
THE KASHMIRI PANDIT INTERNATIONAL

Newsletter of Kashmiri Overseas Association, Inc.

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<http://www.koausa.org>

website:

No. 32 May, 1997

President's Column

Namaskar,

I am delighted to express my sincere thanks to all of you for electing me as President of the KOA. It is a very special privilege and I thank you for this honor and trust you have placed in me. I would like to thank the election and nomination committee members, particularly Inder K Bhat, who volunteered their time for conducting elections timely, fairly and efficiently. The participation of high percentage of members casting their votes, have not only shown the trust and faith of members, but also have taken our organization to a step higher on our growth ladder. We have many more steps to go and with every ones support, we can achieve the success.

This year all of the KOA Chapters have celebrated Shivratri and Navreh and members attended in large numbers. Congratulations to the organizers and thanks to all of the members for supporting and participating in such functions.

We have setup new committees for our operation and these have been formally approved by the KOA Board. These committees are:

Executive Committee: Consists of Lalit Wanchoo (MD) - President, Sushma Bhan (TX) - Vice President, Yoginder Kak (MD) -Secretary, and Shana Mattoo (MD) -Treasurer. KPI Newsletter Editorial Committee: Rajinder Kaul (WA), Autar Karihaloo (CA), Ashok Raina (MD), and Lalit Wanchoo (MD). Children Sponsorship program: KOA adopted this program initiated by Piara Lal Qusba. On behalf of KOA, this program will be managed by Pran N Kaul (CA) and Sushma Bhan (TX) with Piara Lal Qusba's guidance. We would like the members to sponsor as many children as possible. Rishi Memorial School: This program for this Children's school at Udhampur sponsored by KOA, will be coordinated by Mrs Mary Kaul (MI), J B Kaul (MI), and Suman Hukku - KOA Director (MI). Educational Assistance Program: This program run by Dr. Tej N. Kaul (NY) sponsors students for higher education in India. Please feel free to contact any of the above members if you have any question or suggestions.

KOA has come long way only due to the support of our membership. Our Membership has been steadily but surely on the increase. I would like to thank each and every one who have renewed their membership. Members who have not paid their dues, please take

a moment and mail the membership dues to KOA. Our membership dues are: \$30/year/family, \$15/year/single, \$15/year/senior couple, and \$500 for life membership.

To save money in mailing, KOA has been using bulk mail for all KOA publications /communications except KPI newsletter to members. We are exploring using bulk mail for the KPI -Newsletter and we understand that post office does not forward or return bulk mail. Therefore having correct and current address is important. Please provide KOA with the address change if any as soon as possible. A form has been provided in this newsletter for sending in the address change.

KPnet is an Electronic Information Exchange Network of Kashmiri Overseas Association (KOA) dedicated to disseminate information related to History, Culture, Language, Literature, Customs and Rituals of our Community. This service has been undertaken by KOA since November 1996 and has over 250 subscribers from all over the world, including USA, Canada, Europe, India, Australia. KPnet has been used as a open forum to share information with the KPs on the net for social, religious, cultural and political functions. Subscribers are encouraged to provide: personal views/comments about any relevant KP issue, comment on the public actions of our community leaders, and discussion of ideas related to any issues that touches our community. We have developed important guidelines that each subscriber is supposed to follow. An Advisory Group consisting of Rajinder Kaul (WA), Hari Bhat (CA), and Autar Mattoo (MD) has been constituted to monitor that members abide by the KPnet guidelines. We encourage members to subscribe to the KPnet at no cost. Each subscriber is required to have access to internet, e-mail, and of course a computer with proper software that can access internet. To subscribe, please send an e-mail to koausa@iaol.com or contact me.

KOA also has been on the web for almost a year now and has created significant repository of material related to Kashmiri Pandit culture, language, rituals, temples, and Gods & Goddesses. We request each and every one to visit the web sites and browse through the information. The URL for KOA web site: <http://www.koausa.org>

We are here today, at the brink of extinction, and we all share a common goal. Please join hands together to save & promote our culture and heritage by supporting KOA sponsored activities.

Lalit Wanchoo, President

Educational Assistance Program Update

I am writing this letter to update you about our sponsor a student for educational assistance program. Through the generous contributions of 45 members of our community, we were able to raise \$29,167. In addition, one of our generous donors has paid Rs 30,000 (Indian currency). The money raised by our Biradhari members has been utilized to sponsor 112 students for higher education in India.

Moreover, the KOA Camp organized by Mr. & Mrs. P. L. Qusba, held in Connecticut July 4th, 1996, has generated a surplus of \$3124.78. With the consent of camp participants, Mr. P. L. Qusba was kind enough to provide that money towards the educational fund. With this money we have sponsored 12 additional students.

In Dec. 1996 on my visit to Jammu, I personally visited the camps and met most of the students sponsored by our program. I also had a chance to meet in the office of the President of Kashmiri Pandits Sabha Jammu, many other students residing outside camps. All the students receiving the assistance were very appreciative of our modest efforts. However, it was very disheartening to see so many other desperate students in need of the financial assistance.

The lists of the students selected for financial assistance has been mailed to all donor families. If you have not received a copy, please feel free to call me at (716) 773-3416. The financial assistance to the selected students is provided in two installments. Two-thirds of the total assistance was provided as the first installment in August 1996, and the second installment consisting of the remaining one-third of the assistance was provided in first week of January 1997. The first installment for some students has not been distributed yet, because the President Kashmiri Pandit Sabha has not been able to cash the bank draft sent in August 1996. Govt. of India has put restriction on the money from foreign countries received by the Charitable Organizations in India, unless they are registered with the Ministry of Home Affairs of Govt. Of India. Kashmiri Pandits Sabha has applied for the registration to receive the foreign funds. I was told by the President, Kashmiri Pandits Sabha Jammu, Mr. T N Khosa, that they may be approved by the ministry in next few weeks. Meanwhile alternate arrangements through Kashmir Pandits Sabha Jammu have been made.

We have received many more applications from very deserving students requesting financial assistance. Since the funds collected so far have already been sent to Jammu for distribution amongst the selected students for 1996-97, I am kindly requesting you to try to enroll your friends to support this program. This way we will be able to raise more money to sponsor extra needy students. As you know this is the best way to help our less fortunate brethren back at home. If you need any further information in this regard, please call me at (716) 773-3416.

Thank you again for generous support. We will start collecting the cheques for this year in the last week of April 1997. Together we can make a difference in the lives of our less fortune brotheren. Please make the check payable to KOA - Educational fund and mail it to my address - 35 Spicer Creek Run, Grand Island, NY 14072. I wish you and your family a Happy Navreh.

Tej N Kaul.

KOA CAMP 97

By this time I am sure all of you have received the information about the up coming KOA Camp to be held at Hershey Park, Pennsylvania from July 3 to 6th. Response to registration for the Camp has been very heavy. People from over 20 states have registered so far. We expect a record gathering at the Camp. Barring a few exceptions I can tell you all first timers that you will love every moment of it (yes including soaking rainy days too!). You will get to meet your friends and relatives whom you might not have seen since the last big gathering at TUL MUL. You will get to eat exotic and authentic Kashur dishes that you have not eaten since the last Khandar in Kashmir. Need to know more? You will get a hands on demonstration on KOA Web page by the very experts who created it and see what an excellent job these people are doing. With a tour of Hershey Park (amusement park) and the world famous chocolate factory your children will have greatest fun. With many famous outlet centers nearby, some of us will not want to leave the place. This camp therefore offers something for every one. Remember this occasion comes only once a year. You miss it this year and You will have to feel sorry for yourself for the next 364 days. What are you waiting for? Invitations (OOPS I mean registration forms) have already gone out.

If you have missed the registration deadline and would still like to join, please call us. We have only a few sites left and once they are taken, we will not be able to accommodate you this year at the campgrounds. There is a \$15.00 surcharge for the late registration. On site registration will, in addition to the above surcharge, cost \$10.00/perperson per day plus the sharing of common expenses. If you can not stay at the camp site and would like to visit us only as a day visitor, you are welcome to do so. There will be a \$20.00 per family plus \$10.00 per person per day charge for the day visitors. Children 5 years and below are free. Any questions, call 703/ 759-9199 or e-mail at ikbhat@mem.po.com . Hope you all can join us.

Inder K Bhat

Northern California Chapter

We organized a very successful Shivratri get-together of our community on 3/22/97. As people started assembling we served Kehva from the Samavars. There were a total of over 200 participants from the hundred odd KP families in the Bay Area. Thanks to the volunteers we had publicized the event for even those Kashmiris who were just transiting through California and we had them in good measure too.

The shivratri evening got into gear with a traditional Puja of the Vatuk followed by popular Shiv Bhajans sung in chorus by all participants. The highlight of the Shivratri festivities was the Children's program. This Was coordinated by Mrs Girija Raina but she was highly encouraged by The initiative was taken by the Youth under the leadership of Payal Tiku. Also Mr. Mohan Bhan choreographed a lively dance by few 3-5 year olds that was the most popular event of the evening. During this program we got to sample professional pieces of oratory by Nidhi, Kathak by Meghana and Tara, classical vocal by Priyanka and Bharat Natyam by Bahar. The last two Hours provided the time for socializing over a sumptuous dinner. Thanks to The volunteers who worked tirelessly in

the kitchen and those who stayed Back for the clean-up it was one of the most appreciated get-togethers that Our community had in recent years.

During the Shivratri get-together, we also announced our plans to conduct A Kashmiri Musical Evening by Arti Kaul (Tiku) on May 31st, 1997. Arti had enthralled the audiences here in her concert in June 1996. We also announced our plans to hold a Camp in the holiday homes booked for the purpose in the picturesque Lake Tahoe area. The camp will be held from Aug 1st to 3rd. Sixteen families are likely to join.

We learnt about the dastardly acts of murder of our seven brothers from Sangrampora in Kashmir. Our community here expressed our anguish at this event through our letters to the Prime Minister of India and Consul General of India at San Francisco. The letters were delivered by a delegation consisting of a cross-section of our community including three generations and both genders. We explained the plight of our community during our hour long meeting with the Consul General.

Vijay Dhar, CA

Texas Chapter

Shivratri celebration at Houston on March 8, 97, was a wonderful event. The celebration was very well organized. Besides "Herath Watuk-Puja" and traditional Kashmiri food, other programs like Kashmiri skits (impromptu), musical programs CHAKRI, LEELAS and Bhajans were really superb. KUDOS to all KPs of Houston for arranging this celebration and Get together. It was superb team work and dedicated community service by all the KPs of Houston which resulted in grand success of this EVENT. Many KPs from Austin and Dallas (TX), and Louisiana came to participate in the celebration and enjoyed to their utmost.

Sunil, Indu and King Kaul, TX

Sangrampora - Tragic Killings

The recent killing of seven innocent Kashmiri Pandits (our brothers) in Sangrampora, Bhadgam is clearly an act of Islamic terrorism and fundamentalism. Our hearts go to the families of the innocent victims. This mass killing makes us realize that situation in Kashmir is nowhere near a point where rest of KPs living in exile in the rest of the country can even think of going back. KOA and IAKF from different regions held condolence meetings and express our grief and anger at the recent happenings in Kashmir, express deep distress to the Indian Government by presenting memorandums to Indian Embassy and Indian Counsulates in USA, Canada, and UK. Because of KPnet we were able to share this information among KPs and request to make presentations at various Indian Embassies and Counsulates through KPnet.

KOA sent a letter of condolence and support to the families of these victims. This letter was delivered by the KP group who visited Sangrampora following the incident. Following is a copy of the letter:

March 27, 1997

Namaskar,

We, the Kashmir Pandits living in the United States of America are shocked and pained to learn about the tragedy that has taken the lives of seven Kashmiri Pandits in Sangrampora on 21st March, 1997 by the cowardly act of terrorists. Our deepest condolences to the families of the deceased over the senseless murder of our brothers. Nothing anyone can say at this time can ease the pain of your tragic loss. Please know, we the Kashmiri Pandits in USA, share your pain and grieve with you. Even though we are physically thousands of miles away from you but spiritually we are with you at this time and for the time to come. We pray that peace be to the departed souls and God give strength to the families and friends left behind.

Life is a journey which makes us walk through beautiful flower gardens as well as dark streets and bumpy roads. But at the end all of us have to face the God at the entrance to Heaven. He who has good deeds passes through and the one who does not, has to explain. In case of our martyr brothers, Triloke Nath, Dileep Bhat, Bushan Lal, Sanjay Bhat, Vijay Kumar, Piaray Lal and Avtar Krishan, the GOD in the heaven will embrace them with open arms and guide them through their forward journey. These martyrs have scarified their lives in the name of brotherhood, trust, and patriotism. This cowardly act of Muslim extremists will not and should not go unpunished.

Our organization, the Kashmiri Overseas Association (KOA) has written to the Prime Minister of India to directly take over the issues of security, social and economic welfare, children's education, and the well being of Kashmiri Pandit Community. We urged that the Prime Minister of India should allocate special funds for these issues. Meanwhile, we will do whatever it will take to alleviate your suffering.

We wish that one day soon all of us could go back and live together as before.

May God be with you. With sympathies and prayers!

Sincerely,

Lalit Wanchoo

President, Kashmiri Overseas Association (KOA)

Congratulations

New Arrivals

Sandeep and Kiran Kaul of New Jersey for a baby girl.
Anil and Vitasta Bamezai of Georgia for a baby girl.
Bhupendra and Veena Gouri of Georgia for a baby boy.
Sidharth and Jyoti Ganju of Georgia for a baby girl.

Deepa and Ashish Krishan of Texas for a baby girl.
Karuna and Rajesh Raina of Texas for a baby girl.
Vandana and Vinod Pandita of Georgia for a baby boy.

Condolences

KOA convey its condolences to:

Sh. P. N. Kaul of Maryland on the death of his wife and to Pradman Kaul and Pradeep Kaul of Maryland on the death of their mother.

Mr. P. N. Wanchoo on the gruesome killing of his sister in Delhi and to Mr. Lalit Wanchoo on the death of his Aunt. Mrs Asha Dhar of Maryland on the death of her mother.

Matrimonial:

Correspondence invited for a women 25 year/ 5 feet 3 inches tall fair and attractive dental surgeon at Bangalore. Father Executive Director in a large public sector. Outstanding family background. Please call: USA (510) 651-6346 or India 80-8511951

Information

Mr. P K Mattoo who works as an Accounts Officer and spends quite some time with passion for astrology. Mr. Mattoo delivers services related to horoscope reading and palmistry. For information, please contact P K Mattoo - Street # 15, House No. 186, Talab Tillo, Jammu, Ph: 72856 , 76209 (person to person).

IAKF NEWS

IAKF Participation in UNHRC IAKF along with its affiliates IEKF and ICKF, attended the 53rd session of the United Nations Human Rights Commission (UNHRC) in Geneva. Besides making a presence to reiterate human rights issues confronting Kashmiri Pandits, the UN conclave also provided an opportunity to meet with officers of the UN Secretariat and prominent Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs). The IAKF and IEKF representatives followed up with the UN department in charge of the Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs). After numerous contacts and leads, we spoke to the Assistant to the UN Secretary General's Representative for IDPs and presented our case at length (four hour session) with him. Though he promised to take up our case to his superiors, it became amply clear to us that IDP department works in an unique manner and seeks to eliminate drivers behind the forced exodus rather than

providing any humanitarian assistance. So the role of GOI again becomes pivotal in encouraging or denying the UN-IDP initiative.

Press activities in Geneva included an interview with the Indian Express and for a local radio program 'Freely Speaking'. The time in Geneva also provided an opportunity to briefly meet with KMs (from both sides of LAC and who appeared to be there in extraordinary large numbers). G. N. Fai was also there and distributed a statement addressed to KPs (of India). A statement on Sangrampora killings was put in the record. The overseas organizations will pursue next presence in Geneva at the UNHRC Sub commission Working Group on Minorities which will be attended (in May) by ICKF and IEKF.

Vijay Sazawal, Maryland

US Congressmen on Sangrampora

Following the barbaric killing of seven KPs in Sangrampora on March 21, several Congressmen including Sherrod Brown, Tom Lantos and Anna Eshoo sent messages to Jeevan Zutshi (IAKF Board Member) and others expressing their grief and sympathy to the affected families and their support to our community.

An IAKF delegation met with Congressman Frank Pallone Jr. in Washington D.C. on April 8, 1997. Subsequently, he read a statement in the House of Representatives on April 10, 1997. Here are some excerpts from his statement: "Mr. Speaker, I rise to bring to the attention of this Body and the American people a terrible tragedy that recently occurred in India's state of Jammu and Kashmir. On March 21st, in the village of Sangrampora, 15 unidentified terrorists rounded up eight members of Kashmiri Pandit community and shot them outside their homes. Mr. Speaker, for thousands of years Kashmir has been inhabited by Hindus known as Kashmiri Pandits. Virtually the entire population of 300,000 Kashmiri Pandits has been forced to leave their ancestral homes and property, living in refugee camps in various cities in India in sub-human conditions. Only 2,000 Kashmiri Pandits remain in the valley. They have been turned refugees in their own country. The current round of violence is not the first example of the victimization of the Kashmiri Pandits. For centuries, they have been subjected to the atrocities and subjugation committed by invading people. Mr. Speaker, as the co-chairman of the Congressional Caucus on India and Indian-Americans, I believe that the United States and the international community must not allow the practice of ethnic or religious cleansing to continue."

KP Delegation Visits Sangrampora

A five member delegation comprising of Dr. Agnishekhar, Dr. Ajay Chrungu, Sh. Shailendra Aima (all from PK), Sh. R.K.Raina (ASKPC) and Sh.Ashok Baroo (KP Sabha), visited Sangrampora and Srinagar on April 4, 1997. They met with the families of the victims and conveyed to them the unified support of the community including message from the biradhri in US. The delegations report paints a grim picture for our community (what ever is left of it) in the valley. Mass destruction of property and desecration of at least two temples Kathlishor and Raghunath Mandir. The local administration gave them a cold shoulder during their visit.

Fai's New Tactic

Having realized that they (KMs) could not sell the independence movement slogan while KPs continue to expose their sinister plan of ethnic cleansing, G. N. Fai of Kashmir American Council has recently come out in Geneva with a four page brochure, An open letter to Kashmiri Pandits. Here are some excerpts: This letter comes to you from Americans of Kashmiri origin . You might suppose that the resistance against the savage Indian occupation is crumbling and is, therefore, reaching out to you in a desperate bid for help. That, we should say, is not the case . Kashmir is not a part of India . It follows that the time has come for you mentally to extricate yourselves from India's fatal grip and reattach yourselves to Kashmir . For what can India do for you? it can only provide you asylum as individuals or in groups . You have left the valley in large numbers, living rootless lives in an unfeeling environment. Some of you have come abroad but the number is small . The resistance in Kashmir is against alien occupation and is not communal . we are appalled at that group s (PK) blindness to reality and the self-induced desperation that drives it to demand a ghetto for itself . They (GOI) mislead you to flee and desert Kashmir at its hour of trial . communal riots were unheard of in Kashmir . Whatever status the people of Kashmir will decide for themselves after India's inevitable exit, Kashmir will have to be run as a meritocracy .

Meeting with Rep. Rothman

IAKF representatives from Washington area met with Congressman Steve Rothman. He was informed about the plight of Kashmiri Pandit community after the 1990 exodus. A parallel was drawn to the holocaust of Jews. We requested him to write to the GOI and make statements supporting settlement of KPs in the valley with honor and dignity and guarantee for their safety. A copy of the book "My Frozen Turbulence" by Jagmohan was presented to the Congressman.

Washington-Group Meeting

On April 13, about 20 members from Washington area attended a meeting organized by IAKF at Inder Bhat s house. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss current status and future plans with reference to our community in India. Very brief presentations were made on political conditions, condition of refugees, home-land issue, alignment with KP organizations, dissemination of information and congressional campaign, followed by general discussion. Shanna Mattoo pointed out that the relationship between KOA and IAKF was still not clear to some people. It was emphasized that KOA needs to maintain its non-political status. IAKF and other organizations can concentrate on political problems. We all have a common goal, and various organizations can work towards this goal without antagonizing each other. To the world, we should always present an image of a united community. In India, our aim should be to support organizations not individuals. Swapna Raina pleaded that all activities towards helping our community should be supported without any bias. Bakaya Sahab suggested that information about jobs, training and educational opportunities should be widely publicized and made available to people in the camps. He also referred to the outstanding work done by Shri J. N. Kaul of Faridabad in helping abandoned children. Wanchoo Sahab suggested setting up a self-sustaining educational institution in India. A committee may be constituted to conduct a feasibility study for this project. Khushu Sahab made several suggestions that are summarized here: Initiate publishing a global directory of Kashmiri Pandits (this is a monumental task but can be done). Steps should be taken to adopt the refugee families. A trust fund under the name of Displaced KP Charitable Trust may be

established for rehabilitation and consolidation of our community members. These activities can be initiated by KOA. Khushu Sahab also suggested that minutes of such meetings should be sent to PM of India and CM of J & K state for information. Autar Mattoo talked briefly about Kashmir Solidarity and Asia Observer. He suggested using the weekly publication for disseminating information and views of our community. It was also agreed that a few congressmen who have supported our community should be given our support when needed. Congressman Sharrod Brown was invited and has accepted to come to the KOA Camp to be held in Harshey, PA during 3 -6 July, 1997 and meet with the community members attending the camp. An announcement about a symposium was made (see next topic). The meeting chaired by Ashok Raina lasted about 90 minutes.

Washington Symposium

A session on Terrorism and Human Rights in Kashmir will be held during a symposium to be held in Washington D.C on June 9, 1997. Speakers include Krishna Reddy, Hira Fotedar, Subash Kak and Jagan Kaul. The symposium is organized by Indian American Council. For further information please contact Jeevan Zutshi.

(IAKF news was compiled by Ashok Raina, Maryland.)

KPI Newsletter - Editorial Board:

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