

**E-ISSUE**

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***Editor Pushp Saraf***

## CONGRESS GAME PLAN IN JAMMU & KASHMIR

*Pushp Saraf*

On January 26, 1965, the Congress formally converted the ruling National Conference in Jammu and Kashmir into its state unit. Ghulam Mohammad Sadiq, who was the “Prime Minister” (the designation then of the popular head of the state), was credited with having ushered in the change. Syed Mir Qasim was the first PCC president.

The conversion brought an end to a political absurdity. All along the NC had functioned (after the dismissal and arrest of its founder Sheikh Abdullah in 1953) as if it was an independent entity. In reality, however, it was merely an adjunct of Jawaharlal Nehru’s Congress. Nothing proved it more than when Nehru sought the resignations of party chief ministers, under the famous “Kamraj plan”. The NC’s Bakshi Ghulam Mohammad also put in his papers. That was on October 4, 1963.

Nehru had no hesitation in accepting the Bakshi’s resignation. The Bakshi was stunned as he had never expected that he would ever be stripped of power. He had salt rubbed further into the wounds when he was arrested, within months of Nehru’s death, under the Defence of India Rules. That happened on September 22, 1964. He made an unsuccessful attempt to revive the NC in 1966 and his humiliation was complete when he was defeated in the mid-term Lok Sabha poll in the Srinagar constituency, on May 13, 1971, by the Sheikh-backed Shamim Ahmed Shamim.

It was during Sadiq’s tenure at the helm of the State administration that the jurisdiction of Articles 356 and 357 of the Indian Constitution was extended to J&K. He had the State constitution amended to change his designation from Prime Minister to Chief Minister and that of Sadar-e-Riyasat to Governor to bring them in conformity with the other states. On a political level he followed a liberalisation policy, setting the Sheikh free from long detention and taking on his call for “social boycott” of Congressmen in the Kashmir Valley.

For a change it seemed that the Congress was geared up to muster support for its agenda. Sadiq, however, died in 1971. What would have happened had he lived longer? Would the Congress have become a force to reckon with? It is not always easy to answer this question. He did retain his individual status as a leader but the fact is that during the last days of his tenure as Chief Minister all was never well within the Congress which was rocked by dissensions led by Syed Mir Qasim.

And, when the Sheikh decided to return to the mainstream in 1975 following his accord with Indira Gandhi the Congress, after a brief moment of glory, was knocked out of the reckoning in the Kashmir region. It was not able to capitalise on Sadiq's liberalised and pronounced pro-New Delhi agenda. For long it had managed to stay in power (particularly during the long Bakshi era) by subverting the democratic processes to the extent of engineering the defeat of other pro-India elements. Its return to power in 2005 after three decades was possible because of its alliance with the People's Democratic Party (PDP) founded by Mufti Mohammad Sayeed.

The present Chief Minister, Mr. Ghulam Nabi Azad, was a Youth Congress leader in the State during the Sadiq era. He grew up in the Congress hierarchy gradually. At a Youth Congress session at the Pragati Maidan in the national Capital in the early 1970s he was one in a crowd of many. The dominating figures then were Sanjay Gandhi, Ambika Soni and Janardhan Singh Gehlot of Rajasthan. Around that time he seems to have realised that the only way to grow in the organisation was to strike a rapport with the Nehru-Gandhi family. He quickly bypassed Ambika and Janardhan (who is virtually forgotten, having been overshadowed by another Gehlot - Ashok - from the same state).

It is one of those ironies that even though Azad was close to Sanjay Gandhi he was also one of the beneficiaries of Maneka Gandhi's exit from the Nehru-Gandhi home. In a bid to ensure that there was no erosion in younger ranks Indira Gandhi had quickly promoted about half-a-dozen younger party functionaries to key positions and one of them was Azad (he was made a deputy union minister).

Since then he has not looked back. He is regarded as one of the top all-India leaders of the Congress. But even as he was active at the Central level he kept his interest alive in politics of the home state. While being in New Delhi he always had a loyal coterie in the Pradesh Congress that made life difficult for all PCC presidents who did not like his interventions.

It is only recently that, perhaps, for the first time he had a taste of his own medicine. He faced discomfiture when the party high command delayed his move to induct Chief Secretary B.R. Kundal into the Cabinet. The reason: he had not obtained the party leadership's clearance. He was overruled earlier as well when he tried to resist the appointment of Saifuddin Soz, Union Minister of Water Resources, as PCC president. It is clearly a subtle message to him to remain within the limits he had enforced on other leaders during his stay at the all-India Congress headquarters.

It will not be right to say that he is completely out of favour yet. Instead, it appears the party is prepared to give him a chance to prove himself. It is evidently backing his idea to retain power in the coming Assembly elections in the later half of 2008. The contours of this game plan are becoming visible. The party will contest the polls on its own without a formal alliance with any party.

Two developments underline this approach: (a) initial speculation that Soz's appointment as the PCC chief is meant to strengthen the Congress-PDP coalition

before the elections has not materialised; and (b) smaller parties, including the one opposed to the Mufti “dynasty” in the PDP, are being encouraged wholeheartedly to participate in the electoral contest. Prime Minister Manmohan Singh’s two meetings with Kashmir leaders have not gone unnoticed by observers. One has been with PDP rebel Ghulam Hassan Mir and the other with Ghulam Mohammad Shah. Both run their own parties: Mir has floated the Jammu and Kashmir Democratic Party and Shah, estranged brother-in-law of Farooq Abdullah and a former Chief Minister, is the founder of the Awami National Conference. They have already announced their participation in elections. Why should the Prime Minister find time to meet a leader — Mir in this instance — who is openly gunning for the Mufti’s party which is Congress’s major partner in power in a sensitive state? How does a Singh-Shah meeting benefit the Congress?

Normally the get-togethers between Kashmir and Central leaders are explained in the context of securing and giving guarantees for free and fair elections. This does not appear to be the case so far as Shah and Mir are concerned. Shah is much experienced and Mir is also no novice. The Prime Minister, of course, will only be too happy if there is a greater partaking in the polls especially in the Valley.

More groups like the Communist Party of India (Marxist) are also likely to come forward and take the electoral plunge. They may form small groups without directly aligning themselves with the Congress.

In case they win the Congress will carry them on board and form the government again. Its plan is obviously

## ***A Leh special*** **SPARE A THOUGHT FOR CHANGTHANG**

*In this issue we conclude a two-part series on Changthang, a rangeland spread over 22000 square kilometres in the Ladakh region bordering China. The author, Dr Tsering Phunchok, has done painstaking research and written almost a book. His suggestion for taking into account conventional economy of the region while introducing modern technology and laws makes sense. This will help check the migration of nomads into urban areas. He has made a moving observation: “The vulnerabilities are many for the nomads and nomadic areas but the resolve to face and defeat the challenging situations found inbuilt in the nomadic tradition are equally enviable and astounding. Invaluable livestock perish, sometimes in their thousands, but the nomads rise up again from the ruins of bad luck to continue with the production system again to succeed and sustain.” Changthang is the actual producer of pashmina which has been made globally famous by Kashmiri craftsmen through their exquisite embroidery. There are two more articles on Ladakh in this issue virtually making it a Leh special... P.S.*

based on two assumptions: (a) it will retain its dominating position in the Jammu region; and (b) it may be able to woo the Ladakh Union Territory Front (LUTF) after having harassed it all along (LUTF matters in four Assembly seats of the Ladakh region being in a position to win three and influence the outcome of the fourth).

Where does that leave the PDP? The Congress seems to be calculating that if nothing else succeeds it can always turn to the Muftis for support. Why should the PDP permit itself to be taken for granted? Why should it not insist on leading the Government just in case there is a compromise?

What happens to Azad's scheme in that event? Some observers think that Azad wants to go in for an alliance with the NC rather than with the PDP (his rivalry with Mufti Mohammad Sayeed goes back to their days in the Congress) given his proximity to NC patriarch Farooq Abdullah. It will help him get out of a difficult situation and return to New Delhi (where he still maintains a political establishment) after handing over power to Dr Abdullah.

Why should the NC settle for such an arrangement? It will help Dr Abdullah to give away the baton to his son in due course. It is interesting that those who believe in the anti-incumbency factor have thought all along that the NC would form the government on its own strength. However, the State's premier political outfit appears to have lost its steam after an initial good start. It is a different study altogether.

#### FORM IV

(As per Rule 8 of the Registration of Newspapers (Central) Rules)  
Statement about ownership and other particulars about  
Border Affairs

- |    |  |  |
|----|--|--|
| 1. | Place of Publication   | New Delhi  |
| 1. | Periodicity of its publication   | Quarterly  |
| 3. | Printer's Name   | Pushp Saraf  |
|    | Nationality  | Indian   |
|    | (a) Whether a citizen of India?  | Yes  |
|    | (b) If a foreigner, the country of origin  | Not Applicable   |
|    | Address  | D-17, Press Enclave, Saket, New Delhi.                 |
| 4. | Publisher's Name   | Pushp Saraf  |
|    | Nationality  | Indian   |
|    | (a) Whether a citizen of India?  | Yes  |
|    | (b) If a foreigner, the country of origin  | Not Applicable   |
|    | Address  | D-17, Press Enclave, Saket, New Delhi.                 |
| 5. | Editor's Name  | Pushp Saraf  |
|    | Nationality  | Indian   |
|    | (a) Whether a citizen of India?  | Yes  |
|    | (b) If a foreigner, the country of origin  | Not Applicable   |
|    | Address  | D-17, Press Enclave, Saket, New Delhi.                 |
| 6. | Names and addresses of individuals who own the newspaper and partner and partners or shareholders holding more than one per cent of the total capital: | Pushp Saraf, D-17,<br>Press Enclave, Saket, New Delhi. |

I, Pushp Saraf, hereby declare that particulars given above are true to the best of my knowledge and belief.

Date : May 10, 2008

Pushp Saraf  
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# 2008 A CRUCIAL YEAR FOR US IN LADAKH

*Thupstan Chhewang*

Let me say with all humility that 2008 is a crucial year for all of us in Jammu and Kashmir. Going by our experiences in Ladakh I feel that as 2008 heads towards its latter half it will rank with 1953, 1984, 1985 and 1990, 1996 and 2002 — the years that have defined our political destiny in varying degrees in the past. It is an election year and I fear that the worst is in store for us in Ladakh.

To us in Leh especially the Congress-led State Government has already shown its true colours. It has beaten up our elected representatives, put them behind the bars without any provocation, denied our Chairman and Chief Executive Councillor of the Ladakh Autonomous Hill Development Council (LAHDC) the right to hoist national tricolour and stopped our workers from exercising their franchise in a by-election. It has used the police as if it was a pliable tool in its hands. Much to our regret the uniformed force under an officer of the Indian Police Service (IPS) has followed the dictates of an unscrupulous political authority instead of performing its constitutional duty.

How can any government indulge in terror tactics against the leaders of a duly elected local dispensation in this age and times? This question is irrelevant in our context. For, this has actually happened. We have personally tasted the rough end of the ruling stick. Our woes are mostly unknown to the country at large. It is a case of out of sight being out of mind. Just because we live across the Himalayas we can't be ignored like this. We crave more attention by the media and the people who have genuine concern for democracy at heart.

To our relief we have found the Prime Minister and the Union Home Minister always sympathetic as and when we have approached them with our grievances. They have sounded positive. Inter-action with them helps us to at least ventilate our feelings. We trust that they have been persuading the State Government to conduct itself responsibly. The latter, however, is insensitive and is exhibiting extreme arrogance of power.

We have a serious apprehension that the State Government is preparing to rig the coming Assembly polls in Ladakh. It has already conducted a rehearsal and is getting ready for the final act. I take this opportunity to forewarn the nation in this regard. I appeal to it to come to our rescue if for nothing else for the sake of our chosen electoral system.

So far as we are concerned we will stand up to any display of brusque authority as we have done so far with our full might. We shall make use of all democratic options to raise our voice. It is our commitment that we shall remain peaceful as we do so. We will go to every public forum to expose those who tend to believe that democracy is dictatorship by another name. They have tortured us physically. They have turned a by-election into a farce. They are undermining our elected leaders. All these adversities have steeled our resolve to stand up and be counted for the sake of democracy and for the sake of country. Of course, we will contest the elections to assert our presence. More than ever before we are convinced that we must secure Union Territory (UT) status sooner rather than later. We shall intensify our struggle in this direction. We want to strengthen our umbilical cord with New Delhi. We have made it known several times before. Our agitation for UT is as old as the State's integration with India in 1947.

Another party whose state leadership has distressed us is the Communist Party of India (Marxist). I was stunned when I was heckled by one of its leaders from speaking on our demand for UT at a meeting of one of the much-publicised Working Groups. The leader asked me "to get out". Little did he realise that I was made of a sterner stuff than he thought. I stayed put and made my point. The same gentleman is not averse to lending his ears to grossly anti-national militant forces. Why should he not listen to pro-India forces? He is prepared to shake hands with those wanting separation of the State from the country. But he is not keen on making friends with those who want to split from the State to be part of the national mainstream.

We are Indians first and Indians last. Yes, we want to be directly administered by New Delhi . Our population may be small (2.42 lakhs according to 2001 Census) but our dreams are as big as our territory and we want to fulfil them as a constituent of a great nation.

I will use this opportunity to briefly put the record straight. Our demand for UT has a history. On May 4, 1949, a deputation of Ladakhis met Jawaharlal Nehru for the first time to formally demand a UT status. It presented a memorandum seeking separation from J&K and a closer link with India . Their written statement was: "We seek the bosom of that gracious mother ( India ) to receive more nutriment for growth to our full stature in every way. She has given us what we prize above all other things — our religion and culture. The Ashoka Wheel on her flag, symbol of goodwill for humanity and her concern for her cultural children, calls us irresistibly. Will the great mother refuse to take to her arms one of her weakest and most forlorn and depressed children — a child whom filial love impels to respond to the call?"

Instead, the State Government led by Sheikh Abdullah kept on sending one signal after the other as if it was not even aware of the existence of Ladakh. It ignored Ladakh in matters of development. Luckily for Ladakh, however, it witnessed the emergence of a universally acceptable leader Kushok Bakula who was known as the Head Lama of Ladakh. He struck an immediate rapport with Nehru. In his first budget speech in the Assembly in 1952, Kushok Bakula asserted: "Read the

budget statement from one end to the other, you will not find Ladakh mentioned even once, much less will you find reference to its economic and other needs which are urgent and pressing and cry for immediate attention and fulfilment". He had called a spade a spade: "Our land is apparently being held as a part of the State merely for the satisfaction of its being a conquered territory."

Following the arrest and dismissal of the Sheikh there was hope in Ladakh that it would get its due. It was to be belied. The Kashmiri leaders flattered Ladakh to deceive it. Kushok Bakula was first made Deputy Minister and later Minister of State for Ladakh Affairs. It would have turned out to be a major step towards political empowerment of Ladakh. Instead, Kushok Bakula was just treated as a figure head. It was amazing that although a minister he was at one stage asked to inter-act with a junior administrative functionary. It was like rubbing salt into Ladakh's wounds. This also accentuated the feeling of deprivation coupled with general neglect and apathy.

As the number of educated Ladakhis was growing there was increasing demand for equal rights and privileges. Hardly a year passed without them not expressing anger and anguish in one forum or the other. On June 25, 1973, in a statement Lama Lobzang, then spearheading the movement, charged the "Kashmir Government with totally neglecting Ladakh and pitting one community against the other in the region. Young persons returned to Leh after studying in colleges in Srinagar, New Delhi and elsewhere only to find that there had been no progress on the home turf. They also noticed that the local inhabitants were being ignored in the matter of employment. No popular head of the State had cared to visit Ladakh for more than 25 years.

A churning began in young minds about how to get justice. In the meantime senior leaders continued to express their resentment with the State Government by organising protest meetings and hunger-strikes. Government functionaries for their part conceded the demands for giving Ladakh scheduled tribe status but only to pay lip service. It was finally in 1989 that the educated youth took matters in their hands. The fears of young Buddhists in particular that they might get no justice at all were fuelled by the emergence of Islamic extremism in the Kashmir region. If so-called liberal governments could not do justice to them why would the Islamic radicals care for them? Danger seemed real that a terrorist exercise was afoot for the complete Islamisation of India's only Muslim-majority State. However, mercifully, there was no serious misunderstanding among Ladakhi Buddhists and predominantly Shia Muslims.

It was noticed that anti-India forces operating in the Valley were trying to gain a foothold in the Ladakh region. There was unanimity between the Ladakh Buddhist Association, Ladakh Muslim Association and other responsible organisations of the region that they should work together to get the UT status. It was through their combined efforts that Ladakh took the first major step towards achieving its objective of UT.

There was a tripartite agreement among Ladakh leaders and Central and State governments paving the way for the constitution of an elected Ladakh

Autonomous Hill Development Council (LAHDC) on September 5, 1995. The formation of the Council has indeed encouraged the participation of people in managing their affairs. There are more welfare and development projects being executed now than ever before.

Time and again we have recalled this historic background at various get-togethers. We are firm in our belief that India is our motherland and we shall resist any attempt to weaken it. That is why we ensure that our armed forces don't have to look beyond their shoulders when they fight enemies on our borders. We stand like a wall behind them. My party colleague Mr Chering Dorjay, who is chairman and CEC of the LAHDC, has presented our viewpoint on more than one occasion even in Pakistan where he was invited to speak in seminars. His presentations have been so lucid and categorical that even a Pakistani intellectual has observed: "Of all the leaders of Jammu and Kashmir only Ladakhis now what they are talking about." It is ironical that the State Government instead is giving preference to partisan and not national interests.

The manner in which the Ladakh Union Territory Front (LUTF) has been sought to be damaged explains everything. The LUTF was formed as an all-party forum in 2002 after the voluntary dissolution of local units of all political parties. For reasons unknown the Bharatiya Janata Party was the first to pull out. The Congress followed. It did so in a style that left most of us dazed. We had been with the party for long. I was kept in the dark despite being MP from the area. Mr Dorjay was bypassed although he was unanimously elected chairman of the LUTF.

The Congress turned uglier subsequently and threatened to wipe out our existence. We waited for the party high command to intervene but in vain. After all, Jawaharlal Nehru and Indira Gandhi's Congress had always applied balm to us. How could their successors be too ill-informed to not even realise that their party's fair name was being tarnished in one of its strongholds in the north of the country? We waited patiently. However, when we were convinced that we were being altogether ignored we rallied. In the first LAHDC elections that followed in 1998 we virtually made a clean sweep winning 24 of 26 seats. The electorate agreed with our stand and severely punished the betrayers. Since then the Congress thriving on power in Srinagar is trying to harass us in every possible way. We have listed its dirty tricks above. There is yet another it has been working on for some time: this is to engineer defections from our ranks to snatch control of the LAHDC.

However, the popularity of the LUTF is on the rise. Our existence is based on truth and truth alone. Our demand for UT — we have said it earlier as well — is guided by the following principles:

1. We want to preserve our unique identity in every sense — ethnic, linguistic and even religious. We are the only region to have grand Buddhist monasteries and eminent schools of Shia philosophy co-existing with each other.

2. We are a trans-Himalayan territory that deserves particular attention which is possible only if it is governed directly from New Delhi .
3. We are concerned about our very survival because the most of our “leaders” sitting in Srinagar distrust us completely and have made it known through their actions.
4. Our huge natural resources in the form of pashmina and herbal plants, among many others, remain unexploited. The LAHDC has taken some beneficial steps in this regard but a lot more can be done which will be possible only if we have a full-fledged administrative set-up taking care of them.
5. We want due recognition for the Bhoti language. It may be pointed out that the trans-Himalayan MPs’ forum which is active in Parliament has already sought its inclusion in the Eighth Schedule of the Indian Constitution.
6. There should be more assembly seats in the region. Also, there should be at least two Lok Sabha seats — one each for Leh and Kargil.
7. We want to have a separate university.
8. There should be complete jurisdiction of Central institutions like Parliament. We don’t favour any dilution in this regard. There are any numbers of our “leaders” from the State who have sought and got relief from the Supreme Court and the National Human Rights Commission after being denied the same in the State.
9. We are unequivocal in our commitment to India and don’t want any truck with those who are either unclear or mischievous about their political aims. We don’t want to be led by those who are bereft of conviction and change their tune according to the occasion.
10. We are for a genuinely secular society in which every religion is equally respected. We don’t want discrimination on any ground — religion, gender or region. We seek dignified existence for every individual.

We also seek the total repeal of the State Constitution. It has not lived up to the expectations of any region of the State. Does this point require any elaboration? Are inhabitants of the Kashmir Valley happy with it? Are the residents of Jammu pleased? The answer by both them of will be a resounding no. So far as we are concerned we want all hindrances in the way of our close association with the rest of the union to go lock, stock and barrel. We will like to have a direct linkage with New Delhi instead of going via Srinagar . This is possible only if we become a UT,

I wish to point out that the LAHDC is not being allowed to function satisfactorily. The following facts explain this:

1. The Council is not being given financial and legislative powers even in matters under its charge.

2. On one occasion the State Government transferred the funds sanctioned by the Planning Commission for Leh under the Border Area Development Programme (BADP) for some other place. We resisted it and were eventually able to persuade the Planning Commission to tell the State Government to retrace its move.
3. The State Government ignores the LAHDC's pleas to let it have a deputy commissioner of its choice. The deputy commissioner by virtue of being the chief executive officer of the Council is a key functionary. We are never consulted in matter of appointing police head of the area under our jurisdiction.
4. The State Government has not even discussed the Council's plea for sharing four nominated seats. It has gone ahead with appointing its nominees in a brusque manner with the obvious aim of ensuring majority for the Congress through backdoor.
5. There is no consideration of an important factor in planning. Ladakh deserves priority because of its enormous area and not population which is sparse. The schemes have to be tailored according to its typical requirements.

Of late the State Government has fiddled with as revered an institution as the Ladakh Buddhist Association (LBA). It created a drama to lock the LBA office in Leh and implicate our members in false cases including murders. The developments are moving fast in Ladakh. My appeal to the nationalist forces is to conduct on-the-spot studies and find out the facts for themselves.

For our part we are wide awake to assaults on our liberties and the LUTF banner. We will strive to overcome them. We can understand why the state leadership of the Communists should be interested in playing a filthy game. Its previous record speaks for itself including in the turbulent period after 1947. By no stretch of imagination, however, we can comprehend why the Congress should play foul with the forces which have proven record of selfless service to the nation. After having set its own house on fire in Leh what does it gain by taking on a popular and potent pro-India organisation like the LUTF? Does it want to do to Leh what it has done to the Kashmir Valley in the past?

*\*The writer is a member of the Lok Sabha and President of the Ladakh Union Territory Front (LUTF).*

# LADAKH'S STIRRING SAGA OF VALOUR AND PATRIOTISM

*Tsering Samphel*

India is a country of extreme diversity historically, culturally, ethnically, linguistically and geographically. Its northern most geographical tip comprising of two formidable districts of Leh and Kargil is called Ladakh.

The people of Ladakh have successfully shaped their destiny according to their choice with their own efforts after Independence. When there was talk of the early dawn of independence of India in 1930s and early 1940s, Ladakh the cold desert part of the princely state of Jammu and Kashmir comprising tehsils of Skardu, Kargil, Zaskar and Leh had no idea of its place in the two-nation theory. A group of highly intellectual Kashmiri Pandits of the time — one of them Shridhar Kaul Dullu happened to be the Inspector of Schools in Ladakh region from 1939 to 1948 — had foreseen uncertainties looming large over the future of Ladakh. They discussed their concerns with the elite of Leh. The situation evoked apprehensions in the Ladakhi society.

Ultimately August 14 and August 15, 1947 brought up two nations of India and Pakistan on the world map. However, the destiny of Jammu and Kashmir hung in pandemonium. On October 22, 1947 Pakistan moved its army into Kashmir from many vantage points for its forcible annexation; while doing so it tore apart the Standstill Agreement it had earlier entered into with Maharaja Hari Singh.

By the time spring set in 1948, the Pakistani army had entered into Ladakh and occupied up to Nimmo village just 30 kilometres away from Leh by March, 1948.

A team of 18 to 20 Indian soldiers from the Dogra Regiment had by then travelled to Leh from Srinagar to train the Ladakhi National Guard. It was headed by Lt Col Prithi Chand and assisted by Jamadar Bhim Chand. It had 200 rifles to save Ladakh.

By May, 1948, the National Guards had a strength of 500 Ladakhis who included 50 Muslims as well.

Col Chhewang Rinchen, who was to become a local legend later, was a student of eighth class at that time. As a young person also he showed rare nerve and was a main source of inspiration for the locals to organise the Nubra Guards in the Nubra valley where the Pakistanis were already knocking on the doors. He went on to win a MVC Bar and retired as Colonel in the Army. At the same time a company of 150 Army men accompanied by 700 mules transporting arms,

ammunition and ration traversed 640 kilometres on foot from Kullu to Leh. It was commanded by a brave young officer, Maj Hari Chand. It clashed with Pakistani invaders in Hermishukpachan.

May 25, 1948 was a historic day when Capt Meher Singh of the Indian Air Force flew a Dakota plane into Leh. The Leh airport was levelled and its rugged surface stripped of all its boulders with the help of voluntary effort of local people. The smoothening of the runway was done under the supervision of late Sonam Narboo, a local engineer who had obtained higher education in the United Kingdom . At that time he was serving in Kashmir as an assistant engineer and was deputed with Second Dogra in Leh.

The successful landing of the Air Force plane in Leh shaped history of Ladakh. It facilitated bringing in additional reinforcements to push back Pakistanis. Air Force planes made five sorties in a single day in dare-devil exercises.

The reinforcements proved extremely morale-boosting for the local National Guards which was till then equipped with 200 rifles. A tactic adopted by the National Guards, which was virtually raised overnight and was thrown into the battlefield with elementary training, paid off. It would wear Ladakhi attires. It would then be followed by villagers from all over carrying ration and other logistics. An impression would thus be created as if there was a huge army determined to knock out Pakistanis.

The largest ever battle in the history of Ladakh was fought from March 1948 to December 1948, when ceasefire was enforced on December 22, 1948.

Unfortunately the ceasefire resulted into the loss of Skardu tehsil to Pakistan along with Kharmang, Giradwar circle of Kargil.

Pandit Dullu had travelled in between to Delhi via Manali to apprise Jawaharlal Lal Nehru of the situation. His timely strategic wisdom might have saved Ladakh from becoming a part of Pakistan. One shudders to think of what Pakistan could have done to Ladakh. As an Islamic state it would have certainly destroyed its monolithic identity, cultural and linguistic heritage and secular fabric.

The 500 local recruits forming the National Guards, a brain child of Ladakh Youngmen Buddhist Association under the leadership of Kalon Chewang Rigzin, had laid a long road map in making Ladakhis the most confident citizens of India.

The National Guards gradually become a strong regimental unit called the Ladakh Scouts consisting exclusively of the Ladakhi youth, the patriotic sons of India. The successful retention of a major part of Ladakh has yielded a major strategic gain: Ladakh today stands as the iron gate of our northern borders.

Ladakh has experienced many wars after Independence . The role of Ladakhis in all these wars of 1948, 1962, 1965, 1971 and 1999 has been exemplary. The Ladakh Scouts has brought laurels to Ladakhis with their exemplary valour.

The single example of having a battalion-strong regular force carved out of a miniscule population of 2.36 lakhs of Ladakh itself is a tribute to the inhabitants of the region. It also shows the nation's confidence in them in recognition of their bravery. Though comparatively a new battalion, the Ladakh Scouts has been the

recipient of the highest decorations in the annals of the Army: the Chief of the Army Banner for Valour and Sacrifice in Operation Vijay of 1999, Chief of the Army's Commendation Unit Citation 1999 and Unit citation of Meghdoot 2001-2002. Moreover, it has so far won one Ashok Chakra, five Mahavir Chakras, 15 Vir Chakras, two Shourya Chakras, 40 Sena Medals, seven Mentions in Despatch, one AVSM and five VSMs.

The Ladakh Scouts today stands as the synonyms of Ladakh. It has also strengthened the economy of Ladakh. It has brought prosperity in every family of Ladakh, pride to the region and name and fame to the people. The stigma of backwardness, remoteness and hard living standard of the people has been removed.

Today the Ladakhi society undaunted by indifferent climatic conditions and geographical constraints is throbbing with dynamism, adventurism and entrepreneurship. The people of Ladakh feel secure in India and take pride to be Indians. For the Buddhists there is an added solace in India being the land of Buddha. Of course, the country's democracy has taken roots in remote corners including Ladakh.

Ladakhis have performed well in all walks of life in post-independent India . Ladakh was fortunate to have a leader in Kushok Bakula who led the Ladakhis on a path of peace and prosperity from 1949 till his demise four years ago. Eight persons have been conferred national Awards in different fields which include one Padma Vibhushan, seven Padma Shris and two Arjuna Awards in the fields of sports, mountaineering, socio-political works, engineering, arts, music, healthcare and sculpture.

It is presumed that Ladakh has the highest number of decorated persons in proportion to the population.

Ladakh has a civic society totally dedicated towards the nation. Whenever a crisis has erupted on the borders the local people have rallied behind soldiers. The people have carried loads of ammunition to strategic points on high mountains. They have provided animal transportation of ponies, yaks, donkeys and zos to carry logistic supplies, ammunitions and some times even the troops.

I vividly recall the cooperation extended by civil population from time to time more recently during the Kargil War of 1999. Hundreds of young persons would assemble in the premises of Chowkhang Temple in the heart of Leh city early every morning and head towards borders of the Batalic sector as volunteers in fully-packed buses.

I was President of the Ladakh Buddhist Association (LBA) at that time. Once I had flagged off 16 buses full of volunteers towards Chorbat Sector where the first post of Pakistani intruders was smashed by the Ladakh Scouts under the command of Maj Sonam Wangchuk of Leh, who was awarded Mahavir Chakra for his bravery and valour.

It was quite stirring to see how the Ladakhis had risen to the challenge on that occasion. The Pakistanis had taken positions all over the mountain range inside our soil from Chorbat to Drass. Our troops had to hit back in the shortest

possible time. Their capability was never in doubt. The problem was to ensure constant supply of food and ammunition to them. There could not be any delay on this count.

The LBA women volunteered to cook local breads which were dispatched to the forward Army posts in packets. It was a gesture which the Army applauded. It needs to be mentioned that one Tashi Namgyal of Garkhon village had spotted the Pakistanis for the first time and reported the same to the Army. All the examples depict the love and patriotism of Ladakhis for their country. The people from Derchik to Drass stood as one with the Army in the Operation Vijay-1999 and ultimately after fighting for 77 days, every inch of our soil on the high mountainous borders was cleared of the intruders.

It will always remain etched on my mind that during that period Maj Gen Somanwar, GOC of the area, used to ring me up from his strategic locations to convey his appreciation for the cooperation of the local population.

The whole nation actually showed its appreciation and gratitude to the Ladakhis for their extraordinary cooperation and contribution in the Operation Vijay. Delhiites had organised a grand felicitation and reception for the people of Ladakh in the national capital's Constitutional Club during 1999 winter. Who can ever forget that?

Truth can not be concealed and duty befalls on all righteous people to highlight it. The nation has been magnanimous in its appreciation of Ladakhis. There have been two major developments so far: the declaration of Ladakhi communities as Scheduled Tribes in 1989 and the grant of a self-governing mechanism in the shape of Ladakh Autonomous Hill Development Council for Leh as well as Kargil. These are milestones.

The Nimmo-Basgo and Chutak Hydal projects are the symbols of love and affection of the Union Government towards Ladakhis which have been sanctioned surpassing all norms and conditions as well as ignoring the cost: benefit ratio. It has been possible with the blessings of Mrs Sonia Gandhi and Dr Manmohan Singh. One will also like to say that the State Government headed by Mr Ghulam Nabi Azad in recent years has also been extremely favourable to the Ladakhis. There are more ministers from the region than ever before. Creation of more tehsils and blocks has fulfilled a long cherished demand of the Ladakhis. There are new schools and health centres apart from the upgradation of existing facilities.

We still have some major demands like the Union Territory status for Ladakh, inclusion of the Bhoti language in the Eighth Schedule of the Indian Constitution and opening of Kailash-Mansarovar pilgrimage and trade route through Leh which need to be fulfilled. Sooner rather than later our hopes would be realised. I have no doubt about this. I notice that there is a national urge to reciprocate Ladakh's sentiments.

*\*The writer is a member of the National Commission for Scheduled Tribes and a former Congress legislator.*

*(This is the second part of a comprehensive analysis of life and economy of Changthang which is the highest and the largest plateau in the country and produces, among other things, the globally famous pashmina)*

*A rangeland called Changthang*

## **BEST SO FAR HAS NOT BEEN GOOD ENOUGH**

*Tsering Phunchok*

**T**he present policies for alleviating the poverty of the people and for addressing the issues related to physical, economic and environmental vulnerabilities of the region have been good but the impact can not be described as heartening. The policies for development in Changthang and in Ladakh as a whole are still top-down in spite of many efforts made by the Government to make them into participatory movements. The absence of accountability is a big deterrent.

There is no grassland policy in Jammu and Kashmir. The national policies on agriculture and animal husbandry are just general policies for the entire country and no special policy exists for cold arid rangeland areas and high altitude grasslands.

The tenure system for use of grassland resources is not clearly spelled out. There is complete lack of integrated approach in respect of development initiative in the rangeland of Ladakh. There is no separate policy for an area like Changthang although everybody thinks that Changthang is just different.

The old and effective management system has crumbled because of the weight of modernity and the so-called new development era. Old effective customary rules for management and use of pasture resources are being rubbished by the modern educated people, both in the government, politics and even amidst the range-landers. The new laws of the country do not recognise customary practices.

### **Conflict with conservation issues**

A good part of the rangeland area of Changthang is under sanctuary laws which restrict the rights of the user nomads in their traditional area. The nomads are apprehensive that they may not be allowed to carry on with their economic activity with the kind of freedom they are so used to. They still believe that the act will not affect their livelihood activities if, and only if, the

tribal law yet to be enacted is put in place by the Union Government. The tribal law is expected to contain provisions which can undo some of the tough provisions of the sanctuary law. The fact, however, remains that the traditional Ladakhi society has inbuilt conservation measures in the system which guaranteed an enviably harmonious and peaceful relationship between man and nature. ( During a heavy rainfall in the mid-sixties in my village, our house, with thatched roof, leaked due to the continuous rain. My father was very worried about the safety of the house and the comfort of his children. He crowded us in a corner of the house where there was less leakage from the roof and put a blanket on us. Finding us smiling and cheerful, he sighed and thanked the Buddhas for the rain as it would make the hillocks somewhat green and the poor wild animals will have something to eat during the coming days/ winter. In another incidence, the monks and some people in Ladakh protested against the excessive extraction of seabuckthorn berry by entrepreneurs and cooperative societies during 2006-08 as the action would lead to depletion of food resources for the crows, magpie and many bird species. People believed that seabuckthorn berry was a good food for birds).

The customary system of management of resources through strong community regulations has weakened and no government policy for replacement of these efficient systems of management are in place now. The use right of pastures is almost free-for-all as any breeder can play fun with the village de-facto laws and can avoid a penalty through the intervention of modern law enforcement system. The situation is still in reversible mode.

### **Priorities**

The Changpas put education on top of their priority rank followed by health services and public distribution system. They do not mention livestock rearing activities to be a priority area but some people point out that livestock and pasture are obviously priority sectors for nomads and that this fact needs no mention and listing at the time of ranking their priorities. Some people even say that they do not feel it important to mention Sheep Husbandry Department as a priority department as the nomads feel that this government department is a part of their system and not an outsider.

### **Infrastructure**

Except two villages, all the villages/hamlets are linked with reasonably good roads. Every family has a few sets of solar lighting gadgets although very few have diesel generator sets for electricity. Except three villages, no part of Changthang has a high-tension line. Every village has community halls, school buildings and buildings for quite a few different departments. Nyoma and Tangtse (headquarters of both the blocks) have been provided with solar power stations for electricity. These are rest houses in all important halt points and Nyoma is linked with telephone system. Nyoma and Durbook blocks have been provided with Internet facilities which are available to all

for a little payment. Almost every village has been provided with community viewing facilities where people meet and watch television.

### **Importance of livestock sector**

Livestock rearing is the major economic activity of the people as no other economic activity is considered viable in the traditional sense. People hold good number of livestock under a mixed husbandry concept where sheep and goat play lead roles in the subsistence economy. Yak plays good economic role but its number is limited. The holding pattern was always dictated by market trends throughout history. The number of sheep was more or at least equal to goats till the nineties in many parts of Changthang but the goat number increased later in view of good price for pashmina in the market which got shifted over to cash economy replacing the age-old barter system of trade.

The barter system of trade always put the nomads in a disadvantageous position as this system supported an exploitative trend and way of life.

The Changluk wool has attractive market although the production is estimated at 1.29 lakh kgs. The production size dwindles in view of external factors like draught, disease, pasture conditions and even market trends. The market has started favouring readymade yarn to raw wool which is processed traditionally in Ladakh even to this day. Despite all the factors playing against the local wool of Changthang, the wool prices have remained satisfactory because of its quality which is best suited to the traditional processing system which demands long stapled wool for efficient spinning.

Pashmina is, of course, a source of income for the people but not the main source. An average family holding up to a hundred goats produces approximately 22 kgs of pashmina which fetch up to Rs 33000 in the market. The family also holds about 60 sheep giving 90 kgs of wool which fetches Rs 6700 in the market. It has 10-15 yaks and approximately 2 yaks are sold every year which fetches Rs 30000. The family sells 22-25 animals (sheep and goats) for meat which fetches the family up to Rs 50000. In addition the family consumes milk and converts the surplus milk into butter and cheese a portion of which is sold sometimes. The yak wool too fetches some money. The family can earn approximately Rs 120000 a year in addition to a good part of produce used for domestic consumption, which can support an average sized family including the education of some children. This income is not adequate but it can not be called a mean income as well.

Quite contrary to the traditional importance of horse, the present time has put the horse in a losing position. It is important only for carrying goods during migration and the horse has no economic role. The nomads could not use horse for hiring to the travel agencies which operate trekking groups in the area because the outsiders contact the groups beforehand and they have expertise to deal with such operations. The nomads have to complain now against tour operators who, as per their report, use their pastures for feeding

outsider horses, litter their place with tins, plastics and garbage and give nothing to them in return. The local nomads are not benefited by tourism in every manner although some agro-pastorals of Tangtse and Rong areas do derive some gain because of this activity.

The breeders of Changthang have now set up a body called the Pashmina Cooperative Marketing Society Limited at Leh which is a federation of 21 multipurpose cooperative societies in Changthang. All the breeders are under the ambit of the Society which is responsible for pashmina marketing. The Society has set up a pashmina de-hairing plant at Leh which came up in 2004 as a collaborative project of United Nations Development Programme, Union Ministry of Textile and the LAHDC, Leh. It has been established to de-hair the total market produce and to sell it on remunerative rate.

The pashmina prices have gone up over since the project started functioning at Leh. The project has sold de-haired material to many processors in other parts of India but the Kashmiris don't lift even a kilogram from the plant. Kashmir had been the traditional market for Ladakhi pashmina over centuries. It is in Kashmir that the fibre was first spotted by the western community. Hence, the name "Cashmere" (the old spelling for Kashmir) became famous as the classic fibre of east which set the fashion corridors of west on fire. The trousseau and ward-robe of a woman was considered incomplete without an elegant "Cashmere" shawl in it. "Cashmere" shawl was considered the ultimate of the Moghul royalty.

Today Kashmir weaves approximately 132000 meters of "Cashmere" fabric and produces up to 66000 shawls only in the old city of Srinagar where the artisans spin and weave "Cashmere" fibre into the most classic products ever known to the textile industry the world over.

The artisans in Kashmir also used "Shatoosh" fibre in the past but no more are they able to carry out the vocation because of ban on Chiru (Tibetan antelope) which provides the basic raw material. This has give further boost to the importance of pashmina. The Kashmir shawl industry has to set up a link with the Pashmina Marketing Cooperative Society for mutual benefit. For its part the Society has already started processing the raw "Cashmere" purchased from nomads in the Changthang region.

Wool is another important product from Changthang. This wool had been famous throughout Ladakh as "Changbal" (wool of nomadic sheep). The womenfolk in Ladakh loved to spin this wool because of its long staple. They used the yarn from this wool for warping and the weft normally came from the local wool of the respective areas. Spinning, weaving and making of a variety of garments are some handicraft activities known to every household in Changthang and other parts of Ladakh. These skills were essential for a self-sustaining society where every family wanted to avoid dependence on others because of many considerations although the respect for the principles

of reciprocity always existed in the system. (A weaver, spinner or a tailor is to be given good food, lot of Chhang, the local brew, and even some cash/ kind for the service which used to be out of the means of many). The art of weaving is related to the inter-relationship and the strong bonds between people sharing common interests and environment.

Yak *khulu* (down) is a sought after item in Ladakh. It is used now for making pull-overs and shawls. The colour (normally black), however, restricts it to a few users only.

Bleaching can do tremendous value addition of this fibre as the diameter is akin to pashmina and camel down. The yak wool is also used for making Rebo (nomadic tent) which uses yak guard and down mixed for spinning. The down provides sufficient insulation and together with the guard has been the traditional raw material for Rebo.

### **Importance of rangeland**

Ladakh is essentially a rangeland spread over an area of more than 45000 sq kilometres. The land is mountainous and has many rivers which ultimately join the mighty Indus flowing through Ladakh towards the Arabian Sea. The elevation of inhabited areas ranges between 2500 and 4600 meters. Livestock has played a resilient role in the economy of the people through ages and is still a very dependable base of the traditional economy. In terms of temperature norms for climatic zones, there are high plateau frigid and arid temperate grasslands in the southeast to semi-arid areas in the northwest of Ladakh.

The primary productivity ranges/ levels of the rangeland are different in different areas of Ladakh. Even for the same type of rangeland in the pastoral areas and the agro-pastoral areas the productivity potentials are markedly different. The Sheep Husbandry Department has no record of any study done in Ladakh to determine the average fresh yield of grasses in the alpine and other vegetation types. The Tibetan side in China has done extensive studies in these fields. The average yield per hectare in the middle Changthang region of Tibet has been found to be 750 kgs; in Ali prefecture across our border to be 570 kgs and in the Lhasa region to be 300 kgs.

### **Development scenario**

1. Government departments/ NGOs and the Army never care to ask the local people's opinion towards the proposed interventions in the natural revenue (rangeland) area of Changthang.
2. The customary rules and village traditional institutional mechanisms are crumbling under conditions of confusion and non-participatory environment.
3. The number of non-conforming grazers is increasing by the day.
4. The use pattern of pasture land is undergoing changes with more and more tendency for sedentary lifestyle, leading to excessive use of

some pastures and minimal use of yet other pastures areas. This situation results into excessive denudation of pastures.

5. Unplanned development initiatives by individual departments have been done without care for natural resources management and conservation issues. Stakeholders did not believe in the process of participation, dialogue and discussions with other stakeholders before initiating processes for changes and delivery.
6. The rangelands in Ladakh provide the very basis of economy for thousands of people. They support the culture and upland ecosystem which provides the user communities innumerable quantities of economic assets like wool, milk, meat and even fuel in addition to many other uses.

The rangelands, moreover, provide environmental services like nutrient recycling and many floral and faunal species service, produce and reproduce under the rangeland environment. But, as stated above, the challenges facing the rangelands are of very serious magnitude. The pastoral life is fast becoming a very unattractive way of life with very little opportunities for reforms and innovation. The market trends and the trade system of the present age have exposed breeders to the global economy and the national mainstream culture and these values have reached drawing rooms and nomadic tents. The social life of people has changed to the extent of rejecting all traditional values and economic activities.

The traditional economic activity has become less paying and high labour intensive. No enabling policy for sustainable use of the pastoral resources is in place today. In fact, the policy makers and planners look down upon the pastoral way of life and the pastoral people are always ready to give up this age-old traditional activity and way of life shifting over to more lucrative and less polluting economic activities.

The traditional rangeland economy was dependent on the labour put in by the total population as there was no other viable alternative economic activity in Changthang, which could employ/ engage the labour of any person from the nomadic community.

The following ground realities impede development:

1. Gap between the perceptions of people and change agents. The departments responsible for formulation of land use policies blatantly ignore the pre-existing customary rights. The Government finds no good thing in the customary practices of the people in spite of the fact that the de-facto customary arrangements are very appropriate and time-tested systems.
2. Lack of trust in change agents and their programmes.
3. Poor participation of people in developmental activities. Only a small section of the people who are the real beneficiaries in the system

have full say about development activities and this lot is responsible for initiating decisions and actions for the whole area overlooking is major concerns.

4. People/breeders go against perceived Government course of actions often because the Government can not suggest a better tenure arrangement and land use policy than what the people know.
5. More people opting other professions liked the Army, government job, educational pursuit, transport, tourism and other business ventures, leaving fewer hands for livestock husbandry/shepherding and agriculture.
6. The “Cashmere” wool has of late started giving rich returns to the nomads as the price fetched by raw “Cashmere”, after the formation of the breeders cooperative and setting up of the de-hairing machine with the nomads cooperative for value addition, is handsome these days. The nomads have started reducing the number of sheep at the same time affecting a corresponding increase in the number of goats. There is no report till date of any unpalatable effect on the pastures due to this shift in the nomadic priority.
7. A variety of wild life also exists in Ladakh, which share the limited pasture resource. The strong wild life laws have reportedly led to an increase in the number of wild animals and predators. A conflict-like situation arises whenever there are instances of livestock depredation by snow leopard, lynx or wolf.
8. A good number of people have already left their ancestral profession and the area to settle down at Leh permanently.
9. Rangelands in Ladakh provide basic resources for sustenance of economy, health and life: the pastures, medicinal plants, seabuckthorn (in other parts of Ladakh), fresh water, livestock wealth, fuel etc. The people extracted salt from Tsokar Lake. The rangelands are supposed to have immense reserve of minerals. The pasture resources have the capacity to hold large number of livestock and the fresh water is a resource which combined with pasture resources is responsible for sustaining the production system in the rangeland. The movement of nomads is dictated by the availability of these resources.
10. The rangeland is a bio-diversity hotspot. Varied flora and fauna survive in one of the most hospitable places on earth where conservation issues have surfaced in a big way during recent years. The bio-diversity of Changthang is a significant resource in Ladakh on which quite a few economic activities can be based. The Changthang rangeland is a transit station for many types of birds. It is a treat for the eyes to go

there and watch the birds and some of the most graceful wild animals like the Kiang roaming freely.

11. The rangeland is attractive for the promotion of tourism but tourism promotion has to be cautiously perceived in view of the fact that it may be dangerous for the biological status of the rangeland. Mindless promotion of tourism can lead to catastrophic results especially in respect of wildlife bio-diversity and can disturb the migrating birds forcing them to change routes. (This has already happened in other parts of Ladakh). On any routine tour of the area, one might come across a herd of Kiang, Shapo/Sham, Marmots and a few Guwa. Bird watching is a great experience especially when one comes across a young black neck crane learning to fly.
12. The rangeland in Changthang has been used not only for grazing of livestock but also for mining and fuelwood extraction. A variety of roots of shrubs are used for fuelwood purpose. Medicinal plants are still extracted from many parts in Changthang. Only about 60 plant species are identified as per a report of the Wildlife Institute of India but a local person at Kuyul during a decision on the issue mentioned the existence of about 200 plants species in Changthang (This statement is not confirmed through survey).
13. The rangeland in Changthang consists of riparian and lake basins are subject to the level of discharge/water in the water bodies, especially during the growing phase. The cover is subject to precipitation rate in a particular year. Unfortunately the river levels have gone down over the decades and the level of grass growth has also been adversely affected in those areas. Hillocks and slopes depend on snow and rain for pasture grass cover. A snowfall in the 10<sup>th</sup> month of Tibetan calendar is considered desirable as the slopes and hillocks remain covered with snow for the winter only to melt in spring exposing nourishing grass cover underneath them. This grass cover is considered important for saving young and yearling animals.
14. The rangeland has some species of wild depredators who are menace for animal rearers. Lot of animals get killed by snow leopard, wolf, lynx and even dogs gone feral. Fox and wild cat also cause problem as they kill young and small livestock in good numbers. Livestock tending is, therefore, a challenging job for people. A part of the rangeland in Changthang is a sanctuary for wild life. The people do not know much about sanctuary laws and they are even ignorant of the fact that their area is a sanctuary for wildlife and that their rights on the tenurial and other systems existing under de-facto traditional arrangements stand curtailed to some extent. Obviously, the development initiatives have to conform to the provisions of the

sanctuary laws but development has to happen and for this the stakeholders should always be compromising. The co-management of natural resources is a promising model for resolution of conflicts between stakeholders and to push the development programme further in Changthang.

15. The landscape in the Changthang rangeland is unique and picturesque. Tourism, especially eco-tourism has enormous potentials in the area and can offer an alternate means of livelihood for the nomads. The rangeland is studded with many places which are revered by the people. All the passes have a spot on the top which are known as “latos” and people flutter prayer flags there when they scale the top of the pass.

### **Traditional uses of rangeland**

The pastures are used under a de-facto customary tenurial arrangement for livestock grazing which is strictly followed by all. No derangement is permitted and the defaulters if any are sternly dealt with.

The sanctuary rules and government policies conflict with local interests sometimes. The community meets and decides about use rights and management duties whenever required. A routine is otherwise followed. The pastures are used freely by all under the village regulations and non-conforming grazers are penalised by the community but now the outside laws from the Government have become strong and their own laws and customary regulations are becoming weak. The non-conforming grazers can now afford to flirt with traditional regulations to serve their own interests by manipulating a system with the help of unscrupulous elements in the administration.

The Wildlife Act has put the breeders at a receiving end because the traditional system of depredation control was very effective for controlling the predator number. The people used to have “Shangdong” (a well-dug pit with special design to trap wolves and even snow leopards and foxes) to practically kill wolves when their number increased in an area. The system controlled wolf population to a tolerable level. Now the people have all the complaints against wolves and other predators as they believe that the number of predators has gone up significantly and people have to lose good number of livestock every season/year. The Government especially the Wildlife Department does not normally compensate them for the losses as it has limited fund for the purpose. The other depredators are lynx, snow leopard and fox in order of significance.

### ***Major constraints and opportunities for improvement***

#### **Constraints**

1. Lack of ideas.
2. Lack of expertise.

3. No project- although the forest department was made the nodal agency for pasture development.
4. Trans-boundary problem with China. The winter pasture area at Skakjung is near the border and improvement work can not be taken up.
5. Winter reserve pastures under stress due to stocking for longer time giving less time for regeneration.
6. Not much research could be done on pasture development. Studies not carried out.
7. The funds are limited.

### **Opportunities**

- Abundance of water and land resources.
- A local self-government LAHDC, Leh.
- Abundant summer pastures.
- Customary rules are still strong and the maximum people follow them with purpose and seriousness.
- The scheme on value addition of pashmina through de-hairing is complete but lot of further improvements and additions are required. Some more machines for carding and combing of pashmina need to be installed. The cooperative system need further strengthening through continuous training to the workers and awareness of nomads. Further programmes on development of products using pashmina fibre need to be developed and carried out. The handloom sector needs inputs for technology innovation, skill up-gradation and modern machines for effective value addition of pashmina. The de-hairing (to remove guard hair from fine hair in raw pashmina) done manually in olden times used to be a very laborious process which consumed lot of precious time. This process has been made easy by the introduction of de-hairing machine in Ladakh. A technology innovation in the post de-hairing stage may encourage pashmina-related industry in Ladakh giving income and employment to many young people in the future.
- The mini farm scheme under the Border Area Development Programme has provision to issue 100 female goats to the beneficiary family free of cost but with the condition that the Government will take back 125 one-year old kids from the family over a period of 5-6 years. The payback may be delayed if the beneficiary faces problems like huge mortality rate due to calamities. This scheme is not old and has to be continued to see the impact.
- The pashmina goats and Changluk sheep were considered having more resistant to diseases. The disease prevalence has gone up in

recent years due to interactions with outsiders. The Government has made adequate programmes for dosing, dipping, vaccination and treatment of animals. Dipping tanks (portable and permanent) have been provided to many families and hamlets. The people extend full cooperation in the exercises carried out by the Sheep Husbandry Department.

- A few more case studies to see the forage cover, grass varieties and traditional knowledge, among other activities, should be carried out and documented properly.
- Alfa-alfa germinates in Changthang but do not stand the winter and die. Further studies to protect the germinated plots for at least two years, till the roots are deep, need to be carried out for propagation of alfa-alfa in Changthang. This is in good fodder and will be beneficial even if the production may be very low compared to Leh. A pilot scheme under the ICIMOD will be required for implementation through local cooperating families. The nomads and semi-nomads may need incentive for motivation.
- The pashmina development schemes are being implemented in the whole Changthang region but the impact is moderate.
- A pilot programme in two villages to implement some programmes through the local community's participation may provide the required competitive atmosphere for implementation. The Government system needs not be changed for the purpose but the community motivation aspect can be taken care of by the ICIMOD or other NGOs.
- ICIMOD should continue funding the case studies and workshop programmes under RRP-III.
- ICIMOD should impart training and exposure to maximum number of LAHDC change agents from the departments mentioned earlier and also from the planning side.
- ICIMOD should sponsor a participatory monitoring and evaluation exercise in collaboration with the LAHDC, Leh. This will again be a case study.
- The case study of the pasture enclosures for conservation of reserve winter pastures need to be carried out to see the impact and the exact quality yield difference between the enclosed spare and free ranged areas outside.
- The Changpas still practice traditional husbandry systems in spite of the availability of modern technologies. This attitude needs to be changed through specific methods in a few pilot areas. ICIMOD can take up a special study programme through an NGO or the Sheep

Husbandry Department in a few villages. This will generate healthy competition.

- Conservation of bio-diversity has to be at the back of mind when development and Research Programmes are initiated.
- Co-management planning and implementation of Natural Resource Areas should be the buzzword and all activities in the rangeland need to be tuned to suit this concept.

### **Pashmina (“Cashmere”)**

#### ***Leina: a traditional resource of Ladakh***

“Cashmere”/Pashmina known in Ladakh as “Leina” and in Tibet as “Rakhul” comes from some breeds of Asiatic goats of high altitude areas.

Pashmina/Leina is known for its softness and insulating power. Leina garments of all kinds (pure and blended) are available in world markets as classic products of textile giants. The Leina items are costly but not too costly to keep the middle order at bay. The garments are affordable now and the mere possession gives the owner highest level of satisfaction and fulfilment. The very name “Pashmina” has faithful buyers across the globe. It is the class, quality, versatility, grace, feel, look and many other attributes of the pashmina products that set it apart in the world of textile.

Ladakh happens to be the proud producer of the world’s best pashmina although quantity wise India is nowhere in the list of huge pashmina producers. China, Mongolia, Iran, Iraq and Afghanistan (in that order) are the world’s largest producers of pashmina. The total production of the world touched 8000 metric tonnes in 1999-2000. It has insulating power comparable to the Vicuna and Shahtosh wool. It can be found in many shades and colours but white colour always demands a premium in the market. The other colours are grey, fawn and pinkish (the colour of animals can be white, brownish, grey and pied).

There is a historic tale about pashmina. The Afghan Governor of Kashmir, Abdulla Khan (1796), gifted a shawl to an Egyptian guest who in turn presented it to the king of his country when he went back home. Incidentally Emperor Napoleon was the state guest exactly around the same time. The Roman king presented the shawl to Napoleon who gave it to his beloved lady princess Josephine, then fashion queen. When Josephine adorned the Kashmiri shawl the fashion corridors of France and West suddenly went on fire and ladies could die for this exquisite fabric. The publicity attached to this fibre practically fired the markets. The curiosity to see the fibre and the processes of value addition carried out in Kashmir, made many travellers and other people to visit Kashmir- Joseph Dawson of Bradford (England) being one of them. It was during a sojourn in Kashmir that the young Dawson came across the difficulties

associated with the de-hairing of pashmina to remove the rough guard hair from the fine “Cashmere” (Pashmina) and immediately thought about the need of mechanical de-hairing. The first de-hairing machine came up at Bradford and, obviously, Joseph Dawson was its proud possessor.

England and Scotland began processing the “Cashmere” on woollen systems with great success and more than 60 per cent of the total world produce of pashmina found its way to Great Britain where a variety of luxury wears were made for international trade. China produced more than 65 per cent of the total raw pashmina of the world but did no value addition till the earlier parts of eighties when China began value addition, through downstream production on huge scales. The sources of raw material for the Scottish industries dried suddenly and the Chinese took the world by surprise when it threw classic pashmina garments on cheap rates in the markets throughout the world.

India accounted for the production of less than 1 per cent of the world’s total raw pashmina which came from Ladakh and some pockets of Himachal Pradesh. Even at the risk of repeating oneself one would say the Ladakhi pashmina happens to be the best pashmina in the world with the fibre diameter in the knitwear range and the fibre length best suited for hand spinning.

***Increased pashmina production can be hoped through appropriate breeding, nutrition and management.***

### **I. Breeding**

As all the important economic parameters like staple length, fibre diameter and total yield have high heritability, breeding through selection can lead to outcomes provided the breeding plan and execution are chalked out on scientific lines. Selection always plays a very important role in the cycle of qualitative and quantitative production of pashmina.

At the Government farms, we select the best looking animals and allow them to be the parents for the next generation. Not much attention is paid to the details of breed/ individual performance.

Selection obviously carries little meaning if performance records are defective and incorrect. Important workers tend to forget that the economic characters of “Cashmere” are amenable to genetic manipulations and a conscious and continuous accurate breeding policy can lead to great success stories in breeding.

The Government farms can come out of their shell and innovate their systems to accommodate modern outlook in breeding and management of “Cashmere” goats. If we adopt proper selection lines for different parameters and a separate breed control line to see the impact of selective breeding on “Cashmere” quality and quantity, the purpose of “Cashmere” goat breeding

programme can be achieved satisfactorily. Ladakh has not decided to go for crossbreeding for various valid reasons. We have decided to sacrifice quantity to quality and this policy needs to be carried over to posterity.

## **2. Feeding of goats**

It was initially believed (and still believed in Ladakh) that feeding plays important role in the quantity production of “Cashmere”. Studies carried out in the West, however, have shown that feeding has little impact on the growth of down. A high feeding regime has only been found to advance the moulting time. Feeding can, however, affect the cycle of events to the extent that moulting period is condensed and shedding/ combing is over within a shorter period. The studies clearly indicated that fibre production in double coated animals is an insensitive process to feeding standards. That implies that fibre production from primary follicles in single coated animals — sheep, angora and alpaca — are amenable to nutritional manipulations while as the fibres grown by the secondary follicles of the double coated animals are not.

## **3. What determines pashmina growth**

Pashmina - for that matter all undercoats of animals — grows as a special protective coat on the animals for protection against cold in extreme winter. It was believed for a long time during the last leg of the previous century that pashmina growth cycle is influenced by photoperiod and that the cue for changing day length is mediated through the hormone melatonin. It was believed that the growth of undercoat actually took place between the longest and the shortest day of the year. Down growth was photo controlled and happened as a response, mainly, to the change in day length when a range of hormones appeared in the blood of animals, and the secondary follicles in the skin of animals responded by producing fine fibre which deposited on the body of the animals. It has been seen that the amount of prolactin goes down when the day length reduces. The amount increases when the day length increases after the winter solstice. This clearly implied that prolactin was an important intermediary in the pathway linking change in day length to the events taking place inside the hair follicles of the animals. It was also believed that hormone melatonin played important role in the growth of pashmina and it was brought into use in animals just prior to the winter equinox to see the effect on fibre growth.

Quite contrary to it, the amount of prolactin in the blood increased and the moulting time got advanced by a few weeks. It was seen that use of melatonin during short day photoperiod induced photorefractiveness. It was also seen that the concentration of naturally circulating prolactin increases when the day length increases after the winter equinox. The researchers used hormone bromocriptine to suppress the amount of circulating prolactin and the moulting got delayed. The latest developments in the use of hormones for

manipulation of the growth cycle of pashmina are not known to workers at Leh.

Cold condition is considered important for bearing during the growth phase, as otherwise, the undercoat produced during the mid-summer will be lost due to continuous shedding. (The nomads of Ladakh believe that the goats going for grazing in the high altitude cold pastures during mid summer bear more pashmina). The genetic constitution of the goats plays important role in the growth of pashmina as the different economic parameters of pashmina are highly heritable making improvement easy if strict selection procedures are adhered to while breeding of pashmina bearing goats is carried out anywhere in the world. Ironically, feeding regimes have been found to have little role in the growth of pashmina. Well-fed animals, however, may shed the pashmina days before weaker animals. An optimum feeding level and normal health of a flock may be stressed for optimum down production. Altitude of a location and the dry conditions are also cited as reasons for good growth of pashmina (This is a popular belief. I have no evidence to support this theory). Level of production depends upon the age and sex of the animals.

Till the mid-nineties, hormone melatonin was considered to be responsible for growth of pashmina/down but this theory had to be given up when the experts found a host of other hormones as well in the blood of animals after the day length reduced at the summer solstice. It clearly meant that pashmina growth was triggered by interplay of many hormones and was not the result of a single hormone.

Among the hormones found in the blood of animals, the levels of thyroxin, prolactin, bromocriptine and melatonin were significant. The experts injected melatonin to animals in the growth phase but the results were contrary to their expectations implying that a combination of hormones was responsible for the pashmina production by the secondary follicles and not a single hormone. Injection of melatonin only speeded up the moulting process. Among other studies, the number of hormone receptors in the roots of follicles and conversion rate of some hormones to other forms during the cycle of events were also done.

The process of moulting can begin soon after the winter solstice if the environmental temperature gets warmer. Time of moulting also depends upon other factors like the health status of the animals. The moulting, otherwise, gets delayed by a few months.

The thick pad of pashmina remains on the body of the animals till the middle of summer under the conditions of Changthang as the outside temperature remains low till then. Molting is again a response to the change in day length. It takes place between the shortest and the longest day of the

year and can begin at winter solstice in December if the temperature is warmer. The process again is hormone controlled and can be delayed if it is cold outside.

Dr Bruce Reid, an Australian animal scientist associated with studies and beliefs on mechanism of “Cashmere” growth, believed that all earlier findings about “Cashmere” growth, moulting (stated above) can just be myths as, according to him, “Cashmere” growth was a continuous feature and not a seasonal process in response to change in day length.

Moulting at the right time takes place by natural detachment of the warm insulating pashmina pad from the body of the animals, as this pad may otherwise become a menace in warm climate. The goats look bigger and healthier for some days when the pashmina come up near the surface of the guard cover, for natural shedding. The shepherds/ breeders catch hold of the particular animal and comb the pashmina out to prevent the goats shedding the pashmina in the wild.

A lot of goat guard hair (the natural hair of the goat produced by the primary follicles as permanent hair) get pulled at the time of combing and get intermingled with the fine pashmina in the process. The nomads traditionally used obsolete wooden combs but the Department of Sheep Husbandry introduced modified/ improved iron combs which made combing easier and more efficient.

The separation of these guard fibre from the fine fibre was traditionally carried out manually till machines were invented to perform the exercise. This traditional process was a tedious time consuming process, as women folk in Kashmir strained their eyes and even damaged them, while carrying out manual de-hairing. An efficient de-hairing is considered essential for efficient spinning on any system.

Mechanical de-hairing removes the guard hair from the fine hair through a sophisticated mechanical means but up to ten per cent of the length of the fibre may have to be sacrificed in the process.

The raw material is first sorted for colour (Sorting for other parameters — fibre diameter and length — is equally important steps at this point)

### **Role of animal husbandry**

1. It has been a subsidiary activity to agriculture farming in non-Changthang areas where it plays a very resilient role in the concept of subsistence economy.
2. It plays the lead role in the sustenance of the economy of the Changpas whose economic activity revolves round livestock husbandry.
3. It has been an around-the-year economic activity compared to agri-farming.
4. Ladakh is more or less a rangeland area.

The following figures based on census and other developments in 2003-04 give an idea of the role animals play in Ladakh's economy:

**Animal population :** Pashmina goats 229656; Non- pashmina goats 70227; Angora crosses 3795; Alpine 3644; Jakrana 626; Changluk sheep 103210 ; Malluk sheep 59676 and Merino cross 12193. Total 483027.

**Estimated production figures:** Pashmina 42,000 kgs @ Rs. 1500 per kg: Rs.6.3 crores; Wool 241000 kgs @ Rs.75 per kg: Rs 1.8 crores; Mohair 6000 kgs @ Rs. 75 per kg: Rs 0.05 crores; Meat 1122000 kgs @ Rs.125 per kg: Rs 14.2 crores; Milk 1847685 litres @ Rs.15 per litre: Rs 2.77 crores; Hides and pelts 72500 Nos @ Rs.100 pp: Rs 0.73 crores; Goat guard 18000 kgs @ Rs.20/- per kg: Rs 0.04 crores. Total : Rs 25.89 crores.

**Average fibre (Pashmina)/ animal at Khuril farm:** 209 gms (498 animals) and 273.9 gms (344 animals)

**Average raw pashmina yield per animal ( Khuril) by different age groups 2004-05:** 1. Adult male 395.714; 2.Young male 273.928; 3. Adult female 253.713 and 4. Young female 314.576.

**Average fibre yield /animal ( in field):** 20 years back (gms/animal): pashmina 165 and wool 0.915; 2003-04 (gms./animal) 225 and 1.377.

(The Tibetan average is 300 gms (raw) at the government stations and 180 gms in flocks of private breeders. The difference may be due to difference in the combing technique and also due to the difference in the content of non-fibre matters in the raw material which in the case of Ladakh's material has been found to be as much as 47 per cent).

### LIVESTOCK CENSUS FOR LAST 10 YEARS

Species	98-1999	99-2000	2000-01	2001-02	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08
Pashmina goat	157706	133288	163663	223093	209021	229656	227416	187299	196345	208878
Malra goat	97574	105891	97956	80048	84042	70227	67534	62339	63589	51396
Angora cross	8780	6463	5706	3602	4009	3795	3345	1817	2004	2139
Alpine goat	2141	2082	1928	2186	2454	3644	2763	1867	1967	2441
Jakhrana goat	152	159	182	114	335	626	237	340	-	-
Changluk Sheep	71944	57385	66822	85806	98968	103210	113544	76443	62622	60721
Malluk Sheep	65634	71408	74923	59111	60147	59676	52714	46038	42932	38477
Merino cross	22868	21137	18117	11684	11358	12193	11835	11248	13570	12740
Total	426799	397813	429297	465644	471134	483027	479388	387391	383029	376792

(The table shows a little fluctuation over the years. However the number of goats is increasing after 2005-06 when the "Cashmere" wool price was stabilised as a result of the pashmina de-hairing facility coming into place and

also as a result of the formation and functioning of the Pashmina Growers Cooperative Society. It can also be seen that the number of sheep has declined thereafter).

As per report compiled by the ICIMOD 2000 hectares of land is under fodder production at the moment, in Ladakh. As per estimates the total yield per hectare is 15 metric tonnes while as the records available from the three fodder development sections under Sheep Husbandry Department, Leh at Matho, Stakna and Upshi tell a different story.

The average per hectare production of fodder (dry) over the last four seasons, starting from year 2000, has remained at 16.8 quintals – far below the figure appearing in the ICIMOD report. The average fodder production per hectare in 2008 on 28.4 hectares of prime fodder plot at Stakna Farm was however 7 MT.

The difference can be due to the non-availability of sufficient irrigation water for the fodder development sections of the farms. The fodder plots with the private farmers have assured irrigation facilities and better quality of soil. It can as well be true that the assessment of the ICIMOD team may be on the higher side.

There are 40-42 large, medium and small irrigation projects commissioned in Ladakh of which only one or two can be termed as partially successful. Lot of land is available under the command areas.

As the inclination towards agri-farming is fast going down, fodder production along with horticulture may remain as very viable options for proper utilisation of the command areas. It is said that Igu-phey project alone has 7800 hectares (1,56 lakh kanals) of command area land most of which has been distributed to the people. At the present rate given by the ICIMOD, the area can produce 1.17 lakh MT (1170 lakh quintals) of fodder per year on dry basis.

This quantity can be increased using new and innovative techniques of production.

The Changluk wool has a good market although the production is less. The production size dwindles in view of external factors — draught, disease, pasture conditions and even market trends. The market has started favouring ready-made yarn to raw wool, which is processed traditionally in Ladakh even to this day. In spite of all the factors playing against the local wool of Changthang, the wool prices have remained satisfactory in view of its quality which is best suited to the traditional processing system which demands long stapled wool for efficient spinning.

### **Vulnerabilities /threats**

1. The Changthang rangeland area in Ladakh suffers from physical vulnerabilities due to snow, water, forage shortage which combined

with environmental vulnerabilities do bring about catastrophic situations to the nomads quite often than not.

2. Diseases of livestock, depredation of livestock by wild beasts, calamities e.g. heavy snowfall, draught and pasture shortage make the nomads economically vulnerable.
3. The out-migration of nomads to Leh town has increased to alarming levels. The migration has happened because of lack of facilities and amenities in the nomadic areas. The nomad's concern for the education of his children has also driven him out of his native land. More than 50 per cent of Kharnak nomads have permanently migrated and about 30 per cent of Samad nomads have also migrated to Leh. The migration level has been high from the traditionally nomadic areas as the semi-nomads of Changthang have some land holding and as such a good reason to stay back inside the hamlets. Maximum number of young nomads came out because the Army, trade, travels and transport provided them with alternative means of livelihood. Most of the families, who could afford, have sent their children to distant places in pursuit of education. As such, less number of people are left in Changthang to tend livestock and to sustain the nomadic culture and traditions.
4. A draught situation or a condition of heavy snowfall can give the nomad immense problem and can even wipe out his livestock fortune completely leaving his family economically shuttered.
5. The production level of the famous pashmina wool can come down alarmingly under conditions of forage non-availability. 1962, 1998 and 2008 were years of heavy snowfall and 1994 and 2004 were years of draught. The winter pastures were attacked by locust during 2006-2008 in many places and the nomads had to alter their migration routes and schedules. These resulted in denudation of reserve pasture areas and also led to use of spring pastures ahead of time, leaving nothing for the real spring time when the kids/ lambs are big enough to graze but there is pretty little to graze. Every bad winter brings a little or big doom to the pashmina development sector.
6. The changing agro-economic environment, opening of more trade and new livelihood options, tourism, employment, lack of proper returns from livestock rearing activities, disinclination of the new generation to adopt the traditional livelihood options, lack of policies for conservation of indigenous livestock genetic resources and resultant gradual depletion of indigenous livestock genetic resources are serious problems. The fall-out can be extinction of species,

disappearance of potentially highly valuable genetic material in the population.

7. Loss of animal bio-diversity in the indigenous animal genetic pool.

**What needs to be done for livestock sector:** (a) Increase the moisture level of the soil for good pasture growth in the winter pasture areas; (b) Arrange for bore wells, water reserves tanks, mangers and accessories for ensuring drinking water in the summer, spring and autumn pasture areas for longer stay at the site in order to reduce pressure on the winter reserve pasture areas; (c) Use the huge water and land resources for forage production through efficient utilisation by way of appropriate planning/ projecting; (d) Ask for special Central assistance to the LAHDC, Leh for forage development in order to improve capacity for crisis management under conditions of heavy snowfall, drought and locust damage of pastures; (e) The area of Changthang has to keep on asking for and depending on relief supplies during crisis in absence of a system for fodder reserve. Till such time there should be a system of fodder shifting every year to inaccessible areas to like Kharnak and Tegujung (Korzok) which should be done –crisis or no crisis — and the community must be made to lift the fodder at the landed cost in case there is no subsidy on this quantity of grass from the government. This will save the administration the vagary of transporting a huge volume of fodder at all cost to the areas during minor/ major crisis; (f) Livestock, especially newly born lambs and kids die in thousands during tough winters when it is cold outside and dams are also too weak to nurse their young ones properly. Forage sufficiency will be able to tide over the situation; (g) The local livestock share the pastures with wild animals.

While as the customary rules restrict free will use of the pastures by the local livestock, the wild animals are free to use the precious and scarce winter reserve forage land during summer, placing the local livestock at disadvantage. Ensuring a bountiful pasture every where every time shall be beneficial for both local and wild animals. There are agencies which are ready to do it but only if they are roped in.

*(Concluded)*

*\*The writer is District Sheep Husbandry Officer, Leh.*

## A MOVING TALE

### RAJOURI REMEMBERED

*Amar Nath Saraf*

One can't imagine the misery of those who have lived through the communal bloodshed in 1947. Jammu and Kashmir has been one of the worst sufferers. Its problems were further complicated by the delayed accession. The entire State, barring the Kashmir province, was caught in flames of hatred at that time. A little-known fact is that Muslim *tongawalls* (owners of horse-drawn carts which used to run on what is now known as the Jammu-Srinagar highway these days) who risked their lives on the way to take the Jammu Hindus to safety from their temporary sojourn in the Kashmir Valley were butchered by Hindu fanatics on their arrival at Nagrota at the outskirts of this city. How does one explain this phenomenon?

I was moved when during a trip to Muzaffarabad (the capital of the Pakistan-occupied territory) an elderly Muslim gentleman came to meet me at the hotel where I was staying. He said he had come to know about my presence and wanted me to convey his gratitude to my father Om Prakash Saraf (veteran journalist and publicman of J&K) who had informed his relatives about his survival in 1947. He was in tears as he said it. Thanks to the bus service across the Line of Control he later got an opportunity to visit Jammu city and personally met my father and left a pen for me as a gift.

An extremely welcome feature is that the inhabitants of the State who have actually suffered during that chaotic period have begun writing about their first-hand experiences. Those belonging to Mirpur (once a Hindu-dominated town presently under Pakistan's occupation) are already active. They have brought out a number of books - some of them unfortunately written in haste. On the whole it is truly satisfying that a few members of the highly self-respecting Mirpuri community (the majority of them are in Jammu and the national capital localities of Lajpat Nagar and Amar Colony) have begun recounting their startling knowledge. Many are not being direct which perhaps explains their helplessness in having to face a situation in which they have been unable to take care of weaker members of their families.

However, they are being objective while acknowledging the role of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) stalwart Kidar Nath Sahani and

Muslim Conference leader Sardar Abdul Qayum Khan in preserving basic human values even while adhering to their religious convictions. Of course there is no word of praise for Sardar Ibrahim Khan who, I know from personal experience, was outright communal.

Rajouri (it is a district now but was part of Poonch district in 1947 away from Mirpur) also has undergone turmoil. How did the communal relations get soured in this place? Amar Nath Saraf has done a great job in describing in detail the hell he has gone through then (I wish to make it clear that though we share the same surname we are not relatives. Having lived out of the State for a greater part of my life so far I had, of course, heard of him as a man of integrity). His book "*Rajouri Remembered*" is a historic document. It is a first-hand account of a person who had lived through in circumstances that suddenly went out of his control.

I may particularly refer to three of his observations: (a) "I met Mohan Lal Matyalji and Jagdishji who were RSS leaders in Jammu. I pleaded with them to help stop the killings in Jammu or else our families would be wiped out on the borders. They expressed helplessness"; (b) "Narsingh Dass had long held the conviction which he often voiced among the community that communal ties in the region come under immense strain primarily because of the "*sahukaari*" system, the practice of money-lending whose practitioners were the Hindu Mahajans", and, (c) "prominent leaders in full public view were the first ones to consume poison. Soon women and many men in the crowd fell dead with the deadly poison. The poison soon ran out. There were many more of the living. Women started jumping into the *darya* (river) holding infants to their breasts. Men began to behead their women. Those who did not have weapons were exhorted by their womenfolk to crush their heads with boulders preferring to die at the hands of their loved ones than give themselves up to the marauders who circled the maidan as vultures. Even before the physical occupation of Rajouri the Hindu localities were razed to the ground. There was blood everywhere."

One must congratulate the author for having put together a remarkable book. Clearly, as he himself has said, it would not have been possible without tremendous efforts put in by his daughter-in-law Babli Moitra Saraf, who is with a leading college of Delhi University and has actually written the text (her name figures as translator and editor). Babli could not have paid a better tribute to her father-in-law. She deserves to be complimented. As Saraf himself has said: "I always used to remark to her that it must be some bond in a previous birth that brought her from Bengal into a house from Rajouri as my son's wife. Perhaps she came to tell my story and the story of Rajouri." He should be satisfied that she has superbly handled her assignment. On my part, as a reviewer, I am convinced that nothing can lead us to a better understanding of a unique but controversial Jammu and Kashmir than the inputs provided by its own people. I find it amazing that we tend to rely more on authors who have no practical understanding and tend to go haywire in their assessment. We ought to abandon that perception. "*Rajouri Remembered*" gives yet another reason for doing so. **P.S.**

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Publisher, printer, owner and editor : Pushp Saraf.  
Printed at Vashima Printers Pvt. Ltd., A-12, DDA Shed,  
Okhla Industrial Area, Phase-II, New Delhi-110 020, and  
published from D-17, Press Enclave, Saket, New Delhi-110 017.

Editorial Office : D-17, Press Enclave, Saket, New Delhi-110 017, Ph. : 26866038

**R. No. 72310/99**

**Price : Rs. 50.00**  
**US \$ 5**