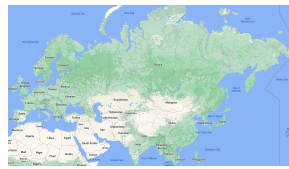


ISBUND

NEWS, EVENTS AND
EVERYTHING IN
BETWEEN



ISBUND

A Quarterly Newsletter for the Kashmiri Pandit Community



Dal Lake, Srinagar

Picture Credit: Neklesh Sumbly

From the Editor's Desk

As the song by legendary Pink goes,

'Cover me in sunshine

Shower me with good times

Tell me that the world's been spinning since the beginning

And everything will be alright'

The word *'Travel'* was coined somewhere in the 14th century it has been claimed. We are all well aware of the famous explorers who went out and about looking for adventure, jewels and much more. We know of explorers who found what they were looking for and some who lost their way and discovered completely different worlds altogether. We don't always land where we want to be in life either but it's always about the experiences you gain from life's adventures that we all crave.

COVID didn't curb our enthusiasm for travel, if anything it has made us want to travel even more. Ever since travel has opened up again, be it staycation or those trips far and wide, the travel business has taken off. We have all been busy planning that next family vacation, that grand reunion, milestone birthday or even a destination wedding.

What is it about travel that perks you up? The planning, the journey or the destination? Or is it simply getting away from the mundane that makes you wander across continents. Whether you are the one for the hills, or the beach, every travel diary starts with a dream, a plan and an itinerary.

How you travel gives a glimpse of your personality. Whether you are the one turning left at the plane door or the one with a rucksack full of wild dreams, every travel story is full of adventures. Well not everyone is a free bird who can just pick up a bag and leave, but we all try. A lot has been written about travel and its impact on mental health, learning and education. You almost always imbibe the many cultures you touch upon during your travels and the food you relish finds its place in your weekly meal plans or those special dinners out. Above all travel broadens your perspective and makes you more tolerable. Every time you take a trip, you come to realise how much more there is to see, to experience, to learn.

For me travel means to unwind, to get away from it all. I love to travel to places of historical and cultural significance but I am not one for travelling solo. I am also the one who gets quite anxious when packing or getting things ready before you leave. But that doesn't stop us from going places. I don't have a bucket list of places to travel to as many have, but I have been to places on many peoples lists. Vietnam scores quite high on my list. The place has this calming feel to it. Depending on what region you travel to, you can feel different energies around you. One gets to experience the same rush in Hanoi as you would in Mumbai but at the same time you are deep within nature within a couple of hours drive at Halong Bay. There is so much peace around those serene waters of Perfume river.

Whether you are a serious packer or last minute grabber, the light traveller or the kitchen sink carrier, every traveller has a story to tell. What's yours?

We invited our readers to share their stories for this issue and many have indulged us. THANK You for taking us on your journeys. This issue also highlights the world post-COVID, where things looked a lot more closer to normal than last year. In the last quarter we celebrated Herath/Navreh and Zyeth Asthami together with our amazing community members and took part in sporting events like marathons and community badminton event. We look forward to many more such events in the months to come.

We hope you are enjoying the English sun and taking the time out to rejuvenate during these summer months. Remember, the world is full of places waiting for you to explore them and what better day to start but today!

Like Dr Suess says, 'Oh, the places you'll go'

Here's wishing you all a wonderful summer.

Sheetal, Shivani, Anjan

(Team ISBUND)



Perfume River, Hue, Vietnam

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Sixth Element

Avanti Sopory

When I began to write this piece, I wasn't sure what to write. Should it be about the idyllic memories of childhood or the secret corners of my gutted house or of the fear that lounged in the corridors and rooms of my erstwhile house or the books that I left behind on my school table in the hope that I would return to them after my winter break of 1989?

What I left behind is the nothingness of things. Idiosyncratic memories of life, which seem paltry in the presence of nothingness. My room had two windows with *khatambandh* shutters, and then in Delhi I had no window. In the kitchen garden of my house I had sprinkled sugar crystals along with the root of *kohl-knol*, to enjoy a sweet harvest, and then I had a shared balcony. The newly constructed cobblestone path leading towards the door of my old house had some friendly foliage on it, and now footwear lay dishevelled in the battered corridor of the rented room. While my Srinagar house entertained endless guest, there was a restrain on guests visiting a family of five in my rented room in Delhi. The aged books in the top room of my old house needed more space, and then there were a few shelves in the single rented room to be shared for clothes, books, and all such oddities of life.



Time, and it superficially healed very well. Over the next three decades I earned my share of respectful *roti, kapda* and *makaan*. I enjoyed the view from multiple windows, I grew and cultivated the fruits of labour, I entertained guests with open arms and I could arrange my books by size, genre, colour and authors. Yet, all of this could not bring me to a sense of stability and security. I live with this fear of sitting in a train which is not headed towards my destination. I am on-board a state-of-art flight but the navigation is lost. I feel I am in the middle of a ship, which has lost the anchor and is afloat without a compass.

The first time, this feeling hit home was when my school mates headed to their 'hometown' during the summer or winter break. In the following years, I often heard this word "hometown", from multiple people. 'Home', 'native place', 'birth place' were the other expressions of belonging for people who had a hometown. Then that little voice inside me hinted at my accomplished life journey -

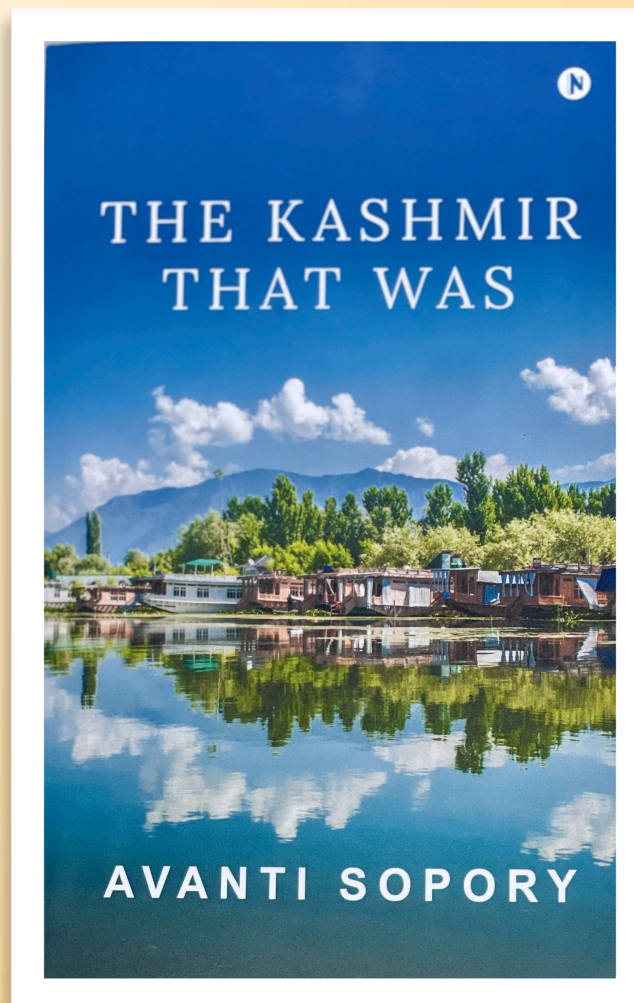
*Cry for what you petty self,
Trod over a million saffrons yourself,
Yet, you wander for a wild flower,
That now grows in a land turned sour.*

'Home' is a wild flower I am aching for. It grows in a forbidden land, which is farther than my thoughts and nearer than my present. I wish to steal that wild flower, put it in a vase and imbue my house with the purity and rawness of its emotions. I wish the flower would overshoot and swarm my rented abode with its wildness. I wish her roots to drench in the warmth of my native land. I wish the nerves of the wild flower would emit the comfort of my hometown. I do not wish to disengage with my umbilical cord. This is my anchor, which is my hometown.

After the unfortunate exodus from Kashmir, Kashmiris did not waste time and they displayed unabashed profailantism. With pure grit and fervour, Kashmiris world over achieved success in all fields. They are globe-trotters, world-travellers, global-citizens and hold positions of repute and honour. As a community, Kashmiri's vaunt about their glorious past and boast with pride about their achievements.

As Kashmiri's we are carrying the five elements, but the sixth element is missing. The five elements that make up our complete being have travelled the world with us. Our elements of earth, air, water, space and fire have the essence of Kashmir in them, how can we part from it? But 'hometown' the sixth missing link in our saga is missing.

The yearning is painful but as Rumi says; *wound is the place where the light enters you*. The wound that we Kashmiris have been living with is also the point from where we will let the sixth element to enter into our lives.



Avanti Sopory is an author and an educator based in Delhi. Her latest book 'The Kashmir That Was' is a collection of her memories from her time in Kashmir.

India Calling!

Samara Ogra Menon

For many people going to their home country means a lot to them. You may not have been born in that country or raised there, but for most people their country means a lot to them.

During lockdown me and my family were pretty sure we wouldn't see our cousins in India for over 2 years. Although our prediction was correct, it wasn't something to be happy about so as soon as travelling was allowed my mum pulled out her laptop and immediately booked tickets for India. Then came the waiting. The terrible ordeal of counting down every single day that went past, looking for upcoming milestones. "3 months to go". "1 month to go". "2 weeks to go". Then finally... "WAKE UP! YOU ARE GOING TO MISS YOUR FLIGHT!!". The morning when we had to leave for India, no one was in the mood to be grumpy, there was too much to do. After months of not going anywhere we were finally free for 6 whole weeks.

The drive to Heathrow was quiet with all of us sitting groggy eyed in the seat waiting to reach. We reached quite early to avoid queues and check-in chaos. With the goodbyes said we headed through security and into the airport, and then had to wait for 3 hours to make up for the early arrival! Most people like it when things are happening, but I like waiting for that thing to happen. It makes me more excited for when things actually happen. I don't know how we managed to survive the 3 hour wait but what I do remember was it was full of tantrums and sibling "love".

After what felt like ages we were finally allowed to board. This was the moment we had been waiting for... 3 years. The excitement of 8 and a half hours of nonstop movies, games and music only to stop for toilet breaks and whether we wanted veg or non-veg, is unique to travel to India. But as all stories go there is a problem. In our case our dream of almost 9 hours of screen time was deflated when to our horror only 1 of our 3 screens was fully functioning. Great, thought my Dad, more fighting! And he wasn't wrong. Well... at least we weren't memorising every crack in our home during lockdown as we were bored out of our wits. Instead we were going to India. Finally, going to India.

What do I love about India? I love meeting my cousins in real life who I've only seen for years only on WhatsApp. Seeing their faces light up and telling me how much I've grown makes me feel really happy. It's the kind of happiness you can't replace with a video call. To me, India is so much more than just meeting my family, it's trying to catch mosquitoes, suffering from the dreaded mosquito bites, turning the fan onto the highest setting, eating LOTS of yummy food, going on rickshaws. And then obviously meeting everyone I haven't seen for the past year. The first few days are full off saying hellos, exchanging gifts, hugs and then you almost feel part of their daily routine.

Nowadays you can easily get all sorts of food from around the world but the joy of plucking and eating fresh mangoes from your grandparent's tree is amazing! That's the fun of travelling to India. You get to indulge in all the food that you don't usually have, stay up late to watch movies with your cousins, go on long train journeys and buy Tinkle comics and sweets from the train station, enjoy the sound of 'chai chai..' throughout the journey...there's so much! However, every holiday eventually comes to an end and then its back on the plane behind a stranger who tilts their chair too far back and hoping the screen works on the return trip home.

Samara Ogra Menon

July 2022

A Peek Into Rowing Life

Akshan Raina, Year 10

At first I was hesitant when opportunity first arose to consider rowing as a major sport. Having little knowledge on the subject as of then, I was under the assumption that it would be a boring and repetitive motion. However, having always been a fan of water sports (having done stand up paddle boarding, kayaking and Canoeing) - I decided I would give it a try, and so when the older boys came round in an attempt to recruit some rowers for the house, I signed up.

For this I must thank my dad who has always pushed me and encouraged me to do water sports as he himself also loves them - in fact we used to do them every summer wherein he would book sessions for us to be on the water together as a family. It was he who first inspired me to do rowing.

This was the start of my rowing journey at Eton.

As I progressed from first learning how to row to then rowing competitively for the house, I learnt to love the sport. There was truly nothing better than the whoosh of the air on your face as you speed through the water. The joyous Summer days where the sun is shining on a clear day at a soothing 21 degrees make up for the late winter nights under the rain at a chilling 4 degrees, and it is this very aspect - the dedication required - that makes rowing such a character building sport as well.

Now I row competitively for the school have earned rowing colours, I also rowed for my house in the annual Bumps competition, one of the most highly regarded of all Eton traditions.

Rowing differs in many ways from other water sports. One of the major differences is that you sit facing the opposite direction to that in which you are moving. It is a sport which is highly physically demanding and unlike most other water sports it primarily depends upon force from the legs (as opposed to arms), yet it also engages the whole body if done correctly. From the moment you have to lift the 114kg boat from the boat house and take it to the water, to rowing the 2k up to start line (not to mention the exhausting race on the way back), the body is never at rest!



I would recommend giving rowing a try if the opportunity were ever to arise as it is a great exercise for the whole body and can also be extremely fun once you get a hang of it. One of the best things about rowing has got to be the sense of camaraderie you feel from being in a boat with seven others, who are all relying upon each other in order for the boat to move well. This is similar to most team sports, where the acts of training and competing together forge strong bonds of friendship. Finally, when you get into rhythm and are gliding through the water, it can be incredibly relaxing - feeling the fresh air on your face and occasionally experiencing a splash of cold water on your back.

As you can tell I have thoroughly enjoyed my rowing journey so far and so would recommend that you should also give it a try. If river and rowing boat are inaccessible or out of the question, you could even start by rowing on an ergometer in a gym to get a taste for the act and motion.



My journey to becoming a lawyer

Priyansha Raina

That I would qualify as a lawyer wasn't a dream, an ambition or a goal I nurtured growing up. I did imagine flying a plane, becoming a physicist or an architect, and eventually set my sights upon a corporate career. I narrowed my focus on working with an MNC in the strategic sphere. Thus, started my journey into the corporate world. I graduated in Economics from Mumbai University with a First Class. I subsequently pursued an MSc in international marketing & management from the University of Leeds, UK, receiving a distinction in my dissertation. Lest I be accused of flaunting my scores, I should identify the reason for stating these – I found, in my experience, a good 'report card' does help in pushing your CV to the top of the pile.

I embarked on my career with a role in strategy with Gulf Oil – I was placed in their Mumbai office, and following the successful completion of a six-month probation period, the Company decided to relocate me to their London office as a part of their global strategic team. I found the job description provided was only a small part of a portfolio of responsibilities. I was thrown in at the deep end and it was either sink or swim. I learnt, amongst the plethora of skills and experience, that irrespective of one's educational qualifications, one only builds their abilities and capabilities on the job.

Here comes the twist. Whilst fully in the throes of corporate strategy and marketing, I found myself greatly attracted to the legal aspects of the work. Due to the nature of my work, I had regular interaction with the legal counsel to evaluate various contracts, albeit my focus was on the commercial viability. Nonetheless, law had my full attention! I was riveted and enthralled. I decided I wanted to practice law full time. I, however, didn't jump the gun. I spent several months researching the demands of the profession, speaking with lawyers and gathering information. It was evident this was going to be no cake walk, far from it, but I had made up my mind and decided to take the plunge.

After four years at Gulf Oil, I submitted my resignation, and commenced my legal training full time. In order to qualify as a lawyer, or 'solicitor' as is the more traditionally used title for the profession in England & Wales, one must either possess an LLB in law, or if the first degree is in another subject, then you have the option of pursuing 'Graduate Diploma in Law' (GDL). This is a one-year intensive conversion course available to non-law graduates. Once you have a GDL or LLB, all such graduates must clear a 'Legal Practice Course' (LPC) whether you have an LLB or a GDL. One important point – an LLB doesn't allow one to practice law in England & Wales. One must also complete a two-year training contract with a law firm in order to qualify as a solicitor.

In my case, I obtained my LLB degree after completing the GDL and LPC from The University of Law (UoL) (formerly The College of Law), London. Obtaining a 'Training Contract' was a job all by itself – it took complete dedication and commitment. I was fortunate to receive an offer for a training contract from Orrick, Herrington & Sutcliffe LLP, London, where I qualified as a solicitor. The path to qualification is strewn with innumerable challenges. However, determination, tenacity and hard work are your faithful friends.

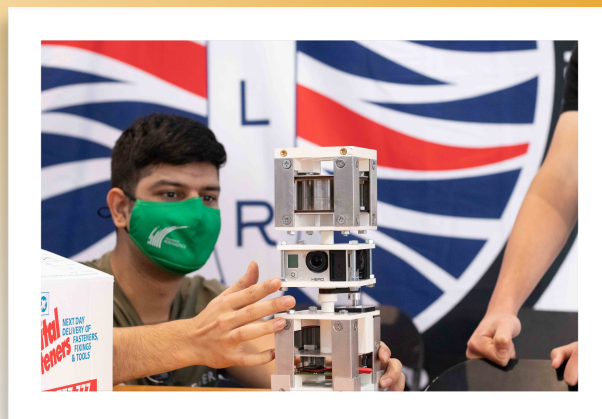
Following my qualification, I spent several years in private practice, at Orrick, and Simmons & Simmons LLP, followed by W Legal as a consultant solicitor.

I'm currently on a sabbatical.

Its Not Rocket Science!

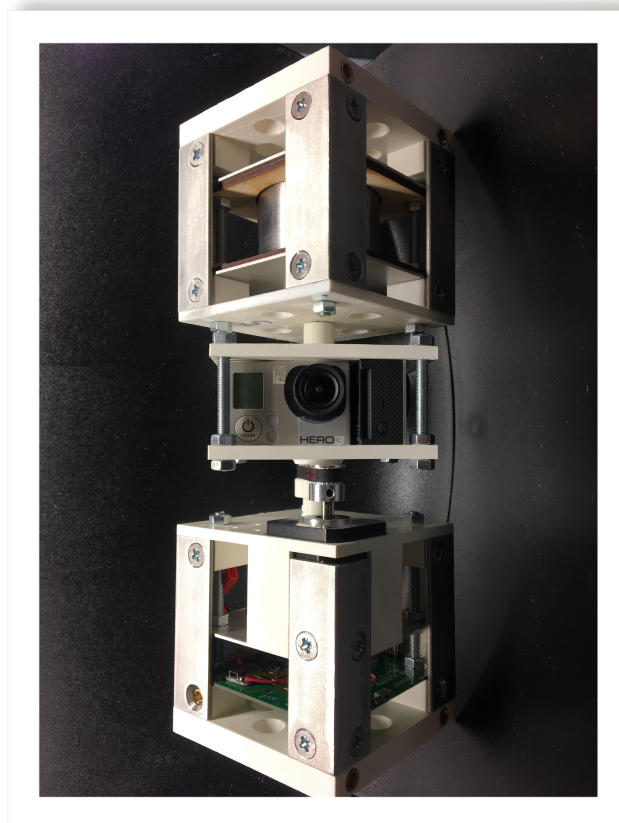
Palash Mattoo

Rocket science and music theory have a few things in common. Both involve intricate methods of constructing incredibly complex structures using nuts and bolts or musical notes. Both require hands-on experimentation and failures, and years of experience to reach mastery. Both are fields I know very little about.



The term “rocket science” is typically used when talking about the propulsion system of the rocket, as it's undeniably one of the most challenging, expensive, and hazardous parts of a rocket to design, build and test. However, a rocket is not just fireballs and flames. A collective effort of a large number of engineers from multiple disciplines is what it takes to design one. For a medium-sized hobbyist rocket, the engine fires for only a few seconds, whereas the aerodynamic response, structural rigidity, and avionics functionality have to be taken into consideration for the entire flight. Towards the end of a nerve-wracking few minutes, the payload, the actual mission finally comes to life.

The main objective of launching a rocket is to transport a payload to the upper reaches of our atmosphere, to orbit around our planet, or deeper into space for interplanetary missions and beyond. A payload can be anything from a small satellite to a large Mars rover to a crew of astronauts. A scientific payload is designed with the intent of either demonstrating a new technology or collecting scientific data.



During my time at university, I worked on multiple different payloads in the form of CanSats and CubeSats as a part of Imperial College of London Rocketry (ICLR) – two of the most common forms of nano satellites. The form factor and dimensions are defined by the rocket, but the mission can be anything - from basic measurements of atmospheric variables to complex mechanisms used to land upright and collect samples of soil. Our most recent CanSat featured thin, flexible solar panels attached to the parachute along with some fabric (yes, daily life cloth) which also produces power from the sun!

I strongly believe that designing a small satellite for hobbyist launches is within everyone's reach. The process begins with an interesting idea and a sketch to visualize the layout of your satellite. There are various standard constructions that can be used, with simple materials sourced from your nearest DIY. Once you have a shell, all that remains is carefully putting all your electronics, batteries, and sensors together like a game of Tetris and you're done! Attach a parachute and you're ready for launch. The satellite only needs to be as complicated as you want it, and lots of help is available at each step of the way. It really is not rocket science - just fancy crafting!

Getting started with such engineering projects can be intimidating, however, a necessary step toward developing useful hands-on skills and a career in this field. Feel free to contact me if you want to know more about the stuff that we do and what goes on behind the scenes.



ABC Tutions

Kashmea Wahi

Within the Kashmiri Pandit community, it is no new news that there is an immense value placed on education. Much of this manifests in aiming to get into good secondary schools and perform well in board exams there.

Having been through the rigorous 11+ exam, I decided to impart my knowledge and share my experience by tutoring others. Although I tutor in all 11+ subjects, I noticed that many second-generation immigrant children were incredibly strong in Maths but needed an extra bit of help in English, specifically the written comprehension and creative writing. This is where I began to specialise and tutored alongside my studies, and throughout my holidays. When COVID-19 struck, it took time, but I adapted to the new online way of life and created my own website and began conducting online lessons. As many were missing school, there was an increased requirement of tutors, which I decided to accommodate through group summer courses. This was a unique and highly enjoyable experience: seeing children interact in a group; feeling excited to share their own work; and seeing those who are on the shyer side, break out of their shells. Most of this experience has been constantly adapting and finding new ways to really ensure students have a solid understanding of concepts taught, can apply them as well.

As I started my GCSE process, I tutored students in a variety of different subjects from Science to History and am hoping to soon tutor at A Level/IB level after I finish my qualification. The most rewarding, yet most difficult age group to teach has been under 8s, as they are all incredibly passionate and usually quick learners, but throughout COVID, found it hard to adapt to the online tutoring style.

I'm hoping to continue tutoring for the next couple of years at least, as I have discovered it gets easier with time, as I have already created all the presentations, worksheets and materials needed for most subjects and age groups. Furthermore, I think it is such a gratifying experience to receive messages from parents when their children get into their dream schools or get the grades they have worked so hard for.

I have also helped many of my friends get into tutoring and have shared students with them and help them get their own as well. If anyone is interested in starting up, I would be more than happy to help!

My website: www.abctutions.com



A Turbulent Night

Rekha Tukra

While turning pages of my memory book on the very introductory chapter, the first passage which directly captured my imagination was, **'My Life in Valley'**.

A prelude: "Our Glorious Ancestors"

It is better to be born as Cactus open and free in dessert rather a Tulip in garden which is destined to be trampled down,

The warm winds, dust storm of sand dunes are better than cool breeze of valley contaminated with toxic poisonous air,

The train of thoughts chugged me to that junction where I halted it occurred to me how our ancestors, forefathers Saraswat Brahmin were prodigy of that land of higher consciousness knowledge, philosophical scholars ilk of Kumarajiva, Vasugupta and Emperor like Lalit Aditya continued to thrive on their ancient civilization, obviously it is very significant we are here all because of them who stood defiant their unswerving resolute, strong willed characteristic refused to bow down in front of tyranny additionally, neither gave up their faith nor converted, above all, defended their forts, identity, revolted against conversion, protected their culture,

On contemplating it highest degree of honour forms in my heart, really, I am proud of our legacy more so their supreme scarifies have emboldened us to keep our Dharma alive, actually, it becomes our utmost ethical moral duty to protect our religion and never allow anyone to destroy our existence, even one dying is like being nearer at alarming rate to extinction subsequently present day to remain alive and surviving of descendants is paramount moreover vital for renaissance of culture and indigenous civilisation.

We were on spiritual journey, and they were on path of destruction; We were looking inwardly and they downwardly.

We seek spiritual light and they towards dark noir morbid agnostic pursuits;

We seek higher consciousness while alive by expanding our knowledge and transform;

on the contrary they devoid of humanity, their truancy and death of conscience;

Irony is these people love to hate and hate to love and we love to love and hate to hate;

However, my heart always contradicts with my mind, I still naively trusted the enigmatically construed persona by our nemesis like we see a mirage, which I still didn't consent infact entirely rejected this fact that anyone would be so brimming with hatred towards us to even think of harming, perhaps, I undermined the sources hinting of brewing animosity and enmity till fire was ignited which turned into inferno, with my mere clenched teeth razed hopes and profound heartache couldn't do anything just be silent spectator.

The pertinent self-question while digging deeper into mind perpetually emerged was:

Who love their soil more, those who have right on it or who are rightful?

Who use bullet to make it hell or who use sweat to make it paradise?

Whose land is it who bleed and taint it or who give their blood never stain it?

In medias res: - **Heading of chapter- 2 “A Turbulent Night in Kashmir”**

My last visit to my native place Srinagar was in summer of year 1988, the whole valley was in prime of most vibrant, colourful flower gardens inviting mountains, enticing woods open for all when one can enjoy the scenic spots, destination, fun outdoor in a very pleasant and cool summer season but something was amiss midst of beauty at pinnacle, perfectness, and excess there was imperfectness, defect and underlying dearth.

The joy was short lived eventually my dream visit turned into nightmare, and came too soon that incidence shook me to core, valley veil was drawn and crude scars came to surface, no inclination at all, it was too perfect to believe it true though I could feel there was something which was not right, it was absolutely quiet before storm, that evening I was at Badiyar Bala at my maternal home in Srinagar's downtown, everyone was watching latest news on telly televising breaking news of Pakistan's General Zia-ul-Hak death, obviously all were glued to TV, simultaneously all my relatives discussing with concern speculating now atmosphere here in valley should remain calm and peaceful, wishing it should not stir disruption, hoping like an earthquake of such a magnitude in Pakistan shouldn't cause tsunami in valley but bad dreams or bad intuition always turn into reality so inevitable conclusion was within one hour we could hear chanting shouting and slurs slogans of frenzy charged mob approaching nearer on the main road like a tornado which stroked ragingly havoc all what came in its path, it rapidly devoured whatever came its way, it was horror death sheer destruction to property, vehicles, a pure devil banging doors barging in to hurt people,

All lights were turned off horrified children, young girls including me and women were segregated and hurriedly led to climb attics to hide behind piles of gunny bags, sacks of grains, large vessels and trunks, all started crying almost gagging ourselves as not to be heard by assailants, we were told to climb up attic silently to lock from inside and strictly warned to block the door with heavy trunks to resist in case they came after us, it was pure scene middle of frightening horror and there was no escape route however were left in peril with threat of life, honour. We remained there motionless for substantial period without food water and nature calls till dusk until army was deployed and mob got dispersed then went elsewhere to unleash their monster rage, mayhem.

That day I realised a paradise on earth has been turned into hell by its own native people and most dangerous place where life has no value or humanity has no meaning this was its real ugly face and true obnoxious nature.

At that instant moment I determined I have to bid adieu heavy heartedly hence joy of visiting vanished swiftly, I still shiver, tremble recalling that night, it also is embedded in my mind and ever since haunting. It was daunting picture, what then followed was a scene from some battle field, honestly speaking we owe our lives to army which was deployed immediately then curfew was also imposed afterwards somehow I escaped from eye of storm thanking my lucky stars.

It also reminded me once those were also times I vividly recall when in downtown area, Alikadal, in our big house consisting of four floors living in it large family of our grand uncles and aunts in one mega joint family, in those fairly happy days generally on Sundays we would host our Muslim neighbours kids to watch Bollywood movies in good numbers all chilling, having fun and giggle. we all would watch those classic movies together without any inhibition, hesitation, tiff, visible enmity or threat, either we could not see red flags or fathom their clandestine intentions plus deceptions.

No matter what we do we could not change the direction of wind, course of river or no one can turn back the hands of time, our lives won't get back on track, explaining any rationale or ideology driving behind this grotesque devilish diabolic act is futile because they refute the charges, categorically deny any wrongdoing.

Heading Of Chapter 3: - “Poignant Scene in Jammu”

Fast forward to fall of 1990 in Jammu at our home, air was stiff again because worrying simmering tension in vale led us to be glued to our gripping TV news on latest sporadic killings that of prominent Kashmiri Hindu figure in Kashmir, in regard to it my Dad and cousin brother went to attend emergency meeting called to do a demonstration to condemn it ,surprisingly they had run away to safety as someone had called cops on gathering who grappled with them.

By the advent of winter things had fallen apart amid worsening atmosphere in vale disruption of peace and violent criminal act of murder was rampant ,here in winter capital of J & K, in Jammu all were on edge for fear of unknown or dark times ahead, it was inevitable and probably anticipated but not too soon, situation took turn for the worse, one sombre starless chilly dark night there was sudden abrupt scary pounding knock on gate which took every one in home by surprise, startled when we turned on lights saw our aunt along with cousin, quickly let them in wondering why they came unannounced or without any prior intimation but their gasping and exhausted exasperated faces did give hint of their ordeal ,they were the first batch who had to run for their lives leaving behind all their wealth ,land etc fleeing from persecution as terrorist outfit had issued threat to life notice, fatwa was declared to them for giving medical emergency aid to dying victim, whom they were first responder ,they borrowed our clothes later held their hot meal in plates with their trembling hands, chapped lips and tears saline pouring down from eyes into their mouth.

Just after another week a honking three-wheeler stopped in front our gate as we guessed rightly thus this time it was our uncle's family who were on hitlist of extremists so were hounded then ousted afterwards tentacles of extremism were spreading far and wide.

Every evening it was regular feature to join our father together to go bus station to receive new batch of our distressed, hapless relatives, poor souls.

Some were still trapped in violence torn city mostly males who stayed behind, nevertheless graphic images were emerging of people involved in looting house plundering heinous crime committed on them.

The intense scene at bus station was of exactly how we had seen in movie on horror of partition or war, dozens of families together hired trucks trailers overpaying extra money to drivers who also unreasonably exploited their helplessness as they were desperate to flee take refuge in Jammu.

An Epilogue: -

In this commotion and quantum of chaotic aftermath of insurgency and mass exodus, Let us not forget how crucial it is to highlight those in our community several individuals like my father, trail blazers, who didn't hinder, in fact in very composed manner came forward to hold their distraught relatives who were plunged into abject misery, in one house they accommodated almost half dozen families and their own large extended family including parents and grandparents alike, lending ear to listen with empathy their horrific experiences relieve their angst and heart break pain, every room occupied, elders had episode of recurring flashback of traumatic events which made them vulnerable like plants without its soil and fish without water because of not living in their habitat. Had to acclimate to climate extremes were incongruous in environment subsequently impoverished so ended up languishing in duress.

The loss of habitat and hostile weather was affecting mental wellbeing and health of our old elders which resulted in three consecutive deaths of grandparents and our eldest uncle within very same year of exodus, witnessing death and destruction equally grief, no compassionate support to grieve or bereavement, condition resulted in deterioration, decline in living standard, we were students then so our studies too took hit and affected our psyche also ,the reminiscent of that traumatic experiences have left lesions in our whole being and healing was prolonged, coping more difficult.

The recollections of the conversations with my Dad I fished out panoply of invaluable quotes aided by his elevating foresight, positive attitude and right spirit even in times of catastrophe of such proportion; -

“God has already allocated, head hunted specific persons to undertake arduous tasks including various liabilities of our community too”

“It is noble and right to give what you would receive but if you give more than how much you received, you create happiness; subsequently you create great future for others”

“Nothing worthwhile is ever achieved without sacrifice and Cost; figure out how not to self-doubt, become indispensable, never hinder to risk your valuable assets to envisage social and economic growth of your family or people in distress “

“It takes tremendous discipline and willpower to discipline yourself to do things for others though are hard and necessary but surely mounts to upliftment and leads to happiness you can’t stand by storm watch it to pass”

Surmount the storm and emerge with self-satisfaction, peace of mind and inner joy because you pursued to do something for others-essentially to needful ultimately you loved to do it not for any reward or award or self-interest but out of your sheer act of kindness”

To conclude: -

Subsequently, it seemed there is no end to human tragedy, no hope of living peacefully without threat of extinction, it was test, penance of our endurance and tolerance was running thin, irony is those implicated are still on loose.

Though, it was arduous journey to fight back eerily tears we didn’t cower hence propelled out of fear somehow however could not dry moist eyes neither anything alleviated our misery nor inexhaustible eyes who are still peering with fear with buried inside in heart respective individual tale of woe.

Travel Essentials and Oddities

Shipra Ogra

Our travel essential survey results were awesome, a snapshot of the best results is [here](#).

- ❖ Bees hazaar (Twenty thousand) chargers.....Thank you EU for simplifying our lives!!!
- ❖ Darjeeling ke bagaan (Tea gardens of Darjeeling)..Wah Ustad wah!
- ❖ Laptops and Phones: by far the list topper, how our lives are tethered to this machine; for work, for pleasure and life's bare essentials.
- ❖ Books: Good to see some old-fashioned people still making their mark or rather marking their travel journeys with a good read. Long flights are generally one of those rare moments where you can dig into a good read start to finish.
- ❖ Magazines also featured on this list... What types is anyone's guess....whatever rocks your boat!
- ❖ Sense of humour for those times when things aren't going your way.
- ❖ Toilet paper for the uninitiated!
- ❖ A hip flask because you never know when you might need to stock up on a drink.
- ❖ Footwear...backup of backups. Someone here either walks a lot on their travels or their shoe fetish finds its wings when they are out and about.
- ❖ Bank cards, cash and means to access your account (if need be). Money makes the world go round, they say.
- ❖ ID cards, wallet, Passport (preferably your own).
- ❖ Vomit bag- try getting an infant or a toddler aim into the bag. Olympic sport in itself, but well done for remembering to pack one.
- ❖ Travel money, shop around for better rates.
- ❖ Well researched destination route (can't rely on sat navs in uber rural England)
- ❖ Music- Get your playlist ready
- ❖ Home cooked meals for the journey
- ❖ Keys
- ❖ Chocolate for those moments
- ❖ Not to forget, jot down essential details in a diary for emergencies.

The Indian Polish Connection

Meru Tikoo

Going by the above name for their social media channel, a Kashmiri Pandit (KP) and Polish couple – Meru and Sylwia, are successful content creators on YouTube and also run an Aesthetic Clinic business in London.

Another KP Engineer? Not me!

When I was a school student in New Delhi, as a KP you would grow up to either be a doctor or an engineer – often it was what was asked of us, rather than our own aspiration. I don't blame our elders though, since after the turmoil 1990 onwards most of them started from scratch and securing a future for their children was pivotal.

I obliged and did what a *Sonngobur* would do – Engineering and MBA. Back then YouTube was something I never would have ever thought.

So, London happened! It's where I did my MBA and fell in love with my now wife Sylwia. I then began working in a seemingly run of the mill job and was trapped in a *Lakeer Ka Fakir* lifestyle i.e. wake up, go to work, come back home, sleep and repeat.

One fine morning my company awarded me as The Best Employee. I distinctly remember my boss coming up to me with the sales sheet and telling me how me and my team have delivered the company their best ever quarter. EUREKA MOMENT HERE...Something in my head started saying...SO I MADE MONEY FOR THEM AND GOT AN "AWARD" AND "FEW QUID" IN BONUS? No, no, no... GOLMAAL HAI BHAI SAB GOLMAAL HAI. I told my wife who was also tirelessly working night and day for the NHS that "Sillu, what are we doing yaar!". We decided life is too short and risks need to be taken.

We started our own business in the field of Aesthetic Medicine. I started handling digital marketing and put my MBA to practical use. So, with all our savings go into the business, I still remember our first day trading with just £25 in our bank account looking at each other and thinking if we had made a big mistake? After a short period of self-doubt and being a little scared, the business started picking up and nervousness finally changed to smiles.



So happy ending Meru, but where is YouTube? Haha yes where is YouTube? Well, after a few years we found ourselves in a pandemic. Having to stay at home and the slowed down pace of life was not pleasant for anyone, including us.

Little did we know that this phase would trigger something so big and beautiful. Yes, YouTube came into our lives then. As we had a lot of free time, we decided to explore our local area a bit more and document it in the form of vlogs. Only within a matter of few months, a video that I posted on YouTube became “viral”. It got around 10 thousand views and numerous comments. I was so surprised that people found us entertaining, because we were only showcasing our lifestyle and routines. As the pandemic stretched longer, our vlogs started being more regular and in just less than a year we were standing at 100,000 subscribers.

The ever-growing support and love we received is what drove us to keep creating more and more. YouTube gave us an instant medium to connect with people and show them things that they may not physically see, which serves as a huge motivation for us. We still treat YouTube as a hobby and I think that’s our secret to success, as many people now a days want to be YouTubers just for the money.

As we approach 100 million views and 350,000 subscribers on our channel The Indian Polish Connection, our advice for young and budding YouTubers or anyone for that matter is “Don’t take life that seriously and always follow your passion”.

Love you all!

Meru & Sylwia

Aarush Wangoo: Surely 'rush' is his middle name!

Aarush started a unique cricket coaching business, **Evolve**, that combines technology and sport to provide one-to-one coaching sessions. What's even more unique about this story is that Aarush is 17 years old and started Evolve while studying for A-levels. Aarush first started playing cricket when he was 11 and has represented Surrey and Kent at county level and he now hopes to drive five figures in revenue in his first operating year

Aarush played a lot of cricket growing up, two deficiencies stood out to him. One was a lack of technology being utilised for coaching at grassroots levels, and the other was a lack of female participation. Aarush said his idea to start Evolve was in the "back of his mind" but it wasn't until a conversation with his physiotherapist that he was inspired to take the leap to start the business. He told Aarush his son wasn't receiving high level coaching at a young age. He saw this as an opportunity, and the thought of being able to contribute for the betterment of these causes inspired him to take action

Explaining why his training sessions are unique, Aarush says he has a website where he uploads videos of people training, where parents can later log in and see their child progress,

Aarush offers personalised one-to-one coaching sessions to young people, both male and female. When asked the reasons why he wanted to pursue the goal of having girls involved in cricket, he'd said it was a combination of different events- from media coverage to witnessing this issue first hand at his college prior to starting his business. He is offering girls group sessions which he makes no profits from as well as having a professional cricketer attend and hold training sessions. He says, more and more clubs are now encouraging girls to play but before it only a few girls and obviously the girls will feel awkward and they'll probably end up stopping playing.

Since starting Evolve, Aarush said it has come with its challenges as he's found that at the start not many parents were trusting of his ability due to his young age, however he was able to overcome this by showing the results he's produced. Being 17 and having a parent put trust in you to coach their kids, especially for coaching important county and scholarship assessments was difficult at the start.. He says now the best part of it has been the way people come up to him and ask for advice about how to start their own thing.

Seeing so many willing to learn from him and being able to advise others and help kickstart their own ideas gives Aarush a lot of joy. Aarush's aim is to help everyone 'evolve' into the best version of themselves . At the moment, this may be in terms of their cricket, but he has strong aims to do the same for other areas, too, in the future.

You can get in touch with Aarush at <https://www.evolvecricket.com/>

Gratitude

Rekha Tukra

मेरी कहानी तेरी जुबानी,

हालाँकि, सारे ज़ख्म है ताज़ा पर पीड़ पुरानी: आखिरकार, मेरी अनकही कहानी सारे जहाँ ने जानी ।

निरर्थक, नहीं गयी हमारे खून की कुर्बानी: बेमतलब नहीं रही हम लोगों की ज़िंदगानी ॥

निर्जर, रहे वह कश्मीर की शारिका वासनी: जगजननी, हमारी इष्ट देवी कुल भवानी ।

निरंजन, पर्वत पे विराजमान आदि अन्नता बर्फ़ानी: निर्जन धरती पे स्वर्ग की स्मृतियाँ पुरानी ॥

कोड़ आया जिसने की हम पर मेहरबानी: शायद होगा कोई फ़रिश्ता आसमानी।

निस्वार्थ और करुणा से हमारी वेदना सुनानी: है वो एक उच्च कोटि का निर्माता और ज्ञानी॥

हमरी अब तक थी पहचान अनजानी, आपने लोटा दी हमारे अस्तित्व की निशानी।

कभी होती है मुझे भी हेरनी, पर ज़रूर होगा हमसे आपका जैसे कोई रिश्ता रुहानी ॥

मेरी मेली चादर कर दी इंद्रधनुष के रंगों से दानी, जैसे गूँगे बद्र को दे दी हो शब्द और वाणी ।

इतिहास का नया अध्याय सुनहरे अक्षरों में लिखवानी, बाव विभोर ,विलोहित हो गए हम सब प्राणी॥

गौरवशाली ऐसे जेसे निर्मल शीतल पानी, विचारधारा बहती हुई दरियाँ की खानी ।

गुम हो गए जहाँ वो थी डगर अनजानी, आशा का दीप और सिखा दी आपने राह पे जोत जलानी ॥

सागर की गीली रेतो पर लिखे थे मेने अपने गम और पशेमानी: गम क्या चीज़ है लहरों को आती हसतियाँ मिटानी: और माँजी को भँवर से नाव बचानी ॥

अब ना चले गी ज़ोर जबर की मनमानी: डट के करेंगे अपने बाग और ज़मीन की निगेबानी ।

मिट जाएँगे भय, अंधकार और पेशमानी: जीत होगी सत्य की फिर पड़ेगी नफ़रत को जंग हारनी॥

हमारा दोष, क्रिस्मत की मार या उसकी करनी: पर हमने भी मुसीबतों से हार कब है मानी।

इरादे हो गए अब मज़बूत चट्टानी: फिर से तूफ़ानों से टकराना की हमने है ठानी॥

हवा ने रुख बदला फिर ना करे कोई आनाकानी, ऐसे ही तो अब फ़िज़ाओं में ईत्र, शहेद है मिलानी

ज़हा कोई न हो मज़हबी बस सिर्फ़ इंसानी, उसी अपने शहर वापस जाकर एक नयी दुनिया है बसानी

शांती अमन के साथ मिलजुल के अब उम्र है बितानी: भाईचारे की परम्परा हम सब को निभानी

अब ना रहे दिलों में कोई बदगुमानी: आओ आज यह क्रसम है खानी: राह भटकों को दिशा दिखानी

Vitality London 10,000

Congratulations to **Ashutosh** and **Anjan** for smashing the Vitality London 10k in May 2022.



Place	PLAC	Name	Runner Number	AC	Club	Finish
6312	787	Bakshi, Ashutosh (GBR)	12302	Men 45-49	–	01:05:50

Place	PLAC	Name	Runner Number	AC	Club	Finish
4313	1472	Raina, Anjan (IND)	12636	Men 18-34	–	00:55:01

Herath/Navreh Puja



Herath/Navreh Puja



Herath/Navreh Puja



Kheerbhawani Hawan



Kheerbhawani Hawan



Kheerbhawani Hawan



Kheerbhawani Hawan



Kheerbhawani Hawan



Enjoy more pictures at <https://photos.app.goo.gl/ADd93aifhRaVpSMh6>

Kheerbhawani Hawan

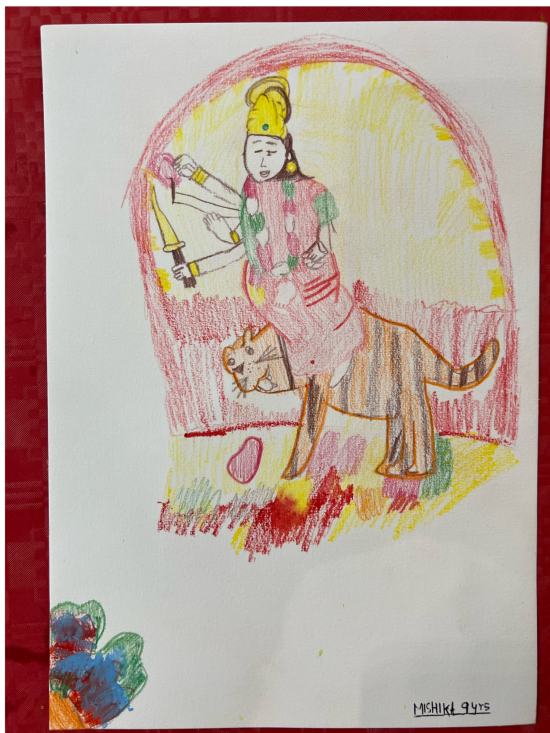
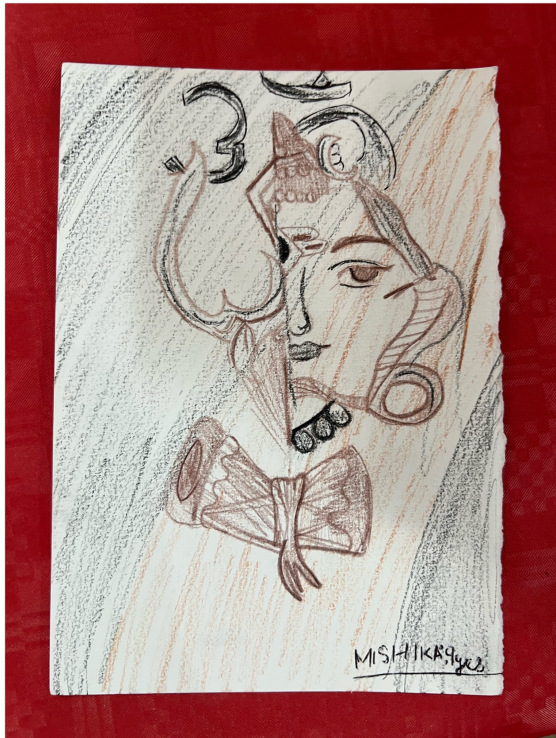


Kheerbhawani Hawan

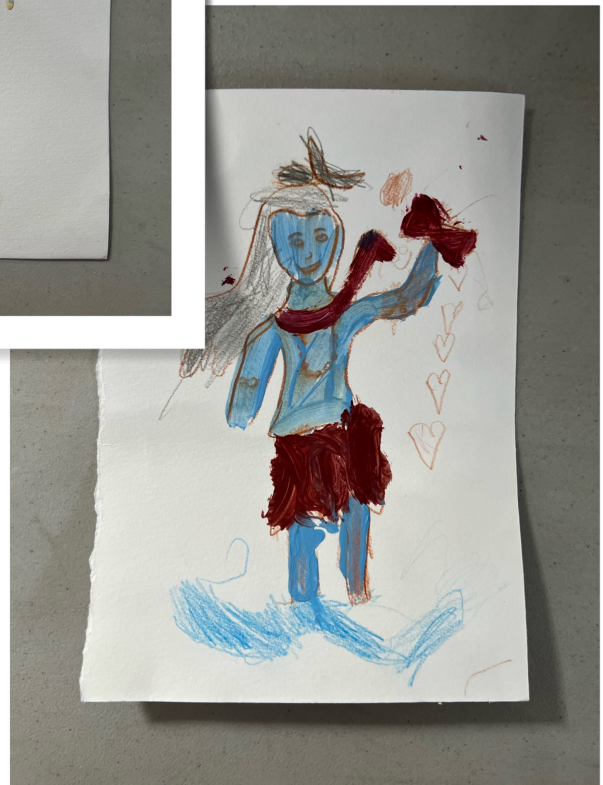


Kheerbhawani Hawan

Kheerbhawani Hawan



Kheerbhawani Hawan



Badminton Tournament



Badminton Tournament



Badminton Tournament







ISBUND next issue will be in October 2022.

Please do get in touch with us at isbund@outlook.com, editorialboard@kpae.co.uk

Picture credits: Sheetal Raina