

REVISITING THE CONTESTED ORIGINS OF JAMMU & KASHMIR REGION

RNI No: JKENG/2022/81439

VOLUME 5 | EDITION 3 | 1 FEBRUARY 2026 | ₹200

kashmircentral.in

KASHMIR CENTRAL

CONTOURS OF DIVIDED INHERITANCE

The political anxieties of Jammu and Kashmir trace back to its turbulent invasion in 1947. Revisiting invasion, communal upheaval and the evolving regional compact, KC examines how historical fractures continue to shape contemporary alignment and politics.



LOG INTO KASHMIR @

kashmircentral.in

razor sharp analysis

INCISIVE REPORTING

**INVESTIGATE
THE TERROR
ECOSYSTEM**

*expose
deception*

**RESTORE
ORDER**

MAKE A SPLASH

**INCULCATE
DEMOCRATIC SPIRIT**

KASHMIR CENTRAL



KASHMIR CENTRAL

VOLUME 5 | EDITION 3
1 FEBRUARY 2026

Editor-in-Chief

Bashir Ahmad Bhat
(Bashir Assad)

Editor

Balpreet

Sub Editor

Mian Tufail

Legal Advisor

Adv Mudasir Ahmad Sheikh

**OWNED, PRINTED AND
PUBLISHED BY**

Bashir Ahmad Bhat

Registered with the
Registrar of Newspapers
of India under RNI No:
JKENG/2022/81439

PUBLISHED FROM

J-24, Jawahar Nagar,
Srinagar, 190008

**ADDRESS FOR ALL
CORRESPONDENCE**

J-24, Jawahar Nagar
Srinagar, 190008

Email:

Kashmircentral997@gmail.com

POSTAL REGISTRATION NO.

L/SK/Kashmir Central 2023-26

PRINTED AT

Elegant Curves, Brein Nishat,
Srinagar - 191121
Phone: 8491859135

All Rights Reserved.

Reproduction in whole or in part
without written permission is
prohibited.

All Advertising enquiries,
comments and feedback are
welcome at kashmircentral997@gmail.com

Periodicity: **Monthly**

Language: **English**

Price: ₹200

The information contained in this
magazine has been reviewed for accu-
racy and is deemed reliable but is not
necessarily complete or guaranteed by
the Editor. The views expressed in this
digest are solely that of the writers and
do not necessarily reflect the views of
KASHMIR CENTRAL

SKY-HIGH FARES, GROUNDED KASHMIR

The soaring airfares to and from Srinagar have become a matter of deep concern, bordering on distress. Ticket prices from Delhi and other Indian cities to Srinagar are, at times, higher than fares for international destinations such as Dubai and Bangkok. This anomaly is not merely an inconvenience; it has serious economic and social implications for both tourists and local residents, for whom these fares have become largely unaffordable.

The situation must be viewed in the context of recent events. Following the tragic terrorist attack in Pahalgam on April 22, 2025, tourist inflows into Kashmir declined drastically. Tourist destinations remained closed for months and flight operations at Srinagar airport were steadily curtailed. Prior to the attack, the airport handled an average of around 100 flights daily. In the aftermath, this number was progressively reduced and today only about 24 flights operate each day.

While the initial reduction in flights may have been justified by the sharp fall in passenger demand, the problem lies in what followed. Months have passed and travel both for tourism and essential purposes has gradually resumed. Yet, the number of flights has not increased in tandem with the returning demand. This persistent capacity constraint has further aggravated the fare crisis, allowing prices to remain abnormally high.



Equally troubling is the absence of any visible intervention to regularise fares and to restore flight frequency. The resulting situation is particularly harsh for those who have no choice but to travel like, patients seeking medical treatment outside the region, students pursue education elsewhere and families facing emergencies. For them, air travel is not a luxury but a necessity and the current fare structure effectively penalises vulnerability.

If left unaddressed, this imbalance risks undermining the fragile recovery of Kashmir's tourism sector and imposes an unfair burden on its residents and the tourists. Restoring adequate flight connectivity and ensuring reasonable airfares is not merely a commercial issue; it is a matter of public interest, equity and regional integration in true sense.

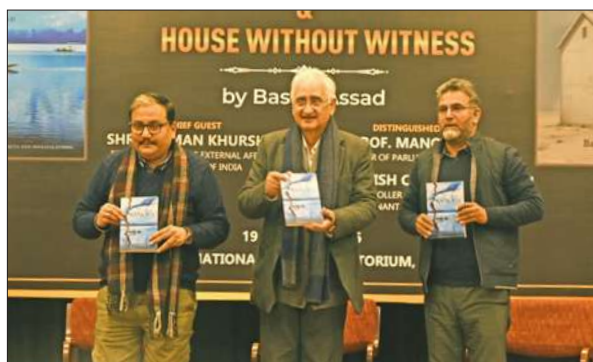
Bashir Assad

CONTENTS



05 FAULTLINES IN THE REGIONS OF KASHMIR & JAMMU

by Bashir Assad



12 KASHMIR: THE UNFILTERED TRUTH

by Waseem Hassan



20 THE CONSTITUTION AS CONTINUUM

by Mian Tufail



28 "THE MOTHER OF ALL DEALS"

DECODING EU-INDIA FREE TRADE AGREEMENT

by Mareaya Fayaz

FAULTLINES IN THE REGIONS OF KASHMIR & JAMMU



by **Bashir Assad**

KASHMIR CENTRAL | 1 FEBRUARY 2026 | 5

Jammu and Kashmir's present anxieties cannot be understood without confronting its violent birth. By revisiting invasion, communal violence and the unresolved regional compact of 1947, *KC* argues that today's political realignments are the aftershocks of an unfinished postcolonial settlement.



▼

The princely state of Jammu and Kashmir in 1947 stood at a uniquely precarious intersection of empire, geography and communal churn. Unlike many princely states that moved swiftly to accede to one or the other dominion, Jammu and Kashmir hesitated, oscillating between competing pressures from its demographically Muslim-majority valley, a politically assertive Hindu majority Jammu and the looming strategic calculations of both India and Pakistan.

THAT HESITATION PROVED TUMULTUOUS

▼

In late October 1947, Pakistani tribesmen, an incursion supported by Pakistan's establishment invaded

Kashmir. Their rapid advance toward Srinagar shattered the already fragile equilibrium within the princely state, producing chaos, fear and administrative collapse. Maharaja Hari Singh, struggling to retain authority, fled Srinagar for Jammu, leaving behind a power vacuum at a

Yet the turmoil in the valley was only one dimension of the catastrophe unfolding across the state. Simultaneously, Jammu witnessed violence of immense proportions.

moment of existential crisis.

Yet the turmoil in the valley was only one dimension of the catastrophe unfolding across the state. Simultaneously, Jammu witnessed violence of immense proportions. The Maharaja's forces, aided by extremist militias, carried out widespread killings and expulsions of Muslims across the province. Fuelled by a volatile mixture of political insecurity and communal vengeance, the violence is estimated to have claimed around two hundred thousand Muslim lives, one of the lesser acknowledged tragedies of the subcontinent's partition. These parallel traumas, one unfolding through invasion, the other through massacre, defined Jammu and Kashmir's violent passage into the post-colonial order.

It was in these extraordinary and highly pressured circumstances that



the Maharaja signed the Instrument of Accession on 26 October 1947. While the accession was legally executed and duly accepted by the Indian dominion, it arose from an urgent security emergency rather than a deliberated, broad-based political process. Embedded within it were anxieties that would shape the state's post-colonial journey of fears of demographic imbalance, memories of communal violence and unresolved questions of political legitimacy across regions.

The post-colonial state that emerged was, in many ways, a mosaic of sharp contrasts. Kashmir possessed a distinct linguistic and cultural identity; Jammu was ethnically varied and religiously heterogeneous; Ladakh was home to Buddhist and Shia Muslim communities culturally linked to Central Asian and Tibetan worlds. Despite these differences, the



While the accession was legally executed and duly accepted by the Indian dominion, it arose from an urgent security emergency rather than a deliberated, broad-based political process.

country integrated them into a single political entity at a moment when democratic governance itself was still experimental.

This integration was both pragmatic and aspirational. Pragmatic because geopolitical realities demanded administrative coherence and Aspirational because the new republic envisioned pluralism as a foundational principle. In this sense, Jammu and Kashmir came to resemble a mini-India, a microcosm of the diversity and contradictions that defined the nation itself.

Yet the postcolonial compact rested on a fragile foundation. Each region carried grievances that long





predated 1947 and the new political architecture did little to resolve them fully. Kashmir often perceived political processes as extensions of external control; Jammu harboured sentiments of neglect and alleged domination by Kashmiri elites; Ladakh experienced administrative remoteness and cultural marginalisation. These tensions rarely erupted simultaneously but they constantly shaped regional political imaginations beneath the surface.

The eruption of armed insurgency in 1990 deepened these fissures dramatically. While the

**Kashmir often
perceived political
processes as
extensions of
external control;
Jammu harboured
sentiments of
neglect and alleged
domination by
Kashmiri elites**

valley descended into a prolonged militarised conflict, resentment in Jammu grew over the instability emanating from Kashmir and the perceived disproportionate influence of valley-centric politics on state governance. Ladakh, meanwhile, intensified its demands for autonomy, a trajectory that culminated decades later in its separation as a Union Territory.

The insurgency thus transformed not only Kashmir's relationship with New Delhi but also the internal relationships among the state's regions, hardening identities and deepening mutual incomprehension.

Another major rupture came with the 2008 Amarnath land row. What began as an administrative decision regarding land allocation to the Amarnath Shrine Board spiraled into a mass uprising in Kashmir and a powerful counter-mobilisation in Jammu. Economic blockades, counter-blockades, street protests and communal tensions followed, producing one of the most intense inter-regional stand-offs since 1947.

The episode revealed that the post-colonial architecture had not merely failed to resolve historical





Calls for a separate Jammu state have resurfaced, drawing upon narratives of discrimination, neglect and demographic anxiety.



grievances; in some ways, it had amplified them through decades of accumulated mistrust.

Today, these unresolved tensions inform a new set of political alignments. Sections of Jammu's leadership argue that their region's aspirations cannot be fulfilled within a framework tethered to Kashmir's unresolved conflict. Calls for a separate Jammu state have resurfaced, drawing upon narratives of discrimination, neglect and demographic anxiety. At the same time, though less coherently articulated, some voices in Kashmir have begun expressing the view that Jammu should be free to pursue its own political course if it believes Kashmir is holding it back. This marks a significant departure from earlier valley centric visions of unity.

The most contentious terrain in this evolving landscape lies in the ethnically and religiously mixed belts of the Chenab valley and the Pir Panjal region, particularly Poonch and Rajouri. Both Kashmir and Jammu seek to incorporate these areas into their respective political futures. Jammu's argument rests on administrative logic, emphasizing existing divisional boundaries. Kashmiri perspectives draw upon historical and political imagination, partly rooted in Sir Owen Dixon's proposals, which envisaged these regions as organically linked to Kashmir's political identity.

The danger here lies not merely in constitutional rearrangements but in the social tensions such claims can ignite.

History repeatedly demonstrates that once the seeds of discord are sown, they rarely remain contained. The Chenab and Pir Panjal regions already marked by histories of communal violence, demographic shifts and political vulnerability could become flashpoints if regional polarisation continues to deepen. The massacres of 1947 in Jammu and the



tensions of the 1990s in Chenab valley remain living memories. Reopening disputes over territorial belonging risks tearing at scars that have never fully healed.

Understanding the transition of 1947, therefore, is not merely an academic exercise. It is a necessary confrontation with the origins of political fragmentation that continues to haunt the region. The invasion, the massacre, the flight of the Maharaja and the accession together formed the crucible from which modern Jammu and Kashmir emerged.

Both Kashmir and Jammu seek to incorporate these areas into their respective political futures. Jammu's argument rests on administrative logic, emphasizing existing divisional boundaries.

The postcolonial political construct sought to overlay these contradictions with democratic institutions, special constitutional arrangements and rhetoric of unity. But without addressing foundational mistrust between regions, between communities and between the state and its people, the arrangement remained perpetually vulnerable to fracture.

The challenge before Jammu and Kashmir today is not simply to negotiate administrative futures but to confront the layered histories that produced its contemporary anxieties. Any future political architecture that ignores the memories of 1947, the fault lines of the postcolonial compact and the intensifying regional polarisation risks repeating the cycles of rupture that have defined the region for nearly eight decades.

If Jammu and Kashmir is to move towards stability, however that stability is defined as it must first grapple honestly with the contradictions at its birth and the trajectories they set in motion.



D GOUSIA TRADERS



GROW YOUR BUSINESS

We are the government approved and Special Defence Contractor.
We build trust, Delivering excellence and Powering progress.

OUR SERVICES

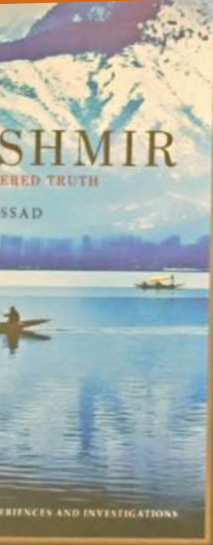
- ✓ Premium furniture
- ✓ Computers, IT
- ✓ AC, TV, Printing,
- ✓ Heating Equipments
- ✓ LED & others

WHY CHOOSE US

From sophisticated Defence supplies to elegant furniture and advanced electrical systems - we deliver it all, with perfection.

D Gousia Traders

Contact: 9796990034



KASHMIR: THE UNFILTERED TRUTH & HOUSE WITHOUT WITNESS

by Basir Assad

CHIEF GUEST
SHEKHAR MAN KHURSHID
EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
OF INDIA

DISTINGUISHED
PROF. MANOJ K. JAIN

OF PARLIAM

ISH C
OLLER
NANT



Basir A



USHA KHANNA MUNSHI

MAJID JHA



SALMAN KHURSHID



BASHIR ASSAD

KASHMIR CENTRE | 1 FEBRUARY 2026

Kashmir THE UNFILTERED TRUTH

by Waseem Hassan

The launch of *Kashmir: The Unfiltered Truth* at the India International Centre became more than a book release, as it was a quiet assertion that Kashmir's future lies in patience, participation and institutional trust rather than ideological triumph.

The release of Kashmir: The Unfiltered Truth by senior journalist and author Bashir Assad at the India International Centre, New Delhi, on 19 January 2026, unfolded a carefully observed public moment: one marked by intellectual seriousness, diplomatic attention and a rare convergence of political, academic and civil society voices. The event, held in one of New Delhi's most respected institutional spaces, reflected the nature of the book as measured, reflective and situated at the intersection of constitutional discourse and lived experiences.

The book was formally released by former Union Minister for External Affairs, Salman Khurshid and Rajya Sabha Member of Parliament, Professor Manoj Kumar Jha, in the presence of a diverse gathering that included senior diplomats, scholars, journalists, policy professionals, civil society representatives and members of India's strategic and intellectual community. The composition of the audience lent the occasion a distinctly international and deliberative character, underscoring the continued global interest in Jammu, Kashmir and Ladakh as regions of constitutional, strategic and political significance.

Representatives from several foreign missions were present at the release, including diplomats from Australia, Russia, Norway, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Singapore, Angola and other countries. Their presence was notable, not for



Representatives from several foreign missions were present at the release, including diplomats from Australia, Russia, Norway, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Singapore, Angola and other countries.

overt political signalling but for the quiet acknowledgement that Kashmir after years of the constitutional changes of August

2019, continues to occupy an important place in conversations that extend beyond India's borders. The gathering reflected an understanding that constitutional transitions in sensitive regions are not only domestic administrative matters but also subjects of sustained international observation and academic engagement.

Speakers at the event approached the book as a serious attempt to widen the conversation on Kashmir. Salman Khurshid, drawing on his long experience in law, diplomacy and public life,





reflected on the importance of constitutional continuity, institutional trust and patience in addressing complex regional questions. Professor Manoj K Jha, known for his academic grounding and parliamentary interventions, emphasised the need for reflective discourse that moves beyond binaries and allows space for nuance, dialogue and democratic imagination. Together, their presence framed the book as part of an ongoing national conversation rather than a moment of confrontation or closure.

It is within this context of deliberation rather than declaration that *Kashmir: The Unfiltered Truth* situates itself. Appearing more than six

Bashir Assad's work does not seek to reopen settled legal questions nor does it offer prescriptive solutions.

years after the constitutional reorganisation of Jammu and Kashmir, the book enters a phase where immediacy has given way to introspection. The certainties that once dominated public debate, whether celebratory or sceptical, have softened into more complex questions about governance, legitimacy, participation and institutional evolution. Bashir Assad's work

does not seek to reopen settled legal questions nor does it offer prescriptive solutions. Instead, it undertakes the more demanding task of examining how constitutional change is experienced, interpreted and absorbed over time.

One of the defining features of the book is its resistance to what the author describes implicitly as the "Single Story Syndrome" approach to Kashmir. For decades, the region has been framed through dominant binaries like, security versus democracy, integration versus autonomy, nationalism versus separatism. While these frames have shaped policy and politics, they have often failed to capture the layered realities of a society shaped by history,

conflict, accommodation and resilience. The book argues that Kashmir's challenge has not been the absence of constitutional engagement but the narrowing of how that engagement is articulated and understood.

Rather than treating the abrogation of Article 370 as an isolated rupture, the book places it within a longer constitutional continuum. From accession in 1947 to the institutionalisation of a special constitutional status and through successive political and administrative adjustments, Jammu and Kashmir's relationship with the Union of India has been marked by negotiation and recalibration. The constitutional reorganisation of 2019, in this reading, emerges as the most decisive intervention in a long series of adjustments, distinguished by its scale, speed and symbolic weight.

The transformation of the erstwhile state into two Union Territories represented a shift towards administrative uniformity, centralised authority and clearer institutional hierarchies. The book does not contest the constitutional authority of this change. Instead, it focuses on how authority is



The constitutional reorganisation of 2019, in this reading, emerges as the most decisive intervention in a long series of adjustments, distinguished by its scale, speed and symbolic weight.

experienced on the ground, where legality intersects with perception and where governance structures shape everyday life. In regions with histories of political exception and prolonged uncertainty, perception plays a critical role in determining whether constitutional change generates confidence, caution or quiet

disengagement.

A recurring theme throughout the book is the distinction between constitutional legality and constitutional legitimacy. While legality flows from formal authority, legitimacy is built gradually through participation, representation and institutional conduct. The book suggests that



constitutional transformations tend to acquire durability when they are communicated and implemented as part of a continuing constitutional journey rooted in administrative necessity, institutional coherence and democratic continuity. When the same changes are perceived primarily through ideological lenses, they may encounter hesitation, even when they are legally sound.

The experiential dimension of *Kashmir: The Unfiltered Truth* lends the work its distinctive depth. Drawing on personal memories from the turbulent 1990s, Bashir Assad reflects on the human costs of prolonged instability of fear, coercion, institutional breakdown and moral ambiguity. These reflections are presented with restraint and sobriety not as grievance narratives but as historical testimony. They serve as reminders that constitutional arrangements operate within social realities that shape trust

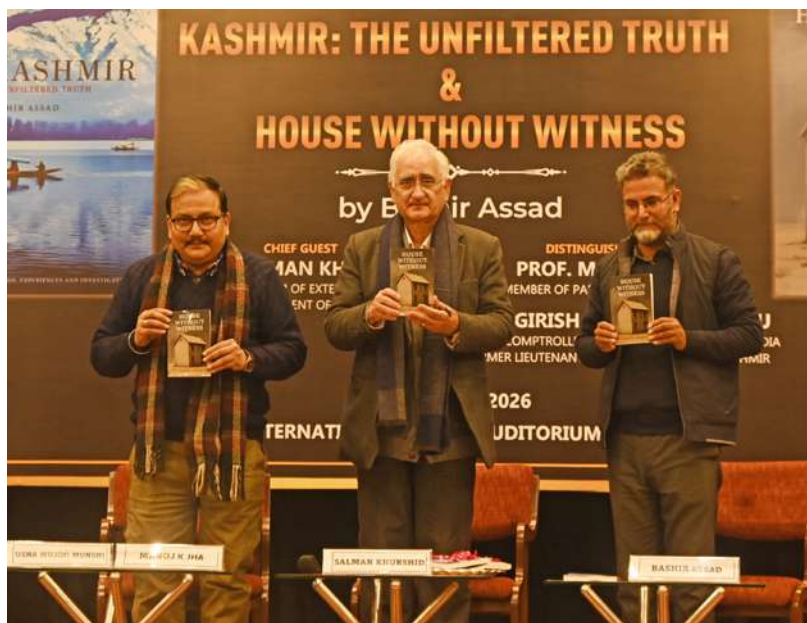
Jammu, Kashmir and Ladakh are treated as distinct political and cultural spaces, each shaped by its own historical experience and contemporary concerns.

and memory over generations.

Significantly, the book avoids romanticising violence in any form. Accounts of militant coercion and intimidation are presented alongside reflections on governance and authority, offering a balanced portrayal of a society navigating multiple pressures. The emphasis consistently remains on ordinary citizens, individuals adapting to uncertainty, negotiating changing political structures and seeking dignity amid transition.

The book's regional analysis further strengthens its contribution. Jammu, Kashmir and Ladakh are treated as distinct political and cultural spaces, each shaped by its own historical experience and contemporary concerns. While initial reactions to the 2019 reorganisation varied across regions, the book observes a gradual convergence around shared aspirations for participation, representation and institutional voice.

In Ladakh, early optimism associated with Union Territory





status has evolved into discussions on constitutional safeguards, environmental sustainability and cultural preservation. In Jammu, long-standing aspirations for integration and development continue alongside debates on regional balance and economic opportunity. In the Kashmir valley, political articulation has increasingly centred on institutional normalcy, democratic participation and the restoration of statehood interpreted as an assertion of agency within a constitutional framework.

The book also engages thoughtfully with the evolving idea of *Kashmiriyat*. Once invoked as a syncretic cultural ethos, it has acquired layered meanings shaped by memory, politics and power. Rather than treating this evolution as a

In the Kashmir valley, political articulation has increasingly centred on institutional normalcy, democratic participation and the restoration of statehood interpreted as an assertion of agency within a constitutional framework.

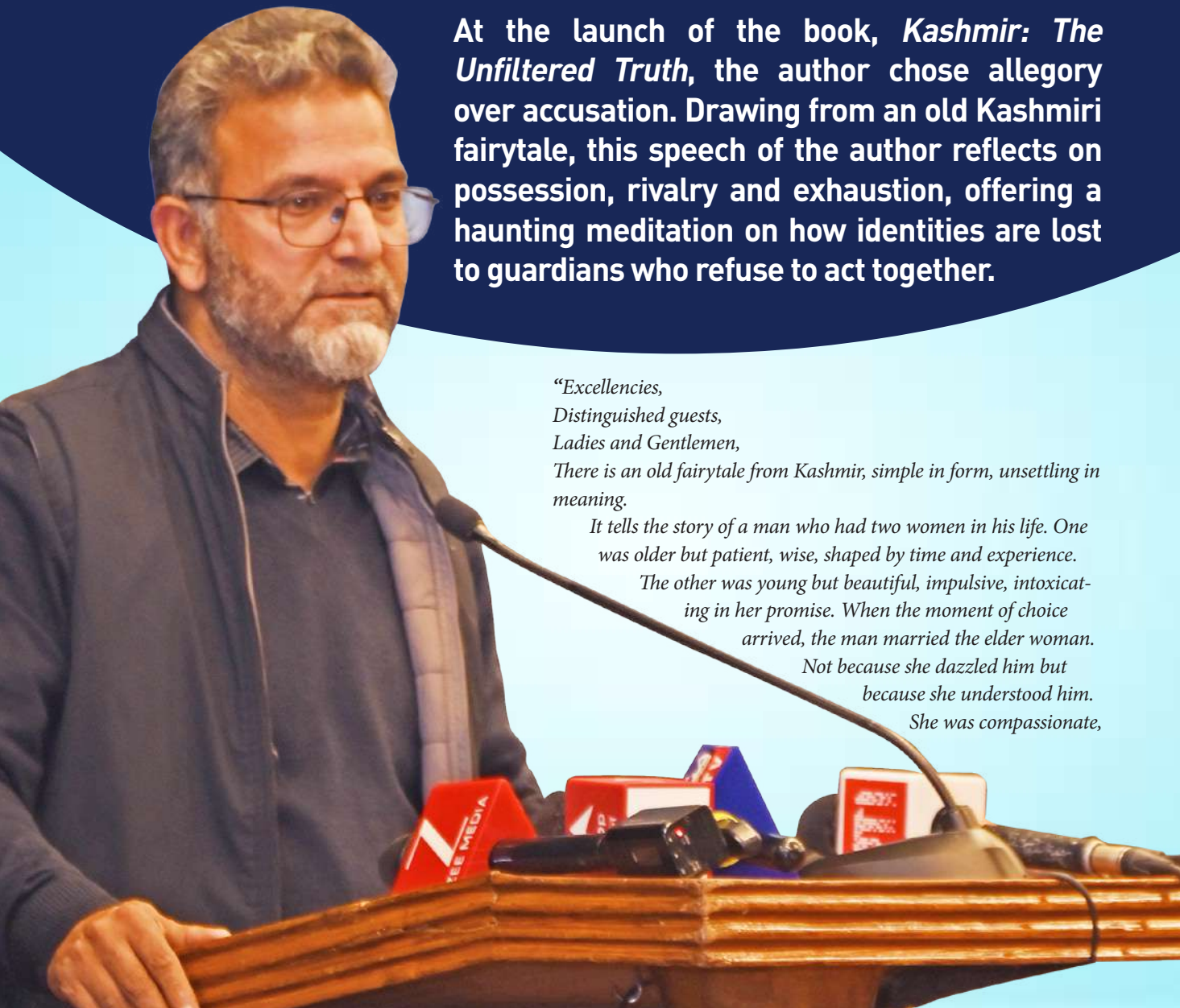
erosion, the author argues for a more inclusive understanding of culture, as a bridge between history and constitutional belonging. The book expands the conversation without sharpening divisions, invites reflection rather than reaction and treats constitutional change as a

process rather than an event.

In an era defined by speed, certainty and competing narratives, *Kashmir: The Unfiltered Truth* argues quietly for patience, continuity and institutional trust. It suggests that peace cannot be legislated, trust cannot be commanded and integration cannot be reduced to administrative alignment alone. Stability, the book reminds us, emerges through sustained engagement, sensitivity of governance and confidence in democratic institutions.

Ultimately, the book and the moment of its release stand as an invitation: to move beyond the single story, to recognise transition as a shared journey and to approach Kashmir not as a problem to be solved but as a constitutional relationship to be carefully, responsibly and continuously sustained.

HAIR BY HAIR: HOW A HOME WAS UNDONE



At the launch of the book, *Kashmir: The Unfiltered Truth*, the author chose allegory over accusation. Drawing from an old Kashmiri fairytale, this speech of the author reflects on possession, rivalry and exhaustion, offering a haunting meditation on how identities are lost to guardians who refuse to act together.

*"Excellencies,
Distinguished guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,
There is an old fairytale from Kashmir, simple in form, unsettling in meaning.*

It tells the story of a man who had two women in his life. One was older but patient, wise, shaped by time and experience.

The other was young but beautiful, impulsive, intoxicating in her promise. When the moment of choice arrived, the man married the elder woman.

*Not because she dazzled him but
because she understood him.
She was compassionate,*



mature and capable of imagining a future beyond impulse.

The younger one, though alluring, was raw driven more by appetite than responsibility, more by urgency than care.

But rejection did not end the story.

The younger woman refused to remain outside. She forced her way into the man's house, illegally and unlawfully, without consent and without legitimacy. At first, the man resisted. He defended the threshold, the memory of order. But persistence seduces where force fails. Repetition erodes resolve. Slowly, through pressure and provocation, she secured a place she was never meant to occupy.

Once inside, she did not remain silent.

She stripped the man, not of gold or land but of inheritance. She took away his culture, his shared rhythms, his ethical grammar. What generations had preserved quietly was dismantled noisily. Trust was converted into suspicion. Community into faction. Continuity into rupture.

The lawful wife watched this erosion with growing bitterness.

Seeing her home violated and her partner diminished, she withdrew what she had once given freely as love, protection, compassion, commitment. Care hardened into control. Responsibility curdled into resentment. What had once been a partnership became a contest, conducted

over the man's body and soul.

Then came the cruelest moment.

Each woman began pulling at the man's hair, one plucking the grey to keep him young, the other plucking the black to make him resemble her age. Each believed she was asserting a rightful claim. Each believed the other was the true destroyer. Neither noticed that together they were undoing him.

Hair by hair, claim by claim, the man was stripped bare.

When he finally stood bald, exhausted, diminished, unrecognizable, both women turned to their children and taught them the same lie that it was the other who had ruined him. And so the inheritance passed on was not truth but grievance; not understanding but accusation.

This book (Kashmir: The unfiltered truth) is that man.

It is also the house he lived in, the inheritance he lost and the silence that followed. It is about how identities are not always destroyed by enemies alone but exhausted by guardians who refuse to act together.

This is not a story of a single villain. It is a story of possession mistaken for love, of rivalry masquerading as care and of a subject reduced to an object by competing claims of ownership.

Let me be clear about the structure of this book.

Each chapter is a room in that

house. Some examine how the unlawful entry occurred. Others trace what was taken, what was surrendered and what was weaponised. Some confront the man's own failings, his hesitations, his compromises, his silences. Others interrogate the lawful partner's retreat into control and withdrawal. Together, they map how a shared home became a contested ruin.

Kashmir: The Unfiltered Truth begins from a recognition that cannot be undone: the choice is locked. The lawful bond exists. History has settled it. The future does not lie in reopening decisions but in whether the legitimate partners can remain together and act together.

Because the uncomfortable truth is this:

The illegitimate presence did not endure merely because it was forceful. It endured because division created vacancy. As long as rivalry replaced reconciliation, the unlawful intruder thrived. Removal was never possible through accusation alone; it required unity, trust and a shared reclaiming of responsibility.

If the house is to be restored, the lawful partners must first recognise that survival does not come from defeating each other but from standing together, to reclaim the home, the inheritance and the future that was slowly taken from them.

Thank you.

THE CONSTITUTION AS CONTINUUM

20
KASHMIR CENTRAL | 1 FEBRUARY 2026

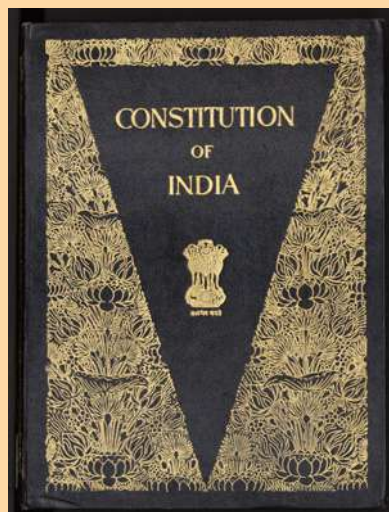


The debate over Article 370 has been dominated by legal arguments and political slogans. This article examines constitutional history, local politics and the exhaustion of conflict in Kashmir; it explains why the manner of constitutional change matters as much as the change itself and what the future depends on.

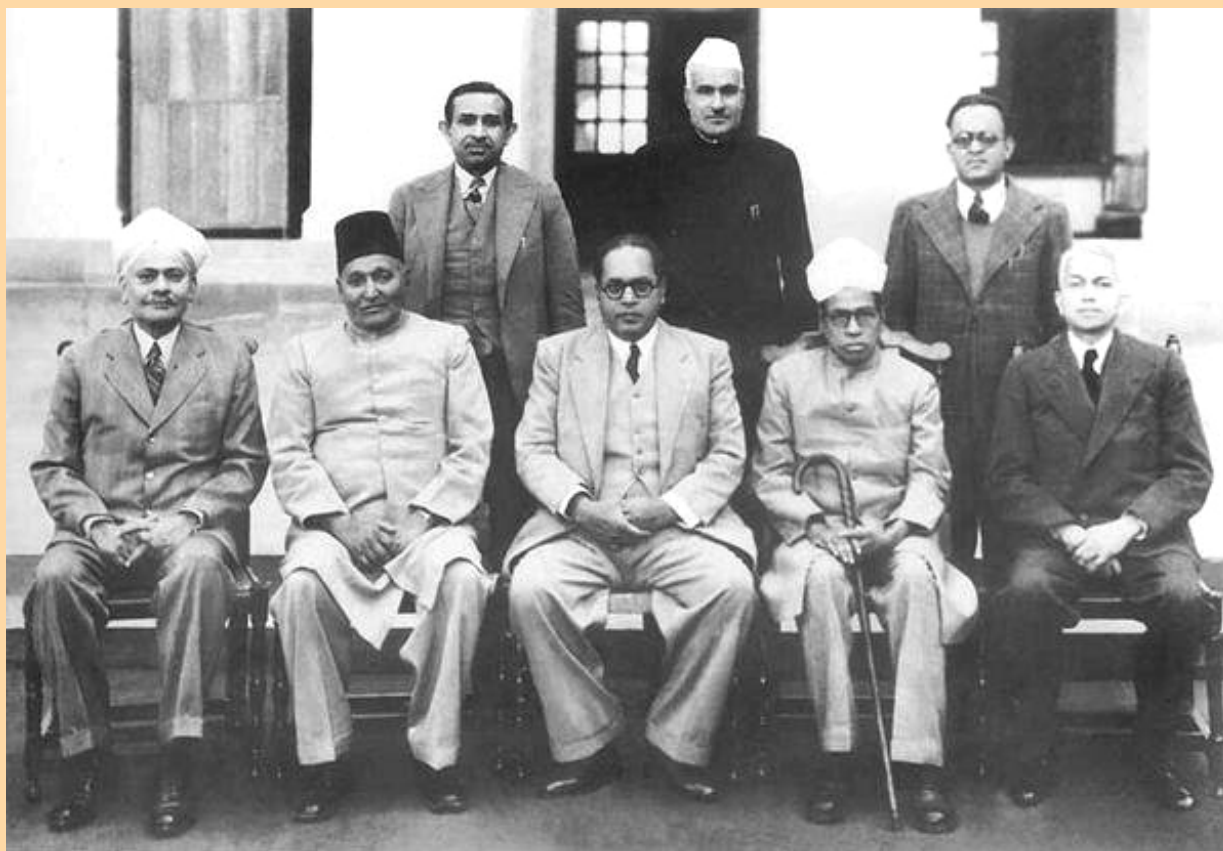


by **Mian Tufail**

The Indian constitution is neither a static monument nor an ideological proclamation frozen in time. It is rather a living continuum, an evolving framework shaped by political necessity,



historical contingency and democratic negotiation. Its durability lies in its capacity to absorb changes through accommodation, adaptation and gradual recalibration. From its very inception, the constitution of India has functioned less as a revolutionary text and more as a pragmatic instrument for managing diversity in a deeply plural Indian society.



Nowhere is this constitutional character more sharply illuminated than in the case of Jammu and Kashmir. The trajectory of Article 370, from its introduction as a constitutional necessity to its eventual abrogation in August 2019, reveals not a singular moment of ideological rupture but a long and complex process of constitutional evolution. Six years after the abrogation, the manner in which the decision has been received in Kashmir underscores a central lesson of Indian constitutionalism that's the change imposed as ideology invites resistance while as the change embedded within continuity is more likely to endure.

To understand this, one must move beyond doctrine of constitutional law and examine the political, social

Its durability lies in its capacity to absorb changes through accommodation, adaptation and gradual recalibration.

and psychological contexts in which constitutional change unfolds.

CONSTITUTION MAKING IN JAMMU AND KASHMIR

The story begins not with Article 370 but with the constitution-making process in Jammu and Kashmir itself. Unlike the Indian Constituent Assembly,





which despite its limitations reflected a broad spectrum of ideological positions, the state Constituent Assembly of Jammu and Kashmir was dominated by a single political force, the National Conference under the leadership of Sheikh Abdullah.

The constitution of Jammu and Kashmir adopted in 1956 was largely an outcome of the ideas, aspirations and political philosophy of this dominant party. Sheikh Abdullah's popularity and political legitimacy were immense and the National Conference had come to embody the aspirations of a large section of the population, particularly in the Kashmir valley. Yet, this dominance also produced exclusions. Diverse communities and political viewpoints, ranging from sections in Jammu, Kashmiri Pandits, alternative regional voices and dissenting ideological forces found limited representation in the constitutional imagination that

Sheikh Abdullah's popularity and political legitimacy were immense and the National Conference had come to embody the aspirations of a large section of the population, particularly in the Kashmir valley.



emerged.

The process of constitution making was marked by what may be described as *foundational violence* laced with the systematic marginalisation of dissenting voices. Very little attention has historically been paid to the constitution as an exclusivist text, one that embedded a monopolistic discourse and foreclosed plural conceptions of politics by institutionalising the dominance of a single political narrative.

Over time, this constitution came to be celebrated as a successful experiment in Indian federal democracy. Yet, beneath this celebratory narrative lay a more complex reality, one in which constitutional authority was consolidated even as political diversity was narrowed. This context is crucial because Article 370 functioned within a political ecosystem already shaped by hegemony, accommodation and gradual erosion of dissent.

Article 370 was never conceived as an ideological aberration. It was born out of political realism and constitutional pragmatism. In October 1947, Jammu and Kashmir acceded to India under extraordinary circumstances amid invasion, displacement and uncertainty. The accession, while legally executed by the then ruler, required popular legitimacy in a muslim majority region joining a secular and newly independent India.

Article 370 emerged as the *need of the hour*. It was a confidence building mechanism designed to facilitate integration without coercion. It limited



The accession, while legally executed by the then ruler, required popular legitimacy in a muslim majority region joining a secular and newly independent India.

the application of the Indian constitution to specific subjects including, defence, foreign affairs and communications while allowing Jammu and Kashmir to retain its own constitution and autonomy over

internal matters.

This arrangement was fully consistent with the spirit of the constitution of India. Indian federalism has never been symmetrical. From special provisions for Nagaland under Article 371(A) to later accommodations for Mizoram and Sikkim, the constitution has repeatedly recognised that unity in India requires differentiated arrangements. Article 370 was not an exception to constitutional logic it was one of its clearest expressions.

At that historical moment, Article 370 was constitutionally necessary. It enabled accession, reassured the population and provided the political space needed for integration to take root.

GRADUAL EROSION OF ARTICLE 370

Over time, however, Article 370 underwent a steady process of erosion. This erosion did not occur overnight nor did it begin in 2019. From the mid-1950s onwards, successive Presidential orders extended a wide range of central laws to Jammu and Kashmir. The dismissal of Sheikh Abdullah's government in 1953 marked a critical turning point after which political arrangements increasingly favoured central integration.

By 1956, when the state Constituent Assembly dissolved, the institutional mechanism envisaged under Article 370(3) ceased to exist. Yet constitutional change continued unabated. Over the decades, as per official records, more than forty Presidential orders were issued, applying hundreds of central laws to the erstwhile state of Jammu and Kashmir. Fundamental rights, emergency provisions and fiscal arrangements were gradually extended.

Crucially, this process was not driven solely by New Delhi. Successive governments in Jammu and Kashmir actively participated in amending and adapting Article 370 to suit their governance needs. Autonomy was often invoked rhetorically, even as it was diluted in practice. Local political elites negotiated constitutional arrangements to consolidate power rather than deepen democratic accountability.

By the time of the 1975



The dismissal of Sheikh Abdullah's government in 1953 marked a critical turning point after which political arrangements increasingly favoured central integration.

Indira-Sheikh accord, the autonomy promised in the early years had already been significantly compromised. Over subsequent decades, Article 370 increasingly became a symbolic marker rather than a substantive

shield. By 2019, much of its original content had been hollowed out. What remained was not constitutional autonomy in any meaningful sense but an emotionally charged symbol deeply embedded in Kashmiri political consciousness.

FATIGUE AND THE CHANGING POLITICAL MOOD

Understanding the reception of the 2019 abrogation requires acknowledging the profound fatigue that had settled over Kashmiri society. Between 2008 and 2016, Jammu and Kashmir witnessed repeated cycles of unrest, each wave exacting a heavy toll on young lives and our

economy. Protests, shutdowns, violence, arrests and economic disruption became recurring features of daily life.

The agitations of 2008, the unrest of 2010, the disturbances of 2013 and the intense violence following the events of 2016 left deep scars. By this point, the social and economic costs of continuous confrontation had become overwhelming. Education suffered, livelihoods collapsed and an entire generation grew up amid uncertainty.

By 2016, even the moral authority of separatist leadership had eroded significantly. Many ordinary Kashmiris began to view repeated calls for shutdowns as derailing everyday life rather than advancing political resolution. Separatists increasingly came to be seen as obstacles to development and stability. Their image suffered a substantial dent.

This fatigue is central to understanding why the abrogation of Article 370 in 2019 did not trigger a mass uprising. The absence of large scale protest was not evidence of enthusiastic endorsement. Rather, it reflected exhaustion, resignation and a desire for respite from perpetual turmoil.

The abrogation of Article 370 was carried out during a period when Jammu and Kashmir was under President's rule, following the failure of constitutional machinery in 2018. The substitution of the Constituent Assembly with the Legislative Assembly through a Presidential order has been the subject of extensive legal debate



Many ordinary Kashmiris began to view repeated calls for shutdowns as derailing everyday life rather than advancing political resolution.

in the revocation. Yet, focusing exclusively on legal doctrine risks missing the broader picture.

The decision was taken in what may be described as a *state of exception*, a moment shaped by long standing political tensions, democratic deficit and regional security anxieties. In such contexts, constitutional actions often derive legitimacy not only from formal legality but from political necessity and public order considerations.

The Indian constitutional experience itself offers precedents where extraordinary measures were taken during exceptional moments.

Whether one views such measures through the lens of constitutional exceptionalism or pragmatic governance, the key issue remains the perception.

In Kashmir, perception carries extraordinary weight. Constitutional change, when framed as ideological conquest rather than procedural evolution, risks deepening mistrust. The abrogation of Article 370, instead of being presented as the culmination of a long constitutional process, was projected as a historic rupture, an ideological victory amplified through national media narratives.

Kashmir is a region where normalcy itself must be normalised. Governance, infrastructure development, tourism growth and connectivity are not extraordinary achievements; they are routine functions of the state. When such developments are portrayed as exceptional or out-of-the-box, they inadvertently create vulnerabilities.

History shows that

exaggerated narratives place pressure on peace. Those vehemently opposed to stability perceive such moments as challenges to be disrupted. Mega projects, rising tourist numbers and infrastructural milestones, when framed as ideological triumphs, invite counter adventures aimed at derailing the process.

The same principle applies to the much talked statehood. Restoring statehood is not any concession or favour rather it is a constitutional norm. Prolonged delay and excessive political emphasis on this issue have generated disenchantment. While statehood primarily benefits the political class by restoring institutional authority, its absence feeds a broader perception of democratic deficit among the population. In Kashmir, delays are rarely interpreted as administrative. They are read politically.

CONTINUITY OVER CLOSURE

At one point in history, Article 370 was constitutionally necessary. At another, it came to be viewed as an impediment. Both positions were articulated within the same constitutional framework. The paradox lies not in the change itself but in how that change was managed.

The same constitution that accommodated Article 370 also revoked it. There is no inherent contradiction in this. The contradiction arises when constitutional evolution is framed as ideological rupture rather than procedural



The same constitution that accommodated Article 370 also revoked it. There is no inherent contradiction in this. The contradiction arises when constitutional evolution is framed as ideological rupture rather than procedural continuity.

continuity.

Six years after the abrogation, Kashmir exists in a space of watchful calm. The silence should not be mistaken for closure. It is a pause shaped by fatigue, caution and guarded expectation. Whether this pause evolves into trust depends not on grand declarations but on the restoration of ordinary democratic processes like, statehood, political participation and governance without spectacle.

THE LESSON

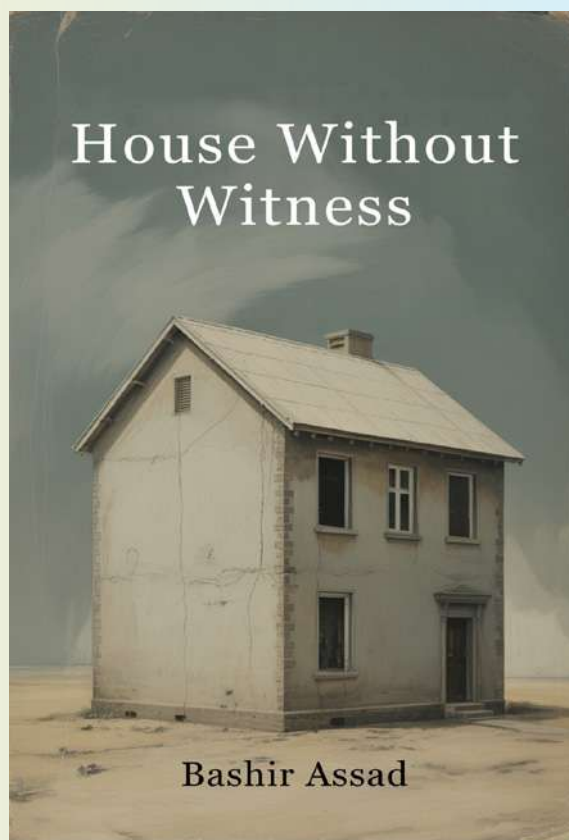
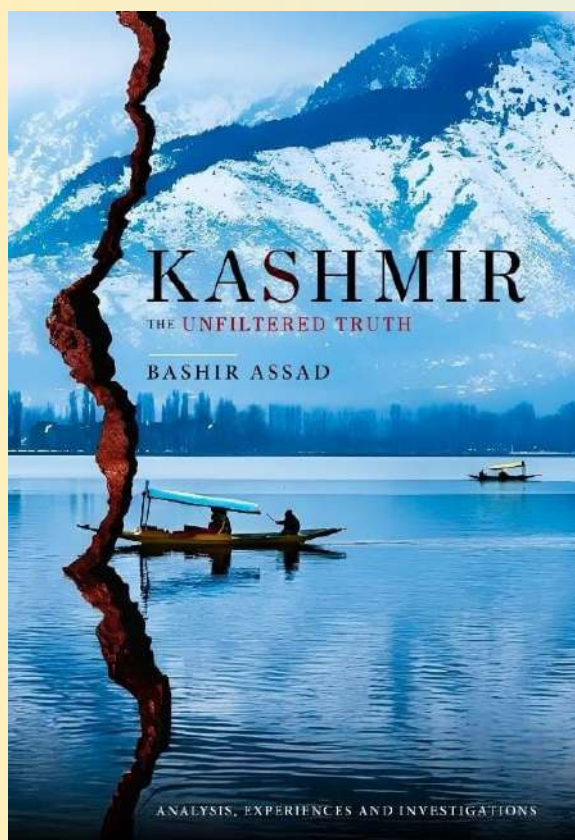
The experience of Jammu and Kashmir offers a broader lesson for constitutional governance in diverse societies.

Stability is sustained through procedural legitimacy and quiet normalisation. Constitutions endure not because they triumph loudly but because they adapt carefully.

When constitutional change feels organic, it is absorbed. When it feels imposed, it provokes resistance. In Kashmir, where memory, symbolism and perception are deeply intertwined, the distinction matters profoundly.

The Indian constitution's genius lies in its capacity for continuity. Preserving that continuity, especially in regions shaped by conflict, remains its greatest challenge and its greatest promise for tomorrow.

The recent release of two books,
“Kashmir: The Unfiltered Truth”, and “House
Without Witness” are available on
Amazon and Flipkart for the readers.





28

KASHMIR CENTRAL | 1 FEBRUARY 2026

“THE MOTHER OF ALL DEALS”

DECODING EU-INDIA FREE TRADE AGREEMENT

Concluded after nearly two decades of uneven negotiations, the agreement reflects the European Union's pursuit of open strategic autonomy and India's calibrated move from defensive protectionism towards global integration. *KC* analyses how the EU-India FTA strengthens India's strategic positioning.



by Mareaya Fayaz

The Free Trade Agreement signed between the European Union and India marks the end of a long and uneven negotiation process that began in 2007, halted in 2013 and was re-established in 2022. The relaunch represents a broader rethinking of EU trade policy in response to global supply

chain fragility, geopolitical rivalry and the need to broaden economic partnerships beyond traditional transatlantic and East Asian foundations. For India, the pact represents a selective shift away from its historically protectionist trade posture and toward a more balanced inclusion into global markets.

The long-awaited India-EU free trade agreement has finally been signed and the timing couldn't be more significant. Across Asia, economies have actively sought to expand export markets beyond the United States, a strategic

For India, the pact represents a selective shift away from its historically protectionist trade posture and toward a more balanced inclusion into global markets.

decision that contributed to the region's strong export growth last year. The India-EU agreement supports this momentum.

Some have dubbed it the "mother of all deals" as it could mark the start of a larger realignment in global commerce. The accord also demonstrates the EU's willingness to take a measured, pragmatic approach to resolving India's concerns about opening specific sectors, which contrasts with the US's considerably less flexible position.

Ursula von der Leyen's political



framing of the agreement emphasizes its twin economic and normative ambition: the FTA is more than just a market-access mechanism; it is also a strategic cooperation between rules-based democracies. This discourse places the deal within the EU's broader concept of open strategic autonomy, which prioritizes economic liberalization alongside resilience, regulatory sovereignty and value projection.

PREFERENTIAL TREATMENT

India's headline gain is the scale of market access. Preferential treatment across 97% of EU tariff lines, accounting for 99.5% of trade value, essentially ensures near-complete admission into one of the world's largest consumer markets. Crucially, a major portion of this access is obtained by rapid duty removal rather than lengthy transition periods. That is especially important for labour intensive sectors like textiles, apparel, leather and footwear, which together account for about 2%



In practice, the agreement boosts India's competitiveness precisely where it is most vulnerable to margin and price competition.

of India's GDP in exports and employ millions of people. In practice, the agreement boosts India's competitiveness precisely where it is most vulnerable to margin and price competition.

This is strategically essential since it complements, rather than replaces, India's current trade agreements. India continues to be a net exporter of products and services to the United States and bilateral commerce with Washington is



expanding. Merchandise trade was over USD137 billion in FY 2024-25, demonstrating that the United States remains a significant demand anchor. However, the EU agreement decreases India's vulnerability to policy uncertainty in any single market, especially at a time when trade frictions and tariff threats are a common element of US politics after the taking over of Donald Trump.

The service dimension adds to this diversification tale. The trade in services between India and the EU is expected to reach USD 83 billion, showing substantial integration in IT, business and professional services. While the FTA's immediate benefits are more obvious in the commodities sector, the pact establishes a more secure institutional framework for services trade over time an area where India's comparative advantage may be even stronger.

Taken collectively, the agreement shifts India's export strategy toward resilience rather than maximization. It may not result in a huge



While the FTA's immediate benefits are more obvious in the commodities sector, the pact establishes a more secure institutional framework for services trade over time an area where India's comparative advantage may be even stronger.



short-term export increase but it does significantly improve predictability, competitiveness and bargaining strength. In an era of fragmented trade and selective protectionism, that trade-off appears to be more strategic than cautionary.

The FTA demonstrates a deep but asymmetric liberalisation paradigm, taking into account structural disparities between a mature regulatory bloc and a fast expanding economy.



India's historic tariff concessions which cover more than 96% of EU goods exports represent a conceptual shift in Indian trade policy, where tariff protection has traditionally acted as an industrial policy weapon. The gradual lowering in tariffs on vehicles, machinery, chemicals and pharmaceuticals demonstrates a balance between liberalisation and domestic capacity growth.

For the EU, the pact follows its long-standing ideology of comprehensive free trade agreements, which include products, services, intellectual property and regulatory cooperation into a single legal framework. The predicted €4 billion yearly savings in customs and the expected doubling of EU exports by 2032 are not incidental effects but rather key grounds under EU trade law, which requires demonstrated

A major doctrinal innovation is the explicit inclusion of Small and Medium-sized Enterprises in the agreement's legal structure.

economic benefit to Member States and employment.

A major doctrinal innovation is the explicit inclusion of Small and Medium-sized Enterprises in the agreement's legal structure. Rather than considering SMEs as secondary benefactors, the FTA includes specialised institutional mechanisms contact points, transparency obligations and



information sharing that signal a shift toward more inclusive trade governance. This is consistent with EU internal market theory, which emphasises legal certainty, predictability and administrative accessibility as essential characteristics.

REDUCTION OF BARRIERS

From a legal standpoint, these measures reduce non-tariff barriers, which have increasingly overtaken tariffs as the principal impediment to trade. The emphasis on regulatory stability and procedural clarity reflects the EU's export of administrative law values into international trade relations.

The chapters on services and intellectual property demonstrate the EU's theory of regulatory convergence through trade. India's financial services obligations exceed those of any preceding partner, demonstrating trust in EU regulatory frameworks and supervisory standards. In terms of intellectual property, the agreement goes beyond WTO TRIPS duties by enhancing enforcement and matching legal ideas for trademarks, designs, trade secrets and plant variety rights.

Doctrinally, this underlines the EU's view of intellectual property as a prerequisite for innovation driven growth and cross border investment, rather than simply a commercial asset. Legal approximation in intellectual property law lowers transaction costs while increasing legal security for both



India-EU FTA Unlocks
**AN EXPORT ENGINE
OF \$75 BILLION!**

**₹6.41 LAKH CRORE
(\$75 BILLION)**
in Exports Ready for
Takeoff

Direct pipeline to
high-value European
consumers

Massive scaling for
**Indian manufacturers
and MSMEs**

The proposed EU-India climate cooperation platform, as well as the €500 million in EU financing, demonstrate the growing convergence of trade, development finance and climate governance.

sides.

The inclusion of a strong trade and sustainable development chapter fits the agreement squarely within the EU's ideology of values-based trade. Environmental protection, labour rights, gender equality and climate action are legally binding obligations supported by conversation and cooperation structures.

The proposed EU-India climate cooperation platform, as well as the €500 million in EU financing, demonstrate the growing convergence of trade, development finance and climate governance. This indicates a growing doctrinal consensus within EU law that trade



agreements are valid vehicles for furthering global public goods, as long as they respect proportionality and partner country capacities.

The ratification process emphasises the EU's complex constitutional system. After legal cleansing and translation, the agreement must be authorised by the Council, agreed upon by the European Parliament and formally concluded by the Council before it can go into effect, subject to India's ratification. This multi-level procedure embodies the EU's theory of democratic legitimacy in foreign action, which ensures legislative supervision of major economic commitments.

The EU-India Free Trade Agreement is a strategic use of trade as a geoeconomic tool, rather than a solely commercial agreement. The

By establishing a preferential economic zone containing nearly two billion people, the pact strengthens each side's strategic autonomy while maintaining openness.

deal, reached amid rising great power rivalry, supply chain fragmentation and contentious global governance, enables both the European Union and India to lessen their vulnerability to economic coercion by deepening dependency with a like-minded partner. By establishing a preferential economic zone containing nearly two billion people, the pact strengthens each



side's strategic autonomy while maintaining openness.

From the EU's geo economic standpoint, the FTA supports its ideology of open strategic autonomy by diversifying markets away from over-reliance on China and strengthening resilient supply chains in manufacturing, medicines, agri-food and services. The extent of India's tariff concessions, which are unique in its trade policy, provides EU enterprises with first-mover advantages in the world's fastest growing major economy, converting regulatory and market access into long-term structural impact. Trade liberalisation thus serves as a vehicle for power projection, integrating EU standards and regulations into India's economic ecology.

For India, the deal signals a shift in geoeconomic strategy from defensive protectionism to selective integration. By offering asymmetric market access while maintaining safeguards for sensitive sectors, India uses the FTA to attract investment, develop industrial capacity



and strengthen its position in non-Chinese global value chains. Improved access to EU service markets and greater intellectual property protections demonstrate India's desire to advance up the value chain rather than remain a low-cost manufacturing hub.

Overall, the EU-India FTA illustrates modern geoeconomics that commerce is used to provide strategic resilience, influence regulatory trajectories and stabilize

alliances in an increasingly fragmented global economy. Rather than signaling de-globalization, the deal represents a change toward selective, alliance based globalization based on trust, regulations and long-term strategic alignment.

CRITICAL ANALYSIS

▼
The EU-India Free Trade Agreement should be viewed primarily as a tool of geo economic statecraft rather



than a traditional trade liberalisation exercise. The pact operationalises the European Union's policy shift toward leveraging market access, regulation and investment as means to maintain geopolitical influence in a more fragmented global order. Trade is used not just to achieve economic gains but also to organise dependencies, anchor alliances and decrease vulnerability to systemic rivals, representing the EU's transition from trade multilateralism to selective strategic bilateralism.

Goeconomically, the FTA serves as a de-risking tool for China without explicitly decoupling. By strengthening economic ties with India, the EU diversifies supply chains in pharmaceuticals, machinery, automotive components

and services, lowering its vulnerability to economic coercion. This is consistent with a broader geopolitical goal of developing alternative production hubs in the Indo-Pacific. However, the pact runs the risk of using India as a strategic counterweight rather than recognising it as an equal normative partner, potentially leading to expectations and long-term trust gaps.

From India's standpoint, the

Goeconomically, the FTA serves as a de-risking tool for China without explicitly decoupling.



deal represents a deliberate geopolitical hedging tactic. While India strengthens economic connections with the EU, it avoids exclusive alignment by preserving policy space in sensitive sectors and maintaining a diverse interaction with other global powers. The FTA enables India to seek capital, technology and regulatory credibility from Europe while maintaining its strategic autonomy rather than subordinating it. Nonetheless, the magnitude of the concessions gained raises concerns about whether economic openness may, over time, limit India's ability to pursue independent industrial and strategic strategies.

A key goeconomic characteristic of the deal is the EU's export of regulatory



standards. The EU incorporates its regulatory standards into India's economic governance structure via rules on intellectual property, services, sustainability and food safety. This exercise of regulatory power converts legal harmonisation into geopolitical influence, since adhering to EU norms becomes a prerequisite for entering a profitable market. While effective, this strategy may spark domestic political opposition in India, especially if regulatory conformity is viewed as an external restraint rather than mutual convergence.

The agreement's sustainability and climate components demonstrate the intersection between geopolitics and economics. By tying economic access to climate cooperation, financing, and normative obligations, the EU positions

Economic interconnectedness while theoretically stabilising has the potential to develop future leverage asymmetries.

itself as a key player in India's green transformation. This moves climate policy from a technical realm to a strategic bargaining tool. However, the mismatch in financial and technological capabilities raises worries that sustainability promises may serve as tools of persuasion rather than true co-constructed goals.

Geopolitically, the EU-India FTA adds to the rise of alliance-

based globalisation, in which economic flows are increasingly guided by strategic alignments rather than universal rules. While this increases resilience among like-minded partners, it also speeds up the fragmentation of the global economic system. Thus, the deal represents a contradiction: it strengthens bilateral rules based cooperation while eroding the universality of global trade regulation.

Economic interconnectedness while theoretically stabilising has the potential to develop future leverage asymmetries. If political relations deteriorate, trade ties may be weaponised. Furthermore, diverging geopolitical trajectories particularly India's non-aligned foreign policy legacy and the EU's normative conditionality may undermine the alliance in the long run. The FTA's success will thus be determined by whether geoeconomic cooperation can continue independent of geopolitical divergence.

In geoeconomic and geopolitical terms, the EU-India trade agreement is a strategic alignment of convenience rather than a completely formed alliance. It represents a reality in which trade agreements are no longer neutral economic instruments but rather critical tools for power, influence and risk management. The agreement's long-term viability will be determined by its ability to strike a balance between economic integration and political autonomy, as well as strategic cooperation and normative constraints. And for the moment it can be truly called as the "mother of all deals."

ABDUL ENTERPRISES

APPROVED GENERAL ORDER SUPPLIERS

We Deals in

- Motor Spare Parts
- Hardware
- Paints
- Books
- Stationery
- Sanitary
- Electric & Electronic Goods
- Computer Accessories
- Sports Goods etc.



ABDUL ENTERPRISES

NEAR WATER TANK SHIVPORA
SRINAGAR - 190004

6005533865 | 9796577734

GSTIN: 01APRIPA4875C1ZB

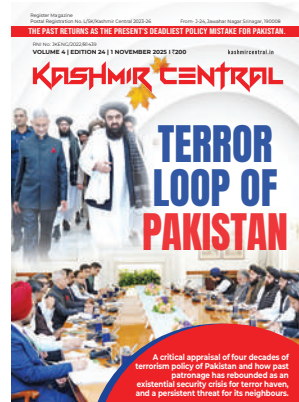
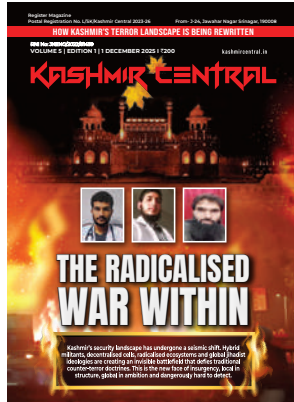
SMS TRADERS

CONTRACTOR AND
GENERAL ORDER SUPPLIER
BB CANTT SHIVPORA, SRINAGAR
MOB: 9797555126 | 7006351983

SUBSCRIBE

KASHMIR CENTRAL

A KZINE INITIATIVE



YES! I wish to Subscribe to Kashmir Central

Period of subscription	Number of issues	Price	Amount	SELECT
6 MONTHS	6	₹200/ copy	₹1,200	☐
1 YEAR	12	₹200/ copy	₹2,400	☐
2 YEARS	24	₹200/ copy	₹4,800	☐
3 YEARS	36	₹200/ copy	₹7,200	☐

Name:

Mailing Address:

Pin code: Email:

Contact No.:

Cash: Cheque No.:

ACCOUNT DETAILS:

Account Title: Kashmir Central

Account No.: 50200066073788

IFSC: HDFC0002419

Branch: Aramwari Rajbagh, Srinagar-190008

Signature

PLEASE SIGN AND SEND THIS TO
Circulation Department, KASHMIR CENTRAL

J24 Jawahar Nagar, Srinagar, J&K 190008

e-mail: kashmircentral997@gmail.com | Circulation: 6006536358, 9070416444, 8825044498

LOG INTO KASHMIR @

kashmircentral.in



HIGH FUEL EFFICIENCY

GET THE BEST VALUE OF YOUR OLD CAR

YOUR
SAFETY
OUR PRIORITY

BRING HOME A DIVINE BLESSING.
BOOK YOUR FAVORITE MARUTI SUZUKI CAR NOW AND TAKE DELIVERY DURING AUTUMN.



INTRODUCING THE ALL-NEW
CELERIO

Dil se **STRONG**
BIG NEW
WAGONR

JAMKASH VEHICLEADES (KASHMIR) PVT LTD

SRINAGAR:	6006751156	KUPWARA:	7051551191	MAGAM:	7006378395
BARAMULLA:	8899333748	GANDERBAL:	9419064686	URI :	7006276076
BANDIPORA:	7006750168	HANDWARA:	9906696933	Visit us at :	
PATTAN:	6006750558	KANGAN:	9419064686	www.jamkashmaruti.com	

WAGONR CELERIO

Your window to news, views, exposes, scoops
and exclusive features that bring to you

KASHMIR

KASHMIR CENTRAL