

Writers



KASHMIR

Columnists





Triloki Nath Dhar 'Kundan'

Articles on Kashmir

SELECTED WRITINGS OF TRILOKI NATH DHAR ‘KUNDAN’

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1.0 TRILOKI NATH DHAR 'KUNDAN'



Sh. T. N. Dhar 'Kundan' has written exclusively on Kashmir, its political scenario and religious practices of its original inhabitants, the Kashmiri Pandits, and has authored several books on a variety of socio-cultural topics. For a number of years, he served as an editor to *Koshur Samachar*, a tri-lingual publication of Kashmir Samiti, New Delhi. We at KNN are indebted to him for sharing some of his articles with our readers.

List of books written by T.N. Dhar

English

1. A Portrait of Indian Culture published by Rashtriya Sanskrit Sansthan.
2. A Window on Kashmir
3. Bhagavad Gita, the Elixir of Life
4. Exploring the Mysterious
5. Understanding Education
6. Philosophy of a Common Man
7. Saints and Sages of Kashmir
8. The Saint Extra-Ordinary, Bhagavaan Gopinath

Serial No. 2,3 and 4 published by Mittal Publishers, Ansari Road, Darya Gunj New Delhi. Serial No. 5 and 6 published by Rajat Publishers, Ansari Road, Darya Gunj, New Delhi. No.7 published by Bhagavaan Gopinath Trust and No 8 by A.P.H. Publishing Corporation, Ansari Road, New Delhi.

Hindi

1. Main Pyasa Hun (I am Thirsty) - A collection of Hindi Poems
2. Main Samudra Hun (I am an Ocean) A collection of Hindi Poems
3. Guru Se Samvad (Dialogue with a Preceptor)

Kashmiri

1. Swapna ta Sonch (A Dream and a Thought) A collection of Kashmiri Poems.

In addition two more books in English, 'Kashmiri Pandit Community- a Profile' and 'On the Path of Spirituality' are under print being published by the Mittal Publishers, Ansari Road, New Delhi.

2.0 WHO FIGHTS WHOM AND WHY

Shrimad Bhagawad Gita is said to be a discourse delivered by the Lord for Arjuna, while the two armies of Kauravas and Pandavas were arrayed against each other in the battle-field of Kurukshetra. Shri Krishna was his charioteer. He placed the chariot in between the two armies, at his instance, to enable him to see the warriors eager to fight on both sides. Arjuna was distressed to see his own relatives on both sides and dropped his bow, 'Gandiva', determined not to fight. A question often asked is why did the Lord not agree when Arjuna declined to fight and thereby avoid the great war of Mahabharata. His endorsement of the change in the mind of Arjuna would have obviated the heavy loss of life resulting from this war and would have served the cause of peace. In order to find an answer to this question, we can proceed in three different ways. First let us see what was the immediate cause of this war. The immediate cause was that Kauravas denied Pandavas their due. In fact Shri Krishna tried His utmost to avoid the conflict by counselling Kauravas. He made a last ditch effort and went to the extent of even settling with just five villages for Pandavas. It was the ego and the adamant nature of Duryodhana that thrust the war on Pandavas and forced them to fight for their rights. So it was a war for the right cause and, therefore, it formed the duty for Arjuna, a warrior as he was. Perhaps it is in this context that Shri Krishna says: 'Atha chet-tvam-imam dharmyam sangramam na karishyasi. Tatah svadharmam keertim cha hitva papam-avapsyasi. If you do not wage this righteous war you will destroy your duty and your fame and thereby incur a sin. II.33.' The epithet used for this specific war here is 'dharmyam', righteous. So it has to be noted that Shri Krishna wants Arjuna to fight for righteousness as a part of his duty. The duties of a warrior have been laid down clearly: 'Shauryam, tejo, dhritir-dakshyam yuddhe chapi-apalayanam. Danam-ishwar-bhavash-cha kshatram karma svabhavajam. By his very disposition, the duties of a warrior are bravery, radiance, resoluteness, expertise, generosity, lordship and determination not to desert in the war. XVIII.43.' He should not run away from the battle-field, an honoured warrior as he is, for if he does, he will not only be forfeiting his own duty but also will incur slanderous defamation from his fellow warriors. 'Bhayad-ranad-uparatam mansyante tvam maharathah. Yesham cha tvam bahumatah bhutva yasyasi laghavam. You will be deemed to have run away from the field out of fear. The warriors who held you in high esteem shall look down upon you with contempt. II.35.'

Another important point to be noted is that Arjuna declines to fight not as a principle that war is evil but because of two distinct reasons. One that he did not want to wage a war against his own kinsmen and kill them and two that he was not sure which of the two sides was going to win ultimately. This will be clear from these shlokas. 'Dhrishtva-imam svajanam yuyutsum mama gatrani seedanti – seeing these Kinsmen ready to fight, my limbs fail me. I.28 & 29.' 'Nimittani cha pashyami viparitani – I see adverse and unfavourable omens. I.31.' 'Na cha shreyo-anupashyami hatva svajanam-ahave. Na kankshe vijayam Krishna na cha rajyam sukhani cha. I do not visualise any good ensuing from the killing of my own kinsmen. I do not desire victory nor any empire. I. 31& 32.' 'Yadva jayema yadi va no jayeyuh . Whether we shall be victorious or they shall defeat us. II.6.' Arjuna is unsure about his duty. He is confused, weakened and, therefore, unable to decide the right course of action. 'Pricchami tvam dharma-sammudha-chetah yat-shreyah syat-nishchitam bruhi tanme..- My understanding about my duty is confused. I am asking your advice. Tell me for certain what is beneficial for me. II.7.' Shri Krishna's replies to these doubts are very pointed. It is not winning or losing in the war that is material. What really matters is doing one's ordained duty. 'Hato va prapsyasi svargam jitva va bhokshyase mahim.- slain, you will gain access to heaven and victorious, you will enjoy sovereignty over the earth. II.37.' 'Svalpam-api-asya dharmasya trayate mahto bhayat.- even a little of this righteous duty when executed protects you from

great fear. II.40.' As regards the point raised by Arjuna about the killing of his own kins, he is put wise by Shri Krishna on the broader questions of who the 'karta', the doer is and the fact that the soul is immortal. He reveals an important secret that these kinsmen, the kauravas, as others, existed before and shall exist hereafter. This is the eternal nature of existence. 'Na tu-eva-aham jatu nasam, na tvam na-imē janadhipah. Na-chaiva na bhavishyamah sarve vayam-atah param. – These ruling kings, you and I were never non-existent. All of us shall similarly never cease to be existent in future. II.12.' So far as the bodily existence is concerned, the life and death is in the hands of the Lord. In this case also He has already slain Kauravas and Arjuna is being made only an instrument, an agent, which gives him name and fame as a warrior. He also is assured of the sovereignty over his kingdom. 'Tasmat-tvam uttishtha yasho labhasva. Jitva shatrun bhukshva rajyam samriddam. Maya-eva-ete nihatah purvam-eva, nimitta-matram bhava savya-sachin.- Get up Arjuna! Earn name and fame, conquer your enemies and enjoy the rich and prosperous kingdom. I have killed them already and you be only an instrument for their killing, a cause of their death XI.33.'

The second way of examining the question is to analyse whether the war or the fight referred to in the Gita at all is Mahabharata or is it some other conflict. This doubt is well founded and can be corroborated with internal evidence from the Gita. Sanjay reports to Dhritarashtra that Arjuna said to the Lord, 'I shall not fight,' and then kept quiet. 'Na yotsya iti Govindam uktva tushnim babhuva ha. II.9' Had the reference been to the war of Mahabharata the logical reaction from Shri Krishna would have been, 'Why? But why don't you want to fight? You want to spare these plunderers who have usurped your legitimate right to kingdom. You are prepared to let these sinners get away with the unmanly treatment they meted out to Draupadi. Don't you remember that I tried my best to avert war by asking Kauravas to part with just five villages for you and your brothers, and they declined.' It will, however, be seen that nothing of this sort was told by Him. No such argument was put forth by Him in defence of waging the war. The first reaction of the Lord on seeing Arjuna lay down his arms was, 'Kutas-tva kashmalam-idam vishame sam-upasthitam. Anarya-jushtam-asvargyam akeertikaram-Arjuna. – Whence has this dejection come upon you at this crucial hour? It is unmanly, heaven-barring and liable to defamation. II.21'. Next when he said in so many words that he was not going to fight, the Lord chastised him for grieving on a situation which did not warrant to be grieved at. He brought in straightaway the subject of the mortal body and the immortal soul to bring home the fact of inevitability of death for the body and indestructibility of the embodied soul. 'Ashochyan-anvashochastvam prajnavadansh-cha bhashase. Gatasun-agatasunsh-cha nanushochanti panditah. II.11'.

In this context one would like to go back to the first word of the Gita which is 'dharma-kshetre', meaning in the field of righteousness or duty. This is followed by the word 'kuru-kshetre' meaning in the field of action. So the battle-field intended is the field of action for righteousness. It is a common knowledge that a person has two aspects of vice and virtue of his nature. The aspect of virtue is sedate, unassuming, sober and beneficial in the long run. The aspect of vice is vibrant, attractive, alluring and of momentary happiness. This aspect becomes dominant and controls and directs our thought, speech, actions and attitude. It is these traits in the form of Kauravas which are to be slain. But they are so enticing that they appear to us to be our own near and dear ones. We don't want to fight them, let alone kill them. Shri Krishna warns us that any idea of not facing and annihilating these is unmanly and disastrous. It will bring only defamation as this will turn us of "asuri prakriti" demonic nature and will deprive us of heaven. 'Anarya-jushtam-asvargyam akeertikaram. II.2'. So He wants us to shun the faint-heartedness and rise to vanquish these enemies. 'Kshudram hridaya-daurbalyam tyaktva-uttishtha. II.3.' Therefore, one could conclude that it is this struggle constantly on against these vicious elements, in our own mind, which the Lord inspires us to fight to the finish. The entire Gita is replete with the details of these two aspects, the

consequences of each one of them and the ways and means of killing the vicious one and then realising the true nature of the Self.

The third way of tackling this question is to keep in mind the basic purpose of the Lord's appearing in the embodied form. This has explicitly been made known in these two shlokas: 'Yada yada hi dharmasya glanir-bhavati Bharata! Abhyutthanam adharmasya tada-atmanam srijami-aham. – Whenever the righteousness declines and the vice is at its ascendance I embody myself. IV.7'. 'Paritranaya sadhunam vinashaya cha dash-kritaam. Dharma-sansthanarthaya sambhavami yuge yuge.- For the protection of the good and destruction of the evil-doers and for the establishment of righteousness I am born age after age. IV.8'. It is, therefore clear that the Lord had embodied himself to protect Pandavas, whose case was just and right. He was here to destroy Kauravas, who were 'dushkritam,' evil-doers, whose actions were unjust, wicked, cruel and sinful. He had to re-establish the rule of law, justice and truth. It was, therefore, imperative for Him to aid, abet, encourage and support the war effort of Arjuna, or else it would go against the very purpose of His 'Avatara', descent on this earth. He was his charioteer and was guiding him in this mental and spiritual struggle of his life. We have to remember that we are not the doers. 'Naiva kinchit-karomi-iti yukto manyeta tattvavit. – One who knows the truth believes, and rightly so, that he is not the doer. He does nothing. V.8'. The Lord is the creator and the destroyer of the whole world. 'Aham kritsnasya jagatah prabhavah pralayas-tatha .VII.6.' It is because of this that Arjuna is urged to fight in order to carry out the task of the Divine as His instrument. 'Antavanta ime deha nityasya-uktah sharirinah. Anashino-aprameyasya tasmad-yudhyasva Bharata! – The bodies have an end. The indweller in them is indestructible and formless. Therefore Arjuna you must fight. II.18.' 'tato yuddhaya yujvasva naivam papam-avapsyasi. – engage yourself in the battle, There is no sin involved for you. II.38'. 'Tasmat-sarveshu kaleshu mam-anusmara yudhya cha. – Remember Me all the time and fight. VIII.7'. The Lord says that we should surrender all actions unto Him and be free from hope of selfish motives, even while engaged in battle. 'Mayi sarvani karmani sanyasya-adhyatma-chetasa. Nirashi-nirmamo bhutva yudhyasva vigata jvarah. III.30.' This is repeated again when the Lord wants us to make all our actions an offering to Him, 'Yat-karoshi yad-ashnasi yaj-juhoshi dadasi yat. Yat-tapasyasi Kaunteya tat-kurushva mad-arpanam. Whatever you do, eat, sacrifice, donate and whatever penance you practise, do it as an offering unto Me. IX.27.'

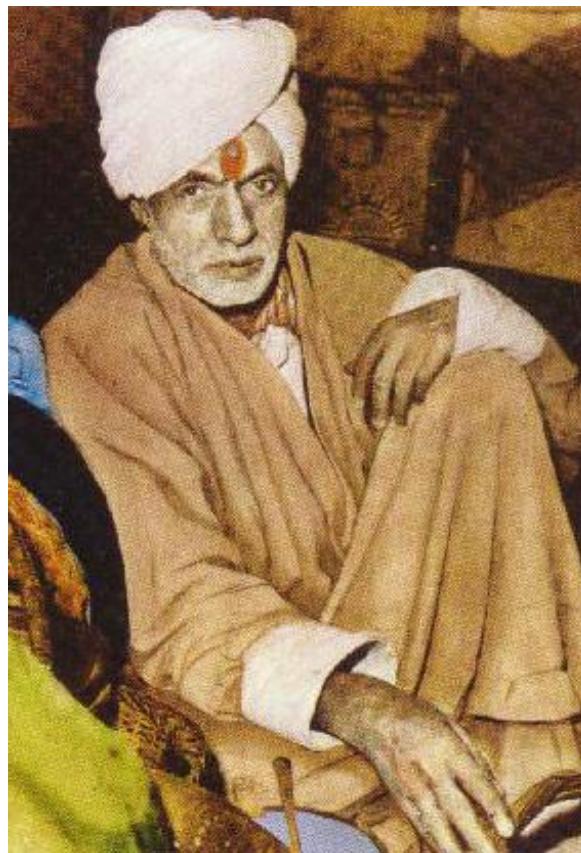
Ego is one trait that is never approved of by the Lord. Humility, submission and surrender before Him are the qualities that endear us to Him. Any action which is carried out without any notion of egoism keeps us free from the fruits of the action. 'Yasya na-ahankrito bhavah buddhir-yasya na lipyate. Hatva-api sa iman-lokan na hanti na nibadhyate. Once there is no notion of ego and once the wisdom is untainted, even if you kill these people, you are not held responsible for the killing and, therefore you do not get involved in the act and its fruits and result. You are not bound at all. XVIII.17.' A practical demonstration of the fact that these Kauravas had already been slain by the Lord and that Arjuna would only be an instrument, has been made to Arjuna when he sees all the warriors enter the mouth of Shri Krishna involuntarily. Awe stricken, he narrates, 'Ami cha tvam Dhritarashtra-putrah sarve sahaiva-avanipala-sanghaiah.... Vaktrani te tvaramana vishanti danshtra-karalani bhayanakani. All the sons of Dhritrashtra along with other monarchs enter hurriedly into your mouth, terrible with teeth and fearful to look at. XI.26 & 27.'

Thus it will be seen that the Gita supports and advocates legitimate action including a war which is righteous and is waged to protect the truth and justice and forms a part of one's duty. It further makes it known that:- 'Sahajam karma Kaunteya! Sadosham-api na tyajet. One should not abandon one's natural duty even if it is faulty. XVIII.48.' It inspires the war effort against animality within our selves, so that we

are able to raise ourselves to divinity. It says that we are helpless in carrying out the fights on His behalf to restore and re-establish 'Dharma' as His agents and instruments for carrying out these tasks.

(Taken from the Book '*Bhagavad Gita, the Elixir of Life*' written by T.N. Dhar)

3.0 JAGAD GURU BHAGAVAAN GOPI NATH JI – A SAINT APART



Bhagavaan Gopinath Ji

A Miracle

It is by now an open secret and a matter of common knowledge that the officers and personnel of the Indian Army, who had never even heard of him saw Bhagavaan Gopi Nath Ji at the front during Kargil conflict with Pakistan Army, guiding them during the operations. These Army Officers have attributed the successful recapture of the Tiger Hills mainly to the directions they received from him during the counter assault launched by them. It was an officer of 18 Grenadiers, who first revealed how this mysterious saint of Kashmir directed the operation and how the commandoes acted according to his command with the result that the strategically important feature of Tiger Hills was snatched from the clutches of the enemy. The officer had heard about him from a Kashmiri Army Officer and had seen a locket in his neck with his photograph. It was because of this background that he had recognized the saint with a white turban and a red 'Tilaka' on his forehead. He vouched that in the first instance the Indian Army encountered enormous difficulties but after this great and mysterious saint appeared on the scene, the strategy was restructured and it bore fruit. He had no doubt in his mind that this success in recapturing this formidable and strategically all important peak was made possible by this unforgettable character emerging on the scene on July 3.

The higher echelons of the Indian Army also were curious to know more about this strange episode. They were informed that according to some war heroes this saint had already guided the forward ranks of the Army during 1947, 1965 and 1971 wars against Pakistan. There should be nothing surprising about this. Shri B.L.Kak, a well-known journalist has quoted Swami Yogananda as having recorded in his book, 'Autobiography of a Yogi' that 'yogis can materialize and dematerialize themselves and move with the velocity of light and utilize the creative light rays in bringing into instant visibility any physical manifestation'. Men of common prudence cannot, however, account for these things. It is perhaps because of this that the Army Officer has recorded in his diary that nobody would believe him when he would reveal that it was Bhagavaan Ji who led this 11-hour assault leading to the recapture of this dominating peak called Tiger Hills in the Kargil region that proved to be the turning point in the 40 days old conflict with Pakistan.

Some devotees of his who were very close to him have said that during 1962 when the Indian Army was engaged in halting the onslaught of the Chinese troops, one day he left his residence and returned only the next day. His body was cold and shivering and he had caught cold and was having the symptoms of bronchitis. When asked he replied that he had gone to Tibet border to settle scores. A few days soon thereafter there was ceasefire on the battlefield. When the decisive war of 1971, which created the separate country of Bangla Desh, was being fought, some devotees of Bhagavaan Ji prayed in his Ashram at Kharyar in Srinagar throughout the day and begged of him to save the country. Bhagavaan Ji appeared before one of them in response to their prayers and directed him that a particular item should be offered by all of them jointly before the evening 'Aarti' by way of oblation for four consecutive days. After these four days there was an announcement on the Radio and Television by Indira Gandhi, the then Prime Minister of India that General Niazi of the Pakistan Army had surrendered before the Indian Army and the war was over. This was his way of influencing the matters of his country even long after giving up his mortal frame.

A Saint Apart

Bhagavaan Ji was a saint, who did not believe in creating a sect or a group around him. He was not given to discourses or philosophical sermons. His aim had been to know the truth, mitigate the suffering of people and give spiritual guidance to those who sought it from him. Because of these peculiarities nobody could see anything unusual in him that would suggest his eventual sainthood. Leading a group of young friends to various shrines or arranging 'Rasa Leela', the spiritual dances, remaining celibate or even seeing some prominent saints occasionally could not be sufficient indication of his being a 'Sadhu'. He did no miracles in his childhood and demonstrated no super natural powers. Why should he have done so? After all he had not to impress anyone or prove his stature or position. He was a quiet, shy lad who was of religious bent of mind no doubt but in the conventional manner only. Every household in Kashmir had a 'pooja' room called 'Thokur Kuth' earmarked for daily worship. Small 'Shiva Lingam' of crystal, a 'Saligram' of a crimson coloured stone, a coin showing Shri Rama Panchayatan, Ganesha and replicas of other deities would be kept there with devotion. Every morning these idols would be washed, smeared with sandal-paste, decorated with flowers of all hues and then propitiated with devotional hymns, 'Bhakti Stotras'. In these private worshipping sessions as also at different pilgrimage centers popular 'Stotras' like Bhawani Sahasranam, Indrakshi, Panchastavi, Shad-akshar and Pancha-akshar hymns would be sung. People would also sing 'Leelas' and 'Bhajans' in praise of their choicest Deities, either in chorus with the accompaniment of Harmonium, Tabla and earthenware pitcher called 'No't' or solo, in individual ways, with faith and dedication.

This was the general religious scenario of an average Kashmiri family. Then there was extra religious fervour and atmosphere in his father's house and in the house of his maternal grandfather. No wonder, therefore, that Bhagavaan Ji turned out to be an ascetic of highest spiritual attainment. He was simple in manners, straightforward in demeanour, man of few words, agile and restless in mind but firm and resolute in his aspiration to know the Divine. He never adopted any outward garb of a saint. Neither did he grow a beard nor did he wear any ochre dress like the usual mendicants. His dress was that of an ordinary Kashmiri Pandit, a shirt, a waistcoat, a 'Pheran' with a detachable white lining and a turban tied on the head. During the winters he would put a black blanket over his shoulders and take a 'Kangri' inside his 'Pheran'. There was nothing unusual in all this that would give an impression that he was a sage of highest order. Yet he was a saint, a seer, a sage, and a saviour of the mankind. When he grew up, however, he did smoke a 'Chillum' and had a 'Dhooni' lighted in front of him. At best this gave an impression of his being a 'Mastana' or one lost in the world of his own and not that of an accomplished emancipated soul that he actually was. How could one gauge the spiritual plane at which our Master was or the level of spiritual accomplishment that he had reached. Strange are the lives of such yogis and mysterious are their ways.

The Abode of Sages

After draining the waters of Satisar with due penance at the instance of his son Nila, it was the desire of the great Kashyap Rishi to make Kashmir a haven for Rishis and convert this holy land into a hermitage. No wonder, therefore that every household in Kashmir has given birth to a sage. It is the unique feature of Kashmir that whereas every mountain peak is celestial, every spring is sacred and every nook and corner is a place of pilgrimage, every village and every township has produced a sage of eminence. Consequently a great number of 'Grihasta Sadhus', household ascetics have lived in this pious land. They have given spiritual guidance and mental peace to a host of their devotees and others from time to time. Some of them have composed mystical and devotional poems in a variety of forms, Bhajans, Leelas (Hymns in praise of God), Vakhs, Shrukhs (Quatrains containing moral and spiritual message) and so on. The message they gave was one of righteousness, piety, purity and penance. In the Hindu period of our history there have been great scholar-sages from Vasugupta, Utpaldev, Somanand and down to Abhinavgupta, and others, who propounded the world famous Trika philosophy – a monistic doctrine unique in many ways. They wrote original texts, treatises and commentaries in Sanskrit notably Spanda Karika, Shivastotravali, Shiva Drishti, Parmarthasara, Tantralok and the like.

From the fourteenth century onwards and with the advent of Islam, we have had saints who wrote or preached through the medium of Kashmiri language. At the head of this list is the great Lal Ded who was followed by Nunda Rishi, Roopa Bhawani, Paramananda, Krishna Razdan, and others. There were quite a few Muslim Sufis as well, notable among them being, Swachha Kral, Rahman Dar, Shah Gafoor, Waza Mehmood, Shamas Faqir, Wahab Khar, Nyama Sahib, Asad Paray and Ahad Zargar. Kashmiris sing their compositions with reverence and devotion and these provide light and guidance. There, however, have been other saints and sages, who may not have written or composed any text or any poetry but they have guided many a seeker and provided solace to the suffering humanity. Some of these holy men revered and remembered by all Kashmiris are Krishna Kar, Reshi Peer, Sona Kak, Jeevan Shah, Mirza Kak Kash Kak, Nanda Bab, Swami Nanda Lal, Grata Bab, Mathura Devi, Swami Laxman Joo, Shankar Razdan. In this galaxy of stars there appeared a shining Pole star called Bhagavaan Gopi Nath Ji, who in his lifetime

got the title 'Jagad Guru' or the preceptor of the world. He was born towards the end of Nineteenth century and lived in Srinagar, the summer capital of Kashmir State throughout his life.

Birth and Background

Srinagar city is situated on either bank of the river Vitasta, also known as Jehlum. This river is the lifeline of the valley and sprouts forth from the spring of Verinag. Its source is known in local language as 'Vethavotur' and is a sacred place of pilgrimage. In olden days the two sides of this river were connected in Srinagar by seven bridges, now there are nine. Between the second and the third bridges, on the right bank there is a densely populated area called 'Bhana Mohalla.' As the name itself indicates the mohalla is named after the family of Bhans, who lived in this area. Shri Lachhman Joo Bhan, a Wazir Wazaarat (present day Collector) in the Revenue Department of the Dogra Maharaja lived here. His son Pandit Narayan Joo Bhan was married to Shrimati Haara Maal, daughter of Pt. Prasad Joo Parimoo and the couple were blessed with a son on the 19th Ashada 1955 (Vikrami) corresponding to 3rd of July 1898 AD, who was named Gopi Nath. There is an unconfirmed report that sometime before his birth Swami Vivekananda, who was in Kashmir then, had paid a visit to that place. Some say that he called on the family and others say he stopped short of entering the house and sat on a tailor's shop below it. Coming events cast their shadow before. Probably Swami Ji was aware that a great and a pious soul was going to be born there. Sometime around that time in 1898 was born Ronald Nixon in Cheltenham, UK, who came to India in 1921, became a Sanyasi, a monk and was eventually known as Shri Krishnaprem Vairagi, a worthy disciple of Yashoda Ma. Two years earlier in 1896 were born A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami, the founder of the International Society of Krishna Consciousness or ISKCON and Anandamayi Ma, who was referred to as 'the purest flower the soil of India has ever produced' by Swami Sivananda Saraswati, the founder of the Divine Life Society of Rishikesh.

Obviously there was something celestial about the last decade of the Nineteenth Century. It is no surprise, therefore, that Bhagavaan Ji should have been born in this auspicious decade. His father Pandit Narayan Joo was a highly religious person, a devout and spiritually very elevated. He dealt with Pashmina wool business. That he was a pious person of highest order devoid of any greed and coveting is clear from the fact that he gave up his ancestral home at Bhana Mohalla and other possessions inherited from his father, in favour of his stepmother and her children. Himself he shifted to the house of Pandit Shiv Ji Khyberi in Bhana Mohalla itself, along with his parents and family including young Gopi Nath Ji, about ten years of age. He had two other sons. The elder one Pt. Govind Joo Bhan remained a bachelor. He worked in the Customs and Excise department and died in 1946. The younger one, Pt. Jia Lal was given in adoption to a family of Kaks at Sathu Barbarshah. He was married but had no issues. He was a draftsman in the State PWD and died in the year 1964. He too was spiritually inclined and would always be seen engaged in the service of Sadhus and the poor and downtrodden. At the time of his death Bhagavaan Ji is said to have remarked that the departed soul had merged with the Divine and, therefore, it was not surprising that he had given up his gross body. This is an indication enough that he too was spiritually at a very high level – a typically household sage, 'Grihasti-Sadhu'.

Shrimati Haara Maal, Bhagavaan Ji's mother was the daughter of Pandit Prasad Joo Parimoo, who lived at Sekidafer. He was also a saint in his own right. He and Swami Anand Ji of Jamanagari, Shopian were the disciples of the same Guru and Pandit Parimoo was considered to be spiritually so profound that he was fondly called 'Zada Bharata' after 'Jada Bharata', the legendary saint of the Puranas. It is said that in the beginning he had no issues and, therefore, he adopted a son, Madhav Joo. Soon thereafter he had a vision of Shri Rajna Bhagavati while in samadhi at Tula Mula shrine. The Bhagavati chided him for having gone for adoption when she herself was desirous of taking birth in his house. Eventually Haara Mal was born, who was to give birth to Bhagavaan Ji in course of time. Shri Parimoo, the grandfather of

Bhagavaan Ji had two more daughters, Badar Ded and Zapaer Ded and two sons, Bhagawan Das and Dama Kak. Holding 'Satsang' or spiritual meetings was a matter of routine in their house. Prasad Joo initiated his younger daughter, Zapaer Ded into 'Japa-yoga' himself as a result of which she was recognized as an accomplished saint when she was around fifty years of age. His son, Pandit Bhagawan Das Parimoo was a devotee of Bhagavati Sharika and would go to Hari Parbat daily for circumambulation. Teaching of the scriptures like 'Yoga Vaasishtha' of Patanjali was a regular feature in their house. He would also go to 'Pokhrival' at the foothill of Haari Parvat towards the exit gate of Kathi Darwaza and return by dawn to his home. The spring at 'Pokhrival' used to be desilted once or twice every year. The young Gopi Nath would undertake this job. He would descend into the spring and remove the silt, mud, rotten flowers and other offerings from its bottom to clean the water. He would also attend the annual yajna at this sacred shrine. These activities of his showed that the seeds of spirituality and religious bent of mind were ingrained in the young lad from the very childhood.

Religious Legacy

Bhagavaan Ji had thus, it appears, inherited religious discipline, yoga practices, sainthood and spiritual atmosphere from his mother's side, Whereas his mother was an incarnation of Bhagavati Rajna, his grandfather, his aunt and his maternal uncle, all were initiated saints and devout practitioners of religious rituals. Periodical religious meetings, 'Satsang' had made the whole atmosphere in their house divine and pious. The atmosphere in his own house also was strictly religious as his father was at a high spiritual level, his elder brother practised celibacy throughout his life and the younger one was also given to service of Sadhus. No wonder, therefore, that he was drawn to 'Dharma sadhana' or the religious pursuit from the early age and as a young boy took pleasure in doing pious jobs as service unto the Divine. Mundane activities and normal household life did not, therefore, interest him at all. He developed aversion to sense objects and became indifferent to food, clothing and other means of comfort. This was manifest in his attitude in later years of his life. It is well said that coming events cast their shadows before. The seeds of his future exalted spiritual position were sown in his young age itself. Yet he was not given to ostentation or exhibitionism and remained throughout a silent and hidden seeker. He spoke very little and that too in low whispers and remained engrossed with the spiritual world of his own although outwardly appearing to be very much in this mundane world. He would seldom address any visitor directly. The conversion would either be indirect or through gestures.

Bhagavaan Ji had two sisters. The sister elder to him was Deva Maali. She gave birth to two daughters and was widowed at a young age. Probably the destiny had willed that she should be free from the worries of her own family so that she gave her full attention to sustain Bhagavaan Ji during the period of his rigorous 'Sadhanaa' or the spiritual pursuit. She remained with him for a major portion of his life, taking care of his food, clothing and well being, till she died in 1965. She was with him during pilgrimages and occasionally on his visits to some prominent saints of the time. Her elder daughter, Shrimati Kamala Ji was married to Pt. Shyam Lal Malla and the couple got one son and two daughters. It was in their house at Chandapora that Bhagavaan Ji spent the last eleven years of his life and gave up his mortal frame in 1968. The younger daughter, Chanda Ji was married to Pt. Madhav Joo Sathu. Bhagavaan Ji stayed in their house at Rishi Mohalla for ten years before moving to the house of Mallas in 1956. Bhagavaan Ji's younger sister was Shrimati Janaki Devi. She died at a young age after giving birth to two sons and two daughters. She was also devoted to her brother and used to serve him on various occasions.

Living in 'Vangaejvore' (hired houses with or without rentals), moving from house to house, losing near and dear ones and the resultant turmoil made this young boy vividly aware of the frivolity of the worldly matters and the need to strive to know the Supreme Truth. Consequently he became an introvert. It is

because of these traits and the fact that from his childhood itself he was not open and communicative that many people have observed that there were no signs of sainthood in him in his younger days. He had inherited piety and spiritual bent of mind both from his father and mother's side. The seeds of 'Sadhana' were there and the deprivation, turmoil and grief that he experienced made these seeds sprout and he chose a path of sainthood that was destined for him. No doubt the cumulative virtue 'Sanchit punya' of the previous many births had a big role to play in shaping his spiritual life. Without the intrinsic qualities of sainthood and the inclination towards 'sadhana' carried over from the previous births, the turmoil would only have caused depression and turned him an escapist and would not have given rise to the positive aptitude towards seeking the Divine.

He must have been around ten years of age when his father shifted from his ancestral home to the house of Pt. Shiv Ji Khyberi in the same area, Bhana Mohalla. He had given up his palatial three-storeyed ancestral house and property in favour of his stepmother and her children. The family lived there for about one and a half years. In 1909 they moved to the house of Pt. Keshav Joo Nagri in Shaalayar where they lived for three years. These were the days of schooling for the young Gopi, who passed the middle standard, which at that time was of good reckoning. It was here that he lost his mother when he was just twelve years of age. In 1912 the family moved to Razverkadal house of Pt. Kailash Joo Bhan. During this period Bhagavaan Ji joined his maternal uncle in Pashmina wool business for some time. Thereafter he took employment with Vishi Nath Printing Press as a compositor. This engagement continued for three years and in between the family again shifted to Sekidafer in his maternal grandfather's house. His sojourn here seems to have intensified his spiritual activities. Earlier he used to visit the saint Zana Kak and now he would press the feet of the Jatadhari saint Balak Kaw, fondly known as Bal Ji. The family stayed at Sekidafer for seven years. His stint with the local press lasted just three years and then he started a grocer's shop at a place called 'Chaidob'. In 1920 the family took up residence at Safa Kadal in the house of Pt. Keshav Joo Dhar. Bhagavaan Ji shifted his Kiryana shop to Sekidafer. He formed a group of young friends and as the leader of the group arranged occasional trips to holy places like Tula Mula, Vitsarnag, and Mahadev. He was fond of going to various saints, meeting them and having their darshan. It is possible that during these meetings he might have been discussing the problems encountered by him as a seeker in his quest for the Divine and sought answers to his queries. Alas these secret conversations are not made public and, therefore, one has just to presume what must have transpired between these sages. Surely they would not talk about worldly matters unless the topic veered round the good of the mankind at large.

It is not uncommon in Kashmir that a sage is born in an apparently ordinary household. There is a saying in Kashmiri, '*Lembi chhu pamposh phatan*' meaning that a lotus grows in muddy waters. We have had a galaxy of such saints, both men and women. In 14th century we had the great saint-poetess Lal Ded whose 'Vakhs' or sayings are on the tip of every one's tongue. We have had Roop Bhawani in the 17th century who was an incarnation of Goddess Sharika. We had Krishna Kar, the illustrious preceptor of another great saint, Rishi Peer, who was called 'Peer Pandit Padshah, Mushkil Kusha har du jahan' meaning a King of saints capable of removing all the difficulties of both the worlds, here and beyond. In the contemporary scene also we had big names like Kash Kak, Nanda Bab, Grata Mo't, Mathura Devi, Sati Ded et al. In the lineage of Kashmir Shaiva Philosophy luminaries we had Vasu Gupt, Utpal Dev, Somanand, Abhinav Gupt, Swami Ram, Swami Mahtab Kak and Swami Laxman Joo. They have left behind a treasure of literature expounding the tenets of the unique 'Trika' Philosophy of this pious land.

This basically a non-dualistic philosophy, propounds that the whole creation is the manifestation of the Divine and is, therefore, real and not an illusion. It comprises thirty-six elements and the spiritual quest consists in moving from objectivity to subjectivity or vice versa and attaining the position where the two

get merged. In this doctrine the Divine is perceived as the Supreme Universal Consciousness, which manifests itself in the form of the creation with the help of its own inseparable energy aspect out of its own free will. Kashmir has been fertile enough to give birth to saints like Bhagavaan Gopi Nath, who during his lifetime got the epithet of 'Jagad Guru', the Preceptor of the World. To his numerous disciples he was 'Bab', the loving father. Some of his disciples have fondly called him 'Bab Bhagavaan' or the God father and God father no doubt he was to his numerous devotees and fortunate persons who gained proximity to him. He was their ultimate hope for support, succour and spiritual guidance. He continues to provide this support in his astral form even now to the people in various nooks and corners of the globe. His birthday and Nirvana day are celebrated every year throughout the length and breadth of the country and abroad with devotion and dedication.

Attractive Disposition

Even today long after he has ceased to exist in human form, Bhagavaan Ji is as radiant as the Sun. He is as cool and soothing as the Moon. He is deep as an ocean and vast as the sky. He is ever fresh as the morning dew. He provides shelter like a mighty Bunyan tree. Whenever we see his portrait, picture or statue a strange kind of magnetic attraction is felt. We are drawn to him by the intensity of the gaze of his eyes. It is as penetrating as the rays of the morning sun entering a closed room through the mesh windows. It is so enchanting as the sight of the rising sun from behind the mountain peaks. It is so captivating as the thousand flowers of all hues blossoming simultaneously. We are drawn towards him because of the attraction of his half open lips, which are eloquent enough to give an impression that they are reciting 'Richas' of the Rig Veda or singing 'Sama' of the Sama Veda or uttering the eternal seed syllable 'Om'. Incidentally he was himself very fond of Shastriya Sangeet or the classical music. We are drawn to him due to the radiance reflected from his glittering countenance and the splendour and grace radiating from his white turban and coloured 'Pheran'. This radiance spreads throughout the atmosphere around and envelops the entire audience. We are also drawn to him by the fountain of lights sprouting forth from the vermillion 'Tilaka' of his shining forehead, likened by many with the 'Sharika Shila' at Hari Parbat.

He was a recluse who lived an austere life. He was an ascetic and an introvert who was never after name or fame. He had taken birth not only to achieve the supreme truth himself but also to uplift others spiritually, rescue those in difficulty and relieve the suffering of their pain. He proved to be a pole star guiding the course of the ship of life for a number of devotees. Dr. S. Radhakrishnan has rightly observed about such an experience, 'It is good to know that the ancient thinkers required of us to realize the possibilities of the soul in solitude and silence, and to transform the flashing and fading moments of vision into a steady light which could illumine the long years of life.' He was always engrossed in his own divine spiritual world, in communion with the Divine, whom he could approach at will. He was not in favour of getting married. Perhaps he thought that he would not be able to devote his full attention to the 'sadhana' that was his main interest and the aim of his life. We have had many examples of sages who did not marry for the same reason or if they did under force and coercion of their parents, they had to neglect their family, which pained them. The 14th century saint Nunda Rishi was forced to marry and got two children. Eventually his wife died and he himself went into a cave for intense penance. The burden of bringing up the kids fell on his aged mother. It is said that the old lady approached him and asked him to relieve her of this troublesome responsibility. The sage looked up towards the sky and requested God to take away the children since household duty was not his forte. Instantaneously the children died and that was the end of this distraction for him. To avoid such a grave and pathetic situation it was in the fitness of things that Bhagavaan Ji should have from the beginning decided not to marry and lead the life of a celibate. He had special liking for the celibates although he was equally considerate and kind towards the

devotees who were householders. He recognized that even they could attain spiritual heights but the path for them was more arduous.

Aptitude and Inclination

In 1923 on Vijay Saptami he joined a group of people comprising the families of Shalis and Parimoos for pilgrimage to Mattan. When they reached Khanabal by boat, he along with a couple of his associates separated from the group and dashed off to see the saint Jeevan Sahib, who lived somewhere that side. There are other instances when he similarly went to see other saints. He would likewise organize trips to Kshir Bhawani, Mahadev, Vitsarnag and other holy places along with a group of people as their leader. This shows that Shrines and Saints attracted him a lot. Shrines would provide him the right atmosphere and a serene environment for his spiritual 'sadhana'. Saints would provide him the proper forum to talk about his spiritual experiences and also help him choose the right mode of 'sadhana' best suited to his genius and temperament. He must have carried forward the 'sanskaras' of his previous births because of which the latent sainthood in him started flourishing right from his young age. Shrimad Bhagavad Gita says, '*Aneka janma sansiddhah tato yanti paran-gatim*' – a seeker gets perfected over a number of births and then only attains the exalted spiritual position'. The exalted spiritual position that Bhagavaan Ji attained during his lifetime stands testimony to the fact that he had a number of highly successful spiritual lives in the past, the cumulative effect of which enabled him to merge with the Divine during this life.

Although the formal school education did not satisfy his mental needs, he did continue his studies till he completed the Middle Standard. He was a student of the Church Missionary School, Fateh Kadal, just across the river from his house. A renowned missionary educationist, Tyndel Biscoe had established this school as a part of his missionary work. The two of Bhagavaan Ji's close classmates were Pt. Vish Nath Kukiloo and Pt. Gash Lal Bhan. The trio would jump into the river Vitasta from the diving board of the school and swim down the river right up to the Veer after the seventh bridge 'Safa Kadal' and then swim back to the third bridge, Fateh Kadal. It is authentically known that he had a good command over Persian, Sanskrit and Urdu. He knew both Devanagari and Sharada scripts. Whether he had read these languages or acquired their knowledge by the dint of his spiritual acumen is, however, not known. There are many devotees of his who have vouched that in his ecstatic mood he would sometimes utter beautiful sentences in English as well. It is also said that when the Kashmir question was being discussed and debated in the Security Council he had uttered a few sentences in an unintelligible language, which turned out to be Russian eventually as these very sentences were spoken by the Russian Delegate the next day while vetoing the resolution of the Council sponsored by the Western powers, which was detrimental to the interests of India. In his early life Bhagavaan Ji would recite Bhawani Sahsranama, Indrakshi, Panchastavi, Vishnu Sahasranama, Mahimnastotra and Shivastotravali. He would occasionally recite the Vaakhs of Kashmiri Saints as well. He was an ardent reader of Shrimad Bhagavad Gita, a copy of which was always by his side.

Himself also he did not attach too much importance to his external self, the body or its upkeep and maintenance. Every morning he would wash his face and Yajnopavit with water at a water tap. Then he would be seated on his 'asana'. Here he would tie his turban and put on a tilak of saffron with a little ash in the centre. Thereafter he would light his 'Dhooni' in an iron sigdi placed on a stone slab or in a large iron tray. The 'Dhooni' would be kept burning with firewood from morning till evening. In the morning some oblations would be offered in the 'Dhooni' and then he would fill his 'chillum' and engage in smoking. Oblations into the fire would consist of 'Shakkar' (raw sugar, yellowish-brown in colour), rice, barley, dry fruits, mint and skimmia leaves, 'bel patra' and flowers of sorts. This 'yajna' was a detached 'sattvika yajna' described as the yajna of the highest order in the Bhagavad Gita in the following verse:
'Aphalakankshibhir-yajnah vidhi drishto ya ijyate, yashtavyam-eva-iti manah samadhaya cha Sattvikah-

Yajna performed without desiring any fruit, as per procedure, with mind fixed on yajna only for its own sake is categorized as a *sattvika yajna*'. He was particular that the 'Dhooni' was always in flame and it was not merely a burning charcoal. This indicated the importance he imparted to the light 'Prakasha' represented by the flame and blaze. This is in consonance with the Vedic prayer, '*Tamaso ma jyotirgamaya* – lead me from darkness to light'.

Signs of Sainthood

He was indifferent to everything external. In the matter of food also he showed a lot of indifference. He used to say that one should not eat when one is hungry but feed this body only when there is no urge for eating or appetite. This was obviously to conquer hunger and thirst. He would go without food for days together and sometimes eat ferociously. Perhaps he believed in what is stated in Shri Gita about digestion, '*Aham Vaishvanaro bhutva praninam deham-ashritah, pranapana-samayukta pachami annam chaturvidham* – Abiding in the body of living beings as *Vaishvanara*, associated with *pran* and *apana*, inhale and exhale, I digest the four types of food'. Normally he would take a cup of Kashmiri black tea called '*Mogael chai*' at about 9 a.m. At about 1 p.m. he would have his lunch consisting of rice, vegetables etc. For this he had to be reminded by his sister and many times he would decline saying that either it was too late or too early. In the afternoon he would again take a cup of '*Mogael chai*' or salted tea with milk, called '*Sheer chai*' in Kashmiri. More often he would take only one meal a day and even that he stopped eight months before giving up his gross body. Even while eating or taking tea he would be lost in his own contemplation, in his own '*Sadhana*' and in his own spiritual world. The tea in the Kashmiri bronze cup called '*Khose*' would get ice cold while in his hand for a prolonged time. Then he would either gulp it down or throw it away. During fasting he would be physically weak but mentally alert. '*Chillum*' was his constant companion and as per his own statement it would give him enough nourishment. It seems he had complete mastery and control over his sense organs because of which he did not feel hunger or need for any thing else.

In his later years he would recite a shloka or two from these scriptures but would not read from them; perhaps he had memorized them thoroughly. He seems to have been particularly fond of the fourth 'Stava' called the '*Ambastava*' or the Hymn to Mother. He would himself recite a verse or two from it. Once when Shri S.N.Bakshi was introduced to him as a melodious singer of the '*Panchastavi*' he asked him to recite the same fourth hymn in a singing tone. Another important text that was very dear to his heart was the '*Guru Gita*', a hymn in praise of the preceptor. This clearly demonstrated the amount of importance he gave to a preceptor for those who aspire for the Supreme Truth. His attendance at the Satsang of saints and scholars shows that he took keen interest in Vedanta and Kashmir Shaiva Darshan in particular and in other disciplines discussed at these meetings in general. For him the different paths of devotion and self-realization did not matter. It was the goal of merger with the Divine, which was of utmost importance for a seeker. The Scriptures were, therefore, of secondary importance to him and what mattered was the personal spiritual experience. Some Sadhu is reported to have made a comment about his not being well versed in scriptures to a disciple of his. Endowed with a clear vision as he was, he made a mention of this comment when the disciple visited him. By this he proved that knowledge does not come to a seeker by merely reading and memorising like a parrot but by perception, vision and yoga and that the experienced truth is supreme and is superior to that acquired by reading scriptures or by listening to discourses. He believed in this shloka from '*Panchadashi*': '*Adhitya chaturo vedan sarva-shastranya-anekshah, Brahma tattvam na janati darvi sooparasam yatha* – Just as the feeding spoon does not get the taste of the soup served with it, a person does not get to know the Divine merely by reading the four Vedas and all the scriptures many times over'. The idea conveyed here is that the

scriptures are there to help. They are the means but it is the perceived and experienced truth ultimately that matters.

The Spiritual Attainment

What brought him emancipation and what gave him the spiritual height of a rare order, nobody knows. However, one thing is clear that he had attained 'Moksha' through his spiritual insight, 'Jnana'. It is rightly said, 'Jnanena cha-apavargo- it is through knowledge that one gets liberated'. Righteousness takes one to spiritual heights, 'Dharmena gamanam-urdhvam'; lack of righteousness throws one in the abyss, 'Gamanam-adhastad-bhavati-adharmena', and through sub-conscious aspirations 'Vasana' one is tied to vice and virtue, 'Viparyayadishyate bandhah'. Knowing these facts fully well Bhagavaan Ji seems to have cleaned his mind of all conscious and sub-conscious aspirations and inclinations. He was 'Vasana-rahita' and had instinctively and intuitively directed his mind and soul towards the Divine. He was a 'Jeevana-mukta' – an emancipated soul during his lifetime. He had transcended all distinctions of being and non-being, right and wrong, true and false, loss and gain, respect and disrespect, love and hate. Even when circumstances demanded of him to attend to some worldly chores or family problems, he did it in a dispassionate and detached manner. He lived like a lotus in a pool of water, unscathed and unaffected, 'Padmapatram-iva-ambasa'. What brought him emancipation and what gave him the spiritual height of a rare order, nobody knows. However, one thing is clear that he had attained 'Moksha' through his spiritual insight, 'Jnana'. It is rightly said, 'Jnanena cha-apavargo- it is through knowledge that one gets liberated'. Righteousness takes one to spiritual heights, 'Dharmena gamanam-urdhvam'; lack of righteousness throws one in the abyss, 'Gamanam-adhastad-bhavati-adharmena', and through sub-conscious aspirations 'Vasana' one is tied to vice and virtue, 'Viparyayadishyate bandhah'. Knowing these facts fully well Bhagavaan Ji seems to have cleaned his mind of all conscious and sub-conscious aspirations and inclinations. He was 'Vasana-rahita' and had instinctively and intuitively directed his mind and soul towards the Divine. He was a 'Jeevana-mukta' – an emancipated soul during his lifetime. He had transcended all distinctions of being and non-being, right and wrong, true and false, loss and gain, respect and disrespect, love and hate. Even when circumstances demanded of him to attend to some worldly chores or family problems, he did it in a dispassionate and detached manner. He lived like a lotus in a pool of water, unscathed and unaffected, 'Padmapatram-iva-ambasa'.

It seems he was deeply seeped into the dictates of Patanjali's Yoga Vasishtha. He would strictly adhere to 'Yama' and 'Niyama', do's and do not's prescribed therein. He adopted the laid down posture 'asana' and engaged in 'Dharna' and 'Dhyana' or contemplation, concentration and meditation. His aim was 'Samadhi' or complete merger with the Divine and this art he was perfecting slowly and steadily, largely unnoticed by others. With his constant companion 'Chillum' and occasionally 'Khos', the Kashmiri teacup in his hand also he would be miles away absorbed in his own ideas wandering in his own world. The sparks from the fire in the 'Chillum' would burn his dress even his lips sometimes, the tea in the cup would become ice-cold and he would be unmindful of all this, himself dwelling in his spirit and not the gross body. An eminent Urdu poet has said, 'Rehte hain apne jism main kuchh istarah se ham, Apne nahin kisi gair ke ghar mein hun jaise' meaning that I live in my own body in such a detached way as if I live in somebody else's house and not in my own. This was exactly what Bhagavaan Ji must have lived like. His real self was his soul and the spirit that was embodied in the gross body and only carried by it.

When he lost his father in the house of Pt. Dina Nath Bota at Rangateng, it seems his last link with the mundane world was severed. He plunged headlong into the rigorous discipline of 'Yoga Sadhana'. His

communication with outside world was minimal and he remained in communion with his inner self all the time. May be he also believed in what Lal Ded had said six hundred years ago: '*Go'ran dopnam kunuy vatsun, nyabra dopnam andar atsun.* – My preceptor told me but one secret, to go from without to within to seek Him'. There are eyewitness accounts that while at the shop he would seldom speak to others and would remain lost in his own inner world. Many a time he would leave the shutters of the shop unbolted and unlocked and rush to Hari Parbat. This shows the aversion he had towards the worldly affairs although the circumstances compelled him to attend to family matters occasionally. That sure must have been a detached involvement, an outward act.

Effect of The Gita

While there are authentic accounts of his knowledge of various 'Stotras' and devotional texts, it is not known if he had studied various scriptures and texts relating to Vedanta, Kashmir Shaiva Darshan or the like. Even otherwise 'Bhawani Sahasranam' and 'Panchastavi' are the two texts very popular among the Kashmiri Pandits, the all-Brahmin community. There are two possibilities in this regard. Either he had studied some of these texts or he had experienced through his own 'Yoga sadhana' all that is written and explained in these scriptures. Such things are not uncommon with many a saint of high spiritual order. In Kashmiri language it is called 'Apaer achhar' or acquiring knowledge without reading any text.. Even so it has been reported that he had recited the following three selected Shlokas to Pt. Shankar Pandit and Pt. Nila Kanth of Ali Kadal: 1. *Na jayate mriyate va kadachit. Naayam bhutva bhavita va na bhuyah. Ajo nityah shashvato-ayam purano na hanyate hanyamane sharire* –The soul has no birth and death. It neither comes into being nor ceases to exist. It is unborn, eternal, constant and ancient, it does not get killed when the body is slain. 2. *Indriyani paranyahuh indriyebhyah param manah. Manasastu para buddhih yo buddheh paratestu sah*– The senses are said to be superior to the body; the mind is superior to the senses; the intellect is superior to the mind and beyond intellect is that or the Brahman. 3. *Na tad bhasayate Suryo na shashanko na pavakah. Yadgatva na nivartante taddhama paramam mama* –The eternal abode of Mine is such that it needs no Sun, Moon or fire to illumine it and having attained it there is no return from there. On one occasion he is said to have recited four of the five 'Stavas' or cantos of 'Panchastavi'.

The year 1929 seems to be a landmark in his life. Till then he must have been in search of the spiritual discipline best suited to his temperament. As soon as he moved to the house of Pt. Tika Lal at Rangateng he intensified his 'Sadhana' on the path finally chosen by him. There was no looking back for him thereafter. In his typical 'Asana', with a bolster on the right and at the back, was seated his 'Sthoola Sharira' gross body only. His 'Sookshma Sharira', the subtle body was engrossed with his 'Ishta Deva', the Brahman. His was an embodiment of a single-minded devotion described in the Gita as '*Eka bhakti vishishyate* – excelling with single minded devotion'. He stayed at this house for seven years. Thereafter he shifted first to the house of Pt. Nila Koul Saraf at Dalhasanyaar and then to the house of Pt. Madhav Joo Sathoo at Rishi Mohalla and stayed in these houses for a period of ten years each. It was in the house of Shri Saraf that for the first time he began to be addressed, remembered and called as Bhagavaan Ji. Finally he moved into the house of Pt. Sham Lal Malla at Chondapora, which turned out to be his last resting place. Here he stayed for eleven years till his 'Maha Nirvana' in 1968. All these places were sanctified and made holy by his presence and by the dust of his lotus feet. Hundreds of people had the good fortune of having his darshan at these places, many blessed people had the good luck of listening to his golden words though limited and very brief, many were cured of their ailments and many more got answers to their queries and remedies to their needs. These answers, however, were always indirect and one had to be very alert and sharp to catch, understand and interpret these.

His subtle self was the most valuable possession with him. He kept nothing for himself. Whatever people brought and offered to him was there and then distributed among all those present. Favoured were those who got a pinch of ash from his '*Dhooni*' and '*Dhoop*' or those who were allowed to have a puff at his '*Chillum*'. Fortunate were those who were treated to a cup of tea or even to a meal at his place. Theirs is an enviable lot as they got the most precious things one could aspire from this seat of '*Dharma*', truth and righteousness. His '*Aasana*' was a Sanctum Sanctorum, '*Garbha Griha*' and his lotus feet were as sacred as the Flagstaff, '*Dvaja-stambha*' of a temple. The sacred fire in his *Dhooni* was the '*Agni*' about which the Rig Veda says, '*Agnimile purohitam, ratna dhatamam*— I bow to the fire, which has always in the past kept my interests supreme and which is the giver of wealth'. *Agni* is next only to Indra in the Vedas. It is significant to note that in Rig Veda alone there are more than 200 '*Richas*' in favour of *Agni*. While the white turban above his broad forehead bearing a glistening '*tilaka*', a coloured '*pheran*' and a blanket over his shoulders were prominent in his external appearance, a '*Chillum*' in his hands, a '*Dhooni*' with a blazing flame, a pincer, a long iron tong, a spoon for oblations in front of him and a few pillows and bolsters on the right and at the back of his '*asana*' constituted all the wherewithal he had in his room wherever he stayed. He believed in no sermons, no scriptural discourses and no scholastic discussions. Physically he would be seated in his '*Aasana*' and his real self would be miles away, in communion with his '*Aradhyā*', the beloved one. Occasionally the word '*Narayana*' would, as it were, slip out from his lips in a feeble low whispering sound. At times he would mutter a few words in such a low tone as if he were talking to himself or to Him who was all the time within him as the great Lal Ded would have it, '*Vuchhum Pandit panani gare*— I perceived Him within myself'. Normally, however, his eyes would be looking up with his gaze fixed upwards. He was seldom in direct conversation with any one present before him, lost in the world of his own. At times while puffing at his '*Chillum*' he would go in a trance, stay in that position for quite sometime and then return to this world. This situation is called in spiritual parlance '*Sahaja Samadhi*', or easy communion with the Divine. This is the high point of '*Yoga*'.

A Self-Initiated Saint

There is a controversy about his preceptor. Many names are mentioned in this regard and many arguments are put forward. Although he has many times stated that one's own effort and preceptor's grace are required for spiritual uplift, yet when himself he was asked who his preceptor was he is reported to have said that any one shloka from the Bhagavad Gita could be the preceptor. It is, therefore, clear that he was self-initiated. Many a miracle is ascribed to him. He delayed death of a person till the wedding of his daughter was solemnized. He cured many patients from severe ailments. He rescued many of his devotees from imminent dangers. Above all he caused a lucky few to have a glimpse of the mother Goddess in the form of a small girl, whom he fed by his own hands with some savouries. He caused rain when it was needed and warded off the clouds when they were likely to cause hindrance in some programme. Many Sadhus who came for the pilgrimage to Swami Amar Nath Ji would call on him. He would pay a Rupee each and then funds would flood from unexpected corners for them to meet their expenditure. He would empty his cloth purse to the needy parents of any marriageable girl and all their needs for the wedding of the girl would be met easily. He was furious to see an unchaste woman or a man of doubtful character, yet he would eventually show compassion towards the erring persons. He inspired householders and celibates alike to take up spiritual '*Sadhana*'.

No body knows the path he chose for self-realisation and realization of the Divine. It appears that he taught different methods to different disciples, each according to his capacity, aptitude and inclination.

Himself he started with traditional '*Panchanga Upasana*' of Ganesha, Surya, Narayana, Shiva and Shakti. Ganesha is the '*Adi Deva*', the primary deity and has to be propitiated before any other deity. Surya is described as '*Pratyakhsha Deva*' or the visible deity. Narayana represents the Vaishnava stream and Shiva the Shaiva stream. Whereas Shiva is *Prakasha*, the Eternal Light, Shakti is the inseparable energy of the Divine with the help of which He controls and manages the entire creation, animate and inanimate. The five together complete the '*Panchayatan*' or a group of five that is worshipped traditionally by the Kashmiris. Later on Bhagavaan Ji seems to have concentrated on Shakti, the energy aspect of the Divine. This must have been the result of his having a vision of the Divine Mother when he was a young man of around 25 years of age. From the age of 22 years itself he had started daily circumambulation, '*Parikrama*' of Hari Parbat. He would rush to Hari Parbat, worship and meditate at Devi Aangan and smoking his Chillum in an open hut there be absorbed with his '*Ishta*', the desired one. There should be no doubt about his having been a regular practitioner of Yoga as propounded by Patanjali in his '*Yoga Vasishtha*'. One has to look at his life and habits in their totality in order to arrive at the conclusion that he had discreetly adopted its tenets of '*Yama*', '*Niyama*' and '*Asana*', gone through the stages of '*Dharna*', and '*Dhyana*' prescribed therein and eventually attained the highest stage of '*Samadhi*' described in this text. No wonder, therefore, that he would often be seen puffing at his 'Chillum' gazing upwards unmindful of his surroundings. He appears to have experimented with control of senses by observing silence at times and by fasting for days on end. He may have practised '*Pranabhyasa*' (a Tantric technique of meditation) as well as is clear from the fact that he is reported to have vomited large quantities of blood at times, which is not uncommon in this process. Some persons have recorded that he would also propitiate Saturn.

Patrizia Norelli Bachelet, the Director of Aeon Centre of Cosmology has given a different reason for Bhagavaan Ji paying homage to the Saturn in his daily practice. According to her Saturn rules Capricorn and Capricorn is the planetary ruler of India. Furthermore Saturn has been equated with Chronos, the Time-Spirit. This is considered to be Shiva in his '*Mahakala*' or the 'time supreme' form. She has, therefore concluded that since this planet is central to destiny it is no surprise that Bhagavaan Ji used to pay homage to this planet everyday. She has also observed that such saints, who are perfectly realized souls, perform such acts guided by their own inner command that this must be done. Finally Bhagavaan Ji seems to have settled for '*Aghor-upasana*' of Shiva. This is indicated by the two items, which were his lifetime companions, the 'Chillum' and the 'Dhooni'. This '*Upasana*', or worship gave him a vision of the past, present and future, powers extra-ordinary to control even death and capacity to transcend time and space and remain engrossed with the Divine at will. May be he sometimes dabbled in '*Kundalini yoga*' as well. This can be deduced from the accounts of many of his disciples who have found him often in an ecstatic state. This ecstatic state is the result of awakening of *Kundalini*, the dormant energy coil, which has been described by Adi Shankara in his '*Soundarya Lahari*' as '*Cidananda Lahari*' and '*Paramananda Lahari*', or bliss of the Consciousness and the bliss Supreme, respectively. The '*Sadhaka*' or the seeker remains glued to his '*Aasana*' for hours together, enjoying the feeling of an eternal bliss.

Bhagavaan Ji appears to have reached a '*Jeevan-mukta*' (emancipated in lifetime itself) state at quite a young age in the prime of his youth. Normally this age leads the young men of ordinary prudence astray and they are attracted towards the worldly pleasures. For him, however, the youth was a different cup of tea. It was the time to reflect on the purpose of the life and explore the right path for attaining the Supreme Truth. He did not consider the gross body as the be all and end all of human existence. He would refer to his legs as mere logs of wood. He was unmindful of his body even when it was swollen, unsteady due to prolonged fasting or weak due to some ailment. Once a rat nibbled a hole in one of his

heels that remained so for a long time. This shows that he enjoyed himself in his 'Sookshma Sharira' (Subtle body) of 'Sat, Chit and Ananda' or Being, Consciousness and Bliss and bothered little about his 'Sthula Sharira' (Gross body) of flesh and blood or the 'Karana Deha' (Causal body). He had no qualms in taking non-vegetarian food and sometimes showed extreme habits by either not eating at all for a long period or by eating unusually large quantities of food. Taking opium, Datura seeds, 'panak' and other intoxicants, emptying bottleful of whisky or brandy when offered at times were the other extremes he engaged in and baffled those present on these occasions. Strange are the ways of such saints and nobody can fathom their depth, vastness or gravity.

A Mystery

It is very difficult to classify his method of 'Sadhana'. He has guided many a disciple transmitting knowledge either through his 'Chillum' or by a mere gaze or by touching them with a pair of tong used for the fire in his 'Dhooni'. There are indications that he prescribed different methods of 'Sadhana' to different disciples of his. This shows that he would examine the capacity, genius and aptitude of a devotee before suggesting what particular path he should follow to achieve the Supreme Truth. His frequent visits to holy places and shrines and his having shown some people a vision of the Divine Mother in the form of a girl indicates his 'Sakaara Upasana' or worship of the Divine with form. Hymns to various deities written in his own hand show his inclination towards 'Bhakti' or devotion. This is also indicated by the fact that the portraits of gods and goddesses, and great saints like Guru Nanak and Sri Rama Krishna Paramhansa adorned the walls of his room. This is further corroborated by the fact that he was very fond of classical music. Shri Shivpuri, who would normally go along with his disciples carrying a Harmonium and a pair of Tabla to sing before him, was once asked by him to bring a Tanpura along giving a clear indication that he preferred Classical music to other forms of light music. He would present various ragas like Kedar, Malkauns, Jogia, and Bairagi Bhairav etc. Many well-known Musicians like Shri Shivpuri, Mohd. Abdullah Tibetbaqal and Ved Lal Vakil would present Kashmiri Sufiana Kalam and Bhajans before him.

This indicates the state of proximity or 'Samipya' in his spiritual life, which is an essential ingredient of the 'Bhakti Marga' of the dualistic school of Philosophy propounded by Madhvacharya. He would concentrate on 'Om' and has written this seed syllable, symbolizing the crux of the Vedas in his own hand in Sharada script. Shri Gita says, 'Pranavah sarva Vedeshu – I am the Om, the crux of all the Vedas'. He has also written Rama and Shiva decoratively around this Pranava. This shows his firm belief in the fact that Shiva and Vishnu are one and the same. He was so much enamoured about the worship of 'Om' that he once explained that it was the throat of the godhead. Om is described in Maitri Upanishad in these words: 'the sound of Brahman is Om. At the end of Om is silence. It is a silence of joy. It is the end of journey where fear and sorrow are no more, steady, motionless, never falling, ever lasting, immortal. In order to reach the Highest consider in adoration the sound and silence of Brahman. For it has been said, God is sound and silence. His name is Om. Attain, therefore, contemplation – contemplation in silence on Him'. Bhagavaan ji advocated this contemplation on Om. This is also indicative of his 'Nirguna Nirakara upasana' or worship of the attribute-less and formless God and the state of similarity or 'Sarupya' in his spiritual life, peculiar to the *Vishishta-advaita* or qualified monism of Ramanujacharya. One has, therefore, to conclude that for him all paths led to the same goal or that he believed that different methods of 'Sadhana' were useful at different levels of spiritual quest and for seekers with different capacities and attitudes.

Ultimately he became a 'Siddha', an accomplished soul conquering death, transcending time and space and remaining in constant communion with the Divine and thus attaining the state of identity or 'Sayujya' as a spiritual entity, the ultimate goal envisaged in the *Advaita* or non-dualistic doctrine upheld and elaborated by Adi Shankara. It is astonishing that while analyzing and writing commentaries on the

'Brahma-sutra' of Badarayan, the Upanishads and the Gita, called the 'Prasthana Trayee' the three great commentators, Shankaracharya, Ramanuja and Madhva should have propounded three different schools of Philosophy. This justifies Bhagavaan Ji's saying that one can hold on to any branch of the tree and yet reach the Truth. A saint is once reported to have found it rather baffling that he should have come to the shrine at Tulamula and without performing any puja at the holy spring should have straightaway gone to a hut in the periphery and got absorbed with his own 'Chillum'. Here one is reminded of a couplet written by an Urdu poet, 'Jo khud se guzar jate hain sijda nahin karte –one who has transcended the self seldom bows'. No doubt he had reached that elevated stage in spirituality where he had transcended his self and had become one with the Divine. There was thus no need for him to follow the routine rituals or routine practices.

He was a 'Virakhta', a detached 'Sadhaka' although occasionally he attended to his family matters as well as social customs. Shri Shali has stated that he once attended the tenth day ceremony of someone who had died but was seen absorbed with the Sun above. He was compassion personified and that is why he sometimes deferred the death of a person when the situation so demanded and so often relieved people of their pain and suffering. God only knows how many people have benefitted due to his benign and compassionate nature and how many have got solace sitting at his lotus feet. Even a cat was allowed to sit in his 'Asana' in spite of the remonstrations of some devotees. It is, therefore, meaningless to enter into a discussion as to which Guru initiated him and what method of worship he professed. Let us not forget what Pushpadanta has said in his 'Shiva-mahimnastotra', which Bhagavaan ji often recited in his younger days, '*Trayi sankhyam yogah pashupatimatam vaishnavam-iti, prabhinne prasthane param-idam adah pathyam-iti cha, ruchinam vaichitryat riju kutila nana patha jushyam, nrinam eko gamyah tvam-asi payasam arnava-iva-* At different times different people professing Vedas, Sankhya, Yoga, Shaivism or Vaishnavism due to their personal preferences proclaim their faith as beneficial. Yet all these people treading different paths, whether straight or involved, seek you alone O Lord! Just as all the rivers are heading towards the ocean only.'

Achieving Immortality

The fateful day of Jyeshta Shukla Dvitiya corresponding to 28th May 1968 arrived. It started as usual and Bhagavaan Ji had his usual routine. There was nothing abnormal or unusual about it and no indication of any major event going to take place. Some people came for his darshan throughout the day and got his blessings and prashada of the holy ash. In the afternoon some three Sadhus came and got the customary 'Dakhshina' of Rupee one each. He puffed at his 'Chillum'. A devotee made some tea for him but he declined to have it. Then he drank a glassful of sugar-mixed water. A lady devotee wanted to have 'Prashada' from him. She refused to budge an inch until and unless she received it from him and not from any one else. At the end he did oblige her by taking out some dry fruits from his pocket and gave it to her. Finally the time came and at 5.45 p.m. he uttered the 'Shad-akhshar' Maha mantra of 'Om Namah Shivaya' and closed his eyes forever. This was in keeping with what the Lord has said in the Gita, "Om iti-ekaksharam Brahma vyaharan mam-anusmaran, yah prayati tyejan deham sa yati paramam gatim– He who remembers me by uttering the single word 'Om' while giving up the gross body certainly attains the exalted spiritual position". Uttering these immortal words with the last breath was very significant. It sheds light on his entire life and sums up his message. All along he had attached a lot of importance to the seed syllable 'Om'. He used to call it the throat of godhead. Om is the crux of both Nigamas or the Vedas and Agamas or other scriptures. It represents the Absolute God, its Energy and the resultant manifestation in the form of the creation. Shiva is the Divine in his attribute-less and formless state, attaining whom is the high point of spiritual seeking. When we pay obeisance to Him by saying 'Namah' we recognize the limitless 'I' being sought after by the limited 'I'. After all the spiritual 'Sadhana' is nothing but a journey

from this limited 'I' circumscribed by time and space to the limitless 'I' transcending all the barriers of time and space. By uttering these words while giving up the mortal coil he gave a clear indication that he had accomplished the highest point of 'sadhana' and was one with 'Param Shiva'.

Bhagavaan Ji might have ceased to exist in his embodied form but he lives in his astral form even today. A distinction has to be made between 'Kshetra' or the body and 'Kshetrajna' or the knower of the body, the terminology used in the Gita. As 'Kshetra' he may not exist today but as 'Kshetrajna' he continues to be there. He lives in the hearts of those who loved and adored him. He lives in the memories of those who were relieved of their suffering by him. He lives in the gratitude of those who consider themselves indebted to him for one reason or the other. He lives in the spirit of those who were guided by him in their spiritual quest. He lives in the gatherings where hymns in his praise are sung, where oblations in his name are offered into the holy fire and where the soul-satisfying 'Mantra' of 'Om Namo Bhagavate Gopinathaya' is chanted with dedication and devotion. He lives in the captivating gaze emanating from his resplendent eyes in the photographs and statues. He lives in the unspoken words that appear to sprout forth from the half-open lips of the statues and portraits placed on pedestals in the Ashrams at different places. He lives in the dreams, thoughts and feelings of his devotees, admirers and beloveds. He had come to this world with a purpose and the purpose was first to complete his own spiritual journey and then to serve the humanity both in mundane and spiritual matters. He accomplished the first purpose by bringing his sadhana to fruition and realizing Self and the Divine. He fulfilled the second purpose by coming to the aid of the suffering and deserving and by guiding the aspirants in their spiritual quest. From all accounts given by various people within the country and abroad he continues to fulfill his mission in his astral form. People have seen him in their dreams, perceived him in human form and seen a glimpse of this great soul in their imagination. This has established his oft-quoted utterance, 'Amar chha maran – How can death come to an immortal.'

Importance of A Preceptor

From different accounts of the devotees it is clear that Bhagavaan Ji attached a lot of importance to the grace of a preceptor. By this he meant that a preceptor was always a must in order to evaluate the need, the capacity and the temperament of a seeker. Although he has emphasized that the effort of the seeker is of paramount importance and that he has himself to strive for the truth, yet he feels that the preceptor helps him in selecting the method best suited to his genius, guides him in spiritual exercise and assists him in warding off the difficulties and overcoming the hurdles. Just as destiny and actions govern the course of one's worldly affairs the two important elements that shape the spiritual 'Sadhana' of a seeker are 'Guru Kripa' or the grace of the preceptor and 'Parishrama' or the effort of the seeker himself.

A World-View

It is clear from the account given in the preceding paragraphs that he experimented with all sorts of spiritual disciplines, different methods of worshipping and various procedures of penance and thus climbed the ladder as it were, step by step. This position also suggests that he had no formal initiation from anyone. For had he got initiation from a Guru he would have been directed on a specific spiritual path and he would have no need for all the experimentation that he actually had to undertake. In that case he would have adopted the path prescribed by his preceptor and stuck to it up to the last. He would give a lot of importance to the path of 'Vichara' or contemplation, the path leading to supreme awareness and universal consciousness. He used to talk reverentially about persons whom he thought were 'Vicharavan' or thoughtful. This vichara took him to the level of totality, universality and limitless eternity. He appeared before Mr. Simpfendorfor, an Australian devotee in 1978 and remarked: 'World harmony depends on a globally inter-connected network of light among sacred places and groups of people

without regard to nationality or religion'. This is a glaring demonstration of Bhagavaan Ji having attained a universal vision and having dismantled all man-made barriers of religion, cast, creed sects and faiths. This is perhaps the elevated position where saints like him quite naturally make statements like, '*Aham Brahmo'smi* – I am the Brahman, the Divine' or '*Man Khuda* – I am God Almighty' or '*Anal Haq* – I am the Truth' or '*Chidananda Rupo Shivo'ham Shivo'ham* – I am Shiva, I am Shiva, in the form of Consciousness and Bliss, or in the words of the Upanishad *Tat Twam asi* – That Thou art or the Sufi's *Hama-O-ast* - I am He'.

Shri Rama Krishna is reported to have experimented with Muslim and Christian methods of attaining the Truth with the same amount of success as he had achieved by following the traditional Indian methods of 'Advaita'. Even the great Lal Ded, the 14th Century saint-poetess of Kashmir has said, '*Shiv Chhui thali thali rozan, mo zan Hyond ta Musalman* – God pervades everything, do not, therefore, discriminate between a Hindu and a Muslim'. Bhagavaan Ji also has remarked once, '*Hyond chha akh ta Musalman byakh* – is there any difference between a Hindu and a Muslim?' In fact there is an interesting story involving a Muslim. It is said that a lady came to see him. A Muslim servant accompanied her carrying a bagful of yellow pears called 'Bagugosha'. He directed that these be distributed among all present beginning with the servant. A devotee who was distributing the fruit gave one pear to him but Bhagavaan ji signalled that he be given more. One after the other he got five pears whereas others got only one pear each. Later he revealed that when the lady was purchasing the fruit he had a craving to get some for his consumption but he was not sure that he would get even one as he did not know the person for whom these were being purchased. It is the saints of his stature who have a universal outlook, a world view and an unlimited vision who are able to perceive the truth and express it spontaneously in these expressions: '*Ishavasyam-idam-sarvam yat kinchit jagatyam jagat* – All this that is and that takes place here in this world is pervaded by the Divine' or '*Vasudevah sarvam-iti* – Everything here verily is Shri Krishna only' as clearly stated in the Ishavasya Upanishad and the Gita, respectively.

Lessons to Learn

Bhagavaan Ji was a saint of very few words. He seldom gave a straight answer to any one. He would always refer to himself in plural and would say sentences like, 'We have eaten already' or 'we shall go to Hari Parbat'. Even so he did utter some pithy and meaningful statements from time to time, which have been devotedly recorded by his disciples. Some of these are:

A person should be endowed with three qualities of 'Sezar, Shozar and Pazar' or straight-forwardness, purity and truth.

'*Amar chha maran*' meaning that cease to exist which is immortal. Here he refers to the immortality of the soul.

'*Ahankaras namaskar, sui gav omkar, tami saet bani sakhshatkar*'. It means that a seeker must realize his self. In so doing he shall realize the Divine and perceive Him as Om. In this situation the subjectivity and objectivity shall get merged.

'*Yi chhu kitab paran, tor chha gash*'. Here he says that mere reading the scriptures does not bring enlightenment and by inference enjoins upon the seeker to experience the truth.

A seeker can achieve his goal only if he strives for it and has the grace of his preceptor. '*Mehnat panan ta Gora kripa*' or one's own effort and the kindness of the preceptor.

Seeking the truth by contemplation is superior to worshipping the Divine with form. '*Yi gav taf parun, yi gav veeri shihlis tal pakun*' meaning that worshipping God with form is an easy-going way like walking under a shade and avoiding the Sun.

A seeker must put his own mind and breath on the same wavelength as that of his preceptor. This happens only if God so wills, 'Yi gatshi yatshun'.

Bhagavaan Ji had a simple message for a common man that he should earn his living honestly, spend some of his money in charity and remain honest in his dealings. For him all men were equal irrespective of their faith. He used to say, '*Bata chha akh ta Musalman chhu byakh*' meaning that a Muslim is no different from a Hindu. For the seekers of the truth he emphasized to have a positive attitude, be prepared for a strenuous effort and keep on loving God. He attached a great importance to the Gita as a guide and the Panchastavi as a document of penance. He had a world-view of spirituality. He desired that the forces of peace, piety and righteousness world over should pool their efforts and serve humanity so that universal brotherhood prevails and the forces of dissension and division are defeated.

A question is often asked whether a saint can change the '*Prarabdha*' or the destiny of a person. Shri Krishna has said in the Gita '*Yo me Bhakta sa me priyah* – one who is devoted to Me is my beloved'. Once a devout commands the love of the Lord, he is in a position to get anything done through Him. There is a story about the sage Narada. He was once going to 'Vishnuloka' when he happened to pass through a township. A couple living there desperately desired to have a child. They requested Narada to give them a boon so that they got a child. The sage told them to wait till he enquired from Lord Vishnu. The Lord told him that the couple was destined to remain childless. He conveyed this to them but they did not give up their hope. They approached another saint who gave them a boon and in course of time they begot a son. After many years Narada happened to drop in the same house for alms and was surprised to see their son. He was furious when he was told how they had got the child and in a rage he went to Vishnu to complain about his having been let down by the Lord. The Lord explained that He was duty-bound to keep the word of His devotees, who are dear to Him. Narada instead of recommending a child for the couple had made only an enquiry whether a child was in their destiny. On the other hand the other saint had straightaway ordered, so to say, that a child be given to them and the Lord immediately accepted his command and blessed the couple with a child.

This mythological story illustrates that the accomplished saints can, if they so desire, give any boon and fulfill any desire of their beloved devotees. Ordinarily, however, they would desist from interfering with the nature or tampering with the destiny. These may be termed as their miracles or the manifestation of their compassion or their concern for the suffering humanity. We can get anything at their lotus feet but it depends on us whether we seek transient impermanent pleasures of worldly nature or eternal and limitless bliss and joy of the spiritual realm. To illustrate this it may be stated that once a devotee came to him with a huge number of fresh lotus flowers brought from the Dal Lake. At his insistence Bhagavaan Ji remained motionless – in fact he went in '*Samadhi*', engrossed with the Divine, while he decorated the Master with these flowers from top to toe in his own choicest way. In order to oblige him and give him the benefit of deriving supreme pleasure he remained in this position for hours together. What better example of selfless love and ecstatic devotion one can give. Yet these acts give eternal joy to the devotees, after all there is a thin line of demarcation between love and madness.

Towards Bhagavaan Consciousness

These directions and the spiritual message received from this saint extra-ordinary have encouraged a band of his devotees to launch a movement of bringing people under the fold of what they call '*Bhagavaan Consciousness*'. Ashrams and centers of worship have been established within the country and abroad. These serve as hubs of twofold activity, '*Sadhana*' or spiritual quest and '*Seva*' or service of the mankind. During 1997-98 yearlong functions were held in India and abroad as a part of centenary

celebrations of the Master. The Government of India, Department of Posts issued a special Rs. 3 stamp and the first day cover to commemorate his hundredth birthday. Mayor Schundler of New Jersey proclaimed July 26, 1997 as Jagadguru Bhagavaan Gopinathji Day when a colourful function was held there with devotion and religious fervour.

In one of his articles on Bhagavaan Ji Philip Simpfendorfer, his Australian devotee has recorded his experience in these words: "In the dark of the night, somewhere beyond deep sleep, I sometimes glimpse awareness of his presence. He is not in human form, but his presence is unmistakable. Perhaps his body is an energy field, perhaps a vibration. It touches one of my subtle bodies with light. I suspect that it touches the whole earth because the presence does seem to pervade some rocks and caves and canyons on the bushland property where I live. Several years ago when I knew him more in his astral form, I asked where he really was, and the reply was to the effect that 'We are in the circle of the Shaktis.' The reply is still an enigma to me. Does it mean he is like the hub of a wheel and his emanation like the spokes, connecting with the rim of powerful blessing as it whirls in energy paths across the earth? Nothing can block or stop the waves of power. All nature receives its good-ness as do receptive humans. To others, it just passes through them. It is an energy of infinite Consciousness." He has concluded with a significant remark that if all of humanity lived in Bhagavaan Consciousness, all creation would be open to infinity. He is sure that Bhagavaan Ji is constantly breathing his consciousness into us. If we also perceive the situation in a similar way any apparent miracle performed by our master will cease to be a miracle and will be seen as a natural and logical phenomenon, irrespective of whether the occurrence has taken place before or after his giving up the mortal coil.

4.0 THE KASHMIR SHAIVA PHILOSOPHY

Kashmir Shaiva Philosophy is basically a non-dualistic philosophy wherein such a Supreme Truth has been conceived which is at once non-changeable, in-divisible, infinite, endless and transcending time, space and form, which is all pervading, yet above everything. This truth has been variably referred to as Chaitanya, Parasamvit, Parameshvara, or Param-Shiva. This school of thought explains the creation as the manifestation of Param-Shiva through His energy (Shakti) aspect, which again is not different from Him. It says that Param-Shiva is 'I' and the creation is 'It', and the process of creation is a journey from 'I' to 'It'. Conversely, the process of emancipation and self realisation is the journey from 'It' to 'I'.

Shiva has five faculties, those of Consciousness, Bliss, Desire, Knowledge and Action. The entire Universe is an extension of these faculties of the Param-Shiva. The opening and closing of his eyes cause creation and destruction constantly and makes Shiva omniscient and all pervading.

The creation according to this philosophy is a summation of thirty six elements which are briefly dealt with hereunder :

The first group comprises five physical elements which are solid but distanced from the ultimate reality. These are Earth, representing firmness or foundation, Water, representing fluidity, Fire, representing form, Air, representing flexibility and Ether, representing leisure.

The second category is the five sense organs : Organ of creation/generation, organ of ejection/evacuation, feet, the organs of movement/locomotion, arms, the organs for handling and mouth, the organ for speech.

The third group is that of sense objects i.e. Smell, Taste, Sight, Touch, and Sound. These are technically called 'Tanmatras'.

The fourth group is that of organs of perception or motor-organs, which in effect are the tools of enjoying 'Tanmatras'. These are the nose, the tongue, the eyes, the skin and the ears.

The fifth group consists of the mind, the ego and the wisdom. These are related to the intellect and therefore are referred to as internal organs of perception.

The sixth group is represented by the duo of 'Prakriti' and 'Purusha'. Prakriti or nature is at the root of feeling and compassion, and therefore causes action. Purusha or the self is the one who experiences and is touched and moved. Purusha is that state of Paramshiva which is circumscribed by art, knowledge, attachment, time and destiny. Whereas time denotes a period, destiny refers to place, attachment shows affection and knowledge indicates limited vision and art the limited creativity. These five elements cover this Purusha and renders him restricted and limited. Along with these five elements, there is yet another element of Maya (a distinction has to be made between Maya in Kashmir Shaiva Darshan and that conceived by Adi-Shankaracharya). This element causes forgetfulness, in-discrimination, and differentiation. At this stage the Param Shiva shuns his Shiva-ness and adopts, of his own free will, the form of a worldly being and then gets engaged in the search for Shiva-hood.

Thus far we have detailed thirty one elements. The next two elements are peculiar to Kashmir Shaiva philosophy and unique in conception. These are 'Shuddha Vidya' or pure knowledge and 'Aishwarya' the lordship. The state of differentiating in non-different is also the state of pure knowledge. In this state one perceives both "This is I" and "I am This" explained differently, the pure knowledge is a means to relate

one with universal experience, and the Lordship is the state of perception of this universal experience. These add up to thirty three elements.

The thirty fourth element has been identified in this philosophy as Sada-Shiva Tatva. By this element and in this state one is conscious of ones existence. In other words, one feels "I am". Thus the pure non-dualism still remains distant at this stage because the knower, the knowledge and the object of knowledge, all the three have their existence. This brings us to the thirty fifth called Shakti, or the energy, the power and the capacity. This element helps in perceiving the universe. According to Kashmir Shaiva philosophy, the ultimate element (thirty sixth), that of Param-Shiva, is in effect the Supreme light and the universe is that which comes to light. The power that converts the light into the object of light is the Shakti aspect of the Divine.

This Param-Shiva is the perceiver and at this state, the object, the knower and the knowledge, all vanish and what remains is pure 'I'. This is the ultimate non-dualistic state in its purest form, conceived by the protagonists of this school of thought.

What Vedanta terms as 'Vivrita' is considered unreal because it is in the nature of name-form (nama-roopa). Kashmir Shaiva philosophy on the other hand, maintains that the entire creation is the manifestation and the perception of Param-Shiva and therefore, real. Perception and manifestation of the real has necessarily to be real. Param-Shiva is the embodiment of Bliss, Perfection and Freedom. The creation exists in Him, in the form of thought and experience. These elements are experienced by all of us knowingly or unknowingly as they are constantly in action. We are in these elements and are formed by these elements. This can be experienced through Yoga - the sum total of mental, ethical, spiritual and physical practices. In His divided form the Param-Shiva is an Atom. Human beings with their limitations are also atoms. The actions and reactions of atoms make this universe. The collectivity of these atoms forms a unit, and maybe called the master of elements. To constantly experience this phenomena Yoga is helpful and essential because it is through Yoga that we can perceive integration and also dis-integration.

To sum up, this school of thought believes that the Divine, which is pure light, of His own free will and by his own powers, appears in the form of the creation because the universe is nothing but a play of His own freedom. The creation gives an indication of the mundane, the spiritual and the ethereal existence, whereas , the Divine indicates the light in the form of knowledge and manifestation in the form of action.

It is believed that this knowledge, also referred to as 'Trika Philosophy' has emanated from Param-Shiva itself. It was revealed originally by Durvasa Rishi and subsequently by Shaiva scholar Vasugupta, who observed the tenets of this philosophy, inscribed on a rock in Kashmir. Later these were explained in a condensed form by another Acharya, Utpal Deva in his famous work called Spandakarika. This established a thought process which was eventually named as Spanda school of Kashmir Shaiva Darshan. Many a great scholar and Acharya followed who wrote commentaries and treatises like Shivadrishti, expounding this philosophy. Then came the great Abhinavaguptapada on the scene. He wrote several monumental works including 'Tantralok', 'Paramarthasara', Pratibhijna darshan' etc.. A new direction was given to this philosophy and this stream was called Pratibhijna school of thought. Kashmir Shaiva Darshan is a unique blend of Bhakti and Jnana, which would be clear from a study of another great work called Shivastotravali.

Let us bow in reverence to that Param-Shiva of whom Spandakarika says

*Yasyonmeshanimeshabyam, Jagatah pralayodayav,
Tam, shakti - chakravibhava prabhavam Shankaram stumah.*

5.0 ‘LAER’, A TYPICAL KASHMIRI HOUSE

Enter the courtyard, with or without a gate, of any house anywhere in Kashmir and you will see an open rectangular or square space kept as neat as the weather permits. This is called ‘Aangun’. On the far off corner there will be a small dry toilet and somewhere in the middle of a side there will be a brick enclosure, ‘Hoze’ with a tap for cleaning, washing and drawing water. You should not be surprised if you find a stone mortal and a large wooden pestle, used for crushing dried chillies and other spices, called *Kanz ta Muhul*. Then you will find a stone platform with two or three steps on either side at the front door. The platform is known as ‘Brand’ and the front door as ‘Daar’. This door leads to a passage, which divides the house into two halves. This is referred to as ‘Vuz’. On either side of this passage there are two big rooms, each called ‘Vo’t’. These are in effect sitting rooms used during winters. They are covered with grass mats, ‘Vaguv’ over which are spread floor coverings, ‘Satrand’, ‘Namda’ or ‘Gabba’. A portion of this room is partitioned and made into a traditional kitchen, ‘Choka’. It has cooking ranges, big ‘Daan’ and small ‘Oksore’, ‘Hahkole’. There are storage spaces for kitchen items, utensils and fuel and charcoal. There is also a wooden shelf, ‘Garavanja’, meant to hold pitchers of water for use in the kitchen. The size of these rooms depends on the number of windows there are on the front elevation of the house. The houses are usually either ‘Sath-taakh’, in which case there will be three windows in each room or ‘Paentsh-taakh’, in which case these two rooms will have two windows each. At the end of the passage there is a self-closing door called ‘Thasa-bar’, which opens into the staircase leading to the upper stories. The space below the circular bend of the staircase is gainfully used as a bathroom or washroom.

Climb the staircase and you are on the first floor. In a typical house there will be two rooms on either side and a small room in the middle on the front side. This small room is very important and sacred. It is called, ‘Thokur Kuth’ or the room for worship. It houses a small temple with a variety of idols of different deities. The rooms on either side would be bedrooms for different members of the family or study cum bedrooms for the youngsters. These are tastefully decorated with pictures and photos and wall hangings and furnished with carpets spread over grass-mats and floor coverings. In some traditional houses one or two rooms out of these four rooms may be used as store rooms called, ‘Bana-kuth’ for grains, spices, pulses etc; and ‘Baeth-kuth’ for fuel, dried cow-dung, charcoal etc. The former will have large pitchers, ‘Machi’ or big but short ones, ‘Math’ made of earthenware to store various items of household. At the onset of the winter these ‘Maths’ will be filled with potatoes, turnips, radish and knoll-khol to be consumed during winter months, when there is scarcity of such items due to snow, frost and cold.

Once again you can go up the next staircase and reach the second floor. There may be three or four rooms on this floor of varying sizes. One of them will have an anteroom, ‘Shansheen’. One on the front or on the side may have a small balcony extended out, either round or rectangular in shape. It will have either ordinary windows opening outside or three or four windowpanes one over the other, which are lifted and stacked one after the other on a support in the upper portion of the window. This is known as ‘Vuroosi’ and is usually made of wooden panels beautifully carved with floral designs. One of the rooms may have all its walls plastered with white cement, ‘gachh’. This room would be earmarked as the bedroom for the head of the family. All these rooms will have double-panelled windows. One set made of thick wooden plank will open towards inside. The other set made of criss-cross carved wooden mesh, called ‘Panjra’ will open outside and would be resting on two hooks. These can easily be removed from the hooks so that paper is pasted on them to block the draught of wind during winter months. The ceiling of the rooms will be rather low and tastefully woven with small wooden pieces of varying designs. This is

called, '*Khutumband taalav*' and is exquisitely beautiful. The floors may be of clay resting on wooden girders and sleepers. These are cleaned and smeared with clay-paste and covered with grass mats '*Vaguv*', '*Satrand*' and carpets or Kashmiri '*Namdas*' and '*Gabbas*'. In some rooms you may find a wooden pole hanging by the ropes on either end from the ceiling. This is called '*Villinj*' and is used to hang clothes, sheets and floor coverings, towels etc.

Another flight of stairs and you are on the third floor, '*Kaani*'. It is a huge hall covering the entire space. In the entire length of the front side there is a projected balcony overlooking the courtyard below. It has beautifully carved wooden poles supporting the typical window-series and separating the '*Vuroosi*' system. The ceiling is of wooden planks below the huge wooden girders and beams. Over this there is a V-shaped roof '*Pash*', either covered with corrugated tin sheets or wooden shingle or of mud-phuska over birch sheets that make it waterproof. The space between the roof and the ceiling is called '*Brari-Kaani*' and is used for stacking cut-wood fuel. In some houses small study rooms are made out on the corner sides known as '*Gable*'. The hall is used as a living room in summer months as it is airy and pleasant and for serving meals to a large number of guests on important occasions like marriages betrothals etc. It has a kitchen and a storeroom on either side of the stair door. Those houses, which do not have taps on this top floor, have a strong wooden wall bracket, '*Garvanja*' to hold earthen pitchers for storage of water. A servant is engaged to fetch water from the taps below and fill these pitchers for use in the kitchen and for drinking purposes.

During the winter, when there is a heavy snowfall a thick layer of snow settles on the rooftop. If the roof is made of tin sheets or shingle, the snow melts in due course and slips from the slanting roof. If, however, the roof is made of mud, some labour is employed to push the snow from above lest the roof gives way under the weight of the snow. This is done with huge wooden ore-like blades called '*Phyuh*'. During the summer people leave chillies, paddy, pickle and '*Kaanz*' (fermented drink) on the roof in the open sunshine. There is a small covered opening in the middle of the roof where the two slopes meet. It has a small door used to climb on to the roof whenever needed. On auspicious days people climb the roof through this opening along with a plateful of raw meat pieces and hurl them above their heads for hovering kites to grab and take away. On the flatter roofs even paddy is spread on grass mats to dry in open sunshine.

A typical Kashmiri house is built on a raised stone plinth. The ground floor is often built in stone blocks neatly chiseled. The remaining floors are built with baked bricks of varying sizes. Small sized bricks '*Maharaji Seri*' give a beautiful look to the construction from outside. These are usually painted brick red or deep crimson. After every floor wooden beams are placed on the bricklayers and interlocked at the four corners. These help the walls to stand firm and secure. The roof is built over huge and straight wooden logs, usually from the poplar tree, and wooden girders. There is no plaster from outside but the inner walls are plastered with fine powdered clay mixed with chaff or tree-wool. Ceilings are low and so are windows so that the rooms remain warm in winter months. Just above the window on the extreme right in the ground floor there is a small wooden shelf on the outside. Cooked rice and other eatables are left on this shelf for birds of sorts, which are there in plenty. Similarly on the top floor just outside the projected balcony there is again a wooden shelf for the same purpose.

People generally sit on the floor on a carpeted surface leaning on large-sized bolsters kept along the walls. It is also customary to sleep on the floor on mattresses stuffed with cotton and take similarly stuffed quilts as coverings. During the day these beddings are neatly folded and stacked in one corner either on top of a table or a huge tin box. While toilets are always outside, bathrooms can be either inside or in the corner of the courtyard adjacent to the water-tap. These houses are living monuments to the culture of Kashmir. The galleries on all the floors are used not only as approaches to different floors but also to

leave the shoes behind, as these are not taken inside the rooms. Kitchens are demarcated by wooden partitions in order to maintain their sacred purity. Every house has a small room for offering worship. Kashmiri Pandits are deeply religious and God fearing. It is customary for them to offer daily pooja, perform rituals on important occasions and observe a fortnight-long celebration on Shivaratri. They sit, sleep and eat normally on the floor and for that keep their houses neat, clean and pure. A portion of all that is cooked is left for dogs, birds and the guests are received with an open heart.

6.0 LYRICISM IN NADIM'S POETRY



Pt. Dina Nath Koul 'Nadim'

At the outset let me make it clear that I am not a critic. I did not aspire to be one for fear of inviting the comment of Alexander Pope that 'those who fail as poets become critics'. I am a poet and, therefore, I shall make my observations about Nadim's poetry as a poet only. Pt. Dina Nath Koul 'Nadim' was born on March 18, 1916. His father, Pt. Shankar Kaul passed away when he was only six year old. His revered mother, Smt. Sukh Mali, who lived another two decades to give Nadim a firm base for writing poetry full of music and melody, brought him up. Initially he wrote in Urdu and Hindi but later he switched over to his mother tongue, Kashmiri, which augured well for him and for the language as well. Nadim struggled from his younger days and had to give tuitions to students in order to augment the earnings of his mother from her spinning wheel. His mother, a lady of great determination, would sing in the accompaniment of the spinning wheel that left an indelible mark on his young and fertile mind.

In one of his interviews Nadim has revealed to Shri Zafar Ahmad that initially Ghalib as also Iqbal influenced him. Later he was impressed by the poetry of Chakbast. In his youth Josh, Ahsan Danish and a local poet Mastana, who incidentally was an ascetic, influenced him a lot. Ideologically the writings of Nehru, Bertrand Russell, Mychovasky, Chekhov and the Neo-romantic writers of the English Classics affected him. In the same interview he has referred to his maternal grand father Pt. Vishnu Bhatt and his mother Smt. Sukh Mali both of whom used to write poetry in Kashmiri. This interview brings to light three very important areas of influence that shaped Nadim's creativity, Mastana, Neo-romantic English poets and his mother. Once he told me that his mother used to sing the poems written by the great 18th century poetess Arnimal and a poem composed by a contemporary poet Dina Nath Almast, which had appeared in an issue of the 'Pratap' the college magazine of Shri Pratap College Srinagar. Arnimal was not only a poetess of repute but was well versed in Kashmiri Classical Music. According to the well known classical singer of Kashmir, Mohammad Abdullah Tibetbaqal, it was Arnimal who rearranged the ragas of Kashmiri Sufiana Kalam called Maqam, which are in vogue even to date. No wonder that her compositions are melodious and musical.

Nadim has, it seems, acquired the delicacy of mysticism from the poetry of the ascetic poet Mastana, the scintillating musicality from the rich lyrics of Arnimal and sensitivity and emotional finesse from the

writings of the Neo-romantic English poets. He has got the melody from the songs sung by his revered mother, which must have been resounding in his ears all the time. I am not discussing here the ideological influence that he absorbed from the writings of the great thinkers and writers mentioned by him, as my only intention is to highlight the beauty of form and the lyricism in his compositions and not the richness of thought and content, which no doubt they have. Any creative art has two aspects to it, its content and its form. The form invariably goes after the content and in case the form is not suitable to the content the poetry becomes weak and tasteless. An attractive form with a weak or shallow content may still attract for the sheer music of it soothing to the ears, as most of present day film songs, but even a meaningful content loses its effect and charm if the form is inappropriate. Nadim has been conscious of this fact and has invariably used a form best suited to the content of his composition. It is said in Sanskrit poetics that a tasteful sentence from which we derive pleasure is poetry, '*Vakyam rasatmakam kavyam*'. There is no doubt that a musical and lyrical composition does give us a pleasure in a great measure.

Once during a conversation with me he said that his mother used to sing Arnimal's lyrics like '*Gaen gaen mo kar ranga yandro, kanaryan ti phalilay malayo bo*', '*Arni rang gome shrawaen hiye kar yiye darshun me diye*' and others. He also said that she liked the poem written by Almast in his college days, '*Vyesiye tsala hai tsala hai tsala hai, sur panas mala hai, malith ti tsala hai vana naey*'. Listening to his mother sing such powerful and musical lyrics brought home to him the importance of musicality and lyricism in poetry. Even when he wrote revolutionary poems like '*Ba gyava na az*' he made a rich use of repetition of words and phrases to give it a musical effect. '*Ba gyava na, gyava na, gyava na zanh*'. The internal rhyming of the words made this powerful song attractive and smooth like a running brook, '*Gulan ta Bulbulan*' '*Khumara ho't ta mara mo't*'. The effect got redoubled when it came to be used in pure lyrics like 'Vegetable vendor's song, '*Dal Hanzyeni hund gyavun*', '*Kyah vanay paetmi brasvari pyayas, zor aesim na laeth zora drayas, do'da hyadur trovum pharitalai hai, hai volay hai, volay hai, volay hai*' or the song 'My motherland', '*Myon Vatan*'. Here he describes the motherland in this rich expression and rhyming similes: '*Gama pyatha yatskael vo'thmut trela hyath zan mam hyu, Adanuk badam hyu*'. Nadim was accused of using unsuitable similes at times. He has taken more care about the musical qualities of his compositions and for this he has used musical and lyrical rhymes even if the simile may not have been appropriate. He writes in his famous sonnet, '*Zoon khaets tso't hish, pana pana gaemaets pompaer po't hish*'. Again in that remarkable poem describing moles on the face of a damsel he says, '*Lakhchi chhu lakhchun, taph prazalvun*'. Many more such examples can be quoted where he has preferred melodious and musical expressions in spite of similes not fully appropriate.

Arnimal has used internal rhyming with a great aplomb. Take for example this couplet of her: '*Qanda naabada aerada mutui, phanda karith tsolum kotui, khanda kaernam lookan thiye, kar yiye darshun me diye*'. Nadim follows suit in a number of his compositions. As an illustration let us take these excerpts from one of his poems: '**Achhidari** vonum vatnaech doluth, **Sonahari** dopum pazi hubi mehanath, **Vanhari** thovum rut naav, divath. Na chha shaha **khasavas**, na chha kuni **Vosa dros**'. In another song titled 'The first Bloom' '*Adanuk Posh*' he writes, '**Mo't** yavun zan **po't** aam phirith', '*Zan drav buji kuji dedi kun zenani go'brah tankhahdara hyu*', '*Mudai gandith me thali thalivuchhmas, do'pmas* naevnai kunsaeuy bag'. He does not give up this beautiful technique even when he writes a free verse. This gives his free verse compositions an effective smooth flow of a waterfall or a mountain brook. Take the case of a poem like 'The thief', '*Tsoor*'. He writes, '*Doh dyan guzrovum zonum lo'b myay lo'b*' and '**Asavun** shokhah **vasavaen mai**'.

Conservative writers have always emphasized the importance of the meter and the rhyme scheme in poetry. Nadim was a revolutionary. How could he afford not to revolt against the rigidity of the rules prescribed in various treatises on Poetics? He was head on in the political arena and a forerunner in the

fight for the downtrodden. He was a committed writer who was opposed to all forms of exploitation, colonization and subjugation. He could not be cowed down to the restrictions of the meter and rhyme scheme as such. That is the reason perhaps that he did not write too many Ghazals. He wrote a lot in free verse. Yet he made it sure that the compositions did not lose on music or melody. Words in melodious arrangement came to him naturally and that too in a perfect order as if a fountain of water gushing forth from its source unhindered. I give here two examples to bring home this fact. '**Gulan ta bulbulan ta so'mblan hundai, khumara ho't ta mara mo't, mo'dur mo'dur ta nyandri ho't su nagma kanh, bo gyava na az**' and '**Vushun vo'zul, vushun vushun, vushun vo'zul, vo'zul vo'zul, yi khoon myon.**jawan chhus tuphan hyu janoon myon'. He has written a monumental masterpiece in defence of world peace called '*Mye chham aash pagahaech*', 'I have hope for tomorrow'. He read it in the Biscoe Memorial Hall in a conference of young writers presided over by the great legendary poet Master Zinda Kaul and Professor Jay Lal Kaul, the well-known connoisseur of literature raised his hat and gave him a standing ovation. The melody of this poem is marvelous, a treat to listen. '*Do'has gash huri gul ta gulzar prazalan, zaminas saesar lagi ta sabzar prazalan, vachhas manz humis lola phamvar prazalan*' '*Kazul laganay me gatshan aechh kazali, diyamtsaeh ta babityend gatshan me vo'zali, ta dahi vahaer dashahar yi son saeli*' – '*Dapan jang chhu vo'thvun pagah gotsh na sapdun*'.

Nadim excels in his diction. His use of words and phrases is unparalleled. True, the Kashmiri language cannot be dismissed as a dialect. It has a rich source in the Vedic Sanskrit from which it has originally been derived when it was called '*Lok Bhasha*' or the common man's lingua. It is enriched by the vocabulary drawn from so many languages, Sanskrit, Persian, Urdu, Hindi, Punjabi and so on. Yet when we read masters of this language we find that they have heavily borrowed from other languages, Sanskrit and Persian in particular. Mehmood Gami, Maqbool Kralawari and even Mehjoor have used Persian words in abundance. Paramanand, Krishna Razdan and many others have drawn from Sanskrit. Nadim has discovered an ocean-like depth in his mother tongue. He has found vast scope in ordinary day-to-day usages and has used them with a remarkable deftness, finesse and artistry. He writes, '*Martsa vangan ta vangan chhi byon byon, mas malaer hiv ruvangan chhi byon byon, navi manz chhi karan tho'la tho'lay, hay vo'lay hay vo'lay hay*' and again '*Taza muji baed chhi hili tshayi zotan, demba go'gjah vo'zaej beebea khotan, phula vangan ta paerimi alay hay, hay vo'lay hay, vo'lay hay, vo'lay hay*'. No wonder, therefore, that the song '*Bo'mbro bo'mbro shama ranga bo'mbro*' from his famous opera, '*Bombaer ta yambaerzal*' should have become so popular throughout the country when it was used in a Hindi film sequence. Arjan Dev Majboor calls him 'Monarch of Words' and remarks that 'when he picks his words they touch the loftiness of the sky'. His son Shantiveer has observed that 'Nadim has superb control over the phonetics of his language and his lexical repertoire is phenomenal. His imagery is breathtaking and his lyricism intimate'. Ravinder Ravi has this to say: 'He coined new words, created new imageries and symbols to enrich Kashmiri language. He extricated and excavated words, scanned and chiseled them and used them artistically in his couplets'. In his book '*Kashmiri Sahitya Ka Itihaas*' Dr. Shashi Shekhar Toshkhani has stated that 'Nadim not only exploited the strength and scope of the language to its full but also expanded it enormously. He was particularly conscious about the musicality of his compositions in addition to the usage of words. The originality that he possessed in the matter of symbols and imageries is unsurpassed and unparalleled'.

Nadim has been a trendsetter. He has for the first time written free verse, sonnet and opera in Kashmiri language. He has also used traditional forms of Geet, Ghazal, Rubai, Vatsun, and Nazm. He used to draw a plan for his compositions, determine an outline best suited to the message that he wanted to convey and then write using choicest words, superb technique and delicate phrases. He would give new meaning to ordinary words and play with his vocabulary as a master artist and craftsman that he was. He had a unique capacity to accommodate an ocean of idea in a small pot of verse. Once he told me about a

four-liner called '*Tukh*' written by him that he had originally planned to write a long poem on that topic. Then he decided to condense it into a '*Nazm*' but eventually he settled on a four-liner. Reading his poems one wonders wherefrom he gets all these words and expressions and how he weaves them into an effective verse. One can site examples galore but suffice it to give a few of them here. '*Vo'thi bagaech kukli koo koo kaer kaer baga babaer vuzunavane*', or '*Aechharvalav daenan dits aesh pheryan do'n, pathar pyayi kagadas pyath mo'khta lar zan*' or '*Un samrajuk pal vurkaevith chhamba din daerith – Allah ho*' or '*Samayichi honji zan lakhchun prazlyav chamnan zan raet sotas sai, chilai kalanuk tapa do'ha hyu magas basyom hara hyu*' or '*Tsa nar chhuk alav chhuk, tsa yavanuk jalav chhuk*'.

A poet observes what an ordinary person also observes but he sees through it and perceives the underlying essence of the object of observation. He then describes it in the backdrop of the life's philosophy that he has evolved over the years. Nadim had an uncanny capacity to observe and then present it in a melodious composition. He would, on the one hand, write a powerful poem like '*Trivanzah*' lamenting the plight of the hungry masses in these words: '*Trivanzah trivanzah, khyemav kyah, khyemav kyah*'. On the other hand he could take up an insignificant topic like '*Haersath*' and drive home a message of unfulfilled aspiration with the help of the symbol of a torn shoe thrown on a wayside. '*Boota kho'rah akh vati pyath pyomut, aesa vahrith tsharan tresh, hoonah akh aav lamuna ko'mas, phuchi matsi buthi khanji dyutnas phesh, dakah dith nyun nali akis kun, treshi hatis ma az phut tresh?*

I have had the privilege of meeting Nadim Ji many a time, almost every time I went to Kashmir on a holiday. During my student days also I not only met him quite often but also participated in many Mushairas along with him and many contemporary senior poets. In his later years also I met him at the house of his brother-in-law Shri J.N.Kaul. In these private meetings and conversations I had the occasions to recite my own poems to him. He was a great listener. He would listen to other poets, young and old, with rapt attention. He would seldom hasten to clap or applaud but whenever he heard some poet recite a truly good piece he would say '*Vah Vah*' and express his appreciation. He was a source of inspiration for many a young and budding poets. I used to write in Hindi those days and it was at his instance that I switched over to Kashmiri. I know from my own experience with him that he would appreciate musical and melodious compositions written in chaste Kashmiri with a powerful humanistic theme. Since he was associated with the political movement and concerned about scourges of war, exploitation, slavery and subjugation, his initial poems did sometime appear propagandist and bordering on slogan-ism e.g. '*Jangbaaz khabardar*', '*Mye chum taza yavun*', '*Ba gyavana az*' etc. With the passage of time he matured into a serious poet of great merit and mettle. He wrote delicate poems on human emotions and feelings as also values of universal appeal e.g. '*Mye chham ash pagahaech*', '*Dalhanznihund gyevun*', '*Lakhchun*', '*Baran coat*', '*Nabad tyethvyen*', '*Adnuk Posh*' etc. In either case, however, his compositions were musical, melodious and lyrical. His diction, selection and usage of words and phrases, the flow in his poetry and the smoothness verse after verse, all were superb.

It was perhaps the quality of lyricism in his poetry that prompted Nadim to write his famous operas, particularly because he found this medium very powerful to bring home his message for the emancipation of the downtrodden, spread of love and brotherhood and to strengthen the forces fighting for justice and peace. These operas include '*Bomber ta yamberzal*', '*Heemal Naegrai*', '*Neeki badi*' '*Safar ta Shehjar*' '*Madanvar ta Zuvalmaal*' and many others written for Radio and then staged by various schools and institutions. Lyricism was in his blood perhaps because his soul was attuned to the singing and humming of his mother. He was '*Rasa-siddha*', full of music and melody and his compositions are nectar to the ears.

7.0 DIVINITY, THE GEETA WAY

Swami Vivekananda's mission was to raise man from animality to divinity. He emphasised that divinity should be made manifest in every movement of his life. The Geeta in chapter XVI has summed up, in just two and a half shlokas, the traits of divinity and explained in detail the various traits of animality. The former is called 'Daivam Sampadam' and it liberates. The latter is called 'Asuri Sampadam' and it binds. Analysed below are the traits of divinity vis-a-vis those of animality as given in the Geeta:-

1. **Abhayam:** fearlessness is the prime quality for the one born for divine state. One has to be fearless in the face of death, dejection, pain, defeat, disrespect, and all other pitfalls of the human existence, for the Geeta proclaims 'Samatvam yoga uchyate'.B.G : 2.48 - equilibrium alone is yoga. This equilibrium can be achieved by being fearless in the face of all odds. And fearlessness can be achieved by complete surrender unto the Lord who is bound by his divine promise 'Tesham nityabhi-yukhtanam yoga-kshemam vahami-aham' B.G. 9.22 - I provide gain and security to all those who are ever devout to me. So when He has taken full responsibility for our security where is the question of our fearing at all.
2. **Sattva sanshuddhih:** purity of heart is the other trait essential for divinity. We all pray in the morning : 'ma vidvishavahay' - let us not hate any one and again: 'tan-me manah Shiva sankalpam-astu 'let my mind be filled with noble resolve.' Both these Vedic prayers indicate that we are required to aspire for purity of heart. The Geeta says that as against this quality of the divine, those with evil disposition are 'ashuchi-vratah' of impure resolve. They are full of malice and hatred for others.
3. **Jnana-yoga vyavasthitih:** steadfastness in the yoga of knowledge. The emphasis here is on steadfastness. Whether it is to achieve merger with the Divine through knowledge or to gain knowledge, one has to be steadfast. The Geeta is on record to say, 'aneka janma sansiddhah tato yanti param gatim-B.G:6.45' birth after birth one has to strive with steadfastness and then alone one attains the supreme position. The evil, on the other hand will be 'ajnani' without knowledge and if at all he makes an effort to know, he will be fickle-minded.
4. **Daanam:** giving alms is also a great virtue. Divine are those who give their wealth and knowledge to others, who help others physically, monetarily as also by giving good counsel. A wealthy virtuous person gives alms but the foolish pride their wealth and covet for more. Sharing is a divine trait and those who are evil cook for themselves: 'te pachanti atma karanat. B.G.: 3.13'
5. **Damah:** control over senses is an important step in yoga. One must be the master of one's senses and not their slave. For, if they get out of control, we become 'ugra karmanah B.G.16.9' men of fierce deeds. That would lead us to destruction. If we cannot control our senses, we are prone to think of sense-objects all the time and a chain of cause and effect follows, viz; attachment, desire, anger, delusion, confused memory, loss of reason, loss of wisdom and finally the destruction. B.G.2.62-63.
6. **Yajna:** the ritual of sacrifice is another important requirement for a person of divine qualities. Performance of Yajna and partaking of the left over from oblations 'yajna-shishta-ashna' is what the Geeta prescribes. This inculcates a sense of sacrificing in us and disciplines our life so that we enjoy every thing with a detached mind as the Ishavasya upanishad would have it : 'tena tyakhtena bhunjithah.' In contrast to this, those who are of demoniac disposition, perform yajna for ostentation disregarding the prescribed procedures. 'yajante nama-yajnaiste dambhena avidhi-purvakam.'B.G. 16.17.
7. **Swadhyayah:** study of the scriptures is also important about which we are told not to shirk , 'swadhyayat ma pramaditavyam.' For it is the study of scriptures that gives us the right direction and

shows us the right way. In the words of Yudhishtara, 'mahajano yena gatah sa panthah,' the path shown by sages and savants, recorded in the scriptures, is the path to follow. If we do not take to the study of scriptures we are bound to act on the impulse of our desire giving a go bye to what is prescribed: 'shastra- vidhim- utsriya vartate kama-karatah. B.G.16.23' That takes us away from our goal, perfection and happiness and consequently we lose our divinity.

8. **Tapah:** penance or austerity is yet another quality which should be inculcated. This quality hardens us and enables us to face the ups and downs of the life. It helps us maintain a balanced posture and remain dogged and steadfast in all our endeavours. Without this quality we become 'chanchala' restless and remain ever dissatisfied: 'aneka-chitta-vibhrantah mohajala samavritah B.G.16.16' bewildered by many a fancy, and caught up in the web of delusion. To avoid such a situation the only answer is tapas or the penance.

9. **Aarjavam:** straight-forwardness in dealings is another positive feature of a good person. In order to qualify for a divine nature, one has to be forthright. There should be no contradiction between what one says and what one does. The conduct should be simple and straight, the actions should reflect the pious intentions and one should be as clear as a crystal. In contrast, the one with an evil nature has neither purity nor right conduct: 'na shaucham napi cha-acharah. B.G. 16.7".

10. **Ahimsa:** non-injury by itself is an essential quality of a person of divine disposition. He injures neither in deed, nor by utterances, nor even by thought. In contrast a person of evil disposition says 'Asau maya hatah shatruh, hanishye cha-aparanapi', that enemy has been slain by me and I shall kill others also - B.G :16.14'.

11. **Satyam:** truth. What is, is called 'sat' and the fact of being is 'satya', the truth. We pray to God to lead us from 'asat', non-being, to 'sat', being. Therefore it is of paramount importance for us to be truthful in word and deed in order to be divine. Seeking and aiming at truth, practising and experiencing truth, truth in thought and conviction makes a person divine. Others of demoniac traits practise only falsehood. They consider the entire universe as unreal and without any basis, 'Asatyam-apratishtham te jagad-ahur-anishvaram - B.G :16.8', the universe is unreal, they say, and is without any moral basis and without any God.

12. **Akrodah:** devoid of anger. Since the person divine controls his senses, it, ipso facto, means that he will have no anger. Anger is the result of intense desire. Conquering it is a step towards divinity. Anger is the trait of the evil as has been stated, 'Ashapasha-shatair - baddhah kama kroda-parayanah - B.G :16.12', they are entangled in multiplicity of hope and are given to lust and anger. Anger is conquered by non-anger. We have the authority of 'Setu-sama', from the Sama Veda, which says that we can cross the chasm of anger over the bridge of non-anger - 'Setuns-tara, Akrodhena krodam tara'

13. **Tyagah:** relinquishing. This has been defined in Chapter 18 of the Geeta, thus, 'Sarva-karma-phalatyagam prahus-tyagam - B.G. : 18.2', abandonment of the fruits of all actions is called Tyagah. Again it has been stated 'Sangam tyakhtva phalam chaiva tyagah sattviko matah - B.G.: 18.9. Abandoning attachment and fruit is a superior tyagah. The Geeta has right from Chapter 2 repeated it several times that actions cannot and should not be relinquished for the cycle of actions must go on. Even the existence is not possible without performing actions. But, what is required to be relinquished is the attachment to and the fruits of these actions. In other words one has to consider the Divine as the real doer and oneself only as a tool. However, a person of demonic traits thinks in a different way, 'Idamadya maya labdham, imam prapsya manoratham. Idam asti-idam-api me bhavishyati punar-dhanam - B.G.:16.13.', this has been gained by me today, this desire I shall fulfil. This is mine. That wealth also

will be mine. Not only is such a person after everything with greed but also considers himself as the real doer.

14. Shantih: serenity and peace come naturally to a person with divine traits because he is 'Santushto yena kenachit - B.G. : 12.19.' satisfied in all circumstances anyhow and 'Atmaneva-atmana tushtah - B.G : 2.55', fully satisfied in himself. He is at peace with everyone because he sees himself in all beings and all beings in himself, 'Sarva-bhutastham-atmanam sarva bhutani cha-atmani - B.G.:6.29', he also knows the gospel 'ashantasya kutah sukham B.G.:2.66' how can one be happy if he has no peace. Peace is the direct result of relinquishment, the quality discussed earlier. Relinquishment, says the Geeta, is superior to practise, knowledge and meditation, and it leads to peace 'Shreyo hi Jnanam - abhyasat Jnanad - dhyanan vishishyate dhyanat-karma-phal-tyagah, tyagat shantir - anataram - B.G :12.12' and it is the peace that we pray for every morning after our 'sandhya vandanam' and other routines chores. While the one with divine nature has complete peace of mind, those of evil nature have, 'Chintam-aparimeyam B.G 16.11', unlimited worries.

15. Apaishunam: aversion to fault-finding. A person, in order to be divine, has to be sedate, simple and soft. He should be devoid of aggression, harshness and vehemence. He should have a gentle and pleasing demeanour. He should be averse to finding fault with others. There is a Sanskrit shloka which says, 'A bad person sees the smallest fault of others but even after seeing, he ignores his own gravest faults, however big and sizeable they may be,' A heavenly person on the other hand, is conscious of his own short comings but never finds fault with others.

16. Daya-Bhuteshu: means compassion for all beings. This is a paramount quality for a person with divine traits. For this quality to develop one has to see everything as a manifestation of the Lord. "Vasudevah sarvam-iti sa mahatma sudurlabhah B.G.7.19" It is difficult to come across a person who sees Vasudeva only in everything. Again, it has been stated that, "Yo mam pashyati sarvatra, sarvam-cha mayi pashyati. B.G. 6.30" One who sees me everywhere and also sees everything in me. Such a state of mind makes us 'sama-darshanah' such that we see the same in all. "Vidya- vinaya-sampanne Brahmane, gavi, hastini, shuni chaiva shwapake cha Panditah sama-darshanah.B.G.5.18" The wise have the same approach towards a well read and humble Brahmin, a cow, an elephant, a dog and a wild person (lit. one who eats dog's flesh). On the other hand the persons of evil mind feel thus, "ko-anyo-asti sadrisho maya B.G.16.15" who else can equal me. And, therefore, they work with impure resolve, 'pravartante ashuchi-vratah, B.G.16.10'

17. Aloluptvam: absence of greed or covetousness. It is a matter of common logic as to how a person can be pious if he is full of greed and covets other's wealth. Ishavasya Upanishad says, " ma gridhah kasyachit dhanam " covet not, for who does this wealth belong to ? Once we develop an attitude of sacrificing and relinquishing, once we develop a habit of giving and once we perfect ourselves in the art of control of our senses, the desire (kama) is won over and covetousness and greed vanish. Kabir has said that 'Lord is he who wants nothing. Now let us see the trait of those who are not virtuous. They strive to secure wealth by unjust means to satisfy their sensual requirements, "Eehante kama-bhogartham anyayena-artha sanchayam. B.G.16.12"

18. Mardavam: this means sweet demeanour and gentleness. No doubt a divine person has to be gentle, soft and pleasing. Like a tree whose branches are laden with fruits bending downwards, a person with divine qualities is gentle and full of humility. Such a person knows that it is the 'Para prakriti' or the higher element of the Divine that upholds this universe and that he himself is only a 'nimitta matra' just a tool or the means through which the Divine makes things happen and, therefore, he is humble and grateful that

the Divine has entrusted him with noble tasks. Pride does not so much as even touch him. As opposed to him an evil person is 'dambha-mana-madanvitah B.G.16.10' full of hypocrisy, pride and arrogance.

19. **Hrih**: or modesty is a complementary trait to gentleness. The opposite trait is 'darpa' or self-conceit. For a person with conceit, the Geeta says that, 'karta-aham-iti manyate,B.G.3.27' he firmly believes that he is the doer. This makes him conceited and he proclaims, "Ishwaro-aham aham bhogi, siddho-aham balawan sukhi B.G.16.14" I am a lord, the one who enjoys; I have accomplished perfection; I am powerful and happy. The virtuous, on the other hand, says, like Arjuna: 'shishyaste-aham shadhi mam twam prapannam, B.G.2.7' I am at your door step as a disciple of yours, kindly order me what to do. After having been shown the path, such a person says, 'karishye vachanam tava, B.G. 18.73. I shall act as per your command. Such is the modesty of this person that he surrenders completely before the Lord.

20. **Achapalam**: meaning firmness. The characteristics of a steadfast person have been enumerated in the second chapter of the Geeta. Such a person is unperturbed in adversity, unattached in pleasure and unaffected by good or bad. This in effect is the exalted state at which the bewilderment vanishes. "Esha Brahmi stithi Partha! Na-enam prapya vimuhyati, B.G. 2.72" To attain this position one has to be in full control of one's senses. The evil, however, is 'aneka chitta vibhrantah B.G.16.16' bewildered by many a fancy, that makes him fickle minded not knowing what to do and what to refrain from. "pravrittim cha nivrittim cha jana na viduh-asura B.G.16.7"

21. **Tejah**: connotes vigour, splendour and radiance. Even in our day to day life we observe that a pious person has a shining face, glowing forehead and radiance in his eyes. We are attracted towards such a person just by his gaze. It is because of this that the Lord has said: 'tejas-tejasvinam-aham, B.G. 10.36' I am the splendour of the splendid. In fact the splendour in itself is the sign of divinity for the Lord has said, "the radiance that is seen in the sun, moon and the fire actually is my own radiance. Yad-aditya-gatam tejah jagat-bhasayate-akhilam chandramasi yat-cha- agnau tattejo viddhi mamakam. B.G. 15.12" Every day we pray that God grant us Tejas: 'tejasvinavaditam-astu' Those who are not pious lack this radiance and have been referred to as malicious people: 'abhyasuyakah. B.G. 16.18'

22. **kshama**: forgiveness is a weapon of the strong. Those who are strong physically, mentally and spiritually and yet forgive others show that they are imbued with divine qualities. Our morning prayers conclude by saying: 'ma vidvishavahai' let us not hate anyone. This prayer presupposes that those who might have wronged us are forgiven by us. Only then do we resolve not to hate them. The Pauranic story wherein it is stated that Bhrigu hit Vishnu with his foot is an excellent example of forgiveness. Vishnu not only did not retaliate, but instead asked Bhrigu if his foot was not hurt. This quality places one in an exalted position. Compared to this is the trait of the evil. They are revengeful and carry hatred for their adversaries to the hilt. They always think ill and of destroying others. 'ksheyaya jagato-ahitah B.G.16.9

23. **Dhritih**: is both tolerance and fortitude. This trait is developed by having poise and equilibrium in the face of all ups and downs of life. It has been stated that one should not waver in the face of one's duty: 'swadharmam-api-cha-vekshya na vikampitum-arhasi, B.G. 2.31' Tolerance and fortitude are imbibed only if actions are performed with mind firmly fixed in yoga. 'yogasthah kuru karmani sangam tyakhtva Dhananjaya, B.G. 2.48' Those with demonic traits are naturally of wavering mind: 'Aneka-chitta-vibhrantah. B.G. 16.16'

24. **Shaucham**: is purity and cleanliness at all levels. Physical purity by cleaning and washing, adoring clean clothes and having clean habits. Mental purity by having pious ideas, noble thoughts, and pure resolve and by keeping at bay all malice, ill-will and hatred. Spiritual purity by transcending Sattva, Rajas and Tamas, all the three attributes as prescribed: 'nistrai-gunyo bhava-Arjuna B.G. 2.45' Purity is the

second nature of the divine person. In contrast to this those who are of evil disposition have neither purity nor good conduct. 'na shaucham na-api cha acharah. B.G.16.7'

25. Adroha: absence of ill will. It is a well known fact that the Indian tradition believes in 'Vasudhaiva kutumbakam' the entire universe is but one family. Our prayers are not self-centred. We pray, 'sarve bhavantu sukhena.' May all be happy and well. 'ma kaschana dukha bhag- bhavet' Let no one come to grief. This prayer stems from a state of mind where there is no ill will . This comes natural to a divine person for he sees everyone in himself and himself in every one. Every one for him is an eternal portion of the Divine, "Mamaiva-ansho. B.G.15.7" So how can he harbour ill will towards any one. It is the evil who hate every one and thereby the Lord existing in every body, 'mama-atma-para-dehesu pradvishanto B.G.16.18." these people hate Me (the Lord) in their own bodies and in those of others.

26. Natimanata: Absence of pride and hot headed-ness. Pride is the symbol of ignorance, shallow knowledge, ego and arrogance. While the pride for one's wealth, power, position and such like things can be tolerable, the pride for being virtuous, knowledgeable or wise is a paradox in itself. There is no limit to knowledge, no boundaries of virtuosity and with any amount of knowledge, virtue or wisdom one has still quest for more of these. This situation removes pride, if any, from a person of virtue. He knows that perfection is the name of God and as a human being he is imperfect. So there is nothing to be proud of. He is well aware that he is limited in Sat, Chit and Anand, the being, the consciousness and the bliss which makes him Jeevatma, the individual soul. It is the Paramatma, the Universal soul which is unlimited in these three and is independent in every respect. There is, therefore, no reason to be hot headed or proud. It is the demonic who are, 'dambha-mana-madanvitah, B.G.16.10. full of hypocrisy, pride and arrogance.

These qualities and traits have been divided into two broad categories. The first category comprise serenity, restraint, austerity, penance, purity, forgiveness, uprightness, knowledge and faith. These are intellectual traits (B.G. 18.42) and could include other items like study of scriptures and performance of yajna etc; The second category consists of heroism, radiance, firmness and expertise and is termed as heroic traits (B.G. 18.43) . This could include the qualities of fearlessness, forgiveness, tolerance and absence of ill will.

The Geeta says that lust, anger and greed are self destroying and lead to hell. 'Trividham narakasya- idam- dwaram nashanam- atmanah, Kamah, krodhah- tatha- lobhah B.G.16.21' and one who shuns these along with ego, violence, arrogance and possessiveness (attachment) attains peace and eventually, the Brahman status. "Ahankaram, balam, darpam, kamam, krodham, parigraham, vimuchya nirmamah shantah Brahma-bhuyaya kalpate. B.G.18.53."

8.0 FROM GRIEF TO RENUNCIATION

Sometimes I wonder why Shri Krishna had to give to Arjuna, after a long discourse running into eighteen chapters of the Geeta, what all was available to the Gopis right from the beginning. For an answer to this question, again I turn to the Geeta itself. I find that Arjuna does not accept anything blindly. He reasons out, argues, puts questions and being an intellectual, has his own philosophy which makes him evaluate everything before accepting it. He grieves sometimes and sometimes he is perplexed and he is always in doubt about what should or what should not be done. The first chapter of the Geeta is, therefore, appropriately named as 'Despondency or grief of Arjuna'. Because of this grief he drops down his famous bow, the 'Gandiva' and declares that he is not going to fight. It takes a long discourse running into nine chapters of the Geeta, from the second to the tenth, to dispel his doubt and remove his illusion. This admission of his illusion having been wiped off he makes for the first time at the beginning of chapter eleventh. He says that he has begun seeing the truth. The only thing that remained for him to see was the grandeur of the Lord and to fathom his vastness. After getting a taste of all this and on knowing some more important and salient secrets, he fully realises that he is on the right track as his memory is back and the veil of delusion is removed. He admits at the end that all his doubts have been cleared and, therefore he was prepared to act according to the directions of the Lord. In other words he surrenders completely before Sri Krishna and resigns unto Him just as the Gopis had from day one. One would like to recall that when Udhava approaches Gopis, at the instance of Shri Krishna, to educate them with spiritual knowledge, the Gopis tell him, 'Nobody is endowed with multiple hearts, we too had only one each and that has been taken away by our Beloved. Now bereft of any heart how are we to follow what you are trying to preach?'

Well Arjuna cannot be faulted for the way he behaved or for the position he took on various matters, spiritual and mundane, that came up under consideration during his dialogue with the Lord. He was a man of intellect and wisdom and such a person is bound to weigh the pros and cons of his actions as also the advice he gets from any quarter. It takes a full study of Shastras, the guidance of a self-realised preceptor and a lifetime of experience to be convinced about the fact that reason and logic lead one up to a point only. Even Dharma as a means is essential up to a point and up to a stage, just as a boat is to ferry across the waters. But once the shore is reached, even the boat has to be abandoned. Thereafter, it is the Divine grace alone that helps to experience the unexplainable, the indescribable and the unknown. In order to bring home this fact the discourse of the Geeta, the quintessence of the Upanishads, was necessary for Arjuna. The culmination is in the last chapter when the Lord reveals the secret of secrets which is 'complete resignation unto Him.' In short Arjuna is advised to become a Gopi.

During the entire discourse at every step it has been stated that Brahman is the whole and sole of the universe as also its soul and seed. This point has been explained in chapter 4 with the help of a beautiful metaphor, 'I am the sacrificial fire, the oblation, the giver and taker of the oblation and indeed the act itself.' Elsewhere in chapter 7 it has been stated that rare are those knowledgeable persons who see God in everything. Again in chapter 9 the Lord makes it clear that He is the father, the mother, the Vedas, the sacred syllable Pranava, the creator, the preserver, and the destroyer of the entire universe. In the next chapter He describes himself as the fountainhead of everything created.

In a beautiful and an appropriate simile the Lord likens Himself, in relation to the universe, to a string running through the beads of a rosary. In the last chapter He again emphasises that He is seated in everybody's heart. Arjuna gets a glimpse of all this when he sees the Majestic Universal Form of Vasudeva, seeing which he trembles and shivers. In the end a spontaneous resolve is made by him when

he says, 'I shall do as You command.' Thus he gives up actions for desired objects and undertakes only detached ones to be presented to the Lord as an offering, which corresponds to the definition of renunciation given in the last chapter. Thus the study of the Geeta, in effect, covers a journey of the mind from the position of grief to the position of renunciation.

Each one of us has to and must undertake this journey. Many a milestone is reached during this journey where we get answers to our questions, clarification to our doubts and thereby our blurred vision gets cleared and we reach a stage where we also say, 'everything here, verily is the Divine only,' and then we surrender unto Him. Now let us examine some of these milestones met by all of us during this journey. The important most of these is the detailed analysis of the 'body and its in-dweller,' the former is liable to decay and death but the latter is immortal. The death itself is only a stage in one's life after the three stages of childhood, youth and old-age. The in-dweller can; therefore, neither kill nor get killed.

Another important topic is that relating to poise and equanimity that one should maintain in one's life. In fact one of the two definitions of Yoga given in the Geeta is poise, 'Samatvam yoga uchyate.' The other definition is excellence in one's deeds, 'yogah karmasu kaushalam.' We are advised to be unruffled in grief and detached from pleasure. We are required to maintain equilibrium in opposite situations of gain and loss, victory and defeat, respect and disrespect and joy and sorrow.

Of the different types of yogas, the yoga of action has been given prominence in the Geeta. Yoga of action is nothing but doing one's deeds without an eye on the reward or the result. In fact it has been explicitly made clear that doing a deed alone is within our authority and the reward or result is outside our jurisdiction. Care should, however, be taken to distinguish between a reward and a purpose. A detached action does not constitute a purpose-less action committed like a mad man. When a mother breast-feeds her baby, she has a purpose - health and well being of the baby. She does not have any reward in view, which she may expect from the baby. So as true 'karma yogis' we should do our deeds efficiently with noble purpose and leave the reward in the hands of the Lord. The Lord has said that those who have unflinching faith in Him need not worry either for their 'yoga', i.e.; the things they lack, or for their 'kshema', i.e.; security for what they already have.

In reply to a query from Arjuna about the attributes of a steadfast person, Shri Krishna says that such a person should have a number of qualities. He should shun all desires and be ever satisfied in himself. He should have poise, detachment and should be devoid of anger and fear. He should neither get elated nor depressed in favourable and unfavourable circumstances. Just as a tortoise withdraws its limbs, a person with firm intellect withdraws his senses from all sense objects. The Geeta says that if the senses are not so withdrawn from their objects, one is bound to think of these objects all the time. This leads to attachment with the objects, which in turn creates desires. Desires give rise to anger. Anger generates stupefaction, which causes loss of memory. The loss of memory about the truth blurs the vision of wisdom. Once the wisdom is gone, it spells doom. Thus the root cause of the spiritual disaster is constant thinking about the sense objects and that is why we are advised to withdraw our senses from these objects. This necessitates our becoming a yogi in the true sense. In other words we have to transcend the three characters of Sattva, the light, Rajas, the fire and Tamas, the darkness. We have to see the Divine in every one and every one in the Divine. We have to see everything in ourselves and ourselves in everything. This makes us immortal and able to perceive the Immortal.

The question what these three characters are and how one is to rise above these to transcend them has been lucidly explained in chapter 14. The Geeta says that the three have three different results. Sattva gives light, Rajas rouses fire of passion and Tamas envelops one in darkness. One who is unmindful about these results, whose mind does not dwindle and who has the same attitude be it comfort or

discomfort, love or hatred, friend or foe, respect or disrespect, is said to have transcended these characters. Such a state of mind is essential for emancipation and liberation. Even if one is not fully successful in rising above these yet one must guard against falling into their trap. Even the moderate character of Rajas leads to sin for according to the Geeta both desire and anger are the progeny of the rajoguna only. These can never be satisfied or curbed and they induce us to commit sins. They should, therefore, be viewed as our enemies. They thrive in our senses, our mind and our intellect, put a veil around our wisdom and knowledge, bewitch us and thus hinder our spiritual advancement.

The Geeta has shown us the way to attain an exalted position. The first step is the control of 'manas', loosely translated as the mind. To control the mind is indeed difficult but the constant practice and a detached attitude make it possible to control it. But then there is another way, easier and faster and that is 'resignation before the Lord.' Shri Krishna says in chapter 9; 'whatever you give and all your austerity should be an offering unto Me. You should concentrate on Me, be my devout, worship Me and salute Me. Thus getting attached to Me, you shall certainly attain Me.' Chapter after chapter important and relevant questions are raised, sometimes by Arjuna, and sometimes by Shri Krishna. Clear, convincing and cogent answers are provided to these questions in simple words that carry a depth of meaning and connotation. A thorough study of all these chapters, not once but repeatedly, helps us undertake this journey from brief to renunciation, as did Arjuna. It enables us to transform the Arjuna in us to a Gopi, bathed in the nectar of the eternal love for Shri Krishna.

Before concluding, however, let us also consider the qualities we need to imbibe in order to endear ourselves to the Lord. These are enumerated in chapter 12 as under: 'no hatred towards any one, friendship and goodwill for everyone, compassion, detachment, no ego, equanimity in pleasure and pain, satisfied always, firm resolve, concentrating mind and intellect on the Divine, conducting one's self in such a way that one is not a cause for grief for others and others are not a cause for grief to him, devoid of happiness and sorrow, fear or favour, satisfied in whatever one gets, pure, efficient, neutral neither grieving nor rejoicing, worrying not about the result or reward, no covet, balanced attitude towards friend and foe, respect and disrespect, heat and cold, pleasure and pain. These qualities lead us to drink deep in the nectar of this sacred discourse of the Lord, act as He dictates, and develop an unflinching faith in Him. Let us imbibe these qualities to justify our existence and our faith in the Lord, as also our firm trust in the scriptures.

If we want to cross the ocean of grief we have to know ourselves, our true nature and the subtle elements in us beyond our gross body. The Veda says that one who knows one's self only is able to cross the ocean of grief, 'tarati shokam atmavit.' Let us cross this ocean with the help of the message given by the Geeta, the Divine Song of the Lord.

9.0 YOGA IN THE BHAGWAD GEETA

In the last five verses of the Geeta, Sanjaya sums up the dialogue between Arjuna and Shri Krishna. It is significant to note that he refers to Shri Krishna as 'Yogeshwara', the lord of yoga. What is meant by yoga? In simple words it means communion, addition, merger, combination or contact. On the spiritual level it means a state where the individual soul, 'Jeevatma' merges with the universal soul, 'Paramatma'. At the practical level it connotes a situation when all our deeds, physical, verbal and mental are related to the Lord. There are two definitions in the Geeta of yoga. One is that it means efficiency in one's deeds, 'yogah karmasu kaushalam'. The other is that it means balanced state of mind, 'samattvam yoga uchyate.' If for a moment the spiritual message of the Geeta is set aside and only the mundane aspects are taken into consideration, it would be clear that we are advised to relate every thing to Him, who is 'the observer, the one granting permission, the protector, the enjoyer and the master seated inside us, B.G. 13.22' Now that the Hero of this sacred text is Master of the yoga, it is no wonder that all the eighteen chapters are related to yoga of one form or the other and are named accordingly.

The first chapter is called the 'Yoga of Despondency of Arjuna.' The grief in the mind of Arjuna is that he is required to fight his own kith and kin, his elders who are worthy of respect and reverence. So he puts forward his grief before the Lord in these words, 'I have no desire for the kingdom if I have to pay this price. How can I be happy after killing my own people ?' Since he relates his grief and misgivings to his Lord in this chapter, it is given the name of 'Arjuna vishada yoga'.

The second chapter deals with a definite and well reasoned knowledge called 'Sankhya'. Arjuna expresses before his mentor the confusion that he is facing in determining what his duties are, prostrates before Him and begs of Him to show him the right way, 'yat shreyah syat nischitam bruhi tanme.' He pleads, 'Please tell me definitely what is good for me.' After listening to a detailed reply, he puts another question about a steadfast person and his qualities. These are narrated in verse number 55 et. seq. The entire chapter connects Arjuna with Shri Krishna through the well reasoned knowledge called sankhya, about the individual and universal soul as also the supreme state called 'Brahmi stithi.' Thus the chapter is rightly called 'Sankhya yoga.'

The third chapter deals exclusively with deeds and duties, the seed of which had already been sown in the previous chapter (2.47.) Again Arjuna is confused whether knowledge is superior to action or vice versa. The Lord clarifies that the path of knowledge is for the discerning and that of action for the active. He lays stress on two things, (i) performing obligatory duties without attachment, 'anasakhti' and (ii) surrendering all actions unto Him, 'karmani mayi sanyasya' B.G.3.19 and 30. Thus the individual soul is required to merge with the universal soul by means of un-attachment and surrender. This is the 'Karma yoga' or communion with the Lord through the action, the name given to this chapter.

The fourth chapter is one of those chapters which have different names in different editions. The most common name given to this chapter is 'jnana-karma-sanyasa yoga' the yoga of renunciation of action in knowledge. In some editions the name given is 'Karma Brahmarpana yoga.' The yoga of offering actions to the Supreme. I would personally favour the latter as this aptly brings out the essence of this chapter. In this connection one has to closely study shloka number 24 which says, 'the oblation, the fire, the giver and the receiver of the oblations, all are Brahman only. One who cognises Brahman alone in his actions attains Him. Thus offering one's actions to the Divine creates communion with Him and this becomes the yoga of offering actions to the Supreme.

In reply to the very first question in the fifth chapter, the Lord says that the performance of action and dedicating it to the Divine is superior to renunciation of actions. The kernel of this chapter is verse 10 wherein it has been stated that he who acts abandoning attachment, dedicating his deeds to the Supreme is untainted by sin as a lotus leaf is in water. This dedication of action is in itself yoga as it helps make contact with the Lord. In effect, therefore 'Karma-sanyasa', the renunciation of action, the name given to this chapter and 'karma Brahmarpana', offering actions to the Lord, the name given to the previous chapter are one and the same. To make a distinction, perhaps , Adi shankara has adopted only Sanyasa Yoga, the Yoga of renunciation, as the name of the fifth chapter. For it is in this chapter that renunciation has been explained as not being inaction but action performed on behalf of the Divine. This attitude also creates constant communion with the Divine and therefore this chapter is appropriately named as Yoga of renunciation of deeds and actions.

The chapter sixth has been differently named as Yoga of meditation 'Dhyana Yoga' and yoga of self restraint, 'Atma Samyama Yoga'. No doubt there is a detailed description of meditation - how, where and when of it, yet the underlying current in this chapter is that of self restraint. In reply to some relevant questions put by Arjuna about the hurdles in controlling one's mind, Shri Krishna concedes that mind is hard to control, but hastens to add that by practice and non-attachment it can be controlled. The Lord explains that a Yogi carries forward his experience from one birth to another and perfects his Yoga, ' Aneka janam sansiddhah tato yanti paraam gatim' B.G 6:45. Thus the message is loud and clear that through self-restraint and self-control, one is able to merge with the supreme and therefore the Yoga in this chapter has been called 'Atma Samyama Yoga'.

The 7th Chapter is called Jnana-vijnana Yoga. While there is no dispute about the meaning of Jnana, the knowledge, the word Vijnana has been variously interpreted as realisation, application superior knowledge or experience. Shri Abhinavgupta, the great philosopher from Kashmir has said, 'Jnana-Vijnana, jnana kriya eva', i.e. it connotes knowledge and its application. In other words, the former would mean pure science and the latter the applied one, represented respectively by the Goddess Saraswati and the Goddess Lakshmi. The Lord acknowledges that all types of seekers, whether men in distress, men desirous of knowledge, men after wealth, or men of wisdom are noble, but it is the wise ones who are dear to Him as He is to them. This is so because the wise are established in the Divine. This communion with the divine through the knowledge, both pure and applied, is called the Yoga of Jnana-vijnana.

Next comes chapter 8th which is rightly called 'Akshara Brahma Yoga', the Yoga of the imperishable supreme. In some editions it has been called 'Brahmakshara nidesha Yoga', yoga of the direction towards the imperishable Lord. Shri Krishna makes it explicitly clear that he who constantly remembers me easily attains me and having attained me, these noble souls are freed form cycle of re-birth. Therefore He advises, 'Think of me alone at all times. B.G - 8:7'. Thus concentrating all the time on that imperishable Brahman is the Yoga, unique and unparalleled.

Rajavidya-Rajaguhya yoga is the name given to chapter 9. This means that this chapter gives out the sovereign science and sovereign secret. The sovereign science revealed herein is that the universe is pervaded by the Divine and that all beings exist in Him. He is the seed imperishable of the entire creation, 'beejam-avyayam.' The sovereign secret given out is that the Lord provides gain and security to those who remain ever devoted to Him, 'tesham nityabhiyukhtanam yoga-kshemam vahami-aham.' Yoga in this context means providing something which is wanting or gain. Kshema means giving protection to whatever one has or security. The Lord advises that 'whatever you do, all your actions should be an offering unto me and this way you shall come to me, B.G. 9.27 and 34.' Understanding this supreme

science and supreme secret also leads to the communion of the soul with the Supreme and thereby, constitutes yoga.

Chapter 10 is called 'Vibhuti yoga,' or the yoga of the contact with the Divine Glory. What better yoga there can be than perceiving and experiencing the glory of the Lord who is the master of this entire cosmos. The Lord says, 'I am the seed, I am the beginning, the middle and the end of all beings. My divine manifestations are endless and an individual being is a spark of my splendour. B.G. 10. 20/39/40/41.' And when yoga takes place it is this spark of His splendour that gets merged with the universal, eternal and immortal splendour that the Divine is.

In the opening shloka of chapter 11, Arjuna admits that all his delusion has been dispelled by the discourse that he has heard. Now he wants to have a glimpse of the Supreme Lord whom he addresses as Yogeshwara. In response to his this request the Lord shows him His cosmic form and seeing that he prostrates before Him. Terrified as he feels on seeing this spectacle, he begs of Him to appear in the 'Deva Rupa', the gentle human or the four-armed Vishnu form. Shri Krishna obliges and makes an important statement, 'I cannot be seen in this form by any means, not even by Vedas but by unswerving devotion only. 'Naham Vedairna.....shakya evamvidho drashtum. Bhaktya twananyaya shakah...B.G 11.53/54.' The vision that Arjuna had of the cosmic and gentle human forms of the Lord brought him in close contact with Him and this justifies the name given to this chapter.

Having said that the Lord can be seen only by an unflinching devotion, the next chapter 12 details the qualities of a devout who is the beloved of the Lord. Among other things the devout is required to be full of faith and keeping the Lord in view as his supreme goal, 'Shraddanah matparamah, 12.20' Since the devotion, 'Bhakti' has been described in detail in this chapter, it has aptly been named as Bhakti yoga, or communion through devotion.

The thirteenth chapter is yet another chapter which has been given different captions by different scholars. It has been variously called as "Prakriti-purusha nirdesha/viveka yoga" or the yoga pointing to/differentiating Nature from the Supreme Self, and 'Kshetra-kshetrajna vibhaga yoga,' or the yoga of the classification between the field and knower of the field. It has been explained in this chapter that the body is the field and the in-dweller Divine is the knower of the field. It has been made clear that the Nature and the Supreme Self both are beginning-less. The former is the means to the cause and effect syndrome and the latter causes enjoyment of pain and pleasure, B.G. 13.20/21. It is the Purusha seated in the Prakriti, who experiences the 'Gunas' born of it. The Purusha himself is the knower of the field and stays in the field in varying capacities of the Observer, the Giver of permission, the Supporter, the Enjoyer and the Supreme Master. Perceiving this with an eye of wisdom helps a person attain the Divine and that is the yoga of discernment described in this chapter.

The 14th chapter is captioned, 'guna-traya-vibhaga yoga' yoga of the division of the three gunas or qualities. In this chapter the three types of characteristics have been identified, described and their effects analysed. It has been stated that one must cross over these three gunas and the secret of doing so lies in poise, equanimity and balanced attitude. The Lord says, 'having crossed these three gunas, a person attains immortality, Gunaetan-atitena treen dehi.....amritam-ashnute, B.G.14.20.' In other words such a person merges with the Divine and that is the yoga realised by differentiating the three gunas and rising above them.'

Let us now take up chapter 15, which is called 'Purushottama yoga' or the yoga of the Supreme Self. In this chapter three types of 'Purushas have been described : the perishable or all the beings, the imperishable or the one seated within the beings and the Supreme or the one who transcends the remaining two. It is this Supreme Self which pervades and sustains the three worlds. 'yo loka-trayam-

avishya vibharti, B.G 15.17.' About this Supreme Shri Krishna says, 'Vedaischa sarvair-aham-eva vedyah,B.G.15.15' I am the one to be known through the Vedas. It is this Supreme Self that the seeker desires to merge with, and so the name of the chapter stands justified.

The 16th chapter is designated as, 'Daivasura sampad vibhaga yoga,' or the yoga of the classification of good and bad traits in a person. These traits have been listed out and it has been stated that those with bad qualities of lust, anger, greed etc; fall into a state still lower and never ever reach the Lord, 'mam-aprapyaiva....yantyadhamam gatim, B.G.16.20' On the other hand the qualities of compassion, renunciation, truth, purity, fearlessness etc; help a person attain the highest position, 'yati param gatim, B.G.16.22.'Therefore, in order to attain communion with the Divine we have to have full knowledge of these requisite qualities, for which the Shastras are the authority, 'Pramana, B.G.16.24.'

The penultimate chapter 17th is named 'Shraddha-trayi-vibhaga yoga,' or the yoga through the three types of faiths. In the Geeta everything is said to be of three types. The food we eat, the nature we possess, the actions we perform and so on, everything is either related to light, 'sattavika', or to fire and passion, 'rajasika', or related to the darkness, 'tamasic'. This can also be classified as superior, ordinary and inferior. Similarly the faith is also stated to be of three types depending upon one's disposition, one's Deity, one's food and one's resolve. The faith when applied to austerity & penance, 'tapas', alms giving, 'dana', and sacrifice, 'yajna' makes them a reality, reality,'Sat' and these very acts performed without faith become a non-reality, 'Asat'. It has further been stated in this chapter that the three sacred words, OM, TAT and SAT are the three ways of reciting the name of Brahman, the Supreme. Uttering these words leads to liberation and thus this chapter has correctly been named as Yoga through discriminating between faiths of three types.

The 18th chapter is designated as Sanyasa Yoga, the Yoga of renunciation at some places and Moksha Sanyasa, the Yoga of liberation through renunciation at other places. Since the chapter 5 is named as Yoga of renunciation or Yoga of renunciation of actions, it would be better to adopt the latter. In chapter 5, a seeker is asked to perform all his actions on behalf of the Divine, which connotes renunciation of action. In this chapter, a complete surrender before the Lord has been prescribed which would lead to merger with Him. Defining the word Sanyasa, it has been stated that it means renouncing those actions which are performed for desired objectives, 'Karma Karmas'. Similarly Tyaga has been defined as abandonment of the fruits of all actions. It has been explained, how, detachment leads to the supreme devotion, a state of freedom from actions, knowledge of the Divine, and, finally, complete merger with Him. A special attention may be paid to Shlokas 63 to 66. The Lord says, 'I have given you a relatively more profound knowledge, reflect on it and then do what you like'. The Lord hastens to add, 'there is however, yet another knowledge which is most profound, and which I shall give you now. Fix your mind on me, be devoted to me, renounce everything and take refuge in me. I shall liberate you and you shall come to me.'

Thus the message of Shri Geeta is unequivocal that surrender leads to liberation. It makes the seeker, 'Yukhta', or merged with the Divine, who is Sat, Chit and Anand, Being, Consciousness and Bliss, and thereby he becomes 'Mukhta', emancipated and liberated. In other words, he becomes the Master of the Yoga, ' Yogeshwara' himself.

10.0 SHIVA THE MULTI-FACETED LORD

Of the three cults prevalent in India, those of Shiva, Shakti and Vishnu, the most common is the Shiva Cult. Even those, whose deity is Vishnu, must worship Ganesha at the outset, who is one of the two sons of Shiva. Those who follow Shakti cult also believe that Shiva and Shakti are inseparable. Kalidasa has referred to the duo of Shiva and Parvati as 'Jagatah Pittarau', the parents of the world, and described them as 'Vagarthau iva samprikhtau', fused together or merged together like a word and its meaning. Shri Pushpadanta, in his famous Shiva Mahimnastotra, goes a step further and states that Shiva is Brahma, the Creator in his Rajoguna form, Vishnu the Preserver in his Sattvaguna form, and Rudra, the Destroyer, in his Tomoguna form, yet He transcends the three Gunas (attributes). He is the ultimate goal of all ideologies, faiths and forms of worship, just as an ocean is the culmination of all the rivers.

Shiva is identified with Rudra of the Vedas, perhaps because of his fierce looks, which He adopts at the time of final annihilation of the creation called Pralaya, when everything merges with the Divine. Otherwise He is addressed as Shiva, the benevolent or auspicious - i.e. one of the three essential qualities of Satyam, the truth, Shivam, the benevolent, and Sundaram, the beautiful. He is also called Shambhu, as the one born out of peace, or the one from whom peace emanates.

Shiva's external appearance, as conceived by seers and sages, is that He is naked, smeared with ashes, because of which He is called Bhasmadhara. There is a legend that when Bhagiratha succeeded in his endeavour to bring Ganges to the earth from the Heavens, it was required to be received by some Divine power. So Bhagiratha worshipped Shiva, who having been pleased with his devotion, agreed to receive the Holy Ganga, in the flock of his hair. He did so and got the name Gangadhara.

At the time of the great Samudra Manthana, churning of the ocean, while all the items that came out from the water, like horse, elephant, tree, and nectar were shared by Suras and Asuras, no one was prepared to accept the poison. In order to save the mankind, Shiva swallowed the poison and retained it midway at his throat. This turned his throat blue and He came to be known as Nilakantha. Chandrashekha and Shashishekha, are the names given to him as the crescent adores his forehead. His chief weapon is a trident because of which we call him Shulapani, and because He killed the cupid, known as Madana, He gets the name Madanantaka. It is also believed that of all the deities, Shiva is the one who gets pleased in no time with very little worship, devotion or prayer. Thus He is appropriately called Ashutosha.

Shiva has been described in volumes of ancient and modern literature, in Puranas, in Itihaasa, in Stotras, and Hymns, as also in legends. The great AdiShankara has written a number of Stotras in praise of Shiva. Om Namah Shivay and Namah Shivay, the two six lettered and five lettered Mantras respectively have been used in two important Stotras in praise of the Lord Shiva. Kalidas has propitiated Shankara in all his works and in the beginning of his three dramas (Nandi Shlokas). Obviously, in all these works, Shiva has been given scores of different names out of devotion, love and reverence to him, and based on his attributes, actions and qualities.

When Shiva is referred to as Nataraja, what is perhaps meant is that He is the one who performs the Cosmic Dance, as the whole creation is the play of his free will. Kalidas has described him as being attached closely to the body of his consort (Kanta sanmishra deho), and yet He is an ascetic of the highest order (Yatinam parastad). That is why He is also called Ardhanarishwara, a combination of Purusha and Prakriti, source of life and the energy that generates life, both fused together.

Shiva's mount is Nandi, the bull who represents strength and the qualities of morality, righteousness and discipline. He is therefore called Nandishwara. He is also known as Hara, and Mahakaleshwara. The

former refers to his disintegrating powers and the fact that He is the remover of all evils, ailments, sins and suffering. The latter signifies that, whereas time is a cyclic beginning-less and un-ending phenomena, Shiva is the Lord of this time, who manifests, controls and manages the same. As lord of mountains He is called Girisha, as lord of Paravati, the daughter of Himalaya, He is called Girijesha, and as the lord of Kailash, Kailashapati. He is also known as Pashupati, the lord of animals, and this has given rise to one of the oldest cults of Shiva worship called Paashupatamatam.

In a Bhakti Stotra, Shiva has been described as covered by Pa-Varga (5 letters of the pa-group of consonants in the Devanagri script), but giver of Apa-Varga, the salvation. The five letters are Pa, for Parvati, Pha for Phani (the serpent), Ba for Balendu (the new moon), Bha for Bhasma (holy ash) and Ma for Mandakini (the Ganges). Svetasvatara Upansihad says that Shiva is the source as also the culmination of all creation. He alone was there at the beginning of the world, and He alone shall remain at the end. That is why He has been called Mahadeva, the supreme deity.

Shiva is sometimes visualised as living in secluded places and cremation grounds, perhaps because, in the triad of Brahma, Vishnu and Mahesh, He is the God of death. He has a host of Bhutas (demon ghosts) around him and therefore He gets the name of Bhutanatha. He has also been conceived as Dakshinamurthy (the icon of Shiva in this form always faces the south), i.e the lord of Yogic power that destroys the bondage of a Jiva (being), with this world, and thereby liberates him. As the master of the universe, He is Vishwanatha, and as the bestower of peace, bliss and tranquillity He is Shankara. This five dimensional God (Panchamukhi Deva) called Mahesha is said to have five faculties of Jnana (knowledge), Iccha (desire), Kriya (action), Pidana (concealment) and Anugraha (grace) and is eternally engaged in creation, preservation and destruction.

Shiva's five faces are Ishana, Tatpurusha, Aghora, Vamadeva and Sadyojata. They represent the five directions of North, South, East, West and the Centre. He is said to have eight distinct forms called Sarva, Bhava, Pashupati, Ishana, Bhima, Rudra, Mahadeva, and Ugra. Some scholars identify these eight forms with five basic elements of Earth, Water, Fire, Air and Ether, and the three Sun, Moon, and the Jiva (the being). This in effect suggests that all the elements and the entire creation is Shiva's manifestation.

Shiva is also worshipped in his formless, Nirakara state, where He is represented by Shivalingam, or the cosmic shape of the universe. There are twelve Jyoti Lingas, in India, which are said to have come into existence by the Divine light which flashed at the exact spot where the Lingam is installed.

There are innumerable other shrines and temples where Shiva is worshipped in one form or the other, and where people of faith throng on holy and auspicious occasions for pilgrimage. One such place is Swami Amarnath in the mountain ranges of Kashmir. An ice Lingam is formed there inside a cave which is said to wax and wane with the moon and people go for pilgrimage to this holy place in the month of Shravana. They have darshan there of the ice Lingam in its full size, on the full moon day, Purnamasi.

Devotion to and propitiation of Shiva has taken so many forms that various cults have grown over the ages. Shiva worship, although basically a non-dualistic philosophy (advaita), in its devotional Bhakti form sometimes becomes dualistic, because the Lord and his devotee have per necessity to exist in Bhakti. Even so the more important schools of philosophy veering round the Shiva Cult, apart from Shankara's Advaita, are Pashupat, Shaiva Siddhanta, Veer Shiava, Kashmir's Trika Philosophy, Aghori, Kapalika etc. In many places Shiva worship is dovetailed with Tantra and Shakti cults. It is therefore well said :

Tava Tattvam Na Janami, Kidrishosi Maheshwara !
Yadrishosi Mahadeva Tadrishaya Namo Namah .
Little do I know your secret, nor your exact form.
Whatever form you may have, I bow to that form in obeisance.

11.0 YOGA IN THE BHAGWAD GEETA

In the last five verses of the Geeta, Sanjaya sums up the dialogue between Arjuna and Shri Krishna. It is significant to note that he refers to Shri Krishna as 'Yogeshwara', the lord of yoga. What is meant by yoga? In simple words it means communion, addition, merger, combination or contact. On the spiritual level it means a state where the individual soul, 'Jeevatma' merges with the universal soul, 'Paramatma'. At the practical level it connotes a situation when all our deeds, physical, verbal and mental are related to the Lord. There are two definitions in the Geeta of yoga. One is that it means efficiency in one's deeds, 'yogah karmasu kaushalam'. The other is that it means balanced state of mind, 'samattvam yoga uchyate.' If for a moment the spiritual message of the Geeta is set aside and only the mundane aspects are taken into consideration, it would be clear that we are advised to relate every thing to Him, who is 'the observer, the one granting permission, the protector, the enjoyer and the master seated inside us, B.G. 13.22' Now that the Hero of this sacred text is Master of the yoga, it is no wonder that all the eighteen chapters are related to yoga of one form or the other and are named accordingly.

The first chapter is called the 'Yoga of Despondency of Arjuna.' The grief in the mind of Arjuna is that he is required to fight his own kith and kin, his elders who are worthy of respect and reverence. So he puts forward his grief before the Lord in these words, 'I have no desire for the kingdom if I have to pay this price. How can I be happy after killing my own people ?' Since he relates his grief and misgivings to his Lord in this chapter, it is given the name of 'Arjuna vishada yoga'.

The second chapter deals with a definite and well reasoned knowledge called 'Sankhya'. Arjuna expresses before his mentor the confusion that he is facing in determining what his duties are, prostrates before Him and begs of Him to show him the right way, 'yat shreyah syat nischitam bruhi tanme.' He pleads, 'Please tell me definitely what is good for me.' After listening to a detailed reply, he puts another question about a steadfast person and his qualities. These are narrated in verse number 55 et. seq. The entire chapter connects Arjuna with Shri Krishna through the well reasoned knowledge called sankhya, about the individual and universal soul as also the supreme state called 'Brahmi stithi.' Thus the chapter is rightly called 'Sankhya yoga.'

The third chapter deals exclusively with deeds and duties, the seed of which had already been sown in the previous chapter (2.47.) Again Arjuna is confused whether knowledge is superior to action or vice versa. The Lord clarifies that the path of knowledge is for the discerning and that of action for the active. He lays stress on two things, (i) performing obligatory duties without attachment, 'anasakhti' and (ii) surrendering all actions unto Him, 'karmani mayi sanyasya' B.G.3.19 and 30. Thus the individual soul is required to merge with the universal soul by means of un-attachment and surrender. This is the 'Karma yoga' or communion with the Lord through the action, the name given to this chapter.

The fourth chapter is one of those chapters which have different names in different editions. The most common name given to this chapter is 'jnana-karma-sanyasa yoga' the yoga of renunciation of action in knowledge. In some editions the name given is 'Karma Brahmarpana yoga.' The yoga of offering actions to the Supreme. I would personally favour the latter as this aptly brings out the essence of this chapter. In this connection one has to closely study shloka number 24 which says, 'the oblation, the fire, the giver and the receiver of the oblations, all are Brahman only. One who cognises Brahman alone in his actions attains Him. Thus offering one's actions to the Divine creates communion with Him and this becomes the yoga of offering actions to the Supreme.

In reply to the very first question in the fifth chapter, the Lord says that the performance of action and dedicating it to the Divine is superior to renunciation of actions. The kernel of this chapter is verse 10 wherein it has been stated that he who acts abandoning attachment, dedicating his deeds to the Supreme is untainted by sin as a lotus leaf is in water. This dedication of action is in itself yoga as it helps make contact with the Lord. In effect, therefore 'Karma-sanyasa', the renunciation of action, the name given to this chapter and 'karma Brahmarpana', offering actions to the Lord, the name given to the previous chapter are one and the same. To make a distinction, perhaps , Adi shankara has adopted only Sanyasa Yoga, the Yoga of renunciation, as the name of the fifth chapter. For it is in this chapter that renunciation has been explained as not being inaction but action performed on behalf of the Divine. This attitude also creates constant communion with the Divine and therefore this chapter is appropriately named as Yoga of renunciation of deeds and actions.

The chapter sixth has been differently named as Yoga of meditation 'Dhyana Yoga' and yoga of self restraint, 'Atma Samyama Yoga'. No doubt there is a detailed description of meditation - how, where and when of it, yet the underlying current in this chapter is that of self restraint. In reply to some relevant questions put by Arjuna about the hurdles in controlling one's mind, Shri Krishna concedes that mind is hard to control, but hastens to add that by practice and non-attachment it can be controlled. The Lord explains that a Yogi carries forward his experience from one birth to another and perfects his Yoga, ' Aneka janam sansiddhah tato yanti paraam gatim' B.G 6:45. Thus the message is loud and clear that through self-restraint and self-control, one is able to merge with the supreme and therefore the Yoga in this chapter has been called 'Atma Samyama Yoga'.

The 7th Chapter is called Jnana-vijnana Yoga. While there is no dispute about the meaning of Jnana, the knowledge, the word Vijnana has been variously interpreted as realisation, application superior knowledge or experience. Shri Abhinavgupta, the great philosopher from Kashmir has said, 'Jnana-Vijnana, jnana kriya eva', i.e. it connotes knowledge and its application. In other words, the former would mean pure science and the latter the applied one, represented respectively by the Goddess Saraswati and the Goddess Lakshmi. The Lord acknowledges that all types of seekers, whether men in distress, men desirous of knowledge, men after wealth, or men of wisdom are noble, but it is the wise ones who are dear to Him as He is to them. This is so because the wise are established in the Divine. This communion with the divine through the knowledge, both pure and applied, is called the Yoga of Jnana-vijnana.

Next comes chapter 8th which is rightly called 'Akshara Brahma Yoga', the Yoga of the imperishable supreme. In some editions it has been called 'Brahmakshara nidesha Yoga', yoga of the direction towards the imperishable Lord. Shri Krishna makes it explicitly clear that he who constantly remembers me easily attains me and having attained me, these noble souls are freed form cycle of re-birth. Therefore He advises, 'Think of me alone at all times. B.G - 8:7'. Thus concentrating all the time on that imperishable Brahman is the Yoga, unique and unparalleled.

Rajavidya-Rajaguhya yoga is the name given to chapter 9. This means that this chapter gives out the sovereign science and sovereign secret. The sovereign science revealed herein is that the universe is pervaded by the Divine and that all beings exist in Him. He is the seed imperishable of the entire creation, 'beejam-avyayam.' The sovereign secret given out is that the Lord provides gain and security to those who remain ever devoted to Him, 'tesham nityabhiyukhtanam yoga-kshemam vahami-aham.' Yoga in this context means providing something which is wanting or gain. Kshema means giving protection to whatever one has or security. The Lord advises that 'whatever you do, all your actions should be an offering unto me and this way you shall come to me, B.G. 9.27 and 34.' Understanding this supreme

science and supreme secret also leads to the communion of the soul with the Supreme and thereby, constitutes yoga.

Chapter 10 is called 'Vibhuti yoga,' or the yoga of the contact with the Divine Glory. What better yoga there can be than perceiving and experiencing the glory of the Lord who is the master of this entire cosmos. The Lord says, 'I am the seed, I am the beginning, the middle and the end of all beings. My divine manifestations are endless and an individual being is a spark of my splendour. B.G. 10. 20/39/40/41.' And when yoga takes place it is this spark of His splendour that gets merged with the universal, eternal and immortal splendour that the Divine is.

In the opening shloka of chapter 11, Arjuna admits that all his delusion has been dispelled by the discourse that he has heard. Now he wants to have a glimpse of the Supreme Lord whom he addresses as Yogeshwara. In response to his this request the Lord shows him His cosmic form and seeing that he prostrates before Him. Terrified as he feels on seeing this spectacle, he begs of Him to appear in the 'Deva Rupa', the gentle human or the four-armed Vishnu form. Shri Krishna obliges and makes an important statement, 'I cannot be seen in this form by any means, not even by Vedas but by unswerving devotion only. 'Naham Vedairna.....shakya evamvidho drashtum. Bhaktya twananyaya shakah...B.G 11.53/54.' The vision that Arjuna had of the cosmic and gentle human forms of the Lord brought him in close contact with Him and this justifies the name given to this chapter.

Having said that the Lord can be seen only by an unflinching devotion, the next chapter 12 details the qualities of a devout who is the beloved of the Lord. Among other things the devout is required to be full of faith and keeping the Lord in view as his supreme goal, 'Shraddanah matparamah, 12.20' Since the devotion, 'Bhakti' has been described in detail in this chapter, it has aptly been named as Bhakti yoga, or communion through devotion.

The thirteenth chapter is yet another chapter which has been given different captions by different scholars. It has been variously called as "Prakriti-purusha nirdesha/viveka yoga" or the yoga pointing to/differentiating Nature from the Supreme Self, and 'Kshetra-kshetrajna vibhaga yoga,' or the yoga of the classification between the field and knower of the field. It has been explained in this chapter that the body is the field and the in-dweller Divine is the knower of the field. It has been made clear that the Nature and the Supreme Self both are beginning-less. The former is the means to the cause and effect syndrome and the latter causes enjoyment of pain and pleasure, B.G. 13.20/21. It is the Purusha seated in the Prakriti, who experiences the 'Gunas' born of it. The Purusha himself is the knower of the field and stays in the field in varying capacities of the Observer, the Giver of permission, the Supporter, the Enjoyer and the Supreme Master. Perceiving this with an eye of wisdom helps a person attain the Divine and that is the yoga of discernment described in this chapter.

The 14th chapter is captioned, 'guna-traya-vibhaga yoga' yoga of the division of the three gunas or qualities. In this chapter the three types of characteristics have been identified, described and their effects analysed. It has been stated that one must cross over these three gunas and the secret of doing so lies in poise, equanimity and balanced attitude. The Lord says, 'having crossed these three gunas, a person attains immortality, Gunaetan-atitena treen dehi.....amritam-ashnute, B.G.14.20.' In other words such a person merges with the Divine and that is the yoga realised by differentiating the three gunas and rising above them.'

Let us now take up chapter 15, which is called 'Purushottama yoga' or the yoga of the Supreme Self. In this chapter three types of 'Purushas have been described : the perishable or all the beings, the imperishable or the one seated within the beings and the Supreme or the one who transcends the remaining two. It is this Supreme Self which pervades and sustains the three worlds. 'yo loka-trayam-

avishya vibharti, B.G 15.17.' About this Supreme Shri Krishna says, 'Vedaischa sarvair-aham-eva vedyah,B.G.15.15' I am the one to be known through the Vedas. It is this Supreme Self that the seeker desires to merge with, and so the name of the chapter stands justified.

The 16th chapter is designated as, 'Daivasura sampad vibhaga yoga,' or the yoga of the classification of good and bad traits in a person. These traits have been listed out and it has been stated that those with bad qualities of lust, anger, greed etc; fall into a state still lower and never ever reach the Lord, 'mam-aprapyaiva....yantyadhamam gatim, B.G.16.20' On the other hand the qualities of compassion, renunciation, truth, purity, fearlessness etc; help a person attain the highest position, 'yati param gatim, B.G.16.22.'Therefore, in order to attain communion with the Divine we have to have full knowledge of these requisite qualities, for which the Shastras are the authority, 'Pramana, B.G.16.24.'

The penultimate chapter 17th is named 'Shraddha-trayi-vibhaga yoga,' or the yoga through the three types of faiths. In the Geeta everything is said to be of three types. The food we eat, the nature we possess, the actions we perform and so on, everything is either related to light, 'sattavika', or to fire and passion, 'rajasika', or related to the darkness, 'tamasic'. This can also be classified as superior, ordinary and inferior. Similarly the faith is also stated to be of three types depending upon one's disposition, one's Deity, one's food and one's resolve. The faith when applied to austerity & penance, 'tapas', alms giving, 'dana', and sacrifice, 'yajna' makes them a reality, reality,'Sat' and these very acts performed without faith become a non-reality, 'Asat'. It has further been stated in this chapter that the three sacred words, OM, TAT and SAT are the three ways of reciting the name of Brahman, the Supreme. Uttering these words leads to liberation and thus this chapter has correctly been named as Yoga through discriminating between faiths of three types.

The 18th chapter is designated as Sanyasa Yoga, the Yoga of renunciation at some places and Moksha Sanyasa, the Yoga of liberation through renunciation at other places. Since the chapter 5 is named as Yoga of renunciation or Yoga of renunciation of actions, it would be better to adopt the latter. In chapter 5, a seeker is asked to perform all his actions on behalf of the Divine, which connotes renunciation of action. In this chapter, a complete surrender before the Lord has been prescribed which would lead to merger with Him. Defining the word Sanyasa, it has been stated that it means renouncing those actions which are performed for desired objectives, 'Karma Karmas'. Similarly Tyaga has been defined as abandonment of the fruits of all actions. It has been explained, how, detachment leads to the supreme devotion, a state of freedom from actions, knowledge of the Divine, and, finally, complete merger with Him. A special attention may be paid to Shlokas 63 to 66. The Lord says, 'I have given you a relatively more profound knowledge, reflect on it and then do what you like'. The Lord hastens to add, 'there is however, yet another knowledge which is most profound, and which I shall give you now. Fix your mind on me, be devoted to me, renounce everything and take refuge in me. I shall liberate you and you shall come to me.'

Thus the message of Shri Geeta is unequivocal that surrender leads to liberation. It makes the seeker, 'Yukhta', or merged with the Divine, who is Sat, Chit and Anand, Being, Consciousness and Bliss, and thereby he becomes 'Mukhta', emancipated and liberated. In other words, he becomes the Master of the Yoga, ' Yogeshwara' himself.

12.0 THE SECRET OF SHIVRATRI

Shiva worships Bhawani

Shiva is the eternal existence and, therefore, the Supreme Truth. He is free of bondage, devoid of attributes, all pervading and yet above everything, 'Ati tishthat dashangulam'. He is Consciousness, 'Chita' and Bliss, 'Ananda'. Everything emanates from Him and everything ultimately merges with Him. He adopts the form of Brahma and with the attribute of Rajas (Rajoguna) creates the universe. He assumes the form of Rudra and with the attribute of Tamas (Tamoguna) destroys the creation. In between He holds the form of Vishnu and with the attribute of Sattva (Sattvaguna) looks after and preserves the creation. He is free to desire, to know and to act (Iccha, jnana and kriya). All this, however, needs energy or power and that takes the form of Shakti, which in essence is an aspect of Shiva Himself. Sometimes Shiva propitiates Shakti and She enters Him to enable Him to perform five acts of creation, 'uttpatti', sustenance, 'sthiti', and destruction, 'samhara', concealing, 'pidana', and showering His grace, 'anugraha'. While explaining the importance of Shakti, in Bhawani Sahasranama, Shiva says to His favourite devotee Nandi, "It is the grace of Bhawani that I have been able to create the entire universe, humans, animals, birds, devas, asuras, gandharvas, stars, planets, flora, fauna, et al."

Bhawani worships Shiva

Some other time the Bhawani herself meditates on Shiva, invokes Him, merges with Him whose inseparable aspect She is and becomes the cause of the birth of Kumara Kartikeya. This brings an end to the demon Tarkasur and saves the devatas from his wrath. This merger or marriage of Shiva with Shakti is what is celebrated as Shivaratri in Kashmir called '*Herath*' or Hara ratri, the night of Shiva. This festival has the same importance in our part of the country as Durga puja has in Bengal, Ganesh puja in Maharashtra, Ayyapa festival in the South, Holi in Brajadam and Baisakhi in the Punjab. This is perhaps the only festival in India that is celebrated in Kashmir for a full fortnight and has become a unique socio-religious event. It starts on the first day of the dark fortnight of Phalgun (February/March) with cleansing and renovation of the houses and concludes on the fifteenth amavasya day with the distribution of prasada of walnuts after performing the prescribed puja. Every married daughter is regarded as a Parvati and is sent by her parents to her Shiva's home in new dresses carrying money and gifts.

We worship Both

Although the fact of one God is universally accepted, the relationship between '**jeeva**' the individual soul and '**Brahman**', the universal soul is perhaps extensively discussed and explained only in our scriptures both in '**Nigamas**'(Vedas) and '**Agamas**'(other **Shastras**). There is an oft-quoted Vedic pronouncement, '**Ekam sat viprah bahudha vadanti**' the Truth is one, yet it is explained by the wise in different ways. This has given rise to different schools of philosophy propounding '**dwaita**' (dualism) and '**advaita**' (Non-dualism). The Shiva school of philosophy espouses non-dualism and the Kashmir Shaiva Darshan, also called '**Trika**' system stands for non-dualism in its pristine purity. It advocates that the creation being the manifestation of Shiva cannot be an illusion or **Maya** as propounded by Shankaracharya. It is, therefore, real and pervaded by Shiva. We in Kashmir worship Shiva in both the aspects of Shiva and **Shakti**. **Shakti** for us is **Rajna**, **Sharika**, **Jwala** and many other forms of the energy aspect of Shiva. Worshipping Her gives us unflinching faith in Shiva, the source of all knowledge and the destination of all the seekers ('**Eko gamyah**' as stated in **Mahimnastotra**). Shiva for us is the supreme Truth. Worshipping Him leads us to unwavering trust and belief in the Mother, the giver of protection, solace and divine grace.

Shivaratri Celebration

The celebration of Shivratri, therefore, is symbolic and this symbolic leads to the Real. Attainment of the real coincides with self-realisation and self-realisation is the ultimate aim and goal of a true seeker. The faiths world over have believed that it is from the mundane that one advances to the spiritual and supramental. Even Sufis have proclaimed that from *Ishqe Majazi*, the worldly love one rises to *Ishqe Haqiqi*, the true eternal love where one is able to realise (*Ham O ast*), I am He or (*Man Khuda*), I am the God. This is called '**Aham Brahmasmi**', I am the Divine in Vedantic parlance. This undisputedly establishes the importance of idol or symbol worship in general, which takes the form of *Vatuk Puja* on Shivaratri in Kashmir, The various pots that constitute the *Vatuk - Dul, Ryesh Dul, Sanivar, Machivar and No't*, etc, stand for various deities or in other words, the different aspects of the same Divine. We propitiate them and pray for world peace and well being of Mankind. From here we march on to self-realization and for this is needed an inward journey.

In the words of the great Lal Ded :

*Go'ran dopnam kunuy vatsun
Nyebra dopnam andar astun.*

My preceptor revealed to me the single truth and that was to go from without to within.

(Taken from the Book '**A Window on Kashmir**' written by T.N. Dhar)

13.0 THE STEADFAST AND THE LOVED ONE

A divine poetry, as the *Bhagwad Gita* is, it is interesting to note, that it is written in conversational form. Conversation between *Sri Krishna* and *Arjuna*, which forms the core content and conversation between *Sanjay* and *Dhritrashtra* that narrates and reproduces the whole dialogue. Obviously, therefore, there are questions and answers, counter questions and detailed explanations. Out of the many important, inquisitive and interesting questions posed by *Arjuna* and replied by *Sri Krishna*, two questions stand out in as much as they sum up the message of the Geeta in respect of the conduct of the mankind. The first one asked towards the last quarter of Chapter 2, is to know the distinguishing features of a steadfast person; his gait, his posture and his speech (*Sthittaprajnasya Ka Bhasha....BG 2.54*). The second question asked in the beginning of Chapter 12 seeks to know which of the two is superior, one who is a devout with unhindered concentration on the beautiful form of the lord with attributes and the other who is a devotee of the formless and attribute-less Lord (*Saguna & Nirguna.....tesham ke yogavittama BG 12.1*). In reply to this question *Sri Krishna* lists out the characteristics of a devout loved by Him the most. Earlier, in Chapter 7, the devotees have been classified into four categories (I) one who is drawn to *Ishwara Bhakti* (Devotion) because of his troubles and tribulations, (ii) one who is inquisitive to know, (iii) one who seeks wealth and (iv) one who is full of knowledge (*Chaturvidha Bhajantey Mam....BG 7.16*) and the lord says that the fourth type of devotee is endowed with unflinching, constant, and undivided devotion and therefore is distinguished. He loves the Lord and is loved by Him.

These two questions are inter related because the distinguishing features listed out in respect of a steadfast person are the same as the qualities required of a devotee to be the loved one of the Lord Himself. In other words it is the steadfast person who is the favoured and loved one of the Lord.

Let us first see what the qualities of a steadfast person are. *Sthitaprajna*, shuns all the desires arising in the mind and is satisfied in himself, by himself. He is undisturbed in grief, unattached to pleasures. He is devoid of love, fear, and anger and has a firm intellect. Un-lured all the time, he neither revels on receiving anything good nor hates anything bad. He withdraws his senses from sense objects like the tortoise withdraws his limbs. He drinks deep the nectar of the supreme vision and feels satiated even without actually enjoying worldly pleasures. He controls all his senses, which would otherwise lead his mind astray, trusts in the supreme and diverts all his energy to realising Him with all the concentration. Unattached with the sense objects, he is in full control of himself and is ever happy. Because of this everlasting happiness, all his grief is gone. He is at peace with himself which leads to firmness of the intellect. He is aware that the sense objects divert the senses and thus create disharmony. Therefore he keeps his senses in check and absorbs all the desires in himself without losing his poise and peace. He conducts himself without any attachment, has no attraction, no ego and no affection (*Bhagwat Gita 2.55 to 71*). This steadfastness is a divine state of mind and leads one to liberation and realisation of the Supreme (BG 2.72).

In reply to the other question, Sri Krishna praises both types of devotees; those worshipping *Saguna* and those worshipping *Nirguna Parmeshwara* (Lord with form and without form, with attributes and without attributes) He underlines the fact that both in effect worship one and the same lord and what is important is unflinching faith in Him and undivided concentration on Him. In this context, He enumerates the qualities of a devotee most loved by Him (BG 12.13 to 20). These qualities are that such a devotee bears no ill will towards anyone. He is friendly and compassionate. He is unattached, without any ego and poised in pain and pleasure. He is ever satisfied, his mind fixed on the Lord, his senses under his full

command and firm in his resolve. His mind and intellect are placed at the feet of the lord. He is a source of grief to none and no one is a source of grief to him. He is free from joy, envy, fear and grief. Contended, he is pious, efficient, neutral, without any remorse and performs his duties unmindful of the fruit. He is neither pleased nor hateful, neither grieves nor covets. For him nothing is favourable or unfavourable, auspicious or un-auspicious. For him there is no difference between a friend and a foe, respect and disrespect. Be it cold or hot, be it pleasure or pain, he is unattached. His reaction is the same when praised and when criticised. He remains calm and gets satisfaction in whatever he has. He is not attached to any one place but is devoted to the Lord all the time and has a firm intellect. He has unflinching faith in the Lord, acts as ordained with supreme faith in Him.

Now if one were to compare the two sets of qualities, one set prescribed for a steadfast person, and the other set for the devout loved one by the Lord, one would find that these are by and large identical. In order to endear ourselves to the Lord, we have to be steadfast and if the Lord loves us it ipso-facto means that we are endowed with a firm intellect.

Apart from the qualities of unflinching faith in the Lord and supreme devotion, what is needed is harmony, poise, and equilibrium, both in body and mind, i.e. *Samatwa*. It is this poise that has been likened with *Yoga* (BG 2.48). *Yoga* in effect means final merger with the Divine and this can be brought about by adopting a balanced attitude towards life in all circumstances and in divergent situations of gain and loss, pleasure and pain, honour and dishonour and bouquets and brick bats.

These qualities and this state of mind can be developed and acquired by constant practice about which the *Geeta* says that it takes so many lives to attain such a state where one sees everything in the *Divine* (*Vasudevah Sarvamiti Sa Mahatma Sudurlabhah...* BG 7.19). Having attained this position and after complete surrender before the Lord, one deserves the Divine grace. The Lord takes note of the fact that the devout is all the time wedded to His love and as stated in Chapter 10, *Slokas* 10 and 11, He lights the lamp of his wisdom, removes the dark veil of ignorance from his eyes and grants him ways and means to attain Him. This transforms the devout from the position of *Dasoham* (I am His servant) to that of *Soham* (I am He). For this he has to (*Da*) i.e give (up) himself, his ego, and merge with the Ultimate Truth (*param Sat*). This is the goal that a steadfast and a loved one has set for himself.

14.0 THE SYSTEMS OF INDIAN PHILOSOPHY

Philosophy, says Bertrand Russell, is a No Man's Land between theology and science. Dogma is the realm of theology and definite knowledge that of science. The Sanskrit word for philosophy is Darshan, which means 'seeing'. There are three things that in our view are shrouded in mystery, namely, God, World, and the Self. Innumerable questions confront us in relation to these three, their nature, their origin and so on. We seek answers to these questions either on the basis of inherited religious and ethical conceptions or through logical reasoning and scientific investigation. This gives rise to a viewpoint or vision and that vision constitutes one's philosophy.

The Vedas comprise a vast body of sacred literature containing divine knowledge as seen by ancient seers. Since it was revealed and heard, it is called 'Shruti'. It used to be called 'Veda Trayi', the triple Vedas, because knowledge (Jnana), ritual (Karma) and devotion (Bhakti), formed the three major streams dealt with in the Vedas. In due course of time, seers and sages engaged themselves in interpreting, investigating and analysing the Veda Mantras. They wrote their conclusions in a form called 'Sutra' (literally meaning - a thread) or aphorism method. This necessitated writing of commentaries and treatises called Bhashya, and Vartika. Since different scholars wrote these commentaries, different systems of Indian philosophy emerged out of these texts. There are six major theistic schools that are usually clubbed in three groups of two schools each.

Sankhya and Yoga.

Nyay and Vaisheshika.

Poorva Mimansa and Uttara Mimansa (also called Advaita).

Buddhism and Jainism provided two major heterodox systems and the Charvaka propounded a purely materialistic viewpoint.

The usual method was to take up a theme (Vishaya), discuss its relevance (Prayojana), consider its dissentient view (Poorva Paksha), and then arrive at the conclusion (Uttara Paksha). The norms or sources of knowledge (Pramana) employed were perception or experience (Pratyaksha), inference (Anumana), verbal testimony or revealed word (Shabda). Some scholars also accepted other sources namely, analogy (Upmana), presumption or postulation (Arthapatti) and non-apprehension (Anupalabdhi). Some facts of knowledge were treated as self establishing (Swatah Pramanya). A distinction was made between the gross body of flesh and blood called 'Sthula Sharira' and the subtle body called 'Sookshma Sharira', between reality and appearance (Sat and Asat). Relationship was established between the individual soul and the universal soul (Jivatma and Parmatma). A correlation (Smanvaya) was observed between the individual entity and the universe (Pinda and Brahamaṇḍa) and it was proclaimed that 'as in individual, so in the universe' (yatha pinde, tatha brahamaṇde).

The rationale for different systems was already given by the Vedas themselves by stating "Ekam Sat Viprah bahudha vadanti"- The Truth that exists is one but the wise describe it in many ways. Even so, the Indian philosophy differs from the western philosophy for the ancient Greek philosophers confined themselves in investigating the individual being, the world and the Divine and social, political and religious tenets only .The Indian philosophers, on the other hand were concerned with suffering of the mankind, materially, morally and spiritually, its eradication, the relationship between the individual being, the nature and the Divine as also the means of attaining the Truth and self-realisation. Thus the Indian philosophers had a definite direction and goal though their paths were different. In fact the difference in these paths itself may be apparent rather than real as these paths are either complementary to each other or relevant

at various stages of spiritual investigation and progress. Now let us examine how and with what purpose did these systems develop and flourish.

Saankhya literally means enumeration. The word is derived from Sankhya meaning numerals. Evidently Saankhya is purported to describe a definitive knowledge as definite as a numeral denotes. This system is concerned with duellist cosmology explicating the concepts of bondage and liberation and is in search of discriminating knowledge. The oldest text on this system of philosophy is the Saankhya Karika of Ishwara Krishna dating back to 4th century, yet it is attributed to sage Kapila of 15th century. It is a boldly speculative system of duellist metaphysics. It does not base itself on Vedic revelation and its basis is a proto-scientific inductive reasoning. It is knowledge of super sensual elements of reality discovered through a form of inference from analogy. This kind of inference supersedes sensual perception as one is removed from the world of perceived effects to unperceived cause. It believes that the knowledge that discriminates between the world of effects and the world of causes is a liberating knowledge and justifies the saying: "Sa Vidya ya Vimukhtaye"- knowledge is that which liberates. Two ultimate eternal realities are recognised in this system, viz.; Purusha, the Spirit and Prakriti, the Nature. Besides these two there are twenty-three other elements that form this universe. These evolve from Prakriti whereas Purusha is non-matter or pure spirit. Two types of liberation are conceived in this system: "Jeevan Mukhti" or liberation during the life time when the self ceases to be affected by life's vicissitudes and "Videh Mukhti", liberation after death when the spirit is released from the psycho-physical organism and remains eternally unconscious.

Yoga, loosely translated yoga means combining or total absorption. This system shows methodicity and may be termed as a formulator of a meditative technique for attaining liberation. While Saankhya is in search of discriminating knowledge Yoga lays emphasis on ascetical methods constituting discipline of body, mind and soul. In philosophical terms it agrees with most of what Saankhya says, only it differs in technique. It accepts the theory of twenty-five elements but adds one more element of the Supreme Being as eternal, all pervading and omniscient which brings about the association of Purusha and Prakriti. This system is based on the Yoga Darshan of Acharya Patanjali, which has been explained and elaborated by scholars like Vyasa, Vachaspati Mishra, Vijnan Bikshu, Raghavanand and Nagesh Bhatt. In this system eight steps of yogic practices have been envisaged. These are Restraint (Yama), Discipline (Niyama), Comfortable posture (Asana), Breath control (Pranayama), Control of senses (Pratyahara), Contemplation (Dharana), Meditation (Dhyana) and the attainment of complete Merger (Samadhi). The aim of both Saankhya and Yoga is attainment of perfect isolation called Kaivalya. This is a state where the individual spirit is liberated from the bondage of matter by vigorous effort and self discipline.

Nyaya: This system of pure logic aiming at liberation through clear thinking is attributed to Gautama, a sage of the 2nd century. In this system a well defined procedure has been developed to arrive at a well reasoned conclusion after ironing out arguments, counter-arguments, objections, doubts, and debatable aspects of the issue involved. There are two streams of this philosophy. One piloted by Gautama is called categoristic since it details sixteen different aspects to be considered before accepting a proposition. This is also called Prachina Nyaya or the ancient logic. The second one originated by Acharya Gangesha is called Navya Nyaya or the modern logic. This is a highly sophisticated school of logic developed in the 13th century. This system accepts the existence of God as all pervading, creator and controller of every thing. It treats the creation as an effect and God as its cause.

Vaisheshika: This system is almost like the modern Physics as it analyses the specifics of material reality and therefore justifies its name, which means Specific Knowledge. It is attributed to the sage Kanada, believed to have lived in first or second century. Originally this system was atheistic and believed that creation was the result of combination of atoms. Later with its merger with the Nyaya it accepted God as

a secondary creator periodically creating worlds from eternally existent matter. Vaisheshika has explained the various forms of matter, the difference between Time and Direction, Nature and Function, Ordinary and the Special, Existence and Non-existence, Knowledge and Nascience and the concept of sky, ether, relationship etc; As against other systems the Vaisheshika accepts only 17 elements of sight, taste smell etc; About Dharma Kanad says: "Yato- abhyudayah nih-shreyas siddhih sa Dharma " - that which helps achieve spiritual upliftment is Dharma.

Purva Mimamsa: Mimansa literally means a critical investigation. Vedas have two major subjects, Karma Kanda and Jnana Kanda, i.e. ritual and knowledge. Since this system makes a critical investigation of the ritual portion of the Vedas, it is called Mimansa. The investigation of knowledge is made under the system called Vedanta. The former is known as Purva Mimansa or earlier exegesis and the latter Uttara Mimansa or Later exegesis. Mimansa has its origin in the Mimansa Sutra of Jaimini (1st century BC) on which a commentary has been written by Shabara Swami. Two scholars further elaborated this Shastra during the 8th century. They were Kumaril Bhatt and Prabhakar Mishra. The main aim of Mimansa has been to propound Dharma for which it considers Veda as the sole authority. Veda, according to it, contains five topics viz.

Vidhi - or procedure, which are directional in character

Mantra - or the specified chanting at the time of performing rituals

Namadheya - or the nomenclature of various Yajnas

Nishedha - or forbidden acts and

Arthavada - or eulogising the qualities and relevance of any matter.

The Veda in Mimansa is considered eternal and unchanging and 'Apaurushya' i.e. a divine revelation. The world is believed to have existed always and there is an endless process of becoming and passing away. Consciousness comes to the soul only when it is embodied. With the liberation, the soul becomes devoid of the body and the consciousness, both.

Uttara Mimansa or Vedanta - The subsequent enquiry or later exegesis is actually Vedanta, end or the goal of the Vedas. The sole aim of this system has been investigation of the knowledge of Brahman and therefore it covers the Jnana aspect of the Vedas. This system actually started with the composition of Brahma Sutra (aphorisms on the Divine) by Badarayan, who perhaps lived around 4th century BC. . The subject of investigation being what it is and the Brahma Sutra having been written in aphorisms, it was open to different interpretations. Consequently, a number of scholars wrote commentaries on Brahma Sutra along with the Bhagwat Gita and Upanishads, collectively called 'Prasthana Trayi'. This gave rise to various streams within the system of philosophy collectively called Uttara Mimansa or Vedanta. There were differing views on the nature of the individual being (Jiva) and the Divine (Ishwara), and the relation of the former with the latter. In fact, these discussions form the core literature on the unique Indian philosophy aiming at ultimate liberation, self-realisation, emancipation and moral, mental, physical and spiritual upliftment of the mankind.

The first major interpretation on Brahma Sutra came from Gaudapada and Shankara, the disciple of his disciple Govinda. They propounded the theory of Monism (Advaita) stating that Brahman alone was the reality and everything else was an illusion (Maya). The catch word was from Chandogya Upanishad 'Tat Tvam Asi' - thou art that. Shankara's philosophy was further elaborated by many scholars including Sureshwara and Vachaspati Mishra.

The next important exposition has been that of Ramanujacharya, who advocated qualified Monism (Vishishta Advaita). It was explained by him that the relationship between individual and the Divine is that of a part and the whole. Both have distinct identity. They are not identical, but everything conscious and unconscious exists in the Divine. This system gave rise to Vaishnava theology and introduced meditational devotion to Lord Vishnu.

The third line of thought was propounded by Madhavacharya, who was the exponent of Dualism (Dvaitavada). He advocated that God is eternal and transcends the world. The world and souls are also eternal but distinct from one another, and dependent on God. This ideology was further elaborated by an erudite scholar named Jayatirtha.

Three Sanskrit words describe the relationship between Jiva (Individual Soul) and Brahman (Universal Soul) according to the three major interpretations to Brahma Sutra provided by the three streams given above. These words are Saameepya (proximity), Saarupyta (similarity), and Saayujya (identity). The Dualist philosophy believes that the individual soul as a devotee can attain proximity to God. The Qualified Monism believes that the individual soul can attain identical similarity with the God by his meditational devotion, and the Monist believes that the individual can attain complete identity with the God by merging with the Divine once the illusion melts away and Avidhya (nascience) and Ajnana (ignorance) are removed by true Vidya and Jnana.

Two other schools of philosophy within the Vedanta system are Dvaitadvaita (Dualism in Non-Dualism) of Nimbarka and Vishuddhadvaita (Pure Non-Dualism) of Vallabhacharya. The former school is also called Bhedabhed (Difference in Non-Difference). Nimbarka believed that the Brahman, the souls and the world are identical yet distinct. Even after their merger, they remain distinct. Vallabhacharya was of the opinion that Maya was not an illusion as stated by Shankara but it was the God's creative activity.

The heterodox systems of philosophy presented a critical epistemology. They evolved a system of logic of complexity and refinement and thereby inaugurated a Philosophy consisting of a dialectic for destroying metaphysics through its own assumptions. However, in due course it gave rise to a counter dialectic which re-established metaphysical thought. Even so there was considerable mutual effect between the theistic (Astika) and heterodox (Nastika) schools of thought, the latter being Buddhism and Jainism. The one school that challenged the primacy of Brahman and Aatman was Charvaka Darshan. This school is attributed to Brihaspati (date not known) and Jayarashi Bhatt of the 7th century. They propagated that the liberation or Moksha was only an illusory goal and that the life ended with the death. There are no Gods nor any Aatman and the happiness alone is a sensible end. Obviously this materialistic viewpoint did not find Indian soil fertile enough for it to sustain. The Indian mind accepted God as an embodiment of Being, Consciousness and Bliss and Liberation or unity with Brahman as the highest goal. It was proclaimed "Sarvam Khalvidam Brahma" - everything here verily is Divine alone.

15.0 THE ELIXIR OF LIFE

A detailed study of the Gita will show that often there is no single straight answer to any single straight question. This is not surprising. Since the dawn of civilisation the life itself has been so complex and intricate that the problems faced by the mankind and their solutions cannot be over simplified. We have the gross body of flesh and blood which has its own problems of survival that gives rise to material needs and their fulfillment. We have the subtle body of mind and soul which has its own problems of perception, feelings, experiences etc; that give rise to non-material needs and their fulfillment. The two are different, poles apart. One is solid, visible and apparent and the other is subtle, invisible and abstract. Even then the two are so intermingled and overlapping that they cannot be completely separated or segregated. The questions that are bordering on both these fields have, therefore, necessarily to be intricate and their answers have to be complex. Sometimes we are faced with a situation like that of the famous egg and hen syndrome and it is difficult to decide which one came first. The nature of persons is varied. Their experiences are different. The circumstances in which they live, the way they think, act and react are dissimilar. It is natural, therefore, that their perceptions differ and they develop different views and philosophies of life. One thing is common though, that all of them want to achieve success, maximise their happiness and attain peace. It is here that the problems arise about what the means to success are, what the lasting happiness is and what the real peace and bliss are. Now the answers to these questions have to be different for different persons. In fact these have to be different even for the same person at different times and at different places. There cannot be a single teacher for all classes of seekers of knowledge nor can there be a single teacher for a student at all levels of his scholarship. A simple primer of alphabets and a nursery teacher would be all that is needed for a beginner to learn a language. The higher the student rises in his studies, the more advanced books would be needed and better qualified teachers would be required. Similarly, different medicines are to be administered to different patients with different diseases and even to the same patient at different stages of his ailment. There cannot be a single medicine as an elixir for all. In the same way, the Gita prescribes different solutions for the problems of different aspirants and for the same aspirant in different situations. The sum total is an elixir of life for all, at all places, for all times and in all circumstances. An aspirant, a seeker has to see for himself what suits him at what time, place or level of his aspiration and quest.

The Gita talks of knowledge, action, devotion and yoga as the different paths of achieving one's goal. In specific contexts it establishes superiority of one over the rest. However, it does not emphasise the supremacy of any one over the others for all situations, for all times or for all persons. Therefore these different paths should not be construed to be conflicting or opposed to one another. They are at least different routes suitable for different sets of travellers and at best different means relevant and beneficial at different stages of the journey, complementary to each other in achieving the desired objective. These different stages could be also the different levels in the quest for spiritual enhancement and realisation of the Supreme Truth. Even while referring to any one of these means the Gita gives a holistic picture with pros and cons, pitfalls and the effort involved, so that it becomes clear as to what one is up to in treading that particular route or adopting that specific means in one's spiritual journey. When it talks about 'jnana', knowledge it gives the importance of both the theory 'jnana' and its application, 'vijnana'. When it talks about 'karma', action it qualifies it by specifying that it should be either 'mat-karma', action on behalf of the Divine, or 'nishkama-karma', action without any desire for its fruits. When it talks about 'bhakti', devotion, it makes the point clear that it should be 'ananya', undivided and unwavering. When it talks of

'yoga', the yoke, it says that one should be 'nityabhiyukta' and 'satat yukta', ever and always merged with the Divine. Thus every path has been defined, qualified, elaborately specified and explained in detail.

It is in this context that we have to understand the alternatives placed before Arjuna by the Lord in these words: 'If you want to live in Me alone, you should all the time fix your mind on Me and apply your wisdom towards Me. This would be the ideal situation. However, it may not be possible for you to be in that state all the time. Try and practise yoga in order to reach Me. In case you find practising also too difficult then perform actions for my sake to attain perfection. If even executing My actions is beyond your capacity, then be on your own, act as you please but renounce the fruit of your actions. This will give you peace because renunciation of the fruit of action is more beneficial than meditation, knowledge or experimentation.' Giving up the fruits of action is the definition of 'tyaga', abandonment provided by the Gita. But it says that it is not possible for any one to give up all the actions born of his nature. No body can remain actionless even for a moment. However, one can be selective and if 'kamya karmas', the desire-oriented actions are given up, this would be termed as 'sanyasa', renunciation. Even so the ascetics, the men of knowledge and the men of action have been placed lower in rank to a 'yogi', one who is yoked to the Divine. This gives a clear message that in the end analysis it has to be our aim to attain the position of 'sayujya', complete merger with the Lord. Yoga also has been defined in two ways: excellence in one's actions and equanimity and poise in one's conduct. Whatever we do it has to be done to perfection. Thus it will be seen that three things are involved in the path of action. First is the selection of actions. These should be those that are our natural duties, virtuous and righteous and not those dictated by our passion, lust, desire or ignorance. Secondly, having selected the right type of actions, we must perform them with excellence and to perfection Thirdly, care should be taken that their fruit is not the consideration for undertaking them The only consideration should be that they form our duty and must be performed. As regards the poise in our conduct, we must take success and failure in our stride. We should neither get lost in pleasure nor be perturbed in pain. Seeing the Divine in every being, our attitude towards all should be the same.

Human life is one of constant change, for better or for worse. If it is former then a person is elevated from the lower stage of spiritual position to the higher one. If it is latter then he goes down from higher to the lower. For the second category of people the Gita says that they sink lower and lower and never attain release from the bondages of 'samsara', the cycle of birth - death - rebirth. It is for the first category of persons that the Gita prescribes various paths, ways and methods of seeking the Truth as also solutions for various problems faced during this quest. These are relevant at various stages and levels of their elevation in their search for self and the Divine. At some level they have to distinguish between the real and the unreal knowledge indicated in the Gita. At other times the detailed procedure for meditation given therein, is found beneficial by them for their upliftment The logic and reason helps them up to a point. Then the faith, trust and belief take over and carry the seekers forward. Thereafter a stage is reached when it is realised that the only way out is complete surrender before the Lord and seeking refuge in Him till one achieves perfect merger, the ultimate goal of all the seekers and devotees. Even the duty and righteousness, called 'dharma', which the Gita says is essential in the early stages of ascendance, has to be abandoned ultimately. This is exactly as we give up the ladder, which helped us climb the heights, on reaching the desired peak. Or just as we abandon the boat, which ferried us across, on reaching the shore.

Our traditional knowledge has always been holistic. There were no compartments, subjects or disciplines of knowledge. One had to traverse the whole range from Grammar to Philosophy, from Logic to Exegesis, from Monism to Dualism and from mundane to spiritual in the quest for knowledge. True to this tradition, Shri Gita also presents a comprehensive picture of all the aspects of life and is, therefore, useful for any

one, at any place, at any point of time and at any level of consciousness. There are four very vivid, lucid and all encompassing shlokas in the Gita. One of them gives the sum total of the nature of existence of the Lord within the heart of beings and His varied functions. It speaks of the Divine as a spectator who goes on observing us and our activities while seated therein. It depicts Him as the one from whom we can seek permission, guidance and direction for all that we do. It calls Him as the enjoyer of all that is enjoyable and master and preserver of all that exists. The second shloka describes the perfect devotees. They sing in praise of their beloved deity. They talk about Him, discuss Him and describe Him in their conversation. The Lord is all the time in their thoughts, mind and intellect. This keeps them contented, happy and peaceful. The third one assures those who are ever merged with the Divine that they need not worry about themselves. What they have, will be protected by the Divine. What they do not have, will be provided by Him. He takes care of their gain and security. The fourth shloka is virtually the last shloka of the operative part of the Gita. It is a window to the ultimate and the supreme path. It asks us to abandon all other props and take refuge in the Divine. This, it says, will liberate us from all sins and thereby all anxieties. This is the elixir of life that will sure deliver us from all our ailments, physical, mental and spiritual so that we are able to reach our goal of realising our self and the Divine, who is Existence, Consciousness and Bliss; who is True, Benevolent and Beautiful.

(Taken from the Book '**Bhagavad Gita, The Elixir of Life**' written by Shri Dhar)

16.0 THE UPANISHADS

Flowers, Fragrant and beautiful

"Jnani Twatmaiva Me Matam, B.G.7.18- A knowledgeable one is my very soul," proclaims Shri Krishna in the Bhagwad Gita. In order to become knowledgeable one has to acquire knowledge. Vedas are the store house of knowledge, but then there is a lot of other matter in the Vedas; mantras relating to actions and deeds, mantras relating to devotion and worship, mantras relating to Yajna, the sacrifice and mantras relating to knowledge relevant to body, mind and soul, the creator and the creation. It is this knowledge content of the Vedas which has been culled out and put forward in the form of various Upanishads, sometimes as a narrative, sometimes in question and answer form, and sometimes in the form of a fable or two. There are a lot many Upanishads, some named after the Rishi who has compiled them, like Kathopanishad, some named after the initial word of the first Mantra, like Ishavasya Upanishad, and others named with reference to their distinguishing features, like Prashnopanishad. Since these Upanishads are the core of Vedanta and contain the wisdom of ancient India, it is the duty of every one of us who claims to be an Indian, to have at least a basic knowledge of this rich and invaluable heritage of ours. Since their number is large, it would suffice if some of the more important and prominent Upanishads are explained.

An inquisitive mind wants to know the reality of what he sees around him. He wants to unravel the secrets of the nature. He looks to this whole universe with awe, surprise and astonishment, as stated in the Gita, 'Aashchariyavat Pashyati Kashchitenam....B.G. 2.29'. It is therefore of paramount importance for him to see, hear, think, analyse, discern and experience with utmost concentration in order to know and gain knowledge, "...drashtavyah shrotavyo mantavyo nididhyasitavyah atmasakhshatkarah kartavyah". The Upanishads help him, show him the way and guide him. The Gita also says in very clear terms, "tatvidhi pranipaten pariprashnen sevaya B.G. 4.34". One has to approach, enquire and serve in order to gain knowledge.

The vivid most questions that arise in the mind of a seeker are about the creation as such, the origin of this universe, the nature of life and death, the evolution and the management and the administration of the cosmos. For an answer to these questions, for a detailed discussion on these points and for an explanation to this phenomena, one has to turn to five important Upanishads viz. Aitreya, Brihadaranyaka, Shvetashwatar, Prashna and Chhandogya.

1. **Aitreyopnishad** is the work of Mahidas. He was born of a maid named Itera, hence was known as Aitreya and his work also gets his name. This Upanishad has three chapters. The first one deals with the creation of the cosmos and the universe. The second narrates the creation of a human being, transmigration of soul and the liberation. The third deals with the nature of the soul and the Divine. Two statements made in this Upanishad would be noteworthy. It says. " Atma va idameka evagre aasit manyatkim chinmishat, sa eekshat lokan nu srijai iti". Prior to creation only Parmatma the supreme soul existed. He saw and desired to create. The Upanishad explains this statement and goes on to add, "Atma vai jayate santatih, it is the self, the procreator who is re-born in the form of his progeny".

2. **Brihadaaranyak**, In size, it is voluminous (Brihad) and has been narrated in a jungle (Aranya) and thus its name. This Upanishad has six chapters and starts with the description of Ashwamedha Yajna. It contains some fables and all important dialogues of Yagyavalka with Janaka, with Maitreyee and with Gargi and that between Gargya and Ajatshatru, Through the medium of these interesting conversations the intricate secrets have been explained, the origin of Time and Speech and the life essence (Prana)

have been revealed. Three important statements made in this Upanishad are I). Paranchikani vyatrinat swayambhu - the Lord has made the senses extrovert because of which these are drawn towards sense objects. II) Ekamevaadwitiyam Brahma. - the creator is one and unmatched, without any second. III) aatmaivedam sarvam - the entire creation is self incarnate.

3. **Shwetashwatar.** This important work of a Rishi by the same name is a very important treatise on the creation of atoms, electrons, protons, and the structure of cells. It also discusses the role of time, nature, destiny and other elements like positive and negative charges of a magnet. It explains the relationship between the Divine, the man, and the nature. It has been stated that 'Maya tu prakritim vidyat Mayinam tu Maheshwaram. - in other words, the nature is an illusion created by the Lord who said in the beginning 'Ekohum bahusyam - I am single and let me become multiple.

4. **Prashnopanishad.** As the name itself suggests, this Upanishad is based on the answers given to six questions put by Sukesh, Satyakam, Gargya, Kaushalya, Vaidarbhi and Kabandhi. Acharya Pippalad takes up the last question first and from the answer to that question derives answers to the remaining five. The last question was, how did the creation take place ? The answer given is by the combination of matter and force, positive and negative, active and passive called Prana and Rayi, symbolised in male and female. The importance of the life essence Prana, has been established in this Upanishad and the life after death has been described.

5. **Chhandogya.** This is one of the voluminous Upanishads divided into eight sections with 154 sub sections. This is said to have been compiled by Angirus, and starts with a detailed account of the worship of 'OM'. There are quite a few illustrative fables in this Upanishad relating to Jana Shruti - Raikva Rishi, Jabala-Satyakam, Shwetaketu-Jaibali, Ashwapati-Uddalak Rishi and Sanat Kumar-Narada. A very important scientific fact has been established in this Upanishad, that the physical elements like water, light etc. are necessary to sustain the mental and psychological elements like mind, speech, resolution, attention etc. The Upanishad narrates the gradual development of spirituality. It says, "Chatushkalah padah Brahmanah prakashawan nama'. The supreme shines on all sides and "Bhuma eva parmam sukham" i.e the search for the eternal and endless only is supreme bliss.

All the Upanishads have proclaimed and established the omnipresence of the God. Yet Ishavasyopanishad and Mandukyopanishad have special significance in regard to this subject. Shwetashwataropansihad says 'Eko devah sarvabhuteshu gudah sarva vyapi sarvabhantratma' - there is one supreme pervading everything which is the soul of everything.

6. **Ishavasyopanishad.** This Upanishad has a distinct place in as much as it forms the last fortieth chapter of Shuklayajurveda. It begins with the words 'Ishawasyam' and thus gets its name. After stating the established truth of the omnipresence of the Divine it says 'Tyekhtena bhunjithah' - enjoy, but with an attitude of sacrificing and not that of attachment. It further enjoins 'Ma gridhah Kasyachit dhanam' - covet not others wealth. The life span in ancient times was hundred years and above. Referring to that, the Upanishad says 'Kurvannevaha Karmani jijivishet shatam samah' - desire to live a hundred years but utilise this span of life in doing good deeds.

7. **Mandukya.** This Upanishad was compiled by Rishi Mandukya whence it gets its name. Running into only twelve mantras, it explains the all pervading Brahman in the form of 'OM'. It analyses its four components, a, o, m and the silent 'n', and connects them to the four aspects of the Supreme and the human being viz. Wakefulness, sleeping state, dreaming state, and the fourth one beyond these three. It also gives an account of the five constituents of a human being i.e. body structure made of food (anna), the ability to perform due to the life essence (prana), the aspect of desire in human mind (mana), knowledge and ego of the intellect (vijnan) and the ability of deriving pleasure (ananda) from both desire

and action. This Upanishad has in effect said that the Divine is all pervading in the form of 'OM' and can be known either as 'He' or as 'I'. In the former case one becomes a devotee (Bhakta) and in the latter a knowledgeable soul (Jnani).

Kena, Katha and Mundaka are the three Upanishads in which again vital questions about the secrets of this universe, knowledge and liberation have been explained. Let us start with Mundakopanishad.

8. Mundaka. It has an interesting beginning. Shaunaka Rishi approaches Acharya Angira, the perceiver of this Upanishad and asks 'Pray ! teach me some such subject by knowing which all the branches of Knowledge become known. In reply the Acharya says that knowledge is of two types, Para (higher) and Apara (lower). It is the former which leads to liberation and self realisation. A quotable quote of this Upanishad is 'Sa vidya ya vimuktaye' - education is that which has liberation as its aim.

It is interesting to note that each Upanishad has something or the other to it which has become axiomatic. Ishavasya has brought out (Vidya and Avidya), experienced knowledge and acquired knowledge. Prashnopanishad has established two elements, Prana and Rayi, the active and the passive , necessary for creation. Mundak describes two types of education, Para, the hidden and superior one and Apara, the mundane. Similarly, Kenopanishad has mentioned the two driving forces as Jivatma, the individual soul and Parmatma, the collective supreme soul. Kathopanishad has referred to two important factors, Shreya, the beneficial and Preya, the attractive one.

9. Kenopanishad gets its name by the first word of the question raised in the beginning itself. Kena, by whom. The full question is 'Keneshitam patati preshitam manah ?' - by whom is the mind diverted towards sense objects ? In other words, who is the driving force behind all activities, physical, mental etc. There is a detailed discussion on this subject in this Upanishad which establishes the existence of the supreme power that pervades, guides and controls the entire universe. There is a tale relating to Vrtrasur through the medium of which this has been explained. The power has been described as unimaginable, indescribable, yet existing in the form of Jeevatma, the individual soul and Parmatma, the collective supreme soul.

10. Kathopanishad. This Upanishad perceived by Rishi Katha is famous because of the dialogue between Nachiketa and Yama. Because of the insistence of Nachiketa, the Yama is forced to divulge the secrets of self realisation for which he says one has to peep inside one's self with due discipline and yogic practices.

Let us before concluding, take up yet another important Upanishad viz. Taittirya.

11. Taittirya. This Upanishad, in three parts, is unique as it throws light on the ancient educational system. The first part is called Shikshadhyay Balli., or the chapter on education. The second part is Brahmanand Balli, or the chapter on supreme bliss, and the third part is Bhrigu Balli, the chapter explaining the worship of the Supreme. This Upanishad is a treatise on learning process, pronunciation, recitation, phonology, morphology, semantics, syntax, etymology etc. It gives the duties of the teacher and the taught, the essence of education, self study, study of scriptures and the development of the spirit of a student. There is also an account of Gurukula, campus of the preceptor and the Deekshanta, the present day convocation after which a Brahmachari, i.e. a celibate used to start Grihasta, the family life.

The study of all these Upanishads is fascinating, illuminating, informative and educative. Let us conclude this brief account of this important treasure of Upanishads with an Upanishadic quotation - ' Swadhyaya Pravachanabhyam na pramaditavyam' - one should shirk neither from learning nor from teaching.

17.0 FIVE MILLENNIA OLD CULTURE & LITERATURE OF KASHMIR - SOME LANDMARKS

(*Lecture delivered at RP Memorial Foundation Society on 16th December, 2000*)

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Please bear with me; I am no scholar. I am simply a student of literature. Writing poetry is my hobby. My only qualification for delivering a lecture on the subject of culture and literature of Kashmir, before this learned audience, is that I am a Kashmiri. You may not, therefore, find any thing revealing or new in my talk but I assure you that you will get the fragrance of saffron and the soothing breeze of the valley, while share my views with you. You may not be any wiser over what you already know but you will surely feel the bubbling life represented by the Lotus grown in the Dal Lake and elsewhere.

- T.N.Dhar 'Kundan'

Culture Defined

It is in the fitness of things that today when the twenty-first century is knocking at our doors and when our beloved Kashmir is undergoing an unprecedented turmoil for more than a decade now, we should be sitting back and reflecting on the five millennia old culture and literature of Kashmir, the land of our birth. Before doing so let us first try to figure out what the word Culture connotes. According to Professor Terry Eagleton, 'Culture, etymologically speaking, is a concept derived from nature. One of its original meanings is husbandry. At first the term denoted a material process, which was then metaphorically transposed to the affairs of the spirit. The Latin root for this word is 'colere', which can mean anything from cultivating and inhabiting to worshipping and protecting. But 'colere' also ends up via the 'cultus' as the religious term 'cult'. The idea of culture signifies double refusal: of organic determinism and of the anatomy of spirit. It is a rebuff to both naturalism and idealism. The very word culture contains a tension between making and being made, rationality and spontaneity'. S.T.Coleridge says that 'culture is what comes naturally, bred in the bone rather than conceived by the brain'. Raymond Williams is of the opinion that 'culture is the organization of the production, the structure of the family, the structure of institutions which govern social relationships, the characteristic form through which members of the society communicate and a structure of feeling'. T.S.Eliot, on the other hand, has defined culture as 'the way of life of a particular people living together in one place; that which makes life worth living; that which makes it a society – it includes Arts, Manners, Religion and Ideas.' After the mid twentieth century culture has come to mean the affirmation of a specific identity – national, ethnic, regional rather than the transcendence of it. All these definitions make culture overlap civilization. In order to differentiate between the two, one could say that culture is the manner of our thinking and civilization the manner of our living. The former has a definite and telling effect on the latter and the two together give us our distinct identity. In effect culture of a society manifests itself in the form of its civilisation.

Ancient Hindu Period

If there is a single terminology that sums up the entire gamut of our culture as Kashmiris, it is the name '**Ryeshi Vaer**' given to our land. '**Ryeshi Vaer**' literally means a garden of sages. This land has produced an innumerable number of saints and savants, sages and Sufis, who have always stood for the durable human goods of truth, freedom, wisdom, humility, simplicity, compassion, contemplation, worship and the like. The common Kashmiri has adopted these qualities and infused them in his thinking and actions. If I borrow the idiom of Mary Pat Fisher I would say that the map of our Kashmir cannot be colour-coded as

to its Hindu, Muslim, Buddhist identity; each of its parts is marbled with the colours and textures of the whole. We have had Buddhist view of life and cosmos thrive in this land for many many years in the past. We have had a distinct non-dualistic ideology called the 'Trika' Philosophy shape the metaphysical thinking of this land. We have had the Vedic rituals of the Sanatana Dharma as the basis of our very existence. There used to be an admixture of 'Shakta' and 'Tantra' in our way of worshipping and then, with the advent of Islam in fourteenth century we witnessed the rise of Sufi order in this land. All these in course of time got merged and produced a blend of culture, which is humanistic, pious and pure, yet very simple and straightforward. It has taught us to turn from the fragmentary to the 'total', from the superficial to the profound, and from the mundane material to the spiritual. Religion has never been an obstacle to this unique culture. I am reminded of a Sufi, Mohd. Sheikh, who lived in our neighbourhood at Chattabal in down town Srinagar. He used to say that the religion is '*Gaev gudom*', the rope with which we tie a cow lest it should stray into the fields and eat the crop. Once the cow knows that it has to eat only the grass and walk only along the periphery of the field, there is no need for the rope any more. Similarly a man needs the religion only so long as he does not develop wisdom to discriminate between right and wrong and reality and falsehood.

Professor Timothy Miller, a specialist in new religious movements, has rightly observed that, 'Human culture is always evolving and reinventing its own past and present. There is no cultural vacuum from which anything truly new under the Sun could arise.' We call our way of life 'Sanatana Dharma' or the eternal norms of Do's and Don'ts of life. Our belief is that God, Universe and the Vedas are eternal and co-existent. Strict adherence to the prescribed norms ensures cosmic harmony, order in the society and the welfare of mankind. Due to this belief Hindus, the original inhabitants of this land, were neither interested in recording their history nor inclined to force their way of thinking on any one. The basic ideology has been twofold. One, '**Ekam Sat Viprah bahudhah vadanti** – the Truth is one and the learned describe it in many different ways' and the second, '**Aano bhadra kratavo yantu vishvatah** – let noble and beneficial thoughts come to us from all sides of the world'. John Renard, Professor of Theological Studies at St. Louis University, USA has said about Sanatana Dharma, 'I have been intrigued by the tradition's flexibility – some call it ability to subsume every religious idea. The larger Hindu tradition represents an extra-ordinary rich gallery of imagery of the Divine. It has encouraged visual Arts to match the Verbal. There is complete religious tolerance and it is free of large scale proselytizing.' This eternal way of life, this age-old culture of ours is said to be five millennia old on the basis of the Saptarishi Samvat adopted by us from time immemorial. Ours is perhaps the only almanac in the country, that gives this Samvat and the running year is 5076. It is a fact that the only recorded History in India, the 'Raja Tarangini' has been written by a Kashmirian, Kalhana. Yet ironically we do not have any record of our cultural heritage and historical events of the prior period and, therefore, we are unable to paint a correct picture of the life and faith of our ancestors who lived in this pious land. As in the rest of the country, we have to draw upon legends, fables and other types of literature, verbal or written, in order to visualize the picture of our ancient heritage. It is very significant that in the Indian tradition the two great epics, 'Ramayana' and 'Mahabharata' along with the 'Puranas' form the corpus of our history, from which we have to figure out what our past has been like. Kashmir also has its own 'Purana' called the 'Nilamat Purana', which throws some light on our heritage. This 'Purana' vouches for the fact that after the water was dried from the vast area of Sati Sar, sages were invited to settle in the valley and do their penance in the calm and peaceful environment of this sacred valley surrounded by the western Himalayan ranges. The aborigines, Nagas, Pishachas, shvapakas etc. were assimilated and as tribes became extinct in course of time. During this period the rituals and the injunctions of the Vedas only were followed. The inhabitants today in effect are, therefore, the progeny of the sages who settled here for penance and eventual emancipation with a sprinkling of immigrant population.

Buddhist Period

The fact that an important congregation of Buddhists was held in Kashmir, during the reign of the King Kanishka, shows that this ideology had found favour with the peace loving citizens of Kashmir in course of time. It is from here that the ideology travelled as far as Japan via Tibet and China. This ideology had Tantrik philosophy as its background and focussed on 'Mantras' or recitation, 'Mudras' or physical gestures and 'Mandalas' or meditation. The Sanskrit word for meditation, 'Dhyana' became 'Gom' in Tibet, got mixed with 'Jen' of China's Confucius and eventually became 'Zen' of Japan. In Kashmir, however, a strong non-dualistic philosophy, called Kashmir Shaiva Darshan, drove out this ideology but not before it had left an indelible mark on our culture. There are a number of places, which are named after the 'Baudha Viharas' and are called in local language as 'Yar'. In Srinagar itself we have a locality named as 'Bodager' a corruption from 'Buddha Giri' or the Buddha's hillock. These together with the non-violent passivity of Kashmiris and their life style imbued with the tenets of Buddhism stand testimony to the fact that this ideology had sway on our thinking for a long time. Buddhism accommodated itself to the local ideas while revaluing them by changing the spiritual centre of gravity. Tantra was given the meaning of extension and interpenetration. The eightfold path of this theology, right view, right aspiration, right speech, right behaviour, right livelihood, right effort, right thoughts and right contemplation permeated into the life of the common man.

Period of the Trika Philosophy

It appears that while the Buddhist thought did shape the lives of the inhabitants, it did not quench their thirst for knowing the reality nor did it satisfy their spiritual quest. The genius of Kashmir evolved its own version of non-dualistic philosophy, which was an improvement on the philosophy of Shankara in as much as it did not accept the creation to be an illusion. This philosophy branched into two, the 'Spanda' or the vibration system and the 'Pratyabhijna' or the cognition system. This unique school of thought espoused that the Divine, which is pure light, of His own free will and by His own inherent powers, appears in the form of His creation and this is nothing but a play of His own free will. The creation gives an indication of the mundane, the spiritual and the ethereal existence, whereas the Divine indicates the light in the form of knowledge and manifestation in the form of action. This was the knowledge aspect of the Kashmir culture then and the ritualistic aspect was governed by the Vedic injunctions. Of course these rituals also were modified to suit the local conditions. The 'Sanskaras' codified by Rishi Katyayana were in vogue in the rest of the country whereas in Kashmir those codified by Rishi Logaksha were implemented. It was the effect of this philosophy that spirituality and divinity was manifest in the life style of the common man. Although many Hindu holy places and temples were destroyed by Sikander But Shikan, who ruled from 1389 to 1413, yet the ruins of these temples at many places including that of Martand Temple stand testimony to the Sun worship also being prevalent here. There is a hill feature named as 'Aeta gaej' a corrupt form of Sanskrit 'Aaditya Guha' meaning the cave of the Sun. This corroborates the fact further.

Sufi Influence

Towards the end of the thirteenth century and the beginning of the fourteenth century Islam came to Kashmir. On the one hand the invaders came to conquer and rule the land and on the other hand this place attracted the Muslim Sufis also. These Sufis believed in 'Khalwa' or spiritual retreat and propagated going from the outer exoteric to the inner esoteric. This coincided with the prevailing tradition of 'seeking to refine deeper realization of the Divine within one's consciousness rather than engaging in critical theological discussions; realizing the possibilities of the soul in solitude and silence, and to transform the flashing and fading moments of vision into a steady light which could illumine the long years of life'. Thus

came into existence a synthesized cultural framework that we proudly call 'The Rishi Cult'. Glimpses of this blended culture could be seen in the day to day life of an ordinary Kashmiri. My father used to swear by 'Dastagir Sahib', a revered Muslim Sufi saint. Any Muslim passing by a Hindu shrine would bow in reverence and any Hindu passing by a Muslim holy place would fold his hands in obeisance. There are innumerable holy places and shrines where both Hindus and Muslims would go to offer prayers. Hindus and Muslims equally revered Lal Ded and Peer Pandit Padshah, and other Hindu sages. Both the communities likewise held Nunda Rishi, Bata Mol Sahib, Dastagir Sahib and other Muslim saints in high esteem. A Muslim lady, after washing her face at the river Vitasta called 'Vyath' in Kashmiri,

would join her palms and pray thus, '*Afu Khodaya fazal kar, badas ta janas, Hyandis ta Musalmanas*' – God shower your grace on good and bad people alike, both on Hindus and on Muslims.' A Hindu woman, after pouring milk and water on the Shiva Lingam in the temple would pray thus: **'Sarve Bhavantu Sukhenah sarve santu niramayah sarve bhadrani pashyantu ma kaschit dukh bhag bhavet** – Let all be happy, free of worries. Let all be met with beneficial and pleasant things and let no body meet with grief and unhappiness'. Salutations would be offered to Muslim elders by the Hindu youngsters and to Hindu elders of the area by the Muslim youngsters whenever and wherever they met. In return they would receive blessings in abundance.

The Other Facets of Culture

To sum up we can safely say that the origin of the cultural stream of Kashmir is Vedic. It has absorbed the influences from Buddhism. It has been shaped by the Trika philosophy of Kashmir Shaivism and it has drawn from the Muslim Sufism and in turn influenced it deeply. The enormous literature that has been produced by the sages and savants of this land portrays a picture of 'Jnana' or Knowledge dressed in 'Bhakti' or Devotion. The message has all along been one of humanism, simple living, high thinking, altruism, contentment, purity and piety. The other facets of our culture are shrouded in mystery. Take the case of the Arts. The old Sanskrit and Sharada manuscripts are full of beautiful paintings and pictures of gods and goddesses. Picturesque flowers and petals are drawn on the margin of the pages and the text is written in beautiful hand in the centre. The colours used in drawing them have been made indigenously from natural material like leaves, herbs etc. They are so prepared and mixed that even the passage of time running into centuries has neither damaged nor faded them. The art is so prolific and profound that it indicates the existence of a well-developed system. Even today one can see samples of these paintings on the top of the horoscopes and on the margin of the manuscripts written on hand-made paper. The portraits and the figures are exquisite and amazing and a well-organised research will throw light on its origin and gradual development. No wonder that the artisans of Kashmir have made a name in embroidery, papier machie and the patterns woven on carpets. In modern times Kashmir has produced a good number of artists, who have experimented with traditional and modern techniques but have distinct styles of their own. Sarva Shri K.N.Dhar, Dina Nath Almast, Ghulam Rasool Santosh, P.N. Kachroo, Manohar Kaul, Bansi Parimoo and many other luminaries fall in this category.

Music is another area where very little is known of its past. Today we have almost identical marriage songs for Hindu and Muslim marriages. The difference is that whereas the Hindus sing them in 'vilambit' or elongated tune, the Muslims sing them in 'Drut' or fast tune. The effect of SamaVedic recitation is apparent from the former. If you listen to these songs from a distance you will mistake them for 'Sama gana'. Kashmir has a tradition of very rich folk songs which depict the emotions, feelings and sensibilities of a common man as also troubles and tribulations faced by him from time to time. Floods and famines have been vividly described in these songs. Then we have a well-organized classical music called 'Sufiana Kalam' or the sayings of the Sufi saints. It has different 'Ragas' and usually the sayings of 'Lal Ded' the great poetess of Kashmiri language are sung in the beginning of each 'Raga'. In recent times we

have had many a great exponent of Sufiana Kalam, Mohd Abdullah Tibbetbaqual and Ghulam Mohd. Qalinbaf being among the prominent ones. The former told me once that all these ragas which are in vogue these days have been formalized by Arni Mal, another great poetess of Kashmiri language. I have also heard Ustaad Bade Ghulam Ali Khan state in one of his interviews on the All India Radio about the origin of Ragas that the 'Rag Khammach' has originated in Kashmir and was derived from the voice of a parrot. While the 'Tumbakh Naer' and the 'Not' or the pitcher form important instruments of the popular folk music 'Chhakri' – a chorus, the multi stringed 'Santoor' is the soul of the Sufiana Kalam. It is well known that Pandit Shiv Kumar Sharma has successfully introduced Santoor into the film-music. Other musical instruments are also in vogue in Kashmir and a well-known name in Sitar recital is that of Pandit Shambhu Nath Sopori. Chhakri was given a new direction and lustre by the late Mohan Lal Aima.

As regards the festivals and the rituals, these are primarily religious in character and therefore, different in different religious groups. But there are some commonalities. Distribution of 'Tahar', the cooked yellow rice on festive occasions is common between Hindus and Muslims. Night long singing of hymns in praise of the Divine is another common feature. The annual 'Urs' or commemorative days of various saints are also celebrated jointly by all the ethnic groups with due reverence. The Hindus of the valley are called Kashmiri Pandits or 'Bhattas' meaning in Sanskrit the honoured one. The important festival that has become their identity is the celebration of Shiva Ratri in the month of February. Unlike elsewhere in the country, here the festivities are fortnight-long and this festival has the same importance for us as the Ganesh Puja has for Maharashtrians and the Durga Puja has for the Bengalis.

Not much is known about the tradition of dramas and dance of Kashmir. Many dramas have been written in Sanskrit. Obviously these must have been staged because Sanskrit plays have always been written for being staged on various festive occasions like the advent of the spring season. It is said that King Zainulabdin had patronized drama writing and theatre. He was himself fond of witnessing plays being staged and would encourage stage artists and actors. During his time, Yodh Bhat and Som Pandit had written some plays with serious themes. The existence of folk dance called 'Banda Paether' with a strong satirical accent and the melodious group dance called 'Rouf' as also 'Veegya Natsun' on the occasion of marriages and yajnopavit ceremonies, indicates that there must have been a very well knit dance tradition in the valley. A unique and well-developed dance pattern with rhythm and synchronized steps accompanied by lively music is prevalent in Ladakh. It is, therefore, certain that there must have been a dance system in vogue during the Buddhist period in the valley also, if not earlier. This is a matter for future researchers to remove the veil of ignorance from this facet of our culture.

Our Language

The inhabitants of Kashmir have a distinct language called 'Kaeshur' or Kashmiri. Although there are two different views about its origin, yet a dispassionate and scientific analysis will show that it has developed from the language of the Vedas. Thereafter the syntax, vocabulary and idiom of Sanskrit enriched it. During the Pathan and Mughal rule, when Persian became the court language, it adopted a number of Persian words. During the rule of the Sikhs, the language of the Punjab also influenced this language and later, with the adoption of Urdu as the official language by the Dogra rulers, it had to borrow from Urdu language as well as from English. There are references in various chronicles that during the Buddhist period some religious books were written in local Prakrit, which has to be Kashmiri but these books are extinct although their translations are available. The initial glimpse of this language is had from the verses written about the love life of the queen of Raja Jayapeed during 8th century and in the Sanskrit work, 'Setu Bandh' of King Praversen, who incidentally established Srinagar as the capital of the valley for the first time. This language was then referred to as '**Sarva gochar Bhasha**' or the language of the masses. The Sanskrit writers used to write in this language side by side with Sanskrit. But a systematic literature in

Kashmiri starts from 'Mahanay Prakash' written in thirteenth century by Shitikanth in the same Vakh form, which was used later by Lal Ded. Kashmiris had evolved a script of their own and this is called Sharada script. It largely follows the pattern of the Devanagari script in the matter of the alphabets and combination of vowel sounds with consonants and appears to have been developed from the old Brahmi script. Unfortunately this script did not get official recognition for obvious reasons and has gone in disuse. It may not be out of place that even Ghulam Mohd. Mehjoor, the eminent poet was in favour of retaining the Sharada script. The official script is based on Persian script with some modifications. Because of a large number of vowel sounds and shades in this language this script hardly meets the requirement. It is time that the alternative script based on Devanagari alphabets, with two or three modifications is also given recognition. It may be mentioned that such a script is currently used by all the publications and journals issued from Jammu and Delhi.

Literature

It is the rule of nature that a change in thinking results in the change in action, which in turn changes the environment. All these changes are reflected in the literature produced from time to time. The literature is the mirror of the culture and the civilization of a society. Kashmir was a seat of learning because of which it is called '**Sharada Peetha**' or the seat of the Goddess of Learning. Just as the name '*Ryeshi Vaer*' denotes the culture of this land, the name '**Sharada Peeth**' indicates the greatness and vastness of the literature produced by the Kashmiris. Up to the time of Sultan Zainulabidin, known as 'Badshah', who ruled from 1420 to 1470, Sanskrit was the language of the elite. No wonder, therefore, that a galaxy of Sanskrit scholars hailed from Kashmir and their contribution to the Sanskrit literature is monumental.

Sanskrit Literature

The literature in Sanskrit of this land can be divided into two groups. The first group relates to the Kashmir Shaiva Darshan. The prominent authors in this group are Utpala Deva, Somananda, Vasu Gupta, Abhinav Gupta and Khema Raja. The scholarly works include Spanda Karika, Shiva Drishti, Shivastotravali, Parmartha Sara, Pratyabhjna Darshan, Tantra Sara, Malini Vijaya, Rudrayamal and the monumental work, Tantralok of Abhinava Gupta Acharya. A number of treatises and commentaries have been written on these works in order to bring to light the true purport of this unique philosophy. It is a matter of concern that there is no effort on the part of the state government to preserve and develop this important and world acclaimed school of philosophy. It has been preserved by individual effort of largely those individual scholars who are 'Sadhakas' or the disciples of Swami Lakkshman Joo. However, there is an 'Abhinava Gupta' centre at Lucknow established by Dr. Pandey where this philosophy is studied by young scholars. Dr. Baljinnath Pandita and Dr. Neelkanth Gurtoo as also late Dr. Dwivedi of Rajasthan University, Jaipur have edited and translated some of the selected works of Shaiva Acharyas.

The second group comprises books on subjects other than Philosophy. The most distinguished name in this group is that of Kalhana Pandit, the author of the famous 'Raja Tarangini', the only book of chronicle written in Sanskrit. This book gives an account of the Rulers and the events from the 8th century to the 12th century. It was later extended and supplemented by Jona Raja, Shrivara and Prajna Bhatta and brought up to date till the reign of Zainul-Ab-din. There are a number of books in Sanskrit written by Kashmiris on a variety of subjects like Linguistics, Aesthetics, Poetics, Sexology and the fiction. Mammtacharya is a great name because of his work, 'Kavya Prakash'. It is said that the scholars would accept no work in Sanskrit unless it had the seal of approval from Kashmir. A very prominent poet brought his book to Mammata for approval after it had already gained recognition in the Sanskrit world. The Acharya said, "The book is very good but alas I wish you had brought it earlier. I have recently completed the chapter of my book on 'Kavya doshani' or the faults and flaws in poetry writing. I had to

strive hard to find examples for different flaws but here in your work I could have got the examples for all the flaws at one place and it would have saved me a lot of effort." Such was the scholarship of Kashmiri Sanskrit luminaries. 'Dhvanyalok' of 'Anandavardhan' added a new dimension to linguistics and poetics. Earlier the definition of a 'Kavya' was '**Vakyam rasatmakam kavyam**' – any composition which gives tasteful pleasure is poetry'. With this work scholars were forced to change their opinion and define poetry as '**Vakyam dhvanyatmakam kavyam**' – a piece of writing that gives a message by inference and suggestion is poetry.' The scholars of Sanskrit from Kashmir had always something novel to say and propound. They were multi-disciplinary scholars and respected in the entire country as geniuses. Kshemendra, the author of 'Kalavilasa', was another great writer who dazzled scholars with his writings full of wit and satire. Then there were host of others including Bilhana, Kaiyata, Udbhatta, Hayata, Koka Pandit, Jagaddhara whose literary, philosophical, devotional and authoritative works have made them immortal in Sanskrit world. The eleventh century poet, Bilhana wrote 'Vikramanka Deva Charitam' in praise of the Karnataka king who honoured him. Manakha wrote 'Shrikantha Charitam' in 12th century. Bharata's 'Natya Shastra' is an authoritative treatise on dramaturgy. During the reign of Badshah Bhatta Avatara wrote 'Banasur Katha' and 'Zaina villas' and Yodha Bhatta wrote 'Zaina Prakash'. Another big name in Sanskrit literature from Kashmir is Gunadya, who wrote 'Brihat-katha Manjari. It is felt that many of the stories from this book have been included in the great storybook, 'Katha Sarit Sagar'. A Russian scholar of Sanskrit revealed during the World Sanskrit Conference at Varanasi in 1981 that the story of their famous ballet 'Swan Lake' also has been taken from this collection. There are modern scholars like Pandit Lakshmidhar Kalla, who have opined on the basis of the internal evidence that even Kalidasa hailed from Kashmir. However, let that be as it may.

Contribution to other Languages

When Persian replaced Sanskrit as the court language, the local Kashmiris faced a serious problem of learning the language in the shortest of time. It is said that by-lingual and tri-lingual verses were composed, committed to memory and thus an effort was made to learn the new language. Two samples will show the ingenuity of the people. (1) *Roni lagani Zongla bastan, Natsun hao raqsidan ast, banda paether murdami raqas sonth amad bahar.* - Tying the jingles is called 'Zongla bastan', dancing is called 'Raqsidan', male folk dance is 'Murdami Raqas and the advent of spring is called Bahar amad. (2) The second is in the form of question and answer and runs thus: *kuja budi, kahan tha, kati osukh? Dere tha, khana boodam, gari osus, Chi khordi, kya tse khyotho, kya khaya? Du nano, do rotiyan, tsochi jorah.* The questions are in three languages about where the person was and what did he eat, and the answer also is in three languages that he was at his home and had eaten two loaves. In the absence of any authentic information with me I am unable to give an account of the prominent Persian scholars of Kashmir of the olden times. I would, however, make a mention of two very important names. The first is about a great poet Ghani, who lived during Aurangzeb's time. He is reported to have declined the invitation of the king to visit his court. His habit was to close all the doors and windows when he was in and leave them ajar when he was out. His explanation was that the most precious item in his house was he himself. The inscription on his tombstone is 'Chu Shama Manzile Ma ba Payi Ma'. It means that 'like a burning candle my destination is under my very feet'. This shows that he was a spiritual poet, who was unconcerned with worldly affairs. The second name that I wish to mention is that of Pandit Bhawani Das Kachroo. He is known for his long poem 'Bahar-I-taweel' or a long meter. This poem is written in praise of the Divine and shows an extra ordinary control on Persian vocabulary that the poet had. His wife, Arnimal too was a great poetess of Kashmiri language in her own right. There are many devotional poems written in Persian with an admixture of Sanskrit. A great saint Krishna Kar has written in praise of Goddess Sharika in these words: 'Avval tui aakhir tui, batin tui zahir tui, hazir tui nazir tui, Shri Sharika Devi namah. Man az tu nadi chakri man, pran az tu pranayami man, Dhyan az tu japa malayi man Shri Sharika devi namah.'

Kashmiris within and outside Kashmir have written in Urdu also. The well known names include Pandit Ratan Nath Sarshar, Pandit Brij Narayana Chakbast, who wrote Ramayana in Urdu, Pandit Daya Shankar Naseem, Pandit Dattatreya Kaifi, Pandit Anand Narayan Mula etc. More recently we have had poets and writers like Prem Nath Dar, Prem Nath Pardesi, Ghulam Rasul Nazki, Ali Mohd. Lone, Shorida Kashmiri, Dina Nath Mast, Pushkar Nath, and others who have made a rich contribution to literature both in prose and poetry. Writers have not lagged behind in Hindi either. Dr. Toshkhani, Ratan Lal Shant, Mohan Lal Nirash, Madhup, Dr. Agnishekhar, Khema Kaul, Dr. Krishna Razdan, Haleem, Maharaj Krishna Bharat and many eminent scholars have contributed both in prose and poetry. Their language is Hindi but the aspirations and feelings projected are those of Kashmiris. I have also given two books, "Main Samudra Hun" and 'Main Pyasa Hun', both collections of my Hindi poems.

Kashmiri Literature

I am proud to say that my mother tongue is very rich in literature, particularly in poetry. The prominent forms in which poetry has been written have been taken from Sanskrit, Hindi, Persian and English. From Sanskrit we have adopted Vakh and Shruk or 'Vakya and Shloka' as also Vatsun or 'Vachan'. Hindi has given us Geet and Urdu Ghazal, Qita, Nazm and Rubai. From English we have taken sonnet and free verse. Lal Ded and Nunda Rishi of the fourteenth century are two great names who have written mystic and spiritual quatrains. Our poetry starts systematically from Lal Ded whose Vakhs were first translated into Sanskrit by Bhaskaracharya and then into English and many other languages. These Vakhs are dipped in Shaiva philosophy and enjoin upon us to go inwards in order to attain the reality. '*Gorun dopnam kunuy vatsun, nebra dopnam anderatsun*' – my preceptor advised me in nutshell to go from without to within'. Nunda Rishi wrote Shruk, which are replete with Sufi mysticism. He has praised Lal Ded in these words; '*Tas Padman Porechi Lale, Yem gale amreth chyev, Shiv Tshorun thali thale, tyuth me var ditam Deeveo*' – Lala of Padmanpura drank the nectar and perceived Shiva in everything. O God, give me a similar boon (so that I see the Divine in the similar way).' These two poets are great names in our spiritual and mystic poetry. Whereas Lal Ded has propounded jnana and Shaiva philosophy in her Vakhs, Nunda Rishi has put forth the Sufi ideology in his Shrukhs. All the Kashmiris hold both in high esteem. During his itinerary, Nunda Rishi reached village Tsrar. He is reported to have spontaneously uttered these words there, rhyming with the name of the place, '*Vola zuva yati prar* – let me wait here till the last,' and it is here that he left his mortal frame.

While this spiritual writing must have continued as a sub-stream, in the sixteenth century we suddenly see emergence of a new theme in the poetry of Zoon, later known as Habba Khatoon. She has sung songs of love, separation, and ill treatment at the hands of the in laws and other human feelings. The Kashmiri poetry thus came down from the spiritual heights to the mundane human level. Her lament was, 'Varivyan saet vara chhasno chara kar myon malino ho – I am not at peace with my in-laws, would somebody come to my rescue from my father's side?' Arnimal further strengthens this human romantic and love poetry in 18th century. Her diction and selection of words and the musical meters used by her are exquisitely beautiful. She had profound knowledge of classical music and is believed to have rearranged the Ragas in use for the 'Sufiana Kalam'. For the first time she uses what in Sanskrit are called 'Shabda-alankaras' or decoration of the words, like alliteration and internal rhyming. An example would show her master craftsmanship. '*Matshi thap ditsnam nyandri hatsi matsu, matshi matsha-band sanith gom, vanta vyas vony kus kas patsi, vunyub karith gom*' – I was in deep slumber when he caught hold of my wrist. The gold wristband cut into the very flesh of my wrist. Friend! Tell me who is to be trusted in these circumstances. He has left me crust fallen'. Rupa Bhawani is another great name in the spiritual poetry. Her Vakhs are full of Shaiva philosophy and the language is sanskritized. She lived a hundred years in 17th century and is regarded as an incarnation of Goddess Sharika. There are a number of anecdotes about her interaction

with Muslim Sufi saints. In one such encounter with 'Shah Qalandar' it is narrated that the two were on the opposite banks of a river. The Sufi called her, 'Rupa (literally Silver) come over to my side, I shall make you Son (literally Gold). She replied, 'Why don't you come over so that I make you Mokhta (literally a pearl as also emancipated).

By this time the Persian influence had gone deep into our literature. Poets started writing 'Masnavis' or long fables in verse. The prominent poet of this period has been Mohmud Gami, who lived during 18th and 19th centuries. The Persian stories adopted by him included those of Laila Majnun, Yusuf Zulaikha, Shirin Khusro, etc. Yusuf Zulaikha, which has been translated in German language, is the most famous of his compositions. He no doubt introduced the Masnavi style but it reached its zenith at the hands of Maqbool Kralawari. This 19th century poet has written a monumental masnavi, 'Gulrez', which has become very popular with the masses. From here onwards three distinct streams of poetry continued to flow unabated, the Sufi mystic, the devotional and the romantic. There is a long list of Sufi poets, who espoused the cause of purity and piety as also mutual brotherhood between various religious groups. These included Rahman Dar, Shamas Faqir, Sochha kral, Nyama Sahib and a host of others. Their philosophy was monotheistic and they laid stress on ethical and moral values. Their poetry shows a deep influence of Advaita Philosophy. '*Ognuy sapan to dognyar travo, pana nishi pan parzanavo lo*— Trust in oneness and shun duality; try to know thy real self.' '*Ognuy soruy dognyar naba, haba yi chhui bahanay*— Truth is one and there is no duality; all else is a fallacy.' In the second stream of devotional poets the names of Prakash Ram, Krishna Razdan and Parmanand are prominent. While the first two wrote devotional poems called 'Leela' in praise of Shri Rama, the last named was a devout of Shri Krishna. '*Aaras manz atsaevay, vigne zan natsaevay*— Let us join the circle of dancers and dance like nymphs in ecstasy for Shri Krishna. Parmanand, who lived in 19th century, has written a memorable long poem wherein he has compared the human actions with tilling of the land right from ploughing up to the time of reaping the harvest. '*Karma bhumikayi dizi dharmuk bal, santoshi byali bhavi aananda phal*—your actions are the land where you must put in the fertilizer of righteousness. Sow the seed of contentment and you will reap the harvest of supreme bliss.' Prakash Ram wrote the first Ramayana in Kashmiri and captioned it 'Ram Avtar Tsaryet'. In the romantic stream of poetry, the next important poet has been Rasul Meer. He has written beautiful love poems in musical meters. His famous poem starts with these words, '*Rinda posh maal gindne drayi lolo, shubi shabash chani pot tshayi lolo*— My beloved has come out to play in an ecstatic mood, praise be to her shadow that follows her'. The description in the next line is noteworthy. '*Raza hanziyani naaz kyah aenzini gardan, ya Illahi chashmi bad nishirachhtan, kam kyah gatshi chani baargahi lolo*— The gracious one has a neck like aswan. God! Save her from evil eye. By that your grace will be no poorer.' Rasul Meer was the first poet who addressed his poems to a female beloved. The earlier poets had made a male their love, perhaps because they were pointing to the Divine and not the human.

Modern Period

The twentieth century is the period when the Kashmiri language made an all round progress. The three streams that were flowing continued and some new trends also developed. Master Zinda Kaul is a great name among the mystic poets of this period. His book 'Sumran' won him the Sahitya Academy award. His suggestive poems are par excellence. A short poem of his reads, '*Tyamber pyayam me khaermanas, alava hyotun kanzael vanas, taer ti ma laej phaelnas, dil dodum jigar tatyom, krakh vaetsh zi naa ha*—A spark fell on the haystack, the entire jungle caught fire. It didn't take long to spread. My heart burnt and the liver heated up – shouts came from all sides, fire! Fire!' He has described God in these words: '*Kaem tam kar tamat bonah pot tshayi doorey dyuthmut, sanyev kanav tee buzmut, saenis dilas tee byuthmut*— Someday somewhere somebody has seen His shadow from a distance. We have heard it with our ears

and our heart is convinced of His existence.' Ahad Zargar is another important poet of this stream who has written masterly poems on mysticism and spirituality. The immortal poet Mehjoor, who is called Wordsworth of Kashmiri language, has carried the romantic poetry to new heights. He was acclaimed by no less a personality than Rabindranath Tagore. The Hindi poet Devendra Satyarathi, collecting folk songs of different Indian languages was aghast to find that Mehjoor's poems were being sung by peasants in the fields just like folk songs during his life time. He had this message for his fellow country men: '*hyund chhu shakar dodh chhu muslim ahli deen, dodh ta shakar milanaeviv pana vaen*'— Hindus are like sugar and Muslims like milk, let us mix the two (to create a harmonious society'). Another great name of this period is that of Abdul Ahad Azad. He did not live long but left an indelible mark on our literature. He was virtually the harbinger of the progressive poetry in Kashmiri. His long poem 'Daryav' or the river is a masterpiece. He has ridiculed romance in the face of poverty, want and hunger. '*Madanvaro lagay paeree, ba no zara ashqa bemari. Tse saet gaetsh fursatha aasen, dilas gaetsh farhatha aasen, me gaemets nael naadari, ba no zara ashqa bemari*'— My love! Romance is not my cup of tea. It needs leisure and peace of mind. I have none and I am crestfallen due to my poverty. So no romance for me please'.

Post Independence period is a period of renaissance for an all round development of literature in Kashmiri. Kashmiri poets were influenced by the philosophy of Marx and the progressive literature of other languages, notably that of Urdu. While Allama Iqbal was the ideal for many, Faiz, Jaffri and other Urdu poets were heroes for others and they took a cue from their writings. Whereas most of the mystic poetry was full of obscure and suggestive idiom, the poetry of this new genre of poets was frank and forthright; sometimes sounding like slogans. In response to the Pakistani tribal raid, the writers formed Kashmir Cultural Front in defence of inter-ethnic harmony and as an affront to religious fanaticism. The literature created could not remain unaffected by the political and social uprising. Earlier in 1945 Mirza Arif had started a cultural organisation by the name of 'Bazme adab'. Many enthusiastic writers got involved with this organization. Mirza Arif himself is a well-known name for his Kashmiri Rubaiyas, which are crisp and meaningful. The prominent poets of this new movement are Dina Nath Nadim, Rehman Rahi and Amin Kamil. Nadim revolutionized the entire face of poetry. He used pure Kashmiri diction, gave expression to the desire and aspiration of the common man and raised his voice strongly in defence of peace. He wrote operas and sonnets for the first time and his poems have been translated into many languages. One of his immortal poems against wars and strife is '*Mya chham aash pagahaech, pagah sholi duniyah*'— I have full faith in tomorrow for tomorrow will bring new light to the entire world.' He is the trendsetter of progressive and humanistic poetry in Kashmir. His operas, 'Bomber ta Yambarzal' 'Neeki ta baedi' etc are the milestones in our literature. Rahi is another Sahitya Academy awardee, whose 'Nav rozi Saba' shows the influence of Iqbal very clearly. He has also made a rich contribution to Kashmiri poetry. He sang, '*Yaer mutsraev taer barnyan, Maer maend phyur mas malryan, vaer zahir vaets aaman ta lolo*'— The benefactor has thrown the doors open and filled wine into the big pitchers; It appears that the common man will get his share now.' Kamil has written short stories and poetry both. His diction is rustic and meters musical. '*Khot sorma sranjan tala razan bhav bahar aav*'— The price of the items of make-up for ladies and the ornaments have shot up, it appears the spring has arrived'. This period produced a galaxy of poets who contributed to the enrichment of our literature. Noor Mohd. Roshan, Arjun Dev Majboor, Ghulam Rasool Santosh, Moti Lal Saqi, Chaman Lal Chaman, Prem Nath Premi, Makhan Lal Bekas, Ghulam Nabi Firaq, Vasudev Reh, Ghulam Nabi Khayal were active within the valley and outside there were B.N.Kaul, Shambu Nath Bhatt Haleem and myself who wrote on a variety of subjects.

Prose writing also got a philip during this period and continues unabated to date. The master short story writers include Akhtar Mohiuddin, Som Nath Zutshi, Ali Mohd. Lone, Umesh, Bansi Nirdosh, Hriday Kaul Bharati, Deepak Kaul, Hari Krishna Kaul, Santosh and Kamil. They gave expression to the emotions and feelings of the common man and picturized the life of the inhabitants of the valley. Akhtar, Lone, Kamil

and Hari Krishna have written novels also and given a lead in this direction. Radio Kashmir and later the Door Darshan Kendra at Srinagar provided an opportunity and thereby played an important role in encouraging these writers. The Academy of Arts and Culture has also been publishing the works of these artists and anthologies, which inspires other young writers to try their pen. Moti Lal Kyomu has been a pioneer in the field of drama and Pushkar Bhan in satirical radio plays. Hari Krishna Kaul is also a successful drama writer. There are a host of other writers whom I have not mentioned for fear of digressing from the central point. My apologies to them since I hold all of them in high esteem and recognize their contribution to the Kashmiri literature. I am trying to convey that our language is rich in literature. There have been some translations into other languages but it is not enough. Some of the names that come to one's mind, who have done pioneering work in popularizing Kashmiri literature are Professors Jai Lal Kaul, Nand Lal Talib, T.N.Raina, P.N. Pushp, K.N. Dhar, B.N. Parimoo, MotiLal Saqi and R.K.Rehbar. There is a pressing need for translating the selected works from Kashmiri into other Indian and foreign languages so that the readers and scholars in the entire country will be acquainted with its depth and vastness. Kashmiri is the beloved mother tongue of all the Kashmiris irrespective of their creed or faith. Both the communities, the Hindus and the Muslims have produced poets, writers and artists of repute. It is, however, a pity that the language has not been receiving the official patronage that it deserves.

Post 1990 period has been a period of turmoil, which brought shame to the composite culture of the valley. The Hindus had to migrate to Jammu, Delhi and other parts of the country to escape the wrath of the foreign provoked and controlled militancy. During the last decade of their exile Kashmiri writers have authored a lot of literature. In this literature there is a lament of losing their hearth and homes, a craving to go back to their roots and pain and anguish at the way in which politics and narrow aggrandizement have cut at the very roots of their rich culture and shattered their proud tradition. The worst casualty have been the mutual trust, relationship and understanding between people of different faiths. Ladies and Gentlemen! May I, therefore, conclude by reciting this verse of mine:

*"Byeyi vaeth deenaek ta dharmaek fitnai,
Byeyi gav byon alfas nish bey.
Gotsh na yi ravun hasil kor yus,
Dashi thaev thaev astanan manz."*

(Again we are witnessing conflict and confrontation in the name of religions. Again one is getting separated from the other. I am afraid we may not lose all that we had achieved after offering prayers repeatedly at the shrines and holy places.)

I am grateful to the R.P Memorial Foundation Society and the organizers of this meet for providing me this opportunity of sharing my views with all of you, on the rich tradition of the place of my birth. Thank You.

18.0 THE FESTIVALS OF THE KASHMIRI PANDITS

Kashmir is known as the abode of Rishis because it has provided a calm and serene shelter to sages and savants for their penance. In the hoary past, it was inhabited by the Nagas as is vouched by Nila in his *Nilmat Purana* and Kalhana in his *Rajatarangini*. Nila, himself a naga, was the son of the illustrious Rishi, Kashyapa. The penance and the efforts of Kashyapa transformed the vast span of water called the 'Sati Sar' into a fertile valley fit for inhabitation and worship by the austere Rishis. It was he who helped these Rishis to get rid of the demon 'Jalodbhava'. These Rishis, finding the place secure for their 'Tapas', made it their home and gave it the name 'Kashyapa-mar' after the Rishi who founded it. This name, in due course became Kashmir.

These pious and compassionate Rishis did not neglect the *nagas* and *rakshasas* who were the original tribesmen living in this land. They made arrangements to satisfy their needs acid requirements from time to time. This gave rise to certain peculiar customs and festivals, not prevalent in any other part of the country. These forest-dwelling tribes would usually demand food items during the winter months. It is because of this that most of these festivals are held in the month of 'Pausha' of the lunar calendar. Some of these are described below:

Monjaher taehler: Monjhaer in Kashmiri means the lunar month of Marga Shirsha. Taehler means yellow cooked rice mixed with mustard. It is customary for Kashmiris to cook such rice on all auspicious days, and on Tuesdays and Saturdays, offer it to their chosen deity and then distribute it among neighbours, friends and relatives. But on the first day following the end of *Margashirsha*, that is the beginning of the Pausha month, such rice is specially cooked, offered to the *Griha devata* and *Grama devata* and then distributed. More often it is vowed that should a desire be fulfilled, like getting a son, obtaining employment or finding a suitable match, the household would prepare this rice regularly on this day every year. Coinciding with this is a very significant observance on this day called the *Matrika Puja*. Since time immemorial there has been a belief that the sound is the Divine *Shabda Brahma* and that the language has originated from the sound produced by the Damroo of Lord Shiva. These sounds, fourteen in number, are called *Maheshwara Sutran*. These are divided into eight groups, one of vowels and seven of consonants. Each group has a deity who is propitiated on this day. Vowels begin with 'Aa' and the consonants with 'Ka', 'Ch', 'Ta', 'Ta', 'Pa', 'Ya' and 'Sha', respectively. So the prayer is offered to the relevant deities in this order. Amayay, Kamayay, Charvageyay, Tankadharyanyay, Tarayay, Parvatyay, Yakhshanyay and Shri Sharika Bhagavatyay. All that we know, this day might have been fixed to initiate a student to a school of learning and he was required to offer prayers before such initiation.

Gada Bhatta: This word literally means fish and cooked rice. On any Tuesday or Saturday of the dark fortnight in the lunar month of Pausha, except when there is *panchak*, fish is specially prepared and near ones are invited to the dinner. First of all a plateful of rice and fish is arranged and it is placed at a clean place in a room on the top floor, called *Kaeni*. This is meant for the deity of the house referred to as *Ghar Devata*. The plate is properly covered with an up-turned basket and nearby is placed a glass of water. Some house-holds even serve a raw fish. There are eye witness accounts that the next morning the food is found consumed and even the fish bones are found lying by the side of the empty plate. After placing the plate at the fixed place for the deity, a feast of rice and fish is held along with near and dear ones.

Khyachi Mavas: This is also known as *Yaksha amavasya*. In other words, the last day of the dark fortnight of 'Paush' dedicated to the 'Yaksha', which again appears to refer to some forest-dwelling tribe that lived there before the rishis. On this day a special dish of moong mixed with rice is prepared in the evening. It is served to the Yaksha on an improvised plate made of dry grass. The plate is placed on the top of the compound wall. The kitchen mortal is placed on a grass ring, worshipped as a symbol of the cosmos and decorated with *sindoor*, sandal, raw rice and flowers. Some households serve fish on this day also. During our childhood we were told that the Yaksha would be wearing a red cap while partaking of this *Khichdi* and whosoever is able to snatch away this cap will get riches. So all the children would be eager to get hold of this cap, which eluded everyone.

These are the festivals which apparently were held to satisfy the demands of the aborigines and tribesmen. There is yet another occasion during the bright fortnight of *Marga* or the dark fortnight of *Pausha*, which is described below:

Shishur: This literally means the winter. This is an exclusive occasion for the new born baby and the newly-wed bride. On this day a little lime powder is placed in a piece of 'Zarbaft' cloth and stitched into a small triangular shape. This is then fixed on the cap of the new born or on the side of the sari which covers the head of the bride. The rationale behind this custom is to ward off any evil eye and any ill omen. On this day yellow meat is specially cooked and this along with pan cakes is distributed among the relatives, friends and the neighbours. Scattering the lime powder during winter in order to get rid of the bacteria, insects and bad odour must have been the forerunner of this custom.

Gora-Trai: *Gora-Trai* or *Gauri Tritya* is celebrated on the third day of the bright fortnight of Magha. Gauri is the name of the Goddess Saraswati, the goddess of learning. On this day the family priest brings a portrait of the goddess, below which are printed some shlokas in praise of the goddess. Whenever a child is born or there has been an addition of a bride, the occasion is special and the family priest of the bride's parents also brings a specially decorated portrait and in return gets a handsome honorarium. This must have been the day of teaching the child the first alphabets after offering pooja to the goddess of learning. This is borne out by the fact that the following day is called *Shruka tsoram* or the *Shloka Chaturthi*. Obviously, on this day the child was taught the basic Sanskrit shlokas like '*Twameva Mata cha Pita twameva* - O Lord, you are my mother as also my father.' This *chaturthi* is also known as 'Tripura Chaturthi' as the goddess is worshipped on this day in her Tripura Sundari form. The goddess is regarded as the energy aspect of the Supreme Divine. It is this aspect of energy that activates the Divine undertake the five functions of creation, sustenance, destruction, providing cover and granting grace.

Kaw Punim: The full moon of the lunar month *Magha* is also known as *Purnima* of the crow. Two sticks are tied in the shape of a cross and on the open ends of the cross grass is woven to make a long handled flat spoon. Again after some pooja, yellow rice is served on this spoon to be offered to the crow. The children sing a melodious song while making the offering to the crow. The song loosely translated reads thus:

O clever crow;
O, the lover of khichri, crow;
Come to our new house along with your spouse;
Be seated on the threshold of our roof –
And partake of the salty pudding.

This festival is indicative of the love that the Kashmiris have had for the birds and the care they took of them. It may be worth mentioning that every Kashmiri household will scatter some cooked rice on a wooden shelf kept outside the house everyday before serving food to any member of the house. This shelf kept near the top right hand corner of the window is called *Kaw paet* - a shelf for the crow. Likewise every person keeps apart a little rice from his or her plate to be fed to the dogs. This is called *Hoonya myet* - the roll of rice for the dog. This shows the compassionate nature of the Kashmiris for the animal world. No doubt the Gita defines a Pandit as one who treats equally a well read Brahmin, a cow, an elephant, a dog and a downcast chandala who devours dog-flesh.

Teela Aetham: This is a festival held on the 8th day of the bright fortnight of Phalgun month of the lunar calendar. In effect it is the culmination of the Shivaratri festivities as also bidding adieu to the shivering winter. To begin with, pooja is offered at home and a number of lamps are lit. These lamps are taken to the river bank and floated on grass bases in the river after the prescribed pooja. Afterwards, old firepots, *Kangris*, are filled with grass. A long rope is tied to its handle and fire is lit in it. Then the kangri is moved round and round in circles rhythmically till the whole kangri burns down. Then it is hurled faraway into the waters of the flowing river. While doing so the children cry out, '*Jateen teen, Jateen teer*'; meaning that it is a flame, it is burning.

Zetha aetham and Shravana punim: The eighth day of the bright fortnight of Jyeshtha and the full moon day of Shravana are both very auspicious days for the Kashmiri Pandits, the former is dedicated to the Goddess Maharajna and the latter to Lord Shiva. On the Jyeshtha Ashtami devotees assemble at the shrine of Tula Mula. After taking a dip in the waters of the Sindhu, they enter the precincts of the shrine. The marble temple is situated in an L-shaped spring, the waters of which change colour, believed to be the change of the dress by the Mother Goddess. The whole area is full of huge Chinar trees and the stream skirts the area allowing the house boats to anchor there. After individual pooja and a collective *Aarati*, there are night long Bhajans and Kirtan. The refrain of the *Aarati* is *Gaurim-ambam amburuha-akshim-ahameedey* - I bow to my beautiful mother whose eyes resemble a lotus.' There are Dharmashalas for overnight stay and Yajnashalas for sacrificial fire. Although this shrine is visited by the devotees every month on the eighth day of the bright fortnight, Jyeshtha Ashtami is a special festival for Maharajna, the Consort of Shiva.

On Shravana purnima, while the entire country celebrates 'Raksha Bandhan' in Kashmir we have the world famous pilgrimage to Swami Amarnath cave for the glimpse of the Ice-Lingam, which waxes and wanes along with the growth and decline of the moon. On this day the Kashmiri Pandits collect the holy clay from the Shankaracharya hill, mix mercury with it and make the required number of 'Partheshwaras' for a private *pooja*. They keep fast on this day and immerse the *Partheshwara* in the river waters in the evening. Pasting is an essential aspect of the spirituality of a Pandit. Amavasya, Purnima, Ekadashi,

Ashtami are the monthly fasts and, besides, there are occasional ones like Chandan Shashti, Bhimsen Ekadashi, Kali Ashtami, Shiva Chaturdashi, Kumara Shashti and the like. The anniversary day of the parents as also of the sages like Alakheshwari and Rishi Peer are also observed as fast days.

Auspicious days of Ashada: There are four important days in the month of Ashada, called Haar in Kashmiri. The seventh day of the bright fortnight is called *Hara Satam*. On this day, the courtyard, the front door and the gallery called the *Vuz* are decorated with *Hara Mandul* - a round design made of multicolour powders. This is to greet the goddess who is expected to grace our houses by her presence. It may be recalled that similar designs are made on the occasion of the weddings and the yajnopavit to greet the bride and the groom and the children who have gone through the *Upanayanamsamskara*. The nomenclature is different. These are called the *Vyuga*. The decoration made on these occasions on the front gates is also picturesque and is known as Krule.

The Kashmiri community is predominantly Shaivite and, therefore, worship Shiva and Shakti. They are grouped into three groups according to their affiliation to three different forms of the Goddess, Maharajna, Sharika and jwala. The three shrines for them are situated at Tula Mula, Hari Parbat in Srinagar and the hill at the village Khrew respectively. It is noteworthy that all the three festivals for these forms of the Divine Mother are held in the month of Ashada. On ashtami is the festival of Tula Mula. On navami is the festival at Chakreshwara, Hari Parbat and on Chaturdashi it is at Khrew to worship Goddess jwala.

Vyatha Truvah: Vitasa or the River jhelum holds an important position in our religious and cultural life. Most of our famous temples are situated on its banks, noteworthy being Ganesh temple, Mahakali shrine, Somayar - the temple of the Moon, Raghunath Mandir, Batayar, Bokhatakeswar Bhairav Temple etc. It is not surprising, therefore, that we celebrate the *Pracdurbhava divas* or the appearance days of this life line of Kashmir on the thirteenth day of the bright fortnight of Bhadrapada, for all the ghats of this holy river are sacred for us to perform *Sandhya*, to have a dip and to offer pooja. The river is worshipped by offering water, milk oblations vermillion, raw rice and flowers. People also go for pilgrimage to its source at 'Vyatha Votur' and Verinag. There used to be seven bridges (a couple of bridges have since been added) across river in Srinagar, from Amira Kadal to Safa Kadal. The banks of this river have been fortified with the huge stone slabs, carved and otherwise, obtained from the destroyed temples during the Muslim rule, particularly during the reign of Sultan Sikander, nicknamed as 'Butshikan', the iconoclast, in early fourteenth century.

Pan Dyun: '*Ryetav manza ryethah, Baedearpyethah, Venayka Tsoram to Aathvar*'- The month is Bhadrapada, the day fourth day of the bright fortnight and hopefully a Sunday. This is the festival known all over the country as Ganesh Chaturthi and celebrated in Kashmir in a unique way. Early morning a metal pot is cleaned and placed at a suitable clean place, with some water filled in it. The ladies of the house prepare a sweet pancake called 'Roth'. Poppy seeds are fixed over these on both the sides. The family members sit near the pot and the lady of the house narrates a story of *Beeb garaz*. This story has a moral that by performing *pooja* of Shri Ganesha on this day, preparing sweet pancake and offering the same to the deity, poverty and the miseries of the person are removed and one lives a pious life full of comfort. The story is very similar to the one narrated on the occasion of the *Satya Narayana Pooja*. After listening to the story, all the members fill the pot with flowers and a specific variety of green grass, which

they hold in their hands throughout the narration of the story. The sweet pancake prepared on this day becomes the *prashada* and is distributed among relatives, friends and neighbours. Distribution of such things as *Tahaer*, *Roth*, *Yogurt*, cakes, walnuts is a common feature of the Kashmiri life and helps make it a close-knit community bound by love, concern and care for each other.

The Sanatan Dharma allows, in addition to the prescribed rituals in accordance with the tenets of the Vedas, observance of additional customs called *Lokachar*, *Deshachar* or *Gramachar* peculiar to the place and environment one may be living in. This prescription has made marriage, *yajnopavit* and other ceremonies different for different groups of people in point of detail. Two such customs which are distinct in our community are briefly explained below:

Divagone: Every marriage ceremony and *yajnopavit* ceremony is preceded by a ritual called *Divagone*. This is to propitiate Surya, Chandra and Brihaspati Devatas to bless the bride or groom to be or the child who is going to adopt the Yoni or the *yajnopavit*. On this occasion, only the bride is asked to wear various gold ornaments including the *Dejhore* which for Kashmiri women is the symbol of marriage. In other parts of our country, the married ladies are identified by red vermillion in the parting of their hair, *Mangalsutra*, or the little toe rings. In Kashmir *Dejhore* is the symbol. It is worn in both the ears and there is an attachment to it which is called the *Atahore* made of gold or golden or silver thread made into a specific shape. Before the ritual proper, the bride, groom or the child is given a bath with milk, yoghurt, honey and other such things mixed with water, to the accompaniment of the chanting of Veda-mantras.

Posh puza: At the end of the ritual of marriage, *saptapadi* etc. the bride and the groom are made to sit in a comfortable posture. A red cloth is placed on their heads, and then all the people around offer them flowers in accompaniment of Veda mantras. This is called worshipping the couple with flowers. The rationale behind this custom is that the couple is considered to be Shiva and Parvati and the two are duly worshipped. First there are mantras for the bride and the groom separately followed by those meant for the two jointly. In contrast to this, the newly-weds in the south are required to touch the feet of all the elderly couples present. We are, however, of the view that marriage is a spiritual union between a boy and a girl and they have to live this life of *Artha* (wealth) and *Kama* (desires) with due regard to *Dharma* (righteousness) and aspire for *Moksha* (Emancipation). The four together are called *Purusharthas*. That is why the newly-weds are treated as Shiva and Parvati and worshipped as such at the time of the Posh Puza.

Dodh: Literally it means milk but what is implied is yoghurt. Whenever a lady is in the family way, she needs to inform her in-laws so that due care is taken of her health, diet and other comforts. It was difficult for her to convey this news to her in-laws with the same ease with which she could to her mother or sister in her parental home. Therefore, after her parents get the information, she was asked to carry two gadvis (metal pots) full of yoghurt and place one each in front of her father-in-law and mother-in-law. This was meant to be a signal to them that now is the time to take extra care of their daughter-in-law. Alas! this custom has lost its original significance and has turned into a bad social custom. A huge quantity of yoghurt is now-a-days expected to be received from the parents of the girl, which is distributed among the relatives as if to give publicity to the event. A gala feast is also organised by the family and the lady concerned comes from her parents' home with new dresses and other costly gifts.

Sonder: On the eleventh day of the delivery or on any other suitable date, ladies of the neighbourhood, near relatives and ladies in the house collect in the morning. The mother and the baby are properly bathed and suitably dressed. Thereafter small pieces of *bhojpatra* bark are burnt and lighted barks moved round the heads of the two by turns. A specific folk song is chanted, perhaps to ward off the bad omens and to wish a further safe delivery in due time. This has its origin in the *Punaswan sanskara*, one of the sixteen prescribed in the rule book. These pieces of the bark are then dipped into the water kept in a pot nearby. This is called *Burza Myet*.

Sonth, Navreh and Zanga trai: Sonth heralds the Spring season and the Navreh the New Lunar Year. Both these days are important in our calendar. A unique custom on these two days is to fill a plate overnight with rice, yoghurt, milk, nuts, cake, flower, pen, gold coin, picture of a deity or the goddess, and the new *panchang* (only on Navreh). This is kept covered for the night and early in the morning every member of the family sees this plate and the nice items placed in it, first thing after getting up from the bed. Thereafter people go to the river bank, take a dip and throw these nuts in the water. Then they wear new clothes and offer pooja at home and in the temples. Outings are also organised to the gardens to enjoy the beauty of the almond blossoms. Sweets, savouries and the famous decoction, 'Chai', is served with gaiety and happiness all round. On the third day from the Navreh, ladies go to their parents' house and dine there. From there they go to the temples and gardens with their kiths and return in the evening with new dresses and the customary *Noon, Tsocha* and *Atagat* i.e., salt, cakes and some cash. These three items are a must to be given to the married daughters, whenever they come to their parents' house, at the time of their return to their home.

Apart from these customs, rituals and festivals which are peculiar to our community, there are other festivals which are celebrated more or less in the same way as in other parts of the country. Whatever difference there is, is because of geographical reasons and availability of the required items. For example, in our rituals walnuts, rice and local vegetables are used whereas in other places coconut, banana, banana-leaf and other locally available items are put in use for these rituals. Likewise, due to the intense cold we have *Sandhya* only once in the morning instead of three times elsewhere. Wearing a dhoti or making offerings and pooja bare-bodied also is not enforced in Kashmir for the same reason.

Shivaratri: Any account of the customs and rituals of our community, without a mention of the Shivaratri festival, would be incomplete. This is the crown of our festivals, and is spread over a full fortnight of the Phalgun month. It is a socio-religious function that is the very part of our life. On the first day of the dark fortnight, called *Hurya Okdoh* the wholesale cleaning of the house, painting and decorating begins with gusto. The *pooja* room called *Thokur Kuth* and the front door called *Dar* are specially cleaned, one for the *pooja* and the other to welcome Shiva and Parvati, whose communion is the real essence of Shivaratri. The first week up to the *Hurya Satam*, is busy time for washing, cleaning and collecting the required items. The eighth day called *Hurya Aetham* is the day of the presiding deity of the valley, Maa Sharika. On this day we have *Havan* at Hari Parbat and night long *Keertan*. This is followed by *Hurya Navam, Dyara Daham*, and *Gada Kah*. On these days apart from usual *pooja*, prescribed items of vegetables and/or fish and meat are cooked according to the custom of every home. Ladies go to their parents' house for bathing and washing and return to their own homes with new clothes, a new *Kangri* (fire-pot) with a silver *tsalan* dangling behind it. Twelfth day is known as *Vager Bah* and it is customary to have *Vager* *pooja* on

that day, which is the first formal pooja of the Shivaratri. The thirteenth day called *Herach Truvah* is the day of the main pooja. The eldest member of the family keeps fast for the day. Vatuk is brought by the potter which comprises a 'No't', Resh Dul, Dul, Saniwaer, Macha Waer, Dhupu Zur, Sani Potul, assortment of Parva and Taekya. These are cleaned, filled with water and then arranged in the prescribed order in the pooja room. Nariwan and garlands are tied round these items. The No't representing the *Kalasha* and some other pots are also filled with walnuts. The actual pooja begins in the night when all the family members assemble in the pooja room for the purpose. The Vatuk, representing various Devatas and Bhairavas, is worshipped under the directions of the Kula-Purohita (the family priest). This is an elaborate pooja for a good three hours and is followed by a sumptuous feast. All the items cooked are first offered to the Vatak Nath. Next comes Shiva Chaturdashi. This is popularly called 'Salaam'. Perhaps because on this day friends from the Muslim community would come to felicitate Kashmiri Pandits. Also beggars, bards and street dancers would come to take their due on this festive occasion, and salute the head of the family with the words 'Salaam'. On this day children receive *Heraech Kharch* the pocket allowance for their enjoyment. The usual pastime is a game of shells which creates a lot of enthusiasm. On the Amavasya day the culminating pooja of the festival is held and the entire paraphernalia of Vatuk is taken off from its place. In the evening a very interesting event is observed. It is called *Dub Dub* or knock knock. Actually one member of the family goes out and returns with a glass of water. The door is shut on him and when he knocks at the door a conversation takes place. He is asked who he is. He replies that he is *Ram bror* and has come with wealth, riches, good wishes for health and happiness, food and means of livelihood and all the good things. Then the door is opened. The walnuts are broken to take the kernel out and along with cakes made of rice flour are first offered to the deity and then taken as *prashada*. From the next day begins an arduous task of distributing the walnuts among friends, relatives and neighbours. The closer the relationship the larger is the number of walnuts given to them. The highest number, in hundreds, goes to the in-laws of the newlywed daughters. The only thing that remains is the disposal of the residual material i.e.; grass seats of the Vatuk, the flowers and Naervan tied round these pots and other such things. These are dropped into the river on the *Tila Ashtami*, and this marks the grand finale to this great festival. It is believed that every Kashmiri girl is a Parvati and is wedded to Shiva. The Shivaratri symbolises the wedding of the two, and on this occasion the Bhairavas and other Ganas accompanying Lord Shiva are fed with choicest dishes up to the fill and to their satisfaction. That is what is known as Vatuk poojan.

This tradition of customs, rituals and festivals gives a distinct identity to the Kashmiri Pandit community and needs to be preserved and nurtured alongwith other important facets of our community life and our beloved mother tongue, Kashmiri, which has been enriched by the writings of Lal Ded and Nunda Rishi, Habba Khatoon and Arnimal, Parmanand and Shamas Faquir, Masterji, Mehjoor, Azad, Nadim and scores of other poets, writers and thinkers.

These festivals, rituals and customs have had relevance in the past, these are relevant today and they shall remain relevant for all times to come. The relevance is manifold. Firstly, they give us a distinct identity as Kashmiri Pandits. We know about various festivals which are associated with different communities. Durga Puja is for Bengalis what Ganesh Puja is for Maharashtrians. Ayyapa Puja in the south, Holi in the Braja Dham and Jagannath festival in Orissa are very well known. We, in Kashmir, are proud of our socio-religious festival of Shivaratri and other local rituals. Every spring is holy for us, every village has produced a Mahatma of repute and every mountain peak is sacred for us. These festivals and rituals have spiritualised our community for centuries. They have made us god-fearing, non-violent, pious

and religious. With all the advancement in science and the technological development, we cannot discard the spiritual aspect of human existence.

After all, our existence is not confined to our gross body alone. These age-old customs of ours help in character building by creating a sense of care and compassion in us. They make us realise our responsibility towards environment, animal world and birds, besides our fellow human beings. These are important props to give us self-confidence, courage to face all eventualities and dynamism in our approach. It is of paramount importance, therefore, for us to preserve and perpetuate these festivals. Their meaning and significance has to be explained to our younger generation in their idiom, cogently and convincingly so that they realise their importance. Carrying forward these traditions is an answer, to a great extent, to our present day problems of stress, strain and tension at the individual level and at the social level of many ills including inter-caste and inter-religious marriages, etc. However, we should not forget that many of these customs are losing their importance because we do not know their underlying significance and the rationale of their observance. This calls for a concentrated effort in the field of research for which our scholars and the knowledgeable should come forward before it is too late and before some meaningful and useful customs get extinct because of non-observance and disuse. This rich tradition of ours is an indescribable 'Radiance', which is self-illuminating, self-satisfying, independent, self-supporting, self-creating, self-rooted and this radiance has to be perceived, realised and then drawn into the depths of ourselves.

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19.0 BATANYA, AN APOSTLE OF WOMANHOOD

Whenever I hear the epithet ‘*Batanya*’ for a Kashmir Pandit lady two different pictures emerge on the canvas of my vision. I shall try to describe both but before I do, let me trace the origin of this word. In Sanskrit dramas the king is always addressed as ‘Bhatta’ and the queen as ‘Bhattini’, both meaning exalted and honoured ones. These two titles are used for Kashmiri Pandits and Kashmiri Pandit ladies in the modified form of ‘Bata’ and ‘Batanya’, respectively. These titles show the respect and reverence they have been commanding all these centuries not because of their wealth or riches, which in any case they did not possess in any substantial measure, but because of their scholarship, piety, character, wisdom and compassion and concern for every one.

The first picture of the ‘*Batanya*’ that I imagine is of an affectionate mother, ‘Bhawani’ of fair complexion wearing the traditional Kashmiri dress. She is wearing a coloured ‘Pheran’ with a snow-white ‘Potsh’ inside. The pheran is laced with a red border called ‘dur’ on the neckline and the bottom-line. It has a printed attachment on both the sleeves known as ‘Naervar’. She has a woolen muffler like belt round her waist. This is called ‘Loongya’, a corruption from Hindi ‘Loongi’. The headgear is a complex item. It comprises a cap on the head known as ‘Kalapush’ round which is tied a white folded cloth in four or five layers, called ‘Taranga’. Thereafter there is a plastic sheet either milky white, when it is called ‘Doda-lath’ or transparent like glass, when it is called ‘Sheeshi-lath’. Damsels, young in age would sometimes use a shining sheet with sparkles. This was known as ‘Zitni-lath’ – all the three names were true to their type and quality. On the back of this headgear there is a beautiful decorated covering of muslin called ‘Zoojya’ about one foot long tugged inside the cloth-folds. On the top of it is another white covering with a long twisted tail dangling down the back almost touching the heels. This is called ‘Poots’. When she goes out she puts on a cotton cloth, ‘Dupatta’ or a woolen cloth, ‘Voda Pallav’, depending on the weather, tastefully placed over the head and firmly held in front below the chin with the help of a black-headed pin called ‘Kaladar saetsan’. Incidentally the Malay women in Southeast Asia wear a similar headgear, which they call ‘Tudung’ not very different from Kashmiri ‘Taranga’.

A gold-chain in her neck, gold ornaments ‘Ath, Atahore and Dejhore’ dangling from both ears is a must for this gracious lady, a mark of her being married and a loving respected mother. On festive occasions and when attending marriages or feasts in relationship she adds some more gold ornaments to her beautiful get up. A necklace or ‘Honzu’ in the neck, earrings or ‘Kana dur’ in her ears, ‘Matshaband’, ‘Katshakar’, ‘Gunus’ on her wrists, ‘Talaraz’, ‘Chaphkael’, ‘Tolsi’, ‘Kantha-maal’ and umpteen different types of typically Kashmiri decorations adorn her personality.

This mother figure ‘*Batanya*’ gets up early in the morning. After the usual morning-chores and personal cleaning she cleans the front porch with stairs as also the three sides of the front door with a white clay paste. This is called ‘Brand-fash ta Dar livun’. Then she sweeps and cleans with the same paste the main gallery called ‘Vuz’ and the main stairs leading to the upper floors. Thereafter she goes to the Mohalla temple and performs pooja, does circumambulation and brings home some vermillion tilaka and holy water for other members of the family. On reaching home she sprinkles some water on all sides of the front door; this is considered auspicious. On her return journey from the temple, she sometimes purchases ‘Hak’ (Sanskrit – Shaka) also. On the riverbank and in the temple she prays for the welfare, longevity and peace and prosperity of every one. ‘*Raja swasthi praja swasthi desha swasthi tathaivacha....*’ Then she cleans the floor of the ‘Thokur Kuth’ and places a pot, filled with fresh water there for the elder male member of the family to perform the daily pooja.

Now she enters her theatre of activities, the kitchen. She lights fire in the traditional 'daan' with two or three cooking ranges. On one she cooks rice in a 'Degchi' and on the remaining two choicest dishes of 'Hak', 'Monja', 'Nadaer', 'Oluv', 'Gogji' and the like. While cooking, stirring the vessels and putting the firewood in order, she goes on chanting holy hymns like 'Indrakhi Namsa Devi' or a hymn from Panchastavi like 'Maya Kunadalini kriya Madhumati' or the favourite 'Bhawani Sahasranam' and I get the echo, 'Madhur madhu pibanti, kantakan bhakshyanti' and so on and so forth. These hymns, stotras and mantras sung in the accompaniment of these daily chores add taste and flavour to these dishes and the food. This ensures longevity, health and prosperity of the members of her family. In between she prepares 'Mogael chai', the typical Kashmiri black tea with cardamom, cinnamon, a couple of times and 'Sheerye chai', tea with milk, salt and common soda in the afternoon. After a brief siesta in the afternoon, when the men folk are away at work, she cleans rice, washes clothes, grinds wheat and pounds chillies.

Spare time is utilized in interacting with neighbours and keeping abreast with the happenings in the families living in the vicinity. She lends a helping hand where it is needed and gives her advice where it is sought. She is a source of encouragement and a key figure in ensuring moral make-up in those that are in distress or faced with some problem. Her words, '*Narayan kari raetsrai* – God will be kind and favorable' lift many a depressed person. Come guest and she will not leave him unfed or un-served. '*Ti banya, nyebokhui ma drakh* – How can it be that you will leave without having something to eat?' In the true spirit of Vedic dictum, '*Atithi Devo bhava* – treat a guest like a god', she serves every guest, known and unknown, with respect, love and care. Her philosophy is '*Daan to't ta bar vo'th* – kitchen range always hot and ready to prepare food for the guest and the door wide open to welcome him'. If the guest is an elderly person she treats him or her like her father or mother. If he or she is of the same age as she, he gets the treatment of a brother or sister. If the guest is a youngster he is treated like a child with soothing love and a bundle of blessings. '*Tse aay ta thadan paay* – may you live long and ever prosper' is the oft repeated blessing on her lips.

She puts up with the carefree nature of her husband and careless attitude of her children smilingly. She will put their personal effects, books, papers, clothes and other such items at their proper places. Sometimes she will scold the youngsters but these utterances will either mean nothing or be in the nature of good wishes. She will burst out, '*Tse zeer gatshan*', '*Tse paha lara phutani*', '*Yi kyah sedoyoy*', which amount to nothing as literally they mean 'may you get a push', 'may your borrowed ribs break' and 'what has straightened in you', respectively. On being wished and saluted she will shower basketful of blessings, to not only the person saluting but also to the entire world. To her own children she will wish, '*Gatsh kulakyan gulal saan phol ta nav* – May you blossom and prosper along with the children world over (literally, flowers)'. Sometimes she adopts another pious routine. She gets up early in the morning at wee hours and goes to Hari Parbat for circumambulation and offering prayers at 'Devi-aangan'. Here also she prays for the welfare of the entire mankind, even for the plants and animals, skies and waters, '*Sarve bhavantu sukhena sarve santu niramaya sarve bhadrani pashyantu, ma kaschid dukhabhag bhavet* – Let all be happy, let no one be worried, let every one be faced with good things and let no one be grief-stricken'.

This Bhawani- Maa is a pillar of strength. She has earthlike patience, ocean-like depth and sky-like vastness. She lends support and good counseling to the men-folk in the hour of crisis. She gives manners and imparts values, ethical and moral, to her children. She is at hand for relations, friends and neighbours to suggest solutions to their problems whenever they are faced with any, be it domestic, social or otherwise. She has advised many a daughter-in-law to try and adjust to the changed environment of her new home and try to endear herself to her in-laws. She has counseled many mothers-in-law to handle their new daughters-in-law with love, compassion and consideration and thus has contributed to the

peace and harmony in their household. She is kind to the maid, the servant and the sweeper, who do all odd jobs for their family. She will feed them occasionally, serve them a hot cup of tea when it is cold and give them odd woolen items, clothing and other things of day to day use and thus subscribe to their comfort and fulfill their small needs.

Her compassion is exemplary. Whatever she cooks for the family a portion of it is earmarked for the birds. This she puts on the shelf outside in a corner of the window frame, called 'Kaw paet' or the shelf for the crow. A portion of the cooked rice she puts in two small brass pots called 'Sanivaer' and this eventually goes for the consumption of various insects when it is emptied every morning before being filled with fresh water. Before eating her food she keeps a portion outside her plate for the stray dog in the lane. This portion carefully shaped is rightly called '*Hunya Myet*' or a portion for the dog. On Tuesdays, Saturdays and other holy days she prepares yellow rice with turmeric and distributes it among her neighbours. She shares everything brought by her daughter-in-law from her father's house with her neighbours and relations. This includes walnuts on Shiva Ratri, yogurt on being in a family way, '*Tsochi*' or pancakes whenever she comes back after a longer stay there and so on.

The second picture of the '*Batanya*' that emerges on the horizon of my imagination is that of a daring and daunting 'Lakshmi'. She is beautiful and charming. She wears a sari with necessary paraphernalia of blouse, petticoat etc., a salwar-kameez or even a bell-bottom with top. She may or may not have the traditional Kashmiri ornaments like 'Dejhor' and 'Atahor' but she would certainly adorn a chain, a pair of ear rings, a couple of gold bangles and a ring. She is agile, quick and sharp. She may be dressed simply but she would be elegant and graceful. She would have done a little make up as well commensurate with the need of her environment as also social and official circle she moves in. Even in the attire common to the ladies of many other communities in our country, she would be conspicuous as a Kashmiri damsel because of her typically Kashmiri demeanour, mannerism and accent.

She is 'Lakshmi' and adds to the family income by her earnings. She may be a Doctor, a Lawyer, a Banker or an Officer. She could be a Teacher, an employee in some government or private office, a Media person, an Engineer, an Architect or in any other profession. She gets up early in the morning. After usual cleaning and a bath, she attends to her kitchen. In a short period at her disposal she has served bed tea to all, given breakfast to young and old, packed lunch boxes for office going males and school going children, prepared children for school and left a couple of dishes in the refrigerator for senior members of the family to consume at lunch time. If she owns a car she drives up to her workplace. Otherwise she rushes to catch a chartered bus and reaches in time at her desk. Whatever her profession she is well versed, efficient and an accomplished expert in her field. She is popular among her co-workers. She is respected by juniors, loved by seniors and held in high esteem because of her expertise and usefulness to the establishment and the organization. She is quick to grasp, fast in taking a decision and lucid and firm in expressing her views. Her compassion and consideration stands her in good stead here also. She is soft and well mannered and careful about her respect, prestige and dignity.

In the evening when she comes back from her work she again attends to household chores. Often she has to retire for the day late in the night. She looks after the needs of the elders, ensures that the children have done their homework, makes advance preparation for the following day and takes care of other household requirements. She not only adds to the family income and supplements the earnings of her husband but also manages the finances of the house efficiently. She does not like extravagance, wasteful expenditure and spending on un-necessary items. She saves money for the rainy day, for bigger social events and for more pressing and desirable items of expenditure. Her efficient management of the household and family earnings makes it possible that sufficient funds are available for the higher education and professional training of children. She foresees the requirements for their marriage and

goes on making due preparations round the year. Her kitchen store, pantry, wardrobe and the storeroom are always full with various items of need. If the guests arrive, neat and nice bedding, sheets and towels are ready for him in the guest room. Her refrigerator and the freezer therein are always full with items that may be needed should an unexpected guest come and stay for the dinner. She is a perfect host and knows the relative importance of each guest. She entertains him as per the norms set by the family tradition and social custom.

Her role in maintaining relationship is very vital. She has to keep good relationship with people on her father's side, people related to her husband, friends and neighbours as also those who come in their contact in the office, family business or otherwise. This good relationship gives the family happiness in celebrating important happy occasions and provides help and assistance in times of sorrow and grief. Why I call this picture of a '*Batanya*' as '*Lakshmi*' and not a '*Saraswati*' or a '*Durga*' is after giving a serious thought to her role in this form. '*Saraswati*' is the goddess of knowledge but only theoretical knowledge. She represents Pure Science. '*Lakshmi*' on the other hand is Applied Science and Knowledge in practice. She represents Technology. That is what a '*Batanya*' is. She applies her wisdom, her knowledge and her discriminating abilities to the family matters as also in the official business in her workplace. As '*Durga*' her looks would be fierce and scaring but she is soft, loving and mild. She can be a '*Durga*' at times, and that is when her prestige and self-respect are threatened and she is forced to change her stance and adopt a different role to assert herself. In her normal posture she is a '*Lakshmi*' and a '*Griha-lakshmi*' at that. She brings fortune and good luck to her family. In Kashmiri idiom when a girl is born in a family she is always referred to as a '*Lakshmi*' or a harbinger of good fortune. Likewise when a son in the family is married his bride is called '*Branda kaen*' or the foundation stone of the main entrance porch of the house. In other words she is considered to be the pillar on which the entire edifice of the family is resting.

It is very important to note that this '*Batanya*' in the form of a '*Lakshmi*' is multi-faceted. She is an obedient and caring daughter to the elders. She is a loving mother who makes the life of her children, gives them the basic teaching and lays a firm foundation of their future life. She is an active life partner to her husband and remains with him in thick and thin, against all odds. She is a cementing force who keeps the bonds of relationship in tact under all circumstances. With all these multifarious activities she attends to other social calls as well. She will be at hand in mourning or marriage. She will participate in all rituals, private or collective. If there is a cultural programme she will be there. If there is a common '*Yajna*' she will be present at the '*Purna-aahuti*' if not earlier. If there is a demonstration against any atrocity on the community she is in the vanguard. Her contribution to the family, the community and indeed to the country is enormous, invaluable and indispensable.

This '*Batanya*' has tolerated the proverbial '*neelavath*' under the cooked rice in her plate when she appeared in the form of Lal Ded. She has withstood smilingly the taunts of her mother-in-law on finding the rice pudding insufficient when she came as Roop Bhawani. She bore the cruelty and infidelity of her husband when she was born as Arni Maal and asserted in no uncertain terms, '*Shayi yaar aestan ta tuthitan pardyan, toti chham ardyan vondasaey sath* –Let him be kind to others, so long as I have the belief that he is mine I couldn't care less'. When she appeared as Raets Ded she compared harsh words with lashing of a whip in these words, '*Kamcha prath chhu maazas laha kharan, mokha prath chhu karan aedjyan soor* –lashing of a whip leaves scars on the flesh whereas scolding breaks the very bones'. As Bhawani Pandit Bhagyavan Ded she again lamented, '*Pananyan ruddukh dur pardyan hovuth noor*–You kept distance from your own people but showered light on strangers'. Unmindful of the treatment she received from her mother-in-law, sister-in-law and others in the new home she has adapted and adjusted to the changed environment and new atmosphere. She has contributed to the prosperity, well-being,

honour and prestige of the family. Service and sacrifice have remained her motto always and she has given her best in recognizing and fulfilling her duties. There is hardly any work that she has shirked to do. If need arises she does shopping of daily items. If the servant is not available she cooks, washes, irons and attends to cleaning. All this she does smilingly, carefully and willingly. For this role that she performs and for the contribution she makes to her family, the society and the country at large she deserves accolades, praise and appreciation.

Her role on important occasions like marriages, yajnopavits is full of affection, love and delicate emotions. She draws the 'Vyug', a type of drawing resembling 'rangoli' for his brother and his bride on their marriage and on the occasion of the former's upanayana. She is prominent in dancing on this circular drawing on the ground called 'Veegya natsun' and sings '*Mye chham bailalaen satha ratha vanday malinyo* I have full faith in my brother, I give my blood for my father's house'. She has to decorate the front gate on these happy occasions. This is called 'Kril kharun'. She has to light a special cooking range on yajnopavit with multiple outlets and cook rice in small earthen pots for the auspicious pooja, 'Varidaan'. She applies 'Mehndi', henna to her brothers and sisters on the occasion of yajnopavit and their marriage. She is the first to welcome the bride and the groom at the front door. She ties 'Rakhi' on the wrist of his brother on 'Raksha Bandan' and applies 'Tilaka' on his forehead on 'Bhaiduj'. On the death of his father or mother the daughter has to perform a special ritual called 'Noona-shrada- shraddha performed using salt in the ritual'.

Professionally also she is exemplary. In the medical profession she excels in both diagnosis and treatment. In teaching she is a patient instructor, facilitator and inspirer. In legal field she is forceful in her arguments and specific in details. As an engineer she is innovative. As a poetess and writer she is lyrical, musical and full of human emotions. As a journalist she is investigative and unfolds news behind news. In every walk of life she is a bold leader and a faithful follower. She lends a delicate touch to anything she undertakes, handles everything with care and concern and ensures finesse, charm and beauty in the end result. She uses her head all right but the element of heart in all her activities is more prominent and pronounced. And why not, after all that is what womanhood is all about. We must appreciate and acclaim the role being played by her and the contribution made by her as a continuing process. Let us not forget what Manu Smriti says about women, '*Yatra naryastu poojyante ramante tatra devata-* gods like to stay at those places where women folk are given due respect and regard'.

20.0 MARRIAGES, OUTSIDE THE COMMUNITY

The Background

Ours is a very small community, a minuscule one, scattered all over the country and even abroad. We go by the nomenclature 'Kashmiri Pandits'. Prior to 1990 we were largely concentrated in the valley and those who were outside also had their roots in the valley. Of course there was a section of our society whose forefathers had migrated centuries back due to the then prevailing persecution in Kashmir and had settled in different parts of the country. It goes to their credit that most of them, almost without exception, would find match for their children from within the community even though they had to find that from distant places. Kashmiris in U.P. would hunt for brides and bridegrooms from distant states of Rajasthan, cities of Madhya Pradesh and the Punjab and vice versa. Those within the state would naturally join in relationship within the community itself. This kept our community largely intact socially and culturally and ensured its distinct identity. Our tradition, rituals and customs were maintained with a very little variation, which together with hundred percent literacy gave this community a place of pride, prestige and dignity. The community produced many a stalwart in the fields of literature, law, medicine, education, politics, philosophy and the like. We are justifiably proud of this creditable past. Of late the number of our girls and boys marrying outside the community is on the rise. The number of divorce cases in the community has also increased substantially. This has resulted in broken families, single parents, disturbed lives, turmoil and stinking conditions. It is also threatening our distinct identity as a community causing concern among the elders and youngsters alike. Let us examine the causes of this sad state of affairs.

The Causes

The causes for young boys and girls marrying outside their community are not far to seek. There may be stray causes for exceptional cases here and there but in general there are two major causes. Firstly there is the changed situation in which our young boys and girls have wider exposure. They come into contact with the young boys and girls of different religions, from different backgrounds, belonging to different castes and hailing from different states and ethnic groups. This inter-action creates proximity, attraction, infatuation and then results in courtship and marriage. This infatuation often makes them blind to the realities of life that they are going to face once they enter into wedlock and this blindness proves in many cases to be disastrous and devastating for the married life in course of time. Another major reason is dowry system (prevailing in most of the communities) and the resultant maltreatment of the brides. Once the children decide to marry out of caste, their parents are no longer obliged to follow the norms in vogue in their own community or those of the community in which the marriage takes place and thus they get rid of a sizeable expenditure which they were required to incur otherwise. This can hardly be treated as an acceptable reason for marriage even though in practice it is found to be expedient. That is why we come across parents who have no objection if their daughters marry out of caste but would prefer their sons to bring in brides of their own ethnic group. The term caste here is meant to convey a wider meaning covering the same ethnic group, speaking the same language and having the same traditional and cultural background. The caste in its real meaning has lost sense, in urban areas and major townships completely and in larger rural areas to a great extent. No doubt in small, remote and backward villages the caste system is still in practice though banned by law of the land. Social evils are eradicated by social reforms and social awareness more than by rules and laws and, therefore, take a long time to vanish.

Consequential drawbacks

Let us consider the consequences of marrying outside one's community. Before doing so let us not forget that a marriage generally and certainly in Indian tradition is not only a relationship between a man and a

woman but also between their families as well. It is, therefore, of utmost importance for the bride and the groom to fit in the new environment. This assimilation and adjustment becomes difficult and sometimes even impossible when the new family, to which one is related as a result of this wedding, speaks a different language, has a different tradition of customs and rituals, a different set of festivals and a completely different way of celebrating them. Sitting among the members of this family one feels like an alien and miserable when during the conversation one is made to feel that one belongs to a different stock altogether. Their different food habits may fascinate initially but soon the food becomes unpalatable and a cause of dejection and aversion. The bride cannot relate to her in-laws to the extent and in the manner they would like her to relate with the result that she is miserable and often unwelcome. She may even have to suffer taunts like 'how can she know anything, coming as she does from a different background'. Her parents and other relations also are not kindly disposed towards her for breaking the family tradition and marrying in a different community. Consequently she loses the love and affection of her childhood and is not able to have it compensated by the love and respect of adulthood that she would certainly acquire had she married in her own community. The groom also has to face the wrath of his own family by bringing his bride from a different community. He too gets a scant regard from the family of his wife and thus is a loser on either side. Whenever there is a family gathering in his in-laws house he is conspicuous like a black sheep among the sheep with white wool on their bodies. The only way out is separation, which itself throws the couple into seclusion, alone sans relatives, sans help and assistance. Like the lone morning star without companions they feel forsaken and forlorn, in an unenviable position. That marriages are made in heaven is of little consolation in such situations.

This conjugal relationship boils down to a situation where the two, wife and husband are just by themselves, the two of them. In course of time they beget children. Now a new set of problems crops up, for the children and the parents. These children belong to the community of neither their father nor their mother. They may learn both the languages of their two parents but can claim no language as their mother tongue. They are successors of neither tradition and inheritors of neither culture. They belong to here nor there. They are misfit in the community of their mother as also of their father. It is often seen that such children adopt a third language without having any moorings in that and own no tradition as such except perhaps some common festivals like Holi and Deeivali, without any special fervour or significance attached to these festivals in different communities. These children are a pathetic lot and when the occasion comes for them to find a life partner and marry, they can hunt for one neither in this community nor in that. Often they land up in yet another community, different from the communities of their father and mother. They remain without any roots, without any links with the tradition like a kite with strings cut, drifting in this and that direction. Certainly nobody would like to land himself in such a situation or see his children in a rootless state. After all man is a social animal and he cannot live in isolation. This isolation is best avoided by marrying within ones community as far as possible.

Some times people marry even outside their religion. Some so-called pragmatic and progressive persons hail it as a step in the right direction and appreciate it on the basis of equality and oneness of the mankind. On the face of it one may find it laudable but down to earth in real life it is fraught with disastrous consequences. All said and done, religions are not same, nor even similar. They are poles apart in their rituals, practices, methods of prayer, beliefs and even their attitude towards the adherents of other faiths. These differences make a man, who marries a woman belonging to a different religion, a misfit in the company of his in-laws. For the women it is simply disastrous and even conversion does not put her at ease. Then comes the question of what religion the children should follow. This becomes a bone of contention between the two and leads to breaking the marriage itself. There are some rigid faiths, the followers of which insist that whomsoever marries in their religion, whether a man or a woman, must first

get converted. This insistence either leads to a friction before the nuptial knots are tied or forces the prospective couple to sever all connections with their respective families.

The Solution

Not all arranged marriages are a success and not all love marriages are a failure. Similarly not all marriages within the community are always a success and not all marriages out of the community are necessarily a failure. Moreover, marriage is a personal matter for every man and woman and no body has any right to interfere, dictate or sermonize where this individual matter is involved. We cannot transgress this fundamental right of a person to choose his life-partner and force him to marry within his community. But alas! If only youth knew and age could. It is the paramount duty of the knowledgeable, the experienced and the learned parents and seniors to educate their youngsters and put them wise about such matters. They should be made aware of the pros and cons of marrying out of their community vis-is marrying within their own and thereafter the decision should be left to them. Let them not, later in their life after facing the realities, accuse their elders of not guiding them at the proper time. It is imperative that all the children are soaked in the nectar of cultural richness and the grandeur of tradition so that they realize the importance and utility of these essential elements in the life of a community. From day one they should be made to develop love and pride for their values, their tradition and customs. This will, in course of time, create in them a firm resolve to find a life partner within their own community and the cases of marrying out of the community will be an exception rather than a rule. This timely education and ingrained values will take care of those cases where persons marry outside their community due to the increased exposure and contact with the persons of other communities in the fast changing scenario all over. This will also ensure that nobody takes a wrong decision due to ignorance and inadequate knowledge of the consequences that are likely to follow by marrying outside his own community.

The second cause has to be tackled collectively at social level. It is really a shame for any community if their girls are to be given in marriage to the boys of other communities not for any worthwhile consideration like the suitability or good qualities of the groom but merely to escape the expenditure on dowry and other such bad customs. Let us not trade in marriages, let us not commercialize this holy relationship and let us not auction our boys in the marriage market. Any other reason for marrying outside one's community, ethnic group, religion or biradari can be understood, reasoned out, rationalized and even justified. There is, however, no justification whatsoever for marrying on this consideration that the parents are spared the compulsory obligation of giving dowry or money that they can ill-afford. Ours is a well-educated, cultured and enlightened community with a glorious past. The scourge of dowry and other social evils and bad customs has crept in over the years and needs to be addressed on a war footing. Let us eradicate these drawbacks and create a healthy tradition so that we do not lose our talented girls to other communities. If we do we shall be poorer to that extent. No rules and no laws are going to see the end of this contagious disease. We need constant self-analysis, social awareness, meaningful education and vigilance. Already ours is a minuscule community; let us not turn it into a microscopic one by creating such conditions as force our children to marry outside our community. Today we are not reckoned because we are not politically important due to our small numbers. Our plight of forced exile from the valley is nobody's concern because we are not a political constituency. Let us make ourselves important enough to be counted (and not taken for granted) by the dint of our acumen, sagacity, scholarship and intelligence and by preserving our distinct identity. This goal can be achieved by ensuring that the number of marriages outside community is as low as possible and that too for good and justifiable reasons and not for ignorance or avoidance of dowry.

Conclusion

Thus we have seen that while marriage is a personal matter for every individual and there is no place for any coercion or dictation, there is a pressing need for creating conditions to ensure that they take place within one's community. The purpose is two-fold, one that the married couple does not find itself isolated and two that the distinct identity of a community, particularly that of a small community like Kashmiri Pandits, is preserved. There are two major reasons why our children tend to find their life partners outside the community. The first reason is that they are nor aware of the consequences of such a marriage. Once they come into contact with the persons of other communities they get emotionally involved and without realizing the adverse consequences they enter into a matrimonial relationship. The second reason is the enormous avoidable expenditure involved in marrying within the community due to the prevailing bad and despicable customs like the dowry in cash and kind. Our children are vividly conscious of these bad customs and they do not want to be a burden on their parents. They want to ensure that their parents are saved from running into debt due to the expenditure involved and, therefore, go for a simpler marriage without incurring any sizeable expenditure. They go for a marriage into a different community and thereby avoid the bad customs of both the communities. If both these reasons are removed, there is no reason why the number of such marriages outside our community cannot be reduced greatly without encroaching on the personal liberty of the young ones. The first cause can be addressed by educating our children about the hard facts of a married life and the consequences of marrying outside one's community. The second cause will get eradicated automatically once the bad customs are removed from our community. These steps are a must if we want to keep our community alive as a well-knit community of intellectuals as we really are.

21.0 THE STORY OF AN 'INFIDEL'

I am a Kashmiri Pandit and my faith is 'Sanatana Dharma', the eternal law. I have been living in this land, Kashmir for so many millennia. In spite of the fact that lofty mountains kissing the sky surround the valley, I had regular and sustained contact with the people of the neighbouring areas and also interaction with the inhabitants of the far off places. I have been culturally close to rest of the country, which has been a living example of unity in diversity. The Vedas, the Upanishads and the Epics have been sacred to my people as to the people living elsewhere in the country. When the Buddhist thought developed in this sub-continent my area could not remain unaffected. The result was that my land produced a number of scholars preaching this doctrine, contributed significantly to the rise of the 'Mahayana' branch of this theology and was instrumental in its spread to far off places including Tibet, China, Japan and Cambodia. Around the 8th century the scholars and sages of this place conceived a unique non-dualistic philosophy, which in due course influenced the life of a common man here. This philosophy prevailed and grew even though many other ideologies, disciplines and ways of worship originated from here, notably 'Vaishnav-agamas' and 'Shaiv-agamas'.

It was in the 14th century that Islam came to Kashmir and this brought a number of Sufis to this place from Middle East because of the persecution there. They were attracted to the philosophy prevailing here and the result was that an attractive and popular 'Rishi cult' came into existence that suited the Muslims and Hindus alike. These Hindu Rishis and Muslim Sufis preached a life of piety, purity, contentment, love and firm belief in God, attainable by love, devotion and penance. I am a Hindu by faith but I love, respect and adore all these sages and Sufis in equal measure. I believe in the existence of God and worship Him in my own way. I go to the temple and pray in front of an idol as a symbol that helps me in concentration and contemplation. I know that truth is not in these symbols but in the universe but I also believe that if through these symbols I am able to see the truth it will only strengthen my faith. I offer prayers to various deities like the Sun, whom I call 'Devatas', or the shining ones, knowing fully well that they are only the visible forces of God, who is unborn, beginning-less, eternal, formless un-paralleled unique supreme entity – a Universal Consciousness, Being and Bliss. I put oblations in the fire to purify the atmosphere polluted by my fellow beings and me. I follow certain rituals, which helps me manifest the divinity in me. I celebrate the death anniversaries of my ancestors and offer oblations to them, only to remind myself of the debt I owe to them, which needs to be paid back by perpetuating the nobility shown by them in thought, word and deed. The intention behind all these activities of mine is to go from exoteric to esoteric, from mundane to spiritual, from gross to subtle and from a part to the whole.

Unfortunately I was branded an infidel, a 'Kafir', hated, persecuted troubled and discriminated against. Infidel means one who has no belief in a faith, an unbeliever. That is not the case with me. I am a firm believer in my faith. In my view religion deals with two aspects of our existence, one our relationship with the Divine and two our relationship with fellow beings. I believe in God and also in multiple ways of attaining Him. I respect all faiths as valid and relevant and am a staunch advocate of universal brotherhood, peace, non-violence and co-operation. 'Kafir' is an Arabic word, which means one who hides truth as opposed to 'Mumin', one who disseminates truth. I give supreme importance to Truth, both at mundane and spiritual levels. I am no votary of falsehood. My scriptures advise me, *Satyam vada na-nritam* – speak the truth and not untruth', '*Satyam-eva jayate* – Truth alone triumphs', '*Setuns-tara, satyena asatyam* – cross the ocean of falsehood by truth' and so on. This being so it is unfair to brand me a 'Kafir'. There can be three reasons why I am branded as such. Either these people, who call me so do not know the correct meaning of the term 'Kafir' and are ignorant about the basic tenets of my faith, or by

'Kafir' they mean all those who do not follow their faith. Or they know all these facts fully well but call me a 'Kafir' deliberately as a matter of some political expediency and part of a bigger global game plan. Let me make it clear to them that if they believe in one God as the Supreme Divine, so do I. If they believe in worshipping Him, so do I. If their faith preaches piety and purity, so does my faith. There may be some differences in perception, rituals and attitudes but that does not mean I stand for falsehood and untruth and can, therefore, be labeled as a 'Kafir'. I do not subscribe to the doctrine of exclusiveness of faith for the Vedas proclaim, '*Ekam sat viprah bahudha vadanti* – Truth is one and the wise describe it in many ways'. Had I stated that my faith alone is valid, I would have been a fundamentalist. Had I subscribed to a view that my faith alone being valid, persons holding different views and belonging to different faiths have no right to exist on this planet, I would have been an extremist. I am neither. I respect all faiths as valid and relevant for different people at different times and at different stages of spiritual quest.

According to Wilfred Cantwell Smith 'nowadays religion is spoken of as the human search for God. Islam, like Judaism and Christianity, rejects this view. God takes the initiative. Humanity's business is not a quest but a response'. Comparing the scriptures of different religions, Huston Smith has observed, 'Koran, unlike the Upanishads, is not explicitly metaphysical. It does not ground its theology in dramatic narratives as the Indian epics do, nor is God revealed in Human form as in the Bhagavad Gita. Old and new testaments are directly historical and indirectly doctrinal. Koran is directly doctrinal and indirectly historical'. These observations may point to some basic differences between the content of my faith and their religion, yet I cannot be called a 'Kafir' for I do not hide truth but the very aim of my life is quest for truth. And then does not the holy Koran say unequivocally, '*Lakum dinka wa li ad Din* – to you your religion, to me mine'. Besides, God neither belongs exclusively to any group nor needs defence from anyone. He is unaffected even if someone questions His very existence. How then is it justified to treat me a 'Kafir' and deny me the right to exist when I am a believer in God, seeker of Truth and respectful to all faiths?

I embrace persons of all faiths and respect them. I have accepted even heterodox philosophies of Buddhists and Jains and have held both Gautama Buddha and Vardhaman Mahavira in high esteem and reverence. I have equal regard for Zoroastrian, Jewish, Christian and Muslim faiths. I have been taught to treat the entire world as one family, '*Vasudhaiva kutumbakam*'. I am in the habit of praying for the welfare of all, '*Sarve bhavantu sukhinah*'. I beg of the Divine to fill my mind with noble resolves, '*Tanme manah shiva sankalpam-astu*'. I always desire peace on earth, in the sky and in the elements, '*Om dhyou shantih, antarikhshagun shantih, prithivi shantih, aapah shantih...*'. It is, therefore, unfortunate and unjustified that I am referred to as a 'Kafir'. If at all I am to be faulted it should be for my reluctance to thrust my faith and views on others. I have never believed in coercion, conversion or confrontation. I made my land an abode for every one to live in peace and harmony in the true Vedic sense, '*Yatra vishvam bhavati eke needam* – a situation where the entire world becomes a nest giving shelter to all'. My doors have always remained open for people of all faiths. I have welcomed everyone and given equal treatment to all. Tagore has beautifully expressed this fact in these lines: '*Hethaya arjo hethaya anarjo hethaya dravida cheen, eka deha halo leen* – whether it was Aryan or non-Aryan, Dravidian or a Chinese, all became one in this land'. My Lal Ded has said, '*Shiv chhui thali thali rozan, mozan Bhatta ta Musalman* – Shiva pervades everything and, therefore, do not discriminate between a Pandit and a Muslim'. She gave the essence of our faith when she said, '*Asi aesi tai asi aasav asi dore kaeri patavath* – we only were in the past and we only shall be in the future. It is we only who have been coming and going from time immemorial'. My Gita tells me, '*Vidya vinaya-sampanne brahmane gavi hastini, shuni chaiva shvapake cha panditah samadarshinah* – men of knowledge view all alike, a Brahmin endowed with learning and demeanour, a cow, an elephant, a dog and an outcaste eating dog meat'.

Firm believer in the Divine dispensation as I am, I am convinced that very soon people of all faiths shall not only respect each other's view point but also hold all faiths valid and relevant. They will learn to co-exist with fellow humans and contribute their mite in creating an atmosphere of love, harmony and brotherhood. There will be no ethnic cleansing of the type Jews faced or my own community was prey to only a decade back. They will realize that if peace and tranquility is ensured, the result will be prosperity and progress. They will accept the love preached by Christ, surrender unto God prescribed by Prophet Mohammed, non-violence taught by Mahavira, good conduct enjoined upon by Buddha, God-remembrance underscored by Guru Nanak, self-less service praised by the saints and sages and the world-view established by Sanatana Dharma. No body will then dare call anyone else an infidel or a 'Kafir' and I, the unfortunate Kashmiri Pandit, forcibly evicted from my home, may find congenial atmosphere to return to my roots to the land of Vasugupta, Abhinavgupta, Lal Ded, Nunda Reshi, Roop Bhawani, Reshi Peer, Paramananda, Shams Faqir, Ahad Zargar, Swami Laxman Joo, Bhagavaan Gopi Nath and a galaxy of other saints and savants, who have guided and shaped my life over the centuries.

22.0 TERRORISM AND KASHMIRI PANDITS

Once we were having a seminar on Kashmiri Language and Literature in New Delhi. As was expected, various aspects of the language, its development, present position and future prospects were discussed. This seminar was of tremendous importance because of the large-scale dispersal of the Kashmiri speaking populace, in view of which the future of this beloved mother tongue of ours was seen as bleak. The participants laid stress on the point that we should find ways and means by which this language continues to be spoken and used by our younger generation. It was, however, recognized that because of the diaspora our children must per necessity learn and use other languages, national and international. During this seminar one of the delegates, a writer friend, raised a very significant question. He asked whether by propagating the cause of our language we were not being language-fundamentalists. He posed a feeler why we should not allow our children to learn and use the language that they have to use in their new environments and not insist on learning their mother tongue. Many delegates reacted to this poser, some even with anger. Intervening in the debate I preferred first to define both fundamentalism and terrorism and then react to his observations.

I pointed out that ever since the man came on this earth, he started living in close-knit tribes, communities, societies and communes. These sectors came to be organized in course of time, administratively, financially, culturally and so on. Over so many millennia with the development and growth of the human society a number of faiths and beliefs, languages and dialects, cultures and civilizations came into existences. As with the species so with these things also, many got extinct and many new came on the horizon. A time came when things started getting institutionalized. What ensued was mutual rivalry, with claims and counter claims for superiority. Conflicts and confrontations brought devastation, distrust, strife and wars. Human being was caught in the vicious circle of his own making. In every sector of human society when a particular group professed that his ideology, faith, language or culture was superior, fundamentalism was born. Specific to the seminar in question I made a point that advocating the cause of the Kashmiri language was in no way a fundamentalist approach unless we claim that our language is superior to all other languages of India and the world at large. We do not propose to claim that even though we love our language and find it sweet, rich and unique in character.

This is true of the faiths as well. If we respect all faiths while adhering to our own, if we profess and propagate our faith without throwing a net of coercion, temptation, compulsion and baits, there will be no fundamentalism in this area either. Fundamentalism is basically a notion of superiority, whereby we feel that our religion and faith, our culture and civilization, our ideology and beliefs and our language and literature are superior to those of the rest. This notion creates a complex in our mind. We become possessive and protective and what ensue are regimentation, groupings, separatism and cessation. These feelings create fear and hatred, fear of getting subsumed by more vibrant civilizations and hatred towards the adherents of different faiths and beliefs. Naturally, therefore, need is felt to put on guards, close all ventilators to external influences and create close-door communities. People are forbidden to challenge, question or try to evaluate the tenets of their faith. They are advised to accept everything prescribed in their own faith as gospel truth and disregard the views of other faiths, considering them as false and untrue. This attitude breeds hatred and malice. We get suspicious of other groups and our mind is enveloped in a threat perception. A strange paradox gets underway. On the one hand we profess that our faith is the only true faith and on the other hand we are afraid that our faith may not be able to stand before other faiths.

There are some sections that not only consider their own faiths and beliefs superior genuine and relevant, but also firmly believe that the adherents of other faiths have no business to be around. They want them either to cross over to their side or get annihilated. They take the views that are contrary to their own views as affront to themselves and to their faith. They believe that God belongs to them alone and no body can be allowed to have any other view of God or worship Him in a different way than the one prescribed in their faith. Therefore they take to arms against them. In the past this situation took the form of inter-faith wars and in the contemporary scene this has taken the shape of terrorism. This is aimed to cause large-scale conversions out of fear and due to the danger to life and existence. Unfortunately due to their own political considerations and self-interests various groups and nations exploit these fascist trends and vulnerable sections of a society get trapped in their net. Right from the 14th century Kashmiri Pandits have become hapless victims to this inhuman phenomenon time and again. They have often been given an ultimatum in three crisp Kashmiri words of '*Raliv, tsaliv ya galiv*' meaning get converted, leave the place or face death. Consequently a large number of Hindus were forcibly converted in Kashmir and this changed the very demography of the valley. Those who did not succumb to the pressure withstood the tyranny for some time. They were subjected to torture. The sacred thread '*Yajnopavit*' worn by them was forcibly removed and many many quintals of the sacred thread were burnt in front of them. Bones of slaughtered animals were thrust into their mouths. Even then they did not agree to get converted. They were put into sacs, stones were tied to these sacs and then they were drowned in the Dal Lake. The spot is to this day called '*Bata mazar*' or the burial ground of Kashmiri Pandits. In this atmosphere of tyranny, fear and cruelty large-scale exodus ensued. This all is the 'glorious' history of Kashmir, the Aden of the East.

Kashmiri Pandits fell victim to this gruesome situation time and again during the past seven centuries resulting in large-scale exodus every time. The situation that developed in the year 1989-90 was somewhat different from the previous such occurrences. During the cruel rule of the Pathan and Moghul governors the tyranny was state sponsored and perpetuated by the rulers and sometimes abetted by religious zealots. This time the entire operation was carried out by the people although it was instigated, aided, abetted and organized by the neighbouring state. Kashmiri Pandits were alarmed and dismayed to find their own neighbours, friends and comrades threatening them of dire consequences should they not leave their hearth and home within hours of the threats announced from mosques and through printed bills. Hit lists were drawn earmarking the persons who should be put to death for choosing to stay back in Kashmir. This was an organized and well thought of ethnic cleansing and denying a community the right to live in a place, which was their abode for many a millennium and which belonged to them. The result was an en masse exodus to Jammu, Delhi and other parts of the country. Even so some people did stay back, though a negligible minority, for one reason or the other. There was a selective killing of intellectuals and prominent persons like Tika Lal Taploo, a public man, Shri Ganju, a jurist, Shri Sarwanand Premi, a literateur and an educationist, Shri Lassa Kaul, a broadcaster, Shri Wanchoo, a social worker and a human rights activist.

This terrorism has political and humanistic ramifications no doubt. The question is whether in this twenty-first century a situation can be allowed to exist wherein some misguided people hold an entire nation to ransom, whether they can be permitted to thrust their opinion and views on others, whether tolerance, mutual trust, brotherhood and co-existence can be sacrificed at the altar of fundamentalism, exclusivism and extremism. The question today is not one of tolerance alone because tolerance is fragile unless backed up by acceptance. The question today is not also one of co-existence only because co-existence can be short-lived unless there is mutual respect. We have to accept plurality of faiths, beliefs and approaches and subscribe to the view that all these are valid and, therefore, have every right to exist.

Freedom has to be treated as a sacrosanct basic right but it should not be at the cost of other basic rights and should in no way infringe upon the freedom of others.

Some vested interests try to justify or rationalize the gun culture of the terrorists by attributing it to frustration due to unemployment and poverty. Some refer to it as a struggle for freedom. Had that been the case there would be a struggle against the establishment only. History stands testimony that wherever and whenever there has been a struggle for economic reasons it has been non-violent and peaceful, at least in the initial stages. The establishments involved have been forced to generate employment. There have been large-scale migrations on this account. A case in point again is that of our community. When the 'popular' rule was established in Kashmir after the Maharaja's exit, the doors for professional training and employment were closed on them. They had to fan out to other parts of the country to find admissions in professional institutions and employment. They struggled but did not take to arms. As regards the mischievous explanation of categorizing it as 'freedom struggle' It has to be observed that Kashmir is ruled by Kashmiri citizens only after due process of election. The question of freedom, therefore, does not arise. The question that does, however, arise is that of making the democratic institutions broad-based by extending the jurisdiction of Vigilance Commission, Human Rights Commission and the like to this state also. This will ensure that there is transparency and accountability in the governance. Thus the terrorism in Kashmir cannot be justified in that part of our country, it cannot be justified anywhere for that matter. By all accounts in Kashmir it is a clear case of ethnic cleansing and terrorism caused by religious fundamentalists in the name of 'Jehad'. The economy, the infrastructure, trade and commerce have been badly affected making the majority community suffer no doubt but by far the worst sufferers are we the Kashmiri Pandits, who have become refugees in their own country, lost all their properties and whose very identity is in danger of getting extinct. This has to be realized and remedied before it is too late.