

PREFACE

It is a great pleasure and privilege to present the XXXVII th, 2005-2006, Annual Number of the Vitasta. It being the Golden Jubilee year of Kashmir Sabha, Calcutta this publication was intended to be brought out at the beginning of the celebrations around Navreh, 2006, as the Golden Jubilee Number. The theme of this Number was, as such determined appropriately, as:

“SABHAS, SAMAJ AND SAMELLAN – A MANTRA FOR KASHMIRI PANDIT SOLIDARITY”

Accordingly, articles were invited and the preamble to the theme of this proposed publication got published, with thanks, in various community journals in our country and abroad to achieve a wide response in respect of the material that was to shape its contents. For unavoidable and unforeseen reasons this publication had to be postponed and the articles received were preserved for the opportunity to materialize for their publication at a later date. The response also was not, to begin with, very encouraging and focused on the theme. This was very disheartening; in a way a frustrating revelation. However, with the decision of Kashmir Sabha hosting the AIKS Samellan in Kolkata, on the 24th and 25th December 06, the urgency for releasing the Golden Jubilee Number on this occasion became a natural corollary and my involvement in bringing it out became inevitable though I had retired from this responsibility some years back. As a first step, it was necessary to send reminders about the theme-focused articles and also requesting those, who had already sent these, for updation as in between almost a year had passed by. It was great some authors did update the matter yet some did not and this time gap is apparent in some of the articles presented herein. Since most of the articles were earlier received through computer, there were inadvertent problems in retaining some of these over this period and despite requests, the copies did not become again available from all. My heartfelt apologies are due for having misplaced two valuable articles in the process. With all efforts and no stone, however, having been left unturned, in procuring the material, as desired, it was gratifying to receive, at the last stage, a reasonably good response. I wish the details of many more organizations had become available. Yet, the satisfaction is that this publication covers the historical accounts of the pillars of the structure of

our Kashmiri Pandit Organizations, in its widespread Diaspora. The objective was to draw the history of our social geography in our Diaspora and provide a bird's eye view of the role our Sabhas are playing, in preserving our identity of all sorts, in different corners of our country and abroad. The objective was also to reveal the Common Agenda being faced and followed by our Sabhas in different places. In the process what became evident and explicit is that there is a need felt commonly, for a federating organization, Samaj, to coordinate our Minimum Common Agenda for preserving our all forms of identities. Oxford dictionary explains “Mantra” as, instrument of thought. The misconception of it being, as if, a jargon for priestly deliberations had to be removed and the simple fact established, that for our survival and preservation of our Kashmiri Pandit identity, as the end, the viable means to achieving this objective is the solidarity of our Sabhas. And for this the instrument of thought is brain storming of our issues, differences and dissensions in our collective Samellans.

It suffices to say that a good beginning has been made, in this publication in respect of these objectives. It is not a complete document, yet it is a model effort at preserving our community identity at different centres in the Diaspora, through our Sabhas, and for documenting our strengths and weaknesses as these obtain from time to time. This has to be followed up, to achieve further improvements and fulfill the lacunas, for preserving our present histories for generations to come. Some of the earlier Vitasta Numbers have opened the vistas, in broad-basing our knowledge pool about our heritage and our background of excellence. This Number, hopefully, may further initiate this necessary trend for our future generations so that our traditions and traits of excellence get passed on from generation to generation. This is a great objective to be achieved and this publication is a small step in this direction. Still, miles have to be walked to achieve this objective.

Kashmir Sabha, Calcutta has been, right from the beginning, very thoughtful about its role as a local guardian for the welfare of its members and for preserving our cultural identity locally. Maintaining its links with the roots in Kashmir and with different Sabhas, set up at different places with the same

objectives, emerged as an operational need for achieving the broader objectives mentioned above. It played a vital role in recognizing the concept of a federating organization for coordinating the common agenda facing the local organizations, call them by any name, herein referred to as, the Sabhas. In 1980, All India Kashmiri Samaj (AIKS) was formed in Allahabad, with the objective of forming the desired federating organization and in December 1980, the second meeting of AIKS was held in Calcutta to frame the Constitution of this federating organization. In Jodhpur Session, held in 1982, the role of Sabhas vis-a-vis the role of Samaj was duly discussed and the demarcating limits identified, as detailed in a paper, "Sabha, Samaj and Samellan" presented from Calcutta Sabha. This view point was well received and published then, besides in the Vitasta and other community journals, in the Martand of Srinagar, also.

Since then many more Sabhas have got formed. The unexpected and unfortunate distress caused by the internal displacement of Kashmiri Pandits and their exodus from their homeland and they being up-rooted from their ancestral hearths and homes in Kashmir have changed the scenario. Therefore the safety, rehabilitation and return of the displaced Kashmiri Pandits have become vital questions for the Sabhas. The need for a relationship, horizontal amongst the Sabhas, and vertical with the federating organization, AIKS, as the Samaj have become, therefore, more intense. This circumstance also caused a shift in the objectives of the Sabhas and those of their federating Samaj, from an absolutely socio-cultural to also a political one from 1990 and this was duly recognized by AIKS in 1991 Jaipur declaration. Kashmir Sabha has duly continued to provide the desired emphasis on this need over the intervening period and is ever alive to the changing roles of our organizations. With this in view it has once again hosted the Samellan of AIKS, to celebrate its Golden Jubilee, in brainstorming our present problems, their perspective and Common Agenda with a view to strengthen our AIKS in playing its leadership role, as an Apex Body.

In this publication, Kashmir Sabha, has made a solemn attempt at presenting the total subject in three sections mentioned below. It requires to be noted that all the articles detailed herein are valuable and their placement and positioning in a particular section is based on the proximity they have with the message each section is providing. A little overlapping is unavoidable in such a presentation but it requires to be emphasized that each article has a distinct message to convey. The Sections are as follows :

- I SAMAJ (AIKS) : For coordinating Sabhas for Minimum Common Programme with Apex Body leadership and No margins for error.
- II SABHAS : For Promoting Welfare, Preserving Identities and implementing Minimum Common Programme, at local levels In Global Diaspora.
- III SAMELLAN : For Brainstorming Minimum Common Programme, Performance and Emerging Agenda, At a Common Platform.

In Section I devoted to the development of AIKS the article by the present President, Shri M. K. Kaw, covers the performance of AIKS as achieved presently, with a historical backdrop. The article by Dr. N. L. Zutshi, a previous President, presents a "New Look" perception keeping the performance AIKS has made during its existence of twenty five years, giving various valuable suggestions, particularly "need based concept", to be brainstormed in the Samellan to be held in the coming session. It was considered necessary to include the previous Presidential addresses particularly by its first President Justice P. N. Bakshi to provide for ready reference the essential ingredients that went in to the making of AIKS at that time. Except the political objective that has now been added to AIKS, an in-depth analysis should reveal how much more has been achieved in respect of the basic perceptions. What was very striking in this address was the emphasis in not shying away our community interest, as communal. The address given by Mr. D. N. Munshi, explains the need of AIKS adopting the political agenda due to the en-masse, internal displacement of our community from its homeland and the need for the representation of Kashmiri Pandits in any dialogue that is to decide the future of Kashmir at any level. Besides, it covers the performance made by AIKS in its first decade of existence. The article by Dr. B. K. Moza, an ex-Vice President of AIKS, covers twenty years of AIKS' performance and lays emphasis on the amendments to the Constitution of AIKS that were felt necessary at that stage. Though changes have been made in the Constitution of AIKS still it is shying away from identifying AIKS in clear terms as the Organisation of Kashmiri Pandits and this dichotomy requires, being set right as is evident in AIKS

declaration on National Policy. It also refers to and emphasizes on the Sabhas, Samaj and Samellan perception which was discussed in 1982 at Jodhpur to determine the limits of a local Sabha from that of a federating Samaj which is still relevant keeping the overlapping attitudes of some Sabhas with the functions of Samaj or vice versa. This perception being still debated, therefore, forms the theme of this Vitasta Number. The article by Prof Sadhu is important as it points to the unresolved question of AIKS Trust which, as happens to be with all Trusts, is independent in approach, yet it belongs to AIKS and responsible for the execution of the objectives for which AIKS had formed it. The coordination between the two is to be perfected to ensure these are the two arms of the same organization. There was another article received, almost a year back, from Prof. Sadhu, exclusively on this topic. This, however, required to be updated to the present understanding of the changes made recently in AIKS Trust structure but these did not become available. Prof Shah's article provides a lot of thought on all these issues towards the formation of AIKS and its responsibilities. Though all the articles in this section are touching on the history of AIKS, it was considered necessary to request Mr Vijay Saqi to give a brief and comprehensive update on the history of AIKS, as compiled by Mr. L. C. Kaul, to detail the role AIKS has played in last few years.

The Section II, comprising twenty articles provides valuable information about the brief historical backgrounds and achievements of our twelve affiliates of AIKS which have been role models in many respects. These are the majestic "Chinars" which determine the, important land marks in the landscape of Kashmiri Pandit diaspora. Eleven of these affiliates have their Kashmir Bhawans and their official organs. Kashmiri Over-Seas Association (KOA) organizes a Camp every year for three days to provide an opportunity for our brethren in USA to have a get-together with their families at one place, as if in a Kashmir Bhawan. It is an occasion for our ladies and particularly children in American Diaspora to get-together and be acquainted with our cultural traits and related issues. An annual "Hawan" is celebrated at all the centres besides observance of other festivals and common agenda to preserve our cultural identity. These descriptions reveal what role individuals have played in creating, selflessly, the structures of our togetherness thus providing the other side of the general belief that we are individualistic. It is a fact our distress has been too harsh and individuals are becoming impatient in

seeing results about our rehabilitation or other goals that are dear to them and thus disagreements emerge which result in forming other outfits, which is natural to an open society in a democratic set up; yet very much harmful to the basic cause. As often said there is a mushroom growth of Kashmiri Pandit organizations in Delhi and Jammu regions. If these have a specialized role and represent a sizable number at a particular location, these are welcome, but if these are parallel bodies then it is not in the interest of our community health and welfare. Kashmiri Samiti Delhi is one of the oldest, respected and well established organizations of our community. But, it is a nodal body for Delhi with enough opportunities to serve our suffering community in this state which has probably the largest population of Kashmiri Pandit youth. Being in the capital of the country it has a special role to play for the community at large but it has to perform, in tandem, with AIKS which is our Apex Body. The differences between the two have to be resolved and both have well-identified areas of action. In fact the two have to go together in achieving the community goals in the best interests of the community at large, keeping the Sabha-Samaj relationship as sacred as it is for other nodal affiliates in other states of the country.

The Section III is discussing the role of Samellans as a platform for our brainstorming the political, cultural and social agenda. Since our AIKS has filed a petition in the Supreme Court for our pending issues of not having been recognized as an internally displaced community in distress, this agenda is special to us from political point of view. It requires absolute solidarity from all the affiliates of AIKS from all angles. From cultural angle preserving our mother tongue is a paramount agenda. Very akin to this is preserving our Kashmiri literature. Streamlined, Devnagri script for Kashmiri language, as another script besides Nastalik, is now a welcome reality and in practice for our literary pursuits. Its recognition by the Government of India, to include it in the Constitution of India, is a very important agenda. That all journals and authors are not using this script uniformly is against the interest of our community welfare. Samellan has to discuss measures to ensure that all adopt this script uniformly and remove, if there is still any, difficulties in its computerized application and usage. Preservation of our Pilgrim centres (Asthapans), in Kashmir particularly in the rural areas and revival of Pilgrimage to Sharda shrine in POK do form our important agenda from Socio-Cultural point of view. Dowry and divorces at increasing rate require an in-depth analysis and this

has to be brainstormed as our Social agenda. What is necessary is to ensure that what we resolve is duly implemented at the grass roots and at ground level.

Sabhas have been our ancient tradition even before, Christian era, started. These represented "Councils of Advisors" in different fields. It amounts to misconception that Kashmiri Pandits were originally priests; they are Brahmins no doubt. It is a long journey of six thousand years from Saraswats to Kashmiri Pandits and this requires to be considered when we wish to dwell on our social history and the related facts about ourselves.

The cover page is adorned with a photo, representing a symbolic Sabha, which is in reality the meeting, the great Swami Vivekananda had, with a Sabha of Kashmiri Pandits in Tullamulla in 1897. Sabhas have been very vital engines of our social change in our millennia old existence in Kashmir. All the relevant papers published in this Golden Jubilee Number and the earlier Numbers reveal that Shri Kashyap Bandhuji played a memorable leadership role in the recent history of Kashmiri Pandits. Earlier we have brought out a Kashyap Bandhu Number dedicated to his memory and to the reformation movements in Kashmir. A letter from Bandhuji addressed to Calcutta biradari is also reproduced in this issue. His photo is included on the cover page representing symbolically the leadership role of our Samaj, as an Apex Body, with one leader and one voice at a particular juncture. The heritage preservation activities and brainstorms in a Kashmir Bhawan do provide a symbolic representation to our Samellans. All these three elements of our solidarity are, therefore, depicted on the cover page of this publication having this theme and objective to ensure preservation of our Kashmiri Pandit identities, political, social and cultural in our wide spread Diaspora.

Last but not the least, I express my profuse acknowledgements of gratitude, I owe personally to the authors of this publication. I have no words to express the cooperation I received from various Sabhas, though at a later stage, and am personally indebted to Shri Triloki Nath Khosa, Padam Shri, Pt. J. N. Kaul, Pt. Maharaj Krishen Kaw, Shri A. K. Kaul, Pt. Triloki Nath Dhar "Kundan", and others for the valuable advice and help they extended from time to time in making this dream realized. Prof. Pandita,

thankfully, communicated a valuable article when he was in the midst of mourning a family tragedy. I am thankful to Kashmir Sabha, Calcutta for its encouragement and making finances available to bring out this publication and to my colleagues particularly Mr. Vinod Dhar and Mr. Jolly Mohan Kaul whose optimism was a tonic for my keeping the spirits up whilst preparing for this publication. It requires to be mentioned that this publication is incomplete as it has not, very regrettably, the Sections on Hindi and Kashmiri. The serious health, break down of Mrs. Niva Kaul, was the primary reason and secondly the articles received were not up to the theme and also alone it would have been an uphill task, for me to bring out this composite publication with time-bound release. It is surprising that our stalwarts who are at the back of this Kolkata Samellan, as its Organising Committee, have not been able to take a joint photograph to be presented in this Publication. Nor have they given their individual photographs as has also been the case with our AIKS office bearers. I am hopeful, Kashmir Sabha will bring out the 2006-2007 publication of the Vitasta, by Navreh, as a supplement of this publication which will have the Devnagri material and the photographs of our Samellan, its organizers and those related to AIKS, to commemorate the Golden Jubilee Samellan of Kashmir Sabha and AIKS, being held on 24th-26th December, 2006. This lacuna has to be attended to and the publication brought out as a complete one, in this respect also.

Whilst soliciting the indulgence for any omissions and commissions that might have, inadvertently, crept in whilst bringing out this publication, I emphasize that the views expressed herein are entirely those of the authors and the Vitasta or Kashmir Sabha, Calcutta does not hold any responsibility for the same.

With these words I wish the Kolkata Samellan a great success in achieving the important agenda it has before it. I also pray that this publication serves, as a Mantra for bringing about the solidarity of our Sabhas behind our Apex Body AIKS to preserve our all identities as Kashmiri Pandits. I wish Kashmir Sabha, Calcutta a memorable Golden Jubilee and many more Jubilees in future to come.

15th December, 2006

Dr. B. K. Moza

From our President's Desk

It is a privilege and indeed an honour for me to have been elected, unanimously, for the second year, as the President of our Sabha which, in the past, has had great luminaries to uphold this responsibility. I, in the first place, take this opportunity to pay my obeisance to them for their contributions in laying a strong foundation of our Sabha.

The focus of our first term was essentially on local priorities. These included holding almost every month get-togethers on festival days to preserve our cultural identity, providing substantial medical help to a deserving Biradari member, provide for health check ups of members at Kashmir Bhawan, Kashmir Bhawan management and related activities. For larger community issues, we continued to provide educational help to a number of deserving students, as recommended by a local organisation in Jammu, providing our humble financial contribution to our AIKS, following its pertinent directives and implementing its programmes as far as possible.

Besides holding our monthly Executive meetings, for monitoring the activities and programmes of our Sabha, we held cultural get-togethers on Navreh/Navroz, Zangtrai, Swami Lakshmanji's birth day, Jesht Ashtami, Sharika Bhagwati Jayanti, Bhagwan Gopinath Jayanti, Janam-Ashtami, Sport's day for children, Gada-batta, Annual Hawan, Kushal Hom, and Shivratri. There was an overwhelming response from our members in sponsoring many of these functions; the remaining having been accomplished by our Sabha. We also had a remarkable musical evening on Navreh when our legendary artist from Jamshedpur, Mrs. Asha Kaul, enthralled us all with her Kashmiri songs, Gazals and Bhajans.

This year being the Golden Jubilee year of our Sabha, we have geared up our loins to host AIKS Samellan and share our joys with the community at large in providing for a meeting ground for the representatives of our Sabhas/Samities and Associations of Kashmiri Pandit diaspora, spread globally, to discuss and brain storm the vital issues that our community is confronted with for its survival in all respects. This is also to commemorate the Silver Jubilee of our Apex Body whose Constitution was adopted twenty five years back in its historical meeting held at Calcutta under the auspices of our Sabha. The Samellan will be held on the 24th and 25th December, 06 and we are looking forward to a great event of AIKS in respect of its meaningful and determining plans and strategies in the interest of our community at large.

On this occasion we are also making all efforts to release the Special Number of the Vitasta on the theme : "Sabhas, Samaj and Samellan – A Mantra for Kashmiri Pandit Solidarity" This publication will be brought out under the guidance of Dr. B. K. Moza, our veteran for this tradition. We are sure this publication will be a bench mark, for its focused and excellent contents, as have been our earlier publications.

We have not been bringing our Annual Numbers regularly, as it used to be some years back, nor have we been able to bring out our monthly/bimonthly Vitasta, the News and Views. Our score in this particular connection has continued to be weak. Our editor for the News and Views. Mrs. Prabha Tankha, has suffered a serious health break and so has our Devnagri expert Mrs. Niva Kaul. We pray to God for their early recovery and hope other stalwarts will volunteer their precious time for this noble community cause.

Ours is a problem of dwindling numbers so far as Sabha's active membership is concerned. Though Kolkata is once again reviving to its glorious past, this trend is not perceptible in respect of our Sabha membership. Two of our very potential Gen. Secretaries, Mr. Ashok Kaul and Mr. Sanjay Kaul, one after another got transferred from Kolkata during my term. We miss them a lot; their involvement and contributions. We, however, wish them all success in their advancing careers and thank them for their dedicated services.

Our Joint Secretary, Mr. Vinod Dhar, Treasurer, Mr. Vikesh Trisal and our ever-ready Rakesh Kaul are extending a yeoman's service along with our other members of the Executive and veterans of the Sabha in making its existence felt. Our Cultural team, with Mrs. Indu Kaul as the Convenor and our veteran Mr. B. M. Misri, as the leader are conspicuous by their excelling presentations. My heartfelt thanks to them, to members of Executive Committee, veterans of our Sabha and the Biradari for the support and encouragement I have received during my tenure. I feel proud of our team spirit and our Sabha.

After the Samellan, we will have our Annual Hawan in January when our new Executive will be in charge. I wish them, a great innings in advance, Good luck and God speed.

V. R. Moza

FROM THE DESK OF AIKS PRESIDENT

A LABOUR OF LOVE

I am delighted to see that this special number of Vitasta focuses on a critical organisational issue. It examines how best the Diaspora of Kashmiri Pandits should organise themselves in different parts of India and the world, and how they can collaborate with one another to foster unity, brotherhood, prosperity and maintenance of a distinct identity. Dr. B. K. Moza has embarked on this massive project in a spirit of dedication and is engaged in a labour of love. He and the entire organisational team of the Kolkata Sabha deserve our kudos for this effort.

This project comes at a critical juncture, when the community is facing an unprecedented crisis of identity and survival. The Seventh Exodus has led to ethnic cleansing of the Kashmir valley on a scale unparalleled in the history of the world. Barring some 5000 odd souls, the remaining 7 lakh Kashmiri Pandits now stand expelled from their motherland, with no early prospect of return.

At this point in time, it is of utmost importance that the community leadership stays united, speaks in one voice, creates a feeling of optimism among the masses and initiates programmes that lead to self-reliance and mutual help.

All India Kashmiri Samaj has been trying to carry out this task with the utmost sincerity of purpose. We have given a new direction to the community thinking by diverting attention from the past to the present and counseling the masses not to indulge in an orgy of wailing and breast-beating. Last February, we held a Corporate Conclave and our brethren in the business world have shown keen interest in helping every way they can. A National Placement Bureau has been set up in the AIKS and several affiliates and corporate leaders have extended concrete help by providing job opportunities.

The umbrella cover of AIKS has been extended to 61 affiliates and more application are in the pipeline. Consultations are on with all frontline organisations to observe community events together and collaborate on a common minimum agenda. A comprehensive writ petition has been filed by the AIKS in the Supreme Court of India. All the political parties have assured our draft Temple bill full support in the next session of the State Legislative Assembly.

This year AIKS celebrates the Silver Jubilee of its existence, while the Kolkatta Sabha observes its Golden Anniversary. Both are historic events and demonstrate that the community is capable of building stable, dynamic and enduring institutions. Our best wishes to these great organisations and all other Samities, Sabhas, Associations, clubs etc. of Kashmiri Pandits across the globe. May their tribe increase!

M. K. Kaw