

Editorial : M.K.Raina
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Involving Youth

Recently, we have had a Cricket Tournament organised by the Kashmiri Pandits' Association at the Navi Mumbai Sports Association (NMSA) Grounds, Vashi, in which 4 Teams namely Chenab, Dal, Wular and Jhelum participated. The young (and not so young) players showed great amount of enthusiasm in and outside the field, not only in playing but also in making necessary arrangements for the Tournament to complete in a disciplined manner.

I am not very much interested in the game of cricket, having watched the legendary sixer by Miandad off Cheten Sharma's last ball in India-Pakistan match in Sharjah. Not only India lost the match, but we KPs had to cough up large amounts of money towards week long celebrations by Muslim youth and also meet worst kind of humiliation at their hands, back in the Valley then. Here, I went to the ground basically to register my presence and be part of the community-organised programme, but the friendly contest proved something to be remembered and photographed frame by frame, which I had no hesitation to do. I enjoyed the game very much.

Being here and watching our youth in action, paid me in one more way. It gave me a message, an encouraging one at that, as far as my interest in the popularising Kashmiri culture and Kashmiri language among the youngsters is concerned. It posed a question in my mind why not involve and encourage the same youngsters in conducting Quiz programmes across Mumbai on Kashmir's Culture, History, Geography, Saints and Seers, Historical and Religious Places etc. We used to conduct such programmes named 'Zaan Festival' under Project Zaan in mid and late 90's, where we gave away Awards in different categories in different age-groups. This Project however got shelved due to pre-occupation of organisers and sad departure from the scene of great people like Onkar Aima Sahib, J.L.Manwati Sahib, J.N.Kachroo Sahib and Shanta Kapoor Ji.

While editing Haarvan (Project Zaan's Net Magazine) and Milchar (earlier editions), I had introduced columns like 'Your Questions on Kashmir', 'Your Own Page', 'Peculiar and Uncommon Kashmiri Words and Phrases', 'Question Bank' etc which initially got good response from our readers but had to be shelved or deferred indefinitely because of lukewarm response from the community eventually. I was sure, our culture and our language was going to die an unsung

death. But this Cricket Tournament changed a lot of my misgivings and aroused a positive thought in me.

I talked to members of the KPA Youth Forum later at the Sharda Sadan, Kharghar where arrangements for celebrating the Navreh and Zanga-trai functions were being made. Some youngsters were in action here as well. I was amazed to see many of them conversing in fluent Kashmiri. One young boy even asked me if I continued to hold Kashmiri classes at Vasai, because he and some of his friends wanted to learn this language. A couple of days earlier, some young boy had put a query on Facebook, asking if there are any arrangements in Mumbai to teach Kashmiri. After my interaction with the youth, I was forced to change my earlier view. Our youngsters, though not giving much importance to speaking in Kashmiri language, do want to know more and more about Kashmir, its history and its geography. This is definitely an encouraging sign. I am in contact with some of our youngsters in Mumbai and Pune in connection with the revival of Project Zaan and it may not be too far in the future when we will be able to organise Zaan Festivals again with participatory and logistic support from the community youth.

I would like to thank KPA, Mumbai and congratulate members of its BOT, Rajen Ji in particular for successfully organising the Cricket Tournament as part of Navreh Function this year, thus encouraging me to work on revival of Project Zaan, my pet project, which used to be envy of many Kashmiri organisations in other cities of our country. I am sure, with the active participation of these enthusiastic youngsters, we shall be able to run this project afresh with renewed zeal and vigour and this will become a role model project for others to emulate. The project will once again serve the community in informing them of the richness of our culture, the peculiarities of our traditions and rituals and in teaching the inquisitive young members of the community our sweet mother-tongue, Kashmiri.

