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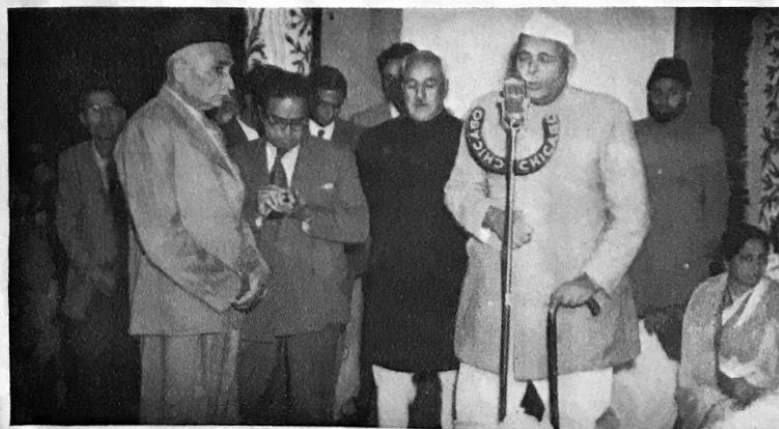
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The Hon'ble Pandit Govind Ballabh Pant, Chief Minister, Uttar Pradesh, speaking at the opening of the Kashmir Government Art Emporium at Lucknow





*Lama musicians at  
the Hemis monastery*

## LADAKH - The Land of the Lamas

*by P. R.*

**L**ADAKH, popularly known as Little Tibet, is one of the highest habitations in the world. There is hardly a place there less than 8,000 ft. high. Its people usually live at an elevation varying from 12,000 ft. to 15,000 ft. above sea-level. The average height of its mountain peaks ranges between 17,000 to 20,000 ft., some of them being above 25,000 ft. The total area of the province is over 30,000 square miles.

In spite of its height, it is very hot in summer. In

winter it is icy cold. The tract presents generally an appearance of desolation though, here and there, crystal clear lakes and arable land may be seen.

Ladakh is a land of incongruities. In spite of its climatic rigour, the people of Ladakh are full of life and mirth. Its capital, Leh, though it has for centuries been an important trade centre connecting India with Tibet, Yarkand and Eastern Turkistan, can hardly boast of many amenities of modern civilization. It is a land of glaciers

and forms the basin of the Indus for over 300 miles, yet it is dry and some parts of it suffer from scarcity of water. Situated in an obscure corner of the world from which it is cut off for nearly six months in the year, it is more advanced in literacy than any part of India, 90 per cent of the people being literate.

Religion is the dominating factor in the life of the Ladakhis. They profess the faith "that teaches compassion, courtesy and kindness, truthfulness, loyalty, politeness in word, cheerfulness and good humour." The people believe in Buddha and the form of Buddhism practised in Ladakh, as in Tibet, is usually known as Lamaism. It is much the same as the theistic or Mahayana (Great Vehicle) form of Buddhism. This faith promises to every Buddhist the bliss of Nirvana. It is a popular religion, deeply pervading and dominating the life of the believers.

#### LIFE OF LAMAS

Lamas, or Buddhist monks, enjoy many privileges and nearly every family in Ladakh dedicates at least one member to the priesthood. Usually the first born or the parents' favourite son, the child destined for religious life, stays at home until about his eighth year. At that age he is sent to a monastery for training and is educated in a kind of boarding school or residential college. He has to pass through the stages of pupil and probationer to that of fully ordained monk. As a Buddhist monk he must observe no less than 253 vows. Monastic life imposes rigorous discipline, celibacy and abstinence upon its followers.

Going round the Ladakh villages one sees in almost every house a little boy wearing a lama's cap or a little girl with the cap of a chomo (nun). The lamas have their heads entirely shaved and wear light chinese caps, usually red in colour. A red band is tied round their waist.

*The Lama of Spitok Gompha—Head Lama of Leh*



The lamas' diet consists of wheat, barley or buckwheat or occasionally rice. The only flesh food permitted is sheep, goat or yak. Soup, milk and tea are the chief beverages. The chief spiritual head of Ladakh, as that of Sikkim, Bhutan, Turkistan and the Buddhists of Eastern Siberia, is the Dalai Lama of Tibet. He is for them the Vice-regent of Buddha on earth.

The lamas undoubtedly form a supremely picturesque element in Ladakh's landscape. Their monasteries are large and spacious; in some cases even bigger than the villages. Each monastery contains hundreds of lamas and every village, even if it be only of a few houses, has its temples and monasteries presided over by a lama or lamas. Every house belonging to a notable or a rich land-owner has its own private temple with a lama. Lamas usually command considerable respect and are accepted as religious preceptors of the people.

The number of lamas, moreover, helps the general economy of the country. The lamas, both male and female, mostly remain unmarried, though, in fact, there is no bar against marriage.

#### STATIONARY POPULATION

Polyandry is another factor that helps to restrict the population. If a son marries, his wife also becomes the legitimate wife of a younger brother or brothers. The children have a big father and one or more little fathers. This system has served Ladakhis well and their population has hardly increased.

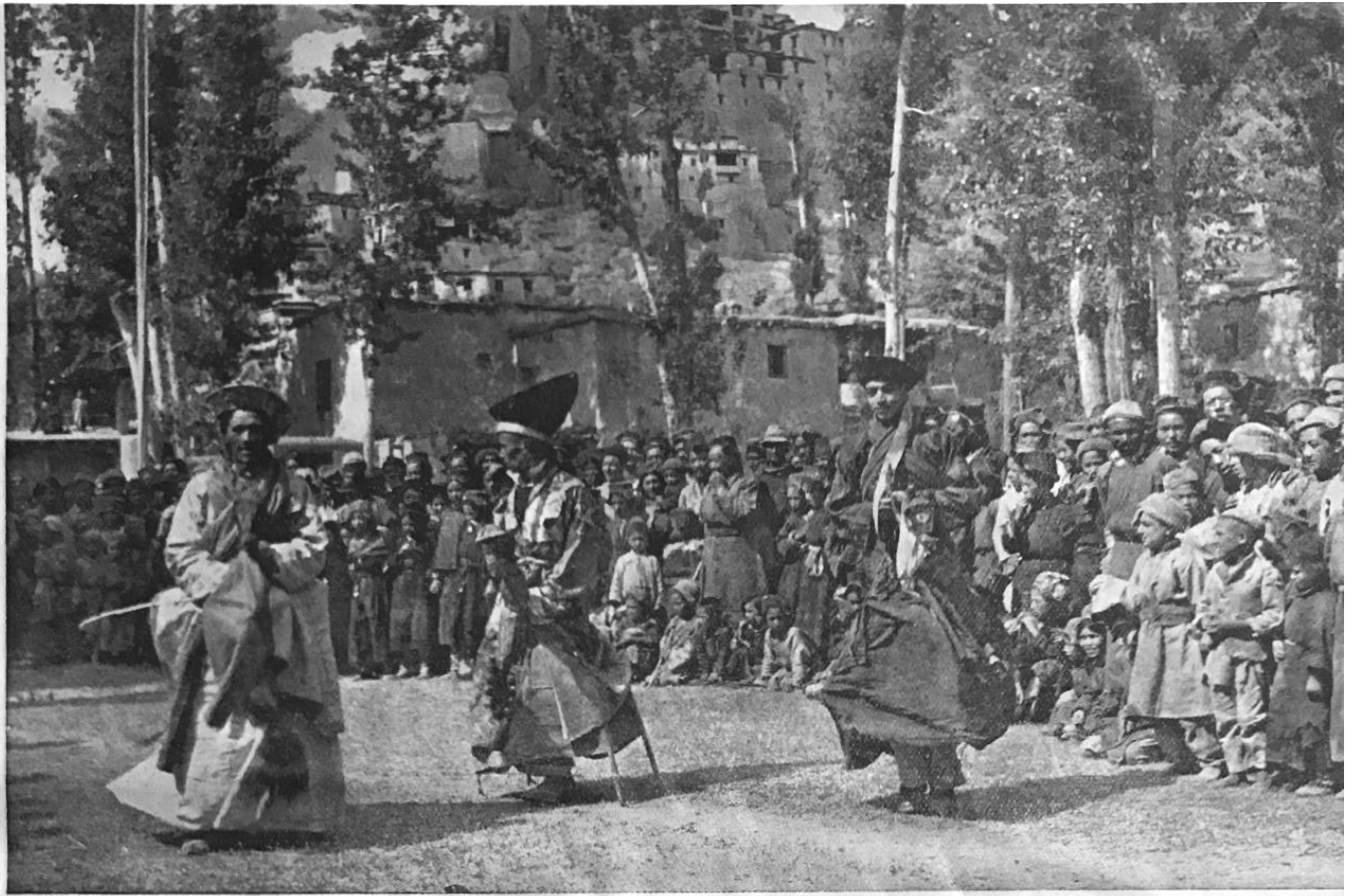
Their system of inheritance is also such that it helps them to keep their property intact. Their patrimony is never divided. There is never more than one heir.

Ladakhis are generally agriculturists, but as the land is largely barren, it cannot support large numbers. Sheep-

*The Lamas of Sankar Gompha, a monastery two miles from Leh, gathered to receive Prime Minister Nehru during his visit to Ladakh in July 1949*







*A dance recital at Hemis*

grazing is the main source of livelihood for the nomads who number not a few. Chang-pas, as they are called, live in tents and go about from place to place in search of pastures for their long-haired goats and sheep. It is from the wool of these sheep that the famous Kashmiri shawls are made. Wool forms the chief commercial product of Ladakh.

For irrigation Ladakhis depend on canal water. Men, women and children work together on fields. Work is allotted to each member of the family according to his or her capacity. While men often do the most strenuous part of the work, the women keep them happy with their songs.

The zho—cross between the yak and the cow—is usually employed for ploughing the land. Barley, wheat, buckwheat, peas, rape-seed and beans form the main agricultural produce. Grim, a kind of barley, is also abundantly grown on an elevation of about 14,000 ft., while fruits—apples and apricots—are grown in warmer regions below 9,000 ft. Grim is mostly used in the manufacture of 'chong', the local drink of the Ladakhis.

#### LADAKH'S TRADE

Ladakhis take keen interest in trade. Their women manage the retail business at home, while the men go abroad to seek new ventures. Ladakh exports salt, wool and dry fruits and it imports tea, tobacco, grains, sugar, matches and ponies from Skardu, Kargil, Yarkand and from India through Lahaul and Kashmir.

Ladakh is said to be rich in mineral wealth such as gold, copper and precious stones, but no serious prospecting has yet been done.

Ladakh also offers much attraction to sportsmen and hunters. It is the home of the markhor and the ibex and it harbours red bear, snow leopard, wild sheep, the Tibetan antelope, gazelle and marmot.

World events, far and near, are now compelling Ladakhis to rise from their age-long slumber and they are beginning to feel that, while retaining their spiritual philosophy, they have to adapt themselves to changing times. Pakistani soldiers gave them the first rude shock and lately Communists in adjoining Tibet are giving them food for thought. They have wisely decided to join the National Militia to defend their homes and above all their monasteries to which they are so devoted. It is not their homes and monasteries alone that are threatened, it is their very way of life. The Indian Army's splendid work in defending Ladakh and Pandit Nehru's recent visit to their land heartened the Ladakhis considerably and now they feel that they can depend on India to help them against any danger from outside.

For other Ladakh pictures  
see centrespread



*Somewhere in Ladakh—an Indian soldier fully equipped for fighting in arctic conditions*

**I**F Ladakh is with India today, it is due to the help the Indian Army extended to save the Lama land and its civilization. In freeing the area in 1948 the "Jawans" and their officers played a valiant part. Interest in this far-off land in the Himalayas has increased due to the presence of the Indian Army. The achievements of the army in 1948, though now almost a matter of history, are still full of interest today. Ladakh was saved at a critical time when faced with a two-front war. Due to the inaccessibility of Ladakh, very little is known about the Indian Army's achievement in Ladakh or the valuable help given by the I.A.F. The spotlight of publicity could not penetrate through the Himalayan ranges which cut off Ladakh from the rest of the world.

The story of the Indian Army in Ladakh begins early in 1948, when Skardu had been surrounded by the enemy and Dras and Kargil were lost. Just before these disasters, Lt. Col. Prithi Chand was sent to Leh with twenty Dogras

## Indian Army's achievement the annals of

# HOW LADAKH

with the object of raising as many troops as possible from among the Ladakhis themselves. Col. Prithi Chand knew the language of the country and he set about his task of training the non-violent Buddhists in the use of rifles. The enemy was already knocking at the gates of Ladakh. Together with his own little group and the remnants of the State force garrisons from Kargil and Dras, Col. Prithi Chand organized the defences of Ladakh. He had eighty men to save thirty thousand square miles!

### SUPPLY POSITION

The defenders' supply position was pretty bad. There was very little ammunition. For food, Col. Prithi Chand depended on whatever the locals would part with from their scanty stocks. No supplies could come from India. There was no air route and the land routes from India and Kashmir were blocked by the enemy, except the Manali route which was blocked by snow.

In May Air Commodore Meher Singh, with Major-General K. S. Thimayya, commanding Indian troops in Kashmir and Ladakh, pioneered an air route and landed on the hastily constructed, bumpy air strip at Leh, 11,554 ft. above sea level. This landing was a turning point in the fortunes of Ladakh.

Local legend has it that Meher Singh landed on the third day since all the Lamas in Ladakh started non-stop prayers and fasting for the victory of the Indian Army. According to the same sources, many Ladakhis wanted to offer gram and grass to the "winged horse from India."

After studying the situation on the spot, General Thimayya sent a company of Gurkhas by air to reinforce



*Air Commodore  
Meher Singh, D.S.O.*



in Ladakh is an epic in  
military victory

## WAS SAVED!

by S. V. R.

the garrison. The Indians were without any medical cover, had hardly any warm clothing and lived on "sattu" (made of local hill barley), a diet quite new to them. It was a difficult job for Col. Prithi Chand to command the front and at the same time raise and train National Guards and militiamen.

The Indian Army authorities decided that a bigger force should be sent into Leh in view of the mounting threat to the Indian positions. Accordingly another company of Gurkhas under Major Hari Chand was sent to Leh via Manali. It reached Leh on July 10 after twenty-five days' journey.

### TWO-FRONT WAR

The Indian Army was faced with a two-front war by now, on the Indus front and on the Shyok-Nubra front.

Hostile pressure in Ladakh increased enormously with the arrival of their reinforcements and heavy weapons from Skardu, which fell in August 1948 after a heroic defence by the State forces under Lt. Col. Sher Jung Thapa. The Indians could do only one thing—shorten their perimeter.

The Indian Army in Ladakh withdrew fifty miles on the Indus front from Dhunakar to Tharu. It had also to readjust its lines on the Shyok front and fall back upon Thoise. On the Indus front the hostiles were now within twelve miles of Leh and on the Shyok front sixty miles from Leh.

Another company of Gurkhas under Lt. Col. H. S. Parab was hastily flown to Ladakh and the rest of the battalion was sent by Manali. The whole of the unit was concentrated in Leh by September 17, 1948.

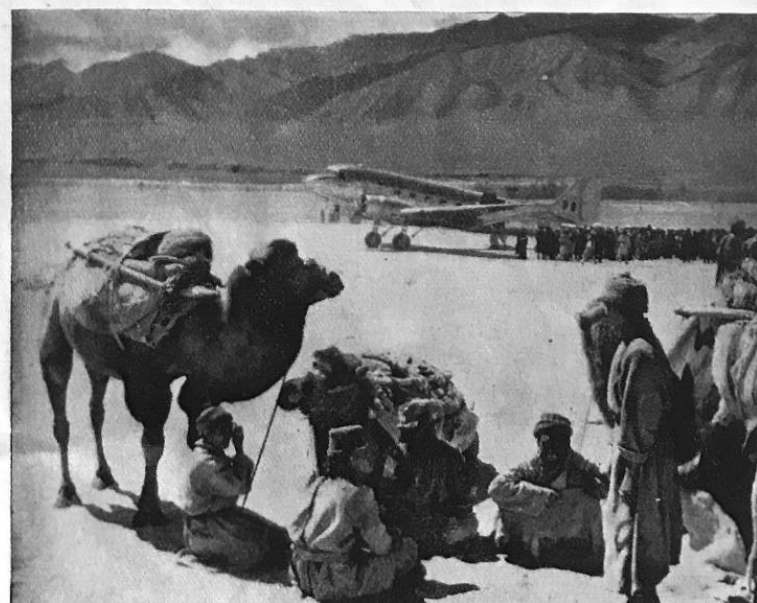
The Indian Army had at last got a sufficient force to check the advance, but the difficulty of administration and supplies remained. Planes had to fly 25,000 ft. above sea level and it was difficult to stock up the garrison for the seven winter months. Supplies already sent through Manali were just sufficient to last the garrison for a month.

### ENEMY FOILED

The enemy made many attempts to take advantage of the situation and made several futile attempts to infiltrate

through the Indian Army defences. The Indians not only defended themselves but chose every opportunity to hit back. A series of raids by Major Hari Chand were particularly successful. With a picked "guerilla force" of Indian troops and weather-beaten militiamen, Hari Chand raided Basgo, nine miles from Tharu. The enemy was bringing up a mountain gun by this route to reduce the Leh defences or at least render the air strip unserviceable. Helped by a little Ladakhi boy, Hari Chand spotted the house where the gun was kept and destroyed it after killing five out of the crew of six. The sixth hostile escaped with injuries to tell the story. Major Hari Chand and his guerillas reached their base after enduring starvation for three days in the bitter cold.

In October, Hari Chand's name was again on everyone's lips. This time the scene of his exploits was Lama Yuru, sixty miles from Leh by the usual route, but ninety by the circuitous route taken by his guerillas. He destroyed an



Early in 1948 troops and tons of supplies were air-lifted to Leh. (Above) An R.I.A.F. Dakota flying over Nun Kun, 23,000 ft. peak in the Himalayas, on its way to Leh

# A KASHMIRI BOY ESCAPES...

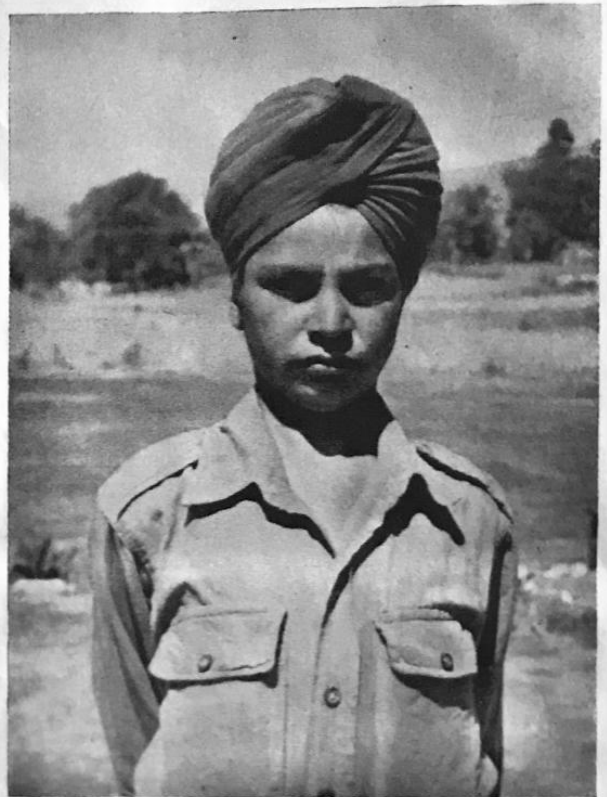
**T**HIS is the story of an adventurous and enterprising young lad who escaped from the clutches of the Pathan raiders nearly two years ago and is now serving in the Jammu and Kashmir State Forces.

Fifteen years old, Daya Singh belongs to the village of Bagh, about 30 miles from Poonch in Jammu Province. His father, Santa Singh, had served the State Cavalry loyally for many years, and with a comfortable pension to fall back upon, he was enjoying a well-earned retirement with a family of seven to look after. As the grand old man of the village, Santa Singh was held in high esteem by the rest of the inhabitants. He was a former cavalryman.

Then the tribal invaders pouring across the Pakistan frontier with the sole intent of pillage and plunder began their depredations. When the raiders infiltrated into the Poonch Jagir, a great calamity befell the family. Old Santa Singh and his family, including young Daya Singh, were locked up in their double-storeyed house which was set on fire. Daya Singh was the only one to escape from the flames.

In a desperate bid to escape being burnt to death, he jumped from the second storey of the house, and concealed himself inside a hay-cart lying in the cowshed, and later finding an opportunity ran for his life. He met a group of people in similar circumstances, with the horror and tragedy of the night writ large on their faces, some miles outside the village. All of them managed to reach Poonch town and eventually joined the ranks of refugees.

When the Indian Army relieved beleaguered Poonch, the Commanding Officer was struck by Daya Singh's



DAYA SINGH

intelligence and smartness. Asked what his ambition in life was, the boy said he wanted to join the Army.

Young Daya Singh, an excellent flute-player, is now a band-master in one of the State militia battalions.

## HOW LADAKH WAS SAVED! [ Continued

enemy convoy of pack ponies carrying ammunition and supplies and killed the enemy escort of seven.

This was typical of the fighting in Ladakh. Topography and logistics ruled out large-scale fighting, but there were

constant clashes on the outcome of which depended the future of Ladakh. Indian troops, greatly assisted by the locals, showed that they were more than a match for the enemy in guile and cunning.

This phase of the battle ended only with the link-up with the Leh garrison in November after the break-through through the Zoji La with the help of tanks. When Brig. K. L. Atal's troops linked up with the Leh garrison, three to four hundred hostiles opposing the Leh garrison on the Indus front and two to three hundred hostiles facing the Indians on the Shyok front beat a hasty retreat.

Today we find the Indian troops roughly holding Ladakh tehsil, with an area of nearly 30,000 sq. miles and a population of 36,000, and Kargil tehsil, with an area of 7,392 sq. miles and a population of 52,853.



*Major General Kulwant Singh, Chief of General Staff, Indian Army, and Col. J. T. Satara-vala being welcomed at the Leh airfield by Buddhist Lamas and civilians*



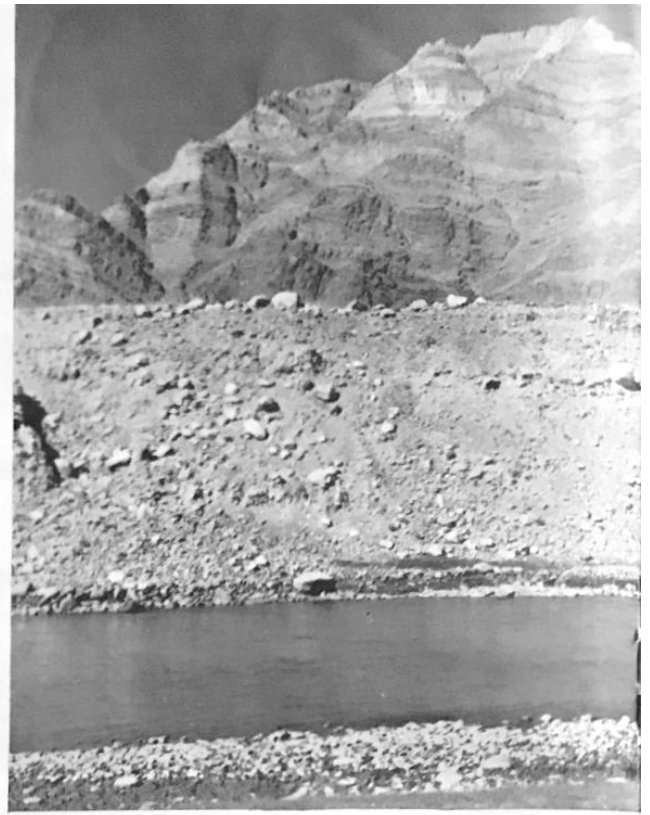
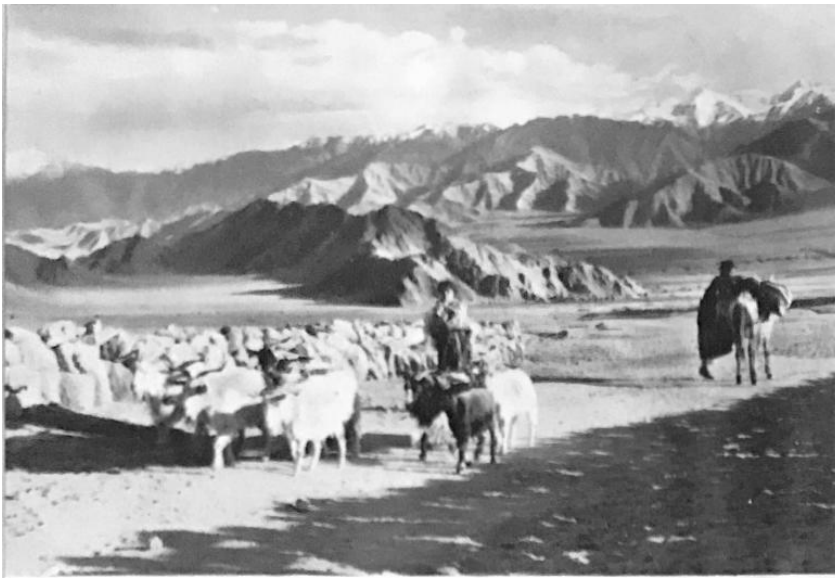


Zho, Ladakh's  
beast of burden

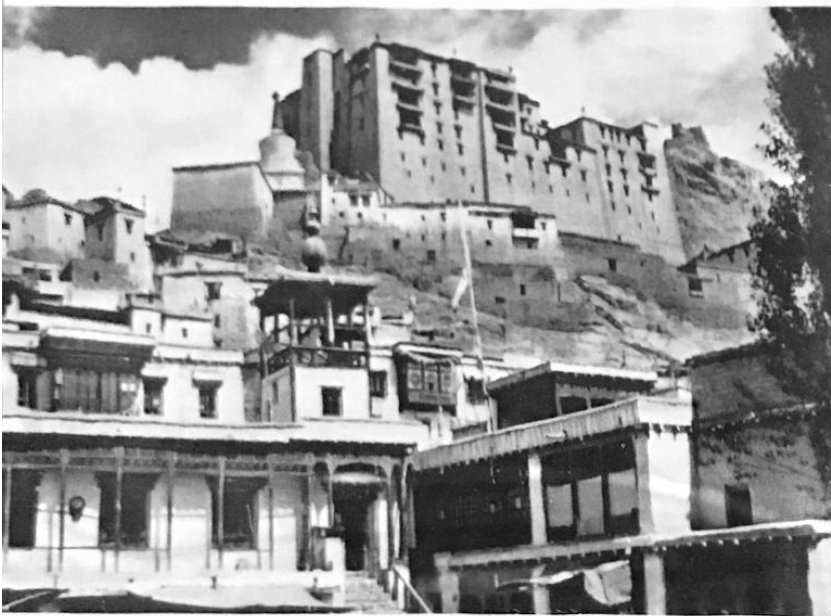


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A young La-  
dakhi mother  
and child



Typical Ladakhi country. The stream is the Indus, beginning its long journey.



LEFT :  
(Top) Nomads wander across barren plateaux.  
(Centre) Palace of the Gyalpos dominates Leh. (Bottom) A marriage procession.



The national sport of Ladakh is polo.

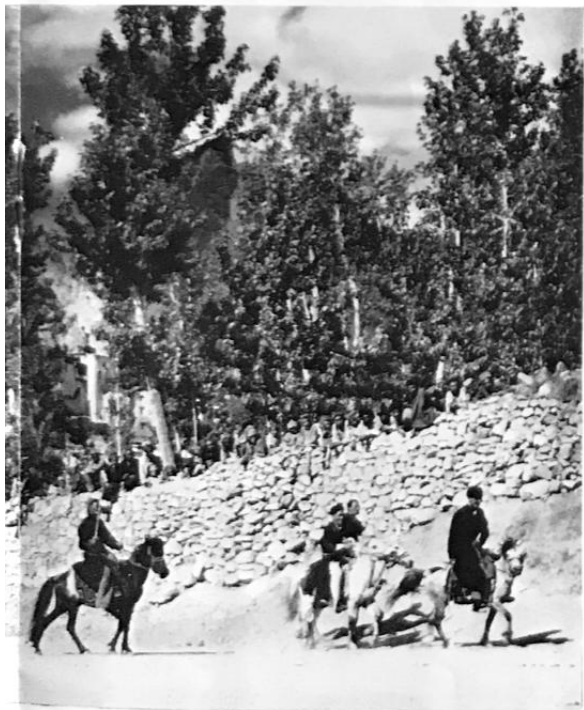




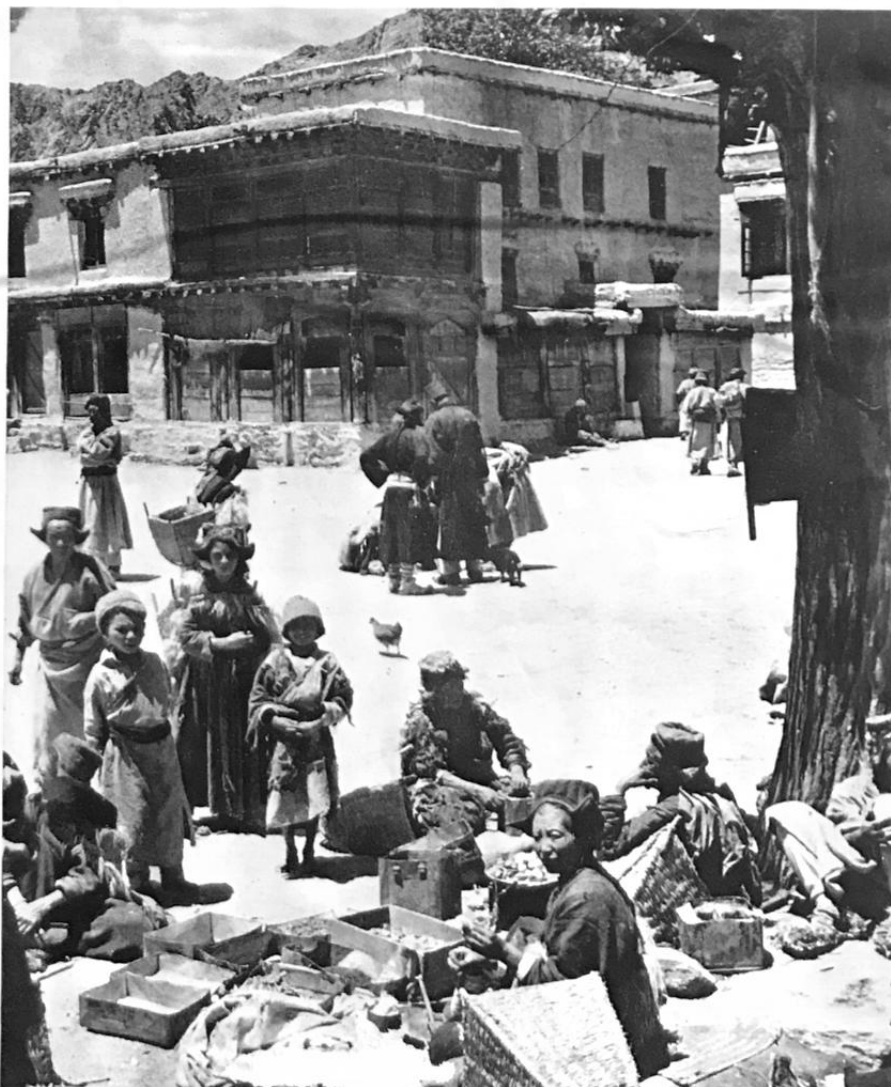
ream in the foreground  
journey to the plains.



RIGHT :  
(Top) A dramatic performance at Hemis, Ladakh.  
(Bottom) A bazar scene in Leh



The game is played even in the main street.





A Ladakhi woman in ceremonial dress



# THE ORIGIN OF KASHMIRI LANGUAGE

by P. B.

**K**ASHMIRI, the spoken language of the people, was originally written in the Sharda script which is now practically extinct. For a long time now it has come to be written in the Persian script. Lately, however, there has developed a definite literary interest in this language and attempts are being made to develop it scientifically.

The classical Sanskrit literature which flourished in Kashmir during the early Hindu period is the common cultural heritage of India. For a long time Kashmir was a seat of learning and powerful literary and social movements developed in the Valley which gradually spread not only to the other parts of India but even across the Indian border to Tibet and other adjacent countries. It was indeed in Kashmir that the latter-day developments in Buddhist thought and philosophy received a more elaborate treatment. The present-day Tantric practices in Tibetan Buddhism are a gift of India to that country passed on through the Valley of Kashmir. The Shaiva philosophy received great encouragement in Kashmir.

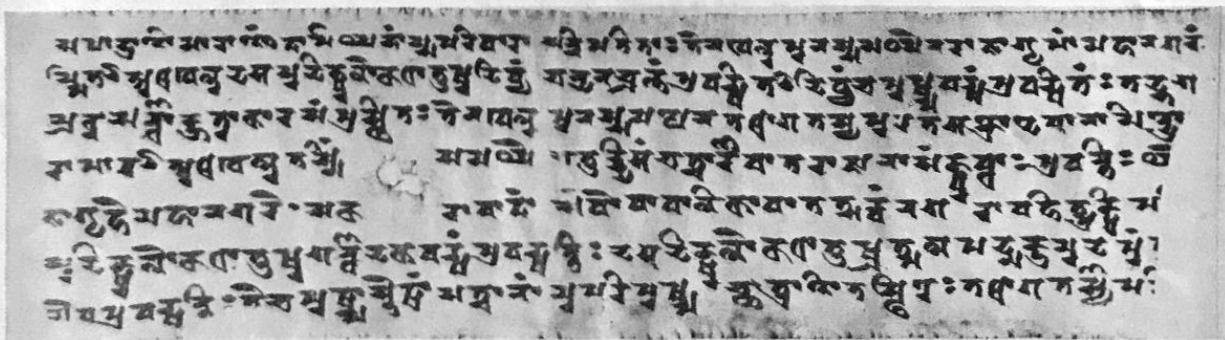
Unfortunately much of this ancient literature has not been preserved and we may perhaps not be able to compile a connected account of the literary and cultural move-

*Kashmiris have inherited a rich literature from their past. This great literary and cultural heritage is the result of literary and cultural movements in the different periods of Kashmir's history. Sanskrit flourished during the early Hindu period and was followed by Persian and a little later by Urdu, during the Afghan and the Sikh periods. Under the Muslims and the Mughals, Persian became the court language and the language of the elite. This continued even into the early Sikh period when gradually it was replaced by Urdu. Urdu is now in general use though English is the official language in the higher administrative branches.*

ments of this period; yet the fact, nevertheless, remains that Kashmir for long remained in the orbit of ancient Indian cultural thought. We have, however, one great book of Kashmir, which has come down to us as a single great piece of literary genius. It is Kalhana's *Raj Tarangini*, "The River of Kings", the greatest available historical document of those days.

Coming now to the Muslim period, we must realize that no account of literary history of Kashmir can be complete without the mention of the name of King Zain-ul-Abidin (1420-1470); for he not only brought peace and goodwill in the religious and political spheres, but also impressed the mark of his tolerant and liberal personality in the field of letters. The Great Monarch attracted chroniclers and writers and poets to his court and the imperial patronage was freely extended to Muslims and Hindus. No longer bound by linguistic barriers, the King showed an equal interest in the study of Sanskrit, though Persian remained the language of the court. The famous chronicle of Kashmir—the *Raj Tarangini* of Kalhana—was brought down to his day by the two famous chroniclers of his time—Jona Raja and Mullah Ahmad—in Sanskrit and Persian respectively. His court was also adorned by another cele-

*A page from 'Sangata Sutram', a palm leaf manuscript in Sharda script, discovered by Sir Aurel Stein in 1925*



brated Hindu Pandit, Shri Bhatta or Shari Bhat. To this ruler also goes the credit of laying down the foundations of the vernacular Kashmiri literature. Under him the Kashmiri genius in vernacular soars to a high pitch and the mystic thoughts and verses and wise sayings were compiled in a collection—known as the *Rishinama*—by the great contemporary, Shaikh Nurud-din, popularly known as Nand Rishi. This work symbolized the traditions of Hindu-Muslim unity both in religion and literary thought. Somo Bhatta's *Zaina Charita* is a biography of the King (Badshah) in prose. Udh Bhat's *Zaina Vilas* is a dramatic work dealing with an interesting episode in the King's life.

#### INFLUENCE OF PERSIAN

Akbar was another illustrious example of a great ruler trying to seek unity in thought and letters. The task of completing Kalhana's *Raj Tarangini* was taken up during his reign by Prajya Bhat in 1575 A.D. Though Persian had become the official language yet the classical Sanskrit literature was treated with respect.

The history of literature in Kashmir during the Muslim, the Afghan and the Sikh rule is mainly the history of Persian literature. The old literary tradition of Sanskrit had, however, not completely lost its hold. This may be seen by the works of Lal Shuri or the famous Lalla Deb, who lived in the 14th century A.D. She could indeed be regarded as a link between the classical Sanskrit traditions of the past and the Persian poetic patterns of the more recent times. In her personality we can find the two streams of thought and culture mingled together—the Sanskrit and the Persian. Among the important Sanskrit works of this period, mention may also be made of Jagadhar Bhat's *Stuti Kusumanjali* (1450 A.D.); Siti Kantha's *Balbodhini* (1475 A.D.); Vallabhadev's *Padyavali* (1550

*A page from 'Nilamanapuram', an anonymous Sanskrit manuscript dating back to the 8th or 9th century. Kalhana drew material for his 'Raj Tarangini' from this book.*

A.D.); and Sivapadhyaya's *Vijhana Bhairav* (1775 A.D.).

Another marked feature of the literature of this period is that not only Muslims but even Hindus took to the study of Persian and showed remarkable aptitude for it. While the name of Mohammad Tahir Gani (who flourished in the reign of Aurangzeb) stands pre-eminent in the galaxy of Persian poets, that of Munshi Bhawani Das Kachru (who lived in the reign of the Afghans) is no less important. His new style of the Bahar-i-Tavil in Persian poetry is held in high esteem. The names of other Kashmiri Pandits who wrote in Persian may also be mentioned. Taba Ram Turki, "Betab" (1840 A.D.), is still remembered for his *Jang Nama* which stands on a par with *Shah Nama* of Firdausi. Pandit Raj Kaul Arzbeqi's *Dairi* (1887 A.D.) is second only to that of Ghani from a literary point of view. In the end we might also add the name of Pandit Raj Kak Dhar, "Farrukh", who died early in Maharaja Gulab Singh's reign, and who was also a great literary figure of his time.

#### KASHMIRI POETRY

Even when Persian was adopted as the medium of expression by the Kashmir poets and writers, and verses were modelled on Persian metres, and references borrowed from Persian literature, their thought and form had a certain fundamental unity which was easily discernible. Whether Muslim or Hindu, the Kashmiri poet or a writer could not remain indifferent to the common indigenous traditions of the past and to the appeal of his surroundings. In the poetry of this period, we repeatedly find the poet drawing on indigenous legends and romances—on Bombur and Lolare, Himil and Nagray, and Myna. His songs are songs in the praise of the oriole and turtle-dove, of narcissus and daffodil, of hyacinth

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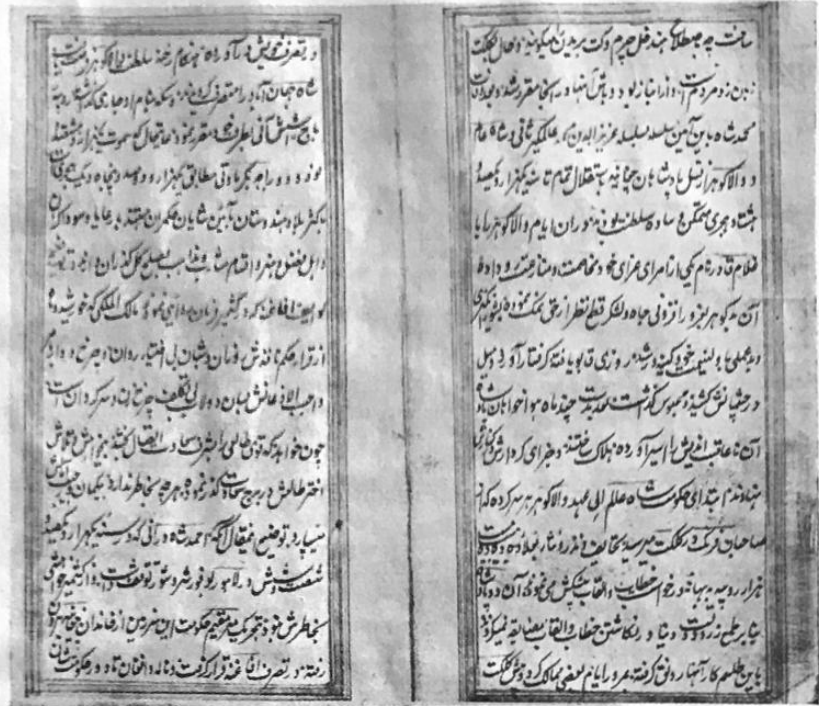
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ॐस्त्रिशीगणेशायनमः ॐयत्सत्पाःसमभूद्दिहारसरसीकल्यान्मन्वदृततो मारीचीनपु  
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ष्ट्रेश्चनदृतःसकथंरूपः कश्मीरामाएलेखेवप्रधानंनगतिस्थितम् कथंनसोसमाहूतस्तत्र  
पाएरवकौरवैः किंनामाभूत्सराजाचकश्मीराणांमहाशयः कथंवासोनिशाम्येतत्रायातश्चा  
त्मनामहः स्वर्गसोपानपंक्तिर्हिभवानांसमभूदिदं भारतंनमपुहंयतिगीहृणांमहात्मना  
म् सुकारणमिदंनमनभवेद्यदसौतदा नायातोभारतंयुद्धंराजाकाश्मीरिकोमहान् वेशाम्याय  
नउवाच सत्यमेतन्महाराजत्वयाश्रोत्रंमहीपते यथानसोसमायातस्तत्रिशांमयसद्वत ऊरु

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A page from Pandit Birbal Kachru's 'Tarikh-i-Kashmir', a historical work written round about 1835



and saffron meadows. The source of inspiration is common—it is peculiarly indigenous in character.

And when we come to the study of modern Kashmiri literature—in the purely Kashmir vernacular of today—which originally is a Prakrit form of Sanskrit, enriched by Persian diction during the Muslim rule and later on influenced by Urdu in the modern period—we find the same cultural and literary unity. Of this Kashmiri vernacular literature the oldest available specimen is the *Mahayney Prakash* of Siti Kantha—tracing its origin to the 13th or the 14th century.

The modern period is dominated by Mahmud Gani—(1855), the author of a Kashmiri version of *Panj Ganj*; Wali Ullah Mattu who wrote the legend of Himal; Pir Maqbul Shah Kralwari who wrote the romance called *Gulrez*; and Wahab Pare who retold the *Shahnama* of Firdausi in Kashmiri. The most famous among Hindus are Parmanand, his disciples Lakshman, Prakash Ram and Krishan Das. A large number of Persian words have been absorbed in the lyrics of these modern poets. These are equally used by Muslim and Hindu poets. Similarly, there is a large number of Sanskrit words—either in their pure form or as modified by popular usage. The various languages that have influenced Kashmiri culture and literature are thus well represented in these modern lyrics. Mahjoor is one of the most famous among the living poets. His lyrics—which are mainly based on political or economic themes—show the influence of the National Conference Movement. Abdus Sattar Gujri—popularly known as “Aasi”, i.e. the “Sinner”—is one of the outstanding figures who are working on Kashmir’s Cultural Front. Rising from humble origin,

this poet truly represents the spirit of “New Kashmir”. He is a proletarian or the people’s poet, symbolizing in his poems the expression of his people’s collective aspirations and urges, fighting for classless society, abolition of economic and social exploitation and Hindu-Muslim unity.

#### KASHMIRI FOLK-SONGS

And lastly we come to the popular literature of the Kashmiris—fairy tales and folk songs. We find in it preserved a vast wealth of common customs, traditions and legends of the bygone days. Wazir Mal and Lal Mal—the famous collections of fairy tales in purely Kashmiri dialect—are treasured possessions of Kashmiri village-folk. Though the Kashmiri folk-songs present a variety in theme and content, according to particular seasons and festivals and occupations, yet their predominant note is the same. These folk-songs may be songs about the beauty of the stately Chenar tree, or the praise of the calmly flowing river Jhelum, or the blossoming of saffron-meadows, or the spinning-wheel at which the rural women-folk work.

The emotions and moods expressed in this folk-lore are the collective embodiment of social and emotional experiences. And when we study the “Ruph” (“Rohv”) or the dance-songs of the Kashmiri women-folk sung at festivals and harvests—the chords of cultural and racial unity are once more echoed through them. On the basis of these facts relating to language and literature of the Kashmiris, one might with justification hold that the Muslims and Hindus of Kashmir have evolved a common point of view and a common mental and spiritual culture.

AN ENLIGHTENED DESPOT  
WHO PUT KASHMIR ON THE MAP OF ASIA

# Zain-ul-Abidin

by N. S.

**T**HE Muslim Ruler who put Kashmir on the map of Asia and who is still remembered by the Kashmiris—Hindus and Muslims—as the greatest of their kings deserves far better the epithet of *enlightened despot* as given to Frederick the Hohenzollern and Joseph the Habsburg who ruled Germany and Austria respectively nearly two centuries later on.

This was Zain-ul-Abidin who ruled for more than 50 years (1420-1472) in the middle of the 15th century.

The chief claim of Zain-ul-Abidin to greatness is the fact that when his more well known opposite numbers in Europe were ruthlessly applying the principle of "religion of the prince is the religion of the people" (*cujus regio ejus religio*), he not only believed in toleration personally, but enforced it in the most rigorous fashion in a land where for a few generations preceding his accession the persecution of the Hindus and particularly the Brahmins, had been the feature of the Muslim rule. The gratitude of the Hindus found expression in the pen of chronicler Srivara who wrote the third volume of *Rajatarangini*.\* As Srivara says, "How shall I describe all his innumerable virtues in this condensed narrative? I therefore paint his virtues in this book, as the Himalaya or the three worlds are painted in a picture, or as the sun is reflected in a mirror. . . As the traders do not allow inequality in their scales, so the king did not brook inequality in his administration. As the lion does not attack other animals in the peaceful hermitage of saints, so the Turaskas who were much alarmed, did not now oppress the Brahmanas as they have done before." In the words of the same chronicler "The king's virtuous mode of government in the *kali yuga* became glorious like the very middle of the *satya yuga*." The grateful Hindus for generations remembered him as the incarnation of Narayana. Shri Jainallahadina, as the Sanskrit form of the name Zain-ul-Abidin was, remitted the *jizya* or the poll tax on the Hindus, taught them Persian, recruited many Hindus into services and encouraged them to settle by grant of land and in many other ways. He repaired some of the Hindu temples, among others the temple of Takht-i-Suleman and extended the patronage of the court to Hindu learning. The result of this religious toleration was the return of the exiled pandits and in their wake came many Brahmins from the South.

Zain-ul-Abidin was a great patron of letters. He persuaded Maulana Kabir, who had migrated from Kashmir

\* The passages quoted are taken from Dutt's translation.

to Herat, to return. Maulana Kabir was a master of theology and was placed in charge of an educational institution, Dar-ul-Ulum, which was the counterpart of European universities in early middle ages. For the maintenance of this university the revenues of several villages in Nagam Parganas were assigned. Mulla Ahmad Kashmiri was another notable who adorned the court of Zain-ul-Abidin. The Mulla who had come to Kashmir during the reign of Sultan Sikandar, was a profound scholar, a first-rate historian and a distinguished poet. Among his works are counted *Tarikh-Waqai-Kashmiri* and a translation of the Sanskrit epic, the *Mahabharata*. Mulla Hafiz Baghdadi and Mulla Parsa were two foreign scholars engaged in the teaching work of the University. Mulla Qazi Jamaluddin, who was living a secluded life at the monastery of Shah Hamadan, was persuaded by this prince to take up a life of social service. He was ultimately appointed the Chief Justice for the whole of the kingdom. The patronage of Zain-ul-Abidin was not confined to Muslim scholars and saints only. He was a patron of Sanskrit learning as well and was occasionally a pilgrim to the ancient *tirthas* of the valley. Jonaraja who continued the work of Kalhana and was the author of the second volume of the *Rajatarangini*, was a contemporary of this king and enjoyed his patronage. The third volume of *Rajatarangini* which covers the reign of Zain-ul-Abidin mentions Tilakacharya the Buddhist, Shivabhata. Srimana Karpurabhata the Physician, Rupyabhata the Astronomer, Simha the Astrologer, and Shri Ramananda the Scientist as those who enjoyed the patronage of the Muslim ruler. These persons cannot be identified with certainty. This much, however, can be said that a Hindu named Soma, held a high position in the court. He was in charge of translation of works from Sanskrit to Persian and *vice versa*. Another Hindu named Bodhibutt, was a man well known for his wit and memory. It was his duty to recite portions of *Shahnama* daily. Zain-ul-Abidin spent large sums in collecting books and documents from far and wide. The library which he thus built up remained for more than a century one of the biggest in Asia.

Zain-ul-Abidin was also a patron of fine arts and pyrotechnics. He invited artisans and craftsmen from Iran, Turkestan and India and offered them privileges and prospects to settle down in Kashmir. The high eminence enjoyed by Kashmir in the field of handicrafts like weaving of woollen goods, wood-carving, paper making or production of papier mâché, is not a little due to Zain-ul-



Abidin's ceaseless efforts to develop new industries and introduce newer avenues of employment to the people of Kashmir. He was a great builder also and has been compared to Shah Jahan, the fifth Moghul Emperor of India. The remains of many important buildings and townships, as, for example, Zainakot, Zainapura, Zainamarg, Zainagir bear testimony to this aspect of his life. He also built *caravan-sarais* and resting places by the road side for the convenience of travellers. His passion for building was not exactly a normal princely pastime, characteristic of so many rulers both in the East and the West. He was essentially a builder for the people and not for the dynasty. He constructed many canals and built many bridges to serve the interests of the cultivators. In his time the water of the Dal lake flowed into the Jhelum and passed the Haba Kadi but Zain-ul-Abidin closed this channel and forced the water in the Nalla Mar which he spanned with seven bridges of masonry. Control and diversion of streams and rivers had been successfully executed in pre-Muslim days also. There is the instance of the control of flood water by the engineers of king Avantivarman (855-883). Unfortunately details of the methods employed by the engineers of Zain-ul-Abidin as of his forerunner Avantivarman, are not on record and we have simply to accept the memory of accomplished facts as unimpeachable history. There is a story also about the origin of the island of Wular Lake. The island was a place of human habitation in very ancient times. Then there came a king Sundar Sena, who was tyrannical and dissolute. His subjects also took to a life of depravity. This incurred the wrath of God, as did the people of Sodom and Gomorrah in the Old Testament. The island

was turned into a lake and the entire community was wiped out. Zain-ul-Abidin discovered the remains of a temple below the surface and with the help of divers he laid the foundations of an island afresh. The king named it Zainalanka. He was fond of sport and his most favourite pastime was sporting on the Wular Lake.

These habits, however, did not interfere with the normal duties of a king in the field of diplomacy and warfare. He had to fight with the Tibetans in Central Asia and it is said that he conquered Tibet. When the famous Chak raiders carried fire and sword into the lovely valley, Zain-ul-Abidin collected all the resources to concentrate on the expulsion of the raiders. When the leader of the raiders was captured alive, the king flogged him to death, but with his characteristic generosity took his son into favour. He exchanged embassies and diplomatic relationships with the rulers of Khurason, Turkestan, Seistan, Egypt, Turkey and the Sultan of Delhi.

He codified the laws of Kashmir and like Asoka engraved them in public places for the enlightenment of all. His mildness and lenience in general was like velvet gloves concealing iron gauntlets underneath.

For his own private use, he would draw upon the proceeds of the royal copper mines which he had discovered. He was fond of sport but not of hunting. His religion and law permitted him the prerogative of four wives, but he had only one, a rare instance of monogamy among the medieval princes on both sides of the Urals. Zain-ul-Abidin's greatest misfortune was the fact that he left behind him unworthy sons. As a result his reign stands like a solitary oasis in the dreary chronicles of ancient and medieval Kashmir.

**WULAR LAKE**  
*Zain-ul-Abidin found the remains of a temple below the surface of this lake and with the help of divers laid the foundations of an island afresh*



# political awakening

I HAVE written that Kashmir had a static appearance. Yet there was one major and fundamental change, which I sensed as soon as I set foot on its soil. I had heard of political awakening there, of the growth of a big organization, often of troubles and conflicts, of good happenings and bad. I had taken interest in all this and read about it, and sometimes discussed it with those most concerned. So I expected to see this change.

I have enough experience of mass movements, some sense of the crowd, a way of judging rapidly and almost intuitively the strength and depth of popular movements. A big crowd may welcome me, and yet to me it might convey no sense of power or of feelings deeply stirred; it might even have an air of artificiality, of groups of sightseers out on a holiday, to have a glimpse of a well-known personality. A much smaller crowd might produce a deeper impression on me and give me a glimpse of strange currents and powerful forces beneath the surface of the life of the people.

I try to be receptive, to tune myself to the inner mood of the mass, so that I can understand it and react to it. That understanding and reaction are necessary before I can try to impose my thought and will on them. So my mental temperature varies with the environment, and for a while I allow it full rein, before I pull myself up lest I go astray. Sometimes a contrary reaction is produced in me by some untoward event, which affects me far more than because of my receptive mood.

With this experience behind me, I set myself out to understand the inner significance of the popular movement in Kashmir. People came to me to speak in praise of it or to criticize it, and I listened to them patiently and sometimes learned something from them. But my rod of measurement cared little for the incidents that seem to excite some people. I was not out to measure individuals, though to some extent that also had to be done, but to grasp what the mass of the people felt, what moved them, what they aimed at, though vaguely and semi-consciously, what strength they had developed, what capacity for united action.

I sensed that Kashmir was astir and the masses were on the move. That had been a common experience to me in many parts of India during the past twenty years. But it was an uncommon experience on that scale in an Indian State. There could be no doubt of the wide-spread awakening among the people, and of a growing feeling of self-reliance and strength. In this respect, in some ways, Kashmir seemed to be in advance. It was difficult to judge if the discipline and self-imposed restraint had accom-

panied this new-found strength. I think there was a measure of discipline also, though perhaps not so much as in the more politically developed parts of India. Perhaps, also, that idealism, which has been so marked a feature of the Indian nationalist movement, was not present to the same degree. The political awakening had not yet brought in its train that hard experience and close thinking which we had had elsewhere. That was natural, for the Kashmir movement was comparatively young, though even in its few years of life it had gone through many an experience which had moulded it and given it shape.

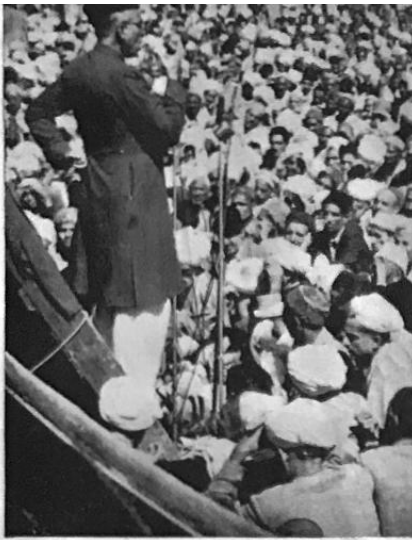
Considering the brief life of this movement, I was surprised to find how vital and widespread it was, although I saw it during a period of quiescence. It had changed the face of Kashmir during these few years, and, if properly led and controlled, it held promise of great good for the country.

In its leadership it was fortunate, for Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah was a real leader of the people, beloved of them, and with vision which looked ahead and did not lose itself in the petty conflicts of the moment. He was the founder and initiator of the movement. At first it began on communal lines and became entangled in many unfortunate occurrences. But Sheikh Abdullah pulled it out of these ruts and had the courage and statesmanship to steer it out of the narrow waters of communalism into the broad sea of nationalism. Dangers and difficulties still remain—which one of us is free from them?—and he will have to steer carefully and to overcome them.

It was a remarkable feat for any person to have brought about this political awakening among the poverty-stricken and helpless people of Kashmir. It was still more remarkable to check it from overflowing into wrong channels, and to guide it with a strong hand along the right path. The difficulties were increased during the past three years by the growth of the communal spirit all over India, which inevitably had some effect on Kashmir also. Sheikh Abdullah performed these remarkable feats and rightly earned the title of "Sher-e-Kashmir", by which he is popularly known. He did not, and he could not, get rid of all the ills—communal or other—that a popular movement suffers from. But the measure of this considerable success is obvious enough in Kashmir today.

This movement has so far affected Kashmir proper far more than Jammu Province, which is partly allied to and affected by Punjab politics. In a sense Kashmir is a definite historical, cultural, and linguistic unit, and it was natural for a popular movement to spread there first without producing the same effect on Jammu. Kashmir





*Sher-e-Kashmir*

proper has an overwhelming big proportion of Muslims in the population ; there are about 95 per cent of them. If Jammu Province is included, the Muslim proportion is reduced to about 75 per cent, which is substantial enough.

The Hindus of Kashmir proper, chiefly Kashmiri Pandits, though only about 5 per cent, are an essential and integral part of the country, and many of their families have played a prominent part in Kashmir's history for a thousand years or more. Even today they play a significant part in the State services and administration. Essentially these Kashmiri Pandits are the middle-class intelligentsia. Intellectually they compare very favourably with any similar group in India. They do well in examinations and in professions. A handful of them, who migrated south to other parts of northern India during the last two hundred years or so, have played an important part in public life and in the professions and services in India, out of all proportion to their small numbers.

A popular mass movement, especially in Kashmir proper with its 95 per cent Muslim population, was bound to be predominantly Muslim. Otherwise it would not be popular and would not affect the masses. It was also natural that the Hindu minority of 5 per cent should not view it with favour, both from the communal and the middle-class point of view. Certain unfortunate occurrences and communal riots in 1931 added to these fears and suspicions. The Kashmiri Pandits, though small in number, impelled by a desire for self-protection, started organizing themselves as a communal group. Since then the situation has certainly improved, and though fear and suspicion remain to some extent, the feeling of hostility is much less. This has been brought about by a keener appreciation of the realities of the situation as well as by Sheikh Abdullah's consistent policy to give the popular movement a national basis. A number of Kashmiri Pandits, especially some bright young men, have definitely joined the National Conference. The great majority, however, hold formally aloof, though in no hostile sense and a definite attempt to establish friendly relations is visible. I am leaving out of consideration the activities or reactions of individuals, who do not make much difference when considering the various currents and group forces at play.

## THROUGH FOREIGN EYES—I

*(Foreign travellers of the past have recorded descriptions of their visits to "the Terrestrial Paradise of the Indies". We propose to publish these in three instalments, the first of which appears below.)*

CASSIMERE is bounded on the north by mount Caucasus, which separates it from Tartary, by Bankish, or Karkares on the east, the province of Pencab or Lahor on the south, and Cabul on the west, and lies between the 34th and 39th deg. of north Lat. as near as I can compute ; but the northern boundaries of this province, and indeed of India in general, are very little known. I believe none of our geographers will pretend that an observation was ever taken in that part of India which adjoins to mount Caucasus, and nothing can be more uncertain than computing the latitude of places, by the number of miles they are distant from one another. This province is encompassed on every side with mountains, but is itself a fine fertile plain, through which innumerable little rivers descend from the hills, which, together with the northerly situation, renders it mighty agreeable to the sun-burnt inhabitants of the southern provinces. The complexion of the natives is not inferior to that of the Europeans, and the country is said to produce most of the fruits of Europe.

—MOLL'S INDIA, 1744.

\* \* \* \*

THE eleventh Province is Cassimire or Quexmir, of which the capital City is named Siranakar, through the centre of which flows the Nilab River. This Province is full of mountains. On the south it touches the Province of Kabul ; and it possesses a famous lake six leagues round, in the centre of which lies a verdant and lovely Island, on which stands a sumptuous Royal Palace. Through the midst of this beautiful lake there flows a rapid and furious stream which descends from the neighbouring hills and urges on its impetuous career westwards. On the banks of this stream grow trees of immense size, which when sawn into planks show, in their natural and perfect flexibility, how great a creator Mother Nature is. Large numbers of geese and ducks frequent their aquatic meadows, which are sold by hunters at a very low price.

—TRAVELS OF SEBASTIEN MANRIQUE  
(1629-1643).

\* \* \* \*

THE men are brown and lean, but the women, taking them as brunettes, are very beautiful. The food of the people is flesh, and milk, and rice. The clime is finely tempered, being neither very hot nor very cold. There are numbers of towns and villages in the country, but also forests and desert tracts, and strong passes, so that the people have no fear of anybody, and keep their independence, with a king of their own to rule and do justice.

—TRAVELS OF MARCO POLO  
(YULE)

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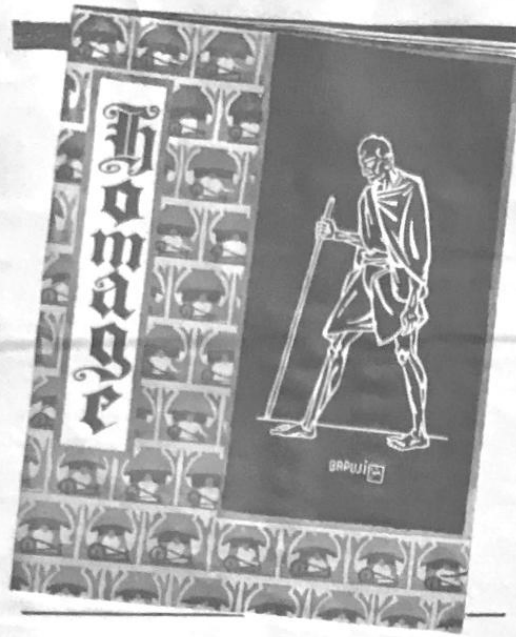
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