



Editor's Note

The Chancellor is an initiative devoted to document the socio-cultural moorings of the people not only in Jammu, Kashmir and Ladakh but the entire India. Each edition will be a curated blend of features, photo essays, interviews, articles and on-ground stories that not only inform but inspire too. We hope *The Chancellor* will become your trusted companion in discovering the places unseen, traditions unsung and the narratives that deserve to be celebrated. *The Chancellor* is fortnightly that aims to develop a knowledge society based on place consciousness and aesthetics. It will strive to inculcate the habit of quality reading and enable introspection to generate public opinion that helps to shape the policies for good governance and social stability. It targets scholars and masses in tandem. That makes *The Chancellor* a fortnightly with a difference. We look forward to your participation and co-operation in enriching society. We are living in an era of co-creation. So your feedback matters to make a difference. Do write to us and be integral to the knowledge initiative called *The Chancellor*.

Editor
The Chancellor

Mata Kheer Bhawani

Where the Goddess Speaks in Colours



The Goddess and Her Spring

Location

Tulmulla, Ganderbal district, Jammu & Kashmir

Primary Deity

Maharagya Devi / Mata Kheer Bhawani

Sacred Offering:

Kheer (rice pudding)

Sacred Text

Bhrangeesh Samhita

Known For

Spring that changes color—interpreted as divine omens

Festival

Mela Kheer Bhawani (Jyeshtha Ashtami)

ANUJA KHUSHU

Nestled in the serene village of Tulmulla, in the Ganderbal district of Kashmir, about 25 kilometres from Srinagar, the shrine of Mata Kheer Bhawani has for centuries held an unshakable place in the hearts of Kashmiri devotees. Beneath the shade of towering chinar trees, the sacred spring ripples gently, encircling the sanctum of a goddess whom many believe watches over the land and its people with divine foresight.

Dedicated to Goddess Kheer Bhawani, also known as Maharagyna Devi, the shrine is not just a spiritual centre—it is a living symbol of mystical faith, prophecy, and cultural identity. Known for its spring that changes colour and for the festival that brings home thousands each year, the temple is a rare site where devotion meets the inexplicable.

The Sacred Story

The origins of the shrine are preserved in the Bhrangeesh Samhita, a little-known but significant Kashmiri scripture. It tells of Rishi Bhringesh, an ancient seer who meditated in the forested lands of Tulmulla. According to the

text, the goddess revealed herself to him in a vision, emerging from a lotus at the site of the spring. She commanded him to offer kheer—a simple dish of rice and milk—as an act of pure devotion. Thus was born Kheer Bhawani, a name that continues to define the goddess and her worship to this day.

Eventoday, bowls filled with freshly cooked kheer are placed near the spring, a tradition that connects modern devotees to an ancient lineage of faith.

Further elaboration on the goddess's significance is found in the Ragnya Mahatmya and, more evocatively, in the Shri Shri Maharagni Pradurbhava, a devotional scripture that delves deeper into the spiritual essence of the goddess. While lesser known outside Kashmir, the Pradurbhava is central to the sacred tradition of Tulmulla. It describes the goddess as Parashakti—the primordial feminine force—and recounts how she chose Tulmulla not for its terrain, but for its spiritual resonance.

According to the text, the sacred spring—referred to as Amrit Kund—is a living manifestation of her presence, a divine yantra in fluid form. The changing colours of its waters are not natural anomalies, but spiritual indicators—reflections

Who is Maharagya Devi?

Maharagya Devi—also known as Mata Kheer Bhawani or **Ragnya Bhagwati**—is considered an embodiment of **Parashakti**, the universal feminine energy. In the scripture *Shri Shri Maharagni Pradurbhava*, she is described as both nurturing and prophetic. The sacred spring of Tulmulla, known as *Amrit Kund*, is seen as a living yantra representing her es-

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“The Devi had warned us, but not everyone understood what she was trying to say”

— A pilgrim from Jammu

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“The goddess does not need language. When she wants to speak, the water answers.”

— Another devotee from devotee

“

“She waits for us. And we will always return.”

— An elderly Kashmiri Pandit woman at the shrine

Contd on Page 02

of the goddess's mood and messages to her devotees. The scripture calls for worship that is inward, humble, and sincere. Kheer, offered in brass or silver vessels, remains the most sanctified form of offering, symbolising simplicity and surrender.

The Pradurbhava also speaks of a sacred yantra associated with the goddess—a lotus with eight petals encircling a bindu, representing the centre of cosmic balance. The recitation of her bija mantra—Om Hreem Shri Ragyaayi Namah—is said to invite her grace, while meditation on her image establishes a deep, protective connection between devotee and deity.

Though the goddess resides eternally at Tulmulla, the text insists she is not bound by land. She travels with her devotees in exile, but it is Tulmulla that remains her moolsthan—her original abode and the heart of her power.

The significance of the Kheer Bhawani shrine is also chronicled in historical texts. Kalhana's Rajatarangini, a 12th-century chronicle of Kashmir, mentions the sacred spring of Tulmulla, noting its location in a marshy area that was once engulfed by floods thousands of years ago, submerging both the spring and the temple.

The shrine has attracted numerous luminaries over the centuries. Swami Vivekananda visited the temple in 1890, and Swami Rama Tirtha also paid his respects there. Their visits underscore the shrine's spiritual prominence and its role as a beacon of faith.

From Lanka to Kashmir

Another legend ties the goddess to the ancient kingdom of Lanka, where Ravana, though known as a demon king, was a devout worshipper of Mata Ragnya Devi. As the tale goes, the goddess grew displeased with his descent into tyranny and chose to abandon Lanka. She instructed Lord Hanuman to carry her image to a land more suitable for her worship. That land, the Devi declared, would be found in the northern valleys.

Lord Hanuman is said to have brought her murti or image to Kashmir, placing it in Tulmulla—a place then full of marshes and serpentine streams. This divine relocation marks the goddess's journey from the heart of the south to the soul of the Himalayas.

The Naga Presence

Local Kashmiri folklore speaks of 360 Nagas—celestial serpents—residing in the spring. These mythical beings are said to guard the shrine and are believed to manifest themselves during the annual cleaning of the pond. Their presence, though invisible to most, adds another layer of mystery and reverence to the sacred site.

The Colours of Omens

At the centre of the shrine is the oval-shaped spring, its calm waters flanked by stone embankments. The most mystifying aspect of the shrine, and one that draws widespread attention, is the spring's ability to change colour. This phenomenon has been observed for generations and is recorded in both oral traditions and texts like the Bhrangeesh Samhita.

The colour shifts are interpreted as divine signals:

- White or Light Pink: A sign of divine grace, peace, and prosperity. It suggests



the goddess is content, and good times lie ahead.

- Green: Associated with fertility and harmony. It is seen as a blessing for farmers and a sign of agricultural abundance.
- Red: A warning. Red water is considered an omen of unrest or coming hardship—be it political strife, natural disaster, or societal upheaval.
- Black: The rarest and most feared. It is believed to signify great distress or impending tragedy. In such times, devotees gather for mass prayers and fasting.

In the early 1990s, when Kashmiri Pandits were forced to leave their exodus homeland in Kashmir by Islamic jihadis, many recall that the water turned a deep shade of red. "The Devi had warned us," says Sunita, a pilgrim from Jammu, who had visited Shrine this year on Jyestha Ashtami. "But not everyone understood what she was trying to say."

While geologists might cite minerals, sediment or algae as possible reasons, the devotees or believers of Mata do not seek explanations. "The goddess does not need language," says Archana, who returns each year from Delhi. "When she wants to speak, the water answers."

A Festival of Return

Every year, on Jyestha Ashtami, the full moon day of May or June, thousands return to the shrine for Mela Kheer Bhawani. It's a spiritual reunion—both with the goddess and with a homeland that, for many, has become memory.

The temple complex becomes a living village for a few days. Tents line the pathways. Langars serve round-the-clock meals. Devotional songs fill the air. Families meet after years apart. It is a momentary reclaiming of space, history, and identity.

And at the centre of it all is the kheer—offered in earthen pots, stirred over open flames, and placed near the spring with folded hands and whispered prayers. The same offering once made by Rishi Bhringesh, it continues to link the present with the distant past.

The Goddess in Exile

For the thousands of displaced Kashmiri Pandits, Mata Kheer Bhawani is both a deity (Kul Devi) and a symbol of continuity. Across Jammu, Delhi, UP and even the United States, small replicas of the shrine stand adorned with marigold garlands. The goddess travels with her people, they say. But for many, Tulmulla remains her true abode.

"She waits for us," says Gunwati, an elderly woman walking barefoot around the temple. Her eyes glisten as she gazes at the spring. "And we will always return."

The author is Editor, The Chancellor





Tracks of Transformation

How PM Modi's Kashmir Vision Is Recasting J&K's Future

The Future of Connectivity, Economy, and Security in Jammu & Kashmir

Anuja Khushu

On June 6, 2025, Jammu and Kashmir witnessed a historic transformation with the inauguration of two Vande Bharat Express trains, alongside a suite of projects worth 46,000 crore, aimed at bringing the region firmly into the fold of India's national development story. The event, presided over by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, was not just a celebratory moment, but a defining shift for the region's future in terms of infrastructure, economy, and security.

A Vision Realised: Connecting Kashmir to India's Heart

For decades, Kashmir's connectivity with the rest of India was often viewed as a distant dream. The region's rugged terrain and geopolitics made it hard to imagine a smooth, all-weather railway network. However, the completion of the Udhampur-Srinagar-Baramulla Rail Link (USBRL)—a colossal 43,780 crore project spanning 272 kilometers—represents more than just a technical achievement; it's the embodiment of years of struggle, ambition, and finally, fulfillment.

The project features 36 tunnels, including one through treacherous mountains, and 943 bridges, such as the world-renowned Chenab Bridge, which is now the tallest railway arch bridge at 359 meters. These structures are not just feats of engineering but symbols of resilience and national pride. PM Modi was quick to point out that these bridges stood as "living symbols of India's ambition," linking the once-isolated region to India's expansive railway network, from Kashmir to Kanyakumari.

This infrastructural leap has been coupled with the inauguration of essential regional development projects: a medical college, several key flyovers, and a raft of new highways and tunnels. For local residents, this means faster, more reliable mobility, a boost to tourism, and the easing of cross-regional trade, especially for Kashmir's renowned agricultural and craft exports like apples, dry fruits, and Pashmina shawls.

Strategic Infrastructure and Regional Development

The inauguration also underscores the strategic importance of Jammu and Kashmir within India's larger geopolitical

and security calculus. Modi's remarks on the region's future echoed a clear message: the region, long viewed through the lens of security concerns, is now an epicenter of development.

The opening of the Chenab and Anji bridges is particularly significant. These two projects, often referred to as "engineering marvels," signal the growing capability of India to execute high-precision, large-scale infrastructure projects in some of the most challenging terrains. Not only do they enhance rail connectivity, but they also contribute to the region's strategic military mobility, ensuring quicker troop movements if needed.

Furthermore, Modi's announcement of the expansion of the Vibrant Villages Program, which will invest 4,200 crore into infrastructure and road networks across Jammu and Kashmir, signals a growing government commitment to border development. With 1,800 kilometers of new roads and 400 remote villages connected, this program aims to tackle decades of underdevelopment in border areas.

The Economic Implications: A New Era for Kashmir's Local Economy

The potential economic impact of these infrastructural projects cannot be overstated. With the railway now connecting Kashmir to major Indian cities, it is expected to unlock new opportunities for trade and tourism, bringing the region closer to national markets. Kashmir's apples, prized as some of the finest in India, can now be transported across the country more easily, boosting agriculture exports and, by extension, the local economy.

PM Modi's remarks about local businesses benefitting from the new connectivity seem poised to be more than just political rhetoric. With seamless access to larger markets, small businesses and industries in Jammu and Kashmir will have the potential to grow, driving job creation and regional prosperity. The emphasis on tourism—specifically, religious tourism with enhanced access to Vaishno Devi—is expected to generate significant revenue for local economies.

In addition, Modi's focus on healthcare, including the foundation-laying of the Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Institute of Medical Excellence, reflects the government's commitment to improving the quality of life in the region. With the region's first

Key Takeaways:

Infrastructure Overhaul: Historic USBRL inaugurated, marking the completion of decades-long dreams.

Engineering Marvels: Chenab & Anji bridges symbolize India's growing engineering capabilities.

Economic and Security Gains: Boost to trade, tourism, and military mobility as security and development converge.

Future Prospects: Kashmir's connectivity paves the way for economic revival, especially in agriculture and tourism.

medical college set to provide 500 beds, Kashmir's healthcare infrastructure is poised to see major improvements, addressing a long-standing gap.

Security Dimensions: A Shifting Landscape

While the infrastructure and economic gains are significant, perhaps the most profound shift is in the realm of security. The successful execution of Operation Sindoor, which decimated Pakistan's terror infrastructure, was an emphatic statement that Jammu and Kashmir's future will no longer be determined by external threats. Modi's mention of the ongoing fortification of border areas, along with the formation of two new border battalions and the establishment of women's battalions, indicates a robust defense strategy that combines both strength and inclusivity.

In his address, Modi emphasized that "any obstacle to J&K youth's dreams will have to face me directly," which resonates not only as a declaration of national intent but also as a message of empowerment for Jammu and Kashmir's youth. The region, long stifled by conflict, now has the chance to rebuild, flourish, and contribute meaningfully to India's broader ambitions.

Conclusion: A Step Toward a United, Prosperous Future

As the Vande Bharat Express trains begin to traverse the newly constructed rail links, they symbolize more than just improved connectivity—they are a testament to the government's vision of a united, economically prosperous India. Jammu and Kashmir, once on the periphery of national development, is now becoming a key node in India's growing infrastructure network.

This shift is emblematic of a broader national ambition: to harness the full potential of every region, to create equal opportunities for all citizens, and to ensure that every dream—from Kashmir to Kanyakumari—has a railway track to run on.

KASHMIR NOW A STOP ON INDIA'S RAIL JOURNEY: LG

More Than a Train: How Infrastructure Became India's New Strategy in Kashmir

The commissioning of the Udhampur-Srinagar-Baramulla Rail Link (USBRL) and the arrival of Vande Bharat trains in the Kashmir Valley may look like a transport milestone—but it signals something far more strategic.

Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha called it "a momentous occasion that will go down in history." But beneath the headlines lies a deeper narrative: one of political symbolism, economic recalibration, and emotional integration.

Since the revocation of Article 370 in 2019, the Centre has sought to shift the discourse on Jammu & Kashmir—from security and separatism to stability and development. Projects worth 1.15 lakh crore have been launched since 2022, and the new rail infrastructure is being projected as both a connectivity revolution and a nation-building tool.

"Kashmir to Kanyakumari is no longer a slogan," LG Sinha said. "The PM has connected hearts, and physically bridged decades-old gaps."

The new rail lines, including the world's tallest railway bridge (Chenab) and India's first cable-stayed railway bridge (Anji), are being presented as engineering marvels—but also as statements of intent: that the government is here to stay, invest, and integrate.

The messaging is clear: progress is the new normal, and the rails that now link Kashmir to the rest of the country also carry the weight of a rewritten national script—one that places Jammu and Kashmir firmly on the map of a Viksit Bharat.

Women’s success stories shape India’s future: PM Modi



THE CHANCELLOR DESK
Jammu

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has underscored the transformative role of women in shaping a developed India, emphasising the government’s commitment to women-led growth over the past eleven years. Addressing the nation, the Prime Minister reflected on the challenges faced by mothers, sisters, and daughters in earlier times, noting that today they not only actively participate in India’s development but also set inspiring

examples across sectors such as education and business. “The successes of Nari Shakti in the last 11 years are a source of pride for every citizen,” Shri Modi stated. He highlighted key government initiatives that have redefined women’s empowerment, including the Swachh Bharat Abhiyan, which ensured dignity through sanitation, and the financial inclusion drive via Jan Dhan accounts. The Ujjwala Yojana was cited as a landmark scheme that brought smoke-free kitchens to countless households, improving health and quality of life. Shri Modi also lauded the MUDRA loans scheme for enabling

lakhs of women entrepreneurs to pursue their dreams with independence. Additionally, the allocation of houses in women’s names under the PM Awas Yojana has strengthened their sense of security and empowerment. Recalling the Beti Bachao Beti Padhao campaign, the Prime Minister described it as a national movement dedicated to protecting and nurturing the girl child. He affirmed that women today are excelling and inspiring across diverse fields—science, education, sports, startups, and even the armed forces—showcasing the power and promise of India’s Nari Shakti.

Railway Link to Kashmir opens new doors for economic growth: CM



THE CHANCELLOR DESK
Jammu

Calling it “a historic leap forward,” Jammu & Kashmir Chief Minister Omar Abdullah has described the commissioning of the Udhampur-Srinagar-Baramulla Rail Link (USBRL) and the inauguration of the Vande Bharat train to Kashmir as more than just a transportation milestone—but a moment of deep political, economic, and emotional significance for the region. “This is not just a rail link—it is a lifeline that bridges decades of distance, isolation, and underdevelopment,” said Abdullah, addressing a packed gathering at Katra alongside Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha, and Union ministers. The event also marked the unveiling of the Chenab and Anji bridges—engineering marvels symbolizing

Kashmir’s definitive integration into the national infrastructure grid. The Chief Minister said that the commissioning of the rail line marks Kashmir’s first-ever all-weather and uninterrupted rail access to the rest of the country—a development long awaited by people who have endured physical disconnect, economic hurdles, and climatic challenges. “Highway closures during snowfall and exorbitant airfares have kept Kashmir at the mercy of weather and monopolies. This railway changes that reality,” he said, calling it a “generational transformation.” Economic Lifeline for Horticulture, Tourism Abdullah emphasised the strategic economic benefits that the railway link brings. “Our apple and cherry growers, our carpet weavers and artisans, now have access to faster, cheaper, and wider markets across the country and abroad.” He called the rail project a “game-changer” for both horticulture and tourism, two of Kashmir’s biggest economic sectors.

“The tourism season will no longer depend on road clearance. Trains will bring visitors even in winter, strengthening the Valley’s appeal as a year-round destination,” he said. Tracing the history of the project, Abdullah recalled that the idea of a rail link to Kashmir was floated during British rule, yet never materialized. “What the British couldn’t build, India has delivered. And that delivery comes with dignity and determination.” He also paid tribute to former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee, crediting him for declaring the USBRL a national priority. “This moment is part of a longer political and engineering journey. It is a testament to continuity, vision, and national will.” While praising the infrastructural achievements under the current central government, Omar Abdullah made a pointed political appeal—the restoration of full statehood to Jammu and Kashmir. “With this connectivity, we are closer to the rest of India than ever before—geographically, economically, and

emotionally. Now, let us also move closer politically,” he said, expressing hope that the return of statehood would be the logical next step in the Centre’s roadmap for development and integration. “This train may be powered by steel and diesel, but it also carries the people’s hope—of dignity, of self-governance, and of a future where J&K stands not just as a Union Territory, but as a full partner in the federal spirit of India.” In a deeply personal moment, Abdullah reflected on his connection to Kashmir’s railway journey—from inaugurating the Anantnag Railway Station to witnessing the opening of the Banihal tunnel. “Fate has made me part of every key moment in this rail saga. Today, I feel pride not as a politician, but as a Kashmiri.” He concluded his address by thanking Prime Minister Modi and the central leadership on behalf of the people of Jammu & Kashmir for turning “a decades-old dream into a modern-day reality.”

DREAMLINER DISASTER: A WAKE-UP CALL FOR INDIAN AVIATION

241 dead in India's worst air crash

Inferno over BJ Medical College: survivors scarred

THE CHANCELLOR DESK

Jammu

On June 12, 2025, a tragedy unfolded in the skies above Ahmedabad—and within minutes, turned into one of the worst aviation disasters of the 21st century. Air India flight AI171, a Boeing 787 Dreamliner bound for London, crashed shortly after takeoff, killing 241 passengers, including crew and as many as 38 people were killed on ground. Only one survivor from AI171 has been found.

The aircraft plunged into the BJ Medical College and Civil Hospital complex near the city's airport, causing fires and explosions that spread through residential blocks, staff quarters, and parked vehicles. Among the passengers was former Gujarat Chief Minister Vijay Rupani, and among the dead were doctors, patients, and civilians caught in the blast radius.

The aircraft involved—a Boeing 787 Dreamliner—was once celebrated as the future of global aviation. Known for its fuel efficiency, carbon-composite body, and long-range capabilities, the Dreamliner had never before been involved in a fatal crash. That record now lies in ruins.

Eyewitnesses reported seeing the aircraft ablaze mid-air, plummeting within minutes of its 1:39 p.m. takeoff from Runway 23. It crashed into the medical campus, setting buildings on fire and damaging several residential quarters. The black box—the cockpit voice and flight data recorders—is still being examined.

Early speculation points to a catastrophic mechanical failure or power loss, but officials have not ruled out human error or bird strike. The Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) has launched a full inquiry, assisted by Boeing's technical team and international observers.

The crash has also spotlighted the state of India's aviation preparedness. Emergency crews responded quickly, yet chaos prevailed amid flames, panic, and structural collapses. Victims on the ground, many severely burned, added to the staggering toll.

Critics argue that Indian airports, especially non-metro ones, still lack comprehensive crash-mitigation infrastructure. Ahmedabad airport operations were suspended temporarily but resumed the same evening—a decision some call hasty, given the scale of devastation.

For Air India, now under Tata Group stewardship since 2022, the crash marks a critical moment. The national carrier has been undergoing a rebrand, with investments in fleet renewal and service upgrades. But this incident threatens to derail public trust once more.

Chairperson N Chandrasekaran expressed “profound sorrow” and promised full support to families. Still, difficult questions remain: Was the aircraft maintained properly? Were red flags ignored? Was this tragedy avoidable?

With passengers from multiple nations onboard—including 53 British citizens, 7 Portuguese, and 1 Canadian—the crash has become a matter of international mourning. UK Prime Minister Keir Starmer called the incident “devastating,” while King Charles III said he was “desperately shocked.”

Diplomatic efforts are underway to identify victims, repatriate remains, and coordinate



AIR INDIA AI171 – AT A GLANCE

Aircraft:

Boeing 787 Dreamliner (VT-ANB), 11 years old

Route:

Ahmedabad to London Gatwick

Takeoff time:

1:39 p.m., June 12, 2025

Total fatalities:

241

Survivors:

1 (Vishwaskumar Ramesh)

Pilot in command:

Capt. Sumeet Sabharwal (8,200 hours); **FO** Clive Kunder (1,100 hours)

Nationalities on board:

169 Indians, 53 British, 7 Portuguese,
1 Canadian

Crash site:

BJ Medical College/Civil Hospital
complex, Ahmedabad

Cause:

Under investigation (black box recovered)

compensation.

The only confirmed survivor, Vishwaskumar Ramesh, was seated in A11 and is currently undergoing intensive care. Doctors say he may have survived due to a delay in rear-section impact. His brother, who was travelling with him, did not survive.

On the ground, medical staff and residents scrambled to rescue victims even as their own buildings were ablaze. "It was an inferno," said a nurse who lost her sister in the crash. "The sky itself seemed to be falling."

This is Ahmedabad's second major air

disaster—after the 1988 crash that killed 130. And it's India's deadliest air crash.

Each such incident prompts calls for accountability, only for them to fade over time. This one must be different. Urgent reviews of aircraft maintenance regimes, pilot training, and crisis response systems are no longer optional—they are overdue.

Meanwhile, 99 victims out of 270 have so far been identified through DNA matching and 64 bodies, including that of former Gujarat chief minister Vijay Rupani, were handed over to their families.

India Calls for Global Unity on Energy, Terrorism, & AI at G7 Outreach

THE CHANCELLOR DESK
Jammu

Prime Minister Narendra Modi, addressing world leaders at the G7 Outreach Session on Energy Security in Italy on June 17, urged collective global action on energy transition, terrorism, and responsible AI governance. Thanking his host, PM Justin Carney, Modi also congratulated G7 nations on completing 50 years.

“Ensuring energy security for future generations is one of our biggest challenges,” Modi said, calling it both a priority and a responsibility. He highlighted India’s strides in ensuring electricity access to nearly all households and maintaining one of the lowest per-unit electricity costs globally.

Despite being the world’s fastest-growing major economy, India has fulfilled its Paris climate commitments ahead of schedule and is progressing steadily toward the Net Zero goal by 2070, he said. Currently, around 50% of India’s total installed energy capacity comes from renewable sources.

“We are moving steadfast towards the target of 500 GW of renewable energy by 2030,” the Prime Minister noted, while underlining India’s focus on green hydrogen, nuclear energy, and ethanol blending. “We are inspiring all the countries of the world to move towards a green and sustainable future.”

Modi cited international initiatives led by India — including the International Solar Alliance, Global Biofuels Alliance, and Mission LiFE — as examples of collaborative efforts toward sustainability.

In a strong message on equity, PM Modi urged G7 members to prioritise the needs of the Global South.

“No matter where the tension is in the world, these countries are the first to be affected by food, fuel, fertiliser, and financial crises,” he warned, emphasising that sustainable and inclusive development will remain elusive as long as “double standards persist.”

He said India has taken it upon itself



to bring the concerns of the Global South to the global stage, asserting that development must be approached with the spirit of “not I, but us.”

In a sharp intervention, Modi condemned terrorism and warned against selective standards. Recalling the recent terror attack in Pahalgam, Jammu and Kashmir, on April 22, he called it “a direct attack on the soul, identity, and dignity of every Indian.”

“There must be no place for double standards when it comes to terrorism,” he said, calling out countries that sponsor or support terrorism while being spared consequences. “Turning a blind eye towards terrorism for the sake of vested interests... is a betrayal of all humanity.”

He urged G7 leaders to reflect: “Are we truly serious about addressing terrorism? Will we understand the true meaning of terrorism only when it knocks on our own doors?”

Shifting focus to technology, Modi underlined the energy-intensive nature

of artificial intelligence, advocating a balanced approach to growth and sustainability.

“AI is emerging as a powerful tool to enhance efficiency and foster innovation... but the growing energy demands of today’s technology-driven societies can only be sustainably addressed through renewable energy sources,” he said.

India is actively working on solar power, small modular reactors, smart grids, and energy storage systems to align technology growth with energy security.

He also cited India’s efforts to democratise technology, highlighting innovations like the AI-powered language app BHASHINI, designed to bridge linguistic barriers for rural users. “We believe that the true value of any technology lies in its ability to benefit the very last person,” he stated.

Calling for an international framework to govern AI, Modi warned against the dangers of unregulated

content, especially deepfakes. “AI-generated content must be clearly water-marked or accompanied by a clear disclosure,” he advised.

He proposed three key actions:

1. Establish global governance for AI.
2. Secure resilient supply chains for critical minerals and technology.
3. Counter the misuse of AI, particularly through misinformation.

He described India’s vast diversity as a rich data resource for building inclusive AI systems and highlighted the country’s skilled talent pool, which aligns with democratic values.

“In the last century, we witnessed competition over energy. In this century, we must embrace cooperation in the field of technology,” he concluded, reaffirming India’s commitment to “People, Planet, and Progress.” Modi also extended an invitation to all G7 members to participate in the AI Impact Summit to be hosted by India next year.

Centre clears Rs 2,006 Cr for Himachal’s post-disaster recovery

THE CHANCELLOR DESK
Jammu

In a major move to aid post-disaster reconstruction efforts, the Centre has sanctioned Rs 2,006.40 crore for Himachal Pradesh, which was severely hit by floods, landslides and cloudbursts during the monsoon of 2023. The financial assistance was approved by a High-Level Committee chaired by Union Home Minister and Minister of Cooperation Amit Shah. The committee, which includes the Union Finance Minister, Agriculture Minister and Vice Chairman of NITI Aayog, considered the proposal under the Recovery and Reconstruction funding window of the National Disaster Response Fund (NDRF).

Of the total amount approved, Rs 1,504.80 crore will be provided by the Central Government,

with the remainder to be contributed by the state. The funding is aimed at facilitating the recovery and rebuilding of infrastructure damaged in the disaster and providing support to affected communities. This comes in addition to the Rs 633.73 crore sanctioned earlier on December 12, 2023, by the Ministry of Home Affairs as immediate financial assistance under the NDRF.

The Ministry highlighted that the government, under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, continues to stand firmly with states in times of natural calamities. It added that several initiatives have been taken under the guidance of Home Minister Amit Shah to strengthen India’s disaster risk reduction and response mechanisms. These efforts are part of a broader vision of creating a disaster-resilient nation, with emphasis on preparedness and

mitigation.

Similar recovery packages have recently been cleared for other disaster-affected states. Uttarakhand was allocated Rs 1,658.17 crore following the land subsidence crisis in Joshimath, while Sikkim received Rs 555.27 crore in the aftermath of a Glacial Lake Outburst Flood (GLOF) that occurred in 2023.

In addition to recovery efforts, the Central Government has also rolled out a series of national mitigation projects with a total financial outlay of Rs 7,253.51 crore. These projects are aimed at addressing specific hazards such as urban floods, landslides, forest fires, drought, lightning and GLOF-related risks. The government stated that these initiatives will help reduce vulnerability and prevent large-scale loss of life and property in the future.

The financial support to Himachal Pradesh

also comes alongside a broader disbursement of disaster relief funds to other states during the financial year 2024–25. So far, Rs 20,264.40 crore has been released to 28 states under the State Disaster Response Fund (SDRF), while Rs 5,160.76 crore has been provided to 19 states from the NDRF. Additionally, Rs 4,984.25 crore has been allocated from the State Disaster Mitigation Fund (SDMF) to 19 states, and Rs 719.72 crore from the National Disaster Mitigation Fund (NDMF) to eight states.

Officials said this comprehensive approach—combining immediate relief, long-term reconstruction and risk mitigation—underscores the Centre’s commitment to supporting states in disaster management and ensuring better resilience in the face of future challenges.



Cooperatives Key to Employment, Economic Self-Reliance: Amit Shah

Announces major Cooperative Reforms, new PACS and insurance firm in pipeline

THE CHANCELLOR DESK
Jammu

Union Home Minister and Minister of Cooperation Amit Shah addressed a national seminar in Mumbai today on the occasion of the International Year of Cooperatives 2025. The seminar was attended by Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis, Union Minister of State for Cooperation Murlidhar Mohol, and several other dignitaries.

Amit Shah emphasized that while cooperation is considered an economic system worldwide, "for India, it is a traditional philosophy of life." He explained that cooperation in India reflects a way of living—"living together, thinking together, working together, moving toward a common goal, and standing by each other in joy and sorrow are part of the soul of Indian philosophy."

He recalled the nearly 125-year-old history of the cooperative movement in India, stating that it has served as a strong support system for the poor, farmers, rural communities, and especially women through various ups and downs.

Citing the success stories of organisations such as Amul, IFFCO, KRIBHCO, and NAFED, Shah said, "Today, 36 lakh poor rural women are associated with Amul, who have invested no more than 100 in capital, yet due to their hard work, Amul's turnover is 80,000 crore, with profits directly deposited into these women's bank accounts."

He added, "Whether it is IFFCO or KRIBHCO, small farmers toil in their fields and supply their produce to the Government of India at the Minimum Support Price (MSP), and the same grain is distributed to the poor as 5 kilos of free ration every month. The backbone of this entire scheme is NCCF and, in particular, NAFED."

On recent initiatives, Shri Shah announced that farmers who register on the NAFED app will have 100% of their pulses and maize



procured at MSP, with the option to sell in the open market if prices are higher. "Seeing the success of the model app, NAFED will soon start direct procurement from farmers. This system will enable farmers to effectively plan for all three of their crops," he said.

At the event, NAFED also formalized new product launches, grants to Farmer Producer Organizations (FPOs), and warehouse-building contracts with Primary Agricultural Credit Societies (PACS). These measures, Shri Shah said, showcase NAFED's commitment to farmer-centric development.

Highlighting Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision, he said, "Modi Ji established the Ministry of Cooperation to empower our farmers and create an ecosystem for their prosperity." He acknowledged uneven growth in the cooperative sector, stating, "In the western region, including Maharashtra, Gujarat, and Goa, the cooperative movement has flourished, but it has weakened in the northern and eastern regions."

The Minister said the government is using newly compiled cooperative databases to identify and address gaps. "The government plans to establish two lakh PACS across the country. Once these are set up, there won't

be a single panchayat without a PACS or primary cooperative society."

Shri Shah noted that 52,000 PACS have already been computerized, and model by-laws have been accepted by states to allow PACS to operate across 24 diverse sectors. "Previously, PACS were limited to short-term agricultural loans, but now they function as Common Service Centres and can run Jan Aushadhi Kendras, petrol pumps, gas distribution, water supply, ticketing services, and more," he explained. "Today, PACS have become the hub for 300 types of schemes."

He announced the upcoming establishment of Tribhuvan Sahkari University, and a taxi service based on the cooperative model, where "taxi drivers will act as owners, with profits directly credited to their bank accounts." Additionally, "a fully cooperative-owned insurance company will soon be established," he said.

To strengthen the financial foundation of cooperatives, the government has taken several fiscal measures. "The surcharge has been reduced from 12% to 7%, and the Minimum Alternate Tax (MAT) lowered from 18.5% to 15%. PACS have been exempted from income tax penalties on transactions below 2 lakh," he stated. Long-standing tax

disputes involving sugarcane mills have also been resolved.

Shri Shah noted the formation of three national-level cooperative bodies within three years—National Cooperative Exports Limited (NCEL), National Cooperative Organics Limited (NCOL), and Bhartiya Beej Sahakari Samiti Limited (BBSSL)—to help farmers access global markets. "Organic products tested and sold under the Bharat brand as 'Bharat Organic' will benefit organic and traditional farmers and ensure consumers receive trusted products," he said.

Efforts are also being made to improve productivity and preservation of native seeds. "In the next ten years, these three new cooperatives will become as impactful for farmers as Amul, NAFED, IFFCO, and KRIBHCO," he asserted.

He pointed to the transformation of the National Cooperative Development Corporation (NCDC), which has disbursed financial assistance of 1.38 lakh crore. He also highlighted cooperative initiatives in fisheries (including 44 deep-sea trawlers) and the dairy sector under White Revolution 2.0. To reduce import dependency, the government has raised ethanol procurement prices, achieving 20% ethanol blending for vehicles.

Concluding his address, Shah said, "India cannot become strong solely based on GDP. With a population of 140 crore, we must ensure employment for all. Cooperatives are the only mechanism capable of providing employment to the rural poor, youth, and women by connecting large numbers of people to businesses with minimal capital." He said the decision of the International Cooperative Alliance to observe 2025 as the International Year of Cooperatives and inaugurate it in India under Prime Minister Modi's leadership was a proud moment.

"Our goal is to make 2025 a landmark year by strengthening cooperatives in every village, district, tehsil, and state. I am confident that we will achieve this target," he concluded.

Int'l meet on atmospheric composition change hosted in Nainital

• Experts highlight Himalayan region's significance in understanding global warming & climate change

THE CHANCELLOR DESK
Jammu

Experts in atmospheric science from around the world gathered in Nainital, Uttarakhand, to discuss the evolving trends in greenhouse gases in Earth's atmosphere and their implications for climate change. A key focus of the discussions was the importance of FTIR (Fourier Transform InfraRed) spectroscopy-based observations from ecologically sensitive Himalayan regions for advancing climate studies.

The Aryabhata Research Institute of Observational Sciences (ARIES), an autonomous

research institute under the Department of Science & Technology (DST), Government of India, is hosting the annual meeting of the Network for the Detection of Atmospheric Composition Change (NDACC-IRWG), the Total Carbon Column Observing Network (TCCON), and the Collaborative Carbon Column Observing Network (COCCON). The event is being held from June 16-20, 2025, at ARIES' Manora Peak campus.

This five-day flagship meeting brings together global experts and data users in ground-based FTIR spectroscopy, all working under the Infrared Working Group of the NDACC-IRWG, TCCON, and COCCON to enhance our understanding of at-

mospheric composition changes.

The meeting was inaugurated on June 16, 2025, by Shri A.S. Kiran Kumar, former Chairman of ISRO and current member of the Space Commission, who is also the chair of ARIES' governing body. In his address, he emphasized the critical role of space-based platforms in monitoring greenhouse gases.

Dr. Manish Naja, Director of ARIES, underscored the significance of the Himalayan region for such studies, noting that while ground observations in this area are limited, space-based observations often prove inadequate.

Dr. Mahesh Shah from Belgium highlighted the scarcity of FTIR-based observations in

India and stressed the need for increased research to better understand climate change in the region. Dr. Nicholas Deutscher (Australia), Dr. Mathias Frey (Germany), and Dr. Jim Hannigan (USA), heads of three global FTIR observation networks, also pointed out the importance of data from ecologically sensitive Himalayan regions for assessing global warming trends.

Nearly 70 participants are attending the hybrid meeting, which includes 47 international experts from countries such as Belgium, Japan, Spain, Germany, France, Australia, Canada, Ethiopia, Mexico, and Sweden, among others.



Ved Prakash Chadha: Forgotten Hero of Kotli

Dr. Madhulika Singh

The 1947 invasion of Jammu and Kashmir by Pakistani forces and tribal raiders brought immense suffering and devastation to many parts of the princely state. Among the worst-affected areas was the district of Mirpur, then part of Jammu province, comprising three principal towns—Mirpur, Kotli, and Bhimber. Owing to its geographical proximity to Pakistan and the communal tension, this region became a major target of the initial assault.

The town of Kotli, strategically located on the Jhelum–Mirpur–Poonch road and surrounded by hills, played a pivotal role in the defence of this sector. Though the majority population in Kotli and its surroundings was Muslim, a significant community of Hindus and Sikhs also resided there, many of whom were engaged in trade and administrative roles.

Following the communal unrest of 1931, the Dogra administration under Maharaja Hari Singh implemented several fortification measures in towns like Kotli. A small but diverse garrison of state forces, comprising Gorkhas, Dogras, Sikhs, and Muslims, was stationed across the Mirpur–Poonch axis, many of whom consolidated their defenses at Kotli when the threat escalated. Adding to the resilience of the town was the work of a local branch of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), established in 1941, whose members would later play a crucial role in the town's defence during its siege.

The Siege of Kotli

On 25 November 1947, Pakistani raiders overran the town of Mirpur, clearing a path toward Kotli. Along their route, several villages—particularly those inhabited by Hindus and Sikhs—were attacked. Given its location and strategic importance, Kotli soon became a primary military target. Within days, enemy forces had established encircling pickets and began heavy shelling from multiple directions. The town was soon cut off from external communication and support.

Ammunition in Kotli began running dangerously low by early November, placing the town's defenders in a dire situation. With supply routes compromised and relief delayed due to concurrent operations in areas such as Deva, Vatala, Chamb, and Akhnoor, reinforcements could not reach Kotli in time. The Indian Army's advance party had reached nearby Jhangar but was forced to retreat due to increasing enemy pressure and



strategic constraints.

Despite these challenges, Kotli's defenders—both military personnel and civilian volunteers—held their positions. Among them were members of the RSS, who displayed extraordinary courage and resolve. Their efforts helped keep morale high and resistance alive for nearly 56 days, staving off a fate similar to that of Bhimber, which had fallen earlier.

The State garrison stationed at Kotli was personally monitored by Colonel Baldev Singh, a close relative of the Maharaja. Col. Kashmir Singh, Maharaja's military advisor had recently visited the town to check its defenses. However, the outer defenses of the town crumbled as some buildings were set on fire by the enemy to provide a convenient smoke screen for the attackers to make further progress. A further reason for the weakening of the Dogra resistance was the inability of the Indian army to timely come to their help.

The situation worsened when the Indian Army's line of communication was threatened by the attacks in the Deva-Vatala-Chhamb-Akhnoor areas and despite having reached Kotli, the compulsion was to fall back on to Jhangar Darmsal. In this situation of distress, the state troops were hard pressed with little hope of succour from rear.

A Daring Rescue Mission

With the garrison nearly out of am-

munition, ration, and medical supplies, the Indian Air Force attempted an aerial resupply. However, due to navigational challenges and enemy presence, twenty chests of ammunition were mistakenly dropped on a steep slope outside the town—within direct firing range of enemy forces.

Retrieving this ammunition became a matter of survival. The state army, already stretched thin and defending sensitive positions, could not spare personnel for the recovery operation. The task was entrusted to a group of civilian volunteers—primarily RSS swayamsevaks—known for their discipline, courage, and physical fitness.

Twenty volunteers were selected for the mission. Among them were Ved Prakash Chadha, Mahipal, Suraj Prakash, and Dr. Satya Prakash. Ved Prakash Chadha, the chief organizer of the RSS unit in Kotli, took command of the group and led the operation. After undergoing emergency military training, the team set out under cover of darkness, crawling across treacherous terrain under enemy fire.

The Pakistani forces, aware of the supply drop, launched relentless mortar and gunfire to prevent the recovery. Yet, undeterred, the volunteers pushed forward. The operation continued into the night, and against all odds, they successfully retrieved 21 chests of arms and ammunition—replenishing the garrison's depleted stock and bolstering its ability to resist.

Sacrifice and Legacy

The mission, though successful, came at a heavy cost. Ved Prakash Chadha, along with fellow volunteers Som Raj, Amrit Lal, Som Prakash, and Sardar Kalyan Singh, lost their lives during or shortly after the operation. Their ultimate

sacrifice ensured that Kotli's defenders could continue holding the town for several more days.

Despite their heroic efforts, the broader military situation remained grim. As state forces came under increasing pressure and local rebel elements joined hands with the invaders, the Indian Army made a strategic decision to withdraw from Kotli. On 27 November 1947, under orders from Major General Kalwant Singh and acting on assessments made by Brigadier Paranjape of the 50 Parachute Brigade, Indian forces began evacuating both troops and civilians to Jhangar.

This decision, though painful, was influenced by the vulnerability of extended supply lines, the fall of Mirpur, and the broader strategic imperative to secure the Kashmir Valley—particularly Srinagar. Advised by Sheikh Abdullah, Prime Minister Nehru prioritized consolidating control over the Valley, leading the Cabinet's Defence Committee to focus on maintaining defensible positions rather than overextending forces.

As the evacuation progressed, tragedy struck once more. A group of local rebels ambushed retreating columns between Kotli and Tara Pani. Caught in a deadly trap along a blind curve, many civilians and soldiers lost their lives.

Aftermath

Kotli fell to Pakistani forces shortly after the withdrawal. Reports from survivors and contemporary accounts describe widespread atrocities following the capture—many non-Muslim residents were killed or abducted, and large sections of the town were burned. The Muslim population, too, faced suffering amid the breakdown of law and order and the destruction of infrastructure.

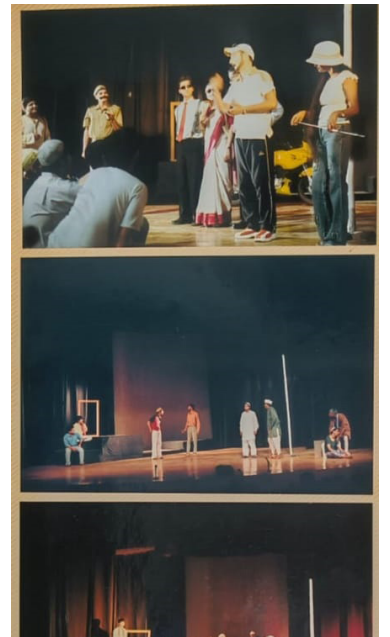
Today, Kotli remains under Pakistani control as part of what is known as Pakistan-occupied Jammu and Kashmir (PoJK). Despite the strategic importance of the region and the sacrifice of its defenders, stories like that of Ved Prakash Chadha have received limited recognition in official narratives.

His early involvement in India's freedom struggle and his heroic leadership during the Kotli siege underscore the crucial, often overlooked role played by local volunteers in the nation's defense during its formative years. In honor of his sacrifice, a neighborhood in Jammu has been named Prakash Nagar—a modest yet heartfelt tribute to a young man who gave his life for the people of Kotli.

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

The man who brought Dogri theatre to the masses

Meet Deepak Kumar: The Man Behind Rangyug



THE CHANCELLOR DESK Jammu

In the narrow lanes of Kachi Chhawani, Jammu, where heritage clings to the walls like ivy, a quiet revolution in the world of theatre has been unfolding for nearly five decades. At its center stands Deepak Kumar, a name that has become synonymous with the revival and evolution of Dogri theatre and socially conscious performance in the region. Actor, playwright, director, educator, and cultural bridge-builder — Kumar's legacy is not just built on the boards of the stage, but also in classrooms, border villages, and international forums.

Deepak Kumar's journey began in 1977, not on grand platforms, but in the grassroots theatre group Dogra Mandal. As a young actor, he had the rare opportunity to observe the national theatre scene in New Delhi and learn from India's stalwarts. But it was in 1984, amid the turbulent socio-political landscape of Jammu and Kashmir, that he truly claimed his space — by founding Rangyug, a theatre group committed to self-realization, social change, and cultural rootedness.

From its inception, Rangyug was more than a troupe. It was a movement — one that used performance to address conflict, gender issues, and marginalization in a sensitive border state. "Theatre," Kumar often says, "isn't just art — it is resis-

tance, memory, and healing."

Theatre Without Borders

In 2005, Deepak Kumar's powerful Dogri play "Aaley" crossed a boundary that few thought possible — it was staged in Lahore, Pakistan, making it the first theatrical exchange from Jammu and Kashmir post-Partition. It wasn't just a performance; it was a message of reconciliation. This ethos led to his selection in 2008 by the U.S. State Department for the prestigious International Visitors Leadership Program, where he represented India in a cultural diplomacy initiative, "Promoting Tolerance Through Arts."

Building Institutions, Not Just Plays

Beyond directing over 70 plays and scripting original Dogri and adapted works, Kumar has always focused on institution building. He pioneered formal theatre education in Jammu and Kashmir by launching the Department of Performing Arts at the Government College for Women, Parade Ground, in 2024. Under a unique MoU with Rangyug, this marked the first government-accredited theatre curriculum in the Union Territory.

As a trainer, he has led more than 50 workshops and training programs — from children's theatre camps in the 1980s to voice modulation classes for All India Radio and theatre pedagogy at IIT and

IIM Jammu. His energy is infectious and his curriculum, rooted both in classical Natyashastra and contemporary street theatre techniques, reflects a rare blend of tradition and innovation.

Stories From the Street to the Studio

Kumar's original Dogri street play "Dheeth" has been staged over 800 times, a record in the region. "Our aim was never applause, but awakening," he recalls. His plays such as "Paandi" (on the life of Dogra laborers), "Odn" (on women's issues), and adaptations of Tagore, Manto, Beckett, and Brecht stand out not just for their artistic merit but for their thematic courage.

His directorial repertoire includes high-water marks like "Waiting for Godot", "Andha Yug", "King Lear", and the folk-theatre infused "Aala Afsar" — all reimaged through a regional and socio-political lens.

Voice of the Region

A "B-High" voice in AIR and Doordarshan, Kumar has lent his voice to over 500 documentaries, besides directing 50+ television serials and documentary films for public service broadcasting. As a cultural communicator, he straddles the mic and the stage with equal ease — often anchoring spiritual festivals or narrating the silent sagas of forgotten communities.

Recognition and Roles

Kumar's shelf boasts numerous accolades: Best Actor and Director Awards, Lifetime Achievement Honours, and cultural recognitions from institutions like Sahitya Akademi, Surya Productions, and Big FM. But his contributions go beyond awards — he is a board member, faculty advisor, festival curator, and a heritage conservationist through groups like PATH and the Panjvaktar Mahadev Ved Pathshala Society.

The Man and His Method

Even with an M.Sc. in Agriculture and a late academic turn toward Natyashastra, Kumar's life arc reflects interdisciplinary passion. His administrative stint as Deputy Director of Agriculture (Trainings) only amplified his belief that culture is policy, and theatre must walk beside governance, not behind it.

Today, at 63, Deepak Kumar remains indefatigable — directing, teaching, organising festivals in temple courtyards, and inspiring the next generation of theatre practitioners. His work, deeply rooted in Dogri language and identity, continues to transcend boundaries — linguistic, national, and generational.

As Rangyug enters its fifth decade, Deepak Kumar stands not just as a theatre veteran, but as an architect of cultural renaissance in Jammu and Kashmir — a man who turned the stage into a sacred space, and every play into a prayer for peace.



The Pain of Exile Flows Through Abhilash's Sacred Verses

Satyarth Pandita

Abhilash' is the pen name of Shri Badri Nath Pandita, a revered Bhakti (devotional) poet, and a household name among the global Kashmiri Pandit community. Born on July 22, 1942, in the village of Achan, Tehsil Pulwama in Kashmir, Abhilash was the only child of his parents—Darshan Lal Pandita, a businessman, and Leelawati.

During his early years, education was not a major priority in the village, where most residents were engaged in farming and small trade. Abhilash studied up to the 5th grade in his village, and in 1959, he moved to Srinagar to complete his 9th and 10th grades. Following matriculation, he returned to Achan to assist in the family business.

At just nineteen, he married Ratni Devi. Over the years, business and household responsibilities took precedence, leaving little time for creative pursuits. However, the radio became his quiet companion, introducing him to the lyrical world of film music. The emotionally rich lyrics and melodies left a lasting impression on him and stirred a latent passion for expression.

The Spark of a Poet

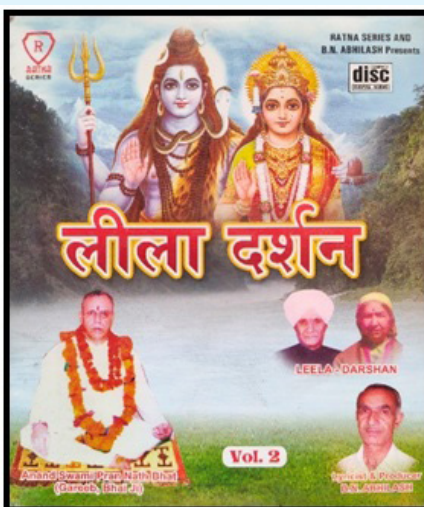
In 1984, while sitting at his shop, Abhilash was suddenly moved to write his first poetic lines:

"Jaan chukh ne paan myanae, kyazi zanmas aakh?

Hyan aakh karman hyendi zaalai..." (This poignant Kashmiri verse reflects on the futility of life entangled in worldly affairs.)

With no literary guidance in his village, he showed his verse to a visiting relative, Niranjanath Suman, who encouraged him to continue writing and suggested him to begin with a hymn to Lord Ganpati. Though hesitant, Abhilash composed his first devotional poem:

"Saundar chu saath az kauta jaan



Shri Ganesh az bante myon mehmaan..." From then on, his pen never stopped. By 1990, his poems had filled pages, forming the basis of his first book.

Exile and Emergence

The outbreak of terrorism in Kashmir in 1990 forced Abhilash and thousands of Kashmiri Pandit families into exile.



He resettled in Jammu, where he eventually built a home. One day, at his shop in Durga Nagar, he met Jagarnath Sagar, a poet and teacher. Upon reading Abhilash's manuscript, Sagar recognised his talent and urged him to share his work with the world.

Encouraged further by Mohan Lal Aash, another poet, Abhilash released his first book, Khemaposh, at the Kashmiri Pandit Sabha Hall in Jammu. The warm reception inspired his second collection, Tez Vuzmal.

The Calligrapher and the Composer

Apart from poetry, Abhilash is gifted in calligraphy. In an era before digital printing, he handwrote entire books—including those of Mohan Lal Aash, Kashi Nath Bhagwan, and others—especially in the Urdu script.

He also turned his poems into music, collaborating with Kashmiri singers and releasing several CDs of devotional songs. His work now reaches a global audience through his YouTube channel "Abhilash Vann" and is regularly aired on Radio Sharda.

Poetry Beyond Devotion

Though best known for Bhakti poetry, Abhilash has also explored satire and social commentary, writing on topics like Alexander Graham Bell's invention, modernization, and the COVID-19 pandemic.

One of his Hindi compositions, Pinjra, captures the post-exodus despair of displaced Pandits:

"पिंजरो में बंद पड़ी है अनमोल आत्माएं

ज्या गदर हो गया है किसको हम ये सुनाएं?

Philosophy and Reflection:

In conversation, Abhilash reflected on

the future of Bhakti poetry: "No seed is ever permanently extinct. Sometimes it blossoms fully; other times, less so. That's nature's way. Bhakti poetry will survive, even if today's generation is less inclined toward it."

He also acknowledged that some rural imagery and idioms in his poetry might be hard for younger audiences to grasp:

"I was raised in a village; that life naturally reflects in my poetry. The metaphors I use—trees, land, birds—are rooted in that world, less familiar in city life."

Despite his popularity, Abhilash remains humble, cherishing feedback from listeners and readers alike:

"I feel grateful. The audience's response—be it praise or criticism—motivates me."

On Technology and Change

Once opposed to mobile phones, seeing them as distractions, Abhilash later embraced them:

"It's the necessity of the time. Phones connect the whole world. Unfortunately, many misuse them, but their potential is vast."

The Unhealed Wound of Exodus

The 1990 exodus remains a wound that time has not healed for Abhilash:

"We lost everything—business, land, identity. Our existence has been shattered. Families are scattered. The elderly live in sorrow, unsure who will light their funeral pyres. From riches, we've been reduced to rags."

Regarding returning to Kashmir, he is clear: "My answer to everybody who asks me if I would like to return to Kashmir after all these years is 'No'. Because the people of Kashmir have dismissed us for the past 33 years and that too on the grounds that we are Hindus. Is there any other reason for our exodus? No Kashmiri

Pandit has committed crimes akin to those inflicted on him by the Kashmiri Muslim. Kashmiri Pandits have not killed any Muslims, never burnt any of their houses, never razed any of their shrines and never acquired their lands by deceit

or



force. Despite being a peace-loving community, we had to endure such suffering. Everything that we had was snatched away from us in an instant. They did not leave our homes and temples. What is left there for us now? More miseries, more suffering and an uncertain future; as the saying goes: "Jahan nahi chaina wahan nahi rehna".

(The author is a Junior Research Fellow at the National Institute of Mental Health and Neuro Sciences, Bengaluru (NIMHANS))

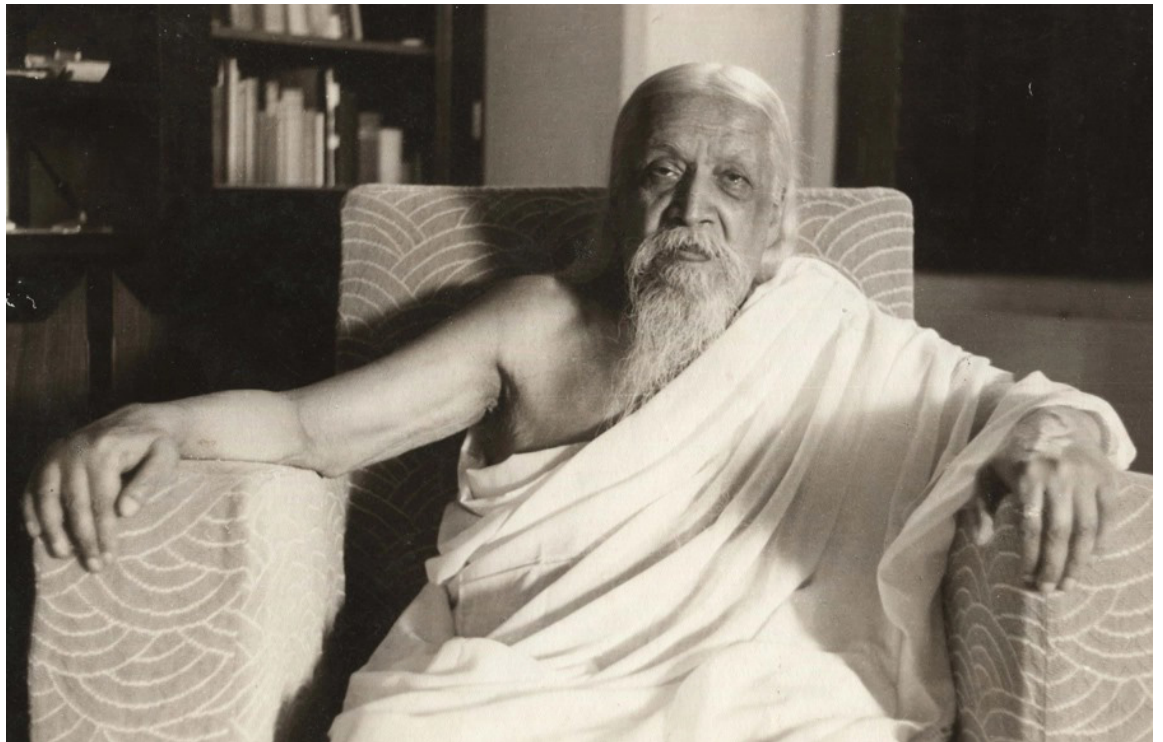
The CHANCELLOR

Editorial

The Chancellor Arrives

Over the decades there has been a considerable thrust to relegate the newspapers to the background and replace them with instantaneous news portals that present the news and views through the digital media. This has indeed revolutionised the media outreach. It did create a new critical mass to provide information and entertainment to the masses. But this has come at a cost. The traditional newspapers that shaped the public opinion and discourse leading to narrative formation have suffered. Not because the electronic and digital media added a new dimension but the print media started losing its own credibility by compromising on its strengths that made it a lead player in public domain and policy making. It got carried away with the glamour of the technology and felt that there was a need to focus on technology and compromise on editorial policy. The outcome was the degeneration of the seriousness and decline of language. The newspapers ceased to be the beacons of opinion making and intellectual pursuits. It would have been best if the technological development would have been used to consolidate the editorial policy and editorial quality but it ended in focussing on marketing through digital platforms without firm grounding in substance. It created a death of writers and decline of editors but emergence of content writers who were not trained in professional journalism and the nuances of language that shapes the narrative. For them, filling the web pages with matter meant the business. Whether it was relevant or not. It killed the art and science of editorials and articles were reduced to mere plagiarism. An ideal situation would have been the synergy of technology with the editorial expertise to evolve a concrete newspaper outreach to sensitise, educate and groom a new generation of readers equipped with a progressive journalism. But things went the other way. The Space for substance, originality, scholarship and an eye for shaping the public policies have declined. Dearth of intelligentsia that can sensitise the masses and develop a thinking society prescribing solutions is a challenge. *The Chancellor* has emerged to fill this gap and restore the policy making ability of the newspapers to develop a knowledge society leading to good governance and suggesting measures to safeguard the national interest with a focus on territorial integrity and sovereignty of the Indian nation at the grass root level. The aim is to indulge in capacity building by involving the communities and the stakeholders to share their experiences and be the change makers and lead with their own examples. This is an era of co-creation. An era of communication and knowledge revolution. Perceptions are shared by practical experiences and global connectivity. The Chancellor will focus on all stakeholders who create the social ecosystem. The scope of the *Chancellor* is well defined by its cardinal principle that experiences are the best teachers. The editorial team of the *Chancellor* comprises experienced editors and writers who have worked at the various levels and contributed to opinion making. The thrust of the *chancellor* will range from tourism to culture, heritage to civilizational issues, art to literature, rural development to women empowerment besides the international affairs to national developments having bearing on the socio-economic and socio-political moorings of the people. The aim is to recreate a new class of readers who value the primary sources and have a keen eye for research. *The Chancellor* will offer the best to the researchers, the common masses besides the policy makers and develop a comprehensive perspective. The imperative is to focus on the journalism and stories that have a long shelf value so that the knowledge management in the contemporary era is made a reality by making it reach the stakeholders across the globe. It is an initiative that is based on the internalisation that we at the *Chancellor* are representing the issues and challenges that confront the Northern Frontier in the Himalayas. Over the decades we have witnessed the erosion of the civilizational moorings leading to the destabilisation of the place consciousness and aesthetics. That has in turn led to dysfunctional response and policy paralysis as the feedback and value addition have been abandoned due to the crumbling of the infrastructure that defined the original thought process shaping the opinion making and newspaper editorial policies based on accuracy, timeline and editorial expertise. Jammu and Kashmir lies at the apex of India's Northern Frontier and shapes the civilizational moorings through centuries. The war of attrition and ploys of subversion have led to degeneration of the value system and scholarship that defined Jammu, Kashmir and Ladakh. The objective is to delve deep and bring to the fore the foundational truths and cultural roots that have given identity to the people of this land. Jammu and Kashmir is the nervous system of India as it is from here that the civilizational moorings have flowed down to the plains. Be it the Shaiv Trika Tantra Parampara of Kashmir or the valour of Jammu that defined the frontiers of India or the patience of Ladakh in terms of safeguarding the national interest, the *Chancellor* will act as the sentinel of preserving the cultural and civilizational interests having Sanskrit moorings as the challenge is defeating the forces of De-Sanskritization. The editorial policy of the *Chancellor* will have a span that embraces all indigenous thought processes that uphold the national interest. Our landscape is pan -India. We have just started the journey to gain momentum to cover the entire nation. Entire India is our domain meant to offer the best of captivating stories, reports and articles. We wish our readers an enriching journey with the *Chancellor* and explore in this issue the comprehensive outlook that we stand to represent.

Sri Aurobindo's Integral Yoga & Kashmir Shaiv Darshan



Dr. Mahesh Kaul

Indic civilisation based on Sanskrit tradition is the continuity of the realised phenomenon of consciousness that is ever progressive and is comprehensive. It nurtures and nourishes the human development from lower truths to higher truths of the creation guided by the nature's mysterious ways that are based on cosmic laws. These laws are beyond the mundane mechanical systems that govern our day to day life. As the eternal existence of nature is based on the phenomena in which consciousness acts at the subtle level, it binds a minute atom to the gigantic mountain and depicts the integrality of the creative force. It is on such a canvas of cosmic domain that Sri Aurobindo developed his all-encompassing Integral Yoga that includes in its sphere of influence all the earthly materials be these human or the inanimate objects.

In his seminal work the *Life Divine* Sri Aurobindo elaborates his vision of the purpose of the creation and the objective of the life on earth. He says, "And if there is, as there must be in the nature of things, an ascending series in the scale of substance from Matter to Spirit, it must be marked by a progressive diminution of these capacities most characteristic of the physical principle and a progressive increase of the opposite characteristics which will lead us to the formula of pure spiritual self-extension."¹ His aim is establishing the divinity in human form and in more clear terms he wants to bring home the point that divine works through ascent in the human form as this body of gross matter is in the process of evolution not in the biological sense but in the sense of super conscious sense. He is pointing towards the life force that acts through nature of the God head who governs the cosmic creation. It is a process of identifying with the Chiti Shakti of the Param Shiva or Maheshwara that is the independent power or energy of the Lord of the cosmos. He reinforces this

ascent and says, "This is to say that they must be marked by less and less bondage to the form, more and more subtlety and flexibility of substance and force, more and more interfusion, interpenetration, power of assimilation, power of interchange, power of variation, transmutation, unification."² The thrust is to drive away from the duality of the form and emulate poise so that we are drawn towards the infinity, unity and indivisibility of the spirit.³ Sri Aurobindo's realm of consciousness is based on recognising the physical form of humanity as an inherent tool for achieving the truth consciousness that is hidden in the Lila of the cosmos and is revealed when ascent of the mind is made possible by discipline of yoga. Yoga that is not mere practice of breathing exercises but being the participant of the Divine process as recognising the Lord in the heart where he is situated and is capable of making us participate in this process of evolution through is energy. Sri Aurobindo demystifies and decodes the life force and says". In Matter Chit or Conscious-Force masses itself more and more to resist and stand out against other masses of the same conscious- Force; in substance of Spirit pure consciousness images itself freely in its sense of itself with an essential indivisibility and a constant unifying interchange as the basic formula even of the most diversifying play of its own Force. Between these two poles there is the possibility of an infinite gradation.⁴

Kashmir Shaiv Darshan that is based on Pratibhigyan (Self Recognition) posits that when one is led out of the intoxication of the Self then Chit gives way to Chiti Shakti and it is the essence of Kashmiri Shaiv Darshan that it explains Chiti as Maya clouded like Sun when there is illusion due to the Malas (impurities). Chiti is Maya when it creates itself due to its independence. It is on these lines that Sri Aurobindo explains and develops based on his realisation that Chitti is hidden in Maya but Maya works in both in descent and ascent as Chiti Shakti.

Thus Sri Aurobindo's conception of Mind, Over Mind and Super Mind has basis in the self-recognition that is Pratibhijana of Kashmir

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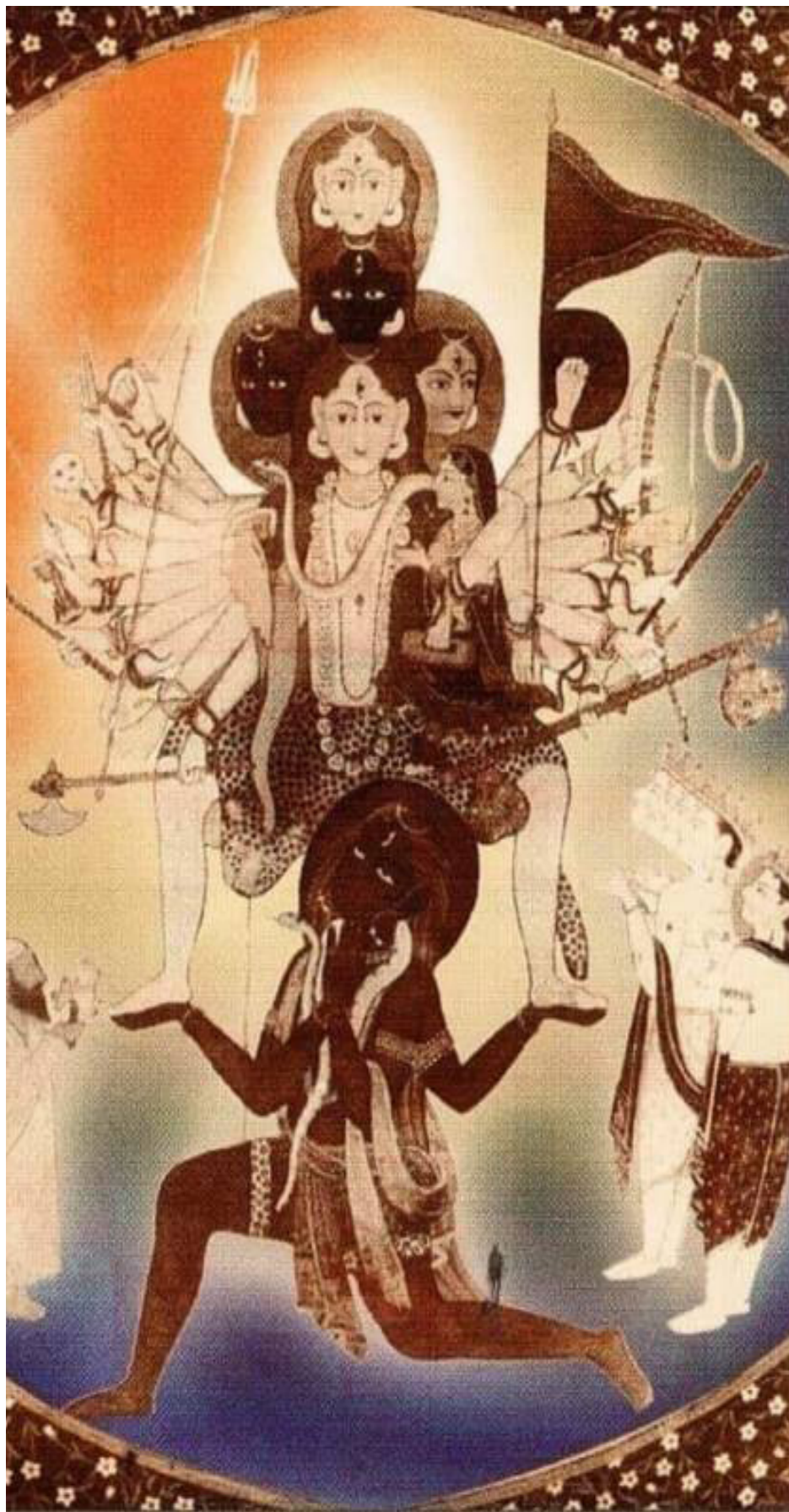
Shiav Darshan; also known as Trika Shaivism. Khemaraja an outstanding disciple of the Maheshwaracharya Abhinavagupta explains the reality of Maya as Chiti Shakti of Param Shiva in terms of three Shaktis that functions at the level of Mind, Over Mind and Super Mind. He terms them as Viakhari, Madhyama and Pashyanti. Not only that he reveals that Kashmir Shaiv Darshan moves beyond it and even reveals the Paravani. He explains that Chiti is Maheshwara Himself and hence the Maheshwari Shakti. His Aurobindo has also explained in his works while associating various hues with the Shakti that Maheshwari is the supreme creative force having white hue and it lasts depending upon the level of consciousness of the Sadhaka.

While going through the texts of Kashmir Shaiv Darshan from Tantraloka to Pratibhgyanhrdhiyam, one sees a complete agreement of the Sri Aurobindo's thesis with the seminal works of Kashmir Shaiv Darshana. It is no exaggeration to say that Sri Aurobindo's Integral Yoga and his formulations of consciousness as revealed to him have roots in Tantras of Kashmir as revealed to Kashmir Shaiva masters.

Sri Aurobindo has termed the perfection of the Mind to be in communion and working in tandem with the Purusha of Yoga to be based on sacrifice of the ego like identifying the self with the material existence. When ego of any action is offered to the Lord in the yogic heart then barriers get demolished and new dimensions and horizons are developed that are operative in co-ordinates that can't be explained in the material space and time. These barriers in Kashmir Shaivism are termed as Malas (impurities) in the Self-Recognition (Pratibhigyan) of Kashmir Shaiv Darshan. It is in this context Kashmir Shaiv Darshan in all its texts as collected from various Agamas as revealed by Lord Maheshwara Himself to Paravati says that when Maya leads to illusion due to Malas, it creates ego.

The Maya of Advaitins is illusion but Kashmir Shaiv Darshan argues if Maya is the Chiti Shakti of the Lord, who is a reality and indulges in creates through his union with Her then how come Maya is an illusion but it is a reality of creation. Sri Aurobindo's conception is superimposed in the Kashmir Shaiv Darshan and is the same that is independent association of Chiti/Maya which differentiates objects takes such names accordingly.⁶

Not only that Kashmir Shaiv Darshan transcends beyond this and situates Maya as the reality by associating it with Shiva consciousness. It says different from Shiva in terms of independence means associated with Shiva as different is relative with some source and that is Shiva Himself. It is Chiti, it defines Chiti and hence, Maya that is different from Shiva but the same Maya when recognised as Chiti in union with Shiva is Maheshwari of Maheshwara indulging in the cosmic process of creation and



dissolution. And the same has been incorporated by Sri Aurobindo in terms of involution and evolution into his Integral Yoga when ego in various forms is sacrificed in the fire of Maya to unveil the Chiti of Maheshwara.

To substantiate how Kashmir Shaiv Darshan and Sri Aurobindo's Integral Yoga are nothing but Self-Recognition of Trika Sidhanta of Kashmir, it is proper to quote Sri Aurobindo, he says, "In sum, it may be safely affirmed that no solution offered can be anything but provisional until a supramental Truth-consciousness is reached by which the appearances of things are put in their place and their essence revealed and that in them which derives straight from the spiritual essence. In the meanwhile our only safety is to find a guiding

law of spiritual experience-or else to liberate a light within that can lead us on the way until that greater direct Truth-consciousness is reached above us or born within us. For all else in us that is only outward, all that is not a spiritual sense or seeing, the constructions, representations or conclusions of the intellect, the suggestions or instigations of the life-force, the positive necessities of physical things are sometimes half-lights, sometimes false lights that can at best only serve for a while or serve a little and for the rest either detain or confuse us. The guiding law of spiritual experience can only come by an opening of human consciousness to the Divine Consciousness; there must be the power to receive in us the workings and command and dynamic presence

of the Divine Shakti and surrender ourselves to her control; it is that surrender and that control which brings the guidance."⁷ When analysed in the continuity and progression; it can be easily concluded that Sri Aurobindo's Integral Yoga is the crystallisation of the internalisation of the Shiva Agamas and Tantra with a conscious sense of the dynamism of the working of Cosmic Divine through Human form and unveiling of Chiti hidden in Maya as the reality and not an illusion but a profound creative force that is hidden due to excess of Malas termed as ego by him. To further substantiate and reinforce the impact of Tantra as enshrined in Kashmir Shaivism, he says, "The extreme solution insisted on by the world-shunning ascetic or the inward-turned ecstatic and self-oblivious mystic is evidently foreign to the purpose of an Integral Yoga-for if we are to realise the Divine in the world, it cannot be done by leaving aside the world-action and action itself altogether. At a less high pitch it was laid down by the religious mind in ancient times that one should keep only such actions as are their nature part of the seeking, service or cult of the Divine and such others as are attached to these or, in addition, those that are indispensable to the ordinary setting of life but done in a religious spirit and according to the injunctions of traditional religion and scripture. But this is too formalist a rule for the fulfilment of the free spirit in works, and it is besides professedly no more than a provisional solution for tiding over the transition from life in the world to the life in the Beyond which still remains the sole ultimate purpose. An Integral Yoga must lean rather to the catholic injunction of the Gita that even the liberated soul, living in the Truth, should still do all the works of life so that the plan of the universal evolution under a secret divine leading may not languish or suffer. But if all works are to be done with the same forms and on the same lines as they are now done in the Ignorance, our gain is only inward and our life is in danger of becoming the dubious and ambiguous formula of an inner Light doing the work of an outer Twilight, the perfect Spirit expressing itself in a mould of imperfection foreign to its own divine nature. If no better can be done for a time- and during a long period of transition something like this does inevitably happen - then so it must remain till things are ready and the spirit within is powerful enough to impose its own forms on the life of the body and the world outside; but this can be accepted only as a transitional stage and not as our soul's ideal or the ultimate goal of the passage.

(The author is Editorial Director, The Chancellor)

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Prof. Lalit Mangotra: The Scientist Who Writes the Soul of Jammu

In a world often divided between science and the arts, few individuals bridge the two with the grace, intellect, and cultural commitment of **Padma Shri Prof Lalit Mangotra**. A distinguished physicist with over 300 scientific publications and a revered figure in Dogri literature, he is not just a literary icon or a scientist, he is a custodian of heritage. His life represents a rare confluence of intellect and emotion, tradition and progress. He reminds us that to preserve a language is to preserve a people's memory, and that no effort in that direction is ever too small.

Dr. Mangotra exemplifies the unique intersection of analytical brilliance and creative depth. Having served as Professor of Physics at the University of Jammu, his parallel journey as a writer, essayist, and cultural activist has not only elevated the Dogri language but has also inspired generations to reconnect with their linguistic roots.

From his acclaimed collections like *Cheten Diyan Galiyan* and *Hello Maya*, to his tireless advocacy that helped secure Dogri's inclusion in the Eighth Schedule of the Indian Constitution, Dr. Mangotra's life stands as a token to the power of language, identity, and intellectual pursuit. Honoured with the Sahitya Akademi Award and, more recently, the Padma Shri, he remains a guiding force in both academic and literary realms.

In this candid and wide-ranging conversation with **Anuja Khushu, Editor The Chancellor**, **Dr. Mangotra** reflects on his dual passions, the decades-long struggle for Dogri's recognition, and his message for the next generation of writers, scientists, and cultural thinkers.

Excerpts:

Take us back to your early academic journey. How did you discover your dual passion for science and literature?

My love for physics began around 11th grade. I never saw it as difficult—it was always fascinating to me. I completed my BSc at Science College Jammu, where I also discovered a love for literature, thanks to its incredibly rich library.

Then I went to Kashmir University and completed my MSc in Physics in 1966, because at that time Jammu did not have a postgraduate physics department. I returned a few years later and enrolled in the newly established PhD program in Physics at Jammu University. I'm proud to say I was the first PhD scholar in physics from Jammu itself.

And yet, all this time, you were also immersed in literature?

Yes. My love for Dogri and storytelling came from my family—my grandmother, my mother. I was raised on oral tales. Even during my student days, I was active in cultural activities. I was elected cultural secretary at Kashmir University and began organising literary programs.

My first short story was published in 1972, and I never stopped. I later wrote essays and poetry, and it's all been parallel to my academic life. The two never conflicted; they complemented each other.

Tell us about your work in forensic science—an unusual turn in your career.

After my PhD, I joined the Forensic Science Laboratory and worked there for four years as Assistant Director of Criminal Scientific Investigation. I was trained by the CBI in Delhi and later at Shivpuri in explosives. But I soon realized that was not my calling. I wanted to return to academics, and I joined



Jammu University in 1978, where I remained until retirement.

You won the Sahitya Akademi Award for an essay collection. What inspired that book?

The book is deeply personal. It reflects my nostalgia for old Jammu, the places, people, and culture that I saw vanishing. These were short, memory-based essays. Because they were brief and reflective, they resonated with readers. Ironically, while I'm mainly known as a short story writer, it was these essays that won me the Sahitya Akademi Award in 2011.

You've led the Dogri Sanstha for over 30 years. What's been the impact of this organization?

Yes, I've been associated with Dogri Sanstha since the 1980s, and have served as its President since the 1990s. The Sanstha was established in 1944, the same year I was born. One of its earliest goals was to secure Dogri's inclusion in the Eighth Schedule of the Constitution—a dream that came true in 2003.

This wasn't easy. Back in 1944, Dogri had no significant modern literary output. It was rich in folk literature, but we lacked books, dictionaries, and educational presence. Over time, we built all of that—schools, colleges, university courses, and thousands of published works. That foundation made constitutional recognition possible.

I have also served two terms as Convener

of the Dogri Advisory Board at Sahitya Akademi, orchestrating seminars on Ram Nath Shastri and translation workshops in major cities and even in Japan.

You played a key role in getting Dogri recognised in the Eighth Schedule of the Indian Constitution. How did that movement unfold, and what does it still demand of us today?

The movement to include Dogri in the Eighth Schedule was a long, collective struggle, fueled by generations of Dogri writers, scholars, and activists who believed in the linguistic and cultural identity of the Dogra people. It wasn't just a demand for administrative recognition—it was a plea for legitimacy, for inclusion in the narrative of the nation. I was involved in organizing awareness campaigns, writing essays, lobbying through literary forums, and coordinating with other language movements.

In 2003, when Dogri was finally included in the Eighth Schedule, it was a historic moment. But it was also just the beginning. The real challenge lies in implementation. Are we teaching Dogri in our schools? Is it being used in official communication? Is it visible in digital media and popular culture? These are the questions we must continue to ask. A language survives not just through recognition, but through usage and pride. We need to keep nurturing Dogri so that it lives not just in literature, but in everyday speech."

In practice, Dogri is not used in courts, police stations, health or agriculture

departments, or even schools at the foundational level. This leaves citizens helpless. Imagine a poor villager standing in court, unable to understand the language being spoken, the judgment being delivered. That is not justice.

What role do literary organisations play in saving languages like Dogri?

They are crucial. There aren't many such bodies for regional languages, especially Dogri. But in Jammu, the literary community—whether Dogri, Hindi, Punjabi, Urdu—works in harmony. When Dogri was campaigning for recognition, writers from all languages stood with us. That spirit of unity is rare and beautiful.

Do you think regional languages like Dogri are endangered today? What can be done to protect them?

Yes, they are under serious threat—not just from other languages, but from apathy. When parents stop speaking a language to their children, it begins to die. To save Dogri, we need a collective cultural commitment: integrate it in school curricula, support writers and publishers, use it in media and digital spaces, and most importantly, speak it at home with pride. At Dogri Sanstha, we've been actively working on these fronts for years, but much more needs to be done.

You began writing poetry later in life. What drew you to it?

About 15 years ago, poetry just happened. I had always written short stories and essays, but suddenly poetry felt like the right form. It allows for a new way of reflecting and expressing. And yes, I continue to write today.

What message would you like to give to the younger generation?

Please, don't abandon your mother tongue. Our generation made the mistake of prioritizing English and Hindi. But your roots, your identity, your cultural memory—they live in your language. I've lived in Germany, Sweden, Switzerland, and everywhere I saw the same thing: people are proud of their languages. They study, work, and thrive in them.

Why should we be ashamed? Language is not just communication—it is who we are.

Back in 1944, Dogri had no significant modern literary output. It was rich in folk literature, but we lacked books, dictionaries, and educational presence. Over time, we built all of that—schools, colleges, university courses, and thousands of published works. That foundation made constitutional recognition possible.

Evolution of Jammu & Its Place Consciousness

The name "Jammu" has been the subject of numerous interpretations by historians and chroniclers. While some attribute it to King Jambulochan, a descendant of the Raghu dynasty, others believe the name derives from the abundant Jamun fruit found in the region. However, a deeper exploration of historical records and epics provides a more nuanced understanding of the name and its significance.

Historically, "Jammu" is believed to refer to a sect of Brahmins who were displaced from Kashmir and settled in this region. The route they followed was known as "Jammu Marg." Even the Mahabharata, one of India's greatest epics, references the region. A verse from the Mahabharata describes the pilgrim journey to Jammu, stating:

Jambumarbam Samavishya
Devish Pitrasevitan
Ashwamedham Mavaproti
Sarvakam semenvita

When translated, this means: "A pilgrim going to Jammu (Jambu Marga), the place of the Gods, saints, and ancestors, is blessed with the boons of the Ashwamedha Yagna and all his wishes are fulfilled." This verse confirms that Jammu was considered a sacred and significant place, not just in local lore, but within the broader religious and cultural consciousness of ancient India.

This Mahabharata verse establishes that Jammu acquired a sacred place in the religious texts. The present day pilgrimage to Shree Mata Vaishno Devi is the continuity of the age-old traditions that has gained momentum with developmental initiatives. But the essence remains the same intent of pilgrimage. The religiosity of the society is visible in the rituals and food habits of the Duggar land. As every activity is blended with some sort of religious overtones that depict the culture.

Jammu and Kashmir may be the state that appears to many as the unnatural wedlock but the cultural aspect when viewed in the prism of the Indian philosophical tradition makes it a complete cultural unit.

It can be argued that the Kashmir region of the state has the tradition of the Kul Devis in each family. Kashmiri Pandits have the tradition of paying obeisance to their Isht Devis like Jwala, Sharika and Kheer Bhawani, venerating the feminine aspect of nature.

But the Jammu region has the tradition of venerating the Kul Devtas like Kali Veer, Sidh Goriya, Baba Bhoti etc. No doubt the Shakti Peeths hold immense significance.

viewed in a comprehensive manner of the religious tradition, it can be said that state of Jammu and Kashmir fructifies the

Shaiva philosophy in which Shakti is the energy consciousness of the Lord and masculine potential manifests in the kinetic action of the femininity. One region acting as the potential energy and

Dr. Mahesh Kaul



another as the kinetic energy of the supreme.

There are many references in the Harivansha that depict Jammu as an important pilgrimage centre of India having great religious significance.

It has to be mentioned here that in texts like Rajatarangini name of the region is mentioned as Dvigrata, which may have corrupted later to Durgara or Duggar. Historians have established in their findings with the help of archaeologists that Chamba copper plate inscriptions refer to Jammu, when they come across the reference 'the Lord of Durgara'. These inscriptions reveal the chivalry of the people of the land who had military interests from the evolutionary stages of the region. It has been referred to as the tribe that existed from the time of Gupta or pre-Gupta age. But 11th century inscriptions in the above-mentioned Chamba copper plates issued by Soma Varman situate Jammu in the antiquity of the cultural tradition. These inscriptions mention the territorial ambitions of the Dogras across the Shivaliks into the Chamba.

Not only that, Dogras find mention in the history while taking part in the military campaigns with their kinsmen known as Balourias. It is a recorded fact that Kangra valley has been in the subordination of the Jammu's over lordship. It must be borne in mind that the city of the region is also known by the name Jammu. Amir Timur attacked Jammu in 1398-99 and thus, we find that its name is mentioned in Malfuzat-i-Timuri and the

enjoyed political relations with the rulers of Kashmir when alliances were sought to defend the territory of the valley from outsiders.

This interaction of the Duggar land with the people to various

Zafarnama. Rajatarangini of Kalhana does not mention the region by the name Jammu, the reason being that the capital of the region was Bahu and even changed for some time to Babbapura also known as Babor. It is located on the Dhar-Udhampur road and excavations done by ASI reveal the importance of this place.

This can be said with ease that Jammu was a politically conscious and culturally adaptable region as the shifting of the capital gives an indication that its rulers ruled with ease that suited their administration. This shifting of capital from time to time would have given a chance to develop the locale as per the situation and natural resources. Travelling in the interior of Jammu region exposes a person to the cultural life that has diversity from district to district. No doubt the language spoken is Dogri but its dialect and intonation changes with the incorporation of words for the same subject differently.

It must be said that the cultural evolution of Jammu has taken place by interaction with the various people and closeness with the people in the adjoining plains makes Jammu an interesting society. Evaluation of the historical records and studies carried out by the contemporary scholars brings to the fore the acumen of the ruling clans to develop relations with the adjoining hill states to foster good trading and cultural relations. Jammu has been close to Punjab plains and Kangra-Chamba belt as far its customs, dialect and other symbols of attire are concerned but it can't be denied that it

hues but same religious denomination proves that it enjoyed a considerable influence among the ruling dynasties. Historical records also reveal that ruling dynasties sought marriage alliances with the royal houses of Rajputana and Delhi to strengthen their political might (Pathik, 1997).

Walter Lawrence has accepted that Jammu is in a strategically important location in terms of its geography that it influences the state of affairs of the Kashmir valley and Kishtwar. Strategically Shivaliks act as a bowl and in this bowl Jammu it perched at the top having advantage to control the fulcrum in the Himalayas and this was well understood by the British imperialists who tried their utmost best to control the state of Jammu and Kashmir to suit their agenda of great game. They succeeded in violating the treaty made with Gulab Singh during the period of Pratap Singh and subjected the state to intrigues that are making the state vulnerable to threats from the neighboring countries. It is having a great impact on the culture and traditions of the people.

Culture of a place develops by religious philosophy that is an aggregate of many human activities shaped by history and nature involving space and time. It cannot be denied that the influence of Ramayana and Mahabharata period on the social consciousness

of Jammu is profound. King Gonanda of Kashmir who was also related to Lord Krishna has been established as the Rajput belonging to Jammu. It

is not clear whether he was invited or he assumed control of the affairs by conquest but his period is marked around 1400 B.C or 1260 B.C. Gonanda is established as the first ruler of Northern India whose kingdom extended from Jammu to Kailash.

Another important description of the Jammu's pan India connection comes from the revelation that the ruling clan of Jammu was founded by Sudarshan, the king of Ayodhya. It has been established that right from Sudarshan to Maharaja Hari Singh nearly 150 kings have ruled Jammu.

It has been established that Jammu developed as the centre of a strong bastion of people who had a clear understanding of statecraft. Cunningham has given classification of the Rajput principalities of the western Himalayas, between Sutlej and Indus. He has divided them into three groups. These include Kashmir, Durgara or Duggar and Trigarta. The first group consisted of Kashmir and small states between Indus and Vitasta. Earlier Chamba was associated with the first group. The second group included Durgar (Jammu) and small states between Vitasta and Ravi. These included Jammu, Mankot, Jasrota, Lakhampur, Samba, Trikot, Akhnoor, Reasi, Dalpatpur, Bhau, Bhoti, Chenani, Bandralta, Bhaderwah, Basohli, Bhadu, Kishtwar, Rajouri, Poonch, Bhimber, Kotli and Khari-Khariali. The third group consisted of Jalandra or Trigarta and small states between Ravi and Sutlej.

This description is significant in a sense that it later helped to classify hill states into twenty two Hindu and twenty two Muslim chiefships, former were in the East and later in the West. Ravi acted as the dividing line and as such it was included in both the Kangra circle and the Duggar circle. This line emerged as the cultural line and helped to shape the evolution of Jammu as the centre of cultural assimilation and later gave expression to the stable socio-cultural space that is witnessed in the rich architecture and artistic forms like Basohli paintings having a significant element of Kangra school.

(Author is a National Security Expert, Heritage Tourism Management Expert & an Exponent Kashmir Shaiva Trika Tantra Parampara. He writes on the issues concerning Jammu and Kashmir, Northern Frontier and Kashmir Shaiv Darshan. His two books titled "Jammu and Kashmir Breaking the Subversive Web and A Way Forward" Exploring Heritage Tourism in Jammu have been widely acclaimed. He is the Editorial Director of The Chancellor)

Minsar: A forgotten Chapter in Indian History

As the Kailash-Mansarovar pilgrimage resumes for its annual season between June and September, many Indian pilgrims set their sights on the sacred peaks of Mount Kailash and the pristine waters of Lake Mansarovar. For centuries, this spiritual journey has effortlessly interwoven spiritual traditions, religious belief and historical continuity. But few pilgrims today would be aware of the fact that the traditional route to this pilgrimage once passed through a village named Minsar.

Most Indians would be oblivious to the existence of Minsar, a small hamlet located in Western Tibet, 32 miles west of Mount Kailash which has been connected to India through cultural, historical and religious ties for over three centuries and paid revenue to the Kashmir government. Minsar's history has been deeply intertwined with that of the Kingdom of Ladakh and later the Princely state of Jammu and Kashmir. From the early 17th century this village was under the administration of the Kingdom of Ladakh and then under the jurisdiction of Dogra rulers of Jammu and Kashmir. The revenue generated from Minsar was directed towards maintenance of the Kailash-Mansarovar pilgrimage. Today, this Indian enclave in Tibet is under the occupation of China. However, no formal agreement exists which indicates Indian relinquishment of their rights over Minsar. India's lost claim over this small yet geopolitically significant principality needs to be brought into focus.

Geographical Extent

Minsar lies in the Ngari-Khorsum region (Western Tibet). Traditionally reached from Demchok (Ladakh) through a ten-day journey, it was a part of the old Kailash-Mansarovar pilgrimage route. This serene village housed about 60 families, nearly 280 people, mostly Buddhists who sustained themselves through rearing of livestock and wool trade. Surrounded by Tibetan territory on all sides and 70 miles from the nearest Indian border, Minsar was located on the main trading route from Leh to Lhasa and acted as a halting place for Hindu and Buddhist pilgrims on their journey to Mount Kailash. As a result of its distant location, the means of communication with Kashmir Durbar and India proved to be difficult.

Historical Origins: From Ladakh to Dogras

Indian ties to Minsar trace back to the 16th century with the rise of Bhagan of Bhasgo and the Namgyal Dynasty in Ladakh. King Singge Namgyal

(1616–1642), the most powerful ruler of this dynasty extended his control over Western Tibet including Minsar. His achievements however triggered the hostility of Tibetans resulting in the Tibet-Ladakh



War of 1679. In 1684, following its defeat in war, Ladakh was compelled to sign the Treaty of Tingmosgang which recognized Tibetan control over much of the region except Minsar. Article 8 of this treaty distinctly allowed the Ladakhi king to retain Minsar to support the pilgrimage to Kailash and Mansarovar.

“But the king of Ladakh reserves to himself the village (or district?) of Monthser (i.e., Minsar) in Ngarees-khorsum, that he may be independent there; and he sets aside its revenue for the purpose of meeting the expense involved in keeping up the sacrificial lights at Kang-ree (i.e., Kailas), and the Holy Lakes of Manasarowar and Rakas Tal”.

Dogra Conquest and Treaties

By the first quarter of the 19th century, the state of affairs in Ladakh were in disarray. In 1834, Raja Gulab Singh set his sights on the conquest of Ladakh. Beyond the exposed political weakness of Ladakh, another reason which motivated the Dogra Raja to invade was the lure of the region's lucrative shawl and wool trade. With this aim in mind Raja Gulab Singh thus dispatched an expedition to Ladakh commanded by his ablest general, Zorawar Singh Khaluria. After successful campaigns, Ladakh became a tributary of the Sikh Empire, but Gulab Singh exercised actual authority over the region. The Dogra army later marched into Tibet, but General Zorawar Singh's tragic and untimely death in the Battle of To-Yo (1841) put an end to any further advance

Alaknanda Mahajan
Manvika Bamba

Post-Independence Shift

Following independence, the Instrument of Accession (signed on 26th October 1947) brought Jammu and Kashmir, including Minsar, into the Indian Union.

A cursory glance at the instrument of accession reveals that when Maharaja Hari Singh signed it, he referred to himself as “Shriman Inder Mahinder Rajrajeswar Maharaja Dhiraj Shri Hari Singhji, Jammu & Kashmir Naresh Tatha Tibbet adi Deshadhipati.” The adoption of this title validated Maharaja's sovereignty over the princely state of Jammu and Kashmir as well as over the adjacent area of eastern Ladakh, including Aksai Chin, and some areas reaching into Western Tibet (Enclave of Minsar). Even after independence officials of the Jammu Kashmir government continued to visit the area and collect revenue from there. In the year 1950, the Kashmir government deputed a civil officer, Mr. N. Rigzen Ghagil Kalon to visit Minsar. This was the last documented visit to the area by an Indian official.

The Panchsheel Agreement and Diplomatic Oversight

By 1954, India and China signed the Panchsheel Agreement which included the five guiding principles of peaceful coexistence between both the nations. It is important to note that prior to the signing of the Panchsheel Agreement at the scheduled Beijing Conference of 1954, the issue of Minsar was brought to the attention of Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru. He instructed Indian negotiators not to raise the issue of Minsar, but to concede if the matter was taken up by the Chinese. Although the Government of India was well aware of the strategic importance of Minsar for

providing a foothold in Tibet there appears to be no clear reason for India's silence on the issue. India's renunciation of claims over Minsar is viewed by a considerable body of academic opinion as a strategic miscalculation, often labeled as a ‘Nehruvian Blunder’. Critics believe that Nehru's unwavering faith in China, ultimately undermined India's strategic interests.

In 1960, as India-China tensions escalated after India's grant of refuge to 14th Dalai Lama from Tibet. India's intervention and extension of asylum to the Dalai Lama was seen as a breach of Panchsheel agreement by the People's Republic of China. Amidst prevalent contentions, Chinese Premier-Zhou Enlai visited India in 1960. In the light of this visit, on 22nd April 1960 Prime Minister Nehru revived the issue concerning Minsar with Zhou Enlai. He highlighted the Kashmir Government's administrative presence in Western Tibet and presented tax records as proof of sovereignty. Nehru maintained that he is making no new claims but defending established boundaries, proposing evidence-based resolution of disputes, especially on India's traditional claims over Minsar. Even after such a vocal stance made over India's position regarding Minsar, the diplomatic talk over the matter reached no substantial end. Ultimately, India's claim over Minsar was gradually lost and as historian John Bray has very eloquently put it ‘reduced to a minor footnote in history’. Minsar was forgotten from our collective memory except for a few academic discussions. China continues to exercise control over the principality of Minsar as over other Tibetan territories.

Conclusion

The legacy of Dogra rule over Minsar reflects a long-standing yet overlooked chapter in India's territorial history. Minsar is linked to India through cultural, spiritual, and historical ties, especially due to its proximity to Mount Kailash. Along with this, its key position on China's G219 highway further increases its strategic relevance in present times. Recently, China celebrated its 70th anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic China in Minsar. This move by China is reflective of its ever-expanding territorial ambitions in the Himalayas and acts as a direct threat to India's frontier security. Hence, there is an urgent need to revisit the issue of Minsar not just in academic discourse but for Indians in general.

(Authors are Ph.D. Scholars, Department of History, University of Jammu)



The Axial Age of Buddha

The strange thing about humans is that they are never ready to visualize death for themselves. When a man witnesses death of another person he never realizes that it will be the fate of his mortal frame as well. Instead he accumulates what is perishable with a firm belief that he will enjoy the material pleasures and assets forever. The reason being that the dependence of man on the outer world and environs are merely meant to stimulate the internal faculties to explore the infinite realm of the cosmic consciousness. But due to inability of the control over senses and the utilization power of the energy inherent in every human being, it leads to non utilization of the inner potential, the vastness of the soul and its eternal power of healing is lost in ignorance.

Gautam Buddha was a realized soul who changed the canvas of whole humanity and the world and laid the foundation of the path based on spiritual rationality, a scientific approach to the world affairs. He shaped the socio cultural domain of India, which was in harmony with the nature and the fellow beings.

His poise and wisdom was based on the power of inner self and the power of self realization. He arrived at a time when the Indian society was burdened with the rituals that were more prone to austerity than realization of the truth. His teachings and wisdom should be seen in the perspective of the turbulence prevalent in the society.

Karen Armstrong's book titled "Buddha" is comprehensive and biographical account of the evolution of Buddha and the development of the circle around him. She has contextualized her work by providing the glimpses of the religious and spiritual movements around the world and that makes her work more interesting and enables the reader to have an idea of the human psyche at a time when Buddha attracted the consciousness of the people.

The book has been divided into six chapters beside an introduction, notes, glossary and index. Writing about the contents of her book and the subject she writes in the introduction, "The search for a place apart, separate from the world and yet marvelously within it, that is impartial, utterly fair, calm and which fills us with that, against all odds, there is value in our lives, is what many seek in the reality we call 'God'. In the person of Buddha, who had gone beyond the limitations and partialities of selfhood, people seemed to find it in a human being. The

life of the Buddha challenges some of our strongest convictions, but it can also be a beacon. We may not be able to practice the method he prescribed in its entirety, but his example illuminates some of the ways in which we can reach for an enhanced and more truly compassionate humanity.”

The important thing that

Dr. Mahesh Kaul

Book : **Buddha**
 Author: **Karen Armstrong**
 Year Publication: **2002**
 Price: **Rs. 282**

no longer worked for them, and an impressive array of prophetic and philosophical geniuses made supreme efforts to find a solution.”

It is not a coincidence but there seems to have been a kind of resurgence and stimulation in the region confined to India, China and Iran for a path breaking religious and social transformation moving away

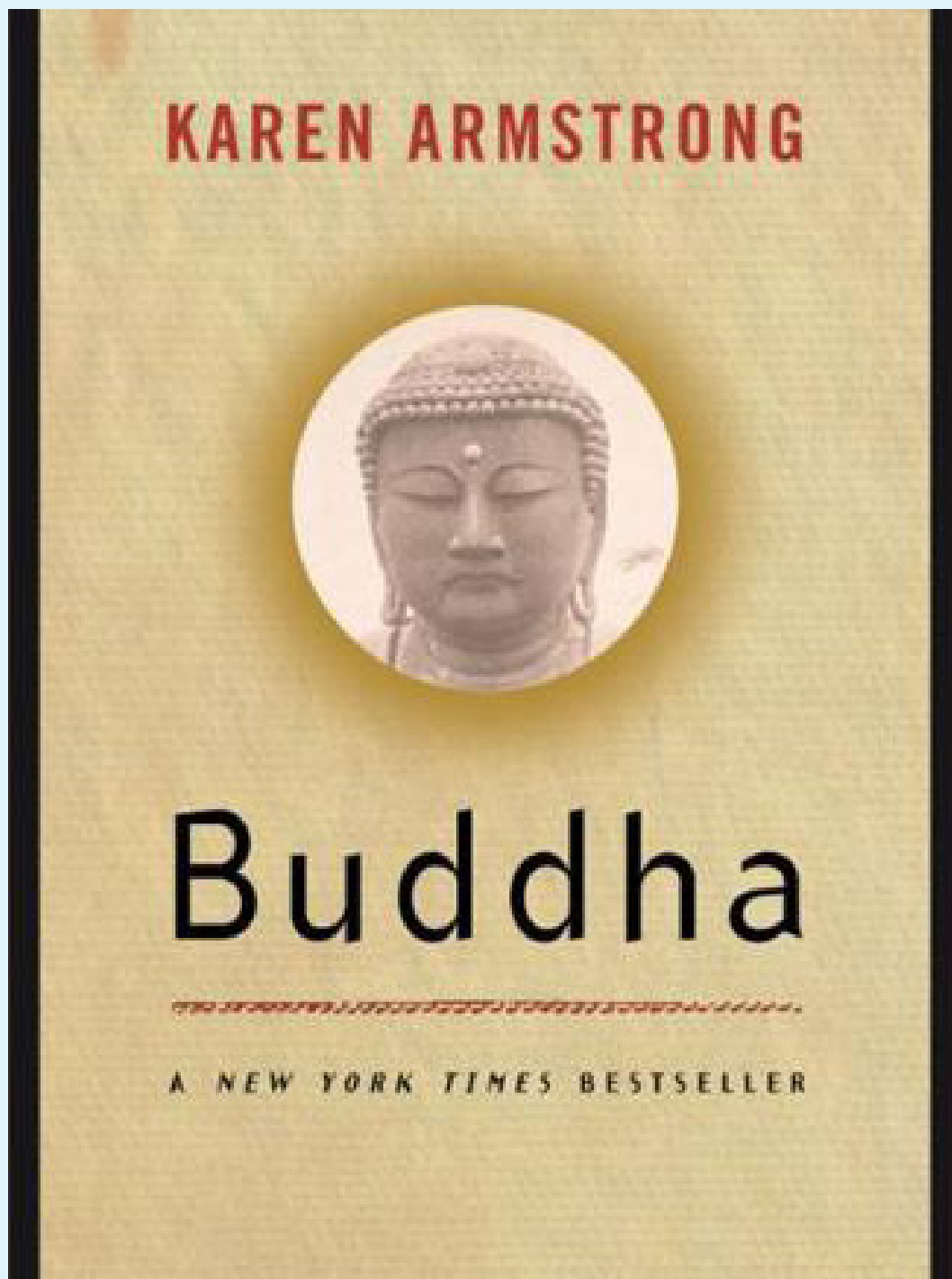
most typical of the luminaries of the Axial Age, alongside the great Hebrew prophets of the eighth, seventh, and sixth centuries; Confucius and Lao Tzu, who reformed the religious traditions of China in the sixth and fifth centuries; the sixth century Iranian sage Zoroaster; and Socrates and Plato (c.427-327), who urged the Greeks to question even those truths which appeared to be self-evident."

Karen Armstrong dwells at length and defines Buddha and his personality beyond the established norms and analysis. Writing further on the Axial Age, she writes, "The Axial Age marks the beginning of humanity as we now know it. During this period, men and women became conscious of their existence, their own nature and their limitations in an unprecedented way. Their experience of utter impotence in a cruel world impelled them to seek the highest goals and an absolute reality in the depths of their being. The great sages of the time taught human beings how to cope with the misery of life, transcend their weakness, and live in peace in the midst of this flawed world. The new religious systems that emerged during this period—Taoism and Confucianism in China, Buddhism and Hinduism in India, monotheism in Iran and the Middle East and Greek rationalism in Europe—all shared fundamental characteristics beneath their obvious differences. It was only in participating in this massive transformation that the various peoples of the world were able to progress and join forward march of history. Yet despite its great importance, the Axial Age remains mysterious. We do not know what caused it, or why it took root only in three core areas: in China; in India and Iran and in the eastern Mediterranean."

This whole description gives a peep into the rise of Buddhism and other religious and spiritual traditions. The need is to understand the similar transformation the three countries which are the dominant cultural forces even today and the emerging political and economic trends also give the evidence of the commonality of the change and cultural undercurrents that should redefine the emerging world order.

Book is an enriching account of the life and time of the Buddha and presents a scholarly view of the philosophical and theological undercurrents and idioms.

(The author is Executive Editor The Chancellor)



should be of interest to an avid reader and thinker is the discourse she sets in the chapter 1, titled “Renunciation”. Besides dealing with the experiences and background of the Gautama, the Buddha she has explained the rationale about the relevance of Buddha and situated his philosophical standpoint in the international context.

Raising an important point

regarding the change in social milieu and the environment for the acceptance of the Buddha's discourse she writes, "Why did the people of India feel this disease with life? This malaise was not confined to the subcontinent, but afflicted people in several far flung regions of the civilized world. An increasing number had come to feel that the spiritual practices of their ancestors

from the stratified system. Explaining this period and the evolution of the new horizon she writes, "Some historians call this period (which extended from about 800 to 200 B.C.E.) the 'Axial Age' because it proved pivotal to humanity. The ethos forged during this era has continued to nourish men and women to the present day. Gautama would become one of the most important and





Oral Sunscreens: Supplementing Skin Protection in the Sun

Dr. Ennakshee Sharma

As the peak summer season is here, the importance of protecting our skin from the sun's powerful rays cannot be overstated. National Sunscreen Day falling on May 27 every year serves as a timely reminder of the significance of sun protection in our daily lives. Sunscreen is not just a seasonal accessory but a vital shield against the sun's harmful UV rays. It acts as a protective barrier, preventing UV radiation from penetrating the skin and causing damage.

Broad-spectrum sunscreens offer protection against both UVA and UVB rays, safeguarding from sunburn, tanning, wrinkles, fine lines, premature ageing, and an increased risk of skin cancer. By applying sunscreen regularly, we not only shield our skin from immediate sun damage but also reduce the risk of long-term consequences.

While traditional sunscreens applied topically are a well-known defense against harmful UV rays, a newer trend has emerged: oral sunscreens. These supplements claim to provide protection from within, but do they live up to the hype?

Let's dive into the world of oral sunscreens to uncover their potential benefits and drawbacks.

Understanding Oral Sunscreens:

Unlike traditional sunscreens, which are applied directly to the skin, oral sunscreens come in the form of pills or capsules. These supplements contain ingredients that are purported to enhance the skin's natural defenses against UV radiation, offering protection from sunburn and long-term damage.

Proponents of oral sunscreens highlight several potential benefits:

1. Convenience: One of the primary appeals of oral sunscreens is their convenience. Rather than having to apply sunscreen repeatedly throughout the day, users can simply take a pill and enjoy extended protection from the sun.

2. Full-Body Coverage: Unlike topical sunscreens, which may be missed or not adequately applied to all areas of the body, oral sunscreens offer the potential for full-body coverage. This could be particularly beneficial for individuals who engage in water sports or activities that cause sunscreen to wash off.

3. Antioxidant Protection: Many oral sunscreens contain antioxidants, which may help protect the skin from oxidative damage caused by UV radiation. By neutralizing

free radicals, these supplements aim to prevent premature aging and reduce the risk of skin cancer.

Examining the Evidence: While the concept of oral sunscreens is intriguing, their efficacy remains a topic of debate. Clinical studies evaluating the effectiveness of these supplements have yielded mixed results. Some research suggests that certain ingredients, such as polypodium leucotomos extract and antioxidants like vitamin E and beta-carotene, may provide some level of protection against UV damage when taken orally. However, the degree of protection offered may not be comparable to that of traditional sunscreens.

Potential Drawbacks: Despite their potential benefits, oral sunscreens also have several limitations and drawbacks:

1. Regulatory Oversight: Unlike topical sunscreens, which are regulated as over-the-counter drugs by organizations like the FDA, oral sunscreen supplements are often classified as dietary supplements. This means they may not undergo the same rigorous testing and quality control measures.

2. Limited Protection: While oral sunscreens may provide some level of protection against UV radiation, they are not a substitute for traditional sunscreens. Experts recommend using them in conjunction with topical sunscreens for

optimal protection.

3. Unknown Long-Term Effects: Since oral sunscreens are a relatively new concept, their long-term effects on health and skin are not well understood. More research is needed to assess their safety and efficacy over extended periods.

Conclusion: In conclusion, oral sunscreens represent an intriguing approach to sun protection, offering the potential for convenience and full-body coverage. However, their effectiveness and safety remain subjects of ongoing research and debate. While they may provide some level of protection against UV radiation, they should not be relied upon as a sole means of sun protection. Until more conclusive evidence is available, it's important to continue using traditional sunscreen and other sun protection measures to safeguard against sunburn and skin damage. There are as many types of sunscreens as diverse and unique as skin types. So choosing the right sunscreen for a person is of paramount importance to avail maximum benefits. One should consult the qualified Dermatologist for skin assessment and finding the perfect sunscreen best suited for their skin.

(The author is Assistant Professor in Dermatology in ASCOMS & Hospital Jammu)



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

Dr. Verender Bangroo

The Dard Aryans of Ladakh are an ancient tribal community whose unique identity, rich traditions, and ecological wisdom have long fascinated anthropologists, historians, and sociologists. For centuries, they have lived in seclusion in the rugged valleys of Ladakh, preserving customs that reflect ancient Vedic heritage. But today, caught in the crosscurrents of modernization and neglect, their way of life faces an existential threat.

Despite their rich cultural fabric, the Dard Aryans have often been marginalized and misunderstood by other communities. Known for their egalitarian values, deep reverence for nature, and harmonious living, they continue to uphold traditions that are both distinctive and dignified. Respect for elders and women, sustainable practices, and ritualistic reverence for natural elements are integral to their worldview.

Recognizing the urgency to preserve this vanishing culture, the author of this study—who has long researched and advocated for the Dard Aryans—initiated a series of outreach programs. In collaboration with the Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts (IGNCA), orientation workshops were held across Aryan villages to encourage younger generations to take pride in their heritage and actively preserve it.

The momentum from these village-level programs culminated in a landmark cultural festival held in New Delhi, showcasing the art, dress, language, and rituals of the Dard Aryans. It was the first such comprehensive national-level exhibition dedicated to the community, and it garnered wide media coverage and public attention. The event marked a significant milestone in efforts to secure recognition for the community's contributions to India's cultural mosaic.

The Dard Aryans' experience highlights the challenges faced by tribal communities in the Himalayas, including the erosion of their cultural heritage and the impact of external influences on their way of life. The author's research and initiatives have shown that it is possible to promote and preserve tribal cultures while also respecting the need for modernization and development.

This study could serve as a model for others working with tribal communities, highlighting the importance of collaborative approaches and community-led initiatives. By recognising the value of tribal knowledge and cultural practices, we can work towards preserving and promoting the rich diversity of human experience.



Background:

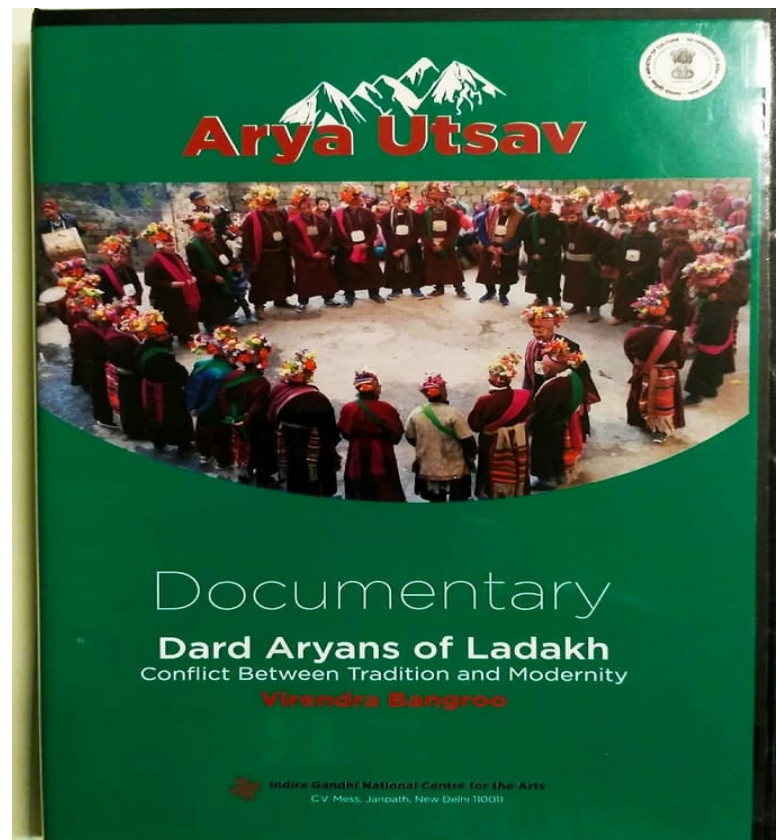
Since ages Himalayas are considered to be an abode of Gods which has sheltered and nurtured many age old civilizations. These civilizations, although, were having their origins somewhere else, but since they could not survive the onslaughts of war & inner community conflicts, they took refuge in remote interiors of Himalayas having harsh climatic conditions. Dard Aryans is one of such civilizations which sank quietly in the Indus Valley for centuries, free from any outside world's influence and thus could retain their archaic customs and traditions. The geographical location & dry cold desertic environment of Ladakh where not even a shrub could survive, Dard Aryans endeavored and with their might, as the saying goes, even rocks began to melt.

Nestled about 180-185 kilometers northwest of Leh, along the banks of the Indus River, lie the villages

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Culturally identified sacred places:

- 1. Guru Rempoche Phatincha** - To ward away the evil spirits, games are played here before cultivation season.
- 2. Duha- Place** where newlyweds offer prayers for their happy long married life. Also to pray for the newly born child's health, wellbeing and long life.
- 3. Thare Water fall**- Waterfall comes out of the stream from Banju Glacier and the same flows into the Indus river. The waterfall is said to come out from the mouth of a celestial golden fish.
- 4. Latoth- Sacred place** on the top of the Daun mountain for sacrificing Goats especially on Losar and Naah Festival times. Only the Labdak family is exclusively entitled to do sacrifice at this sacred spot. Down below this sacred place Latoth on the mountain, there are other such small places identified and designated for each family of Garkhun village, where they make their separate offerings.
- 5. Harn**— Another scared spot at the top of the hill. This place is represented by an icon which is considered to be the "Protector of the Village". According to one folk story, it is said that one Amchi came to visit this village and he was astonished to know that this place is untouched from any disease or illness. Upon his query villagers replied that it's all due to the grace of their protector Harn. But being selfish & ill-willed, he desecrated it by chipping some of the area of the sacred icon and from that day onwards, it is believed that disease and illness started to affect the villagers.
- 6. Haru Dus**— A sacred spot represented by a Stupa which was erected during the 1990 Kargil war to keep enemy (Pakistani) forces at bay.
- 7. Haru Bari**-A swimming pool for training purposes for children of the village. During water scarcity, water from the pool is used.
- 8. Changra**- It is a celebration Festival spot where performances of Garkhun dance songs are held.
- 9. Munal**— A place on the mountain where there are separate small individual designated spots meant for each respective family head of the village for keeping relics of their departed family members.





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of Dah, Hanu, Garkhun, and Darchiks. These are the primary settlements of the Dard Aryans—also referred to as Brokpas. Their physical features, rituals, and language—replete with Sanskritic elements—indicate a deep lineage linked to ancient Vedic Aryans. European anthropologists have often shown particular interest in them due to their racial distinctiveness.

The nomenclature 'Aryan' has been given by foreigners on account of their features with North-Indian of the plains, their deities and common traits in their language which constitute majority of Sanskrit words. There isn't any written manual or documentation by these inhabitants but an ocean of folklore which narrates their ordeals and their calendar of festivals. Well, it is an established fact that they have migrated from neighbouring lands and finally established themselves in Dah village and later on spread and made their dwellings in the nearby villages. The main occupation of this tribe was sheep and goat rearing. Even to this date, the Ladakhis call them 'Bopkas' which means 'shepherds'.

In the tribal communities, we see that their entire history is orally transmitted from generation to generation. Also, the migrations initially by compulsions have been there since times immemorial. As a result of racial interactions, the catastrophic situations mystify their origin. In the case of the Dards living in these areas are confined to a few villages and also their unique lifestyle and features are subjected to all sorts of speculations. There hasn't been any serious scientific study to document and to find out their origin and also affinity with the other neighboring communities/ places.

The following are the unique features which make them distinctive in their outlook and character: Both men and women wear exquisite dresses and ornaments. The headdresses are peculiarly adorned with flowers; they abhor rearing of cow and poultry farming; the consuming of beef and chicken is also prohibited; they consume only the milk of goat and sheep; the Dards were used

to rear horses which they use for transporting goods; More than 50% words in their language have got Sanskrit origin; in every house, in the kitchen they worship 'Sabdak', a form of Linga, their first offering of food etc. is offered to the Sabdak every day, the stone Sabdak is triangular in shape and there is a ritual for identifying and selecting it for worship and public passionate kissing is also popular among the tribe.

The Aryan villages of Dah, Hanu, Gorkhun and Darchik are about 160 Km. North-West of Leh. The villages located on the right side of Indus and some on the left side, are mostly Buddhists. The conversion from animist to Buddhism took place only 150 years back. The Dards marry within their own community and with the result; they are able to preserve their distinctive character. It is only in the recent past that they have started mingling with neighboring communities of Ladakh. In the village of Dha is an ancient settlement, as was revealed, around 40 families used to live under one roof. The rubble of walls of the households can still be seen in the Dha village. Near this old settlement was also a small fort which was used as a watch-tower in ancient days to defend from advancing army/ forces.

The road connectivity from Leh to Kargil is via Khilasi, there is a diversion which links their villages. After the Kargil war the government authorities placed the development work in this region. Some of the areas of Aryan valley are restricted for outsiders, since it borders Pakistan occupied Kashmir (POK) and Indian forces are stationed for keep watch and vigil in this region. One has to get an Inner Line Permit (ILP) from the District Commissioner to visit these villages.

Now there is road connectivity in all the villages of this region and also the public amenities available. In Dah village there are two small guest houses. With the changing paradigms of cultural traits and religious practices resulted in lots of threats which make this community vulnerable. Buddhism is being followed in all the villages except few, which are Muslims. While they practice

Buddhism, they are distancing themselves from their old age traditions and now mostly dependent on the monks for day-to-day rituals.

The Aryan tribe is facing a transition time. The reasons attributed towards this changing period are increasing connectivity with the outside world, flourishing tourism, availability of satellite TV Media, migrating youth towards urban installations etc., resulting into degeneration of their ancient cultural practices and customs. Therefore, a need was felt to take urgent steps to preserve their heritage.

In 2016, a small initiative was taken up by the author in the Dha Village for the setting up of an Aryan Valley Museum. This initiative was supported by Sh. Landup Dorjee, a local villager. He felt proud of his heritage which relates him to the Aryan class but his apprehensions were that with the growing urbanization and other influences the community is going to lose its heritage in terms of language, customs and traditions.

A lot of tourists do visit this village but there has not been any effort to highlight their culture and their habitat. What has been done over the years is taking cultural troops from this village and performing them in various cultural shows in India and abroad. This, as a matter of fact, has created less awareness and more curiosity about this lively community.

As a stepping stone for promotion and propagation of their rich heritage it was thought to set up a space which would ignite the passion among the villagers to come forward and to take pride in their culture which turned out to be a useful exercise, a milestone for the said 'Aryans'.

So, it was decided to have a small museum, the space for which was offered by Landup Dorjee. The local constituted team went door-to-door to collect old artifacts which include ritualistic, decorative and utilitarian utensils and these were displayed in the room. Hand-written labels were prepared for each item. The traditional kitchen which also houses 'Sabdak', the deity which is worshipped daily, and offered first served food, was also the centre of

attraction.

The Museum was inaugurated on 24th July, 2016 which was attended by the counselor of the area, Sarpanch and Panch of the Aryan villages. Everybody expressed burning desire about preserving their culture and traditions. All the villagers were left spell-bound, seeing their age old heritage being displayed and appreciated. All of them expressed their desire and concern to have such kinds of museums in every Aryan village.

In the inauguration ceremony of the Museum, neighboring villagers were also invited. These natives deliberated various issues related to preserving their ancient eco-cultural heritage of the region. Everybody expressed their deep concern regarding the fast changing lifestyle and fast deteriorating social values.

One of the participants, Sh. Landup Tashi of Gorkhan village expressed his desire to set up a museum, on similar lines, in his village also. He remained in constant touch with the author and also visited him at Delhi IGNC to plan and materialize the concept of setting up a Museum in his village.

Accordingly, to attain the target of establishing a living museum in Garkhon Village in Ladakh region, a visit was therefore organized in the month of September, 2017 by the author. During the visit, the entire village was surveyed for locating other culturally important tourist spots also which have the potential to become important cultural halts for future tourists visiting this region, adding on to their income levels. It was assessed that these identified places, if highlighted, would further add on to the tourist attraction for lesser known cultural ladhakhi region in Garkhon village.

(...to be 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

Dr Javaid Rahi-The Voice Fighting for J&K's Tribal Communities

In the diverse and culturally rich landscape of Jammu and Kashmir, the voices of tribal communities have often been overshadowed by broader political narratives. Among these communities, the Gujjars and Bakarwals have preserved unique languages, traditions, and ways of life for centuries. Yet, despite constitutional safeguards, they continue to face systemic marginalisation in education, employment, and political representation.

Dr. Javaid Rahi, a distinguished scholar, activist, and cultural historian, has dedicated his life to advocating for the rights and recognition of these tribal groups. With over three decades of experience, Dr. Rahi has tirelessly worked to document tribal languages, promote indigenous knowledge, and challenge administrative inertia that hinders the full realization of constitutional protections.

In this in-depth interview with **ANUJA KHUSHU**, the Editor, *The Chancellor*, Dr. Rahi shares his insights on the challenges faced by tribal communities in the wake of political changes in Jammu and Kashmir, the urgent need for policy reforms, and the transformative power of youth and media in shaping a more inclusive future.

Dr. Rahi, thank you for joining us. Could you share with our readers a brief overview of your journey so far?

Thank you. My journey began in the early 1990s when I joined the Jammu and Kashmir Cultural Academy as a research assistant. Back then, there was very little institutional focus on tribal languages or culture. I saw the urgent need to preserve the oral traditions, stories, and unwritten histories of the Gujjar and Bakarwal people—communities that have long been marginalised not only in academia but also in policymaking.

Over time, I served in different roles—including Chief Editor of tribal publications—and led several initiatives on tribal documentation, including the creation of dictionaries, folklore anthologies, and educational resources in tribal languages. My work extends into public policy, social awareness, and media-based activism.

You've been vocal about the constitutional safeguards for Scheduled Tribes. What has been the actual ground-level impact of these provisions in J&K?

The Indian Constitution provides numerous safeguards for Scheduled Tribes (STs) in the form of reservations, land rights, and political representation. However, in Jammu and Kashmir, these were either partially applied or entirely absent until very recently.

For instance, although Gujjars and Bakarwals were recognized as STs in 1991, they did not receive political reservation—meaning no seats were reserved for them in the legislative assembly. It was only after the abrogation of Article 370 in 2019 that national laws such as the Forest Rights Act (FRA), 2006, the SC/ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, and political reservations under the Representation of the People Act were extended to J&K. But even now, the implementation is half-hearted.

These laws are not just symbolic. They determine whether people can own the land they live on, whether tribal children can access quality education, and whether our voices are represented in governance.

What has been your experience with higher education institutions and tribal representation?

It's quite disheartening. Universities in Jammu and Kashmir—whether it's the



University of Kashmir, Central University of Kashmir, or others—have not lived up to their constitutional duty to ensure equitable representation for tribal communities.

Despite reservations, hardly 2–3% of university faculty members are from ST backgrounds. In fact, in many recruitment drives, even well-qualified tribal candidates are dismissed as "not found suitable." This reveals an entrenched bias in selection committees and a lack of structural accountability. In some institutions, not a single Gujjar or Bakarwal has been appointed as an assistant professor despite numerous applications.

We're not asking for favours—we're demanding our constitutional rights.

You've often mentioned the importance of language in identity. Could you expand on that?

Absolutely. Language is the soul of a community. It carries our history, our worldview, and our values. Gujjars and Bakarwals speak Gojri, a rich tribal language that has existed for centuries. But until recently, it was completely ignored in educational curricula and official communications.

Through our work, we've created dictionaries, grammar guides, children's books, and audio-visual archives in Gojri. We've also advocated for Gojri to be introduced in schools as a medium of instruction. Preserving a language is not just about words—it's about preserving a civilization.

How has social media helped amplify tribal voices, particularly your own work?

Social media has been revolutionary. For years, tribal stories and issues were ignored by mainstream media. So, we turned to platforms like YouTube, where I launched a channel dedicated to tribal awareness. Today, we have over 200,000 subscribers, and our videos are viewed across India and even internationally.

We use this platform to educate people about tribal rights, constitutional provisions, and cultural heritage. Young people from remote areas now send in their own videos, their own poetry, their own stories. It's no longer

a one-way communication—it's a movement.

In your view, what are the top three priorities for tribal policy reform in Jammu & Kashmir?

That's a vital question. First, full and fair implementation of the Forest Rights Act (FRA)—this will secure land and livelihood for thousands of nomadic families who've lived in forests for generations.

Second, strict enforcement of reservation policies in education and employment. It's not enough to reserve seats on paper—there must be transparency and accountability in recruitment processes.

Third, creation of tribal-specific institutions—language departments, cultural academies, research centers—that promote tribal heritage. And of course, everything must be backed by budgetary support and political will.

What has been the focus of your research and cultural efforts?

My primary work has been around tribal languages, identity, and traditional knowledge systems. I've compiled tribal dictionaries and led initiatives to safeguard oral histories and folklore. I'm also involved with the Tribal Research Academy and use my platform to promote tribal education.

I also run a YouTube channel to reach wider audiences, especially youth. It has over 200,000 subscribers and serves as a space for tribal voices and cultural documentation.

How has the revocation of Article 370 affected tribal communities in Jammu and Kashmir?

The revocation of Article 370 opened the door for several national laws including the Forest Rights Act (FRA) and SC/ST Reservation Acts—to be extended to Jammu and Kashmir. However, implementation has been a major hurdle.

Despite legal provisions, the systems haven't delivered the expected benefits. Tribal people are still denied access to forest rights, land ownership, and representation in political and academic institutions. Much of this stems from administrative apathy and a mindset that resists change.

Could you talk about representation in higher education?

Unfortunately, tribal representation in higher education is almost non-existent. In institutions like Kashmir University or Central University of Kashmir, the participation of Gujjars and Bakarwals is less than 3%, despite reservation quotas.

Many eligible candidates are overlooked. Committees often declare them "not suitable," without transparency. This is a violation of constitutional rights and reflects systemic discrimination. We need strong policy enforcement and accountability.

What policy changes are most urgently needed?

First, laws like the Forest Rights Act must be implemented properly, without delay. Second, we need institutional reforms to ensure fair recruitment, especially in education and civil services. Third, tribal departments should be established in every major university to support research in tribal languages and knowledge systems.

Finally, we must address the mindset barrier—both at administrative and societal levels. Change in attitude is as important as change in law.

What role do youth and media play in this movement?

A critical one. Youth today are more aware and engaged than ever. Through digital media—especially YouTube and social platforms—they're learning about their history, their rights, and how to advocate for themselves.

Social media has helped us bypass traditional gatekeeping. We are now documenting our stories and preserving our culture digitally. This has created new momentum, especially among the younger generation.

Thank you, Dr. Rahi. Any final message?

Thank you. My message is simple: constitutional rights are not charity. They are guarantees. We must continue to raise awareness, build leadership within our communities, and ensure these rights are respected, implemented, and protected.



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CONSULT

Dr.Ennakshee Sharma

MBBS (GMC JAMMU)
MD Dermatology Venereology and Leprosy (SMGS JAMMU)
ASSTT PROFESSOR DERMATOLOGY (ASCOMS JAMMU)
FOUNDER, DIRECTOR & CHIEF CONSULTANT (ENNFINITY SKIN)
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• FROM -4:00PM TO 7:30 PM



300,NEAR GURUDWARA,OPPOSITE
TAWI LAB,LANE OPP. VISHAL MEGA
MART,BAKSHI NAGAR,JAMMU,J&K

WE CARE ABOUT YOUR SKIN HEALTH

WE PROVIDE FREE CHECKUP for UNDERPRIVILEGED on
Last Thursday of every month under our Initiative

HEALING TOUCH:

FREE SKIN TREATMENT FOR THOSE IN NEED



6006-5005-01



ennfinity.skin@gmail.com
@ennfinityskin