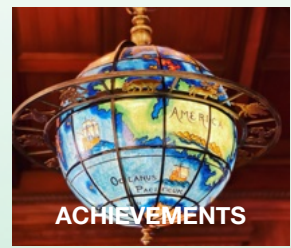


ISBUND

NEWS, EVENTS AND
EVERYTHING IN
BETWEEN



ISBUND

A Quarterly Newsletter for the Kashmiri Pandit Community



From the Editor's Desk

N^{amaskar!}

Introducing 'Van'duh,' our winter-themed edition that draws inspiration from the chill of Kashmiri winters. While the temperatures may have dropped (if you witnessed a summer in England) the nostalgic embrace of *kangri*, *Gaad baat*, and *khetch mawas* promises to keep us snug, both literally and metaphorically.

With this issue, ISBUND marks a triumphant three-year journey, three volumes in the making—an idea born during a casual conversation that has now materialised into a tangible reality. None of this would have been possible without the unwavering support of our contributors and our dedicated readers. While the tagline 'Quarterly' on the front cover remains an aspirational milestone, we playfully ponder if 'Termly' might be a more accurate description, given our consistent releases during the main term breaks of Easter, Summer, and Christmas. Nonetheless, we aim for four issues in volume 4 in 2024, embracing the abundance of 4s.

Despite having numerous planned initiatives yet to materialise, it only underscores our enduring motivation to sustain this endeavour. The desire to produce a printed version has been echoed by our community, and we're exploring options with our esteemed executive team and vendors to bring this to fruition.

The vibrancy of our Diwali party this year, attended by many of you in your fabulous attire, deserves acknowledgment. Behind the scenes, the diligent planning and execution by our exceptional executive team surpassed expectations. We express our heartfelt gratitude to them on behalf of the entire community, recognising the challenges involved in orchestrating such events.

In an insightful conversation (albeit virtually), our own Mridula Kaul (or Ruby as we know her) engages with Dr. Sundeep Kaul (Sunny Bhaiya), the current KPAE president.

The interview delves into his connections with KPAE and his vision to propel the organisation and our community forward. The transcribed version is available in this issue, with the interview set to be released on our digital platform soon. Details about the updated website release dates will be shared by the Exec team, but we are excited to announce the winning KPAE logo designers in this issue, with the finalised logo to be revealed shortly.

This edition features the remarkable journey of Shashi Kaul, who conquered Mt Everest in 2017 and continues to embark on climbing expeditions and run marathons. Additionally, we showcase Dalip ji, who has discovered his passion for photography. True to form, our youth contribute thought-provoking initiatives and writing, adding depth and meaning to this issue. Compiling this edition has been a pleasure, and we sincerely hope you derive as much enjoyment from it as we have.

Lastly, as the year comes to a close, it's time for celebrations with friends and family- a moment to rejoice, rejuvenate, reflect on the journey of the past, savour all things delightful, and bid a fond adieu to 2023, eagerly embracing the dawn of 2024.

Team ISBUND wishes you all a fantastic Christmas and a joyous New Year!

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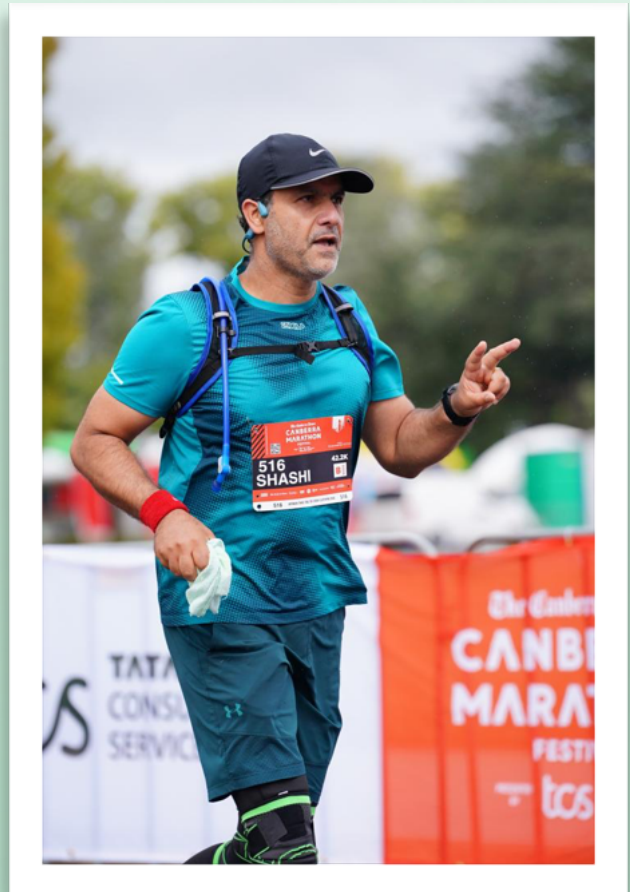
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Journey From Pit to Peak

Shashi Kaul

Most Kashmiri Pandits born in the 70s and 80's will have a story to share that will often be a testament of resilience, and the pursuit of excellence. Born in a village near the holy city of Anantnag, in the heart of Kashmir, Shashi grew up in a close-knit Pandit family. His childhood was filled with the micro celebrations of life's small joys, which was a way of life back then. A difficult upbringing from perspective of materiality and insufficient money in the household. Sole focus was education and human interaction and in fact it sheltered Shashi's upbringing from the harsh realities of insurgencies and tear in the secular fabric of the Kashmir as a result, which eventually laid foundation for his incredible grit and determination.

For his early education, Shashi attended National, Caset and Walden schools in Srinagar. Like many Kashmiri families, academic excellence was the primary focus.



Initially Shashi was in oblivion to the typical schooling back in his junior years. A dyslexic (wasn't known until later years), but excellent with numbers, Shashi managed to get through his schooling years.

Despite the challenging times due to the peak of insurgency in Kashmir during the 90s, losing everything overnight, Shashi's determination and pursuit of knowledge led him to three masters degrees in three separate disciplines. These incredibly difficult and formative years marked the beginning of his resilient journey.

One thing Shashi was always known for was challenging the status quo and not doing things as per convention. Shashi would always ask, 'why can't we do this'? and try to do things that often his peers would say 'you can't do that'.

Now settled in Australia in the capital city of Canberra, this desire of thinking about things differently, over the years allowed Shashi to get involved with Australian foundations such as, *Brave hearts*, *Make a wish* and *Hands across the water*, and several other charities. A group of friends together started a trust to support the functioning of a school in India. They were keen to instigate a system that could attract attention and consequently enhance funding for the school.



Now, in a position to give back to society, Shashi has dedicated himself to making a positive impact, especially for kids that do not have enough parental support. At first the idea was to raise funding by running, climbing a few hills as an adventure etc. Shashi is passionate about philanthropy; his north star is to promote the welfare of others and leave a slightly better world for our children. Shashi's philanthropy work has led him to participate in endurance events mainly to raise funds. The group started with a few minor mountaineering challenges to get some funding. In the process the group became obsessed about climbing. Slowly they started to take bigger challenges, whilst Shashi personally became an alpine and Everest enthusiast.

Shashi has climbed, Mount Everest, Mount Aconcagua and Kilimanjaro, and he runs marathons regularly.

Shashi plans to capture seven summits, including:

1. Mount Everest – completed (2017)
2. Aconcagua– completed (2014)
3. Kilimanjaro – completed (2013 and 2019)
4. Mount Kosciuszko – completed (2013)
5. Vinson – To be completed
6. Denali - To be completed
7. Mauna Kea - To be completed

Recent Marathons and Half Marathons

March 23 – Weston Creek half Marathon

April 23 – Canberra full Marathon

June 23 - Canberra half Marathon

September 23 – Sydney full Marathon



From Banking to Birdwatching

Dalip Kaul

I've had the pleasure of knowing Dalip Kaul ji throughout my life, and it warms my heart to see how he has found his true calling. Today, we delve into his fascinating journey of a remarkable transition from the world of banking to the captivating realm of photography. Many of us can relate to the idea of pursuing a passion or dream that may seem worlds apart from our current profession. Dalip ji has not only dared to dream but has also turned that dream into a reality.



I asked him about how this incredible transition unfolded, what sparked the shift from the rigid structures of banking to the creative and dynamic field of photography.

My passion for photography has been a constant in my life, beginning with capturing moments of family and friends and eventually shifting towards documenting the growth of my children. The numerous trips to Kashmir provided the perfect backdrop to my shots, the landscape, streams, mountains...what else do we need to get started.

Upon relocating to Mumbai for a work assignment, my enthusiasm for photography reached new heights. I delved into experimenting with various subjects in and around Mumbai, immersing myself in capturing the essence of the vibrant scenes of the city.

Amidst these explorations, a profound interest in birds emerged. Since then, my focus has predominantly been on capturing the beauty of these winged creatures, and it has indeed been an exhilarating and unpredictable journey.

Dalip ji finds his photography inspiration from life in general, holidays, and places he visits on business.

He acknowledges that he is self-taught and loves to search through YouTube for refining his techniques. On most days you will find him strolling along the wilderness with his beloved camera



gear, waiting for his subject patiently.

He is grateful for the inspiration and support he draws from numerous Facebook groups and loves the admiration from his Instagram followers, of which the numbers keep rising. In today's world where everyone is looking for instant validation, he says he has been fortunate enough to find the support and guidance from people.

Next time we will have a proper sit down chat with him and ask for his tips and tricks to capture the perfect moment. For now I will leave you with some of his shots. You can follow him on [Instagram](#) and Facebook .





Embracing The Journey: Leading KPAE Into a Vibrant Future

Dr. Sundeep Kaul

It's an honour to share my thoughts and aspirations as I take on the role of President of the Kashmiri Association of Europe (KPAE). A warm welcome to this insightful conversation where I delve into my connection with KPAE, the evolution of our community, and the vision I hold for its future.

A Walk Down Memory Lane

My earliest memories of KPAE date back to the late '70s and early '80s, a time when the Midlands became a hub of excitement for our community. Faces painted in shades of love and warmth, the camaraderie was palpable. It was in hotels, often in Kenilworth, where we, as a community, felt a sense of ownership and belonging. These gatherings evolved into annual or biannual meetings across the country, fostering an environment of warmth, language, and cultural expression.

Roots and Inspiration

Growing up, my father was actively involved in KPAE, and witnessing his dedication left a lasting impression. His leadership and the contributions of many uncles instilled a sense of warmth and welcome that became synonymous with KPAE events. Those were the positive aspects - the language, the camaraderie, the cultural expressions - all creating a unique bond among us.

The idea of leading KPAE, however, emerged from a deeper calling. Leadership roles require the right timing, and I firmly believe in contributing when one can bring value. With the baton passing through capable hands, my inspiration came from observing the positive energy injected into KPAE by the younger generation.

Transition and Evolution

A significant transition occurred, shifting momentum from those who had been in the UK for a long time to the younger sector. This infusion of passion, vibrancy, and exuberance marked a turning point. My connection deepened unexpectedly, becoming one of the most uplifting experiences of my life. The last 20 years witnessed an influx of individuals like yourself, redefining our community's dynamics.

Filling the Void

I sensed a void during my youth, a lack of the familial warmth and support that I now experience within this community. The love, affection, and respect from those who arrived in the last two decades became a cornerstone of my life. Connectivity increased, and the advent of technology further amplified our ability to stay in touch.

The Decision to Lead

The decision to step into a leadership role emerged during a crucial period, particularly as surges of events like the COVID pandemic unfolded. Unfortunately, our community faced fragmentation, and I felt a calling to bring us ***together because together we are stronger***. My vision is clear - to build a community that is supportive, caring, high-achieving, and proud of its roots. And the bridge to this vision is a robust digital platform.

Digital Transformation

In this modern era, technology can be a powerful connector. My vision revolves around creating a digital platform that integrates our community seamlessly. This platform won't merely be a communication tool; it'll be a hub for support, healthcare, education, cultural exchange, and much more. Connecting to a central source, it will evolve with our community's needs, offering flexibility and resilience.

Encouraging Regional Participation

With a growing membership base, regional get-togethers become essential. Encouraging smaller events, whether it's badminton tournaments or musical evenings, adds layers to our interactions. This ensures that the community remains engaged throughout the year, not just during annual gatherings.

Unveiling Priorities

The top priorities for KPAE under my leadership are clear. We aim to create a platform that adds tangible value to individuals' lives, offering support in health, finance, education, and cultural exploration. The focus is on fostering a sense of togetherness, utilising technology to bridge geographical gaps.

Looking Ahead

As I embark on this journey, my goal is to strengthen the bonds within our community. The power of collective support, care, and collaboration cannot be overstated. I envision a future where KPAE becomes a beacon of unity, resilience, and achievement for Kashmiris in Europe.

In conclusion, the digital platform is not just a technological innovation; it's a manifestation of our collective spirit. Together, we can build a vibrant community that thrives on support, understanding, and shared aspirations. Here's to embracing the journey ahead with enthusiasm and unity.

Team ISBUND would like to thank Mridula Kaul for taking the time to have this conversation with Dr. Sundeep Kaul. The interview was transcribed using the AI tool. We will upload the audio file on our digital platform and share the link soon.

Odd Pair of Socks

Anu Raina



Last week has been Anti-Bullying week at our school and each day we had to find different socks as the children went to school wearing odd socks. So I asked : "What has an Odd Pair of Socks got to do with Bullying?" The answer I got was that one must not be picked on because you may be odd or different or stand out from the rest. We have to be accepting of others' differences and celebrate those differences.

The children also learnt an important aspect of Bullying which is accepting differences and also to say 'STOP' or 'NO' when you feel hurt or picked on.

But bullying is beyond accepting differences - A Bully by definition is someone who is an intimidating, aggressive, disrespectful and dominating individual, using threatening and hurtful words or actions. Some bully because they have been bullied and return the favour to someone else, some bully are ageists, some bully because of their position, some because they are envious and deeply insecure and some bully because they get pleasure out of the act.

As we raise awareness about 'Odd Socks', we also need to :

- Raise their Self-Esteem
- Standing up for yourself and each other.

A child who is loved unconditionally and valued for who they are rather than who you want them to be will gain high SELF-ESTEEM. Knowing one's self worth makes us feel good, gives us confidence in our own abilities. It gives us the boost to face challenges, taking risks to learn new things and develop.



Working with young children, we are often presented with all kinds of artwork and though one may be tempted to say, 'It's wonderful' or 'beautiful' for every artwork, the children value more if we are specific and genuine in our praise... 'I like the colour combination you have chosen' or 'the leaves look very real in your picture'

Giving them the right kind of praise / feedback allows them to understand their work and abilities but also develop it further whilst valuing your advice in their life. This is key to raising their **SELF-WORTH** or **SELF-ESTEEM** to make them stronger adults for later.

Self-Esteem can lead to **Believing in yourself** which empowers children to Stand up for yourself or for others. The confidence that is built into us gives us that power to be assertive, which can be used most certainly be in a respectful and dignified manner. Children exposed to positive and effective communication in their environment will be able to state their opinion, relaying their message successfully.

Communication is a powerful tool when used correctly!

Sometimes its best to be silent in a situation if it does not honour your self worth.

Speak up on things that matter most!

Speak up for those who matter most!

My Reflection: म्योन अक्स

Rekha Tukra

यिईत कएल, अज अन्स लछ व्थोवुम,

बुथ वुछुम येलि, पनुनुय पान न प्रजनोवुम:!

After ages when today, I wiped dust on mirror of my inner core;
Once saw my face didn't recognise my own-self inward anymore;
because of ignorance mask outward I wore.

यिम दाग अस्मि खटथ, तिमय अँछव किइन् नरोवुम:

Those scars which I kept so far obscured and hidden before;
Same very eyes gave exposition written by welling from every pore.

पानय यिमन जखन ,हवा दिथ नोसूर बोडरोवुम:,

कँअसी वुछ न कूत अँदरी, अँछव किन खुन् दरियाव होरुम:,

पनिनिस अशक् सहलाबस मँज फटथि, मनुक भार लोतरोवुम:

Thus hold own self solely responsible for triggering every open wounds
to form scars which I truly deplore;
Nobody bothered to peep inside my damaged heart's pain, ache and gore;
Thereafter how I cried a blood tears river nevertheless I didn't implore.
In my own flood of tears vortex apparently I drowned until I did explore;
emerged completely self soothed cool and felt bit lighter what I adore.

समँदर भसि लहर ठासान वनान, वड्छ किथप्पअठ छानि सइत सेकि मोखत् छोनुम:,

तिथप्पअठ वक्त् चँजव, छौकव सईत मस तान छोटु, सइत मन ति छोलुम

छोकुम।

Towards kerb of sea beach sea waves apprise by making sound waves on crashing
to the shore;

Look, carefully how I churned pearls from the sieve straining all sand which
oysters bore;

Similarly, when life gave hard time and threw blows like a slap on the face
causing greying plus wore and tore;

Eventually these experiences cleansed my mind, heart, purified my soul and
rinsed my sins, soothed my sore.

यिमन ख्यशिन त सारनी खोश थ्वन् किन, कूताह मे चोलुम:,

कड्च लड्ठ पनुन तमाह, मन मोरुम सइति जमीर त गोलुम।

Whether for my own aspirations or in pursuit trying to make everyone happy my own happiness never came to fore no more now I ignore;

Many times in heartbreak and betrayal I killed my desires ,conscience therefore all things I abhor.

पोष कम त कएँढ स्ठ्या, पननिस लअनि मे पान्य पुशरोवुमः,

यिमवुय कँढ स् अथव, पोष गौँद न हुँद गुलजार रअछरोवुमः।

My life wasn't a cake walk moreover less bed of roses and more thorns probably my destiny and fate for me in store;

Certainly, I am myself to blame brought misfortune upon myself furthermore;

However cruised through storms and difficulties with strength and big roar;

Likewise wilted flowers makes through winter to spring for bloom to restore;

Survived autumn didn't wither also never dwelt on days of yore;

Sowed seeds of joy, grew hope equally harmony to even the score;

Also harvested bumper crop and sunny days galore.

यथ दुनिया मँज यि सोरुम, अखरसः किहीन नय लोभुमः,

सोरुय सरमाय युस पनुन ओसुम, सुय व्अन रोवुम

In this material world all the years amassed wealth, at the end nothing I gained all the splendour turned dust and hoar;

Whatever earned lost essentially the goodwill, money, metal, gems and ore.

पन्ि किन कएँम सारनि रुत् त ज्अनी, विनीसतान प्जर वरतोवुमः,

यिइ न स्योद् गोख वोनहोम, सुत्ति तकसीर च्ोअनी, तवय पतुस पछतोवुम।

Personally, my actions and intention were right and good for others simply because I care for;

No want of yield in return of my random act of kindness and goodness being believer in humanity like hardcore;

Also practiced truthfulness been honest, harmonious in encore;

For right results attributed credit to themselves but what went wrong there was uproar;

All played blame game therefore regretted then repentance became my new chore.

A Brief Introduction to Kashmiri Shaivism

Shaarika Munshi

Kashmiri Hindus follow a specific branch of Hinduism known as Kashmiri Shaivism. This revolves around the worship of Lord Shiva and Mother Shakti. Though all other Gods and Goddesses of Hinduism are worshipped, Shiva-Shakti are the central to our traditions. These two divinities are eternal companions, husband and wife. One cannot be without the other. Therefore, our most important festivals are those which worship Shiva and Shakti, such as Shivratri - the marriage of Shiva and Parvati.

Kashmiri Shaivism is a distinct tradition within Hinduism that developed between the 9th and 11th century AD. It propounds the idea that the essence of the individual self (jiva) is non-different from the universal consciousness, and that liberation can be achieved through the realisation of this identity. The main scripture of this tradition is the "Tantraloka", written by Abhinavagupta in the 10th century. It teaches that the ultimate reality of the universe is consciousness, known as Shiva or Para-Shakti, and that everything in the world is a manifestation of this consciousness. Other key texts in Kashmiri Shaivism include "Shiva Drishti" and the "Spanda Karikas" which offer a comprehensive view of the tradition, including its cosmology, metaphysics, and spiritual practices.

One example of influential Kashmiri literature is the Shiva Sutras. Sutras are a set of rules or guidelines and these ones describe the nature of human consciousness, a highly condensed set of instructions that guide an individual to realise the true nature of Shiva within themselves. There are 77 sutras in total in the Shiva Sutras, categorised into 3 parts- 1st, 2nd and 3rd awakening. Each part has a varying number of sutras aimed at a different target audience.

Attributed to the Sage Vasugupta - 9th Century

Core Principles

1. The most devout and in control individuals aiming to completely detach from the material world and aimed at total enlightenment.
2. For individuals caught between the two but also wishing to become more enlightened while progressing in the material world.
3. Small Baby steps, how to realise the divinity within you in everyday actions. Begin the journey towards enlightenment.

Often Kashmiri Shaivism is referred to as Trika Shastra. What does this mean? Trika means TRINITY- the trinity being different from the standard trinity in other schools of Hindu philosophy e.g. Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva. In this case the Trika or Trinity is Shiva, Shakti and the individual seeking enlightenment (Nara).

Shiva Drishti is a term used in Kashmiri Shaivism, which is a form of Hinduism that focuses on the worship of Lord Shiva as the supreme deity. It refers to the belief that the universe is a manifestation of Lord Shiva's vision or perception. In this tradition, the goal of spiritual practice is to attain a state of consciousness in which the individual realises that they are one with Lord Shiva and that the entire universe is seen through his eyes. This cultivates a contemplative perspective and encourages the practitioner to look at the world with compassion and equanimity. This is often referred to as the "Shiva-Drishti" or "Shiva's gaze," which is said to bestow liberation or enlightenment.

The power and gravity of these traditions have resulted in consecration of shrines for Shiva and Shakti. Some of the Shiva shrines include Amareshvara, Vijayeshvara, Sureshvara, Harsheshvara, Mahaadeva, Bhuteshvara, Haramukheshvara. Similarly, some of the shrines dedicated to Shakti are Tripurasundari, Trisandhyaa, Jvaalaamukhi, Shailaputri, Shaarika, Shaarada, Rajni, and Khirbhavaani.

Kashmir was regarded as one of the greatest places of Sanskrit Learning in ancient India. It has contributed and influenced a variety of other doctrines in Hinduism e.g. Bhakti movement as well as Buddhism and Jainism.

Over the past few centuries, the valley was subject to numerous invasions in which there were several attempts to destroy the indigenous faith and culture. Yet by some miracle, this philosophy survived it all. To this day, Kashmiri Shaivism continues to be practised and studied by a significant number of followers in India and abroad and is considered as one of the most important and influential schools of thought in Hinduism.



Burnout

Neetu Raina

Upon completing "*The Burnout*," I took a profound pause, wiping away tears wrought by the emotional journey. A heartfelt salute to individuals born in '70s and '80s, particularly women, resonates deeply, given the book's revelation that burnout is more prevalent in the female demographic. Closing my eyes, I reflected on the authenticity of these sisters' narratives. While acknowledging that burnout affects both genders, the book scientifically underscores women's heightened vulnerability to this phenomenon.

For women, navigating the divide between societal expectations and personal identity proves to be an exhausting journey. The constant pressure to embody the best version of oneself can lead to a spiral of memories. Just when we believed we could take a breather from the hardships that befell our community, striving for independence, we realize we've grappled with a significant issue of self-esteem. We allowed others, including our loved ones, to define us, motivated by a desire not to burden parents who we believed had already suffered. Now, inadvertently, we've become a generation striving to provide the best for our children, yet we let their expectations dictate our lives. If a woman dares to voice her concerns, she is often met with a world quick to label her as selfish and needy.

We are a generation that places a strong emphasis on caring for our parents, surpassing the efforts made by previous generations. As we age, we willingly take on the responsibility of looking after them, mindful of the extended life expectancy that reinforces the ongoing commitment to family across generations.

The idea of techniques to complete the biological stress cycle and restore the body to a state of relaxation is debunked; it's a myth. The only effective approach is breaking the cycle.

Don't allow anyone to manipulate you into believing that you are less than you truly are. You are more than the opinions of your partners or anyone else. Reach out, let your friends know when you're not okay, and be willing to distance yourself from people who cause harm, after giving them a fair chance to be supportive. Cultivate an ecosystem where you can freely express yourself without fear of judgment.

With the help of eye-opening science, prescriptive advice, and helpful friends, all women will find something transformative and will be empowered to create positive change. The key will be finding this clan but once you do, you will be blessed.

Levelling The Playing Field: Insights From Online Doctor Interviews With 'The Aspiring Medics'

Vidisha Handoo

Namaskar Sarnee!

My name is Vidisha and I'm a 3rd Year Medical student at King's College London.

Unlike the Kashmiri stereotype, I do not come from a long line of doctors. Being the first one in my family to pursue a medical career, applying to medical school was an overwhelming experience - I had no idea what to expect. Applying to Medical School is a ruthless journey with multiple hurdles: entrance exams, A-levels, personal statement, extracurriculars, interviews and beyond. For individuals from disadvantaged backgrounds or without connections in the field - the application process can be especially intimidating.

It was during this time that I initially discovered and connected with 'The Aspiring Medics': a social enterprise levelling the playing field for Medicine applicants. Whilst other companies exploit students by charging exorbitant fees, this online-platform provides free online courses and webinars, accompanied by certifications for participants. They comprehensively address every aspect of the application process.

A crucial criteria for the Medical School application is demonstrating an understanding of the medical profession, assessed in personal statements and interviews. While many students typically secure work experience through their GPs and connections in hospital, I faced challenges in this regard due to lack of personal connections and constraints imposed by the onset of COVID-19. In response, I took the initiative at my school's medical society and organised weekly webinars. Using LinkedIn, I reached out to doctors in various specialties, inviting them for Zoom interviews. Each week featured a different specialty, and I posed questions about their work, daily routines, the highlights, challenges, and delved into their diverse interests.

After getting into Medical School, I wanted to give back to the organisation that supported my journey. I persisted in conducting these sessions, now integrated into a national teaching program within their online course. I was privileged to involve doctors spanning diverse specialties like Aesthetic Medicine, Neurosurgery, Psychiatry, and Anaesthesia. I extend my appreciation to

Dr. Shivani Dudha and Dr. Anju Raina from KPAE, who kindly agreed to support this initiative and share their experiences.

A key insight I gained was a greater appreciation of the wonderful diversity within the medical field. Every specialty showcases its own individual characteristics, from the amount of patient interaction, number of hours worked, types of case presentations that appear to the daily duties of doctors. However, a shared commitment to patient care binds all the specialties together.

As doctors presented to aspiring medics, it not only served as a valuable resource for students, but also offered me a chance to explore potential career paths and broaden my professional network.

You can access these interviews and numerous others for free on The Aspiring Medics' online work experience platform!

Visit <https://courses.theaspiringmedics.co.uk/p/medicine-online-work-experience>

Make sure to follow us on Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube @theaspiringmedics.

If you're a doctor who would be able to give a presentation, I would greatly appreciate if you could drop me an email.

If you're applying to Medical School or considering applying, my inbox is always open, and I'm more than happy to help.

vidisha.handoo@kcl.ac.uk

Thank you!

Embarking on The Sacred Journey: Discovering Blessings and Tranquility at Kheer Bhawani Temple in Kashmir

Rinzen Kaul (Age 11)

I recently had the pleasure of visiting the enchanting region of Kashmir during the summer holidays. Amidst the captivating allure of Srinagar, Pahalgam and Gulmarg, one particular destination stood out - the Kheer Bhawani Temple also called as *Tulla Mulla*. As a Kashmiri, this sacred place holds deep significance for our community, as we revere the goddess 'Kheer Bhawani,' also known as Ma *Ragnya Devi* – an incarnation of Goddess Durga.' My parents decided to plan a trip to seek the blessings of Ma Kheer Bhawani for my little brother, who had not yet started speaking coherently, much to my annoyance.

As a Kashmiri Pandit, we have stayed connected to our roots. My family has a long history in Kashmir and have cherished our cultural heritage. One of the most important aspects of our culture is our faith in the goddess Kheer Bhawani. This was a special trip for us, as it was the first time in 33 years that my parents had been to the temple.

The journey to the temple, which took around 45 minutes by car from our hotel, was filled with anticipation and excitement. Upon arrival, we embarked on a short walk along narrow paths, leading us to a bridge where we left our shoes, adhering to the customary practice of maintaining cleanliness in holy places. Surrounded by the beauty of Mother Nature, we were greeted by a small pool with milky light blue water. In the center stood an imposing statue of Ma Kheer Bhawani. There are numerous legends about the mystical properties of the water, which could supposedly change colours to predict the future. For instance, a shift from milky light blue to red was believed to foretell a significant loss of life, while a transformation to black hinted at the possibility of a deadly disease or virus outbreak.

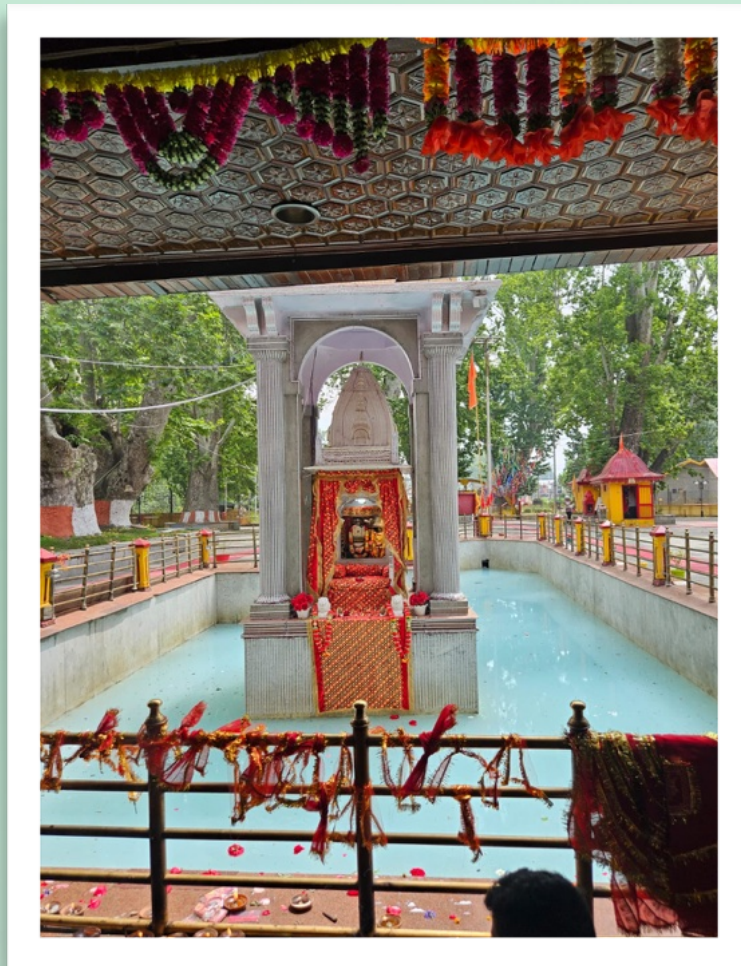
As an enthusiast of Hindu mythology, I found myself captivated by the stories and folklore associated with the temple and its deity. Our spiritual journey continued with prayers, during which the priest offered us sugar moulds, locally known as '*Kand*,' to cast into the pool. My father also presented some sacred water as an offering.

Amidst the rituals, my father recited mantras that resonated with a sense of peace and serenity. Surprisingly, the temple premises were relatively quiet, contrary to my mother's expectations.

Nonetheless, Kheer Bhawani Temple managed to hold me in awe, and I found myself utterly at peace and far from being bored during our visit.

With its spiritual aura and calming ambiance, I wholeheartedly recommend Kheer Bhawani Temple to anyone planning to visit Kashmir. The experience not only instils a sense of deep reverence but also offers a connection to the rich tapestry of Hindu mythology.

My journey to the Kheer Bhawani Temple was indeed a soul-enriching experience. The blessings sought for my little brother's speech were undoubtedly cherished, but what remained with me was the tranquillity and inner peace that the temple exuded. If you ever find yourself in the mesmerizing land of Kashmir, do not miss the opportunity to visit Kheer Bhawani Temple; it promises to leave an indelible impression on your heart and soul.



Seasons

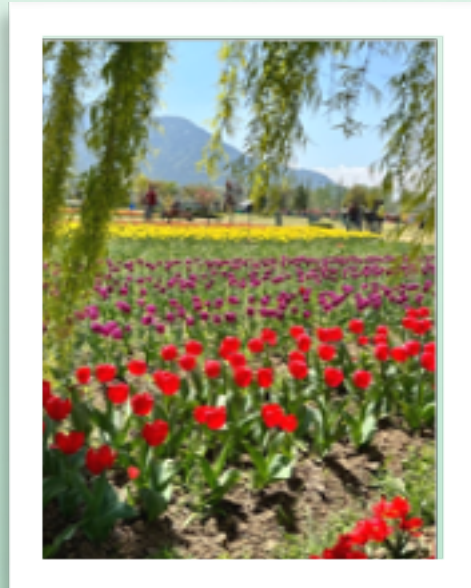
Kabeer Ganjoo (Age 11 years)

Seasons change, full of range;
But people love them, nothing's strange;
From fresh white snow to a glittering rainbow;
Each brings unique things, as you know.

Spring is beginning, the ice is thinning;
Buds start to appear; Mother Nature is grinning;
Hibernations ended and we all feel splendid;
As greenery returns, and wildlife is mended.

The Sun is ablaze, here come holidays;
Summers arrived and it won't fail to amaze;
Picnics and paddle pools are better than school;
As clear blue skies cover us, fun is our fuel.

Trees start to shed, and we start to tread;
On crunchy autumn leaves, golden and red;
Fireworks at night, the days are less bright;
And fauna collect food for when they have to sleep tight



We all sit and stare, as boughs turn bare;
And slumbering wildlife rests without a care;
Snow covers the winter land, and warmth is our demand;
So, cheer spreads around, making the new year grand.

Seasons change, full of range;
But people love them, nothing's strange;
From fresh white snow to a glittering rainbow;
Each brings unique things, as you know.



The ‘C’ word? Oh, you mean Cancer - Let’s talk about it!

Lena Khagram-Dhar

Discussions around cancer awareness and prevention can sometimes generate much fear and prevent individuals from arming themselves with the necessary tools and wisdom to not only detect cancer early but also prevent it.

Not many people are aware but *bowel cancer is the third most common cancer in both men and women and the second leading cause of cancer deaths in the UK*. This frightening statistic starkly justifies the importance of opening ourselves up to learning more and empowering ourselves to take practical steps, such as participating in screening to reduce our risk of getting bowel cancer which in many cases presents itself without any visible signs or symptoms.

As a health improvement specialist working with diverse communities across north-east London, I have the important responsibility to make conversations around bowel cancer screening more “easily digestible”. However, some individuals find conversations about the ‘bowel’ and ‘cancer’ highly ‘un-palatable’ and embarrassing – it’s a double whammy for most as talking about these topics tends to require a certain degree of comfort, openness, transparency and more importantly fearlessness.

My projects in community settings involve working with those aged 50 and over. Engaging with this age group is very insightful because it is an opportunity to learn about health beliefs and general attitudes to health which have become quite stable and ingrained over a long period of time. One particular belief which appears time and time again is that ‘a cancer diagnosis always means imminent death’. I have witnessed the power of this fear-provoking belief (or shall I say myth!) in preventing people from having open discussions about cancer - it’s still a taboo topic despite significant advances in technology for cancer prevention and treatment.

The fear associated with cancer is understandable and sadly it can’t always be detected early or prevented and may lead to death but I always ask individuals, ‘*is it better to openly talk about common cancers like bowel cancer and participate in life-saving initiatives like the NHS Bowel Cancer Screening Programme and possibly find cancer early when it is more treatable than to avoid the conversation just because it’s too uncomfortable or too frightening?*’

Following a workshop I facilitated on bowel cancer and screening, I asked a gentleman, ‘what would motivate you to participate in bowel screening now?’ He said, ‘Now that I know more about bowel cancer and screening, I owe it to myself to do something about it sooner rather than later. I

would rather know if my health is fine now, than to wait for something to go wrong and by then it may be too late’.

When individuals are encouraged to see another perspective and supported to overcome any deeply held fears about cancer, they feel a little more open and comfortable talking about this difficult topic. Subsequently, the old debilitating perceptions around health and disease have a chance to fall away and potentially make way for new empowering beliefs – *this is where knowledge becomes power and a call to action*. We’ve all heard ‘prevention is better than cure’ and this is precisely the purpose of the NHS Bowel Cancer Screening programme which is saving hundreds of lives every year through early detection and prevention. The bowel screening programme involves completing a simple test kit at home which is automatically posted to those registered with a GP.

For more information about the bowel screening programme and eligibility criteria, you can visit the NHS Bowel Screening website: <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/bowel-cancer/>

If you have received the NHS bowel screening test kit, take action now – it could save your life.

KPAE Logo Design Contest

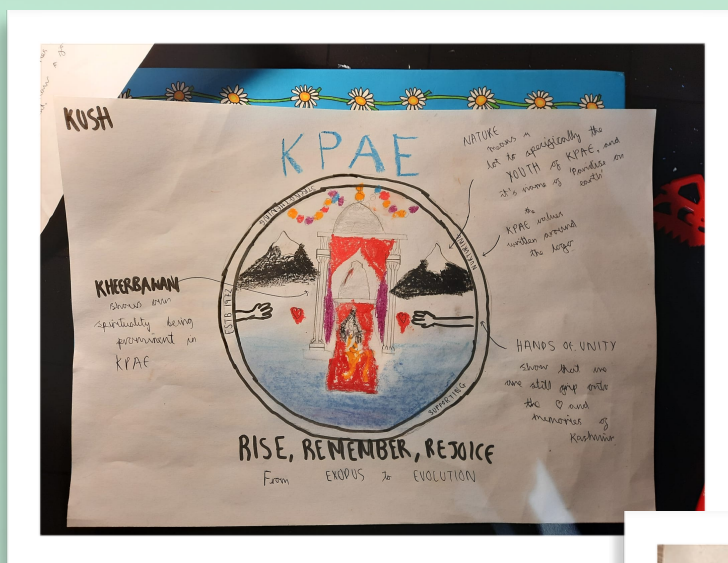
Shipra Ogra

As part of our digital refresh - including the development of a new website, earlier this year, the KPAE Team launched a logo design competition. The brief was open to interpretation as long as it symbolised an aspect of our community, our culture and our spirituality.

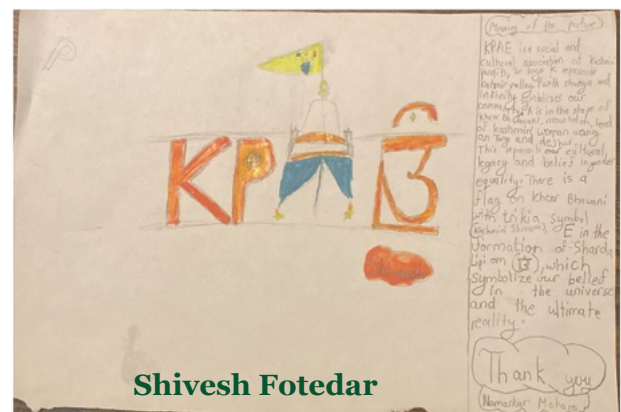
Seven (7) entries were received - from kids, young people and adults and the KPAE Exec team along with a member from the previous Exec committee, agreed on taking two designs forward to execution.

The new KPAE logo is currently being developed and will incorporate the wonderful work submitted by **Kush Kaul** and **Shivesh Fotedar**.

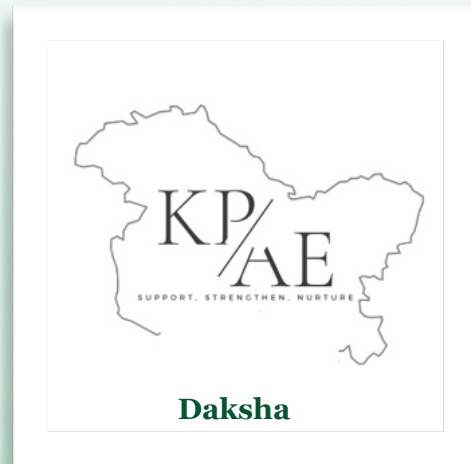
Congratulations to Kush and Shivesh and thank you to the others here who took part in the competition with such commitment and creative flair.



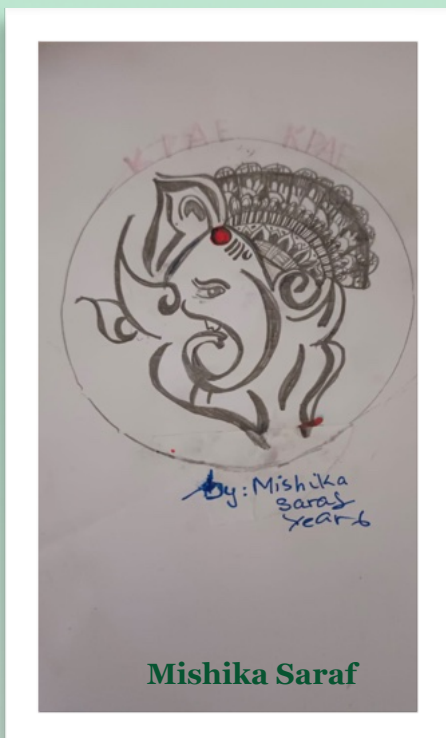
Kush Kaul



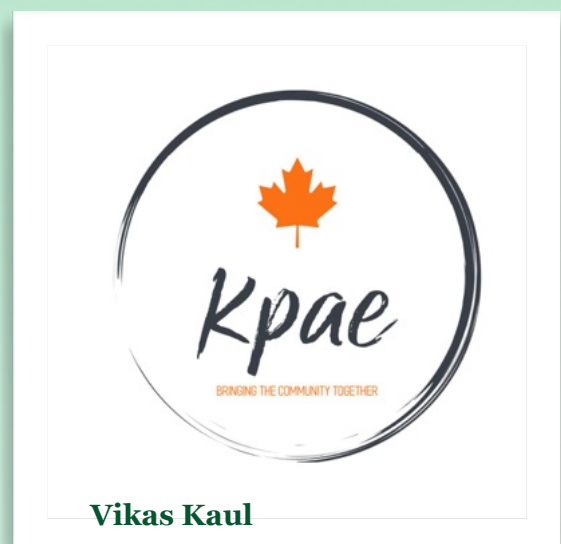
Shivesh Fotedar



Samara Ogra Menon



Mishika Saraf

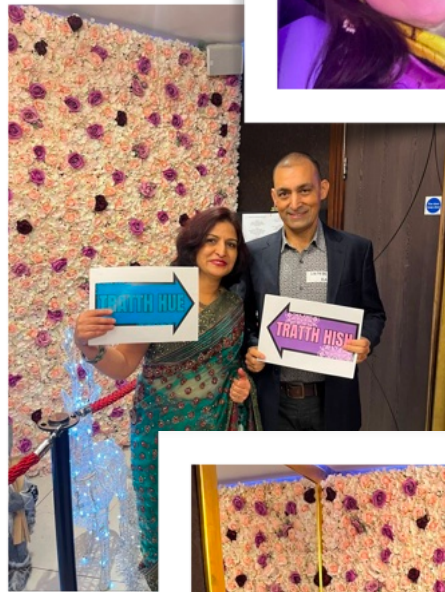


Vikas Kaul

Glimpses From Diwali Night









Upcoming Events

Badminton Courts await you!!!

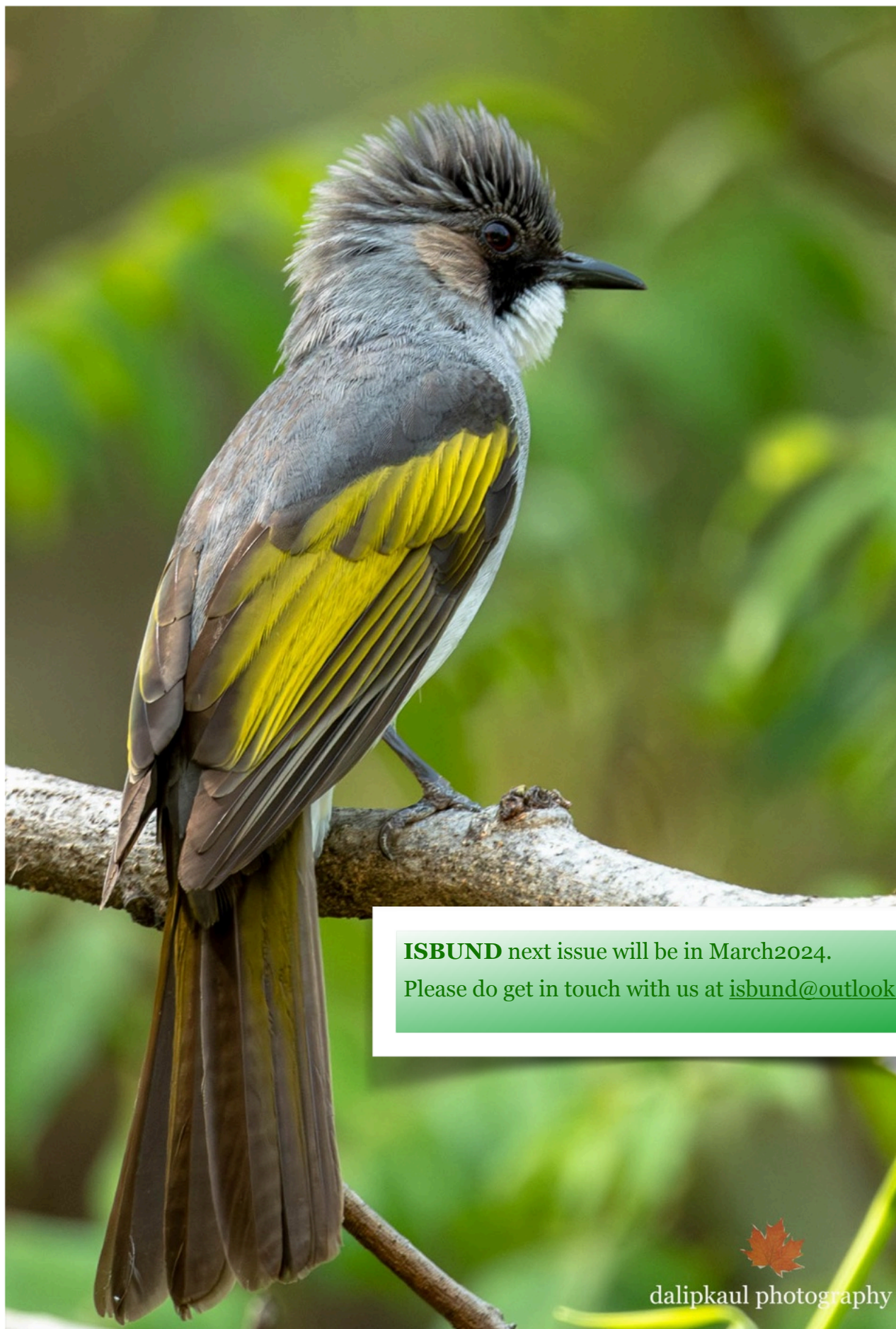
On popular demand our KPAE Badminton championship will be back this winter.

More details will be shared soon, so please do look out for announcement on KPAE WhatsApp.

To keep up with interesting events and initiatives , do check our **“KPAE Events or KPAE Kath-Bath”** WhatsApp group.

If you are a UK/EU resident and would like to be added please let the executive committee members know via email: executives@kpae.co.uk





ISBUND next issue will be in March2024.
Please do get in touch with us at isbund@outlook.com



dalipkaul photography