



# The Echo

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**RELIVING HERITAGE STRUCTURES OF KASHMIR**  
PAGE 2



**A 'HOPE' AWAY FROM HOME**  
PAGE 3



**PAMPORE: WHERE RED GOLD IS HARVESTED**  
PAGE 6

## Alpine Lakes: Where beauty knows no bounds

Famous for its natural beauty, the Valley of Kashmir is blessed with breathtaking mountain ranges, meadows and water bodies. Among these, lakes and springs add immensely to its splendor, many of which are located in several districts of South Kashmir—Anantnag, Kulgam, and Shopian. Some of these lakes, known as 'Alpine Lakes,' have been captured by **FIRDOUS AYOUB PARRAY**.



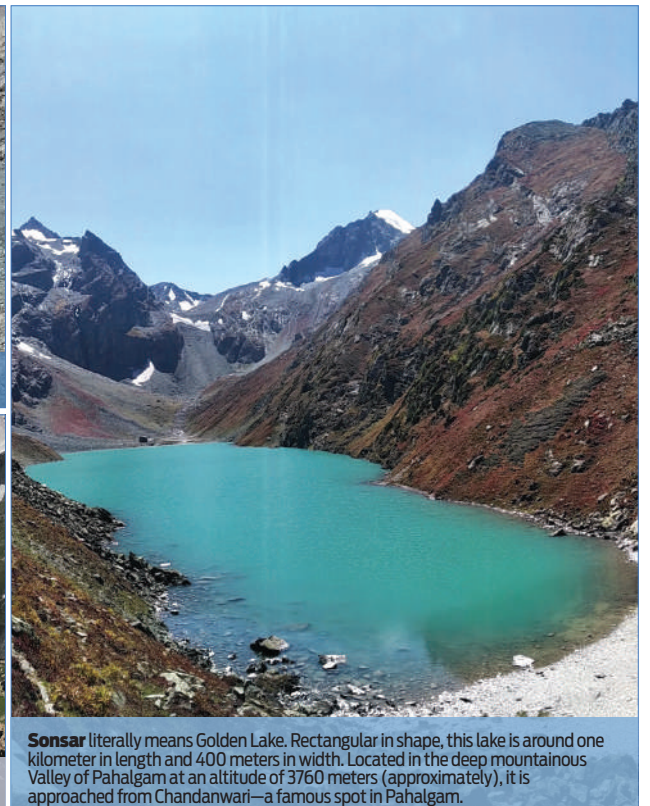
**Chohar Nag or Tchor Nag**, which means four lakes in Kashmir, is a cluster of four lakes. Chohar Nag is located in higher reaches of South Kashmir's Margan Valley in district Anantnag at a distance of 49 kilometers from the famous tourist resort Kokernag and at an altitude of 15, 000 feet.



**Khilan-Nag** is located in the remote area, Margan Top, at an altitude of 4,100 meters above the sea level. It lies about 46 kilometers from Kokernag—a famous tourist resort of South Kashmir's Anantnag district.



**Kousarnag** is a famous lake located in the Pir Panjal range of twin districts of south Kashmir—Kulgam and Shopian, at an altitude of 4,000 meters above sea level. The length of lake is approximately 3 kilometers and a half mile in width. The water of lake is icy but crystal clear.



**Sonsar** literally means Golden Lake. Rectangular in shape, this lake is around one kilometer in length and 400 meters in width. Located in the deep mountainous Valley of Pahalgam at an altitude of 3760 meters (approximately), it is approached from Chandanwari—a famous spot in Pahalgam.



## Reliving heritage structures of Kashmir

Housing structures in Kashmir have undergone drastic changes over past some decades. Earlier houses used to be heat and cold resistant because of use of mud and wood rather than cement concrete. The people who live in such dwellings claim that despite having constructed modern concrete houses, they would prefer to rest in their old dwellings as they are more comfortable, cozy in frosty winters and cool in sultry summers.

However, the walls and ceilings of these century old houses, some lying almost in a rundown state, have begun to collapse. The modern engineers lacking the centuries old techniques are unable to refurbish or repair them. Some octogenarian dwellers of such houses told this photojournalist that now only a few such structures are left in the Valley, which too shall vanish after some years.

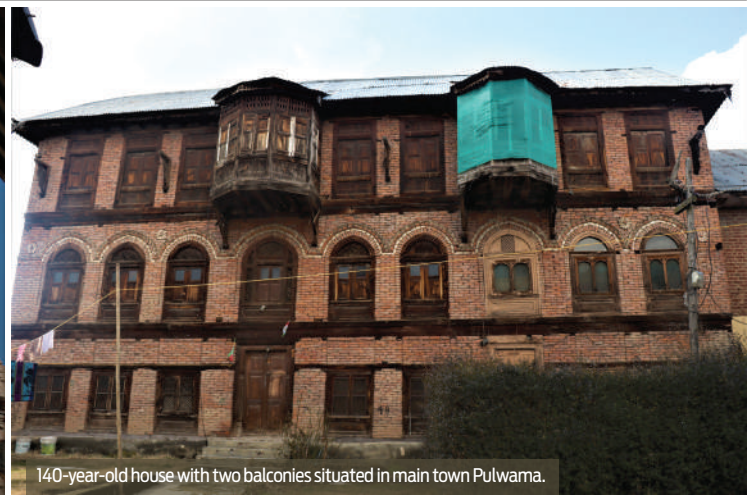
**PHOTO-FEATURE BY ARJUMAND WANI.**



90-year-old house situated in Tral town of Pulwama district.



150-year-old four-storied house with big balcony in the middle and two small others on both sides.



140-year-old house with two balconies situated in main town Pulwama.



Century-old design of balcony, locally known as 'Zoon Daeb,' which is rarely found nowadays in Kashmir.



Traditional wooden bridge between house and grocery store owned by same person.



Piece of iron support at the corner of the wooden base, which was used to prevent the imbalance caused by huge load. Even after 150 years it is perfectly doing its job.



Centuries old door knock as well as door handle.



Stairs built of mud and wood are still usable.



Three feet thick walls and beautiful windows were enough to protect Kashmiris from harsh winters.



## A 'hope' away from home

The massive Myanmar violence that erupted in 2017 compelled the Rohingya Muslims to migrate to different borders across the globe. In India, around 40,000 Rohingya natives have settled in the refugee camps since then, especially in Jammu, Hyderabad and New Delhi. In Jammu alone, the population of Rohingya refugees estimates to be around 6000 with over 39 camps located in the northern regions of Jammu and Kashmir.

**PHOTO-FEATURE BY SAFA CHISTI.**



Rohingya refugees reside in the relief camps set up in Bathindi area of Jammu following the displacement crisis that broke out in 2017. Around 150 families comprising of an approximate 800 people are settled in this sector.



One of the Rohingya sheds captured amidst smog during chilly winter on January 15. In an attempt to evade the cold winds entering their sheds, the refugees cover them with woollen clothing and other belongings.



Salamat Ullah, a Rohingya Muslim, is caretaker of the area. He maintains a track record of new arrivals of the refugee families. The details are later handed over to CID officials. Following the arrests of some refugees, hundreds have reportedly fled the relief camps fearing detentions or expulsions due to lack of travel documents under Foreigners Act.



A child waves to the camera while riding his bike inside the camp besides a clothing line.



Interior of one of the sheds in the camp. The refugees have to pay Rs 1,000 as monthly rental charges. They spread rags on the ground to sleep. The sheds are mainly built of wooden poles and old steel sheets, while roofs are formed of foam sheets.



A man lifts a bag of whole walnuts from a shop for preparing walnut giri manually as part of refugees' livelihood in winters. Almost all the families are involved in this job, which brings the only source of income to them during the cold season.



A Rohingya man lights fire to aid the breaking of walnuts while warming his hands simultaneously. Around Rs 10 to 12 per kg is earned by them for manually sorting out the walnut kernels.



Mohammad Anas, a young Rohingya boy was born in the refugee camp nine years ago. He resides with his family in Bathindi, Jammu.



## Sopore Fruit Mandi: Economic hub of Kashmir

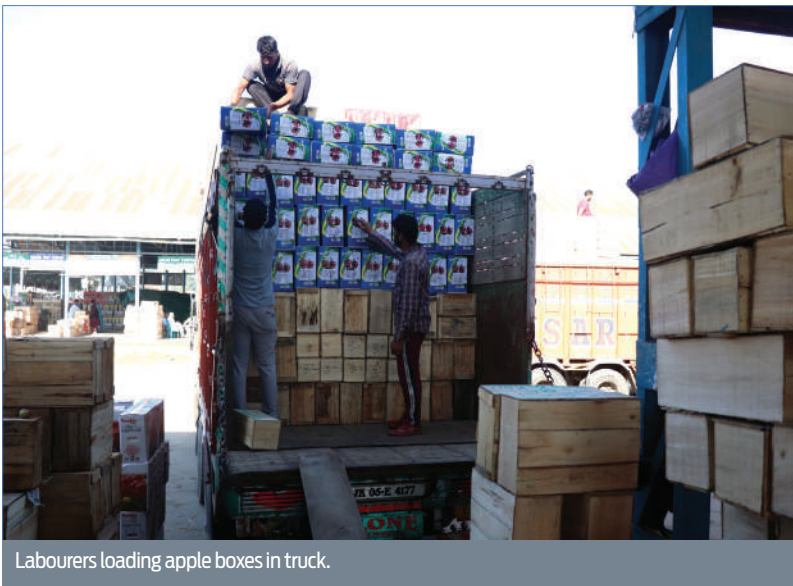
Asia's second largest wholesale fruit market, the Sopore Fruit Mandi located in North Kashmir, witnesses a yearly turnover of around Rs 2,600 crore. The market is spread over 372 kanals. Each year, over two crore boxes full of apples are dispatched from the mandi across India. Around 4,000 labourers are employed in this trade. **PHOTOS AND TEXT BY MISBAH UL AIN.**



The Sopore Fruit Mandi is the biggest economic hub of Kashmir.



A trader, namely Mudasir Qadri, selling apple boxes to buyers.



Labourers loading apple boxes in truck.



Around 2000 trucks laden with fruits travel to various places across India daily.



More than two lakh apple boxes arrive here everyday.



A farmer displaying apples for sale in Sopore Fruit Mandi.



## Smoked fish: Kashmir's winter delicacy

Traditional smoked fish, popularly known as *Fhari*, are prepared over slowly burning grass field on the banks of Anchar Lake in Srinagar. The smoked fish that are usually consumed as part of the winter cuisine in Kashmir are sold by Tippli community living on the banks of the lake. Kashmiri fishermen catch fish under blankets—a unique way of catching fish—before smoked fish are prepared by womenfolk. **PHOTOS AND TEXT BY FAZA ZAINAB.**



Kashmiri fishermen throwing net in the waters of Dal Lake, Srinagar, to catch fish.



Foremost, the offal is removed from the fish, either collected from the local water bodies, mostly Dal Lake, or bought from market.



The cleaned fish are dried over the grass.



Dry grass is then put on fire to smoke the fish.



Dried fish are laid over dry grass equidistantly to ensure uniform heat.



A woman collects smoked fish on the outskirts of Srinagar.



Smoked fish locally known as *Fhari*.



A local boy holding the basket of smoked fish to sell in the market.



## Pampore: Where Red Gold is harvested

Pampore is one of the few places in the world, where Saffron—world's most expensive spice—is grown. That is why, it is also known as the Saffron Town of Kashmir. It is an ancient historic town situated on the western side of River Jhelum on Srinagar-Jammu National Highway in Jammu and Kashmir. It is also famous for *Shirmaal roti*, historical monuments like Shrines of Hazrat Khwaja Masood Wali, Ahad Sahab Dalvan, Ahad Sahab Gangi and others, and some wetlands like Manibagh and Chaetlam. **PHOTO-FEATURE BY HADIKHA FAROOQ.**



Saffron is used in seasoning and as a colouring agent of food. The price of saffron is between Rs 150 and 250 per gram. Because of being expensive, saffron is also known as Red Gold. Its harvest period is between ending days of October and starting days of November.



Sheermal Roti is a famous bread of Pampore. It is exported from Pampore to various places for special occasions like Eid, weddings and so on.



Shrines of Ahad Sahab Dalvan (RA) and Ahad Sahab Gangi (RA) at Kadlabal area of Pampore.



The Shrine of Hazrat Khwaja Masood Wali (RA) popularly known as *Khuja Sahab* at Namblabal in Pampore. During the days of Urs, majority people from Pampore and adjoining villages do not consume mutton or chicken.



Manibagh, one of the wetlands located at Pampore, is spread over two square kilometers of land and marshes.



Chaetlam wetland is situated two kilometers away from the National Highway. During winters, migratory birds from several locations including Siberia flock this wetland.



## Carpet weaving in Kashmir

Kashmiri carpets are well-known around the world for being handcrafted. King Zain-ul-Abidin, also known as Badshah, introduced carpet weaving to Kashmir in the late 15th century, bringing artisans from Iran to instruct Kashmiri people. The carpet weaving was resurrected later during the reign of Mughal Emperor Jahangir after the reign of King Badshah. Kashmiri carpets were so well-known that they were presented in the Crystal Palace exhibition in London in the 18th century. Handmade carpets necessitate a great deal of labour and patience. **PHOTO-FEATURE BY INSHA SHIRAZI.**



The initial step in the carpet-weaving process is to hang the thread, known as *yeoni pan* in Kashmiri, in the logs of wood. Two large logs of wood are used. On the top of the wood, threads of several colours are connected.



The carpet is made with a variety of coloured and overpriced threads. These threads are imported from several places of the world, such as silk from China. Depending on the size of the carpet, these are placed at an equal distance from each other and utilised one at a time.



The threads are tightened and checked manually to ensure that they are placed perfectly.



This device, known as *ompod*, is used to weave the carpet. The carpet weaver places the apparatus in his right hand, which ensures that threads are not knotted.



A basic thread is now used to interlock the unprocessed carpet. Interlocking the threads is an important operation since it tightens and strengthens the fabric.



After the interlocking process, all the threads are aligned in the same sequence and a proper shape is created.



The wooden block has been renamed as *kamaan*, and it is used to loosen or tighten the carpet. It is attached to a wooden block with a rope-like thread that the weaver created himself. After then, it is pushed back and forth.



The magnificent carpet has been completed and is now ready to be sold. These handcrafted carpets are currently sold throughout the country, including London, America, and other places of the world.



Gulzar Ahmad Bhat, from Rainawari Srinagar, has been weaving carpets for past 35 years and believes that despite automation and innovations, handcrafted carpets will preserve their peculiar appeal.



## Relish Harissa to warm up frosty days

Harissa is the most favourite traditional breakfast of Kashmir in winters. People welcome the cold season with this delicacy. Harissa, which is believed to have its origin in Central Asia, was introduced in Kashmir during the Mughal era, and still remains a popular cuisine in the Valley.

Harissa is a mutton preparation cooked in huge *Degs* (earthen pots) placed inside wood fired ovens. The mutton is cooked, deboned and then slowly stir-cooked till it acquires a smooth paste form.

Harissa is served hot with flat bread or naan garnished with small pieces of kebab, methi maaz, and topped over with boiling mustard oil. **PHOTOS AND TEXT BY INSHA FAROOQ.**



A Harissaghur (chef) prepares Harissa in Srinagar.



The cook garnishes Harissa with small pieces of kebab and methi maaz.



A plate of Harissa is garnished with hot oil at an outlet in Srinagar.



Harissa, packed in earthen pots, ready to be served.



Harissa is served hot in small plates with traditional flat bread.



A local relishing Harissa with flat bread.