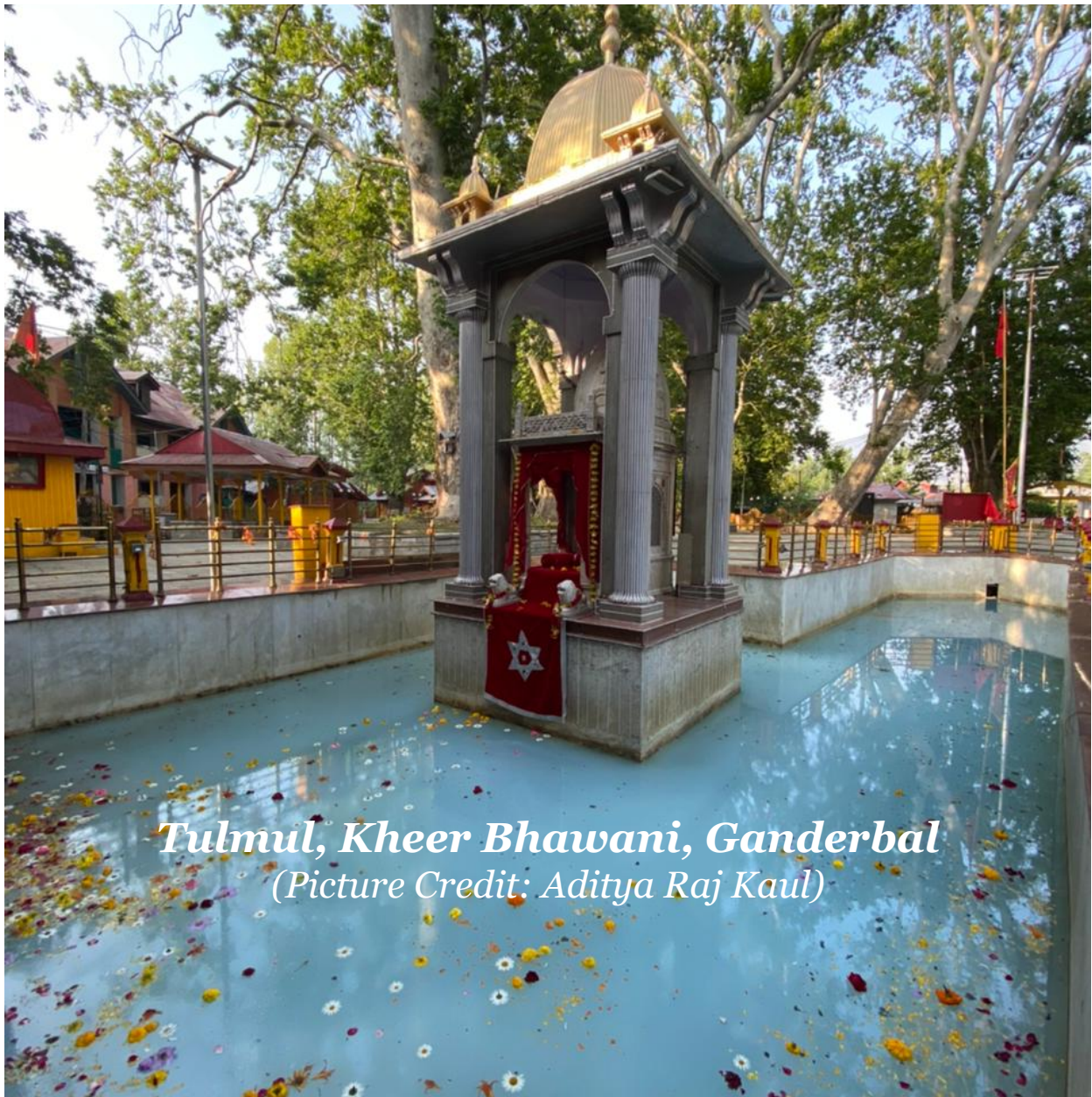


ISBUNDNEWS, EVENTS AND
EVERYTHING IN**CULTURE****EVENTS****ACHIEVEMENTS**

ISBUND

A Quarterly Newsletter for the Kashmiri Pandit Community

Tulmul, Kheer Bhawani, Ganderbal
(Picture Credit: Aditya Raj Kaul)

From the Editor's Desk

Namaskar. Although belatedly, we would like to take this opportunity to send you '*poshteh*' for *Zyeth Aetham*. Deeply venerated by Kashmiri Pandits as the time to worship our presiding deity, *Mata Maharagnya*, this is one of the most hallowed of religious festivals for us. Celebrations were unsurprisingly muted this year though.

On May 6, according to the 'Our world in data', India's COVID-19 cases peaked at 414,188 cases and between April 4 and June 6 more than 100,000 cases were reported each day. Almost all of us know someone who was directly affected. The scenes of devastation were not for the faint-hearted, with people literally gasping for breath and the healthcare system crumbling faster than a house of cards. Delhi was particularly worse off, with Jammu close on its heels, and with that we saw our Kashmiri community disproportionately affected. *Naad*, a monthly magazine of the All India Kashmiri Samaj (AIKS), published a heartbreaking, 9-page list of biradari members we lost in a single month. Never have so many loved ones been lost in such a short span, to one catastrophic event.

India, like many 'developed' countries was unprepared for the spiralling cases and the speed of contagion but a shortage of essential supplies, be they timely oxygen, life-saving drugs or equipment to treat COVID-19 patients, were some of the reasons it was left crippled. It would've been an even bigger disaster if not for the many armies of volunteers, who left no stone unturned to find and provide support for patients and their families, giving them a chance of survival. Our community members across the globe were exemplary in their altruism. Our physicians worked through the night, finding precious minutes from their ward rounds in their day jobs and giving up their sleep to treat patients in many parts of India via video calls. Today, we would like to acknowledge and thank their selfless work and tireless efforts. There are so many to name but Dr Sundeep Kaul, Dr Urmi Raina, Dr Tina Raina, Dr Ram Ganjoo, Dr Nikhil Ganjoo and Dr Shivani Dudha shone especially bright even when they were dealing with their own loss and heartache. We remain forever indebted to you all.

Individuals deal with adversity and grief differently and through our volunteers, even those from non-medical backgrounds, we have witnessed how each one of them have given so much to a common cause. Whether it was finding a non-existent ICU bed in Delhi, oxygen cylinders or concentrators, amphotericin B, a meal, someone to look after the children or just be there at the other end of the phone as an empathetic voice to provide succour, they did all they could to keep hope alive. Our young volunteers, barely in their teenage years, consistently went over and above what was required and helped someone in need, always following up and closing the loop. Saisha, Siddhi and Vidhisha - you have all led by example and achieved more in these few months than many ever will in decades of their lives. May Mata Ragnya bless you all.

We are particularly proud of the fundraising effort by Amit Kachroo and team which saw more than half a million pounds generated in donations over a span of just a few days that helped provide oxygen concentrators and other medical devices to so many people across India. Well done to the O2C team and the many other fundraisers our community managed. Every little helps.

This edition of ISBUND is a tribute to Tulmul, the divine place of worship in Kashmir that is home to our beloved Mother, Maa Kheer Bhavani, who we hold so dearly in our hearts and to celebrate our COVID-19 volunteering efforts.

As Sigmund Freud said in 1895 '*I think this man is suffering from memories*', let's hope to keep the good ones alive in our collective memories and learn from the ones we much rather forget.

Sheetal & Shivani

Editors: ISBUND

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ISLANDS

Vinayak Razdan

I stand over a bridge. There are two bridges that connect the island to rest of the earth. No, in fact there are three. First one is the oldest, a small one for the pedestrian devotees. Second one, just near the first one, is a recently built bigger bridge for the heavy vehicles of dignitaries and security men. Third one is just diametrically opposite the first one. It leads to a wall of wilderness, to the original place, to the marshes from which this island was reclaimed on directions of a snake after a man had a dream about a mother goddess. This bridge leads to nowhere, it is crudely barb-wired and shut at the other end. Here I stand.



I stare at the vastness of the wetlands. An empty canvas painted with green of willow trees and tall grass that surrounds this small island of human settlement. An island built upon faith. Faith that in a way believes that the power that created this vastness and emptiness is an entity that is, or can be, sympathetic to human turpitude and exaltation. And yet all this time these indifferent wetlands lay in a patient wait to reclaim what was once taken from it. Waging a thousand year war and having little victories each day. Like all wilderness, there is something frightening and beautiful about it. I can imagine a bunch of people setting fire to a corpse in this wasteland, in the anonymity offered by this vastness. Totally possible. Anonymity offered by a vast sea of history. History consumes everything and nothing, till none remain to consume it. Things could certainly burn in these woods and no one would know. Was this where he burned? Why do I have to hear stories like these? Just hours ago, sitting under a Chinar tree, I hear a version of the story of a man named Hameed Gada, Hameed The Fish.

Even after he became the top-most *Hizbul* commander of this area, everyday, with his own hands, he would pour 1.5 liter of milk into the holy spring of this island. He really believed in it. In a way it makes sense, he became a militant to protect this spring. Hameed Butt grew up near the island. Since childhood Hameed was fascinated by this spring. Loved it. This love was to shape his violent life. One day he heard of a plan by a bunch of 'extreme' militants to blow up the spring, he protested and fought them alone. All to protect a Hindu temple. But he had to pay a heavy price. To protect himself and his family from these militants, he sought and joined Hizbuls. He became their best man in the area. A dreaded killing machine. Nemesis of security forces deployed in the area. There were many reasons for him to hate the Jawans. Most obvious one being that they didn't protect him and his family when he sought their help to escape the wrath of 'extreme' militants. So he now killed Jawans with an extra zeal and pleasure and made money from it. With each killing and each daring escape, his notoriety grew. And like all men who became killing machines in those days, he got a new name. It is said that once to escape the security men, he jumped in the syendh river near the temple and stayed under water for hours, breathing through a hollow reed. Aaja Ai Bahaar Dil hai... much like Shammi Kapoor and Rajendra Nath in that old film song. From that day on wards, people started calling him 'Hameed Gada', Hamid The Fish. Later he picked up another name, Bombar Khan. Probably for his expertise at blowing up things. I can't image his face, all I see is Bomberman of an arcade game blowing up pieces of colorful squares. In the Wandhama massacre of Pandits, his name is given as Bombar Khan. And yet all this time he continued to visit the temple and offer milk to the goddess. This goddess who in Lanka was fed blood by Ravan. Some years ago, Gada was finally cornered by RR men and COBRAS in those marshes somewhere beyond this island. They killed him and burnt his body right there. No trace left. No mausoleum. No Shaheed. There, that old man you see, he is Hameed Gada's father, still selling vegetables outside the temple. You would like to hear more stories like that...wouldn't you?

I look away and stare below at the calm icy grey waters of syendh. I hear a boat approaching as someone aboard gently chops water. There is a village just next to the island. This too reclaimed from wilderness. This too in faith. Not in a different faith. In similar faith, faith that claims – in the end it all amounts to something. Does the universe care?

‘Hey you! What are you doing here?’ I hear someone shouting at my back. The voice is closing in. But I don’t move. I want stare some more at this green vastness. I wait for the boat.

The boat approaches. There is a man and a child on it. Across this fine divide, slowly drifting across the river, they pass under the bridge, under me and past me. The boat passes as if the island and the wilderness doesn’t exist, or as if the two entities exist only to hold the river in between them. Hold it together just so that a boat with a man and a child would pass over it in peace. Singing songs of faith.

‘What’s going on? Come down from there.’

Faith and its benign assumptions. The boat is now gone. A month later, back in Delhi, I was to see a strange dream. Shikaras afloat over a road, passing under an overbridge at Manto road. Drove of people passing by, floating under me driven without a sound over an invisible river. Not a man on it, only shadows, only women in black veils, rowing slowly. Alas! Kashmir offers nightmares me no more, no sleepless nights.

‘Oi. Tu.’ The man’s voice again.

I turn around to see a man in underwear and banyaana with a comb in his left hand. Maybe I have strayed in dangerous territory. And stay was long enough to raise suspicion. This man had come out of a tent belonging to the security forces camped next to the bridge. There were cloths left for drying on metal wires, almost making an odd protective mesh. Another human habitation. Another island.

‘What are you doing there?’ said the man who looked genuinely worried or pissed off in his blue and white loose comfy *kacha*.

‘Nothing,’ I blurted. I kept my head low, quickly making my way down from the bridge.

‘This is not the place for you. You are not supposed to be here. Go.’

“And you are supposed to be here.” I kept the thought to myself. Is world a filing cabinet and everything in it, animate or inanimate, a file. Every file labeled and to be placed in a proper place. Why is he here?

You want to hear another one. In those days, for security personnels this island was a prime posting. A pleasurable stay. Almost a little paradise inside paradise. Here once was posted a Captain who fell in love with to the spring. He must have stayed here for two years and during those two years he become more of a priest and less of a soldier. It was around then that the security men claimed this holy place as one of their own. The place started to look more and more like a regular Hindu temple in mainland India. Regular Hindinised aartis and bhajans orchestrated to the sounds of gongs, conch shells and bells. This was happening at some other Pandit spots too. The shrines were becoming more and more templeish. Any given time, the Captain could be seen near the spring, staring at its waters. Then one day he received orders to move, a new posting to some other place. To war. From this island of peace to Kashmir. Young Captain couldn’t bear the thought of moving from this place to another. He went mad. It is said, on receiving the news he ran straight to the spring and jumped in. As a kid when I first saw the spring, I did wonder and fear if a man, a boy, could drown in it. The poor man survived.

I make my way back to the center of the island still feeling the eyes of that security man on my back. I take a turn and pass some recently constructed structures. These are big halls and rooms meant to house the seasonal pilgrims. Near the wall of one of these buildings, I find a bunch of people staring at a giant pile of rundown chappals and shoes. They stare as they discuss contemporary history and seek to draw me in.

You think this is an island of peace. A miracle. You read those news reports and believe their foolish words and think this island is a bridge of brotherhood between Hindus and Muslims of Kashmir. I once found myself on this island while a group of Afghan militants fired rockets at the spring. We just put our heads between our legs and waited for it all to get over. You read those news reports about Kashmiriyat and you won't know how this place survived and what it survived. In early days, when the Muslim officers of the secretariat stopped coming to work in protest of what was happening in Kashmir, a handful of us Pandit employees kept reporting to work. Of course, there aren't many of us left in the machinery anymore. We are all retiring. They wouldn't have anyone of us among them. But in those dark days, we kept the machinery going. The state running. And what kept us going. We would come to this island and try to reclaim it. It wasn't easy. You are lucky. You just sat in a vehicle, told them, 'Tulamulla Chalo' and rode here in comfort afforded by ignorance. In those bad old days an Army convoy used to lead us through a besieged city to drop us here in this village. And while our convoy would pass on road, people would spit at us and hurl abuses. They didn't want us here. They knew what we were coming for. And yet, now after all these years, you see their welcoming faces in newspapers. It is true many Muslims join the Mela every year. But you want to see something funny. You want to know what happens once the great Khir Bhawani Mela is over. After locals and visiting Pandits have hugged. After all the cameras are gone. You see that huge pile of chappals. That's what's left. Those are the chappals that get left behind. It's a little scam. At a Hindu temple, you are supposed to take your shoes off before entering the temple ground. In old days you couldn't even enter the Island with your shoes on. The whole island was off-limit if you were in shoes. It was an unchallenged rule. The Island was a holy place and not a public park. Even British weren't allowed with shoes. They would have liked to make this spot a park. They never had any liking for Pandit's holy mambo-jambo. But even they appreciated the Pandit's choice in picking these scenic spots as their holy places. And Muslims, of course weren't allowed inside in general. I guess, they too would have preferred a public park. A lot of our monuments are now public parks. You probably don't know an old tale of a Sufi saint who in some village created a public toilet over a spot infested by Vetaals and held holy by Pandits. Death to all superstitions he said. No, you don't know the tale. Just as I thought. Your mind needs expanding. The whole holy area of Hindus is constantly shrinking. Here, now, only the Spring and not the whole Island is holy. The Island they think is Booni Bagh, a garden of Chinars, another Shalimar. I was confused. So am I supposed to take my shoes off outside the Island or just outside the temple. So pilgrims come. And so do the local Muslims. It's a great cultural mix happening, you say. O the Secular spectacle! I say it's just one man gaining a pair of shoe and another losing it. Locals do come and pray, go around the spring in circles with hands folded, sometimes in anti-clockwise direction. But when they leave, some of them leave wearing shoes that don't belong to them. And the poor loser, the pilgrim, has to leave the mela wearing a pair stolen from someone else. Some have extra chappals with them and leave in them, while some buy new ones from local shops. In the end, we are left with this huge pile of old worn out Chappals. What are we supposed to do with it? Tell me what are we supposed to do with this pile of junk.

Sounds normal. Happens all the time. Isn't it a phrase? Stand in someone's shoes. How do you step in someone's shoe without taking them from him first. Happens at almost all the temples and probably at other places too. That's why all these places have these advanced shoe management systems, every shoe marked and numbered. Basic rules to understanding humans: People want to experience divinity, unity with God, fraternity with fellow beings, but not at the cost of their chappals.

I walk my way back to the spring. Under the shed that is the temple, I find the hunchback old man still at his seat near the spring. He is mumbling something under his breath while holding onto some worn out scrolls of paper. And his story too tumbles out.

Over the years a lot of people from the plains have made this place their home. Lot of strange folks. There is this case of a man who was at one time supposed to be a magistrate in Madras. Not a judge, a magistrate. He too made this place his home. He was a man touched by divine, as they say. Much advanced on the path of spiritual development. He stayed put here because he believed his progress had come to a halt. The goddess of the spring wasn't blessing him with a Darshan. He was stalled. But he stayed put, lingered on. Spent all the later years of his life here. Passed away only recently. Made no progress. Some are never blessed. The spring has always been surrounded by men like that. Men of faith. You see that old man there sitting near the spring, lighting agarbattis, that man

with a hunch, he is a Pandit. I mean a Kashmiri Pandit. He had been here for months now. His wife stays at the guest house at Zeethyaar temple while he stays here, spending all his time next to the spring. Doing his Sadhna. Keeping to his spiritual exercises. He has his own seat next to the spring. Every morning, as part of some ritual, he take a full glass of that milky water from the spring and drinks it neat.

I see a woman, a tourist from the plains with a pooja thali approaching the hunchback. She asks him something. The man doesn't reply. He just points to the spot opposite him. The woman implores. She again asks him to do a pooja for her. Pray to the goddess for her. She thinks he is the official priest of the temple. Visibly irritated but still not saying anything, he again replies only in gestures and points to the seat of the official priest. The scene went on for sometime till the woman left in frustration. I was almost chuckling. Over the course of the day, the scene kept repeating with the poor old man. To stay on and to watch this comedy unroll all day long would amount to cruelty. I feel sleepy even though the sun is yet to hit noon. I look for a suitable bench under a Chinara. To sleep under a Chinara is absolute bliss. Had sleep been born under this tree, sleep would have less to do with death and more with life.

The whole Island now looks like a park now. The ground is all tiled, there are benches for people to sit. Rest rooms and dormitory. It wasn't like this in old day just a few decades ago. There was much mud and muck. And we would set camp on this slippery ground. Even these benches ruffle the religious sensitivities of some old-timers. 'A park!' they curse.

'I would bring my grandmother here someday. This is a beautiful place.' The words crafted in peculiar accent intrude my half-sleep mind. I follow the worlds. Sitting on a bench just behind me, I find a young man with a camera around his neck talking to a group of locals. This man is obviously not from Kashmir. The older men with him who nod approvingly to his thoughts definitely are. The man is either from Pakistan or India. A Punjabi. A Mirpuri. A Pathan. What is he doing here? I don't want to think. I don't want to know. I get up and head back to our camp.

Under a steel shed, I see aunts shredding monj. A woman, another tourist, an Indian tourist approaches our camp. The woman walks to one of my aunts and makes an inquiry. Bua laugh first and then answers, 'No we are preparing it for ourselves. This is no prashad. But, there is halwa being served by the security guys. Go that way.' Woman leaves confused and disappointed. Kashmiri pandits have been coming to the Island since ages. They would come days before the special day of the goddess. Families arriving on boats, arriving by road on tongas. They would come from city and villages, from near and far. All these families would camp under the shade of Chinars for a couple of days, sing and pray together, but each family cooking its own meals. And now we arrive in planes, buses and cars. From far and near. Just like others.

Mother is tearing at leaves of hakh. We are going to have a feast in the afternoon. And I am going to have three serving of rice. This air and water has made me hungry all over again. I would have definitely been a fat kid if I had been raised completely in Kashmir. I would have grown old a gargantuan. A bhatte jinn. A rice guzzling Jinn, a big giant ape.

Have you heard this one: The Island owes its holiness to apes. They say Hanuman himself brought the goddess here. Kalhana's Rajatarangini in a story about a King and a Queen who proclaimed themselves as divine. The book offers us an episode that follows the aftermath of Ramayan War. It is said one of the sources of Ravan's great power was a particular idol of a goddess that he worshiped. Goddess Ragnya. To please this goddess, to control her, to gain power, he would feed this Goddess blood. After Ravan's death at the hand of Ram, this goddess, or rather her idol too was rescued along with Sita. Monkeys, the allies of Ram were entrusted with the job of returning the goddess to her abode in the mountains. But monkeys being monkeys, while on way to the Himalaya, in mid air, accidentally dropped it somewhere. Now some say, the idol fell at Tulamulya or the present day Tulamula. The Brahmins of Tulamulya were powerful conjurers who could bring down Kings with their spells. That's all in Rajatarangini. Ages later, it was re-discovered thanks to dreaming of a Pandit. Some say, apes made no mistake, Hanuman brought the Goddess to her rightful place. This place where we feed her milk. Pandits believe it to be their highest court. They plead the cases of their lives here. And if you believes the local lore, the court is open just once a year. The goddess visits this place, the idol is alive only once a year. Rest of the time she isn't even here. She is supposed to be at a temple in village Tikkar in district Kupwara. Or at Devsar in district Kulgam. Away from the maddening crowd. She is supposed to be at all these places at various times of the year. Does Hanuman still carry her around to all these places to keep up with court appointments?

'I saw a Muslim man eagerly showing Hanuman to his kid earlier. Ye gov Hanuman. This is hanuman. He said to his little kid while pointing to that big red statue over there,' says my mother while working with hakh. This is the second time she is telling me this.

Mother has been taken-in by the scene she witnessed. She would later tell me that she was in fact fascinated by the presence of Muslims on the Island itself. It seems, for her generation, Muslims were a common sight at a lot of holy sites just like Pandits were at a lot a Muslim sites. But this island was not one of them. And now it is. Is this the good that comes out of conflicts? How is the zoning of a holy place done? The only spot on the island where the Muslims are still not allowed is inside the spring. Is this that particular moment in history when cultural smashups-mashups happen? And this how it happens? Is this the secularization of religious spaces? Is this how the idea of Kashmir, or its extension, the idea of India was born? Or is that vice-verse? Doesn't India like to see itself in idea of Kashmir? Are we loosing space, and is someone else gaining space? Is idea of Kashmir an extension of idea of India? Or is there a mutual space, a common ground getting created? Can a venn diagram really explain it all?

It is in fact interesting. The Mela is already over, and yet these Muslims arrive, sometimes with families. Some even seem to be regulars. They come, go around the spring and leave. Almost like a pilgrim. Why do they come here? What are we doing here? Mela finished a couple of days ago. Or rather Mata has already left the place if Kashmiri lore is to be believed. Her court here is adjourned for the year. I missed it by a few days because of a massive strike by transporters in Jammu over low fares. We had reached only till Hari Singh's Palace when, just near the tomb of a green Pir Baba, we were stopped by a bunch of people with iron rods in hand who threatened to puncture the tyres of our hired vehicles unless we returned back the same way we came. The multi-lingual Kistawari driver tried to talk to them in fluent dogri, tried all his skills, but to no avail. In Kashmiri, he then advised us to turn back. My younger Bua pretending to be a village woman pleaded with the goons to let us pass. She pulled a pallu over her head and with folded hands went, 'Mata Ko Jatay Hai! Mata Ko Jatay Hai! Jai Mata Di! Jai Mata Di!' It was funny for a moment. Sadly, the men didn't find the act funny. Neither did her twin little kids. The sensitive one of the two started crying as the men raised their voices and hurled abuses. Those angry men were inconsolable. We were forced to return. Back in house, I read the news. In a single local paper, I counted at least 23 news reports on strikes and protests being organised by various people on issues like no supply of clean water, no electricity, low wages, high prices, discrimination based on class, no pay, corruption. criminal inaction, criminal action and things like that. Almost the entire town was trying to reach some higher court that day. Holding courts in street. After the strike was over, even though we missed the Mela, our 'Back to Kashmir 20 years later' trip was back on. I found the determination of our traveling party a bit out of character. 'Papaji needs to go back at least once,' Father explained.

So here we were on the Island.

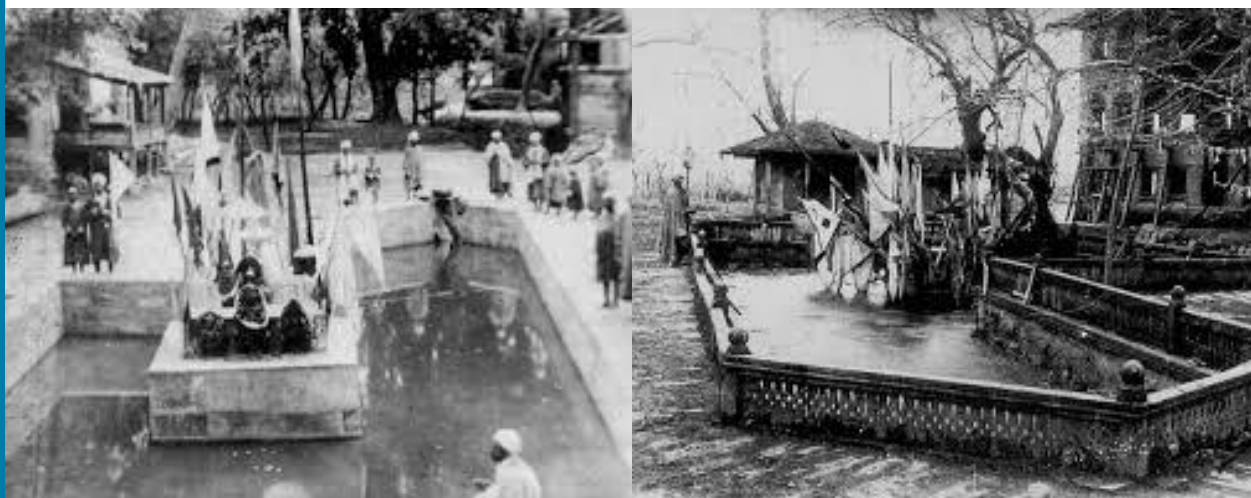
'Where is Daddy?' I ask my grandmother about my grandfather.

'He went out. I know where he has gone. He just couldn't do it here. These new toilets on the island don't make much sense to him. He has gone to take a royal crap in the wilderness somewhere beyond the island. An old favourite spot of his. He must be on his way back now.'

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Note: This article was originally Published on www.searchkashmir.org in March 2013. Re-published with permission from author.

***Pictures of Tulmul - Family Collections
(Bakshi's, Kaul's and Razdan's)***



Tulmul ***Aditya Koul***



Every year for the last 20 years during the scorching dry months in India my parents have been visiting a particular place without fail. Guess what, they went this year as well and that too during a gaping lockdown. It was the birthday week of a Devi Kheer Bhawani. Just weeks back our family of 7 had recovered from the 2nd wave of Covid-19 virus in India. I hadn't managed much sleep for over 2 weeks, taking turns with my little brother to nurse our elderly grandparents who were badly hit and developed severe pneumonia. Always on duty, by the time we all had hit the road to recovery, my younger brother and I had managed to train ourselves to clinically monitor a 75-year old COVID patient with pre-existing co-morbidities, with help from clinicians across the globe. I still get terrible nightmares of that period. And here were my parents lionhearted rebellious to go to Tulmul, a small village in Kashmir. They strongly felt it was both deemed and imperative that they should visit as they have for the last 2 decades since they had witnessed the blessings from the Devi a month back. So after 30 years of my existence, I decided to know more about the Devi (who happens to be the Kuladevi, protective patron deity of Kashmiri Pandits) who invokes such strong emotional connection in my parents to this day.

Marga

A Path of practice in Hinduism such as Vama marga, Bhakti marga, Sankhya marga and so on.

Taking the liberty of assuming the reader to be unaware, I now explain.

Kheer Bhawani is common name of a Hindu deity of the Trika marga of Kashmiri Shaiv Tantra system. The term kheer refers to rice pudding that has been offered as prasada in the spring since ages to the Devi, which became part of the name of the temple where she resides. Some people are of the opinion that there was a mulberry tree near the holy spot of Kheer Bhawani which, in local language, is called tul mul. But tul mul is also derived from the Sanskrit word atulya mulya meaning great value. It is believed that Ravana, after his worship of the Goddess, offered her kheer, which she accepted and since then it is called Kheer Bhawani.

She has many names: Ragnya Devi, Sharika, Rajni, Lalitah, Raja-Rajeshvari, Tripura Sundari and so on. Tripura Sundari literally translated to '**Tri** meaning three, **Pura** meaning the world and **sundari** meaning lovely; 'she who is lovely in the three worlds'. She is considered to combine in her form all three major deities: Mahalakshmi, Mahasaraswati and Mahakali. A very famous Hindu text, Saundarya Lahiri, composed by revered Maharishi Adi Shankar is dedicated to the Devi. Incidentally there is a temple by that name in Kashmir, The Shankarcharya Temple dedicated to the great sage from Kerala.

The mention of Kheer Bhawani is also found in Kalhana's Rajtarangini, the first chronologically documented historical text of Kashmir. Kalhana writes that the sacred spring of Tula Mula is situated in a marshy ground. The name of the spring is Mata Ragini Kund (pond).

Thousands of years ago, many floods occurred in Kashmir and the sacred spring of Tula Mula was inundated under its sway and the holy place could nowhere be traced. At last, Kashmir's Yogi Krishna Pandit Taploo of Bohri Kadal, Srinagar had a dream in which the Goddess appeared to him and directed that she would swim in the form of a snake at the proper place and that he should stick large poles to demarcate the holy spot in the marsh land. Subsequently, when the water subsided there the holy spot was discovered. This event happened during the Samvat 4041 (Hindu lunar date). It is also said that Maharagya was pleased with the devotion of Ravana and appeared before him and Ravana got an image of the Goddess installed in Sri Lanka. However, the Goddess became displeased with Ravana and is believed to have instructed Lord Hanuman to reinstall the Pratima at the spot of Tula Mulla.

Pancha-dasha-kshari

A Beeja mantra with (Ka Ye E La Hrim Ha Sa Ka Ha La Hrim Sa Ka La Hrim) as Beeja `ksharas. One of the famous and powerful mantras.

A recently popularized term Sri Yantra in India and world over by the so called masters of Sri Vidya have to be given the credit of getting the term back to our collective memory. It is astonishing to know that the Sri Yantra can only be installed by invoking the Devi Tripura Sundari using the ***Srividya*** mantra. As Dr. Shashishekhar Toshkhani has cited in his book Rites and Rituals of Kashmiri Brahmins, “the Srividya mantra consisting of fifteen syllables (Pancha-dasha-kshari) is not the Devi’s symbol but the Devi herself in her sonic form”. Incidentally Devi Kheer Bhavani and Sharika also have fifteen syllable mantras.

Tapri (Slang)

A local tea snack cart in India

As far as the recollection of my first and only visit to the Devi is concerned, I vividly remember it was around the year when Dr. Manmohan Singh had sworn in as the Prime Minister of India for his first term. What I profoundly remember is that I had never ever witnessed such torrential rainfall in my life. It rained as if we were in *Mawsynram* (a town in Meghalaya). We decided to run out of the car and take shelter at an open Chai ***Tapri*** adjacent to the main gate. Run by a thin built man from the Hindi heartland of India selling tea and snacks, his inviting hot pot of tea smelling sweet like Saunadrya Lahiri! I could feel the moist breeze hitting my face as I examined his cart for all the edible items. We could only hear the rain and nothing else. I screamed so hard out of bliss, the moment I took a bite of the freshly prepared bread butter toast which the gentleman offered to us. Tea and plain bread butter toast had never tasted so nectareous; it had sent me to tranquility. Then the gentleman laughed and added a touch of butter to our tea. I don’t remember anything thereafter, only that a Hindu deity’s Pratima was installed in the middle of a pearly white pond is one of its kind. My mother however, remembers every step of that place and to her nothing tastes as divine as the louche te halwa from Tul mul. It is believed to be an indication of inauspicious times for Kashmir whenever the pond turns black or darkish and the last it did was before the forced exodus our community.

May the Devi bless and shelter us all.

न तातो न माता न बन्धुर्न दाता

न पुत्रो न पुत्री न भृत्यो न भर्ता ।

न जाया न विद्या न वृत्तिर्ममैव

गतिस्त्वं गतिस्त्वं त्वमेका भवानि ॥१॥

TULMUL, Kheer Bhavani
Where I Long To Go
Rekha Tukra

जगदम्बा विराजमान करान काशमीरः तुलमुलि वास
 महा पर्व ज्येष्ठ अठम शुक्ल पछ त मास
 वएन्य, पमपौष, जाफ़्इर, गुलाब लागस लछ तय सास
 तुलमुलि नाप्स दोध त नाबद भावनि ओय यि अख दास

भवनस ज़ूल क्या छु ज़ोतान ज़री तिल् मोख् माताय छु लिबास
 प्रक्रम नागस दिवान भक्त सु अ्सितन आम या खास
 अँद अँद प्रत्क्षन करथि मनस आव आनंद त रास

माता रूअगिना भव्नी रोज़ान छक च दूर,
 होकसय न व्अतथि कोताह छुस मजबूर
 वन् करत् सारनी प्यठ कृपा त कामना मँज़ूर,
 दया बअगराव् असिय अथव पननव् भरपूर
 ज़गतिच दीवी करुना त दया चअन् छ मशहूर,
 प्रशाद खारय बादाम हलव् त खिर टूर

निर्मल जल नाग छुय वुज़ान ज़ाहरमूर ,
 अमृत कुण्डस रंग नियूल हियू फियूर
 बजान् घंटा चौपअर साज़स नचान ज़न मयूर,
 गज़ान छू बाज् ,चिम्ट तुम्भक् नारि त सँतूर
 लीलाय् मस्त मगन सप्सत गन् करान गूर गूर
 प्रेम लोल सान आरती करव ई सरुर

कंद नाबद रतन दीप त कपूर,
 दोध् दुल्य दुल्य हेथ् आव दोध् गूर
 हलवड़ ढेरव तरोव् मेव् त खज़ूर ,
 बनवन् लिचि ,न्दरि मौज् त घ्अर पूर
 पीडा हरत् दोखन म्यान्न करत् सूर
 मोह मायाय अहंकारस् मँज गोस चूर
 संसारस मँज छु कुताह क्रूर,
 नाश कर सोन क्रोध त गरूर

म्यज चि छक भ् छसय चअन कूर,
 पापीयन कअरजि संगहार ज़रूर
 त्रूशूल स्रति दि दण्ड यिमव नाकारव तुल घयूर
 च्छथि ज़ाल शाप त पापकि च्यि हे तकदीर शयूर

दित् शुद्ध मन ,कोमल काया, पूरन संयम त सबूर
 सुंदरमुखी कमलनयनी छख् च् त्रिलोक चि हूर

क्षमा ईश्वरी स्वरूपनी माता तिम्न यिम छ् फितूर
 श्रदा सान प्रार्थना करय थाल ह्यथ पोष धूप जोग त कपूर
 सिंहस् प्यठ् सवार सर्व शक्तिमान च्यान् एकि इशार् पृथ्वी ठहूर

गुल्य गँडित ज़ारपार करय मतय् मेय्नु गुल्य मूर
 वथ हावतम पज़रइच मत् कअनि फोल् समझिथ दितम ठूकूर
 दम फुदि त बेज़ार लँगान इम् तिम्न छक बूजरिच् लूर

Fundraiser: Oxygen Concentrators for India



On Saturday 24 April 2021 at the Annual General Meeting of Kashmiri Pandit Association of Europe, the idea was proposed by Amit. Shortly afterwards Amit Kachroo and the team organised a [fundraiser](#) to raise funds for procurement of oxygen concentrators for India. By Sunday night, the fundraiser had raised a whopping £100,000. The fundraiser was recognised globally, with it making to the front pages of “The Times of India” and encouraged many more similar fundraisers across the world.

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THE TIMES OF INDIA

Help for India: UK diaspora raises over Rs 1 crore within hours

Apr 26, 2021, 02:19 AM IST



LONDON: The UK Indian diaspora raised more than £100,000 (Rs 1 crore) within hours to help India win its deadly Covid-19 battle.

A GoFundMe appeal set up by Amit Kachroo and two others to supply India with oxygen concentrators had by Sunday night reached £1,00,000 from just 1,800 donors.

The appeal read: “Since lack of oxygen supply has been a limiting factor, we would like to contribute as many Oxygen concentrators as we can procure from various sellers and send it to India to aid in recovery and ease the burden on already stretched resources. Oxygen concentrators need just a 220V power supply to purify oxygen from ambient air by

filtering out nitrogen. Every contribution no matter how big or small counts. Time is of essence and we would like to raise these funds by Monday morning UK time to ensure that we can get hold of all supplies that are available.”

Congratulations!


Overall, the group raised £507, 238 and over-exceeded their initial target of £160,000. The team worked tirelessly to procure oxygen concentrators from many suppliers at a time when many established charities as well as Governments were trying to buy the same for India. They successfully managed to procure and donate 1,074 oxygen concentrators to Red Cross, India. In addition, 38 Bi-Pap machines were procured and donated to hospitals in remote areas of India.

Fundraiser updates on where these funds have been spent can be accessed at this [LINK](#).

Picture below gives us a snapshot of where some of these devices have reached and helped save lives and some of our top donors (THANK you for your generosity).




 The GoFundMe Team
£2,500 • 2 months ago

 Anonymous
£2,000 • 2 months ago


 Pallavi Tyagi
£2,000 • 2 months ago

 Niharika Tiku
£2,000 • 2 months ago

 Neha Bhat
£2,000 • 2 months ago

 Nailesh Patel
£1,501 • 2 months ago

 IMMO Capital
£1,500 • 2 months ago

 Anonymous
£1,500 • 2 months ago

We would like to acknowledge suppliers Medaid and Entec UK, without their support and cooperation it would not have been possible to procure such large number of devices in such short span of time. The team is also grateful for the generous logistic support provided by High Commission of India, DB Schenker, Qatar Airways and Air Vistara.

Lastly, we would like to thank the O2C for India core team led by Amit Kachroo for initiating and leading this effort.

The A-Team (names in alphabetical order): Mr Gaurav Mahna, Mrs Upasana Moza, Mr Amit Kachroo, Mrs Smriti Kaul Kachroo, Mr Vineet Kakroo, Dr Dinesh Kaul, Mr Kamesh Kaul, Mrs Mukta Kaul, Dr Dinesh Kumar, Mr Atul Pathak, Mr Parmendra Pratap, Mrs Rashmi Razdan, Dr Sanjay Saproo and Mr Satyam Singh.



I'd like to take this opportunity to congratulate Dr Dinesh Kumar and his friends for the incredible achievement in raising over £400,000 to send oxygen concentrators to India, and I am pleased to read that as of 16 May several hundred oxygen concentrators have reached India from the 'O2CforIndia' campaign. The display of goodwill among the UK population has been commendable and demonstrates the strong links between India and the UK.

I would like to congratulate Dr Dinesh Kumar again for this incredible achievement.

(Letter forwarded by Jeremy Hunt from Dominic Raab to Dr Dinesh Kumar)

We would like to **CONGRATULATE** the entire team (and each of the donors) for this truly magnificent effort.

KPAE COVID-19 Community Fund Raising

Total funds raised for COVID-19 relief : £6,400.00

Total funds spend on shipping 4 Bi-Pap devices to Vitasta: £650.00

Total funds spend on shipping 8 O2C to KMECT: £590.00

*Remittance / Transfer of funds to Vitasta: £2,580.00

*Remittance / Transfer of funds to Genebandhu: £2,580.00

We express our gratitude to “**AKW MEDI-CARE LIMITED**” for donating 4 bi-pap machine. These devices were given to Vitasta Hospital in Jammu.

We also express our gratitude to “**Sherwood Forest Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust, Nottingham**” for donating 8 Oxygen concentrators. These oxygen concentrators were given to KMECT.

* Transfer of funds to India has been initiated, however, due to increased checks on foreign transactions, these have not yet been received by the beneficiaries.

I Wonder Why *Vimla Bhan Durani*

I WONDER WHY we are here, not in our own country or in our own state or in our own Kashmir where our parents have given birth to us?

I WONDER WHY minority had exodus for centuries?

I WONDER WHY in ancient Kashmir different rulers attempted to convert minorities by force and against their will?

I WONDER WHY there was no political solution in 1947 when KABALIS attacked Kashmir at URI?

I WONDER WHY AZADI was not vocalised then, when the Maharajah of Kashmir requested help from India, and the Indian army came to our rescue and saving the people of any caste, colour or creed?

I WONDER WHY The Land Act was introduced to seize land from original landowners and given to tillers free of cost?

I WONDER WHY there was subtle ethnic cleansing of Pandits in the Valley, forced to look for their livelihood in other parts of the country or across the entire World?

I WONDER WHY we had to acclimatise ourselves to other cultures, language, weather, rituals and fashions?

I WONDER WHY we have forgotten our Kashmiri language, which we couldn't pass onto our future generation although derived from Sanskrit?

I WONDER WHY we snow birds had to live in the sun-scorching heat of other parts of the country, be frightened of snakes, other reptiles and mammals?

I WONDER WHY even before 1989 exodus, places for higher profession were not allocated on a merit basis?

I WONDER WHY nepotism was the mainstay, when minorities were thrown into far-flung areas without any facilities or monetary help?

I WONDER WHY we had to witness common people getting a seat on the bus, whilst going to Kheer Bhawani, like wandering cattle flocking together to graze?

I WONDER WHY minorities were treated as B class citizens?

I WONDER WHY there were no vocational training courses available in our own state in order to earn our livelihood?

I WONDER WHY after exodus, we were not welcome by the host community in other parts of our own state?

I WONDER WHY the Media, the Government, the Politicians, and the Journalists remained silent at the exodus?

I WONDER WHY political leaders were hibernating and ducking their faces from the reality, ignoring, looting and murdering?

I WONDER WHY there were no signs or heard of the Human Rights Commission?

I WONDER WHY for our return we wait and hope with wonder in our eyes, even after 30 or so years?

To sum up, parental roots should be steadfast and dug in their own birth land, whilst their children can get an education, get jobs anywhere in the world but from time to time they should come to their parental house to enjoy the soothing climate of Kashmir and be able to pass on their culture to their own generation, without any fear and free of any suspected atrocities.

Community Volunteering Group

Sonal Sher

Knaphill, St John's and Brookwood Volunteers' support group was founded Sonal Sher in March 2020 and has about 200 registered volunteers helping hundreds of residents, elderly, vulnerable or immune compromised, with picking up prescriptions, shopping and errands during Covid-19. Thousands of tasks have been completed by the volunteers in addition to dog walks, to reading books, to checking on a family members' welfare

* The Care Calls Team regularly call residents for a chat and to check on their welfare. This helps and supports the vulnerable and isolated neighbours and gives them a friendly voice to speak to. We have a dedicated Care Calls Team in place to do this.

*Sonal raised over £1100 for her birthday fundraiser and the funds were used to donate hampers and packs filled with treats to Community Health Support staff in Surrey.

*The group raised money for Art Kits for the community by Sonal donating her Eindre handmade chutneys. This fundraiser was supported by the family of a volunteer, Claire Dockley who passed away; which enabled the group to donate to more residents, old and young. The recipients were nominated by friends and family. Other kits went to the women's refuge, Your Sanctuary and to The Hermitage School in Woking.

* 131 pairs of socks were donated to the York Road Project for the homeless to help them in the winter, over £210 worth of donations in kind.

*The group organised a virtual musical evening and quiz nights for the volunteers during the first lockdown as a morale booster for volunteers and residents both.

* Care Notes, an initiative to engage residents was started, encouraging local residents to write letters and send cards to neighbours which were dropped off by volunteers.

*Sonal and her children donated a few books to start up a local Lockdown library and this initiative ran very successfully for 5 months until libraries reopened for residents.

*The group has been featured in Woking News and Mail, The Telegraph, BBC Radio Surrey, BBC News and acknowledged for its contributions by the residents, the MP Jonathan Lord, The High Sheriff of Surrey and the Mayor, who sent thank you letters to the volunteers. A story from the KStJB group also featured in a documentary featuring Martin Kemp on the BBC.

A dedicated helpline: 01483 380801 and an email ID wokingvolunteers@gmail.com where people can reach out for help, are still in place. The group works alongside other voluntary and statutory bodies in Surrey. There is a team of volunteers managing requests via the helpline and email each day to support this effort until such a time when it is not needed.



A Perfect Day Out at Kheer Bhavani, TULMUL

Rekha Tukra

O, Great mulberry tree peerless, thy name, existence
immortalised infinitely in Tul Mul, so your fame
You are truly “atulya mulya” rendered name
signifying to this pilgrimage

*O chinar tree, It's is you have shaded picnicking, worshiping Swami
Vivekananda, Maharajas, monks, spiritual gurus, notable personalities
and commoners all alike or a sage*

*O My Holy Mother, come on Summer month of June or May,
so comes your pious sacred auspicious day
my mind dwell on you, immersed in your thought night and day
Three decades is not less time in exile,
let us proclaim what is rightfully ours without delay
Difficult for me to cross mountains seas and thousand miles
I won't be asking for moon perhaps how dare I say*

*O, My Mind, Sitting on balcony watching infinite turquoise sea it's horizon,
sailing boats
its tides teleported me instantly to unequivocally unparalleled
exceptional scenically stunning located opulence gate, luminous court*

*O my Heart, Etched in my memory, time machine took me back
in time to particular, divine abode of Goddess
commenced my journey along natural bewitching features
Brooks, rivers, pleasant climate most sacred
pilgrimage, Shree Kheer Bhavani, loaded in memory in stack*

*My memories, prouted with fresh bloom of such colourful trips
to kheer Bhavani temple
its splendour of fine greenfield, rice fields grove of trees, orchards on
its route panoramic vista in ample*

*O Maple tree, whistling wind through you burst my mind
with sweet smell of breeze bathing gentle
my whole inner soul sitting direct view of my goddess's throne
few yards away under the chinar tree in courtyard temple*

*O our solo uno, Ishta Devi, Deity,
Sleeping in compound under crystal glittery
sequinned blanket of starry sky
alongside moon overhead, arrays of clay tea lamps flickery
near flowers cladded natural spring*

*Continued afterparty at "Gander Bal",
under the bridge, stream milky plus silvery
Your own food, tea, mat, swimsuit, wicker basket
Charcoal hearth food never tasted so flavory
lingering taste of relishing savoury*

*Ah, Never knew then how these memories will become treasure
dwell deeper I yearn a day out, perfect picnic,
where fun never ceases
all aches and pain eases
adventure never stops, pilgrimage was pure pleasure*

*O merciful, how come you didn't send for me
to come over your shrine
clouds should not bring rain but rainbow
Tell me where would I go
should I not only in your lotus feet bow
You punished me for my sins, faced test and trial
O my compassionate Mata, now time to redeem and reconcile*

*O my Holy Mother, the nights have been long
so has been pitch darkness
Trust, faith and hope float
when my days will have golden dawn
will summon me to your magnificent court
My prayers will yield you will rock my soul row my boat
Set on sail I will reach my harbour and port*

*O Hail Mata, Shower your unlimited blessings in abundance and pile
Show me your radiant face with glowing smile
Uplift us downtrodden's and make our life worthwhile
Come to rescue I am marooned lonely alone afar on isle*

*O My deity, You have eighteen arms can't you hold my hand,
take me out of sea of my tears in which I drowned,
lift us, make rich enrich me with your divine magical wand*

Understanding Grief/Bereavement and Dealing with it in COVID Times

Dr Nischint Warikoo

Death of someone close brings a whole range of feelings and emotions. Even though everyone's response to loss is a personal, individual experience, there are some common experiences that many people will share. Bereavement is this experience of losing someone important to us. It is characterised by grief, which is the process and the range of emotions we go through as we gradually adjust to the loss-you will probably experience many emotions which will change over time.

Grieving process

Shortly after the death of a close relative or friend, you may experience: Shock, numbness, panic, or calm, being weepy, or being not able to cry at all and difficulty sleeping.

The effects may over months be replaced by:

- Agitation
- Odd sensations, such as thinking you saw, heard or felt your loved one near you or in the distance. These experiences are not unusual following the death of a near one.
- Relief/guilt: it is common to feel relief at someone's death when suffering ends following a painful and prolonged illness. This may make you feel guilty.
- Regret: You may wonder what you could have done differently that might have helped the situation
- Anger: this can be directed at your loved one for leaving you.
- These feelings may alternate with depression, weepiness, tiredness and low mood.

Then this over a period can lead to recovering from bereavement - people usually find that gradually – perhaps within a year or two - they are able to start to move on and get on with their lives, and think a little less about the person they have lost. It is quite normal to begin to recover and start to rebuild your life. Try not to feel guilty, it is not disloyal to the memory of the person who has died.

Children and young people

The Grief is similar in children but with some differences.

The UK organisation Child Bereavement UK reports that every year in the UK over 20,000 children and young people under the age of 18 experience the death of a parent and that around 6% of schoolchildren are grieving the death of a close friend. This may have increased during the Covid times particularly in India as we have seen and heard of deaths of young parents and at times both of them.



How do children respond to such situations?

Clearly children are individuals and some will understand death better than others.

Under 3 - do not really understand death but they will react to the absence of a known person, and will respond to the emotions and feelings of those around them.

By age of 4- they will have experience of separation and death is therefore seen as someone “going away” with the expectation that they will come back. **By age of 7** -the permanence of death is beginning to be understood. They explore their feelings of sadness.

In covid times it can be extreme as parents or near ones are experiencing anxiety too.

How do the children present when grieving?

They often express their grief through their behaviour. They may become quieter, or more easily tearful or angry in everyday situations.

They may have physical symptoms, for example a sore tummy.

When someone dies, children usually realise something is wrong. They need help to understand what has happened and to express their feelings.

How to help them with their grief and it will depend on the age of the child?

Every child is unique and will cope with the death of someone important in their own way. There is no magic formula but things that help include:

- Clear, honest and age-appropriate information. you should tell them the person has died and explain what this means using words they understand. Help children understand that death is natural: all living things die, accidents happen, and illness and old age are all part of the life cycle of people and animals.
- Reassurance that they are not to blame and that different feelings are OK. Children may feel hurt or angry that the person has gone, or may feel it happened because of something they said or did. It's important to allow children to express these feelings, and to reassure them that they are not to blame.
- Normal routines and a clear demonstration that important adults are there for them
- Time to talk about what has happened, ask questions and build memories
- Being listened to and given time to grieve in their own way children will move in and out of their grief – sad and tearful one moment, and maybe playing the next. It is important to recognise this is normal and to try and support them.

As parents you need to help yourself too.

It's important to look after yourself. For example, you should try to eat well, and avoid drinking too much alcohol. It's also important to know that it's normal to feel afraid, have nightmares or struggle to see the point of life. However, if you are worried about your feelings, you can speak to your doctor.

Remember:

- grief is normal, it's part of what it is to be human and to have feelings
- grief is a journey, it is often hard, but it will get easier
- grief has no shortcuts, it takes time, often much longer than you and many people around you expect
- it's normal both to grieve and live, remember it's alright to find yourself not thinking about the person who has died
- grief can be scary, can lead to depressing thoughts and even thoughts of suicide, while it's normal to think this way it's good to talk to someone about these feelings. It can be helpful to find someone you trust that you can talk to, for example a friend, your doctor, or a religious leader. If after a while you feel you're still not coping, you may want to speak with your doctor.

Finally, it's important not to expect too much of yourself, and to know when to ask for help. The death of someone close is a major event in anybody's life and there are no quick ways of adjusting. Impact of COVID and how it complicates Grieving process

Given the global impact of COVID-19, it is hard to escape from information about its impact and the losses that others are experiencing.

Not only is the person grieving for loss of near ones but at the same time have a fear and anxiety that the same can happen to them or other near ones, this anxiety will have a major impact on the grieving process. The pandemic may make it easier to become more isolated and withdrawn, when your energy and interest in connecting with others is low.

Seek professional help if your grieving process is not following the usual course as explained earlier. If it is extreme or prolonged seek professional help.

Further support for your child

There are also bereavement charities that offer helplines, email support, and online communities and message boards for children.

These include:

Child Bereavement UK – call 0800 028 8840 Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm, or email support@childbereavement.org

Cruse Bereavement Care – call 0808 808 1677 Monday and Friday, 9.30am to 5pm, and Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday 9.30am to 8pm, or email info@cruse.org.uk

Grief Encounter – call 0808 802 0111 Monday to Friday, 9am to 9pm, or email contact@griefencounter.org.uk

Hope Again – call 0808 808 1677 Monday to Friday, 9.30am to 5pm, or email hopeagain@cruse.org.uk

Winston's Wish – call 0808 802 0021 Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm, or email info@winstonswish.org

You can also find out more about children and bereavement from the Childhood Bereavement Network

<https://www.childbereavementuk.org/supporting-bereaved-children-and-young-people>

Remembering Dr T N Dudha: A Tribute

Shivani Dudha

After my father's death, it took a very long time to not feel angry and bitter but instead celebrate his glorious life. I can't believe that here we are again, trying to get used to Sabha "was" instead of "is".

Sabha papa didn't live for himself, he lived for others. Not a single day went by in his life since he graduated as a doctor when he did not treat patients.

"What kind of a doctor do you want to be like?"

"Like Sabha".

This was my aim since the age of 15, and 15 more years later I have constantly judged myself whether I have been able to be even 1% like him.

No one else got up early in the morning and before anything else opened the gates to the clinic because "patients have come from so far away". Sabha often had his morning tea with them in the waiting room. He had to be dragged out of his office for lunchtime after several reminders, apologising on the way to a long line of patients sitting in the lobby for keeping them waiting. He did not waste a single second before rushing back down to the clinic. The same scenario repeated at dinner time, but this time he ate at leisure, simultaneously ringing several family members to check on their welfare.

Sabha did not leave his desk until every last one of the patients were seen, often working until 11pm. Of course, he took a 30 minutes break to catch his favourite crime thriller on Sony TV at 10pm with a big plate of rice, dal, lots of curd and a curry. Often, if there were patients arriving very late in the night, he left his dinner halfway to attend to them. Sabha never, ever refused to see a patient no matter what the time.

All of Sabha's patients, old and new, absolutely adored him. Even if they came after several years to visit him, he remembered the names of their parents, children, grandparents... He would always enquire about their family and treat everyone with warmth and kindness. His empathetic and compassionate approach towards patients is something I have never seen anywhere else, either in India or in the UK. His vast expanse of knowledge in general medicine and women's health was extraordinary. He never recommended unnecessary tests and always referred on to other specialists appropriately when needed.

I forgot to add, he was also 24x7 available for patients (previously reviewed and strangers) on his mobile. For many years, technology moved forward but he carried on using a very tiny basic handset, saying "it does the job" or "kaam cha chalaan" in Kashmiri.

Sabha never worked for money. His fees were affordable for the poorest man, and he never demanded fees from the underprivileged, instead offering them any kind of monetary or non-monetary help.

From a very young age, I have been a big fan of Sabha papa and Kaki mamma because we felt so pampered in Noida. Soooo many memories, I feel he is sat right next to me as I am fondly recalling them. As kids me and my brother always got to play on the 2nd floor where Kaki mamma ran a primary school. The walls were full of our favourite cartoon characters and there were so many mini swings and fun storybooks to read. I remember Sabha giving me my first maths graphs book from Kaki mamma's stock sneakily and saying "don't tell her".

Our yearly family Kashmiri tradition, "Gadh batt", was usually held at their place and the feast was similar to Hogwarts school's long dining table with the addition of DJ party on the rooftop.

Sabha treated all my illnesses as a kid - Fever? Call Sabha. Cough? Call Sabha. Cold? Call Sabha. Tummy ache? Call Sabha. Ear ache? Call Sabha. Vomiting and diarrhoea? Call Sabha. I think the only other time I saw another doctor was for a Japanese encephalitis vaccine or tetanus shots after injuries. Every time I got a shot elsewhere I muttered under my breath angrily, "ugh I wish Sabha would have done that, wouldn't have hurt so much".

My little brother Ishu and I had a spectacular knack for goofing around and breaking stuff wherever we visited. Of course, Noida home was not spared. We've smashed 3 beautiful dining tablets (2 on the same day even) and several others tumblers, embarrassing our parents until their cheeks flushed. Sabha did not even once frown or tell us off - in fact he laughed with us at our mischiefs. He was utterly forgiving. Over the years, we visited Noida for the yummy food, getting the chance to sit in Sabha's clinic and see patients (my secret childhood inspiration) and playing with all the animals both inside and outside Noida house. All sorts of birds, dogs, cats (heck I'm sure he would have even adopted a dinosaur) found their home at Sabha's. His love for them knew no bounds and would have featured as the top viewed video on The Dodo channel, for sure. He fed them day and night - not just leftovers but special delicacies straight from the butcher. He sat with the animals every night petting each of them and talking to them. So many cats and dogs have taken birth under his wing, and he raised them all like his kids and was massively protective towards them. This was not an exception even when one of the dogs chewed off his calf few years ago. Yes, he still fed the canine the following day and said "I could see regret in his eyes, he felt so bad".

Sabha created time. He managed to visit us at the most unexpected time of the day - 05:30/06:00 or 23:30/00:30, after an hour long drive each way. These were stolen moments when he wasn't seeing patients. We did the same, because we knew this was the best time to visit him! Any other time, and he would never be able to come upstairs even for a cup of tea to take a break.

I did not see Sabha very much after I went away to college at the age of 18. But you know what? Every time I got home from the airport or was about to leave for the airport to head back, he was there. He was there after driving his little red car with his beautiful squint eyes and cursing all the way through the UP-Delhi traffic for an hour. The same continued even when I went to London and returned back home every 3 months pre-pandemic. Sabha was there to make sure he gave me his blessings "khush raho, abaad raho, longer life". I wish we could all add some of our own lives to increase his...

Sabha also had a spontaneous and hilarious side. Ever so often, I would get calls at random times during the day and he would put me on speaker phone and be saying to his patients, "She is my daughter, my daughter is also a doctor, Hatate Chinu, emis seath kar kath (here talk to XYZ patient and tell them what you are doing in London, they want to know)". I would go along and say... "training to be a psychiatrist blah blah blah" and wouldn't even know when they hung up. Other times he would just call me to say hi and give his blessings. Throughout my life, Sabha had NEVER ever said goodbye on the phone, and a telephone conversation with him usually started exactly where we left it.

Sabha asked me a million times how far Pummy Bua lived away from London, because he was always excited with the idea of me taking a train to Coventry and being together with her. You see, what filled his heart with love was seeing everyone together and being happy.

Sabha loved food, and we often joke that my little brother Ishu was born with Sabha papa's and Baraja papa's (our other adorable bade papa) hands on his head as Ishu too loves to clean up the fridge at 3am in the night since he was a little kid.

There is so much more I want to write, but can't because it's very difficult. I am angry at Sabha for leaving us so soon, for seeing patients even in his 70s and not caring for his own health despite so many co-morbidities. I am bitter because this was not the way for him to go, just like so many others who have had their life snatched in an insensitive and isolated way.

A part of me wonders whether he wanted to kickstart his journey to be one with God while serving others, as that was the meaning of his life.

Goodbye Sabha, hope you are enjoying Kehwa and Chzir Chzot with papa, Thathaji papa and Vijay Jijaji.

Forever in our hearts.

Our COVID-19 Volunteers

Our star youth volunteers share their experiences of being of the global volunteering effort helping COVID-19 patients in India.

Vidhisha Handoo

After finishing my A-Level exams in May, I started working as a Patient Outreach volunteer. It has been the most fulfilling and growth inducing experience of my life: talking to new people every single day, working as part of an amazing team from all over the world and making a tangible difference to people's lives.

I'm quite an emotional person- I tend to soak up other people's problems as if they were my own. Though in a way this was a positive, as it filled me with drive, it meant that I found grievances particularly emotionally challenging. I'm so much stronger because of this experience, mostly because of the wonderful KPCF team who supported me, and each other, every step of the way.

Thank you so much to Ashwani sir, and all of the amazing KPCF team, for fuelling such a noble initiative.

One funny story I'll always remember is a case where we were looking for a Black Fungus medicine. We found the contact of a seller, but suspected he was a fraud. A team member from America contacted him, and he promised he would deliver the medicine to the patient, but requested a ridiculous amount of money in advance. We put the contact on hold, but after a while, upon seeing that the number of the team member was not from India- he asked about where they were from. Impressed that our team member was from America, he began requesting for a PS5 game console delivery!



Saisha Dudha

Growing up in my family can be described as 17 years of experiencing unexpected forms of selflessness. My grandfather, late Dr T.N Dudha has been no different as he always was (and always will be) a guardian angel to so many throughout his life. I learnt from him that "a life is a life, be it rich or poor, human or a tiny bug. Each of them deserves to be treated with the same love and care".

24 hours after Dadda had left us this April to continue serving Heaven, I got introduced to *Every Infant Matters*, an organisation through which I got a chance to carry on Dadda's good work. Where was the time to grieve, there was much to do.

Days turned to weeks and the volunteering tasks poured in round the clock on the WhatsApp group. I spoke to countless relatives and patients to triage their problems and help find medicines, hospital beds, ICUs and ambulance transport. I did not know these people, yet they didn't seem like strangers. Once the second wave peak was falling, I shifted focus towards registering close to 4,000 people for their vaccination doses online. This was the only time in my life when mom didn't mind me being glued to my phone all the time!

It has been far from easy. The last 4 months saw a complete roller-coaster of emotions as I juggled my own loss and Covid-19 work for others, but in the end it has always been fulfilling and worth it. There were days when we could not save everyone and had to close cases with a heavy heart, but we tried our very best. And I know that the big guy up there is very proud.

As a kid, I remember telling my parents I want to be famous. The meaning of this has evolved over time, because the most heartwarming and priceless gift I received was a young couple from deprived background naming their new born girl Saisha.



Siddhi Qazi

As India experienced a deadly Covid-19 outbreak this year, lack of medical resources and a failed healthcare system left the country gasping for air.

By the time I was introduced to the KPBB & KPCF group, the death toll was climbing and oxygen beds, injections and other medical resources were running out by the minute.

The decision to volunteer and actively contribute for Covid-19 relief was a complete no-brainer. The thought of having been able to save or impact even one life seemed to ease my anxiety to a great extent.



In the times, where people were stock piling injections and medicines for themselves and the healthcare infrastructure wasn't well equipped to tackle the spread of Covid-19, sidelining my daily chores and stepping forward to do my bit came effortlessly. I'm very thankful and grateful for this opportunity and the KPCF platform as it gave me the opportunity to contribute extensively to the cause as well as partner with people from diverse backgrounds, age groups and professions. The whole process was very organised, and a life altering experience for me.

Introducing The Next Generation

Samyakh Tukra

Founder & CEO at Third Eye Intelligence LTD

Have you ever thought about what will happen to our bodies by the time we enter our early 70s? The future tends to fill us with fear, and since it's not here now, it's an easy thought to push aside.

Over time, the body deteriorates, weakening to a point where it cannot fight against the medical threats that haunt us. I witnessed it happening not too long ago, when my grandfather was admitted to an Intensive Care Unit (ICU) for a heart attack. Despite being in the highest echelon of care, where he was monitored 24/7, he died within five days due to multi-organ failure. A feeling of helplessness sank in. My family and I had forfeited my grandfather's fate to the doctors in the ICU, and so had other families with their loved ones.

Suddenly, it hit me. This wasn't just about my grandfather. There are more than 85 million patients admitted to the ICU annually for potential organ failure, yet only up to 50% of them survive.

I decided to shadow multiple doctors in the ICU and conducted more than 40 interviews. I found the underlying problem is that organ failure is often detected too late. Healthcare staff have to make life-or-death decisions in high-pressure settings while retaining and analysing mounds of information at speed. Hence, interventions are delayed and chances of survival for patients are low. This results in increased treatment costs as well as patient morbidity and mortality. Additional treatment costs are estimated at \$220 billion globally, and 7 million lives could potentially be saved every year. With acute kidney injury alone, for instance, early detection and treatment could prevent 42,000 deaths in the UK annually, according to National Institute for Health and Care Excellence estimates.

The problem isn't that clinicians don't have suitable ways to intervene, but that they can't plan for when to do so.

Current early warning systems (e.g. NEWS, Apache III) are static and tend to compute scores based on a pre-set combination of vitals to get a momentary risk-score for patient deterioration, giving few insights that would allow doctors to catch future deterioration in time. These systems fail to use the entirety of available digital patient data, only address specific organ-failure conditions, and are often not time-specific in their predictions. Hence, they lack the crucial ability to analyse and predict deterioration for more complex multi-organ conditions and have only limited usefulness. Current methods also fail to utilise the electronic health records (EHRs) comprising the patient's entire digital footprint in real time. Mostly, this is because they can't scale to that level of complexity or predictive power, but with the advent of machine learning this is no longer a limitation. With deep learning in particular, we can train a model to do such inferences.

To address this problem and give patients a fighting chance, I created Third Eye – a universal early warning system for organ failure based on an evolving AI algorithm. The AI processes and amalgamates



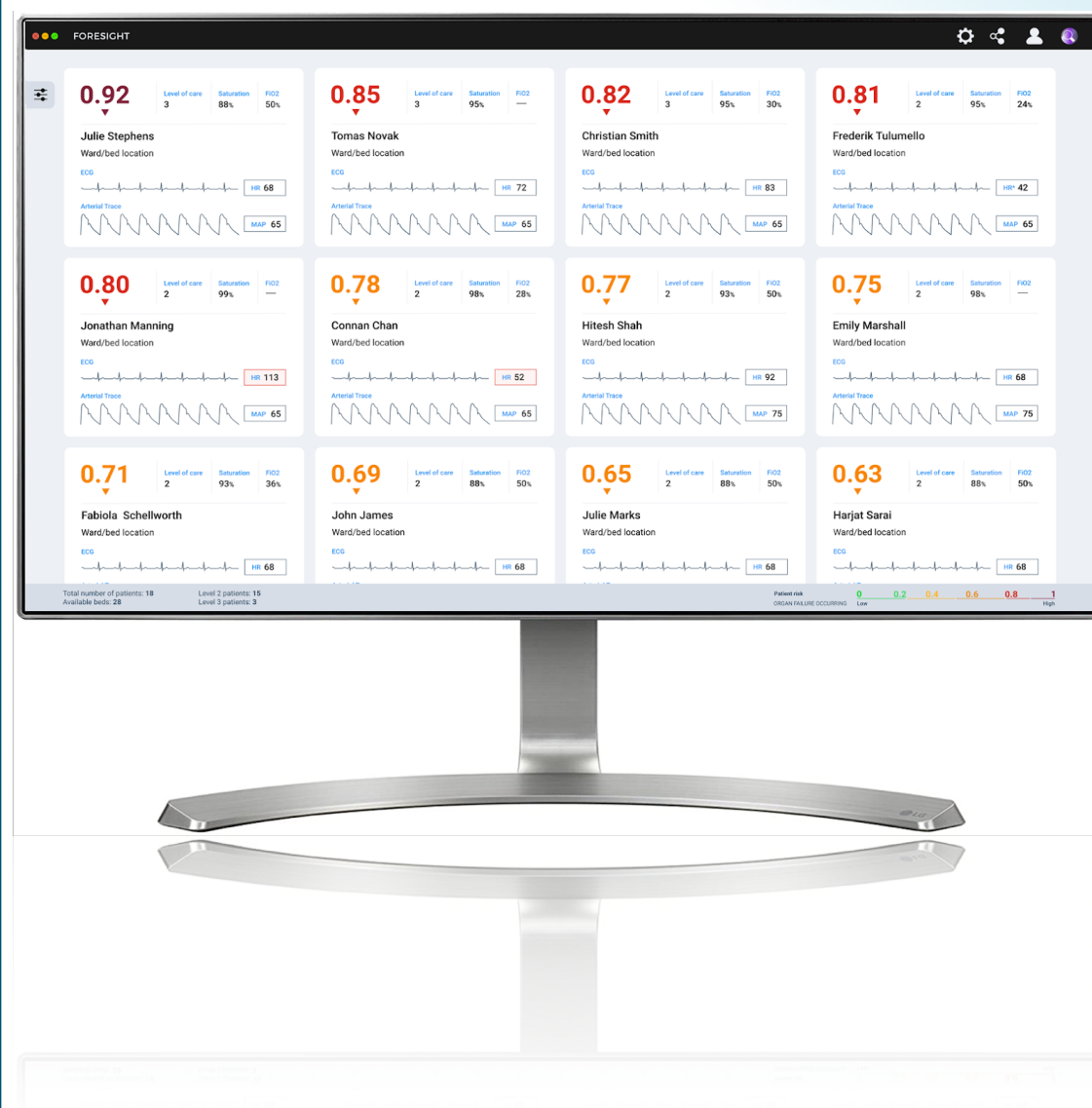
Currently, this system can predict organ failure 36 hours before disease onset with 96% accuracy, so that clinicians have a longer time window to administer life-saving interventions before it's too late.

The underlying technology is based around automated machine learning (AutoML). AutoML is a branch of AI where instead of humans designing AI models, we train another AI system to design better AI models. Third Eye's system comprises two AI models, where one AI model – called designer – iteratively designs and optimises the other – candidate model – to attain peak prediction performance. The final candidate model is vastly superior to industry standard, hand-designed AI models, which are sequential and limited in nature. Our approach overcomes the limitations found in existing hand-designed AI models, such as lack of optimal AI design, lack of generalisability, inability to learn features from multiple input sources and more. Since our AI designs candidates from the inherent patterns of data itself, bias associated with human designs is significantly reduced.

We embed our AI in a support platform that provides actionable organ failure predictions to help ICUD staff make decisions. By integrating our software into current ICU workflows, we estimate an increase in survival chances for organ failure conditions by up to 65% – and up to 30% reduction in ICU costs.

Our goal is to bring this technology into the clinical environment very soon. We are about to enter a clinical trial to validate its performance in a real ICU, to ensure the system is stress-tested for all possible scenarios. There is a huge discrepancy between data used for validating machine learning models outside of the clinical setting and within, hence it's vital as AI researchers we develop our systems robust to such cases. Over the next 20 months, we will be testing our system in the ICU while collating all the evidence required to achieve regulatory approval and get ready for market entry.

A look of our software:



Being a Part of Kashmir's Legacy in Tourism



Kashmir's tryst with tourism goes long way back of course, but it was the very few who realized its potential in the early years. One such person was Late Mr. ML Razdan, the founder of **Razdan Holidays** and also my grandfather.

Razdan Holidays, then known as **Razdan Travel Service**, was established in 1957. The company has been in existence for over 60 years now.

I am the 3rd generation in the company and my father took over the baton in his early 30s after my grandfather left us quite early. He had to take the responsibility of taking the company forward quite early after the tumultuous years that had been in the past.

Kashmir's tourism industry was quite dis-jointed but you know the quote "**If there is heaven, it is here**" doesn't exist for nothing.

Mr. ML Razdan was one of the many brothers and sisters in his family. At an early age, he joined the Police force of Kashmir as a constable. In the meanwhile, owing to the lack of medical advancement in India and low life expectancy, he had been losing brothers and sisters. His mother was distraught.

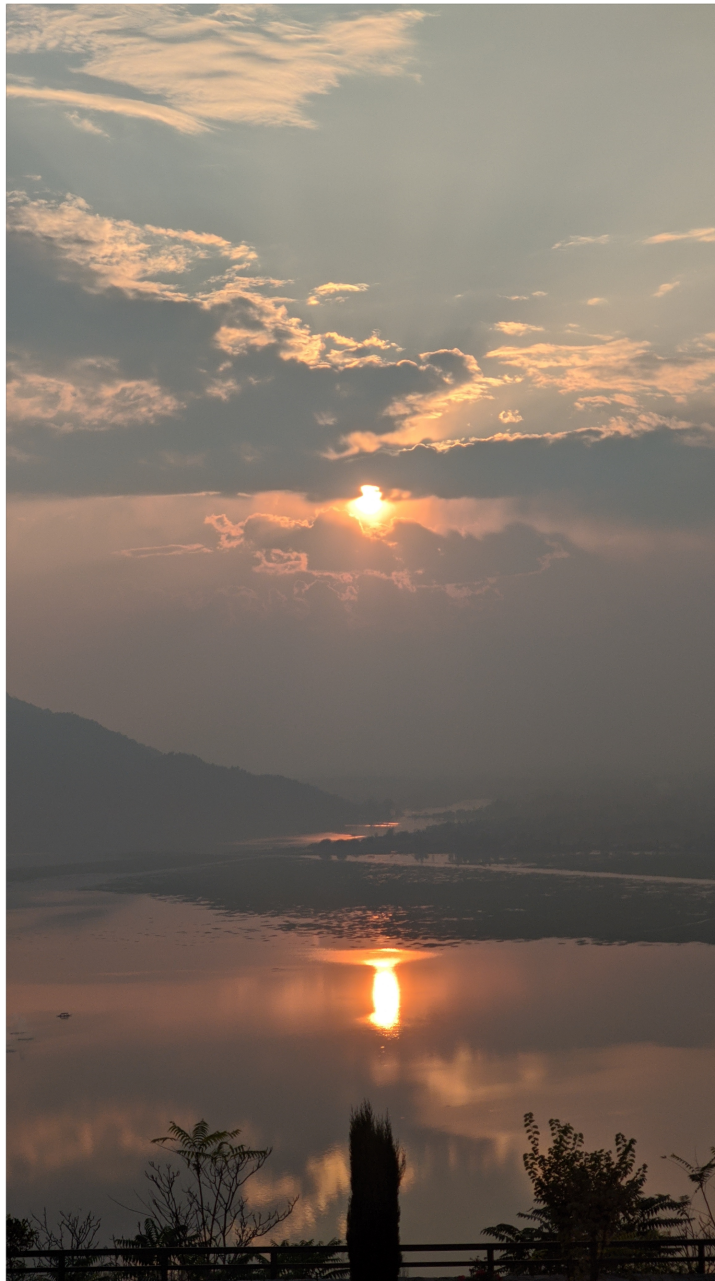
Being in the police force in a place like Kashmir wasn't one of the safer occupations (how times haven't changed) and hence my great-grandmother insisted with her motherly concerns that he drops his job for something safer as she could not take any more tragedies. They were 10 children who had become just 2.

Kashmiri's have usually been known to be professionals in the field of engineering and medicine and quite successfully so.

Entrepreneurship wasn't very popular and was probably frowned upon during the Nehruvian Socialism era.

However, Mr. ML Razdan took the plunge into entrepreneurship with Razdan Travel Services.

A great explorer himself, he personally developed trekking routes in the valley, hence, opening up the world to Kashmir.



Kashmir was a hard place to gauge, especially for foreigners.

Therein he saw the opportunity, of organizing a disjointed market into a specialized product with his own expertise and his vision of integrating professionalism even in one of the remotest areas of the world.

He also made a huge contribution by bringing Bollywood to Kashmir. A lot of the movies shot in Kashmir between the 70s and 80s had been done under the care of Razdan Travel Service. Movies were the best advertisers for a destination in those times in India. Soon, Kashmir became very popular amongst domestic travellers as well. Srinagar, Gulmarg, and Pahalgam were on everyone's lips in the summers in mainstream India.

Razdan Travel Service's impact in the region of Kashmir had been left for generations. Even today, Mr. ML Razdan is well known as the pioneer of tourism in Kashmir.

The story does not end there. Mr. ML Razdan also opened trekking routes in the region of Zaskar and Ladakh leading some of the first-ever trekking expeditions in the region.

Gaining expertise in two of the hottest selling destinations in the world, Kashmir & Ladakh, was fundamental to the company's success.

However, the oncoming man-made disaster in 1989, shook the company's base. A once sprawling tourism industry of Kashmir was sent under a tsunami of insurgency and violence.

Razdan Travel Service had to immediately cease operations. A budding business run by a Kashmiri Pandit immediately became one of the major targets and hence, he was threatened to shut shop.

The company had to shift its base to Delhi in urgency but the hold in the region from far away had been lost. Kashmir also became notorious in the market for foreign destinations hitting the operations of the company hard.

Nevertheless, the drive to survive was still high and Razdan Travel Service took shape as Razdan Holidays under his son and my father Mr. Sanjay Razdan.

Now the company has expanded its expertise and operations to all over India, Nepal, Bhutan & Sri Lanka.



As I write this, our tourism industry in India is under a similar onslaught due to COVID, though a much larger pool is being affected.

I sometimes wonder if this is the second coming in the company's history. However, having survived **1989**, I think we shall overcome.

It is an incredible privilege to be a part of this legacy and I hope more and more Kashmiri's having found new homes around the world travel to not only Kashmir but also India and discover the country's incredible offerings.

Web: www.razdanholidays.com

IG: [@razdanholidays](https://www.instagram.com/razdanholidays)

- DHRUV RAZDAN



Kosher Tchoke

Nadir Monji

Vimla Bhan Durani

If you were at Tulmula today on the auspicious day of JYESTHA ASHTAMI (KHEER BHAWANI) you won't go home without NADIR MONJI & LOOCHI and carry some for your family to share and taste. If some of you can't travel for the Darshan to Tulmula far away from your country, here is the easy recipe to follow - don't worry, let us try!

Ingredients: 1 1/2 cup Ground rice flour
1 stick nadru
2 tbsps Kashmiri chilli powder
1 tsp Ajwain (caraway seeds)/Thyme
1 tsp whole zeera (cumin) optional
1-2 drops Red food colouring (optional)
Salt to taste
Oil for frying

Method:

In a bowl add finely ground rice flour, Kashmiri chilli powder, ajwain, and zeera. Add salt to the taste and mix all the ingredients well.

Now add water to the mixture, in the bowl bit by bit, stir it well till there are no lumps in the batter. Make a paste, mixture should be smooth keep on mixing.

Add few drops of red food colouring dissolved in water to the mixture (optional).

The consistency of the batter should be smooth not too thick. Leave it for 10 minutes.

Process:

On the other side, get one nadru stick to peel. Cut it in the middle longways, into two pieces. Now cut the long pieces into small long pieces. Wash the cut pieces of finger sized pieces in water, so that they are nice & clean.

Put all the pieces in the batter made above. The oil should be very hot in the pan/ kadahai. Deep fry them only on a high flame, one batch at a time. Care should be taken that we do not rush and put all the pieces together.

Nadir Monji should be crispy and get them out and keep them away for 10-15 minutes. Fry batch by batch, every time oil should be very hot. Fry them again on a high flame, to make them crispy before serving. Use a paper towel to get rid of some oil from the monji.

Safety aspect: care should be taken while frying in very hot oil.

Serve the nadir monji with a walnut chutney dip.

Recipe for walnut chutney:

Grind handful of walnuts. Add crushed green chillies and mint leaves in a mixture. Add salt to the taste. Put the ingredients together to make a paste. Add some yoghurt to it and your chutney is ready. Yum! Yum!

Kosher Tchoke

Loochi

Anita Raina Kotwal

Ingredients:

Maida (plain flour) 500 gram

Oil to knead and fry

Salt to taste

Preparation:

To make dough, add lukewarm water, salt and few tablespoons of oil into the maida (plain flour). Knead well till the dough is very soft.

Let the soft dough rest for 30 minutes. Knead the dough again and divide into small dough balls. Apply oil to dough balls and cover with a damp muslin or kitchen towel. Let it rest for 10-15 minutes.

Apply a little oil to your palms and roll out the dough ball into the shape of loochi. You can also use a rolling pin if you prefer but do not use dry flour to help you roll. It is much easier to do it with your hands as the dough is quite elasticated and rolls back in when you use a rolling pin.

Once the dough ball is the shape of a loochi (circle or oval), fry it in very hot oil. Turn the loochi as soon as you put it in hot oil and take it out quickly. Loochi should not change colour and should not be crispy. Continue the process with other dough balls.

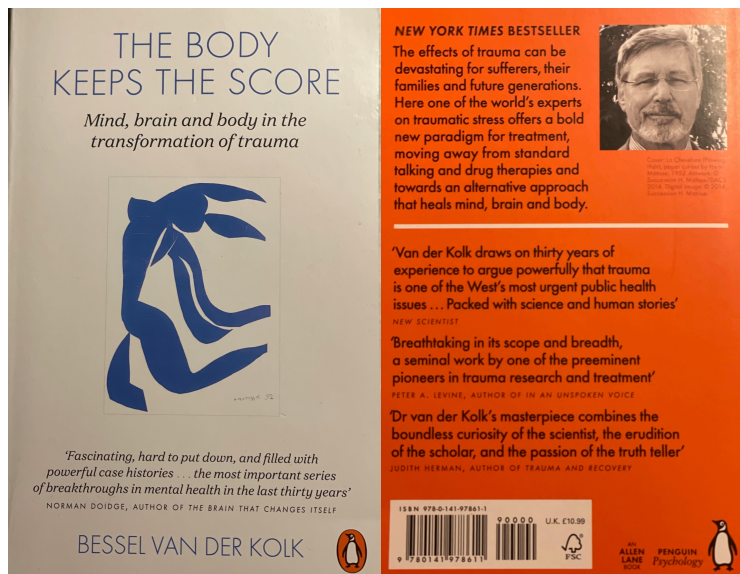
Serve with suji ka halwa and kehwa.



LOOCHI AT TULMUL
PICTURE CREDIT: DHARUV RAZDAN

Book Recommendation for Summer

Some of the books we think must be added to your list of things to read this summer!



Non-Fiction

The Body Keeps The Score.

This is deeply moving, intense and informative. If you ever wanted to understand how trauma affects its victims at multiple levels, this encompasses all of that.

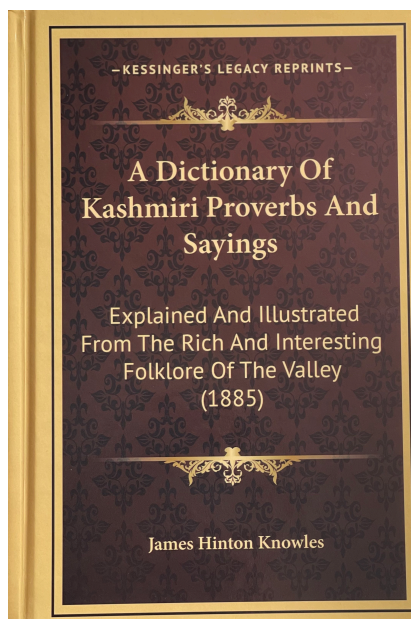
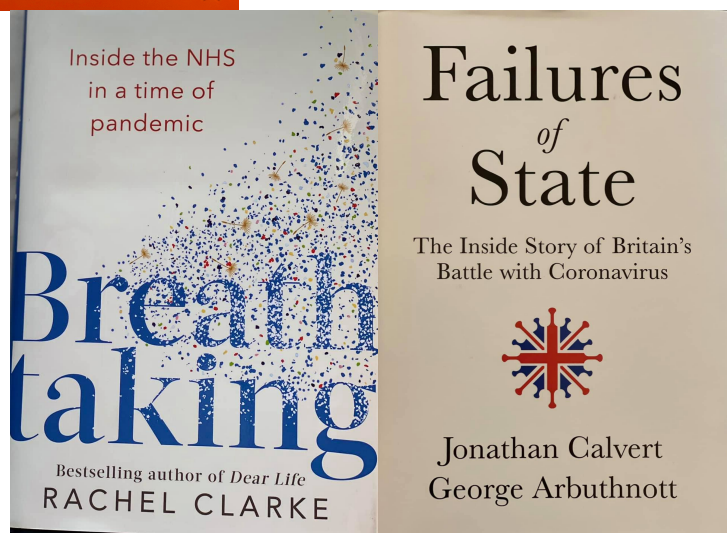
Not a book you can read all at once, but something you would want to come back to.....

Non-Fiction

Keeping up with our COVID-19 theme, 2 books that we think cover a lot of ground and perhaps answer some of your questions.

Breathtaking

Failures of State



One of the conversations that I had with Shivani's Nanaji (Kachroo Sahib), he spoke about his career in Library Sciences and how he had once requested a book from a library in Calcutta. When I asked for the name, it took him no longer than few seconds to remember and recollect the contents of this book. I ordered a reprint from Blackwell Publishing House and I am enjoying reading and re-learning. There are many other similar books published in recent years which I have not read but understand equally good.

Zutshi-Smith Scholarship

Derek Wyndham Hariram Zutshi, born to consulting mining engineer Lambodha Zutshi and Eileen Dorothy Wyndham Zutshi nee Lord in April 1930, was a consultant rheumatologist and Senior Medical Officer at the Department of Health.

Zutshi was educated in Brighton, Bangalore and Bombay (now Mumbai) and graduated MB ChB in 1957 at Bristol University. In 1968, Zutshi became the senior registrar in rheumatology and physical medicine at the London Hospital. Zutshi also had a well established private practice in Harley Street and was a council member of the British Association for Rheumatology and Rehabilitation amongst many other esteemed posts that he held through his career.

In 1974, Zutshi married Marguerite Elizabeth Smith (physician).

Dr Zutshi was deeply dedicated to many charities and social work including his involvement with Kashmiri Association of England, an association established by his father Lambodha Zutshi. By their wills, Dr and Mrs Zutshi have established the Smith-Zutshi Foundation to continue their work. The University of Bristol offers ‘The Zutshi-Smith Scholarship’ as part of their legacy.

The Zutshi-Smith Scholarship covers:

- all University of Bristol tuition fees;
- an annual living stipend in line with UKRI funding levels (£15,285 in 2020/21);
- one return flight to/from India;
- an allowance for research costs.

To be eligible for this scholarship, you must be ordinarily resident in India (preference being given to applicants of **Kashmiri origin**) and have an offer to study a PhD course at University of Bristol.

Terms and Conditions of ‘The Zutshi-Smith Scholarship’ can be accessed [here](#).

Applications are now closed for the 2020/21 academic year and will **reopen in early 2022**. The scholarship is generally awarded every other year.

(Information accessed from [Royal College of Physicians](#) and [University of Bristol](#))

Achievements

It is very important for the young generation especially those whose life, education and school has been disturbed due to COVID. This post is to prove that hard-work, resilience, dedication and commitment can make anything work for you.

My husband Vikas Nagpal and I are beyond proud of what our son Suryavansh Nagpal has achieved even before his 18th birthday. He got his offer as a Trainee associate at EY London office on 16th July, after he got through the final interview for Degree apprenticeship in Technology Consulting UK&I. He will be joining one of the world's biggest consulting companies at 18 which is a huge achievement in itself. Being able to mention #bigfour on your resume at 18 didn't come easy, his resilience, focus and grit helped him achieve his goal even after facing so many challenges this year including COVID and loss in family. It was a tough competition, he made us proud after 7 rounds of assessments and interviews.



He is an inspiration to us as well as to his peers.

Well done son!

(Archana Warikoo Nagpal)



ISBUND next issue will be in October 2021.

Please do get in touch with us at editorialboard@kpae.co.uk.

The Children's Times: Our young editors from Children's Times will be reaching out soon to ask for contributions. If you would like to contribute, please do get in touch with them at Childrenstimesnews@gmail.com

ISBUND is available quarterly in United Kingdom by email or on our various social media platforms. If you would rather like a paper copy mailed to you, please do ask.

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