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# When Care Turns Cruel

In recent weeks, Kashmir's healthcare system has been rocked by a troubling cascade of incidents—allegations of medical negligence, tragic deaths, administrative inaction, and rising frustration from patients' families. These events have exposed deep systemic faults while raising urgent questions about the dignity of medical professionals, the rule of law, and the responsibility that all stakeholders bear in restoring public trust. The death of Waseem Ahmed Pathan, a 34-year-old resident of Pampore, at Srinagar's Paras Hospital in May has become a rallying point. Pathan, admitted for treatment of an intestinal infection and having undergone surgery, returned with severe pain and later died. His family alleged negligence and demanded justice, claiming they paid over ₹2.5 lakh but received substandard care. In response, authorities suspended eight medical staff pending inquiry and barred them from practice pending outcome. Similarly, at District Hospital Kulgam, a pregnant woman died in childbirth amid accusations that medical attention was delayed until it was too late. The incident provoked outrage and prompted a formal investigation by the health department.

Other reports from across the valley, including Handwara and Bandipora, narrate comparable stories—delayed intervention, inadequate supervision during critical procedures, and preventable fatalities. These patterns echo the region's long-standing concerns around ill-equipped hospitals, staff shortages, protocol lapses, and regulatory opacity.

While systemic failures have caused lasting harm to patients, it is equally important to recognize that doctors—often underpaid, overworked, and unsupported—have found themselves in the eye of public scrutiny. Attacks on healthcare professionals have surged, with cases such as the resident doctor assaulted at SMHS Hospital, triggering a protest strike and bringing services to a halt. The doctors refused to work in the absence of adequate security and demanded legal action and institutional safeguards. Caregivers entered the protest not as opposers of patient welfare, but as guardians of their own dignity. They spoke of casualty wards as battle zones, where split-second decisions are made amid chaos, yet they live with little protection or respect. "We treat the sickest patients... yet we are repaid with blows, abuse, and humiliation," they declared, highlighting the grim reality of practicing medicine in such conditions.

These converging crises underline a stark truth: victims deserve justice, doctors deserve safety, and hospitals deserve reform. First, legal and administrative mechanisms must move swiftly. FIRs have been lodged, inquiries ordered—but outcomes must be transparent, fair, and timely. Suspensions without action erode confidence in governance, while prolonged investigations amplify grief. Second, safeguards for medical staff are non-negotiable. Hospitals should implement non-bailable legal provisions against violence, enforce one-attendant policies in high-risk wards, and deploy trained security personnel around the clock. These are not privileges—they are basic workplace protections. Third, patient communication needs reform. Grief and frustration often turn into confrontation when families lack real-time updates or feel ignored during emergencies. Training medical staff in compassionate communica-

tion and clear protocols for sharing information can ease tensions before they escalate into confrontation.

Fourth, regulatory oversight must strengthen. The Jammu & Kashmir Medical Council and district authorities should establish fast-track review boards that can examine allegations of malpractice, uphold standards, and punish negligence swiftly and visibly. This is essential to deter future lapses and instill accountability.

**Responsibilities Shared**

Responsibility for preventing such tragedies cannot rest solely on one side of the divide. Healing this crisis demands action from multiple fronts. Health administrators and government bodies must ensure that investigations are credible, infrastructure is upgraded, staffing norms are met, and procedural lapses are corrected. Strong leadership and zero tolerance for negligence must shine through. Doctors and medical institutions should uphold professionalism, document their decisions transparently, welcome accountability for mistakes, and yet demand solidarity and legal support when they face threats. Protest must never breach duty of care—rotational strike Panels that keep emergency services open could help balance advocacy with patient responsibility. Patients and families must assert their rights through formal grievance redressal channels and avoid resorting to violence or intimidation. Families rightfully demand answers—but justice must follow due process, not anger. Media and civil society should report incidents factually and empathetically. Highlighting systemic gaps, rather than sensationalizing tragedies, promotes informed public discourse. Journalists also play a role in amplifying stakeholders' voices and advocating reform while respecting the sensitivity of grieving families. Regulatory bodies must confront allegations of negligence without delay. Their rulings must be publicly accessible and enforced without bias, without compromise. When patient lives are lost, something deeply fragile in the social compact breaks. Trust dissolves. Anger rises. Fear takes root. Kashmir's recent medical tragedies are not isolated—they are symptomatic of larger institutional decay and mutual alienation. Restoring health means more than administering medicine. It means rebuilding faith between communities and institutions. It means ensuring that doctors work in safe, respectful environments supported by rules and infrastructure. It means showing that when negligence occurs, accountability follows—not silence, not feigned concern—but decisive action. It means teaching future generations that the dignity of patients and professionals both matter. That caregivers and care-seekers are not adversaries but parts of a healing whole.

In Kashmir today, urgency demands nothing less than collective commitment. Medical negligence must be rooted out. Doctors' dignity must be defended. Law must act swiftly. Systems must reform. And communities must reaffirm the social contract that ensures both care and accountability.

It is time to understand that every death from avoidable error is not just a loss—it is a warning call. And every protection denied to doctors is a failure of civility. When all stakeholders—government, medical professionals, patients, families, regulators, and media—embrace responsibility, the future of Kashmir's healthcare can shift from crisis to care, from distrust to trust, and from negligence to dignity.

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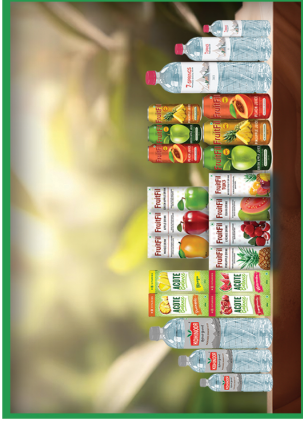
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# Kargil's Other Heroes: The Indian Army's Combat Engineers

**Major General RPS Bhadauria (Retd)**

The Kargil conflict fought on the icy and rocky Himalayan mountains 26 years ago, will go down in history as a war won by the young and brave soldiers of the Indian Army, led from the front by the young officers. The conflict saw numerous acts of bravery from the infantry and artillery soldiers, which is well documented. However, there was equally important behind the scenes contribution from the Engineers, who made a stellar contribution in supporting the infantry and artillery soldiers. Their courage and role in the conflict has largely remained unheralded.

During a conflict, the biggest challenge is to keep the logistics chain open and uninterrupted, despite the fact that supply lines are the first target of enemy shelling in any conflict and Kargil was no different. The Engineers worked tirelessly to keep vital supply routes open, often under enemy fire, ensuring troops had the necessary ammunition, food, and equipment. They were responsible for building and repairing roads, bridges, and other infrastructure necessary for troop movement and logistics.

Engineers conducted reconnaissance missions to identify enemy positions and, when necessary, used explosives to clear obstacles or create breaches in enemy lines. Clearing minefields was a dangerous but crucial task performed by

Engineers, allowing troops to advance safely.

Before the Pakistani intrusion, only one Indian brigade looked after an approximately 80-km sector. For Kargil operations, a division, along with several Arty and other units were inducted, a nightmare for logistic build-up, especially infrastructure development in the high-altitude mountainous terrain of Kargil and Batalik sectors.

Complete engineer support to the Indian Army during the Kargil War was provided by the Bombay Sappers. Six regiments along with detachments of 411 (Independent) Parachute Field Company took part in this operation. 106 Engineer Regiment was at Mashkoh and Batalik, while detachments of 411 (Independent) Parachute Field Company with Para Commando units were at Mashkoh and Point 4905. 110 & 116 Engineer Regiments were at Dras, 108 Engineer Regiment was at Kargil and Batalik while 112 and 270 Engineer Regiments were in Batalik. 2 Engineer, a Madras Sapper Regiment, was in 3 Mountain Divisional Sector at Turtuk.

Engineer tasks were spread across the 80 km of intrusion areas. They needed heavy engineer regiment deployments. The initial engineer support to the 8 Mountain Divisional Sector during the Kargil War was provided by the 6 Bombay Sapper Regiment along with detachments of 411 (Independent) Parachute Field Company. During the Kargil War, several Sappers displayed exceptional bravery and skill, playing a crucial role in overcoming enemy

positions and obstacles. Sapper Haji Basha of the Bombay Sappers was awarded the Sena Medal (Posthumous) for his bravery in demining and defusing IEDs, which helped pave the way for capturing an enemy position in Drass, despite sustaining severe injuries.

Captain Rupesh Pradhan of 2 Engineer Regiment was part of the team tasked to breach an enemy minefield to facilitate deployment of own troops in Muntho Dhalo, Batalik sub-sector. In the process, he suffered a mine blast injury to his face. For his courageous action, he was awarded Vir Chakra (VrC).

Their actions, along with those of other Sappers, were instrumental in the success of the operations, resulting in many of the Engineer Regiments winning a number of awards like the Battle Honour, Theatre Honour and the Chief of Army Staff (COAS) Unit citation.

The 108 Engineer Regiment commanded by Col Rohit Mohan Chaudhri, operated in the Drass sector under 08 Mountain Division. The unit was awarded a Battle Honour, Theatre Honour and the COAS Unit Citation for War. The 2 Engineer Regiment commanded by Col Krishnan, operated in the Drass sector and was awarded Theatre Honour.

The 106 Engineer Regiment helmed Col I P S Ahuja, operated in Drass and Kargil sectors under 16 Corps. The unit was awarded COAS Unit Citation of War. The 112 Engineer Regiment headed by Col N B Saxena, operating in Daha and Ganasak sector under 92 Mountain Brigade, was awarded COAS Unit Citation of War. These units, among others, were recognised for their unwavering dedication, engineering expertise, and bravery in overcoming challenging conditions and contributing to the overall victory in the Kargil War.

(Maj Gen. RPS Bhadauria (Retd) is the Additional Director General of the Centre for Land Warfare Studies (CLAWS), New Delhi, and was formerly the Director of the Centre for Strategic Studies & Simulation (CS3) at USI of India, having served in the Indian Army for 36 years. He can be reached on email: rpsbhadauria99@yahoo.com)

# UK-India Economic Leap



**T**he inking of the Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA) between India and the United Kingdom marks more than just a diplomatic milestone—it signals a pivotal evolution in global trade architecture, and a confident stride by India into the strategic core of economic multipolarity. With the UK emerging from the shadow of Brexit and India carving a credible presence on the world stage, this partnership is a calibrated leap towards mutual prosperity and geopolitical realignment.

At its essence, the FTA is structured to double bilateral trade by 2030, offering India direct access to one of the world's most advanced and stable markets. The agreement slashes tariffs on 99% of Indian exports, immediately benefiting key sectors such as textiles, footwear, seafood, gems, engineering goods, and processed foods. For Indian exporters, especially those long edged out by preferential access granted to Bangladesh or Pakistan, the playing field now tilts in their favour—with an estimated 5% gain in UK market share within just the first two years.

But the sig-

nificance of this pact transcends economics. As global trade routes are redrawn by conflict, protectionism, and political volatility—from the Ukraine crisis to West Asia's instability—India's pivot to pragmatic alliances has become increasingly clear. With tensions simmering between India and the US over digital trade and tariffs, New Delhi's simultaneous outreach eastward through BRICS and the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation, and westward through this UK partnership, represents a remarkably balanced foreign policy anchored in economic self-interest and sovereign strategy.

For the UK, still recalibrating after its exit from the European Union, the agreement with India is a vital corridor into Asia's largest untapped consumer market. In return, India has negotiated deftly: tariff reductions on Scotch whisky and luxury vehicles will be phased, protecting India's domestic manufacturing while enabling premium imports. It's a win-win—India gains export competitiveness, while the UK secures access to a young, tech-savvy, and fast-expanding market.

One of the FTA's most transforma-

tional provisions lies in the mobility of services. Indian IT giants like Infosys and TCS will now operate in the UK without mandatory social security contributions for short-term employees, lowering operational costs and enhancing agility. This not only boosts India's formidable services sector, but also strengthens people-to-people ties—a cornerstone of sustainable global partnerships.

Symbolism, too, has played its role. Prime Minister Narendra Modi's gift of a tree sapling to King Charles III, under the Ek Ped Maa Ke Naam initiative, serves as a reminder that this relationship is rooted in more than commerce. The discussions around Ayurveda, Yoga, climate action, and digital education reflect a conscious broadening of the partnership—one that touches values, culture, and future-ready innovation.

The Vision 2035 roadmap, embedded within the FTA, outlines joint goals in AI, higher education, green technology, pharmaceuticals, and health systems. These are areas where UK's intellectual depth meets India's execution scale, creating synergies that move beyond transactional trade and into generational collaboration.

Above all, this FTA is a message to the world: that India is not merely participating in global trade—it is shaping it. By striking deals that protect domestic priorities while expanding global reach, India demonstrates the confidence of a rising power—open to alliances, unwilling to be subordinate. This is not just an economic leap. It is a geopolitical assertion.

In an age of shifting alliances and economic brinkmanship, the UK-India Economic Leap stands as a model for how democracies can partner pragmatically, trade responsibly, and grow resiliently, together.



# J&K'S PSGA PUSH

## KL Desk

**T**he directive by the Chief Minister, mandating monthly departmental reviews and strict enforcement of the Public Services Guarantee Act (PSGA), is a timely and crucial intervention. It signals the administration's intent to place citizen-centric governance at the core of its service delivery model. More than a bureaucratic mandate, this directive is a reaffirmation of the Government's responsibility to provide time-bound, transparent, and accountable services—a cornerstone of any progressive governance system.

Enacted in 2011, the Jammu and Kashmir PSGA was a pioneering move to institutionalise the guaranteed delivery of essential public services. With 493 services currently notified under the Act—spanning departments like Power Development, Revenue, Finance, Transport, Housing, and more—J&K has emerged as a leading region among States and Union Territories in PSGA implementation. In a digital era, where citizens expect efficiency and responsiveness, such statutory frameworks are not just administrative tools but moral contracts with the public.

The real strength of PSGA lies in its architecture—defining service timelines, assigning responsibility to designated officers, and establishing an appellate structure to ensure accountability. The transition of most services to online platforms has further amplified the reach and impact of the Act. Today, a resident in a remote village can apply online for a domicile, birth or death certificate, or revenue document by uploading the requisite forms and documents, eliminating the need for multiple physical visits to Government offices. By minimising human interface, they also reduce the scope for petty corruption and ensure that public servants serve, rather than obstruct, the public.

However, the promise of e-governance cannot be fulfilled by digital infrastructure alone. The real chal-



lenge lies in execution and monitoring. The Chief Minister's concern over inconsistent oversight across departments is valid. An online application process is futile if the applicant ends up waiting weeks or months without updates, eventually forced to physically pursue their request—a regression to the very inefficiency the PSGA was designed to eliminate.

The Chief Minister's instructions are therefore not only timely but also imperative. Mandating monthly review meetings at the level of Administrative Secretaries institutionalises accountability at the top and builds pressure for responsive governance down the chain. The insistence on imposing penalties for unjustified delays underlines a long-overdue shift from passive tolerance of inefficiency to a culture of consequence. This message—"Don't be soft"—resonates powerfully in a bureaucratic setup where leniency has too often led to complacency.

What stands out is the insistence on transparency, especially in service rejections. A citizen deserves to know why a service was denied—vague or arbitrary refusals must have no place. By enforcing clear rejection reasons, the Government safeguards the citizens' right to appeal and upholds procedural fairness. It also minimises the misuse of discretionary powers—a critical concern flagged by the CM. Additionally, the CM's decision to personally review PSGA implementation every quarter signals a robust top-down monitor-

ing mechanism. Such high-level reviews, informed by dashboards that reflect service requests, resolutions, and rejections in real time, leave little room for bureaucratic evasion. The use of data analytics through these dashboards can be a game-changer, allowing targeted interventions and resource allocation to departments or regions falling behind.

Practically, budgetary constraints, staffing issues, or glitches in web portals can disrupt service delivery. By acknowledging these issues upfront and committing to resolving them in parallel, the CM provides a balanced and pragmatic approach. What matters most is the political will to enforce systems.

Ultimately, the relevance of any governance reform lies in its consistent implementation. With strong monitoring, penalty provisions, and citizen appeal mechanisms, the PSGA holds the potential to become a gold standard for service delivery. It should not remain on paper, but translate into timely, hassle-free services at the citizen's doorstep. In a time when trust in public institutions often hinges on the speed and fairness of everyday services, J&K's leadership in PSGA implementation is both commendable and instructive. The real test now lies in sustaining the momentum—and ensuring that every citizen, regardless of geography, receives what is not a favour but a guaranteed right.

# Karbala Lives On



**Asif Ali Rather  
Mehandhi Yaseen**

In the heart of Islamic history lies the Battle of Karbala, a pivotal event that unfolded on the 10th of Muharram, 61 AH (October 10, 680 CE), in the plains of Karbala, modern-day Iraq. More than a mere military conflict, Karbala represents a profound moral and spiritual struggle led by Imam Husayn ibn Ali, the grandson of Prophet Muhammad, against tyranny and oppression. The essence of Karbala transcends time, embodying the eternal fight for justice, human rights, social stability, and a life of dignity. This historic stand continues to inspire millions, serving as a beacon for those who seek to uphold truth and humanity in the face of injustice.

## The Historical Context of Karbala

To understand the significance of Karbala, one must first grasp the political and social climate of the time. After the death of Prophet Muhammad, the Islamic community faced challenges in leadership and governance. By 680 CE, the Umayyad caliph Yazid I had assumed power, ruling with an iron fist that many viewed as antithetical to the principles of justice and equality championed by Islam. Yazid's reign was marked by corruption, moral decay, and a blatant disregard for the rights of the people.

Imam Husayn, a revered figure known for his piety and commitment to Islamic values, refused to pledge allegiance to Yazid. For Husayn, this was not a mere political stance but a moral imperative. He saw Yazid's rule as a betrayal of the principles of justice, compassion, and fairness that his grandfather, the Prophet, had established. When Yazid de-

manded Husayn's loyalty, the latter embarked on a journey from Medina to Mecca, and eventually to Karbala, to rally support for a movement that would restore righteousness and protect the soul of Islam.

## Karbala: A Stand for Justice and Human Rights

At its core, the Battle of Karbala was not about power or conquest but about preserving the fundamental values of humanity. Imam Husayn's defiance was a bold stand against oppression, a call to protect the inalienable rights of individuals, and a rejection of tyranny that sought to strip people of their dignity. His small band of loyal followers—numbering no more than 72 against an army of thousands—faced the forces of Yazid in a battle they knew they could not win militarily. Yet, their sacrifice was a testament to the belief that true victory lies in upholding truth, even at the cost of one's life.





**Justice and Resistance to Oppression:** Imam Husayn's refusal to bow to Yazid was a rejection of tyranny in all its forms. He declared that a leader who promotes injustice and deviates from the path of righteousness has no claim to authority. His stand was a clarion call for justice, emphasizing that no individual or ruler is above accountability. By choosing to confront Yazid, Husayn set a precedent for resisting oppressive regimes, inspiring movements for justice across cultures and eras.

**Human Rights and Dignity:** The tragedy of Karbala underscores the sanctity of human rights. Husayn and his companions, including women and children, were denied food and water, and faced brutal treatment, yet their resolve remained unshaken. Their ordeal highlights the right to live with dignity and freedom from dehumanizing treatment. The women of Husayn's camp, such as Zainab, his sister, exemplified resilience and courage, speaking out against the injustices they faced even after the battle. Their actions affirm that human rights—access to basic necessities, freedom from cruelty, and the right to voice dissent—are non-negotiable.

**Social Stability and Moral Order:** Karbala was not merely a personal or familial struggle but a fight to preserve the moral and social fabric of society. Husayn's movement aimed to restore a system where rulers govern with fairness, ensuring social stability and communal harmony. His sacrifice was a reminder that societies thrive when justice prevails and individuals are treated with respect, not coercion.

As Imam Husayn and his followers reached Karbala, they were intercepted by Yazid's forces, led by Umar ibn Sa'd. Cut off from the Euphrates River, they endured days of thirst and hardship. On the day of Ashura, the 10th of Muharram, Husayn and his companions fought valiantly but were vastly outnumbered. One by one, his loyal supporters, including his brothers, sons, and nephews, fell on the battlefield. Husayn himself was martyred, and the surviving women and children, including his young daughter Sakina, were subjected to captivity.

Yet, the legacy of Karbala was not one of defeat. The survivors, particularly Zainab and Imam Ali ibn Husayn (Zayn al-Abidin), carried forward the message of Karbala. Through their courage and eloquence, they exposed the tyranny of Yazid, ensuring that the sacrifices of Karbala would resonate through history as a call to stand firm against injustice.

### **The Universal Message of Karbala**

The story of Karbala is not confined to a single community or faith. Its lessons are universal, speaking to the human spirit's unyielding desire for justice, equality, and dignity. Imam Husayn's stand reminds us that oppression, in any form, must be challenged, and that the fight for human rights is a collective responsibility. His sacrifice emphasizes that even in the face of over-

whelming odds, one must hold fast to principles of truth and compassion.

Karbala teaches us that human rights are not abstract ideals but lived realities worth defending. The denial of water to Husayn's camp was not just a tactical move but a violation of the basic right to life. The courage of Zainab, who spoke truth to power in the courts of Damascus, reflects the right to free expression and the duty to call out injustice. These acts resonate today in movements advocating for free speech, and protection from tyranny.

### **Karbala's Enduring Legacy**

Every year, millions commemorate Karbala during the month of Muharram, particularly on Ashura, through mourning rituals, processions, and reflections. These observances are not merely rituals but a reaffirmation of the values Husayn stood for; justice, human rights, and resistance to oppression. The story of Karbala lives on in the hearts of those who refuse to accept tyranny, who fight for social stability, and who believe that every individual deserves a life of dignity.

In a world still grappling with inequality, authoritarianism, and human rights abuses, Karbala remains a powerful reminder. It calls on us to stand up, as Husayn did, for what is right, to protect the vulnerable, and to build societies where justice and compassion prevail. The plains of Karbala may have been stained with blood, but they also gave rise to an eternal message: to live with dignity is to live with courage, and to fight for justice is to honor humanity itself.

(The authors of the write-up are students at Department of Law, University of Kashmir. Feedback, if any, can be shared at [asifrath-er555@gmail.com](mailto:asifrath-er555@gmail.com))

# From Baisaran to Dachigam



In what is now being hailed as one of the most meticulously executed counterterror operations in recent Indian history, the government of India launched a strategic manhunt codenamed Operation Mahadev, culminating in the elimination of three most-wanted Pakistani terrorists who were behind the barbaric April 22 Pahalgam attack. This was followed by Operation Sindoor, a bold retaliatory strike that marked a significant shift in India's counterterror doctrine.

The terror attack in Baisaran near Pahalgam had left the nation shaken, with 26 civilians including tourists killed in cold blood by militants who had infiltrated from Pakistan. These terrorists—Suleman alias Faizal Jatt, Hamza Afghani, and

Zibran—were tracked for over two months in the dense forest region of Dachigam, about 20 kilometers from Srinagar, before being neutralized on July 29, 2025.

Union Home Minister Amit Shah, in a special address to the Lok Sabha, called the operation a resounding success and an example of the Modi government's "zero tolerance" approach toward terrorism. "From Baisaran to Dachigam, the killers met their end," Shah declared, affirming the government's commitment to justice through decisive military and intelligence action.

The April 22 attack in Pahalgam unfolded in a horrifying manner. LeT operatives disguised as civilians mingled with tourists at the Baisaran meadow, a popular tourist destination, before executing

a coordinated massacre. According to investigations, the attackers herded the people into a confined space and opened fire indiscriminately, killing 26—including one Nepali citizen—and injuring dozens.

The attack sent shockwaves across the country. Prime Minister Narendra Modi immediately convened a high-level Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS) meeting on April 23. Home Minister Amit Shah arrived in Srinagar within hours of the attack, personally overseeing the initiation of Operation Mahadev and issuing firm orders to ensure that the perpetrators do not escape to Pakistan.

On May 22, acting on a tipoff from the Intelligence Bureau (IB), a joint operation involving the



Indian Army's 4 Para unit, the CRPF, and the Jammu and Kashmir Police was launched in the Dachigam forest range. What followed was a 67-day-long pursuit, using advanced signal interception technology to trace ultra-high-frequency (UHF) wireless communications used by the terrorists to stay in touch with handlers across the border.

The terrorists had been using line-of-sight UHF devices capable of covering up to 25 kilometers, which made their detection challenging. However, using direction-finding tools and technical intelligence, Indian forces gradually zeroed in on their movements. Every time a signal was intercepted, the security forces combed the indicated area, narrowing the perimeter over weeks.

Finally, on July 22, human and technical intelligence confirmed the presence of the three terrorists in a specific zone of Dachigam. The area was cordoned off. A swift, surgical operation followed on July 28, and by the morning of July 29, all three terrorists were eliminated.

"Their bodies were buried where they fell. There will be no glorification, no martyrdom," said Amit Shah in Parliament, emphasizing the government's resolve.

The slain trio—Suleman alias Faizal Jatt, Hamza Afghani, and Zibran—were all Pakistani nationals who had infiltrated into the Kashmir Valley three years ago. Suleman, a designated 'A' category commander of the Lashkar-e-Taiba, was the prime orchestrator behind both the Pahalgam massacre and a previous attack in Gagangir, Ganderbal, in October 2024 that killed seven.

The men had established a covert operational base in the upper reaches of Dachigam and received support from local sympathizers. Two Pakistani voter ID cards were recovered from their possession, alongside Pakistani-manufactured chocolates found near their bodies—further confirming their identity and origin. Earlier confusion about the identity of the attackers, based on preliminary sketches, was resolved when local witnesses and forensic evidence confirmed the trio's involvement in the Pahalgam attack. Eyewitnesses interviewed by the National Investigation Agency (NIA) during the course of their 3,000+ hour-long investigation unequivocally identified the men when their bodies were brought to Srinagar.

The weapons used in the Pahalgam massacre were also recovered—two AK-47s and one M4 carbine. These were flown to Chandigarh where the Forensic Science Laboratory conducted ballistic tests. Shell casings found at the Baisaran crime scene were matched with those from the recovered rifles. This confirmed that the same weapons were used in the April 22 attack.

Union Home Minister Amit Shah told Parliament that this meticulous investigation not only closed the loop on the Pahalgam killings but also disproved speculation that the attackers were local youth. "These were foreign terrorists, sent by Pakistan, and their masters have been punished," he stated.

India's response did not stop with Operation Mahadev. In a historic move that signifies a paradigm shift in India's defense strategy, the government launched Operation Sindoor, a cross-border offensive targeting terrorist infrastructure deep inside Pakistan.

According to Shah, Indian forces crossed over 100 kilometers into Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK) and destroyed nine terrorist camps, eliminating over 125 militants. These included key figures responsible for training and directing operatives like Suleman and his associates.

India's DGMO informed his Pakistani counterpart on May 7 that the strikes were limited to known terrorist hideouts and command centers—a legitimate act of self-defense. The operation was carried out with surgical precision to avoid civilian casualties.

Pakistan retaliated by shelling civilian areas in Indian territory, damaging religious sites and causing civilian deaths. In response, the Indian Air Force targeted 11 Pakistani airbases, crippling their offensive capabilities. The tit-for-tat ended with a ceasefire on May 10, following a phone call from Pakistan's DGMO requesting de-escalation.

The NIA played a crucial role in piecing together the entire chain of events. On June 22, they arrested Parvez Ahmad Jothar and Bashir Ahmad Jothar, local residents who had harbored the terrorists in a remote dhok (hut) near Baisaran on April 21. Their mother later confirmed the identity of the slain terrorists.

As part of the probe, the NIA interrogated over 1,055 people including tourists, locals, shopkeepers, photographers, and transporters. Every interrogation was recorded on video. It was this human intelligence that led to the generation of more accurate sketches and the eventual tracking of the terrorists.

Amit Shah noted, "This is not just an intelligence success; it is a triumph of India's counterterrorism capabilities and determination."

While the ruling BJP celebrated the operations as proof of their national security doctrine, Shah did not miss the opportunity to criticize the opposition—particularly the Congress. He slammed previous governments for failing to act after 27 major terror attacks between 2005 and 2011, including the 26/11 Mumbai attack and the Jaipur, Ahmedabad, and Delhi bombings.

He also listed fugitive terrorists like Dawood Ibrahim, Tiger Memon, Syed Salauddin, and Riyaz Bhatkal who all fled the country under Congress rule. "They kept sending dossiers. We are sending missiles," Shah thundered in Parliament.

He lamented lost opportunities: the 1948 ceasefire, the 1965 return of Haji Pir, and the 1971 Simla Agreement where India failed to reclaim PoK despite holding 93,000 Pakistani POWs.

Since the abrogation of Article 370 in August 2019, the government claims significant gains:

- Terror incidents reduced by 70%
- Civilian casualties down by 80%
- Terrorist deaths up by 123%
- No glorified terrorist funerals
- No mass strikes; the valley that once shut for 132 days now reports zero shutdowns
- 702 mobile sellers jailed; 2,666 SIM cards blocked
- 75+ terrorist-linked government employees dismissed
- Hurriyat Conference dismantled; its leaders jailed
- "Our policy is clear—no talks with Hurriyat. We talk to the youth of Kashmir," Shah said.
- Amit Shah concluded in Parliament: "Under Narendra Modi's leadership, India doesn't just talk about justice. We deliver it—with resolve, with might, and with honor."

# SOPORE TEACHER TURNS WASTE INTO LEARNING WONDERS



Asif Iqbal

With experiential learning and sustainability becoming more prevalent in the realm of education, the classic models of teaching are simply not capturing the attention of students as effectively as they could. To overcome it, Sufeena Bano, an esteemed and dedicated teacher from zone Sopore, started an innovative TLM (Teaching learning material) making project “From Waste to Wonder”. At the heart of this project is a simple, transformational philosophy believed by Bano

“Learning is most effective when students are co-creators, and teaching becomes magical when it turns waste into wonder.”

Ms. Bano’s innovative initiatives towards TLM making has been appreciated by the department from time to time. She being Resource person has been disseminating her TLM ideology at different platforms where thousands of teacher trainees got inspired and motivated towards growth of educational goals by enriching TLMs. Ms Sufeena has been honored with “TLM Maker Award” at Zonal and District Level and “Zero Investment Innovations for Education Initiatives” (ZIIIEI Award from Sri Aurobindo

Society Rupenter) for her exemplary passion towards making of effective TLMs from non-hazardous waste materials and her art of innovative initiatives for effective pedagogy. According to her, “Nature is an unparalleled resource for educating and nurturing children. To maximize its benefits, students should be gradually introduced to nature in manageable, incremental experiences rather than being immersed in its entirety at once.”

As an influential educator, she has been leading a campaign to develop effective Teaching-Learning Materials (TLMs), significantly enhancing students’ learning experiences and enriching their educational journey. As a result of this campaign, the students did not play the role of passive learners who accepted edtech content; rather, they were active in not only participating in, but also creating, the service design—using waste materials that would have been thrown away anyway as educational tools. The project was in keeping with the main focus of NEP, 2020 on experiential, inclusive and participatory learning. During an interview highlighting the remarkable facets of her inspiring journey, Ms. Bano shared thought-provoking insights regarding ‘Waste to Wonder’ project growing and going all along through decade.

## What are Objectives of the Project “From Waste to Wonder”?

We create innovative and effective spaces/technologies that not only treat but also heal

- To encourage environmental awareness through the recycling and reuse of waste products in TLM production. As a teacher I am very much cautious in picking up the harmless waste, Low cost No cost things or natural easily available things.
- To help reinforce concepts with up-close, hands-on, and visual learning tools.
- To encourage creativity and innovation in students through the engagement in TLM design and development.





· Learning as fun and inclusive, where all learning abilities can contribute.  
 · To develop 21st-century skills such as teamwork, leadership, problem-solving, and communication.

**Why do you use Waste for TLMS?**  
 “Most contemporary classrooms are brimming with expensive and pre-determined TLMS, leaving no space for freedom. And the volume of reusable material that is thrown away or given to the curb side every day in schools and homes is staggering. From lolly sticks and old CDs to

cardboard boxes, bottle tops, wires and broken toys – these are all objects full of potential when it comes to providing children with learning resources which are budget friendly and help in conservation too,” says Bano.

We also got all of this FOR FREE using trash:

- **No costly kits to purchase.**
- **Advocated the “3 R’s” – Reduce, Reuse, Recycle.** Bano believes her

students understand the potential of the beautiful and functional value in “waste” materials. In creating something out of nothing – my students felt a sense of pride that they were making something without a lot of tools, materials or help.

Bano has been recognized and celebrated for her outstanding contributions in developing the “Casket of TLMS” and for pioneering the creation of the “Magic Box of TLMS for the Foundational Stage.”

For an extended period, she has strengthened this initiative, transforming it into a robust project. The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 now emphasizes its significance. When asked to share how she approaches presenting her project planning and execution strategies to class. Here is what Bano has to say:

"To me, where there is passion of teaching, there would be passion of creating effective tools for learning. I have been trying to justify my role as a teacher in making joyful and effective TLMs. And years ago, I used to have "Casket of TLMs" which has been metamorphosed now into "Jadaui Pitara" to boost FLN. And I owe great thanks to Allah SWT that my efforts have been appreciated and encouraged by my higher-ups' time to time that inspired me to discover new horizons of my initiatives. I may make you understand my project plan and its execution in just three simple steps keeping in mind the latest TLM project(s) like "Students' Globe – Redesigned Model" and "Zigzag Map – Easy to Get", done by my class VI students at BMS Arampora School."

### Step 1: Orientation

I introduced the project with an activity session focusing on: The role of Teaching-Learning Materials (TLM) in simplifying learning; the creative process of transforming trash into useful objects; and the environmental impact of unrecycled plastic waste.

### Step 2: Collection Drive

For one week, I encouraged students to bring safe, cleaned household waste items. In groups, they collected items such as: Paper rolls, boxes, wires, and straws. Plastic bottles, bangles, and matchboxes. Caps, foil, thread reels, and buttons.

### Step 3: Design and Ideation

I guided groups of four students to choose topics with their group leader and brainstorm model ideas for subjects like math, social sciences, or language, which I was assigned to teach. Some student ideas included: A solar system model using CDs and string. A water cycle diorama made with a plastic tray and cotton. Plant parts crafted from paper, sticks, and fabric scraps. A clock model with bottle caps as numbers. Polyhydra built with toothpicks and clay. Numeracy concepts represented using sticks, pebbles, or used paper sheets.

### What are the effects on students

### and classroom instruction?

"Through teacher-led instruction, students are able to design useable visually attractive TLMs. They later shared their models with their classmates and explained the concept and how they were made. The products of this work are rich results. It enhances engagement, develops something real taught students to be curious and become more interested in learning. Symmetry and climate change, grammar rules and number operations all became fun and easy to understand. I suppose, the involvement of students in such projects boosts confidence in them. Even the shy or academically underachieving students get their time in the spotlight. After giving the models, the students standing in the front of the room developed communication and confidence in front of their peers. And we never know, where their creativity would take off."

Sufeena Bano has been a multi-award-winning teacher, particularly referring to The Best Teacher Award of UTJ&K -2023. She has already proved her mettle in multi-dimensional levels as content creator, researcher, resource person. She also has been a proactive participant in social awareness programs, community mobilization, channelizing resources for students, national integration and global education campaigns.

### What is Deep Conceptual Understanding of TLMs in teaching process?

"Making a TLM is not an exercise in rote learning. TLM making is dependent on one's understanding of a topic. For example, students constructing a model of a working volcano (with papier mâché and soda-vinegar reaction) needed to know some basic chemistry and be able to articulate that. Moreover, it is a practical process of teamwork and empathy. It is a shared, collaborative effort of empathy, responsibility, patience and team work. My project "Waste to Wonder" also promotes Environmental Awareness," says Bano.

"This project organically becomes a conversation about sustainability, climate change, waste segregation and responsible consumption— no need for a lesson. It is pertinent to mention here that teachers or school must be facilitator, Not Just Instructor. As an instructor, I transformed myself from a purveyor of content to a coach and advisor."

When asked to share with the challenges during TLM making project, Bano says, "As with any creative project, this one also has a couple of challenges like avoiding hazards with specific materials; balancing group dynamics; persuading parents to let children use "waste-formers". (But they proved easy enough to overcome with open communication, and planning and setting boundaries); Vision of the Future and Sequel and specifically hinting to unspacious infrastructure of the school where I am currently); Vision we don't have room to display or document such projects for longer time. Still, we manage to exhibit and safeguard for requisite learning period at the mini sites of learning corners in tight class-rooms of BMS Arampora Sopore (which is a rented building). Many a times the concept of BALA (Building As Learning Aid) adds impact to our aim."

Ms Sufeena Bano's "Waste to Wonder" project is more than just a process of creating TLMs but a metamorphosis of learning, innovation, sustainability and partnership. It teaches that education doesn't require costly tools — it requires inspiration and participation.

While interacting with some of her students about this TLM creation initiative, the students felt to be blessed being under mentorship of Ms Sufeena and expressed themselves highlighting the project that Ms Bano tries to help her students to select practical ideas; leads how they are built; asks them questions that prompt greater depth of thought; makes them to celebrate their failure as a Learning Opportunity by providing friendly and frank environment. "Rather than one-way instruction, we were co-creating knowledge in an atmosphere of dynamism and creativity," affirmed one of the students.

"We also seek to incorporate elements of local culture in TLMs in that it utilizes regional arts and storytelling to ground learning in its cultural context making learning relevant," affirmed Ms Sufeena with a confidence and determination nurturing within her soul.

In turning trash into treasure, Ms Sufeena has been teaching her students not just school subjects but life lessons: to innovate, to care for the world they live in, and to believe in themselves and the power of possibility. This is what real education is all about — hands-on, hearts-in and minds-alive.



# Chestnut Wular Chronicles

Rafeeq UI Islam

As the first flakes of snow kiss the peaks of Kashmir in the winters and the mercury plummets, Wular Lake – Asia's largest freshwater lake – awakens into a strange, beautiful hardship. In the heart of December, when winter tightens its grip and the infamous 'Chillai Kalan' begins its 40-day reign of sub-zero stillness, Wular transforms into both battlefield and breadbasket. For the boatmen who sail its swampy expanse, the cold is not just weather; it's a test of survival.

Wrapped in fog, their oars cutting through glassy, semi-frozen water, the boatmen journey into the depths of this legendary lake. They come in search of 'Gaer' – the water chestnut – a spiny aquatic fruit that grows wild here. Known across the subcontinent as Singhara, it is a humble food item that, for these men and their families, offers sustenance, tradition, and identity. What might seem like a seasonal snack in city markets is, for them, a hard-earned emblem of endurance.

The lake does not give easily. The journey begins from villages like Banyari and Laharwabora, with boats pushing off long before dawn. In the past, men would go out daily, but that rhythm has changed. Now, they stay out in the lake for days, sometimes weeks, crafting makeshift homes out of sand-collecting boats. Covered in tarpaulin and stocked with firewood, these floating shelters – called douks – house their kitchens, beds, and worries. In these narrow spaces, huddled in wool and hope, they cook, sleep, and brace themselves for the work that pays just enough to keep going.

One of them is Mohammad Jamal Dar, a 70-year-old veteran of the lake. He calls Wular his second home, though lately, he says, it feels more like exile. Jamal remembers a time when chestnuts were easier to gather and the government less intrusive. Projects in the name of conservation have

pushed the boatmen deeper into the lake, displacing them from zones they once considered ancestral. "If they hadn't pushed us out, we wouldn't be stuck here in the middle of the cold, away from land and safety," he laments, sipping the salted nunchai that keeps him warm.

The chestnut harvest comes in phases. The early, green chestnuts – called Sabaz Gaer – are extracted in late summer and early autumn. Then comes Beh Gaer, the stage where water-soaked chestnuts descend to the bottom, hidden beneath the weed-rich floor. The final and most lucrative phase is Abhi Singhara, the blackened, ripened kernel ready for sale. These phases are not just botanical stages but economic timelines. A good harvest of Abhi Singhara can mean a family survives the winter.

But a good harvest is no guarantee anymore. Pollution and encroachment have choked parts of Wular. Where once a man could gather 50 kilograms in a day, now he struggles to fill even half. The chestnuts are fewer, smaller, harder to reach. "The water is sick," says Ghulam Hassan Dar, a retired boatman who now runs a modest shop by the Jhelum. "So is our future."

And yet, each morning, boats fan out across the lake. With ropes and Kum Khurr – a traditional tool – they drag the chestnuts from the muddy bed. Some boatmen dive waist-deep into the icy sludge, others sweep from above, collecting what little they can find. Each man earns around 600 to 700 rupees a day – less than \$10 – for 30 kilos of chestnuts. It's barely enough. The real work begins once the chestnuts reach shore. Women, who also help collect Sabaz Gaer and Beh Gaer, sun-dry the produce, crack open the spiky shells, and ready the kernels for market.

Wular Conservation and Management Authority (WUCMA), the official guardian of the lake, claims the numbers have held steady. According to their figures, Wular yields about 4000 metric tons of water chestnuts annually. But the boatmen disagree. They say the lake is over-regulated in some ways, abandoned in others. Registration fees are collected – 500 rupees for a four-month license –

but rehabilitation programs have vanished. Financial support that once trickled down before August 2019 has dried up completely, leaving these boatmen to their own fate.

The conflict is not just between man and system, but among the boatmen themselves. With no formal ownership of the waters, tensions brew. Some claim rights over certain patches, blocking others from access. Mushtaq Ahmad Dar, a boatman of 42, admits things have gotten ugly. "People are greedy. They fight over space. It's like the lake is theirs. But it belongs to us all."

Amid these struggles, there's still something sacred about Wular. The silence of the lake, broken only by the dip of an oar or the echo of a foghorn, carries centuries of tradition. The boatmen speak of the sun like an old companion, guiding them when their keypad phones – their only lifeline to the outside world – stay off to preserve battery. They know how to read shadows and mist, how to find coordinates by intuition and sun-rise. It's a science passed down by silence.

The women back home, often unseen in this narrative, play a vital role. From sun-drying the harvest to cracking shells and preparing the chestnuts for sale, their labor is as critical as that of the boatmen. Without their effort, the cycle would break.

Today, WUCMA says it is working on ways to revive the chestnut economy – including marketing chestnut flour and cookies. "It's still early," says an official at WUCMA. "But there is potential for global markets." For now, that promise is distant, like the sunlight struggling to cut through Wular's fog.

When winter finally loosens its grip and Wular begins to thaw, the boatmen will return to other means – fishing, sand extraction – until next year's harvest. But the lake remains their constant. It gives them life and takes part of it back.

In the end, Wular is not just a lake. It is a world – of risk, resilience, and rhythm – where spiked shells hold stories and cold winds carry dreams across the water.

# Writing Poems Doesn't Make the Writer a Poet!

aside the dictionaries, as those definitions seem rigid and misaligned with the perspective of poets, who subsequently reject them. Poetry, in its true essence, extends beyond the mere arrangement of words in rhyme and rhythm. It differs for every thought, which is why each individual beholds it in their own way. Wordsworth sees poetry as “a spontaneous overflow of wonderful feelings and emotions, recollected in tranquility,” while Mat-



**Gowhar Ahmad Lone**

In the 21st-century realm, while authenticity fades for the lust of validation, poetry has not remained untouched. The catch in this race is that the understanding of one's authenticity demands patience and curiosity that rat-racers do not inherit. They want things done apparently, rather than bringing originality and purpose. On the same vein, poetry has been heavily misunderstood, linked to mere rhyme, and that's all they think of poetry. But we know, from the historical background to the scientific studies, poetry is not just a part taken for granted; it's a different version of life that po-

ets experience. It doesn't welcome human choices; it transcends all those human constraints.

Consequently, it is something that can be understood only through personal experience, rather than solely through reading it academically. Since most people are not poets, they do not experience poetry first-hand, leading to a wrong perception. But being a poet, I feel compelled to present a clarification of its actual spirit, which, in my view, transcends such conventions. In this article, I will share my understanding of poetry, drawing from my experience and supported by historical and scientific perspectives.

To understand poetry in its true attire, we must first grasp its meaning. However, to do so, we must set

thaw Arnold describes it as “the criticism of life.” I see it as “an expression of feelings, thoughts, and ideas—either when no one is willing to listen to you, or when your thoughts possess empathy towards mankind.” After all, it is not important to understand what poetry is, but to understand that poetry is deeply rooted in emotions, and since every individual experiences it uniquely, there can be no absolute definition of poetry.

The greatest privilege poets assume—one that also serves as the core in understanding poetry—is that it arrives in one's life as a moment of chance. It transcends personal choice entirely. As Robert Frost said, “Poetry is



a condition, not a profession.” A profession is choice-dependent, whereas a condition is quite the opposite.

At least in my personal experience, this game of chance extends to the act of writing poems as well. I have been writing poetry for the last couple of years, and undeniably, my engagement with it was purely accidental. Over the past few years, I’ve decided to write poems about certain subjects, but every time I tried, I failed—because every poem demands an “intensely overwhelming emotional experience” on the subject, which is something beyond my control. That’s why I claim, “When I’m a poet, I’m not myself, and when I’m myself, I’m not a poet.”

Writing poetry is an overwhelming experience; it consumes the poet before it takes form on paper. I am reminded of a quote by Judy Francisco: “I only write when I’m falling in love or falling apart.”

Furthermore, this idea is not limited to my experience—it has also been scientifically validated. Researchers have discovered that certain areas of the brain light up exclusively in response to poetry, indicating a unique neurological reaction—something I’ll elaborate on later.

It is also important to remember that poetry is not limited to writing poems. It encompasses a vast range of experiences, from self-introspection in solitude to recording observations on paper. What we generally recognize as poetry—the written form—constitutes only about 10% of its true essence. It is merely the outcome of poetry, not the entire poetry itself. So the poems we read are just one facet of the larger experience of poetry.

The entire system is built on the inclusion of self-introspection, solitude, self-conversation, and even a profound connection with nature, all leading to the overwhelming emotions that precede poetic expression. I also admit that one may experience all the aspects of poetry without ever writing a poem—because poetry is far greater than its written form. On this note, Enzo Silon said, “I



believe poetry happens to a poet long before they ever write it.”

APJ Abdul Kalam may have provided the best answer to this question, at least to me, when he said, “Poetry comes from the highest happiness or the deepest sorrow.” As I mentioned earlier, poetry—even a single poem—requires an overwhelming flow of emotions, which arise at these two extremes. Without such emotions, it is almost inconceivable to write a poem with true authenticity. In fact, someone has rightly said, “In poetry, if emotion is lacking, everything is lacking.”

However, the revelation of poetry is not confined to these emotions alone; it extends its wings to other aspects, particularly self-introspection, solitude, and love. In solitude, through deep self-reflection, with a heart open to love, one becomes a fertile ground for poetry to take root. In such a state, the entire being becomes perceptive—attuned to everything around and deeply empathetic toward the human condition, which I consider the primary purpose of poetry.

While some people may link poetry with prose, seeing only the difference in form, that is not the case—at least as far as I observe and experience. Prose may sometimes depend on chance, but it is also largely shaped by human choice. For instance, if I am writing a book or an article on a societal issue, I can simply witness or experience that reality and then write it down. However, poetry operates differently. Even if I find my subject and intention for a poem, unless I experience overwhelming and impulsive emotions, I cannot translate my thoughts into poetic expression.

But the distinction between poetry and prose does not end here—

scientific studies have also provided evidence to differentiate them. A study published in 2015 examined the neural correlates of poetry composition using Functional Magnetic Resonance Imaging (fMRI). The research revealed that both composing and reading poetry engage unique neural pathways. Writing poetry activates brain regions associated with language, emotion, and memory, particularly the medial prefrontal cortex and the posterior cingulate cortex during the creative process.

Moreover, when individuals read poetry, different neural circuits are engaged compared to reading prose. Poetry stimulates areas of the brain linked to introspection and emotional processing. For instance, the posterior cingulate cortex and medial temporal lobes, regions associated with internally directed thought and memory, show increased activity during poetry reading.

While poetry and prose share a literary space, they differ in nature—one emerges from structured thought, the other from deep emotion.

We have discussed that poetry is not what the common masses assume—it extends far beyond its apparent form of rhyme, rhythm, or stanzas. In fact, even the true spirit of poetry is not absolute; it is dynamic, shaped by the nature of the poet, his beliefs and experiences. While some may deliberately choose poetry, but in its truest essence, it remains beyond human choice and control. Moreover, poetry transcends other literary forms, such as prose, and holds significance not only in artistic and humanistic contexts but also in scientific studies of cognition and emotion.

To me, poetry is not just an art but a blessing—one that gives meaning to existence. If poetry had not chosen me, my life would have felt empty—perhaps even more so than death itself.

This was my perspective on poetry, but I acknowledge that there are countless other dimensions I may not have observed or experienced. I would love to hear your thoughts—feel free to share them with me on Instagram @poet.gowhar.025.

(Feedback, if any, can be shared at lgkashmiro25@gmail.com)

## Kupwara Custodial Torture Case: CBI Acts on SC Order, Books DySP, Names SSP in FIR



### KL Desk

More than two years after Constable Khursheed Ahmad Chohan was wheeled into the ICU of Sher-i-Kashmir Institute of Medical Sciences in a near-dead condition—his testicles severed and body bearing signs of brutal custodial torture—the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) has finally registered a case against six police personnel, including a Deputy Superintendent of Police (DySP), and named the then Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP), Kupwara, in its investigation.

The move comes after a landmark judgment from the Supreme Court of India, which came down heavily on the Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh High Court for what it termed a “complete abdication” of its constitutional duty. The apex court quashed what it called

a “prima facie fabricated” suicide attempt case against Chohan, directed the CBI to register a criminal case, and ordered ₹50 lakh in compensation—recoverable from guilty officers—to the survivor of what the court described as “one of the most barbaric cases of custodial torture to ever come before this court.”

### ‘Mockery of Natural Justice’: Supreme Court Rips Through High Court Findings

In a judgment that could reshape the contours of custodial accountability in the country, the bench of Justices Vikram Nath and Sandeep Mehta minced no words in slamming the J&K High Court. In September 2023, the High Court had dismissed Chohan’s petition, holding that his grievous injuries were “self-inflicted in a suicide attempt” and not a result of custodial violence. The court also refused to direct a fresh probe, upholding an internal magisterial inquiry conducted by the same SSP under

whose command the alleged torture had taken place.

The Supreme Court tore into this logic. It called the High Court’s conclusions “unsubstantiated, unsustainable, and contrary to basic judicial principles.” The judgment observed that asking the same police officers accused of torture to conduct an inquiry “was a travesty of justice and a textbook case of conflict of interest.” The top court questioned why the High Court chose to believe the police version, despite overwhelming medical evidence showing injuries that could not possibly be self-inflicted.

“It defies logic,” the court noted, “to believe that a man in police custody would mutilate his own genitalia, beat himself with rods, and inflict injuries on the soles, buttocks, and palms.” The High Court, it said, had turned a blind eye to the gross abuse of power and failed in its “constitutional mandate to protect the rights of a citizen, even more so when the violators are State functionaries.”



## The Torture, the Cover-Up, and a Plastic Bag

As per the CBI FIR—based on a detailed complaint filed by Chohan's wife, Rubina Akhtar—Chohan was summoned to the Joint Interrogation Centre (JIC) in Kupwara on February 20, 2023, by then SSP Kupwara under the pretext of questioning in a narcotics-related case. He was held in illegal detention for six days. During this time, he was allegedly subjected to unspeakable torture by DySP Aijaz Ahmad Naiko, Sub-Inspector Riyaz Ahmad, and four other policemen—Jahangir Ahmad, Imtiyaz Ahmad, Mohammad Younis, and Shakir Ahmad.

The FIR details the use of electric shocks on his genitals, beatings with rods, and the insertion of irritants like red pepper in his rectum. On February 26, Chohan was shifted to SKIMS in a critical condition. A sub-inspector reportedly brought Chohan's severed testicles to the hospital in a plastic bag—a detail that left the Supreme Court visibly shaken during the hearing.

Despite this, the Kupwara police registered a case against Chohan himself under Section 309 of the IPC (attempted suicide), in what the Supreme Court described as a deliberate attempt to suppress the truth and shield the perpetrators.

## A Wife's Legal Odyssey Against Silence and State

Rubina Akhtar, who discovered her husband unconscious in hospital, began her journey through the labyrinth of silence, stonewalling, and bureaucratic indifference almost immediately. The local police refused to register her complaint against the officers involved. For months, she filed legal notices, submitted multiple RTI applications for access to medical reports, and faced threats and pressure to withdraw her allegations.

Her determination eventually led her to the Supreme Court. Backed by medical records from SKIMS and expert testimony, Rubina ar-



gued that the suicide theory was fabricated to protect the officers. Her legal team placed the forensic findings on record—injuries inconsistent with any self-harming method. She also exposed how the magisterial inquiry relied exclusively on statements from the accused officers and did not include any testimony from her or from Chohan's treating doctors.

The Supreme Court took a dim view of this. "This is not just police excess. This is institutional malice backed by procedural cover-ups," the bench observed, adding that "had Rubina not approached this court, the truth would have remained buried beneath official paperwork."

## The CBI Investigation Ordered

The Supreme Court directed the CBI to immediately register a Regular Case (RC), name the officers involved, and begin an independent investigation. The agency has since booked six officers and named the then SSP, Kupwara, for being a "mute spectator" despite knowing that Chohan had been picked up and detained under his watch.

Though the SSP has not been listed as a formal accused yet, the court made it clear that his actions—or lack thereof—warrant scrutiny and potential accountability. A Special Investigation Team (SIT) has been constituted under a Superintendent-level officer and has been directed to complete the probe within 90 days and file a status report before the Supreme Court by November 10, 2025.

In addition, the court has ordered a comprehensive forensic audit of the Joint Interrogation Centre (JIC), a review of all detentions during that week in February 2023, an inspection of CCTV footage, and a complete audit of standard operating procedures for handling detainees.

## 'Not Just Compensation'A Constitutional Imperative'

In awarding ₹50 lakh to Chohan, the court said this was not just reparation but a "constitutional imperative to affirm the dignity of the individual in the face of State excess." The bench made it clear that the compensation must be recovered from those ultimately found guilty, setting a precedent for personal liability in custodial rights violations.

## A Case That May Change the Way India Thinks About Custody

This is no longer just the story of one man's brutalisation in a dark room. It is a story of how a system built to protect the public turned against its own—and how the silence surrounding custodial abuse can be pierced when one voice refuses to be silenced.

As the CBI begins its investigation under the Supreme Court's watchful eye, Khursheed Ahmad Chohan's case may emerge as a watershed moment in India's legal response to torture—especially in regions where institutions are often fused with power and impunity.

# Poetry Through Encoded Circles

**Babar Rather**

**L**ost in creative contemplations with a pen in her right hand and a piece of white paper held in the left, she is creating her verses in the form of indistinguishable encoded circles. Only when they begin to flow seamlessly onto the paper, can she, or anyone wishing to enjoy her beautiful poetic verses, decipher what she has written and what those curiosity-driving circles mean to her.

Meet Zareefa Jan from Poshwari village of Naidkhai in north Kashmir's Bandipora district, who has left the people of Kashmir in awe of her writing style for the last three decades. Her poetic journey has held her readers in thrall, leaving an indelible, yet enigmatic, mark on their minds.

No one has a whiff of the stories she has weaved in the pattern of circles that she has continued to draw on a countless number of pages. It is a unique style of writing that no human or technology has been able to understand, but when brought before her, it is as legible to her as a text written in any language known to most of us.

For avid readers, and listeners, of poetry, this will surely be an experience of a lifetime as this sexagenarian lady is weaving pure magic with her unique writing style. Learning about a never-heard-before poetry writing style from none other than the poetess herself, is, in itself, a fascinating experience. Equally fascinating is watching Zareefa translate her thoughts into mystical encoded circles, a unique poetic language that has captivated readers for decades. Sample this:



“Peer hyun Rehbar  
saete gatie andar,  
Seerie tass sarie bhaaw;  
Yas’ne yeti peer senz  
zaan gayie war’e watie,  
Kya karie dunhayas  
saath”

(One should choose his guide to drive away darkness, One should reveal to Him the secrets; One who didn't recognise His guide, What good would he bring to others) In the above poem, Zareefa eulogises her spiritual saint aka Peer-o-Murshad, Masood(a) Saeb. Her Rehbar (Guide), she says, was the daughter of Musse' Saeb of Tulumulla Ganderbal.

“Once I chose my guide, my Rehbar enjoined me with a particular invocation,” says Zareefa, who vividly remembers the days of her youth. Sharing her experience, she narrates an incident: “The day when it first dawned on me was the time when I had gone to fetch water from a brook – Yaarbhal.” It is the meeting place of friends; here, however, it means the low-lying place on the bank of a water body, especially a river or canal, where the women would go to fetch water. She continues, “With a pitcher on

my head, I was caught in a sort of trance. Struggling to get back home, I somehow managed and upon reaching, I, at once, got hold of a pencil and a paper and, out of nowhere, began writing – which, to others, may seem like just drawing circles because what I wrote appeared on paper in the shape of circles. But that was the moment I wrote for the first time.”

Continuing the story further, Zareefa shares, “Upon regaining my sobriety, I straightaway drove to my Murshad to narrate it. Murshad asked me if I had any objection with what I was endowed with. I only requested that I shouldn't lose my sanity as I had a family to look after. Fortunately, my submission was entertained.”

Check out another of her beautiful verses that the poetess shares for us:

‘Paan soraem aawum  
yaawunyeh,  
Lalwun yetie thowtham  
naar;  
Yaawun meune chambb  
dolwuneye,  
Ye chui samsaar naa  
pidaaar;  
Gachie toure' kyuith sulie  
sourunyeh,  
Lalwun thowtham yetie  
naar’





(I turned wine in my waning youth, burdened by my existence; My youth faded in this transient world; And made me seek solace in the Hereafter, as my existence became my burden).

Now, 35 years down the line, Zareefa Jan continues to follow her unique style of writing her Kalaam. Recollecting life's happenings, Zareefa speaks of her daughter, Kulsoom, who was roped in by the poetess-mother to textualise her writings. Kulsoom had done her MA in Arabic, and worked as a government teacher. Sadly, however, she could not be a part of her mother's writing ritual for long, as she left for the heavenly abode soon after her marriage.

The unfortunate demise of her daughter pushed the mother into oblivion, making her distance herself from writing too. But then, the fire within rekindled and she continues penning her thoughts and feelings that lay beneath, in endless circles.

Carrying the legacy forward, Kulsoom's daughter has stepped into her late mother's shoes and has now become an invaluable part of her grandmother's world of poetry. As the grandmother narrates, the little girl, a sixth standard student, translates it into text. And it goes on for endless hours in a single sitting, at times!

"Every time something comes to my mind, I jot it down in my own way, and there hasn't ever been a single instance where I might have felt dissatisfied with what I write," says the creator of enchanting poems.

Zareefa Jan shares the secrets of

her encoded circles with her granddaughter, who, in turn, engages in the intricate process of decoding as her grandmother narrates the verses — a collaborative effort preserving a sacred tradition.

Over the years, the brilliant poetess has received acknowledgement and accolades from her contemporaries and acclaimed poets, including



Shahbaaz Hakbaari, Farooq Adeeb, Ali Mohammad Nishtar, Mohtaaj Ganstaani, and Mushtaq Sumbli. Alongside her poetry, Zareefa has also been an active member of the 'Science & Cultural Foundation Forum', founded by Shahbaaz Hakbaari, which regularly holds symposiums. Despite not being able to write a single word even in her native language Kashmiri, the unassuming and unlettered Zareefa, quite surprisingly, can understand English and Urdu languages. Her inability to write, nevertheless, has come at a huge cost as she has lost many of her written verses and can't even recall any of them now. Fortunately, however, there are still some hundred poems with her, which are now in the process of getting published — both in text form

as well as in Zareefa's original, distinctive style of creating the verses.

"Wallai Shaam Sundri Boznai Su-fiyaan," she fondly remembers the lines narrated to her by a Pandit saint once when she was a child. With many people losing interest in literature, especially poetry, the magical Zareefa Jan is highly optimistic about the future of poetry, as she feels more and more people are getting inclined towards it.

Speaking highly of her life partner, the poetess acknowledges the immense support she received from her husband. "It would not have been possible for me to tread along had my husband in any way shunned me — because of the kind of art I got engaged with," she says.

And by way of concluding our conversation, Zareefa Jan has a message for all of us: "One shouldn't run after materialistic benefits; instead, look to earn respect through

what one does." Needless to say, the way she has lived her life and carried her art forward are testament to the fact that her actions and beliefs go together.

Well, for all those impressed by the jugglery of words by other poets, Zareefa Jan just ups the ante with not only her thoughts but also her mystic writing.

Here's another mesmerising verse on love:

"Loole Kyn Nyezan Syeene Pyoum Darun,  
Myah Pyou Tchaalun Zahre Almaas"

(I took the matters of love on my heart, and ended taking hemlock.)

(Babar Rather is a Sub Editor at Kashmir Leader.)

# ‘Witch-Hunt’: High Court Quashes FIR Against Sportswoman



The High Court of Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh last month quashed an FIR against a decorated sportswoman and Physical Education Teacher (PET), terming the investigation a “witch-hunt” driven by vested interests and an abuse of the legal process.

The FIR (No. 23/2023), registered by the Anti-Corruption Bureau (ACB) Central Kashmir, alleged that the petitioner had been illegally appointed as a PET without the required Bachelor of Physical Education (BP.Ed) qualification, was unlawfully promoted while on deputation to the J&K Sports Council, and was elevated as Incharge Executive Director in violation of service norms.

However, Justice Sanjay Dhar, in a detailed judgment, dismissed all allegations as factually and legally untenable, concluding that the proceedings amounted to a misuse of criminal law to target an individual with a commendable record of national service.

## SRO-Based Appointment Upheld

Addressing the first allegation, the court noted that although the petitioner had not obtained a BP.Ed degree (even as of 2020), she had been continuously deputed to national and international sporting duties. Her initial appointment, the court held, was made under SRO 349 of 1998, which permits the government to appoint outstanding sportspersons to non-gazetted posts without standard educational qualifications.

“If a person is serving the nation on international sports platforms, she cannot be punished for not undergoing a routine course like BP.Ed,” the court ruled. “Such national duties are far more important and valuable.”

Regarding the second allegation of unlawful pay upgrade, the court observed that the petitioner had been deputed to the Sports Council in the public interest and, under J&K Civil Services Regulations, was entitled to the pay

scale of the deputation post. The revision, done with the approval of the then Minister for Sports in 2014, followed the petitioner’s offer from the Sports Authority of India — which the Council acted upon to retain her services.

“This was not a backdoor benefit but a legitimate administrative decision,” the judgment stated.

The third allegation — that the petitioner’s designation as Incharge Executive Director was in violation of rules — was also dismissed. The court held that the change was an administrative designation without any pecuniary benefit and was duly approved by the Advisor to the Governor.

“It was a designation change, not a promotion,” the court clarified.

The High Court strongly criticized the ACB for ignoring the petitioner’s distinguished career. She has represented India in the 2009 World Cup, served as National Coach for the 2012 London Olympics, and is nominated for officiating roles in the upcoming Paris 2024 Olympics and Paralympics — a rare honour for any Indian sportsperson.

She is also a recipient of prestigious state honours including the Sher-i-Kashmir Award and Women Achievers Award.

“The attitude of the Investigating Agency in criminalizing non-acquisition of a qualification while ignoring the national contributions of the petitioner speaks volumes,” the court observed. “Instead of honouring her, she has been harassed. This country fails to build a sporting culture because we punish achievers instead of encouraging them.” The court also rebuked the ACB for attempting to question even the evaluation of her answer sheets, calling it a “classic example of witch-hunt by vested interests.”

Finding no merit in the case, the court invoked Section 528 of the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS) to quash the FIR in its entirety.



# WORKPLACE TOXICITY IN KASHMIR'S PRIVATE SCHOOLS

Iqra Nanda

For many, teaching is more than a job — it is a calling, a commitment to shaping young minds and futures. Yet despite the nobility of this profession, countless educators across Kashmir's private schools face a reality that is far from what they deserve: a toxic workplace that steadily chips away at their passion and dignity.

I write this not merely as an observer, but as someone who has walked every rung of the educational ladder — from classroom teacher to school manager, vice principal, and principal. Having experienced the education sector from multiple vantage points, I believe it's time we confront an uncomfortable truth: workplace toxicity is quietly suffocating our educators.

## Behind the classrooms

Private schools have flourished across Kashmir, promising quality education and modern facilities. But behind the neat classrooms and disciplined morning assemblies lies an unspoken struggle. Teachers, expected to nurture with patience and care, are often subjected to unrealistic expectations, long hours, administrative overload — and, at times, disrespect and dismissal.

In my early days as a teacher, I too felt the weight of responsibilities that extended far beyond lesson plans. I've witnessed young, bright educators break down under pressure — not because they lacked skills, but because they felt unheard and undervalued. Teachers are often expected to sacrifice their family time, mental peace, and even self-respect just to meet the ever-mounting expectations of some managements.

## Leadership shapes culture

As I moved into leadership roles, my perspective deepened. I saw clearly that the tone of any institution is set at the top. A principal or school owner can either create a nurturing environment or a toxic one — there is no neutral ground when it comes to workplace culture.

One of my firmest convictions as a school leader has always been this: a passionate teacher should never dread coming to work. I believe in fair policies, open-door commu-

nication, and most importantly, treating every member of staff with dignity, regardless of role or rank. And I have seen what happens when empathy guides leadership — staff morale improves, the atmosphere brightens, and students thrive. A happy teacher does not just teach well; they inspire.

## Why does toxicity persist?

If many educators and leaders want better, why does toxicity continue to fester? It's because many private schools in Kashmir lack foundational HR systems — no proper grievance redressal mechanisms, no clear contracts, and often no respect for work-life boundaries. In some places, favoritism, micro-management, blame games, and the silencing of feedback have become normalized.

Teachers are afraid to speak out, often trapped between their need to retain jobs and their desire for dignity. This silence is not consent — it is survival.

## The unseen cost

What we often ignore is that the cost of toxicity isn't borne by teachers alone — students suffer too. When educators are demoralized, overworked, or emotionally drained, the quality of education deteriorates. Passion cannot bloom in fear. Creativity withers when stress is constant.

We are sacrificing future generations by allowing such environments to persist.

## A call for change

To school owners and administrators reading this: your school's strength is not its buildings or branding — it is your teachers. No app or curriculum can replace a passionate educator. They are your frontline, your ambassadors, your legacy. Don't take them for granted. As a principal, I've made it my mission to create a culture where teachers are heard, valued, and trusted. I've pushed for fair policies, clear communication, and professional development — not as a privilege, but as a basic right.

I call on my fellow education leaders across Kashmir to:

Put in place transparent workplace policies.

Respect personal time and bound-

aries.

Create grievance systems that teachers trust.

Provide mental health and professional support.

Build school cultures that value collaboration over control.

We must stop expecting teachers to pour from empty cups. It's time we take care of those who care for our children.

## Parents must also ask

Parents, too, must hold schools accountable — not just for academics, but for how they treat teachers. Ask if your child's teacher is respected, supported, and heard. Your child's education depends as much on the emotional well-being of their teacher as it does on textbooks and tests.

## Together, we can do better

To my fellow educators: do not be afraid to speak your truth. Support one another. Advocate for yourself and your peers. Your voice matters. You are not alone.

If we truly want our children to flourish, we must first build environments where teachers are respected and empowered to do what they love — teach with heart, not under pressure.

We cannot afford to be silent any longer. The future of our classrooms depends on the well-being of those who stand at the front of them.

(Iqra Nanda is an educator, school leader, and social-emotional learning (SEL) expert with years of experience across multiple roles in Kashmir's private education system. From teacher to principal, she has witnessed the silent emotional erosion that many educators endure and has made it her mission to advocate for healthier, more humane work environments in education.)

## Backstory

Iqra began her teaching journey with dreams of shaping young minds, but quickly found herself juggling unrealistic expectations, unpaid overtime, and emotionally taxing work environments. Rising through the ranks to leadership roles, she chose to break the cycle of silence — implementing inclusive policies and mental health support systems in schools she led. This piece is not just a reflection, but a manifesto for change — from someone who has lived both the struggle and the solution.



## When Duty Clashes With Dignity

KL Desk

A brutal storm descended upon Srinagar's Shri Maharaja Hari Singh (SMHS) hospital—a fulcrum of health care for Kashmir—when a resident doctor was assaulted by an attendant following a patient's death in the emergency ward last month. The outrage that followed, including a sit-in strike, police arrest, media harassment, and ministerial intervention, has laid bare deep fissures in the relationship between front-line healthcare

providers, patients' families, the press, and public administration.

Late on the night of July 22 into July 23, 2025, a critically ill patient was brought to SMHS hospital in a gravely unstable state. According to Dr. Shah Nawaz, a postgraduate resident from Uttar Pradesh on emergency duty, the patient had non-recordable vitals upon arrival and was promptly sent for triage and resuscitation. Unfortunately, he passed away within 10-15 minutes despite medical efforts.

Moments later, the patient's attendant—identified by police as Srinagar resident Abid Hassan Bhat—entered the casualty and slapped

Dr. Shah Nawaz on the cheek. CCTV footage captured the blow, and viral circulation of the video sparked immediate outrage among medical professionals.

In protest, hundreds of resident doctors, interns, and staff associated with Government Medical College Srinagar shut down OPD and emergency services, locked the hospital gates, and demanded strict legal action against the assailant, enhanced security, enforcement of one-attendant policy, and institutional protection for healthcare personnel. Thousands of patients and attendants were stranded, urgent cases delayed, and chaos reigned outside hospital walls.

The strike, though effective as a protest, was sharply criticized by public officials and attending families, some of whom launched counter-protests. A father from Pulwama, carrying a harmed



child needing urgent care, lamented: “who is responsible if something happens to him?”. Health minister Sakina Itoo, visiting the hospital, condemned the strike as unacceptable, particularly for halting emergency treatment, and called for action against both the attacker and any doctors who abandoned duty mid-shift.

Meanwhile, the accused was arrested by srinagar police within hours. Bhat later apologized in a video statement, acknowledging that the doctor was not at fault. The government ordered a formal enquiry, chaired by the National Health Mission’s Mission director, with a 15-day deadline to submit findings and recommendations to strengthen institutional redress mechanisms and safeguard workers in critical-care areas

This incident is not an isolated aberration but part of a worrying national trend. According to national surveys, over 60% of doctors report fear of violence as their top workplace stressor, and less than half report incidents to authorities. Emergency wards are repeatedly named as high-risk zones for abuse. Peaceful strikes have often been doctors’ only recourse to demand protection and action—sometimes at the cost of patient access and public goodwill.

In Kashmir and across India, repeated clashes have erupted following patients’ deaths in government hospitals. Days before the SMHS case, a female doctor was attacked at Government Medical College Jammu after a patient’s death, prompting another doctors’ strike in solidarity. These episodes underscore a dangerous cycle: medical emergencies, public expectation, emotional grief—and when loss occurs, violent blame ensues, fueling strikes that further disrupt health-care services.

Amid the protest at SMHS, a disturbing subplot emerged—doctors barricaded against journalists attempting to report the protest.



Among those, Sufi Hidayah, a female reporter, alleged she was heckled, physically cornered, and told to leave the premises. Colleagues were prevented from interviewing patients or officials. Many expressed that journalists were labeled “unprofessional” and their presence unwelcome. The Press bodies condemned the attacks as direct assaults on press freedom and public accountability.

Such obstruction is intolerable. While tensions can run high during protests, journalists play a vital role: documenting facts, amplifying voices, and holding institutions accountable. When medics turn physically or verbally against reporters, the entire discourse suffers, and public trust frays further.

The SMHS crisis reveals a tragic clash: the fundamental duty of doctors to care for the sick, and their right to safety and dignity at work. Patient families, desperate and grieving, are obligated to remain respectful while pursuing justice. And the press must be allowed to function unhindered—even in emotionally raw moments.

Doctors are underpaid, overworked, and frequently under threat. Violence against them is unacceptable and dehumanizing. The strike, demanding action and safeguards, was an understandable and

valid response. The closure halted services temporarily, but negotiations resumed once an arrest and official inquiry were assured.

Yet ... When emergency care (not just OPD) is shut down—especially for grief-stricken families—lines blur. Medical staff carry a moral responsibility not to abandon critical care. Health minister Sakina Itoo rightly declared that leaving patients unattended is unacceptable, and vowed disciplinary action for any doctor who walked out prematurely during duty hours.

Therefore, while the doctors’ demands deserve support, the method must balance protest with patient welfare. Solutions could include rotational protest shifts, ensuring emergency service coverage while applying pressure on administration for reforms.

Doctors have long demanded clear legal safeguards. Non-bailable charges for violence against health-care workers, mandatory hospital security protocols, and one-attendant policies in critical wards could reduce risks. The officer-led enquiry, mandated by the JK government, must focus not only on the accused and any medical lapses but also on systemic vulnerabilities—unregulated access, inadequate security, chaotic casualty management, and lack of



communication between staff and attendants.

Clear guidelines on handling attendant frustration—like controlled communication during emergencies, real-time updates, and staff trained in conflict de-escalation—could prevent such tragic incidents.

Even amid conflict, journalists must be permitted to report freely. The targeting of reporters—especially women—by protesting doctors is profoundly ironic. Healthcare professionals fight for freedom and rights; yet, when crisis unfolds, they seek to silence scrutiny. That must not stand.

Journalistic bodies urged the smhs administration to guarantee media access and protect reporters on duty, including immediate inquiries into misconduct, disciplinary measures, and protocols safeguarding press access in high-stress zones like hospital premises. What the smhs incident reveals is not just a failure in one hospital, but a collapse of mutual trust—between doctors and patients, between medics and administration, and between institutions and journalism.

**To rebuild this trust:**

Justice must be swift and impartial. The accused has been arrested, FIR lodged, and enquiry ordered. But the public must see fair process and clear accountability—not excuses or cover-ups.

Long-term institutional reforms are critical. Mandatory security in emergency wards, visitor limits, visible identification for doctors (like badges), grievance desks, and regular risk audits can all provide tangible protection and confidence.

Communication must replace chaos. Informing patient relatives clearly and compassionately during emergencies can mitigate grief-fueled blame. Training medical staff in empathetic communication can save lives and relationships.

Respect for media must be encouraged. Press access during institutional crises should be enshrined in policy. Hospitals should designate liaison officers, allow controlled press zones, and recognise that media serve the public by holding both sides accountable.

Public education must continue. Civic awareness campaigns clarifying the nature of emergency care, its frustrations, and the im-

portance of respecting medical staff can reduce knee-jerk outrage.

The SMHS hospital confrontations—the attack on Dr Shahnawaz, the protesters among doctors, stranded patients, harassed journalists, and the minister's intervention—are part of a pattern repeated across India. Such incidents point beyond individual anger; they expose an underlying culture where grief meets inadequate communication, institutional breakdown meets public distrust, and frontline service meets systemic apathy.

The solution is not either/or but both/and. Yes: doctors deserve respect, safety, and legal protection. Yes: patients deserve timely care, dignity, and compassion. Yes: journalists deserve access and protection. The SMHS hospital must remain both sanctuary and site of accountability.

Kashmir's hopes, like the nation's, rest in the fragility of public institutions and the courage of individuals to demand change—not just for one night of chaos, but for a generation of better norms, protected lives, and restored humanity.



# Green Sweater Days

**Syed Majid Gilani**

Let me take you back—not just in time, but into a world where life was simple, hearts were kind, and schools were places that shaped our minds and our character.

This is not just my story. It belongs to all those children who once wore a school uniform with pride, carried a tiffin box and a water bottle, and walked into classrooms where teachers were more than just teachers — they were like family.

My journey began at Caset Experimental School, Rainawari, founded by the respected C. L. Vishen Sahib. Later, I moved to Greenland High School, Hawal, Srinagar, where I studied from class 1 to class 10. That school was not just a building. It was like a second home. A place full of care, learning, and strong friendships. In those days, there were no smart boards, no mobile apps, no AC classrooms. Water wasn't filtered. Benches were plain wooden planks. But we had something far greater — discipline, respect, and truthfulness. School wasn't just for passing exams. It was for learning how to live a good and honest life. I still remember my teachers with deep respect. Siraj Sir, Farooq Sir, and Mukhtar Sir taught us maths — each in their own special way. Narinder Sir, our PT teacher, was full of energy. Sushma Ma'am made history feel like a story. Rita Bakaya Ma'am taught science so simply. Rita Chakoo Ma'am taught Hindi and General Knowledge with warmth and care.

There were many other kind-hearted teachers — Jiya Lal Sir, Molvi Sahib, Firdosa Ma'am, Aabida Ma'am, Nighat Ma'am and Naseema Ma'am. Each of them gave us much more than just textbook knowledge. They shaped our thinking, built our character, and touched our hearts in ways we still carry with us today.

Our teachers came from all communities — Muslims, Kashmiri Pandits, and Sikhs. We celebrated

Eid, Milad, Nauroz, Shivratri, and Baisakhi together. There were no walls between us — only shared smiles, shared prayers, and shared dreams. It wasn't religion that joined us. It was our culture, our way of life, our language, love, and above all, our shared sense of humanity.

Our principal, the founder of the school, late Mohammad Ashraf Jan Sahib, came every day in his shining white Fiat car. He had a special charm. Always well-dressed and graceful, he didn't need to shout to be respected. His presence alone brought calm and discipline. Even the naughtiest student would quietly stand straight when he passed. He wasn't just a principal — he was a person with wisdom and silent strength.

We respected not only our teachers but also the non-teaching staff. Names like Maqbool Seab Jr., Halima Ji, Kanta Ji and Kiran Ji are still fresh in my heart. They weren't just peons or helpers. They were part of our school family. We greeted them with smiles and spoke to them with respect. No one had to teach us that — we learned it by watching and living it.

Our school bus — a big 52-seater — picked us up from Botshah Colony under a huge Chinar tree and dropped us back home. The conductor was a kind, chubby man we called Maqbool Seab Sr. He kept us in line with his soft scolding and friendly jokes.

Later, when the school opened a small canteen, it was run by Maqbool Seab Jr. A hot cup of tea and a crispy samosa cost just two rupees. Simple, tasty, and full of joy.

Every day, my father gave me a two-rupee note. That was my pocket money — for tea and a samosa, or sometimes an ice cream, or a spicy masala roti sold outside the school gate. That small amount of money meant so much. It showed my father's trust in me. It taught me how to be happy with little, and how to spend wisely.

Outside the gate, orange ice creams sold for 50 paise, white khoya bars for one rupee, and the big pista bar — our luxury treat — for two rupees. The spicy masala

roti, warm and delicious, cost one rupee and was a favourite on cold afternoons.

We all drank water from the same tap in the schoolyard. No filters — just cold water, shared steel glasses, and good health. We never got sick. Maybe because we trusted life more than we feared germs. We lived freely — and happily.

Discipline came from love and respect — not fear. Teachers did scold us and sometimes lightly tapped our knuckles or backs. But never to insult. We never felt hurt. We knew it came from care, not anger.

Parents never argued with teachers. They trusted them completely. They didn't run to school over small complaints. They never demanded special favours. That strong bond between home and school made us feel safe and cared for.

Then came the dark days. I was in class 7 when trouble started in the valley. The school bus stopped. We walked long distances, or crowded into the new TATA buses. Strikes, curfews, and fear became normal. But school never stopped. And neither did our dreams.

During lunch breaks, we didn't scroll through phones. We shared food and stories. At the final bell, we quietly lined up and left school in order. That discipline and unity — I miss it deeply today.

I can still see myself — in grey pants, white shirt, green sweater, white socks, and black polished shoes. Standing proud — not just for the uniform, but for the values stitched into it.

Today, when I see students arguing with teachers, or parents rushing to school over small matters, it hurts me. Something gentle and beautiful has been lost. But I believe we can bring it back — if we share these stories, relive the memories, and bring back that spirit.

I don't wear that uniform now. I don't carry a tiffin box or line up for assembly anymore.

But deep inside, I am still that boy. With two rupees in his pocket, a hot samosa in his hand, and a heart full of respect, thankfulness, and joy.

And in those quiet, priceless memories — I still find peace.



# VANISHING HUMAN BONDS

**Abid Hussain Rather**

**R**eliving old memories, I remember well that there was a time, not too long ago, when life was lived in community—fully, openly, and without walls. In the neighbourhoods of our childhood, boundaries existed only on maps, neither on the ground nor in our hearts. Every joy was communal, every sorrow shared. There was no concept of “my happiness or sorrow is mine alone,” for the happiness or sorrow of one was the concern of many. In any neighbourhood, if a child took their first steps, sweet fritters would find their way to every

doorstep. Whenever a cow gave birth to a calf in any household, colostrum cheese was shared among all the neighbours. If someone passed an exam, the entire street would celebrate. When tragedy struck, radios and televisions fell silent, laughter was hushed and celebrations were postponed out of respect. Neighbours were treated like extended family. Their smiles were ours and so were their tears.

But today, that world seems like a dream long lost—like a once-bright photograph, now faded and forgotten in the quiet corner of an old attic drawer. We now live in an age where privacy is glorified. We wear our secrecy like a badge of sophistication. “Don’t tell anyone,”

“Keep it between us,” “It’s none of their business”—these phrases, once considered cold or even rude, are now common and even celebrated. We proudly say, “I mind my own business,” without realizing that in doing so, we’ve given up the greatest asset of humanity—the ability to truly connect with one another.

Our elders often said, “A shared sorrow is half a sorrow, and a shared joy is double the joy.” This wasn’t poetic exaggeration—it was lived experience. A neighbour’s unemployment was not whispered about; it was responded to. A sick person in one house meant concerned visitors, herbal remedies, generous financial help and prayers from every corner.

Today, in our concrete houses, tightly locked apartments and digitally guarded lives, we know nothing of the people who live just a wall away. The sounds of celebration or mourning might drift through occasionally, but we rarely knock to ask what is wrong or what is right. There was a time when children carried plates of food and other small offerings to neighbours, with warm smiles and gentle messages. Life was woven together with kindness, and every joy or sorrow was shared like a family secret. Now, meals arrive at doorsteps through apps and sentiments are reduced to emojis on screens. We have gained convenience, but lost intimacy and left behind connection. Our hands are fuller, but our hearts are emptier. We have built fences—emotional, digital, and even spiritual. We curate our lives into social media highlight reels, where sorrow is photoshopped out and imperfections are edited away.

Mental health professionals are now ringing the alarm bells, calling loneliness the epidemic of the 21st century. Depression, anxiety, and suicides are on the rise—not just because of economic stress or societal pressures, but because people no longer feel seen.



We have replaced community with connectivity, but the Wi-Fi signal doesn't reach the soul. Our older generation remembers a world where even marriage decisions were made with neighbourhood input—not due to interference, but because relationships were considered too important to be built in isolation. Neighbours mediated disputes. Families intervened in times of crisis. An unemployed father, a struggling student, a lonely widow—no one suffered alone but everyone in the neighbourhood shared their sufferings.

But the world has changed now, and so have the people. Now, personal space has turned into personal exile. We confuse silence with dignity and distance with strength. In our race to protect our “private lives,” we have sacrificed our public bonds. Even grief is now a solitary affair. Funerals that once brought entire communities together are now modest, brief, and often poorly attended. The pandemic amplified this, but the trend predates it. Joys too are muted. Engagements, marriages, pregnancies, promotions—all are often kept under wraps, shared selectively, if at all. What was once called *razdari* (confidentiality) is now a permanent cloak—one that suffocates more than it protects. We often say that we don't like to depend on anyone. It sounds strong. But what it really means is that we are afraid to be disappointed. We no longer trust our communities to

hold our truths with compassion. And in doing so, we deny ourselves the most profound human experience, which is to be known and still be loved. Children raised in such environments inherit this guardedness. They learn early that emotions must be managed quietly, victories downplayed, problems hidden. The art of sharing, once a sacred skill, is now dismissed as oversharing, and vulnerability is perceived as weakness.

This is not just about nostalgia; it is about a cultural crisis. When a society loses the ability to share, it loses the ability to care.

Now the question is not whether we can return to our traditional way of living and past ethos but whether we are willing to. The antidote to this growing poison of secrecy is deceptively simple: intentional heartfelt connection. A knock on the neighbour's door. A shared cup of tea with nears and dears. An offline conversation without screens. A willingness to say that I am not okay and to listen when others say it too. Let us remember that communities are not built through policies or apps; they are built through small, sincere acts of openness. The woman next door who cries at night might just need someone to ask if she is okay. The elderly man who sits alone on the bench might have a story to tell. The child who seems withdrawn may need a little attention. Let me make one thing clear here:

this is not about abandoning privacy; it is about reclaiming community. It is about remembering that life is not meant to be lived in isolation but in shared humanity. Of course, secrecy has its place. Not all information is meant for public consumption. But secrecy should be a tool for protection, not isolation. When we use secrecy to hide our pain, we suffer alone. When we use it to protect others' dignity, we act with wisdom. In its purest form, secrecy is an ethical principle, not a wall. It is the understanding of when to speak and when to listen; when to share and when to hold. But today's version has mutated into emotional hoarding—where nothing is shared, and everything is suppressed.

As we move forward in our digital, fast-paced, hyper-private lives, perhaps it is time to pause and remember what we have left behind. Maybe it is time to dust off the old values—not for the sake of tradition, but for the survival of our humanity. Let us normalize asking, “How are you?” Let us celebrate each other's joys together. Let us grieve together. Let us teach our children that being open is not a flaw but a strength. Let us turn off our screens and turn toward each other. The poison of secrecy thrives in silence. But a single act of connection can be the antidote.

Let us go and knock on the door. Someone might be waiting.

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# VOICES AT LAST HEARD



In July 2025, the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir witnessed a watershed moment. Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha, confronting decades of institutional neglect, launched a sweeping programme to restore dignity, justice, and livelihood to families whose loved ones were brutally slain by Pakistan-backed terrorists—families whose suffering had long gone unacknowledged.

On July 1, Sinha chaired a high-level meeting in Srinagar. He directed Deputy Commissioners and Senior Superintendents of Police to “reopen cases which

were deliberately buried”, ensure FIRs were properly filed, and give priority jobs to next-of-kin (NoKs) of terror victims.

He further ordered the recovery of property and land that had been grabbed by terrorists or their sympathisers, pledging immediate steps to free these assets. Sinha also called for identification of individuals linked to terror ecosystems who had infiltrated government departments, promising legal action and removal where necessary.

Crucially, he announced that a Special Cell would be established in the LG Secretariat, with another in the Chief Secre-

tary’s office, to address individual concerns of terror-victim families, alongside helplines and district-level mechanisms to support the initiative.

Barely two weeks later, on July 13, Sinha personally handed appointment letters to the next-of-kin of 40 terror victims in Baramulla. He fulfilled his June 29 promise—with the processing completed in just 15 days, well within the 30-day assurance he had given in Anantnag. During the ceremony, he reiterated that “those days are over when family members of terrorists used to get jobs”, signalling a reversal of past practices.



But the effort was not merely symbolic. On July 22, Sinha officially launched a dedicated web portal—an institutional, digital mechanism to support victims' families across all districts. Developed by the J&K Home Department in collaboration with the National Informatics Centre (NIC), the portal centralises district-wise data on terrorism-affected families and supports streamlined processing of ex-gratia compensation, financial relief, compassionate employment, and encroachment records. It is designed to eliminate duplicate or fraudulent claims, and ensure no bona fide case is overlooked. Sinha pledged to personally monitor and oversee the redressal of all cases across the UT.

In tandem, toll-free helpline numbers were activated in the Divisional Commissioner offices of Jammu (0191-2478995) and Kashmir (0194-2487777), staffed by trained control-room personnel who record grievances and integrate them into the portal for formal follow-up. Meanwhile, Special Monitoring Cells have been constituted in the offices of the Chief Secretary and Director General of Police to track case-status, identify bottlenecks, and coordinate across departments for timely resolution.

In repeated public addresses, Sinha lamented how “terror victim families, forsaken and forgotten, suffered silently for decades”. He chastised “conflict entrepreneurs”—those he called opportunists who had shapeshifted narratives to portray India as the aggressor and terrorists as victims—asserting that this false discourse had been destroyed and replaced by a process of giving recognition to real victims and exposing Pakistan-backed terror ecosystem inside the UT. He warned that such individuals would face removal from public service if implicated in past atrocities.

The scale of suffering surfaced at these meetings. The administration documented the plight of Wali Mohammad Lone of Fatehgarh village, Baramulla, whose son Bashir was shot dead by terrorists on June 9, 1992, and whose two other sons were kidnapped a year later—never found. Similarly, Raja

Begum of Lilam, Kupwara, waited 26 years for justice after terrorists brutally murdered her husband, two sons, and daughter in 1999. These stories, Sinha emphasized, had been suppressed for decades; now they could finally be heard.

Officials from key departments were present throughout: Chief Secretary Atal Dulloo; DGP Nalin Prabhat; Principal Secretary (Home) Chandraker Bharti; Principal Secretary to the LG Dr. Mandeep K. Bhandari; GAD Commissioner-Secretary M. Raju; Divisional Commissioners Vijay Kumar Bidhuri (Kashmir) and Ramesh Kumar

dented in J&K's post-2019 governance, aimed at institutionalising redressal to families of terror victims.

On the ground, families voiced cautious but real hope. Fayaz Ahmad Sheikh of Sheeri, Baramulla, whose father was killed in an attack years ago, described in a deeply emotional interview how successive governments offered “humiliation” instead of relief. He said that until now, the burden of bureaucratic verifications and meaningless queries compounded trauma. “Every government came with their own ‘compassion’, but all we got was humiliation, multiple



(Jammu); IGP Kashmir VK Birdi; IGP Jammu Bhim Sen Tuti; NIC's SIO Jaskaran Singh Modi, among others.

Taken together, the sequence of actions—case reopening orders on July 1, job appointments on July 13, and web portal launch on July 22—constitute a comprehensive initiative unprece-

rounds of verification...and no clarity,” he said. Fayaz appealed for reservation quotas, psychological counselling, community outreach and livelihood support—pointing to needs beyond immediate financial assistance. He insisted, “We don’t want to be pitied—we want equal opportunities to live with dignity”.



The administration's leaders responded. LG Sinha announced that families wishing to start enterprises would receive financial assistance under the MUDRA scheme, along with handholding support and guidance in setting up self-employment ventures. He also ordered property retrieval if encroached upon, FIRs to be registered where missing, and assistance to all families from as far back as the 1990s. The administration now promised to literally "reach the doorsteps" of families who have long waited, with one official remarking that "culprits will not be spared" and that "every possible support will be given".

Civil society groups have called on the government to institutionalise these processes, ensuring long-term support beyond the current volumes of cases. They noted that server-based portals and helplines are only effective if coupled with on-ground verification, follow-through, and transparency in decision timelines.

Yet the response in Baramulla and Anantnag has been deeply emotional and palpable. When Sinha handed over appointment letters, families broke ground on holding photographs of their slain kin, some weeping openly, others standing tall to receive the government letter they had long awaited. Local leaders described the moment as "real rehabilitation in progress".

Together, the portals, helplines, case reopening, job appointments, property restoration, and business support form

a policy architecture unprecedented in scale and symbolism for terror-victim families in J&K. For decades they were overshadowed by political narratives; now Sinha's administration asserts a counter-narrative: one that places real victims at the centre, acknowledges past errors of omission, and sets in motion both justice and livelihood.

Such measures have begun shortly after a horrific terrorist massacre in April 2025—the Pahalgam attack which killed 26 civilians in Baisaran Valley, mostly Hindus but also including a Christian tourist and a local Muslim. That event prompted the UT administration to reopen dozens of closed tourist areas and urge restoration of normalcy across valleys—because the pain extended far beyond the immediate survivors to entire communities grappling with long memory of violence and marginalisation.

The initiative was clearly led by the Lt Governor's office and the Home Department, with NIC support. LG Manoj Sinha has said, "The administration will now reach the doorsteps of all the families who have been waiting for justice for decades, and jobs, arrangements for their rehabilitation and livelihood will be ensured." Families like Lone's and Begum's have waited decades. Now begins the real test: translating announcements into actionable justice and sustainable inclusion.

As Jammu & Kashmir turns a page, this July 2025 initiative may well become the foundation of a golden chapter of inclu-

sive development, peace and social justice, in the words Sinha used—a chapter scripted under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, with efficient, transparent and people-centric governance.





# The Vanishing Teacher Bond

Md Ahtesham Ahmad

The morning sun barely touches the windows of the school building when Mr. Vikram Gupta begins his daily 200-kilometer commute, a journey he has made faithfully for fifteen years. By the time he reaches his classroom, he has just enough energy left to mark attendance before launching into back-to-back lessons, assignments, and unexpected classroom crises. The final bell doesn't bring relief—only the exhaustion of the return trip, where he stares out the window, wondering when teaching became so transactional, so devoid of the connection he once cherished with his own gurus.

His story is not unique. Across India, teachers navigate similar routines—overburdened by administrative duties, rigid curricula, and the unspoken expectation to be both educator and disciplinarian. The reverence once reserved for gurus, those divine guides who shaped not just minds but character, has faded. Today, a teacher is often seen as just another service provider in a system racing toward measurable outcomes. Students, armed with smartphones and AI chatbots, no longer look to them for answers but for validation of what algorithms have already told them.

The shift is cultural as much as technological. Ancient texts spoke of the guru-shishya parampara, where learning was a sacred bond, not confined to



classrooms but extending into life itself. A guru molded princes and paupers alike, commanding respect not through authority alone but through wisdom and genuine care. Modern education, however, has reduced this relationship to grades, attendance, and standardized tests. Teachers, pressured by institutional demands, have little room to mentor. Students, bombarded with digital distractions, have even less incentive to engage beyond the syllabus.

Yet the need for human guidance has never been greater. Adolescence today is a minefield of hormonal changes, social media comparisons, and existential uncertainties—challenges no AI can navigate with empathy. A student might find facts on Google, but only a teacher can help them make sense of failure, heart-

break, or self-doubt. The irony? Many educators recognize this but are trapped in a system that values efficiency over connection. Schools celebrate Teachers' Day with speeches about nobility, yet few address the growing chasm between those who teach and those who learn.

The solution isn't nostalgia for a bygone era but a recalibration of priorities. Teachers must reclaim their role as mentors.

not just instructors. Schools need to carve out space for unstructured interactions—where a struggling student can speak freely, where a teacher's advice extends beyond academics. Technology, instead of replacing human connection, should enable it: AI tutors for rote learning, freeing teachers to focus on the irreplaceable—guiding, inspiring, and understanding.

As Mr. Gupta's train rattles home, he thinks of Dr. Kalam's words about teaching shaping character. He wonders if today's system still allows for that. The answer, much like education itself, lies not in tools or traditions alone, but in the willingness to see students as more than data points—and teachers as more than conduits of information. The bell may mark the end of class, but real teaching begins when the lesson plan ends.

# Echoes of Yesterday



**Syed Majid Gelani**

**I**t was the last week of June. The sun was merciless, the kind of heat that makes you sweat even when you are sitting still. I was in my modest Alto 800 car, quietly parked outside the gate of Badamwari Garden, Srinagar's famous almond orchard. Like every Sunday now, it had become my routine, waiting there for my three beautiful children.

It was nine in the morning. The sun was already high, and the heat unbearable. Sweat clung to my skin, my clothes stuck to my body, and my head felt heavy, yet my eyes remained fixed on the road leading to the garden gate, hoping to catch the beloved faces of my children. I was there to pick them up and take them home.

Then, amid the usual crowd, an ordinary scene took place. No one else noticed it, but it quietly shook my soul. A young couple arrived on a scooty. The man was neatly dressed, with a

small, well-kept beard, spectacles, a formal shirt and trousers, and polished black shoes. His wife sat behind him, modestly dressed, holding a little baby, hardly two years old, in her lap. The way both husband and wife lovingly looked at their child stirred something deep inside me.

I watched as the man glanced at his wife with warmth and care. He took her to a Malai Kulfi stall nearby and bought kulfis for both of them. Then, beside the garden gate, a small roadside stall sold chips, mineral water, chewing gums, and toffees. The man gently asked his wife to pick something for herself and the baby. They bought a few small things and placed them in a simple bag hanging from her shoulder. The man then tenderly took the baby in his lap, holding him close.

A little ahead, there was a food truck, a small roadside eatery with pots of biryani, fried rice, and kebabs. The aroma of food mixed with the hot summer air. The man asked his wife if she wanted some biryani or fried rice. She smiled politely and refused, saying they had already taken snacks

and it was enough. He asked again, she declined once more with a gentle smile.

That simple, ordinary scene opened an old, rusted, long-forgotten door inside my heart. It pulled me straight into my own past. I had lived those moments once, walked through those picnics, those garden visits, those outings. Sometimes with one child, sometimes with two, and sometimes with all three of my children — and my whole family. I too had bought them kulfis, toys, snacks, meals, and carried those tiny hands across these very garden paths. As those forgotten memories came flooding back, my eyes filled with tears.

But along with those sweet, innocent memories came some bitter, heart-wounding truths. I remembered how, after receiving years of love, care, and respect from their husbands, some wives, misled by wrong advice, become cold, indifferent, and ungrateful. They start complaining, creating conflict, and making unfair demands. Many even take extreme steps against the very men who gave them



everything in life.

I have personally seen materialistic and greedy women, who, after repeated failures to achieve their childhood dream of getting a respectable job, start chasing shortcuts for financial independence. Some misuse personal relationships for money, turning marriage into a business deal, and a sincere husband into a source of easy, regular income through maintenance claims. For them, loyalty and family ties mean nothing when greed fills the heart.

Even worse, there are those who cross all moral, ethical, and religious limits. In the grip of greed and malice, some secretly engage in witchcraft, black magic, and other filthy practices. I have witnessed such silent hatred, where wives, consumed by jealousy and resentment, visit fake peer babas and so-called healers to harm the very husbands who once sheltered them.

Shame on such women, who neither fear the unseen eyes of Allah, nor remember the innocent tears of the children whose lives they destroy in the process. They forget that these crooked tactics never harm anyone but themselves. A day always comes when such women and their advisers, supporters, and greedy families face the consequences of their deeds. Allah may delay, but He never forgets.

Yet, not every woman is like this. In the same world, there are noble, simple, and loyal women. Women who stand by their husbands in both good and bad times. Who adjust, who show respect, and who carry their homes with honour and patience. Who fear Allah and value the little or much their husbands provide. Such women are rare, but wherever they exist, they are a priceless blessing from Almighty Allah.

In the same way, I have seen good and honest husbands too. Men who gave their best, who loved, cared, and respected, and never allowed their wives or children to suffer. And believe me, good and loyal husbands always have Allah on their side. Not just Allah, but also the people, relatives, neighbours, and acquaintances who silently observe everything from the first day. Truth may remain hidden for some time, but it never stays buried forever. A day always comes when truth speaks.

It is sad how greed blinds some hearts so much that they forget the value of a sincere companion. They treat husbands like mere providers, running after money without realising that no amount of wealth can replace pure love and loyalty. Some turn the purest human relations into cold calcula-

tions of profit and loss. But money is lifeless; it cannot wipe tears, it cannot hold trembling hands, and it cannot ease loneliness.

One day, when time passes, when youth fades, and when loneliness covers them, they will realise what they lost in exchange for a few currency notes. But by then, it will be too late.

That day, sitting in my modest Alto 800 car, watching an unnoticed scene before me, my heart grew heavy, my eyes filled with tears, and my mind wandered into the world of old memories. A world where only silent tears bring peace.

I looked once more at the young couple, now walking hand in hand towards the flower-filled paths of Badamwari, their child giggling in his father's arms, the sunlight falling softly through the almond trees. This garden, in its calm and quietness, had silently seen countless stories of love, loyalty, betrayal, and longing.

And in that very moment, under the patient shade of those trees, I realised that some scenes may appear ordinary to the world, but quietly, they shake a soul forever.

(Syed Majid Gilani is a government officer by profession and a storyteller by passion. He writes about family values, moral wisdom, and real life emotions. He can be reached at syedmajid6676@gmail.com.)



# Nikahfy Kashmir

In a society where traditional matchmaking often sidelines widows, divorcees, and those above 35, a homegrown solution has emerged ‘NikahfyMe, Kashmir’s first Muslim matrimonial app rooted in Islamic ethics and Kashmiri culture. Launched on July 17 with the blessings of Mirwaiz-e-Kashmir Molvi Mohammad Umar Farooq, the app is the brainchild of Imad, a local cinematographer and entrepreneur behind Miya Infotech.

Unlike global platforms like Muzmatch or pan-Indian services like BharatMatrimony, NikahfyMe is designed exclusively for Kashmiris, prioritizing family involvement, cultural nuances, and Islamic modesty.

**Kashmir Leader’s Sub-Editor Babar Rather speaks exclusively to Imad about the inspiration, vision, and Islamic ethos behind NikahfyMe, addressing everything from societal stigmas to technical safeguards.**

Here are excerpts from the conversation:

**Q. What was the primary motivation behind creating #NikahfyMe?**

Imad: The motivation stemmed from real-life experiences and visible gaps in our society especially for widows, divorcees, and individuals over 35. Despite their genuine intentions, they often face silence, stigma, and systemic barriers in traditional matchmaking settings.



NikahfyMe was born as a dignified, tech driven solution rooted in Islamic values to fill that void.

**Q. How does it differ from platforms like Nikah Forever, Muzmatch, or BharatMatrimony?**

Imad: NikahfyMe is “purely Kashmiri” in culture, and approach. While others are pan-Indian or global, we focus on local sensitivi-

ties, vernacular communication, cultural compatibility, and family oriented matchmaking with Kashmiri values at its core.

**Q. Why focus on widows and divorcees?**

Imad: Because they are often left behind. Many face societal judgment or isolation, despite being entirely within their Islamic right to remarry. While we don’t



restrict our platform to just them, we actively prioritize making the app a safe, accepting space for them.

**Q. How does it align with Islamic principles of modesty, privacy, and family involvement?**

Imad: Every feature is designed with Islamic ethics in mind, no dating, no swiping culture, no random chatting, and family involvement is actively encouraged at every step by us.

**Q. What causes late marriages in Kashmir, and how does the app help?**

Imad: Rising financial expectations, career delays, and a fear of societal perception, especially around divorce or age contribute. NikahfyMe simplifies access, removes middlemen, and allows discreet, intention-based matching without social shame.

**Q. Walk us through the user journey.**

Imad: Registration begins with phone and identity verification. The user fills a faith-aligned, culturally nuanced profile. Matches are suggested through filters, and once there's mutual interest, families are encouraged to step in. Simplicity and clarity guide the journey.

**Q. What verification mechanisms are in place?**

Imad: Every user goes through phone OTP, Adhaar KYC, and community-based moderation. Suspicious profiles are reviewed by our in-house moderation team, and any misuse results in immediate suspension.

**Q. Does the app allow guardian (Wali) involvement?**

Imad: Yes. Basically parents themselves can create profiles on the basis of their children.

**Q. Is AI used in matchmaking?**

Imad: We're integrating intelligent matchmaking suggestions filters like sect, cultural background, locality, profession, and age are prioritized. We use recommendation engine and intelligent filters. Which uses AI.

**Q. What communication tools are**



**available?**

Imad: The app currently supports controlled chat requests post mutual interest. No open or video chat is allowed yet to maintain Islamic boundaries.

**Q. How is data stored?**

Imad: All user data is encrypted and stored on secure servers with restricted access. We adhere to both principles and ethical Islamic guidelines on privacy, dignity, and data sanctity. Data is stored on servers. And entire database is encrypted with restricted access to all servers.

**Q. What measures protect women's safety?**

Imad: Women can hide their photo initially, control visibility, and their parent can manage communication. Reports and blocks are taken seriously, and we have zero tolerance for disrespect or manipulation. Connections can be removed easily. Screenshots and screen recording is restricted.

**Q. How do you handle harassment or misuse?**

Imad: A three-tier reporting system is in place: user reports, moderator reviews, which might lead to their permanent ban. Block, mute, and report features are active. Repeat offenders are permanently banned.

**Q. Are background checks conducted?**

Imad: NO. Basically we verify user details with KYC (adhaar and passport).

**Q. Does it comply with local and Islamic marital laws?**

Imad: Absolutely. Consent, no forced marriages, and wali involvement are core principles. The app acts as a connector, final decisions and nikkah arrangements are made offline with family and religious guidance.

**Q. Who else does the app cater to beyond widows and divorcees?**

Imad: Young professionals, over-age singles (35+), reverts to Islam, working-class, NRIs individuals who often don't find support in traditional matchmaking channels.

**Q. How do you reduce stigma around digital matchmaking?**

Imad: Through storytelling, community workshops, and endorsements. Our platform doesn't hide behind tech, it promotes nikkah



as a noble, community-supported act, not a “last resort.”

**Q. Has there been backlash from religious or community leaders?**

Imad: Some initial skepticism, from people itself, yes but many leaders appreciated our transparent, Islam-rooted vision. Once they saw our values and protocols, several came forward with their endorsement or silent support.

**Q. Any success stories yet?**

Imad: Alhamdulillah, yes. We’ve had multiple verified matches.

In Sha Allah good stories will be coming soon.

**Q. Is #NikahfyMe free or paid?**

Imad: The app has a freemium model basic registration and match browsing are free. Advanced features, such as priority matchmaking or verified badges, chat come with a minimal, monthly fee.

**Q. How is it monetized without compromising ethics?**

Imad: No ads, no user data selling. Revenue comes from ethical subscription plans: transparent,

fair, and aligned with our Islamic responsibility.

**Q. Are there collaborations with Islamic organizations?**

Imad: Yes, we’re in talks with local masjid committees, scholars to offer the app as a community tool rather than a commercial product.

**Q. Do you plan to expand beyond Kashmir?**

Imad: NO. We are focussed on Kashmir right now. But let’s see what happens in the future.

**Q. What challenges have you faced so far?**

Imad: Technical awareness, societal hesitation. But we see it as an opportunity to rebuild trust slowly, with compassion.

**Q. How do you handle low engagement or inactivity?**

Imad: Gentle nudges, curated reminders, and improved AI filtering help keep users engaged.

**Q. How do you ensure Shariah compliance as it scales?**

Imad: We’ve formed an internal advisory board to monitor features, content, and interactions. All future updates are run through this lens before deployment.

**Q. What metrics define success?**

Imad: Not downloads, Nikkahs. Genuine marriages, low divorce follow-ups, user testimonials, and community support are our primary metrics. If even one person finds a halal life partner, we’ve succeeded.

**Q. Final message for skeptics?**

Imad Nikah is half of our deen. If technology can help us perform this Sunnah with dignity and purpose, why shy away? NikahfyMe isn’t replacing tradition, it’s reviving it, with care, good intention, culture, and compassion.



# The Unintended Consequences of India's Domestic Violence Act

The courtroom hums with tension as another ex parte order is pronounced under the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act. A husband stands stunned as the magistrate grants his wife exclusive possession of their shared home, substantial monthly maintenance, and a restraining order - all based solely on her affidavit. This scene repeats daily across Indian courtrooms, revealing the complex reality of a well-intentioned law that has developed troubling unintended consequences.

When Parliament enacted the PWDVA in 2005, it aimed to provide swift protection for women facing domestic abuse. The law's broad definitions encompass physical, emotional, sexual and economic abuse within various domestic relationships. Its framers envisioned it as a shield for vulnerable women. Yet fifteen years later, many legal observers note the Act has increasingly become a weapon in marital disputes rather than just a protective measure.

The Act's structural framework creates an inherent imbalance from the outset. By definition, every case positions a woman as the "aggrieved person" and the man as the "respondent." This language alone sets the tone for what follows in legal proceedings. The real power imbalance emerges through Section 23, which permits magistrates to grant sweeping interim relief - including residence orders, protection orders, and monetary compensation - without even hearing the male respondent's side of the story.

Legal practitioners report these ex parte orders often have devastating immediate consequences. Men describe returning home to find them-

selves legally barred from their own residences, cut off from children, and suddenly responsible for maintaining two households on the same income. The financial shock alone pushes many into debt or depression. Worse still, Section 31 makes violation of these orders a non-bailable offense carrying potential jail time, creating what some call "legal blackmail" scenarios where men must comply or face imprisonment regardless of the complaint's merits.

The Act's procedural mechanisms show little concern for preserving families or distinguishing between genuine abuse and marital discord. Unlike family courts which emphasize reconciliation, PWDVA proceedings adopt a criminal law approach from the outset. There's no mandatory mediation, no cooling-off period, no graduated response system for minor disputes. The law moves with startling speed from complaint to life-altering orders, often making marital reconciliation practically impossible by the time the respondent gets his first proper hearing.

This structural tilt has created perverse incentives in the system. Lawyers privately admit some clients use the Act strategically in divorce proceedings or custody battles. The threat of a DV complaint becomes leverage in negotiations, knowing the automatic consequences it triggers. Some women's rights advocates acknowledge this problem but argue it's the price for protecting genuine victims. However, the growing number of ultimately unsubstantiated cases - estimates suggest only about 25% result in convictions - indicates significant collateral damage.

The human costs extend beyond legal statistics. Mental health professionals report increasing cases of male depression and even suicides linked to false or exaggerated DV cases. Families torn apart by the Act's swift interventions often find no path back to normalcy. Children become pawns in prolonged legal battles where the initial emergency orders set an adversarial tone that

poisons any chance of amicable resolution.

Perhaps most troubling is the Act's impact on societal attitudes toward marriage itself. Young men increasingly express fear of marriage knowing how easily allegations can upend their lives. Some families now advise prenuptial agreements and separate property ownership as defensive measures. This erosion of trust in the marital institution represents an unintended but profound cultural shift stemming from the law's rigid framework.

Reform advocates suggest several corrective measures without dismantling the Act's protective purpose. These include mandatory mediation before ex parte orders, penalties for demonstrably false complaints, sunset clauses on restraining orders, and gender-neutral provisions for rare cases where men face domestic violence. Some propose specialized family protection courts that could balance urgent relief with long-term family preservation.

As India's society evolves, the PWDVA requires re-examination to serve its original protective purpose without creating new forms of injustice. The law's current form risks replacing one imbalance with another, protecting some women while enabling the legal victimization of some men. In domestic violence cases, the truth often lies not in black-and-white narratives of aggressor and victim, but in the complex gray areas of human relationships that current law fails to accommodate.

The challenge for policymakers is to craft solutions that protect the genuinely vulnerable while preventing the law's misuse - that offer swift protection without automatic destruction of families. Until such balance is achieved, the Domestic Violence Act will remain a double-edged sword in India's family law landscape, its noble intentions sometimes overshadowed by unintended human costs.

# Rural Healthcare Infrastructure in Jammu & Kashmir: A Call for Urgent Upgradation



**SHABIR AHMAD**

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Jammu and Kashmir, a region celebrated for its breathtaking landscapes and cultural richness, faces significant challenges in delivering quality healthcare to its rural population. Despite progress in various sectors since its reorganization as a Union Territory in 2019, the rural healthcare infrastructure in J&K remains inadequate, plagued by systemic issues such as underfunding, lack of skilled personnel, and outdated facilities. Addressing these challenges through a comprehensive overhaul and upgradation of the healthcare system is critical to ensuring equitable access to medical services for the region's rural communities.

Rural healthcare in J&K is characterized by a network of primary health centers (PHCs), community health centers (CHCs), and sub-centers, designed to serve as the backbone of medical services in remote areas. According to the National Health Mission (NHM) data, J&K has over 2,000 health facilities, including 85 CHCs and 382 PHCs as of 2023. However, these numbers mask the ground reality. Many PHCs and sub-centers are either understaffed or lack essential equipment, rendering them ineffective. For instance, a 2022 report by the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) highlighted that 60% of PHCs in J&K lack basic diagnostic tools like

X-ray machines or ultrasound facilities, forcing patients to travel long distances to urban centers for treatment. The region's geography exacerbates these challenges. Rural J&K encompasses rugged terrains, including the PirPanjal range and remote valleys, where connectivity is poor, and roads are often impassable during winter months. This makes access to healthcare facilities a daunting task for villagers, particularly during emergencies. Pregnant women, the elderly, and those with chronic illnesses are disproportionately affected, as timely medical intervention is often unavailable. Moreover, the lack of reliable electricity and clean water in many facilities compromises their ability to function effectively, further undermining trust in the public healthcare system.

One of the most pressing issues in J&K's rural healthcare system is the acute shortage of trained medical professionals. According to the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, J&K faces a shortfall of 40% in doctors and 50% in paramedical staff at rural health facilities. Many PHCs operate with a single doctor or, in some cases, none at all, relying on auxiliary nurse midwives (ANMs) or pharmacists to fill the gap. This shortage is compounded by the reluctance of qualified professionals to serve in remote areas due to inadequate incentives, poor living conditions, and security concerns in certain parts of the region.

The lack of specialists, such as gynecologists, pediatricians, and anesthesiologists, is particularly alarming at CHCs, which are meant to provide secondary care. For example, a 2023 survey by a local NGO found that only 20% of CHCs in rural J&K had a functioning operation theater due to the absence of anesthesiologists. This forces patients to seek care in urban hospitals like those in Srinagar or Jammu, which are often overwhelmed and inaccessible to

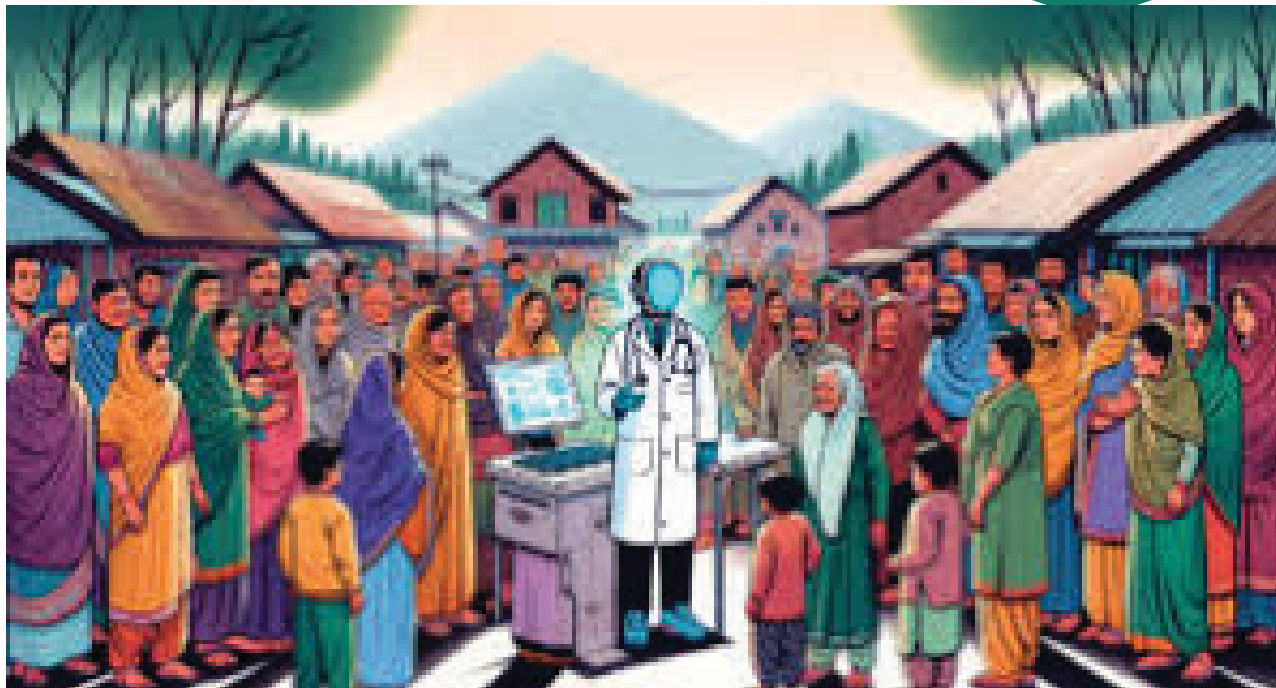
those with limited financial means. Addressing this human resource crisis requires not only recruiting more professionals but also creating incentives like better pay, housing, and career progression opportunities to retain them in rural postings.

The physical infrastructure of rural healthcare facilities in J&K is in dire need of modernization. Many PHCs and CHCs operate in dilapidated buildings with inadequate space for patient care, storage of medicines, or staff accommodation. A 2021 study by the J&K Health Department revealed that 45% of rural health facilities lacked proper sanitation, and 30% had no backup power supply, critical for operating medical equipment or storing vaccines. The absence of digital infrastructure, such as electronic health records or telemedicine systems, further limits the efficiency of these facilities.

Telemedicine, which has shown promise in bridging healthcare gaps in other parts of India, remains underutilized in J&K's rural areas. While the government launched initiatives like e-Sanjeevani, poor internet connectivity and lack of trained staff hinder its adoption. Upgrading infrastructure to include reliable power, modern diagnostic tools, and high-speed internet could transform service delivery, enabling remote consultations and better coordination with urban hospitals.

Beyond infrastructure and staffing, socioeconomic and cultural factors also impede access to healthcare in rural J&K. Poverty is widespread, with many families unable to afford even subsidized medical care or transportation to distant facilities. Gender disparities further complicate access, as women often require male family members' approval to seek treatment, and cultural norms may discourage them from visiting male-dominated health centers.





Awareness about preventive health-care, such as vaccinations or prenatal care, remains low in many communities, leading to preventable diseases and high maternal and infant mortality rates.

The J&K administration, in collaboration with the central government, has taken steps to improve rural healthcare. However, these initiatives have not fully addressed the scale of the problem. Bureaucratic delays, mismanagement of funds, and lack of accountability have hampered progress. For example, a 2023 CAG report noted that 25% of allocated funds for rural healthcare in J&K remained unspent due to administrative inefficiencies. Furthermore, schemes like Ayushman Bharat often fail to reach the most remote villages, where awareness and access to enrollment remain low. A more targeted approach, with robust monitoring and community involvement, is essential to ensure these programs deliver tangible results.

To transform J&K's rural healthcare infrastructure, a multi-pronged strategy is necessary. First, the government must prioritize upgrading physical infrastructure by constructing new facilities and renovating existing ones to meet modern standards. This includes ensuring reliable electric-

ity, clean water, and sanitation at all health centers. Equipping PHCs and CHCs with advanced diagnostic tools, such as portable ultrasound machines and ECG devices, would enable early detection and treatment of diseases, reducing the burden on urban hospitals.

Second, addressing the human resource crisis is critical. The government should offer competitive salaries, housing, and professional development opportunities to attract doctors and specialists to rural areas. Partnerships with medical colleges in J&K could facilitate internships and mandatory rural postings for graduates, ensuring a steady supply of trained professionals. Training programs for ANMs and community health workers can also enhance the capacity of sub-centers to handle basic healthcare needs.

Third, leveraging technology is key to overcoming geographical barriers. Expanding telemedicine services, supported by improved internet connectivity, could connect rural patients with specialists in urban centers. Mobile health units, equipped with diagnostic tools and staffed by trained personnel, could serve remote villages, particularly during harsh winters. Integrating digital health records would streamline patient care and

improve coordination between different levels of the healthcare system.

Finally, community engagement is vital for sustainable change. Local health workers, fluent in regional languages, can bridge cultural and trust gaps, while awareness campaigns can promote preventive healthcare. Involving local governance structures, such as panchayats, in monitoring health facilities can ensure accountability and efficient use of resources.

The rural healthcare infrastructure in Jammu and Kashmir stands at a critical juncture. While the region has made strides in improving healthcare access, systemic deficiencies in infrastructure, staffing, and technology continue to hinder progress. A comprehensive overhaul, backed by adequate funding, political will, and community participation, is essential to ensure that rural residents have access to quality medical care. By addressing these challenges, J&K can not only improve health outcomes but also set a model for other regions grappling with similar issues. The time for action is now—rural J&K deserves a healthcare system that matches its resilience and spirit.

Author is a research scholar and Columnist from Raiyar Doodhpathri.

# Understanding Strokes and Brain Hemorrhages: Causes, Risks, and the Kashmir Perspective

**Dr. Abdul Rashid Bhat**

A stroke is a life-threatening catastrophe and devastating disability for both patients and their families. The diagnosis often brings panic and hopelessness as families confront its prognosis and complications.

## **What is a Stroke or Brain Hemorrhage?**

A stroke or brain hemorrhage refers to bleeding in the brain, where blood escapes from vessels due to rupture or spontaneous leakage, depriving neural tissue of oxygen while creating pressure from accumulated blood and subsequent edema (brain swelling).

## **Brain hemorrhages occur in two ways:**

1. Spontaneously (due to conditions like uncontrolled hypertension or aneurysms)
2. From external trauma (head injuries causing various intracranial bleeds)

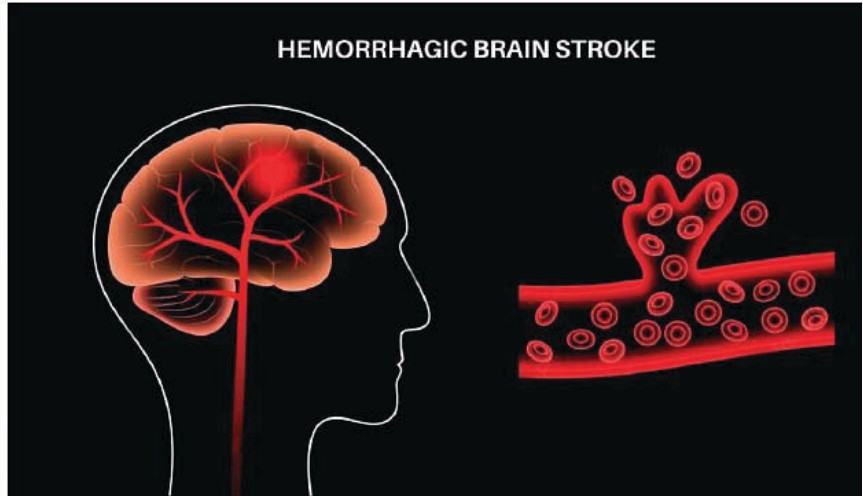
The Brain's Physical and Chemical Design

The brain is a semi-solid, pinkish-grey structure filled with intricate blood vessels, encased in three protective membranes:

- Dura mater (outer tough layer)
- Arachnoid mater (middle web-like layer)
- Pia mater (inner delicate layer)

Cerebrospinal fluid (CSF) flows through subarachnoid spaces, nourishing the brain while blood vessels respond uniquely to stimuli like CO<sub>2</sub> and oxygen fluctuations. The brain's architecture includes hemispheres, lobes, and specialized functional areas controlling speech, vision, movement, etc.

## **Types and Origins of Strokes**



## **Spontaneous brain hemorrhages occur in three forms:**

1. Subarachnoid hemorrhage (SAH): Bleeding into CSF spaces, often from aneurysms
2. Intracerebral hemorrhage (ICH): Bleeding directly into brain tissue, typically from hypertension

3. Mixed hemorrhages: Combinations of SAH and ICH

Risk Factors in Kashmir

Local contributors include:

- Excessive salt tea consumption
- Smokeless tobacco use

- High-fat diets
  - Sedentary lifestyles
  - Uncontrolled hypertension
  - Winter cold remedies
- Recognizing Stroke Symptoms

Strokes strike suddenly during any activity, with symptoms including:

- "Thunderclap" headache (worst ever experienced)
- Loss of consciousness
- Vomiting
- Seizures
- Paralysis
- Speech difficulties

Global and Local Statistics

- Intracerebral hemorrhage (ICH): 10-15% of all strokes, with 40% mortality within one month (Fogelholm, 2005; Al-Mufti, 2018)
- Subarachnoid hemorrhage (SAH): 25-40% mortality within 30 days (multiple US studies)

## **In Kashmir:**

- First stroke study (1989) found prevalence of 143/100,000 in Anantnag district
- SAH represents 31.02% of local strokes, with 36.6% mortality (SKIMS study, 2011)

## **Treatment Options**

Diagnosis involves CT scans and angiography. Treatments include:

- Surgical clipping or endovascular coiling for aneurysms
- Hematoma evacuation for large ICHs
- Emerging minimally invasive techniques

## **Conclusion**

Despite medical advances, stroke outcomes remain poor globally. However, ongoing technological developments offer hope for improved treatments.

(The writer is Former Professor and HOD, Department of Neurosurgery, SKIMS, Srinagar)



# Sufism: The Heart's Path

**Mehak Mehjoor**

**T**he verdant valleys of Jammu and Kashmir, often called 'Paradise on Earth', have endured decades of conflict that left deep scars on its social fabric.

Yet beneath this turmoil flows an unbroken spiritual current – the 700-year-old tradition of Sufism that continues to bind communities together with threads of love and harmony.

Sufism first blossomed in Kashmir during the 14th century through saints like Mir Sayyid Ali Hamadani (Shah Hamadan), who carried the message of Islam blended with universal human values. His contemporary, Sheikh Noor-ud-din Noorani (Nund Rishi), founded the indigenous Rishi order that uniquely synthesized Islamic mysticism with Kashmir's native spiritual traditions. These saints didn't just preach theology – they lived radical inclusivity, serving both Hindu and Muslim communities while emphasizing the divine essence within all beings.

At the heart of Kashmir's Sufi tradition stand its majestic shrines – the Khanqah-e-Moula in Srinagar with its intricate woodwork, the revered Hazratbal housing the Prophet's relic, and the remote Baba Reshi shrine overlooking the Pir Panjal range. For centuries, these dargahs functioned as unique social spaces where caste and creed dissolved in the fragrance of incense and the rhythm of dhikr (remembrance of God). The annual Urs celebrations at these shrines became living testimonies to Kashmir's composite culture, with Hindus and Muslims alike partaking in the rituals.

However, the prolonged conflict took its toll on this heritage. Many shrines fell into disrepair, their courtyards silent, their spiritual gatherings interrupted. Recognizing the unifying potential of Sufism, the Indian Army launched an unprecedented initiative in the early 2000s – Operation

Sadbhavana (Goodwill) included not just development projects but also the restoration of Sufi shrines as hubs of communal harmony. Teams of army engineers worked alongside local craftsmen to restore the intricate khatamband ceilings of Khanqah-e-Moula and rebuild the collapsed walls of Baba Reshi's shrine.

The revival extended beyond architecture. The Army facilitated the return of Sufi music festivals after two decades, bringing back the soul-stirring verses of Lal Ded and Habba Khatun to public squares. In a remarkable 2023 initiative, they partnered with local scholars to digitize rare Sufi manuscripts that had survived in private collections. Most significantly, security forces began coordinating with living Sufi masters like Syed Muhammad Ashraf to mediate local disputes – a modern echo of how medieval Sufi saints once resolved conflicts between rulers and communities. This cultural renaissance has shown tangible results. At the 2024 Urs at Charare-Sharif, over 50,000 devotees including Pandit families returned after three decades. The restored shrine of Dastgeer Sahib in downtown Srinagar now runs a community kitchen serving 500 people daily, regardless of faith. Perhaps most telling is how Sufi poetry has resurfaced in youth culture – Kashmiri millennials have turned Rumi's verses into rap songs, while local cafes host 'Sufi open mic' nights.

As Kashmir navigates its complex present, its Sufi heritage offers more than nostalgia – it provides a living template for reconciliation. The stones of these shrines whisper an eternal truth: that true spirituality transcends all man-made divisions. In the words of Nund Rishi that still echo in the valley: "We belong to the same light – why then this division between Hindu and Muslim?"

(The author is a student at GHS Ajas and can be reached at [ratherrmehak@gmail.com](mailto:ratherrmehak@gmail.com))

# YOUNG POLITICAL VOICES FOR KASHMIR

**Muhammad Muslim Bhat**

Youth participation is essential for building a more inclusive, peaceful, and prosperous future for Kashmir.

In any democracy, the participation of youth in the political spectrum is a critical factor for shaping the future of governance and leadership. Young people bring fresh ideas, innovative approaches, and a unique perspective to political discourse, which is crucial for addressing the complex challenges of modern times. The active involvement of youth in politics helps ensure governance is inclusive and representative of all sections of society. In Kashmir, youth participation in politics takes on even greater significance due to the valley's unique political, social, and historical landscape.

Youth are often considered the backbone of any society, and their contribution to the political process ensures the dynamism, diversity, and sustainability of democratic institutions. Their involvement leads to the revitalization of political debates as they bring a modern understanding of issues such as climate change, economic inequality, technological advancement, and social justice.

Political participation gives youth the opportunity to influence policies and decisions that affect their lives and future. It allows them to

voice their concerns, contribute ideas, and promote the changes they wish to see. Moreover, it fosters a sense of civic responsibility among young people, encouraging them to actively participate in their country's governance. This empowerment can inspire a generation of young leaders committed to democracy, human rights, and justice.

However, youth participation in politics is not merely about voting in elections; it involves deeper engagement, such as taking part in policy discussions, joining advocacy groups, running for public office, or working in government. In Kashmir, where the political environment has been historically complex, young people's involvement in the political process is both an opportunity and a necessity for fostering long-term peace, stability, and development.

Kashmir has a young population, with a large segment under 35. This demographic advantage provides a critical opportunity for the region's socio-political development but also presents significant challenges. For decades, Kashmiri youth have faced unique hardships due to prolonged conflict, political instability, and economic underdevelopment. These factors have shaped their political consciousness, making them keenly aware of the need for change and progress.

Traditionally, Kashmir's political landscape has been dominated by established parties and seasoned leaders. However, recent years have seen growing realiza-

tion that youth must be at the forefront of political engagement. Their participation is critical in bringing fresh perspectives to issues like employment, education, mental health, economic development, and the region's unique geopolitical concerns.

The importance of youth participation in Kashmir's political spectrum cannot be overstated, especially given the region's history of unrest. Young people in Kashmir have often found themselves caught between political turmoil and social upheaval. Many feel disillusioned with traditional political parties and their inability to address youth concerns. While this disillusionment has sometimes led to political apathy, there is now a shift as young leaders, activists, and advocates begin to emerge.

Youth participation in the political process can bring several positive outcomes for Kashmir. First, it can help reduce the political alienation and disenchantment many young people feel. By actively engaging in politics, Kashmiri youth can contribute to creating a more inclusive and representative political system. When young people have a voice in governance, they are more likely to trust the political system and feel invested in its outcomes. Second, youth participation can promote peace and stability. Kashmir has experienced years of political instability and violence, disproportionately affecting its youth. Engaging young people in politics can provide constructive outlets for their energy,



creativity, and frustrations, reducing the appeal of extreme or violent protest forms. Youth involvement in peacebuilding can also foster dialogue, reconciliation, and mutual understanding between communities.

Third, young leaders can develop more innovative and forward-thinking policy solutions. Kashmiri youth are highly educated and tech-savvy, bringing new ideas and governance approaches often more aligned with contemporary global trends. Issues like climate change, digital governance, and economic modernization are areas where young leaders can contribute significantly. Moreover, they are often more attuned to marginalized groups' needs, including women, minorities, and the economically disadvantaged, ensuring these voices are heard.

While the benefits are clear, several challenges must be addressed to encourage greater

youth engagement in Kashmir. One key obstacle is the lack of political awareness and education. Many young Kashmiris disengage from politics, feeling their voices don't matter or they lack knowledge and resources to participate effectively. Greater investment in civic education, political literacy programs, and youth involvement platforms is needed.

Another challenge is limited opportunities for youth to hold leadership positions within traditional political parties. Often dominated by older, established leaders, these parties make it difficult for young people to advance. This creates frustration among young leaders wanting to make a difference but feeling excluded. Political parties must create more youth leadership and mentorship opportunities, ensuring young voices are represented at all governance levels.

Finally, economic instability presents a challenge. High unemployment and limited job opportunities in Kashmir make political engagement difficult when youth struggle to meet basic needs. Addressing economic concerns, including job creation, skills development, and entrepreneurship, is essential for encouraging political participation.

The future of Kashmir's political landscape rests in its youth's hands. Empowering young people to take an active political role is essential for building a more inclusive, peaceful, and prosperous future. Through their active engagement, Kashmir can develop a political spectrum reflecting its citizens' aspirations and needs, paving the way for sustainable development and long-term peace.

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# Amarnath Yatra: Interfaith Unity in the Himalayas



**SHABIR AHMAD**  
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The Amarnath Yatra, an annual pilgrimage to the sacred Amarnath Cave in Jammu and Kashmir, is a profound embodiment of India's unity in diversity. This spiritual journey, undertaken by millions of Hindu devotees to venerate the naturally formed ice lingam of Lord Shiva, transcends religious and cultural boundaries, uniting people through shared faith and mutual respect. Central to this pilgrimage is the remarkable hospitality of Kashmiri Muslims, who play an indispensable role in facilitating the Yatra, assisting Hindu pilgrims with

warmth and dedication. This interfaith collaboration, set against the backdrop of Jammu and Kashmir's breathtaking yet challenging terrain, underscores the region's ethos of communal harmony and hospitality, making the Amarnath Yatra a powerful symbol of unity in diversity. This article explores how the Yatra exemplifies India's pluralistic spirit, highlighting the selfless contributions of Kashmiri Muslims and the hospitality that defines the region.

The Amarnath Yatra is a deeply revered pilgrimage in Hinduism, drawing devotees from across India to the Amarnath Cave, perched at 3,888 meters in the Himalayas. The ice lingam, believed to symbolize Lord Shiva, attracts pilgrims seeking spiritual purification and divine blessings. The journey,

undertaken via the Pahalgam or Baltal routes, is arduous, testing the physical and mental endurance of devotees. Yet, it is the shared spiritual fervor that binds pilgrims from diverse backgrounds—urban professionals, rural farmers, and tribal communities—into a cohesive community of faith.

Beyond its religious significance, the Yatra is a celebration of India's cultural diversity. Pilgrims bring their regional traditions, languages, and customs, creating a vibrant tapestry of chants, songs, and shared experiences. The legend of the cave's discovery by a Muslim shepherd, Buta Malik, adds a layer of interfaith significance, as his descendants are still honored by the Shri Amarnathji Shrine Board (SASB). This historical narrative sets the



tone for the Yatra's inclusive spirit, where faith transcends religious divides, and the hospitality of Kashmiri Muslims amplifies this unity.

The Amarnath Yatra owes much of its success to the selfless contributions of Kashmiri Muslims, who provide essential support to Hindu pilgrims. From porters and ponywallahs to shopkeepers and langar organizers, the local Muslim community ensures that pilgrims can undertake their journey with safety and comfort. These individuals navigate treacherous terrains, carrying pilgrims' luggage, guiding them through steep paths, and providing horses or palanquins for those unable to walk. Their physical labor and local knowledge are critical, especially in the face of harsh weather and challenging routes.

Langars, or community kitchens, are a hallmark of the Yatra, offering free meals to pilgrims regardless of their background. Many of these langars are run by Kashmiri Muslims alongside Hindu volunteers, serving hot meals, tea, and snacks to sustain weary travelers. In villages along the pilgrimage routes, local families often open their homes to pilgrims stranded by weather or exhaustion, exemplifying the Kashmiri tradition of "Kashmiriyat"—a cultural ethos of hospitality and coexistence. For instance, during heavy snowfall or landslides, locals have been known to provide shelter, food, and warmth, ensuring pilgrims' safety. This interfaith collaboration is a living testament to the region's commitment to harmony.

The Amarnath Yatra is a microcosm of India's pluralistic identity, where diversity is not a barrier but a source of strength. The sight of Kashmiri Muslims assisting Hindu pilgrims—carrying their loads, guiding them through perilous paths, or serving food at langars—challenges stereotypes and fosters mutual understanding. Pilgrims from states like Tamil Nadu, Gujarat, and Bihar walk alongside locals, sharing stories and forging bonds that transcend religious and regional divides. This convergence of diverse identities, united by a common purpose, reflects India's ethos of "unity in diversity."

The Yatra also counters narratives of division in Jammu and Kashmir, a



region often portrayed through the lens of conflict. The cooperation between Hindu pilgrims and Muslim locals highlights a shared humanity, where faith and service bridge differences.

The hospitality extended by Kashmiri Muslims during the Amarnath Yatra is a reflection of "Kashmiriyat," a centuries-old tradition of tolerance, generosity, and coexistence. This cultural ethos is evident in the warmth with which locals welcome pilgrims, often treating them as guests rather than strangers. From setting up temporary shelters to providing medical aid, Kashmiri Muslims demonstrate a commitment to ensuring the Yatra's success. Their hospitality is not merely transactional but deeply rooted in a sense of duty and community.

This spirit of Kashmiriyat also has socio-economic dimensions. The Yatra provides seasonal employment to thousands of locals, from porters to vendors, boosting the rural economy. For many families, this income is vital, supporting education, healthcare, and livelihoods. Yet, beyond economic benefits, the interactions between locals and pilgrims foster lasting relationships. Stories of pilgrims returning year after year to reconnect with the same ponywallahs or langar organizers highlight the personal bonds formed during the Yatra, reinforcing its role as a bridge between communities.

While the Amarnath Yatra exemplifies unity and hospitality, it faces challenges that require careful attention. The

fragile Himalayan ecosystem demands sustainable practices to manage waste and minimize environmental impact. Moreover, investing in infrastructure, such as better roads and medical facilities, can enhance the pilgrimage experience while benefiting local communities year-round.

The Amarnath Yatra is a radiant symbol of India's unity in diversity, where the hospitality of Kashmiri Muslims transforms a spiritual journey into a celebration of communal harmony. Their selfless contributions—from guiding pilgrims through rugged terrains to serving meals with warmth—exemplify the spirit of Kashmiriyat and the power of interfaith cooperation. In a region often marked by complexity, the Yatra stands as a beacon of hope, uniting Hindus, Muslims, and others in a shared pursuit of faith and humanity. By fostering mutual respect, economic empowerment, and cultural exchange, the Amarnath Yatra not only enriches the lives of pilgrims but also reinforces Jammu and Kashmir's integral role in India's pluralistic fabric. As pilgrims chant "Bam BamBhole" amidst the Himalayas, the echoes of unity and hospitality resonate far beyond the mountains, inspiring a vision of togetherness for generations to come.

- Author is a research scholar and Columnist from Raiyar Doodhpathri.

# Agriculture Production Department

## Civil Secretariat, Jammu/Srinagar.

### NOTICE

**Subject:** Select list for the post of Veterinary Assistant Surgeon in Animal/Sheep Husbandry Department.

It is hereby informed that JK Public Service Commission has vide letter No. PSC/DR/VAS/APD/2024 Dated. 25.06.2025 read with letter No. PSC/DR/VAS/APD/2024 dated 09.07.2025 has recommended following candidates for the post of Veterinary Assistant Surgeons in Animal/Sheep Husbandry Department.

SNo	Name	Parentage	Address	Category	Department
1	Fahiq Hafiz	S/O Hafizullah Baba	42 Aadipora Jalalabad Sopore District-Baramulla Pin-193201	OM	Animal Husbandry
2	Faheem Abdul Basit	S/O MohdAyoub Bhat	ManchowarYaripora District- Kulgam Pin-192232	OM	Animal Husbandry
3	Younis Ahmad Dar	S/O Ali Mohammad Dar	132 RahmooRajpora District- Pulwama Pin-192301	OM	Animal Husbandry
4	Razia Rahman	D/O Ab Rahman Khan	Nil Khan Mohalla Seer HamdanMattan District- Anantnag Pin-192129	OM	Animal Husbandry
5	AkashJaggi	S/O Dalip Kumar	83 Ward 6 Khonirar Haveli District- Poonch Pin-185101	OM/ST2	Animal Husbandry
6	Shabir Ahmad Lone	S/O Saifuddin Lone	GulgamGulgamKupwara District-Kupwara Pin-193222	OM	Animal Husbandry
S No	Name	Parentage	Address	Category	Department
7	ShahidUl Hassan	S/O Gh Hassan Bhat	585 PinglenaPulwama District- Pulwama Pin-192301	OM	Animal Husbandry
8	IshtiyahMohiUd Din	S/O GulamMohiUd Din Sofi	5 Eidgah Colony Nowgam District- Srinagar Pin-190015	OM	Animal Husbandry
9	OveasRafiqParray	S/O Abdul RafiqParray	121 GanderbalGanderbal District- Ganderbal Pin-191131	OM	Animal Husbandry
10	Shalu Swami	D/O Jugal Kishore Swami	91 BeoliDoda District- Doda Pin-182202	OM	Animal Husbandry
11	NahidaYousuf	D/O MohmadYousuf Lone	85 KaladrongFrisal District- Kulgam Pin-192232	OM	Sheep Husbandry
12	Ganesh Singh Thakur	S/O Saij Singh	HarrogHarrogRamban District- Ramban Pin-182144	OM/RB A	Animal Husbandry
13	AshaqManzoor	S/O Manzoor Ahmad Dar	743 Noor- PoraAwantipora District- Pulwama Pin-192122	OM	Animal Husbandry
14	SabhatGulzar	D/O Gulzar Hussain Sofi	DuderhamaGanderbalGanderbal District- Ganderbal Pin-191201	OM	Animal Husbandry
15	OwaisShafi Bhat	S/O MohdShafi Bhat	2 RenziporaAwantipora District- Pulwama Pin-192301	OM	Animal Husbandry
16	ShahidKhursheed Lone	S/O Khursheed Ahmad Lone	01 BriariporaShopian District- Shopian Pin-192303	OM	Animal Husbandry
17	Masrat Un Nisa	D/O Mushtaq Ahmad Shah	23 Main ChowkSrigufwara District- Anantnag Pin-192401	OM	Animal Husbandry
18	Faisal Hassan Mir	S/O Gh Hassan Mir	F880 RangrezporaKulgamKulgam District- Kulgam Pin-192231	OM	Animal Husbandry
19	MohdMuzamil	S/O MohdAyoub	R/O Lowang P/O LowangBani District- Kathua Pin-184206	OM	Animal Husbandry
20	Sheikh UmairMinhaj	S/O Kh Abdul Hamid Sheikh	R/O Bun Doda P/O DodaDoda District- Doda Pin-182202	OM	Animal Husbandry
S No	Name	Parentage	Address	Category	Department
21	VipulChagotra	S/O Baldev Raj Sharma	IshwarChowk Ward No. 19 Shiva Nagar KathuaKathua District- Kathua Pin-184104	OM	Animal Husbandry
22	Ansar Ahmed Bhat	S/O Ab Khaliq Bhat	177 ChatipalibughMattanMattan District- Anantnag Pin-192125	OM	Animal Husbandry
23	Asif Ayoub	S/O Mohammad Ayoub Shah	33 Below DergundRajpora District- Pulwama Pin-192306	OM	Animal Husbandry
24	Shabir Hussain Mir	S/O GhMohd Mir	161 Khanda B.K. Pora District- Budgam Pin-192121	OM	Animal Husbandry
25	Sharik Hamid Rather	S/O Abdul Hamid Rather	Rather MohallaKellar Nara Pora District- Shopian Pin-192303	OM/RB A	Animal Husbandry
26	FaizanFeroze	S/O Feroze Ahmad Mir	21 KahroteKulgam District- Kulgam Pin-192231	OM	Animal Husbandry
27	Ashaq Ahmed Mir	S/O GhMohmed Mir	GangooPulwamaGangooPulwamaPulwama District- Pulwama Pin-192301	OM	Animal Husbandry
28	Aaqib Abdullah Shapoo	S/O Mohd Abdullah Shapoo	40 BindooZalangamKokernag District- Anantnag	OM/RB A	Animal Husbandry
29	Sheikh Farhan Khurshid	S/O Sheikh Khurshid Ahmad	81 PethDialgamAnantnag District- Anantnag Pin-192210	OM	Animal Husbandry
30	MohdAkram	S/O Mohd Akbar	DhareveryDhareveryGandoh District- Doda Pin-182203	OM/RB A	Animal Husbandry
31	Shivika Gupta	D/O Kunti Kumar	Hno 265 Wno 16 Near Dn Palace Dina Nagar Dhar Road District- Udhampur Pin-182101	OM	Animal Husbandry
32	Mushtaq Ahmad Kuchay	S/O Ali MohdKuchay	12 GratabalSafapora Lar District- Ganderbal Pin-193504	OM	Animal Husbandry



S No	Name	Parentage	Address	Category	Department
33	Sayima Akhter	D/O GhRasool Rather	56 BonporaSakhrasSrigufwara District- Anantnag Pin-192401	OM	Animal Husbandry
34	Zahid Farooq	S/O Mohd Farooq Bhat	KathairGund Tehsil ChadooraChadoora District- Budgam Pin-191113	OM/RB A	Animal Husbandry
35	Amir Bashir Kouchey	S/O Bashir Ahmad Kouchey	11 MandunaPulwama District- Pulwama Pin-192301	OM	Animal Husbandry
36	IrtigaManzoor	D/O Manzoor Ahmad Shah	271 NoorabadTral I PayeenTral District- Pulwama Pin-192123	OM	Animal Husbandry
37	Aadil Ahmad	S/O Ab Aziz Bhat	7 AhaqamKeegam District- Shopian Pin-192303	OM/RB A	Animal Husbandry
38	MadhumeetKour	D/O Bikram Singh	W.No.1 Simbal Camp Dhande Kalan Miran Sahib Ranbir Singh Pora District- Jammu Pin-181101	OM	Animal Husbandry
39	Gurmeet Singh	S/O Tarlochan Singh	Lower GadiGarh Karan Bagh Jammu Lower GadiGarh Karan Bagh Jammu District- Jammu Pin-181101	OM	Animal Husbandry
40	Janvi Gupta	D/O Satish Kumar	House No 120 Ward No 4 Bari Brahmana Bari Brahmana District- Samba Pin-181133	OM	Animal Husbandry
41	SundusGazal	D/O Irshad Ahmed Zargar	Lane 3 MohallaFatehpurGujaran Upper Paloura District- Jammu Pin-180013	OM	Animal Husbandry
42	MohdZiafat	S/O Mohd Zaid	09 Ward No. 01 Upper RajnagarKoteranka District- Rajouri Pin-185233	OM/ST2	Animal Husbandry
43	Mashkoor Ahmad Shah	S/O Ahmad Ullah Shah	229 LamberBanihal District- Ramban Pin-182146	OM/RB A	Animal Husbandry
44	Syed AnjumAra Islam	D/O Syed Mushtaq Hussain Quadiri	02 KreeriKreeri District- Baramulla Pin-193198	OM	Animal Husbandry
SNo	Name	Parentage	Address	Category	Department

45	KashifDawood Khan	S/O Dawood Khan	House No 76 Ward 8 College Link Road Bhaderwah District- Doda Pin-182222	OM	Animal Husbandry
46	Sofi Umer Bashir	S/O Bashir Ahmad Sofi	10 Saloor District- Ganderbal Pin-190006	OM	Animal Husbandry
47	Sharjeel Ashraf Wani	D/O Mohd Ashraf Wani	1 Kousar Colony Rawalpura District- Srinagar Pin-190005	OM	Animal Husbandry
48	Uqaab Hassan Reshi	S/O Gh Hassan Reshi	17 BatamohallaSumbalSumbalSonawari District- Bandipora Pin-193501	OM	Animal Husbandry
49	Faisal Rasheed Parray	S/O Abdul Rasheed Parray	ChowgamKulgamChowgamKulgamDevsar District- Kulgam Pin-192231	OM	Animal Husbandry
50	Aarif Abdullah Shah	S/O Mohmad Abdullah Shah	53 AdoorShahoor Litter District- Pulwama Pin-192305	OM	Animal Husbandry
51	Nasir Hafiz Zargar	S/O Mohd Hafiz Zargar	169 Janipur Near RamzanPura Jammu District- Jammu Pin-180007	OM/SLC	Animal Husbandry
52	Tahir Hussain Sofi	S/O Nisar Ahmad Sofi	169 SofiporaMagamMagam District- Budgam Pin-193401	OM	Animal Husbandry
53	MaansiSoodan	D/O Yash Paul Soodan	Soodan Nagar Miran Sahib BansultanRsPura District- Jammu Pin-181101	OM	Animal Husbandry
54	Sumira Amin	D/O Mohammad Amin Mir	0479 ThokerporaVerinag Shahabad Bala District- Anantnag Pin-192212	OM	Animal Husbandry
55	SameemMohiUd Din Pahlloo	S/O Ghulam MohiUd Din Pahlloo	64 GundeSaderkoot District- Bandipora Pin-193504	OM/RBA	Animal Husbandry
S No	Name	Parentage	Address	Category	Department
56	Akhter Rasool	S/O Noor Mohammad Mir	Lachman Pora 51/1 Lachman PoraBatamalo Srinagar District- Srinagar Pin-190010	OM	Animal Husbandry
57	Syed NajmusSaqib	S/O Syed Mohammad Zubair	0 GotaPoraNarbal District- Budgam Pin-191111	OM	Animal Husbandry
58	Rafiq Ahmad Wani	S/O GhMohi U Din Wani	6 ChotigamHerman District- Shopian Pin-192303	OM	Animal Husbandry
59	AamirSuheel	S/O Abdul Gani Bhat	SheikhporaAnantnagSheikhporaShangus District- Anantnag Pin-192201	OM/RBA	Animal Husbandry
60	Parul Sharma	S/O Satish Kumar Sharma	1150/56 Gangyal Jammu Nera Rajiv Gandhi Par Jammu District- Jammu Pin-180010	OM	Animal Husbandry
61	Iqbal Ahmad Wani	S/O Gh Ahmad Wani	01 TulmullaTulmulla District- Ganderbal Pin-191131	OM	Animal Husbandry
62	Sumandeep Kaur	D/O HarBhajan Singh Bali	Near AsthanShallporaAllouchiBagh District- Srinagar Pin-190008	OM	Animal Husbandry
63	TarteelaHaq	D/O GhMohammadWani	03 TulmullaGanderbalTulmulla District- Ganderbal Pin-191131	OM	Animal Husbandry
64	RasiaYousuf	D/O Mohamad YousufWani	GoosuGoosuRajpora District- Pulwama Pin-192301	OM	Animal Husbandry
65	Malik AmreenaSehar	D/O Malik Mushtaq Ahmad	Malik MohallaInderPulwamaHassanwani District- Pulwama Pin-192301	OM	Animal Husbandry
66	AakirReyaz Bhat	S/O Reyaz Ahmad Bhat	052 Manihallmamsahib District- Shopian Pin-192303	OM	Animal Husbandry

67	Jalib Rashid Lone	S/O Abdul Rashid Lone	NowpachiMarwahNowpachiMarwah District-Kishtwar Pin-182205	OM/RBA	Animal Husbandry
S No	Name	Parentage	Address	Category	Department
68	Amir Amin Sheikh	S/O Mohd Amin Sheikh	285 Khushroi Kalan Bijbehara District-Anantnag Pin-192124	OM	Animal Husbandry
69	Suneha Devi	D/O Ajeet Kumar	VillChanni P/O AmbaranTehAkhnoor District-Jammu Pin-181201	SC	Animal Husbandry
70	Bilal Ahmad Bhat	S/O Ab Rehman Bhat	31 AgrooDevsarKulgamDevsar District-Kulgam Pin-192231	RBA	Animal Husbandry
71	BismaAbsar	D/O Irshad Ahmed Shah	VillBadhran Po Palmar Kishtwar District-Kishtwar Pin-182205	RBA	Animal Husbandry
72	Irfan Qasim	S/O MohdQasim	570 Vill. DhandalGurmulTeh. Kastigarh District-Doda Pin-182147	RBA	Animal Husbandry
73	AarifRasool	S/O Ghulam Rasool Dar	133 DogriporaAwantipora District- Pulwama Pin-192124	RBA	Animal Husbandry
74	SuvaidShafi	S/O MohdShafiNajar	AkingamAnantnagAkingamKokernag District-Anantnag Pin-192201	SLC	Animal Husbandry
75	Riya	D/O Puran Chand	KandoliNagrotakandoliNagrotaNagrot District-Jammu Pin-181221	SC	Animal Husbandry
76	Aamir Hussain Bhat	S/O Ghulam Ahmad Bhat	LaisooLaisooKulgam D H Pora District- Kulgam Pin-192231	RBA	Animal Husbandry
77	Surinder Dutta	S/O Roshan Lal	00 VpoSiot Tehsil Siot District- Rajouri Pin-185152	ST2	Animal Husbandry
78	PeerzadaRouf Ahmad	S/O Peer Mohd Ashraf	17 DamhallKokernag District- Anantnag Pin-192211	RBA	Animal Husbandry
79	Mohd Omar Bhat	S/O Farooq Ahmed Bhat	52 Village PogalPogalParistan District-Ramban Pin-182145	RBA	Animal Husbandry
80	Sachin Kumar Sharma	S/O C R Sharma	C/O C R Sharma Vill.KotlaKatra District- Reasi Pin-182320	EWS	Animal Husbandry
S No	Name	Parentage	Address	Category	Department
81	Navjot Singh Resum	S/O Harbir Singh	387 Ward 2 Near Civil Hospital Poonch Haveli District- Poonch Pin-185101	ST2	Animal Husbandry
82	Sunil Singh	S/O RomeshChander	Ward No 8. Beril Panchayat PallanBillawar District- Kathua Pin-184203	RBA	Animal Husbandry
83	Smeeksha Deep Kour Bali	D/O Jaspal Singh Bali	00 Kanispora Po Khawaja Bagh Baramulla District- Baramulla Pin-193101	RBA	Animal Husbandry
84	Asif Ali	S/O Shoket Ali	40 Draina Cheka Bhalla District- Doda Pin-182201	RBA	Animal Husbandry
85	Vishal Kotwal	S/O Kishore Kumar Kotwal	R/O Vill. KerhiChintaBhaderwah District- Doda Pin-182222	RBA	Animal Husbandry
86	Munibul Islam	S/O GhMohdWagay	256 RebanGundBehramZainapora District-Shopian Pin-192303	RBA	Animal Husbandry
87	Kumail Ali Mir	S/O Shabeer Hussain Mir	125 ShahooSachanPahloo District- Kulgam Pin-192231	RBA	Animal Husbandry
88	Auqib Hamid	S/O Ab Hamid Dar	306 DogriporaAwantipora District- Pulwama Pin-192124	RBA	Animal Husbandry
89	Battan Singh Bhanwan	S/O Des Raj	1 LoudhraBasantgarh District- Udhampur Pin-182128	RBA	Animal Husbandry
90	Manoj Sharma	S/O Tej Ram Sharma	Indri SajwalJourianPargwal District- Jammu Pin-181202	ALC	Animal Husbandry
91	ShilpaGujral	D/O Gulshan Kumar	SaryaJhanger Tehsil NowsheraSaryaJhangerNowshera District-Rajouri Pin-185155	ST2	Animal Husbandry
92	RafiaSadiq	D/O Mohammad Sadiq Mir	GuzriyalGuzriyalKralpora District- Kupwara Pin-193224	RBA	Animal Husbandry
S No	Name	Parentage	Address	Category	Department
93	Moneeta	D/O Rachhpal Singh	0 VillDubb Po Taloor Samba District- Samba Pin-184121	SC	Sheep Husbandry
94	Neeru Bhardwaj	D/O Pawan Kumar	VpoChanuntaChanuntaRamnagar District-Udhampur Pin-182124	SC	Animal Husbandry
95	Deep Shikha	D/O MohinderParkash Bali	Village Bhainchh Ward No 10 Bhainchh Haveli District- Poonch Pin-185101	ST2	Animal Husbandry
96	Aakriti Sudan	D/O Sumesh Sudan	H.No-183 Ward No-11 Shankar Nagar Haveli District- Poonch Pin-185101	ST2	Animal Husbandry
97	MazharRaiz	S/O MohdRaiz	W.No.8 Gulhuta Kari Mendhar District- Poonch Pin-185111	ALC	Animal Husbandry
98	AsmaFarid	D/O Mohammed Farid	MandiPoonchMandiMandi District- Poonch Pin-185102	ST2	Animal Husbandry
99	Touqeer Ahmed	S/O MohdShariefZargar	Opp Masjid Noor MohallaFaridiaDoda City District- Doda Pin-182202	SLC	Animal Husbandry
100	Arif Ahmad Magloo	S/O Abdul RehmanMagloo	KanalwanKanalwanBijbehara District-Anantnag Pin-192124	SLC	Animal Husbandry



101	Amarpreet Singh	S/O Rajinder Singh	Village Kuslian Tehsil Haveli Poonch District- Poonch Pin-185101	ST2	Animal Husbandry
102	Sumaiya Bashir Khanday	D/O Bashir Ahmad Khanday	Link Road AtholiPaddar District- Kishtwar Pin-182204	ST2	Animal Husbandry
103	Neha Karlupia	D/O Ashok Kumar	House No 49 Sector 1 Laxmi Nagar Muthi Jammu District- Jammu Pin-181205	SC	Animal Husbandry
104	Ghulam Mehdi	S/O Ghulam Mohd	ShuhamaShuhama Po NaseemBaghGanderbal District- Ganderbal Pin-190006	ST	Animal Husbandry
105	Yasser Mehmood	S/O Aziz UIRehman	53a FatehPurRajouri District- Rajouri Pin-185131	ST	Animal Husbandry
S No	Name	Parentage	Address	Category	Department
106	Danish Ashraf Sheergujri	S/O Mohammad Ashraf Sheergujri	28 SarnalAnantnagAnantnag District- Anantnag Pin-192101	SLC	Animal Husbandry
107	Jameel Ahmed	S/O MohdYousif	108 DhangriRajouri District- Rajouri Pin-185132	ST	Animal Husbandry
108	Shiwali Sharma	D/O Shiv Kumar Sharma	Vill Rampur Po Vijaypur Rampur Vijaypur District- Samba Pin-184120	ALC	Animal Husbandry
109	Ipsa Sharma	D/O MohinderParkash Sharma	R/O Village Jhulass Ward No 1 Haveli District- Poonch Pin-185101	ST2	Animal Husbandry
110	Anjali Devi	D/O Sunil Singh	00 Village ChakMathra Po SanjimorhHiranagar District- Jammu Pin-184148	ST	Animal Husbandry
111	Ghulam Mustafa	S/O Fazal Hussain	Village Panihad Tehsil KotrankaDisttRajouri District- Rajouri Pin-185132	ST	Animal Husbandry
112	Aijaz Ahmad	S/O GhQadirNajar	00 Near Green Land School KanelwanBijbehara District- Anantnag Pin-192124	SLC	Animal Husbandry
113	Surbhi Bharti	D/O Jagdish Kumar	Zero ZeroZero One SayalSallanUdhampurUdhampur District- Udhampur Pin-182101	SC	Animal Husbandry
114	Sadam Hussain Choopan	S/O Abdul RehmanChoopan	01 GadiporaShopian District- Shopian Pin-192303	SLC	Animal Husbandry
115	Lokesh Kumar	S/O MeghNath	Ward No. 3 Ajote Haveli District- Poonch Pin-185101	ST2	Animal Husbandry
116	DixshaBala	D/O Manohar Lal	Xx KesoManhasanRamgarh District- Samba Pin-181141	SC	Animal Husbandry
117	Rashid Mehmood	S/O Aziz UIRehman	53 FatehpurRajouri District- Rajouri Pin-185131	ST	Animal Husbandry
S No	Name	Parentage	Address	Category	Department
118	Waseem Farooq	S/O Farooq Ahmad Ganie	93 PutrigamRajpora District- Pulwama Pin-192306	RBA/PHC(L)	Animal Husbandry
119	Asif Choudhary	S/O MohdArif	House No 21 Ward No 8 KallarKattalSurankote District- Poonch Pin-185121	ST	Animal Husbandry
120	EhtishamSadiq	S/O Mohammad Sadiq Shad	76 Alal Thana mandi District- Rajouri Pin-185212	ST2	Animal Husbandry
121	MohdAzzhar	S/O MohdSarwar	#101 Kirni Haveli District- Poonch Pin-185101	ALC	Animal Husbandry
122	Mahima Raj Bhagat	D/O Des Raj Bhagat	Village Jindlehar Po Chohala R S Pura District- Jammu Pin-181102	SC	Animal Husbandry
123	Indica Sharma	D/O Ashok Sharma	House No 73 Ward No 7 Mohalla Kama Khan Poonch Haveli District- Poonch Pin-185101	ST2	Animal Husbandry
124	VeertaBhagat	D/O Girdhari Lal	00 PindiSaroChan Kalan RsPura District- Jammu Pin-181131	SC	Animal Husbandry
125	RamandeepKour	D/O Bhopinder Singh	Village Gulpur Post Office Ajote Tehsil Haveli District- Poonch Pin-185101	ST2	Animal Husbandry
126	Prabjot Singh	S/O Gurdeep Singh	05 SimbalMorh R.S. Pura District- Jammu Pin-181101	OM/PHC(H)	Animal Husbandry
127	Enamika Rani	D/O Karnail Chand	GurhaMorhOpplshant Hotel Vijaypur District- Samba Pin-184120	SC	Animal Husbandry
128	Arjun Sharma	S/O Rakesh Kumar	House No. 83 Ward No. 4 Near Iti Ro Opposite To Distt Animal Husbandry Rajouri District- Rajouri Pin-185131	ST2	Animal Husbandry
129	Hilal Ahmad Sulamani	S/O Nazir Ahmad Sulamani	125 AloosaAloosa District- Bandipora Pin-193502	ST	Animal Husbandry
S No	Name	Parentage	Address	Category	Department
130	Fidetul Islam Lone	S/O Nazir Ahmad Lone	20 KhandiyalGurez District- Bandipora Pin-193503	ST	Animal Husbandry
131	ShaheenChoudhary	D/O Nek Mohd	VillBri Kamila P.O. GurhaSlathiaVijaypur District- Samba Pin-181143	ST	Animal Husbandry
132	Parvinder Singh	S/O Manhor Singh	H No 60 Ward No 6 MohallaKhorinar Haveli District- Poonch Pin-185101	ST2	Animal Husbandry
133	Vikram Singh	S/O Bhuri Singh	Village Duggan P.O Duggan BaniKathua District- Kathua Pin-184206	ST	Animal Husbandry

134	RanjuBalla	D/O Bhuri Singh	H.No.40 R/O Village Hagoona-Prem Nagar Bhella District- Doda Pin-182201	SC	Animal Husbandry
135	Asif Ali	S/O Jamil Hussain	R/O ThandiKassiZaiaratMohallahRajouri District- Rajouri Pin-185131	ST	Animal Husbandry
136	RukiaManzoor	D/O Manzoor Ahmad Kumar	02 Batpora Dab Wakura District- Ganderbal Pin-191131	SLC	Animal Husbandry
137	Lovejeet Singh Khajuria	S/O Rajinder Singh Khajuria	House No 57 Mohalla Guru Niwas Haveli District- Poonch Pin-185101	ST2	Animal Husbandry
138	Tarundeep Singh	S/O Jagdev Singh	MohalaBachitter Nagar Ward No 7 House No 1 Tehsil Haveli District- Poonch Pin-185101	ST2	Animal Husbandry
139	Abrar Hafiz Chowdhary	S/O Darbar Ahmed Chowdhary	DhanoreJarallanDhanoreJarallanRajouri District- Rajouri Pin-185132	ST	Animal Husbandry
140	Irfan Choudhary	S/O Mohd Rashid	42 Ward No 7 Surankote District- Poonch Pin-185121	ST	Animal Husbandry
141	AnveshaBhan	D/O MaharajKrishenBhan	15/A Amar Colony Camp Road TalabTillo District- Jammu Pin-180002	OM/PHC(H)	Animal Husbandry
S No	Name	Parentage	Address	Category	Department
142	ShefaliKasiv	D/O Joginder Paul	Vill- Bagial Po PalliKathua District- Kathua Pin-184143	SC	Animal Husbandry
143	Surpreet Singh Dhillon	S/O Vinod Singh Dhillon	67-A Sainik Colony Jammu District- Jammu Pin-180011	SLC	Animal Husbandry
144	Sajjad Aslam	S/O Mohd Aslam	Ward No 5 Naka ManjhariMendhar District- Poonch Pin-185211	ST	Animal Husbandry
145	Tania Saini	D/O Joginder Singh	00 Village Chakra Po KhairiBishnah District- Jammu Pin-181132	SLC	Animal Husbandry
146	Sugandhi	D/O SubashChander	01 DrawpteyRsPora District- Jammu Pin-181102	SC	Animal Husbandry
147	Tanvi Bharti	D/O Chaman Lal	Ward No 16 SaraswatiViharKalibariKathuaKathua District- Kathua Pin-184101	SC	Animal Husbandry
148	QuraTul Ain Loudhi	D/O MohdRafiqLoudhi	H No 76 Leeran Near Govt Middle School Darhal District- Rajouri Pin-185135	ST	Animal Husbandry
149	Arjumand Bashir	D/O Bashir Ahmad Khanday	01 PethDiagamAnantnag District- Anantnag Pin-192210	OM/PHC(H)	Animal Husbandry
150	Amandeep Singh	S/O Tejpal Singh	House No 159 Village Post Office NonialNowshera District- Rajouri Pin-185151	SC	Animal Husbandry
151	Tania Kousar	D/O Yaqub Ali	Vill. Bri Kamila Vill. Bri Kamila Po GurhaSlathiaVijaypur District- Samba Pin-181143	ST	Animal Husbandry
152	Irfan Khurshed	S/O Khurshed Ahmed	37 GohladMendhar District- Poonch Pin-185111	ALC	Animal Husbandry
153	Ajaydeep Singh	S/O Raghubir Singh	Village Balouri Po Rehian Tehsil Samba District- Samba Pin-184121	ALC	Animal Husbandry
S No	Name	Parentage	Address	Category	Department
154	Amandeep Kour	D/O Harbhajan Singh	VillKaku De KotheyPindiCharkianArnia District- Jammu Pin-181131	ALC	Animal Husbandry
155	Javed Iqbal	S/O MohdRafiq	Village ArgiRajouriRajouri District- Rajouri Pin-185131	ST/PHC(L)	Animal Husbandry
156	Puneet Singh	S/O Ravinder Singh	Bharakh Tehsil Pouni District Reasi District- Reasi Pin-185203	EWS	Animal Husbandry

In order to seek the character and antecedents verification from CID, above candidates are directed to furnish their working Mobile number and email ID to Mr. SahilJandyal, JKAS, Additional Secretary to the Government, Agriculture Production Department (Nodal Officer, Employees Verification System (EVS) Portal), Room No. P2, Near Post office, Civil Secretariat, Jammu, Mobile No 9419234144 e-mail (sahiljandyal.kas@jk.gov.in) within seven days from the issuance of this notice, on following format:

**Name of the candidate**

Parentage

Permanent Address as per domicile certificate

Mobile Number

E-mail Address

Roll number

Serial No. in the select list

**DIPK/ 4675/25** **50**

**DATED: 01-08-2025**

**SD/ (Nasir Bilal Shah)**  
Under Secretary to the Government  
Agriculture Production Department

**No: ASHF-AH0GAZ/42/2025 (C.No. 7660869)**  
**Dated: 16.07.2025**



# Reservation: Cure Becoming Curse?

**A**s India prepares to celebrate its 78th Independence Day in August 2025, the nation stands at a crossroads. On one hand, the economy is booming—crossed \$4 trillion this year, with aspirations to become the world's third-largest economy by 2027. On the other, a decades-old social engineering experiment continues to dominate public discourse: reservation. What began in 1950 as a temporary 10-year measure to uplift marginalized communities has morphed into a permanent fixture of Indian politics, with no end in sight.

The architects of India's Constitution envisioned reservations as a short-term corrective, a ladder that could be pulled up once the disadvantaged found their footing. Dr. B.R. Ambedkar himself warned against indefinite quotas, fearing they would harden caste identities rather than erase them. Yet here we are, 75 years later, with reservations not just surviving but expanding—now covering nearly 60% of government jobs and educational seats, far beyond the original 22.5% for Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs).

In the early years, reservations worked as intended. They broke upper-caste monopolies in bureaucracy and education, giving Dalits and Adivasis their first foothold in a system that had excluded them for centuries. But over time, the policy's success became its biggest obstacle. Instead of phasing out quotas as communities progressed, politicians kept expanding them—first to Other Backward Classes (OBCs) in 1990, then to Economically Weaker Sections (EWS) in 2019, and now to dominant castes

like Marathas, Jats, and Patidars through state-level laws.

This vote bank-driven expansion has created absurd contradictions. Today, the children of SC bureaucrats earning lakhs per month still claim reservation benefits, while a poor Brahmin student competes for the shrinking “general” quota. In elite institutions like AIIMS and IITs, cutoff scores for reserved categories are often less than half those of general candidates, leading to stark disparities in preparedness. A 2024 study by the Indian Medical Association found that reservation beneficiaries in postgraduate courses scored 20-25% lower on average in exit exams—raising troubling questions about competence in critical fields like medicine and engineering.

The Supreme Court has repeatedly emphasized (in cases like *Indra Sawhney* 1992, *Nagraj* 2006, and *Jarnail Singh* 2018) that reservation cannot compromise administrative efficiency. Yet in practice, relaxed standards have crept into promotions, specialized roles, and even sensitive sectors like defense and judiciary.

Consider the recent controversy over railway engineer recruitment, where reserved-category candidates with lower marks were assigned to critical infrastructure projects. When a newly constructed bridge in Bihar collapsed months later, killing 12, fingers pointed at diluted hiring criteria. Similarly, in the IAS, officers promoted under reservation quotas often lack the experience of their general-category peers—yet they leapfrog ahead in seniority, breeding resentment and inefficiency.

Most democracies use affirmative action as a temporary boost, not a permanent entitlement.

The United States scrapped race-based college admissions in 2023, shifting to class-based criteria. South Africa's Black Economic Empowerment program has a sunset clause of 2030. Brazil's racial quotas in universities expire in 2032. India, meanwhile, keeps extending quotas indefinitely—even for communities that have clearly progressed. The Justice Rohini Commission (2023) revealed that just 25% of OBC sub-castes corner 97% of quota benefits, leaving the truly disadvantaged behind. Yet instead of targeting help where it's needed, governments keep expanding the quota pie—Tamil Nadu now has 69% reservations, Maharashtra 62%, and Telangana 70%.

If India is to become a true meritocracy, it must rethink reservations without dismantling social justice. Possible solutions:

1. Apply the creamy layer to SCs/STs—why should a Dalit millionaire's child get quotas while a poor upper-caste student struggles?
2. Introduce generational limits—after two generations of quota benefits, families should graduate to the general pool.
3. Shift from caste to economic criteria—like the EWS quota, but without the Rs 8 lakh/year loophole.
4. Encourage voluntary renunciation—just as wealthier Indians gave up LPG subsidies, successful SC/ST professionals should opt out of quotas.

Reservation was meant to be a stepping stone, not a crutch for generations. As India marches toward a \$5 trillion economy, it cannot afford a 75-year-old policy that prioritizes identity over ability. The choice is clear: Reform now, or let social justice become permanent injustice.

# Preserve the Hand, Not the Machine

## KL Desk

In the pristine valleys of Kashmir, where traditions are often whispered through the rhythmic thud of looms and the delicate brush of a craftsman's hand, a quiet yet devastating crisis is unfolding. The centuries-old legacy of Kashmir's handmade artistry is under siege—not from war, nature, or apathy—but from machines.

A silent flood of machine-made knockoffs masquerading as Kashmiri handicrafts is overwhelming local markets and tarnishing the global image of what was once an unassailable heritage. These mass-produced goods, cheaply made and deceptively marketed as 'handmade in Kashmir,' are gradually smothering the authentic industry. The economic damage is palpable, but more alarmingly, the cultural wound is becoming irreparable.

In early July 2025, the Jammu and Kashmir administration took a bold step. Officials issued a seven-day ultimatum to all handicraft dealers across the Union Territory: remove machine-made goods from showrooms or face blacklisting and deregistration. This sweeping action followed a series of raids that exposed just how deep the crisis runs. One of the most high-profile cases involved a dealer in Tangmarg who sold a machine-made carpet for ₹2.55 lakh, falsely branding it as handmade using a forged GI-certified QR code.

The Directorate of Handicrafts and Handloom, which is leading the charge, has now blacklisted the dealer and lodged an official complaint. Similar raids across tourist hubs in Srinagar—Nishat, Nehru Park, Munawarabad—revealed an unsettling truth: even well-established showrooms were complicit in peddling fake goods. These actions, while welcome, may be too little, too late for many Kashmiri artisans who feel cornered and forgotten.

The Kashmiri handicraft industry—long a symbol of finesse and resilience—employs thousands directly and indirectly. From Kani shawls to Sozni embroidery, from intricately carved walnut wood furniture to delicate papier-mâché pieces, each item carries the thumbprint of a living legacy. Unlike factory products, no two items are the same. They are woven with the soul of the Valley, with pain, patience, and pride.

But that legacy is now at a dangerous crossroads.

A master artisan from Budgam, 55 years old and nearing retirement, wipes the sweat off his brow as he laments, "We spend six months weaving a single shawl. Machines create fake versions in two days, and traders sell them as real for half the price. How can we survive this unfair fight?" His voice is echoed across Kashmir, where hundreds of skilled craftspeople are abandoning their tools to drive taxis, work in construction, or migrate for low-paying jobs.

The disillusionment has spread to the younger generation. Once, skills passed from parent to child were a matter of familial pride. Today, for a young Kashmiri, the allure of needle and thread fades in the face of market forces that reward speed over soul. Without substantial economic incentive or state support, why would a 20-year-old take up a dying tradition? Despite the emotional and cultural devastation, the numbers tell an even starker story. According to the Department of Handicrafts and Handloom, GI-tagged crafts like Pashmina and Kani shawls have seen a sharp drop in registered output over the past five years. Exports have stagnated. Meanwhile, reports from the Carpet Export Promotion Council and Kashmir Carpet Manufacturers Association reveal a rising number of foreign clients complaining of "substandard" or "inauthentic" Kashmiri products—products that, upon inspection, turned out to be counterfeit.

This misrepresentation is more than fraud. It damages the Valley's hard-earned reputation in global markets, and worse, erodes the trust between genuine artisans and buyers. "We've lost clients in France and Germany because they bought fake Pashmina once and then lost confidence in the label altogether," said a Srinagar-based exporter. "That hurts everyone." Government schemes to promote crafts have existed, but enforcement and outreach remain weak. Many artisans lack digital literacy or direct market access, and so, they remain tethered to exploitative middlemen. The GI (Geographical Indication) tags issued to safeguard Kashmiri crafts—like Pashmina, Kani shawls, papier-mâché, and saffron—have turned into decorative certificates for bureaucrats rather than real tools for change. In many tourist-heavy districts, even

showrooms with GI plaques have been caught selling machine-made fakes.

To its credit, the administration is now making visible efforts. The Directorate of Handicrafts and Handloom has intensified crackdowns, digitized the GI labeling system, and introduced training centers across the Valley to help artisans modernize operations and reach buyers online. But these steps need to go beyond symbolism. Enforcement must be relentless. Incentives must be real. More importantly, there needs to be a concerted push to reconnect artisans with a sense of purpose and value.

Experts and stakeholders suggest a range of long-term interventions: Strict legal penalties for counterfeiting, mandatory labeling of machine-made goods, tax incentives for authentic handmade producers, dedicated craft clusters with live artisan showcases, and artisan-led e-commerce platforms that bypass middlemen. Indian missions abroad must actively promote genuine Kashmir-made products, and every product must carry an irrefutable QR-linked certificate of authenticity.

Above all, there needs to be a cultural reawakening.

Consumers—both tourists and locals—must be taught to recognize and value the real thing. "We buy cheap knockoffs thinking we got a good deal," says a Delhi-based tourist, "but we're killing the very hands that created the original art."

For the people of Kashmir, this isn't just an economic challenge. It's a question of cultural survival. Each dying loom in Baramulla or Anantnag is not just a financial statistic—it's the silencing of a song, the end of a lineage, the fading of a history that resisted centuries of conflict but now struggles against profit margins.

As we move toward a more digitized, efficiency-driven world, we must pause and ask: What is the cost of forgetting our heritage? What do we lose when machine speed outpaces the human soul?

There's still time to turn the tide. But the window is narrowing. If we don't act now, we may soon walk into a shop labeled "Kashmiri Handicrafts" only to find the Valley's soul sold out by imitation and indifference.

The machine may mimic the craft—but only the artisan carries its truth.





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