

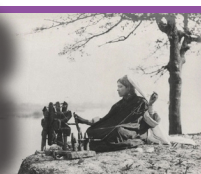
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**RESURRECTED: MUSHK
BUDJI RICE RETURNS TO
CULINARY LIMELIGHT**

5


**A TAPESTRY OF MEMORIES:
REMEMBERING CREWEL ART
FROM KASHMIR**

8


**REMEMBERING KASHMIR
THROUGH MEMOIRS AND
SOUVENIRS**

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PAGES 08

Disease, Distress, Desertion: Abandonment and Old-Age Homes in Kashmir

Kashmiris have been known for their strong community bonds, but some of them now abandon their old ones at newly opened old-age homes.


SHAISTA ALTAF

Coppersmith Bashir struggled throughout his life for family welfare. He never let his loved ones suffer despite the situational-crippled market and his limited means of income. They appreciated his selfless efforts until the octogenarian suffered a heart attack. His ailing state eventually sent him packing to an old-age home in Kashmir.

The brutal shift took place shortly after the demise of his spouse. Alone and agonised, Bashir became an aloof widower in a home he built with toil. The reality of abandonment hit him hard when his ailing state was shrugged. "I suddenly became some unwanted member in the family I raised with my sweat and blood," Bashir narrates his ordeal in an old-age home in Kashmir. "I was dumped here and discarded forever."

For generations, Kashmir had a tra-

dition of living together which is now falling apart. While Bashir's tribe is growing, hearts and hearths are being thrown open for tourists in the name of hospitality. Most of these forsaken figures are battling health issues like hearing loss, cataracts, osteoarthritis, diabetes, etc. As their ailing state renders them redundant, they're tossed between sons and daughters before dropped at new homes.

This wilful abandonment violates The Jammu And Kashmir Maintenance And Welfare Of Parents And Senior Citizens Act, 2014. The Act makes it certain that whoever, having the care or protection of senior citizen, leaves such person in any place with the intention of wholly abandoning him/her, shall be punishable with imprisonment of either description for a term which may extend to three months or fine which may extend to five thousand rupees or with both.

But Bashir is clueless about this Act

— and so are his *tormentors* he called sons. "The thought of not having my loved ones with me makes me very sad," Bashir continues the conversation filled with loss and longing. "But it's not just me going through this problem in a place called Kashmir now."

In the verdant lawns of Kashmir University, Dr. Farah Qayoom talks about this 'new social crisis' in the valley where the sense of togetherness and family system was always robust. But now, the sociology professor says, the normalised joint-to-nuclear family shift is breeding old-age homes.

"In joint families," Dr. Farah says, "the elderly members would be taken care of, and they rarely ever felt neglected. However, the pulls and pressures of modern life, increased conflicts and neglect by children leave no room for the old now. And that's why these old-age homes are emerging on the scene now."

But while the sociologist holds the

shifting sands in the valley responsible for the new order, one of the wardens of these shelters term them *favourable* for the abandoned lots.

"Our homes have availability of doctors for weekly check-ups and body profiles, nursing staff and a physiotherapist," says Mustaffa Nazir Khan, an administrator of an old-age home. "Apart from this we're trying our best to engage elderly people in recreational and meaningful engagements."

But those who land in these old-age homes recount some shocking *human-bonds-gone-rogue* stories. They call out domestic violence and family disputes for breaking the old tradition of togetherness. "I used to live with my wife and children," says Abdul Majid, an elderly man living in old-age home called *HOPE*. "My life was not worth living. I would get physically abused several times. I used to run away and cry because of the pain."

Continue on (Page 2)

Kashmir's Young Research Society: An initiative by two high schoolers

SUALIHA ZUBAIR

After finishing their class 10th exams in December 2021, Mehroz and Ahmed aimed to write a research paper in Mathematics. This is where the duo got an idea from to set up an organisation that fosters the research culture among high school students in Kashmir.

It was then a late-night phone call between the two friends that gave birth to 'Young Kashmir Research Society' (YKRS), valley's first high school-centric research community.

Set up in January 2022, YKRS remains a non-profit organisation consisting of over 30 skilled professors from universities across Kashmir such as University of Kashmir, Central University of Kashmir, National Institute of Technology and various degree colleges.

The organisation provides resources and free mentorship opportunities to high schoolers aiming to execute research projects in the field of science, technology, humanities, social sciences, linguistics, economics and finance.

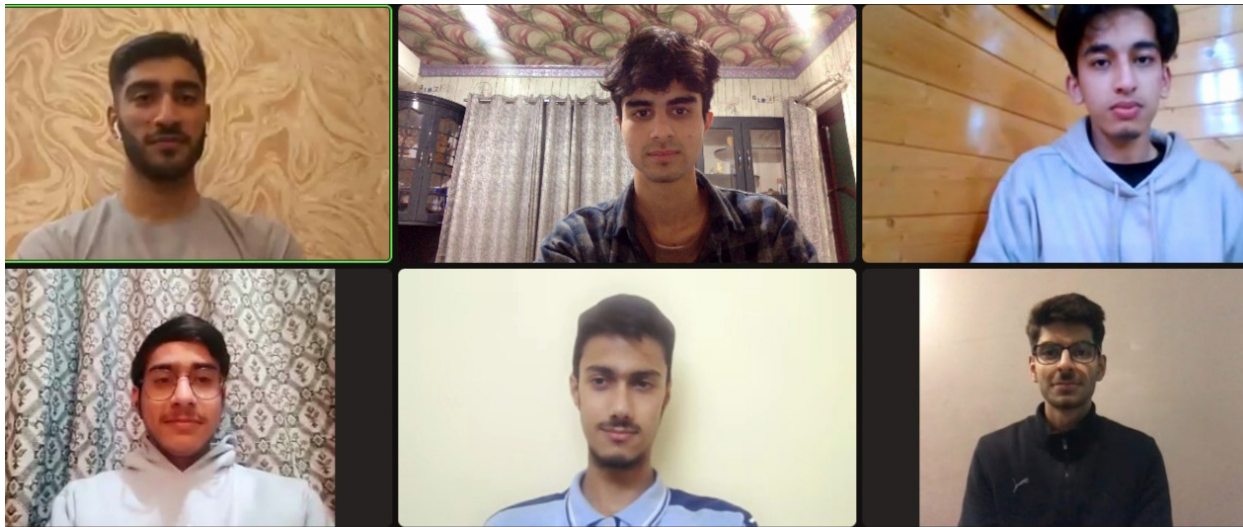
The founders of YKRS are two young

students from Srinagar, Ahmed Pathan and Mehroz Mir. A small-scale initiative taken by the duo has now become a body of 13 team members working hard to create an atmosphere of accessible edification in Kashmir.

After conceiving the idea of establishing such an unparalleled organisation, it was a number of phone calls and visits to various academicians that turned their dream into a reality. Impressed by the vision of boys, the professors they

Ameen recalls that earlier students would learn the importance of these papers very late. Often at their Ph.D. level they would be trained to do research.

Praising YKRS for their work, he says, "However, it is fortunate that students today are so informed that the idea of doing research is engrained in them at such a young age." During the last six months, YKRS has successfully completed over six research projects. "There are around 30 mentees under YKRS right now, 80 percent of them being girls," says Ahmed Pathan, co-founder.



"Most of the mentees are 9th to 12th grade students. However, there are also a few college undergrads with us. At YKRS, we provide them guidance to write not just research papers but articles and position papers too," says Mehroz.

He explains that while the process of high schoolers writing research papers is common and easier in foreign countries, the concept is relatively newer in Kashmir.

approached lauded their idea and immediately agreed to be a part of YKRS.

Dr. Mohd Ameen Meer, Urdu professor at University of Kashmir, is one of the 30 mentors proud to be a part of YKRS. He says, "At a time when youngsters are involved in various social evils, it elates my heart to see these passionate teenagers approaching us for learning purposes."

While briefing over the benefits of publishing one's research paper, Dr.

Talking about the dedication of aspirants, Mehroz says, although research internships are quite hectic, the persistence of students is praiseworthy. Sharing an anecdote of how a student got her research proposal rejected four times yet she didn't give up until it finally was accepted, Mehroz mentioned that "the response and approach of students joining from various schools of the valley is great."

From Page 1.. (Old Age Home)

Along with domestic violence, the overlooked healthcare is feared to contribute psychological problems like depression, anxiety and dementia in elderly people. "The pain most of the times was not physical but emotional," Majid continues. "My heart still aches because of that trauma. To escape that abusive life, I finally found a solace in this shelter."

However, this distress-drive is still a low-intensity, inevitable social crisis in Kashmir, as per Mohammad Ashraf Akhoun. "It's not like we're admitting a crowd of people in some of our old-age homes," Akhoun, deputy director, social welfare department, said. "Most of these people just stay for the day and return to their family upon reconciliation."

Some four to five elderly citizens are reportedly registered in old-age homes while registrations from both men and women are being accepted. The prob-



lem might still be in its initial stage in Kashmir, but the official stance makes it alarming.

The LG administration early this year announced its plan to establish old-age and day-care homes in every district of the valley. In 2019 itself, four-day care homes—two in Srinagar district (one in

Chhanapora and another in Eidgah), and the other two are in Bandipora and Kupwara districts—were established by the social welfare department. The one at Chhanapora has at least 200 elderly individuals already registered. The department is now establishing two more old-age homes in Anantnag and Ganderbal districts.

In the existing setup, some of the inmates are being sheltered through SOS calls, says social worker Sumaya recalling a distress call about a 67-year-old man namely Ghulam Mohammad Rath.

"I got him placed in our old age home at Baghi Mehtab in a terrible state," Sumaya, a social worker cum superintendent of the old-age home, recalls. "But we've faced a lot of challenges and criticism from locals when they came to know about old-age homes in the beginning."

Amid the growing abuse cases, Sumaya says, senior citizens mostly visit the old-age home to talk about their ordeal. "But there was a time when we required rental homes for these distressed lots," she informs. "So, we approached a Ganderbal resident and convinced him for that once. But next morning his father called and said that he might himself land in the same old-age home one day if he gives permission for it!"

Raising Dough: Women Home Bakers Knead Success in Kashmir

SUALIHA ZUBAIR

Female home bakers in Kashmir are revolutionizing the bakery industry in the valley. Ordering a custom-made cake from a home baker online has become a trend for every celebration, and abandoning the traditional bakery shops, people are now opting for the services of these talented home bakers. With countless such bakery ventures to choose from, it's no wonder that people in Kashmir are increasingly turning to them for their bakery needs.

Only a search away on Instagram, these young entrepreneurs bake delicacies in the comfort of their homes and earn a livelihood through their skills and passion. Over the past few years, Kashmir has witnessed the growth of these young bakers who are turning their hard-earned culinary prowess into successful business ventures. Bazilla Malik, a 23-year-old entrepreneur from the HMT area of Srinagar, runs one such successful enterprise, called Sugar n Smiles by Bazilla. She believes the success of many home bakers, including herself, is due to their uncompromising approach to hygiene and the quality of ingredients. "People don't want to compromise on their health. Since we don't make products in bulk, we provide freshly baked and packed items with no preservatives," she explains.

Bazilla also believes that the world of customization is where home bakers are taking the lead. "We bake and design for our customers exactly what they want, according to the theme and type of occasion. Creating a 'just for you' connection through that personalization adds an extra touch of joy and warmth," she says. Alongside her bakery business, Bazilla is pursuing master's degree in sociology. She says her mother has been the greatest support throughout her journey. "From being the first one to taste the delicacies the first time I baked in 2015, to now helping finish all my orders on time, I credit my mother's support and hard work for the success of my business."

It was during the pandemic that Bazilla delved into the world of baking through YouTube videos and experimenting with various recipes. What started out as a hobby quickly transformed into a full-fledged profession. "The pandemic turned out to be a blessing in disguise



for me," she shares. Encouraged by the praise from friends and relatives during her pandemic baking, Bazilla made a bold decision. "I created an Instagram page and soon started taking orders. Little did I know that this leap of faith would lead to remarkable success for me." Today she bakes and sells all kinds of cakes, cupcakes, chocolates, donuts and more. The Covid pandemic was a push not only for Bazilla but many young women who made use of their time in lockdown to uncover and refine their hidden skills. Iqra Imtiyaz's Sweet Sensations by Iqra is a shining example of one such pandemic blessing. 25 years old, Iqra who lives in the Hawal area of Srinagar, started her business in 2021.

"Back in February (2020) I was in Chandigarh where I took a baking course for 20 days. But it was immediately halted by the lockdown," she recalls. Determined to pursue her passion, she returned to Kashmir and used the available resources to continue her learning journey. Online resources and trial-and-error methods helped Iqra develop her art.

She says around 70% of her baking knowledge has been acquired through her own

efforts. Her perseverance has paid back. Today, Iqra runs her enterprise single-handed and bakes a variety of treats. With over 4K followers on Instagram, she receives huge appreciation and encouragement from her fans online. "My favourite part of being an entrepreneur is that I am the boss of my own. I have the freedom to make all the decisions related to my business," she says proudly.

Asked to comment on her fellow home-bakers, she says that it's good to see how young girls are challenging the social stereotype that only males can handle a business well. "It is great that Kashmiri women are stepping up and taking charge of their careers. It not only provides us with financial independence but also contributes to the local economy," she says, adding that lately such steps have brought hope and opportunities for many women in Kashmir.

The pluses of being your own boss are similarly endorsed by many such entrepreneurs. 26-year-old Nowsheen Zahoor from Srinagar's Nowshera area says that being the founder and sole manager of an enterprise gives one the opportunity to make decisions about product offerings,

business strategies and customer interactions that may not have been possible otherwise. She thinks this autonomy helps entrepreneurs become more creative and experiment according to their own will.

"While it comes with responsibilities, being the boss personally grants me the freedom to innovate and foster a business that reflects my passion for baking. This way I ensure everything is aligned with my vision and personal values," says Nowsheen. Her online business is called Sugar Cravings by Nowsheen Zahoor.

Having initiated the venture in May 2020, today she crafts a diverse range of confectionery including custom baked cakes, cookies, chocolates, pastries, and other goodies. She runs her enterprise from a designated space inside her house where all the products are crafted.

Nowsheen has employed a few delivery agents as well who ensure the products reach their customers promptly. She says that her master's degree in food science and technology has been instrumental in helping her run a successful business. "The knowledge gained about quality assurance, food quality majors, and understanding licence requirements has enabled me to maintain high standards in my baking enterprise," says Nowsheen.

She recently expanded her reach by supplying products to exclusive restaurants and hotels. Asked about her future plans, she says that in the coming years she wants to expand her startup into a physical storefront. And "as a food technologist, I want to incorporate health-conscious options such as sugar-free and gluten-free products."

A year ago, the unemployment rate in JK was 21.8%, the highest in states and UTs across India, according to the Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy. By March 2023, unemployment rose above 23%. Later, in the July-September quarter, the Periodic Labour Force Survey conducted by the National Sample Survey Office found that unemployment stood at 29.8% in the 15-29 age group in the urban areas of Jammu Kashmir. Notably, females in the region bear a more significant burden of unemployment, with an unemployment rate of 51.8% as opposed to 19.8% among males.

Continued on (Page 4)

Resurrected: Mushk Budji Rice returns to culinary limelight

SHEREEN NAMAN

Mushk Budji Rice, a short, bold aromatic rice variety, once considered extinct, is now making a triumphant return to the local and international culinary scene. This heritage rice, cherished for its unique taste, aroma, and rich organoleptic properties, is primarily grown in the areas of Sogam, Panzgam, Soaf Shali in the Anantnag district, and the Beerwah belt of Budgam district.

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In recent decades, the consumption of aromatic rice in Kashmir become limited to special occasions, marriages, and festivals. However, Mushk Budji, a native rice variety popular in the valley during the 1990s, is now gaining renewed attention as the local Agriculture Department



expands its cultivation areas to meet growing demand.

Dr Tasneem Mubarak, Chief Scientist Agronomy, spoke about the revival efforts, "Mushk Budji was a traditional crop in Kashmir, but it had become extinct due to blast diseases.

Fortunately, new varieties with excellent yield and double resistance have been developed."

During the recent G20 summit in Kashmir, Jammu and Kashmir Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha congratulated the farmers for reviving Mushk Budji, recognising it as a heritage crop.

Rice is a staple in the Kashmiri diet, and reviving high-cost traditional varieties like Mushk

Budji is crucial due to its significance and unique qualities. This rice variety faced the brink of extinction due to its vulnerability to blast disease, non-uniform production, seed shortages, poor yield potential, and the prevalence of high-yielding paddy varieties.

Mushk Budji, cultivated on over 250 hectares in five villages of Kokernag in south Kashmir, received a Geographical Indication (GI) tag in August, thanks to the efforts of the Agriculture Department and

SKUAST (Sher-e-Kashmir University of Agricultural Sciences and Technology). This recognition not only validates the rice's unique qualities but also provides opportunities for its broader promotion and protection.

Ghulam Nabi, a farmer, expressed his satisfaction, saying, "We had high hopes about the government helping us revive the culinary heritage of the valley. Initially, we didn't find it existing anywhere, but now we are quite satisfied."

The niche crop is grown under specific climatic conditions, and agricultural experts are exploring various areas across the Valley to expand its cultivation.

The government aims to bring 5,000 hectares of land under rice cultivation over the next three years as part of the holistic development of agriculture and allied sectors scheme. This initiative is set to transform the agricultural economy in Jammu and Kashmir, boosting exports and enhancing rural livelihood security in the Union territory.

The GI tagging not only acknowledges the unique heritage but also promotes the hard work of farmers.

From (page 3)... (Raising Dough)

Rounak Qayoom Khajwal, 21 years old from the Hawal area of Srinagar, says unemployment is the biggest reason for the upcoming of such endeavours. She started her online business, Cakecraft by Rounak, in 2023. According to her, while passion and interest do have a role to play when you start a business, in Kashmir it is more like a necessity. She says that looking at the increasing unemployment rate amongst women across Kashmir, it is evident that jobs are nowhere to be found, even for those holding multiple academic degrees. "Hence, youth has taken matters into their own hands, and as a result, we see growing startups including bakery startups across the Kashmir valley," says Rounak.

While she prepares the products entirely by herself in the kitchen of



her house, she has opted for local delivery services for the rest of the job. Primarily a self-taught baker, to enhance her skills she took baking classes and attended a workshop at a local coaching institute.

While individual talent and unique business strategies have earned each baker a special spot, these young women do share a common secret to their success. It is in the ways in which they harness the power of social media and digital tools to reach a wider audience and boost their business ventures.

Indeed, the use of social media in the journey of these homebakers has been incredibly beneficial. These platforms help them receive orders and get instant feedback and suggestions from the customers precious to them. Through their passion and their commitment toward financial independence, these young women have not only built thriving businesses for themselves but are inspiring many to likewise turn their creativity into enterprises.

A Tapestry Of Memories: Remembering Crewel Art From Kashmir

The designs used in crewel embroidery draw inspiration from not only the natural beauty of the Kashmir valley but also motifs of flowers, leaves, and birds, with jungle scenes being particularly popular.

SHEREENAMAN

Slipping kehwa and cherishing the warmth of a Kashmiri hamam are my favourite moments to capture every winter. Warmth, food, fun, and laughter have always been my favourites; adding to their comfort, my grandmother's tales mark a significant part of it. Last evening, when the echoes of Asr were heard from all corners of the city, I could feel my grandmother's eyes completely soggy, and I could hear her sob. I couldn't stop asking her the reason, to which she immediately responded with a smile and said, "Old memories are always pinching; one should never grow up and lose its childhood."

Later, I came to know that she became emotional because of the heirloom hand-work crewel curtains that were used in the hamam and belonged to her mother. "These curtains speak volumes about their history; my memories turned fresh, and as just yesterday, these have been bought," my grandmother said with an emotional grin. Being a fanatic since childhood, I couldn't wait to hear the entire story, which she promised to narrate after offering the Asr namaz. Eagerly waiting for the same, I executed my religious obligation as well and sat beside her to travel down memory lane.

"I am so happy that you have cared for these curtains for so long and used them with elegance which gives me more joy. I remember my mother, on collecting my wedding trousseau had pre-ordered these curtains for me, purely handmade and with the most appealing jungle design, then by the young Kashmiri girls in "Karkhanas," she said, while recalling the art of crewel.

"Can you tell me something more about its history?" I asked with excitement to satisfy myself. As long as I remember, my father had told me that the designs used in crewel embroidery draw inspiration from not only the natural beauty of the Kashmir valley but also motifs of flowers, leaves, and birds, with jungle scenes being particularly popular. These designs are often created by artisans using their imagination and creativity to create



intricate, exquisite patterns. I will introduce you to Ghulam Nabi's family, the one whose four generations are following the same art.

I couldn't stop visiting his karkhana in the Fateh Kadal area of downtown, where his son, Fayaz Ahmed, was busy making a beautiful crewel cushion cover. As I stood near his door, he gently lifted his head and took his glasses off. Bewildered, he couldn't understand the reason for a youngster being there.

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Upon having a brief chat, while intro-

ducing myself, tears dropped from his eyes and he kissed the beautiful peacock eye while making the cushion cover. "It is my immense joy to tell you about the art of crewel, although no young generation bothers to make such efforts these days. I am very happy to see you here," he said in a mood of agreement.

Sitting beside the samovar with the brewing aroma of nun chai dominating his compact workspace, he started, "The art of crewel is a British gift to us, and the Angrez raaj had some advantages as well," he chuckled. "Let me tell you that embroidery, also known as zalakdozi embroidery, is a priceless craft that has been handed down through generations of needle workers. We have refined the art of crewel stitching throughout the years and continue to create exquisite, highly valued pieces of embroidery that are detailed and attractive. Approximately, the art dates back to the eleventh century, when the seventy-metre-long tapestry was created entirely by hand using crewel. By now, it is evident that the tale of crewel embroidery is a rather long one, but what's interesting is how it followed a pathway to reach the hills of Kashmir."

While offering me a khos of nun chai, he continued imparting his knowledge. "We use a hooked needle, which is used to generate a chain stitch on fabric for the crewel embroidery technique. The wool of nearby sheep is often spun into a fine, delicate

thread to provide the yarn needed for crewel needlework. Then, a variety of vivid hues, including red, green, blue, yellow, and black, are dyed onto this thread. We usually make it on 56-quarter-wide Dusoot cotton fabric manufactured locally in Kashmir. Fabric bolts may be 20 to 33 yards in length, although custom orders at times require longer yardages per bolt.» The same was used by my father while weaving curtains for your grandmother. "I have heard that she was very possessive of her accurate designs," he said with a subtle laugh.

By this time, the sun was about to set, but Fayaz Ahmad continued his narration. "Crewel yarns are stiff and can be firmly turned and twisted into shapes. Depending on the intricacy of the design, the embroidery can take up to several weeks to finish. In the Kashmiri craft community, it is said that a person requires sixteen years to master the craft. That's why small children in the community are trained from the age of eight to ten years."

"You must be enjoying what I say. Aren't you?" He asked me, attentively listening and cherishing the beautiful pieces lying near his bukhari. I had the pleasure of asking him more about the same, and tirelessly he responded that once the design is finalised, it is drawn on tracing paper by professional tracers called Naquashbands. In Kashmir, the design is then printed on the base fabric using ink.

After the design is imprinted, the fabric is sent to the craftsmen, who start embroidering. In this embroidery, some of the conventional stitches used are stem, chain, and padded satin stitches made with a hook needle, or Aari. The Mughal emperors greatly supported the craft. As a result, it soon gained popularity and became an indigenous art form in Kashmir that was practiced by nobles from both India and Europe. "Thanks for helping me recall the bygone wonders of this art." He concluded, "Please pay my regards to your grandmother, and don't forget to tell her that you still remember her possessiveness very well."

Waving goodbye, he tightened his half-strung wooden gate and gave me a gaze of fond remembrance.

Unleash Passion: Exercising the Power of Choice

SHAISTA ALTAF

Professor Mohammad Hussain, who teaches Law at University Of Kashmir, Naseem Bagh Hazratbal has 32 years of experience in teaching. It's like a flood of memories rushing back, reminding him of his dreams and aspirations he had as a young boy where everyone was determined to their goals. When everybody was wondering about their future choices, Mohammad Hussain got himself admitted in traditional sciences in 1970s along with his other friends who had opted in different fields.

"In between attending classes of Botany, me and my friends who had opted for other courses in university were having a delightful lunch, sharing laughter and ideas," says Mohammad. While discussing our future plans, a sudden remark was made by my friend who was studying law, questioning my value of delving into the intricate world of Oospores and Zoo-spores (basic structures of plants).

I asked in return to this remark what's your plan for future?, to which my buddy replied, "I'll be embarking on a journey of practicality, immersing myself in the lives of others, lending an empathetic ear to their problems and engaging in meaningful conversation".

That day, when I came back to my home the comment made by my friend on my decision to study plants unsettled me. It sparked a cascade of thoughts, and the following day, as I stepped onto the university grounds, I made a profound shift in my plans, choosing to pursue law.

Soon I realised I had a deep passion for education. I found immense fulfilment in imparting knowledge, particularly in the field of law. "Teaching has been and will continue to be a lifelong commitment for me", remarked Mohammad.

In a world where dreams collide with societal expectations, the pursuit of a desired career can be a transformative journey. It's a path filled with passion, sacrifices, and the potential to make a lasting impact on both individuals and society.

Shafin Abdullah, a third-year student of Music and Fine Arts at University of Kashmir, Naseem Bagh Srinagar, explores the new visual ideas in the form of paintings. The greatest asset of Shafin is when words



fail to express, the artwork conveys it all.

His expressive art depicts a narrative through the themes of joy, sorrow, love, conflict, and variety of emotions that reflect the human conditioning.

Painting being the favorite hobby since childhood gradually attracted the idea of choosing it as a career. In spite of being listening to ongoing loud voices all around, asking him to do the stuff of painting in his leisure time and rather focus on his academics, Shafin found where his love of life resides and that was painting.

Malecha Sofi, a Journalism student at Cluster University, Srinagar tells her story of the journey of self-discovery, choosing journalism over expectations. Malecha narrates the story as she says; as a child, I never had the typical aspirations of becoming a doctor like many kids do. When I finished my 10th class exams, everyone around me suddenly insisted that I pursue Science. Without much resistance, I went

along with it.

However, during my time studying science, I discovered my love for writing and news reading. In the gap year of 2019, I delved deeper into my interests and realized that journalism was my true calling.

I am incredibly grateful that I didn't rush into following the expectations of others. Instead, I took my time, carefully considered everything, and ultimately found my passion in journalism. I knew deep down that it was the only path for me.

I strongly believe that every student should have the freedom to choose their own career. However, I also believe that these choices should be backed by logic and ability. It's important to make informed decisions that align with our interests and capabilities.

In all honesty, I believe that we should have the freedom to pursue our desired careers without worrying about judg-

ments from others. The opinions of others hardly matter. If we allow ourselves to be swayed by the fear of judgment, we may end up compromising our own education.

I have faced taunts and criticism from people for not choosing Science and opting for a subject in the field of Arts. But I have come to terms with it. What matters most is that I am happy and satisfied with my choices, and so are my parents.

I am confident that no other profession could have brought me the level of contentment that journalism does. It's a journey of self-discovery, following my passion, and finding fulfillment in my chosen path.

By embracing our true calling and pursuing what brings us joy, we can create a life filled with purpose and contentment.

Shafin always weaves the message regarding the power of passion that is hidden somewhere in one's heart.

On a societal level, the impact of going according to an individual's interest can have a profound impact. When individuals pursue their passions, they often bring innovation, creativity, and new perspectives to their respective industries.

This can drive progress and advancements in various fields, leading to economic growth and societal development. Passionate individuals can also inspire others, serving as role models and catalysts for positive change within their communities.

Sameer Ahangir, the cricket enthusiast, once had big dreams of following in the footsteps of his cricket idols. He dedicated himself to honing his skills, emulating their practice routines, and finding inspiration in their success. At around 33 years old, Sameer was a socially vibrant person, full of life and passion for the game.

But as Sameer reached the 12th standard, his dreams began to fade. There was no supportive atmosphere for him to pursue cricket, and societal pressures started creeping in. The weight of expectations, like getting married and taking on huge responsibilities, gradually forced him to make unwanted career choices. He obtained a psychology degree, but it felt empty, just a piece of paper. The same happened when he pursued a master's degree in English literature.

Moving from one unsatisfying career to
Continue on (Page 7)

Kashmir's Lost Numerals: Siyaq, a Valuable Heritage

SHEREEN NAMAN

The Kashmir Valley harbors an invaluable treasure within itself – its traditions, customs, and cultures. Unfortunately, these elements now seem to have vanished, earning them the title of “lost cultures.” The history of Kashmir is exceptionally vast, rich, and brimming with ethnic details.

Among the lesser-known facts is the existence of Kashmiri numerals, which form an essential part of knowledge and overall development. It is challenging to trace the exact era when the Kashmiri numerical system came into existence. According to estimations, it may have been invented after Islam reached Kashmir. However, some information can be gleaned from the “Shiraza” magazine of that time, registered with the Cultural Academy, as stated by Javid Mukhdoomi, a researcher and writer of the “Indicsiyaq in Kashmir.”

The numeral system spread to various parts of the world, giving rise to different variations such as the Ottoman Turkish Siyaq and the Indic Siyaq. The Indic Siyaq Numbers were used in accounting under the Mughals until the mid-20th century,



which likely explains their adoption in Kashmir. Kashmiri numerals and digits were commonly employed in the valley, especially by moneylenders, grocers, and various shopkeepers. Even the revenue department continued to use them until the early 1950s.

The Siyaq numerals were designed to complement the Arabic script. Their form was derived by abbreviating the Arabic names for numbers and compressing them into shorter symbols. Efforts have also been made to encode these numerals into

Unicode, a system for defining character encodings of new languages. This enables the creation of keyboard layouts that allow people to type these new languages on

“Among the lesser-known facts is the existence of Kashmiri numerals, which form an essential part of knowledge and overall development.”

computers and other digital devices.

Some suggest that the design of Siyaq numerals was an artistic endeavour aimed at achieving a specific effect. Others propose that the fusion of Persian, Arabic, and local requirements might shed light on their origins. However, Kashmiri numerals remain distinct and unmatched.

“A more mathematically inclined reader would notice, for instance, the absence of any symbol representing the numeral ‘ZERO,’ unlike in Arabic and Persian languages. This necessitates the use of special symbols for numbers like ‘TEN,’ ‘TWENTY,’ ‘HUNDRED,’ etc.,” explains Ghulam Nabi Aatish in the magazine “Shiraza.”

Undoubtedly, there must have been a period spanning several decades when multiple numbering systems coexisted in the valley. However, the Kashmiri system was ultimately neglected, initiating its gradual extinction. Like many others, the Anglo-Indian System of Notation took over our own system. Today, this significant part of Kashmiri culture, heritage, and ethos is extinct.

From page 6.... Unleash Passion

another, Sameer now finds himself as an educationist, coaching students with no real fulfilment. The struggle has taken its toll, turning him into a quieter person who no longer feels the urge to socialize or engage in conversations. This lack of satisfaction has even affected his love life, leaving him feeling trapped in a monotonous cycle of earning a living.

It sheds light on the challenges many face when societal pressures overshadow their true passions. It serves as a reminder to pursue what truly brings us joy and fulfilment, rather than succumbing to the expectations of others.

Meet Mehnaaz Khan, a 27-year-old, who grew up in a troubled family. Her father's abusive behaviour, including violence towards her mother, created a chaotic environment. To protect Mehnaaz from this turmoil, her mother sent her to live with

her grandmother.

It was in her grandmother's home that Mehnaaz discovered the enchanting world of Kashmiri tapestry. Mesmerized by the intricate designs, she realized her true passion for fashion designing. However, her family discouraged her from pursuing her dreams.

Despite their objections, Mehnaaz's family insisted she pursue a BBA degree. However, she couldn't find fulfilment in this chosen path. She then embarked on an Integrated MBA program at North Campus, but after five years of struggling, she felt no sense of worth in her degree.

Feeling lost, Mehnaaz attempted to explore other avenues and appeared in competitive civil service exams. Yet, her life became a series of unwanted choices, leaving her unfulfilled. Even working from home failed to bring her inner satisfaction.

Now, at the age of 27, Mehnaaz finds

herself at a crossroads. While her family searches for a suitable match for her, she feels a deep sense of emptiness and regrets the choices she has made.

Sometimes, the path to discovering our true calling can be a winding one. It's okay to feel lost and unsure at times. The important thing is to keep searching and never give up on what truly makes you happy.

Gowhar, a compassionate adult residing in the old town of Baramullah. Since his childhood, Gowhar witnessed people facing tough times, which fuelled his desire to lend a helping hand. He discreetly assisted those in need, particularly in managing marriages for those less fortunate.

However, Gowhar's aspirations to formalize this as his career were met with opposition. Like many others, he was pushed to go against his own dreams and desires. This forced him to question his

own identity, leaving him feeling lost and unfulfilled.

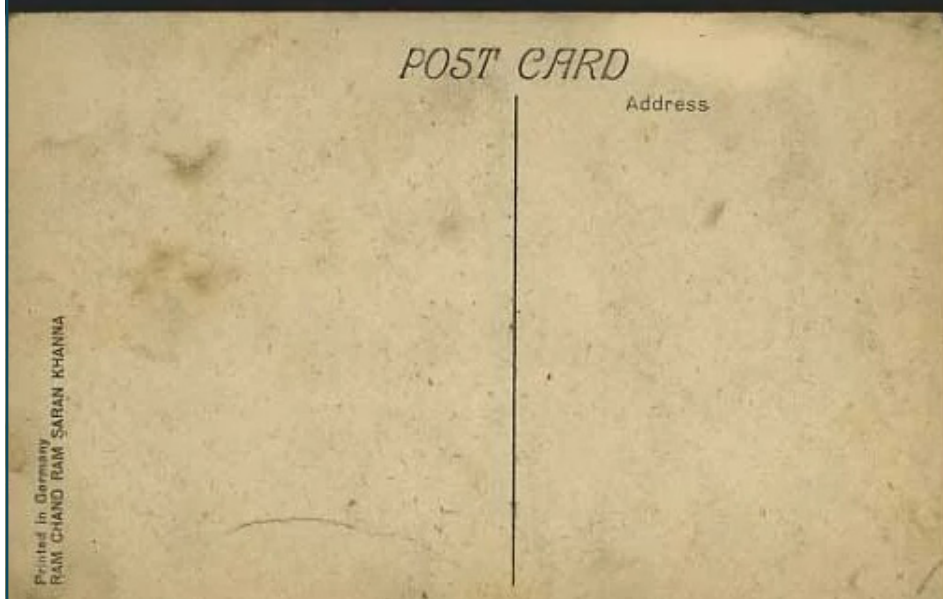
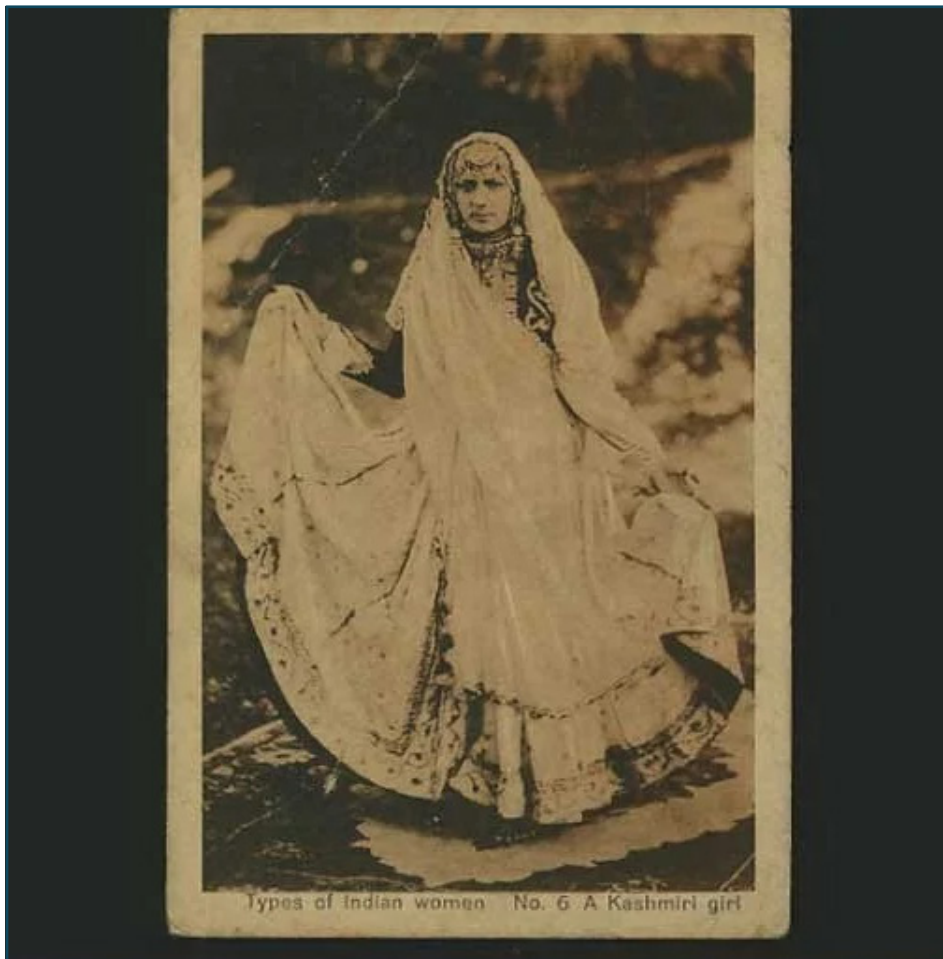
Despite the challenges, Gowhar ended up working as a petty clerk in a school, lacking the sense of contentment and liveliness he once yearned for. This is a story that explores the struggles of following one's true passion and the impact it can have on a person's life.

Choosing a path driven by genuine interest and passion is like unlocking a door to a world of fulfilment and joy. It allows us to approach our work with enthusiasm and dedication, leading to a greater sense of purpose and accomplishment.

In the intricate realm of career choices, opting for what truly resonates with us can be a transformative experience. It opens up endless possibilities and empowers us to make informed decisions that shape our future.

Remembering Kashmir through Memoirs and Souvenirs

Historians typically privilege documents over other non-verbal sources of information to retrieve information and knowledge about the past. The Valley of Kashmir has been represented selectively in popular literature and cinema. However, Kashmiris have preserved their stories and culture through memoirs and material culture. **Shereen Naman** shares some souvenirs preserved by her family to remember their past and cultural heritage.



Awadhi Anarkali & Post Card: This old Kashmiri postcard has been discovered by Ram Chand Ram Saran Khanna. The card depicts an old Kashmiri lady wearing an Awadhi Anarkali of the modern times, paired with Kashmiri jewellery and a heavy Gotta dupatta.



Photo Source:
searchkashmir.org
&
nostilagickashmir.com

Pet Culture in Kashmir: According to sources, this picture was taken between 1890 and 1900. It is fascinating to see the pet culture in ancient times. Such postcards were sent to foreigners who came to Kashmir as tourists.



Yander katun: This is an antique Kashmiri postcard which depicts a beautiful Kashmiri young girl, spinning cotton called 'Yander katun'. The picture is taken in 1900s and describes how beautifully she has chosen a bhot; meaning the banks of river or a lake to enjoy her daily chores.



Shalimar Garden: This picture of Shalimar Garden, built by emperor Jahangir, depicts the beauty and architecture of the garden is a bliss in solitude today as well.



Shikar Party: This postcard of a 'shikar party' (going for a hunt) was clicked in 1903 and captures how khojas or elites used to cross waters on horses for hunting.