

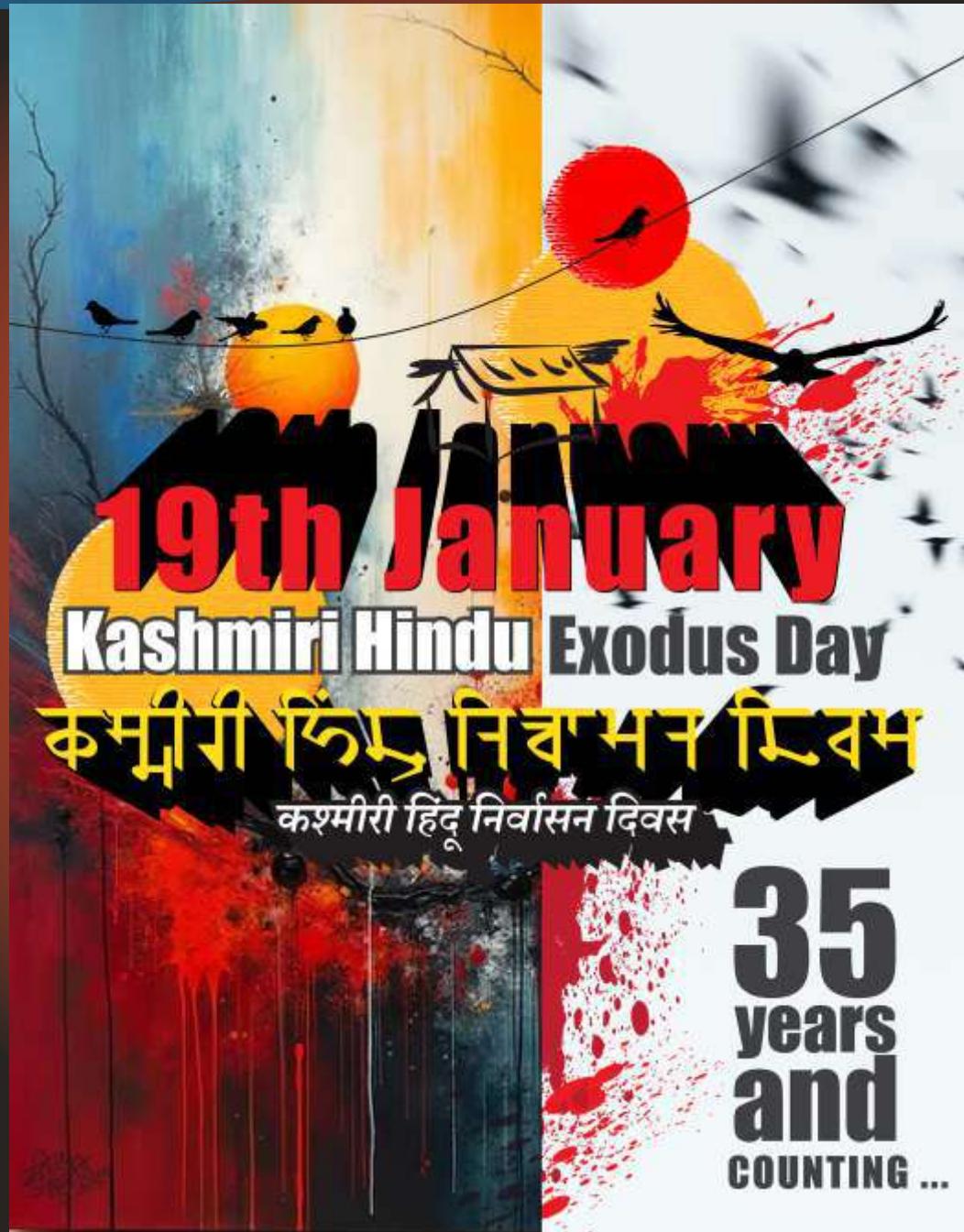


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**19th January**  
**Kashmiri Hindu Exodus Day**  
**कश्मीरी हिंदू निर्वासन दिवस**  
**कश्मीरी हिंदू निर्वासन दिवस**

**35**  
**years**  
**and**  
**COUNTING ...**



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## EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

**Sunil Raina Rajanaka**

## EDITORIAL BOARD

Col. Tej K Tikoo

Shuban Khaibri

Dr. Ravi Dhar

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## AIKS Secretariat, HQ

H. No. 308 (LGF), Sector 35  
 Ashoka Enclave Part -III,  
 Faridabad, Haryana - 121 003

## 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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## THIS MONTH'S COVER

**Conceived and Designed by  
 Sunil Mahnoori**

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# Editor's Note



## Dear Readers,

Kashmiri Hindus shall be in their 35<sup>th</sup> year of our exile. This exodus was enforced by regressive and fascist forces, armed and abetted by terror and genocidal state Pakistan. The hoary days of 19<sup>th</sup> January are grim reminder of violence which resulted in death, destruction, and decimation of minority Hindus in Kashmir. Half a million aborigines of Kashmir were forced to leave their civilisational habitat.

Psychic wounds of genocide have passed through decades and the dispensations at center have tried to ignore the genocide of Kashmiri Hindus. The orgy of revulsion by terror state Pakistan along with its surrogate armed groups in valley reminds how the majority community with xenophobia and bloodlust targeted the peaceful Hindu minority of valley. However, the survival of community despite such a genocide is not only a saga of resilience but also a matter of great pride.

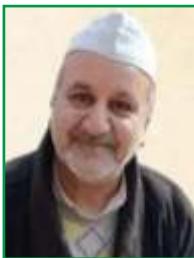
Post abrogation of Article 370 there has been a lot of buzz around normalcy. However, the spread of terror mechanism to regions of Jammu and targeted killings of Hindu employees in valley is a matter of concern which needs to be addressed in larger national interest. To secure the lives of Hindus in Jammu & Kashmir, government must provide more economic opportunities to prevent attrition of Kashmiri Hindu youth and ensure wider participation of them in economic field also a special package for them is the need of the

hour. In the meantime, Government must immediately provide accommodation to the minority Hindu employees in valley who are at the mercy of majority community. Relief enhancement of the community is another demand which government must look sympathetically considering the inflation and spending which is necessary for survival.

As train services from Katra to Kashmir shall get effective from this month making it convenient for locals and tourists to travel to Kashmir, the government must come up with blueprint to weed out terror from the whole of Jammu & Kashmir and ensure that terror modules, their sympathizers and over ground support is rendered ineffective. If India has to ensure long term return of Kashmiri Hindus to their homes, the government must first recognise the genocide, initiate the trials against the perpetrators and pass a law to prevent such reoccurrences in future. The government must also address the geopolitical aspirations of community so that there is no future refoulement from their homeland. Community must also not be silent on such genocidal issue; this is an important issue for community as genocide is a terrible stain in the collective conscience of India. I sum up with the feeling of every Kashmiri Hindu in the words of community poet Brij Narain Chakbast.

*Shuteh Huveh Oos Bagh Ko Guzrah Hai Zamana  
Taaza Hai Magar Iski Mohabbat Ka Fasana*

ਮੁਨੀਲ ਝੜਕ ਮਾਣਕ



## From the President's Desk

Respected All  
Namaskar to All AIKS family,

As we enter 35th year of exodus, we still feel the pain for what we lost in the 1990 genocide. The problems and issues with the community still persist with no hope in the tunnel. We are fighting a lost war, hoping against hope as yet another year passes. Pain is still there.

AIKS new team called the Executive team met on 4 Jan'2025 to deliberate upon the continuing issues. As per the manifesto and road ahead I dwelt upon a 3 point program for near future as :

a) Rehabilitation of community at 3 settlements viz, South, Central & North Kashmir as a part of dignified return of exiled community with security. Simultaneously, AIKS itself needs rehabilitation as an apex organization, which is in bad state of affairs in a financial crunch. Sewa by 'Tann, Mann & Dhan' is needed as AIKS is in ICU and has to be taken out to general ward, The unfilled 2 seats in assembly need to be nominated for KPs.

b) After the Anglo Indian seat in Rajya sabha fell vacant a few years ago, the community should raise its demand for nominating a KP to Rajya sabha to give representation to this exiled community, so that their voice is heard in Parliament.

c) The Jammu court case incl setting up of Temples & Shrines board at the moment followed by proper legislation & empowerment in the shape of Act towards migrants Shrines property incl. its consolidation w.r.t revenue records and physical reclamation. In the Jammu court case OWP No: 477/2016 Divisional Commissioner has been directed to file compliance report in terms of order dated 06.03.2020 and 31.05.2023 passed in CM No: 2445/2023

The AIKS Trust case pending adjudication was deliberated upon by honorable senior members. NDOH being 01.04.2025,new

President needs to appear before court through a lawyer.

Raising of funds to run the organization through personal contributions, existing donors was stressed as AIKS is facing acute financial crunch because of mismanagement by previous office bearers & president not paying due attention to this issue.

Revival of Vaakh our literary and only Devnagiri magazine was deliberated upon, Naad, being official mouthpiece of AIKS, should be printed with a better sense of responsibility and objective content and more advts. resources, subscription fee, hard copies etc was favored. I vouch for organizing International Mother Tongue day falling on 21 Feb'2025 in collaboration with IGNCA in New Delhi. A special edition of NAAD will be released on 19th January on eve of exodus day.

In the meantime, AIKS has also voiced concern regarding migrants AMR and filling up of new forms under NAFSA.

Jammu team and Kashmir team has to be more active, so that visibility on ground in the state is vivid and affiliates need to come forward with their suggestions to take AIKS to new heights.

We also feel deeply concerned regarding the condition of record files and portraits of former presidents & stalwarts of AIKS now damaged because of improper attention by previous team It is felt that there is a need of shifting the records and files to KECSS Pamposh Enclave, till we get a permanent office somewhere in Delhi, for which the case file is being pursued..

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

We wish our AIKS extended family a vibrant future and a Happy New year 2025.

May Sharda Mata bless us all !!

Er. RAVINDER PANDITA



Sunil Kaul



## General Secretary's Column

After winning the presidential elections on 11 Nov'2024, the new President, Sh. Ravinder Pandita, took over formally from the incumbent President, Dr. Romesh Raina, on 17 Nov'2024. Subsequently a new Executive Body of 37 members was constituted. For the first time a Kashmir team was announced to work directly in valley and show its presence as a team of AIKS in the valley.

The new Executive body met formally in its maiden meeting on 04 January'2025. The new team expressed its determination to take forward the core issues of AIKS, including the permanent rehabilitation, Temples & Shrines Bill, Migrants property as envisaged in the Migrants Property Act of 1997, representation of our community in the Parliament as well as State Assembly through filling up of 2 nominated seats for migrants. The new executive body also deliberated upon the AIKS Writ Petition of 2006, presently being adjudicated in Jammu High Court. It also discussed the pending AIKS Trust case, presently under adjudication. Revival of the only Kashmiri magazine 'Vaakh' was also discussed along with strengthening of AIKS mouthpiece 'Naad'. It was also decided to celebrate International Mother Tongue Day in New Delhi on 21 Feb'2025.



AIKS took up the matter of release of AMR, NAFSA, forms and expressed concerns over these issues. AIKS team also visited SGPC for participation in 150th Martyrdom of Guru Teg Bahadur ji. The team was felicitated by prominent members of Sikh body. The new President was also felicitated by JKVM and GKPD also. Besides, AIKS also felicitated and new President of KOA, Uphar Kotru in New Delhi. It also deliberated upon oversees issues with the new President. The file containing the case to restore office accommodation through DDA has also been pushed with the concerned ministry.

Taking over of record files and documents also began during the past month. It is with great anguish I inform the community that most of the historical record of AIKS is destroyed due to sheer carelessness of the previous President and his team who just dumped the documents in an area where water seepage was all too visible. The seepage and utter neglect and no maintenance has resulted in nearly all records getting destroyed. These included the portraits of past presidents and stalwarts of the community who had served this apex organization over a period of decades. It was, therefore, decided to digitalize all the records including important letters.





**ALL INDIA KASHMIRI SAMAJ (REGD.)**  
(APEX BODY OF INDIAN & OVERSEAS KASHMIRI PANDIT ORGANISATIONS)  
**House No. 308, (LGF), Ashoka Enclave Part-III, Sector 35**  
**Faridabad Haryana 121003, Telephone: 0129-4061043**  
Web: [www.aiks.org](http://www.aiks.org); E-mail: [hqaiks@gmail.com](mailto:hqaiks@gmail.com)

**Dated: - 8<sup>th</sup> January, 2025**

**Press Brief**

AIKS (All India Kashmiri Samaj), in its Core Committee meeting held on 8<sup>th</sup> January 2025, expressed its grave concern over the Public Notice issued by the Relief & Rehabilitation Commissioner (M), Jammu, recently. The Public Notice, published in a local newspaper, has created confusion and distress in the community about the impact that the contents of the notice will have on the displaced community members.

The public notice "Integration of Migrant Ration Cards into the NFSA (National Food Security Act) Database" mentions the benefits of various government schemes. However, the benefits are neither defined nor explained, which has created anxiety among the displaced community.

As was explained in the meeting, the referred notice conveys benefits like those accruing to Antyodaya Yojna Families and households without shelter.

The Government of Jammu and Kashmir does not mention Kashmir Migrants in the National Food Security Act of 2013, nor does it include them in any footnote.

Calling the displaced persons of Kashmir as migrants depicts the insensitivity of the powers in the governance.

It is pertinent to mention that the displaced community has faced uncertainty over the last 35 years of such notifications, which do not detail the schemes' purpose and benefits to the displaced.

It's, therefore, a relevant question to be asked to the committee that is supposed to comply with the act, 'Where will the displaced community get the benefits of the notice mentioned above, without their permanent settlement in the valley?"

It is this lacuna that is troubling the displaced KP migrants.

The president and members of AIKS appeal to the Chief Secretary (Member State Food Commission of J&K) and Secretary of the Department of Disaster Management, Relief, Rehabilitation & Reconstruction, Jammu and Kashmir, to address the community's apprehensions regarding the public notice issued by; the Relief & Rehabilitation Commissioners (M) Jammu, at the earliest to allay the suspicions the displaced migrants that this notice has created.

**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, Sahibabad, Shimla, Srinagar, Udaipur, Varanasi, Karnal, Telangana.**

**Overseas: U.K. & U.S.A**



Dr. Ramesh Tamiri



# THIRTY-FIVE YEARS OF EXILE AND OUR FUTURE SURVIVAL

## Background

We will be completing thirty-five years in exile in January 2025. There is no indication that our goal of resettlement in Kashmir on a durable basis will be accomplished too soon. Despite our willingness to return home and struggle for this, the successive governments at the centre, including the present dispensation, have not taken a single step towards that. Our return is not a priority or even an agenda for the BJP-led NDA government. Decisions announced by the governments from time to time for a tokenist or symbolic return to claim that normalcy has returned and the Pandits have come back have no takers. Our concerns have been conveyed to the government that we want the return of the community on a durable basis.

Three aspects related to our genocidal cleansing need to be discussed if we wish to survive as a community and return to Kashmir on a durable basis:

1. Policies of the govt. that created a situation of genocidal attrition in the 1947-1990 period leading to our extirpation from Kashmir.
2. Policies of the Govt. from 1990-2024 vis-à-vis Kashmiri Hindus affecting our survival and return-rehabilitation in Kashmir.
3. Protection of our identity as a community.

**Our return is not a priority or even an agenda for the BJP-led NDA government.**

## Genocidal Attrition (1947-1990)

How we managed to live all these years in Kashmir is in itself a miracle. 1947 Pakistani invasion of J&K, the transfer of power to the National Conference-led regime in October 1947, and the central government's approval of the Sheikh Abdullah-led government's discriminatory policies against us became a major threat to our existence in Kashmir.

North and central Kashmir came under Pakistani occupation, leading to unspeakable atrocities—killings, looting of property, rape, and expulsion of thousands of Hindus and Sikhs. The indifference of the state government towards Kashmiri Hindu refugees forced them to lead a subhuman existence in different camps in Srinagar city and Sopore town. Due to this apathetic attitude and blatant discrimination, many refugee families were either unable to return or lived in penury after return. Some families from these areas bid goodbye to Kashmir for all times to come.

The National Conference-led government did not follow the rules of secular governance. Since it espoused sectarian Muslim sub-nationalism, its discriminatory approach towards Kashmiri Hindus was visible in all aspects of governance. In the name of 'correcting historical wrongs against

Muslims,' it pursued policies that threatened our very survival in Kashmir. Jobs for Kashmiri Hindus in state services became scarce. They were told that they had green pastures available throughout India, while Muslims had opportunities only in Kashmir. The land reform process was faulty and discriminatory. Maximum Kashmiri Pandit families, who lost land in land reforms, were those who had purchased it in 1932 when proprietary rights were first granted to state subjects. The Pandit families, which had invested their little savings in purchasing land, lost it with a stroke of a pen. Since income on the land after land reforms was too meagre to sustain normal living and jobs were not available for them, they turned overnight into paupers.

Kashmiri Hindus made entreaties to Pt. Nehru and other leaders, individually and collectively, to put a halt to discriminatory policies. They were asked to keep patience, and false assurances were given that things would improve in due course. Nothing changed. In fact, the situation turned from bad to worse.

The Sheikh Abdullah government was itself dismissed in 1953, not for its hostile policy towards Kashmiri Hindus but for the pro-separatist positions it had been taking right since January 1948.

Bakshi Ghulam Mohammad replaced Sheikh Abdullah. Though he was not hostile to Kashmiri Hindus at a personal level, he had to operate through the same bureaucracy that had served Sheikh Abdullah so loyally. Discriminatory policies against Kashmiri

**“Kashmiri Hindus made entreaties to Pt. Nehru and other leaders, individually and collectively, to put a halt to discriminatory policies. They were asked to keep patience, and false assurances were given that things would improve in due course. Nothing changed. In fact, the situation turned from bad to worse.**

Hindus continued. A slow migration of Kashmiri Hindus started to seek job and business opportunities in other parts of India. Since the Bakshi years were an age of plenty due to the massive pumping of funds by the centre, the slow migration did not become a storm because some jobs at lower levels also trickled to meritorious Pandits.

Worse was to follow when GM Sadiq took over the reins of power in 1964. He was pro-India but had no social base for support. To create a constituency for himself among the Muslim middle class, he unleashed communal policies in education and job recruitment. A major portion of jobs and seats in professional training courses were reserved for Muslims, leaving very little for Kashmiri Hindus. Even promotions in education services were brought into the ambit of communal policies. Kashmiri Hindus launched a massive agitation in 1967 to protest against the institutionalised discrimination of the Sadiq regime. The struggle failed because of the short-sighted community leadership and hostile attitude of the then Prime Minister, Indira Gandhi. Aggrieved Kashmiri Hindu teachers also filed cases in the Supreme Court for relief against communal policies in promotions.

During the chief ministership of Syed Mir Qasim (1971-75), not only did the economic and educational opportunities shrink further for Kashmiri Hindus, but also the Pandits started facing the threat of social destabilisation. It was because of the

**“National Conference-led government did not follow the rules of secular governance. Since it espoused sectarian Muslim sub-nationalism, its discriminatory approach towards Kashmiri Hindus was visible in all aspects of governance.**

“

**There is a need for an inquiry into the role of VP Singh, Mufti Syed, and George Fernandes in their handling of the Kashmir situation and dealing with the security of Kashmiri Hindus in 1989-90. Many decisions of Mufti Syed and George Fernandes are questionable.**

squeeze of economic opportunities for Kashmiri Hindus in state services, and new land reforms implemented in 1978 were an attempt to uproot Kashmiri Pandits from rural Kashmir. If Pandits still got some jobs, it was because the recruitment in central government departments, nationalised banks, and public sector undertakings was guided by well-laid-out procedures and merit. There were also a few humane heads of the Department of State Services who ignored government directions and selected Kashmiri Pandits on merit. Since jobs in central services were not much in number, the impact of the economic squeeze was severe. Around this time, hundreds of Kashmiri Hindus found jobs as medical representatives in pharma companies, which had recently expanded their operations in Kashmir to tap the new market. Many went for lowly paid private school jobs or set up small businesses. Migration from Kashmir assumed a bigger form.

### **Destabilisation**

A politically sponsored hate campaign started against Kashmiri Hindus across the Kashmir Valley in the early 1980's. At times it looked as if there was convergence in the politics of

patronisation of Jamaat Islami by the then Congress leadership.

The installation of Sheikh Abdullah as Chief Minister in 1975 directly threatened the existence of Kashmiri Hindus in Kashmir. NC leadership pursued a vicious form of sub nationalism that emboldened communal, fundamentalist, and separatist forces in Kashmir.

There was a total

the National Conference and Jamaat Islami. Stone-pelting on houses of the Kashmiri Pandit community, harassment of the community members in public places, and offices, and punishment transfers became the new normal. There was increasing insecurity among our women.

Communally sponsored attacks against Kashmiri Hindus in many villages of Anantnag in 1986 were a rehearsal of what was to happen in 1989-90.

By now hundreds of Kashmiri Muslim youth had been recruited by Pakistani agencies for training in subversion. The behaviour of these newly trained terrorists on their return towards Kashmiri Hindus was belligerent. An atmosphere of insecurity built up. The central government overlooked all this, either because it did not get proper feedback or had no policy plan/political will to deal with the situation. Many segments of local administration on whom the community could rely for security seemed hostile.

### **Ethnic Cleansing**

Selective killings and abductions, which initially began sporadically, soon became a regular feature. The then governor, Gen. KV Krishna Rao, was indifferent to Kashmiri Hindus. The new government of VP Singh, which had Mufti Syed as home minister, was the worst thing to follow. Mr. Jagmohan, who was appointed to replace ineffective governor Gen. KV Krishna Rao, was not allowed to function by ministers and other lobbies in the Janta Dal ministry.

There is a need for an inquiry into the role of VP Singh, Mufti Syed, and George Fernandes in their handling of the Kashmir situation and dealing with the security of Kashmiri Hindus in 1989-90. Many decisions of Mufti Syed and George Fernandes are questionable.

All-round abdication of the role by the state and central government left no option for Kashmiri Hindus but to leave Kashmir at least till the situation improved a little. Editors in Delhi were told not to cover the atrocities and exodus of Kashmiri Hindus in the media in the “national interest.” This emboldened the

terrorists to continue to target Kashmiri Hindus. Lobbies that collaborated with the terrorists let loose a barrage of disinformation against Kashmiri Hindus. We had no means to counter the disinformation campaign and attempts at social profiling by these powerful lobbies.

### Government Role

The government of the day was apathetic to the needs of Kashmiri Hindu refugees. Tented accommodation in hostile weather, paltry relief to sustain day-to-day existence, and the absence of medical facilities led to hundreds of deaths in 1990-1992. Harassment of refugees and employees on different issues made the community members vulnerable to chronic stress and various stress-related diseases. Increased number of deaths and poor birth rates led to a demographic squeeze.

Two major initiatives helped Kashmiri Hindus:

1. Reservation of seats in professional colleges in Maharashtra by Shri Bal Thackeray.
2. Construction of two-room quarters and PM package for our youth.

Lately, the present government has taken some initiatives to renovate our shrines and complete the quarters for our PM package youth in Kashmir.

Even after 35 years, the government is unwilling to frame a well-thought-out policy to

address day-to-day issues of survival and the question of return and rehabilitation in Kashmir.

### Struggle

The community has been waging a struggle for survival and return as it faces three serious challenges today:

1. Redressal of day-to-day problems on a comprehensive basis.
2. Question of return and rehabilitation in Kashmir on a durable basis.
3. Preserving our identity as a cohesive community in exile and linking it with the struggle for return and rehabilitation in Kashmir.

Our Sabhas in different cities and community leadership need to work out a blueprint to address all these issues. In particular, these organisations need to connect with the community youth to get them into the fold of activism. We also need to engage in relevant narrative-building to sensitise the public opinion and put pressure on the government.

Growing Hindu resurgence in the country, where many important people have started speaking for us, remains our great hope. Sooner than later, the government at the centre will feel the necessity of opening a serious dialogue with our community-based leadership to address all concerned issues.

- The author has recently published first part of his trilogy on Pakistan Invasion of 1947-48, titled *Pakistan Invasion on J&K (1947-48) - Untold Stories of Victims*

### Cartoon by- Anil Nakhasi





# NIGHT OF TRAMPLED FAITH

The night between 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> January, 1990, was a horrifying ordeal in the lives of Kashmiri Hindus —the night when psychological terror was let loose on helpless thousands. The loudspeakers of mosques were repurposed as potent weapons to terrorize a minuscule minority— a community that posed absolutely no threat to anyone.

In the evening of 19 January, our family was sitting around a *Bukhari* in our first floor living room, and mother was busy preparing dinner. It must have been around 7:30 pm when Ramesh, our tenant, came rushing up from his ground floor accommodation. Appearing jittery, he told father that his Muslim worker had called up, and advised him to stay indoors as people were gathering in large numbers in mosques throughout the city. Situation seemed highly volatile, things could take an ugly turn anytime, so he had counseled Ramesh to stay alert. Without a doubt, the news was disturbing, yet we didn't take any extra precautions—our neighborhood seemed quiet, there wasn't any unusual activity on the streets. Before long the spine-chilling events of that night would prove how badly we, and our whole community, had misread the situation. We could hear some indistinct slogans being

**Completely unprotected, we were at the crowd's mercy, with no sign of security forces to deliver us from this threat.**

**From our porch we kept a tense vigil, our eyes fixed on the mosque and the streets outside, fearing a hostile mob to be let loose on us at any moment.**

shouted from the nearby mosque. And then, the loudspeakers of the mosque were turned on, blaring out venomous rhetoric, asking 'Indian dogs' to leave Kashmir. Thousands seemed to have gathered inside the mosque, and soon the anti-India rant took on an anti-Hindu hue. Humiliating and blood-curdling threats were yelled out at Kashmiri Hindus: '*Ashi Gachi Banun Pakistan Batav Ros Thi Batnev Saan*' (We want Kashmir to become Pakistan without Hindu men, but with their womenfolk), *Raliv Galiv ya Chaliv* (Convert or get killed or run away), *Pakistan se Rishta kya? La Ilaha Illallah* (Islam is our bond with Pakistan), *Ae Kafiron Kashmir Hamara Chhod Do* (On non-believers, leave our Kashmir). Terrified, we rushed down to bolt the main wooden gate of our house, locking it up securely. The possibility of a violent strike on our colony now seemed frighteningly real. Mother turned ashen-faced, and in a grim tone directed my sister to rush to the attic, and hide there in a charcoal storage drum, if the mob attacked our house and broke in. Under no circumstances was she to come down, even if rest of us were

being beaten up, or got killed. As a 17-year old adolescent this somber conversation left me scared stiff. The mere thought of what could befall us made my blood run cold, we were in serious trouble. Meanwhile an unearthly darkness descended on the Hindu houses of the area, as frightened residents switched off all the lights of their homes to avoid unwanted attention. From our porch we kept a tense vigil, our eyes fixed on the mosque and the streets outside, fearing a hostile mob to be let loose on us at any moment. Lasting late into the night, the harrowing situation kept us on edge. Eventually the loudspeakers fell silent but we didn't dare to lower our guard, keeping up the watch for a long time. Later our parents sent us to bed but a fitful sleep was the best we could manage that night, or whatever was left of the terrible night, as the fear of a possible attack on our house still haunted us.

The blaring of threats from mosques was a deliberate ploy to instill fear in the minds of the minorities. This is how one of my friends, Prateek Hak, who was also 17-years old at the time, describes his experience of that horrifying night:

**A few days later, there was an attempt on my father's life. Unnerved, we fled the Valley taking nothing along, except our honor and lives.**

"The date 19<sup>th</sup> of January, 1990, is seared on the collective memory of the Hindus who endured that dreadful night. I was at my friend Ajay's house for a sleepover. It was 10 pm, and the movie *Do Aankhen Barah Haath* had just got over on Doordarshan. Shibni Aunty, Ajay's mother, was urging us to switch off the lights and go to sleep. Lying on the carpeted floor, wrapped up in thick quilt with a *Kanger* to keep us warm, we heard a mumble coming from the loudspeaker of a nearby mosque. Soon, the murmur changed into clearly audible chants like '*Naara-e-Takbeer, Allahu Akbar*'. Then came the more vicious slogans like: *Kashmir Mein Agar Rehna Hai, Allahu Akbar Kahna Hai* (To stay in Kashmir you will have to chant Allah is great); *Battan Hyund Byol Khodayan*

*Gol* (May God wipe out Kashmiri Hindus). Listening to the growing chorus, a gnawing anxiety replaced the carefree attitude we had had just a few moments back. Quietly, Ajay got up and tiptoed towards the window. Peering out at the main road outside, which was about 100 meters away from the house, he was startled to find it teeming with people shouting anti-India slogans. We got scared as the mob appeared hostile, and seemed to have taken over the whole area. Soon Shibni Aunty came in, switched on the lights and asked us to get up. Her ashen-faced look spooked us, making our angst grow into panic. We froze when she told us that things didn't look good, and that we need to save ourselves if the mob attacked the house. Taking out warm clothes from the cupboard, she asked us to put those on and be ready to run. She sat with us, explaining the escape route out of the house in case the mob came in through the front door.

'When I tell you to run, take this route and get away. Don't look back. Just run towards the army cantonment area,' she instructed, as Ajay and I, sat terrified, and

ready to run for our lives. Wearing *Pheran* and having put on our shoes, we waited for the inevitable, while endless waves of anxiety washed over us. Our gaze fixed at the main gate for any ominous sign that would spark our desperate dash through the back door. As the ranting from the mosques kept growing louder, the crowd kept getting bigger, with men shouting in unison.

It was common knowledge that in the last few months, names of many Hindus had appeared on lists published at mosques across the Valley, asking them to leave or face death. Similar notices had been pasted on Hindu houses as well. We also knew that Hindus leaders had been cherry-picked, and then assassinated in cold blood. Inexplicably, it

never crossed our minds that it could happen to us as well. We had done nothing to upset the separatists and they had no reason to target us, or so we thought. Now as we sat, horror-struck and helpless, a troubling thought that we might all get killed tonight kept tormenting us. While our lives were hanging by a slender thread, we wondered what was happening in the rest of the city. The seeds of fear sown in our hearts by the targeted killings of our community members were now manifesting in full blown panic. An ethnic wipeout suddenly seemed imminent. We sat through the whole night, scared and endlessly staring at the front gate, a menacing mob on the streets just a stone's throw away. Completely unprotected, we were at the crowd's mercy, with no sign of security forces to deliver us from this threat. Sadly, anarchy driven by religious fundamentalism had taken over the Valley and we were like sitting ducks in the midst of this mayhem.

Finally, it was dawn, the crowd had dispersed and we had survived! The crowd's intent seemed to be to heighten our sense of insecurity, and it clearly succeeded in it, so that we would choose to flee our homeland. A few days later, there was an attempt on my father's life. Unnerved, we fled the Valley taking nothing along, except our honor and lives. We left behind our home, our identity and our culture, never to return and reclaim these. Overnight we were refugees in our own country. The religious fundamentalists had succeeded in cleansing the Valley of its minuscule Hindu minority. Yet, sadly, the nation remained silent."

The separatists precisely timed the frenzy on a night when there was transition of power, from an indifferent, elected government to Governor's rule, taking place in the state. The administration was at its weakest, with a highly compromised chain of command. The infiltration of the administrative set up by terrorist sympathizers, the low morale of the pro-India elements, selfishness of local political parties and cluelessness of central leadership made it very difficult for the Governor to get boots on the ground in time.

That night the whole city was gripped by communal frenzy, with marauding gangs of men roaming the streets unchallenged. A few Hindus who had contacts in the administration desperately tried to seek help. The promised succor never arrived, leaving them abandoned and vulnerable. Army units were at the ready but the orders never came from the local or central civilian leadership for their deployment. A bitter reality struck us: The proximity of the army cantonment to the city didn't count unless there was a political will to wield this potent weapon of the Indian nation. At many places these gangs were just few meters away from Hindu homes, hurling abuses and threatening to burn down their houses. The radicals could be heard saying: "Now they are enjoying the comfort of their homes. But not for long." Scared and huddled together in their houses, these defenseless people were praying desperately for a miracle. Left unprotected many households braced themselves for a final bloody confrontation, the ladies kept kerosene nearby to self-immolate themselves in case of any threat to their honor.

In some villages Muslim neighbors openly told the Hindus they would side with the Jihadists in case of an attack on the minorities. In the months leading up to that dreadful night, under a well thought out strategy, the Hindus were first selectively targeted to create a sense of uncertainty and vulnerability among them. Then on that dark cold night, deliberately such overwhelming fear was instilled in their minds that that uncertainty crystallized into mortal dread, and fleeing from their motherland seemed to provide the only reprieve. That horrifying ordeal was the final nail in the coffin, so to say, for the Hindus of Kashmir. The intent of the majority community was highly suspect, our faith in *Kashmiriyat* lay trampled.

*Author is a Professor of Respiratory Medicine. (This is an excerpt from his book 'AND THE VALLEY REMAINED SILENT', which is currently being translated into Kannada, Tamil and Oriya. The book is available on Amazon worldwide)*



Dr. K N Pandita



# FORCED DISPLACEMENT OF PANDITS From Their Homeland



*Photo Credit: Akhil Koul*

Community had somehow survived the onslaughts of religious zealots during six centuries of autocratic monarchical rule, but alas! their decimation happened when India, of which Kashmir became a part on the instance of the local Muslim leadership in 1947, declared itself a secular democracy.

The forced displacement of the Pandit minority in Kashmir in 1989-90, is in the sequence of atrocities perpetrated against the Hindu minority ever since the advent of the Islamic faith and its propagators in Kashmir in the third decade of the 14th century.

Islamic faith enjoins its followers to practise Allah's command of destroying atheism, polytheism, idolatry or grave worship. The Hindus of Kashmir followed their age-old philosophy of polytheism and

practised idolatry. They are stuck to mythology and traditions inherited over time. Advent of Islam in Kashmir meant clash of civilizations --- the Abrahamic versus the Vedic.

To the Muslims, the antiquity is reprehensible. Allama Iqbal, one among those who conceptualized a separate country for the Muslims of India, summed up the teachings of Allah in the choicest religions viz. Islam "jo naqsh kohan aye nazar usko

*mita do*" meaning destroy and wipe out all that appears antiquated". Hinduism is a religion of great antiquity.

Therefore, all concepts and ideologies, all traditions and customs, all social and political systems, all judicial and legal modules, all traditional arts, architecture and intellectual skills have to be discarded, destroyed and replaced with the systems put forth by nomadic tribal traditions springing from the deserts of Arabia. Sharia meaning Islamic jurisprudence (essentially based on the customs of a tribal society) has to replace all the codes brought by the Greek philosophers and subsequent political scientists. Islam discards the concept of a state with settled boundaries or territories; it believes not in the native place, homeland and state but in Islamic *ummah* means the community of Muslims. To the Muslims of Kashmir, Kashmir means the Islamic *ummah*. That is why contemporary Muslim historians of Kashmir call *Rajatarangini* a groundless fiction,

It is here the concept of Islamic brotherhood (*ukhavvat*) has sprung. A Muslim is supposed to be mentally, and psychologically a different species not at all like any other extant human species. Not to talk of this world, the hereafter of the Muslims is also markedly different from other human beings. The final resting place for a Muslim is one of the three enclaves namely *jannat*, *jahannam* and *barzakh* meaning paradise, hell and the enclave neutral. After the demise, a Muslim is transported to the enclave of the other world which is commensurate with his actions during his life on the earth. From the tone and tenor of the commandments in question, the message is generally for men folks and women folks are mentioned only in specific places.

Even the creator of Muslim community, Allah, is different from the concept of creators in other religions. Allah is the creator of a very different community because He is different from all other contemplated creators.

The Arab warriors carried out Allah's commandments in their initial swoop over the

Arabian Peninsula, Mesopotamia, Asia Minor, Southern Spain and the vast Central Asian Steppes. With the central authority in Arabia enfeebled by the schism which threw up the strong Shia ideological segment and the rising crescendo of local satraps, a new phenomenon of projecting the Islamic religion of the Shia faction emerged on the scene. This sect also expanded in Iran, Iraq, Northern Afghanistan, pockets of Trans-Oxiana and the Levant.

The rise of a strong dissenting voice became the catalyst to terse radicalism first among the Sunnis and later on in the Shia sect as well because both tried to vie with one another to claim the custodianship of "True Islam".

Destruction of non-Muslims categorized as *kafirs*, *heathens*, *polytheists*, *idolaters*, *atheists*, *zunnar-bands*, *murtads*, *zindiqs* et al became targets of the zealots. Thus began a great era of competition between various fanatical Islamic groups in both factions vying with one another in spreading Islam (in reality respective factions and schools) through the power of the sword.

Kashmir was the proverbial sitting duck for them. The Hindu kingdom had begun to become hollow soon after the Silk Route running across Central Asia with arteries connected to it, was taken into control by the Mongol warriors in the 13th century. Kashmir was connected with the Silk Route through two exit points viz. in the east through Shahidullah Pass arriving at Yarkand and Kashghar, and to the north-west via Swat to Mazar-i Sharif and then turning north and crossing the Oxus to Merv (in present Turkmenistan) and finally the Trans-Caspian region and then Europe.

The Kashmirian Hindu Kingdom's economy was very adversely affected by the insecurity and predatory phenomena overtaking the Silk Route. The arrival in Kashmir of a Shia missionary from Hamadan by the closing years of the 14th century carried the great factional and ideological strife of Islam to the Shaivite Kashmir. In Kashmir, the Muslim missionaries found every aspect of life diametrically opposed to the teaching of their faith. The rituals, traditions, customs, beliefs

and practices etc. of local Hindus all appeared detestable to these missionaries. They imagined they were chosen to purify the defiled community of polytheists in Kashmir. This self-styled responsibility is notable throughout the reign of Sultans in Kashmir. In Islamic period, Muslims in general and proselytes in particular endeared themselves to the religious supremos by inflicting gruesome atrocities on the non-Muslims of Kashmir.

The missionaries, whether from Iran or Central Asia, were of Aryan stock, ethnically different from the Arabs. Arabic was not their mother tongue; it was acquired by them. Not only that, the region from which they came was once a great stronghold of ancient religions different from Islam. For example, the region of Hamadan (Greek *Ecbatana*), from where Mir Sayyid Ali Hamadani hailed, was a stronghold of Jewish and Zoroastrian people in pre-Islamic times. These people were converted to Islam (mostly of Shia faction) with the conquest of Iran by the Arabs.

Since Islam emerged as the new faith, the proselytized community, owing to its ethnic, cultural and linguistic distinctions, had the compulsion of projecting itself more Islamic than the Muslims themselves. The general rule is that a person abandoning his ancestral faith and converting to a new faith has the psychological compulsion to present himself as rabidly fanatical convert more loyal than the king. That is what happened with Suh Bhat, Musa Raina or Kaji Chak in Kashmir history.

The Muslim rulers --- to be precise the Shahmiris who established sway over Kashmir in CE 1339 after treacherously liquidating the last ruler of Lohara Hindu ruling house --- were fully conscious of their mission of promoting the Islamic faith through whatever means they could. For mass indoctrination, the role was volunteered by the half-baked missionaries from Iran and Central Asia. The missionaries, posing as Islamic scholars given to puritanical life, influenced the prominent local commanders (the Damras, Lavanyas, Margishas, Tantrins, Ekangas) and others, and carried the mission of converting the masses of people through their instrumentality.

The destruction of Martand and many other temples was undertaken at the behest of Muhammad Hamadani, the son of Mir Sayyid Ali Hamadani had developed serious differences with his father on ideological basis. He had abandoned Shiaism, the faith of his father, and owed allegiance to the Sunni faction. Ladi Magray, a commander of the Margesha warrior clan surrendered before Mir Sayyid Ali Hamadani (1379 CE) and began attending his five-time-a-day prayer congregations. Musa Raina (Soma Chandra, a convert from the Chandravanshi Rajanaka House of Chadura in Budgam) was instrumental in mass conversions. *Baharistan-i-Shahi* records: "Thus in the year A.H. 924 (A.D. 1518), corresponding to 94<sup>th</sup> year of Kashmiri calendar, during the 'Ashura, about seven to eight hundred infidels were put to death. Those killed were the leading personalities of the community of infidels at that time: men of substance and government functionaries. Each of them wielded influence and sway over a hundred families of other infidels and heretics. Thus the entire community of infidels and polytheists in Kashmir was coerced into conversion to Islam at the point of the sword. This is one of the major achievements of Malik Kaji Chak, (his Hindu name was Kanchan Chakra).

Exodus of the Hindu minority of Kashmir to escape persecution (by majority dominance) took place during the reign of Sultans, Sayyids, Mughals and Afghan Pathans. These are sporadically reported by local and foreign historians.

But the forced displacement in 1989-90, is the biggest and almost the irretrievable of all exodus the Pandit community has gone through in the last 650 years. The mass expulsion of the community was the result of meticulous planning by the vicious planners of the Islamic faith sitting hundreds of miles away from Kashmir. A community with ten thousand years of written history, a community with glorious heritage and a community that contributed immensely to the enrichment of Indian civilization, was

hounded out of their ten-thousand-year-old homeland. The worst is that the community had somehow survived the onslaughts of religious zealots during six centuries of autocratic monarchical rule, but alas! their decimation happened when India, of which Kashmir became a part on the instance of the local Muslim leadership in 1947, declared itself a secular democracy.

Much worse is that at a critical time when the zealots openly gave a call to the Kashmiri Pandits (*kafiro aur zalimo*) to leave Kashmir minus their women folks, hundreds and thousands of fully armed Indian troops

did not move a step out of their barracks to protect the hapless Hindu minuscule minority and the nationalist elements in the city or the towns. It has to be said that an Indian soldier, after completing his training and induction into his respective battalion is administered an oath that he will protect his country from external aggression and internal subversion. In the case of Kashmir in 1990, both things happened simultaneously. Yet the conscience of the Indian soldiers and their officers and their supremos did not revolt. God save the country whose defenders betray their conscience.

## Kashmir Pandits Brave Act Saves Woman, Child in Crisis

An incident which is hard to believe took place near Srinagar's Rajbagh where a woman throws a girl child aged around five or six over the bridge into the river Jhelum and then threw herself into the river too. The child's head gets badly hit by the pillars.

But luckily their lives then were saved by Amit Koul who happened to be there for his evening walk. As he heard the loud splash sound he rushed to see a child and a woman struggling for their lives in the river.

Without wasting time Mr. Koul with the help of few pulled both out and tried to stop passing vehicles but none stopped to help. But soon an auto was arranged to carry them to Lal Deh hospital and from there they were taken to SMHS hospital where the girl underwent emergency surgery.

As both the girl and the woman were unconscious to tell about their family and whereabouts so Mr. Koul made all the necessary arrangements from blood to medicines. He even signed on the consent form needed prior to the surgery of the girl child.

At that point of time the child's condition was critical and the woman was stable.

The girl later succumbed to her injuries.

The act of Mr. Koul from pulling two complete strangers out of the river to arranging a vehicle and rushing them to the hospital to save their lives truly sets an example of what it is to be "BEING HUMAN". It also shows the kind of person Amit Koul is, a brave heart, courageous and carries humanity not only in thoughts but in actions too. Our society truly needs more people like him.

The police initially said that severe family issues have led to such a grave and unfortunate incident.

But later it was confirmed by the woman's brother who happened to be the girl's father that his sister is not in the sound state of mind for long which led her to such an aghast act.

The police even confirmed that two FIRS have been filed, one for murder against the woman and another for abetment to suicide.

### Kashmiri Pandit's brave act saves woman, child in crisis



Ennada Makhdoosani

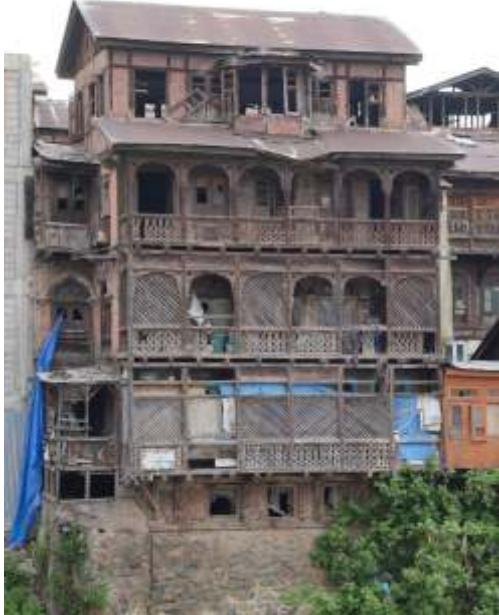
Updated: 06 December, 2024 12:32 pm IST





# EXODUS OF 1989-90

## Warning Signs of Historically Significant Events Ignored by Our Community



*Photo Credit: Akhil Koul*

**I**n our 35 years of trials and tribulations, the displaced Kashmiri Pandit community has seen little transformation in the environment that resulted in our exodus. Whatever transformation we see has mostly been of frills, not of substance. Looking back at our exodus from a historical perspective, one can safely say that our community failed to interpret the meaning and significance of important historical developments that shaped

the subcontinent in general and Kashmir in particular in early thirties. In hindsight, one can say that with every passing day since 1930, a Kashmiri Pandit's continued presence in Kashmir, its ancient land, was becoming increasingly untenable.

A Kashmiri Pandits' ethnic cleansing from Kashmir has been the result of Islamic majoritarian assertion, mostly (but not always) executed violently. Other methods

employed, depending on the situation, achieved the same objective; permanent displacement from Kashmir, that turned us into dispossessed and refugees in our own country. After the end of Afghan rule in 1819, many generations of our community had overcome the trauma of brutal violence that we faced then. However, in the early thirties, the ghost of falling a victim to Islamic terror once again returned to haunt us.

The events orchestrated by powers that shaped the history and geography of the subcontinent then, and which continues to reshape it even now (and will continue to do so in the not-so-distant future), had invariably one fall-out: our displacement. We, as a community, became an expendable commodity for those who shaped these events, be it in Kashmir, New Delhi or London and later in Karachi, Rawalpindi or Islamabad.

We would be overlooking a stark truth if we did not accept that as a community, we failed to interpret the significance of these events that literally sealed our fate. Even though the power equations after the end of WWII changed, Kashmir continued to be treated as a cake, a piece of which everyone wanted to have. In that cake we were an indigestible intrusion which needed to be cast aside.

Let us go over some important milestones that shaped the politics in the last half century of British rule in India. The most significant development was the rise of Muslim communalism. Much against the conventional narrative that holds some later-day Muslim intelligentsia as being the catalysts and the engine of this rise and spread of communal politics, it was, actually, the then Principal of the Anglo-Oriental College, Aligarh, Mr Beck, who organized The Mohammedan Defence Association in 1893, with the sole objective of preventing Muslims from joining the Indian National Congress, thus playing a significant role in distancing Muslims from Hindus. It was his enunciation of the two-nation theory that converted Sir Syed Ahmad Khan from a nationalist into a

stauch Muslim communalist. Creation of Muslim League on Dec 31, 1906, soon after the partition of Bengal into Hindu and Muslim provinces, advocacy of separate electorates and homeland for Muslims by Choudhary Rehmat Ali, the bright young Indian Muslim student at Cambridge, in 1932-33, further helped this Muslim consolidation. Allama Iqbal later endorsed this demand. Muslim League, thereafter, embraced this concept and demanded the implementation of Minto-Morley reforms which had recommended separate electorate for both communities. Consequentially, the rise of Muslim communalism in the subcontinent did not leave Kashmir untouched, though here, the earliest seeds of Muslim communalism had been sown by Ahrar Party, formed exclusively of radical Muslims of Punjab. This had created bitterness between Hindus and Muslims, particularly in Jammu. However, the turning point in Kashmir was reached in July 1931.

The interests of British Crown, which exercised the paramount powers over Jammu and Kashmir always perceived a threat to their Indian empire from Russia, whose Czar had been expanding its territory relentlessly and, in some ways, eyed the Indian subcontinent too. After the WWII, Stalin, after his forceful victory over Germany, had already started extending his influence in the countries in eastern Europe. On its southern border lay the bigger prize, the region of Persian Gulf, with its oil wells, which Sir Olaf Carew, the Secretary of the foreign affairs of British India, called the 'wells of power'. It was due to this feverish strategic contest that Britain demanded to physically occupy the northern most outpost of their empire, the Gilgit Agency.

India, as a jewel in the British Crown, had played an unparalleled role in the Allies' eventual victory over the Axis powers. By the end of the WWII, the British had realized India's geostrategic importance as an invaluable military base from where it could dominate the Indian ocean and the countries around the Persian Gulf. Indian subcontinent also provided the Imperial Army an inexhaustible source of quality manpower.

These geopolitical factors deeply influenced the British plans for the future of the subcontinent as Britain was winding up its empire in India. The Congress leadership, however, remained oblivious to the British manipulations aimed at protecting its geopolitical interests by partitioning India and carving out Pakistan. For the Congress the demand for Pakistan was purely a result of Muslim League's communal politics. In the British scheme of things, no other state under their paramountcy was as crucial to protecting their interests as the State of Jammu and Kashmir. During Maharaja Hari Singh's rule, the British demand to get a foothold in Gilgit, therefore, became even more intense. Maharaja Hari Singh refused to succumb to such pressure. To add insult to injury, the Maharaja had taken a patriotic stand at the first Round Table Conference in London (Nov 12, 1930 to Jan 15, 1931).

It was in the backdrop of these developments that the events of July 13, 1931, took place. In many ways the events of this fateful day proved to be a watershed in the recent history of Kashmir. First, it pitchforked Sheikh Abdullah to the forefront of anti-Dogra protest at a crucial point in Kashmir's history, turning him gradually into a rallying point of a mass movement of sorts. Second, the British got a golden opportunity to use the events to weaken the Dogra Maharaja to such an extent that he felt compelled to hand over Gilgit agency to the British on a long-term lease, with disastrous consequences for India later in 1947. Third, Sheikh Abdullah succeeded in projecting a purely communal movement as a revolt by the oppressed against the feudal Maharaja. This appealed to the stalwarts of the Freedom Movement in India who, thereafter, supported Sheikh Abdullah politically, overlooking his essentially communal agenda. Lastly, Kashmiri Pandits and other non-Muslims who bore the brunt of the Muslim fury that broke out after the happenings at the Central Jail on July 13, 1931, were left high and dry, something that became a norm, eventually leading to their ethnic cleansing in 1989-90. Therefore, when our community

members were assassinated in 1989-90, their death sentences had been issued then, though these were carried out nearly 60 years later.

Later, developments in Kashmir as a result of the partition of India and Pakistani invasion of October 22, 1947, State's accession to India, proceedings at United Nations, declaration of ceasefire (that left 86000 sq Km of the State's territory with Pakistan), was essentially manipulated by Britain to protect its own interests in this part of the world. It was, however, the Kashmiri Pandits who paid the price for the unfolding events.

In-between this long period from 1931 to 1989, many events took place which marginalized our community gradually, forcing them to seek a safe and better future outside the state. Prior to their latest exodus in 1989-1990, Kashmiri Pandits had been forced out from Kashmir during the Afghan rule (1753-1819). However, thereafter, during the Sikh rule (1819-1846), and then during major portion of the Dogra rule (1846-1947), they enjoyed some respite. In the twentieth century, the old story repeated itself when on July 13, 1931, as mentioned above.

Feeling threatened, neglected and vulnerable, nearly 30,000 to 40,000 families are said to have moved out to other cities of India between 1931-41. Official census figures for 1941 say that Kashmiri Pandits formed 15 per cent of the population of Kashmir, as against 83 per cent Muslims. However, these figures were wide off the mark. Actual population of Kashmiri Pandits in 1941, must have been close to 25-30 per cent of the total population. Indeed, the census of 1941 was the first statistical assault on the Kashmiri Pandits in the valley; an ingenious ploy among other methods, used to reduce Kashmiri Pandits to non-entities.

After the break-up of Muslim Conference into two factions, Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah headed the faction which he named the National Conference. He developed close relationship with Indian National Congress, particularly with its

leading light, Jawahar Lal Nehru. As the supremo of National Conference, Sheikh Abdullah denounced the sectarian politics of Jinnah and vowed to follow secular policies. Many Kashmiri Pandits felt relieved that their future could now be safe in secular Kashmir. To add to their new-found optimism, Pandit Nehru and Khan Abdul Gaffar Khan attended the Annual session of the National Conference in Sopore held between August 2-5, 1945. Here, Nehru made an appeal to the audience to rally around Sheikh Abdullah and his National Conference, which was an answer to their ills. He particularly asked Kashmiri Pandits to 'leave Kashmir if they did not join the National Conference. If Pandits could not join it, no safeguards would protect them.' Following Nehru's advice, Pandits, including many of their leading lights, joined the NC in large numbers. They had hoped that the party would become a symbol of secularism and nationalism in newly independent India. But that was not to be. It is estimated that during the four decades between 1948 and 1988 about 200,000 Kashmiri Hindus migrated to other parts of the country.

The false figures quoted by the government stood exposed in 1989-90, when the number of Kashmiri Pandits who fled the valley was placed at over 450,000. Nearly 300,000 of them were housed in refugee camps in Jammu, Delhi and elsewhere; 100,000 found place with relatives in various places in India and abroad; around 50,000 were still left in the valley before the end of 1990. Thereafter, the 1991 census put the Pandits at 0.1 per cent of the population, which would translate to barely 3,000 people.

An indication of the coming events was available from what happened in 1986, when the state Chief Minister, Ghulam Mohammad Shah, aka, Gul Shah, decided to construct a mosque named Shah Masjid, inside the new civil secretariat, within premises of an ancient temple in Jammu. People of Jammu resented this communally driven move and came out on the streets in protest. Gul Shah retaliated; but only after reaching the Valley. In February 1986, he instigated

the Muslims by raising the slogan of *Islam Khatre Mein Hey* (Islam is in danger). This provocative slogan, coming from the Chief Minister himself, was enough to instigate the Muslims, who turned their anger against the hapless Kashmiri Pandits. The worst hit areas were mainly in South Kashmir and also in Sopore, namely Vanpoh, Lukhavan, Anantnag, Salar and Fatehpur, etc. The rampaging Muslim mobs plundered and destroyed 300 Pandit houses and two temples, besides looting many shops, setting their business establishments on fire, and desecrating many religious sites. However, to hide the reality of what had happened, the state government used a massive cover-up. Though President's rule was imposed in the state after the Congress Party withdrew support from the state government, yet no action, whatsoever, was taken against those responsible for destruction of life and property of Kashmiri Pandits.

The central and State governments' tepid response to what the hapless Pandits suffered further emboldened the radical Islamists in Kashmir. It will not be wrong to say that Central Government's weak response encouraged the radical Islamists to embark on an outright armed uprising inspired by the concept of Jihad, three years later.

However, the complacent Pandits of Kashmir missed this marker too and failed to interpret its significance as a stern warning to their very survival in Kashmir. END

## **2<sup>nd</sup> JYOTISHACHARYA SAMMELAN - 2025**

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Surinder Kaul



# ESCAPED THE WRATH OF **Kashmiri TERRORISTS**

**J**an 1999 was the zenith of the Jammu Kashmir Liberation Front terrorist uprising in Kashmir. On the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> Jan Kashmiri people en masse in lakhs came to the streets of Kashmir to reach Eidgah or Cheri Shrief to get independence. Anti-India and pro-liberation, pro-Islamic slogans collectively were hurled by the marching crowd on the roads. Equally from the loudspeakers of mosque minarets tape-recorded high-pitched advisories of either to convert or to perish or to run away, leaving their women folk for Muslims of the valley were billowing in air nonstop.

Already the law-and-order situation in the valley was incapacitated. JKLF kidnapped Rubia Syed the daughter of Union Home Minister Mufti Mohd Syed on 8<sup>th</sup> Dec 1989 and was captive till 14<sup>th</sup> of Dec. In bargaining for her release from JKLF captivity, the government was forced to release dreaded terrorists from the jail. Their release was treated as a triumph towards their liberation struggle. The administration and police were

in disarray. In the second week of Jan, the CRPF fired at the protesting crowd on Gow Kadal in which 45 civilians were killed. Jag Mohan was a newly nominated Governor. The law-and-order situation was at a decimal level. JKLF commanders were ferrying arms and ammunition unchecked to distribute among the trained youth with the objective of insurgency against a state. They primarily singled out Intelligence Officers who felt the bullets of JKLF area commanders were late Kishen Gopal Chauhan in Beeru, R.M.P. Singh in Anantnag, Tej Kishen Razdan Gaw Kadal tempo stand and Moti Lal Bhan at Khanda bus stand from point-blank range in broad daylight. No one dared to carry these fatally wounded officers to a nearby hospital in Srinagar to save their lives if possible. If anyone perchance had shown some empathy for the victim, that one was too riddled with bullets. A State Police officer of the rank of Assistant Sub Inspector posted in the downtown area of Nauhatta, Srinagar was killed on the main road passing by the side of

Jamia Masjid. Before these killings, JKLF terrorists killed retired Justice Neel Kant Ganjoo, Tika Lal Taploo, the State BJP Vice President and a lawyer and Mohd Yusuf Halwa, National Conference block president Kalashpur, Fateh Kadal, Srinagar and Prem Nath Bhat a known lawyer and columnist from Anantnag brutally in 1989. JKLF terrorists were cracking the whip in the city area. They blasted government buildings and threw grenades on the vehicle of Santaram of Kokerbazar and the shop of Somnath Suri of Maharaj Bazar in Srinagar were on their radar. Intermittent firing from AK-47 on vintage road crossing was a routine phenomenon.

Under the precarious situation in Srinagar city, Sohanlal was assigned to collect ground intelligence in highly sensitive areas of Downtown under a cover job. Despite the risk of danger to his life, Sohanlal was moving through the lanes and alleys of Malaratta, Jamalatta, and Nauhatta in search of an important bit of information about the movement of known JKLF terrorists in the area. Sohanlal was on deputation from the State Police to the central agency as a field officer in 1988. It was the 22<sup>nd</sup> or 23<sup>rd</sup> of January, when Moti Lal Bhan, an officer was shot dead while boarding the Khanda bus for his office. On this day Sohanlal was roaming about in Nalbandpura, a volatile area in Chattabal as usual in search of his catch of information. The killing of Kashmir Pandit spread downtown like wildfire. Simultaneously, the gun-toting JKLF terrorist also resorted to AK-47 firing on the CRPF post in Nalbandpur, the CRPF men retaliated in defence which caused public turmoil in the market area. Pedestrian fled to save their lives in different lanes and bye lanes to safe shelters. Sohanlal was also trapped among the fleeing people in one of the lanes of a clustered enclave in Nalbandpura, Chattabul. But the lane ended in a blind alley so the running group was in six and seven where to go? In the meantime, one of the house owners in the lane was kind enough to open the door of his house and

asked the 10/12 escaping persons to get in to relax his house till the situation subsided. Sohanlal had no other course but to accept the shelter that was given to them by the unknown house owner. As the commotion outside, calmed down, persons walked out of the house. The house owner asked Sohanlal, where he was to go. Sohanlal by appearance was looking like a Muslim boy. He had grown a beard in Moulvi style of one fist length and his accent was Muslim-like.

Sohanlal replied, that he was going to Islamabad (Anantnag).

The House owner asked Sohanlal what he was doing in the Nalbandpure, Chattabal area. Sohanlal replied that he had come to meet the trader as he was dealing in the wallpaper business.

The House owner told Sohanlal that he would arrange an escort for him who would lead him to the main road through the narrow lanes. Sohanlal left the house with a strange fellow who took him to Karan Nagar Chowk, where he took a transport to his office. On reaching his office, he found the office deserted in most of the official portion. On finding no one known around, Sohanlal barged into the office of the senior most officer, who was astonished to see him. The officer enquired how he was there. Was he not scared of the tense situation? Sohanlal replied that he did not fear. The senior officer's office and paraphernalia were preparing to shift to Jammu during some winter months in Kashmir as a routine. Sohanlal was entrusted to the middle-level officer to manage his shift to Jammu in official transport with the instructions not to permit him to go out. The middle-level officer took Sohanlal to a safe house for a night stay with him. While being with the middle-level officer, Sohanlal requested that he be allowed to visit home to see his family in Anantnag and promised him that he would reach Jammu directly. The middle-level officer yielded to his request with a word from Sohanlal that he would reach Jammu at any cost without putting his service at stake.

After Sohanlal came on deputation to the central agency from the state police, Sohanlal

lived in the house of Gulzar Ahmed on rent at Dawood colony in the Batamallo area. Sohanlal wished to go to his rented accommodation in Batamallo to collect his belongings before going to his village Batagund in Anantnag. He arrived at his rented room in the dark and met Gulzar Ahmed an employee of Telephone Department Srinagar, who did not permit him to go to his room at that hour. Gulzar revealed to him that the youth were desperately searching for him and they had come several times to ask about Sohanlal and his whereabouts and the nature of his job he had. Gulzar explained to Sohanlal that by lighting his room in the late evening hours the terrorists were to get a signal that Sohanlal had turned up and they would come to kill Sohanlal. Gulzar Ahmed took Sohanlal to a hidden corner of his kitchen where he concealed him under the pile of chopped wood. Gulzar Ahmed impressed Sohanlal to sleep with him in his bedroom to hoodwink the terrorists who had been hunting for Sohanlal for days. Gulzar Ahmed further thought a safe time to leave the house for Sohanlal was to depart in the early morning around 3 a.m. for his village without any baggage.

While in hiding, two youths with AK-47s suddenly dropped into the house as they had information that Sohanlal was in the house. These JKLF terrorists went up the stairs to look in the room and other parts of the house to trace Sohanlal but again they went blank. Sohanlal was in a state of numbness and shock in his hiding corner. Before their sudden raid on the house, Sohanlal was told by Gulzar Ahmed not to sleep in his room because the lighting in the room would transmit a signal about Sohanlal's presence to his prey. After the sudden barging of the terrorists, the thinking of Gulzar Ahmed changed and he proposed to Sohanlal that he should leave his house on the same midnight after some pause as the terrorist might be watching around the house. Sohanlal agreed to depart from Gulzar Ahmed's house after an hour. Sohanlal had thought of a walking distance of about four miles up to Hyderpore bypass B.S.F check post through the pathways in paddy fields from Dawood colony in pitch

dark hours when the whole area was in deep slumbers. Sohanlal decided to leave after a gap of two hours and thanked Gulzar Ahmed and his family for all the help they rendered to save his life. Gulzar interrupted him and let him peep out on the roadside from the main gate to size up if any movement was outside. Gulzar Ahmed briefed him it was quiet outside and ushered Sohanlal to a certain distance through the fields. Sohanlal prowled along the pathways that bisected the paddy fields with uncertain life ahead. In his heart of hearts, Sohanlal was sorrowful not knowing if he would reach alive to Hyderpore bypass. The pathway was forlorn but his faith in Almighty and balance of mind helped him. It took nearly two hours for Sohanlal to reach the B.S.F check post on the Hyderpora bypass. Sohanlal approached the B.S.F men posted there and disclosed his identity his police background and his latest service with the central agency. Sohanlal disclosed to them that he was hailing from Bijbehara town and wanted to see his family. In the morning he was to board a bus from the highway to get a drop at Bijbehara. The B.S.F officer told him their Dak vehicle was going to Bijbehara in the morning to supply the ration items for their deployment in the town and allowed Sohanlal to take the lift. The following morning, Sohanlal was accommodated in the vehicle bound for Bijbehara. Before getting seated in the B.S.F vehicle, Sohanlal intimated to the driver that he should not be dropped in the main town market but a little ahead near the Chinar bag, fearing that he would be detected by JKLF elements who were on the lookout for him.

Sohanlal was alighted from the B.S.F vehicle near the chinar bag area in Bijbehara. It was the wintry hours of early morning. Sohanlal took his route towards his village on foot. On the way to his hamlet, Batagund, from Bijbehara, Sohanlal walked over a creaking wooden bridge where he encountered Bashir Ahmed, his class fellow in the company of another youth. Neither Sohanlal nor Bashir Ahmed hailed each other in any gesture but after crossing each other

over the bridge, Bashir Ahmed yelled at Sohanlal to wait without naming him. Bashir Ahmed retraced his path to come close to Sohanlal and told him he should stay at Bashir Ahmed's house for the night as JKLF persons were scouting for him. Bashir Ahmed also revealed Sohanlal that the youth accompanying Bashir Ahmed was Manzoor Darzi, JKLF commander of Anantnag. Sohanlal was calm and gave him a cool ear with his affirmative head movement. Sohanlal on reaching his home, his family members were in tears and hugged him with warmth that he was safe at home in the village. He spent some hours with his parents and family members but was unprepared to stay for a night in his house. JKLF terrorists were also doing fox hunting for him on the village side. From his home in the village Batagund, Sohanlal sneaked into the nearby hamlet Laribal where his friend Beharilal was residing. Sohanlal related the story of his

being on the hit list of JKLF terrorists to his childhood friend Beharilal, who reacted with the remark that unknown Muslim youth were also asking about him in the village. Sohanlal replied that he was to go to Jammu to join the duty. Beharilal advised Sohanlal to be with him in his house for a day or two. Their vehicle was going to Jammu to carry the household items for their newly built house In Udhampur, Jammu region in which Sohanlal could also travel discreetly to Jammu. Sohanlal did not step out of Beharilal's house and waited for a day when his friend's mini-coach would drive to the Jammu region. On the scheduled departure date Sohanlal was ready with a backpack waiting last spur of the moment to jump in the vehicle when it sped off from the loading slot. On reaching Jammu, he joined the Central Agency and continued his job till his superannuation and lived in Jammu with his family.

## KASHYAP KASHMIR SABHA GURGAON ELECTS NEW BODY

Elections were held to the prestigious Kashyap Kashmiri Sabha - a premier Organisation of Kashmiri Pandits based in Gurgaon Haryana on 24 November 2024.

Dr. Anil Vaishnavi

President New Executive Body headed by a leading Paediatrician Dr. Anil Vaishnavi as President was elected for a second consecutive term along with other office bearers. Dr Vaishnavi defeated his rival Mr. T. N. Kaul by a margin of over 130 votes whereas Rakesh Koul & M. K. Raina were elected Vice President. A leading Banker Mr. Dhruv Thusoo was elected General Secretary defeating his nearest rival Mr. T. K. Kaul by over 125 votes. In addition, Ashok Zutshi & Ramesh Bhat were elected to the two posts of Secretary defeating their nearest rival Sushil Bhat by 100 votes. The Treasurer S. K. Kher along with 14 Executive Body members were elected unopposed.

The elections were fought keenly with a wide participation of the life members of KKS Gurgaon.

It is pertinent to mention that KKS Gurgaon is in the process of constructing a Temple cum Heritage Centre at Palam Vihar which was started under the aegis of Dr. Vaishnavi in year 2023 and the first phase is scheduled to be completed in 2025 which will be a meeting ground for this displaced Kashmiri Community.

Elections were conducted by the Returning Officer Sh. K. K. Koul.



**Dr. Anil Vaishnavi**



Dr. Roop Krishen Bhat



# IMPACT OF TERRORISM AND EXODUS ON KASHMIRI LANGUAGE



Ever since the unfortunate and tragic mass exodus of Kashmiri Hindus in the year 1990 leaving behind their centuries old homeland in Kashmir, they have been wondering like nomads from place to place in search of social security, livelihoods, opportunities and mental peace. While as the decade of Nineties was the worst and physical survival remained the sole concern of the community, the last two decade have been a period to ponder over, asses and analyse the physical, social and political losses suffered, accept the tragedies as they were and attempt to rearrange the broken threads, and move forward. Big volumes could be written on the

bitter experiences, tragedies and sufferings the community has underwent during last thirty five years and such attempts have already been made by various writers, scholars, historians, journalists, community leaders and individuals. Sufficient and incredible literature has been written on various happenings in several languages including Kashmiri in the form of poetry, short stories, novels, biographies etc. Perhaps the unique and brighter side of the current displacement or migration has been the accumulation of vast amount of publication of displacement literature especially in Kashmiri Language. This becomes unique

because in earlier similar displacements or migrations of Kashmiri Hindus from Kashmir (the current one being counted as seventh in very long history of Kashmir) there is hardly any such literature written in Kashmiri. The obvious reason has been the neglect or under development of Kashmiri language in those times and its status only as a spoken language or a *desi bhasha* as it was referred those days.

Since then, lot of water has flown down the *Vitasta*. Immediately after the Independence of India in fifties Kashmiri language was included in the school curriculum in Kashmir, Academy of art, culture and languages established and a committee of scholars set up to recommend the script for the language. Persio- Arabic with modifications suitable to sound system of Kashmiri was accepted as the official script. It may be mentioned here that the first ever script was *Sharda* and lot many manuscripts are even now available in that script. Nagri and Roman too were used by some scholars to write Kashmiri during those times.

Unfortunately, Kashmiri language was eliminated from school curriculum within years of its introduction, but was introduced at PG level in the University of Kashmir in seventies of last millennium. It gradually spread to several colleges. However, Attitudinal changes towards the language started appearing amongst certain sections of scholars in the decade of eighties and Urdu was preferred in day-to-day communication, i.e. for public speeches, declarations, media religious sermons, slogans and even prayers. The trend was further complicated by biased, rigid and unscientific stand of politicians and few scholars towards its scope and script.

Terrorism in Kashmir added to its woes since the language of militants too was Urdu and all dictates and communications were issued through this language. Broken and rustic variety of Urdu was preferred in and outside homes instead of much refined, sweet and easily comprehended mother tongue Kashmiri. Kashmiri Language was degraded and disowned to a greater extent during

militancy and terrorism in Kashmir. A conscious effort was made by certain vested elements to marginalize the Kashmiri language, literature and culture and promote Urdu. The Kashmiri scholars remained tight lipped, mute and preferred to live in voluntary freeze in the earlier years of terrorism and not much was written or talked about in this period in the valley.

However, the trend was different so far as displaced Kashmiri scholars were concerned. They continued to give vent to their vows and sufferings and a record number of books in all genres have been written in Kashmiri after displacement. Though there has been a bloom in Kashmiri literature after displacement, even new names not heard earlier in the field of literature were born and became popular instantly but Kashmiri language in itself has been the worst sufferer or victim so far as its use, patronage and promotion is concerned. Being forced to live and survive in alien cultures and amongst non-Kashmiris our people voluntarily and effortlessly started ignoring and discarding their mother tongue for various silly and petty reasons like non-native environment, curricular or career opportunity etc. Kashmiri was seen as a hindrance or obstacle in learning of other languages and unnecessary burden which if ignored would not make much difference for their survival as Kashmiri language was not a bread earner. Governmental hostility towards Kashmiri, the wider spread of the community across India and other countries resulting in inter community marriages amongst our youngsters has further worsened the situation. There could be a host of other reasons some even boasting of being part of global fraternity or global world which in their eyes could be relished or lived only through English. Role of English in social media etc.

The excuses and reasons apart, hard fact remains that mother tongue is the sole language of perfect communication and expression but this also is a fact that we Kashmiris are generally hostile to our language and culture or even to our existence as Kashmiris. As community we are distancing from one

another. We succumb to material gains easily, our youngsters are blindly pursuing impossible materialistic dreams, we have inbuilt inferiority complexes about language and are prone to adopt and change at the cost of our identity or individuality were ever we may be. The dwindling numbers and our green card syndrome is proving fatal for our social fabric which is wearing and tearing out and feeling threatened day by day.

Despite of all odds many organizations like Kashmir Education Culture and Science society, Samprati, Nagrad Adbi Sangam, Kashmir Cultural Trust, Centre for Kashmiri language Literature and Culture of AIKS, Jammu Kashmir Vichar Manch etc. played important role for preservation of Kashmiri language, literature and culture. Devnagari script for Kashmiri was standardised and promoted as alternative script for Kashmiri. As Hindi is taught as a subject all over India and it was easy for Kashmiri children to learn and use it for Kashmiri language. Many teaching learning materials were developed for the purpose. Software named Aranimal-Akruti was developed and widely circulated to be used for DTP of Kashmiri language. An important development was publishing of Vaakh a literary magazine in Devanagri script. Scholars and individuals like Sh. M.K. Kaw former Education Secretary Govt. of India and earlier President KECSS and AIKS , Prof. Omkar N Koul a Linguist of International fame, Sh. A. N Kaul Sahib former Editor Koshur Samachr and NAAD, Dr. Roop Krishen Bhat an eminent Linguist and author, Sh. M.K. Raina based in Mumbai, Prof Rattan Lal Shant, eminent scholar, S.N.BHAT Haleem former editor *koshur samachar* and writer and host of other persons played an important role for preservation and promotion of Kashmiri language in diaspora.

Having said all that I still presume and believe that there is a reasonable and sizable majority amongst us who want to live and be known as Kashmiris, rather than get dissolved as nobodies in the vast ocean of humans across the world. We are also proud of our rich cultural heritage and of eminent legacy of great

luminaries in various fields of knowledge known and respected globally we would therefore love to live and be known as Kashmiris. With the Govt. of India thrust on primary education through mother tongue as per the New Education policy 2020 there is hope that the importance of mother tongue would be realised in future among youngsters and more and more children would learn and speak Kashmiri in future.

It is an accepted fact that a community is known and can survive only through language and culture and not through historical linkages or Surnames alone. To achieve that we have to consciously honour and explore the reasons to keep our identity alive. The sole and only remedy to do that is to know and speak Kashmiri language were ever we may be, In our home with family members and fellow Kashmiris where ever we meet, in offices, market places, social functions, get-togethers etc. even in alien environments. If Punjabis, Bengalis, Tamils, Telugus, Guajarati's can proudly do so why cannot we. There are many other ways of doing so which can be discussed and written about separately.

**Whether we like it or not it is a hard fact that no other language than mother tongue remains the sole and complete language of communication. One may be an expert speaker in other languages but it is difficult to be a confident one and achieve the native speaker's level of ease and expertise in communication through other languages other than mother tongue. There is an individual and collective responsibility on all of us to contribute one or other way in this endeavour, do our best towards preserving our language, culture and there by preserve our identity as a member of Kashmiri community. I hope all of us want to do that and live as proud Kashmiris where ever we may be in the globe.**

The author is a writer, Linguist, Media free lancer and former Director and Professor, Govt.of India.

*roopkbhat@gmail.com*



Urvashi Jalali



# CARTOGRAPHIES OF LOSS

## Memory, Meaning, and the Uneasy Inheritance of Displacement

*"The night is shattered like a glass in the street, and the stars, like broken pieces, are scattered. Still, we return to that place where we once believed we belonged." — Agha Shahid Ali*

Forced Displacement, a relentless spectre, does not arrive with the measured tread of time; it descends like a sudden storm, tearing through lives and leaving behind trailing debris of memories. For the K a s h m i r i P a n d i t community, the exodus of 1990 was not merely a severing from land but an irrevocable rewriting of existence. What was carried away were not just hurriedly packed belongings but an uneasy inheritance—an heirloom of longing, torment, and resilience. This inheritance, sharp as glass and soft as moth-eaten silk, serves as a tether to a past that aches. Those who lived through the 1990 January nights recall the smoky blur of chaos—windows slammed shut on a home suddenly made foreign, walls too fragile to keep out fear, and the silence that grew louder than the gunshots. For their children, exiled before they were even born, the weight of this history is spectral. It lingers in the air like



unspoken prayers, stitched into rituals, encoded in stories whispered like lullabies. This exile is no longer an event—it is a condition, sprawling and insidious, reaching across decades. It defies closure, folding itself into the fabric of generations, creating a shared wound whose edges never quite heal.

Memories of home are unruly things. They rise unbidden, ungovernable as wildflowers, rooted not only in what was but also in the imagination of what could have been. For the displaced, memory transcends mere recall; it becomes an act of creation, a

fragile artifice to hold onto what is gone. For the Kashmiri Pandits, the house they left behind is alive in the mind's eye, imbued with sensory detail: the smoky warmth of the *kangri* in winter, the taste of aromatic spiced *kehwa*, the rhythmic creak of wooden beams that sang through quiet nights. For the children of exile, the house is reconstructed from fragments—a *samovar* glinting in a story, a *kangri* now reduced to an artifact, its warmth transformed into the heat of longing. But memory is a double-edged gift. As Agha Shahid Ali wrote, “*My memory keeps getting in the way of your history.*” It complicates as much as it connects. The house, standing resolute in recollections, no longer exists as it once did. It has become something else—a spectral presence that persists in imagination and storytelling, its walls sheltering not bodies but a collective longing.

What the first generation lived through, the second inherited as 'absence'—a ghost that takes the shape of a home they have never known. Displacement, like a slow-burning fire, consumes not just the place left behind but the rhythms of life that once defined it. This inheritance is uneasy, a paradox that binds pride to pain, resilience to rupture. For the descendants of the exiled, the notion of home becomes a tightrope walk between loss and reconstruction. They grapple with a history that is both theirs and not theirs, a belonging that slips through their fingers like sand. In their veins flows a yearning not for a return to what was, but for a reckoning with what has been irretrievably lost. However, memory is not static. It evolves, and with it, the inheritance of displacement shifts into something more complex—a legacy that endures yet always feels incomplete.

Return is a siren song, its melody steeped in nostalgia, its verses laden with uncertainty. For many Kashmiri Pandits, the dream of return is not merely about reclaiming physical space but about the possibility of resurrecting a world that feels lost. The land they left has transformed, yet fragments of the past they grieve for may still linger—woven into the landscape, carried by air, or rediscovered

through acts of memory and belonging. Yet, even with these traces, the longing persists. To return is to confront both the transformation of the homeland and the self. It is not only a physical journey but an emotional pilgrimage—a ritual of remembrance and a quiet act of defiance against the erasure of history. In the unrelenting hope of return lies an affirmation: that home, fractured as it may be, remains indivisible from the self.

Displacement is not just a wound; it is a prism. Through it, the notion of home is refracted, its meaning altered. For the exiled, home shifts from a tangible location to an intangible constellation of practices: the preservation of language, the telling of old stories, the scent of snow-laden air and the yellow bloom of spring's *Yemberzal* (daffodils). For those born into exile, home is an inherited metaphor, heavy with the weight of both memory and reinvention. It is a place that must be carried within, a fluid construct negotiated between past and present, belonging and becoming. It is at once a solace and a burden, an anchor, and a reminder of the storm.

Loss has a peculiar gravity. It pulls, stretches, and reshapes identity across time. For the Kashmiri Pandits, the loss of home is more than a loss of mere shelter or geography; it is the erosion of cultural rhythms that once provided meaning and purpose. Language morphs, rituals evolve, and customs adapt to new landscapes. Yet, in every conversation, every fragment of memory preserved, there remains an echo of what was. The house, in this narrative, becomes a metonym for the home itself. It is a repository of meaning, a structure that holds not just memories but the tension between permanence and impermanence, presence, and absence. It is a place that, even in its absence, continues to shelter the ache of longing.

For Kashmiri Pandits, the connection to Kashmir is not severed by exile; it is only deepened, woven into the complex milieu of memory and imagination. The homeland becomes an abstract presence,

simultaneously elusive and omnipresent, shaping identity in its absence. What does it mean to remain tethered to one's faraway homeland? This entanglement is both a blessing and a curse—a thread that binds and cuts, like an unsevered umbilical cord that exists only in the labyrinth of memory and imagination. In its sharpness, it carves a deeper understanding of self—not in the past but in the present, where memory and desire coalesce into something new.

The story of the Kashmiri Pandit community is one of survival against forgetting, of longing that refuses to wane. It is a narrative defined by the tension between rupture and resilience, between the pull of memory and the push of reinvention. The thread connecting them to Kashmir is both lifeline and noose—binding them to a home that exists only in memory, shaping an identity forever marked by its absence. And yet, this thread persists, stitching together the fragments of past and present, weaving a future where home is not just a place but a testament to the unyielding spirit of those who carry its memory in their hearts. Perhaps the greatest testament to the resilience of the

displaced is their ability to carry these questions forward, not as burdens but as guideposts. In doing so, they transform loss into meaning, displacement into creation, and the scattered stars of exile into constellations of belonging. This legacy, passed down like an heirloom, is no mere relic of the past. It is a living, breathing entity that continues to shape the present, its threads woven into the very fabric of those who carry it forward. Through their stories and silences, their rituals and reinventions, they remind us that while the pain of losing home may endure, so too does the indomitable human spirit to never forget to imagine, to hope, and to persevere. A Kashmiri Pandit dreams not just of a home that was, but of a home that is—Kashmir, both present and eternal, etched eternally in the heart and mind, forever alive in the dreams that transcend exile. In this longing, they carry with them the hope of return, not just to the physical space of their homeland, but to the essence of what was—the home that exists in memory, in being, and in the unbroken thread of belonging.

*Author is a Research Scholar*

*Research Focus: Forced Displacement & Exile UNSW - Australia*

## Calendar of Month

Okdoh (Makar Sankranti)	14 <sup>th</sup> January 2025
Shashti (Sahib Saptami)	20 <sup>th</sup> January 2025
Ashtami (Krishna Paksha)	22 <sup>nd</sup> January 2025
Ekadashi (Krishna Paksha)	25 <sup>th</sup> January 2025
Amavasya	29 <sup>th</sup> January 2025
Gauri Tritya	01 <sup>st</sup> February 2025
Choram (Basant Panchmi)	02 <sup>nd</sup> February 2025
Ashtami (Shukla Paksha)	05 <sup>th</sup> February 2025
Bhimsen Ekadashi (Shukla Paksha)	08 <sup>th</sup> February 2025
Kaw Poornima (Sankranti)	12 <sup>th</sup> February 2025

## Note

Panchak starts on 30th January 2025 ends on 03rd February 2025

Poh (Shukla Paksha) from 31st December 2024 to 13th January 2025

Maagh (Krishna Paksha) from 14th January to 29th January 2025

Maagh (Shukla Paksha) from 30th January to 12th February 2025



Sanjeev Munshi



*A forlorn KP lady in a tented refugee colony at Jammu, a 'migrant' from her own land of birth!*

## WAS 1990 EXODUS AN ACCIDENT?

**K**ashmiri Pandit community faced a major tragedy in 1990s – a mass exodus from Kashmir valley due to targeting by the aggressive Islamist Jihadis. Official records with Relief and Rehabilitation Deptt of J&K estimate that almost 62,000 families of Kashmiri Pandits were forced to move out of Kashmir Valley after 1986 - the bulk of people left after the horrors of January 1990. People left behind their homes and businesses – houses, orchards, shops – above all, the land of their ancestors where for over 5000 years this community had lived and thrived! Several thousand families were forced

to stay in hastily built tented colonies for years! Exodus caused major disruption in the lives of these unfortunate people, estimated to be around 5L in number. We lost our moorings – religious, social and cultural!

It has been a tumultuous 35 years since the 7<sup>th</sup> Exodus of KPs took place. In the last 5 years we have seen 'near normalcy' return to the Kashmir valley – at least for the local Muslims! Tourists are thronging the valley as trade, commerce and businesses are thriving. GOI's liberal funding for development has opened new avenues. Train services, directly connecting Kashmir with Delhi are likely to

commence from January 2025. There is a boom in infrastructure and overall prosperity in the Kashmir valley.

In contrast, not much has changed for the KPs – our people continue to live as migrants in different parts of the country. Recent (Sept-Oct 24) elections have revealed that politically, nothing has changed in the valley! Kashmiri Muslims are not impressed with the development agenda and continue to support the same old faces that have been exploiting them since 1947. Secessionist feelings continue as an undercurrent. I am sure valley's Muslims, particularly its 'politico-religious leadership' would be aware of political unrest that has gripped entire Pakistan. Social media is extensively covering the unrest and uncertainty economic difficulties, and daily large-scale sectarian killings in its different provinces! Yet, Pakistan remains a utopia for many in Kashmir. Comparisons normally help in highlighting the contrast but what can one do if people refuse to see reason! In Kashmiri, we have an adage – “Deenuk tham chum seenas pyeth, kooty ha mornas khodayo” – loosely meaning 'religious compulsions make me close my eyes' to realities!

In the last 35 years, minimum 2 generations of KPs have passed away, with hope alive in their hearts and minds of a return to the valley. Several attempts were made in the last 35 years, by individuals, particularly by the landowning KPs to return to the valley but the crafty merchants of terror knew how to handle them. On January 25, 1998, 23 KPs, men, women and children of Vill Wandhama (Distt Ganderbal) were lined up by terrorists and, in full sight of the entire village, mowed down in cold blood! This was followed up by the Nadimarg (Distt Pulwama) massacre in March 2003 in which 24 Kashmiri Pandits were gunned down! Such targeted killings have continued since 1989, sending out clear signals to the hapless minority that they are not welcome in Kashmir Valley!

My uncle, a retired Kashmir University professor, recently visited Kashmir – first time since 1990; his remarks were, “This is

what our Kashmiri Muslims were striving for – a Kashmir free of its Pandits so that they can realize the dream of Sikandar Butshikan and his cohorts to Islamise Kashmir.”. Today, KPs are welcome to Kashmir – but as 'tourists' only! That way, we help the local businesses thrive!

It is time for us to look back and ask – was our 7<sup>th</sup> Exodus a sudden accident or was it the culmination of a carefully crafted, multiple layered plan to ethnically cleanse Kashmir of its aboriginal inhabitants to create a Muslim Sheikdom that the British/ West thought it could control? How shall history judge Kashmir through the 20<sup>th</sup> century? The plan to create a Hindu Free Kashmir was drafted by Abdullah and his cohorts soon after his return from the communal cauldron of Aligarh (1930) with help from British. The 'steps' for ethnically cleansing Kashmir included :

- ❖ Promoting Majoritarianism through a display of collective strength
- ❖ Encouraging Islamization of Kashmir, including changing names of places
- ❖ Marginalizing KPs through economic discrimination especially by reducing job opportunities.

The post 1947 milestones in the path that led to Exodus were:

### **1. Unbridled Power to Abdullah (1947-1953)**

- a. Special provisions inserted for J&K in Indian Constitution (Oct 1949). Even the Supreme Court of India did not have jurisdiction over J&K till 1954.
- b. Snatching Land without Compensation: The Big Landed Estates Abolition Act, 1950 was brought in to marginalize the land owning KP families. Transferring land without compensation was possible since the provisions of the Indian constitution did not apply in the state.
- c. Declaring All Muslims Backward: Irrespective of their existing financial and social status, all Muslims in J&K were declared 'backward' in matters of employment and promotions. *80% jobs and promotions were reserved for them. Specific laws were passed that allowed out of turn promotions to Muslims and*

*even courts could do nothing about those.* The promotion policy was declared void by the Supreme Court (Triloki Nath Tiku v/s State of J&K, 1966) but state has found methods to circumvent the ruling!

- d. Changing Demography of Kashmir: Post 1947-48 Qabaili raid, thousands of Hindus and Sikhs from Muzaffarabad and adjoining areas took refuge on the Indian side. Shiekh administration, in a very farsighted move, 'encouraged' all Hindu and Sikh refugees to move to Jammu instead of settling them in Kashmir province.
- e. Internationalizing the Kashmir Case by Taking it to UN: Abdullah was sent to the UN by Nehru as part of Indian delegation in 1948 and 1950; Shiekh used the opportunities to open his channels to the Americans and the British. The results were there for everyone to see - in August 1953, Shiekh had to be rather unceremoniously dismissed as PM of J&K and imprisoned for anti-India activities by his 'dear friend', Nehru! Had the Shiekh been given some more time, he would have ensured establishment of his cherished Sheikdom in early 1950s only.

### 2. 1963-64 Moya-Muqaddas Agitation:

December 1963 saw Kashmir valley go up in flames when an Islamic 'relic', kept at the Hazratbal Shrine was reported missing. Though KPs had no role to play in the entire drama, they were at the receiving end of wrath of the agitating mobs. Police from several states was rushed to Kashmir to help the J&K Police tackle the situation. The processions and open display of anti-India anger sent a chill up the spine of the minuscule Kashmiri Pandit minority. Petitions were sent to Home Minister Lal Bahadur Shastri by terrified Kashmiri Pandits to ensure safety of their homes & hearths.

### 3. The Parmeshwari Conversion Agitation (1967)

The Parmeshwari Handoo agitation erupted in July 1967 – a young Kashmiri Pandit girl, Parmeshwari Handoo was abducted by her

senior in office, Gulam Rasool Kanth. After many political and administrative machinations, the girl was recovered but instead of being handed over to her family, she was allowed to stay with her abductor! The Kashmiri Hindu community rose up in revolt against this second-grade treatment meted out by the Muslim dominated administration. On Aug 8, 1967 an agitation was launched – it continued for the whole month of August. The agitation became a victim of political betrayal, administrative apathy, and deception. It led to the death of 9 young Pandits through police beatings and lynching by Muslim mobs. For a microscopic minority, without any political support, without a strong local leadership, it became difficult to sustain the protests. Parmeshwari agitation proved to be a watershed in the history of our community. Never before had that this minuscule community risen in protest. Failure of the movement sent out different signals to different people within the community. Like many, my late grandfather became convinced that our community has no future in Kashmir since we were not a vote bank. Many families started moving out of Kashmir to Jammu and other cities in India. The apprehensions, alas came true later when the entire community was uprooted in 1990.

### 4. The 1983-88 :

#### Breakdown of Law and order :

- a. Radicalising the Society: Jamat-e-Islami had started radicalization through its educational institutions in early seventies, followed by a huge and widespread influx of 'Deobandi preachers' from UP-Bihar (Allahwale) post 1975. This brainwashing played a major role in radicalization of youth!
- b. The 1983-1989 period saw strengthening of anti-India narrative and a breakdown of the rule of law. Several youths unzipped their pants to show their private parts to Mrs Indira Gandhi during her 1983 election campaign in Srinagar. Muslims started showing open defiance - public sacrifice of a cow in

Anantnag by Qazi Nissar in 1985. In Feb 1886, communal riots were engineered by a disgruntled Mufti Saeed in Anantnag in which Hindu temples, residences, and businesses in Wanpoh, Dyalgam, Luk Bhawan, Tral, Pulwama were attacked. This action sowed the seeds of a mass exodus from Kashmir Valley in 1990.

- c. The 'stolen' election of 1987: A joint venture of Rajiv Gandhi's Congress and Farooq Abdullah's National Conference; elections to the State Assembly were openly rigged. Though again, KPs were not involved, the fraudulent mandate resulted in open defiance by the cadres of JKLF, the major terrorist organization. Yasin Malik, Javed Ahmad Mir (Nalqa), Hamid Sheikh and Ashfaq Wani became public heroes for openly displaying their weapons and openly killing Kashmiri Pandits.
- d. Emergence of a the cruel, almost barbaric terrorist organization **Hizbul Mujahideen (HM)** which killed a greater number of Kashmiri Pandits than the JKLF. This organization, a Jamat-e-Islami offshoot was funded and supported by Pakistan.
- e. The Nero of Kashmir – Farooq Abdullah admitted in an interview to a leading newspaper (TOI) that he encouraged Muslim youth to crossover to Pakistan for receiving arms training.

## 5. Targeted Killing & Kidnapping (1989-90):

This is a tried and trusted method employed by terrorists! It is estimated that over 287 KPs, men, women and children fell to the bullets of soldiers of Jihad in Kashmir in 1989-90 period. These included community leaders like Pt Tikalal Tapyiloo (14.09.89), Retd Sessions Judge NK Ganjoo (01.11.89), Pt Lassa Koul, Station Director, Doordarshan Kashmir (13.02.1990), Pt Sarvanand Koul 'Premi', poet and author (01.05.1990) and so many more.

## 6. Creating an Atmosphere of terror & Hysteria (January 1990):

On Jan, 04, 1990, a local Urdu newspaper, *Aftab*, published a press release issued by *Hizb-ul-Mujahideen*, asking all Pandits to leave the Valley immediately. *Al Safa*, another local daily repeated the warning. Posters mysteriously starting appearing on doors of selected KPs, and even public places, asking KPs to leave their houses, sans their womenfolk. The horrific night of Jan, 19, 1990, witnessed macabre happenings, the like of which had not been witnessed by Kashmiri Pandits since the Afghan rule. Those who experienced the fear of that night are unlikely to forget it in their life time. Slogans and shrieks were broadcast from the loudspeakers of every mosque, numbering roughly 1100, exhorting the hysterical mobs to embark on *Jehad*. This was the final straw that broke the spirit of KP Community. A desperate race towards Jammu started the next morning.

## 7. Role of Pakistan:

Since independence, Pakistan has very actively sought to create an anti-India constituency in Kashmir through powerful political and religious propaganda besides active interference. Operation Gulmarg (1947) was followed by Operation Gibraltar (1965) – both attempts failed to arouse the local Muslims against India. Their third direct military attempt was in 1999 (Operation Koh-i-Paima) when they captured several peaks and posts in Kargil area of J&K. This attempt too failed with a loss of face and military humiliation.

To my mind, these events are the milestones that ultimately led to the mass Exodus of the entire KP community from Kashmir in 1990s. The plan was already there since 1930 – its execution took 60 years! Eruptions of this nature are neither sudden nor spontaneous, as is being made out by some apologists of the liberal variety! Time has come for KPs to realize that what hit them in 1990 was the result of a Machiavellian Plan, set in motion in 1930!

*sanjeevmunshi@hotmail.com*



Ravinder Gurtoo

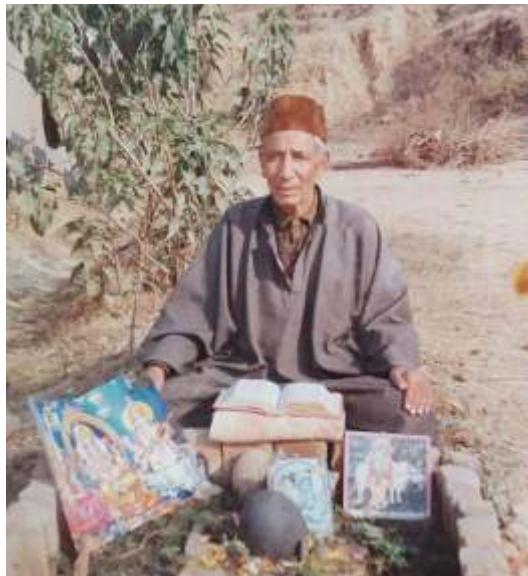


# A REFLECTION ON LOSS AND RESILIENCE

The night of January 19, 1990, is etched in the collective memory of the Kashmiri Pandit community as a moment of unparalleled sorrow, a rupture in the fabric of their existence. On this fateful day, an ancient and vibrant community was compelled to abandon its homeland, driven out by a crescendo of terror, hatred, and violence. What transpired was not merely the physical displacement of a people but a profound severance of their spiritual and cultural connection to the land they had nurtured for millennia.

This tragedy was born out of an escalating tide of extremism and communalism that gripped the Kashmir Valley in the late 1980s. The Pandits, custodians of the region's ancient wisdom, literature, and traditions, found themselves targeted in a horrifying campaign of persecution. Mass rapes, killings, torture, and the looting of their homes and temples transformed the valley into a theatre of chaos and despair. It was a night of deafening slogans and eerie silences, of broken dreams and shattered faiths.

The Philosophy of Exile in its essence, is a profound human tragedy. It is not merely the loss of a home or property but the loss of belonging, a severing of roots that leaves an indelible scar on the soul. The Kashmiri Pandits were not only forced to leave their homes but also the orchards where their ancestors had toiled, the temples where their prayers had echoed, and the rivers whose songs had intertwined with their own.



**Photo Credit - Rohit Bhat**

*This picture is of Kashmiri pandit from 1990. He had lost his three storey building house*

Yet, within the depths of this suffering lies a timeless philosophical question—

What does it mean to belong? For the Pandits, their exile was not just a geographical displacement but a philosophical confrontation with the fragility of identity. When the walls that shelter us crumble, when the soil that nurtures us turns hostile, where do we seek refuge? Despite the unspeakable horrors they faced, the Kashmiri Pandits have exemplified extraordinary courage and determination. In exile, they have built new lives, preserved their

traditions, and passed on the legacy of their rich cultural heritage. Their story is a testament to the human spirit's ability to endure and adapt, even in the face of unimaginable adversity. Yet, the philosophical burden of their plight remains. How does one reconcile with a homeland that has rejected them? How does one find justice in the face of enduring silence? These are questions that transcend the Kashmiri Pandit's experience and resonate universally, reminding us of the fragility of human coexistence and the dire consequences of unchecked hatred.

As we remember the events of January 19, 1990, let it not be a mere recounting of sorrow but a call to introspection. Let it remind us of the importance of compassion, understanding, and the relentless pursuit of harmony in a world often marred by divisions.

The tragedy of the Kashmiri Pandits is not theirs alone; it is a collective wound; a reminder of what humanity stands to lose when intolerance prevails. In their story lies a lesson for the ages that while homes may be lost, the spirit can remain unbroken, and while hatred may displace, love and memory can rebuild.

May this day serve as both a sombre reminder and a beacon of hope—a plea to heal, to remember, and to ensure that such tragedies are never repeated.

Kashmiri Pandits, displaced and rendered refugees within their own country, have been consistently overlooked by successive central governments. Despite the undeniable truth of their suffering, their genocide remains unrecognized, and the perpetrators of the atrocities that forced them to flee have neither been punished nor held accountable. A vibrant community now teeters on the brink of extinction, yet there is no meaningful effort to address their plight.

The Kashmiri Pandit community has endured immense suffering over the past 35 years since their exodus from the Kashmir Valley in 1990. This period of exile has brought with it a profound sense of loss,

neglect, and marginalization. Here's a summary of the damages and hardships faced by the community:

Lakhs of Kashmiri Pandits were compelled to flee their ancestral homes due to threats, violence, and targeted killings by militants. They lost not only their homes but also their cultural and spiritual roots tied to the valley. Many Pandits had to leave behind their homes, lands, and businesses, which were often illegally occupied or destroyed. The sudden displacement disrupted careers, businesses, and education, pushing many into poverty.

In the initial years of exile, many families lived in makeshift camps in Jammu and Delhi, facing extreme weather, poor sanitation, and lack of basic amenities.

The harsh living conditions led to a rise in health problems, including psychological trauma. Successive governments failed to address their plight adequately, offering insufficient financial aid and rehabilitation measures. Promises of safe return and rehabilitation in the valley largely remained unfulfilled.

The community felt abandoned by society and the state, leading to a deep sense of alienation. The memories of violence, displacement, and loss have caused generational trauma. The younger generation of Kashmiri Pandits, born in exile, has grown up disconnected from their cultural heritage and homeland. Many traditional practices and rituals have become challenging to sustain outside the valley. Their suffering has often been sidelined or downplayed in mainstream narratives. Despite being a minority, they received little active support from the broader Indian society or international human rights organizations. Many children had their education interrupted due to displacement. Financial constraints and lack of resources affected the aspirations of the youth.

Despite these challenges, the Kashmiri Pandit community has shown remarkable resilience. However, a lot more needs to be done to ensure justice, restitution, and a sense of belonging for them. Their demand for

justice, acknowledgment of their suffering, and measures for a dignified return to their homeland remain critical.

The plight of exiled Kashmiri Pandits has been a long-standing issue, and successive governments could have implemented a variety of measures to safeguard their rights and improve their condition. Here's what could have been done:

### **Safe Return Policy**

Governments could have formulated a comprehensive plan ensuring security, economic incentives, and societal reintegration for Pandits willing to return to the Valley.

### **Land and Property Safeguards**

Legal measures to prevent encroachment or illegal sale of their properties should have been strictly enforced.

### **Dedicated Colonies**

Establishing secure colonies with adequate facilities in Kashmir could have eased their transition back.

### **Political Representation and Empowerment**

Allocating reserved seats for Kashmiri Pandits in the Jammu and Kashmir Legislative Assembly and Parliament could have given them a stronger voice in policy making.

### **Consultative Bodies**

Involving Pandit representatives in decision-making for matters concerning their welfare.

### **Economic Support and Livelihood Opportunities**

Special job quotas and scholarships for displaced families to rebuild their economic foundation.

### **Entrepreneurial Support**

Offering loans, grants, and skill development programs tailored to their needs.

### **Social and Cultural Preservation**

#### **Cultural Protection**

Initiatives to preserve Pandit traditions, temples, and heritage sites in the Valley.

### **Awareness Campaigns**

Promoting awareness about their history and struggles to build societal empathy.

### **Justice and Accountability Prosecution of Perpetrators**

Identifying and prosecuting individuals responsible for violence against Pandits during their exodus.

### **Truth and Reconciliation Commissions**

Establishing bodies to acknowledge past injustices and foster communal healing.

### **Building Long-term Security and Trust**

#### **De-radicalization Programs:**

Tackling the roots of extremism to ensure long-term peace and coexistence in the Valley.

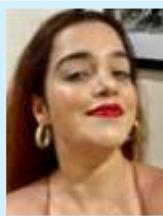
#### **Confidence-Building Measures:**

Regular engagement between communities to rebuild mutual trust.

Unfortunately, most political parties, regardless of their ideological leanings, have used the miseries of Kashmiri Pandits more as a rhetorical tool than a policy priority. This has led to tokenistic gestures with no tangible results. A lack of consistent efforts to address their grievances or ensure justice.

A more empathetic, action-oriented approach could have alleviated much of their suffering and helped restore their rightful place in the Valley and the nation.

Kashmiri Pandits have endured unimaginable suffering with unshakable patience, clinging to the hope that one day they will return to their homeland. They dream of walking freely in the land of their ancestors, where their temples and shrines will once again stand tall, radiating faith and resilience. If the governments fail to honor this sacred promise, the nation will not just fail a community but will forfeit a treasure of intellect, culture, and history. We risk becoming mere echoes of a glorious past, reduced to ruins and fading memories, lost forever unless recorded in the annals of time. Will we let a proud civilization vanish into the shadows of neglect, or will we rise to reclaim its rightful place?



Sanchi Bhat



# WHERE DO I BELONG?

**A**t times this question rests quietly on the shelf of my mind, a cat watching me intently, waiting for its turn to be petted. Sometimes, this question pushes other thoughts out, punching my awareness back to look for an answer.

But it always stays—Where Do I Really Belong?

As someone whose father was in the forces, the sense of belonging never really occurred to me. Packing up every two years to start a new life until the age of 14 ensured that I never really cemented my sense of self anywhere. Added to this was the identity crisis that existed owing to the 1990 Kashmiri Pandit exodus—I became like a *dupatta* flying in the wind, moving in the direction of where my father's job took me.

Because I moved around so much, Kashmir initially felt like a distant planet, with the exodus never really touching my life

as it did my father's. There were a few times it glazed the surface of my reality—during our annual trip to Jammu where I saw my grandparents had skin boils because they were unable to bear the heat in their tiny, extremely hot house. They were forced to construct this Jammu house as refugees when they were ousted from the mountainous and cool Srinagar. Or the undercurrents of my parents' silent worry for their relatives in Jammu and Kashmir when they heard of a terrorist attack in the state, bringing back the feeling of horror or dread from January 1990. My parents rarely spoke to us about their pain, my father internalising the horror of losing his friends, his childhood and homeland, into silent numbness.

Kashmir spoke her first words to me actively in Delhi, where I have settled since my class 8th back in 2005. My father took a new job in the non-defence world and I was finally able to establish something akin to roots in the city, although they were shaky and weak. Coming from relatively smaller cities, Delhi was too fast paced, too ruthless for me to handle. The questions of identity, the feeling of not belonging finally took root firmly in my active mind. I couldn't stop marveling at the decades old friendships shared by my classmates and jealousy over the ease of being a part of a community that I never had the chance to experience. That's when I looked toward Kashmir. And the journey of understanding her has been lifelong ever since.

At first, I did not comprehend Kashmir. I



got to know her in stages: first, I researched online and understood the whole exodus from a third, even fourth person perspective. Then, I whitewashed what happened to her and my community in January 1990, thinking the world is a better place now than it was at the time, and not everyone was bad. Once I understood that I was in denial about not feeling the grief of loss, I felt rage and anger from my homeland being snatched away from me like never before. The injustice, the way the world ignored my community (and still does) emboldening the perpetrators to murder more of my people finally shone through in my blood. I have never wished as bad for the ruling government (UPA) of the time as I had then. Sometimes I think it's the curse of my people that has decimated that party currently into tiny pieces (and I'm glad).

The pain of not knowing Kashmir intimately, as the muslims or currently residing factions in Kashmir, hasn't really ended. In fact, it alternates between the aforementioned rage and grief. Sometimes it reaches a crescendo and I, unlike my father, cannot

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silently bear it. At other times, it stings slightly, especially when I struggle to understand *koshur* since I never grew up speaking it as much. But, in 2024 the pain has doubled immensely for me and because of a surprising new update in my life—getting engaged.

My partner is a born and brought up Delhiite, but originally from Andhra Pradesh, with a strong community of family and friends back in Hyderabad. He not only speaks Telugu well and often, but is an active part of the Andhra culture in the city. This south Indian culture surprisingly is homogenous in the capital, as the pride and love they have for their traditions shines even in an unknown territory. But, even to build a strong base such as this, one has to have strong roots, which isn't the case with second generation Kashmiris whose

parents were terrorised into leaving their state.

For the sake of my marriage, I make an active effort to learn more about his culture and his language and naturally, as my partner, he too tries to understand where I come from. And usually, he's disappointed because he can see the lack of "geographical roots" in my life. I do not know my lineage, nor do I know my mother tongue well. I know what every common Indian knows about Kashmir through videos and books, but I haven't experienced her in an intimate setting yet—taking shikara rides on the daily (not as a tourist), sipping *kehwa* while gossiping about my neighbors, letting snowflakes sizzle on my tongue and going to *Kheer Bhawani Mata's* temple every Sunday for prayers. Although my partner empathises with my communities' suffering and loves me to no end, the lack of a cultural backbone directly tied to my state hurts me. Kashmir in Delhi is not really Kashmiri, it's adulterated Kashmiri culture with strong Punjabi undertones—not truly a place to experience the state, let alone teach about it.

The question of belonging has reared its ugly head yet again as I enter the 35th year of the Kashmiri Pandit exodus in 2025. Women adopt the identity of their partner post wedding, but solely becoming a Telugu bride and letting go of the possibility of finding a true Kashmiri identity is painful for me. The sense of belonging and community has a strong pull, especially now that I'm getting older. It's something that I am hopeful I will experience in this lifetime. Hence, I keep the door for an "identity-in-flux" open for me, while on paper I cement the future of my marriage as a Telugu-Kashmiri affair.

*Author is a Strategic Researcher at a Gurgaon Based MNC  
You can follow more of her poetry and life journey on Instagram: @thesanb*



R L Bhat



# THE LEGEND OF SATIISARAS IN MEDDLESOME HANDS

Kashmir is well known. And, for all the good reasons – its scenic vistas, the soothing climate, the rich culture, and, neither the last nor the least, the profound religious thought, Kashmir Shaivism. Added to these is the art of historiography practiced in its modernist ideation by Pandit Kalhana in his *Raajataranginii*, the earliest extant history of Kashmir. It is equally notable that Kalhana is not a lone bird but stands on a tradition of continuous and consistent recording of history. Kalhana says that he consulted 'eleven works by former scholars' including Suvratta, Khemendra, Heelaraaja, Padmamihira and Chavillakara as well as the *Niilamata Puraana*'. Kalhana also used collateral sources like epigraphic records, temple grants, laudatory inscriptions, and written works like *shaastras*, to write the account. *Raajataranginii*, which thus narrated the history of Kashmir from the earliest sources, was completed in 1149 CE.

## The Legend of Satiisaras

*Niilamata Puraana*, dated to the 4<sup>th</sup> century CE, says that once upon a time, Kashmir was one huge lake, called *Satiisaras*, the Lake of

Disregard of the local roots and the attempt to impose Semitic myths upon Kashmir lore, are patently evident in these adaptations of the original legend.

the goddess Satii. In a happenstance divine, a *raakshasa* got born there. Having arisen from water, it came to be called *jal-udbhava*, in *sandhii* *Jaloodbhava*. After hard penance to Brahma, he obtained the boon of remaining safe so long as he remained in water.

Having obtained the boon, *Jaloodbhava* took *Satiisara* for his dwelling and began to torment the people. He would kill people and hide in the lake and none could get at him. Then, goes the legend, *Niilanaaga* entreated *Rishii Kashyapa*, who got the *deevataas* to intercede. They drained out the water, killed *Jaloodbhava* and made the land fit for habitation.

Kalhana tells that Kashmir is called so because the legendary sage Kashyapa rescued it from being the watery abode to the *raakshasa*, *Jaloodbhava*. The efforts of Kashyapa *rishii* led to the demon's death and reclamation of the valley.

## Habitation and The First Kings

*Niilamat* tells that the land became the abode of *Naagas* who reveled in heavy snows, hail and rain. This rendered the land so cold in winter that the inhabitants had to leave the valley at the

advent of the winter and could return only in summer. During one of these seasonal shiftings, a Brahmana called Chandra Deeva was left behind. He entreated Niilanaaga, the king of *Naagas*, to allow people to live in there, permanently. The king agreed, provided the people followed the observations holy to *Naagas*. These are detailed in the compendium *Niilamat Puraana*.

The Puraana also tells of the first kings of Kashmir, not as a historical description but in answer as to why Kashmir was not represented in the Great War, Mahaabhaarata. It tells that Goonanda I was killed by Lord Krishna during a fight with Jarasandh, on whose side Goonanda fought. His son Daamoodara, who succeeded, went to take revenge and also got killed. Thereupon, Lord Krishna had his enceinte wife, Yashoomatii, crowned. She, posthumously, gave birth to Goonanda II, who was just a child when the Great War took place. These are the first kings mentioned by Pandit Kalhana in Raajataranginii. Accordingly, Kalhana begins the history of Kashmir around the year 653 of Kali Era, given for the war in Varahmeehra's *Brahat Samhita*.

### Converting The Legend

Legends are legendary. People have been living by legends inherited from remote antiquity. Others create legends in life times. They then take a life of their own and live on, enlivening them. It is uncommon for the legends to be revised and converted to alien allegories. Persian historians of Kashmir performed that feat. Writing a millennium and a half after *Niilamata Puraana*, they revised the legend, inserted choice elements into it and virtually converted it into a tale of alien antecedents. And, called them variant versions.

Disregard of the local roots and the attempt to impose Semitic myths upon Kashmir lore, are patently evident in these adaptations of the original legend. Calling it '*Kashyapsar*' the second Persian history of Kashmir written in early 17<sup>th</sup> century, *Bahaaristaani Shaahii*, says that Kashmir had been a lake for 'two thousand years' and that

'three angels' were tasked to drain it out. The succeeding 17<sup>th</sup> century chronicler, Haidar Malik of Chaadduurah, first recounts the *puraanik* legend that the *rishi*, whom it calls 'Kashaf', got *deevataas* to drain the valley and says it came to be called 'Kohi Kashaf'. The account is largely that given by Kalhana though it carries variations, like calling Brahma and Vishnu (Bishan in the text) *kaarkunaan* – agents – of Mahaadeeva.

### Building Backdrops

In the page following this, Haidar Malik gives the early glimpses of what became the *ratnaakar*-tale of Piir Hasan and Fauk: "Though the Muslim chroniclers present variant versions here, it is settled that when *hazrat* Sulaimaan landed in this realm on the divine orders, one leg of his throne came to rest on the mountain which is now called *kohi Sulaiman*. Except the high reaches, all land was under water. Since he liked the climate of this region, he commanded two jinns, one *Kashaf* and another *Miir*, to drain out the water. They did what was ordered and creating an outlet, they removed the water. Hence it was named *Kashaf-Miir*, which became *Kashmir*."

Written a century later, in mid-18<sup>th</sup> century, *Vaaqyaati Kashmiir* of Muhammad Azm Dyada'ma'ry recounts the legend of Kashyapa *rishi* (whom he calls 'Kashaf' at the beginning and 'Kashab' toward the end of the page). While there are variations in the recounting – like calling 'Kashaf' the son of Naaraayan (Naaranj in the VK text) – Azm adds a major variant saying that the wife of 'Kashab' was called 'Miir' and thus the land came to be called '*Kashab-miir*' and later Kashmir. There is no mention anywhere that Kashyapa *rishi* had a wife called Miir. Azm, whose account repeats the *taariikh* of Haidar Malik of Chaadduurah, almost sentence for sentence here, mixes Malik's latter tale about Sulaimaan and jinns '*kashaf*' and '*miir*' with Kashyapa *rishi*, to account for the name Kashmir.

### Hasan Inserts a Whole Book

In 1884 CE, Piir Hasan Khoyihaamii brought

forth a compounding of these variant legends about the nomenclature 'Kashmir'. Invoking an unknown work, which he called *Ratnaakar Puraan*, Hasan claimed that he had obtained the Persian translation of the work by Mulaa Ahmad, of Zainulaabdiin's court, and that the legend was given in it. Sanskrit literature of Kashmir, where *Raajyanka Ratnaakara* is a prominent writer, is unaware of any *Puraana* written by him.

This fable, given by Piir Hasan, combines the elements of the original legend and the variations in later Persian histories. It is woven around a brave called Kaasham Viir. Citing Mulaa Ahmad's translation of '*ratna puraan*', Hasan tells that the brave Kaasham Viir having gotten beholding to *rakheeshar* asked him how he could expiate for his sins. The *rakheeshar* told him to visit the *tiirthas* of Satiisara after draining the water. The brave Kaasham Viir, says Hasan, made a hole at Khaadan Yaar and drained out the waters. As per Hasan, the land thus exposed came to be called *Kashii-Mar* after him, which finally became Kashmir.

### Draining of Kashmir Continues

Later, in Volume II of his *Taariikh*, Hasan pulls off a second draining out of Kashmir valley on directions of the Semitic prophet Sulaimaan, after Raajaa Daamoodara and the legend of his becoming a python as recounted in Kalhana's *Raajatarangini*, during the reign of Raajaa Nareendara. This legend too is said to have been given in Mulaa Ahmad's translation of *Ratanaakara*, who is reported to have written that 'one of the *rakheeshars* of west', named Sandiimaan, came in his flying craft and landed upon the *Shankraachar* Mountain, which Hasan here calls *kohi jaarjeett*. Hasan's narration goes on:

'The king and his subjects came to him and beseeched him to drain out the waters of Kashmir. He ordered a body of jinns, accompanying him, to remove the rocks at Khaadan Yaar.

They did as ordered and the water flowed out. The king surrendered to Sandiimaan. He accepted and appointed three princes Hushak, Jashak and Kanishak to rule Kashmir.'

### Tale Atop A Toll

After this description, Hasan says that Mulaa Ahmad opines that the *rakheeshar* must be the Semitic Prophet Sulaimaan. While dealing with this fantasy-filled world, it is interesting to note that another learned man, Shamsudiin, of our own times, who translated Dyada'ma'ry's *Vaaqyaati Kashmiir* into Urdu, picks Hasan's Sandimaan and accuses Kalhana of being a communal perpetrator for deliberately writing 'Sandimaan' in place of *hazrat suliamaan* to distort the history of Kashmir! In his zeal the learned professor has not noted that the word 'Sandimaan' is not given by Kalhana, but has been inserted by Piir Hasan on the basis of the so-called *Ratnaakar Puraana* by Mulaa Ahmad in *vaqyaayi kashmiir*, which as shall be discussed below is, a fiction foisted on Kashmir history by Hasan. Citing this same '*Puraana*', Hasan adds names of the 35 'lost kings' which Kalhana says he had not been able to trace in the records available in his time.

### And, the Edifice Falls

Stein says about this insertion: "the fictitious character of this list does not need detailed demonstration... the fact that this supplement having been attempted at so late a period and without any historical foundation whatever, deserves mention..." A contemporary researcher G A Batt, who has critically evaluated this claim of Piir Hasan, points out that these kings are little more than a collection of the drifting folklore.

Ghulam Ahmad Batt rejects *Taariikh* Hasan's claim on another ground. Discussing the dates of Zainulaabdiin and his father Sikandar, Batt shows that the dates given by Hasan for these kings are the same as those of *Taariikh Sayyid Alii* and differ from those of Joonaraaja and Shriivara. Batt argues that had Hasan really obtained a work by Mulaa Ahmad, who was a contemporary of these personages, this discrepancy would not have been there. He says that Hasan's 'discovery' is a collation of the later Persian histories and concludes that Hasan did not have any work of this name and vintage with him.

## Foot Noot

<sup>1</sup> Raajataranginii is usually written 'Rajatarangini'. This is an inaccurate usage of IPA transcription where the first 'a' and the last 'i' carry a bar indicating that these are extended vowels. This and other diacritical marks are hard to apply in the normal course. Often, they get dropped leaving an inaccurate transcript. RRK overcomes this by not using any diacritical marks. RRK scheme, used here, denotes the extended vowels by a simple doubling of the vowel – aa, ii, ee, oo, uu – without the use of diacritical mark bar. All non-English names, words etc., in this work are given as per the RRK scheme. Accordingly, 'Jonaraja' is written precisely as 'Joonaraaja', 'Deva' as 'Deeva', Rishi as 'Rishii' etc.

<sup>2</sup> Kalhana's Raajataranginii, English translation by M A Stein, 1900, Volumes I-III, reprint 1989, Moti Lal Banarsi Das, Delhi.

<sup>3</sup> Raajataranginii of Kalhana (RTK), Book I, shlooka 14. Kalhana's reference is to the oldest extant book from Kashmir, the Niilamata Puraana.

<sup>4</sup> Raajataranginii of Kalhana, I: 15 and fn Volume I, on tr. page 3

<sup>5</sup> Raajataranginii of Kalhana, VIII: 3404

<sup>6</sup> Raajataranginii of Kalhana, I:55-56

<sup>7</sup> Bahaaristaani Shaahii (BS), English tr., K N Pandit, 1991, Firma KLM Pvt. Ltd, Calcutta, chapter I, page 1

<sup>8</sup> Taariikhi Haidar Malik Chaadduurah, Persian text given in the English translation titled 'History of Kashmir' by Razia Bano, 1991, Bhavana Prakashan, New Delhi, (henceforth, THMC), page 3

<sup>9</sup> Taariikhi Haidar Malik Chaadduurah, Persian text, page 4

<sup>10</sup> Vaaqyaati Kashmiir (VK), Muhammad Azm Dyada'ma'ry, Persian text, Srinagar edition, 1937, page 9

<sup>11</sup> The 'f/b' difference is present in the text of earlier Lahore edition, at the exact place (VK, Persian text, Lahore), page 9

<sup>12</sup> John Dowson, A Classical Dictionary of Hindu Mythology and Religion, 1987 print by Rupa & Co, page 153

<sup>13</sup> Taariikhi Hasan, 1956, Persian text published Research Department J&K Govt, (TH, Persian text), Volume I, page 53

<sup>14</sup> Kashmiir Kaa Sanskrit Saahitya Koo Yoogdaan, 1986, Ved Ghai, JKAACL, Pages 40-49, 168

<sup>15</sup> Taariikhi Hasan, Persian text, ibid., Volume I pages 53-55

<sup>16</sup> Taariikhi Hasan, Persian text, Volume II pages 41-42

<sup>17</sup> Taariikhi Hasan, Persian text, loc. cit.

<sup>18</sup> Shamsudiin Ahmad, 2001, vaakaati kashmiir, Urdu translation, J&K Islamic Research Center, Srinagar, pages 500-503

<sup>19</sup> Hasan inserts the kings 'discovered' by him in two installments, one after Goonand II, whom he calls Baal Goonand and the second after Sachinara. (Taariikhi Taariikhi Hasan, ibid., Volume II, pages 15-30 and 32-37)

<sup>20</sup> Raajataranginii of Kalhana, I:83

<sup>21</sup> M A Stein, Kalhana's Raajataranginii, Volume I, page 73

<sup>22</sup> Shiraaza, Urdu, volume 35, issues 1-3, Shah Hamdaan Number, reprint 2000, JKAACL, Srinagar, pages 187-88



Isha Raina



# WHAT DOES THE RAMAYANA TEACH US?

**S**ri Rama is held to be the supreme Brahma by some, a manifestation on earth of Bhagavan Visnu by others, a superman by the third, a perfect king by the fourth, and a mythological figure by still another. The transcendent diving Being of Sri Rama is understood to none but the Lord Himself. There's nobody within the world capable of truly and fully expounding His essential character. All that has been said about the Lord thus far is merely a fragmentary description of Him, a mere plan to hint at Him because the moon is shown with the assistance of some bought beside which it appears to be though really existing thousands of miles away! Yet it's not untrue. As every particle of the ocean is that the deep itself, even so, whatever has been said about the Lord is His description despite its incompleteness. Viewed from this angle of vision everybody is true in what he says about Him. Bhagavan Sri Rama is also the supreme Brahman, a manifestation on earth of Visnu, a superman, a perfect monarch, and a mythological figure too because the mind that imagines Him to so derive its existence from the Self, which is identical with the Lord. In fact, the Lord's being is such it embraces all; for everything emanates from Him, exists in Him and it's He who pervades all. He's the 'All', the 'All-pervading', the 'Indweller of all hearts. Actually, the Lord's being, also as His

attributes and aspects are incomprehensible, inconceivable, and indescribable.

1. God alone, who is absolute Existence, pure Intelligence, and infinite Bliss, is projected everywhere. The entire universe also as what's happening within the universe is His manifestation and play.
2. The Supreme Deity bodies Himself forth from time to time with a view to redeeming the virtuous through love and therefore the evildoers by punishment and plays the role of a perfect Man for the great of humanity.
3. Surrender to the Lord is that the best means of achieving salvation. Vibhisana may be a typical example of such surrender.
4. Truth is that the highest religion: one should cheerfully renounce power and pelf, nay; one's the very life, for the sake of truth. The lifetime of Sri Rama is an embodiment of truth.
5. The very best goal of human existence is God-Realization and this will be attained by dedicating oneself to the Lord and performing one's duties for Him alone, without attachment to the fruit and during a spirit of renunciation.
6. It's the foremost duty of these who believe the institution of Varnasrama.
7. It's the paramount duty of a son to serve his parents. This is often exemplified within the lifetime of Sri Rama.
8. Supreme and undivided devotion to her

husband is that the highest duty of a wife. Sri Sita was a living embodiment of such devotion.

9. It's the very best duty of a person to form his brothers happy. Sri Rama, Bharata, Lakshmana, and Shatrughna should be considered ideal brothers.

10. It is the foremost duty of the people to serve their ruler even at the cost of their own lives. (a) the people of Ayodhya at the time of Sri Rama's departure for the forest and (b) by the monkey-subjects of King Sugriva, who laid down their lives in the war between Sri Rama and Ravana.

11. One should never lend countenance to the wrong-doings of an unjust and unrighteous ruler. It is our sacred duty to raise our voice against such a ruler, no matter if he is our real brother. This is exemplified in the life of Vibhisana.

12. It is the paramount duty of a ruler to renounce his dearest object in order to please his subjects. Sri Rama's abandoning of Sita is a noble example of this.

13. A ruler should give away his all-in performing sacrifices for the welfare of his subjects. This is exemplified in the lives of King Dasaratha and Bhagavan Sri Rama.

14. The mightiest monarch will surely be met with his end if he offends against the sacred laws of morality and commits outrage on women. The case of Ravana can be cited by way of an example.

15. One should be prepared to lay down one's very life for the sake of a friend and should help him in every way. The friendship of Sri Rama and Sugriva, on the one hand, and Sri Rama and Vibhisana, on the other, should be recognized as ideal in this respect.

16. A devotee should always deep himself engage in serving the Lord in a disinterested spirit. This is fully exemplified in the life of Sri Hanuman.

17. An ideal wife should love her step-children in the same way as her own progeny. This is exemplified in the lives of Kausalya and Sumitra.

18. The Brahmans (the priestly class), as well as hermits, should always be honoured by means of gifts and respectful behaviour. This is exemplified in the life of Sri Rama.

19. One should spend one's spare moments taking to Lord or dwelling in one's mind on noble thoughts. This was done by Sri Rama and his brothers whenever they met together.

20. One should offer oblations of water and food to one's ancestors with reverence.

21. One should always and in every circumstance raise one's voice against injustice. This is exemplified in the life of Lakshmana.

22. One should prostrate oneself at the feet of one's teacher, parents, elder brother and so on every morning.

23. One should undergo the severest ordeal for the sake of duty. This is exemplified in the lives of Sri Rama, Lakshmana, Sita, and Bharata.

24. Every member of the twice-born classes should perform his Sandhya at the right time every day.

25. One should always be fearless. Sri Rama and Lakshmana were living embodiments of fearlessness.

26. One should never marry more women than one. The life of Sri Rama should be taken as an ideal in this respect.

27. One should be ever ready to help sages and anchorites in performing their religious rites without interference from outside. This is exemplified in the lives of Sri Rama and Lakshmana.

28. One should mete out a friendly treatment even to those who do one wrong. The behavior of Sri Rama towards Kaikeyi should be taken as an ideal in this respect.

29. One should love the meanest of creatures. This is exemplified in the life of Sri Rama.

30. By taking refuge at the feet of the Lord and bearing their dust on its head, even an inanimate object can become animate. The case of Ahalya can be cited by way of example.

# KASHMIRI PANDITS WHO STAND WITH YOU?

In Kashmir's valley, where once they dwelt,  
The Kashmiri pandits, their hearts did melt,  
Forced to leave their homeland, thirty years ago,  
But still they dream of returning, despite the sorrow.

Their homes lie empty, their temples desecrated,  
Their hearts are heavy, but their spirits remain unstated,  
They long for the day when they'll be welcomed back,  
But the reality is bleak, their hopes under attack.

The Muslims of Kashmir, they see them as tourists,  
Not as brothers and sisters, but as outsiders, the purest,  
They thwart their plans, for rehabilitation and return,  
Leaving the pandits' hearts to ache and burn.

The pandits hold on to hope, though it seems in vain,  
For their land has been occupied, by those with an Islamic reign,  
New colonies have sprung up, with an intolerant mindset,  
No place for idolaters, in a land they once met.

Three decades in exile, they've endured the pain,  
Hoping for a future, where they can once again reign,  
But where will they go, when their homes are no more?  
Their aspirations dashed; their dreams torn at the core.

Oh God, what wrong have they done,  
To face this exile, their battle never won,  
The peaceful community of Kashmiri pandits, they cry,  
But their voices are silenced, as the years go by.

Their struggle is long, their pain severe,  
Their only solace, the hope they hold dear,  
To return to Kashmir, their homeland true,  
But the road ahead is rocky, the future unknown too.

The ballad of Kashmiri pandits, a tale of woe,  
Their resilience tested, their faith in tow,  
May they find peace, may they find justice,  
In a land where once they were free to discuss.

But until that day comes, they'll continue to fight,  
For their right to return, to reclaim their light,  
To live in harmony, in a land they once knew,  
Kashmiri pandits, we stand with you.



Virendra Bangroo

Today the long tresses fall open,  
The wet matted hair tangle up in curls.  
Fierce locks of golden grace,  
With their naked truth, they tend to amaze.

Bells, gongs, cymbals produce sounds,  
Loud rhythmic beats in thundering storms.  
Grey powdery ash stirs up into the air,  
As her feet in wilderness, rise and fall.

Decked up in soot and surrounded by smoke,  
She dances drinking the night.  
With her, dance her tresses,  
In every spin tasting moonlight.

A garland of skulls swings in her neck,  
Tresses fall on her forehead red.  
Not some Passion play at its best,  
A dance it is to the tune of Death.

A dance of destruction on fathomless waves of bliss,  
A dance of swallowing darkness on all pervading consciousness,  
A dance of gorgeousness in that state of wilderness,  
A dance of time on her own timelessness.

A dance of vigour and vitality on weary dead lands.  
A dance of only light that exists, in that pitch blackness.  
A dance which leads to the dissolution of all that was ever designed  
A dance it is to death, drunk in the infinite, undefined.

A dance that devours, a dance that ignites  
Where chaos births creation and darkness births light  
Oh, Kali, eternal, in your dance we find,  
The absolute great void (Anākhyā), where all states align.

The tunes keep enhancing, high and high and high and high.  
She dances seizing it all with the chime of her anklets.  
In her ecstasy, no boundaries remain,  
Where life and death are but same.

Life on the verge of cessation;  
Death dancing on the edge of manifestation;  
I and this dissolved in active awareness;  
Five senses glowing within in fixation.

A dance of death vibrating along all elements,  
A dance which is the pulse of all one hundred eighteen worlds,  
A dance which is untamed, relentless and raw.  
A dance of unification of graceful Lasya and vigorous Tandava.

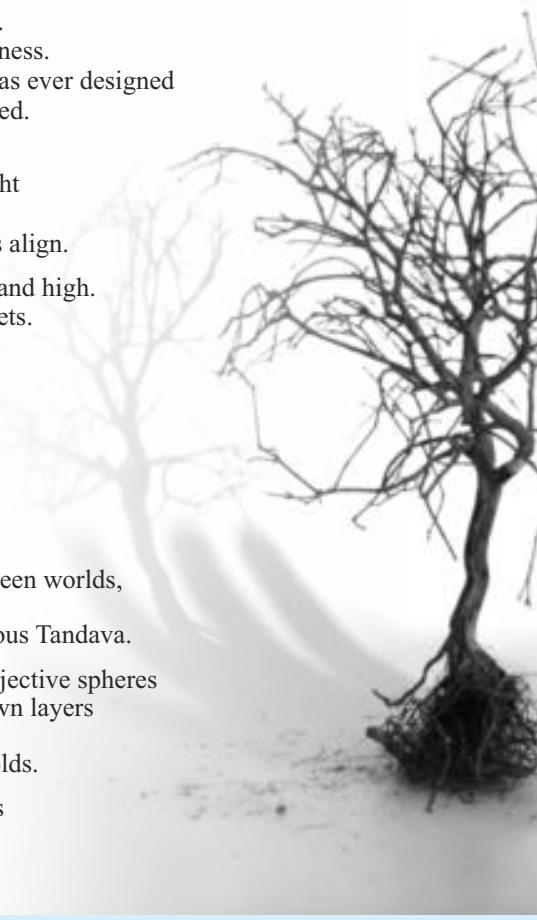
Her laughter echoes in objective, cognitive and subjective spheres  
A sound that pierces through all unknown and known layers  
In her eternal womb, Five Great Acts unfold  
A divine dance of death which dazzling stillness holds.

In the stillness of her dance, the divine truth unfurls  
It is “Who am I?” the supreme mantra that echoes  
Beyond the three malas and their layered design  
I am the dance and the dance is mine.

# DANCE to DEATH



Vimarshi Koul





Sanjay Pandita



# SANTOSH BAKAYA

## A JOURNEY OF IMAGINATION, RESILIENCE, AND THE POWER OF WORDS

**S**antosh Bakaya's journey is a fascinating blend of youthful whimsy, profound literary achievements, and an unshakeable belief in the transformative power of love and creativity. From a young age, she was known for her spirited nature, branded as the "Mad Hatter" at St. Angela Sophia School in Jaipur, where she was regularly found standing under the tamarind tree near the administrative block, a consequence of her latest prank. For her teachers, this mischievous side hinted at a creative spark within her. Sister Theodora, one of her favourite teachers, predicted that her "fertile imagination" would one day lead her to become a writer—a prophecy that would later come true in the most prolific way.

Though Bakaya had no initial ambition to become a writer, her journey into storytelling began early. Even in school, she found herself drawn to stories and visual arts, dabbling in illustrations and winning a prize in The Illustrated Weekly of India for a cartoon heavily inspired by Mario Miranda. She also frequently wrote, directed, and acted in plays, an early sign of the narrative voice that would later flourish in her writing. Her first love, however, was not literature but cartoons, and she initially aspired to be a cartoonist. This dream took a detour when a new classmate introduced her to the world of



limericks. From that moment, Bakaya became hooked, moving beyond limericks to essays,

young adult novels, poetry, and biographies, ultimately crafting a literary career spanning more than forty books—many of which became bestsellers.

As a writer, Santosh Bakaya is driven by a deep-seated optimism. A firm believer in the power of love to overcome negativity, she echoes Martin Luther King Jr.'s philosophy, whom she greatly admires and has written a biography of. Like King, she is adamant that “hate is too great a burden to bear” and has decided to “stick to love.” This core belief, which she reiterates with references to John Lennon's song “Imagine,” underscores her desire to envision and create a peaceful, harmonious world. In Lennon's words, she hopes for “a brotherhood of man,” and her work often seeks to reflect this idealistic yet earnest worldview.

Her vivid imagination has not only fueled her writing but has also allowed her to find beauty in the mundane. Bakaya has a knack for reimagining challenging situations with a sense of optimism. In one essay in *Flights from My Terrace*, she describes traveling on an overcrowded local bus filled with the pungent aromas of garlic and onions. She copes by mentally transporting herself to a hammock on a serene beach, imagining waves gently lulling her to peace. This ability to “positivize” situations is at the heart of her creative process, which she has also applied in her poems inspired by nature. Her novella, *A Skyful of Balloons*, for instance, is set against the breathtaking backdrop of Kashmir, a place she holds close to her heart. During the lockdown, she found solace in small glimpses of beauty, like sunrays filtering through curtains—moments that would later inspire her poetry collection, her 30th book.

Bakaya's sense of justice is as integral to her identity as her optimism. She describes an almost visceral urge to address injustices, often finding herself compelled to write about them. Her biographies, *Only in Darkness Can You See the Stars* (on Martin Luther King Jr.) and *Ballad of Bapu* (a poetic biography of Mahatma Gandhi), originated from similar impulses. Each work was sparked by a

classroom challenge: her MPhil students had either criticized Bapu or failed to appreciate King's contributions. She channelled her frustration into creating educational yet engaging works that would bring these figures to life for younger generations, penning *Ballad of Bapu* in the rhyme scheme of a limerick, a genre she has cherished since childhood.

Despite her formal training in Political Science, with both MPhil and PhD degrees, her love for English literature has always been central to her life. Bakaya's father, a professor, played a crucial role in cultivating her love for literature by reading classic works aloud and encouraging discussions. By the time she graduated from high school, she had read almost all of Dickens and Hardy, and in college, literature became her “obsession.” This background in the classics has profoundly influenced her writing style, and she continues to hone her craft through constant reading. Bakaya's approach to writing—reading voraciously and writing daily—reflects her commitment to her art. She believes that writing style, depth, and vocabulary are honed over time and are the result of a constant process of learning.

Among Bakaya's literary heroes are Charles Dickens, Oscar Wilde, Ernest Hemingway, Thomas Hardy, and Edgar Allan Poe. She is especially fond of O. Henry's twist endings and Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird*, a book she holds in the highest regard. She also admires Russian writers like Tolstoy, Dostoevsky, Maxim Gorky, Chekhov, Boris Pasternak, and Alexander Pushkin. Their works left a lasting impact on her, as did the contemporary Japanese author Haruki Murakami. While she does not believe in consciously imitating these writers, she sees them as an essential part of her literary education and continually returns to their works for inspiration.

Beyond her admiration for the classics, Bakaya's writing is characterized by humor and relatability. Her weekly column, *Morning Meanderings*, published in *Learning and Creativity*, has become widely

popular among readers who enjoy her reflections on daily life. Bakaya often writes about “the ordinary,” finding charm in common characters and events that resonate with her readers. These characters, Bakaya notes with satisfaction, have “become part of [her readers'] lives too,” a testament to her ability to connect with her audience. Her humor shines through not only in her columns but also in her co-authored humorous books, *Mélange of Mavericks and Mutants*, with Ramendra Kumar, and *Bring out the Tall Tales*, with Avijit Sarkar.

For Bakaya, humor is more than a tool for storytelling—it is a way of life. She describes herself as someone who loves to “inject some insanity into the sane world,” often light heartedly frustrating her family with her jokes. This lightness and warmth make her a beloved figure among her readers and students alike.

Bakaya's journey into young adult fiction began with her mystery series inspired by Enid Blyton. Her books, such as *The Mystery of the Relic* and *The Mystery of the Jhalana Fort*, feature young characters who embark on thrilling adventures, often with elements drawn from Bakaya's life. Ashok, one of her beloved characters, is based on her younger brother, who once aspired to be a detective. Though only three of her mystery books were published, these stories continue to captivate readers with their humor, suspense, and camaraderie, and remain a testament to her storytelling skill.

Santosh Bakaya's deep connection to her Kashmiri roots has also shaped her literary career. Although she spent much of her life in Jaipur after her father took a position at Rajasthan University, her family-maintained ties to their ancestral home in Srinagar, Kashmir's landscapes, rivers, and cultural heritage have inspired much of her poetry and prose, and one of her young adult novels, *The Mystery of the Jhalana Fort*, is set in the backdrop of Jaipur, blending her memories of both places. Her forthcoming book, *The Tottering House on the River Jhelum*,

promises to capture even more of her Kashmiri heritage.

Bakaya is also deeply committed to encouraging young people to read, urging them to appreciate the classics and the depth they bring to one's writing. In her creative writing classes, she emphasizes that great writers possess a “depth, style, vocabulary, and narrative skill” that can only be cultivated through constant reading. She has often quoted her father's advice to “READ–READ–READ” to her students, encouraging them to explore a range of works, from “the good, the bad, and the ugly.” Bakaya believes that reading allows one to develop a unique voice, and she is a staunch advocate of approaching criticism with an open mind and a willingness to grow.

Santosh Bakaya's prolific output and enthusiasm for her craft are matched by her disciplined approach to writing. She insists that aspiring writers must “write at least for an hour every day” and be “very observant,” storing images and memories for future stories. Her advice to young writers emphasizes passion, resilience, and curiosity. She believes that a writer must actively “filch time” for their craft and develop a drive that fuels creativity, often keeping her up at odd hours to jot down ideas. In her TEDx talk, “The Myth of Writer's Block,” she dismisses the notion of creative blocks, arguing that true passion overrides any obstacle to writing. According to Bakaya, “no block can hinder you from writing” if you feel passionately enough.

With her remarkable literary career and passionate dedication, Santosh Bakaya continues to inspire and entertain readers of all ages. Her “fertile imagination” and enduring love for storytelling have allowed her to create works that range from poetic biographies to mystery novels for young adults. She remains a writer who not only cherishes her roots but also strives to make the world a better place through her words, one story at a time. Her legacy is a vibrant testament to the power of resilience, creativity, and a boundless love for literature.

*The writer can be reached at  
sanjaypanditasp@gmail.com*

# NOTE ON AIKS TRUST

The AIKS Trust has been failing to pursue its objectives, as outlined in the trust deed dated February 26, 1993, for more than 4-5 years, rendering the board of trustees ineffective.

Shri Vijay Aima, who self-proclaimed himself chairman in 2016 in a questionable manner, has been alleged to operate without adhering to standard operating procedures. Additionally, Shri Rohit Dhar, who was never appointed as a trustee, acted as one under the direction of Shri Aima, serving as his advisor and confidant. Furthermore, two members of the Board of Trustees resigned before the end of their respective tenure due to concerns about the organization's functional style and practices which were not aligned to main objective of the organisation.

Instead of calling a meeting of the governing council to fill the vacant seats of trustees, the chairman carried out his agenda along with Shri Rohit Dhar to further prove that he was utterly indifferent to the standard operating procedures of a public charitable institution and provisions of the Trust Deed. Shri Aima had also been continuously requested by some founding members and other biradari members to call a meeting of the governing council to elect trustees as the term of the board of trustees (whatever manner they were elected) had also expired in 2020 as per clause 7 of the Trust Deed. However, all these requests were ignored, and Shri Vijay Aima continued his agenda contrary to the spirits and provisions of the Trust Deed.

Under these circumstances, a few of the founding members called a virtual governing council meeting on 24-01-2022 to discuss the state of affairs of the Trust and in the same meeting proposed and elected five members of the board of trustees. In this meeting, Shri Aima preferred to stay absent despite the prior notice. Shri Ramesh Raina, the AIKS president and trustee of the Trust, also abstained from this governing council meeting. However, Shri Rohit Dhar attended this meeting.

After the new board members of trustees were elected, there were several conflicts between Shri Aima and Shri Rohit Dhar on one side and the newly elected members on the other.

One significant conflict arose when Shri Aima refused to hand over the Trust's original documents, records, chequebooks, etc., to the newly elected Board of Trustees. Unfortunately, Shri Romesh Raina, the outgoing President of AIKS who aligned with Shri Aima, contributed to the conflict and remained in conflict with the Trust. As a result, instead of remaining neutral, AIKS, our esteemed organization, also got dragged into the conflict.

Shri Aima also got suddenly activated due to these developments and suddenly called a governing council meeting on 03.04.2022 after a gap of 4-5 years and one of the agenda of such meeting called by Shri Aima was the election of members of the board of trustees. This deadlock and highly conflicting situation resulted in three respected founding members of the Trust approaching on 25.03.2022 a competent court in Delhi (the "Court") with various prayers, inter alia, including the following three significant prayers:

Stay the meeting of the governing council called on 03.04.2022 and permanently cancel the same as the same is called illegally by persons who are no longer holding any office of the Trust; Declare the persons elected in the governing council meeting held on 24.01.2022 as the board of trustees of the Trust; and Direct Shri Aima and his team to hand over all the Trust's original records and documents to the new board of trustees.

The Court cancelled Shri Aima's illegally called governing council meeting on 03.04.2022. The Court further admitted the application of the three founding members and issued notices to various defendants, including Shri Vijay Aima and Shri Romesh Raina.

Shri Aima and Shri Raina continuously attempted to delay the resolution process inside and outside of the Court and kept filing frivolous, preposterous, and erroneous affidavits and statements. Even Shri Rohit Dhar and Smt. Anupama Lahori Ganjoo jumped-in to delay and complicate the process/resolution and, with that objective, filed an application on 25.10.2023 with several misstatements and misrepresentations and also claiming to be representing 42 "ordinary members" without attaching any proof of authorization from anyone of them.

The application from Shri Rohit Dhar and Smt. Anupama Lahori Ganjoo was dismissed by the Court on December 4, 2024, as the Court held that they are not proper parties from whom any application can be considered.

The Court further ordered in its order dated 04.12.2024 (the "04.12.24 Order") that:

1. Shri Romesh Raina, Shri Vijay Aima, and Shri Ashok Ogra must file their affidavits before the next date of hearing (which is scheduled on 01.04.2025) attaching therewith (a) Trust's accounts for last three financial years and (b) documents evidencing that IT Department has seized the accounts of the Trust (as was claimed by them in an earlier hearing of the Court held on 17.11.2023). The Court also asked these three persons to clarify in the same affidavit if the Trust has opened any other account or not after the alleged seizure of accounts by the IT Department and how & by whom the funds / assets of the Trust are managed.

2. Shri Romesh Raina, Shri Vijay Aima, and the three former trustees (namely, Shri Ashok Ogra, Shri Maharaj Pajan and Shri Umesh Moza) shall submit their respective affidavits as per an earlier order of the Court dated 17.11. 2023 (the “17.11.23 Order”) attaching therewith the Income Tax Returns of the Trust for the financial years 2016-17 and 2017-18 and explicitly disclose whether the Trust's bank accounts have been seized by the IT Department.

Previously, in its order dated 26.09. 2023 (the “26.09.23 Order”), the Court appointed Shri O.P. Saini, a retired Additional District & Sessions Judge, as the Court Observer to conduct a governing council meeting to finalise nomination and appointment of trustees of the Trust in compliance of the relevant provisions of the Trust Deed. The Court had also ordered the 26.09.23 Order that only founder members and life members who can demonstrate their eligibility according to Clause 6(ii) of the Trust Deed would be entitled to attend such meeting of the governing council, which will be called by Shri Saini. As per clause 6 (ii) of the Trust Deed, a persons is a life member who can produce (a) proof of payment of a one-time fee of ₹20,000/- paid in one or in five equal instalments to become a life member and (b) details of two founder or life members who sponsored him/her.

In the 26.09.23 Order, the Court also fixed Shri Saini's remuneration as ₹2,00,000/-, to be shared equally (50% each) by the plaintiffs and the Trust, Shri Romesh Raina (as President of AIKS) and Shri Aima.

As the Trust indicated its inability to pay its share of the costs stipulated in the 26.09.23 Order, the Court, upon the plaintiffs' offer, ordered in the 04.12.24 Order that the plaintiffs could cover Shri Saini's entire remuneration upfront, with half of that amount recoverable from the Trust once its accounts become operational. Furthermore, the Court mandated that the election be completed within three months of the 04.12.24 Order (i.e. by 03.03.2025) and that determining eligible life members should be finalized within two months (i.e. by 03.02. 2025).

Shri Saini convened a meeting with the plaintiffs and defendants on 17.12. 2024 and another meeting on 10.01.2025. However, both the meetings were not attended by any of the defendants (including Shri Romesh Raina and Shri Vijay Aima) but were attended by Shri Maharaj Pajan (both the meetings) and Shri Kuldeep Drabu (10.01.2024 meeting) besides the plaintiff and plaintiffs' counsel.

During the first meeting held on 17.12.2024, Shri Saini requested to send a list of all the founding and alleged life members with their available contact detail, including phone numbers and email addresses. In the said meeting, Shri Saini also directed to suggest a venue that can accommodate 50 to 80 people for the verification of life members and for conducting governing council meeting for nomination and appointment of the trustees.

The plaintiffs, to the best of their knowledge and information available with them, have already provided to Shri Saini a list of all the founding members with contact detail and a list of alleged life members as was filed by Shri Vijay Aima in the Court in compliance of its order dated 25.07.2022 (the “25.07.22 Order”).

During the second meeting held on 10.01.2025, Shri Saini has considered the list of the alleged life members provided by the plaintiffs (which was as submitted by Shri Vijay Aima in compliance of the 25.07.22 Order) and decided to send invitation to all the persons mentioned in such list to attend the governing council meeting with two proofs, i.e. (a) proof of payment of a one-time fee of ₹20,000/- paid in one or in five equal instalments to become a life member and (b) details of two founder or life members who sponsored him/her. Shri Saini has further decided to finalise a date for such meeting of the governing council soon and inform all the founding members and the alleged life members. Shri Saini has also considered, based on a request of the plaintiffs for the reason that many founding members are very senior in age, to make arrangement to attend the proposed governing council meeting both physically and virtually. Further, the venue of meeting will be decided by Shri Saini after he finalises the date of such meeting.

The next court hearing is fixed for 01.04. 2025. The Trust's elections are expected to be completed by then, and the Court will be notified accordingly on that day of the hearing.

However, the nomination and appointment of the trustees of the Trust may not close all the matters as Court has issued directions for compliance of the 17.11.23 Order in its latest 04.12.24 Order



## Kashmiri Pandits Integral Part of Our Culture: Deputy CM J&K

Surinder Choudhary, the deputy Chief Minister of Jammu and Kashmir, has reaffirmed that Kashmiri Pandits (KPs) are an integral part of the cultural and social fabric of the state and that the Government is committed to their dignified rehabilitation. He made these remarks while addressing a function on the sidelines of his visit to Jagti Township, Nagrota, Jammu. The Deputy CM and the Chief Minister accompanied the Relief Commissioner (Migrants), the Director Health Services Jammu, Director General Floriculture, Director Food supplies Jammu, and other senior officers.

In a detailed inspection of healthcare services at the Sub-District Hospital (SDH) in Jagti, the Deputy CM directed the Director of Health Services to ensure uninterrupted and high-quality medical care services. He also stressed the need for an adequate supply of medicines to meet the needs of the patients, as well as upgrading the existing infrastructure at the hospital.

## Kashmiri Pandit Activists Protest NAFSA Forms

Many prominent Kashmiri Pandit social activists and community organizations have been discussing the mandatory requirement to fill out NAFSA forms. The public notice issued by the Relief Commissioner (M) Jammu has generated considerable distress among the displaced population. As articulated in statements released to the media, they have expressed that the Relief Commissioner for Migrants already possesses comprehensive data on all relief holders, making the added administrative burden on the community unnecessary and unduly stressful for those still living in temporary exile.

## J&K Relief Organisation Rebuts Social Media Report on Integration of Migrant Ration Cards into NFSA

The Relief Organization (M), J&K, has clarified the concerns circulating on social media platforms about integrating the Ration Cards of Migrants registered with the Relief Organisation (M) J&K into the National Food Security Act (NFSA) database.

In a rebuttal issued today by the organization, it states that, in terms of S.O. 392 and S.O. 393 of 2024, dated August 13, 2024, the Jammu and Kashmir Food Security Rules, 2021, and the Targeted Public Distribution (Control) Order, 2023, necessary amendments have been made to integrate the Ration cards of Kashmiri/Jammu migrants into the NFSA database.

Currently, migrant ration cards are neither digitized nor categorized. Consequently, the migrants cannot avail themselves of the benefits of various social security schemes, wherein one of the essential eligibility conditions laid down is the applicant's possession of a Priority Household (PHH) card.

The document added that integrating ration cards into the NFSA database and their categorization will resolve this issue. The ration cards will be categorized into PHH (Priority Household), NPHH (Non-Priority Household), AAY (Antyodaya Anna Yojana) and Exclusion categories while digitizing the credentials of all registered migrants. This exercise will ensure that migrants are seamlessly included in various flagship government programmes and facilitate the delivery of services to them.

"The S.O. 392, dated 13-08-2024, explicitly provides that the Relief Assistance in respect of Kashmiri/Jammu Migrants shall not be counted as income, but as a source of

sustenance only. This ensures migrants remain eligible for welfare entitlements under existing frameworks, maintaining their socio-economic security. The document added that the current scale of ration/ relief benefits and norms will remain unchanged. The Government remains committed to protect the interests and welfare of Kashmiri/Jammu migrants.

*Credits: RK Online Desk*

## **Panun Kashmir Reaffirms Commitment to Justice and Homeland**

**Jammu, December 28, 2024.** Panun Kashmir marked the 33rd Homeland Day anniversary with a powerful national convention at Kangra Fort, Barnai, Jammu. The event, themed “Kashmiri Hindus Caught Between Jehad and Denial of Genocide”, highlighted the community's ongoing struggles and aspirations for justice and a secure homeland.

Dr. Ajay Chrungoo, Chairman of Panun Kashmir, and other notable speakers, including former DGP Dr. S.P. Vaid and security expert Col. R.S.N. Singh, condemned the denial of genocide and jihadist violence targeting Kashmiri Hindus. Resolutions were passed reaffirming the Margdarshan Resolution for a separate Union Territory for the community and demanding the removal of the “migrant” label.

Cultural performances and the felicitation of achievers like Sunil Raina (Lava MD) and artist Ravi Dhar underscored the community's resilience. The convention ended with a call to unity and determination to secure justice and dignity for Kashmiri Hindus.

## **Kashmiri Pandits Celebrate Pradur Bhav Diwas of Swami Ram Ji Maharaj**

Kashmiri Pandits celebrated the Pradur Bhav Diwas of Swami Ram Ji Maharaj, who revived Shaivism during challenging times. Swami Ji established the Shaivism center at Fatehkadal, Srinagar, visited by icons like Swami Vivekananda, Swami Dandi Swami, and Maharaj Pratap Singh. His efforts

brought Kashmir Shaivism global recognition, with teachings now included in major universities.

The event included recitations of *Bhairav Stotra* and *Behroobgarv Shastra*, a pooja of Saptarishis, and prasad distribution. Shri Sanjay Raina, a prominent Shaiv scholar, highlighted Swami Ram Ji's divine mission and the works of Acharya Abhinavagupta, celebrated on Gupha Prayan Diwas at Bharav Gupha, Beeru, Badgam.

The program, available online, was hosted by Ram Shaiv Ashram, Naseeb Nagar, Jammu, a growing research hub for Kashmir Shaivism. Ashram President Shri Surinder Kachroo and General Secretary Shri J.K. Kher thanked devotees for their participation.

## **Ashok Kumar Sidha and Tej Krishan Tickoo Re-Elected to Martand Tirath Trust**

Sh. Ashok Kumar Sidha has been re-elected as President for the third consecutive term, and Sh. Tej Krishan Tickoo as Secretary for the second term of the Martand Tirath Trust. Their leadership continues to promote cultural harmony, celebrate festivals like Diwali and Navratri, and preserve the heritage of the historic Martand Temple in Anantnag. The community applauds their dedication and looks forward to further progress under their guidance.

## **SIA Cracks Down on “Kashmir Fight” Militant Threats Targeting Migrant Kashmiri Pandit Employees**

Jammu, Dec 23, KNT: The State Investigation Agency (SIA), Jammu, has filed a chargesheet against key operatives behind the “Kashmir Fight” a social media handle.

The platform as per the police operated by The Resistance Front (TRF)—a proscribed militant organization—was used to issue chilling online threats to migrant Kashmiri Pandit employees, aiming to spread fear and unrest.

In February 2024, a series of threatening

posts were published on social media by the militant outfit's social media handle, following which an investigation was initiated by SIA Jammu.

During the investigation, SIA apprehended Farhaan Muzaffar Mattoo, a resident of Srinagar, for his alleged role in gathering and sharing sensitive information about targeted employees. The probe revealed that Mattoo acted as a conduit, using encrypted communication platforms to pass critical data about migrant employees to handlers based in Pakistan, who then issued threats through the "Kashmir Fight" platform.

The chargesheet also names Sheikh Sajjad Ahmad, alias Sajjad Gul, a Srinagar resident now operating from Pakistan, as the mastermind of this plot. Sajad is accused of coordinating the campaign to intimidate migrant employees and disrupt communal harmony in the UT.

The exposing of militant plans to disrupt peace underscores the determination of Jammu and Kashmir Police to protect its citizenry and provide a peaceful environment to them.

The chargesheet was filed before the Hon'ble 3rd Additional Sessions Judge, Jammu, today. [KNT]

### **Sh. Sanjay Koul, President AMEAK, Meets Honourable Lieutenant Governor of Jammu and Kashmir**

Jammu: Sanjay Koul, President of the All Minority Employees Association of Kashmir (AMEAK), met the Honourable Lieutenant Governor of Jammu and Kashmir to discuss key issues concerning minority employees. The meeting focused on the pending issues and following immediate issues:

Fatehpura, Baramulla: Request for merging 72 residential quarters with an adjacent site for better security management, resource utilization and amenities.

Wandhama, Ganderbal: Proposal to allocate 10 Kanals of land for developing a ground, park, and temple to enhance community welfare.

Panchmukhi Colony, Vessu, Kulgam: Appeal to relocate 8 PMDP blocks from other South Kashmir sites or develop the colony as a religious recreation center for the minority Hindu community.

The Lieutenant Governor assured thorough review and appropriate action on the matters discussed.

*Team, All Minority Employees Association of Kashmir*

### **PM Package Employee Ankita Raina Appeals for Transfer to Jammu on Humanitarian Grounds**

Ankita Raina, an employee appointed under the Prime Minister's Special Employment Package for Kashmiri Pandits, currently serving as an Assistant Compiler in the Fund Office, Srinagar, is facing severe hardships due to her disability. Despite her commitment to her job, the daily challenges of navigating her routine tasks in a distant and demanding environment have taken a toll on her health and well-being.

Ankita has made an earnest appeal to the Worthy Chief Secretary, requesting a transfer to the Fund Office in Muthi, Jammu, on humanitarian grounds. She believes that relocating closer to her support system in Jammu would help her better manage her disability while continuing to fulfil her professional responsibilities efficiently.

The appeal has garnered the support of RTI activist and prominent Kashmiri social worker [Rakesh Handu], who has highlighted the need for compassionate intervention in such cases. "Ankita's case reflects the struggles faced by differently-abled employees under the PM Package, who deserve sensitivity and support from the administration," the activist stated.

This situation also underscores the importance of creating an inclusive and supportive work environment for employees with special needs.

**AICTE declares 2025 as the 'Year of AI'**

The All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE) has declared 2025 the "Year of Artificial Intelligence (AI)" to help India become a global leader in AI. The technical education regulator's initiatives under this declaration will span AICTE-approved institutions and impact over 14,000 colleges and 40 million students nationwide.

AICTE had urged all affiliated institutions to submit their AI implementation plans by December 31, 2024.

"With this bold announcement, AICTE aims to embed AI within the fabric of higher education, fostering innovation, ethics, and leadership to position India as a global leader in AI-driven progress," AICTE said.

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AICTE chairman TG Sitharam, in a letter, had urged all its affiliated institutions to submit their AI implementation plans by December 31, 2024, which will be reviewed by its approval bureau, with top submissions featured as benchmarks for other institutions. He has urged the AICTE-approved institutions to adopt five measures to "affirm India's leadership in AI". Five measures include institutions taking the pledge to make India a global leader in AI through innovation, ethics, and education, displaying this commitment prominently on campuses; launching AI awareness campaigns; updating curricula to include AI topics fostering interdisciplinary approaches; conducting workshops and certifications to equip faculty with AI teaching expertise; and partnering with AI-driven organizations to provide real-world exposure through internship, projects and mentorship.

AICTE will organize workshops and certifications to upskill faculty in AI education. Students will receive real-world

experience through internships, projects, and mentorships as their colleges collaborate with global companies like Adobe, Cisco, and International Business Machines (IBM). Top-performing institutions will be recognized with awards as models of AI excellence.

"As we dedicate 2025 as the Year of Artificial Intelligence, let us unite to build a future-ready workforce. Together, we can shape India as a global leader in AI innovation, ethics, and education, fulfilling our shared vision of self-reliance and prosperity," Sitharam said.

*Credits: By Sanjay Maurya*

**GATE 2025**

Graduate Aptitude Test in Engineering (GATE) is a national-level examination that primarily tests the comprehensive understanding of various undergraduate subjects in Engineering/ Technology/ Architecture/ Science/ Commerce/ Arts/ Humanities. GATE 2025 will be a computer-based test (CBT) organized by the Indian Institutes of Technology Roorkee. The examination will be conducted by IISc Bengaluru and seven IITs (IIT Bombay, IIT Delhi, IIT Guwahati, IIT Kanpur, IIT Kharagpur, IIT Madras and IIT Roorkee) on behalf of the National Coordination Board - GATE, Department of Higher Education, Ministry of Education (MoE), Government of India (GoI).

GATE 2025 will be a computer-based test (CBT). The exam will be for three hours and will have 30 full and sectional test papers. The sections will be General Aptitude (GA) and the candidate's selected subjects. The candidate's chosen subjects will be MCQs, Multiple Select Questions (MSQ) and/or Numerical Answer Type (NAT) questions. There will be a negative marking for a wrong answer in an MCQ. For a 1-mark MCQ, a 1/3 mark will be deducted for an incorrect answer. For a 2-mark MCQ, a 2/3 mark will be deducted for a wrong answer.

There is no negative marking for wrong answer(s) to MSQ or NAT questions. There is no partial marking in MSQ.

Candidates must familiarize themselves with the paper code as it is required during application and examination.

The Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Roorkee is the organizing institute for the Graduate Aptitude Test in Engineering (GATE) 2025. On July 1, IIT Roorkee launched the new GATE 2025 website, [gate2025.iitr.ac.in](http://gate2025.iitr.ac.in).

#### **GATE 2025 Dates:**

- ❖ February 01
- ❖ February 02
- ❖ February 15
- ❖ February 16

Candidates currently studying in the 3rd or higher years of any undergraduate degree program or who have completed any government-approved degree program in Engineering/ Technology/ Architecture/ Science/ Commerce/ Arts/ Humanities are eligible to appear for GATE 2025.

Some Professional Societies/Institutions which conduct examinations in various fields of engineering are given below:

- ✓ The Institution of Engineers (India) (IE)
- ✓ The Institution of Civil Engineers (ICE)
- ✓ The Institution of Electronics and Telecommunication Engineers (IETE)
- ✓ The Aeronautical Society of India (AeSI)
- ✓ The Indian Institute of Chemical Engineers, including Polymer and Environmental Group (IICHE)
- ✓ The Indian Institute of Metals (IIM)
- ✓ The Indian Institute of Industrial Engineers (IIIE)

Candidates with certification from such professional societies must ensure that those examinations are approved by MoE/AICTE/ UGC/ UPSC as equivalent to B.E./ B.Tech./ B.Arch./ B.Planning, etc.

Candidates who have obtained/are pursuing their qualifying degree from countries other than India: Candidates must be currently in the 3rd or higher years or must have completed their Bachelor's degree (of at least three years duration) in Engineering/

Technology/ Architecture/ Science/ Commerce/ Arts/ Humanities.

Any candidate fulfilling the abovementioned criteria is eligible to appear for GATE 2025.

Apply online. Ensure that the uploaded documents are readable and clear. Uploading unreadable documents may lead to delays in processing the application and may lead to rejection of candidature.

#### **Delhi Technological University, Kashmiri Migrant Candidates**

01 seat (supernumerary) each is available in all the 25 M.Tech programmes the University offers. There will be no relaxation in the minimum eligibility criteria. The merit will be made among the Kashmiri migrant applicants based on the GATE score.

#### **University Business School, Panjab University, Chandigarh**

- ✓ Admission to: MBA
- ✓ MBA (International Business)
- ✓ MBA (Human Resource)
- ✓ MBA (Entrepreneurship)
- ✓ MBA (Business Data Analytics)

Reservation of one seat in each programme to the wards of Kashmiri Displaced persons/ / Kashmiri Hindu families (non-migrants living in Kashmir Valley). (Additional seats over and above the total sanctioned seats(s) and Eligibility criteria subject to the approval of the Syndicate of PU.)

Admission for these courses will be made based on merit determined by scores of the candidates in the Common Admission Test (CAT) 2024 conducted by IIMs, followed by Group Discussion and Personal Interview (GD & PI). All candidates aspiring to apply for MBA Programmes at UBS must have taken the Common Admission Test (CAT) – 2024 conducted by the IIMs.

- ✓ Registration will be closed on February 03, 2025
- ✓ Submission of hard copy of Application form is up to February 25, 2025
- ✓ Registration fee is ₹3225/-

Website: [www.ubsadmissions.puchd.ac.in](http://www.ubsadmissions.puchd.ac.in)

The candidate's scores in the Common Admission Test (CAT) 2024 were conducted by IIMs, followed by a group discussion and personal interview (GD & PI). All candidates aspiring to apply for MBA Programmes at UBS must have taken the Common Admission Test (CAT).

### State Common Entrance Test Cell, Mumbai, Tentative Schedule of CET A.Y. 2025-26 (Revised)

S No	Name of CET	Department	Registration of Application Form on the website (upto)	Online Registration Confirmation (upto)	Exam Date
1	MAH- MBA/MMS-CET-2025	Technical Education	January 25, 2025	January 25, 2025	01 to 03 April, 2025
2	MAH-MCA CET-2025	Technical Education	January 25, 2025	January 25, 2025	March 23, 2025
3.	MAH-B.HMCT/M.HMCT Integrated CET-2025	Technical Education	February 15, 2025	February 15, 2025	March 28, 2025
4.	MAH-B. Design CET-2025	Technical Education	January 27, 2025	January 27, 2025	March 29, 2025
5.	MAH-B.BBA/BCA/BBM/BMS CET 2025	Technical Education	February 10, 2025	February 10, 2025	April 29, 2025, April 30, 2025 & May 02, 2025

### Six Central Universities to Offer Admissions Twice a Year

The Union Ministry of Education announced that six central universities in India will offer admissions twice yearly. The policy, approved by the University Grants Commission (UGC), aims to provide students with more opportunities to enrol in higher education institutions (HEIs). Six central universities will adopt the UGC's optional biannual admissions policy, offering student intakes in July/August and January/February for better accessibility. Other institutions can opt-in based on their readiness.

#### The universities implementing this change include:

- ✓ Central University of Kerala
- ✓ Central University of Punjab
- ✓ Central University of Rajasthan
- ✓ University of Hyderabad
- ✓ Tezpur University
- ✓ Nagaland University

These institutions are pioneering the policy, allowing admissions in July/August and January/February.

### NTA released NEET UG 2025 Syllabus for Medical Admissions

The National Testing Agency (NTA) has unveiled the syllabus for the National Eligibility cum Entrance Test (NEET) UG 2025, designed for undergraduate medical

admissions. The official portal for the examination is [neet.nta.nic.in](http://neet.nta.nic.in), will be the hub for all exam-related processes, including registration, document access, and updates.

The Undergraduate Medical Education Board (UGMEB), under the National Medical Commission (NMC), has released the NEET UG 2025 syllabus. This comprehensive syllabus covers Physics, Chemistry, and Biology topics and offers structured guidelines for students preparing for the exam.

- ✓ **Physics :** Includes topics like kinematics, laws of motion, and rotational dynamics.
- ✓ **Chemistry:** Covers areas such as atomic structure, chemical bonding, and methods for organic compound purification.
- ✓ **Biology:** Focusses on biodiversity, cellular biology, and plant and animal systems.

### Google partners with NCERT & NPTEL

US tech giant Google has partnered with the National Council for Educational Research and Training (NCERT) to launch YouTube channels in 29 Indian languages, including sign language. This initiative aims to provide free educational content to Indian students between grades 1-12 and to empower teachers.

Under this initiative, the NCERT will launch YouTube channels and develop educational content supported by Google.

Besides NCERT, Google has launched several other collaborative projects in India to promote educational and training programs.

### **Google's collaboration with NPTEL**

Google has partnered with the National Programme on Technology Enhanced Learning (NPTEL) to introduce credentialed courses on YouTube. This collaboration allows learners to explore and complete courses across various subjects, including pure sciences, literature, sports psychology, and rocket propulsion.

"This initiative creates a pathway for individuals outside the IIT system to take NPTEL courses on YouTube, complete the online certification process via the NPTEL-SWAYAM portal, and earn certificates from the IITs," said Jonathan Katzman, Director of Product Management, YouTube Learning in Google, in a blog post.

"Leveraging AI, we analyze video content to identify key concepts and provide relevant definitions sourced from the web across disciplines like biology, physics, and chemistry. Using Google's Knowledge Graph, we present definitions and images based on the video's transcript and associated metadata," he added.

### **CBSE Date sheet 2025 for Class 10 and 12 Board Exams announced at cbse.gov.in**

The Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) has released the 2025 date sheet for Class 10 and 12 board exams. Class X and XII exam schedules are now available on the official CBSE website at cbse.gov.in.

According to the released schedule, the CBSE Class 10 Board Exams 2025 will begin on February 15, with English being the first exam. Class 12's first exam will be Physical Education, scheduled for February 17.

*Feedback: vijaykashkari@gmail.com*



# **SILENT SOBS**

**- Ashok Kak**

There we lived a way special,  
Strode happily hither and thither.  
Breathed free in the Vale, Mixed free and loved we all.  
Till suddenly noise of gun woke us up  
And worse it grew with each passing moment.

Blaring loudspeakers day and night.  
Warnings, threatening and those probing eyes.  
Pasting posters on our doors,  
And those wild gestures petrified us-poor souls  
Cuddled we sat in our homes.  
Confused, bewildered and dazed we felt.

Death was stalking the streets,  
Lanes and bazaars were spitting fire.  
Killing was rampant and so very cheap,  
Bombs, curfews and hartals galore.

Hapless we felt and were ordered to leave  
And in those still and paralyzing moments  
We cared least for our precious possessions.  
Of the majestic life we lived Of the luxuries we owned  
And left our homes in a trice

Least we knew of the impending gloom  
And arson and loot of our houses.  
Oh! God wake up to our wails  
Pray, pity thy silent and gentle souls  
Enough is enough, no more woes can we bear.  
Soothe our hearts and balm our sores,  
Pray restore us our glory and pride.

*5th May 1995 Jammu India*



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: aryanramesh99@gmail.com, or Mobile no. 9419189513.



Looking for a Suitable Match for our Son Born on 29th August 1994 at 08:55 AM at Jammu. Parents are presently living in Roop Nagar, Jammu. Height 5'9", Qualified as BE in Computer Engineering from Mumbai University plus pursuing MS in AI & ML. Working as Senior Data Scientist in Fractal Analytics Pvt Ltd, Pune currently WFH. Interested people may contact on MB- 7889558793,9419241773, Email id: sunitarazdan25@gmail.com for Tekni & Biodata.



Seeking Alliance for my Daughter. DoB: 12-09-1997, Born in Faridabad, Haryana at 05.04 PM. Height: 5ft.2in. Qualification: B.TECH (EIC) from Govt Engineering College YMCA, Faridabad. Non-Manglic. Working in Central Govt. Service. Father from Karan Nagar, Srinagar. Retired as C.E.O and Settled in Faridabad Haryana. Mother: Gazetted Officer, retired from Central Government. Seeking Alliance from equally educated Boy. Preferably working in PSU or Central Govt Service (DELHI NCR). Interested, Please Contact on: WhatsApp No - 8178887009 Or 9868109905.

Looking for suitable match for our Son, born on 02nd january 1991 (06:30 PM) at Jammu. Height: 5'11, Education: BE (C.S.E) MBA from University. Working as Manager in MNC company at Bangalore handsome package. Interested person may contact on : - MB No. & WhatsApp: - 7006171324, 8717090262, 8717090264 & 9055272134 or Email-Id: - hldhar1958@gmail.com



We are looking for an alliance for our Daughter, DOB: 24-07-1995, TOB: 09:41PM, POB- Delhi and Height: 5'5". Qualification: MBBS (IGMC Shimla), Currently Perusing Masters in UK. Present address: Dwarka, Delhi. Valley address: Zaina Kadal, Srinagar, Kashmir. Boy should preferably be settled in the UK/USA. Interested may contact on MB no. 9871790735 or 9871790729.



Looking for an alliance for my daughter Dr. Aditi Tikku, Date of birth : 12-10-1989, Time of birth : 10:58 AM, Place of Birth : Srinagar, Height : 5 feet 5 inches, Qualification : BDS Mumbai, MBA in Health Care Management from IIM-Calcutta. Currently working as an Implementation Project Manager at Tata Trusts Hospital Mumbai. Valley Address : Haba Kadal Sgr, Present Address : Mumbai/Gurgaon. If interested please WhatsApp tekni and kolawali on Contact no: 9312869544 or Email id: jyotinder.nath.tikku@gmail.com.

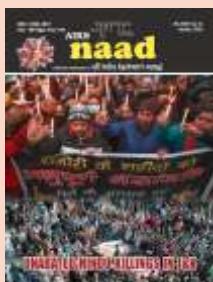
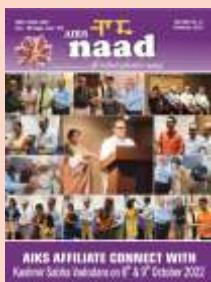


Seeking a suitable alliance for my Son. DOB-17/09/1993, Height- 5.11 ft, Qualification- BE in Computer Science & MBA Finance (Mumbai University). Occupation: Sr. Manager in Kotak Mahindra Bank, Mumbai. Earlier he was working as Relationship Manager in HDFC Bank. Family Details - Father: Sh. Predemen K Tikoo, Rtd Dy-SP and Mother: Smt. Bunty Tikoo, House Wife. Valley Address: Village Bandipora, Kashmir. Present Address –Saraswati Vihar, Bohri, Jammu. Interested may contact at MB No- 9419240281, 9419272653.



# AIKS naad

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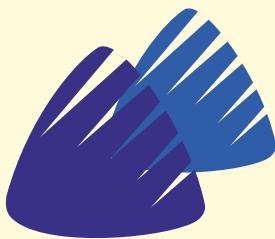
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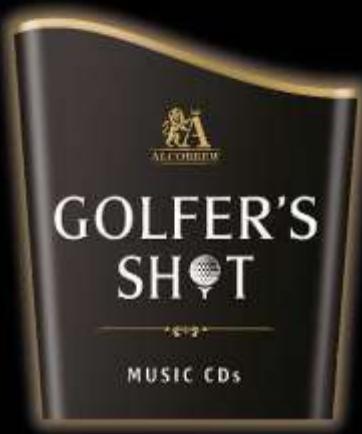


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