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## MAGAZINE

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 1, 2013

INTERNET EDITION : www.dailyexcelsior.com/magazine

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# KAILASH YATRA

**Kaushal Kotwal**

*Kailash Yatra is one of famous pilgrimages in erst-while Doda district.*

*Every year thousands of pilgrims from districts of Chamba, Kathua, Udhampur, Doda, Jammu and out-side states participate in Kailash Yatra which commences on the 14th day after Shravan Purnima. Main yatra starts from Gatha, Bhadarwah. The track from Seoj passes through a spot called as Shank Padar & Ramtund which are known for its religious legends called 'SHAGARAN' (Two stones which exactly resemble the face of Hanuman). It is a huge stone having a mark and an etched line and it is believed to be the spot where the fleeing Vaski Naag' wept while taking rest on the said stone. The Yatra on its way to Kailash is joined by a number of yatras, besides yatras from Chamba and Duggan .*

**After Gow Paeda yatra passes in groups through wild flowers growing over a slope called "Ram Tund". There is a green valley over the peak, having Gujjar huts.**



**Kailash Kund the abode of Lord Vasuki Nag Ji**

somewhere outside. At Gatha, a poor and old woman of Diaden families was living in a hut. She had a cow which was giving 4-5kg of milk daily. This cow was the only means of her living. Suddenly this cow stopped giving milk. This continued for at least 10 days. The old lady became very worried so she hid behind a tree. Suddenly she saw a man who changed into a big snake and started sucking milk from the cow. After some time, the snake disappeared. This shocked the woman. She returned home and became unconscious. That night she saw a dream. The man who had turned into a big snake came into her dream. The man said that he was Vasuki Nag. He said that the place of Gatha had fascinated him. He asked her to make a temple for him at the place. In

the morning, she told the villagers about it. The villagers gathered and decided to build a temple for Vasuki Nag there. This temple is at Gatha Bhadarwah . The temple is 2062 years old and the Diaden family are the pujaris.

The yatra proceeds further on the same route, which, as per legend, was adopted by Shri Vasukinagji to reach Kailash Kund at the time when Garudji challenged him to a fight. Instead of fighting Garudh ji, Shri Vasuki Nag Ji ran away to avoid the fight to keep Garudh's promise which he had made to his mother.

"It is also believed that when Shri Vasuki Naag Ji reached Shankh Padhar he threw his shunkh to get water out of the land for quenching his thirst that is why the spot is named as

Shankh Padhar. He also ate grass which became sweet. Yatris grass blades from this place on the way to Kailash Kund as prasad. Lord Shiva used to live at Kailash Kund with his family. When Vasuki Naag Ji reached there, he prayed to Lord Shiva. Lord Shiva appeared and promised him that Garud Ji cannot attack him there and his is safe. Lord Shiva also offered Vasuki Naag Ji to live there and himself left with his family to Manimahesh in Himachal Pradesh."

On the way to Kailash Kund, yatris shout religious slogans like "Jai bole Vasuki Naag ki etc... Government and NGOs including some local families organize langers at Seeri Baazar Bhaderwah as well as on the way upto Kailash mountains. Some yatris take with themselves tents for night stay. The yatra passes through Seeri baazar and reaches Nalthi village via Sungli. In the middle of the mountain above Nalthi starts a plain path which yatrics cover to reach Hanyieha. It is a charming small plain spot which is believed to have a temple in the past. There is an old spring as well. Here yatrics take rest in the night. People of adjoining villages serve langers to the yatris.

The other day at about noon, yatra reaches "Jiggar Gudh" a small stream in the forest at the base of another hill "Gow Paeda". It is named so because Shri Vasuki Nag ji had turned into a cow while climbing this hill. (Cow is called Gow in Bhaderwah).

After Gow Paeda yatra passes in groups through wild flowers growing over a slope called "Ram Tund". There is a green valley over the peak, having Gujjar huts.

After this yatra reaches "Gan Thuck" a very beautiful spot with the scenic beauty of "Seojdhar" and adjoining areas. This is the spot where Shri Vasuki Nag Ji had converted into a honeybee called "Gan" in Bhaderwah. While others move on to Kailash Kund for the night. On the way yatra comes across two big stones which have a story attached to them. It is believed that there were two "Dev Kanyas" (Daughters of gods) who were collecting flowers and herbs, but they made fun of Shri Vasuki Nag Ji when he was running dead-ly tired. Shri Vasuki Nag Ji got annoyed and cursed them to become stones and they are still in the form of stones which were named as "Shagereene" (Herb collectors).

Yatris take bath in the ice cold water of the Kund and perform pooja of Lord Shiva and Shri Vasuki Naag Ji. Yatra takes about 2-3 days to complete.

The Tourism Development Authority should pay attention towards the development of the periphery of kailash kund and also develop the route of kailash kund so that more and more pilgrims could visit this sacred place.

# JAMMU WOMEN TODAY

**Suman K. Sharma**

Because of its geo-historical conditions, the Jammu region remained under the sway of war- lords for centuries together, and the worst sufferers were women who found themselves at the receiving end of their men's internecine blood-letting. In the society that was of necessity paternalistic, women were relegated to homesteads under the strict code of sathar. Exposure, however, to the world outside, thanks mainly to the not so covert British influence and also the ceaseless stream of migrants thronging to Jammu in the aftermath of the Pakistan-sponsored wars and non-state violence in the state ever since its merger with the Indian Union, have led to emancipation of Dogri women to a considerable extent. Education has also helped.

But how do Jammu women comport themselves in the current milieu? Here is a sampler (all names have been changed to maintain anonymity):

**Seema (19)** lives in a Jammu suburb. She lost her mother at 15 and her father too, some three years later. Her elder sister got married about a year and half ago. Forced by the circumstances to live with the family of her chacha, she is now waiting for her own marriage. Elder to a brother and a sister, she is apprehensive of their future as her own. Seema has studied up to class ten, though she couldn't pass the secondary exam because of the hurdle of mathematics. Asked about her marriage plans, she says her elders (meaning her uncle and aunt, with who she stays) are the ones who will decide who and when to marry. Her ambition in life is to secure a government job and be financially independent.

**Pinki** is in her mid-thirties and a mother of three daughters aged eleven, four and one year. She hails from a remote village located on the LoC. A school drop-out (studied up to class nine) and the youngest of seven siblings (five brothers and two sisters), she was married at seventeen with a Jammu man nearly twice her age. Pinki's under-matric husband is a low-paid employee of Military Engineer Service (MES). Now in his late forties, his greatest worry is his three daughters. Asked why he went for the third child, he said it was for the desire to have a son. But why a son? To carry his name further. Girls do not carry further their father's name? No, they go away to their in-laws. Pinki confided that her husband taunts her in private for having failed to give him a son. Doctors have advised them not to go for another child because Pinki's all three daughters are Caesarian. Pinki is proud of her beautiful and highly intelligent daughters, particularly the eldest one - a sixth grader at a public school - who has always stood first in her classes; but is depressed because of her husband's utterly rude behavior towards

herself and their daughters. Her priority for the daughters is not their early marriage but good education for them.

**Madhu Mahajan (52)**, lives with her husband Ajay Mahajan in a well appointed house of a posh suburb of Jammu. Their two sons are well settled, one in Delhi and the other in Hyderabad. Ajay runs a flourishing business and Madhu, her school. Madhu was a graduate in Humanities when she married Ajay, who was then a bank clerk. Their married life was too confined to contain their big

ancillary businesses. At the time of writing, Ajay wants Madhu to take full charge of the school and let him divert his energies to his other business interests and activities; but Madhu feels she cannot function independently of her spouse.

**\*Rashmi (48)** is an actress who has performed in several tv serials and a couple of films. Married in her teens, just after she had passed higher secondary exam, she is already a grandmother - her daughter having married a



dreams. Madhu took initiative to start a school for young children in the spare room of their small house. Thanks to her diligence and Ajay's ready support, the school grew so big in a couple of decades that Ajay decided to seek voluntary retirement from the bank (he was then in managerial cadre) and devote full attention to the school and

couple of years ago. She lives with her husband - a manager with some private concern - and a son, in a house that the couple has acquired recently. Rashmi says that in the initial years she had to suffer taunts and numerous hardships because of her overriding interest in theatre, but gradually, thanks to the sustained support of her hus-

band and the success she achieved in her career, people have started to respect her. She agrees, though, that adopting acting as a profession in such an orthodox society as the Dogras was a difficult choice and it required all of her will power to make a name for herself in the calling. Asked about her ultimate aim in life, Rashmi says that she wants to make her family happy. To the question whether she has any aim for herself, Rashmi responds with a vague smile.

**Divya (29)** is a vivacious young woman coming from an affluent background. The only daughter of her parents, she had everything a girl could desire: freedom to wear whatever she liked to wear, freedom to eat what she wanted to eat (her parents are vegetarians; she is not), and freedom to acquire proficiency in any discipline of her choice. She graduated in Humanities, did her MBA with distinction and then went for a physical trainers' course at a prestigious institution. Her first job was with a multinational company, of which she was soon fed up. Eventually, she started a gymnasium of her own with father's support and it proved a huge success. Life appeared going too well for Divya till the question came of her marriage. She had someone in mind, but the parents were not too willing as the boy was from a different caste. Instead, the father chose a boy from a well off family of their own caste. It took immense power of persuasion on the part of the parents, but Divya relented at last. The parents spent lavishly on the marriage and the newly-wed shifted to Delhi where the groom had his job. It hardly took a few weeks for the rift between the husband and wife to emerge. Divya's parents as well as her widowed mother-in-law tried their hardest for a patch up. But the affair ended in legal separation of the couple. Divya is back with her parents, trying to revive her gym clientele. She says that her prime responsibility lies towards herself and to her dream of making something out of her life.

It is anybody's guess that most of yesterday's girl-children of Jammu have been nurtured with the regressive thinking that their individuality is subservient to the that of others: father, brothers, husband, in-laws, sons and so on. The subliminal denial of their 'self' seems to be the root cause of their low self-esteem or the total lack of it. Time has come for the parents to treat their daughters not as hostages - or cherished nuggets of gold for that matter (Laadali te main i'yaan rakhi ai/J'iyaan kaagde de bich sunna - I have coddled her so/Like a gold piece wrapped in paper - a Dogri folk song) - but as real persons of flesh and blood who will have to fend for themselves sooner or later in the wide world. As for grown up women, they would do better to unlearn their dependency on men.