

THE KASHMIR CONNECT

Ms Sherwani's Viral Report
Why The Wire, Other
Media Houses Need To
Understand Kashmiris

VOLUME 2 EDITION 11

09 FEBRUARY, 2023

STABLE KASHMIR BOOSTING BUSINESS



Tourism Stakeholders
On The Forefront To Woo
National, Global Traffic



THE KASHMIR
CONNECT

FROM THE DESK OF THE EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

ZARDARI BHI LE LO NAWAZ BHI LE LO NAHIN CHAHIYE HUM KO YUSUF GILANI

Days after famously declaring that Pakistan has learnt its lesson after wars with India yielded nothing, the neighbouring country's Prime Minister Mr Shahbaz Sharif again expressed support for separatists in Kashmir, speaking at a propaganda event directed against India. While Mr Sharif is occupying himself with these empty pursuits, he should listen to what his countrymen are telling him.

The video by two Pakistani artistes has gone viral in both India and Pakistan. It's based on the mega-hit of Jagjit Singh and Chitra Singh – Ye daulat bhi le lo, ye shohrat bhi le lo. The artistes are also dressed as lookalikes of the famous Indian singing stars. Below is the lyric of their song. Mr Sharif and his coterie can draw lessons from here.



Zardari bhi le lo
Nawaz bhi le lo
Bhale cheen ho hum se Yusuf Gilani
Magar hum ko lauta do keemat purani
Vo aata vo cheeni, vo bijli vo paani
Vo vaadon kein choongal
Vo naaron ka ghera
Merey des mein chaarsu hai andhera
Vasiyat mein likha hai tu badshah hai
Hamare liye bhi kya kuchh kaha hai
Tujhe mil gayi rahte ja vidani
Hamare liye hai na roti na paani
Jamhoori hukumat ki hai yeh nishani
Na aata, na cheeni, na bijli, na paani
Muqtaal bana raasta zindagi ka
Milta nahin naksh e pa roshni ka
Musarrat ke jugnu kahan kho gaye hain
Umeedon ke mahtab bhi so gaye hain
Dukhon ki hai bas ek lambi kahani
Na aata, na cheeni, na bijli, na paani
Nahin chahiye hum ko Yusuf Gilani

– GAYATRI MOHAN

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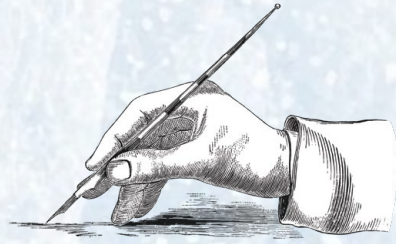
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Srinagar

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FROM THE DESK OF THE DEPUTY EDITOR

We all shall collectively achieve *Atma Nirbhar Bharat*

**Staff Correspondent
cum Staff Photographer**
AL MUNEEB LONE

Staff Correspondents
CHASWEEDA ASLAM
DR SUMI SAIDULLAH
MISBA YOUSUF

**(Deputy Editor Ms Abida War
has an honorary position
with The Kashmir Connect)**

I feel so happy when I observe many among the current crop of the youth of Kashmir. They are enthused with fresh ideas, they are setting out to build their life with optimism and enthusiasm. These youth have clarity of purpose. These youth are deeply conscious and responsible towards their roots, and also have a modern cosmopolitan approach to the world.

I hail from Handwara, a small town in the frontier district of

Kupwara. Even within this small town, I find the youth setting out with grit to build their life and career.

I feel sad when I see that a section of our youth is influenced by notions embedded by the terror ecosystem. I try to reach out to more and more such youth. I try to make them realize that we shall gain nothing by aligning with the ideas that destroyed Kashmir for over 30 years.

We all have to look ahead. We have to rebuild our Valley with trust and with hope. The children of our valley are looking upon us to show them the right direction. The right direction can only be nation-building. The right direction must lead to peace, harmony and progress.

The direction which brings solace to our elder generation, which brings growth and abundance to the workforce, and which brings hope and trust to the children – that is the right direction for society. Many among our youth are headed in this direction. We all shall collectively achieve *Atma Nirbhar Bharat*, where we all fellow Indians march ahead to prosperity and abundance.

THE KASHMIR CONNECT



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FROM THE ASSOCIATE EDITOR'S DESK

SHEIKH MUDASIR HUSSAIN

MS ARFA KHANUM SHERWANI'S VIRAL REPORT



WHY THE WIRE, OTHER MEDIA HOUSES NEED TO UNDERSTAND KASHMIRIS

The video report carried by The Wire on the situation in Kashmir has gone viral in the Valley, with nearly 4 lakh views. The report is based on interviews of some Kashmiris by Ms Arfa Khanum Sherwani, Senior Editor of The Wire.

Ms Sherwani interviewed these Kashmiris regarding the halaat in Kashmir after the abrogation of Article 370. Almost everybody responded on camera that Kashmiris are oppressed. *Zindagi behaal hai*. Barbaad hai. They said that the markets wear a curfew-like look after 5.30 pm and people

Is it accurate to call the report by Ms Sherwani as an “honest account of Kashmir”? No Ms Sherwani. It is not an honest report. You have to know the Kashmiris before answering this question

can't venture out. There is no employment for people, there is no business, Kashmiris are finding it difficult to make ends meet, they stated.

Ms Sherwani has tweeted this about her "ground report" from Kashmir: Article 370 *ke baad Kashmiriyo ke halaat ki sabse imandar report*. The most honest account of the situation in Kashmir post-370.

I smiled when I read this description by Ms Sherwani and by The Wire desk. When all the Kashmiris who have been interviewed are echoing the same sentiment, is it accurate to call the report an "honest account of Kashmir"? No Ms Sherwani. It is not an honest report. You have to know the Kashmiris before answering this question.

Ms Sherwani herself states at the end of the video that people of Kashmir were voluble regarding their views and never afraid of speaking. Always, their case was that India had screwed up their life and was responsible for all the miseries in the Valley.

Why The Kashmiris Never Blame The Terror Ecosystem For Their Miseries

Did the Kashmiris ever blame the terrorists or the terror ecosystem for their miseries? No. Because the Kashmiris had watched that whoever had blamed the terror ecosystem had been brutally killed in the Valley. Even those people who wanted to stay indoors to protect their children and did not want to be part of the funerals of martyrs were viciously targeted. It was always

Did the Kashmiris ever blame the terrorists or the terror ecosystem for their miseries? No. Because the Kashmiris had watched that whoever had blamed the terror ecosystem had been brutally killed in the Valley. It was always safe to berate the Indian state and stand up for the azadi narrative



Photo: Al Muneeb Lone

safe to berate the Indian state and stand up for the azadi narrative.

How The Azadi Narrative Harmed Kashmir Society

This deliberate and repetitive tarnishing of the Indian state and hailing Pakistan as the messiah was not without consequences. The anger and alienation of the azadi narrative was systematically drilled into boys, who then became ready material to become terrorists.

Radicalized and indoctrinated youth rushed to take up arms, they killed and died. Kashmiri terrorists killed Kashmiri

policemen, Kashmiri soldiers, Kashmiri civilians. Everything was fair game in the name of "the conflict". In village after village, poor Kashmiris lost their sons and were left without support in old age.

Meanwhile, sections of the media glorified terrorism as "the home-grown resistance of our boys". After some time, Pakistan did not even have to light the matchstick to start the fire. We were doing a very good job of it on our own month after month, year after year.

Zaina Kadal, Srinagar

THE WIRE



The background image shows a woman with long dark hair, wearing a patterned jacket, holding a microphone with 'THE WIRE' logo and interviewing a man. The man is wearing a black beanie and a striped jacket. They are on a street in Srinagar, with buildings and a white car visible in the background. The text 'Zaina Kadal, Srinagar' is in the top left and 'THE WIRE' is in the top right. A small 'THE WIRE' logo is also in the bottom right corner of the image area.

WHY KASHMIRIS ARE MELANCHOLIC IN THEIR RESPONSES TO STRANGERS

Why are Kashmiris melancholic in their responses to strangers or to people outside their immediate community? To understand this, one may read the book acknowledged by most Kashmiris as one of the finest treatises on the people of the Valley.

The book, titled 'The Valley Of Kashmir', was written by Sir Walter R. Lawrence, described in the book as "Settlement Commissioner, Kashmir And Jammu State." Sir Lawrence served in the Indian Civil Service in British India. The book was published in 1895.

"The Valley Of Kashmir" is one of the most-quoted books by eminent Kashmiri writers on

Kashmir, who affirm its accuracy. The pdf of the book is available online. Over 30 years of living amidst conflict and brutal violence has deepened the intrinsic Kashmiri characteristics that Sir Lawrence captured in his book with deep perception and compassion.

Our Default Response
Ms Sherwani may be surprised

The section of our radicalized youth is impacted by narrative terrorism. When youth take to anti-state violence, it impacts national security and stability. It emboldens the terror ecosystem and the narcotics ecosystem. Their families are destroyed, the social fabric gets ruptured

anti-state narrative. The terror ecosystem has created toxicity against the state. Such reports feed the toxicity and make it multiply. Silently, that narrative is pushed far ahead. Those who promote harmony and peace – their narrative is pushed back.



that why did all Kashmiris respond that life is behaal or barbad. She needs to understand us better. The Kashmiri will enjoy noon chai and roti with his family in the morning. He will go to his place of work and enjoy bonding with his colleagues. The farmer will go to his orchard. He will tend to the orchard and chat with his friends around. The women – whether working or not – will attend to their routine chores.

In the evening, you ask any of them how life is in Kashmir. 99 times out of 100, the response will be that life is behaal. The youngster will give you the same answer. For one reason or another, this has become our default response that *halaat*

kharab hain, zindagi behaal hai. This is the message we are deepening for ourselves daily.

How Narrative Terrorism Impacts Us

Let us get real. In Kashmir, the section of radicalized youth is impacted by narrative terrorism. When youth take to anti-state violence, it impacts national security and stability. It emboldens the terror ecosystem and the narcotics ecosystem. When youth take to violence, their families are destroyed. The social fabric gets ruptured.

It makes me sad that such reports act like fuel for the

DEEP ROOTED ANTI-STATISM

Over 30 years of Pakistan's strategic indoctrination in Kashmir and the impact of Jamaat e Islami have rooted the Kashmiri in anti-statism.

The elderly man in the video report by Ms Sherwani said, "*Koi bolta hai to pata nahin, shaam ko utha ke le jaate hain yahan.*" Can he cite any example of anybody who was picked up and taken away without valid reason? Why is the state expected to be a silent spectator to narrative terrorism?

KASHMIRIS BELIE MS SHERWANI'S REPORT



SHEIKH MUDASIR
Associate Editor

On Twitter, a host of people have hailed Ms Sherwani. A line is being oft quoted. Zinda hai, bas jee rahay hai. We are alive, just about living.

The Twitter world, though, has little connect with real life.

Please examine the cover story of this edition of The Kashmir Connect. A few weeks ago, thriving members of the Travel Agents Society of Kashmir (TASK) went to Thailand at their own expense to organize a road-show to invite tourists here. Some days ago, in January, they went to Kolkata – again fully at their own expense – to woo tourists here.

Tourism is one of the mainstays of the Kashmir economy. If tourism is thriving, all the sectors of Kashmir are raking in good revenue. Everybody is making money. And that is wonderful. Does Ms Sherwani take note of this? No.

Constant Emphasis: All Is Good In Kashmir

What was the constant emphasis of these leading, eminent Kashmiris at the road-show? Life is good in Kashmir. Security situation is good. We have the best hotels, restaurants, cafes, houseboats, home-stays and more for you. The best adventures, the best thrills. Please come to Kashmir and enjoy your holiday here.

Tourism is one of the mainstays of the Kashmir economy. If tourism is thriving, all the sectors of Kashmir are raking in good revenue. From the auto-wallahs to the shikara wallahs to the transport service providers to the small vendors to the shopkeepers to the cafés to the restaurants to the hotels to the houseboats and more - everybody is making money. And that is wonderful.

Does Ms Sherwani take note of this? No.

Efforts To End Nepotism, Corruption In Appointments

For decades, the poor youth of Kashmir were aggrieved by the rampant nepotism and corruption in all government appointments. All posts were filled either on the basis of the lists given by the politicians or by the Hurriyat.

After abrogation of Article 370, thousands of poor and meritorious have been placed in government service – the most coveted jobs in Kashmir. People entrenched in the corrupt sarkari system still tries to make money out of appointments, but

there is a concerted effort by the LG Administration to end the corruption and nepotism. Does Ms Sherwani take note of that? No.

Ms Sherwani's Gloom And Doom Report On Kashmir

Ms Sherwani's report is such a fantastic gloom and doom job that Pakistan's former prime

minister Mr Imran Khan tweeted it with comments dyed in the same colours.

Ms Sherwani is happy, The Wire is happy, Imran Khan is happy, ISI is happy. The Army is delighted. Pakistan is elated. In these times when Pakistanis are scrambling to find food, water or fuel, The Wire report provides some reason for cheer at least.



What was the constant emphasis of these leading, eminent Kashmiris at the road-show? Life is good in Kashmir. Security situation is good. We have the best hotels, restaurants, cafes, houseboats, home-stays and more for you. The best adventures, the best thrills. Please come to Kashmir and enjoy your holiday here

Ms Sherwani Declares That She Spent A Whole Afternoon And Evening Interviewing Kashmiris

Ms Sherwani Does Not Take Note Of Ground Truths In Kashmir

Let us study some real ground truths of the valley.

Business is booming in Kashmir. Tourist footfalls are increasing every season. Restaurants, cafes, eateries, ice-cream joints, hotels, guest-houses, home-stays – these are mushrooming in Kashmir daily to cater to the huge tourist inflow and our own local demand.

After abrogation of Article

Such reports act like fuel for the anti-state narrative. The terror ecosystem has created toxicity against the state. Such reports feed the toxicity and make it multiply. Silently, that narrative is pushed far ahead. Those who promote harmony and peace – their narrative is pushed back.

370, there are no civilian killings in Kashmir. There are no so-called spontaneous violent street agitations. Stone pelting is a thing of the past. No pellet injuries, no youths being taken to jail for mindless clashes.

Now, teachers are not absent from school. Government employees are not absent from their offices. Cliques of some government employees are not running anti-India agendas because now, the State initiates action against them under provisions of the Constitution.

There is control on corruption in offices. There is a strict check on bribing. There are serious efforts to recruit people on merit.

Earlier there was mind-boggling corruption and bribing. So many teachers would not come to school. A sizable section of government employees regarded sarkari jobs as pension in service. It was a situation of Jis ki laathi, us ki bhains.

The Time When I Reached Srinagar After Midnight

In late December, I had to come back from Jammu by road. I could start only by evening. By the time I reached Srinagar, it was 1 am. The cab brought me to the taxi stand opposite TRC Building in Rajbagh.

I was astounded to see a booth close to the taxi stand open. While coming towards Baramulla, we crossed Pattan at about 1.30 am. Two shops were open near the bridge at Hanji Wera village in Pattan. We stopped at these shops to buy water and chips. I shared my surprise with the shopkeepers.

Why Ms Sherwani's Report Reminds Me Of Brexit

* All About What People Believed

* Blind To Ground Realities

* Landed UK In Royal Mess

They told me that they kept the shops open to cater to truckers and late-night travelers.

During the years of terrorism, one could not think of travelling at night. One could not imagine seeing any shop open.

The Other Ground Reality – Hybrid Militants Are Watching

While talking of the ground reality in Kashmir, Ms Sherwani

does not really dissect why everybody echoes the dismal picture. This is because nobody knows where the hybrid militant may be hidden, and whom he may target for not siding with the azadi narrative. Hence, lashing out at the state is always considered the safe option. Lashing out at the terror ecosystem comes at a huge price.



STABLE KASHMIR BOOSTING BUSINESS

Tourism Stakeholders On
The Forefront To Woo
National, Global Traffic

'ALL NATIONS MUST REMOVE TRAVEL ADVISORY AGAINST KASHMIR'

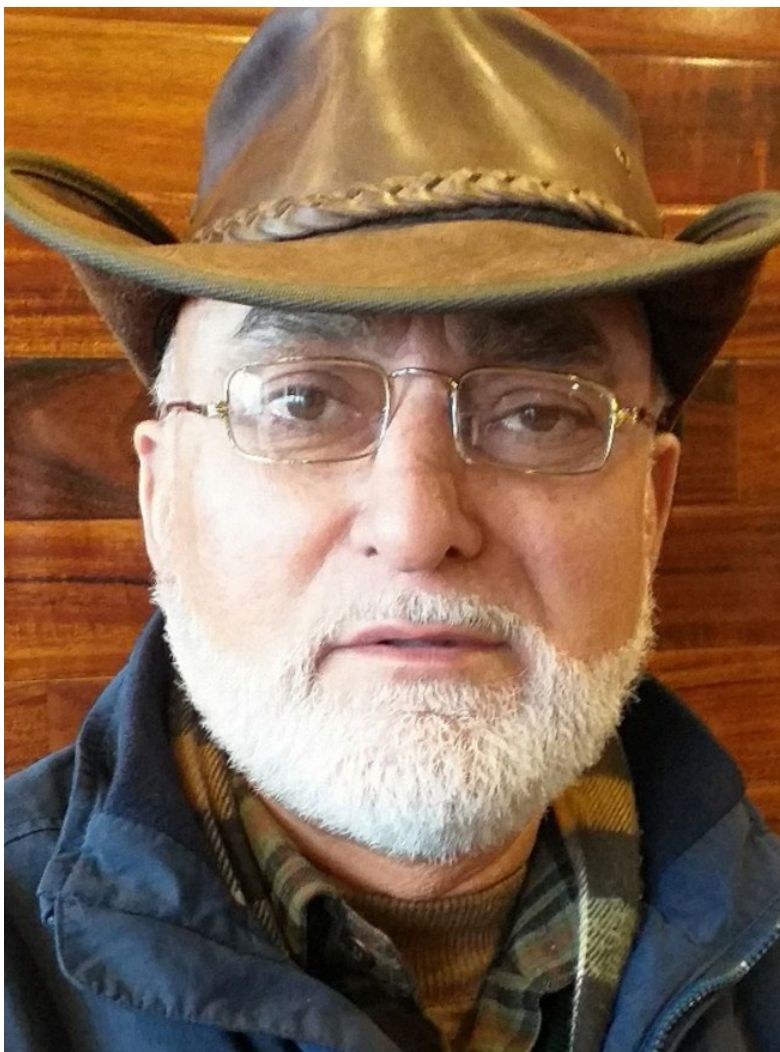
Kashmir should be back on the international tourism map. We have robust national traffic now, and Kashmir Tourism has immense scope for growth.

A limitation we face is that several nations still have travel advisories against Kashmir. These should be completely removed, looking at the security situation which is normal now. I am sure that GOI can impress upon most of the foreign countries that they should remove the advisory on Kashmir.

Italy, Spain, France have removed this travel advisory for Kashmir. The UK and Germany have softened it. Hence things are looking positive. The Tourism Department must connect with local travel and trade for promotional activities.

MR NASIR SHAH

Chairman J&K Chapter, Indian Association of Tour Operators (IATO)



Kashmir Tourism Must Be Promoted Aggressively Globally

We are still lacking behind in the proper promotion of Kashmir. In order to restore Kashmir's glory on the international map, the Ministry of Tourism and the J&K Tourism Department must make aggressive efforts to promote Kashmir in the international marts and the B2B networking of Indian Association Of Tour Operators. Kashmir should be back in their itineraries.

The Department of Tourism of J&K Government must make more efforts to bring international tourism to Kashmir. They continue to focus more on the domestic tourism traffic.

Recently, some top Tourism officers of J&K went to Spain. This

is a good initiative. They must also involve major international tour operators and IATO members for B2B exercises. The major tour operators of Kashmir should be part of these teams that go to major markets to woo tourists.

IATO members should be incentivized with technical and financial support to add Kashmir pages to their brochures and promotional products in international marts.

Global Tourists Will Love The Glorious Culture, Heritage Of Kashmir

We in Kashmir are confident that we provide everything for a great holiday, whether it is hotels, luxury houseboats, luxury transport, a range of adventure activities and more.

Global tourists love to visit destinations for their culture. The amazing cultural heritage of Kashmir and the scenic beauty makes it a perfect destination. Our centers for silk carpets, handicrafts, woodwork and the like, agriculture and horticulture products – all these are incomparable. We need greater focus on our all-round strengths.

Domestic tourists come for scenic beauty and adventures.

Foreigners come for our culture, heritage and further promote them. This improves people to people contact.

The J&K Tourism Department has a huge budget for publicity and promotion. So much is possible when the budget is used judiciously.

Over the last few months, Kashmir's leading tour operators self-financed the entire road-shows in Thailand, Kolkata, and other places. We invited the local tour operators and media there. We told them of new destinations like Doodh Pathri, Bangus valley, Lolab Valley, Gurez, Bhandarwah, Yous Marg, Kishtwar and the like. The private sector has provided accommodation, transport, adventure activities at these charming destinations.

People were surprised. They asked us – Is Kashmir open now? Is it safe? We tell them that Kashmir is completely safe and will give them a great holiday.

Tourism boosts employment at grassroots level. We have high domestic tourism now, and expect about half a million foreign tourists this year. There should not be any wrong messaging by the media. It leads to a trust deficit and all our sectors get impacted.

I am sure that GOI can impress upon most of the foreign countries that they should remove the advisory on Kashmir

‘KASHMIR IS AS NORMAL AS ANY GOOD TOURISM DESTINATION IN THE WORLD’

The Travel Agents Society Of Kashmir (TASK) has taken the lead in reaching out globally to invite tourists to Kashmir. Domestic tourism traffic is good now. Kashmir now has the ideal conditions for global and domestic tourism to be headed here in large numbers.

Now the Thai tourists are drawn to Kashmir round the year. We are expecting good numbers from Malaysia too. Earlier, the J&K Tourism Department used to involve the leading local players in taking teams abroad to woo global traffic. They should start it again. It gives a big boost to tourism here.

MR MUHAMMAD AKRAM SIAH
President, Travel Agents Society of Kashmir (TASK)



We tour operators organized road shows within the country and abroad over the last few months. Next month we may go to Malaysia with our self-financed road show.

Now We Get Domestic Traffic Through The Year

People ask us how the law and order situation is in Kashmir now. We tell them things are as normal as any good destination in the world. Now the tourism season has started. We had a very good season last year and are expecting strong tourist traffic this year too.

January onwards, we are witnessing a large number of tourists in Kashmir. Earlier the season used to start around April 15. Now we get domestic traffic through the year. New destinations like Yus Marg, Gurez, Bangus, Doodh Pathri have been developed. We must promote more traffic to these destinations.

Media, Politicians Should Avoid Frivolous Negative Statements

The media often paints a negative image of Kashmir. At times the politicians also talk of Kashmir in negative tones. At ground level, the situation is normal and peaceful. Frivolous statements should be avoided because they impact tourist inflow. That in turn impacts our economy. It impacts everybody's bread and butter.



At times the media or the politicians paint a negative image of Kashmir. At ground level, the situation is normal and peaceful. Frivolous statements should be avoided because it impacts our economy. It impacts everybody's bread and butter



‘WE NEED TO ADDRESS NEGATIVE PERCEPTIONS REGARDING KASHMIR’

We need to promote Kashmir internationally. We need to be part of major international travel marts. People have negative perceptions regarding Kashmir because of media reports. We have to address these wrong notions directly. We have to explain that Kashmir is normal and the ideal destination for tourists. All these promotions have to be done anew.

For one or two decades, Kashmir was not promoted at international travel expos. Hence the younger generation of global tour operators are not familiar with it. We need to make them

MR MANZOOR PAKHTOON
Vice Chairman, Kashmir House
Boat Owners Association
(KHBOA)

Chairman J&K Chapter, Travel
Agents Federation Of India
(TAFI)



aware. Promotions are very important.

It is good that Director Tourism has gone to Spain to promote Kashmir. At this juncture, we are not getting any major support for promotion programs. That is why we are organizing national and international road-shows for Kashmir ourselves.

J&K Tourism Dept Must Involve Genuine Local Stakeholders

The department should take genuine local stakeholders who have product knowledge. Promoting global tourism is not everyone's cup of tea. Many don't have the knowledge of European markets or of South East Asia.

The tourists will come to Kashmir directly only if we involve ourselves in international tourism expos. Tour operators from European markets ask many questions. Only tourism operators with long-term experience can answer those questions.

Houseboat Sector Has Played A Major Role

Houseboat owners have been the main promoters of foreign tourism. Foreigners used to come here because of their network with the houseboat community. The government should further incentivize and boost the houseboat sector.

GOI has a major role to play in ensuring that the right message on Kashmir is correct globally. There should be more schemes to encourage entrepreneurship among the youth.

Arts, handicrafts, culture sectors – all shall flourish if the tourism players are going strong.

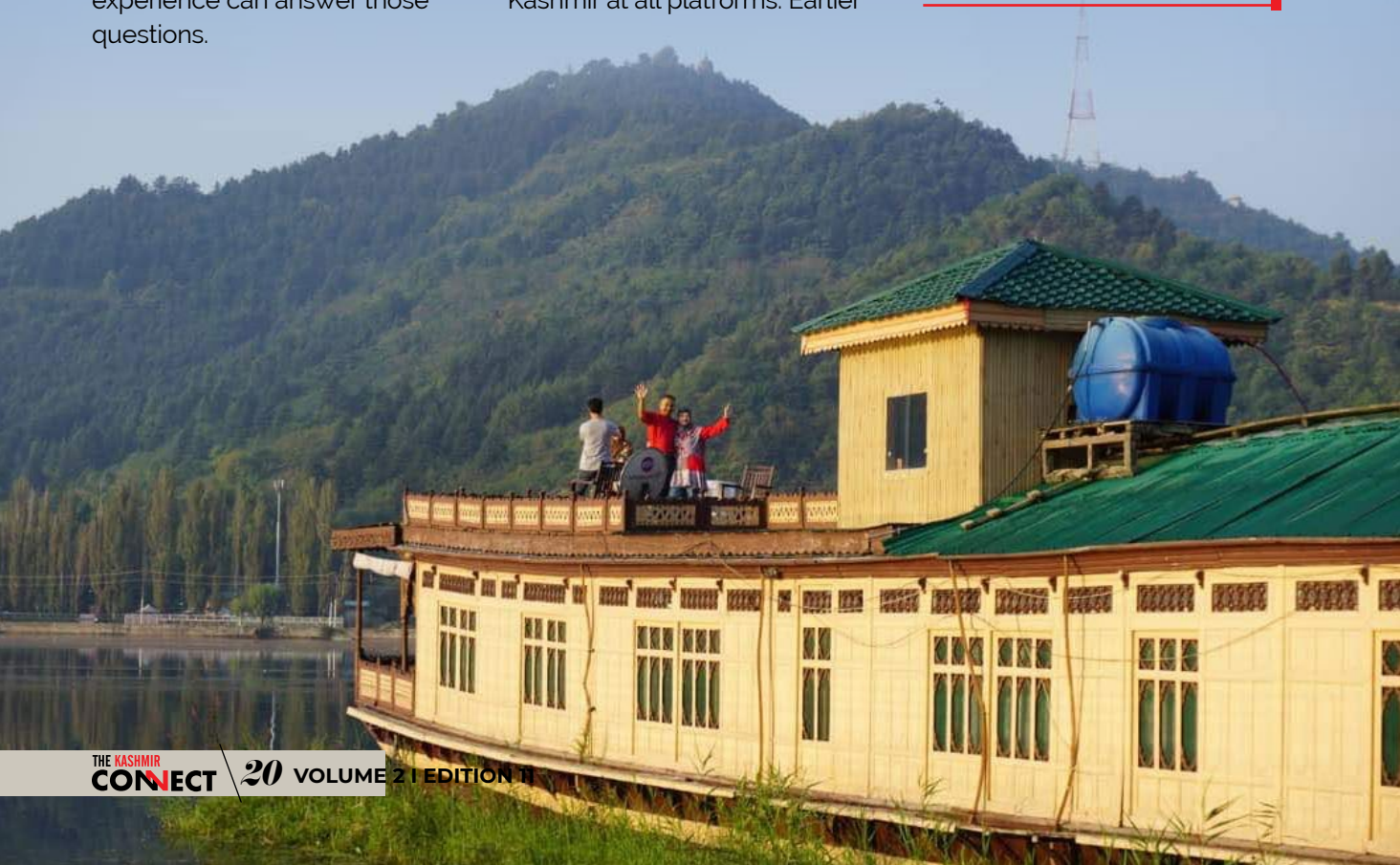
Kashmir has very high potential as a tourism destination. Brand Kashmir does not need any introduction, and promotion always helps. Tourists must be encouraged to visit new destinations in Kashmir.

Tour operators must have a market strategy to promote Kashmir at all platforms. Earlier

J&K government always involved the major local stakeholders in international promotions. This should be started again.

GOI must push that the travel advisories against Kashmir are withdrawn.

GOI has a major role to play in ensuring that the right message on Kashmir is correct globally. There should be more schemes to encourage entrepreneurship among the youth



'ADVENTURE TOURISM EMERGING AS A STRONG SECTOR'

The growing figures of domestic tourism are good news for Kashmir. New infrastructure has come up to cater to the increasing demand. That is a good sign.

Tourism keeps all sectors of the economy thriving. Now, women tourists are making group trips to Kashmir for adventure or leisure. That's a new segment and holds great promise. Earlier, trekking used to be male-centric. Now we have groups of women aged about 50 who seek guided tours for trekking.

MTB tourism is another promising sector. The Srinagar-Leh-Kullu-Manali circuit and routes within these areas are popular among MTB groups.

There is strong interest in Kashmir among the domestic tourism traffic. Adventure tourism is emerging as a major segment.

MR AP VICKY SHAW
Chairman Kashmir Region,
PHDCCI

We have paragliding, river-rafting, skiing, fishing and various other activities.

GOI has come out with a policy for home-stays in Kashmir. They should encourage more home-stays for the Valley so that tourists can experience the culture of Kashmir.





WHY UT ADMN MUST PROMOTE ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN KASHMIR

**WE YOUTH NEED TO
HELP OURSELVES.
GOD HELPS
THOSE WHO HELP
THEMSELVES**

by Al Muneeb Lone

It makes me sad to observe that despondency seems to define many among our youngsters. I am aware of the challenges that we face. At the same time, we must always believe in our own power. We must always believe in our ability to build our life the way we want to

Being a Kashmiri youth, I grew up with the mentality that in our society, a man will be considered successful only if he has a government job. This is the pervading social belief, so we all grow up thinking this way.

Sometimes it seems to me that our society lives in some kind of a box. The rules are fixed by our own people, and these rules leave very little space for 'out of the box thinking'. People have defined a scale in which they measure our success and our social status in terms of what government job we hold.

But the more I read books, newspapers and observed people, the more I observed the difference between jobs versus entrepreneurship. I found that in most cases, people who run for jobs in

the government or private sector are not as happy as entrepreneurs. This is because entrepreneurs are exposed to new challenges and new environments constantly. They enjoy their life by exploring new chapters constantly, even if their achievements may not be considered high by others.

My Journey To Be An Entrepreneur

My first steps in the journey of entrepreneurship started in February 2020.

I started doing network marketing business when I was still in college. This business demands team work. So every day, I showed my presentation to about 20 people. I observed that only two or three of them got interested.

The rest used to reject my proposal to progress together. The answer that I encountered most often was this – This

is Kashmir. This is a conflict region. No one can achieve success here. Our future is completely dark. We don't know what may happen at what time.

It makes me sad to observe that despondency seems to define many among our youngsters. I am aware of the challenges that we face. At the same time, we must always believe in our own power. We must always believe in our ability to build our life the way we want to.

A Negative Attitude Will Take Us Nowhere

If we only keep looking at the negative, it will not do us any good. We all know that the unemployment figures are high here. Kashmir ranks among the top regions in the country in terms of unemployment. Often, youngsters talk that so

The PhD Fruit Seller Who Transformed My Life



Photo: Al Muneeb Lone

My mental conditioning in favour of a government job changed about two and a half years ago. I live in Baramulla, and in the market I used to see a young man selling fruit on his cart. I was standing near his cart one day when I overheard a man saying to him, “Doctor Saab please give me a dozen bananas.”

I went to the fruit seller and asked him, “Why is this man calling you Doctor Saab?” His reply shocked me. He said, “It’s because I have a PhD. I could not secure a government job. We don’t have a strong private sector in Kashmir which can offer employment to the youth. I cannot afford to have a shop, so I sell fruit on a cart.”

Then the fruit seller gave me advice which transformed my life. He told me, “Government jobs are not available for people like us. You are still studying. Start your own business during your college years. With the business base that you create, you will not have to face any trouble or the pressure of unemployment after college. Then you will be able to devote your time and strengthen your business more and more.”

That interaction changed the course of my life. I decided that I would build my own business rather than depending on a job in the government or private sector. I was confident that I would be able to build my life as an entrepreneur. I always believe in that old saying. God helps those who help themselves.

and so many committed suicide because he could not get a job. Youngsters also discuss that so many in the age group of 16 to 25 committed suicide because their parents had taken education loan. Now the parents could not pay back the loan and the youngster could not get a job, so he killed himself.

I don't know how true this talk is. But it is definitely very saddening. If a youngster is not able to get a job to pay back a loan, how will his suicide help the situation? The Almighty has blessed him with youth and with the ability to work. He must always have faith in the Almighty and keep trying to do his best. He will not have to wait long, and the Almighty will bless him with the fruit of his efforts.

So many times in my business interactions, I urge the youth to believe in themselves and move forward. Most of them seem confused. Their answer is – how can we think of a business start-up? It will need huge investment and we don't have the money. This is where we make the mistake.

Business Needs Passion and Commitment

Money is Not The Most Important Factor

If business depended only on money, we would not have hundreds of success stories within Kashmir. In our Valley, even with the challenges we face, we keep hearing of so many individuals who started with very little.

Some started with two goats.

We keep hearing of so many individuals in Kashmir who started with very little. Some started with two goats or two cows or two boxes to make honeybee nectar. Some started as an adventure tour operator and made intelligent use of social media to build networks. Their passion made them successful



Photo: Al Muneeb Lone

Some started with two cows. Some started with two boxes to make honeybee nectar. Some started as an adventure tour operator and made intelligent use of social media to build networks. Their investment was not in terms of money. Their investment was in terms of three things – consistency, dedication and patience.

Those who have these three

things shall definitely succeed. If passion for your work drives you, nothing can stop you. You shall be victorious in your endeavours.

There are millions of such examples nationally and globally. We all know Dhirubhai Ambani. He was engaged in a job. Then he started a small business. With smart thinking and sharp business acumen, he raised the empire of Reliance Industries.

WHY KASHMIR NEEDS ENTREPRENEURS



Photo: Al Muneeb Lone

Our market needs more and more entrepreneurs. They are the wheels of economic growth.

Within Kashmir and elsewhere in the country, entrepreneurs

are the building blocks of the economy. They promote products and services and find new markets. In the value chain that they activate, everyone is benefited.

If we can rewire our thinking, we shall be able to successfully deal with the problem of unemployment. Innovative thinking shall engage our youth in a meaningful and constructive manner. It will improve our standard of living. It will promote research and development. All these positive initiatives shall make our nation strong.

Our local youth must be imbued with the dream of entrepreneurship. We all must work hard for Kashmir's industrial sector, which has suffered for so long. We can imbue Kashmir's industry with the happy colours of our passion and commitment, and bring it with our youthful energy.

Why do you Kashmiris feel dejected? It is time to wake up

and create your life the way you want to live it. It is time to mark the definition of success. Let us jump over all the barriers we face and soar like an eagle.

Your Network Is Your Net Worth

I always start my business interactions with the sayings of Mr Robert Kiyosaki, an -American author and businessman. Mr Kiyosaki says 95% of the world's people run for a job. Only 5% of the population starts a business.

But the 95% that comprise the workforce have only 5% of the entire world's wealth. He says that 95% of wealth lies in the hands of the entrepreneurs. That's a strong argument in favour of why we should choose to be entrepreneurs.

I also often quote Les Brown, Eric Worre and the like. They say that your network is your net-worth. We all must be inspired by these men. We must remember what Bill Gates said. "The the

best time to start a business was 10 years ago and the next best is now.”

We Are The Output Of Our Habits

In my interactions with the youth regarding entrepreneurship, I always focus on self learning. It is said that it takes only 21 days to build a habit, and 90 days to build a lifestyle.

We are the output of our habits. We should not wait for any other helping hands – the Almighty has given us our two hands so that we are able to face the world full of challenges and tough competitions.

Only those who learn how to survive in these tough times can achieve success. Many of my friends who hailed from lower middle class have been able to scale up in life because they worked hard, they sacrificed their leisure activities, they struggled. At times, people mocked them, but they never looked back. No one is born with a golden spoon in his mouth that he will be guaranteed success. But if we work hard and have faith in ourselves, we can achieve anything that we seek.



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What The Youth Expect From UT Administration

The positive energy of the youth is enough to carry them through most hurdles. The UT Administration can speed up their success by being there in a supportive, empowering role.

Youngsters who make the decision to be self-employed and self-reliant should be honoured on some youth-centric platforms. The Administration can involve them in special sessions to engage them positively, listen to their needs and address the challenges that they face. They should be supported and encouraged to build their enterprises on their own rather than depending on others.

The government should play a vital role in developing their innate abilities and talent. We know that these youth will benefit themselves and they will also benefit the society, the economy. Hence constant hand-holding and guidance should be provided.

Increase Awareness Of Youth-Centric Schemes

Since the last few years, the UT government has introduced several business building schemes for the youth. The government is providing support for the start-ups. The Administration has enabled many youth to benefit from the Integrated Dairy Development Scheme (IDDS). The Administration has helped the youth to set up dairy farms by providing 50 per cent support for infrastructure. Such schemes are highly helpful.

The government must introduce more and more entrepreneurship development campaigns. The government must equally focus on the awareness of these campaigns. It is important that the youth know with certainty that they can build their future with the support of the government. Then the youth will examine the various opportunities that come their way and shall be optimistic and positive about their future.



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