

## Property Tax

Jammu and Kashmir has come a long way in the last few years, in every respect. Hundreds of kilometres of roads, flyovers, hospitals, parks, gardens, and parking lots are coming up. Every drain and lane is being revamped; the artificial lake, Tawi Riverfront, Zoo, Bala Ji Temple, and so many other projects are being implemented at a fast pace. Similarly, in Kashmir, Boulevard Road is being renovated, a laser show at Dal, an open theatre at Dal, Mughal Gardens are being developed, a museum, flyovers, bridges are being built, and Gulmarg is being developed as a major international adventure and winter sports destination. Alternative tourist destinations and more religious circuits are being planned and developed. All efforts are there to build infrastructure to attract business avenues. But all these things come at a cost. To maintain these and sustain the development, finances have to be generated. The Gol has been continuously supporting Jammu and Kashmir with huge budgets every year, and in fact, all these major projects are under the PMDP itself. Gol has been providing 100% support, but some contribution from the local level has also to be ensured. "Property Tax" is one way to uniformly collect revenues from all. Jammu and Kashmir is the only UT that has yet to implement a Property Tax. Certain due grants of hundreds of crores from the Gol for all three tiers of Panchayati Raj are getting blocked as the implementation of Property Tax is mandatory. The LG administration has correctly issued a notification to implement Property Tax in stages beginning in April 2023. According to the formula developed, no tax is levied on small houses and business establishments, and even on large houses and business establishments, the rate applied is the lowest in comparison to neighbouring states and the rest of the country. The public is already paying a hundred rupees per house as sanitation charges and can contribute another few hundred. All political opponents are just flaring up the sentiments of the public without reading between the lines. Time and again, opposition parties are playing a dirty game and, for the sake of a few votes, unnecessarily raising stumbling blocks in the progress of Jammu and Kashmir.

Property tax implementation has been on the horizon for quite some time, and the administration should have reassured all stakeholders by explaining what is required, what will be done, and what is already being implemented in the rest of the country. The equations are simple; old and new properties, localities, areas, locations, and tax returns have all been taken into account. The confusion seems to be more at the political level than at the public level. It is time for the administration to meet with various stakeholders and members of local bodies and explain the calculation formula to them so that they can be convinced. Corporators and local body members should go out into the public with their supporters, calculate property taxes for them, alleviate public concerns, and the misinformation campaign will be atonically busted. It makes no sense to own properties worth crores and complains about a few thousand rupees in taxes. It is time to support the administration's plans for the development of Jammu and Kashmir; after all, it is for the benefit of the public.

## Meerut Tragedy

Another tragedy has occurred, this time in Meerut, Uttar Pradesh, where seven Jammu and Kashmir residents were killed at construction site and several others were injured. It is a very sad and distressing moment for the families of the deceased, and the district administration is assisting in getting the bodies and has ensured all possible help. This is another incident in the last few days that has highlighted an unknown fact: that youth from Jammu Division are going to faraway places to earn a living as labourers. This is shocking in the sense that, with so much infrastructure development going on in our own Jammu Division, our youth cannot even be assigned as day labourers. Time and again, objections are raised about denying job opportunities to local youth for regional projects, but no efforts have been made to address the issue. Youth from far-flung areas are deprived of any means to earn an honourable livelihood near their native places. It is time for the local administration to step in and establish a proper coordination structure to assist these local youth in finding easy employment in major projects in Jammu and Kashmir. The district administration, on its part, can set up enrolment desks for all these, establish links with project companies and contractors, and ensure all these deserving locals get a chance at livelihood. A proper insurance policy must also be in place to safeguard the lives and livelihoods of their dependents. Because all of these families come from low-income families, proper compensation must be provided. A healing touch at this juncture is the need of the hour, and administration should also come forward to help out the families.

# 'Modi empowered people of J&K'

Tarun Chugh an Indian politician from Punjab, is the National General Secretary of the Bharatiya Janata Party serving as the in-charge of Jammu and Kashmir (Union Territory), Ladakh. In an interview with the Daily Excelsior correspondent, he throws light on a host of developments taking place in Jammu and Kashmir.

### Excerpts of the interview

**(Q): What according to you J&K has achieved post the scrapping of Article 370?**

**(Ans):** "The biggest achievement of J&K people, after the scrapping of 370 and 35A, has been that they participated in democracy in a big way. I want to salute the people of J&K who gave 21 lakhs votes in the BDC election. I want to give credit to our PM Narendra Modi who provides an environment where the people of J & K could get out of their homes to go for voting."

**(Q): What do you think the centre has done for the people of J&K post this voting?**

**(Ans):** "After the scrapping of 370 and 35A, the people here have started getting their rights, especially the women, and ST. The people, who have been investing themselves for decades for the welfare and development of J&K, got the opportunity to be a part of J&K. The law which the entire India was following, the same will be implemented here - No girl would lose her rights if she leaves J&K anymore. All of this is due to PM Modi who empowered the people of J&K with this."

**(Q): When will the election happen for the people of J&K?**

**(Ans):** "PM Modi in his speech on 15 Aug 2021



said that elections will be conducted soon in J&K after delimitation is done and he is committed towards the same."

**(Q): What preparations are being done for the same?**

**(Ans):** "The home minister has ensured that elections will be conducted soon in J&K. Those who spoke big words about democracy were the ones who boycotted the panchayat elections. It is our government that promised to conduct panchayat elections and we did it. There was a narrative set to boycott the elections for so many decades in J&K. It is the BJP which got the BDC as well the DDC election done. I am proud that 22 lakh people came forward to vote in the DDC & BDC election to elect their own representatives. This enabled the growth of leadership in J&K's

future politics.

In order to conduct a fair election, we need to first get the delimitation done and prepare a fresh electoral list. But this is not an easy process. Any opposition party or organization can challenge the electoral list via form 7A. However, deliberate attempts are being made to create confusion and mistrust among the citizens who would not succeed.

**(Q): More than 25 lakhs voters are in the electoral list. The question is where is this 25 lakhs coming from?**

**(Ans):** "This is because girls and women are getting their rights. The women and girls who were married outside to J&K will now get the right to vote in their constituency in J&K which was earlier not given. For many years, they were stripped of their rights to vote for Vidhan Sabha elections. This right has now been given and hence the increased number in electoral list is reflected. For the last seven decades, all over INDIA there were two electoral lists formed - 1) Lok Sabha & Vidhan Sabha 2) Panchayat and Corporate Elections. But J&K was the only state where three lists were formed. If a person who is a citizen of some other state but is residing in J&K, was allowed to cast vote in the Lok Sabha Elections, but however could not participate in Vidhan Sabha elections. J&K was not implementing 140 laws for public welfare. RTI was never implemented in J&K since its inception. It is our government which has reinstated these basic rights. It is these rights that empower a democracy."

**(Q): It was promised that the youth of J&K will be given employment post the scrapping of 370. How and when will this be done?**

**(Ans):** "All those who are questioning the development in J&K, I personally ask them to come with me and I will show them where industries are being set up, and roads are being laid. It is our government which established IIM and two AIIMS in J&K. As many as 60,000 applications for setting up industries have been received. Around Rs 50,000 cr worth development works are being done. Even during covid times, BJP workers were providing ventilators, oxygen, medicines, food across J&K."

**(Q): There is an ongoing narrative that today the fear in the minds of J&K citizens have increased. How would you respond to that?**

**(Ans):** "We are in Jammu; it is your news platform and Omar Abdullah spoke for around one hour and nobody objected him. Be it Mehbooba Mufti, or Tarigami, no one stops them from speaking."

There is fake fear that is being propagated. Our government is trying to get rid of the poison spread by the three families in J&K that ruined the life and future of citizens. They created a terrorism capital in J&K and supported stone pelters. Today not one stone pelted is seen in J&K. There is fear in the minds of terrorists not the citizens."

**(Q): Your views on the Bharat Jodo Yatra?**

**(Ans):** "I believe if those parties coming together, who have been responsible for partition and are continuously working towards it, to chant 'Bharat Mata ki Jai' or 'Vande Mataram' then it is the victory of BJP's agenda. The Modi government does not split India based on regions or religions. We provided schemes like ujwala, har ghar sauchalaya, ayushman bharat, awas yojna irrespective of religion."

## A poet who loved Jammu

### Squadron Leader Anil Sehgal

After our marriage at Jammu, in 1984, Seema and I moved to Bagdogra, where I was posted at the Air Force Station. This place falls in Darjeeling district of West Bengal, and the nearest station of All India Radio (AIR) is located at Siliguri.

Seema was an 'A' graded singer of the AIR and the Doordarshan those days. Today, she holds the Top graded position. And there is nothing higher than this.

All India Radio, Siliguri invited her for a recording in their studios. When we reached the radio station, the Station Director introduced us to his senior officers. And, see, who we met there!

We were introduced to Shri Hans Raj Abrol, the administrative officer of AIR Siliguri who we both knew as renowned Urdu poet 'Arsh' Sehgal from Jammu!

To Seema, Arsh saheb was an uncle, a colleague of her father, Sahitya Akademi Award winner renowned Dogri poet Yash Sharma. Both the poets worked in the erstwhile Radio Kashmir Jammu (R K J).

Both the colleagues, Arsh and Yash, were good friends too. Both were counted among the best poets in their respective languages.

We found Arsh saheb rather sad and disenchanted even in the proximity of enchanting places like Darjeeling (60 kilometres), Gangtok (110 Kms) and Kalimpong (65 Kms)! He missed his Jammu dearly!

Arsh Sehgal loved Jammu as much as he loved Urdu, poetry and the aesthetics of life. Living in Siliguri, or, for that matter, anywhere in the world, except Jammu, was like an exile to him.

He expressed his anguish thus:  
*Dast-e-ghurbaat mein jo aayee hai kabhi yaad-e-vatan /*

*Phoot ke royee Hain hum paon ke chhalon ki tarah //*

*(I bitterly cry like the boils of the soles / As memories of homeland knock at my doors, living in foreign lands //)*

I knew Arsh saheb from my student days in Jammu. He was working as an accounts officer

with R K J. I was perhaps the most prolific broadcaster among the young students, and was often invited to the radio station where, among other stalwarts of literature and broadcasting, I used to interact with Arsh saheb as well.

Arsh Sehgal was already a poet of renown and he was very fond of me because of my multifarious activities in art and literature. Moreover, like him, I was a lover of Urdu language and could recall some of the best poems of the language extempore. These common interests brought us closer.

He was one of the tallest Urdu poets of his time in Jammu and Kashmir.

Besides, he was the best recognised face from Jammu & Kashmir in mushairas all across the country.

He belonged to the Daag Dehalvi school of Urdu poetry and was a disciple of Pandit Labhu Ram Josh Malsiyani, though for a short time.

Although his poetry contains modern expressions, he claimed he was not a modernist or "jaded" poet. To my mind, Arsh was an effective blend of classicism and modernism in Urdu poetry.

Like the famous poet and film lyricist, Dadasaheb Phalke Award winner, Majrooh Sultanpuri, Arsh Sehgal is also famously known for his blunt speech and temperament. He loved calling a spade by its name.

Arsh has a large number of disciples. His most famous disciple was Pandit Vidya Ratan Aasi, a Dogra from Jammu who lived a miserable life, but gave out some of the most enchanting poems written in Jammu and Kashmir in the recent times.

There is a well known instance when his best known disciple 'Aasi' sought counsel of his Ustad Arsh on a ghazal he had written. It is said that Arsh approved the ghazal after deleting just one couplet, which, as the time proved subsequently, was the most powerful couplet of that ghazal!

For records' sake, this deleted couplet is the magnum opus and perhaps the most quoted couplets of Pandit Vidya Ratan Aasi! Thus goes the couplet that has given recognition to poet 'Aasi':

*Ghalat sub daleelein, ghalat sub hawaale / Andhere, andhere, ujaale ujaale //*  
*(All reasoning and references mean nothing / Darkness remains dark, brightness remains bright!)*

Prof Zaman Aazurda who claims he is responsible for inclusion of poems by poets like Arsh Sehgal, Rasa Javidani and Aabid Munawari in the Urdu textbooks of Jammu and Kashmir, thus recalls an incident:

"I was working for the Doordarshan at Delhi. I wanted Arsh Sehgal for an episode of a series I was producing.

"I called up Arsh saheb to come to Delhi for the shooting. He said he was not keeping good health and it would be difficult for him to travel alone.

"Arsh needed someone to escort him during the journey from Jammu. It was tricky. I was authorised to give him single air passage, but not an escort for the train journey.

"I thought of inviting poet Sehrai also for the programme, clearly stating that he was invited so that he could bring along Arsh with him!

"Thanks to the brilliance of Arsh Sehgal, this programme became very popular and was repeated several times! Arsh is certainly highly respected and accepted by a large chunk of Urdu lovers across the country."

He also recounts an incident where an IAS officer of Jammu & Kashmir cadre was invited to preside over a mushaira because of his official position.

"I was pained to see how this officer shamelessly accepted the undeserved honour in the presence of a senior and acclaimed poet like Arsh Sehgal. Though visibly offended, Arsh attended the mushaira till it's end.

Arsh Sehgal is a master when it comes to romanticism. He blends beauty, love, longing, and mysticism like an expert chemist:

*Kaun Sa Wo Zakhm-e-Dil Tha Jo Tar-o-Taaza Na Tha ?*

*Zindagi Mein Ime Gam The Jinka Andaaaz Na Tha,*  
*Arsh Unki Jheel Si Aankhon Ka Usmein Kya Kasoor,*  
*Doobane Walon Ko Hi Gehrayi Ka Andaaaz*

*Na Tha.*  
Which wound of the heart was not fresh and moist?

There was no estimate of the sorrows the life had

Arsh, why blame her pond like eyes!  
Those who drowned in them had no idea of their depth!

He was a simple soul with strong sense of ethics and high moral values. Without assurance of a new job, he resigned his position at the Regional Research Laboratory, Jammu just because they were carrying out experiments on live animals.

Arsh Sehgal embraced modernism or "jadediyat" whilst keeping his feet firm on the soil of traditional literary values of classicism. His expressions are subtle and understated:

*Waqt ki yeh sitam zareefi hai / Varna insaan bura nahin hota //*

It is just an irony ( mischievousness ) of time  
Otherwise, no human is bad!

Born Hans Raj Abrol, in a village of Udhampur district of Jammu and Kashmir, on 3rd December 1930, Arsh was perhaps the tallest Urdu poet Jammu and Kashmir has produced.

Anjuman Farogh-e-Urdu, Jammu & Kashmir held a memorial mehfil to remember this eminent Dogra poet on his second death anniversary, at K L Sehgal hall of the Writers' Club where his friends and admirers paid rich tributes to significant contributions of Arsh Sehgal making Urdu poetry rich and endearing.

It will only be fitting to mention this oft quoted couplet of Arsh Sehgal in conclusion:

*Dil to kya cheez hai, hum rooh mein utre hote/ Tumne chaha hi nahin chahne walon ki tarah//*

*(Why talk of heart alone ? I could have immersed into your soul ! / Somehow, you failed to love me the way lovers do ! //)*

Except for the few hardcore lovers of Urdu poetry of substance, not many Jammuites may be aware of the eminence of Arsh Sehgal in the world of Urdu poetry or the significance of the 18 books he has published in his life span of 90 years. But, as they say, 'better late than never'!

### Archana Sen Kotwal

Plants have been a source of life for humans since the beginning of time. They provide us with oxygen, food, and shelter. However, in recent times, we have started to appreciate plants for much more than just their practical uses. They can also have a profound impact on our mental and physical well-being.

One woman's experience highlights the therapeutic effect of plants. What started as a way to pass the time and alleviate boredom soon turned into a passion for growing plants. She found that spending time with plants helped her to de-stress and stay physically fit and agile.

Her love for plants has led her to wake up before sunrise just to see flowers opening up to the morning sun. Even her husband laughs at her for her early-morning excursions, but she is in love with her plants and the peace they bring her.

## The Magic of Green



Through her experience, the woman has realized that she can make a difference in the world around her by contributing to making it more beautiful and safer for future generations. She does not want to wait for the right moment or time to start because life is short and unpredictable.

The woman's story also highlights the importance of like-minded people coming together to create a positive impact on the environment. Despite having limited space, she has set up a balcony and terrace garden and hopes to keep it vibrant with the support of others who share her passion for plants.

The therapeutic effect of plants is not a new concept. Plants have been used for centuries for their medicinal properties. However, in recent times, there has been a renewed interest in the

benefits of spending time with plants. Research has shown that plants can help to reduce stress, anxiety, and depression. They can also improve air quality, which has a positive impact on our physical health.

In addition to the therapeutic benefits, growing plants can also be a rewarding and fulfilling hobby. It allows us to connect with nature and appreciate the beauty of the natural world.

In conclusion, the woman's experience with plants highlights the therapeutic effect they can have on our mental and physical well-being. It also emphasizes the importance of taking care of our surroundings and contributing to making the world a better place. Even with limited space, one can still make a significant impact on the environment through a passion for growing plants. Together, like-minded individuals can make a positive impact on the world around us".

"The author is a successful DIY expert & can be reached out at magic of green on Instagram."

## Viewing Vyjayanthimala in 'Amrapali'

### Suman K Sharma

Sometimes it is good to sit back and view life as it is, trying to find a meaning of the heat and flurry of the world. Recently, I watched on Netflix an old Bollywood movie, 'Amrapali', directed by Lekh Tandon. It is based on the life story of a courtesan of an ancient republic of Vaishali. She with her ethereal beauty, uncommon wisdom and spirituality transformed a blood-thirsty war-monger, King Ajatshatru of the Magadha empire, to a peace-seeking follower of the Buddha.

In the film, however, I hardly saw the Buddha or his followers. There was Vyjayanthimala exuding sheer sensuousness in the role of Amrapali, and there was Sunil Dutt as Ajatshatru, his thirsty eyes lapping every square-inch of her luscious body. A spaghetti-strapped tight choli showed off her full bosom against her slim, dusky arms. Being 30, the heroine of yesteryears was at the peak of her sexual maturity when the film was made in 1966. There was that scene in which Amrapali is shown dressing Ajatshatru's chest wounds without knowing his true identity. What with the facial expressions of the leading pair and the angle at which the

camera hovers suggestively over them, it looks more like an intimate Vyjayanthimala-Sunil Dutt bedroom scene than an honest depiction of an act of compassion on the part of a pious woman towards a nameless wounded soldier.

One should be chary of saying that those connected with the film had had any prurient intentions. Perhaps the storyline demanded to show how a young woman won over a deadly enemy by virtue of her physical charms. Could the director have achieved the same effect in the film with a differently attired leading lady? Maybe not. Amrapali's alluring femininity needed to be evoked through Vyjayanthimala's artfully draped fulsome roundness. I have been an ardent fan of the Bollywood films ever since the late 1960s. What confounded me then was why would women-actors, more often than not, dance and prance about in skimpy sleeveless blouses in the icy hill locales; while their male companions sang paeans to their beauty, clad from head to toe in warm woollens. It was a woman's shapely arms, set off by her bosom, that the audience desired to watch. That was the answer that came to me much later. In hindsight, I don't blame the Bollywood. Fascination for such womanly attractions has

been a universal trait. To quote just two instances, dear old Thomas Hardy (1840-1928) speaks of 'the round bare arms' of his protagonist in 'Tess of d'Urbervilles'. Closer home, Fredrick Drews (1836-1891) in his memoirs 'The Territories of Jummoo and Kashmir' applauds the shapely arms of women dancers in the Dogra durbar.

But what of men? Wasn't Sunil Dutt, Vyjayanthimala's opposite in 'Amrapali', also required to display his manly charms? No, the audience of those times might have been turned off by his muscular - and probably hairy - limbs and torso. The fascination for men's six packs and bulging biceps was to come much later, with the filmy peccadilloes of Salman Khan, the shirtless. As it happens, men with bare tummies are in trend all over again, showing how lean and fit they are. Unlike women in fashion, they lay more emphasis today on their physical fitness than mere aesthetics. That was not always the case though. It may come as a surprise to some of us that once upon a time, men too experimented with decking up their private parts during the Renaissance period in Europe. If modern women wear bra to shape and support their bosoms, those European men wore codpiece to cover their pelvic region. That

began as a necessity for them.

The tight-fitting hose which they wore covered each of their legs separately upto thighs, leaving their pubis and buttocks naked before the elements and the lustful eyes of sodomites. With time, the fashion-conscious males thought of giving the 'cod' (a contemporary jargon for scrotum) a more prominent shape to advertise their masculinity. Codpieces - the bigger the better - became the rage of the day. In 1549, Ferdinand, Emperor of the Holy Empire commissioned a portrait of himself, proudly showing off his accessory to one and all. Henry VIII, that macho monarch if ever there was one, had himself cast in bronze. His oversized codpiece got more side glances than any other part of his physiognomy. But as someone has said, what goes up, must come down. Codpieces vanished altogether with the onset of the seventeenth century. The male half of the European society got more occupied with exploring the wide world than flaunting its potency, real or assumed.

Society has designs on all of us. Nature gave us our bodies. The society then hastened to fashion how each one of us should look and comport ourselves.