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The Echo



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**A TRIBUTE
TO
BRAVE HEART
JOURNALIST**

SHUJAAT BUKHARI
(1968-2018)



Editor Speaks

IUST's bond with Shujaat

Dr Syed Shujaat Bukhari's association with Islamic University of Science and Technology (IUST) and especially with Department of Journalism and Mass Communication (DJMC) was not new. He had always been encouraging the department and its students in one way or the other.

Of late, the department was planning to engage Dr Bukhari as a member of the board of studies as well as the adjunct faculty, to which he had given a verbal consent. While the proposal was still in process, we lost this gem of a person in an attack at Press enclave on June 14. In fact, he too had plans to work on some projects with IUST. He was also keen to bring journalists of international repute to the varsity.

The university got the opportunity to have Dr Bukhari in the campus on several occasions. He interacted twice with the students of Journalism and Mass Communication, and International Relations.

Besides, Dr Bukhari would often provide a space to guests of the department to interact with his staffers. A couple of years back, he organised an interaction session for his team with Prof Steven Youngblood, Director, Centre for Global Peace journalism, Park University, USA, who highly appreciated his approach in dealing with critical political issues.

By setting up four newspapers in three different languages, Dr Bukhari not only contributed towards the press in Kashmir, but contributed his bit in employment generation as well in the Valley. Many pass-outs of DJMC too have served as journalists at *Rising Kashmir* and its sister publications.

This edition of *The Echo* is a tribute to the brave heart veteran journalist, who would always be remembered for his huge contribution in the field of journalism as well as for the humility that he never did let go of even after scaling heights.

The Echo



SOME FACTS ABOUT SHUJAAT BUKHARI

- Shujaat Bukhari, a Srinagar-based journalist, was the Editor-in-Chief of *Rising Kashmir*, a Srinagar-based English daily and three of its sister publications.
- He previously served as the Kashmir Bureau Chief of *The Hindu* for 15 years.
- He was also the president of Adbee Markaz Kamraz, the biggest and oldest cultural and literary organisation of Valley.
- He did his Masters in Journalism from Ateneo de Manila University, Manila as a fellow of the Asian Centre for Journalism, Singapore.
- He was a recipient of the World Press Institute (WPI) USA fellowship and Asian Centre for Journalism Singapore fellowship.
- He was also a fellow at East West Centre at Hawaii, USA.
- He had survived three assassination attempts in the past.
- He had been under police protection since an attack on him in 2000.
- He was instrumental in organising several conferences for peace in the Kashmir valley.
- He had been part of India's delegation for Track II process with Pakistan. The talks had happened in Dubai in 2017.
- Bukhari was considered an expert on the Kashmir situation and had been writing columns for the most prestigious news organisations.

Shujaat Bukhari: In many worlds at the same time, yet rooted to the ground



SEEMA CHISTI

Shujaat Bukhari, perhaps embarrassed about his tall and distinct demeanour, hunched just a wee bit to make his friends comfortable. His two children, before they were five, would walk with their head distinctly bent to the right, as that was a good imitation of Abba, always on the cellphone, trying to be hands-free. Always wired, he was quick to read up NYT and The Guardian first thing in the morning, before the smartphone arrived, as he tapped his fingers, itching to read the newspapers that reached only in the afternoon. With a trademark mischievous smile, he had mastered just the right manner to disarm you as he proceeded to slowly rip your arguments apart—whether in the biting Kashmir cold or the sweltering Delhi heat. He had just turned 50 this February.

A journalist with spunk, courage and a keen sense of his calling, of telling the story, Bukhari fundamentally believed it was his bounden duty to jump fences between holders of different truths and come to his own conclusions. It is no surprise that his 'pinned tweet' is from an Editors Conference in Lisbon in May. He liked being in many worlds at the same time.

Bukhari, widely travelled inside and outside Jammu and Kashmir, was able to blend a truly rooted view of the ground in the state with an easy cosmopolitan perspective. His stints in universities abroad, his long journey with *The Hindu* brought out the best in him, even though in his final years he gave his newspaper, *Rising Kashmir*, his everything.

Laughingly, he would speak of *The Hindu* as being the best teacher, because he had to ultimately ensure that "Anna Salai" (the road with *The Hindu's* head office in Chennai) understood

the importance of what was happening "downtown or in Baramulla". That, he said, forced him to be able to tease out stories and be most matter of fact. A long and sustained stint there through very troubled years in the state made his a reliable and valued byline.

Bukhari, in his own office at Press Colony, hosted hundreds of parachuting journalists in and out of the state—in dark times, when stepping out was impossible after sunset, to rosier times, when apple orchards would be covered and there was optimism over the bus service between Srinagar and Muzaffarabad.

On quitting *The Hindu*, Bukhari took to editing his own newspaper. Even in his avatar as an Editor-in-Chief, with more responsibilities now and a sibling who went on to become (and still is) a minister in the PDP-BJP government, always punched hard and stayed above the fray. In a world dominated by social media, Bukhari adapted remarkably to being able to translate his thoughtful and shrewd assessments to the demands of expressing himself 24x7.

With a declared and courageous view that he stood by the peace process, Bukhari was part of a small group of voices with a well-rounded view of the Kashmir situation and an ability to convey what changed there and what didn't, convincingly to the rest of the country and world. He was happy to not always be seen to be in sync with the dominant view of his peers in the field. In the past few months, while he welcomed the Ramzan ceasefire, his world had grown darker and he did not like what he saw.

Among the last things he did was to still write about his defence of objective and solid reporting from Kashmir as he wrote about allegations that Kashmiri journalists were biased, "we have done Journalism with pride and will continue to highlight what happens on the ground".

The author is associated with *The Indian Express*

(Courtesy: *The Indian Express*)



Shujaat Bukhari: A man who epitomised the best of Kashmir



Andrew Whitehead, a former *BBC India* correspondent, has been travelling to and reporting on Kashmir for 25 years. He offers this tribute to his friend, Shujaat Bukhari, editor of *Rising Kashmir*, who was shot dead in Srinagar on the evening of June 14.

Kashmir is a conflict which consumes the best of its people. Shujaat Bukhari was a proud Kashmiri, a champion of its language and culture, and someone who sought dialogue over slogans and violence. His independence of mind has cost him his life.



One of the chinks of light in Kashmir is the growth of a vigorous local press. On the newsstands in downtown Srinagar, you can see 10 or so English language daily newspapers alongside titles in Urdu and Kashmiri. *Rising Kashmir*, Shujaat Bukhari's paper, shines with energy and editorial vigour.

Shujaat built round him a young and talented team - he was proud that women were prominent among them - who shared his vision of a vigorous, inquisitive and non-partisan press which held to account not only the government but separatists too. Earlier, he had been the Srinagar correspondent for one of India's liberal daily papers, *The Hindu*, and pulled off that difficult task of informing India's opinion makers about a corner of their country they sometimes seem determined to forget.

Shujaat himself was a big man, bespectacled, with a warm smile and generous manner. He had a knack of making friends. He was wonderfully well-informed. If you wanted to work out what was happening in Kashmir - not the superficial story but what was working away underneath the surface - Shujaat was the man to talk to. He had contacts on every side. And he was keen to listen

too. He wanted to understand how Kashmir was seen from afar.

When I was in Srinagar a little over a year ago, Shujaat lent me his spare mobile phone. International phones don't work there, and it's not the sort of place where you want to feel cut off and out of contact. I

wanted to see round his office, and he arranged that I would come and chat to his journalists.

I was a few minutes late - sheltering from a rain storm. Shujaat called me up and said, "Hey Andy, where are you? We're all waiting. We've got tea and Kashmiri pastries". He epit-

omised Kashmiri hospitality. I spent an hour chatting to his reporters: about what was happening in global journalism, the rise of digital platforms, styles of reporting, achieving balance when passions are so roused - and why Kashmir, a conflict which has smouldered for 70 years, gets so little attention in the world's media.

He was just the sort of man - wise,



Thousands of people attended Shujaat Bukhari's funeral on June 15.

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In London, I'd met up with Shujaat at a gathering to encourage informal dialogue about Kashmir across ceasefire lines and borders. He travelled a great deal - I recently followed his tweets from a global editors' conference in Lisbon - and wanted Kashmir not to be sealed off from the world, but open to new ideas and approaches.

Shujaat was brave - as so many of

friendly, confident, courageous - that Kashmir needs if it is to find a way out from a deepening political impasse. He died during the holy month of Ramadan - and when there are stirrings, just stirrings, which suggest a fresh willingness to talk about easing Kashmir's agony.

Last night as he was leaving his newspaper office in Srinagar's press enclave, Shujaat Bukhari was gunned down. His two personal security officers were also killed. A targeted attack. And, alas, not the first time a leading Kashmiri journalist has been subject to such outrage. I feel so sad for his family, his colleagues, his many friends - and for Kashmir.

(Courtesy: BBC)



Iron Lady, Irom Sharmila, visits IUST

SURIA HAMID/ MUNEEB JAVAID

The 'Iron Lady' of Manipur, Irom Chanu Sharmila, visited Islamic University of Science and Technology (IUST) and interacted with university students and faculty on June 5. The interaction session was organised by Department of Journalism and Mass Communication (DJMC), IUST, especially for the students of Humanities.

Irom, who has been the longest hunger striker and a civil rights activist, said her 16 years long fast was not accidental. "The reason for my hunger strike was the hope of bringing justice to the society, for which I got arrested and re-arrested, while I was fasting, as a penalty for attempt to suicide," she said.

Responding to a question on why did she end the 16-year-old fast, she said, "I realised this is not the right way to mark your protest and that you cannot wait for justice while doing nothing."

Talking about the Kashmir issue, she empathized with Kashmiri people for their "resistance" of decades. "I consider Kashmiris as my own



Irom Sharmila interacting with IUST faculty and students on June 5.
PHOTO: KAMRAN ALI/IUST

people. I want to know about their issues, which I wish to highlight across India and beyond. I also want Kashmiri people to identify me as a human and not as an Iron Lady," she said.

Irom, who was accompanied by her husband, Desmond Coutinho, further said, she intends to empower the women of Kashmir who have suffered for so long "and am eager to meet the half widows."

Welcoming the guests to the campus, Vice Chancellor, IUST, Prof Mushtaq A Siddiqi, said the interaction session was aimed to expose the students to the experiences of people living in other conflicts. "The two regions have several similar experiences to share. The aim of this event was to make students understand that positive individual efforts are always recognised by the world," the VC said, adding that the youth should invest their energy in bringing peace in the world.

Appreciating Irom's struggle, Head DJMC, Dr Ruheela Hassan, said a woman in her twenties has various goals and aspirations. "But the way she dedicated her life for the revocation of draconian Armed Forces Special Power Act is exemplary," she said.

IUST collaborates with Malaysian varsity

IQRA QADRI / ZUBAIR LONE

A five-member delegation from Universiti Sains Islam Malaysia (USIM) paid a four-day visit to Islamic University of Science and Technology (IUST) from April 9 to 12. The purpose of their visit was to collaborate with IUST and sign a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for student-exchange process.

The delegation was headed by Dr Umami Salwa Ahmad Bustawan, Director, Entrepreneurship, USIM. After being formerly welcomed by former Registrar and Chief Librarian, IUST, Syed Reyaz Rufai, the delegation held a meeting with the Vice Chancellor, IUST, Prof Mushtaq A Siddiqi. Foremost the grounds on which the collaboration could be initiated were discussed. "This is our initial visit to the varsity and there shall be more collaborations in future," said Dr Salwa.

Prof Siddiqi asked the delegation about the courses offered in USIM. He recommended developing a linkage between the two universities, "so that both the universities shall be

benefited mutually."

"Long-term goal should be to develop linkage between departments and individuals from both the universities," he said.

was also attended by Dean, School of Technology, Prof A H Moon, and Head, Department of Food Technology, Prof Muhammad Ashraf Mir.

Later, an interaction session was

held between the delegation from USIM and the faculty members of IUST. The session was presided over by Prof A M Shah, Dean Academic Affairs, IUST, who introduced the courses and other facilities offered at IUST. Meanwhile, Dr Salwa also introduced the courses taught at USIM. Prof Shah said, the university is not only planning to sign an MoU with USIM, but also there will be a collaboration at the departmental level. The interaction was followed by a question-answer session between the delegation and heads of the departments.

The Malaysian delegation also visited some departments of IUST on April 10 and 11, followed by a meeting with the Dean, School of Humanities and Social Sciences, IUST, Prof Abdul Salam Bhat. The delegation accompanied by Prof Bhat and Dr Iqbal Qureshi, Head, Centre for Spiritual Studies, interacted with the students of various departments. The interactions concluded with the question-answer sessions.

Later, 34 students from Department of Business Studies (MBA-IB) along with two faculty members visited USIM for 10 days from April 29 to May 9. USIM arranged industrial visits for the students and also informed them about research-based scholarships.

USIM delegation interacts with DJMC faculty, students

IQRA QADRI

The delegation from Universiti Sains Islam Malaysia (USIM) visited the Department of Journalism and Mass Communication (DJMC), Islamic University of Science and Technology (IUST), accompanied by Dean, School of Humanities and Social Sciences, IUST, Prof Abdul Salam Bhat, on April 10.

The delegation was accorded ceremonial welcome by Head, DJMC, Dr Ruheela Hassan, who introduced them to the faculty members and students. The session began with a brief introduction about the depart-

ment and courses offered, and finding similarities in media departments of the two universities.

Meanwhile, a documentary film, '*Forgotten Land-Naranag to Gangbal*' produced by an ex-DJMC student, Abrar Qazi, was screened on the occasion. The delegation was informed about departmental news magazine, *The Echo* and community radio programme *Pesh Kadam*. Showing keen interest in *The Echo*, the delegation inquired if the students from USIM could also contribute for it. The delegation also asked if any collaboration at departmental level could be initiated.

Prof Siddiqi also suggested the delegation to visit class rooms at IUST, so as to understand "the ecosystem of our classes." The session

held between the delegation from USIM and the faculty members of IUST. The session was presided over by Prof A M Shah, Dean Academic Af-



ICSS launches intn'l journal

IQRA QADRI/ MUSLIM RASHID

The International Centre for Spiritual Studies (ICSS), Islamic University of Science and Technology (IUST), launched the maiden issue of *The International Journal of Spirituality (TIJOS)*, at university auditorium on May 2.

Welcoming the guests, Head ICSS, Dr S Iqbal Quraishi said, the journal was launched to promote the research culture in the university. "It aims to provide a platform to research scholars from all disciplines to highlight the spiritual heritage of various traditions," he said.

Pertinently, this is the maiden journal of the IUST. The launch ceremony started off with the lecture of Prof Seyyed Hossein Nasr, the editorial board member of the journal. He highlighted the role the journal can play in Kashmir and how it can emerge as a "centre for spreading the ethical framework" in South Asia. He also discussed the importance of reintroducing spirituality in the postmodern world, "where morality is altogether absent from the public discourse."



Maiden issue of *The International Journal of Spirituality (TIJOS)*, being released at university auditorium on May 2.

PHOTO: MUSLIM RASHID/IUST

Prof Patrick Laude from Georgetown University talked about the importance of fostering spirituality and of shaping an inter-religious discourse at a time when the ideological conflicts have created discord within the world.

Speaking on the occasion, Vice Chancellor IUST, Prof Mushtaq A Siddiqi said the new generation needs to learn spirituality, as spiritual studies are

nowadays as important as science and technology. "Technological education is not enough in contemporary times. We also need to address issues of self that will be depicted by spirituality," he said.

Justice Bashir Ahmad Kirmani, who was guest of honour for the event, said this effort by IUST shall positively contribute towards the intellectual world.

While congratulating the Vice Chancellor, Prof Abdul Haq from Delhi University, who was the Chief Guest on the occasion, said that the journal will attract the scholars from across the world to contribute their research on spirituality.

Among others, reviewers of *TIJOS*, Prof Abdul Rashid Bhat, Director Shah-e-Hamdan Institute of Islamic Studies, University of Kashmir; and Prof Hameed N Rafiabadi from Central University of Kashmir, Chief Librarian IUST, Syed Reyaz Rufai, former Dean Academic Affairs IUST, Prof Mushtaq A Quraishi, Dean School of Humanities and Social Sciences, IUST, Prof Abdul Salam Bhat, and heads, faculty, scholars and students of various departments of IUST were present on the occasion.

IUST hosts spl lecture on *Ilm-ul Ehsaan*

SURIA HAMID

International Centre for Spiritual Studies (ICSS), Islamic University of Science and Technology (IUST), organised a special lecture on '*Ilm-ul Ehsaan*' by Allamah Showkat Husain Keng, former Professor, Hanfiyah Arabic College, for university faculty and students on June 7.

While deliberating on the word '*Ehsaan*', Prof Keng said Islam is not only a religion to worship but a "complete code of life." "The basis of our religion is knowledge, which is deeply rooted in the Holy Quran," he said.

He dealt at length with '*Ilm-ul Ehsaan*'—the identification of self and God—the levels of faith a person should have, belief on God and *Ikhlās* (to think same for others as for self).

While quoting different religious scholars, he said Quran touches all aspects of human life. He also referred to several in-

cidents from the life of saints, including Baba Nasruddin (RA) and Shah-i-Hamdan (RA), and philosophers like Imam Al-Ghazali and Dr Sir Muhammad Iqbal.



Former Professor, Hanfiyah Arabic College, Allamah Showkat Husain Keng, delivering lecture at IUST on June 7.

PHOTO: SYED JUNAID/IUST

In his concluding remarks, Prof Mushtaq A Siddiqi, Vice Chancellor, IUST, said without spirituality, a religion is incomplete. "We need to strengthen our deeds and I pray to Allah to help us follow the path of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) in letter and spirit," he said.

DJMC organises PR lecture

Furthering its academia-industry interface, the Department of Journalism and Mass Communication (DJMC), Islamic University of Science and Technology (IUST), organised an interaction session on 'Public Relations Tactics and Conventional Practices' with State Project Coordinator and Nodal Officer, J&K State Sports Council (JKSSC), Umer Wani, on June 11. Wani talked about various aspects of professional techniques that are in vogue in the field of Public Relations. He stressed on the need to aware oneself with latest trends in the field. "We have been making use of multiple tools for conducting PR, which include promotional videos, flyers, coffee table book, etc," he said, adding that social media platform also plays a significant role, "which has revolutionized the entire PR scene."

The significance of public relations was also dealt with during the session, while the role of 'messenger between the departments' was elaborated upon. "As facilitators for promoting sports related activities, JKSSC is supporting 3000 clubs in rural areas as well as in towns, who are coordinated by 200 community coordinators. We nurture the raw talent from all the three regions of J&K with equity in participation," he said.

Course instructor, Public Relations and Corporate Communications, Monisa Qadri, said, there is a need to acclimatize PR students with the prevailing practices in the field. "The idea is to encourage students to identify PR as a career option."

Shujaat Bukhari: A profile in courage



IFTIKHAR GILANI

Hours before Eid festivities, killers snuffed the life out of prominent Kashmiri journalist Shujaat Bukhari in Srinagar. On two occasions in the past, Shujaat and I had seen death missing us narrowly. Even though he had cultivated a maze of sources, he had the knack of reporting incidents from the ground. His writings were a rare mix of source and ground-based reporting. In the early nineties, after a major incident of killings somewhere in Kupwara district, he invited me to join him to visit the spot. The entire Valley was under strict curfew. Having just learnt driving, he hired a Maruti 800 from a friend and arranged curfew passes. Almost 60 kms from Srinagar, on the outskirts of Sopore town, near the Agriculture College, an Army contingent led by an officer of the rank of Lt Colonel stopped us. The officer was livid because some hours ago the area had witnessed an encounter, resulting in casualties of his men. He ripped our curfew passes and threw away the identity cards. Next, his men pointed guns and asked us to bend by squatting beneath the one-tonne, low-floored Army vehicle.

Since Shujaat was tall, he could not bend his knees properly under the vehicle. In this situation, where death was staring at us, he continued entertaining me with his wit and sarcasm. He joked about how political parties, government and militant groups would react and issue condemnation and blame each other when our bodies would be discovered in the rice fields.

Just before sunset, we were told to come out from beneath the vehicle. I remember, the officer yelling at us to run for our lives. "This is the deal. We will start firing after 10 minutes. Run and get out of our range," he had thundered.

We ran through rice fields towards a house at a distance. The door was shut and there was no other option but

to climb the wall. This time, Shujaat took advantage of his height, and easily jumped across the wall. I had to try several times before managing to get on the other side. As I landed on the ground, a volley of bullets hit the brick wall, exactly the point I had crossed over. The house owners were scared, thinking that we were militants dodging the Army. Shujaat asked



BESIDES BEING A JOURNALIST, SHUJAAT WAS A PEACE ACTIVIST. HE HAD CARVED A NICHE IN TRACK-II ACTIVITIES TO ENABLE POLITICIANS, JOURNALISTS AND CIVIL SOCIETY REPRESENTATIVES ACROSS THE LOC TO DELIBERATE ON ISSUES

them to show us the way to the village headman's house. The headman, after much cajoling, took us in. The next day, we set off for Sopore, crisscrossing through orchards and fields on foot. It took us three days to return to Srinagar. Thanks to the then General Offi-

cer Commanding (GOC) of 15th Corps, General Sundararajan Padmanabhan, we could recover the car after a fortnight. Again, death passed us by, two years ago in Delhi. After having dinner at a restaurant in the Nizamuddin area, I was driving to drop him. It was raining, with high-velocity winds pummeling Delhi. Just near India Habitat Centre on Lodhi road, a huge tree fell

two-day deliberations, it issued a summary of the proceedings. The common points included, support for a dialogue, silencing the guns along the LoC, taking interim measures, promoting connectivity and garnering support for resumption and sustainability of the peace process between India and Pakistan. There was nothing in the proceedings that called for such a dastardly murder. After a hue and cry, engineered by vested interests, Hizbul Mujahideen chief Syed Salahudin, in an interview, termed all who had participated in the conference as 'paid agents'. His diatribe was echoed by United Jihad Council and later by the LeT. The leader of the hard-line faction of Hurriyat, former MLA, GN Sumji, said his organisation would probe all those who attended the conference. When we presented ourselves for the probe, he denied having issued any such statement, and blamed the newspapers for distorting facts. When we asked him to issue denial, he switched off his phone. Some people, who had business rivalry with the Rising Kashmir daily, also found an opportune moment to join in.

on the bonnet, which was crushed to a pulp. The windscreen was smashed. We couldn't believe that we were still alive. After few minutes, a police van arrived and pulled us out of the car.

Many analysts have attributed Shujaat's tragic end to a track-II conference held in Dubai last year in July. Besides being a journalist, Shujaat was also a peace activist. He had carved a niche in Track-II activities to enable politicians, journalists and civil society representatives across the Line of Control (LoC) to meet and deliberate on issues. I also attended the conference as an observer, which had representation from all political parties from both sides of the LoC. This was no ordinary feat. But it did cause heartburn to a few people in London and Islamabad because they had not been invited to enjoy Dubai. They started a vicious campaign. A screaming headline in a Pakistani newspaper was: 'Kashmiri blood was sold in an air-conditioned hotel in Dubai'.

The conference didn't issue any joint statement. At the end of the

This campaign, which had stopped after a while last year, resurfaced a month ago, leaving Shujaat scared. Minutes before his death, he called me from Srinagar and advised me to take care as the campaign against us from fake social media accounts was getting shriller. His voice was wobbly, so I asked him to call later in the night to discuss in detail. Barely 20 minutes later, news of his cold-blooded murder started flashing. Those who had engineered the campaign may not have executed his assassination, but their hands are equally soaked in his blood. There is a case to look into all those IP addresses and their sources and identify people who were a part of this malicious campaign. Looking back at the years we spent together and how we dodged death together, it is heart-rending that Shujaat ultimately left alone. The sun of journalism in Kashmir was forced to set minutes before the rise of the Eid crescent.

The author is Editor, Strategic Affairs, DNA.

(Courtesy: DNA)

What Shujaat Bukhari and other journalists in Kashmir risk everyday

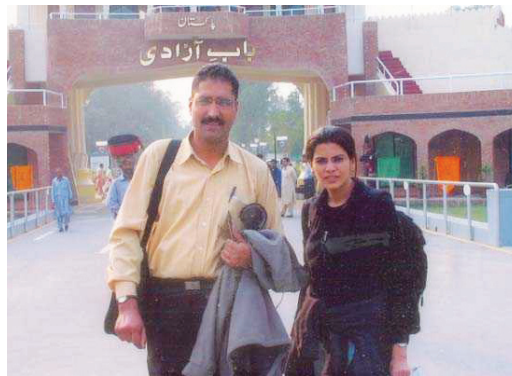


NIDHI RAZDAN

In one of his last tweets before he was brutally shot dead, Shujaat Bukhari wrote, “In Kashmir, we have done journalism with pride, and will continue to highlight what happens on the ground.” This was Shujaat, exasperated with the increasingly polarised discourse in the country which seeks to label all of us, and more so, journalists from Kashmir. Shujaat was hard to label. Because he was a moderate voice from the Valley. In today’s reductionist terms, that means he was a “jihadi” for the extreme right wing, which is now a ‘compliment’ for anyone who advocates peace and dialogue. And that is exactly the reason why the other side thought he had “sold out” to India.

The fact is, Shujaat always stood for dialogue and peace. He was very active on the “Track 2” circuit between India and Pakistan. And within India, he regularly organised and attended semi-

nars and conferences on Kashmir, which included sessions on bridging the divide between Kashmiri Pandits and Muslims. Over the last few years, he



NIDHI RAZDAN WITH SHUJAAT BUHARI AT WAGAH BORDER IN DECEMBER, 2003

appeared regularly on our TV shows. We didn’t always agree, but he was polite and put across his point of view firmly but respectfully.

He would make it a point to always tell me how some other TV channels had poisoned the discourse in Kashmir with their hate-driven agenda night after night. Those sections of the media have done so

much harm, essentially in labelling all Kashmiris as stone-pelters and terrorists, calling anyone who wants peace a “lobbyist” and “Pakistan apologist”. They haven’t even spared Chief Minister Mehbooba Mufti from these labels, she who is a democratically-elected Chief Minister no less.

Which is why I tweeted last night that armchair patriots really don’t understand what journalists in Kashmir go through, the kind of pressure they face in their reporting day after day. I want to thank them for what they do.

Shujaat had welcomed the recent ceasefire announced by the centre in the Valley, a ceasefire that terrorist groups and their supporters have been seeking to destroy from the very moment it was put into place. His killing reminds me of the assassination of separatist leader Abdul Ghani Lone in 2002, who was murdered for talking about peace. I have no doubt that Shujaat has been killed by the same forces. The onus is on us to make sure those forces are eventually defeated. RIP Shujaat.

The author is Executive Editor, NDTV.

(Courtesy: NDTV)

An editor who gave space to every idea



MOHAMMED SAYEED MALIK

Many strands of Shujaat Bukhari’s murder in Srinagar on Thursday, June 14, resemble those of the assassination of People’s Conference leader Abdul Ghani Lone 16 years ago.

It is so despite the fact that Bukhari was a journalist and Lone a politician, both high-profile. Both were perceived to be seeking to bridge the mutually clashing political ideologies comprising the complex Kashmir matrix.

Bukhari’s profile did not take long to emerge on the Kashmir scene after he opted for journalism in the 1990s when he joined Ved Bhasin’s *Kashmir Times* in the thick of in-

urgency (then spearheaded by pro-Independence Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front). Bukhari’s shifting to *The Hindu* a few years later substantially elevated his public profile. He was an instinctive journalist and his wider interests buttressed his public image. Bukhari widened his sphere of influence with the help of his talent and aptitude for Kashmir’s cultural and literal life. He soon became a popular face in the Kashmir media and in the rest of India and Pakistan as he engaged in Track Two activities.

His visits to Pakistan, the U.S. and European countries got wide publicity in his own English daily, *Rising Kashmir*, which he floated after leaving *The Hindu*. In less than 10 years, his stable expanded with the addition of an Urdu daily, *Buland Kashmir*, a Kashmiri daily and an Urdu weekly. Bukhari took time off to promote lit-

erary and cultural fora floated by his group of publications.

There was nothing he or his products — newspapers and literary and cultural fora — did or say that could place him in the hazardous course of confrontation with any of the local militant or secessionist groups.

To his credit, he gave sufficient coverage to every thought and idea afloat in the over-crowded Kash-

mir politics.

Bukhari soon became a familiar and popular face in debates on Kashmir on national TV channels. He held his ground against vocal opposition from ultra nationalists, just as he sought to deal with hardcore local armed groups without yielding any ground to them or risking their annoyance.

His publications appeared with a distinct anti-establishment edge, but stopped short of crossing the red

line of accession.

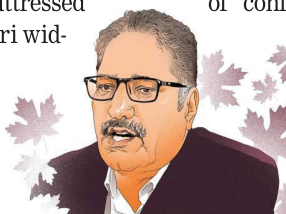
Somehow, Bukhari was not able to maintain harmonious relationship with the local press corps. He recently fell out with the main body and floated a parallel one, though hardly with any big name.

Reports from across the LoC published here lately indicated that Bukhari’s venturing into Track Two activities was causing resentment in the pro-establishment militants in Pakistan. They questioned his bona fides in the context of his recent meetings held in the U.S., Turkey and Dubai.

Nobody could have guessed the impending tragedy. Bukhari had come to be seen as one of the few effective, reasonable voices of Kashmir. Ironically, its ugly side became the perceived cause of his tragic end.

The writer is a veteran Srinagar-based journalist

(Courtesy: The Hindu)



EXCERPTS FROM ARTICLES

The cult of violence killed #ShujaatBukhari

ANURADHA BHASIN JAMWAL



...My professional association with Shujaat Bukhari goes back to the early 90s when he was working with Kashmir Times. We worked together as a team and gradually turned professional rivals when he started the *Rising Kashmir*. There's also been a long association in several of our peace initiatives. Over the past two decades, we have shared many a common causes; and there have been many moments of agreements, differences, disagreements, arguments, expressing solidarity and even taking potshots at each other – warmth and bitterness alternatively punctuating this relationship of mutual respect at both professional and personal level. But why should the passing away of a man, my relationship with whom was marked by many ambiguities and ambivalence, have impacted me in a manner that I felt something inside my heart die or at least irreparably break?

The grief went beyond personal shock and a sense of personal loss, loss for journalistic fraternity and a huge void in the lives of his family. It came with an overwhelming sense of all that his brutal and cold blooded murder signified. The sense of loss was magnified by the way his life ended and the reason it ended for...

The author is Executive Editor, Kashmir Times

The Shujaat, You Do Not Know

MASOOD HUSSAIN



...Shujaat had a great capability of remembering all the important telephone numbers and that was perhaps why he rarely required a telephone directory. His love for sophisticated phones that people would witness after the entry of cell phone was the outcome of his love for the technology.

Much later, when Shujaat was kidnapped from the Residency Road in an auto-rickshaw by some unknown gunmen and dumped near Eidgah, he had quickly used his phone to SMS Khurshid: "Kidnap, kill me". Once home, Shujaat told us that they fired on him before fleeing but he survived. Either they missed the target or they simply wanted to scare him. Once, they fled, Shujaat ran up to Hawal Chowk where from he rang up his home. I presume it was on basis of this that security cover was extended to him.

Exhibiting the same wit in Magam on May 10, 2001, Sheikh Mushtaq of *Reuters* told me that day, Shujaat rang up SSP Budgam and detailed him how a renegade leader and his men were beating a group of 42 reporters who had gone to report the killings from a landmine explosion. This was perhaps the only FIR that stands registered against that renegade, so far...

The author is Editor, Kashmir Life

Shujaat Bukhari and the Unflinching Effort to Reason

SUSHIL AARON



The news about Shujaat Bukhari is tearing into the hearts of those who knew him, as one of his friends put it on Facebook.

There is so much to say about him. First, his tall, vivid presence, always elegantly turned out with a ready smile and a constant willingness to chat. For at least a quarter century, he indulged scores of visitors to Srinagar – journalists, diplomats, academics, students and civil society figures who sought out his views on conflict in Kashmir. In meetings, he would fidget a bit, be distracted with calls, juggle two phones but one could always rely on hearing a measured, incisive assessment of Jammu & Kashmir's politics, Pakistan's motivations and Delhi's outlook towards the valley.

Shujaat had an understated drive and kept himself busy. After a long stint as a highly-regarded reporter covering Kashmir since the early 1990s, he started an English newspaper alongside Urdu and Kashmiri publications and was actively working to extend the use of the Kashmiri language across J&K. He was a public speaker, a regular on TV debates and keenly engaged on social media...

The author is a working journalist

The dream Shujaat nurtured

SUHAIL AHMAD



Amid the deluge of obituary and remembrance pieces on Syed Shujaat Bukhari, I salvage the treasured share of my personal memories of the man whose murder has left Kashmir in a state of loss and bereavement.

It's difficult to describe a dynamic personality like Shujaat sahab. Right from my university days as a journalism student to my stint as Deputy Editor at *Rising Kashmir*, I have known Shujaat as someone who commanded respect and also gave respect where it was due.

As journalism students way back in 2004-2005, we looked upto senior journalists like Shujaat and I was fortunate enough to be part of his dream venture '*Rising Kashmir*'. It was 2007 and I was working as a sub-editor with another local English newspaper when Shujaat sahab entrusted me the responsibility of editing the pre-launch tabloid-size edition of *RK*. After a few months of its formal launch as a broadsheet newspaper in 2008, I formally joined the *RK* family which now boasted of nearly 100 staff members.

I have not known many people more courteous and approachable than Shujaat. I always found him full of energy and journalistic passion. He was brimming with innovative ideas and never shied away from experiments in a bid to give a refreshing content and look to his newspapers including his flagship venture Kashmiri vernacular '*Sangarmal*', Urdu daily '*Buland Kashmir*', Urdu weekly '*Kashmir Parcham*' and English daily '*Rising Kashmir*'...

The author is columnist with Rising Kashmir

After journalist's murder, is peace journalism dead in Kashmir?

STEVEN YOUNGBLOOD



...I had the honour of meeting Shujaat Bukhari a few years ago during a peace journalism project in Kashmir. We chatted in his office and then discussed peace journalism with the staff of *Rising Kashmir*. It took seconds to see that Bukhari had a keen mind—quick to ferret out the key issues and to probe for insights. Though I've had dozens of such meetings with journalists through the years, the discussion with Bukhari and his staff still stands out as one of the most candid and valuable.

Though Bukhari was dubious about the label peace journalism, there's no doubt that he and his staff practiced the concept. In 2016, I wrote, "*Rising Kashmir* is a fine newspaper that if anything is the opposite of inflammatory or sensationalizing. I was so impressed with their work that I used *Rising Kashmir* as an example of peace journalism in action in my textbook, *Peace Journalism Principles and Practices*."

During our chat in his office, Bukhari and I discussed *Rising Kashmir's* necessary balancing act. In volatile Kashmir, favouring either the authorities or rebels could result in the paper being raided by authorities (as it was in 2016) or the paper's staff being the target of violence...

The author is Director, Center for Global Peace Journalism, Park University, Parkville, USA