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expression unleashed

From Operation Blue Star to Kartarpur Corridor: Why the Victims of the 1984 Anti-Sikh Riots Need Closure



Bureaucratic Ego and Incompetence

The government order last week that imposed a blanket ban on storage, sale, possession and use of heavy heating appliances such as blowers, heaters and radiators in central Kashmir's Ganderbal was so ill-conceived that it was withdrawn within hours following a barrage of criticism.

A corrigendum was soon issued by the Deputy Commissioner Ganderbal, the officer who had issued the order earlier, which now prohibits sale, purchase and use of "banned nichrome coil based crude water heaters and crude cooking heaters, which do not conform to the relevant specifications of the Bureau of India Standards."

The two orders – the one that was withdrawn and another issued as a corrigendum – were aimed at ensuring efficient use of electricity and its conservation during the ongoing winter season, which is going to continue for at least three months.

It is the duty of the administration to ensure an uninterrupted power supply during the harshest periods of winter, when much of Kashmir depends on traditional and modern heating appliances to keep themselves and their children and elderly warm in freezing climatic conditions.

The order, however, was grossly irresponsible and shifted the responsibility of ensuring the continuous power supply to the consumers. If the solution to ensure uninterrupted power supply is to not use it for the purposes it is meant for, it is surely a bizarre solution.

The winters in Kashmir are harsh. The temperatures fall to freezing levels for a minimum forty-day period of the *chilai kalan*. Those are

tough times to live, especially for the children and the elderly, who are weak in terms of immunity, prone to illnesses and may already be on life-support medicines. The cold of winter, in the absence of proper heating mechanisms, can mean death to many frail and old bodies.

So the order – though withdrawn under public pressure – placing a blanket ban on use of heating appliances was cruel and inhumane. It is just another incident that proves that the bureaucracy,

The amount of infrastructure damage along Polo View Street makes no sense. Why was the road in the heart of Srinagar's already congested commercial nerve center dug out and is going to be restricted for pedestrian movement only? How is this going to achieve the goal of making Srinagar a smart city? The officers, who devised this idea of destroying the existing infrastructure and rebuilding it with minor changes, need to answer to the people who pay huge taxes.

So the order - though withdrawn under public pressure - placing a blanket ban on use of heating appliances was cruel and inhumane. It is just another incident that proves that the bureaucracy, left alone to govern and administer without the overview of a political structure, can be totalitarian and foolish.

left alone to govern and administer without the overview of a political structure, can be totalitarian and foolish.

The lack of knowledge about local issues and lifestyle, coupled with an urge to copy-paste irrelevant solutions from other locations, are becoming an unfortunate working style of the bureaucracy in Kashmir. The bureaucracy continues to remain indifferent and ill-informed about the ways and the essentials of life in Kashmir. That is the reason why, month after month, government orders are causing more disturbances than enhancing stability.

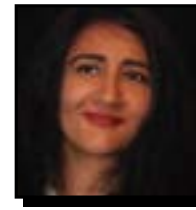
The examples are there to see for everyone. The improperly managed transportation of apple-laden trucks last month, which were forced to stop along the Srinagar-Jammu highway for several days, caused irreversible damage to the local economy and has shattered the hopes of the farmers.

Another example of the bureaucratic fallacy is the current working style of the body overseeing the projects of Srinagar Smart City. Most of the works that have been ordered and are underway right now are almost hostile to the objectives of the Smart City project. The intense insistence on destroying the existing works and redoing them into a fancy avatar of the same are not a solution and it will not make Srinagar a smart city in any way.

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Bespoke Tailoring: A Tale of Disappearing Art from the Valley

Photo essay on Kashmir's premier tailoring shop established a hundred and eighty years ago.



JASPREET KAUR

K Salama, the corner shop on Polo View Street was a chance discovery, when I stopped to look around finding the entire Polo View Road dug up. As I waked in, I met Amjid Gulzar Bhat (K Salama's great grandson), who showed me the usual Kashmiri fabrics and embroidery. We soon got talking and I got to know that Amjid left his corporate job in 2010 to join the family business. Along with learning the nuances of tailoring from his father, he looks after the marketing.

There was an elderly man moving around the shop - very busy at his own pace. He came over and offered tea, which came with a plate full of biscuits and a delicious cake from the local bakery around the corner. Knowing that I liked the cake, it's there every time I visit the shop. He was introduced as Gulzar Bhat, Amjid's father.

Once the introductions were over, he very proudly showed his bespoke creations and all the testaments from his clients across the world, along with folders of business cards of his prestigious clients. Some handwritten, others typed out, some faded, framed letters praising the dress-making skills of K Salama are a living testament to the Srinagar-based tailoring shop's legacy. These include a note by Booker Prize-winning author Arundhati Roy: "I am writing to you while I am dressed in the elegant *pheran* you tailored for me at such lightning speed. I can't believe you remembered the fabric you used to make my coat seven years ago."



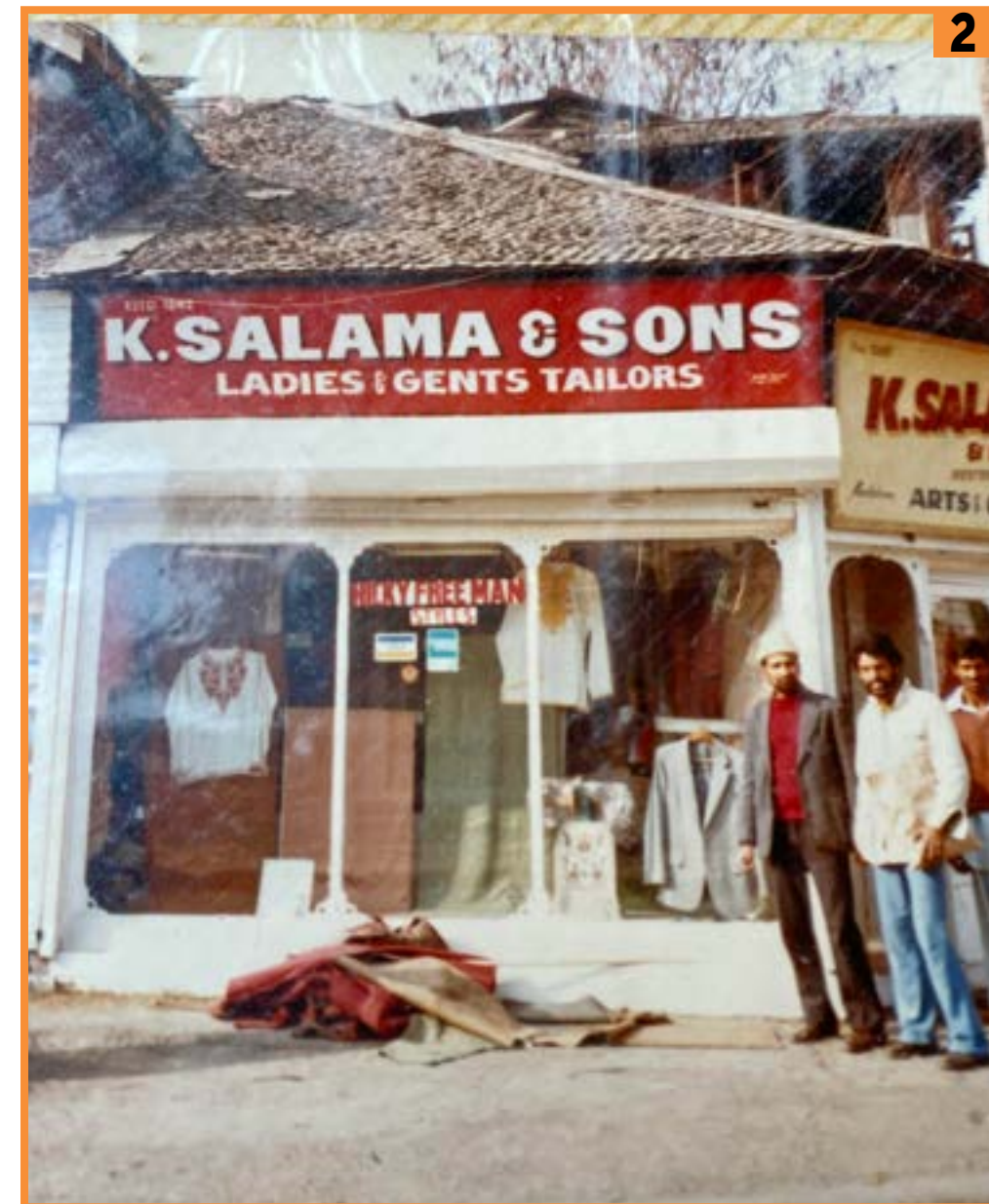
Since 1842, K Salama, founded by Khawja Salama, has offered tailoring services to locals and has been very popular with the visitors in the valley. Amjid, who runs the business, estimates that his father has thousands of such notes filed away from patrons across the globe - journalists, diplomats, noted military men and others.

Before India gained independence, K Salama was a favourite among British visitors whose holiday itineraries in the valley often included a visit to the shop. Gulzar Bhat recalls that the street was once similar to Savile Row, with several rows of tailoring shops, now replaced with craft stores.

He started accompanying his father, Ghulam Nabi, from the age of 12 and soon learnt the skills. Their workshop, he said, had some very skilled master tailors. Even today he works with his experienced master tailors, Ghulam Hassan Bhat (86) and Abdul Rashid Kumar (60). The expertise is a result of perfection in fitting and tailoring. Gulzar Bhat supervises each piece tailored in his workshop. Tailoring remains K Salama's forte and heritage.

Gulzar Bhat tolerates no compromises and can be tough in demanding the best from his tailors. However, as Amjid says, he keeps them happy and pays them well, almost two to three times more than others do.

The upper level is a storehouse of some amazing fabrics, some very rare like the Kashmiri tweed, the impeccable weave of which, Gulzar Bhat demonstrates by piercing



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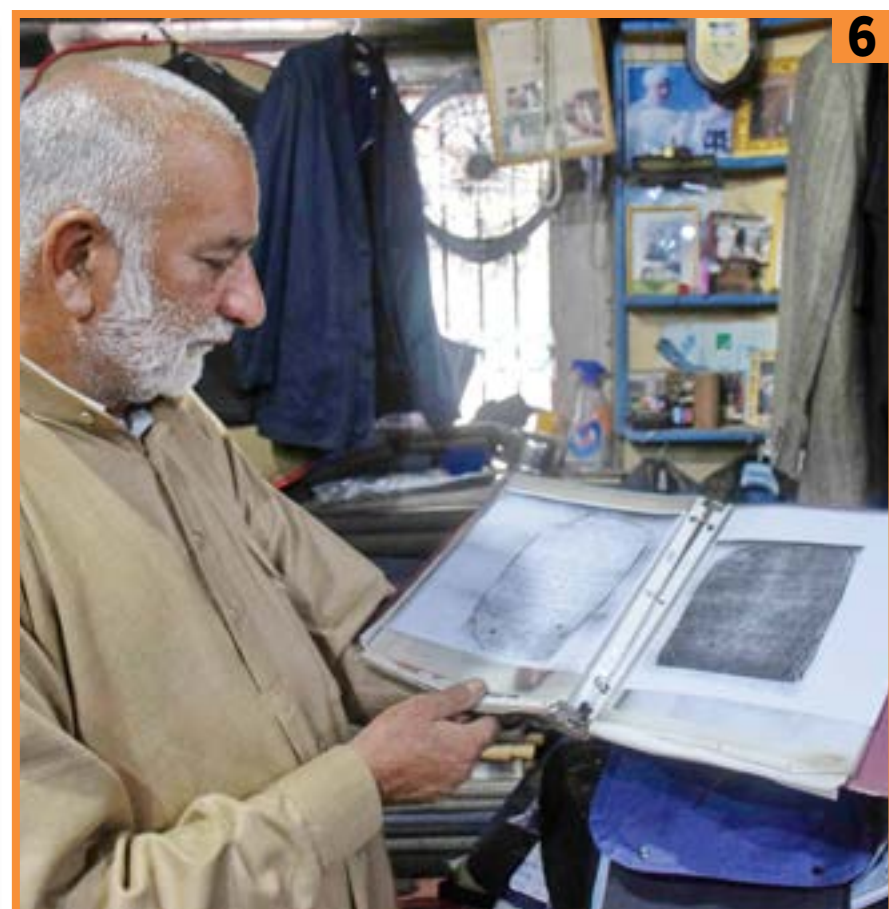
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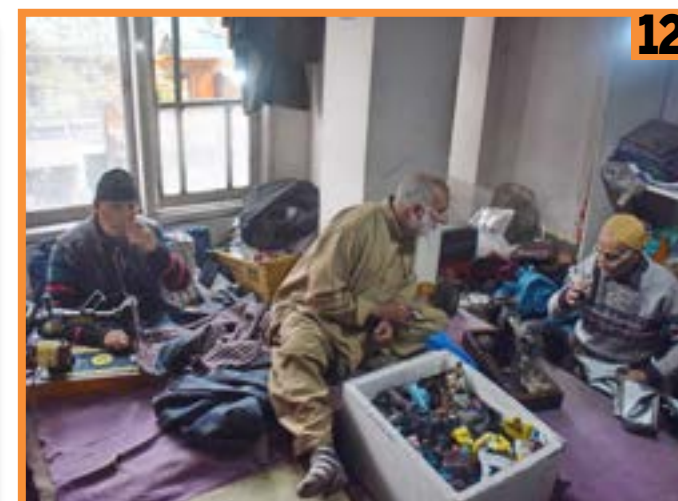
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1. Ghulam Nabi, Amjid's grandfather, photographed outside K Salama in the 70s.
2. Gulzar Bhat in red pullover and jacket having a few leisurely moments outside his shop in the 70s.
3. Rasool, their tailor, who worked since his childhood, first with Ghulam Nabi and then with Gulzar Bhat till the age of 85, when he was still stitching coats.
4. Amjid Bhat and Gulzar Bhat outside their shop.
5. Amjid Bhat and Gulzar Bhat in their shop which now is known for its varied designer fabric and embroidery.
6. Gulzar Bhat showing his album of appreciation letters.
7. Framed letter of appreciation of July 7th 1956.
8. Framed letters of appreciation on display in the shop.
9. This photograph that hangs in the shop is of one of their oldest tailors, Sultan, who was a master in hand-stitching. He worked with them till the age of 95.
10. Gulzar Bhat demonstrating the strong weave of the Kashmiri Tweed.
11. Gulzar Bhat showing the fabric designed by his father to mark the lakhs of migratory birds of the Valley.
12. Gulzar Bhat supervising his master tailors - Ghulam Hassan Bhat (86) and Abdul Rashid Kumar (60).
13. Gulzar Bhat in his workshop with his master tailors.



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it with a pen. It restores to its original form as soon as the pen is removed. He clearly loves his fabric collection. There is one particular tweed that he's quite nostalgic about - a light brown with tiny white crosses, designed by his father, to mark the thousands of migratory birds that visit the valley every year.

K. Salama's tailoring expertise is varied, with a focus on Western menswear and womenswear as well as uniforms. Traditional English Bedford cord trousers, Prince of Wales check double-breasted suits, fishing hats and a 'Kashmir waistcoat' are regular mentions in the letters of appreciation. They have now added tailoring of ethnic wear.

The bestseller, for which K Salama is now popular, is the *pheran* made from various fabrics like pashmina, cashmere, wool, cotton and even the 60-year-old vintage Kashmiri tweed.

I was shown several immaculately tailored waistcoats of Kashmiri Tweed, sadly now a rarity. I was lucky to find a beautiful blue tweed fabric and asked Gulzar Bhat to make me a waistcoat. It has been tailored to perfection. I shall be winter-ready with a tweed coat and a wrap made from the vintage bird-design tweed. But I also leave with a heavy heart listening to Gulzar Bhat reminiscing the times of tailored perfection, attention to detail, and his love for his fabric, that which is valued by only a few now.

Jaspreet Kaur is a New Delhi-based architect and urban designer.

Photo credits: Shah Jehangir and Amjid Gulzar



Photo credit: Sajjad Haider

Journeys up the Hill

Excerpts from the foreword of Maulana Muhammad Abbas Ansari's autobiography.

Among the autobiographies written by Kashmiris, 'Abbas: Journeys up the Hill' (originally *Khaar-e-Gulistan* in Urdu) stands out as an account of a brilliant mind, a statesman, an emancipating leader, and a religious and spiritual head. Steeped in the Islamic values, it is the story of a person - Maulana Muhammad Abbas Ansari - who relentlessly fought for the rights of the people of Kashmir and dedicated his life to unifying the fragmented community of Kashmiris. His was a struggle to liberate his people from the shackles of ignorance, be that illiteracy, political servitude or religious bigotry, enduring political persecution and imprisonment or facing hardships throughout his life with patience and fortitude. Obviously, it is the story of this same struggle and journey - a compendium of innumerable and connected episodes in his life, each of which he has analysed deeply and came to specific conclusions to light the way in our lives. It has much to offer for the learned and the understanding minds.

The world stands to gain even when moral lessons are drawn from fictional tales. What would the results be if we took to learning from real life which is a vastly better guide even when portraying ordinary lives, not to speak of noted and renowned people? Maulana Abbas stands tall among the very few Kashmiri leaders who resisted temptations and blandishments. He maintained a consistent stance throughout his life. He had just one goal: a secure future for his nation and a lasting peace in the region based on justice and fair play.

The outpouring of sentiment on his passing on 25th of October 2022 is testimony to the mass acknowledgement of the Maulana's unwavering and unblemished record.

The role the Maulana played till his last breath on the political, social and religious spheres is immense. To expect more from a single human being would be an injustice. With a life embodied in his writings, speeches, political and diplomatic tours, religious activities and long imprisonments, the Maulana is counted among those formidable and committed Kashmiri leaders who have the distinction of making productive use of their protracted imprisonment to faithfully pen down observations and events pertaining to their times, which is before us in the form of a book today.

Among the many merits of the book, the outstanding features are that Maulana Abbas has written it with creative flair, in a smooth and flowing style,

without wavering from the idea. With great mastery, he has used his own personal and political experiences to give an absorbing account of the tortuous and tangled politics of Kashmir during his lifetime. Of particular importance is the point that the author is an eyewitness to a crucial phase in our history and he has put it down in such a novel and vivid style that a reader feels compelled to analyse and reflect. This perhaps is the real purpose of the book.

The highly respected and reputed family the Maulana belonged to had been beset with great dangers when he set out on the rocky journey of his life. For ages, the Muslims of Kashmir, especially the Shia community, had been leading their political, religious and social lives under the tutelage of various religious dynasties, but at a particular point, this led to mutual discord and factionalism, a mortal illness that gradually hollowed out their political and religious structures and foreclosed all paths to their progress. Maulana Abbas not only faced the situation courageously, but being a part of this obsolete system, he also displayed sagacity and foresight. He had realised that fighting against it, he would himself fall prey to factionalism. He was a part of the environment and fighting against it would be tantamount to shooting oneself in the foot. He not only admitted this but also ideologically scrutinised the perils of this blind cult of personality, and

proved himself to be truly progressive by his conduct.

Together with highlighting the defects and drawbacks of this blind following, he also raised questions about its causes and basic concepts. In his crusade, Maulana sahib instituted reforms that the society will long remember.

As a result, he had to face bitter criticism not only from his associates and his own organisation but also from the elders of his family, about whom he says that they would have preferred to stay on the other side of the iron curtain even then. Though he has written in detail about the life he had to live and the treatment meted out to him for combating evils and prejudices, remarkably, there is no sign of bitterness or rancour in his words.

Ever since his childhood, after the partition of the subcontinent, Maulana Abbas had seen, in the perspective of the Kashmir issue, a generation betrayed, pacts and promises broken, and hopes dashed to the ground and how, under the cover of a charade of democracy, rulers would be selected in New Delhi's chambers and foisted on Kashmiris in the name of popular elections.

Maulana sahib and this generation continued their struggle under the banner of the Plebiscite Front and the Action Committee and transferred their hopes and aspirations to the next generation when Pakistan had split into two and weakened, and New Delhi had reneged

even on the internal autonomy option by giving its blessings to dynastic rule in Kashmir. The United Nations was silent, and even after the Shimla and the Tashkent agreements, the Kashmir issue hung fire. This generation had now totally lost its confidence in pro-establishment parties. It was at this juncture that the People's United Front and the Muslim United Front emerged under Maulana Sahib's leadership as symbols of a dream that adopted peaceful means for achieving people's rights.

But when it turned out that even this legitimate course was subservient to New Delhi's wishes, Kashmir's new generation took recourse to the armed means. After mutual consultations during incarceration, the leadership, when released from jail, formed the All Parties Hurriyat Conference in the wider interests of the movement for self-determination and national unity. Maulana sahib's autobiography is in fact an extremely scrupulous endeavour to hand over a somewhat detailed account of the vicissitudes of the incessant striving of three generations to a new crop of Kashmiris.

It would not be inappropriate to class the autobiography as a living story of the Kashmiri people's struggles and their various stages. It is a glimpse of Kashmir's political history. In this respect, it is an essential reading for those interested in Kashmir and its chequered history.

Among the many merits of the book, the outstanding features are that Maulana Abbas has written it with creative flair, in a smooth and flowing style, without wavering from the idea. With great mastery, he has used his own personal and political experiences to give an absorbing account of the tortuous and tangled politics of Kashmir during his lifetime. Of particular importance is the point that the author is an eyewitness to a crucial phase in our history and he has put it down in such a novel and vivid style that a reader feels compelled to analyse and reflect.

Right on the Money

Stock Exchange Crimes

Misusing price sensitive information of a listed corporate by its custodians is an act of robbery.



SAJJAD BAZAZ

Market players such as Harshad Mehta and Ketan Parekh are big names when it comes to the exploitation of the system from outside. Scams which demonstrate how the people inside the system have been playing fraud by misusing their authority to make profits for themselves have also been surfacing.

All of us know about the unpredictable and ever changing nature of stock market. It's a market that lives with a life of its own, reacts to situations and leaves investors either reaping profits or with nothing at all. Though there are certain economic and financial indicators like inflation, interest rate scenarios etcetera that contribute to the movement of stock prices, a lot remains hidden behind this price movement game.

A listed company's corporate information is one of the most vital elements for an investor. Stealing of this corporate information, especially by those who are the custodians of such information, and passing it on to other people is one of the oldest crimes in the world of investments.

This illegal act of accessing the most confidential corporate information has seen many corporate bigwigs behind the bars. Who can forget a U.S. District Court judge in Manhattan some years back sentencing the prominent Indian-American business leader Rajat Gupta to two years in prison and imposing a fine of \$5 million on the charges of stealing corporate information and passing it on illegally to a select bunch of people!

Surfacing of irregularities at stock exchanges is nothing new. It's only a matter of time when the scams are unearthed and culprits, especially the white collar criminals, spotted and booked. But not before the damage has been done extensively, more particularly to common, gullible investors who remain unaware of the tricks played by the influential market players, both inside and outside the system.

For instance, market players such as Harshad Mehta and Ketan Parekh are big names when it comes to the exploitation of the system from outside. Scams which demonstrate how the people inside the system have been playing fraud by misusing their authority to make profits for themselves have also been surfacing.

The latest scam in the series that surfaced at the country's largest stock exchange, National Stock Exchange (NSE), in which its former MD and CEO, Chitra Ramkrishna, was arrested in connection with the co-location scam case. Chitra Ramkrishna was holding the position from April 2013 to December 2016. In the co-location facility offered by NSE, brokers could place their servers within the stock exchange premises giving them faster access to the markets.

Allegedly, select players obtained market price information ahead of the rest of the market, enabling them to front-run the rest of the market. The alleged connivance of insiders by rigging NSE's algo-trading and use of co-location servers ensured substantial profits to a set of brokers.

Notably, algorithmic and high-frequency trading strategies give faster

access to traders streaming real-time market data and enabling them to execute orders in milliseconds.

Algo-trading is an automated trading system that utilizes very advanced pre-programmed mathematical models for making transaction decisions in stocks, currencies or commodities. It involves two stages: identification of a buying or selling opportunity which entails what and when to buy or sell and how the trade will be executed.

High-frequency trading (HFT) employs superfast computers to track even the minutest price discrepancy in stocks, currencies and commodities and execute orders in a millionth part of a second in order to make profit by quickly buying and selling stocks at the slightest price differential. This means, while every HFT is algorithmic, every algorithmic trade is not necessarily high frequency.

Both automated trading systems face sharp criticism of common retail investors for breeding discrimination between rich brokers and common investors. The main argument has been that algorithmic trading has created inequality because small investors can't afford such trading software. This has invited debate where tech-savvy stock traders call the inequality argument as frivolous.

Meanwhile, insider trading is viewed as a serious white-collar crime. It implies buying, selling and dealing in shares and securities of a listed company by insiders such as directors, designated officers of the management team, employees of the company or any other connected persons such as auditors, consultants, lawyers, analysts who possess material information which is not available to general investors.

This trading takes place when those privileged with confidential information about important events use the special advantage of that knowledge to reap profits or avoid losses illegally and unethically on the stock market, to the detriment of the source of the information

and to the typical investors who buy or sell their stock without the advantage of inside information.

For example, if one of the top executives of a company shares with you some kind of material information of the company which is yet to be made public and can have impact on the share price of the company, you are now every bit as much an insider as he is, with respect to that information. Firstly, it is illegal on part of the management executive to share the company's material information with you before it becomes public knowledge. Secondly, it is equally illegal for you to do so because you are now a temporary insider. This remains true regardless of how many times the information is passed. Legally, anyone who has material information is prohibited from trading, based on that knowledge,

until the information is available to the general public.

By virtue of standing SEBI rules, the definition of an insider also includes persons connected on the basis of being in any contractual, fiduciary or employment relationship that allows such person access to unpublished price sensitive information (UPSI), employees. The masterstroke is that the onus lies on the accused (insider) to prove his or her innocence.

How does insider trading work? It's simple. An insider in a company first buys the stock, then shares price-sensitive information with a small group of people who buy the stocks and spread the word. This leads to a huge artificial demand for the particular stock which results in higher prices. At a certain point, when the prices hit the 'satisfactory' level, the insider exits along with his small group of people and makes profits. Soon the stocks witness a fall resulting in huge losses for the public investors.

To be precise, insider trading harms small investors. Since there is no fair play involved in this kind of trading and no fair demand and supply of stocks, it is all detrimental to the functioning of a healthy stock market. This white collar crime weakens the faith of investors in the system and ultimately harms the economy as a whole.

Sajjad Bazaz heads Internal Communication Department of Jammu & Kashmir Bank Ltd. The views expressed are his own and not of the institution he works for.

This illegal act of accessing the most confidential corporate information has seen many corporate bigwigs behind the bars. Who can forget a U.S. District Court judge in Manhattan some years back sentencing the prominent Indian-American business leader Rajat Gupta to two years in prison and imposing a fine of \$5 million on the charges of stealing corporate information and passing it on illegally to a select bunch of people!

From Operation Blue Star to Kartarpur Corridor

Why the Victims of the 1984 Anti-Sikh Riots Need Closure.



SHOME BASU

A stone's throw from French cafes and posh restaurants at Delhi's Bikaner House, situated at a corner of the India Gate hexagon, Research and Analysis Wing (R&AW) operated from a small room at the building's annex. The founder secretary of R&AW, R N Kao, was tasked by Indira Gandhi to run his operations from the room number 7 for a special job.

One of the main assignments of Kao's team was to analyse and talk with the newly growing threat in the northern state of Punjab - The Khalistan movement. But what did R&AW have to do with it? After all, the spy organization wasn't meant for internal intelligence. Khalistan movement was, meanwhile, growing rapidly among various sections of the Sikh population in Punjab, which the state police and the IB could handle well.

However, it was a bigger game which had its brains, money sources and tentacles in faraway lands which included USA, England and Canada. Kao got in touch with his protégé B Raman to assist him to make sure the movement didn't get completely out of hand.

The Beginning

In a small village of Punjab's Moga district, Jarnail Singh Brar was born in a Jat family in 1947 - the year India got Independence and Pakistan was born. He would later come to be known as Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale, a godman for the Sikh community and its dream of Khalistan. Neither he nor his fellow villagers knew that, in the years to come, he would be running the show in Punjab and finally be killed for a cause for which many Sikhs around the world looked up to him. But was it the real cause or a political rise which turned out to be a Frankenstein monster?

While operating from the room number 7 at Bikaner House, Kao and his team were trying to accommodate and initiate a dialogue with the pro-Khalistan activists based overseas while also trying to engage the leaders based out of Canada, UK and USA to negotiate with Bhindranwale who, by then, was

brandishing guns and swords and had turned Punjab into a semi-autonomous region with its own parallel governance and kangaroo courts.

By 1977, Bhindranwale had become the head of Dam Dami Takhsal as 'Sant' (Saint). He was deeply religious and motivated by the orthodox Sikh teachings and could motivate others. Punjab was then dominated by the Akalis where G S Tohra, H S Longwal and Prakash Singh Badal (who later formed SAD) were the heavyweights.

At the Centre, Giani Zail Singh, who went on to become the President of India, was the Home Minister in Indira

Gandhi's cabinet. Singh had himself risen from the gurdwaras. Zail Singh propped up Bhindranwale in the state politics to break the Akali domination. People in Punjab abhorred Congress politics led by Mrs Gandhi. So, to circumvent that, Zail Singh's strategy was to build a proxy force.

Before the Beginning

Much before Bhindranwale burst on the scene, Sikh community in the UK in the 50s and the 60s, complained about lands not being granted to them for religious purposes. The then Indian High Commissioner to the UK, instead of tak-

ing up their cause, told them to talk to the local authorities themselves.

As India and Pakistan became two different countries after the Partition, the Sikh holy shrines like Nankana Sahib and Kartarpur Sahib were in Pakistan while Golden Temple, Anandpur Sahib and many other religious sites were in India.

Dr Jagjit Singh Chauhan, a finance minister in the Akali Dal cabinet, went to London and joined the diaspora to demand a Sikh home rule in India and Pakistan. By then the Pakistan High Commission and M16 were monitoring the diaspora which comprised migrants

from both India and Pakistan who had settled in the UK.

A former cop from Punjab, Ganga Singh Dhillon, would become an ideologue of the Khalistan movement in the latter part of his life and chairman of Sri Nankana Sahib Foundation. Dhillon went to the US and settled there and got married to a Sikh lady of Kenyan origin who was friends with Gen Zia-ul-Haq's wife. This is how the Dhillon family came close to the dictator. Once in an interview to an Indian magazine on his visit to Chandigarh, Dhillon denied being an agent of CIA and Zia. In anger, he stated: "I don't need Zia or the CIA to tell me to do what I must do..." Later his entry into India was barred. He passed away in the US in 2014.

Meanwhile, Chauhan's efforts led to the creation of groups like Babbar Khalsa, International Sikh Youth Federation (ISYF) and Dal Khalsa, which slowly spread among sections of the Sikh diaspora in Europe, USA and Canada.

Just after the recovery of huge arms from the premises of the Golden Temple in 1984, S Venkat Narayan interviewed President Zia ul Haq over phone for India Today. Some revealing facts were discussed among which Zia denied any insolvent in Khalistan movement and smuggling of arms. When asked about Dhillon, Zia said that he (Dhillon) had met him as a Sikh pilgrim and not as a leader.

When asked specifically about arms smuggling to Punjab, Zia said: "It may be possible because these days gun-running between Pakistan and India is as common as anywhere in the world." He added: "This problem is fairly seri-

ous. Smuggling does take place across the borders. This has been discussed at most of the bilateral meetings. According to an agreement, the two border security forces are honour-bound and duty-bound to check smuggling. They are allowed to keep contact with each other in order to help in providing necessary information and to ensure that smuggling is checked in time and, if detected, the individuals are apprehended. There is a good coordination between the two forces and this point has been discussed at the diplomatic level practically in all the meetings. We have been continuously trying to see that such practices of smuggling across the two borders are, at least, minimised, if not totally checked."

The Showdown

Bhindranwale's men unleashed a spree of assassinations in 1981. Anyone who stood up against the cause of Khalistan was killed. Bhindranwale was arrested on charges of murder, accused of getting Hind Saachar's Jagat Narain assassinated.

While Kao was trying to negotiate with the hardliners back in North America and UK, an Indian Airlines plane IC423 from Delhi to Amritsar was hijacked by the Dal Khalsa members who demanded release of Bhindranwale in Lahore. Natwar Singh, the then Indian High Commissioner to Pakistan, intervened and spoke to President Zia for the release of the passengers. Pakistan took a prompt action using the SSG commandos to storm the plane, release the passengers and neutralise the hijackers.

The support and strength of Bhindranwale was increasing and Punjab was increasingly becoming a potboiler of murders and kidnappings. No one could talk against the Khalsa, or else, they were killed in broad daylight. Ammunition and sympathy from the USA and Europe was pouring in and slowly Bhindranwale took over the Akal Takth inside the premises of the Golden Temple in Amritsar.

Indian Army deserters and discontented officers joined the Khalistani ranks, prominent among them was Major General Shahbeg Singh. An Indian Army veteran who in 1971 took care of the Pakistani POWs, Major General Singh was now preparing Sikhs to create a fortress against the Indian Army that would be the epicentre of the fight on the fateful days of Operation Blue Star.

Operation Blue Star left a deep scar on the Sikh community which till date rankles many. Jarnail Singh Bhindran-

wale was killed in the shelling as military grade equipment was used to blow the Akal Takth. The Sikhs took it as an assault on their religion. In 1966, Mrs Gandhi had used similar military measures in Mizoram where air force was used to bomb the Mizo National Army.

Prime Minister Indira Gandhi was being guarded by Sikh bodyguards, despite having been advised against it in the wake of Operation Blue star. On 31 October, she fell to the bullets of her Sikh bodyguards as she was stepping out of her Safdarjung Road residence. Satwant Singh and Beant Singh used 0.39 bore revolver and sterling submachine gun or stengun to assassinate her at 9:20 in the morning to avenge the attack on one of the holiest Sikh sites.

What followed was one of the most dastardly pogroms in the post-47 history of India. An estimated 8,000 Sikhs were killed across India—more than 2,000 in Delhi alone. Rajiv Gandhi seemed to be justifying the massacre when he said: "When a big tree falls, the earth is bound to shake."

Though 38 years have gone by, judgments have been delayed and the perpetrators are still roaming free. Accused politicians like Sajjan Kumar and Jagdish Tytler are leading a free life. Many children who lost their fathers are now in their thirties and forties. Their children still hear stories of spine-chilling violence.

Many years later when I interviewed the families of the victims who, somehow, managed to survive, they narrated heart-rending accounts of the massacre and the agony of justice still eluding them.

Bhagi Kaur, who migrated from Tilak Vihar to Trilokpuri, had her husband and seven relatives, including her brothers-in-law and their sons, killed on the evening of November 1, 1984. She lives on a pension of around Rs 10,000 which is not enough to run her household and take care of five people.

"To everyone else, the riots took place so many years ago, but for me, it feels like it all happened yesterday. Almost my entire family was wiped out in front of my eyes and even after so many years, we haven't been delivered any justice. The culprits are still roaming free. We are still fighting the consequences of what had happened. My life is almost over now, but my kids are facing the hardships they don't deserve. The only hope I have is that, maybe, my grandchildren will one day see happiness," she says.

Lakshmi Kaur's husband and five brothers, among other relatives, were brutally killed. "They put a tyre dipped in kerosene around my husband's neck and set it afire. A middle-aged man from the mob came back at night and tried to touch me inappropriately. When I resisted, he went out and called his entire group. They searched my house and killed all the eight men hiding inside," she recalls.

Her infant son was thrown into the fire. The mob thought her son was dead but he somehow survived. He has been paraplegic since then. These people living in the ghettoized areas of the national capital ever knew what Khalistan was. Neither were they involved in any activities related to it. To them, the assault on the Golden Temple and the Akal Takth was a sorrowful event. They knew nothing beyond that.

Kartarpur Corridor

Many members of the Sikh community in India visited the final resting place of the founder of Sikhism, Baba Guru Nanak, at Kartarpur in Pakistan for the first time since Partition, after the announcement of the Kartarpur corridor initiative between the two countries. The inauguration of the project on November 28 in 2018 also gave a new lease of hope to diplomatic ties between India and Pakistan.

The proposed corridor is 4 km long on the Indian territory from Gurdaspur to Pathankot and 3 km onward to Kartarpur in Pakistan's Narowal district, including a stretch over the river Ravi.

Baba Nanak spent his last 18 years of life preaching and farming from Kartarpur village. The gurdwara that came up here following his death in 1539 was destroyed by floods in the subsequent years. It was in the 1920s that the erstwhile maharaja of Patiala, Bhupinder Singh, the grandfather of Captain Amarinder Singh, reconstructed the Kartarpur gurdwara.

In 1999, the then prime ministers of the two countries, Atal Bihari Vajpayee and Nawaz Sharif, briefly discussed opening up a corridor to Kartarpur but no progress was made until another Indian PM, Manmohan Singh, spoke to Pakistan's military President Pervez Musharraf, under whom the building underwent a renovation. However, Kartarpur Sahib remained inaccessible to the Indian pilgrims.

Finally, in August 2018, during the swearing in ceremony of Imran Khan, politician and former cricketer Navjot Singh Sidhu and Pakistan's Chief-of-Army Staff, Qamar Javed Bajwa, spoke about the proposed corridor. Imran Khan also told an Indian journalist at a press conference that "...the only way forward is peace."

At the inauguration of the corridor, Khalistan supporter Gopal Singh Chawla was present at the podium which gave India an uneasy feeling. Present at the inaugural function were a large number of students from Khalsa schools all over Pakistan including KPK, Rawalpindi, Karachi, Balochistan, Mirpur and Abbottabad. There were many other Khalistan supporters present but there was no provocation and when I talked to them, I found they had neither forgotten Operation Blue Star nor the subsequent violence unleashed upon the community.

While the community has moved on from the extreme violent days of Khalistan and Bhindranwale, the wounds of the 1984 anti-Sikh riots continue to fester and justice continues to be elusive.

Cover photo: Shome Basu



Pic: Shome Basu

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Interview: 'People are Deeply Pained by Mirwaiz's Absence from Jamia Masjid'



In 1963, in his early 20s, Syed Ahmad Sayeed Naqshbandi was appointed the Imam-e-Hai of Srinagar's Jamia Masjid. Photo: Qazi Irshad

Syed Ahmad Sayeed Naqshbandi is the Imam-e-Hai of Jamia Masjid, the historic grand mosque of Kashmir. He talks to **Bilal Bashir Bhat** about his life, religion, Kashmiri society and the role of preachers and religious scholars among other things.

For almost three years, Mirwaiz Umar Farooq has allegedly been under house arrest. I say 'allegedly' because Lt Governor Manoj Sinha says Mirwaiz is free to roam around, a claim that the Mirwaiz vehemently challenges. What does his absence from Jamia Masjid mean?

In the absence of Mirwaiz Umar Farooq, there is a great deal of pressure on me. But what is more important is that the Muslims of Kashmir, especially those who have benefitted from the Mirwaiz family's sermons through generations, are deeply pained by his absence from the grand mosque of Kashmir.

Could you please provide a brief overview of your scholarly journey?

Initially, I studied Arabic at the Oriental College, Srinagar. There, I acquired a Maulvi Alim degree. After that, I went on to study at Madinat-ul-Uloom where I had the honour of being in the company of the great scholar Maulvi Abdul Kabir. It was followed by Maulvi Fazil course. I also had the privilege to observe the teaching style of Maulana Qasim Shah Bukhari from close quarters. Later, at the age of 18, I joined the Education Department at Banihal in 1957. Two years later, I was transferred to Srinagar. Back then, my uncle Maulvi Ghulam Hasan was serving as the Imam-e-Hai of Jamia Masjid, Srinagar. While delivering the Friday sermon from the pulpit of Jamia Masjid, he passed away reciting kalima-e-shahadah. He was succeeded by my cousin Maulvi Sharif for seven years until 1962. It was in March of the following year, 1963, that Shaheed-e-Millat Mirwaiz Maulvi Muhammad Farooq became the Mirwaiz of Kashmir. A mere five months later, in August 1963, I was given the enormous responsibility of being the Imam-e-Hai of Jamia Masjid. I would like to mention here that Mirwaiz Maulvi Muhammad Farooq delivered the sermon on the north side of the mosque while I used to deliver *hadith* lessons near the *mehrab*, where the pulpit is now. Meanwhile, Mirwaiz sahib was arrested and, after his release more than two and a half years later, the pulpit that is in use today was chosen for teaching and preaching.

It is sad that despite the holy Quran having several Kashmiri translations, it is not studied in the mother tongue in the valley. What is your opinion regarding the idea of teaching Quran in Kashmiri?

Currently, Urdu is one of the most widely studied languages. There is no doubt that the interpretations of the Qur'an by Muhajir-e-Millat Mirwaiz Maulvi Yusuf Shah Sahib, Jenab Qasim Shah Bukhari and others are easily available, but it is unfortunate that they have been left to gather dust.

A number of preachers are busy spreading hatred between sects and subjects across Kashmir on day to day basis from the pulpits of the mosques and via social media. What should be the role of the more responsible and saner imams in such a situation?

Prophet Muhammad (saw) said that a time would come when adultery, indecency, and alcoholism would be commonplace, elders would not be respected and scholars would be the ones who will spread evil rather than being righteous. Majority of the scholars today

fail to follow what they preach, whereas there were many dignified scholars in the past who could hardly afford two square meals but earned widespread respect. In contrast, scholars today are the slaves of materialism in various ways.

There are so many small mosques that organize Friday prayers around Jamia Masjid. Doesn't this defeat the purpose of the Friday gathering?

This question has come up so many times earlier as well. As a matter of fact, even Mirwaiz Maulvi Farooq Sahib attempted this during his time, but failed. The truth is that there are people who have opened businesses in the name of mosques.

Is there a message that you would like to convey to the people of Kashmir?

To begin with, we should avoid what has been forbidden in Islam. We need to get rid of pomposity, drugs, and wasteful spending on weddings and everything else that embodies evil. Lastly, as long as we keep reminding ourselves that we have to ultimately die, most of our problems will be addressed.

(Bilal Bashir Bhat is the editor of the daily Srinagar Jung.)

Majority of the scholars today fail to follow what they preach, whereas there were many dignified scholars in the past who could hardly afford two square meals but earned widespread respect. In contrast, scholars today are the slaves of materialism in various ways.

Unlike many other imams, you are known for delivering sermons in Kashmiri language. Is there a specific reason for that?

Kashmiri is our mother tongue. It is easier to understand and follow sermons when delivered in native language. In fact, Mirwaiz family has a legacy of preaching and teaching in Kashmiri so that the words have a last-

The Transformation of English Cricket

Credit must be given to a visionary board.



FAHEEM GUNDROO

In the late August of 1999, Nasser Hussain, the newly appointed England captain, was booed by The Oval crowd when he took his place in the balcony with its ash brown bricks in the background. The grim truth of the English cricket hitting rock bottom gritted through his teeth. New Zealand had beaten England 2-1 in the Test series, which was followed by disastrous World cup campaign - England bowing out in the preliminary round, failing to proceed to the Super Six. Cornhill Insurance—the official sponsors of test cricket in England—threatened that they would not renew the contract from the next summer. This surely was the darkest hour of the English cricket.

Years later, Duncan Fletcher who took over as the coach of England, believed that England's side of the 90s should have been the world champions. One really could hardly argue with that. They did boast of some terrific players, but somehow always failed to live up to the expectations.

Things started to turn around from 2000. Nasser Hussain may not have been the most talented batsman of his generation, but he was a good captain. A bloody good captain! Someone who took a lot of pride in representing England and carried that killer instinct which deserted the English players of the 90s. Thorpe, Gough, Atherton, Malcolm, Fraser could have walked into any test XI, yet they did not help England climb any success ladders back then. It's tough to make sense of it or theorize it. Perhaps it was the selectors who never gave players like Hick a long run without an axe hanging around their neck.

The introduction of central contracts was the first step which, to a large extent, helped England come out of that decrepitude. England's management finally rose to the call of giving international Test cricket precedence over



With the T20 World Cup 2022 under their belt, England are the only team to possess both the ODI as well as the T20 world cup trophies simultaneously, having also won the ODI World Cup 2019.

county cricket. After lot of pestering, the counties allowed international players to be exempted from playing, protecting them from being wearied out. The results were immediate, culminating in the famous 2005 Ashes victory.

If the red ball cricket had found its mojo, the white ball cricket was still lying in dark dungeons. The officials running cricket in England were quite indifferent to the shorter formats of the game. It's quite amazing that till late 90s, England played just three ODI matches throughout their summer – an archaic trophy, named after the American oil company Texaco. They may have won a series here or there, but England largely remained a very mediocre ODI

and T20 side. Things reached to abysmal level in 2015 ODI World Cup held in Australia, where they lost to Bangladesh and were thrown out of the tournament. Quite like in 1999, the press had their daggers drawn on England's continuous poor performance. It needed a shakeup.

Again, the turnaround was remarkable. England won the 2019 World Cup. And now the Men's T20 World Cup 2022 at the MCG, becoming the only nation to own both ODI and T20 world cup trophies at the same time. Again, the wheels of fortune changed when the officials running the game realized that change was necessary. Andrew Strauss was made the Director of England Cricket Board after the shameful exit

from the 2015 World Cup. The decision proved to be wise and fruitful. In 2016, he introduced what was called as 'white ball contract for white ball specialists'. In the contract, white ball specialists were paid a handsome amount on top of their county salaries. This helped on two counts: it encouraged players like Eoin Morgan, Alex Hales, David Malan, Sam Curran, and Chris Jordan to focus on white ball cricket only. And, secondly, it helped England nurture aggressive players who literally rewrote the coaching manuals. This was a massive step-up. I remember how Aussies mocked England's copybook coaching style that emphasized on never hitting the ball in the air or playing across the line.

The change was so drastic that England now has two different teams and coaches for red and white ball formats. To play the modern brand of cricket you need specialists and England has very well realized that.

Indeed England is very lucky to have a strong firstclass structure in county cricket. This ensures that there is never a dearth of quality cricketers knocking the international doors.

It's the waking up to the changing dynamics and the realities of today's multi-format game because of which England has managed to do so well from the past few years in the white ball cricket. And the credit must be given to a visionary cricket board.

A cricket puritan, Faheem Gundroo is an ICT engineer, based in Dubai, with interest in travel, history and current affairs.

200 Years of Urdu Journalism and the Existential Threat

The progressive devaluation of Urdu is part of a greater design to rewrite our history.



SANJAY KAPOOR

This year, Urdu journalism turned 200 (years) at a difficult time in its tumultuous evolution. As the language is being identified with a religion, the majoritarian beliefs and flawed perception about what can foster nationalism are smothering Urdu in a manner that the study and understanding of our collective past is getting increasingly threatened.

The progressive devaluation of Urdu is part of a greater design to rewrite our history and make light of the contribution of people belonging to the minority community in our fight against the British colonialists. This is considered necessary as we, as a nation, embark on changing our icons and rediscovering those personalities that had little or no role to play in ousting the Britishers and lending shape to a syncretic society.

So, Tipu Sultan, who valiantly fought the British, has to be demonized. The role of the first war of independence that coalesced the opposition to British India is diminished. And there is a lot more. In many states like UP, for instance, Urdu media is being starved of advertising. Simultaneously, there is pressure on the Urdu ecosystem to limit its reach to ordinary people. Madrasas are being subjected to audit, many of them closed down and their teachers are not getting salaries. In these circumstances, how do Urdu publications find teachers and even students? A writer lamented some years ago that every time he saw a funeral of a Muslim he knew that one more Urdu reader had gone without being replaced by anyone.

It was not like this after the trauma of the Partition had lessened and Bombay film industry took to Urdu for its lyrical flow and ease at which it adapted to romantic scripts. Also, it was a language of the elite and hence people aspired to read, write and memorise its poetry. New India's identity was shaped around the use of a language that was spoken all over the country and it grew with the growth of the media. Simultaneously,



the Hindi language also grew, which was sanskritised and crafted under the supervision as a language at Fort William by the British to diminish Urdu, which was also the language of *inquilab*—revolution. However, Hindi could never be used colloquially and remained in use for administrative purposes.

Ever since the BJP government came to power in Delhi, efforts at imposing the Hindi language have acquired an urgency, which was not seen in the past. A home ministry committee has suggested its speedy implementation much to the chagrin of the speakers of other languages. It is possible that in this conflict between Hindi and regional languages, Urdu may become a collateral damage as it is not identified with a region, but with a community whose influence is challenged in everything - food, music and reading of the past.

At a conference organized by the Maulana Azad National Urdu Universi-

ty (MUNA) a few days back, there was understandable melancholy at the manner in which the Urdu language and journalism are losing ground. An attempt to establish its secular credentials was made by speakers including noted Urdu poet Hasan Kamal and author Kamna Prasad who is behind Jashn-e-Bahar, an NGO dedicated to the cause of promoting Urdu, explaining that it was not the language of the Muslims. Prasad brought out the fact that the first Urdu paper in the country was started by a Brahmin and so did the first Persian publication. Others suggested that what was being suggested as Urdu was basically the spoken Hindi with some Urdu words, so it was wrong to say that it was losing ground. Other speakers feared that without the language becoming the language of the commerce, it might be difficult for it to survive. There may be a kernel of truth in this as there are no advertisements made for the Urdu press and there are no journalists who

It is possible that in this conflict between Hindi and the regional languages, Urdu may become a collateral damage as it is not identified with a region, but with a community whose influence is challenged in everything - food, music and reading of the past.

report commerce for any publication. It was felt that Urdu press would have to keep up with the times and the journalists, whether they were in print or TV, would have to build their credibility for readers to listen to them.

Be that as it may, there is a serious existential challenge the language is facing in India. The worry for many is that due to the support the language is getting in Pakistan where it enjoys the status of a national language, it may get confined to our neighboring country thus feeding the stereotype that it is indeed the spoken language of the Muslim community. It will be a pity if that happens as it will only serve those who are in the business of rewriting our past.

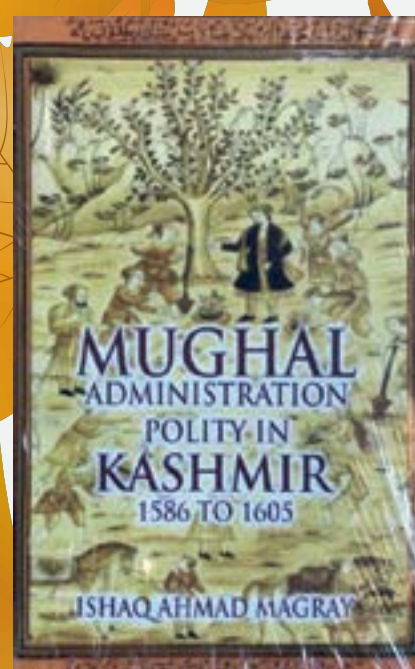
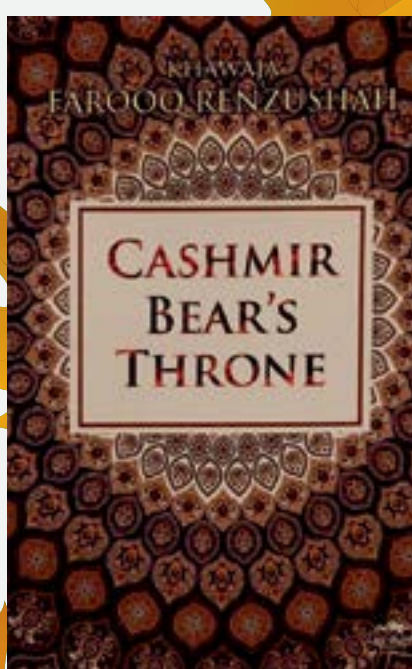
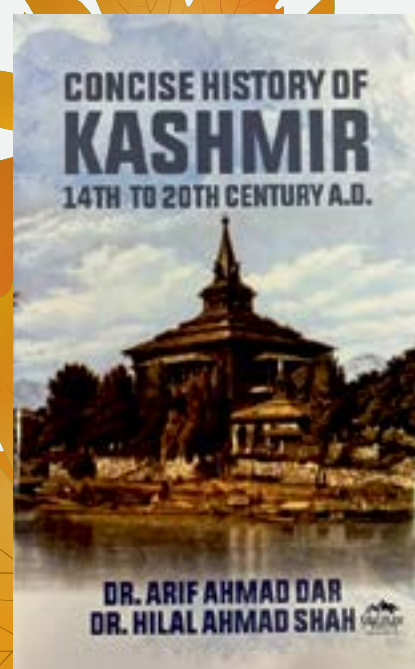
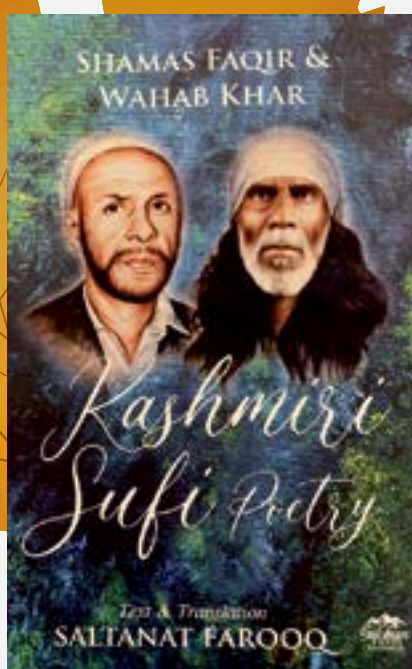
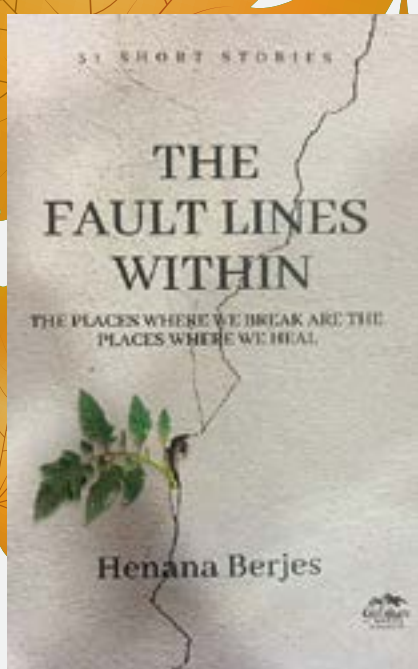
Sanjay Kapoor is the editor of the New Delhi-based Hardnews magazine and General Secretary of the Editors Guild of India.

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