

SACRED SPACE

Navreh Mahaotsav

Rajesh Dhar

Navreh, according to the Hindu Calendar, is observed on the first day of 'Shukla Paksha' in the month of 'Chaitra'. It usually falls in the month of March or April of the Gregorian Calendar.

This year, Navreh will be observed on (Wednesday) March 22.

Navreh is the lunar new year which is celebrated in Kashmir and many other parts of the country. This coincides with the first day of the Chaitra (spring) Navratras.

This day finds mention in Rajtarangini and Nilamat Purana of Kashmir and is regarded as sacred in Kashmir as the Maha Shivratri. The celebrated Arab scholar Alberuni has written that Kashmiris celebrate the second of Navratras to commemorate victory of their greatest and famous king--Lalitaditya (8th century) with great festivity and religious gaiety. The first was a festival as the New Year in its own right. And the day before Navreh i.e. March 21 the Indian history records the great contribution in saving the Hindu culture by a Kashmiri Pandit Shreya Bhat as early as the 15th century.

Srivara, the famous poet- historian of mediaeval Kashmir, has also mentioned this Chaitra festival in his Rajtarangini.

It is observed as the New Year's day in Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka (as Ogadi), in Maharashtra and Goa as (Gaudi Parva), by Sindhis as Cheti-Chand and in the northern parts of India as Chaitra Shukla Di i.e. the first day of the lunar fortnight of Chaitra. In Delhi and northern parts of India, parohits in temples release before the assembled devotees the new almanac after morning prayers and dwell upon its highlight.

In Kashmir, the day is celebrated with great enthusiasm and sanctity. It is on the eve of Navreh that the Kulguru of a Pandit family gets a new almanac (nachipatra - Sanskrit: Nakshetra-patri) and an illustrated scroll (Kreel Pach) with a sacred picture of Ma Sharika on it and some sacred verses. Formerly the Nachipatri used to be in the form of a tolled scroll but now it has taken the form of a small booklet known as Jantari. Just one day before Navreh, Kashmiri Pandits in Srinagar used to visit a sacred spring Vichar Nag (downtown) and take a holy dip in its waters to cast off the wintry sloth and impurities. After returning home from Vichar Nag round pieces of Wye herb are taken along with homemade rice powder cakes as prasad before breakfast. In olden times, astrologers and astronomers would assemble here to discuss and prepare a new almanac. May be this is the reason why this place is known as Vichar Nag.

Late in the evening, the housewife gets a big Thali (metal-plate) and fills it up with rice or paddy. In villages, mostly paddy is used. After arranging it nicely, the new almanac and Kreel-pach are placed on the rice. Besides dry flowers, a few fresh flowers are also placed on the rice. Wye, a special weed which resembles arabi in shape and which grows in the marshes and is regarded to be very sacred and pure, is also kept on the thali. Among other things placed on the thali are newly sprouted grass, a little curd, walnuts in odd numbers and their kernels, a pen, inkpot and pen-holders and a pot containing a little salt are placed on the thali alongwith silver and gold coin and a lump of cooked rice in a small pot, a wheat cake and a small bread made of rice powder are also placed on this rice. All these things are arranged aesthetically on this small mound of rice. This Thali is then covered with another metal plate for the night. Formerly, the flowers and herb W'ye used to be provided by a florist who was

known as Push after Pushap, i.e. the flower, and he used to be a Muslim. He was paid in cash and kind on the ensuing New Year day. Now all these things are procured from the market.

Early morning on the New Year day, a boy or a girl gets up at dawn and, after taking the lid off the thali, takes it to the head of the family and his wife and then to others in such a way that every member of the family gets a glimpse of the things kept in the plate and looks into the mirror as the first thing in the morning. This signifies as prayer for food, wealth and knowledge in the coming year. The bearer of the plate gets a rupee or more from every member of family.

Every member picks up a few walnuts kept in the thali and drops them in the river, where he goes to take a bath. This seems to be a thanks giving affair

that the people have come out of the dreary wintry cold and its allied ordeals safe and sound as the Maharashtrians do when they drop coconuts into the sea on Rakshabandhan day which is turbulent during the rainy season. After a bath and donning new clothes and a new sacred thread, Hindus



in the city throng temples, especially the Hari Parbat which is Shakti shrine known as Chakreshwari. Later on, the head of the family offers turmeric coloured rice prepared in ghee known as Tahri to Ma Sharika, the principal deity of Chakreshwari which is afterwards distributed as Prasad among all the family members.

From this day, Nav Durga Puja commences in Kashmir.

On Navreh, sumptuous dishes are prepared and friends and relatives who come to offer greetings are also entertained. Newly wedded brides go to their homes donning new clothes, and carry a pot of curd, bread, sweets, etc as these are thought to be auspicious. New brides and youngsters are given some money by their elders.

According to mythology, Lord Shiva created the Universe on Navreh. On the third day, His Consort (Parvati) paid a visit to Her parent's home 'Malyun'. So, all Kashmiri married women go to their 'Malyun' for an hour or two, conveying good wishes for the new year, and then return to their homes. That is 'Zang Tri'.

Meanwhile, this year, Sanjeevani Sharda Kendra (SSK) Anand Nagar, Bohri, Jammu will be celebrating 3-day 'Navreh Mahaotsav 2023' on March 21, 22 and 23 with a pledge to leave no stone unturned in ensuring peace and harmony in the pious land of Kashmir.

While dedicating day-1 of celebration i.e. March 21, I salute Tyaag (Sacrifice) of Shreya Bhat in making huge sacrifices for preserving our culture and day-3 of celebration i.e. March 23, I salute Shaurya (Valour) of Lalitaditya in defeating Turkey and making the day Vijay Divas and March 22 as 'Sankalp Divas', reads the pledge.

Self introspection

Why it is important

Arun Kumar Gupta

The word self-introspection seems to be a very simple word, which we must have heard very frequently. However, in our day-to-day lifestyle, a person does not perform his activities according to these words, thus, the result is that the life of the person does not progress.

Introspection means looking at yourself, looking at your life, looking at your behaviors, looking at your speech, looking at your thoughts, looking at your rituals, and comparing all these with rishi munis, teachers, gurus, acharyas and feeling the difference between the humans and these noble people. The act of bridging this gap while keeping in mind the teachings of these venerated people and our actions are termed as Introspection.

There is a great deal of progress in life. This is especially in the spiritual field which we can also call an infallible weapon. This is similar to Parasmani which you may have heard. In fact, Parasmani is not an object, but it is believed that the Parasmani with which it is attached becomes gold. This introspection is like parsmani. In the olden days, India was also called as a Parasmani country as whosoever came in its contact, became gold.

Nowadays, a condition of the person (most of the persons) is that they are not ready to know their activities by closing their eyes. When a person closes his eyes, panic starts, because the misdeeds come to the fore, what he has done, what he is doing and is going to do. All these three types of bad tendencies come in front of him, he gets scared and leaves. He is clearly aware of all these bad tendencies. That he is doing wrong, Rishi Dayanand has clearly written in his book Satyarth Prakash. "As soon as you close your eyes, you will know that today you have stolen, lied, raised wrong thoughts. I have slandered, harmed, insulted, accused, all of this is now known."

That's why this person thinks that he is very intelligent. By stopping the negative actions that come to the fore, that's why they stopped seeing and stopped introspection but this style of the people is not good. The instructions God has given to the sages, every aspect of life especially the spiritual without inspection and test, a person cannot achieve progress. One cannot know those sanskaras which make a person dance and go towards misdeeds. Knowing them as harmful, there is no feeling to stop them. Doesn't find a way to destroy them, doesn't make effort to cure them, doesn't do penance, because it knows that the way or the level at which today's man is leading life, he accepts that it is right.

Such a person believes himself that what he was speaking, thinking, and doing was right, in that there was no need

for improvement. Such a person behaves very angrily and considers himself everything. Lies fifty times a day, but considers himself right. He uses a lot of violence, malice, backbiting, and blasphemy, yet he considers himself right. He is very much attached to the objects of the senses, he is livid, and he is full of desires, yet he considers himself right.

No huge amount of money is required to upgrade ordinary life. It is not like if we have 10-20 50 lakh rupees only then our standard of living will improve. There is no need to read any grammar, Upanishad, or closed books to make life advanced, no one can read all the books. There is no need for any great force to make life advanced, holy, pure, and fearless. It is not that if one reads all the Vedas then one will lead a better life. A religious pious person, a contented person, a happy person, or a contented person can become an ideal person by knowing, conducting, and understanding the general rules and conducting them properly.

In general, we know that we have two types of lives, one is internal and the other is the life we take from others, his clothes are like this, his house is like this, his language is like this, your car is like this, his bank account is like this, the degree is like this, how much he has. All life is apart from this, there is an inner life whom only God knows or that person himself knows. We ourselves know how many times a feeling of fear, anger, and jealousy has arisen in us today. The wife cannot know the mind of the husband and the husband cannot know the mind of the wife. The son does not know the matter, the brother cannot know about the brother, how many disputes arose in the brother's mind, nor can we know. The inner life is more important than life itself.

Any person whose life is different from the outside is considered evil, a wicked and bad man. Mansi Ekam, Varchis Ekam, Karmani Ekam Mahatamneyam - A person who is similar on the inside as well as the outside is considered to be a Saint i.e. Mahapurush, as his actions match his words and vice versa.

When a person comes to the spiritual world and progresses slowly, he comes to know that God is seeing, hearing, and knowing me everywhere, then he starts thinking about his deeds. Thinks about what deeds he has been doing in the last 10-20-30 years, then the deeds done come to the fore, and thinking about those black deeds, he cries and cries. Seekers, Without introspection, defects are not detected and further defects are not prevented. When it is known that the wrong actions will be rewarded with wrong results, punishment, sorrow, then there will be a break in future misdeeds. This is the only way to bring improvement in life and go closer to the Supreme Lord.

BOOK-REVIEW

Duggar history in Dogri

O P Sharma

Name of the Book: *Jammu Padashaahi*
(A Complete history of Jammu in Dogri language)
Author: TR Magotra 'Sagar'
Publisher: Highbrow Publications, Bari Brahamana, Jammu.

This 560-page book entitled 'Jammu Padashaahi' in Dogri language is the result of long and serious study by the author. It is authentic and authoritative historical work on rulers and the people as also rich cultural heritage of this part of the country.

In an interview with the historian Mr Sagar told me that 'the fascination for writing of Dogra history, was inculcated in me by village elders who were repository of anecdotes related to Dogra kings and always appreciated their pro-people policies. But their knowledge was mostly related to the period of Maharaja Gulab Singh. I had to put very hard work and studied old historic documents, visited numerous historical places and met knowledgeable persons for preparing this research based book. I may add that it is for the first time an authentic voluminous book in Dogri has been brought out for the benefit of the readership interested in glorious past'.

Although Maharaja Gulab Singh unified all the three regions of the State into one entity and extended its boundaries up to Tibet, Maharaja Ranbir Singh consolidated the power and put it on fast track of development. While Maharaja Pratap Singh's period is full of relative controversies, Maharaja Hari Singh's period is known for reforms and modernizing the State. Sufficient record is available of this period; but what was before that period; the information available is very limited. Some historians in English have tried their best to upgrade, but history is based on concrete evidence and needs more research.

Bold Venture

Most of the people trace history of Dogra kings from Jambo Lochana and think rule of only one dynasty but from the perusal of genealogies / records it seems there were many dynasties who ruled this part of the country.

Rajdarashani by Ganesh Dass Wadhwa deals in some details with the history of Jammu prior to Maharaja Gulab Singh. From the perusal of these genealogies of ruling class, it appears that from time to time rulers of different dynasties ruled this part of country. Besides Lochans; there were Pandava, Kol, Gupt, Rai, Yaksha, Dhar Dev, Sikh rule and thereafter Singh/Dogra dynasty.

While writing Kashmir history many classic works are available in Sanskrit which have enriched the historical accounts; but at that time sufficient information/record was available to them. Later many valuable records were destroyed by fanatics. Some names/deeds of kings perished/missing from the record but Kalhana was able to trace some of them from Nilmata Purana and other records. The Persian historians of Sultans also took the thread from Kalhana and compiled several accounts in style then in vogue. Their works have provided very useful information about Jammu Kings and people also.

And these Persian historians mostly wrote on the basis of translations of Sanskrit works of Joanaraja, Shrivara and Shuka'. The work of Joanaraja & Shrivara seems to be very authentic as both were having the status of equal to ministers. Thus it appears their Sanskrit works have given valuable mention of Jammu region and its surrounding rulers, its people and places.

From ancient times, this part of Jammu region was part of upper Madra Desha and its capital was Sialkot. Many times Jammu was controlled by the kings from this capital. In old records Sialkot is recorded as Sakala or Sagala. An archaeologist (Javed Iqwal) in his book has stated that in ancient times some Unani kings have also ruled over Jammu but evidence given by him is very weak. The recent finds of Harappa remains and artifacts belonging to Mourayan, Kushan, and Gupta period at Akhnoor have added new dimensions to its character but no such ancient sites have ever been traced in proper Jammu area. Old record also indicates that at many times capital of Jammu kingdom was at Babbapur (now known as Babor). Some work has been done by Archaeology Department at this place but I have no knowledge whether any historian was involved in this research/search or not.

Ancient record shows that there was a place called Bahusthali. Kalhana and Bilhana both Sanskrit scholars from Kashmir have given some references about Bahusthali. And kings of Bahusthali have close relations with their Kashmir counterparts through some marriage contacts. To me, it appears that at that time Bahusthali or Bahunagri (Bawaa, Bahu) was the capital of this region, still there is no mention of Jammu or Jamboo in ancient records. But Persian writers always mentioned BahuQila (fort) as Jammu kingdom in their works. And Kashmiri Sanskrit writers always mentioned it as Madra Desha. Up till Guru Govind's time Jammu was known as Madra Desha.

Strangely Kalhana, Joanaraja and Srivara have nowhere mentioned of Jammu, they always referred it as Madra Desha; still some valuable information about Jammu Rajas have been given by them. It seems that they were not aware of Jammu.

There were many small countries in Madra Desha region. During king Kalsa's reign (1063-1089AD) eight kings from hill principalities participated in a conference in Kashmir to chalk out a common strategy to fight unitedly against foreign Muslim invaders. The kings who participated in that conference were: 1. Kirti (the ruler of Baddapur perhaps Babbapura/Babour; 2. Asata or Jasat (king of Champa or Chamba; 3. Kalasa, (Tukkaa's son) lord of Vallapura (Balavar); 4. Sangrampala king of Rajapuri/Rajouri; 5. Utakarsha, Lohar's (Poonch) ruler; 6. Sangata, the ruler of Urasha; 7. Gambhir Singh chief of Kandha Desh; and 8. Uttam Raj, the ruler of Kasthvata (Kishtwar). Although name of Baddapura/ Babbapura figures in this list but there is no mention of Jammu king/kingdom.

The Rajadarashani contains some details of history of Jammu and north-western Punjab till the rise of Gulab Singh, it narrates important events of Jammu region. Gulabnama is comprehensive biography of Gulab Singh. Ganesh Dass Wadhwa (writer of Rajdarshani) seems to have taken up his research work independently on his own and whatever information available to him has been incorporated in his work.

While translating the Sanskrit works of classic writers Dr. Raghunath Singh former Member Parliament and Convener of Parliament Committee on Kashmir Affairs of that time (1960s) has enriched the history of this Jammu (Kashmir). Not only through translation works, but he has written/composed his own original Rajataranginis' of Mughal, Afghan, Sikh and Dogra period. This way he has done great service to our state. Writer of Jammu Padashaahi has benefitted himself from these classic works and tried his best to put the record straight.

The book is well designed by the publisher thus deserves good word. This informative book is very useful for academicians, scholars, students and in fact none and all.

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ART & CULTURE

Kathak dance and creativity

**Shivani Kapoor,
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Art is a spontaneous and immortal reflection of one's infinite consciousness. Art is such a timeless expanded expression of human psychological powers where psychic consciousness melts and merges into spiritual consciousness; and becomes one commune, which is beyond the five senses. Art is an imaginary vibratory thrill which stimulates the spirit, mind and circulates to every 'Nano' particle of body; which creates a divine 'synchronization' in humanitarian unit. Art is such a multidimensional, spiritual, psychic and social phenomenon, having no categorized language, caste, color and creed, it's an independent element which unites the society under the essence of Aesthetical virtues of rhythm, beats, sounds, colours, personified emotions and calculative aligned movements, which creates a magical culture and such a divine language which can communicate to the higher realms of every existing spirit beyond lands, species, societies, communities and every possible limitations.

According to John Dewey, an art is a quality that permeates an experience, it is not, saved by a figure of speech, the experience itself. Aesthetic experience is always more than aesthetic. "Kathak" is a versatile form of aesthetical activity. 'Kathak' an Indian Classical Dance form, literary means 'A story telling vibratory, musical, psycho, physical gestural constitution. It is a combination of two fold emotional personified representation; aesthetically controlled and co-ordinated by bodily and facial expressive movements in a poetic and musical directed manner. Kathak is a spiritual, religious, social, folk-lore; storytelling phenomenon with the abstract virtues of compassion, Benevolence and empathy in a rhythmical, vibrational, calculative and aesthetical moves in one alignment both as physical and psychic levels with absolute awareness, designed by impulsive language of 'Bhaav-Bangimaas', mudras, rasas with infinite dimensions directed by rhythm, beats, poetic verses, taals and raagas.

'Kathak' is a Transcendental, Divine blessing of supreme power not only to human civilization but to every living constitution; as Kathak Dance is having its own language of "Love", "Aesthetics" and Catharsis, beyond the time lines of physical existence in supreme existence itself. 'Kathak' an Indian Classical Dance; A colorful and unique formulation of personified emotional communi-

cation which touches the subtlest dimensions of human spirits. Kathak enhances and evolves the human creativity by altering the human psychic behavior in an aesthetic fluency by purifying the 'chakras', detoxifying the humans whole organic somatic system at physiological and metabolic levels, releases happy hormones like 'Serotonin' and 'Dopamine' (As per researched study by psycho-scientist Director of Dance Psychology Laboratory of the University of Hertfordshire Dr. Peter Lovatt) which reduces the stress and generates a 'psychophysiological' state of well-being; transforming the psychic powers to 'Alpha' state of consciousness which leads the creative quotient of dancer to absolute extent.

During dance, sensory motor nervous system, develops so refined attunement as whole psychophysiological constitution is guided and controlled by beats, rhythms, facial expressions, poetic contexts and



aligned body movements to such an aesthetic extent, which creates superior levels of concentration and attention skills effortlessly. An unmeasurable fluency generates at the level of biological and psychological aspects which elevates the cognitive skills, perceptive and intuitive tendencies in resultant, evolves the human creativity in versatile dimensions. This is the horizon of creativity; where dance and dancer attain one consciousness. It's a visionary analytical approach by practicing an 'Indian Classical Dance' form; one can clean psychological debris by performing the spiritual and religious contexts; which can immediately transforms one's psychic consciousness to superior creativity which leads to the final liberation...The 'Moksha' itself.