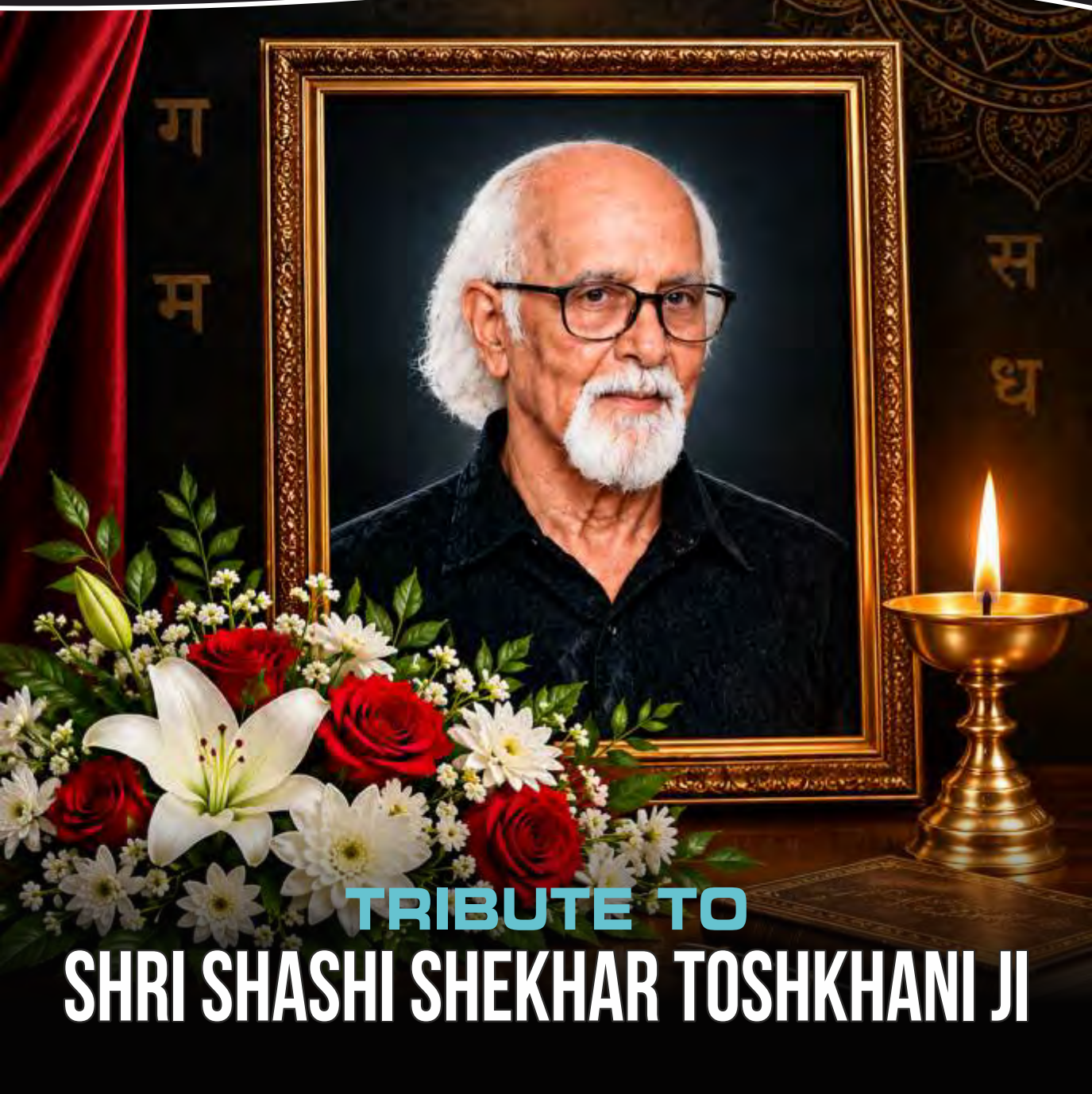
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AIKS naad

Vol. XXXVI No.09 September 2026

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Tribute to
Shri Shashi Shekhar Toshkhani Ji

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Editorial

Dear Readers,

This special edition of *Naad* is dedicated to the memory of a towering intellectual, scholar, writer, teacher and cultural thinker of our community, Late Dr. Shashi Shekhar Toshkhani, who departed this world on 5th June 2026 after a brief illness.

There are some personalities whose contribution can be measured through the number of books they write, the institutions they build, the awards they receive or the positions they hold. And then there are those rare individuals whose contribution is much larger than any such measure. Their real legacy lies in the minds they influence, the questions they provoke, the traditions they preserve and the intellectual curiosity they ignite in others.

Dr. Toshkhani belonged to the latter category. As I sit down to write about him, I find myself struggling to find words adequate to describe the magnitude of his personality and contribution. As his student, I had the privilege of listening to him, learning from him and seeking his guidance on subjects close to my heart. Yet even after years of knowing him, I feel that I had only begun to understand the extraordinary breadth of his intellectual world.

His contribution to Kashmiri culture, philosophy, language, history, poetry, literature, drama and spirituality was vast and deeply rooted. He was not merely a scholar who studied these subjects individually; he possessed the rare ability to see the connections between them and place them within the larger civilisational context of Kashmir.

Dr. Toshkhani was, in the truest sense, a polyglot of knowledge. His intellectual range was remarkable. He could speak with great depth about Kashmir Shaivism and, almost effortlessly, move into a discussion on Quantum Physics. He could explain philosophical concepts with great precision and, in the next moment, recite verses of Lalleshwari or Kabir. He could discuss history, literature, language, poetry and spirituality without treating them as isolated disciplines.

For him, knowledge was interconnected. That perhaps was one of the most fascinating aspects of his personality. He did not see Kashmir merely as a geographical entity or a historical memory. He saw Kashmir as a civilisational idea, an intellectual and spiritual tradition that had evolved over centuries through the contributions of philosophers, poets, saints, scholars, artists and ordinary people.

He was deeply conscious of the responsibility that each generation carries towards this inheritance. Whenever he came across any work that contributed meaningfully to the understanding of Kashmir and its civilisation, he appreciated it wholeheartedly. But his appreciation was never merely ornamental. If he felt that something was incomplete, missing or inadequately researched, he would point it out. And if he believed that a particular gap needed to be filled, he would encourage the concerned person to undertake that work. He wanted things to be done properly. This quality was particularly evident in his own scholarship. Dr. Toshkhani was a man of extraordinary intellectual discipline. His knowledge was accompanied by an equally extraordinary humility. Despite possessing enormous command over diverse

subjects, he never treated scholarship as a means of displaying superiority. He approached every subject with seriousness and respect. He could speak from the heart, but he would never compromise on facts. He had no personal malice towards people and, to my understanding, never carried hatred or ill will against anyone. Yet he was uncompro-mising when it came to what he considered distortion, concoction or falsehood. He could disagree strongly with an argument without allowing that disagreement to become personal.

That combination of intellectual firmness and personal warmth was one of his most distinctive qualities. Such qualities are rare. For me personally, Dr. Toshkhani was much more than a scholar whom I admired. He was my teacher, mentor and, in his own affectionate words, my "young friend."

I had the privilege of meeting him frequently and seeking his advice on subjects related to Kashmiri culture, philosophy, religion and our civilisational heritage. Many of those conversations were informal, sometimes extending far beyond the subject with which I had initially approached him. I would often return from these meetings with more questions than answers and that, in many ways, was the hallmark of a great teacher.

He did not simply provide answers. He encouraged one to think. It was on his advice and encouragement that I conducted interviews with him on subjects including Lalleshwari, Abhinavagupta and his beloved poet Krishanjoo Razdan. Those conversations have acquired an entirely different significance for me today. At the time, I regarded them as interviews. Today, I realise that they were also opportunities to preserve the voice of a scholar whose generation carried within it an enormous reservoir of knowledge and lived experience.

His affection for the younger generation was equally remarkable. He was genuinely pleased whenever he saw young people taking an interest in Kashmir's culture, philosophy, literature and heritage. When I assumed the editorship of *Naad*, he expressed happiness that the next generation was becoming involved in community service and cultural work.

He would read *Naad* carefully and would often compliment me after going through an issue. For an editor, appreciation from readers is always encouraging. But appreciation from Dr. Toshkhani carried a different weight. I knew that he was not someone who praised merely to please. His words were measured. His standards were high. Therefore, whenever he appreciated something in *Naad*, I valued it immensely. His encouragement gave me confidence.

He taught, through his own example, that preserving culture does not mean merely repeating the past. It means understanding it deeply, questioning it honestly, documenting it carefully and presenting it responsibly to the next generation.

For *Naad*, dedicating this special edition to Dr. Toshkhani is therefore not merely an expression of grief. It is an expression of gratitude.

We are grateful that our generation had the opportunity to witness such scholarship. We are grateful that he chose to engage with younger people. We are grateful for his encouragement

Dr. Toshkhani's physical presence is no longer with us, but his intellectual presence will remain. There will be conversations where his absence will be felt. There will be books and articles where one will wish to seek his opinion.

His legacy deserves to be remembered, studied and carried forward. This special edition of *Naad* is our humble offering in that direction.

I conclude with words that came from Dr. Toshkhani himself:

"Fehleega Fehleega, Mera maun ek sagar mein namak ki tarah."

There is something profoundly moving about these words today.

Like salt dissolved in the ocean, his physical presence may no longer be visible, but his contribution has become part of the larger ocean of Kashmir's intellectual and cultural memory.

Dr. Shashi Shekhar Toshkhani ji, Pranam.

Your *young friend* will remain grateful for having been your student.

भ्रनील ैंना ग्एनक

From the President's Desk



Respected All,
Namaskar to the AIKS Family,

I welcome with deep appreciation the comprehensive Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) issued by the Revenue Department, Government of NCT of Delhi, for implementation of the historic One-Time Amnesty Scheme relating to Ad-hoc Monthly Relief (AMR) for displaced J&K migrant families.

This important decision addresses several long-pending concerns of the displaced Kashmiri migrant community in Delhi and provides significant relief to families who have faced procedural and financial difficulties in accessing their legitimate entitlements.

AIKS places on record its sincere gratitude to Hon'ble Chief Minister Smt. Rekha Gupta ji and Shri Ashish Gupta ji for their attention to the long-standing concerns of the displaced Kashmiri migrant community and for facilitating a framework aimed at providing relief to deserving families.

For over three decades, the displaced Kashmiri Hindu community has demonstrated extraordinary resilience. While we have rebuilt our lives across the globe following the tragic exodus of 1990, our connection to our homeland remains unbroken. A critical part of preserving this connection—and ensuring future justice and restitution—is the safegua-rding of the immovable properties and heritage we were forced to leave behind.

To this end, the All India Kashmiri Samaj (AIKS) has initiated a fresh, rigorous administrative push to protect our rights and bring governmental services directly to our diaspora.

Safeguarding Immovable Properties in the Valley

The protection of our ancestral lands, homes, and shrines in Kashmir is a non-negotiable priority for AIKS. Distress sales, encroachments, and administrative blind spots have posed severe threats to our remaining physical legacy in the Valley.

I am writing to inform you that AIKS has formally written to the Divisional Commissioner, Kashmir, demanding the immediate compilation of a comprehensive, transparent, and officially verified inventory of all immovable properties left behind by the displaced Kashmiri Hindu community. This inventory must accurately reflect the original ownership status of these properties as they stood prior to the 1990 exodus. An official registry is the foundational step required to halt illegal encroachments, resolve pending disputes, and create a clear legal pathway for restitution and the rightful reclamation of our heritage.

The Path Forward

Our demands to the Divisional Commiss-ioner are just the beginning of this renewed campaign. AIKS will actively pursue these matters with the higher echelons of both the UT Administration and the Central Govern-ment until tangible progress is made.

In the interim, I urge all community members to organize and digitize their property documents, revenue records, and any historical evidence of ownership in the Valley. When the administration initiates these requested drives, we must be fully prepared to register our claims swiftly and accurately.

AIKS remains unwaveringly committed to advocating for the fundamental rights, dignity, and heritage of the Kashmiri Hindu community. I will keep you updated on the administration's response and our subsequent course of action.



Sunil Kaul

General Secretary's Column

The AIKS leadership welcomes with deep appreciation the comprehensive (SOP) issued by the Revenue Department, Government of NCT of Delhi,

The SOP Provides for Several Important Measures, Including :

- **Complete waiver of the family income criterion** and the requirement for submission of immovable property documents.
- **Clearance of AMR arrears up to 31 March 2026**, subject to submission of the prescribed Annual Self-Declaration and Aadhaar of the existing Head of Family.
- **One-time updating of family declarations through Form-A**, enabling beneficiaries to declare their updated family units as of 1 April 2026.
- **Simplified family bifurcation through Form-B**, facilitating equitable entitlement for eligible expanding family units, subject to the prescribed four-member ceiling per unit.
- **Recognition of family relationships and marital status irrespective of the physical address** of individual family members.
- Provision for **inclusion of non-migrant women marrying into Kashmiri migrant families** in the beneficiary roster.

The AIKS leadership views this development as an important step towards ensuring that eligible displaced families are able to receive their rightful relief without unnecessary procedural impediments.

During this month of September, AIKS continued its legal intervention before the **Hon'ble High Court of J&K and Ladakh at Jammu in WP(C) PIL No. 5/2026, titled *All India Kashmiri Samaj through Sunil Koul, General Secretary, AIKS versus UT of J&K & Others*.**

The matter concerns the non-disbursement of monthly ration to eligible registered Kashmiri migrant families despite the provisions contained in Order No. 15-JK(FCS&CA) of 2026 dated 05 March 2026.In connection with the objections filed to the report submitted by the family, an Affidavit in Support of Objections has been prepared for eligible registered Kashmiri migrant beneficiaries. The affidavit seeks to place on record the individual particulars of affected migrant families, including their registration number, ration card number, zone, and number of family members/souls covered under the ration card.

The deponent is also required to affirm that the family falls within the special category referred to in the aforesaid Government Order and, most importantly, that neither the deponent nor any member of the family covered under the ration card has received the entitled ration from April 2026 onwards.

This initiative is intended to place verified beneficiary-level information before the Hon'ble Court and substantiate the concerns raised by AIKS regarding the continued non-disbursement of ration to eligible displaced families.

AIKS is pursuing the matter with the objective of safeguarding the legitimate welfare entitlements of registered Kashmiri migrant families and ensuring that eligible beneficiaries are not deprived of the assistance provided under the applicable Government orders.

The AIKS legal team and organizational representatives will continue to monitor the proceedings and coordinate the collection of necessary beneficiary affidavits and supporting documentation, wherever required, for effective presentation of the community's concerns before the Hon'ble Court.

KASHMIRI PANDIT MARTYRS
List for September 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. Tika Lal Taploo	Srinagar	14.09.1989
2.	Sh. Shadi Lal Bhat	Anantnag	04.09.1990
3.	Sh. Prathvi Nath	…	05/06.09.1990
4.	Sh. Makhan Lal	Srinagar	08.09.1990
5.	Sh. Hirdey Nath	Wuyan, Pulwama	09.09.1990
6.	Sh. Gouri Shanker	…	10.09.1990
7.	Smt. Trikha Ji	Ganderbal, Srinagar	10.09.1990
8.	Sh. Triloki Nath	Anantnag	11.09.1990
9.	Sh. Ramesh Kumar	Khrew, Pulwama	12.09.1990
10.	Sh. Avtar Krishen	….	12/13.09.1990
11.	Sh. Dwarika Nath	Moripora, Anantnag	13.09.1990
12.	Sh. Avtar Krishen Raina	Chowalgam, Kulgam, Anantnag	14.09.1990
13.	Sh. Rattan Lal Pandita	Srinagar	16.09.1990
14.	Sh. Pyarey Lal Raina	…	23.09.1990



Naad Pays Tribute to Shri Shashi Shekhar Toshkhani Ji



Col Tej K Tikoo, Ph.D (Retd)

DR SHASHI SHEKHA TOSHKHANI
A TRIBUTE

The news about the passing away of Dr Shashi Shekhar Toshkhani on 5 June 2026, was received by the whole the whole community and the legion of his admirers with great shock and anguish. Dr Shashi Shekhar Toshkhani passed away in New Delhi, where he had been residing since exodus of the community from Kashmir in 1989-90.

Dr Toshkhani was not an ordinary intellectual, having been honored with numerous awards in his eventful life. He was a litterateur, well-versed in Kashmir's past, its Sanskrit civilizational ethos, and the broad Sanatani traditions that defined Kashmir's many millennia-old old past. His knowledge about Shaivite philosophers and the impact that their philosophy had on Kashmiri outlook of life was incisive and deep.

He was deeply conversant with the Hindu texts and his deep knowledge about the life and teachings of Kashmir's sages and saints, and their eternal message to humanity, was mind-boggling. I am not sure if there is another living KP with such in-depth knowledge about our classics and the contribution Kashmir has made to the Indic traditions, philosophy, music, art, dramatics, grammar, etc. What attracted the knowledge seekers to him was his articulation of most complex subjects in simple and easily- understood language.

Dr Toshkhani belonged to a scholarly family and had inherited the love of reading



and learning from his equally distinguished father, Professor Srikanth Toshakhani, a well-known scholar of Kashmir in his own right. It can safely be said that the 'son carried forward the tradition with distinction, establishing himself as one of the foremost scholars of Kashmir in modern times' writes Gaurav Toshkkhani, his son.

Of late, Dr Shashi Shekhar Toshkhani had been greatly disturbed by the manner in which some Kashmiri historians were trying to distort Kashmir's past, including misinterpreting Lal Ded's life's various milestones that made her an icon of whole of Kashmir. Speaking about Lal Ded, Dr Toshkhani could recite her lesser-known Vaakhs with ease and passionate belief in the Shaivite mystic's eternal message.

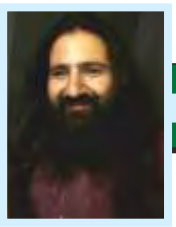
I had the good fortune of recording a number of his videos in which he spoke on varied subjects related to Kashmir. Besides others, these included Kashmir's Sanskrit civilization, contribution of its saints, sages and philosophers, Kashmir Shaivism, Kashmir's Indic connections going back to antiquity, Pandit Kalhan and the great master - Abhinavagupta.

There is another angle of Dr Toshkhani's personality which has largely remained hidden from public view, particularly after our exodus. Dr Toshkhani never compromised with the purity of his interpretation of our centuries-old texts. This was particularly significant because we have generally become habitual of accepting the corruption of the true meaning of our texts, just to please others. Be it a debate, a public function or his speech, he would be unsparing of those who tried to flow with a specific narrative to meet the requirements of carrying out a function smoothly. He would immediately lodge a vehement protest whenever the Sanatani/ Shaivite philosophy was twisted by anyone to suit the occasion.

Dr Toshkhani was also a perfectionist, in that he would re-write or re-narrate and re-record some portions of his essays or podcasts, if he felt that he is not being hundred percent true to the texts or their innate message/philosophy. His wide knowledge of Kashmir's past was a result of this being a voracious reader, his ability, in fact, his eager impatience in delving deep into the Kashmir's past and searching for truth, while others only scratched the surface. This ability allowed him to quote from centuries-old texts like Puranas and Itihas. I once told him about the recent trend in Kashmir in which some present-day Kashmiri historians and academicians are trying to propagate that 'Kashmir had no connection with mainland India but was actually a part of Central Asian civilization'. He completely rejected the theory quoting from old texts like Vishnu Puran and others where Vitasta River (Present day Jhelum) is mentioned as being a prominent river of India. Similarly, he would quote from other ancient texts how Bhagwan Krishna had anointed King Gonanda I's wife Yashomati as the queen of Kashmir after her husband had been killed by the former's brother, Balaram. What annoyed him most was the attitude of some of his own community members, particularly the gullible youth who, without taking the trouble of studying the original Texts or delving deep into history, or without studying the basic writings by well-known writers on such issues, unknowingly embrace the false narrative of vested interests and thereby give credence to such false recounting of history. He cautioned such youth not to fall victim to such corruption of history and mainstream this false narrative to serve such peoples' vested interests. He motivated a bunch of Kashmiri youth by his enlightening talks who took on the responsibility of carrying forward the legacy of keeping the flame of knowledge about our past tradition, customs, sages and saints, alive.

I had the good fortune of recording many of his podcasts on various subjects concerning Kashmir's history, its Indic roots, its contribution as the fountainhead of Indic traditions, impact that Kashmir Shaivism has had on Indian thought and many other subjects. These podcasts reflected Dr Toshkhani's mastery of the subject and his innate belief in what he said. Time spent with him was a great education as he was an encyclopedia of various aspects of Kashmir's history, its traditions and its people.

Dr Shashi Shekhar Toshkhani was an extraordinary scholar, writer, thinker and poet, all rolled into one. His departure robs the community in exile of one of its illustrious sons, an institution in himself. His leaving has left the community in exile poorer in many ways.



Verender Bangroo

REMEMBERING
DR. SHASHI SHEKHAR TOSHKHANI
CULTURAL MEMORY, HERITAGE AND THE MAKING OF A MOVEMENT



This memoir reflects upon my association with Dr. Shashi Shekhar Toshkhani, eminent scholar of Kashmiri language and literature, philologist, cultural historian and authority on Kashmir Shaivism. It particularly recalls the circumstances that led to the establishment and early activities of the Nityanand Shastri Kashmir Research Institute (NSKRI), and the conceptualization of Unmeelan: An Exhibition of Glimpses of Kashmiri Pandit Cultural Heritage in 1998.

The initiative emerged in the immediate aftermath of the displacement of the Kashmiri Pandit community from the Valley, at a time when questions of cultural continuity, preserv-ation and transmission had acquired an unusual urgency. The concern was not confined to the physical dispersal of manuscripts, archival material, ritual objects, works of art and family collections. Equally serious was the possibility that the knowledge systems

required to read, interpret and transmit these materials— particularly the Sharada script and the Sanskrit intellectual tradition of Kashmir—might themselves disappear.

Beginning with an official communication to the Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts (IGNCA) in 1997, the initiative gradually developed into a wider programme of cultural documentation and preservation. The exhibition Unmeelan, held in New Delhi in April 1998, became its first major public manifestation. The subsequent work of NSKRI, including its newsletter Unmesh, the proposed Encyclopaedia of Kashmiri Culture, plans for critical editions of classical texts, documentation of scholars, and efforts to locate Sharada manuscripts, reveals an important but insufficiently studied chapter in the cultural history of the Kashmiri Pandit diaspora.

This account is both a personal recollection and an attempt to place that work within the larger history of cultural preservation in exile. At its centre stands Dr. Toshkhani, whose intellectual vision combined philological rigour with an expansive understanding of Kashmir as part of the larger civilisational and cultural history of India.

1. A Community in Cultural Exile

The displacement of the Kashmiri Pandit community from the Valley in 1990–91 constituted not merely a demographic rupture but also a profound disruption of cultural continuity. Families were separated from ancestral homes, temples, libraries, private collections and the physical landscape within which generations had lived and transmitted their traditions.

For a community whose historical self-understanding had been closely associated with learning, scholarship and textual traditions, displacement posed a question that went beyond rehabilitation and resettlement: what happens to a culture when its people are separated from the geographical and institutional environment in which that culture evolved?

At the time, considerable attention was understandably devoted to questions of relief, rehabilitation, political representation and eventual return. Alongside these concerns, however, there existed another, quieter anxiety —the preservation of cultural memory.

Manuscripts were dispersed. Family archives were separated from their original contexts. Traditional objects and ritual artefacts found their way into different households and institutions. Oral traditions became increasingly vulnerable to generational discontinuity. The knowledge of the Sharada script, already restricted to a relatively small circle of scholars, appeared particularly fragile.

It was within this atmosphere of uncertainty that Dr. Shashi Shekhar Toshkhani and a small group of scholars and cultural activists began to think about an institutional response.

2. The Beginning: A Letter to the IGNCA

My association with this initiative began in late 1997, when I was serving at the Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts in New Delhi.

An official communication was received in the office of Dr. Kapila Vatsyayan, the distinguished Founder-Member Secretary of the IGNCA. The communication, signed by Dr. Shashi Shekhar Toshkhani, sought institutional support and methodological guidance for a systematic effort to preserve, document and project the cultural heritage of the Kashmiri Pandit community.

Because of my Kashmiri background and my association with cultural documentation programmes at the IGNCA, the correspondence was forwarded to me for preliminary interaction. I subsequently established telephonic contact with the signatories and invited them for a meeting at my office at the IGNCA. That meeting became the beginning of a long intellectual association with Dr. Toshkhani and the group that subsequently worked around NSKRI.

3. The Foundational Meeting: From Anxiety to a Programme of Action

The first meeting was simultaneously reflective and intensely practical and the immediate concern was the fate of a dispersed

cultural inheritance. The group spoke of manuscripts, miniature paintings, archival documents, ritual objects, traditional costumes, folk-art practices, photographs and oral traditions. The question was not simply how these objects could be collected, but how the knowledge associated with them could be preserved and transmitted.

I remember that one of the central anxieties concerned the Sharada script. Many important Sanskrit manuscripts associated with Kashmir were written in Sharada, while the number of scholars capable of reading the script had already become relatively small. With the community displaced, the possibility of further decline appeared very real.

At that time, I personally felt rather pessimistic about the future of this tradition. Displacement had created a sense of finality. I wondered whether, in the absence of a return to Kashmir and without an institutional mechanism for transmission, there would eventually remain enough people capable of reading and interpreting these manuscripts.

Dr. Toshkhani and his colleagues, however, approached the question differently. Their response was not resignation but action. They believed that the cultural inheritance could still be documented, studied and transmitted if an organised effort was initiated.

During our deliberations, I suggested that such a programme required a visible public beginning—a kind of curtain raiser that could communicate the urgency of the larger project, bring the community into the discussion and attract institutional and intellectual attention.

The idea of an exhibition therefore emerged.

It was to be more than a display of objects. It would constitute the first public articulation of a larger intellectual project: to document a culture that was now experiencing the condition of exile.

4. The Institutional Context: NSKRI

The institutional framework for this endeavour had already begun to take shape. The Kashmir Research Institute was established and was subsequently renamed the Nityanand Shastri Kashmir Research Institute (NSKRI).



The choice of the name was significant. Prof. Nityanand Shastri (1877–1943) represented an important phase in the modern history of Kashmiri scholarship. His association with major Indologists and Orientalists, including Sir Aurel Stein, J. Ph. Vogel and Sir George Grierson, symbolised the intellectual networks through which the textual and cultural heritage of Kashmir had entered wider scholarly discourse.

Naming the institute after him was therefore more than an act of commemoration. It established a historical connection between the scholarly traditions of earlier Kashmir and the cultural preservation challenges confronting the displaced community in the late twentieth century.

The core group included Dr. S.S. Toshkhani, P.N. Kachru, M.L. Pandit, S.N. Pandita, M.L.Kemmu, Prof. B.L. Fotedar, C.V. Gopinath and others. I too became associated with the Institute in the course of the conceptualisation and development of Unmeelan.

What distinguished the group was its combination of scholarship, cultural activism and voluntary commitment. The members brought different areas of expertise and experience to the enterprise, but they were united by a shared conviction that cultural preservation could not be postponed.

5. Three Fundamental Concerns

The preservation and transmission of the Sharada script and its manuscript tradition constituted a primary imperative for the institute, addressing both material conservation and paleographic literacy. Because Kashmir's vast Sanskrit intellectual corpus was historically recorded in Sharada, scholars recognized that

physical recovery of texts across South Asia and Nepal was insufficient without sustaining the specialized hermeneutic tools required to read and interpret them. Contextualized within the legacy of early twentieth-century archival efforts—such as those led by George Bühler and the Jammu and Kashmir State Research Department— the initiative sought to prevent the institu-tional erosion of script competency, ensuring that recovered textual artifacts remained legible and active objects of scholarly inquiry.

Equally central was the systemic recovery of Kashmir's historical memory, an endeavor driven by Dr. S.S. Toshkhani's insistence that the region be analyzed not as an isolated geographical entity, but as an integral nexus of broader subcontinental intellectual currents. Countering the gradual erasure caused by successive socio-political transformations, this approach sought to move beyond nostalgic recollection to cultivate a rigorous historical consciousness among younger generations. Central historical, philosophical, and literary figures—such as Lalitaditya Muktapida, Abhinavagupta, and Lalleshwari (Lal Ded)—were positioned not merely as symbolic relics, but as foundational pillars of a multi-stranded civilizational trajectory that required systematic documentation, critical interpretation, and pedagogical transmission.

Finally, the institute addressed the holistic documentation of Kashmir's visual, material, and literary arts, bridging the gap between private family archives and public scholarly discourse. By synthesizing diverse cultural expressions—including the Kashmir school of miniature painting, visual iconography, ritual practices, and classical Kashmiri and Sanskrit literature—the initiative established a framework for systematic study and critical editing. Ultimately, projects such as Unmeelan transcended immediate post-displacement crisis management, serving as structured interventions designed to transmit complex cultural knowledge across generations and ensure that spatial displacement did not result in civilizational erasure.

6. Unmeelan : Making a Culture Visible

The exhibition Unmeelan: An Exhibition of Glimpses of Kashmiri Pandit Cultural Heritage was held from 12 to 14 April 1998 at the All India Fine Arts and Crafts Society (AIFACS), New Delhi.

The title Unmeelan, chosen by Dr. Toshkhani, is derived from Sanskrit and conveys the sense of an opening or unfolding of the eyes. The metaphor was particularly appropriate. The exhibition sought to make visible a cultural inheritance that had received relatively little systematic public presentation in the context of the displaced community.

The exhibition was inaugurated by the eminent Indologist Dr. Lokesh Chandra.

The material culture assembled for Unmeelan encompassed a vast array of historical and ethnographic artifacts, including Sharada and Persian manuscripts, archival records, traditional attire, ornaments, and sacred ritual objects. A core focus was dedicated to the Kashmir school of miniature painting, contextualizing its stylistic evolution within the region's broader visual and sculptural traditions. Crucially, the exhibition incorporated early twentieth-century photography, offering vital primary documentation of domestic, social, and religious practices that now serves as an invaluable ethnographic record of a displaced society.

While the physical exhibition was open for only three days, its intellectual and methodological ramifications extended far beyond its brief public run. For Dr. Toshkhani and the NSKRI team, Unmeelan was conceived not as an ephemeral event, but as the foundational public phase of a sustained scholarly endeavor. Designed with the potential to travel to other national and international venues, it established an imperative framework for ongoing research, rigorous archival documentation, and the long-term preservation of Kashmiri cultural inheritance in exile.

7. Unmesh: A Newsletter as an Intellectual Record

Unmesh, under the chief editorship of Dr. S.S. Toshkhani, served as a vital intellectual and

research journal for the Nitya Samvit Kripa Research Institute (NSKRI), documenting the cultural heritage and scholastic endeavors of the Kashmiri Pandit community in exile. Moving beyond the scope of a standard organizational bulletin, the newsletter detailed ambitious initiatives aimed at preservation, including plans for a major cultural exhibition, fieldwork to locate Sharada manuscripts across South Asia and Nepal, and critical scholarly editions of foundational classical texts such as the Vaakhs of Lalleshwari, the Kashmiri Ramayana, and the poetry of Krishna Joo Razdan.

A central focus of the publication was the proposed Encyclopaedia of Kashmiri Culture, a comprehensive undertaking encompassing Kashmiri architecture, philosophy, literature, fine arts, and performing traditions. Additionally, through recurring features like Faces of Glory and structured biographical sketches, Unmesh sought to recover and honor the contributions of prominent scholars, including Nityanand Shastri, Govind Kaul, Ishwar Koul, and Swami Lakshman Joo. Ultimately, the newsletter remains a crucial primary source for understanding the structured, intellectual response and archival efforts of an exiled community striving to safeguard its cultural inheritance.

8. From NSKRI to Heritage Kashmir

The initial momentum generated by the NSKRI ultimately encountered the systemic vulnerabilities common to voluntary cultural organizations, including resource constraints, geographic dispersion of key figures, and shifting socio-political dynamics over time. As formal institutional cohesion diminished, Dr. S.S. Toshkhani maintained an unwavering commitment to the core mission: sustaining an active public and scholarly platform for Kashmiri cultural heritage. This imperative catalyzed a second phase of collaboration under the banner of the Heritage Kashmir Foundation, designed to reconstitute and expand the intellectual network established during the institute's early years.

This revitalized endeavor drew together an esteemed cohort of scholars, practitioners, and cultural figures, including Dr. C.K. Atal, Dr. Naveen Atal, Dr. Advaitavadini Koul, Shri Verender Bangroo, Shri Shanti Veer Kaul, filmmaker Sh. Arun Kaul, Dr. B.L. Malla, and Shri Narendra Safaya. Convening at major institutional centers such as the India International Centre and the India Habitat Centre, the initiative sought to move beyond organizational restructuring. Instead, it aimed to elevate the study of Kashmiri heritage, re-embedding the region's historical and philosophical traditions within the broader discourse of Indian intellectual history and ensuring the continuity of its cultural legacy within the public sphere.

9. Dr. Toshkhani as Scholar and Mentor

Dr. S.S. Toshkhani possessed a comprehensive mastery of Kashmir's civilizational landscape, spanning linguistics, literary history, visual arts, and the philosophical subtleties of Kashmir Shaivism. As a meticulous scholar and philologist, his rigorous intellectual work was balanced by an approachable, patient demeanor and a profound generosity in conversation. This dynamic nurtured a relationship rooted in the classical guru-shishya framework—not as a mere symbolic gesture of deference, but as an active pedagogical process. My engagements with him served as an ongoing education in which vast erudition was shared with humility, significantly shaping my analytical approach under his mentorship.

Our association in cultural initiatives at the Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts (IGNCA) further consolidated this intellectual bond, creating a shared space for critical inquiry and collaborative work. The defining element of his mentorship lay in his ability to reframe perspectives on post-displacement Kashmiri identity. Rather than allowing the narrative to remain bound to the immediate trauma and socio-political conditions of exile, he encouraged me to view Kashmir through the longue durée of its intellectual and cultural history. By contextualizing contemporary upheaval within centuries of

textual, philosophical, and artistic continuity, he imparted a pivotal historiographical lesson that continues to guide my understanding of the region.

10. Kashmir in the Wider Indian Civilisational Context

A defining hallmark of Dr. S.S. Toshkhani's scholarship was his steadfast refusal to view Kashmir as an isolated cultural entity. Instead, he conceptualized the region's historical evolution within the expansive geo-cultural matrix of the Indian subcontinent. Under his analytical framework, Kashmir's profound intellectual contributions—encompassing Kashmir Shaivism, Sanskrit textual traditions, literary theory, poetics, and aesthetic philosophy—were understood not as provincial phenomena, but as foundational currents that continuously interacted with and enriched the broader Indian intellectual landscape.

This perspective provided a vital historiographical intervention in the context of exile and displacement. When a community is severed from its geography, its culture risks being reduced to nostalgia and the passive memory of a lost homeland. Countering this insular tendency, Dr. Toshkhani asserted that Kashmir was primarily an enduring epistemological hub whose influence transcended physical borders. By centering figures such as Abhinavagupta and Lalleshwari (Lal Ded) alongside the region's broader artistic and textual heritage, his work demonstrated that the archival and scholarly recovery of Kashmir's past constituted an essential retrieval of India's collective civilizational inheritance.

11. Cultural Preservation as an Ethical Responsibility

Reflecting across several decades, the intellectual interventions executed by the NSKRI under the visionary direction of Dr. S.S. Toshkhani emerge as a vital counter-narrative to the existential precarity that marked the immediate post-displacement era. In a period dominated by the pressing imperatives of physical survival, Dr. Toshkhani and his colleagues maintained that cultural memory could not be relegated to a secondary concern. Instead, they recognized that safeguarding the community's intellectual inheritance was a fundamental prerequisite for its long-term historical and civilizational continuity.

Central to this effort was Dr. Toshkhani's leadership in orchestrating NSKRI's multifaceted projects—encompassing the proposed Encyclopaedia of Kashmiri Culture, systematic searches for Sharada manuscripts, critical textual editions, biographical documentation, photographic archiving, and curated public exhibitions. Under his guidance, initiatives such as Unmeelan functioned as deliberate assertions of cultural persistence, demonstrating that spatial displacement need not precipitate civilizational obliteration. By establishing a rigorous framework to bridge generational fractures and transmit foundational knowledge, Dr. Toshkhani transformed archival work into an enduring instrument of cultural survival.

12. Legacy and the Road Ahead

The significant shift in cultural consciousness among the Kashmiri Pandit diaspora—particularly among younger generations—reflects a growing engagement with their history, literature, and philosophical traditions since the initial precarity of the late 1990s. While this revitalized awareness cannot be attributed to a single catalyst, pioneering initiatives such as the NSKRI and Heritage Kashmir were pivotal in establishing the necessary intellectual framework. The work of Dr. S.S. Toshkhani and his contemporaries demonstrated that civilizational and cultural continuity is not self-sustaining; rather, it relies upon rigorous scholarship, systematic archival documentation, robust institutions, and an active commitment to historical memory.

Building upon these foundations, the imperative for contemporary scholarship extends beyond mere commemoration to the active expansion of this preservation movement. Priority must be given to the critical edition and translation of Sharada manuscripts and classical literary works, the systematic cataloging of family archives and

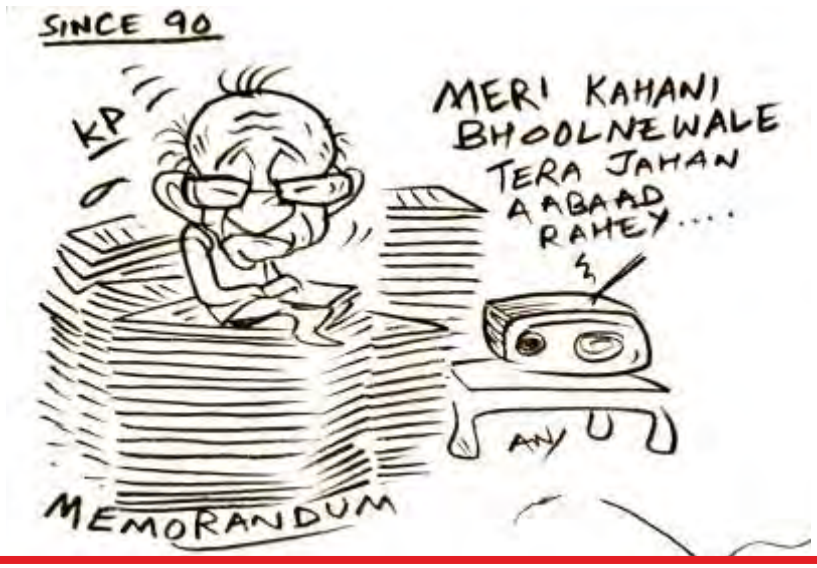
oral histories, and the further integration of Kashmiri art and philosophy into the broader canon of Indian intellectual history. Ultimately, this legacy must be transmitted not as a passive repository of nostalgic artifacts, but as a dynamic, living intellectual tradition capable of informing current and future scholarship.

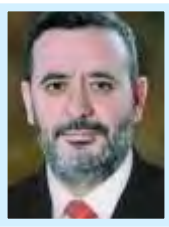
13. Conclusion: Keeping the Flame Alive

My association with Dr. Shashi Shekhar Toshkhani originated in 1997 through correspondence received at the Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts (IGNCA), initiating an intellectual partnership that would span several decades and introduce me to one of the most remarkable cultural scholars of our time. The trajectory from that initial encounter through the NSKRI, the Unmeelan exhibition, and subsequent initiatives under Heritage Kashmir was marked by systemic changes, institutional transitions, and geographic separation. Yet, throughout these shifts, Dr. Toshkhani maintained an unwavering central focus on a fundamental historiographical challenge: the methodology by which a displaced community can safeguard and sustain the foundational knowledge that defines its historical existence. His solution lay in a rigorous combination of systematic scholarship, archival documentation, interdisciplinary dialogue, and intergenerational transmission.

Retrospectively, the title Unmeelan—conveying an "opening of the eyes"—assumes a profound pedagogical significance. Beyond serving as an invitation for external audiences to engage with Kashmiri Pandit cultural heritage, it functioned as an internal imperative for the displaced community to re-evaluate its own intellectual legacy: to systematically re-examine its manuscripts, scholars, artists, languages, and philosophical systems within the broader narrative of Indian cultural history. Following Dr. Toshkhani's passing, his unfinished projects, critical texts, and institutional memory endure as an urgent scholarly responsibility. For those who collaborated with him, honoring his memory necessitates moving beyond memorialization to actively continue his life's work: interpreting, preserving, and transmitting the cultural memory of Kashmir to ensure that physical displacement does not result in historical obliteration. This commitment constitutes Dr. Toshkhani's enduring legacy and represents an imperative that must be sustained.

Cartoon by- Anil Nakhasi





Rashneek Kher

REMEMBERING
DR. SHASHI SHEKHAR TOSHKHANI



"When you bury an old man, you bury a library," he would often tell us. I am not certain if every old man who passes is a library, but Dr. Toshkhani was far more than that. He was a vast repository of knowledge that spanned a multitude of disciplines. My first introduction to him was through his writings on the Kashmiri saint-poet Lalleshwari. However, as we delved deeper into his works, he opened a door to a world hitherto unknown to me—a universe of linguistics, epistemology, dialectics, poetry, art history, and Darshana (philosophy).

Most people who encountered him thought of him as direct, often to the point of being blunt. He could repulse people by his intolerance for ignorance, and truth be told, we were all puny in comparison to him. Learning from him required complete submission, an ability to see beyond the obvious. I am frequently reminded of a verse from the Laghustava of Panchastavi, where the Mother Goddess is described as ferocious and awe-inspiring, yet to go beyond that terrifying frame is to receive Her everlasting bliss. In many ways, learning at the feet of Shashi Shekhar was exactly like that.

Frankly, I feel completely inept writing about someone who could quote the Tantraloka at will, recite lines from Dinkar, Jaishankar Prasad, or Akbar Allahabadi in one breath, and use Schopenhauer or Nietzsche to drive home a point in the next. His memory never faded. Even in his final days, when his body was wracked by acute illness and terrible pain, his intellect shone like twilight stars. His eyes remained vividly alive, his Antahkarna (inner consciousness) effulgent. It felt as though the

great lake of Saraswati was his eternal refuge, the one he was finally merging into.

In many ways, he was a contrarian. He possessed a universal consciousness, yet he was fiercely, deeply rooted in the land of his forefathers. His love and yearning for his motherland were unparalleled; this devotion manifested in every word he read, spoke, or propounded. To purists, this might seem anathema—as if the Mayakosh had spun a web around him, binding him to time and space. But in my humble opinion, the land of his ancestors was the sacred bindu from which emerged the Sri Yantra of geography and the Srividhya of knowledge. That knowledge liberated him; even when he was deeply troubled by the Samsara at large, it was this wisdom that set him free.

I do not wish to engage in mere hagiography, yet I refuse to downplay the sheer force of his presence. I remember when he visited my house and began to sing the Shiva Tandava Stotram; it felt as though the very walls began to shake. Such was the power of his evocation that when he recited Jewish exiled poets, it brought tears to our eyes. Then, abruptly, he would pick up a book, read a passage, look up at us, and smile.

“His understanding of the Saivagamas, Buddhist scriptures, aesthetics, and the etymology of the Kashmiri language was so profound that I can only glimpse its depth.

To write about him is an exercise for which I am unqualified. His understanding of the Saivagamas, Buddhist scriptures, aesthetics, and the etymology of the Kashmiri language was so profound that I can only glimpse its depth. To casual observers, he seemed an aloof, distant scholar living in an ideal world disconnected from our own. But beneath the veneer of that dry, didactic scholarship was Shashi—the boy who once ran amok through the bypasses and lanes of downtown Srinagar, where he was born.

He did not practice rituals, nor did he wear the sacred thread, yet he authored a book on the Rites and Rituals of Kashmiri Brahmins. His exact philosophy of life remains a mystery to me. He claimed he did not believe in a creator, and in moments of grief, he would quote King Lear: "As flies to wanton boys are we to the gods; they kill us for their sport." Yet, in moments of ecstasy, the very same man would recite Lalleshwari with unbridled joy and sing Abhinavagupta's cherished Bhairava Stotra.

If there is one figure he resembled, it was the great Buddhist philosopher Nagarjuna, who brought to life the near-nihilistic concept of Shunyavada. Much like Nagarjuna, he believed the world was devoid of intrinsic existence, and because dukkha (suffering) pervades it, the only true liberation is through knowledge. Yet beneath that academic exterior lay a man of immense compassion, mirroring Nagarjuna's eternal master, the Buddha.

To say Dr. Toshkhani was fond of me would be a profound understatement. What is true is that he taught me how to intern-alize Lalleshwari. He was as harsh as a teacher as he was loving as a parent. There was so much scholarship within him, yet such a profound disconnect from the material world, that a vast universe of what he knew has eclipsed with his passing. Even as he lay suffering in his hospital bed, he was fully conscious of the cosmos he contained. His eyes reflected the light of what he once described as... Madhyama se Pashyanti tak aur Para ke Paar.

Undoubtedly, we have lost one of the greatest custodians of the ancient Kashmiri tradition—a master equally proficient in his mother tongue, Sanskrit, and Hindi. Whenever Geetika and I had a disagreement over an idea, a historical incident, or a nuance of Kashmiri philosophy, we would take our case to him. He was our final arbiter, listening patiently before offering his verdict. In his passing, we have lost that ultimate anchor. As his mortal remains were consigned to the fire, the lines of his famous poem, “Phalega hamara maun,” echoed like a repeating record in my ears. The silence was deafening.



Avtar Mota

A SMALL TRIBUTE TO
Shashi Shekhar Toshakhani

The passing of Shashi Shekhar Toshakhani marks the end of an era in the intellectual and cultural life of Kashmir. With him departs not merely an eminent scholar, but a towering repository of knowledge, wisdom, integrity and clarity, whose like is rarely encountered in a lifetime.

An illustrious son of the equally distinguished scholar Professor Srikanth Toshakhani, he inherited a rich legacy of learning and enriched it manifold through his own scholarship, dedication and intellectual rigour. The sad plight of women in the tradition-bound and orthodox Kashmiri Pandit society was powerfully portrayed in Leela, a Kashmiri novel written by Srikanth Toshakhani in 1923. Shashi Shekhar Toshakhani not only inherited his father's intellectual legacy but carried it forward with distinction, establishing himself as one of the foremost scholars of Kashmir in modern times.

A distinguished Sanskrit scholar, linguist, author, poet, grammarian and polyglot, Shashi Shekhar Toshakhani belonged to that increasingly rare breed of scholars whose erudition was matched by depth of understanding and an unwavering commitment to truth. What made him truly exceptional was not merely the vastness of his knowledge but the extraordinary clarity with which he communicated it. Few could match his scholarship and insight in matters relating to the ancient texts of Kashmir, the interpretation of Sanskrit and Sharda



(The author with S S Toshakhani, Nov 2025, Jammu)

manuscripts, the history of ideas, and the immense contribution of Kashmir to the broader fabric of Indic civilisation.

He remained closely associated with the internationally renowned Buddhist scholar, linguist and polyglot, **Dr Lokesh Chandra**, and shared with him a lifelong commitment to

the preservation, study and dissemination of India's civilisational heritage. Through decades of painstaking scholarship, he emerged as one of the most authoritative voices on Kashmir's intellectual traditions and cultural history.

In an age marked by superficiality and noise, he embodied intellectual precision and honesty. Whenever one approached him with a question, however complex, one invariably returned with a clearer understanding. His scholarship was never obscured by needless complexity; rather, it illuminated difficult subjects with remarkable lucidity and balance.

His mastery of Kashmiri Shaivism had no parallel. He possessed that rare gift of illuminating profound philosophical concepts without diminishing their complexity. The most intricate metaphysical ideas became lucid under his guidance. He was not merely a scholar of the tradition; he was among its finest interpreters and exponents in contemporary times. For students and researchers alike, conversations with him often became journeys of discovery into the deepest layers of Kashmir's philosophical heritage.

What I admired most about him, apart from his scholarship, was his uncompromising commitment to truth. Falsehood, distortion and manipulation irritated him profoundly. He had little patience for intellectual dishonesty or convenient misrepresentations. He was a man who called a spade a spade. He never hesitated to speak the truth as he saw it, without fear or favour, regardless of whom it pleased or displeased. In an age when many choose comfort over conviction, he stood firmly by principle. That moral courage was as remarkable as his scholarship.

His literary and scholarly output was immense. Apart from hundreds of research papers, essays and articles published in reputed journals and periodicals, he authored several important books that have made a lasting contribution to the study of Kashmir's history, literature, religion and culture. Among his most notable works are **Kashmiri Sahitya Ka Itihaas (Hindi), Lal Ded: The Great Kashmiri Saint-Poetess (English)**, **Rites and Rituals of Kashmiri Brahmins (English)**, **Kaha Tha Rishi Ne** (Hindi translation of the shrukhs of Nund Rishi) and **Cultural Heritage of Kashmiri Pandits**, co-authored with Professor K Warikoo. These works are not merely books; they are enduring repositories of knowledge. **Kashmiri Sahitya Ka Itihaas** remains one of the most comprehensive studies of Kashmiri literary history available in Hindi. His work on Lal Ded introduced generations of readers to the life, philosophy and poetic genius of Kashmir's greatest mystic poetess. **Rites and Rituals of Kashmiri Brahmins** has become an indispensable reference for understanding the religious customs, ceremonies and cultural practices of the Kashmiri Pandit community. Through **Kaha Tha Rishi Ne**, he made the spiritual wisdom of Nund Rishi accessible to a wider readership. At the same time, the **Cultural Heritage of Kashmiri Pandits** stands as an invaluable document preserving the memory, traditions and civilisational contributions of a community whose heritage deserves careful preservation. Today, these books are widely regarded as authoritative reference works. Scholars, researchers, students and general readers continue to turn to them for reliable information, thoughtful analysis and meticulous documentation. Their enduring relevance is a testament to the depth of his scholarship and the care with which he approached every subject. In preserving and interpreting Kashmir's intellectual and cultural heritage, he rendered a service whose value will only grow with time.

I had the privilege of knowing him personally. There was an effortless grace in his scholarship and an unaffected humility in his conduct. Whenever I found myself confronted by a difficult textual problem, a historical ambiguity or a philosophical puzzle, it was invariably to him that I turned. Every clarification I sought, every intellectual knot in which I found myself entangled, was patiently unravelled by him with a clarity uniquely his own. Time and again, he rescued me from confusion and

uncertainty. For this generosity of spirit and learning, I shall remain forever indebted to him.

He would quote Jayadeva, Kalidasa, Bilhana, Kshemendra, Kalhana, and many others with an almost effortless familiarity, moving across the Sanskrit tradition as though it were a lived intellectual landscape rather than a field of study. His engagement with European literature and philosophy was equally deep and wide-ranging. He read Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, Husserl, Heidegger, Karl Jaspers, Sartre, Simone de Beauvoir, and Camus not as isolated thinkers but as part of a continuous, unfolding conversation about existence, consciousness, and freedom. Within that constellation, he was especially drawn to Albert Camus, whom he clearly esteemed more than Jean-Paul Sartre. He could speak with equal ease about Jean Genet, Andre Gide, Tolstoy, Dostoevsky, Kafka, Chekhov, Maupassant, Hemingway, and Allen Ginsberg. What stood out was not merely the breadth of his reading, but the discernment with which he moved between voices and sensibilities, as though each author were part of an internal, carefully arranged dialogue.

He took evident delight in the photographs I sent from Paris, especially those of the graves of Sartre and Camus, which seemed to him to carry a quiet symbolic weight. The images from France that I shared in 2023 and again in 2025 were received not as casual travel impressions, but as fragments of a world to which he felt intellectually and emotionally attuned. In one of our exchanges over WhatsApp, he suggested that I turn to the Katha Upanishad, proposing it as a way of re-encountering Camus through a different metaphysical and contemplative lens. I followed his advice and found in it an unexpected but illuminating return to Camus's enduring reflections on mortality, meaning, and the limits of human understanding.

I met him a few months ago in Jammu, where he had come to perform the Yajnopavit ceremony of his grandson. That final meeting remains one of my most cherished memories. One of my fondest hopes was that he would write the foreword to my new book, "**Songs Beneath a Lost Sky"**. He had graciously expressed his willingness to do so. I regarded it as a singular honour and looked forward to the privilege of having his words introduce my work. Alas, fate decreed otherwise. Before that wish could be realised, he was admitted to the hospital suffering from a serious ailment.

Like many who knew his indomitable intellect and resilient spirit, I believed he would fight his way back to health. I hoped that this too would pass and that he would once again return to the world of books, creative work and ideas that he loved so deeply. But it was not so destined. None can challenge the will of the Almighty. We may hope, pray and strive, yet ultimately there are forces beyond human control.

His passing leaves a void not only in the fields of Sanskrit studies, Kashmiri studies and Indian intellectual history, but also in the lives of all those who had the privilege of learning from him. Through his writings, lectures, painstaking work on manuscripts, and profound insights into Kashmir's intellectual heritage, he preserved and illuminated an invaluable civilisational legacy for future generations.

Shashi Shekhar Toshakhani was not merely a scholar of Kashmir. He was one of its finest custodians, a guardian of its intellectual memory, and a bridge between its glorious past and its future. His scholarship was monumental, his clarity unmatched, and his contribution enduring. As we mourn his passing, we also celebrate a life devoted to learning, truth and the pursuit of knowledge. The man may have departed, but the light he kindled in countless minds shall continue to shine.

I bow my head in gratitude for having known him, for having learned from him, and for having benefited from his wisdom. His memory will remain a source of inspiration, and his absence a source of profound sorrow.

May his noble soul attain Sadgati and Moksha. Om Shanti.

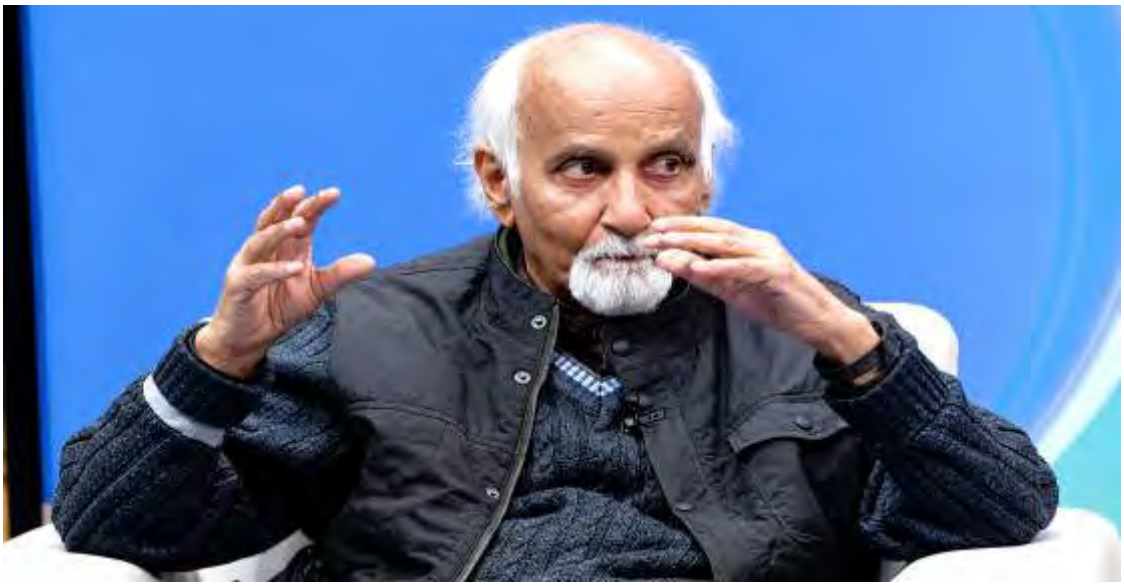
Gaurav Toshkhani



Tracing Kashmir's Literary Journey : A Tribute to

DR SHASHI SHEKHAR TOSHKHANI

and His Kashmiri Sahitya Ka Itihas



What is the meaning of "History. Let me clarify here that, I am talking only and specifically about History as a subject, a field of study.

Well, in lexicological terms , the term History has been variously defined across different dictionaries Foe example, the Websters Dictionary defines it as "the study of, or a record of, past events considered together, especially those relating to a particular period, country or subject".

The Oxford Learners' Dictionary defines it as "All events that happened in the past; also, the study or written account of past events."

The Britanica Dictionary defines it as "The study of past events, or the past events themselves, including events relating to a particular subject, place or organisation."

There are other dictionaries as well, which offer their definitions of the word.

However, all such definitions are to a similar import and bring out the following characteristics of what the term "History" would mean:

(a) History is about the past, about what has happened

(b) It is a study of past events as they happened and their interpretation , based on written documents or an oral account and then

(c) a recording of those events in a chronological order .

The idea is to offer the knowledge and understanding of the past, from which the future of the subsequent times (i.e. the present) emanated.

Now, what kind of History would be the easiest history to compile. Very obviously it would be the history recording the lives and times of the different rulers and the people they ruled, over such different times, their kingdoms, their conquests, their victories and defeats and most importantly their reigns and its length .

The person who undertakes that task , has more often than not lived in and through those times and therefore it would be a firsthand account . In any case, i.e. whether one writes the history of their times of an era bygone, there is enough available by way of documentary records and evidence and /or the oral across passed down generations, through word of mouth.

When it comes to our land i.e. Kashmir , the "Raj Tarangini" a major Sanskrit historical chronicle of Kashmir written by the Kashmiri poet and historian Kalhana in the twelfth century, around 1148–1150 CE recording the historical narrative , of the Kings and its ruling dynasties of the times would perhaps be the most comprehensive account of the place as it existed through different times. There are some other historical accounts drawn up into texts e.g. the "Baharistan-e-Shahi " a Persian chronicle of the medieval history of Kashmir which records the establishment and of Islam and of the Muslin rule in Kashmir and it growth. There would are some other texts as well.

However, to repeat what I said earlier, what was common across all such works, was that they were a gathering, study, examination , interpretation and finally chronological recoding of the past, based on live realities of the authors and /or the evidence documentary or oral, which would form the basis thereof.

How does one however write about the history of literature of a place . More specifically, how would one write about the history of literature of Kashmir .

To say that doing so would be an onerous task, would be an understatement. A more appropriate statement would be that it would be seeking to a achieve the impossible and believing that the attempt would culminate in success.

The reasons for why that is so ,can be broadly summed up as under :

1. Many literary languages: From Sanskrit in the earlier period to Persian under and post the Muslim rule , followed by Urdu in the later nineteenth century and then English and to small extent , Hindi, the periods that followed, which simultaneously meant almost a complete absence of authentic Kashmiri texts. In other words, a literary historian would have to rely more on the translations of what was original, in different languages.

2. Loss of manuscripts: Whether due to natural calamities or invasions and /or political disturbances where the destruction of the manuscripts was deliberate , with an intent to destroy what was original and replace it with what had been imported to replace it, decay or inadequate preservation (which again could have been intentional, when it came to the institutions of the state entrusted with the responsibility) a large number of Kashmiri manuscripts did not survive.

3. Changes in scripts: With Sharda script becoming extinct, the scripts came to be written in different languages, with perhaps only Sanskrit being close to originality. Therefore other than Sanskrit, the Kashmiri manuscripts were written or rewritten Persian Scripts and this is largely where corruption of the manuscripts occurred.

4. Lack of government / institutional support : It is very obvious that with historical and the consequential demographic changes, Kashmir went through, most of what could be used as a track back to the origins, was obliterated and attempts to rediscover the same, discouraged. This largely meant that the author, very largely had to be on his own, logistically and financially.

It was in this background and against these odds that my father late Dr. Shashi Shekhar Toshkhani , took upon himself the task

of being perhaps the pioneer in the field , at least of the modern times and wrote the history of Kashmiri literature in his book "Kashmiri Sahitya Ka Itihas" (The History of Kashmiri Literature) in the late eighties, published under the aegis of the Jammu Kashmir Academy of Art, Culture and Languages.

The first serious attempt at presenting the development of Kashmiri literature in a systematic historical framework, this work of Dr. Toshkhani does not merely look at Kashmiri literature as having begun only recently in the Kashmiri language used by ordinary people. The book places within itself Kashmir's wider civilisational and linguistic history, discussing the region's Sanskrit heritage , the emergence and development of Kashmiri as a literary language the growth of devotional and mystical poetry. It sees Kashmiri literature as a much older and broader literary tradition shaped by several languages and cultural influences and of course, impacted by the Islam and therefore Persian and later by Urdu currents.

The book consists of two broad parts. The first part traces the development of Kashmiri literature from around the eleventh century until the early twentieth century, while the second focuses on modern Kashmiri literature and its later developments.

The book opens by examining the origin and evolution of the Kashmiri language, where Dr. Toshkhani explores its connections with earlier Indo-Aryan languages, its special pronunciation and grammatical structure, its different regional forms, and the scholarly debate over whether Kashmiri should be regarded primarily as a Dardic language or as an Indo-Aryan language influenced by Dardic features.

This introductory discussion is something the Dr. Shashi Shekhar Toshkhani considered essentially important, for understanding the growth of Kashmiri literature could not be possible unless one examined linguistic history of Kashmir itself.

In this section Dr. Toshkhani has tried to trace the beginnings of Kashmiri literary expression, showing how its first writings were closely connected with religion, philosophy and spiritual experience. Works such as *Mahanayaprakash*, along with the poetry of Lal Ded and Sheikh Nuruddin Wali, are examined as important foundations of Kashmiri literature. Toshkhani also discusses fifteenth-century works such as *Banasur-akatha* and *Sukhdukhcharit*, highlighting the influence of Sanskrit, Prakrit and Apabhra-msha traditions on Kashmiri poetry. In particular his broader work on Lal Ded is concentrated on with reassessing inherited images of the saint-poetess by returning to her verses and examining whether later portrayals accurately reflected her ideas and personality.

The book then follows the development of lyrical poetry through poets such as Habba Khatoon, Arnimal and Shah Gafur, and examines the influence of Persian forms such as the masnavi and ghazal, represented by poets like Mahmud Gami and Rasul Mir. It also discusses Vaishnava "Leela" poetry, Sufi poetry and poets such as Parmanand, Samad Mir and Ahad Zargar.

In the context of Arnimal it would be highly pertinent to note that Dr. Toshkhani does not treat Arinimal merely as an imitator of Habba Khatoon. He sees her as a poet with her own emotional voice, particularly distinguished by the intensity of her wounded love and the simplicity of her expression. He also addresses the controversy over the popular song beginning "Arini rang gom shravan hiye." Some critics had attributed the poem to Mahmud Gami, because a few of its lines appear in one of his poems. Dr Toshkhani reports the argument that in fact Mahmud Gami may have adopted or reused a few lines from an already popular Arinimal song.

The first part concludes with the gradual emergence of Kashmiri prose, marking the transition from a predominantly poetry-based tradition to modern forms such as the short story, novel, drama and literary criticism.

The second part focuses on the emergence and growth of modern Kashmiri literature. It begins with Ghulam Ahmad Mahjoor and the poets associated with him, presenting Mahjoor as a major figure who helped Kashmiri poetry move beyond

traditional themes and forms towards contemporary social issues, public life and political awareness.

It then examines the development of modern Kashmiri poetry after Mahjoor. Dr. Toshkhani discusses themes such as social reality, political experience, human suffering, loneliness, alienation and modernism, while also examining experimentation with poetic language and form. He gives attention to the rise of progressive poetry, which connected literature more closely with the lives and problems of ordinary people.

The later chapters of this part deal with the development of modern literary genres. Here Dr. Toshkhani surveys Kashmiri drama, considering its forms, themes, achievements and limitations, while observing that it did not develop as extensively as poetry. He also discusses the rapid growth of the Kashmiri short story, which became an important means of portraying ordinary life, poverty, social change, personal relationships and psychological conflict. The chapter on the novel considers its relatively recent development, narrative methods and engagement with social reality. The volume concludes with a discussion of Kashmiri literary criticism, including the need for more systematic research, the scarcity of manuscripts, the limited readership of Kashmiri books and the difficulty of keeping up with contemporary literary production.

To sum up , the book is a path breaking work which covers the entire trajectory of Kashmiri literature, from Vedic and Sanskrit influences; Medieval Kashmiri poetry; Persian and Mughal period literature and Modern Kashmiri literary movements, providing a detailed analysis of Kashmiri language evolution, including Vocabulary changes under Sanskrit, Persian, and Mughal influence; Stylistic features of key poets and Use of visual imagery and metaphors in Kashmiri poetry.

It would not be an exaggeration to say that Kashmiri Sahiyta Ka Itihas is a scholarly document of the highest order to document and preserve the Kashmiri literary identity .

Calendar of Month

Sankat Nivaran Chaturthi	29th Septptember 2026
Sahiba Saptami	02nd October 2026
Ashtami (Shukla Paksha)	03rd October 2026
Ekadashi (Shukla Paksha)	06th October 2026
Amavasya	10th October 2026
Kumar Shashti	16th October 2026
Sankranti	17th October 2026
Durga Ashtami	19th October 2026
Ekadashi (Krishna Paksha)	22nd October 2026
Purnima	26th October 2026

Nota

Panchak starts on 21st October 2026 ends on 25th October 2026

Ashwin (Krishna Paksha) from 27th Sept. 2026 to 10th October 2026
Ashwin (Shukla Paksha) from 11th October 2026 to 26th October 2026



Inder Krishen Raina

36 Years In Exile
THE WAY FORWARD
Confronting the Crisis of Our Past, Present, and Demographic Future



I. Introduction : The State of Un-belonging

For *thirty-six years*, the Kashmiri Pandit community has lived in a state of profound and agonizing "*un-belonging.*" When the winds of radical jihad swept through the Valley in *January 1990*, we were not merely displaced. We were *uprooted*. A tree that is uprooted does not just shed its seasonal foliage — it is severed from the subterranean source of its life, left to wither slowly under alien skies.

Our ancient shrines, ancestral homes, orchards, and agricultural land were never mere real estate. They were the *sacred canvas upon which our 5000-year-old civilization was written*. They held our rituals, our folklore, our dialect, our memories. Yet for over three decades we have watched from the margins of exile as our heritage slips into the fog of history — ignored by administrative apathy, trivialized in public discourse, and left unscoured by a constitutional system that has repeatedly failed to secure justice for a minuscule indigenous KP Community.

The most painful truth is this: *time is*

being weaponized to erase our claims. Land records fade. Witnesses pass away. Narratives are diluted. If we stop struggling in the right direction today, we do not just lose our land. *We lose the very direction, purpose, and continuity of our existence.*

II. The Failure of the Guarantors and Lessons From History

We must be starkly honest with ourselves. The administration, judiciary, and state apparatus have failed in their primary constitutional obligation to *protect and restore the indigenous KP Community* that was ethnically cleansed from its homeland.

For 36 years we were told to wait for a "conducive atmosphere." To trust one-time rehabilitation packages. To rely on a judicial process that moves at a glacial pace and often forgets the victim. No truth and reconciliation commission was ever constituted. No one consoles our tragedy.

The result is a community left *exhausted, fragmented, and neglected* — politically underrepresented, culturally dispersed, and economically restarting from zero in every new city. But history also teaches us a vital lesson: when state fails its citizens, *waiting for institutional grace is a dead end.* Dignity is reclaimed, not granted.

- *The Crimean Tatars* endured nearly 45 years of forced exile in Central Asia. They did not wait for a sympathetic regime. They built a relentless national movement, held annual commemorations, taught their children the Crimean language, and preserved the "myth of home" across generations. That persistence forced their eventual return.
- *The Jewish Diaspora* survived two millennia of statelessness by shifting from passive victimhood to active agency — building yeshivas, cultural bodies, publishing houses, and welfare networks long before 1948. They invested in continuity first.
- *The Chagos Islanders* spent over 50 years fighting legal battles against major global power. Their meticulous documentation of eviction, their genealogies, and their maps created an undeniable *DNA of claim* that courts cannot ignore today. Our way forward cannot rest on pity or empty political promises. It must mirror the *civil persistence of the Tatars, the institutional nation-building of the Jews, and the relentless documentation of the Chagossians.*



III. The Silent Emergency: The Crisis Of Shrinking Population

While political and economic rehabilitation dominate our public discourse, an even more *insidious, existential threat* is unfolding quietly within our households: *demographic collapse*. To understand how rapidly our community is contracting, one only needs to look at the generational descent across the last century:

1. *The Grandparents' Generation ~80 years ago: Marriages at 18–20. Large, joint families of 6 to 8 children by age 30. This provided a robust foundation capable of sustaining temples, schools, and a vibrant cultural ecosystem in every village.*
2. *The Parents' Generation ~60 years ago: Marriages at 20–22. Families averaging 4 to 6 children by age 30–32. Replacement levels were comfortably maintained despite early signs of migration.*

3. *Our Generation: Marriage age pushed to 26–28 due to education and job insecurity. Result: 2 to 3 children by the age of 36. Growth flattened into a dangerous plateau.*
4. *Our Children's Generation: Marriage routinely delayed to 30–36 due to career, housing, and diaspora pressures. Result: 0, 1, or at most 2 children by the age of 40–42.*

This trajectory is not merely a reflection of modern urbanization. For a displaced community, it is a compounded catastrophe. With *roughly 30% of the older, migrated generation having passed away in exile* without witnessing a return, the community is shrinking from both ends: elders fading away, and a near-zero replacement rate among the youth.

Exile fractured joint family support systems. It forced our youth to rebuild lives from absolute scratch in Mumbai, Delhi, Jammu, and abroad. It scattered us globally. Delayed marriages, biological realities, housing costs, and economic vulnerability have trapped the post-migration generation in a *sub-replacement fertility cycle*.

If our population continues to contract at this pace, we must ask: *Who will inherit the legal struggle? Who will speak Kashmiri at home? Who will return to light the diyas in our hearths?*

IV. The Way Forward : Three Pillars for Survival

To arrest this decline and chart a meaningful course, our community must pivot from reactive grief to *proactive strategy*. We must anchor our future in three non-negotiable pillars:

1. From Conditional Camps to Sovereign Restoration

We must move past the era of temporary transit camps and fragmented, conditional packages. The way forward demands a *secure, dignified, and politically guaranteed return* to our original, authentic villages and towns. This must be backed by legal protections for property, political representation, and community security. Return without rights is resettlement. We seek *restoration with the right to make informed choices*.

2. Institutional Documentation Of Loss

Because official commissions have stalled for decades, we must establish an *independent, community-led digital archive*. Every desecrated shrine, every illegally occupied acre, every burnt library, and every personal testimony of our ethnic cleansing must be meticulously cataloged with dates, GPS, photos, and affidavits. This creates a *forensic and moral record* that ensures our history can never be rewritten, minimized, or erased by future narratives.

3. A Global Cultural And Demographic Lifeline

Physical return cannot happen without a living, rooted population. We must institute *community-backed support systems for young families in the diaspora*. This includes housing support, marriage facilitation, childcare cooperatives, Kashmiri language schools, and mentorship for entrepreneurs. We must invest in cultural immersion for post-migration youth so that our language, traditions, festivals, and identity survive across borders until the day of return.

V. Conclusion: Looking Up, Not Just Back

To stop struggling is to accept total disappearance. We are the descendants of *sages, scholars, poets, and survivors*. We gave world philosophy and grammar. We may be reduced in number, but *we are a civilization that refuses to die*. Exile has tested us, but it has also refined us.

Thirty-six years have passed. The pain remains, but so does the purpose. As we look ahead, let us shift our perspective: *we are not merely looking for a way back to our homes. We are looking for a way up as a community.*

Let our collective resolve be measured not by the volume of our grievances, but by the *discipline of our institutions, the unity of our purpose, and our refusal to let 1990 be the final chapter of our history.*

The Valley waits.

Author is President, Ganesh Shivshakti Asthapan Akoora
KP in Exile



Bushan Jalali

The Vanguard of Sharda

PANDIT KESHAV BHAT JOTSHI AND THE SALVATION OF KASHMIRI INTELLECTUAL HISTORY



Abstract & Introduction: The Anatomy of Cultural Erasure

The existential baseline of an ancient civilization resides inextricably within the survival of its primary script. When a script falls silent, the entire repository of a people's theological, philosophical, and historical consciousness is systematically erased. At the close of the nineteenth century, the Kashmiri Pandit community stood on the precipice of such a catastrophic civilizational amnesia.

The ancient Sharda script (*Sharda Lipi*)—the foundational conduit for the region's profound contributions to Epistemology, Shaivism/Shaivdarshan, and Sanskrit literature—was actively facing extinction. As centuries of irreplaceable palm-leaf and birch -bark manuscripts languished in domestic neglect or faced destruction by geopolitical disruptions, a solitary figure emerged to disrupt this trajectory of decline.

Pandit Keshav Bhat Jotshi (1873–1949), born into a modest family of *Purohits* in Jogi Lanker, Rainawari (Srinagar), recognized that the expiration of Sharda meant the absolute death of the Kashmiri intellectual lineage. Working under severe material constraints as a humble *Pathshala* teacher, Jotshi possessed a formidable academic foresight. He understood that saving a civilization required more than sentiment; it demanded a rigorous, exhaustive, and hazardous systemic rescue mission.

The Philological Salvage: Decryption under Duress

Operating entirely independently and with negligible financial capital, Pt. Keshav Ji —widely respected across communities as *Pt. Keshav Sikh too* —instituted a rigorous methodology of manuscript recovery. He systematically canvassed households across the Kashmir Valley to rescue fragile, disintegrating texts before they were lost to decay or hostile regional mercenaries.

The moniker **"Pt. Keshav Sikh"** was born not only from his unyielding determination but out of a profound feat of multi-script mastery. Recognizing his peerless calligraphic and philological capabilities, the then **Maharaja of Jammu & Kashmir commissioned him to meticulously transcribe the holy *Guru Granth Sahib***. His flawless execution of this monumental Sikh scripture solidified his status as an unpreced-ented bridge between diverse spiritual and linguistic traditions within the princely state.

Yet, his life's core mission remained the complex philological task of decoding, translating, and transliterating endangered Sharda texts into readable Devnagri. This monumentally demanding task was executed

entirely at his own personal and financial cost. Jotshi single-handedly built an operational bridge between a dying medieval script and the modern typographic era. His meticulously curated translations include:

- **Socio-Liturgical Lexicons:** *Karam Kand Manual*, *Har Ratri Pooj Paddati*, and *Shiva Puja*.
- **Esoteric Devotional Hymns:** *Ganesh-Durga Stotravali*, *Saundarya Lahiri* (with *Panchastavi*), *Bhavani Sahasra Namavali*, *Vishnu Sahasra Namavali*, *Rudra Panchakam*, *Aditya Hriday*, and *Indrakshi Stotra*.
- **High Philosophical Digests:** *Mata Shree Roopbhawani Rahasi Updesh*, *Yoga Vashishtha Sar*, and *Bhakti Vivek Sar*.

By modernizing these primary sources, Jotshi did not merely archive the past; he democratized it. His scholarship formed the baseline reference data that allowed all subsequent 20th-century researchers, indologists, and theologians to engage with Kashmiri heritage.

Socio-Economic Resiliency and Contemporary Global Utility

The contemporary impact of Jotshi's life work extends far beyond passive archiving. Today, his Devnagri translations serve as the vital liturgical and cultural link for lakhs of displaced Kashmiri households globally.

Crucially, his *Karam Kanda* manuals established a robust vocational framework. By standardizing and preserving complex ritual practices in an accessible script, he engineered an independent economic engine. This corpus directly empowers a vast network of self-employed youth across the diaspora, affording them a source of dignified, specialized livelihood within the priesthood.

A Clarion Call for Institutional and Posthumous Rectification

It is a stark, profound injustice that a scholar who single-handedly preserved the intellectual core of a civilization—and simultaneously honored the sacred traditions of neighbouring communities under royal decree—remains largely absent from global historiography. The systemic silence surrounding his contributions demands immediate correction from state, national, and international institutions.

To honor this unparalleled legacy, a coordinated global effort must materialize across three distinct fronts:

1. **Conferment of High National Posthumous Honors:** State and national administrative agencies must formally recognize Pandit Keshav Bhat Jotshi's preservation work with prestigious cultural honours, acknowledging him as a premier architect of indigenous preservation.
2. **Establishment of Academic Chairs:** Major global universities—particularly those focusing on Indology, South Asian Studies, and Historical Linguistics—should establish dedicated academic chairs in his name to fund critical research into endangered scripts and Himalayan textual cultures.
3. **Endowments at Global Cultural Centers:** International heritage bodies and cultural centers should anchor research wings dedicated to the preservation of the Sharda language system, ensuring that the flame Jotshi kept alive through raw human will is never extinguished by institutional neglect.

Pandit Keshav Bhat Jotshi passed away in 1949, living and dying on the periphery of material comfort. Yet, every time a sacred hymn is chanted, a text is referenced, or a displaced community reaffirms its roots, his heart beats within the ritual. His death anniversary is solemnised by RAINAWARI KP ACTION COMMITTEE® by floral tributes every year to remember the unsung hero. It is now incumbent upon modern institutions to elevate his memory from a quiet community debt to its rightful place in the pantheon of global intellectual heroes.

(Author is the native of Pt Jotsh's original residence, Chairman, Nancy Foundation®,and President, Rainawari KP Action committee®). Email: nancyfoundations2015@gmail.com, rkpac@yahoo.com



Upender Ambardar

THE PROGRESSIVE MOVEMENT IN KASHMIR BY DR. BRIJ PREMI

A translation by Upender Ambardar



In India the progressive movement in literature witnessed a formal start in the year 1931. Within a short span of a few years, the movement struck its roots in almost all parts of the country. Notwithstanding the fact that Kashmir was neither an Urdu language zone, nor was Urdu, the mother tongue of Kashmiris; yet the local writers adopted and patronized it to ventilate their feelings. In the light of this fact, it is futile to dig for any specific trend in Urdu literature in Kashmir during this period. However, when the progressive movement spread its tentacles throughout the country by surmounting all the barriers of colour, creed and language; the Kashmiri writers did not remain immune to its affects.

At the same time, events of far-reaching consequences were emerging on the political front in Kashmir. Muslim Conference, which was the largest local political party was converted into the National Conference and its leadership went into the hands of a broad-minded person like Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah.

Non-Muslims were also enrolling themselves in it. Instead of communal preference, the political agenda formulated by it was nationalist one and it drew it's inspiration from the Indian Freedom Movement. At the same

time, Kashmir also registered its protest against the oppressive and exploitive mechanisms of the then rulers. Under the leadership of National Conference, a sustained campaign against subjugation, poverty and social imbalances had begun, the echo of which was also observed in the then poetry. One could also perceive the traces of revolt in the poetry of Mehjoor, Azad and Dilsoz around this time.

Apart from other things, the progressive writers organisation in its very first Lucknow declaration asserted: "We desire new Indian literature to focus on hunger, poverty, social injustice and subjugation, which are the basic problems of life." It was not a mere coincidence but the need of the hour that a movement against the 'Jagirdhari' system had begun in Kashmir under the leadership of Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah. Besides other things, the issues of hunger, social imbalances, exploitation and subjugation were on the forefront. At this very time, the literary Urdu circles were witnessing the emergence of Prem Nath Sadhu Raunak as a budding writer. He later succeeded in establishing his credentials in the literary circles of the subcontinent under the name of Prem Nath Pardesi. Pardesi was the first short story writer of Kashmir. In his initial stages of writing, he due to Tagore's influence would resort to romanticism. But the portrayal of social reality in Prem Chand's work, the injustice perpetuated by the exploitive forces, the advent of progressive movement and the emergence of the local political events convinced Pardesi for the first time that a better part of his life had gone waste. This he himself acknowledges: "This transformation was such that it not only opened new Vistas for me but also gave a new ideology to the nation. I felt that if I did not align myself with this ideology even now, my short stories are useless and the future historian will never forgive me. Being in government service, I could not join the National Conference, but in disguise I could make the public aware about subjugation, poverty and exploitation through my short stories."

(Short Story Allahabad No. 8)

Pardesi not only started writing against this exploitation but in association with his few friends established a literary organisation under the name of "*Halqae Arbab Zauk*". This organisation came into existence in early 1940s'. This organisation had no connection with *'Halqae Arbab Zauk'* of Lahore but there was a hell of difference in ideologies between the two. The access of the young writers of Kashmir was limited to the house of Prem Nath Pardesi, where literary meets would take place. The active members of this organisation included P.N. Pushup, Prem Nath Dhar, Qaisar Qalandhar, Som Nath Zutshi besides Mirza Arif Beigh and others. It was here that short stories were read, poetry was recited and discourses were held. It was the direct outcome of the progressive movement by virtue of which they had come together. But this process did not last long and the organisation disintegrated. Inspite of this closure of 'Halqae Arbab Zauk', the literary roots did not dry-up. During this time, the famous film producer and director and a noted progressive short story writer Ramanand Sagar, a native of Kashmir came into close contact with Pardesi. During his brief stay outside the state, he had formally aligned himself with this movement. He persuaded Pardesi to open a branch of progressive writers' organisation. It is no overstatement to say that Prem Nath Pardesi and Ramanand Sagar played the same role in consolidating the progressive movement in Kashmir as was done by Sajad Zaheer and his friends in other parts of India. The same has been acknowledged by Pardesi himself:

Notwithstanding the fact that Kashmir was neither an Urdu language zone, nor was Urdu, the mother tongue of Kashmiris; yet the local writers adopted and patronized it to ventilate their feelings.

"Immediately on his arrival after two years, Ramanand Sagar met me. He asked me to establish a branch of the progressive writer's organisation. Eventually, we both joined hands together to mobilize the native progressive writers and established an organisation, which exists even today". These were the same progressive writers, who were associated with 'Halqae Arbab Zauk'. This is how progressive writers' organisation was launched formally. The organisation operated from Pardesi's house and gradually its influence extended. The progressive poets and writers from outside Kashmir, by their participation in the meetings of the organisation, cheered-up the young talent. This helped in the growth of the movement. The functioning of this small organisation took the shape of a full-fledged literary movement in the state of Jammu and Kashmir. Those of the basic problems which were mentioned in the progressive writers first declaration again became the subject of deliberations.

As mentioned earlier the meetings of the organisation would take place on the first day of every month at Pardesi's house. But with the spread of its sphere of influence and the increased interest shown by the literary people, the venue of the meetings shifted to the halls of Biscoe School and S.P. College. The proceedings of those meetings were published in *'Navyug'*, a newspaper edited by Nand Lal Wattal and subsequently in a weekly *'Nizam',* published from Bombay. At this time, Rajinder Singh Bedi, Khwaja Ahmed Abbas, Balraj Sahni, Devinder Satyarthi and many other progressive writers and poets arrived here and participated in the meetings of the organisation. Prem Nath Pardesi, Som Nath Zutshi, Ali Mohammad Lone, Sallahudin Ahmed, Kanwal Nain Parvez, Professor Mahmood Hashmi, S.N. Kanwal, Qaisar Qalandhar, Mohinder Raina, Hamid Fitrat and Dr. Nazurul Islam are the notable local writers and poets, who were associated with this organisation. This organisation remained active till 1948 and proved quite affective. At this time, Ramanand Sagar wrote many short stories, which were put to debate in these meetings.

Pardesi also wrote a few of his famous short stories, which had the then regime's exploitation as the main theme. *'Khutbay', 'Kagaz Ki Jandiyen', 'Juvari'* are the notable short stories, which were read-out in different meetings of the organisation. In October 1947, Pakistan at the behest of the British imperialists sent armed infiltrators into Kashmir. These were the days, when the Dogra rule was on its last legs. The weak forces of Maharaja Hari Singh capitulated against the onslaught of heavily armed invading forces, who were experts in guerilla warfare. The Maharaja ran away leaving behind his helpless subjects in lurch and the government came into the hands of the people, whose leader was Sher-e-Kashmir, Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah. The infiltrators were forced to flee with the help of Indian army and it was a turning point in our history. The infiltrators by coming close to the city limits of Srinagar had snatched peace and harmony of the people. A reign of loot, plunder, death and destruction was at its peak.

Under these circumstances, besides external defence, maintaining internal peace and confidence was necessary. As such a small force by the name of National Militia was formed, whose one wing named as Cultural Front comprised of intellectuals, writers, poets and enlightened youth. It is pertinent to mention here that most of those enrolled in the National Conference were progressive mined youth. For this, *'Naya Kashmir',* the manifesto of the National Conference is a proof in itself. However, Khwaja Ghulam Mohammad Sadiq and Moulana Mohammad

The infiltrators were forced to flee with the help of Indian army and it was a turning point in our history. The infiltrators by coming close to the city limits of Srinagar had snatched peace and harmony of the people.

Sayeed, who occupied a place of prominence in the National Conference, consolidated the cultural front movement. Initially, the front functioned from the Coronation Hotel (presently Kashmir Guest House). It was here in the rooms of this hotel that the early soul-stirrings songs were composed, Guns were distributed and training imparted to the intellectuals, writers and poets, who owned their allegiance to this front. With the guns on their shoulders, they would guard during nights and compose new songs during the day time.

The hot discussions would take place in the weekly meetings of the organisation. The participants would include not only writers and poets but also the intellectuals and educationists.

Pardesi was the first to offer his services to the front. 'Step by step, we will march ahead and fight on the front', a famous song of him then, was on everybody's' lips at that time.

'Swali' and *'Mujahid Sherwani',* the dramas written by Pardesi during this time were staged by National Cultural Front and became instantaneous hits. The cultural front became very popular in a short span of time. Its theatre wing (which was following *'Ipta'* line), staged Mehmood Hashmi's drama *Kashmir Yeh Hai'* and *'Choudan Golien'* of Khwaja Ahmed Abass, in addition to Pardesi's dramas. The theatre wing included Dina Nath Nadim, Mohan Lal Aima, Usha Kashyap, Khurshid Jallaudin, Sumitra and Santosh Lakhwara, Achala Sachdev, Sheela Bhatia, Sher Jang, Raj Bans Khanna, Durga Singh, Girdhari Dhar, Pran Kishore and others. These plays proved fruitful for our stage and the theatre movement. With the emergence of the extra ordinary political situation, this front was disbanded. On similar lines, the state Cultural Congress came into being.

It comprised of three sections, that of writers and poets (writer's section), theatre artists' section, and painters section. The writers section was known by the name of Progressive Writers Association (P.W.A.), which was headed by Khwaja Ghulam Mohammad Sadiq. This organisation in addition to being practically a part of the Progressive Movement, was also working actively as its unit. Being disciplined to its objectives, it was pursuing its programme vigorously.

A large number of intellectuals were associated with it, the notable among them being Peer Abdul Ahad, Ghulam Rasool Renzu, Peer Giasudin, Noor Mohd., Moti Lal Misri, Pran Nath Jalali, Badri Nath Nishat and Madhusudhan Kausar. The senior writers and poets included Shair-e-Kashmir Mehjoor, Aasi, Master Zinda Koul and amongst the younger generation, almost all the prominent writers, poets and artists were involved with this organisation; the notable among them being Dina Nath Nadim, Rehman Rahi, Amin Kamil, Mohinder Raina, Noor Mohammad Roshan, Aziz Haroon, Zaib Kamran.

Arjun Dev Majboor, Akhtar Mohiudin, Som Nath Zutshi, Ali Mohd. Lone, Qaisar Qalandhar, Bansi Nirdosh, Nand Lal Ambardar, Prem Nath Premi, Dina Nath Almast, Deepak Koul besides Tej Bahadur Bhan etc.

The hot discussions would take place in the weekly meetings of the organisation. The participants would include not only writers and poets but also the intellectuals and educationists. It is a fact that the critical and the creative trend was not extremist in nature but the situation was the same as was prevalent in the initial stages of the progressive movement everywhere. Through these meetings, the Kashmiri and Dogri literature drew new inspirations. A realisation dawned that the revolutionary ideas and changing intellectual perceptions can best be represented in the local language, and mother tongue only. As such, it found its outlet in Kashmiri, Dogri and Ladakhi creative writings, which in turn enriched these languages.

It is apt to state that the present distinguished Kashmiri writers and poets, who were associated with this organisation, used to write in Urdu language earlier. Urdu was the creative language of Nadim, Rahi, Kamil, Akhtar, Nirdosh, Deepak, Tej, Som Nath Zutshi and Ali Mohd. Lone. At this time, the legendary Hindi progressive writer, novelist and a critic Shodan Singh Chouhan was the moving spirit behind this organisation, who perhaps under the directions of the central organisation was camping here. Under his guidance, the activities of the organisation attained new heights. The renowned artist Sheela Bhatia was associated with the theatre wing. Ali Sardar Jaffari, Dr. Ram Vilas Sharma, Dr. Salamat Ullah, Zia Ahmed, Kamal Ahmed Sidiqqi (who latter-on worked in the Radio Station here), frequented the organisation's meetings as and when present here. In this way, under a fine formulated guide line, not only was the movement run but the literature too got a flip.

The year 1953 once again witnessed a new political turn in Kashmir. Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah was arrested. Under the leadership of Bakshi Ghulam Mohammad and Khwaja Ghulam Mohammad Sadiq, the new government undertook various new initiatives.

The name of All State Cultural Congress was changed into State Cultural Conference. Now the writers and poets from Ladakh and Jammu were more actively associated with it. This movement impressed upon to write in the local languages in order to garner the local support. It was realised that the expressions can be conveyed effectively though the mother tongue.

In order to gain public confidence, the second important consideration was to present the problems of the people in their own languages.

In consequence, it created a wealth of creative literature in Kashmiri, Dogri and Ladakhi languages.

It can be said with certainty that in the absence of this movement, perhaps our local languages would have not attained such a tremendous growth. The theatre wing of the organisation, which was apart of *'Ipta'* increased its activities greatly. A young poet, Abdul Gani Namtahali and his friends did a pioneering job in making the common man well acquainted with the revolutionary Kashmiri poetry. Namthali was a native of Namthal, Chadura. He was recognised as a public musician and was known as local *'Paul Robsan'.*

As and when he would sing in his sweet voice in tune with his music, the atmosphere would reverberate with the revolutionary affect. The author himself was a witness to such countless mesmerizing performances in the rural belt at that time.

The attempt to create a pubic movement through culture, poetry, literature and art is a historical fact. During this time, the organisation also published a few booklets, the notable among them being, *'Gaye Ja Kashmir', 'Vuja-Mal'* (lightening) and *'Soan Gaevun'* (our songs).

Dina Nath Nadim was a torch-bearer of this movement. Nadim's writings attained phenomenal dimensions when he shifted to writing in Kashmiri from Urdu. He was a pioneer among the Kashmiri poets of the time. Fact is that Nadim gave a new dimension to the Kashmiri poetry. His experimentation with the trends and contents in this language will always be remembered with appreciation. A major portion of his poetry exhibiting revolutionary and rebellious trends are in the form of free verse. He was the first to write the first sonnet and first opera in Kashmiri.

Nadim greatly utilized the form of the folk songs in his poetry, which at times was greatly influenced by the poetry of Chakbast, Ahsan Danish and Josh. But after his association with the progressive movement, he wrote on novel themes, which opened new Vistas in Kashmiri literature.

At this time, Som Nath Zutshi, who earlier worked as Secretary of Progressive Writers Organisation, shifted from Urdu to Kashmiri language. Basically, he was an Urdu short story writer. Around this time, he wrote *'Yeli Phol Gash'.* In this way, his short story along with

Nadim's first short story *'Jawabi Card',* enjoy a prime place in Kashmiri language. Akhtar Mohiudin too was associated with the organisation at this time. Akhtar was an acknowledged Urdu short story writer and his short story *'Pandrich'* was an award-winning entry in one of the Urdu short story contest. He also started writing short stories in Kashmiri. His compilation of short stories *'Sat Sangar'* was the first compilation in Kashmiri language, which won him the Sahitya Academy Award. Rahi, Kamil, Firaq, Roshan, Ranjoor were outstanding poets, who due to the diversities of themes and by their experimentation with the trends carved-out a niche for themselves in the Kashmiri literature. The organisation also started publishing a periodical *'Kong Posh'* (saffron). In the initial stages, it had two sections: Urdu and Kashmiri. But later-on during the time of cultural conference *'Kong Posh'* was published separately in both Urdu and Kashmiri languages. Based on progressive ideas and convictions, one more periodical *'Azad'* which was edited by Badri Nath Nishat and Madhusudhan Kosar, was published.

After some time, these publications ceased to be published but their contribution in the enrichment of progressive movement can never be overlooked. A number of organisations came into existence at that time. *'Halqae Adab Khanyar'* is worth mentioning. Even though, these organisations were not associated at the administrative level with the Progressive Writers' Organisation, but the kind of literature presented and the nature of discourses held, had the objective to develop and expand the progressive ideology.

During this time, the young artists of the cultural conference and other organisations who made their presence felt included Umesh Koul, Ghulam Nabi Khayal, Chaman Lal Chaman, Makhan Lal Baeqas, Muzaffar Azim, Farooq Budgami, Shahid Budgami, Moti Lal Saqi, Brij Premi, Pushkar Nath, Hakim Manzoor, Manzoor Hashmi, Autar Krishan Rehbar, Tahir Muztar, Shankar Raina, Taj Begum, Nirmala Kusum, Ghulam Nabi Baba, Rashid Nazki, Ayub Betab, Bahudin Zahid, Badurudin, Shamim Ahmed Shamim, Hari Krishan Koul, Farooq Nazki and many other artists. A few among them are presently well-known Urdu and Kashmiri writers and poets, enjoying national fame.

The first declaration of the Progressive Writers Organisation (of India) asserted "The objective of our organisation is to free the literature and the fine arts from the grip of fanatics and make it a representative of people's aspirations, hopes and struggle so as to pave way for the bright future, for which the humanity is striving for presently. We Indians claim to be the inheritors of the proud cultural legacy...We through the organisation will represent those aspirations, which will show a new and better way of life to our nation."

The declaration of All State Cultural Conference also reaffirmed the manifesto of the first conference of the Progressive Writers' Organisation with a few amendments: "We declare that our culture, our nation and the public life is dear to us. We also declare that the cultural heritage left behind by our ancestors will be preserved by us at any cost. By enriching further these traditions, we will formulate a better life. We also declare that for promotion of art and literature, the betterment of public life is necessary. Fine art and literature have always represented the aspirations and feelings of the people. Only that art has flourished, which has remained aligned with the concerns of public life..." (Bi-Monthly Kong Posh Urdu Number 1).

But the declarations are similar in nature and represent the same line. After 1957-58, this movement gradually slowed down and lost its original grandeur. This situation developed in the overall progressive movement of the country. The progressive movement in Kashmir has remained a prominent literary movement. It had taken an integrated and unified shape in Kashmir and it set new milestones not only for Kashmiri but also for Dogri and Ladakhi literature. For this very reason, nobody from the field of literature can overlook the historical and beneficial role of this movement.



Shailaja Wanchoo



If this history is not confronted honestly, it will repeat itself elsewhere. We are already witnessing echoes of it in Bangladesh, where Hindus face targeted violence and persecution. If Indian society and the Indian state do not come together, we will once again look back and ask why we failed to act in time.

A RENDEZVOUS WITH EXODUS

A Kashmiri pandit has been thrown out of his hometown where he knew the ways like the back of his hand. Outside his home turf he is learning to swim with the big sharks totally unprepared and may be sometimes gobbled by these large mammals or some may take pity on the smaller fish and piggy back them into a successful career. Kashmiri pandits had to knock on the doors of fellow Hindu gentry of northern plains to accommodate them in their fold. These people were totally unaware and apathetic about simmering conditions of a dark sinister kind in their neighbouring state. Such was the apathy it was shocking. This is the 36th year of exile for Kashmiri pandits. Their status remains unchanged despite different governments who came and went. Kashmiri pandits still remain as refugees in their own country.

The genocide of Kashmiri Hindus represents one of the glaring faces of evil in independent India, yet it has never been formally acknowledged. "If this history is not confronted honestly, it will repeat itself elsewhere. We are already witnessing echoes of it in Bangladesh, where Hindus face targeted violence and persecution. If Indian society and the Indian state do not come together, we will once again look back and ask why we failed to act in time. "

Many explanations of the Kashmir crisis

point to economic deprivation, lack of opportunity, or underdevelopment. Such narratives are either naïve or deliberately misleading. They obscure the reality of a community-wide, militant-backed insurgency against India.

Kashmir has long had one of the highest per capita incomes in the country. Housing, food, and essential services were heavily subsidized. The state's budget was sustained largely through central grants. In many ways, Kashmir was a pampered region.

"The crisis in Kashmir rests on four fundamental factors. The first is the unfulfilled ideological project of Islamist dominance spanning seven hundred years. The second is the unresolved conflict between two fundamentally opposing value systems.

India is a secular, democratic republic with a Hindu majority, and coexistence has always been a civilizational value for us. We have lived with diverse cultures, ethnicities, and religions for centuries. In contrast, radical Islamist clerical ideology rejects coexistence with other faiths. That ideological incompatibility played out brutally in Kashmir.

The third major factor is Pakistan's long-standing obsession with the region. From the moment of Partition, Pakistan viewed Kashmir as unfinished business. When General Zia-ul-Haq became President, this obsession took a more dangerous form. He openly promoted cross-border terrorism and systematically trained, funded, and armed militants to destabilize India. His doctrine was simple and ruthless: if Pakistan could not defeat India in a conventional war, it would bleed India through a thousand cuts. What unfolded in Kashmir from 1989 onward was the direct outcome of this strategy. It became a full-scale terror campaign against India.

Violence in Jammu and Kashmir became open and normalized. The methods were barbaric: rape, murder, and targeted assassinations. Prominent Kashmiri Hindu leaders were killed in broad daylight. Homes were burned, businesses looted, and temples destroyed.

"The crisis in Kashmir rests on four fundamental factors. The first is the unfulfilled ideological project of Islamist dominance spanning seven hundred years.

One would expect the police and state machinery to protect citizens under such conditions. Instead, they often worked with or looked away for the separatists. Injured Hindus were refused treatment by hospitals and doctors. The press was silenced. Conditions were deliberately created to make life unsafe and unlivable."

"Then came the night of January 19, 1990.

Mosque loudspeakers across Kashmir came alive simultaneously. The message was chillingly clear: *"Kashmir mein Islam."* Muslims were ordered onto the streets. Hindus were addressed as *kafirs*, non-believers. The ultimatum was unmistakable: convert, flee, or die."

Kashmiri Hindu men were told to leave to save their lives but ordered to leave their women behind. That announcement was nothing less than an eviction notice for Hindus from Kashmir.

Imagine thousands, even lakhs, of people flooding the streets, banging on your doors, breaking windows, trying to force their way into your home. You would feel helpless. Trapped. Like prey. This is typical of Islamic raiders who raided Indian subcontinent.

That is how the indigenous Hindu population of Kashmir was driven out. Kashmiri Hindus suffered genocide and ethnic cleansing. The exodus was forced upon us by Islamic terrorism.

Thirty-six years later KP's remain in exile. Many of them still live in refugee camps in Jammu, Delhi, and other parts of the country.

"Over the years, several false narratives have been promoted to distort the truth. One of the most persistent myths is that Governor Jagmohan forced Kashmiri Hindus to leave. Anyone who has listened to survivor testimonies or spoken to Kashmiri Hindus knows this is false. It was genocide that created the conditions of exodus.

Lists bearing Hindu names were pasted

outside mosques. People saw their names and wondered, *Am I next?* Warning notices appeared on doors. It was a threat of death."

Another persistent myth is that Kashmiri Hindus and Muslims lived in perfect harmony. If any such coexistence existed, it did so largely because of Hindu tolerance.

History tells a very different story. From the arrival of Islam in Kashmir in 1338 until the onset of Dogra rule, Kashmiri Hindus were driven out of the Valley seven separate times. Each time, we returned. Each time, we resettled. And each time, we compromised.

"In the twentieth century, the pattern repeated itself. During the 1931 agitation led by Sheikh Abdullah against the Maharaja, Kashmiri Hindus again bore the brunt of violence. Hindu shops were looted, homes were burned, and many families were forced to flee.

Even in recent memory, the violence did not stop. In 1986, during the tenure of Chief Minister Ghulam Mohammad Shah, Islamist mobs in South Kashmir destroyed several temples in a single day, while Hindu homes and businesses were looted and vandalized.

If this is *bhaichara* or *Kashmiriyat*, one must honestly ask whether it ever truly existed. The reality is that Hindus survived in Kashmir not because of mutual harmony, but because Hindus tolerated, adjusted, and compromised again and again."

Another false narrative claims that Kashmiri Hindus were a privileged community. The facts clearly disprove this. After the accession of Jammu and Kashmir to India, particularly under National Conference governments, Kashmiri Hindus were systematically reduced to second-class citizens.

Our representation in professional colleges and government jobs was steadily curtailed. Census figures were manipulated to understate our population. Despite being less than five percent of the population, we were denied minority protections on the grounds that Hindus are a majority in India. It began under Sultan Sikandar, when the chilling slogan *"Raliv, Galiv, ya Chaliv"* was coined:

"If this is bhaichara or Kashmiriyat, one must honestly ask whether it ever truly existed. The reality is that Hindus survived in Kashmir not because of mutual harmony, but because Hindus tolerated, adjusted, and compromised again and again."

convert, flee, or die. It continued under the Chak rulers, under the Mughals, and later under Afghan rule.

There is also the claim that the Government of India unleashed excessive force in Kashmir. The truth is that Kashmiri Muslim separatists viewed their movement as a struggle for freedom from India, whether through merger with Pakistan or the creation of an independent state. Kashmiri Hindus did not join that movement. We remained loyal to India. We stood as visible symbols of Indian nationalism in Kashmir.

For that loyalty, we paid a terrible price.

Even after the exodus, those Kashmiri Hindus who remained in the Valley or resettled in nearby villages were not spared. Massacres continued.

In 1997, in Sangrampura village in Baramulla district, seven members of a single Hindu family were brutally killed. That same year, in Gool village in Ramban district, people were asked their religion and shot dead. In Wandhama, in Ganderbal district, twenty-four Kashmiri Hindus were dragged out of their homes and murdered.

The violence did not end with displace-ment. It continued as a warning and as a message.

"In the year 2000, when President Bill Clinton visited India, terrorist groups sought international attention through coordinated massacres. In Chittisinghpuora, in Anantnag district, thirty-five Sikhs were brutally killed. On the very same day, in Nadimarg in Pulwama district, twenty-four Kashmiri Hindus were massacred. This incident is depicted in *The*

Kashmir Files, but it was not an isolated event. There were many others."

In total, more than 1,500 Kashmiri Hindus have been killed. Thousands more have endured torture, displacement, and lifelong trauma. Over 5,000 security personnel have also lost their lives. The National Human Rights Commission of India has rightly described the Kashmiri Hindu exodus as *akin to genocide*. Yet the world has remained largely silent.

My first observation goes back nearly thirty years ago. My father was posted in Palam Airforce Station in 1990's around the same time when militancy was at its peak in Kashmir. One morning we got the news that the bank in which my parents operated their locker in Srinagar was half burnt and the bank was located in the interiors of Srinagar downtown where even the Bravehearts did not dare to set foot. It was heavily surrounded by militants. My parents were resilient and determined to get their precious items out of the bank. My parents decided to go incognito in plebian attire carrying a torn vegetable bag. They went in the half unburnt section of the bank operated their locker took out their gold and very confidently mixed around with the gentry outside. In fact both of them opened the very bag in which locker items were kept and bought some vegetables from the nearby vegetable vendors and put the vegetables in it and with measured steps boarded the van which took them to my aunt's house safely.

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Vijay Kashkari

Delayed Justice is HALF-JUSTICE

Kashmiri Pandit (KP) organisations and families of terrorist victims have hailed the decision of the J&K Government to reopen the cases of the victims. The State Investi-gation Agency (SIA), which has investigative powers similar to a Special Investigation Team (SIT), will investigate the cases. The KP associations publicly praised the move. The community is optimistic about delivering long-delayed justice for those killed during the peak of militancy in the 1990s. While welcoming the SIA's reopening of old cases, such as the Wandhama massacre and the killings of prominent figures like Tika Lal Taploo and Nilkanth Ganjoo, community leaders have stressed that the government should follow up on these cases by establi-shing a dedicated Genocide Commission vested with independent judicial powers.

In 2024, the Sarla Bhat murder case was officially transferred to the State Investigation Agency (SIA) of Jammu and Kashmir. The SIA went public in August 2025 with the reopened case and publicised it, pointing towards JKLF.



SIA filed a massive 737-page chargesheet in a special court in Srinagar on June 29, 2026. The charge sheet names jailed Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF) chief Yasin Malik as the primary mastermind behind the 1990 murder of Kashmiri Pandit nurse Sarla Bhat. The other names in the charge sheet include five individuals: Sheik Abdul Hamid nee Abdul Hamid Sheik, Mohammad Yousuf Sofi a/s Idrees, and Ghulam Mohammad Taploo; all three named are dead. Yasin Malik and Khurshid Ahmad Chalkoo are alive. All five were members of Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF). Yasin Malik, undergoing life imprisonment in another case, submitted an affidavit in September 2026 denying any involvement in the crime.

In August 2026, as reported, high-profile cases were opened for investigation. These cases are the Wandhama Massacre Case on August 24, 2026. Sarwanand Koul Premi & his Son Case by the SIA from the Dooru Police Station in Anantnag on August 12, 2026. Tika Lal Taploo & Justice Neelkanth Ganjoo cases, alongside the Wandhama probe, in late August 2026.

The Additional Sessions Judge (TADA/ POTA) and Special Judge designated under the NIA Act in Srinagar is presiding over these matters. The Special Court has officially listed the next critical hearing for September 19, 2026.

The exact number of the terrorist preys is confusing. The government cites 219. Many published books list 326, with names and dates of the incidents. The KP community leaders claim the killings to be over a thousand.

How the government opened these high-profile cases is a question for the government to answer. Why haven't the cases of Advocate Prem Nath Bhat, a popular community activist, and Lassa Kaul, Director, Door Darshan Srinagar, been opened?

When will the government investigate the bloodbath in Nadimarg? In 2003, 24 Kashmiri Pandits, including 11 men, 11 women, and two children, were lined up and shot dead; the butchery of 1997 in Sangrampora of Budgam District, wherein 7 Kashmiri Pandits were selectively killed; In 2000, Chittisinghpora in Anantnag district, in which 35 Sikhs were shot dead.

What about the victims of zealots in Jammu Division? 2002 Kaluchak extermination: Three militants hijacked a bus and opened fire on an army family residential complex in Kaluchak, killing 36 people, predominantly the wives and children of Indian army personnel. 2006, in Doda and Udhampur, 57 Hindu civilians were slaughtered. In Kulhand, Doda, gunmen lined up and executed 22 unarmed Hindu villagers (including an eight-year-old girl) outside their homes; In Basantgarh, Udhampur, Terrorists kidnapped and murdered 35 Hindu shepherds in a high-altitude meadow. Between May and August 2001, a series of targeted attacks occurred across remote temporary summer camps (called dhoks). In the Kishtwar belt, a total of 43 Hindus were systematically killed across multiple locations, including Cherji (15 killed), Tagood (4 killed), and Shroti Dhar (15). On April 17, 1998, terrorists targeted the remote mountain hamlets of Prankote and Dakikote. They brutally hacked, shot, and beheaded 29 Hindu villagers, including 13 women and children, before setting their homes on fire. Over 48 hours in May 1996, terrorists executed 31 people across two locations; they killed 14 villagers, mostly members of local Village Defence Committees in Dessa village (Doda) and gunned down 17 members of the minority community in Sumbar village (Ramban). On August 14, 1993, militants intercepted a passenger bus traveling through the Sarthal area of Kishtwar. They forced the passengers off the bus, separated them by community, and shot dead 16 Hindu passengers.

It is understood that authorities have directed district commissioners and senior superintendents of police to prioritise old cases from the 1990's onward where FIRs were unfiled, buried, or ignored.

According to news reports, officials have confirmed that a high-level review committee is systematically auditing cold cases from the period of highest violence to identify files where new leads, modern

forensic capabilities, or fresh intelligence can help build an admissible case in court. It is also reported that the agencies are actively tracking down surviving culprits, conspirators, and local support networks tied to these historical atrocities.

The NIA, India's premier counter-terrorism agency, has taken over several high-profile targeted civilian killing cases. The agency has carried out widespread raids across Jammu & Kashmir and other states to break up funding networks and logistical support cells. The Hindu reported that 14 Kashmiri Pandits and Hindus were killed specifically between August 5, 2019, and March 24, 2022.

India's premier anti-terror agency, the National Investigation Agency (NIA), alongside the local Jammu & Kashmir Police and its specialised State Investigation Agency (SIA), is investigating the cases of the terrorist victims, Makhan Lal Bindroo, Supinder Kaur Deepak Chand, Rahul Bhat, Satish Kumar Singh, Akash Mehra, and over 25 non-local workers from states like Bihar, West Bengal, and Uttar Pradesh.

But I worry that delayed legal cases lead to careless decisions and unfair outcomes. Delayed legal cases result in severe psychological distress, prolonged financial instability, and a systemic denial of closure. Navigating a slow, complex legal system for decades becomes humiliating and emotionally draining. Victims often describe feeling that the justice system itself has become an extension of their initial suffering.

My anxiety about delayed justice is that, after 19 years, Kashmir University vice-chancellor, Dr Musir-ul-Haq, along with his private secretary, Abdul Gani Zargar, and general manager of the HMT watch factory, HL Khera, the terrorists' victims in the Valley couldn't get justice as the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) failed to prove its case. After a 19-year-long trial, the Special Court under the Terrorist and Disruptive Activities (Prevention) Act in Jammu acquitted all the accused in two separate cases pertaining to the abduction and subsequent killing. The Special Court ruled that the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) failed to present sufficient evidence to prove the charges beyond a reasonable doubt. Furthermore, there were critical procedural lapses in the recording of confessions under the Terrorist and Disruptive Activities (Prevention) Act (TADA).

As delayed remedy fails to repair the harm done, I asked a legal expert why not demand Fast-Track Courts. His opinion was that Fast-Track Court (FTC) trials are incredibly difficult in practice. In fact, even when special judicial frameworks (such as the National Investigation Agency or UAPA courts in India) are established, they frequently suffer from significant delays. Courts cannot simply "fast-track" terrorism cases due to a combination of systemic hurdles, constitutional mandates, and practical investigative challenges. Quoting from a press report, "Terrorism trials frequently require testimonies from foreign intelligence agencies, cross-border witnesses, and specialised bomb-disposal or cyber experts. Coordinating these attendances takes months or years, completely gridlocking a day-to-day schedule." Prosecuting and successfully convicting accused of terrorism require an incredibly high standard of proof. Inordinate delays in trials frequently rely heavily on independent witnesses who later contradict the prosecution's account under rigorous cross-examination by defense lawyers. Procedural errors by investigative officers. Long court processes marked by persistent delays, preventing continuous day-to-day trials.

It is pertinent to note that the Union Home Ministry reports that the conviction rate under the UAPA ranges from 2% to 6%, meaning up to 98% of cases ultimately end in acquittal. Critics and legal scholars note that because the statutory definitions of "terrorist act" or "unlawful activity" are highly elastic, it is easy for agencies to make initial arrests but exceedingly difficult to sustain those allegations.

I hope that time does not diminish facts. Even though late rulings lose their full value and impact on the victim, it's still better late than never.



Deepak Budki

Rape of an Abandoned House

An iron trunk, an old leather suitcase, and a stuffed bed holdall —this was all they took with them in the dead of night as they fled their home. Six people—he, his wife, two young children, and two elderly, invalid parents. For the first time in his life, he felt his parents were a burden.



"Mamma, where all we going in this darkness?" asked the seven-year-old daughter of her mother.

"Hell…! Can't you keep quiet?" The mother got peeved.

Her rebuke was enough to silence her daughter, but they were uncertain of their destination. With trembling hands, she hung the door chain on the hook above, slid the lock into place, and fastened it. Afterwards, she tugged the lock several times to make sure it was firmly secured. She felt reassured that, with the door properly locked, the house was now fully secure.

In no time, the entire family vanished into the darkness of the night, God knows where. Anyone could break the lock; no one was there to guard it now. The fact remains that the lock does not guarantee security, but the neighbours around unconsciously keep a vigil on the adjacent houses, which they consider their duty. But circumstances had taken such a turn that neighbours could not be relied upon. The neighbours were under threat themselves; how then could you expect them to look after your house? If they saw anyone breaking the lock, they would prefer to shut their windows, stay indoors and remain silent as if they hadn't seen anything. It would be imprudent to

object and make enemies of gun-wielding people who reigned supreme.

The lock remained untouched for several months. The likelihood of the occupants returning approached zero. Everyone who passed by would look at the lock with greedy eyes, wishing it would open by itself, and the door was ajar. They felt happy when an unknown fellow broke open the lock on a moonless night and did not consider themselves sinners. The social custom is like this. If you force a virgin into prostitution, you have committed an unpardonable sin. Still, if you enjoy a girl already in the profession, you are not a sinner because she is available.

After the incident, the main door of the house remained open round the clock, like a brothel. The lock, though opened, had been left hanging on the hook, as if a customer had forgotten to remove the customary nose-ring of the prostitute in a hurry, and it was still hanging in her nose.

The man who had broken open the lock was a dreaded terrorist on the run, trying to hide from the dragnet of security forces. The vacant house had sheltered him for the night. Immediately upon entering the house, he threw his AK-47 rifle onto the chair with disdain, as if he had been carrying this heavy burden for a long time and wanted to get rid of it. Then he plonked his heavy body onto the soft bed with the same scorn and fell asleep immediately.

He woke at midnight, thirsty and hungry. The AK-47, left on the chair in front of him, was neither capable of quenching his thirst nor his hunger. He lit his cigarette and, by the same dim light, tried to search the kitchen for water and food. He could not switch on the electricity for fear of being noticed. Somehow, he found an earthen pot full of water and took some out, drinking it quickly. Then he searched the almirahs for food by lighting matchsticks. The kitchen had nothing in it. He grew annoyed and swore, “Bastards! They have left nothing in the kitchen. They have taken everything.”

Suddenly, his eyes fell on a small wooden temple unit. The unit displayed many photographs of Gods and Goddesses. In front was a small incense holder with cold dhoop ashes. Beside it was a small dish containing five sweet roats that had not spoiled, as they were deep-fried in ghee. These roats were an offering made to the Goddess on the occasion of the 'Pun' festival.

These roats had a tale of their own. When the puja was being performed, Panditji told a mythical story that impressed everyone in the family, as follows:

"This festival has been celebrated for thousands of years. On this occasion, every house prepares roats and offers them to the Mother Goddess. Long ago, a King lived with a pious and devout wife. The household was happy and prosperous. However, the King was proud and an atheist. Every year on the occasion of 'Pun', the Queen used to have fresh wheat ground into flour, mix it with sugar, and then fry it in pure ghee herself during the night with utmost devotion and reverence. She would then offer them to the Mother Goddess. But her haughty husband, the King, would not approve. One day, in a fit of anger, he entered the puja room with his dirty shoes on and kicked the metal basin in which the roats had been kept for puja. His wife looked on helplessly, unable to do anything. She kept praying to the Mother Goddess to forgive her husband and to save her family from her wrath.

Unfortunately, she could not avert the consequences. Misfortunes visited the family one after another: first, the king was dethroned; second, he had to flee in disguise with his family; and third, he worked incognito in a neighbouring country as a labourer. His wife had to work as a domestic in rich men's houses. After some years, in one of the houses where she was working, she saw the owner and his wife performing the 'Pun' puja. She watched them silently, eyes swollen with tears. She resolved to perform the 'Pun' puja again, though on a very small scale. Wherever she worked, she collected wheat grains, even separating them from the wheat hay fed to the domestic cattle. After many days, she gathered enough grain, which she ground herself,

yielding about a pao of wheat flour. She made a few roats from the flour and offered them to the Mother Goddess while performing 'Pun' puja at her hut.

And that was it. Over time, things began to change for the family. The subjects of the former kingdom learned that their king was blameless and that some rogues had plotted against him; so they began to search for his whereabouts and ultimately learned that he was working in the neighbouring country as a labourer. They felt ashamed, but girded up their loins and approached him. Upon meeting him, they asked for his forgiveness and requested that he return to his own kingdom. Upon reaching his palace, the king was once again enthroned, and thus the family regained its happiness. Afterwards, the queen performed 'Pun' puja every year with regularity and utmost devotion, and the king would participate in the puja willingly and happily.

So let us pray to the Mother Goddess to remove all obstacles from our path and to shower us with happiness and prosperity, as she did for the King's family.

That is how Panditji concluded his story. All the family members offered flowers, rice, and other offerings to the Mother Goddess.

That was a different scenario, with a completely different background for the disaster. The king in that story was an atheist. In this case, however, no one in the household questioned God's existence or committed sacrilegious acts against the Goddess. So, what caused this catastrophe? Ironically, the offerings once given to the Mother Goddess ended up in the stomach of a starving, inhumane terrorist. He devoured the available roats in the temple and then slept, showing no concern for his surroundings.

He searched through the iron trunks, attaché cases, wooden boxes, and almirahs in the house. He focused solely on money or jewellery—items easy to carry—and nothing else mattered. He cursed the house's owners once more before pressing on with his mission. His expletives echoed through the house for a long time.

The next day, security forces learned that a dangerous terrorist was hiding in this abandoned house. Their suspicions grew when they saw the door lock hanging open. They encircled the house, firing guns and even cannons at the windows and the door, and called for the terrorist to surrender, but received no response. Finally, four soldiers cautiously entered to search thoroughly. The house was riddled with bullets and cannon fire, making it look like a sieve, yet it couldn't express any grief. In reality, no one was inside; they were stunned and angry at the deception.

"Sir, there is no one in this house," a jawan reported to the Subedar.

"Bastard, must have hidden himself somewhere. Better check thoroughly. Let him not escape," the Subedar ordered in a bitter voice.

They searched every nook and cranny of the house, opened the iron trunks, wooden boxes, and attaché cases, and threw their contents onto the floor; the ladies' sarees lay like the eviscerated intestines of a slaughtered goat. The whole room was scattered with woollen clothes, sweaters, children's uniforms, utensils, and other articles. When they could not find anything, they vented their rage by striking the trunks and furniture with their batons, then went back, disappointed.

From that day on, the house became accessible to all. People sneaked in, made sure no one saw them, and quietly stole precious items. In the first instalment, they took away Weston's black-and-white TV set, a Philips transistor, steel utensils, and clothes. Then they took chairs, tables, almirahs, and other furniture. The process continued until the house was emptied. The house was like a semi-conscious, blood-soaked girl who had been gang-raped, her half-naked body thrown by the roadside. History is replete with such excesses. The lecherous and lascivious predators spare neither coffins nor the dead.

Although the house had been emptied, a neighbour noticed that the windows and doors, made of expensive deodar wood, were

still in place. That same night, the neighbour and his son deftly loosened the fixtures and made off with them, hoping to hide their involvement. To further cover their tracks, they set the house on fire to prevent anyone from suspecting they had stolen the woodwork. It was almost as if seasoned criminals were destroying the victim's evidence and possessions to leave no clues behind.

In the morning, the house was still ablaze. When the villagers discovered the fire, they rushed out with buckets of water and poured them over the flames to extinguish it. Fearing the fire might spread and consume their homes, they acted quickly. The house, already robbed of its contents, stood helplessly, smouldering for hours. All that remained was smoke, ash, and charred coals.

In the end, only ashes were left alongside some stone and brick walls that had withstood the fire and remained intact. Yet, the heart refused to accept that the great treasure was entirely gone. It continued to beat with hope, whispering, "There must be something still there, somewhere, that is useful."

An old woman noticed some burnt Tata CGI sheets beneath the debris. She called her two young sons for help, had them pick up the sheets, and directed them to carry them home for repairs to her cowshed. Afterwards, she went to offer prayers to secure her place in the afterlife.

Yet another neighbour took bricks from the debris and surviving walls and carried them away to build a toilet in his compound. A few days later, an old widow walked past the house and saw half-burnt charcoal lying helter-skelter. She remembered the previous severe winter, which sent shivers down her spine. She collected all the charcoal and half-burnt wood in gunny bags and stacked them in her house.

Now, only debris remained where the house had stood. The neighbouring children made it their playground. Every day, after returning from school, they gathered here with locally made bat, stumps, and a ball and started playing cricket.

Yesterday, all four children turned up after school with stumps, a bat and a ball to play. One boy started driving a stump into the ground. It refused to go in. Something was obstructing it. He whirled it several times to widen the hole in the ground. Then he took out the loose soil and inserted his finger. There was metal there. He cleared the soil and tried to look into it. It looked like a bright, shining yellow metal. He exclaimed with joy.

Other friends gathered round him and, in turn, looked into the hole, which by then had widened. They also expressed their happiness.

"I am sure it is a gold ornament, nothing else," he exclaimed.

All of them thought it was a gold ornament, but preferred to keep it a secret.

One of them rushed to his nearby house to fetch a metal tool to make digging easier. The boy kept digging with the wooden stump. The other two boys wished it were only a gold ornament.

The hole was now wide open, and the yellow metallic object was faintly visible. Before the boy could put his hand in to force the item out of the ground, the other three boys chanted loudly:

"Adus"
"Adus"
"Adus"

It was a Kashmiri word meaning 'I am an equal shareholder in whatever you find.' All of them waited patiently.

The first boy reached in, scratched and freed the item with his nails, then pulled his hand out.

Out came a heavy yellow metal object, which he held in his hand. It was the same lock that had once hung on the door hook, guarding the house, but it had subsequently fallen and been buried in the ground.

Everyone's face grew gloomy. Yet the small kids still had some hope. They thought they should celebrate every win, no matter how small. All four went to the market to sell the brass lock to a scrap dealer, showed him the lock, and after intense haggling, settled on four rupees. They shared the amount among the four; each took one rupee and returned home happily.



Surinder Koul

Why Are Kashmiri Pandits Under Constant Threat?

The recent threat issued to the small Kashmiri Pandit minority, especially the Prime Minister's package employees in the Kashmir Valley, by the newly formed United Liberation Council shows once again that this community belongs to no one's care or concern. They are being tossed around like a Ping-Pong ball between the state and central machinery, both of which keep claiming that everything is normal in Kashmir. Meanwhile, millions of tourists are being brought to the Valley under the slogan that peace and prosperity have returned. The RSS has also played a major role in projecting Kashmir as peaceful by attempting to draw Kashmiri Muslims closer to an Indian nationalist narrative. At the same time, roads from different parts of Jammu are being built toward Kashmir, while the interests of Jammu province itself are neglected and reduced to a secondary status. True prosperity in the Valley is not just about roads and development projects; it also requires hospitals, medical colleges, and educational institutions so that people can be employed and feel secure.

Why are members of the Kashmiri Hindu community, which is already on the verge of disappearance in the Valley and once formed an important part of its demography, still being threatened? Whether the danger comes from Islamist groups in the Valley or



from a sponsoring power across the border, it has revived deep fear among the Prime Minister's package employees, who are the sole breadwinners for families displaced from their ancestral homes. A familiar accusation is repeatedly directed at them by both Valley society in general and Islamic outfits in particular: that they are RSS supporters or agents of an Indian agency. In reality, members of the Valley's majority community are far better placed to work for or with any agency, because they can move more freely and have greater access to extremist circles. This accuses Kashmiri Hindus seem less like a factual claim and more like a tactic to frighten and humiliate them.

The community is being treated like the lamb in the story of the wolf and the lamb, where one side is always vulnerable, and the other side always holds power. The goal appears to be to weaken their confidence and destroy any hope of returning to Kashmir. Dr Farooq Abdullah, the self-styled secular leader, once called for an inquiry into the threat letter. But when he came to power after the 1996 elections, did he ever show real sympathy for the displaced Kashmiri Pandits? On the contrary, he reduced the issue to two brief remarks: that they were already settled outside the Valley, and whether they would ever return at all.

The threat letter, which reportedly included the names and addresses of these employees, is not a minor matter. It is a matter of life and death. Understandably, the affected employees have appealed to the government for strong security arrangements. Omar Abdullah, the Chief Minister, has expressed concern and urged the agencies to take responsibility for protecting them. He has also asked for a proactive investigation into the matter. Yet the fear of targeted killing remains like a sword hanging over the heads of these employees. The killing of Rahul Bhatt inside his office in Budgam in May 2022 had already shown how exposed members of the community remain. Similarly, the killing of labourers Monish Kumar and Ram Sagar from Kannauj in Shopian in October 2022 showed that innocent workers could be singled out without any fault of their own. Omar Abdullah announced ex gratia relief of ten lakh rupees, but no compensation can erase the lasting psychological fear that continues to haunt the Valley.

The silent presence of terrorist sleeper cells has not ended violence against a particular community, and this suggests that the return of the Hindu minority is still not welcome. In such circumstances, responsibility does not lie only with the state. It also lies with social groups, traders' associations, employee federations, intellectuals, and academia from the Valley's majority community. They must speak out, protest such killings, and launch a public campaign against these crimes. Silence in the face of such violence is a dangerous and unjust position in the Kashmiri context.

Despite all this, the number of pilgrims visiting the Amarnath cave has continued without interruption. At the same time, the Central Government has begun investigating the killings of Kashmiri Pandit leaders and prominent figures from 1989–90 and the events that followed. These killings took place more than three decades ago, and after 1996 elected governments had already been functioning in the state. Yet none of the regional chief ministers—Dr Farooq Abdullah, Mufti Mohammad Sayeed, Ghulam Nabi Azad, Mehbooba Mufti, or Omar Abdullah —ever formed a committee to investigate the displacement of the Kashmiri Pandits from the Valley.

When two migrant labourers, Deepak Kumar Ratry and Bhupinder Basrat from Chhattisgarh, were killed in Kulgam, Dr Farooq Abdullah demanded an honest and impartial inquiry to identify the real perpetrators. He also questioned how attackers continued to infiltrate despite sealed borders. In subtle terms, he suggested that such violence tends to rise whenever there is renewed talk of restoring statehood to Jammu and Kashmir, indirectly hinting at the BJP-led Centre's policy of maintaining Union Territory status. In such a pessimistic atmosphere, one has to ask whether the regional ruling parties, along with

the police and administration, may have left the evidence of the killings of prominent Pandits and the larger massacres unexamined or untouched.

The State Investigation Agency has reopened the 1998 Wandhama massacre and the targeted killings of Tiklal Taploo, Neel Kant Ganjoo, Prem Nath Bhatt, and Sarvanand Premi to uncover the circumstances and conspiracy behind those crimes. The purpose is to build a case based on substantial evidence and credible witnesses against the perpetrators. But why is this investigation being pushed now, in 2026, when the crimes are more than thirty years old? The NDA has been in power at the Centre since 2014, so what explains this sudden concern after so long? Why did the government not show the same urgency earlier, and why is it now highlighting justice for the victimised community in Kashmir before the public?

The article also questions whether reopening these old Pandit killings is meant to influence the political climate before the 2027 elections. It argues that elections in Uttar Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh, Punjab, Gujarat, Manipur, and Goa will be decided on their own local issues, caste alignments, and development concerns. Therefore, the revival of the Kashmir Pandit issue is unlikely to deliver votes for the NDA in any direct way. The irony is that although the mass displace-ment of Kashmiri Hindus has been known for 35 years, a four-member committee on demographic changes in Jammu still met displaced Pandits in Jagti in August, even though they do not fall under the category of demographic change.

The author insists that these people were terrorised, targeted, and forced to leave their homes at gunpoint. As state subjects, they had the right to live anywhere in the erstwhile state before Article 370 and Article 35A were abrogated and Jammu and Kashmir became a Union Territory. For that reason, the Home Ministry's decision to place them under the same umbrella as “demographic change” is described as politically careless and inappropriate. Their stay in Jammu cannot be compared with the presence of Rohingya or Bangladeshi migrants, who are seen as entering Indian states through broader conspiracies aimed at disturbing the Hindu majority ratio.

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P K Mam

WHEN MORALITY FAILS
Society Pays The Price

"The world will not be destroyed by those who do evil, but by those who watch them without doing anything." – Attributed to Albert Einstein_

India is the land of mahapurushas, educationists and statesmen. We inherit a civilization rich in culture, tradition and multiple faiths — the very source of our strength, resilience and secularism.

With 140 crore people, we have made remarkable progress in technology, IT, space, agriculture, industry and services. Yet, progress in GDP has not kept pace with investment in character and values. Narratives built on lies, manipulation, distrust and fake news now shape public opinion with devastating consequences. With deepfakes, bots and advanced surveillance tools, the scope for mischief has multiplied. In a nation with a vast digital population but uneven digital literacy, vigilance is essential. We are now living in a Post-Truth era, when everyone has his own truth and perception to tell.

In this age of AI, viral news and instant outrage, the real challenge is not just to know, but to discern — to recognise what is real, question what appears unreal, and still retain the ability to smile. Only a composed and peaceful mind can examine situations rationally. Perception is relative to time, place and person. We must guard against illusions driven by ego — political, commercial or social. Wisdom lies not in accepting every



narrative, but in questioning it and having the humility to admit our own view may be incomplete.

The Erosion We See — Four Challenges of Present Scenario

This quiet crisis of character is visible in four chronic maladies:

1. Justice Delayed: 4.5 Crore Pending Cases. When over 4.5 crore cases remain pending, justice becomes costly and distant. An undertrial languishes for years, a litigant grows old waiting for property justice. When punishment is not

swift and certain, greed and corruption are emboldened, and the fear of law diminishes.

2. Betrayal in Education: The NEET Scam Ecosystem. Reports of paper leaks, grace marks and coaching mafias shattering dreams of lakhs reflect a system where merit is compromised. When hard work is defeated by money and manipulation, youth lose faith in honest effort and start believing shortcuts work.
3. Criminalisation of Politics. When over 40% of legislators face criminal cases as per ADR reports, law-making loses moral authority. Parties prefer winnability over integrity, and power is used to slow investigation. The message to youth is dangerous — crime pays if it brings power.
4. Divisive and Disruptive Politics. The most dangerous trend is the deliberate attempt to sow divisive seeds through caste-based politics, communal polarisation, misinformation and emotional narratives. Today a section of the Opposition seems determined to oust the Modi Government by hook or by crook, spreading venom, hatred and disinformation. Whether this is the law of diminishing returns after a decade, or a deeper conspiracy — internal, external, or both — deserves introspection. Why the Government is unable to counter this narrative effectively must be pondered over. Such politics may fetch short-term votes, but it inflicts long-term damage on national unity.

Definitions of morality are also shifting rapidly under the banner of modernity — in advertising, digital relationships and public discourse. We see rising online abuse, financial frauds and exploitation with little regard for dignity. The 24x7 media cycle amplifies every negative incident, creating anxiety, cynicism and copycat behaviour among youth.

Way Forward: From Outrage To Action

The antidote is not only new laws, but a change in mindset at home, in school and in public life. Five practical steps:

1. Values-Based Education: Beyond marks, teach ethics, financial literacy, digital hygiene and civic duty. One period a week for "Character and Constitution" can build conscience early. Reward teachers as role models.
2. Family First: Charity begins at home. Parents must model honesty — no cheating in exams, no bribe for "speedy work", no forwarding unverified news. Children learn more from what we do than what we say.
3. Swift, Certain and Visible Justice: Focus on speed, witness protection and forfeiture of illegal assets. Fast-track courts for corruption, paper leaks, cybercrime and crimes against women are a must. When people see crime does not pay, deterrence becomes real.
4. Media and Technology as Partners: Newsrooms and platforms must label AI-generated content, promote fact-checking and amplify integrity stories. Use AI to detect deepfakes and frauds. Every district can have a Digital Seva Kendra to teach citizens how to spot fake news.
5. Community Accountability: RWAs, panchayats, corporates and professional bodies must adopt codes of conduct with real consequences. Celebrate whistleblowers. Make integrity audits as common as financial audits.

A nation cannot rise on GDP alone. It rises when its people trust each other. We must coordinate scientific temper with value-based living. If we work vigorously for progress in one area, but undo it in another through moral compromise, our efforts will remain unproductive.

Let us ensure our society does not become a safe haven for anti-social elements. India's youth, armed with both technology and tradition, can lead this transformation — by making integrity a habit of heart and mind.

Because a country's future is not built only by what it invents, but by what it refuses to tolerate.



Chander M Bhat

Habba Kadal

THE HISTORIC HEART OF SRINAGAR



Habba Kadal occupies a unique and distinguished place in the history of Srinagar. More than merely a bridge across the River Vitasta (Jhelum), it evolved over centuries into one of the most vibrant cultural, intellectual, religious, and residential centres of Kashmir. For generations, Habba Kadal symbolized the soul of old Srinagar and was particularly renowned as a stronghold of the Kashmiri Pandit community.

The history of Habba Kadal cannot be separated from the larger history of Srinagar itself. Ancient Sanskrit texts such as the *Nilamata Purana* and Kalhana's *Rajatarangini* describe the sacred geography and urban evolution of Kashmir but do not specifically mention Habba Kadal by its present name. The locality emerged much later as part of the expanding riverine city that developed around the Jhelum and its bridges.

The word *Kadal* in Kashmiri means "bridge." The origin of the word *Habba* remains a matter of debate among historians. One tradition attributes the name to Sultan Habib Shah, the last ruler of the Shah Mir dynasty who reigned during the sixteenth century. Another popular tradition associates the bridge with the celebrated Kashmiri poetess and queen, Habba Khatoon. Over time both traditions became interwoven in popular memory, making it difficult to establish a definitive origin. Regardless of its etymology, the name Habba Kadal has become inseparable from the identity of old Srinagar.

Habba Kadal is not merely the name of a bridge; it represents a vast cluster of historic residential localities that developed around the bridge and collectively formed one of the most important urban and cultural centres of Srinagar. The area broadly extends from Badiyar Bala in the west to Fateh Kadal in the east and encompasses numerous neighbourhoods including Kral Khud, Brarie Kujan, Sathu, Barbarshah, Nai Sarak, Sheetal Nath,

Chotta Bazaar, Guru Bazar, Zaindar Mohalla, Karfoli Mohalla, Kharyar, Malapur, Madanyar, Banomohalla, Chinkral Mohalla, Ganpatyar, Shalla Kadal, Drabyar, Dalhasanyar, Raghu Nath Mandir, Kani Kadal, Ganpatyar, and several adjoining localities.

The development of Habba Kadal was closely linked with the construction of permanent bridges over the Vitasta. Before the fifteenth century, river crossings were largely dependent on boats and temporary structures. The construction of Zaina Kadal by Sultan Zain-ul-Abidin marked the beginning of a new phase in Srinagar's urban growth. Permanent bridges encouraged the expansion of markets, residential quarters, temples, mosques, shrines, and educational institutions along both banks of the river. Habba Kadal emerged as one of the most important of these bridge-centred localities.

Shri Deepak Budki, in his acclaimed Urdu short story *Mukhbir*, has painted a vivid and evocative portrait of Habba Kadal, capturing its atmosphere, character, and the essence of life in this historic locality with remarkable sensitivity. The following excerpt beautifully reflects his literary depiction of Habba Kadal:

"Habba Kadal was the only place in the city of Srinagar that would come to life every day with the cock's first crow. On the one hand, the temple bells would start ringing, while on the other the Muezzin would call the faithful to pray to God. Within no time, the hawkers would throng the Habba Kadal bridge and lure customers with the best sales. You could hear the vegetable sellers selling knol khol, lotus roots and Kashmiri *saag*, and fisherwomen taking swearing on petty pretexts to sell their fish. From one corner arose the appetizing smells from the baker's ovens, while from the other corner the sweet fragrance of milk arose from the pans (*Karahis*) of the Sweat meat shops. You could see a Hindu customer incanting Gaytri Mantra while buying fish, while you could see a Muslim Incanting Surah Bakr of the Holy Quran while checking the bundle of lotus roots. During the day the atmosphere became lively with the horses galloping on the road, bicycles ringing and making their way through the crowd and the puttering noise of the auto-rickshaws. The noise would continue until midnight. The road presented a captivating picture at the time boys and girls marched to their schools and colleges. Groups of young beautiful belles, clad in snow-white *kurta* and *shalwars*, would be seen followed by young sadistic boys looking for an opportunity to tease them. They would seize every little chance to pass a remark, while the coy young girl would simply blush, perspire, and yet feel amused."

By the Mughal period, Habba Kadal had become an integral part of Srinagar's commercial and residential landscape. The Vitasta functioned as the city's principal thoroughfare, and life revolved around the river. Wooden houses with projecting balconies lined its banks. Narrow lanes descended to *ghats* known locally as *Yarbals*, where residents fetched water, washed clothes, performed rituals, and interacted socially. Boats carrying goods, passengers, and produce passed continuously beneath the bridge, making Habba Kadal a bustling centre of activity.

Throughout the centuries, Habba Kadal acquired immense religious significance. The locality housed numerous temples, shrines, mosques, and religious institutions. It reflected the composite cultural character of old Srinagar where different communities lived in close proximity while preserving their distinct traditions. Many of the temples situated in and around Habba Kadal became important centres of worship for Kashmiri Pandits.

The architectural character of Habba Kadal was equally distinctive. Traditional houses were constructed using the indigenous *Taq* and *Dhajji Dewari* techniques, which combined timber and masonry to withstand earthquakes. Multi-storeyed wooden houses with carved windows, lattice screens, *khatamband* ceilings, and intricately carved balconies gave the locality its unique visual identity. The dense cluster of such structures

created one of the most picturesque urban landscapes in Kashmir.

The nineteenth century witnessed both prosperity and tragedy. In 1892 a devastating fire swept through Habba Kadal, destroying more than fifteen hundred houses. The disaster transformed the physical appearance of the locality and prompted urban reconstruction efforts. A wider road was subsequently laid through the affected area. Barely a year later, the catastrophic flood of 1893 caused extensive damage to Srinagar's bridge network, including Habba Kadal. Reconstruction of the bridge was undertaken during the reign of Maharaja Pratap Singh, further strengthening its role as a vital urban link.

During the Dogra period, Habba Kadal emerged as an important centre of education, literature, and public life. The locality became home to scholars, teachers, writers, government officials, and professionals. Educational reforms introduced during the early twentieth century increased literacy and contributed to the growth of an intellectually vibrant society. Many prominent Kashmiri Pandit families resided in Habba Kadal, giving it a reputation as one of the foremost centres of Pandit culture in Srinagar.

The locality also played a significant role in the literary renaissance of Kashmir. Several eminent scholars, Sanskrit scholars, poets, and writers lived in its narrow lanes. The celebrated Kashmiri poet Dina Nath Nadim had ancestral roots in Habba Kadal. The area became associated with progressive literary movements, educational initiatives, and cultural organizations that shaped modern Kashmiri identity.

The political upheavals of the twentieth century deeply affected Habba Kadal. During the turbulent years surrounding 1947, neighbourhood committees comprising Hindus, Muslims, and Sikhs worked together to maintain peace and security. These efforts reflected the long-standing traditions of coexistence that characterized old Srinagar.

The spiritual landscape of Habba Kadal has been as rich and vibrant as its cultural and intellectual heritage. For centuries, the locality and its adjoining neighbourhoods were dotted with numerous temples, shrines, ashramas, and sacred sites that served as centres of worship, learning, and community life for the Kashmiri Pandits. The ringing of temple bells, the chanting of hymns, and the celebration of religious festivals formed an integral part of the daily rhythm of life in this historic quarter.

Among the most prominent shrines of the area was the ancient Ganpatyar Temple, dedicated to Lord Ganesha and revered by devotees from across the Valley. The famous Durga Mandir at Kharyar stood as an important centre of Shakti worship, while the Kathleshwar Temple and Purshyar Temple preserved centuries-old traditions of Shaivite devotion. The Shiva Temple at Drabyar attracted worshippers throughout the year and formed an important landmark in the religious geography of old Srinagar.

The historic Raghunath Temple, one of the most prominent temples of Srinagar, drew devotees from every corner of the city. Nearby stood the Soomyar Temple and the revered Channa Sahab Temple, both deeply embedded in the religious life of the local community. The Ajal Temple, situated opposite Shyam Bhat Lane, the Qazi Temple opposite the old Shalla Radio premises, and the Kalposh Temple near Tiny Tots School further enriched the sacred landscape of Habba Kadal.

Equally significant was the presence of the Ashrama of Bhagwan Gopi Nath Ji, the renowned saint and mystic of Kashmir. The Ashrama became a centre of spiritual awakening and attracted seekers from diverse backgrounds who came to receive his blessings and guidance. The Shiva Temple at Barbarshah and the Ram Chandrun Temple added further sanctity to the area and remained important centres of worship and community gatherings.

Within the sacred precincts of Sheetal Nath, regarded as one of the most revered religious centres of Kashmiri Pandits, stood the shrine of Sheeleshwar Bhairava, revered as the guardian deity of the locality. Together with the historic Sheetal Nath Temple complex, this shrine played a central role in the religious,

social, and cultural life of the community for generations.

These temples and sacred institutions were far more than places of worship. They functioned as centres of education, charity, cultural activities, religious discourses, and social interaction. Festivals such as Herath, Janamashtami, Navreh, Ram Navami, and various temple fairs brought together thousands of devotees, strengthening community bonds and preserving centuries-old traditions. Collectively, these sacred sites transformed Habba Kadal into one of the foremost religious and cultural centres of Kashmiri Pandit life in Srinagar, earning it a unique place in the spiritual history of Kashmir.

The most profound transformation, however, occurred after the migration of Kashmiri Pandits in 1990. For generations Habba Kadal had been one of the largest concentrations of Kashmiri Pandit households in the Valley. The departure of most of its Pandit residents altered the demographic and cultural character of the locality. Many houses were abandoned, sold, or fell into disrepair. Streets that once echoed with festivals, religious processions, and social gatherings became quieter, carrying memories of a vanished way of life. Today Habba Kadal stands as a powerful symbol of both continuity and loss. It remains one of the most historically significant quarters of Srinagar, preserving fragments of its rich architectural and cultural heritage. Yet it also faces serious challenges, including urban congestion, deterioration of traditional buildings, fire hazards, environmental degradation, and flood vulnerability.

Recent conservation efforts have sought to restore the historical character of the bridge and surrounding areas. Heritage projects have attempted to revive public awareness of Habba Kadal's importance, though concerns regarding long-term preservation continue to remain.

The story of Habba Kadal is therefore the story of Srinagar itself, a story of rivers and bridges, temples and mosques, scholarship and trade, coexistence and migration, memory and survival. Few localities in Kashmir embody so completely the historical, cultural, and emotional landscape of the Valley. Even today, for countless Kashmiris across the world, Habba Kadal remains not merely a place but a cherished symbol of an enduring civilizational heritage.

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JK DIARY

Report By- Vijay Kashkari



J&K UT SIA Reopens Investigation

J&K State Investigation Agency (SIA) has reopened the investigation into the 1998 Wandhama massacre of 23 people as part of a wider push to probe killings of Kashmiri Pandits during the militancy's peak in the Valley.

A few selective cases are also reopened that include the killings of prominent advocate-politician TikaLal Taploo and Justice Neelkanth Ganjoo. On Jan 25, 1998.

SIA hopes for "substantial progress soon".

Tika Lal Taploo, then vice-president of J&K BJP, was shot dead near his residence in Srinagar in Sept 1989. He was the first among the targeted killings. Another terrorist victim, Justice Neel Kant Ganjoo, who was killed on 4 November 1989, was also reopened. Justice Ganjoo had sentenced JKLF founder Maqbool Bhat to death in Srinagar. Another high-profile killing that was reopened is that of poet and writer Sarvanand Kaul Premi and his son. Sarvanand Kaul Premi and his younger son Verinder were shot dead in Anantnag on May 1, 1990.

On June 29, SIA filed a 737-page chargesheet in connection with the killing of Sarla Bhat, a nurse at Srinagar's Sher-i-Kashmir Institute of Medical Sciences. She was abducted on April 18, 1990, tortured and shot dead.

As reported, agencies are actively tracking down surviving culprits, conspirators, and local support networks

KPs Condemn Threats to Package Employees

Many Kashmiri Pandit organisations have expressed their grave concern over threat letters by the terrorists to PM package employees serving in the Valley.

KPs demand a thorough probe into the matter and punishment for the terrorists responsible for issuing these threat letters.

The president of the Kashmiri Pandit Sabha, K. K. Khosa, has taken strong note of the recent threat, repeated thrice in a row, meted out to the members of the displaced community by a terrorist organisation.

The All-State Kashmiri Pandit Conference (ASKPC), Shri Sanatan Dharam Yuvak Sabha (SSDYS), headed by its president M. L. Malla, strongly and unequivocally condemned the latest threat letter reportedly issued by a local terror outfit against PM Package employees serving in Kashmir.

CM Kashmir Seeks Action on Threatening KPs

CM Omar Abdullah has expressed his concern over the poster issued by the little-known United Liberation Council (ULC) threatening Kashmiri Pandits working in the Kashmir Valley under the PM Package.

The poster contains the personal details of some Kashmiri Pandit employees, including addresses. Omar urged police and security agencies not to take the threats lightly. He said the agencies have a responsibility to provide security to Kashmiri Pandit employees and urged them to proactively investigate the source of the threats.

KP Sabha Jammu Reacts to the Statement of Dr Abdullah

In a statement issued, Kashmiri Pandit Sabha, under the leadership of its president K. K. Khosa, has reacted to the obnoxious statement made by the NC president regarding the threatening letters warning Kashmiri Pandits of dire consequences.

KPS described Dr Farooq's statement as extremely inappropriate, stemming from frustration and a delusional mindset. "It is shocking to see that senior leaders like Dr Farooq Abdullah, along with most of the other leaders of his party, continue to imagine that

the Union Territory which was formerly a State has some special status even after the abrogation of the obnoxious articles 370 and 35A

15-Year-Long Wait by PM Package Employees for Career Progression Likely to end

The senior correspondent, Daily Excelsior, Avtar Bhat, of September 3, 2026, as per official sources, has written that the long wait for about 6000 employees of the Prime Minister's package in J&K is likely to end with the UT Government, for the first time in the last 15 years after their appointment, taking concrete steps for their career progression. He reported that the Government's recently constituted Committee on this matter held its first meeting on September 9 to examine all aspects of promotions for package employees appointed in 2010 under the PM's special package for displaced Kashmiri Pandits.

Janmashtami Celebrated by KPs in Srinagar

Kashmiri Pandits in Srinagar celebrated Janmashtami on 4th September with all the fervour and gaiety. Shobha Yatra was held, during which devotees took part in prayers, devotional singing, and colourful processions across the city. The procession began from Tankipora near Kathleshwar Temple and passed through Habba Kadal, Barbarshah and Lal Chowk before returning to the starting point.

The celebrations witnessed participation from members of the Kashmiri Pandit community as well as people from other communities. Many young children were seen wearing traditional Kashmiri outfits and carrying small idols of Lord Krishna.

J&K Government's Response to PK on their Demands

As per the PTI despatch, the J&K government's response to Panun Kashmir's multiple demands, including formal recognition of the alleged genocide of Kashmiri Pandits, addresses the displacement of migrants but leaves its fundamental political and historical dimensions unresolved.

As reported, on August 31, the government outlined measures to support Kashmiri migrants, including a monthly increase in relief and additional housing accommodations.

However, on Panun Kashmir's principal political demands, the government said recognition of the genocide and establishment of a separate secured homeland need broader policy considerations and fall outside the domain of its concerned department.

Kashmiri Pandits Observe Balidan Diwas all over India

Kashmiri Pandits displaced from Kashmir observed Balidan Diwas 2026 all over India. As symbols of endurance, the main martyrs' functions were held in Jammu.

36th 'Balidan Diwas' was observed by paying homage to members of the community and security personnel who lost their lives to violence and terrorism in Jammu and Kashmir. The community reiterated its demand for legal recognition of the violence against Kashmiri Pandits and their displacement as "genocide" and called for the establishment of a separate homeland in the Valley under direct Union protection.

BJP organised a memorial meeting on 13 September to pay heartfelt tributes to Tika Lal Taploo, Prem Nath Bhat and all other martyrs, including the brave personnel of the security forces, who laid down their lives for the unity, integrity and security of the nation.

The All State Kashmiri Pandit Conference (ASKPC) observed Balidan Diwas under the Chairmanship of M. L. Malla, with profound reverence and solemnity, at the Sanjeevani Sharda Kendra in Jammu.

The gathering recalled with anguish the martyrdom of distinguished socio-political leader, renowned lawyer, writer and former ASKPC Vice-President Prem Nath Bhat.

The programme was chaired by ASKPC President Moti Lal Malla. Dozens of community stalwarts and representatives of various social and political organisations

participated in the solemn programme and expressed solidarity with the families of the martyrs and with the larger Kashmiri Pandit community.

The sacrifices of the martyrs of Nadimarg, Wandhama, Sangrampora and Chittisinghpora, among numerous other places, were remembered with deep emotion. The gathering also paid respectful homage to the personnel of the J&K Police, Security Forces and Paramilitary Forces who made the supreme sacrifice while protecting the people and defending the nation.

Kashmiri Khatri Hindu Maha Sabha observed 13th & 14th September 2026 as Balidan Divas. The programme was led by KKHMS Chairman Ramesh Chander Mahajan. The speakers urged the Union Government to implement the " Genocide and Atrocities Prevention Bill" to recognise the genocide of Kashmiri Hindus and their mass exodus as genocide. They also urged the Government to expedite the resolution of a concrete plan for their "rehabilitation and permanent settlement.

In Bangalore, the Kashmiri Hindu Cultural Welfare Trust (KHCWT), with Panun Kashmir, observed Balidan Diwas 2026 at Kashmir Bhavan, Jayanagar, Bengaluru. The programme was held under the theme "Justice for Martyrs, Homeland for the Living - The Unfinished Struggle of Kashmiri Hindus."

The speakers unanimously expressed concern over the continued threats to Hindu employees in Kashmir, selective killings, and lack of adequate security and justice.

Div Com hails KPs for Thriving in diverse fields

On August 31, Divisional Commissioner Jammu Ramesh Kumar attended the '1st Community Cash Award Function' organised by the Saraswathi Educational, Cultural Charitable Trust in association with Helpline Humanity, at Abhinav Theatre.

The Divisional Commissioner was the chief guest, and the former Director General of Police, Dr Ashok Bhan, attended as the special guest. The programme recognised and honoured individuals who have made significant contributions to society and brought distinction to the Kashmiri Pandit community in their respective fields.

Addressing the gathering, the Divisional Commissioner highlighted the rich historical and cultural legacy of Kashmir, describing it as a land of knowledge, intellectual excellence, art and culture.

The chief guest presented cash awards of different categories to the distinguished Kashmiri Pandit personalities.

Relief Com Reviews Implementation of Special Relief Ration Scheme

On August 27, Relief & Rehabilitation Commissioner (M) Dr Arvind Karwani convened a meeting to review the implementation of the ration distribution in terms of the Special Relief Ration Scheme for Kashmiri /Jammu Migrants notified vide Government Order No.15-JK(FCS&CA) of 2026 dated 05.03.2026 and extension of benefits of social sector/welfare schemes to eligible migrants, after integration of their ration cards on the national database.

The technical issues faced by some beneficiaries in the ration distribution were deliberated, and the National Informatics Centre was asked to redress them on priority. The officers of FCS&CA and the Relief Organisation will take proactive steps to reach out to all households and ensure the supply of rations to all migrant beneficiaries.

LG visits Ramakrishna Mahasammelan Ashram, lays foundation stone for heritage, cultural preservation initiatives

The Lieutenant Governor, Manoj Sinha, on 17 August visited the Shri Ramakrishna Mahasammelan Ashram in Anantnag on the auspicious occasion of Samadhi Pratishtha Divas, Nag Panchami Mahotsav, and the Purnahuti of the Yajna. He also laid the foundation stone for initiatives dedicated to heritage and cultural preservation.

In his address, the Lieutenant Governor expressed deep reverence for the Ashram,

which has preserved the wisdom of sages. Paying homage to Swami Ashokanand Ji Maharaj, the Lieutenant Governor recalled his visionary resolve in 1937, which transformed the Ashram into a vibrant spiritual centre. He noted that Swami Ashokanand Ji Maharaj envisioned not merely a place of worship but a living institution that carried forward the eternal message of Sanatana Dharma while serving the real needs of society.

Hundreds throng Kapal Mochan Shrine on Shravan Bah

A large number of devotees from Kashmir Valley and different parts of the country thronged Tirathraj Kapal Mochan in Shopian Batpora of South Kashmir on the occasion of Shravan Bah on August 23 a Hawan was performed at the shrine on the occasion.

The Chief Secretary. Atal Dullo graced the pious occasion as the chief guest. After the Purna Ahuti, Prasad was distributed among the devotees

Sharika Foundation Milepost (September)

A student of Jagti Migrant Tenements, Krithik Khair, was selected for NIT Srinagar

A student of Jagti Migrant Tenements, Krithik Khair, qualified JEE Main and was selected for Admission to NIT Srinagar. The student received financial assistance for his education from Kashmir Overseas Association (KOA) USA through the Sharika Foundation.

The Sharika Foundation members expressed happiness and thanked KOA for their support for the boy's achievement.

Vice-Chancellor of the University of Jammu, Prof. Umesh Rai, felicitated Jeevika Misri.

A volunteer of Sharika Foundation was felicitated on August 21, 2026, by the VC of Jammu University for her selection and participation in the prestigious UNESCO MGIEP Youth Fellowship, focused on peacebuilding, leadership, and sustainable development, at Humanities College, Kyung Hee University, South Korea.

Jeevika Misri is a Semester II Postgraduate English student at the Centre for Distance and Online Education (CDOE), University of Jammu, and a youth leader/ cultural practitioner from Jammu.

Sharika Misri has represented Jammu and Kashmir as a folk dancer at both the G20 Summit in Kashmir and the Republic Day Parade in New Delhi, and has actively competed in university-level theatre, dance, and debate.

She was named runner-up at the 2025 State Youth Parliament and contributes to social welfare by volunteering with the Sharika Foundation for community workshops.

Sharika Foundation on 14th September, paid tributes to the martyrs

The rich tributes were paid to the martyrs who lost their lives in Jammu & Kashmir at the hands of zealots.

The martyrs were remembered through the chanting of Bhagavad Gita shlokas, the lighting of diyas, meditation, and prayers.

The gathering was mostly of the younger generation, and they were apprised of the pain of the KP community's migration and the sacrifices of the martyrs.

Source: Agencies
Editing: Vijay Kashkari

PNBMT Reiterates Demand for Temples & Shrines Bill for Kashmir

Jammu: Prem Nath Bhat Memorial Trust (PNBMT) held an important meeting to receive first-hand feedback from members who recently toured different parts of the Kashmir Valley to assess the condition of temples and shrines.

The meeting was held under the chairmanship of senior community leader and President ASKPC, Sh. Moti Lal Malla. The members stressed the need for a comprehensive legal mechanism for the protection, preservation and proper management of temples, shrines and their properties in Kashmir.

Sh. Shadi Lal Koul Rais, General Secretary, PNBMT, who recently returned



after a tour of Anantnag and participated in the Anant Chaturthi function there, briefed the meeting about his visit, including the situation at the historic Nag Bal Temple. He emphasised that a permanent statutory mechanism was required to ensure the proper upkeep and protection of temples and their properties.

Dr. Ramesh Bhat, who visited the important Navdal Tirath, said that individual efforts alone could not ensure the long-term security of the religious heritage of the community. He stressed that a comprehensive Temples and Shrines Bill could provide an institutional framework for preservation, maintenance, proper documentation of properties and protection against encroachments and alienation.

Padma Shri Sh. Brij Lal Bhat, head of Nagdandi Asthapan, Anantnag, recalled how the Ashram had been built and developed through years of grit, determination and dedicated community effort. He said Nagdandi had emerged as an important spiritual and community centre and also served as a valuable base for devotees during the Shri Amarnath and Kheer Bhawani yatras.

Sh. Virender Raina, Chief Spokesperson, PNBMT and President, Panun Kashmir, appreciated the dedicated services being rendered by community leaders, particularly Sh. Ashok Sidha of Mattan Tirath and Sh. M.K. Raina of Jwala Ji, towards safeguarding and developing these sacred institutions.

Raina said that while such individual efforts deserved the highest appreciation, the protection of hundreds of temples and shrines could not remain dependent upon a few committed individuals. He stressed that a comprehensive law was necessary to provide an enduring institutional framework for their protection, preservation, restoration and management.

He said the temples and shrines of Kashmir were not merely places of worship but repositories of the faith, history, identity and civilisational memory of the Kashmiri Pandit community.

Sh. M.K. Bharat delivered a scholarly discourse on the preservation of Dharma and civilisational heritage, observing that temples have traditionally been centres of worship, learning, culture and community life.

Those who spoke on the occasion included Sh. H.L. Jad, Sh. Kashmiri Lal Bhat, Advocate, Sh. M.K. Jalali, Sh. Chaman Lal Bhat, Sh. Bushan Ji of Nadimarg and Sh. Pradeep Khodbali,Pyare Lal Bhat,Shadi Lal Bhat and Hira Lal Jad.They supported the continuing struggle for legislation to safeguard the temples and shrines of Kashmir.

The meeting paid heartfelt tributes to Smt. Chand Rani Bhat, mother of Sh. H.L. Bhat, who recently attained Nirvana. Members prayed for eternal peace to the departed soul.

On the occasion, Sh. M.M. Thaploo recited sacred Richas from the Rigveda, lending a spiritual dimension to the proceedings.

The meeting concluded with a resolve that PNBMT would intensify its peaceful and democratic campaign and continue engaging with all concerned for the passage of an effective Temples and Shrines Bill. The Trust maintained that preservation of these sacred institutions was essential for safeguarding the religious and civilisational heritage of Kashmir for future generations.

Issued by:
Prem Nath Bhat Memorial Trust (PNBMT)

B. Tech - Pharmaceutical Engineering

This program is designed to meet the evolving demands of the pharmaceutical, biotechnology, and healthcare industries. The curriculum combines in-depth knowledge of drug development, pharmaceutical technology, and process systems with essential pharmaceutical engineering, bridging engineering, science, and manufacturing to design, develop, and scale safe medical products. Its scope covers the entire drug lifecycle—from lab molecule to mass production—spanning R&D, facility design, automation, and regulatory compliance across global healthcare and biotechnology sectors.

Core Application Areas

Drug Manufacturing & Scale-Up : Translating small-batch laboratory formulas into high-volume commercial production for tablets, liquids, and sterile injectables.

Bioprocess Engineering: Applying engineering design to biological systems for producing vaccines, gene therapies, and monoclonal antibodies.

Facility & Equipment Design: Building sterile cleanrooms, automated bioreactors, fluid-processing lines, and precision packaging machinery.

Quality Assurance & Compliance: Enforcing strict Good Manufacturing Practices (GMP) and adhering to international regulatory frameworks to ensure patient safety.

Career & Industry Opportunities

Process & Validation Engineer : Optimising chemical and physical transformation steps while testing systems for operational consistency.

Automation & Data Analytics: Utilising AI, machine learning, and advanced sensors to monitor production in smart factories.

Research and Development (R&D): Innovating novel drug delivery methods, drug-device combination products, and sustainable manufacturing practices.

The future of pharmaceutical engineering is driven by digital transformation, advanced automation, and personalised medicine. The field is shifting from traditional batch processing to continuous manufacturing and [Pharma 4.0] concepts, integrating artificial intelligence (AI), machine learning, and green engineering to accelerate drug discovery and make production safer and more sustainable.

Key Technological Shifts

Pharma 4.0 and Continuous Manufacturing: Moving away from traditional offline batch testing toward fully automated, continuous production lines with real-time quality control and monitoring.

Pharmacy is a good career in 2030, but the job is changing. Traditional pill counting is moving toward clinical care, data analysis, and specialised medicine. Global pharmaceutical markets are expanding rapidly, creating fresh jobs outside local retail counters.

Clinical Care : Pharmacists work directly with doctors to manage patients' medication regimens.

Specialised Tech : Jobs now involve working with gene therapies, biologics, and personalised medicine.

Industry Roles : Growth in clinical research, drug safety, and regulatory compliance offers strong prospects.

Automation : Basic tasks are automated, leaving more room for high-level advice.

Broader Markets : The global pharma sector is projected to reach $130 billion by 2030, driving steady hiring needs.

Tech Skills : Workers who understand digital health tools and data do best.

GATE 2027 Exam Schedule Revised; Registration from August 27

The Indian Institute of Technology Madras (IIT Madras), which is the organising institute for GATE 2027, has revised the application schedule. The institute has announced that the GATE Online Application Processing System (GOAPS) will now open on August 27, 2026.

The exam is conducted jointly by IISc and the IITs on behalf of the National Coordination Board, Department of Higher Education, Ministry of Education.

According to the revised schedule, the last date for regular registration without a late fee has been extended from September 21 to September 27, 2026, while registration with a late fee will remain open until October 5 instead of September 30.

Notably, GATE 2027 will also be conducted over six days — February 6, 7, 13, 14, 20 and 21 — compared to four days as notified earlier. The city allotment notification is scheduled for January 4, 2027, while the result will be announced on March 19, 2027. Other major dates, including the application rectification window, remain unchanged.

GATE 2027 Revised Schedule

1. Opening of GOAPS: August 27, 2026
2. Regular registration closes Sept. 27, 2026
3. Extended registration with late fee closes October 5, 2026
4. Application rectification begins October 14, 2026
5. Application rectification closes Octo. 21, 2026
6. City allotment notification: January 4, 2027
7. Admit card To be announced
8. GATE 2027 examination February 6, 7, 13, 14, 20 and 21, 2027
9. Result declaration March 19, 2027

GATE 2027 will be conducted with 30 test papers, and candidates may appear for one or up to two papers from the permitted combinations. A new Robotics and Automation (RA) paper has also been introduced this year. IIT Madras has additionally announced revisions to the syllabi of several papers, along with changes to the Textile Engineering and Fibre Science paper and the sectional paper codes for Engineering Sciences, Humanities and Social Sciences, and Life Sciences.

Candidates can use a valid GATE score for Admission to master's and doctoral programmes, including programmes in engineering, technology, architecture, science, commerce, arts and humanities at eligible institutions. GATE scores are also used by several Public Sector Undertakings for recruitment. The official GATE 2027 website states that the score remains valid for three years from the date of result declaration.

Harness AI To Educate, Empower and Innovate

The Ministry of Education, in a special session titled "Ministry of Education - Pushing the Frontier of AI in India" at Bharat Mandapam as part of the India AI Impact Summit 2026, outlined the government's roadmap to integrate artificial intelligence across the education ecosystem.

Addressing the gathering, the Union Education Minister said the world is increasingly looking at India as the country embraces AI at a remarkable pace. Highlighting rapid technological progress, he said that AI would play a transformative role in shaping India into a global knowledge superpower and significantly contribute to the vision of Viksit Bharat 2047.

Stressing the importance of youth-led innovation, he said Indian students are thinking differently from previous generations. "AI in education and education in AI are deeply intertwined," he remarked, urging students and young professionals to harness AI to educate, embrace, empower and create pathbreaking initiatives. He added that such efforts would help position India as a leading force in the evolving global AI landscape.

The Major Changes Planned for TOEFL IBT

Educational Testing Service (ETS) has introduced several important updates to make the TOEFL test fairer, more accessible, and less stressful for students. One major change is that the test content is being designed to level the playing field. For instance, a Chinese test-taker once expressed nervousness over a question on Egyptian culture, which may not affect an Egyptian student the same way. We need content that doesn't put any student at an unfair disadvantage.

Another key update is the introduction of a simplified 1-6 score scale that aligns with the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR). This scale will be introduced alongside the existing 0-120 score, making it easier for students and institutions to interpret proficiency levels without having to convert or guess what a score means. The test will also become adaptive. It will adjust to the test-taker's ability level.

Feedback : vijaykashkari@gmail.com



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

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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.

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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

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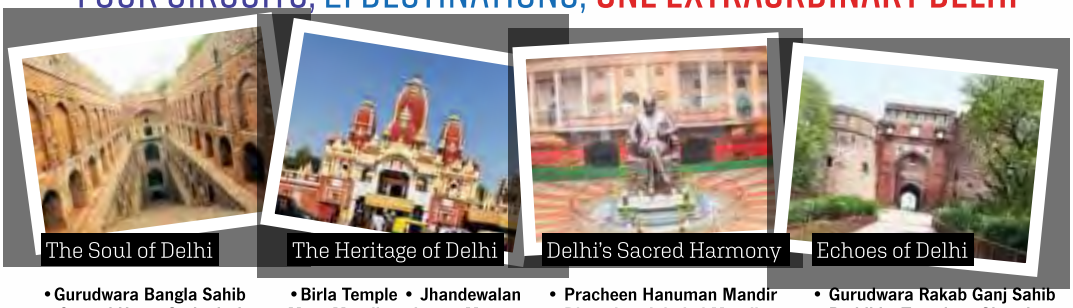
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