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THIS MONTH'S COVER
Contrasting Priorities in J&K

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Editorial



Dear Readers,

13th July serves as a solemn reminder for the Kashmiri Pandit community of the communal violence and the politics that have long surrounded this date. It was on this day in 1931 that organised Islamist mobilisation manifested itself in violence against the peaceful Kashmiri Pandit community of Kashmir. The events marked the beginning of a tragic chapter whose consequences would continue to unfold over the decades. History cannot be forgotten, and its lessons must be honestly acknowledged.

For decades, sections of the political establishment, influenced by separatist and communal narratives, officially commemorated the day as *Martyrs' Day*. For the indigenous Kashmiri Pandit community, however, 13th July symbolises the beginning of organised communal violence against Kashmiri Hindus and the systematic marginalisation of their civilisational presence in the Valley. The communal riots, widespread looting of Hindu homes and businesses, and targeted attacks that followed the events of 13th July 1931 have remained conspicuously absent from the official narrative. It is for this reason that many Kashmiri Pandits remember the day as "Bhatta Loot Day", commemorating the forgotten victims whose suffering has never received official recognition. We solemnly pay our tribute to all those who suffered during these tragic events.

On 20th July, the National Conference organised a protest at Jantar Mantar demanding the restoration of statehood for Jammu and Kashmir. Ironically, at the very same venue and on the same day, members of the displaced Kashmiri Pandit community, under the banner of Panun Kashmir, assembled to register a peaceful counter-protest. Their message was unequivocal: before resurrecting politically convenient narratives of the past, the nation must first address the unresolved tragedy of the Valley's indigenous Hindu community.

The contrast between the two demonstrations could not have been more striking. One sought the restoration of political arrangements, while the other demanded justice for a community that has remained forcibly displaced from its homeland for more than three decades. While political parties continue to pursue

constitutional and administrative objectives, the fundamental concerns of the Kashmiri Pandits—secure rehabilitation, restitution of properties, protection and restoration of temples and shrines, recognition of the genocide of 1989–90, and credible guarantees for their safe and dignified return—continue to remain unaddressed.

This contradiction is difficult to ignore. Those who speak passionately about democracy, constitutional rights and federalism seldom display the same urgency when confronted with the plight of the community that paid the highest price for steadfastly standing with the Indian nation. The voice of the displaced Kashmiri Pandits has repeatedly been overshadowed by electoral calculations and selective interpretations of history.

The issue before the nation today is not merely whether Jammu and Kashmir should regain statehood. The more fundamental question is whether the suffering of Kashmiri Hindus deserves equal recognition within India's historical and political discourse. A narrative that remembers one set of victims while erasing another cannot claim moral credibility or historical completeness.

As *Naad* has consistently maintained, the events of 13th July 1931 must be viewed in their entirety. The victims of the communal violence, arson and looting that followed deserve acknowledgement in the national memory. For the Kashmiri Pandit community, Bhatta Loot Day remains a reminder of the beginning of a long process of discrimination, exclusion and persecution that ultimately culminated in the genocide and exodus of 1989–90.

The events at Jantar Mantar should therefore serve as a wake-up call for the Government of India. The time has come to move beyond symbolism and address the legitimate aspirations of the displaced Kashmiri Pandit community. Justice delayed for over three decades cannot be allowed to become justice denied. The restoration of the civilisational, cultural and demographic presence of Kashmiri Pandits in the Valley is not merely a community aspiration; it is a national imperative.

Until that objective is realised, commemorations of history will remain incomplete, and the promise of justice for Kashmir's indigenous Hindu community will remain unfulfilled.

As Martin Luther King Jr. aptly observed:

"Justice too long delayed is justice denied."

मनील गुप्ता



From the *President's* *Desk*

***Respected All
Namaskar to All AIKS family,***

AIKS is pursuing the OWP 477/2016 and thanks the community advocates Sh. P N Raina, Ms Diksha Handoo, Sh. P N Goja, Sh. Kashmiri Lal Bhat and Sh. Virender Bhat & Ors for their sustained efforts and getting a favorable order on each Date of hearing. In the last date of hearing on 21 May the Hon'ble judges pulled up State Govt. on various issues of encroachments particularly the instance of Cremation ground land encroached by State Police Department at Wanpoh, Anantnag. The NDOH 16 July'2026 could'nt be taken up because of change of Judges bench and I sincerely believe that this court case will help & Benefit the community more than other efforts. AIKS is pursuing the matter of NFSA in High Court due to sustained efforts of our advocates who are working selflessly for the community without any remuneration. The case is likely to be listed shortly.

AIKS also requests community not to come out publicly about the case and clarifies that it is the main applicant and it should be left to the organization and not individuals to go public. Jammu team has been requested to assist the advocates physically, morally & ethically.

AIKS has also written and demanded from Divisional commissioner Kashmir inventory of immovable properties of exiled community left behind in valley in 1990 exodus, We demand that outreach camps be immediately organized in Delhi NCR also where around 30% of kashmiri displaced Hindus live since our forced migration. Earlier too, RC office J&K has conducted a similar exercise during issuance of Domicile certificates and Ayushman coverage.

AIKS further demands that despite

pursuance in the past, by many kashmiri Pandit organizations a complete inventory of Migrants immovable properties left behind in the valley has not been publicly issued. It was demanded that cut off dates of migrant's revenue records be 1990 as the community fears a large scale tampering of records after the forced exodus in the valley.

And that Government should conduct a local survey regarding those migrant's ancestral properties left behind, for which they do not possess any records with them. These properties are the inherited ones through a lineage.

AIKS is again requesting the community about the ongoing census to be in single voice about our status so that census is vivid about the displaced community regarding population and status. We have to come together on the issue of identity front so far as Census 2026 is concerned. As we met Registrar General Census with a plea to count us as a 'Distinct identity' many pertinent points came up. Our delegation was made to convince that we will have to identify ourselves as 'Migrants 'or " displaced' under the caste sub head in 2026 census that is being carried out. Our primary objective is to get our population census correct so that even if Central & State Govt. too wants to go for our return & rehabilitation process, our count should reflect a correct figure. Our community is facing crisis on preservation and promotion of culture, heritage and language.

Last but not the least I appeal to the whole community to opt for membership of AIKS and subscription to its mouth piece NAAD.

May Sharda Mata bless us all !!



 Sunil Kaul



General Secretary's Column

The month of July 2026 was marked by significant organisational activity, with AIKS continuing its focussed efforts towards legal advocacy, institutional strengthening, financial governance, and community coordination. Throughout the month, the organization remained committed to safeguarding the interests of the displaced Kashmiri Pandit community while upholding transparency, accountability, and collective decision-making.

The foremost priority during the reporting period was the ongoing High Court case. A detailed visit to Jammu was undertaken to hold consultations with the AIKS Legal Advisory Team and senior advocates to review the progress of the case, assess future legal strategy, and strengthen coordination between the organization and its legal representatives. Discussions also focussed on establishing a dedicated support mechanism in Jammu for documentation, legal correspondence, and other backend activities to facilitate the effective conduct of the litigation.

An urgent online meeting of the Executive Committee was convened to deliberate on the latest legal developments, define organizational responsibilities, and formulate the future course of action. Members were regularly updated on the progress of the case, while reiterating that all public communication regarding the litigation should remain disciplined, coordinated, and issued only through AIKS to avoid misinformation.

As part of strengthening institutional governance, the proposal to appoint Shri L. N. Goyal, Chartered Accountant, as the official Chartered Accountant of AIKS was initiated, subject to the approval of the General Body. The proposal aims to enhance financial management, statutory compliance, taxation, and accounting practices within the organization.

During the month, repeated appeals were issued requesting members to refrain from circulating unverified information related to AIKS legal matters and to rely only on official communications. Despite operating under limited organizational resources while simultaneously managing legal, administrative, and community responsibilities, AIKS continues to discharge its responsibilities with dedication and remained steadfast in protecting the larger interests of the displaced Kashmiri Pandit community.



ALL INDIA KASHMIRI SAMAJ (REGD.)

(APEX BODY OF INDIAN & OVERSEAS KASHMIRI PANDIT ORGANISATIONS)

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PUBLIC NOTICE

The All India Kashmiri Samaj (AIKS) hereby informs all members of the Kashmiri Pandit community that all litigation instituted by or on behalf of AIKS is being conducted exclusively through its duly authorized Panel of Advocates comprising **Shri P. N. Raina, Shri P. N. Goja, Shri Virender Bhat, and Shri Kashmiri Lal Ji.**

AIKS places on record its deep appreciation and sincere gratitude to its distinguished Legal Advisory Team for their unwavering commitment and exemplary services in safeguarding the interests of the displaced Kashmiri Pandit community. We are proud to acknowledge that these advocates have been rendering their valuable legal services entirely on a pro bono basis, without charging any professional or legal fees to AIKS.

It has come to the notice of AIKS that certain individuals are allegedly soliciting donations and financial contributions in the name of AIKS for the ongoing legal proceedings. AIKS categorically clarifies that it has not authorized any individual, group, or organization to collect funds or donations on its behalf for any pending litigation or legal matter.

All expenses incidental to the conduct of AIKS litigation are being managed and borne exclusively by AIKS through its authorized channels. Accordingly, members of the community are strongly advised not to make any payment or financial contribution to any person claiming to be collecting funds for AIKS legal cases.

AIKS shall bear no responsibility or liability for any payment made to unauthorized persons. Community members are requested to disregard such misleading representations and rely solely on official communications issued by AIKS through its authorized platforms.

AIKS remains committed to maintaining complete transparency, accountability, and integrity in all matters concerning the organization and its legal proceedings.

Issued in the larger interest of the Kashmiri Pandit community.

Date: 4th July 2026

General Secretary

All India Kashmiri Samaj (AIKS)

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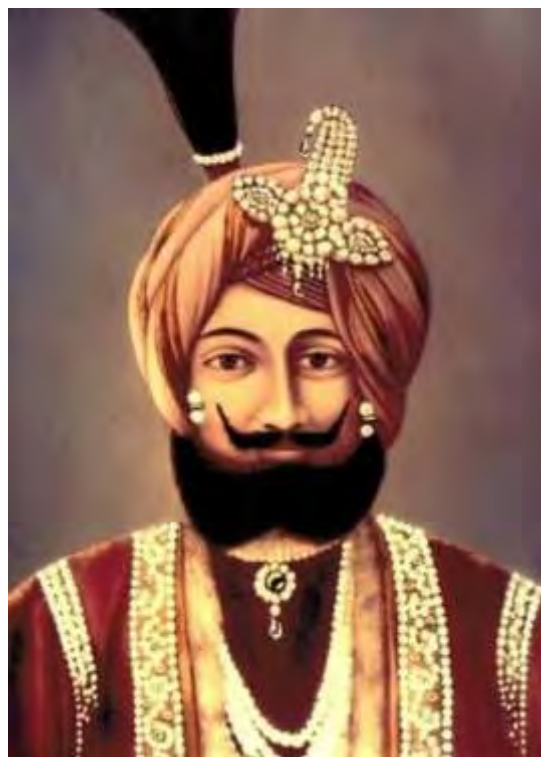


 Col Tej K Tikoo, Ph.D.



JULY 13, 1931: WHEN THE BRITISH SUPPORTED SHEIKH ABDULLAH'S Communal Agenda to Undermine the DOGRA MAHARAJA

In many ways the events of July 13, 1931, 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, seen later on at the time of country's partition 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. Fourth, 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. Lastly, the British, having tasted blood would now onwards play increasingly partisan role to tie the Maharaja's hands to serve their own



strategic interests at a crucial time in the 'Great Game' being played in the high Himalayas.

Background

The events of July 13, 1931, did not take place in isolation nor were they sudden. Actually, these were preceded by untoward happenings

with communal overtones within the state at many places. But their deft handling by the state administration prevented matters getting out of hand. However, the British were determined to teach the Maharaja a lesson after he had delivered two bold and fiery speeches in favour of India deciding its own destiny during the first round table conference in London in late 1930. The British could not have left the Maharaja's stand, which sent shivers down the British foundations to go unchallenged.

In 1921, during Maharaja Pratap Singh's reign a five-member State Executive Council was formed with Wakefield as its Chief Secretary to keep the Maharaja's powers in check. The Council remained functional till the death of Maharaja Pratap Singh in September 1925. Maharaja Hari Singh retained him (Wakefield) as the head of Political and Police Department in the rehashed Council of Ministers.

In 1930, Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah and his colleagues, Mohammad Rajab, Qazi Saif-ud-Din and Ghulam Ahmed Mukhtar, returned to Srinagar after completing their studies at Aligarh Muslim University, where they had come into close contact with rabid Muslim communalists. This informal group, formed itself into the Muslim Reading Room Party to oppose the Dogra rule in general and the Maharaja in particular. However, as their

The British could not have left the Maharaja's stand, which sent shivers down the British foundations to go unchallenged.

activities increased, conflict soon arose with Ahmad Ullah, the Mirwaiz of Kashmir, who was not in favour of opposing the Maharaja. In March 1931, at the demise of Ahmad Ullah, the mantle of Mirwaiz fell on Maulvi Yousuf Shah, who had received his religious education at the theological College at Deobandh. Maulvi Yousuf Shah became a willing supporter of the Reading Room Party and helped it by organizing large gatherings in various mosques of Kashmir. Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah emerged as a star campaigner as he could arouse religious frenzy among his audience. In him, Wakefield found a promising candidate who could be used to undermine the Dogra King and consequently, strengthen the British leverage to achieve their own strategic aims.

From here on, Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah was provided all kinds of support, including financial, by Wakefield. The



In an extensive area from Bohri Kadal to Alikadal and Safakadal, all Hindu shops were looted and burnt and Hindus molested.

Reading Room Party's meetings now shifted from the mosques into the open, reaching out to the middle classes and the peasants. Though the Reading Room Party's agenda was ostensibly to oppose the feudal Dogra rule, its communal outlook was its defining feature. The Maharaja's return from Cannes, where he had gone to welcome the birth of his son on March 9, 1931, witnessed a spontaneous outburst of joy throughout the State. The residents of Srinagar formed a Reception Committee under the Deputy Commissioner, Pandit Balkak Dhar. The Reading Room Party immediately raised objections to a Kashmiri Pandit heading this Committee. Subsequently, the Muslim Reading Room Party formed its own committee under Mir Maqbool Shah. However, when the Maharaja got wind of it, he refused permission to both.

Soon, thereafter, rumours of blasphemy (in this case, disrespect to Holy Qura'n - *Tauheen e Quran*) were published by the Muslim (Urdu) press, vitiating the atmosphere. Some communal organizations, particularly The Young Men's Muslim Association of Jammu, used these events to incite communal passions, leading to some violent incidents, particularly in Jammu. Though the situation, handled with deft diplomacy, prevented large-scale violence, a committee headed by Muslims, was formed to investigate the events. The report submitted by the committee exonerated the alleged culprits of any wrong-doing. Projecting himself as the messiah of Muslims, Sheikh Abdullah, however, used this so-called act of blasphemy to spew venom against the Maharaja during a public meeting

at Jama Masjid, Srinagar, and later by other speakers on July 11, 1931, at the Makhdum Sahib's fair. A Muslim was also caught while attempting to break the idol in Shankar Acharya Temple. It was, however, Sheikh Abdullah's speeches that kept the atmosphere charged for the most significant event, which occurred on July 31, 1931.

The immediate cause for the violence perpetrated on the hapless Kashmiri Pandits on 31 July 1931, was the rabble-rousing speech delivered in a meeting (attended by two Mir Waizes), by Abdul Qadir, a cook of a European visitor, inciting hate and violence. He said, "We should end Hindu Raj and the time has come when we should meet force by greater force to put an end to the tyranny and brutalities to which you are subjected. You must rely on your strength and wage a relentless war against the opposition. You must use *lathis* and other weapons, if the need arises. Pointing his finger towards the Palace, he thundered, "Raise it to the ground." Subsequently, he was apprehended in Khanqa-e-Maula Mosque on June 25, 1931, and charged with offences under Section 124 A (Treason) and 153 A (creating hatred between two communities).

Adding fuel to the fire, Sheikh Abdullah delivered a fiery speech in a meeting organized by the Reading Room Party at Jama Masjid in which he exhorted the people to be ready to make any sacrifice for Islam. Consequently, thousands of people thronged the Session Court of Pandit Kishan Lal Kitchlu, whenever Abdul Qadir was brought to the court. The tempers ran high on these occasions as Wakefield, the Political and Police Minister, did everything to fan the trouble further. Despite the Maharaja issuing an appeal for peace on July 9, 1931, Sheikh Abdullah delivered a fiery speech at a mosque in Gawkadal on July 12, 1931, aggravating the situation further. As the situation continued to get worse, the Chief Justice of the High Court ordered that the trial of Abdul Qadir will be held inside the Central Jail premises. When Wakefield received this confidential order for compliance, he leaked it to the leaders of the Reading Room Party. They, in turn, sent

messages all across the valley, asking people to assemble at the Central Jail the next day, i.e., 13 July 1931, when the trial inside the jail was to begin. On July 13, 1931, when the Sessions Judge entered the Jail premises, he found a mammoth crowd trying to force an entry into the jail premises. The defense counsels of the accused (Muslims) too appealed to the crowd to calm down and disperse, but to no avail. The Superintendent of Police, who arrived on the scene on the orders of the Judge, found the restive crowd turning aggressive. Realizing that there was no possibility of ingress into the jail premises, the violent crowd rushed to the outer gate and overpowered the guard. The Police arrested four people, but the crowds started pelting stones and brickbats on the officials and succeeded in freeing these four arrested persons. They, then, cut the telephone lines and set the quarters of the jail guard on fire, while attempts were also made to snatch the rifles from the armed police, some of whom had been seriously injured. A Lathi charge ordered as a consequence, proved ineffective. Thereafter, the District Magistrate's announcement that the police will have to use force to disperse the crowd, too had no effect. Consequently, to control the situation, the police first fired in the air as a warning, but when this too had no effect on the violent mob, the police fired for effect, which claimed 21 lives, with 42 people sustaining injuries.

The violent mobs then proceeded towards Maharajganj, the business hub, and looted the shops and business establishments of the Hindus. In an extensive area from Bohri Kadal to Alikadal and Safakadal, all Hindu shops

Despite the Maharaja issuing an appeal for peace on July 9, 1931, Sheikh Abdullah delivered a fiery speech at a mosque in Gawkadal on July 12, 1931, aggravating the situation further.

were looted and burnt and Hindus molested. Similarly, an orgy of violence and mayhem was let loose on Vicharnag and Chhatabal. At Vicharnag, a predominantly Pandit locality, the violence continued for three hours, till Colonel Nawab Khusro Jung reached Vicharnag with a contingent of Palace Guards. He later confirmed the untold atrocities committed on the Pandits here, turning them into paupers, while their women had to undergo the worst possible cruelties. Forcible conversions of Hindus too were reported from some towns. The rioters also cut the telephone lines at Banihal and burnt the Sangam Bridge, approximately 23 miles from Srinagar. Nine members of a Pandit family in Kanikoot, in Budgam district, which had a sizeable Kashmiri Pandit population, were axed to death by Muslims of a neighboring village. The lone survivor was a young boy who was not sleeping in the house during the night when it was attacked.

The Maharaja appointed a Commission of Enquiry into these happenings on 14 July 1931, and gave an opportunity to everyone to present their grievances to him personally. On 25 July 1931, the Maharaja appointed Raja Hari Kishan Kaul, first as the Minister-in-Waiting and subsequently being elevated to the post of the Prime Minister.

On 5 August 1931, the Kashmiri Pandits, having suffered the worst, presented their grievances through Prem Nath Bazaz, the President of the Sanatan Dharam Young Men's Association of Kashmir. The enquiry report submitted to the Maharaja on September 24, 1931, revealed that these events were a result of a conspiracy hatched by the British Political Department, headed by Wakefield and the Muslim Reading Room Party, headed by Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah, to discredit Maharaja's government. With too many fingers pointing towards Wakefield as the main conspirator of these events, Hari Singh removed him from the Council of Ministers. But Wakefield continued to finance and direct the activities of the Reading Room Party even after his removal and relocation to Murree. **END**



 Ravinder Gurtoo



A Journey to Kanchipuram and Kumbakonam A Pilgrimage of Faith, Memory, and Hope



There are journeys that take us from one destination to another, and then there are journeys that transform us from within. Our recent visit to the sacred towns of Kanchipuram and Kumbakonam in Tamil Nadu belonged to the latter category. It was much more than a pilgrimage; it was an emotional, intellectual, and spiritual experience that connected the ancient heritage of Kashmir with the timeless traditions of Sanatana Dharma flourishing in southern India.

For a community that has lived in exile for more than three and a half decades, every opportunity to reconnect with India's sacred centres carries profound significance. Our delegation of Kashmiri Pandits travelled not merely as devotees but as representatives of

one of the world's oldest living civilizations, a civilization that has survived unimaginable suffering while continuing to preserve its faith, philosophy, culture, and identity.

The most memorable moment of our journey was undoubtedly our audience with Jagadguru Shankaracharya Sri Vijayendra Saraswati at Kanchipuram.

The Kanchi Kamakoti Peetham occupies a unique place in the spiritual landscape of Bharat. For centuries, it has preserved and propagated the teachings of Adi Shankaracharya while nurturing the spiritual traditions that unite the country from Kashmir to Kanyakumari. As we entered the revered Peetham, there was a serenity that words can scarcely describe. The atmosphere radiated simplicity, discipline, scholarship, and divine grace.



His Holiness received our delegation with extraordinary warmth and compassion. Despite the immense responsibilities resting upon his shoulders, he patiently listened as we narrated the painful story of the Kashmiri Pandit community, the targeted killings, the forced exodus of 1990, the destruction of temples, and the continuing struggle for justice, recognition, and dignified rehabilitation. It was not merely a meeting; it was a dialogue between history and spirituality.

The delegation briefed His Holiness about the relentless efforts being undertaken to secure recognition of the genocide of Kashmiri Hindus and to preserve the community's rich cultural, philosophical, and literary heritage. We highlighted the deteriorating condition of numerous ancient temples and shrines in Kashmir, many of which once served as vibrant centres of learning, devotion, and spiritual enlightenment.

His Holiness listened with deep concern and blessed our efforts. His reassuring words renewed our confidence that India's spiritual institutions continue to stand firmly with every community that has endured persecution while remaining steadfast in its faith.

One of the most meaningful moments during the interaction was the presentation of scholarly publications documenting the history, suffering, resilience, and intellectual legacy of the Kashmiri Pandit community. Copies of our research on the genocide and displacement of Kashmiri Pandits, along with the recently released volume *Decivilisation and Displacement: Indic Reflections on Social Death*, were respectfully presented to the Jagadguru, together with books authored by several members of the delegation.

These works are not merely books; they are testimonies against historical amnesia. They seek to ensure that future generations understand not only what happened in Kashmir but also what humanity lost when one of the world's oldest continuous civilisations was uprooted from its homeland.

The meeting also served as a reminder that Kashmir has never been geographically isolated from the rest of India. The philosophical traditions that blossomed in Kashmir, particularly the teachings of Acharya Abhinavagupta and the profound insights of Kashmir Shaivism have enriched Indian thought for centuries. Likewise, the great spiritual traditions of southern India have always embraced Kashmir as an inseparable part of the civilisational fabric of Bharat.



This cultural continuity became even more evident as our pilgrimage continued to the temple town of Kumbakonam.

Every street, every temple, and every ancient structure seemed to narrate centuries of uninterrupted devotion. The magnificent temple architecture, the rhythmic chanting of Vedic hymns, the fragrance of incense, and the disciplined temple rituals reminded us that Sanatana Dharma continues to flourish because generation after generation has faithfully preserved it.

Our visit coincided with the celebration of Mahamaheshwaracharya Abhinavagupta Jayanti, jointly organised by the Abhinavagupta Chair of the Jonaraja Institute of Genocide and Atrocities Studies, Srivathsam Kumbakonam, Kakni Foundation, and Swami Ram Shiv Ashram.

The event itself symbolised a remarkable cultural bridge between Kashmir and Tamil Nadu.

No account of this pilgrimage would be complete without paying tribute to the towering genius of Acharya Abhinavagupta, whose legacy formed the intellectual and spiritual soul of the celebrations.

Living nearly a thousand years ago, Acharya Abhinavagupta was not merely a philosopher but a polymath of extraordinary brilliance. He was a saint, theologian, aesthete, poet, musicologist, dramatist, yogi, and one of the greatest exponents of Kashmir Shaivism. His monumental masterpiece, *Tantraloka*, continues to guide seekers across the world, while his celebrated commentary on the *Natyashastra*, the *Abhinavabharati*, remains one of the greatest works ever written on aesthetics, theatre, and Indian philosophy.

His philosophy transcended ritual and dogma. He taught that every individual possesses the divine consciousness within and that the highest purpose of life is *Pratyabhijna*, the recognition of one's own true Self. His teachings beautifully harmonised devotion, meditation, knowledge, and artistic expression into a complete vision of life. For Kashmiri Pandits, Acharya Abhinavagupta represents the intellectual



zenith of Kashmir's civilisational heritage. To witness his Jayanti being celebrated with such reverence thousands of kilometres away from Kashmir was deeply moving. It reaffirmed that while history may have displaced a people from their homeland, it cannot erase the timeless wisdom they have contributed to humanity.

The programme featured enlightening scholarly deliberations on Kashmir Shaivism, Indian aesthetics, spirituality, and the continuing relevance of Abhinavagupta's teachings in the modern world.

One of the highlights of the event was the conferment of the Abhinavagupta Award upon the eminent classical dancer Padma Shri Padma Subrahmanyam, whose lifelong dedication to preserving India's artistic heritage beautifully embodies the spirit of India's cultural unity.

The programme also witnessed the participation of a distinguished delegation of Kashmiri Pandit scholars, researchers, writers, social activists, and community representatives from different parts of India. Their presence reflected the community's unwavering commitment to preserving its civilisational heritage while engaging with the wider intellectual and spiritual traditions of Bharat. A number of books written by Kashmiri Pandit

authors who were a part of this delegation and others were released on the occasion.

During the programme, we had the privilege of speaking on the continuing impact of the genocide and displacement of Kashmiri Pandits. It was an emotional moment, not merely because of the painful memories associated with our exile, but because of the empathy shown by scholars, saints, artists, and devotees from thousands of kilometres away. Their concern reaffirmed that the pain of Kashmir is not the concern of one community alone, it is a national concern.

Throughout our visit, we experienced extraordinary hospitality. Every interaction reflected humility, affection, and deep respect for Kashmir's traditions. There was no sense of distance between North and South. Instead, we experienced the timeless truth that Bharat is one spiritual family united by shared values rather than geography.

For Kashmiri Pandits, this journey carried an important lesson. Despite decades of displacement, we remain custodians of a priceless intellectual and spiritual legacy. Our responsibility extends beyond seeking justice for past atrocities. We must preserve our language, philosophy, rituals, literature, temples, and sacred traditions so that future generations inherit not merely memories of suffering but also the immense richness of our civilisation.

The visit strengthened our resolve to continue documenting the history of the genocide, preserving our cultural heritage, restoring neglected temples, and educating younger generations about Kashmir's invaluable contribution to Indian civilisation.

No event of such spiritual and intellectual significance becomes successful without the dedication of countless individuals working quietly behind the scenes.

Our heartfelt gratitude goes to Mr. Shankar, whose meticulous planning and tireless coordination ensured that every aspect of the programme was conducted with dignity and perfection. We are equally grateful to Mr. Seetharaman, whose warm hospitality and unwavering commitment reflected the

timeless traditions of South India, making every participant feel like a member of one extended family.

A special word of appreciation is due to Sunil Raina Rajanaka, whose efforts in coordinating scholars, community members, and institutions played a vital role in the success of the programme. His dedication to preserving and promoting the intellectual heritage of Kashmir deserves sincere admiration. The organisers, volunteers, scholars, and devotees together transformed the event into far more than a conference, they created a memorable confluence of faith, scholarship, and national unity.

As we returned home, we carried with us far more than photographs and memories.

We returned with renewed faith.

Faith that truth ultimately prevails.

Faith that justice, though delayed, must one day be achieved.

Faith that the spiritual traditions of India continue to recognise and embrace the Kashmiri Pandit community as an inseparable part of the nation's civilisational heritage.

Above all, we returned with the comforting realisation that while we may have been displaced from our homeland, we have never been separated from the larger spiritual family of Bharat.

The sacred temples of Kanchipuram, the divine atmosphere of Kumbakonam, the blessings of the Jagadguru, and the celebration of Acharya Abhinavagupta together reaffirmed a timeless truth: kingdoms may rise and fall, political circumstances may change, and communities may endure unimaginable hardships, but a civilisation rooted in faith, knowledge, and resilience cannot be extinguished.

Our journey ended, but its message continues to inspire us.

May the blessings received during this sacred pilgrimage strengthen our collective resolve to strive for justice with dignity, preserve our priceless heritage with devotion, and continue contributing to the eternal ideals of Sanatana Dharma for generations yet to come.



 Vijay Kashkari



Kashmir Parikrama

The book under review is “Kashmir Parikrama,” written by K. L. Reshi (Kanya Lal Reshi). Instead of writing on budgeting, saving, debt management, or translating financial reporting, cash flow, and auditing principles, the author turns to the history, heritage, and apathy of Kashmir and Kashmiris. He explores Kashmir’s cultural, historical, and geographical landscape.

The book is the author’s memoir, told through the made-up name Krishna. It may be described as a fictional autobiography or an autobiographical novel. The hard-cover book is printed on glazed paper and comprises 344 pages and 96 colour plates. It has 10 chapters and is published by Maxford Books, New Delhi.

The title Parikrama means circumambulation or covered path around a temple. This is an act of walking in a circle around a sacred object, shrine, or deity.

Krishna recounts his story from childhood to adulthood, as told to him by his parents, grandparents, and other elders who enter his life or cross his path along the journey.

Krishna was born in downtown Srinagar, an area that has become notorious as the epicentre of socio-political unrest, frequent stone-pelting protests, and separatist strikes until 2019. For over 90 years, the old city has been politically volatile, though it should have been on Kashmir’s tourist map for its centuries-old cultural, spiritual, and architectural heritage. Political unrest has made it infamous.

The account of his journey begins in his



historically significant neighbourhood. The author describes the surrounding areas, which are traditional centres for the manufacture and trade of Kashmiri handicrafts, copperware, and papier-mâché.

His story begins at the Khanda Bhawan Shrine, dedicated to Lord Kumara, the eldest son of Lord Shiva. The name of the shrine derives from Iskand Bhawan, or Skanda Bhawan. From a historical perspective, the places are Budh-geer, from the Buddhist period, and Bulbul-Lankar, named after Bulbul Shah, the first Muslim missionary. He was a 13th- or 14th-century Sufi preacher and one of the earliest to bring Islam to the Kashmir Valley, converting Rinchan Shah, who became the first Muslim ruler.

The ten chapters give a vivid picture of his historical neighbourhood, the three parikrama routes to Hariparbat, a memorable donga journey to Tulumula, mountains, temples and shrines, the historical importance of Muslim shrines, and the neglect of ecology.

The book describes the Rishi traditions of Kashmir and Islamic mystics. Krishna relates stories of Lalded, Rishi Peer, Mata Roop Bhawani, Bhagwan Gopi Nath, Nund Rishi, Shah-e-Hamadan, and others. Their miracles are also stated. He recounts the stories of Akanandun and Heemal Nagrai. While describing Sharda and Shardi in POK, he also mentions Tikker and Swami Nand Lal ji. The author writes about Abhinavagupta and the contemporary Swami Laxman Joo.

The book contains pages highlighting architectural and religious sites. He describes the 14th-century wooden Jamia Masjid and the stunning Khanqah-e-Moula. Krishna narrates expeditions to Mahadev, Amarnath Cave, Haershour, and Danaeshour. The doonga travel from Habbakadal to Tullmula via Shadipur is fascinating. He dispels the myth that a Gujjar shepherd named Malik first discovered the Amarnath cave.

The book refers to multiple regional journeys. The notable one is the ancient, 3-4 km Parikrama around Hari Parbat in Srinagar. A full chapter is devoted to Hari Parvat, the central point of Kashmiri culture. This historic route traces the sacred hill that houses the revered Sharika Devi Temple and other temples, including Chatti Pathshahi, a Sikh Gurdwara, and the Makhdoom Sahib Shrine. The Parikrama begins and ends near the historic Kathi Darwaza or Sangin Darwaza gates. The Hindu population was predominantly in Saffakadaal, Habbakadal, and Rainawari areas of Srinagar City. It was routine for Hindus across these areas to take a spiritual walk around the Sharika Hill until terrorism spread in the valley. Besides a morning walk, it was considered one of the holiest sites for Kashmiri Pandits to receive the blessings of all Hindu gods and goddesses.

The book reveals who first brought a houseboat to Kashmir, who built a temple dedicated to Lord Brahma, who built a temple of Kubera, and Rainawari was surrounded by the springs.

Detailed descriptions of temples and shrines appear on about 85 pages of the book. Major temples from all districts of Kashmir are

cited. The book highlights the rich cultural heritage of Kashmir, including the cultural, mythological, and religious traditions that have shaped the area's identity over centuries.

An important reference in the book is Shamasud-din Araki and his role in converting Kashmiris to the Muslim faith. The author refers to Araki in the translated book titled "A Muslim Missionary in Mediaeval Kashmir" by Prof. (Dr.) K. N. Pandita, Padma Shri.

The book is a scholarly study for those who want to know about Kashmir from the early to the medieval periods and thereafter. It is suitable for generations whose parents and grandparents were forced to be cut off from the rich cultural heritage of Himalayan Kashmir. For those interested in history, archaeology, hagiology, hagiography, and environmental science, the book can help develop a research outline. It can also be referred to for religious tourism.

The book is the author's travelogue, presenting his personal journey. It describes tourist attractions, combining real events with the traveller's observations, emotions, and cultural reflections to capture the true essence of an experience.

The author, who lives in exile, has not forgotten to mention the apathy. Describing Kashmir as a remnant of nature's beauty, he expresses concern about its erasure, which bears a link to the past. He also describes extreme congestion, decaying unbaked-brick structures, and poor sanitation in Kashmir, holding the governments and the insensitivity of those governing responsible.

The book cites Rajtarangni, Neelmatpuran, and other sources to support its authenticity.

After reading the book, I find the concept of exploring Kashmir as a sacred circumambulation brilliant. I perceive the book as a travelogue, a history book, and a deeply spiritual and cultural pilgrimage. I appreciate the author for his chapter-wise descriptions, and his research, poured into all the chapters, shows his love for the place he was forced to leave.



 Sanjay Kundu



Kashmir Revisited

My Personal Pilgrimage



*A solitary shikara glides across the misty expanse of Dal Lake—
a poignant symbol of identity, time and destiny in the valley.*

In September 2023, a Conference of North-India Directors General of Police (DGPs) brought me back to Srinagar. The conference was organized by the Jammu & Kashmir Police, with Mr. Dilbagh Singh, DGP of J&K, as our host.

For security reasons, our accommodation was arranged at the Sarovar Portico Hotel, located close to the Police Headquarters (PHQ). I was provided with a highly secure motorcade, including a top-end bulletproof

vehicle. My driver was a young Muslim policeman from Kupwara.

But as we wrapped up the official proceedings, my mind wasn't on the security briefings; it was on a quiet corner of Rainawari, searching for the ghost of my childhood home. During the conference, I mentioned to Mr. Dilbagh Singh that if the proceedings concluded early, I would like to visit my ancestral home in Rainawari. Also, if time still permitted, I would try to locate my in-laws'

house in Fatehkadal, about which they talk very fondly. The conference ended on schedule, which was followed by an official lunch hosted by the DGP at the Police Mess in Humhama.

Mr. Singh advised me to leave immediately after lunch to avoid delays. He deputed the SSP Srinagar and SP (City) to accompany me. As we drove towards Rainawari, the SSP, seated beside me, asked if I knew the exact address of my ancestral house or how I intended to locate it as the urban landscape had changed considerably. I assured him that I was born in Rainawari and had spent my early years in the Kundu house in Kralayar, so I would have no trouble finding it.

Upon reaching Kralayar, I walked towards our ancestral home. A crowd quickly gathered, drawn by the presence of security personnel and senior police officers. Our house had been purchased by Bilal Ahmed Biloo, who owned a houseboat named “Howrah.” The family had renovated it into a modern home. They were exceptionally warm and welcoming, having prepared an array of cold drinks, tea, and snacks. They insisted that I taste something. After taking a sip, I went to the room where my parents, sister, and I had once lived. I was born in the Mission Hospital (later called Jawaharlal Nehru Hospital) in Rainawari, and the room brought back countless memories. Bilal told me they had retained some of our old furniture and even a few pictures.

By this time, hundreds of people had gathered outside. Many elderly residents, unable to recognize me, inquired about my lineage. When I mentioned my father's name, they immediately remembered him as a professor at Kashmir University and my mother as a professor at Nawakadal Government College. They asked about my grandfather, uncles, and cousins, and many embraced me warmly, some even kissed my hand.

The Superintendent of Police (City), a Muslim officer, lamented their fate. Addressing the crowd, he pointed out, “*Look at him—he is now the Director General of Himachal Pradesh, while you are still rowing boats.*” In

true Kashmiri fashion, they responded, “*This is our destiny.*”

Since we had some time, we walked towards the Vishwabharti Educational Institute, which was closed. The temple within the campus was also locked. The canals of Dal Lake, which once extended up to Kralayar, had dried up, replaced by reclaimed land and new buildings.

As it was getting late, I requested the SSP to proceed to Fatehkadal. He asked if I knew my in-laws' exact location. I told him that they were Walis and that their ancestral home was near a shop called “Dukan-e-Sangeen.” When we reached the main Fatehkadal area, we struggled to locate the shop. I called my wife's cousin, for directions, which proved helpful. Meanwhile, the local Deputy Superintendent of Police (DSP) conducted a brief investigation and successfully located the Wali house.

We walked through a tunnel and approached a massive haveli, approximately eight storeys tall, with a grand façade and an equally breathtaking view. This building was indeed the Wali house. The ground floor, which had once been used for stables was now used as store, with staircases on either side leading to the main living quarters, starting from the first floor. The Walis had sold the house to a Muslim “*Gadi-saaz*” (watch-maker) who ran his business in downtown Srinagar. The house was stunning, adorned with intricate “*Khatambandi*”—a traditional Persian woodwork ceiling art.



Wali haveli in Fatehkadal

The current owners graciously hosted us with a lavish spread of snacks and beverages. They spoke with my wife's cousin over the phone, making an instant connection. As night approached, the local DSP advised us to leave, warning that staying longer could be risky. Before departing, we took several photos of the haveli.

On our way back to the hotel, we stopped at Polo View, Residency Road, where my grandfather owned a famous departmental store established in 1936, named “*Eastern Agencies*”. The store was located in the iconic building of Gulam Mohiden & Sons. The Polo View was recently done up with cobblerstone tiles and had become like the Mall of Shimla, closed to traffic and reserved only for strolling. It had become quite a hip place. The store was renamed as Stationery Shop and was run by my cousin Inder Krishen Kundu. I met him and his wife at the store. Later many Polo View shopkeepers gathered and offered me Kashmiri Kahwa and evening snacks.



My grandfather's departmental store in Polo View, Residency Road, then and now

The physical journey through the winding alleys and bustling markets of my youth had concluded, but the spiritual circle remained open. Early next morning, I visited one place that binds my family's history to the divine. No visit to Kashmir is complete without Darshan of the Mata Kheer Bhawani Temple in Tula-Mulla.



Mata Kheer Bhawani, radiating timeless grace

For me it is extra-special as Kundus ancestral village Theru-Dungarpur borders Tula-Mulla on its east side. Kundus were major landowners in the area with their lands in many villages around Tula-Mulla and were given the title of “*Jagirdar*” by Maharaja Ranjit Singh as one of my ancestors was a general in his army, helped defeat the Afghans and end their tyrannical rule in Kashmir. Early next morning, I visited Tula-Mulla where my cousin Sandeep Dhar, who was the Chief Engineer of the Power Development Department, Jammu & Kashmir Government joined me. The water glowed a pristine turquoise, and the sacred idols shone brilliantly.



Offering prayers at the Mata Kheer Bhawani temple, connecting past legacy with present devotion.

At the Srinagar Airport that afternoon, as I was preparing to board my flight, my driver asked if he could take some photos with me. “Why not?” I replied. Then he hesitated and asked if he could touch my feet.

I strongly discouraged such gestures of reverence but asked why he wanted to do so. His response surprised me: “*You are from the family of jagirdars, who owned huge tracts of land adjacent to your most sacred temple and were in the court of rulers of Kashmir. Also, you are the son-in-law of the Walis, and it is an honor for me to have driven you around.*” Curious, I asked what was so special about the Walis. He explained, “*Sir, in Islam, a Wali is a saint—just one step below the angels. Your in-laws must have carried immense grace for the rulers to give them that name.*”

Standing there, I realized my life was bounded by two grand Kashmiri legacies—a lineage of warriors on my father's side, and a lineage of saints on my wife's.

Cartoon by- Anil Nakhasi





P K Mam



KASHMIRI HINDUS

Beyond Symbolism Towards Safe and Sustainable Rehabilitation

Kashmir has been a lifelong longing. The catastrophe of 1990 did not just displace us it deepened our detachment, built resilience, and taught compassion. Yet the desire to return to Mauj Kashir, our Motherland, remains.

A secure nation is the foundation of development. The government must act decisively on security to protect the country's integrity and its citizens.

A 2016 Perspective Still Relevant

A decade ago, in Milchar, Mumbai, I had put forth some personal suggestions for consideration. They remain urgent today:

For the Majority Community:

Abandon labels like Mukhbir, informer, and “soft targets” used against KPs. Recognize the futility of displacement and reaffirm Live and Let Live, co-existence, and brotherhood.

For Kashmiri Pandits:

Unite under one platform. Engage political parties, civil society, and intelligentsia from the majority community to draft a concrete, time-bound action plan. Experts can refine the details.

Security and Justice Post Article 370

The abrogation of Article 370 and 35A w.e.f. August 5, 2019 aimed to dismantle the ecosystem behind the 1990 exodus. Attacks on civilians have reduced but not ended. Terrorism in J&K is not just radicalized youth



it is a system entrenched in society, administration, and the narcotics economy. The crackdown must reach its logical conclusion.

The exile of Kashmiri Pandits remains one of independent India's gravest humanitarian tragedies decades of displacement without justice. The Supreme Court's 2017 refusal to entertain the genocide petition deepened the sense of abandonment.

The Hard Reality

It has been over 35 years. Nearly 50% of the displaced are no more. 20% are elderly and dependent. Another 20% of the young are settled elsewhere. Perhaps 10% might still consider returning. Without unified leadership and political will, resettlement fades yearly.

This was premeditated, identity-driven violence not retaliation. Death was not the worst fate. Rape, torture, mutilation were the tools of terror. Migrant camps were overcrowded and disease-ridden. To call flight a “safe option” ignores the trauma.

History records six forced exoduses of Kashmiri Hindus, the last in 1990. After six displacements, caution is not fear it is wisdom born of experience.

Trust cannot be rebuilt by assurances alone. It requires credible guarantees of security, dignity, justice, and sustainable rehabilitation.

The State's duty is to protect. When it fails, the answer is justice and rule of law not vengeance. Today, truth finds expression through testimonies and films long suppressed. We must resist distortion. This is remembrance, not revenge.

The Challenge of Unity Today

The recent visit of Non-Resident Kashmiri Hindus to Kashmir has sparked a critical debate within the community. Groups like Panun Kashmir argue it exposed internal divisions rather than a unified front. Instead of projecting a cohesive voice for definitive resettlement, the event showed that strategic alignment is still lacking.

This fallout proves that a true return needs more than ad-hoc cultural exchanges. It demands institutional cohesion. For resettlement to be viable, KP leadership must bridge ideological chasms and forge one coordinated strategy that leaves no room for misinterpretation.

The Road Ahead: From Slogan to Structure

For return to be real and not symbolic, we need a concrete framework:

1. Security-First Rehabilitation : Return must be voluntary, phased, and based on

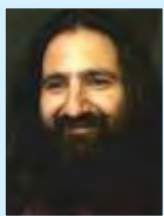
independent security assessments, not political timelines. Safety must precede settlement.

- 2. Cluster-Based Smart Townships :** Develop secure, self-sufficient townships with schools, hospitals, temples, commercial areas, and police units. This prevents isolated resettlement and ensures community security.
- 3. Property Restitution Tribunal:** Establish a fast-track tribunal to restore illegally occupied properties, provide compensation where restoration is impossible, and digitize all pre-1990 land records.
- 4. Preservation of Cultural Heritage:** Restore temples, shrines, cremation grounds, and manuscripts. Rehabilitation is not merely physical it is cultural and civilizational.
- 5. Independent Monitoring Authority:** Constitute a high-level body with Govt, judiciary, security, civil society, and KP representatives to monitor implementation and publish annual progress reports.

The return of Kashmiri Hindus must not become a symbolic gesture or a political slogan. It should stand as a model of constitutional justice, national responsibility, and humane rehabilitation. A dignified return is not merely about reclaiming homes it is about restoring trust, preserving an ancient civilizational heritage, and reaffirming India's commitment to justice, equality, and the rule of law. Only then will the dream of returning to _Mauj Kashir_ become a lasting reality rather than a fleeting aspiration.

The Way Forward

'Determined effort' means conditions where Kashmiri Hindus and Sikhs live without fear with full rights, protection, and honour. That requires political will, legal safeguards, and national resolve. Let our path be defined not by haste or helpless longing, but by resilience, wisdom, and a rightful return anchored in justice.



 Virendra Bangroo



Home After Exile

WHY PANUN KASHMIR REMAINS THE ONLY VIABLE SOLUTION

Nearly four decades after the exodus, generations of Kashmiri Pandits continue to seek not the whole of the Valley, but a secure homeland within it—a place where they can live with dignity and safety while preserving one of India's oldest living civilizations.

The demand for Panun Kashmir—a proposed homeland for Kashmiri Pandits within the Kashmir Valley—gained significant momentum after 1990, when an estimated several hundred thousand Kashmiri Pandits were forced to flee the Valley following a targeted campaign of violence, intimidation, and threats.

For the Kashmiri Pandit community, 1990 was not merely an exodus. It was the violent uprooting of an indigenous people from their ancestral homeland. Men, women, and children were killed; thousands of families abandoned their homes overnight; and an entire civilization was displaced from the land where it had flourished for millennia. The response of both the then Jammu & Kashmir administration and the Central Government was inadequate, leaving an entire community vulnerable and displaced.

Today, this exile has lasted for nearly four decades. Two to three generations have grown up away from their homes, temples, neighbour-



hoods, schools, and sacred spaces. For many young Kashmiri Pandits, Kashmir survives only through family memories, stories, photographs, rituals, and an enduring longing to return.

The central demand of Kashmiri Pandits has remained unchanged: Panun Kashmir—a secure homeland within the Kashmir Valley. It advocates the creation of a separate Union Territory where Kashmiri Pandits can live safely, practice their faith freely, preserve their language and traditions, celebrate their festivals without fear, and rebuild their community in their ancestral homeland.

There are, of course, other voices in this conversation. Many Kashmiri Muslims believe that Pandits have always been an integral part of Kashmir's social fabric and argue that a separate administrative arrangement is unnecessary. They emphasize centuries of coexistence and hope that reconciliation can eventually restore the bonds that once united the two communities.

Yet, from the perspective of Kashmiri Pandits, nearly four decades have demonstrated that reconciliation alone has not created the conditions necessary for a safe, dignified, and sustainable collective return. While individual gestures of goodwill have taken place, there have been few sustained, community-wide initiatives capable of restoring the confidence of a people who continue to live in exile.

Most visits to the Valley remain temporary—pilgrimages to ancient shrines or brief visits to ancestral homes—rather than permanent resettlement.

During these decades of displacement, many homes, agricultural lands, businesses, and other properties belonging to Kashmiri Pandits were illegally occupied, encroached upon, or transferred under distress. These properties should have been restored to their rightful owners in accordance with the law. For displaced families, the continuing delay in resolving these issues remains both painful and difficult to comprehend.

As a member of the Kashmiri Pandit community, I believe the time has come to



move beyond symbolic assurances and adopt a practical, durable solution.

For many of us, Panun Kashmir is that solution

This is not merely about land. It is about restoring dignity to a people who lost not only their homes but also their social, cultural, and spiritual ecosystem. It is about preserving an ancient civilization that has shaped Kashmir's philosophy, literature, spirituality, language, and intellectual traditions for thousands of years.

Kashmiri Pandits are among the Valley's oldest indigenous communities. Our connection with Kashmir is not simply geographical; it is civilizational. Across the Valley stand ancient temples, sacred springs, pilgrimage routes, and sites of learning that bear witness to our uninterrupted historical presence. Exile may have separated us from our homeland, but it has not broken that bond.

The events of 1989–90 were a genocide—a systematic attempt to eliminate an indigenous community from its ancestral homeland through targeted killings, terror, and forced displacement. This painful chapter deserves formal acknowledgment by

the Government of India and should be addressed through justice, rehabilitation, restitution, and lasting institutional safeguards.

Recognition of this tragedy is not merely about the past; it is essential to ensuring that such a catastrophe is never repeated

The collective memory of the community also recalls earlier episodes of persecution and displacement over the centuries. Our ancestors spoke of seven previous exoduses before 1990. Whether viewed through the lens of history or lived memory, the message is the same: an indigenous community has endured repeated displacement across generations. The exodus of 1990 must be the last.

For Kashmiri Pandits, Panun Kashmir is therefore not a political slogan. It is a humanitarian necessity. It represents the most viable framework through which an uprooted indigenous community can rebuild its collective life with security, dignity, and constitutional protection.

We are not asking for the whole of Kashmir. We are asking for a secure homeland within Kashmir—a place where our children can grow up without fear, where our temples can flourish once again, where our festivals can be celebrated openly, where our language can be spoken naturally, and where our traditions can be passed on to future generations.

This is not a demand for privilege.

It is a plea for survival

India has always taken pride in protecting its civilizational diversity. Safeguarding the heritage of Kashmiri Pandits should be viewed in that same spirit. Preserving one of India's oldest indigenous communities is not only a moral obligation but also a national responsibility.

The time has come to translate empathy into action. The proposal for Panun Kashmir deserves to be examined with seriousness, compassion, and practical resolve. Justice also requires that displaced families regain possession of properties that were unlawfully occupied or alienated, wherever the law so provides, and that comprehensive rehabilitation finally move from promise to implementation.

After nearly four decades of exile, Kashmiri Pandits are not asking for revenge. They are asking for the opportunity to live peacefully in their ancestral homeland, preserve their identity, protect their heritage, and pass on their civilization to future generations.

Let this be the last exile

Let Panun Kashmir become the foundation upon which an indigenous community can finally return home with dignity, security, and hope.

*From my daily diary 12 July 2026
virendrabangroo@gmail.com*

APPEAL FOR ARTICLES!

NAAD is a monthly community magazine of All India Kashmiri Samaj (AIKS) with circulation across the globe. The monolingual publication is in English. It needs support from its readership scholars by way of articles that relate to the Kashmiri community and also to the country. Please come forward and send your articles. In order to give space to maximum number of writers, we request to make each article of 3 to 4 pages in Times New Roman with Font size – 12.

Please send your articles on [**hqaiks@gmail.com**](mailto:hqaiks@gmail.com).



B L Saraf



IS KASHMIR PREPARED TO Receive Pandits?

Is Kashmir ready to welcome Pandits? Turn around the question and ask: are Pandits prepared to return to Kashmir? This two-dimensional question needs a two-way answer. The question did strike minds of the Kashmiri Pandits (KPs) soon after their enforced displacement from their home. Then, they would eagerly say when and how will they return home! Almost every one among them expressed a firm belief in the return. However, with the passage of time, as their exile got unintentionally elongated, a second thought developed in their minds. By the time many of

them got adjusted to the new situation and some, perforce, compromised with what they thought was in their store and accepted that as a fate accompli. However, the return issue kept constantly taxing minds of the displaced persons - as it did to some Kashmiri Muslims. Sometimes it came to the fore hard and at times it receded in the back ground.

Today, the issue had resurfaced with good deal of seriousness. Both, Srinagar and Jammu political and social circles are abuzz with a talk that time has come when KPs should return and be welcomed in Kashmir.

For many KPs things seem to have cleared a bit and for the KMs a sight of the Pandits in their neighborhood is also becoming rather clearer. The recently concluded GKPD Conclave held on the banks of Dal Lake, Srinagar and subsequent meeting organized in Amar Singh Club Srinagar, where some K Ps and persons from other faiths participated and deliberated up on how to rebuild the inter-community relations and find a way for Pandit's honorable return to their home, did have some



impact. These events were marked by a positive approach required for the mutual reconciliation. Not to be missed here, is the religious social fervor witnessed around the religious places sacred to the Pandits –spread across hills and plains of the Valley – where locals welcomed Hindu devotees with a noticeable warmth.

KPs return to the Valley is not all that easy. They have a story and a recognition that lies bruised deep inside which need narration and an understanding, especially, by the Kashmiri Muslims. With its post 1990 situation and as things stand with it today, the entire Pandit community is, per force, now walking on a path of an irresistible trajectory with the foregone conclusion of their collective destiny as that of fading into the history as a lost community. Undoubtedly, members of the community individually are bound to thrive and prosper wherever they live in this planet. But the authenticity of being Kashmiri Pandits in their identity and make up is bound to wane and then completely wither away with the passage of time.

It is agonizing that the Internally Displaced KPs (IDP) are still groping in darkness to find a path that may take them back to the home, in Kashmir, from where

they stand hounded out. A path has to be found out. Though, primarily it is community job, nonetheless, other state and non-state actors too have a have role cut out for them, in this regard. Our neighbors (KMs), back home, may have to bear some responsibility.

What makes KP problem worrying is that nobody has time and inclination to look for the truth. It is important to welcome self-probing and stay calm. We have allowed many problems to go un noticed and unaddressed, to create the impression that it is acceptable to tolerate such things. It is for us to prepare and present an achievable return Road Map, suit to our social, political and economic requirements - having regard for the security concerns. The job can't be left to others - certainly not to the government. Though, government's role in ensuring the foregoing can't be disregarded.

Apa. rt from physical security issue, one of the main concerns among the aged and aging IDPs is that with children far away eking out a livelihood there will be none to look after them in Kashmir - almost a new habitat to begin a fresh. Given the paucity of the sources to make earnings, these children won't find an attraction to return back. The concern has some substance. But at the same time one has to keep in mind that residing at a place doesn't mean to remain fixed to the place, forever. The

exigencies of life often force a native to leave the place for another one just to earn a livelihood. As has been the case with so many of us. But while he moves out to the other place the native always retains a right to come back or revisit the place, on choice. There is no impediment – physical, psychological emotionally – for him to return home when occasion arises. Therefore, more than living at a native place, it is the unfettered right of egress and ingress that matters. Restoration of that inalienable right should be the guiding force when we think of return and resettlement in Kashmir – our birth place.

Jammu and Kashmir needs peace and a congenial atmosphere. In this regard the changed attitude of the KMs gives some hope. But the prevailing atmosphere in the Valley is still far from satisfactory on the security front. A trust deficit on the social circuit remains which deters Pandits to embark on a return journey. The initiatives referred in the beginning may help reduce the deficit.

It is the duty of the state to give the displaced community what Constitution has provided for the citizenry - as a measure of political, economic and social empowerment. The KPs are a Minority in Jammu and

Kashmir: therefore, they should be recognized as such in terms of the relevant Law applicable to the Minorities in rest of the country. Similarly, their spiritual sigh post, Temples and Shrine and their assets should have a Statutory protection, along with an assured architecture for a democratic management. The KPs must have a meaningful presence in all organs of the state.

It is in the appropriateness of things that both the communities commence and keep a dialogue going on for achieving mutual understanding which is very essential to promote human dignity. It is equally necessary to underline the need of interfaith harmony and encourage those who are on the job in this regard. Recent attempts made in this direction are welcome. Kashmiri Pandits believe in composite way of life in the Valley, where each one of the different creed and faith lived in harmony on equal terms. The bond of inter dependence which existed earlier and held communities together, at some level, must be revived.

Author is Former Pr. District & Sessions Judge

Calendar of Month	Kumar Shashti	19 th July 2026
	Haar Saptami	20 th July 2026
	Haar Ashtami (Shukla Paksha)	21 st July 2026
	Haar Navami (Sharika Jayanti)	23 rd July 2026
	Devshayni Ekadashi (Shukla Paksha)	25 th July 2026
	Guru Poornima	29 th July 2026
	Sankat Nivaran Chaturthi	02 nd August 2026
	Ashtami (Krishna Paksha)	06 th August 2026
	Ekadashi (Krishna Paksha)	09 th August 2026
	Amavasya	12 th August 2026
	Note Panchak starts on 31 st July 2026 ends on 04 th August 2026	
	Aashaad (Shukla Paksha) from 15 th July 2026 to 29 th July 2026	
	Shravan (Krishna Paksha) from 30 th July 2026 to 12 th August 2026	



 Prof. ML Pandit



Why does Kashmiri Hindu Community alone retain Kashmir in Community nomenclature/suffix?

Why are aboriginal Kashmiri Hindus called Kashmiri Pandits (KPs) when the suffix does not apply to Muslims/Christians/Sikhs/ Buddhists of Kashmir?

Pandits in nearby Jammu or UP/Bihar/ Bengal are Pandits only!

Nor do the members of any other Indian social group(s) carry region in their nomenclature!

Muslims/Christians across regions and globe also do not bear such a stamp!

They are simply Christians/Muslims of their countries!

Why then are aboriginal Kashmiri Hindus uniquely called Kashmiri Pandits? WHY? WHY?

The suggestion that KPs alone belong to the highest Brahmin varna is not true!

The word Pandit means a learned scholar in Sanskrit!

Kashmir since long was an exclusive KP territory, globally acknowledged for learning and scholarship!

Ruled by brave and warrior kings/ empire builders for many millennia!

Commanding forceful armies under brave military commanders!

Expanding kingdom to Central Asia, close to Tibet, and the plains of India!

Prominent empire builders included Lalitaditya Muktapida and King Avanti Varman!



The then Kashmir was also a reputed centre of knowledge, learning and philosophy!

Shaping, among other things, Trika Shavism which revolutionized Indian metaphysics!

Asserting that entire universe is a playful expansion of absolute consciousness (Shiva)!

Prominent contributors: Vasugupta, Somananda, Utpaladeva, Abinavagupta, Kshemaraga!

But Pandits elsewhere in the north were not sitting idle, they too made equally significant contributions to knowledge and philosophy

In deep south Pandits were equally great contributors to knowledge and philosophy!

Fierce Queen Kota Rani was the last KP Hindu ruler and ruled until her defeat and death in 1339!

Making space for first Muslim takeover of Kashmir and brutal centuries of rule!

Demolishing and destroying all that had been accomplished and built over millennia!

Besides enforcing ruthless conversions of to Islam on a large scale!

Thereby transforming landlocked Kashmir into an overwhelmingly Muslim majority territory within a century, perhaps faster than anywhere else in the Indian subcontinent!

The ruthlessness was so intense that Pandits even forgot that their most scared Amarnath Cave ever existed!

It was accidentally re-discovered centuries later by a Muslim shepherd tending sheep and now attracts millions of devotees annually from across country and outside!

But how did the surviving and vanishing Hindus here become Kashmiri Pandits (KPs)?

The only and apparent answer seems to be their unflinching love for homeland Kashmir!

Which did not wane after it came under centuries of brutal Muslim rule!

Only an ever-declining proportion of KPs managed to save faith by deserting the valley!

Not once or twice but six times prior to the ongoing seventh exodus!

Making compromises but never abandoning Kashmir exile after exile!

Shaping Kashmiriat - never provoke and never offend - just to coexist as a docile minority!

Forgetting ancestral military supremacies and forsaking arms for good, even after driven out!

Never minding being labelled docile "dale Bhata" by the converted cousins!

Never ever charged with blasphemy by religiously super sensitive Muslims!

While such accusations keep on happening even in Muslims countries and against Muslims!

Exiles then were "vanvas" (forest dwelling) into unknown territories across mountains!

Foraging and surviving on their own and at the mercy of nature and wilderness!

Nothing short of an herculean task indeed!

Crossing the mountains repeatedly to save life and faith!

Earning the mountains the nick name: Kasthan (troubled days abode), present day Kishtwar!

Being back when the troubled days eased/ruler relented/or succeeded by a tolerant one!

And returning on their own even while risks to life and faith persisted!

What do such multiple returns under and because of Muslim rule prove?

Pure and unparalleled love for Kashmir even as numbers dwindled fast and risks remained!

What else can be the unflinching love for aboriginal homeland Kashmir be?

With no parallels across globe over time and space?

Exiled Parsis never ever returned to their homeland Iran after it got overtaken by Islam?

Christians of the Arab world fleeing their Biblical homeland never returned!

Nor did the massive non-Muslim migrations of indigenous Christians and Jews in Africa reverse!

Jews of Biblical homeland are, no doubt an exception!

But their return happened after 2000 years and only after the United Nations officially recognized and supported the State of Israel!

But KPs kept on returning again and again and on their own amid persisting threats to life and religion!

Is this not proof enough what made daring Hindus of Kashmir Kashmiri Pandits?

Their unexpected arrivals after each exile must have made their convert cousins to cry: look KPs are back again!

Forget the past, is the community today not waiting in wings for end to the current exodus?

Even when it is no longer "vanvas" across mountains but widely dispersed across India and outside, although the majority is still around Jammu city, not far from Kashtvar / Kishtwar?

And supported with state aid/relief and shelter for since the exodus?

Is the optimism to be back not peaking day in day out?

Did a deputation of NRIs not arrived in



Kashmir days before to demand return to Kashmir!

The current exodus is also bound to be reversed! No one can dare to stop it permanently!

The state and the civil society now seem to be keen to welcome the aboriginals!

And this time the middle and younger generations returnees would be professionally transformed! Not just like their predecessor mountain dwellers!

The current exodus had a silver lining: state help and multiple avenues and offers to acquire and sharpen professional skills in unprecedented numbers!

Thanks to the initiative of revered late Bala Sahib Thackrey, a large number of seats in professional courses in Maharashtra got reserved for the community youth initially!

With state intervention, the provision got extended across most of the country!

Thousands of youth have already acquired diverse professional degrees and work experience! Some have already made a mark and in diverse fields of professional life!

Their contributions are getting duly acknowledged in and outside India!

And are ready again to be back in their own paradise like homeland Kashmir!

But need to be relocated together at a single location so they can coordinate and deliver big!

A single location would not only offer safety in numbers but also opportunities to pool and share their diverse competencies to build institutions and organisations!

If relocated together and supported, there is no doubt they can shape a globally acclaimed enterprises and institutions that matches best of the world!

That might attract talent and expertise from across the globe to the only paradise on earth!

After all we are uniquely called and acknowledged as Kashmiri Pandits!

Ready to return and build a developed Kashmir to the envy of the developed West!

Prof. ML Pandit is a retired professor from NIT Srinagar.



Inder K Koul



MANASBAL (PLACE/TEMPLE/LAKE)

(From my book Ancient Historical Geography of Kashmir)

This deep lake (AMPC* - 74° 40' 13" long. & 34° 14' 51" lat) of about 178 hectare area located at an elevation of 5,180 from the sea level which might have been oval in the past but is presently more or less kidney shaped, is situated about 20 miles to the north-west of Srinagar City on the left side of a steep isolated hill abounding in limestone known as Ashatung or Ahateng (74° 40' 42" long. & 34° 14' 23" lat. – 6,152 feet altitude) close to Sumbal/Safapore villages in present district Ganderbal. Previously this lake

measured three miles by one mile but with passage of time its dimension has reduced to just about 2 miles in length and a maximum of about a mile in width with an overall perimeter of just more than 5 miles. The lake itself has been mentioned by the name Manasa (Saras) or Mansarovar in celebrated scripture Nilmatpuran and also by Jonaraja the 15th Century poet-cum-historian of Kashmir and a contemporary of Sultan Zain-ul-Abidin or Budshah. Besides several springs in the lake, it is also fed by a canal





Amravati (now known by the name Shah Kol) brought by Sultan Zain-ul-Abidin (1420-70 CE) from the Sindh River which flows into it near Kondabal (74° 40' 57" long. & 34° 14' 55" lat). The water of the lake flows into Vitasta via Nun-nar channel. Manasbal is deepest of all other lakes in Kashmir plains. The average depth of the lake is 15 feet but at certain spots its depth may be more than two and a half time than this. During 1877 in a tragic incident eleven people belonging to Kondabal village on its shore drowned in the lake. The well-known historian of Kashmir Hassan Shah Khuihami who mentions its name as Mansar writes that the water of the lake near its southern flank does not freeze even in severe winter. On the western shore of the Lake towards Asham is an area earmarked for a military installation including a small airstrip exclusively for the use of Armed forces. Since Sep 2022 the Indian Navy has been running a naval training camp through state National Cadet Corps in Manasbal lake. The place, lake and ancient temple all are a special attraction for local population as well as non-local tourists.

An ancient Shiva temple made out of grey stone and measuring about 12 feet in height is located at 74° 41' 17" long. & 34° 15' 06" lat. on the eastern shore of Manasbal Lake. For most part of the year, the temple remains

submerged. The temple size is 6 ½' x 6 ½'. It is believed to be a 9th Century temple built during the rule of illustrious king Avantivarman (855 to 883 CE) or Shankarvarman (883 to 902 CE). In previous times it must have been above the ground, but has gradually sunk due to recession of land on account of earthquake etc. Only its two pyramidal roofs are visible now in the driest seasons. Also, the upper part of the pediment of the entrance is visible which faces west. A stone idol of Lord Ganesh can be seen in the triangular niche in angled roof cornice on outer side.

On the far north western bank of the lake are ruins of a terraced Mughal Garden, the construction of which is ascribed by tradition to Empress Noor Jahan. The garden, locally known as the Jarogha Bagh, is entirely in ruins but for the parts of some retaining walls and the corner bastions of the terraces. This seventeenth century structure is believed to have been built to cater to the needs of caravans that used to travel from the Punjab to Srinagar. As per the famous archaeologist R C Kak there are a number of sculptured stones belonging to some Buddhist shrine, scattered about on top of the low ridge on the northern bank of the lake.

Legend..... APMC (*Average Mid-Point Coordinates)



Anil Bhatt



NOISE CANNOT CLOUD FACTS

In an era where perception is often shaped by the loudest voices rather than the strongest facts, it is important to judge public servants by their work and conduct, not by the noise surrounding them.

Atal Dulloo is perhaps one of the most low-profile and honest most Chief Secretaries Jammu and Kashmir has seen. He has never believed in chasing headlines, seeking publicity, or projecting himself through interviews or media appearances.

Instead, he believes in letting his work speak for itself. He has quietly built a reputation as a work-oriented and process-based administrator, often spending long hours in office and remaining focused on governance rather than personal visibility.

Unlike many of his predecessors, Dulloo has opened the doors of the Chief Secretary's offices in both Jammu and Srinagar to everyone, including the common man.

One of the defining features of his tenure has been accessibility. Unlike the traditional image of an inaccessible bureaucrat, the doors of the Chief Secretary's office in both Jammu and Srinagar have remained open to ordinary citizens, employees, delegations, and public representatives. His office functions less like a closed bureaucratic chamber and more like a public darbar, where grievances are heard with patience and respect.

He does not believe in special treatment, favouritism or discrimination. Whether it is a senior politician, a government officer, employee or a poor citizen with nowhere else



to go, everyone receives the respect and attention. Visitors often find him standing up to receive them, listening attentively, accepting representations personally, and interacting with them with humility.

His approach has helped create an administrative culture where officials, too, are encouraged to engage with the public respectfully. Accessibility has become part of the ecosystem rather than an exception.

Those who have worked with him describe him as a leader who believes in fairness rather than favouritism. He does not

distinguish between influential personalities and an ordinary citizen seeking justice. For many, this has restored confidence that government offices exist to serve the people.

His office and its ecosystem today is perhaps closer to the public outreach associated with a Chief Minister or Lieutenant Governor than the stereotypical image of an inaccessible bureaucrat.

Those who criticise him without ever meeting him should first visit his office and experience his style of functioning. Unlike some previous administrations, where access to the Chief Secretary was often difficult even for former ministers, legislators and senior public representatives, Atal Dulloo has made himself available to everyone.

Equally significant has been his style of leadership within the bureaucracy. His tenure has also been marked by regular and time-bound review meetings aimed at improving accountability and expediting decision-making. Senior officials across departments acknowledge that projects are monitored closely and approvals are pursued with urgency. Rather than creating an atmosphere of fear, he has sought to motivate officers through professional engagement and mutual respect.

His emphasis has been on timely implementation of projects and accountability instead of intimidation.

Ask the officers and employees who work within the system rather than those commenting from political platforms. After decades of stagnation, his tenure witnessed significant movement in long-pending service matters affecting local officers of JKAS, JKPS and other services.

He played a key role in resolving numerous service-related issues that had remained entangled in litigation for years, paving the way for the induction of over 40 Jammu and Kashmir officers into the IAS, IPS and IFS. Several officers were also promoted to senior non-IAS positions such as DIGs and IGP.

Among government employees, Atal Dulloo enjoys considerable goodwill. Many officers and officials see him not merely as a

superior but as a mentor who understands the challenges of the administrative machinery.

Perhaps the biggest beneficiaries of his tenure have been local government employees. More than one lakh employees benefited from long-pending promotions, grade confirmations and service benefits that successive governments and administrations had failed to address. Officers who had retired with lower pay and pension despite earning higher promotions because their confirmations were delayed finally received long-awaited justice. He treated this 50 years long ailment.

Thousands of employees benefited from the finalisation of recruitment rules and clearance of promotion cases that had remained unresolved for decades. One of the beneficiary are Patwaris, Girdawaris and Naib-tehsildars. He has become a God send angel for locals employees.

For most of the employees, these were not merely administrative orders but long-delayed recognition of their professional careers and financial entitlements.

Whether one agrees or not, Shri Atal Dulloo was entrusted with the responsibility of leading Jammu and Kashmir's civil administration by the country's top leadership, including Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi, Union Home Minister Shri Amit Shah and Lieutenant Governor Shri Manoj Sinha. His appointment reflects the confidence reposed in his administrative ability and integrity.

Another notable aspect of his tenure has been his ability to steer the administration through Jammu and Kashmir's complex governance structure, where the Union Government, the Lieutenant Governor's administration, and the elected government all have important roles. Maintaining institutional balance while ensuring continuity of governance is no easy task. Yet, despite the inherent challenges, the administration has largely functioned without major bureaucratic controversy under his leadership.

His reputation for probity is not accidental.

Equally significant is the absence of any established personal controversy or allegation

regarding his integrity. Throughout his administrative career, Atal Dulloo has enjoyed a reputation for honesty and professional integrity. Those familiar with his background often recall that he inherited these values from his father, who was widely respected as an upright chief engineer known for his integrity and commitment to public service.

Criticism is an essential part of democracy, and every public office is open to scrutiny. However, criticism is most meaningful when it is grounded in facts rather than assumptions or regional narratives. Personal attacks and attempts to draw individuals into divisive debates rarely contribute to constructive public discourse.

Administrative stability:

Dulloo is widely regarded within the bureaucracy as a calm, methodical and consensus-oriented administrator. He has ensured continuity in governance without frequent policy shifts or public controversies.

Strong emphasis on digital governance:

His tenure has seen a major push towards reforms, solarisation, digitisation of government services, workflow re-engineering and technology-driven administration. The

government has expanded online citizen services through the E-Unnat platform and has emphasised end-to-end digitisation instead of partial computerisation.

Whole-of-Government approach:

One notable feature of his administration is the effort to break departmental silos by encouraging integrated governance and common digital platforms across departments.

Timeline implementations:

His tenure has focussed whole of government approach in implementation of infrastructure projects within timeline with budgetary violations and over soendings.

Ultimately, administrators should be judged by their work, accessibility, integrity, and the outcomes they deliver. Whether one agrees with every decision or not, it is difficult to overlook the administrative changes, employee-centric reforms, and accessible style of governance and large scale development implementation that have come to define Atal Dulloo's tenure.

Noise may dominate the moment, but facts endure far longer.

**Article is sourced from Social Media*

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 Vansh Raj kaul



FROM HINDU COLLEGE TO MAIN VAAPAS AAUNGA THE JOURNEY OF VANSH RAJ KAUL

At a time when the film industry is constantly searching for fresh voices with both creative sensitivity and technical understanding, Vansh Raj Kaul represents a generation that has chosen to learn the craft from the ground up. His journey from the theatre stages of Delhi to assisting one of India's most celebrated filmmakers is a story of perseverance, discipline and an unwavering commitment to cinema.

Born and raised with a deep fascination for storytelling, Vansh's relationship with cinema began long before he entered the industry. While films inspired him as an audience member, it was the process behind filmmaking that truly intrigued him. He was drawn not only to performances on screen but also to the invisible effort that goes into creating them—the writing, directing, rehearsals, production planning and countless creative decisions that shape every frame.

His formal artistic journey took shape at Hindu College, University of Delhi, where he immersed himself in theatre. During his college years, Vansh established himself as an actor, writer, director and organiser, eventually leading Ibtida, one of India's most respected college theatre societies, as its Director. His tenure was marked not only by creative productions but also by his ability to mentor young performers, lead large teams and create an environment where storytelling remained at the centre of every production.



The years spent in theatre became the foundation of his artistic identity. Theatre taught him discipline, collaboration and resilience. Rehearsals stretching late into the night, multiple script revisions and the pressure of live performances helped him understand that good storytelling demands patience and relentless hard work. More importantly, it instilled in him the belief that every individual involved in a production contributes equally to its success.

Like countless aspiring filmmakers, Vansh's transition from college theatre to the professional film industry was far from easy. Breaking into cinema is rarely straightforward. It demands persistence, the willingness to start from the bottom and the courage to embrace

uncertainty. Rather than waiting for opportunities to arrive, he focused on continuously learning, improving his craft and preparing himself for the moment when the right opportunity would present itself.

That defining opportunity came when he joined acclaimed filmmaker Imtiaz Ali as the Director's Assistant on *Main Vaapas Aaunga*. Working alongside one of India's most respected storytellers marked a significant milestone in his career and provided him with an education that extended far beyond textbooks or classrooms.

The experience exposed him to every aspect of large-scale filmmaking. From pre-production planning and coordinating departments to working closely with actors and assisting during production, Vansh witnessed firsthand the immense preparation required to bring a feature film to life. The experience reinforced his understanding that filmmaking is ultimately a collaborative art, where every department functions as an essential part of a much larger creative vision.

Beyond the technical aspects of filmmaking, working under Imtiaz Ali offered invaluable lessons in storytelling itself. Observing the director's creative process, his interactions with actors and his attention to emotional authenticity deepened Vansh's appreciation for cinema rooted in honesty rather than spectacle. It was an experience that refined both his creative instincts and his professional approach.

The opportunity also allowed him to work alongside some of the country's finest actors and technicians, exposing him to the standards of professionalism expected at the highest level of Indian cinema. For a young filmmaker, such experiences become invaluable lessons that shape not only technical competence but also creative maturity.

While *Main Vaapas Aaunga* became an important milestone, it represents only one chapter in a journey defined by consistent effort. Vansh has steadily built his understanding of filmmaking through theatre, advertisements, creative collaborations and practical experience across different formats. Each project has contributed to his evolution as

a storyteller while strengthening his belief that there are no shortcuts to mastering the craft.

Those who have worked with him describe him as someone deeply invested in understanding every aspect of filmmaking rather than limiting himself to a single discipline. Whether discussing performances, screenplay structure, direction or production logistics, his curiosity reflects an artist committed to lifelong learning.

At the heart of Vansh's journey lies an important message for aspiring artists. In an era dominated by instant visibility and overnight success stories, his path demonstrates the value of patience and sustained effort. His achievements are not the result of a single breakthrough but of years spent honing his skills, accepting criticism, learning from mentors and embracing every opportunity to grow.

Despite entering the professional film industry, he continues to remain closely connected to the values that theatre instilled in him—humility, teamwork and respect for every individual contributing to the creative process. These principles continue to shape his work and define his approach to storytelling.

Looking ahead, Vansh hopes to contribute to Indian cinema as a writer, director and actor, creating stories that are emotionally honest, culturally rooted and universally relatable. Having experienced filmmaking both on stage and on professional film sets, he believes meaningful cinema emerges from authenticity, empathy and a genuine understanding of people.

His journey from the rehearsal rooms of Hindu College to assisting on a major feature film stands as a reminder that success in the creative arts is rarely accidental. It is built through years of preparation, perseverance and an uncompromising commitment to one's craft. As Indian cinema continues to evolve, young professionals like Vansh Raj Kaul represent a generation determined not merely to participate in the industry but to contribute meaningfully to its future.



Honorary Lieutenant Inder Raina (Retd)



The Water Crisis in India TOO LITTLE, TOO MUCH

(Understanding the Challenge, Sharing the Responsibility, Securing the Future)

Every civilization has grown where water was available. Rivers have nurtured cultures, supported agriculture, built cities, and sustained life for thousands of years. India is blessed with mighty rivers, the Himalayas, forests, lakes, wetlands, and the life-giving monsoon. Yet today, millions of Indians live between two opposite realities. In one part of the country, people wait for water to meet their daily needs. In another, people struggle to protect their lives and homes from floods. One is

searching for water, while the other is trying to escape from it. This is the reality of India's water crisis: too little water in one place and too much in another. The challenge before us is not only the availability of water but also how wisely we manage every drop.

Water is the foundation of life. It is essential for drinking, farming, industries, hospitals, schools, electricity generation, and the environment. India receives a large amount of rainfall every year, but most of it falls within the four monsoon months. The rainfall is also





uneven. While some regions receive heavy rain, others receive much less. As the population grows, cities expand, industries develop, and the demand for food increases, the pressure on our water resources continues to rise. Climate change has made this challenge even greater by increasing the uncertainty of rainfall and the frequency of extreme weather events.

Water scarcity has become a serious concern in many parts of the country. Parts of Rajasthan, Bundelkhand, Marathwada, Vidarbha, and several other regions often face severe shortages during the summer months. In many towns and growing urban areas, the demand for water is greater than the available supply, forcing many families to depend on water tankers. India is one of the world's largest users of groundwater, but in many places groundwater is being used faster than nature can replace it. Shrinking lakes, polluted rivers, poor water conservation, and the wasteful use of water have made the situation more difficult. Water shortage affects agriculture, health, education, industries, sanitation, and the quality of life of millions of people.

At the same time, floods continue to affect

many parts of India almost every year. Rivers such as the Brahmaputra and Barak in Assam, the Kosi and Gandak in Bihar, and the Mahanadi in Odisha often overflow during periods of heavy rainfall. Floods also affect parts of West Bengal, Kerala, and several states in the North East. Villages become isolated, crops are destroyed, roads and bridges are damaged, schools remain closed, and thousands of families are forced to leave their homes. Floods contaminate drinking water, increase the spread of disease, damage public property, and cause heavy economic losses.

Many people wonder how the same country can suffer from water scarcity and floods at the same time. The answer lies not in the lack of rainfall alone but in the way water is managed. A large part of the rainwater flows into rivers and finally reaches the sea without being stored for future use. Many ponds, lakes, wetlands, and natural drainage channels have disappeared, become polluted, or lost their capacity to store water. Unplanned construction has reduced open spaces where rainwater could naturally enter the ground and recharge groundwater. Forests that slow the flow of rainwater and

protect the soil have declined in many areas. The Himalayas, often called the water towers of India, feed many of our major rivers, and changes in glaciers and snowfall may affect water availability in the future. Together, these factors increase both water scarcity and the risk of floods.

India has a rich tradition of water conservation. For centuries, communities built ponds, tanks, stepwells, johads, baolis, and other traditional water systems to collect and store rainwater. Many of these served villages successfully for generations. Today, modern science offers additional solutions through dams, reservoirs, groundwater recharge, efficient irrigation, flood forecasting, wastewater treatment, and better water distribution systems. Traditional wisdom and modern technology should work together to meet today's challenges.

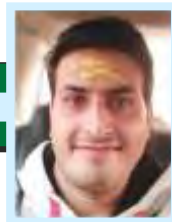
The country has already taken many positive steps. Rainwater harvesting is being encouraged in many states. Watershed development programmes, check dams, groundwater recharge projects, and the restoration of rivers, lakes, ponds, and wetlands are helping to improve water security. Farmers are increasingly adopting drip and sprinkler irrigation to save water. Better flood forecasting and early warning systems are helping reduce the impact of disasters. These efforts are encouraging, but they must continue with greater public participation and careful planning.

Water security cannot be achieved by the government alone. It is the shared respon-

sibility of all concerned. Governments can make policies and create facilities, but local bodies, industries, farmers, educational institutions, housing societies, community organisations, and every citizen also have an important role to play. Rainwater harvesting should become a common practice wherever possible. Every leaking tap and pipeline should be repaired without delay. Rivers, lakes, ponds, and wetlands should be protected from pollution and encroachment. Trees should be planted and protected because healthy forests help conserve water and reduce soil erosion. Water should be used carefully, recycled wherever possible, and returned to nature in a clean form. Every drop saved today is an investment in the future.

Nature has been generous to India. It has given us rivers, mountains, forests, glaciers, lakes, and the life giving monsoon. The question is not whether nature has given us enough water. The real question is whether we are using this precious gift wisely. Every flood reminds us that water cannot be ignored, and every dry well reminds us that water cannot be wasted. Every drop of rain carries two possibilities. It can become a flood that destroys, or a resource that sustains life. The difference is not made by nature alone. It is made by the choices we make as a nation and as citizens. Water is not only a natural resource. It is our shared responsibility and our shared future. The future of India's water will not be decided by the next monsoon alone. It will be decided by the decisions we make before the next monsoon arrives.





THE UNREAD PAGES OF HOME

Orzu Bhat sat alone on a weathered wooden bench at his university campus in New York City, the early autumn air carrying a faint chill. Students rushed past him—laughing, debating, scrolling through their phones—but he seemed detached from it all, as though suspended in a quiet, invisible bubble.

In his hands rested a book he had picked up from the university library almost absentmindedly. Yet now, it felt anything but ordinary.

Its subject unsettled him.

It spoke of Kashmir Shaivism—a profound, intricate philosophy rooted in the very land his ancestors came from. It spoke of Acharya Abhinavagupta, a towering intellectual figure, and of Lalleshwari—a mystic revered for her spiritual poetry.

Orzu stared at the pages, a strange unease rising within him.

“How is it,” he murmured to himself, “that people across the world study this... and I know nothing about it?”

A sharp gust of wind brushed past him. He shivered—not just from the cold, but from something deeper, something unsettling. A quiet fracture within his identity had begun to reveal itself.

He was a Kashmiri Pandit.

And yet, in this moment, he felt like a stranger to his own roots.

The thoughts spiraled.

He tried to trace himself backward—to memories, to stories, to something that felt like

home—but everything seemed distant, blurred, fragmented. His breathing grew uneven. His hands trembled slightly.

Without thinking further, he pulled out his phone and dialed a number he knew by heart.

Far away, in a modest one-room tenement in the migrant camps of Jagti near Jammu, the phone rang.

Pandit Som Nath Bhat, his grandfather, picked it up.

“Hello... Bob ji, Namaskar Mahraa?” Orzu's voice carried both affection and urgency.

On the other end, the old man's voice warmed instantly.

“Oh ho, Orzu... warai chu chuka. Kya dallel Ya'th times karothon phone?”

(Oh Orzu, you've remembered me at this time. What made you call at this hour?)

Orzu exhaled slowly, as if gathering courage.

“Bob ji... today I found a book in the university library... about Kashmir. About our Kashmir Shaivism”

There was a pause.

Som Nath shifted slightly on his worn bedding, his frail body carrying the weight of decades of exile. The walls around him were thin, the room sparse—far removed from the sprawling ancestral home he once had in the Valley before 1990.

Before everything changed.

Before the night of slogans.

Before fear replaced belonging.

Before the Exodus of Kashmiri Pandits.

Orzu continued, his voice trembling now.

"They are studying Kashmir Shaivism here, Bob ji. Scholars... researchers. They talk about Acharya Abhinavagupta... about Shiv Sadhika/Shiv Yogini Lal Ded... about Trika philosophy. They speak of it with such respect, such depth."

He swallowed.

"And I... I knew nothing. For me, Lal Ded was just another poet from Kashmir. Abhinavagupta... just a name. How is this possible?"

Silence filled the line.

Not empty silence—but heavy, lived silence.

Som Nath closed his eyes.

For a moment, he was no longer in Jagti.

He was back in his village—in the Valley—where the mornings smelled of dew and saffron, where temple bells echoed softly, where stories of sages and philosophers were not written in books, but lived in everyday life.

"We did not lose just our homes, Orzu," he said finally, his voice steady but carrying a quiet pain. "We lost our continuity."

Orzu listened intently.

"Your ancestors," Som Nath continued, "were not just inhabitants of Kashmir. They were keepers of knowledge. The land you come from gave the world thinkers like Abhinavagupta—who saw the universe as one consciousness—and mystics like Lal Ded, who spoke truths that even scholars struggle to understand."

He paused.

"But when we were forced to leave... we carried what we could. Some carried documents. Some carried idols. Most carried trauma."

"And many things..." he added softly, "...were left behind. Including parts of ourselves."

Orzu's eyes welled up.

"But Bob ji... why didn't we learn all this?"

Som Nath sighed.

"Because survival became more urgent than remembrance."

He continued:

"When you live in exile, in a single room, with memories of violence, loss, and uncertainty... philosophy becomes a luxury. Identity becomes something you hold quietly, inside, hoping it doesn't fade."

A distant noise crackled through the phone line.

Orzu tightened his grip.

"Bob ji... will we ever go back?"

The question lingered.

Som Nath did not answer immediately.

Instead, he spoke slowly, each word deliberate.

"We are still waiting."

He looked around his small room.

"Waiting to return. Waiting for justice. Waiting to reclaim not just land—but dignity."

Then, with a faint firmness:

"And waiting for you... your generation to remember what we could not preserve."

Back in New York, Orzu looked again at the book in his hands.

But now, it felt different.

It was no longer just a text.

It was a bridge.

A fragment of something broken—yet not entirely lost.

His shivering had stopped.

In its place was something else.

A quiet resolve.

"Bob ji," he said softly, "I want to learn. Everything. About us."

On the other end, Som Nath smiled—a rare, gentle smile.

"Then perhaps," he said, "we have not lost everything after all."

As the call ended, the campus noise slowly returned around him.

But Orzu remained still.

For the first time in a long while, he was not searching aimlessly.

He knew where to begin.

Not in the future.

But in the past—

in the wisdom of his people,

in the silence of exile,

and in the stories waiting to be remembered.



I.K. Raina



THE SEVEN PILLARS OF AKOORA

A Manifesto of Memory, Law, and Civilizational Reclamation

Prologue: The Geography of Belonging

To the casual traveler passing through the Anantnag district of South Kashmir, Akoora appears as a quintessential valley settlement. It is a place defined by its vibrant natural topography—cradled by the shimmering, snow-fed waters of the Lidder River, split by the clear streams of the Trout Nala, and cooled by the sweeping shade of ancient Chinar trees.

But to the displaced Kashmiri Pandit Baradari, Akoora is not merely a collection of coordinates on a map. It is a sacred landscape of memory, a legal battlefield, and a testament to a centuries-old way of life that was violently disrupted but never destroyed. For 36 years, since the traumatic exodus of 1990, our community has carried the architecture of this village in its collective heart.

Today, that passive memory is transforming into an active, organized mission. We are moving systematically, despite the enormous pain of displacement and exile, to the precision of administration. By mapping, documenting, and legally defending the Seven Pillars of Akoora's Heritage, the Baradari is asserting its permanent right to the soil of its ancestors. This is the comprehensive ledger of our roots, our losses, our victories, and our ongoing struggle to reclaim what is rightfully ours.

I. The Spiritual Axis (Devibal) :

The Trinity of the Asthapan

The spiritual foundation of Akoora was

historically anchored by three distinct manifestations of the divine, forming a protective, interconnected triangle that defined the daily rhythms of the village long before our displacement.

1. The Ganesh Temple: The Tree of Life

Located at the central geographic nexus where the historic lanes of Mohallas converge, the Ganesh Temple represents the ancient, organic roots of our faith. Unlike the structured stone temples of the urban centers, this sacred shrine was uniquely housed within the massive, hollowed-out trunk of a majestic, centuries-old tree.

This living temple was the heart of the village. It was where children were brought for blessings before starting their education, and where elders gathered in the cool morning air. The tree itself was viewed as a living deity, its roots gripping the very soil of Akoora just as the Pandit community did for generations. Though it stands today in its fallen trunk form, it remains the bedrock of our identity—a silent witness to our past and the ultimate symbol of our endurance.

2 The Durga Temple: The Dilapidated Silence

Adjacent to the ancient Ganesh site stands the structural Durga Temple, built by the dedicated hands of our ancestors in the year 1900. For nearly a century, this temple was the focus of intense devotion, its walls echoing with the sounds of morning and

evening Aartis, the ringing of heavy brass bells, and the soft glow of dozens of Diyas lit by local families.

The baseline of our later displacement was painfully foreshadowed by a secondary tragedy in 2003, when iconoclasts and thieves broke into the sanctum sanctorum and stole the precious Idol of Goddess Durga. The theft of the Murti was a deliberate attempt to tear out the spiritual heart of the community, leaving the physical structure empty. Today, the temple stands in a state of profound "dilapidated silence." There is no Abisheikh to cleanse the sanctum, no Puja to elevate the spirit, and no flame to pierce the darkness. We are left to wonder what the divinity thinks of our forced absence from her courtyard.

3. The Gift of the Lidder: The Consecration of Mahadev

The completeness of the pre-migration Devibal Trinity was sealed by a miraculous event that belongs firmly to our history in the valley: the "Gift of the Lidder." Years before the exodus, a majestic, naturally formed Shiva Linga was discovered resting in the bed of the flowing Lidder River. Recognizing this as a profound divine blessing, the Baradari retrieved and formally consecrated Mahadev directly at the Asthapan site beside the Durga temple.

By manifesting naturally from the waters of our native village, this Shiva Linga became the vital third pillar of our spiritual axis. Its pre-migration consecration ensures that even though the Durga Murti was stolen decades later, the ground remains intensely sanctified. The presence of Mahadev means the true spiritual seal of the Trinity was set by the river itself, keeping the ancient fire of our faith smoldering through the decades of exile.

II. The Center of Harmony: The Shivshakti Temple of Boni Bagh

4. The Shivshakti Temple

Moving outward toward the boundaries of other Mohalla the vibrant landscape opens up to the expanse of Boni Bagh (the Garden of Chinars). It is here, within the refreshing mist created by the nearby Paan Chader waterfall,

that the Shivshakti Temple stands. The historical layout of this site is deeply intertwined with the cultural legacy of local mohalladars. Recognizing the need for a unified space for community congregation, Baradari helped to oversee the development of this spiritual oasis. Boni Bagh was the grand finale of the village's festive calendar; it was the sacred ground where the vibrant Krishna Jula procession would culminate after weaving its way through the narrow lanes of all four Pandit Mohallas, bringing the entire Baradari together in a display of shared joy.

The temple suffered severe desecration during the targeted regional riots of 1986, foreshadowing the larger displacement that was to come four years later. Today, the temple is seen in "OK condition," largely because it is flanked by active CRPF security camps and protected by the immense courage of the few Pandit families who chose never to migrate, standing as living sentinels of our heritage.

In 2019, the Baradari achieved a historic milestone by organizing a grand Maha Hawan at the Shivshakti Temple—the first such smoke to rise from its altars in thirty years. While the subsequent global lockdowns and shifting geopolitical realities temporarily slowed our momentum, the 2019 Hawan proved that the spiritual link between the diaspora and Boni Bagh remains unbroken.

III. The Guardians and the Rites: The Triumphs of Administrative Law

The restoration of Akoora is not merely a spiritual longing; it is a rigorous exercise in administrative endurance, property verification, and legal defiance.

5. Thaineshwar Bairav: The Reclaimed Sentinel

In the sacred geography of Kashmir, a village cannot exist without its Kotwal—the guardian deity who protects the boundaries and ensures the safety of the main shrines. For Akoora, that guardian is Thaineshwar Bairav. His specific, divinely ordained role is to guard the approach to Maa Bargashaka Bhagwati (the revered Kuldevi whose primary seat rests on the mountain ridge overlooking the neighboring town of Mattan) from the eastern side.

Over the decades of our absence, greedy local interests slowly encroached upon the sacred land of the Bairav and completely blocked the ancient approach road leading to the altar, effectively cutting off the deity from his people. In 2019, the management committee launched a focused legal offensive. By coordinating directly with the Revenue Department and securing a personal spot-visit from the Tehsildar of Mattan, we successfully negotiated a formal settlement.

The encroachers were forced to back down, the approach road was cleared, and the site was successfully restored to its past glory. The reclamation of the Bairav road provided the legal and psychological blueprint for everything that followed. It proved that even in exile, the Baradari possessed the documentation and the willpower to enforce the law.

6. The 10th Day Kriya Ghat (Kreye Boon)

If the temples represent the joy of our living culture, the Kriya Ghat represents the dignity of our final transitions. Located under the protective shade of the Two Chinar Trees (Kreye Boon) along the banks of the Trout Nala, this site is where generations of Akurites performed the somber, essential rituals for their departed loved ones.

In the early months of 2026, a crisis emerged when three influential local families began constructing an unauthorized bridge (culvert) directly over the Trout Nala, physically encroaching upon the Ghat and threatening to permanently alter the sacred site. Ganesh Shivshakti Asthapan Management Committee, initiated an immediate escalation, firing off urgent formal representations to the Tehsildar Mattan and the Deputy Commissioner (DC) of Anantnag.

When the encroachers defied a formal stop-work order and completed the bridge under the cover of darkness, the Baradari mobilized globally. We organized a mass protest, scheduled for March 11, 2026. Sensing the absolute resolve of our community, the administration acted decisively. On the morning of March 11, the government's official encroachment squad arrived on-site

with heavy machinery, completely dismantling the unauthorized bridge and restoring the natural flow of the Nala. Our planned protest was instantly converted into a historic Thanksgiving Event, sending a powerful message across the valley: the Pandit community may be physically distant, but its eyes are always on Akoora.

7. The Shamshan Ghat

The battle for our final rites continues at the Shamshan Ghat, the ultimate destination for every soul that has passed through our village. This extensive asset comprises exactly 3 Kanals and 18 Marlas of land, officially designated in the ancient land records as Ahal Hanud (Property of the Hindus), situated prominently on the banks of a major branch of the Lidder River, in close proximity to the village's famous playing and cricket ground.

Because of its premium location near the recreation grounds and the riverfront, this sacred land has been partially encroached upon. Though we successfully persuaded the Tehsildar of Mattan to oblige us with a personal site inspection to verify the illegal boundaries, actual progress on the physical eviction of these encroachers has stalled within the bureaucratic machinery. The Baradari is currently preparing a comprehensive case, leveraging our consolidated historical records to force a final, non-negotiable demarcation of the entire Shamshan Bumi area.

IV. The Cradle of Knowledge : The Rebirth of the Dharamshalla

8. The Dharamshalla:

The historic Dharamshalla was a large, two-story pre-independence structure built adjacent to the Trout Nala. It fulfilled a vital dual purpose: its ground floor served as a peaceful sanctuary where high-caliber, traveling Sadhus and pilgrims could rest, while its upper rooms housed the local village school. This school was the intellectual crucible of Akoora, producing a highly literate, professional, and well-educated

Pandit community that went on to serve in the judiciary, health, banking, administration, and academia across India.

In 1993, during the absolute peak of armed militancy in the valley, the Dharamshalla was targeted and intentionally burnt to the ground. The ashes of that building represented an attempt to erase both our educational lineage and our physical presence in the area.

For twenty-eight years, the charred foundations stood as a silent reminder of that loss. Then, in 2021, the committee decided that compliance with exile was over. We returned to the exact spot of the ruin and performed a formal, sacred Bhumi Pujan. We designed a comprehensive structural blueprint: a grand two-story residential facility built upon a solid 2,100 square foot plinth, engineered to house 8 independent one-room sets, with each individual unit featuring its own modern kitchen and attached washroom to ensure dignity, privacy, and long-term comfort.

Through the meticulous management of our community funds, transparent accounting, and the overwhelming generosity of Akurites worldwide, we have successfully completed and opened the first two beautiful sets on the Ground Floor.

Furthermore, our vision has steadily materialized: the Community Kitchen and Hawanshalla are now physically in place. While a few minor leftover operational details remain, they are being actively addressed by the committee to render the facilities fully operational.

The purpose of this building is explicitly practical: it provides a high-quality, safe, and completely home like night-stay destination for any Akurite returning to the valley to inspect their left-over properties, navigate property documentation with local authorities, conduct root-seeking tours to show their children the homeland, or embark on major regional pilgrimages like the Martand Tirath. The message written into the concrete of this new building is clear to all local : The Pandits have never relinquished their homeland, and

we are actively building the physical infrastructure of our return.V. The Final Frontier: The Legal Battle for the Razbal

The final piece of the geographical puzzle is the Razbal—the traditional open-air shrine dedicated to the Grama Devata (the village guardian deity). This site represents the collective spiritual security of the entire Mohalla, a space where community energy was anchored for centuries.

Because we have been physically "absent from the scene" since 1990, the Razbal has faced the most severe crisis: it is currently totally and unauthorizedly encroached. In the labyrinth of Kashmiri revenue management, many customary spaces like the Razbal were held by long-term traditional usage rather than a specific, explicitly named deed in the Jamabandi (master land records), making them highly vulnerable to land-grabbing during the decades of our displacement.

However, our ongoing investigation has revealed our "Golden Key." In the official premigration Revenue Records of 1989-1990, the land comprising the Razbal is explicitly classified under the permanent designation of Ghair Mumkin (uncultivable, sacred, or public utility community land).

Under the strict provisions of the JsK Migrant Immovable Property Act, any unauthorized conversion, sale, or building upon land designated as Ghair Mumkin during our forced absence is legally null and void. The burden of proof now rests entirely on the encroachers to explain how they came to occupy sacred community land.

Backed by our digital directory of 225 distinct family heads, we are currently compiling a massive body of oral affidavits and historical evidence to launch a formal "Restoration of Land Character" petition before the Deputy Commissioner of Anantnag.

Epilogue : 36 years in exile: the way forward.

The story of Akoora while being a tragedy of displacement; has evolved into a masterclass in Civilizational Repair. Over the last few years, the Baradari has systematically built the

framework for a sustained cultural renaissance:

| **Phase 1** | Compilation of the Digital Directory | Unified 225 scattered family heads into a singular communicative body. |

| **Phase 2** | Consolidation of Baradari Banking Accounts | Established absolute financial transparency to fund massive building projects. |

| **Phase 3** | Reclamation of Thaineshwar Bairav C Kriya Ghat | Proved the power of administrative law and forced the removal of illegal structures.

|| **Phase 4** | Activation of GF Dharamshalla, Hawanshalla C Kitchen | Created a physical, modern harbor to cook, gather, and welcome returning families. | The mission now turns to completion.

Our immediate next step is the launch of action toward wrapping up the leftover requirements for the kitchen, expanding our inventory of collective copper utensils for community feasts, and breaking ground on the second floor to complete the remaining six residential sets, besides complete restoration

and renovation of Devibal Temple. And, last but not least, performing annual Hawan on 18th September 2026.

Thank God, with the unwavering support of the Baradari and generous contributions, the first doors are open. The keys are in our hands, the water is flowing smoothly in the Trout Nala (Idiomatic usage only. Trout Nala is in a very bad shape both dirty and encroached), the Hawanshalla is all set, and the rooms [2] are ready. People are welcome to stay.

The ancient Ganesh tree still rests in its fallen form in Devibal, anchoring our history. The Shiva Linga stands tall beside the Durga temple. The approach road to the Bairav is completely open. We have preserved the map of our ancestors in the language of modern law and architecture.

The exile needs to end. Government should walk the talk. A graceful and dignified return and secured living conditions for KP'S is the only way forward.

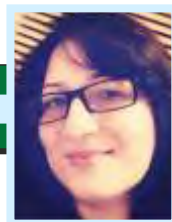
Akoora is beckoning.

*President, Ganesh Shivshakti Asthapan
Committee (GSA-AKOORA)
A Kashmiri Pandit in Exile*





Meenakshi Kaul



THE HEART AND HANDS OF MY HOME

Our house never woke up late. The hustle started before sunrise, always. Mom was up first & she wouldn't step into the kitchen until after her bath and pooja. To her, food wasn't just food. It was prayer, care & her way of saying "I love you" three times a day, on a plate. By 9am, breakfast and lunch were both done. That was the plan to get out of the kitchen early so she could get on with other chores like cleaning, washing and by afternoon, her knitting, embroidery, and sewing.

I don't think I ever saw my Mom sit idle. She was always doing something. A brilliant host, caring, affectionate and loud in the best way. An extrovert through and through. Her laugh could fill the whole house, and her honesty could fill your heart. People either adored her for that bluntness or found it a bit much. She called a spade a spade. No sugar-coating, because for her, love meant not lying to the people you cared about. Dad was the opposite of her: quiet, introvert, gentle in a way that didn't need words. But don't let the quiet fool you. He was a master: a super engineer by profession and at home, he was everything. Carpenter, plumber, tailor and later, even the cook. If something broke, Dad fixed it. If a button came off, Dad stitched it. He didn't talk much. But his hands? His hands said everything, every single day.

They were so different. As people say, "Opposites attract". Mom was the tomboy, carefree, loud, and full of life. Dad was steady, reserved, and calm. What tied them together was Art and Music. Ragas in the morning, bhajans at dusk & movies (Amitabh-Jaya was their favorite jodi) When the music played, their differences just... melted.

Together, they built our home. Not just with bricks and cement. Piece by piece with love, hard work and a kind of quiet teamwork that I didn't understand as a kid. They argued, loudly sometimes, but somehow, those arguments always turned into something beautiful. That was their magic.

Mom would dream it up; Dad would build it. Mom would speak her mind, Dad would listen and in that space between them, I got a childhood most people only read about in books. As an only child, I was never spoiled. Mom was strict & I was terrified of her till my teens. One look from her, one raised eyebrow and I'd sit up straight. Then something shifted, the fear faded and suddenly, she became my best friend. The first person I ran to with every secret, every heartbreak, and every silly dream. Dad never scolded me, not once. He didn't believe in physical punishment. His way was quieter, firmer. Sometimes just a look of disappointment from him hurt more than any scolding ever could, and I listened.

Everything was good... until it wasn't.

Mom left us too soon. No warning, no goodbye. Me and Dad were shattered. How do you imagine life without the person who was the center of everything? She was the nucleus of our family. The one who held us together. The day she left, the house didn't just go quiet, it went empty.

And that's when I saw Dad change. He took all his grief, folded it up neatly and tucked it away where I couldn't see it. His whole world became me. Maybe he promised Mom that....I don't know. He gave up his career so I could have mine. He held my hand through everything: the good, the bad, the reckless decisions I made.

People thought he was like Dhritarashtra, blinded by love for his child, but he wasn't blind. He was choosing.... Choosing to see only me, so I wouldn't feel her absence as sharply. He became both Mom and Dad... without ever trying to take her place. He never gave me lectures but he taught me anyway.... That grief can be carried with dignity that love doesn't end just because someone dies. He lived more years as a widower than as a husband, but he lived those years with grace.

And in the end... he chose her again. On the same day she left us, he left too. Like he'd been waiting his turn. Like he was finally saying, "Okay. I'm coming home to you now."

KASHMIRI PANDIT MARTYRS

List for July Month

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

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

S No.	Martyr's Name	Location Killing	Date
1.	Sh. Shridar Joo	...	01.07.1990
2.	Smt. Smt. Babli	Drusu, Pulwama	01.07.1990
3.	Smt. Roopawati (Mother Of Babli)	Drusu, Pulwama	01.07.1990
4.	Sh. Trilkoi Nath	...	01.07.1990
5.	Sh. N.G. Sadhu	...	01.07.1990
6.	Sh. Dina Nath	Ali Kadal, Srinagar	01.07.1990
7.	Sh. Raj Nath Dhar	Ali Kadal, Srinagar	01.07.1990
8.	Smt. Girja Dhar	Ali Kadal, Srinagar	01.07.1990
9.	Smt. Teja Dhar	Ali Kadal, Srinagar	01.07.1990
10.	Sh. Predman Krishan	Kokernag, Anantnag	02.07.1990
11.	Smt. Arandatti	Batyar, Srinagar	02.07.1990
12.	Sh. Mohan Lal	Harwan, Srinagar	03.07.1990
13.	Sh. Arjan Nath	Shopian	03.07.1990
14.	Sh. Makhan Lal	Srinagar	03.07.1990
15.	Sh. Dharamdass	Srinagar	03.07.1990
16.	Sh. Hari Krishan	Uri	06.07.1990
17.	Sh. Satish Kumar	Baramulla	06.07.1990
18.	Sh. Jawahar Lal Bhat	Harwan, Srinagar	06.07.1990
19.	Sh. Dina Nath Mujoo	Rawalpora, Srinagar	06.07.1990
20.	Sh. Gopi Nath Raina	Ganderbal, Srinagar	08.07.1990
21.	Sh. Avtar Krishan	Hawal, Srinagar	08.07.1990
22.	Sh. Suraj Prakash	Rainawari, Srinagar	09.07.1990
23.	Sh. Gauri Shankar	Baramulla	09.07.1990
24.	Sh. Shibani Koul	Tangmarg	09.07.1990
25.	Sh. P K Kotru	Srinagar	09.07.1990
26.	Sh. Brij Nath Koul	...	09.07.1990
27.	Sh. Inder Krishan Kumar	Mehjoor Nagar, Srinagar	10.07.1990
28.	Sh. Kuldeep Chand	Natipora, Srinagar	10.07.1990
29.	Sh. Shambu Nath	...	11.07.1990
30.	Sh. Inder Kumar	Natipora, Srinagar	11.07.1990
31.	Sh. Nanaji	Batmaloo, Srinagar	11.07.1990
32.	Sh. Nank Chand	...	11.07.1990

S No.	Martyr's Name	Location Killing	Date
33.	Sh. Shanker Nath	Shopian	11.07.1990
34.	Sh. Raghu Nath	Tral, Pulwama	
35.	Sh. Kameshwar Lal	Anantnag	
36.	Sh. Jiwan Lal	Rainawari, Srinagar	15.07.1990
37.	Sh. Bishambar Nath Koul	...	15/16.07.1990
38.	Sh. Radha Krishan Koul	Ashmiji, Anantnag	15/16.07.1990
39.	Sh. Ved Prakesh Koul	...	16.07.1990
40.	Sh. Brij Nath Koul	...	16.07.1990
41.	Sh. Shibban Lal Koul	Ashmiji, Anantnag	16.07.1990
42.	Sh. Anand Narayan	...	17.07.1990
43.	Mrs. Sahini		18.07.1990
44.	Sh. Chand Ram Kher	Damjan, Anantnag	18.07.1990
45.	Sh. Hansraj Suri	...	20.07.1990
46.	Sh. S S Abrol	Anantnag	20.07.1990
47.	Sh. Roop Raj	Badgam	22.07.1990
48.	Sh. Janki Nath	Sumbal	26.07.1990
49.	Sh. Nath Ji	Anantnag	26.07.1990
50.	Sh. Vaed Lal	Sopore	26.07.1990
51.	Sh. Badri Nath Wattal	Rainawari, Srinagar	26.07.1990
52.	Sh. Bharat Bhushan	Jammu	29.07.1990
53.	Sh. Avtar Singh		29.07.1990
54.	Sh. Adarsh Jee	Baramulla	29.07.1990
55.	Sh. Gauri Shankar	Anantnag	29.07.1990
56.	Sh. Bharat Singh	Jammu	29.07.1990
57.	Sh. Omkar Nath Matoo	Dragbal, Pompore	29.07.1990
58.	Sh. Sundri Lal	Kangan, Srinagar	30.07.1990
59.	Sh. Mahesh Kumar	...	30.07.1990
60.	Sh. N G Sadhu	Manzgam, Anantnag	31.07.1990
61.	Sh. Virander Kumar Suri	Mandirbagh, Srinagar	30.07.1990
62.	Sh. Mohan Lal Mattoo		01.07.1991
63.	Smt. Vijay Bhat		31.07.1991
64.	Sh. Jagar Nath		06.07.1993
65.	Sh. Neel Kant Lala		25.07.1993
66.	Sh. Piya Lal Raina		13.07.1994
67.	Sh. Sona Ram		25.07.1995



July 13 as Black Day for Kashmiri Pandits

Various Kashmiri Pandit organisations observed July 13, 2026 as a Black Day in Jammu. This was to remember the victims of the communal riots that were unleashed in Kashmir on the day in 1931.

The day was observed in Delhi-NCR, Pune, and other parts of India. The day was observed by wearing black badges and black headgear, hoisting black flags on their rooftops, and offering prayers in memory of the innocent Kashmiri Pandits and non-Kashmiri-speaking Hindus living in Kashmir, in particular the business class.

Special prayers were also offered in solemn remembrance of the nine innocent Kashmiri Pandits martyred in the Kanikoot massacre in Budgam, and Vicharnaag in Srinagar.

Observing the Black Day, Panun Kashmir expressed anguish that, for decades, the erstwhile State Government officially observed July 13 as "Martyrs' Day" while the suffering and sacrifices of the Kashmiri Pandit community remained ignored.

The All-State Kashmiri Pandit Conference (ASKPC) and Shree Sanatan Dharam Yuvak Sabha (SSDYS), under the leadership of its President, Moti Lal Malla, observed Black Day by organising a peaceful protest sit-in at Muthi, Jammu.

A large number of members of the displaced Kashmiri Pandit community, including prominent social activists, intellectuals, community leaders, women, youth, and senior citizens, participated in the programme. The gathering expressed deep anguish over the tragic events, discrimination, persecution, and atrocities suffered by the Kashmiri Pandit community over the decades and remembered the countless victims who sacrificed their lives during periods of turmoil and violence in Kashmir.

Kashmiri Khatri Hindu Maha Sabha paid

rich tributes to Hindu martyrs and observed July 13, 1931 as "Black Day".

Annual Kheer Bhawani Mela Celebrated in Valley

As per media reports, a record number of displaced Kashmiri Pandits assembled at Mata Kheer Bhawani temple in Tulmulla, central Kashmir's Ganderbal, on June 22, 2026, on the occasion of Jyeshtha Ashtami.

As reported, over 214 buses ferried the Pandits to the Shrine over a few days. A day before the festival, the Mata Kheer Bhawani Ji Yatra Welfare Society, which facilitates the annual pilgrimage, served over 10,000 devotees at its langar (community kitchen), according to M.K. Yogi, the society's general secretary.

Amongst the yatries were many youngsters of the next Generation travelling to the

LG Prays for Peace, Prosperity at Mata Kheer Bhawani Shrine

Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha paid obeisance at the revered Mata Kheer Bhawani Temple at Tulmulla in Ganderbal on the auspicious occasion of Jyeshtha Ashtami. He offered prayers for peace, prosperity and the well-being of the people of Jammu and Kashmir.

He extended his greetings to devotees and wished that the blessings of Mata Ragnya Devi continue to guide everyone towards harmony, progress and spiritual fulfilment.

Interacting with Kashmiri Pandit Community members, Sinha assured that the comprehensive arrangements have been successfully put in place to ensure a seamless and spiritual experience for everyone.

The Lieutenant Governor was accompanied by Atal Dulloo, Chief Secretary; Nalin Prabhat, Director General of Police; Anshul Garg, Divisional Commissioner Kashmir; Jatin Kishore, Deputy Commissioner

Ganderbal; Dr Arvind Karwani, Relief & Rehabilitation Commissioner; senior officials of police and civil administration and heads of Kashmiri Pandit organisations.

KPs Celebrate 'Jyeshtha Ashtami' at Kheer Bhawani Peeth in Jammu

Thousands of Kashmiri Pandits living in Jammu assembled at Kheer Bhawani Peeth in Janipur to celebrate Jyeshtha Ashtami, popularly known as Mela Kheer Bhawani, with deep religious fervour and devotion.

Displaced Kashmiri Pandits established the Shrine in exile. Religious ceremonies commenced with the first Aarti at 3 AM and continued throughout the day with special prayers, hom, bhajans, pooja and distribution of prasad.

More than 20,000 earthen lamps were prepared and offered during the celebrations as devotees prayed for the well-being of their families and fulfilment of their wishes. The shrine complex and surrounding Bhawani Nagar area wore a festive look. Decorated for the annual festival

The management also highlighted ongoing development works at the Peeth and appealed for community support in transforming the Shrine into a grand spiritual centre for future generations.

Abdullah Visits

Tulmulla and Interacts with KPs

National Conference president Dr Farooq Abdullah, while interacting with KPs in Tulmulla on the eve of Zaisht Ashtami, expressed hope that displaced Kashmiri Pandits would return.

Referring to the return of Kashmiri Pandits, the NC chief said people in the Valley wanted them to come back and live alongside other communities.

When asked about measures taken for their rehabilitation, Abdullah said that both the Union Territory administration and the Centre have to make the necessary arrangements.

Mufti Urges KPs to look for Future to Reconnect with Kashmir

People's Democratic Party (PDP) president

and former Chief Minister Mehbooba Mufti asked Kashmiri Pandits to "forget the past," look towards the future, and reconnect with Kashmir. She said the community should be encouraged to strengthen its ties with the Valley while preserving the spirit of brotherhood and coexistence.

She was speaking to the reporters after paying obeisance at the annual Mata Kheer Bhawani mela at Tulmulla.

She said many members of the community residing in Jammu continue to face difficulties and should be provided facilities and benefits on a par with those available to migrant families.

Congress Leader Mir Visits Tulmulla

Senior Congress leader and MLA Dooru, G.A. Mir, while speaking to reporters after visiting the annual Mata Kheer Bhawani mela at Tulmulla in Ganderbal district, said the festival symbolises J&K's centuries-old tradition of communal harmony and brotherhood.

"The annual Mata Kheer Bhawani mela reflects the faith of Kashmiri Pandits and witnesses participation from people from J&K as well as outside the region.

"We have become victims of politics. The better we are as people, the worse our image has become outside," he said.

Highlighting the issue of the return of Kashmiri Pandits, Mir said their absence continues to leave a void in Kashmir's social and cultural identity. "Without Kashmiri Pandits, Kashmir is incomplete, and its image is incomplete. The Centre of brotherhood that Kashmir used to be will remain incomplete until they return," he said.

KPs Recall Selfless

Services of Keshav Bhat Jotshi

Glowing tributes were paid to the legendary Pt. Keshav Bhat Jotshi, on his Nirvan Diwas at the Writers Club Abhinav Theatre, in Jammu. The function was organised by the Rainawari KP Action Committee (RKPAC).

Dr Arvind Karwani, Commissioner (Relief & Rehabilitation) (M), graced the commemoration as the chief guest.

KP Organisations Observe Vaishnavi 14th Death Anniversary of ANVashnavi

Glowing tributes were paid to former president of All State Kashmiri Pandit Conference (ASKPC) and an RSS ideologue, Pt Amarnath Vaishnavi, on his 14th death anniversary by various KP organisations.

Those who spoke in the various organisations' programme described Late Vaishnavi Ji as a towering son of the soil, an uncompromising champion of Sanatan Dharma, an unwavering nationalist, and one of the greatest community leaders of the Kashmiri Pandit community. His lifelong struggle for the protection of the identity, dignity, rights, and existence of the Kashmiri Pandit community remains an enduring source of inspiration.

The main function was organised by ASKPC in Jammu, led by its chief, M L Malla. Ex-Chief Secretary Vijay Bakaya was the chief guest on the occasion, on which a floral tribute was paid to the late leader. M L Malla, while recalling the services of the leader, said that Vaishnavi Ji's life was an open book; he never compromised on his principles and fought for the rights of nationalist people in J&K as well as his community till his last breath.

Relief Comm Reviews

Development Works in Migrant Camps

A meeting was held under the chairmanship of Relief and Rehabilitation Commissioner (Migrants) Dr Arvind Karwani to review ongoing development works in the migrant camps at Jammu, including migrant schools, dispensaries and community halls, and to take stock of budgetary provisions made by various government departments for the financial year 2026-27.

The Commissioner reviewed the status of basic amenities, including drinking water, power supply, and sanitation, in the camps. Works worth over Rs 100 crore have been approved by the Government recently, including about Rs 82 crore for repair and renovation of assets in the camps, with tender work in progress. Five bore wells are to be

commissioned by the end of the month, along with renovation of more than two dozen hand pumps, while the multi-purpose community hall at Jagti is estimated at Rs 6.5 crore.

Jagti Inmates

Continue to Face Water Scarcity

The inmates of Jagti township have expressed grave concern over prevailing water shortage in their town and urged the authorities to take immediate steps in solving the problem, failing which they will be forced to launch agitation.

The leaders of Jagti Township have sought the intervention of the Lt Governor and the Chief Minister to mitigate the suffering of the township's inmates.

KP Sabha, Jammu Welcomes Action of State Intelligence Agency

Sh. K.K. Khosa, President KP Sabha, Amphalla Jammu welcomed the action of the State Intelligence Agency on filing the charge sheet about the abduction and gruesome murder of Ms Sarla Bhat in 1990. Although the action is delayed, it is appreciable on the part of the UT administration for acknowledging the barbaric act of terrorists leading to the gruesome murder and mass exodus of Kashmiri Pandits in 1990. The members of the Executive Committee in the meeting held under the chairmanship of Sh. K.K. Khosa hoped that the UT government shall execute the legal follow-up to the case in a time-bound manner for an early delivery of justice. The members of the Executive Committee also see a ray of hope in conducting investigations on a similar analogy on the cold-blooded murder of several other prominent citizens from the Kashmiri Pandit community in 1989-90.

The Executive Committee expressed concern over recent statements by certain Kashmir-centric political leaders advocating dialogue with counterparts across the border for establishing peace in the region. While peace and stability are essential prerequisites for development and prosperity, it is equally important to recognise that these political

formations have seldom raised their voice for a judicial inquiry into the circumstances that led to the targeted killings and mass displacement of KPs in 1990.

KDD Team to Raise Migrants' Issues in Parliament

On July 11, 2026, BJP Jammu & Kashmir UT president and MP, Rajya Sabha, Sat Sharma, CA, reviewed the functioning of the Kashmiri Displaced District in Jammu and sought comprehensive feedback on issues concerning the displaced Kashmiri Hindu community.

Addressing a meeting of KDD office bearers, he invited suggestions to strengthen KDD's outreach and improve communication with broader sections of the community.

Team KDD highlighted the continued official apathy towards the displaced community, particularly the residents of the migrant camp of Jagti. The team drew

attention to erratic drinking water supply, prolonged delays in repairing leaking residential quarters, poor sanitation, dilapidated internal lanes, and an inadequate drainage system.

The meeting also discussed the long-pending issue of the permanent and dignified return and rehabilitation of the displaced community in Kashmir.

Sat Sharma assured that the BJP remains fully committed to addressing the concerns of the displaced community. He promised to personally undertake a detailed visit to the migrant camps to assess the ground situation. He assured that these issues would be forcefully raised during the forthcoming Parliament session. He emphasised that such interactions should continue regularly to ensure sustained engagement with the community.

*Sources: Agencies
Editing: Vijay Kashkari*

Former ASKPC President Shri Radha Krishan Raina Remembered

Jammu, 24 July 2026

The All State Kashmiri Pandit Conference (ASKPC), under the presidentship of Shri Moti Lal Malla, held a condolence meeting in Jammu to mourn the sad demise of Shri Radha Krishan Raina, former President of the organisation.

Remembering his dedicated service to the community, the participants described Shri Raina as a humble, respected, and selfless leader who worked tirelessly for the welfare and upliftment of the Kashmiri Pandit community. His invaluable contributions and commitment will always be remembered with gratitude.

A two-minute silence was observed to pray for the eternal peace of the departed soul. Rich tributes were paid, and heartfelt condolences were conveyed to the bereaved family expressed their solidarity with the family and prayed to the Almighty to grant them strength and courage to bear this irreparable loss.



*P K Raina
General Secretary,
All State Kashmiri Pandit Conference (ASKPC), Jammu*

SANJAY PANDITA'S SAFFRON WINDS RELEASED AT A GLITTERING LITERARY FUNCTION IN SRINAGAR

SRINAGAR, June 17: Poet and columnist Sanjay Pandita formally released his much-awaited anthology of poems, *Saffron Winds*, at a glittering literary function organized by the Jammu & Kashmir Cultural Academy in Srinagar on June 27, 2026.

The event was chaired by eminent writer Satish Vimal and witnessed the presence of many distinguished writers, poets, scholars, literary critics, and lovers of literature from across the Kashmir Valley. The gathering celebrated not only the release of a book but also the enduring spirit of Kashmiri literature and its rich cultural legacy.

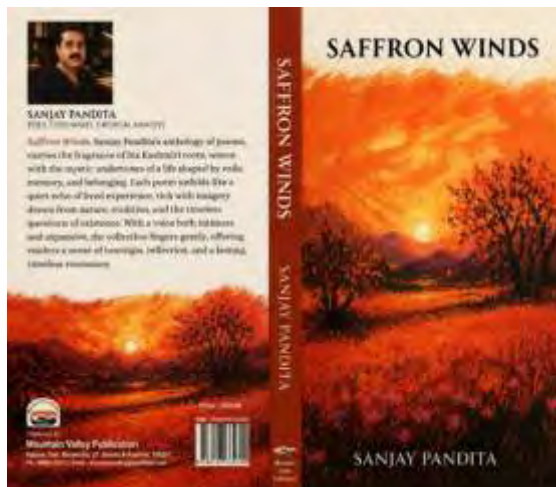
Saffron Winds is a collection of poems deeply rooted in the ethos of Kashmir. Through vivid imagery and lyrical expression, the anthology explores themes of memory, exile, identity, spirituality, nature, love, hope, and resilience. The poems capture the fragrance of Kashmir's saffron fields while reflecting the emotional landscape of a people bound to their homeland through memory and faith. Blending personal experience with universal emotions, the collection presents a journey through loss, longing, belonging, and the enduring strength of the human spirit.

Speaking on the occasion, the speakers appreciated Sanjay Pandita's poetic voice for its sensitivity, depth, and evocative language. They observed that his poems preserve the cultural memory of Kashmir while speaking to readers across geographical and emotional boundaries. They described *Saffron Winds* as a significant addition to contemporary Indian English poetry.



from lived experiences, cherished memories, and an abiding connection with the land of Kashmir, hoping that its poems would resonate with readers who seek beauty, introspection, and hope amid life's uncertainties.

The function concluded with an engaging interaction between the author and the audience, followed by a formal vote of thanks. The release of *Saffron Winds* marked another significant milestone in Sanjay Pandita's literary journey and was widely appreciated as a memorable celebration of poetry, culture, and the timeless spirit of Kashmir.



In his address, Sanjay Pandita expressed his heartfelt gratitude to the Jammu & Kashmir Cultural Academy for organizing the release ceremony. He thanked the distinguished chair, fellow writers, guests, readers, and well-wishers for their encouragement and support. He remarked that *Saffron Winds* was born

Ravinder Pandita Awarded Lal Ded National Literary Award by LG Manoj Sinha



Srinagar, 13 July'2026

Shri Ravinder Pandita, Chairman Save Sharda Committee Kashmir Regd was awarded with Lal Ded national Literary award at a glittering Book released function in Tagore Hall Srinagar for Cultural & Heritage Preservation. The event was the Book release function of 'Lal Ded – The Mother of Kashmir' authored by Dr. Vaidehi Taman. Many more activists were awarded at this Book launch event that included Commodore retd. D. S Sodhi, journalist Manzoor Dar amongst others.

Ravinder Pandita has thanked the organizers for bringing forth importance of Lal Ded as shared heritage. He alongwith organizers have demanded that a library be set up in the name of Lal Ded and her contemporary works.

Noted guests included Dr. Vinay Sahasrbude former MP, Tirath Singh Rawat former CM of Uttarakhand and Smt. Neerja Mattoo a notable writer of Kashmir.

FIVE-YEAR-OLD AUTHOR SOHUM BRINGS THE HIMALAYAS TO THE HOUSE OF COMMONS

Hosted by Bob Blackman MP, Chair of the APPG for British Hindus, the Parliamentary launch of *The Mystic Family of the Himalayas* celebrated Sohum — aged five and as the youngest spiritual published author in the world — as ancient Sanatana wisdom found a proud home on the lands of Britain.

LONDON, 6 July 2026 — On Monday evening, 6 July, at the House of Commons, five-year-old author Sohum launched his debut series, *The Mystic Family of the Himalayas*, before an audience of more than 60 guests — three original picture books carrying the deities and devotion of Sanatana Dharma into the heart of the British Parliament.

The evening, themed “Eternal Stories — Where Ancient Wisdom Meets Young Voices,” was hosted by Bob Blackman CBE MP, Chair of the APPG for British Hindus.

The event was opened by Mr Blackman, who, together with Sohum and his family, unveiled the books to the room. A steadfast friend of the Hindu community — who has famously taken his parliamentary oath on the Bhagavad Gita — he warmly congratulated Sohum, encouraged him to keep writing, and, in a memorable touch, shared a few entrepreneurial tips to guide the young author on the journey ahead.

Sohum spoke, in his own words, about his journey, then read aloud from Book One, *The Magical Mango* — introducing guests to naughty Ganesha, brave Murugan, Mother Parvati and mighty Shiva — before taking questions with a warmth and confidence that charmed the room.

“I am inspired by Ganpati writing the Vedas, and my mom saying that everyone can write. So I thought — if Ganpati could write the Vedas, I can write spiritual stories too.”

— Sohum, aged five

“Very rarely do we encounter someone who writes with such sincerity and purpose at such a young age. It has been an honour for all of us at Om Books International to be a part of Sohum's journey.”

— Ajay Mago, Publisher, Om Books International

Celebrated as the youngest spiritual published author in the world and affectionately called a “Child Tolkien,” Sohum has not simply retold the old tales, but told them anew in his own voice. That such a voice should be honoured within Parliament made the evening a proud celebration of the roots, culture and enduring faith of Sanatana Dharma — carried across generations, and now welcomed onto the lands of Britain.



Notes to Editors

The Mystic Family of the Himalayas is a three-book children's picture-book series — *The Magical Mango*, *The Birth of Ganesha* and *The Birth of Murugan* — written by Sohum, aged five, of Kashmiri Pandit heritage, and published by Om Books International. The launch was held on Monday 6 July 2026 at the House of Commons, Westminster, hosted by Bob Blackman CBE MP.

Media contact: Dr. Anisha Safaya · bysohum@gmail.com · 07854 341368 · Interviews available on request.

NEET UG 2026 Expected Cut Off for Kashmiri Migrants in Karnataka Govt. Colleges

With more than 22.79 lakh candidates appearing for the NEET-UG 2026 re-examination on June 21, students are now awaiting provisional answer keys and the expected cutoffs. While the National Testing Agency (NTA) has yet to release the official results, based on the difficulty level of this year's paper, previous years' trends and the overall candidate pool, coaching experts have begun projecting category-wise expected cutoffs for the examination.

Cutoffs for NEET-UG vary across categories and are determined by factors including the total number of candidates, the number of available seats, and the performance distribution on the day of the exam. The general category has required scores north of 700 to remain competitive for government medical college seats. The qualifying cutoffs determine a candidate's eligibility for counselling, while the admission cutoffs determine whether a candidate can secure a medical seat. (Courtesy The Indian Express)

In Karnataka, one MBBS seat per government medical college is reserved for Kashmiri Migrant candidates.

To secure admission, candidates generally require a NEET score between 330 and 450, with corresponding AIR (All India Ranks) ranging from roughly 1.5 lakh to 3.5 lakh, depending on the specific college.

The Jammu & Kashmir migrant quota is an exclusive reserved category under the state's seat matrix. Because migrant cutoffs depend directly on the inter-se merit of other applicants competing for these limited seats, the score requirement fluctuates.

In recent admission cycles, the closing ranks for government colleges ranged from

400 to 430. For private or deemed medical colleges under this quota, the cutoff has occasionally dropped to 330-380 marks in later counselling rounds.

Allotments are strictly managed through the Karnataka Examinations Authority (KEA). Candidates must select the KM (Kashmiri Migrant) quota during registration and provide the necessary certificates from the competent authority.

The Karnataka Examination Authority (KEA) is expected to start the NEET Counselling 2026 registration soon, which is anticipated to be in late July 2026. The registration process will be conducted online on the official KEA website - cetonline.karnataka.gov.in. Candidates must register online to participate in the counselling process, which will include rounds of registration, choice filling, and seat allotment.

NEET counselling is the centralized process through which qualified candidates are allotted seats in MBBS, BDS, and other medical courses across India based on their NEET rank, category, and preferences. The process is conducted in multiple rounds and is managed by two main authorities:

Medical Counselling Committee (MCC):

Handles 15% All India Quota (AIQ) seats, central universities, and deemed universities.

State Authorities: Manage 85% of state quota seats in government and private colleges within each state

Registration:

Counselling registration for Round 1 is expected to begin in July 2026. Candidates must register on the MCC portal for AIQ seats and on their respective state portals for state quota seats.

Each round involves registration, choice filling, seat allotment, and reporting. The process may continue for several months, sometimes extending until December 2026.

Top 5 Government Medical Colleges as per 2025 ranking

1. National Institute of Mental Health and Neuro Sciences (NIMHANS), Bengaluru
2. Bangalore Medical College and Research Institute (BMCRI)
3. Mysore Medical College, Mysuru – Known for its legacy in medical education and rural healthcare initiatives
4. Karnataka Institute of Medical Sciences (KIMS), Hubli
5. VIMS Bellary

As per the NIRF Ranking 2025 amongst 1 to 50

1. National Institute of Mental Health and Neuro Sciences, Bengaluru, Karnataka Rank 7
2. Kasturba Medical College, Manipal, Karnataka Rank 10
3. St. John's Medical College, Bengaluru, Karnataka Rank 30
4. Kasturba Medical College, Mangalore Karnataka Rank 35
5. JSS Medical College, Mysuru Karnataka Rank 37
6. Jawaharlal Nehru Medical College Belagavi Karnataka Rank 46
7. M. S. Ramaiah Medical College, Bengaluru, Karnataka Rank 50

58 Engineering Colleges Shut Down Across India

More than 55 engineering colleges across the country were closed during the 2025–26 academic year for various reasons, according to the All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE). However, the council has clarified that students already enrolled in these institutions will be allowed to complete their degree programmes.

"A total of 58 engineering and technical colleges were closed progressively during 2025-26. Progressive closure means the institute cannot admit the students for the first year during the academic year for which progressive closure is granted. However, the existing students will continue," a senior AICTE official said.

The All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE), the statutory national regulator for technical education in India,

oversees programmes in engineering, architecture, management, and pharmacy to ensure quality, maintain academic standards, and promote coordinated development across the sector.

Of the 58 institutions that were shut down, Uttar Pradesh and Maharashtra recorded the highest number of closures, with 12 colleges each. Madhya Pradesh followed them with eight closures, while Telangana and Punjab reported four each.

Three engineering colleges each in Andhra Pradesh and Rajasthan were closed during the academic year. Gujarat, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Haryana, Odisha, Uttarakhand, and West Bengal each recorded two closures, while one institution in Puducherry was also shut down. Of the 58 institutions, three were government-aided, while the remaining were privately financed.

"Over 950 courses being offered in technical and engineering colleges across the country were also closed during the period," the official added.

The AICTE distinguishes between progressive closure, under which institutions are phased out gradually while allowing currently enrolled students to complete their studies, and complete closure, in which programmes are discontinued entirely and affected students are transferred to other institutions.

According to the AICTE, institutions may be ordered to shut down for several reasons, including low student enrolment, failure to maintain the required faculty strength, and non-compliance with prescribed infrastructure and operational norms.

The state-wise breakdown of these closures is as follows:

- Uttar Pradesh: 12 colleges
- Maharashtra: 12 colleges
- Madhya Pradesh: 8 colleges
- Telangana & Punjab: 4 colleges each
- Andhra Pradesh & Rajasthan: 3 colleges each
- Gujarat, Karnataka, & Tamil Nadu: 2 colleges each
- Haryana, Odisha, Uttarakhand, & West Bengal: 1 college each

(With inputs from PTI)

All India Council of Technical Education (AICTE) Warns J & K Students

The Member-Secretary, AICTE, has warned beneficiaries/aspiring students of SSSJKL not to be misled by messages from groups on social media such as Facebook, X, Twitter, or WhatsApp.

Students seeking scholarships, please use the information available on the AICTE SSSJKL official website <https://www.aicte-jk-scholarship-gov.in>.

All India Council of Technical Education (ACTE) Public Notice

As per the public notice issued by All India Council of Technical Education (ACTE), the letter received by the Ministry of Education states that AICTE, which is an implementing agency for PM USPY SSSJKL, will only process renewal cases for 2026-27 and fresh applications after approval is received from the Government of India.

Source: PIB Backgrounder

7 Indian Schools Make Global Mark, Shortlisted for World's Best School 2026

Seven Indian schools have been shortlisted for the World's Best School Prizes 2026 across five categories, with the shortlist announced in London.

Seven schools from India have made it to the top 10 shortlist for the World's Best School Prizes 2026, which were announced in London. The awards, known as the World's Best School Prizes, are awarded in five categories and were established by the UK-based organization T4 Education. They aim to recognize schools that are making a real difference in students' lives both inside and outside the classroom.

In the Innovation category, two Indian schools have been shortlisted: PCMC Chhatrapati Shahuji Maharaj English Medium School in Kasarwadi, Pune, and Army Goodwill School, Wuzur in Anantnag, Jammu and Kashmir.

- ❖ Inventure Academy Karnataka, Bengaluru, India

- ❖ Healthy Planet TGA Early Years School Noida, Uttar Pradesh, India
- ❖ Seth Anandram Jaipuria School, Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh, India
- ❖ Seth M.R. Jaipuria School, Vineet Khand, Gomti Nagar, Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh
- ❖ EuroSchool Bannerghatta Bengaluru, Karnataka, India
- ❖ NDTV

DU to Announce Revised BA Programme Combinations with Next Phase of UG Admissions.

The University of Delhi will announce revised combinations for multiple BA programmes this week, along with the commencement of the second phase of its undergraduate admission under the Common Seat Allocation System (CSAS-UG), as said by a Delhi University official.

It is to address low seat occupancy in courses that have consistently witnessed low demand over the past few years. The announcement will be made after analyzing admission trends over the last few years. The decision will be data-driven.

Admissions to 73 undergraduate programmes and more than 100 BA programme combinations offered across 67 colleges will be based solely on candidates' CUET-UG 2026 scores, subject to programme-specific eligibility criteria prescribed by the university, officials said.

After completing the initial registration, candidates will be required to participate in the second phase of CSAS, during which they will submit their preferences for programme and college combinations.

During phase II, candidates will also have to map their CUET-UG test papers with the subjects they studied in Class 12.

The university said that only language and domain-specific CUET papers corresponding to subjects passed in Class 12 will be considered when determining programme-specific eligibility and calculating candidates' scores.

The schedule for the second phase of CSAS will be announced shortly, according to the university.

Source: PTI

Feedback: vijaykashkari@gmail.com



AIKS Matrimonial Service



Wanted a suitable bride for our son, 6' tall, born in Delhi on 19/09/1987 at 9:20 AM. Srinagar-origin, Jammu/Delhi-based Kashmiri Pandit family. Postgraduate from IIMC, Delhi. Associate General Manager (Marketing) in Gurugram, earning about ₹20 lakh p.a. Interests: theatre, voice-over, reading and cinema. Contact: WhatsApp 9811503668 or email: krtmina22@gmail.com



Wanted a suitable groom for our daughter, M.A. (Gender Studies), B.A. (Hons.) in History from Miranda House, currently working as an Impact and Creative Producer. Born in Jammu on 31.08.1999 at 5:15 p.m. Height: 5'2". Interested families may contact via WhatsApp at 9831154746, 9682331850, or 7889684650.



Seeking alliance for our son born 10-06-1995 at 05:37 pm in Mohan Nagar, Ghaziabad. Height 5'10"; BBA from SYMBIOSIS, Pune MBA from SYMBIOSIS INSTITUTE OF MANAGEMENT, PUNE Working as Manager International Marketing in MNC Pharma co. based in Bangalore. Valley address: - Civil Lines, Exchange Road Present Address: - House no. D -233, Sector 61 Noida E-mail: - vinod_bhat7@yahoo.co.in; Mobile:- 9810917550, 9971973833



Seeking a suitable match for my daughter, born on 05/02/1998 in Jammu, height 5.2 ft. She has completed her B.Tech in Computer Science from JNTUH and MBA from the Indian School of Business (ISB). Currently, she is working as a Product Manager in a multinational company in Gurugram. Father is a retired Central Government officer and mother is a homemaker. The family is presently residing in Dehradun and originally belongs to Baramulla, Kashmir. Interested may kindly contact at 8077364644



Seeking alliance for my son, 5'9", B.E. (EXTC, Mumbai University), MBA (Business Analytics, Symbiosis Pune), born 28th May 1995 at 12:06 noon in Jammu. Working as Business Insights and Engagement Partner at TE Connectivity, Bangalore. Contact Ramesh Pandita (9419189513), 3/1 Anand Nagar, Borhi, Jammu; aryanramesh99@gmail.com



We are seeking a suitable alliance for our daughter. Date of Birth: 13.08.1996 (01:38 AM), Place of Birth: New Delhi, Height: 5 ft 4 in, Manglik: Anshik Manglik

Qualification: M.Sc. in Pharmaceutical Design and Engineering – Technical University of Denmark (DTU), Denmark. B.Sc. in Biomedical Engineering – University of Texas at Arlington (UTA), USA. Professional Details: Presently working in Denmark as a Senior Regulatory Affairs Specialist in a global organization providing medical devices and technologies for chronic care management. Career is well established with strong long-term prospects.

India Address: Faridabad, Delhi NCR (Currently residing in Denmark) Preference: Kashmiri Pandit boy residing in Europe (working and well-settled). Tekni Milap is a must.

Interested may kindly contact: +91 98104 21789 or Email: vinay@bhat.co



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Signature

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