

## A KASHMIRI KITCHEN

On normal days, the cooking, in both Hindū and Muslim homes, is mostly done on a 'Ḍān' which is an oblong clay oven, about 3' x 2' and a foot and a half in height. It has a floor-level hole, through which firewood is fed and has usually 3 holes on the top, on which the food, in different pots, pans and vessels, etc., is heated or cooked. Nowadays, due to scarcity of wood fuel, LPG and kerosene stoves are commonly used.

A big dinner, called a 'Sāl', or a 'Vāzāvān', is still cooked in a 'Vurābal' which is an open-air kitchen. The fire-place, for this sort of cooking, is called a 'Vurā'. It is about 10' to 15' in length. In the shape of an above-ground drain, with air holes on both sides, it is built with bricks or stones. Fire-wood is used as fuel. Heat of such fires is very easily regulated for mass cooking. It is very convenient for deep and slow frying in big iron Cauldrons called 'Kadhās', as well as, for slow cooking and simmering, in earthenware pots especially. Here also the contents in cooking vessels, are conveniently watched and stirred with different types of wooden or metallic ladles. Such low-level 'Vurā' also facilitates the time to time addition of ingredients. Generally, an hour or so before serving most of the Dishes, the cooking vessels are removed from the 'Vurā' and are kept on charoal or dry cowdung slow fires, for maturing of flavours and arriving at the right consistency of gravy, and also the desired 'texture'.

Among Kashmirī Pandiṭs cooking of most Vegetarian and Non-vegetarian Dishes, is done mostly in pots made of baked clay. The pot is called a 'Ḍeg', a 'Ḍegul' or a 'Leij' according to its shape and size. Cooking in these pots gives the Meat, Cheese, Vegetable and other Dishes a special aroma. Caking at the bottom of pots, and acidic and alkaline reactions with metals, are also thus eliminated. Rice and some other dishes are cooked in tinned brass vessels. Muslims cook generally in tinned copper pots. Pots used in Kashmir are generally round bottomed, to make stirring and turning of the contents easy, while cooking, and also while mixing Spices and Condiments, which are called 'Masālā'.

A big round-bottomed, deep brass cooking pot, with a somewhat narrow mouth, is called a 'Ḍigchā', by Pandiṭs. It is mainly used to cook Rice, and sometimes 'Pulāvs' or other Dishes prepared in larger quantities. A similar pot, made of copper or aluminium and usually used by Muslims, is called by them a 'Ḍeg' or a 'Ḍigchāvār' according to its being big or small.

Round-bottomed, deep wide-mouthed metallic cooking pots, big and small, are called 'Paḷilā' usually. Pandiṭs call these generally 'Bahugan', which is plural of 'Bahugun'. It is a Sanskrit word meaning 'a thing having many good qualities.' Perhaps this name was given to this metallic pot, when introduced in place of the easily breakable earthenware pots (H. 'Hāḍī') used earlier. These of course, are utilized for many kitchen jobs, such as boiling, frying, cooking etc. of foods, and are almost unbreakable.

## Kashmīrī names of other Kitchen Implements.

1. 'Athāāeçh', - Cloth for wiping hands etc.
2. 'Bothlai' & 'Çhegla', - Pots for cooking rice etc.
3. 'Çhalān' & 'Raemb', - Broad spatulas.
4. 'Chhān', - Colander or strainer.
5. 'Chhōpp', - Churning stick.
6. 'Chōpchi' & 'Kṛeçh', - Ladles.
7. 'Chumta' & 'Sanāes', - Tongs for holding hot things & lifting hot pots.
8. 'Daknā', - Lids.
9. 'Ḍamchulā', - Iron charcoal stove.
10. 'Dul' & 'Kopḍ', - Metallic & deep wash basins.
11. 'Hāhkol', - Clay charcoal stove.
12. 'Kafgīn', - Perforated ladle.
13. 'Kṛāy', - Cauldron.
14. 'Kṛoçh', - Fire spoon.
15. 'Ṭāev', - Iron griddle.
16. 'Masālā' Vatur', - Box for keeping spices.
17. 'Mujikoḍ', - Grater.
18. 'Sīkh', - Skewer.
19. 'Ṭlāvār' & 'Kṛoḍ', - Edible oil pot & its ladle.
20. 'Voakhul' & 'Kājivath', - Stone mortar & pestle.