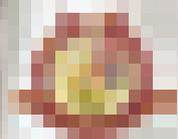


MEDIA TIMES



‘HAVE SEEN IT,
WILL CHANGE IT’



**MEDIA EDUCATION RESEARCH CENTRE
UNIVERSITY OF KASHMIR**

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Feedback and suggestions from the readers are welcome
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Printed and Publisher by:

HoD MERC
for and on behalf of
University of Kashmir.

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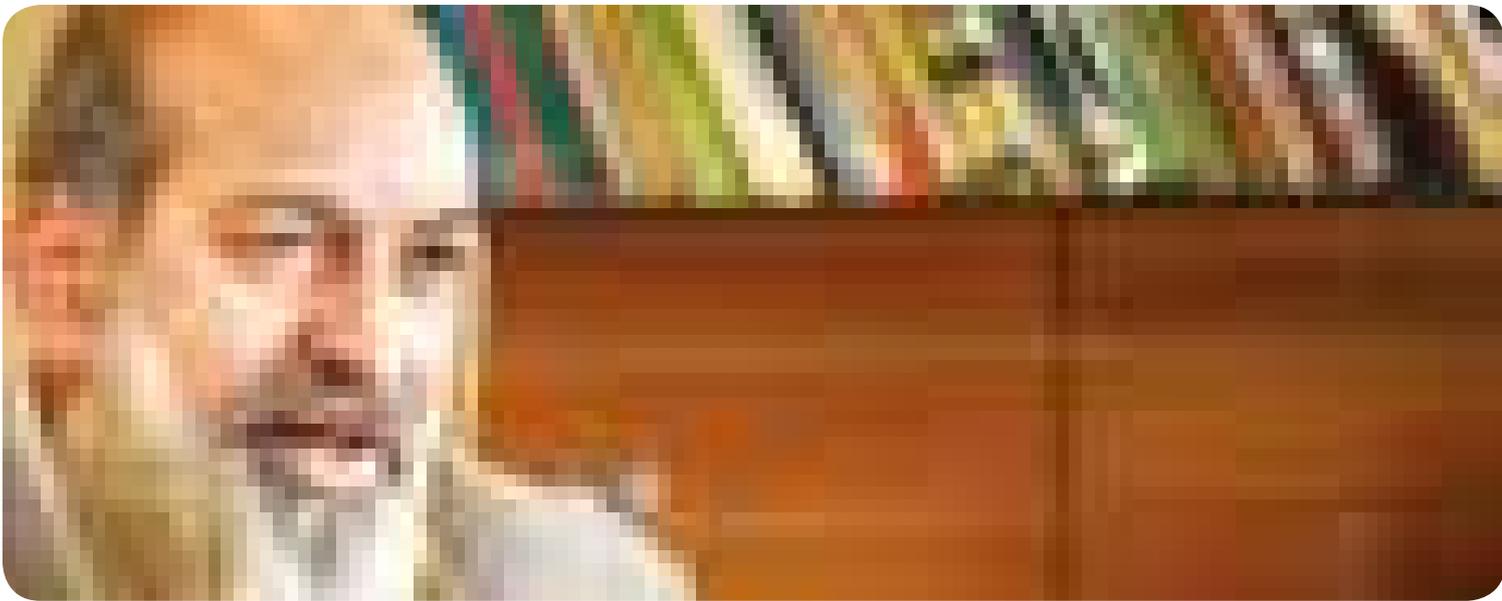
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The Media Times is a lab journal of Media Education Research Center, University of Kashmir. Its main purpose is to provide a platform to the students and scholars to hone their writing abilities and to chisel their journalistic skills. The journal builds necessary confidence in them to take on the future responsibilities as conscious media practitioners in the society.

All the contributions are the students/scholars of Mass Communication and Journalism at MERC KU. Opinions, views, reports & essays in this issue do not necessarily represent the views of the faculty of MERC. The author are solely responsible for the facts stated including the source of the information and references. The Editor or the centre is not responsible for any kind of plagiarism.



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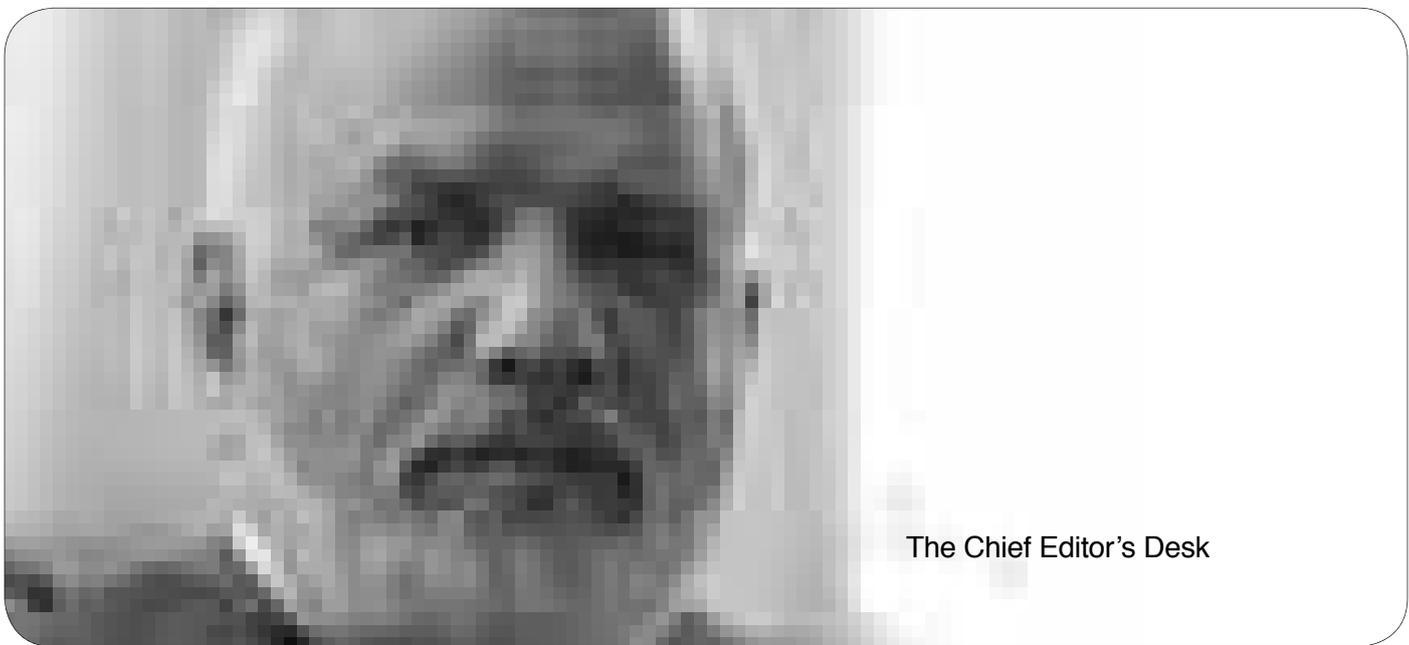
The mass media has over the years contributed significantly in bringing about social change and transformation, to make us in the process dependent on salvaging information as diverse as politics, education, science, religion, agriculture, charities, aviation, etc.

Accordingly intellectual exercises aimed at publication of magazines, journals and other off shoots help the budding writers develop a habit of professional writing and an opportunity to express their ideas for the benefit of the society at large.

The publication of magazine Media Times and fortnightly newspaper MERCTimes by Media Education Research Centre of our University is right tread in this direction.

I appreciate this effort of the editorial team and hope that the students make full use of the opportunity to bring out their best to the fore.

Prof. Khurshid I. Andrabi



The Chief Editor's Desk

Another issue of Media Times. Yet another. And yet another. And I will never be tired of one more issue of it. Because one more is not far too many.

It is not just the content, different writing styles, varied topics and myriad themes of these features, stories, reviews, articles; but an overall, ever encompassing gush of adrenaline that rushes through every word of this magazine.

Damn it. It is so exhilarating, so exciting. It is a joy. You become addicted to it. Page after page, as a Chief Editor.

It is always an honor to be part of this groovy bunch of kids.

Who teach me more than I have taught them ever.

Faruq Masudi

JOURNALISTS AS SAVIORS

A famous journalist Henry Luce once said: "I became a journalist to come as close as possible to the heart of the world."
Everywhere in the world, journalists

are taught to be always ready for crisis situation, be it breaking out of wars, conflicts, or the occurrence of natural calamities. Journalists are usually first news dispensers in an emergent crisis, particularly when it involves their own communities or cities.

Journalists are supposed to be among the most credible people out there, and have important stories to convey. The stories that push people to do something for those who need help. It is during the catastrophes, such as floods and earthquakes, that journalists need to be more than just reporters of news and events. They become the repository of information and are also required to dispense not just news, but be part of relief and rescue efforts for trapped people.

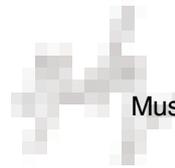
The recent floods in Kashmir showcased journalists as saviors and rescuers. Many journalists jettisoned their observer status and jumped in to help the suffering victims of the disastrous floods which hit the valley in the first week of September. Journalists reacted to the emergency in the most fitting manner, rescuing victims and taking them to safer places; they went beyond their line of duty. Instead of preferring to do only stories, they helped in rescuing people and bringing relief material to the flood-affected population from their own sources. The journalists covering the flood showed compassion by offering water, rides and rescue, but their most enduring service was to expose the suffering of citizens trapped in harmful shelters. They became a ray of hope for the distressed and devastated people.

The breakdown of communication rendered journalists dysfunctional for a while, but it didn't stop them from utilising their human skills to help in rescuing people and creating information centres, which were most needed at that point of time. Particularly, when the administration had paralyzed itself into inaction, it became paramount for journalists to carry out rescue operations and to create helplines on their own.

Kashmir floods were a fertile ground for stories and news events for journalists, but journalists showed sensitivity in not becoming zealous-seekers of news. On the contrary, they concentrated all their energies on focusing on the grave situation i.e. to save people's lives. As rightly said by a great journalist Henry Anatole Grunwald, "journalism can never be silent: that is its greatest virtue and its greatest fault. It must speak." The journalists of Kashmir spoke it, and spoke it well.

Of course, Media is always in debate over dichotomy on whether to become crisis managers or crisis escalators during a disaster. The journalists in Kashmir have shown that journalists can also be saviors without borders or bias. The ability to empathize with pain and suffering, and the desire to prevent it, does not conflict with the professional standards. Those impulses make a better journalist, more attuned to the stories. Journalists are tasked with telling, if they change an outcome through responsible and necessary intervention, no one can deter them.

As part of the training of budding journalists at Media Education Research Centre, it remains our focus to teach not just the necessary skills required for news writing and reporting, but to turn every student of journalism into a sensitive person capable of saving lives. The continuous effort on part of the department is to develop this aspect of journalism. To inculcate in them, the spirit of human agency so that they have an ethical framework to guide them when they work in the field. Yet, in the case of covering a catastrophe or hardship, they are taught and reminded that they are primarily journalists trying to cover a story. That is their principal role in the world, and if they perform it well, it is an absolutely unique service: helping the world understand something as it happens.



Muslim Jan



Sibtain Hyder

Media tries to persuade us to believe that our natural skin colour is not good enough.

DARK **IS NEW FAIR**

BEING DARK IN COMPLEXION DOESN'T MEAN I AM A LESSER HUMAN.

Laxmi Chandra, a dentist based in Jammu, recalls how her classmates in college used to ridicule her because of her dark complexion.

"They never allowed me to sit next to them. Being dark in complexion doesn't mean I am a lesser human. I am perplexed, People still continue to stress on this myth that white people are superior," she said.

"My relatives barraged me with words of contempt. My uncle even bought me a fairness cream and persuaded me to use it every day. For a woman, looking fair is a must in this country," she added.

Subash, a 25-year old pass-out from National Institute of Technology Srinagar, has a similar deplorable experience to share.

The questions he faced from his fellows like "don't you take bath? Look at your skin, you pollute this college", he recollected.

Media strengthens the stereotypes. It plays a significant role in shaping our outlook. And it is dead on target. In promoting a brand or in highlighting social causes, objectivity is crucial. But on the contrary we see adverts and films promoting discrimination on the basis of skin colour.

Media tries to persuade us to believe that our natural skin colour is not good enough. Low caste workers or beggars shown in films are mostly dark-skinned. Advertisements of fairness products openly express that dark is ugly. A report by market researcher AC Nielsen stated that in 2010 India's fairness cream market was worth \$432 million and was growing rapidly at the rate of 18 percent a year. So far this year, people have consumed 100 tons of skin whitening products, which are endorsed by the celebrities.

We have to examine culture in general. Fairness has always been considered superior. The films, advertisements are made for a

commercial outcome. For a successful commercial outcome, filmmakers or advertisers will make a media product that is targeted to a certain audience. One could blame filmmakers or advertisers for their stance, but it's all society's fault. The questions are, Can society be changed? And what role should the Media play? Media has become a money-making machine, We can't get away from the fact.

I believe the only way to change views is to take education to the grassroots level. The government must utilise media to project a healthier viewpoint. Since the society we live in doesn't have direction or motivation for the good, the short-term prognosis will be poor.

You cannot promote something without comparing it with its inferior, like they do in advertisements. They promote a certain brand of fairness

cream by comparing a dark-skinned person with an energetic white skinned one.

People suffer from low self-appreciation. Colour bias is still lodged in the society. It not only involves home or family, but educational institutes and workplaces too. It has affected our relations. Discrimination lives in those who have continuously stressed on this concept. Education

plays an important role in bridging the gap.

In the corporate world of today, every value, every great human virtue is trashed. Evil phenomena like racial discrimination are being promoted as common brains already stand brainwashed to anti-human tendencies by today's corporate culture.

Media, parenting, friend circles or lack of conscience, whatever be the reason, dark is not ugly. What is ugly is the fact that consciously or sub-consciously your society is contributing to this hurtful social evil. ■

People suffer from low self-appreciation. Colour bias is still lodged in the society. It not only involves home or family, but educational institutes and workplaces too.

THE HOLY RELIC WAS FIRST ENSHRINED IN KHANQUAHI-NAQASHBANDIA AT KHWAJA BAZAAR IN OLD SRINAGAR.

REVERED HOME OF THE RELIC



Ubaid Jeelani

The Hazratbal shrine houses the Moi-e-Muqqadas, the holy relic of Prophet Muhammad (SAW), which is displayed only on special occasions.

Hazratbal is the revered Muslim shrine of Kashmir. The name of the shrine comes from the Arabic word 'Hazrat', meaning holy or majestic, and Kashmiri word 'bal', meaning place. It is seen as a symbol of love and respect for the Prophet Muhammad (SAW).

Hazratbal is situated on the western banks of picturesque Dal Lake. Facing the beautiful Nishat Bagh, the shrine offers panoramic view of the lake and the mountains afar.

The shrine is adorable. People coming from far off places rest beneath the Chinars. They come with their families, sit in the gardens, and enjoy the cool breeze coming from the Dal Lake. They relish the flavour of the local snacks.

The Friday prayers offered here attract

Muslims in huge numbers. On the other religious occasions, women offer prayers in the garden of the shrine while men pray at the other end.

The shrine houses the Moi-e-Muqqadas, the holy relic of Prophet Muhammad (SAW). It is displayed only on special occasions such as Eid Milad-un-Nabi (SAW) and Shab-I-Meraj every year.

Hazratbal shrine of Kashmir, dates back to 17th century. The subedar of Mughal emperor Shah Jahan, Sadiq Khan, constructed Ishrat Mahal and a garden at the site of the Shrine in 1623. However, when Shah Jahan visited the place in 1634, he ordered conversion of the palace into prayer house.

History has it that Hazrat Syed Abdullah (RA), a trustee of holy shrine of Madina possessed three holy relic. He undertook a journey to India and reached Bejapur in 1636 during the reign of Shah Jahan. After his death, his son Syed Hamid became the custodian of the holy relic. Khwaja Noor-u-Din Ashawari, a noted Kashmiri trader, met him and developed deep respect for him.

While leaving for home, he requested Syed Hamid for one of the relics. Initially, he refused, but later gave the relic to Khawaja Ashawari for taking it to Kashmir. The latter chose the sacred hair which was given to him. On reaching Lahore, Khawaja Ashawari was arrested by Aurangzeb and the sacred relic was enshrined in the Dargah at Ajmer Sharief. Later, Aurangzeb arranged the passage of the caravan carrying the holy relic with full honor and it reached Srinagar in 1700 BC.

The holy relic was first enshrined in Khanquahi-Naqashbandia at Khwaja Bazaar in old Srinagar. From there, it was shifted to Baghi Saif Khan and housed in the bungalow of Sadiq Khan, a descendant of Mughals. Since then, it came to be known as Aasari Sharief Hazratbal. ■

LABELING ISLAM AS TERRORIST OR PEACE ABHORRING RELIGION IS THE OUTCOME OF MISPLACED ASSUMPTIONS.

BOLLYWOOD TERRORISM

Movies are an effective way for propaganda. Using stereotyped images, cinema can communicate strong political messages to its audiences and exacerbate existing conflicts.

India leads the world in sale of movie tickets, and it is of the interest of the public of the world's second most populated country to take in movies. Bollywood competes with Hollywood for viewership and cultural impact at the global level. And its success in doing so can be judged from its demand in Pakistan despite differences between the two neighbouring states.

In the initial years of independence, the Indian film industry had many Muslim producers, directors, writers, and actors. Back then, Shah Jahan, Mumtaz Mahal, Anarkali, Mughal-e-Azam, Mere Mehboob, Bahu Begum and Chaudhien ka Chand were the kind of movies produced in India. The movies rightly showed Muslims as rulers and showcased their resplendent past.

However, over the decades the prejudice against Muslims in the film world has become more pronounced. The portrayal of Muslims has changed from that of philanthropists to terrorists. In 1970s, the

Bollywood started depicting Muslims as indolent and futile nabobs, who squandered their money on prostitutes. Mere Hazoor, Pakeezah, Umrao Jaan were some of the movie based on the theme. In '80s and '90s, Muslims were shown in movies, such as Ghulam-I-Mustafa and Angaar, as underworld Dons. Subsequently, the trend of presenting Muslims as a terrorist or extremists reached its pinnacle after 2001.

Due to the 9/11 attack, the political scenario in the entire world changed. Muslims in general became direct or indirect victims of the wrath of the West. In India, the incident of 26/11 only added fuel to the fire. It influenced Bollywood too.

Since then, most Bollywood movies have projected a negative image of Muslims. This change posed a question mark on Bollywood's position as an industry for entertainment. Bollywood has made no effort to highlight the extremist elements in the Hindu community in India in order to establish that extremist tendencies aren't dependent on religion. Labeling Islam as a terrorist or peace abhorring religion is the outcome of misplaced assumptions that are unbecoming of the country proud of its cultural diversity and secularism. ■



Omer Malik

The prejudice against Muslims in the film world has become more pronounced.



ALL SHOULD CREATE A MORAL WATCHDOG FOR OURSELVES.

DON'T BE A STEPHEN

In this world of cut-throat competition, how far would you go to clasp on to that position where you are viewed as the benchmark for others? Would you pursue your conscience or let your praise-loving instinct stake over your decisiveness? Or would you choose to be an entertainer at the cost of risking your Professional Integrity?

The questions like these stroll through your imagination when you watch the movie 'Shattered Glass'. This ironic 'true story' tells the tale of concoction and fabrication that marred the career of an otherwise talented writer, Stephen Glass. A 24-year old dynamic reporter working for the prestigious in-flight magazine of Air Force One, The New Republic (TNR), Stephen has made a name for himself as an entertainer who does stories that his colleagues wish they could do. These striking stories are new, entertaining and at times resembling fiction. However, as Stephen describes the emphatic fact-check and review process during the TNR three-day torture test, no one doubts their credibility. Stephen

manages to manipulate the process and slip in his fiction in the form of facts in any generic article, which does not have a source material and is purely checked on the basis of the reporter's notes and description of the event. Quite masterfully, Stephen heightens his aplomb and starts overdoing his fiction-fact-farcereports and is eventually exposed by an online magazine, Forbes Digital, after an article, titled Hack Heaven, is scrutinized and found fake. Twenty-seven of the 41 reports by Stephen are adjudged as fabricated, making the readers question the credibility of the entire magazine. What follows is a formal apology letter from The New Republic team to its readers accepting the tale of myth, lies and fabrication that Stephen had managed to write as facts.

'Shattered Glass' is a must-watch movie for every professional, not only a journalist. It portrays the significance of sensibility and common sense over creativity and treachery. Not only does it tell us a tale of emphatic rise and equally fast decline of a Journalist's career, it manages to describe the essentialities of the profession. The fact that

assumption, over confidence and amateurism should not overtake your conscience, honesty and professional integrity, has been beautifully showcased in this movie. Some of the nonverbal intricacies like showing the lead actor barefooted in the office signifies how immobile and theoretical his professional life was. The repeated dialogue "are you mad at me?" tells us how sceptical and aware Stephen was about the fallacies in his work. And last but not the least, the conscious attempt to show a credible care for every colleague thereby gaining their trust tells us how planned Stephen was in his efforts of turning fiction into facts. As a journalist, everyone experiences that →



Nisar Dharma

Cunningness may lead us to a life of failure and shame.



delicate moment in his profession where he has to make a sensible decision of acknowledging what is morally and professionally right and shunning what could possibly be a tempting short-lived success. But what follows can be a disaster as happened with Stephen. We all should create a moral watchdog for ourselves by strengthening our credibility and thus not allowing our thoughts take over our thinking.

In reality, Stephen Glas studied Law after his infamous exit from the world of

journalism. Yet this disgraced past hung on to him as he was denied a license to practice law by the California Supreme Court. Pointing out in its ruling that "Glass's journalistic dishonesty was not a single lapse of judgment, but involved significant deceit sustained unremittingly for many years." Glass was left disorganised and ashamed. That tells us that the consequences of our cunningness may lead us into a life of failure and shame. So, beware and be aware! ■



BACKWARD EDUCATION

ONLY FIVE OF THE 69 MOBILE SCHOOLS STARTED IN THE PIR PANJAL MOUNTAIN RANGE HAVE BEEN FUNCTIONING.

Education remains a dream for the nomadic Bakerwals of Jammu and Kashmir as the successive government have failed in making the mobile schools operational.

An ethnic group basically from the high altitudes of Chenab valley, Bakerwals wander from place to place with their cattle for livelihood. Studying in regular schools is thus an impossibility for their children who are constantly engaged in rearing the cattle.

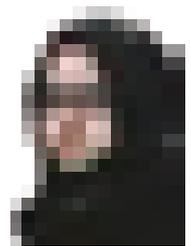
In 1970, the then state government opened mobile schools for the community at Kupwara, Baramulla, Bandipora, Poonch, Budgam,

Kargil, and Rajouri. In '90s, these mobile schools were shut down due to turmoil and it took the state administration years to make them functional again.

However, a survey conducted by the President of the J&K Residents of Backward Forum, Zakir Malik Bhalessi, has revealed that only five of the 69 mobile schools started in the Pir Panjal mountain range have been functioning.

Ghulam Mohammad Gorsehails from Doomi Gaathi, a village in Poonch. Gorse migrates from Poonch to Kashmir within April and stays here till the harvest season is over.

"The education of my children has been marred by the government's unfulfilled promise of mobile schools. No mobile school is functioning at the place where I am staying. Mobile schools exist on papers only," he says. ➔



Mir Sheema

In 1970, the then state government opened mobile schools for the bakerwals, but the initiative is proving to be a damp squib

Mohammad Abdullah Jahraa hails from Brewnwar area of district Budgam.

Abdullah and his family left home in May, migrating to the greener pastures of Dhokal some 30 Kilometers away from their home.

"My children have been to schools since we left home," says Abdullah.

"When the government opened mobile schools in these areas last year, not even one of them was with proper facilities. The school was functioning under the open sky. The teachers had to teach in the shade of the trees. And the school had to be closed in bad weather," he says.

The President of Mobile Teachers Forum, Mian Mohammad Sadiq, agrees that the scheme is a failure. Sadiq who has been working as a mobile school teacher for last seven years hasn't seen any step taken by the government for the improvement of these schools.

"The condition of teachers in these

schools is bad as they are paid less and are asked to be on duty at high altitudes. There is no arrangement for them to stay in Dhokes," says Sadiq.

"The educational volunteers working in mobile schools are supposed to work for six months a year, and for rest of the season they are not paid anything. Even the salary paid is not released for years," Sadiq adds.

Abdul Hafeez is a student of 5th class who hails from Kalakote, a village in Rajouri. He has come with his parents to Kashmir along with their flock of sheep. Hafeez also left home in April and now they are staying in a Dhoke at Pulwama.

"For last four months I am absent from school and my study is disturbed. There is no mobile school here. How can I continue my studies?" he asks.

Director school Education Kashmir Mir Tariq Ali avoided refused to talk about it. ■

I EARN AROUND RS 3000 A DAY HERE. MY CUSTOMERS ARE MOSTLY THE LABORERS.

A BIT OF BIHAR



Nayeem Rather

The huge presence of non-locals has given Nasrulahpora village the name of 'Chota Bihar'

Every Friday morning, Sonram Raju boards a sumoat Srinagar's Batamaloo bus stand for Nasrulahpora village located some 16 km away in central Kashmir's Budgam district.

A resident of Jalandhar city in north Indian state of Punjab, Raju has been coming to the village for last 10 years to sell second hand clothes at 'Bihari Market' fair held every Thursday and Friday at the village. Being a non-local, Raju easily mingles into a small crowd of non-local laborers who have begun to assemble in the village. He spreads out a rug on the roadside, arranges the clothes that he has brought in a sack and sits down to begin the sale.

"I earn around Rs 3000 a day here. My customers are mostly the laborers," he says.

The dilapidated road in Nasrulahpora is flanked by makeshift stalls flooded with all kinds of items ranging from



food articles to clothes and pirated CDs of Bollywood movies. Most of the village's population is dependent on agriculture, which gives fewer yields now and is not enough to sustain.

But eager shoppers are pouring in huge numbers, mostly non-local laborers generalized as 'Biharis' who work at the adjoining brick kilns. They jump from the roofs of the buses that come to Nasrulahpora or emerge from shared passenger taxis. Some arrive on donkey-driven carts too. But all kinds of vehicles are brought to a grinding halt due to jammed roads in the village. The overloaded trucks honk madly. The noise is such that you have to shout to make yourself heard.

The fair is held on every Thursday and Friday from May to October but the rush is highest on Fridays. And it is the huge attendance of non-locals at the fair that has given the Nasrulahpora village the name of 'Chota Bihar' in the area.

Outside the stalls, the 'Biharis' are busy in purchasing stock of essential items for the week. In a stall managed by 22 years old Zareena, dark-skinned women clad in ragged saris are busy haggling and buying multicolored cheap bangles, nose studs and vermilion. Amidst the din, loud shouts promising quality products at cheap rates emanate from somewhere in crude Hindustani: 'Company ka Ghata, Logon ka Fayida'. Beneath a majestic Chinar, the laborers have assembled around a non-local barber, obediently waiting for their turn. At a butcher's shop, long queues of non-local laborers are waiting to get beef.

"They eat a lot of beef. I sell around 400 kg on the market day. The business is going great," says Mushtaq Ahmed Dar who has been selling beef for last 14 years in the village. The more people pour in, the more congested the place becomes and it becomes difficult to even walk. Innumerable heads move in tandem. This place looks more of a village in Bihar.

The history of 'Bihari Market' dates back to the time when the lush green paddy fields of Budgam were buried under brick kilns in late '90s. With the laborers from north Indian states flooding the area, the villagers thought of making hay, and some of them set up small, makeshift shops in the vicinity of kilns to sell essential items to the laborers.

As the number of brick kilns increased, the demand for goods increased too. The

makeshift shops proved inadequate to meet the demands of the laborers, who began to move to adjoining villages and toward the district headquarters in Budgam town.

"In order to curb the economic drain, we made a decision to hold a fair in the village where all essential items should be made available," says Fayaz Ahmed, who was among the first in the village to have a shop.

"The laborers are connected with the laborers of other areas and they also visit the market occasionally," he says.

The fame of the market spread like wildfire and the vendors started to come here from other districts to sell their products. Some of them from Srinagar, Anantnag and Chadoora visit this market regularly for earning a livelihood.

"I come here every Friday to sell clothes and shoes, like I do in Sunday Market at Lal Chowk," says Ghulam Mohammad, a resident of Srinagar who has been visiting the 'Bihari Market' in Nasrulahpora for last five years.

According to locals, around 30,000 laborers visit the market on Friday and spend around Rs 35,00,000 on a market day. Mubashir Ahmed Dar is a 12th pass who was unemployed for a long time. Three years ago, he started a retail shop in 'Bihari Market'.

"On a market day, his sale is around Rs 40,000. The business is good here. The laborers spend all the money they earn here. Thank Almighty, I earn enough to feed my family now," he says.

With their agricultural land changing into kilns, the villagers were unemployed for a long time and they found it hard to earn their livelihood. The respite came with the start of 'Bihari Market'.

In the last 10 years, the economic condition of the village has drastically improved. It is visible in the recently built plush houses and ruins of old mud houses.

"This village was poor. We had no avenues of employment but our lives have drastically changed due to this market," said Abdul Ahad Dar, the headman of Nasrulahpora.

Adil Mir, 17, studies in 10th class and runs an electronics shop in the market. Adil earns Rs 4000 on the market day.

"I earn while I am still in school. I want to study and become an engineer. This market has allowed me to realize my dream of studying," he says. →



Mohammad Sabir, a laborer from Bareilly in north Indian state of Uttar Pradesh has come to buy a CD. He is a fan of Salman Khan.

"I love Salman. I have come here to buy CDs of his films," he says.

As the popularity of the market grew, many 'Biharis' began to establish shops in the village. They rented small patches of land and constructed tin sheds from where they are now running the shops.

Hari Kishore, who has a sweet shop in the village, came to Kashmir in 1999 from Bihar for the first time.

"For a long time I had no job. I wandered here and there and then I heard of this market and started to sell sweets for a year. Eventually I got a place here to set up my shop," he says.

Not all the residents of the village are happy with the presence of 'Biharis' in their neighborhood.

"There are too many Biharis here. They create problems and they pollute the road with their gutka spits," says Abdul

Hamid, a local of Nasrullahpora. "They drink openly and have become so fearless that we have started to fear them now. Sometimes I think that Article 370 does not apply to our village."

In past, there have been many fights between non-locals and locals with the villagers alleging that many youth were picked by army for 'harassing' the non-local laborers. On July 23, 2012, Showket Ahmed was summoned to the army camp in Dharmul where he was allegedly assaulted for being a "supporter of militants".

Two days prior to the incident, Showket had scolded a laborer for drinking alcohol in public. "The laborer went to the camp and told them that I threatened to kill him for drinking alcohol," says Showket. Later, on the intervention of village elders, Showket was released. Similarly six other youths claimed to have been summoned to the camp in the recent past on charges of "harassing the Biharis". ■

ADVENTURE SPORTS IS THE NEW ATTRACTION AMONG YOUTH.

NOT SO ADVENTUROUS AFTER ALL



Irfan Mehraj

The beautiful mountains and vast areas of Kashmir offer tremendous scope for sports

Over the past three years of boom in tourist influx in Kashmir, adventure sports too have gained popularity. The history of adventure sports in the valley is short, but the sport is increasingly becoming an attraction for the sportsmen.

"Adventure sports is the new attraction among youth as it is challenging," said an official at State Youth Services and Sports Department.

However, the promotion of adventure sport in the valley is largely done by the State Tourism Department. The department pushes it as an extension of the tourism industry in order to promote tourism in Kashmir.

Earlier, it was mountaineering, skiing and the water sports like rafting, canoeing and swimming that formed the bulk of adventure sports in the valley. Now, other sports have entered the frame as well. Paragliding is one of them.

Introduced in the valley September last year, a seven-day paragliding festival was held at Asthanmarg Dara on the outskirts of Srinagar. It received positive response →



from sport enthusiasts. Organised and supervised by Jammu and Kashmir Tourism Department, the festival was yet another step towards promoting tourism in Kashmir.

“Although paragliding is done in other parts of India, the beautiful mountains and vast areas of Kashmir offer tremendous scope for this adventure sport,” Ghulam Ahmad Mir, Minister for Tourism, said on the occasion.

“Paragliding is the newest entrant to the adventure sports scene in the valley, although it is mainly conducted for tourism purposes,” said Shabir Shah, a physical education teacher at State Youth Services and Sports department.

Skiing is the most popular adventure sport followed in the valley. Every winter, tourists and locals alike throng the snowy meadows of Gulmarg to participate in skiing events.

“Skiing is the most famous among all adventure sports in the valley as it is very popular owing to the snow

at Gulmarg,” Muzamil Ahmad Dar, another physical education teacher at State Youth Services and Sports department, said.

State Youth Services and Sports department conducts yearly skiing courses for school going students. Other than skiing, it offers mountaineering and rock climbing courses as well.

“Mountaineering and rock-climbing has limited participation. Skiing receives the bulk of participation,” he said.

Rock climbing is held once in a year for school students in under-19 age group. However, Muzamil Ahmad Dar thinks the sport is losing its charm in the valley as there is limited participation.

“When I started out, rock climbing was my passion. Sadly the sport is ignored today,” he said.

The annual skiing course conducted by the Youth Services department costs around Rs 30 Lakh. It is a 45-day event divided into three courses in which students from all private →



and government-run schools participate.

“We conduct skiing courses only for school going children. Our job is to impart sports training at the grassroots level,” Shabir Shah, an official, said.

Several officials at State Youth Services and Sports department rue the fact that there is no separate adventure sports wing in their department.

“We had a post of Assistant Director Skiing and Mountaineering. But this post was demolished six years ago for unknown reasons,” Muzamil lamented.

Presently, there is no adventure sports wing in the department. The department conducts only a few adventure sports courses in Skiing, Mountaineering, Rock Climbing and Rafting.

“But it is negligible. We can do much more if there is a separate adventure-sport wing in our department,” said Shabir.

Other than Youth Services department, there are other Skiing events which are sponsored by J&K Tourism Department.

A yearly skiing event is held by Indian Institute of Skiing and Mountaineering, sponsored by State Tourism Department. It’s an open event, inviting participation from all age groups.

J&K State Sports Council, a semi government body, also conducts an open skiing event.

Kashmir University too has its own skiing event.

While the promotion of tourism industry in Kashmir forms the main reason behind promoting adventure sports in the valley, there is no imparting of adventure sports training at the school and college level.

“Adventure sports training shall be imparted at the school level so that it will boost popularity of the sport and also help in boosting sports activity in Kashmir,” said Shabir Shah.

Physical education

teachers associated with Youth Services department argue that the promotion of adventure sports in Kashmir only serves commercial interests, and that Kashmiri students by and large do not benefit. They argue that if adventure sports is explored at grassroots level, it will help in creating career opportunities.

“Today adventure sports are used for commercial purposes by tourism department involving instructors from the outside. How do Kashmiri’s benefit from that?” asked Muzaffar.

Adventure sport has tremendous potential in valley, argued Shabir Shah.

“Today’s youth are adventure lovers, so if proper training is imparted at school level it would create career opportunities as not all of them will think of becoming doctors and engineers,” he said.

The skiing events conducted by the Youth Services department only serve the recreational purposes as there is no competition at professional level to test the ability of students.

“Since there are no skiing competitions where students can be groomed at professional level, it becomes an exercise of acquirement of certificates,” he added.

For Shabir Shah and Muzammil Dar, the youth services department should be authorized to conduct tournaments in adventure sports so that this form is explored at the professional level.

Lack of infrastructure and absence of a separate adventure sports wing at Youth Services department are a few reasons that adventure sports remains unexplored at the school level.

“There are not enough trainers. They are brought from outside. How can there be home grown trainers when adventure sports is not imparted at the school level,” said Shabir Shah.

The advancement of adventure sport in valley will only happen if it’s imparted at school level. “If school going children are trained for adventure sports, they can have a future as adventurers and it will help our economy,” argued Shabir.

The present scene of adventure sports in valley is dominated by commercial interests. At one end Tourism department treats the sport as a tool in promoting tourism in Kashmir with negligible benefits to the local populace, at other end is Youth Services department, which lacks infrastructure and work force to train students for this sport. ■

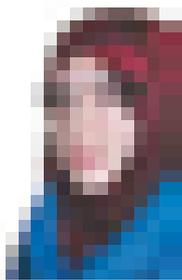
“We can do much more if there is a separate wing for adventure sports in our department”

State Youth Services and Sports Department officials.



THE ABSENCE OF HUTS TOO A PROBLEM FOR THE TOURISTS.

TULIPS IN TRAUMA



Yusra Khan

The lack of infrastructure results in economic loss to the people whose business is associated with the garden.

On the banks of Dal lake in the Srinagar city is the Asia's largest tulip garden, which received 24 new varieties of tulips this year and also suffered damage at the hands of the weather.

This year, the weather wasn't favourable for the growth of Tulips. The heavy snowfall in early spring and the unusual heavy rainfall thereafter affected growth of the flowers.

"This year there was too much snow which affected the blossom and now the rain is affecting. Too much rain or too much dry weather affects the bloom. The temperature should remain 20 degrees Celsius," says one of the gardeners, Nissar Ahmad.

The rains affected the tulips, but couldn't affect the tourist rush.

"I came here for first time. We haven't visited Gulmarg, Pahalgam or Sonmarg yet. I and my family arrived only the last evening, and we wanted to explore the garden first. We have heard a lot about this garden, but it really is very beautiful. And

the rain adds to its beauty," Chandrakanta, a tourist from Haryana, said.

The only inconveniences the tourists suffer are due to the lack of infrastructure at the garden. There is no tiled walkway, and the visitors are forced to walk on the muddy tracks.

"There shall be a proper walkway so that we could walk without any fear of falling over. It's so inconvenient. The ticket cost me Rs 200, but I think it is not worth it. This muddy track is blotting the beauty of the garden," said a tourist, Tarun Saxena of Lucknow.

The absence of huts too is seen as a problem by the tourists. April is the month of tulips and rains in Kashmir, but there is no arrangement of shelter.

"Infrastructure could have been improved. There could have been a hut or a shelter somewhere to save us from rain. It must be affecting the business as well," Kashmiri, visiting the garden, said.

The lack of infrastructure results in economic loss to the people whose business is associated with the garden. →

The only restaurant in the garden is improperly placed. Its owner has paid Rs 3.5 lakh for the space this year, but rain and the lack of infrastructure are becoming a threat to his business.

“I used to earn Rs 30,000 a day previously, but I hardly earn Rs 5000-6000 a day now,” the owners said.

“Apart from the rain, the problem is this mud. Tourists don’t come to have food due to the mud. We have requested the department to concrete paths, but they don’t pay any attention making us suffer,” he added.

In front of the restaurant is a tent in which tourists and visitors enjoy Kehwa made with saffron. A cup of Kehwa served with bagirkhani costs Rs 30.

“Our business is affected by the rain. We paid Rs 3,00,000 for this place for 28 days. Last year, we earned a good profit, but this year the business is running in loss,” the owner said.

Kashmiri tradition and culture is on display everywhere in the garden. From the hawker selling Kehwa to the photographers whom tourists pose in Kashmiri costumes, everyone is doing his bit to showcase the culture and traditions of Kashmir.

“We have all the Kashmiri garments both for men, women and children. We have jewellery too. Tourists, especially Indians, love to be photographed in such costumes.” says Aabid Bhat, one of the photographers.

The garden of tulips is also famous by the name ‘Siraj Bagh’. The garden was basically an apple orchard, which was later turned into a nursery by floriculture department where flowers used to be cultivated and exported to the countries across the globe. The garden has 122 varieties of tulips, having 1.5 million bulbs, and is spread over 15 hectares of land. ■

KARGIL HAS CHANGED VERILY IN THE PAST TWO DECADES WITH THE ESTABLISHMENT OF LADAKH AUTONOMOUS HILL DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL IN 2003.

KARGIL: ARYANS' ABODE



Ghulam Murtaza

Kargil has tremendous potential for tourism due to the presence of picturesque spots like Damsna, Panikhar, Zanskar, and Drass.

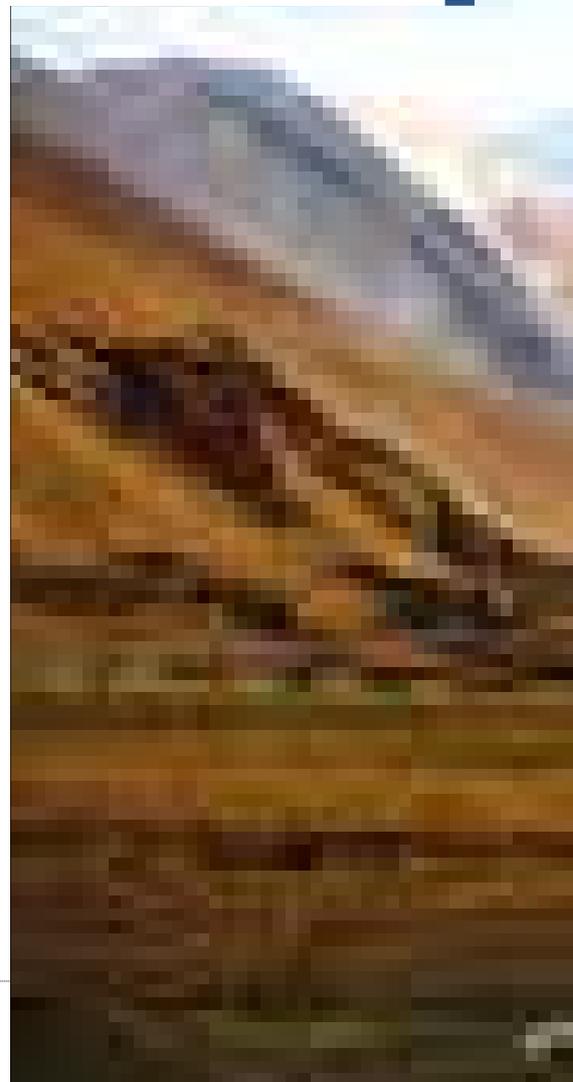
A beautiful landscape in the middle of Himalayas is Kargil—one of the two districts of Ladakh region of Jammu and Kashmir.

Prior to 1949 ceasefire between India and Pakistan, Ladakh was divided into Leh, Skardu, and Kargil tehsils. Earlier, Kargil was known as Purig, and its people were called Purgis.

The name Kargil, derived from the local word gar-kil meaning “were to stay” for the region is at an equal distance from Skardu, Kashmir, and Leh, came into trend in 1800 after the attack of general Zorawar Singh on Ladakh.

Kargil is situated at an altitude of 9000 feet above sea level. Leh and Kargil together cover an area of 59,605 sq km from Zojila to Zanskar on one side and from Batalik to Bodh Kharbu on the other.

The majority populace of the district is settled on the banks of Suru river, which originates from the Penzila glacier of Zanskar. →



The area is known as Suru valley or Suru Karchay.

Kargil is mostly a mix of Dard or Tibetan origin, belonging to Dards, Purgis and Baltis ethnicities. Dards came from Gilgit and have settled in the Drass region. Purgis are a mixed breed of the Dards, Mongolian, and Tibetan origin. And Baltis believe they have come from Baltistan.

Purgis speak Purgi language, the inhabitants of Drass use Shina language, and Baltis use the Balti language.

Kargil witnesses a very scanty rainfall and has less vegetation, but on the outskirts of Suru basin the land is very fertile. Farmers sow two crops in a year. Barley, wheat, millet, peas, and black beans are regular in cultivation. Kargil is famous for its apricots. The area is famous for its gem stones.

Kargil has a distinction of being the habitat of a special ethnic race called

Aryans, which live in the Darchiks Garkoon area. They have preserved their race for thousand years. Historians believe that they may have come from Rome and some believe that they are the descendents of Alexander the great. The people follow Buddhism and speak a different language.

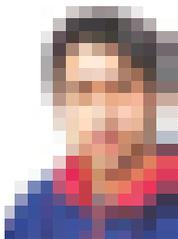
Kargil has a tremendous potential for tourism due to the presence of picturesque spots like Damsna, Panikhar, Zanskar, and Drass. The region has various sculptures of Buddha that are thousands of years old and are called Chamba in the local language.

Kargil has changed verily in the past two decades with the establishment of Ladakh Autonomous Hill Development Council in 2003. The present generation of Kargil wants to be in touch with the global world and the government is taking steps for socio-economic development of the region. ■



WE ARE TRYING OUR LEVEL BEST TO PRESENT PROGRAMMES THAT WILL BENEFIT AND ENTERTAIN OUR LISTENERS.

VADI KI AWAAZ



Altaf Hussain

Radio Kashmir Srinagar has over the years evolved as a powerful medium in the Valley.

In the recent decades, Radio Kashmir Srinagar has become the voice of Kashmir, touching the hearts of millions of Kashmir.

“Radio Kashmir Srinagar has something new for its listeners every day. That is the reason we listen to Radio,” Ghulam Mohammad Mir, an avid fan of Radio Kashmir, said.

Programmes like Payame Subh, Aaj ki Surkhiyan, Zoon Dab, Hello Tuhenz Farmaish, Dhadkan, Shehrbeen, and Hamsafar are winning the hearts of people. Shehrbeen has been highlighting the problems and issues confronting the common people. Aaj ke Surkhiyan is an important programme for the people living in far flung areas for it brings to them headlines of the local newspapers, which they don't usually have an easy access to. Zoon Dab has been the most popular radio feature that highlights problems faced by

the people.

“We are trying our level best to present programmes that will benefit and entertain our listeners from different walks of life,” Station Director at Radio Kashmir Srinagar said.

“We have a responsibility towards our society. We are here not only to entertain people but we have to inform and educate them also,” she added.

It is perhaps for the efforts of broadcasters that radio has over the years evolved as a powerful medium for mass communication in the Valley. Despite mushrooming of television channels, it has retained its place in the society as an effective medium for awareness about social issues.

“Radio offers variety of programmes, ranging from entertainment to news. It builds opinions, entertains us, and keeps us updated,” said Suhail Ahmad, a college student. ■

THIS TYPE OF WORK IS QUITE DIFFICULT FOR PEOPLE LIKE ME.
THE GOVERNMENT SHOULD SUPPORT PEOPLE LIKE ME.

CRIPPLED BY FATE, ENDOWED BY WILL



Sami Ullah

Crippled Iqbal, from Damhal Hanjipora village of south Kashmiri's Kulgam district, helps his father to earn livelihood for their family.

With sweat on his forehead and nose, he drives his wheelchair on hot summer days amid heavy traffic in Lal Chowk, the commercial hub of Srinagar. In a stammering voice, he almost pleads people to buy his Islamic posters or dry fruits.

For crippled Muhammad Iqbal, 19, it is a daily routine—to leave home early in the mornings with a collection of Islamic posters and packets of dry fruits carried on the top of his wheel chair.

Iqbal, who is from Damhal Hanjipora village of south Kashmiri's Kulgam district, stays with his father, a labourer, in a rented room at Shalteng Srinagar. Since his father finds it hard to earn a decent livelihood for his family, Iqbal decided to lend a helping hand.

Every day, he moves from Shalteng to Lal Chowk, selling the posters and dry fruits.

"Every day, I leave Shalteng at 9 am on my wheel chair to tour various areas of the

city to sell the items to commuters. I sell about 10 posters a day," he says.

He doesn't sell the same item throughout the year, but keeps on changing the goods as per the market demand.

"I keep on selling different varieties. In the holy month there is a huge demand for Islamic posters and dry fruits for tourists," he says.

For Iqbal, the desire to be independent has been the driving force.

"Normally we see most disabled persons give up because of their disabilities, and then they suffer problems like unemployment. Some even turn to begging," Iqbal says. "But a person shall not get discouraged and shall learn to live with dignity."

Iqbal says sometimes he has to return home with empty hands after the day's hard work.

"This type of work is quite difficult for people like me. The government there shall have given subsidies for people like me to start their own business," he says. ■

ULTIMATELY, THE LEECHES DIE WHILE THE PATIENT IS SAVED.

Rx LEECHES

In the Friday market set up at a little distance from the Hazratbal shrine, Ghulam Mohammad tends to people complaining of knee ache, back problems, pimples, sinusitis, or blood pressure. These septuagenarian leech therapist appears incongruous in the thoroughfare packed with fruit sellers, bearded beggars, wailing infants, and crumbling matriarchs.

Sitting on a jute rug, surrounded by ill people, Mohammad does not sport a stethoscope or surgical garb; there are no florescent lights generally present in the clinics.

His only tools are a cloth pouch full of leeches and years of experience. His way of dealing with the patients isn't cosmetic. His method of assuaging pain is somewhat queer.

He places a leech on the knee of Manjeet Kour. After applying water on her skin with his forefinger, the old man picks up another worm and places it just below the previous one. There are four leeches sucking blood from Manjeet's leg at a time.

Mohammad says that he inherited the practise from his father.

"If a patient is suffering from some poisonous disease, the leeches suck out the

poison. Ultimately, the leeches die while the patient is saved," he says Mohammad. "The therapy has no side effects."

Leech therapy is one of the oldest treatments used for alleviation of pain. The species of leech used for medicinal purpose is called *Hirudo medicinalis*, which live in clean water. These leeches can suck 5-10 ml of blood, many times their body weight.

Hirudu therapy, the use of medicinal leech for medical purposes, was introduced by Ibn-e Sina. According to records, leech therapy was prevailing during the Egyptian pheronic dynasty some 3500 years ago.

Greek and Roman physicians have made note of these invertebrates for remedial properties. Leech therapy was in practice in America during the 19th century when physicians used it for a variety of illnesses. However, the trend started declining with the introduction of modern medicinal methods.

Leech therapy has been in practice for centuries in Kashmir valley, and continues to be a source of succour for many Kashmiri's who still adhere to this age old method of healing. ■



Yasir Gaffar

Leech therapy is one of the oldest treatments used for alleviation of pain.



AN ENGINEER BY PROFESSION, 64-YEARS-OLD AUSSIE VAN DEN BARSELAAR IS A FOLLOWER OF KASHMIR SHIVISM.



‘DIFFERENT RELIGIONS, ONE THEME’

In the shade of centuries-old mighty Chinar in the premises of Khir Bhawan temple at Ganderbal, George Van Den Barselaar is resting on a chair, surrounded by glowing earthen lamps and the fragrance from incense sticks and flowers. An engineer by profession, 64-years-old Aussie is a follower of Kashmir Shivism.

“Every spiritual life is a journey; mine began in Kashmir in 1980,” he says.

Barselaar was 29 when he first visited Kashmir, and fell in love with Kashmir Shivism. He studied it for a decade under the guidance of Swami Lakshmanjoo.

“I was born in a Methodist family that was not rigid in practicing religion. In Kashmir I became associated with Shivism and helped Swamiji’s trust in publishing books and circulating them in America and Australia,” he says while opening a book to find a photograph of himself.

“This is young me, when I was a student of Shivism,” he says, wearing a smile on his wrinkled face.

Barselaar believes that all religions have the same theme that “God is one”, but different approaches. And Kashmir Shivism, he insists, “is the best path for

meditation”.

He visits Kashmir almost every year to be at Ishwar Ashram trust at Nishat, Srinagar. His wife too has visited the place. This year, he was specially invited to set-up a bookstall at Khir Bhawani for books on the life and teachings of Lakshmanjoo.

“History has it that many Kashmiri Muslims are actually third or fourth generation Hindus. I feel very bad for the younger generations of Kashmir because they are losing touch with their traditions; the departure of Kashmir pandits has disturbed the social setup completely,” he says.

Khir Bhawani has been Kashmiri pandits’ vital connection to Kashmir. And reduction in the number of visitors is the only change Barselaar has noticed at the temple after 1990.

“Except the decline in the number of devotees visiting the temple, there is no change here. There is no change in the way they (devotees) do their religious rituals here,” he says.

“India is going to the West,” he continues, “and the West is coming to India. Despite their rich traditional and cultural values, Indians, unfortunately, tend to follow the West. It is a cause of concern.” ■

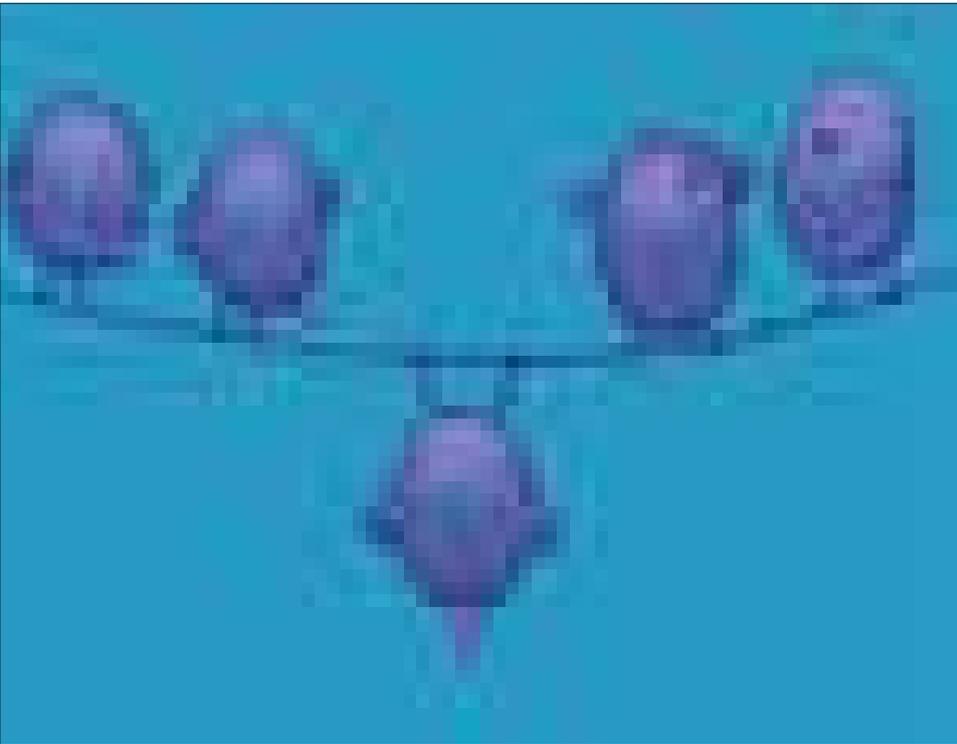


Afshan Rashid

Barselaar begin his spiritual journey in Kashmir in 1980

BE TRUTHFUL AND HAVE FAITH IN YOUR ABILITIES AND CAPABILITIES.

BEING YOURSELF



have a own role model for inspiration in depressing and hard times. But in this process of looking up for inspiration, we, more often than not, tend to lose our originality and individuality by following every act, good or bad, of our role models. We work very hard to be like someone else. We always conform to the society's common sense without realising whether its impact on us will be positive or negative.

It is often found that we are not our true selves in the company of others as we consciously or unconsciously wear the mask to project a certain kind of image in certain situations. We do it hoping that this will serve our interests without realising that we would have to live in a constant fear of being unmasked. It's imperative that we should never lose our originality or individuality, which are a person's biggest asset and strength in hard times.

It's important that one recognises the uniqueness about his personality. We humans have the tendency to compare ourselves with others, and it is not the right thing to do. By comparing, we attach high expectations with ourselves and sometimes when we fall short of those expectations. The contempt for one's own self starts to take roots. Every human has flaws as well as strengths, but what matters is how we deal and overcome the weaknesses.

It will be in the best interest of us all to be truthful to ourselves and have faith in our abilities and capabilities. Many kinds of flowers make a garden beautiful, and the world is beautiful only due to the presence of different individuals in it.

You hold significance till you maintain your individuality; once you lose it, you are lost in the abyss of insignificance. Once you know that you have already been given an independent, unique, and timeless identity, you need never worry about making yourself like someone.

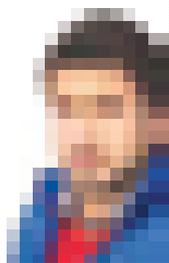
"It's safer to be that which we destroy than by destruction dwell in doubtful joy", William Shakespeare. ■

"There is but one cause of failure and that is a man's lack of faith in his true self,"
William James

The creator has created every soul with some unique talents and potentials. This uniqueness in terms of talent and potential is something that makes this world fascinating and diverse. The particular talent and potential enables each one of us to serve the mankind, and work for betterment of the society. The diversity makes us curious to know more about the people and the culture, and about how and why things work in a particular way. It thus becomes possible for us to find a way to change them for better.

We live in a world where everyone is dependent on others for one reason or the other. We cannot live in isolation for the reason that we, as humans, have needs and wants that cannot be satisfied without social bonds. Everyone in this world wants to be someone. And that someone we may succeed in becoming defines the measures of safety, security, or happiness we win in this life.

To become someone, everyone has to



Anayat Sultan

Everyone has to have a role model for inspiration



DAYAN CHAND, THE INDIAN HOCKEY LEGEND, REFUSED TO PLAY FOR GERMANY WHEN ADLOF HITLER OFFERED HIM MONEY.

GAMES: FIXED

Therewasnoconceptofcurrency in ancient times. Man was living a life of wanderer. With the passage of time, concept of private property came into being. Desire for property created competition.

From ancient to medieval period to so-called modern age, scene has drastically changed. 'Survival of the fittest' theory by Darwin shook the minds of humans. Humans began to feel insecure in the competitive nature of life. Now race for money in every walk of life. Human have become so money minded that they can go to any extent to make money.

Money factor has also touched the arena of sports. Money has invaded the essence of sports. This does not mean that money is curse; it is indeed important part of life and it plays good role in sports. But over emphasis on money is really a matter of concern.

Sports reflects the endurance of life. Sports keep one fit and healthy, and gives us relief in times of distress. Sports is about spirit and determination and teaches us how to tackle problems of life. Football, tennis, cricket or any other sport should be kept within its framework of originality.

Now billion dollar sports leagues like football leagues of Europe, glamorous baseball and basketball leagues of USA, IPL of India are growing at a very alarming speed. Players overnight switches

teams when offered more money. Football which is called beautiful game and cricket which is known as gentleman's game have lost their real essence. Nowadays, players are devoid of sportsmanship; fame and money is their priority. Money has ruined the competitive spirit and joy of participation in sports. Honor and respect means nothing to sports persons. The ethics of sports have been jolted by excessive commercialisation.

However, there are still some sports lovers and sports persons who try their hard to keep it alive. Example was set by Dayan Chand, the great Indian hockey legend, who refused to play for Germany when German dictator Adlof Hitler offered him money and a high post in army. Dhayan Chand knew the honour of playing for his nation.

Money also talks in sports in Kashmir. According to Ghulam Nabi Baba, a well know footballer of '60s and '70s, today's players lack commitment and enthusiasm, and "no one in Kashmir is playing for state as they play for money only".

The pleasure is in the joy of victory or in the striving for a win after a defeat. Sports is all about spirit of sportsmanship. The doom of sports seems to be near if the games are not saved from overflow of money. Excess of everything is bad. Every sports lover should come up with a iron-will to save sports from turning into a commercial hotspot. ■



Idrees Dar

Overemphasis on money is a matter of concern.

THE ONLY HOPE OF SURVIVAL FOR THE ART IS THE ANNUAL SHOW ORGANISED EITHER BY RADIO KASHMIR OR THE TOURISM DEPARTMENT.



DIMINISHING ROLES OF BHAND PAETHER

Their costumes are unusual with flashy colours and well ornamented to grab attention. They converse in a tone which sounds like a mixture of singing and talking. The buzzing of the trumpet is somewhat a signature tune of their art. And when they start entertaining they give the spectators a lot to introspect through their satirical acts. These are the artists of Kashmiri folk theatre, the “bhands” of the “Bhand Paether”.

The history of bhand paether dates back to 1800's, when it was used to entertain the king and to spread social messages. The army of entertainers would walk through the villages and entertain people. They would be specially called over to marriage ceremonies to add to the celebrations. But the past few decades haven't been cordial with the art of Bhand Paether.

Now, they hardly roam through villages to entertain or to spread public messages. The marriages have become such an affair where the people hardly need a traditional music and dance show. And as such the art is dwindling and the artists are suffering. The only hope for survival of the Bhand Paether is a single show that they do once in a year with Radio Kashmir or the tourism department. This effort is too minimal to help save the art or to help the “bhands” financially. The art is set to doom and the

artists are suffering.

With eyes sunk deep and skin wrinkled around them, the professional bhand, Abdul Qayoom Bhagat of Akingam area of Anantnag district, from where the bhand are believed to have evolved says that the art is no more beneficial financially. “The young generation cannot survive through this art as it has lost its value”, he says. The bhand now hardly walk through the villages to entertain and the marriages have become such an affair where a traditional music and dance show is not required or does not fit the settings.

The only meek hope of survival for the art of Bhand Paether is one show that they do annually with Radio Kashmir or the tourism department. “We get to do one show with Radio Kashmir in a year. Is this effort enough to save the dwindling art of Bhand Paether?” asks Abdul Qayom Bhagat. Bhagat and his other family members are professionally “bhand”, the folk theatre artists of Kashmir. Bhagat reminisces that he learnt this art of “public entertainment” from his father, who himself had inherited it from his ancestors. “Roaming through villages and performing in marriages” made Abdul Qayoom Bhagat earn enough for his family.

When the art, which is a profession as well, fetches minimal wages, the artists are →



Ishan Fazili

The young generation cannot survive through this art, which has lost its value

bound to abandon it. The bhand blame the “20 years of turmoil and the apathy at the hands of the government” for the loss of the art. “The government is not paying attention to the fate of this art”, says Ghulam Mohi-u-din Aijaz, a professional bhand from Wathoora area of Budgam district. He suggests that training programmes can prove to be a breather for the art of bhand paether which is dying a silent unnoticed death.

Cultural experts opine that the Bhand Paether have the “potential of solving current social issues” by creating awareness.

“As this art is a media and can throw effective social messages, the problem is that our society is facing can be solved by them”, suggests Zareef Ahmed Zareef, an eminent poet of the valley.

The number of bhand theatres in the valley stands at 15 and the number of people they are engaging is 400. The stakeholders of this art are toiling hard silently to make the numbers maintain their standard. As the art is on the verge of extinction, the bhand have pinned all their hopes to the Divine for their art to survive through the times. ■

WILL CAN HELP US ACHIEVE ANYTHING. A STRONG WILL ISN'T ONLY TO ACHIEVE FEATS, BUT IT ALSO DICTATES OUR BEHAVIOUR.

WILL YOU, WILL YOU NOT?

Understanding is the greatest power one can have to succeed in life. But every now and then each one of us has to rely upon feelings or will of heart rather than on thoughts. Confronted by hardships, we often forget about our surroundings and retreat to our heart to find ourselves, and to know who we are. With the will of heart, we can do anything we dream of.

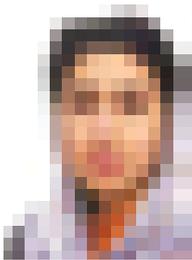
In Abraham Lincoln's words, “Nothing in this world is impossible to a willing heart.” And Andrew Carnegie said, “People who are unable to motivate themselves must be content with mediocrity, no matter how impressive their other talents are.” When Alexander the great decided to conquer the world, he succeeded. Louis Braille was a blind educationist who devised the touch system of reading and writing for blind. Helen Keller was both blind and deaf, but became an educator for blind. Sudha Chandran, the famous classical dancer, danced her way into millions of hearts across the globe despite having lost her legs in an accident before the start of her career. She did the impossible. Their success was result of their will, determination and confidence.

Nothing is impossible to a willing heart. Will can help us achieve anything. A strong will isn't only to achieve feats, but it also dictates our behaviour.

Once a man walked up to me and my

friend, asking for money. I turned away, but my friend gave him Rs 500. I asked her the reason, and she responded with the question, “Why did you turn away.” I suddenly realised that I judged the man — that he shouldn't be begging — in just two seconds, but my friend didn't try to judge him. She just followed her will.

With a willing heart, we can be less judgemental, more caring, more thoughtful, more loving, and more understanding. Let us be one of those people whom nothing can stop from following their will. ■



Rafia Rahim

With a willing heart, we can be less judgemental, more caring, more thoughtful, more loving, and more understanding.



THE PROBLEMS USUALLY ARISE WITH UNPLANNED EXPANSIONS IN ABSENCE OF GOVERNMENT'S CONTROL AND POLICIES.

DISASTROUS EXPANSION



Nazir Gillo

The expansion of the city has strained the available infrastructure and urban services.

Srinagar city is undergoing an unplanned expansion with its population dangerously occupying the agricultural land.

The city, which is spread over 294 square kilometre and has a population of density of 8,523 persons per square kilometre, is expanding. The people are moving from the congested parts of the city to new, unplanned residential pockets in the peripheries, damaging the agricultural lands and natural beauty in the process.

Unplanned and uncontrolled expansion of cities usually leads to soil erosion, concentration of low-income groups in ecologically sensitive areas, increase in cost of infrastructure, and the misuse of fertile agricultural land for commercial or residential purposes.

The problems usually arise with unplanned expansions in absence of

government's control and policies. In Srinagar, the lower middle class has occupied land illegally and has built over houses in contravention of the regulations. This has led to proliferation of illegal settlements.

The expansion of the city has strained the available infrastructure and urban services. The encroachments into government's land in the peripheries is the latest phenomenon. And it is contributing to the rapid horizontal expansion of the city.

The encroachments have taken water bodies such as Dal Lake and Anchar Lake to the verge of extinction. Our wetland too are under threat of occupation. The land mafia occupies the wetlands and converts them into residential areas.

The unplanned expansion is posing a major threat to the city. And it must be stopped. ■

WE WOULD USUALLY TALK ABOUT BOYS. WE DISCUSSED THE POSSIBLE REASONS BEHIND OUR IDENTITY.

THROES OF THIRD GENDER



Aushaq Malla

In Kashmir, members of the third gender find place neither in their families nor in the society.

In Kashmir Valley, the third gender continues to battle for a place in the society.

Salman, who lives in Srinagar, was normal like his friends. But his physique changed after he reached the age of puberty. He who counted himself in males had his gender redefined. And his friends turned away from him.

Psychologically traumatized, Salam isolated himself from his social circle.

Gowher, also from Srinagar, was raised as a girl till he turned 12 and his family started behaving different towards him. He started spending time alone, trying to find his identity.

Like the two of them, Saleem of Bandipora was trying to resolve the confusion surrounding his identity. He left his home, and shifted to downtown Srinagar. Looking for company, Saleem met Gowher, and the two of them became

friends.

They started meeting daily, discussing “why are we like this?”, they said.

“We would usually talk about boys. We discussed the possible reasons behind our identity,” they said.

Two months later, they met Salman.

The trio started working in a beauty parlor to earn livelihood and to be independent. Soon, they started matchmaking. Apart from matchmaking, they go to sing and dance at the weddings.

Their friendship and independence finally gave them confidence to survive in the society that continues to be indifferent towards them.

In Kashmir, members of the third gender find place neither in their families nor in the society. But the state government has made no effort to help them. ■





Professor Khurshid Iqbal Andrabi, a well known researcher in Biotechnology and former Dean Research University of Kashmir, has taken over as the Vice Chancellor of Kashmir University. In an exclusive interview with Media Times reporters **Sumaiya and Moosa** along with Editor **MERC Muslim Jan**, Prof Andrabi shares his experience and talks about his future plans for the University.

‘HAVE SEEN IT, WILL CHANGE IT’

Excerpts:

• MT: Sir, Tell us about the journey of your academic career?

I did my masters in Biochemistry from KU and was incidentally a topper and a gold medallist. I did my Ph.D from Post Graduate Institute of Medical Education and Research, Chandigarh. I moved onto earn a Post-Doctoral fellowship at Tuft's Medical School, Boston and later at Harvard Medical School, USA. I worked as a Lead Scientist at Clinical Foundation Cleveland, USA. I returned to Kashmir University, as an Associate Professor in the Department of Biochemistry before taking over to establish Biotechnology at the university.

• MT : The student community loves you and have lot of expectations

from you. Sir, will you reciprocate the same to make their dreams come true?

I am flattered to know something that I don't know, whether that is absolutely true or not (smiles). My mindset is that we are accountable to students beyond everything else. I would do whatever it takes to make them comfortable for the betterment of their future, and it remains a priority of my administration. I have geared everybody up to respond to that, and I will try my level best to live up to their expectations. It is a promise and a commitment.

• MT: Research is an integral and vital part of University, How do you rate KU on this account?

When I joined this institution in 1997, there was low visibility of research here. Usually, around 4 pm, watch and



ward people would drive us out of the campus. We used to fight with them at times, but they would just not listen to us. On top of that, another team would come and turn off the main electricity. During winters, the water pipes would be actually locked so that one has no access to the water. The authorities would think that using water pipes in winter would burst the pipes. So without electricity, water and most importantly, without time, one would not be able to conduct any substantial and real research. We somehow prevailed over them, and eventually we have come to the situation where many departments remain open 24x7, even on holidays. There are no more hassles like before. We have grown up considerably, in terms of research as well as academics.

- MT: Your body language and informal dress code is unique to your persona: Do you see yourself as an icon of students?

I don't necessarily think that way. I have my own rationale and reasons for dressing up casually. My reasons are simple because we are a community at the service of students and when people are at the service of students they necessarily don't have to dress like a person who 'appears' to be an administrator or a public personality. We are teachers and

teachers, are labourers. I always had a belief that a formal suit doesn't go with using chalk on a blackboard. I believe that it goes with the dress I wear and it makes me feel more comfortable, moving around or sitting anywhere with students, and being available to them all the time. Probably if you are wearing a tie and a suit, perhaps you would not be able to do that. The bottom line for me is that unless you don't mingle with your students exactly the way you mingle with your children, the feel-good factor of learning won't evolve. So, I always preferred the dress code that looks more casual, in order to make students comfortable to communicate with their teacher.

- MT: Your viewpoint about work culture at KU. Are you going to change it?

I am going to make it better. For instance, the work culture, the student teacher relationship, and the communication with students in the department of Biotechnology is a glaring example of efficiency. If students can communicate freely with their parents, that's how they should be with their teachers. If they fail to communicate, there will always be problems. So the gap has to be dramatically reduced. My plea and request to my colleagues is that we →

should communicate with our students as much as we otherwise do.

• MT: Would you like to see this University become more vibrant in terms of its contribution towards the society?

See, I have always held this view that we have not grown up to the point where our voice would be respected as much as is from a university that has its academic credentials well established. So I really do not necessarily subscribe to the idea of letting politics come to this University as much as it comes to the best of the universities like JNU. First we have to first come to the level of their academic excellence and then only our voice will be heard everywhere and at any point as respectfully as is heard from the other universities. Our effort has to be for building this institution first, and taking it to a point where we do not have to necessarily seek permission for speaking about freedom of expression. Then, it would be taken respectfully and would be noted and would create an impact. We are not grown up to that level at all. We have ignored the university's stature and we are basically advocating for freedom of expression, speech and other things at the cost of university's development and growth: First priority has to be building this institution to a point where the other things come as bonus.

• MT: How would you like to see MERC Times and Media Time's publications grow in next five years?

I have always aspired that in best institutions you have your own radio stations, newspapers, and magazines. That is what Universities are all about. We do not have to depend on the outside Media. If our paper gains in circulation, we will be totally independent and we would perhaps make much more impact on government policies through this medium than otherwise. This is what knowledge creation is all about. Why to depend on outside media? Why not to strengthen our resources for creating better newspapers? I will always help in making this newspapers more impactful so that people prefer it over others.

• MT: What are your strategic plans for next 10 to 20 years?

Yes, of course. We really have plans to improve and implement certain criteria for being at par with other Universities. But I do not necessarily want to scare people with all that.

• MT: Can you share some of your important plans with us?

I am not comfortable with policing around and asking people to stick to their jobs. We are in the process of devising a system in which people themselves are more conscious; let us make it more simple. If I had my lecture uploaded on the internet for public evaluation, I would work harder, to prepare for the class. That is one of the ways we basically want to make ourselves more accountable. And if any student misses the lecture somehow, he can have access to the archived lectures anytime. That is how the best universities and countries run their show. It will take a while before we begin to see changes like that.

• MT: What will be your priorities at KU ?

I really want to make it an institution of higher learning and a University of substance. I will cite an example: one day I had a visitor from JNU. He was staying in the University guest house. He came to meet me and had to wait for me outside the department. It was around 8.30 in the morning. He called me up and asked, "Is it a holiday today?" I said, "No, our university actually starts at 10:30 am". He was shocked and remarked that it was pathetic. And this is exactly what I do not want the university to be like. It has to remain open 24x7 for learning and other activities. Mindset has to be changed. This is not a school that starts at 10 in the morning and closes at 4 in the evening. It is a challenging job: I may or may not succeed, but the fact is that this would have to be done at the same point.

• MT: Your message for students and teachers?

Students have to make teachers accountable, and vice-versa. They say a good student makes a good teacher, and vice-versa. It is a bilateral transaction. It comes with good culture and effective communication between students and teachers. But we lack it. We need to work together for the betterment of our student community so that we are able to give our best to the society at large. And to make this University one of the best institutions. So that more and more students flock to this university. And that is only possible when our academic excellence is at par with other best Universities around the globe. ■

Thank you...

STRESS ARISES WHEN WE GENERALLY DO NOT BOTHER TO PAUSE AND THINK ABOUT OUR PRIORITIES.

S FOR SUCCESS—AND STRESS



Waseem Nasir

The solution surely lies in devising your own way to success.

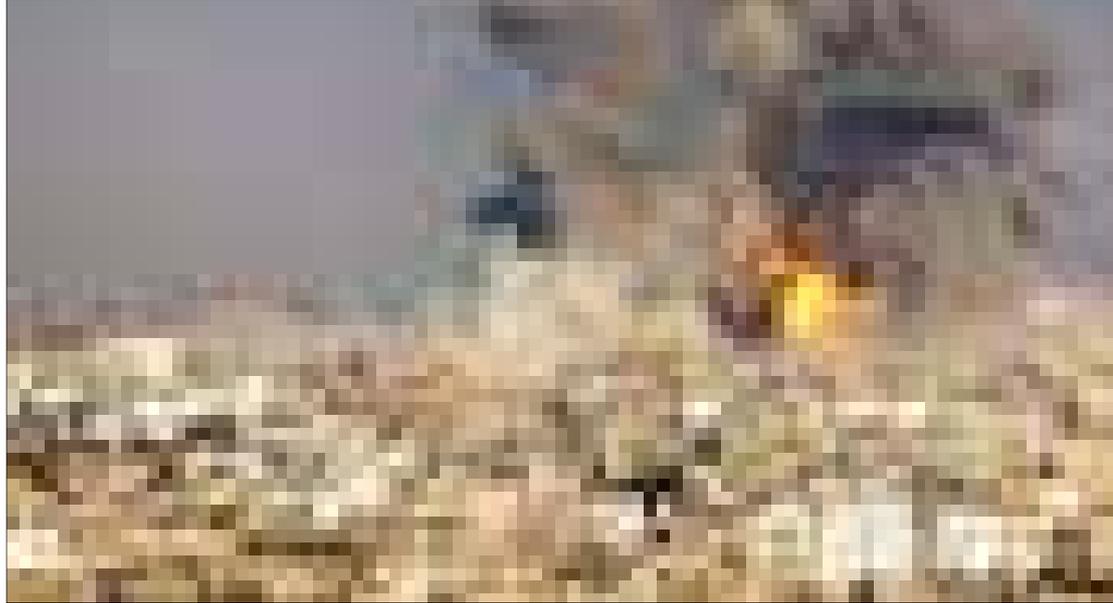
Perhaps life has always been stressful, but the way of looking at it has been changing consistently. In this day and date, one cannot escape the stress associated with the rat race for success.

Stress arises because we generally do not bother to pause and think what our priorities are. There is tendency to follow the trend whether or not it suits us. Getting swayed and allowing our rational faculty to take a back seat is actually a reflection of our personality. It appears that we have lost the habit of respecting and relishing what we have at any given moment. As a result, we can neither enjoy what we have nor achieve what we crave for. It is not really

surprising that recent sociological studies have suggested an alarming rise in cases of depression and other psychological problems. It is rather ironical that in trying to avoid strain, we end up having a life full of imaginary insecurities.

We seem to be consumed by the desire for success. An impression has been created that one must succeed in whatever one is doing. The belief that one learns from mistakes or that success is something evaluated in the long run seems unknown to the present generation. Even the remedies to overcome stress are characteristics of the present generation. The solution surely lies in devising your own way to success. ■

UNDER INTERNATIONAL LAW, PALESTINIANS HAVE A RIGHT TO RESIST WITH NON-VIOLENT MEANS OR OTHERWISE.



HYPOCRISY AND GAZA

Israel's month long military offensive—dubbed "Operation Protective Edge"—has claimed the lives of over 1,865 Palestinians, largely civilians. The civilian death toll has bought Israel worldwide condemnation from politicians, the media, and the general public.

UK Prime Minister David Cameron called the loss of life in Gaza awful, but said, "We do have to remember, whenever we have had a cease fire in the last few days, it has been a cease fire that has been obeyed and observed by the Israelis, but it has not been observed by Hamas." Barak Obama condemned Israel's shelling of a United Nations school, but called the rockets from Gaza "barbaric."

The general public gets upset on reading in their Sunday morning papers about the children killed in Gaza. Yet they question Hamas for firing rockets when stopping it can bring an end to the killing.

What they don't understand is that Israel has been enforcing an air, sea and land blockade on Gaza for the past seven years, effectively sealing off the 25 mile long strip of land to cage 1.8 million Gazans. It is a form of collective punishment being carried out in contravention of the international laws.

Three thousand fishermen in Gaza are

forced to fish within three nautical miles along the shore. And 35 percent of the agricultural land in Gaza is out of bounds to Gazans due to the restrictions enforced through the use of live ammunition by Israel's military and naval forces.

As a result of the blockade, 60 percent of Gaza's business have closed down and a further quarter has laid-off 80 per cent of the staff. Unemployment stands at 43 per cent, leaving 80 percent of the population dependent on humanitarian aid.

The only crossings through which people are permitted to travel to and from the Gaza Strip are Erez (to Israel) and Rafah (to Egypt). Israel allows passage through Erez only in what it calls the "exceptional humanitarian cases involving urgent medical cases." Due to the political situation in Egypt, travel through Rafah is also extremely difficult.

The United States by using its veto power as a permanent member of the UN Security Council works to ensure no lasting change can occur through the United Nations.

In the cease fire agreements that ended hostilities in the two previous military offensives, provisions to ease off the blockade were reneged by Israel. The last time the Israeli government and Hamas reached a cease fire agreement following →



Adil Baghdadi

Israel has enforced an air, sea and land blockade on Gaza for the past seven years



Operation Pillar of Cloud in 2012, a military offensive that claimed the lives of around 174 Palestinians and 6 Israelis, there was a commitment to "open the crossings and facilitate the movement of people and transfer of goods" in and out of Gaza. A year after that offensive, the UN said the situation in the tiny coastal strip was worse than before the conflict, claiming it was fast becoming "uninhabitable."

Israel has placed Gazans in what can only be defined as an open air prison. It has confiscated their tools for resistance, and tarnished the hopes and dreams of entire generations. And when they react with homemade projectiles, people ask why.

Under international law, Palestinians have a right to resist with non-violent means or otherwise. Numerous UN resolutions support this. The General Assembly resolution of November 1974 "reaffirms the legitimacy of the peoples' struggle for liberation from colonial and foreign domination and alien subjugation by all available means, including armed struggle."

In the words of renowned author and scholar Norman Finkelstein, "The United States and Britain, among others, have staunchly defended the right of a state to

use nuclear weapons by way of belligerent reprisal. By this standard, the people of Gaza surely have the right to use makeshift projectiles to end an illegal, merciless seven-year-long Israeli blockade or to end Israel's criminal bombardment of Gaza's civilian population."

International law prohibits an occupying power from using force to suppress the struggle for self-determination, but it does not prohibit the people struggling for self-determination from using force. Israel's relentless bombing of Gaza in an attempt to root out a democratically elected government that is attempting to resist decades of oppression.

We often hear Israel and its allies describe what is happening in Gaza as self-defense. However, history shows that Israel was carrying out operations long before Hamas was born. And if Hamas did not exist, the Palestinian people would still not be free.

While the negotiations are on to work out a lasting agreement for peace in the region, Palestine is demanding, "Israeli troop withdrawal from Gaza, end of the Gaza siege, and opening of its border crossings." The Palestinian representatives are also demanding fishing rights up to 12 nautical miles and the release of prisoners. ■

HARI PARBAT IS THE ONLY FORT PRESENT IN THE VALLEY AND IT HAS A GREAT HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE.



Sheikh Uzair

The fort was closed for public in late '80s due to rising political turbulence in the Valley.

REDISCOVERED FORT ATTRACTS TOURISTS

Walking inside the stone-lined environs of Hari Parbat Fort gives an overwhelming sense of traversing through history. Giant stone walls lining the fort and its large wooden doors give rise to feelings that the fort has been both protected and diminished by history. Dusty antechambers and corridors of the fort reveal an architectural marvel that is in near ruins. From the top of Hari Parbat hill, also known as Koh-e-Maran, in the heart of old Srinagar, the city appears a dotted tapestry of tiny houses whose tin roofs shine in the sun.

Also known by the name Durrani Fort,

it is the only fort in Kashmir valley. Afghan governor Atta Mohammad Khan built it in 1808 during the reign of Shuja Shah Durrani to serve as a central point from which the entire city could be controlled.

The fort was recently thrown open to public after it remained under the government forces.

"Hari Parbat Fort is the only fort present in the valley and it has a great historical significance. The idea behind throwing it open is to highlight the heritage of Kashmir," said Saleem Beigh, Director of the Kashmir wing of Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage (INTACH). →



The State's Archives department and the Archaeological Survey of India have declared the Fort a protected monument. It was closed for public in late '80s due to rising political turbulence in the Valley. The fort was first occupied by army and now a contingent of paramilitary Central Reserve Police Force has made barracks and also a temple inside one of the lawns of the Fort.

"At one point in history, the Fort was very important for controlling Srinagar. But this has changed now, as new areas of control have sprung up," Beigh said.

"The Fort served as the biggest bunker for the Afghan rulers; they surveyed the entire city from the four towers to keep watch on people," said Zareef Ahmad Zareef, a known social activist said.

"It was by erecting this towering fort overlooking Shahr-e-Khaas (old city) that Afghans stamped their authority," he added.

The Fort spread over 80 kanals of land. Inside, there are four talaabs (ponds), a hamam (bath place), a Masjid, and towers at four corners. "The fort is an architectural marvel and at that time could hold 750 soldiers," Zareef said.

The years of neglect have taken toll on the beauty of this architectural marvel. The ponds are without water and covered with slime.

"We have been here for a year. This was a jungle here. We have removed the tall grasses and are in process of making a garden," a young laborer said.

The Fort had two secret goaphs (caves)—one at the eastern end and the other on the west. The eastern pathway lay near Kathi Darwaza, one of the four gates of the Nagar Nagar Kalai. This pathway was known as peer-goaphe (cave of peers). An entire neighborhood is named after it.

"People used to visit this goaph (cave) in large numbers till it was blasted in 1965. There is no goaph today," Zareef said.

The western secret pathway to the fort lies near the botanical garden of the Islamia College. Zareef said it is in need of renovation.

"The Afghans built these secret pathways in order to escape in case of a military emergency. The western pathway can be renovated," he said.

On the southern side of the Hari Parbat hill, just below the imposing Fort, is the shrine of Sheikh Hamza Makhdoom (RA), also known as Makhdoom Sahib, Mehboob-ul-Alam, or Sultan ul Arifeen. The Fort also nestles the 1649 stone mosque of Akhund Mullah Shah. On the western slope of the hill lies the Sharika temple.

In early 2007, a civil society →

group named Valley Citizens Council, of which Zareef is the chairman, had approached the government to reopen the Fort. The fort was opened for only a brief period.

It was finally thrown open to public in the last week of June this year, and so far the fort has witnessed inflow of both tourists as well as locals. "The place has remained closed for long. Now that it is open, people are enthusiastic to visit the place," said a tourist department official.

"Since Srinagar is the hub of tourism activity, we are encouraging that tourists

don't limit themselves to Mughal Gardens. That's why Hari Parbat Fort was thrown open as a tourist destination," said Talat Parvez, Director of Kashmir's tourism department.

"Shahr-e-Khaas needs to be focused upon and Hari Parbat fort lies at the centre of its development. Government of India has sanctioned Rs 38 crore for the Nagar Nagar project. The project includes conservation of the Hari Parbat fort and conservation of monuments at Manasbal and Naranag. After finishing the conservation work, we threw the fort open to public," he said. ■

HERE ALL WE RECEIVE IS A CUP OF TEA AND AN OMELET AFTER DONATING BLOOD.

TEACHING BY BLOOD

Sajad Hussain, a teacher by profession, is different from the rest of his class. He has donated blood more than 100 times since 1987.

"Allah has perhaps chosen me to give life to others by donating blood," he believes.

In 1996, he formed a group by the name Imam Sajad Group of Blood Donors at Magam in central Kashmir's Budgam district. Since then, the group has been organising blood donation camps across the Valley.

"Our organisation works without the support of any political organisation. Ours is a voluntary group working on humanitarian grounds, and we welcome anyone who wants to work for humanity,"

he says.

Sajad says the volunteers in his group make efforts to ensure fair usage of blood.

"Sometimes we receive call for blood at midnight, and we never say no. My support has been my family, which encourages me to continue the good work," he says.

"This year, my children accompanied me to the blood donation camp that our group organised at Kashmir University," he adds.

Sajad believes the society should respect blood donors.

"In other states, blood donors even receive gold medals, but here all we receive is a cup of tea and an omelet after donating blood," he says, appealing people to come forward in service of humanity. ■



Nelofar Jan

The group has been organising blood donation camps across the Valley since 1996



IT IS PAINFUL AND UNFORTUNATE TO SEE A BEAUTIFUL PLACE
TURNED INTO A GRAZING LAND.

STILL HERITAGE

Sarai of Aliabad is in a dilapidated state, crying for attention, conservation and restoration. Ever since paramilitary forces left the Sarai, no developmental works was taken up in order to protect it. People from different walks of life want to see it preserved like other heritage places of the valley.

Historians believe that the Sarai has been constructed by the Shahjehan's Governor of Kashmir, Ali Mardan Khan hundreds of years ago. Aliabad Sarai served as an important stopover for the Mughal journeys into the valley where the caravan took rest before proceeding further.

The Mughal Sarai is in dilapidated state due to lack of proper preservation by Archaeological Survey of India (ASI). It can be developed as a heritage tourist place.

"These places are of historical significance. This architecture and ambience gives the visitor a feel of the Mughal Era. So the protection must be done," said Jalal-u-din, a tourist.

Though Aliabad Sarai is an ASI protected monument, it doesn't look like one. Nothing was done to renovate or

restore it.

"Disturbance and remote location have resulted in less attention being paid towards the development of the Sarai. Funds have been provided for other Sarais, but for this one no specific funds have been allocated as yet," said Gowher Ahmad Khan, Conservation Assistant at ASI.

Nomadic shepherds and stray cattle stay in the Sarai. Many visitors don't find the grazing of animals appropriate as such an important place.

"It is very painful and unfortunate to see such a beautiful place turned into a grazing land," said Arif Sultan, a visitor.

Officials of Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage said, "Our proposal was not to preserve the Sarai as it is already an ASI protected monument. Our policy was to make the government aware about the Sarai's condition and to make a 2.5 (km) Pedestrian track, but due to insufficient funds the project failed."

"In our Proposal we have mentioned the importance of Mughal road, and suggested ways to promote heritage tourism on route to explore the unexplored cultural and natural sites," they said. ■



Shiekh Umer

Aliabad Sarai is a protected monument, but it doesn't look like one.



TIME, IF YOU WANT TO DO SOMETHING BAD,
DO IT NOW BECAUSE PEOPLE ARE HOPING FOR A
BETTER TOMORROW.

DASHED HOPES AND RUINED LIVES

Are you dead or silent? I am confused. In the heart of the city your heart doesn't beat. Fixed on top of a tower, you look at everyone, but no one does the same to you. Baikaar (worthless) is the name they have given you.

On the tower, which state you are in? Please disclose.

At school, I was taught, rather made to realise, the value of time.

"Time is free, but it's priceless. You can't own it, but you can use it. You can't keep it, but you can spend it. Once you have lost it, you can never get it back," -Harvey Mackley had said.

But your stagnation has made me to say, "Time is free. You can own it, you can keep it. It will never be lost and if it would, you can get it back."

The older people at home always told me your realization bring on track those who have gone astray, but on the tower you have reciprocated the meaning yourself. For you are dead.

They desperately want to see you work. At home you work, and you function on my wrist too. So, why are you quite on this tower amidst the crowd.

Oh! I understand. Are you ashamed of the fact that time and again, time has hurt the people of Kashmir? Or has the situation that Kashmir faced pierced your heart?

I think you are upset about the recent floods, which exacerbated the condition of the people of Kashmir. The volte face taken by time has riled the people. Their nights have become nightmarish, for they are left with nothing. The floods has drowned their dwellings. They

are living in tents on roads, like refugees.

Your silence reveals that you are guilty of killing of 111 people in 2008. You left children orphaned, and wives windowed.

Time, you are indeed held responsible for all this. And why shouldn't you be. You are the one you gave mothers hope that one day their disappeared sons will be home. Keeping the photograph of their beloveds close to their hearts, they pinned their hopes on you, longing for the day when their sons would replace the photographs in their arms.

But you trampled their feelings by giving them a shock that their disappeared sons are dead—in unmarked graves.

How can you play such a hide and seek with them. Where would a father find his son in Baramulla, Bandipora or Kupwara. When my father misses his father, he goes to his grave and talks at length. But why have you snatched this freedom from others.

Do you know these miserable fathers and mothers accuse and abuse you for everything you have been doing to them. But at same time they are aware of your dynamic qualities. You are a healer of their wounds. You will make everything normal. Time heals everything.

So don't dash the hopes of people. If you want to do something bad, do to it now for people are fancying a better tomorrow. ■



Shafaq Shah

At school, I was made to realise the value of time.

KASHMIRIS DON'T UNDERSTAND THAT WOMEN HAVE SURPASSED MEN IN EVERY FIELD.



PROFILING LAL'S GENDER



Tasir Khan

The people praise Habba Khatoon or Lal Ded, yet consider women feeble minded.

Oursocietyisyettotreatwoman at par with men. Woman are stereotypedwhenmenarefree to do whatever they want.

Gender stereotypes and sexism are the evils that defaced and discoloured our society. The problem of sexism is not limited to a particular religious, caste or community, but the evil finds its place everywhere. And women in Kashmir have to bear the brunt of these stereotypes.

The people praise Habba Khatoon or Lal Ded, but at the same time consider women feeble minded. There are people who believe that heaven is under the mother's feet, yet they consider women worthless. We all see women being disrespected only because of their gender.

In Kashmiri society weakness is usually associated with women. If a man says

he won't be able to do something, he is rebuked by saying "che kya zanaan cha kha? (Are you a woman?)" Women are made to believe that they are not free as men, and that they have to respect the restrictions imposed on them.

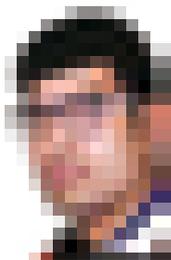
Being a part of the society, all this seemed normal to me until I gradually realised the hollowness of such arguments and understood the absence of logic and reason in them. Many people believe that stereotyping woman is a trait of older generations; young generation is above it. But that is not the case.

We Kashmiris don't understand that women have surpassed men in every field. Kashmiri girls have proved their metal in all walks of life. But the attitude of disrespecting women continues to destroy our society. ■



MY DREAMS ARE SHATTERED. MY LIFE HAS BECOME HELL.

ABUSING INSTITUTION OF MARRIAGE



Aaqib Makhdoomi

The Commission for women, receives 1700–1800 domestic violence cases every year.

Haneefa (name changed) is bruised, abused, and beaten up regularly by her husband. After returning from work, he beats her up with his belt and abuses her and her parents. She sobs and cries, but nobody comes to her rescue.

In her thirties, Haneefa looks older than her age with pale eyes and rounded face.

“In the early years of my marriage, he was humble and respectful towards me. But due to loss in business, he changed abruptly,” Haneefa says and breaks down.

Haneefa is a graduate in Arts. She was working as daily wager in Public Health Engineering (PHE) department, but left the job on her in-laws’ request. They also abuse her, sometimes helping their son in beating her.

“They raise volume of Television so that

neighbours couldn’t listen to my cries,” she says. “My dreams are shattered. My life has become hell. I have done a big mistake by marrying this cruel man.”

Haneefa has been living with her parents, but she is ready to return home for the “better future” of her three children including two daughters.

“I can’t be a burden on my parents. I have to make compromise for the better future of my children. It is only woman who has to sacrifice. This is what she is meant for,” she says with moist eyes.

Haneefa is returning home after her in-laws and husband gave a written assurance that they will behave properly.

“I am very much optimistic that things will get better. He has apologised to me and I have accepted his apology. I don’t have much choice anyway. I am doing this →

for my children," she says.

In a similar case, Farheeda (name changed) doesn't have peace of mind since her marriage three years ago. Her husband, a government officer by profession, didn't allow her to work, sparking the arguments that led to physical abuse.

"He wanted to make me his housemaid. When I protested, I faced abuse and was thrashed. Like him, I too have some dreams which I want to fulfill," she says. "Don't I have a right to fulfill my dreams?"

A leading sociologist of Kashmir Professor Bashir Ahmad Dabla says there has been rise in domestic violence in the Valley.

"There have been drastic rise in the cases of domestic violence in Kashmir Valley. It is a matter of concern for all of us," he says.

Professor Dabla has conducted a study 'Violence against Women in Kashmir' involving 200 married and unmarried women from the Valley and found that 40 percent of the respondents were victims of emotional and psychological abuse. According to the study, 63 percent of respondents felt discriminated against by their families, especially when it came to pursuing education and finding employment.

Surprisingly, as per the study "30 percent of the victims choose to suffer in silence without taking recourse to any action".

According to Dabla, "the rise in the women's employment goes side-by-side in rising levels of domestic violence".

"Many women don't report the cases of their domestic violence to anybody, even to their parents. These women, at the end, become habitual of the environment, which leads them to depression and later, in some cases, they go for suicides as well," Dabla says.

Dr Aneesa Shafi, who heads the Department of Sociology in the Kashmir University, believes that the dynamic role of women has given rise to the cases of domestic violence against them.

"In past women were not educated. As women are getting engaged in different jobs in both government and private sector, she seeks to play an equal role with men and it is resulting in violence against them," she says. "They shall come forward and speak about the sufferings they go through."

More than 200 cases of domestic violence have been registered so far at the women's police station Rambagh. According to

the SHO, everyday 18-20 complaints of domestic violence are registered at the police station.

"We receive complaints of domestic violence in large numbers. In 2013, more than 500 complaints were registered and it is shocking for all of us," Sugandha Mahajan, SHO women's police station, says.

In this violence, many women have lost their lives. In March, a woman was poisoned by her in-laws. Her parents blamed her in-laws for death; the case is still going on.

In 2012, a young woman, Shazia, died allegedly due to prolonged domestic violence from her husband and in-laws. The number of deaths has increased due to the domestic violence in last few years.

In 2013, a woman from Budgam died after being allegedly set ablaze by her in-laws. The same month, a 30-year old woman, mother of three children, from Pampore died after she was allegedly poisoned by her in-laws.

"Sometimes we receive complaints of extreme torture and even death of the victim. We are trying our best to help these victims," Mahajan says.

Chairperson of the State's Women Commission, Shamima Firdous, agrees that the domestic violence against women is on rise.

"The number is very huge because in many cases the women are reluctant to lodge complaint against husband or in laws," she says.

The Commission, she says, receives 1700-1800 domestic violence cases every year, and "majority cases come from the Kashmir Valley".

"Valley is witnessing huge rise in domestic violence due to nuisance in the society. Dowry, girl child are common reasons behind domestic violence," Shamima says.

The protection of women from Domestic Violence Act 2005 was brought into force by the Government of India on October 26, 2006. In Kashmir, domestic violence Act was re-enacted on July 12, 2011.

"Society has to change its mindset towards the women folk. Social evil of dowry and 'casteism' have engulfed the society. Violence against women will stop once we get rid of the evils," says Professor Hameeda Nayeem, who is a social worker and heads the Department of English in the University of Kashmir. ■

IF PEOPLE CAN'T BE GOOD TO THEIR DAUGHTERS-IN-LAW, WHY DO THEY ALLOW THEIR SONS TO MARRY.

‘WOMEN DESERVE AN HONORABLE LIFE’

Rameesa was married to Naseer Ahmad of Pulwama in south Kashmir about six years ago. For about two years of the marriage, their life went on smoothly in which the couple also had a daughter.

However, things changed after that. Rameesa's in-laws, who had been kind and caring thus far, turned hostile, making her life miserable.

“Unlike before, they began to demand dowry. I wasn't allowed proper rest and diet even if I was ill,” she said.

Yet, Rameesa was committed to live with the condition, but her in-laws, she said, had other plans. They were hell bent upon throwing her out, and they succeeded.

At present, Rameesa is living with her parents; her daughter is her only motivation to live.

“I would prefer death over separation from my daughter,” she said. “I have struggled hard for my daughter's better life. No one can even imagine what I have gone through.”

Recently, she found out that her husband

has an extramarital affair with a girl, and that he wants to marry her. It has forced Rameesa to move court against her husband.

“It (the affair) is perhaps the reason behind all the torture I faced,” she said, questioning the society, which, she thinks, is discriminating against women.

“If people can't be good to their daughters-in-law, why do they allow their sons to marry? Why do they even let their own daughters get married?” she asked.

“I am a woman and mother of a daughter. I know exactly how it feels when a girl is caught among in-laws,” she said.

Incidents of domestic violence have been apparently on rise in Kashmir Valley. But the victims don't usually speak about it owing to the dominance of males in the society.

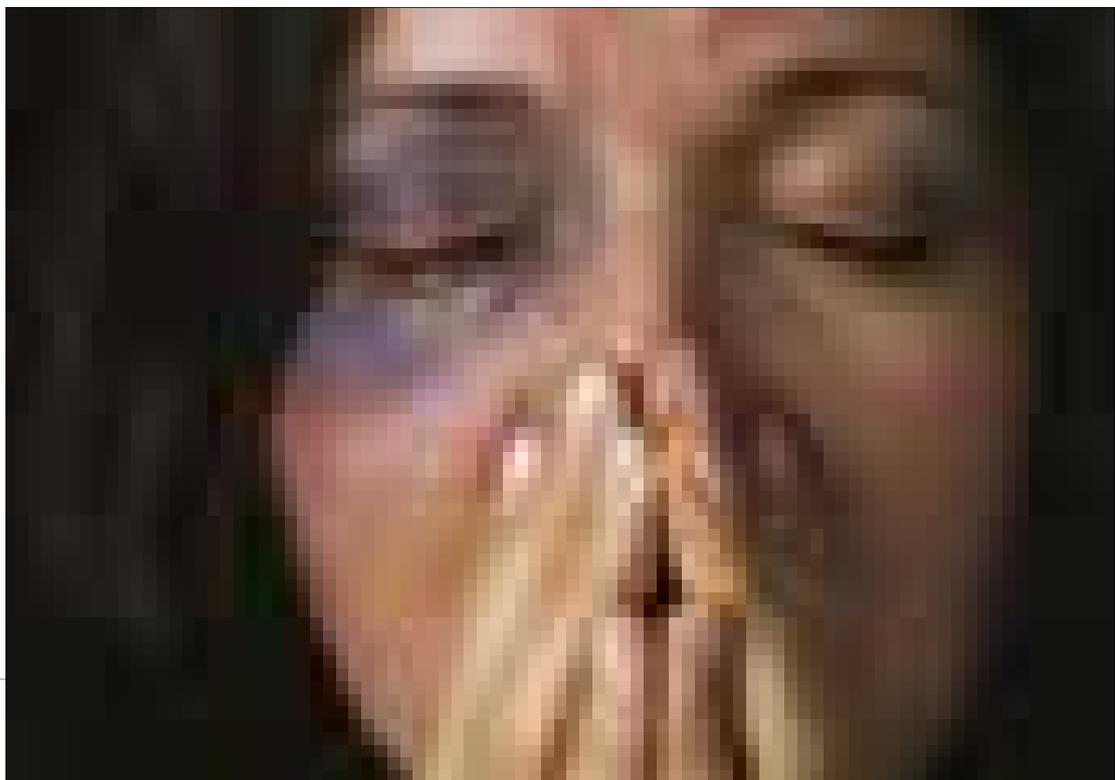
In a recent study, prominent sociologist Prof B A Dabla concluded that around 31 percent of his 200 respondents were “physically harassed”, which includes beating by husbands and in-laws.

Reportedly, more than 200 cases of domestic violence have been filed in 2014 so far. ■



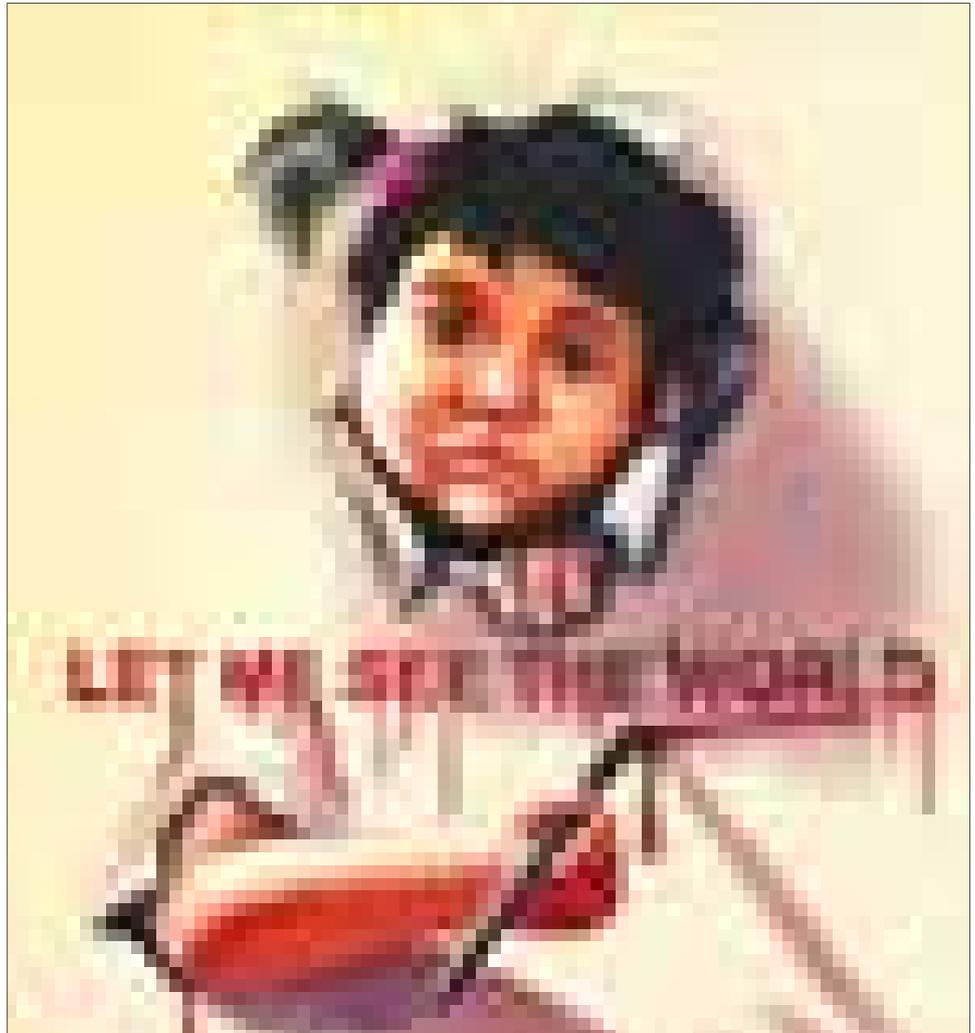
Mohamad Yonus

More than 200 cases of domestic violence were reported in 2014 in Jammu and Kashmir



A DRASTIC DECLINE IN SEX RATIO HAS BEEN NOTICED IN THE BASIC AGE GROUP OF 0–6 YEARS.

ABORT FOETICIDE



Gazanfar Afroze

Despite summits, conferences and events female foeticide continues in the state.

Female foeticide and violence against women are two faces of the same coin. The State of Jammu & Kashmir, which was hailed by UNICEF in its 1994–1996 study as a place where no female foeticide took place, has suddenly become indifferent to the fairer sex.

The bias against the girl child may take generations to vanish, but there are people who value girls and want to have daughters. A woman shapes the destiny of a civilisation. Today such is the irony of fate that the God's beautiful creation is labeled as a burden. Despite summits, conferences and events held for the cause by top most leaders, it is unfortunate that the gender titled procreator is being

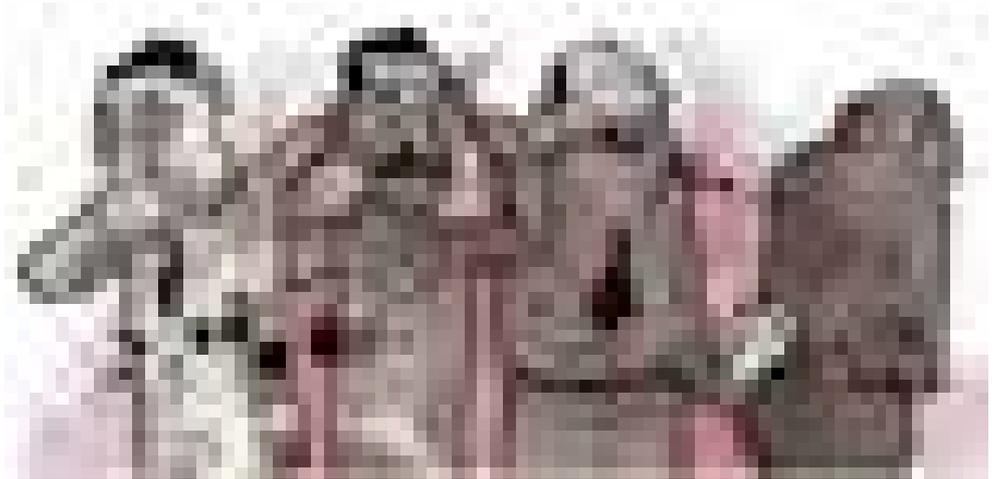
aborted.

As per the 2011 census, Jammu and Kashmir has 79 female children per 1000 males; a drastic decline in sex ratio has been noticed in the basic age group of 0–6 years. In each unit of 2000 children, there were 941 females and 1059 males in 2001. The ratio has fallen to 862 females to 1138 males as per 2011 census.

This is a matter of serious concern. Steps are required to reverse the trend.

As Minister of Health & Family Welfare Sham Lal Sharma says, "We all shall take a pledge to save girl child and raise our voice over the crimes against women to contribute for a healthy and prosperous society." ■

WE HAVE TO BE THE BEST AND TAKE THE CONSTRAINTS AS CHALLENGES.



PARENTING CORRUPTION

People are different, with different values and perspectives. Apart from the anatomy, humans have one more thing in common—the desire for more. It is this urge that keeps one unsatisfied all the time. We ignore what we already have and focus on all that we may not have. This leads to ingratitude and unhappiness. Even when someone tries to change the so-called corrupt system, he is made to face the negativity and is exposed to criticism up to a level where he starts believing that nothing can be changed, be it the society or his own self.

An idea or a thought, kept within for a long time, becomes captive of our mind. Our mind starts to overlook it and it, like a prisoner, starts to write on the walls of our mind. So, even when we get rid of the thought, the walls remind us about it. May be our minds are purposely being played with so that we focus on the things that don't really matter and the master minds get their way out.

Like a chained baby elephant determined to break free, we, in the beginning of our lives, are committed to bring about changes in our society, but we gradually

realize that it cannot be done. Thus, we become the captives of either others or of our own selves.

We are so engrossed in this complex world that we fail to understand the most simple and easiest things. We have to be the best and take the constraints as challenges. Our children learn by seeing what we do, especially the erroneous stuff. When we watch filth on television and think that they don't understand, that's when we spoil them. We leave them with the cartoons and they start loving and admiring them. BEN 10 becomes their superhero and Dada is just like an ATM machine that gets no deposits but there is always a surety of withdrawals. Why in the world do we expect them to even listen to us when they grow up? We do their homework, let them sleep for long hours, lie to them and think that they won't or don't understand!

We are programming their tender minds and destroying their sensitive conscience. And the worst part is that we love to discuss it all the time. We know where we are wrong. We point out the actual and exact issues, but unfortunately that discussion ends at the note "that's how



Marouf Gazi

We are programming tender minds of children and destroying their sensitive conscience.

life is, we cannot help it” or “Azikshuyrcha maanaan (kids don’t listen).”

Our children are not supposed to stand in a queue, why? Because, they are too special and they belong to us? Don’t we offer bribe to the peon of their school to help them out? Aren’t we the people who show them the short-cuts, the less hectic path? Don’t we provide them with everything that they need, sometimes, even before they ask for it? How will they ever learn to be thankful, learn to appreciate? Don’t we offer them candies after they do something for us? No doubt, we do that to appreciate them but in actuality we stop them from growing up as individuals. They learn to ‘expect’ and that is what they end up doing all their lives.

That head clerk you see, who just asked you for a bribe, wasn’t always old. He was somebody’s child and that man is what they made out of him.

The things we ignore right in the beginning are the ones that need most of our attention. We all have ‘good’ within us. Evil, envy, jealousy, hatred and dissatisfaction are the outcomes of the way we are nurtured. Intentionally or unintentionally, we tend to spoil our loved ones in the name of love. Maybe we need to revisit the definition of love that is carved on the walls of our minds.

Nobody is born corrupt. If at our own levels, we work hard and bring about the change in ourselves, even if it’s within some boundaries, the world would be a better place. ■

THE PEOPLE WHO PUT THEMSELVES DOWN ARE ONLY REINFORCING A POOR SELF IMAGE THEY MAY BE CARRYING.

MOTIVATIONAL MANTRA



Khalid Bashir

Cut out the weeds of negativism as soon as possible.



Do you know how much damage you do to your self esteem by putting yourself down? Always remember people will try to bring you down only if you are above them. Being unconfident is part and parcel of life. Many teens have fine tuned the art of putting themselves down. Some may not →

be even aware of what they are doing. Others easily find their faults and then broadcast them to anyone who will listen. But who wants to be surrounded by the negative tones?

The people who put themselves down are only reinforcing a poor self image they may be carrying. They will end up feeling worse about themselves and their life. So it is time to be more positive and self confident.

Begin by understanding yourself. The point is to learn to recognise the self deprecating behaviour, so that you can take steps towards building yourself up instead of tearing yourself down. Stop refusing to accept compliments. Stop talking yourself down. Stop spotlighting others when your own star deserves to shine. Stop blaming. Stop the habit of not giving it your all. Stop validating your opinion through others.

Many people often find it difficult to accept compliments. We must accept the compliments with sincerity and use them for our positive reinforcement. Let's accept compliment with gratitude. Saying thanks doesn't let you sound conceited. If someone gives you a sincere compliment, they are offering you their honest opinion. They are telling you, "This is how I see you and I like this about you."

So if you scoff it off or turn it into a joke, you are actually insulting yourself by way of insulting their viewpoint. Of course you are worthy of the nice comments people make about you. But by refusing to accept compliments you are refusing to see yourself in a positive way.

Another sure symptom of cutting yourself down is swallowing a mega dose of negative self talk, which includes joke about yourself. Problem is whether you are talking only to yourself or voicing your low self image to others, the message that comes across is quite clear and quite damaging: That you are not good, or that you are worthless. There is nothing wrong with you, but it is your attitude that is wrong.

Studies show that if you insult yourself often you will actually start to believe these negative messages about yourself. So, once you realise how unique and special you are, you won't feel the need to put yourself down.

Stop spotlighting others when you

own star deserves to shine: It is one thing to be modest, but it is quite another to deny yourself credit that is due.

Stop blaming yourself. If I say Hi to friend Salman and he responds with a grouchy shrug, shall I immediately chastise myself? Of course I won't. Instead of taking the situation personally and cutting myself down, I would assume that Salman is just having a bad day. Remember you are not responsible for other people's behavior. You are in charge of your own moods and actions. So don't be so quick to take the blame and dump yourself if someone around you is upset, unless you can honestly think of something you specifically did to cause it.

Don't stop putting in your 101 percent effort. You need to give your best shot and stop assuming that you will never make it anyway. Or maybe you just try, but you just don't try your best. Keep it in mind that everyone has failed at something. But it takes guts and gumption to try even if you try and fail.

Remember, if you don't go after what you want, you will never have it. And that way, you won't waste time wondering about what could have happened if you gave your best shot.

Stop validating your opinion through others. Needing other's approval is an easy trap to fall in.

There are steps you can take to feel good about yourself, to develop positive traits. Police yourself, always accept compliments with a sincere, simple thanks, list your plus points, hang out with positive pals, smile for it really is a cure to all.

Cut out the weeds of negativism as soon as possible. Monitor your thoughts. Have motivational thoughts. Think of something pleasant; something you want to happen to yourself. Be intentional. Don't waste time in making friends with people who can bring you down. The right friends can trigger the right motivational thoughts for you. People can have negative impact on you.

Zap the negative thoughts early. I remember seeing a few weeds in my backyard, two years back. I neglected them. Now they are trees that I need to pay someone to uproot them. ■



PROGENY OF POVERTY AND IGNORANCE

Child labour deprives children of their childhood, their potential, and their dignity. It is harmful to their physical and mental development. In its most extreme forms, child labour involves children being enslaved, separated from their families, exposed to hazardous work, and left on the streets to fend for themselves in big cities .

What particular form of work can be called as child labour? It depends on the age of the child, the type and hours of work, and the conditions under which the child is working.

Child labour is a complex issue. The main reason behind it is poverty. Children born in poor families are forced to work not only for their own survival but also for the survival of their families. It compels parents to make their children work as labourers in agricultural farms, factories, brick kilns, or as domestic servants.

There is a growing phenomenon of using children as domestic workers in urban areas. The conditions under which the children are made to work are unregulated and the children are often

made to work without food, and at very low wages for long hours. It resembles slavery. There have been cases of physical, sexual or emotional abuse of the underage domestic helps.

Another form of child labour is bonded child labour, which is common in low caste groups such as Dalits. The child is employed against the debt his family may owe to, say, a rich landlord. It is a hidden phenomenon usually found in the informal sectors, but it is a form of slavery. Children are often found working in fields or assisting their families in brick kilns. Bonded labourers in India are mostly immigrants. Bonded child labourers are at very high risk of being physically and sexually abused and sometimes this negligence leads to their death . They are often psychologically and mentally disturbed.

India is home to the largest number of under-14 child labourers in the world while the sub-Saharan Africa has the highest percentage of children who work as child labourers. The number of child labourers in India increased from 11.28 →



Junaid Rafiq

In Jammu and Kashmir, the census of 2001 counted 1,75,000 child labourers.

million in 1991 to 12.59 million in 2001.

A major concern is that the actual number of child labourers goes undetected. Laws that are meant to protect children from hazardous labour are ineffective.

In Jammu and Kashmir, the census of 2001 counted 1,75,000 child labourers. A study, titled Child Labour in Jammu and Kashmir—Social, Economical and Ethical dimension, conducted in 2011 by Professor Fayaz Ahmad Neika, Associate Professor of Management at Central University Kashmir, showed the number of child labourers in Kashmir alone is 2.5 lakh. It also revealed that the youngsters in the age group of 6-12 years are the worst hit.

The state government has vowed to make Jammu and Kashmir a “child labour free state” by way of prosecuting those found employing children below 14-years of age.

“Whosoever is found employing the children in hazardous occupations and processes is liable for prosecution under the Child Labour (Prohibition & Regulation) Act, 1986,” a notice issued by the Labour Department, J&K, reads.

The Act prescribes fine of up to Rs 20,000 or imprisonment up to one year or both to the employer. The Government has listed 57 hazardous processes and 13 occupations in which child labour has been completely banned in the state. ■

IF SOMEONE OFFERS ME A JOB OUTSIDE THE STATE, I REFUSE TO TAKE IT BECAUSE I FEAR THAT I MIGHT BE CHEATED AGAIN.

UDAAN AND HIMAYAT



Shahid Andrabi

The schemes are proving to be a damp squib, forcing the youths to quit the jobs and return home.



Udaan and Himayat schemes launched in Jammu and Kashmir by New Delhi to tackle unemployment are proving to be least helpful to the youths. Udaan was announced by the

government of India in response to the 2010 mass agitation in the valley with the aim to train and employ the jobless youths in the private companies outside the state. In 2012, the implementation of the scheme began by sending the youths who sought →

to avail benefits promised under the scheme for training.

But it is proving to be a damp squib, forcing the youths to quit the jobs and return home.

Hilal Ahmad Malik, 23, of Budgam in central Kashmir was in the first batch selected for training and placement. A year later, Malik, a commerce graduate, got a job in Tata Consultancy Services with a monthly salary of Rs 12000. But the conditions "compelled" him to quit after three months.

"I was posted in Bangalore. I had to work for nine or ten hours a day, and I wasn't comfortable with the conditions at the workplace. I wasn't allowed to have holidays during the first year of the job, and my salary was too meagre to survive in Bangalore especially when I had to pay for accommodation and food," he said.



Back in the Valley, Malik was unable to resume studies, which he had quit for the job.

"Since I was promised a good job under Udaan, I didn't opt for higher studies after graduation. But I eventually ended up losing a year. I had to wait till the next academic year to join University," he said.

Irshad Ahmad Hajam, 24, of Shopian in south Kashmir was provided three months training and subsequently placed in an outsourcing company in Kolkatta.

"My salary was just Rs 14000 a month, and the working hours in the company were long. It ultimately coerced me to leave the job," he said. "During training, I was told that I will be placed in an A-grade company with a handsome salary. But the reality was different."

Irshad is now doing B Ed through distance education programme.

"Had I not lost those six months, I would have been studying in University

as a regular candidate," he said.

Till date, not more than 1000 candidates got jobs under the scheme, which had assured employment to at least 8000 youths in first five years of its implementation.

For the implementation of this centrally sponsored scheme the state government has appointed a nodal officer called as "Project Director Udaan" as well. Media Times tried to contact the said official but all in vain.

Another programme, Himayat, was launched by the Rural Development ministry of the state in 2011 to provide job-oriented courses to the youth. In five years of its implementation, around 1,00,000 unemployed youths were to get training and subsequently placed within five years.

The records, however, reveal that since 2011 only 25,189 candidates were trained and of them only 19,812 were got jobs. At present, not more than 5000 candidates are undergoing training.

Sameer Ahmad, 24, from Anantnag was trained and employed under the programme.

"If someone offers me a job outside the state, I refuse to take it because I fear that I might be cheated

again," he said.

"In 2012, we were taken to Srinagar for two month training programme. We were assured handsome jobs outside the state with Rs 14000 salary and seven hours daily work. But after placement, I was forced to work nine hours a day and my salary was only Rs 6000. Unable to sustain, I quit the job after two months," he said.

Sameer said seven of his friends also left the job for the same reason.

Kaiser Ahmad Shah, an Arts graduate from south Kashmir, termed Himayat as "complete failure".

He said: "I was trained for three months in Srinagar under Himayat in 2012 and after that I was offered a job outside valley. I was offered a salary of Rs 7000 a month and the working schedule was tough to bear. It forced me and my 12 friends to quit the job only after 15 days."

The officials refused to comment. ■



CRIMES ARE BEING COMMITTED IN NEW AND DIFFERENT WAYS WITH INSPIRATION FROM VIDEO GAMES.

BOOM! BOOM! VIDEO GAMES

Outdoor games play a vital role in physical and mental development of a child. Playing games with friends make children interactive, healthy, friendly, and active in day-to-day life. A positive attitude develops in them, and they learn how to behave with family, friends, and elders.

In the last decade, involvement of children in theft, drug addiction or even murders has made parents more cautious. They bring them video games so that they spend more time inside their homes rather than playing outside and get exposed to bad company.

In USA 96 percent of teens play video games and sales of these games are growing. The domestic video game industry in USA earns nearly \$12 billion a year. This popular form of media has both positive and negative effects on children.

Modern video games encourage players to become a part of the game's script. They require players to pay constant attention to the game, and get involved to a deeper level, physically as well as emotionally.

One of the most widely known positive impacts of the modern video games is that they help children to improve their abilities. According to a 2014 study, a "prosocial" video game—that 'rewards' players

for building a town or helping others—makes children show more empathy and helpfulness in their daily lives.

However, it is also shown by studies that video games with violent content are linked to more aggressive behaviour in teenagers. Children's aggressive behaviour is partly linked to the amount of time they are allowed to play video games. A survey in 2009 showed that the age group of 8-18 years devote seven-and-half hours a day to entertainment media. Less than half of the kids surveyed said their parents have rules about the shows and games they can watch or play.

In these interactive video games, players are encouraged to identify with their favourite characters. In many popular games, players have to win fights or battles. Here players are virtually engaged in acts of violence. Playing video games may increase aggressive behaviour because violent acts are continuously repeated throughout the game.

The Entertainment Software Ratings Board (ESRB) is a self-regulatory board established in 1994 by the Interactive Digital Software Association (IDSA). This board is created by major video game manufacturers after concerned groups applied pressure over the →



Mjeeb-ul-Feroz

Playing video games may increase aggressive behaviour in children

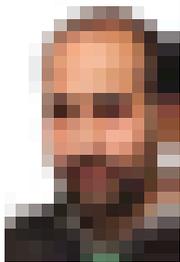
content of videogames. All major game companies submit their new products for ratings to specially trained raters at ESRB. The ESRB looks at a number of factors. In particular, it considers the amount of violence, sex, controversial language and substance abuse found in a game. Based on its developed guidelines, the ESRB then gives an age recommendation and content descriptors to each game submitted.

The modern videogames make children more violent. More crimes had been done in new and different ways with inspiration from video games. And the parents in Kashmir seem to be worried about it.

"My son forced me to buy a videogame. I bought it, but with very mild content cassettes. These games are a matter of concern and I don't want to take any risk with my son's life," Bashir Ahmad Dar, a parent, said. ■

NOKIA DIDN'T GO FOR TECHNOLOGICAL ADVANCEMENT IN ITS MANUFACTURED HANDSETS, EVENTUALLY FAILING TO COMPETE WITH NEW ENTRANTS IN THE INDUSTRY.

PIONEER SUCCUMBS TO COMPETITION



Sarvat Nabi

Nokia was by no means the first company to manufacture mobile phones, but it was the first to do it with mass appeal.

Nokia as we all know was the world's largest cell phone maker for more than a decade. The company was a leading innovator in both design and technology. It was the world's largest cell phone vendor between 1998 and 2012.

Nokia was founded by mining engineer Fredrik Idestam in year 1871. Before focusing solely on the fastest growing segment in telecommunication, Nokia was a shapeless conglomerate manufacturing multiple products like cables, paper products, tyres, rubber boots, consumer and industrial electronics, plastics, and chemicals.

Nokia was by no means the first company to release a commercially available mobile phone, but it was the first to do it with mass appeal. Nokia was a key developer of GSM (Global System for Mobile

Communications), the second-generation mobile technology that could carry data as well as voice traffic. It developed Nordic Mobile Telephony, the world's first mobile telephony standard to allow international roaming. And it was just the start of Nokia's success. In the years that followed, Nokia enriched the cell phones industry with innovations.

Downfall of Nokia

Nokia didn't go for technological advancement in its manufactured handsets, eventually failing to compete with new entrants in the industry.

Apple introduced I-phone in 2007. Advent of the smartphone revolutionized the concept of mobile communication. Nokia's fans preferred its N95, but it was not a strong competitor to I-phone.

Nokia failed to recognize the increasing importance of new softwares. Its →

Symbian was considered obsolete. Nokia concentrated on resistive touch screens while capacitive touch was being used by all other smartphone makers. Nokia wanted to be different, but it was heading the wrong way.

Nokia was, after all, earning more than 50 percent of all the profits in the mobile phone industry in 2007, and most of it was not coming from the smartphones. So, it took less interest in smartphones.

A 2010 Bloomberg chart shows the value of Nokia dropping below BlackBerry, which was then known as Research In Motion (RIM). As a result of the downfall, its share price fell from \$40 in 2007 to under \$3 in 2012.

In September 2013, Microsoft announced that it would acquire Nokia's mobile device business in a deal worth €3.79bn along with another €1.65bn to license Nokia's portfolio of patents for 10 years. ■

FRUITSSUCHASCHERRIESANDPEARSAREALSO TRANSPORTED TO THE OUTSIDE STATES FROM THE MANDI.

MANDI OF FRUITS AND FORTUNES

Fruit-laden trucks coming in or leaving is a routine scene at Fruit Mandi Parimpora, located at a distance of seven kilometres from Lal Chowk.

The Mandi, as it is commonly called, was established in 1982. Spread over 100 kanals of land, it is provided with good roads for the smooth flow of trucks. It has around 239 shops provided on rent to the shopkeepers.

The traders in the Fruit Mandi are always busy in making deals. Scores of trucks loaded with tones of fruits visit this Mandi from across India each day. The fruit growers across Kashmir come to this Mandi to sell their fruits or to purchase the ones brought in from outside.

Besides Kashmiri apples, fruitssuchas Cherries and Pears are also transported to the outside states from the Mandi.

Keeping the importance of Mandi in mind, the J&K Bank has installed an ATM at the entrance of the Fruit Mandi. It has come as a major relief to the traders who have to make transactions daily. It is also provided with a petrol pump that works round the clock.

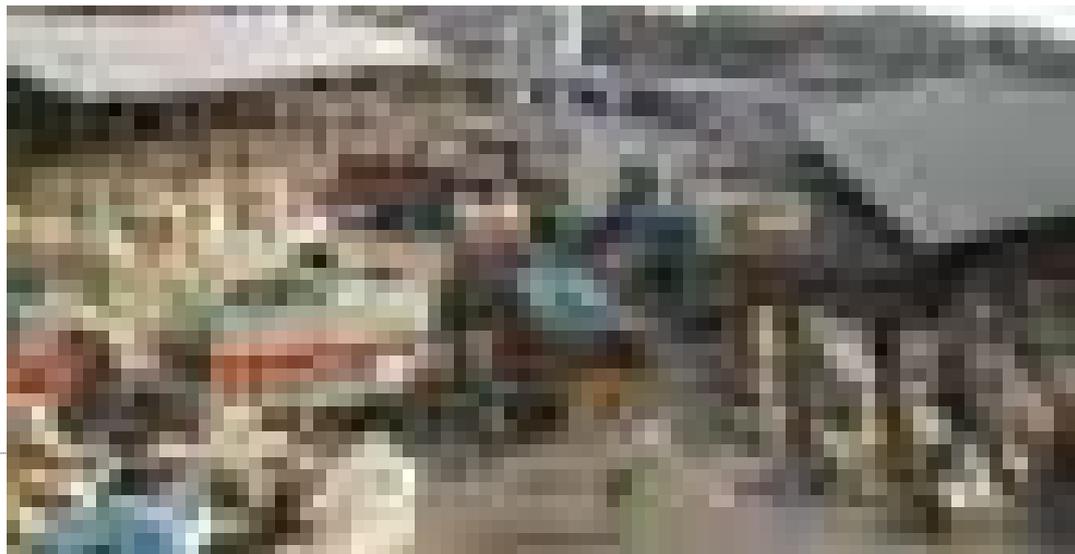
The Mandi is a source of livelihood to skilled as well as unskilled workers. Thousands of unskilled labourers earn their livelihood by working on a daily basis. Each shop in the Mandi is run by a dealer who has five or six people assisting him. Skilled people like mechanic earn by maintaining the vehicles that reach here from far off places.

The Fruit Growers Association works for the benefit of the people associated with the Mandi. It takes important decision on issues related to sale or purchase of fruits. Its office is located at the centre of the Mandi. ■



Umar Shafi

Scores of trucks loaded with tones of fruits visit this Mandi from across India each day.



PEOPLE, ESPECIALLY THE RICH, TREAT TAILORS LIKE THEIR SERVANTS.



Sumaiya Yousuf

A graduate in science, Afzal ended a being famous tailor in srinagar.

‘ENGINEER’ DOOMED TO TAILOR CLOTHES

A pair of scissors, a needle, marker and a big sewing machine lie on a huge wooden table in Blue Star, a famous tailor shop in Srinagar. I see some beautiful and colourful dresses out in display. Fascinated by a turquoise dress hanging on the wall besides me, I begin to touch it to feel the new stitched design. I am so attracted by the design that I wish to have a dress made of similar cloth and design.

“What do you want madam?” a voice came from behind.

I had planned to converse in Kashmiri language, thinking it would be awkward to talk in English to a tailor. But my notion proved to be wrong.

“Sir, actually sir!” puzzled me tried to introduce myself. But stopped.

“Sit down dear.” Afzal, owner of the shop, offered me a seat. And I took the seat beside him.

“Sir, I am a journalist, and would like to have a word with you. Please cooperate,” I was finally able to introduce myself and the purpose of my visit. →



"Most welcome," he said.

"What would you like to know about?" Afzal asked.

"Sir," I replied, "you speak English very well, I mean without any flaw."

"I am a graduate, my child," Afzal replied with a smile.

For a moment I disbelieved him, but the way Afzal started to introduce himself and continued to talk made me believe that the man in pitch-black shirt and having blond hair is a graduate in science.

His father died 20 years ago, forcing Afzal to forget his dream of becoming an engineer. And he decided to look after his father's tailoring business. The lone bread earner for his four sisters, Afzal had to quit his studies after completing graduation.

"I was married at the age of 19 when I was still in college," Afzal said, looking towards one of his employees who was trying to fix a power extension board.

"I will do that myself," Afzal said to the employee.

"I can do small repairs," he continued his conversation with me. "This might be because I still have an urge to become an engineer."

While talking to Afzal, my eyes were, for some reasons, getting attracted to a photograph on the wall. I thought it would be of any Bollywood actor from '60s. The person in the photo had a hairstyle typical of erstwhile Bollywood stars.

"You seem to be his fan," I asked Afzal.

"I am indeed. He is my hero," he said, tempting to me to ask the name of the actor.

"GMBhat," he answered. "My father. My real hero."

My eyes almost popped out in excitement.

Afzal's father had a diploma in tailoring from Nepal. He died of asthma soon after the death of Afzal's mother who suffered the same disease.

"Blue Start was the shop where from my father had learned tailoring in Nepal. That is why he opened this shop by the same name," Afzal said with moist eyes.

Afzal has no complaints with life. His profession enables him to fully support his family. The only thing he misses are his parents.

Not to upset him further, I changed the topic. I started interacting with his employee, a shy young man who didn't lift

his head even during conversations.

"What is your name?" I asked. He didn't reply. "Talk to him in Kashmiri," Afzal, perhaps sensing the awkwardness I felt, interrupted.

"Me chhu naav Ishfaq (my name is Ishfaq)," he replied in Kashmir.

He paused then smiled timidly, and turned towards his boss Afzal. I didn't ask him more questions. Instead, I asked him to share whatever he wanted to.

"I feel embarrassed whenever my friends talk about studies because I am an illiterate. My relatives look down upon me as someone inferior," he said, and kept quite at once.

"He is right," Afzal said, almost whispering.

I turned my table towards Afzal again. The fact that society considers tailoring inferior does not bother Afzal at all. But some of his customers do irk him with their the rough behaviour.

"People, especially the rich, treat us like their servants. They come and talk usually in a high tone and even fight with us sometimes." He sighs.

Afzal, father of two young boys, prevents them from visiting his shop. He doesn't want them to follow his profession, which doesn't earn him respect from even his sisters, sometimes.

"It has affected my eyesight," complained Afzal.

"I have been looking after my sisters since long, but even they.....," he lets his smile complete the sentence.

As we were talking, Afzal's phone kept on the wooden desk rang. "Hello ma'am, han han aapka suit ready hai, aap lene ayiye, (yes yes, your suit is ready ma'am, you can come and take it)."

"You know," he turned to me again, "nowadays married women, and not teenagers, come to me and ask me to stitch their clothes in a trendy way."

Afzal expressed surprise. It was a surprise for me as well.

Afzal said he sometimes advises 30 or 40 years old women to prefer loose and simple clothes to be comfortable.

"Once an elderly lady scolded me when she saw full sleeves in her dress. She wanted half sleeves," Afzal chuckled as did I.

"Now I will surely get all my suits stitched from you only," I said in an excited tone. "Here is my card dear and it has my father's photo," he replied. ■

THE YOUNGER GENERATION IS SHOWING LESS INTEREST IN THE WORK.



CARVING THE STONES



Zafar Aafaq

Athwajan is known across the valley for its stone products.

Sitting on a stone stool surrounded by gravel and unpolished stones, Riyaz Ahmad explains what goes on inside their small workshop, which is one among the many at Athwajan near Srinagar.

"We are a group of six people here in this workshop. We start our day at around 9 AM and work till 6 PM. Depending on one's ability and efforts, a person can produce four to six finished stone items in a day, each worth Rs400 to Rs600," he said.

The various types of stone products produced by these hardworking artists include mortar, gate-pillar stones, meat pounding stones, corner stones, pavement stones, gravestones, and stones for a hamam.

The polished products are sold either to the traders in different markets of the valley or to the customers directly. The products are usually put on display in the shops nearby.

The contractors working for the government also buy crafted stones from the workshops for use in valuable structures like memorials.

"The tourists from outside the state also buy these products," Ahmad said.

The stones for the workshops come from the quarries of Ladhu village in Pampore five kilometres away. The quarries are under supervision of Geology and Mining department.

Athwajan is known across the valley for its stone products. The people engaged in the workshops are the locals who have inherited the skill from their forefathers.

"Very less people from outside Athwajan learn this skill," Arif Ahmad, who assists his father at their workshop, said. "But now the younger generation of this area is showing less interest in this work, which demands hard labour, dedication, interest, and patience." ■



MARKET THAT FLOATS

Cool morning breeze, cooing of koels, soothing movement of water waves and sweet fragrance of lotus flowers. Welcome to the floating vegetable market in the interiors of Dal Lake.

The market operates on hundreds of vegetable laden boats which row to a particular area of lake specified for the purpose. One can easily trace the rows of lotus flowers surrounding the boats that buzz around each other on water to carry out their transactions. The market is the only of its kind. Called 'Gudir' in local parlance, the vegetable cultivators living in and around Dal Lake row in their boats to the market and sell their produce there. The market starts immediately after the dawn sets in for a period of two hours.

Water transport has been an important means of transportation in the valley from earlier times. Local octogenarian, Wali Mohammad said that when there was no road transport, people would row large boats (locally called dongas) laden with vegetable through river Jhelum to supply the markets of Anantnag, Baramulla and other districts of the valley.

However, presently local customers from Hazratbal and Nishat, row several miles to buy the fresh vegetables from

here. "It is the cheapest vegetable market in the whole city", says Nazir Ahmad, who sells vegetable to local greengrocers after buying from the market. More than five hundred boats throng the market daily to sell and buy the vegetables. On an average each boat has a daily transaction of about one thousand rupees. "The annual turnover of the market amounts to about Rs 5 crore", says a trader Mohammad Ashraf.

The vegetables sold in the market are cultivated in the floating gardens and island stretches of cultivable land on Dal waters. Cucumber, bitter gourd, pumpkin and all seasonal vegetables grow in the lake and are sold in the market. A special vegetable grown in the Dal waters is edible Lotus root locally called "Nadru. The market is the main source of nadru in the valley. Thousands of cultivators and traders living in and around the Dal Lake make their living from the market. But nobody from the current generation of cultivators knows when the market actually started. "I believe it has been here for generations," says Wali.

The vegetables from the market reach the main markets of the city for further distribution. The vegetable markets of Baramulla, Anantnag, Sopore and Kulgam get their share of vegetables from this market. ■



Moosa Hayaat

The annual turnover of the floating market amounts to about Rs 5 crore

SPREAD OVER HUNDREDS OF ACRES, THE FRUIT MARKET OR FRUIT MANDI IS THE BUSINESS HUB FOR KASHMIR'S APPLE INDUSTRY.

BEARING FRUITS OF NEGLIGENCE

Setup 26 years ago to boost Kashmir's fruit industry, Sopore fruit market is fast emerging as one of the largest business establishments in Kashmir.

The idea to have the market in Apple town was conceived by Khawaja Ghulam Mustafa, an activist working for the rights of fruit growers in the Valley. He wanted to end exploitation of Kashmiri growers at the hands of Delhi-based traders and agents. As on date, the market is Kashmir's first and Asia's second largest depot for fruits.

The market remains a buzz with activity all day—the fruit growers and traders indulging in negotiations over rates, labourers loading and unloading the boxes of apple, or the trucks finding way to enter or exit.

Spread over hundreds of acres, the fruit market or fruit Mandi, as it is commonly called, is the business hub for Kashmir's apple industry. Top varieties of apple like Delicious, Maharaji and American are exported to other states from this Mandi. The significance of the market can be gauged from the fact that buyers from Bangladesh or Nepal purchase fruits directly from here.

The market, according to the growers,

generates livelihood for 15-20 lakh souls of the state. Rough estimates reveal that market records annual turnover of Rs 2000 crore.

Fruit growers, however, allege that the market is devoid of basic facilities due to lack of interest shown by the successive governments.

"The government is totally indifferent towards the market. We don't have basic facilities like water, roads and transport here," said Fayaz Ahmad Malik, president Sopore fruit growers association.

"I have approached all higher-ups from Governor N N Vohra to Chief Minister Omar Abdullah, but they turned a deaf ear to our pleas. Had this market been in any other state, it would have facilities of international standards," he said.

Malik said the condition of the market gives a wrong impression about Kashmir's fruit industry to people from the other states.

"The buyers who come from the other states or countries from a bad impression about the industry on seeing poor facilities here," he said.

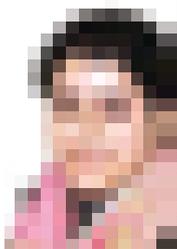
Growers are up in arms over failure of the government particularly the horticulture department in providing them shelters for auction of the fruits.

"We have only 14 auction sheds, and these are too less to meet the demand. We have deposited the requisite fee for auction sheds with government, but the work is yet to start," said Nazir Ahmed, a fruit grower.

"This speaks volumes about the government's negligence towards the fruit market. We are left with no alternative but to auction fruit on pavements," he said, appealing the government to follow the development models adopted in Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand.

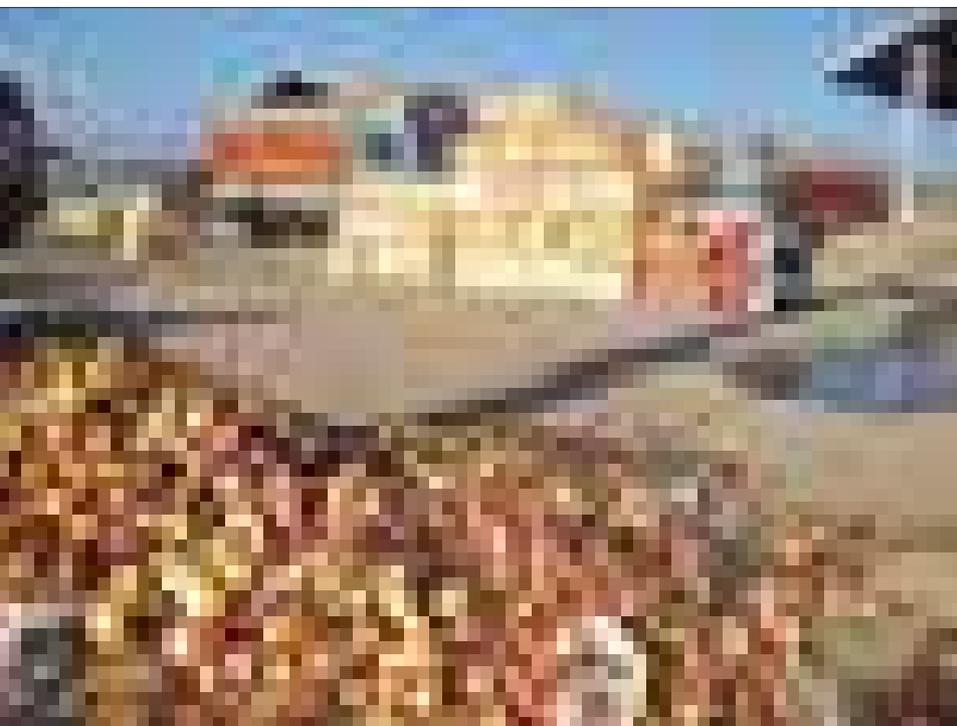
Experts argue that the fruit market can become important trading centre if cross-LOC trade moves beyond symbolism.

"It can become what Rawalpindi was for Kashmir before 1947," they said. ■



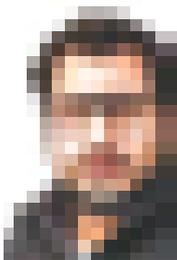
Muzamil Bashir

The market is devoid of basic facilities, courtesy negligence of the successive governments.



HE WAS AWARDED SAHITYA AKADEMI AWARD FOR HIS COLLECTION OF POEMS AND GAZALS.

REBEL OF HIS TIMES



Suhaib Mansur

Prof Firaq began to write in Kashmiri in early 1950s and attained fame through his poems and Gazals.

Prof Gulam Nabi Firaq is a prominent name among the scholars of Kashmiri language. Prof Firaq is a high profile academician, a legendary poet, and a trendsetter in the field of literary criticism in Kashmiri language.

He has translated the works of Dr Faustus and the famous comedy 'The Cit Becomes Gentleman'. He also translated into Kashmiri a number of poems of famous poets such as Mollier, Marlo, Keats, Shakespeare, Byron, Shelley, Wordsworth, John Hollyway, Ghalib, and Iqbal.

Prof Firaq began to write in Kashmiri in early 1950s and attained fame through his poems and Gazals. One of his noteworthy works is the poem "matcharaavaabsharan, beh tcharun yaar kot goom...."

His other famous works include "taem doupnam", "Janavar", "BagasAndar", "wuf", "chuAdamaaztetasraan, lolihhethshamo sahersaqi", "mokhprunbartsavsubheay subheay".

Unlike most of his contemporaries, Prof Firaq didn't base his work on a certain philosophy. He introduced new themes. "Mehboob sinz kabri peth", for instance, established a new trend in Kashmiri language.

He infused a new spirit into Kashmiri poetry. He is considered as one of the few important prose writers of the language. His unique style involving use of new verbs, adjectives, and adverbs together with his remarkable flow and consistency in theme makes him a different prose writer who can be placed among the avant-gardes of the genre.

Prof Firaq has written hundreds of critical and literary essays on different topics and themes. Almost all of them have been printed in different magazines and journals of the language. Some of them have been telecast from time to time whereas most of them have been broadcast on All India radio.

He has authored more than 12 books till date. He was awarded Sahitya Akademi award for his collection of poems and gazals published under the title "Sada te Samandar".

The J&K government has conferred upon him Life Time Achievement award. Many radio and television stations, and cultural or art institutions have produced programmes on Prof Firaq and his works.

Prof Firaq has been unwell for the last couple of years. But the ailment has not been an impediment to his writings as he continues to contribute poems and gazals. ■

VIDHYA BALAN SEEMS TO HAVE MADE THE HABIT OF PLAYING UNCONVENTIONAL ROLES WITH GREAT MASTERY AND SKILL.

BOBBY JASOOS: UNCONVENTIONAL STORY, HYDERABADI FLAVOUR

Directed by Samar Sheikh, Bobby Jasoos is a superb detective thriller. The movie has Vidhya Balan playing Bilquis Ahmed aka Bobby Jasoos—30-years-old Muslim girl who is obsessed with her desire to be a detective. She goes around taking pictures of the couples romancing at public places, and sprints like an athlete when caught snooping on people. And she pesters detective agencies for jobs.

Her one-point agenda for life is to solve cases as a private detective. She stands for herself and the men in her life, father (played by Rajendra Gupta) and friend (played by Ali Fazal) lend credence to her story. And she

finally gets an opportunity when a big case comes her way courtesy a rich man, Kiran Kumar.

To say that Vidhya is the film's hero would be belittling the fine heroine that she is. She seems to have made the habit of playing unconventional roles with great mastery and skill.

Till the first half, the film engages an audience with its unique Hyderabad flavour and dollops of suspense. Post interval, it doesn't sink outright, but has predictable twists. The biggest spoiler, however, is the clichéd feel-good climax quite on the expected lines.

If for nothing else, the film is certainly watchable for Vidhya's superb performance. **■**



Muneer Ahmad

If for nothing else, the film is certainly watchable for Vidhya's superb performance.



THE ONLY DETAIL THAT COULD HAVE BEEN AVOIDED IS THE INTEREST OF RANI'S FATHER IN VIJAYALAXMI.



Arshie Qureshi

Queen is a must-see film that leaves one with a big smile on face.

QUEEN OF VIEWERS' HEARTS

Vikas Bahl's 'Queen' is about a 24-year-old Punjabi girl, Rani Mehra, played by Kangana Ranaut. Living in Delhi's Rajouri Garden, she is all set to marry the love of her life Vijay, Rajkumar Rao. Amid the ostentatious celebrations where all Grannies, Chacha ji's, Auntie ji's have gathered, the jittery bride is dumped by her UK-return fiancé, who considers himself ahead of her. Rani breaks down while he is perturbed at the thought that her sniveling might create a scene in the café. Consequently, she locks up herself for a

brief period of time, recollecting her days of romance with Vijay. Deciding to take control of her life, Rani, who has never stepped outside her house alone, proceeds on alone on her pre-booked honeymoon trip to Paris and Amsterdam. The girl who was accompanied by her adolescent brother on her date with Vijay, sets on the journey of self-discovery amongst the people who barely understand her. How this journey turns out to be an ameliorating and evolves the character shapes rest of the movie.

Queen is a simple story that →

banks wholly on one character—Rani. The way she surfaces her emotions as an ordinary Indian on his/her first visit to a foreign land comes across as very heartfelt and genuine. The scene where the burglar attempts to steal her bag and she yells “Mummy, merabag” has to be a rib tickler for sure. During her stay, comes across another Indian girl, Vijayalaxmi aka Vijay, played by Lisa Hydoon, who is a single mother and works in a hotel to support her son. Rani gets drunk, dances to desi beats and vents out her pain by speaking to Vijayalaxmi. However, she soon moves to Amsterdam where she takes lodging with three other men, one of whom is from Japan and has just lost his family during an earthquake, another a black Frenchman, and a handsome Spaniard. She connects well and hangs around with all three of them after being reluctant early on to stay with them. Her conversations with the Spaniard remind of the conversations of Shahshi and the Spaniard from ‘English Vinglish’, yet Bahl has been able to maintain the originality to a large extent.

At Amsterdam, she is kissed by an Italian cook and she bumps into Vijay who now wants her back in his life and tries hard in his pursuit. Contrary to the expected Bollywood melodrama, wherein the female counterpart surrenders in the end no matter how impudent the male has been, Rani turns down his proposal.

The movie maintains a very clichéd image of Punjabis right from the women rehearsing their steps to a popular dance number for a lavish wedding ceremony to Rani’s apparels and braided hair and her Santa-Banta jokes. However, her looks contribute to the overall tone. Rani is a perfect example of a small town girl left alone in a big city. She had planned to see the Eiffel tower with her husband, but now that she is alone there, she is shown to be running away from it. The actress effortlessly conveys anxiety, sadness and anguish, of somewhat scared, unsophisticated, and conservative Indian girl.

Apart from the amusing angle, the movie is a strong commentary on the patriarchal setup in India. In

one scene, when Rani is drunk and travelling back to hotel in Paris with Vijayalaxmi, regarding belching, she says, “Humarey wahantouladkiyaan bilkul nai karti. Mano , bilkul bhi nahi (Women at our place don’t do it, not at all).” And at other instance, her friend calls her to tell her “Tum Europe ghoom lo yaar, hum yahan potty dhoterahenge (You travel across the Europe while we continue cleaning potty here)”, depicting the dullness and weariness in lives of Indian women.

The most beautiful part of the movie is that despite a huge transformation, she undergoes from being a woman who is left breathless on being rejected by her fiancé to a woman who tosses him out. Rani does not turn out to become an overnight sensualist, and maintains her own style statement simply by being herself.

The only detail that could have been avoided is the interest of Rani’s father in Vijayalaxmi. He spots her during his conversations with Rani on Skype and in subsequent conversations is concerned more about her than his own daughter.

Kangana Raunaut’s performance as Rani gives her way into the hearts of viewers and makes one desire repeat show. Rajkumar brilliantly plays a grating assertive man who loves to make decisions for others, especially for the women in his life. However, his performance is slightly overshadowed by Kangana’s presence. Producer-Director Vikas Bahl gracefully explores a girl’s identity. With its uncomplicated dialogues and a number of funny one-liners, the movie grips its viewers. Cinematographers Siddharth Diwan and Bobby Singh have done a brilliant job, especially in the song sequences. The soundtracks composed by Amit Trivedi ranging from very upbeat ‘London Thumakda’ to very casual ‘Kinare’ and the remixed ‘Hungama Hogaya’, are hummable and compliment the storyline without disturbing the narrative. “oh Gujariya” is a track you would love to play on loop.

For the freshness in narration and dialogues, all in all Queen is a must-see film and leaves one with a big smile on face. ■

MORE THAN THE LANGUAGE, RESIDUE WILL BE REMEMBERED FOR THE POLITICAL QUESTIONS IT ENGAGES WITH AND SEEKS TO FIND AN ANSWER TO.

A NOVEL OF POSSIBILITIES

The first thing that strikes a reader on reading Nitasha Kaul's novel, *Residue*, is the character of Leon Ali. He is a mystery unto himself, as the name, derived from the names of the Russian revolutionary Leon Trotsky and a common Muslim name Ali, connotes. Leon Ali is a troubled man. The entire novel is a landscape of Leon's troubled state. He is a Kashmiri Muslim with one thing: he is brought up during '90s by an irritable mother in Delhi amidst poverty and woe of another kind.

The treatment he and his mother are meted with in Delhi, while searching for an apartment, is what strikes a chord with a native reader. Leon's experience only renders him hopeless by making him a rank outsider wherever he goes.

Residue is a novel laced with political vocabulary of the kind we didn't see in Siddhartha Gigoo's *The Garden of Solitude*. Unlike Gigoo, Nitasha Kaul succeeds in drawing characters that are shaped by the politics of their homeland, or who are trying to escape from it. Keya Raina is another interesting character whose sole purpose in life is to collect "other people's stories." Her zest is parallel with Leon's escapism. That Leon and Keya should meet and set about finding traces of Leon's missing father is predictable and unforthcoming. With this meeting of the two characters, the aim of the novel is brought in focus. In stark political language, it would be imagining Kashmir as a space where the histories of the Muslim and Pandit communities meet in a finale embrace; the harmonious embrace which was rent asunder by unfortunate events. Leon and Keya are characters who through their troubled lives are trying to arrive at a phenomenon which Salim Sinai in *Midnight's Children* aptly called 'a new way of being'.

How this is done and how far the novel captures the politics of this effort is the reason why people should read *Residue*. It's



a novel of possibilities. Leon Ali and Keya Raina are not people who simply exist; they are people who should exist in our society. The searing search for knowledge of his father's death is at one level mundane, but Leon like so many Kashmiris is making an effort to save his father from the onslaught of forgetfulness which apparatuses of injustice force upon people. Keya Raina, while helping Leon in his search, is in essence the novelist's device for political comment in the manner of finding common trajectories of truth seeking among Muslims and Pandits.

Residue is a novel of abounding themes, of rising above prejudice and finding commonness in characters even if experiences are different. Nitasha Kaul's prose is a bit exhaustive, but more than the language, *Residue* will be remembered for the political questions it engages with and seeks to find an answer to. ■



Junaid Nabi

Residue is a novel laced with political vocabulary of the kind we didn't see in Siddhartha Gigoo's *The Garden of Solitude*.

KOHLI EMERGED AS THE MOST CONSISTENT BATSMAN IN THE ICC CHAMPIONS TROPHY IN JUNE 2013.

VIRAT AMONG CRICKET'S GREATS

can field anywhere in the park given his quick feet and safe hands. He can also roll his arm over with some occasional medium pace. While his test career might have had its ups and downs, his ODI graph is definitely an upward curve. He is already the fastest Indian to score 1000, 3000, and 4000 runs in ODIs and is also the fastest cricketer to score 10 ODI centuries. He was also the highest run scorer for India in ODI for three consecutive calendar years—2010-2011 and 2012 and won the ICC ODI cricketer of the year award in 2012.

Kohli also emerged as one of the most consistent batsmen in the ICC Champions Trophy in June 2013 and finished fifth in the table of top run-scorers with 176 runs. When Australia toured India in October 2013, Kohli scored the fastest century for India by hitting a ton of just 52 deliveries. India ended up victorious with the second highest successful run chase in the history of the game.

No one can doubt the abilities of the prolific right-hander when it comes to the shorter versions of the game. In the 2014 World T20 in Bangladesh, Kohli not only stunned everyone with his variety of shots, but also ended up being the leading run-getter in the tournament.

Kohli leads the Royal Challengers Bangalore in the Indian Premier League. He led his team to fifth position in the league table, convincing RCB to retain him for the 2014 IPL.

Kohli is as active off the field as he is in business on field. SportsPro rated him as the second most marketable athlete in the world with endorsements of some prominent brands like PepsiCo, Adidas, TVS Motor to his name. Kohli has been dating Bollywood actress Anushka Sharma for the past year or so with strong possibilities of them tying the nuptial knot sooner or later.

With Kohli already establishing himself as a middle-order batsman, he is the strongest contender to take over as the captain of the Indian cricket team after MS Dhoni. How the Delhi lad fares in the acid test will be worth seeing. ■

Born in Delhi to Prem and Saroj Kohli, Virat Kohli shot into prominence as the under-19 skipper who led India to victory in the 2008 cricket World Cup in Malaysia. It gained him instant recognition, making him a sensation. Soon he made his ODI debut for India against Sri Lanka in August 2008 as an opener. He played two important knocks of 37 and 54 in the second and fourth ODI, helping India win both the games and eventually the series as well. His tremendous batting exploits gave India many tournament wins and the cricket world a batting sensation.

A typical modern cricketer, Kohli plays his game aggressively, vents his emotions in open, yet retains the element of maturity that is integral part of every great player. Virat possesses a sound technique and perfect hand-eye coordination. He is equally adept against pace and spin, and never appears ungainly at the crease. With a penchant for using his feet against the spinners, he is known to be quite destructive when in the mood. Kohli is well on the way to fulfill the high expectations placed on him.

One of the finest fielders in the game, Kohli



Irshad Khan

His test career might have had its ups and downs, but his ODI graph is definitely an upward curve.



MERC GROUP IN WISCOMP WORKSHOP ON PEACE JOURNALISM

'Women in Security, Conflict Management and Peace (WISCOMP)' is an initiative by the 'Foundation for Universal Responsibility under his Holiness the Dalai Lama'. The foundation was established with the Nobel Peace Prize awarded to Dalai Lama in 1989. Under its Hum Kadam program, WISCOMP conducted a workshop from Dec 28-30 2014. Titled as 'the Role of Media in Conflict and Peace: Exploring Alternatives', the workshop brought together journalism students from various universities across J&K and Delhi. The venues were India Habitat Centre (IHC) and India International Centre (IIC-Annexe), Lodi Road New Delhi.

The participating institutions included Media Education Research Centre, University of Kashmir; Islamic University

of Science and Technology, Awantipora; Lady Shri Ram College, Delhi; and Jamia Millia Islamia. A total of 34 students including 10 from MERC attended the workshop. The visiting students from Kashmir flew to Delhi a day before as WISCOMP had already reserved guest rooms for them in IHC.

The three-day workshop included 13 interactive sessions with various eminent journalists, teachers, social activists, and film makers.

The day started at 9:30 AM with a welcome address by Dr. Meenakshi Gopinath, Honorary Director WISCOMP and former Principal Lady Shri Ram College New Delhi. It was followed by an 'Ice Breaking and Introductions' session by Akanksha Joshi, a →

Nisar Dharma &
Sibtain Hyder

cultural entrepreneur and an award winning story-teller. As a pleasant surprise, she made the students do various activities to break the monotony and get to know each other. She also touched upon the art of digital story telling by sharing her own experiences and showing a few of her short films.

After the lunch, Nilova Roychaudhury, a senior journalist and Chief Editor of the Indian Review of Global Affairs (www.irgamag.com), introduced the audience to Peace journalism. The session continued throughout the afternoon as Nilova discussed her career and the challenges she faced while reporting the Delhi Riots of 1984. The 'Kashmir Conflict' was also discussed during the course with views from both Delhi and Kashmir given equal measure. The episodic treatment to conflict by media was analysed and measures were suggested to ensure proper contextualising of such issues while reporting them.

The second day began with a panel discussion including Ahmad Ali Fayaz, a senior journalist and television producer based in Srinagar and Rita Manchanda, Director Research at South Asia Forum for Human Rights. The topic of discussion was 'state of the industry and ethical challenges'.

The next session was very interactive as Pervez Majeed, a journalist with Sahara Times and alumni of MERC, shared copies of his unique stories that he had reported throughout his career. Subi Chaturvedi, an IIT-Delhi faculty member and media researcher acted as a moderator during the session. Majeed demonstrated the need of finding the right story and promoting peace journalism while building trust and credibility in a media organisation.

As the buffet lunch concluded, the students got a lifetime opportunity to interact with Raj Chengappa, Editor-in-Chief of The Tribune Group of Publications. He spoke about the corporatization of media and the ethical challenges a journalist faces while carrying out his or her responsibilities. Chengappa responded to many questions posed by the audience. He suggested that a journalist should have integrity to ensure that none of the road

blocks stop him or her from pursuing peace journalism.

The penultimate session of the days saw Achin Vanaik, an award winning social activist and International Relations and Global Politics academician, speak about the nexus between Peace, Conflict and Journalism. His session was engrossing as the entire audience were all ears while he spoke about how to take a strong stand and be fearless while reporting truth.

The day concluded as Nilova Roychaudhury discussed the art of reporting conflict with focus on quelling the conflict than aggravating it.

The final day of the workshop started at a uniquely interesting note as Pamela Philipose, a Senior Fellow with the Indian Council of Social Science Research, discussed the role of oral histories and alternative stories in understanding conflict. She read a few oral history pieces from British India's Dandi March and The Bhopal Gas Tragedy. The whole audience immersed into this unique way of expressing conflict that brought out human suffering in a different form, something that was neglected by the mainstream discourses. Students from Delhi and J&K shared their own stories about conflict and natural disasters including the recent devastating floods.

The next session allowed the audience to explore New Media while interacting with Shuddhabrata Sengupta (a media practitioner, filmmaker and writer with the Raqs Media Collective) and Shibayan Raha (a non-direct action trainer, founder of Seven Sisters Project in North-East India). The invitees shared their extensive experiences and explained how social media can be used as a powerful platform to practice peace journalism.

The concluding sessions included a series of brief presentations of small films made by the students during the entire workshop. The exercise was named 'Gupshup' (a light chat) as the films focussed on the lives of common people in Delhi.

The workshop concluded with a group photograph, feedback and closing comments from the WISCOMP team. ■



Winner 72 hour film competition
organised by Funtoosh

A DAY IN SRINAGAR

MERC PRESENTS
A BUDDING BIRD PRODUCTIONS

PRODUCED AND DIRECTED BY: SUMAIYA YOUSUF | CINEMATOGRAPHY: SUMAIYA YOUSUF
EDITOR: IMRAN LATIEF PATHAN | PRODUCTION ASSISTANCE: MERC | STUDIO: MEDIA EDUCATION RESEARCH CENTRE LABS



Winner 72 hour film competition
organised by Funtoosh

BREAK

A Short Film



MERC PRESENTS
AN ISAM FILM PRODUCTION

PRODUCER: SIBTAIN HYDER | DIRECTOR: MAROUF GAZI | CINEMATOGRAPHY: ISHAN FAZILI | SCRIPT: ARSHIE QURESHI & MAROUF GAZI
EDITOR: IMRAN LATIEF PATHAN | VOICE OVER: MAROUF GAZI | ACTOR: SIBTAIN HYDER | SCREEN PLAY: MAROUF GAZI | STUDIO: MERC