

Ministry of Human Resource Development has approved a residential coaching centre for the civil service aspirants of the state, which will be coming up soon in the university: Prof Talat

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MERC TIMES

Lab newspaper of
Media Education Research Centre, KU

Vol: 6 | No.: 03 | MAY 30, 2013

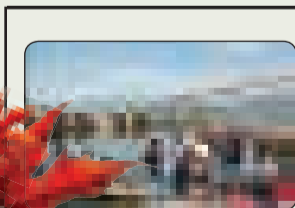
'TELL YOUR OWN STORIES'



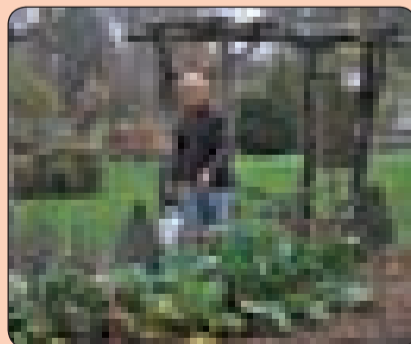
Photo by: Janbaz Rahil

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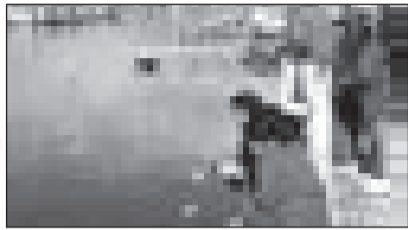


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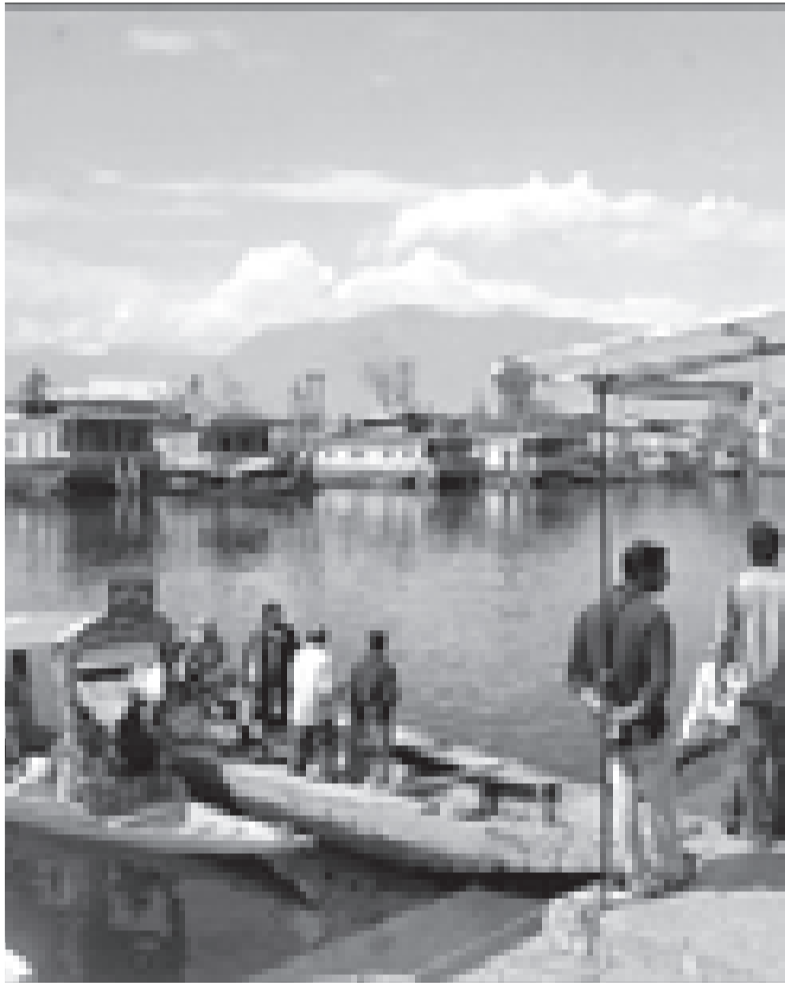
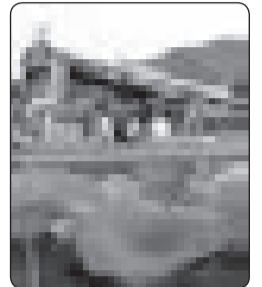


Sub-standard
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"I am fascinated by the splendid beauty of Kashmir. I would like to come here every year"



Kashmir fascinates tourists

Liya Farhat

The valley of Kashmir has witnessed an unprecedented rush of tourists this year. The tourist destinations are abuzz with tourists not only from India but from foreign countries as well.

"I am fascinated by the splendid beauty of Kashmir. I would like to come here every year," says Neetu Jain, Mumbai.

Popular destinations like Pahalgam, Gulmarg and Sonamarg are attracting tourists in large numbers even during the off-season. Indira Gandhi Memorial Tulip Garden popularly known as Tulip Garden remained the top attraction spot for the tourists.

"Tulip garden is simply wonderful. I haven't seen such a colorful garden before. It is breath-taking," says Anil Kumar from Delhi

As per the statistics with state tourism department, more than 4 lakh tourists visited the Valley in 2012. The number has shown further increase in 2013.

"The number of tourists is increasing. There has been a sizeable tourist rush for last few years and it's immensely going up,"

THE TOURIST RUSH IS INCREASING AND WE ARE HOPING A STEEP RISE IN THE NUMBER OF TOURISTS VISITING KASHMIR IN FUTURE



says Wali Muhammad, President Shikara Worker's Union.

"At least 400 tourists come to enjoy Shikara ride in Dal Lake every day. The business is picking up," he added.

A honeymooning couple from Jabalpur finds Kashmir an amazing place. The couple, besides being fascinated by the beauty of Kashmir, is also overwhelmed by people's hospitality.

"We are over whelmed equally by the beauty of Kashmir and the hospitality shown by people here. We would like to come here every year," says the couple.

Kashmir hasn't been the spot of enjoyment for the people of India only but for foreigners as well. Arthur, a Polish tourist says, "Kashmir is a beautiful place. These are my memorable moments. People are very friendly here. I would like to visit this beautiful place in future as well".

Director Tourism Department, Talat Parvez is very optimistic about the future of tourism industry in Kashmir. "The tourist rush is increasing and we are hoping a steep rise in the number of tourists visiting Kashmir in future," he says.



“Normally 9 to 15 beggars come to my shop everyday and I find it very difficult to turn down their demands in presence of my customers. They have an ability to emotionalize and persuade people with their fairy tales that often forces one pay them”
Says Shopkeeper

Generous Kashmir turns safe haven for Beggars

Sheikh Umar

As scores of vehicles make a beeline once the red light flashes near Srinagar's Jahangir Chowk windowpanes of stranded vehicles receive knocks from rough and dry fingers. Shereen, a barefooted woman from Uttar Pradesh (UP), often makes her presence known while seeking alms from the people inside the vehicles.

Shereen, 35, makes pity faces while begging, apparently to strike a compassionate chord in people. A new born baby hangs around her waist in a cloth; She spends almost ten months in Kashmir with her family and during that period, she and her family survive on begging.

“We are very poor people,” Shereen, a mother of three, says. “My husband along with my two kids begs around Lal Chowk area for survival.”

The family lives in one of the slums in Srinagar's Bemina locality, opposite to Hajj House. Shereen with her family returns home in UP only for two months once winter sets in Kashmir. “We make good earnings out of begging, Besides, we don't have to pay any rent for living here,” she says almost cautiously, adding, “Our savings are enough to feed our children for two months without doing any hard labour after returning back to Uttar Pradesh.”

But, Shereen and her family are not only sole solitary reapers of public generosity in Kashmir, scores of her ilk make their presence felt throughout the valley. As spring arrives, the summer capital of Jammu and Kashmir apparently turns into a ‘hotbed’ for beggars, especially non-locals.

Kumar, 17, a beggar from Rajasthan has made his base near the Hatrick Restaurant in Srinagar's Raj Bagh area. This skinny boy keeps on requesting every passerby for alms by pitching compassionate outcries. “All my family members beg for the living,” Kumar says. “On an average, I earn around Rs 500 to 700 per day.”

Apparently, as the Srinagar city is fast turning out to be safe-haven for beggars, law experts argue that the practice is a banned activity in the state.

Bashir Ahmed Bashir, a senior advocate who has been pleading for many years that beggary is banned in the J&K state, says: “Begging is a cognizable offence, any police officer under Section 4 can arrest any beggar without any warrant. The offence is punishable from one year to three years.”

Reportedly, there are 4,500 non-local and local beggars active in and around Srinagar city earning at an average Rs. 300 each. It is estimated that the beggar industry in the Valley generates Rs. 42 crore

annually.

In the past, the government plan to deport these beggars failed to yield results, as soon after their deportation from Srinagar, they again surfaced in the city and outskirts.

In 2005, Dr Shafkat, Health Officer of the Srinagar Municipal Corporation, had made a startling revelation about non-local beggars. He was then quoted saying: “These beggars are spreading diseases like Hepatitis, cholera, HIV and polio and there is every possibility of locals and tourists contracting these dreadful diseases from them in Srinagar.”

Dr Shafkat revealed that a majority of the beggars land up in the city along with their families and have also pitched up tents on the city outskirts.

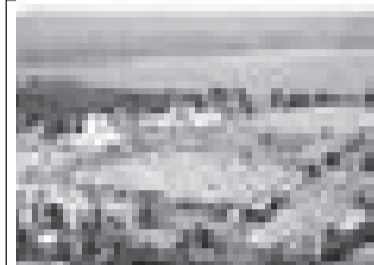
Many believe, during summers, the reason for the huge beggar influx to Srinagar is simple as they want to escape the scorching heat and to make good money. Officials in Srinagar's Municipal Corporation said that these non-locals come from Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Bihar and Delhi.

These beggars are mostly active outside hospitals, educational institutions, tourist spots and shopping malls with almost free access. “Normally 9 to 15 beggars come to my shop everyday and I find it very difficult to turn down their demands in presence of my customers. They have an ability to emotionalize and persuade people with their fairy tales that often force one to pay them,” says Ghulam Mustafa, a footwear shop owner in a Srinagar's Fair Deal shopping centre.

Evidently, the ‘nuisance’ of begging chases passengers in public transport as well, who have to face “ordeal” of frequent begging episode.

Ahmad, a handicapped beggar from Bihar often jumps into vehicles near old city's Bohri Kadal, and start reciting verses from the Holy Quran to get alms from passengers. Scores of others enter public vehicles with the motive of begging. “It is becoming a real menace,” Shakeel, a final year student of Srinagar's SP college, says. “I mean these beggars often torture me with their appeals and emotional drama. For god sake, somebody should prevent them from entering public transport.”

Back to Jehangir Chowk, Shereen can be seen knocking at windowpanes of stranded vehicles almost frantically. Some deny her alms, but few don't disappoint her. Meanwhile, green signal flashes on screen and vehicles move others. She took a refuge on a footpath nearby, till another red signal halt vehicle!



Campus Bites

Shahid Andrabi/Sheikh Uzair

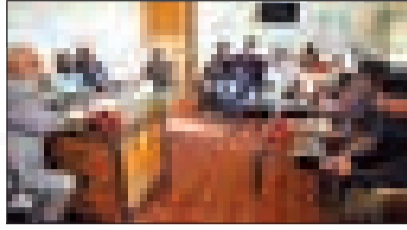
• Ten day event on Research Methodology organised by Department of sociology in collaboration with Indian council of social science research at Ghandi Bhawan .Vice-Chancellor Prof. Talat Ahmad inaugurated the session which was attended by scholars, students and other faculty members. Eminent educationist A. G. Madhosh was chief guest on the inaugural event.

• International day for Biological Diversity observed on May 22 by Department of Botany. One day seminar with the theme “Water and Biodiversity” was organized during which a poster and debating competition was also held, students and scholars participated.

• Department of social welfare organised one km marathon race for differently-abled children which was flagged off by the Vice Chancellor Prof. Talat Ahmad .The race ran from the Zain-ul -Abeddein gate to the Ghandi Bhawan. CAUSE NGO, Space Communications, Text Kashmir and TCI Max collaborated the event.

• A seven day orientation program was inaugurated by the vice chancellor Prof. Talat Ahmad for NSS officers and was attended by students from various colleges and faculty members. The program focussed on the need to orient the educated youth towards community services. General Secretary J& k branch of Indian Red Cross society Dr. Roma Wani attended the session.

• Two day National Seminar on the Scenario of ‘Post Harvest Management of Fruits in India’ held by Department of Food Science and Technology, University Of Kashmir at Ibn-Khaldun Auditorium. Rajesh Kapoor, Advisor Ministry of Science Government of India Department of Biotechnology was Chief Guest on the occasion.



'The art of storytelling and how it is being projected on the screen plays an important role in the success of any film and it's something which ultimately makes one a good film-maker'

'LEARN ART OF STORYTELLING TO BE A GOOD FILM-MAKER'

Umar Hayat

Noted film maker Imtiaz Ali impressed upon the media students to take full advantage of being in the profession and learn the art of storytelling so as to become good filmmakers.

"You should have something to say. The art of storytelling and how it is being projected on the screen plays an important role in the success of any film and it's something which ultimately makes one a good filmmaker," Ali said.

He was interacting with the students of Media Education Research Centre, Kashmir University on May 17.

While sharing his experience with MERC students, Ali emphasized that the trend



Photo by: Janbaz Rahil

I HAVE NEVER BEEN TO ANY MEDIA INSTITUTE. I HAD APPLIED IN JAMIA, NEW DELHI BUT I WAS NOT SELECTED. YOU PEOPLE ARE LUCKY ENOUGH, SO YOU SHOULD CASH IN ON THESE THINGS



in Bollywood is changing from big budget movies to small budget ones. He said it is these small budget movies which are receiving rave reviews from critics and are highly appreciated by the society for their simplicity.

"I have never been to any media institute. I had applied in Jamia New Delhi but I was not selected. You people are lucky enough, so you should cash in on these things," Ali said.

Praising Valley of Kashmir for its 'mesmerizing' beauty, Ali said "Kashmir is the most beautiful place which I have

seen so far in my life and the people here are equally beautiful. Whenever people complement someone in other parts of the country they say he is handsome or she is beautiful like a Kashmiri."

Ali has earlier visited the valley for shooting the Ranbir Kapoor starrer Rock Star.

Ali went on saying about his upcoming movie 'Highway' for which he had come to shoot here starring Randeep Hooda and Alia Bhatt.

"The story of the movie is about a girl who goes on an unusual journey. I am also

planning to shoot at LOC Gurez in near future to capture the beauty in my camera," Ali said.

Ali has directed four Bollywood films including 'Jab We Met' and 'Rockstar'. 'Highway' is produced by Sajid Nadiadwala with music by famous music director A. R. Rahman. The movie, which is likely to release in December this year, is set in six different states and captures the journey of two completely opposite people who are thrown together by fate.

At the end of the session, he promised students to conduct a workshop at MERC in near future.



It's good to see people following the rules and above all wearing helmets, while they are on scooties which otherwise they ignore. This will surely help us to ensure the smooth plying of traffic: SP Traffic

AFTER GIRLS, BOYS CHASE SCOOTIES



I RIDE A WOMEN SCOOTER BUT HOW DOES IT MATTER WHETHER I AM SEATED ON A SCOOTY OR A BIKE. WHAT MATTERS TO ME IS MY SAFETY AND ALSO THERE IS VERY MINIMAL SNAG IN HANDLING THIS VEHICLE



Yusra Khan

Over the years scooties have become prime mode of transport for many women, especially in Srinagar city. Now 'Scooty-Mania' is fast catching up among boys.

"I prefer my son having scooty rather than motor bike because it is a safer form of transport. There is minimum accident risk in riding a scooty compared to speedy bikes," said Ibrahim Malik, resident of Bemina.

Scooties also benefit the pockets of the parents as they don't have to spend their money on expensive motorbikes and cars. "This trend has really been pocket friendly for the parent. I am happy to buy a scooty for my son rather than going for a car which comes at a hefty price," said Shakeel Wani, resident of Natipora.

Initially these scooties were designed and introduced in the market only for females, but now boys are also opting for these so called women-scooties.

"I ride women scooty but how does it matter whether I am seated on a scooty or a bike. What matters to me is my



THIS TREND HAS REALLY BEEN POCKET FRIENDLY FOR THE PARENT. I AM HAPPY TO BUY A SCOOTY FOR MY SON RATHER THAN GOING FOR A CAR WHICH COMES AT A HEFTY PRICE,"



safety and also there is very minimal snag in handling this vehicle," said Aamir Rafiq, a BSc student.

S.P Traffic, Haseeb-ul-Rehman Claims that people riding scooties usually provide less hindrance in smooth movement of traffic. "It's good to see people following the rules and above all wearing helmets, while they are on scooties, which otherwise they ignore. This will surely help us to ensure the smooth plying of traffic".

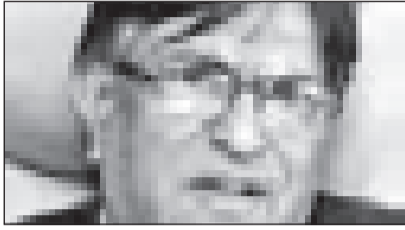
Aged people also prefer scooties because of its low weight and easy handling. "I find it easy to ride women scooty then the scooters made for our gender. Scooties are lightweight," said a retired government employee.

Gone are those days when women were "Mocked" for riding scooties. Nowadays it's not unusual to see girls riding bike. It has added a new dimension to the mode of travelling for women as well as men.

"I don't have any problem with males riding scooties. It's about the perception. Anybody can use scooties. They

(males) used to make fun of us but why should we commit the same mistake.

We shouldn't discourage them. After all, why should girls have all the fun," a college going girl says.



Ministry of Human Resource Development has approved a residential coaching centre for the civil service aspirants of the state, which will be coming up soon in the university: Prof Talat

Civil services best career option: IGP



Fida Hussain

Inspector General of Police (Kashmir) Abdul Gani Mir impressed upon students to prepare themselves for civil services which he termed as the best career option.

Addressing them at a function organised by Centre for Career Planning & Counselling (CCPC), Kashmir University, he said civil service officers play an important role in framing government policies."

"Civil service is the best career option and it plays vital role in decision making in the government spheres," said Mir.

Planning and management, according to Mir, are the two things which need to be prioritized while preparing for the exams.

"For qualifying the civil service examines, hard work plays vital role," he said.

Speaking on the occasion, Vice Chancel-



**CIVIL SERVICES
PLAYS VITAL
ROLE IN THE
GOVERNMENT
DECISION
MAKING'**



lor, Prof. Talat Ahmad appreciated IGP for sharing his experiences with the students.

Stating that students of the state have the ability to crack this exam, he said, "Students need to channelize their abilities in right direction and take full advantage of university facilities to shape their career."

"Ministry of Human Resource Development has approved a residential coaching centre for the civil service aspirants of the state. It will be coming up soon in the university," Talat said.

In his address, Registrar, Prof. Zaffar Reshi said, "The culture of civil services which was missing among the youth of Kashmir has increased now. Lot of credit goes to A G Mir who cultivated the culture of civil services in the valley."

In his address, Director CCPC, Prof. Shabir Bhat said, "KU established CCPC for preparing students for different competitive examinations."

The proceedings of the function were conducted by Coordinator of CCPC, M. Ayub Shah.

Sub-standard oil spray?

Mudabbir Ahmad

Fruit growers of Shopian district have expressed concern over the supply of "sub-standard" oil spray by Horticulture department. However, officials have blamed growers for not following proper instructions.

"We have already suffered from extensive damage to apple buds because of wet weather. Now this substandard oil has worsened the damage. It would have been better if the department had not supplied the oil at

Fruit growers, experts trade blame

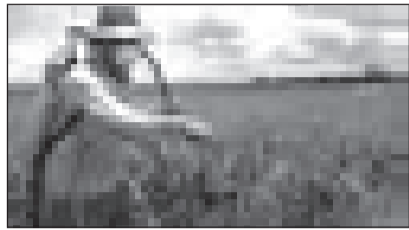


all," said an upset Nisar Ahmad, a fruit grower from Keller Tehsil of Shopian.

However, the officials and the scientists deny the charges. Officials say that even after awareness programs and interactions, fruit growers do not follow the recommended procedures.

"They just don't listen to us. When you don't follow the procedures, the crop is due to get damaged. Rather than observing the rules, they go for experimentation," said scientist, Farooq Ahmad Peer.

Conttd. on Page 7



“It was not due to substandard oil. The committee found two main reasons for the damage- hailstorm and the ratio of oil and water. Fortunately, the rains washed away the sprays”

Conttd. from page 6

an expert from the Department of Horticulture, Abdul Hanif Bhat, who surveyed orchards and interacted with the fruit growers, said, “Our findings have shown that besides bad weather conditions, the oil and water ratio was not strictly followed. The ratio is 2 litres of oil with 100 litres of water i.e 2:100 but we found that at places it was 1:18 and an average ratio of 1:30 had been used that resulted in crop damage.”

Fruit growers on the other

WE HAVE ALREADY SUFFERED FROM EXTENSIVE DAMAGE TO A APPLE BUDS BECAUSE OF WET WEATHER. NOW THIS SUBSTANDARD OIL HAS WORSENERD THE DAMAGE. IT WOULD HAVE BEEN BETTER IF THE DEPARTMENT HAD NOT SUPPLIED THE OIL AT ALL”

hand question the department as to how these “Sub-standard” oils, especially HP oil found their way into the market. “The farmers don’t follow the guidelines. This oil is not recommended by the Agriculture University,” said Bhat.

Director Law Enforcement J&K, M.S Katoo said after reports of damage to crops surfaced, an expert committee was formed to look into the matter. “It was not due to substandard oil. The committee found two main reasons for the damage- hailstorm and

the ratio of oil and water. Unfortunately, the rains washed away the sprays,” Katoo added.

Meanwhile, fruit growers have accused Horticulture Department of callous attitude towards the fruit industry. “Every year Horticulture scientists blame fruit growers for crop damage. We have been in this business for decades, do they think we still don’t know the proportion in which the oil is to be mixed?” said fruit grower Mushtaq Shah visibly agitated.

Kindle Magazine Editor Visits MERC

Owais Gora

Roving editor of Kolkata based Kindle Magazine, Pranab Mukherjee visited Media Education and Research Centre, Kashmir University on May 23.

Addressing a special session attended by students, Pranab said “News reading and close analysis of the news is the most important step for a media student to become a successful journalist”.

Mukherjee, in his lecture, highlighted the importance of the theatre and how it can be used to disseminate news in an entertaining and impactful way.

“Theatre is a sophisticated expression of a basic human need. It gives information in a metaphorical way.

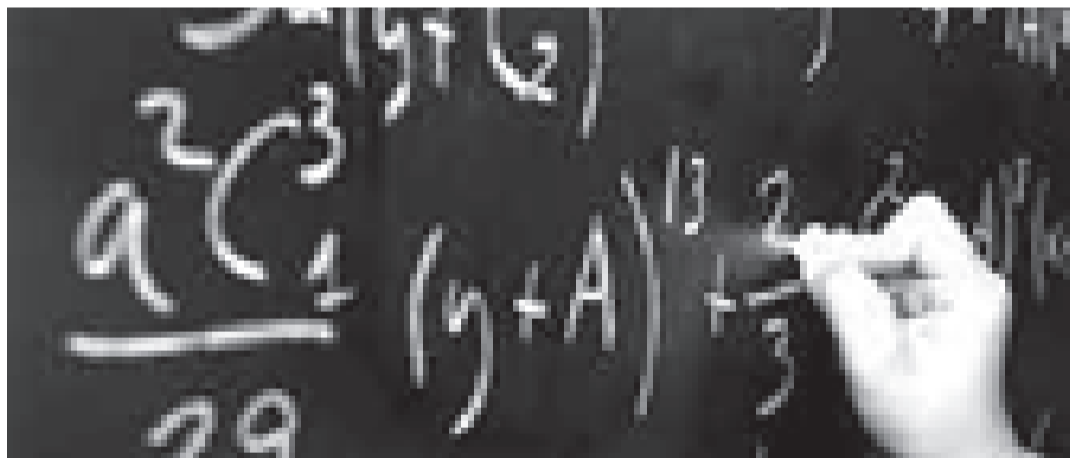
On the emergence of new media, Mukherjee said it is important for students to be accustomed with these different kinds of media as it is useful to convey message in a shorter period of time with high efficacy.

“Social media websites like Facebook and twitter are playing pivotal role in connecting people. It gives easy accessibility to people to spread the information across the world with a single click. It breaks the monotony for the readers and acts as new source of information other than newspapers,” Mukerjee said.

He also discussed his work on the famous saints like Nundrishi and Lal Ded, “I have been very much passionate about the writing of the Nundreshi and Lal Ded. They have extensively included Ecology and the human rights in their writing which is hard to find in old literature”.

The lecture was followed by an interactive session with the students .

Education a costly affair in private schools



Mohammed Reza

Parents prefer their children to study in reputed schools so that they can get better education.

But now it has almost become impossible for many to admit their wards in such schools due to steep hike in the fees.

Parents are left with no option but to change the school of their children as the expenses have increased beyond their affordable range.

“Hike in fees have made me to think of admitting my child in a government school. I cannot bear more financial burden,” says Mushtaq Ahmad, a parent.

Working as autonomous bodies, some reputed private schools have once again left the parents in lurch with sudden raise in their fee, posing financial problems to

the parents.

“I am not able to meet the financial needs as half of my income goes to my son’s fee which has been hiked many times already,” says Imtiyaz Khan, another parent.

“The annual charges should not be increased every year,” he adds.

Despite the fact that many notices have been issued by the government to private schools, they are regularly ignored.

“We send our children to these reputed schools to get better education. But these schools are only busy making money. They have become money minting machines,” says Ghulam Mohammad, a senior citizen.

“The culture of hiking fee in private schools needs to be ended. The parents should not remain silent on the issue,” he adds.

EVERY TIME



Tujar Shrief: The Father, Son and the Shrine

Mudasir Majeed

Sheikh Hamza Makhdoomi (RA), the Sufi legendry, had asked his followers to pay obeisance at his father's resting-abode in Tujar Sharief — Mondays and Thursdays. People come to this village, in North Kashmir's Baramulla district, to follow the tradition.

Shameema, a devotee from the neighboring village, Bomai, comes to this shrine regularly. Today she has brought along her 5-year old daughter. "I am endowed with peace whenever I come here," she says.

As Shameema and her daughter leave the shrine, they do not turn their backs towards the Tombstone— as a mark of respect. On the door, she touches the iron chain hanging over it. Her daughter in a gesture of curiosity continuously swings her gaze from the hands on the iron chain to the face of her mother. Her own little hands cupped to invoke the God.

On the right side of the door, a woman wearing pheran is offering something in small hand-made paper bags.

"It is Tabrook (offerings)," she says.

"What is in it?" the little girl asks, only to be scolded by the mother"

Habla Begum, the lady on the door smiles and informs, "Today it is rice." Tabrook can be anything from rice, sugar and sometimes even grains of dust.

After receiving Tabrook from Habla, the mother and daughter leave. Shameema says, "The village has enough to offer and our next stop will be another shrine in the village—the brother of Sheikh Hamza is buried there."

As Habla starts narrating the story of faith a group of devotees, who feel connected like her to the Sufi belief, is drawn to her.

"On Thursdays and Mondays, Sultan-ul-Aarifeen (Sheikh Hamza

RA) visits his parents and blesses the devotees who come under his shade in this shrine," Habla pauses, gulps some water as she continues the story.

Sultan-ul-Aarifeen (RA) was born in the 15th century (around 1494) at Tujar, a village at a distance of 6-8Kms from Sopore. His family was noted for its scholarship and piety.

As a child, Sheikh Hamza (RA) was sent to the village Madrassa to learn the Quran. He studied Sufism, the Quran, traditions of prophet, Islamic jurisprudence, Arabic and Persian.

Sheikh Hamza had his initiation in fourteen different Sufi orders, but is remembered as a Suhrawardi. It is believed that Sheikh Hamza achieved great spiritual heights and thus is popularly remembered as Sultan-ul-Aarifeen, or 'the King of Gnostics.'

Habla and her husband Pir Muhammad Yaseen are more than the usual devotees—they are the 'Reish', custodians of this shrine, popularly known as Baba Usman Raina shrine. 'Custodian' as Yaseen defines is the traditional role of a family to look after the shrine.

"Every family, of Makhdoomi or Pir caste from this village remains custodian for seven days and then the 'duty' transfers to other family," says Yaseen.

Why Pirs and Makhdoomis only, Habla's husband explains, "Families with Pir or Makhdoomi caste are the direct descendants of Sheikh Hamza (RA) from his brother. Sheikh Hamza himself remained a celibate".

It is afternoon. A woman beckons Yaseen for the meal. Some devotees have brought their lunch with them. The lunch offered at the shrine is not just normal lunch; it is Tehar, whether served with meat or not it is the holiest Tabrook offered at the shrine.

While Yaseen is eating, a large group of devotees arrive, "We are from Maraaz, south Kashmir," an

elderly man among them says. As Yaseen hears the word Maraaz, he washes his hands and greets them. The elderly man signals the other man with him, who hands a bag full of rice to Yaseen.

For the group visiting Tujar Sharief from south Kashmir, it was a long journey. They had travelled some 110kms from the morning and had changed four vehicles.

Tujar Shrief is situated in North Kashmir at distance 67 kilometers from Srinagar.

Half a kilometer from Baba Usman Raina shrine is another place of reverence— Baba Ali Raina Shrine. Baba Ali was the brother of Sheikh Hamza (RA).

However, the place which is dearest to all devotees and never remains unpeopled is the birthplace of Sheikh Hamza (RA). It is the main attraction of the village. A 5x5 feet stone on which it is believed that Sheikh Hamza (RA) was born, a mosque has been built near it. The small mosque had been his house.

Yaseen says that some artifacts in the mosque date back to the time of Sheikh Hamza. As Habla and Yaseen present every devotee the all-necessary Tabrook, they share their experience with them. Yaseen is quick to mention the days when the militancy was on its peak. "Some cadres of an organization often ridiculed us. They would say that it is not Islam. Even reciting of Daroods was banned. For last ten years, times have changed. Now even women recite Duroods", Yaseen remembers the dreadful days of the village but does not name the organization.

As soon as he talks about women, Habla quickly makes a point, "Women break the sanctity of the shrine. They lack in etiquettes and talk a lot inside the shrine. We are planning to make a separate quarter for the women".

Sheikh Hamza (RA) breathed his last in 1576 at the age of eighty-four and was buried in his Khanqah at Koh-e-Maran, Srinagar.



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