

TR naad

AIKS

A Monthly Publication of **All India Kashmiri Samaj**

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PAHALGAM ATTACK

How Many More Precious Lives Will Be Lost?



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EDITOR-IN-CHIEF
Sunil Raina Rajanaka

EDITORIAL BOARD
Col. Tej K Tikoo
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AIKS SECRETARIAT, HQ
AIKS Camp office at Samavar Club,
Pamposh Enclave New Delhi

**BUSINESS MANAGER &
CIRCULATION FEEDBACK**
Sudhir Shah
9910076101

EDITORIAL COORDINATOR
Bharti Raina Kaul
8130538867

LAYOUT & DESIGN
Pranav Koul, Suman Kumar
M/s Print Orbit

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Editor's Note

Dear readers,

The tragic massacre of 28 innocent tourists in Pahalgam on April 22, 2025, has left the nation in shock and mourning. This brutal act is not just a senseless tragedy but a direct assault on India's sovereignty, orchestrated by the terror state of Pakistan and its sleeper cells operating in Kashmir. The timing and execution of the attack bear all the hallmarks of Pakistan's ongoing campaign to destabilize the region, a campaign that has been supported by the Pakistan Army since 1989.

The inflammatory rhetoric of Pakistan's Army Chief, Asif Munir, on April 15, 2025, is a glaring indicator of the intentions behind this attack. Munir's open calls for violence against Hindus, aimed at inciting Islamist terrorists, have been tragically realized. This pattern of incitement and violence continues to put lives at risk, both in Kashmir and beyond.

At the same time, we cannot ignore the disturbing reports coming from the Jammu region, where recent attacks in Kathua and Poonch suggest that Pakistan is still using the international border for infiltration. This critical issue, which should have been addressed long ago, now poses a significant security threat.

The execution style of this attack, in which tourists were singled out, identified, and then executed in cold blood, mirrors the tactics of terrorist groups like Hamas. This is not just an isolated attack but part of a larger ideological campaign driven by Pakistan's pathological hatred of India, especially towards Hindus.

The terrorists' audacity to strike during high-profile visits, including that of US Vice

President J D Vance and Prime Minister Narendra Modi's trip to Saudi Arabia, sends a chilling message: they are undeterred by international attention or consequences. This disregard for the larger geopolitical ramifications highlights their commitment to spreading terror.

Moreover, local Over Ground Workers (OGWs) continue to support and enable these terrorists by providing vital logistics. This underlines the need for a comprehensive strategy to root out terrorism and its local supporters.

It is also troubling that certain local politicians continue to fuel divisiveness. The recent remarks by a Member of Parliament from Srinagar, who referred to tourists as part of a "cultural invasion," are irresponsible and dangerous. It is high time that leaders like Aga Ruhullah are held accountable. Kashmir needs politicians who foster peace, unity, and progress—not those who promote hatred and division.

The government must act decisively. A dedicated task force should be set up to address lapses in security and provide clear advisories to tourists. Most importantly, India must impose diplomatic, economic, and military costs on Pakistan for its ongoing support of terrorism.

As the poet Ghalib wisely said, "Hamein Maloom hei Jannat Ki Haqiqat Lekin, Dil Ko Khush Rakhno Ko Ghalib Yeh Khayal Acha Hei"—While we know the truth of the situation, we must also find the strength to keep our spirits up and continue the fight for peace and justice.

मनील गैत गणक



From the President's Desk

Respected All

Namaskar to All AIKS family,

As we entered new year NAVREH, the dawn has set for new hopes for our return & rehabilitation. We expect an Apex committee back again after it was abolished in the year 2014 to take up matters with State government, but at the same time agreement eludes us. We are fighting within, which gives an edge to the govt classifying us as a divided class. The present dispensation is throwing ball in our court saying you come up with a rehabilitation plan or any other scheme and We (Govt) are there to help. This I could gather in meetings with cabinet ministers Sh. Kiren Rijiju and Sh. M.L Khattar.

As I returned to Delhi after a 15 days stint in motherland in District Kupwara, Srinagar & Badgam, I tried to gauge the mood at the grassroots. I met two civil society groups which are involved in inter faith dialogue in Srinagar and Badgam, I could gauge that we should continue to engage in dialogue with civil society and simultaneously seek our demands with Central & State govt. It is through our collective efforts which will result in the fulfilment of our long pending demands and shall pave way for our return & rehabilitation.

After closing AIKS office at Faridabad, where most of the records had got damaged due to seepage, it took two months to retrieve and rebuild the files as well as portraits of our stalwarts and past presidents. We will pursue with Delhi Cabinet ministers also for office space in Delhi till our previous file is recommenced in cabinet committee, as assured by M L Khattar, Hon'ble minister for Housing & Urban Development in a meeting with us last month.

As the J&K UT govt enters six months, we have tried to raise our issue through MLA's Waheed Parra, Fayaz Mir of PDP and Javed

Mirchal of NC in the assembly. We got some good news through an announcement by CM Omar Abdullah that a yatri niwas & Cafeteria will be build by government at Sharda Temple LoC Teetwal Kashmir.

As per our manifesto, without wasting time, We would like to have a membership drive particularly amongst youth. Further making our visibility in Kashmir by setting up a branch office there for co-ordination with non- migrants and PM package employees. AIKS as the name suggests should have a base in Kashmir as the name itself is suggestive of that " kashmiri samaj" but till now we haven't been able to do so. Working in tandem with affiliates & other KP organizations, financial sustenance, having a permanent office in Delhi, reneging on our commitments, use of social media for transparent functioning, our writ petition No: 534 of 2006 pending adjudication in J&K High court and addressing long pending issues.

We want to reinforce the standing of AIKS as politically non-aligned organization.

With the cooperation of previous office bearers and the new ones, let's hope we bring back AIKS to pristine glory, which has been ably run by the stalwarts of the community. I request everyone from community to visit website of AIKS, get enrolled as members as per guidelines and put your suggestions & problems on website as well as my Whatsapp number to consolidate the same for a better vision document and road ahead.

We wish our AIKS extended family a vibrant future.

May Sharda Mata bless us all !!

Er. RAVINDER PANDITA

Tel : 9811143024



Sunil Kaul



General Secretary's Column

At the outset, I extend my warmest greetings to all readers on the auspicious occasion of Navreh and Sapt Rishi Samvat 5101.

The annual Navreh celebration, observed by Kashmiri Hindus, signifies the cultural and religious continuity of an event that we have been celebrating for over 5000 years. These celebrations reaffirm the community's resolve that regardless of where we are or the circumstances we face, we shall always remain connected to our roots due to the strong foundation laid by our worthy ancestors.

On this auspicious day, a special edition of *NAAD* was released at the Faridabad Hari Parbat Temple, in collaboration with our affiliates — the KSS Faridabad, which was led by Shri Kashi Akhoon ji. The release was marked by great enthusiasm and a vibrant cultural program, where hundreds of community members gathered to enjoy performances by the next generation of our community.

This day beautifully weaves the entire community into a single emotional thread, visible on every member's face, suggesting a deep yearning for their homeland, Kashmir, and the collective hope of returning there one day.

On this occasion, an AIKS delegation comprising President Shri Ravinder Pandita, Senior Vice President Shri Vijay Kashkari, Vice President Shri Dilip Kaul, along with Shri Ajay Pandita ji and Smt. Kusum Lata ji, called upon Shri Manohar Lal Khattar, Hon'ble Minister of Housing & Urban Development, Government of India. The delegation submitted a proposal for a permanent address/asset for AIKS in New Delhi and also

discussed the rehabilitation and return of the displaced Kashmiri Pandit community to the Valley. The Hon'ble Minister offered valuable suggestions and encouraged the community to present a detailed plan so that the Government of India could extend its support to the initiative.

Update on RNI Certification and Concessional Postal Rates for NAAD

We would like to bring to the notice of the community that the **RNI (Registrar of Newspapers for India) revised certification** had not been processed since 2021. Unfortunately, the previous President and the entire Editorial Board were unable to address this crucial matter over the past four years.

As a result of this negligence, the RNI registration fee was not deposited, leading to **avoidable penalties and interest charges** being imposed on AIKS. This situation arose due to the incompetence and inaction of the former President and his Executive Committee, including the Chief Editor of *NAAD* at the time.

We are, however, pleased to inform you that the matter has now been resolved. The **revised certificate of registration** from the RNI office, along with the **pending fees for the last four years**, has been successfully **negotiated and settled**. We expect to receive the updated RNI certification by **next week**.

Based on this forthcoming certificate, we have already submitted the requisite documents to the concerned **postal authorities** for the grant of **concessional postal rates**. This will enable us to **dispatch NAAD at a reduced postal rate**, significantly optimizing our distribution costs.



ALL INDIA KASHMIRI SAMAJ (REGD.)

(APEX BODY OF INDIAN & OVERSEAS KASHMIRI PANDIT ORGANISATIONS)

AIKS Camp Office:-B-36 Samavar Premises GK-1 NEW DELHI -110048

Web: www.aiks.org; E-mail: hqaiks@gmail.com

All India Kashmiri Samaj
Press Release
24th APRIL 2025

AIKS strongly condemns the cowardly and heinous terror attack on innocent tourists in Pahalgam, Kashmir, today. This inhuman act, targeting civilians solely based on their identity and faith, is a grim reminder of the recurring pattern of violence faced by the Hindu community in the Valley.

This attack reopens the deep wounds of displaced Kashmiri Pandits and mirrors the horrors of past massacres—Nadimarg, Sangrampora, Chhatisingpora, Wandhama, and Pulwama. AIKS urges the government to take swift and decisive action to bring the perpetrators to justice and ensure the safety of all citizens, especially minorities in the region.

Terrorism has no place in a civilized society, and such acts will never succeed in breaking the spirit of peace-loving Indians.

Sunil Kaul
General Secretary

AIKS affiliated Units at:

Inland : Agra, Ahmedabad, Allahabad, Ambala, Amritsar, Bangalore, Bahadurgarh, Baroda, Bhopal, Chandigarh, Dehradun, Delhi, Dharamshala, Faridabad, Ghaziabad, Gurgaon, Gwalior, Hyderabad, Indirapuram, Indore, Jabalpur, Jaipur, Jammu, Jodhpur, Kolkata, Lucknow, Ludhiana, Mumbai, Moradabad, Nagpur, Noida, Panchkula, Pune, Ranchi, Sahibabad, Shimla, Srinagar, Udaipur, Varanasi

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MARTYR'S OF JIHAD IN KASHMIR

List for April

Team Naad pays homage to the martyrs who were brutally killed by Jihadists in Kashmir, leading to the ethnic cleansing of Kashmiri Pandits from their homeland. NAAD shall continue to honor these innocent victims of Islamic fundamentalism on a monthly basis.

The list below is not comprehensive. We request community members, along with friends and relatives of the victims, to share additional details of the martyrs so that we can compile a complete record and pay tribute to them.

S No.	Martyr's Name	Location Killing	Date
1	Sh. P N Handoo	Srinagar	01.04.1990
2	Sh. Prem Nath Tickoo	.....	05.04.1990
3	Sh. K.K. Koul	Srinagar	05.04.1990
4	Sh. Radha Krishan	Karan Nagar, Srinagar	05.04.1990
5	Sh. Prem Nath Koul	Kil, Pulwama	05.04.1990
6	Sh. Ashok Kumar	.....	6.04.1990
7	Sh. H.L .Khera	Srinagar	06.04.1990
8	Sh. Ramesh Peer	Vichar Naag, Srinagar	06.04.1990
9	Sh. Kari Lal	.....	09.04.1990
10	Sh. Heera Lal Khar	Kak Mohalla, Srinagar	30.04.1990
11	Sh. Makhan Lal	Wangnoo Srinagar	10.04.1990
12	Sh. Dina Nath	.....	13.04.1990
13	Smt. Sarla Bhat	Srinagar	19.04.1990
14	Sh. Makhan Lal	Kani Kadal, Srinagar	21.04.1990
15	Sh. Sushil Kr Kotru	Rainawari, Srinagar	22.04.1990
16	Sh. Joginder Malhotra	Safakadal, Srinagar	22.04.1990
17	Sh. Ravinder Kr. Pandit	Mattan, Anantnag	24.04.1990
18	Sh. Narender Nath	.....	24.04.1990
19	Sh. Niranjan Nath	.....	24.04.1990
20	Sh. Bansi Lal Sapru	.....	24.04.1990
21	Sh. Kashi Ram	.....	25.04.1990
22	Sh. Sarup Sampath	Zakura Budgam	25.04.1990
23	Sh. Surender Khar	Mattan, Anantnag	25.04.1990
24	Smt. Sarla Bhat	Qazi Mohalla, Anantnag	25.04.1990
25	Sh. Bushan Lal	Budgam	26.04.1990
26	Sh. Dr.Raj Nath	New Khanda, Srinagar	26.04.1990
27	Sh. Raj Nath Raina	.....	26.04.1990
28	Sh. Brij Lal Shah	Sadhu Ganga, Kupwara	27.04.1990
29	Sh. M L Pandita	Tikri, Kupwara	27.04.1990
30	Sh. Bansi Lal	Chattergul, Srinagar	27/28.04.1990
31	Sh. Bharat Bhushan	Pampore, Srinagar	27/28.04.1990
32	Sh. Predhiman Krishan Bhat	Lolab, Sogam	28.04.1990
33	Sh. Gushi Lal	.....	29.04.1990
34	Sh. Daleep Kumar	Nowhatta, Srinagar	30.04.1990
35	Sh. Dwarika Nath	Anantnag	30.04.1990
36	Sh. Heera Lal Khar	Kak Mohalla, Srinagar	30.04.1990



Col Tej K Tikoo, Ph.D.



WAQF CONTROVERSY



The Waqf had its origin in the Arabic word Waqufa, meaning to detain or hold or tie up. According to history, once Khalifa Omar acquired a piece of land in Khaibar and asked Prophet Muhammad how best to make the most of the piece of land. The prophet is believed to have said the above.

According to the historical purpose for Waqf was conceived, it was meant to fulfil various social needs of the Muslims, including their education and health. It is considered to be a Jariah practice (charity that continues to give

“

The draconian section enabled the Waqf board to unilaterally claim any piece of land or a property as its own.

rewards) because its benefits can be felt by future generations. Waqf properties are essentially meant to be charitable endowments donated by Muslims for religious and social purposes and these remain as such for all time to come. In nutshell Waqf is a permanent dedication of any movable or immovable property by an individual, philanthropist or institution for religious, charitable or pious purposes, as recognised by Muslim law. The grant is known as Mushril-bil-khidmat, while the person making such dedication is called Waqf.

In the Indian subcontinent Waqf has had a long and chequered history. During the British rule, the Waqf Boards were established in 1923, a decade after the first legislation to regulate the Boards was enacted in 1913. The Boards were established by the British to receive proper advice on the matters pertaining to the working of the state Waqf Boards, which would, consequently, lead to their efficient functioning.

In Independent India the central Waqf Council, statutory body set-up in 1964 under the provision of the Waqf Act of 1954, was meant to serve as an advisory body to the Central/State governments on matters concerning the working of the Waqf boards and the efficient administration of Auqaf (Plural of Waqf). This Act was later repealed and replaced by Waqf Act 1995. However, provisions added in 2013, by the Congress-led UPA II, clearly reflected its desire to consolidate its hold on the Muslim Vote bank, just a few months before the general election were due. The amendments introduced to the Waqf Act 1995 gave unimaginable powers to the Waqf boards. It was to put a stop to such unbridled powers that the present bill- The Waqf Amendment Bill-2025 was introduced in the Parliament.

During the debate over the bill in the parliament some of the corrupt practices indulged in by the Waqf State Boards and the Central Waqf Council were highlighted. Some of these are discussed below:

1. At the time of independence, the total land holding of The Waqf Boards was 50,000 acres. Today it is 500,000 acres (size of Pakistan) making it the World's biggest land holder.
2. Despite holding such huge land parcels and billions of rupees worth of properties, totalling 12 lakh crores, the total income generated in the last financial year was a paltry 120 crore rupees.
3. The Waqf Boards have provided no account of the financial or other assistance provided by it to the needy Muslims over the years.

4. Some years back a villager in village Thiru Chenturai wanted to sell his land to fund his daughter's marriage. However, he could not do so, as he learnt to his shock that the whole village was a Waqf property.

When millions of Hindus and Sikhs were cleansed out from Pakistan during partition, they left behind huge properties, including land behind. All such lands and properties were confiscated by the government of Pakistan and distributed among the Muslims. But here in India the land and properties left behind by Muslims who went to Pakistan was turned into Waqf property.

One of the glaring examples of the land-grabs indulged in by Waqf was the case of one Bedar of Uttar Pradesh. In 2004, this man approached the Allahabad High court to seek legal support for his demand to become the caretaker of Taj Mahal. The High Court advised the Waqf Board to take the matter seriously. In 2005 the Board decided to register Taj Mahal as a Waqf property.

As mentioned earlier, some of the provisions, added over the years, clearly reflected the ruling party's (in this case the Indian National Congress) outreach to appease Muslims to strengthen their vote Bank.

One of the provisions added was the inclusion of Section 40 of the Waqf Act 1995. The draconian section enabled the Waqf board to unilaterally claim any piece of land or a property as its own. What is even worse was the fact that this act could not be challenged in a court of law. In case a dispute arose between the original land/property owner and the Waqf board, it was always the Waqf Tribunal itself which had the authority to adjudicate the matter. In essence it meant that the Tribunal itself was the accused, the police the lawyer and judge and executioner.

The Act had also legalized the donation of the land/ property by a non-Muslim. This had led to serious conflict at the ground level as the provision had been misused to grab huge chunks of land/property by merely claiming that a non-Muslim had either converted to Islam or had willingly donated his

land/property to Waqf as an act of charity.

It is because of such blatant misuse of power by the Congress and its UPA allies that not only empowered the Waqf boards to unilaterally claim many properties, but also ensured that they could not be legally challenged in courts for such blatant misuse of authority. It is, therefore, no wonder that the Waqf, over a period of time claimed Triveni Sangam in Prayagraj, the Parliament building in Delhi and the Presidential estate as its own.

The Waqf Amendment Bill introduced, debated extensively in the both houses of the Parliament on 5th and 6th April 2025, was subsequently passed by both houses. On 6 April, 2025, the bill received the assent of the Honourable President of India and has now become a law. The Bill removed the outdated Mussalman Waqf Act 1923, which did not cater for the needs of the public good after a century of its enactment. The new Act will ensure that the uniform rules are now applicable for managing the Waqf properties in India and improve the transparency and accountability of the Waqf Boards.

Some of the the other issues addressed by the amendment include negating the legally certified land-grabs by Waqf. Besides, only those Muslims can donate property/land etc., to Waqf who have been practicing Muslims for at least 5 years. This will practically take all non-Muslims out of the equation; thus protecting their properties.

Many have argued that Modi should have introduced this bill in his second tenure as the PM. This would have ensured that some lacunae still existing, after the new Act comes into play, could have been done away with; what with near to two-thirds majority enjoyed by NDA!

There is a point in this as the government was heavily dependent on its two allies, the Chandra Babu Naidu's TDP and Nitish Kumar's, JDU. BJP being dependent on them for their support to pass the bill, has ensured that the new Act, rather than having a retrospective effect, will be implemented prospectively. Nevertheless, it is considered to be a good beginning.

Cartoon by- Anil Nakhasi





 Dr. Rahul Magazine

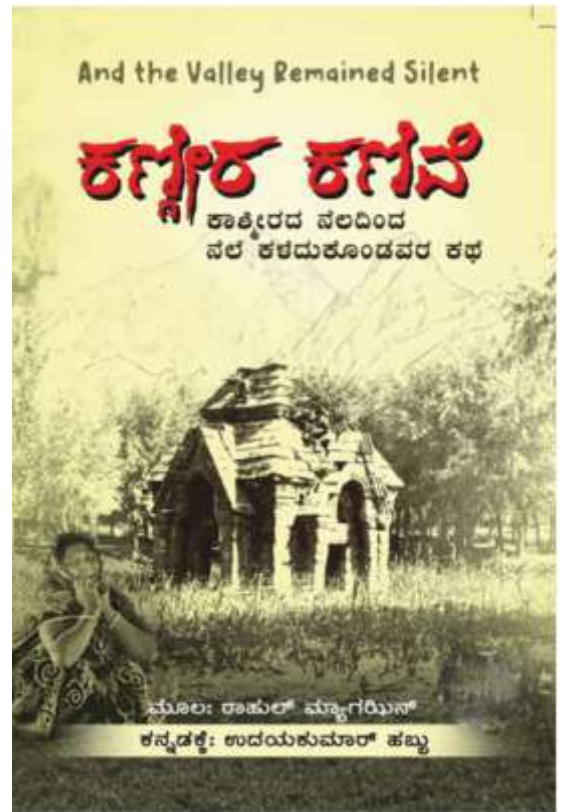


A HOUSE THAT NEVER BECAME HOME

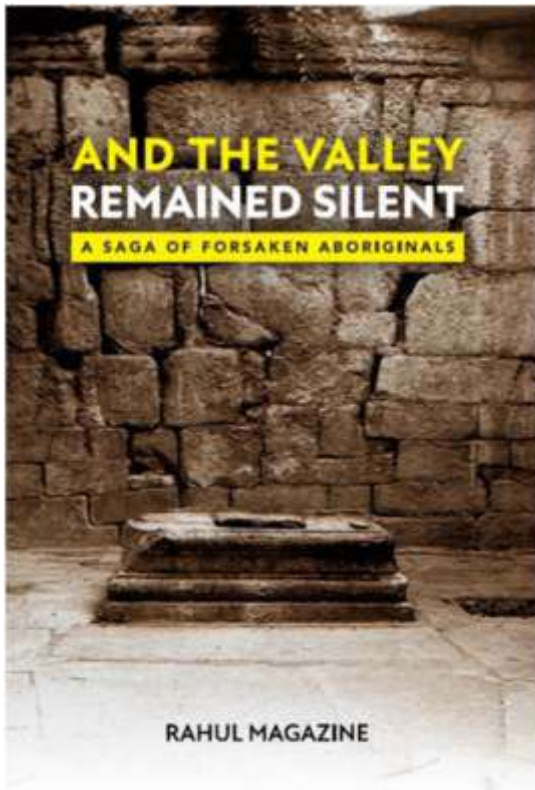
In 1986, Janki Nath Pandita (name changed)* was posted at Qazigund, as a manager of the local branch of Jammu and Kashmir Bank. An honest, deeply religious person, he was loved and respected by his family, friends, and colleagues. Living alone in Qazigund—his wife had stayed back in Srinagar for kids' schooling—he made friendship with two locals, Mohammed Shafqat* and Sukhbeer Singh*, spending a lot of time with them. Both were much younger to him, and not his co-religionists, yet this didn't get in the way of their close friendship. Often the trio would be seen riding together on Sukhbeer's motorcycle, a heartwarming, real-life example of Hindu-Muslim-Sikh amity.

Notwithstanding Shafqat's shady past, Pandita showered his fatherly love on him, and in turn received unquestionable loyalty from his young friend. He would confide in Pandita the details of his past, sharing with him personal things he wouldn't even tell his family: about his days of incarceration after being apprehended by the police, the graphic details of his interrogation and supposed torture. During school holidays when Pandita's children were free, Shafqat would loan a truck and drive down to Srinagar. He would pick up Pandita's wife and kids from their house then drive them back to Qazigund, pleasantly surprising Pandita.

Once a Muslim contractor, who would do most of the government-related construction work in the town, refused to pay



up the loan he had taken from the bank. The bank officials had almost given up on the case, as this person was well connected in the local corridors of power, having the backing of the town area committee chairman, Mohammed Asif*, and a local MLA. This cabal of corrupt officials and politicians was involved in many government projects in the town. One day a bearer cheque for Rs. 16000 was delivered to



the bank, by a peon from the town area committee office. It was a payment issued in the name of the contractor for some work done in the town. Pandita, aware of the loan this person owed the bank, immediately deposited the cheque into the loan account rather than the contractor's savings account. Irrked the contractor complained to Asif, the town area committee chairman, who next day barged into the bank, cursing and threatening Pandita. The chairman had perhaps expected Pandita to back off, not realizing he was dealing with an upright and fearless person. Enraged by Asif's wrongful and arrogant attitude, Pandita retorted equally forcefully. Right away the bank staff intervened, trying to calm them down so that the shouting match didn't turn into something uglier. Asif stormed out of the bank, hurling expletives and threatening to complain to the minister. The news of this run-in at the bank reached Shafqat, incensing him so much he went straight to Asif's house. Standing outside, with a stick in his hand, Shafqat tongue-lashed Asif, and warned him

against daring to hurt Pandita. Having given Asif a taste of his own medicine, he left to meet with Pandita. News of the row had by now spread throughout the small town.

Trying to calm Shafqat down, Pandita said, "Please don't take this matter so seriously, it was just a minor altercation between me and Mohammed Asif."

"Pandita Sahib, I respect you like my father," said Shafqat, getting emotional and with tears in his eyes. "How dare he use those filthy words to threaten you? I won't tolerate it under any circumstance."

Pandita, offering him a glass of water, tried to reason with him and finally convinced him to get past the messy affair. Interestingly, the following day Asif called up Pandita, and apologized for his bad behavior. Accepting the apology, Pandita was glad to put the matter to rest.

Yet another incident revealed how much love and regard Shafqat had for his friend. He had come over to the bank for a relaxing chit chat over a cup of tea, but found Pandita in low spirits. Concerned, he asked, "Pandita Sahib, today you are not in your usual jovial mood What is bothering you?"

"Shafqat," said a grim-faced Pandita, "I am in a difficult situation due to a blunder committed by our clerk. Being the manager of the bank, the buck stops at my door."

He then explained how a silly but serious clerical error at the bank led to a draft being cashed out twice. The amount involved was also quite large so refunding it from his's own personal resources was also not an option.

Having understood the problem, Shafqat assured him, "Don't you worry; let me see what can be done to resolve the issue."

Next morning, when Pandita entered the bank he found Shafqat waiting for him outside his office.

"Shafqat!" said Pandita, surprised to see him at the bank. "What are you doing here at this time of the day?"

Shafqat, with a big smile on his face, said "*Mahra*, let us go inside your office first, then I will tell you everything,"

"Here, take this," Shafqat said, closing

the office door behind him and handing over a packet to Pandita. "Your problem is solved."

"What is this?" Pandita asked, pointing to the packet which Shafqat had given him.

"It is the money bank had overpaid the customer due to the clerk's slip-up."

"How on earth did you manage to recover it?" asked Pandita, delighted and puzzled at once.

Beaming with pride, Shafqat told how he had gone straight to Sukhbeer's house after hearing of Pandita's plight. Together they got on the motorcycle and set out in search of the person who had received the extra payment from the bank. Not only did they trace the person but also convinced him to pay up immediately, in cash. Feeling grateful, Pandita thanked Shafqat for getting him out of trouble.

"I am like your son. How can you insult me by thanking for something that is my duty?" asserted Shafqat.

Not only Shafqat but his entire family held Pandita in high regard. When Shafqat's sister was getting married, Pandita with his family was invited for the function. On the wedding day Shafqat's mother surprised Pandita by requesting him to keep account of the money being gifted to the bride by the guests. Uncomfortable handling someone else's money, Pandita instead suggested, "Don't you think it would better if Shafqat took up this responsibility."

"I don't trust Shafqat when it comes to money," she said jokingly.

Since she insisted he do it, Pandita couldn't say no, feeling overwhelmed by the trust she placed in him. Staying up whole night during the festivity, he received and kept account of the money that was being gifted.

Hailing from Neva village in Pulwama district, Pandita's family had an ancestral house there, constructed in the center of a

four-kanal plot, where his uncle's family stayed. The property had a barn for cows and in the backyard there was a large kitchen garden. Though his job had made him to leave his native village, Pandita dreamed of leading a relaxed retired life there. In 1986, he took a bank loan to construct a two-storey house, on his part of the property. The construction went on for a few years, and he put all his hard earned money into building his dream house, getting the choicest material and fittings for it.

In the meantime, events took an ugly turn in the Valley, with an upsurge in the violence against Hindus. Feeling increasingly uneasy about safety of the womenfolk, Pandita sent them to Jammu. Along with his mother-in-law and his youngest son, he stayed back in

Srinagar, where he had been transferred a few years back. Their new house at

Neva was ready by now and Pandita waited patiently for the

situation to ease off so he could get his family back from Jammu. Hopeful that the government would step in and control the situation, he wanted to celebrate the house warming ceremony with his entire family. His optimism was shattered when

his Muslim subordinates at the bank advised him to leave the

Valley. They claimed to have heard his name come up during discussions at a nearby mosque, most likely he was on the hit list of the terrorists. Being a well-known figure in the neighborhood, Pandita actively participated in social events, and this made him vulnerable. Moreover, the vermilion *Teeka* on his forehead, which he never missed to put on after his morning prayers, was a giveaway of his being a Kashmiri Hindu. Gruesome murders of Hindus in the neighborhood around this time shook his confidence. An overpowering sense of insecurity gripped Pandita, the unremitting anxiety was too much to handle. The message was clear: the fundamentalists decided who got to live and who deserved to die—the law-and-order apparatus had totally collapsed. At 3 am,

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on 29 February 1990, a taxi arrived to take them to Jammu. The whole night they had been awake, waiting for the taxi and packing whatever little could fit into a few suitcases. They filed into the vehicle and left. With a heavy heart Pandita thought about his new house at Neva, a house of his dreams which had become a reality but seemed to slip out of his reach—permanently. For almost a year the family stayed in Jammu at a relative's house, before Pandita's job took him to Delhi.

In 1992, they got a message from the Valley that separatists had burnt down their ancestral house. The arsonists had got to know through insurance officials that the adjacent new house was insured, so they didn't burn it, instead they took away all the fittings, even the wooden doors and windows were pulled out. All this was done to ensure that the Hindu family didn't get any compensation by filing an insurance claim, such was the level of complicity between the arsonists and the officials! Undeterred Pandita put in an insurance claim for the stolen items, but yet again the unholy nexus worked against him. Local team of assessors played mischief by submitting in their report photographs of the part of the house that was still untouched by the looters, thus ensuring the claim was rejected by the company.

A few years later Pandita received a phone call at his Delhi office, from an officer of

A few years later Pandita received a phone call at his Delhi office, from an officer of the Border Security Force (BSF) unit stationed in Neva. The BSF wanted to take his house on rent for putting up troops there. Though offered a meagre rent, Pandita took up the offer — better his house be of some use to the nation's forces than becoming a den of terrorists, he thought.

The chairman had perhaps expected Pandita to back off, not realizing he was dealing with an upright and fearless person.

the Border Security Force (BSF) unit stationed in Neva. The BSF wanted to take his house on rent for putting up troops there. Though offered a meagre rent, Pandita took up the offer — better his house be of some use to the nation's forces than becoming a den of terrorists, he thought. In 1996, they found out that his in-laws' house in Srinagar was illegally occupied by the Muslim neighbors. Later the illegal occupants offered to buy the house but at a fraction of the market price. Considering the biased administration, it would be next to impossible to evict the illegal occupants, so reluctantly Pandita, on behalf of his in-laws, accepted the offer. The family land was likewise partly sold while the rest was being tilled by a Muslim neighbor who would share part of the profit with them.

To rebuild their lives Pandita toiled hard, got his children educated, and once more started saving money to construct a house, but this time it would far away from his beloved Neva. Meanwhile the family stayed in a small, rented accommodation in Delhi. It pained Pandita when at the beginning of each month he had to pay the rent to the landlord and EMI to the bank for the loan that he had taken for the house at Neva. A house he had spent his life's savings on but was snatched away from him before he could even set his foot inside — a house that never became his home.

Author is a Professor of Respiratory Medicine.

(This is an excerpt from his book 'AND THE VALLEY REMAINED SILENT', which has been translated into Kannada. Also Tamil and Oriya translations are in the works. The book is available on Amazon worldwide)



 Sanjeev Munshi



The Missing Work Life Balance

Over a century ago the Welsh poet W.H Davies wrote:

*What is this life if, full of care,
We have no time to stand and stare!
No time to stand beneath the boughs
and stare as long as sheep or cows.
No time to see, when woods we pass,
Where squirrels hide their nuts in grass.
No time to see, in broad daylight,
Streams full of stars, like skies at night.*

I recall these lines each time I interact with my own children or children I have seen growing up, including those of my relatives, my neighbours, and friends! These children are so engrossed in their work, are living such stressful lives, that, at times, I wonder if such lives are worth the efforts these kids are putting in. I see these kids stuck to their phones and laptops for 10 – 15 hours daily, if not more! They are so busy that parents or spouses often do not dare to disturb them during such 'work' sessions. Recently, I visited my cousin, a retired 'Bharat Sarkar' karmachari at Bangalore; both his daughters are living within a 5km radius. His wife lamented that for 5 work days of the week, both daughters and their spouses, are too busy with 'office work', hardly able to speak over phone; on weekends, they are busy attending to household needs and other chores, leaving limited time for one-to-one interaction, excepting over phone. These kids have packages running into six digits (and more)

but do not have the time to relax in the evening, post work! For people working with MNCs, with clienteles' spread across continents, the difference in time zones creates longer work hours! Recently, I saw the top executive of a MNC at Bangalore return from office by 5 pm but start a video conference with his bosses in US by 7 pm! The conference can last for 2 hours at a time and Family, by now has learnt to 'live' with the situation! Here in India mostly people live to work. One of the biggest reasons that people struggle to balance work and family life is that they fail to compartmentalize. Talking to wife/ child while at office is considered normal as is checking of a work email while playing with the kids or taking calls from clients while out for dinner with family - all in the name of that magical word – Multitasking!

Post 1990, India saw the evolution of private sector 'corporate world', led so powerfully by the IT sector. Private jobs became the preferred choice as against 'sarkari' jobs of the golden times (as those appear today) of 1960s and 1970s! I used to see my late father (and other close relatives with govt jobs) return from their offices by a fixed, predictable time and then, enjoy family time or socialize! Over the years, job opportunities in public sector or pure govt sector have reduced in absolute numbers or as a percentile of total jobs available in the market. A classic example is the telecom sector – I have 3 cousins who worked

for the 'sarkari' BSNL – the organization used to have a monopoly on communication facilities in India. With introduction of competition from the private sector (starting 1995, Essar Cell phones), BSNL not only lost its monopoly but also its arrogance, its sheen and, more importantly, its customers. Telecom sector just erupted like a volcano and today, India has the world's second largest telecom market with a base of 1.19 billion customers (Dec 2024). Similar explosions took place in several other segments of Indian economy – Banking, electronic media, insurance, consumer and white goods manufacturing, aviation, food, hospitality, travel, industrial manufacturing, services segment etc. This boom has created jobs, mostly well-paid ones but the kids appear to be paying a heavy price for the money they are earning—by way of their family and social relationships!

Having spent 43 years in Pharma Marketing, I have seen the Indian Corporate World functioning inside out, as I rose through the ranks. Throughout my professional career, I had to travel frequently and stay away from home for days together; introduction of cell

phones further tightened the noose around our necks as corporate bosses could contact sales staff at odd hours! Sales are considered a jealous mistress, leaving one with limited time for other activities; yet, I feel, I and my colleagues in the industry could maintain a decent balance between life and work responsibilities. I always could give time to my family and attend to my social responsibilities, including parent-teacher meetings of my kids! Today, that life-work balance is under serious threat. Employees are expected to be on duty 24x7x365! No doubt the facilities and financial rewards are way beyond our expectations. Yet, the question remains in my mind – at what cost?

The Covid 19 outbreak had a brutal impact on every segment of economy, particularly on segments like the small retail, tourism, food, hospitality, non-pharma sales, travel, aviation, manufacturing etc. For about 24 months, country remained in varying degrees of lockdown. Manufacturing industry resorted to downscaling, leading to loss of jobs. Labour market crashed, particularly in unorganized sector;



construction industry came to a halt, domestic help was advised to stay home. Some industries created various forms of 'work-from home' model – but WFH suited only certain types of industries! Zoom calls became the order of the day. I learnt that several IT Companies in hubs like Bangalore, Hyderabad and Pune let go of huge properties they had hired as office space! Initially, people working from home were delighted; WFH saved commute time, a huge relief in large cities like Delhi, Mumbai etc, besides giving people the notion of convenience. Young parents were particularly happy for being able to spend more time with their toddlers. Soon, however, people started feeling that the knife cuts both ways and there is a serious issue of timings. People ended up working for longer hours! Given the propensity of Indian Managements, long work hours have become the norm, creating stress and impacting lifestyles!

Impact of Covid 19 was global. I found that several of my relatives in North America were also working from home. However, during my stay abroad, I found while people had adopted WFH, they continued to maintain a healthier work-life balance, in line with the general trend in the West. Holidays and weekends continue to be sacrosanct. Likewise, work hours are respected in the West and people are often compensated for putting in extra hours, unlike in India. It is only in India that employers/ managers try to squeeze out every ounce of juice from their workforce! We Indians are often hailed as 'hard working' but soon people realize that the 'hard work' comes at a huge cost, impacting quality of life! I overheard a middle level MNC IT manager in Bangalore lamenting that his US based *Indian* boss often berates his team in India with comments like, "Sleep is very over rated; you have weekends free, enjoy your sleep on weekends"! Such comments or thinking comes but rarely from the Western bosses or can be used to other employees in West. Mostly it is the Indian origin bosses based in US who act as slave drivers. My son recently (2025) has relocated

to the US and, he is already feeling in lifestyle as compared to his India tenure.

Having worked in Indian corporate world, I can say with a certain amount of conviction that most Indian employers and Managers are obsessed with 360 degrees, 365x24x7 availability of their staff. They also have this feeling of owning the body and soul of their employees. As a result of the immense competition and perceived 'threat to job', a few unfortunate trends are being noticed in this 25–35-years population segment:

- People have become obsessed with their careers, often losing life perspectives
- Due to high disposable incomes, this segment has increased its expenses and got used to a certain lifestyle;
- Fear of losing a job haunts many as it impacts lifestyle; lockdown demonstrated that.
- Lack of work-life balance affects personal relationships. If an employee continues to neglect their loved ones for work, he may end up with relationship problems that enhance his stress quotient, affecting work as well as quality of life. The bottom line: unhappiness at work causes unhappiness at home and vice versa.
- Relationships have become fragile – people are hesitating in committing themselves to the institution of marriage. Live-in relationships have gained acceptance. Living currently in an IT hub, I often come across couples 'in relationship' but uncertain or uncomfortable in committing to a long-lasting relationship.
- In chasing the mirage of career, people are deferring (even refusing) having kids. Nature sometimes has its revenge later!
- Job obsessions and leading 'pressure cooker' lifestyles are impacting health with depression, mood swings, obesity, hypertension, diabetes, and other lifestyle disorders. Increased screen time has led to problems affecting vision (sore eyes, double vision, blurring, headaches (migraine), excessive tearing or blinking,

the 'computer vision syndrome') etc.

- Since both partners are engrossed in career building, household chores, particularly cooking get outsourced – either to Zomato/ Swiggy or a cook. Quality obviously suffers since the 'domestic help' commands a high premium and the couples face a TINA (there is no alternative) situation.
- Home delivery of daily household needs, even at a cost, has become the norm. A proper 'supply-delivery' mechanism has evolved for such families in Metro cities in India. Mostly couples lack the time to visit markets personally!

An unwitting victim of such lifestyles are the kids born to busy parents. Toddlers need proper care and attention for the first 2-3 years of their lives. As per current Indian laws, expectant mothers are allowed just 6 months of maternity leave; there is no provision of paternity leave in India as on date. Our workplaces do not have provision for nurseries and it becomes very difficult for a mother to nurse a 6-month-old child. Indian managements are mostly insensitive towards such basic needs of a lactating mother. Recently, a colleague was forced to resign by an arrogant HR because she wished to feed her 6-month child at home during lunch break! Since families have become nuclear, parents must either fall back upon their own parents (set of in-laws) or to hire nannies. Parents from India have been traveling to the greener pastures of Europe and America for decades for babysitting! The concept of sending young kids (< 6 m - 5 yrs) to Day Care Centres has been prevalent in developed countries for decades and is taking root in larger cities now in India too! I recently got to see first-hand, working of a couple of Day Care Centres in Canada; such centres are tightly regulated in the West but not in India. While these Day Cares provide adequate care to young kids, nothing can replace the love and care parents'/grandparents'/ family can provide! My wife and myself spent 8 months babysitting in Canada in 2021-22 and the difference it made to the child's development

was obvious to all, including the day care provider!

I am not in any way criticizing the current generation – they are just responding to a set of situations; their lifestyles are a response, maybe knee-jerk one, to the situation they find themselves in. I find it different from my point of view, having led a very different type of life. Probably every generation goes through this process of evolution, finding their own answers to the peculiar situations they find themselves in. My concern is that the cost our children are paying for earning big salaries might, in the long run, prove too big even for them! Not everything can be seen in terms of dollars earned! Life does not have a rewind button! Time just flies by, leaving behind people not in step. A healthy life-work integration is the order of the day! We need to look at life in its larger context! Life balance is more than work-life balance - it is an intricate art and science of making decisions on how we spend our time and energy, including how we include various parts facets of our lives - caring for our families, our friends, traveling, self-care and occasionally dabbling in our hobbies. Yes, work consumes a significant part of our day, but there is a much larger, much more important thing called LIFE. Work Life Balance (WLB) has more to do with managing expectations - those others have of us and those we have of ourselves. Humans are sensitive and vulnerable creatures, designed in a complex and vastly varying ways. The pace of life these days requires cultivation of expectation management and everyone must evolve their own unique form of that art. It's a struggle because so many people just rely on wrong role models. Your employer shall replace you as soon as you quit or retire. Long after you retire, your loved ones and friends shall still be there for you. The relationships and memories you built with them is what matters most in life.

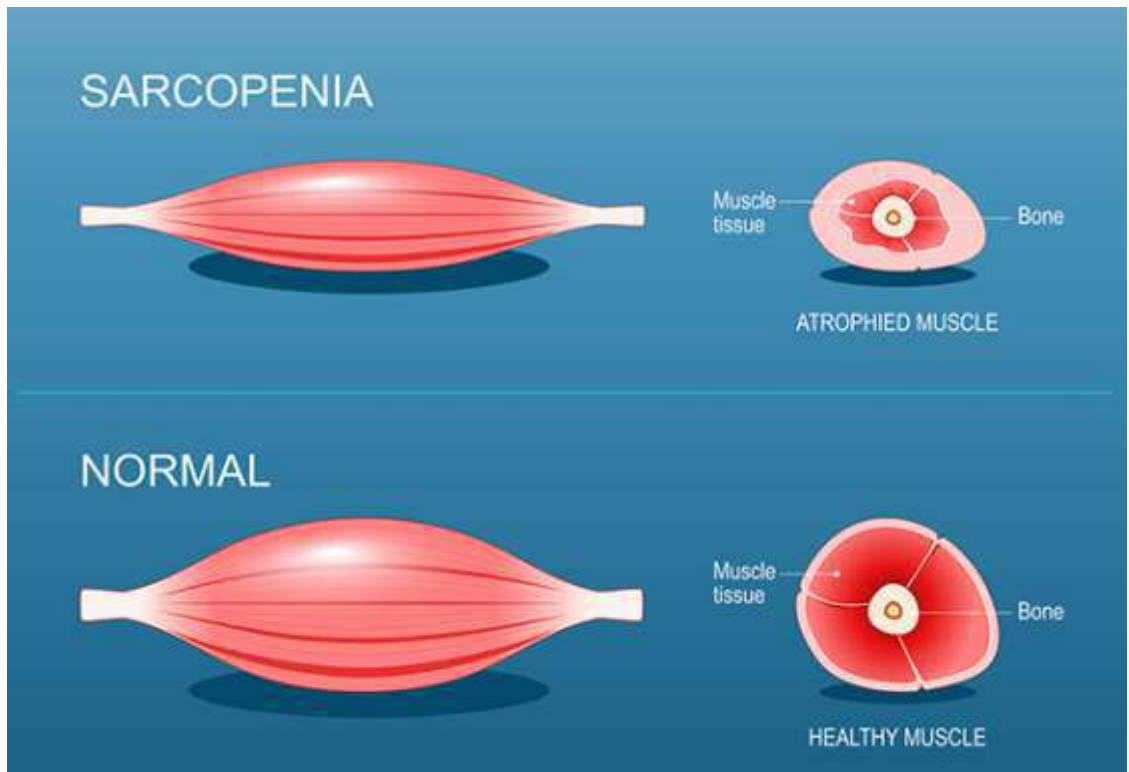
*Hyderabad, March 18, 2025
sanjeevmunshi@hotmail.com
9099188501*



 Dr Viney Kantroo



WHAT IS SARCOPENIA?



Sarcopenia is progressive loss of muscle mass, strength or function.

Until recently muscle loss was considered normal ageing process but continued research has shown that it has many causes. Sarcopenia leads to poor disease outcomes meaning recovery is hampered and prolonged. It also leads to more chances of dying from any disease described as increased mortality in medical language. In 2022, Verma et al showed a high sarcopenia prevalence of 46.7% in adults who led a sedentary lifestyle, almost fifty percent of population suffers from it.

Why are we discussing it?

Irrespective of the definitions, sarcopenia is independently associated with a poor quality of life, risk of fractures and falls, and mortality. Sarcopenia has also been linked to various comorbidities and seen to be enhancing these disease states, including heart failure, chronic respiratory diseases, chronic liver diseases, diabetes, chronic kidney disease, and malignancy. The good thing is it is tangible or has solutions to be corrected.

What are the various causes?

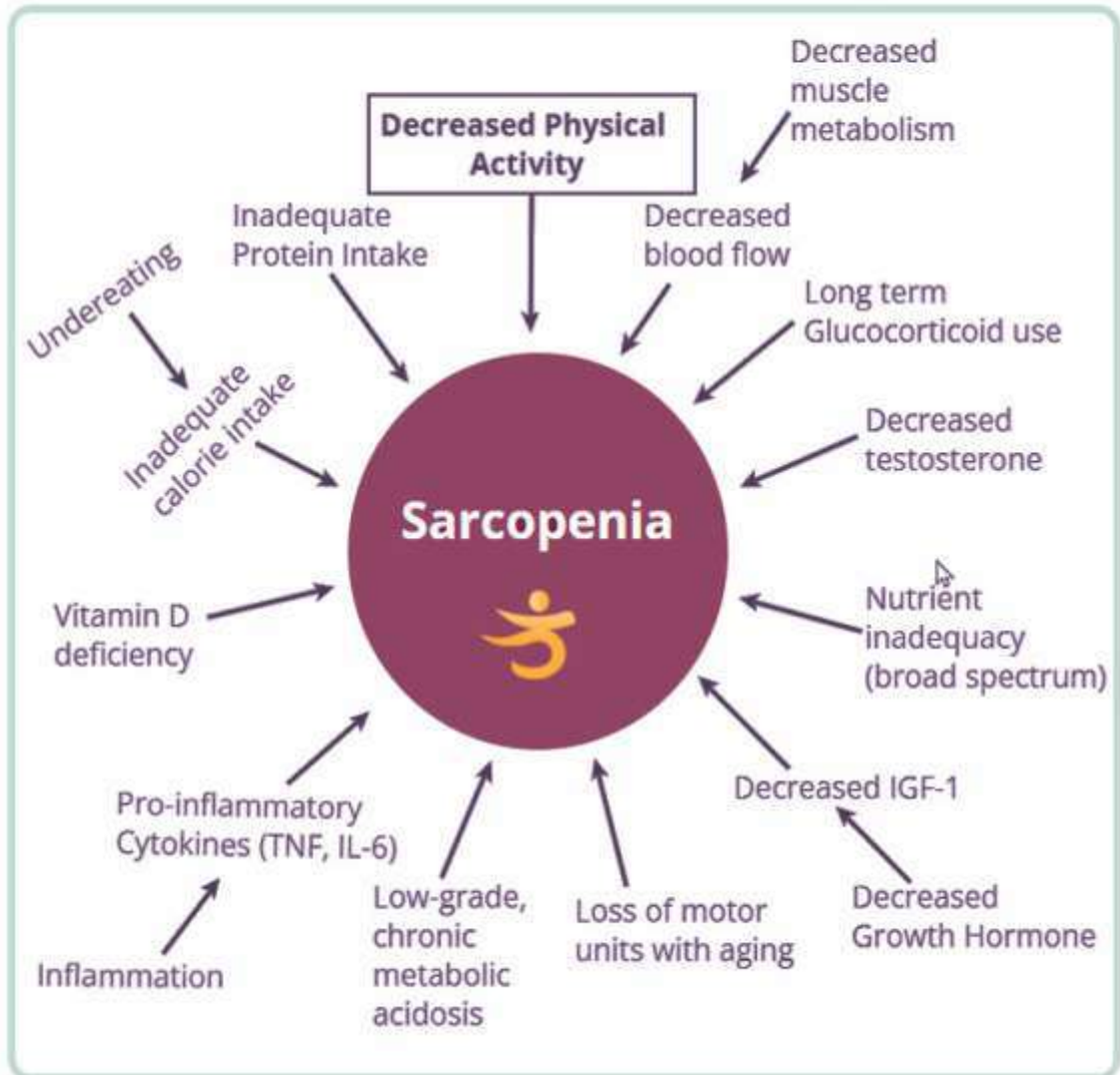
In general, Asians have smaller body sizes,

lower muscle mass, and higher adiposity than their Western counterparts. Particularly, Indian diets are primarily cereal-based and are relatively low in protein quality. Lower socioeconomic status is associated with malnutrition and a higher risk of sarcopenia.

How can it be screened meaning how do we know if you may have it?

You may complete a questionnaire based on your self-reported symptoms called the SARC-F. SARC-F stands for:

The muscle loss cascade of sarcopenia



The most important cause is ageing leading to what we call primary sarcopenia. We lose about 8% of muscle mass each decade which is very high.

Secondary sarcopenia could be attributed to multiple factors, namely diseases, poor lifestyle, inactivity, and malnutrition/obesity.

- **S**—Strength.
- **A**—Assistance with walking.
- **R**—Rising from a chair.
- **C**—Climbing stairs.
- **F**—Falls.

You score each factor with a number

between 0 and 2. The highest maximum SARC-F score is 10. A SARC-F score of 4 or more warrants more testing.

What are the tests that can be done?

- **Handgrip test:** Handgrip strength draws a parallel to the strength in your other muscles. Providers use it to identify shortages in overall muscle strength. A baseline HGS strength cutoff value of <27.5 kg in males and <18.0 kg in females can be defined as low muscle strength for the Indian population
- **Chair stand test:** Providers use the chair stand test to measure your [leg muscle](#) strength, especially your quadriceps. The chair stand test(CST) measures the number of times you can stand and sit from a chair without the use of your arms in 30 seconds. A cutoff value of ≥ 12 seconds in the 5-CST may be considered poor physical performance in individuals with sarcopenia.
- **Walking speed test:** The walking (gait) speed test measures the time it takes for you to travel 4 meters (about 13 feet) at your usual walking pace. A gait speed of 0.8 m/s suggests poor physical performance in adults aged over 60.
- **Short physical performance battery (SPPB):** With the SPPB test, you take three timed tasks: chair stand test, standing balance test and walking speed test.
- **Timed-up and go test (TUG):** The TUG test measures the time it takes for you to rise from a chair, walk 3 meters (about 10 feet) away from the chair, walk 3 meters back to the chair, and sit back down in the chair.

What are the imaging tests that can be done?

Imaging tests such as computed tomography (CT), magnetic resonance imaging (MRI), ultrasound (USG), DXA, or BIA may be conducted based on need and affordability.

How can we manage Sarcopenia?

A minimum 12-week program of resistance exercise combined with nutritional supplementation can be recommended for the prevention and management of sarcopenia.

Exercise guidelines advocate atleast exercising for 60-90 minutes atleast three days a week.

Exercise protocols are mainly of three types:

1. **Cardio-respiratory(Heart lung) Endurance training :** It mostly works with heart and readies the body for burning fat and overall increases body's capacity to endure physical activity. Examples include brisk walking, Running, jogging, cycling, swimming, treadmill, playing sports etc
2. **Strength Training :** works with the muscles to build and maintain muscle mass by being focused on certain muscle groups. Once muscles are strengthened it helps to strengthen joints as without healthy muscle it's impossible to maintain a healthy joint eg weight training, core strengthening
3. **Stretching and flexibility:** maintains the elasticity and flexibility of body to sustain/bear the daily twists and turns our body undergoes. Eg Yoga
4. **Balancing :** important to have perfect balance of body and maintain an erect posture to avoid unnecessary pulls and stretches on the joints and muscle groups eg Yoga, Pilates

Out of all these Yoga has additional benefits of improvement in mental health though any form of physical activity is good for brain in general.

We often forget about own body which ensures us a comfortable movement and precision in execution of various activities. If you have not started exercising it's NEVER TOO LATE.

And don't forget the last but the most important activity for healthy living is :

S.L.E.E.P - do get your dose. Sleep reduces body inflammation and also mitigates effects of deficiency of insulin in body which means better sugar control.

Specialised Nutrients NUTRITION THERAPY for Sarcopenia

Nutrient	Action	Dosage
Protein(including whey)	Improved muscle mass, muscle strength and physical performance	1-1.2 g/kg body weight
Essential amino acids (leucine)	Improved muscle mass and synthesis of basal muscle protein	2.5–2.8 g per meal
Calcium	Regulation of muscle health and increased lean muscle mass	1000–1200mg/day
Vitamin D	Enhanced muscle strength and performance and decreased risk of fractures	800–1000 IU/day
Creatine	Increased lean mass and muscle strength	20 g/day
Omega-3 fatty acids	Increased lean muscle mass and walking speed	2 g/day
Vitamin C	Antioxidant	45–90 mg/day
Magnesium	Preserving muscle mass and preventing oxidative damage	300 mg/day for men and 270 mg/day for women 400 µg/day
Probiotics	Production of short-chain fatty acids and amino acids to regulate homeostasis in skeletal muscle	

Summary: the following diagram summarises everything beautifully. In the end I would like to share that women have more problems with muscle and bones because our hormones are not “strength” friendly traditionally. However it is a myth that women don’t do strenuous activities. The level of multitasking required to manage a home is next level and I have always maintained that “home making” is the hardest of all jobs in the world. It requires extreme physical and mental toughness. Hence it is mandatory that women should incorporate all these measures in their routine more importantly than men to maintain healthy body, mind and future generations as they also give birth to children which saps the body of essential nutrients.



(Author is MRCP(London), DNB Respiratory Diseases, IDCCM (Critical Care), EDARM Senior Consultant, Respiratory, Critical Care and Sleep Medicine, Indraprastha Apollo Hospitals, Sarita Vihar, New Delhi – 76)



Inder K Koul



MAHADEV (TIRATH/PEAK)

A pilgrimage unto Eternal Bliss

The tallest impressive peak visible from Srinagar city in its eastern horizon rising in the mountain chain located in the valleys of Triphar and Dachigam, is the sacred Mahadev ($74^{\circ} 59' 49''$ long. & $34^{\circ} 09' 28''$ lat.) It has often been mentioned in Nilmatpuran and Sarvavtara and is frequented by the pilgrims particularly on Ashad Poornimashi and Sawan Poornimashi (the full moon days in July/August and August/September) besides being a well-known adventure tourism destination and trekking resort.

Lalitaditya Muktapida who ruled over Kashmir between 699 CE and 736 CE is reported to have built Mahadevswami temple

at Mount Mahadev which is considered to be one of the abodes of Lord Shiva. Some writers have mentioned its height as 11,500 ft. However, the actual height of main peak locally called Angrezi Mahadev because it was generally scaled by the British mountaineers/trekkers in the past, is 14,892 ft. which remains clad with snow throughout the year though partially in summers, while the one visited by the Hindu pilgrims is just above 13,100 feet at $74^{\circ} 59' 15''$ long. & $34^{\circ} 09' 08''$ lat. Almost a constant ascent from Harwan via Chak Dara which is the last inhabited place on the route to Mahadev, for a distance of about 19 Kms. brings one onto the peak which overlooks almost the maximum part of the



main valley of Kashmir. Almost half the way in a narrow gorge flanked on both sides by dense cedar trees is a somewhat flat spot where down running streams form a shallow placid water pond with a peculiar bluish sapphire tinge for which it has rightly been named as Neel Paan sar meaning Bluish water lake. Lidwas ($74^{\circ} 59' 3.2''$ long. & $34^{\circ} 10' 12.8''$ lat.) whose elevation is 10,925 feet and falls on the route is the main camping ground both for trekkers as well as pilgrims and from here onwards one cannot find any tree even that of birch family. There are two or three small natural springs more or less round in shape at Lidwas whose water is very cold especially in the morning hours even during the hot months of June or July. There are a few Gujjar dwellings or Kothas here used by the nomadic members of this community as shelter when they pass through this glade in summer. It is Lidwas from where the pilgrim peak is at a trekking distance of 4/5 Kms for which one has to traverse about half a dozen up and down basins covered solely with big stone boulders called Gaagar locally, in which only the roaring sound of water running underneath can be heard. On escaping from the gaggars this water forms streamlets like Wagbat Nadi, Namblan Nadi, Munyu Nadi and Drong Nadi. Out of these the last mentioned one merges with Dagwan nallah at Draphom ($74^{\circ} 56' 33''$ long. & $34^{\circ} 07' 35''$ lat – alt. 5,909' which after receiving the streams coming from Tar Sar and Mar Sar joins Telbal nallah near Telbal before flowing into Dal lake.

Coming back to the trekking expedition, those wishing to scale the actual snow clad Mount Mahadev peak shall have to go further up by about 1800 feet from the sacred Mahadev and they would require mountaineering kit in any season. However, for the pilgrim Mahadev only a few strong ropes of average length (say 10 feet) may be required

As regards the holy spot of Mahadev, there are three distinct upright projections of this spur visited by the devotees; one each meant for the worship of Hindu deities Ganesh, Parvati and Shiva. The last mentioned one bears a naturally formed stone linga on a



natural pedestal or pranali (both formed in one rock only). The grey coloured linga whose surface is rough and is rather conical than oval in shape has naturally formed white and blackish streaks running parallelly and obliquely just as a yagneopavit or holy thread runs across the chest of a Sanatani Hindu. The devotees perform Pooja at this spot which at one time can accommodate 6 to 8 persons in standing position.



Birds cannot normally be seen at this high altitude, but during the pilgrim days the silence of solitude on Mahadev is occasionally interrupted by black jungle crows who fly here for eatables offered by the pilgrims. Hangul the Kashmir red deer occasionally stray from Dachhigam National Park up to Mahadev in search of grass. Since this small peak is somewhat aloof from rest of the mountain body any sound produced echoes for a considerably longer period and the way it eventually gets lost into the hazy 'emptiness' beyond one's visual and hearing range gives an impression as if one has merged with some ethereal thing far away from earth.... a temporary salvation from the material world.



 Upendra Ambardar



Acharya Abhinavagupta

A COLOSSUS GENIUS



His learning signified an exceptional convergence of numerous fields and subjects ranging right from the religion, spirituality, philosophy, Vedas, Buddhist and Vaishnavite thoughts to Shaivite concepts of both tantric and kaula traditions.

The world-renowned Siddha Mahamaheswaracharya Abhinavagupta occupies a glorious place in the religio-spiritual and literary matrix of the country. His very name stimulates varied recollections about the weighty imprints left by him in the form of creative works. He epitomizes a towering genius, a spirited scholar, an extraordinary intellectual, a stand-out philosopher and an extremely revered saint, self-disciplined guru – all amalgamated in one. He is admired for his phenomenal creative works in the fields of literature,

dramatics, tantra, criticism, music, grammar, logic, meditative practices, and spiritual hymns. His insatiable appetite for learning and knowledge made him to study under many acknowledged scholars cum spiritual masters of that period. His learning signified an exceptional convergence of numerous fields and subjects ranging right from the religion, spirituality, philosophy, Vedas, Buddhist and Vaishnavite thoughts to Shaivite concepts of both tantric and kaula traditions. He as well had the distinction of being the highest authority Mahamaheswaracharya Abhinavagupta on

Kashmir Shaivism and Tantra. Learning and writing were Acharya Abhinavagupta's lifelong missions, which opened new trailblazing vistas in the field of creative writings. His earthy devotedness coupled with the personal involvement to the framework of the mundane reality made him a versatile Acharya of an exceptional nature. His supreme gifts to the creative ecosphere are scores of his written works on changeable subjects that enjoy unrivalled universal acknowledgements and recognitions.

'*Tantraloka*' represents one of his principal esoteric works that covers different aspects of non-dual Shaivite and Tantric philosophical traditions and the related practices. His one more famous treatise is '*Tantrasar*'. It is centred on varying Tantric ritual aspects and metaphysical elements of tantra. Additionally, it is regarded as an abbreviated rendering of his *Tantraloka*. '*Para Trisika Vivarana*', denoting the classified aspect of Tantric mysticism, is a shortened form of *Tantra* in its philosophical interpretation. It is the most challenging writing in the *Trika* structure, meant for the highly knowledgeable disciples. It is also known by the alternative name of '*Trika Sutra*'. It centres upon the ultimate reality, and with the practices therein for the related realisation. His one more famous work entitled '*Paramarthsara*' epitomizes the essence of the supreme truth. This *Trika* scripture is a rhythmic composition of one hundred and five (105) verses evocating the non-dual Shivite thought intended for the spiritual aspirants. It echoes the universal nature of the Lord Shiva as the supreme and ultimate God. In another publication '*Gitaartha Samagraha*', Acharya Abhinavagupta has given an esoteric interpretation of the Bhagwat Gita in context of the non-dual Kashmir Shaivite thought. Another literary work '*Abhinavbahrati*' is a detailed treatise on Bharat Munis *Natyashastra* and covers the theory of *Rasa* and *Dhwani*. Supplementary, it is referred to as one of the foremost works on poetic concept of the ancient India. Furthermore, '*Kulaka-vivriti*', an elucidation on *Ghatakarpura* of Kalidasa, '*Kavyakautukavivarna*', a discourse on the poetic work of Bhatta Tauta, and

'*Dhvanyalokaloचना*', an interpretation of *Dhvanyaloka*, the famed work of Anandvardhana form central part of Acharya Abhinavagupta's poetic works.

'*Purvapanchika*' is an illustration on *Malinivijaya*, while as '*Malinivijaya Varttika*' is his written narration in the metrical form on the *Malinivijaya Tantra*. Acharya Abhinavagupta's other works comprise '*Devistotravivarana*', which is a commentary on the hymns in praise of the Goddess, '*Paramarthsara*', meaning the quintessential of the Supreme Reality, and '*Kramakali*', an explanation on *Kramastotra*.

The devotional hymns also form a part of his creative oeuvre. It includes '*Bodhapanchadasika*', '*Dehashthadevatachakra - stotra*' (sacred chakras within the human body), '*Paramarthadvadashika*' (based on the supreme reality), besides the famous '*Bhairav Stotra*'. The *Bhairav Stotra* is the most sanctified and revered hymn encompassing the philosophical essence of the Shaivite thought. Its recital continues to be integral both to the Kashmiri households and Sahivite Ashrams right up to the present times.

Acharya Abhinavagupta, in folklore of Kashmir, continues to have a sway in the folk memory and social recollections. As per a native lore, he is said to have undertaken the pilgrimage of the holy shrines in the ancient Budgam area of Kashmir, before his entry in to the '*Bhairav Cave*' in Beerwah, Budgam. It is understood that the Acharya entered the '*Bhairav Cave*' amidst the recital of this very *Stotra* by him and his followers. Be that as it may be, the hymn continues to be recited even now in the distinct form and metrical style, as was followed at that time. An additional spoken lore also says that the Acharya entered in the '*Bhairav Cave*' all alone, without any of his followers, reciting loudly his self-composed *Bhairav* hymn. The pond in the village '*Sonapah*', a short distance away from the '*Bhairav Cave*' owes its origin to Acharya Abhinavagupta. '*Sonapah*', as per an oral narrative, was a vast barren land, devoid of any water source. Acharya's disciples and followers, who had gathered there to bid adieu to him are thought to have

wished him for the water source as they needed it for their religious rites. The Acharya, acceding to their request is believed to have made the pond come up there due to his spiritual powers. The presence of this pond even now in the village bears testimony to the lore. The cave in symbolism is said to represent the spiritual retreat, untapped positive energy, a sort of transcendental sanctum and final cessation of mundane attachments. His never to return entry into the cave, as per an indigenous legend, is ascribed to an ancient '**Yogic cum Spiritual**' act, wherein, a spiritually endowed and enlightened sage would offer the '**Panch Bhootas**' of the physical body, representing the five life elements, ranging from Prithvi, Jala, Agni, Vayu and Ether to the respective deities which preside over these physical elements. This dematerialization of the physical state, in the spiritual parlance is known as '**Shiv Vilai**', meaning the unification with the supreme reality of the Lord Shiva.

One more lore says that Anadeshwar Bhairav, the senior most amongst the Asht Bhairvas of Sringar city was the most

favourite Bhairva of Avharya Abhinavagupta. The oral narrative holds that the Acharya used to frequent and stay at Anandeshwar Shrine located at Maisuma, Srinagar, where he is said to have composed the famous Bhairav Hymn '**Vyapta Charachar Bhav Vishaysham**' As per another oral history, the Acharya would also engage himself in the meditative-spiritual practices at the '**Tapovan**' area of '**Mahadev Parvat Range**' under the sheltering canopy of the Chinar tree, adjacent to the sacred pond, housing an ancient Shiv linga.

In the folk reverence, the said Chinar tree is evoked as '**Abhinavagupta Boien**'. There is a supreme need to preserve and conserve all these sanctified places that are associated with the legendary Acharya.

To sum it up, Acharya Abhinavagupta, the towering intellectual saint who is regarded for his vastness and brilliance of knowledge, continues to occupy an unrivalled and exalted space at the universal level. His scores of written works not only define his creative genius but also continue to be his greatest gifts to the mankind.

BRUTAL KILLING OF TOURISTS AT PAHALGAM IN KASHMIR VALLEY

Jammu Kashmir Vichar Manch with profound shock and sadness condemns in the strongest possible terms the heinous terrorist attack and the act of brutality done at Pahalgam in the Kashmir Valley. This barbaric act of violence, targeting the innocent tourists and selective killing of people from one community amounts to ethnic genocide.

The loss of life and the injuries inflicted upon innocent individuals are deeply tragic and our heart goes out to the victims and their bereaved families in this hour of grief. Such acts of terror have no place in a civilised society and should be condemned by one and all.

JKVM urges the government to take the corrective measures in the valley. This is a total failure of the state and central intelligence agencies. Yet again we got exposed to a planned insurgency and wolf attacks.

We urge the government to thoroughly investigate and bring the perpetrators of crime to justice immediately. It is imperative that those responsible for this cruel act are held accountable for their heinous crime and punished.

JKVM requests all community members to come together support the victim families and reaffirm our collective determination to eradicate terrorism in all its forms.

May peace and normalcy restore to the beautiful land of Kashmir.

We reaffirm our support to the administration in restoring peace and resilience and also express confidence in the authorities to overcome the tragedy and restore peace as soon as possible.

Thanks and regards

TEAM JKVM



Dr C K Gariyali



KAILASH-MANSAROVAR YATRA WITH BABA



It was 2016 and I had just met Baba in Australia and become his fan. Soon I learnt that Baba was taking a group of people to Kailash-Mansarovar Yatra, I decided to go along.

We met Baba Indra Gandhi International Airport to board Kathmandu flight. In Kathmandu, we landed in a five star hotel. It had an exquisite lobby where Nepalese folk music was played by a group of musicians all through the day.

In the evening, Baba took us to watch the Bagmati Ganga Aarti. The river Bagmati is as sacred to people of Nepal as Ganges is to the people of India. It was a thrilling and unique experience for us.

Next day we visited Pashupati Nath Temple. With the blessings of Baba, we had beautiful *darshan* of Lotrd Shiva as Pashupati Nath. We sought the blessings of Guru

Gorukhnath, sat for meditation at Osho-tapoban on Nagarjuna Hills, and finally paid homage to the Sakyamuni Buddha at the Swayambhunath Stupa. We also visited antique parts of Kathmandu, went around shopping for beads and trinkets.

Next day Baba took us to Bhattarai Ashram. Shri Krishna Prasad Bhattarai was the first constitutional Prime Minister of Nepal. After his death, his house was converted to an ashram. We had a soulful *kirtan* in Bhattarai ashram. The descendants of the Bhattarai served us a delicious lunch. I understood that Shri Bhattarai was a student of Baba in Banaras Hindu University.

Flying to Lhasa

Next day, we boarded a flight to Lhasa, we were heading for Tibet. Flying over Mt Everest on way to Lhasa, we could see a wave

of snow that had swept across the vast Himalayan region. At Lhasa, we arrived in Hotel Brahmaputra, named after the legendary river.

At Hotel Brahmaputra the hospitality was unique. We were given a royal welcome by young Tibetan women dressed in traditional attire.

Potala Palace Seat of Dalai Lama

In Lhasa we visited Potala Palace, Norbuhlinka Palace, Drepung Monastery and the famous Barkhor Bazaar. Potala Palace used to be abode of Dalai Lama.

The palace is 119 meters high and has 13 levels. It is said to contain 1000 rooms, 10000 shrines and 200000 statues.

Outside the palace, we saw the devout Tibetans repeatedly bow and kneel in front of the palace as if Dalai Lama was still present.

Travelling by Highest Mountain Train

We were supposed to start our road journey from Lhasa but we were lucky. Baba arranged for us to travel in the highest mountain train in the world to our next destination Shigatse. It was a unique and unforgettable experience.

The Seat of Panchen Lama

Shigatse is the second important city as well as sacred place in Tibet next only to Lhasa. It

is also the headquarters of Panchen Lama. Panchen Lama is a *tulku* (reincarnated lama) in the Gulang School of Tibetan Buddhism. He holds the second-highest spiritual authority in Tibet after Dalai Lama.

Shigatse

In Tibetan language, Shigatse means fertile land. The city is surrounded by plateaus with green pastures freckled with golden sub-tropical forests and Himalayan peaks.

The history of Shigatse goes back to six centuries. In the old town, we can still see the white washed homes with prayer flags on their roofs. Many old houses have murals on the walls based on stories from scriptures to ward off the evil eye.

Shigatse is where Tibetan opera Lhamo was born around the 14th Century during Tang Dynasty. Baba showed us the majestic statue of future Buddha. This tallest Maitreya Buddha statue was made in 1447 out of an alloy of gold and copper. We also saw the Summer-palace of Panchen Lama located nearby. The palace is a mix of Victorian and Buddhist architecture.

Three Single Women and Baba

Most of the Australians had come in small groups. Indians were travelling with families.. There were three of us Pamposh Sarolia, A young female police inspector from Andhra



and me travelling alone. Baba was particularly mindful of three of us. We had come without family but Baba acted as our family. When we reached a hotel, three of us would be checked-in first. We got the same treatment at airports and in visa queues. Most of the time Baba choose to travel by the vehicle in which we were travelling.

Through the entire pilgrimage, we basked endlessly in the unconditional love Baba poured over us, which we can never forget.

Saga

Our next stop was Saga. Saga in Tibetan means 'Happy Land'. Saga is located 151 kms from Shigatse, at an altitude of 4640 meters. It is situated in the valley of Yarlung Zangbo river also known as Brahmaputra and is endowed with beautiful natural scenery.

Prayang

After Saga we travelled to Prayang. Prayang is situated at an altitude of 4700 meters and is considered to be the highest town in the world. It is a picturesque desert. From Prayang it took us over six hours to reach Mansarovar. As we ascended higher, Baba pointed out to us the white tip of Mount Kailash. Having *darshan* of Kailash everyone started chanting Om Namo Shivay.

Reaching Mansarovar

At Mansarovar we camped for four days on the bank of Mansarovar Lake. As soon as we arrived, Baba asked us to go and have our first dip in the holy waters of the fabled lake. I got into freezing water and emerged totally, refreshed. All the aches and pains of the long journey forgotten.

Every evenings, on all four days, before dinner, we had a *satsang* with Baba on the banks of Mansarovar which was an ethereal experience in itself. During these meetings, Baba shared with us many legends of Mansarovar.

Buddhist Legends and Buddha's Birth

Baba said that the Buddhist name for Mount Kailash is 'Kang Rinpoche' 'the snow of the precious jewel'. Lord Demchok is the Buddhist guardian deity of the peak of Kailash. Lord

Demchok appears to be Tibetan version of the Lord Shiva. He is depicted wrapped in a tiger skin and wearing an intimidating garland of human skulls, he holds a *damaru* - a small drum – in one hand and a *khatam* – trident – in the other.

Buddhists believe, Queen Maya, was transported to this Anotatta Lake (Mansarovar) by gods and after purifying her body and womb, she was made ready to receive the future Buddha. They believe that the future Buddha, riding a white elephant, descended from the direction of Mount Kailash and entered the womb of Queen Maya.

Hindu Legends

Hindus believe that Mount Kailash is the manifestation of the mythological Mount Meru. It is the spiritual pillar of the universe around which everything else revolves. The root of the pillar is in the lowest hell and the summit of the pillar is reaching the heavens.

Hindus worship Mount Kailash as the abode of Shiva and Parvati. To them a journey to Kailash is considered the ultimate *yatra*..

Shiva Purna says that there is no sin in the world which cannot be destroyed by a dip in Mansarovar and by undertaking the *parikrama* of Mount Kailash. A single *parikrama* of Kailash wipes out 'sins of a life time and 108 *parikarmas* lead to the enlightenment

Jain Legend

In Jain mythology, Mount Kailash is known as Ashtapada meaning eight steps or eight peaks. It is considered the place where the first Tirthankar Shri Rishabdeva attained liberation.

Bon Legend

The followers of the Bon religion call Mount Kailash as Yungdrung Guste, 'the Nine-Story Swastika Mountain' symbolising the axis of the universe and a seat of spiritual power. It is the place of their protective deity Tonpa Shenrab. It is also the abode of the Sky Goddess Sipaimen representing cosmic balance.

Visit to Rakshas Tal

On our second day, Baba took us for a visit to Rakshas Tal. Mansarovar and Rakshas Tal are twin lakes connected to each other. Mansarovar is a round shaped sacred fresh, serene lake while Rakshas Tal is a crescent shaped inauspicious, saline, turbulent lake, associated with negativity and demons. It has no fish and aquatic life and its waters are supposed to be toxic and poisonous. The crescent shape is associated with the darkness compared to Sun-like round shape of Mansarovar which is associated with the brightness.

A short river called Ganga Chhu connects Mansarovar to Rakshas Tal. It is believed to be created by rishis to add pure water of Mansarovar to Rakshas Tal to reduce its negativity. These two lakes symbolise the timeless struggle between the good and the evil. Rakshas Tal, was once the abode of Ravana, a great devotee of Lord Shiva. You get a lovely view of Mount Kailash from there. The water of the lake is crystal-clear, so we wanted to bathe in the lake but Baba did not permit us to take bath there.

Passing through Yam Dwar

Next day Bab took us to Yam Dwar, the starting point of Mount Kailash *Parikrama*.

Before we start the *Parikrama* we have to cross the Yam Dwar. Yam Dwar means 'Gate of Yama' the God of Death. The belief is that once we cross the Yam Dwar, we enter the abode of Lord Shiva and lose all fear of the death.

Many yatris trek up to Dirapuk, have *darshan* of the North face of Mount Kailash and return. They believe that a full *parikrama* should not be done, because one should not cross over the *pranali* (water outlet from Shivlinga). They go up to Gauri Kund and return. Gauri Kund was gifted by Shiva to Parvati. Shiv Puran describes it as a lake of compassion. Waters of Gauri Kund have cleansing and redeeming power that can bring spiritual and physical well-being to men and women.

In Search of Gods

It is widely believed that gods descend to bathe in Mansarovar Lake at

Brahmamahoorath. Every night a saw dozens of my fellow pilgrims sitting outside their rooms for hours in sub-zero temperature for having *darshan* of gods when they descend into the lake. Along with others, I also tried to sit and wait outside for gods to come down but ran in soon after I started freezing. A few of us reported sighting of gods but not many.

Last bath in Mansarovar and its impact

My last bath in Mansarovar Lake was very significant. Like every Indian woman, I have been fond of jewellery. However, when I started for Kailash Mansarovar yatra just with a backpack, I removed all the jewellery and left it at home.

On the last day of our stay at Mansarovar, I thought of having a final bath in the lake. When I emerged out of lake and started combing my hair a young woman sharing room with me, passed me a mirror. All these day, I had not looked into a mirror. When I looked into the mirror after freshly bathing, I found my face shining. I realised I was not wearing any jewellery and yet my face was glowing. At that moment, I realised that I did not need to wear gold and diamonds anymore.

Our ancestors used to give up some food item when they went on a pilgrimage, so I decided I would give up wearing expensive jewellery.

After coming home, I transferred the ownership of my locker to my daughter after distributing small ornaments to my cousins, nieces and others. I closed my running account with my family jeweller, paid his due and requested him to delete my name from his client register. Since then, I am enjoying wearing trinkets made of wood, metal, stone, mud and fabric and they look as good.

Till we meet again - Saying goodbyes

Finally, back at Delhi airport, it was a tearful goodbye to Baba and the group. We parted with hugs, shake-hand and blew kisses in the air. WE carried with us the fond memories of the best journeys of our lives. There was tremendous gratitude in our hearts for our guide and protector Shri Yogiraj Amarjyotiji Maharaj.



LALLESHWARI'S DIVINE JOURNEY

A Mesmerizing Opera Unfolds

Transported into the 14th century, nearly a thousand audience members found themselves immersed in an enchanting spectacle, packed within a hall designed for six hundred. The atmosphere was electric as the mystical Shaiv Yogini, Lallechwari, came alive on stage, casting a spell over the spectators.

The performance commenced with the hauntingly melodious vakh (verse), "Ami Pan Sadras...", rendered in the soulful voice of Pallavi Koul New and Shazia Bashir. This verse poignantly expressed the Yogini's profound longing to find her true abode, a culmination she ultimately achieved in the climax of the hour-long musical, as she merged with Shiva and Shakti through mesmerizing theatrics and evocative music by Rajesh Kr Khar.

The stage was a visual masterpiece. A backdrop of brightly lit golden Chinar leaves framed the Yogini, clad in a flowing white robe, her hands raised in invocation of Shiva and Shakti. A mystical cloud enveloped her, creating an ethereal haze, while her vakhs echoed through the hall, resonating with divine energy. Then, as the haze cleared, she had vanished into the Brahman. A

The atmosphere was electric as the mystical Shaiv Yogini, Lallechwari, came alive on stage, casting a spell over the spectators.



reverent silence followed, broken only by the reverberations of "Om Namah Shivaya" as the stage was bathed in radiant light. The sutradhar, played by the charismatic Arvin Tickoo, appeared in a white robe, a snowy-white beard cascading down his chest, his head adorned with a traditional Kashmiri Pandit dastar. He eloquently narrated the spiritual journey of Mother Lalla—her path of Kundalini Yoga, which ultimately liberated her from the material world, allowing her to dissolve into divine light in the village of Bijbehara, Kashmir.

The opera was a magnificent portrayal of Lalleshwari's life—from her birth in Pandrethan, a serene Kashmiri village, to her father Chandraju Bhat introducing her to her Guru, Pandit Sidha Mol, and finally to her spiritual ascension. Through the mellifluous verses of Lalla that chronicled her spiritual quest since childhood, veteran actor Suman Pandita brought the character to life with remarkable depth and poignancy.

Even as a child, Lalleshwari was aware of the fleeting nature of material existence. The musical beautifully captured her verses about being ensnared in the

The overwhelming response was a testament to the enduring love and reverence for Lalleshwari, proving that even centuries later, her spirit continues to illuminate the hearts of many.

expressions as she sang of the relevance of forbearance and how it pays off in the end. Her verse, "Kus mari te maran kas.... is about the irrelevance of the worldly pain upon the union with the supreme.

The immersive "mise-en-scène" transported the audience into her world—the rustic village scene, the gentle waterfall from which she filled her pitcher, the melodious chirping of birds, and the shimmering golden Chinar leaves, all creating a spellbinding spectacle. The anguish of her oppressive home life was palpable. Her mother-in-law's cruelty—placing a stone beneath her rice to make it appear a large serving



eleven senses and yearning for liberation—to reach a state beyond pain and attachment. Her wedding to Son Pandit and the turmoil of a painful marriage were heartbreakingly real, conveyed through the actor's evocative

while misleading her own son—only strengthened Lalla's resolve to break free and seek her true spiritual home.

Every note sung by Pallavi Koul encapsulated Lalla's agony and enlightenment.

One poignant moment depicted her sitting down to eat, only to be jolted by her mother-in-law's harsh command to finish washing utensils first. Tears welled in her eyes, yet she obediently rose, suppressing her sorrow. Her struggle as a woman who defied conventional norms was starkly evident.

The verses in Kashmiri vividly depicted her journey of overcoming desires such as lust, anger, greed, and attachment through Kundalini Yoga. A striking moment in the performance was when her husband shattered the pitcher she had painstakingly filled with water, yet the water miraculously remained suspended in her hands. As she poured it into multiple vessels, her hands remained brimming. The commentator's voice narrated how this miraculous water transformed into a sacred lake, later known as "Lalla Tral." The ethereal sound of water cascading onto the stage sent shivers down the audience's spine, leaving them in awe of the divine manifestation.

The opera's mise-en-scène—a seamless blend of set design by Virji Virender Sumbly, props, costumes, lighting, and the actors' movements—was nothing short of spellbinding. The audience sat transfixed until the final moment. And then, as the last note faded, the entire hall erupted in a standing ovation. Some had been seated on the floor, others had stood throughout, and those in chairs

now rose in unison to honor the spectacle they had just witnessed.

Scripted by the renowned literary figure Sh. Bal Krishan Sanyasi, the opera was deeply rooted in Kashmir's spiritual and philosophical traditions. In his speech, Sanyasi described #Lalleshwari as an Advaitvadini, a proponent of the Trika philosophy within #Kashmir #Shaivism. This non-dualistic school of thought emphasizes the interconnectedness of Shiva, Shakti, and the individual soul (Anu), seeing the universe as a manifestation of Shiva's consciousness. He quoted Utpaladeva's Shiv Sutra: "When I realized that everything around me was a manifestation of the Supreme, I became oblivious of my physical form." This profound realization, he noted, was mirrored in Lalleshwari's vakhs, often misinterpreted as her wandering naked. In truth, they symbolized her transcendence beyond bodily consciousness. For Kashmiris, Lalleshwari's vakhs are woven into the very fabric of their existence. Passed down through generations, her verses remain a cornerstone of Kashmiri wisdom. Any septuagenarian or octogenarian Kashmiri can recite them by heart, not merely as poetry but as a philosophy embraced in daily life. The deep emotional connection with this mystic Shaiv Yogini remains unshaken.

Vomedh, a socio-cultural organization based in Jammu, is dedicated to preserving Kashmiri heritage. Led by the visionary Rohit Bhat, this opera was yet another testament to his commitment to keeping cultural traditions alive despite the displacement of Kashmiri Hindus. His directorial design of the opera and his month-long outreach efforts ignited a resurgence of devotion to Lalla, drawing massive crowds eager to witness the spectacle. The overwhelming response was a testament to the enduring love and reverence for Lalleshwari, proving that even centuries later, her spirit continues to illuminate the hearts of many.

Mr. Ramesh Marhatha's voice put together the entire show with superb anchoring.

“

The verses in Kashmiri vividly depicted her journey of overcoming desires such as lust, anger, greed, and attachment through Kundalini Yoga.

”



Chander Mohan Bhat



SUKH RAZA BHAIRAVA, VILLAGE WANPORA

Coordinates: Lat. 33 degrees 96 minutes, Long. 74 degree 87 minutes

Located northward of Pulwama lies the renowned village of Wanpora, fondly referred to as Thanther Wanpur.

In Kashmiri culture, the term '*Thanther*' encompasses skilled artisans who craft practical objects such as kitchenware and tableware from a variety of metals, notably bronze. This occupation, rooted in the ancient art of smithing, entails the meticulous shaping of metal through hammering and forging techniques. These artisans, revered for their expertise in metalwork, play a vital role in providing essential items for daily life while upholding a tradition that spans generations.

In the Kashmiri valley, artisans known as '*Thanther*' specialize in crafting traditional utensils for the Kashmiri Pandit community, utilizing two main metals: Bell Metal (*Louy*) and Bronze (*Sartal*). *Louy*, also referred to as *Kansa* in India, is an alloy of copper and tin. Among the *Louy* utensils crafted are the *Thall* and *Khous*, which include variations like *Kenzi Khous*. Over the course of history, the village of Wanpora has been renowned for its skilled metal smiths, including notable figures such as Shri Abdul Rehman Mir, son of Shri Mohd Sultan Mir, Shri Abdul Aziz Mir, son of Shri Mohd Sultan Mir, Shri Abdul

Salam Wani, son of Shri Khazer Mohd Wani, and others. These artisans have upheld a rich tradition of craftsmanship, passing down their expertise from generation to generation, and contributing significantly to the cultural heritage through their meticulous work in metal crafting.

In the artisanal hub of Wanpora, skilled craftsmen specialize in fashioning a range of traditional utensils from bronze also, an alloy of copper and zinc. Among these utensils are the *Dul*, *Gadeh*, *Toor*, *Samavaar*, *Tumbeh*, and *Deekchi*, each serving essential roles in Kashmiri Pandit households. Renowned for their expertise, craftsmen like Shri Abdul Khaliq Mir, son of Abdul Qadir Mir, Shri Abdul Aziz Khan, son of Shri Mohd Ramzan Khan, Shri Abdul Samad Mir, son of Shri Ali Mohd Mir, and others, have honed their craft to perfection. Through meticulous attention to detail and a dedication to preserving heritage, these artisans have contributed significantly to the cultural fabric of Kashmir, ensuring the continuation of traditional craftsmanship for generations to come.

Following the forced exodus of Kashmiri

Among these sacred sanctuaries, Sukh Raza Bhairava stands as a hallowed abode, where Bhairava finds solace and sanctuary within the verdant foliage of an elm tree.

Pandits from the valley in 1990, the once thriving trade of metal smiths in Wanpora began to dwindle. Today, only two craftsmen remain, persevering in their ancestral craft despite the challenges. Their dedication extends beyond mere survival, as they now focus on supplying their meticulously crafted utensils to Kashmiri Pandit communities residing in areas like Jammu and Delhi. Through their resilience and adaptability, these artisans continue to serve not only as guardians of tradition but also as a vital link connecting displaced Kashmiri Pandit community with their cultural heritage, fostering a sense of belonging and continuity despite the distance from their homeland.

Prior to the tumultuous events of 1990, the rhythmic beats of the *louny* resonated from the shops nestled along the banks of a gentle stream flowing from the *Sukh Raza Bhairava* shrine, echoing the vibrant pulse of Wanpora's rich cultural heritage.

Nestled in the northwest expanse of this village, *Sukh Raza Bhairava* shrine emerges as a solitary sanctuary spread over an area of about 3 Kanal of land, ensconced amidst the tranquil beauty of verdant paddy fields and dense woodland. Serenely isolated, it exudes an aura of mystique and reverence. Before its hallowed grounds, a small stream meanders gracefully, its waters perpetually murky or turbid water, earning the epithet "*Gurei Woan*" in the melodious dialect of Kashmiri. Enigmatic and ever flowing, this stream remains veiled in obscurity throughout the year, adding to the mystical allure of the sacred shrine dedicated to *Sukh Raza Bhairava*.

Sukh Raza Bhairava stands as the revered village deity, revered as *Bhairava* by the Kashmiri Pandit families not only within this village but also across the Budgam and Chadura areas. The sacred abode of *Sukh Raza Bhairava* resides within a humble chamber, where an elm tree gracefully traverses through its roof, adorned with vermilion as a symbol of divine presence. This sacred space serves as the focal point of devotion and reverence, embodying the spiritual essence that binds the community together in faith and tradition.

Bhairava is regarded as one of the terrible aspects of Rudra Shiva, associated with his fights against the *asuras* or demons. During his fight with *Andhakasura*, eight emanations came out of him, called *Asta-bhairava*. Bhairava is sometimes mentioned as one of the five leaders of Shiva troops. Iconographical works generally describe the Bhairava as of a dark or reddish complexion and having four arms in which he carries mace, lotus, spear and discus. Other texts describe him as having a flabby belly, round yellow eyes, side tusks and wide nostrils, and, wearing a garland of skulls. Snakes are his ornaments. A dog is often shown as his companion.

Agni Purana in chapters from 52 to 80 describes that immediately after his birth, this terrible monster, subdued all the *Devas* without getting the permission of Shiva. Enraged at it, Shiva turned him into a tree by a curse. But Shiva was soon pacified and lifted the curse by declaring that those who offered puja to the gods would get the full reward for their worship only if they offered puja to Bhairava also.

Bhairava became a tree as soon as he was cursed. He became tree because he subdued the gods. Therefore, that tree came to be called '*Damanaka*' tree (Damana = Subdue).

Shiva Purana, *Satarudra Samhita* mentions that as soon as he was born, Bhairava rushed towards Brahma and pinched off his fifth head which had insulted Shiva. By this, he incurred the sin of *brahmahatya*. For expiation of this sin, as ordered by Shiva, Bhairava started on a journey to go abegging, with Brahma's severed head in his hand.

Although Bhairava visited many places, he was not able to liberate himself from the sin of *brahmahatya*. At last, at the suggestion of the Shiva, he went to Degoam, a village near Shopian and washed off his sin. Brahma's head which he carried, was also deposited there and the place became famous under the name of '*Kapal Mochan Shrine*'.

Legend has it that *Bhairava*, seeking

redemption from the weight of *Brahmahatya*, embarked on a journey across the picturesque landscapes of Kashmir, seeking refuge within the embrace of various trees scattered throughout the valley. Among these sacred sanctuaries, *Sukh Raza Bhairava* stands as a hallowed abode, where Bhairava found solace and sanctuary within the verdant foliage of an elm tree. Each tree he inhabited became a locus of divine energy and spiritual resonance, symbolizing his quest for liberation and redemption. *Sukh Raza Bhairava* thus holds a profound significance as one of the sanctified sites where Bhairava, in his divine grace, chose to dwell, infusing the surrounding community with blessings of peace and tranquility.

Tragically, on the fateful day of October 14, 1990, the revered shrine housing the sacred elm tree, the cherished abode of *Sukh Raza Bhairava*, fell victim to flames that engulfed its sanctified precincts. This devastating event not only razed the physical structure to ashes but also burnt the elm tree. The loss of this sacred site, steeped in centuries of veneration and devotion, served as a poignant reminder of the turbulent times that beset the valley, echoing the upheaval and turmoil that marked that tumultuous

period in Kashmir's history. Yet, amidst the ashes of destruction, the enduring spirit of faith and resilience persevered, nurturing the hope for restoration and renewal, as the memory of *Sukh Raza Bhairava* and the elm tree remained etched in the hearts and minds of the faithful, inspiring them to strive for the preservation of their cultural heritage and spiritual legacy.

On the afternoon of August 8, 2009, Sh. Ajay Pandita, a resident of village Lajura in Pulwama, led me to a temple nestled within the village. Despite the scars of past, he and his family still resided in their village. As we arrived, the desolate temple stood amidst overgrown shrubs, its sacred idols scattered and neglected. With determined hands, we began clearing the wild growth, carefully collecting the scattered idols and arranging them reverently near the ancient elm tree, known as Bren in Kashmiri tradition. Amidst the solemn atmosphere, we applied vermilion, affixed three small vibrant red triangular flags (*jindis*) to the elm tree, and lit incense, invoking a sense of sanctity. Around us, a group of more than 18 village children watched with eager fascination, witnessing the restoration of their cultural legacy with unwavering attention.

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Isha Raina Bhat



MATRU SAKTI



From times immemorial, women in our country have been the custodians of the culture and heritage of this holy land and in any festival in any part of the country; it is they who carry the charm of every celebration.

Perhaps India is the only country in the world where women have always been held in high reverence and in a higher position than the men on the social ladder. The great law-giver, Manu, has ordained: "Where women are honored, no sacred rites yield rewards."

Unfortunately, there are some people who

condemn our time-honored and eternal Hindu culture and religion charging that it has kept our womenfolk in utter ignorance, poverty, and slavery and that it has been cruel and inhuman to those they call the "weaker sex". In our country women were never considered as the "weaker sex", rather they were called the embodiments of Sakti. Those who say that Manu denied the freedom to women are ignorant of what he actually said. Manu ordains that the father ought to protect a woman while she is a maiden, the husband

In our country women were never considered as the "weaker sex", rather they were called the embodiments of Sakti.

The most covetous position, which only the women are privileged to hold by virtue of their sex, is that of the Mother who is the very idea of Indian womanhood.

when she is married, and the sons when the husband is no more; a woman ought not to remain independent. In the very next verse he points out that the father would be to blame if he does not give his daughter in marriage in proper time; the husband if he does not look

after his wife properly, and the son if he does not protect his mother during her old age. Thus it is clear that what Manu intended was not to deny freedom to women but to ensure adequate and continuous protection to them throughout their life. As daughters, wives, and mothers, women enjoyed a very respectful and privileged position in Hindu society. The English word, 'Daughter' is cognate with the Sanskrit Duhita...one who milks...meaning one who brings prosperity to the house by milking the Kamadhenu. Hence the birth of a daughter in Hindu society was not considered, unlike in ancient European countries, unwanted addition to the family, but the "pride of the family". Like other male children, she too had her full share of education and in fact out, the country produced mighty geniuses like Maitreyi and Gargi, thousands of years before the West stopped eating raw flesh and living in caves. Women enjoyed the right to property and the stridhana was not, as it means today a "dowry", but the gifts which she received from her father, mother, brother, husband, son, and other relations.

As a wife, she was not merely the "better half" of the husband, but one with him, his equal in all respects. In the important ritual of Saptapadi in Hindu marriage, the bride and bridegroom took seven steps together, and it was hoped and prayed that their future life should be full of love, brilliance, opportunities, prosperity, bliss, progeny, and holiness. The husband and wife took mutual

vows that each would further and fulfill the hopes, desires, and ambitions of the other in the spiritual and temporal spheres. A prayer was offered at the end that the affectionate union of the couple should never be dissolved. Thus the wife in a Hindu family was not an object of lust and sense gratification, but a mistress of the house...Grihini...on whom depend the entire edifice of the family structure. Housewives were permitted to participate in public life and in fact, they were expected to be so educated that they could even speak in public assemblies. Our history is replete with instances where women have held positions in different walks of life, including the highest rungs of administration of the country.

The most covetous position, which only the women are privileged to hold by virtue of their sex, is that of the Mother who is the very idea of Indian womanhood. "Now the ideal woman in India is the mother: the mother first and the mother last. The word woman calls up to the mind of the Hindu, motherhood; and God is called Mother," says Swami Vivekananda in one of his speeches which he delivered in California, on January 18, 1900, in a bid to remove the misconceptions of the Westerners about Indian women. At a time when many leaders of the society could see only women steeped in ignorance, slavery, and ostracization by customs and practices, it was Swami Vivekananda who had the courage of conviction to declare that "Still on this sacred soil of India, this land of Sita and Savitri, among women may be found such character, such spirit of service, such affection, such compassion, contentment, and reverence, as I could not find anywhere else in the world!"

Today, there is a lot of talk about women's liberation everywhere. Fortunately in India, very few women hold and propagate this view, but the rest are fully conscious of their position in the family and social life and are not carried away by meaningless slogans. During the early centuries of the Christian era, when hordes of foreign tribes poured into India through North-Western gates, some customs and practices are introduced into the Hindu Society to give greater protection to women from foreigners. It



is a fact that some of them have become obsolete and they need to be discarded. Our culture permits change. Manu himself has said that if his law went against the spirit of a particular age, it can be abrogated or modified. But the change that is to be brought about is a very vital thing that demands deep consideration. Are we going to bring in the equality of women with men as we see in the West today...the equality of rights to marry and dissolve the marriage according to will and pleasure, to procreate children and abandon them to be brought up in orphanages, to denigrate the sacred contract of marriage as a mere means to fulfill the lust, and to run after material well-being devoid of moral values? In our country, it is still regarded as a sin on the part of men to swerve from the path of virtue, and from their duties to their wives and children. In the foolish imitation of promiscuous type of western life, some of our men are losing moral and ethical values and are racing towards destruction. But it is not for our womenfolk also to demand equal rights to march to hell. It is their sacred duty to throw themselves up, in a Yagna spirit, in the task of

preventing this erosion of dharma. Our mothers and sisters are to be educated not to compete with men in their craze for sinful material life but to understand their own responsibility and rise up to the occasion to mold virtuous men as protectors of the eternal culture of this land. Let them hearken to the call of the patriot-monk of our country, Swami Vivekananda:

“To the women of this country, I would say exactly what I say to the men. Believe in India, and in our Indian faith. Be strong and hopeful and unashamed, and remember that, with something to take, Hindus have immeasurably more to give than any other people of the world.” Let us inspire our sisters to carry the eternal message of India on the ideal of womanhood, to the distant shores of foreign lands and arouse the MATRU-SAKTI in every nook and corner of the world. Let our sisters' march on the path of Sister Nivedita, the illustrious disciple of Swami Vivekananda, who threw herself up in the sacred task of arousing Indian women to live and die as ideal Hindu women fulfilling their mission in life.

Notes and References

1. *Yuva Bharati, Distinctive Cultural Monthly in English, issued by Vivekananda Kendra, Triplicane, Madras. February 1975 issue.*

UNBROKEN SPIRIT

A Koshur Bhatta's Lament



 Virendra Bangroo

Yes! I am Koshur Bhatta,
From Kashmir's valleys, where memories reside
A tale of faith and strife, side by side
With a heritage rich and diverse, yet misunderstood and unplanned
We, the Kafirs, have a God too,
Our idols, trees, stones, all part of nature's fabric, a true sense of God
We see God in living entities, while others wait for judgment's day
Is believing in everything a crime? Who gave you the right to judge and slay?
Your forefathers were Kafirs like us; did they too face heaven's denial?
You shattered our idols, desecrated our temples, but couldn't break our will's trial
You tried to eliminate us, target us, desecrate us; we fell to your bullets cold
Only because we're Kafirs, children of a lesser God, or so you're told
But I see compassion, humanity, and humility in every soul
While you saw disrespect, and forced me to flee, my heart and home to unfold
You alone are responsible for my exile, my forced departure from Kashmir's land
Leaving me with memories, and a longing to return, hand in hand
Yes! I am Koshur Bhatta,
Proud of my heritage, my faith, and my name
I'll hold on to my roots, my culture, and my story
Forever I'll proclaim, my identity, my pride, my glory.

Note:

Koshur Bhatta refers to the original inhabitants of Kashmir. The term "Koshur" is derived from the Kashmiri language and describes the people of Kashmir.

"Bhatta" is derived from Sanskrit word Bhatarik meaning a deity, a pious man and a learned person. The term "Bhatta" also refers to the community of Kashmiri Pandits, forced to live in exile.

virendrabangroo@gmail.com



Moti Lal Pandit



KASHMIR SHAIIVISM

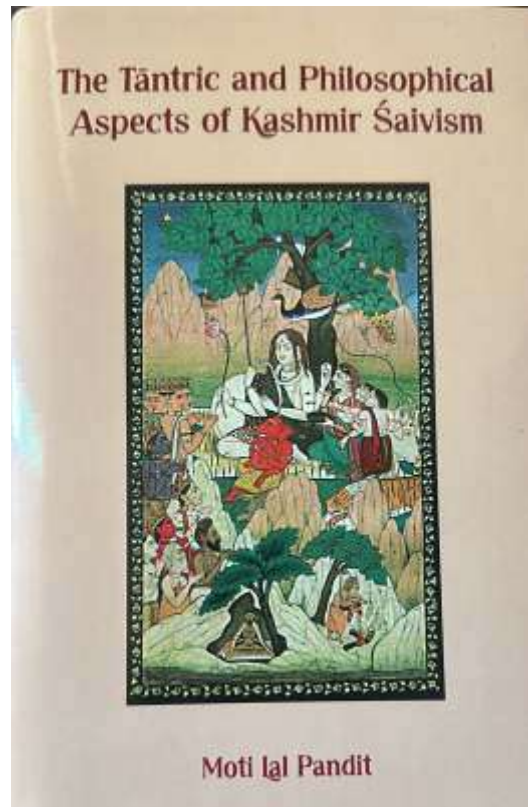
In the very first *Sutra* of *Shivasutra* is laid down such a metaphysical principle upon which the entire superstructure of Kashmir Shaivism would be built, and the principle is characterized by an orientation in terms of which Consciousness would be considered such a substantial substance which would manifest it as the universe, which, in other words, would mean that the world, including its denizens, are but coagulated forms of consciousness. This orientation of Kashmir Shaivism is expressed in this manner: The Self is Consciousness (*caitanyamatma*, 1.1). In this manner Consciousness is viewed as the being foundational substratum of the entire manifest cosmos. This very

“

It is within this framework the following affirmation is made, which maintains that Shiva is in everything and everything is Shiva, which, when translated into the religious language, denotes that the worship of Shiva must be performed only when you become Shiva.

”

Consciousness, from a philosophical point of view, is termed as the Absolute, and which, from a religious perspective, is equated with Paramshiva/ Mahesvara. Since everything is Consciousness, so nothing exists apart from Consciousness. What we call matter, or physical aspect of the universe, is nothing but



the reflection of Consciousness. It is within this framework the following affirmation is made, which maintains that Shiva is in everything and everything is Shiva, which, when translated into the religious language, denotes that the worship of Shiva must be performed only when you become Shiva.

If it is asserted that we are non-different from Shiva, then why is it that we are experiencing the pervasion of the sense difference, which is say we experience the fact that everything seems cognitively to be characterized by difference. The answer to

this question lies in the fact that are unable to experience the nature of reality as being one precisely because our vision is totally obscured by what we refer ignorance. Ignorance, however, does not mean the absence of knowledge. If *absence of knowledge* would be construed as a factuality, then there would be no possibility for us to know anything. Since ignorance is not identical with non-knowledge, it is, therefore, identified with knowledge that is imperfect and erroneous. It is erroneous knowledge that is constitutive of ignorance. On account of this erroneous knowledge our cognitive vision or understanding is so obscured as would result in a knowledge that is hazy and unclear. Thus, ignorance is at the heart of the problem.

Ignorance is said to be of two kinds: existential and intellectual. Insofar, as these forms of ignorance reside in the individual, to that measure he would be deprived of knowledge that pertains to the transcendent realm. A knowledge that is characterized by the sense of difference or limitation comes within the rubric of what we call ignorance. Within such a framework of understanding all forms of empirical knowledge would be characterized as being identical with ignorance. It is in the transcendence of ignorance in which the acme of supernal knowledge lies. It is in and through right knowledge that the trudging of the passage towards the Transcendent become easeful and comfortable. The perfect existential as well as intellectual knowledge leads to the gateway of nectarine bliss.

Apart from ignorance, there are the three existential defects known as *malas*. The number of malas are enumerated in this manner: *anava-mala*, *mayiya-mala* and *karma-mala*. The anava-mala functions as a mala of limitation. We experience ourselves as being the creatures of limitation. It is within the causality of space and time within which we are made to function, and thereby our freedom, which is constitutive of our essential nature, is made to evaporate in the thin air of nothingness. Apart from the sense



limitation, we also experience difference both cognitively and epistemically. Finally, we perform such actions that determine our future in terms of the reaping of the fruit of action either as good and vile. It is due these malas we are unable to experience as to who are, and according are made to undergo the painful circuit of becoming. In addition to the three malas, there are six covering of *maya* which deprive us from the divine experience of identity with Param Shiva. The covering are: Niyati (causal restriction), raga (attachment), vidya (limited knowledge), kala (time or finitude), kala (division) and maya (power of delusion). These coverings function in the empirical individual in such a manner cause obstruction in the pathway of self-realization.

In order to overcome all these hurdles in the path of spirituality, we are asked to trudge the way as would to the experience of entrance into supreme. The Ways are the Limited way (*anava-upaya*), the Way of Energy (*shakta-upaya*), and Way of Shiva (*shambhava-upaya*). In addition to these three ways, there is the Null Way (*an-upaya*). It is the highest. In order to trudge these paths fruitfully, one must take shelter in one's *guru*. He is the person who alone is empowered to show you the way.



Robin Koul



SANATAN MAHADEV MANDIR QAZIGUND

Prologue: The origin of this article is the inspiration of *Amit Raina*, a young flag bearer of the spirit of the community with a fire burning inside to preserve and rejuvenate his culture and motherland. This is a story of the *Sanatan Mahadev* Temple situated in *Qazigund*, which once was the essence for the pilgrims coming to the Valley but now remains hidden behind the curtains of modern-day *Qazigund*.

To go through the brief journey of this divine Shiva Temple, we need to have a glimpse of the history and legacy of the area, what is known as present-day *Qazigund* in Part -I.

Part-I

Qazigund: Located in the *Pir Panjal* range, *Qazigund* is considered the gateway to the Kashmir valley. It is located at 33.59°N 75.16°E and has an average elevation of 1670 m above mean sea level.

The *Qazigund*, what we know today, was not known by this name. It is a contemporary name for erstwhile *Chanpura*. Right now, the name *Qazigund* is the collection of newly developed villages in the area. Earlier, most of the ancient villages in this area were known by their own names, each having a great historical and cultural importance. In revenue records, the area is still referred to by the name *Kurigham Halka*. Of course, like other prominent villages in the area, *Kurigham* too has its own rich ancient history associated with it.

Modern History of Qazigund: The area of *Qazigund* was a sort of *padaw* (transit stop) for those who travelled from the surrounding areas across the *Jawahar Tunnel* to and from other places. The only focal route connecting Kashmir valley to other parts of the country across the *Pir Panjal* range, through the *Old Cart Road*, then *Jawahar Tunnel*, and now the modern *Navyug tunnel*, passing through the area of *Qazigund*. The people from surrounding areas came here to earn a livelihood and eventually settled down in *Qazigund*. People of all religions, including Muslims, Sikhs, and Hindus, made it their home. Mainly Hindu business families, especially shopkeepers and *Aarthees* came from *Vessu*, *Wanpoh*, and *Chowgam*. A good number of Sikh families from *Baramulla* also came here for the purpose of the hotel business and settled here. The name *Chaanpur* originated as initially some carpenter families started doing their business in the emerging areas. In later times, many *Sufi* saints visited the place, and with the development of the area, Muslim families along with some *Qazis* settled down here, hence giving an inclusive the name *Qazigund* to the area.

It is said that there were initially only three Pandit families in *Qazigund*. Simultaneously, some more Hindu families settled, taking the count to twelve. *Qazigund* has always been known for religious tolerance. Muslims, Hindus, and Sikhs have

resided peacefully in Qazigund for centuries.

In Later times, a fruit *mandi* and a walnut processing factory were developed in *Qazigund* due to its strategic geographical location. All the produce from the valley was collected here for further transfer across the *Pir Panjal Range*. Also, it became the receiving point for the goods coming from the Jammu region. With this many more businesses flourished here. It led to the rise in the settlement of the *aarthees*, who were the persons conducting those businesses.

Some of the important places in *Qazigund* are *Levduru*, *Kundh*, *Kurighom*, *Chowgam*, *Divser* (upper and lower), *Kahnbarana*, *Dalwis*, *Tarighom*, *Wangund*, *Khatirchak*, *Badwinchak*, *Whaithul*.

Ancient History of Qazigund: As *Qazigund* lies in the lap of the *Pir Panjal Range*, it has a historical relationship with this Mountain Range. The *Pir Panjal* region is named after the *Pir Panjal Pass*, whose original name, as recorded by *Srivara*, is *Panchaladeva* (The deity of *Panchala*). *Panchala* is a country mentioned in the *Mahabharata* in the northwest of *Uttar Pradesh*. However, many scholars believe that this place in the *Mahabharata* is a region in western Punjab and southern Kashmir. Scholar *Dineshchandra Sircar* has analysed the geography described in the *Shakti-Sangama Tantra*, where this is indeed the case. Scholar *M A Stein*, who translated *Kalhana's Rajatarangini* into English, states that, "the high mountain passes were always regarded as deities, or deities were associated with them. These customs continued from generation to generation, and after Kashmir was Islamised, the prefix *Deva* was substituted by *Pir* (Muslim Saint)." Also, according to some references in ancient times, *Pir Panjal* was better known as *Dharanagri*. It was referred to by this name in historical and ancient texts.

Two important spiritual *Nagas* which have reverence in our historical books are *Vasak Nag* and *Panzath Nag*. Which relates the history of present-day *Qazigund* to antiquities.

Spring and Nags: *Qazigund* is surrounded by springs, known as *nags* in the local language. *Verinag*, the source of the river *Vatista*, is only 10 km from *Qazigund*.

Vasak Nag: An ancient and mystical *Naag* known as *Vasuki Naag* is at the base of a mountain near *Wagam* in a place called *Kund*, around 12 km from *Qazigund*. The holy spring of *Naag Vasuki* is a shrine for pilgrimage to Kashmiri Pandits. In this mysterious *Naaga*, water appears only before the start of the cultivation season, and it runs dry when the cultivation season completes. It almost flows with water for six months and runs dry for six months. No one could understand this mysterious phenomenon till now. The rains, strong winds, and thunderstorms in the sky are the harbinger of the coming of water in this spiritual *Naag*. A large stream flows out of it and irrigates the cultivated land in the area.

Vasuk Naag is referred to as the abode of *Nag Vasuki* in ancient scriptures. When *Garud Dev* was chasing the *Nagas* due to their enmity, he fled to *Bhaderwah* and settled there. But his love for his original abode later made him come to *Vasuk Naag* for six months in a year, bringing all the water along with him. There must be some mystical *patal lok* (underground) route from *Vasuk Nag Qazigund* to his abode in *Bhaderwah* which he may be using for his commute to both the places along with his waters.

Panzath Nag: Just three km away from *Qazigund*, there is a famous nag known as *Panzath Nag*. "*Panzath*" is a combination of two words: "*Paanch*" and "*Haath*," meaning 500 in English, and "*Nag*," which means spring. It is believed the 500 springs lie within a radius of 1.5 kilometers from *Panzath* village, though only a few are visible presently.

The spring finds mention in the ancient texts of Kashmir, namely the *Rajtarangrni* and *Nilamata Purana* which were written in the 12th century. It is believed to be the source of many other smaller springs.

This place has a religious association with the Pandit families living nearby since ancient times. There is a *Naag* known as *Sat Rish* or *Saptarishi Naag* near the main *Panjhath Nag*.

People from the nearby village of *Levduru* on the day of *navrahy* used to visit the *Naag* and present *taher* (Yellow Rice) at the *Naga*.

Recently a tradition of fish catching festival has been started annually in the Panjhath Nag. It is believed this festival started around 1846 according to the villagers.

Ancient Shrines: Several shrines having historical and mythological significance are manifested in the *Qazigund* area since eternities. In the village of *Kurigam*, there are the ancient shrines of *Ganeshbal* and *Mother Goddess Chandika Bhagwati* with a *Holy Spring*. The sacred site of Goddess *Tripursundari* in *Devsar* and *Tara Mata* in *Tarigham* connects us with their divine *tantras* of mystic *Shaivshakti* philosophy. Each shrine is a source of eternal spring for divine realization. The count goes on if we keep adding.

One of the famous gems of our motherland *Pandit Prakash Ram 'Kurigami'*, who wrote a Kashmiri version of *Ramcharitmanas* and many other epics, belongs to this place, which signifies *Qazigund* as a spiritual hub, a centre of learning and cultural ethos from the times antediluvian.

Part-II

The concoction of history, mythology, folklore, beliefs, culture, religion, *Sanatan*, Sufism, Sikhism, Islam, and the influence of various rulers has transformed what we know as “*Qazigund*” today.

Now moving to the abode of Lord, *Santan Mahadev Mandir* in *Qazigund*.

Har Har Mahadev!

Historic Sanatan Shiv Mandir- Qazigund

Overview: A historic *Shiv Mandir* is located in the heart of town at *Qazigund*. This temple has a great legacy as being the only temple and a revered religious site for the local Hindu Community in the area. It holds an honoured value for the local Pandit community. Many of the generations in the area had a personal association and emotional connection with this shrine, as they constructed this Shiv temple with their own hands brick by brick, saw it in the zenith of its glory, and are now distressed

by seeing it in a reduced state due to the hard setback of migration.



Location: Opposite to the Main Taxi Stand -Qazigund Town (Kashmir).

Evolution: After the gradual development of the *Qazigund*, the number of Pandit families also increased. There arose a need for a religious and cultural place that could connect all the Pandit families with a feeling of association and religion. And for such a noble cause, around ninety years ago one of the *Kashmiri Pandits*, who was *Chakdaar* (Great landlord) of the area known as *Pandit Vishnu Koul*, came forward. *Pandit Vishnu Koul* originally belonged to a nearby village, *Vessu*, but subsequently settled down in *Qazigund*. He bequeathed some land for the construction of *Mandir* and *Dharamshalla*. With the help of the local population and the support of some businessmen settled in *Qazigund*, the construction work was completed.

Importance: Not only did it become a common symbol of cultural unity and religious fervour among the people around the area, but also it became a place of importance to the people from other parts of the country too, as it provided a resting and a halting-place, particularly for the *Sadhus* coming to Kashmir during yearly *Shree*

Amarnath Ji Yatra. They used to stay in *Dharamshala* en route. Coming from any part of the world, of any creed, caste, or religion, this *Dharamshala* became the epitome of cultural amalgamation, where everyone was assured to get an *ashray*. During their stay, the local people organize the *bandara* and provide food, bedding, and shelter to the pilgrims, holding a high example of selfless service to mankind. This *Dharamshalla* provided a 24x7 kitchen service for the pilgrims. Many of the cultural events, meetings, and various festivals were organized in this shrine. The temple complex also had a public library, which was the hub of literature for the intellectual people of Qazigund. This place became the centre of hustle and bustle among the Pandit community as well as other local people



Talking to *Amit Raina*, who shared his vivid and emotional memories of his regular childhood visit to the *Sanatan Mahadev Mandir* with his father, *Sri Avtar Krishan Raina*. His grandfather *Sh. Brij Nath Bharti ji*, who had also served as the President of

Sanatan Dharam Sabha Qazigund, had done a lot for the conservation of the Mandir. Now the present president, *Sri Badri Nath Raina* is working relentlessly with the team of fellow Pandit families of the area for the renovation and preservation of the temple and the *dharamshala*.

Temple architecture: The temple premises start from the main road which can be reached through an alleyway that passes under the building of the *Dharamshala*. The *darshan* of a divine *Shivlingam* inside the temple arouses a feeling of devotion in the hearts. One memorial stone is also preserved inside the temple. Temple walls are made up of bricks, and the roof is constructed of GI sheets spread on the wooden pillars. The front facade of the building consists of the *Dharamshala*, which has an occupancy of six rooms on the first floor.



Conclusion: Due to the distressed migration of the Hindu community, the temple lacks proper maintenance and the buildings are in a deteriorated condition. The local Hindu *baradari* has come forward to reconnect with their roots again and is now working on renovating both the buildings of the *Mandir* and *Dharamshala*. They are trying to unite the people and resources under the banner of *Sanatan Dharam Sabha Trust Qazigund Kashmir*. This century-old *Sanatan Mahadev Mandir* holds great sanctity and significance among the locals. Its importance increases as its strategic location for the transit point for the pilgrims.

The people of the nearby places and the Pandit community, in general, are requested to support this noble cause in any viable means, which will help us to connect to our roots. The

main aim in the present scenario is to maintain the building and renovate the temple to its past glory. Preserving these priceless cultural treasures and restoring the sacred places is our moral duty. It will be a tribute to the legacy of our ancestors. This is the least we can do for them.

It is the need of the hour to get involved and to know about the historical relevance of our cultural and religious heritage. So that the present and coming generation could relate their identity to those motifs. It is all about who we are. Otherwise, when we will stop running behind what we are following right now, sit to give a thought to the most important question of life: “*Who am I ?*” We will be lost nowhere if we don't have relative answers that define our identity. *Jai Sanatan Mahadev Ji ! Jai Qazigund! Jai Kashmira!*

Calendar of Month	Okdoh (Sankranti)	13 th April 2025
	Ashtami (Krishna Paksha)	21 st April 2025
	Ekadashi (Krishna Paksha)	23 rd April 2025
	Amavasya	27 th April 2025
	Akshay Tritya	29 th April 2025
	Ashtami (Shukla Paksha)	05 th May 2025
	Ekadashi (Shukla Paksha)	08 th May 2025
	Ganesh Chaturdashi	11 th May 2025
	Poornima (Hanuman Jayanti)	12 th May 2025
	Saptami/Ashtami (Krishna Paksha)	20 th May 2025
	Ekadashi (Krishna Paksha)	23 rd May 2025
	Amavasya	27 th May 2025
	Note Panchak starts on 22 th April 2025 ends on 26 th April 2025 Panchak starts on 20 th May 2025 ends on 24 th May 2025 ----- Vaisakha (Krishna Paksha) from 12 th April to 27 th April 2025 Vaisakha (Shukla Paksha) from 28 th April to 12 th May 2025 Zyeth (Krishna Paksha) from 13 th May to 27 th May 2025	



Col. Tej K Tikoo

'SEARCHING FOR YEMBERZAL'

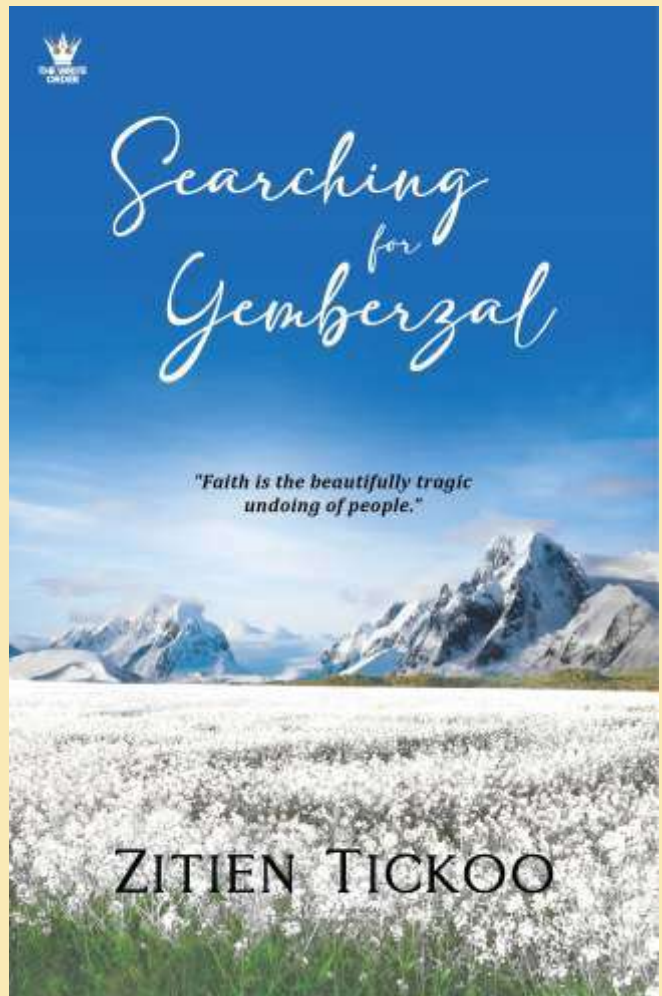
Author : Zitien Tickoo

Book Review By : Col Tej K Tikoo, Ph.D.

'Searching For Yemberzal' is authored by 15-year-old Kashmiri girl, Zitien Tickoo, and published by 'The Write Order', Bengaluru.

This wonderfully written small novel, just over 90 pages long, is the latest addition to 'Exodus Literature'. What makes this book rather special is the poignant narration of the events just before the exodus of Yemberzal's own family, written from the perspective of a young teenager, with all her innocence and purity. The deep fissures the violence and uprooting of her own family and her close relatives created on the young mind of Yemberzal (Kashmiri name for daffodils), the protagonists of the novel, is so effortlessly recounted that the reader himself becomes part of the dreadful happenings and the unfolding of an unprecedented tragedy. The sorrowful events are written with utmost felicity, without being judgmental, mainly because Yemberzal, at that tender age, could barely understand the politics of it all. The anguish and pathos that the writer portrays, particularly of the events between September 1989 and January 1990, makes a lasting impact on the reader, as the world around

her is torn apart, suddenly, and swiftly. The horrific events, as these unfold in front of Yemberzal and her younger sister, Shehlat, turn their own small worlds upside down. The unbelievable scenes of shrieks, shock, and anguished cries of people in lane after lane that greeted the two sisters returning from school could hardly be comprehend by the young children. It was only a little later that they understood the enormity of the tragedy when they



overheard groups of people talking in hushed tones about the killing of Tika Lal Taploo on September 14, 1989. The benumbing shock that the children experienced, provides a peep into the minds of little girls when confronted with such senseless violence of unimaginable proportions.

The frequency of such incidents, more violent than the one preceding it, now occurred every day at some place or the other, with each such event getting closer to their own family. One day it is burning down of a school, while on another day, a shopkeeper is asked to close his business and flee for his own safety. When Yemberzal's own close-knit family is confronted by a news item in a local Daily in which the radical Islamists clearly ask the Pandits to leave the Valley at the earliest or be prepared to convert or get killed, the reality starts dawning on them; this is what their elders had been heard speaking about- *Raliv, Galiv, Tscaliv*.

Yemberzal and Shehlat's mother makes great efforts to restore calm in the agitated minds of the young girls, assuring them that the situation will normalize in a few days and they need not worry. But the children are far from being calmed, as they see the situation deteriorating with every passing day, with their own eyes. Eventually, even the mother gives up the pretense as her own brother decides to flee after he receives death threat. His fleeing Kashmir so suddenly deals a deathly blow to whatever was left of the children and the mother's resolve to stick on. From then on, it was only a matter of time before the family too decided to bolt.

Zitien, with her imaginative writing style and flowing prose, painfully describes the conflict raging in her own young mind as it becomes abundantly clear to her and every member of her family that their days in Kashmir, their home for all their lives, are now numbered. The very thought of abandoning their home, their beloved daffodils, which bloomed in their garden, their numerous friends, their school, their home containing a million memories, makes her sick, literally so. The last nail in the coffin, as the adage goes, was driven-in when someone repeatedly jumped over the wall of her lawn, not once but twice, and pasted a leaflet. As she read the leaflet, her heart came to her mouth with fear and apprehension, pounding uncontrollably; this time it was a warning to her and to the inmates of her house to flee from Kashmir: *Raliv, Galiv, Tscaliv*. And to make matters worse for her, the warning came around the Night of January 19, 1989; the night that Kashmiri Pandits will never forget.

The disastrous impact that such events have had on young minds is aptly summed up by the teenage author in the title of the book itself, *Searching for Yemberzal*. The main protagonist of the novel, Yemberzal, the elder of the two sisters, is searching for the lost daffodils, meaning Kashmir, while at the same time, she is also trying to search for her own identity; an identity that was stolen by the radical Islamists.

15-year-old Zitien, the author of this wonderful book, is a three times winner of English Olympiad and therefore, it was no surprise that I had to consult the dictionary often enough to understand the meaning of some of the words that embellish the vocabulary of the book.

Incidentally, Zitien is the great granddaughter of a prominent Kashmiri Pandit of Habba Kadal, Late Shyam Lal Tickoo and granddaughter of well-known Kashmiri Pandit social activist, Dr Usha Tickoo and her husband, Sh. Chaman Lal Tickoo, the owner of a famous Education institute in Jammu.



Dr. Inder Krishen Kilam

KASHMIR: MEN, MATTERS & MEMORIES

Author, Publisher, Copyright : Avtar Mota

Pages : 194

Price: in India: Rs.480/-, in USA, Europe, Canada: US \$ 20

Last month, I got this latest book written by my good friend & an ex PNB colleague Sh. Avtar Mota. After his retirement from PNB over a decade ago, Avtar jee has turned out to be a dedicated, passionate and an accomplished researcher / author / writer / Kashmir Culture exponent. It is always a pleasure to read his blogs, write ups, research expositions and books related to Kashmir culture and memories that we left behind.

The book starts with a well written one-page foreword by the author himself. I quote here a few lines from the foreword itself.

“In this compilation, I have written what I observed and felt. There are creative stories about men who didn't know the skill and art of manipulation and manoeuvrability and suffered in a world driven by values of expediency and utility. There are essays that convey a truthful nostalgia”.

The book is presented in two parts – part 1 covering 18 crisp chapters on 'Some Memorable Men from Kashmir' and part 2 comprising another 15 brief chapters covering 'Memories and Anecdotes of Kashmir'. On the whole, the book brings out a good blend of memories and presentations about Kashmir people and culture.

In its part 1 titled 'Some Memorable Men', the author writes 18 individual brief chapters covering people like – Shantiveer Kaul, Arvind Gigoo, Hriday Kaul Bharati, Avtar Kaul, Mohammad Ashraf, Bansi Kaul, Ghulam Hassan Sofi, Moti Lal Saqi, Mohan Nirash, Bansi Nirdosh, Umesh Kaul, Chaman Lal Chaman, Ali Mohammad Lone, Vijay Malla, Lassa Kaul, Sadiq Ali, Pushkar Nath, and Prem Nath Dhar.

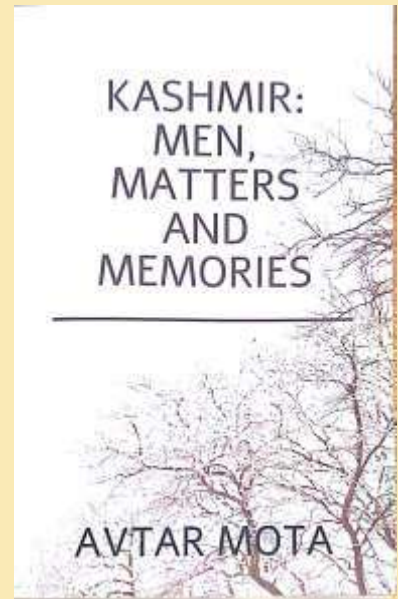
Part 2 of the book with 15 brief chapters, covers various memories and anecdotes titled interestingly as – Winter without rain or snow, Patel police of Kashmir, Jashne Kashmir, Kaawa Yenivol, Kashmiris are global competitors now, India Coffee House - Srinagar, Mir Paan House, Cricket in Kashmir, Bangladesh clothes and Kashmir, Tobacco and Kashmir, The Paetgo'r of Kashmir, The Death of an Institution, Shawl was not created in Kashmir, The neglect at Burzahom in Kashmir, and lastly, The Haanjis of Kashmir belong to the Nishada Tribe.

Chapter 1 is titled “Tum Na Jaane Kis Jahan Mein Kho Gaye Shantiveer Kaul”. The author here says at page 15:

“Never ever have I seen him indulging in self-publicity. A man of sharp intellect, Shantiveer spoke less, thought too much and never failed to demonstrate empathy, affection and care for those who came close to him.” Further, on the same page, the author says, “Shantiveer was unique on all fronts. Much ahead of his time. He will always be missed. I do not know which number I should dial now to seek guidance and encyclopaedic clarity on issues.”

Chapter 2 is titled “Good Bye Arvind Gigoo”. Here the author quotes the personality himself, who had said, “I detest double talkers.” This trait made him profoundly different from others, affable and respected. Further the author says, “Arvind Gigoo was the sharpest observer of men and matters that I happened to befriend in my life. Exile had touched his soul, yet he retained his objectivity. Truth alone remained his tool.”

Chapter 6 is titled “Bansi Kaul (1949 – 2023): Doyen of Indian Theatre”. At page 50 - 51, the author



quotes from Bansi Kaul's letters to some of his close friends, post KP migration of 1990s, where Bansi Kaul had said, "We are in times where displacements are the rule Displacements from physical spaces, nature and natural sounds, from cultures, from one's own family and friends. Scenes of daughters and sons carrying their aged parents across the country to a safer place during the lockdown, and children falling asleep on suitcases being rolled along are etched in my mind. All these painful experiences must be stopped. This can happen only when there is a sense of general well-being". Quoting Lal Ded -

"In the midst of the sea, with unspun thread, I am towing the boat; would that God grant my prayer and, ferry me too, across.

We all need to hold a single rope to tow the boat of goodness, peace, mental and physical well-being, gratitude, kindness, and magnanimity across the sea of life."

So, dear friends - killing, hating, plundering, and cheating – all in the name of belief and faith will bring nothing. All of us must love each other, which can happen only if you get rid of hatred. The act of throwing a stone of hatred at someone has its repercussions. It will rebound. The hurt ultimately comes to oneself.

Strength can only be in togetherness, and in togetherness, there are memories".

Chapter 7 is a brief 3-page chapter (pages 53-55) on legendary Singer, Ghulam Hassan Sofi. The author quotes a rich tribute from Sh. Haseeb Drabu, former Chairman of J & K Bank Ltd, on Sofi sahib's passing away – it says at page 55 -

"It is a collective loss for people of Kashmir and nobody can fill the void created by his demise. Ghulam Hassan Sofi was not just a great singer but an institution in himself. He didn't merely sing songs; he vocalized the cultural philosophy of the Kashmir valley. Not only his style, his sensibilities too were deeply Kashmiri. May God grant him the same peace and solace that he gave to millions of Kashmiris by his soulful singing."

The reviewer of this book also fondly remembers his own wedding in Srinagar on 5th June 1972, when Ghulam Hassan Sofi sahib had sung melodious Kashmiri songs and Ghazals, both spiritual and romantic. The songs like GANEEMAT SHAMI GUMM ROZYA NA ROZYA, TAMISS ZULPHANN YI KHAM ROZYA NA ROZYA and many others, through the whole night. Baratis (Kilams) and host family (Valis) were all mesmerized by his soulful singing.

Chapter 8 is on Moti Lal Saqi sahib, a great literary figure from Kashmir who had an excellent command on Kashmiri language and was an accomplished poet of his times. The author says at page 56, "Saqi sahib enriched Kashmiri language and literature in several ways and emerged as a major poet and critic in his youth." I leave it to the readers to read the chapter in full and enjoy his literary contribution to Kashmir.

Chapter 15 (page 108 – 118) is on Late Sh. Lassa Kaul, the honest, compassionate and fearless broadcaster. Reading about Sh. Lassa Kaul, brought back memories of my four years working (1969-73) in the Engineering department of All India Radio Srinagar, then called (Radio Kashmir). Sh. Lassa Kaul was unfortunately and gruesomely gunned down by terrorists in Kashmir on 13th Feb 1990. In him we had lost a dear friend and a brilliant radio / media personality.

Part 2 of the book covers 'memories and anecdotes' in 15 well written short chapters. One of the chapters here is titled as "From a complacent onlooker to a global competitor: Kashmiris make big leap forward". I quote here one of the paragraphs at page 147:

"Thank God, everything has changed now. This has been possible with the spread of education and a revolution brought about by information technology. The Kashmiri character has also undergone a metamorphosis towards development. Young Kashmiris hailing from Pandit and Muslim families are now venturing out for better education and employment. I find them going up and up the ladder in all fields. They are focused, honest and sincere and accordingly sought after by the employers globally. They are visible in the sunrise information technology sector, medicine, media, cinema, sports, administration and new business enterprises. A Kashmiri is an acknowledged competitor now, a fierce one in any arena across the globe."

Reading this well written book refreshed my own memories of Radio Kashmir days from 1969 to 1973. The author Avtar Mota jee has packaged his thoughts, memories and interaction experiences very well. I am sure that the book will be of good interest to readers to read the book in full – both in Kashmir and outside. Kashmiris and Kashmir lovers must make it a compulsive read for themselves. Yes, I would like all future books from the versatile author are now in a hard bound format. Yes, two parts of this book under review could have been written as two separate books with some more memories covered in the same.

Wishing readers a happy reading and Avtar jee further curiosity and energy to write still more on Kashmir related matters. I personally wish he writes a comprehensive book on some vital success stories of Kashmiri Pandit families who have particularly done well post 1990 migration.

AFFILIATES' NEWS

KASHMIRI SEWAK SAMAJ (KSS) FARIDABAD CELEBRATES NAVREH 2025 & RAM NAVAMI HAWAN WITH GRANDEUR

Kashmiri Sewak Samaj (KSS) Faridabad joyfully celebrated *Navreh 2025* at the serene Hari Parbat hilltop in Anangpur, Faridabad, blending tradition, culture, and devotion. The event commenced with a sacred Mata Jhanki, followed by the two swahakaar Hawan. The ceremony was honored by the gracious presence of esteemed guest, Sh. Raj Nehru, Officer on Special Duty to the Hon'ble Chief Minister of Haryana and Smt. Praveen Batra Joshi, the newly elected Mayor of Faridabad, along with several respected ward members of the Municipal Corporation of Faridabad.



Drawing a large gathering of nearly 900 attendees from across NCR, the celebration began with prayers to Maa Sharika and unfolded into a vibrant cultural evening. The cultural showcase featured soulful performances by Mr. Abhay Sopory and Mrs. Ragini Rainu, along with a spirited group led by Smt. Sushma Kalla, comprising Sunita Hanglu, Beti Raina, Princy Raina, Dr. Seema Raina, Pammi Dhar, Savita Bhat, Kiran Premi, Niharika Raina, Anshika Raina, and Bharti Kaul. Team Gashtaruk brought boundless energy to the stage, while Saraswati Vandana by Ms. Vijay Laxmi and Shiv Tandav by Sneha Pandita added spiritual richness. A graceful classical dance by Bharti Kaul added elegance to the celebration.

A delightful addition this year was the *Navreh Bazar*, which added color, culture, and festive joy to the event. Another highlight was a **drawing competition for children**, where students from **Hermen Gmeiner School** participated enthusiastically, showcasing their creativity and connection to tradition.

Many association took the opportunity to unveil the bellow mentioned Magazines/trusts/



companies. KSS unveiled the martyrs memorial design which designed by the famous architect Mr Anil wali. It was long pending demand if kashmiri pandits that there should a dedicated place for martyrs to pay tribute to those for their sacrifice for the National integrity, Sanatan Dharma and for Mother India.



KSS also unveiled latest issue of *Sharda Tarangini*, a special calendar, and the newly launched KSS website. AIKS released its latest issue of *Naad*, while GKPD Foundation and Zaan Travels Pvt. Ltd. also marked their presence with key releases.



Special thanks were extended to the sponsors and supporters, including Sushi Hashia, Ashish Zutshi and team JKIDWS, Ramesh Bhat, Bhavana Kaul, Sheetal Kaul, Vinod Bhan, Vishal Bhat, and many others for their valuable contributions.

The program concluded with a serene prayer at Sharika Mandir around 8 p.m., bringing the day to a spiritually fulfilling close. The entire celebration was steered under the dynamic leadership of Sh. Kashi Akhoon, Sh. Vinod Dhar, and the dedicated team of KSS Faridabad.

Adding to the spiritual ambiance, **Ram Navami Hawans** were conducted on 5th and 6th April 2024 at both venues. The sacred chants and collective prayers further strengthened the cultural and religious bonds within the community, making the celebrations truly unforgettable.





Sanjeevani Sharda Kendra (SSK) holds a 3-day Navreh Mahotsav

The three-day "Navreh Mahotsav 2025", observed by SSK, held the closing ceremony at the Abhinav Theatre Jammu. It was to culminate the festivities of celebrating the Kashmiri Hindu New Year. Many people, including prominent celebrities of the community, attended the closing ceremony. The festival started on March 29, 2024.

The first day was observed as Tyaag Divas, commemorating the selfless sacrifice of the revered 15th-century scholar and physician Acharya Pandit Shreya. March 30 was observed as Navreh Sankalp Divas, a day dedicated to reaffirming the community's resolve (Sankalp) to return to their homeland. Collective and individual pledge ceremonies occurred globally in homes, temples, community halls, and various locations. The third day, March 31st, was celebrated as Shaurya Divas, honouring the valour and legacy of the great 8th-century emperor, Samrat Lalitaditya.

The youth was engaged online to write an essay focusing on the lives of Pandit Shreya Bhat and Samrat Lalitaditya.

The concluding ceremony featured enriching cultural performances showcasing the community's rich traditions.

Those who graced the occasion included Prafulla Ketkar, senior journalist and Editor of Organiser Weekly as the chief guest, Mahamandaleshwar Shri Rameshwar Das of Purani Mandi, and Dr Arvind Karwani, Relief and Rehabilitation Commissioner (Migrants).

The Centre is for the dignified return of KPs: LG

As Senior Special Correspondent Daily Excelsior Jammu Avtar Bhat has reported the following from the event of Navreh organised Kashmiri Sabha Jammu:

"Reiterating Central Government's commitment to ensure the dignified return of Kashmiri Pandits to the Valley, Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha today said that efforts are being made to create a conducive environment for the same.

Addressing the Navreh function organised by Kashmiri Pandit Sabha here today, the Lt Governor said that all the obstacles in the way of the return of Kashmiri Pandits to Valley will be removed, and the Government is seriously working in that direction."

"Government is committed to the return of Kashmiri Pandits to Kashmir valley. The Central Government is working on this. Efforts are being made to create the environment for this, and we will eliminate all the obstacles to make it possible", he said.

On the occasion, the Lieutenant Governor assured the PM package employees that appropriate steps would be taken to ensure that all the benefits available to other employees of the J&K Government are extended to them as well.

Sinha interacted with the people and extended his heartiest greetings and best wishes. He prayed that the year ahead would bring happiness, joy, and fulfilment to all, illuminating their journey with hope for a better future.

The LT Governor was the chief guest during the function, while Chief Secretary Atal Dulloo and former DGP Kuldeep Khuda were the guests of honour.

Addressing the gathering, the Lieutenant Governor exhorted the young generation to pledge to celebrate the nine days of Navratri as Nari Shakti Utsav.

"He said, we should resolve to provide equal opportunities to our daughters in every sphere of life."

Sinha also lauded the significant contribution of Kashmiri Pandit Community

iJ&K's growth journey and nation-building."

"Jammu Kashmir is blessed with spiritual energy. The Kashmiri Pandit community has been practicing for thousands of years on this land and has touched the ultimate peak of consciousness. On this occasion, we should also remember the great men and women of the Kashmiri Pandit community and pay homage to those great personalities," he said.

He appreciated the vital contribution of everyone associated with Kashmiri Pandit Sabha and other stakeholders in preserving and promoting the cultural and spiritual heritage of Jammu Kashmir."

"The kind of coordination and efforts that many Kashmiri Pandit organisations are making and the values that are being inculcated in the younger generation, I am confident that no one can harm this vibrant culture," the Lieutenant Governor said.

The Lieutenant Governor highlighted that the celebrations of Navratra and Navreh also reflect unity in diversity and strengthen the emotional bond. "Let us pledge today that we will further strengthen this unity for the welfare of Jammu Kashmir," he said.

Earlier, the president of the Sabha, K K Khosa, while presenting the welcome address, highlighted the critical role played by the Sabha for the past more than a century in safeguarding the interests of the Kashmiri Pandits, especially when the Valley was in turmoil situations from time to time. He appreciated the role played by the GoI under Narendra Modi and the UT Government under Manoj Sinha during the past decade in containing terrorism in the UT of Jammu and Kashmir. He said that this is the result of the policy of zero tolerance towards terrorism that the situation is near normal in the Union Territory by now.

He said this is one of the reasons why the chorus regarding return and resettlement is growing with each passing day. He complimented the Lt. Governor for coming with a heavy hand on all the anti-national elements: "Having received a decisive mandate by the NC Government in UT of J & K, we hope that robust return and rehabilitation

policy is formed after due consultation with the community leadership to ensure our resettlement back in our motherland", he added."

"Until the formation of a new rehabilitation policy, we request that an exclusive employment package be formulated for our community youth to relieve them of despair and despondency over growing overage."

He also demanded enhancement of the monthly cash relief to mitigate the suffering of poor and marginalized people of the community and compensation for owners of farmland besides due compensation to be given to KPs whose houses and other property was razed to ground during turmoil and protection of Hindu shrines in Valle".

Credits: Daily Excelsior

KPs Celebrate Navreh with Passion and Dedication

On March 29, 2025, Navreh, the first day of the New Year, according to the Hindu calendar, was celebrated with passion and dedication by Kashmiri Pandits across J&K.

The day was observed solemnly and determinedly as the Kashmiri Pandit Sankalp Diwas (Day of Resolve). Responding to a call given by Sanjeevani Sharda Kendra (SSK), Jammu, community members participated in pledge-taking ceremonies, reaffirming their collective commitment and aspiration to return to their homeland, Kashmir.

Vivekananda Kendra Nagdandi hosted a significant "Navreh Milan" Sanskrit Bhawan in Roop Nagar, Jammu, where attendees collectively recited the Sankalp (pledge).

A function was held at the Bhagwan Gopinath Ji Ashram Udheywala Bohri Jammu to mark the first Navratra (Navreh c) celebrations. The function started with a Guru Vandana. The Geeta recitation competition was to promote Bhagawaan consciousness among the youth.

The Zeashta Devi Prabandhak Committee (ZDPC) organised Navreh Milan, followed by the General Body Meeting (GBM) at Nardani. President Ravinder

Kumar Jogi delivered a discourse on the significance of Navreh, the Hindu New Year, emphasising the festival's cultural and spiritual essence.

Trikuta Kashmiri Pandit Trust organised Navreh and Zangtrai functions at Sai Palace Trikota Nagar, and a large number of people participated. MLA Bahu and senior BJP leader Vikram Randhawa were the chief guests on the occasion.

Mata Bhaderkali Asthapan Trust organised a grand function at Thalwal Jammu, where over 250 members of the Kashmir Pandit community solemnly pledged to return to their homeland.

Legislators exert pressure on Govt for return of Kashmiri Migrants to Valley

The return concern dominated the proceedings of the J&K Legislative during the last budget session. Across party lines, legislators from BJP, NC, Congress, PDP, CPI (M), AAP, etc., discussed the concern of the return of Kashmiri migrants, including Pandits, to their homes and the creation of a favourable environment for them in Kashmir. They said that KPs are part of Kashmiri society; without them, that society is incomplete.

Responding, Dy Chief Minister Surinder Choudhary said that the National Conference-led Government wants all the Kashmiri migrants, including Pandits, back in their homes in the Valley. He added that Valley at efforts are being made in this direction, in collaboration with the Centre, which the legislators took up in response to a question by CPI(M) Member MY Tarigami and subsequent supplementary questions by various members during Question Hour.

PNBMT Strengthens Temple Movement in Kashmir

Prem Nath Bhat Memorial Trust (PNBMT) recently met with the heads of various temple committees in Kashmir to enhance cooperation and advance the movement to pass the Temples and Shrines Bill.

The Trust reaffirmed its commitment to

assisting temple committees in tackling encroachment, vandalism, and misuse of temple properties while ensuring the preservation of Kashmir's religious and cultural heritage. The meeting was presided over by PNBMT Chairman Roshan Lal Pandita.

ASKPC Delegation Calls on CS

An All-State Kashmiri Pandit Conference delegation, led by its president, Moti Lal Malla, called on Chief Secretary Atal Dulloo in Jammu. The delegation members highlighted the community difficulties and requested early solutions. The emphasis was on restoring normalcy in Kashmir valley, which would pave the way for its dignified and honourable return to its roots.

The other snags discussed were enhancement in cash relief, problems of PM package employees, and issues related to the overaged youth of the community. The delegation demanded a new comprehensive employment package to facilitate the settlement of these employees in Kashmir Valley,

The other harms discussed with the CS were the deplorable conditions of temples and Shrines in Kashmir and encroachments. CS stressed the need to enact law through the passage of the Temples and Shrines Bill as per the pattern of the Muslim Aquaf Trust or Gurudwara Prabandhak Committee to save the community's heritage sites.

The issue of renovation work in Jagti and other migrant camps was also taken up with CS.

The CS gave the patient a hearing of all issues and assured them about their redressal.

CS Reviews Relief and Rehab Measures being extended to different Migrant Categories

Chief Secretary Atal Dulloo held an intensive meeting with the Department of Disaster Management, Relief, Rehabilitation & Reconstruction (DMRR&R) to assess the relief and rehabilitation measures being extended to different migrant categories of

J&K and the status of disaster management preparedness across different districts of the region.

The Principal Secretary of the home and DMRR&R Departments, the Divisional Commissioner of Kashmir/Jammu, the secretary of PWD, the CEO of SHA, the Relief Commissioner, the Chief Engineers of PWD, and other concerned officers and officials of the department were present at the meeting.

Dulloo enquired about the current status of relief and rehabilitation measures extended to different migrant categories in the UT. He said that the set timelines for

The Chief Secretary asked for updating the Kashmiri Migrants Grievance Portal to make its functioning more satisfactory for its users.

The Relief Commissioner, Arvind Karwani, gave a detailed presentation about the status of transit accommodations and jobs being provided to Kashmiri Migrants in different districts of the Valley.

He told Valley that 5 Valley appointments have been made out of 6,000 jobs, and only the posts facing specific issues or subjudice are currently in limbo.

Regarding the transit accommodations, he informed the meeting that 5632 flats had been taken up for construction, with 3152 completed to date.

Regarding relief to the both, Kashmir and Jammu migrants, 9 kg of Rice, 2 kg of data, and 1 kg of sugar are given to each family member. In addition, cash assistance of up to Rs 13,000/family is being provided to 20,564 and 908 families from Kashmir and Jammu, respectively.

Cong MP asks Govt to facilitate Sharda Peeth pilgrimage

Rajya Sabha Congress MP Vivek K Tankha has requested the Government to facilitate pilgrimage to Sharda Peeth, located across the Line of Control (LoC) in Pakistan-occupied Jammu Kashmir (PoJK), on the lines of Kartarpur corridor.

During the Zero Hour in the Rajya Sabha, the Congress MP also spoke about the need for

rehabilitation of displaced Kashmiri Pandits and the facilitation of religious visits to Sharda Peeth through the LoC border.

Highlighting the pain of displaced Kashmiri Pandits, he said they want to return, but there is a lack of security and facilities.

He further said that it was only during the tenure of Prime Minister Manmohan Singh that serious efforts were made for the rehabilitation of Kashmiri Pandits.

The Congress MP further said the facility should be made for a visit to Sharda Peeth."

DC Budgam visits the Vasuki Nag temple site and reviews restoration work.

The Deputy Commissioner (DC) Budgam Akshay Labroo recently visited ancient Vasuki Nag temple site at Wagam Chadoora to inspect the on-going restoration and revival work. During the visit, the DC assessed the progress of various components of the project, including boundary walling and chain link fencing, which is nearing completion. The steel mesh roofing and granite work for the temple are also in progress. Additionally, the hall at the site has reached the slab level, while work on the sanitary complex, which includes the construction of three toilet units and a disposal system, is currently underway, with the brickwork of the superstructure in progress.

*Source: Agencies
Editing: Vijay Kashkari*

DMRRR Jammu Delegation Visits Chowgan and Vessu Transit Camps in South Kashmir

Chowgan/Vessu, April 15, 2025 - A high-level delegation from the Department of Relief and Rehabilitation (DMRRR) Jammu, led by Ms. Sonia Vaid, Joint Director, visited the Chowgan and Vessu Transit camps today. The delegation reviewed the ongoing construction activities at both sites.

During the visit, Vinod Tikoo, Zonal Officer South, along with relief officials, welcomed the delegation. Officials from the

Roads and Buildings department presented progress updates through powerpoint presentations. Technical Officer Ashwani Pandita ensured seamless coordination between departments.

The Joint Director also interacted with PM Package delegations led by Sanjay Koul and Sunny Raina, listening to their concerns and feedback.

Volunteers from Odina KP Colony found the Shivlingam in a State of Neglect

In a divine moment of grace and devotion, volunteers from Odina KP Colony, representing Amruteshwar Mahadev Mandir, took a sacred journey to Baramulla after a viral image of a Mahashivlingam surfaced on social media.



Upon reaching the site, we found the Shivlingam in a state of neglect. With hearts full of bhakti and a deep sense of duty as Sanatanis, we cleaned the surroundings, performed Dhoodh Abhishek, and offered our prayers. According to the locals, such a worship ritual had not taken place here in decades—possibly since the early 90s.

Many residents, who had until now only witnessed people come and take pictures,

stepped out of their homes to watch the revival of faith. The joy, curiosity, and emotional response in their eyes was something truly moving. It wasn't just a ritual—it was a spiritual awakening, a reconnection with roots long left untouched.

We returned with hearts full of peace and satisfaction, blessed to be instruments of Lord Shiva's will. As Shiv Bhakts, this was not just seva, but a call from Mahadev himself.

Let this be a reminder that faith unites, uplifts, and heals. May we continue to answer the call wherever Dharma needs us.

PM's PKG and Non-PM's PKG Employees Meet at Vessu



A meeting was convened at Vessu, gathering all colony inmates and rented employees to discuss pertinent issues related to the Prime Minister's Package (PM's PKG) as well as the concerns of non-PM's PKG employees. The discussion primarily focused on topics such as accommodation, service-related grievances, and the security situation in the area.

PM Package Quarters allotted at Mach Bawan ,Mattan

We are highly thankful to the Divisional Commissioner Kashmir for gracing the final day of Navratri celebrations at KP Colony, Odina, with his esteemed presence. Despite his busy schedule, he made time on very short notice, and we are truly grateful for his support.

We also extend our heartfelt thanks to the Deputy Commissioner Bandipora, SDM Sumbal, DSP Pattan, DO Mirgund, XEN PHE, XEN R&B, and other distinguished dignitaries who were present during the occasion. Their presence made the event even more meaningful and memorable for the community.

IIT Madras admission without JEE Advanced

Cracking the IIT entrance is often considered the ultimate test of perseverance for engineering aspirants in India. To make courses more accessible to deserving candidates, the institute has introduced a new admission pathway that allows students to secure a seat without going through the conventional exam system.

Starting from the 2025-26 academic session, IIT Madras will offer admission to students excelling in National and International Olympiads through a newly established process called 'Science Olympiad Excellence' (ScOpE). This initiative aims to recognize academic excellence beyond conventional entrance exams and provide opportunities for students who perform excellently in specific subjects.

Under this scheme, IIT Madras will introduce two supernumerary seats per undergraduate program. One seat will be exclusively reserved for female students, promoting greater gender inclusivity in technical education.

Candidates will be admitted based on the ScOpE Rank List (SRL), assessing their achievements in five major Olympiads: Physics, Chemistry, Mathematics, Informatics, and Biology.

Unlike regular admissions through the Joint Seat Allocation Authority (JoSAA), ScOpE admissions will be managed through a dedicated portal: <https://jeeadv.iitm.ac.in/scope>.

The application process for the first batch will commence on June 3, 2025.

To qualify for admission through ScOpE, candidates must meet the following criteria:

Must have passed Class 12 and meet the exact age requirements as JEE Advanced for that academic year. Should not have been previously admitted to any IIT. Must be an Indian national (by birth or naturalization) or an OCI/PIO candidate whose card was issued before March 4, 2021.

Additionally, in the last four years, the candidate should have participated in at least one of the following training camps:

Mathematics: International Mathematical Olympiad Training Camps (IMOTC) by Homi Bhabha Centre for Science Education (HBCSE)

Physics, Chemistry, and Biology: Orientation-cum-Selection Camps (OCSCs) organized by HBCSE

Informatics: International Olympiad for Informatics Training Camp (IOITC) by the Indian Association for Research in Computer Science (IARCS)

Students admitted through this process will have access to a range of undergraduate programs, including Aerospace Engineering, Biological Engineering, Chemical Engineering, Civil Engineering, Computer Science and Engineering, Artificial Intelligence and Data Analytics, Electrical Engineering, Engineering Design, Engineering Physics, Mechanical Engineering, Metallurgical and Materials Engineering, Ocean Engineering, Naval Architecture, Medical Science and Engineering, and Chemistry.

Find details at https://ugadmissions.iitm.ac.in/scope/pdf/SCOPE_BR_v1.pdf

CBSE to seek feedback on conducting board exams twice a year

The Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) is considering holding Class 10 and 12 board examinations twice a year, starting from the 2026 session. According to the multifaceted challenges of the modern business world.

JEE Advanced 2025: Documents required for students who quit college in Nov 2024

The Supreme Court has allowed students who quit college between November 5 and 18, 2024, to register for JEE Advanced 2025. Candidates must submit specific documents to complete their registration process.

National Testing Agency (NTA) Question Paper Pattern NEET 2025

NTA, conducting the NEET 2025 since 2019 on behalf of the National Medical Commission, has notified that the pattern of question papers and examination duration for NEET (UG) 2025 will revert to COVID-19 format. The Director Examination NAT issues the public notification.

There will be no section B. There will be 180

compulsory questions, 45 each from Physics and Chemistry and 90 from Biology. All the questions have to be attempted in three hours. There will be no optional questions introduced in COVID-19, and time will not be extended.

Candidates who desire to appear in NEET (UG) 2025 may refer to the detailed Information Bulletin for NEET UG 2025, which will be made available on the website (www.neet.nta.nic.in) when the application form is launched.

Maharashtra Govt launches Atal Portal for Professional CET Cell courses & Career Guidance

Maharashtra's Higher and Technical Education Department has introduced CET—ATAL (Assessment, Tests and Learning) to help candidates seeking admission to various professional courses in the state. The portal will provide mock tests and psychometric tests to students to help them choose the right career and prepare for success in the entrance tests.

There is no age bar for appearing or registering for the tests. Anyone who intends to achieve self-improvement is eligible to apply. As mentioned on the official website, the selection process includes a committee that can either accept or reject the student's application.

CBSE is currently working on the logistics of holding two sets of exams annually, ensuring that the academic schedule is restructured accordingly without disrupting undergraduate admissions.

This initiative is in line with the government's efforts to implement the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, which seeks to reform the education system in India. The primary aim of this change is to reduce students' stress and provide them with additional opportunities to improve their scores.

Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan has confirmed that the new system will allow students to appear for the Class 10 and 12 board examinations twice a year, beginning from the academic session 2025-2026.

The Minister later announced on social media platform X that the Ministry will publish a draft outlining the proposed changes.

IIM Jammu gets 22nd position in IIRF Ranking 2025

Indian Institute of Management (IIM) Jammu has secured the 22nd position in the Best B-Schools (Government) overall category in the prestigious IIRF (Indian Institutional Ranking Framework) Rankings 2025.

The rankings were released based on a comprehensive evaluation of parameters crucial to higher management education.

With an impressive overall index score of 906.42, IIM Jammu has been ranked on various critical parameters such as Placement Performance, teaching, Learning Resources, pedagogy, research, Industry Income and integration, Placement Strategy and Support, Future Orientation, External Perception, and International Outlook (EPIO).

Institute	Rank	Specific Subject	Category
Indian School of Mines (ISM), Dhanbad	20	Engineering	Mineral and Mining
IIT Bombay -	40	Engineering	Mineral and Mining
IIT Kharagpur	45	Engineering	Mineral and Mining
IIT Delhi	47	Engineering	Electrical and Electronic
IIT Bombay	50	Engineering	Electrical and Electronic
IIM Ahmedabad	27	Business and Management Studies	Business and Management Studies
IIM Bangalore	40	Business and Management Studies	Business and Management Studies
IIT Madras	31	Engineering	Petroleum
Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU)	29	Development Studies	Development Studies

IIT Delhi and IIT Bombay improved their global standing in the broader category of Engineering and Technology, moving from a shared 45th rank to 26th and 28th place, respectively.

IIT Bombay and IIT Kharagpur also made it to the top 50 in the specific subject category of Engineering. However, both dropped in ranking compared to last year.

IIM Ahmedabad and IIM Bangalore continued to rank among the world's top 50 for Business and Management Studies but slipped from their previous positions. IIM Ahmedabad dropped from 22nd to 27th, while IIM Bangalore fell from 32nd to 40th.

Similarly, IIT Madras (Petroleum Engineering) and Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) (Development Studies) remained in the top 50 but saw a slight decline.

Panjab University - Tentative Schedule of Entrance Tests

Entrance Test: CETUG

Entrance Test for Course(s): B. Pharm., B.Sc. (Hons) Anthropology, B.Sc. (Hons), Biochemistry, B.Sc. (Hons) Biophysics, B.Sc. (Hons) Biotechnology, B.Sc. (Hons) Botany, B.Sc. (Hons) Chemistry, B.Sc. (Hons) Geology, B.Sc. (Hons) Microbiology, B.Sc. (Hons) Physics, B.Sc. (Hons) Physics (Specialization in Electronics), B.Sc. (Hons) Zoology, Mathematics

Last Date for Applying: April 24, 2025 (Thursday)

Date of Entrance Test: May 11, 2025 (Sunday)

Website: <https://cetug.puchd.ac.in>

Jawahar Lal Nehru University New Delhi

Admission to the B.A. (Hons.) program in Foreign Languages, B.Sc. Programme in Ayurveda Biology and Certificate of Proficiency Programmes of Jawaharlal Nehru University for the Academic Year 2025-26 will be through CUET (UG) 2025.

Admission to Jawaharlal Nehru University's B.Tech. The programme for the Academic Year 2025-26 will be through JEE Mains (J oSAA/DA SA).

All Kashmiri Migrants are eligible for a grant of 05 (five) deprivation points upon producing registration documents from the notified authorities certifying their Kashmiri Migrant Status.

The University has decided to provide 02 seats under the supernumerary quota for candidates from Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh Union Territories. Of these, 01 seats will be allocated for the Undergraduate programme and another 01 for the Postgraduate programme. The candidates for these seats will be selected based on securing the highest marks among the remaining candidates after the final list.

University of Delhi

Admissions to all Undergraduate Programs at the University of Delhi will be based on the scores obtained in CUET (UG) - 2025, except for admissions to the School of Open Learning (SOL), Non-Collegiate Women Education Board (NCWEB) and for Foreign Nationals

website of the University of Delhi (www.admission.uod.ac.in)

Candidates seeking admission to the University of Delhi must apply to the University of Delhi's Common Seat Allocation System (UG)-2025. The details related to allocations and admissions through CSAS(UG)-2025 will be notified separately on the University of Delhi website.

Candidate must refer to the Program-Specific Eligibility to choose the subjects in which s(he) should appear in CUET (UG) – 2025.

Kashmiri Migrants Candidates desirous of admission to Supernumerary seats must appear in CUET (UG) - 2025.

Kashmiri Migrants (KM): Up to 5% of seats are reserved program-wise in all colleges for Kashmiri Migrants. All Kashmiri Migrants' wards will have to upload a certificate of registration issued by the Divisional Commissioner/Relief Commissioner.

Prime Minister's Special Scholarship Scheme for J&K students (PMSSS) Candidates desirous of being admitted under the PMSSS must appear in CUET (UG)—2025.

The Highest education is that which does not merely give us information but makes our life in harmony with all existence.

- Rabindranath Tagore





AIKS Matrimonial Service



Seeking Suitable Alliance for my Daughter, DoB-21.02.1996, ToB - 10.40 AM, Place of Birth – Jammu, Height - 5'4" (165 cm), Prof. Qualification - MBBS from Manipal College of Medical Science, Pursuing DNB Anesthesiology at Medanta Hospital. Family Background: - Father running own Business M/s Imperial Pack Masterz (www.ipmasterz.com), Mother in a Government service, Sister MBBS Graduate. Valley address-Rainawari, Srinagar, Kashmir, Home address - Jasola Vihar, New Delhi. Preference-Co-profession/ Civil Servant, Mobile / WhatsApp Number – 9818879945 Email Id- vakilrajinder@gmail.com/vakil@ipmasterz.com



Seeking Alliance for my Son Date of birth:-19-12-1990, Time of birth:-9.25 pm, Place of birth:- Jammu, Height:-5'10", Qualification:- B.tech(EEE) from MDU Rohtak. Job Discription:-Marketing Director VaYu (Vivekanadayoga university), Work from home/ anywhere. Previously worked as Marketing Manager, Sewa International (USA) Delhi. Permanent address (Valley) Proper Budgam-Town. Present Address:-Durganagar Jammu, Email:-Chandkishankoul@gmail.com, MobileNo:-8899511408, Whatsapp:-8717071706



Looking for suitable match for our son Vaibou Munshi born on 16/01/1987, Educational qualification BMS (Mumbai University) Annual income in 7 figures. Working as manager FAR East region Emerties Leaving Solution (Mumbai) Kashmir Address: Malik Bagh Zaindar Mohalla Habba Kadal, Srinagar KMR. Present Address: 19/1A, JMC- 22, Munshi Shack, Anuradha Puram, Barani Muthi, Jammu - 181205. Interested may contact on Mobile no - 9419195317, 7006144793, 9419878796



Looking for a suitable match for our son, Manik Patwari, DoB: 21-12-1994, Place of Birth: Faridabad (Haryana), Time of Birth: 09:35 AM, Height: 5'5" ft. Qualification: B-Tech (Mechanical Engineer) from Deen Bandhu Chhotu Ram University of Science and Technology, Murthal Sonipat) Haryana. Job Profile: Presently working as Engineer in M/s Sanden Vikas India Pvt. Ltd, Faridabad. PREFERENCE: Working KP Girl. Present Address: H. No B/29 Ashoka Enclave Part 2 Sec 37 Faridabad and Valley Address: Sangri Colony Kanlibagh Baramulla Kashmir. For more details please contact: puranpatwari@yahoo.co.in, Mobile number: 9811561341, sunilpatwari007@gmail.com, Mobile number: 9810191189, Ramesh Bhat Mobile number: 9310357707



Looking for a suitable match for our son working in Deloitte Bangalore as a Software Engineer. Qualification: B.Tech from PDEU Gandhinagar Gujarat in ICT (information and communication Technology). Born on 14 NOV 1997 at 09:26 AM, Height -6 Feet. Appearance: Handsome, FAMILY originally from Fathe Kadal (Vakils) Srinagar. Family well settled in Ahmedabad, Father - CEO in Pvt organisation. MOTHER - Associate Professor in Pvt University Please contact: 9924700377



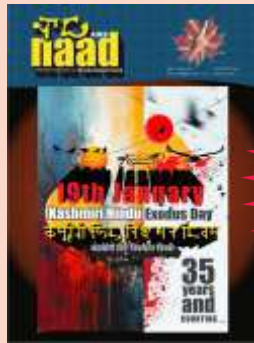
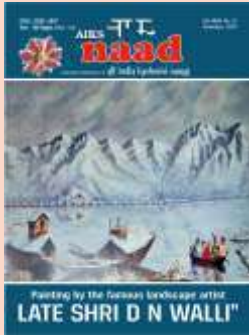
Suitable alliance invited for my son (B.E, M.B.A), born 28th May 1995, 5'9". Working as DATA ANALYST at LOWE'S COMPANI, Inc., Bengaluru, Karnataka Interested may contact: Ramesh Pandita, Anand Nagar, Jammu, Email-Id: arianramesh99@gmail.com, or Mobile no. 9419189513.



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Date :

The President

All India Kashmir Samaj

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With best wishes
Yours Sincerely

Signature

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