

**SACRED SPACE**

# Mata Roopa Bhawani

*The mystic saint of Kashmir*

Dr. Daleep Pandita

Holly divine Shakti Swaroop of Mata Sharika of Hari Parbat Shrine (Mata Durga) in Kashmir, commonly referred as Alakshwari Mata Shree Roopa Bhawani Jee, shines as a bright star in the galaxy of mystic saints and sufis of Kashmir.

It is believed that pleased with his great devotion, Mata Sharika in the form of a little girl appeared before her staunch kashmiri pandit devotee, Madhav Joo during auspicious occasion of Brahma Muhurta and asked him "speak out your wish". Prostrated at Mata's feet, he submitted that "I wish you are born as my daughter". Mata Sharika granted the boon by giving birth to a girl child to his wife in the early morning of mag Jyaistha Purnamasi 1621 AD at Safakadal locality in Srinagar city of Kashmir, which chronicled as the birth of Mata Roopa Bhawani Jee.



Life Divine - celebrating 400 years of Mata Shree Roopa Bhawani Jee Prakash Utsav

During these days, the birth of a girl child in a household of kashmiri pandit was believed to be the form of Mata Raganya or Mata Durga or Mata Lakshmi, hence she was named as "Alakshyeshwari" meaning one who is unnoticeable. It is also referred to the Goddess in unnoticeable form of life. It is said that since her birth, this baby girl had spiritual powers and divine touch in her body. Maintaining his family traditions, her father, as her Guru, continued to preach her teachings of Vedas and

Upnishads at her tender age.

From her early childhood days, due to influence of Trika Shaivism, Mata started to reshape the prevailing Kashmiri household culture in to divine sanity and encouraged spiritual devotion that helped in reduction of difference of opinion and resolution of various socio religious conflicts. Delicately Mata also started cultivating tolerance that generated love for each other and started becoming a social reformer ever since Mata came to her senses.

At that time, due to the threat of ruling Pathans, parents of Mata preferred to marry her at a very young age, wherein her parental-in-laws could not understand her spiritual nature, ultimately subjected to her ill-treatment. As per custom on a festive occasion at her in-laws home, her father presented traditional sweet rice "Kheer" in a small earthen pot for its distribution among their relatives. Seeing its small size, her mother-in-law sarcastically remarked "How can I distribute such a small quantity among so many relatives" and ordered to return it. No matter its size, Mata humbly requested her "please start its distribution and don't look inside the pot". Reluctantly she started distributing Kheer and it seemed that Kheer lasted forever. Finally she got tired and opened the lid to look in to the pot - that was empty.

Everyday morning Mata used to go to Hari Parbat shrine for prayers irrespective of prohibitory dictates from her in-laws, but for its continuance of the cause, she sacrificed her short period married life and finally went back to her parental home. It is from there only that depending upon the piousness of the situations, the series of her miracles started happening.

In pursuit of solitary location for continuing her spiritual sadhana, Mata went to Manigam, then to Vaskura followed by Cheshma-Sahib, all village hamlets in central Kashmir, away from the materialistic world. She preferred to remain in the company of saints, learned people and devotees all over to follow the path of spirituality. The great old chinar tree on the banks of river Sind in Manigam, the culmination of a half-burnt branch planted by Mata, is still standing there as a mute but living witness to her spirituality.

A blind man who sincerely served Mata with his full devotion, got back his vision and to address water woes of locals, Mata dug a well at Vaskura, whose water is considered to be pure and pious. There are some other miracles Mata did for her devotees during young days of her life. Mata's brother, also her devotee, requested her to bless his illiterate son. Mata gave him a pen and paper and asked him to write and he got transformed to write like an educated person.

Right from her early days of spirituality, Mata preached much needed awareness among innocent women folk for development of their divine feeling of self respect and nurtured their sentiments for the eternal peace for the peace of the society, which under present times is seen as "Women empowerment".

# Happy Father's Day, Dad



Mehak Grover

Father- a gift from the heaven above. We all take our fathers for granted. We all do. Until the day comes when you need him the most and you realise that you can no more go up to him with your demands and tantrums.

This article is dedicated to all the wonderful fathers and father figures who have touched the lives of many people out there, be it your children, your family, people you have mentored and people you are role models to. Thank you for being you.

Usually, people talk about mother's love and affection in which a father's love often gets ignored. What we fail to acknowledge is the strength of a father which often goes unnoticed. Though, I am sure all fathers but surely, I can vouch for my father without any second thoughts when it comes to being an ideal person.

They have their own unique style. They possess inner strength and provide a sense of security and safety within the home. They give and give until they can't give anymore. Now is the time to say thank you to our fathers for all the love, effort and hard work they have put into raising us. Now is the time to say thank you before the time is gone.

It is very rightly said- 'Anyone can father a child, but being a dad takes a lifetime.'

Fathers, like mothers, are pillars in the development of a child's emotional well-being. Children want to make their fathers proud, and an involved father promotes inner growth and strength. Fathers not only influence who we are inside but how we have relationships with

people as we grow.

Dads might not have a Superhero mask or wear his pants outside his trousers, but their powers are greater than any superhero. Dads are amazingly cool people because they show us that no matter what struggles they face in their lives or what happens to them, they always get out of them with full confidence. They are the ones who teach us that generosity is a state of mind and not a state of money. They are the ones who are behind our struggles and achievements in life.

Everyone's fathers are very special to them. So is mine. The most humble, insightful, pure and generous soul. Without ever speaking about it, he has shown me

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what it means to be a father and the meaning of selfless living. The things that our fathers do for us may not be materialistic always, but they mean so much more than all the expensive commodities, right? My father has been everything, my guide, my friend and my moral support. Words will fall short to express my gratitude and love for all the fathers.

I owe everything to my father who stood by me through thick and thin and always encouraged and inspired me to be a good human. I believe that my father had all that it takes to be called a real-life superhero. The way he used to manage things professionally and personally left me mesmerized every time. No matter how tough the times got, I watched my father become tougher. My father is my protection, my strength and my power. I certainly aspire to become like my father. If I could just inherit ten per cent of what he was, I believe my life will be complete.

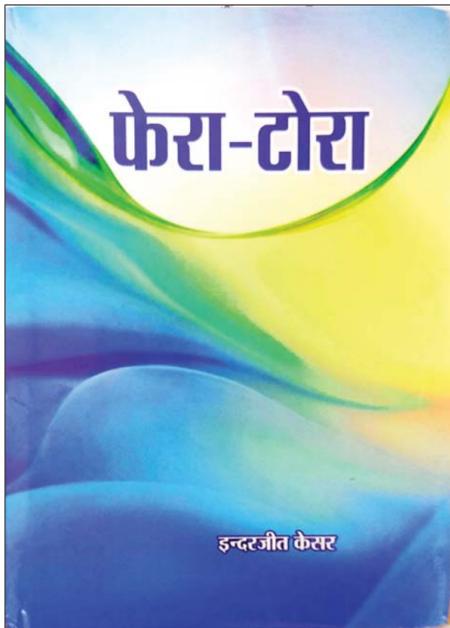
**BOOK-REVIEW**

## Phera Tora: A Travelogue

**Book :** (Travelogue in Dogri)  
**Author :** Inderjeet Kesar  
**Publisher :** Jai Mata Prakash 2-P,  
**Sector-3 Ext. Channi Himmat, Jammu**

**Rajeshwar Singh 'Raju'**

Travelogue means to pen down account of a journey to another place and personal impressions and experiences of the places visited by the author. It is heartening to say that even Dogri authors are not far behind in writing the anecdotes while moving to different places and compiling same in the form of a book. Recently a new travelogue has been published that justifies the contents therein with the title itself. Yes, it's 'PHERA TORA' by Inderjeet Kesar.



**About Author**

Inderjeet Kesar is a prolific writer who believes in his commitment towards mother tongue Dogri and proves his devotion through regular contributions whether in the form of poetry, spiritual songs, novels or short stories. Till date he has 22 books to his credit that comprise of 14 collections of poetry, 6 novels, one collection of spiritual songs (Bhents) and essays.

Now he has come with "PHERA TORA", a travelogue that carries his experience during his visits to different places within own country and abroad. His creative journey that started with "Phull Khide Re" a collection of poetry published in 1998 did not halt at all. He was awarded prestigious Sahitya Academy Award for Dogri Novel "Bhageerath" in

2017. Kesar is a regular participant as a poet at All India Radio, Doordarshan Kendra and literary programs organized by J & K Academy of Art, Culture & Languages and other organizations.

**About Book**

The instant book 'PHERA TORA' is divided into seven parts. The book contains write ups on different places of religious importance visited by the writer being accompanied by his wife.

It's worth mentioning here that although Kesar is the writer of this travelogue but he has been guided and inspired by his wife Savitri Kesar to visit such places that she wished to visit. She is a religious lady who has firm faith in Sanatan Dharma and follows it religiously. The writer owes a lot to his life partner in writing this book as she has helped him in recalling different aspects of their journey that have become an integral part of this travelogue.

The first part of travelogue carries three sections covering writer's pilgrimage to Utrakhand's 'Chaar Dhaam Yatra'. It describes his pilgrimage to the eminent sacred places Kedarnath, Gangotri, Yamunotri and Badrinath. These places are of immense cultural and religious worth. While going through the write-ups one feels connected with these places. The writer has described the details in an informative way. The next part is about special yatra to Badrinath wherein detail has been given about the visit. The third part of the book has reference to India's three Dhams including pilgrimage to Mahakleshwar, Onkareshwar, Nageshwar, Bheemashankar Mahadev, Trimbakeshwar Mahadev, Gushmeshwar Mahadev, Mallikarjuna, Rameshwaram, Kashi Vishwanath, Mathura, Vrindavan, Ayodhya, Prayagraj, Shri Ganganagar, Gaya, Sonmth Mandir, Dwarka, Shirdi, Shinganapur, Tirupati Balaji, Kanyakumari, Pashupatinath Mandir Kathmandu Nepal etc., the holy places that find essential place in the lives of Hindus.

The 2nd part of the book is dedicated to 'Brij Charasi Yatra'. The writer on being persuaded by his wife was inspired to go for 'Brij Charasi yatra'. He writes that even Shastras say that after performing "Chaar Dhaam Yatra", Brij Charasi Kos Yatra is a must.

The 3rd part gives a detailed account of writer's visit to different places of Lucknow popularly known as city of 'Tehzeeb' and 'Nawabs' and its surroundings. Whereas 4th part is about the importance of 'Monday Amavasya' and holy dip in the Ganges during Amavasya. In 5th part of travelogue, the writer enjoys the company of his better half visiting the sacred places of Devbhoomi Himachal Pradesh and Punjab. In the next part he takes us to beautiful places of Jaipur and its surroundings whereas in 7th and concluding part he boards flight with his wife a foreign trip to Abu Dhabi to see his son Nipun kesar, who serves in a company there. The writer gives a detailed account of his stay and visits to popular places of Abu Dhabi.

Kesar dedicates the travelogue "PHERA TORA" to his father Late Amarnath Kesar. The book carries 251 pages and is priced at Rs 400. The cover page is simple but impressive.

It's a welcome addition to Dogri Literature that tells a lot about the different places of historical, religious and cultural significance in an interesting style.

**NATURE**

## Medicinal properties of Mentha species

Dr. Vikas Sharma, Insha Rasool

Mentha is a worldwide plant and contains several species which are used in traditional medicine and phytotherapy. It is a well-known genus that includes 25-30 species that are generally grown in temperate areas around the world, particularly in Europe, North America, North Africa, Asia, the northern parts of Iran and near the east (Syria, Ethiopia). The plant is cultivated in Jammu and Kashmir at heights from 300-1200 m and the whole plant is used in vast range of diseases like anorexia, abdominal pain, vomiting, cough, loss of appetite, menstrual disorders, pain in joints and in diseases of liver, spleen and asthma. Each species has its own characteristic prevalent compound. The phytochemical investigations on the Mentha species

revealed that they possess flavonoids, glycosides, phenolics compounds, triterpenoids, steroids and lignans. A comprehensive review was conducted to assess the safety and efficacy of some Mentha species of Jammu region:



*A tea made from the fresh or dried leaves of Mentha citrata has traditionally been used for stomach aches, nausea, parasites and other digestive disorders and for fevers and headaches.*

\* Mentha arvensis, Field mint, Pudina.  
\* Mentha citrata, Bergamot mint, Pudhina,  
\* Mentha longifolia, Horse mint, Jungli Pudina.  
\* Mentha piperita, Pepper mint, Gamathi Pudina.  
\* Mentha spicata, Spear mint, Pahari Pudina.  
\* Mentha viridis, Green mint, Pudina.

The whole plant of Mentha arvensis is used in vast range of diseases like abdominal pain, anorexia (eating disorder), vomiting, cough, loss of appetite, menstrual disorders, pain in joints and in diseases of liver, spleen and asthma. The leaves are mostly used as salad and medicinally used for stomach problems and allergy. The infusion of these leaves is used in indigestion, rheumatic pains, arthritis and as remedy for inflamed joints. It is traditionally used in hypertension and in patients with ischemic heart disease. Essential oil can be diluted and used as a wash for skin irritations, itching, burns, inflammations, scabies and ringworm or to repel mosquitoes.

Mentha citrata is a herbaceous, perennial and highly aro-

matic plant, which is commonly known as bergamot-mint, lemon-mint or lavender-mint. Two chemotypes of bergamot-mint: one rich in linalool accompanied by small quantity of linalyl acetate and the other rich in linalyl acetate accompanied by some amount of linalool are recognized. The linalool and linalyl acetate are used as a sedative and inflammatory medicine and are beneficial to mental and physical health as well as its widespread use in cosmetic and sterilization industries. A tea made from the fresh or dried leaves of Mentha citrata has traditionally been used for stomach aches, nausea, parasites and other digestive disorders and for fevers and headaches. Mentha citrata has shown a significant antioxidant effect as well as a notable anti-cancer activity against colon cancer.

Mentha longifolia is used in the pharmaceutical, tobacco and food industries and particularly in cosmetology. Different parts of the plant including its leaves, flower, stem, bark and seeds have been also used widely in traditional folk medicine as antimicrobial, carminative, stimulant, antispasmodic and for the treatment of various diseases such as headaches and digestive disorders. Usage of M. longifolia in the treatment of throat irritation, mouth and sore throat is widespread.

Mentha piperita is used as a remedy for common cold, inflammatory processes of the mouth, pharynx, sinuses, liver, gallbladder and bowel as well as gastrointestinal tract ailments such as nausea, vomiting, diarrhoea, cramps, flatulence, dyspepsia. Peppermint oil (as well as peppermint leaf) has been used internally as an antispasmodic (upper gastrointestinal tract and bile ducts) and to treat irritable bowel syndrome, catarrh (inflammation of mucous membranes) of the respiratory tract. Externally, peppermint oil has been used for myalgia, neuralgia and also act as a carminative, cholagogue, antibacterial and secretolytic agent. Chloroform and ethyl acetate extracts from leaf part of Mentha piperita showed significant dose and time dependent anticarcinogenic activity against cervical, breast, leukaemia, colon and pancreatic cancer cells.

Mentha spicata or spearmint acts as insecticide, antispasmodic and anti-platelet (anticoagulant) drug. In term of medical uses, it is considered as an herbal medicine in folkloric remedies for treating of colds and flu, respiratory tract problems, gastralgia, haemorrhoids and stomach-ache. Spearmint leaves are generally taken as a tea in which its carminative properties can help to treat digestive disorders, fever and minor ailments. The anticancer potential of essential oils from Mentha spicata leaves on some cancer cell lines have also been revealed in vitro. It has been proved that Mentha spicata oil has anti-proliferative activity on leukaemia and prostate cancer cell lines.

(The authors are from Division of Biochemistry, FBS-c, SKUAST-J)