



United Nations
Educational, Scientific
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narrated by
MADANJEET SINGH
UNESCO Goodwill Ambassador

Collection Intangible Heritage
UNESCO Cultural Sector

KASHMIRIYAT

THE PLURALIST SUFI-BHAKTI-RISHI CULTURE



Madanjeet Singh was born on 16 April 1924 in Lahore, present-day Pakistan. A well-known painter and a distinguished photographer, he is an internationally known author of several books on art and other subjects, closely interwoven with UNESCO's programmes, principles and ideals.

During Mahatma Gandhi's 'Quit India' movement in 1942 against colonial rule, Madanjeet Singh was imprisoned. He later migrated to newly partitioned India in 1947 and worked in a refugee camp. He joined the Indian Foreign Service in 1953 and served as Ambassador of India in Asia, South America, Africa and Europe before joining UNESCO in 1982, based in Paris.

In 1995, in recognition of his lifelong devotion to the cause of communal harmony and peace, the UNESCO Executive Board created the biennial 'UNESCO-Madanjeet Singh Prize for the Promotion of Tolerance and Non-Violence'. The decision was adopted at meetings in Paris and Fez (16 May to 4 June), to commemorate the 125th birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi. In 2000, Madanjeet Singh was designated a UNESCO Goodwill Ambassador on the United Nations' International Day of Tolerance.

Madanjeet Singh, in front of his painting, The Midnight Sun (1960). The canvas is one of a series painted in the sixties, two of which were acquired by the Museum of Modern Art, Stockholm, Sweden.

Madanjeet Singh

“In the darkness engulfing the subcontinent the only ray of light came from Kashmir” - Mahatma Gandhi (1947)

KASHMIRIYAT

THE PLURALIST SUFI-BHAKTI-RISHI CULTURE

Dedicated to the young people of South Asia



SOUTH ASIA FOUNDATION - SAF

IN COOPERATION WITH UNITED NATIONS EDUCATIONAL, SCIENTIFIC AND CULTURAL ORGANIZATION

BOOKS AND MONOGRAPHS BY THE AUTHOR

INDIAN SCULPTURE IN BRONZE AND STONE (1951)
ETRUSCAN CAVE PAINTINGS (1953)
INDIA, PAINTINGS FROM AJANTA CAVES (UNESCO/1954)
INDIAN MINIATURES (1963)
AJANTA, PAINTINGS OF THE SACRED AND THE SECULAR (1964)
HIMALAYAN ART (UNESCO/1968)
THE WHITE HORSE (1976)

MADANJEET, THE EARLY SIXTIES (1986)
THIS MY PEOPLE (1989)
THE SUN IN MYTH AND ART (UNESCO/1993)
RENEWABLE ENERGY OF THE SUN (UNESCO/1996)
THE TIMELESS ENERGY OF THE SUN (UNESCO/1998)
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THE ORAL AND INTANGIBLE HERITAGE OF SOUTH ASIA (UNESCO/2007).

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H.E. SHRIMATI PRATIBHA PATIL, PRESIDENT OF INDIA, INAUGURATED THE INSTITUTE OF KASHMIR STUDIES, AFFILIATED TO THE UNIVERSITY OF KASHMIR, ON 26 MAY 2008. THE INSTITUTE HAS BEEN ESTABLISHED TO PROMOTE THE TRADITIONAL BHAKTI-SUFI-RISHI PLURALIST CULTURE OF 'KASHMIRIYAT' IN A WORLDWIDE HISTORICAL CONTEXT AND STRENGTHEN REGIONAL COOPERATION THROUGH EDUCATION AND MUTUAL UNDERSTANDING AMONG THE PEOPLE OF SOUTH ASIA.



THE INSTITUTE OF KASHMIR STUDIES IS FUNDED BY SOUTH ASIA FOUNDATION (SAF), A SECULAR, NON-PROFIT AND NON-POLITICAL ORGANIZATION, ESTABLISHED IN 2000 BY UNESCO GOODWILL AMBASSADOR MADANJEET SINGH. SAF HAS BEEN ADMITTED INTO OFFICIAL RELATIONSHIP WITH THE UNITED NATIONS EDUCATIONAL, SCIENTIFIC AND CULTURAL ORGANIZATION (UNESCO), AND RECOGNIZED AS AN APEX BODY OF THE SOUTH ASIAN ASSOCIATION OF REGIONAL COOPERATION (SAARC). THE AIMS, OBJECTIVES AND ACTIVITIES OF SAF ARE IN CONFORMITY WITH THE SPIRIT, PURPOSE AND PRINCIPLES OF THESE TWO INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS.







At the annual meeting of the UNESCO Goodwill Ambassadors in Paris on 20 May 2008, Madanjeet Singh raised the curtain on the Institute of Kashmir Studies, Srinagar. He informed his colleagues that the institution had been established under a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signed on 21 August 2007, between the South Asia Foundation (SAF) and the University of Kashmir. It is the tenth institution of excellence that SAF is in the process of establishing in SAARC countries.

The first SAF institution of excellence, he said, was inaugurated in Kabul on 13 April 2007. This was the result of a tripartite agreement signed between the South Asia Foundation, UNESCO and the Government of Afghanistan on 22 March 2004.

He also informed the assembled UNESCO Goodwill Ambassadors that on 7 May 2008, an exhibition of Afghanistan's women paintings had been opened by Dr. H.B. Ghazanfar, Minister for Women's Affairs, at the Madanjeet Singh Institute of Afghanistan's Cultural Heritage in Kabul. Some of these works of art have now been sent to Srinagar where a more comprehensive exhibition of South Asian women's paintings will be held, and thereafter exhibited in other South Asian countries.

Later, at a dinner hosted by UNESCO Goodwill Ambassador Mme Mehriban Aliyeva, first lady of Azerbaijan, Mr. Koïchiro Matsuura gave the text of his message to be read out at the inauguration of the Institute of Kashmir Studies on 26 May 2008.

*(Left to right) Mr. Madanjeet Singh, Lady Owen-Jones, UNESCO Deputy Director-General Mr. Marcio Barbosa, Mme Marianna Vardinoyannis, Mme Mehriban Aliyeva, UNESCO Director-General Mr. Koïchiro Matsuura, Princess Lalla Meryam of Morocco, Mme Ute-Henrietta Ohoven and Mr. Zurab Tsereteli. **The most eminent UNESCO Goodwill Ambassador, Nelson Mandela, could not attend the meeting because of other commitments.***

Message from Mr. Koïchiro Matsuura, Director-General of UNESCO, on the occasion of the launching of the Institute of Kashmir Studies, Srinagar, 26 May 2008



Director General

It gives me great pleasure to convey my greetings on the occasion of the inauguration of the Institute of Kashmir Studies. Established under the auspices of the South Asia Foundation, this institute will undoubtedly make a unique contribution to the promotion of research and education in the region. UNESCO looks forward to cooperating with the Institute in the framework of its various activities devoted to heritage-based development in Kashmir, particularly in the wake of the devastating earthquake of October 2005.

UNESCO is very happy to have established a long and privileged relationship with the prime mover behind this worthwhile initiative, Mr. Madanjeet Singh. In the year 2000, Mr. Singh created the South Asia Foundation to promote sustainable cultural, educational and economic development throughout the region. The Institute of Kashmir Studies is the eighth institution of excellence established and funded by the South Asia Foundation to date. Among Mr. Singh's numerous other cultural undertakings in Asia, allow me to mention the establishment of the Kabul-based Madanjeet Singh Institute for Afghanistan's Cultural Heritage, whose principal objective is to provide much-needed training for Afghan preservation specialists.

Mr. Singh's personal commitment to fostering culture, dialogue, mutual understanding and peace has served as a great source of inspiration to people of many different nations, cultures and religions. In recognition of his generosity and untiring efforts to promote these noble objectives, which are also those of UNESCO, I had the privilege of designating Mr. Singh as a UNESCO Goodwill Ambassador on 16 November 2000.

I sincerely hope that the new Institute of Kashmir Studies will help reinforce the role of culture and education in ensuring a sustainable future for all peoples of the region.

I wish it much success and a long and productive life.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "K. Matsuura".

Koïchiro Matsuura



Prime Minister Manmohan Singh was recently reunited with his childhood classmate and friend, Raja Ali Muhammad, from their ancestral Gah village in Chakwai district, Pakistan. The meeting took place after a gap of six decades. Following traditional custom, the septuagenarian Raja Ali Muhammad presented his Indian friend with a 100-year-old shawl and offered his wife, Gursharan Kaur, two embroidered salwar kameez suits.

This meeting between Dr. Manmohan Singh and his old Indian friend, now a Pakistani, was as significant as it was poignant, invoking the spirit of India's pluralist Bhakti-Sufi-Rishi culture. Sikh tradition has it that at the age of 30, Guru Nanak Dev would say no more than repeating: "There is no Hindu. There is no Muslim." He believed that religion was a matter of personal belief and private affair of an individual (just as modern secularism separates the State and education from religion).

This same spirit infused the opening of the long overdue Institute of Kashmir Studies at the University of Kashmir in Srinagar, and was profoundly reflected in the message of best wishes written by Dr. Manmohan Singh, and handed to me in New Delhi on my way from Paris to Srinagar.

Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and his childhood classmate and friend, Raja Ali Muhammad, embrace each other as Shrimati Gursharan Kaur looks on.



प्रधान मंत्री

Prime Minister

MESSAGE

It gives me great pleasure to learn about the programme being organized by the University of Kashmir on the occasion of the inauguration of the Institute of Kashmir Studies. The Institute is being established in collaboration with the South Asia Foundation established by Shri Madanjeet Singh, and is primarily designed to promote 'Kashmiriyat', based on Kashmir's age old 'Bhakti-Sufi-Rishi' traditions and culture. This unique eclecticism in Kashmiri tradition and the natural beauty of the area has not only made Kashmir a 'Paradise on Earth', but also a microcosm of the secular, pluralist traditions of India.

The initiative to resuscitate the age old traditions of Kashmir, and to establish an institution which would serve as a melting pot of ideas and learning, involving young people and others, not only from the State and other parts of the country, but also from the neighbouring countries of the Indian sub-continent, is timely. I hope the Institute contributes to strengthening the composite culture of the State.

I convey my best wishes to all those associated with the Institute of Kashmir Studies.


(Manmohan Singh)

New Delhi
May 19, 2008



PHOTO: J&K BHARAT SCOUTS & GUIDES

On arrival at Srinagar airport, Madanjeet Singh and France Marquet were welcomed by Dr. G.M. Khawaja, Director of the Institute of Kashmir studies and Mr. N.A Khan, State Chief Commissioner, J&K Bharat Scouts & Guides. They received a warm and effusive reception from a group of scouts and guides in uniform, playing music and carrying welcome banners.

As we landed at the Srinagar airport on 22 May 2008, a pleasant surprise awaited us as we stepped out of the airport building. Instead of the overbearing security men, we were surrounded by a band of music-playing young scouts and guides, displaying welcome banners as they escorted us to the waiting vehicles. They were led by Mr. N.A. Khan, State Chief Commissioner, J&K Bharat Scouts and Guides, and accompanied by Dr. G.M. Khawaja, Director of the Institute of Kashmir Studies, Srinagar.

The SAF Scouts Friendship camps, held annually in cooperation with the Asia-Pacific Regional Scouts Movement, effectively promote regional cooperation. The first SAF Scout jamboree was held in Bhutan in 2002, with the participation of over 500 scouts and guides, setting the tone with music and dance in an ambiance of colourful pageantry. Since then similar friendship camps have been successfully held annually in Maldives (2003), Nepal (2005), Sri Lanka (2006), Pakistan (2007) Bangladesh (2008). The 2009 SAF Scouts Friendship camp is planned to be held in India.

At the 22nd Asia-Pacific Regional Scouts Conference (APR), held in Tokyo, Japan, from 18-23 October 2007, South Asia Foundation, represented by Mme France Marquet, was awarded a Plaque of Recognition for supporting young South Asian scouts to promote regional cooperation. The theme of this conference was 'Advancing Towards the New Scouting Century', an event which was attended by more than 500 key scouts leaders from 24 member countries. In her address, SAF representative informed the delegates that since 2002, SAF had been annually funding US\$ 40,000/- to the Asia-Pacific Region of the World Organization.



In 2002, the first SAF Scouts Friendship Camp was organized in Bhutan in which 550 scouts and guides from seven SAARC countries participated in a colourful pageantry of dance and music.



PHOTO: SOS CENTRE, SRI LANKA

Also, at the grassroot level, SAF has annually organized the SOS vocational training camps for South Asian social orphans in cooperation with the SOS-Kinderdorf International. The first 'Environment Work Camp' was held in 2003, at the SOS Vocational Training Centre at Malpotha, Sri Lanka, in which forty girls and boys participated. At these camps the youngsters learn about the enormous economic potential of employing improved methods in organic agriculture and acquiring professional skills for gainful employment.



PHOTOS: MALDIVES SCOUTS & GUIDES



'Protection of the Environment' was the theme of the second SAF Scout Friendship Camp, held on Feydhoo Finolho island in the Maldives from 16–22 February 2003. It was an amazing experience, especially for girls and boys coming from landlocked countries such as Nepal and Bhutan, who had never seen the sea.



Since South Asia Foundation (SAF) was founded in 2000, its core objective has been to establish educational projects, designed to promote regional cooperation. In the field of higher education, SAF is funding institutions of excellence in the SAARC countries and granting Madanjeet Singh Group Scholarships to girls and boys to study jointly at these institutions. SAF has also offered to fund group scholarships to students selected by the proposed South Asian University (SAU), who will be admitted to SAU's affiliated Universities/Institutions in SAARC countries.

The establishment of SAF institutions of excellence in Afghanistan was a response to the shocking demolition of the colossal fifth-century Bamiyan Buddha idols by the Taliban regime. SAF reacted by announcing a donation of US\$ one million at the first plenary session of the International Coordination Committee (ICC), for the safeguarding of Afghanistan's Cultural Heritage, held at UNESCO House in Paris on 16-18 June 2003. This amount was used to restore a war-damaged building and establish the Madanjeet Singh Institute of Afghanistan's Cultural Heritage that was opened in Kabul on 13 July 2006.

The Institute of Kashmir Studies in Srinagar is the second SAF institution of excellence in India since the Asian College of Journalism (ACJ) launched the Madanjeet Singh Group Scholarship scheme in 2002. In Pakistan, this programme was emulated by the School of Visual Arts at the Beaconhouse National University in Lahore. Since then SAF has signed more MoUs, ten in all, to establish institutions of excellence in SAARC countries.

The Madanjeet Singh Institute of Afghanistan's Cultural Heritage in Kabul was inaugurated by the Minister of Culture and Information, Dr S. M. Raheen, on 13 July 2006. The courses on the restoration of monuments started in 2008, by a faculty of Afghan teachers, recruited on the advice of two experts, assigned by UNESCO, Dr. Tej Singh from the Lucknow Institute for Restoration and Mr Robert Knox of the British Museum.

Bad news awaited us, as we reached the Grand Palace Hotel from Srinagar airport. The Jihadists had strongly condemned the “un-Islamic activities” of Junoon concert and threatened to kill Salman Ahmad if his band came to perform in Srinagar. As a warning, a bomb had exploded a fortnight earlier in the vicinity of the arena where the stage for the concert was being erected. It was with great difficulty that SAF had persuaded Showtime Music contractors to arrange the concert as no other music company dared to take up this job in the prevailing insecurity in Srinagar. I was afraid that after the Jihadists warning, Showtime might also withdraw.

Then my attention was drawn to another disturbing piece of news that appeared in the leading Pakistani daily, *Dawn*, reported by its Muzaffarabad correspondent in Pakistan controlled Kashmir. He wrote that the chairman of the United Jihad Council (UJC), Syed Salahuddin, had asked the Federal Government of Pakistan to stop the Junoon band of musicians from performing in Srinagar. Salahuddin argued that dancing and singing at the concert would send a “wrong message to the Kashmiris who are already facing the onslaught of Indian culture”.

My nerves were on edge as I was afraid that Salman Ahmad and his band that had already arrived in Delhi, might decide to cancel the planned Junoon show in Srinagar. So I heaved a sigh of relief on learning that he had categorically ignored the Jihadist threat and issued an admirable statement: ‘I urge the United Jihad Council to join Junoon in a “Musical Jihad”, instead of fear-mongering and threatening to boycott the concert in Srinagar. It is time to replace gun with guitars and ring the bells of change for a peaceful future for all South Asians’







Chairman of the SAF-India chapter, Mani Shankar Aiyar, consulting with Mme Chandrika Kumaratunga, Chairperson of the SAF-Sri Lanka chapter, before the start of the 7th Annual SAF Governing Council meeting in Durbar Hall at the Intercontinental Grand Palace Hotel, Srinagar.



On the morning of Sunday, 25 May, SAF-India Chairman Mani Shankar Aiyar opened the 7th Annual SAF Governing Council meeting in Durbar Hall at the Intercontinental Grand Palace Hotel. The meeting was attended by most of the chairpersons of SAF chapters except for Dr. Ahmed Shaheed, (Chairman, SAF-Maldives) and Dr. Kamal Hossain (Chairman, SAF-Bangladesh). Dr. Hossain was represented by Prof. Jamilur Reza Choudhury, Vice-Chancellor, BRAC University. The chairpersons were accompanied by their respective SAF Advisory Board secretaries.

A number of vice-chancellors of Indian universities also attended the meeting as observers. These included Prof. Surabhi Banerjee of Netaji Subhas Open University, Kolkata; Prof. Mahendra Lama, University of Sikkim, Gangtok; Prof. Jalees A. Khan

The Chairpersons of the SAF Governing Council. (Left to right) Prof. Salima Hashmi (Pakistan), Dr. Rita Thapa (Nepal), Mme Chandrika Kumaratunga (Sri Lanka), Mr. Mani Shankar Aiyar (India), Mr. Madanjeet Singh (SAF Founder), Mr. Lyonpo Sangay Ngedup (Bhutan), Prof. Jamilur Reza Choudhury (Bangladesh) representing Dr. Kamal Hossain, and Dr. Sayed Makhdoum Raheen (Afghanistan).

Tareen, Pondicherry University; Prof. Riyaz Punjabi, Vice-Chancellor, University of Kashmir; and Prof. B.B. Bhattacharya, Vice Chancellor, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi; Mr. Abdullah Rasheed, Regional Director of the World Organization of the Scouts Movement, Asia-Pacific Regional Office, Manila, Philippines, also attended the meeting.

Hon'ble Mani Shankar Aiyar warmly welcomed the participants to what he called a meeting with an 'open agenda' and invited the Governing Council members to report on the activities of their respective chapters during the year 2007. With regard to the SAF-India chapter, he stated that the Advisory Board had been reconstituted and would be assisted by three committees: an Academic Committee headed by Dr. G.M. Khawaja, a Cultural Committee headed by Wajahat Habibullah, and a Social Committee headed by Dr. Syeda Hameed.



Group photograph taken after the SAF Governing Council meeting on 25 May 2007, with the Chairpersons of SAF chapters and their representatives, Secretaries of the SAF Advisory Boards, observers including vice-chancellors of several universities and the Regional Director of the World Organization of the Scouts Movement, Manila.

Dr. Sayed Makhdoum Raheen (SAF-Afghanistan) stated that since relinquishing his position as Minister of Information, Culture and Tourism and taking over as Afghanistan's Ambassador in India, he had nominated Mr. Omara Khan Masoodi, Director-General of Museums in Afghanistan, to replace him as the next chairman. The Secretary of the SAF-Afghanistan Advisory Board had also been replaced by Mr. Raufi Obaidullah. Nevertheless, Dr. Raheen said that he would continue as an Advisor and informed his colleagues that Dr. H.B. Ghazanfar, Women's Affairs Minister, had very kindly accepted to serve on the SAF-Afghanistan Advisory Board. Dr. Raheen stated that the UNESCO Madanjeet Singh Institute of Afghanistan's Cultural Heritage was developing satisfactorily and the first ever exhibition of Afghan women's paintings was inaugurated in Kabul by Dr. Ghazanfar on 7 May 2008.

Prof. Jamilur Reza Choudhury (SAF-Bangladesh) mentioned that the MoU between SAF and the South Asian Institute of Advanced Legal and Human Rights Studies had been signed on 12 December 2006 and he hoped that the Institute would be formally inaugurated during the year. He stated that an agreement had also been reached between the Institute and BRAC University (BU) for the purpose of conferral of degrees as well as for cooperation on other related matters.

Mr. Lyonpo Sangay Ngedup (SAF-Bhutan) stated that the signing of the MoU between SAF and the SAARC Institute of Forestry had been delayed due to the recent elections and the establishment of a new democratic government in Bhutan. He thanked SAF for increasing the number of group scholarships to Bhutanese students at the ACJ, Chennai, and the BNU in Lahore.

Dr. Rita Thapa (SAF-Nepal) stated that the South Asia Madanjeet Singh Institute of Training for Community Midwives in cooperation with the Council of Technical Education and Vocational Training in Nepal was proceeding satisfactorily. She informed the Council that at present forty students were enrolled, of whom 80 per cent came from remote 'insurgency' districts. Next year the programme will be expanded by the introduction of English-language courses, which will enable students from other SAARC countries to participate. She expressed her happiness that the establishment of a democratic government would accelerate the midwife programme, as Nepal had voted for peace and development. This was evident from a letter of appreciation that SAF-Nepal had received from the government, which she circulated among all the delegates:

'This is to commend the works of the South Asia Foundation (SAF-Nepal) for the successful implementation of training of the first batch of Madanjeet Singh Assistant Nurse Mid-Wife (ANM) Scholarships consisting of girls from the six poorest districts of Pyuthan, Mugu, Darchula, Kapilwastu, Siraha and Rameechap. We understand that the training has been undertaken through the active partnership of organizations such as: SAF, PAF, CTEVT, Jiri Technical School and Thapathali Maternity Hospital.

The 2006 Nepal Demographic and Health Survey shows that the proportion of births attended by skilled health workers in Nepal is only 19%, which is far behind the Millennium Development Goal of 60% by 2015. In this regard, the aforementioned public-private initiative would greatly complement the efforts of the Ministry of Health and Population to meeting the national goal of having skilled health workers at every birth, regardless of the geographic location and socio-economic condition. In the days ahead, we hope that SAF-Nepal will not only continue its Madanjeet Singh ANM scholarships for the training of ANM among the poorest and disadvantaged groups of women, but also gradually increase the number of scholarships so that more and more rural women can be saved from preventable death due to complications of pregnancy and child birth.'

Prof. Salima Hashmi (SAF-Pakistan) explained that the SAF Madanjeet Singh Group Scholarship programme was being upgraded following the signing of a MoU with SAF on 4 July 2007; that the graduate level course was expanding to encompass Post Graduate level courses and would shortly become a Master of Arts degree course. Regional cooperation would also be strengthened by the addition of Academic Jury members from SAARC countries. She concluded that the courses at the School of Visual Arts at BNU were highly proactive and served as a tool for peace and development in the region.

Mme. Chandrika Kumaratunga (SAF-Sri Lanka) regretted that since plans for the Lakshman Kadirgamar Centre in Kandy were shelved, no further SAF projects for a institution of excellence had been proposed. In order to promote SAF's objectives, she suggested that SAF-Sri Lanka began establishing different workshops in collaboration with other institutions, as proposed by Kandy University: a South Asian Youth Parliament to promote Human Rights, and a workshop on South Asian Heritage in cooperation with the Heritage Trust of Sri Lanka. A workshop may also be conducted in collaboration with universities of the eight SAARC countries to organize performing arts festivals. She suggested that perhaps a link could be established between SAF and the Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunga Foundation (CBKF) to promote regional cooperation.

On behalf of the SAF Trustees, I thanked the SAF chairpersons and observers for their valuable proposals and suggestions, which, I said, have been noted and would be implemented subject to availability of funds. I endorsed Mr. N. Ram's remarks, that in order to promote SAF's objectives of regional cooperation, all contentious issues must be scrupulously avoided. I also emphasized that SAF projects must be evaluated rigorously prior to acceptance.





After the meeting, an outdoor banquet lunch hosted by the chairpersons of the SAF Governing Council was held on the adjacent Durbar Hall lawns at the Intercontinental Grand Palace Hotel. However, as there was a thunderstorm the night before and at lunchtime it was still drizzling, the guests departed in a hurry as they had to catch the bus for the Centaur Hotel where the Sufi rock concert featuring performances by The Singhs and Junoon bands was scheduled to take place by the Dal Lake at 3 pm. Extremely tight security required from the invitees to be seated in the arena of the hotel lawns at least half an hour before the start of the concert.

Arriving at the lawns of the Centaur Hotel where the concert was to be held, we found the security extremely tight. I was held up at the entrance for not carrying the obligatory invitation card while several invitees tried to convince the guards that I was the organizer of the show. I was unhappy also because the security people had restricted the quotas allocated to students invited from schools, universities and other educational institutions. As a result many youngsters were disappointed as these limited quotas prevented an overwhelming majority of students from attending the concert. Therefore, as the concert began many students who had been barred from coming in, defied the restrictions and security personnel were obliged to open the gates to allow entry to many young fans.



PHOTO: SHOWTIME

The invitees, mostly young boys and girls, began arriving hours before the start of the concert because of strict security checks. The entrances were embellished with SAF logos and flags of the eight South Asian countries.





No one was allowed to enter the heavily guarded concert enclosure without an invitation and identity card and for security reasons the number of invitations were limited to 10,000. By the time the concert started the lawn of Centaur Hotel was jam-packed as far as the Dal Lake.



Loud applause greeted the charming announcer Geetika Gunju as she walked on the stage through a huge circular rainbow. Dressed in a white silken sari and holding a microphone, she gave an excellent speech introducing both the concert groups and thanked South Asia Foundation for its efforts in bringing them to Srinagar. She then walked through the audience asking questions. One young fan responded by saying that he had never attended an open-air concert and imagined the Junoon/Singhs musical show like the Woodstock festival.



The Singhs took to the stage following the introduction by Geetika Gunju and performed a set fusing rock with Indian music. Mahendrajeet Singh (Miki) was accompanied by guitarist Peter Parcek and guest sitar and tabla players Ravi Chari and Deepak Peters. Insecurity in Kashmir had unfortunately prevented the other three band members, Steve Scully, Marc Hickox and Brother Cleve from coming to Srinagar.

As I sat in the front row, in between Mme Chandrika Kumaratunga, former President of Sri Lanka, and Dr. H. B. Ghazanfar, Afghanistan's Women Affairs Minister, I felt a shiver pass down my spine, as my only son, Miki, stepped on to the stage. The same undercurrent of nervous foreboding was written on the faces of all the eminent guests present, particularly following the rumour that security had prevented President Pratibha Patil and the State Governor, Lt. Gen. S.K. Sinha from attending the function, despite their presence in Srinagar. But local VIPs like veteran politician Dr. Farooq Abdullah seemed unconcerned, stating that "such happenings were a common everyday part of life in Kashmir". So eager was he to attend the show that he had personally solicited an invitation.

The earlier clouds had by then be blown away and as we sat in the hot sun I thought about my son Jeet's passion for music and the incredible story that began to unfold shortly after Miki graduated from MIT and decided to become a musician – an ambition no less ridiculous than my intention of becoming a painter after graduating in technical chemistry – an idea that my father had naturally scoffed at. The classic drama of father-son disagreement followed and finally a compromise was reached, in which Miki promised to work until the age of 35, earn sufficient money to sustain himself, and then go back to his first love, music.

Miki, also known as Jeet, created a software company, the Art Technology Group (ATG), with a friend, Joe Chung, a Korean-American studying at the MIT Media Lab. They began by employing a programmer and a secretary. This nucleus of four soon expanded to about 100, and Miki requested my help to rent larger office space. Somehow I managed to pay him half the amount needed and advised him to collect the other half from Joe's father, a well-known brain surgeon, in this way keeping the partnership on an equal footing. In return, ATG allotted 10 per cent equities each to Chung's father and myself. The company grew rapidly and shortly after went public on the Nasdaq.

One morning, I received an unexpected e-mail from Miki conveying the "good news" that he had just bought a rosewood Steinway piano, adding "that means ATG was worth it". Curious to know what he was worth, I looked up the Nasdaq online and rubbed my eyes in utter disbelief; on that day my son was worth millions in stocks. That he should have failed to mention this fabulous wealth and simply informed me of his purchase of a rosewood piano was incredible to me.

I was stunned – 10 per cent of this enormous sum was now at my disposal. Unlike Miki, who was restricted as a manager from selling a lot of shares, I sold my equities just before the IT bubble burst, and earned a fortune that I never would have imagined in my wildest dream. As a career civil servant who had been counting pennies all my life, I was delighted at so much money suddenly falling into my lap. No longer would I have to go begging to funding agencies to support the Sumitra Foundation that I had established after the name of my mother. At the same time I was saddened by the thought that if I had all this money a few years earlier, I could have accomplished so much more.

I was also overpowered by a nagging realization that the success of Jeet's company meant I hardly ever saw my only son, as he shuttled madly around the world in his private jet, visiting his many ATG offices in Europe and Asia. Once he came to Paris for a three-day meeting of European ATG offices in Europe, and promised to spend time with me. But to my deep disappointment, I saw him just for two hours during lunch before he left hurriedly, as "something had come up in Frankfurt".



I was extremely upset. What was the use of all this wealth if it broke up whatever was left of my small family? My only sister, Ranjeeta, whom I loved so much, was shot dead in broad daylight by a mugger as she had gone out for a stroll in Delhi, and her only teenage daughter, Reeta, died in an air crash in Paris. So when Miki came for my birthday on 16 April 2002, I gave him a piece of my mind. I reminded him of his promise at the start of his career to work until the age of thirty-five, earn enough money to live on, and then go back to his first love, music. "Now you are thirty-seven", I told him, "What happened to your promise?" Miki scratched his head, and shortly after returning to Boston, resigned as the CEO of ATG. Since then, he has settled in St. Barthelemy in the Caribbean, devoting himself full-time to his new career – he composes his own music and songs, plays the guitar, and is the lead vocalist of his band, now called The Singhs.



Although Miki sang in English, a Press correspondent noted that his music “enthralled the audience”. The Singhs (formerly known as Dragonfly) recently opened for the Canadian rock star, Bryan Adams, in Bangalore, to a crowd of more than 40,000 people. The band also released a video ‘*The Holy Rollers*’, decrying the manipulations of people by unscrupulous politicians and religious bigots. The Singhs have just released their third major album, ‘*Supersaturated*’. Miki is now collaborating with one of France’s well-known rock guitarists, Louis Bertignac , and has written an anti-war song entitled ‘*Still They Die Young*’. Now he has begun working with Julian Lennon, son of John Lennon, and planning to compile a ‘*Peace Album*’ in cooperation with Salman Ahmad.

(Right) Mahendrajeet Singh (called Miki or Jeet), the lead singer of *The Singhs*, and (left) the guitarist Peter Parcek .







PHOTOS: SHOWTIME



Salman Ahmad's group Junoon (comprising band members Samir Chatterjee, Chris Tarry and Sandeep Kumar Jain) combine powerful arena rock with the spiritual tranquility of Sufi poetry in Urdu and Punjabi. His performance by the Dal Lake thrilled the crowds for whom Salman Ahmad's belief in music's power to unite rather than divide evidently struck a deep chord.

This was just the latest in a series of successes for the band, whose 1998 hit song 'Sayonee', from Salman's bestselling fourth studio album *Azadi* (Freedom), took both Pakistan and India by storm. On 9 December 2007, Junoon performed at the Nobel Peace Prize concert in Oslo, in honour of the Nobel Peace Prize laureates – Al Gore, former US Vice-President and the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, represented by its chairman Rajendra K. Pachauri. The event included many well-known artists, including Alicia Keys, Annie Lennox, Kylie Minogue, K.T. Tunstall and Melissa Etheridge. Junoon's set of

Salman Ahmad raised his hands, acknowledging the enthusiastic cheers and applause that greeted the band, before Junoon launched into its opening number.



acoustic Sufi music was dedicated to the lawyer's movement in Pakistan, which calls for the restoration of the Supreme Court judges, and the independence of the judiciary. It was yet another landmark event in support of Pakistan's civil society, media, students and rights activists. Junoon's music is an antidote to religious extremism and terrorism, just as western rock stars and actors such as Sting, George Clooney, Brad Pitt, Bono and Bob Geldof, support worthy campaigns against poverty, disease and vanishing rainforests.

The youngsters burst into a wild applause as Salman, accompanied by Bassist Christopher Tarry, began singing 'Meri awaaz suno, mujhe azaad karo' or 'Yaaro yehi dosti hai'. The youngsters joined Salman in singing Iqbal's 'Khudi ko kar bulund itna', Bulleh Shah's 'Mandir dha de, masjid dha de', and especially Junoon's 1998 hit song 'Sayonee', from the bestselling fourth studio album Azadi (Freedom).



PHOTOS: SALMA ALI



A rising cloud of white smoke enveloped Salman Ahmad as he began playing his guitar. Several moist-eyed 13 or 14-year-old Kashmiri girls, barred from attending the concert, barged into the enclosures, one of them dodging the cops and jumping over the stage barricade just to tell Salman she had been dying to hear 'Sayonee' live for a long time. As the show started, some newspaper correspondents reported that the crowd had swelled to about 15,000, ignoring security restrictions.



The Srinagar concert featuring The Singhs and Junoon created tremendous media excitement. Immediately following the show newspaper and TV correspondents flocked to interview Salman Ahmad and Jeet Singh. During the following days leading Indian newspapers including *The Hindu*, *The Times of India*, *The Hindustan Times*, *The Indian Express*, *The Asian Age*, *The Tribune*, and magazines such as *Tehelka*, *Outlook* and *Rolling Stone*, featured extensive coverage of the concert. Pakistan's leading newspaper *Dawn* wrote an editorial, much to the bitter chagrin of Islamic fundamentalists who consider all music as blasphemous.

I was also congratulated for having dared to bring the musicians to perform in Srinagar, in defiance of opposition and death threats from militants. A well-known journalist representing *Doordarshan* TV, Srinagar, interviewed me shortly after the concert at the Intercontinental Palace Hotel, overlooking Dal Lake.

As young girls whirled and danced to the music, their voices carrying across through the peaceful valley, Dr. Farooq Abdullah, former J&K Chief Minister, surprised all by walking up to the head of police standing at guard and urging him to dance, breaking into a little jig himself.



PHOTO: NISHCHAL PANDEY

Madanjeet Singh, Founder of the South Asia Foundation (SAF), was among those interviewed by Tarique Bhatt, the Chief Srinagar Correspondent of Doordarshan TV in Srinagar. He briefly described the aims and objectives of SAF and his vision of regional cooperation among the eight SAARC countries, underpinned by a common currency, similar to the Euro, in the hope that this could become an anchor of economic stability and peace in South Asia.



Srinagar rocks to Pakistani band Junoon's music, thousands turn up for the mega concert

SHUJAAT BUKHARI

Photos by Nissar Ahmad

SRINAGAR: Despite threats from militant organisations, thousands of Kashmiris, mostly youth, turned up for a musical concert organised by the South Asia Foundation (SAF) here on Sunday.

The star attraction was the Pakistani rock band Junoon, which performed in Srinagar for the first time and turned thousands of music lovers hysterical.

The event was to mark the opening of the Institute of Kashmir Studies at the Kashmir University funded by the Foundation. It was aimed at spreading the message of peace, love and harmony.

The United Jihad Council, the umbrella forum of militant organisations, had warned against organising the event. But that did not deter the youth who were determined to watch Junoon leader Salman Ahmad's performance on the banks of the Dal Lake.



PHOTO: NISSAR AHMAD



SAF founder and UNESCO Goodwill Ambassador Madanjeet Singh had on Saturday brushed aside the threats. 'I would not like to comment on issues related to politics ... Ours is a purely non-political organisation', he said.

Union Minister for Panchayati Raj Mani Shankar Aiyar threw the concert open in the presence of a large number of dignitaries, who included the former Sri Lanka President, Chandrika Kumaratunga, Afghan Minister for Women's Affairs, H.B. Ghazanfar, the former Foreign Minister of Bangladesh, Kamal Hossain, SAF's Pakistan chapter chairperson, Salima Hashmi, Pakistan Human Rights Commission chairperson I.A. Rehman, Editor-in-Chief of *The Hindu*, N. Ram, Union Minister for Water Resources Saifuddin Soz and the former Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister Farooq Abdullah.

Besides Salman Ahmad, Jeet Singh of the rock music band 'Singhs' enthralled the audience. Jeet is the son of Madanjeet Singh and has played a significant role in organizing South Asia Foundation.

As Salman began his most popular song 'Sayonee' (Oh my friend), the audience joined him, clapping and dancing. Throughout his nearly two-hour performance, the audience kept asking for more.

'It is great. I love this day', said Farah, a college student. 'We need this kind of opening after such a long turmoil', said Abrar, a student of the Kashmir University.

Salman said that he had been longing for ten years to come to Kashmir. 'When I came to Mumbai for the first time in 1988, I told my promoter to take me to Kashmir. But he could not', he said. 'I came to India again in 1999, 2000 and 2001 but could not make it here.' He was grateful to SAF Founder Madanjeet Singh who made his dream come true. 'It is a 10-year long tryst with destiny and Junoon is with you', he said amid thunderous applause from the audience.

His sisters asked him to get autographs from Bollywood stars Shah Rukh Khan, Salman Khan and Aishwarya Rai when they heard he was planning to come to Mumbai. 'But I was surprised when Salman Khan, Juhi Chawla and Kajol came to see me in my hotel and wanted my autographs for their sisters.'

He reiterated his desire to bring 'India and Pakistan closer through music'. On Saturday, Salman asked militants to join him in his 'Musical Jihad' to bring peace and harmony. This was in response to the UJC Chief Syed Salahuddin's request to the Pakistan government to stop them from coming here.



PHOTO: NISHCHAL PANDEY

The live performances of Junoon and The Singhs at the concert in Srinagar were greeted by thousands of cheering and waving fans. The concert took place by the Dal Lake, flanked by the lofty Zabarwan mountain range and a Sufi shrine.

DAWN

28 May 2008

EDITORIAL

BREAKING DOWN BARRIERS

MUSIC knows no boundaries, allowing its universality to transcend age-old divisions and bring strangers – even rivals – closer to one another. Which is why one should appreciate, rather than condemn, concerts such as the one staged by Pakistan’s Junoon band in Srinagar on Sunday. Considering the militaristic attitudes that have over the decades come to dominate the Kashmir question, it was not surprising to hear jihadist concerns that the rock band’s presence would send the ‘wrong message’ to the international community about India’s political status in the Valley.

However, the huge response to the band that played at the opening of the Institute of Kashmir Studies despite the death threats it had received from militants gave a different impression. Politics was forgotten as prominent South Asians, including Indian President Pratibha Patil, former Sri Lankan President Chandrika Kumaratunga and civil society representatives from Pakistan amongst others enjoyed the performance that received thunderous applause from thousands of young Kashmiris. While this was not for the first time that Pakistani musicians performed in Kashmir, Sunday’s concert, organised by the South Asia Foundation, created greater waves on account of the popularity of the band and its Sufistic message of peace.

There is no doubt that cultural exchanges, particularly in the performing arts, between India and Pakistan have been gaining momentum as part of people-to-people diplomacy. But they are especially relevant in war-scarred territories like Kashmir where there is anger against religious militants and their acts of violence as well as Indian troops that have perpetrated countless excesses on the population. Here, the people, especially the youth, need unrestricted forums to interact with those from the other side and in order to build up a non-political base for promoting peace in the region. Perhaps access of this kind will propel the governments of India and Pakistan to take a less rigid view of the situation and soften their respective political stances.



PHOTO: SHOWTIME



SOUND TRACK DIPLOMACY

NEELESH MISRA

TEN MINUTES after he landed at Srinagar airport, Chris Terry felt he was in a Will Smith action flick. The Canada-born musician who lives in New York was dazzled by the sight of the guns, the armoured cars, the camouflage, the nervous organizer shouting to the driver, 'Go! Go!' Go!' The next day was better. Terry, bassist of the Pakistani band Junoon, was on the stage and he had a familiar sight before him: thousands of youngsters screaming and cheering, singing along and swaying to popular Urdu numbers. What was unusual was the setting. In the heart of a 'war zone', the tat-tat-tat of the AK-47 was replaced by the thump of percussions on Sunday evening as something unimaginable until now played out: a Pakistani band playing in Kashmir by the Dal Lake in the presence of a frenzied audience. In the crowd there were also people from outside Kashmir who have experienced conflict – and worse: former Sri Lankan President Chandrika Kumaratunga and Afghan Minister H.B. Ghazanfar.

There were schoolgirls in headscarves, young women in jeans and designer glasses. There were students in school uniforms. Behind them, the Dal Lake looked dreamy in a film of mist, flanked by the lofty Zabarwan range. It was as picture postcard as it could get in the Kashmir Valley. One young man laughed and said, 'Why didn't these guys come 20 years ago? We wouldn't have had to take up guns!' It was a joke many in the front row would take very seriously, of course. Was this part of the peace process? Nope. It was just an enjoyable concert for youngsters craving for popular culture in Kashmir. Did people on 'both

sides – and Junoon itself – try to wrap the event up in the complex politics of the region? Oh, of course. Everything is not politics in Kashmir, but everything becomes politics here.

The United Jihad Council, a conglomerate of militant groups fighting in Kashmir, urged the Pakistani government from Pakistan-Occupied Kashmir's capital Muzaffarabad not to allow Junoon to travel to India – forgetting, of course, that the band members live in the US. On their part, the authorities in Srinagar did not throw open the event to all; they had allowed only invited guests – keeping out many who would certainly have shouted pro-freedom and pro-Pakistan slogans at the concert.

President Pratibha Patil was supposed to attend, but she stayed away despite being in Srinagar, apparently due to security concerns. 'The concert is an ... investment in peace', said the organizers from the South Asia Foundation. From attending minister, Mani Shankar Aiyar came the quote: 'People are less interested in politics; they are more into music, dance and culture. Such exchanges will ... lead to a grand reconciliation.' It is this kind of fluffy talk that has cumulatively invented perceptions that keep governments off the hook in Kashmir for not trying hard enough to ease the situation – and certainly for not trying hard enough to govern well.

Opinion leaders on both sides of the Kashmir debate have made the mistake of wrapping everything up in politics, mystery and conspiracy. And too many vested interests – from bureaucrats and separatists to the security establishment – have indirectly conspired to keep the Kashmir issue on 'auto-pilot'. It helps everyone, except the ordinary Kashmiri and the Indian taxpayer who pays crores of rupees into the region in return for no accountability.

Over the past two decades, windows of entertainment and mass social interaction for Kashmir's youth were slowly choked off by the insurgents and the government. Militants shut down cinemas, theatres and a handful of bars, calling them anti-Islamic and symbols of 'India's cultural invasion'. The government, in turn, deleted 'hanging out in the evening' from the social calendar of Kashmiris.

The overwhelming military presence, the idea of negotiating through check posts, was factored into everything from wedding timings to a romantic rendezvous.

Much of that is changing now. The Sunday concert was a sign that Kashmir is opening up. There are greater avenues for entertainment, debate and even a growing tolerance for dissent. The city is dotted with several new coffee shops. FM radio stations with chirpy female RJs are

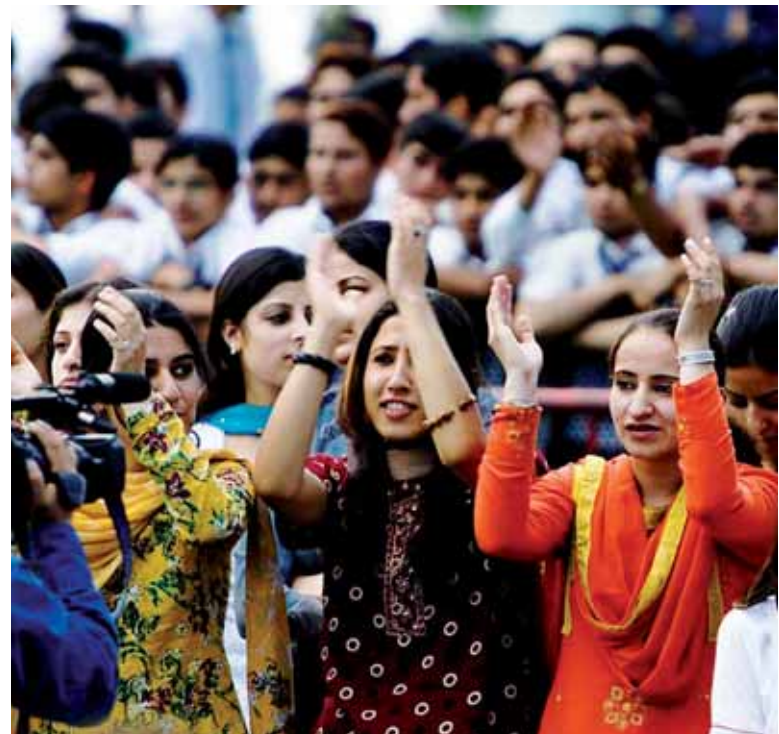
overwhelmed with calls from listeners in not just Srinagar but in faraway smaller towns. Young Kashmiris, inward-looking for decades and unwilling to leave the Valley, are now doing extremely well in jobs elsewhere in India, and overseas.

With cinemas unavailable, Kashmir turned with a vengeance to television. Indian soaps bloomed. Although Kashmiris find virtually no cultural connection or resonance with Pakistan, the existing bonds being political and religious, Pakistani plays on PTV have been a rage here – so popular that the government last month ordered that cable operators who operate PTV, Geo, Aaj, ARY etc. 'shall forthwith stop airing these channels'.

The concert had nothing to do with politics, said lead singer Ahmad to the crowd. But he later abruptly ended Junoon's hugely popular number *Mujhe Azaad Karo* to quickly move on to the next.



PHOTOS: SHAHIDUL ALAM/DRIK





FROM KASHMIR TO JERUSALEM ...

... and a UN summit en route, Junoon vocalist Salman Ahmad's music straddles many worlds 'Working in a government (Mayo) hospital in Lahore made me aware about the need to write music which heals. It also taught me to publicly speak out against injustice, poverty and violence' Salman Ahmad.

MALVIKA NANDA

It's been almost a decade since they hijacked the Indian popularity charts with their first hit *Sayonee*, but Pakistani band Junoon's work continues to enthrall music lovers on either side of the border. After performing at the Nobel Peace Prize ceremony and more recently in Kashmir, the band has now been invited by the UN Secretary-General to perform at the Global Insight Summit in the US. The original line-up of Junoon doesn't exist anymore: singer Ali Azmat is no longer with the group and the new order includes Salman Ahmad (guitar/vocals) Pandit Samir Chatterjee (tabla and backing vocals), Chris Tarry (bass) and Sunny Jain (drums and percussion). Says Ahmad, 'Junoon's been reincarnated

many times since the 90s. It's a musical passion. The current Junoon line-up is an awesome bunch of free wandering spirits'.

Ahmad is particularly excited about the performance in Kashmir, 'For me, it [Kashmir] was always the final frontier to perform'. His other ideal destination is apparently 'Jerusalem'. But for Kashmir, he feels, that the ideal song would be one of his earliest hits, '*Khudi ko kar buland itna ... kay har taqdeer sey pehlay khuda bandey sey khud poochhay bata teri raza kya hai*'. Talking on the Indo-Pak peace process, Ahmad says that peace is long overdue. 'India and Pakistan should reap the benefits of this age of connectivity. Culture, economics and the environment are all dependent on human relationships. The governments have to recognise that Indians and Pakistanis complement each other whenever they work together or indulge in healthy competition'. He adds, 'When I recorded *Ghoom Tana (infiniti)* with Shubha Mudgal, the song touched the hearts of millions of South Asians who dream of a peaceful subcontinent'.

At the Nobel Prize ceremony, Ahmad shared the stage with the likes of Alicia Keys, Annie Lennox, KT Tunstall, Earth Wind And Fire and Melissa Etheridge. 'It's these kind of musical interactions which keep pushing you to do your passionate best. It's a lot more challenging but very rewarding artistically and otherwise', says the singer, who is also collaborating with Etheridge. Commenting on it, he says: 'It is special because it merges all my influences, both Western and Oriental'. The song, *Ring The Bells*, will be out by November 2008. He has also launched HIV-AIDS awareness T-shirts with Bono's company Edun Live, branded 'Coexistence'. For someone who is also known as the Bono of South Asia, it was only a matter of time before all that activism transferred from music to life. 'Junoon as a band always had an opinion to voice and sang politically and socially relevant songs. But the band only exercised this concern in their music. Outside of Junoon, you started to take action not only musically but also on a very basic human level', says Ahmad, the teacher and artist in-residence at Queens College. Ahmad, who is also a qualified doctor, attributes this to his growing up years in Pakistan and America. He says, 'Working in a government

Salman Ahmad and his wife Samina (on his right) photographed with Junoon band members Samir Chatterjee, Chris Tarry and Sandeep Kumar Jain, after the SAF concert which took place in Srinagar on 25 May 2008.



(Mayo) hospital in Lahore made me aware about the need to write music which heals. It also taught me to publicly speak out against injustice, poverty and violence'. Ahmad will chronicle this story in an upcoming book from the *Simon & Schuster* stables. The contract has just been signed. But ask him if the activist will ever turn politician and he rubbishes any such speculation without a moment's hesitation. He says, 'I'm an artiste not a politician. I can better serve as a voice that speaks from the heart'.



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NEXT TO DAL LAKE, MUSICAL JIHAD PAKISTAN BAND, JUNOON PERFORMS IN SRINAGAR

M SALEEM PANDIT

Srinagar: The hills that have for years reverberated with gunfire, came alive with the sound of music on Sunday afternoon as Kashmiris, particularly the youth, turned up in large numbers and swayed to the rhythmic beats of Pakistani Sufi band, Junoon.

Amid resounding applause, the band, braving terrorist threats, played before a capacity crowd of about 10,000 on the banks of the Dal Lake

with the snow-capped Himalayas and a Sufi shrine forming a majestic backdrop. Junoon's fusion of western and eastern music left a discerning audience asking for more.

For the band's guitarist-cum-lyricist Salman Ahmad, the concert was their contribution towards peace building. 'Join us in a musical jihad for peace and ring the bells for harmony', he said to a responsive crowd, adding: 'We are on songs of unity, peace, joy and brotherhood; Kashmir is the perfect setting for it.' More cheers followed.

For Kashmir's youth, who have long lived under the shadow of the gun, these were moments to cherish. 'Something great happened to Kashmir after ages, and we rocked!' exclaimed Arshi Gouse, a 20-year student.



PHOTO: SHOWTIME



Kashmir University student Mudasir Ahmed, voicing the feelings of the youth, said, 'Music's a tremendous healer, and I'm sure such events will succeed in defusing hatred between India and Pakistan.' He said 'the rendering of the poetry of Maulana Rumi, Iqbal and Bulleh Shah, with rocking beats, was a great innovation.'

The musicians themselves – followers of Sufism that extols humanity's oneness with divinity – who have given such hits as 'Sayonee', 'Khudi' and 'Bulla ki jaana' were overwhelmed by the response.

Performing before Kashmiris for the first time, they furthered the Sufi vision with their renditions. "Junoon is a voice for peace and international understanding", Ahmad said.

'Music is like water and air; it has no religion. It connects the world.' Performing in Kashmir was 'a dream-come true for the band. 'I have performed all over India and always wanted to perform in Srinagar,' Ahmad said, adding there couldn't be a better setting for their kind of music than the picture-postcard Valley.

Junoon is in Kashmir at the invitation of South Asia Foundation (SAF). The concert, described as the biggest musical event in the region in nearly two decades, was dedicated to peace. Not surprisingly, many here would want an encore.



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WITH PAK'S JUNOON IN FULL BLAST KASHMIR SINGS TO PEACE, UNITY

RIYAZ WANI

THE scene was like a postcard image of Kashmir – but superimposed with visuals straight from the Woodstock music festival. As the Pakistani Sufi rock band Junoon sang its popular compositions against the backdrop of the hills and the tranquil expanse of the Dal Lake, the predominantly youthful audience went into a trance, especially when the group performed its biggest hit Sayonee. A jugalbandi with tabla maestro Pandit Samir Chatterjee also received an enthusiastic response. The crowd clapped, it roared and it sang along.

'We are all one. Beware of the people who divide', said lead singer of the band Salman Ahmad in his loaded remarks between songs. 'India and

Pakistan may be two countries but a GT Road connects us from Calcutta through Lahore to Kabul.'

The only reminder that all was not completely idyllic was the motion of an odd security boat and the occasional hovering of a helicopter.

The audience had several VIPS to merit such caution. There was the former Sri Lankan President Chandrika Kumaratunga, Union Minister Mani Shankar Aiyar, H.B. Ghazanfar, the Afghan Minister of State for Women's Affairs, Afghan Ambassador Dr Syed Makhdoom Raheen, PCC chief Saifuddin Soz and former Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister Farooq Abdullah.

And even though the Chairman of the United Jihad Council, Syed Salahuddin had denounced the concert in a statement – saying that the Pakistan Government should stop the concert to prevent India from making Kashmir look like an 'integral part' of it – it was a success. When Ahmad urged the crowd to 'sing to (Kashmir's) spirituality, to peace', the thousands of people there obeyed.



PHOTO: SHOWTIME

SRINAGAR ROCKS NOT BY BOMBS BUT BY THE SOUND OF MUSIC

By Nishchal N. Pandey

The South Asia Foundation (SAF) organized a rare concert of 'The Singhs' and the 'Junoon' groups in Srinagar in the third week of May. The very fact that such a lively performance by two well known groups of South Asia was held in Srinagar is an achievement in itself and moreover, it is a great contribution to peace and harmony in the region. Although being a scenic place to the equivalent of being called a Jannat (heaven), Kashmir is always on the news for all the wrong reasons – from bomb blasts to protest rallies. But this time, the youngsters of Srinagar in



their thousands thronged the main venue of the concert in the lawns of the convention hall well before time. They cheered, yelled and danced, notwithstanding the threats by a handful of militant groups and as the evening drew to a close it was evident that the concert had been successful in achieving one thing which years of curfew and control was unable. The young people of Kashmir are fed up with politics of hatred, militancy and division and wish to be hand in hand with their fellow friends throughout South Asia. Jeet Singh, of the 'The Singhs' group was one of the main attractions of the concert where he sang a few of his popular numbers whilst girls, some with their heads covered cheered and danced. It was a big problem for the Srinagar police as the audience was much bigger than anticipated. There were even police patrol boats in the nearby Dal Lake on standby. After that, the Pakistani group Junoon played most of its popular songs including 'Sayonee' which was also taken by the crowd with great receptiveness. This is the first time that a Pakistani rock band has played in Srinagar. A lot of VIPs including former President of Sri Lanka who also happens to be the Chairperson of the SAF-Sri Lanka chapter, Chandrika Kumaratunga, Former Chief Minister of Jammu and Kashmir, Dr. Farooq Abdullah, and a host of other dignitaries were present.

This event was preceded by the Annual SAF Governing Council meeting where past and proposed activities of the Foundation were discussed. Due to the untiring efforts of the SAF Founder UNESCO Goodwill Ambassador Madanjeet Singh, not only this concert but also a host of other activities and projects in Kashmir are currently being undertaken. For instance, the President of India inaugurated the 'Institute of Kashmir Studies' which is being established with the support of the SAF and Ambassador Madanjeet Singh. Also, a primary school building ravaged by the earthquake is being reconstructed through the generous contribution of SAF.

South Asian countries due to their mutual suspicion and occasional conflict have hindered viable economic cooperation in the region but it is due to the personal commitment of personalities such as Ambassador Singh and organizations such as the SAF, that regional cooperation and people to people contacts at all levels have been promoted in the last 7-8 years.

Rolling Stone

GUITARS FOR GUNS

ROLLING STONE: July 2008

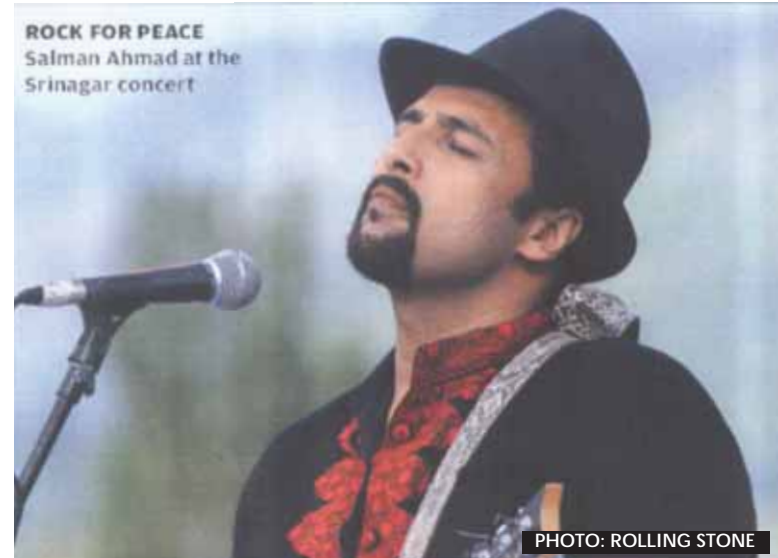
JUNOON CONQUERS HEARTS IN THE TERROR-STRICKEN VALLEY OF KASHMIR

NEHA SHARMA

Even until just a day before, uncertainty loomed over the status of the Junoon concert which was to be held on the lawns of the Sher-e-Kashmir International Convention Complex in Srinagar. Salman Ahmad and his band were rushed from the airport to their hotel in bullet-proof jeeps in light of the death threats triggered off by the culturally skewed mentality of the United Jihad Council. Ahmed recalls suggesting the idea of doing a Junoon concert at Srinagar to a couple of promoters exactly a decade ago in 1998. Of all responses, one crudely cuts through the musician's memory: 'Not in your lifetime!'

On May 25, Kashmir had what Ahmad believes to be its first ever rock concert. The concert was organised by the South Asia Foundation and SAF founder and UNESCO Goodwill Ambassador Madanjeet Singh.

The Singhs, a Boston-based band that combines bluegrass and Indian influences, opened for Junoon. Amongst the thousands that showed up in spite of the dangers involved, in attendance were a bevy of political



figures such as Farooq Abdullah, former Sri Lankan President Chandrika Kumaratunga, Indian Union Minister Mani Shankar Aiyar and Afghan Minister for Women's Affairs HB Ghazanfar and former Foreign Minister of Bangladesh Kamal Hossain. But this did not necessarily deem an officious occasion; the day remained true to rock and roll.

As the girls whirled and danced to the music with their voices searing through the peaceful valley, Abdullah is said to have surprised all by walking up to the head of police who stood at guard and urged him to dance breaking into a little jig himself. Ahmad endearingly recalls moments from the day that would inspire moist eyes – a 13 or 14 year old Kashmiri girl dodged the cops and jumped over the barbed wire that guarded the stage just to tell Ahmad that she had been dying to hear 'Sayonee' live since forever. The band which also played at the Nobel Peace Prize Concert in Oslo, played most numbers off Junoon's album *Azadi* with which the Kashmiri audience were more familiar. 'The scale and emotion of this concert and the fact that it would get such attention summed up a life-transforming experience for me. As for the United Jihad Council, I would just like to tell them, "Let's do a musical jihad instead"', says Ahmad.

OUTLOOK

JUNOON, THE SOFT-ROCKING DERVISHES FROM PAKISTAN CAME AS A RARE MUSICAL INTERLUDE

NAMRATA JOSHI

DESPITE staying in the same hotel, it proved hard to pin down Salman Ahmed – the lead singer and guitarist of the Pakistani Sufi rock group Junoon – for an interview. Faced with opposition from hardliners against his concert, he preferred to lie low, doing *riyaaz* at the crack of dawn by the peaceful expanse of Dal Lake, instead of talking to the media. But after the success of the concert, it was quite another story – Salman had become an instant celebrity, a bigger presence in the Kashmir capital than the visiting president of India. When our turn with him finally came at 2.30 am, you could hear the joy in his voice, even at that unearthly hour.

‘After performing in innumerable shows you can get jaded, till something like this comes along to energise you’, said Salman, ‘the response was totally unexpected, unprecedented’. The concert, organised by the South Asia Foundation (a secular, non-profit, non-political organisation with chapters in the eight SAARC nations), in association with the University of Kashmir, was indeed unique, the first of its kind in the two decades since militancy claimed Kashmir in 1989. There have been occasional concerts like those of Begum Akhtar and Farida Khanum but those were for the bureaucracy and officials. Junoon’s show was the first one for the public, packing in over 5,000 people. The venue at Chashm-e-Shahi made it even more memorable, with the majestic Zabarwan ranges providing a dramatic backdrop to the stage and the tranquil waters of the Dal Lake spread in front.

In this idyllic setting, Junoon’s music spoke of all the right things: peace and harmony, pluralism, unity and regional cooperation, of music transcending religion to bring people together. The political symbolism of the concert became more pronounced, given the fact that just a couple of days before the event, the United Jihad Council, the umbrella group of militant organisations, had passed a resolution against the show. Their leader Syed Salahuddin had urged the Pakistan government to stop Junoon’s performance since it would have a negative impact on the ‘disputed status’ of Kashmir and send a wrong signal to the international community that ‘Kashmir was an integral part of India’.

Salman’s response was to dub his show a ‘jihad for peace’. ‘It’s about waging a war through the guitar rather than the gun’, he said. ‘Both sides of the border, we have been demonising the other, but music is a universal emotion and the success of Pakistani musicians in India, like Atif Aslam, Strings and Jal, shows another way to take the peace process forward’, he added. ‘We have begun something, now it’s for others to take it forward’, said Union minister Mani Shankar Aiyar who heads the India chapter of South Asia Foundation (SAF).

Junoon’s concert had cultural significance as well: it marked the opening of the Institute of Kashmir Studies at the University of Kashmir, which aims to revive the region’s rich and distinctive culture. But more than



political-cultural issues, the concert's real significance was in the way it reached out to young Kashmiris. They flocked to the venue in hordes, stood for hours in long queues; patiently bore with rigorous security checks and the scorching sun. But none of this dampened their enthusiasm. In fact, it came as a rare relief from the tensions and tedium of their daily lives.

For the young, the concert came as a rare relief from their limited world. And they seized the moment. 'The boys here have been facing bullets in the last 20 years and the girls have hardly seen anything of life', observed a local journalist. Indeed, youngsters in Srinagar have very few options for entertainment other than watching TV or DVDs. There are no malls, multiplexes or clubs. 'We carry our music and spend time listening to it by the lake' said Rashid, a student at Kashmir University.

In such a limited and limiting world, the concert was a release, especially for the girls. And they seized the moment with gusto. They sat quietly as the concert began, gently moving their hands to the tunes. By the time Salman began playing the hot favourite, Sayonee, they were up on their feet, clapping, dancing and whistling in happy abandon. What helped was the fact that Junoon's is the kind of music they could instantly connect with. It was their language, their concerns and feelings, be it *Meri awaaz suno, mujhe azaad karo oh Yaaro yehi dosti hai*; Iqbal's *Khudi ko kar bulund itna* or Bulle Shah's *Mandir dha de, masjid dha de*.

'We want more such events here', said college student Aban Mullick. The environment certainly seems conducive at the moment for fostering a lively youth culture. The town might look as though it is under siege, bathed in army hues of olive green and khaki, but Srinagar has been peaceful for a while now. The economy is looking up a little with tourists from Gujarat, south India and Bengal cavorting in the Mughal Gardens and posing for pictures in *shikaras*. Life seems normal but the underlying unease is also palpable. One incident can tilt the balance – that's the unspoken fear.

And though the young may have lost themselves happily in Junoon's music for an evening, their frustration at the lack of opportunities in the Valley remains. The concert was but a glimpse of a normal, vibrant world, that's still a long way out of their reach.

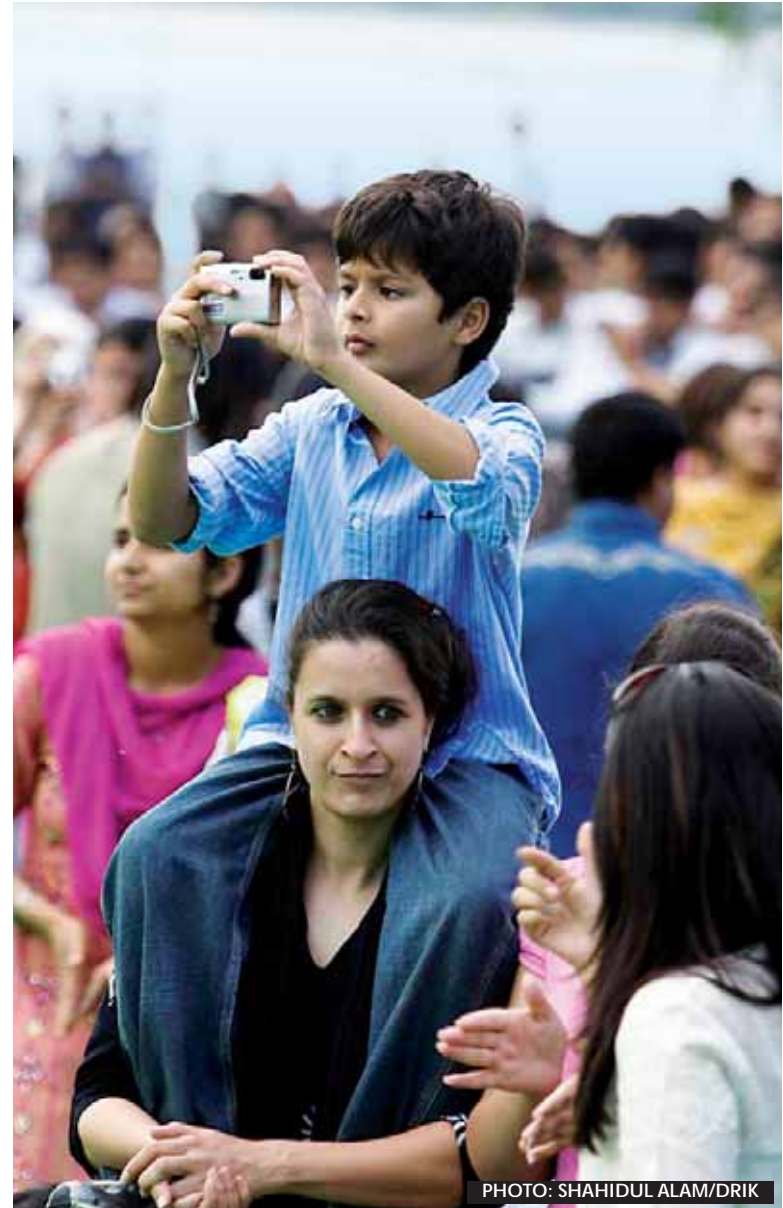


PHOTO: SHAHIDUL ALAM/DRIK

RAYS OF MUSIC

OUTLOOK: 9 June 2008

TARIQ BHAT

As the guitar riffed and the sufi rock band sang its chartbuster *Sayonee*, the young in the crowd went into an inexplicable frenzy. Unmindful of the uptight culture and the security concerns, the girls and boys shrieked with joy as music cut through the eerie silence of gloom in the Valley.

They sang along, hands swinging with the music, and hair flowing in the soft breeze coming from Dal Lake nearby. Some stayed close to the stage to catch a glimpse of Salman Ahmad, the lead singer of Pakistani band Junoon, which was performing at the Sher-i-Kashmir International Conference Centre.

The event was organised by the South Asia Foundation (SAF), and despite Syed Salahuddin-led United Jihad Council and Hurriyat hawk Syed

Ali Shah Geelani condemning it as untimely, things went off smoothly with 10,000 invitees taking part. Among them were former Sri Lankan President Chandrika Kumaratunga, Afghan Minister for Women's Affairs, Dr. Ghzanfar, Bollywood actor Milind Soman and National Conference Patron Farooq Abdullah. While it was the joy of coming back to Kashmir after 12 years for Soman, for Abdullah, the band's choice of songs indicated the change of trends. 'I prefer ghazals, which is now fast losing its charm', he said. But the youngsters couldn't be bothered about changing trends or the hovering around of a helicopter and a security boat to keep an eye as Junoon belted out *Yaro Yehi To Zindagi Hai*, *Meri Awaz Suna*, *Khudi Ko Kar Buland Itna*, *Sayonee*, *Damaadam Mast Qalander* and *Allah Hu*.

Junoon, too, got more than it had asked for. 'Performing in Kashmir is a dream come true. I promise to perform here next year,' said Salman Ahmad. Junoon may or may not keep its word. But, for once, the Valley did resound with musical notes rather than wild cries of fear and gunshots.



The performance of The Singhs was followed by Junoon, led by Salman Ahmed, who lifted the concert to an incredible climax.

Tehelka

KASHMIRIYAT BLOOMING

A NEW RESEARCH INSTITUTE BY SOUTH ASIA FOUNDATION PROMISES TO GIVE A FRESH LEASE OF LIFE TO THE RICH BUT ENDANGERED SUFI CULTURE OF KASHMIR

‘Only culture will stop violence, and not the army’, says Madanjeet Singh, UNESCO Goodwill Ambassador.

THE THOUGHT had been lurking for as many as sixty years. Then, traumatized by the Partition, UNESCO Goodwill Ambassador Madanjeet Singh, who had witnessed bloodshed on both sides had been influenced by an illiterate Muslim labourer. It was in Kashmir that he first became aware of the influence and power of oral folk culture. Aasi, a ‘coolie poet’, made ends meet through menial jobs, and walked the streets narrating poems. Then, way back in 1948, Aasi’s secular poetry had inspired the Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists and Sikhs to form a cultural front to resist the brutal attack by tribesmen who had invaded the Kashmir valley.

Sixty years later, Madanjeet Singh is trying to apply the same balm. A student of Government College, Lahore, who hails from Uri – a border district in Kashmir – Singh believes that culture will provide the antidote to the violence and intolerance that has ravaged the Valley over the last two decades. As founder of the South Asia Foundation (SAF), 84-year old Singh was back in Kashmir to open the Institute of Kashmir Studies, where he hopes students from SAARC countries, including Pakistan will come and learn about Sufi culture. Former military dictator Zia ul Haq changed that in Pakistan and the myriad militant groups punctured holes into Kashmiriyat in India. ‘Only culture will stop violence, not the army’, asserts Singh whose Foundation has also been recognized as an apex body

of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC). Kashmir certainly can do with a lot of help. There are many silent Aasis, who like the labourer-poet, are devotees of Hazrat Nuruddin Nurani – or Nund Rishi – Kashmir’s patron Sufi saint whose shrine used to have a temple on one floor and a mosque on another. That is, in effect, the essence of Kashmiriyat – slowly but surely chipped away in the last two decades, since the gun culture took root.

The spirit resurfaced and floated across the picturesque Dal Lake last week when Salman Ahmad, founder of the Sufi-rock band, Junoon, strummed his guitar and enthralled a 15,000-strong crowd with various songs including, *Meri Awaz Suno, Mujhe Azad Karo*. Before he lent voice to words, Ahmad invited the militants to join his ‘musical jihad’. Kashmir Governor, Lt Gen (Retd) SK Sinha, while speaking at the inauguration of the Institute of Kashmir Studies also said, ‘We feel very encouraged to find that music transcends boundaries and can be used to launch a jihad for peace, transcending boundaries and bitterness of the past.’



PHOTO: KASHMIR UNIVERSITY



The Institute is only one amongst many of Madanjeet Singh's passions. It is the latest of eight institutions of excellence which SAF is in the process of establishing in SAARC countries. But Kashmir is where Singh has set his heart. His desire is to rekindle Sufism, which has been overtaken by Islamic fundamentalism. He has tried to make a difference through culture in other countries too. As with the Institute of Kashmir Studies, in Afghanistan SAF pledged 1 million US dollars to the

UNESCO Madanjeet Singh Institute after the Bamiyan Buddhas were destroyed by the Taliban. He also, for the first time, brought an exhibition of Afghan women painters from Kabul to Kashmir. In Bangladesh, he is in the process of forming a research center in South Asian Common Law, and in Bhutan, he is upgrading the SAARC Forestry Centre.

Madanjeet Singh is clear about his mission: that suppression of culture can't stop music from transcending national boundaries.

Musicians from India and Pakistan performed on the same stage in an unprecedented concert to celebrate the inauguration of the Institute of Kashmir Studies in Srinagar on 26 May 2008.









The proposal to establish an Institute of Kashmir Studies was first mooted in 1948 by the members of the Kashmir Cultural Front. Besides Madanjeet Singh, it comprised Navtej Singh, Khawaja Ahmad Abbas, Rajinder Singh Bedi, Shivdan Chauhan and several Kashmiri writers and poets including Arif, Premnath Pardesi and Somenath Zutshi.



At the Governor's dinner in honour of the visiting President of India, I was very kindly invited to sit next to President Pratibha Patil. During our conversation, I related to her how I had come to Srinagar at the time of the invasion of Kashmir by Kabaili (*Pathan*) tribesmen from newly created Pakistan. These gangsters had entered Kashmir at Domel, ransacked Uri – my ancestral home – and had continued to advance towards Srinagar, looting, pillaging and raping along the way. It was only when the invaders reached Baramula that Maharaja Hari Singh signed the Instrument of Accession to the Indian Union, on 26 October 1947.

I reached Srinagar in December along with a group of foreign correspondents that included the French photographer, Cartier-Bresson, and his vivacious Indonesian wife. By then, the Indian army had secured Srinagar airport and the tribesmen were in full retreat from Baramula. Khawaja Ahmad Abbas, the veteran Indian journalist, happened to be at the airport when I arrived and as he drove me into town, he told me that had the invaders advanced directly to Srinagar they would have easily captured the airfield. Instead they were more interested in looting, murdering and burning towns with unbelievable savagery. He accompanied me to the riverside government guesthouse, where I met a number of old friends including Navtej, the son of *Preet Lari* editor Gurbaksh Singh, the distinguished short-story writer Rajinder Singh Bedi, and a number of Kashmiri writers and poets, such as Premnath Pardesi, Somenath Zutshi and Arif, the author of several poems and short stories. I was especially excited to meet with the 'coolie poet', Aasi – a common labourer with a charismatic personality, who represented Kashmir's grassroots secular culture. He had orally composed, in Kashmiri, a series of beautiful poems on the theme of communal harmony.

Walking through the debris that lay in the streets of Uri, Madanjeet Singh tried to locate his ancestral home. It was as if an earthquake had shaken the place, not a single building was left standing. He wondered why the tribal gangsters ransacked houses after looting and killing their owners.

Among the guests was also Shivdan Chauhan, the well-known Hindi scholar and critic, who had arrived about a month earlier with the 'Progressive Writers' delegation, and had stayed on to help organize the National Cultural Front. He was working on an ambitious project to compile a cultural history of Kashmir. At one of the weekly meetings he described a primitive form of democracy that existed in certain areas of the valley, where voting was compulsory for community leaders and panchayat officials. Our stimulating talks and discussions highlighted Kashmir's Sufi culture in particular.

A number of Kashmiri artists, such as Bhat, Kaul and Somnath, were among the active members of the Cultural Front. They exhibited their works of art, jointly with Raza, a Muslim from Bombay, a Hindu called Anand and Amar Singh, a Sikh, both from Amritsar. Sheila Bhatia of Lahore fame, also inspired Kashmiri women from all the communities with her folk songs and plays. Mahatma Gandhi had visited Srinagar in October 1947, and seen for himself this remarkable cultural interaction and communal harmony, which later prompted his comment: "In the darkness engulfing the subcontinent the only ray of light came from Kashmir".



PHOTOS: MADANJEET SINGH



Whether working in the farms or tending their children, the Kashmiri peasants inspired Madanjeet Singh as much as the boatmen who wanted to live in peace and harmony with all the communities in the beautiful surroundings of Kashmir.

A year later, I exhibited about a hundred photographs taken during this crucial period of Kashmir's history at the All-India Fine Art and Crafts Society, New Delhi. The exhibition was inaugurated by Sheikh Abdullah who thanked me for my efforts in helping to organize the Kashmir Cultural Front under such difficult conditions. The Kashmir exhibition was widely covered by the media, including *The Statesman* and *The Hindustan Times*, which generated a lot of public interest, and the exhibition was extended for a further two weeks.



Walking along the banks of Dal lake and the River Jhelum, Madanjeet Singh was enchanted by the charming Kashmiri children as a little girl chewing a straw (left), and the girl rowing a shikara in her Kashmiri costume (right).



PHOTO: MADANJEET SINGH

The determination to stop the advance of tribal invaders from Pakistan was clearly written on the faces of Kashmiri boys carrying sticks and wearing paper caps, as they paraded with their elders through the streets of Srinagar.

ABDULLAH OPENS EXHIBITION OF PHOTOGRAPHS

By a staff reporter

Opening an exhibition of photographs by Mr. Madanjeet Singh, at New Delhi, Sheikh Abdullah, Premier of Jammu and Kashmir, said that the artist was one, who out of love of the Kashmiris, had come to help build up the Kashmir Cultural Front in Srinagar last year.

He added: 'I greatly appreciate Madanjeet Singh's efforts as well as the activities of the Society under the auspicious of which today's exhibition is being held. The artist's contribution to the culture of peace and the functions of the Society have attracted the attention of the world to our neighbour Pakistan trying to force its will on Kashmir.'

About 100 photographs, neatly arranged and excellently presented give an accurate impression of Kashmir's struggle. Mr. Madanjeet Singh has taken great pains to combine the artistic and the topical. Each photograph, in fact, is a story by itself. The artist is a great exponent of light and shadow technique. The artistic effects in his black-and-white photographs are essentially obtained by contrast.

One of the best of India's photographers his works of art are already known through earlier exhibitions in Delhi, especially the one on 'Peace Campaign', visited last year by Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru at the All-India Fine Arts and Crafts Society.

The Statesman; November 1948

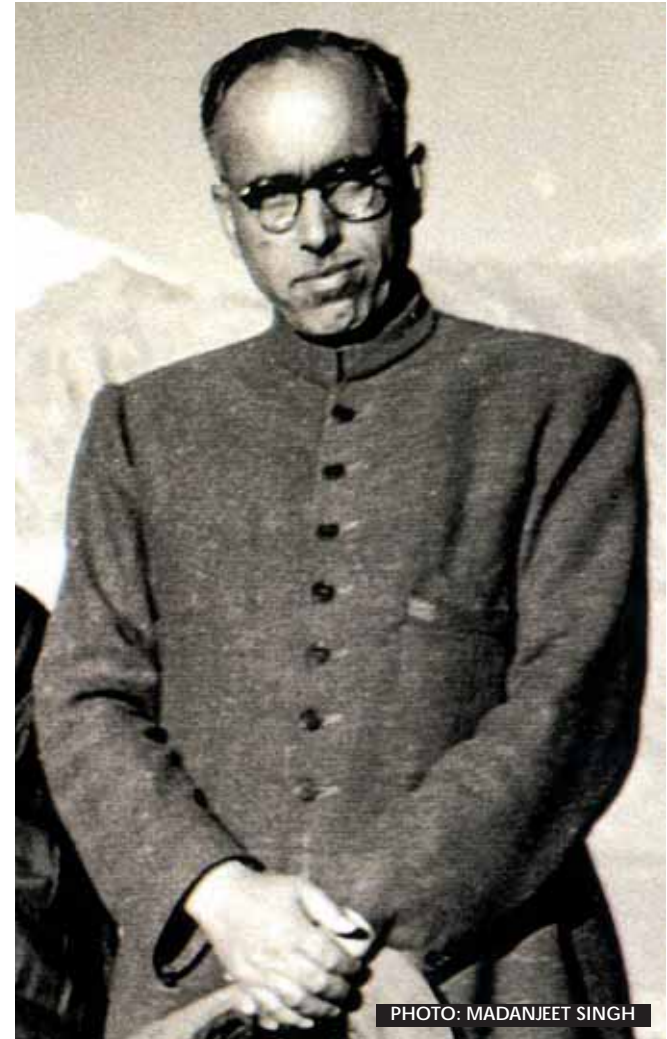


PHOTO: MADANJEET SINGH

Sheikh Abdullah became the first Premier of Jammu & Kashmir after Maharaja Hari Singh signed the Instrument of Accession to the Indian Union on 26 October 1947. The formation of the Kashmir Cultural Front in 1948 was a part of the defensive measures he took to involve the people in resisting the aggressors.



Mme Chandrika Kumaratunga, Chairperson of the SAF-Sri Lanka chapter, with SAF Founder and UNESCO Goodwill Ambassador Madanjeet Singh as they awaited the arrival of President Pratibha Devisingh Patil. The theme of the meeting was symbolized by large images of the 'coolie poet' Aasi, projected on a screen and around the walls of the auditorium.



ADDRESS BY SHRI S. K. SINHA, FORMER J&K GOVERNOR AND CHANCELLOR OF THE UNIVERSITY OF KASHMIR

Your Excellency the President of our Republic, Shrimati Pratibha Devisingh Patil, Honourable Chief Minister Jenab Ghulam Nabi Azad, Hon. Dr. H. B. Ghazanfar, Afghanistan's Women Affair Minister, Mme. Chandrika Kumaratunga, Chairperson, SAF-Sri Lanka chapter, UNESCO Goodwill Ambassador Madanjeet Singh, Professor Riyaz Punjabi, Vice Chancellor, University of Kashmir, and distinguished delegates from South Asian countries, Ladies and Gentlemen.

Today is indeed a very memorable day in the history of the University of Kashmir when Her Excellency the President of India is with us for the inauguration of our Institute of Kashmir Studies. We are also extremely fortunate that we have a galaxy of such distinguished people from all the eight South Asian Countries. This day will long be remembered as a red letter day for our University and also for the State of Jammu and Kashmir.

Some three years ago I set up a Centre for Kashmir Studies in Kashmir University. We obtained a grant of Rs one crore from the Government of India for the purpose. This Centre has been promoting the cultural heritage of Kashmir, in all its aspects. The Centre has been holding national and international seminars. Apart from scholars from different parts of our country, we had participants from Pakistan and Central Asian Republics, with whom we share old historical and cultural ties. I discovered that the University of Lahore already had a Department of Kashmiriyat, before we set up our Centre for Kashmir Studies.

The inaugural ceremony began with the singing of the Indian national anthem as President Patil stood to attention with (left to right) J&K Chief Minister Ghulam Nabi Azad, Governor Lt. Gen (Retd) S.K. Sinha and UNESCO Goodwill Ambassador Madanjeet Singh.

I had occasion to interact with UN Goodwill Ambassador and Founder Trustee of South Asian Foundation, Shri Madanjeet Singh. He was very enthusiastic about our project. We decided to upgrade and reorganise our Centre of Kashmir Studies and also expand its activities to cover all the South Asian Countries. We entered into a Memorandum of Understanding with the South Asia Foundation which has promised us a grant of Rs. four crores. The Centre has been registered as an autonomous institution and redesignated as the Institute of Kashmir Studies. It is our great good fortune today that the President of our Republic is here to inaugurate this Institute.

It is a coincidence that two of us who now belong to the rare breed of the Eighties witnessed Kashmiriyat in action in October 1947, here in this city of Srinagar, are present in this auditorium. We saw different perspectives of Kashmiriyat in action at that time in Srinagar. We had not met in those days. More than half a century later we met for the first time here in Srinagar, Shri Madanjeet Singh as a UN Goodwill Ambassador and I as Governor of Jammu and Kashmir. We have collaborated in setting up this Institute with new Terms of Reference. I have mentioned that we had a glimpse of different perspectives of Kashmiriyat in October 1947. That was the time when tribal raiders from Pakistan led by Maj General Akbar Khan of Pakistan Army, had invaded this State. They had captured the town of Baramulla a mere 30 miles from the city of Srinagar. Baramulla had been subjected to the most horrendous orgy of violence and it was feared that the city of Srinagar may be subjected to a similar fate. Shri Madanjeet Singh tells us, that in those days, there was an illiterate labourer, Aasi, who composed songs and sang them in the streets of Srinagar. His songs boosted the morale of the people of this City and went a long way to prevent panic. I did not have the good fortune of meeting or knowing of Aasi at that time. I learnt about him much later from Shri Madanjeet Singh. We are happy to show you the picture of that labourer poet on the screen here. This Institute of Kashmir Studies is compiling a booklet of his songs so that they may be available to the present and future generations of Kashmiris.

The glimpse that I got of Kashmiriyat in October 1947 was from a different angle. As a Major in the Army, I had been involved in combating the fury of communal violence during the Partition Holocaust, in which thousands were killed and millions got uprooted. And then suddenly on the afternoon of 26 October 1947, we were told that the Army had to go to Kashmir the next day, to rescue the people from ravages of a brutal and barbaric invasion. I landed in Srinagar with the first lot of troops as the Operation Staff Officer of the controlling headquarters tasked to conduct operations in Kashmir. Our priority task was to defeat the tribal raiders and our subsidiary task was to ensure law and order in Srinagar. The Maharaja and senior officials of the State had fled from Srinagar and had gone to Jammu. I was sent from the airport to the city to assess the situation. There were then hardly any buildings or habitation between the airport and the city for about 15 kilometers, till one crossed the Zero Bridge. As I entered the city I found National Conference volunteers maintaining order in the city. There was no communal tension and no communal violence. The city reverberated to the slogan of *Hamlawar Khabardar, Ham Kashmiri Hindu Muslim Sikh Tayaar*. (Invaders beware: We Kashmiri Hindus Muslims and Sikhs are prepared).

It is pertinent to recall the words of the Father of our Nation in those dark days of the history of our Sub-Continent. That apostle of peace who was broken and disillusioned with the Holocaust of that time, wrote, 'I see a ray of hope in Kashmir'. We have set up this Institute of Kashmir Studies to make his vision of hope into reality. Today from the ancient city of Srinagar

founded by Emperor Ashoka, the unique Prince of Peace in the history of mankind and from the city where over a millennium later, the great liberal and popular Bud Shah ruled, are striving to get that light of hope, and illuminate the world. Kashmir has been called the 'Paradise on Earth'. Kashmiriyat embodied in amity and brotherhood is the message of Paradise. We want to spread this message far and wide, not only all over South Asia but also all over the world. That is an ideal towards, which I urge the Institute of Kashmir Studies to strive for ever and for ever.

We feel very encouraged to find that music transcends boundaries and can be used to launch a Jihad for peace transcending boundaries and bitterness of the past. The Junoon Band from Pakistan enthralled thousands at the function in SKICC grounds at Srinagar yesterday.

I once again thank Her Excellency the President of India, participants from all over South Asia and the distinguished assemblage in this auditorium for their august presence amongst us on this historic occasion. Thank you all very much.



PHOTO: FRANCE MARQUET

**ADDRESS BY FORMER J&K CHIEF MINISTER GHULAM NABI AZAD
PRO-CHANCELLOR, UNIVERSITY OF KASHMIR**

Shrimati Pratibha Devisingh Patil Her Excellency, the President of India, Lt. Gen. (Retd), S. K. Sinha His Excellency the Governor, J&K, Excellency Madam Chandrika Kumaratunga Bandaranike, former President of Sri Lanka, Dr. H. B. Ghazanfar, Women Affairs Minister, Afghanistan, Shri Mani Shankar Aiyar, Union Minister for Panchayati Raj, Prof. Saifuddin Soz, Union Minister for Water Resources, Prof. Riyaz Punjabi, Vice Chancellor, University of Kashmir, Shri Madanjeet Singh, UNESCO Goodwill Ambassador, Dignitaries from the SAARC countries, Delegates of the South Asia Foundation, Academicians, intellectuals, Ladies and Gentlemen,

As alumnus and Pro-Chancellor of Kashmir University, I feel great pleasure and honour to welcome you all, to this beautiful land, also known as the Paradise on Earth.

I am highly thankful to you, Madam President, for sparing your precious time and being with us here today, to inaugurate the Institute of Kashmir Studies. Your presence has made the occasion all the more significant for us.

The presence of international personalities like Madam Chandrika Kumaratunga Bandaranike and Dr. H.B. Ghazanfar amidst us here today speaks volumes about the importance attached to the launching of the Institute of Kashmir Studies.

I welcome you both on behalf of the Government of Jammu & Kashmir and on my own behalf.

I would also like to profusely thank Mr. Madanjeet Singh for his support in setting-up the Institute of Kashmir Studies. He has been helping us in some other projects and deserves our heartfelt appreciation.

Distinguished Guests, Kashmir has always attracted poets, scholars and mystics who saw in this land a perfect place to pursue their vocation. Kings and common people have turned versifiers in eulogizing the Valley and its physical features. He who came here once, yearns to come again and again. Emperor Jahangir, when asked about his last wish while on the deathbed, drew out a deep sigh and said, '*Kashmir, digar haich*, Kashmir – the rest is meaningless'. His son and successor, Shah Jahan, who was ill and away from Kashmir once recited a couplet saying to the Almighty, 'Adam ate the wheat and was driven out of Paradise, I took only barley water, O God take me to Kashmir'.

In the words of Walter Lawrence:

There is sport varied and excellent;
there is scenery for the artist and the layman,
mountains for the mountaineer,
flowers for the botanist,
a vast field for the geologist
and magnificent ruins for the archaeologist.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The Kashmir University campus where we have assembled today is perhaps the most beautiful campus in the country, situated, as it is, on the banks of the famous Dal Lake which itself lies in the lap of the enchanting Zabarwan mountain range, and in the close neighbourhood of the most revered shrine of Hazratbal housing the sacred relic of Prophet Muhammad (Peace Be Upon Him). The spiritual light emanating from here adds a glow to the academic atmosphere in the University.

Distinguished Guests, The University of Kashmir had a humble beginning in 1948 immediately after Independence. However, the university was formally established in 1956. The University has come a long way to its present status, where it has developed into a multi-faculty university. It has earned a name for scholarship and knowledge and is reckoned as one of the leading universities of the country. Its alumni are spread the world over, serving as doctors, engineers, scientists and technocrats.

I am confident that the new leadership in the person of the Vice-Chancellor, Prof. Dr. Riyaz Punjabi, who, like myself, is the alumnus of this institution, and his team would take the university to newer heights of knowledge and scholarship. I am confident, that the University would always prove worthy of its own motto *Mina Zulmaati Ilun Noor*, meaning 'From Darkness to Light'. Your Excellency, Kashmir has the unique distinction of having the world's oldest recorded history dating back 5000 years. The *Rajatarangini*, written by our own Kalhan Pandit, serves as a perennial source of information and inspiration for historians all over the world. This great treasure of ours speaks of the value the people of this land have always attached to learning and knowledge. We, as the inheritors of this great legacy, are conscious of the rich civilization that Kashmir had been. The mountains and river valleys throw-up lot of evidence of man's presence here, in the prehistoric era. The discovery of stone tools and implements add credence to this evidence. A few kilometres from this campus is the pre-Harrapan site of Burzahome where man lived in complete harmony with nature as a pit dweller. A little distance away from the Dal Lake is Harwan, the site of the 3rd International Buddhist Conference held by Kanishka.

In ancient Kashmir, Shaivism and Buddhism flourished in complete harmony with each other and when Islam arrived here in 14th century AD, it did not meet with any resistance as the people of this land had learnt over centuries to assimilate what is good in other religions. The interface of different religions gave birth to a new society whose defining identity was tolerance, amity and unconditional surrender to knowledge and wisdom. This unique identity is also known as *Kashmiriyat* and stands for the sublime and higher values of humanity. Laleshwari and Sheikh Nooruddin Noorani are the embodiments of this identity. While the former, a Hindu mystic, was Lal Ded for her Muslim fellow citizens, the latter, a great Muslim saint, was revered by Hindus as Nund Rishi.

It is through this firm belief in the cardinal principles of tolerance and amity and the urge for seeking knowledge and wisdom, that Kashmir has withstood many a tribulation and turmoil over the centuries. People have found in these values the strength, to dispel the clouds of darkness and triumph over the odds. A whole civilizational history is on my side when I say that Kashmir has never, and would never, compromise on the principles of peace and tolerance. It is embedded in the soul of this land and has helped the people to rise stronger from every ordeal. They have again proved this by successfully surmounting the long period of violence and bloodshed spanning past about two decades.

As I said, Kashmir is an interesting subject for scholars and researchers. There is variety and richness that intrigues a seeker of knowledge. The rich cultural heritage of Kashmir beckons students and research scholars to unearth this vast treasure and build upon it in terms of knowledge and scholarship. The setting up of the Institute of Kashmir Studies is a significant step in this direction. I am hopeful, that the Institute would serve as a beacon for scholars and interested people from far and wide, to learn about Kashmir, its history, culture and the intellectual treasure of its people.

I extend my warm greetings to the Vice-Chancellor and the faculty of the University of Kashmir on this important occasion and wish them success in their striving to make this institution one of the best seats of learning and knowledge.

I once again thank Her Excellency, the President of India, Smt. Pratibha Devisingh Patil for gracing the occasion and conceding to our request to inaugurate the Institute of Kashmir Studies.



PHOTO: SHAHIDUL ALAM/DRIK

WELCOME ADDRESS BY PROF. RIYAZ PUNJABI, VICE CHANCELLOR, UNIVERSITY OF KASHMIR

Your Excellency Smt. Pratibha Devisingh Patil, Hon'ble President of India, His Excellency the Governor of J&K State and Chancellor, University of Kashmir Lt. Gen. (Rtd.) Shri. S.K. Sinha, Hon'ble Chief Minister of J&K State and Pro-Chancellor, University of Kashmir Mr. Ghulam Nabi Azad, Hon'ble Union Minister of Panchayati Raj, Mr. Mani Shankar Aiyar, Hon'ble Union Minister of Water Resources, Prof. Saifuddin Soz, Excellency Chandrika Kumaratunga, Dr. Farooq Abdullah, Esteemed Minister of Women's Affairs Govt. of Islamic Democratic Republic of Afghanistan, Dr. Hassan Bano Ghazanfar, Diplomats, Vice-Chancellors and other Dignitaries from the SAARC countries, Heads of Faculties, Departments, Professors and students of University of Kashmir, and Esteemed members of Civil Society.

I heartily welcome you to this inaugural function of the Institute of Kashmir Studies in our University. We are overwhelmed with the presence of Her Excellency Hon'ble President of India. On behalf of University of Kashmir, I express my deep gratitude to her for being with us today.

I take this opportunity to briefly introduce Kashmir University to you. The picturesque location of the University of Kashmir has endowed it with a unique ambience. The University is situated in the lap of a majestic range of hills on its eastern side and on its northwestern side it is being overlooked by Hariparbat hillock. It is worth mentioning here that this hillock houses the temple of the legendary Chakreshwari Devi on one side and the shrine of Sheikh Hamza Mukhdoom on the other and on its foothills is situated Guruduwara Chatipadshahi – the memorial to commemorate the visit of the 6th Sikh Guru to Kashmir. The reverberations of the recitations in the name of Allah are heard here from all around from dawn to dusk. This ambience of its surroundings is reflected in the functioning of the University in every respect.

Kashmir has a tradition of great scholarship and learning. Prominent Kashmiri scholars and philosophers have made great contributions to Indian philosophy and culture. Kashmir has also the pride of holding international conferences and setting up Sharda-Peethas thousands of years ago. Following this tradition of knowledge and learning, the University of Kashmir has been making immense contributions in different fields of knowledge. Our university, which is more than 55 years old now, while nurturing its glorious historical values of the past, has embraced new trends and is meeting new challenges of modern times in its pursuit of academic and research activities. The University of Kashmir comprising 11 faculties, 35 departments and 15 centres of educational and scientific research has emerged as a premier institution of learning. The university has established a network of 120 constituent, affiliated and professional colleges in the State of Jammu & Kashmir. The University offers a wide spectrum of 172 academic and professional courses through formal and non-formal modes of education. The University of Kashmir, accredited as a 'Grade-A' University by the National Assessment Accreditation Council (NAAC), is marching ahead on the path of expansion and excellence. The university has an academic record of excellence in research and a grant of special financial assistance through various programmes provided by the national research and funding agencies which provide illustration to the point. The university has signed a number of MoUs with several institutions at the national and

international levels to foster close academic and cultural collaboration in various academic ventures of mutual interest. We are pledged to establishing a vibrant knowledge society in Kashmir.

The Institute of Kashmir Studies which is being inaugurated today will be another vibrant centre of research of Kashmir University. It may be mentioned here that various departments in the university have made commendable contributions towards studies on the history and culture of Kashmir. However, there has been a great urgency in setting up an Institute to undertake a focused study on varied aspects of Kashmir including its history, culture, sociology and its great contribution in strengthening the Sufi-Bhakti-Rishi tradition of the sub-continent. Kashmir has been the torch bearer in providing a paradigm of multi-culturalism, interfaith dialogue, and has always provided a vast space for co-existence of different religions and faiths. Thus reinvigorating the spiritual strength of Kashmir and connecting it with similar thought processes, values and practices in South-Asia in particular and other parts of the world in general assumes a great priority. I am confident that the Institute will undertake this gigantic but meaningful task of re-connecting Kashmir with the neighbouring regions with whom it has enjoyed cultural, philosophical and commercial relations in the past.

I acknowledge with gratitude the contribution made by the Chancellor of Kashmir University, Lt. Gen. (Rtd.) Shri. S. K. Sinha, in taking a keen interest in setting up this Institute of wider educational and research dimensions. We are equally grateful to Hon'ble Pro-Chancellor of Kashmir University, Mr. Ghulam Nabi Azad, who has provided required assistance and guidance not only in establishing this Institute but for other ventures which have also been undertaken by the University.

I take this opportunity to express my profound gratitude to Mr. Madanjeet Singh, Founder and Chairman of South Asia Foundation, and UNESCO Goodwill Ambassador, who, in view of his great concern for promoting the values of peace and brotherhood, provided generous financial support to establish the Institute of Kashmir Studies. We are equally grateful to Chairman, SAF India Chapter, Mr. Mani Shankar Aiyar for his keen interest in setting up the Institute of Kashmir Studies. We are grateful to Prof. Saifuddin Soz, Hon'ble Union Minister of Water Resources and our former colleague in the University, Dr. Farooq Abdullah and Mr. Mufti Mohammad Sayeed, our former Chief Ministers, for their keen interest in the development of this University and the Institute of Kashmir Studies.

We are indeed grateful to the Hon'ble Prime Minister of India who has expressed his pleasure about the inauguration of Institute of Kashmir Studies. I take this opportunity to present before you the message sent to us by the Hon'ble Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh (see page 9).

The University of Kashmir is much obliged to Mr. Koichiro Matsuura, Director-General of UNESCO for the message sent to the Institute of Kashmir Studies and extending cooperation in order to strengthen the objectives and activities of the Institute (*see page 7*).

May I once again express my heartfelt thanks to Her Excellency the Hon'ble President of India. On behalf of the University of Kashmir, I express my deep gratitude to her and all the distinguished guests for being with us today.



SPEECH BY PRESIDENT OF INDIA, SHRIMATI PRATIBHA DEVISINGH PATIL, AT THE INAUGURATION OF THE INSTITUTE OF KASHMIR STUDIES, UNIVERSITY OF KASHMIR

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am happy to participate in the inaugural function of the Institute of Kashmir Studies at Kashmir University. I would like to congratulate all those who have been involved in its inception and wish them success.

Kashmir has had a rich and vibrant cultural history and a tradition of learning and scholarly pursuit since times immemorial. Its enchanting beauty has attracted thinkers and philosophers, seers and sages, kings and noblemen, travellers and traders, from far and wide. Through the ages, it has been a melting pot of ideas, which have been distilled into the finest traditions of learning, tolerance and cultural cohesion. Whether be it Islam, Hinduism, Sikhism or Buddhism, all these religions have for centuries been a part of the spiritual landscape of the State.



All this has evolved into the unique concept of 'Kashmiriyat', the cohesive historical-cultural identity of the people of the State, which represents an ethos of liberal values, religious and social harmony, mutual co-existence and brotherhood. It reflects the contributions made by thinkers and men of letters like Charak, Bhartrihari, Bilhana and Kalhana and saints and sages called Rishis and Sufis, in whose name Kashmir is still known as 'Reshiwari' or abode of Rishis. Spiritual thinkers such as Lal Ded and Nund Rishi spread the message of love, tolerance and compassion, which left a deep imprint on the lives of the people of Jammu and Kashmir. Their legacy, over a period of time has etched itself so much into the collective consciousness of the region, that it cannot be eroded. Kashmiriyat is a living legacy. It has withstood the test of time, and it is now for us to continue to nurture it so that it is preserved for future generations.

The Institute of Kashmir Studies, in a sense, continues this rich tradition of learning and scholarship. I congratulate all those who have worked towards the setting up of this Institute. I hope that it will contribute to the study and assimilation of knowledge about the history, cultural values and socio-economic structure of society in Jammu and Kashmir. It will provide a platform for scholars in the field of Kashmir studies regarding ideas on pluralistic cultures and tolerant societies. The younger generation should be involved in the studies, so as to benefit from this initiative. The scope for preservation of culture is wide and can cover a broad spectrum of activities such as finding and conserving valuable manuscripts as well as conducting research into languages, art and literature. This work, I am sure, will interest not only scholars of this Institute but also of other universities and academic bodies in the State and other parts of the country as well.

Jammu and Kashmir is nature's manifestation in its pristine form. Its scenic beauty, its different seasons and the abundance of water, make it a paradise on Earth. Kalhana, the great poet of Kashmir, wrote, 'Learning, lofty houses, saffron, icy waters and

grapes. Things, that even in heaven are difficult to find, are common here'. During my visit to the State, so far I have travelled to Srinagar, Tangdhar, Baramulla and Gulmarg. I could not go to Baderwah due to bad weather. I intend to go today. I have had the opportunity to see the beauty and the culture, the friendly and hospitable people, the ethos and diversity as well as the progress and development of the State.

Building a future of hope and optimism for Jammu and Kashmir is a collective endeavour in which every person is a participant and a contributor. It requires that Government, civil society and all communities and sections of the people of Jammu and Kashmir work together. I am aware of the difficulties that the people of this State have undergone due to violence and terrorism. However, we are all proud of the resilient and strong people of Jammu and Kashmir, who have demonstrated, over the past few years, their determination to move ahead on the constructive path of peace and progress. This is the true path. Both the State and the Central Government have taken the development of the State, as a top priority agenda and enunciated policies and programmes towards this end. The objective is to secure a better life for our citizens where each one can have the opportunity to grow. The State has tremendous potential in horticulture, floriculture, handicraft, tourism and IT among others. Equally important is our determination to create a secure environment and to defeat the divisive designs of terrorism and violence. Education is essential for nation building and for the empowerment of its people. The education system should equip students with skill sets so that they can earn their livelihood, impart knowledge so that they can contribute to their country and inculcate values that will make them tolerant individuals, concerned about the well being of humankind. Education should also strengthen the values of secularism, democracy, inclusiveness and pluralism. These values give strength and sustenance not only to our diverse multi-cultural society but also to our country. I am told that the State Government has taken a number of measures to expand the educational infrastructure. I would encourage and urge that work in this direction continues so that education facilities are available to all.

As I have said earlier, all of us must work together for peace and prosperity in Jammu and Kashmir. The State Government has taken a number of measures and initiatives to help create necessary conditions for development. I congratulate the State Government, particularly the Chief Minister, Shri Ghulam Nabi Azad for taking the State forward on the road to development. The Government of India through centrally sponsored programmes and the Prime Minister's Reconstruction Plan is committed to strengthen the economic and social infrastructure of the State. I am confident that we can all work together to create a prosperous and peaceful Kashmir.

As the great Kashmiri poet, Mehjoor has written, and I quote:

Vwolo haa baagvaano, navbahaaruk shaan paadaa kar. (O Gardener! Create the glory of spring!)

Phwlon gul gath karan, bulbul tithe saamaan paadaa kar (Make the flowers bloom and the birds sing - create such haunts!)

The reference to spring and flowers in this beautiful composition by Mehjoor, reminds me of the occasion that I had, to meet groups of women and children who came from Jammu and Kashmir to Rashtrapati Bhavan. When I met them in the Mughal Gardens, which have been inspired by the beautiful gardens of Kashmir, I was struck by the thought that just as the many varieties of flowers make a garden beautiful, the diversity of our people has created the vibrant Indian nation. I am confident that

our Unity in Diversity will lead the country to greater glory. I am also confident that the spirit of Kashmiriyat will flourish and the fragrance of mutual love and affection will spread beyond the precincts of Jammu and Kashmir and become a way of life.

I wish the Institute success in its endeavours, and would like to convey to the people of the State of Jammu and Kashmir my best wishes for peace, progress, prosperity and happiness. Thank you. JAI HIND



PHOTO: SHAHIDUL ALAM/DRIK

The spectacular gardens in Kashmir as the Shalimar Garden in Srinagar, inspired the Mughal Gardens at the Rashtrapati Bhavan at New Delhi, symbolizing India's Unity in Diversity like the large variety of colourful flowers that makes a garden beautiful.



PHOTO: KASHMIR UNIVERSITY

President Pratibha Patil inaugurated the Institute of Kashmir Studies by unveiling an inscribed metal plate together with (left to right) Vice-Chancellor Riyaz Punjabi, J&K Governor S.K. Sinha, Chief Minister Ghulam Nabi Azad, and UNESCO Goodwill Ambassador Madanjeet Singh.



The afternoon session began with a presentation of dances and music by the Cultural Club of the University. The girls wore colourful traditional costumes representing different regions of Kashmir and the boys were attired in costumes used by Kashmiri boatmen.



PHOTO: FRANCE MARQUET

SAF-India chairman Mr. Mani Shankar Aiyar (centre), presided over the afternoon session with the participation of (left to right) Prof. Fayyaz Ahmad, Registrar of Kashmir University, Dr. G.M. Khawaja, Director, Institute of Kashmir Studies, Prof. Riyaz Punjabi, Vice-Chancellor of Kashmir University, Prof. Mushirul Hasan, Vice-Chancellor, Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi and UNESCO Goodwill Ambassador Madanjeet Singh.

**KEYNOTE ADDRESS BY PROF. MUSHIRUL HASAN, VICE-CHANCELLOR, JAMIA MILLIA ISLAMIA,
AT THE INAUGURATION OF THE INSTITUTE OF KASHMIR STUDIES**

In his Keynote address, Prof Mushirul Hasan placed the onus on Muslims as inheritors of the great Indian civilization. He quoted a number of Islamic scholars and great Indian poets as Iqbal, Mirza Ghalib and others who called upon Hindus and Muslims to live in harmony within India's secular and pluralist milieu and to cultivate decent values that spring from common multicultural traditions.

'O you who believe, steer well clear of supposition,' stated the Quran. The aim of this lecture is to take stock of the appalling ignorance about Islam and the culture associated with it. Even though Islam is widely perceived and experienced as a dynamic way of life consisting of praxis and ideology, the literature on its followers in the subcontinent, who are regarded as a part of the repository of many events that make up its complex history, is woefully inadequate.

Mohammad Iqbal, the poet-philosopher observed: 'It is no exaggeration to say that India is perhaps the only country in the world where Islam, as a people-building force, has worked at its best.' Yet so little is known about India's Muslims' histories and contemporary predicaments. This is an example of how the twenty-first century historian sees the 'Muslim world'. If the place of Islam in the twenty-first century is permanent and that living with it as a political phenomenon is a certainty for the foreseeable future, we need to build a history that does not distort or misrepresent the history of Islam and its followers.

Today, vital issues impinge on Muslim lives, not least their interaction with other communities. Globalization is another issue; it causes the old traditional points of reference to disappear here and elsewhere and reawaken passionate affirmations of identity often emerging from withdrawal and self-exclusion. Then, there is the challenge of Western ascendancy being met on a daily basis not uniformly but variously. There is, finally, the struggle between modernists and traditionalists for Islamic heritage and the search for a place in postcolonial societies. Issues touching deep-seated chords of feelings are raised over and over again as every single Muslim – from North America to South-East Asia – is under scrutiny to either reinforce or revise the only two images that are in vogue, 'Good Muslim' or 'Bad Muslim'.

The heart and soul of my concern is to articulate a vision of Islam: rather the many different kinds of Islam instead of the frightening monolith of popular perception; living in harmony with other faiths, and Muslims as inheritors of the great Indian civilization, living in a pluralist milieu. If this effort sounds unduly optimistic, it is in part because of the vast resource of religious and intellectual tolerance embedded in 'Hinduism' and partly owing to the diversity in Islam. In a society where religion plays a dominant role in virtually every walk of life, it is my business and the business of every historian to bring secularism into our discussions and to affirm its validity as a principle guiding the nation. To renounce this claim is to surrender the nationalist project to right-wing ideologies, be it Hindutva or Islamism. Given that India is neither a centre of jihadi terrorism nor the battlefield for the future of Islam, I lay stress on India's civilization identity against any totalitarianism, Hindutva or Islamism. When all is said and done it ought to be possible to locate the diminishing value of divisive ideologies and the ultimate dissolution of primordial loyalties.

I wish to underline another point: whether or not Islamism is the ideology of Islamic internationalism which has evolved as a variety of religious fundamentalism, I consider its impact to be detrimental to Muslims themselves. I say this as a Muslim seeking a place for Islam and for its adherents in a set-up of democratic peace based on a global civil society and its civic values. Even though it is grossly inaccurate to suggest that Islamists are 'nourished by an Islamic tradition that is intrinsically inhuman and violent in its rhetoric, thought and practice', there is no denying that the totalitarian forces seeking redemption through force cause greater damage to Muslims themselves and not to the West alone.

Let me touch on three or four points. First, Islam in South Asia is a living tradition, however defined, and a dynamic force and that the region's unique culture has moulded its traditions. Even though the social and cultural profile of its followers has undergone a fair degree of change, especially owing to the Tablighi Jamat's influence, these traditions are inseparable from what Aziz Ahmad called the 'Indian Environment'. Again, even though they have their own role to play, their role must be integrated within a large complex of diversity, constituted in part by other men, more numerous and perhaps more powerful, with other values and with other roles. The future of Indian Muslims depended upon their own inner resources and creativity, and their outward relations with their fellow men.

Second, Islam persists not through rigid negation but through adaptation to the forces of change. This has enabled its adherents to survive the endless vicissitudes of history. In fact, Islam is a dynamic faith demanding continuous involvement of mind and energy in worldly affairs for fulfilling the purpose for which man was created.

A.A.A. Fyzee (b. 1899), the scholar of Islamic jurisprudence, positioned himself against the traditional belief that law and religion are coterminous in Islam, arguing that law, a product of social evolution, must change with time and circumstances. The Deoband-educated Maulana Said Akbarabadi argued in the 1960s that a distinction had to be made between those Quranic injunctions that were specific to the Arab customary law and those applicable to Muslim societies in other times. This distinction has been made, and that alone enabled Islam to pass through many stages of reorientation and readjustments. Other scholars, too, interpreted Islam liberally and reformulated some of the main premises or Islamic theology and jurisprudence. They drew a distinction between *Din* (religion), immutable, and *Shari'ah* which has been constantly changing. Today, we must make sure that the eclectic spirit of the Prophet's message is not throttled, its theology not gagged by history, and its vitality not sapped by totalitarianism.

Third, public intellectuals invariably found in their tradition the ideological resources to bridge their sense of 'difference' and participate fully and actively in the anti-colonial movement. This is exemplified in the writings of Azad and Madani, who championed composite nationalism and rejected the idea of Hindus and Muslims being two different nations. Lesser men found conflict in the rich variety of Indian life. Azad, on the other hand, saw the essential unity behind all that diversity, and realized that only in unity was there hope for India as a whole. He envisaged an Islam not of sectarian belligerence but of confident partnership in a cultural and spiritual diversity where a strident divisiveness would be its betrayal.



The Mughal Emperor Akbar (1556–1605) created the inter-faith religion Din-e-Ilahi. He was a great patron of the arts and music and filled his court with both Hindu and Muslim scholars, poets, painters, architects and musicians. Among them were such Hindu luminaries as Tansen, the legendary musician, and the influential courtier, Birbal. From Akbarnama manuscript (seventeenth-century in National Museum, New Delhi).

The *Tarjuman-al Quran* is one of the most profound statements on multiculturalism and inter-faith understanding. It is the finest example of constructive thinking enjoined on the Muslim in his discovery of a new world of religious thought to redress the balance of the old Azad, the bridge between Deoband's ulama and the liberal modernist, shared in the effort to give the lie to the steady charge, or implication, that living without benefit of statehood world inevitably entail a slow assimilation of Muslims into the dominant ethos of Hinduism.

'Kashmir', wrote Jahangir (r. 1605–27), 'is a garden of eternal spring, or an iron fort to a palace of kings – a delightful flowerbed, and a heart-expanding, heritage for dervishes.' By far the most important observation of the Mughal emperor was on the long tradition of religious tolerance and pluralism in Kashmir, starting with Syed Ali Hamdani (1313–80) and Sheikh Nuruddin (1376–1438) in the fourteenth century. In one tale, it is said that when a baby, Nuruddin, refused to take his mother's milk and would drink only from Lalla Ded (1320–89), the Kashmiri mystic.

A century later, Sultan Zainul-Abidin exemplified a more civilized adherence to harmonious communal relations. According to Kalhana's *Rajatarangini*, he participated in Hindu religious festivals, visited Hindu shrines, and had the Sanskrit texts read to him. English observers of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century in Kashmir found shared popular religious traditions especially in the countryside. Thus W. Lawrence referred to the 'delightful tolerance' between the followers of Islam and Hinduism.

In Punjab, Islam provided a repertoire of concepts and styles of authority that served to encompass potentially competing values, including the values of tribal kinship, within a common Islamic idiom. Sufism and the Bhakti stream escaped from the cloister and joined and fermented among common people,

helping to create a body of folk-poetry where the religious brotherhood of man blended with thoughts of social equality, and deliverance from feudal bonds.

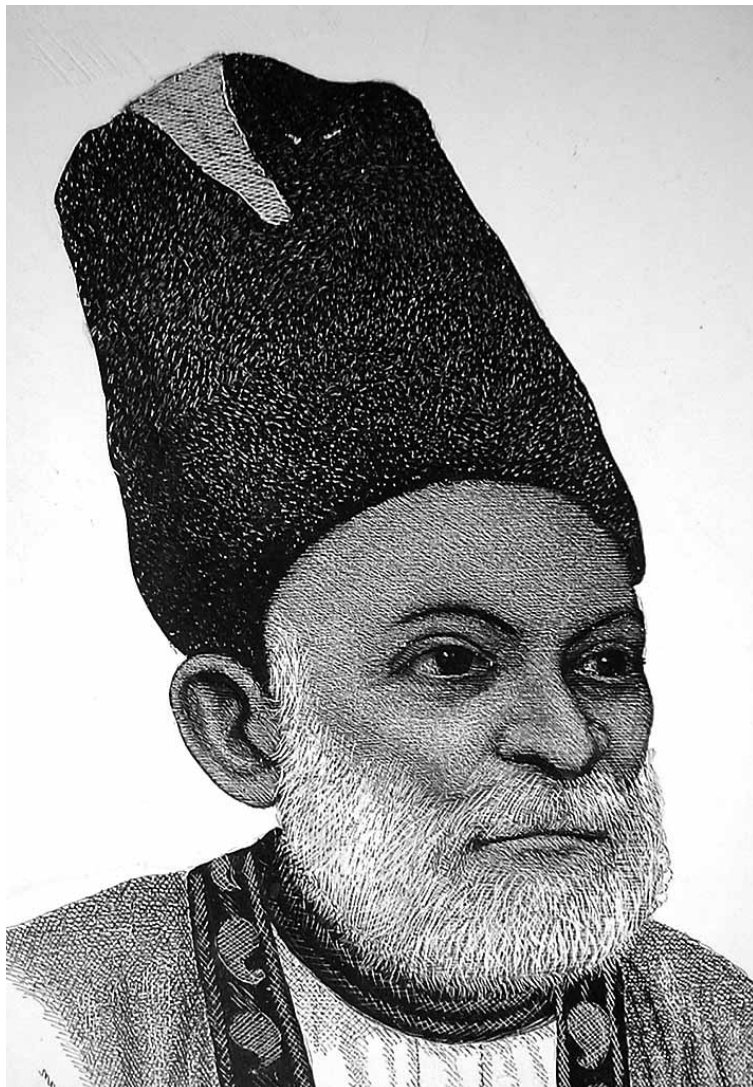
Richard Eaton's erudite study concludes with the remark: 'What made Islam in Bengal not only historically successful but a continuing vital social reality has been its capacity to adapt to the land and the culture of its people, even while transforming both.' The pattern is the same elsewhere, so that the modes of thought and action of thousands of people in a part of South Asia suggest that Hindus and Muslims have been living together but not in separate compartments. Indeed, the hallmark of urban life has been the sharing of a similar lifestyle, the ideology of work, tenure and public activity. Divisions among people, in order of importance, seem to be: men/women; lower-class/upper class; educated/uneducated; and then on the basis of religion, mohalla, caste, language, community and personal compatibility. Division on any of these levels did not necessarily mean antagonism but structural similarity, as for divisions along lines of sex, religion and mohalla.

Turning to the attitudes of literary and historical figures living through Delhi's upheaval in 1857, we find them building bridges of understanding between religious communities and responding to the conditions of modern life with a strong and universalistic component in their thinking. They found wisdom in numerous religious traditions, and, without advocating the cultural merging of religious traditions or the dissolution of religious boundaries, they were content to let a hundred flowers bloom. Even though Islam was a necessary cultural and spiritual ingredient of their national culture, they viewed religion as a matter of personal choice and disposition. Again, they adhered to the personality paradigm of the Prophet but they also drew upon non-Muslim religious figures in order to develop a conception of coexistence between religious institutions and the men of faith in different religions.

Consequently, one of the key themes in my historical explorations is to point out that Indian civilization has been in continuous relationships with other religions, cultures and civilizations, and that Muslims have come into contact with many religions, including Zoroastrianism and Manicheism, Hinduism and Buddhism, Sikhism, not to speak of Christianity and Judaism inside and outside Western Asia. Sure enough they discovered the congruence of the basic tenets of all religions. Mujeeb asserted that if the Muslim and the Sikh walk steadfastly on what is their true path they will discover that their paths and the goal are the same. That discovery will itself be a spiritual experience, 'an occurrence of the heart', a fulfillment of what God, in a story related to Maulana Jalauddin Rumi (1207–1273), the Balkh-born Persian poet, said to Moses, the Hebrew prophet: 'You have been sent to unite, not to divide.'

Even though British travellers viewed Islam in a binary and essentialist manner, Mir Taqi Mir has this to say in this couplet: 'It is the power of His beauty fills the world with light/Be it the Kaaba's candle or the light that lights Somnat.' Let me use Ghalib, his successor in terms of greatness, to make a point that encompasses religious tolerance. The ideological element in his poetry and letters is not, of course, new; but a shift in analysis can sometimes help in uncovering new elements in the past.

According to Hali, 'it is clear that not only in poetry, but also in his manners, dress and address, food habits, life style and even in the art of living and dying, Ghalib disliked to follow the popular, conventional ways.' III at ease with religious dogmas and



The pre-eminent Indian poet Mirza Ghalib (1797–1860) wrote both in Persian and Urdu. He had to struggle with penury and hardship reflected in works, which show a paradoxical attitude towards the divine in which faith and agnosticism are intertwined.

discarding outward religious observance, he announced virtually from the rooftops: 'Faith stops me, if impiety pulls me towards itself/Ka'ba is behind me, the church is in front of me.' For Muslims, this house is the Kaaba in Mecca, for others, it is the temple.

Ghalib makes his meaning clearer in another verse:

What is the temple, what is the Kaaba?
Baffled passion for union constructing
Myths and illusions, asylums to shelter
Its ardour, its hopes, its dreams and despair.

The true faith can be attained only if we get beyond religion.

God is One, that is our faith,
All rituals we abjure,
'It's only when religions vanish
That belief is pure.

Ghalib disrupted prejudice wherever he found it. He wore no sectarian badge, no sectarian colour. 'I hold mankind to be my kin', he told Hargopal Tufta, a devotee of Persian poetry, 'and look upon all men-Muslim, Hindu and Christian as my brothers, no matter what others may think.' 'Every son of Adam', he says in another letter, 'be he Muslim, Hindu or Christian, I hold dear and regard as my brother. I do not care if others believe in this or not'. Once, while gazing at the sky, the apparent chaos in the distribution of the stars struck him. And he proclaimed, 'there is no rhyme or reason in anything the self-willed do. Just look at the stars scattered in complete disorder. No proportion, no system, no sense, and no pattern. But their King has absolute power, and no one can breathe a word against Him.'

For the Muslim elites to which Ghalib belonged by virtue of his family lineage and his ancestor's social status, Islam was neither the only nor in all circumstances the most important identity.

Once during Ramazan, the month of fasting, his close friend, Mufti Sadruddin Azurda, visited him about midday. He was then in cell, playing chess or *chausar* with a friend. The Mufti found his way to the cell, and seeing Ghalib playing games in the month of fasting, said, 'I have read in the *Hadith* (Tradition) that Satan is kept locked up during Ramazan, but now I have doubts about the genuineness of this *Hadith*.' 'No, my venerable friend', Ghalib replied, 'the *Hadith* is perfectly genuine. Only, you must know that this cell is the place where Satan is kept locked up.'

Ghalib admired Hindu rituals and Hindu sites. In October 1827, he set out for Calcutta. Part of the way he travelled by river; and the final stage, from Banaras to Calcutta, he did on horseback. He reached Kolkata on 20 February 1828 – almost a full year after he had set out from Delhi. The travels enchanted him; hence the long lyrical Persian poem of 108 couplets in its praise. It is entitled *Chiragh-e Dair* ('The Lamp of the Temple'). According to him, the beauties of Banaras have 'their coquetry in a rose garden intoxicated and brim-full of blandishment; their graceful walking embraces the hundred turmoils of Judgment Day!' By contrast, Allahabad (Prayag) was a ghost, 'dull and uninspiring, its people unfriendly and inhospitable.' He did not touch Allahabad on his journey back home.

From its alleged founding in the 6th century BC, Kashi had grown to be one of northern India's largest cities in the early nineteenth century. With the pilgrims seeking salvation or taking part in seasonal fairs and eclipses, Ghalib enjoyed the paradise-like environment of natural beauty, the temple bells ringing, and the devotees walking hurriedly towards the Ganga, invigorated by the salubrious climate, the forests along the river, and the streams and waterways all through the city, he reveals his patriotic reevaluation of the common cultural and religious inheritance.

Preservation of customs is Ghalib's theme in yet another long Persian poem. In this he rejects infidelity (*rasm-e kuffi*), but not the Divine Bounty. 'Negation without affirmation is nothing but error'; indeed, one cannot affirm God and deny His signs. Kashi was, thus, a 'sign' of God. Besides being a centre for pilgrimage and worship, it was a microcosm of Indian life, customs, and popular belief. It was the Kaaba of India, wrote Ghalib.

More than thirty years later Ghalib remembered his stay with pleasure: 'What praise is too high enough? Where else is there a city to equal it? The days of my youth were almost over when I went there. Had I been young in those days I would have settled down there and never come back this way'. Arguments for tolerance, when not purely pragmatic, took recourse to other values, some of which, including respect for cultural diversity, play a central role in the thinking of Urdu's greatest poet.

Without suggesting any causal relationship between Ghalib's interest in Hindu sites and symbols, it is important to point out Ghalib's interest in them to indicate something of the significance of these histories for composite traditions and even composite nationalism. It is not as if he did not pay sufficient attention to religiously defined cultures. The fact is that he tried to tease out the subtle ways in which conflicts could be avoided.

The message is loud and clear. Instead of the imaginary civilizational clash between 'Islam' and 'the West', the 'latitudinarian tendencies' should intermingle with antinomian trends in Hinduism itself to reinforce the phenomenon of Hindu-Muslim rapprochement. An average Muslim should hold, rather than abrogate, his right to hold an independent opinion about right and

wrong, good and evil, and, above all, act according to his conscience and remind himself that he must be a 'source of justice' not only for his brethren but the international community, of Muslims and non-Muslims, to which we belong. Iqbal had alluded to this in *Naya Shivala*. With its lyrical quality and tone of cheerfulness and hope, he had called upon the Hindus and Muslims to cultivate decent values which spring from a common tradition, to recognize each other as equals and treat the sister faiths with fundamental respect.

In his story *Vettamangalam Elephant*, Thoppil Mohamed Meeran, the great Malayalam writer, dwells on aspects of inter-community intermingling, the fusion of religio-cultural practices, its variety and richness. He describes popular singers, actors and costumes: these develop into signs whose semiotic richness evokes the spontaneous and collective *jouissance* of Hindus and Muslims alike. Soon, though, this sharing of a unique and long-standing experience is ruptured. The elephant procession, once a joyous occasion for all, now fills Muslims with foreboding. Saddened that his children were caught up in the communal cauldron, the Muslim narrator lamented that they would neither have access to a rich cultural tradition nor the opportunity to enjoy what he had so cherished all his life.





PHOTO: FRANCE MARQUET

Kashmiri houseboats reflect the synthesis of architecture that Emperor Akbar attempted to invoke by harmonizing Hindu and Muslim architectural styles in the buildings of his new capital at Fatehpur Sikri, (abandoned in 1586 for want of water). The capital was dedicated to the Sufi saint Sheikh Salim Chishti.

THE ASIAN AGE

NEW DELHI • TUESDAY • 27 MAY 2008

PRATIBHA SAYS KASHMIR IS EMBODIMENT OF COMPASSION

May 26: Invoking Kashmir's revolutionary poet Gulam Ahmed Mehjoor, President Pratibha Patil on Monday asked its 'gardeners (people) to create the glory of spring and make the flowers bloom and the birds sing again'. She said Kashmir was rightly called reshiwari or the abode of rishis as it 'embodies love, tolerance and compassion'. She said, 'The amalgam of pristine beauty, enchanting landscape rich culture, seat of learning and a melting pot of ideas, Kashmir has lived as the finest centre of learning, tolerance and cultural cohesion,' adding, 'whether be it Islam, Hinduism, Sikhism or Buddhism, all these religions have for centuries been 'a part of the spiritual landscape of the state.'

The President, who is on a five-day visit of Jammu & Kashmir, was speaking at the inaugural function of the Institute of Kashmir Studies (IKS) at the Kashmir University here.

Recalling the contributions of various spiritual and philosophical saints and seers to Kashmiriyat, the President said that their message of love, tolerance and compassion left a deep imprint on the lives of the people of Jammu & Kashmir. 'Their legacy, over a period of time has etched itself so much into the collective consciousness of the region, that it cannot be eroded,' she said, adding, that Kashmiriyat is a living legacy which has withstood

the test of time and 'it is now for us to continue to nurture it so that it is preserved for future generations'. The IKS is established under a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the South Asia Foundation (SAF) and the Kashmir University signed in August 2007. 'The Institute will promote regional cooperation, based on the Bhakti-Sufi-Rishi culture of Kashmiriyat in a broader historical and worldwide context,' said UNESCO Goodwill Ambassador Madanjeet Singh and Founder of SAF. It is the latest of the eight institutions of excellence which the SAF is in the process of establishing in SAARC countries, he added.

The President expressed hope that the IKS will contribute with the study and assimilation of knowledge about the history, cultural values and socio-economic structure of society in Jammu & Kashmir. 'It will provide a platform for scholars in the field of Kashmir studies regarding ideas on pluralistic cultures and tolerant societies,' she said. Later, she flew to Bhadarwah in Jammu region called 'Chhota (tiny) Kashmir' to inaugurate the regional campus of the Jammu University.

Speaking on the occasion, she said that the quest for knowledge has remained an important facet of Indian civilization.



As a token of appreciation, President Pratibha Patil receives a gift from Afghanistan's Women's Affairs Minister Dr. H.B. Ghazanfar at the inauguration ceremony of the Institute of Kashmir Studies at the University of Kashmir, Srinagar.

South Asia **Women's** ART Exhibition





PHOTO: KASHMIR UNIVERSITY

The invitees to the inaugural ceremony of the Institute of Kashmir Studies, Srinagar, also had the rare opportunity of visiting an exhibition of women painters from South Asia, displayed in the auditorium lobby of the University of Kashmir. The idea originated in early 2008 at the Madanjeet Singh Institute of Afghanistan's Cultural Heritage in Kabul where the first ever exhibition of Afghan women painters was held in cooperation with the Centre for Contemporary Arts-Afghanistan.

Former J&K Chief Minister, Ghulam Nabi Azad, previewing the exhibition of South Asian women painters. He is accompanied by Prof. Riyaz Punjabi, Vice-Chancellor, University of Kashmir and Prof. Mufeed Ahmad, in charge of management of SAF functions in Srinagar.



The hosting of an exhibition of women artists should have been a relatively normal affair in the sophisticated environment of Kashmir — a rich composite culture inspired by such stalwarts of letters and thinkers as Kalhana, Charak, Bilhana, Bhartrihri and Nund Rishi. Many Kashmiri poets were women, like Lal Ded (Fourteenth Century) and Arani-Mal (Eighteenth Century), famous for their hauntingly beautiful love lyrics.

Unfortunately, within a few decades the Jihadist gangsters in Kashmir have degraded this Paradise on Earth into a veritable inferno of Hell, decrying Kashmiri works of representational art, painting, music and dancing as un-Islamic and blasphemous. In Afghanistan, Taliban death squads are out to kill girl students if they go to school. In the central Afghan province of Logar, six girl students were shot and injured on their way home from Qalai Saydan Public School, two of them fatally. To the north

The exhibition was inaugurated by Dr. H.B. Ghazanfar, Afghanistan's Minister for Women Affairs. She was accompanied by (left) Ambassador to India, Dr. Sayed Makhdoom Raheen, former chairman of the SAF-Afghanistan chapter and (right) Dr. Amina Afzali, Advisor on Children's Rights Affairs to President Hamid Karzai.



of Kabul, warlords issued threats against radio journalist Zakia Zaki, 35, for daring to broadcast educational programmes. She was murdered in her home as she refused to cease her broadcasts. In a recent case, Taliban militants sprayed burning acid on the faces of Shamsia Husseini and 14 other girl students and teachers of Mirwais school in Kandahar; Shamsia's face was so badly burnt that she had to be sent abroad for treatment.

Such outrageous crimes have provoked some people to resist the militants. The gangsters failed in their attempt to prevent the students from going to Mirwais school; the wounded girls are back at school together with all the other girls in this deeply conservative community — about 1300 in all.

Against this background of insecurity, Dr. Sayed Makhdoom Raheen, Chairman of SAF-Afghanistan chapter, took a great risk, first by holding an exhibition of women painters in Kabul and then daring to send a number of women artists and their works for a show in Srinagar. Prof. Salima Hashmi, Chairperson of the SAF-Pakistan chapter, enlarged this collection by including paintings by women students on SAF Madanjeet Singh Group Scholarships at the School of Visual Arts, Beaconhouse National University in Lahore, who exhibited their works together with several women artists from Kashmir.

The Director of the Institute of Kashmir Studies, Dr. G.M. Khawaja managed to cross a great many hurdles and accusations of un-Islamic activities by holding the exhibition in the lobby of the University Auditorium. The Kashmiri media, terrified by the

After inaugurating the Institute of Kashmir Studies, President Pratibha Patil visited the exhibition of women painters from South Asia, accompanied by (left) the Union Minister for Water Resources, Prof Saifuddin Soz and other VIPs.

The Afghan artist Ms Shela is among the active painters, experimenting with different styles ranging from 'Socialist realism' to various modern trends in Western art that are influencing the young artists of Afghanistan.



Jihadists' threats, completely blacked-out this unprecedented historic exhibition of South Asian women painters.

In Afghanistan, the "crime against culture" that the Taliban vandals committed by blasting the 5th Century idols of Bamiyan Buddhas was a warning against representational painting as well, traces of which are still found in the Buddhist caves. This manner of painting called the 'silk road style', influenced many countries along the trade routes across China and beyond (see Ajanta paintings on pages 126 and 131). The style flourished in Afghanistan until the Timurid period in the sixteenth century

The Afghan artist Ms Omalbanin explains her painting to Ambassador Raheen and Mr. Madanjeet Singh. Many of her works of art are influenced by the destruction of Afghanistan culture by the Taliban regime that ruled Afghanistan from 1996 to 2001.



PHOTO: FRANCE MARQUET

when an outstanding Afghan artist, Kamaluddin Behzad, introduced the miniature style of painting in Herat, a form that was already very popular in the courts of Persian Safavides and the Mughal emperors in India. After the fall of the Timurids, Afghanistan was overtaken by a long, dark period of war and instability when art and literature also suffered. It was not until

Ms Omalbanin shows her symbolic style of painting, a solitary kite tied to the stem of a plant — which represents the conservative society that prevents the artists from escaping, like the kite.



PHOTO: FRANCE MARQUET

A number of women artists in Afghanistan are now beginning to paint more realistic pictures, depicting the pain, frustration and desperation caused by war and communal conflict, as shown by this painting of a mother and child.



1921 that glimmers of art reappeared with the founding of the first school of arts and crafts during the reign of King Amanullah. Half a century later, in 1976, another centre of art named after Ghulam Mohammad Maimanagi was set up followed by the faculty of fine arts at Kabul University in 1976, and then another faculty of fine arts at Herat in 1986. In contrast with the Behzad school of art, a

Coming from a conservative background (as her manner of dressing shows), Ms. Saleha's creations conform to the style of 'miniature painting', introduced by Kamaluddin Behzad.

number of advisers who arrived from the Soviet Union in 1975, promoted the style known as ‘socialist realism’. They rejected ‘art for art sake’ notion and exclusively focused on the realities of life. Among the leading artists who practised this style of painting was also Abdul Ghafur Breshna. Some outstanding works of art were created during this period including scenes from Afghan countryside, portraits of common people as well as images of historical monuments such as the Bamiyan Buddha idols, Jam Minaret, Buzkashi and other famous sites of Afghanistan’s cultural heritage.

Meanwhile, Afghan artists began to adopt a variety of modern styles of Western art, as impressionism, cubism and other forms of innovative art. This trend was strengthened as several Afghan artists, settled abroad, decided to return home. Among them was an outstanding woman painter, Semoon Shukur Wali, born and educated in France who, supported by the Ministry of Information and Culture, became the director of the Artist Foundation of Afghanistan. She organized several exhibitions during the years 1961–66 in Afghanistan and abroad.

Unfortunately, all these creative activities were stopped by the Taliban regime that ruled Afghanistan from 1996 to 2001, as they enforced strictly Islamic Shariah laws, the brunt of which was mostly borne by women.

The ousting of Taliban usurpers by US and allied military action in September 2002, has helped in reviving Afghanistan’s artistic traditions, restore the artists’ human rights and freedom of expression. Like the Madanjeet Singh Institute of Afghanistan’s Cultural Heritage in Kabul, other organizations as the Centre for Contemporary Arts (CCA), are actively working to repair the severe damage to Afghanistan’s art and culture inflicted by Taliban vandals.

The influence of the four painting styles practiced in Afghanistan over the centuries — the ‘Silk Route’, ‘Miniature painting’, ‘Socialist realism’ and ‘modern Western art’ are all represented in the few selected works by the Afghan women painters exhibited in Srinagar.



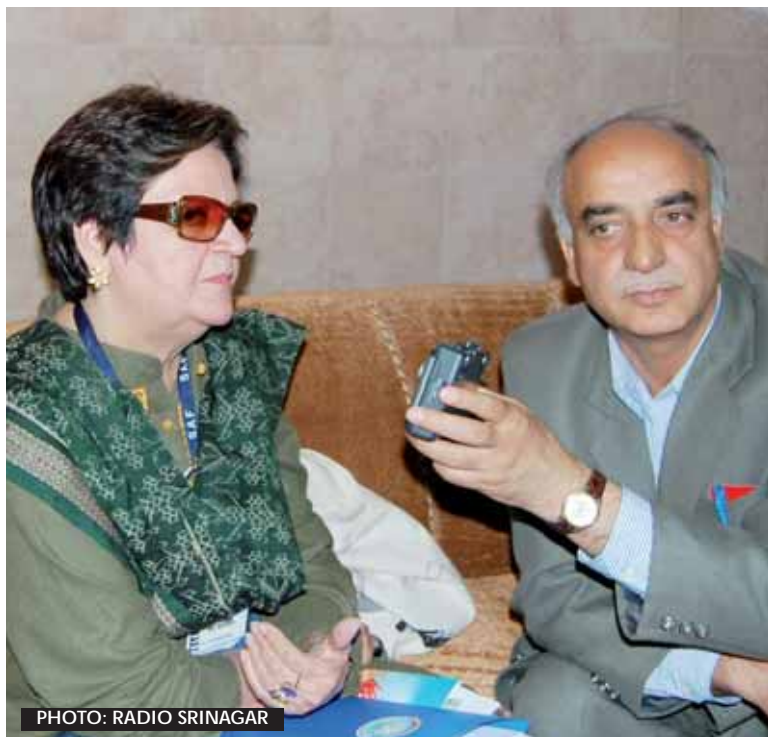
OIL ON CANVAS BY JAHAN ARA RAFI



OIL & ACRYLIC ON CANVAS BY KHADIJA HASHEMI



OIL ON CANVAS BY MANEZHA HEWAD



Interviewed by a Radio Srinagar correspondent, Bashir Ahmed, the Chairperson of SAF-Pakistan chapter, Salima Hashmi, compared the exhibition of women painters from South Asia with the remarkable show that she had organized in 1996 at the UNESCO House, Paris. Represented by 26 women artists from all generations and from all regions of Pakistan, the 85 works of art reflected the rage and frustration for having been denied their human rights and freedom of expression during the repressive regime of Zia-ul-Haq. But they had continued to paint in the privacy of their homes, as the Afghan women painters defied the Taliban injunctions. In 2002, as Dean of the School of Visual Arts, Beaconhouse National University, Lahore, she developed the SAF Group Scholarship programme in which sixteen Madanjeet Singh stipends are given annually from each of the eight South Asian countries, based on gender equality.

Ambassador Madanjeet Singh proposed a vote of thanks to Prof. Salima Hashmi and Ambassador Sayed M. Raheen, former Minister of Culture and Information, Afghanistan, for jointly organizing the landmark exhibition of women painters in Srinagar. In recognition of the invaluable services rendered by Ambassador Raheen, former Chairman of SAF-Afghanistan chapter, he presented him with an inscribed silver plate on behalf of the SAF Governing Council.



CITY GREETS KASHMIR INSTITUTE

Hindustan Times dated June 10, 2008

AVISHEK DASGUPTA

Here's an opportunity for scholars and journalists as well as tourists who make a beeline to the Paradise on Earth every year to know more about Kashmir. Thanks to the initiative of South Asia Foundation founder and UNESCO Goodwill Ambassador Madanjeet Singh, the Institute for Kashmir Studies was inaugurated by President Pratibha Patil on May 26 at the University of Kashmir. According to the MoU signed between South Asia Foundation (SAF) and the University of Kashmir, SAF has pledged financial support to the Institute of Kashmir Studies to the tune of US\$ 1 million to be given over a period of five years.

'The focus would be to provide a platform for interaction between people of South Asia and promoting Kashmir's traditional Sufi culture as an antidote to the extremism that has rocked Kashmir for more than 17 years since 1989', said Madanjeet Singh, who brought Junoon, the famous Pakistani Sufi rock band, to perform during the inauguration functions. City based scholars would be also able to participate in its yearly symposiums, seminars and workshops.



Attending the inauguration of the Institute of Kashmir Studies was also a group of Bharat Scouts and Guides in Kashmir who assisted in the organisation of the SAF functions.



The day after the inauguration of the Institute of Kashmir Studies, the guests were invited to visit one of the Phool-Ban Nursery Schools at Gandharbal, under the SAF Pre-Primary School Programme that began in early 2003. We were fortunate to have with us Prof. Jalees Ahmed Khan Tareen, who had originally conceived this project as Vice-Chancellor of Kashmir University. Later he joined as CEO of SAF-India chapter, and at present he is the Vice-Chancellor of Pondicherry University.

Prof Tareen's idea was to select a number of young, educated but unemployed girls from remote and isolated villages in the Kashmir valley, and bring them to the Institute of Home Science in Srinagar for a 9-month pre-primary teacher-training course. A diploma would be awarded at the end of the course following an annual exam. The students would then return home to construct pre-primary schools in cooperation with their local communities. In this way, they could teach

The former Vice Chancellor of Kashmir University, Prof. J.A.K. Tareen (right), conceived the pre-primary Phoolban school programme in June 2007. At the request of Nazir Ahmad Lone (left), a brother of Afroza Bano, a computer was also provided for the training of children, a project that is being extended to all the Phool Ban schools in Jammu and Kashmir.

children and at the same time train other teenage girls to become pre-primary schoolteachers in their own environment. He wanted SAF to give Kashmir University a grant, as his request to local authorities had fallen on deaf ears.

It was indeed an excellent proposal, but I could not provide him with funds without the approval of the SAF Governing Council, a time-consuming procedure. However, as my family originally hailed from Uri in Kashmir, I wrote a personal cheque for twice the amount that Prof Tareen wanted, on the condition that work on the project would start immediately so that I could see the results in about six months during a visit to Jammu and Kashmir that we were planning.



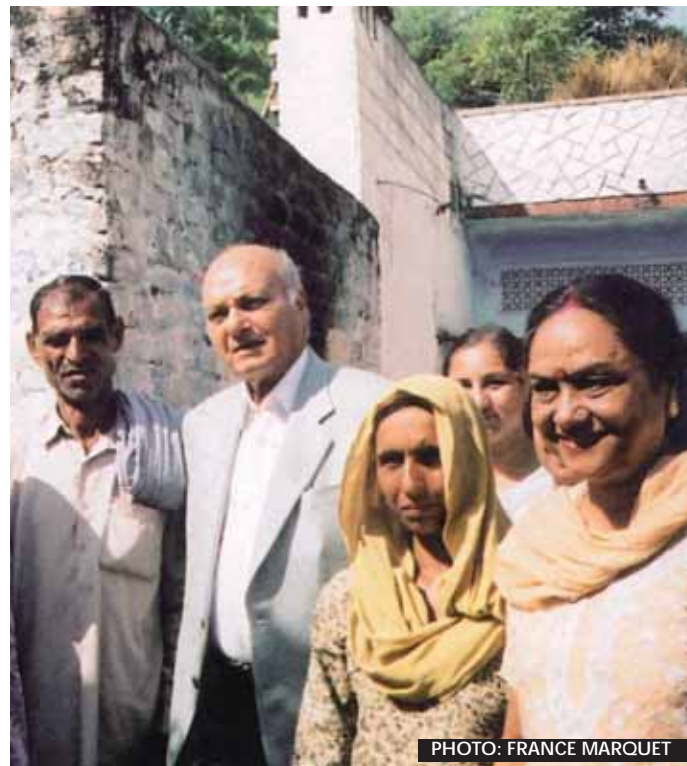
The Phool Ban school has developed greatly in five years since Afrooza Bano (third from left) took Mr Madanjeet Singh to visit the site in 2003. The school is now located on the ground floor of a house in which Afrooza and her parents inhabit the upper floor. The curriculum includes primary education and Afrooza Bano is designated as the School Principal.



Indeed, when we arrived in Srinagar in October 2003, the project was in full swing. We met with the thirty-three young girls from far-off villages, who had been chosen on the basis of merit, and also shown the house that had been rented for them in Srinagar. They were running it themselves, cooking, cleaning, and also using it to hold vocational training lessons. At my request, France and I were driven to two nearby villages, accompanied by Afrooza and Rubeena, whose families lived there. The dusty, pot-holed road we took was incongruous with the picturesque landscape and the warmth with which the families of the two girls received us.

At Ganderbal, the villagers were already busy hand building the wooden structure of the school where Afrooza Bano would teach after the completion of her training. Her parents thanked us profusely for giving their daughter the opportunity to become a teacher and serve her community. They gave us Kashmiri sweets to eat, the customary offering at the start of a new enterprise.

On arrival at Ganderbal school, Mr Madanjeet Singh received a rousing reception by a crowd of people in Ganderbal and others who had come from neighbouring villages. Gifts were presented to the guests accompanying the SAF Founder.



Later, France Marquet and I visited Kalamkari College of Education at the University of Jammu, where courses in vocational training are funded by South Asia Foundation since 2003. Here we met with a group of very enterprising village girls under the charge of Prof. Poonam Dhawan, Department for Adult and Continuing Education. We were very impressed by the manner in which the students were making handicrafts and learning skills such as tie-and-dye, block printing of textiles, basket and toy making etc. There was also a course in computers, management and entrepreneurship, so that on completion of their training, the girls could use their skills to obtain gainful employment in rural communities.

Unlike in Kashmir, the young girls in Jammu were recruited through Panchayats and it took us three hours to drive and visit the remote village, Sata in Samba Tehsil, where the parents of the young student Pripta Devi live. As we arrived, her father was busy thrashing hay in front of their hut and he welcomed us with the customary offering of *gur* made of sugarcane.

The 2003 batch of students who received SAF Madanjeet Singh Scholarships at the Kalamkari College of Education, Jammu (Left). Pripta Devi (right) and her parents welcomed Mr. Madanjeet Singh in their village, Sata, in Samba Tehsil.

PLURALIST CULTURE TRANSCENDS RELIGION

'Music has no religion – like water, air, and fire – and it connects the world, rather than divides.' Salman Ahmad, founder of the Sufi rock band Junoon, made this declaration before thousands of cheering and waving fans who watched as the Srinagar show unfolded against the backdrop of the misty Dal Lake, flanked by the lofty Zabarwan mountain range and a Sufi shrine.

The music of this group of Pakistani musicians forges an instant connection with its largely young audience, characterized by diversity and pluralism, whether in the market economy, new technologies, mobility, or the arts. The music articulates their concerns and feelings, be it *Yaaro yehi dosti hai* (Comrades, this is friendship), Iqbal's *Khudi ko kar bulund itna...* (Elevate to a level where God is obliged to consult you about your destiny), or Bulleh Shah's *Mandir dha de masjid dhe de* (Demolish temple, demolish mosque).

Salman Ahmad is a devotee of the Islamic mystical tradition of Sufism, which aims to emotionally bind together people from all walks of life. Working with renowned musicians worldwide, he says, has broadened and enriched his music. 'I think its imperative that we fight the recurring religious and political divides through producing musical harmony and promoting tolerance for all peaceful multicultural traditions in the subcontinent. I've committed my life to furthering these goals.'

Music terrifies the Jihadists; that is the reason why they issued death threats against Salman Ahmad to deter Junoon performing in Srinagar. The civilian President of Pakistan, Asif Ali Zardari, described the jihadist as 'terrorists', not 'freedom fighters' – as the former military dictator, Pervez Musharraf called them. In their view, Salman Ahmad resembles Dara Shikoh, the disciple of the Qadri Sufi who was declared an apostate from Islam and murdered in 1659 by his brother, the Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb. Dara Shikoh was a poet and a patron of fine arts, music, and dancing. He believed in India's uniquely composite culture and interaction among people of all faiths. Towards this goal, he translated fifty *Upanishads* from the original Sanskrit into Persian in 1657, a treatise often called *Sirr-e-Akbar* (The Greatest Mystery). In its introduction, he states that the work referred to in the Qur'an as the '*Kitab al-Maknun*' or the Hidden Book is none other than the Upanishads. His most famous work, *Majma ul-Bahrain* ('The Mingling of the Two Oceans'), was devoted to finding commonalities between Sufism and Hinduism.

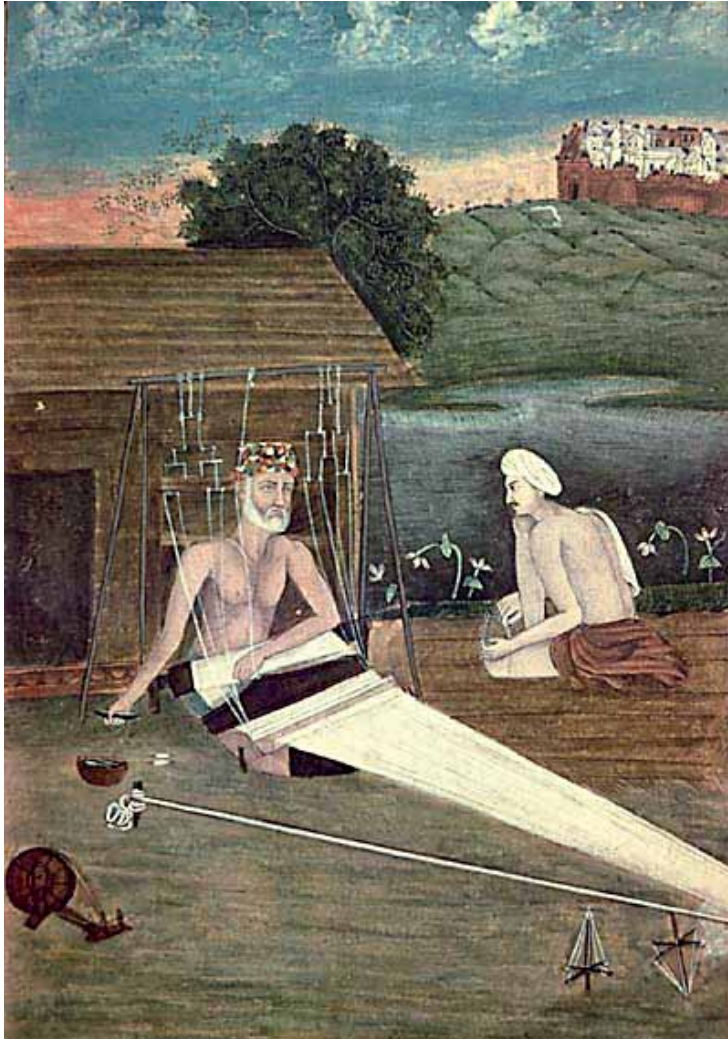
Dara Shikoh was a follower of the celebrated Sufi saint Hazrat Mian Mir, who laid the foundation stone of Sikh's holiest shrine, the Golden Temple at Amritsar. As with Guru Nanak, he devoted much effort towards finding a common language between Islam and Hinduism. As a result of his efforts, the Muslim elite in the seventeenth century virtually identified Vedanta with Sufism – an interfaith culture based on ethical teachings common to all religions. Many historians have speculated about how different the Indian subcontinent would have been had Dara Shikoh prevailed over his fierce fundamentalist brother Aurangzeb – a moment in history that is being repeated today by the clash between the secular and jihadi partisans, between Kashmiriyat and Talibaniyat.



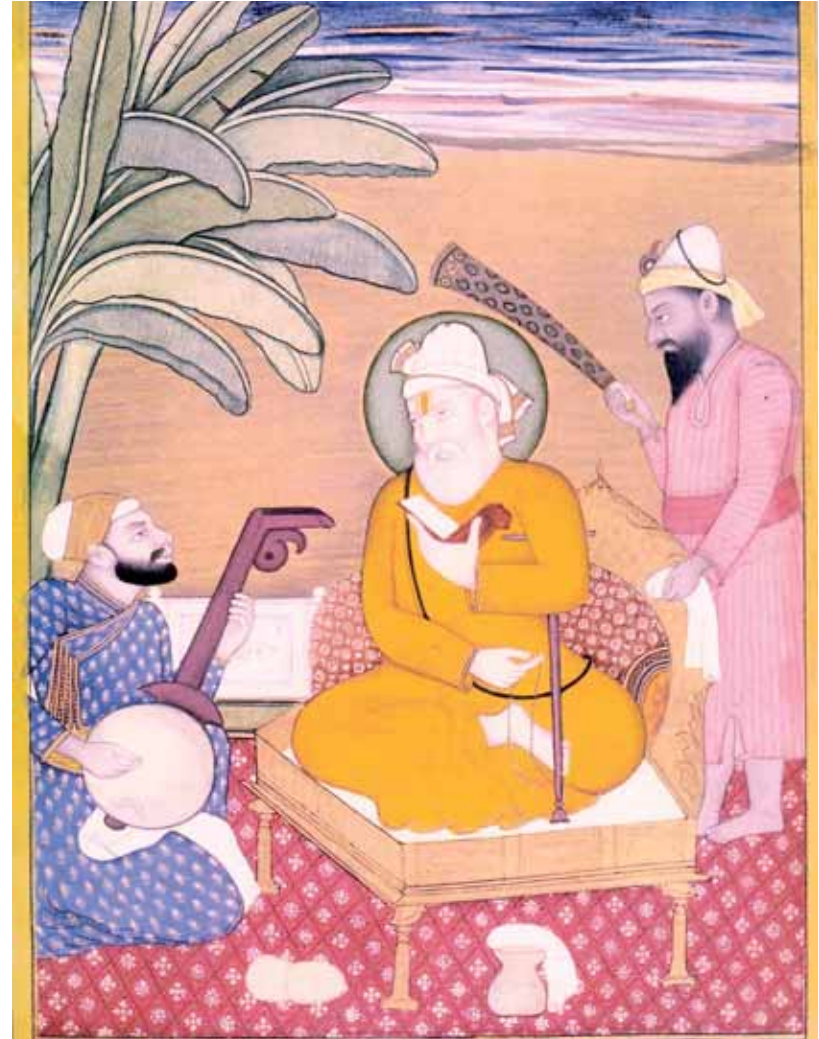
A Seventeenth Century miniature painting of a Sufi ascetic attributed to Mian Mir, who in 1589, laid the foundation stone of the Sikh Golden Temple, Amritsar, India.

The composite culture of Sufism resulted from its interaction with the Bhakti notions of passionate love and devotion promoted by spiritual personalities as Hazrat Nizamuddin Auliya and Khwaja Moinuddin Chishti of Ajmer. With the emergence of Vedanta in the tenth to eleventh centuries, also called the *Upanishads*, Moinuddin Chishti (AD 1141–1230) found himself in the midst of fermenting ideas as Indian philosophical perceptions took a giant leap forward towards pluralism. Several, often contradictory, schools of thought arose, representing an unprecedented diversity in beliefs spanning monotheism, polytheism and atheism. At the same time, the focus began to shift to rational thinking and analysis as contained in the *Nyaya-Sutras*. These emphasize the pragmatic human understanding of natural phenomena – how real-world issues have an impact on theological perceptions, which then in turn underwrite major social change.

Having assimilated the multicultural plurality of traditional Indian culture, Chishti promoted his interfaith doctrine through music. He established cultural centres called *khanqah* to spread the Sufi message of peace, tolerance, and non-violence. These cultural centres became the forerunner of *gharanas*, a system of social organization in which groups of musicians are linked by lineage and/or apprenticeship and adhere to a particular musical style. *Gharanas* gave birth to Indian classical music and also served as laboratories for the development of new musical instruments. The musical genius, poet, and philosopher, Amir Khusro (AD 1253–1325), is credited with inventing the sitar, based upon the ancient one-string instrument (*ek-tara*) and Persian ‘*setar*’ from the *saz* group of musical instruments. As with the sitar, the string instrument, *rabab*, used by Guru Nanak’s entourage, also



Kabir (1440–1518), born to a Hindu widow and brought up by a Muslim weaver in Varanasi, invoked the life and concerns of common people and secular ideals through his simple poems, promoting harmony among Hindus and Muslims. Miniature painting (eighteenth century), National Museum, New Delhi.



Guru Nanak Dev (1469–1536) devoted his entire life to promoting Hindu-Muslim unity. Accompanied by Mardana, a Muslim rabab player, and a Hindu disciple Bala, he travelled far and wide in India and abroad preaching his doctrine of equality, fraternity and peace through music. Miniature painting (seventeenth century), Sheesh Mahal Museum, Patiala, India.

helped to establish cross-civilization musical links that promoted interaction between the cultures of the world's two ancient civilizations, India and Mesopotamia.

As a result, interfaith music acquired a new international dimension, largely pioneered by Guru Nanak Dev (AD 1469–1539). He traveled extensively in India and abroad as far as Mecca and Baghdad, accompanied by a Muslim rabab player named Mardana, and a Hindu disciple, Bala. The *slokas* (lyrics) and *shabads* (hymns) he composed were based on teachings of both his Hindu and Muslim mentors – Kabir, Namdev, Ravidas, and notably Sheikh Farid, an eleventh-century Sufi saint, born in Pak Pattan (at present in Pakistan). The Sikh tradition has it that at the age of 30, Guru Nanak proclaimed: “there is no Hindu, there is no Muslim.” Music also benefited from Guru Nanak's *avant-garde* vision of duty, devotion and reform in the conduct of daily life.

In today's modern world, the mantle of interfaith secular music has fallen on the shoulders of such stalwarts as Ravi Shankar, the famous sitar player. Born (April 7, 1920) in a Hindu family in what is today Bangladesh, he married the daughter of his mentor, Allaudin Khan (1862–1972), founder of the Maihar gharana. In 1971, Ravi Shankar and George Harrison, together with other famous musicians such as Ringo Starr, Leon Russell, and Bob Dylan, organized 'The Concert for Bangladesh' at Madison Square Garden in New York City. Some 50,000 people attended the concert, which drew attention to the growing threat to secular Bengali culture by Islamist bigotry.

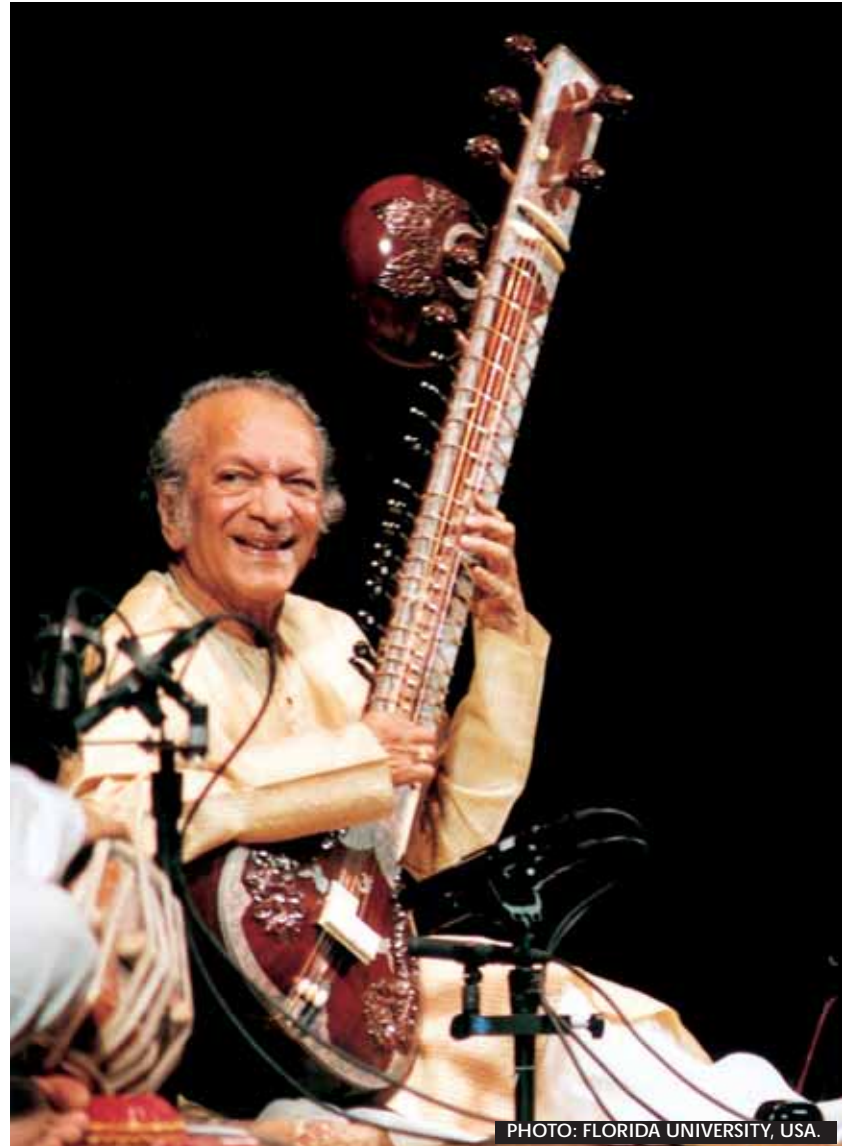


PHOTO: FLORIDA UNIVERSITY, USA.

Pandit Ravi Shankar, now aged 89, is as active as ever travelling worldwide and playing sitar at international concerts.



PHOTOS: THE HINDU



Bigots against baul monument

Staff Correspondent

SOME Muslim bigots on Wednesday forced government authorities to pull down a monument of bauls on the roundabout at Zia International Airport in Dhaka after they had tried to raze and rallied against the sculpture.

The Dhaka City Corporation six months ago decided to erect a monument at the place as part of the city beautification programme.

Sculptor Mrinal Haque about three months and a half ago started building the monument, sculptures of five bauls holding cktaras, single-stringed instruments, symbolising the exuberance of the Bengali culture. The

Continued on page 11 Col 5

Muslim bigots try to pull down a sculpture named Baul at Zia International Airport in Dhaka on Wednesday. — Raquib Khan



As Ravi Shankar foresaw, this monster of Islamic bigotry has gone on the rampage in Bangladesh, attacking the country's tangible and oral heritage. In early October 2008, a number of Masjid Imams demanded that the five works of art by the famous Bengali sculptor Mrinal Haque entitled '*Unknown Bird in a Cage*' must be dismantled. Calling themselves the Anti-Statues Resistance Committee and supported by the Islamic Oikya Jote and Jamat-e-Islami, the bigots mobilized Muslim clerics and madrasa students to demonstrate against the "un-Islamic" Baul sculptures. The military-backed caretaker Government willingly obliged them by removing the works of art that were being installed outside the International airport in Dhaka. As with the fifth century Bamiyan Buddha idols which were destroyed by Taliban vandals in Afghanistan, this 'crime against culture' was committed publicly in broad daylight in Bangladesh.

The dismantling of Baul sculptures in Bangladesh, like the demolition of the Babri Mosque in Ayodhya by the Hindutva bigots in India, is as serious an act as the destruction of the colossal fifth-century Bamiyan Buddha idols by the Taliban Regime in Afghanistan, described as a "crime against culture" by Koichiro Matsuura, Director-General of UNESCO, Paris.



PHOTO: MORSHED HIMADRI/DRIK

Bauls are wandering itinerant minstrels who do not belong to any religious denomination. Their songs, inspired by Fakir Lalon Shah, invoke cultural traditions that can be interpreted as a revolt against religious conventions and bindings. Playing on a single-string instrument, ek-tara, they roam from place to place, seeking their secular identity through music, devotion, and love. They believe that the 'spirit' resides not in an unknown heaven but can instead be traced within us through love and compassion for one other. Baul songs were included in the 2005 UNESCO list of 'Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity.'

The dismantling of the Baul sculptures is an audacious violation of human rights and the UNESCO international 'Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions' to which the Bangladesh Government is a signatory. It is a 'wake-up call', I wrote in a piece 'Cultures and Vultures' (*The Hindu*: May 18, 2007), about the false outcry of 'hurt religious feeling' like those of the Hindutva fanatics in India who attacked an exhibition containing some nude paintings at the Fine Arts Faculty of the M.S. University of Baroda. 'These self-appointed custodians of Indian culture, may start chipping away at temple murals, breaking down monuments, and eventually targeting the temples at Khajuraho, Konark and Bhuvaneshwar — until they succeed in effacing the rich Indian culture of art, image, and narrative, to conform to their own one-track, fascist vision of what Indian civilization is.'

The act of Baul vandalism unleashed an avalanche of protests against state-sponsored bigotry. Eminent citizens in Bangladesh were alarmed and decided to assemble all the *The Baul are wandering itinerant minstrels who do not belong to any religious denomination. Playing on a single-string instrument (ek-tara) the lonely Baul roams from place to place, seeking his secular identity through music, devotion and love.*



secular organizations into one people's movement. The group includes SAF-Bangladesh Advisory Board members, Hamida Hossain and Khushi Kabir; academician Anisuzzaman, columnist Syed Abdul Maksud, sculptor Emdad Hossain, Ajoy Roy of Sammilita Andolan, Anwar Hossain of Dhaka University, human rights activists Shamsuzzaman Khan, and various others. At the vanguard are a number of Bengali artists, filmmakers, singers, and writers and especially university students in Dhaka and other cities. Recalling the arrest of the young cartoonist, Arifur Rahman, 20, for drawing a 'cat named Mohammed', Rashed Ahmed of Dhaka University expressed his protest by drawing a fiery-eyed python swallowing the secular culture of Bangladesh. "The python is the traditional symbol of Islamic bigotry," says Ahmed, "and unless we stop the Islamic bigots now they will destroy our rich culture altogether." Another student sketched a mullah's face resembling a devil, with the inscription underneath in Bangla script: '*They are fundamentalists, they are against freedom, they are against culture, they have no right to live in this free country.*'

As in Bangladesh, the cultural groups in Pakistan, artists, intellectuals, social activists, writers, teachers and students, are resisting the Jihadists' violence by peaceful means. The three bomb explosions near the Alhamra Cultural Complex in Lahore failed to prevent art lovers from attending performances at the World Performing Arts Festival organized by the Rafi Peer Theatre. Ali Zafar and other leading pop musicians have launched an anti-terror campaign with a hit song, 'Yeh Hum Naheen' ('We are not terrorists'). The movement, designed to erase the worldwide impression that Pakistan is the 'epicentre of terror', has grown rapidly as millions of people from all walks of life have signed the Peace Charter.

In fact, it was the United States of America that created Pakistan's 'epicenter of terror' in the early 1980s in cooperation with the arch bigot General Zia-ul-Haq. The CIA used Pakistan's Inter-services Intelligence Agency (ISI), as a conduit to provide

lavish funds and arms to any group resisting the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. Osama Bin Laden was one of the key players in organizing the U.S. backed training camps and Taliban militants succeeded in ousting the secular government of Nagibullah in Kabul and installed an atrocious regime of Islamic bigots in Afghanistan in September 1996.

It was at this time that a deep-rooted nexus between the ISI and the Jihadists developed as they shared the spoils of the war in Afghanistan. Above all, Zia-ul-Haq was obsessed not only to rebuild the Pakistani army and its nuclear arsenal but also to cut once and for all his country's umbilical cord with mother India's pluralist multiculturalism. As Prof. Pervez Amirali Hoodbhoy, Quaid-e-Azam University, Islamabad, wrote (*Frontline*: 27 March 2009): 'this continental drift is not physical but cultural, driven by the belief that Pakistan must exchange its South Asian identity for an Arab-Muslim one. Grain by grain, the desert sand of Saudi Arabia is replacing the rich soil that had nurtured a rich Muslim culture in India for a thousand years. This culture produced Mughal architecture, the Taj Mahal, the poetry of Asadullah Ghalib, and much more. Now a stern, unyielding version of Islam - Wahabism - is replacing the kinder, gentler Islam of the Sufis and saints.'



The henchmen of Mullah Fazlullah have destroyed the famous rock-carved image of the Buddha, dating back to the second century BC, at Jahanabad and other pre-Islamic historical sites in Swat. Recently they bombed the shrine of the revered Pushtun Sufi poet, Rahman Baba (born around 1650), in the outskirts of Peshawar, as the Sufi saint de-emphasized the importance of the mosque and relied extensively on dance, music and poetry to promote such virtues as tolerance, devotion and love.

There is nothing more baneful to the Jihadists than dance and music. The Taliban bigots revealed their poisonous fangs in the aftermath of the NWFP elections, won by the liberal Awami National party, as thousands of jubilant people spontaneously crowded the streets and bazaars, singing and dancing to Punjabi *bhangra* and playing local Pushtun folk music. Unfortunately the euphoria of the 'Peshawar Spring' abruptly ended as the Taliban thugs and suicide bombers resumed killing and terrorizing people. Armed with guns and shouting, "Al-jihad, al-jihad", they went on a wild rampage, demanding the imposition of Shariah laws.

It is not just the slaughter that has shocked the people but its brutality and ruthlessness. The hair-raising horror of five screaming women, pleading for mercy, who were buried alive for blasphemy, has been justified by the Home Minister of Balochistan government, Zafarullah Zehri, as "a mere customary *Karo-Kari* punishment". In Swat, a self-appointed Taliban leader Shah Doran started using a portable radio transmitter to broadcast newly proscribed un-Islamic activities, like selling DVDs, watching TV, singing and dancing, shaving beards and allowing girls to attend school. He also revealed names of people recently killed by Taliban or those they were planning to kill for violating their decrees to enforce Shariah. A region where the Pushtun leader Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan, known as the 'Frontier Gandhi', once promoted his secular and democratic ideals of non-violence and tolerance, has become an inferno of Jihadist cruel repression and slaughter.

'Today a full-scale war is being fought in FATA (Federally Administered Tribal Areas), Swat and other "wild" areas of Pakistan, with thousands dying and hundreds of thousands of IDPs (internally displaced people) streaming into cities and towns', wrote Prof. Hoodbhoy. 'In February 2009, with the writ of the Pakistani state in tatters, the government gave in to the demand of the TIP (Tehrik-e- Taliban Pakistan, the Pakistani Taliban Movement) to implement the Islamic Shariah in Malakand, a region of FATA. It also announced the suspension of a military offensive in Swat, which has been almost totally taken over by the TIP. '

This blunder of wooing the so-called 'moderate Taliban' in Pakistan and Afghanistan that the Pakistani government committed, recalls the British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain's disastrous policy of negotiating with Hitler. With the Damocles' sword of the army hanging overhead, the authorities seem obliged to overlook the deep-rooted nexus between Islamic fundamentalists and Pakistan's Inter-services Intelligence Agency (ISI), some rogue elements of which may well be helping the militants.

"The monster that Pakistan created has outgrown its inventors" stated Jugnu Mohsin, editor of *Friday Times* and *Daily Times*, as she accompanied a 23-member Pakistani *Aman Karavan* (Peace Caravan) to India with the message of fostering peaceful amity between the two countries in the wake of Mumbai Massacre. The delegation included journalists, human rights activists, legislators, scholars and artists. Senator Haji Muhammed Adeel of the Awami National Party in Swat lamented: "Blaming Pakistan is easy but we are as much the victims of terror; we have Taliban bombers razing schools to the ground, stopping girls from going to schools and women and children are dying. We have militants from Sudan, Chechnya, we have Afghans, Uzbeks and Arabs terrorists".



*Shahid Nadeem, a leading dramatist, journalist and human rights activist of Pakistan, wrote *Burqvaganza* (2007), a metaphorical play translated from Urdu. He was imprisoned by General Zia-ul-Haq for 'un-Islamic activities.' Now he lives and works in Lahore.*

In return, a group of 13-member Indian peace delegation went to Pakistan in February 2009, led by the veteran journalist Kuldip Nayar. And on April 4, the Joint Action Committee for People's Rights and other civil society organizations in Pakistan including labour leaders and students, staged a massive demonstration led by Asma Jehangir, I.A. Rehman, Salima Hashmi, Mubashir Hasan and other human rights activists in Lahore.

'Even the worm turns', editorialized *Dawn* (25 May 2009). 'For long left at the mercy of the Taliban, the people of the Swat valley now seem to be mustering the courage to stand up to the rebels and fight back. The effectiveness of the army's operations against the Taliban has encouraged the non-combatants to organize their own defence to foil the Taliban's attempt to re-enter the villages from where they had been dislodged by the army. Last Thursday non-combatants in Kalam beat back attempts by the rebels to get a foothold in the area to resume their activities. The most barbaric aspect of the Taliban philosophy revealed itself in their attitude towards women: they beat up even those who had the 'audacity' to go to bazaars for essential shopping wearing a burka. They also brazenly advertised their anti-modernity ideology by blowing up schools and colleges. Devoid of the rudimentary concepts of compassion and mercy, the Taliban have slaughtered people and shown off their acts of barbarism on video.'

The avant-garde cultural practitioners in India and Pakistan have long highlighted these concerns through films, documentaries and theatrical performances. The Ajoka Theatre in Lahore - a city once known as the Paris of the Orient - has recently staged some outstanding productions such as *Hotel Mohenjodaro* and *Burqvaganza*, plays that are set in contemporary Pakistan. Inspired by Madeeha Gauhar and directed by her playwright husband Shahid Nadeem, *Burqvaganza* is his latest creation. Zia-ul-Haq's government had imprisoned Shahid Nadeem, accusing him of un-Islamic activities; and even today the fundamentalists such as Muttahida Majlis-e-Amal do not spare him as its Members of Parliament forced the Culture Minister to ban the play. He had already incurred the wrath of General Musharraf's Federal Minister of Culture, G. G. Jamal, who stated: "No one will be allowed to ridicule our culture". Such incendiary statements coming from the Minister of culture, encouraged and provided free license to Islamic zealots like Maulavi Sarwar Mughal in Swat, who assassinated the Punjab Minister of Social Welfare, Zile Huma, for not covering her head with a veil. The mother of two children was killed in Gujranwala, the cultural heartland of Pakistan. Earlier, the Maulvi was accused of murdering six women for being 'immoral', but the courts acquitted the pious fanatic for 'lack of evidence'.

Shahid Nadeem defended *Burqvaganza* on the plea that 'burqa' symbolizes the cover under which the corrupt Pakistani politicians, civil and military officials and the Jihadists wield arbitrary authority with impunity and hide their misdeeds. The playwright seems to visualize his country like its National Gallery of Art in Islamabad, containing innovative works of art that currently engage Pakistani society - religious intolerance, ethnic conflicts, Islamic bigotry. But these burning issues of human rights are barred from public view by the seven ghostlike black burqa-clad statues of women installed at the entrance of the gallery. Indeed, they represent the corrupt civil and military officials and fanatic militants who use the burqa to hatch their dangerous plots by the bigots like the head cleric of Lal Masjid, Qazi Abdul Aziz, who had attempted to slip through the army cordon clad in a burqa and wearing high-heel shoes. And those who reveal their faces are thrown out of the Burqvaganza fraternity; the Pakistani security chief Mahmud Ali Durrani was fired for telling the truth that the lone arrested Lashkar-e-Taiba trained gunman in Mumbai was in fact Ajmal Amir Kasab, a Pakistani national.



The play *'Hotel Mohenjodro'*, is based on the 1967 short story by the gifted Pakistani writer, the late Ghulam Abbas. This futuristic fiction intuitively predicts how a progressive, modern country under the oppressive regime of Islamic bigots can be reduced to the backwardness of the stone age. This futuristic story opens with a celebration at the fictional Hotel Mohenjodaro as Pakistan becomes the first country to send a man to the moon. The mullahs are horrified and condemn the astronaut as a heretic and whip up a frenzy that topples the government. They take over power, impose Shariah and gender segregation, ban music, dance, art, English, modern inventions and destroy educational institutions, schools and libraries.



Jinnay Lahore Nahin Vekhya (One who has not lived in Lahore), tracks a shared history of Punjab - a sub-continental culture, language and a way of life - that was torn asunder in the fateful year of 1947. It brings to mind the numerous post-partition heart rendering tragedies such as of Boota Singh, a Sikh, who committed suicide as he was not allowed by Pakistani bigots to live with his Muslim wife, even though he converted to Islam. Larry Collins and Dominique Lapierre poignantly describe Boota Singh's ordeal in the book, '*Freedom at Midnight*'. The play *Jinnay Lahore Nahin Vekhya* was written by the Indian playwright Asghar Wajahat. It is a true story that was made famous by the iconic Indian theatre director Habib Tanvir when he first directed it in 1989. The play is based in an old house (*haveli*) in Lahore in which an elderly Hindu woman decides to stay on after India's Partition in 1947. She refuses to vacate her ancestral home even when the haveli was allotted to Muslim migrants



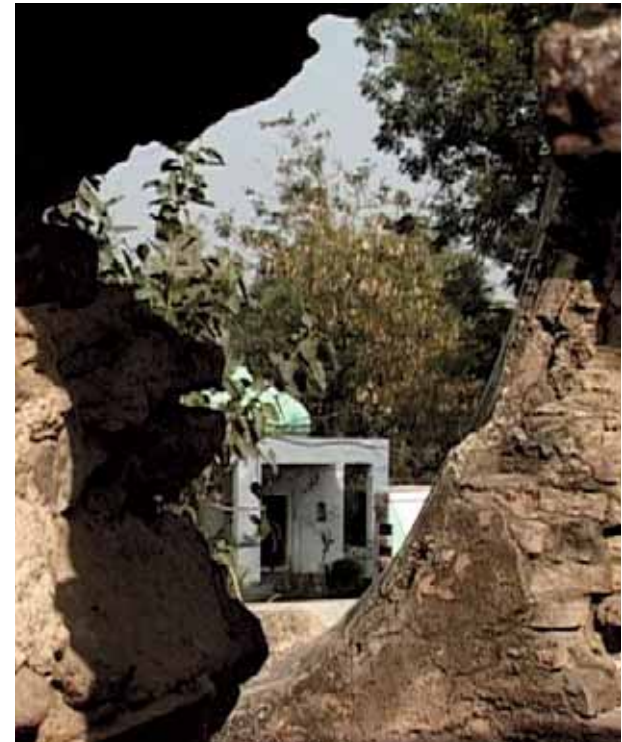
PHOTO: S. THYAGARAJAN/NSD

coming from across the border. Suddenly she finds herself among antagonistic strangers who had come to believe that only Muslims are allowed to live in Pakistan. She is harassed because of her religion and intimidated by local ruffians in an attempt to banish her from her beloved Lahore. But she adamantly declines and tries to develop amicable relationship with the co-owners, until she dies. Produced by *Tehrik-e-Niswan* (Women's Movement), Karachi, and directed by Sheema Kermani and Anwar Jafri, the play incorporates the verses of the famous Urdu poet, Nasir Kazmi, who had migrated from Ambala to Lahore after India's Partition.

The remorse and regret of the 'Partition generation' is powerfully shown in Ajay Bharadwaj's documentary, '*Rabba Hun Ki Kariye*' (Oh God, what should we do now). Travelling in the Ludhiana, Bathinda, Patiala, and Malerkotla districts of the Punjab, the filmmaker found a groundswell of introspection among the people, trying to atone for feelings of guilt over the horrific violence of 1947. The memories the film rescues from the detritus of time are in essence the shared cultural values, the deep nostalgia about the good old days, of jointly held festivals in pre-Partition Punjab at which storytellers related down-to-earth *qisse* (ballads), such as the tales of *Sassi-Pannun*, *Sohni-Mahiwal*, *Heer-Ranjha*, and *Balo Mahiya*. The trauma is poignantly personified by one Karam Singh who, until his death at the age of 86 in 2007, prayed at a Sufi shrine near Bathinda for the everlasting peace of those killed and also for the salvation of their killers. There could not be a better illustration of how the emotional force of pluralist culture can transcend communal animosities whipped up by unscrupulous politicians and clerics.



The film, *Rabba Hun Ki Kariye* (Oh God, what should we do now), invokes feelings of guilt and remorse as the Hindu, Muslim, Sikh and Christian friends of 'Partition generation' share their agonizing memories of the violence in 1947.



Until his death in 2007, Karam Singh prayed for the everlasting peace of those killed and also for salvation of their killers at a Sufi shrine near Bathinda in the Indian part of Punjab.

Since the Mumbai terror attack, unprecedented throngs of Indian Muslims – ranging from Bollywood filmmakers and actors to skull-cap wearing seminary students – have lit candles and marched through the streets of Mumbai and other cities, holding banners proclaiming their condemnation of terrorism and their loyalty to the Indian state. Imams asked people to wear black ribbons as a mark of protest and no local Muslim charity is willing to bury the dead terrorists in its cemetery.

That the Indian Muslims have stood up in this way is due, in part, to the fact that they live in and are the product of a secular and pluralist society. Muslim artists have intensified their struggle to uphold the country's democratic culture. This is reflected in the views of maestros such as Sajjad Husain, Ghulam Haider, Naushad Ali and, more recently, Ismail Darbar and A.R. Rehman. At the vanguard are a number of progressive actors and actresses from Madhu Bala to Shabana Azmi, Dilip Kumar, and Naseeruddin Shah, while the Indian theatre continues to draw its inspiration from the secular stalwarts as Ebrahim Alkazi and Habib Tanvir. The nonagenarian master painter, M.F. Husain, who has been banished to live outside India by Hindutva fanatics, powerfully expresses his outrage over the Mumbai massacre in a large collection of his newly painted works of art, titled '*Rape of India.*'



N.N. Vohra, Governor of Jammu & Kashmir

The separatists' claim to partition Kashmir valley because of its Muslim majority is absurd as India has the second largest Muslim community in the world, after Indonesia, and the one with the deepest democratic traditions. Bigotry is invariably stoked and manipulated by communal politicians who take every opportunity to inflame religious passions. They were rattled by the success of the Junoon concert and the historic exhibition of South Asian women painters in Srinagar, based on liberal and tolerant Islamic values. Bucked up by Kashmiri media's petty lies and misrepresentations, the militant separatists hijacked the euphoria created by the two SAF events and manipulated people's attention in the name of 'freedom'. They launched a movement, falsely alleging that the allocation of land for pilgrimage to the Amarnath shrine was a Hindu conspiracy to change Kashmir's demography. Even after the order was rescinded by Governor Sinha's successor, N.N.Vohra, they continued misleading many youngsters into jumping on to their Jihadist bandwagons, while a similar number of saffron-clad Hindutva bigots in Jammu demonstrated by marching along their *rathyatras*. The volcano of protests that erupted forced many artists to suspend their work. The Kashmiri singer Syed, for example, was compelled to cease a video shoot for her new album. She now waits for the day when she can leave her home, resume her music, and sing in freedom from Jihadist oppression.

The people of Kashmir defied the separatists' threat-laden calls for a boycott of State Assembly elections, braving the freezing cold to go out and vote for democracy in unprecedented numbers. The resounding victory of the coalition of secular parties, the



Congress and the National Conference led by the youngest Chief Minister, Omar Abdullah, has left no doubt that the people of Jammu & Kashmir see in India's democracy, however imperfect, the best means to address the multiple problems they face. As Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh recently reaffirmed at an election rally attended by throngs of people in Srinagar, freedom can be realized only within the framework of India's secular constitution and which is synonymous with Kashmir's autonomous identity and self-rule.

Even more astonishing are the results of India's general elections announced on 16 May 2009. I waited with fingers crossed as the votes were being counted after a month-long, five-phase election. From the media reports it appeared as though the verdict of some 700 million electorate would result in a 'hung parliament', a close contest between the coalition of secular parties led by Congress and the communal groups represented by the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP).

The reason for my anxiety was expressed in a lengthy three-page letter I wrote to Sonia Gandhi, dated 31 December 2007, pointing out that the state elections in Gujarat in which Narendra Modi of the BJP swept the polls, should not be taken as just another periodical election. 'The Hindutva laboratory set up by "maut ke saudagar" (merchants of death) as you rightly called Modi's VHP henchmen, is working overtime. They are pulling out the roots of India's pluralist secular culture and, as with the Taliban, promoting that "authentic culture" must be rooted in the religious majority, and that such culture must include myths and scriptures, while excluding archaeology, history and science.'

The political strategy that Modi is emulating to win Gujarat elections is a carbon copy of Hitler's Nazi goons. The mysterious fire that engulfed the train in Godhara was no different from the burning of the Reichstag building in Berlin as a prelude to winning the German elections in the early 1933. The only difference between the German and Gujarat analogy, I wrote, is that Germany, a country no larger than an average Indian state, came under the heels of fascist boots in a short period of time, while here in India the *trishuls* are being carried in different states at different paces. Hence, unless the Congress wakes up to nip this ugly hydra of communal intolerance, the fascist virus of unilateralism will spread all over India and destroy its ageless, multifaceted civilization and pluralist culture.

The Congress President Sonia Gandhi promptly responded in a letter dated 10 January 2008, assuring me that "the Congress Party has not and does not intend to abandon the basic principles of secularism and inclusiveness that have been the bulwark of its philosophy". The resounding victory of the incumbent UPA coalition government has proved her political instinct, as the political maturity of "Aam Adami" (common man) has come to India's rescue by voting massively for stability and secularity. The Indian industrialists - many of whom supported the BJP - are not unhappy either as markets have been electrified by the prospect that policy continuity will stabilize the Indian economy and they, too, would benefit from the economic, educational and cultural reforms, so ably implemented during the past five years by Dr. Manmohan Singh— a clean and honest politician whom the US President Barrack Obama called "a wonderful and wise leader". I was absolutely thrilled and as soon as the results started coming in on 16 May 2009, I profusely congratulated Sonia Gandhi for having reappointed Dr. Manmohan Singh as Prime Minister.

Above all, it is Rahul Gandhi who, much like Barrack Obama, is the new phenomenon on India's political horizon. Tirelessly, he crisscrossed the entire length and breadth of India and reached out to the marginalized and deprived communities, explaining to them the Congress programmes for the benefit of poorer sections of society. With the Congress theme song, *Jai Ho*, echoing in his ears, he probably saw the slum dog sleeping hungry in terrible conditions while the millionaires slept in luminous palaces. It appears as though during his travels he felt like his great grandfather Jawaharlal Nehru who wrote in *The Discovery of India*: 'Looking at the people and their misery and overwhelming gratitude, I was filled with shame and sorrow, shame at our easygoing and comfortable life and our petty politics of the city dwellers who ignore this vast multitude of semi-naked sons and daughters of India, sorrow at their degradation and overwhelming poverty. A new picture of India seemed to rise before me, naked, starving, crushed and utterly miserable. And their faith in us, casual visitors from the distant city, embarrassed me and filled me with a new responsibility that frightened me.'





Only time will tell whether the mantle of Jawahrlal Nehru's legacy has fallen on the shoulders of Rahul Gandhi, just as his mother Sonia Gandhi inherited the legacy of Annie Besant, the first President of the Indian National Congress. Rahul's bold decision not to join the new government and instead devote his time in rebuilding the Congress party at the grassroots bodes him well.

A fresh wind of gradual democratic reform is sweeping all over South Asia. The establishment of constitutional monarchy in Bhutan and its abolition in Nepal, election of a civilian president in Pakistan, the end of one-man rule in the Maldives, and a landslide victory of secular parties led by Bangladesh Awami League in the parliamentary elections, will inevitably strengthen regional cooperation, mutual security and benefit the region's secular culture. Sheikh Hasina, the daughter of the eminent 'Father of Bangladesh' Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, has once again wrestled the reigns of power from Begum Khaleda Zia's ruling coalition that included two Islamic fundamentalist parties, the Jamaat-e-Islami and the Islamic Oikya Jote. The Jihadists' agenda remains unchanged as their slogan: '*Amra Sobai Hobo Taliban, Bangla Hobe Afghanistan*' (We will all become Taliban and we will turn Bangladesh into Afghanistan). One important contributing factor that isolated and defeated the Islamic militants was the fair election, viz. elimination of the fake votes and impersonation. In 2007, the caretaker government had formed a committee headed by the Vice Chancellor of BRAC University, Prof. Jamilur Reza Choudhury (a member of

Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh announced the names of the Union Council of Ministers in the 2009 cabinet who were appointed on the basis of expertise, regional and age balance, in consultation with Congress President Sonia Gandhi. Congress General-Secretary Rahul Gandhi decline to join the Government as he wants to devote his time to rebuilding the Party at the grassroots.



PHOTO: SHAHIDUL ALAM/DRIK



PHOTO: THE PROTHOM ALO

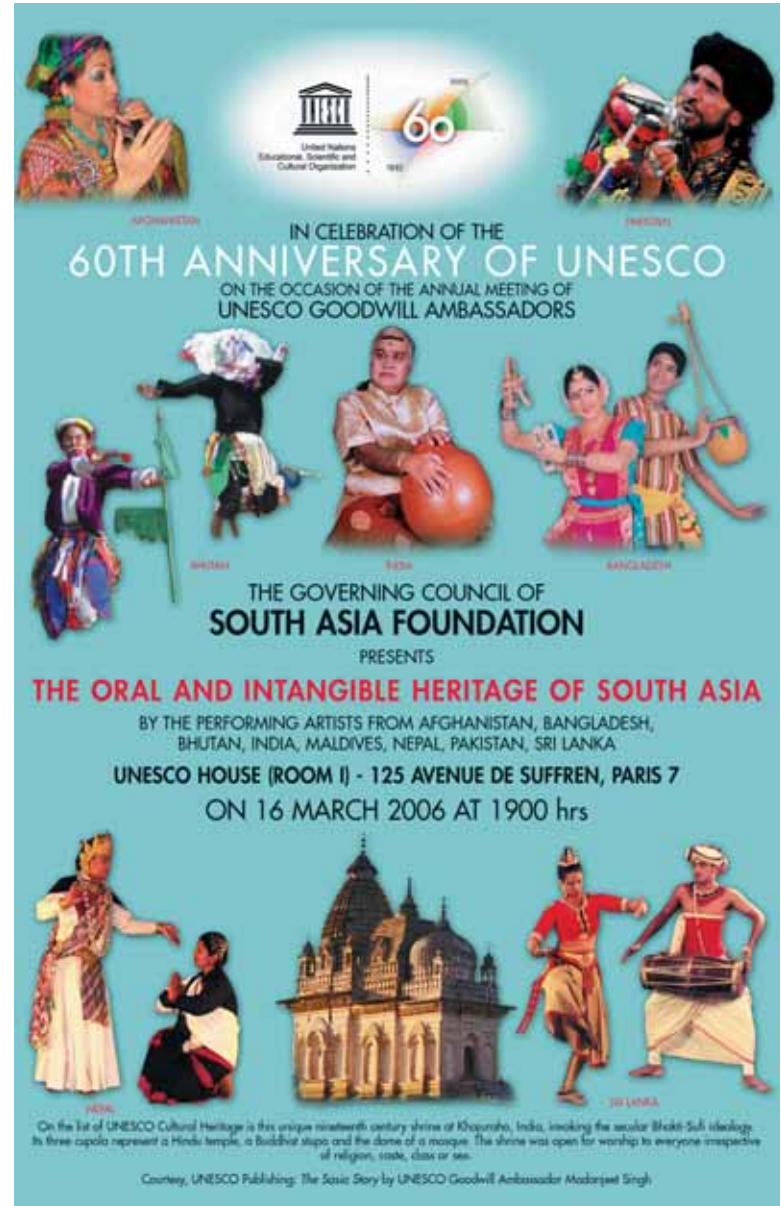
SAF-Bangladesh Advisory Board) to recommend a methodology for preparing a fresh Electoral Roll and issuing ID cards with photographs and fingerprints. This task of preparing the computerized database of more than 80 million voters using a large number of laptop computers with attached cameras, was completed in around 15 months by the Election Commission, with assistance from the Armed Forces.

‘The margin of win has truly been a humbling experience as it reflects the profound faith and huge responsibility the people of Bangladesh have reposed on me for realization of their expectation’, wrote Sheikh Hasina in her letter to me dated 18 January 2009. ‘It is also clear by their overwhelming support that they subscribe and support our party’s manifesto which emphatically includes establishment of a progressive, secular, democratic Bangladesh. Therefore, it is imperative that I fulfill their expectations, meaning also a Bangladesh free of terrorism and all forms of extremism constituting hindrances to secularism.’

With two-third parliamentary majority achieved by Bangladesh Awami League, Sheikh Hasina has an unprecedented opportunity of strengthening the secular constituency by reinstating the constitution on which the first government of independent Bangladesh was formed by her father Mujibur Rahman on 8 January 1972. The latest elections have shown that while the Islamists have grabbed headlines, Bangladeshi society remains overwhelmingly secular.

In Kashmir, the massive turnout of the electorate to vote can be credited to the timely Junoon and the Singhs concert in Srinagar, held on the eve of the State elections. The secular emotions it invoked roundly defeated the separatist Jihadists — recalling the worldwide rejoicing at the 33rd session of the UNESCO General Conference in Paris, when its 183 Member States had trounced the rabid unilateralism of just two countries, Israel and the USA under former President George W. Bush, by adopting the resolution on 'Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions'. SAF enthusiastically supported this resolution and to commemorate the 60th Anniversary of UNESCO in 2006, invited forty dancers and musicians from the eight SAARC countries to perform in Paris. Like the Baul singers from Bangladesh, the famous group of dancers from Bhutan, *Drametse Ngacham* (proclaimed by UNESCO as among the 'Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity'), were among the outstanding performers.

A poster printed on this occasion also shows the unique 19th century shrine at Khajuraho in the Indian State of Madhya Pradesh, a site that is on the UNESCO list of the World Heritage. Its three cupolas represent a Hindu temple, a Buddhist stupa and the dome of a mosque. The shrine was open for worship to all, irrespective of religion, caste, gender, class or status. Similar interfaith monuments and shrines are extant in many parts of the Indian subcontinent. In Srinagar, a shrine was founded by the 14th century secular Sufi saint, Hazrat Nurooddin Noorani (Nund Rishi), one floor of which was used as a Hindu temple and the other as a mosque. Kashmiri Sufis who call themselves Rishis after the legendary Hindu sages, respected and recited verses from both Hindu and Muslim scriptures. It was at Nund Rishi's shrine that the original Sufiana Gharana became an active centre of vocal and instrumental music in Kashmir.



THE SECULAR LEGACY OF AASI

One fine morning on 20 November 2006, as I was exploring the idea of making Aasi's concept of Kashmiriyat the central theme of the Institute of Kashmir Studies, I received an unexpected telephone call from the Indian Embassy in Paris. They wished to inquire whether I would accept a Padma award, which the government wanted to bestow upon me. For a moment I was nonplussed, not knowing how to react. This was indeed a great honour, and one that many in India eagerly solicit. I was looking at a photograph of the 'coolie poet' Aasi, taken almost half a century ago, published in my book *This My People*. Aasi had worked as a humble labourer in Srinagar, undertaking menial jobs and never soliciting favours or recognition in return for the valuable contribution he had made to Kashmiriyat through his secular poetry. He, in fact, firmly rejected the suggestion put to him by Mr. D.P. Dhar (under whom I served as a diplomat many years later while he was Ambassador of India to Moscow) that his name be recommended to the Premier of Jammu & Kashmir, Sheikh Abdullah, for a reward.

Perhaps it was Aasi's extraordinary precedent lurking in my subconscious mind that led me to respectfully decline the award. Realizing that the offer was the initiative of Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh, I wrote to him on 22 November, to explain my reasons for declining his very kind offer. I submitted to him that I was fortunate that my contribution to Indian arts and culture through my books, exhibitions and other means were well known in India and abroad and that I considered this my reward. I had carried this conviction since the early 1950s when my first book, *INDIA, Paintings from Ajanta Caves*, was launched by the UNESCO World Art series, a volume to which Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru was kind enough to write an introduction.



I recollected that at the time, while Cultural Attaché at the Indian Embassy in Rome, I had produced an award-winning documentary film based on this publication in collaboration with the famous cinematographer Claude Renoir. The film narrated a Jataka story during which a Buddhist monk is asked what rewards he and his ancestors have earned in return for their creation of six centuries of artistic masterpieces. In answer, the monk pointed to the fifth-century painting *Dancing Girl with Musicians* and replied: 'That is the reward'. These words provoked loud applause from the audience at a screening of the film in Rome. As I explained in my letter to Dr. Manmohan Singh, this was a lesson that I had never forgotten.

I remained concerned, however, that my decision might be misconstrued, so I heaved a sigh of relief on receiving Dr. Manmohan Singh's reply of 1 February 2007.

A further, even more valid reason for my refusal was my extreme discontent at our secular government's inability to protect our writers and artists against religious fanatics. The astounding manner in which Hindutva bigots had hounded my good friend Maqbool Fida Husain out of his beloved country into exile was eating away at my soul. It was Husain who had encouraged me to paint and let me use his two-room studio at Nizamudin, New Delhi, shortly after India's partition. Even at that time he painted nude and scantily clad figures, inspired by the thousands of naked gods and goddesses traditionally depicted on ancient Indian monuments and temples. During my time as cultural attaché I arranged for some of these works of art to be exhibited at the 1953 Venice International Biennale.

It was not until the nineties, however, that Hindutva puritans suddenly began undermining India's rich



प्रधान मंत्री
Prime Minister

New Delhi
February 1, 2007

My dear Madanjeet,

I have received your letter of 22nd January and appreciate the reasons for declining to accept the Padma Award.

Your work, both as a Freedom Fighter and subsequently, has contributed to a greater understanding of India and its culture across the world.

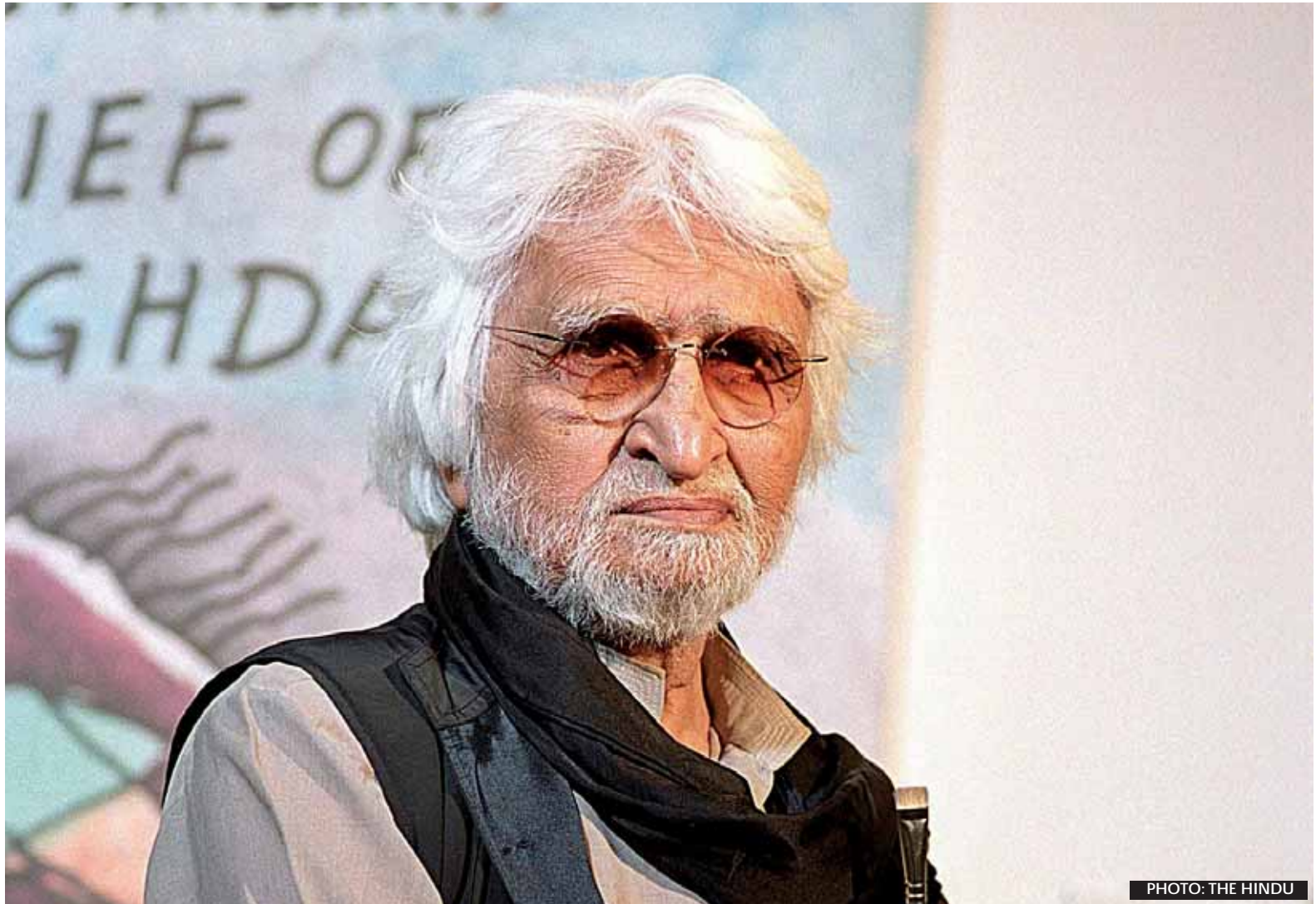
I wish you well and hope that you will continue to contribute in your chosen fields for a long time to come.

With warm regards,

Yours sincerely,

Manmohan Singh
(Manmohan Singh)

Mr. Madanjeet Singh
Villa Surya – 23,
Bd Alsace Lorraine – 06310
Beaulieu-sur-Mer, Paris
France



The atrocious manner in which Hindutva bigots had hounded into exile one of world's greatest artists, the 'Indian Picasso', Maqbool Fida Husain, was eating away at Madanjeet Singh's soul.



These two historical masterpieces, which Husain painted in 1953, were among those exhibited abroad for the first time at the 1953 Biennale in Venice (at present in Madanjeet Singh's collection).



PHOTO: MAGDA FRIMER

Husain's paintings were among the 65 works of art displayed at the 1953 Biennale in Venice, Italy, in an exhibition organized by Madanjeet Singh, (right) then a Cultural Attaché at the Indian Embassy in Rome. The Indian pavilion was inaugurated by Sir Roland Adam (left) in the presence of Dr. Luther Evans, the former Director-General of UNESCO, Paris.

multicultural tradition for political reasons. Husain became the target of their so-called 'religious sensitivity', just as the jihadis had issued fatwas condemning artists and writers, such as Salman Rushdie, to death. The fanatics pounced upon this greatest of contemporary Indian artists, for the 'offense' of depicting Hindu goddesses without clothes. They offered large sums of money to anyone who would behead the artist, gouge out his eyes, and chop off his hands. In 1998 they ransacked his Mumbai home and criminal complaints were filed in Indore and Rajkot courts, alleging that Husain had 'hurt the sentiments of Indians'. His failure to respond to court summons even led to an order from a Haridwar court to seize his property in Mumbai. My heart refused to let me accept a government award, however prestigious, as long as 'India's Picasso' languished in exile.

I was troubled also by the failure of the authorities to apprehend or punish the Muslim militants seeking the death of Taslima Nasreen, the 2004 laureate of the UNESCO-Madanjeet Singh Prize for the Promotion of Tolerance and Non-Violence. The Bangladeshi writer and poet had been obliged to flee her country and take refuge in India, unaware that the long arm of Islamic fundamentalism would not permit her to live in peace, even in her adopted home of Kolkata. The head of the All India Ibtihad Council, Taqi Raza Khan, publicly threatened her, demanding her beheading (qatal) under Shariah law for holding secular views, and offered Rs.5,00,000/- to anyone willing to carry out the execution.

But this was not the end of Taslima's ordeal. Even more strange was the decision of the Communist Party (Marxist) government in West Bengal – the self-proclaimed champions of secularity – to expel her from Kolkata in order to secure the votes of the constituency of Muslim fundamentalists in local elections. I wrote to Shri Jyoti Basu, the veteran CPM leader, and sent several letters to Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh, Foreign Minister Pranab Mukherjee and Shrimati Sonia Gandhi, President of the All India Congress Committee. I urged them to help Taslima return to Kolkata. In one letter I invoked the morals of the Sibi Jataka, painted on the walls of the Ajanta Caves, in which the King of the Sibis offered an equal weight of his own flesh to save a dove that had sought his protection from a hawk seeking its death.





To cut a long story short, on 31 March 2008 I wrote once more to Dr. Manmohan Singh regarding Taslima's plight. I brought to his kind attention how the Bengali writer, unable to bear the prolonged isolation of solitary confinement in a small room in Delhi, had left India on Friday, 28 March. She had flown straight to a hospital in Upsala, Sweden, and from there, had come to stay with me at Villa Surya, terribly shaken.

'Notwithstanding the appalling violation of her human rights', I wrote, 'she has not lost her sense of balance. She loves secular India and appreciates the sympathy shown to her by people like you, Shrimati Sonia Gandhi and Shri Jyoti Basu. She blames communal politicians for having made her into a political shuttlecock, especially since she carefully avoided participating in any political activities during her stay in India.' Taslima is a symbol of uncompromising secularism and empowerment of women. Moreover, I see in her the image of my sister's only daughter, Babli, who was killed in a plane crash in Paris. Babli, like Taslima, was a poet and a writer and her mother Ranjeeta was later shot dead by a mugger in Delhi. So I accepted Taslima as a part of my family and asked her to stay on at Villa Surya in France until she can return 'home' to Kolkata.

Taslima was absolutely thrilled. She wrote: 'It must have been a full moon last night. Seeing its reflection in the Mediterranean made my entire body shiver with joy. It was a joy I could not share with anyone, however, for I was standing alone on the terrace of Villa Surya. The soft wind feathered my face, my hair. Like a bindi in the heavens, the moon shone in all its glory. Oh, India! India is still in my thoughts, my irresistible thoughts.'

Today in France, I am the guest of Madanjeet Singh, the Indian artist, writer, former diplomat, and philanthropist who is a UNESCO Goodwill Ambassador. In his name UNESCO gave me a prize for the promotion of tolerance and non-violence. An incredibly generous person, he has also established the South Asia Foundation, a secular, non-profit and non-political organization that promotes friendship and regional cooperation among the people of South Asia. Never before have I met such a dedicated secularist and visionary.

The Director-General Mr. Koichiro Matsuura awarded Taslima Nasreen the 2004 UNESCO - Madanjeet Singh Prize for the Promotion of Tolerance and Non-Violence at UNESCO headquarters, Paris, on 16 November, the United Nations Day of Tolerance.



प्रधान मंत्री
Prime Minister

New Delhi
4 April, 2008

Dear Shri Madanjeet Singh,

I read your letter with great interest. Let me state at the outset, that many of us here share the sense of anguish you feel at Taslima Nasreen's plight. It is most unfortunate that someone like her should be the target of extremist elements. Actions of this kind, though by a small minority tend to undermine our secular credentials and damage our image as an inclusive society.

You may rest assured, however, that we shall never deviate from our age-old traditions and principles. Right through the ages we have offered sanctuary and a home to anyone who has sought our help. We have always shown compassion to those who have been persecuted. His Holiness the Dalai Lama is one shining example. We are unhappy at the turn of events in the case of Ms Taslima Nasreen, but in her case also we have honoured our ancient pledge. I cannot say how pleased I am that you have offered her a place to stay in Paris, till such time as she finds it convenient to return to India.

Taslima has been a victim of the politics of hate that a small section of extremists within our country are now pursuing. Her preference was to stay in Kolkata, but the West Bengal Government apprehended that this might lead to a law and order situation in the State. I cannot say whether this apprehension is valid, but we nevertheless welcomed her here in Delhi. Taslima misses being in Kolkata, however.

It is not correct to say that while in Delhi she was kept in solitary confinement in a small room. Certain restrictions on her movements had to be imposed based on perceptions of the threat to her personal security. Otherwise she had relative freedom of movement. The restrictions that were imposed, no doubt, weighed heavily on her mind, and I can understand her predicament. External Affairs Minister, Mr. Pranab Mukherjee, and senior officials did meet her from time to time to assuage many of her concerns.

-2-

She left for Sweden on her own volition, and not because we asked her. She will always be welcome in India as our guest. Her personal security, however, remains a matter of concern and we will need to take precautions to ensure her protection as long as she is our guest. We can try and see whether she could go back to Kolkata where she feels most comfortable, but for this we would need the cooperation of the West Bengal Government.

India's glorious traditions of welcoming people irrespective of caste and creed, community and religion will continue, whatever be the odds. The atmosphere of hate being perpetrated by a small segment within the country will not prevent us from persisting with this tradition. We recognize Taslima Nasreen's right to remain in a country of her choice, viz., India in this case. She should also have the option to choose whichever city or state she chooses.

I hope you would try to make her understand this. You should also try to persuade her to realize that whatever was done while she was in India was dictated by the necessity to ensure her safety and security.

With regards,

Yours sincerely,


(Manmohan Singh)

Shri Madanjeet Singh
Goodwill Ambassador
United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
Villa Surya – 23, Bd Alsace Lorraine – 06310
Beaulieu-sur-Mer
France

As with Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, first Prime Minister of India, Dr. Manmohan Singh acknowledged each and every letter of Madanjeet Singh. However, the lengthy letter of explanation he wrote to him on 4 April 2008, was truly unprecedented. His response arrived on 16 April, 2008 which happened to be Madanjeet Singh's 84th birthday. The letter was like a bouquet of roses, emitting the perfume of Dr. Manmohan Singh's impeccable sense of human decency, respect for human rights and deeply embedded secular ideals.

If anyone today wonders who cares for honesty and integrity, they have only to look at Madanjeet. When I was truly without a country, he is the one who first embraced my cause and me. He is the one who has given me shelter. He is the one at whose Villa Surya I have been staying and enjoy walking with his gigantic dog Wasa (whom I adore as much as I love my cat Minu, left behind in Kolkata). Strolling on the beach of Beaulieu-sur-Mer, I listen to the sound of the sea, and contemplate the beauty



of the overlooking mountains. Nature makes me spellbound, but when I get love from a fellow dreamer, one who envisions a world free from hatred and violence, from oppression and exploitation, I am also spellbound. On the one hand, I am walking a lonely and dangerous path, and on the other I feel like crying with joy. He, Madanjeet at the age of 84, is showing his solidarity, support, and empathy, something that the new generations of South Asians have to learn; they are sinking in the stagnant pool of conservatism, narrow-mindedness, fanaticism and fear.'

Encouraged by Dr. Manmohan Singh's assurance in his letter to me dated 4 April 2008, recognizing 'Taslima Nasreen's right to remain in a country of her choice, viz, India in this case', she returned to New Delhi as my guest to mark time until she can either go back home in Bangladesh or live elsewhere. Similar sentiments, as by the Indian Prime Minister, were expressed by the Mayor of Paris, Bertrand Delanoe, at a function last year in July, making her an "honorary citizen" of Paris in the presence of the entire French Legislative Assembly. He said: "You are at home here, in the city where it was proclaimed that men are born and remain free and equal and nobody can be condemned for their beliefs."

As Robert Frost noted, 'Home is a place where, when you have to go there, they have to take you in'. With my incorrigible optimism, I have not given up hope that Husain, too, shall eventually return home. His presence in India and that of other great artists and writers is vital to keep the secular dream and legacy of Aasi alive.

Taslima Nasreen with Madanjeet Singh and his gigantic dog, Wasa, in front of Villa Surya facing the deep blue Mediterranean Sea, Cote d'Azur, France.

THIS, MY PEOPLE

On January 9, 1949, Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru handwrote the foreword to a set of my photographs entitled *This, My People* that I had taken mostly in pre-Partition India, a selection from the two Peace Campaign exhibitions in Lahore and New Delhi. It was with a great deal of hesitation that I had approached him at that critical time, knowing how distressed he felt in the wake of Mahatma Gandhi's assassination and extremely occupied writing India's constitution.

Nevertheless, knowing that since Pandit ji visited my November 1947 exhibition at the AIFACS gallery, he had become quite fond of me. By then he also knew about my imprisonment during Mahatma Gandhi's Quit India movement and my having worked as a volunteer at the Dewan Hall refugee camp, opposite the Red Fort in New Delhi.

So I picked up my bicycle, tied on its rack the album of my photographs and took off for Teen Murti House, the residence of the first Minister of India of India. It was a chilly morning, and I wondered if the shiver I felt in my spine was due to the cold



In the midst of the bloody communal riots that engulfed Lahore in 1947, Madanjeet Singh organized two Peace Campaign exhibitions of his photographs and paintings, one at the Government College and another in the Lahore Museum.

**ART EXHIBITION AT
LAHORE MUSEUM**

Photographs and Paintings on Display

PROCEEDS TO HELP RIOT VICTIMS

An exhibition of photographs and oil paintings by Madanjeet was opened in Lahore on Sunday, March 30, at the Punjab University Institute of Chemistry, and will remain open a few more days. The exhibition is organized in aid of the riot sufferers, and a collection was made on the first day when Dr. C. L. Fabri, Curator, Central Museum, opened the show.

Some of the photographs show the shocking and terrible damage done at Amritsar by the rioters; and these prints of smouldering and collapsed houses are deeply moving. Against this savage document of the beastliness of human nature, stand other, happier photographs, eloquent in their emphasis on the beauty of our daily lives in the Punjab: the simplest gateway or the smallest hut can become an object of beauty when seen through the lens of a camera-artist; and the homcoming of the cattle, or ears of corn against the sky, or rows of plants growing in the garden, or again the smiling face of a lovely Punjabi girl silhouetted against the sky, all prove that life could be full of beauty and plenty and happiness, if only we live in peace with each other, without getting at each other's throats.

Madanjeet's paintings are interesting as the experiments of an original mind, though technically he still has to learn a great deal before his oils will be considered as good as his photographs are.

The exhibition is very much worth visiting, and it is hoped that many people will find time in the coming two or three days to go and see this show.

The Civil & Military Gazette, Lahore, 1 April 1947.

or nervousness at the prospect of meeting with Pandit Nehru. At that time, I was staying with the family of another refugee from Punjab, Gurbaksh Singh, the editor of Preet Lari (Garland of Love). He had taken shelter in a dilapidated house facing the Qutub Minar at Mehrauli, having abandoned the Kibbutz-like colony he founded at Preet Nagar (Township of Love). I admired him immensely for his forward-looking views on the burning topics of social life, communal harmony and socialism. Preet Nagar had become the meeting point of many progressive artists, writers and poets, and it was there that I met such eminent poets as Amrita Pritam, Faiz Ahmed Faiz and Sahir Ludhianavi, and writers such as Nanak Singh.

Urbanization had not yet invaded Mehrauli, a sleepy village, and as I pedaled my way towards New Delhi along the narrow dirt road muffled in misty smog and smelling of burning cow dung, it reminded me of the day when some peasants had helped me and my companions to escape from Mirzapur jail as the police wanted to re-arrest us after our release. And as we were making a dash for freedom, I had similarly seen in the milky fog ascending towards the sky, silhouettes of a herd of cattle being driven home by a cowherd.

After my nine-month imprisonment I appreciated nature and open spaces all the more. In Lahore I joined the Government College rowing club and on weekends went rowing on the River Ravi. Dawn on the Ravi reminded me of the New Year's day in 1930, because it was on its bank that Jawaharlal Nehru had proclaimed for the first time India's *Purna Swaraj* (complete independence) from colonial rule through peaceful constitutional means. At the time I was very hopeful that the Congress and Muslim League would eventually find a compromise within the framework of the 1935 Government of India Act, which envisaged a federal constitution.

I wanted to convey to Pandit ji the trauma I suffered in midst of the bloody riots that engulfed Lahore, the 'Paris of the Orient', that the communal monsters had torn apart with their bloody claws. How could I express the horror of seeing the train arriving from Batala at Amritsar railway station, with blood dripping from the crevices under the doors of compartments full of dead and wounded passengers. Tears swelled in my eyes as I recalled the dead body of woman with a crying baby in her arms, who had been stripped naked and her one hand still gripping the door handle in an attempt to escape. How could I overcome my emotions and describe the trail of blood that followed me to Delhi when, coming out of the railway station, I once again, saw, as in Amritsar, blood dripping from a truck loaded with dead bodies - the gruesome images that have ever since haunted me and ate into my soul.

By then, I had reached Teen Murti House. In those days anyone could freely walk in Prime Minister's 'open house'. People used to say that there are two historic landmarks in India, the Taj Mahal and Pandit Nehru. As I entered through the large iron-grilled gateway, I was taken aback to see a large crowd of people in the lawn facing the house, waiting for Pandit ji's darshan.

God Lord! I muttered to myself. How can I possibly meet with Pandit ji in this crowd? Even if I succeeded in drawing his attention, how could I show him the pictures standing in this multitude? Fortunately, a young housekeeper spotted the packet of photographs, and having seen some of them, she led me to the ground floor reception room where a number of visitors were already waiting. I found a vacant sofa at the far end of the room and placing the album on the table in front of the sofa, I sat down facing the staircase to the upper floor.



As I waited, a photograph of a horse carriage that I had taken in Lahore, reminded me of my chance encounter with an extraordinary man on the day of departure from my beloved city. By then the security situation had rapidly deteriorated and Hindus and Sikhs were waylaid, stabbed, killed or wounded. It was an extremely hot day in June and I departed in a hurry, with only a suitcase. Looking for a *tonga*, I walked along the main street and kept looking over my shoulder; I was a conspicuous target, wearing a turban, as the hooligans usually attacked their victims from the back.

Tired, and perspiring profusely from the heat as well as from the tension that was building up within me, I finally saw and stopped a tonga coming my way. I hesitated for a moment because the driver, with his red henna-dyed beard, was obviously a Muslim; the Hindu and Sikh tonga drivers had either fled to India or hiding. The coachman stared at my turban and nodded as I requested him to take me to the railway station.

As the vehicle started moving, I tried talking to the coachman about the good old days when people belonging to all communities lived and worked together peacefully. He did not respond and his silence worried me as I wondered if he was a Jihadist, planning to kill me like the Hindu passenger who was stabbed to death earlier in the week by the coachman of the tonga he had hired. By then we were passing through a narrow street and I was horrified to see in front a violent Muslim mob throwing stones and blocking our way. That was the end, I thought. My first reaction was to leap out of the tonga and run, but I could not have possibly escaped in a street crowded with hooligans armed with knives and hatchets. The coachman pulled back the reins and stopped, obviously wondering what to do. He looked back at me like a judge about to pronounce his verdict of life or death. No words were spoken as I held my breath. Then he whispered: "Stoop low", and, shouting a mouthful of vulgar Punjabi abuse for which the Lahore tonga drivers are notorious, he whipped the horse hard. The vehicle gathered speed as I ducked behind the wooden partition between the seats, covering my turban with my two hands, as the tonga made its way through the shrieking mob.

It was indeed a miraculous escape, and not before we reached the railway station did I recover my senses. How could I

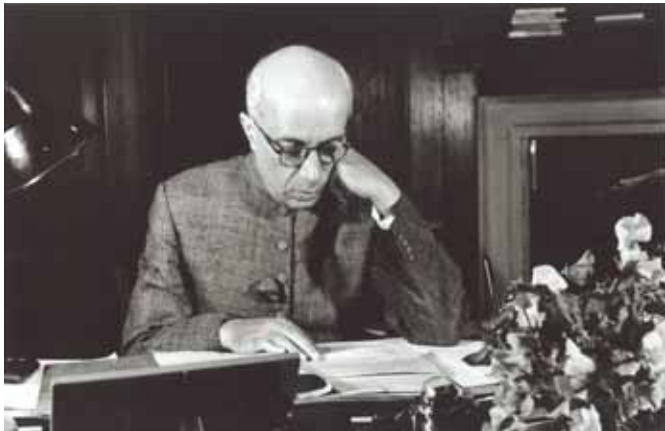
express my gratitude to this stranger for having saved my life? I offered him all I could spare - a 5-Rupee note (3 Rupees more than the fare), asking him to keep the change. But to my astonishment he returned the money with thanks, saying: "You will need it in the train." I was overwhelmed. This single gesture of compassion shown by an ordinary man reaffirmed the traditional multicultural ethos of secular culture that transcends the absurdity of India's political Partition on the basis of religion. This solitary event washed away the communal filth and innumerable atrocities committed by the fundamentalist Jihadists in Lahore and restored my faith in the intrinsic goodwill and generosity of my people.

This poignant event erased any doubt in my mind if *This, My people*, was an appropriate title for the book as many images included in this collection were of Indians who for no fault of theirs had become Pakistanis. Moreover, I wanted Pandit ji to see the peaceful aspects of life. So on the spur of the moment, I hurriedly reshuffled the album, excluding gruesome images of death, destruction and arson in Lahore, Amritsar and Uri and Delhi, replaced them with the photographs I had taken in the Punjab villages during happier times: portraits of sturdy Punjabi peasants – Muslims, Hindus and Sikhs – living and working together in the fertile farms, ploughing their fields, harvesting the crops or sitting in groups and smoking water-pipes in their moments of relaxation.

At last, I saw the Prime Minister coming down the staircase. My heart missed a beat as I jumped upon my feet and took a step towards him, respectfully holding the album in both my hands.

"*Yeh Kya hai?*" (what is it?) he enquired in Hindi, and taking the album, he sat down on the Sofa, asking me to sit beside him. Then he began looking at the pictures, slowly turning one leaf after another, and asking questions about the places they were taken. Meanwhile, his secretary was trying to draw his attention, looking at his watch, as it was late for the Prime Minister to go to office, while the visitors waiting to meet with Pandit ji paced up and down the hall impatiently. Moreover the crowd outside was waiting for his drashan. But Pandit Nehru took his time, until he had seen each and every photograph. Now I felt more relaxed and requested him to kindly write a brief foreword, as that would help me publish the book. "I shall try", he responded

and handing over the album to his secretary, he walked out of the room in a hurry with the visitors trailing behind him.



Three days later, I received a call that the Prime Minister wanted to see me at Teen Murti House. I arrived at the appointed time and his aide very quietly ushered me in his office on the first floor. He was engrossed in reading, sitting behind a large table facing the door. I stood there for quite some time, not wishing to disturb him. But as he made such a beautiful picture in his maroon sherwani with a red rose tucked in its buttonhole, I could not resist the temptation of snapping a photo. The flash of the light bulb made him look up at me and said: "Hello Madanjeet!" Then he lifted the album from the table and handing it over to me said: "I hope you like my foreword".

Not wanting to take any more of his precious time, I slipped out of the room and standing in the corridor I was amazed to see that instead of a few lines that I thought he would have dictated to his stenographer, Pandit ji had neatly handwritten an entire page, carefully centering the text in the middle without any correction whatsoever. It was all the more astonishing that he had written the preface just before midnight after having finished dictating the monthly letter he circulated to the Chief Ministers of Indian States.



India is frequently represented by pictures of its noble buildings and its famous monuments of antiquity. Sometimes we see more modern structures, which may be impressive in their own way, but are seldom noted for their grace or beauty.

We have also pictures of the mountains and lakes and forests, and vast plains, and great rivers and raging torrents and bubbling brooks.

All that is India, or a part of India. It is impossible to compass the infinite variety of India in a book or in a collection of pictures.

Lately, the politicians of India appear almost daily in some form or other in the newspapers. They compete, in this respect, with the film stars of other countries. It is not a happy development. But that too is India.

Then we have pictures of parties and receptions, especially in New Delhi, with the same people, or more or less the same people, going from one reception to another. They represent the official world as well as the non-officials of note and substance, with their wives and daughters. That too is India.

But here in this volume there is a different aspect of India — the common folk, the masses, the people. Again, they represent some odd types chosen from Kashmir in the North to Kanya Kumari in the far South. It might have been possible to choose an entirely different set of types and they would have been equally representative of the rather wonderful country of ours. But this set of pictures does give an idea of our people in the humbler ranks of society. The pictures are good and I hope that many will derive pleasure from them and some understanding, as I have done.

New Delhi - January 9, 1949

Jawaharlal Nehru

Madanjeet Singh refrained from publishing This, My People for over forty years as he did not wish to reinforce the distorted impression in the West that India is nothing more than its dire poverty and the fabulous wealth of the Maharajas. The book was finally published (1989) in several languages to commemorate Jawaharlal Nehru's birth centenary on 14 November.

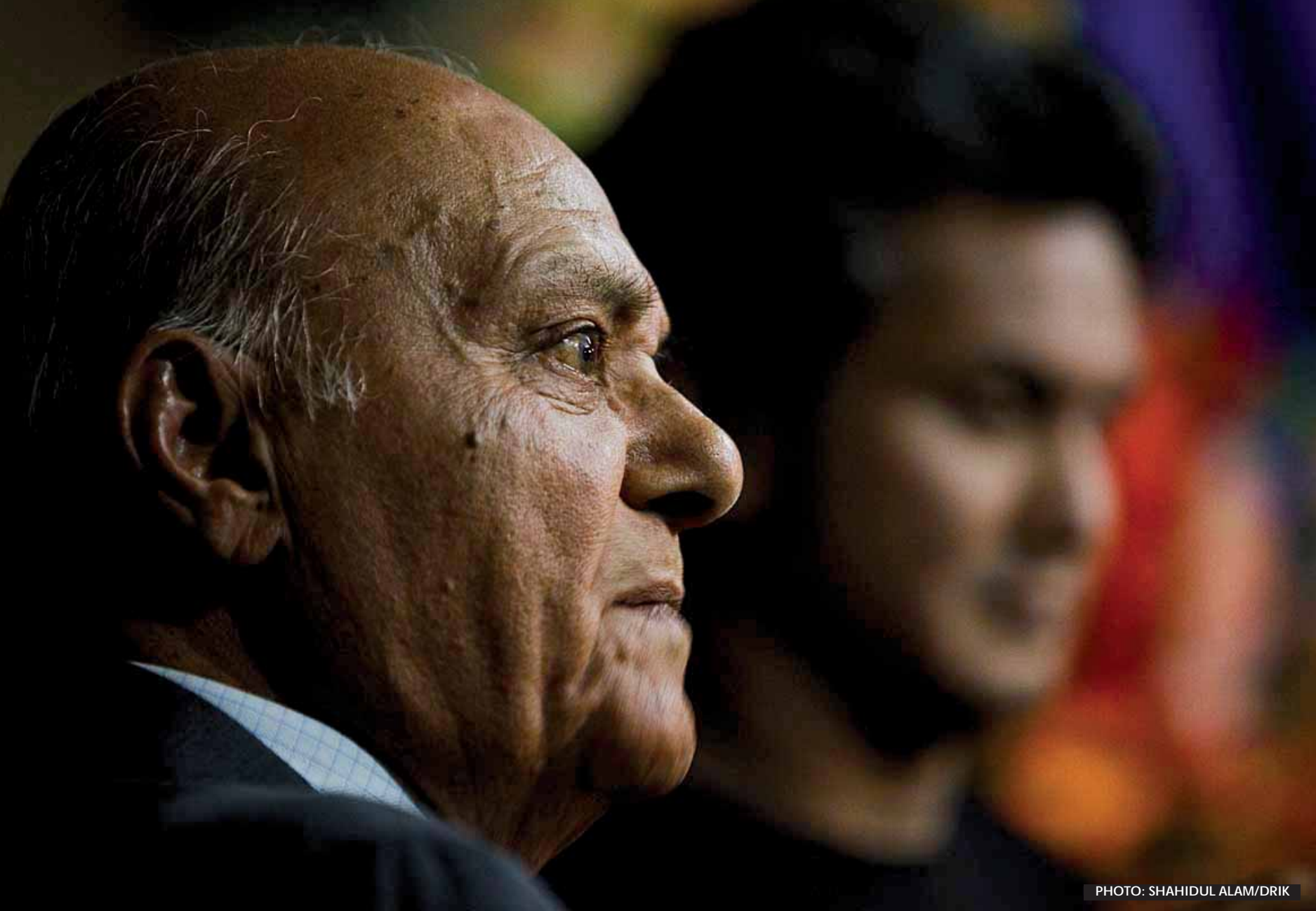


PHOTO: SHAHIDUL ALAM/DRIK

Madanjeet Singh and his son Mahendrajeet Singh, (called Jeet or Miki) photographed in Srinagar by Shahidul Alam of DRIK, Dhaka, Bangladesh.

The Tribune

VOICE OF THE PEOPLE

New Delhi . Chandigarh . Jalandhar . Bathinda . Monday, June 2, 2008

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BUILDING CROSS-CULTURAL BRIDGES BETWEEN SAARC NATIONS

NAVEEN S. GAREWAL

Chandigarh, June 1: He did not become the UNESCO Goodwill Ambassador by sheer chance. It was the trauma of India's Partition and the images of violence engraved in his mind that forced Madanjeet Singh to promote cross-cultural ties among SAARC nations.

His belief that the destruction of culture manifested in violence that Punjab and Kashmir have witnessed has led him to strive hard to restore Bhakti-Sufi-Rishi Culture. This he says 'is one sure way to return peace to Kashmir'.

Founded by Madanjeet eight years ago, the cardinal objective of the South Asia Foundation (SAF) was to uphold core values of regional cooperation and peace through education, cultural interaction and sustainable development. SAF is today recognised as the apex body of SAARC and admitted into the official relationship with UNESCO.

In Chandigarh on a visit to meet relatives, the 84-year-old shared some insights into his life and vision that have made his dream of having a forum of South-Asian nations a united force on the pattern of the European Union (EU) with a common currency. 'To make this objective a reality, SAF is a secular, non-political organisation comprising eight autonomous chapters in eight SAARC nations. With democracy returning to Nepal and Pakistan, we are hopeful that achieving our

objective will become less arduous. He hopes that one day Myanmar would be the ninth member of SAF.'

Madanjeet's vision for promoting goodwill and peace through people-to-people contact has been endorsed by none other than President Pratibha Patil, who during her recent visit to Kashmir, inaugurated the Institute for Kashmir Studies, established under a Memorandum of Understanding between SAF and the University of Kashmir. The Institute, started with a small personal donation from Madanjeet, has emerged as one of the most important and latest of the eight institutions of excellence established by SAF. It will promote regional cooperation on Bhakti-Sufi-Rishi culture of 'Kashmiriyat' in 'broader historical and worldwide context'.

'I started Sumitra Foundation, named after my mother in 1995. The objective was to work with hospitals in the tribal district of Bastar (Chhattisgarh) for providing them solar energy. But I soon ran out of money. Determined to work at the grassroots, there was a virtual windfall in 2000. My son, a Massachusetts Institute of Technology graduate, floated an IT company where I held a 10 per cent stake. When NASDAQ shot up, I cashed my shares for \$200 million. I had enough money of my own and decided not to do rounds of World Bank and other institutions to borrow,' he recalls, adding 'If you have the money, there is nothing stopping you from succeeding.'

Ever since there has been no looking back for SAF, which now works with SOS villages and scouts at the grassroots level and has eight institutes of excellence in SAARC countries. The objective is common –

to promote cross-cultural links. SAF promotes group scholarships and offers other fellowships to academics and professionals to undertake research and publish books, etc. In Afghanistan SAF runs the Madanjeet Singh Institute for Afghanistan's Cultural Heritage. SAF is in the process of forming a Centre for Research in South Asian Law in Bangladesh. In Bhutan, SAF is upgrading the SAARC Forestry Centre. In Nepal, the foundation is training Assistant Nurse Midwives since 2005. In Pakistan, SAF supports the School of Visual Arts affiliated to Beaconhouse National University and the Institute of South Asian Studies under the Government College University (GCU).

The success of SAF nearer home can be gauged from the fact that 30 students trained by SAF in Kashmir have gone back home to establish 180 schools in rural areas. On May 25, SAF organised a Sufi-rock concert in Srinagar, featuring famous Pakistani band, Junoon, of Salman Ahmad and Madanjeet's son Jeet's band The Singhs, defying threats by

fundamentalists and promoting integration between people of the two nations. Recognising the power of Madanjeet's concept of promoting culture and people-to-people contact for reducing violence, Azerbaijan and Chechnya have started similar institutions. To honour Madanjeet for his work in 1995, the UNESCO established an award in his name for the promotion of non-violence and tolerance, fetching the winners US\$ 100,000/-. In the past, the award, judged by the likes of Butrous Butrous Ghali and Desmond Tutu, has gone to people like Aung San Suu Kyi and Taslima Nasrin etc, besides some women's organisation in India and Pakistan working on human rights.

Living it up with zest, Madanjeet's life echoes Robert Frost as in Woods on a Snowy Evening:

*'The woods are lovely, dark and deep
But I have promises to keep
And miles to go before I sleep'*



The Falling Autumn Leafs in Scandinavian Woods.

Painting by Madanjeet Singh (Stockholm: 1960)



SOUTH ASIA FOUNDATION INSTITUTIONS OF EXCELLENCE

AFGHANISTAN: AFGHANISTAN: Madanjeet Singh Institute for Afghanistan's Cultural Heritage, Kabul. A tripartite MoU was signed between UNESCO, The Government of Afghanistan and South Asia Foundation (SAF) on 22 March 2004. The Institute was inaugurated on 13 April 2007.

BANGLADESH: Madanjeet Singh Centre for Research in South Asian Law, inaugurated on 13 October 2008, within the South Asian Institute of Advanced Legal and Human Rights Studies, Dhaka. The MoU was signed between SAF and the Institute on 26 December 2006, with the provision that the institute will enter into an agreement with BRAC University (BU), Dhaka, for the purposes of conferral of degrees and promoting regional cooperation.

BHUTAN: SAF has decided to upgrade the SAARC Forestry Centre in Bhutan (in the process of formation), which was approved by the SAARC Council of Ministers at its 25th session in Islamabad in July 2004. SAF will offer group scholarships to South Asian students to study together in order to promote regional cooperation.

INDIA: The SAF Group Scholarship Programme was first developed in 2002 at the Asian College of Journalism (ACJ) in Chennai. It offers Madanjeet Singh Group Scholarships annually to students from the eight SAARC countries. This successful project, based on gender equality, was upgraded on 7 May 2007, under the MoU signed between SAF and the Media Development Foundation (MDF), Chennai.

On 23 March 2009, a proposal by the Vice Chancellor of Pondicherry University to establish Madanjeet Singh Institute for South Asia Regional Cooperation (MISARC) was accepted by the Chairman of SAF-India chapter, which is now in the process of formation at Pondicherry.

NEPAL: The SAF project to train Assistant Nurse Midwives began in 2005, with the selection of fifty young women from the six poorest districts of Nepal, following an agreement between SAF and the Council for Technical Education and Vocational Training (CTEVT). This annual programme has since been expanded under an MoU signed on 26 March 2007, between SAF and Jiri Technical School in Cooperation with the Poverty Alleviation Fund and Dhulikhel Hospital, Nepal.

PAKISTAN: The School of Visual Arts, affiliated with the Beaconhouse National University, Lahore, emulated the ACJ Group Scholarship programme in 2003. The first batch of 10 South Asian Madanjeet Singh art students graduated with professional BFA degrees in June 2007. Since this time, SAF has upgraded the School of Visual Arts, including it among the SAF Institutions of Excellence under an MoU signed with Beaconhouse National University on 16 July 2007.

The Institute of South Asian Studies under the Government College University (GCU), Lahore, is in the process of formation. To this end, SAF signed an MoU with GCU on 17 January 2007. The Institute will enter into necessary agreements with GCU for the purposes of offering degrees and diplomas.

During the Programme Commission (I-V) of the 34th session of the UNESCO General Conference in October-November 2007, it was decided that as with the Madanjeet Singh Institute of Afghanistan's Cultural Heritage, Kabul, UNESCO will assist all institutions of excellence established by South Asia Foundation (SAF).

The two unique and memorable events that South Asia Foundation (SAF) organized in Srinagar to commemorate the Bhakti-Sufi-Rishi culture of Kashmiriyat, featured a jointly held India/Pakistan music concert Junoon and the Singhs, and an unprecedented exhibition of paintings by South Asian women artists.

Madanjeet Singh narrates an account of these events, providing insights into age-old links between the music and art of South Asia and the pluralist culture and legacy of Kashmiriyat.



At the inaugural ceremony of the Institute of Kashmir Studies on 26 May 2008, Madanjeet Singh presented President Pratibha Patil with a copy of his book, *This My People*, to which Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru handwrote a preface, shortly after India's Partition in 1947. Published in 1989, its several language editions were reviewed and acclaimed worldwide. The French weekly *L'Express* wrote a three-page article and the eminent art critic of *The International Herald Tribune*, Soren Melikian called it an 'astonishing book of photographs (see cover image of Aasi), a mental journey through the India Madanjeet loves so much'. The famous film producer, Ismail Merchant, praised 'the aesthetic merits and historical value of the book' in a full-page review published in *The New York Times*.

