

Shri Amarnathji Cave Shrine

Where Amreshwar Awakens in Ice & Silence

ANUJA KHUSHU

High above the bustling valleys of Kashmir, beyond dense cedar forests and snow-glazed ridgelines lies the Amarnath Ji Cave Shrine, one of the most spiritually resonant Shaiva tirthas of India. Situated at an altitude of 3,888 meters, this natural cave hosts the ice-lingam of Lord Shiva that forms and dissolves cyclically with the lunar phases, reflecting Shiva's cosmic presence. Though modern records of the shrine are sparse, its sanctity is firmly embedded in ancient Hindu texts, especially the Amriteshwar Mahatmya and the Bringes Shambhita, two pivotal Kashmiri Shaiva scriptures.

The pilgrimage to Amarnath begins from either Pahalgam or Baltal, both of which serve as base camps. The journey involves challenging treks through steep slopes, forests, and narrow mountain paths. Despite its physically demanding nature, the pilgrimage remains a test of faith for the devotees, who often endure harsh conditions to seek the blessings of Lord Shiva.

The naturally formed ice Shiva Lingam is considered the most important deity in the cave. This

lingam is not an artifact of human hands or ritual construction but a Swayambhu—self-manifested—symbolizing Shiva in his purest, formless essence. It is an enduring emblem of cosmic cycles, impermanence, and the silent power of divine consciousness.

It's growing and shrinking in size with the changing seasons symbolises the cyclical nature of time and the impermanence of life. The ice lingam is revered as the embodiment of Lord Shiva, and pilgrims come to seek his divine grace.

The Amar Katha: An Esoteric Revelation

The spiritual narrative of Amarnath begins with the Shiva Purana, which recounts how Mahadeva chose this cave to disclose to Goddess Parvati the secret of immortality—Amar Katha. Wishing for absolute seclusion, Shiva discarded every cosmic companion: Nandi, the bull, was left at Pahalgam; the Moon, at Chandanwari; Sheshnag, at the high-altitude lake; and Ganesha, at Mahagunas Top. Finally, at Panchtarni, he let go of the five elements, merging into the stillness of the cave to reveal the most sacred truth.

But, to their surprise, an immortal pair of pigeons, who were created by the power of the Amrit, being



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Ancient Texts That Mention Amarnath

Amriteshwar Mahatmya

Part of the Bringes Shambhita, describes the Amarnath cave as the site where Shiva revealed the secret of Amar Katha to Parvati.

Rajatarangini

(Kalhana, 12th century CE) – Refers to Lord Shiva's worship in Kashmir valleys; hints at a long-standing Shaiva tradition.

Nilamata Purana

Speaks of the holiness of Kashmir and its tirthas, offering symbolic context to places like Amarnath.



“

“The cave is not visited, it is approached with surrender.”

“Here, snow is not frozen water. It is frozen prayer.”

— Amriteshwar Mahatmya

“

The snow beyond the five streams is no snow; it is the breath of Mahadeva made visible to the inner eye.”

— Bringes Shambhita poetically captures the cave's mystery

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Pilgrims on their way to perform Puja of Shiv Lingam at the holy cave Shire of Amarnath on the Baltal route

overheard by creatures like pigeons or doves, deeper interpretations drawn from Shaiva Agama literature suggest that this Katha is non-verbal, a transmission of the param tattva (supreme truth) through inner silence. The cave itself becomes a cosmic womb (garbha griha) where the transcendental secret is realised through surrender, not speech.

The Yatra Through Sacred Geography:

The journey to Amarnath is not merely physical but deeply symbolic. Each stop embodies a metaphysical shedding of worldly layers—culminating in the union with the Supreme.

1. Pahalgam (Bail Gaon):

Associated with Shiva leaving his bull, Nandi, it represents the first renunciation—of dharma and the material order.

2. Chandanwari:

Here, Shiva is believed to have removed the moon from his jata (hair). This symbolizes detachment from time and ego. The first base of the Yatra, it represents the beginning of the pilgrimage—where the devotee sheds worldly distractions to embark on the sacred journey. Surrounded by lush meadows and the murmuring of rivers, it embodies the purifying aspect of the Yatra.

3. Pissu Top

Linked with the victory of the Devas over Asuras. The ascent here represents overcoming inner dualities and tamas.

4. Sheshnag

Named after the serpentine lake, it recalls the abandonment of Vasuki, Shiva's naga. Water here symbolizes kundalini energy, hinting at yogic sublimation. Sheshnag symbolizes the connection between the physical and spiritual realms. The lake's tranquil blue waters offer a moment of reflection before the final ascent.

5. Panchtarni

The convergence of five streams—representing the pancha mahabhutas (five elements)—signifies Shiva's surrender of physical existence before entering the final state of spiritual reality.

Situated at an altitude of around 3,500 meters, Panchtarni is the last

base camp before the final leg to the Amarnath Cave. The five streams here are said to represent the five elements (earth, water, fire, air, and ether), reflecting the holistic nature of the pilgrimage.

6. Amarnath Cave (Amreshwar Tirtha)

The culmination, where the ice lingam (swayambhu himalinga) stands. This is Shiva in his absolute form—pure, formless, and timeless.

Amarnath in Shaiva Scriptures: 1. Amriteshwar Mahatmya (Part of the Brhad Amarnath Mahatmya):

Found within certain regional recensions of the Skanda Purana, the Amriteshwar Mahatmya provides a sacred account of Amarnath's holiness. It describes the cave as the "Teertha of Immortality," where Shiva transmitted the Amar Katha—the secret of eternal life—to Parvati. According to the text:

"Yatra Shambhuh swayam lingam himarupam pradarshayet, tatra devyah katha divya amaratvam prakashayet."

(Amriteshwar Mahatmya, Sloka 22)

"Where Shambhu himself manifests as a lingam of ice, there he reveals to the Goddess the divine tale of immortality)

2. Bringesh Samhita

An important regional Shaiva text from Kashmir, the Bringesh Samhita (sometimes also spelled Bhringisha Samhita) extensively catalogues sacred sites in the valley. It mentions Amarnath (Amreshwar) as the highest Shaiva tirtha in the Himalayan belt.

The Samhita also classifies Amarnath as a moksha-pradayak kshetra—a liberating shrine akin to Kashi and Kedarnath. It emphasizes that the mere darshan of the Amarnath lingam can cleanse lifetimes of karma and lead to spiritual liberation (moksha).

"The ice beyond Panchtarni is not frozen water, but stilled time—only the still mind can behold it. The snow beyond the five streams is no snow; it is the breath of Mahadeva made visible to the inner eye." (The

regional Shaiva text Bhrangeesh Samhita poetically captures the cave's mystery)

Scriptural Roots in Kashmiri Texts 1. Nilamata Purana:

Another important ancient text that reinforces the sanctity of Kashmir's tirthas is the Nilamata Purana (circa 6th–8th century CE), which provides a detailed description of the valley's geography, sacred sites, and rituals. Though it does not name Amarnath directly, it extols the Himalayan region as the abode of Shiva and elaborates on the importance of pilgrimage to snow-clad shrines. It states:

"Iha devanam ayatanani aivalani mahanti cha"

("Here lie the great shrines of the gods, especially the glorious Shaiva ones.")

— Nilamata Purana, Verse 1025

This verse resonates with the cultural and theological framework that venerates Kashmir as a sacred geography—a setting where deities manifest through natural forms like lakes, forests, and caves. In this sense, the Amarnath Cave emerges as a natural culmination of Kashmir's deeply spiritual terrain.

2. Rajatarangini: The Rajatarangini, a 12th-century Sanskrit chronicle composed by Kalhana, makes one of the earliest historical references to the shrine. It notes that Queen Suryamati, consort of King Ananta of Kashmir (11th century), made donations to the cave shrine, affirming its importance as an established pilgrimage destination even in the medieval period.

Mughal Recognition:

Ain-i-Akbari:

In the 16th century, Mughal historian Abul Fazl, in his encyclopedic work Ain-i-Akbari, refers to a mysterious cave in the north where a naturally forming ice lingam appears during certain months of the year—a clear reference to the Amarnath Cave.

Royal Patronage:

While Amarnath had always attracted ascetics and wandering

saints seeking solitude, the 19th century saw its transformation into an organised pilgrimage under Dogra royal patronage.

● Maharaja Gulab Singh, the founder of the Dogra dynasty, recognised the shrine's cultural importance and extended his support to secure the pilgrimage routes, making access safer for devotees.

● His successor, Maharaja Ranbir Singh, played a pivotal role by formally institutionalizing the Yatra, allocating state resources for its protection, and constructing resting stations, or chowkis, to facilitate the arduous journey.

● Subsequent rulers such as Pratap Singh and Hari Singh further promoted the pilgrimage, weaving it into the collective identity of Jammu and Kashmir.

Pilgrimage & Practice:

The yatra coincides with Shravan Purnima, and is coordinated with ancient lunar calendars. Rituals include:

● Darshan of the Ice Lingum

● Aarti performed by priests of the Dashnami Naga tradition, with ancient links to Adi Shankaracharya

● Offerings of Bel Patra, Water, and Ashes

Shri Amarnathji Yatra is a highly organised event, overseen by the Jammu and Kashmir Shri Amarnathji Shrine Board (SASB). Every year, thousands of devotees undertake the pilgrimage to pay homage to Lord Shiva. While the journey itself remains arduous, it is accompanied by a deep sense of devotion, offering a life-changing experience for many.

The pilgrimage to Amarnath involves several rituals and observances. Devotees undertake a 40-day pilgrimage, now cut to 38 days, during the summer months (usually July to August), with the date for departure and arrival varying each year based on the lunar calendar. During this period, pilgrims chant the sacred "Bum Bum Bhole" mantra, often in large groups, to invoke blessings from Lord Shiva.

Shri Amarnath ji Yatra 2025:

Over 2 lakh devotees have darshan so far: LG

THE CHANCELLOR DESK
Jammu

The annual Amarnath Yatra, one of India's most revered Hindu pilgrimages, began on July 3 and will culminate on August 9, spanning a total of 38 days this year. As the second week of the Yatra unfolds, over two lakh pilgrims have already had darshan of the sacred ice lingam of Lord Shiva at the Amarnath cave shrine, situated at an altitude of 3,888 meters in the Himalayas of Jammu and Kashmir.

Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha extended heartfelt greetings to the devotees. "With Baba Amarnath Ji's blessings, the holy pilgrimage has crossed the 2 lakh mark today. This is a sacred journey of a lifetime, and I welcome all the devotees to discover and experience the divinity. Har Har Mahadev," the LG said in a statement.

Despite heightened security following the tragic terror attack on a bus of pilgrims near Pahalgam earlier this year, the spirit of the Yatra remains undeterred. Pilgrims from across the country continue to arrive in thousands each day, undertaking the journey via the two main routes—Pahalgam and Baltal.

According to official figures, more than 93,000 yatrish had performed darshan by the evening of July 7, with a record 23,857 devotees visiting the cave in a single day. Cumulative numbers by July

8 had crossed 100,000, with pilgrims expressing both satisfaction and gratitude for the seamless arrangements made by the administration.

The Jammu and Kashmir administration, in coordination with central security agencies, has deployed over 40,000 personnel, including members of the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF), Jammu and Kashmir Police, and disaster response teams. Pilgrims are being monitored in real-time through Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) tags, which help track movement and ensure quick emergency response. Facial recognition systems, drones, and mobile command centres have been introduced along the route for enhanced safety.

The yatra, which resumed last year after a pandemic-induced break, has also seen a digital makeover in 2025. Over 3.5 lakh pilgrims have registered through an online portal launched by the Shri Amarnath Shrine Board. E-KYC verification, Aadhaar-linked health certificates, and mobile app updates are now standard for all yatrish, streamlining the journey and enabling better management of pilgrim flow.

The Yatra has also brought an economic boost to the region. Hotels and lodges in Srinagar, Pahalgam, and Sonamarg are running near full capacity, and thousands of locals have found seasonal employment as pony owners, porters, cooks, and volunteers at community kitchens. Langars (free food stalls) dot the route, offering simple, hot meals to exhausted pilgrims.

With 'Har Har Mahadev' on their lips, devotees march fearlessly

ANUJA KHUSHU

Neither chilling winds, steep climbs, nor the looming shadow of terror has shaken the resolve of thousands of devotees making their way to the holy Amarnath cave this year. As the annual Yatra enters its second week, what stands out more than the numbers is the collective spirit of the pilgrims—undaunted, prayerful, and profoundly determined.

Following a deadly terror attack near Pahalgam earlier this year that claimed the lives of several yatrish, concerns around security were at the forefront. Yet the incident, far from deterring pilgrims, appears to have only strengthened their faith.

"This is not the first time we are hearing of such dangers. But when Baba Barfani calls, how can we say no?" says Neelam Joshi, a schoolteacher from Bhopal, trudging slowly along the Baltal route with her two teenage children. "We're walking with faith, not fear."

It's a sentiment echoed across groups, camps, and langars lining the Yatra routes. For many, this journey is not just a spiritual obligation but a declaration of courage and belief. Ravi Sharma, who travelled from Rajasthan with 30 others, said his group never once considered cancelling their trip. "Some relatives tried to stop us, but our hearts were already at the cave. It's not bravery; it's devotion."

Despite heightened alerts and unprecedented security arrangements—drones in the sky, armed

personnel at every checkpoint, RFID tracking, and facial recognition—pilgrims speak not of fear, but of protection. Many express gratitude toward the administration and security forces, describing a sense of safety and structure throughout their journey.

"There are cameras, CRPF jawans everywhere, and medical camps too. It feels more like a guided spiritual expedition than a dangerous trek," said Ankit Verma, a software engineer from Noida on his first Yatra.

Local volunteers, too, have become part of this resilient tapestry. Youth from nearby villages have set up free food stalls and help desks, often greeting pilgrims with chants of "Har Har Mahadev!" and cups of hot tea.

The pilgrimage, stretching from the twin routes of Baltal (14 km steep ascent) and Pahalgam (43 km traditional route), has always tested physical and mental limits. But this year, it is also a test of national spirit—and the pilgrims are answering with unwavering steps.

Even senior citizens are unfazed. Maheshwari Devi, 68, from Varanasi, is on her sixth visit. "If this is my last Yatra, so be it. I want to see Baba's ice lingam with my own eyes again," she says, resting on a rock along the trail. Her walking stick, like her words, bears the strength of devotion.

As chants of "Bam Bam Bhole" ring through the valleys and snow-clad ridges, it becomes clear that the journey is more than just physical. It is a testimony to the collective resilience of ordinary people with extraordinary faith. No matter the odds, the pilgrims are coming—and they are unshaken.



TRIBUTE

Himalayan Heritage Foundation pays rich tribute to Smt. Seema Kachroo, W/o Sh. Surinder Kachroo, (President, Swami Ram Shiv Trika Ashram, Naseeb Nagar, Janipur, Jammu) originally from R/o Narparistan, Srinagar, Kashmir and presently at H.No.4, Lane No.6, Naseeb Nagar, Janipur Jammu who left her mortal frame on 9th July, 2025 at Flat No. 710, Tower-B, Majestic Towers, Kharadi Pune. She was an ardent devotee of Maha Maheshwaracharya Swami Ram Ji Maharaj and lived her life as devoted Trika adherent of Kashmir Shaiva Darshan. Her dedication towards the Dharmic activities at Swami Ram Shiv Trika Ashram, Naseeb Nagar, Janipur was matchless.

Himalayan Heritage Foundation expresses heartfelt condolence and grief on the sad and untimely demise of Smt Seema Kachroo Ji and prays to Para Bharava Shiva and Swami Ram Ji Maharaj that her pious and noble soul attains Shiv Loka and also prays that Para Bhiarava and Swami Ram Ji Maharaj gives enough courage and strength to the family and friends to bear this irreparable loss.

**Om Para Bhairavai Namah
Om Para Bhattarikai Namah
Jai swami Ram Ji Maharaj**

**Grief Stricken
Dr. Mahesh Kaul
Chairman**

Himalayan Heritage Foundation



TENTH DAY KRIYA

With profound grief and sorrow, we inform the sad and sudden demise of dear **Seema Kachroo** w/o Sh Surinder Kachroo originally R/o Narparistan, Fateh Kadal, Srinagar, presently at HNO. 4, Lane 6, Naseeb Nagar, Janipur, Jammu who left for her heavenly abode on 8th July 2025 at Flat No. 710, Tower-B, Majestic Tower, Kharadi, Pune.

Tenth Day Kriya will be performed on 17th July, 2025 (Thursday) at Alandi Ghaton the Indrayani River, Pune at 11 am.

Grief stricken:

Surinder Kachroo-Husband (8484981566)
Rajni Chaku w/o Lt M.N Chaku (Sister-in-law)
Diya and Sahil – Daughter-in-law and son (7767944557)

Sneha and Deeraj Hashia
– Daughter and son-in-law
Shurya and Viyon (Grand Children)
Hashiyas, Kouls, Kaws, Rainas and Nagaris

India set to become 3rd-largest economy: PM Modi

THE CHANCELLOR DESK
Jammu

Prime Minister Narendra Modi, addressing thousands of newly recruited central government employees under the Rozgar Mela, reaffirmed his government's commitment to clean and transparent recruitment, saying, "No recommendation, no corruption."

Over 51,000 appointment letters were distributed during the event, which was conducted virtually and linked to locations across India.

In a statement issued by PIB here today, it stated that among those recruited are individuals who will now serve in the Indian Railways, the Postal Department, health services, financial sectors, and industry-linked roles. "Your departments may be different, but the goal is one – service to the nation. Our guiding principle is 'Citizen First,'" the Prime Minister told the new recruits.

Significantly, appointments also included youth from Jammu and Kashmir, who were welcomed as part of the expanding drive to ensure inclusive development and opportunities across all regions. Union Minister Dr. Jitendra Singh, also present, emphasized the growing participation of youth from J&K in national-level services, a development seen as part of the broader integration and economic upliftment of the region.

PM Modi described India's demographic and democratic strengths as its "limitless assets," adding, "This power of youth is both the greatest asset and the strongest guarantee for Bharat's bright future."

He shared that during his recent five-nation tour, world leaders consistently praised the energy and capabilities of Indian youth.

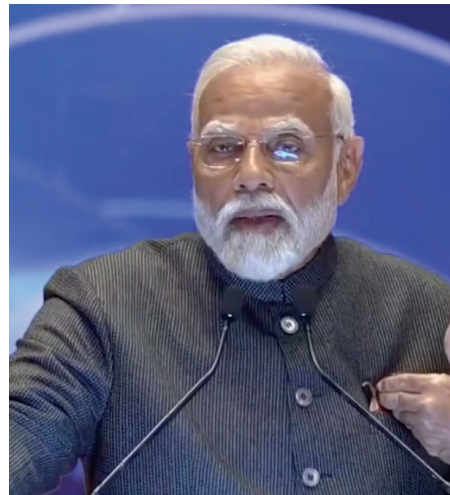
Several recent international agreements in defence, pharmaceuticals, digital tech, and rare earth minerals, he noted, will create new job opportunities at home and abroad. He also highlighted the changing nature of work in the 21st century, underlining the government's sustained focus on preparing youth through startup promotion, skilling initiatives, and innovation-driven policies.

Among the key announcements was the Employment Linked Incentive Scheme, under which the government will offer 15,000 towards the first salary of youth entering private sector jobs. The scheme, with an outlay of 1 lakh crore, aims to create 3.5 crore jobs.

Manufacturing remains a cornerstone of the government's job creation strategy. Citing record outputs in electronics and defence production, PM Modi said the Production Linked Incentive (PLI) Scheme alone had generated 11 lakh jobs. India now boasts nearly 300 mobile phone manufacturing units and has become the world's largest producer of locomotives.

The Mission Manufacturing, announced in the latest Union Budget, is another step to energize industrial job growth. "These jobs didn't appear out of thin air—they came because young Indians are working harder, smarter, and with more dedication than ever before," the Prime Minister noted.

PM Modi laid out the wide spectrum of employment being generated through welfare schemes. From construction under PM Awas Yojana (4 crore homes



Distributes 51,000 appointment letters at 16th Rozgar mela

Calls youth the "strongest guarantee" of Viksit Bharat

Says startup, innovation, & research ecosystem boosting youth capabilities

built) to rural toilet infrastructure (12 crore units), each initiative has created layers of employment—from masons and plumbers to raw material suppliers.

Similarly, the Ujjwala LPG scheme, PM Surya Ghar Muft Bijli Yojana (solar

rooftops), and the 'Drone Didi' programme are not only improving rural livelihoods but opening new sectors—such as drone manufacturing and solar energy—for employment.

"Under the Surya Ghar scheme, every rooftop becomes a power plant," he said, adding that this had boosted demand for engineers, panel manufacturers, and maintenance services.

The Lakhpati Didi initiative, aimed at creating 3 crore rural women entrepreneurs, has already seen 1.5 crore women cross the 1 lakh annual income mark. PM Modi praised schemes like PM SVANidhi and PM Vishwakarma, which support street vendors and traditional artisans, respectively, as game-changers in promoting self-employment.

India, the Prime Minister said, is firmly on track to become the world's third-largest economy. "In just 10 years, 25 crore Indians have risen out of poverty," he stated, attributing this shift to employment-led welfare. He cited a recent ILO report and recognition from the World Bank that described India's progress in social security and reduction of inequality as exemplary.

Calling the recruits "partners in national progress," he urged them to uphold the spirit of public service, saying: "Now that you have this opportunity, expectations are higher, your responsibility is greater. Your growth is my satisfaction."

The PM concluded by encouraging the new government employees to continuously upgrade their skills via the iGOT platform, and reminded them that the next two decades are crucial for shaping a Viksit Bharat (Developed India).

Rozgar Mela a major outreach to create employment avenues: Jitin Prasada

THE CHANCELLOR DESK
Jammu

As part of the 16th edition of the Rozgar Mela, a major employment outreach program was organized here Saturday. Minister of State for Commerce and Industry, Electronics and Information Technology Jitin Prasada participated in the event from the Convention Centre. The appointment letters were given to the newly appointed candidates by the MoS in the presence of Lok Sabha Member Parliament Jugal Kishore.

The event, aimed at providing employment opportunities to the youth, saw participation from job aspirants and new



appointees. Addressing the gathering, the MoS highlighted the Centre's continued efforts to address youth unemployment and enhance access to skill-based

and merit-driven recruitment. "These Rozgar Melas are not just recruitment drives, but part of a larger strategy to support youth and bridge employment

MoS participates in Rozgar Mela from Convention Centre, Jammu

gaps," the minister said.

In a statement issued by PIB here today, the Union minister stated that the Rozgar Mela is an initiative towards building a robust and inclusive workforce contributing to the nation's development. Emphasizing the transformative role of such initiatives, he noted that these job appointments not only provide financial stability to young citizens but also instill a sense of purpose, responsibility and pride in serving the nation. The MoS appreciated the enthusiasm and determination of the youth of Jammu and Kashmir,

acknowledging their role in driving regional growth and national progress. He urged the new appointees to discharge their duties with sincerity, integrity and a commitment to public service.

The event in Jammu was one of several held simultaneously across the country. The initiative is aligned with the Prime Minister's vision to provide 10 lakh government jobs under the Mission Recruitment campaign. The letters were provided to newly appointed employees in various ministries and departments of the Central Government. During the main program at New Delhi, the Prime Minister provided appointment letters to 51,000 youth across the country through video conferencing.

Pahalgam killings an attack on humanity: PM Modi at BRICS

Says terrorism can't be fought with double standards • Funders & shelters of terror must face harshest action
Participates in the 17th BRICS Summit in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil

THE CHANCELLOR DESK
Jammu

Citing the deadly April 2025 terror attack in Pahalgam as a grim reminder of the global threat posed by terrorism, Prime Minister Narendra Modi delivered a forceful call for united global action against terror during his participation in the 17th BRICS Summit held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil on July 6-7.

The Prime Minister, addressing the session on "Reform of Global Governance and Peace and Security," said, "The Pahalgam terror attack was not just an attack on India, but an onslaught on the entire humanity." Expressing appreciation for the BRICS leaders' unequivocal condemnation of the attack, he emphasized, "There should be no double standards in dealing with terrorism. Those funding, promoting or providing safe havens to terrorists must be dealt with in the harshest terms."

PM Modi thanked the President of Brazil for his warm hospitality and the successful organisation of the summit, where leaders held in-depth discussions on global governance reform, enhancing the voice of the Global South, peace and security, multilateralism, development, and Artificial Intelligence.

Highlighting India's consistent stand for the Global South, Modi reaffirmed the country's commitment to strengthening the voice of developing nations. "Developing countries require greater support for sustainable development — particularly in access to climate finance and technology," he said.

Pointing to the inability of 20th-century institutions to effectively address modern challenges, the Prime Minister called for urgent reform of key global bodies, including the United Nations Security Council, IMF, World Bank, and WTO. He welcomed the Summit Declaration's strong language on UN Security Council reform and commended the BRICS leaders for their support.

Expanding on the theme of peace and global conflict, Modi expressed concern over ongoing crises from West Asia to Europe, reiterating India's long-standing position favoring dialogue and diplomacy. "India has always supported peaceful resolution of conflicts and stands ready to contribute to such efforts," he added.

In a later session on "Strengthening Multilateralism, Economic-Financial Affairs and Artificial Intelligence," Modi underscored the importance of diversity and multipolarity within BRICS. "At a time when the world order is under pressure and the global community faces uncertainty, the relevance of BRICS is evident," he remarked. Later, PM's proposed four key suggestions which included the BRICS New Development Bank should follow a demand-driven approach and prioritise long-term sustainability in project financing. Establishment of a Science and Research repository to benefit countries of the Global South. Ensuring secure and resilient supply chains for critical minerals and promoting responsible AI that balances governance concerns with innovation.

The Summit concluded with the adoption of the 'Rio de Janeiro Declaration,' signaling consensus among BRICS nations on key issues and future directions.

PM Modi's interventions at the Summit reflected India's proactive role in shaping a just, secure, and multipolar world order while highlighting terrorism as a shared global challenge that demands a unified and uncompromising response.



PM Modi conferred with Brazil's highest civilian honour

THE CHANCELLOR DESK
Jammu

The President of Brazil, Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, today conferred upon Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Brazil's highest national honour – "The Grand Collar of the National Order of the Southern Cross".

Prime Minister expressed his heartfelt gratitude to the President, the Government, and the people of Brazil for the distinguished honour. Accepting the award, he noted that the honour was a tribute to the 1.4 billion people of India, and to the enduring bonds of friendship between India and Brazil. He further stated that President Lula was the architect of India-Brazil Strategic Partnership, and the award was as much an honour to his untiring efforts to take the bilateral ties to greater heights.

Prime Minister underlined that the accolade would inspire the people of the two countries to further deepen their warm and friendly ties.

Modi, Malaysian PM review bilateral ties at BRICS Summit

THE CHANCELLOR DESK
Jammu

Prime Minister Narendra Modi met with the Prime Minister of Malaysia, Anwar bin Ibrahim, on the sidelines of the 17th BRICS Summit in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

The two leaders reviewed the progress in India-Malaysia bilateral relations since Prime Minister Ibrahim's State Visit to India in August 2024. They discussed ongoing cooperation in key areas including trade and investment, defence, education, healthcare, tourism, and people-to-people exchanges.

Prime Minister Modi thanked Prime Minister Ibrahim for his strong condemnation of the recent terror attack in Pahalgam. The leaders also exchanged views on regional security and cooperation in multilateral fora.

Prime Minister Modi congratulated Malaysia on its successful leadership of ASEAN and welcomed its continued support for strengthening the ASEAN-India Comprehensive Strategic Partnership. He also emphasized the importance of the early and successful completion of the review of the ASEAN-India Free Trade Agreement (FTA).

India must lead in tech, not import it: Vice-President

Says nation builders of the future will be coders, not commanders
Says coaching centres have turned out to be poaching centres

THE CHANCELLOR DESK
Jammu

The Vice-President of India, Jagdeep Dhankhar, today delivered a powerful address at the 4th Convocation Ceremony of the Indian Institute of Information Technology (IIIT), Kota in Rajasthan, expressing deep concern over the rise of coaching centres and the changing dynamics of education and technological sovereignty. “Coaching centres have turned into poaching centres,” Shri Dhankhar remarked. “They have become black holes for talent, trapped in regimented silos. Their unchecked proliferation is a menace to our youth — the future of our nation. This is a worrisome malady that must be addressed urgently. We cannot allow our education system to be smeared and tarnished like this.” In a statement issued here today, it stated Shifting focus to global digital dynamics, the Vice-President warned that modern threats to national sovereignty no longer come through military invasions, but through technological dependence. “Nations will no longer be colonized by armies — today, algorithms have taken their place. Sovereignty can now be compromised not through invasions, but through reliance on foreign digital infrastructure,” he cautioned.

Calling for a reimagined sense of patriotism rooted in technological innovation, Shri Dhankhar emphasized, “We are entering a new era — an era of New Nationalism. Technological leadership is now the frontier of patriotism. We must aspire to become world leaders in technology.” Highlighting vulnerabilities in critical sectors like defence, he noted, “If we continue to import technology-driven equipment, especially in defence, we give other nations the power to bring us to a standstill.” He underlined how the nature of power has shifted in the 21st century. “The battleground is no longer land or sea. Conventional warfare is obsolete. Today, power is measured in code, cloud, and cyber.” Touching on India’s educational heritage, the Vice-President lamented the erosion of its values. “Among the 22 visual depictions in our Constitution is a Gurukul. We have always believed in the donation and sharing of knowledge. Coaching centres should transform into skill centres. I urge civil society and public representatives to recognize the urgency of this problem. We need coaching for skills, not for cramming.” He voiced concern about the harmful obsession with marks and standardised tests. “This marks-driven culture is suffocating curiosity — an essential facet of human intelligence. Coaching



centres, with their robotic training, stymie independent thinking and creativity. Students are trained for years, only to become mechanical. This can lead to serious psychological consequences.” Encouraging students to think beyond marks, he said, “Your grades and marksheets will not define your future. It is your curiosity, your critical thinking, and your knowledge that will shape your destiny in the real world.” Addressing the digital divide, Shri

Dhankhar stated, “A smart app that doesn’t work in rural India is not smart. An AI model that doesn’t understand regional languages is incomplete. A digital tool that excludes persons with disabilities is unjust.” He urged India’s youth to become innovators and solution-builders. “The youth of Bharat must become conscious custodians of the tech world. We need to build Bharatiya systems for Bharatiya users — and globalize them.” On digital self-reliance, he added, “India must rise as the architect of its own digital destiny. Our coders, AI engineers, data scientists, and blockchain innovators are the modern-day nation builders. We can no longer afford to be passive consumers of borrowed technologies. The tech gap that used to be measured in decades is now down to weeks — and we should be exporting, not importing.” Strongly opposing the commodification of education, he said, “This assembly-line approach to education is dangerous. It contradicts the vision of the National Education Policy and creates unnecessary roadblocks to progress.” Critiquing the commercialisation of coaching, he said, “Huge sums are spent on billboards and advertisements — money that often comes from families who take loans or make heavy sacrifices. These glossy ads, while alluring, are eyesores that conflict with our civilizational values.”

India’s solar capacity surges 4,000%, reaches 227 GW: Piyush Goyal

Renewable energy capacity reaches 227 GW; India likely first G20 nation to meet Paris agreement goals

THE CHANCELLOR DESK
Jammu

Union Minister of Commerce and Industry Piyush Goyal said that India has achieved an unprecedented 4,000% increase in installed solar capacity, bringing the country’s total renewable energy capacity to a robust 227 GW. Addressing the 11th edition of India Energy Storage Week (IESW) 2025 in New Delhi, Goyal said, “India is likely the first G20 nation to have fulfilled its Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) under the Paris Agreement.” In a statement issued here today, the Minister had cited the example of Palli village in Jammu and Kashmir, describing it as India’s first carbon-neutral panchayat powered by solar energy and enhanced energy efficiency. He also highlighted the venue of IESW, Yashobhoomi, as a model of sustainable infrastructure with rooftop solar, wastewater treatment systems, and energy-efficient design. Reflecting on India’s clean energy journey over the past decade, Shri Goyal noted significant strides in manufacturing, stating that solar photovoltaic module capacity has increased nearly 38-fold, while photovoltaic cell capacity has expanded 21-fold. He spoke of several flagship initiatives,



including the PM Surya Ghar Yojana—aimed at equipping one crore households with rooftop solar panels to promote energy self-sufficiency and reduce electricity bills—and the PM Kusum Yojana, which supports solar pump deployment in the agricultural sector. “To further strengthen India’s position in clean technology manufacturing, the government has introduced a Production Linked Incentive

(PLI) scheme for Advanced Chemistry Cells (ACC),” he added. Congratulating the India Energy Alliance and its partners for curating IESW, Shri Goyal commended their role in bringing together stakeholders in clean energy, energy storage, green hydrogen, and e-mobility. He reiterated that India is progressing towards energy independence and emphasized the importance of powering growth through renewable sources round the clock. Underscoring the crucial role of energy storage technologies—such as batteries, pumped hydro, and geothermal—he said, “The energy sector will be a major driving force in India’s clean energy transition, and our achievements over the last decade are testimony to this vision.” He proposed a four-pronged approach for advancing India’s energy self-reliance: innovation, infrastructure development, supply chain resilience, and value chain integration. “India must lead global R&D efforts in energy storage, particularly in next-generation battery chemistries, solid-state and hybrid technologies, and circular supply chains,” he asserted. Referring to the recent Cabinet approval of a 1 lakh crore Research, Development and Innovation Fund under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Shri Goyal said this initiative has the potential to yield R&D outcomes equivalent to 6–7 lakh crore in advanced

economies due to India’s cost efficiency. On infrastructure, the Minister called for collaborative efforts to develop EV charging and battery-swapping networks, enabling widespread, affordable e-mobility. He also urged the private sector to focus on building resilient supply chains by reducing overdependence on specific geographies and leveraging new technologies to attain energy sector self-reliance. “India’s ambition must encompass the entire value chain—from raw materials and battery components to semiconductors and recycling—ensuring a robust, sustainable clean energy ecosystem,” he stated. Goyal reaffirmed India’s goal of reaching 500 GW of renewable energy capacity by 2030, stressing that storage will be at the heart of this transition. Quoting Prime Minister Modi, he said, “Ensuring energy security for our citizens is not just a priority but also a responsibility.” India Energy Storage Week is a flagship industry event promoting dialogue, partnerships, innovation, and technology in the domains of energy storage, green hydrogen, battery manufacturing, and e-mobility. The 2025 edition convened global leaders, policymakers, and stakeholders to align with India’s clean energy goals and accelerate its transition to a sustainable energy future.

PM E-drive scheme offers financial support for heavy electric vehicles

THE CHANCELLOR DESK
Jammu

In a significant step toward sustainable freight mobility, the Ministry of Heavy Industries (MHI), Government of India, has launched a landmark incentive scheme for electric trucks under the PM E-DRIVE initiative.

In a statement issued on Friday, the Ministry announced that this is the first time the Government of India is extending direct financial support specifically for electric trucks, with the aim of accelerating the country's transition to clean, efficient, and low-emission transport.

The initiative has been launched under the visionary leadership of Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi and the guidance of Union Minister for Heavy Industries & Steel, Shri H.D. Kumaraswamy.

Highlighting the critical need for cleaner alternatives in the heavy-duty transport sector, Union Minister H.D. Kumaraswamy stated: "Diesel trucks, though constituting only 3% of the total vehicle population, contribute to 42% of transport-related greenhouse gas emissions and significantly worsen air pollution. This pioneering scheme, guided by the visionary leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, represents India's first dedicated support for electric trucks. It will drive our nation toward sustainable freight mobility, a cleaner future, and the



realization of Viksit Bharat by 2047, in alignment with our net-zero emissions goal by 2070."

Under the scheme, demand incentives will be provided for N2 and N3 category electric trucks, as defined under the Central Motor Vehicle Rules (CMVR): N2 category: Trucks with a Gross Vehicle Weight (GVW) above 3.5 tonnes and up to 12 tonnes. N3 category: Trucks with GVW exceeding 12 tonnes and up to 55 tonnes. For articulated vehicles, incentives will apply only to the puller tractor in the N3 category.

To ensure vehicle reliability and performance, the scheme mandates robust manufacturer-backed warranties: Battery: Five years or 5 lakh kilometres, whichever

is earlier and vehicle and motor: Five years or 2.5 lakh kilometres, whichever is earlier.

The incentive amount, designed to make electric trucks more affordable, will depend on the truck's GVW, with a maximum of 9.6 lakh per vehicle. These will be provided as an upfront discount on the purchase price and reimbursed to Original Equipment Manufacturers (OEMs) through the PM E-DRIVE portal on a first-come, first-served basis.

The scheme targets the deployment of approximately 5,600 e-trucks nationwide. In a special allocation for Delhi—aimed at combating the capital's critical air quality issues—1,100 e-trucks have been earmarked with a dedicated outlay of 100 crore.

Key sectors expected to benefit include cement, steel, ports, and logistics. Leading domestic manufacturers such as Volvo Eicher, Tata Motors, and Ashok Leyland are actively engaged in the production of electric trucks, boosting indigenous capabilities in line with the Atmanirbhar Bharat mission.

The scheme has already drawn encouraging responses from both users and manufacturers, who recognize its potential to lower logistics costs and reduce environmental impact.

As part of the initiative's early momentum, Steel Authority of India Limited (SAIL) has committed to procuring 150 e-trucks over the next two years for deployment across multiple locations. In a further commitment to sustainability, SAIL has set an internal target to ensure that at least 15% of all vehicles hired across its units are electric.

A key requirement under the scheme is the mandatory scrapping of old, polluting trucks, ensuring both fleet modernization and a reduction in emissions.

This forward-looking initiative reinforces the Government of India's broader goal of building a self-reliant electric mobility ecosystem. By extending financial incentives to the heavy vehicle segment, the scheme seeks to reduce operational costs for transporters, promote clean energy adoption, and enhance urban and industrial air quality—moving India closer to its net-zero and sustainable development goals.

Grievance redressal must ensure citizen satisfaction: Dr. Jitendra Singh

THE CHANCELLOR DESK
Jammu

Dr. Jitendra Singh, Union Minister of State (Independent Charge) for Science and Technology; Minister of State for Earth Sciences; and Minister of State in the Prime Minister's Office (PMO), Department of Atomic Energy, Department of Space, Personnel, Public Grievances and Pensions, called for a fundamental transformation in the handling of public grievances and emphasised that grievance redressal should extend beyond mere disposal to ensure genuine citizen satisfaction.

Addressing the National Workshop on "Effective Redressal of Public Grievances, Next Gen CPGRAMS and Progress Review," Dr. Singh stressed that grievance redressal must become a tool for systemic reform and improving the ease of living for citizens.

Highlighting the importance of grievances as indicators of administrative challenges, he urged the government to treat each complaint as an opportunity to identify and correct shortcomings in policies and procedures.

Recalling the evolution of grievance redressal mechanisms in India, Dr. Singh pointed out that in 2014, only about two lakh grievances were filed annually, with many government websites for grievance submission remaining underutilized. He stated, "Today, more than 26 lakh grievances are filed every year. This reflects a transformation in public trust and the system's responsiveness." He credited this progress to the government's strong

emphasis on citizen-centric digital governance under Prime Minister Narendra Modi's leadership.

In a statement issued here today, Dr Singh described grievance redressal as a key pillar of the Prime Minister's vision of "Maximum Governance, Minimum Government," emphasizing that accountability, transparency, and timely feedback are essential to achieving ease of living. He shared personal experiences where he and senior officials made random calls to citizens on Friday evenings to assess their satisfaction levels, saying, "We tried to reconnect with people who had become disengaged from the system."

The Minister also highlighted innovative measures such as introducing a human interface after grievance disposal, where trained personnel follow up with complainants to evaluate their satisfaction. Additionally, he underscored the importance of analyzing recurring grievance patterns to uncover deeper policy flaws. "If a complaint is coming from different parts of the country, it is time to question the underlying rules or procedures," he remarked, noting that over 1,600 obsolete rules have already been repealed as part of this systemic reform.

V. Srinivas, Secretary of the Department of Administrative Reforms and Public Grievances (DARPG), provided further insights, stating that major advances have been made through CPGRAMS 7.0, the government's flagship grievance redressal platform. He said, "Grievance redressal time is now down to 15 days, and citizen satisfaction levels have reached 62%. More

than 1.15 crore grievances have been resolved between 2019 and 2025." The CPGRAMS system, now integrated with all Central Ministries, State Governments, and 23 Administrative Training Institutes, has earned international recognition from the Commonwealth Secretariat and the IBM Centre for Excellence.

Reiterating the ultimate goal of governance, Dr. Singh said, "Our mission is to create a framework where citizens can seek happiness without infringing on the rights of others. Public service delivery must uphold this principle."

The Minister also noted the increasing global interest in India's grievance redressal model, with delegations from countries such as Bangladesh, Maldives, and South Africa studying CPGRAMS and related initiatives like the Digital Life Certificate system. He called for more frequent interactions beyond the annual workshop, facilitated by new digital infrastructure.

The workshop, held at the Indian Institute of Public Administration's iconic T N Chaturvedi Hall, saw participation from senior bureaucrats across India, including Secretaries, Chief Secretaries, heads of training institutes, and grievance officers. Organised by DARPG, the event reinforced the government's commitment to making governance more accountable, data-driven, and citizen-centric.

Notable attendees included K. Padmanabhaiah, Chairman of ASCI; Professor Avanish Kumar, Dean of the School of Public Policy & Governance; along with senior officials from Central Ministries and State Governments.

NHAI strengthens process for reporting 'Loose FASTag' for blacklisting

THE CHANCELLOR DESK
Jammu

To ensure smooth tolling operations and strengthen reporting of 'Loose FASTags', NHAI has further streamlined its policy for the Toll Collecting Agencies and Concessionaires to immediately report and blacklist 'loose FASTags', that are also commonly called "tag-in-hand". In view of upcoming initiatives like the Annual Pass System and Multi-Lane Free Flow (MLFF) tolling, it is critical to address this issue to ensure FASTag authenticity and system reliability.

FASTags are sometimes deliberately not fixed on the windshield of the vehicle by the owners. Such practices pose operational challenges leading to lane congestion, generation of false chargebacks, misuse in closed loop tolling system, causing overall disruption of the Electronic Toll Collection framework, resulting in unnecessary delays at toll plazas and inconvenience to other National Highway users.

In a statement issued here today, NHAI has provided a dedicated email ID and has directed the Toll Collection Agencies and Concessionaires to immediately report such FASTags. Based on the reports received, NHAI will take immediate action to initiate blacklisting / hotlisting of the reported FASTags.

With penetration rate of over 98 percent, FASTag has revolutionized the Electronic Toll Collection system in the country. Loose FASTags or "tag-in-hand" pose a challenge to the efficiency of Electronic Toll Collection operations. This initiative will help to make toll operations more efficient, ensuring seamless & comfortable journeys for the National Highway users.

Employment Linked Incentive Scheme: A catalyst for jobs, economic growth, & formalisation



Jyoti Vij

With the world fast moving towards automation, the Government of India's recently approved Employment Linked Incentive (ELI) scheme, comes as a very timely and measured step. With an outlay of nearly Rs 1 lakh crore, it is a bold policy intervention in India's evolving employment landscape especially in manufacturing sector. Designed to support the creation of more than 3.5 crore jobs over the next two years, the ELI Scheme is not just an economic measure—it is a strategic investment in the future of India's workforce, directly supporting the Government's *Viksit Bharat@2047* vision. ELI is going to be a major catalyst of job creation in the country.

Unlike many other countries where population would soon start reducing or have started reducing, India still has a large working-age population which needs to be supported by more job opportunities. The ELI Scheme seeks to bridge the persistent gap between job seekers and job creators, and more importantly, between informal work and formal employment.

Beyond the immediate employment outcomes, it is important to note that the ELI Scheme also strengthens India's progress towards several Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) particularly in SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), by incentivising formal,

long-term employment; in SDG 1 (No Poverty) and SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities), by offering targeted financial support to low-wage earners and first-time jobseekers.

The linkage of the scheme to EPFO registration and disbursement through Aadhaar-enabled DBT systems ensures that it not only generates jobs but also expands social protection coverage, which is critical for building a just and inclusive economy. Recognising such efforts by India, ILO recently acknowledged India's achievement and officially published on its dashboard that 64.3% of India's population (as against 19% earlier in 2015), i.e. over 94 crore people, are now covered under at least one social protection benefit.

The emphasis on manufacturing is particularly welcome. As global value chains undergo realignment, India is fast emerging as a trusted alternative in sectors such as textiles, electronics, automobiles, consumer goods, and pharmaceuticals. By supporting long-term employment generation in these sectors, the ELI Scheme complements existing initiatives like PLI schemes, Make in India, and Skill India, and would accelerate industrial growth in both urban and semi-urban clusters.

For MSMEs, which often face constraints in scaling up formal hiring due to cost concerns, the scheme offers critical relief. The employer-side incentives reduce the marginal cost of new hiring, thereby encouraging expansion, formalisation, and workforce upgradation.

Globally, wage-linked incentive

schemes have proven effective in promoting employment. Countries like Germany offer employer subsidies for apprenticeships and long-term hiring; South Korea provides targeted wage support to employers of young and older workers; and Singapore ties financial assistance to upskilling and employment retention. The United States has the Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC), which rewards employers hiring individuals from disadvantaged groups. India's ELI Scheme incorporates global best practices while customising for local needs—such as our large informal labour market, demographic dividend, and expanding digital infrastructure.

The ELI Scheme reflects a maturing of India's employment policy—shifting from short-term relief to long-term labour market development. In the face of global megatrends like ageing populations as well as the digital and green transitions, such effective policies are crucial to grant more people access to quality jobs. We at FICCI urge our members to come forward to use this scheme. Employers—especially in the MSME segment—must recognise this as more than a financial benefit. It is a tool for scaling operations, tapping into young talent, formalising payrolls, and creating lasting economic value. As the apex industry chamber, FICCI stands committed to support this cause.

*(The author is Director General, FICCI)
Courtesy: PIB*

What is the ELI Scheme?

A government-backed Employment Linked Incentive (ELI) scheme with Rs 1 lakh crore outlay.

Aims to create 3.5 crore jobs over the next two years.

A pivotal policy to promote formal employment, particularly in manufacturing and MSMEs.

Strategic Significance

Tied to India's *Viksit Bharat@2047* vision.

Complements existing efforts like PLI, Make in India, and Skill India.

Moves beyond short-term relief towards sustainable employment generation.

Demographic Advantage

While many nations face population decline, India's large working-age population is a strength.

The ELI scheme helps leverage this demographic dividend by promoting productive, formal jobs.

Social Protection & Inclusion:

Linked to EPFO and Aadhaar-enabled DBT, ensuring transparency and social security.

ILO recognised a jump in India's social protection coverage: from 19% in 2015 to 64.3% in 2024.

Support for MSMEs

Employer-side incentives reduce the cost of formal hiring, promoting:

Expansion
Payroll formalisation
Skills upgradation

Global Context

Inspired by successful international models:

Germany: Subsidies for apprenticeships

South Korea: Wage support for young/old workers

Singapore: Upskilling-linked incentives

USA: Work Opportunity Tax Credit

Krishna Mehta: An Architect of hope in Kashmir's Darkest Hour

Dr. Madhulika Singh

Krishna Mehta's unwavering spirit has distinguished her as an epitome of personal courage and leadership during the 1947 Pakistan led tribal invasion. She emerged not as a victim but as a beacon of defiant hope. She worked for preservation of women's dignity in refugee camps under her own captivity which reflects her devotion to society and nation. Her ground-breaking role must be remembered as the first female member of parliament from Jammu and Kashmir. Her contributions in founding Gandhi seva sadan and khadi gram Udyog underlines her compassion for upliftment of displaced women in J&K. This article encapsulates her journey from personal tragedy to celebrated paragon of women's empowerment.

Krishna Mehta was born on June 4th, 1913, in the illustrious Mehta family of Kishtwar. Her great grandfather, Colonel Mehta Basti Ram, was in Maharaja Ranjit Singh's army who helped in the annexation of Ladakh and later, served as its Governor. Krishna Mehta was married to Duni Chand Mehta, a civil servant of Jammu and Kashmir who was posted as Wazir- e- Wazarat (District Commissioner) of Muzaffarabad (a north western district of Jammu and Kashmir) during the time of Pakistan tribal invasion in 1947.

On the intervening night of 21-22 October, 1947, hordes of Pakistani tribesmen from the North Western Frontier Province (NWFP), equipped with modern weapons, under the command of Major Khurshid Anwar, the officer in-charge of the attack, crossed the border and entered Muzaffarabad and let loose reign of terror on the civilians and government officials. Houses were looted and plundered and were set on fire. While Krishna Mehta's husband, Mr. Duni Chand Mehta, the then Wazir-i-Wazarat of the area, was away from his residential quarters repelling the invasion, the marauders reached their home. Krishna Mehta along with her six children had to escape. They wandered from one place to another seeking refuge as they had lost everything – wealth, power and possession. Eventually, she fell into the hands of the raiders and was kept in jails and in various refugee camps at Muzaffarabad, Domel, Rawalpindi, Thathyal. These camps were terrible places full of horror where the refugees were treated with callousness as slaughter animals. It was in these camps that Krishna Mehta came to realize the gravity of the situation. She was



deeply pained to see the plight of Hindu and Sikh women who were abducted and sold by the raiders. The vulgarity and coarseness was so casual that there was no violent rage or regret. Hunger and starvation was common and people often suffered from cholera and diarrhea, whenever they received rotten, spoiled and awful ration.

Krishna Mehta herself suffered a lot of torture and trauma. Even after hearing the news of her husband's revered martyrdom, she pulled herself together as she did not want to die an empty death which had no meaning. She was also persuaded to get settled to the other side of the border. Many times she was provided an easy way to escape by the Pakistani Government officials who knew her husband personally and were considerate but she never accepted these proposals as she didn't want to prove herself unworthy of her husband.

Undaunted, unbroken in spirit, Krishna rose to every occasion. While staying in camps, she took upon herself the task of rehabilitating the suffering women

and children in the camps. The women in these camps were forcibly converted to Islam and used to live under the shadow of a strange terror of being ostracized anytime. Many of these women committed suicide by drowning themselves. Krishna Mehta felt piercing to see their deplorable condition and the level of destitution they were living in. She took it as her moral duty to save them and promised herself to do whatever she could to bring these broken women back to their normal life. By organizing rhythmic chanting of morning and evening prayers in the camps, she tried to give a vent to their stifling grief and release their mind out of the oppressed and burdened memories. However, she had to bear the wrath of the local Muslims. Her strong conviction to bring the Hindu and Sikh women out of the haunting terror of the raiders and infusing in them a strength of self-assurance often raged them. Many times she was threatened with dire consequences. Even amidst such appalling suffering and dangers, Krishna Mehta held her head high and did not give up to her fate. It was because of her tireless efforts that the condition of the women in the camps improved. Being from a highly revered family of the time and the wife of Wazir-e-Wazarat of Muzaffarabad, Krishna's presence in the camp proved a blessing for the tortured women. It was by dint of her tireless efforts and charismatic personality that she could motivate and bring many young girls, women, men and children back to India along with her.

After arriving in India, Krishna Mehta was kept at Kurukshetra refugee camp for some days. It was here in this camp that her meeting with Pt. Nehru, the then Prime Minister of India, became a turning point in her life. Despite the trauma through which Krishna Mehta had herself

gone, her tremendous will power, her determination to human cause and her dedication to work for the welfare of society impressed Pandit Nehru so much so that he took her to New Delhi where she began to be treated as one of the members of the Nehru family.

She made it her mission to ameliorate the condition of those women whom she had left behind in miserable condition in refugee camps and furiously consumed herself to achieve this greater purpose. She remained instrumental in establishing two organizations in Kashmir-one was Gandhi Sewa Sadan and the other was Khadi Gram Udyog Sangh-which was launched in May 1948 when she accompanied Nehru during his visit to Kashmir. These institutions worked for training of the refugee women of Kashmir in vocational crafts which provided livelihood to thousands of families. Within six months the institution made rapid strides and three more branches were opened in Baramulla, Habbakadal and Chhati Padshahi. The focus was socio-economic development of the disadvantaged refugee women of J&K region.

Realizing the fact that social transformation requires a collaborated and coordinated action of multiple fields, she entered active politics and was nominated to Rajya Sabha as the first woman MP from the state of Jammu and Kashmir. Her political life became a means to achieve a more practical end of her life. She breathed her last on October 20, 1993 and as per her wishes, her ashes were immersed in river Chandrabhaga, in her hometown, Kishtwar..

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





A Comprehensive Manual on Kashmir's Tantric Shaiv Darshan

Kashmir has been the nucleus of the Sanskrit Civilisation of India and this can be witnessed in all spheres of life even today after continuous socio-political turbulence that has led to the genocidal attrition causing immense damage to the aesthetics and place consciousness. Kashmir's contribution to the pool of civilizational values through philosophy and aesthetics is matchless. It has enriched the Dharmic landscape of entire India. It goes to the credit of the Sanskritists of Kashmir who not only developed the parameters for the Paramarthika and Vyavharika but established complete system based on original methodologies shaping the foundations and evolution of the Kashmir Shaiv Darshan that prevailed in the valley from the times immemorial. It is a myth propounded by the neophytes that Shaivism made its advent in the later centuries. Perhaps this narrative was spread to justify and bail out the De-Sanskritization of Kashmir at the hands of the subversives who wanted to erase the indigenous Dharmic culture having a pan-India reach at all levels of society. In spite of these efforts to whitewash the Agamic and Nigamic moorings of Kashmir Mandala; the place consciousness of Kashmir has prevailed and that is why we are witnessing the re-emergence of its Sanskrit culture in one form or the other.

Kashmir's contribution to the Dharmic Consciousness of India lies in internalising the Integrality of Agama (Tantras) and Nigama (Vedas) by clarifying all the misconceptions that were interpolated into the public domain by the subversive narrative. It evolved into a complete system known as non-dual Shaiv Darshan. Moreover it must be noted that Kashmir Shaiv Darshan is also known as Trika and it can be argued that Trika is a system of Yoga that has evolved on the basis of tantric consciousness. And this injects substances into the

philosophical undertones and overtones of Kashmir Shaiv Darshan. Majority of the principles that are enshrined in the Trika Tantric Shaiv Darshan of Kashmir are absent in other schools; the reason being that it is based on 36 Tattvas. Whereas in the other schools the number of Tattvas is lesser. Thus shrinking the level of experiences. This does not mean that Kashmir Shaiv Darshan evolved in isolation. It reached the new levels of Tantric consciousness by internalising the concepts and nuances of the other schools of philosophy that existed side by side. But the

Dr. Mahesh Kaul

Book:
The Tantric and Philosophical Aspects of Kashmir Saivism

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Moti Lal Pandit
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beauty of this system lies in developing an integral system that proves the continuity of Indic philosophical tradition. At the outset I would like to make it clear that there is an undeclared norm in practice that terms the Kashmir's Tantric Shiva Philosophy as Kashmir Shaivism. I would like to differ on this as it is a comprehensive system based on the primacy of the Tantric consciousness. As such I would prefer to call it as Kashmir Shaiv Darshan as it includes all the elements and models that establish it as a well defined study area that needs a complete dedication and regimentation

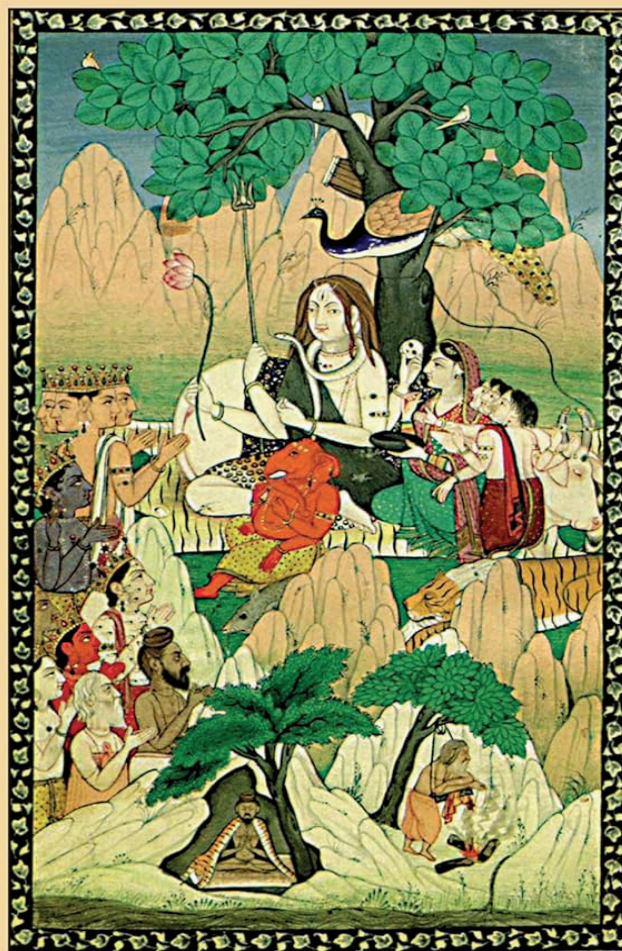
to master it. It has both theoretical and practical aspects that need to be inculcated to internalise it. It won't be an exaggeration to say that Tantra is the science of Yoga. People have been associating the tantric formulations with the magical powers. This is indeed an oversimplification of the reality. Kashmir Shaiv Darshan goes to the root of the Bhairava Consciousness and decodes the influx and outflux of the cosmic energy that is understood in terms of Prakash and Vimarsh. Shiva is termed as Prakash and Vimarsh is His Shakti in Kashmir Shaiv Darshan.

Various Tantric practitioners and scholars ranging from Utpaldeva to Abhinavagupta and many more have contributed to the corpus of the Kashmir Shaiv Darshan in terms of their observations and realisations. As Shiva Tantra system is not the creation of an individual but owes its existence to the interactions between the Bhairavi and Bhairava codified in various Tantras and have come down from generations to generations through Guru-Shishya Parampara. But there were times that led to the suppression of the Shaivas due to external invasions and series of proselytization by invaders that led to a period of dormancy. That does not mean Kashmir Shaiv Darshan was lost. Moreover, being an absolute Tantric system it needs its own serene well established ecosystem to execute its functioning away from the public glare.

Many modern theorists and philosophers have contributed to the corpus of Kashmir Shaiv Darshan but in the contemporary era Moti Lal Pandit stands out as the beacon of light who has been able to trace the evolution and philosophical undercurrents of this system in a comprehensive manner. His contribution to make the adherents and curious scholars internalise the nuances of the Shaiva tantric System of Kashmir is matchless. He has the distinction of being the fluent speaker and equally competent

Contd on Page 11

The Tāntric and Philosophical Aspects of Kashmir Śaivism



Moti Lal Pandit

Contd from Page 10

writer of this system working tirelessly. His ability to weave the history of Kashmir Shaiv Darshan with the minute and difficult concepts is flawless. He is a trained theologian and linguist who brings his experience in Ideological research to decode the hidden truth of tantric moorings. His advantage lies in being a scholar who internalises the Buddhist philosophy and its implications on the society when Trika was facing challenges. That makes him an expert to sift the myths from the reality and use his pen like a surgeon’s knife to sift the pearls from interpolation. To understand his theological basis one needs to read his previous works as well.

His latest book titled “The Tantric and Philosophical Aspects of Kashmir Shaivism” is a comprehensive manual that dives deep into the development and evolution of Kashmir Shaiv Darshan. In this book Moti Lal Pandit has taken a holistic view of the Shaiva worship in Kashmir. What makes this book different is that it attempts to find out as to how the proto-Shiva of the Mohenjo-Daro evolved as the synthesis of both terror and boons. It is important to note that in Kashmir Shaiva system Bhairava is the one who overcomes fears and tears them apart and has the qualities of both influx and outflux of energies. In this work he makes it clear that the spiritual atmosphere was developed in such a way so as to transform, in the Svetasvatara, the conceptuality of Shiva into such spiritual heights that would assume, with the passage of time, such a role which would be both philosophical and religious.

It is clear from the book that Shiva was assigned the role of transcendence and as a religious reality Shiva would be conceived as representing the principle of immanence. It means that the presence of transcendent principle would be experienced as the principle of immanence within the realm of manifestation. Thus in the proto-Shiva of Mohenjo-Daro would be expressed, on the one hand, the concept transcendent principle as being the creator of the world and thereby making Him master and ruler and on the other hand it would explain the nature of reality being identical with the cosmic consciousness. This work also establishes that initially the concept of Isa or Shiva expresses itself theistically in terms of which the immanence of the Creator-God would be established logically. He argues that such a theistic conception of Isa or Shiva leads to the emergence of a sentiment clothed in the garments of Bhakti and on the other hand God as a metaphysical entity expresses itself as consciousness. The motive and objective is clear and that is to establish the transcendent nature of Shiva. In the post-Upanishadic period there is the emergence of philosophical undercurrents that spread in the form of spirituality being rooted in Bhoga and Moksha. The author succeeds in establishing that

this spirituality culminates in the affirmative metaphysical spiritual consciousness of Kashmir Shaiv Darshan. That is how all types of differentiations are made to disappear in the non-dual unity of the being and that is the basis of Kashmir Shaiv Darshan.

The book “The Tantric and Philosophical Aspects of Kashmir Saivism” is divided into fourteen chapters besides the appendix, bibliography and index making it a complete manual based on rigorous research for which Moti Lal Pandit is known. Chapter 1 titled “The early Sources of Shaivism traces the primordial nature of Siva and then elaborates the prototypic Shiva. Author then moves to investigate the nuances of the tantric consciousness in terms of the Linga-Yoni representations. This leads the author to conclude the unification of Shaivism and Shaktism. Chapter delves in detail into the close antiquarian association of Yoga with Shaivism. This makes it easier for the readers to internalise the synthesis of Rudra-Siva. He then writes about the religion of the Vedas and explores the Aryans socio-religious system and delves at length on Aryan and Non-Aryan conceptions of worship that later on synthesised towards the non-duality.

Chapter 2 titled as “The Beginnings of Kashmir Saivism” is an important chapter to understand the concepts of the system as it explains the agamic nature of the Kashmir Shaiv Darshan in terms of its foundational texts. He has underlined various agamic texts that are the basis of Kashmir Shaiv Darshan. These include Malinivijaya Tantra, Svachchanda Tantra, Siddha Tantra, Namaka Tantra. This helps to situate Kashmir Shaiv Darshan in terms of its philosophical and theological tradition. He has cited the Pratyabhijna Literature that gave the sound footing to this tantric system of Kashmir. He has also underlined the contribution of Maha Maheshwaracharya Abhinavagupta who with his genius synthesised into harmony the various strands of the Kashmir Shaiv Darshan into a fragrant garland making it a complete system. The various strands of Kashmir Shaiv Darshan that he integralised include Spanda, Pratyabhijna, Krama and Kaula. This chapter deals with the philosophical contents of the Philosophy of Recognition as enshrined in Shaiv Darshan of Kashmir. Moti La Pandit has given due space to the emission of the manifest categories making us understand the subtle themes in the Tantric system. He has also dealt with the concept of Prakriti and Purusha and how the Trika system adopted it and synthesised it with larger contours of Tantra. The chapter addresses the issue of the internal and external categories and the various soteriological concerns.

Chapter 3 titled as “The Conceptual Tantric Background” and Chapter 4 titled as “The Tantric Formulation” explains the content of Tantric

esotericism and the necessary background for its development. Author makes it amply clear in these chapters that the nature of the Tantric texts is both extensive and varied and upholds that that these are considered by the Tantric adherents as having issued from the mouth of God itself and thus identified with the Divine word (Paravak). As such these texts and treatises are considered to be existing eternally.

Chapter 5 titled “The Divinization of the Body” and Chapter 6 titled “The Nature of the Absolute” focus on the concept of Tantrism as a positive alternative leading toward non-duality establishing the Divinity of the body and the being. This helps to establish the unitary nature of consciousness. The chapter deals with correspondence between the microcosm and the macrocosm in terms of tantric realm. These chapters describe the spiritual ascension of a Yogi and the process of deification and establishing the senses as the medium of delight. If seen in terms of the seminal of Sri Aurobindo-The Life Divine, the author is successful to prove life as a divine wonder that is the cardinal principle of the Tantra of Kashmir. Sri Aurobindo’s Integral Yoga is a Tantric formulation and is ready to meet Kashmir Shaiv Darshan’s principles of Introversion and Extroversion. The chapters are important to internalise the non-dualism of Kashmir Shaivism by proving the Absolute as the unity of Prakash and Vimarsh. The fullness of the being and the order of manifestation are well addressed in the Chapter 6. This chapter also describes the theory of appearance and the mutuality of Shiva and Shakti besides delving on the freedom as the Absolute nature of Shiva who is the embodiment of the splendour of powers.

Chapter 7 titled “The nature of the Doctrine of Vibration” delves on Spanda and thus discusses the content and concept of Spanda. It deals adeptly with the equivalence of Spanda with Shakti and the phases of Spanda testifying Spanda as the embodiment of power.

Chapter 8 titled as “The nature of Knowledge” discusses the earlier views of knowledge and decodes the Self as the source of knowledge as rooted in Kashmir Shaiv Darshan in terms of degrees of knowledge. The chapter also sensitises about the content of empirical knowledge and supernal knowledge. Validation of knowledge, error and ignorance with the two fold format of ignorance have been discussed for the sake of clarity. He has concluded the chapter aptly with remembrance and knowledge.

Chapter 9 “The Emission of Categories” talks about the emission of pure categories and impure categories in Kashmir Shaiv Darshan. The central concept of Kashmir Shaiva System known as the Five Kanchukas has been explained in detail for the adepts and learners both. The concept of Purusha and Prakriti again finds mention in this

chapter for the sake of clarity.

Chapter 10 titled as “The Soteriology of Bondage and Liberation” posits bondage and liberation as a Divine play and decodes these in terms of the thralldom of ignorance and bondage. The chapter brings to the fore the concept of knowledge as a means of liberation as propounded in the Tantra system of Kashmir Shaiv Darshan. It deals with the nature of liberation and its essential types and suggests approaches to liberation as well. The Chapter ends with the nature of grace. Chapter 11 titled as “The nature of Grace” takes this discussion on grace to its logical conclusion.

Chapter 12 is titled “Forms of Initiation”. This chapter deals with the initiation into the Tantric System of Kashmir Shaiv Darshan and is a must read for both scholars and practitioners to quench their thirst about this system. Then this discussion is taken to its logical conclusion in the Chapter 12 titled as “Spirituality as a Form of Philosophy”. This chapter makes it clear that Kashmir Shaiv Darshan helps individuals to transcend the circle of conditioned existence through the process of affirmation of the conditioned existence. Ultimately the last Chapter that is Chapter 14 titled as “Spirituality of Interiority as a Means of Freedom” posits the self-dependence and other-dependence with an emphasis of the way of ease, recognition and knowledge, the nature of recognitive knowledge and the practical means of interiority besides the individual way and the way of energy. The nature of the mystical centres that are important for the tantric system of Kashmir have been discussed. The chapter goes to the core of the Kashmir Shaiv Darshan and discusses the cosmic attributes of the ritualised sex and terms it as the primal energy. This chapter underlines that apart from sexual intercourse, there are other ways and means that are seen to be the fit instrumentalities for facilitating the arousal of ecstatic joy in the region of the heart and one such appropriate means is considered to be the excitement of the nerve system. The chapter ends with the way of Shiva, the Null way and the seven hierarchical disciplines that are Vamadeva, Saivacara, Vamacara, Dakshinacara, Kulacara, Mascara, Triakacara.

Moti Lal Pandit is undoubtedly the foremost Acharya of the Kashmir Shaiv Darshan in the contemporary times who has the distinction of situating the Tantrism of Kashmir in a comprehensive manner due to his vast scholarship and experience of other philosophies primarily the Buddhist philosophy. It is a must read for scholars, adepts and Tantra practitioners.

(The Author is Editorial Director, The Chancellor)



The CHANCELLOR

Editorial

Amarnath-
The Amareshwar Tirtha
of Kashmir

The worship of an "Ice Lingam" is attributed to Kashmir's world famous Tirtha- Amarnath. This Tirtha has always caught the imagination of the researchers and pilgrims for different reasons. Every year pilgrims from all parts of India and abroad converge in Kashmir to have a glimpse of the Holy Ice Lingam. This sacred Lingam and the cave in which it is located finds an elaborate mention and description in various texts and scriptures. From the times immemorial this Tirtha in Kashmir has been known as Amareshwar (the one who has conquered death). Kashmir has a distinction of having the continuous documented history in the form of Rajatarangini's. Not many people know that there are five Rajatarangini's that describe the place, people and periodicity of Kashmir and its adjoining areas. At least two among these give references regarding the Amareshwar Tirtha. The antiquity of Amarnath originally known as the Amareshwar has been established by Kalhana in his Rajatarangini where he cites the religiosity of King Sandhimati who was a devout Shaivite (34 B.C. to 17 A.D.). He made pilgrimages to the pious Amareshwar Tirtha to worship Shiva. Kalhana also describes an incident regarding the Amareshwar Tirtha during the reign of King Nara (1048- 1008 B.C.). Pilgrimage Amareshwar establishes the importance of Kashmir as the highest seat of Shaiva tradition that cannot be denied at any cost. Pilgrimage to this Tirtha assumes great significance when the Holy Ice Lingam of Para Bhairava Shiva attains maximum height on a full moon day in July-August on the "Shravan Poornima". It is pertinent to mention that Kashmir and its historicity is well documented. Especially the history of the Tirthas. Bringsesh Samhita is the compilation that documents the Tirthas in detail with the focus on the place consciousness and aesthetics. Not only has that. It has documented the geographical locations and historical evidence with the scientific precision. There is a need to follow and decode the Tirthas documented in the Bringsesh Samhita so that Tirthas and temples that have lost significance or have been forgotten due to different reasons can be reviewed and brought on the pilgrimage circuit. So that the civilizational continuity of Kashmir is reaffirmed and course correction is done in the history. It will enable the preservation of the religious heritage of Kashmir that defines its place consciousness and aesthetics. There is need for a multi-disciplinary approach to fructify this objective in the interest of the society and nation; without doubt archaeology will play a pivotal role in this. It is in this context there is a need to focus on the primary research and work on the scientific evidence so that ancient religious places in Kashmir are given their due. And the ancient Tirtha of Amareshwar represents the civilizational continuity proving its pan-India appeal in terms of Sanskrit civilizational moorings. Adi Shankaracharya is said to have visited the Amarnath Cave and experienced the bliss of the Maheshwara. Swami Vivekananda, the Wandering Monk of India visited Amareshwar by the end of the 19th century and his whole being witnessed the Shaivahood that he has himself documented and described by narrating his experience. Swami Ram Tirtha too has undergone ecstasy at the Amareshwar. As cited above Bringsesh Samhita is the authentic manual on the Tirthas of Kashmir; Amareshwar Mahatmaya that is integral to it is an exclusive treatise giving the absolute description of the Amareshwar Tirtha that is now popularly known as Amarnath. It has to be internalised that Amareshwar or Amarnath is not the name of just a cave but Amareshwar is an entire Kshetra and a complete Shaiva Tantra ecosystem that can be internalised through Trika Shaiv Parampara of Kashmir. The Chancellor wishes a blissful Amarnath (Amareshwar) Yatra to all the devotees of Para Bhairava Shiva who are converging in Kashmir to experience and internalise the Divinity of Maheshwara.

Internalising the
Dogra Heritage of Jammu

Dr. Mahesh Kaul

Jammu and Kashmir has the distinction of being the frontline state in the Himalayas that has emerged as the centre of attractions for many reasons. Its location in the frontier has made it witness to many upheavals and situations that have matured it as the cultural fountain head and enabled its inhabitants to shape their society and culture in response to the nature and surroundings. Environment rich in vegetation has enabled it to respond in a meditative way that is fertile in imagination. The Jammu region of the Union Territory (UT) is different from the valley in terms of topography and social setup. Enabling it to generate its own response; with climate playing a predominant role to shape the imagination of the people. Having been in the forefront of the political power equation, the Rajput clans of Jammu played a decisive role in shaping the boundaries of the region and the erstwhile princely state. Himalayan frontier has been witness to the power struggle and invasions from outside that shaped the response of this land. Local people known as the Dogras have their evolution rooted in the Hindu pantheon and have pan Indian moorings; the reason being that they are the descendants of the Lord Rama's sons. Their emergence in this climatically hot and humid land started from the Ravi belt of Kathua and then stretched across the length and breadth of the entire Jammu region. Ramayana connection and the physical presence of the descendants of the hero of that epic gives the history of Jammu region an authenticity and credibility of being the part of the continuous Sanskrit traditions. Due to the change in the power equations and intermingling of the people during Ranjit Dev's time enabled the secularization of the society in terms of trade. Mughlani Begum's Haveli that stood at the present location of the Radio station brings home the point that Jammu has been the land that sheltered the people persecuted by tyranny; irrespective

of religious considerations. It enabled the social space to be tolerant towards the people of different denominations. When harmony exists in a society it develops a vibrant culture and leads to heritage that can boast about its rich past and valor.

Religion, valour, trade, human values have shaped the consciousness of the people of the region. It was exhibited in social space. The rich cultural traditions of Jammu are diversified and find expression in monuments, rituals, handicrafts, dance forms, language, historic heroic figures who have been immortalized in ballads and folk songs by bards. Fertile social space leads to fertile imagination and it can be seen in the rich Dogri literature that is far ahead of its times. Monumental heritage that has emerged in Jammu is mainly the outcome of the royal patronage. Architectural marvels in the form of Mandi Mubarak, Samba fort, Akhnor fort, Reasi fort and many other assets of representing the cultural moorings give a peep into the historical evolution of Jammu as the complete social structure that has immense potential to carve its niche as the heritage tourism hub. Not only that intangible linkages like the Thappa chadars of Samba and Kudh dance reveal the richness of its culture and ready to be marketed through marketing strategies but having in inherent safeguard mechanism as developed by international guidelines.

Authenticity is the main issue when heritage and culture are to be judged and in that area too Jammu stands far ahead as numerous sources authenticate Jammu as the qualified heritage destination that has all the ingredients needed to define and market a heritage tourism destination. Historians and explorers of repute have written treatises and manuals that substantiate Jammu as the virgin territory that has not been given its due that it deserved in terms of the recognition of its heritage. Vogel has been forthright in relating Duggar and Gurjar as the tribal terms besides that Chamba copper plates reveal the antiquity of the Dogra tradition and its emergence as the continuity of the pan Indian tradition of evolution of culture rooted in national

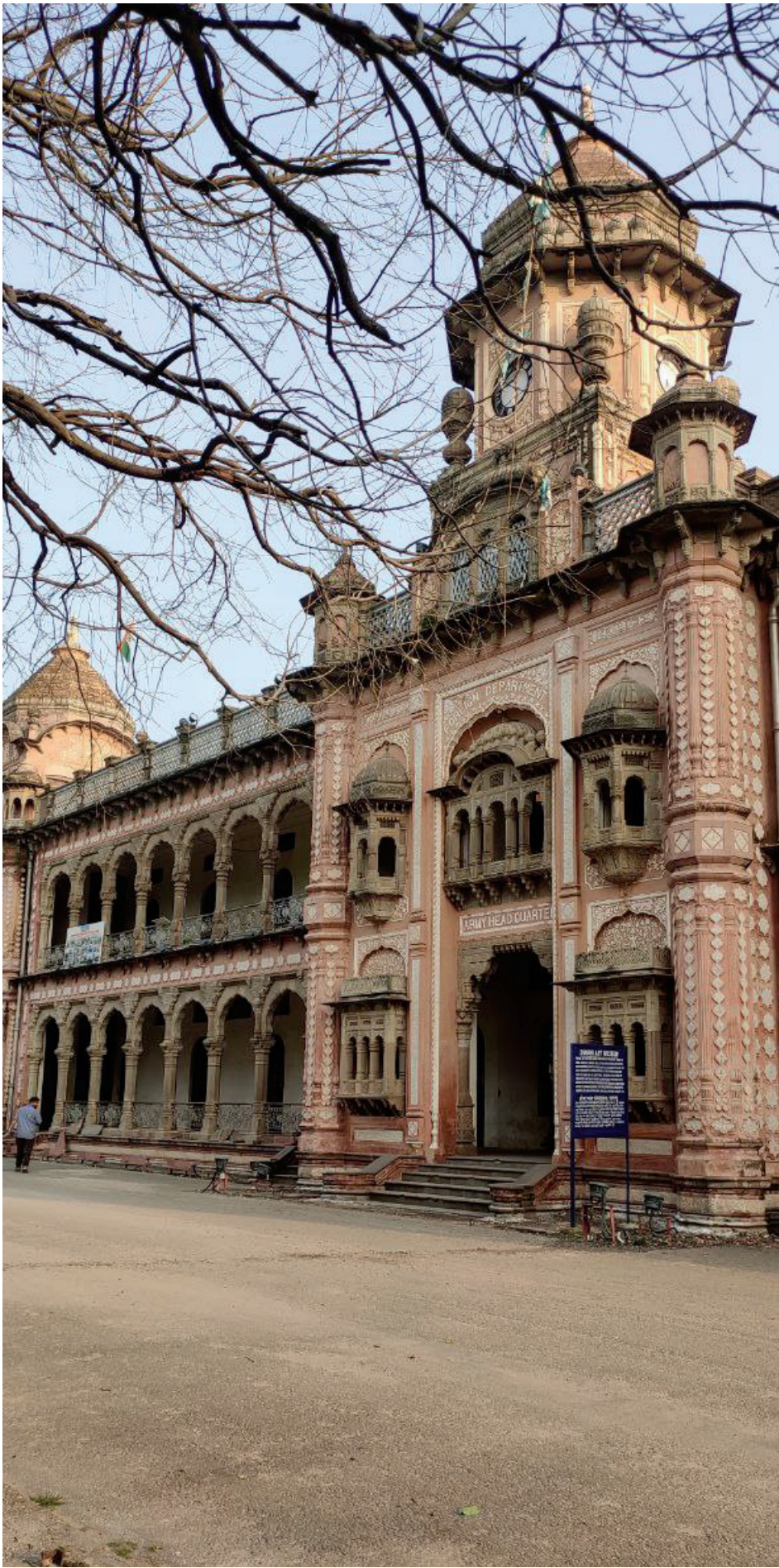
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discourse. It has been argued that natural landscape is the originator of the heritage and as such Jammu is the prominent example of this phenomenon. Water bodies are the continuous witness of the human development index and it has been argued that the civilizations that flourished around the water bodies have the fertility of imagination and innovation. The reason being water is the source of prosperity and wellness in terms of irrigation and cultivation, the prime need of the people. Jammu region has the considerable segment of peasants that define the cultural moorings of the region. It has been argued and witnessed in literature review that culture is born in rural landscape in originality and then gets scattered to other areas.

The vastness and freedom of space enables culture to flourish in the rural landscape and it is no surprise that the rich Dogra culture still resides in the rural landscape both in tangible and intangible forms. Royal patronage enabled forts to be established in remote corners of Jammu and added grandeur to them by using local wisdom of the artisans. Historical records suggest that term Dogra, the corrupted version of the original term Durgara, has its roots in the name of two famous lakes, Mansar-Surinsar. These two lakes are supposed to be linked to the Mahabharata hero Arjuna who had matrimonial relations with the family of serpents in that belt. Influence of the Naga culture of Kashmir cannot be ruled out and it is for the historians to establish and come out with findings that substantiate the immense presence of Naga culture in the Bhardwah belt of Jammu region. The land where two lakes meet is known as Dvigrata and as such it establishes the credence of the name of Durgara or Dogra.

Alberuni who travelled in India in 1017 A.D. and 1031 A.D. has mentioned the Pir Panjal pass with the description of the Punjab plains. It can be argued that Jammu province was the part of the Punjab plains even during the rule of Maharaja Ranjit Singh that nurtured the clan of the modern Dogra clan led by Gulab Singh who rose to the status of the chieftain along with his brothers and later mustered enough clout to integrate various principalities and warring factions of Shivaliks into a viable administrative unit. His resolve to act as the astute ruler blended with diplomacy gave a new state of Jammu and Kashmir housing various communities and social groups having varied interests in terms of power and administration. It is undoubtedly the genius of a ruler who amalgamated an artificial state as one unit. Today, we are witnessing the fluidity of this artificiality leading to conflict and posing various factions of the society at loggerheads. Lack of astuteness in statecraft has posed a threat to the heritage preservation as conflicting definitions and interpretation of heritage are coming to fore. In the present age when political interventions are more profound with trans-national interests in the Himalayas. Preservation and safeguard of heritage is a challenge



that cannot be addressed until the fault lines at various levels are addressed. Regional conflict that has emerged after the armed insurgency in the state has changed the social and political dimensions. It has led to demographic change and displacement of populations and communities seeking shelter in Jammu region. It has added another paradigm to cultural heritage as the interaction between people of different social set ups though same religious denominations has led to development of a culture that is shaping a new heritage for future. Besides that Jammu has witnessed influx of

refugees from time to time. It has added a cosmopolitan dimension to the social space. Kashmir region of the UT being in the forefront of ethno-religious conflict has shifted the focus on Jammu and its heritage assets but the lack of proper strategy to convert it into a viable policy paradigm has not been material. The reason as discussed elsewhere is that when political imbalance and issue of identities takes the centre stage it has inherent in it the element of discrimination. It in a way has acted as a catalyst to take the heritage issue out of the closet and subject it to public scrutiny. It was in 2003-04 that civil society

of Jammu realized the importance of heritage and raised voice against the vandalism of heritage. The issue was the destruction of the urban historic complex of Mandi Mubarak. It is a complex of ten palaces that have come over a period of many centuries and shaped the imagination of the people living around the localities bordering it. The misuse of this heritage monument by the state government and housing many offices inside it had led to its vandalism. As the occupants were not sensitised about the heritage value of the building. It led to the crumbling of its structures and renovation started by the state government included incompatible use of materials that violated its cultural heritage identity and architecture. This case study is substantiated with similar issues that have crept in many places where local governments are not aware of the heritage value and treat the restoration of heritage monuments as the case similar to that of construction of normal roads and buildings.

Jammu region is replete with examples that bring to the fore the devastation and vandalism of heritage. Samba fort, Hira Nagar fort, Reasi Fort, Moti Mahal, Poonch fort and many more. Literature reviews suggest that heritage vandalism is the outcome of the various reasons that include the wrong interpretation of the heritage assets, identity politics having conflicting overtones and non-representation in power structures and statecraft. This description fits the case of Jammu. Non-sensitisation of the stakeholders is the main reason for the devastation of the heritage and the representatives of the society have failed to pressurize the policy makers to frame strategies to showcase heritage of the region. Rajatarangini of Kalhana establishes Jammu as the ancient society that had socio-cultural relations across the plains through Punjab and enjoyed a power equation with Kashmir. It indicated the period of Jas Dev, the prince who founded the Jasrota principality and where Jasrota fort is still defining the cultural splendor of that time.

Review of literature suggests many variants of culture in Jammu and establish the influence of Buddhism. Ambaran located on the banks of Chanderbagha Chenab) is another repository of the rich cultural heritage of Jammu. It is here the tooth relics of Buddha were excavated by ASI in the casket. If proper marketing strategies are employed then it is not an exaggeration to say that Jammu region has the potential to emerge as the favorite Buddhist destination for the pilgrimage tourists of South-East Asia. Jammu is the name of the province of the state and is often confused with the district. This issue has also to be resolved by the marketers and policy makers when they devise marketing strategies to situate Jammu region in the heritage tourism orbit.

(The author is Editorial Director, The Chancellor)

Liberation in Daily Life:

The eternal wisdom of Lord Krishna through Paramhansa Yogananda

S.K.Khushu

In the luminous tradition of spiritual interpretation, few works have illuminated the profound mysteries of the Bhagavad Gita as brilliantly as Paramahansa Yogananda's monumental commentary "God Talks with Arjuna." This masterwork reveals the Gita not merely as philosophical discourse, but as a complete science of God-realization disguised within an epic narrative of cosmic proportions.

The Modern Interpreter: Paramahansa Yogananda

Paramahansa Yogananda (1893-1952), the Great master who brought the ancient science of Kriya Yoga to the West, possessed the rare gift of bridging Eastern wisdom and Western understanding. Author of the spiritual classic "Autobiography of a Yogi," Yogananda spent over thirty years in America, establishing the Self-Realization Fellowship to disseminate the universal teachings of yoga and meditation.

His interpretation of the Bhagavad Gita, spanning over 1,500 pages in "God Talks with Arjuna," represents perhaps the most comprehensive yogic commentary ever written. Yogananda approached the text not as a scholar but as a realized master, one who had experienced the states of consciousness described by Krishna. His commentary reveals layers of meaning that transform every character, location, and event into profound spiritual symbolism.

The Cosmic Allegory Unveiled

In Yogananda's vision, the Bhagavad Gita operates on multiple levels simultaneously. While maintaining respect for its historical authenticity, he reveals the deeper cosmic allegory where every element corresponds to aspects of spiritual anatomy and the journey of consciousness toward divine realization.

Krishna emerges not merely as a divine incarnation, but as the Cosmic Christ—Consciousness—the intelligence of God that permeates creation and guides every soul toward liberation. Arjuna represents the devotee's soul, initially identified with the ego but gradually awakening to its divine nature through Krishna's grace and wisdom.

The battlefield of Kurukshetra transforms into the human body, specifically the cerebrospinal axis where the great spiritual war between



forces of evolution and involution perpetually wages. The hundred Kauravas symbolize man's countless material desires and sense attachments, while the five Pandavas represent the five instruments of discrimination that the yogi must cultivate.

Understanding Krishna's Divine Play: Dispelling Common Misconceptions

Western minds often struggle with certain aspects of Krishna's life story, particularly his relationships with the gopis (cowherd girls), his childhood pranks involving butter theft, and his apparent suffering despite divine nature. Yogananda's yogic interpretation transforms these apparent paradoxes into profound spiritual teachings.

The Gopis: Souls in Divine Union

The traditional count of Krishna having 16,108 wives represents not polygamy but the highest spiritual symbolism. In yogic understanding, these gopis symbolize the individual souls of devotees who have achieved complete union with Divine Consciousness. Each "wife" represents a soul that has surrendered its separate identity to merge with the Beloved.

when the soul realizes God, it experiences intimate, personal union with the Infinite. The number 16,108 itself holds yogic significance, representing the completion of spiritual evolution through all possible states of consciousness.

This interpretation elevates what appears as romantic dalliance into the highest spiritual allegory—the soul's love affair with God. The gopis' unconditional devotion and complete self-surrender exemplify the bhakti (devotional) path to God-realization.

The Butter Thief: Stealing Hearts for God

Krishna's childhood reputation for stealing butter (makhan) carries profound yogic symbolism that Yogananda beautifully explicates. Butter represents the essence extracted from milk through churning—symbolically, the divine consciousness extracted from creation through spiritual practice. Krishna "steals" this butter to demonstrate that God claims the devotee's heart-essence as His own.

The butter-stealing episodes represent the Divine's playful way of drawing souls away from material attachments toward spiritual realization. Just as butter is the purest extract of milk, divine love is the essence of all experience. Krishna's "theft" signifies God's irresistible attraction that eventually captures every heart, leading it home to divine consciousness.

The households Krishna "robs" represent human consciousness filled with spiritual treasures that remain hidden until Divine Grace reveals them. His childhood pranks thus become cosmic play (lila) through which God awakens souls from material slumber.

The Divine Paradox: Why Krishna Suffered

Perhaps the most perplexing aspect for many is why Krishna, being divine, experienced apparent suffering—the pain of separation from the gopis, the tragedies befalling his clan, and his own physical death from a hunter's arrow. Yogananda's interpretation reveals this as the supreme teaching about divine love and cosmic responsibility.

Krishna's "suffering" demonstrates that even divine consciousness, when incarnate, willingly accepts the limitations of human existence to teach humanity. His pain of separation from devotees illustrates that God Himself "suffers" when souls forget their divine nature and become lost in material consciousness. This divine empathy draws God into creation

The battlefield of Kurukshetra transforms into the human body, specifically the cerebrospinal axis where the great spiritual war between forces of evolution and involution perpetually wages. The hundred Kauravas symbolize man's countless material desires and sense attachments, while the five Pandavas represent the five instruments of discrimination that the yogi must cultivate.

The famous Rasa Lila (divine dance) depicts the ultimate spiritual experience where individual consciousness dissolves into cosmic consciousness. Each gopi dancing with Krishna simultaneously represents the mystical truth that

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again and again as avatars. Moreover, Krishna's acceptance of physical death reveals the ultimate spiritual teaching: even the divine body is temporary, but consciousness is eternal. By experiencing birth, growth, and death, Krishna demonstrates that these are merely appearances in the unchanging backdrop of eternal existence.

The Gita's Yogic Revelation

In Yogananda's interpretation, Krishna's teachings in the Bhagavad Gita constitute a complete manual for scientific God-realization. Each chapter represents progressive stages of spiritual unfoldment, from initial confusion to ultimate liberation.

The Science of Meditation

Krishna's discourse on meditation (dhyana yoga) becomes a precise scientific method for transcending body consciousness and realizing the Self. Yogananda explains how Krishna's instructions correspond exactly to the advanced techniques of Kriya Yoga—the scientific method of meditation that accelerates spiritual evolution.

The "supreme secret" that Krishna promises to reveal represents the ultimate technique of yoga: the direct method of communion with God through scientific meditation. This isn't mere concentration but the actual science of consciousness that enables the soul to withdraw from identification with the physical body and realise its true nature as spirit.

The Spiritual Spine: Battlefield of Consciousness

Yogananda's most revolutionary interpretation reveals the human body, specifically the cerebrospinal system, as the true Kurukshetra battlefield. The seven chakras along the spine represent the seven levels of consciousness through which the soul must ascend to reach divine realization.

The opposing armies symbolize the eternal struggle between upward-flowing life force (prana) that leads to enlightenment, and downward-flowing energy that binds consciousness to material existence. Each character in the epic corresponds to specific aspects of this internal spiritual anatomy.

Dharma as Cosmic Law

Krishna's teaching about dharma transcends conventional morality to embrace cosmic law itself. In yogic understanding, true dharma means alignment with the evolutionary force of the universe—the divine will that guides all creation toward ultimate realization of unity.

When Krishna instructs Arjuna to fight, he's commanding the devotee's soul to engage actively in spiritual battle against ignorance, not to remain passive in the face of evolutionary opportunity. The "killing" of relatives represents the necessary destruction of ego-attachments that bind the soul to limitation.

The Universal Christ Consciousness

Yogananda's interpretation presents Krishna as the universal Christ Consciousness—the same divine intelligence that incarnated as Jesus and appears whenever humanity needs spiritual guidance. This consciousness represents the mediating principle between transcendent Spirit and manifested creation.

Krishna's promise "I come in every age" reveals this eternal presence that manifests through realized masters across all spiritual traditions. The Gita thus becomes not sectarian scripture but universal spiritual science applicable to seekers of every background.

The Deathless Teaching

The dialogue between Krishna and Arjuna represents the eternal conversation between God and the seeking soul. Yogananda reveals that this dialogue continues within every sincere devotee's consciousness, where the inner divine teacher guides the soul through life's battles toward ultimate realization.

The Gita's teaching about the immortal soul takes on scientific precision in yogic understanding. Through meditation, the practitioner directly experiences consciousness as separate from physical existence, validating Krishna's assurance about the soul's eternal nature.

A Sacred Path for Modern Youth: Liberation Through Daily Practice

In our contemporary world, young people face unprecedented mental stress, anxiety, and confusion. The pressures of academic competition, career uncertainty, social media comparison, and material expectations create a perfect storm of psychological turbulence. Many seek relief through destructive means—substance abuse, addictive behaviors, or escapist practices that promise temporary relief but deliver lasting harm.

Krishna's teachings, as illuminated by Yogananda, offer a radically different solution: the path of liberation through integrated spiritual living. This isn't about abandoning worldly responsibilities but transforming them into stepping stones toward divine realization.

The Student's Spiritual Path:

For students, the Gita provides a blueprint for academic excellence without anxiety. Krishna's teaching of "yogah karmasu kaushalam" (yoga is skill in action) means performing studies with full concentration while remaining detached from results. This doesn't mean indifference to outcomes but freedom from the anxiety that clouds judgment and performance.

Regular meditation practice, even fifteen minutes daily, develops the inner stillness that enhances learning capacity while reducing stress. When study becomes an offering to the Divine—seeking knowledge to serve humanity rather than merely personal advancement—education transforms from burden to blessing.

The Professional's Liberation

Young professionals can apply Krishna's karma yoga principles to transform their careers into spiritual practice. Every task performed with dedication and without ego-attachment becomes yoga. The key lies in working with full engagement while maintaining inner detachment—giving one's best effort while surrendering results to Divine will.

This approach eliminates the anxiety that comes from over-identification with success or failure. Whether in business, service, or any profession, the practitioner finds peace in knowing they are instruments of Divine action rather than separate entities struggling against cosmic forces.

The Entrepreneur's Dharma

For young entrepreneurs and business leaders, Krishna's teachings offer guidance on ethical success. True prosperity comes not from exploiting others but from serving universal good. When business becomes a means of benefiting humanity rather than mere profit-making, it aligns with cosmic dharma and attracts divine grace.

The Gita's principles help navigate ethical dilemmas with clarity: decisions made from divine guidance rather than ego-driven ambition naturally align with long-term success and inner peace.

Daily Practice for Modern Liberation

Yogananda emphasized that liberation doesn't require retreat from the world but conscious engagement with it. Simple daily practices can transform ordinary life into spiritual journey:

Morning Meditation: Beginning each day with even brief meditation establishes divine connection that carries through all activities. This practice builds the inner strength to face challenges with equanimity.

Conscious Breathing: Throughout the day, returning attention to breath connects one with life force energy (prana), reducing stress and maintaining spiritual awareness during busy periods.

Service Attitude: Approaching all work—whether cleaning one's room, helping colleagues, or serving customers—as service to the Divine transforms mundane tasks into spiritual practice.

Evening Reflection: Before sleep, offering the day's activities to God and reflecting on lessons learned maintains spiritual perspective and prepares consciousness for divine communion during rest.

Breaking Free from Destructive Patterns

The Gita addresses directly why people turn to harmful substances or behaviors: they seek the joy and peace that is their true nature but look for it in temporary, external sources. Krishna teaches that true bliss (ananda) comes from within, accessed through connection with

one's divine essence.

Drugs and addictive behaviors promise transcendence but deliver bondage. The spiritual path offers genuine transcendence—the expansion of consciousness that reveals life's underlying joy and meaning. When young people experience this authentic spiritual fulfillment, destructive cravings naturally diminish.

The Promise for Youth

Krishna's promise to Arjuna—and through him to all seekers—remains as relevant today as 5,000 years ago: "Abandon all varieties of dharmas and just surrender unto Me. I shall deliver you from all sinful reactions. Do not fear."

For modern youth, this means trusting that sincere spiritual practice will provide the strength, guidance, and inner peace needed to navigate life's challenges successfully. The path is simple: regular meditation, selfless service, study of wisdom teachings, and cultivation of divine love.

Integration and Realization

This integrated approach transforms the Gita from ancient philosophy into practical life guidance. Young people discover they can achieve both material success and spiritual liberation—not despite their worldly responsibilities but through them, sanctified by proper attitude and practice.

The ultimate goal remains the same as Krishna promised Arjuna: liberation through direct realization of one's divine nature. This isn't theoretical knowledge but practical experience achieved through scientific application of yoga principles in daily life, whether in classroom, office, or marketplace.

The Eternal Promise

In Paramahansa Yogananda's luminous interpretation, the Bhagavad Gita emerges as the complete revelation of humanity's spiritual destiny. Krishna's teachings provide not just philosophy but practical methods for achieving the highest human possibility—conscious union with Divine Spirit while remaining active in the world.

The apparent paradoxes in Krishna's life dissolve when understood as cosmic allegory designed to teach the deepest spiritual truths. His divine play becomes a mirror reflecting our own spiritual journey from unconscious identification with limitation to conscious realization of our infinite divine nature.

Through this yogic lens, the Gita transforms from ancient text to living guidance, where Krishna's voice continues speaking to every heart ready to receive the eternal wisdom that leads from darkness to light, from mortality to immortality, from human consciousness to divine realization.

(The author is retired government official)





Save Birds of Jammu & Kashmir

Jammu and Kashmir has the distinction of being the habitat to varied species of birds besides rich in vegetation and climatic conditions that makes it the desired destination of these myriad species. It is the blessing of nature to this state that besides being the favoured destination among the tourists all over the world, the birds of various hues flock to this state. So this state is visited by special tourists as well. Like humans, birds are also sensitive to the environment around them and like the harmony of nature for their breeding and other activities. But over the years not only humans but these birds whether visiting this state or the birds that are indigenous to the ecosystem of Jammu & Kashmir are witnessing decline in terms of their population, visitation and breeding due to the human inflicted challenges and the insensitivity of one and all.

At such a crucial juncture when these species are facing immense challenge to their survival and the biodiversity is being dismantled in the state, the book titled Threatened Birds of Jammu and Kashmir written by Dr. Asad R. Rahmani and his professional team that includes Intesar Suhail, Pankaj Chandan, Khursheed Ahmed and Ashfaq Ahmed Zarri is a timely move. The book is a rich reservoir of data, contemporary research, field work and analysis regarding the habitats of the species of the birds in the state and delves at length suggesting the ways and means to conserve bird species. The authors need to be congratulated in coming out with this volume as it is timely and responsible intervention.

The book has been divided into five sections: Critically Endangered, Endangered, Vulnerable, Near Threatened and Marginal.

These sections cater to the threats and dangers to various species at various levels and discuss them in detail. In the section Critically Endangered the authors discuss the white-baked or White rumped Vulture. This species is found in the Jammu region of the state. Authors have dealt in analysing the dwindling of this species in a scientific manner and while delving into the details of the decline of this species they write 'The most catastrophic and rapid decline of the White-backed Vulture (and other related Gyps

Dr. Mahesh Kaul

Book:
Threatened Birds of Jammu & Kashmir
Authors:
Asad R. Rahmani, Intesar Suhail, Pankaj Chandan, Khursheed Ahmad & Ashfaq Ahmed Zarri
Publisher:
Oxford University Press
Year of Publication:
2015
Price:
300

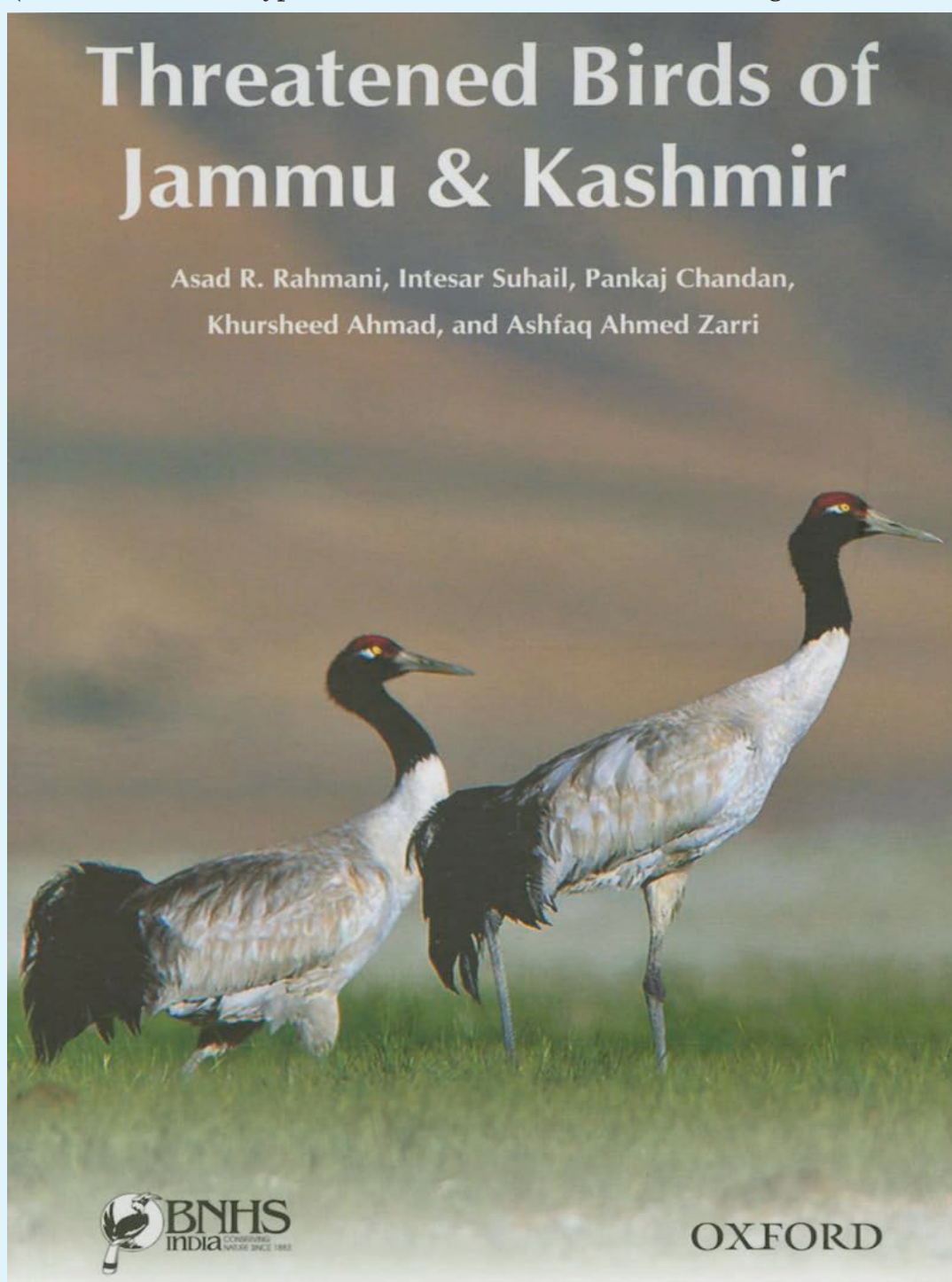
species) has been seen in South Asia. This decline was first reported in newspapers in the mid-1990 and later confirmed scientifically at Keolao NP and all over India. Similar steep declines were noticed in Nepal and Pakistan." (pp.34)

Discussing the impact of their decline on the ecology they write, "It affects open countryside, avoiding thick forests and wooded hilly areas. Feeding as it does on large carcasses; it locates them visually, by soaring regularly on thermals, covering vast areas of

hundreds of square kilometers a day. It also locates food by following other descending vultures and scavengers." (pp.35).

Other species that have been discussed in this section include Slender-billed Vulture. The book gives recommendations for the conservation of these species. The threat to these species has increased over the years due to the extraction of diclofenac from these species for medicinal use. The authors have highlighted the various policy measures of the state and central governments and stressed for the adherence to these safeguards to conserve these threatened species. Emphasising the need to meet this challenge head on, they exhort, "The Ministry of Environment and Forests should ensure that funding does not become a constraint in running the Vulture Conservation Breeding Programme, which is of paramount importance to ensure the survival of these valuable scavenging birds that play a vital role in quick disposal of carcasses, and consequently in human environmental management." (pp.39). To give credence to their research and the issue of saving vultures they have shared inputs from Chris Bowen, SAVE (Saving Asia's Vultures from Extinction)

The next section "Endangered" is dedicated to the issue of Egyptian Vulture. "This bird has been seen frequently in small numbers near Gharana Wetland Reserve by Ashfaq Ahmed Zarri, Pankaj Chandan, Pushpinder Singh Jamwal, and Rohit Rattan. It was also recorded on three different visits to the mansard Surinsar Wildlife Sanctuary in the winter of 2009, 2010 and 2011 (Ashfaq Ahmed Zarri). the species has been sighted recently in various other locations in Rajouri and Poonch districts few



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birds were seen near Chandimarh village in Poonch District during an expedition in Pir Panjal range by Pankaj Chandan. The species can be easily seen along River Tawi and the outskirts of Jammu city. Thus, the overall population seems to be declining in J and K, a small population is still surviving in the Jammu region, south of Pir Panjal range. (pp.43). To safeguard the species from extinction and preserve ecological balance, the authors have suggested the ban on veterinary use of diclofenac, to conduct surveys in the Jammu region, environmental educational programmes in rural areas, satellite tracking of these species. (pp.44)

Another species that has been dealt in this section is White-headed Duck. As per the authors it was found in Srinagar. They have quoted the eminent settlement commissioner of the Kashmir, Walter Lawrence, who had worked extensively to document the various facets of Kashmir ranging from agriculture to ecology during the time and era of the Dogra rulers to lend credence to their work. Quoting Walter Lawrence they write, “The duck is very rare in Kashmir and six specimens were shot on or near the Wular lake by the sportsman in the hard winter of 1809-1891. we do not have record in recent years. Ever since the establishment of a Wetland Division under the Department of Wildlife (Protection) in J and K, efforts are being made by field staff during surveys to locate this species, but not even a single bird has been spotted in any wetland of Kashmir in recent years.” (pp.47)

They have expressed serious concern about this rare species and underlined the conservation measures that are prevalent all over the country under the legal provisions. To substantiate their concern and the ground reality they write, “The species is legally protected in many countries, including India. It is included in Schedule VI of the Indian Wildlife (Protection) Act 1972. It is listed in CITES Appendix II and CMS Appendix I. A conservation programme in Spain has resulted in a significant population increase (Birdlife International 2013)”.

It brings to fore the lack of will on the part of the policy makers and the lack of sensitivity of the common people who have taken the biodiversity for granted and are contributing to the vandalisation and extinction of the habitats of the rare species of birds and their annihilation. To further reinforce their concern they suggest in their recommendation that “As it is a scarce migrant in India, not much can be done here except prevention

of poaching and poisoning of all waterfowl. The IBAs and Pas where this bird has been reported should be better protected, particularly their water quality.” (pp.48)

Third section, Vulnerable is quite large as it includes various species that include Western Tragopan, Cheer Pheasant, Lesser White-fronted Goose, Marbled Duck, Pallas’s Fish-eagle, Greater Spotted Eagle, Eastern Imperial eagle, Sarus Crane, Black-necked Crane, Pale-Backed or Yellow-eyed Pigeon and Kashmir Flycatcher. While analyzing these species in terms of threats to their existence they have divided their study and research into the following heads:

- Field Characters
- Ecology
- Threats
- Conservation measures underway

For every species they have underlined recommendations besides the data based on scientific methods and field survey made rich by observations over the period of time. It speaks volumes about the involvement and dedication of the authors who are well trained professionals in their respective fields.

The fourth section, Near Threatened is another longer section that deals with very important species of birds that frequent the state of Jammu & Kashmir making the avifauna and biodiversity of the state rich but due to conservation and survival threats cause a serious concern among the ornithologists and people concerned with the ecological balance. The various species of birds that have included in this section and discussed in detail include Ferruginous Duck, Black-necked Stork, Black-headed Ibis, Black-tailed Godwit, Eurasian Curlew, Cinereous Vulture, European Roller, Long-billed Bush-warbler, and Tytler’s Leaf-warbler. These species have been analysed in terms of threats as employed in the previous section and after giving a description of each of these species they have given recommendations to implement the conservation techniques to save them from extinction.

The last section titled Marginal includes the following species that have been studied as per the standardized format adopted in every section: Red-headed of King Vulture, Painted Stork, Oriental darter, Red Kite, pallid harrier, Little Bustard. References have been included at the end of the book besides the index of the common names. The book has been published by BNHS (Bombay Natural History Society) and printed by Oxford University Press.

Authors have dedicated this book based on field studies to Dato Loke

“

The book has been divided into five sections: Critically Endangered, Endangered, Vulnerable, Near Threatened and Marginal. These sections cater to the threats and dangers to various species at various levels and discuss them in detail. In the section Critically Endangered the authors discuss the white-backed or White rumped Vulture. This species is found in the Jammu region of the state. Authors have dealt in analysing the dwindling of this species in a scientific manner and while delving into the details of the decline of this species they write ‘The most catastrophic and rapid decline of the White-backed Vulture (and other related Gyps species) has been seen in South Asia

Wan Tho who was reputed businessman and ornithologist and keen birdwatcher. Though a Malaysian he took keen interest in the birds of Jammu and Kashmir and wrote articles in JBNHS. In their tribute to this great ornithologist they write, “We at the Bombay Natural History Society are privileged to hold a part of his legacy, a fabulous collection of bird photographs, and numerous landscapes of the remote and pristine areas that he explored while accompanying Dr Salim Ali on his field trips. The pictures bear visual testimony to the excellence of the man behind the camera.” (pp.144)

Authors have shown in their presentation that they are true to their words and deeds in terms of the tribute paid to this great man and the pioneering work of Dr. Salim Ali by providing the researchers, policymakers and readers with the rare pictures and analysis.

It is pertinent to mention that the authors have made a comprehensive assessment of the threats to the rare species of birds in all the three regions viz; Jammu, Kashmir and Ladakh of the state and brought to the fore the issues concerning the conservation measures and scientific methods that should be employed to save the birds whether migratory or the indigenous. The concluding paragraph of the introduction to the book sums up well the objective and broader framework of the work. It reads, “Overall, the key threats to birds and other biodiversity of the state are habitat encroachment, overgrazing by livestock, tourism, firewood collection, and forest fires. As is the case across the world and in India, loss of wetlands owing to human interference is continuing and has resulted in degradation of large numbers of wetlands in the state.” (pp.22)

Underlining the negative role of the human interference other challenges to biodiversity they add. “Besides numerous human disturbances threatening the survival of wetlands in Kashmir, such as increased siltation, eutrophication, overfishing, and encroachment of agricultural land into the marshes peripheral to lakes, climate change is reported to have impacted wetlands in Jammu and Kashmir, as also worldwide, by drying up small wetlands resulting in the loss of these “carbon sinks”; converting permanent wetlands into seasonal wetlands, subject to greater variation in water levels; enhancing the release of greenhouse gases from these systems; and decreasing biodiversity within affected wetlands.” This book reminds keen observers of the state’s biodiversity of the foremost bird watcher and ornithologist Late Pt. Samsar Chand Kaul of Rainawari, Srinagar, Kashmir who set the benchmark in this field without any patronage and trained his students in the subject and inculcated them to internalise the sense of living in harmony with nature. This book is a tribute to such pioneers. Dr. Asad R. Rahmani and his dedicated team needs to be congratulated for carrying forward this noble mission.

Print quality and presentation of the book is good but if the book would have been divided into chapters and a comprehensive index added at the end of the book, it would have benefited the scholars and keen readers in more ways. Hope the authors and the publisher will work upon it in the next edition. It will lead to the value edition of this important book.

(The author is Editorial Director, The Chancellor)



A Pilgrim's Path: Journey to the Amarnath Cave

Sunil Raina Rajanaka

Everyone who takes part in the annual Amarnath Yatra first pays obeisance to the Sun God at the Martand Tirtha Temple in Pahalgam. Even the Charri Mubarak, the holy mace of Shiva and Parvati, is brought here for prayers before the yatra begins.

Built by King Lalitaditya Muktapida of Kashmir, the temple is set amidst majestic chinar trees, with a spring flowing nearby—an island of calm and bliss. Muktapida's desire to connect with the true Self must have been profound to inspire the construction of a temple dedicated to the Sun God.

"The sun shines not only in the physical world but also inside us, removing all traces of darkness, so that we strive for the transcendental Self," explained my friend, as if reading my thought.

During the yatra season, the gardens of Pahalgam are in full bloom. The Lidder River snakes through the town while snow-capped mountains stand like silent sentinels. The scene is nothing short of heaven on earth.

From Pahalgam, I hired a cab to Chandanwari, the first halt en route to the Amarnath cave. This marks the end of

the road journey; from here, one must trek 32 km to reach the sacred cave where Shiva revealed the secret of immortality to Parvati. In ancient times, Amarnath was known as Amreshwar.

I checked into a hotel at Chandanwari for the night. Shiva released the crescent moon from his dreadlocks here, hence the place got its name, which means a piece of moon. Legend has it that on his way to the Amarnath cave, he released all his adornments on the way.

As I looked at the deodar and conifer trees bathed in moonlight, I realized: since the moon symbolizes mind and ego—both obstacles on the spiritual path—Shiva left them behind.

At daybreak, after completing registration formalities, I began the long trek. The trek to the craggy Pissu Top, the next halt, was treacherous; the path to salvation is rough and the soul requires inner strength to overcome challenges. After an hour, the sun's rays started falling on the mountains all around. The snowcapped peaks dazzled with the sun's golden rays and it appeared as if they had donned a golden diadem. The scene was a treat for the eyes. At Pissu Top, yatra volunteers had set up community langars, where pilgrims were being served hot tea and paranthas for breakfast. The warmth of the sun along with the gentle breeze, was refreshing and the fatigue of climbing simply van-

ished. The next milestone was Sheshnag. The trek from Pissu Top to Sheshnag was through an undulating mountain range. Everything was still; it was as if these gigantic mountains were given lessons on peace and tranquillity to the pilgrims. Meadows with wild shrubs and numerous streams from the melting glaciers dotted the route. Looking ahead, I caught the first glimpse of the green waters of the Sheshnag Lake, on the banks of which, Shiva released the snake — representing possessions and desires — coiled around his neck. My next stop was Panchtarni, which means five rivulets. Here Shiva released Ganga, who represents continuity, culture, civilisation and knowledge. The five rivulets also represent the five elements — earth, water, air, fire and sky. From Panchtarni to the entrance of the Amarnath cave, the trek gets tougher as one has to negotiate rocky terrain, icy streams and frozen passes. But the experience that awaits one at the end of the climb makes up for the grind. After taking the customary bath, I climbed the stairs to the cave.

The moment my eyes fell upon the Shiva Lingam, I stood rooted to the spot. An electric current ran through my body and I was in a state of bliss. Inside the cave, every year, a white ice lingam takes shape. Water trickles mysteriously from the roof of the cave and freezes into ice.

It first forms a solid base and then a lingam begins to rise and acquire full form on Purnima or full moon day. After due oblations, I left the cave and walked to the spot to collect my belongings, but my boots were missing. I got annoyed at the poor arrangements for the pilgrims. Had I come all the way up to lose my boots? May be someone needed them more than me. Or was Shiva testing my endurance? With these conflicting thoughts, I climbed down the steps and started walking. A short distance away, I saw a man in rags wearing similar boots. I went up to him, smiled and pointed towards the shoes and asked if they belonged to him. He said no and started removing them. I told him to keep the boots. I had another pair anyway. I was surprised at my own magnanimity. Perhaps there was a shift in consciousness as I didn't attach much value to smaller things. On my way back, I crossed the Sangam river, then Brarimarg and finally reached Baltal, a scenic meadow nestling on the banks of the Indus river. Coming downhill, I realised that spiritual journeys are full of trials and tribulations, which an ardent devotee finally overcomes. Perhaps, this triumph is, called Self-realisation.

(The Author is Editor, Naad and an avid traveller)



Reviving the Roots: Museum & festivals put Dard Aryans back on the map-II

Dr. Verender Bangroo

In Garkhon Village, old buildings made of locally available material exhibit distinct architecture which is unique in its own way. But since, the new concrete structures are also coming up in the region, which more or less resembles the neighborhood villages (Leh and Kargil) architecture, therefore, the village is losing its distinctive sheen.

Therefore, to establish a museum, we decided to convert an old village building into a Museum set up. For this, Golpa family of the Gorkhan village lane came forward and offered their old house. This three storied old building was intact but was in a bad shape, especially its floor and roof. The enliven family and the young volunteers of the village began the restoration process and as a first step cleaned the house. Thereafter, the second step was to white wash the walls excluding wooden windows, almirahs and doors intact.

Alongside, a group of young village boys named Sh Gelsun, Sh Nawang Tsezrat, Ms Dolma of Golpa family were given the task to list all the age old household

artifacts encompassing that building. Amazingly, a few tourists visiting the village also came forward and helped in the work. Some old photographs of the village clicked by the author last year depicting nature, festival celebration, their unique dresses, dances etc were also selected for framing & display in the museum. The work of framing of photographs was again volunteered by Sh. Landup Tashi, which he got from the nearby Kargil region.

Then, conducting a workshop on Museum management with the villagers kept the ball rolling and our next step was to garner some support from the local administration and army stationed in the region. We visited the army base camp and they welcomed the move and assured their full cooperation and support for the cause.

Since, the next two weeks, author was scheduled to spend his time in Zaskar region visiting different monasteries for some research related work, he left the place after aligning all the necessary activities & assigning different tasks like cleaning & white washing of old building, photo framing of pictures, typing labels etc to responsible villagers. Thus initiating the process & channelizing all the efforts in the direction of museum establishment under his supervision.

Upon his return from Zaskar via Kargil, he made it a point to visit Gorkhun village again to take stock of the situation. He

was happy to see that Sh Landup Tashi got the house white washed according to the plan. All the Labels were ready in neatly typed form, and framing work of photographs was also complete. Since, Bonana Festival of Ladakh was to be celebrated from 2nd to 6th October 2017, therefore, that time was appropriately chosen by all for the inauguration of the said Museum.

To make the museum inauguration function a grand success, a meeting of the village heads was also called up for organizing and coordinating all its preparatory work under the leadership of the author. In the said meeting, besides inauguration of the Museum, other issues such as cleanliness drive in the village, various plans to maintain discipline etc during the festival were also discussed. The date for Inauguration of the Museum was finally decided for 4th October 2017.

Since, there is one primary and high school in Gorkhun village and in both the schools Drawing as a subject is not being taught separately, so it was decided to involve school children also in the process by holding a drawing competition for them a day before museum inauguration i.e. on 3rd November, 2017. For this, free Paper and colors brought by the author from Delhi were also distributed amongst kids and the results were amazing. Children enthusiastically participated and showed a lot of interest in making

drawings & coloring. The special prizes were also distributed to all the participating students on Museum Inauguration day.

The inaugural function was organized in two terrace gardens of Golpa family's house. In the lower terrace, villagers performed dances whereas the upper terrace was meant for visitors. After the inaugural speech, there was a musical performance followed by distribution of gifts. The guests visited the Museum and appreciated all the efforts for the revival of art & culture in the region.

Floor Plan of Museum Exhibiting Labdak Culture in Garkhon Village

The Aryan valley has a distinct culture but it is gradually fading by modernization and getting influenced by neighboring cultures. The impact is so visible in all aspects of their lives viz their eating habits, dressing styles, house construction etc where Aryan people switching over to concrete constructions, which although has some advantage, but not in terms of economy.

Thus, to safeguard and promote the indigenous culture, it was decided by the villagers to set up a museum in the Garkoh Village. For this, an old Labdak house constructed approx 500 years back was finalised. This old building was last repaired by Shri Dudho Samphel about 150 years back. The three storied old building has a typical look of the

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vernacular architecture. The existing floors of the building were converted into different Galleries to get the glimpse of the ancient times.

The details of the floor plans of the old building vis-a-vis its floor wise conversion into Museum is given below:-

1. The Ground Floor called Bhu, is used for sheltering sheep and goats.

2. The First Floor called Ktsha is used during winter's season, where all the family members assemble. A small passage leads to Ktsha where there is one big room which houses Guru Padmasambhava's fingerprints on Sabdak, an ancient symbolic representation of the local God. Sabdak is placed near the fire altar and the first food cooked was offered to it daily. The adjoining second cell was used for storing house hold items. There was one special cell also which was used for the head of the family. There are underground stores and adjoining small cells for storing petrified butter & grains. Amazingly, there is only one small window in this entire floor.

We turned this First floor, Ktsha [winter room] into a Gallery highlighting the synchronization of ancient Aryan culture with Buddhism. This gallery houses Sabdak with fingerprints of Loban Rinpoche and Thankas depicting Loban Rinpoche. The horns of sacrificial animals are also displayed in this gallery. The stone utensils of Aryan valley and other ancient utilitarian objects are also displayed on a decorative shelf called Tsangs in the local language.

3. Second Floor called Barkhang is

used in the summer season. This floor also has a small room for the head of the family and also for the visiting guests.

The Second Floor, Barkhang was dedicated towards the display of the traditional kitchen of the ancient Dard Aryan family once living there. It housed traditional utensils once in use some 150 years back. In this gallery photographs of the previous year's festival celebrations were also displayed in the adjoining room. This floor has two adjoining balconies, one opening in the eastern side giving the glimpse of the Fort of the Aryan Dards and the second balcony opening in the southern side with a spectacular view of the rocky mountain chain of Singay Gangs across the Indus.

4. Third floor called Rafsal has a small covered space and a puja room and the rest is an open courtyard. The first prayer of the day is held on the open courtyard of the floor.

Accordingly, the Third Floor was converted into a Labdak Gallery depicting the life & culture of Aryan Dards.

The Museum has become an important hub of research for researchers, anthropologists and historians who are curious of knowing the culture and traditions of a long lost community who remained isolated for centuries in this difficult mountainous terrain of lower Ladakh.

The villagers has realized the importance of the museum as a tourist attraction and also a great potential for attracting youngsters in their community to take pride in their heritage. Increase in the number of visitors in these valleys has generated more employment. There are

few guest houses and it is foreseen that many more will be needed in the years to come, together with the setting up of many more community museums in this region will amount to a movement toward conserving their heritage.

'Arya Utsav-celebrating Dard Aryans of Ladakh'

The focus on Dard Aryans continued with the support of Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts (IGNCA)

. With a view of promoting the unique cultural heritage culture of Dard Aryans, IGNCA organised 'Arya Utsav-celebrating Dard Aryans of Ladakh' from 16 to 21st January, 2019. The Centre invited 30 artists and scholars of the 'Dard Aryan' community from Leh and Kargil regions of Ladakh. Twenty villagers from the Aryan valley came to Delhi on their own and participated in the festival.

The festival comprised of the glimpses from various aspects of their life - through paintings, music, dance, and material culture.

An exhibition was part of the festival, giving an idea about their socio-cultural and religious life, which was curated by Verender Bangroo. The exhibition was inaugurated by Sh. NN Vohra, President, India International Centre, and Former Governor, Jammu, and Kashmir, along with Dr Sonal Mansingh, Trustee, IGNCA and Member of Parliament, Rajya Sabha.

The exhibition was divided into six segments - geographical, religion, architecture, agricultural, festivals and children's paintings. The Exhibition was open to public from 16 - 25th Jan, 2019.

The cultural evenings during the festival featured the traditional celebrations of

Dard Aryans. The following events were celebrated: Nausar - celebrating New Year; Bononah - celebrating Harvest; Manut - celebrating marriage; Naa - festival of flowers and Rail - celebrating senior citizens.

Cultural performance of Dard Aryans was held in the forenoon on 17 Jan, 2019 in Jawaharlal Nehru University. It was attended by faculty and students of JNU. The well attended event was wrapped up with an interactive session between the audience and the performers.

Documentary film titled, Conflict between tradition and modernity-Dard Aryans of Ladakh by Verender Bangroo was screening on 17th Jan, 2019, 4 PM, followed by discussion

A seminar on Dard Aryans of Ladakh was held on January 18, which was inaugurated by Sudarshan Bhagat, Union Minister of State for Tribal Affairs.

At the seminar, 18 papers were presented by scholars from Dard Aryan community as well as scholars working in the field. Topics deliberated upon in the Seminar were: 1. Geographical terrain and early human settlements in the region 2. Dard life and their sustenance 3. Beliefs, practices; fairs and festivals 4. Impact of outside world.

The visiting delegation of the Dard Aryans also submitted a charter of demands to Minister of State for Tribal Affairs, Sudarshan Bhagat.

Concluded

(Author is Former Regional Director, Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts (IGNCA), J&K, Goa and presently Associate Professor at (IGNCA), New Delhi)

World Population Day: Counting People, Valuing Lives

THE CHANCELLOR DESK
Jammu

Every year on July 11th, the world pauses to observe World Population Day, a day dedicated to raising awareness about the profound impact that population growth has on societies, economies, and the environment. Since its establishment by the United Nations in 1989, this day has become an important occasion to reflect on the challenges and opportunities that arise from humanity's increasing numbers.

The origins of World Population Day trace back to July 11, 1987, a date that marked a significant milestone: the global population had reached five billion people. This figure ignited conversations about the sustainability of continued rapid population growth and its implications for the planet and quality of life. Fast forward to today, and the world population has soared beyond eight billion, a staggering number that presents a mix of promise and pressure.

2025 Year's Theme: "To Leave No One Behind" focuses on inclusivity, ensuring that as we plan for the future, every individual has access to education, healthcare, and opportunities, regardless of where they are born. It underscores the importance of gender equality, especially in reproductive health and family planning, allowing individuals to make informed choices about childbearing.

matters not only because it represents a headcount but because it touches every aspect of our lives. Economic development, for example, is closely linked to demographic trends. Countries with a large, young workforce can potentially enjoy what demographers call a "demographic dividend," where increased productivity leads to rapid economic growth. Yet, this potential can only be realized if there are adequate investments in education, healthcare, and job creation. Without these, rapid population growth may instead lead to increased unemployment, poverty, and social instability.

At the same time, the relentless rise in population places enormous pressure on natural resources. The demand for food, water, energy, and housing rises

with every additional person. This often leads to overexploitation of forests, water bodies, and agricultural land, accelerating environmental degradation and biodiversity loss. Hence, managing population growth sustainably has become an urgent necessity if future generations are to inherit a livable planet.

Public health and social services also feel the weight of growing populations. Larger populations increase demand for hospitals, schools, sanitation, and social welfare systems. Access to maternal health care, child nutrition, and family planning are critical factors in improving life expectancy and reducing infant mortality rates, yet many regions still struggle to meet these basic needs. Urban areas, in particular, are facing

rates and aging populations. Countries such as Japan, Germany, and Italy face shrinking workforces and increased pressure on social security systems as a growing proportion of their populations enter old age. These demographic shifts demand innovative policy responses, including encouraging higher birth rates, extending working ages, or welcoming immigrants to balance population structures.

India stands at a unique demographic juncture. Having recently surpassed China as the world's most populous nation, India is home to over 1.4 billion people. While its population continues to grow, the fertility rate is gradually declining, signaling the start of a demographic transition. The

maternal and infant mortality and helps break cycles of poverty, fostering a better quality of life.

Closely linked to reproductive health is the imperative of gender equality. Societies that empower women through education, employment, and decision-making opportunities tend to experience better demographic and social outcomes. Promoting gender equality not only supports population management but also advances human rights and social justice. Many campaigns and initiatives on World Population Day emphasize this vital connection, advocating for policies that uplift women and girls worldwide.

The relationship between population and the environment is equally critical. Increasing human numbers intensify the strain on ecosystems already challenged by climate change, water scarcity, and habitat loss. World Population Day serves as a call to integrate population policies with environmental sustainability goals. This means promoting sustainable consumption, renewable energy, conservation efforts, and climate resilience as essential components of addressing population growth.

Education remains one of the most powerful tools for creating awareness and fostering responsible behaviour regarding population issues. Schools, media, and community organizations play pivotal roles in informing young people about reproductive health, environmental stewardship, and the social implications of population growth. Around World Population Day, many countries organize educational campaigns, workshops, and public discussions aimed at inspiring informed choices and community engagement.

India's population narrative encapsulates the broader global story of hope and challenge. The country's young population holds immense promise for economic and social development. Yet, this promise can only be realized through investments in quality healthcare, universal education—especially for girls—and the creation of meaningful employment opportunities. Moreover, managing rapid urbanization with smart infrastructure development is crucial to ensuring that growth is sustainable and inclusive.



unprecedented challenges as rural-to-urban migration swells city populations. While cities can be hubs of innovation and economic activity, unplanned urbanization often results in slums, pollution, and inadequate infrastructure.

Globally, population growth does not occur uniformly. Some regions, particularly parts of Asia and Africa, continue to experience high birth rates and rapid population increases. Sub-Saharan Africa, for example, is projected to be one of the fastest-growing regions in the decades ahead. This rapid growth presents daunting challenges related to education, employment, and healthcare, but also offers potential if these youthful populations are equipped with opportunities and resources.

Conversely, many developed nations are confronting an opposite trend: declining fertility

challenge for India is multifaceted: how to harness the energy and potential of its young population while addressing issues of healthcare, education, employment, and sustainable urban development. Success in these areas could transform India's demographic dividend into a powerful engine of growth and innovation, not only for the country but for the global economy.

Central to managing population growth is the often-overlooked role of family planning and reproductive health. When individuals, especially women, have access to contraception and reproductive healthcare, fertility rates tend to decline naturally. Education and empowerment allow women to make informed choices about marriage and childbearing, leading to healthier families and communities. Family planning reduces



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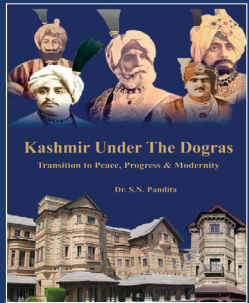
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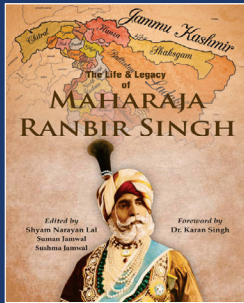
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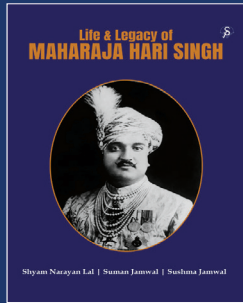
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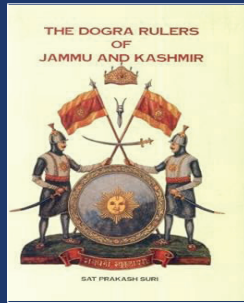
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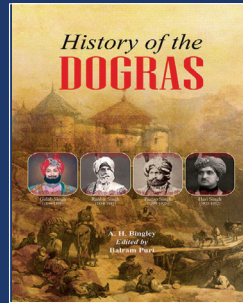
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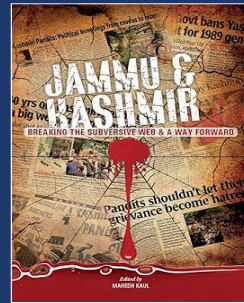
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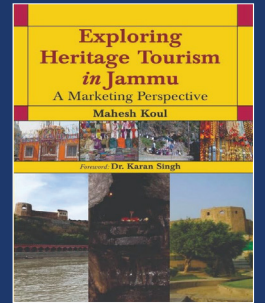
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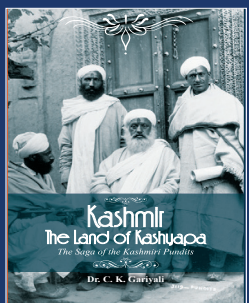
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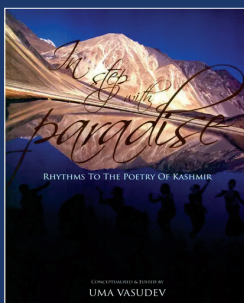
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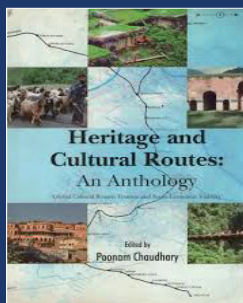
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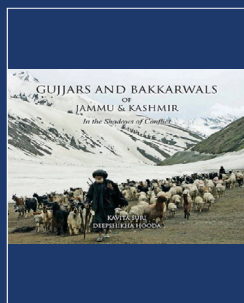
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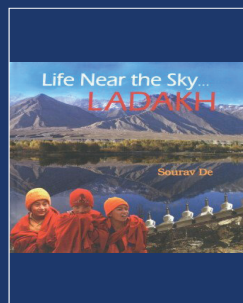
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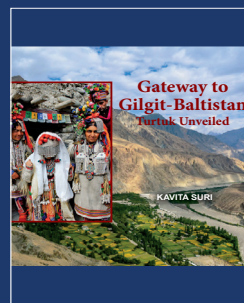
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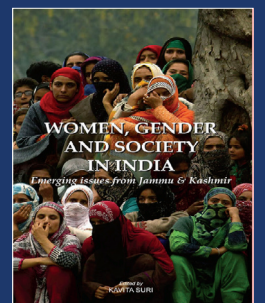
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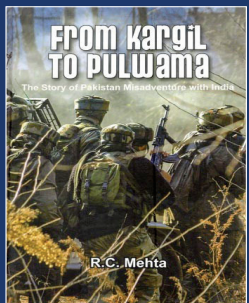
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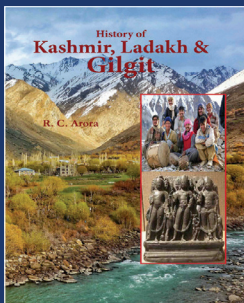
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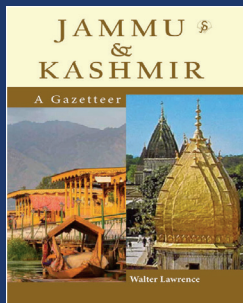
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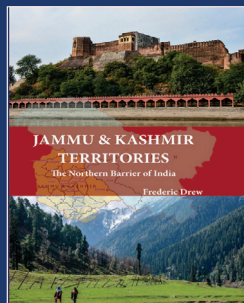
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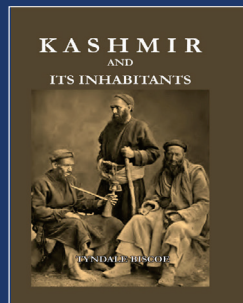
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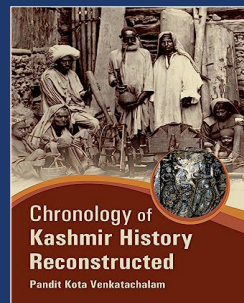
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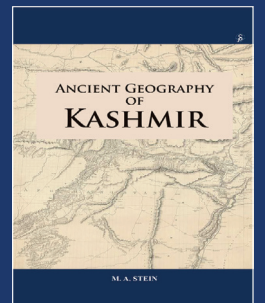
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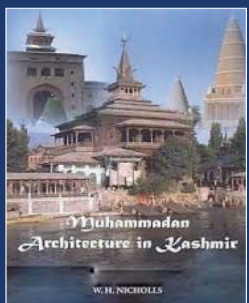
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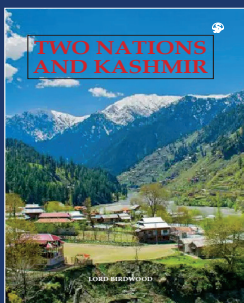
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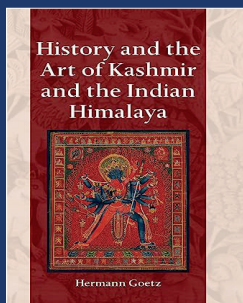
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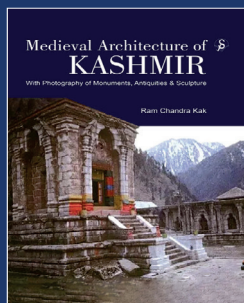
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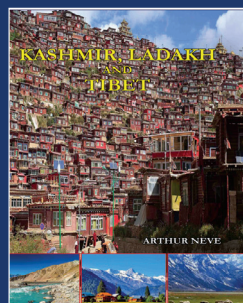
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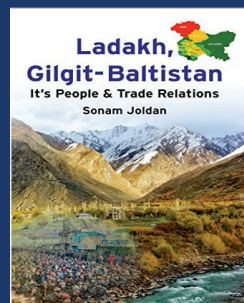
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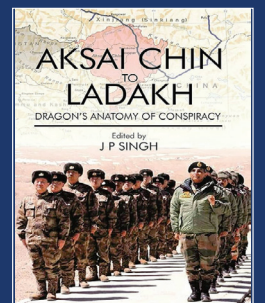
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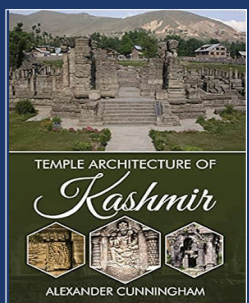
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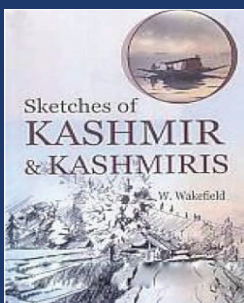
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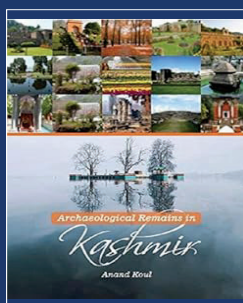
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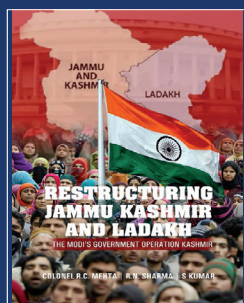
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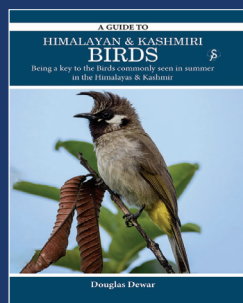
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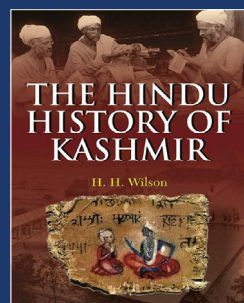
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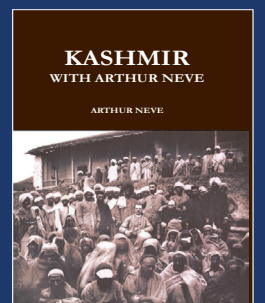
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