



Kashmiri Pandit Leaders



PANDIT KASHYAP BHANDHU

KASHMIRI PANDIT LEADERS

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

1.0	SHRI BHAT	1
1.1	SULTAN ZAINULAB-UD-DIN, SAVIOUR OF KASHMIRIYAT	1
1.2	VAIDRAJ PANDIT SHRI BHAT	1
1.3	NATIONAL INTEREST ABOVE ALL.....	2
1.4	THE RETURN OF THE ANCIENT GOLDEN AGE	2
1.5	SHRI BHAT TRANSFORMED KASHMIRI SOCIETY INTO A CLASSLESS SOCIETY	3
2.0	BIRBAL DHAR	5
2.1	PANDITS DID NOT ACCEPT DEFEAT.....	5
2.2	PT. BIRBAL STAKED HIS LIFE.....	5
2.3	SUPPORT OF PATRIOTIC MUSLIMS.....	6
2.4	FAREWELL FROM BRAVE WIFE.....	6
2.5	PATRIOTISM OF QADIS KHAN AND PANDIT BASSA RAM	7
2.6	IMMORTAL SACRIFICE	7
2.7	FATHER AND SON REACHED THE DESTINATION.....	8
2.8	VICTORY CAMPAIGN OF SIKH SOLDIERS.....	8
2.9	A QUESTION WORTH CONSIDERATION.....	9
2.10	TEMPLES ECHOED WITH THE SOUND OF ARTI (PRAYER)	9
2.11	MAHARAJA GULAB SINGH	9
2.12	CHIVALRY OF GEN. ZORAWAR SINGH	9
2.13	MAHARAJA RANBIR SINGH	10
2.14	ANTI-NATIONAL CRIME OF PANDITS	10
2.15	MAHARAJA HARI SINGH STOOD FOR COMPLETE INDEPENDENCE.....	11
3.0	KASHYAP BANDHU	12
3.1	WIDOW RE-MARRIAGE.....	13
3.2	WASTEFUL EXPENDITURE AND OTHER CUSTOMS	13
3.3	GIRLS' EDUCATION.....	13
3.4	WEEKLY CONGREGATIONS	14
3.5	MOCHCHI PHOL.....	14
3.6	FROM PHERAN TO SAREE.....	14
4.0	PANDIT SHIV NARAIN FOTEDAR	15

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1.0 SHRI BHAT

Light in the Darkness

Narender Sehgal

CONVERTED KASHMIR: Memorial of Mistakes

As a result of efforts of Sultan Zainulab-ud-Din and Pandit Shri Bhat the ancient glory of Kashmir started returning. Temples started being built, ban was imposed on slaughter of cows, taxes were abolished and the migrant Hindus returned to their houses.

The state of Kashmir had become almost Hindulless because of the massive and powerful campaign for religious conversion launched by Sikander, the iconoclast, his son, cruel Ali Shah and antinational Saifuddin (Suha Bhat) and the cruel Syeds in their religious garb. Only a few Hindu families were living in Kashmir after paying taxes and after tolerating many difficulties and ignominies. The embers of the burnt libraries were still hot. The cries of the raped Hindu women were reverberating in Kashmir. The silence of the ruins of the temples was generating terror. The water of the Jehlum was still red with the blood of the Kashmiris. Amid this deep darkness there was refulgence from a lamp.

1.1 Sultan Zainulab-ud-Din, saviour of Kashmiriyat

In 1420 A.D. Sikander's second son, Sultan Zainulab-ud-Din, occupied the throne of Kashmir. He decided to compensate for the cruel activities and the sin of his father. Shrivar has given an impressive account of the liberal and tolerant Sultan, after having written about the deeds of earlier Sultans who had crossed all the limits of cruelty. According to Shrivar, Zainulabud-Din was a ruler like a sandalwood balm that gives coolness after the end of the heat wave in the desert.

Zainulab-ud-Din, popularly called Zainul, tried to turn Kashmir towards its ancient glory. Under his orders many ruined temples were rebuilt. Those Kashmiri Pandits, who had migrated and scattered in different areas in India were invited back. Many industries were set up for the welfare of the people. Barren lands were made cultivable. For improving irrigation many plans were introduced. Constructive minded Zainul started many schemes for promoting art and culture. He got many Hindu scriptures translated in Persian. Through such deeds he earned love and loyalty from all. He achieved honour as a real king of Kashmir.

Behind all this good work and his awakend sympathy towards all human beings is hidden one important event, which the historians have concealed, which pertains to the change of his mind brought about by Shri Bhat.

1.2 Vaidraj Pandit Shri Bhat

It will be incomplete to describe the short glorious era of Kashmir without the introduction of Shri Bhat. Zainul had hardly completed two years on the throne when a dangerous boil developed on his chest. Many Syed Hakims treated him. Known Hakims from Central Asia came to treat him but there was no improvement. Sultan Zainul had heard that there were Hindu doctors in Kashmir who had the expertise in curing the boil after an incision. Under the orders of the Sultan a search for such doctors was launched but thanks to the activities of the Syeds, Kashmir was bereft of these doctors.

Historian Joanraj has written that just as a result of the anger of the snow, flowers are not seen or do not bloom in midwinter, similarly no expert doctor was available because of the state repression. Ultimately Government employees found Sri Bhat, an expert in treating poisonous boils. But he delayed his arrival out of fear. And when he reached the palace, the king encouraged him. Shri Bhat treated successfully the poisonous boil of the king.

While treating the Sultan Pandit Shri Bhat harboured fears of punishment in case the Sultan does not become well.

He was well versed in treatment but he had started the treatment of Sultan carefully and hesitatingly like the one who touches a diamond, shining like fire, after sometime out of fear of already having suffered burns.

1.3 National interest above all

When the Sultan was fully well, he wanted to reward Shri Bhat with jewels and diamonds but Shri Bhat refused to accept any such regard. He did not bother about his personal comforts and amenities. He gave preference to the happiness and prosperity of his Kashmir. This attitude of Shri Bhat was something new for the Sultan. By rejecting wealth and prosperity Shri Bhat, while thinking in terms of the benefit of the nation, had decided to make the King adopt a liberal outlook and transform his lifestyle in the background of the historical and constructive mould. The Sultan witnessed transformation in the outlook of life and his religious fervour ended giving place to broadmindedness instead of narrow-mindedness.

On being told by the Sultan Shri Bhat submitted seven demands which Zainul accepted gladly. These demands were:

1. The massacre of Hindus on the basis of reasonless religious conflict be stopped immediately and no one be punished without proper investigations and enquiries.
2. Those temples, which were damaged during the time of Alexander, be rebuilt. Permission be given to those Hindus, who had been forcibly converted to Islam, to return to the religion of their ancestors. Those Kashmiris who had migrated out of fear to areas outside Kashmir, where they were leading a life of penury, be immediately invited back to their houses.
3. The Sanskrit schools be reopened and facilities be made available there for the Hindu students for their development and progress.
4. The taxes imposed on the Hindus be abolished and they be given equal rights.
5. While respecting the religious sentiments of the Hindus cow slaughter be banned.
6. The ban on performing Yagnya and rites and customs of Hindus be lifted.
7. Immediate repair of libraries, set ablaze by the Sultans, be undertaken.

History is witness to the fact that the Sultan accepted all the demands submitted by the patriot, Shri Bhat.

1.4 The return of the ancient golden age

Sanskrit scholars, who had migrated from the valley, returned to Kashmir and again Kashmiri Pandit families started resettling in Kashmir. On the request of Shri Bhat the Government sanctioned monetary help to the students and the scholars and many Sanskrit centres were reopened. The property of Hindus looted during the period of Sikander was returned to them. Zainul developed faith in Hindu religion. He

started the study of Hindu scriptures. He ordered closure of all those centres which had been set up by the Syeds for perpetrating cruelty.

A Muslim historian, Mohd. Din Fak, has given an account of Shri Bhat in his book "Shabab-e-Kashmir". According to him Shri Bhat became famous on the Government level after he refused to accept presents from the king. He was appointed state physician and head of the health department. He carried great influence on the king and his people. He earned this influence through resettlement of his people. He was desirous of peace and progress.

Joanraj has written that just as a lion does not attack other animals in the hermitage of saints, so the Turks now stopped punishing Brahmins as they used to do earlier. The sun like glorious king treated kindly those Brahmins whose very existence had been endangered earlier.

Famous historian, Abul Fazal, has, while giving an introduction of Shri Bhat in his book "Aain-e-Akbar", written that in the golden history of Kashmir, particularly in the context of the golden history of middle period, the glory of Zainulab Din, which is worth remembering, would have not been there and he too would have flowed with the tainted tide which had carried his parents had not Shri Bhat come in contact with him. This being the reason, for Joanraj to write that Zainul was always ready to implement all the suggestions of Shri Bhat in the historical tradition.

In many places in his book Joanraj has described Shri Bhat as a well-behaved and unique social leader in the history of Kashmir.

After the treatment of poisonous boil three beneficial matters were settled. Shri Bhat became famous because of the amazing curative treatment. Zainul was free from this fatal disease and as a result of it he was highly happy to see the bright future of the Hindus.

Joanraj has written that there was no problem in the Government because of secular penance of Zainul, Shri Bhat's successful policies and the fortune of the people.

1.5 Shri Bhat transformed Kashmiri society into a classless society

In the middle period of Kashmir the life of Shri Bhat, a brave Sanskrit scholar, is a gleaming page of history but besides this his life is a guide in the work and attitude for bringing the Muslim mind to the national stream in the present and in the future. Modern historians have not set their eyes on this type of great man who converted a Sultan, belonging to the family of heartless, cruel and destroyers of the roots of Indianness, to a nationalist and a secular king. In this context Shri Bhat had the capacity to change the course of the era and as such he was a greatman of this era.

Because of the efforts of Shri Bhat when Hindu families returned to Kashmir for resettlement, the problem of their houses and earning cropped up. Under the guidance of Shri Bhat and under the permission and plan of the Government everyone was appointed on different posts in the Government as per their calibre. Shri Bhat resolved successfully all the problems connected with their resettlement, their family arrangements, their security and their identity while linking them with the then administrative setup.

There were many castes and subcastes in Kashmir. This system had been demolished because of the atrocities committed by Muslim rulers. There was need to give new shape to this caste system in the light of the migration and then the return of the displaced Hindus in miserable conditions. In such a situation Shri Bhat categorised all in one community of Brahmins.

Dr. Triloki Nath Ganjoo has made a detailed reference to it in his book "Mahashri Shrihat". He has said that possibly there was no need for analysing the socio-political development of Kashmiri Hindus but Shri Bhat has, through his revolutionary reforms, organised a classless and one class society not only in the

history of Kashmir but for the entire Hindu society of India, on the scientific lines, while looking a thousand years ahead of him. It is surprising that the reforms for which Bhakti revolution, Brahma Samaj, Arya Samaj and Vishwa Hindu Parishad wanted to implement the bugle of this reform was sounded several hundred years ago by Shri Bhat in 1420 A.D. It was an instance of his deep insight in future.

He has said that the modern historians have, without fully understanding the Rajtarangani of Joanraj, considered the identity of Shri Bhat nothing beyond a minister of health. In this connection P.N. Koul (Bamzai), Dr. R.K Parimoo and Dr. Mohibul Hassan are worth reference. But according to Joanraj Shri Bhat was a health minister but Zainul had given him the powers to look after all departments and he would take care of other departments and activities of the Government. Historians have forgotten to note that, because of his unique and lovely personality he had not only influenced the Sultan but had also attracted him. He had eclipsed the biased influenced of Muslim ministers and the Syeds who had come from central Asia by his extraordinary personality.

Thus Shri Bhat is one such greatman of the history of Kashmir who, through innumerable qualities and matchless calibre of his grand personality, again linked defunct Kashmiri Hindus with the land of Kashmir.

2.0 BIRBAL DHAR

Liberation of Kashmir

Narender Sehgal

CONVERTED KASHMIR: Memorial of Mistakes

Kashmiri Hindus did not lose courage despite being victim of atrocities during 500 year barbaric rule of the foreigners. When the Hindu state was established in Punjab, Kashmiri Pandits, through their adroitness and alertness, established contact with Maharaja Ranjit Singh and established Hindu Government in the state. The hero of this work was Birbal Dhar.

The trend of religious conversion, which started with the reign of Shahmir, continued, without any interruption, for 500 years till the rule of the last Afghan ruler, Ajim Khan. The erstwhile Hindu Kashmir was converted to a Muslim state on the strength of the sword. During this era all cruel and destructive means were adopted for destroying the Hindu society but despite these cruel and inhuman measures foreign rulers could not finish the basic society of Kashmir. Kashmiri Pandits, while maintaining their tradition of unique sacrifices, protected the Indian value of life.

2.1 Pandits did not accept defeat

The basic nationslist society of Kashmir had become tired while tolerating and facing strocities upto the last Afghan Subedar's rule. But their mind for struggle was not tired. The major section of the Pandits was still capable of facing this situation with novel style and this section achieved success through their great sacrifice.

The last Subedar, Ajim Khan, felt the need of involving capable Pandits for running the administration systematically after silencing the flames of anarchy and mutual conflict. It is condemnable but a reality that every Muslim ruler in Kashmir fully banked on the calibre and wisdom of Pandits for running the state administration and for fulfilling their political objectives and then destroyed the Pandits, their families and their religion for their political interests.

This Subedar, Ajim Khan, too obediently followed the demonic traditions of his ancestors and entrusted all the powers of the government to Pt. Birbal Dhar, Pt. Sukh Ram and Mirza Pandit. These three Hindu sardars were competent administrators. But the Muslim sardars incited the Subedar against them by levelling baseless charges of embezzlement and misappropriation of Government funds. The Subedar ordered confiscation of the family property of Birbal after levelling false charge of embezzling crores of rupees. With this the Hindu society came under the cloud of misfortune. Ajim Khan gave full freedom to Muslims sardars for annihilating the remaining Pandits.

2.2 Pt. Birbal staked his life

Prominent Pandits of Kashmir decided to protect the Hindu society in this situation. A secret meeting was organised for carrying out the sacred duty of protecting their society in the interest of nationalism. Political, religious and social Hindu leaders from the entire state participated in the meeting which was held in the house of Mirza Pandit. Some decisions were taken after a day-long deliberations.

The question pertained not only to Kashmir but to whole of India. The question related not only to the Pandit society of Kashmir but to the misfortune having befallen the entire Hindu society. There was need

for resolving this misfortune on the national instead of the regional level. After the deliberation it was decided to approach Maharaja Ranjit Singh for help. The responsibility of meeting the Maharaja was given to the seasoned person like Birbal Dhar.

2.3 Support of patriotic Muslims

Faint outlines of this plan became known to the Subedar. He immediately summoned Mirza Pandit and enquired from him about the plan but Mirza Pandit cleverly pacified the Subedar. By then Birbal Pandit had left the house alongwith his son, Raja Kak, in disguise. After halting at Devsar, away from Srinagar, the father and the son left for their onward journey. With the help of the local Muslim society they succeeded in crossing the Pir Panjal. These Muslims performed their duties towards the nation by giving assistance to them and the names of such Muslims will shine in the history of Kashmir.

The Subedar and the Muslim courtiers were highly irked and intrigued by the way Pandit Birbal and his son duped the Subedar and crossed the Pir Panjal with the help of some Muslims. On hearing about it, the Subedar rushed his soldiers who carried out massive search operations in the entire country but by then the arrow was out of the bow.

Those patriotic Maliks who helped Birbal and his son in going out of the state were hunted and killed. Those houses, in which Birbal and his son had stayed, were set ablaze and the family members in those houses were burnt to death alive. Their lands were seized and all Government grant and facilities were stopped in all those villages where Birbal and his son had crossed and stayed. The Subedar called Mirza Pandit for talks and the two discussed the situation. During this discussion Mirza Pandit concealed the plan of Birbal. He told the Subedar that if Birbal was successful in reaching the court of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, he would return to Kashmir with Hindu troops or otherwise go to Haridwar for penance.

It inflamed the Subedar. He was confident that Birbal would be successful in his mission. He was aware of the patriotism of Maharaja Ranjit Singh and his faith on Hindutva and his powerful country. The Subedar turned mad with anger and through his dexterity Mirza Pandit weakened all the defence of the Subedar. The Subedar started visualising the fall of the Muslim rule in Kashmir.

Subedar Ajim Khan started grumbling like an insane animal and whosoever confronted him was killed. When he got wary of all this he ordered that all the women of the family of Birbal Pandit be arrested and brought in front of him. But in this field also he had to face defeat.

2.4 Farewell from brave wife

When Pandit Birbal initiated the plan he had visualised such a possible attitude of the Subedar. He had the inkling of his wife and children getting killed and insulted. He had decided to give this sacrifice in the interest of the nation. He had preferred safety of the land of Kashmir, the Indian culture and the Hindu society to the gradual sacrifice of individual families. Before his departure Birbal Pandit had met his wife who bid farewell to him with her tearful eyes and with the assurance that she would never hesitate performing her duties even if she had to undergo severe pains and miseries. While placing her hands in the hands of her husband she had pledged that she would not hesitate embracing death and will not allow any foreigner to touch her body so long she was alive. How emotional farewell would it have been for Birbal when he was confronted by his wife pledging to sacrifice herself for the cause of the nation?

Her son, Raja Kak, too touched his mother's feet for seeking her blessings. She embraced her son knowing fully well that that meeting with her son was the last. She entrusted her son to the care of his father and bid a customary farewell to her husband and son who had to go on a right course of action. Both the son and the father left the house with their chin up and the brave husband saw his brave wife the

last time and the son waved his hand to his mother. The brave mother went inside the temple for prayer. She worshipped both Shiva and his trident and her daughter-in-law, wife of Raja Kak, too joined her in her prayers.

2.5 Patriotism of Qadis Khan and Pandit Bassa Ram

Prior to his departure, Birbal Pandit had entrusted the task of protection of his family to one of his trusted Muslim associates, Qadis Khan Gojwari. Therefore, both the mother-in-law and her daughter-in-law, went to the house of Qadis Khan.

The soldiers of Ajim Khan launched a massive hunt for the two women but Qadis Khan had made elaborate arrangements for their security and the two women were made part of the family in order to prevent any suspicion from taking shape.

One Hindu, Pandit Bassa Ram, knew about the whereabouts of the two women. He had left the two women in the house of Qadis Khan. Bassa Ram was a close friend of Birbal Pandit. Subedar Ajim Khan learnt about the whereabouts of Bassa Ram who was arrested and brought to the subedar. The Subedar gave him the allurements of estates, gold and top post in the Government but the strong-willed Pandit refused to divulge anything. The Subedar ordered that the Pandit should be tortured. For nine days he was kept hungry and was subjected to torture. His flesh was peeled off with hot iron rods. His eyes were gouged out and for each of these nine days he was fined Rs. 9,000. But when he refused to open his mouth despite undergoing all these ordeals and tortures, on the 10th day his belly was ripped open with red hot sword and this way Bassa Ram Kak achieved martyrdom on the altar of the nation.

2.6 Immortal Sacrifice

Subedar Azam Khan made all possible efforts to search out these two ladies but it was of no avail. Qadis Khan spared no efforts to hide them. It was destined that these two women would sacrifice their lives for Kashmir. This news reached Subedar through one of the trusted friends of Qadis Khan because of his selfishness and anti-national bent of mind. Whether this friend of Qadis Khan was Hindu or Muslim is not known from any historical source. It may be due to this fact that a traitor is to be condemned everywhere. The house was besieged by Qadis Khan because of the news of this hated person. Qadis Khan tried his best to hide these ladies but he was killed by Subedar's Soldiers. Both the mother-in-law and daughter-in-law were arrested.

While these ladies were being taken by Subedar's soldiers, the mother-in-law swallowed one diamond, she was having round her throat but the daughter-in-law could not do so. When both of them were brought before Subedar, the wife of Birbal looked at Azamkhan with contemptuous eyes and said bravely, "The reign of terror leashed against the Kashmiri Pandits will end and the rule of the Afghans will collapse. My husband and son have reached Maharaja Ranjit Singh's Darbar". She died before she could conclude her talk. She fulfilled her promise and did not allow any person to come near her while she lived. Azamkhan was very much sad.

But Pandit Birbal's daughter-in-law and the wife of Raja Kak was sent to Kabul through one Afghan Subedar. There is a lot of difference between these two cultures. The students of history know when the Maratha soldiers defeated a Muslim Subedar at Kalyan near Pune, the weapons, artillery and the fort of the Subedar fell into the hands of the Marathas. The Maratha soldiers presented the young daughter-in-law of Muslim Subedar before Shivaji. Shivaji reprimanded his soldiers and asked them not to repeat such a type of action in future. Then, he addressed Subedar's daughter-in-law as "Mother" and offered her golden ornaments and sent her back to Subedar. Here lies the difference between these two cultures.

2.7 Father and son reached the destination

Pandit Birbal Dhar and his son, Raja Kak, were marching towards their destination carefully after surmounting many hurdles in the way. As a result of their strong faith in their objective they could secure assistance of many in the way. Many more Hindus from Kashmir followed Pandit Birbal. All these Hindus were successful in reaching the court of Maharaja Gulab Singh in Jammu. Maharaja Gulab Singh gave a letter for Raja Dhian Singh, Prime Minister of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, and made arrangements for their trip to Lahore. On reaching Lahore, Raja Dhian Singh made arrangements for their meeting with Maharaja Ranjit Singh. Pandit Birbal narrated the entire story to the Maharaja. He influenced the Maharaja with his oratory and learning.

The Maharaja listened to Birbal attentively. He was dismayed over the misfortune on Hindutva and Indianness in Kashmir. He felt that the entire problem should be viewed in the national context. He was a true Sikh who recalled the sacrifice of Guru Teg Bahadur. The picture of young children of Shri Gobind Singh being embedded in the wall loomed large in front of his eyes. He could see the severed head of Hakikat. After discussing the matter with his associates the Maharaja immediately ordered that the troops be kept ready. He suggested to Birbal to remain with the Army officers for acquainting them with the topography of the state. Pandit Birbal accepted all the conditions and kept his son in the Lahore court as a pawn.

When Subedar of Kashmir, Ajim Khan learnt about it and about the ensuing invasion of Kashmir by the Sikh soldiers, he felt scared. He felt he would be asked to give an account of all his evil deeds. He was so terrified that he sent his harem, his entire gold and wealth to Kabul under the supervision of Sehaj Ram. After some days he also left Kashmir and handed over power to his brother, Jabbar Khan. Even while fleeing Kashmir Ajim Khan committed condemnable act of taking a wealthy Pandit, Suraj Tikoo, with him so that he could grab his wealth. But when he could not lay his hand on anything the Subedar killed Suraj Tikoo near Baramulla.

2.8 Victory campaign of Sikh soldiers

Maharaja Ranjit Singh sent his five top and brave Army commanders alongwith 30,000 soldiers to Kashmir under the guidance of Pandit Birbal. Raja Gulab Singh of Jammu, and other powerful Army officers including Hari Singh Nalwa, Jwala Singh, Hukum Singh and Shyam Singh uprooted the troops of Jabbar Khan with their might. Jabbar Khan took to his heels. The Sikh soldiers emerged victorious and this way brought about an end of the Afghan rule. On June 20, 1819 A.D. Pandit Birbal entered with Sikh soldiers into Kashmir as a victor. Even the Muslim historians have praised the contribution of Pandit Birbal.

According to Mohd. Din Fak, Pandit Birbal was a person of bright character. In his view any great sacrifice was much too small for any noble cause. He was not perturbed even by the suicide of his loyal wife, abduction and forcible conversion of his daughter-in-law and by the merciless killings of his friends and relations. He kept on marching with determination on his path so that he could throw out the Afghans from his country. But in the hour of his triumph he did not forget his Muslim countrymen and his duty. The Sikhs wanted to loot the city but he came in their way. And when Phool Singh started demolishing the sacred shrine of Shah Hamdan, Pandit Birbal, without caring for his safety, told Phool Singh that the history will condemn him for his evil deed. This deed of Birbal is sufficient to make him immortal. He is a symbol of innate qualities of Pandits and of their permanent strength to fight the onslaughts of time.

2.9 A question worth consideration

The character of Pandit Birbal reveals that if a single person desires, he can change the course of history. Success is assured if one remains above self-interest and works with dedication and determination during the hour of national crisis. The role played by Pandit Birbal and his son for finishing the cruel rulers of Kashmir has its background in the encouragement of two great women who lost and sacrificed everything for completing the national task.

Had Pandit Birbal desired he would have sought revenge after his victory. He could have avenged the destruction of temples and educational institutions during the last 500 years from mosques and tombs. He could have reconverted those who had been forced to adopt Islam but as a greatman he did nothing like this.

In the context of the current problem in Kashmir it is worth consideration and debate whether Pandit Birbal should have destroyed all the foreigners on Kashmir and all their signs with his sword under the "tit for tat" policy in consonance with the requirements of history, political wisdom and in order to caution foreign powers in the future.

2.10 Temples echoed with the sound of Arti (prayer)

After conquering Kashmir, the reign of Maharaja Ranjit Singh lasted for 27 years. During this period 10 Governors were appointed in Kashmir. The Government policies were liberal and the victimisation and suppression of Hindus by Muslims had stopped. Muslim landlords, who would commit atrocities daily, took to their heels and the women folk used to live and roam about honourably and freely. Bells in the temples started ringing and the tunes of Arti reverberated in the temples and it seemed as if the golden age had dawned again.

But with the advent of this era no such system and practices were adopted which could have given a permanent and stable shape to this era. It was never thought that this era would end some day and result in the same age of darkness. After achieving freedom from 500-year long slavery no attempt was made to link the state with its ancient foundation. No plan was formulated for the renovation of the ruined temples and the centres of culture, education and spiritualism. There was no possibility of starting activities in order to strengthen nationalism because by this time the British had established their foothold in rest of the country.

2.11 Maharaja Gulab Singh

During his lifetime, Maharaja Ranjit Singh had appointed Gulab Singh as the ruler of this state. But in 1846 under the Amritsar Agreement, which was forged after the battle between the Sikhs and the British, the Britishers secured penalty for the Sikh-British war from Gulab Singh even after recognising him as the ruler of Kashmir. One British agent was appointed in Kashmir. In Reality the Britishers established their control over Gulab Singh through the Agent.

2.12 Chivalry of Gen. Zorawar Singh

Gulab Singh converted Jammu and Kashmir to a strong state by uniting small states with the help of his military missions and political influence. Through the efforts of Gen. Zorawar Singh, well adept in mountain warfare, Gulab Singh annexed Ladakh. This brave Gen. Zorawar Singh attained martyrdom

while fighting the war in the mountain region of Ladakh. Famous historian, K.M. Pannikar, has praised his troop command and war tactics. He has written that it is most amazing to see him carry the soldiers to the heights of 15000 ft. above the sea level in Ladakh and Baltistan's snow covered cliffs where it is difficult for the people from the plains to live because of paucity of oxygen. Carrying the troops to these heights more than six times and launching one attack after the other for conquering the state in order to establish peace is unique and matchless in the history of India. His greatness as a great soldier will shine in the pages of the history of India.

2.13 Maharaja Ranbir Singh

After Gulab Singh his son, Maharaja Ranbir Singh, occupied the throne of Jammu and Kashmir. People remember him as an ideal Hindu king because of his interest in Hindutva, Sanskrit and the Indian culture. He opened many centres for the teaching and study of Sanskrit, built libraries and made efforts for re-establishing the values of Hindu life. Under the guidance of this Maharaja a Dharmarth Trust was set up for the construction of many temples. As a result of these efforts a wave of Hindutva swept the state. The Hindu society too started to get up and the people of Kashmir became impatient in restoring to the state its ancient glory.

2.14 Anti-national crime of Pandits

The impact of the wave of Hindutva was so powerful that even the converted people started making up their mind for adopting the religion of their ancestors. Muslims from Poonch and Rajouri and some from the Kashmir valley assembled and appealed to the court of Maharaja Ranbir Singh praying that they be accepted in their basic Hindu religion. It can be treated a misfortune for the country that some contractors of religion always tried to create hurdles. When the Maharaja asked the Pandits about the reconversion of their relations, the Pandits clearly refused to accept them back in Hindu religion. These very Pandits had not allowed Rinchan to adopt Hindu religion which led to the trampling of Kashmir under the feet of Muslim rulers for 500 years. And when the Muslims expressed their wish to return to the Hindu religion, these very Pandits created obstacles because of their narrow outlook.

Had the Maharaja himself declared the converted people as Hindus, the problem would have ended for ever. History can never forgive the Pandits for this antinational work.

When Raja Pratap Singh succeeded Maharaja Ranbir Singh, he had to face opposition from his younger brother, Amar Singh. Amar Singh had challenged the occupation of the throne by Pratap Singh. The British Government assisted Maharaja Pratap Singh and this way it further strengthened its foothold in the state. The British Government appointed political Agents in Srinagar, Leh and Gilgit.

A British Parliamentarian, William Digwe, had given an account of the political powers of these agents. He has written that the powers of the Resident have been supreme and the fact is that one cannot do anything without written orders from him. His wish is law, he is a ruler. He has allowed himself to be surrounded by sycophants and friends and has ousted old and loyal servants of the Government. No one, in that country, can open one's mouth and in case any weakling raises a voice of protest, he is warned of dire consequences.

2.15 Maharaja Hari Singh stood for complete independence

Maharaja Hari Singh ascended the throne of Kashmir after Maharaja Pratap Singh. On assuming the throne this young ruler brought about many constitutional reforms in the state. Having been baptised in the Indian culture, Hindutva etc the Maharaja was a nationalist. His patriotism is testified by the way he supported total independence for India as a representative of the Chamber of Princess in the roundtable conference in London in 1931. The Maharaja said candidly "It is the first occasion when the Indian princes have come to discuss the political future of India with the representatives of the British Government and the British India. As Indians we want our motherland to enjoy a place of honour and equality in the British Union".

For the first time in the British rule in India that a ruler of a state had raised the question of India's independence with determination. The British Government was alerted. Feeling that patriotism of Hari Singh may come in the way of their scheme, the Britishers started hatching conspiracies for creating an atmosphere of opposition for the Maharaja. They thought of projecting a Kashmiri leader as a British "stooge" and the then Viceroy, Lord Mountbatten, projected Sheikh Abdullah in the guise of the "stooge" through Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru.

3.0 KASHYAP BANDHU

A Social Reformer

H. N. Kaul



Pandit Kashyap Bhandhu
(24th March 1899 - 18th December 1985)

Shri Tara Chand of Gairu (Noorpur Village), popularly known as Kashyap Bandhu and Bulbul-e-Kashmir, should have been given the same position among social reformers in Kashmir as is bestowed to Raja Ram Mohan Roy of Bengal. He is better known as a political leader rather than a social reformer. His efforts to revolutionize the thinking of Kashmiri Pandits - change their social structure and social disabilities, brought about a tremendous change in the community, the impact of which is visible even today in the dress of our women folk i.e. 'saree' and in the fast growing education of our women.

Born in March 1899 to Thakur Bhat in Gairu (Noorpur village), he got his education up to primary standard in the local primary school and then in Srinagar upto entrance examination. After passing his entrance examination, a quest for job started and after a great struggle he got a job of Shajrakash in Revenue department. But after some time he left the job and went to Lahore. These were the days when Arya Samaj, Brahma Samaj and other such organisations were advocating social reforms. He came under the influence of Arya Samaj and joined Vrjanand Ashram in Lahore. He became a total vegetarian and never touched meat etc. Vishwa Bandhu was the Principal of the Ashram. Vishwa Bandhu observed the

keen interest of Tara Chand in public service and social reforms and advised him to serve Kashmir. It was he who named him as Kashyap Bandhu. Kashyap Bandhu became the editor of Arya Gazette in Lahore. While in Lahore, he saw the miserable condition of Kashmiri labour who used to migrate during winter months to earn their livelihood. He organised them and started Kashmiri Mazdoor Board of which he became the Secretary. He came into contact with revolutionaries and joined Bhagat Singh's party. He was arrested in Sanders' case but was released.

Kashyap Bandhu was always keen to serve Kashmir and while out of the State, he kept himself abreast of the conditions in the State and particularly about the conditions of his community - Kashmiri Pandits. It was during these years i.e. beginning of 1930-31 when the Muslim Conference came into existence. In 1931 when the leaders of Muslim Conference were in jail, a procession in connection with the demand for their release was taken out in the city of Srinagar. It became unruly and on their way the processionists looted the houses and shops of Kashmiri Pandits. Some of them were killed. Though the killing and looting stopped in no time, the scars remained for a long time. It was after this happening that Kashyap Bandhu returned to Kashmir. He was already familiar with the condition of the State particularly the Kashmiri Pandits. After his return to Kashmir - Shri Prem Nath Bazaz, Shri Shiv Narain Fotedar, Shri Jia Lal Kilam and Bandhuji organised "Yuvak Sabha" with its central office at Sheetal Nath. It was from this place that Bandhuji started his political and social reform activities. He realised that to ameliorate the condition of the community the social evils in the community should be removed and reforms brought in. During the beginning of the thirties he started his programme of Social Reforms. The Reforms which were taken up for implementation were:

3.1 Widow re-marriage

In those days widows were not allowed to remarry as the society did not approve of it. Young widows had to suffer for whole life and depend for their existence on the in-laws or own parents. Kashyap Bandhu started the movement, propagated for it alongwith other workers. Most of the workers who worked with him volunteered and married widows. That was the example they put forth for the community. In those years many widows got remarried.

3.2 Wasteful expenditure and other customs

Most of the expenditure incurred during the marriages or other festivals used to be wasteful. The manner in which feasts were given for days together on such occasions and food stuffs and other things wasted was unbearable. To stop all this, Bandhuji and his colleagues started picketing and used to sit on dharnas wherever such feasts were organised. He requested the people to limit the number of Baratis and stop wasting the money and the food stuff. He also advocated limiting the number of preparations on such occasions and refrain from giving huge dowries. Those days it had a salutary effect on the community.

3.3 Girls' Education

The greatest contribution of Kashyap Bandhu is the spread of education among the girls. It was during that time that Girls Schools such as Vasanta School came into existence. We owe it to him that our women folk have taken to education and are not lagging behind in any field today.

3.4 Weekly Congregations

Weekly gatherings used to be organised at Hari Parbat where the community people used to gather in large numbers. Yajnas (Havans) were also performed. This was done to imbibe unity and brotherhood among Pandit Community.

3.5 Mochchi Phol

Kashyap Bandhu started collecting contributions and donations both in kind and cash to help widows. His volunteers used to visit each and every house to collect rice and other things just to give solace to the economically and socially backward persons. He started 'Silai Kendra' to give training to the needy widows so that they could sustain themselves.

3.6 From Pheran to Saree

Today we see our womenfolk in sarees and salwar kameez. During the period of early thirties, sarees and salwar kurtas were non-existent. Pheran was the common dress for our women without any under garment beneath it. This dress was responsible for lethargy and laziness. Bandhuji requested the women folk to change the dress and start wearing sarees and that too khadi sarees. There was resistance initially but he and his volunteers started visiting each and every house and requested the women to change the dress. His efforts bore results and today saree and salwar kameez have become the normal dress of our women folk.

To educate the people on these social reforms, he used the media to a great extent. He published many of his ideas through articles in the Daily Martand (of which he was the first editor), "Kesari" and "Desh" etc.

But alas! today we have not only forgotten the man but we have betrayed him. He wanted us to shun dowry system - wasteful expenditure - show off on festivals, particularly on the occasions of marriages - we have not adhered to his teachings. Our demand for dowry has grown to awful proportions; the expenditure on marriages has multiplied, and our marriage festivities continue for days together. Many things have been added to our menu- Chicken, which once was unheard of in our community, has become one of the varieties which is served on the receptions and other occasions. 'Nena Batta', 'Hyot Dyot', Gharachun etc. have become our culture. Khadi, which Bandhuji wanted our women folk to use, has given place to Banarasi and other costly silken sarees. This is how we have betrayed the man who gave us self confidence and self respect, wanted our emancipation and development. We can still pay him our respects and shradhanjali by following his ideas and teachings.

Let us observe his birthday as the day of Social Reforms every year and organise lectures, seminars etc. on this occasion.

[The intensity of the opposition faced by Bandhu ji will be gauged by this example:

Kashmiri Women:

taaraachand bulbulo trawoo israar
aes na baa traawoy z'ahtih naerwaar

Bandhuji:

pootch, zoolya tai naerwaar
im chhi shikasaek sardaar
mali baerthaey gardan
traawi feran tI lolo
Editor]

4.0 PANDIT SHIV NARAIN FOTEDAR

An indomitable crusader

Dr. B.N. Sharga

The Bhagwad Gita depicts the essence of Hindu philosophy which lays emphasis on the theory of Karma. It teaches us how to overcome our shortcomings and failures. As the salt makes the various food preparations more delicious and palatable. So it is with life. The Gita leads a taste to life like does salt to food. The philosophy of Gita plays an effective role in the growth and development of both body and mind. It is an important ingredient in one's life. The Gita introduces you to your inner personality. The intellect which reasons and discriminates and the mind which is the centre of emotions and impulses. So only when the intellect is in your command you can have the access to the knowledge that you have so painstakingly acquired. It acts like a remote control of your over all personality without which every thing becomes meaningless and out of control. So apart from achieving academic knowledge development of intellect is equally important for success in life. The Gita clearly enumerates that one should not be driven by passion but by vision, not by the desire to arrogate but to abnegate. Go for deeper more meaningful aspirations as the lofty ideals keep the mind away from developing into chaos and poor quality of work and take you on the path of progress to achieve new milestones in life. The person who gave these high ideals a practical shape in his life and adopted the philosophy of Karma in letter and spirit was Pt. Shiv Narain Fotedar, who was not only a tireless crusader but also a champion of human values.

Pt. Shiv Narain Fotedar's ancestors were the Dattatreya Kauls of Rainawari mohalla of the Srinagar district in the Kashmir Valley. The administration of the Kashmir Valley during the Dogra rule (1846-1947) was divided into different parganas each headed by a parganadar. Under each parganadar there used to be subordinate government employees like thanedars, Shikdhars, patwaris, quanongos, fotedars, etc. One of Pt. Shiv Narain Fotedar's ancestor was appointed as a fotedar during the rule of Maharaja Ranbir Singh (1857-1885) so his descendants started writing Fotedar as their new surname in place of original Kaul.

Pt. Shiv Narain Fotedar was born in 1904 in a middle class Kashmiri Pandit family of Rainawari. The name of his father was Pt. Prakash Joo Fotedar who was a lower rank government employee. The name of his mother was Padmawati who was the daughter of Pt. Hargopal Kaul Khasta, she though did not have any formal education but somehow gained mastery over Sanskrit, Urdu and Persian language at home. Since the girls' education was almost non-existent in the valley then due to orthodoxy, she opened a girls' school for imparting training and education in Arts and Crafts to young girls of the community in Nawakadal which was subsequently shifted to Bana Mohalla. She also took care of the young K.P. widows and orphans. This dynamic and farsighted woman became popular as Nani in the community for her various philanthropic and charitable acts.

Pt. Shiv Narain Fotedar spend his childhood days in such an enlightened atmosphere at home under the loving care of his mother which naturally ignited a fire in him for social service. His mother saw to it that as per traditions of the family her son should receive the best education.

Pt. Shiv Narain Fotedar had his early schooling in Christian Missionary School from where he passed his middle examination in 1920 with flying colours. He then took admission in Sri Pratap High School from where he passed his matriculation examination in 1922 in first division. He then joined Sri Pratap College and did his F.A. in 1924 and then B.A. in 1926 respectively in first division. Prof. William Marcdermat an Irish scholar was the Principal of the college then who was a very strict disciplinarian. Pt. Shiv Narain Fotedar used to take an active part in the extracurricular activities of the college especially debates as he was a very good speaker and therefore most favourite student of his teachers. Prof. Chand Narain Bahadur

a product of Canning College, Lucknow taught him English at the graduate level in Sri Pratap College, which was then affiliated with the Punjab University of Lahore.

Pt. Shiv Narain Fotedar then went to Lahore from Srinagar in 1926 for higher studies and did his M.A. in history from the Foreman Christian College, Lahore in 1928 in first division obtaining a very good percentage of marks in the examination. He then came back to Srinagar from Lahore and joined his service in 1929 as the Professor of history in the then Prince of Wales College, Jammu. He did this job for about two and a half years.

Pt. Shiv Narain Fotedar had a burning desire in him right from his childhood days towards social service. He came under the magic spell of the two stalwarts of the K.P. community Kashyap Bandhu and Justice Jia Lal Kilam who were spearheading, the movement to bring certain social reforms in the community to make it more progressive in out look and for the eradication of certain evils like dowry and wasteful expenditure on the marriages and other ceremonies. Kashyap Bandhu on every Sunday used to organise the meeting of the community at the historic Hari Parbat and used to emphasize especially to the women folk to switch over to wearing sari and blouse instead of traditional Phiren and Taranga to look more smart, elegant and agile. Being impressed by the work of these two great leaders of the community. Pt. Shiv Narain Fotedar took the membership of the Sanatan Dharam Yuvak Sabha and was soon elected to its executive body.

Maharaja Hari Singh of Jammu and Kashmir Riyasat in 1931 made Pt. Shiv Narain Fotedar the provincial head of the census operations in the state. He carried out this job with great ability and skill and received all round praise and appreciation for completing this stupendous work of the census in Jammu and Kashmir state in record time.

The community members then selected him to lead their delegation to meet Indian leaders like Dr. Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru, Pt. Madan Mohan Malviya, Raja Narendra Nath Raina and Dr. Monje etc. to put up their view point before them during the freedom struggle of the country. He very successfully led this delegation which made his entry into the political arena of the state.

Pt. Shiv Narain Fotedar then fought the Municipal elections in 1933 and became a member of the Srinagar Municipal Corporation which provided him an opportunity to do social work with more vigour and enthusiasm. This made him quite popular among the masses. He did a lot of work to improve the basic civic infrastructure in the Srinagar city. His main focus was on health and sanitation and to provide basic education to all irrespective of their caste or creed and blood or breed.

Due to his dynamism and popularity Pt. Shiv Narain Fotedar was elected as the President of the Santan Dharam Yuvak Sabha in 1935 when Kashyap Bandhu parted away which is now known as All State Kashmiri Pandits' Conference after the mass migration of K.Ps. from the valley in 1990.

A very unusual event took place in the long history of the British monarchy on 11th December 1936 when King Edward VIII abdicated the throne of England to marry a commoner Miss. Wallis Warfield Simpson of America a divorcee much against the established royal traditions saying that "I have found it impossible to carry the heavy burden of responsibility and to discharge my duties as a king as I wish to do without the help and support of the woman I love". He thus became the only British Sovereign ever to voluntarily resign the throne.

Pt. Shiv Narain Fotedar was again elected to the Srinagar Municipal Corporation in 1937 and became a Municipal Councillor. He then became first a senior Vice Chairman and finally the Chairman of the Srinagar Municipal Corporation on which post he functioned up to 1955.

Prior to this Pt. Shiv Narain Fotedar was elected to the Praja Sabha in 1934 during the rule of Maharaja Hari Singh which is now called as the Jammu and Kashmir Legislative Assembly. He was again elected to the Praja Sabha in 1938 and then in 1947 respectively. He remained continuously its member for 14 years. The Praja Sabha was constituted by Maharaja Hari Singh to give a chance to the people of the

Riyasat to participate in its administration just to suppress their anger and agitation against his autocratic and despotic rule. Because Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah had raised a banner of revolt against him in 1931, which led to a large scale communal riots in the valley. The main demand was freedom from the Dogra rule. This agitation was named as Quit Kashmir Movement.

Then between 1947 and 1949 the Kashmir Valley witnessed very fast political developments. On 3rd June, 1947 the last Viceroy of the British India Lord Mountbatten finalised the plan to divide the country into two independent dominions and gave an option to the princely states of British India either to remain an independent entity or to merge with either of them. The country was then partitioned on 15th August 1947 purely on communal lines leading to a large scale killings of both Hindus and Muslims in this process. Then tribal attack on the Kashmir Valley took place on 22nd October 1947. Maharaja Hari Singh then signed the Instrument of accession with India on 26th October, 1947 and took refuge in Jammu after handing over the power to Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah, who became the Prime Minister of Jammu and Kashmir. Riyasat with certain special privileges like its separate Constitution and flag not enjoyed by the other states.

Pt. Shiv Narain Fotedar then after weighing all the pros and cons joined the National Conference party of Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah and became a member of its governing council in 1952. In the meanwhile the Constituent Assembly of the Jammu & Kashmir state nominated him as the member of Parliament to represent the interests of the Riyasat at Delhi. Pt. Jawahar Lal Nehru who was the Prime Minister of the country then saw a spark in this young man to become a great leader in future and so duly encouraged him. Pt. Shiv Narain Fotedar took a keen interest in the Parliamentary debates and exhibited his potential and skills as an orator and his command over the language be it English or Urdu. His presentation of events always used to be in chaste language punctuated with interesting anecdotes which used to have all the ingredients of a superb mind as he had a razor sharp memory.

While staying at Delhi Pt. Shiv Narain Fotedar developed a very good rapport with the national level leaders of all shades of political opinion like Dr. Kailas Nath Katju, Pt. Govind Ballabh Pant, Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, Morarji Desai, Lal Bahadur Shastri, Gulzari Lal Nanda, Madhu Limay, Prakash Veer Shastri, Dr. Ram Manohar Lohia, Jaya Prakash Narayan, Mrs. Vijaylakshmi Pandit, Dr. Hriday Nath Kunzru, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, Sardar Baldev Singh, etc.

Pt. Shiv Narain Fotedar served on many Parliamentary Committees. He was a member of the Central Advisory Committee of National Cadet Corps, which was constituted in 1948 under the Chairmanship of Dr. Hriday Nath Kunzru to suggest ways and means for reorganising the infrastructure of N.C.C. in the country to prepare the youth for the defence of the country. Pt. Shiv Narain Fotedar was also a member of another important committee for defence which was constituted under the Chairmanship of the then defence minister Sardar Baldev Singh for reorganising the whole defence system of the country as per needs of a newly born independent nation. He was also a member of the committee on foreign affairs which was formed to chalk out the foreign policy of the new country under the guidance of the then Prime Minister Pt. Jawahar Lal Nehru who was also holding the portfolio of the foreign affairs at that time.

In 1954 Pt. Shiv Narain Fotedar was invited as the chief guest in the annual function of the Amar Singh Degree College, Srinagar. While presiding over the function the then principal of the college Prof. Mahmood in his customary thanks giving address recalled the qualities of Pt. Shiv Narain Fotedar's head and heart. Prof. Mahmood while eulogizing Pt. Shiv Narain Fotedar said the students of history used to listen the lectures delivered by Fotedar Sahib in chaste English dotted with chronological calendar of events clothed over with inimitable style of presentation with rapt attention. Even the students of science used to swarm his class to listen to this fiery giant of English language and its diction. Prof. Mahmood actually was a student of Pt. Shiv Narain Fotedar during a brief tenure of the latter as a faculty member in the Prince of Wales College, Jammu. Pt. Shiv Narain Fotedar was selected in 1954 as a member of the Parliamentary delegation to Turkey and to some other middle east countries. His main job was to establish friendly relations with all these countries and to propagate the India's policy of non alignment.

He was then in 1955 elected as the President of the All India Union of Post and Telegraph Employees. He was also elected as the President of the Cantonment Workers' Federation in 1956.

Pt. Shiv Narain Fotedar then in 1957 after the expiry of his term in Parliament went back to Srinagar from Delhi. There he was elected as the member of the Jammu & Kashmir Legislative Council. He was then unanimously made its Chairman during the tenure of Bakshi Ghulam Mohammad as the Chief Minister of the state.

Pt. Shiv Narain Fotedar had the honour to again become the Chairman of the Legislative Council of Jammu & Kashmir in 1959 as a nominee of the National Conference. He discharged his duties with great poise and dignity by strictly maintaining the decorum of the House and encouraging healthy and constructive debates inside the House on crucial matters involving the welfare of the common man.

Pt. Shiv Narain Fotedar then became a nominated member of the Jammu and Kashmir Legislative Assembly. He was a member of the Budget Planning Committee, Board of Industries, Board of Food Control and Public Health, Education and Finance Standing Committees.

He also functioned as the Vice-Chairman of the Post War Reconstruction Committee with the then Prime Minister of Jammu and Kashmir state B.N. Rao as its Chairman.

Pt. Shiv Narain Fotedar was the founder President of the Kashmir Educational Society. He was founder of the Social Reforms Organisation. He was founder President of the Gandhi Memorial College Trust and under its banner he established seven high schools and middle schools in different parts of the valley to spread the message of light and learning among the masses.

Pt. Shiv Narain Fotedar also had the flair for journalism. He was the editor-in-chief of Martand a reputed English daily of Srinagar. He was the President of the Hazara Relief and Rehabilitation Committee which was formed to look after the relief work properly.

He was the Senator of the Kashmir University for a number of years and played an effective role in toning up the academic atmosphere in the university. He used to command a great respect from both its staff as well as its students for his humanitarian approach towards their genuine problems. He always tried his best to improve the academic standards of the university to make it one of the best in the country.

Pt. Shiv Narain Fotedar throughout his life maintained the great traditions of his kinsmen Pt. Hargopal Kaul Khasta and Pt. Salig Ram Kaul Salig the two legendary brothers of Kashmir, who were the first to raise a banner of revolt against the despotic rule of Maharaja Ranbir Singh (1857-1885) after coming to Srinagar from Lahore and were sent to jail for sedition. Pt. Hargopal Kaul Khasta the great revolutionary became subsequently popular among the community members as Sher-e-Kashmir.

Pt. Shiv Narain Fotedar was a person with no inhibitions and ego. He used to meet every body in the society whether high or low with the same ease and warm affection. He used to be always ready to be a part of any call given by the community members. He used to take part in all the religious functions with out any complex or reservation. He always used to lead the Janma Asthami procession of Pandits in Srinagar without any fail. He was himself quite hospitable to any invited or uninvited guest to his residence. He used to relish the delicious food and occasionally it is alleged he used to take a few pegs of wine as well to maintain a good health on medical advice.

In his youth and even in his adulthood he was always known as a well dressed person with a sense of elegance and perfection. He was endowed with a charming personality with an infectious smile. He was very fond of wearing a turban with multi coloured stripes. In the later years of his life he started wearing a typical cap type head gear. He was deeply imbibed with a sacrificing spirit. When Pt. Jawahar Lal Nehru died on 27th May, 1964 a funeral procession was taken out by the Pandits at Habba Kadal in Srinagar. Pt. Shiv Narain Fotedar paid his homage by saying that great men never die in a condolence meeting held after that. He lived for upholding certain values which were very dear to him. He never nursed any ill will against any body in life. He was a man with a noble mission and a tireless crusader.

In 1967 Parmeshwari Handoo the daughter of a widow who was working as a sales girl in a departmental store in Srinagar was abducted by allegedly her colleague Ghulam Rasool Khan with the connivance of the General Manager Mir Qasba and then forcibly converted. The Kashmiri Pandits then led by one Pt. K.L. Moza went to office of the Sanatan Dharm Yuvak Sabha at Sheetal Nath and a movement was launched on 25th August 1967 for the restoration of the Kashmiri Pandit girl to her mother and awarding a severe punishment to the culprits.

Pt. Maharaj Kishan Razdan died in police lathi charge on the peaceful demonstrators. Pt. Shiv Narain Fotedar extended his full support to this agitation. But unfortunately this movement later on petered out due to dissensions and differences in the rank and file of the Pandits themselves which left them high and dry without achieving anything worth while to their credit, although in the initial phase of this agitation they exhibited a unique solidarity over this crucial issue. This agitation actually flopped due to the subversive role played by a Pandit minister in the state governments for his own selfish ends.

Pt. Shiv Narain Fotedar in the fag end of his life became critically ill. He was then shifted to Jammu for treatment where this great son of the motherland passed away on 6th December, 1976 at the age of about 72 years. The rich legacy of his leadership qualities will always act as a beacon light for the future generations. Thomas Edison was very correct when he said “Many of life failures are people who did not realise how close they were to success when they gave up.”

Dr. B.N. Sharga

Manohar Niwas
Kashmiri Mohalla,
Lucknow – 226003