

RAM CHANDRA KAK: AN INTELLECTUAL WITH INTEGRITY

The Last *Bhatta* Prime Minister of Jammu & Kashmir

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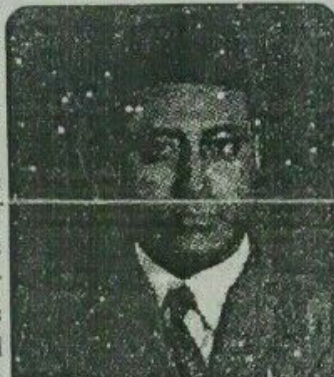
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It cannot be asserted with any show of plausibility and reason that intellectual and spiritual qualities of a community have very little to do with the political destiny of its people. Hence, the loss of a deserving political fate in the present times, that Kashmiri Pandits are in at the moment, should not be made a ground of decadence of values and attainments achieved by its past generations. But, yet, through a concatenation of circumstances, political subjection has deprived the Kashmiri Pandits of alertness and curiosity, and who as a result have come to a tragic position of some bankruptcy through an ignorant denial to itself of its own inheritance.

And it is perhaps for this reason alone that one can have some kind of justification to the obscured memories which the Kashmiri Pandit community carry about the outstanding attainments of Ram Chandra Kak – an intellectual with integrity and who incidentally was also the last *Bhatta* Prime Minister of Jammu & Kashmir State. Ram Chandra Kak was pre-eminently a scholar and a politician. As a Kashmiri Pandit, I consider the personality and achievements of Ram Chandra Kak as a gift of the premier rank to our past history.

Born in 1893 A.D. in the *Gautam Gotra* of the *Razdan (Rajanaka)* clan, Ram Chandra Kak's ancestors originally belonged to the ancient village of Hushkapura who later settled in Utpalapura. In more recent times the Kak clan had their redneck in Zaldagar and Baghe Sundar localities of Srinagar while R.C. Kak's own household lived in the Gurgari Mohalla from where they moved to live in the modern day up-town area of Kakaserai in Srinagar. In his later life, Ram Chandra Kak built a private house for himself at Dara near Harvan in Srinagar. He was a descendant of Pandit Sunda Kak through the lineage of Pandit Govind Kak whose sons were named Keshav Lal Kak, Srikanth Kak and Prithvi Nath Kak. Pandit Keshav Lal Kak, born in



Pandit Ram Chandra Kak

1873 A.D., lived in the Gurgari Mohalla of Srinagar where R.C. Kak was born as the second of his five children, (four sons and a daughter) named Amar Nath, Ram Chandra, Niranjan Nath, Prem Nath and Shubri Devi (Dhar), Durga Bazi, Subhadra

By profession Pandit Keshav Lal Kak was a money lender who also ran many trading activities including those in cloth, paper granery and other land produce. Though a businessman by profession, yet Pandit Keshav Lal Kak had deep inherent interest in learning Persian and Sanskrit. He learnt Persian at a very young age under the tutelage of many eminent Persian scholars of Srinagar, namely, Pandit Veer Kaul Jan, Pandit Kailas Kaul Jan, Pandit Govind Kaul Jan and Pandit Madhava Kaul Jan who ran a *Maktaba* in the *Aali Kadai* locality of Srinagar. As a result, in a span of only few years, he became an accomplished Persian scholar having studied most of the important extant Persian texts then prevalent in Srinagar. This was followed with his learning Sanskrit from Pandit Madhav Kak, my great grandfather and

Pandit Hara Bhat Shastri and thus soon became well versed in the study of *Katantra Kaumudhi*, *Amara Kosa* and *Raghuvamsha*. From his very childhood, under the affectionate care of his mother, Bhageshwari Devi, and father Pandit Keshav Lal, Ram Chandra Kak showed signs of high talent and ability to work hard. Ram Chandra Kak graduated in 1913 A.D. from Sri Pratap College, Srinagar, then affiliated to Punjab University, Lahore. However, while still a young child, Ram Chandra was married at the raw age of 8 in 1901 A.D. to Janaki Devi, daughter of Pandit Lakshman Joo Tikku, the first qualified engineer of Kashmir who was drafted to work on the construction of Jhelum Valley Road at the beginning of the last century in Kashmir. From this marriage, the couple begot four sons named Narendra, Brijendra, Surendra and Khemendra whose Yagneopavit ceremony was performed by them in 1922 A.D. at their Gurgari

3 daughters

Munshi

administrator (NOT politician)

① five and a daughter (Shailendra died young and she died in infancy)

Mohalla residence. Regrettably, Janki Devi died at a very young age of 34 years in 1928 A.D. as a result of long battle with tuberculosis, a ravaging disease prevalent in Kashmiri during those days. Many years later in 1935 A.D., Ram Chandra re-married his life long companion, Mary Margret, who in fact outlived him. After her marriage to Ram Chandra, she was affectionately called Ben Ded in the Kak clan. She turned herself so much into a Kashmiri woman by picking all the finer points of the Pandit traditions and even learnt Kashmiri language to make its full spoken use as well, no mean achievement by any standard. After graduating in 1913 Ram Chandra Kak was soon identified as a highly deserving candidate to undergo training in archaeology while he was still pursuing his M.A. Course. Between 1914 and 1919, Ram Chandra Kak spent five years in India taking training under the legendary archaeologist Sir John Marshall, the then Director General of the Archaeological Survey of India by closely working under his incomparable direction and critical but kindly eye at Taxilla, Sanchi and other places."

After finishing this training under Sir John Marshall, Ram Chandra Kak was appointed as Superintendent and later promoted as the Director of the newly formed Archaeology and Research Department in Jammu & Kashmir State. He directed the local Archaeological Survey for 10 years between 1919 and 1929, a term which was attested by "improved state of preservation of the ancient buildings in Kashmir". During this time he also prepared a scientific catalogue of the collections in the Sri Pratap Museum, Srinagar. As a result of his distinguished services to the cause of archaeology, the Government of India proposed to take him permanently into the Archaeological Survey of India but the proposal was not agreed upon by the Government of Jammu & Kashmir State and the move was dropped. Among the notable publications of Ram Chandra Kak in the field of Kashmir Archaeological Survey are *Antiquities of Marv-Waddhwan* (1924); *A Handbook of Archaeological and Numismatic Sections of Sri Pratap Museum, Srinagar* (1924); *Antiquities of Bimbar-Rajauri* (1926); *An Outline of History of Kashmir* (1927); *References in Kashmir: Education and Services* (1928) which was followed by his magnum opus, the *Ancient Monuments of Kashmir*, published by The India Society, London, in 1933. During his tenure as the Director of Archaeology and Research in Kashmir, Ram Chandra Kak also held the

dual charge as Curator of the Sri Pratap Museum, Srinagar. While still serving the State in this position, he was also appointed as the Librarian of Maharaja Hari Singh's private Royal Library that housed more than 275 Sanskrit manuscripts and 800 rare works prepared with the assistance of Pandit Hara Bhat Shastri. It was published from Poona in 1927. Commending his epic book, *the Ancient Monuments of Kashmir*, Sir Francis Younghusband records in the Foreword of the book, "It has been written by my friend Pandit Ram Chandra Kak", and in the introduction to the same work, eminent French archaeologist, A. Foucher attests, "It seems almost miraculous that after a single generation one of their (read Kashmiri Pandits) descendants (read Ram Chandra Kak) is able to write in English a work so judicially critical on the antiquities of his country. But the miracle is explained—let us add this to spare the author's personal modesty—first by exceptional intellectual qualities of the race; then by excellent teaching now offered at the Government College of Srinagar affiliated to the Punjab University; and lastly by the five years of archaeological training (1914-1919) which Mr. R.C. Kak spent in India under the incomparable direction of Sir, John Marshall."



Mary Margret Kak

With these pioneering archaeological works in Kashmir, Ram Chandra Kak's research threw light on the earliest period of Kashmir art and history from 6th century onwards, the most remarkable results of which came from his work in 1925 at Harwan near the famous Shalimar Garden in Srinagar. The discoveries made by him here included the finding of foundations of old temples belonging to the 3rd and 4th century and large courtyard of terracotta tiles with features of Central Asian influence. The brief results of this work were, however, first published by R.C. Kak in the illustrated London News in October 1925 and only later in greater details with profuse illustrations in his much acclaimed work, the *Ancient Monuments of Kashmir*. In the same year, Ram Chandra Kak also made a pilgrimage to the famous sacred shrine of Sharada accompanied by his father, Pandit Keshav Lal Kak, a highly revered Pandit, who visited their family, named Tota Kak and Pandit Hara Bhat Shastri.

Not only did Ram Chandra Kak come in contact with the European archaeological giants like Young-husband, Foucher and Marshall but during his tenure as the Director of State Archaeology and Research in Kashmir, he came in contact with classical Sanskrit

orientalists like Professor Maurice Winternitz of the Prague University, Czechoslovakia. It was in 1924 that Maurice Winternitz visited Kashmir in search of procuring many extant versions of *Mababharata* manuscripts for use in the preparation of a critical edition of the great epic of India—the *Mababharata*. In this task, Winternitz's efforts came to success mainly through the efforts of Professor Nityanand Shastri, my grandfather. It was during this visit that Winternitz also came in contact with Pandit Ram Chandra Kak to seek copies of many *Mababharata* manuscripts then lying in the State Archaeology Department under the latter's control. The help rendered by R.C. Kak and Professor Nityanand Shastri to Professor Maurice Winternitz bore fruit with the publication of the first critical edition of the *Mababharata* in 1927 by the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, Poona. — a project that was in fact initiated in Europe from Prague by Winternitz himself. Today the history of this literary fact remains preserved in the line, "How is Pandit Ram Chandra Kak? If you see him, please remember me to him" that Maurice Winternitz wrote to Nityanand Shastri in a letter dated December 23, 1924.

Ram Chandra Kak's other classical contribution to the ancient history of Kashmir came in the form of the help which he rendered to the publication of the first European critical edition of the 6th century cultural text of Kashmir, the *Nilamata-purana* by the famous Dutch scholar K.de. Vreese, which he prepared under the able guidance of Professor J.Ph. Vogel of the Leiden University, Holland in 1938. Among the various manuscripts which formed the basis of this critical edition was the one owned by Pandit Ram Chandra Kak. It was made available to K.de.Vreese by Sir Aurel Stein who obtained it with the help of Professor Nityanand Shastri. In securing the desired assistance for K.de. Vreese, wrote Aurel Stein to Nityanand Shastri in a letter dated August 17, 1938: "There is one more request. In the preface of the Lahore edition of the *Nilamata* it is stated that there are two manuscripts of the *Nilamata* which were written before Pandit Sahib Ram prepared his text and which do not contain the blanks of the old *Sarada* copies. One of these manuscripts is said to be the property of Pandit Srikantha Rajanaka and the other of Pandit Ram Chand Kak. Could you kindly find out whether these two manuscripts can be lent to Dr. Dee. Vreese. I should be prepared to guarantee that they will be faithfully returned. But I am sorry I am too busy to write myself and enquire about these manuscripts. I am sure, you will be ready to render this service to *Sarada Devi* in the same way as you used to do when answering enquiries of Sir George Grierson."

However, Ram Chandra Kak's archaeological career was short lived as the State was constrained to make

use of his exceptional administrative capabilities in other directions. As a result he was given secretarial and administrative duties under the Jammu & Kashmir Government. In turn, he became first a Chief Secretary in 1934 followed by his appointment as Inspector General of Customs & Excise in 1935. A few years later he was made the Political Advisor to Maharaja Hari Singh in 1938 that culminated in his appointment as the Minister-in-Waiting to the Maharaja. This followed with his next appointment as Army Minister and finally the Prime Minister of Jammu & Kashmir State between 1945 to 1947. Though his last posting as the Prime Minister was historically quite significant but it also brought a bag of mixed destiny for him.

While R.C. Kak's pinnacle of the illustrious career was reached in his appointment as the Prime Minister of Jammu & Kashmir State in 1945, it was also marred by a personal tragedy in his private family life. It struck him in the form of the death of one of his sons, namely, Khemendra, who served the Royal Indian Air Force during the British Rule as a fighter pilot. During his short career in the force, he had earned distinction during the Burma Operations. For the exemplary services rendered in the war, Khemendra was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross (DFC) by the British Establishment. But much regrettably in the same year (1945) the promising life of this son of Ram Chandra Kak was cut short in an air crash while flying his fighter aircraft in peace-time. The tragic accident took place over the township of Risalpur in Battishah in the North Western Frontier Province, now in Pakistan.

R.C. Kak was distinctly proud of this son of his. He even thought of requesting the Maharaja to appoint Khemendra as the pilot of his newly acquired private plane." Says Vijay Wattal, "the proudest expression of this feeling, Ram Chandra himself has confided to my father (Pandit Nand Lal Wattal, a veteran journalist of yester-years) sometime before his son's death in an air crash", stating that "never have I felt so proud than when Khemendra was invited to the Reception Lunch which the Maharaja hosted this year (read 1945) in honour of the visiting British Army Commander General Auchinlec."

But the loss of the son consumed by death shattered Pandit Ram Chandra Kak. However, he bore the tragedy stoically and carried on with his sovereign official duties of the Prime Ministership to the State and Crown of Jammu & Kashmir. His appointment to the high post of Prime Minister came at the time when Second World War was at its peak. In Kashmir it was, however, preceded first by the exit of N. Gopalaswami Ayyangar as Prime Minister in 1943, which followed with the appointment of Sir Maharaja Singh, Colonel Sir Kailash Narayan Haksar and Sir B.N. Rau as successive Prime Ministers in quick succession. In summer 1945, Sir

B.N. Rau relinquished his charge as the Prime Minister of the Jammu & Kashmir State. Maharaja Hari Singh next appointed Ram Chandra Kak to succeed him.

Of these developments, Dr. Karan Singh recalls: "It was an open secret that my father (read Maharaja Hari Singh) wanted him (read Kailash Narayan Haksar) as political adviser, and adopted the somewhat transparent stratagem of appointing him guardian to the Heir Apparent (read Yuvraj Karan Singh). This highlighted a strange tendency in my father (read Maharaja Hari Singh) that was ultimately to prove his political undoing—his inability to trust any one for any length of time. He selected his Prime Ministers with great care, but no sooner had he appointed one, than he would begin cultivating someone else as a sort of counterbalance. With the exception of N. Gopalaswami Ayyangar who was Prime Minister of the state for six years from 1937 onwards, this happened with all succeeding incumbents—Raja Maharaj Singh, B.N. Rau, Colonel K.N. Haksar, Pandit Ram Chandra Kak and General Janak Singh—right down to crisis in 1947."

And yet Kak's coveted appointment to the high post of Prime Minister was a befitting reward in recognition of the distinguished services rendered by him to the state previously in various capacities, viz as Director Archaeology, Chief Secretary, Political Secretary, Minister-in-Waiting and the Minister of Army to the Maharaja. With his remarkable aptitude for hard and sincere work in the best interest of 'the State and the Maharaja, Pandit Ram Chandra Kak carried his task of administering the State in the highest political traditions. However, the fast changing political scene in Kashmir was in for cataclysmic changes of far greater consequences. The cry for the ouster of the Maharaja reached its crescendo, with the launch of Quit Kashmir Movement by the National Conference led by Sheikh Mohammed Abdullah against him in May 1946, for transfer of power to the people. Giving the local Movement a garb akin to Quit India Movement led by Mahatma Gandhi pushed the agenda with vigour against Maharaja Hari Singh and his family. But R.C. Kak, true to his mould and make-up and with utmost professional and political integrity, took strong measures to quell the Movement and as a result, it soon fizzled out. However, the iron hand of Ram Chandra Kak could not contain the tide for long as the local demand of Maharaja Hari Singh's ouster met with considerable support from the Indian National Congress and soon Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru rushed to 'the aid of the Kashmiri people in their demand. At the time when Jawaharlal Nehru came to Kashmir, there was a ban on his entry into the State. He defied the ban but was arrested by a Gurkha officer, Major Bhagwan Singh, at the behest of the State authorities after he crossed into the State territory via the Kohala Bridge.

Giving an account of this development, writes Dr. Karan Singh: "The news reached us in the Gulab Bhavan and Pandit Kak, the then Prime Minister, reported to my 'father with subdued pride and excitement that Jawaharlal had been arrested." Following his detention in Uri for three days, Nehru was released and left Kashmir. However, he came again in July 1946 when the ban on his entry was lifted. In the meantime, while Sheikh Mohammed Abdullah was charged with sedition and was under prosecution, far reaching political changes were set in motion for India. An insider's account of these developments is preserved in *Hamara Vritant (Hindi)*, and unpublished history of the Kak clan, authored by Pandit Amar Nath Kak, the elder brother of Ram Chandra Kak. Writes Amar Nath Kak, "on 3rd June 1947, Lord Mountbatten announced the plan of partition of India and declared the date for it as August 15, 1947. The Maharaja of Kashmir did not agree to the accession of the State either with India or Pakistan and was in favour of an independent Kashmir. In the month of July 1947, on the invitation of Lord Mountbatten, Ram Chandra Ji went to Delhi and there he also met Sardar Patel and apprised him of the developments in Kashmir. Sardar Patel told him, "I have full faith in you and if you continue to remain the Prime Minister, then at an appropriate time you will facilitate the accession of Kashmir to India. But Maharaja Hari Singh is in search of a new Prime Minister". However, Sardar Patel suggested to Ram Chandra Ji to advise the Maharaja that either he ought to go by your advice as the Prime Minister or else he may retire you from the charge of Prime Ministership and instead appoint a new Prime Minister."

"On July 28, 1947, Ram Chandra Ji conveyed Sardar Patel's advice to Maharaja Hari Singh accordingly. On hearing the same, Hari Singh was upset and asked for a written Note on the matter. On July 30, 1947, Ram Chandra Ji sent the written Note to the Maharaja under copy to Sardar Patel. Maharaja did not reply to the Note. In the first week of August, Mahatma Gandhi came to Kashmir to advise the Maharaja and stayed there for seven or eight days. Ram Chandra Ji would go to meet him every day. He showed his Note to Mahatma Gandhi also, who in turn told him that "you have done the right thing" Mahatma Gandhi even came to visit Ram Chandra Ji at his residence and stayed there for a couple of hours interacting with warmth and affection. Maharaja Hari Singh kept a quiet posture until Mahatma Gandhi left Kashmir and for next two days went for a game of hunting.

The Maharaja returned to Srinagar on August 10, 1947. On August 11, 1947, he wrote a letter to Ram Chandra Ji announcing his retirement from Prime Ministership and informed him that in his place Thakur Janak Singh is appointed as the Prime Minister.

Uma Jalali was Subhadra Puri's daughter

adopted daughter (she was born to Bansilal and Uma Jalali)

Following these developments, recalls Dr. Karan Singh, "a new unfamiliar set of people began appearing at the palace. Ram Chandra Kak, the one man who had the intellectual capacity to make some coherent efforts towards an acceptable settlement had resigned after being humiliated by my father." (read Maharaja Hari Singh).

It is pertinent here to recount that following these historical developments which though included Ram Chandra Kak's own exit as the Prime Minister, it also brought a 'qualified apology', as described by Mehar Chand Mahajan, the some time later Prime Minister, in the form of a letter written from jail on September 26, 1947 by a much mellowed Sheikh Mohammed Abdullah addressed to Maharaja Hari Singh stating *inter alia*, "before I close this letter I beg to assure Your Highness once again of my steadfast loyalty and pray God under Your Highness' aegis bring such era of peace, prosperity and good government that it may be second to none and be an ideal for others to copy." Closing this letter, Sheikh Mohammed Abdullah used the expression "Your Highness' Most Obedient Subject" appended to his signature.

However, after retirement, Ram Chandra Kak desired to go to England. On September 16, 1947, he reached Srinagar airport accompanied by his English wife and daughter to proceed for England. There he was detained and later put under house arrest by the officials of Maharaja Hari Singh. On October 22, 1947, Kashmir was attacked by Pakistani raiders. Maharaja Hari Singh left Srinagar on 25th October but before that ordered for the release of Sheikh Mohammed Abdullah from jail. Next day i.e. October 26, 1947, Maharaja Hari Singh acceded Kashmir to the Indian dominion. But due to the detention orders imposed on Ram Chandra Kak, he and his family could not leave Srinagar.

With Sheikh Mohammed Abdullah now commanding unofficial authority to control things in Kashmir, found circumstances suitable to avenge retribution from Ram Chandra Kak for all he had done to him and his National Conference followers during the Quit Kashmir Movement. First, his followers rented the air with slanderous slogans against Kak. Next he ordered for his prosecution in 1948 while his pecuniary benefits accrued from his previous service to the Government were sealed for release. "Between 1947 to 1957, R.C. Kak fought legal battles to secure the release of his confiscated privileges and economic benefits. It was only in 1957 that he could secure the release of a part of his assets after fighting dogged legal battles" says, Bansilal Jalali, a descendant relation of Ram Chandra Kak. *vasa?*

With much regret and dismay I recount from the faint memory of my own childhood having heard once, from someone whose identity I cannot recall now, a

demeaning slogan directed against Ram Chandra Kak as "Kheles Ramboon Takaan Gav Brakaan Gav, Magpr Soun Karwaan Pakaan Gav". Obviously it seems to have been current even then in the memory of people as a coinage of his political detractors. Pandit Amar Nath Kak also writes in *Hamara Vritant*, "From August 11, 1947 itself these people started using many derogatory remarks against us and when in the month of September, Maharaja Hari Singh released Sheikh Abdullah from jail, it followed with a kind of tirade directed against us. This tirade reached its crescendo on October 27, 1947."

"His other pension benefits were only settled in his favour by Bakshi Ghulam Mohammed. Not only this, he and his brother Pandit Amar Nath Kak were hounded with insidious vocatives of most uncivilized meanings while being addressed as *Ram Bakra* and *Amber Bakra* by the people hostile and aggressive to his political outlook within the community and even sometimes were reportedly dragged by *Ghassa Raz* and spitted upon by unidentified goons of his political detractors during their court trials. But both the brothers stood the rest of time with poise and enviable calm dignity", states Vijay Wattal, on the authority of his father's claims in the matter. He also attests, as told to him by his father Pandit Nand Lal Wattal, that, "on some occasion, after his ouster as the Prime Minister of Jammu & Kashmir, Pandit Ram Chandra Kak and Maharaja Hari Singh attended a Reception Party in Bombay. Mindful of the humiliation he had suffered at the hands of the Maharaja, Kak ignored to acknowledge his presence in the Party. The host, one Mr. K.T. Shah, had only to bear with his discomfiture when Ram Chandra refused to talk to Hari Singh even when requested to do so. My father would say that Ram Chandra Kak's demure self-respect and dignity was the uppermost character of his polished personality."

In his continued retirement and seclusion, Ram Chandra Kak spent most of his time in reading. "He was a voracious reader. As a reader he had amassed a huge personal library which, however, is lost due to recent militancy in Kashmir. He remained humiliated, aloof and carried the scar of having been politically victimized by the later date political establishment of Kashmir till the very end. But no one can deny that he was an intellectual with integrity. In his retirement, Ram Chandra Kak lived between his Kakaserai house in Srinagar and Kasauli in Himachal Pradesh where he had built an alternative residential retreat in 1972," says Sanjay Kak, a descendant of the Kak clan.

Perhaps the best account of Ram Chandra Kak's upright personality, determination and conviction to carry one's ideals and beliefs till the very last under all circumstances, comes in Dr. Karan Singh's observation as he writes in his Autobiography, "My only regret is that because of my father's strictness and the absence of an outstanding housemaster, I did not have any

he was in exile in Kasauli

① He returned to Kashmir only in 1959, and then alternated between Srinagar (summer) and Kasauli (winters)

strong figure upon whom I could rely during those formative years, someone who might have filled the inner vacuum of uneasy insecurity that afflicted me. I remember once how a casual remark by Pandit Ram Chandra Kak (appointed my guardian after Colonel Haksar) to the effect that he had great hopes and faith in my future as Yuvraj gave me tremendous sustenance for months. Pandit Kak was in many ways a remarkable man, arrogant but unflinching in his adherence to the principles in which he believed. He would tell me that the greatest quality one could develop was 'poise', a calm imperturbability in the face of any circumstances, howsoever unsettling, and he displayed this himself in the adversity that he faced only a few years later."

In this context it is pertinent to make mention of the letter Sir Aurel Stein, the great oriental scholar and editor, translator and commentator of Kalhana's *Rajatarangini*, wrote to my grandfather on August 9, 1931 following the outbreak of serious riots in Srinagar. His words are prophetic: "I wish you had been able to give me better news than those about the serious out-break in the city. You know that my sympathy is fully with those who have been wantonly attacked and injured. I know enough of the history of Kashmir to have realized long ago that tame as the people apparently are in ordinary times, trouble may always arise if there is any sign of weakness about. I hope that now that order has been enforced. I hope it will be maintained with a strong hand and needless feats will cease. The appointment of Raja Hari Kishan Kaul as Prime Minister is certainly encouraging. I have known him and his family for a long time as deserving full confidence."

As is well known that not long after Hari Kishan Kaul was appointed as the Prime Minister, he was replaced by Colonel E.J.D. Colvin, a British officer. But Sir Stein's prophetic words, from the experience of history, are enough to justify the use of "strong hand" which both the first and the last Bhatta Prime Ministers of Jammu & Kashmir had resorted to in the best interest of the State and the Crown but only to their personal disadvantage, which turned out more damaging and costly in the case of Pandit Ram Chandra Kak. Although Ram Chandra Kak never claimed recognition from his contemporaries or from the posterity, yet his vision and scholarship are not easy to be obliterated.

To say the least, he was an incarnation of intellectual honesty and highly cultivated political integrity which he never allowed to be sullied by the intrigue and deceit of his political detractors during his life time. No matter, R.C. Kak's political outlook may not have had many takers then and even some may not endorse it today. But opinions on either side can be worthy of respect. And this has to be considered in the light of the fact that the sub-continent in itself, and Kashmir in particular,

was in for political changes of far reaching consequences. No single person therefore can be faulted in absolute terms, particularly when history was in the making. By destiny, R.C. Kak was one among the many who were in the vortex of it. Though shattered but never vanquished, he lived true to his salt and the values and ideals he believed in. He left the mortal world in 1983 at the age of 90. However, no homage is sufficient to this man of steel guts, impeccable integrity and intellectual sagacity. One day history will vindicate him. As of the scholar, Ram Chandra Kak is cast in permanence with the league of the great ones in the field of his study.

** Any and all insensitive or derogatory words that appear in the preceding article have been referred to without any prejudice and or bias against any one whatsoever and least to demean or cause any injury to the esteem and self respect of the person or persons to whom they are implied to. As such, therefore, no offence, whatsoever in any manner, is intended against any one. These words are incidental and have been used merely as a record of oral history connected to the topic of the subject without any claim to their authenticity. The notice of this exclusion is perpetual and perennial-SNP.*

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Photographs of Ram Chandra Kak and Mary Margret Kak; Courtesy : P.K. Jalali and Sanjay Kak.