



Nature's Fury Ravages J&K

”

ANUJA KHUSHU

Over 100 dead, thousands displaced, crores in losses as century's heaviest rains batter J&K.

Floods, landslides, cloudbursts leave trail of death & despair

Highways cut off, rail lines suspended, bridges collapsed— a UT brought to a standstill

Electric grids down, water systems destroyed, & losses running into hundreds of crores.

Army, IAF, and locals in relentless rescue

Jammu

The Himalayas roared this August, reminding Jammu and Kashmir of its fragile geography and fractured infrastructure. In less than a week, the Union Territory was battered by cloudbursts, flash floods, landslides, and record-shattering rainfall, leaving more than a hundred dead, thousands displaced, and entire towns plunged into darkness and despair.

This was not just another monsoon spell; it was a disaster unfolding on multiple fronts—from the pilgrimage routes of Vaishno Devi and Machail Mata to the floodplains of the Jhelum, from Kathua's bridges to Ladakh's high mountain passes.

A Cloudburst Turns Pilgrimage into Tragedy

On a quiet morning in Kishtwar's Chositi village, thousands of pilgrims were trekking toward the sacred Machail Mata shrine when the skies suddenly tore open. Within minutes, serene streams turned into raging torrents. Boulders, mud, and water swept through, leaving a trail of destruction.

At least 64 pilgrims and locals were killed, over 100 were injured, and many remain missing—feared to have been swallowed by debris or carried downstream. Among the dead are families who had travelled across India seeking blessings, only to find

themselves part of a nightmare.

The Indian Army's 16 Corps, supported by disaster response teams, launched operations amid relentless rain and crumbling terrain. Helicopters airlifted the injured while soldiers waded through waist-deep waters to rescue survivors. But the pilgrimage has been suspended indefinitely, its spiritual sanctity overshadowed by grief.

Jammu Drowns: Rainfall Breaks Century Record

If Kishtwar was the epicenter of sudden devastation, Jammu bore the brunt of sustained fury. Between August 25 and 26, 380 mm of rain lashed the city in just 24 hours, the highest in 115 years. Udhampur reported an even more staggering 629 mm, turning neighbourhoods into rivers.

The fallout was immediate & crippling:

- 58 trains cancelled, 46 short-terminated, cutting pilgrim and passenger routes.
- Jammu-Pathankot Highway blocked by landslides.
- Flights grounded at Jammu Airport, stranding hundreds.
- Bridges collapsed, including the approach to the 4th Tawi Bridge, severing arterial roads.
- Low-lying colonies near the railway station were inundated; schools, colleges, and even hospitals lay crippled.

“We woke up to water rushing through our rooms. Within an hour, our home,

our cattle, our grain stores—all were gone,” said Ramesh Kumar, a farmer from Udhampur.

Kathua, Ramban, Reasi: Districts of Despair

As Jammu reeled, Kathua district faced a cloudburst that washed away houses and rendered the Kathua Bridge unusable. In Ramban, flash floods and landslides cut off villages, damaged schools, and triggered power blackouts.

In Reasi, tragedy struck a single household: seven members of one family—parents and five children—were buried alive when a landslide engulfed their home in Mahore. “We pulled at the mud with our hands. By the time help came, it was too late,” recalled a neighbour.

Contd on Page 02

CORRIGENDUM

In the August 1-15, 2025 issue (Vol. 1, Issue 4) of The Chancellor, the picture of the late Girija Tickoo was inadvertently published in place of the late Sarla Bhat, who was martyred in Kashmir. The Chancellor wishes to put on record that there has long been confusion regarding the pictures of these martyrs in both print and electronic media—national as well as local. Despite the circulation of incorrect images in reputable newspapers, websites, and social media platforms, this discrepancy has not yet been corrected. The Chancellor requests the media fraternity to help rectify this confusion to prevent such errors in the future. This correction would be a rightful tribute to these martyrs, who lost their lives to the gruesome and inhuman atrocities inflicted upon them. The error is deeply regretted.

EDITOR

Contd from Page 02

Vaishno Devi Yatra Halted by Landslide

Perhaps the most heart-wrenching blow came on August 26, when a massive landslide near Ardhkuwari on the Vaishno Devi route buried scores of pilgrims under tons of rock and mud. At least 34 lives were lost, including women and children. Rescue teams, aided by the Army and NDRF, continued to dig through debris for survivors, even as the sacred yatra was suspended indefinitely.

“In Katra, where the Vaishno Devi yatra was suspended, pilgrims described scenes of chaos. ‘One moment we were chanting bhajans, the next moment we were running for our lives,’ recalled Neha Sharma, a devotee from Haryana.”

For a region where pilgrimage sustains the local economy, the halt has left devotees and livelihoods in limbo. Vendors, pony-wallahs, hoteliers, and transporters in Katra are staring at an abrupt collapse of income.

In the aftermath, the Government of the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir constituted a high-level committee to assess the widespread destruction caused by unprecedented rains and landslides across Jammu region. Officials estimate losses already run into hundreds of crores, and the committee is tasked with expediting compensation for affected families, businesses, and infrastructure. It will also recommend stronger safeguards on pilgrimage routes to prevent such tragedies in the future.

Kashmir on Edge: Jhelum Rises Again

While Jammu battled rising waters, Kashmir braced for déjà vu. The Jhelum River, which wrought destruction in 2014, once again swelled beyond the red-mark at Sangam, Ram Munshi Bagh, and Asham. In Anantnag, knee-deep waters entered homes, while in Srinagar’s Rajbagh and Bemina, residents piled sandbags in a grim rehearsal of the past.

“More than the flood, it is the fear that haunts us. The 2014 scars never healed,” said Shabina Ali of Bemina.

Though the river has since stabilised, the psychological panic remains — a reminder that Kashmir lives under the constant threat of being drowned by its own river.

Ladakh’s August Snowfall: A Warning from the Peaks

Adding to the surreal weather, Zaskar and Khardung La witnessed heavy snowfall in August, signalling an early onset of winter. The Srinagar–Leh highway was briefly blocked before the Border Roads Organisation (BRO) restored traffic. For Ladakh’s remote settlements, early snow raises concerns of prolonged isolation.

POWER & WATER NETWORKS COLLAPSE:

The floods also exposed the fragility of J&K’s infrastructure. 1,049 of 1,349 power feeders were damaged, plunging 70% of Jammu into darkness.

Thousands of electric poles and transformers were destroyed. Over 100 tube wells and water stations along rivers were washed away, cutting safe drinking water.

Entire neighbourhoods in Jammu, Kathua, Samba, and Doda faced double jeopardy: no electricity and no potable water.

Relief & Resilience: A People’s Struggle

Despite the magnitude of destruction, relief operations began swiftly. The Indian Air Force deployed Mi-17s, Chinooks, C-130s, and IL-76s, flying in 22 tonnes of relief material. The Army set up makeshift bridges, while volunteers and community kitchens kept survivors fed in Satwari, Muthi, and relief camps.

Yet the need far outstripped capacity. Camps grew overcrowded, communications collapsed, and trauma deepened. “I don’t care about 4G. I just want to know if my brother is alive,” said a distraught student in Ramban.

Climate Alarm, Policy Gaps

Experts warn that these disasters are no longer rare anomalies but part of a pattern of extreme weather linked to climate change. Cloudbursts, once occasional, have grown more frequent in Himalayan belts. Urbanisation on floodplains, deforestation, and poor drainage amplify the risks.

J&K’s 2014 floods had prompted promises of robust flood-management systems, embankments, and early-warning networks. A decade later, the tragedy unfolding shows how little has changed.

The Road Ahead:

For now, J&K struggles to return to normalcy. Roads remain buried under landslides, homes are gutted, and livelihoods washed away. Schools and hospitals are crippled, power grids hang by a thread, and thousands live in makeshift shelters.

Yet, amid devastation, resilience flickers. Soldiers digging trenches, volunteers distributing food, neighbours carrying each other’s children across floodwaters — these images stand as testimony to a people who refuse to surrender.

But resilience alone is not enough. As climate extremes intensify, J&K faces a pressing question: Will disaster preparedness finally move beyond relief, toward prevention and protection?

Echoes of the Past:

1903

The great Jhelum flood devastated Srinagar, forcing the Dogra rulers to build protective bunds that still line the river today.

1988

South Kashmir reeled under floods that wiped out thousands of acres of farmland, leaving long-term scars on agrarian families.

2010 (Leh)

A cloudburst unleashed two years’ worth of rain in one night. Over 200 lives lost, villages buried in mud, and the cold desert reshaped overnight.

2014 (Valley-wide):

The Jhelum breached its banks after record rainfall. 500+ dead, half a million displaced, and huge losses crippled J&K’s economy. Entire Srinagar neighbourhoods lay submerged for over a week.

The Pattern

Each calamity reinforced the same lesson, that the fragile Himalayas, battered by extreme weather, demand stronger disaster preparedness. Yet incomplete flood-control projects, weak embankments, and unchecked construction keep the region exposed to nature’s fury.

Amit Shah to visit Jammu on Sept 1

Likey to access damages in flood-hit areas



THE CHANCELLOR DESK
Jammu

Union Home Minister Amit Shah will personally review the crisis during a two-day visit beginning September 1. Shah is scheduled to chair a high-level flood relief review meeting at Raj Bhawan at 11:30 AM the next morning. A

ll top officials of the Union Territory administration and the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) have been directed to attend.

The Home Minister, accompanied by a senior MHA team, will also tour flood-affected districts including Katra, the base camp of Vaishno Devi, and Kishtwar, to assess first-hand account of damages caused by flash floods and cloudbursts. Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha and senior officials will brief him on rescue efforts, relief distribution, and the restoration of damaged infrastructure across Jammu region.

LG chairs high-level meeting to review rescue & relief efforts

THE CHANCELLOR DESK
Jammu

Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha convened a high-level meeting today with senior officials and central agencies to assess the ongoing flood situation and oversee rescue, relief, and restoration operations in Jammu and Kashmir.

Addressing the unprecedented challenges posed by incessant rains and flash floods, the LG directed all concerned departments to take every possible measure to ensure the safety of residents in low-lying flood-affected areas, with more than 5,000 people already evacuated to safer locations.

Emphasising the urgent need for restoring essential services, he instructed officials to prioritize the reinstatement of power, communication, and water supply systems in areas where floodwaters are receding. He also called for immediate restoration of roads, bridges, and alternate routes on National Highways to ensure uninterrupted traffic movement.

The LG specifically directed the Power Development Department (PDD) to collaborate closely with NHPC Limited and Power Grid Corporation of India Limited (PGCIL) for swift restoration of power infrastructure. He urged the National Highway Authority of India (NHAI) to assist the Public Works Department (PWD) in repairing roads and highways.



Highlighting the critical need for healthcare readiness, Sinha called on health authorities to prepare for a possible influx of patients suffering from waterborne diseases. He also stressed that all flood-affected areas must have adequate stocks of essential supplies and medicines.

The Lieutenant Governor instructed the Additional Chief Secretary of Jal Shakti to arrange alternative sources of clean drinking water, especially for remote and waterlogged regions, until regular supplies are restored.

He further mandated that non-essential

government offices, schools, and colleges remain closed until further notice. District administrations have been asked to ensure 24x7 operation of control rooms to assist affected individuals and households.

Appreciating the efforts of all responders, LG Sinha lauded the coordinated work of the Army, Air Force, National Disaster Response Force (NDRF), Central Armed Police Forces (CAPFs), State Disaster Response Force (SDRF), district administration, and police for minimizing loss of life through swift evacuations.

In a separate statement, the Lieutenant

Governor spoke with Divisional Commissioner Jammu Ramesh Kumar and other senior officials, reaffirming his commitment to the restoration of essential services and relief distribution. "Army, NDRF, and SDRF are coordinating closely with the Divisional Commissioner's office to ensure adequate relief supplies and assistance reach those in need," he said.

Officials directed to remain stationed in Jammu Division for on-ground coordination include Secretary Health, Public Works Department (R&B), Food and Civil Supplies, and Power Development Department, with a strict no-leave order for government employees in the affected zones.

The Lieutenant Governor's office is maintaining continuous 24x7 monitoring of the evolving situation, remaining in contact with Union Territory and central agencies to ensure timely response and preparedness.

Attendees of the meeting included Chief Secretary Atal Dulloo, Lt Gen Pratik Sharma (GOC-in-C Northern Command), Chairman NHAI Santosh Yadav, DGP Nalin Prabhat, Lt Gen Prashant Srivastava (GOC 15 Corps), Additional Chief Secretary Jal Shakti Shaleen Kabra, Principal Secretary to LG Dr Mandeep K. Bhandari, Divisional Railway Manager Jammu Vivek Kumar, Commissioner JMC Devansh Yadav, Maj Gen Mukesh Banwala (GOC 26 Infantry Division), Divisional Commissioners Ramesh Kumar and Anshul Garg, and senior officials from various departments and central forces.

CM tours flood-hit Jammu, reviews relief measures

Briefs PM Modi, calls for swift restoration of all services

THE CHANCELLOR DESK
Jammu

In the wake of heavy monsoon rains and widespread flooding in Jammu, Chief Minister Omar Abdullah conducted an extensive tour of the affected areas to assess the damage and oversee relief and recovery operations.

Accompanied by Minister for Food, Civil Supplies and Consumer Affairs & Transport Satish Sharma, Additional Chief Secretary to CM Dheeraj Gupta, Divisional Commissioner Ramesh Kumar, IGP Jammu Zone Bhim Sen Tuti, DC Jammu Dr. Rakesh Minhas, and other senior officials, the Chief Minister reviewed the situation on the ground and directed authorities to take urgent and coordinated measures to safeguard lives and property in vulnerable zones.

The CM inspected key flood-affected locations including Fourth Tawi Bridge (Bhagwati Nagar), Science College (Old Campus), Hari Singh Park, and parts of Gujjar Nagar, issuing specific instructions for damage assessment and urgent repairs. He noted that the damaged end of the Fourth Tawi Bridge, which had also suffered during the



2014 floods, requires immediate technical evaluation and long-term preventive action.

The Chief Minister said he had briefed Prime Minister Narendra Modi on the evolving flood situation in Jammu. "I shared details of the most severely affected areas along the Tawi River. The Prime Minister has assured full support from the Government of India," Omar Abdullah said, thanking him

for the commitment to extend continued assistance to J&K.

Expressing deep sorrow over the recent landslide at Katra, which claimed several lives during the Vaishno Devi Yatra, the Chief Minister emphasized the need for proactive safety protocols. "Advance weather warnings were available. Preventive measures to halt pilgrim movement should have been enforced," he said, extending condolences

to the bereaved families.

The CM directed BSNL, Jio, and Airtel to restore internet and telecom services on war footing, stressing the critical importance of communication during disasters. "Service disruptions have impacted rescue coordination and daily life across J&K. These must be restored immediately," he said.

He also instructed concerned departments to expedite the restoration of electricity, water supply, and road connectivity in all affected districts, and asked officials to ensure that traffic on the Srinagar-Jammu and Jammu-Pathankot Highways is resumed as a priority.

Omar Abdullah assured residents that a comprehensive relief package for flood-affected people of Jammu and Kashmir would be formulated shortly. He urged line departments to work round-the-clock to restore normalcy and meet the urgent needs of displaced and affected citizens.

During his visit, the Chief Minister interacted with residents, assessed local damages, and visited temporary shelters to check relief arrangements. He emphasized prompt disbursement of aid, effective shelter management, and transparent coordination between departments for sustained recovery efforts.

Flood & Cloudburst Tragedy

CM Omar calls for urgent relief & long-term safeguards

▪ Reviews relief and rehab measures in flood-hit Kishtwar, Kathua

THE CHANCELLOR DESK Jammu

Chief Minister Omar Abdullah chaired a high-level meeting to review the ongoing relief and rehabilitation efforts in the flood and cloudburst-affected areas of Kishtwar and Kathua districts.

Emphasising the urgency of the situation, he called for the swift delivery of relief assistance, immediate restoration of essential services, and the formulation of long-term strategies to protect vulnerable areas from recurring natural disasters.

Abdullah noted that the tragedy struck at the busiest time of the year in Chashoti village, observing that whether it was a cloudburst or a glacial lake outburst, the timing significantly worsened the impact. He stressed the importance of learning from such incidents by establishing clear Standard Operating Procedures and issuing targeted advisories for high-risk zones, especially given that the Meteorological Department had issued prior warnings.

The Chief Minister highlighted that while the immediate focus must be on relief and rehabilitation, medium- and long-term plans should include scientific assessments of vulnerable areas, protection of agricultural lands, discouragement of settlements near flood-prone areas, and the establishment of robust preventive infrastructure.

Regarding rescue operations, Abdullah



expressed a somber outlook, saying that with 33 people still missing, it was likely they may not be found alive. He underscored that the priority now was to recover the bodies and hand them over to families, while also providing support to survivors who had lost their homes and livelihoods. He assured full government backing for the reconstruction of damaged houses, restoration of farmlands, and provision of basic services. Departments were also instructed to

deploy generators and make temporary arrangements to ensure uninterrupted power supply until road connectivity is fully restored.

Divisional Commissioner Jammu Ramesh Kumar briefed the Chief Minister on the current relief and rehabilitation measures. The Deputy Commissioners of both districts provided detailed reports on the ground situation. The Deputy Commissioner of Kishtwar reported that 65 people had died, with 62 bodies

identified and handed over to families, 33 persons were still missing, and 66 individuals had been rescued. He said temporary shelters, food, medical care, and other necessities were being provided with coordinated efforts from the Army, Police, NDRF, SDRF, and civil administration, while heavy machinery was deployed to aid rescue operations.

Meanwhile, the Deputy Commissioner of Kathua informed the meeting that seven people had died and thirteen sustained injuries, with around five areas severely affected. Relief materials had been distributed, NGOs mobilized, and temporary shelters set up. He added that although public and private infrastructure had suffered significant damage, restoration of road connectivity was expected to take about a week, with work underway to resume electricity, water supply, mobile networks, and other essential services.

The meeting was attended by Advisor to the Chief Minister Nasir Aslam Wani, Chief Secretary Atal Dulloo, Additional Chief Secretaries Shaleen Kabra and Dheeraj Gupta, Principal Secretary PDD, Commissioner Secretary Food & Civil Supplies, Divisional Commissioner Jammu, Deputy Commissioners of Kishtwar and Kathua, and other senior officials joining both in person and virtually.

The Chief Minister directed all departments to intensify relief efforts on a war footing and simultaneously prepare a comprehensive disaster mitigation plan focused on Jammu and Kashmir's most vulnerable regions.



Centre introduces J&K Reorganisation (Amendment) Bill in LS

- Proposed constitutional amendment to disqualify leaders under prolonged custody
 - New Bills seek to end practice of leaders governing from jail
- Disqualification clause to apply uniformly across states & UTs
 - All three bills referred to Joint Parliamentary Committee
- "Opp alleges misuse of law; Govt calls it a moral correction"

ANUJA KHUSHU
Jammu

Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Wednesday introduced three landmark bills in the Lok Sabha, including the Jammu and Kashmir Reorganisation (Amendment) Bill, 2025, aimed at enforcing stricter provisions for the removal of elected ministers held in custody on serious criminal charges.

Alongside the J&K Amendment Bill, Shah also tabled The Constitution (One Hundred and Thirtieth Amendment) Bill, 2025, and The Government of Union Territories (Amendment) Bill, 2025 during the ongoing Monsoon Session of Parliament. These legislations seek to establish a uniform legal framework to address cases involving ministers, including the Prime Minister, Chief Ministers, and Union Territory ministers, who are under judicial custody for grave offences.

Under the proposed J&K Reorganisation Amendment Bill, any minister remaining in custody continuously for 30 days on charges punishable with imprisonment of five years or more would face removal from office.

The Constitution Amendment Bill is particularly significant, as it aims to prevent individuals holding key constitutional offices, such as the Prime Minister, Chief Ministers, and other ministers at the Centre and states, from retaining their positions if arrested and jailed.



Addressing the House, Shah said the move underscores the Modi government's "unwavering commitment to fight political corruption" and responds to public outrage over ministers continuing in office while incarcerated.

"The purpose of this bill is to elevate the declining standards of morality in public life and bring integrity to politics," Shah asserted.

According to the proposed legislation, any serving Prime Minister, Chief Minister, or Minister who remains in jail and fails to secure bail within 30 days of arrest would be removed by the Prime Minister or Chief Minister, or be automatically disqualified

from carrying out constitutional duties.

Following the introduction, Shah moved a motion to refer all three bills to a Joint Parliamentary Committee (JPC), which was accepted without division. The JPC, comprising members from both the Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha, will conduct a detailed, clause-by-clause examination, seek expert opinions, and submit its report ahead of the next parliamentary session.

While introducing the bill, Shah launched a scathing critique of the opposition, accusing them of opposing the legislation to shield corrupt leaders and maintain power despite legal proceedings.

"Despite clear intent to place the bills before the JPC, the opposition resorted to crude and indecent behaviour to protect corrupt individuals, thereby exposing themselves before the people," he said.

Highlighting recent instances where jailed Chief Ministers or Ministers allegedly ran governments without resigning, Shah questioned the propriety of governing "from behind bars." He emphasised that the framers of the Constitution never envisaged such a scenario, stressing the urgent need to restore the dignity of public office.

Contrasting the BJP-led government's reformist initiative with past precedents, Shah recalled the Emergency-era 39th Constitutional Amendment enacted by the Congress, which shielded then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi from legal scrutiny. "That amendment reflected the opposition's intent to keep the Prime Minister above the law. In contrast, this amendment seeks to ensure that even the highest office in the country is not immune," he remarked.

Responding to personal allegations from an opposition leader concerning his own arrest, Shah clarified, "I resigned before my arrest. Even after being granted bail, I did not accept any constitutional position until fully acquitted by the court," reiterating that the case against him was dismissed as politically motivated.

The bills are expected to spark intense debate in Parliament, with the opposition branding them politically motivated, while the government maintains they represent crucial reforms to uphold constitutional morality and public trust.

India set to drive affordable, innovative healthcare solutions: Pharma Secy

THE CHANCELLOR DESK
Jammu

India is rapidly emerging as a global hub for medical technology, with government policies, industry innovation, and growing domestic demand propelling the MedTech sector to sustained double-digit growth, Union Pharmaceuticals Secretary Amit Agrawal said at the 17th CII Global MedTech Summit 2025.

Themed "Innovating for a Healthier Future – Advancing MedTech for Global Impact: Make in India, Make for the World", the summit brought together industry leaders, policymakers, and innovators in New Delhi.

Addressing the opening plenary, Agrawal stressed that India's MedTech mission must remain focused on patient well-being, with the goal of producing high-quality, affordable medical devices for both domestic and global markets.



With the world's largest population and a rapidly expanding economy, he said, demand for innovative healthcare solutions in India will continue to grow at double-digit rates for decades.

Agrawal noted that India has made significant strides in self-

reliance since the COVID-19 pandemic, with domestic manufacturing now covering advanced equipment such as MRI and CT scan machines, mammography units, ventilators, stents, heart valves, dialysis machines, and implant devices.

"Products that seemed impossible for local production a decade ago are now manufactured in India, demonstrating the country's growing capabilities and innovation ecosystem," he said.

The government is reinforcing the sector with multiple policy interventions. Three upcoming dedicated medical device parks are expected to become functional within the next year, supported by continued infrastructure upgrades. The Production Linked Incentive (PLI) Scheme for Medical Devices and the Marginal Investment Scheme for backward integration are already providing a strong boost.

Agrawal also highlighted the soon-to-be-launched 5,000 crore Promotion of Research and Innovation in Pharma MedTech Sector (PRIP) Scheme, aimed at enhancing cost competitiveness, production efficiency, and innovation capacity. These steps, he said, will strengthen domestic value chains and position India

as a supplier of affordable healthcare solutions to both the Global South and North.

Underscoring India's growing stature, Agrawal said:

"Countries worldwide now look to India not only as a market, but as a leader in healthcare innovation. We must believe in our own capabilities and intensify industry-government partnerships to realize the full potential of the MedTech sector."

He added that ongoing economic reforms and international trade agreements would create millions of new jobs while making accessible, high-quality healthcare a reality for all.

Concluding his address, the Secretary urged all stakeholders—industry leaders, entrepreneurs, researchers, and investors—to join hands in shaping India's MedTech vision.

"Collaborative and concerted efforts across the value chain are essential to realize the vision of Viksit Bharat 2047," he said.

MoHUA pushes for visible cleanliness, transformation of urban 'Dark Spots'

THE CHANCELLOR DESK
Jammu

The Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA) convened a high-level virtual meeting with States and Union Territories to review progress under Swachh Bharat Mission–Urban (SBM-U) 2.0. The meeting, chaired by Union Housing and Urban Affairs Minister Manohar Lal, with MoS Tokhan Sahu and Secretary S. Katikithala, stressed the need for visible cleanliness in cities through the identification and transformation of Cleanliness Target Units (CTUs).

During Swachhata Hi Seva 2024, over 8 lakh CTUs were transformed nationwide. Building on this, MoHUA has urged States to identify neglected, difficult and dark spots and ensure their beautification within fixed timelines.

“Cleanliness and urban development are two sides of the same coin,” Manohar Lal said, underscoring that CTUs must become engines of change for urban renewal.

The ministry has circulated a framework for time-bound



clearance of urban waste sites, involving regular reviews by States, citizen participation via the Swachhata App, and beautification measures to reclaim public spaces.

All CTUs will be mapped on the swachhatahiseva.gov.in portal. Cities have been directed to prioritize legacy dumpsites as

high-intensity CTUs requiring greater resources for transformation. MoHUA has advised urban local bodies (ULBs) to collaborate with PSUs, private firms, CSR initiatives, NGOs, and startups for adoption and management of CTUs.

The Swachhata App, which already has over 2 crore registered

users, will remain central to the drive. It captures location and image-based complaints, assigns them to ward officials, and allows citizens to track progress with a 7-day window to confirm or reopen grievances.

Reiterating Prime Minister Narendra Modi's call for cleanliness, the Union Minister said:

“CTU cleaning is about converting eyesores into areas of pride, restoring dignity of public spaces, and ensuring that cleanliness is not just on paper, but visible and experienced by every citizen.”

MoS Tokhan Sahu urged States to speed up solid waste management interventions, noting that with just 12 months left for SBM-U 2.0, timelines must be strictly met.

To strengthen capacity-building, MoHUA also launched the Swachh Shehar Jodi (SSJ) guidelines, under which the 72 top-performing cities in Swachh Survekshan 2024-25 will mentor 72 lower-performing cities within their States. Modeled on “Each One Teach One”, the initiative aims to institutionalize peer learning, structured mentorship, and replication of successful sanitation practices.

MoHUA noted that it has held two rounds of State-level review meetings in the past two months to track progress on legacy waste remediation, solid waste management, and setting up compressed biogas (CBG) plants. States have been urged to adopt daily reviews and aggressive monitoring to accelerate the goal of Garbage-Free Cities under SBM-U 2.0.

Op Sindoor victory showcased India's indigenous defence strength: Rajnath

THE CHANCELLOR DESK
Jammu

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Friday asserted that self-reliance in defence has become a “condition for survival and progress” in an era marked by terrorism, pandemics, and regional conflicts.

Addressing the Defence Conclave on “Warfare in the 21st Century”, he said India cannot afford to depend on others for its security and must safeguard its strategic autonomy.

“This is not protectionism. It is about sovereignty and national autonomy. When a nation of youth, energy, technology and possibilities moves towards self-reliance, the world pauses and takes note,” Singh said.

Referring to the recent Operation Sindoor, the Defence Minister hailed the Armed Forces for their precision strikes using indigenous equipment. “Operation Sindoor may appear to be a story of a war of a few days, India's victory and Pakistan's defeat. But years of strategic preparation and defence preparedness played a crucial role behind it,” he noted.

Singh described the Sudarshan Chakra Mission, announced by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, as a game-changer to provide full aerial protection within the next



decade. He revealed that DRDO's recent successful trial of an indigenous integrated air defence weapon system, which hit three targets simultaneously, was the “first step towards realising this vision.”

Highlighting the Navy's push for indigenisation, he said, “All our warships are now being built in India. The commissioning of stealth frigates INS Himgiri and INS Udaygiri reflects our resolve not to buy from abroad.”

On the ambitious indigenous

aero-engine project, Singh said preparations were complete. “Earlier the question was whether India could build such systems. Today the question is how quickly we can deploy them,” he stressed.

Singh underlined India's transformation in defence exports—from under 700 crore in 2014 to nearly 24,000 crore in 2025. Domestic defence production has now crossed 1.5 lakh crore, with 25% coming from the private sector. “Defence is not mere expenditure, it is Defence

Economics – a driver of jobs, innovation and growth,” he said.

The Minister credited the Positive Indigenisation Lists, under which over 3,000 items previously imported are now produced indigenously. He also pointed to the success of defence corridors in Uttar Pradesh and Tamil Nadu, which are “set to become engines of growth.”

Singh lauded the induction of women into combat roles, calling it “a revolutionary change”. “Today, women officers are flying

fighter jets, navigating ships, and defending borders in the most difficult terrains,” he said.

On structural reforms, he cited the corporatisation of the Ordnance Factory Board, which turned losses of 3,000 crore in 2019–20 into profits of over 1,600 crore post-restructuring. “This was freedom from a colonial legacy and a mindset of slavery,” he said.

Singh reiterated that India seeks no enemies but will not compromise on its interests. “The welfare of our people, farmers, small businesses and citizens is our top priority. The more pressure the world applies, the stronger India emerges,” he said.

Calling the 21st century “the most unstable and challenging” with disruptions ranging from terrorism to pandemics and global conflicts, he asserted: “India's only sustainable path is Aatmanirbharta.”

Cautioning the media on wartime reporting, he said: “A small report can raise morale, but a mistake can cost lives. Freedom and responsibility must go hand in hand.”

Concluding, Singh declared: “Aatmanirbhar Bharat in defence is not a slogan but a roadmap. In the coming years, India will not only meet its own needs, but also become a reliable defence partner for the world.”

Defence Secretary Rajesh Kumar Singh was also present at the conclave.

PM Modi lands in China after 7 yrs

THE CHANCELLOR DESK
Jammu

Tianjin: Prime Minister Narendra Modi arrived in China on Saturday evening after a gap of over seven years, embarking on a visit that has drawn keen attention amid a sudden downturn in India-US ties triggered by Washington's recent trade and tariff policies.

Modi is in Tianjin primarily to attend the annual Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) summit on August 31–September 1. However, his scheduled meeting with Chinese President Xi Jinping on Sunday on the sidelines of the summit is being closely watched in view of the shifting global economic and geopolitical landscape.

In their talks, Modi and Xi are expected to review India-China economic relations and discuss steps to further normalise ties that were severely strained during the eastern Ladakh border standoff.

“Landed in Tianjin, China. Looking forward to deliberations at the SCO



Summit and meeting various world leaders,” the Prime Minister posted on social media shortly after arriving from Japan, the first leg of his two-nation tour.

He was welcomed at his hotel with performances of Indian classical music and dance by local artistes.

Besides Xi, Modi is also expected to hold bilateral meetings with Russian President Vladimir Putin and other leaders on the margins of the SCO summit.

Ahead of his visit, Modi underlined the importance of India and China working together to stabilise the world economic order. In an interview with Japan's The Yomiuri Shimbun, he said, “Stable, predictable and amicable bilateral relations between India and China can have a positive impact on regional and global peace and prosperity. Given the current volatility in the world economy, it is important for India and China, as

two major economies, to work together.”

Modi's visit comes less than two weeks after Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi was in New Delhi for wide-ranging discussions with External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar and National Security Advisor Ajit Doval. The two sides agreed on a series of measures to build a “stable, cooperative and forward-looking” relationship — including joint maintenance of peace along the Line of Actual Control (LAC), reopening of border trade, and early resumption of direct flight services.

Both countries have taken steps in recent months to reset relations strained by the deadly Galwan Valley clashes in June 2020. The disengagement process at the last two friction points — Demchok and Depsang — was completed under an agreement finalised in October 2024, effectively ending the four-year-long border face-off.

Modi last visited China in June 2018 for the SCO summit. Xi Jinping's last trip to India was in October 2019 for the second informal summit at Mamallapuram.

PM Modi's bilateral meeting with Chinese President Xi Jinping

THE CHANCELLOR DESK
Jammu

Prime Minister Narendra Modi met with Xi Jinping, President of the People's Republic of China, on the sidelines of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) Summit in Tianjin on 31 August 2025.

The two leaders welcomed the positive momentum and steady progress in bilateral relations since their last meeting in Kazan in October 2024. They reaffirmed that India and China are development partners, not rivals, and emphasized that differences should not be allowed to escalate into disputes. A stable and cooperative relationship between India and China — home to 2.8 billion people — based on mutual respect, mutual interest, and mutual sensitivity, is essential for the development of both countries and for advancing a multipolar world and a multipolar Asia, in line with 21st-century trends.

Prime Minister Modi underscored the importance of peace and tranquility in the border areas for the continued development of bilateral ties. The leaders noted with satisfaction the successful disengagement achieved last year and the maintenance of peace along the border since then. They reiterated their commitment to a fair, reasonable, and mutually acceptable resolution of the boundary issue, guided by the broader political context of their bilateral relationship and the long-term interests of both peoples. They acknowledged the important outcomes of the recent talks between the two Special Representatives and agreed to continue supporting their efforts.

The leaders also recognized the need to strengthen people-to-people exchanges by enhancing direct flight connectivity and easing visa processes, building on the resumption of the Kailash Manasarovar Yatra and tourist visa services. On economic and trade matters, they acknowledged the critical role of their two economies in stabilizing global trade. They agreed on the need to adopt a political and strategic approach to expand bilateral trade and investment and address the trade imbalance.

Prime Minister Modi highlighted that both India and China pursue strategic autonomy, and their bilateral relationship should not be viewed through the lens of any third country. The leaders emphasized the importance of finding common ground on regional and global challenges such as terrorism and equitable trade through multilateral platforms.

Prime Minister Modi expressed his support for China's Presidency of the SCO and for the successful organization of the Summit in Tianjin. He also invited President Xi to attend the BRICS Summit that India will host in 2026. President Xi thanked the Prime Minister for the invitation and expressed China's support for India's BRICS Presidency.

Separately, Prime Minister Modi met with Mr. Cai Qi, Member of the Standing Committee of the Politburo of the Communist Party of China. During their meeting, the Prime Minister shared his vision for the future of India-China relations and sought Mr. Cai's support in advancing the consensus reached between the two leaders. Mr. Cai reiterated China's commitment to expanding bilateral exchanges and further improving relations in accordance with the shared vision of the leadership.

125TH MANN KI BAAT

Dal Lake becomes national stage for water sports: PM

- ◆ Applauds hosting of Khelo India Water Sports in Srinagar
- ◆ Says Pulwama's Night Cricket Match symbolises light over shadows of the past

THE CHANCELLOR DESK
Jammu

Addressing the nation in the 105th edition of his monthly radio programme Mann Ki Baat, Prime Minister Narendra Modi reflected on the challenges brought by the monsoon's fury, the undeterred spirit of citizens, and the extraordinary milestones being achieved across the country — particularly in Jammu & Kashmir, where stories of progress now shine bright amid past shadows.

Beginning his address with a heartfelt message to families affected by floods and landslides in recent weeks, the Prime Minister expressed solidarity with those who have lost loved ones. He described the widespread destruction — homes lost, roads washed away, families displaced — and praised the tireless efforts of the NDRF, SDRF, armed forces, and local administrations. Advanced tools such as thermal cameras, drones, and life detectors, he noted, were deployed extensively in rescue efforts, which were further aided by airlifts and relief supplies sent via helicopters.

“In these difficult times, humanity stood taller than disaster,” said the Prime Minister, lauding the courage of doctors, social workers, and common citizens who came forward to help, calling their service a true expression of the nation's collective resilience.

Yet even amidst the devastation, there emerged heartening news from a region long associated with turmoil — Jammu and Kashmir. Modi proudly highlighted two transformative moments that marked a new chapter in the Valley's journey.

In Pulwama, once the epicenter of militancy, the district recently hosted its first-ever day-night cricket match under floodlights — an event unthinkable not long ago. The match, part of the local Royal Premier League, drew thousands of spectators, particularly youth, who cheered enthusiastically under the evening sky. “This wasn't just a game,” said the Prime Minister, “It was a testament to how deeply the spirit of peace and aspiration has taken root.”

From Pulwama to Srinagar, the Prime Minister then turned to another historic moment — the hosting of the first Khelo India Water Sports Festival on the iconic Dal Lake. With over 800 participants from across the country, including near-equal numbers of men and women, the event was a spectacle of youthful energy and national unity. Madhya Pradesh topped the medal tally, followed by Haryana and Odisha, but it was the participation itself that stole the show.

To share the ground reality, Modi conversed with two medal-winning athletes — Odisha's Rashmita Sahu, a canoeist with an impressive medal tally, and Mohsin Ali, a young water sports athlete from Srinagar. Rashmita narrated her humble beginnings, learning about canoeing almost by accident, and shared how her father's support and the Khelo India platform helped her grow. Mohsin, son of a labourer, spoke of his dream of winning an Olympic medal and how Dal Lake became his training ground. “The dream of a son of a humble family in Kashmir to hear the national anthem on the Olympic podium reflects the new aspirations of New India,” said Modi.

Celebrating the country's rising stature and the world's growing interest in India, the Prime Minister spoke of a surprising ripple effect from a recent podcast conversation with renowned AI researcher Lex Fridman. In that discussion, Modi had casually mentioned the passion for football among tribal youth in Shahdol, Madhya Pradesh. That mention caught the attention of German football coach Dietmar Beiersdorfer, who has now extended an invitation to train Shahdol's young footballers in Germany — a story Modi said symbolised India's quiet but growing influence on the global stage.

Reflecting on global cultural footprints, the Prime Minister also shared recent developments from around the world — the installation of Maharishi Valmiki's statue in Camp Rotondo, Italy, and a 51-ft tall statue of Lord Ram in Mississauga, Canada, along with a unique Ramayana painting competition by schoolchildren in Vladivostok, Russia. “Our culture is not just surviving abroad — it is thriving,” Modi said with pride.

Cloudbursts in the Himalayas

Why their frequency has risen sharply in the last decade

SHAILENDRA AIMA

A cloudburst is a highly localized extreme rainfall event in which more than 100 mm of precipitation can fall within an hour over a small area. In mountainous regions like the Himalayas, the steep terrain prevents infiltration, so this intense rainfall rapidly transforms into flash floods, debris flows, and landslides.

While cloudbursts have always occurred in the Himalayas, their frequency, intensity, and destructive impact have escalated markedly in the past decade. This is not a random spike, it is the combined outcome of accelerated climate change and intense human alteration of the fragile Himalayan ecosystem.

1. Climate Change and Moisture Loading of the Atmosphere

The Himalayas are warming at nearly twice the global average rate due to elevation-dependent warming. Warmer air can hold

more water vapor, about 7% more for every 1°C rise in temperature. This means monsoon clouds reaching the Himalayas now carry higher moisture loads.

Additionally, climate change is disrupting traditional monsoon rhythms. Instead of sustained, moderate rainfall over several days, precipitation is increasingly arriving as short, violent bursts, a shift that directly aligns with the dynamics of cloudbursts.

2. Glacial Retreat and Humidity Feedback Loops

Rapid glacier and snowfield melt is releasing large amounts of freshwater into rivers and the atmosphere. Increased evapotranspiration from exposed wet surfaces boosts local humidity. When this moist air is forced upwards by mountain slopes and meets cooler air masses, the condensation is sudden and explosive, producing high-intensity rainfall.

3. Deforestation and Loss of the Natural Water Buffer

In natural Himalayan forests, dense

vegetation acts like a hydrological buffer, absorbing and gradually releasing rainwater into the soil. Deforestation for roads, construction, and agriculture has stripped this buffer. Without canopy interception and root systems, heavy rainfall flows unimpeded down slopes, drastically increasing runoff speed and flood potential during cloudburst events.

4. Unregulated Infrastructure and Slope Destabilization

Highway widening, tunnel excavation, hotel construction, and unplanned urbanization are disturbing the geological stability of slopes. Blasting, hill-cutting, and debris dumping obstruct natural drainage channels. When cloudbursts occur, blocked watercourses cause sudden surges and debris-laden floods, multiplying damage beyond what natural systems would produce.

5. High-Altitude Dams and Reservoir-Induced Microclimates

Large hydropower dams in the Himalayas introduce two microclimatic changes:

Evaporative Moisture Injection: Reservoir surfaces at high altitude release significant moisture into the local atmosphere, especially during warm periods.

Thermal Disturbances: Heavy construction activity and machinery create localized heat zones that enhance convection.

In deep Himalayan valleys, rising moist air is easily lifted to condensation levels, potentially triggering intense, localized precipitation—including cloudbursts—especially when interacting with monsoon systems.

Urban Heat Islands in Hill Towns

Hill towns with dense concrete structures and minimal green space form urban heat islands, trapping heat during the day and releasing it at night. This localized warming promotes vertical air currents and destabilizes atmospheric layers—conditions that can amplify rainfall intensity when moisture-rich clouds are overhead.

(The Author is an eminent educationist and analyst)



India's Semiconductor Leap: OSAT Pilot Line facility inaugurated in Gujarat

India can bridge global semiconductor talent shortfall by 2032

THE CHANCELLOR DESK
Jammu

Marking a major stride in India's ambitions to become a global semiconductor powerhouse, Union Minister for Electronics and IT, Shri Ashwini Vaishnaw, along with Gujarat Chief Minister Shri Bhupendra Patel, inaugurated one of the country's first end-to-end OSAT (Outsourced Semiconductor Assembly and Test) Pilot Line facilities by CG Power at Sanand on August 28.

The launch is being hailed as a landmark under the India Semiconductor Mission (ISM) and a pivotal development in the country's journey toward self-reliance in chip manufacturing.

Highlighting the broader vision, Vaishnaw stated that the inauguration is not merely a facility launch but a crucial step in realizing Bharat's dream of becoming a semiconductor hub. "Chips produced here will undergo customer qualification. Once validated, full-scale commercial production becomes a reality," he noted.

In a statement issued by PIB, he emphasized that by 2032, the global semiconductor industry will face a talent shortfall of nearly one million



professionals, and India is uniquely positioned to bridge this gap.

To foster talent, the government has partnered with 270 universities and provided them with cutting-edge semiconductor design tools. In 2025 alone, these tools saw over 1.2 crore usages, resulting in 20 chips designed by 17 institutions, now successfully fabricated at the Semi-Conductor Laboratory (SCL), Mohali.

"This initiative not only empowers our youth but strengthens India's technical ecosystem," he added, underlining the support from the Government of Gujarat in building the necessary infrastructure.

Chief Minister Bhupendra Patel lauded the launch as a moment of pride for Gujarat and the nation. "This initiative will place India at the forefront of semiconductor design and manufacturing," he said.

The event was attended by Gujarat Industries Minister Shri Balwant Singh Rajput, MLA Shri Kanhubhai Patel, senior officials from MeitY, and leadership from CG Semi.

The CG Semi facility in Sanand is among India's first full-scale OSAT plants, offering end-to-end chip assembly, packaging, testing, and post-test services—spanning traditional and

advanced packaging technologies.

Backed by both central and state government support, CG Semi is investing over ₹7,600 crore (~USD 870 million) to develop two world-class facilities:

Together, both units are expected to create over 5,000 direct and indirect jobs, providing a major boost to local and national economies.

CG Power Chairman Vellayan Subbiah termed the launch a "national milestone", stating:

"It's a testament to what the Government and Industry can achieve together—with conviction, capital, and scale. Every chip we make here is a step toward India's technological sovereignty."

The OSAT facility is being led by a team of industry veterans with over 1,000 years of cumulative experience, with Indian engineers trained in Malaysia to ensure operational readiness.

CG Semi is a joint venture between CG Power and Industrial Solutions Ltd. (Murugappa Group), Renesas Electronics Corporation (Japan), and Stars Microelectronics (Thailand). Headquartered in Sanand, Gujarat, CG Semi offers comprehensive OSAT services across advanced and legacy chip packages, serving industries such as automotive, defence, infrastructure, and IoT.

India Post is now a world-class logistics force : Scindia

Advanced Postal Technology transforms 1.70 lakh post offices, strengthening digital India vision

THE CHANCELLOR DESK
Jammu

In a landmark move to modernise one of India's oldest public service networks, Union Minister for Communications and DoNER, Jyotiraditya M. Scindia, inaugurated the national rollout of IT 2.0 – Advanced Postal Technology (APT) under the Department of Posts (DoP). This sweeping digital upgrade represents a major milestone in India Post's journey toward a more connected, efficient, and citizen-centric future.

Under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, IT 2.0 aligns with the broader goals of Digital India and Aatmanirbhar Bharat, bringing transformative changes to all 1.70 lakh postal units, including post offices, mail centers, and administrative offices.

"APT will transform India Post into a world-class public logistics organisation," said Minister Scindia.

"Led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi from the front, this is Aatmanirbhar Bharat in full strength, charting the path for a stronger, self-reliant Digital India."

The new APT platform, designed and developed entirely in India by the Centre for Excellence in Postal Technology (CEPT), features a microservices-based architecture hosted on the MeghRaj 2.0 cloud, and is backed by BSNL's robust nationwide network.

After a successful pilot in the Karnataka Postal Circle (May–June 2025), IT 2.0 was rolled out in a phased and calibrated manner across India. The Jammu & Kashmir Postal Circle implementation, conducted between July 15 and August 4, 2025, played a crucial role in refining deployment strategies.

The full-scale rollout concluded on August 4, 2025, with all 23 postal circles across the country live on the APT platform.

Acknowledging that technology is

only as effective as its users, India Post implemented a massive upskilling initiative, training over 4.6 lakh employees through a cascade model involving Master Trainers, User Champions, and frontline staff. The "Train – Retrain – Refresh" model ensured consistent learning and seamless system adoption across all levels.

APT has already demonstrated its strength, having processed over 32 lakh bookings and 37 lakh deliveries in a single day, setting a new benchmark for operational efficiency.

With the completion of IT 2.0, India Post reaffirms its position as a trusted, modern, and technology-driven institution, bridging the rural–urban digital divide while upholding its legacy of nationwide service. The Advanced Postal Technology platform marks a significant stride toward financial inclusion, last-mile delivery excellence, and world-class public service in the digital age.

- Key Features of IT 2.0 – Advanced Postal Technology (APT)
- Microservices and Open API architecture

Unified, user-friendly interface

Cloud-ready deployment

End-to-end digital service: booking to delivery

Next-gen features: QR code payments, OTP-based delivery

Open Network System enabling rural connectivity

Unique 10-digit DIGIPIN for improved delivery precision

Real-time reporting and analytics

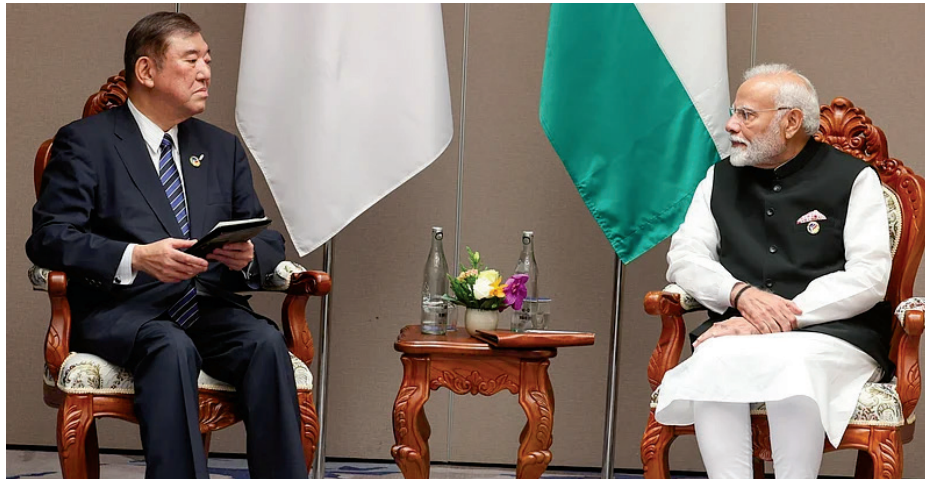
India & Japan forge new alliances in semiconductors, AI, & clean energy

THE CHANCELLOR DESK
Jammu

Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the Prime Minister of Japan, Shigeru Ishiba, attended the India-Japan Economic Forum, organised by the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) and Keidanren (Japan Business Federation), in Tokyo on 29th August 2025. The forum witnessed participation from leading industry figures from both nations, including CEOs of the India-Japan Business Leaders' Forum.

In his address, Prime Minister Modi highlighted the success of the India-Japan Special Strategic and Global Partnership, especially in the areas of investment, manufacturing, and technology. Inviting Japanese companies to expand their presence in India, he noted that India's robust growth story offers significant opportunities. He emphasized that deepening the economic partnership between trusted friends like India and Japan is especially relevant in the current turbulent global economic landscape.

In a press release issued by PIB, the Prime Minister underlined that India's political stability, policy predictability, ongoing reforms, and efforts to improve the Ease of Doing Business have enhanced investor confidence. This is reflected in the recent credit rating upgrade of India by global agencies.



Focusing on the immense potential for collaboration in cutting-edge technologies, manufacturing, investment, and human resource exchanges, Prime Minister Modi stated that India contributes around 18% to global growth and is on track to become the world's third-largest economy in the coming years. Highlighting the complementarities of the two economies, he outlined five key areas for deeper business cooperation under the 'Make in India' initiative and other flagship programmes, the statement said.

In his address, Prime Minister Ishiba expressed Japan's keen interest in forging partnerships that combine Indian talent with Japanese technology to build resilient and reliable supply chains. He identified three priority areas for

cooperation: strengthening people-to-people connections, integrating technology with green initiatives and markets, and enhancing collaboration in critical and emerging technologies, especially semiconductors.

The co-chairs of the 12th India-Japan Business Leaders' Forum (IJBFLF) presented their report to both leaders. Highlighting the growing ties between Indian and Japanese industries, Mr. Norihiko Ishiguro, Chairman and CEO of the Japan External Trade Organization (JETRO), announced several B2B MoUs signed between Indian and Japanese companies. These covered a wide range of sectors including steel, artificial intelligence, space, education and skills, clean energy, and human resource exchanges.

'Make in India' initiative & other flagship progs :

Manufacturing

Including batteries, robotics, semiconductors, shipbuilding, and nuclear energy;

Technology and Innovation

Collaboration in AI, quantum computing, space, and biotechnology;

Green Energy Transition;

Next-Generation Infrastructure – such as mobility, high-speed rail, and logistics;

Skill Development and People-to-People Ties.

India eyes doubling Africa trade to \$85 billion by 2030: Goyal

Indian industry urged to expand in Africa's \$20 Billion Auto Market
Bilateral Trade, value-added production, & critical minerals top India-Africa agenda

THE CHANCELLOR DESK
Jammu

Emphasising that India and Africa must work to double bilateral trade by 2030, focusing on value addition, technology-led agriculture, renewable energy, and healthcare collaboration, Union Minister of Commerce and Industry, Piyush Goyal today delivered the keynote address at the valedictory session of the 20th CII India-Africa Business Conclave in New Delhi.

"Together, we can move from raw material exports to value-added production for global markets," he said, highlighting the potential for deeper economic integration.

Reflecting on the two-decade journey of the Conclave, Shri Goyal noted that the platform has been instrumental in showcasing Africa's potential and India's strengths, facilitating meaningful dialogue and partnerships across sectors.

Goyal pointed out that bilateral trade between India and Africa is already fairly balanced, with India's exports standing at USD 42.7 billion and imports at USD 40 billion. However, he stressed the need to tap into the vast untapped potential across regions.

"This trade balance shows the opportunity we've missed over the years, and the enormous scope for expansion," he remarked.

Citing Africa's USD 20 billion annual import of motor vehicles, Goyal noted that India currently contributes just USD 2 billion to this market. He stressed that Indian manufacturers, known for cost-competitive and high-quality vehicles, could significantly expand their presence in Africa, especially in: Passenger and commercial vehicles, two- and three-wheelers and affordable electric mobility solutions

This would not only support Africa's mobility needs but also offer India access to Africa's rich natural



resources, such as critical minerals, petroleum products, and agricultural commodities, leading to balanced, sustainable, and mutually beneficial trade.

Goyal emphasised the shared aspirations of India and Africa, both home to over a billion people each, striving toward prosperity. As India marches toward Viksit Bharat by 2047, Africa too is pursuing development for all. The Minister highlighted the need for cooperation in digital public infrastructure, such as India's Unified Payments Inter-

face (UPI), to strengthen African financial ecosystems and reduce transaction costs.

He reiterated India's enduring commitment, recalling support extended to African nations during the COVID-19 pandemic through affordable access to vaccines, medicines, and pharmaceuticals.

Reaffirming India's close ties with Mauritius, Goyal assured continued support in combating inflationary pressures in essential commodities such as milk products, edible oils, and rice, reflecting the spirit of genuine partnership.

Invoking the shared history and deep ties, symbolised by Mahatma Gandhi's journey in South Africa, Goyal described India and Africa as natural partners in shaping the future of the Global South.

"India and Africa together represent over 2 billion people and one-third of the global population. Our shared struggles, shared dreams, and shared futures make us natural partners in global decision-

making," he said.

Calling for stronger collaboration at multilateral platforms like the WTO, he invited African nations to align with India on common objectives, especially in agriculture technologies, generic medicines, renewable energy, and youth empowerment.

"Our relationship is not just about history or trade – it is about shared dreams, shared challenges, and shared solutions. Together, we can transform our economies, empower our youth, and ensure prosperity for every citizen. The future is ours to capture," Goyal concluded.

He urged both regions to focus on complementarities rather than competition, emphasizing mutual strengths in Agriculture and food security, Cooperative and self-help group movements, Education, skill development, and R&D, Healthcare and pharmaceuticals, Renewable energy and clean technology, Start-ups and innovation and Critical minerals and petro-resources.

Empowered in Arms:

Kanta Wazir- The Unsung Heroine of 1947 Kashmir

DR. MADHULIKA SINGH

In the turbulent autumn of 1947, as tribal raiders advanced into Jammu and Kashmir, a young student named Kanta Wazir emerged as a symbol of courage and resilience. Amid the chaos and fear, she learned to fire a rifle, protect the vulnerable, and uphold the dignity of women in a time of profound crisis.

Born in Srinagar in March 1930, Kanta Wazir was pursuing her studies at Sri Pratap College when history took a dramatic turn. She was married in July 1949 to Manmohan Wazir (1926–2018), a civil servant in the Jammu and Kashmir administration. In 1947–48, while pursuing her FA (Fellow of Arts), she was influenced by progressive ideologies and joined the Women's Self Defense Corps (WSDC)—the women's wing of the National Militia, formed during the critical period following the Pakistan-backed tribal invasion of Jammu and Kashmir.

On October 22, 1947, tribal raiders, armed with modern weapons and commanded by Major General Akbar Khan of the Pakistan Army, crossed the border and entered Muzaffarabad, unleashing a reign of terror. Massacres, arson, looting, and widespread sexual violence followed in their wake. In this atmosphere of fear, the gravest concern became the safety and honour of women. To address this urgent threat, the Women's Militia was established under the aegis of the National Conference, with the goal of arming and training women to defend themselves.

With an unyielding spirit to serve her motherland, Kanta Wazir broke away from conservative Kashmiri traditions and joined the Women's Militia. She embraced the challenge of training with firearms, transforming fear into resolve. Along with her team of volunteers, Kanta Wazir actively mobilized the people to defend their motherland against the tribal aggression along with the Indian army which landed in Srinagar on 27th October, 1947.

The response was overwhelming and subsequently a spontaneous grass root movement began to emerge in the streets of Srinagar. Epitomizing supreme sacrifice and deep conviction, she along with other volunteers played an exemplary role in guiding jawans and gathering vital information about the movement of raiders in the frontlines.

Gole Bagh, later renamed Usman Zennana Park in honour of Brigadier Usman, the hero of the Battle of Jhangar, became a key training ground. There, Kanta and



her peers learned physical drills, parade techniques, and mastered weapons like .303 rifles, Sten guns, Bren guns, and pistols.

Kanta Wazir was active in a plethora of volunteer works ranging from military training to social work and cultural activity. Through the platform of women's militia, she gained a profile, confidence and purpose which broadened the opportunities and helped in shaping her logical and pragmatic approach towards life. She became a popular name in the first battalion of women militia named as Mukta battalion. Known for her sharpshooting, she displayed her marksmanship in several firing competitions. Her expertise in the skill of shots would entitle her three packets of salt, a rare commodity in Srinagar in 1947 because of the economic blockade caused by Pakistan which led to the suspension of the supply of essential commodities in Jammu and Kashmir.

She played a substantive role that helped in building up the community spirit. After receiving a short training in first aid, Kanta Wazir along with militia women, to name a few, Krishna Misri, Girja Dhar and Jai Kishori started delivering basic humanitarian services to the dislocated

individuals and families who thronged to seek shelter in Srinagar city from the nearby areas ravaged by the raiders. Further, these militia women would go in batches of five to seven to offer support and look after the beaten, raped and molested women arriving in Government hospitals. Additionally, to boost the morale of ailing and injured soldiers, she along with other volunteers also visited the military hospitals and spent time in looking after them.

Although the women militia never fought on the frontiers, it remains a standalone event in Kashmir history in which women from every community and class equipped themselves with arms to counter the dreaded and uncouth tribesmen. With time, the forgotten women militia became synonymous with Kanta Wazir who set into motion a transformative process of women's emancipation and empowerment in Kashmir. Later, in 1990s, during the insurgency in Kashmir, she along with her family shifted to New Delhi.

(The author is Associate Professor, Department of History, University of Jammu)

The CHANCELLOR

Editorial

Himalayas Break the Silence

Jammu has witnessed an unprecedented human tragedy in terms of the loss of lives and devastation of the infrastructure due to repeated cloud bursts and flash floods. The last fortnight has witnessed havoc leaving people stranded. This devastation started with the cloud burst in Chisoti in Kishtwar enroute to the temple of Machail Mata. The loss of lives such that the actual number of the people cannot be ascertained as flash floods after the cloudburst transformed the site of calamity into a veritable hell, with people that included infants and children stuck under debris. Defence Minister Rajnath Singh accompanied by the Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha visited the affected people in the Government Medical College (GMC) and Hospital to enquire about the recovery of the affected people who had been rushed to GMC for the treatment. The Defence Minister was supposed to visit the cloudburst victims in Chisoti but due to the inclement weather the itinerary had to be changed to enable him to meet the victims at least in the GMC. Nature's fury did not end here. Kathua witnessed the cloud burst after this gruesome tragedy leaving people dead and homeless with people seeking shelter and assistance amid the chaos that engulfed the whole Jammu region. Kathua and Samba were cut off from the rest of Jammu as the road infrastructure totally collapsed with bridges damaged at various locations. Still at the time of writing this editorial the road infrastructure has not been completely restored. This fury spread its tentacles to other areas like Doda and Ramban increasing the toll of the victims and causing immense loss of life and property. Educational institutions that include schools, colleges and universities also have been affected by the flash floods. This misfortune did not end here. Thirty-four pilgrims lost their lives enroute Shri Mata Viashno Devi Shrine due to landslides caused by the unrepresented rainfall and flash floods. In order to ascertain the actual cause of this lapse that led to the deaths of the pilgrims on the Mata Vaishno Devi route a three-member Parliamentary Committee has been constituted by the Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha who is also the Chairman of the Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Shrine Board. The committee has been asked to submit its report within two weeks. For the time being Shri Mata Vaishno Devi yatra has been suspended till 3rd September. Keeping in view the state of climatic emergency, Home Minister Amit Shah is scheduled to visit the areas that have undergone the deluge and flood fury. These include Chisoti, Kathua, and Doda where cloudbursts have brought life to standstill. He is also scheduled to take stock of the damage caused by the landslides enroute Shri Mata Vaishno devi Shrine. The deluge that has submerged the Jammu region must make all stakeholders think and introspect as to what has led to the complete devastation in terms of lives and infrastructure. It would be wrong to cast aspersions on the common people alone who have been the worst victims of this fury. Neither can we hold the policy makers completely responsible for the situation that is being faced today. Himalayas have broken the silence and started showing signs of exploitation that is leading to the natural disasters and catastrophes of unthinkable magnitude. Making hit and trail experiments with the water and mineral resources of the Himalayas is proving damaging. Not only that People have become oblivious to many things that include ignoring safety at the cost of development. Authorities must ensure proper verification before allotting the lands for construction, ensuring that these new lands marked for the habitation are safe. Most of the new colonies in Jammu have come up along Tawi riverfront, khads and nallahs; obstructing the natural flow of the rivers like Tawi and Basantar. Over exploitation of the land resources and the forests besides the overall Himalayan region has brought us to the precipice of collapse. The administration must learn its lessons too not only in disaster management but infrastructure development. After the 2014 deluge in Kashmir, August 2025 cloudbursts in Jammu have exposed the claims of development being made in terms of infrastructure. Whole Jammu is today engulfed, water supply disruption. Instead of playing the blame game it is the time to learn our lessons well and work for making Jammu well equipped to deal with any future fury of nature. This issue of The Chancellor explores and investigates as to where we have failed as a whole to safeguard ourselves.

Tourism, Heritage & Marketing: A Holistic View-I



DR. MAHESH KAUL

Tourism marketing plays a pivotal role in positioning the tourism product amongst the right segment that has a demand for it. Targeting the right segment and proving to be apt in terms of service delivery is the key towards the successful promotion of the product. Heritage tourism operates through its cultural moorings and sensitivities that shape the perceptions of the tourists towards the heritage. Identification with the particular heritage and satisfying the cultural moorings should have the basis for marketing heritage tourism. Heritage as the expression of innovations acquiring the landscape in space and time has an impact on both heritage tourism marketers and the heritage management professionals. It is a diverse form of tourism that requires a multidisciplinary approach to yield sustained dividends. It is not just a type of tourism but a tool that has the tendency to harmonize the relations between various segments of the society. No doubt economic benefits are the primary objectives kept in mind by the marketers but at the same time it acts the glue and catalyst that binds social groups of diverse types in one single thread. It is type of tourism that demand introspection on the part of both tourists and policy makers. Not to forget the role of the heritage tourism professionals and the conservation management experts who are basically the heritage management professionals. The various stakeholders have a role to play. It can be best described as the application of the concept of co creation where product is developed by the inputs from the consumers. In which, the voice of the consumer is always given primacy. The great thing about heritage tourism is that people are not only curious about their own heritage but develop inclination for the other people's heritage. That is why international organization as argued elsewhere project heritage as the shared and common heritage of humanity depicting the continuous journey of evolution to seek spiritual solace embedded in culture.

The element of sanctity associated with heritage tourism makes it a positive domain for the developmental activities in the destination area that has heritage assets. Religious heritage has community involvement but the sensitivity linked with religious heritage makes it a political imperative for the policy makers to deliver the infrastructural facilities in the destination

area that include roads, electricity supply and water supply. As the negligence on the part of the decision makers may cost them the vote bank whose sensitivities are linked with heritage asset.

It makes heritage a sensitive issue. Besides being the high-profile tourism product, it is the most vulnerable in terms of the expensive and high cost of the heritage items like idols, miniatures, instruments, weapons and jewelry that is traded through illicit activities. Thus it has prompted many nations to implement the antiquity laws to deter the smugglers from trafficking the heritage assets across the national borders and the state jurisdiction. These factors have shaped the policy making paradigm in the public domain internationally.

Product differentiation is the outcome of the usage of heritage preservation and conservation that acts as tool to keep the demand of the upscale tourist in the mind. As heritage tourism is the niche area that is the segment dominated by the educated class of the society having an insight of its cultural moorings and realization of the heritage value of the assets. What makes heritage tourism a specialized type is that it is divergence from mass tourism of 1960's and 1970's. the inter reacted economic developments in the world have converted a large chunk of mass tourists into new tourists and this new class refers to sustainable tourism having the element of responsibility. It is basically the diversification of tourism and reflects the maturity of the sector more towards specialized tourism; where heritage tourism stands at first rank.

Heritage tourism tough both tangible and intangible, it has produced a three-pronged gaze-natural, cultural and built. The three representing landforms, festivals and monuments. This triad of elements makes it amply clear that heritage tourism operates within the socio-cultural domain. It is not only a form of tourism but many things rolled into one. It is a unique kaleidoscope and acts like a time machine having the tendency to take humankind back into the past with glimpses of history and a sense of continuity with the present and future.

The identity of the heritage tourism lies in its antiquity and if it is violated then it renders the asset useless and meaningless in terms of social and cultural objective. It cannot be the representative of the mass tourism. If anywhere mass tourism impinges upon the heritage assets; it can be easily taken as tantamount to invasion of the cultural domain and sacrilege of the asset. It renders its essence ruptured and that is not required as has been argued that heritage tourism is the divergence from mass tourism

Contd on Page 13

Contd from Page 12

shaping the paradigm of new tourism that is conscious of its sensitivity. Heritage tourism is the leisure activity that that makes a tourist travel but towards past; no doubt the tourist is living in the present age. Heritage assets link past, present and future. It is a state of consciousness that shapes the perception for the future acts towards the responsibility of upholding the intrinsic cultural core. In spite of the restrictions and guidelines there has been a new challenge that has emerged globally. It is the conflict between the conservation and tourism. It goes to the credit of the organizations like UNESCO, ICOMOS and ICCROM in ironing out the confrontation between the two and bringing to the center stage the challenges that need resolution for the sustainability of heritage.

What needs to be kept in mind in terms of heritage tourism in a broad sense is that tourism addresses the presentation aspect of heritage asset that can be explained as the extrinsic aspect of the product and conservation is the representative of the interpretation of heritage asset depicting the core intrinsic cultural aspect that has given birth to it and has evolved it over the years. Both these elements should have a symbiotic relationship for the sustainability of the tourism product. It can be easily internalized from the basic nature of the two areas that they separately address two important aspects of heritage and one needs the coordination with the other for the market viability of the heritage tourism product. Without interpretation, heritage cannot exist in the market as the sustainable tourism product. This needs to be analyzed in proper analytical paradigm and realize that tourism and conservation aspects of heritage when taken in totality makes heritage tourism a complete product and address its uniqueness and viability in the market and the segment in which it has to be positioned for the target tourist.

Heritage attraction is a marketers delight and can be made out to be the sustainable product in the tourism market if public accountability of the heritage tourism attraction is made the center of policy making. For developing the marketing strategies to promote the heritage of the destination area, marketers, researchers, tourism professionals and decision makers have to address the two sets of parameters.

One set of parameters lies in the domain of heritage tourism professionals and another lies in the domain of heritage management professionals. The parameters that are to be dealt by the tourism professionals include public presentation and that to be dealt by the heritage professionals is the interpretation. When both synergize, it yield the desired results and delivers the heritage tourism mechanism that is sustainable and acts as the foundation stone to devise the marketing strategies. The matrix developed by these two groups is the viable solution to minimize the conflict generated by the vacuum created by the absence of one of these from the heritage asset scene or the complete vacuum created by the absence of the both.

The path for marketing strategies laid down by these two groups is the outcome the interdisciplinary work that has been done at the international level by various stakeholders and accepted heritage as the common asset and shared legacy. The following parameters that have been developed as the outcome of the co operation between these two groups

are public access, entertainment, education, visitor facilities, conservation, economic viability, investment, professional staff. Assimilation and adaptation of all these factors leads to better visitor experiences and better conservation. Desired result cannot be obtained if one of the two groups is absent in the policy making and decision making. These aspects provide many vistas for developing the marketing strategies. As it is evident from the relationship of heritage with heritage professionals and tourism professionals that marketing strategies for heritage tourism can be framed only when tourism marketers take into consideration the past, present and future of the heritage asset. Past includes the historicity, present the conservation aspect and future the sustainability. This triangular relationship should act as the key to develop marketing strategies for heritage tourism at all levels of market demand and supply.

What makes the marketers to think to develop marketing strategies for heritage tourism in a different manner? It is the new tourism. Gone are the days of mass tourism and people are becoming more conscious to learn about places through their art, history and culture and all these aspects are synthesized into one ,when it comes to heritage tourism. It makes the heritage tourism as the desired choice for the tourists who crave for such experiences. Moreover, mass tourism is not the hot pursuit as it tends to give the following results that are detrimental to the objective of the responsible tourism:

Economic benefit trickles down to small segment of people
It is a less learning experience
Human resource is not paid well
It encourages environmental degradation
It does not sensitize the tourist about the cultural value of the destination

For developing marketing strategies for heritage tourism it can be argued that balance has to be maintained in terms of tourism promotion and protection of heritage sites by educating the people and keeping the influx of tourists to the sites within optimum sustainable limit. Marketing strategies can be implemented and can bear the desired fruit of sustainable development and promotion of the heritage tourism product if the following measures are taken to overcome the problems related to development.

These include the following:
Zoning
Regional Planning's
Licensing Regulations
Control in the Destination Areas
Cultural Supply Decentralization

Sensitisation of the local stakeholders has been another area that has been given credence by heritage management professionals as they vociferously argue that community involvement is the only concrete path to sustainable development. After all it the communities and the ethnic groups that are its beneficiaries. Development of heritage site not only rejuvenates the asset but the potency is infused in the whole area or landscape where the heritage asset is located. Once the attention of the authorities is gained by the asset it involves the joining of hands by the multiple agencies that include multitude of organization both governmental and non-governmental. It generates a kind of hustle and bustle that invites the stakeholders to the destination area by one means or the

other. The Public works departments are made to be the part of these initiatives as it has been mostly observed that once the heritage asset has been identified ;documentation of its time frame and history takes place by the site visitations of the organizations and their professionals to ascertain the feasibility of the destination and its locale to be incorporated as the heritage management issue .The site or a monument that drives the people to its domain creates a gaze that leads to many things at the same time(JOST,1999)..For example, if the asset that has come to the notice of the ASI by local intervention then the organization reaches the venue with it teams establishing the base camp for its operation. If the asset has been observed to be underground and excavations are needed .Then the excavations are carried out with support of various agencies that includes roads and buildings, water works departments and electricity departments. As the usage of technical knowhow requires the basic infrastructural facilities to operationalize the process to excavate the asset from the ground. There are many possibilities of the challenge at this phase only. Conflict may arise if the stakeholders are not involved and sensitized at this initial process. Conflict may be of varying nature depending on the stakes of the community involved.

A heritage asset identified in the farm lands or fields in a village will involve various sensitivities that may hamper the excavation process, leave alone the initiative to safeguard the heritage asset that is to be situated in space and time by the archaeologists and conservators. Legal battles and tangles may hamper the speed of the process. Besides the villagers may find it as in intrusion in their locale as they find it a trespass into their cultural privacy.

Moreover, the excavation work in the fields will be construed as the stagnation the farming engagements of the owner whose land has the treasure hidden in it. That is why both legal remedies that speak of compensation and the sensitization processes guided by proper legislative framework of the state is needed to make the process of heritage identification and documentation a viable and workable initiative. The concerns of the community that are genuine need to be addressed by bringing home the point that what has been located and identified in a land belonging to a particular person is a national asset that is shared property. Various legislations have been enacted to mitigate this conflict, if it has the tendency to arise at the time heritage asset documentation phase.

What is more intriguing is that people consider only built heritage as the representative of the heritage and end up missing the living part of it that is more visible in their daily acts. It is a paradoxical situation in heritage management that the ruins or the dilapidated structures that are in no use but stand erect depicting artistic and architectural marvels of the period that passed becomes center of attraction. But the art forms, music, textiles, traditions, rituals that are still performed are taken as the routine part of a community work. Without realizing that this is the intangible heritage and is in fact the living heritage that has maintained continuity through ages and needs to be seen in tandem with the tangible heritage that is in need of conservation and interpretation. UNESCO and other allied bodies have been doing tremendous work to address

this challenge to see the intangible heritage in tandem with the tangible heritage. It is a fact and reality that intangible heritage is transmitted orally. This leads to variation within heritage and may lead to emergence of various versions of heritage. For the sake of the lag of time frame and the issue of memory these diverse forms have been treated as equally meaningful. Documentation is the most technical part that has to be conducted in total adherence of the authenticity. Homogenization, standardization and fossilization of the cultural heritage are the natural derivatives of this process. The challenge lies in keeping these traditions as pure as only then tourist will desire to witness the real and authentic heritage embedded in rich culture. It leads to standardization of the heritage.

As has been indicated elsewhere that many challenges emerge during the identification and documentation process being the part of the memory and that too living memory both tangible and intangible heritage have the tendency to attract political attention. After all heritage is the representative of the socio-cultural moorings and evolution of a community and has the tendency to generate the public opinion. Local interests of the community in terms of economic benefits being the primary stakeholders makes the issue sensitive. Tourists on their part are attracted due to many factors and primary being the nostalgia of seeking to go back to cultural roots and at times religion plays a significant role in shaping the tourist gaze in heritage monument and allied living heritage termed as intangible heritage.

Homogenization and standardization of the heritage makes it imperative to be prepared to accept that politics of cultural heritage identity will emerge as the critical issue. As has been argues at the outset that heritage tourism has the tendency to act as the decisive tool in the international diplomacy to address the issues of cultural interchange and freeze the conflicts; when other tools have failed. It must be understood that heritage and its core culture are not just the representatives of the past but the keys to future construction. The presentation of the heritage to the outside world is important for the community as it presents itself to the outsiders and it basically concerns the future.

Many cross-cultural ethnographic cases have brought this aspect of heritage to the fore. It represents the political set up and condition of the power within the community and society. It can't be denied that power and politics has been a key element in devising the cultural moorings and its subsequent development. Diversity is inherent to the heritage and culture. Unified representation may not go well with some members of the community .it has an impact on the community negatively in both socio-political and economic domains, it hampers the spirit of cohesiveness and this has been noticed by the marketers and professionals while devising marketing and conservation studies. The need is to accommodate the diverse views and shun hegemony when it comes to showcasing heritage and gaining benefits from tourism.

(to be contd...)

(The author is Editorial Director, The Chancellor)



The Body’s First Barrier: Why Skin Care Matters After a Flood?

DR. ENNAKSHEE SHARMA

Floods are among nature’s most destructive forces, disrupting lives, displacing communities, and leaving behind a trail of contaminated water, debris, and disease. In the immediate aftermath, the focus typically shifts to essentials like food, drinking water, and shelter. Yet one critical aspect of health is often overlooked: the health of our skin.

The skin is not just a surface layer; it is our largest organ and the body’s frontline defence. When compromised, it allows bacteria, fungi, viruses, and parasites to invade. In flood-affected areas, I have seen firsthand how quickly seemingly minor rashes, cuts, or insect bites can escalate into major health problems. Protecting your skin is not merely about comfort—it is about safeguarding overall health.

When we think of the skin, it helps to imagine it as a shield. Under normal conditions, this shield is strong, resilient, and capable of fending off constant exposure to environmental irritants and microbes. But during floods, this protective layer is placed under relentless attack. Floodwaters carry sewage, industrial waste, and chemical contaminants that directly expose skin to dangerous pathogens. The constant wetness caused by prolonged exposure to damp clothing softens the skin, making it fragile and prone to cracks. These small breaks in the surface then become gateways for infection. At the same time, sharp debris floating in the water frequently causes cuts, bruises, and scrapes that might appear minor initially but often worsen due to contamination. Hygiene facilities, too, are often compromised, with limited access to clean water and soap, leaving people unable to wash thoroughly or maintain basic skin care routines. On top of that, stagnant pools of water provide breeding grounds for mosquitoes and other insects, increasing the risk of bites and vector-borne diseases. Together, these factors transform skin care from a matter of comfort into a crucial, yet often overlooked, aspect of survival and recovery.

The problems that emerge on the skin after floods are diverse, ranging from minor irritations to severe, life-threatening conditions. Fungal infections are among the most common, as warm, humid conditions provide the perfect environment for fungal overgrowth. One frequently seen condition is athlete’s foot, where the skin between the toes begins to itch, peel, and scale. Another is candidiasis, which thrives in moist skin folds such as the armpits, groin, and under the breasts, leading to redness, soreness, and persistent irritation. Ringworm, despite its name, is also a fungal infection and is recognized by its red, circular patches with a characteristic central clearing. Left untreated, these fungal infections can persist for weeks, spread easily, and become chronic, creating lasting discomfort.

Equally concerning are bacterial infections, which flourish in contaminated floodwaters. Even small abrasions provide bacteria an easy entry point, leading to a range of infections that spread rapidly. Impetigo, often affecting children, presents as crusty, honey-coloured patches on the skin and spreads through touch. More serious is

Contd on Page 15

Quick Tips:

SKIN CARE DURING FLOODS:

- Avoid direct contact with floodwater whenever possible
- Wear waterproof boots and gloves
- Change out of wet clothes quickly
- Wash skin with clean, boiled-and-cooled water and mild soap
- Pat dry, especially between toes and skin folds
- Apply antifungal powder in moisture-prone areas
- Use antiseptics on cuts and scrapes
- Sleep under mosquito nets and use repellents

BUILD YOUR FLOOD-READY SKIN CARE KIT:

Keep these essentials in an emergency kit:

- Mild soap or cleanser
- Antifungal powder (e.g. clotrimazole)
- Petroleum jelly or thick moisturizer
- Antiseptic solution (chlorhexidine or povidone-iodine)
- Bandages, gauze, and plasters
- Mosquito repellent (DEET-based or natural alternatives)
- Clean towel and extra cotton clothes



Contd from Page 15

experience slower wound healing, making even minor injuries more difficult to manage. People living with diabetes face a higher risk of severe fungal and bacterial complications due to impaired circulation and immunity. Pregnant women also experience reduced immunity and must be particularly cautious. Outdoor workers, rescuers, and volunteers are at constant risk, as their prolonged exposure to water and damp conditions makes their skin more vulnerable than most.

Despite these risks, there are practical steps individuals can take to protect their skin during and after floods. The most important principle is to reduce exposure whenever possible. Avoiding direct contact with floodwater, wearing waterproof boots and gloves when stepping into water, and changing out of wet clothes promptly can make a significant difference. Maintaining hygiene is another key step. Washing exposed skin with clean, boiled-and-cooled water, using mild soap instead of harsh detergents, and gently patting the skin dry—especially in folds and between toes—help preserve the skin barrier. Preventing infection requires a little extra vigilance: applying antifungal powders to moisture-prone areas like the groin, underarms, and feet; using petroleum jelly or protective creams to reduce friction; and cleaning wounds promptly with antiseptics before covering them with dry dressings. Protecting against mosquitoes is equally vital, which means using repellents on skin and clothing, sleeping under mosquito nets, and eliminating stagnant water around homes to curb breeding sites. Clothing choices also matter; loose, breathable cotton garments are preferable, and sun-drying clothes, bedding, and towels helps kill lingering microbes.

Despite all precautions, some situations require immediate medical attention. Warning



signs include spreading redness accompanied by fever, blackened or foul-smelling wounds, intense itching that prevents sleep, rashes associated with systemic symptoms such as cough, diarrhea, or jaundice, and severe pain in an area where the skin appears relatively normal. Seeking care without delay in such cases can prevent complications and save lives.

The skin does not only reflect physical health but also emotional well-being. Floods are traumatic events, and stress, poor sleep, and inadequate nutrition can exacerbate pre-existing skin conditions such as eczema, psoriasis, or even hair loss. Visible rashes, scars, or pigmentation can affect confidence, adding another layer of psychological burden. Thus, restoring skin health is not simply about treating infections—it is also about restoring comfort, dignity, and a sense of normalcy during recovery.

Even after the floodwaters

recede, the importance of skin care remains. Persistent fungal infections may flare up again with humidity, pigmentation changes may linger after viral rashes or insect bites, and chronic dermatitis may arise from prolonged exposure in damp homes. Scars and ulcers, if neglected, may result in lasting disability. Long-term vigilance, therefore, is necessary to prevent these conditions from becoming permanent burdens.

For those living in flood-prone areas, preparing a simple skin care emergency kit can make a real difference. A dermatologist-approved kit may include mild soap or cleanser, antifungal powder, petroleum jelly or moisturizing cream, an antiseptic solution such as chlorhexidine or povidone-iodine, mosquito repellent, and basic wound care supplies such as gauze, bandages, and plasters. Having these items at hand can help transform small problems into manageable issues rather than full-blown

emergencies.

Floods damage homes, communities, and lives. Amid this chaos, the importance of skin health can be easily overlooked. Yet the skin is our first barrier against the outside world, and protecting it is central to protecting overall health. Simple measures—keeping the skin clean and dry, treating wounds quickly, and taking steps to prevent insect bites—can prevent a cascade of infections and complications. By valuing skin care alongside food, water, and shelter, individuals and families can reduce suffering and improve their recovery journey. Floods may disrupt lives, but they should not be allowed to compromise health further. With awareness and preventive care, the skin can remain a strong and resilient shield, even in the toughest of times.

(The author is Assistant Professor, Department of Dermatology, ASCOMS Hospital, Jammu)

A Plate of Kachalu & a 20-Year-Old Memory

Girdhari Kachalu Wala & Siddharth Kak

It was a cold winter evening in 2005 when I received a call from Zameer Mir, then Vice President of TakeOneTV, content providers for Zee Kashmir Channel. I was at the Jammu Press Club enjoying an evening with friends when Zameer's call interrupted the gathering. He informed me that Siddharth Kak, the renowned television personality of Surbhi fame, was in town, and I was to interview him at 1:00 pm the next day for Guftagu, the weekly chat show I hosted for Zee Kashmir.

I cut short my merry-making and rushed home to gather whatever information I could about Siddharth Kak for the interview.

I reached the studio the next day to find Siddharth already there and having a chat with Zameer, who had earlier brought him from his hotel in his car. After exchanging pleasantries, we straightaway headed towards the Studio for the interview.

The interview over, Zameer invited us for a cup of tea in his chamber. While sipping tea, Siddharth casually remarked, "There once was a famous Kachalu (Taro Root, a variety of Arbi, in a spicy concoction) Rehri (push cart) at Kachi Chhawani. Is it still there?" Having lived in Ustad Mohalla for many years, I was quite familiar with the Rehri and I replied knowingly "The one whose owner's name is Girdhari? Yes, of course, he

must still be there." This, despite the fact, that I had not visited the place for many years.

Girdhari's Kachalu Rehri was a very popular eating joint in Jammu and as young school and college going students, we were frequent visitors to the place - less for Kachalus and more for ogling the pretty girls of Government College for Women, Parade Ground, who would throng the Rehri after college hours.

"For many years my uncle lived in the government accommodation in Kachi Chhawani and I used to stay with my uncle whenever in Jammu. I loved to eat Kachalu at that particular Rehri," Siddharth said and expressed his desire to visit the place. I happily agreed to take him there, hoping to relive my college days, at least for a few moments.

Hurriedly, the three of us loaded in Zameer's car and during the drive Siddharth revealed, "I last visited the Rehri some 10 years ago and the taste of those Kachalus is still fresh on my palette. Please give me Mukti (Freedom) from craving for that awesome flavour so that henceforth I can live my life peacefully." We all chuckled.

We reached Kachi Chhawani Chowk, but the Rehri was nowhere to be seen. My heart skipped a beat. I got down from the car and enquired about Girdhari. A cobbler finally informed, "Girdhari passed

RAVINDER KAUL

away a few years ago but his son is still running the show. There's no Rehri now because he has moved to a shop in the nearby Dewan Mandir Lane." Hearing this we parked the car in the parking lot and walked around 50 meters into the lane to reach the shop that prominently proclaimed on its signboard 'Girdhari Kachalu Wala'.

Girdhari's son Ram Prasad had clearly done well for himself. It was a tidy little joint. He received us with the enthusiasm generally reserved for all customers. We ordered three plates of Kachalu - "Dikheen shail kachalu daiyeen. Ass tere baapu de puraane gahak aan, to ae Bombay thama aayen Kachalu khaan", I instructed in Dogri. (See that the Kachalus are excellent. We are your father's old customers and this friend of ours has come from Bombay to specially savour your Kachalus).

Ram Prasad assured us warmly and prepared the slurping bitter-sour, almost divine concoction, himself. As we savoured the delightful spicy treat, Ram Prasad kept staring in our direction. Then

I figured he was staring at Siddharth. Understandingly, I informed him that he must be finding the face of Siddharth quite familiar as he was the host of the popular TV programme 'Surbhi' and that Siddharth had also acted in a number of films. Ram Prasad nodded, "Yes, maybe that's the reason."

After a while, he abruptly came to our table and directed his question at Siddharth, "Have you ever visited our Rehri before?" Oh yes! So many times, but that was long time back. The last I came to your Rehri was around 10 years ago", Siddharth responded.

"Yes, now I am sure it was you" Ram Prasad said. "What do you mean?" Siddharth asked. "When you came here last, you had consumed Kachalus for Rs.15/- and paid my father a 100 rupee note and thanked him for the fabulous taste of our Kachalus. By the time my father could return the change to you, you had already left. I was also there, a young boy then, and remember the entire sequence. My father asked me to run after you to return the change but you had already boarded a car and left", his eyes were glittering in excitement.

Suddenly, Ram Prasad's voice broke and tears welled up in his eyes. "Till the time he passed away a few years ago, my father often remembered you and would tell me that if that customer ever returned, I must repay him the balance

of Rs.85/- that we owe him. Prasad started crying bitterly now.

I looked at Siddharth. Tears were rolling down his cheek too. He held the hands of Ram Prasad - "It was not that I had forgotten to take back the change. I knew the price, but I had given 100 rupees as a reward to your father for the excellent quality and taste of Kachalu," Siddharth said emotionally.

Ram Prasad took out Rs.85/- from his cash box and tried to hand over the amount. Siddharth refused. Both were crying and mumbling incoherently. Zameer and I also could not control our emotions and our eyes too were moist.

After quite some time, we took our leave, Siddharth expressed condolence over the demise of Girdhari and we too joined in reverence. Ram Prasad refused to accept any money for the Kachalus that we had eaten.

Sitting in the car on our way back, Siddharth forlornly remarked, "Such incidents can only take place in small towns like Jammu. I can never imagine anything like this happening in Bombay!" After saying this he kept quiet and did not utter a single word during the remaining ride to the Hotel.

(Author is a renowned literary critic, writer & Journalist)



Disclaimer: The views expressed in the articles are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of The Chancellor.

Pokhribal: The Place of Sacred Springs

CHANDER M. BHAT

Nestled beneath the towering Hari Parvat hillock in its northwestern corner, adjacent to the historic Kathi Darwaza and near the serene waters of Nagin Lake, lies Pokhribal—a revered pilgrimage destination steeped in ancient sanctity. Over the centuries, this sacred site has drawn devotees from near and far, its spiritual significance woven into the very fabric of time. With its tranquil setting and profound aura, Pokhribal stands as a timeless testament to faith and devotion.

The name Pokhribal is derived from two words: Pokhri, meaning spring, and Bal, meaning place—together signifying "the place of springs." At the heart of the temple complex lies a central spring within the cella, the innermost sanctum, originally designed in a square format and shaded by majestic Chinar trees. From beneath the temple's eastern wall, the spring's waters gently flow into a kund before ultimately merging with the placid expanse of Nagin Lake. This serene confluence of natural and spiritual elements heightens the sanctity of Pokhribal, drawing worshippers to its sacred waters and tranquil beauty.

Overlooking the kund stands an ancient Shiva temple. The shrine is entered from the northern side, featuring a circumambulatory path for devotees. Its interior ceiling forms a shallow dome, beginning at the lintel level and resting on an arched string course. The temple's painted tin sheet covered Shikhara seems to be of later addition. On the southern face, a rear extension opens into the cella, blending newer construction with the original sanctum. Built with stone and brick masonry and finished with cement plaster, the older section of the temple retains its original stone flooring, while other areas have been updated with plain cement. Among its most notable features are the intricately carved eaves board and decorative wooden balustrades. The temple is currently maintained by the Amrit Kund Committee.

Cherished by Kashmiri Pandits, the Pokhribal shrine includes two ancient temples—one dedicated to Lord Shiva and the other to Uma Devi, an embodiment of Sharika. The sacred grounds encompass several holy features: the Amrit Kond (a revered spring),



a bathing spring, Suraj Kund, and various auxiliary structures, including a building with a store, kitchen, and hall, all shaded by a magnificent Chinar tree. The main temple complex is enriched by the presence of the Shiva Lingam, a Hawanshala, and an L-shaped, two-storied building with multiple rooms, a kitchen, and two spacious halls.

Amrit Kund holds particular spiritual importance; its holy waters flow into adjoining springs before joining Nagin Lake and are believed to cradle the feet of Goddess Sharika. Devotees regularly visit the shrine, especially on auspicious occasions, to organize bhajans and pujas. Over the ages, revered saints such as Swami Anand Ji, Swami Nand Bab, Swami Razdan Sahib, and Swami Sona Kak have meditated and performed sadhana at Amrit Kond, receiving divine grace. Their followers have even established Asthapanain Bantalab, Jammu, further extending the shrine's spiritual legacy.

During the blossoming spring of either 1944 or 1945, amidst the enchanting spectacle of almond trees in full bloom, a gathering of devotees assembled before Bhagawaan Gopi Nath Ji, beseeching him to accompany them to Hari Parvat, enveloped by fragrant almond orchards. Responding to their plea,

Bhagawaan Ji beckoned Pt Nila Koul Saraf to join their journey. Initially hesitant, Pt Nila Koul expressed his conviction, stating, "The Devi resides here as well. Why venture elsewhere?" Despite his reluctance, persuasion prevailed, and the entourage, comprising nine individuals with Bhagawaan Ji at its helm, embarked on their pilgrimage to Hari Parvat, commencing their spiritual odyssey around noon.

Entering the Shrine through the unconventional path of the exit gate of Kaathi Darwaaza, the group proceeded towards the Pokhribal Temple, which housed a sacred spring within its confines. Upon opening the small outer wicket gate, they were greeted by the sight of a lone young girl, around five years of age, innocently engrossed in playing with fallen Chinar leaves. Advancing through the inner gate, they settled on a wooden platform within the Shrine's precincts. Bhagawaan Ji, moved by compassion, instructed Pt Nila Koul to bring the child inside. As the girl was brought before him, Bhagawaan Ji tenderly cradled her on his lap, offering her nadermunji (a fried preparation made from lotus roots and rice flour), a delicacy procured from a local confectioner at Devi Aangan. After the nourishing exchange, Bhagawaan Ji entrusted Pt Nila Koul with escorting the

girl back. Swiftly, she darted away upon exiting the inner gate, disappearing from sight. As the party made their return, savoring salted tea along the way, Pt Nila Koul, in a light-hearted manner, quipped to Bhagawaan Ji about witnessing the Devi's darshan. In response, Bhagawaan Ji poignantly reminded him of the divine encounter they had just experienced, leaving Pt Nila Koul overcome with realization, falling into a state of unconsciousness. With great effort, he was escorted back home by the concerned party, deeply impacted by the profound spiritual encounter.

Currently undergoing renovation, the shrine stands amidst a landscape of transformation. The once uneven land adjoining Nagin Lake has been meticulously levelled, serving as the fertile ground for the planting of approximately 200 flourishing poplar trees. While there rejuvenation efforts unfold, the dharamshalas, originally intended for spiritual seekers, remain temporarily occupied by the Central Reserve Police Forces, adding a unique layer of activity to the serene ambiance of the sacred precincts.

(Author has contributed immensely on the temple history of Kashmir with his primary research and has a number of books to his credit)

Swami Vidhyadhar Ji Maharaj

V.N.JOTSHI (BHAT)

Swami Ram Ji, who is said to be a Shiva incarnate, was introduced and initiated into Trika philosophy by his uncle, Shri Ishwar Swamipad. There are numerous accounts of miracles performed by him. He was a Shaiv scholar and his task of spreading and reviving Shaivism in Kashmir in modern times is unparalleled.

One of his disciples was Swami Vidhyadhar who, by virtue of unflinching devotion to his Guru, had mastered the theoretical as well as practical aspects of the Trika philosophy.

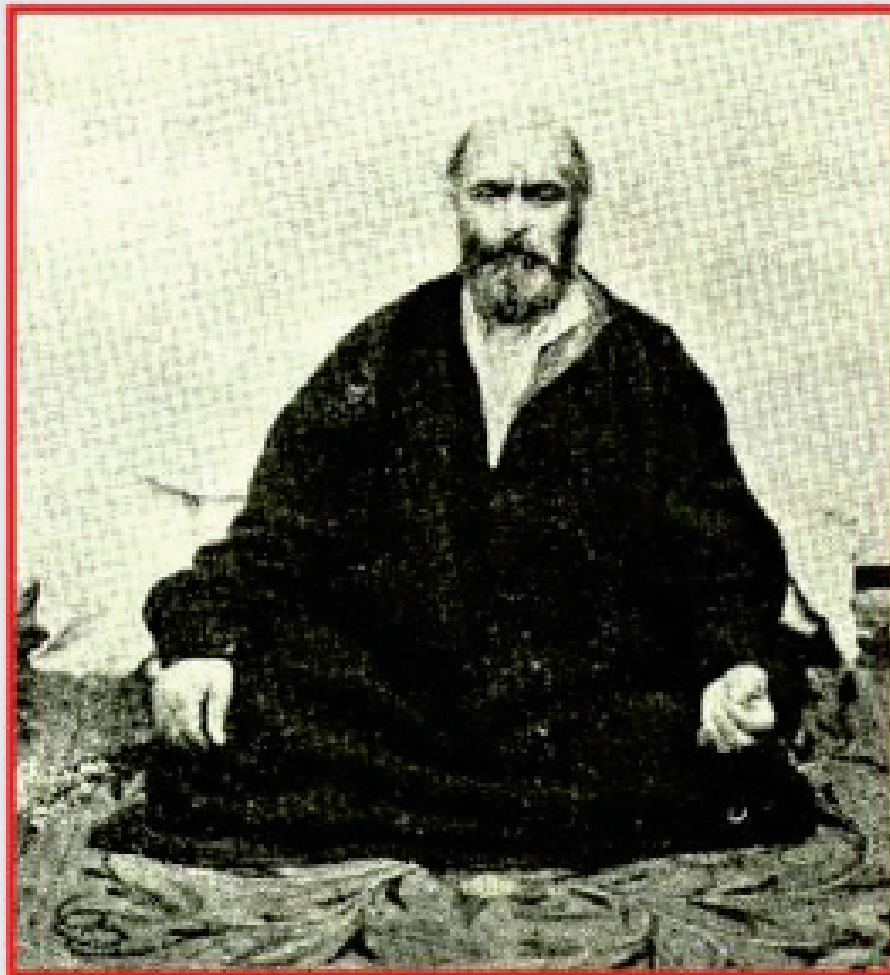
Swami Vidyadhar was born in an established Brahmin dynasty of Sri Gankak Rajanak Khunmushi of Sathu Barbarshah, Srinagar. The name of his mother was Harmali. He was born in Har, 1942, Vikrami. Swamiji was six years old when his father passed away and he remained under the guidance of his elder brother, Shri Gopinath.

Swamiji received his education in his home and was then taught Karma Kanda by Shri Madavji Chander and Shri Raj Kak Ganz, and studied Sanskrit in a government pathshala. His exalted concentration in his studies is said to have been beyond description.

When Swamiji was 15, he was married to Smt. Padmavati, daughter of Shri Reshikak Kaloo, belonging to a reputed Brahmin family. Guru Mata (as she was called) was a devoted housewife and revered her Sadhu husband in the heart of her hearts and attended to her family chorus while Swamiji was away in jungles and other places in search of self-realisation. She never ventured to see or disturb her husband till the eve of his nirvan day.

Worldly Detachment

Swamiji left his home when he was very young. After staying at Thejiwara near Bijbehara for some days, he went to Traal where he enjoyed solicitude in the Kamla Forest. After some time, he received letter from Swami Mahtab Kak, elder disciple of Swami Ramji, that he should return to his home. He could not disobey the orders of his elder Guru Brara and returned to his home and continued to live there for full one year. He, however, remained detached from all worldly affairs and remained in solitude and meditation almost



all the time. In due course his dispassionate disposition became more strong and unyielding and his spiritual concentration was so intense that he began to remain unaware of this body, true to the saying that "when an aspirant has rightly controlled (his mind thought construct), i.e. merged himself with the supreme self, he is qualified as yogi."

One day while he was explaining some of the Shlokas to a devotee, something struck his mind and he left his home, never to return again. He went straight to Traal. After some time, he went to Shopian, Bijbehara, Kathsu, etc. There he inculcated in the village-folk the spirit of Bhajan-Kirtan and the recital of the name of Lord Shiva. He would usually spend his major time in samadhi.

Aversion Towards Worldly Pleasures

Swamiji's inclination towards the exterior gradually diminished and he would like to remain aloof. He developed aversion towards worldly pleasures and lived a saintly life. Accordingly, he went to Karkotnag (a sacred place in the dense forests of Vailnagbal near village Salia along the Anantnag-Pahalgam road. This is a place in a jungle where all types of wild animals roam day and night. He first went to the residence of late Prasad Joo Salia

(a local-land Lord), where some people were playing cards. Swamiji was not aware of the game but soon learnt that from the second figure to the tenth all lower leaves are being conquered by the higher figure. But, above all, the ace is the highest of all. He was amazed that "oneness, i.e. undifferentiated reality has such a big value." He thought: "Why am I seeking help when I have resolved to consign myself to Him." With this ordeal of full realisation of the Supreme Reality Swamiji reached Karkotnag. He stayed there forlorn without any comfort and began to practise Samadhi under an open sky. The grace of God remains like a shadow to such noble and divine souls. Swamiji remained without food for the first few days. One day a Gujar passed that way and explained to him the dangers inherent in staying in that dense jungle because of wild creatures and non-availability of edibles. Swamiji did not budge an inch and continued to stay there. After all true aspirants are self-contented. Seeing the unflinching resolve of Swamiji the Gujar started sending some milk to him daily and to his surprise he found that his cows began to yield more milk than before. His devotion for Swamiji gradually developed and through him Swamiji's fame spread far and wide. Shri Prasad Joo got constructed a small hut

for him and arranged to send some food to him. Swamiji stayed there for many days and achieved his goal more perfectly than he expected.

From here Swamiji went to various scenic places where meditation was his main aim. He went to Guddar Valley via Kulgam and stayed in a jungle far from the village habitation. Here too he used to get absorbed in meditation -almost always. Devotees would throng to this secluded place also to have his darshan.

In Srinagar, Swamiji would usually stay with Dr. Srikanth, renowned doctor of the city. The untiring service rendered by the doctor Srikanth merited him Swamiji's special compassion. Being the eldest disciple, the doctor was fortunate enough to have learnt different Shaiva scriptures from Swamiji. In turn, Dr. Srikanth taught these to many devotees for almost 40 years in the Vidhyadhar Shaiva Ashram, Karan Nagar, in the mornings. For a brief period, I had an opportunity to be one among the devotees.

Special Attraction for Tullamulla

Swamiji had a special attraction for the shrine of Maa Ragniya at Tullamulla. He would usually say that the serene and tranquil atmosphere of the Tirath would bestow what we cannot get elsewhere. He would spend the major part of the year at this sacred place.

Once Swamiji reached the sacred cave of Sri Amarnath on Ashad Purnima, 1972, Vikrami, with some devotees who had brought some satu (baked maize flour), tea leaves, match boxes, charcoal and woollen blankets with them. The devotees returned next day but Swamiji chose to stay in the cave for some more days. He got himself absorbed in meditation there for full one month. As usual there was snow on every side and shivering cold with no vegetation, except two doves who appear on the front side of the cave on Shravan Purnima and bestow darshan to the devotees. There being no place worth sitting except the cave itself, there was no possibility of preparing meals without some prior arrangement. Swamiji had brought nothing with him except what the devotees had left there. It was later learnt that Swamiji had prepared some tea and nothing else during his one-month stay in the cave.

On the day of the darshan

Contd on Page 20

Contd from Page 19

pilgrims came to the cave as usual. They were stunned to see Swamiji there alone. They bowed before him with reverence and implored him to return to some area of human habitation. After having Nav-Dal Yatra he stayed at Traal for some days and returned to Srinagar where he stayed with Pt. Anand Joo Hashia who was one of his devoted disciples. After his return to Srinagar from Amarnath, Swamiji was a graceful one. His speech was eloquent and he would remain mostly calm unless otherwise persuaded to explain some teachings from Shaiva scriptures.

Composes Ragnyaastuti

Kapal Mochan in Shopian was one of the attractions for Swamiji where he wanted to spend much time in meditation. He inspired the Hindus of Shopian and got the shrine renovated. From there he went to Kaunarnag, Vishnupad, etc.

Swamiji's stay at Manzgam on a hilltop of the Kulgam area, the abode of Goddess Ragniya, needs special mention. It is here that he composed Ragnyaastuti - a famous hymn recited by every devotee. The translation of its first Shaloka is: "Be pleased Goddess Ragnya - epithet of Shakti, Who dominates this whole universe with Her free will; Who is followed by all the Maharishis, Who is seated on a lion having three types of visions (the subject, means of knowledge, the object) who has a big snake around Her neck, a conch, a lotus and a pitcher filled with nectar and commands all the five aspects, i.e. Supreme Consciousness, Divine Bliss, Divine Will, Divine Cognition, Divine Act."

This place was a dense jungle then and every type of wildlife would roam about the place. Swamiji always remained delighted in their company. Swamiji would usually go to Traal (Kamla Ban). One evening he asked Tarawati (one of his staunch devotees) to bring some stale cooked rice and curd, mixed with sauce. She was stunned to hear it, for Swamiji took meals only once a day. However, she got it. He told her that unless she rebuked him and asked him to take the rice immediately, he would not eat it. This is to be done like a mother rebukes her child when he refuses to eat. Smt. Tarawati had no other option but to obey. Apparently Swamiji had a glimpse of his mother in Tarawati and enjoyed an incident of his childhood. During his 13 months of Moanavrat, Swamiji drank only a little quantity of milk.

Swamiji undertook the pilgrimage of Kooti Tirath (Gosain Teng) in Baramulla. He stayed in a hut in Pukhribal (Hari Parbat), Srinagar. He went to Jullundur with one

**Swami Ramji**

of his devotees and after spending some time there he returned and stayed at Thagpahari in Rainawari, Srinagar. At all these and other places throughout the day, flocks of people would come to Swamiji and would recite hymns and learn Shaiva scriptures.

Once in Thagpahari, a visit of Dal Lake was planned on Asad 31, 1988, Vikrami, but Swamiji hesitated. The programme was finally cancelled; instead Swamiji went to Dr Srikanth's house in the city. It was subsequently learnt that cholera had befallen the entire Valley the same day.

The same year Swamiji went to Khonemuh where he took potatoes and milk only. From here he went on pilgrimage to Harsheshwar. Thereafter he went to Sharada Peeth with some disciples. Next year Swamiji went to Hardwar with his cherished disciple Swami Mahadevkak of Ratnipora. He spent appreciable time in meditation on the banks of the Ganga.

Swamiji went to Mahadev with some of his disciples though the passage to the mountain top was very hazardous. The sky was overcast and all apprehended heavy rains. Swamiji took off his clothes and recited Bairav Stotra with high pitch in a full-blowing mood. Clouds vanished and the sun shone and this selected group of disciples enjoyed the nectar of

bliss for which they undertook the pilgrimage.

Social Upliftment

One of the constituents of the Kashmiri Pandits, though very insignificant in number, known as Laeji Battas had suffered at the hands of invaders (history is replete with such events from which our community suffers even at present). They had perforce to do something contrary to the rectitude of conduct. Although these people, even after the expiry of that formidable situation, continued to observe the rituals of their brethren Pandits, yet the increasing Hindu conservatism led the elite to regard those people as repugnant and, hence, were repudiated from the society. Understanding their plight, Swamiji performed a yajna and invited all the intellectuals of the Valley to participate in the Brahmoj. He took the lead and all the intellectuals, academics and elite personalities of the community of the time attended the congregation where these people so-called (Laeji Bhattas) served them in full faith and devotion. They were embraced and thus welcomed in the community without any reservations.

Swamiji was averse to have any Ashram in his name. It was in 2003 Vikrami that an Ashram at

Karan Nagar, Srinagar, was established after a great persuasion by the devotees. He allowed it on the explicit condition that it will not impede his free movement. All the same Swamiji spent much time in Traal and other places despite physical indisposition. In 2006 Vikrami, one day Swamiji told his three disciples that durability of life is unbelievable. It is not known when this mortal frame has to be abandoned. Therefore, they should realise their duty after him (Swamiji's nirvana). Devotees were stunned to hear this and wondered why such an idea should come in his mind unless otherwise necessary. However, among other discourses, he avoided the real issue. In September - October, the same year, Swamiji returned from Traal on his own accord. At the time of departure at Traal he addressed Smt. Tarawati thus: "You have faced many difficulties on account of me, kindly forgive me. You will have to come down to Srinagar soon. Kindly remember to spend the rest of your life like this ascetic and virtuous woman." Tears trickled down her eyes but she could not understand what actually Swamiji meant.

On reaching Srinagar, one devotee enquired how was it that he came to Srinagar without any prior information. To this, Swamiji replied: I do not wish that devotees of Srinagar should roam from pillar to post for me. This could not be understood by them. However, he had hinted about his last journey. On Magh Amavasya of the same year, Swamiji took his meals at 12 o'clock. It was perhaps the first time he finished all his food. He had, of course, some hypertension problem. He attended all the discourse and Bhajans. In the evening, the devotees went to their homes. Only three persons stayed there for the night. Till late in the evening, he narrated mainly episodes and experiences of his life, after leaving his home for good. After saying that it was better to leave this mortal frame because of changing times, he wanted to know the position of stars for the next three days. When given the details, he laughed and went towards the door and stayed there. His devotees felt that Swamiji was feeling uneasy and laid him on bed. Dr Srikanth was called and he gave some medicine. During the night his uneasiness increased. He chose to remain silent and did not utter a word. Next day, all the devotees reached the Ashram. Prominent doctors were called and all types of medicines were administered but of no avail. This condition persisted for almost three days. as if Swamiji was in Samadhi with usual brilliance on his face. During all this period, prayers, Bhajans, aarties and hymns were recited.

Contd on Page 21

Contd from Page 20

On the third day from dawn itself indication of Swamiji's last moments became visible. As Bairav Stuti was being recited, Swami ji opened his eyes and breathed his last. He was 64 years at the time of the nirvana.

After Swamiji's nirvana a trust was constituted under the chairmanships of late Dr. Srikanth and, accordingly, his Jayanti, Pitrapakh Jug and Nirvan Jug were performed on due dates at his Karan Nagar Ashram. It has now been resumed in Shri Swami Vidyadhar Swami Mahadev Shaiv Ashram, Paloura, Jammu.

Shaivism lays much emphasis on devotion. In practice, it is quite pragmatic. It does not ignore objective enjoyment within moral discipline. Any aspirant can have it both in theory and practice. The latter part is more important as outward enjoyment has also to be regarded as a means of concentration in meditation. It needs control on the mind and senses. In stages, mind has to be withdrawn from objective activities and turned towards a subject which gives realisation of the real self. It not only inspires spiritual aim but also shows the principle and methods of achieving it. Trika gives rise to three Upayas, i.e. Shamb Upaya, Shakt Upaya and Anav Upaya. All the three Upayas were practised by Swami Vidyadhar one after the other as is evident from the philosophical lyrics and verses composed by him. Swamiji was the follower of mystic doctrines of the Trika philosophy, so was his exalted rank or might in the field of being a perfect being. Swami Vidyadhar passed an illustrious life. From childhood till his nirvan his life's activities remained commendable while receiving education he showed exemplary intelligence. In his domestic life, he followed noble traditions as a son, husband and brother. But for his detachment, he could not bind himself in worldly ambitions. Bondage is attached with "being" Spiritual leanings were discernible from his childhood.

Swamiji was not only a learned person but also a spontaneous source of non-dual philosophy. Constant meditation had inculcated in him serenity and he was a seer of high order. He would usually remain engrossed in penance. His radiance, both physical and mental, could attract a person to touch his feet and obtain blessings.

Shaiva Incarnate

He was as a matter-of-fact Shiva incarnate Shri Swami Ram's favourite disciple. He would never wish to be known as a Sadhu to get impressed by different shades of people. He would never lose any chance to help the down-trodden and deserving, even at the cost of this own comfort. Many



times, it happened that he did put out his own clothes and offered these to those who needed these. Many a times devotees would offer costly clothes, etc., particularly on his birthdays. He would instantly distribute these to the needy and would never keep these for himself. After abandoning his home, he never touched money. At Tullamulla, once a business tycoon offered a handsome amount to Swamiji and he totally refused it. Similarly, at Shri Amarnath cave an Englishman tourist offered him some money clothes, gold and cigarettes. He distributed those among those who accompanied that English tourist. He had no material ambition whatsoever. He regarded the construction of an Ashram a bondage but could not help it being established on the request of some ardent devotees, though it had at once caught fire as he had wished.

Swamiji never looked to his wife after abandoning his home and treated every woman (aged or young) like his mother. The absence of worldly desires, or passions was visible from Swamiji's minutes, human activities. Indifference to this world was one of the principles of his Sadhana. His eldest son died in the prime of his youth. On hearing of it Swamiji did not get disturbed a bit. Simply he smiled after looking towards his audience which was present there.

He was an ardent follower of daily rituals an would never miss to observe daily routines prescribed by the Shastras. Apart from Shaivism he had full command over other philosophies like Vedanta. He would say that difference is in the path of practice

only; otherwise, all these roads lead to God.

Non-dual experience was fully practised by Swamiji. Because of this he could stay in isolated places, in jungles and dangerous caves and places where wild animals would roam frequently. In Karkotnag, wild bears and snakes would pass near him. In Manzgam, a bear was on an apple tree dropping the fruit. Swamiji collected the apples and returned to the hut. In Kamlaban, he was in deep meditation during the night. Next morning he found a big snake under his pheran and asked the snake. "Could you sleep with me comfortably for the whole night?" In Parimahar Swamiji stayed several days alone, without any fear of snakes and reptiles. These and similar other instances are testimony to the fact that he had overcome duality.

Swamiji's Watchword

Swamiji would never remain negligent when a chance of meditation came to him. "Udhimo Bairava" (elevation of consciousness) is Shiva, was his watchword for both worldly and spiritual functions. His conviction was that limitations and ego of an individual can be wiped off only with the effort of Vimarsha. He would love to prolong his stay for the purpose of meditation in a clear, clean, silent attractive environment. He would enjoy nature's beauty, the chirping of birds and their notes.

Swamiji would also love to hear music. For this purpose, Shri Shamlal Kotwal would usually play Santur and sing for him. Though he was not conversant with Persian yet he would understand those songs and would

explain its meaning to others.

He would treat everybody alike, whether known to him or not. Unusually, the people would come to him to get themselves enlightened as far as spiritual problems were concerned. He would love to reply and explain to the satisfaction of the aspirants. He would, however wish that the people should never rub their forehead in front of him: but the divine attraction of Swamiji would lead them to bow before him

Swamiji's love for children was unique. He would play with children and one would be surprised when he would act like a child. He was an eloquent orator and his expression was so interesting that listeners would forget their self.

Swamiji's predictions and their validity we were perfect. His acquisition of supernormal powers was marvellous. He would never wish the people to come to him for the fulfilment of worldly ambitions. It is a different thing, it by way of Ashirvaad and blessings somebody's wishes would be fulfilled. He would never wish to establish his prominence even if he was powerful enough to do so. There here are living examples of these predictions. Even at present the mention of the same are voluminous. He was not interested in publicity. There are many stories recounted about the miracles he performed during his life time. Its narrative here would be contrary to the saintly style of life he lived.

The life history of this illustrious Swami was one of the pioneering and practical illustrations of virtue for the mankind in general and the community in particular. In the attainment of perfection in Shaivism, his name remains an everlasting guiding factor. He had exalted spiritual traditions through his verses in Sanskrit. Poetry is possible only with divine bliss. The poetic works available at present in Sanskrit composed by Swamiji are: Guru Stuti hymn in praise of his preceptor Swami Ram; Nirvan Villap; philosophical hymn to Maa Ragniya which is highly popular in Kashmir; Kalika Stuti hymn to Goddess Kalika and Saraswati Stuti; philosophical hymn to Maa Saraswati.

The meaning and the philosophy embedded in these poems lead one to believe that Swamiji had attained the highest spiritual elevation in the Shaiva philosophy. Besides, the meaningful material provided in these verses it exhorts thinkers, intellectuals, saints and aspirants and devotees to carry forward the torch to preserve the Kashmir Shaiva Trika philosophy.

(Courtesy: Koshur Samachar, December 2001)

Caste & the Crisis of Hindu Identity: Time for Reform & Renewal

S.K. KHUSHU

India, the cradle of one of the world's most profound spiritual traditions, today finds itself divided, not by foreign invasions or ideological conflicts, but by deep internal fractures in its religious and social fabric. At the heart of this division lies the caste system: a construct that, though never intended to divide, has evolved into one of the greatest internal threats to Hindu unity and dignity.

The Origin and Misuse of Caste

The caste system, or varna vyavastha, as originally conceived in Hindu scriptures, was never intended to be a rigid hierarchy based on birth. The Bhagavad Gita speaks of four varnas—Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya, and Shudra—based on qualities (guna) and actions (karma), not lineage. In fact, great sages and seers like Valmiki, Vyasa, and even Maharishi Satyakam Jabala hailed from humble or uncertain origins, yet were venerated as spiritual luminaries.

Over centuries, however, this dynamic social model became distorted into a rigid, hereditary hierarchy. Spiritual growth and social mobility were curtailed. The system was hijacked by narrow-minded orthodoxy and misused by feudal interests. Instead of unity, it bred exclusion. Instead of compassion, it sowed humiliation. The so-called lower castes were pushed to the margins of society, denied education, temple entry, and dignity—grossly violating the very dharma that teaches the presence of the Divine in all beings.

A Community Divided Against Itself

This unnatural rigidity and the humiliation it caused led many from the oppressed sections of Hindu society to feel alienated from their own religion. Seeking dignity and equality, many chose to embrace other faiths where they hoped to find respect and opportunity—whether it was Islam, Christianity, or more recently, Buddhism. The fault lay not in their decision, but in our collective failure to uphold the values of inclusion and justice.

Let us ask ourselves honestly—who pushed them away? Was it some foreign power? No. It was our own social apathy, our silence in the face of caste-based oppression, our refusal to see all Hindus as equals in the eyes of God.



The Reservation Paradox

Post-Independence, the Indian State made sincere efforts to correct historical wrongs through affirmative action. Reservations in education, employment, and politics were introduced to uplift the Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, and later, the Other Backward Classes. But over time, this too became politically manipulated and socially polarizing.

Now, even if the caste system were to be officially denounced or abandoned, those historically oppressed might not agree to erase these classifications—because the reservation system has become their lifeline. It offers security, opportunity, and a safeguard in an otherwise unequal system. They fear that any rollback will lead to a return of systemic neglect and discrimination.

Moreover, the benefits of these policies are not always reaching the most deserving. Many poor Hindus from so-called "upper castes" or marginalized sub-castes often find themselves ignored. This fosters further division and resentment.

A Call for Reform and Unity

We must acknowledge this reality and frame our actions with wisdom. The solution is not to dismantle the safety net that supports the underprivileged, but to expand it—to include all poor, regardless of caste. Economic status, not caste identity, should increasingly become the measure of affirmative action. Some progress has been made through

the introduction of the Economically Weaker Section (EWS) quota, but much more needs to be done.

A sound mechanism must be instituted, transparent, accountable, and apolitical, to ensure that benefits reach the truly needy and are not hijacked by vote-bank politics. At the same time, social reform must accompany policy reform. Caste-based discrimination must be denounced unequivocally—not just in law, but in practice, in our temples, homes, and hearts.

Reclaiming Hinduism's Spiritual Universality

Let us remind our brothers and sisters—especially those feeling estranged from Hinduism—that our religion at its core is not a religion of birth, but of spiritual evolution. Hinduism never excludes anyone from the path to God. Saints have emerged from all walks of life. God-realization knows no caste, no community, no social rank.

Changing religion in pursuit of equality might seem like a solution, but what is truly gained? Often, it is merely a shift in label, not in reality. Discrimination can exist in all societies and faiths. But spiritual richness, depth of philosophy, and freedom of thought—these are unmatched in Sanatana Dharma. We must embrace and live these ideals, not just preach them.

A Movement of Awareness and Reform

It is time to launch a social

awakening—not through confrontation or blame, but through compassion, education, and inclusion. Let us:

Reaffirm that all Hindus, regardless of caste, are one community.

Ensure every Hindu child learns
of our saints from all backgrounds.

Promote inter-caste marriages as a path to unity.

Empower and support spiritual and social leaders who work for caste harmony.

Encourage every temple and religious institution to uphold equality in practice.

Conclusion: Unity is Strength
Hinduism, once a unifying force of profound depth and spiritual wisdom, has been weakened not by external enemies, but by our own divisions. The caste system in its distorted form has become a social sin that must be atoned for—not by erasing history, but by writing a new chapter of equality, unity, and shared pride in our common heritage.

Let us be the generation that ends this divide. Let us bring every estranged soul back not just to the Hindu fold, but to the realization that we are all children of the same Divine.

Only then will Hinduism not merely survive—but thrive, as a united, inclusive, and spiritually vibrant force for generations to come.

(The author is a retired government employee)



परमशैवाचार्यश्रीअभनिवगुप्तकृत तदेहस्थदेवताचक्रस्तोत्रम् (DEHASTH-DEVTA-CHAKR-STOTRAM)

A.K. RAZDAN

आत्मीयवषियभोगैरिन्द्रियदेव्यःसदाहृद
मभोजे।
अभपूजयन्त्यितंचन्मयानन्दभैरवंवन्दे॥४॥

I bow to चन्मयानन्दभैरव - the blissful
Bhairava of pure consciousness
- Whom the इन्द्रियदेव्या (the goddesses
of the senses) continually worship in
the lotus of the heart with the enjoyments
of their own objects.

Here Abhinavagupta personifies the
heart-experience: the sensory powers
(इन्द्रियदेव्या) themselves offer their objects
as worship to the central Consciousness
- चन्मयानन्दभैरव (literally: Bhairava of
consciousness and bliss). This is a
quintessential Trika insight, sense-
enjoyment need not be alienating; if
the senses become offerings to the
inner Lord, भोग is transformed into पूजा
and then into प्रत्यभजिज्ञा. The image of
the हृदमभोज (heart-lotus) centralises
the stotra's message: the heart
is the microcosmic temple where
sense-powers are consecrated
and converted into recognition.

शक्ति/ कला/ Faculty : हृदय - इन्द्रियशक्तयः
- अभवियक्तचिदानन्द (heart - senses
as expressions of self-bliss)
उदयावभासचरवणलीलां विश्वस्यया
करोत्यनशिम।

आनन्दभैरवीं तां वमिरशरूपामहंवन्दे
॥५॥

“अहंवन्दे I bow to आनन्दभैरवी, Who -
being वमिरशरूपा - unceasingly
performs the play of the universe's
उदय (arising), अवभास (shining forth),
and टरेवल (re-assimilation).”

The करोत्यनशिम moves the meaning
from a mere descriptive to a
direct affirmation: She herself
is the unbroken करता of the cosmic
play. Identified as वमिरशरूपा, आनन्दभैरवी
is the dynamic aspect of प्रकाश
(Shiva), showing that
manifestation is not an inert
product but the vibrant expression
of pure consciousness's bliss.
In Trika Shaivism, this cycle
- emergence, revelation, and
reabsorption - is the pulsation
(स्पन्द) of reality itself, an ever-
present rhythm in which the

universe is born, sustained, and
dissolved within the eternal awareness
of the Self.

शक्ति/ कला/ Faculty : This verse reveals
the Goddess as the eternal faculty of
manifestation, illumination, and
reabsorption. The sequence - उदय
(emergence), अवभास (self-revelation), and
चरवण (re-internalization or savoring)
- is not mechanical but a living,
conscious act. Through the faculty of
वमिरश (self-reflective awareness), the
universe arises, shines in the light of
consciousness, and merges back into
the source unceasingly (अनशिम). This
dynamic is active in all four states -
जागृत् (waking), स्वप्न (dream), सुषुप्ति (deep
sleep), and त्रय (the transcendental).
अर्चयत भैरवयानशिचयकुसुमैः सुरेशपत्र
स्था।

प्रणमामि बुद्धिरूपां ब्रह्माणीं तामहंसतत
म्॥६॥

“I continually bow to ब्रह्माणी, the form
of बुद्धि (intellect), who - seated upon
the lotus-petal of the lord of gods -

worships भैरव with flowers of firm resolve
(नशिचय-कुसुम).”

Here the faculty of discriminative
intelligence (बुद्धि) is personified as
ब्रह्माणी. The devotional trope -
“worshipping भैरव with flowers of नशिचय”
- means that unwavering resolve and
discriminate insight are themselves
offered as the highest oblation. In Trika
practice, बुद्धि cleanses and illumines
the field of experience so that the inner
deities are seen as one's own nature.
The image also teaches that knowledge
(बुद्धि) is not an abstract faculty: it is a
शक्ति that participates in worship and
transforms experience.

भाव/ कला/ Faculty : बुद्धि/ नशिचय (intellect
/ firm resolve)

कुरुते भैरवपूजामनलदलस्थाऽभिमिन-
कुसुमैर्या।

नित्यमहंकृतरूपां वन्दे तां शाङ्करीमम्बाम्॥७॥

“I bow to शाङ्करी अम्बा, ever of the form of
the self-sense अहं-कृत (I-maker), who,
seated on the fire-petal (अनलदलस्था),
performs the worship of भैरव with the

flowers of अभिमिन (self-assertion).”

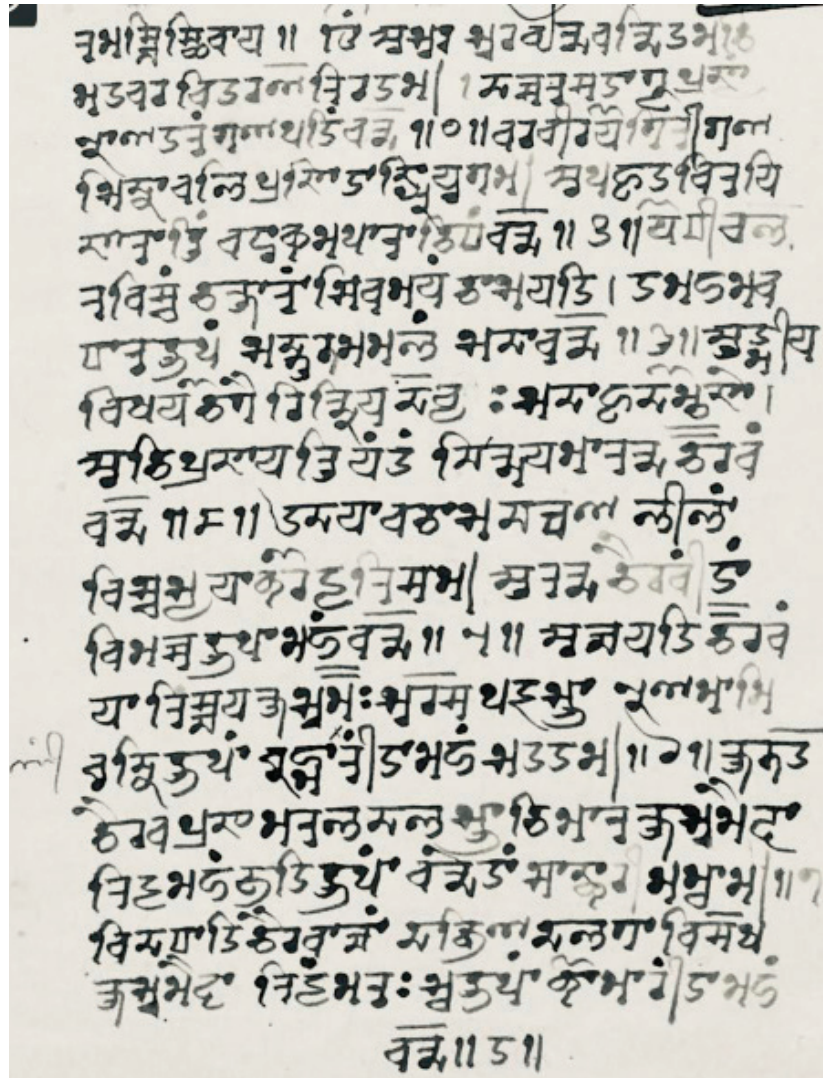
This verse confronts the deep
psychological faculty अहंकार (sense
of “I do / I am the agent”) by
sanctifying it: शाङ्करी अम्बा
transforms the sense of agency
into an offering. The location
on a fire-petal (अनलदल) signals
purification by inner tapas (अनल/
fire), where the egoic tendency
is offered (अर्पण) and thereby
refined into an instrument of
devotion. Abhinavagupta's subtle
teaching is that even the egoic
“I” can become a doorway to
recognition when it turns its
assertion into worship.


भाव/ कला/ टFaculty : अहंकार / अनल-शक्ति
(ego-sense / fire-transformative
power)

अचतितशक्त्यै नमः॥

(The Author is a
Sadak, keen researcher of
Kashmir Shaiva Darshan, an
authority on the
Shardascript of Kashmir
and Sanskrit scriptures of
Kashmir)

to be contd ...





Winner of Times Food Award




SAMAVAR

CLUB BAR & RESTAURANT

ISO 22000:2005


Authentic Kashmiri & Multicuisine

PROVIDES ALL KASHMIRI SPICE & DRY FRUIT PRODUCTS





Conference



Birthday



Wedding



Luncheons

FULLY EQUIPPED

BANQUET

HALLS



Contact : 9654424141, 9811424141 B-35, Pampooch Enclave, G.K.I, New Delhi - 110043