
THE KASHMIRI PANDIT INTERNATIONAL

Newsletter of Kashmiri Overseas Association, Inc.

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President's Column

Namaskar,

This year KOA has so far organized two camps. One in Harshey, PA during July 3-6, 1997 and other in Lake Tahoe, CA August 1-3, 1997. Both camps have been excellent and very well received by the people who participated. Lake Tahoe details will be provided in next newsletter. Harshey camp was attended by over 400 people from 24 US states, India, and New Zealand. This is first time for such a gathering of KPs in USA. Words will not do justice to this camp. One had to be present to believe it. What a thrill and excitement among one and all present. Human sentiments were high, a unique opportunity for KPs and an excellent show of togetherness by the participants. This camp could not have been such a success without the participation of the members. We congratulate Inder K and Kamini Bhat and their team for organizing this successful KOA Camp 97 and a job well done. Our special thanks to the camp participants, particularly children and young adults for making it a milestone in KOA's accomplishments. At the Harshey Camp, Monick Bhan son of Purshotam and Anila Bhan of MD and Rahul Trisal son of Vijay and Anuradha Trisal of PA raised \$50 each by selling snacks and drinks to the camp participants. They donated the amount to KOA for sponsoring a child from refugee camps in Jammu. Mohini Kaushik of MD donated \$50 in appreciation of children's effort.. KOA will put the difference (\$50) for providing one year support for a child in the refugee camp. Monick and Rahul, we are proud of you for this effort. Mohini ji- thanks for encouraging our children.

KOA organized a meeting with Prof. Saif-ud Din Soz, Indian Minister for Environment and Forests on June 28, 1997 in College Park, MD. About 25 KPs attended this meeting which lasted for about 2 hour. Meeting was started by addressing key issues currently faced by KPs and then Prof. Soz's speech for 20 or so minutes. After his speech we had question answer session for over an hour. Questions were asked regarding refugee's support, living conditions in the camps, education, health, financial assistance and the rehabilitation of KPs Questions were asked by almost every one present. Women did an excellent job of asking questions and confronting with incorrect answers from Prof. Soz. Sumi Nakhasi, a high school student, did an excellent job of asking Soz to provide more information than just being philosophical about the hope. Sumi we are all proud of you.

From time to time we have appealed to members for providing support for various KOA activities. I am pleased to inform KOA membership that we have two KOA members who voluntarily offered their support and they are: a) Ashok Dhar of PA offered to host KOA internet web and KPnet services at no cost to KOA. We are working out the details as to how to make the transition. b) Suresh Raina of NJ pledged upto \$10,000 for producing a audio tape/CD for Kashmiri Language. Dr. Kachru of IL has been contacted to help in this area. Members will be kept informed as things materialize. Thank you Ashok ji and Suresh ji for your support and generosity. I am looking forward to more support from membership. These things make me feel proud of our community.

In 1997, KOA organized concerts of Arti Tiku Koul in Houston, TX, Northern California, and Southern California. All three concerts were very well attended and appreciated (details of these concerts are in this newsletter).

I would urge members who have not paid their 1997 membership dues to KOA, please do so. Members can check their membership expiration year on the address label.

Lalit Wanchoo

Koshur Samachar Subscription - Discounted Rate

For the past several months on the KPnet we have seen, read, and enjoyed articles that were copied from Koshur Samachar, a monthly magazine published by Kashmiri Samiti Delhi. This magazine publishes articles on current issues, our heritage, culture, and community news. About 60 pages are in English, 40 in Hindi, and 20 or so in Kashmiri. This publications is very regular. We have been receiving request from the Samiti people to request KOA membership for the subscription. We had requested them to charge \$25/year instead of \$40/year to KPs abroad. In recent meeting with Mr. Gadoo, President of Kashmiri Samiti, Delhi we negotiated a subscription rate of \$25/year. Already 13 KOA members have sent subscription to Kashmiri Samiti. If interested, please send a check of \$25 for annual subscription payable to Kashmiri Samiti, Delhi and mail it with address information to Kashmiri Samiti - Delhi, Kashmir Bhawan, Amar Colony New Delhi, 110024, India. Members who will subscribe to Koshur Samachar will receive regular publication directly from the Kashmiri Samiti Delhi.

Suggestion - Yagnopavit at the Camp

It was suggested to KOA that at the camp we should organize yagnopavit for KPs living in USA. This suggestion was presented to people at the Harshey and Lake Tahoe camp. Mostly response has been positive. One family has already expressed interest. Members who think it is a good idea and will like to participate in this ceremony, please contact Lalit Wanchoo - (301) 262-7743 or wanchoo@iaol.com.

Arti's Concerts

Texas

We were delighted to have Arti Kaul perform in Houston. It was a treat for all of us. Arti's songs were captivating, her in-depth knowledge of various forms of Kashmiri music and poets was both educational and entertaining. Our folks were mystified by LalDed's philosophy delivered in a melodious voice by Arti. She brought back memories of our childhood with her song selection. By the end of the night, we were all rocking to the beat of the tabla and her lyrics. In future, we really need many more of such performances to revive Kashmiri music in the hearts of all of us, especially the newer generation. We really appreciate Arti's efforts to make this event a great success. We personally are thankful to Shana Mattoo and Mr. Kaul (Arti's Husband) for encouraging her to pursue the revival of Kashmiri music against all odds. Thanks also go to Dr. Kuldeep & Veena Kaul for hosting this event at their home.

Sushma & Opinder Bhan

Northern California

Northern California chapter of KOA organized an evening of Kashmiri music on June 1, 1997. Arti Kaul, the well known singer of Kashmiri songs on Radio Kashmir and Srinagar Doordarshan, enthralled the audience of about 75 members of the community. They included Sunil Fotedar from Dallas, Shana Mattoo from Maryland and Arti ji's husband Arvind. Arti sang songs of all hues. She started with deeply philosophical verses of Lal Ded and soon took the audience on a nostalgic trip through the whole spectrum of Kashmiri lyrics ranging from romantic verses of Habba Khatun to Chakri while concluding with the Sufiana style of Shiv Bhajan "Bel Tai Madal" which was originally made extremely popular by "Padm Shri" Mohammad Abdulla Tibbet Bakkal in late sixties. For three hours the audience relived the entire "Lokchar" and we renewed our determination to preserve our heritage by all necessary means.

The greatest discovery of the evening was Ravinder Pandita, a bay area software engineer at Intel Corporation, who joined our community little over one year back. He gave a fantastic recital of Violin and demonstrated the high level of mastery that he has achieved from his Guruji Pandit V.G.Jog a living legend on Hindustani Instrumental Music. Ravi gave an excellent performance in raag hamsadwani. Both the artists were given an excellent accompaniment on Tabla by most popular Surinder Singh Ji Mann, who has been a disciple of the Great Ustad Alla Rakha. The evening was concluded with presentations of bouquets by Mrs. Pushpa Dhar. She, Mr. Surinder Choudhury, my wife Rajini and Tushi Sharma were the main organizers of this program. As always, thanks to them for their efforts.

Vijay Dhar, President, Northern California chapter of KOA

Los Angeles, CA

On the evening of June 7th, 1997, "Vetesta" over-flowed with joy and we regaled in and partook from, in rapture. On June 7th, a gathering of a very special group of KPs were treated to a feast of lilt, "loll", and longing by a very special exponent of Kashmiri and Hindustani music - Ms. Arti Tiku-Koul. Artiji's name was known to us, but I am afraid, rather superficially. Never had we experienced, first hand, her

rhythmic renditions replete with the rhapsody of yesteryear. Never has the nectar flowed so effortlessly, so rich with nostalgia. Never has the heart brimmed and tripped over a few simple syllables:

Beyea Yina Doh Tarai Lokcharas Vienta-vay!
(Beyea = more; Yina = come; Doh = days; Tarai = about three; Lokcharas = childhood; Vienta-vay = request)

She transforms ordinary, daily melodies into flights of ecstasy, uncountable - only to be experienced. She carried the emotional audience (who couldn't but let it go) with her, every note and cadence. Artiji's artistry is complete and captivating. Its vivaciousness invigorates, its pathos soaks the parched soul. The lilt that cradles the emotion is unintentional and even the uninitiated amongst us start humming:

Rosh-e-roshe yikhna rosh-e-matay
Pamposh Lagai Pamposh-e-matay

Arti Tiku-Koul is an artist with a soul? Her music gets right to the heart and you know that there is a beat in it! How do you compensate someone for returning you to a piece of your dream? Our thanks, to Shanna Matto for making it possible for us to have Artiji and her family (her husband Arvind and her sons, Anubhav and Akshai) in our midst; to Shibani and Sushma Tiku, who initiated the process that brought this evening to fruition; to Hari and Nimee Bhat for their constant support, this evening would not have seen the light of the day without the unconditional help and commitment from Hari Bhat; to Renu and Alex Hansen who remain our unwavering material and mental sources of strength that help us do what we do for our community with joy; to every member of the audience (our extended family), who made it possible for us to once gain (though for a short while only), regain (though in mere spirit), what we lose in the din of our daily rut. To those of our friends who for some reason or the other could not make it that evening - we missed you. We hope we have many more such evenings that thread us together with our emotions.

Anjali and Suraj Bhat, CA

Child Sponsorship Program

KOA has adopted the Child Sponsorship Program with Pran Kaul of CA and Sushma Bhan of TX as the coordinators. Almost all of the 55 children living in the refugee camps whose names were sent by Mr. T N Khosa have been sponsored. There are few children left from the current list and a new list is being compiled. This program works as follows:

A sponsor selects a child from the available list compiled by Sh T N Khosa of Kashmir Pandit Sabha, Jammu. This list is maintained by me and once I am contacted by the prospective sponsor, the list is mailed to them for selection purposes. The sponsors pay

Rs. 600 (about \$17) per month per child by sending a check in the name of the child to Sh. T N Khosa, President, Kashmir Pandit Sabha, Amphalla, Jammu, J&K, India. Sh. Khosa has to be in loop to coordinate the program in Jammu to ensure that there is no duplication or double-dipping. The sponsor for their convenience could mail a check to cover payment for three to six months at a time. Should a sponsor desire to make a tax deductible donation for this program, the check should be made payable to KOA, which will then in turn mail the check for that child to Mr. Khosa. It would be preferred that if a sponsor could mail a letter to the child along with the check, to introduce sponsor so that the child or the parents of the child are not caught by surprise.

Our appeal to the community is to please sponsor as many children as possible. For more information, please contact Pran Kaul - (510) 795-9641, pkaul@slac.stanford.edu or Sushma Bhan - (281) 492-7575, bhan@shellus.com

Pran Kaul, CA

Minutes of the KOA General Body Meeting

KOA held a general body meeting on July 5, 1997 at 5.30 PM and was attended by over 250 people. Lalit Wanchoo, President of KOA opened the meeting by observing one minute's silence in the honor of Late K L Kaul. Status of the various KOA sponsored programs was presented to the general body and questions were answered by the President. Tej N Kaul presented the details of the Educational Assistance Program and current status. President recognized following community members:

Ashok Raina, MD for his significant contributions as the President of the Kashmiri Overseas Association (KOA) for 1995 and 1996. Inder K Bhat, VA as Chairman of the Election/Nomination Committee for conducting 1995 and 1996 elections of the organization in timely and efficient manner. Subhash Kak, LA for his contributions in promoting Kashmiri Pandit history and culture through his publications and speeches, particularly noteworthy is his book titled "The Secrets of Ishbar: Poems on Kashmir and other Landscapes". Sunil Fotedar, TX for his dedication, effort, and significant contributions for developing and maintaining KOA Web site and KPnet. Late Kanhya Lal Koul, MI for his outstanding contributions for the community and his efforts for raising money for the Kashmiri Pandit refugee children's program. Inder K Bhat and Kamini Bhat, VA for their outstanding efforts and dedication for organizing the KOA Camp of 1997 at Hershey, PA. Meeting was concluded by thanking people for their participation in various KOA sponsored activities.

Yoginder Kak, Secretary - KOA

Condolences

Bansi Pandit, MI on his mothers death
Shashi Kher, VA on her brother's death
Nisha Kaul, VA on her grandmother's death
Anupam Wali, MA on his father's death.

Congratulations

Sharad and Saroj Dixit, MD on the birth of a daughter.
Asha Khosa, the Srinagar-based Special Correspondent of The Indian Express for receiving the Prem Bhatia Scholarship for Media-related issues. Award is a scholarship of Rs 40,000 for her research project 'Covering Insurgency in Kashmir since 1989'. The scholarship is sponsored by the K C Mahindra Education Trust. The jury comprised of Nikhil Chakravarty, Prabash Joshi, SK Singh and Ajit Bhattacharjea.

Matrimonial

Alliance invited for 25 year old female, 5.5 feet tall, fair, and attractive Wellesley College Graduate. Third year Medical student in USA. Father Internist/Cardiologist, outstanding family background. Please contact: (315) 393-7077 (USA) or 646-9307 (Delhi-India)

KOA 97 Camp Report

Aayeye Aapko Le Chalen Hum
Aaj Eek Zindagi ke Naye Daur Par
Jahan Tentoon Main Rahkar
Karna Hai Milkar
Teen Din aur Teen Raat Ka ye Safar
Aayeye Aapko.....
Jahan Dhoop Ho Ya Chhavoon
To Rahna hai Sang
Aur Baarish Bhi Ho To
Rahna Hai Milkar
Aayeye Aapko.....
Jahan Kongposh Aur KOA Milke Rahen
Aur SOLIDARITY Se Bhi Banke Rahe.
Jahan East Coast Aur West Coast
Rahten Hon Milkar
Aayeye Aapko Le Chalen Hum,
AAJ EEK ZINDAGE KE NAYE DAUR PAR..

I hope by this time everyone has recuperated from the camp exhaustion. For the past one week I have been seeing lot of mail on the net regarding the camp⁹⁷. I did not respond so far as I needed one more vacation after the vacation! Not because I played too much Volley ball (Vijay Parimoo was scared to face me) or Cricket (field was too small for my sixers) at the camp, but like some of you , Maal Gaadi had kept me too awake at night!, especially when we the organizers had chosen the very right spot for our tents! Thank you Hira Lal for that suggestion!

Well looks like every one (I hope) has had great time at the camp. I have received quite a number of calls, number of personal e-mail messages and a few thank you cards even, and every one seems to have enjoyed immensely the entire event. People have commented that the Camp was a great success. Well let me tell you that first of all it was a success because of the participation of you all. What is a camp without peoples participation. For the first time ever nearly 100 Kashmiri families have come together outside India and that is not a joke. Thank you all for coming. Participation of each and every one of you has made it worthwhile. Secondly the three Regional Coordinators, Mrs Uma Bhan, Mrs Nanna Warikoo and Mrs. Usha Nakhasi really worked hard to coordinate the food arrangements and to make sure we did not run short of food (and collect all the checks too!) and all of you know that in spite of the enormous number of people, we did not run short of home cooked food. It is a tremendous job which they have performed very well. What a dedication . My thanks to all of you. Thirdly the camp was success because of entire Washington Group but in particular Hira Lal and Usha Nakhasi again, Ramesh and Sujata Qasba, Anila and Purshotam Bhan, Pankaj and Deepti Qasba, Shanna Mattoo, Rakesh and Sapna Raina, Lalit Wanchoo, Ashok & Santosh Raina and Vijay sazawal who have been working tirelessly with me right from the day one to the end. My sincere thanks to all of them. To some of the youngsters like Vini Bhat, Ambika Wali, Sumi Nakhasi, Sonu Bakaya, Roger McCarthy and others who spent the whole day manning the registration desk. What a dedication. Future of KOA is in good hands. Thank you all. To Navin Mirakhur who supplied us with the high tech computer center at the camp site, thank you Navin. To Sandeep Kaul and Sunil Fotedar for the KOA Web site demonstration, which was a big hit, thank you. To Mrs. Uma Saini & Mr. Keshav Saini, who drove from Washington area early that morning to perform the Yagna which was enjoyed by each and every one, thank you. To Santosh Khachroo, Vijay Parimoo and all others who stayed late on the last day and helped us wind up and clean up, Thank you. And finally to little Sandhya who saw some inspiration (Kamini) behind my perspiration and taped a message for me, thank you Sandhya.

For those of you who are interested in some stats. We had a total registration of 110 families. Nine families had to withdraw due to personal reasons before the dead line date of June 1st. Six families did not turn up at the site. Thus 95 families which translates into 405 people attended the Camp. At the peak time on Saturday about 420 people were present. I have always said that I am looking forward to the day when all 600 plus families living in US are seen under one tent. Looking at this years numbers that day probably is nor far away. We had onsite registration of 9 families. Members present represented the ages of 6 months to 80 plus. 22 states were represented. People from India, Canada and New Zealand were also registered.. All three days combined together

we have fed about 3000 people. We used 1300 lbs. of Ice and 210 lbs. of Rice. We gulped down 57 gallons of Juice, 27 gallons of milk and 26 gallons(100 liters) of Lassi summer delight(Washington's favorite drink). We used 500 cereal bowls, 5500 hot and cold cups and 2900 plates (sorry folks I donot know how many tons of trash!). We used 1500 tea bags and 1900 spoons. Finally according to Sanjay Kaul we withstood the noise levels (more than 200 decibels) of 168 freight trains (144 according to my calculations). Shows you who was awake the whole time!!! No wonder he rebutted me by writing a poem then and there! Two awards, Best Tent and Most Messy Tent were given on the last day of the camp. I am told that Anila Bhan, MD (Most Messy Tent Award!) has received many calls people wanting to know how did she do it and Shakun Malik (Best Tent Award) is planning to leave her practice of medicine to go on lecture circuit.

Finally I feel that the whole event was clouded by the tragic car accident of Mohan & Kiron Razdan and their family of Indiana. They were returning home from the camp when this unfortunate event took place near Columbus, Ohio. They are all recuperating well even though some of the injuries were serious. Our hearts go to them. Let us all pray for their quick and complete recovery so that we can all see them again next year.

Inder K Bhat -VA

Poem: Our KOA Camp-1997 at Hershey Park

At the KOA Camp we meet each other.
Then we greet each other.
We are seated together.
We wish we could stay like this forever.
We talk to each other.
We meet people's father, sister, brother , or mother.
It brings us joy to see one another.
We all start hugging each other.
We dance and sing to the music's beat.
Then we get hungry and decide to eat.
At the KOA Camp we love to play.
So we decide to play games like cricket everyday.
Now we are sad since we have to leave.
But don't cry we'll be back after New Years Eve!

Kashmiri Friends - what are they!

F un and sometimes funny
R eally cool and interesting
I ntelligent and very understanding
E xcellent and very helpful
N ever being mean, but caring
D oing and playing cool games
S urprising but amazing

Shruti Pandita, 10-year old daughter of Dr. Tej and Raj K. Pandita of NJ. This poem was written on the occasion of the just-concluded KOA camp.

KOA 97 Camp Attendees Mail:

As Inder ji Bhat has rightly pointed out, we were all taken to "Zindagi key naye daur par". It is extremely hard for me to put in words my personal experiences at the KOA camp and what I see unfolding before my eyes for our community in general. This camp, IMO, had all the necessary ingredients of a "Koshur Bhatta Khaander" with the exception of a "maharaaz" and "maharaen". It is my personal recommendation to everyone throughout the country to make an effort to come to these camps every year - it is undoubtedly an experience of a life time! I got to see folks that I hadn't seen as long as 19 years. I will see ya'll next year!!!! -- **Sunil Fotedar, TX**

I and Arti had a wonderful time being part of the whole thing - Volleyball, Chatting, Singing, Dancing, playing Cricket, Childrens' activities Cooking, Serving, enjoying the dishes - but most of all being in your company. Meeting so many new faces itself was refreshing. While we never got to hear any 'Ajit' jokes from Ramesh Ganju, Sunil Dhar did keep us awake from his 'Serious SURD jokes'. Pankaj got a new name 'DJ Uncle' while 'Enchilada' (Sunil) Fotedar was seen everywhere. If I only knew he played such bad volleyball, I would have put him on the same team as Kuldeep Bhat (who always complained that the net was too high). Kanwal Dhar kept Fatehkadal's name alive by his good short selection during the Cricket match - he was especially brutal on the Balls that never get up using the 'LACCHHUL' (Sweep) drive to hit the ball. Lalit Koul should seriously consider opening a singing band. Then maybe we can call him Lalit 'Chakri'. Thanks for the memories. See ya all next year! -- **Vijay Pari moo, NJ**

The KOA camp was a sort of home coming. It was a memorable time. The air was fresh and rejuvenating. Shree Inderji Bhats meticulous details as camp coordinator reminded me of people organizing a marriage festival in Kashmir. The name tags at the point of registration gave the camp site an aura of a symposium. Some people from India and New Zealand were also present. In essence the wider participation in the camp gave it a global flavor. What was striking in the camp were a series of events that kept people busy and engaged. Mrs Arti Tiku Kouls absence, our Kashmiri/Hindi artist from Kashmir, was felt and the gap was partly filled by Kashmiri songs that I heard after a long time on our way back to home. Strangers we met, friends we departed. Do keep on raising issues facing the KP community. -- **Kanwal Dhar, NJ**

This year's camp was a grand success too. I am sure all of the attendees had a great time enjoying all the activities - right from pitching the tent, hatting, singing, dancing, macerena, chakri, political discussions, KOA WEB site demo, cricket, volleyball, camp-fire shayari, antakhshri, jokes, serious jokes, cooking, savoring the mouth-watering dishes, Hershey Amusement Park, Swapna Raina & Pankaj Qasba Associate's KOA -shirt Product Launch (Swapna, Pankaj - any idea of getting a job on Madison Ave. ?), children's games, kids cultural programs and above all the non-stop train (that train really made us nostalgic about our train rides back home in India). The only thing I didn't like

about the whole camp was "Leaving for home on Sunday morning". So I am counting down the number of days left for next camp. Wish you all a great year and see you all next year on 3rd July '98. -- **Lalit Koul, MA**

The KOA camp was simply terrific. Personally, it was the day of freedom for me. No more did I have to look around twice before saying something that emanated from within. I felt liberated. Little had I thought of meeting so many of my friends/relatives whom I had lost touch with for more than a decade. There were so many pleasant surprises that I was overwhelmed. Hope to meet you all and many more Kashmiris in the next camp. -- **Sanjeev Munshi, PA**

Annual Camp in Texas

Texas Kashmiri Biradari is organizing its annual camp at Bastrop State Park, from November 14, 1997 to November 16, 1997. Last year we had a marvelous response and everyone who attended had the terrific time. We hope to see same this year. Anyone interested may please call (by 9/15/97) either Anita Kaul at (281) 461-3822 or Asha Kaul at (281) 499-5136. You may e-mail your query at "kalahana@worldnet.att.net" or at akaul@worldnet.att.net. Please call me or e-mail if you have any questions. -- **Anita Kaul**

KOA Web Appreciation Mail

A net surfer browsed through KOA web pages and sent following mail expressing his feeling:

It is really an admirable site; I may not be a Kashmiri but the beautiful snaps of the resorts brought back cherished dreams and then the superb poem by Lalit Kaul brought the harsh realities back!

Indeed I feel that if I felt so bad, how bad would the Kashmiris be feeling? Its sad indeed. Good work indeed sir.

I hope Kashmir remains part of India (note I am unaware of the beliefs of people) but this comes from my selfish desire of touring such a beautiful place. I hope its possible soon.

sincerely, **Umesh Nair**

Letter - PANIN MAJ KASHEER

Namskar to all.

I appreciate your taking the time to read this note. I am writing to touch a deep place in your hearts. We all share a common ancestral home in India and face the task of maintaining our traditions that are melting into the Western pot of cultural assimilation. There is no greater task that we as a community can achieve than to preserve our culture for generations to come. I request everyone to read the following and contribute in a very special way.

1) Let's begin preserving our community by first developing our own sense of community. This may begin once we inquire into what makes us unique. Consider the following questions: · What is it that makes me proud to be Kashmiri? · What do I find most unique about being Kashmiri? I would like all the adults in our Kashmiri community to answer these questions in their own personal way. This can take the form of a piece of writing, a videocassette, an audiotape, a work of art, etc. Please be creative in truly expressing something you would like to preserve for the youth and generations to come. You can mail your final products to me at my current address below by December 1, 1997. Contributions would be especially welcome from the adults who have had the opportunity to experience first-hand the extraordinary life in Kashmir.

2) Perhaps one of the most unique aspects of Kashmir is our language-it creates such a singular sound not heard anywhere else in India. The ability to preserve it is made even more difficult by the fact that there is no easily retrievable written script. My vision is to produce a Kashmiri language audiotape series designed to teach the language. This tape series will be based on the lessons available in Professor Braj B. Kachru's book An Introduction to Spoken Kashmiri available by the author at the University of Illinois in Urbana (see address below). Kachru Ji has generously agreed to provide technical support for this project. I will begin by reviewing the first few lessons of Kachru Ji's book and having these lessons recorded on a trial tape.

I would greatly appreciate it if you could call me with any ideas and volunteerism as soon as possible. I am invigorated by the possibility of a Kashmiri community that is bound by an invisible force of common good and is able to preserve and propagate its precious contribution for its members and the rest of the world.

Thank you, and I will be in touch with you. Urzu tu durkuth.

Rahul T. Pandit,
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Chicago, IL 60607 -
(312) 997-2443,
Email: rpandit@acr.acfac.rpslmc.edu

IAKF NEWS

The successful community mela, otherwise known as the KOA Camp 97, provided a back drop to an equally successful meeting of the political cadre who turned out in full force to participate in the meeting. The meeting was jointly addressed by Vijay Sazawal and Ashok Raina and topics on the agenda were: IAKF Goals for 1997, Results of a survey done through professional polling in refugee camps in Jammu and Udhampur, a summary of the Global KP Summit Conference held in London and the latest news from Jammu and Delhi. Comments were solicited from the participants, followed by a Q and A session. The meeting closed with an appeal to KOA members to join the IAKF and support the political cause of the community in India.

Results of the Survey

A poll was conducted in May 1997 in the refugee camps and among the internally displaced (since 1990) KPs residing in Jammu, Udhampur and Bombay. The poll was sponsored by IAKF, IEKF and the Delhi based R.P.Raina Foundation. A number of trained interviewees collected first hand nearly 10,000 pieces of information. A summary of the results was presented at the London conference and will be posted on the KIN Web Site. The highlights of the result are: (a) Most KPs were driven out as a result of militant Islamic fundamentalism and Pak sponsored terrorism. (b) 81% of those polled said they wish to return back, primarily to go back to the roots and affirm their basic rights. (c) Of those wishing to go back, 43% said they would return with their children (22% said they would go alone and 35% were not sure). (d) Nearly half of the population wants a separate district or territory earmarked for the community. (The other half is divided among three other points of view including a willingness to return if the pre-1989 situation is re-established). (e) 45% of those polled feel the community's political posture should focus on securing a homeland. Other political interests are: secure internally displaced persons status and secure constitutional guarantees and minority status within the state. (f) Most of those polled felt that political aspirations of the community should be channelled through a common set of goals under one leadership (group of leaders). (g) The three most important issues concerning the individual were: unemployment, future of younger generation and disunity in the community. (h) The three most important issues concerning the community were: insufficient efforts to rehabilitate the community, early return to homeland and restoration of lost identity of the community. The results of this poll should govern our thoughts and actions as it provides an answer to the pressing question, what are the refugees thinking and what are their preferences and concerns.

Kashmiri Pandit Political Steering Committee (KPPSC)

A four day Global Summit Conference was held in London from June 18-21, 1997, to bring together KP organizations from India, Europe, Canada and USA. A major accomplishment of the meeting was the achievement of unity with a view to address collectively various political and social issues confronting the community in exile. The organizations and their representatives were: All State Kashmiri Pandit Conference (ASKPC) Jammu, Mr. A. N. Vaishnavi (President); Kashmiri Pandit Sabha (KPS) Jammu, Mr. T. N. Khosa (President); Kashmiri Samiti Delhi (KSD), Mr. C. L. Gadoo (President); Panun Kashmir (PK) Jammu, Dr. K. L. Chowdhury (Vice-President); Panun Kashmir Movement (PKM) Jammu, Mr. Ashwani Kumar (President); Kashmiri Overseas Association (KOA) USA, Dr. A. K. Raina (past-President); Kashmiri Pandit Association of Europe (KPAE) Mr. B. L. Kaul; Indo American Kashmir Forum (IAKF)

USA, Dr. V. K. Sazawal (President); Indo Canadian Kashmir Forum (ICKF) Canada, Mr. V. Sumbly; Indo European Kashmir Forum (IEKF) Mr. A. Tikou (President) and Dr. P. Ganju, Mr. R. Kotwal and Dr. J. Rawal. Following intensive discussions leading to the formation of KPPSC, the following appointments were announced: Mr. Vaishnavi (President), Dr. Chowdhury (Director of Political Affairs), Mr. Khosa (Director of Cultural and Educational Affairs), Mr. Gadoo (Director of Finance, Press and Publicity), Mr. Ashwani Kumar (Director of Human Rights Affairs). Once KPPSC was formed the next move was to formulate a Common Minimum Political Program (CMPP). As a result the following Charter was formulated:

POLITICAL AGENDA.

1. Recognition of factors that lead to KPs becoming refugees in their own country. 2. KPs are determined to return to Kashmir with honor, dignity and safety. 3. KPs demand serious dialogue with the State and Central governments to expedite their return with constitutional, institutional and political guarantees on their terms. 4. KPs will continue the struggle in the National and International arenas until the demands of the safe return to the Valley are met. 5. Realization of our political demands in a co-ordinated and aggressive manner leading to a change from the past approach and culminating in the above CMPP implemented by the KPPSC.

SOCIAL AGENDA.

1. Preserve and restore religious places in Kashmir. 2. Provide educational scholarships for needy students for primary, higher education and technical (vocational) training. Seek admission for students. 3. Build a Heritage Center in Jammu. 4. Provide medical assistance for needy people and monitor disease prevalence among the community. 5. Conduct a social and cultural survey and community census incorporating an International KP Directory. 6. Initiate programs for the welfare and development of women.

The group planned a press conference and a demonstration in Jammu in mid July. The latest report is that KPPSC plans are on track and we expect it to be the collective voice of the community that will enter into political negotiations with both state and central governments. This message was also conveyed to Prof. Soz during the KOA/IAKF meeting with him which is reported elsewhere in this issue. Please support IAKF activities. Mail your check to Rohit Dhar, Treasurer, 12 Lowell Drive, Wayne, NJ 07470.

IAKF part of the Newsletter was compiled by Ashok Raina, Maryland

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