

**BASHIR ASSAD SHARES NOTES ON HIS CLOSE ENCOUNTER WITH HIZBUL MUJAHIDEEN & JAMAAT**

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# KASHMIR CENTRAL

# DANGEROUSLY CLOSE

**We continue our exclusive series of first-hand encounters of KC Editor-In-Chief Bashir Assad with dreaded militants and bring yet another thrilling encounter he had where death by killing was a certain possibility.**

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**KASHMIR CENTRAL**



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VOLUME 3 | EDITION 51  
17 DEC 2023

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# HEY, IT'S A NEW DAY!

It's good that the Supreme Court of India has finally closed the chapter with regards to Article 370. And with this, it is hoped, the nuisance of regional political forces of Kashmir too finds a closure.

THE Constitutional Bench of the Supreme Court of India headed by Chief Justice Dhananjaya Yeshwant Chandrachud has upheld the August 5, 2019 action of the Parliament and subsequent Presidential order in regard to the revocation of Article 370 of the Indian Constitution which allowed the erstwhile state of Jammu and Kashmir a unique position within the Union of India.

The ruling BJP is celebrating the Supreme Court verdict pronounced on December 11, 2023. However, the regional political forces of Jammu and Kashmir have expressed their disappointment over the verdict. The legality of the revocation of Article 370 by the Parliament was questioned by the regional political forces in the Supreme Court. The court heard the argument of the petitioners for close to a month in September. The legal luminaries, on behalf of the petitioners, argued vehemently. However, they could not convince the court. The argument focussed around the "illegitimate action" alleging that due procedure was not followed. However, the court was not convinced by the argument and very explicitly ruled that Article 370 was a temporary provision and the Parliament was the only legitimate forum to revoke this provision from the Constitution and bring Jammu and Kashmir under uniform constitutional framework of the Union of India.

The Supreme Court verdict has finally removed the uncertainty looming over the legality and constitutionality of the Presidential order of August 6, 2019. The fact of the matter is that Article 370 was greatly eroded in practice since its incorporation in 1954. All those political forces who had fashioned their political bible around this provision, greatly contributed to its erosion from time to time. It was National Conference, Congress and of late, People's Democratic Party of Mufti Muhammad Sayeed who eroded this special provision for decades and it was now just a numerical figure in the statue book. But hurrah, they would harvest on politics over 370 for seven decades. They would swear by its sanctity outside the Assembly. As and when in power, the same forces would recommend massive erosions to the Article 370 with ease and very smoothly.

It was an irony that violators would pretend as defenders. The height of hypocrisy could be assessed from the fact that late Mufti Muhammad Sayeed, before and after forming PDP, facilitated many erosions to the Article 370 and still, he would say, "Article 370 was the article of faith" for the people of Jammu and Kashmir. The National Conference, which is undoubtedly and undeniably the mother of all evils, did the worst thing any political party would have done to its people. Its leadership, when in power, was never serious in strengthening this temporary provision; rather it went all out against it inside the state legislature and the Parliament. But reaped the benefits of the same Article for decades. The power-hungry National Conference sacrificed everything for power and ironically took the ownership of the so called "honour and dignity" of the people of Kashmir enshrined in Article 370.

Good that the Supreme Court has finally closed the chapter. It is hoped the nuisance of regional political forces of Kashmir too finds a closure. And people are allowed to think and ponder.

**Bashir Assad**

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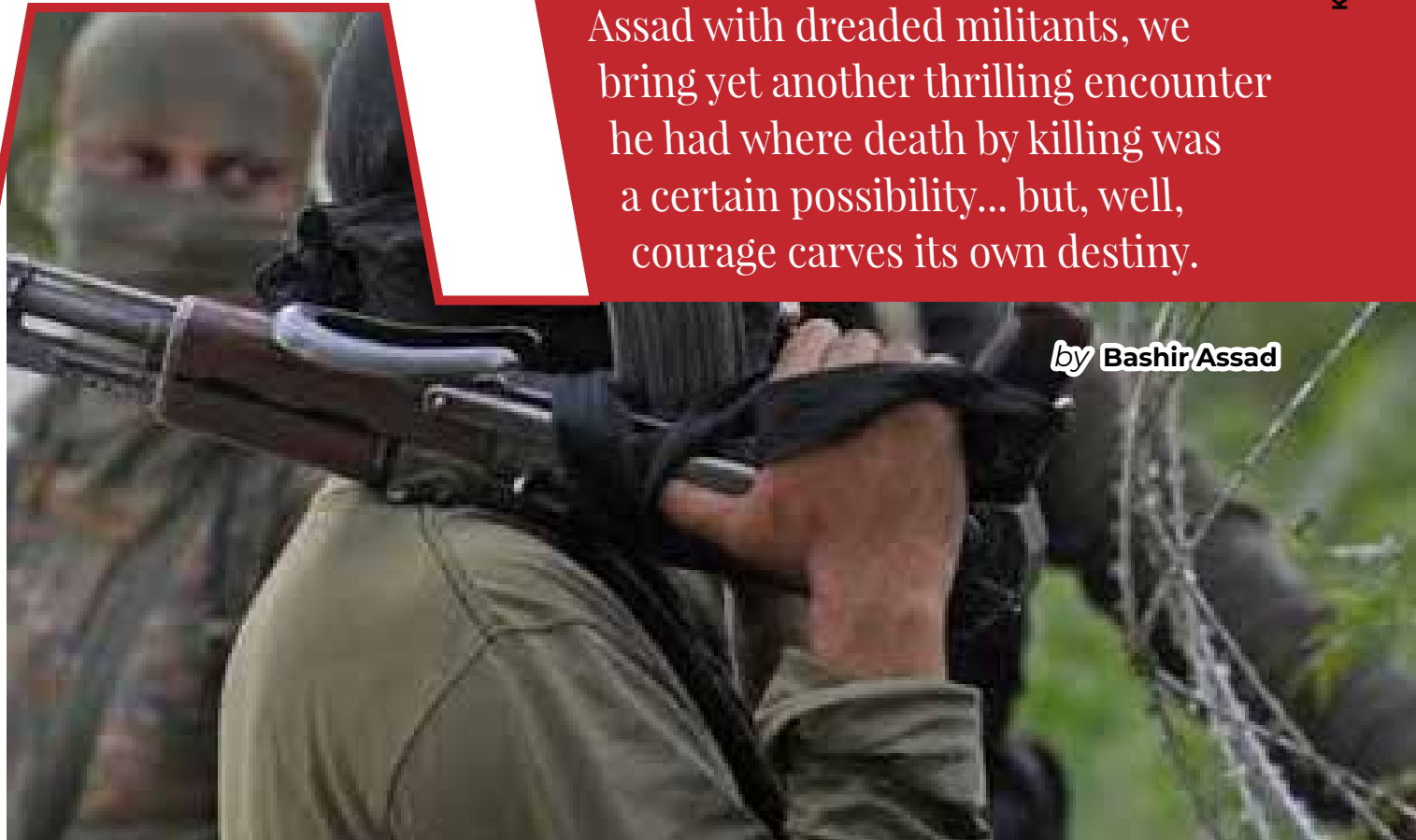
by Waheed Jeelani



# DANGEROUS ENCOUNTER

Continuing our exclusive and special series of first-hand encounters of *Kashmir Central* Editor-In-Chief Bashir Assad with dreaded militants, we bring yet another thrilling encounter he had where death by killing was a certain possibility... but, well, courage carves its own destiny.

by **Bashir Assad**



LIKE a lamb caged with 15 hungry lions, I covered my face with my hands just to pray for some miracle to happen which alone could save me from these beasts. There were some prominent Jamaat leaders of Anantnag and Kulgam (Kulgam was still a part of the Anantnag District) which included Abdul Rashid Chehlan who, if I recall correctly, was the Ameer e Zilla (district president of Jammata-e-Islami at that time), Gulzar Monkanpuri, Muhammad Amin Naqasbandi, Rashid Tarigami, Muhammad Abdullah Wagay of Rampuri village and many more who I could not identify. Right in the corner was sitting (as I was told) Shamsul Haqu, the supreme of Hizbul Mujahideen. Haqu was reciting The Quran when I was forced into the room. He didn't raise his eyes. There were around 150 militants guarding the supreme commander in the village. The village, I was told, was called Srundoo. The militants were manning the village from all directions. Some 10 to 12 militants, armed with sophisticated weapons, had surrounded the small single-storey house where Shamsul Haqu was putting up. Adjacent to this small single-storey house was a three-storeyed house. The house owner may have been the richest man in the village. The house looked elegant and aesthetic. Actually Habibullah Jeelani, lecturer with the School Education Department, famously known in militant

circles as Professor Habibullah Jeelani from Chhee village in the outskirts of Anantnag District headquarters, and Professor Ghulam Hasan Shah of Brakpora Village in the north of Anantnag town and I were brought to Srundoo last night. We were kept on the third floor of the mammoth house in a big well-furnished hall. The house owner too was a government teacher, I was told by Jeelani.

It was the time when Hizbul terrorists would go on

a rampage, killing hundreds of militants of other militant organisations, particularly Al-Jehad and JKLF. A day prior to my captivity, more than 15 militants of Al-Jehad were killed by Hizbul Mujahideen militants in group clashes somewhere in the forest area above Mattan in the east of Anantnag town. And Jamaat-e-Islami leaders and workers were very happy that day. Killing militants of other outfits was like establishing caliphate for

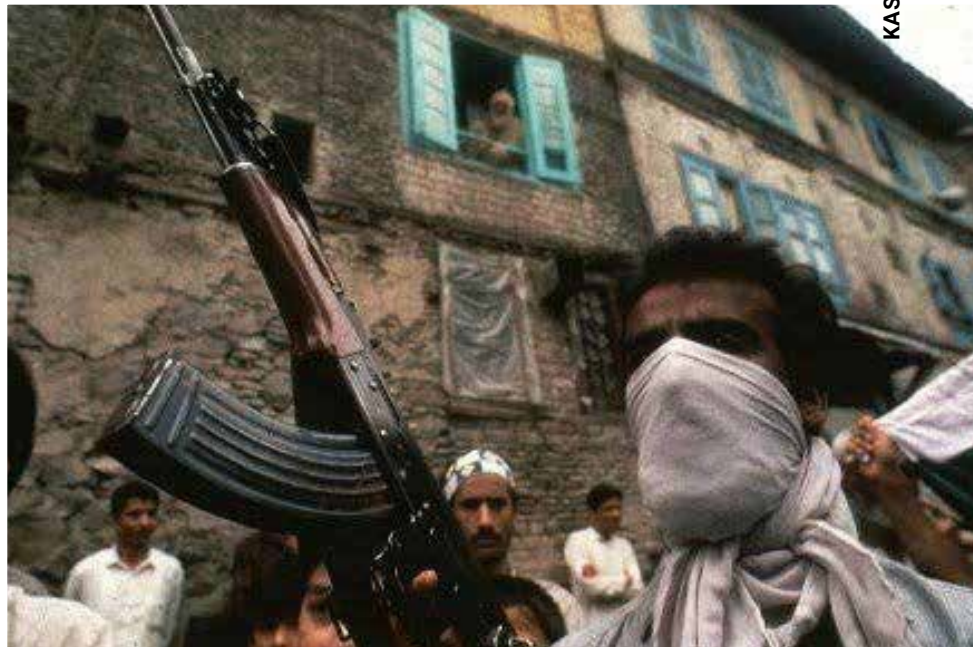


Hizbul Mujahideen. I had gone to Anantnag town, which is 12 kilometres from my native place, towards south. Since the spilling of blood on the streets was very painful, I could not hide my anger. Professor Ghulam Hasan Shah, though a Jamaat member himself, was equally disturbed over such dastardly acts of Jamaat-e-Islami backed Hizbul Mujahideen but was hesitant to speak up, fearing reprisal from the Hizbul and Jamaat. The Jamaat and Hizbul

were dominant. Nobody could dare speak against whatever they were doing. They were on a killing spree. For them, anyone and everyone who was not ideologically on their side, didn't deserve mercy. They would kill people on mere suspicions, political affiliation and particularly those who had taken a stand against them during peace times before 1990. From north to south, east to west, there was just one Jamaat leader, just one Muhammad

Sultan Bhat Advocate (my father-in-law) who had the courage to stand and speak against the butchery of Jamaat and Hizbul. Muhammad Sultan and I would loudly and vociferously denounce killings of civilians on any pretext. I was a little more aggressive. I would never hesitate in taking my ideas to the streets. I would publicly address the people in the streets, schools, colleges and even mosques and denounce the killing of civilians. Muhammad Sultan would denounce such acts during Friday prayers in Khiram Hazratbal Shrine. I, however, went too far.

At one point in time, I invited Hizbullah militants from Tral area of Pulwama districts to guard the village elders who were on the list of suspects of Hizbul Mujahideen. Actually I





met one Abul Rashid of Dadsara Tral in Kashmir University who was an employee there. Rashid, I got to know, was at a very important position in Hizbullah outfit and at the same time, was a strong opponent of Jamaat in Tral. I asked Rashid to deploy a couple of gunmen to Marhama who would stand as a symbolic guard for the village elders against Hizbul Mujahideen. Rashid readily agreed and sent two militants to Marhama. The village elders would feel psychologically safe when the two Hizbullah militants were roaming in the village. It was symbolic but huge. The Hizbul militants would demand money from the village elders at gunpoint. I summoned a meeting of all those political workers and elders of Marhama village and encouraged them not to pay

ransom to Hizbul Mujahideen. The trick did work. Political workers, former panches and sarpanches and followers of non Jamaat-e-Islami religious groups from other villages would now seek my advice on how to defy militant diktats and refuse to pay ransom. However, it was very short-lived. Soon Hizbul Mujahideen, rather than going after villagers, chose me as their target. Jamaat-e-Islami, right from Sayed Ali Geelani down to village level workers, were after my blood. For them, my killing would automatically kill the resilience of Muhammad Sultan Bhat also. It was killing two adversaries with one bullet.

So, on that day, I had gone to Anantnag to meet some friends. We were sitting at a tea-stall just outside the district court premises, engaged in a

meaningful conversation. It was perhaps five in the evening. All of a sudden, a pheran-wearing militant, hiding his gun inside the pheran, put his hand on my shoulder from the back. Very gently, he whispered in my left ear, "Ameer-e-muhtaram







ne aapko bulaaya hai, kuch aur logoon ke saath (supremo Shanmsul Haq has summoned you and a few others)". Before I could respond or say something, my friends got up quietly and left the tea-stall without even looking at me. "Okay, let's move," I finally told the militant. As I stepped out of the tea-stall, I saw Professor Shah and Jeelani on the other side of the road, surrounded by four-five militants. The militant escorting me, signalled to cross the road and walk up

(name withheld) of my village, standing 100 metres from us, making some unusual gestures.

Here Professor Shah found some courage and asked the militants, "*Aap hamein address batayein, main aapko yaqeen dilaata hoon hum teenoon wahaan pahunchenge, aise zaleel karke mat le jaaao hamein* (Please tell us where to reach, I assure you we will come by ourselves but don't humiliate us like this)". The leader of the group, to my surprise, agreed readily and gave us the address. There was



to the other abductees. I was surprised over how they got to know that I was in Anantnag in those times when there were no mobile phones and no internet. Anyways, I was not able to figure out till my eyes caught the glimpse of a Jamaat worker

no traffic, it was already 6 pm. Those days, the streets would wear a deserted look even before the evening would set in and traffic would come to a halt.

***(What happened next? Well, wait for our next edition!)***

# THE NEW TIDINGS

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The Supreme Court verdict validating the abrogation of Article 370 by the Indian Parliament has set a new precedence and brings yet more lease of life for the people of Jammu & Kashmir. Clearly, the politics of exploitation has been shown the door and a bright future awaits our future generations.

by **Mian Tufail**



THE verdict of the Supreme Court on Monday validating the abrogation of Article 370 by the Indian Parliament has set a new precedence and brought a lease of life for the people of Jammu and Kashmir.

‘The article of exploitation’ had remained active for 75 years in the books of our Constitution, giving space to appeasement and separatism. This judgement of the Supreme Court made the article fait accompli and now, hopefully, a new political landscape will shape the future of Jammu and Kashmir.

The court held the Constitutional order that revoked Article 370, as valid. A five-judge Constitution bench, presided over by Chief Justice of India (CJI) D Y Chandrachud, had reserved its verdict on as many as 23 petitions on the matter on September 5 this year, after 16 days of hearings. The bench also comprised Justices S K Kaul, Sanjeev Khanna, B R Gavai and Surya Kant.

In the lead judgment, Chief Justice of India (CJI) D Y Chandrachud pointed out that J&K had divested itself of “any element of sovereignty” after the execution of the Instrument of Accession to the Union in October 1947. Justices Sanjay Kaul and Sanjiv Khanna concurred in their separate opinions. The special privileges of J&K as well as a separate Constitution were held to be a mere feature of ‘asymmetric federalism’ and not sovereignty.



CJI D Y Chandrachud said that Jammu and Kashmir held no internal sovereignty after accession to India. He said there was no prima facie case that the President’s 2019 orders were mala fide (in bad faith) or extraneous exercise of power. While the court said the re-organisation of the erstwhile state into Union Territory in 2019 was a temporary move, it directed the Centre for the restoration of Jammu and Kashmir’s statehood and for Legislative Assembly elections to be held by September next year.

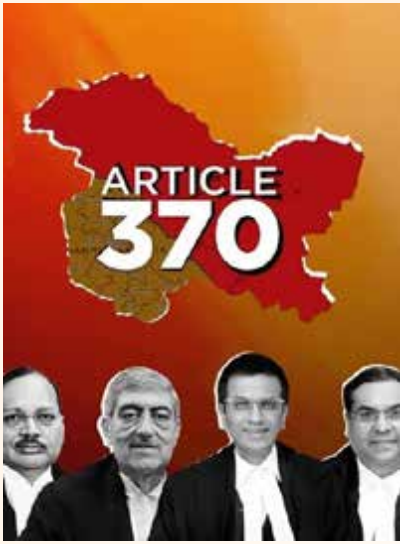
The Centre’s move to remove the special status was clandestine. The Court did not favour the ingenious method of amending Article 367 and altering the definition clause in it by stating that the Constituent Assembly of Jammu and Kashmir would mean the ‘Legislative Assembly of Jammu and Kashmir’. However, in the end, the Court endorsed the Presidential decision to issue a

notification putting an end to Article 370.

### **HOW ARTICLE 370 AND 35A BRED HEGEMONY AND INEQUALITY?**

The autonomy provided by Article 370 allowed a certain political elite in Jammu and Kashmir to wield considerable power without significant checks and balances. This could contribute to a form of political hegemony, where a few individuals or families dominated the political landscape to the detriment of a more inclusive and representative political system.

Article 35A allowed the Jammu and Kashmir state legislature to define permanent residents of the state and accord them special rights and privileges. This provision, while intended to safeguard the rights of the local population,



led to a situation where certain communities were granted exclusive rights, contributing to inequality.

Article 35A also had implications for gender equality. It stipulated that a woman who married a non-permanent resident would lose her rights and privileges as a permanent resident, and her children would not be considered permanent residents. This provision was criticised for discriminating against women and perpetuating gender-based inequalities.

## ARTICLE 370: EMOTIONAL PLOY IN THE HANDS OF POLITICIANS

Article 370 was a political tool in the hands of both mainstream and separatist leaders here. Both would issue threatening statements towards the Union government against the tinkering. After the abrogation, separatism politics died down and mainstream saw a massive shift in its ideology. Now, the verdict by the top court has

belied these parties' hopes to befool people, and allow any political maneuvering by both BJP and regional parties to appease and emotionally deceive people. Article 370 remained a numerical figure and the whole consolidation was eradicated gradually by the regional and Union governments. It has hardly served the people of J&K and has just been an emotional entanglement.

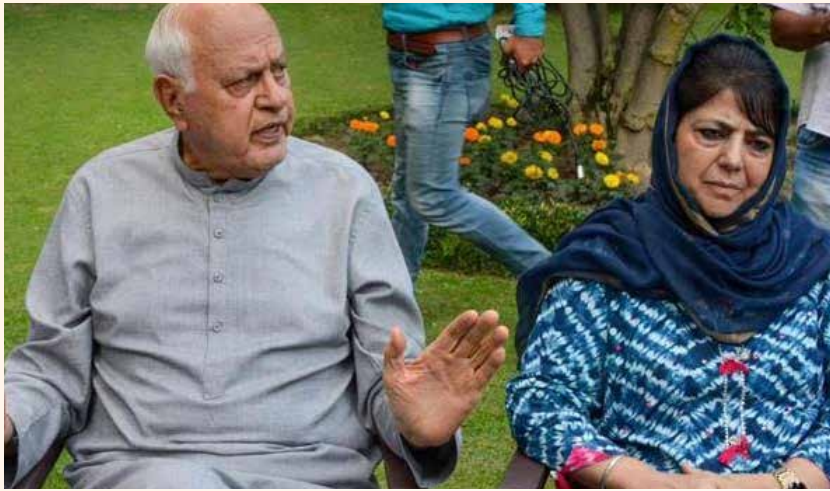
Pandit Nehru had said, "Ghiste ghiste ghis jayega" – meaning Article 370 would die its natural death. The consecutive governments realised the hindrance it caused and the laws were implemented in Jammu and Kashmir while bypassing the rulings of Article 370. Implementation of GST tax and bringing Jammu & Kashmir

Bank under the purview of RBI are some of the main assaults on Article 370.

Were the regional leaders really serious about not allowing outsiders to settle in J&K? No, there are hundreds of laws and rules which were evoked by previous state governments in which land was offered to non-state subjects on lease for indefinite period. These land holders used our land for commercial purposes. Like, hotels of Srinagar and Gulmarg are hardly owned by the locals; the previous governments had handed these luxury establishments into the hands of non-State subjects to earn more monetary value.

Despite the lease being on for decades, there was no demographic change in Kashmir





as threatened by the leaders like Mehbooba Mufti. The bond between locals and tourists are praised worldwide. The political ploy under the garb of Article 370 is gone now. It has sent shivers in the shackles of political fiefdom here. Inefficient politicians are worried here after the ruling of Supreme Court. They have nothing to sell to

the people except sentimental dramas. Their inefficiency can be gauged from the fact that a top leader has announced the intention to stay away from public life for some time in order to come to terms with the new reality. These rulers could not deliver good governance during their regimes and there are hundreds of corruption and embezzlement cases pending against them in the court rooms.

Mehbooba Mufti, who is vocal and has shown disappointment over the verdict of the Supreme Court,

is actually trying to pass her political crown into the hands of her daughter Iltija Mufti and that is the reason why she appeals to people to fight and resist the moves of the Union government. Likewise is the case with the father-son duo of National Conference.

Today, nobody remembers what Article 370 was. The transformation in Jammu and Kashmir is real and unambiguous. Kashmir has changed vastly over a few years. Law and order, economy, peace, good governance, grass root democratisation, infrastructural development and grievance redressal are the hallmarks of the new Union Territory. Hotels have lined up, job recruitments have geared up, cities like Srinagar wear a new look and the transformation is fantastic. Kashmir has moved on. The politics of exploitation has been shown the door and a bright future awaits our future generations.





The government and the UT administration have been constantly taking steps to uphold the status of handicrafts so exclusive to Jammu & Kashmir and rightly so.

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# Handicrafts, our other Treasure

by Sheikh Abid

It is often referred to as the Paradise on earth. The Valley of Kashmir, with its verdant hills and flaring Chinars, has inspired poets and artists for millennia. Besides its breathtaking natural beauty, it is also home to the most prized crafts that represent age old legacies. Let us explore the journey of Kashmir's finest art and craft industry across Indian states and abroad.

Kashmir has a rich heritage of art and crafts. The Valley alone is a haven for culture lovers, looking forward to witness varied art & craft in the State. A glimpse of the State's rich art & craft heritage can be seen in the common man's lives. From their utensils to clothes to furniture to jewellery, almost everything reflects the artistic skills and dedication of the locals towards the traditional art & craft.

Among the varied art and crafts, there's a wide variety of marvellous handmade wonders to be seen across various districts of J&K. Some of them are the prime contributors in the State's handicraft skills that include weaving, crewel embroidery, wood-crafting, and carving, silverware work, papier-mache, phoolkaari etc.

J&K leaves one spoilt for choice. Amongst the top art & crafts items to buy in Jammu & Kashmir include Pashmina shawls and stoles, crewel embroidery curtains, bed-sheets, table runners, walnut wood items, Kashmiri rugs



and carpets, papier-mache items, phoolkaari items along with a variety of similar other handicraft materials.

## KASHMIRI CRAFT IN MAJOR INDIAN CITIES:

Unlike earlier times, the last few years have witnessed a whopping proliferation of Kashmir based arts and crafts in major metropolitan and other big cities of India. A number of Kashmiri businessmen have extended their showrooms and shops to big cities like Kolkata, Goa, Mumbai, Delhi, Bangalore etc. Since the demand for these beauties from Kashmir is always high, they make good earnings across the year. "We have been selling Kashmiri handicrafts in Goa for the last ten years and are getting a good response from local as well as foreign tourists. We have recently extended

our showrooms to Bangalore, and in Kerala and they are also running quite well," says Mohammad Altaf, a Kashmiri crafts businessman.

Similarly, if you take a walk down Delhi's busy markets or malls, you will come across multiple Kashmiri arts and crafts shops. Same is the scenario in Kolkata. A lot of Kashmiris have set up shops across the city. Also, many Kashmiri labourers go as 'feri wallahs', selling Kashmiri handicrafts across various cities of the country. This is a testimony to how good they are doing across India.

However, Mushtaq Ahmad, a local 'feri wallah' is disappointed with the incorporation of machines and technologically-assisted artificial craft pieces. He believes these have hampered their market and trust among customers. "Since some greedy businesses have incorporated machine-made fake Pashmina

shawls and other Kashmiri handmade items, this business has become tough for us. Apart from cost related problems, it has also raised an issue of trust among our customers,” he opines.

## INITIATIVES BY THE GOVERNMENT

▼  
The government has always been proactive in promoting the art and crafts of Kashmir at both national & international levels. Besides, the Indian government, along with the UT administration, has been mulling on getting Geographical Indication (GI) tags for various crafts.

According to the World Intellectual Property Organisation, a geographical indication (GI) is a sign used on products that have a specific







geographical origin and possess qualities or reputation that are due to that origin. The qualities, characteristics or reputation of a product should be essentially due to the place of origin.

The Kashmiri crafts namely Pashmina, Kashmir sozni, kani shawl, papier-mache, Kashmiri crafts, khatamband and walnut wood carving have been officially granted Geographical Indication (GI) tags, which firmly establish their origin in the Kashmir region.

Beyond this, the central government has also come up with BIS (Bureau of Indian Standards) certified status to various Kashmiri crafts

including Pashmina, recognized as one of rarest and the finest of fabrics, and which has fans not just in India, but all across the globe. This is done to protect the practice of adulteration of Pashmina products, and safeguard the heritage and culture of Pashmina produced in J&K. The Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS) has formulated an Indian Standard IS 17269: 2019 – identification, labelling and marking of Pashmina products.

Meanwhile, the process of GI registration of five more crafts i.e., Kashmir namda and gabba (two types of Valley specific woolen rugs), wagguv (mat



made of reed and paddy straw), shikara (pleasure boats on Dal Lake), and Kashmir willow bat, is already under process and the dossier for the same had been submitted a few months ago only.

Talking about our local Department of Handicrafts and Handloom, Kashmir, well, they have also played a significant role in promoting, processing & providing necessary help to artisans related to the industry.

The Government has ever been according priorities for its overall development. A full-fledged department for projecting the crafts on a wider scale was established in 1972-73. Prior to this establishment, however, the department used to be a part of the Directorate of

Industries and Commerce.

From the last two years, the department has been continuously upgrading the testing and labelling facilities for GI certification for different crafts. "Because of the aggressive promotion of the certification, a huge number of manufacturers and exporters are approaching the department for testing and labelling," the director of the department has been quoted to have said.

The department is also in the process of launching the quick response (QR)-based GI labelling of six crafts, which was rolled out for carpets last year.

Handicrafts have been the mainstay of the J&K's economy since centuries. The dawn of the modern era of industries cannot take away from the viability of the crafts that always have had the capacity to hold sway in even international markets. Conscious of this colossal potential for economic activity of the sector, it needs more attention and priority from the administration in order to promote it at international levels so that Kashmir, apart from its abundant and mesmerising bounty of Nature, could maintain and establish its status in context of handicrafts.



Let's Talk About

*Fari & Hoggade*

# FISHING FLAVOURS



by **Waheed Jeelani**

*Fari and hoggade*, the two pillars of dried fish in Kashmir, showcase the ingenuity of preserving fish in a way that enhances rather than diminishes their essence. These methods, passed down through generations, not only serve the practical purpose of preservation but also elevate the flavour of the fish.

IN the heart of the Himalayas, where the air is tinged with the fragrance of saffron and the landscapes are painted in hues of emerald and gold, lies the enchanting Kashmir Valley. Renowned not only for its breathtaking beauty but also for its rich culture, Kashmir boasts a culinary heritage as diverse as the valleys that cradle its existence. As the sun rises over the snow-capped peaks, it illuminates a culinary canvas that unfolds with tales of tradition, community, and an exquisite dance of flavours.

Kashmiri cuisine is a symphony that harmonises with the rhythms of Nature and the passage of seasons. From the cool mountain air that whispers through the Chinars to the crystal-clear waters that dance through the valleys, every element of Kashmir's geography finds its reflection in the dishes that grace its tables. The culinary journey of Kashmir is a pilgrimage through a land where saffron fields sway in the breeze, where orchards bear witness to the cycle of harvests, and where the waters teem with aquatic life, offering a cornucopia of flavours to be savoured.

Amidst the breathtaking landscapes and beneath the benevolent gaze of the Himalayas, a culinary cosmos unfolds - a cosmos where every dish is a chapter, and every bite tells a story. Today, our exploration ventures into the heart of Kashmir's culinary legacy, where the spotlight is cast upon fari and hoggade, two icons



that resonate with the symphony of tradition, resilience, and the deep-rooted connection between the people and the fertile waters that surround them.

Fari and hoggade are not just culinary delights; they are emissaries of a culture that has stood the test of time. As we delve into the intricate layers of this narrative, we find ourselves tracing the steps of generations who, with salt and sun, have transformed the bounties of the Jhelum and Dal Lake into gastronomic treasures. Imagine the bustling shores, where fishermen navigate their shikaras through the dawn mist, casting nets into the azure waters to harvest the aquatic bounty that will later find its way into the meticulous process of salting, drying, and preserving - the essence of fari and hoggade.

The kitchen, with its rhythmic dance of hands seasoned by generations of culinary wisdom, becomes a sacred space where the alchemy of preservation takes place. The process is not merely a technique; it is an art form that transforms simple fish into a delicacy that transcends time. As the sun bathes the Valley in

its golden glow, it also bestows its warmth upon the drying fish, infusing them with a flavour that speaks of the land, the waters, and the collective spirit of a people who have perfected this craft over centuries. In every shimmering scale, in every carefully salted layer, one discovers not just a dish but a living testament to the cultural wealth that defines Kashmir's culinary identity. Let our journey into the heart of this culinary cosmos commence, where the stars are fari and hoggade, and the constellations tell tales of a legacy that unfolds in every delectable bite.

## HARVEST OF THE WATERS: FISHING IN KASHMIR

The story of dried fish begins with the pristine waters that cradle the Kashmir Valley. The lakes and rivers that meander through the landscape offer an abundance of fish, each species endowed with distinct flavours. As the fishing season unfolds, Kashmiri households engage in a time-honoured ritual, casting

nets and lines to harvest the bounty of the waters. The catch, varied and plentiful, becomes the canvas upon which the art of preservation is painted.

## THE ESSENCE OF PRESERVATION: FARI AND HOGGADE

Fari and hoggade, the two pillars of dried fish in Kashmir, showcase the ingenuity of preserving fish in a way that enhances rather than diminishes their essence. Fari typically involves sun-drying small fish like anchovies, while hoggade sees larger fish undergoing a meticulous process of salting and drying. These methods, passed down through generations, not only serve the practical purpose of preservation but also elevate the flavour of the fish.

## SUN-KISSED BRILLIANCE: THE ART OF FARI

As the sun graces the Kashmiri sky, it also becomes a crucial partner in the art of fari. Small fish, cleaned and salted, are carefully laid out under the warm sun to undergo the transformative process of drying. The solar infusion not only dehydrates the fish but imparts a subtle, sun-kissed brilliance to their flavors. The resulting fari becomes a culinary treasure, with an intensified taste that mirrors the natural bounty of Kashmir's aquatic landscapes.

## HOGGADE: A SYMPHONY OF SALINITY

In the case of hoggade, the process is a symphony of salinity that unfolds in the heart of Kashmiri homes. Larger fish are meticulously cleaned, salted, and then left to air dry in a controlled environment. The salt acts as both a preservative and a flavour enhancer, infusing the fish with a nuanced saltiness that harmonises with the natural taste of the catch. The hoggade, with its robust and concentrated flavors, becomes a cornerstone in many traditional Kashmiri dishes.



## FROM THE KITCHEN TO THE TABLE: THE CULINARY ALCHEMY

The preserved fish, once transformed into fari and hoggade, find their way into the heart of Kashmiri kitchens. These dried treasures become the alchemical ingredients that impart a distinct umami and depth to a myriad of dishes. Whether it's the aromatic Yakhni, a delicate curry, or the hearty Rogan Josh, dried fish plays a crucial role in elevating the culinary experience. The dried fish, rehydrated in the cooking process, releases a symphony of flavors, a testament to the intricate dance between preservation and culinary artistry.

## CELEBRATING TRADITION

The celebration of tradition is not confined to daily meals but extends to the festive occasions that punctuate the Kashmiri calendar. During festivals and family gatherings, dried fish takes centre stage, symbolising continuity and heritage. From the crispness of fari to the robustness of hoggade, these preserved delicacies embody the spirit of Kashmiri festivities, a bridge connecting the past with the present.

In bidding adieu to our gastronomic exploration of Kashmir's culinary wonders, we find ourselves immersed not just in a tapestry of flavours but in the very soul of the Kashmiri people. The legacy of fari and hoggade extends beyond the bounds of a single dish - it encapsulates centuries of tradition, resilience, and a relentless commitment to



preserving the essence of Kashmir's culinary heritage. As we relish the final bites of a dish infused with the rich flavours of dried fish, we partake in a communion with the enduring spirit of those who, generation after generation, have perfected the art of fari and hoggade. These dried delicacies are not mere ingredients; they are storytellers, narrating tales

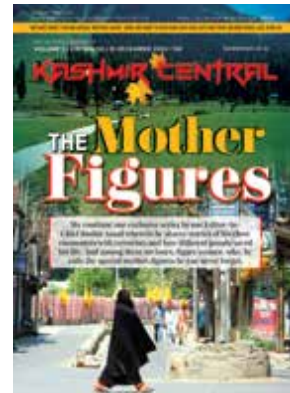
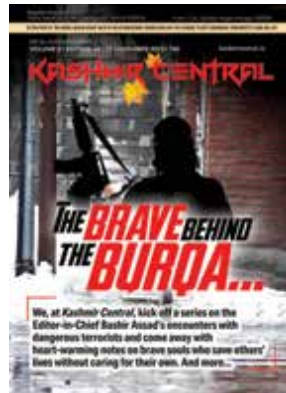
of fishermen casting nets into the glistening waters, of kitchens where the air is fragrant with the meticulous salting and drying process, and of dining tables where the aroma of fari and hoggade mingles with the laughter of family and friends. The taste of Kashmir's legacy, embodied in the sublime fari and hoggade, is a journey through time, a testament to the cultural continuity that thrives in each dried fish. These culinary treasures are not just sustenance; they are a link to the past, a bridge to the future. As we savour the last remnants of fari and hoggade, let it echo in our palates and resonate in our hearts - a timeless reminder that the heritage of Kashmir lives on, vibrant and unyielding, in every carefully preserved bite. In every dish, we find not just the taste of tradition, but the enduring legacy of a land where culinary artistry is a celebration of life itself.



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The invitation card features a central graphic of a globe with a scenic Kashmir landscape (mountains and a lake with a boat) overlaid. To the right, the Kashmir Central logo and the IETO (North Economic Trade Organization) logo are displayed. The text 'CONFERENCE INVITATION' is prominently shown in a large yellow circle. Below this, the date and time are provided in rounded rectangular boxes with icons. The location is given as 'Niryat Bhavan Vasant Vihar New Delhi' with location pin icons on either side. At the bottom, contact information is provided in two rows, each with phone and email icons on either side.

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