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U-TALK

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Dr. Aamir Habib

Legacy of Healing: Herbal Traditions of Kashmir's....

Aditi Pathak

When Stories Become Art: How Loksutr Brings...

Rajeev Kumar

My First Trip to the UK: Time in London



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From the Editor-in-Chief's Desk



Prof. Mousumi G. Banerjee

Editor-in-Chief, U-Talk Magazine

Director, The English and Foreign Languages University, Shillong, India

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to all individuals who contributed to the creation of this Issue of the U-Talk Magazine.

First and foremost, we appreciate all the contributors to the Magazine, writers, and artists, whose creativity and skill have been instrumental in making this publication a reality. The "Articles" by Dr. Aamir Habib and Aditi Pathak; the section on "Poetry" contributed to by Swasti Bisai and Harshita Shankar; the "Voices, Verses & Visions" of Zenab Suhail Afridi and Deepa Ramanathan; the section on "Art, Craft & Culture" contributed to by Shivani Koul Bhatt and Fatima M. Saify; "Photography" by Sudipta Nath and Aman Das; "Health & Healing" by Students of AIIMS Raebareli; the section on "Travelogue" by Rajeev Kumar and Dr. K. Lakshmi Priya; and an "Interview" by Sonal Butley – all endeavors deserve to be lauded for making the Magazine complete and fulfilling.

Special thanks go to our Managing Editor, Rajeev Kumar, for overseeing the Magazine's layout and design. His expertise and artistic vision have made the publication visually engaging. Thanks to the Magazine's Copy Editor, Dr. Insha Qayoom Shah, for copy editing and doing all the meticulous work that was required for bringing out the work, thereby ensuring its quality and accuracy. Thanks are also due to the Section Editors, Dr. Kannan Prasad, Saalima Khan, and Dr. R. Abeetha, for mobilizing the articles and getting them ready for publication. We thank our IT team, comprising Graphic Designer, Harsh Dubey, Website Coordinator, Atender Ray, Media Coordinator, Aman Verma, Content Layout, Sonal Butley, and Outreach, Harsh Srivastava – all of whom have remained fundamentally involved in putting their hard work together to give birth to this much-awaited version of the Magazine.

Our sincere appreciation goes to the esteemed Advisors of the Magazine, Professor Bruce B. Lawrence, Professor miriam cooke, Prof Manindar Nath Thakur, Professor Purnendu Ranjan, Professor Rakesh Thakur, Professor Raziuddin Aquil, and Dr. Ajit Kumar Jha, for their invaluable guidance and insights in shaping the Magazine's content and direction.

We express our gratitude to our sponsors and supporters, the Umran Green School, the Umran Academic Research Association, and Webultrasolution, whose generous contributions have also made this publication possible.

Best Wishes

Prof. Mousumi G. Banerjee



U-Talk

About U-Talk

U-Talk Magazine is a multidisciplinary, quarterly publication by the Umran Green Perspective Foundation, produced through its initiatives Umran Green School (UGS) and the Umran Academic Research Association (UARA).

The magazine creates a bridge between grassroots experience and scholarly reflection, providing a platform for often unheard voices—including rural poets, folk artists, and community leaders. It features articles, essays, interviews, poetry, photography, and visual art.

Rooted in the ethos of Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam (the world is one family), U-Talk fosters a space for creative expression, critical dialogue, and community storytelling. It is hosted and published online by UARA.

Our Vision

To foster creativity, empower voices, and promote cultural understanding through storytelling, artistic expression, and critical dialogue.

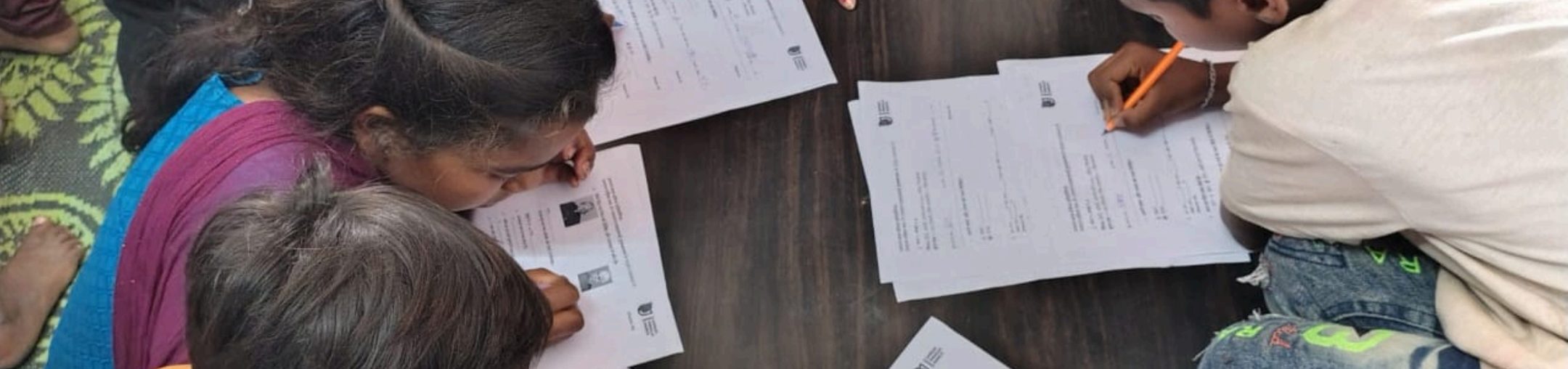
Join us

To amplify diverse voices—students, artists, storytellers, and community members.

To celebrate cultural diversity and promote dialogue across generations and regions.

To inspire readers through stories of resilience, innovation, and the richness of human experiences.





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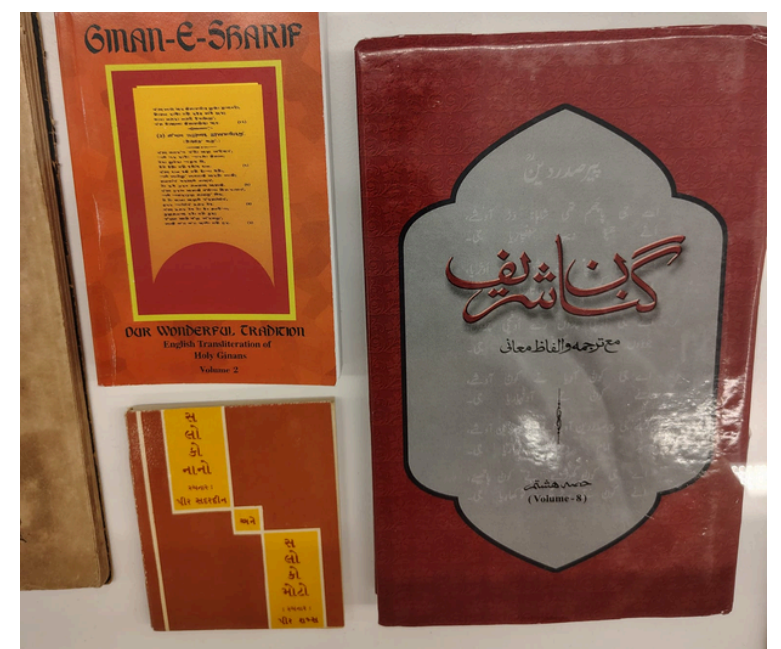
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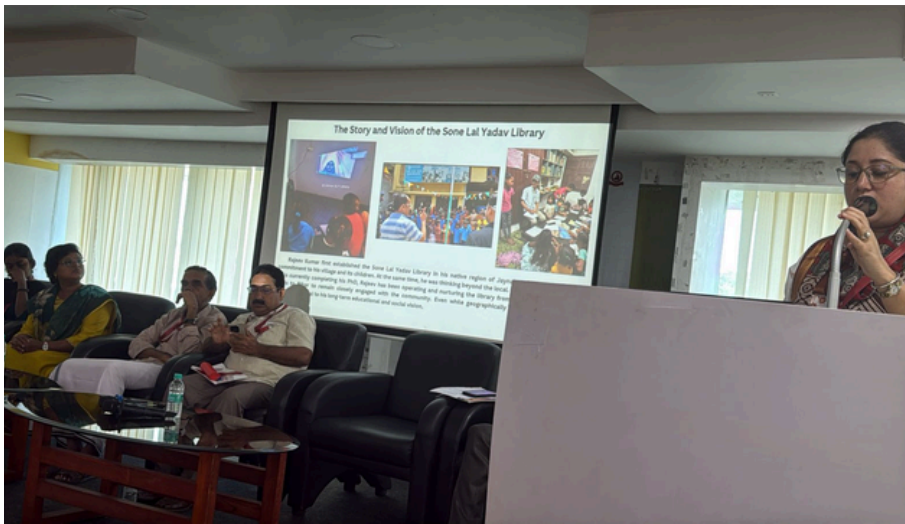
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SLY Library at the Indian Library Congress 2026

We are proud to share that our delegate, Dr. Insha Qayoom Shah, presented the Sone Lal Yadav Library (SLY Library) at the Indian Library Congress 2026, held in Chennai, Tamil Nadu, on February 16–17.

This moment reflects our continued commitment to community knowledge, grassroots learning, and the empowerment of rural readers through library initiatives. We congratulate Dr. Insha Qayoom Shah for representing our vision and taking SLY Library to a national academic platform.



Symposium on CHSS Project, IIT Roorkee

It is heartfelt to convey that our delegate Dr. Insha Qayoom Shah presented 'Rethinking Methodology in Researching Marginalities: Reflections from Practice' Cultivating the Humanities and Social Sciences and Supporting the under-represented scholars of Asia' (CHSS), coordinated by Association of Asian Studies (AAS), hosted by IIT Roorkee.

Being Women: The Third Umran International Symposium 2026

Umran Academic Research Association and Umran Mahila Manch organised the Third Symposium on the occasion of Women's Day on 8 March. The Symposium incorporated 8 scholarly research presentations on themes surrounding womanhood, patriarchy, and identity construction. It was introduced by Saalima Khan and keynote address delivered by Prof. Arzuman Ara.

The session explored diverse array of themes ranging across of womanhood, including patriarchy, marriage, performance traditions, religious femininity, ecofeminism, cultural resilience, identity formation, and the reconfiguration of women's roles in the post-pandemic and digital age. It brought together perspectives on both lived experiences and representations of women across contexts. The event concluded with the felicitation by Dr. Insha Qayoom Shah.



Legacy of Healing:

Herbal Traditions of Kashmir's Diverse Communities



Dr. Aamir Habib

*Islamic University of Science and Technology,
Kashmir, India*

In the serene valleys and winding mountains of Kashmir, a quiet yet precious tradition continues to flourish—a legacy of healing affectionately nurtured by the elders who serve as living custodians of traditional herbal wisdom. This knowledge, handed down through generations, is far more than a collection of curative recipes; it is a living heritage, a spiritual and cultural thread that binds the past to the present. It sustains not only bodies but also the identities of communities, weaving together celebration, belonging, and a sacred relationship with the land that nourishes all. Among Kashmir's Muslims, Sikhs, and Hindus alike, this shared heritage forms a luminous tapestry where diverse cultures honour nature's bounties, united by the ethics of care and coexistence.

This article is about the living legacy of Kashmir's herbal traditions and how they unite diverse communities through shared wisdom, faith, and care for nature.

Imagine walking through Kashmir's lush meadows in springtime, accompanied by a grandmother or grandfather who pauses to pluck a cluster of fragrant wild herbs. In that simple gesture lies an entire philosophy of life. For centuries, such elders have been the repositories of Kashmir's herbal lore—living libraries who transmit, through memory and practice, the healing intelligence of the earth. They teach younger generations to identify plants such as *Allium humile* and *Fritillaria cirrhosa*, herbs long cherished for their power to soothe the common cold or ease chronic

pain. Each plant embodies a story, each remedy a testament to patience and attentiveness—qualities often overshadowed by the haste of modern medicine. The wisdom of these elders is not recorded in books but in gestures, voices, and landscapes. Their teachings are offered not in laboratories, but in the open sanctuaries of meadows and mountains, where nature herself becomes the first teacher.

Kashmir's herbal traditions are more than remedies; they are a living bridge between cultures, generations, and spiritual worlds. Through stories of healers and elders, this essay uncovers a legacy that heals not only illness but also divisions.



For Kashmiri Muslims, this herbal wisdom often intertwines with Islamic spirituality. Many Muslim mystics discern Divine presence in the blossoming of a flower or in the scent of a healing leaf, finding in nature a mirror of the Creator's mercy. Among Kashmiri Sikhs, these practices resonate deeply with the Sikh ideal of harmony between body, mind, and spirit, while Kashmiri Hindus perceive them through the lens of Āyurveda and cosmological balance, where health and healing are threads in the vast cycle of existence. In each tradition, nature is not merely an external resource but a living companion, a sacred interlocutor in humanity's dialogue with the Divine. Together, these perspectives form a vibrant spiritual ecology—an interfaith symphony of healing that celebrates diversity through shared reverence for life.

The stories of Kashmir's herbalists and healers offer a glimpse into this ethos of harmony. They remind us that Kashmir's diversity is not a mosaic of separation but a woven fabric of connection, strengthened by mutual trust and respect. The elders, as carriers of herbal wisdom, hold in their memory the delicate threads that bind communities together. When people gather to listen to their stories or to learn the art of healing from them, these threads are renewed, transforming tradition into a living bridge between generations and faiths.

Two stories from local memory illuminate this spirit vividly.

The first concerns Hakīm Maqbūl of Urdu Bazaar, Srinagar—a healer admired across religious boundaries. Oral accounts recall that people of every faith sought his remedies. Among his closest friends was an elderly Hindu from Habba Kadal, who visited him daily after performing prayers on a nearby hill. One morning, when the man returned as usual, Hakīm Maqbūl greeted him but soon said gently, "Your family members were looking for you. You should go home quickly." The Hindu left at once, only to pass away later that evening. When those present asked the Hakīm how he had become aware of his friend's approaching death, he replied softly, "Each day when he returned, the tilak on his forehead had dried. But today, it was still wet. Seeing that, I perceived that his soul was being prepared to return to its Creator." Such stories reveal that for these traditional healers, insight was not merely medical but spiritual—rooted in empathy,

observation, and an intuitive grasp of life's sacred rhythms.



Another tale comes from the verdant district of Anantnag, where Karan Singh, a Sikh herbalist from Nambal area, is celebrated for his skill in traditional medicine. People from all faiths visit him, seeking remedies for ailments and counsel on maintaining good health. His practice continues to draw together Muslims, Hindus, and Sikhs, who see in his healing art a reaffirmation of Kashmir's enduring message: that service to others transcends all sectarian boundaries. In these stories, we find living embodiments of interreligious harmony—traditional healers who healed not only the body but also the communal spirit.

Yet this centuries-old legacy now faces subtle but growing challenges. Modernity, with its urban migrations and pharmaceutical quick fixes, often leaves little room for the slow, patient learning that herbal traditions demand. The younger generation, in their pursuit of education and employment, seldom accompany elders on their walks through the forests or listen to their fireside tales of healing. Environmental degradation and political unrest further erode the delicate ecology in which these plants—and the wisdom they symbolize—once thrived. In losing touch with this knowledge, communities risk losing an essential dimension of their own identity: their intimacy with the land of Kashmir.

Still, amidst these challenges, hope persists. In several spaces nestled within the folds of the Himalayas, efforts are being made to revive and preserve this precious heritage. Elders and youth gather to hold storytelling sessions, conduct herbal workshops, and prepare traditional meals infused with medicinal herbs. Through these acts, they reaffirm not only the practical benefits of herbal medicine but also the moral and spiritual wisdom it embodies.

a wisdom that teaches humility before nature and compassion toward all beings. The legacy of herbal healing in Kashmir, therefore, is not a relic of the past but a living philosophy—one that unites ecology, faith, and ethics in a single act of care. It invites us to reconsider our understanding of health, not merely as the absence of disease, but as the harmony of body, mind, community, and environment. In a world increasingly fragmented by differences and driven by haste, Kashmir's herbal traditions remind us that healing begins with listening—to the earth, to our elders, and to one another.

To walk beside a Kashmiri elder through those meadows is to step into a living classroom of wisdom, where every plant is a verse in a sacred scripture of life. The stories they share are not just tales of herbs and cures; they are meditations on coexistence, gratitude, and the Divine mystery of being alive. In preserving these traditions, we do more than safeguard knowledge—we reaffirm the profound truth that the healing of the earth and the healing of humanity are, ultimately, one and the same.



When Stories Become Art:

How Loksutr Brings Tribal Voices to the Page



Aditi Pathak

*Student, Public Policy
Jagran Lakecity University, Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh, India*

In the forests and villages of Madhya Pradesh, knowledge does not arrive through books. It is learned by watching, listening, and remembering. Stories here are not told for leisure; they instruct when to sow, how to heal, what to eat, and how to live with the land. Passed down through speech, ritual, and everyday practice, these stories form living systems of knowledge, fragile not because they lack value, but because they are rarely written down.

This article explores how Loksutr transforms tribal oral traditions into visual narratives, allowing indigenous knowledge to move from memory to material form. It shows how stories, language, and art come together to preserve cultural wisdom without disconnecting it from everyday life.

As modern life increasingly favors what is documented and digitized, oral traditions risk being seen as informal or outdated. However, in tribal communities, language still serves as memory, science, and a means of survival. Words provide instruction. Idioms contain ecological wisdom. Rituals maintain knowledge refined over generations. When language is lost, it is not just expression that disappears, but also understanding itself.

Loksutr emerges at this intersection of memory and materiality. Conceived by Achyut Siddu and Apoorva Mishra, the project approaches indigenous storytelling through visual narratives, recognising that images often succeed where text falls short. Rather than translating oral traditions into dense documentation, Loksutr allows stories to take form through illustration, pattern, and design, retaining the rhythm and worldview from which they originate.

By transforming lived narratives into visual artefacts, Loksutr does not attempt to fix culture in place. Instead, it offers a way for tribal voices to move beyond the spoken word, while remaining rooted in the knowledge systems that shaped them.

Visual Storytelling as Cultural Memory

For communities whose histories are spoken rather than written, memory is not linear. It is layered, circular, and often visual. Loksutr recognises this by treating illustration not as ornamentation, but as a language in itself. Through motifs, symbols, and patterns drawn from indigenous art forms, the project allows stories to retain their cultural texture rather than flattening them into explanation.

The visual approach matters because oral traditions are rarely abstract. They are tied to landscapes, seasons, and the body. An image of a forest is never just scenery; it signals food, medicine, danger, and



(Source: Loksutr official website)

protection all at once. By working visually, Loksutr preserves this density of meaning, making space for interpretation without forcing translation into rigid categories.

What results is not a record frozen in time, but a living archive—one that invites engagement rather than observation, and understanding rather than consumption.

Language as Lived Knowledge

Within many tribal communities, language operates as a practical guide to everyday life. Muhavaras and kahavatein—everyday idioms and sayings—are not ornamental phrases, and often carry practical instructions about food, farming, and social conduct.

Among Pithora communities, the gradual disappearance of words associated with grains and cereals revealed how closely language and practice are linked. As names were forgotten, so were cultivation methods. The recovery of this knowledge did not come from formal education, but through conversations with elders who still remembered the idioms connected to food and farming. These exchanges restored not only vocabulary, but an understanding of what to grow, how to grow it, and why it mattered. Today, this revived knowledge has returned to the soil itself.



(Source: Loksutr official website)

Here, language functions as a tool of continuity. Loksutr captures such moments with sensitivity, showing how speech carries within its entire systems of living.

Scientific Tribal Knowledge

Tribal knowledge systems are often framed as belief rather than understanding, a distinction that overlooks their scientific foundations. Communities such as the Baiga possess extensive medicinal knowledge shaped by careful observation of forests, seasons, and the human body. Their practices align closely with what modern frameworks recognise as ecological science and Ayurveda.

This knowledge is neither random nor symbolic. It is tested through use, refined through repetition, and preserved through oral instruction. Plants are chosen for specific conditions, seasons dictate treatment, and healing is understood as a balance between body and environment. What differentiates this knowledge from institutional science is not its accuracy, but its mode of transmission.

By presenting such practices through visual narratives, Loksutr allows indigenous science to be seen as systematic and deliberate, without forcing it into unfamiliar terminology. It challenges the assumption that knowledge must be written to be valid.

Revival Through Dialogue, Not Nostalgia

A recurring strength of Loksutr lies in its refusal to romanticise the past. The stories it engages with are not positioned as relics, but as resources. Revival, in this context, is not about returning to an imagined purity, but about reconnecting with relevance.

Intergenerational dialogue becomes central to this process. Elders carry memory, but it is the younger generation that negotiates how that memory survives. Through conversation, questioning, and adaptation, knowledge is reshaped to meet present realities. Culture, then, is not preserved by isolation, but by participation.

The Gonds were seven brothers|They sowed jute in the fields|In a few days, when the jute began to grow, the brothers went to attend to it||



There they saw a young man galloping on his big black bull right through their field|The hooves of his bull were trampling the jute saplings|This enraged six of the seven brothers|This is where the milk begins to curdle||

(Source: Loksutr official website)

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The Responsibility of The Present

The question that Loksutr quietly raises is one of responsibility. Preservation alone is insufficient if it leads only to archives detached from life. The task of the present generation is not merely to document, but to translate. To make ritual knowledge intelligible without diluting it, and visible without appropriating it. Design, illustration, and collaborative storytelling offer one possible bridge. They allow indigenous voices to remain central while opening pathways for understanding beyond the community. When used thoughtfully, contemporary tools do not erase tradition; they extend it.

When stories become art, they do more than endure. They continue to speak across generations. Loksutr demonstrates that tribal knowledge does not need to be rescued, only recognised on its own terms. Patronage here is not charity, but respect. Pride in language and oral tradition is not nostalgia, but continuity. Culture remains alive not when it is archived, but when it is practiced, shared, and allowed to evolve.

(Source: Loksutr official website)



Bada Dev comes down and possesses one of the listeners|This is called *Bhaav aana* (being possessed by the spirit.)|It is only because of this possession that *Guddi pooja* becomes possible|Before Bada Dev is awakened, people hide their *guddis* (dolls which represent their ancestors)|These are in the form of packets containing turmeric and rice, tied in a knot|The *guddis* bear the names of those who died after the last *Guddi pooja*||

The Greasy Haired Woman



Zenab Suhail Afridi
Research Scholar, English,
Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh, India.

“**M**ay I come and live with your family?” she said, lightheartedly. My mother looked at her with amazement and grinned at her innocent question. We live in a big house with a dozen family members, on the upper floor live our tenants, a woman lives there with her husband and three adult sons.

During the winter, we spend most of our time on the terrace in the sunlight. We go to the terrace when the muazzin says the afternoon azaan and return when the evening azaan is heard. I take all my books and study material, and my mother takes all her knitting material along with some eatables.

She moved through the world carrying her silence like oil in her hair—unnoticed, unasked about, yet impossible to wash away.

The warmth of the sun in winter gives the pleasure like rain in summer. Winter always remains the most cherished time of the year for me and there are many reasons for the same. The first is the morning sunshine, which I love the most, the other is the smell of hot coffee, which pulls me towards it. Warm blankets and a messy bed are another attraction.

A few days back, when my mother and I went to the terrace, we saw the woman (our tenant) putting the clothes on the string to get dry. My mother went to talk to her. At first, she hesitated, but later joined the conversation.

The diffident woman is in her fifties, her grey hairs tied in a messy bun, her kurti stained with patches of oil and drops of water falling from her shalwar as she has washed the clothes, a bindi on her forehead and bangles in her hands which do not match her dress. Our tenant talked with us about her mother, who is no more, and also told us about the love and care her mother showered on her. The woman told us that she is the eldest of her four siblings, and her mother used to love her the most, being the most innocent child of her parents. While telling her all this the lady began to sob.

When a girl marries, she leaves everything behind; her family, her friends, her old world for someone she does not even know properly. A woman marries hoping for a better tomorrow, but for some, the dreams remain dreams. They never get the love and care they longed for.



"Mummy... mummy," a manly voice called out when the woman was telling us about her mother, wiping her tears, she stood up from the ground and told us that she had to go as her son is here and food has to be served to him. Before going, she requested that my mother to come tomorrow as well, and my mother promised her. That was too strange for me. Why did she ask my mother to come again tomorrow?

In her presence, desire was never spoken; it lingered instead in gestures, glances, and the weight of what society refused to name.

"Your suit is very nice," she said.

"Thank you," I said smiling.

"How much does it cost?" She asked

"Fifteen hundred," I replied .

"Fifteen hundred for this suit only?" She asked, surprised. "Yes nowadays simple suits cost this much only," I said casually.

"I have not been to market for 4-5 years", she told us.

I looked at my mother with surprise. My mother being a wise and kind The lady asked her if she wanted to come to the market with us tomorrow. She said no and told us that her younger sister, who is well-off, sends clothes and other necessary items for her. The other day mother carried some eatables and fruits for her. Mother is now her all-time favourite, because she understands her and that's all a woman wants. A woman always needs someone who can understand her emotions and feelings even before she expresses them.

The woman who is now my mother's friend and my aunt is a lonely person though she has three sons. Daily she asks my mother to come again tomorrow. Whenever she says this, certain questions surround me.

Why is she attached to strangers too much? Loneliness is a terrible poverty; human beings are social animals who cannot live alone. Daily my mother spends time with aunty and tries to end her loneliness. Their friendship is beyond religion; one never asks about religion before making friends.

Our meetings continued, and in every meeting, the aunt talks about her past life and her life before marriage. She often says, "Those were the golden days of my life, no work, no responsibilities, no commitment." The thing I noticed most in her daily conversation was the pain behind her words. She never mentions anything about her husband. This thing keeps questioning me. Why does she never talk about her husband? How can a person not talk about the most important person in her life?

One day, when I was sitting in my room and studying till late at night, I heard some noise. I went closer to where the noise was heard. I heard Aunty crying and pleading "No... no. Please... no." From her voice and crying I could make out that her husband is drunk and is beating her. Even her sons were not defending their father. Why? How can 3 adult son watch their mother being assaulted by someone and not defend?

I don't know why but I ignored everything and went to bed. That day, I got answers to my previous questions. She became attached to strangers as she does not have anyone who can be called her own. She never mentions her husband because he is not a person who can be talked about.

The next day, we again went to the terrace, and as usual, she was waiting for us. Her smile was no different, and one could never tell from her face what had happened last night. That day she said, laughing, "May I come and live with your family?" We took her words casually with smiling faces.

My examinations were going on and I didn't sleep till late at night, that day also I heard Aunty sobbing as her husband was beating her. I felt bad for her and wanted to change it, but I was helpless. After that multiple questions surrounded me. What is the use of my education when I'm unable to help a woman in need? Feminism seems nothing to me now, this woman does not even know the meaning of feminism, and I, despite knowing my duty at this point, am not helping her.

A woman always needs someone who can understand her emotions and feelings even before she expresses them.

This became a regular activity, every day her husband came drunk, shouted at her and beat her. Everyone in my family was now aware of what was going on in our house. One day, I personally discussed about Aunty with my younger brother, who was just eighteen years old.

“Aunty is very innocent since her childhood, but she is not insane,” I told my brother.

“Yes, but now she is moving towards insanity because she is all alone,” My brother said.

“No, we will not let that happen,” I said confidently.

Further, we discussed that she needs to develop some confidence, and she has to learn to defend herself as her husband never cares for her. Even her sons, whom she loves so much, do not show their affection towards her. A mother’s love is unconditional she never wants anything in return. She just showers her love on her children, even though they do not love her back. She is a sweet lady and surely she will lead a happy and independent life.

She was not remembered for what she did, but for what she endured—embodying a life where neglect itself became a form of intimacy.

On the same day, we again heard the noise, and to my surprise, my brother straightaway went to the upper floor where the tenants live. He hit the door of their room and shouted, “Stop this, stop ... We will not tolerate this in our house” he paused, and there was complete silence from the other end. He continued “Learn to respect a woman, all day from morning till night she works for you and waits for you to come home so that she can spend some time with you, and you... you assault her as if it is a part of your daily routine. Shame on you... but we will not tolerate this.” There was pin-drop silence from the other side. I was shocked to hear my younger brother speaking all that. This is what education teaches us, and yes, education is the most powerful weapon with which we can change the world. I even got the answer to my previous question that her sons were not helping her because they had seen their mother being assaulted by their father all their lives, and they could not help.

That day, I also realised the importance of the upbringing of a child. I was proud of my brother who fulfilled his duty as an educated student. We often witness wrongdoers around us, and we ignore them, but if we are educated, it is our duty to raise our voice against the injustices around us.



The next day, when we met Aunty, she was wearing a yellow saree with matching bangles and a bindi of the same colour on her forehead and her open hair was clean and smelling faintly of the shampoo. She was beaming, though she didn’t mention anything, but I could observe her face, confident and sparkling in the bright yellow sunlight.

From that day onwards, we never heard any noise in our house, but the tenants soon left our house of their own accord. Now, I always wish that she would be happy and content wherever she is living but also worry about her well-being because she still lives with the same abusive people.

The end.

It is The Heart That is Important



Deepa Ramanathan

*Veeranari Chakali Illama Women's University,
Hydrabad, India*

The world is full of people who practise altruism. The general rule is the have reaching out to the have-nots, or we can say the more fortunate ones reaching out to the not-so-fortunate ones. Having grown up and received my education in a middle-class family where I saw my parents struggle, I really envied some of my relatives who, at that time, to my eyes and heart, seemed to have it all. Though at a certain stage in my life the circumstances changed, my belief and “oh, poor me” attitude did not.

This story gently reminds us that generosity is not measured by what we have, but by what we are willing to share. In the smallest acts of kindness, we often discover the greatest lessons of humanity and compassion.

Life is a great teacher, and I learned a valuable lesson that is forever ingrained in my life—a lesson I would carry with me into my next birth, if at all there is one, and that too as a human being. I would like to share that experience with all of you here.

On a cold winter day (the cold winters of the capital city, New Delhi), I was waiting with my son for the school bus. A big park served as the backdrop, and a temple stood opposite it on the other side of the road. Outside the park, on the pavement, usually sat the not-

so-fortunate ones, who would be treated with different eatables (bread, biscuits, fruits, tea) and would get richer by a few coins given to them by the kind-hearted and generous people going in and coming out of the neighbourhood park and the temple. People would also show their affection towards a huge street dog that was a regular there. The dog was intelligent; he knew he would be treated to fine eatables without having to work too hard.

That day was no different. Though it was morning, it was still quite dark, and the street lights were illuminating the entire area. An old amma (old lady) came and occupied her space on the pavement. Their places were fixed—who would sit where—as if they owned that little place. A Samaritan came out of the temple with a big



sweet box. God would have fulfilled one of his demands from a long list of wishes and desires which, like Draupadi's sari, is unending. He opened the box; it contained ladoos, the sweetness filling the air and tickling my taste buds. In his magnanimity, he gave a piece of ladoo to the amma (how I wished he could have given me one), who gave him loads of blessings and wishes. The Samaritan smiled, happy that he had created a good deed, and walked away.

The true climax comes when the two old women, despite having almost nothing, break their own share again to feed the street dog, showing that compassion grows stronger when it is shared, not when it is kept.

Amma was jubilant. She opened her mouth to bite into that ladoo, and lo and behold, her companion, another amma, came there, grinning and greeting her friend with a toothless smile.

The first amma, the recipient of the ladoo, not wanting to eat alone, broke the ladoo in half and gave it to her friend. No sooner had they opened their mouths than the four-legged animal came there from nowhere, sniffing at the ladoo. And lo! What I saw was unbelievable. Both of them broke their ladoos further into halves and gave them to the dog. Now all three enjoyed their share of ladoo, leaving my son and me wonder-struck. My little son commented, "Ma, the old amma shared that one ladoo of hers with others." In my heart of hearts, I was thinking: had I been in that amma's place, I would have popped the entire ladoo into my mouth—not every day do I get to eat a ladoo.

Soon the school bus arrived and all the children boarded it. The bus left, and we walked back home. I was in a trance, too shaken by the incident. That day I learnt a very important lesson: for giving and sharing, you do not have to be the fortunate one—it is the heart that is important. Smiling and feeling very happy, I entered my home. I was enlightened.





Swasti Bisai
*Central Institute of Technology Kokrajhar,
 Assam, India*

Back to Life

They tried to make her fall,
 Turn her voice into a wall.
 But she is more than what they did,
 She rises again, no longer hid.

The road is long, the scars run deep,
 Some nights she wakes and still she weeps.
 But step by step, she start to see,
 The world still has a place for her.

No chains remain, she's not the same,
 She will not live inside the pain.
 She takes her light, she takes her name,
 She won't be trapped inside the shame.

She chooses to live, to dance, to sing,
 To love, to heal, to feel the spring.
 Not just to breathe, but to be free,
 To take back all they stole from her.

Silent Ashes

She walks where the moonlight cannot reach,
 shadows curled beneath her feet.
 The air is thick with ghosts of hands,
 pressed like whispers into her skin.
 A body once her own, now foreign,

a temple defiled, turned to ruin.
 She gathers pieces in trembling palms,
 but they slip like sand, unholy, undone.
 Her voice...
 a thing lost in the valley of silence,
 where echoes refuse to return.
 She stitches her ribs with quiet prayers,
 but the thread is made of mourning.
 Night does not end, only shifts.
 The morning sun is cruel in its knowing.
 She watches it rise, an indifferent god,
 burning, burning,
 but never for her.



Harshita Shankar
*Pre-final year Student,
 IIT Agartala*

Itch

I was born on the border between an accumulation of
 tears and weakness in the blood
 I stand on this edge again, no longer a child
 unacquainted still with the beauty of form
 I stare at this gaping chasm, the siege of my heart and I
 stare at the sickening soft rise of light that surrounds your
 neck and here I find a distance that resembles death.
 I commit the crime, I deny it, apologize politely and talk of
 peace

Are we forgetting something in this rush to excise the
 ringing slogans of human dignity our parents read to us?
 How has your deprivation become a measure of my life?
 Do I love you because you are an occasion for conflict?
 Do I dream of you out of reasons justified by necessity or
 because you incentivize living for me - becoming a
 touchstone to my existence?

I wish I could tell you how my departure wasn't voluntary,
 how it felt more like expulsion, like exile
 I stand here and search for things that make me feel lost
 when they are lost, for obscure shapes and empty calls of
 tar-streaked devotion, eroding imagination and dream
 I commit the crime, I deny it, apologize politely and talk of
 peace

Are we more mature now, objecting to the practice of
 laying the blame of our misery on each other, on the
 colour of our fates, on the discord between our wounds
 and our hands?

I try to make my love small, to rake the soil beside me and
 bury it somewhere in a breach in its womb
 I fear sometimes that I may have violated your idea of
 love, may have ruined its symmetry, may have pushed
 you behind a wall of inspired longing and lead you to
 celebrate past misery as I in turn defend past happiness
 I still believe sometimes that this is a minor
 inconvenience, that the night has woken you up in lieu of
 an itch and that I will get you a glass of water and put you
 back to sleep and see my peace reinstated beside me
 when you rest your head on my shoulder
 I commit the crime, I deny it, apologize politely and talk of
 peace



ELIZABETH TOWER

Travelogue



My first Trip to the UK Time in London



Rajeev Kumar

*Research Scholar, Civilization Studies,
Ibn Haldun University, Istanbul,
Turkey*

Aga Khan Library

My London adventure began with my arrival at Waterloo Station from Exeter. From there, I traveled to King's Cross, eager to explore the city's cultural and intellectual landmarks. My first stop was the Aga Khan Library, a place that truly amazed me. Although I've visited many libraries before, this was the first time I witnessed such meticulous archiving and preservation of resources. The care taken to maintain and present these collections was truly inspiring.



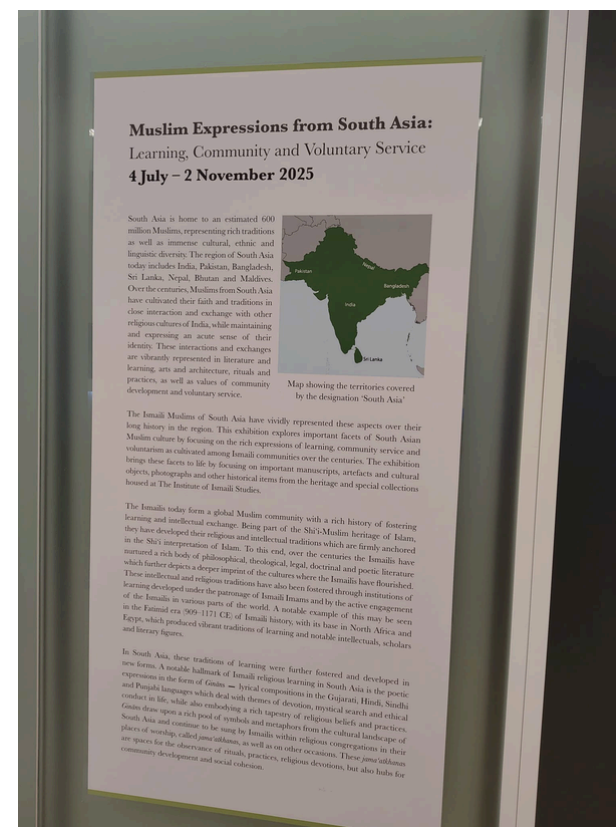
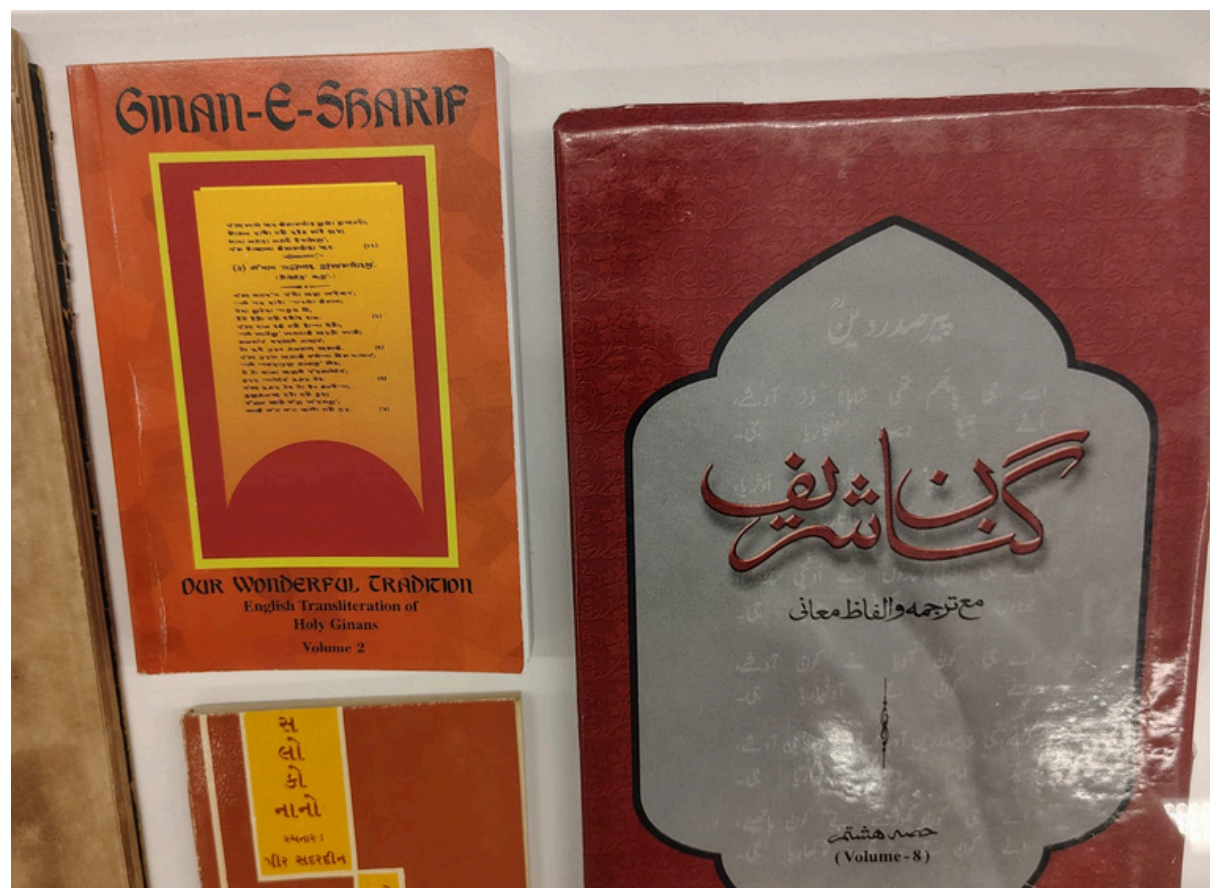
From there, I made my way to the British Library, a massive and impressive building that felt like a temple of knowledge. The sheer scale of the structure, with its grand facades and vast halls, was extraordinary. It was fascinating to see how much history and knowledge were housed within its walls.

British Library

After a quick visit to the British Library, I headed to SOAS, the School of Oriental and African Studies. On my way, I encountered the Gandhi Park and statue of Gandhi and then a peaceful protest advocating for Palestine just in the middle of park, church and SOAS. This combination of historical symbolism and contemporary activism was a striking reminder of how London is a city where past and present constantly intersect.



Time in London



A Story at Agha Khan Library

When I reached the Aga Khan Library, the first thing I did was write to my mentor, Professor Bruce B. Lawrence. He had asked me to keep him updated so he could guide my journey. Although he was in North Carolina, USA, his spirit felt like it was traveling with me. My email read: "Today I am in London and have come to visit the Aga Khan Library. Please let me know if you have any suggestions."

Within minutes, I received his reply: "Dear Rajeev, If you are visiting the Aga Khan Library, try to meet Omar Ali-de-Unzaga, the Academic Coordinator of the Qur'anic Studies Unit at the Institute of Ismaili Studies. He is a wonderful scholar and a great human being, as are most of the folk at the Ismaili Institute."

Unfortunately, Omar Ali-de-Unzaga was not there that day, and I could not meet him. I have so much to say about Professor Bruce—if I began, it would turn into a book.

At the library, I met Imran Visram. I loved his name—so syncretic, embodying the soul of South Asia. He, too, had been a participant at the Exeter workshop, but he had left a day before me, promising to meet me at the Aga Khan Library. Having lived in London while completing his PhD at Oxford, he was very familiar with the space. He escorted me through the library and introduced me to several staff members.

Then, we walked to a section on the ground floor where a cultural exhibition was on display. It focused on the Aga Khan and his trustees, as well as Ismaili literature—specifically the Ginān Sharīf, which is originally in the Gujarati language. There, I saw a volume titled Ginān Sharīf, much like

Quran Sharif. In the gallery, a soft recording of a Ginān was playing through a speaker: a woman's voice singing, without any musical accompaniment. It was Yasmin Rayani's "Sahebji Tu(n) More Man Bhaave" (from Ginan Sharif). Her voice was like my mother's, and at that low volume, it touched my soul.

I felt deeply emotional listening to it. It reminded me of my mother singing at home in Bihar while she worked, calling out to me. That moment opened something inside. I missed my mother in London. I was as far from her in distance as I was close to her in my mind.

Time in London



British Museum

My next destination was the vast British Museum. I was excited about this museum for many reasons- first to see how British have collected and preserved all the historical facts from all around the world for which they have been always criticized. Second I was reading about the British Poet like Percy Shelley and other were very much inspired in writing poems like Ozymandias. I explored the Chinese, Korean, Indian, Greek sections, marveling at the ancient artifacts. The Egyptian and Mesopotamian exhibits were equally captivating, especially the Assyrian artifacts that brought ancient civilizations to life. One of the most fascinating sections was dedicated to the evolution of watches. It was amazing to see how timepieces developed over the centuries, and many of these intricate watches were still working, each one telling its own story of human ingenuity. I also found the ancient chess sets fascinating, showcasing how this timeless game evolved.

Building of the Museum was so massive from the inside that I can not express. They were expert in creating massive facades. Seeing artifacts and well documented, many times I was saying that at least Indian could not do what they have done. They value it, and collected and they believe in preservation and history. We South Asian believe in present not in preservation.

The British Museum was so vast that I had to move quickly from one section to another, and even then, I couldn't see everything. It was impressive that such an incredible experience was free of charge.

ISKCON temple

After exploring the British Museum, I headed to the ISKCON temple, guided by my friend Taiba Riaz. The temple was a vibrant space where spirituality and community intertwined. I enjoyed a delicious and affordable Indian meal there, which was a welcoming experience. After the meal, I joined the bhajan session, letting myself get lost in the music and the collective energy of the gathering. It was good that I came here. For research purpose it was good. I could experience the live space and performance that I could not sense it in video. It was moving to see people from different backgrounds come together in this spiritual celebration- British, African, European, Indian.

The next morning, I participated in the temple's storytelling session and question-and-answer time. While I appreciated the spiritual teachings, I also became aware of the fundraising aspect that was integrated into the activities. It made me thoughtful about how spirituality and practical needs often go hand in hand, and how religious spaces sometimes navigate these complexities.



I also had a chance to talk to the devotees and when I asked whether they know Bhakti movement, they said they do not know what is it. When I asked Chaitanya Prabhu, they said yes and they started from there. I was talking to the devotee from Philippines. I had a long and interesting chat with an Indian devotee which was ultimately leading to Vedic scripture as the ultimate source of knowledge. Because, he claimed only knowledge can lead to the right path and Veda is the ultimate knowledge. Yet he was could not answer my question when all our sense can



deceive and can not provide right knowledge and then we can not even get the right knowledge of Veda, even Veda is the ultimate knowledge. I had to leave the conversation due to my schedule meeting but I got their phone number to talk further. What was impressive no one asked me my surname.



Whitechapel and Bengali Diaspora

I had a meeting with a Bengali brother named Nayeem. I had known him from distance only. And this was the first time I was meeting him in person. He invited me in Whitechapel. I got out from Whitechapel station and I see many Bengali and when I turned I see Bengali language written on wall Whitechapel Station. This area was of Bengali diaspora. My friend Naeem took me on a tour of the area, introducing me to the local mosque and sharing insights about the community. It was fascinating to learn how different diasporas have created their own neighborhoods, like the Bengali community in Whitechapel and Canary Wharf. It was eye-opening to see how each group maintains its cultural identity while contributing to the diverse tapestry of London.



The East London Mosque is the biggest mosque in Europe and it is built by Bengali diaspora. It is in the main city of London. Right beside the mosque is a building owned by the mosque itself, which supports its funding through rent from shops and guest house and conference rooms.

There is a big hall and gallery for events and exhibitions, and a conference hall used when needed. Many courses were going on—some organized by a Somali women's group. There was also an exhibition on the Bosnian Genocide.

Reflecting on my experiences, I couldn't help but compare the distribution of the Qur'an and the Bhagavad Gita that I encountered. The Qur'an distribution was a welcoming experience, with free copies, water, and snacks offered to everyone. Many youths were picking up the Qur'an themselves. I could not see such Islamophobia and all the drama I see in India.



TIME IN LONDON

In contrast, the Bhagavad Gita distribution by ISKCON initially seemed free but later involved a request for donations, which felt a bit uncomfortable. It made me reflect on how different communities approach sharing their spiritual texts and the fine balance between spirituality and sustaining their efforts. But let me be direct but not polemic. Islamic group was more concerned with iman and Islam but ISKCON group was selling the religion or doing business with it. Even I felt all business class diaspora was involved with ISKCON and such community.



As I concluded my London journey, I felt a deep appreciation for the city's rich history, its vibrant cultural diversity, and the many layers of experience it offers. Honestly, it was a bit overwhelming—the scale, the architecture, the sheer presence of the city. I saw buildings that were six stories tall, built even before the Industrial Revolution. I was stunned not just by their size but by their functionality—how they were designed for administration, for training armies, for housing officers, for managing entire systems. Each building seemed to have a purpose, a role in the machinery of empire. And the fact that they were already standing so powerfully before the Industrial era began told me something deeper.

It made me think: this is how civilizations are designed—not just through ideas, but through space, structure, and the confidence to build. The British had this confidence. They had architecture, planning, military training, even a



sense of aesthetic in their churches and offices. I could begin to understand how they felt powerful, proud, even entitled enough to speak of things like the “white man’s burden.” They believed in what they were building—and they had the space and materials to back it.

Seeing all this in person wasn’t just sightseeing—it was a reflective moment. I stood there, thinking about how architecture becomes thought, and thought becomes power. It helped me understand the mindset that shaped empires.



A Spiritual Odyssey to Sathuragiri The Abode of Lord Shiva and the Siddhars



Dr. K. Lakshmi Priya

*Assist. Prof., Department of English,
Shrimathi Devkunvar Nanalal Bhatt Vaishnav
College for Women, Chromepet, Chennai*

Nestled in the lush Western Ghats, the Sathuragiri Hills, also known as Chathuragiri or Sundara Mahalingam, is a sacred pilgrimage site near Srivilliputhur in Tamil Nadu, India. This mystical mountain, revered as the "Abode of God" and "Siddhargal Boomi" (Land of the Siddhars), draws thousands of devotees and nature enthusiasts seeking spiritual solace and adventure. My journey to the Sathuragiri Shiva Temple, a place steeped in legend and divine energy, was a transformative experience that blended physical endurance with profound spiritual awakening.



The name Sathuragiri, derived from "Chathur" (four) and "Giri" (hill), reflects the hill's square shape or its mythological connection to the four Vedas uniting here. Legends also speak of this being the abode of the 18 Siddhars—enlightened saints who mastered yogic powers and still worship Lord Shiva in invisible forms.

At Sathuragiri, the mountain tests the body before the deity answers the soul.

Between slippery rocks and sacred caves, faith becomes a form of endurance.

This is not a pilgrimage for comfort, but for transformation.

The Journey Begins: Reaching Thaniparai

The pilgrimage to Sathuragiri begins at Thaniparai, a quaint village about 10 km from Watrap and 70 km from Madurai. I set out from Madurai, the nearest major city, taking a bus to Watrap, followed by a shared auto to

The Journey Begins: Reaching Thaniparai

The pilgrimage to Sathuragiri begins at Thaniparai, a quaint village about 10 km from Watrap and 70 km from Madurai. I set out from Madurai, the nearest major city, taking a bus to Watrap, followed by a shared auto to Thaniparai. The early morning air was crisp as I arrived at the base around 6 AM, greeted by the sight of towering hills and the distant hum of chanting pilgrims. The forest checkpoint at Thaniparai requires a modest entry fee of ₹10, and I was advised to start the trek early to avoid the midday heat. With a small backpack carrying water, snacks, and a torch, I began the ascent, my heart buzzing with anticipation.



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The Trek: A Test of Will and Spirit

The trek to Sathuragiri is not for the faint-hearted. Spanning roughly 8 km to the Sundara Mahalingam Temple, the trail is a challenging mix of rocky paths, slippery stones, and steep inclines. The initial stretch from Thaniparai is a concrete path leading to the Lord Karupusamy Temple, surrounded by dense greenery. This guardian deity, installed by the Siddhars, marks the transition to a rugged trail. I felt a surge of reverence as I offered a quick prayer, mindful of the local belief that one needs the Siddhars' permission to ascend safely.



The path soon turned into uneven rocky terrain, with the Mangani stream offering a refreshing pause. Crossing Vazhukku Parai (Slippery Rock), I tread carefully on steps carved into the rock, marvelling at the lush valley to my left and massive rock formations to my right. The trail tested my endurance, especially at Kona Thalai Vasal, where the steep climb left me breathless. Yet, the sight of vibrant birdlife and the distant sound of flowing water kept my spirits high.

Along the way, I passed sacred sites like the Korakkar Cave, where the Siddhar Goraknathar, known for his Kayakalpa medicines, is believed to appear as a light on the 10th day of the Tamil calendar. The Irattai Lingam cave, housing two Shiva Lingams symbolising the unity of Shiva and Vishnu, was a humbling stop. Small shops selling herbal drinks like Paruthi Pal (cotton milk) provided much-needed hydration, their earthy flavours a reminder of the hill's medicinal heritage.

The Divine Encounter: Sundara and Santhana Mahalingam Temples

After nearly 4 hours of trekking, I reached the summit, where the Sundara Mahalingam Temple. Ascending the hill felt like a divine blessing, and I stood before the Swayambu Lingam, inclined 40 degrees to the left, radiating an ancient, serene energy. The temple, over 2,500 years old, is believed to be where Lord Shiva once appeared as a devotee, claiming the land as his own. I chanted a prayer, my voice mingling with the soft chants of other pilgrims, feeling a deep connection to the divine.

A 15-minute trek led me to the Santhana Mahalingam Temple, where separate sanctums honour the 18 Siddhars, Lord Ganesha, Murugan, and Santhana Mahadevi. The Akasha Ganga stream, flowing between the two temples, is said to have healing properties, though water was scarce during my visit. I meditated briefly at the Satta Natha Muni cave nearby, sensing the mystical presence of the Siddhars. The atmosphere was charged with spirituality, amplified by the Aadi Amavasai festival, which draws lakhs of devotees.



The Siddhars' Presence: A Mystical Aura

Sathuragiri is synonymous with the 18 Siddhars –saints like Agastiyar, Goraknathar, and Sundranandar, who are believed to roam the hills still invisibly. Locals advise respecting every stranger, as they could be a Siddhar in disguise. Stories abound of mystical encounters, like dogs or cows guiding lost pilgrims, reminiscent of Kamadhenu's legend. As I sat near the Anandavalli Amman shrine, formless except during Navaratri, I felt an inexplicable calm, as if the Siddhars' energy permeated the air.



Practicalities and Reflections

The trek down took about 3 hours, my legs weary but my heart light. The hills are open only on full moon, new moon, and Pradosham days, with strict visiting hours from 6 AM to 4 PM due to the reserve forest setting. Annadhanam (free food) at ashrams sustained me, though facilities like toilets are basic and limited to the summit. The absence of electricity and mobile coverage added to the raw, unspoiled sanctity of the place.



Sathuragiri is not just a trek; it's a spiritual journey. The challenging climb, the divine darshan, and the whispers of the Siddhars left me transformed. As I departed Thaniparai, the square silhouette of the hill against the sunset seemed to promise that I'd return when the Siddhars call again.

Manish Verma

A Numismatist and Curator



Sonal Butley

Student, Hansraj College
Intern, UMRAN

Sonal Butley: Thank you for agreeing to this interview, sir. I understand that you've spent nearly a decade immersed in cultural heritage, specifically numismatics, working at the Hinduja Foundation. What first sparked your interest in history and culture, and what factor retained that drive over time?

Manish Verma: Since I was a young child, I have enjoyed going to historical sites and museums. History has made my world enlightened, dazzling, and explicit. It enables me to remember my roots and helps me comprehend who I am. For the simple reason that knowing the past helps us discern the present and gets us ready for the future, I have always been interested in history. My desire to contribute to my nation's cultural legacy has remained strong over time, and I have ultimately chosen to pursue a career as a numismatist.

SB: Numismatics is such an important historical discipline. What drew you towards it specifically? Would you say that it is a part of contemporary historical studies, or will you argue that it is a separate discipline in itself?

MV: As a source of historical data, coins are essential. These coins are a reflection of our nation's rich culture. They have seen the triumph and defeat of the state empires as well as the ascent and fall of the rulers. The development of Indian coinage sheds light on its significant influence on the political, cultural, and economic fabric of the country over the ages. It can be studied separately, such as Before Money, Coin Evolution, and the Continuance of Indian Coinage Tradition, and its significant stages over a long period of 2600 years. It is also a part of historical or contemporary studies.



Manish Verma is an accomplished researcher with a wealth of experience in Indian archaeology, specialising in Indian numismatics. Currently, Mr Verma is serving as curator of the Hinduja Foundation Antiquity Collection in Mumbai, India since 2015.



INTERVIEW

Mr. Verma has worked as a research associate at the Indian Institute of Research in Numismatic Studies in Nashik for seven years. Along with conducting numismatic certificate courses in colleges, he possesses certifications in Digital Strategy.

SB: Your publication, *Coins of India*, is a significant contribution. I understand that you utilised the work of Dr. Navin Shah as well, who preserved India's numismatic heritage, an assortment of Indian coins spanning from 600 BC to 2022 AD. What was the process of thinking, writing, researching, and finally releasing this book? Did you face any challenges?

MV: The process was very interesting. I visited Washington, DC, in July 2017. In Maryland, USA, Dr. Shah is a well-known surgeon for prostate-related conditions. He is ninety years old now. Over the course of 70 years, he has collected about 2600 coins since his early years. Nearly every significant series and dynasty of coins is represented in this collection. He requested me for the coin documentation. This is a truly amazing collection. After documentation, I suggested Dr. Shah that your collection represents almost 2600 years of a long span of Indian Coinage Tradition, and it is nearly impossible for someone to collect coins which is representing 2600 years of history. It is an excellent collection for a book.

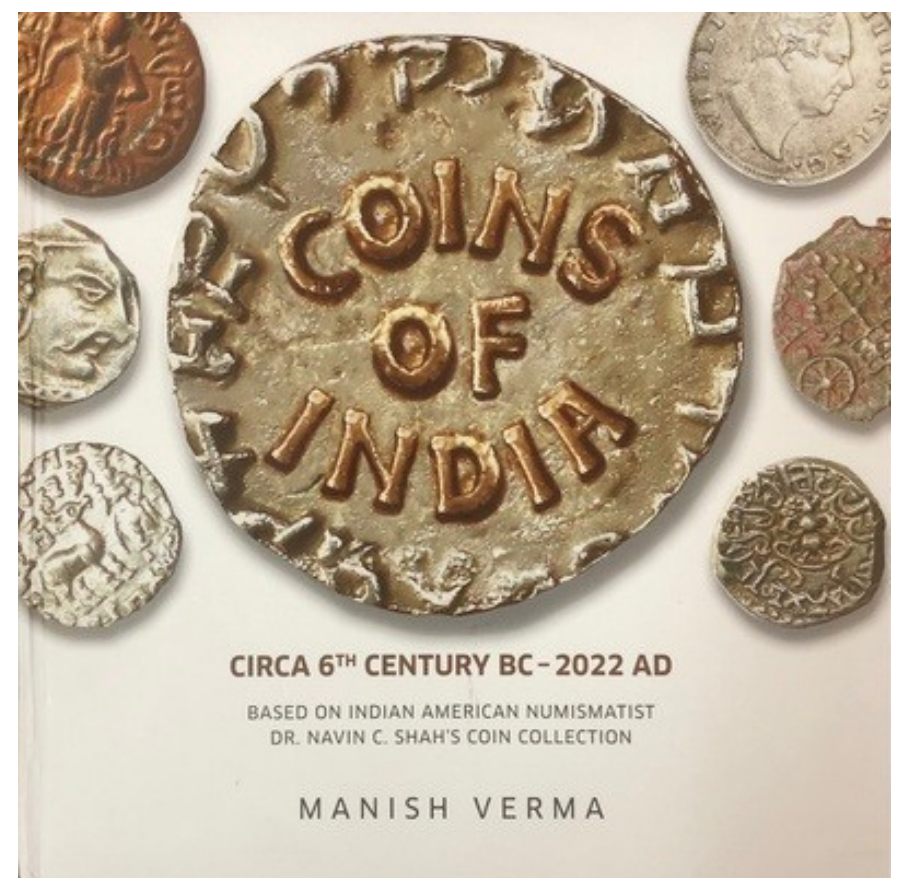
The current numismatic books on the market are mostly meant for academics and can be costly and complex, making them hard for the average coin collector to understand. I have tried to maintain the scholarly subject of this book while using simple language. *Coins of India* is a book that provides a thorough overview of the topic. Two main goals have been maintained: to explain the coinage's development and to demonstrate its importance in economic history as well as the cultural and political history of the era in question. It is intended for a diverse audience, including coin collectors, dealers, students, and researchers. The book includes maps that help to understand the territories of the dynasty or ruler, as well as more than 327 colour illustrations of coins. Before the evolution of coins.

The history and saga of Indian coinage tradition spans around 2,600 years, from 600 BC to 2022 AD. Earliest Coins of India and their features. Through the coins, explain different coin minting techniques and India's economic history.

Each coin's details are presented with its respective photograph, and, wherever applicable, transliterations and translations of the coin legends. Dating System on Ancient Indian Coins. Features of Islamic Coins: over 400 fascinating facts on economic history to readers. This book provides a detailed overview of the most crucial series/dynasties of Indian coins that will prove useful to college students and coin collectors in India and elsewhere.

SB: Sir, you have worked formerly at the Indian Institute of Research in Numismatic Studies. What was that experience like, and what was your biggest takeaway there?

MV: I was quite fortunate to have handled 4,70,000 coins from various collections and institutions in India and elsewhere. In just eight years, the team I was a part of documented around 4,70,000 coins. The most important lesson I gained in the institute was how to interpret coin legends, both ancient and medieval, and then impart that knowledge to students.





SB: Can you tell us about the Hinduja Foundation's recently published *Kunindas and their Coins* by Shri Devendra Handa? Also, what will be incorporated in the Heritage of India Series?

MV: The book discusses the Kunindas, a tribe of North Indians who lived from the second century BCE to the third century CE, and their coins. There are several aspects of these coins, such as their legends, attributes, denominations, weighing patterns, and various forms of analysis. The foundation plans to publish books in the next few years that focus on different aspects of the Hinduja Foundation Coin Collection and Indian Coinage Tradition under the Heritage of India Series.

SB: You're now pursuing digital strategy and data-driven decision making. How do you envision these transforming future occupations and the job market?

MV: Now, on LinkedIn and our website www.hindujaheritage.com, I am working to promote heritage awareness through coins and the concepts of Digital strategy and data-driven decision-making are set to significantly reshape future occupations and the job market, driving the need for more data-driven professionals and creating new roles. These trends will also likely make existing jobs more reliant on analytical skills and automation, leading to both increased demands for certain roles and potential displacement in others.

SB: Last year, there was a debate on the internet regarding popular history and academic history after William Dalrymple's remarks that Indian academics are responsible for 'WhatsApp University'. What is your take on these approaches to constructing history?

MV: Academic history would, in my opinion, be given greater weight and should be presented objectively.

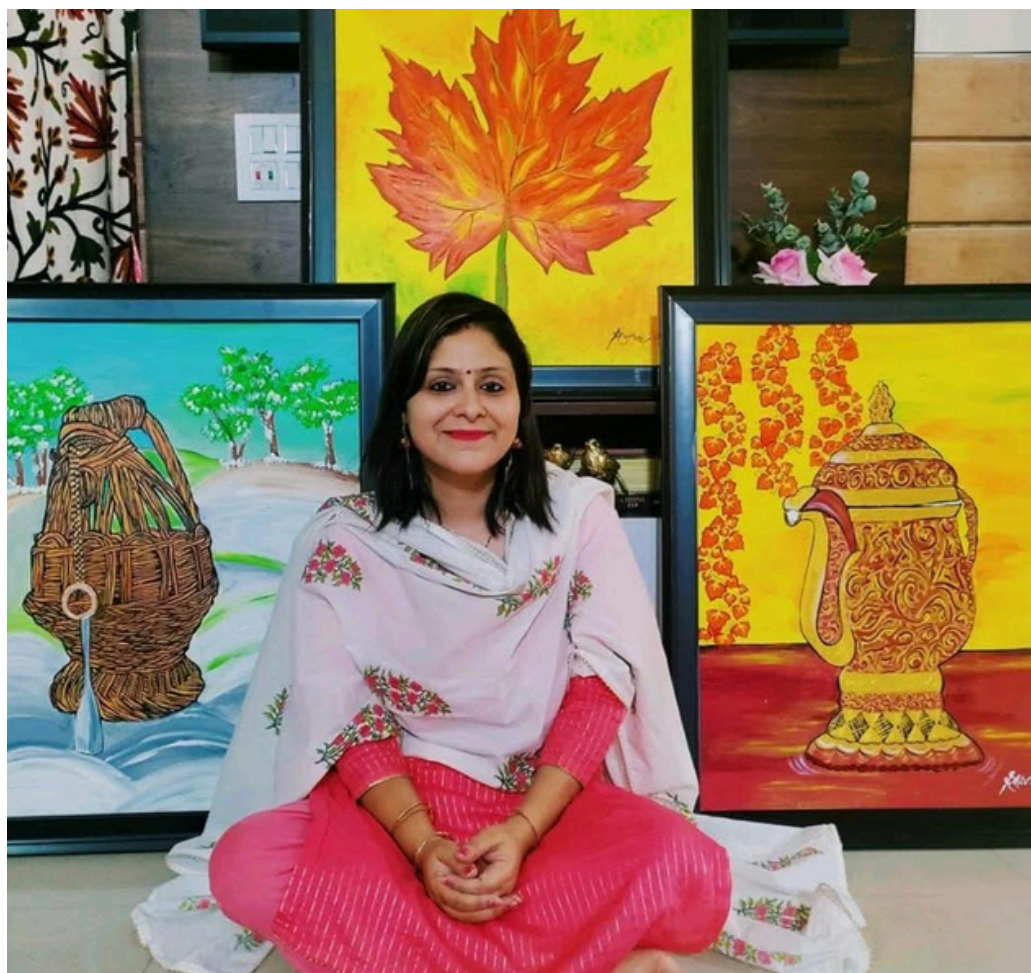
SB: What advice would you offer to students or early-career professionals who are passionate about coinage studies, but are unsure of how to go about it?

MV: No subject or discipline is unfair, in my opinion, and it is up to the students to adapt it using the most up-to-date techniques. There are several career opportunities for numismatists in museums and other institutions in the near future.

*Mr. Verma has obtained a Master's degree in Archaeology and Heritage Management from the Delhi Institute of Heritage Research and Management. As the author of **Coins of India**, he has meticulously documented the evolution of Indian coinage.*



Shivani Koul Bhatt
Artist and Engineer, Jammu & Kashmir





At a very young age, Shivani got obsessed with the surrounding nature and quickly found the use of a brush for an insatiable quest. She is a self-taught artist who has developed her own technique and application. Her array of artwork is detailed, drawing attention to colours, reflection and movements that express the mood of the moment. As an Artist, she deals in realism, representational, surrealism, abstract and sometimes traditional. Having been part of many National and International Art Exhibitions, she has received appreciations and awards for the emotions portrayed on canvas by eminent personalities at different platforms. She designs the cover page of magazines and has her works published in different newspapers and journals.

She creates Canvas Paintings, MDF based Art Works, Handmade Collages, Handmade Nameplates and Handmade Home Decor. One would indeed love to experience the textured and thumb-based artistic techniques as the highlight of her works. She constantly experiments with the new techniques, materials, as well as printing hybrids. Her art works represent moments in her journey. Should these evoke some personal connection or stir an emotional response in you, then its value as true art succeeds. As the vibrant hues always create a lively aura all around where we breathe, her art works have been given beautiful spaces in different parts of the world.

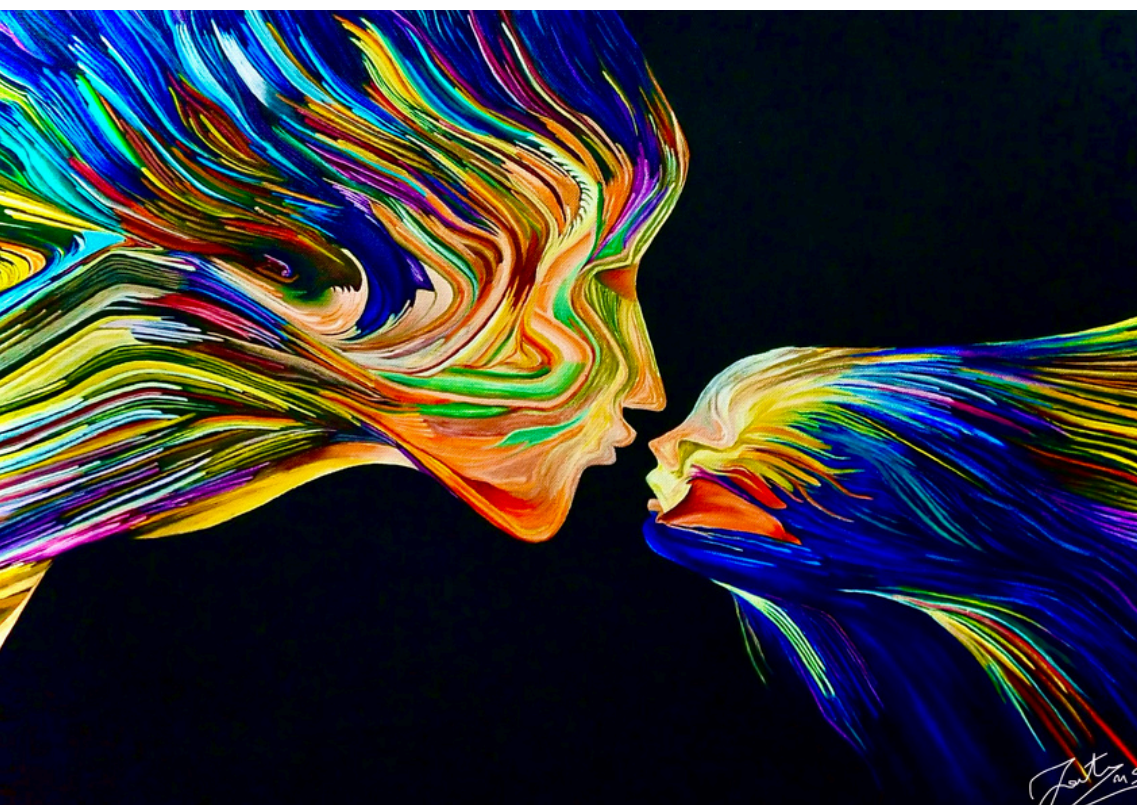
Our passion is a force that drives us and when we are passionate about something we are motivated to follow our dream with full dedication. It is important that you fulfill your ambitions and heart's desires before its too late and you regret saying "We should have at least once strived for it". If you have dreams, gather the courage to pursue them, leave no stone unturned and make it turn into reality. Just believe in yourself, take that one step and everyone around will start believing in you and the love for your passion.

These are the words by Shivani Koul Bhatt, an Artist and an Engineer from beautiful Union territory of Jammu & Kashmir. She has done B.Tech from Jammu University and M. Tech from Kurukshetra University. It is famously said that art lets one's soul live. We must see as much with the eyes as with the soul.





Fatema M Saify
Student, MSB Educational Institute, India



Breathing Earth

This painting stages a stark contradiction: a world suffocating under its own excess, yet quietly fighting to live. Scattered plastics, smog-stained greys, and industrial debris dominate the foreground, forming a visual archive of human disregard. But from this chaos emerges a single, luminous leaf—its veins lit with a soft green aura that feels almost otherworldly. The leaf doesn't simply grow; it asserts itself, pushing through the pollutants as if rewriting the narrative of the canvas.

By pairing environmental degradation with a symbol of regenerative hope, the artwork reframes sustainability not as an abstract ideal but as a living force. The glowing leaf becomes a metaphor for resilience: nature's capacity to heal if given even a sliver of space. Its radiance contrasts sharply with the dull toxicity around it, inviting viewers to confront both the consequences of neglect and the possibility of renewal.

Ultimately, the painting argues that sustainability is not passive preservation but active reclamation. Life is still choosing to grow—our question is whether we choose to make room for it.

Eternal Bonds: A Mother's Love

While making this painting, Fatima was thinking about her mother; how precious a mother is especially for her daughter. A mother is the only person in the world who can turn a daughter's worries and fears into happiness. In this painting she could hear the deepest feeling of her mother who wants to convey to her, "My daughter, you are a masterpiece; be yourself, for there is no one in this world like you. People will try to take your confidence away; don't allow them to. Be who Allah created you to be and not what someone else tells you to be. Stand up for what is right even when it's hard. Be courageous and don't be afraid to choose the right path. Learn from your mistakes and move forward. I will always carry you in my heart; no matter how old you might be, you will always be my little girl."

"Stand up for what is right even when it's hard. Be courageous and don't be afraid to choose the right path. Learn from your mistakes and move forward."



Wrist-Worn Blood Pressure Monitor and Arm Cuff Aneroid Sphygmomanometer: A Comparison

First independent Indian study on wrist blood pressure accuracy exposes a systematic measurement gap that affects millions of self-monitoring patients published in European Society of Hypertension.



Divyanshu Mohan Arya, Meek Dineshbhai Gajjar, Rishu Anand, Harshit Kumar, Shruti Gupta, Niraj Kumari

Department of Pathology and Lab Medicine, Undergraduate MBBS Students, All Institute of Medical Sciences, Raebareli

THE PROBLEM

Over 25% of India's population lives with hypertension. The majority remain undiagnosed until a cardiovascular event forces clinical attention. Self-monitoring devices have become the first line of awareness yet their accuracy in Indian populations had never been independently verified. This study from AIIMS Raebareli directly confronts that silence.

THE STUDY

Published in the Journal of Family Medicine and Primary Care (2025), 150 healthy volunteers underwent simultaneous blood pressure measurements under AHA-protocol conditions wrist monitor against aneroid sphygmomanometer, with both teams blinded to each other's readings. Across 1,800 data points:

- Wrist monitor overestimated systolic pressure by +5.9 mmHg
- Wrist monitor overestimated diastolic pressure by +4.5 mmHg
- Diastolic overestimation (6.02%) consistently exceeded systolic (5.08%)

- Bias showed no significant correlation with age or gender, it is device-level, not population-dependent
- Mean arterial and pulse pressure readings were equally inflated

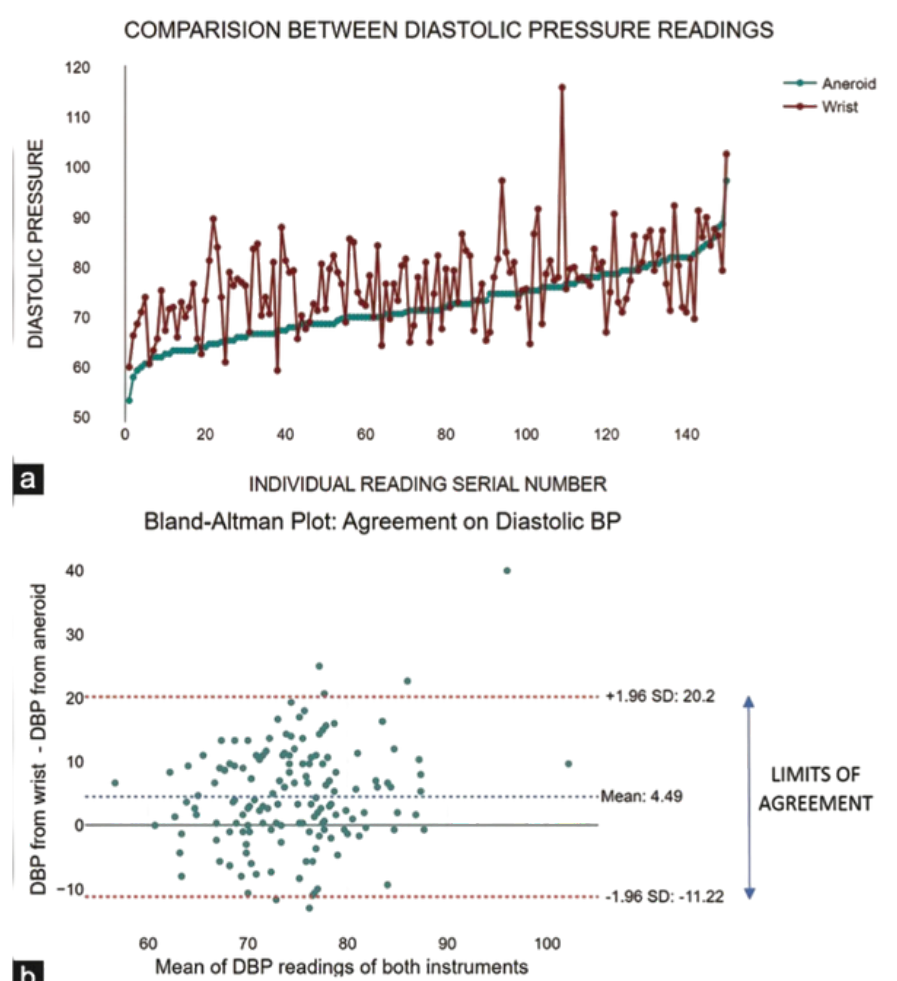


Figure 2: (a) Line graph showing comparison between diastolic pressure readings of the two instruments. (b) Bland–Altman plot showing the agreement on diastolic blood pressure between aneroid and wrist meter, 96% of the diastolic blood pressure readings were within 95% agreement

THE IMPORTANCE

Device error is the most fundamental and preventable source of blood pressure measurement inaccuracy. In a country where cardiovascular disease claims lives that early detection could protect, an uncalibrated reading carries real consequence. Patients who rely solely on wrist monitor values risk false reassurance or unnecessary clinical alarm and neither outcome serves public health.

HOW THE BIAS WAS CONFIRMED

The study employed Bland-Altman analysis the clinical benchmark for comparing two measurement instruments to plot agreement across all subjects. The mean difference remained consistently positive for both pressures. The wrist device did not fluctuate randomly around zero. It skewed high, directionally, across the board. That is the critical distinction between imprecision and systematic bias. Globally, the literature is divided Karampela found underestimation in critical care settings; Saito recorded mixed results against mercury standards. This study aligns with Schaefer and Azaki: both pressures inflated. What it uniquely contributes is the Indian population anchor previously absent from the published record entirely.

WHAT REMAINS UNANSWERED

This is a pilot study of 150 young, healthy college students in a controlled setting. The authors themselves flag it. What happens to this bias margin in older populations, in hypertensive patients already on medication, in those with arterial stiffness or obesity? The device gap documented here may narrow or widen considerably. The paper establishes the baseline. The clinical question it opens is larger than the one it closes.

THE EVIDENCE-BASED POSITION

Wrist monitors are not inaccurate instruments, they are systematically biased ones. Used with awareness of this margin, they remain viable for home surveillance, particularly in elderly, post-surgical, or non-ambulatory patients where arm cuffs are impractical. The clinical imperative is calibration awareness, not device abandonment. A single mmHg gap, repeated daily, is not a rounding error. It is a public health variable.

WHY YOU NEED TO CARE

The world is moving fast. Smartwatches flag irregular heart rhythms. AI health platforms analyse your blood pressure trends and generate dietary recommendations. Insurance models in several countries are beginning to incorporate wearable biometric data into risk profiling. Fitness applications are being trained on user-submitted readings to predict cardiovascular events before they occur. Every one of those systems is only as reliable as the data feeding it. If the input is consistently skewed by 5 to 6 mmHg, the output is not intelligent monitoring. It is confident error at scale. An AI trained on systematically overestimated readings does not learn blood pressure. It learns a distorted version of it. The question this paper raises is not whether wrist monitors work. It is whether the digital health ecosystem being built around them has accounted for what they actually measure.

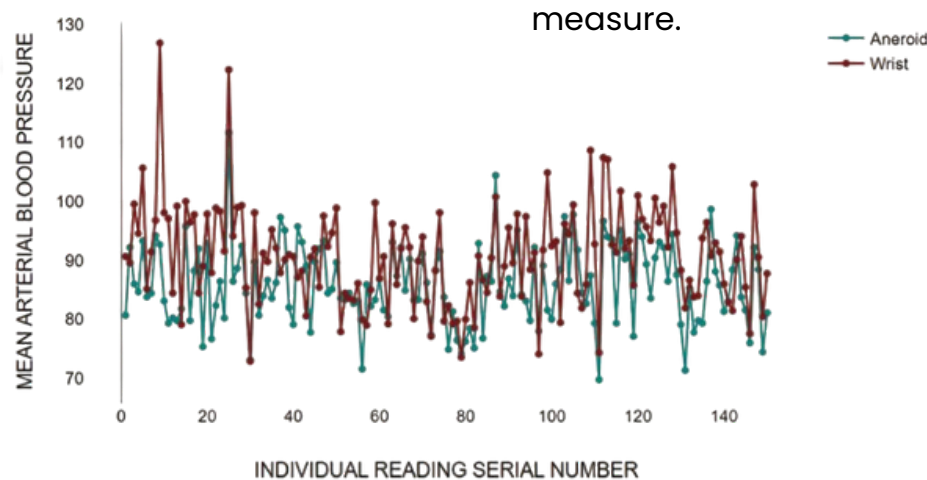


Figure 3: Line graph showing comparison between mean arterial pressure readings of the two instruments

Based on the study "A Comparison of Utility of a Wrist-Worn Blood Pressure Monitor with Arm Cuff Aneroid Sphygmomanometer," published in the European Society of Hypertension. For further details, refer to the original paper.

Photography



Amit Das
Pixels
Freshmen, B. Tech Chemical
National Institute of Technology, Agartala

Threads of Life

Each frame becomes a thread, carrying its own story while contributing to a larger narrative. The elderly man, still and introspective, reflects time, memory, and endurance. The worker, burdened yet smiling, represents resilience shaped through daily struggle. In contrast, the child's radiant expression captures innocence, spontaneity, and the simplest form of happiness.



Sudipta Nath
Pixels
Pre-Final Year, M. Sc. Physics
National Institute of Technology, Agartala

Leaving The Past Behind

This scene reflects a phase of life where one feels low, uncertain, and almost broken, but continues to move that way only. It is not about strength in the usual sense, but leaving the past behind and walking away despite it being big.





WORDS OF ADVISORY BOARD



"...there is a saying of Prophet Muhammad pbuh, 'Plant a Tree Even If It's the Day of Resurrection.' I think Umran is an example of this. We belong to different tribes, but Umran is trying to bring different tribes together even though the world is very pessimistic during this pandemic."

Prof. Heba Raouf Ezzat, Ibn Haldun University, Istanbul



" ...there is a hierarchy within Umran. However, I see this hierarchy as being present in activities, ranging from small to large and from beginner to advanced. But there is no hierarchy in terms of value, because all individuals are important and included."

Prof. Bruce B Lawrence, Duke University, USA



"...Umran, as we have seen, signifies prosperity, peace, and compassion, and it promises that the Green Perspective has taken shape, which is extremely awe-inspiring. The zeal and potential with which the organization has initiated its operations, including the multiple academic projects and ventures it has envisaged, would benefit people across borders and nations."

Prof. Mousumi G Banerjee, EFL University, India



"... I want to say how impressed I have been by your project. It is truly extraordinary what you have been able to achieve in such a short time. You have a sparkling vision, and the year 2020 means you have perfect sight."

Prof. Miriam Cooke, Duke University, USA



"... I have been following the Umran program for a while, and honestly, I have to say that it is a highly successful and beneficial project. Umran is a peaceful initiative against global conflicts, injustice, and many other issues"

Prof. Vahdettin Işık, Ibn Haldun University, Istanbul



CONTRIBUTORS



Prof. Bruce B. Lawrence



Prof. Miriam Cooke



Prof. Mousum G. Banerjee



Dr. Insha Qayoom Shah



Rajeev Kumar



Dr. Kannan Prasad



Ms. Saalima Khan



Dr. Ajit Kumar Jha



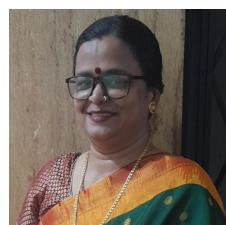
Dr. Aamir Habib



Aditi Pathak



Zenab Suhail Afridi



Deepa Ramanathan



Swasti Bisai



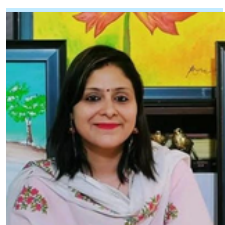
Harshita Shankar



Dr. K. Lakshmi Priya



Sonal Butley



Shivani Koul Bhatt



Fatema M Saify



Sudipta Nath



Amit Das



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“U-Talk gave me my first platform to publish my artistic work—it was like being heard for the first time.”

— Mokshita Mohan, Contributor from Pondicherry

“We feel proud to be one of the contributors of this reputed magazine. Thank you for giving me an opportunity to be the part of this issue.”

— Dr. R. Abeetha, Contributor from Tamil Nadu

Your support isn't just financial—it's a belief in expression, equity, and ethical storytelling. With every donation, you're helping build a world where rural and global voices speak together, where stories become bridges.

Thank you for being part of this journey.

The U-Talk Magazine Team

U-TALK

A QUARTERLY MAGAZINE



U-TALK | VOLUME 4, ISSUE 2 | APRIL - JUNE | 2026

About U-Talk Magazine

U-Talk Magazine is a multidisciplinary, quarterly publication by the Umran Green Perspective Foundation, produced through its initiatives Umran Green School (UGS) and the Umran Academic Research Association (UARA).

The magazine creates a bridge between grassroots experience and scholarly reflection, providing a platform for often unheard voices—including rural poets, folk artists, and community leaders. It features articles, essays, interviews, poetry, photography, and visual art.

Rooted in the ethos of Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam (the world is one family), U-Talk fosters a space for creative expression, critical dialogue, and community storytelling. It is hosted and published online by UARA.

Our Goals:

- Amplify diverse voices—students, artists, storytellers, and community members.
- Celebrate cultural diversity and promote dialogue across generations and regions.
- Highlight transformative initiatives of UGPF in education, social impact, and rural empowerment.
- Inspire readers through stories of resilience, innovation, and the richness of human experiences.

