

## **Ah! Kachroo Sahib**



The Editorial Board, 'Milchar' announces with deep regret, the sad demise of its seniormost member Shri J.N.Kachroo on 14th September 2006 at Mumbai. Shri Kachroo Sahib's departure from the scene has been a great loss to the Mumbai biradari in general and the Kashmiri Pandits' Association in particular.

Shri Kachroo Sahib got associated with 'Milchar' in the year 2001, when its Editorial Board was re-constituted to bring in professionalism in its publication. Apart from the valuable guidance he provided to the Board, Kachroo Sahib initiated the column 'From the Pages of History' in 'Milchar' in January 2001 and continued it till August 2005 when he could not concentrate much on writing due to his ill-health. His contribution to refurbish the journal has been enormous. The vacuum created by his departure as far as 'Milchar' is concerned, can not be filled for a long time to come.

Apart from his contribution to Milchar, Shri Kachroo Sahib was instrumental in launching the Project Zaan, a Kashmiri literary platform in the year 2000 in Mumbai. It was actually in late 1998 that some enthusiastic members of Lalla Ded Educational and Welfare Trust, under the inspiring guidance of Shri Kachroo Sahib, conceived the idea of organising some sort of 'Story-telling' or 'Quiz Contest' in Kashmiri language to inculcate interest in our youngsters in their mother-tongue. Initially, one page hand-outs were released along with the Milchar, giving tit-bit information about our culture, language, birth place etc. to our youngsters. These hand-outs created interest not only in our young generation, but also in the senior members of the community. It was here when Shri Kachroo Sahib and his team discussed the blue print of the project with Kashmiri Pandits' Association for the larger interest of the community, and KPA decided to give logistic support to this laudable effort. Consequently, on 30th

April, 2000, Project Zaan was re-launched as a joint project of Lalla Ded Educational & Welfare Trust and the Kashmiri Pandits' Association, Mumbai.

The periodical 'Hand-outs' ultimately gave way to the 'Information Digest Series', of which 5 volumes have been published till date. This also includes the publication of 'Basic Reader for Kashmiri Language', the first of its kind in the country incorporating the Standardised Devanagari-Kashmiri Script, in March 2001, . The 'Reader' was further revised and republished in June 2004.

From the start, Shri Kachroo Sahib had the young boys and girls of the community in mind, who he wanted to be in touch with their language and their roots. So he conceived the idea of conducting quiz programmes on the yearly basis, where these youngsters could recite stories, poems, riddles etc. in Kashmiri, and also answer question related to Kashmir and Kashmiri, based on the information given in 'Information Digests'. Thus started the 'Quiz Contests' of Project Zaan, which were held year after year, initially for only youngsters, and finally for seniors as well. First such Quiz Contest was held at Kashyap Bhawan on 30 April 2000 at the re-launch of Project Zaan itself. With the help of Shri Sunil Fotedar of Texas, USA, the Project was also put on internet in the year 2001.

Though the Project Zaan could not do well during the last couple of years mainly due to lack of funds, it was hoped that the things would move in the right direction once the revised blue-print, which Shri Kachroo Sahib had lately thought upon, was ready. But the Almighty did not allow us company of Shri Kachroo Sahib for long and the Project got yet another setback.

In keeping with the hopes and aspirations of Shri Kachroo Sahib, this is the right time that the organisers revive the Quiz Contests, induce more interest in our youngsters and add more volumes to the Information Digest Series. Since the Project Zaan has already some capital for introducing prizes for various events, it would be worthwhile, if some sort of Award is also started in the name of Shri Kachroo Sahib. It is hoped that the organisers will not find the community wanting and many well-wishers will come forward to finance the Project. If such a thing happens, it will be a humble tribute to the great personality of Kachroo Sahib on behalf of the Mumbai biradari.