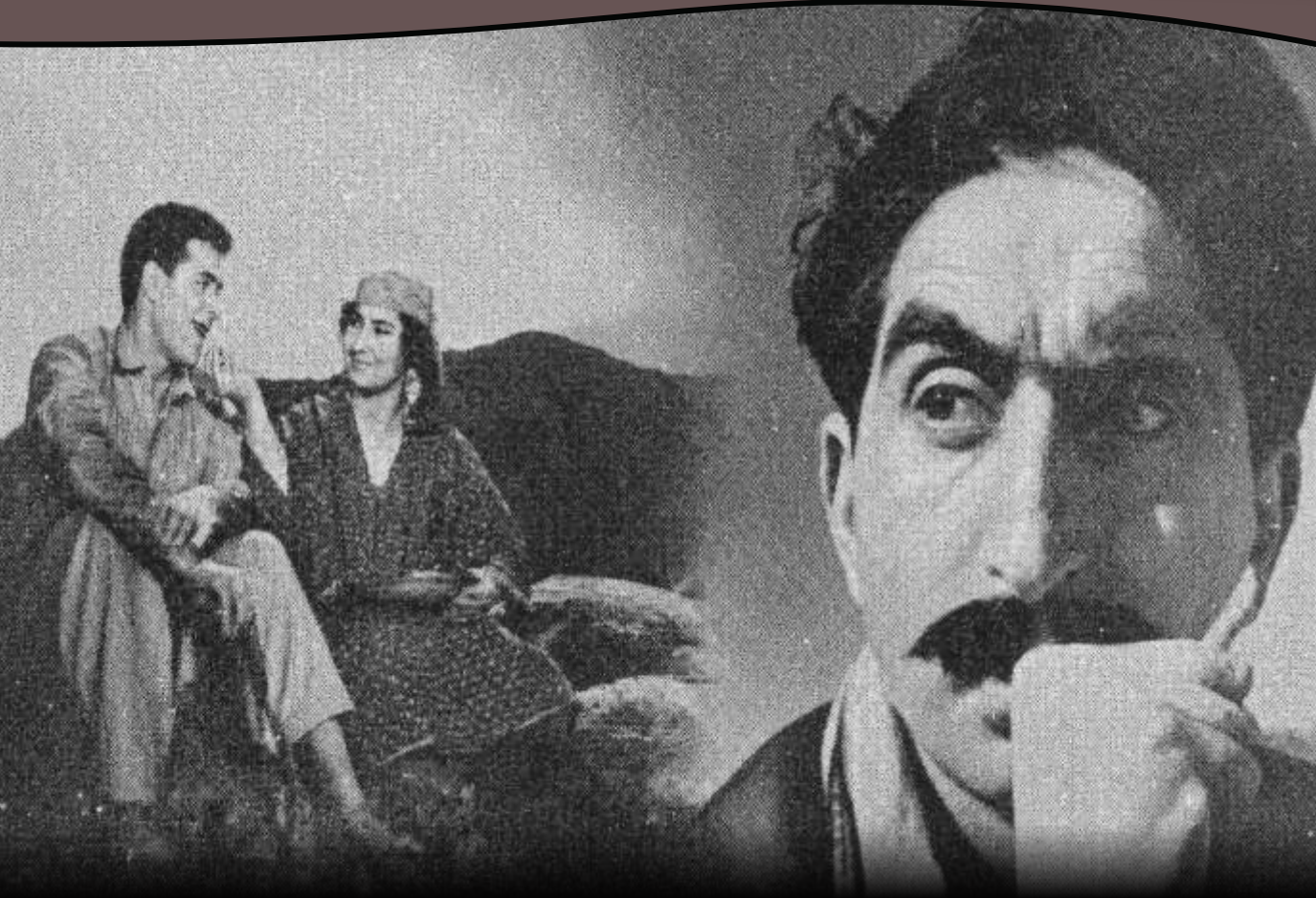




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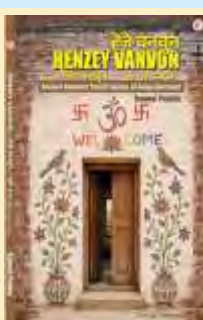
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THIS MONTH'S COVER

Tribute to
Padma Shri Pushkar Bhan

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Editorial



Dear Readers,

India has celebrated its 80th Independence Day with immense patriotic fervour. The celebrations were visible across the country, including regions once scarred by terrorism and Naxal violence. From the Red Fort, the Prime Minister outlined the nation's achievements, welfare initiatives and vision for the future. Yet, amidst this celebration of national progress, one critical security concern remains insufficiently addressed, the continuing vulnerability of Kashmiri Hindus.

For the displaced and beleaguered Kashmiri Hindu community, security is not merely a political issue; it is an existential question. Recent targeted killings in Kashmir, including the brutal killing of innocent labourers after their religious identity was ascertained, once again demonstrate the continuing threat posed by jihadi terrorism and religiously motivated violence. Such incidents demand an unequivocal national security response. Silence or inadequate public acknowledgement risks weakening the confidence of communities that have already suffered displacement, targeted killings and decades of terrorism.

Equally disturbing are threats issued by The Resistance Front (TRF), a terrorist organisation associated with the Pakistan-backed terror ecosystem, against Kashmiri Pandit employees. Kashmiri Hindus serving in government departments,

educational institutions and other establishments in the Valley remain particularly vulnerable because their presence represents not only employment but also the fragile return of a community that was driven out through terror.

The security establishment must therefore treat the protection of Kashmiri Pandits as a core component of Kashmir's counter-terrorism strategy. Threat assessments, intelligence gathering, workplace security, rapid-response mechanisms and accountability for terrorist networks must be strengthened. Those who issue threats must be identified, neutralised and prosecuted without ambiguity.

The return of Kashmiri Pandits cannot be measured merely by numbers of employees posted in the Valley. It must be measured by whether they can live, work and worship without fear.

India's journey towards lasting peace in Kashmir will remain incomplete until the security, dignity and permanent rehabilitation of Kashmiri Hindus become an unequivocal national security priority. This reminds me few lines of Bashir Badr,

*"kitna khauf hota hei sham ke anderoon mei,
pooch unn parindoon se jinke ghar nahi hote"*

("How much fear there is in the darkness of evening, ask those birds who have no homes.")

मनील गैरा गणक



From the *President's* *Desk*

***Respected All,
Namaskar to the AIKS Family,***

On behalf of All India Kashmiri Samaj (AIKS), I extend my warmest greetings and heartfelt wishes to the entire community on the auspicious occasion of Raksha Bandhan.

The recent threat letters targeting our PM Package employees, reportedly containing their names and personal credentials, are a matter of serious concern for the entire community. The subsequent letter has further sent shockwaves and highlights the need for utmost vigilance and a strong response from the concerned authorities.

Similarly, the arrest of an individual, Manoj Bhat, in connection with an alleged narcotics case registered under FIR No. 13/2022, has been repeatedly reported in certain sections of the local media with an unnecessary emphasis on his community identity. AIKS has issued a press statement urging the media to refrain from giving any criminal matter a communal colour. Crime has no religion, and the identity of an individual should not be used to malign an entire community.

AIKS is also actively pursuing its ongoing litigation before the Hon'ble High Court of Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh. We sincerely acknowledge and thank our community advocates, Shri P. N. Raina, Ms. Diksha Handoo, Shri P. N. Goja, Shri Kashmiri Lal Bhat, Shri Virender Bhat and others, for their sustained efforts and valuable assistance in securing favourable directions during the course of the hearings. The matter is expected to be listed shortly before the newly constituted Bench.

AIKS respectfully appeals to members of the community to refrain from making individual public statements regarding the matter. As the principal applicant in the case, AIKS believes that all official communication should appropriately be handled through the organisation and its authorised representatives. The Jammu team has also been requested to extend all possible physical, moral and ethical support to the legal team.

AIKS has further written to the Divisional Commissioner, Kashmir, seeking a comprehensive inventory of the immovable properties left behind

by the displaced Kashmiri Hindu community following the exodus of 1990. We have also demanded that appropriate outreach camps be organised in Delhi-NCR, where a substantial section of the displaced community now resides. Similar exercises have earlier been undertaken by the concerned authorities in connection with domicile certificates and Ayushman coverage.

AIKS once again appeals to the entire community to participate in the Census 2026 with a united and clear approach regarding our identity and status. The correct enumeration of our displaced community is of vital importance. During our interaction with the office of the Registrar General and Census Commissioner, several important issues concerning the identification and enumeration of our community were discussed.

Our foremost objective is to ensure an accurate and authentic population count of the displaced Kashmiri Hindu community. Such reliable data is essential not only for understanding our present demographic status but also for any future policy relating to our return, rehabilitation and welfare. At a time when our community faces serious challenges concerning the preservation and promotion of our identity, culture, heritage and Kashmiri language, unity on these issues is more important than ever.

Finally, I sincerely appeal to every member of our community to strengthen All India Kashmiri Samaj by taking its membership and by subscribing to our organisational mouthpiece, NAAD. A strong and united organisation is essential to effectively represent the concerns and aspirations of our community.

AIKS also proposes to convene another Annual General Meeting (AGM) shortly to deliberate upon several important and core issues concerning the community and the organisation.

Let us remain united, responsible and committed to preserving our identity, protecting our interests and securing a dignified future for generations to come.

**May Sharda Mata bless us all.
With warm regards,**



 Sunil Kaul



General Secretary's Column

General Secretary's Monthly Report

August 2026 remained focused on two key priorities of AIKS — securing meaningful educational opportunities for displaced Kashmiri Pandit youth and safeguarding the community's security and dignity in Jammu & Kashmir.

1. Educational Advocacy for Displaced Kashmiri Pandit Youth

AIKS continued its sustained representations to the Hon'ble Union Education Minister, Government of India, and the Department of Higher Education, seeking meaningful and practical educational opportunities for displaced Kashmiri Pandit students in IITs, NITs, Central Universities and other Institutions of National Importance.

Recognising that education has remained a foremost priority for the community throughout more than 36 years of displacement, AIKS has highlighted the growing financial and competitive challenges faced by students, particularly in examinations such as JEE Advanced and GATE.

AIKS has proposed consideration of at least one supernumerary seat, stream-wise/programme-wise, for eligible displaced Kashmiri Pandit candidates, strictly subject to prescribed academic and entrance requirements. The proposal is intended not to dilute merit or academic standards, but to provide a meaningful opportunity to a community that has faced the continuing consequences of displacement.

As part of this initiative, KP activist Shri Reapon Tickoo, Mumbai, and the General Secretary, AIKS, jointly pursued meetings with premier institutions during the General Secretary's recent visit to Mumbai. Appointments were secured with Prof. Shireesh B. Kedare, Director, IIT Bombay, and Prof. Rajat Moona, Director, IIT Gandhinagar, where the educational concerns and aspirations of displaced Kashmiri Pandit youth were placed before the institutional leadership.

AIKS will continue to pursue this matter with the Ministry of Education and concerned institutions with the objective of developing an appropriate and sustainable mechanism for the educational advancement of the younger generation.

2. Security & Protection of the Community

On 24 August 2026, AIKS strongly condemned the circulation of a fresh threat letter targeting members of the Kashmiri Pandit community on social media.

AIKS immediately raised the matter with the Hon'ble Lieutenant Governor and Chief Minister of Jammu & Kashmir, urging the J&K Administration and Police to take immediate cognizance, investigate the source of the threat and ensure adequate security for vulnerable Kashmiri Pandit employees and families residing in J&K.

AIKS also appealed to civil society and mainstream political parties to unequivocally condemn such intimidation and called upon the Government to deal firmly with anti-social elements responsible for creating fear and insecurity.

General Secretary, AIKS
New Delhi | August 2026



Sakshi Dassi Bhan



CENTENARY BIRTH ANNIVERSARY LATE PADMA SHRI PUSHKAR BHAN

*"If we look into ourselves keenly, there is a Machama in every one of us...
He is in you and in me. He is Machama. He is alive"*

As I sit down to write about my grandfather-in-law Late Padma Shri Pushkar Bhan, I realise that for most people he was the legendary voice of Zoon Dab and the unforgettable Machama — the man who made an entire generation of Kashmiris laugh, reflect, and feel seen. But for me, he was simply "**Papaji**", the gentle storyteller whose laughter still echoes in our home even years after he left us.

Growing up, I watched how people of all ages would light up at the mere mention of his name. Strangers would share stories of how they waited every day for the familiar announcement on Radio Kashmir, how his characters felt like members of their own families. To them he was a cultural icon. To me whatever years I knew him, saw him, he was the soft-spoken man who filled us with humour, warmth, and quiet wisdom. Today, as we mark his 100th birth anniversary, I feel both proud and humbled to share a few thoughts about the man behind the legend — **Papaji**. My naman and Tribute to him on his Centenary Birth Anniversary and may his blessings keep showering on all of us.

As I grew in my childhood days, I was not much aware of Papji's early life and his impact on Kashmiri population the radio artist who made an entire valley pause at a fixed hour every day. By the time I entered the family, he

was already a name spoken with reverence — Padma Shri, Sahitya Akademi awardee, the voice behind Zoon Dab and the unforgettable Machama. And my interaction with him spending and sharing the time under same roof along with family stories, fading photographs, old radio recordings, and the quiet dignity of those who lived with him left a deeper imprint than any public honour.

Papaji ji was born on **26th Aug 1926** in Habba Kadal, Srinagar, into a Kashmiri Pandit household. From early years he was drawn to theatre and storytelling. After graduating in 1947, he immersed himself in the progressive cultural movement led by Dina Nath Nadim. He wrote and acted, performed in open-air plays, went to Mumbai where he was secretary Urdu section of Indian People's Theatre Association (**IPTA**). Getting opportunity to share the stage in those times with Sh. Prithvi Raj Kapoor, Balraj Sahni and with many more speaks a lot of his talent which Bollywood also couldn't resist and was offered to play leading role in movie Darwaza.

But as son of soil, he chooses to peruse his dreams back in Kashmir rather moving back to Mumbai. In 1952 he joined All India Radio, Srinagar, as an artist and playwright on modest terms. Over the decades he rose to Senior Producer and was later honoured as

Producer Emeritus. His radio serial Zoon Dab ran for years and became part of the daily rhythm of Kashmiri homes; he himself played the beloved character *Mama* and received the *Padma Shri* in 1974. Machama, his collection of satirical plays, earned him the *Sahitya Akademi* Award in 1976. He collaborated with Som Nath Sadhu on stage works, acted in the first Kashmiri film *Manzeraat* and later in Shayir-e-Kashmir Mehjoor which acknowledged by Presidents' gold medal. *Papaji* left for heavenly abode journey in Delhi on 5 October 2008.

What I absorbed from those who knew him closely was not merely the list of achievements. It was the quiet consistency of a life devoted to craft. He treated humour as a serious instrument, sharp enough to expose hypocrisy, bureaucracy and human weakness, yet gentle enough to keep people listening rather than turning away. He worked with limited technical resources, turning ordinary objects into sound effects, writing episode after episode, and still finding ways to make ordinary Kashmiri life feel seen and heard. Even after displacement, illness and the loss of much of his archival material, the body of work he left continued to speak. As a member of the newer generation, there are many lessons I draw from his life which are practical and enduring, and they are the ones I hope to pass on so that the legacy of legend continues.

First, excellence does not require perfect conditions. He began on daily wages, worked with whatever the radio station could offer, and still produced programmes that became cultural landmarks. Commitment and imagination mattered more than resources.

Second, humour can be a form of service. Through *Mama* and *Machama* he held up a mirror to society without bitterness. He showed that one can criticise and still remain affectionate towards one's own people. In an age of loud opinion, this restraint and craft feel rare and necessary.

Third, cultural memory is fragile and therefore precious. Much of his original radio material has been lost. That loss itself is a reminder: stories, languages and local ways of seeing must be recorded, shared and renewed by each generation, or they disappear.

Fourth, identity can be carried with quiet dignity. As a Kashmiri Pandit who lived through upheaval and later years away from the Valley, he continued to create in Kashmiri and for Kashmiri audiences. Rootedness and openness need not cancel each other.

Fifth, recognition is welcome but secondary. Awards came, yet those who remember him speak more of the daily discipline, the collaborative spirit with fellow artists, and the pleasure he took in making people laugh while making them think.

I did not sit at his feet as a child. I inherited him through the family that loved him and through the work that still surfaces whenever Kashmiris speak of radio, satire or the golden period of Kashmiri broadcasting. What I wish to imbibe and hand on is simple: treat your craft with seriousness, use whatever platform you have to speak truthfully and kindly, guard the language and stories that shaped you, and remember that a life of consistent, honest work outlasts applause. *Papa ji's* voice once filled Kashmiri homes at a fixed hour. The voice itself is gone, but the example remains—work that was rooted, inventive, humane and lasting. That is the inheritance I hold, and the one I hope the generations after me will choose to carry. As we celebrate the 100th birth anniversary of his, I hope the generations take away more than just nostalgia. His life teaches us the honesty, observation, and courage. If we the young generation, learn to listen carefully, to laugh without bitterness, and to tell stories that matter, than the legacy of *Papaji* will not remain confined to old radio recordings. It will continue to live-in our words, in our humour and in the way we chose to see the world.

"He left us no riches of silver or gold, but stories that warm us when nights are cold.

If we guard our language and laugh without shame, Pushkar Bhan's name will forever remain"



PADMA SHRI PUSHKAR BHAN

A MASTERMIND OF HILARITY CUM HUMOUR AND RENOWNED ARTIST BROADCASTER

Sh. Pushkar Bhan was a legendary Kashmiri playwright, a celebrated radio, stage actor and a reputed Broadcaster. He brought immense joy to a vast multitude of radio listeners through his brilliant use of wit and humour. His creative works in the form of comedic and satirical writings greatly shaped the genre of social satire in the Kashmiri language.

His sparkling wit and brilliant pun and sharp social satire gave a refreshing life to his crafted scripts. He used it to entertain the radio listeners and also generate the awareness about the social concerns. He, as a master writer and actor created the heritage programmes of "Zoon Dub" and "Machama" drama series. Both of these enjoyed massive and unprecedented daily listenership throughout the Kashmir Valley. It earned him a permanent place as a dramatist and writer of immense fame in the Kashmiri language.

He was born on 26, August 1926, at Habbakadal, the heart throb centre of Srinagar city. He had his early schooling at Srinagar and finished his Graduation in the year 1947. He joined the Srinagar Broadcasting station in the year 1952 as a staff artist.

His talent and dedication led to his success and was promoted as a Producer. He was appointed as a Producer In charge of the reputed rural programme in Kashmiri, named "Gamie Bayan Hindae Khatre". It was aired daily at 7.15 PM and it addressed to the issues,



concerns and welfare measures of the farmers.

"Posh Gondh", a Kashmiri programme, meaning a bunch of flowers was his initial assignment, which gave him an appreciable response from the listeners. "Niza Saeb", was another early programme assignment of Bhan Sahib. It won him a lot of praises from the radio audience. It was scripted and produced by him. He also played the stock character role of "Kanth Kak" along with his colleague artist Sh. Nizamuddin. The family serial cantered around the family life and the social issues.

As a Producer, he also supervised the weekly children's programme in Kashmiri, "Phoulvin Tooer", meaning the blossoming buds. It formed a part of the daily rural programme.

"Paeth Akis Sindae Khatre", meaning meant for everyone, was his another programme assignment. It was also a part of the rural programme and was aired on every Sunday from 7 P.M. to 7.30 P.M. Based on a quiz segment, it catered to both the rural and urban listeners.

He also wrote and sang delightful Kashmiri songs meant for the children. They charmed both young and the adults.

A few of the song refrains that have stayed back in my mind were:

- ❖ "Doub doub daber vai, Hapatvola aangan chaav..."
- ❖ "Chie ha myoun bolun pooch, Kaav poot, Kaav poot..."
- ❖ "Ha Kaav Kaako, khoobsurut ha chukh, ha Kaav Kaako..."

He also oversaw the women's programme, named "Poshmaal", which was broadcast on every Tuesday evening as a segment of the rural programme.

He also appeared as an actor in the first full length Kashmiri feature film "Maanzraat", released in the year 1964.

Shahyar-e-Kashmir Mahjoor, was another Kashmiri film, made by the veteran Sh. Balraj Sahni, in which Sh Pushkar Bhan acted as a villain. It was a biographical film about the legendary poet of Kashmir, released in the year 1972.

He also played the role of "Harud", representing the season autumn, in the landmark musical opera "Bombur Tae Yemberzal", written by the celebrated Sh. Dina Nath Nadim. It was staged before a visiting Soviet government delegation, headed by its Premier Nikita Khrushchev. It was staged in the year 1956 at Srinagar. "Harud", is a seasonal allegory representing an antagonist element that proves as a spoilsport in the warm bonds of Bombur with Yemberzal.

Sh Pushkar Bhan's powerful enactment

of "Harud" drew a thunderous applause from the visiting delegation and the audience.

He in co-association with his fellow veteran colleague Sh Som Nath Sadhu wrote three Kashmiri stage plays of "Grand Rehearsal" (1967), "Chapaat", meaning - slap (1973) and "Nav Nosh," meaning - new bride (1975). All these plays were staged before the invited audience. They drew huge response and the applause from the viewers. Later, they were recast and adapted in the radio format by both of them. All these dramas were also broadcast from Srinagar station, where they also won great praise from the radio listeners. Sh Pushkar Bhan played a central role in all these plays.

He has also written a memorable song in Kashmiri, titled "Manzimyor", which also became a great hit with the people. It was brought to sound life by the iconic Sh. Moti Lal Kemu, who gave voice to it. Manzimyor is a traditional matchmaker in Kashmir, who bridges families by carrying marriage proposals and coordinates the matrimonial alliances.

Votul Buyji :

"Votul Buyji" was another watershed radio programme, which was launched in the aftermath of 1965 war with Pakistan. It was broadcast to counter the hostile propaganda and to boost the public morale. Sh Pushkar Bhan was also actively associated with it.

In it, the role of Mr Ayub Khan of Pakistan was performed by Sh. Omarkar Nath Khazanchi, Sh. Mohd Abdullah played "Hakeem Charakhchu" and Sh Nizamuddin acted in the unforgettable character of "Body Guard", purposely mispronounced in the serial as "Guardy-board" to evoke amusement amongst the listeners.

Zoon Dub Serial:

"Zoon-Dub" was a milestone and all-time famous family serial broadcast from Srinagar radio, which ran for almost two decades. It used sharp wit and light humour to discuss the domestic concerns and highlight the public grievances to bring them to the notice of the administration for their redressal. It was broadcast six days a week at 7.30 A.M. in the

summer and at 9.A.M. in the winter for a duration of fifteen minutes each. In the serial, Sh Pushkar Bhan played the unforgettable role of a domestic helper with the stock character name of "Mama Pipijee", who would interact with an iconic cast of Agha Saab (played by Sh. Som Nath Sadhu), Agha Bhai (enacted by Mrs Mariam Begum), and other stock characters. He, in the serial was assisted by another junior helping hand in the character role of Ismala or Ismail Pethkharich, performed by Sh. Ashok Kak. In the serial, both "Mama" and "Ismala" would often engage themselves in light-hearted chats between them.

The jesting remark used by Ismala "Hatta Khoda Saeaba turr ha", (meaning Oh, God, all tall tales!) was countered with a witty quote by Mama as "Damn, dubudy phool" in a stuttering voice, which would amuse the listeners.

Machama Drama Series:

The legendary comedy drama series of "Machama" in Kashmiri, broadcast from Srinagar station, wholly conceived, written and produced by Sh. Pushkar Bhan stands as a defining feat in his illustrious creative career. It entertained and resonated with millions of radio listeners across Kashmir. The drama "Machama" also marks the height of imagination, hilarious inventiveness and memorable naming of the characters in it.

The use of appropriating sound effects, right music bites, and distinct speaking patterns woven with the incorporated colloquial and exotic words, employed in the drama constituted the exceptional hallmark tags of the play "Machama".

It made the drama to look like a real window into the human realm of life, often confronted with the day-to-day paradoxes of longing and quest.

Sindbadh Machama Drama Series:

Sindbad Machama was an expansion of the 'Machama Series' in the backdrop of the folkloric adventurous voyager in the form of Sindbadh.

Its conceived characters of Hero Machama (Sh. Pushkar Bhan), Sulla Gotta (Sh. Som Nath Sadhu), Rehman Daeda (Sh.

His sparkling wit and brilliant pun and sharp social satire gave a refreshing life to his crafted scripts. He used it to entertain the radio listeners and also generate the awareness about the social concerns.

Mohd Sultan Pandit), Tuva, the main jinn (Sh Bansi Raina), Tuva Bacha, the child jinn (Sh Sharief-ud-Din), Khatij, the fictional spouse of Mama (Smt Shanta Kaul) and Kak (Sh Jager Nath Saqi), have now shaped into a sort of true to life characters. They continue to remain etched in the collective memory of the listeners as a reminder of immense popularity enjoyed by the said drama.

Singari and Zingari:

Additionally, the love-smitten jinn-damsel sister duo of "Singari" and "Zingari", performed in the drama by the reputed artists, Sh Pyare Lal Handoo and Sh Makhan Lal Saraf, respectively are also a part of the shared recollections of the radio audience.

The intimacy laden dialogues of the play "Hatai Zingaeri, Vani Singaeri", "Hata maini Shoga," and "Hata maini Balbula..." when remembered still chuckles an erstwhile radio listener and puts him into a belly-laugh.

He was a recipient of many national and state awards like Padam Shri, Sahitya Academy Award, Sadiq Memorial Award and State Academy Award for his distinguished contributions.

Sh Pushkar Bhan went to rise to the coveted post of Senior Producer Emeritus, from which he retired in the year 1985 from Srinagar station. He left his mortal frame on 5 October, 2008 at Delhi, leaving behind a vast multitude of admirers and friends shell shocked.

Undeniably, Padmashri Pushker Bhan will always be remembered for contributing his artistic and professional might along with his fellow colleagues in shaping an era, known as the golden age period of Broadcasting Station of Srinagar in the yesteryears.



 Ravinder Gurtoo



Condemned to Neglect

HOW JAGTI AND TRT NAGROTA HAVE BEEN LEFT TO COLLAPSE

For over thirty-six years, the displaced Kashmiri Pandit community has waited for justice, rehabilitation and a dignified future. Governments have changed, political slogans have changed, rehabilitation policies have been announced and committees have been constituted. Yet, for thousands of families living in the transit camps of Jagti and TRT Nagrota, very little has changed. Their homes continue to decay, their surroundings continue to deteriorate and their repeated cries for help continue to disappear into bureaucratic silence. What was once projected as temporary accommodation has become a permanent symbol of governmental neglect.

A visit to these camps is enough to expose the harsh reality hidden behind official claims. The buildings stand scarred by decades of neglect. Walls are blackened with dampness, plaster has peeled away exposing weakened concrete, vegetation grows from cracks in balconies and rooftops, drainage pipes hang broken, and rainwater seeps into homes every monsoon. Staircases have visibly deteriorated, balconies appear unsafe and the structures resemble abandoned buildings rather than homes inhabited by thousands of Indian citizens. No responsible



administration can look at these buildings and claim that they are fit for human habitation.

What is even more alarming is that these buildings are located in Jammu, a region falling under a high seismic zone. Structural engineers repeatedly warn that ageing buildings weakened by continuous seepage and corrosion become highly vulnerable



during earthquakes. Every monsoon weakens these structures further, while every passing year reduces their ability to withstand natural forces. If a moderate or major earthquake strikes tomorrow, these colonies could witness unimaginable devastation. Thousands of innocent lives could be trapped beneath the debris. The warning signs are visible today. The question is whether the authorities are deliberately choosing to ignore them.

The tragedy is not merely that these buildings have deteriorated; the greater tragedy is that successive governments have allowed them to reach this condition. Maintenance of public housing is neither an extraordinary favour nor an optional exercise. It is one of the most basic responsibilities of any government. Yet, for decades, these transit camps have remained outside the priorities of

What was once projected as temporary accommodation has become a permanent symbol of governmental neglect.



those who regularly speak about the welfare of displaced Kashmiri Pandits from political platforms. Speeches are delivered, anniversaries are observed and assurances are repeated, but the residents of Jagti and TRT Nagrota continue to live in buildings that resemble disaster sites waiting for their final collapse.

The neglect extends far beyond the buildings themselves. Residents have repeatedly raised concerns regarding irregular water supply, unreliable electricity, poor sanitation, damaged drainage systems, inadequate cleanliness and lack of proper civic maintenance. During heavy rains, overflowing drains and stagnant water create unhealthy living conditions. Common spaces remain neglected and repairs are carried out only when situations become impossible to ignore. Such conditions would be unacceptable in any government housing colony elsewhere in the country. Why then should displaced Kashmiri Pandits be expected to accept them as their fate?

Perhaps the most disturbing aspect of this prolonged neglect is the complete absence of political accountability. Every government claims commitment to the rehabilitation of Kashmiri Pandits, yet very few senior ministers or influential political

leaders have actually visited these colonies to assess their condition firsthand. It appears that the suffering of displaced families has become useful only during election campaigns and commemorative speeches. Once the cameras disappear, so do the promises. The residents are left alone to negotiate leaking roofs, collapsing walls and a future filled with uncertainty.

The photographs of these camps should disturb the conscience of every policymaker in the country. These are not photographs from an abandoned industrial complex or a forgotten ghost town. These are homes where children study, elderly people spend their final years, women manage households and families struggle to rebuild lives shattered by terrorism. Every crack on these walls represents another broken promise. Every patch of dampness reflects years of official indifference. Every plant growing from a balcony is evidence that nature has occupied spaces abandoned by governance.

Governments often react only after disasters occur. Bridges are inspected after they collapse. Hospitals receive fire audits after fires claim lives. Unsafe buildings suddenly become priorities only after earthquakes reduce them to rubble. Must Jagti and TRT Nagrota also witness such a catastrophe before authorities wake up? Is the administration waiting for television cameras to capture the bodies of displaced families buried beneath collapsed buildings before ordering structural audits and reconstruction? If that happens, responsibility will not rest with nature alone. It will rest equally with every authority that ignored years of visible warning signs.

The Government of India and the

The walls have spoken for years. The buildings have been crying for help. The residents have raised their voices repeatedly.

Government of Jammu and Kashmir must immediately order an independent structural audit of every residential block in Jagti and TRT Nagrota. Buildings found structurally unsafe should be vacated without delay and rebuilt rather than cosmetically repaired. Water supply, drainage, sanitation, electrical infrastructure and public amenities require complete modernisation. Temporary patchwork repairs can no longer substitute for comprehensive redevelopment. Human lives cannot be protected by whitewashing cracked walls.

The issue before us is not political; it is humanitarian. The displaced Kashmiri Pandits have already paid an unbearable price by losing their homeland, their properties, their cultural landscape and decades of normal life. They should not now be forced to risk their lives because governments failed to maintain the very shelters they were provided. Rehabilitation cannot mean merely constructing buildings and then abandoning them for decades. Rehabilitation is meaningful only when people can live safely, securely and with dignity.

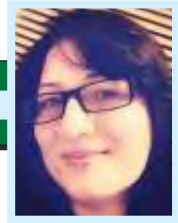
History will judge governments not by the number of rehabilitation packages they announced but by the lives they protected. If tragedy strikes tomorrow, no inquiry commission, compensation package or condolence message will erase the fact that the warning signs were visible long before disaster arrived. The walls have spoken for years. The buildings have been crying for help. The residents have raised their voices repeatedly. The only thing missing has been the will to act.

The nation owes the displaced Kashmiri Pandits far more than sympathy. It owes them safety, dignity and justice. Jagti and TRT Nagrota should not become memorials to governmental apathy. They should become examples of responsible governance that recognised danger in time and acted before innocent lives were lost.

The question before the government is no longer whether these camps need attention. The question is whether it will act now or wait until another avoidable tragedy becomes tomorrow's headline.



Meenakshi Kaul



FROM PARTITION TO RESPONSIBILITY 80 YEARS OF FREEDOM

I was eight when my dadi first told me about 1947. She didn't talk about leaders or dates. She talked about a trunk and my grandfather's kurta tied up in a potli, and a train that wouldn't stop. She remembered the women who hummed bhajans softly so the children wouldn't cry. That was the first time I understood that **freedom had a cost**, long before I understood what the word actually meant.

Eighty years later, we still gather in school grounds. We sing the anthem and feel that familiar tightness in our throats. We eat the sweets. And then, when the noise settles, the same question stays with me: what has freedom taught us?

The people in 1947 didn't call it "motivation," they called it "passion". It was a fire that made you do hard things without asking what you'd get back. A shopkeeper in Amritsar locked his shop for the last time. A student in Delhi cycled around with pamphlets in her school bag. A farmer who had never heard a lecture on democracy knew he was tired of bowing to a foreign lathi. They weren't thinking of themselves, but about Our Country.

Can we match that spirit today? Our battlefield is different, but the muscle is the



same. It's choosing "us" over "me," again and again. It's voting when you're tired. It's speaking up when someone is being treated unfairly. It's paying taxes, cleaning your lane, teaching a child to read. Smaller actions, but

Freedom also came with a wound we rarely put in textbooks. Fifteen million people moved. Trains arrived full of silence. A line drawn in a week cut families in half.

the same choice to stay responsible for a place bigger than yourself.

Freedom also came with a wound we rarely put in textbooks. Fifteen million people moved. Trains arrived full of silence. A line drawn in a week cut families in half. My dadi's words stayed with me: "azadi mil gayi, par chain nahi." We got freedom, but not peace. That grief was packed into trunks and carried to Delhi, Punjab, and everywhere else people rebuilt. For years no one spoke about it because survival came first. Now their grandchildren watch Partition stories and cry. It taught us how fragile borders are, and how stubborn people are. It also taught us that freedom without healing remains incomplete.

So, do we have freedom in the real sense? On paper, Yes. We elect, we speak, we protest. A driver's son can become an officer. A girl in a village can sell her art to the world from her phone. That was the dream, and parts of it are alive.

In daily life it's messier. Real freedom is walking home without fear. It's disagreeing and not being shouted down. It's starting something without paying ten bribes. It's breathing air that doesn't hurt. It's feeling that this country belongs to you, not only to the people in power.

And it's also about the things we still haven't fixed. We still read about dowry deaths. We still see road rage turn fatal over a few seconds of anger. These are not "small issues." They are places where freedom gets tested in the most ordinary moments. Here, an individual has to make a choice: will I stand with what is right or will I bend to what society expects? That distinction between a person and "what's right" is not easy. It may not come overnight but we can at least make a beginning: in our home, in our car, in how we raise our children.

We've come far, but we've also learned that rights are easy to announce and hard to live. Somewhere the conversation shifted to seats and slogans instead of streets and schools. When decisions are made for the next election instead of the next generation, we drift from the idea of the country itself. And

it's not only about leaders. We treat democracy like a five-year subscription. We want clean roads but toss wrappers from car windows. We want honesty but look for a "contact" to skip the line. The freedom fighters gave up comfort for the nation. Our test is whether we give up the nation for convenience, for outrage, for "my side versus yours."

What does freedom mean in 2026? It's not just breaking chains. It's building things that last.

It's a student asking "why" in class and a teacher pausing to listen. It's paying the auto driver the exact fare without bargaining and paying the help who runs your home with respect, not just money.

It's speaking Hindi, Punjabi, Tamil, Bengali, English and not making anyone feel small for their accent. It's the freedom to be wrong, to apologize, and to begin again.

In short, freedom today looks like responsibility in everyday clothes.

How do we pass this on without sounding like a lecture? Patriotism isn't manufactured with slogans. It grows when children feel ownership. Teach rights and duties together, not in separate chapters. "You have the right to clean water. Your duty is to not waste it, and to speak up when the system fails you."

Tell real stories not just point to statues. Take children to meet the sanitation worker who keeps the city alive, the teacher who stays late, the veteran's family, the migrant who rebuilt from zero. Let them see the nation as people.

Give them work. A voter drive, a tree planting, tutoring a younger kid. Pride sticks when you've sweated for something and model it. They watch what we do when no one is clapping. Do we follow traffic rules? Do we tip? Do we argue on our phones and still show up for people in person?

Last Independence Day in Delhi, I saw a ten-year-old boy selling flags at a red light. Sweat on his forehead, a small tricolor in each hand. A car window rolled down, someone bought two flags and said "Jai Hind." The boy grinned and saluted. That moment held everything: exhaustion, pride, business, hope.

Countries aren't built in speeches. They're built in small, ordinary choices. In what we say at the dinner table. In how we treat the person with less power. In whether we stay to fix things instead of leaving to complain.

We will never face the exact passion of 1947. Thank God. But we are being asked for a new version of it: the passion to stay, to argue and still belong, to choose the harder right. Sometimes we lose the country in the noise of politics. Sometimes we bring it back with one good decision because freedom was never the last page. It was the first. The pen is still in our hands.

The question is not just what we can do with freedom, but what we are doing with it. Freedom wasn't free we inherited it through generations of struggle, sacrifice, and unity. The neat side of freedom is using it to create space for others, to take responsibility, to move forward.

The messy side shows up when we treat freedom like a room we never clean. Loud, scattered, careless. As if freedom means we

can say anything, tear anyone down, and walk away. Disagreement is not disrespect. A difference of opinion should open a conversation, not end it with insults. When we mock, when we shame, when we stoop low just to "win," that's not freedom. That's misuse. Real freedom gives us the strength to hold our ground without losing our grace. It lets us say "I don't agree" and still say it with dignity.

Have we learned from our past? Too often we react without thinking, and we become pawns for people with vested interests, just like before. It's easy to forget the sacrifices made so we could have choices. A nation that forgets, repeats. A nation that remembers, repairs.

Freedom with memory is responsibility. Freedom without reflection turns into noise, division, and disgrace.

So, the real question for us now is this: With the freedom we were given, what kind of country, and what kind of people, are we choosing to become for the next generation?

Jai Hind!!

Cartoon by- Anil Nakhasi





Chander M Bhat



THE HOLY AMARNATH PILGRIMAGE

Coordinates: Lat. 34 degree 21 minutes, long. 75 degree 50 minutes



Almost every part of India is known for many a sacred shrine, but the *Amarnath* Cave embossed in the snowy valley of Kashmir reveals the unique sight of natural Ice *Lingam* of Lord Shiva perched on a glacial gorge which waxes and wanes with the movements of the moon. According to a common belief, it reaches the maximum height on *Purnima* in the month of *Shravan* (July-August), when Shiva is supposed to have divulged to *Parvati* the secret of salvation. On this day thousands of pilgrims negotiating the most difficult ridges arrive at the holy cave for *Dharshan* of the Lord. The pilgrimage of thousands of devotees to the far way cave of *Amarnath*, nestled in a glacial gorge of the western Himalayas, through some of the most

charming scenery in the world, is fascinating in the extreme. One is stuck with wonder at the quiet and ordinary way in which a canvas town springs up with incredible rapidity of colours and of all shapes and sizes and broad streets running through the middle, and all vanishing as quickly at the break of dawn when the whole army of pilgrimages set out on the march again. The glow of countless cooking fires, the ashen smeared *Sadhus* under the canopy of discussing or meditating before the *Dhunis*, the *Sannyasins* of all orders in various garbs, the men and women with children, from all parts and their devote faces, the torches shimmering at nightfall, the blowing of conch-shells and horns, the singing of hymns and prayers in chorus...all these are most impressive, and convey an idea of mastering passion of the race for religion.

Amarnath literally means the Immortal Lord. Lord Shiva stands for Deathlessness. He confers this boon on his devotees. Deathlessness is not trying to preserve the physical sheath forever but in growing so fearless as to look at death in its face! The truth of this will be evident to one who undertakes a pilgrimage to Amarnath, the hallowed pilgrimage center of Kashmir.

The Present Kashmir valley was, according to the chronicler *Kalhana* a lake called *Satisar* that the sage Kashyapa converted into a beautiful valley. Kashmir as the name *Satisar* indicates, is believed to be the body of *Parvati*. The whole valley is studded with holy places associated with Siva and *Parvati*. It is the cradle of many philosophical systems such as the *Trika-Shaivism* and the *Pratyabhijna* School. Even *Pancharatra* school, is supposed to have its origin here. Pippalada rescension of *Atharva Veda* is also known as Kashmirian rescension as the only manuscript available was found here. This was again the center of Sun Worship. Here was the famous *Sharda pitha* which now lies in Pakistan Occupied Kashmir. The great *Sankaracharya*, according to his biographers, came here and ascended, *Sarvajnapith*, the throne of omniscience after having been acknowledged the philosopher by the great scholars belonging to various schools here. Even today here is an ancient hill with a Siva temple on the top named, *Sankaracharya*. Kashmir is full of history, legend, philosophy and religion apart from being described as a paradise on earth, the truth of which has to be experienced to be believed.

In olden days the route was via Rawalpindi (Pakistan) but now a direct train is there connecting rest of India to Jammu, the winter capital of the State. The best part of journey is between *Guru Purnima* and *Shravan Purnima*. The Government of Jammu and Kashmir makes all arrangements for the comfort of the pilgrims for undertaking the ritualistic journey for visiting the shrine on *Shravan Purnima*. But the highly unpredictable weather of the mountains should be more obliging before *Guru Purnima* as rain would

not start. There is a bus service from Jammu to Pahalgam (7,500 ft.). Pahalgam "the valley of shepherds" is surrounded by snowy mountains in the lap of dancing streams and deep forests. At Pahalgam the pilgrims arrange for coolies or ponies to carry gear of food and clothes etc. Everybody remains busy making arrangements for the pilgrimage. The golden glow of, the sun falls on the turbulent river at Pahalgam.

The journey from Pahalgam commences towards the first halting station Chandanwari (8,500 ft.) is ten miles away. Chandanwari is famous for its snow bridge. Chandanwari literally means 'Orchard of Sandalwood', the abode, of sweet fragrance. By fragrance we mean sound and light, which imparts attainment of self-realization. With the bright sunlight reflected in silvery snow-clad peaks above, and gurgling river meandering through the valley below, the pilgrim already is in a different world. The trekking undoubtedly is slow by not boring as the scenery alongside is most picturesque.

Early the next morning the caravan again proceeds further towards a straight two-mile climb towards Pisutop (12,200 ft.). From Pisutop one must cover seven miles to reach Seshnag (13,148 ft.) next halting station. Sheshnag Lake is an emerald lake surrounded by mountains from all its sides. The true nature which indicates life and which revolves on two wheels '*Shivas*' and '*Prashivas*', emanates eternal peace which is symbolized with a stream whose origin is a big lake having fresh and beautiful waters of *Ananda*. This is supreme factor in attaining true nature. Ascents are stiff and steep, climbs are difficult to negotiate. The path is clear but at some places the glaciers become slippery. It is here where a stick carried by a pilgrim becomes useful and, in some cases, saves one's life. Before entering the small pilgrim camp, one gets the enchanting sight of blue still waters of Sheshnag Lake. One must walk a mile to take a refreshing bath. The lake is very deep and is fed by the melting snow of the glaciers above and water is bluish green below. It is believed that someone has seen

Adishesha, the many hooded serpent streaking through these waters. Whatever the explanation may be, it is true that one experiences an invisible presence of some superpower near the lake. The mountains are fully covered with snow, and their peaks resemble the seven heads of the mythical snake. The quiet place looks so thickly populated, then, that everybody, despite intense cold, appears in high spirits, probable feeling proximity to the divine. The roaring sound of gushing streams, the gigantic snow-clad mountains, the moonlight beaming through foggy enclosure, the neighing horses and the dim tent-tops all around presents an indelible impression. One feels nearer to God and in such a blissful environment.

From Sheshnag one reaches Panchtarni, the valley criss crossed by five rivulets. Five senses that work on the behest of mind is the confluence stretched and symbolized with Panchtarni. Mind is the whole object which if controlled beats one to eternal peace. Five rivers meet in this beautiful valley surrounded by five mountains, which resemble the same mythical guard of Lord Shiva, five headed serpents.

The journey is most difficult as one has to climb to a height of 14,500 ft. and then to descend. The highest point is *Mahagunas*, which means the great serpent. There is no vegetation at this height and one begins to feel lack of oxygen. It is said that the fragrance of the herbs in *Mahagunas* is so alluring that the pilgrims are warned not to have any rest at this place and *Ponywallas* are very careful not to allow their horses to graze here, which otherwise, is fatal for these animals. The four-mile descent from *Mahagunas* to Panchtarni is slippery especially after a rain, which is a common occurrence. The night is spent in great expectation of reaching the cave in the morning. The journey starts early in the morning. When one controls his senses, mind and heating, he obtains light that is only possible when he travels different terrains, gorgy and steeply places en-route Amarnath. On reaching the *Barav Bal* one gets full glimpse of Siva Lingam.

Again a steep ascent to Sant Singh Top (13,500 ft.) and a slippery descent until one reaches the low-lying glaciers over which are seen the pilgrims walking in a row. At last one reaches the *Amar Ganga* where one takes his bath in ice cold water and climbs up the steep to the cave. This bath and steep climb are final tests of devotion.

The holy cave is approximately 50 feet long, 25 feet wide and 15 feet high. When one reaches the cave, he becomes over struck at the sight of Ice *Lingam* completely filling the right corner of the cave, the top of the *Lingam* touches the roof of the cave. The base of the cave is also covered with ice, like a carpet. Here Siva is worshipped by nature in the purest way. The cave is the nature's temple and is undefined, by human touch. Siva is snow-white and pure. *Lingam* is formed by drops of water falling from the top of the cave and two other small ice *Lingam* are also formed, believed to be the symbols of Goddess *Parvati* and Lord *Ganesa*. On early morning a white pair of doves (believed to be Siva and *Parvati*) appear at the cave corner. Austerity and strenuous mountain climbing with all its attendant risks are soon forgotten and one gets a sense of grand fulfillment here.

After having *darshan* one climbs down with a heavy heart casting "a longing lingering look behind" and slowly starts returning. The river *Amar Ganga* flows with a gentle murmur Siva, Siva and the tall peaks echoed it, to be heard by the Heavens. Himalayas around Kashmir have their special grandeur. Even a loud shout is sufficient to dislodge a huge boulder or rock precariously hanging on the tip of the mountain and bring it hurtling down leveling everything, pilgrims and all. Rarefied atmosphere again burns the exposed skin of the face with its ultraviolet radiation. At every step death stares in the face! But who cares?

One can return along the same route or by a different route, which takes a short time but is very risky.

Despite innumerable difficulties and hindrances, the pilgrimage to Amarnath provides not only adventure and spiritual solace, but also an ineffable experience that abides with one for ever.



Independence Day

FREEDOM, MEMORY, UNFINISHED RESPONSIBILITY, AND THE PAIN OF DISPLACEMENT

Independence Day serves as a solemn reminder of the freedom earned through the immense sacrifice, courage, and devotion of countless men and women. We bow in gratitude to all those brave souls who gave their today so that India could breathe freely tomorrow.

We celebrate with pride the freedom of our nation. Yet, beneath that celebration, there remains a quiet anguish in the hearts of many Indians, a question that conscience cannot simply silence. Can the joy of freedom ever be complete when a community of Indians has lived for decades in displacement from its own homeland, within its own country?

For those of us who have witnessed this tragedy, displacement is not merely a historical event. It is a living wound carried across generations, the memory of homes abandoned, temples desecrated, traditions disrupted, cultural spaces lost, and roots violently severed from the soil that nurtured them.

I belong to a generation that has witnessed thirty seven years of displacement from its own birthplace, within its own country.

To be uprooted from one's home and then to wait for decades for the opportunity to return to one's own soil is not merely a



personal or familial tragedy. It is a profound question before the collective conscience of the nation.

A community that preserved its civilisation, culture, knowledge traditions, and national commitment through generations should never have to struggle merely to preserve its identity and existence. To speak of this pain is not to diminish India's freedom. It is to deepen our understanding of what freedom demands from us.

A citizen who loves his nation has the moral right to expect that the nation will protect the life, dignity, identity, culture, heritage, and security of every community equally.

National unity cannot be built by asking the displaced to forget their suffering. It is strengthened when their suffering is acknowledged with truth, justice, compassion, and the resolve to find a dignified, constitutional, and lasting solution.

Freedom and National Duty:

Freedom is not merely a right; it is also a responsibility. The responsibility to preserve our culture. The responsibility to understand and protect our heritage. The responsibility to cherish our civilisational memory. The responsibility to transmit our values and knowledge to future generations. And above all, the responsibility to ensure that no citizen is ever made to feel like a stranger in his or her own country. A nation is not secured merely by protecting its geographical borders. A nation is truly secure when it safeguards the life, dignity, identity, faith, culture, and security of its people.

Therefore, the pain of displacement must not remain outside India's national memory. The families whose eyes are still turned towards the homes and lands they were compelled to leave behind must also find a place in the conscience of the nation.

From Displacement to a Constitutional and Dignified Future:

For us, the answer to this prolonged tragedy cannot be confined to temporary relief, rehabilitation packages, or the passage of

time. We seek a permanent, constitutional, and dignified political solution that guarantees security, equality, cultural continuity, and the right to live with honour.

We therefore reaffirm the aspiration for the creation of a separate Union Territory comprising the contiguous areas to the East and North of the River Vitasta (Jhelum) in the Kashmir Valley, where the Constitution of India shall apply fully, unequivocally, and in letter and spirit, providing a secure constitutional framework for the displaced community and all citizens who choose to live there.

This is not a demand for revenge against anyone. It is a demand for justice, security, dignity, constitutional protection, and a durable framework for coexistence. The proposed Union Territory is envisioned as a place where the Constitution of India reigns supreme, every citizen enjoys equal rights and equal protection of law, the life, dignity, and security of every individual are protected without discrimination, the civilisational heritage and cultural identity of Kashmiri Hindus are preserved, temples, shrines, cultural institutions, and heritage sites are protected, displaced families can return and rebuild their lives with security, honour, and dignity and future generations of those uprooted from Kashmir can once again become rooted in their own land.

This is the essence of the survival for displaced community which has vision not exclusion, not revenge, but a constitutionally protected homeland within India, founded upon equality, justice, security, and civilisational continuity.

The Necessity of "Shatru Bodh":

There is another responsibility that a mature and vigilant nation cannot ignore, Shatru Bodh, the awareness and recognition of the adversary.

Shatru Bodh is not hatred towards any community, nor is it a call for revenge. It is the wisdom and national consciousness required to recognise forces, ideologies, and designs that threaten the unity, security, constitutional order, and civilisational character of the nation.

A nation that cannot recognise the nature

of the threats confronting it cannot adequately protect its people. But Shatru Bodh must always be accompanied by Vivek, Dharma, and justice. It means distinguishing between the innocent and the perpetrator, between faith and fanaticism, between legitimate disagreement and violent extremism, and between reconciliation based on truth and appeasement based on fear.

Forgetting history does not create peace:

Understanding history, learning from it, and acting with wisdom and courage create the possibility of lasting peace. If we fail to learn from history, if we fail to recognise the suffering of our own citizens, and if we hesitate to act when their security and existence are threatened, the consequence is not merely a failure of governance. It becomes a deeper

question of our collective national consciousness and our resolve to protect Bharat.

Neither Pity nor Revenge, Only Justice
Yet, despite all the anguish, our faith in India remains unshaken. We do not seek anyone's pity. We seek justice. We do not seek revenge. We seek dignity. We do not seek confrontation for its own sake. We seek the right to live safely, honourably, and fearlessly in a secure constitutional homeland within India.

Displacement may have become our circumstance, but oblivion can never become our destiny.

Our cultural memory cannot be erased by the passage of time. Our civilisational roots cannot be severed merely because generations have been forced to live away from their birthplace

OBITUARY



Prof. Krishna Labroo

All India Kashmiri Samaj pays a heartfelt tribute to Prof. Krishna Labroo, a worthy daughter of Kashmir, who took her last breath on 5 August 2026 in Noida. Wife of Prof. G. L. Labroo, she was a highly popular teacher at Government College for Women, Nawakadal, and went on to serve as Principal of Government Degree Colleges for Women in Anantnag, Udhampur and Jammu.

Education, emancipation and empowerment of women in the Valley remained her abiding passion. Her dreams were realised through the hundreds of students she inspired, who went on to live with freedom and dignity at home and as equals of men at work.

Krishnaji had a deep love for theatre and music and actively promoted Kashmiri culture through numerous events that she organised and sponsored. Her catholicity and broad-mindedness were always her forte.

All India Kashmiri Samaj offers its sincere condolences to the bereaved family.



ELEVEN FREEDOM FIGHTERS

FROM JAMMU & KASHMIR FIND A PLACE OF HONOUR ON THE GREAT TRIBUTE WALL AT KANYAKUMARI

Standing majestically at the headquarters of Vivekananda Kendra, Vivekanandapuram, Kanyakumari, the Great Tribute Wall is one of India's most inspiring national memorials dedicated to the unsung heroes of the Indian freedom movement. Conceived as part of the nationwide celebrations marking 75 years of India's Independence, this magnificent monument has been developed in collaboration with the Chakra Vision India Foundation Trust, Chennai, with the noble objective of ensuring

that the sacrifices of forgotten patriots are preserved for posterity.

Stretching 60 feet in length and 10 feet in height, the memorial is a remarkable blend of patriotism, history, and technology. At its heart stands a 10-foot-tall statue of Bharat Mata, while a 100-foot National Flag proudly flutters above the complex, symbolizing the unity and sovereignty of the nation. The marble granite plaques engraved on the wall carry the names, states, and lifespans of 1,040 unsung freedom fighters from across India. Modern QR code



technology enables visitors to access the inspiring life stories of these patriots in twelve Indian languages, making history accessible to every generation. Fittingly, the very first commemorative plaque honours Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose, one of the greatest icons of India's struggle for independence.

Among these 1,040 immortalized patriots, eleven distinguished freedom fighters from the erstwhile State of Jammu & Kashmir have been accorded this rare national honour. Their inclusion is a matter of immense pride, not only for the people of Jammu & Kashmir but for every Indian who cherishes the sacrifices made for the nation's freedom.

The honoured personalities are: Maharaja Hari Singh, Lieutenant General Kashmir Singh Katoch, Sant Singh Tegh, Dhanwantri, Niranjan Singh Bhalla, Brigadier Rajinder Singh Jamwal, Sardar Budh Singh, Pandit Kanti Chandra Zadoo, Pandit Dina Nath Zadoo, Pandit Pushkar Nath Zadoo and Pandit Sarwanand Koul 'Premi'.

The inclusion of these eleven illustrious sons of Jammu & Kashmir is deeply significant. They represent the diverse social, cultural, military, and intellectual traditions of the region and embody the spirit of courage, sacrifice, patriotism, and unwavering devotion to the motherland.

Particularly noteworthy is the recognition accorded to four eminent Kashmiri Pandits, Pandit Kanti Chandra Zadoo, Pandit Dina Nath Zadoo, Pandit Pushkar Nath Zadoo, and Pandit Sarwanand Koul 'Premi'. Their presence on this national memorial is not merely an individual honour; it is a recognition of the invaluable contribution made by the Kashmiri Pandit community to India's freedom movement and the building of the nation. Through their scholarship, activism, literary excellence, and fearless patriotism, they enriched the national struggle and upheld the ideals of justice, liberty, and national unity.

Equally inspiring is the inclusion of the great patriots from the Jammu region. Brigadier Rajinder Singh Jamwal, revered as the *Saviour of Kashmir*, made the supreme sacrifice in October 1947 while heroically

delaying the invading tribal forces, thereby buying precious time that enabled the accession of Jammu & Kashmir to India. Lieutenant General Kashmir Singh Katoch, Sant Singh Tej, Niranjan Singh Bhalla, Sardar Budh Singh, and others symbolize the indomitable martial tradition and unwavering patriotism of the people of Jammu. Their courage and selfless service continue to inspire generations of Indians.

The presence of Maharaja Hari Singh on the Great Tribute Wall carries profound historical significance. His decisive role during one of the most critical moments in Indian history shaped the destiny of Jammu & Kashmir and strengthened the unity and integrity of the Indian nation.

For decades, the contributions of many patriots from Jammu & Kashmir remained confined to regional narratives and received only limited national recognition. By engraving their names on the Great Tribute Wall, the nation has corrected an important historical omission. Their stories now stand permanently enshrined at Kanyakumari, the southernmost tip of India, where millions of visitors from every corner of the country and the world will learn about their extraordinary sacrifices.

The Great Tribute Wall sends a powerful message that India's freedom was not won by a few celebrated leaders alone. It was achieved through the courage and sacrifices of countless unsung heroes from every region, every community, and every walk of life. The inclusion of these eleven distinguished freedom fighters from Jammu & Kashmir beautifully reinforces the timeless truth that the spirit of nationalism transcends geography, language, and religion.

Their names, now carved in stone beneath the fluttering Tricolour, shall continue to inspire future generations with the ideals of courage, sacrifice, patriotism, and national unity. It is not merely a tribute to eleven remarkable individuals; it is a tribute to the enduring legacy of Jammu & Kashmir and its priceless contribution to the making of modern India.



 Sanjay Pandita



The Second Innings

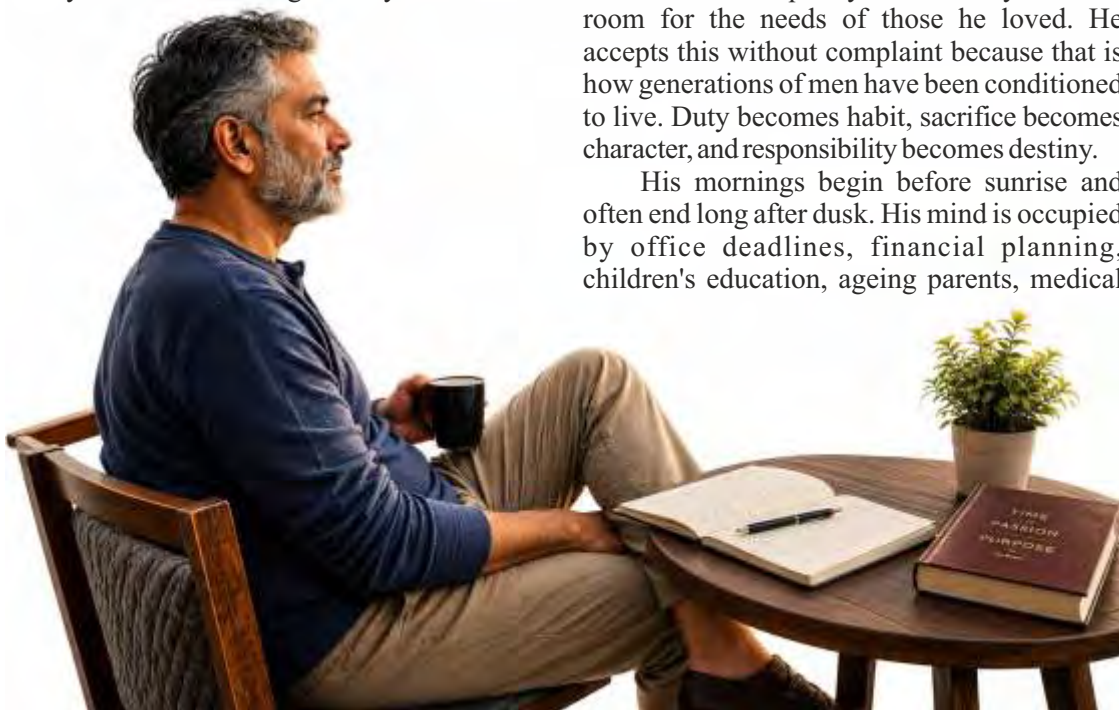
REDISCOVERING THE MAN BEYOND RESPONSIBILITY

Life seldom grants a man the luxury of living entirely for himself. Almost from the day he steps into adulthood, he finds himself woven into an intricate web of responsibilities that quietly shape his identity. He becomes a son before he becomes an individual, a husband before he has fully understood himself, a father before he has finished chasing his own dreams, and, in time, the dependable pillar around whom an entire family revolves. His life gradually transforms

into an endless series of commitments, obligations, sacrifices, and expectations. Somewhere along this long journey, without even realizing it, he begins to disappear behind the roles he performs.

The world applauds him for his achievements, measures his worth through his profession, and respects him for the responsibilities he fulfils. Rarely does anyone ask what he desired, what passions he abandoned, or what dreams he quietly folded away to make room for the needs of those he loved. He accepts this without complaint because that is how generations of men have been conditioned to live. Duty becomes habit, sacrifice becomes character, and responsibility becomes destiny.

His mornings begin before sunrise and often end long after dusk. His mind is occupied by office deadlines, financial planning, children's education, ageing parents, medical



emergencies, social obligations, and the countless uncertainties that accompany family life. Every promotion is celebrated not merely as personal success but as greater security for the household. Every hardship is silently absorbed because someone has to remain strong when everyone else is vulnerable.

Years Pass Almost Unnoticed

Children grow into adults. Parents slowly depart from this world, leaving behind memories instead of guidance. Loans are repaid. Weddings are celebrated. Grandchildren begin to arrive. The man who once ran tirelessly through the corridors of ambition gradually reaches the final chapter of his professional life.

Then Comes Retirement

The farewell is warm. Colleagues praise his dedication. Bouquets, shawls, mementoes, and speeches attempt to summarize decades of service in a few emotional moments. Photographs are taken. Promises are exchanged to remain in touch. Everyone smiles, yet somewhere within him he senses that something immeasurable has quietly come to an end.

The next morning, for the first time in decades, there is no alarm demanding urgency.

- ❖ The office no longer waits for him.
- ❖ The phone remains silent.
- ❖ The files belong to someone else.
- ❖ The chair he occupied for years has already found another owner.
- ❖ The world continues exactly as before, but without needing his presence.
- ❖ This realization often arrives with astonishing force.

Retirement is not merely the end of employment; it is the sudden loss of a familiar identity. A man who introduced himself for decades through his profession now finds that title has quietly vanished. He is no longer addressed as manager, principal, engineer, officer, professor, or administrator. He is simply retired.

Initially, retirement feels like freedom. There is relief in escaping schedules and deadlines. One sleeps a little longer, enjoys leisurely mornings, reads newspapers without

haste, and sips tea without constantly glancing at the clock. Friends visit, relatives congratulate, and conversations revolve around shared memories.

Naturally, the Mind Turns Toward the Past.

Stories emerge effortlessly. Tales of difficult assignments, memorable journeys, humorous incidents, inspiring colleagues, impossible challenges, and unexpected victories fill family gatherings. Grandchildren listen with curiosity. Friends laugh over forgotten episodes. Contemporary companions contribute their own recollections, weaving together a tapestry of nostalgia that momentarily bridges yesterday and today.

Memory becomes a comforting home.

Yet memory has its limitations.

The same stories, repeated often enough, gradually lose their freshness. Family members begin anticipating every ending. Younger generations, living in an entirely different world, struggle to relate to experiences shaped by another era. Conversations that once attracted eager listeners slowly become polite rituals. No one intends disrespect; life simply moves forward.

The retired man notices this change before anyone mentions it.

He pauses midway through an old anecdote, sensing that his audience has heard it many times before.

Silence begins replacing narration.

Gradually, he withdraws into himself.

Then begins another phase of retirement—the quiet rediscovery of ordinary life.

For perhaps the first time in decades, he observes the rhythm of his own home. He accompanies his wife to the market, carefully selecting vegetables whose prices he never previously noticed. He learns the names of neighbourhood shopkeepers. He waters plants, arranges bookshelves, repairs forgotten corners of the house, and discovers satisfaction in tasks once considered too insignificant for his busy schedule.

He waits eagerly for the laughter of grandchildren.

A child asking for a bedtime story becomes more important than an official meeting ever was.

Helping with homework, walking little hands to school, sharing chocolates secretly despite parental objections, or simply watching them sleep creates a joy impossible to measure.

Grandchildren unknowingly become therapists.

They ask no questions about status, salary, designation, or achievements. They love without conditions and restore something beautifully innocent within ageing hearts.

Yet even these precious moments occupy only part of the day.

The remaining hours stretch endlessly.

Time, once relentlessly scarce, suddenly becomes abundant.

Ironically, abundance can be more difficult to manage than scarcity.

Many retirees struggle not because they have nothing to do but because they no longer know who they are without constant responsibility. Society prepares people for careers but seldom prepares them for retirement. Financial planning receives attention; emotional planning rarely does.

The greatest challenge of retirement is therefore not economic—it is existential.

What gives life meaning when professional identity fades?

What remains after decades of duty?

Some answer these questions with despair. They become prisoners of routine, sitting for hours before television screens, endlessly discussing politics, complaining about changing times, comparing generations, or waiting for visitors who seldom arrive. Loneliness gradually settles into the home like invisible dust.

Others choose a different path.

They rediscover forgotten interests.

Books waiting patiently on shelves are finally opened.

Poetry begins speaking again.

Music regains its melody.

Paintbrushes emerge from cupboards.

Gardens bloom under attentive hands.

Pilgrimages postponed for years finally become possible.

Some begin writing memoirs, preserving family histories before they disappear forever. Others teach underprivileged children, volunteer in hospitals, mentor young professionals, or devote themselves to charitable work. Retirement, instead of diminishing them, expands their usefulness in unexpected directions.

There are those who turn inward.

The silence once feared gradually becomes a companion.

Meditation replaces anxiety.

Prayer deepens.

Sacred texts reveal meanings overlooked during hurried years.

They discover that spirituality is not an escape from life but another way of understanding it.

Age softens ambition and sharpens wisdom.

Many begin appreciating things that success never provided—the changing colours of evening skies, birds returning to their nests, the fragrance of rain, conversations without purpose, morning walks beneath old trees, and the extraordinary peace hidden within ordinary moments.

Retirement teaches an uncomfortable but necessary truth.

No human being is indispensable.

Every office continues.

Every institution replaces its employees.

Every position eventually belongs to someone else.

This realization may initially wound the ego, yet it also liberates the soul. If work was never our permanent identity, then perhaps our true identity has always existed beyond designation, salary, and achievement.

The second innings invites a man to meet that forgotten self.

He remembers the books he wanted to read.

The places he hoped to visit.

The language he wished to learn.

The songs he loved singing.

The diary he intended to write.

The friendships neglected by busyness.

The dreams postponed in the name of responsibility.

Perhaps retirement is life's gentle way of returning these unfinished conversations.

Families too carry an important responsibility during this phase. Elderly parents do not merely require medicines, comfortable rooms, or financial security. They seek participation. They long to feel that their presence still matters, that their opinions remain valued, and that they are remembered not only during festivals or emergencies but in everyday life.

Sometimes the greatest gift a family can offer is attentive listening.

Not because every story is new, but because every storyteller wishes to know that his journey has meaning.

Children who patiently hear the memories of their ageing parents inherit more than stories; they inherit values, resilience, family history, and emotional continuity.

Likewise, retirees themselves must accept that every generation creates its own language, priorities, and pace. Wisdom becomes meaningful only when offered with humility rather than imposed through authority. The role of an elder gradually shifts from commanding to guiding, from controlling to inspiring.

Perhaps this transformation represents the deepest purpose of ageing.

Youth builds.

Middle age sustains.

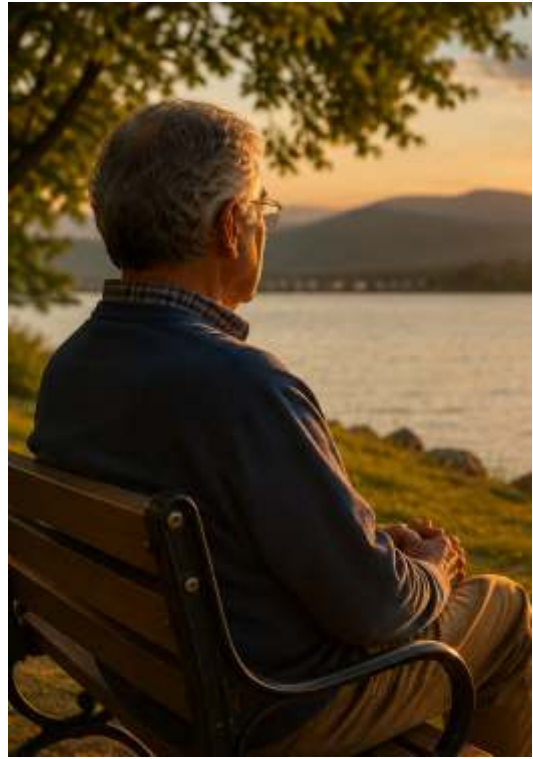
Old age illuminates.

A life well lived eventually becomes a lighthouse for others.

Retirement therefore should never be mistaken for the closing chapter of existence. It is simply the beginning of a different narrative—one where success is measured not by promotions but by peace, not by possessions but by presence, not by authority but by affection.

The first innings belongs largely to society.

The second innings belongs to the soul.



It is during these quieter years that a man finally discovers the person who had patiently waited behind decades of duty. He realizes that fulfilment is not always found in achieving more but in becoming more aware, more compassionate, more grateful, and more deeply connected with life itself.

The evening of life has its own sunlight. It is softer than the brilliance of noon, yet far richer in colour. It does not blind the eyes; it warms the heart. It invites reflection instead of competition, gratitude instead of ambition, and serenity instead of struggle.

When embraced with courage and purpose, retirement ceases to be an empty passage of time. It becomes a season of rediscovery—a season in which a man, after spending an entire lifetime living for everyone else, finally learns the gentle and often forgotten art of living with himself.

That, perhaps, is the true meaning of the second innings—not an ending to be endured, but a new beginning to be cherished.

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 Dr. M K Mam



Bone and Joint day is celebrated all over India by the Indian Orthopaedic Association (IOA) and all its regional and state chapters on 4th of August every year since 2012. We have public awareness programs at regional and state chapters to sensitize the society about the importance of maintaining sound bone and joint health, impact of bone and joint disorders like osteoporosis, osteoarthritis, back and neck pain, injuries etc., and how to prevent and treat them. The campaign reflects the commitment to improve bone and joint health, promote preventive orthopaedics, and strengthen community engagement across India. This year the theme of observing the day is "*Healthy Bones Healthy Joints Healthier India*" We usually have a week-long activity and this year it is from 3rd August to 8th August.

As per IOA program, awareness programs are to be held where people, more so the children being the future of a nation are

educated about the importance of having strong bones and joints, and what all can be done for having healthy bones and joints. Awareness shall also focus on spinal deformity screening in children and adolescents for its early detection and treatment, healthy school bag habits, healthy posture, and exercise.

Programs are held to apprise the people about the importance of maintaining a healthy posture and the implications of unhealthy posture which somehow is a very common problem nowadays. Awareness program about proper use of digital device, office ergonomics and workplace related issues are held. What is important is that the people have to be mindful of the posture during day-to-day activities especially when working on laptop-computer, using the smart phone or watching TV etc.

The campaign involves educating people about prevention of road traffic injuries as deaths, injuries and long-term disabilities caused by road accidents is a major public health problem having a lot of physical, social,

Exercise keeps joints mobile prevents stiffness and strengthens the muscles, that is necessary for the stability, movements to the joints and balance. Exercise also helps in keeping weight under control, which is good not only for bones and joints but also for overall health of a person.

emotional and economic implications. All that can be prevented to a large extent. People are informed about prevention of road injuries, sports injuries, workplace injuries, home accidents- falls especially in elderly etc. and first aid, as safety is the best treatment

People are educated about maintaining a sound bone health and what all can be done for it. The bones along with the joints and muscle provide shape, form, support, stability, movements to the body. Bones protect our delicate organs like brain, spinal cord, heart, lungs etc. They also serve as the store house of the minerals - calcium and phosphorus. The marrow present in the bones produces the blood cells. In short, bones along with joints are very important for us and we must take care of their health. Poor bone health- osteoporosis is common as bone and joint health is somehow neglected by people in general. It is a major and a serious health problem as fractures of the bones of hips, spine etc. occur just with a minor trauma. This results in lot of disability, affects quality of life and performance of the person. Good thing is that osteoporosis is preventable and treatable.



Joints provide flexibility to the skeleton; with the result we can move freely and do various day to day activities. When joints in particular the joints of limbs do not function well as usually occurs in osteoarthritis, inflammatory arthritis etc. the person has pain, stiffness, deformity, disability etc. All that badly affects ability to work, activities of daily living, performance and the quality of life. As such maintaining a sound bone and joint health is essential.

Sound bone and joint health can be maintained by regular physical activity- exercise along with a balanced diet with adequate amounts of calcium, vitamin D, vitamin C, proteins etc. Weight bearing exercise i.e. when bones and muscles work against gravity and resistance make the bones and muscles stronger. They stimulate the bone cell to form new bone and thus increase bone mass. Exercise keeps joints mobile- prevents stiffness and strengthens the muscles, that is necessary for the stability, movements to the joints and balance. Exercise also helps in keeping weight under control, which is good not only for bones and joints but also for overall health of a person. Yoga- asanas done under the guidance of an expert improve bone and muscle strength, increase range of movements of joints- flexibility and improve balance. One should avoid overuse, abuse and injury of the joints. Again, continuous repeated movements and tasks, overworking of joints is not good for joints. Having some changes in the daily life like activity modification etc. can protect the joints. Tobacco smoking, consumption of alcohol, sodas etc. have adverse effects on bones and overall health of a person, all that has to be avoided. People are educated about having a healthy life style- regular daily exercise, intake of balanced diet, avoiding smoking, alcohol consumption, keeping a watch on weight, healthy posture etc.



Amit Kaul



Herath

THE NIGHT THAT HOLDS THE UNIVERSE STILL



When the crescent of Phalguna's dark fortnight dissolves into near-nihility, just before the veil of Amavasya falls, Kashmiri Hindus enter the profound stillness of Herath—Hara-ratri, the Night of Hara. This is no ordinary festival. It is the night when the unmanifest stirs, when the formless takes the form of a household kalash, and when the devotee's vigil becomes a bridge between the ephemeral and the eternal.

Unlike the single night of Maha

Shivaratri observed across the rest of Bharat, Herath unfolds as a living continuum. Homes are first scrubbed clean in the ritual of Haur, an outer purification that mirrors the inner clearing of the mind. Then the sacred space is prepared for Vatuk Puja. Earthen vessels—filled with pure water and walnuts—are arranged with quiet precision. The large kalash stands as Vatuk Bhairava, the youthful, fierce-yet-compassionate form of Shiva; others embody the Divine Mother and the retinue of protective powers. The walnuts, slowly

swelling in the water, will later be shared as prasad, carrying the night's grace into every home that receives them. In this simple act the infinite is domesticated: the same Shiva who is the aniconic column of light becomes the quiet presence in a Kashmiri household.

The night is heavy with primordial memory. The Linga Purana recalls the lingodbhava—the blazing, beginningless pillar of jyoti that rose between earth and sky. Brahma soared upward as a swan and Vishnu plunged downward as a boar, both seeking its end and both failing. In that failure the truth was revealed: Shiva is anādi-ananta, the substratum that no form can measure and no intellect can exhaust. On this same night the cosmic ocean was once churned, and from it rose the deadly halahala. Shiva, the Neelakantha, took the poison into Himself so that gods and demons alike might live. The azure mark at His throat remains the eternal sign that the Divine does not merely transcend darkness—He transforms it.

Even the unwitting find redemption here. The hunter Lubdhaka, fleeing danger, spent the night in a bilva tree. Leaves fell, water spilled, and through the four praharas of the night an accidental worship was completed. When dawn came, the Lord appeared. Violence turned to vairagya; the hunter's future was rewritten. The story is not about perfection

of ritual but about the potency of the night itself—how sincerity, even accidental, is received when the cosmic gates stand open.

For those steeped in the vision of Kashmir Shaivism, Herath is more than mythology. It is the living recognition that the one Reality, *eko devaḥ sarvabhūteṣu gūḍhaḥ*, hides within every being as the inner Self. The darkness of this night is not absence; it is the fertile void from which all manifestation arises and into which it returns. The devotee who remains awake—*nirahara*, senses reined, repeating *Om Namah Shivaya* or the *Mṛtyuñjaya*—participates in that return. The spine becomes a conduit; the quiet house becomes Kailasa; the ordinary breath begins to taste the still mountain after eons of cosmic dance.

Herath is also the night of the divine wedding—the *yuganaddha* of Shiva and Shakti, consciousness and energy, without which the world would tilt into imbalance. For the householder it brings the blessing of harmony; for the seeker it offers the rare alignment in which one night of dhyana can equal long years of ordinary effort. The three fortified cities of ego, desire, and illusion—those *Tripuras* that arise only once in a cosmic age—stand momentarily vulnerable. The archer who is *Tripurantaka* waits within the silence.

Thus the narratives converge: the hunter's redemption, the infinite lingam, the swallowed poison turned to nectar, the household *kalash* holding the same mystery that once confounded the gods. In the diaspora as in the Valley, in modest rooms and in carefully prepared puja spaces, the same intention rises—to stay awake not from fear of sleep but from love of the vastness that sleep conceals.

This is Herath: the night when the Kashmiri home becomes the axis of the universe, when walnuts carry the blessing of the Absolute, and when the devotee, whether through perfect ritual or simple heartfelt vigil, is invited to dissolve into the One who is both the dancer and the stillness after the dance.





 Sandeep Dhar



JOURNEY TO THE DIVINE

A MEMORABLE TREK TO SHREE TUNGNATH TEMPLE



The Himalayas have always held a special place in my heart. Every visit leaves behind memories that stay with me forever. This time, it was the sacred journey to Shree Tungnath Temple, the highest Shiva temple in the world and the third among the revered Panch Kedar temples of Uttarakhand.

Our journey began on the evening of 12 June, when members of KRC (Our Runners Club) gathered in Delhi. Excitement was high as we set off for Chopta, Uttarakhand, the base for our trek. The newly built Delhi Dehradun Expressway made the drive smooth and comfortable. Covering nearly 430 kilometres, we stopped only for tea, fresh fruits, and light snacks while enjoying endless conversations and laughter.

After an overnight drive, we reached Chopta at around 7.00 AM. Surrounded by lush green meadows and the majestic Himalayas, the peaceful atmosphere instantly refreshed us. We checked into our tents, freshened up, and enjoyed a simple, wholesome mountain breakfast of hot parathas, fresh curd, tea, and seasonal fruits before preparing for the trek.

The morning was magical. The first rays of the sun painted the snow-covered Himalayan peaks in shades of gold. Before starting our climb, we spent a few quiet moments practising Surya Namaskar, breathing in the fresh mountain air, and sharing stories of our travels and faith. Looking at the endless mountain ranges, many of us were reminded of the beautiful valleys of Kashmir.



From Chopta, we took a shuttle service to the trek starting point. The four kilometre trail to Tungnath is well paved but steadily uphill. The climb tests patience more than speed. Though we are runners, this was never about finishing first. It was about enjoying every step and every view.

Very soon, the mountains echoed with the chants of Har Har Mahadev. The powerful chant lifted everyone's spirits and created a wonderful feeling of unity. Pilgrims greeted one another with smiles, and strangers became companions on the sacred path.

The trail itself was a reward. Green meadows stretched across the hillsides, colourful wildflowers bloomed along the path, ancient rhododendron forests stood tall, and clouds floated below the mountain peaks. Every turn revealed another breathtaking view. According to tradition, the Pandavas, seeking forgiveness from Lord Shiva after the Mahabharata war, travelled through these very Himalayan mountains. Tungnath is believed to be the place where the arms of Lord Shiva appeared when He took the form of a bull, making it one of the five sacred Panch Kedar shrines. Walking this ancient route made the journey feel even more meaningful.

After a steady climb, we finally reached Shree Tungnath Temple, standing proudly at

an altitude of 3,680 metres or 12,073 feet. Believed to be over a thousand years old and associated with Adi Shankaracharya, the temple is a masterpiece of simple Himalayan stone architecture. Standing before this ancient shrine, surrounded by mist, mountains, and the sound of temple bells, filled our hearts with peace, gratitude, and devotion. The tiredness of the climb disappeared the moment we had darshan.

We had originally planned to continue to Chandrashila Peak, but after the climb and considering the limited time available, we decided not to push further. Sometimes, listening to your body is wiser than chasing another destination. We were grateful for the blessings we had received and content with the experience.

After spending peaceful moments at the temple, we began our descent to Chopta, once again enjoying the magnificent Himalayan scenery from a different perspective.

On our return journey towards Delhi, we stopped at Devprayag, where the sacred rivers Alaknanda and Bhagirathi merge to form the holy Ganga. Taking a dip at this divine confluence was refreshing and deeply spiritual. It was the perfect conclusion to our pilgrimage.

This journey gave us much more than beautiful photographs. It strengthened friendships, renewed our faith, and reminded us of the healing power of nature. The Himalayas teach patience, humility, and gratitude. They also remind us that these mountains are sacred and fragile. Every traveller should carry back their waste and help preserve their natural beauty for future generations.

As we returned home, our bodies were tired, but our hearts were full. The memories of the Himalayan peaks, the ancient temple, the ringing bells, the chants of Har Har Mahadev, and the warmth of friendship continue to stay with us.

Some journeys end when you return home. Others continue to live within you. For me, the Tungnath Yatra will always remain one of those unforgettable journeys.

Lost Paradise

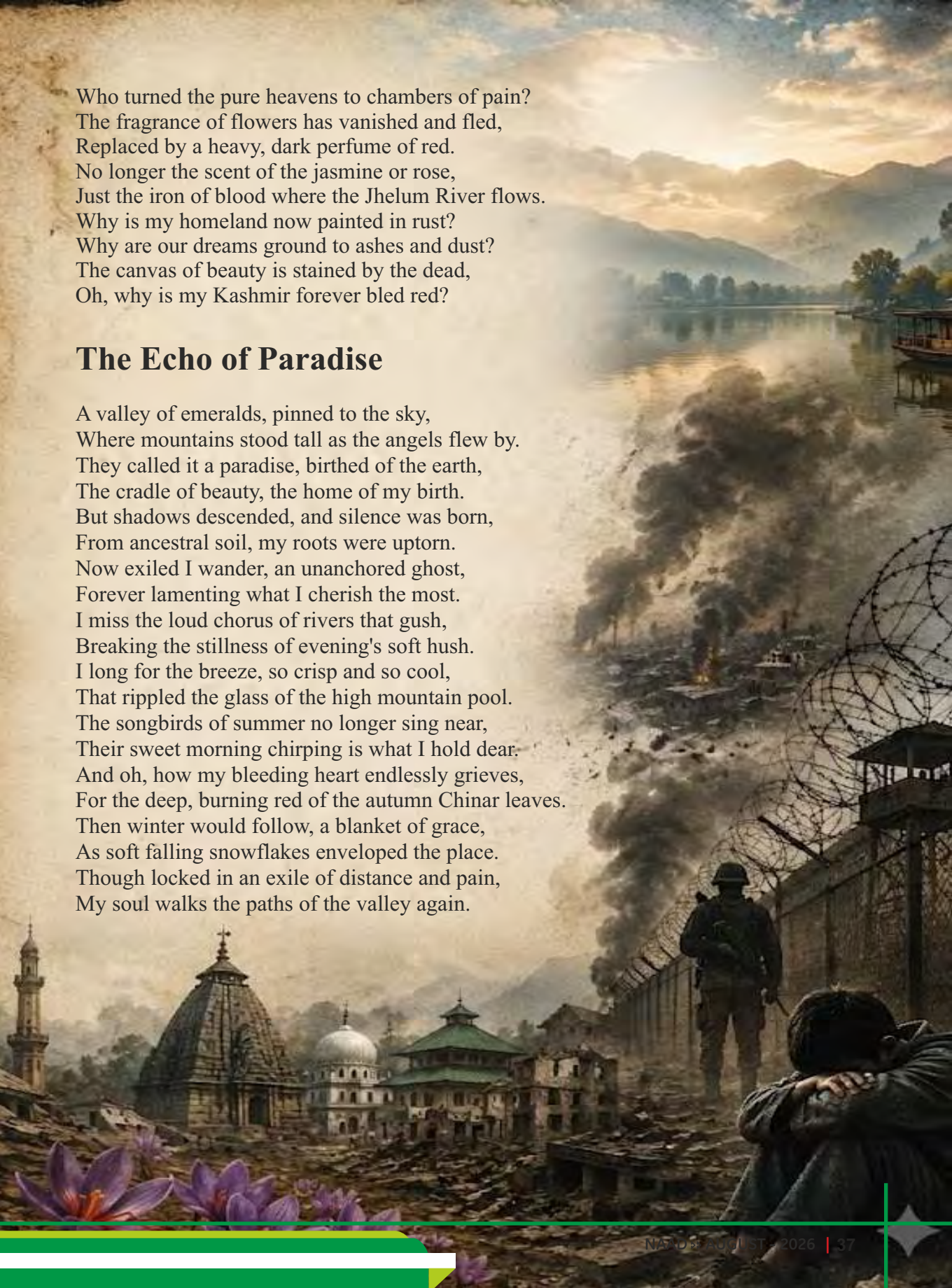


 Vijay Kashkari

The Jhelum once mirrored a sky bright and clear,
Where peace was a whisper that everyone could hear.
The temples and shrines shared the very same air,
A chorus of blessings, of song, and of prayer.
But yesterday's harmony fractured and broke,
The green of the valley now smothered in smoke.
The laughter of children is swallowed by fear,
As midnight brings shadows that creep far too near.
Now concrete and wire replace the old trees,
And teardrops are carried away on the breeze.
The soil that grew saffron now cradles our grief,
A lifetime of trauma with no sign of relief.
We walk through the ruins of what used to be,
Locked inside cages, yet longing to be free.
The past was a haven of comfort and grace,
But pain is the ruler that now owns this place

A Chamber of Pain

An emperor whispered, in eras of old,
"If heaven exists, it is here to behold."
A garden of grace where the blue lotus grew,
Baptised in the scent of the morning's fresh dew.
But the valleys of saffron were swallowed by night,
And the petals of paradise withered from sight.
Who broke the sweet peace of this holy domain?



Who turned the pure heavens to chambers of pain?
The fragrance of flowers has vanished and fled,
Replaced by a heavy, dark perfume of red.
No longer the scent of the jasmine or rose,
Just the iron of blood where the Jhelum River flows.
Why is my homeland now painted in rust?
Why are our dreams ground to ashes and dust?
The canvas of beauty is stained by the dead,
Oh, why is my Kashmir forever bled red?

The Echo of Paradise

A valley of emeralds, pinned to the sky,
Where mountains stood tall as the angels flew by.
They called it a paradise, birthed of the earth,
The cradle of beauty, the home of my birth.
But shadows descended, and silence was born,
From ancestral soil, my roots were upturned.
Now exiled I wander, an unanchored ghost,
Forever lamenting what I cherish the most.
I miss the loud chorus of rivers that gush,
Breaking the stillness of evening's soft hush.
I long for the breeze, so crisp and so cool,
That rippled the glass of the high mountain pool.
The songbirds of summer no longer sing near,
Their sweet morning chirping is what I hold dear.
And oh, how my bleeding heart endlessly grieves,
For the deep, burning red of the autumn Chinar leaves.
Then winter would follow, a blanket of grace,
As soft falling snowflakes enveloped the place.
Though locked in an exile of distance and pain,
My soul walks the paths of the valley again.



 **Deepak Sopori**

Today,
Kamla walks on sunlight.
Golden are the wings that carry her dreams;
rainbows gather
like blessings
upon her lowered eyes.

Somewhere, a wedding fire waits to be lit.
Somewhere,
seven sacred circles
are already turning inside her heart.

She laughs to no one in particular.
Then whispers to her friends—
“You will come to Baramulla,
won't you?
You will tell me
how the chinars have turned,
whether the Jhelum
still remembers my name.”

Later,
she asks her mother—
“How does a daughter learn another sky?
How does she leave the hands
that taught her how to walk?”
Her mother smiles.
The oldest griefs are never answered.
Only carried.
Her eyes glisten, but tears,
like disciplined soldiers,
never cross their borders.

“Such is the world's decree,
my child.
Every daughter must one day
plant her roots
in another soil.”

She drops saffron into simmering kahwa,
stirs its fragrance through the room,
pretending the earth itself
has not begun to tremble.
Then—

1947- Kabali Loot

The valley hears another music.
Not wedding drums.

Hooves.

Iron.

War.

India has scarcely tasted freedom,
when Partition
tears open its first great wound.

Across the mountains come men
who have forgotten
They were born of mothers.
Fire learns the names of villages.
Smoke memorizes every roof.
Steel drinks more blood than rain.

Kamla waits.
Her father does not return.
He had gone to Sopore,
Where autumn hangs apples
like small crimson suns.
No footsteps.
No messenger.
Only whispers—
that every brook
now runs red,
and every road returns
without its travellers.
Then her mother knows.
The bullets have arrived.

She places a tiny vial
inside Kamla's hands.
*“Darken the lamps. Bury the jewels.
Let silence be your breath.
Hide.

Whatever happens—
do not open this chest.”
She closes the lid. Touches it once.
Whispers—

“Har Har Mahadev...”

and walks away towards history.

Night does not fall.

It invades doors. Become splinters.

Markets become ashes.

The Jhelum, old witness to kings and saints,
must now carry the faces

of the dead.
No cradle is spared.
No old age is honored.
Only greed survives.
Hands are severed for bangles.
Necks for necklaces.
Faith itself is dragged
through blood.
A blow.
Another.
The door breaks.
Madness enters.
Kamla's mother chooses death
before dishonor.
Some wounds leave no room for living
Inside the darkness,
Kamla hears footsteps.
She lifts the vial,
and drinks.
Not because she fears death—
but because she knows
what men can become.
Darkness takes her gently,
like a mother singing
one last lullaby.
Morning, however, is cruel.
It returns her to life.
She pushes open
the wooden lid.
Silence.
Only silence.

The village has forgotten its own voice.
Bodies cover the courtyard
like fallen leaves
after an endless autumn.
She falls upon her knees.
A scream
rises— but dies
inside her throat.
The poison has become
her permanent silence.
Someone's hands lie apart
from the body
they once blessed.
Someone's daughter still wears
her wedding dreams—
but nothing else.
The old cow breaks free,

wandering among the dead,
licking familiar faces
that no longer remember love.

In the cowshed lies Girja.
Her hair has been hacked away.
Even her prayer beads
have been stolen.
The thieves leave nothing—
not even God.
Kamla gathers an ocean inside her chest,
yet cannot weep aloud.
She will live.
Years.
Decades.
Breathing. Walking.
Existing.
Yet the day her voice was buried,
part of the world
was buried with it.
Bow,
before those
whose heads were offered
so the tricolour
might never bow.
Bow, before every soldier
who climbed through fire,
that dawn might once again find Kashmir.
They call Kashmir the crown jewel of India.
Perhaps it is.
But every crown has thorns
Hidden beneath its gold.
The valleys still remember those daughters
whose bridal songs were silenced
before the first verse was sung.
Do not say Kamla died.
She did not.
She lives
in every survivor who speaks
only through silence.
She lives
in every abandoned home,
every burnt doorway,
every unanswered prayer,
every child who inherited memory
instead of childhood.
Kamla still lives. She still waits.
Not for pity.
Not for remembrance. For Justice.



Honorary Lieutenant Inder Raina (Retd)



India's Borders

INDIA'S BORDERS: WHY EVERY CITIZEN SHOULD KNOW THEM

(Beyond the LoC and LAC lies a much larger story of geography, security, diplomacy and national responsibility.)

When we think of India, our minds naturally turn to its ancient civilisation, rich heritage, diverse cultures and remarkable democratic journey. We picture the Himalayas, the Ganga, the Thar Desert, the forests of the Northeast and the vast coastline that surrounds the peninsula. Yet there is another part of India that deserves much greater public attention: the borders that define, protect and connect our nation. They are not merely lines on a map. They influence our security, our relationships with neighbouring countries, our trade and connectivity, and in many ways, the choices that shape India's future.

For many people, the word "border" immediately brings to mind the Line of Control with Pakistan or the Line of Actual Control with China. Both are critically important, but India's border story is much larger. In India's official position, the country shares land borders with seven countries: Bangladesh, Pakistan, China, Nepal, Bhutan, Myanmar and Afghanistan. Beyond these land frontiers lie India's maritime boundaries across the Arabian Sea, the Bay of Bengal and the Indian Ocean. To understand India fully, therefore, we need to look beyond the few borders that regularly appear in the news.

The geographical spread of India's land borders itself tells a remarkable story. In



India's official position, Afghanistan borders the Union Territory of Ladakh. Pakistan borders the Union Territories of Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh, as well as Punjab, Rajasthan and Gujarat. China borders Ladakh, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Sikkim and Arunachal Pradesh. Nepal shares borders with Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, West Bengal and Sikkim. Bhutan touches Sikkim, West Bengal, Assam and Arunachal Pradesh. Bangladesh borders West Bengal, Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura and Mizoram, while Myanmar borders Arunachal Pradesh,

Nagaland, Manipur and Mizoram. This geographical spread alone shows the extraordinary diversity of India's frontiers.

These borders are not alike. They pass through some of the highest mountains on earth, fertile plains, deserts, forests, rivers, densely populated regions and remote areas. Each frontier has its own geography, history, relationship with the neighbouring country and security considerations. Understanding this diversity helps us appreciate why India's approach towards different neighbours cannot always be the same. Geography creates realities that diplomacy and national policy must constantly take into account.

Along the northern frontier with China, the Himalayas create one of the world's most demanding environments. Personnel operate at great altitudes, in freezing temperatures, with reduced oxygen and difficult terrain. In such regions, roads, tunnels, bridges and communication systems are not merely development projects. They connect remote communities while also strengthening national preparedness. The challenges of these areas remind us that national security and development are often closely connected, particularly in remote and strategically important regions.

Moving westwards, the landscape changes dramatically. India's frontier with Pakistan extends through mountains, fertile plains, deserts and the distinctive terrain of the Rann of Kutch. It includes the Line of Control in Jammu and Kashmir, as well as the International Border along the plains and border regions of Punjab, Rajasthan and Gujarat. Behind the security headlines are ordinary people whose farms, homes and communities exist close to the frontier. Their lives remind us that a border is not simply a line on a map. It is also a place where people live, work, raise families and build their futures, often under circumstances that demand resilience and courage.

The borders with Nepal and Bhutan present a different picture. India and Nepal share deep historical, cultural, religious and family connections, while India's relationship

with Bhutan is built on close friendship, mutual trust and cooperation. These frontiers demonstrate that borders can connect societies through trade, pilgrimage, culture and human interaction rather than simply separate them. At the same time, responsible border management remains important for security and the prevention of unlawful activities. The experience of these frontiers shows that friendship between nations and responsible security management can exist together.

Further east, the border with Bangladesh presents another dimension. It runs through West Bengal, Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura and Mizoram and includes rivers, plains, agricultural areas and densely populated communities. Trade and connectivity have given this frontier growing economic importance, while effective management remains necessary to address smuggling, trafficking and other cross border crimes. The nature of this border also shows how closely geography, human movement, economic activity and national security can be connected, particularly in regions where communities and economic interests exist close to an international frontier.

The frontier with Myanmar, touching Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Manipur and Mizoram, passes through mountains, forests and remote settlements. It is also India's land gateway towards Southeast Asia. Better connectivity, infrastructure and regional cooperation can make this frontier an important engine of development for the Northeast and an important part of India's Act East approach. Here again, the border represents more than a security concern. It can also become a pathway for economic opportunity, regional cooperation and stronger connections with the wider Asian region.

Then comes the sea, India's vast maritime frontier. It is less visible to many citizens than the land borders, but it is equally important. The Arabian Sea, the Bay of Bengal and the Indian Ocean connect India to global trade routes. Ports, shipping, fisheries,

tourism and energy infrastructure support millions of livelihoods, while a substantial share of India's international trade moves by sea. Maritime security is therefore closely connected with India's economic security. The safety of India's waters affects not only national defence but also trade, employment, energy supplies and the everyday economic life of the country.

For centuries, these waters have connected India with Africa, the Middle East and Southeast Asia. Merchants, sailors, pilgrims and scholars crossed them carrying goods, ideas, languages and cultures. The sea was never merely a barrier around India. It was, and remains, a pathway to the wider world. India's maritime geography therefore gives the country both responsibilities and opportunities that extend far beyond its coastline.

Protecting these vast frontiers requires the combined efforts of the Indian Army, Border Security Force, Indo Tibetan Border Police, Sashastra Seema Bal, Assam Rifles, Indian Navy, Indian Coast Guard and other agencies working in their respective areas of responsibility. They serve in mountains, deserts, forests, rivers and seas under conditions most citizens will never experience. Their service deserves our gratitude and respect. Yet national security is not the responsibility of those who guard the borders alone. Citizens also have a role, and that role begins with understanding the country and the geographical realities that shape it.

That responsibility has become even more important in the digital age. Information now travels across the world within seconds. Maps, photographs, videos, comments and claims can reach millions of people almost instantly. Some are accurate, some are incomplete, and others may deliberately present a distorted picture. This is particularly important when information concerns India's borders. Incorrect maps, misleading claims and false narratives can spread rapidly through social media and various groups. Sometimes they are shared simply because people have not checked the facts. At other

times, information may be presented selectively or deliberately distorted to serve a particular interest.

An informed citizen is better equipped to recognise such misinformation. This does not mean accepting everything that supports our own views. It means checking reliable sources, questioning doubtful claims, distinguishing fact from opinion and refusing to forward information simply because it appears convincing or confirms what we already believe. In a country as large and diverse as India, informed citizens are an important safeguard against confusion and manipulation. Knowledge does not make a person an expert, but it makes that person less vulnerable to being misled.

This is why border awareness should not be considered the responsibility of soldiers, diplomats, governments or experts alone. An ordinary citizen should know which countries surround India, which States and Union Territories meet those frontiers, and why those geographical realities matter. Such knowledge makes it more difficult for anyone to mislead people through incorrect information or carefully constructed narratives. It also gives citizens a stronger foundation for understanding national issues and participating meaningfully in public discussions.

Border awareness also helps citizens understand India's foreign policy. Geography cannot be changed. Mountains, rivers, deserts, forests, seas and the location of neighbouring countries remain permanent realities. Governments may negotiate, cooperate or compete, but geography continues to influence their choices. It shapes security requirements, trade routes, connectivity, strategic priorities and relationships between nations. This is why international relations cannot be understood fully without understanding geography. The map of India is not simply a picture of its territory; it is also part of the foundation on which many national decisions are made.

This does not mean that every citizen needs to become an expert in international law, military strategy or geopolitics. What is needed is something much simpler: an informed

understanding of India. A citizen who knows the country's geography is better placed to understand its challenges, appreciate its opportunities and judge information more responsibly. In an age when information can be used both for knowledge and for misinformation, knowing the basic facts about one's own country is not merely useful. It is a form of responsible citizenship.

When we look at the map of India, therefore, we should see more than an outline. We should see the mountains where personnel serve in extreme conditions, the plains where farmers live close to international frontiers, the forests and hills of the Northeast that connect India towards Southeast Asia, and the vast seas through which India's trade reaches the world. We should also understand that India's borders influence far more than security. They affect diplomacy, trade, connectivity, economic development, regional cooperation and India's relationship with its neighbours.

Most importantly, we should remember that a border is not merely where India ends. It

is also where many of India's relationships with the world begin. India's borders should therefore be understood not only when tensions arise or headlines appear. They deserve a place in the everyday knowledge of an informed citizen. To know which countries surround India, which States and Union Territories meet those frontiers, how different those borders are and why they matter is to understand an important part of our national story.

Our soldiers protect India's frontiers. Our diplomats manage the relationships beyond them. Our institutions work to secure the nation's interests. But every citizen has a responsibility to understand the country whose sovereignty they represent. The better we know our geography, the better we can understand our national interests. The better we understand our national interests, the harder it becomes for anyone to mislead us about our own country.

To know India's borders is, in a very real sense, to know India.

Calendar of Month

Kumar Shashti	17 th August 2026
Ashtami (Shukla Paksha)	20 th August 2026
Ekadashi (Shukla Paksha)	23 rd August 2026
Poornima (Raksha Bandhan)	28 th August 2026
Sankat Nivaran Chaturthi	31 st August 2026
Chandan Shashti	02 nd Sept 2026
Krishna Janam Ashtami (Krishna Paksha)	04 th Sept 2026
Ekadashi (Krishna Paksha)	07 th Sept 2026
Amavasya	11 th Sept 2026
Vinayak Chaturthi	14 th Sept 2026
Kumar Shahsti	16 th Sept 2026
Ashtami (Shukla Paksha)	19 th Sept 2026
Ekadashi (Shukla Paksha)	22 nd Sept 2026
Poornima	26 th Sept 2026

Note

Panchak starts on 27th August 2026 ends on 31st August 2026
Panchak starts on 23rd September 2026 ends on 27th September 2026

Shravan (Shukla Paksha) from 13th August 2026 to 28th August 2026
Bhadrapada (Krishna Paksha) from 29th August 2026 to 11th September 2026
Bhadrapada (Shukla Paksha) from 12th September 2026 to 26th September 2026



- Col Tej K Tikoo, Ph.D. (Retd)

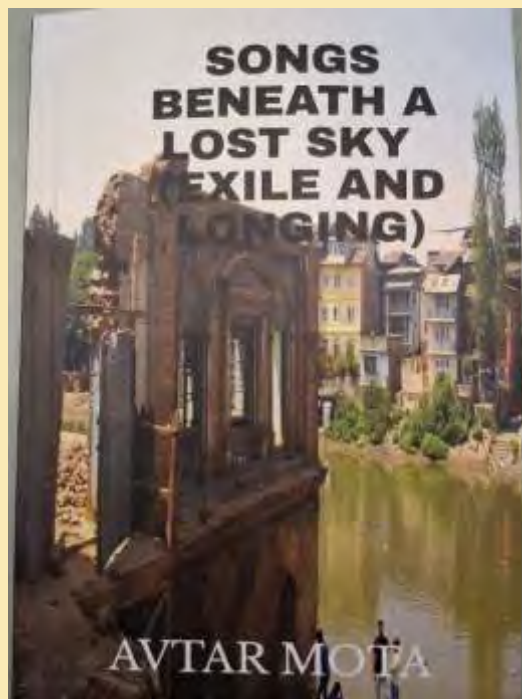
SONGS BENEATH A LOST SKY (EXILE AND LONGING)

Author : Sh. Autar Mota

Songs Beneath a lost Sky (Exile and Longing) is among the latest books to be added to the body of 'Exodus literature,' viz, books written by the displaced Kashmiri Pandits in exile. The book describes the pain of displacement, the fear that stalks life in an unknown environment, the miseries of day to day living in camps, and longing for return to our homes in Maej Kashir. The book has been written by one of our most outstanding and prolific writers, Sh. Autar Mota, whose poems and blog on Kashmir's art and culture, traditions and practices, has a huge following of nearly three million people worldwide.

The book under review is a small one as compared to several other books written on our exodus, with many photographs of our 'lost' heritage in the valley (mostly taken by the author himself) embellishing its 130 pages. What is interesting about the book is that the sudden displacement of the community, fleeing into the unknown just to save themselves and their families, life in exile, chances of return becoming bleaker by the day, and the longing for what is lost, perhaps for good, have all been articulated in poems by the author in an easily-understood language. Each poem captures the pathos of the situation and the melancholy of the generation that suffered the worst privations, having been uprooted from their familiar surroundings, suddenly and unexpectedly. There is little connected with our exodus that does not figure in these poems - leaving behind everything that defined our lives and gave meaning to our existence, the traditions, the rituals, the friends, the neighbors and the relatives who lived at walking-distance from each other, and the events that made life joyful and worth living. The despondency of the situation, in view of no resolution of our core concerns, too have been highlighted in a gentle and soft manner, devoid of hate, bitterness and rancor.

The eternal flow of Vitasta, the heavenly shade under the Chinar tree, branches of fruit trees bent under the weight of a heavy snow fall, the musical sound of the ice-cold and gleaming streams, the snow-clad mountains ringing the Valley which greets the eye first thing in the early morning, the calm of Dal Lake and the fascinating view of the city of Srinagar, made even more magical by the Vitasta meandering through it, have so well been described. That such an experience was part of the daily routine in Kashmir for the displaced seems unreal today to our post-exodus generation.



As is true with all the poets, there is virtually no restriction on their imagination and therefore, the poems deeply reflect the pain of separation from our homes, which reverberate with the laughter of children and the sound of ghantas in every Thokur Kuth of our houses, the deep spiritual environment of the Heirath pooja, the Navreh ritual and other religious functions.

Some of the now long- forgotten events have been presented with precision and life-like manner, making these authentic and part of the smooth flow of the narrative. The compelling narrative instantly transports the reader to one's own home in Kashmir, urging the reader to leave the book aside, close one's eyes and think of Kaeshir which nourished every one of us and whose memories are so deeply embedded in our very being. The essence of these poems is that Maej Kaeshir stays with you, internalized, never forgotten.

The poet takes pains to explain at the end of every chapter, the detailed account of the origin, meaning and significance of typical Kashmiri words which formed part of our routine vocabulary and day to day conversation. Terms like Ghar Devta, Kaw, Paett, Thokur Kuth, Tsong, Dhan-kuth, Ghar Devta, Dastar, Nadru, Tumbakhnaer, Noat, etc., have been well explained for the benefit of non-Kashmiri readers.

The misery of life in camps, characterized by cramped spaces, little privacy, the difficulties imposed by lack / non-availability of even the minimum needs that make life merely livable, have been described with great deal of sensitivity and care. The unspeakable privations imposed on hapless members of the community after exodus, old and young, youth and middle aged, children and adults, have been explained at many places. Just quoting one poem:

“In the sweltering heat of Jammu's June,
Bansi Lal sleeps inside his tent without a fan,
Sweating yet snoring,
While the world outside is busy and engaged.
Perhaps he has nothing to do;
His bank accounts have not been transferred yet,
His children have no school to go,
The water tanker from PHE didn't arrive today.
No salary, No office, Nothing in the bank,
Sleep comes without effort.

Lakshmi Nath died yesterday from heatstroke, Rupawati died after being stung by a deadly snake, Death has rituals,.....

The author also deals with the 'Jagmohan theory'—a narrative that propagated the myth that it was the then Governor Jagmohan (18 Jan 1990 to May 1991) who asked Kashmiri Pandits to leave Kashmir, as he had decided to carry out a scorched earth policy against Kashmiri Muslims. The author, through a scathing poetic rejoinder, asks tough questions of such people. Here is just a glimpse of it:

They said, “Jagmohan”
“I asked:
Who burned blackboards and benches to ash?
Who reduced Rupa Devi Sharda Vidyapeeth to smoke?
Who set DAV School, Rainawari, ablaze in the dark?
Who looted Triloke Kaul's paintings,
His colours, his brushes,
And burned his studio?
Who occupied colleges: Vishwa Bharati, Gandhi Memorial?
Who dismantled Lal Ded Memorial School,

And tore through Nadim's soul?
Who renamed Sheetal Nath School
To erase its memory?"

"They said Jagmohan.

Who raised the slogan: "Convert, leave, or be killed"?

Who stayed silent while Pandits were hunted?

Who set their watches to the enemy's time?

Who denied treatment to dying Pandits?

Who profited from stolen homes and land?....

Writing about the night of Jan 19, 1990, the author writes:

"The night of 19 January 1990 marked not the beginning of terror, but its open declaration. That night, a coordinated and well-planned assault was launched through mosque loudspeakers across the Valley, openly calling upon Kashmiri Pandits to convert, leave Kashmir, or face death. The slogans were not whispered; they were amplified. The threats were not symbolic; they were explicit. The administration had already collapsed. The streets had already been surrendered. It was this open, mass intimidation, combined with the assassinations, rapes, arson, and systematic targeting that preceded it, that forced the Pandits to flee.

The author also takes a dig at our neighbors, team mates, friends, business partners, etc., who instead of coming to our rescue, joined the perpetrators of such crimes. The author writes:

"Was he the same neighbour who once

Put the first garland around my neck,

As I led the Baraat procession toward the bride's home?

Was he the same neighbour who ran to me

And carried me to Ram Joo's shop when I slipped,

On the Jogilanker Bridge,

My skin torn open?

Was he the same man whose daughters

Were brought up in the lap of my mother,

Never differentiating them for their faith?

If he was the same,

Then who was the man who turned his face

And walked away?

The author has also replied to the oft-repeated argument put forth by the so-called mainstream politicians and their camp followers who, when reminded of the complicity of common Kashmiris in our killings, say, "But we also suffered, thousands of Kashmiris too were killed."

The author in his strong rebuttal reminds such people that whereas Kashmiri Pandits were deliberately targeted and killed as part of a systematic campaign aimed cleansing them out from Kashmir, the suffering of Kashmiri Muslims was a result of the collateral damage of conflict, initiated by them.

The author finally closes the lamentable tale, thus:

Will there be a Poorn-ahuti,

That final, merciful surrender,

When all this anguish is gathered and ended in a single grace?

Or is this my fate:

A ritual without completion, without release?

Is this my trial or my punishment? Am I being purified or slowly erased?

I do not know. I do not know.



- Avtar Mota

HENZEY VANVUN

HENZEY VANVUN

Henzey Vanvun is a treasure collection of ancient hymns of auspiciousness that have been at the heart of Kashmiri Pandit celebrations for centuries.

These hymns have always been an essential part of Kashmiri Pandit life. Sung only by the women of the community, the *Henzey* and *Vanvun* were an integral part of the two most joyous and sacred occasions in Kashmiri Pandit tradition — marriages and the *Yagnopavit Samskar*, the sacred thread ceremony. As rituals were performed and prayers were offered, it was the women who filled the air with song — blessing the occasion, honoring their ancestors, and carrying forward the traditions passed down to them. These hymns are among the oldest songs of celebration and prayer in the Kashmiri language, kept alive for generations entirely through memory and voice.

The exodus of the Kashmiri Pandit community in 1990 and the years of displacement that followed put these hymns in grave danger. The elder women who knew these songs by heart grew fewer with each passing year. The joyful gatherings where these hymns were once sung became rare. A precious part of the community's heritage was slowly fading away.

This book is a response to that loss. Every hymn is written out in three scripts side by side — Roman transliteration, Devanagari, and Nastaleeq (Kashmiri Arabic) — so that people across the world can read and connect with these verses, whether they are scholars, members of the diaspora, or young Kashmiris discovering their roots for the first time.



Kanwal Peshin

A poet who believes that a people's soul lives in the songs they sing, Kanwal Peshin has devoted his life to ensuring that Kashmir's living heritage is never reduced to a memory. Rooted deeply in Jammu and Kashmir, he has spent decades giving voice to its language, music, prayers, and the stories that pass silently from one generation to the next. Through literature, devotional productions, and unassuming cultural activism, he has worked tirelessly to honor what was threatened to silence and displacement threatened to erase.

A senior figure in Film and Emergency Services with nearly three decades of dedicated service, he has lived by a single principle in both his professional and creative life: that what is precious must be preserved, what is endangered must be defended, and what is sacred must be passed on.

Henzey Vanvun is the culmination of that lifelong mission — and in every profound, most personal expression.



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Compiler : Kanwal Peshin
Editor : Smt. Janak Rani Peshin
(Sponsored by KOA, USA)
Publisher : BFC Publications Pvt. Ltd., Lucknow
Edition : Trilingual (Hindi, Roman Transliteration and Nastaleeq Kashmiri in one Volume)

The preservation of oral traditions is among the noblest responsibilities of cultural scholarship in the twenty-first century. Unlike written literature, oral traditions survive not in manuscripts but in living memory, transmitted across generations through voice, performance and ritual participation. Their very vitality renders them vulnerable. Once the chain of transmission is broken, entire worlds of language, music, symbolism, ritual practice and collective memory risk disappearing forever. It is against

this larger civilisational backdrop that *Henzey Vanvun*, compiled by Kanwal Peshin and edited by Smt. Janak Rani Peshin, assumes extraordinary importance. More than a compilation of ceremonial songs, this beautifully produced bilingual volume is a monumental act of cultural preservation, rescuing one of the oldest surviving ritual traditions of the Kashmiri Pandit community from the uncertainties of oral transmission and securing it for posterity.

Vanvun occupies a unique position in the cultural history of Kashmir. It is one of the oldest living ritual song traditions of the Valley, preserving echoes of an ancient liturgical heritage that many scholars discern as bearing remarkable affinities with the melodic recitation of the *Sāma Veda*. While the tradition has naturally evolved through centuries of historical and social change, its sacred cadence, communal performance and ceremonial function continue to reflect a civilization deeply rooted in Vedic culture. The remarkable continuity of Vanvun is itself evidence of Kashmir's enduring spiritual and cultural resilience.

Kashmiri Vanvun is not just a poetic form; it is ritualized memory. Traditionally sung by women during rites of passage in Kashmir, such as birth, marriage, and seasonal change. It works as a living archive, carrying history, myth, and collective emotion through rhythm and repetition. This makes it a powerful bridge between cosmic myth and human experience. In the *Sāma Veda*, especially in expansive chants such as *Bṛhat-Sāma*, sound is not composed for pleasure or artistic display. It is elongated, vowel-dominant, ritualized, and effective. The chant functions to align the human, cosmic, and divine orders through *Nāda*. Meaning is secondary to resonance; grammar dissolves into vibration. Time is ritual time, not chronological time. A strikingly similar sound logic governs Kashmiri *Vāṇvun*. Though situated in domestic and communal life rather than in *yajña* ritual, *Vāṇvun* is likewise non-entertainment sound. It is obligatory, performative, and efficacious. Sound does not describe auspiciousness; it produces it. Like *Sāma* chanting, *Vāṇvun* prioritises vowel elongation, cyclical unfolding, collective voicing, and suspension of ordinary temporal awareness.

Kanwal Peshin deserves the highest commendation for recognizing that Vanvun has always been fundamentally an oral tradition. For centuries these sacred songs were preserved not by institutions or manuscripts but by memory itself, particularly through the devoted voices of Kashmiri women who sang them during weddings, *Mekhla* (*Yajnopavita*) ceremonies, festivals and other domestic rituals. In every generation, mothers became the principal custodians of this precious inheritance, transmitting melody, rhythm and meaning to their children with extraordinary fidelity. Long before folklore became an academic discipline, these women functioned as living archives of Kashmiri civilisation. Their contribution to preserving cultural memory deserves far greater recognition than it has generally received.

The publication of this volume is especially significant in the aftermath of the displacement of the Kashmiri Pandit community, which inevitably disrupted the natural transmission of ritual knowledge. Oral traditions survive only within living communities. Once communities become fragmented, memory itself begins to fade. By transforming a living oral tradition into a carefully documented text, Kanwal Peshin has ensured that future generations will inherit not scattered recollections but an authentic and coherent

corpus of ceremonial literature. His work is, therefore, an enduring gift to posterity.

The scholarly character of the volume is evident from the opening pages. Rather than presenting the songs in isolation, the compiler provides thoughtful introductory essays explaining their historical, religious and cultural context. These essays demonstrate that Vanvun is far more than a body of folk songs; it is an integral expression of the spiritual, social and domestic life of the Kashmiri Pandit community. Religion, aesthetics, family life and everyday existence have historically formed an inseparable whole in Kashmiri civilisation, and this volume successfully restores the songs to that wider cultural framework.

One of the greatest strengths of the work lies in its editorial discipline. Oral literature invariably presents formidable challenges because no two performances are identical. Variations arise naturally across families, regions and generations. Kanwal Peshin has approached this task with exemplary scholarly restraint, preserving the authenticity of the songs while arranging them in a systematic and accessible manner. The trilingual presentation is particularly commendable. By providing the original text in Hindi, Roman transliteration and a text in Nastaliq Kashmiri within the same volume, the compiler has made this priceless heritage accessible to the entire Kashmiri diaspora. It is now accessible to the readers from the younger generation as well who are unfamiliar with the Nastaliq script as also to the community of scholars across the world. This thoughtful editorial decision considerably broadens the readership without compromising authenticity. The editorial contribution of Smt. Janak Rani Peshin also deserves special appreciation. Her careful editing lends coherence and refinement to the compilation while preserving the natural rhythm and sanctity of the oral tradition. The volume thus reflects a harmonious collaboration between compiler and editor in the service of preserving an endangered cultural legacy.

Particularly touching is the compiler's acknowledgement of his mother, from whom he first learnt these Vanvun. This acknowledgement symbolizes the indispensable role played by Kashmiri mothers in preserving ritual knowledge across centuries. Through their voices, generations inherited not merely songs but an entire philosophy of family, devotion and sacred duty.

The compiler convincingly demonstrates that Vanvun constitutes a complete ceremonial repertoire rather than a miscellaneous collection of songs. The opening invocation immediately establishes an atmosphere of sacred auspiciousness:

***Zyun chatnas zangi kus oyo,
Mangala Devi te Nandkishwar.***

*(In whose auspicious presence were the logs cut for the festivities?
Surely in the presence of Goddess Mangala and Lord Nandkishwar.)*

These simple yet profound lines reveal that every auspicious undertaking in Kashmiri life begins with divine invocation. Likewise, the Vanvun accompanying the Mekhla ceremony beautifully express the sacred purpose of education:

***Shoklam karith hyot vanvuni,
Shob phal dyutui Maji Bhawanie.***
*(May this sacred chant bear auspicious fruit
through the blessings of Mother Bhawani.)*

Knowledge here is understood not merely as intellectual achievement but as a sacred trust nurtured through divine grace. Equally evocative are the songs associated with 'Krool Khaarun' or decorating the main entrance colourfully, 'Dapun' (starting invitation to close relations), 'Muss-Mutchrun' or hairdressing of the bride, 'Maeznraat' or Mehndiraat, 'Shraan' (bath with milk and curd), 'Devgun' (invitation to Vedic gods), 'Varidan' (gifts to the relatives), 'Dastaar Gandun' or covering bridegrooms head with a decorated Pagri, 'Yonya Traavun' (sacred thread wearing), 'Taranga Gandun' or covering the bride's head with a decorated headgear, 'Lagan', 'Posha Pooza' or showering flower petals over the bride and bridegroom, 'Veegis –Natchun' or dancing by women over the marriage Rangoli and 'Maharaaza Nernas' or departure of the bridegroom. Kashmiri Pandits would also sing Vanvun songs for 'Navis Palvas Ang Deun' or putting on new clothes, 'Navis Gharas Atchun' or entering a newly built house, 'Vidhya Aarambh' or the start of education by the child, 'Shraan ta Sondhar' (postpartum bath of the woman with herbs) 'Zara Kaasaai' (first haircut of the baby), and many more rituals. These verses transform ordinary domestic labour into communal celebration. Work becomes music; music becomes devotion; and devotion becomes collective memory.

An outstanding feature of the book is its rich collection of photographs. These illustrations are far more than decorative additions. They visually correlate the Vanvun with almost every important ritual associated with Kashmiri Pandit weddings and the *Mekhla* ceremony, enabling readers to understand precisely where and how these songs are performed. The photographs considerably enhance the ethnographic value of the work, transforming it into a visual as well as textual archive of Kashmiri ritual culture.

From the perspectives of anthropology, folklore, linguistics and religious studies, this compilation is invaluable. Political histories generally narrate the deeds of kings and states, whereas oral traditions preserve the emotional history of ordinary people. These Vanvun illuminate family relationships, ritual practices, gender roles, social values and religious beliefs with remarkable intimacy. They also preserve archaic vocabulary, idiomatic expressions and linguistic forms that might otherwise disappear from the Kashmiri language. The volume will undoubtedly become an indispensable reference for historians, folklorists, anthropologists, ethnomusicologists and students of Kashmir Studies.

In conclusion, *Henzey Vanvun* stands among the most significant recent contributions to the preservation of Kashmir's intangible cultural heritage. It is simultaneously a work of folklore, ethnography, linguistics, cultural history and religious scholarship. By rescuing these sacred songs from the uncertainties of memory, Kanwal Peshin has rendered an enduring service not only to the Kashmiri Pandit community but also to the cultural history of India. His achievement transcends that of a compiler; he emerges as a custodian of memory, a guardian of tradition and a cultural archivist of the highest order. Beautifully produced by BFC Publications Pvt. Ltd., Lucknow, this trilingual edition deserves a place in every library devoted to Indian culture, folklore, ethnography and Kashmir Studies.

KASHMIRI PANDIT MARTYRS

List for August 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. Dina Nath Raina	-	15-08-1989
2.	Sh. Jia Krishan Bhan	Dribyar, Srinagar	02-08-1990
3.	Sh. Ram Nath Bhat	...	06-08-1990
4.	Sh. R.K. Handoo		09-08-1990
5.	Sh. Arjan Nath	Shalipora, Budgam	09-08-1990
6.	Sh. Saroop Narayan	...	10-08-1990
7.	Sh. Manoj Kumar	...	10-08-1990
8.	Sh. Prathavi Nath Bali	...	10-08-1990
9.	Sh. D.N. Chowdhary	...	11-08-1990
10.	Sh. Roshan Lal Chowdhary	Rainawari, Srinagar	11-08-1990
11.	Sh. Vasudev Pandita	Rohama, Anantnag	11-08-1990
12.	Sh. Tarlok Chand	Achabal, Anantnag	11-08-1990
13.	Sh. Autar Krishen Pandita	...	12-08-1990
14.	Ms. Babli Raina	Sopore	13-08-1990
15.	Sh. Darshan Koul	Anantnag	15-08-1990
16.	Sh. Maheshwar Nath	Kupwara	16-08-1990
17.	Sh. Madan Mohan	Sopore	17-08-1990
18.	Smt. Baljeet Kour	...	17-08-1990
19.	Sh. Chand Ji Kher	Vessu, Anantnag	17-08-1990
20.	Sh. Rattan Lal Raina	Rainawari, Srinagar	18-08-1990
21.	Sh. Shanker Nath Tiku	Wadwan, Badgam	21-08-1990
22.	Sh. R K Koul	Nai Sarak, Srinagar	24-08-1990
23.	Sh. Gopal Ram	Kokernag, Anantnag	28-08-1990
24.	Sh. Bansi Lal Raina	Srinagar	29-08-1990
25.	Sh. Mahesh Chander	...	30-08-1990
26.	Sh. Omkar Nath	Baramulla	30-08-1990
27.	Sh. Surinder Kumar	...	26-08-1991
28.	Sh. Kanya Lal Dudha	...	14-08-1993
29.	Sh. Radha Krishen Koul	...	24-08-1990



MHA's Panel on Demographic Changes Assesses the Situation in Jammu

As reported, on August 11, the Central Government Committee on Demographic Changes visited Jagti Tenements to meet the Kashmiri Pandits. The delegation had detailed interactions with the migrants and their representatives. The committee listened to their suggestions. The community representatives raised the issue of their return and rehabilitation amongst other suggestions.

The team, headed by Justice (Retd) Prakash Prabhakar Navlekar, comprised Census Commissioner Mritunjay Kumar, Durga Shankar Mishra (retired IAS officer), Balaji Srivastava (retired IPS officer), and Shamika Ravi.

Dr Ajay Chrungoo, a faction of Panun Kashmir, submitted a memorandum to the Committee mentioning the genocide of Kashmiri Hindus and the demographic transformations of Jammu and Kashmir within a large strategic framework.

KP Bodies for Increase in Cash Relief

In a joint statement, Vishwa Kashmiri Samaj (VKS) and Jammu & Kashmir Displaced Kashmiri Pandit Front (JKDKPF) have appealed to the Prime Minister, Home Minister, and Lt. Governor of J&K regarding an enhancement of the monthly cash relief for displaced relief holders who are solely dependent on it for their sustenance.

They demanded that the cash assistance be increased to Rs 25,000 per month for a family of four.

Their other demands are new ten thousand posts for the displaced unemployed youth, a tangible return, and a rehabilitation policy for displaced Kashmiri Pandits in a time-bound period so that they are permanently rehabilitated in their homeland.

KPs Express

Concern for the Threats of Terrorists

The KP organizations have expressed grave concern over a purported threat communication dated August 7, 2026, issued in the name of the United Liberation Council (ULC), which has specifically named members of the Kashmiri Pandit community and disclosed their telephone numbers.

Dr. Agnishekhar, a faction of Panun Kashmir, expressing concern, said that the communication represented a serious escalation because it went beyond generic threats and appeared to identify individuals as potential targets while claiming access to information about their families, locations, and places of work. Dr. Agnishekhar emphasized that the matter should be treated as one involving community security and counter-terror preparedness, rather than as an isolated law-and-order incident.

Panun Kashmir has urged the administration to determine whether the communication is connected to wider extremist networks and to take appropriate legal action against those responsible for its creation and dissemination.

Water Crisis Continues in Jagti

Residents of Jagti Camp, in a joint meeting of various camp committees, have flayed the government for failing to provide basic amenities, alleging that the inmates of 4,224 sets in the township are reeling under an acute water crisis, erratic power supply, and deteriorating housing conditions.

They said that despite the assurances given by the authorities that the restoration of the water supply and the repair of quarters would positively start from August 7, 2026, these assurances proved to be mere lip service, alleged residents.

KPs for Preserving Rich Archaeological, Cultural Heritage of Kashmir

At a meeting on August 9, the Kashmiri Pandits at Sanjeevani Sharda Kendra stressed the importance of preserving Kashmir's rich archaeological and cultural heritage dating back to the Puranic period.

The meeting, which was chaired by the chairman, Pt Prem Nath Bhat Memorial Trust C L Pandita, turned the attention of the gathering towards the recent discovery of an ancient rock-cut artifact, reportedly depicting Lord Shiva and Mata Parvati, during excavation work on 31st July from an old Kund presently being used as a fishery pond for Pisciculture at Kulam-Chinar Spring, on Anantnag - Veerinag road in Anantnag.

We identified the urgent need to identify, excavate, document, preserve, and protect the rich archaeological and cultural heritage of Kashmir.

We have requested Lt. Governor Manoj Sinha, Chief Minister Omar Abdullah, and other concerned authorities to hand over this antique artifact to the community for its preservation and upkeep.

The meeting also urged the Government to take concrete measures for the preservation, protection, and restoration of these invaluable remnants of the community's ancient heritage.

PNBMT holds a General Body Meeting

On August 8, the Prem Nath Bhat Memorial Trust (PNBMT) convened its General Body meeting in Jammu.

The meeting identified the major challenges facing the organization and emphasized the need to re-energize the cadre to carry forward PNBMT's mission with renewed commitment and dedication.

LG chairs Governing Board Meeting of Gandhi Memorial College Srinagar

On July 27 2026, in Srinagar, Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha chaired the introductory meeting of the newly constituted Governing Board of Gandhi Memorial College Srinagar, at Lok Bhavan.

The meeting was attended by Additional

Chief Secretary, Finance Department, Shailendra Kumar; Commissioner/Secretary, Higher Education Department, Ram Niwas Sharma; Commissioner/Secretary, Department of Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs, Achal Sethi; Director Colleges, Prof. (Dr.) S. Ajaz Bashir; President, Hindu Education Society Kashmir, Prof. B. L. Zutshi; other members including Prof. Ashok Aima, Prof. Veena Pandita, Prof. Verinder Rawal, VK. Raina, M. K. Jalali; Dean, Academic Affairs, University of Kashmir, Prof. Sharie-fuddin Pirzada; Dean, College Development Council, University of Kashmir, Prof. (Dr.) Aneesa Shafi, Principal, Gandhi Memorial College, Prof. Masood Ahmad Malik, and other senior officials.

The Lieutenant Governor directed the development of a comprehensive policy aimed at streamlining the administrative and operational framework across the institution.

The Board also held detailed deliberations on the adoption of the Rules of Business of the Governing Board; Grant-in-Aid to G. M. College of Education, Bantalab, Jammu; streamlining the recruitment process; and pensionary benefits for existing staff and retired employees w.e.f. 2002; augmentation of campus infrastructure; revision of existing curriculum, and the introduction of new courses aligned with the National Education Policy (NEP).

KPs Term NC

Protest at Delhi a Political Drama

The All State Kashmiri Pandit Conference (ASKPC), and other organisations have strongly deplored the National Conference (NC) Government's persistent demand for the restoration of Statehood without first addressing the unresolved tragedy of the displaced communities of Jammu and Kashmir.

The Conference maintained that any debate on the Constitutional or political future of J&K is incomplete, morally untenable, and constitutionally deficient unless the victims of terrorism and forced

displacement are made equal participants in the decision-making process. "No Government has the moral authority to speak of restoring political privileges while thousands of displaced families continue to live in exile, deprived of their homeland, properties, temples, and fundamental rights"

The Conference therefore calls upon the Government of Jammu and Kashmir to publish a comprehensive White Paper on the status of migrant properties, detailing the extent of illegal encroachments removed, properties restored, pending disputes, and the concrete steps taken to safeguard the rights of displaced owners and formulate a comprehensive return and rehabilitation policy in consultation with recognized representatives of the displaced communities.

RRC Reviews Essential Services, Development Works in Migrant Camps

In Jammu on July 29 2026, the Relief Commissioner (Migrants) held a meeting to review the delivery of essential services in the migrant camps. The works include safe drinking water, sanitation, and a regular power supply. The meeting also discussed the budgetary provisions for routine maintenance, upkeep, and repair works.

The Relief Commissioner has instructed the officers of the Jal Shakti Department to take the necessary measures to ensure a regular water supply.

Sharika Foundation Milepost

A full-day Saturday Workshop was organized at Sharika Bhawan, Jammu, by young professional volunteers from the Kashmiri Pandit community for children and young adults.

The children from camps and non-camps participated in interactive learning sessions, group activities, cultural discussions, and educational exercises.

The best-performing groups were felicitated with gifts, while all participants received the latest National Geographic magazines.

Sharika Foundation was honored to be

invited to participate in a United Nations-supported Conflict Management Workshop in the Republic of Korea (South Korea)

During the workshop, the Foundation's representative shared the history and humanitarian impact of the exodus of the Kashmiri Pandit community, highlighting the suffering, displacement, and loss experienced by thousands of families during the conflict in Kashmir. The representative emphasized the importance of peace, justice, dialogue, and the protection of human rights so that such tragedies are never repeated.

As a symbol of hope and faith, the Sharika Foundation volunteer wrote "Jai Maa Sharika" as a message of peace at the Korean Demilitarized Zone (DMZ)—the demarcation line between North Korea and South Korea.

SHARIKA Foundation Souvenir that contains a detailed account of the plight of the genocide-affected Kashmiri Pandit community was presented to the Director of UNESCO by a SHARIKA Foundation volunteer during an international workshop and Mata Sharika Jayanti Utsav

The children and volunteers of SHARIKA Foundation celebrated Mata Sharika Jayanti with great devotion and enthusiasm, according to the traditional Vedic Kashmiri Pandit Vidhi, through a day-long spiritual celebration at Sharika Bhawan with the recitation of the one thousand holy names of Mata Sharika. The celebrations concluded with the distribution of scholar-ships to deserving children and ration kits to needy and single mothers of the community, reaffirming SHARIKA Foundation's commitment to service, compassion, and sharing joy.

KOA USA recognized the dedicated efforts of Sharika Foundation volunteers. The Foundation has accepted the award with humility and gratitude. The Sharika Foundation has promised to continue its mission of serving and empowering the exiled Kashmiri Pandit children through education, guidance, and opportunities for a brighter future.

KPs Join Nation in Celebrating 80th Independence Day

In Jammu, Kashmiri Pandits (KPs) celebrated the 80th Independence Day with a glittering and colorful function organized by residents of Saraswati Vihar Bohri. On the occasion, Kashmiri Pandits in their localities recited Vande Mataram and the national Anthem.

Independence Day was celebrated with pride and reverence at the Kashmiri Pandit Sabha, Ambphalla, Jammu. The ceremony began with the recitation of Vande Mataram, followed by the hoisting of the Tricolor flag by K K Khosa, president of the Sabha, accompanied by the members of the Executive Committee. The Flag hoisting was followed by the National Anthem. The speakers paid tribute to the motherland.

Sharda Institute of Computer Education, Bohri and Jagti centers of Sanjeevani Sharda Kendra, Anand Nagar, with great enthusiasm and fervor.

Source: Agencies

Editing: Vijay Kashkari, Jammu, 24 July 2026

ASKPC held Condolence Meeting Jammu

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*

ASKPC Expresses Serious Concern Over Reported Threat Letter Targeting Kashmiri Pandit Employees

JAMMU, 09 August 2026: The All-State Kashmiri Pandit Conference (ASKPC) held an emergency meeting today at the Community Hall, Muthi Phase, Jammu, under the presidentship of Sh. Moti Lal Malla, to express deep concern over the reported circulation of a threatening letter allegedly targeting individuals, their families and specific locations, including Kashmiri Pandit employees serving in the Kashmir Valley.

The meeting expressed serious apprehension over the contents of the reported letter. If found to be genuine, the matter constitutes a grave security concern and a direct challenge to the authority of the Government, the security establishment and the rule of law.

ASKPC strongly urged the Government to treat the matter with the utmost seriousness and urgency and ensure that the reported threat is immediately investigated, its authenticity established, its source identified and those responsible brought to justice.

The Conference further demanded that every Kashmiri Pandit employee named or otherwise threatened be provided effective and adequate security, along with necessary protection for their families. It was pointed out that a large number of PM Package employees are presently residing in rented accommodations, which further adds to their sense of insecurity.

ASKPC, therefore, strongly urged the Government to direct the concerned authorities to allot suitable Government accommodation to these employees on priority, particularly those facing security threats. The Conference also called for a thorough inquiry into the reasons and circumstances behind such threats so that appropriate preventive measures can be taken.

The meeting recalled that the mass exodus of 1990 uprooted an entire community from its ancestral homeland and forced generations to live in exile. The administration must ensure that such a tragic chapter of history is not allowed to repeat itself in any form. The safety, dignity and security of Kashmiri Pandit employees and their families must remain a priority.

All members present expressed grave concern over the reported threatening letter and urged the authorities to address the issue forthwith and take all necessary measures to instil confidence among the affected employees and the community at large.

Besides the security issue, various day-

to-day matters concerning the management of the Conference and issues affecting the community were also discussed. Several decisions were taken in this regard.

The following members attended the meeting:

Sh. M. L. Malla, Sh. M. K. Kaul, Sh. S. K. Bhan, Sh. Nanaji Sathu, Sh. C. L. Bhat, Sh. Navin Bhushan, Sh. Ram Krishan Bhat, Sh. Surinder Kumar Bhat, Sh. Sundari Lal Koul, Sh. Rohit Bhat, Sh. Bharat Bhushan Raina, Sh. Opinder Lidoo, Sh. Raj Nath Raina and Sh. Virander Koul.

The meeting concluded with the recitation of the Gayatri Mantra, followed by a vote of thanks proposed by Adv. C. L. Bhat.

NIPUN PANDITA MAKES HIS MARK IN SHER-E-PUNJAB T20 LEAGUE

Nipun Pandita, a talented youngster from the Kashmiri Pandit community, has taken an important step in his cricketing journey by being picked by Mohali Kings for ₹2.80 lakh in the Sher-e-Punjab T20 League auction—an impressive 14 times his base price.

The auction witnessed the presence of six franchise captains, including Abhishek Sharma, Shubman Gill, Arshdeep Singh, Prabhsimran Singh, Gurnoor Brar and Ramandeep Singh. The proceedings were led prominently by Abhishek Sharma and Ramandeep Singh.

The Sher-e-Punjab T20 League matches will be played from 30 August to 13 September 2026 and will be available live on SonyLIV.

The KP community proudly congratulates Nipun on this achievement and wishes him the very best for a successful tournament and a bright cricketing career ahead. May he continue to make the Kashmiri Pandit community proud



NIPUN PANDITA
PPL / 437 | B

SOLD
₹2.80 L

BASE PRICE ₹0.20 L

RIGHT HAND
RIGHT ARM FAST
AGE 28 YEARS

MOHALI KINGS

J&K Activists hold protest at JNU- Call for Justice, Protection of Human Rights in PoJK



New Delhi; 31 July'2026

A silent protest was held at JNU campus New Delhi by activists of J&K demanding end to brutalities with fellow state subjects in PoJK.

Earlier, a solidarity meeting was held at Sabarmati Dhaba, Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU), New Delhi, under the banner of Jammu and Kashmir Students of JNU. The gathering brought together students, academicians, intellectuals, and members of the Jammu and Kashmir community to express solidarity with the people of Pakistan-occupied Jammu and Kashmir (PoJK) and to voice concern over reports of human rights violations and the suffering of civilians.

The participants observed that the meeting was convened to express solidarity with the people of PoJK, reaffirm the importance of protecting human dignity, and call for peaceful and lawful efforts to address humanitarian concerns. Speakers stressed that civilians should not bear the consequences of political conflicts and that the rights and welfare of all affected communities deserve attention.

Social activist Ravinder Pandita and Romi Sharma Poonchi participated in the programme and strongly condemned the reported killings and violence affecting civilians in PoJK. They appealed to the international community and relevant international human rights agencies to take appropriate notice of the situation, examine the reported violations, and work towards ensuring accountability, protection of civilians, and respect for human rights.

Rizwan Ahmed, a law student at Jamia Millia Islamia, addressed the gathering and criticised the actions of Pakistan in relation to the situation in PoJK. He emphasised the importance of safeguarding fundamental human rights and called for peaceful and lawful measures to address the concerns of the people living in the region.

Umar Farooq, a PhD Research Scholar at the School of Language, Literature and Culture Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, reflected on the deep historical, cultural, and social connections shared by the people across the region. He spoke about the enduring human suffering associated with the Partition and emphasised the need to preserve shared heritage while promoting peace, dialogue, and reconciliation.

Hamid Hashmi, a PhD Research Scholar at Jawaharlal Nehru University, stated that the people living in PoJK are "our own people" bound by shared history, culture, and familial ties. He highlighted the hardships and reported human rights concerns faced by civilians and called upon all democratic institutions, civil society organisations, and the international community to work towards ensuring justice, dignity, and the protection of fundamental human rights.

The meeting concluded with a collective appeal for peace, justice, and respect for human dignity. Participants reiterated that humanitarian concerns should remain above political differences and expressed hope for a future based on dialogue, coexistence, and the protection of the rights of all people.

Chief Justice J&K and Ladakh High Court visits Sharda Temple LoC Teetwal

Teetwal, Karnah, 23 August' 2026

Chief Justice of J&K and Ladakh, Sh. Sanjiv Kumar along with his family paid his maiden visit to Sharda Temple LoC Teetwal today. He paid obeisance and did Puja at the newly constructed Sharda Temple that was inaugurated in March 2023 by Hon'ble Home minister Amit Shah. He was accompanied by Registrar General J&K High Court Sh. M K Sharma, SDM Karnah Mohd Raiyaz and others.

He was received at the temple by Ajaz Khan Coordinator and Mahaveer Thussu, Manager besides Pujaris Kamal and Ritik Raina. While appreciating Save Sharda Committee Kashmir Regd for its efforts in reclaiming and rebuilding temple on same land where it existed before partition in Maharaja times that was burnt in partition war, he also visited Sikh Gurudwara also located in the complex.



Ravinder Pandita

Save Sharda Committee Members Welcome MLA Devyani Rana at Sharda Temple Teetwal



Date: 30/07/2026

Sub: Executive Committee for 2026-2028

Ref: Notice: July 6, 2026, July 17, 2026 and July 19, 2026

Dear Sir, Madam

This is in continuation with the earlier notices related to the nominations for the various posts of Office Bearers of Executive Committee of Sabha for 2026-2028. Nominations were received till July 27, 2026 upto 5:00 P.M.

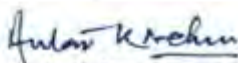
July 29, 2026, no withdrawal of nomination took place till 5:00 P.M. The nominations were scrutinized by Election Committee on July 27, 2026 after 5:00 P.M.

Since there was only one candidate against each post. Accordingly the following have been elected unopposed Office Bearers of Sabha for 2026-2028.

1. President : Sh. Sanjoo Pandita
2. Vice President (Female) : Smt. Rita Kak
3. Vice President (Male) : Sh. Rajeev Dhar
4. General Secretary : Sh. Manoj Kumar Handoo
5. Joint Secretary : Smt. Kakee Saraf
6. Finance Secretary : Sh. Surinder Kumar Kaul
7. Social Secretary : Sh. Ravinder Pandita

I ~~like~~ thank my team members Mr. K.K. Kaul and Col. Ashok Dhar for their able assistance in the process.

Wishing all the best to the incoming team.


A. K. Nehru.
Returning Officer



Common Admission Test (CAT) 2026

CAT is a national-level computer-based test conducted for Admission to MBA and management programs in India. The examination is conducted by the Indian Institutes of Management (IIMs) on a rotational basis for postgraduate management courses like MBA and PGDM at IIMs and other top business schools.

The Test is held once a year, usually in late November or early December. The Test lasts 120 minutes in total, with 40 minutes assigned to each of the three sections. Test Sections are: VARC (Verbal Ability and Reading Comprehension), DILR (Data Interpretation and Logical Reasoning), and QA (Quantitative Ability).

IIMs are considered India's premier national institutes providing quality management education and research. IIMs primarily offer post-graduate, doctoral, and executive education programs. The flagship program of IIMs is the two-year postgraduate program. These two-year programs are residential. The Fellow/Doctoral Program in Management (FPM) is a full-time, doctoral-level program in management that leads to the award of a PhD. The Executive Post Graduate programs are targeted at working professionals.

Admission to the two-year postgraduate programs at IIMs is merit-based and involves a rigorous selection process. IIMs also offer scholarships to deserving students in need of financial support.

The list of IIMs in India

Indian Institute of Management (IIM), Ahmedabad, IIM Calcutta, IIM Bangalore, IIM Lucknow, IIM Indore, IIM Kozhikode, IIM Shillong, IIM Raipur, IIM Ranchi, IIM Rohtak, IIM Kashipur, IIM Tiruchirappalli, IIM Udaipur, IIM Amritsar, IIM Bodh Gaya, IIM Nagpur, IIM Sambalpur, IIM Sirmaur,

IIM Visakhapatnam, IIM Jammu, IIM Mumbai, and IIM Guwahati.

IIM Ahmedabad and Kolkata are the oldest institutes, established in 1961. The last IIM was established in 2025 at Gauhati. In Jammu, IIM was established in 2016.

To appear in the CAT, the candidate must hold a Bachelor's Degree with at least 50% marks.

Candidates appearing for the final year of a Bachelor's degree/equivalent qualification examination and those who have completed degree requirements and are awaiting results can also apply. However, it may be noted that such candidates, if selected, will be allowed to join the programme provisionally, only if they submit a certificate from the Principal/Registrar of their University/Institution (issued on or before the date as stipulated by the respective IIM) stating that they have completed all the requirements for obtaining the Bachelor's degree/equivalent qualification on the date of issue of the certificate.

The percentage of marks obtained by the candidate would be calculated based on the practice as followed by the respective University/Institution. In the case of grades/CGPA, the conversion to percentage marks would be based on the procedure certified by the respective University/Institution. If any University/Institution confirms that there is no scheme for converting CGPA into equivalent marks, the equivalence would be established by dividing the candidate's CGPA by the maximum possible CGPA and multiplying the result by 100.

IIMs may verify eligibility at various stages of the selection process; the details are provided on the website <https://iimcat.ac.in>.

In Jammu & Kashmir, the test centers are Jammu, Samba, and Srinagar. At the time of registration, candidates must select five test cities, at their preference, from a drop-down menu. After the registration deadline,

candidates will be allotted one of the five preferred cities, subject to availability. In the rare case that a candidate is not allotted any of the preferred cities, he/she will be allotted a nearby city.

- ❖ Online registration for CAT 2026 opens on Monday, August 03, 2026, and closes on Tuesday, September 15, 2026, at 5.00 PM.

The other dates are:

- ❖ Candidates can download their admit cards from November 04, 2026, until November 29, 2026.
- ❖ The Indian Institutes of Management will conduct a computer-based Common Admission Test 2026 (CAT 2026) on Sunday, November 29, 2026, in three sessions.
- ❖ Candidates' CAT 2026 scorecards will be made accessible on the CAT website. We may also inform candidates individually by SMS. The CAT results are likely to be declared by the First week of January 2027. The CAT 2026 score is valid only until December 31, 2027, and will be accessible on the website accordingly. Thereafter, no queries related to the issuance of CAT 2026 scorecards will be entertained.

Each IIM sets its own eligibility criteria (including academic cutoffs and relative weights) and follows different selection processes. Performance in the CAT 2026 examination is an important factor in the selection process. IIMs may also use

candidates' previous academic performance, relevant work experience, and other similar inputs in shortlisting candidates at various stages of the selection process. For more information, refer to the admissions policies of individual IIMs on their respective websites.

The Common Admission Test (CAT) is widely considered a very difficult and highly competitive exam. Its toughness comes from a mix of intense competition among over 2.5 lakh candidates, tight time limits, and tricky application-based questions rather than simple memorization. Questions do not just test basic formulas; they check your critical thinking and great problem-solving skills under pressure. The conducting authorities do not give an official, detailed syllabus, so you must prepare based on past years' papers.

A raw score of 70 marks is an excellent result, usually translating to a 97th to 98th percentile, which can open doors to top IIMs and premier B-schools. General category qualifying criteria to even be considered by standard standards usually begin around the 70th to 90th percentile, though actual Admission calls demand much higher scores. The overall CAT score refers to the raw or scaled marks you receive out of 198, while the percentile indicates your relative rank among all test-takers. Because paper difficulty varies, the exact marks needed to reach a specific percentile change slightly every year.

Overall CAT Score vs. Percentile

Target Percentile Required	Overall Score (Out of 198)	Target Colleges
99.90 %ile	111.4+ Marks	IIM Ahmedabad, Bangalore, Calcutta
99.00 %ile up to 81	85 Marks	FMS Delhi, SPJIMR, IIM Lucknow, Kozhikode
95.00 %ile	65 – 68 Marks	MDI Gurgaon, IIM Shillong, IIT Bombay
90.00 %ile	52 – 55 Marks	IIMs (Trichy, Udaipur), IMT Ghaziabad
80.00 %ile	43 – 45 Marks	Tier-2 Private B-Schools

Marking Scheme:

+3 marks for every correct response

-1 mark for every incorrect multiple-choice answer.

Non-MCQ "Type in the Answer" (TITA) questions carry no negative markings for wrong answers. Always attempt them.

Normalisation:

Your raw marks are scaled across different slots based on difficulty before calculating your final percentile.

Expert Panel Proposes CLAT Overhaul but 2027 Exam remains Unchanged

From completely doing away with the general knowledge section for undergraduate aspirants to drastically reducing the number of questions in the test, an expert committee has recommended sweeping changes to the Common Law Admission Test (CLAT). But these changes will not affect CLAT 2027, according to the Consortium of National Law Universities, which conducts the entrance exams. The proposed overhaul will be considered for CLAT 2028.

The Consortium published the expert committee's report, which is made available for public feedback until August 31.

The committee was set up months after the apex court criticized the "callous and casual manner" in which the Consortium had been framing CLAT questions.

The five-member panel included professors Tarunabh Khaitan (LSE), Dev Saif Gangjee (Oxford), Shyamkrishna Balganesh (Columbia), Pritam Baruah (BML Munjal University), and Surabhi Ranganathan (Cambridge). The panel was set up last year

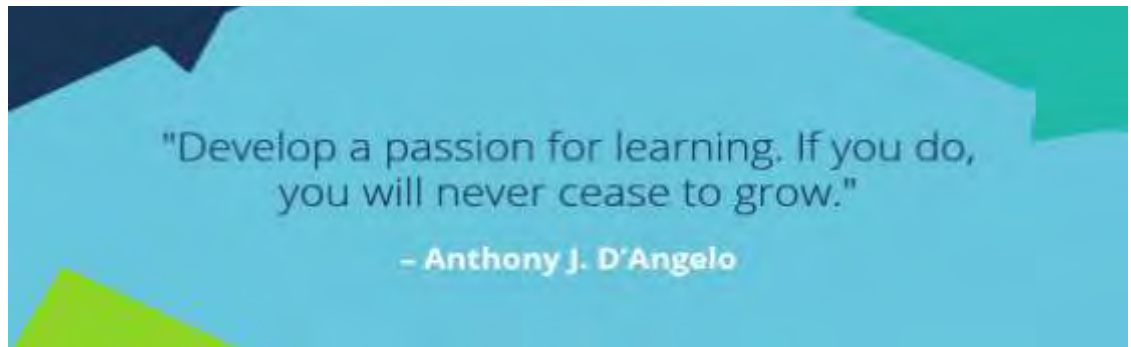
by the Consortium's advisory board, chaired by former Supreme Court Justice Indu Malhotra. The NLU Consortium has also sought the Office of the Chief Justice of India to constitute a committee to further examine the expert committee's recommendations.

For undergraduates, the committee has proposed a leaner three-section model: English reworked into a language and comprehension section testing functional literacy. Legal and logical reasoning merged into a single aptitude section. Each section is capped at 10–15 questions and is limited to the same two-hour duration to reduce the "premium on speed." A new subjective essay component to test communication and argument.

For the postgraduate exam, the panel called the current uniform syllabus unfair to those pursuing specialized LLMs and proposed retaining the UG-style sections for half the weightage, adding a legal developments section restricted to the past two years, and introducing a subjective "problem question."

The report also recommended an overhaul of the CLAT administration. Currently, the responsibility of conducting the exam rotates annually among the vice-chancellors of member universities. The committee noted that this rotating convenorship model prevents the development of "institutional memory". To fix this, the panel recommended professionalizing the paper-setting process by hiring external testing experts or developing a dedicated internal team to ensure quality control and avoid recurring litigation over erroneous answer keys.

Feedback: vijaykashkari@gmail.com



"Develop a passion for learning. If you do,
you will never cease to grow."

- Anthony J. D'Angelo



AIKS Matrimonial Service



Suitable Alliance is Invited for Our Son. Born On 22.05.1996 at 12.05 Pm at Jammu, Height- 5 Feet 3 Inches. B. TECH (Chemical Engineering) From UICET, Chandigarh Under Panjab University. MBA (Rural Management) From Institute of Rural Management, Anand, Gujarat. Presently Working as Programme Manager in Blinkit India Ltd. At Jaipur. Interested May Please Correspond Through Email TO zutshI.kuldeep@rediffmail.com; Contact Nos. 9910030473/9711384614



Suitable alliance is invited for our Son. Born on 11.10.1996 at 9:05 AM at Jammu, height 5 feet-5 inches. He has completed B.A. (History Honours) from Delhi University, PG Diploma in Advertising and Public Relations from IIMC, New Delhi, M.A. in Mass Communication and is NET qualified. Presently working as Deputy Manager (Public Relations), IFFCO Ltd., IFFCO Sadan, Saket, New Delhi-17, and also as Guest Lecturer for PG students at IIMC. Salary is in seven figures annually. Native place is Rainawari, Srinagar, Kashmir, and presently residing at A-7, R-118, Apna Apartment, Khirki Extension, Malviya Nagar, New Delhi-17 (Near Select City Walk Mall). Interested may please contact 9419140616, 9149849374 or correspond through email at anjalideep40616@gmail.com.



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



OPEN LETTER TO THE HON'BLE PRESIDENT OF INDIA

Date: 29th August, 2026 .

Subject: Urgent Appeal Regarding Recent Threat Letters to Kashmiri Pandit Community and Request for Ensuring Right to Live with Dignity in Our Homeland – Kashmir.

Respected Rashtrapati Ji,

We, the members of the Kashmiri Pandit (KP) Community, write to you with deep anguish and grave concern regarding the recent multiple threat letters issued to our community members serving and living in Kashmir Valley. Your Excellency, these threat letters cannot and should not be taken lightly. For us, they are not just pieces of paper - they are a chilling reminder of 1990 and thereafter.

In 1990, similar threats, hit-lists, and warnings were issued to our community. Those threats were ignored by the administration of that time. What followed was one of the darkest chapters in independent India, which ended in the forced exodus of over 4.5 lakh Kashmiri Pandits from our ancestral homeland, our place of origin and birth, where we have lived for over 5000 years.

History is repeating itself. The killing of innocent employees like Rahul Bhat, Rajni Bala, Sanjay Sharma, and many others in recent years shows that we continue to be selectively identified and killed only because of our identity.

We are, and have always been, one of the most patriotic communities of this nation. We never raised arms against the state. We unfurled the Tricolour in the Valley even when it was most dangerous to do so. We believe in the Constitution of India. Yet today, we are being forced to live **as internally displaced persons in our own country**, and those who dared to return under the PM Package are living under constant fear for their lives. We therefore most humbly and urgently appeal to you:

1. To direct the Ministry of Home Affairs and UT Administration of J&K to treat these recent threat letters as a serious national security issue and not as routine law and order propaganda.
2. To ensure a time-bound, high-level investigation to identify and bring to justice the perpetrators of these threat letters and the terror networks behind them.
3. To ensure foolproof security and a dignified, safe and secure environment for Kashmiri Pandit employees and residents in the Valley.
4. To uphold our fundamental right as citizens of India to live in our place of origin and birthplace with dignity, respect, security and without any threat.

Madam President, we have full faith in your esteemed office as the guardian of our Constitution. We only want to live peacefully in the land of our ancestors. We hope our voice will be heard.

With deepest respect and hope, yours faithfully,

Signed by:
Sanjay Sapru
UID:0886-021746416
8/29/2026

Sanjay Sapru - Technocrat & Social Activist - On behalf of the Kashmiri Pandit Community

Sanjay Sapru can be contacted on: Sapru1971@gmail.com

CC for kind information and necessary action:

- Hon'ble Prime Minister of India, Prime Minister's Office, New Delhi
- Hon'ble Home Minister of India, Ministry of Home Affairs, New Delhi
- Hon'ble Lieutenant Governor, Union Territory of Jammu & Kashmir

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DELHI AS A MICE DESTINATION



Yashobhoomi

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Equipped with cutting-edge infrastructure, this world-class convention centre



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The Pradhanmantri Sangrahalaya is where India's post-Independence journey comes alive. This digital and immersive.

DELHI: WHERE HERITAGE, TOURISM AND MICE COME TOGETHER

Delhi, the capital of India, is a vibrant blend of heritage, spirituality, culture and modern infrastructure, making it an ideal destination for Meetings, Incentives, Conferences and Exhibitions (MICE).

With UNESCO World Heritage Sites such as Qutub Minar, Humayun's Tomb and the Red Fort, along with spiritual and cultural landmarks like Akshardham, Pradhanmantri Sangrahalaya, Bangla Sahib, Lotus Temple and Nizamuddin Dargah, Delhi offers diverse experiences for visitors and MICE delegates.

Delhi Tourism offers a wide range of experiences, including heritage walks, city sightseeing, Delhi by Evening, spiritual and heritage circuits, and the double-decker heritage tour, allowing delegates to explore the city beyond the

convention venue.

Dilli Haat INA, Janakpuri and Pitampura, along with the Garden of Five Senses, offer vibrant settings for cultural programmes, corporate dinners, networking and incentive activities, showcasing India's crafts, cuisine and traditions.

With world-class MICE venues such as Bharat Mandapam, Yashobhoomi and Vigyan Bhawan, along with excellent connectivity, hospitality and tourism services, Delhi provides a complete MICE experience.

The city brings together business, heritage, culture, spirituality and experiential tourism—truly offering "Business with an Experience."

Delhi is not just a place to meet—it is a place to connect, experience and remember.



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