

# HOUSE & GARDEN®

HOUSE & GARDEN UK

By Cosmo Brockway

## The land of lakes and mountains

A wonderful piece on Kashmir in House & Garden UK and lovely mention of Qayaam Gah, enjoy the read!

The spring blossoms in Kashmir are like a rainbow woven into the ground; wrote one traveller of this mountain-ringed valley, the very name of which conjures up a sense of indefinable emotion. Flying into Srinagar's tiny airport from the crush of Delhi is to be hit by the scent of pine wood and attar perfume. Centuries after this was the sylvan retreat of the Mughal princes, it retains the magic that moved them to build pavilions roofed with a blaze of irises to contemplate the views etched for ecstasy.

The fractures of its recent history have brought a sense of trepidation, but Kashmir should be on the India lover's list for its potent culture, kept intact by its isolation.

"The scents lingered as the sky began to glow salmon pink and we climbed higher to soulful new opening Qayaam Gah. A retreat of stone villas clinging to a mountainside overlooking the city, it is the vision of hotelier Altaf Chapri.

He has achieved something of a paean to Sufi culture, interwoven in these parts like the prayer threads that are tied around marble jali screens at the waterside shrines. Bukhari wood-burning stoves warm the rooms built by craftsmen using time-honoured skills, the play of light and shadows enhancing the embrace of silence here, broken only by the bell of a passing mountain goat. Settling down on block-printed cushions on a granite-carved terrace overlooking the lakes, we listened to a trio of qawwali devotional Sufi musicians, thrumming tabla drums and transporting us with their reverent singing, crescendos and refrains dancing up to the night sky like the sparks of a fire".

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