

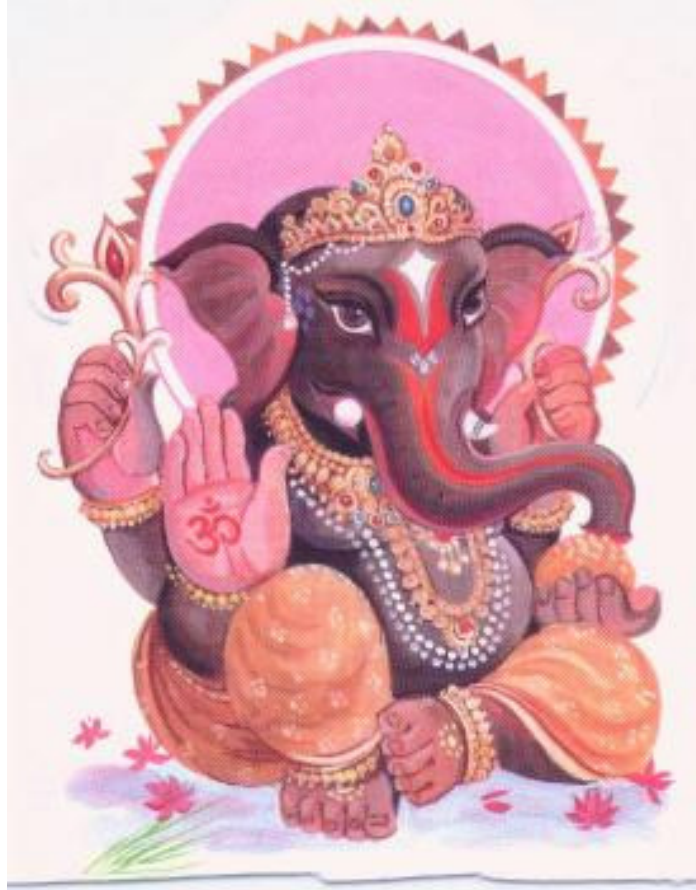
RELIGIOUS FESTIVALS IN KASHMIR
FESTIVALS CELEBRATED BY KASHMIRI PANDITS

OMANAND KOUL



A publication of Kashmiri Overseas Association (KOA), Inc.





om shree ganeshaaya nama:

ॐ श्रीगणेशाय नमः

RELIGIOUS FESTIVALS IN KASHMIR

Festivals Celebrated By Kashmiri Pandits

Compiled by Omanand Koul for:

Kashmiri Overseas Association (KOA), Inc.



om

namaami twaam shaaradaa deveem,
mahabhaageem bhagwateem
kashmeer puvaasineem, vidyaa daayineem
raksh maam raksh maam |
namaami twaam |

ॐ

नमामित्वाम् शारदादेवीम्, महभागीम्भगवतीम्
कश्मीरपुवासिनीम्, विद्यादायिनीम्
रक्षमाम्रक्षमाम्।
नमामित्वाम्।

Cover picture: Navreh Thaal (courtesy: Dalip Langoo)

First Edition, December 2016

Copyright © 2016 Kashmiri Overseas Association (KOA), Inc.

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced in whole or in part, or stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise, without written permission of KOA, Inc. For permission regarding publication, send an e-mail to management@koausa.org

Table of Contents

Title	Page
Vowel key for Devanagari Kashmiri	4
Introduction.....	5
About The Author	6
Herath (Shivaratri) - <i>A Primer</i>	7
The ritual and the philosophy	7
The progression of festivities during the fortnight	8
Gadda kaah (गाड़ काह, gaḍḍa kaah) (11th day: the fish-day).....	9
Wager Baah (वागुर्य बाह, vaagry baah) (12th day: Day of the Wager)	9
Herath (हेरथ) (13th day: the day of main Pooza).....	10
The protocol of the pooza	10
Salaam (सलाम): (14th day: Shiva Chaturdashi) (शिव चतुर्दशी, shiv chaturdashee)	12
Doonya Mavas (डून्य मावस, ḍaony maavas) (15th day: walnut amavasya (अमावस्या, amaavasyaa).....	13
Herath Pooza Materials List (minimal)	15
Sonth and Navreh.....	18
Ramanavmi	21
Mystery of Khir Bhawani Festival.....	22
The month of Shravan, Shravan Punim, Amarnath Yatra	24
Janama Ashtami - <i>Zanam Ashtami-Zarama Satam</i>	29
Punn Festival - <i>Celebration to Eat Sweet Fried Dough</i>	33
Diwali (Dipavali) and Dussehra	36
Khechi Mawas and Gadda Bhatta - <i>Celebrating our Ancient Ancestry</i>	38
Kawa Punim - <i>Tradition, A Connection</i>	40
Kashmiri Calendar - <i>The Panchang and the Janthari</i>	43
Why is my Kashmiri Birthday not on the same day every year?	43
Tithi (lunar day)	43
Vara (day of the week).....	45
Nakhshatra (Constellation: Lunar house)	45
Yoga (The luni-solar day) (not yoga exercises).....	46
Karana (a half tithi).....	46
Kashmiri Glossary	48

Religious Festivals in Kashmir
FESTIVALS CELEBRATED BY KASHMIRI PANDITS

CONNECT WITH US

YAHOOGROUP: <https://groups.yahoo.com/neo/groups/koahealthcare/info>

TWITTER: <http://twitter.com/KOAorg>

YOUTUBE: <http://www.youtube.com/user/sathyuk>

FACEBOOK PAGES:

KOA: <http://www.facebook.com/groups/koausa>

Youth: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/koayouth>

Healthcare Network: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/koahealthcare>

Entrepreneurs: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/koaentrepreneurs>

LINKEDIN FOCUS GROUPS:

KOA Healthcare Partners Focus Group: <https://www.linkedin.com/groups/8559527>

KOA Technology Focus Group: <https://www.linkedin.com/groups/8559541>

KOA Entrepreneur Focus Group: <https://www.linkedin.com/groups/8559545>



**Printing and
Graphic Services**

*Graphic Design, Offset Printing, Digital
Printing, Corporate and Non-Profit Printing
services, Brochures, School Year Books,
Souvenirs, News Letters, Folders, Envelopes,
Letterheads, Wedding Cards & Invitations. Plus
Mailing Services.*

505 MIDDLESEX TURNPIKE # 7, BILLERICA, MA 01821

TEL: 978-667-6950
CELL: 978-888-7496

neelamwali@gmail.com or
neelam.wali@printingandgraphicservices.com



(Indian wedding Invitations)

www.printingandgraphicservices.com

KAUL GROUP
RAJEEV KAUL, CPA PC

BRIDGING THE EXPERTISE GAP IN THE GLOBAL
MARKET PLACE FUNDAMENTAL STRENGTH
ENABLES BUSINESS TO SPAN THE WATERS OF THE
WORLD TO UNCOVER OPPORTUNITIES

- **MORE THAN BOOK SMARTS OUR EXPERTS
HAVE YEARS OF EXPERIENCE SOLVING
OUR CLIENTS DAY TODAY CHALLENGES
AS WELL AS THEIR LONG TERM GOAL.**
- **WHETHER YOU ARE DOING BUSINESS IN
USA OR PLAN TO DO BUSINESS IN USA WE
CAN ASSIST YOU IN AREAS OF
ASSURANCE, ADVISORY, PERFORMANCE
AND PROCESS IMPROVEMENT.**
- **EXPERTISE IN CORPORATE FORMATION,
RAISING EQUITY, ARRANGING CAPITAL &
LIASING WITH VENTURE CAPITALISTS.**

**303 FIFTH AVENUE, SUITE # 1007
NEW YORK, NY 10016
TEL: (212) 684-8601 ; FAX: (212) 684-8602**

Religious Festivals in Kashmir
FESTIVALS CELEBRATED BY KASHMIRI PANDITS

Vowel key for Devanagari Kashmiri

Vowel	Symbol	Usage
अ, a		अगर, agar (if), अज़, az (today)
अँ, aaँ	ँ	अँछ, aachh (eye), कँन्य, kañy (stone)
अ, a	॒	ब, b (me), कसु, ks (story)
अु, a	॑	तुर, tr (cold), सुत्य, sty (with)
आ, aa	ा	आय, aay (income), तार, taar (wire)
ऑ, oaँ	ॉ	दोर, doṛ (window), कोर, koṛ (neck)
इ, i	ि	इजाज़त, ijaazat (permission), फिर, fir (turn)
ई, ii	ी	सीर, seer (brick), ईश्वर, iishvar (God)
उ, u	ु	उजरथ, ujarath (wages), बुजर, bujar (oldage)
ऊ, oo	ू	वून्ट, voont (camel), कूर, koor (girl)
ऋ, ri	ृ	तृथ, trith (tear/cut), चृंग, chring (jump) <i>Alternative: त्रुथ, trṭh, च्रुंग, tchrṅg</i>
ए, e	े	एतराज़, etaraaz (objection), नेक, nek (nice)
ऐ, e	े	ऐहसास, ehasaas (feeling), बेह, beh (sit)
ऐ, ai	ै	वैक्कन्ठ, vaikvanṭh (heaven) <i>Alternative: वयक्कन्ठ, vayakvanṭh</i>
ओ, o	ो	ओल, ol (nest), मोल, mol (father)
ओ, o	ो	ओड, oḍa (half), कोल, kol (dumb)
औ, au	ौ	औज़ार, auzaar (instrument), गौ, gau (went) <i>Alternative: अवज़ार, avazaar, गव, gav</i>
अं, an	ं	ज़ंग, zang (leg), गंड, gṇḍa (knot)
-य, -y	-य	र्यथ, ryath (month), स्यख, syakh (sand)
-व, -v	-व	र्वफ, rvaf (silver), ख्वर, khvar (foot)

Introduction

Here we present short descriptions and stories connected with some of the festivals celebrated by Kashmiri Pandits during the year. Some of the festivals that we celebrate are familiar to Hindus, outside Kashmir, and others are different. The festivals include components that are uniquely Kashmiri in character and detail. Since the descriptions given here are directed to younger generation in the diaspora, a heavy emphasis on use of complex philosophical terminology has been kept to a minimum. However, appropriate philosophical and Puranic descriptions are sprinkled throughout the text to arouse curiosity for detail that can be researched by the aspirant.

The normal life of a Kashmiri Pandit is peppered with festivals big and small throughout each week in the year. The descriptions roughly follow a chronological order of the yearly calendar. In these festivals one discovers our zest for enjoyment of life within the monotony of daily living. Each festival in its own way has significance for us as individuals, family and community. They demonstrate how we loved nature and its creatures before it was Green to do so. At the same time some of the festivals demonstrate our ability and resilience to live with other tribes in Kashmir during the ancient times. And some of the festivals have a secular character embedded in them.

Some of the articles presented here will look familiar to members of Kashmiri Pandit community in the US, as they were the first to read them as members of KOAUSA. I thank my Boston-area Kashmiri Pandit community who have been greatly supportive of my activities and continued to encourage me in this endeavour. Now at the insistence of Shri Sunil Fotedar (KOA President, 2015-16) these articles are being compiled together in the form of a booklet.

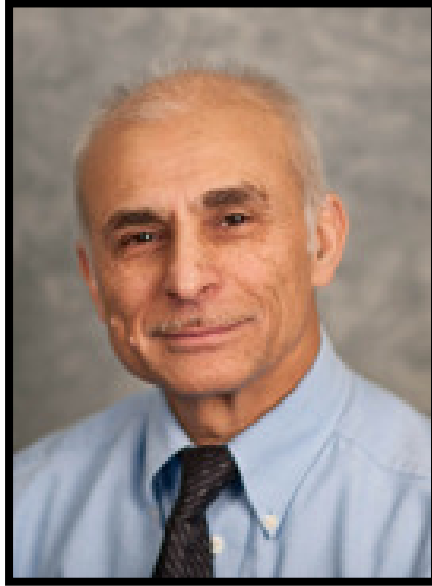
Although written for the younger generation in the Diaspora, as an introduction to the festivals of Kashmiri Pandits, it is my hope that their families will be enthused enough to keep the traditions alive.

Additionally, Unicode fonts (like Siddhant font, used in this book) have revolutionized the availability of uniform web content in Devanagari and with the efforts of several Kashmiri tech volunteers, new Unicode fonts now incorporate all specialized characters used in Devanagari Kashmiri. Use of a Unicode font ensures that such text is searchable on the web and is readable without download of non-standard fonts.

We very much appreciate the generosity of our donors for providing funds to make this project a reality.

Omanand Koul

About The Author



Omanand Koul

Omanand Koul resides in Burlington, Massachusetts with his wife Prana Koul. They have been active in the religious activities of the Boston area Kashmiri Pandit Community. He has been presenting the significance of various religious festivals to community members at various functions. He graduated from the Banaras Hindu University, Varanasi India with a Ph.D. in Biological Sciences, and is a professor at University of Massachusetts Medical School.

Herath (Shivaratri) - A Primer

Herath (हेरथ, *herath*) is celebrated during the month of Phalgun according to the Hindu lunar calendar. The main *pooja* (पूजा, *pooza*) is held on the 12/13th night of the dark fortnight of the month of *Phalgun* (फागुन, *faagun*). Tradition has it that on this day, in different eons of the Hindu cosmology, Shiva (शिव) drank poison to become *Nealakantha* (नील कण्ठ, *neel kanath*), got married to Parvati (पार्वती), performed His *Tandava* dance, and was declared by the goddess Uma (उमा) as the Unfathomable entity. For Kashmiri Pandits this day truly is a family celebration. While inviting the ideal inseparable family of Shiva and Parvati into our homes, we celebrate their bond and share the blessed joy together. In the elaborate preparations for this festival no stone is left unturned. And it does take a village to get it together.

Although the ceremonies are laden with symbolism, and at times, resemble a chaotic scene with all the pots and pans used in the *pooza*, yet the festival does manage to bring together the ultimate unit of daily life-the family.

What follows is a description of my practice while living in the US (and might be similar to what is followed by others living outside of Kashmir). It is an adaptation of the practice of Herath/Shivaratri that we grew up with in the Kashmir valley.

My notes about the significance/philosophy of Shivaratri are based on an explanation of the festival written by my father, Pandit Bishamber Nath Koul.

The ritual and the philosophy

In Kashmir, we celebrate Herath with the grand ritual of *Vatuka Pooza* (वटक पूजा, *vaṭak poozaa*). *Vatuk* is corruption of the word *Batuka* (बटुक, *baṭuk*) - the young *Bhairav* (भैरव, *bhairav*) - that is Shiva (see notes below).

Although the ritual is given the name of *Vatuk Pooza*, yet it is a three act play running concurrently: a Kashmiri Pandit multitasking.

Act 1. The re-enactment of the marriage ceremony between *Vatuk* (Shiva) with Parvati (Uma). To get married, Shiva is accompanied by his *Bhairavs* (played by the five little pots; *duljees* (डुलिज, *dulij*) (and *Dhull*) (डुल, *dul*) and an assortment

Religious Festivals in Kashmir

FESTIVALS CELEBRATED BY KASHMIRI PANDITS

of little pots). Shiva and his retinue are offered the feast. Depending on the family tradition (reeth), vegetarian or non-vegetarian food is offered. In Kashmir meat and fish preparations were offered with gusto by many of the families.

Act 2. The annual return of Parvati (along with Shiva) to her parent's home, and her stay for three days. Shiva (Large pot; *Nott*) (नोट, *not*) comes along with his wife Parvati (small pot; *Naar*) (नॉर, *noṛ*, राम गोड, *raam goḍa*). This is the annual enactment of the inseparable bond between Shiva and Shakti (शक्ति, *shaktee*). Herein lies the lesson for the common householder. After all, in Kashmir Shaivism, the path to Self realization adopted by a householder is considered better than that of an ascetic monk. Householder is immersed in the world with all the vicissitudes and enjoyments.

Act 3. The *pooza* itself includes Sanskrit recitations to invoke blessings of Ganesha (गणेश, *gaṇaesh*), offer pooza to Kalusha (कलश, *kalash*, कलुश, *kalush*), to Shiva and Parvati. These manifestations are represented by walnuts soaking in water in different pots. The rituals associated with the *pooza* cement the symbolic with what is common practice of worshipping Shiva to remove ignorance and attain the light of Shiva. Here an unrealized self is represented by the hard shelled walnuts soaking in ultimate knowledge represented by water in the pitcher. The continued soaking ultimately softens them to allow access to the kernel. The 'unrealized person' performing the *pooza* is symbolically represented by the *Nott* (the pitcher with dry hard walnuts in it). Here, the unrealized soul identifies with and assumes the role of *Bhairav* (Shiva unrealized) with the hope of progression to *Parama Shiva* (परम शिव, *param shiv*) (as *Nott* with shell softened and kernels accessible). Thus the *pooza* and the ritual is a symbolic demonstration of the processes needed to remove ignorance (shell) and access and realize the Truth (kernel inside), and unify the seeker with the Source. In this portion of the play the *duljees* play the part of our senses that need to be directed and appropriately positioned, kept clean to help.

The progression of festivities during the fortnight

Kashmiris begin the festival on the first day of the dark fortnight. The celebrations in Kashmir were literally made possible by the hard work of Pandit women - the cleaning, the arrangements and cooking - the eating and merrymaking was, however, done by us all. Now outside Kashmir these burdens on women have changed somewhat although not completely.

Religious Festivals in Kashmir

FESTIVALS CELEBRATED BY KASHMIRI PANDITS

Huri Okdoh (हुर्य ओकदोह, *hury okadoh*) marks the beginning of the fortnight long Herath festival for Kashmiri Pandits that ends on *Amavasya* (अमावस्या, *amaavasyaa*), 15 days later. Each day has significance in the sequential progression to the climax. I have listed them as we see them here in the US.

***Huri Okdoh to Huri Shiyam* (हुर्य शेयम, *hury sheyam*) (first to sixth day)**

Clean the house, and give it a festive look.

Procure material for pooza.

***Huri Sattam* (हुर्य सतम, *hury satam*), *Huri Atham* (हुर्य आठम, *hury oṭham*) and *Huri Navam* (हुर्य नवम, *hury navam*) (seventh to ninth day)**

Offer prayers to the mother goddess Sharika - the presiding deity of the valley of Kashmir.

***Dyara Daham* (द्यारु दॅहम, *dyaar daḥam*) (Tenth day: - literally the Day of the Money - Day of Lakshmi (लक्ष्मी, *lakshmee*))**

Offer prayers to Goddess of wealth. Send a felicitation card to the mother-in-law if not living with you. In olden days, the daughter-in-laws would return to their in-laws house bearing gifts in cash and kind.

***Gadda kaah* (गाडु काह, *gaaḍa kaah*) (11th day: the fish-day)**

Feast with fish, according to the reeth (family tradition).

***Wager Baah* (वागुर्य बाह, *vaagry baah*) (12th day: Day of the Wagur)**

Ritual performed after sunset.

At sunset, tie a naarivan around a small pitcher (*wagur* (वागुर, *vaagur*): the priest: the messenger) and offer tilak. The messenger brings the good news about Shiva and Parvati visiting next day. Another tumbler or pitcher is filled with water and walnuts (called *kalusha*: the witness: the mind). The priest and *kalusha* sit on grass mats. A brief pooza is offered, culminating with eating of rice cakes and walnuts. At the end of the ceremony, the mats and *naarivan*

FESTIVALS CELEBRATED BY KASHMIRI PANDITS

(नॉर्यवन, *noṛyavan*) are collected and deposited under a tree (parmoozan) (परमूज़न, *paramoozan*). In Kashmir we would deposit this in a stream.

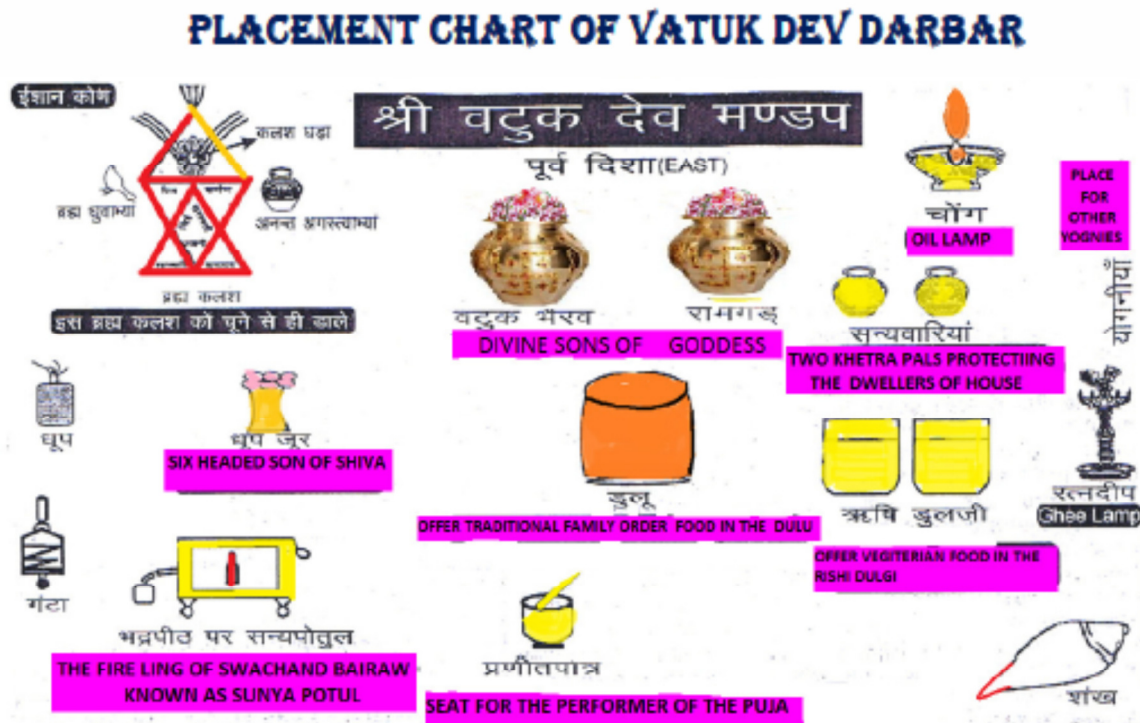
Herath (हेरथ) (13th day: the day of main Pooza)

Wedding party of Shiva arrives: Shiva and Parvati come to stay in the home: the seeker (you) seek the Source (Universal Truth/Being: the *Parama Shiva*).

The protocol of the pooza

The eldest male in the household keeps a fast.

The family cooks a feast according to the family tradition (*reeth*) (रीत, reet, रीथ, reeth).



Source: satisar.org

Collect various pots including *Nott* (a large pot: representing Shiva/human being), *Naar* (smaller pot: meant to signify Parvati), *Dhull* (a wide pot as the Universal mother: this has also been referred to as the Bhairav-the young

Religious Festivals in Kashmir

FESTIVALS CELEBRATED BY KASHMIRI PANDITS

Shiva, a voracious eater who has come to get married), two *Saniwari* (सनिवारि, *sanivaari*), *Sani Potul* (सनि प्तुल, *sani pvtul*, सनि पौतुल, *sani potul*), and an assortment of plates and bowls. Arrange the pots in the prescribed order.

Tie *naarivan* and garlands around each of them.

The pots are filled with walnuts and water.

Since the three plays are enacted concurrently, various actors play several roles and accordingly have different names ascribed to them.

- A. The large pitcher (*Nott*) containing walnuts in water: The individual Shiva (*Bhairav*, *Vatuk*) ignorant of the presence of *Parma Shiva* within. Knowledge and realization of our real identity - symbolically the kernel of the walnut - is enveloped by the hard shell of ignorance. Knowledge comes forth only when one works at it; shell is softened by water over time and the kernel becomes accessible. Of course, walnuts are symbolic, and may be replaced by almonds.
- B. A small pitcher (*Kalusha*) - the *Manas* (मनस) - the Mind. Though smaller in appearance, yet with appropriate training and evolution everything is attainable. This *Kalusha* is also the traditional witness of the ceremony.
- C. The *Duljees* (Five senses): Our worldly existence depends on the information received through the senses. We need to preserve and protect them and pray for their proper use. Our thoughts and actions affect the natural order, so we pray that our contribution be beneficial to all.
- D. Two *Sani wari*: two small pitchers (two nostrils): The two nostrils need to be clean to convey the unhindered daily breath or *prana*. The same *sani wari* later on are kept in Pandit household for a ritual cleaning and feeding every morning for the year. The ritual cleaning is to remind us to take care of our own body parts every day.
- E. The *Dhull* (large wide pot) signifies the Universal Mother/Nature that offers shelter to us all as does our earthly mother. The width of Shakti is all encompassing and Shiva is ineffective without it. (The *dhull* is also the Bhairav the-unmarried Shiva - and all the other Bhairavs who come along with Him in the wedding party. Since the attendants eat all types of food, different delicacies are prepared and offered to them according to the reeth).

Religious Festivals in Kashmir

FESTIVALS CELEBRATED BY KASHMIRI PANDITS

F. The *Lingam* (लिङ्गम) with *Yoni* (योणी) (Shiva and Shakti). The life-force/creator. It is the ultimate reductionist symbolism of the creative force in the universe. And of course, the symbolic union needed at both the family and at the universal level for creation and perpetual harmony. This reinforces the importance of both Shiva and Shakti: the equality of man and woman in the family.

With the actors set in place, and decked out accoutrements for *Vatuka pooza*, the play is ready, and the *pooza* begins.

Pooza is offered after sundown with all the family members in attendance.

The departed relatives are also invoked and invited and ritual offerings are made to them as well.

The *Pooza* is meant to enliven the actors, invite them into the home, offer them a place to sit, decorate them with flowers (and clothes), offer them water and food. Some families perform a little havan at the same time, prayers are offered to Shiva and Parvati (Shakti), and beg for their forgiveness for any errors of omission or commission.

For *pooza* I use the text published by Vijayeshawar Janthari, and KOAUSA website (and video/audio versions available on tape and on Youtube).

After the *pooza*, the Sanskrit poem *Mahimnapar* (महिम्नापार) is recited. This is one of the favorite prayers of Kashmiri Pandits (*Pushpadanta* (पुष्पदन्त)

Mahminaparam (महिम्नापरम)) that extols the virtues of Shiva. It was written by Pushpadanta to appease and pray to Shiva to lift His curse for stealing flowers meant for Shiva's worship. At the end of the *Pooza*, all the water used in the *pooza* (*nirmaal*), flowers, rice cakes offered to *Vatuk*, and any offerings to the departed are collected and deposited under a shade tree. The eldest person in the household now can break his fast and the feast is enjoyed.

Salaam (सलाम): (14th day: Shiva Chaturdashi) (शिव चतुर्दशी, shiv chaturdashee)

Day after the main *Pooza*.

Morning *pooza* is offered to the *Vatuk*. Rice cakes and walnuts are eaten as *naveed*.

Religious Festivals in Kashmir
FESTIVALS CELEBRATED BY KASHMIRI PANDITS



(Source: http://snehabhatsepo.blogspot.com/2011_03_01_archive.html)

Children receive Herath *Kharcha* (pocket money for the festival). Exchange presents. This is a day of general festivity for the family, friends and relatives.

Doonya Mavas (डून्य मावस, ḍaony maavas) (15th day: walnut amavasya (अमावस्या, amaavasyaa)

Day of Parmoozun.

The day Shiva and Parvati return to the Himalayas. Offer Pooza in the morning.

Empty the pots, collect water and flowers in a large bucket. Keep wet walnuts at home.

Take the bucket and empty it under a shade tree.

Return home and enjoy rice cakes and walnuts.

Distribute the walnuts among friends, relatives and neighbors.

Religious Festivals in Kashmir

FESTIVALS CELEBRATED BY KASHMIRI PANDITS

According to family reeth, different variations of the above routine are considered valid, but the core pooza has to be performed. However, the pooza may be abbreviated depending upon the availability of time.

Seven more days after *Doonya mavas*, on day of *Teel Aatham* (तेल अँठम), one lights an adobe lamp outside the house on the stoop, heralding the Spring.

Thus Herath for Kashmiri Pandits is an all encompassing major festival celebrating the individual, the family, and the Source of all, and beginning a dialogue within. And paraphrasing Abraham Lincoln, Herath has helped us evoke the better angels among us for thousands of years.

Who is this Bhairva?

There is an interesting story in Shiva Puran about the origin of Bhairav. It so happened that once upon a time Vishnu (the preserver aspect of the trinity) asked Brahma (the creator aspect with five heads) as to who among the trinity (Brahma, Vishnu, Shiva) was Supreme. Brahma immediately pointed to himself and asked Vishnu to worship him. This angered Shiva, who flicked one of his nails towards Brahma that severed one of his heads. This head-severing nail-incarnation of Shiva was the terrifying Bhairav. Brahma was left with only four heads, and Bhairav roams the universe with the severed head. Later on a multiplicity of Bhairavs were introduced with different names and powers. Bhairva is also another name for Batuk Nath, or Vatuk.

In Shaivite traditions of Kashmir, Bhairav is the ideal ascetic with three functionalities of Shiva: maintenance, withdrawal and creation (creation, maintenance, and reabsorption). Many names and attributes of Bhairav have appeared in tantric writings, one such is the Swachhanda Bhairav of Kashmir that is self-manifesting and self-evolving at will. That concept of self-manifestation is stressed in the Herath rituals with the unity of the eternal with the self.

Note: Some of the people may find the multitude of utensils for *Herath* far too many. The minimal items I would suggest are:

- *Nott*: a pitcher filled with walnuts and water.
- *Kalusha* a smaller pitcher (filled with walnuts and water): these are walnuts eaten right after the pooza.
- A *Dhull*. A large vessel to collect all the offerings of the day including water.

Religious Festivals in Kashmir
FESTIVALS CELEBRATED BY KASHMIRI PANDITS

- A Shiva *linga* or (placed on a *Pranali* (प्रणाली, *pranaalee*))

Herath Pooza Materials List (minimal)

- A pot to burn wood for Havan
- Adobe lamp (1)
- Apples
- Barley (1 cup)
- Coconut dry whole (1)
- Coins for *Dakshina*
- Cotton real (to make wick for adobe oil lamp)
- Dhoop, and incense sticks
- Dry pieces of wood for Havan (birch or pine)
- Dry Walnuts (unshelled, whole)
- Flowers assorted
- *Ghee* (1 cup)
- Grass mat (ऑर, *Or*, आरि, *aari*) (circular: *aari*: made with dry grass: each pot needs one)
- *Havan samagri* (small packet)
- Honey (1 cup)
- Lime white (lime is considered auspicious: if not available use white rice flour)
- Match sticks
- Milk (1 cup)
- Mirror (1)
- *Naarivan* (one for each celebrant; one for each pot in the *pooza*)
- *Naveed* (नैवीद) (almonds, sugar, raisins, cardamom)
- Oil (mustard, olive or canola) for Adobe lamp (1 cup)
- *Pavither* (पवित्र, पवैथुर) (made with long dry grass from your lawn or Raffia grass)
- Puffed rice (लायि, *laayi*, 1 cup)
- *Qund* (कन्द, *kand*) (2 sugar cylinder)
- Saffron (a little)
- Sesame seed (2 tablespoon full)
- *Sindoor* (for *teeka*)
- *Tambool* (ताम्बूल, *taambool*, तम्बोलु, *tambol*) (a mixture of green cardamom, cloves, dry rock sugar, and raisins (in the ratio of about 1:1:1:1))

Herath stories for the children

Long time ago there lived a King named *Himavant* (हिमवंत, हेमवंत) in the kingdom of the Himalayas. He was married to a beautiful wife *Meenawati* (मीनावती, मैनावती). They had a daughter named *Parvati* (पार्वती, पारवती). Parvati grew up to be a very intelligent human being with great knowledge about the Vedas (वेद) and yoga (योग). As she came of age, Parvati decided to marry Shiva the ascetic living on the adjoining mountains called the *Kailash* (कैलाश, कैलास, कॉलास). Although her parents advised against it, she could not be dissuaded.

Himavant and Meenawati would only agree to this marriage on condition that the couple visit Himavant and Meenawati annually on the thirteenth day of the dark fortnight of the lunar month of Phalgun for three days. Shiva agreed, and Shiva and Parvati were married according to the Vedic tradition. We celebrate this wedding day as Herath.

Since Herath reenacts the marriage ceremony of Shiva and Parvati, Shiva (as an unmarried Bhairav) is accompanied by the groom's party. The major participants are also called the Bhairvas who need to be fed. Although there are only five Bhairavs they eat a lot. To serve a lot of food we keep a large steel bowl nearby wherein a sampling of all the dishes can be accommodated for feasting by the Bhairavas.

Shiva and Parvati decided to begin their promised annual three day visit to Himavant and Meenawati on the day of Herath itself. This visit is also re-enacted during the ceremony of Herath. One day before the couple arrives, a messenger (*Wagur*) comes in with the good news of their impending arrival. Wagur is welcomed with tilak and naarivan, offered a place to sit, provided food and drink (Rice Cakes, walnuts, milk).

The combined ritual of annual visit and the wedding on the thirteenth day is accompanied with a great pooza, chanting, and offering and feasting. The feasting only begins after a ceremonial welcome and offerings of a tilak, naarivan, and seating of Shiva, Parvati and the accompanying party. The guests are offered milk, yogurt, and honey. And then a sampling of all the prepared dishes are ritually offered.

For the next three days the married couple, Shiva and Parvati are offered pooza and food. And since the couple only stays for three days, on the last day they are sent off to return to Kailash. The farewell ceremony called Parmoozun.

The beautiful thing about the Herath is that Shiva and Parvati are all made up of pots filled with water in which walnuts stay soaking for the three days of visit. After the farewell, we enjoy soaked walnuts with rice cakes. Yummy.

Religious Festivals in Kashmir
FESTIVALS CELEBRATED BY KASHMIRI PANDITS

- Uncooked Rice (washed) (1cup)
- Uncooked rice Dry (1 bowl; for zang)
- Water
- White Daicon Radishes
- White Rice flour (for rice cakes)
- White Rock sugar (Crystal sugar: Naabad) (1 cup)
- White Sesame seed (30 grams)
- *Yagnyopaveet* (जन्मू, *janyoo*, योनि, *yonī*) for the eldest person representing family
- Yogurt (1 cup)
- Shiva ling plus yoni
- Metal Icon of Shiva

Kashmiris follow a lunisolar calendar; a combination of the lunar and solar calendars. The endings and beginnings of the month are marked by the transit of the sun into various constellations -- the *Sankranti* (संक्रान्ति). The last of these transits in a year is the Meen Sankranti, marking the festival of Sonth.

A photograph of a traditional Indian Thali, a collection of various food items including bread, sweets, fruits, and a bowl of white rice, arranged on a plate.

Source: searchkashmir.org

Religious Festivals in Kashmir

FESTIVALS CELEBRATED BY KASHMIRI PANDITS

Thaal Bharun (थाल बरुन): The ritual preparation of a plate or Thaal for Sonth/Navreh viewing. On both these days the Kashmiri tradition calls for an early morning ritual of viewing of a thali full of paraphernalia for good omen.

The thaal for *Sonth* (सोनथ) contains:

- Rice (previously used to be unhusked)
- Yogurt
- Milk
- Walnuts/almonds
- Salt
- Flowers/Daffodils (nargis, narcissus, यॅम्बुरज़ल, *yāmbrazal*)
- Pen/pencil and a paper pad
- A coin
- A batch of honey
- A batch of Ghee
- A picture of a deity
- A small mirror

The thaal for *Navreh* (नवरेह) contains a few additional items as follows:

1. Kashmiri Whye: A bitter herb (*Sweet Flag or Sweet Rush: Acorus calamus* (वायि गन्दुर, *vaayi gandqr*))
2. A new calendar (*panchang/janthari*)
3. A little cooked rice

The uncooked rice grains and coins represent our daily bread and wealth, the pen and paper a reminder of the quest for learning, the mirror represents retrospection. These articles represent good omens for the coming year. For Navreh additional items placed on the thali include a bitter herb (Wye: Sweet Flag, Sweet rush: *Acorus calamus*), and a new calendar (*panchang*). Although the geographical and mythological stories associated with our thaal are distinct from those in the festival of *Navroz*, one cannot but appreciate the similarity one notices in symbolism of the 'Haft seen' (seven S) items the Iranian people use on *Navroz* table/plate.

The calendar signals the march of time, and the deity the reminder of the Universal. While the bitter herb is a reminder of life's bitter aspects and has been used in Native American cultures as well as by some of the American transcendentalist philosophers, the information from the Food and Agricultural Organization Corporate Document Repository and other sources indicates that

Religious Festivals in Kashmir

FESTIVALS CELEBRATED BY KASHMIRI PANDITS

calamus contains insecticidal, carcinogenic and hallucinogenic components. So beware!

Darshan of Thaal: The thaal is presented early next morning individually to all the family members by a younger female or an elderly lady. In return for this service she is compensated with ritual offering of money for good omen (ज़न्ग, *zang*). In the US we have found it easier to leave the thali on the kitchen table and let the individuals do their own viewing, fee optional.

After the *darshan* (दर्शन), each person takes a walnut to be thrown into a river (in the USA we place it under a tree). The rice is cooked to make *Tahar* (तेहॉर) (rice with turmeric) and eaten as a *prashad* (प्रसाद). The bitter herb is eaten with walnuts to make it sweet.

On the day of Sonth, in some villages people would tie together old adobe pots and drag them with a rope to a dumpster. This is symbolic of the renewal of spring, so you would see many families doing their "spring cleaning" in this manner.

The Navreh celebration includes wearing of new clothes, and cooking and serving fancy dishes. In Kashmir, people would go for a picnic to view almond blossoms.

On the third day after Navreh - the day of *Zanga Treye* (ज़न्गु त्रय, *zang tray*) comes along. On this day in Kashmir, married women folk would visit their parents' house (natal place) if close by and return in the evening with presents of a bunch of salt, bread, and small amount of money as *attagath* (अतु गथ, *at gath*) (pocket money). This was to harken good beginnings - *zang* - for the New Year.

The day of Navreh is also the start of the nine day festival of spring Navratri dedicated to worship of Shakti.

Ramanavmi

On the ninth day of *Navratra* (नव रात्र) (nine days of worship of Durga in



the spring) comes the festival of Ramanavmi (राम नवमी, रामु नवम in

March/April). This is the birthday of *Bhagwan Ram* as given in the epic *Ramayana* (रामयण) written by sage

Valmiki. Valmiki tells us that Ram was born on the ninth day of the bright fortnight of the month of *Chaitra* in the dynasty of *Ikshawaku* (इक्ष्वाकु), who was

a descendent of the Sun. The zodiac

details given by Valmiki have recently been used to determine that his birth occurred on the 10th January 5114 BC. Ram was born in the city of *Ayodhya* (अयोध्या) in current state of Uttar Pradesh in India. His mother was the queen

Kaushaliya (कौशल्या) and his father was *Dhashratha* (दशरथ), king of Ayodhya.

For Kashmiris Ramnavmi is a minor festival because most of the Kashmiri Pandits are followers of Shiva and Shakti. In spite of this, people throng to Ram temples in the valley and offer prayers, and go for a picnic. In other parts of India, Ramnavmi is celebrated in much more elaborate detail particularly in Ayodhya. The day is celebrated by worshipping the Sun, keeping a fast, and offering pooza to Ram. In some parts of southern India, Ramnavmi is also celebrated as wedding day of Ram to his wife Sita. The festival might include recitation of the entire Ramayana in nine days.

Ram was an obedient son, a great warrior king, but with human flaws. We need to recognize him for his ability to join hands with a race of beings called Vanars (वानर), who did not look like humans. With their help he was able to

conquer Ravan (रावण). The greatest of Vanars is *Hanuman* (हनुमान), the dearest disciple of Ram. He is one of the seven *Chiranjeevi* (चिरञ्जीवी) (immortals) in the Hindu pantheon, the giver of strength and bestower of boons to us mortals. Hanuman is the original Superman.

Ram is considered as an incarnation of *Vishnu* (विष्णु) - the sustainer of universe. Temples constructed to worship him have statues of Ram as a standing figure, with an arrow in his right hand, a bow in his left, and a quiver on his back. Ram temples also include statues of his wife *Sita* (सीता), and brother *Lakshman* (लक्ष्मण).

Mystery of Khir Bhawani Festival

A majority of Kashmiri Pandits considers Khir Bhawani (क्षीर भवानी), the Goddess whose favorite offering is rice-pudding, as the guardian of Kashmir Valley. The annual festival of *Zetha Ashtami* (ज्येष्ठ अष्टमी, *jyēṣṭh aṣṭamee*, जेठु आँठम, *zeṭh ōṭham*), in Her honor, is celebrated on the 8th day of the bright fortnight of the lunar month *Jeshtha* (ज्येष्ठ) (May/June of the common calendar).

The shrine of Khir Bhavani is located in the village Tulmul (तुलमुल), about 15 miles from Srinagar, the summer capital of Kashmir. Discovery of the site in the swampy areas of Tulmul is ascribed to village mystics Pandit Gobind Joo Gadru and Krishna Taplu. In a vision Pandit Gadru received instructions to follow a celestial snake to reach and offer pooza and milk at the designated site of the Bhavani in the marshy lands of Tulmul. Since then the tradition continues with monthly visits by devotees with an annual mela and grand pooza on the day of Zetha Ashtami.



(Courtesy: Lalit Koul, MA)

The spring in the temple complex has an irregular heptagon shape with its apex, called *Paad* (पाद) (feet), towards the East. The northern and southern

Religious Festivals in Kashmir

FESTIVALS CELEBRATED BY KASHMIRI PANDITS

sides are longer than the western side-called *Shir* (शिर) (Head). In the center of the holy spring now stands a marble temple dedicated to the Bhavani. The water in the spring is said to change color portending the circumstances in Kashmir. Sir Walter Lawrence in his book 'Valley of Kashmir' (published 1895) reported the water to have a violet tinge.

The legend of Khir Bhavani is engrossed in antiquity and has been enshrined in two Sanskrit scriptures: *Sri Sri Maharajni Pradurbhava* (श्री श्री राज्ञा प्रादुर्भाव), and the *Rajni Mahatmya* (राज्ञा महात्म्य). Apparently the scripture is supposed to be part of the *purana* (पुरान, *puraan*) named *Bringisha Samhita* (ब्रिन्गिश संहिता). These scriptures indicate that the original abode of the Goddess was in Lanka (लंका). After killing of Ravana by Rama, the Goddess ordered Hanuman to carry Her to Kashmir along with her 360 attendants Snake *Nagas* (नाग, *naag*).

The journey of the Goddess from Lanka to Kashmir is not only a description of a physical journey of the Goddess, but also signifies the journey of the tantric yogi through the various phases of purification during the practice or *sadhana*. It is also interesting that vehicle for the journey of the Bhavani to Kashmir is Hanuman-the quintessence of a devotee (*Bhakta*) in the Vaishnavite tradition. Thus we have an esoteric confluence of *Vaishnavite* and *Shaktic* traditions, and introduction of a Vaishnavite link for a people more comfortable with Shaivite systems. Dr. Madhu Bazaz Wangu in her books, 'Goddess is born' and 'Images of Indian goddesses: myths meanings and models' has researched details about the background, introduction, iconography and meaning of Khir Bhavani during the nineteenth century Kashmir. Her research (source for some of the information herein) indicates the confluence of several threads Tantric, Shaivite, Vaishnavite, and even Western in the tradition and molding of the guardian Goddess.

Khir Bhavani is the representation of the *Krama* (क्रम) tradition where Bhairavi is the supreme power encompassing all-the culmination of Shakti worship. Thus the elements of ancient traditions in Kashmir of Lalla Ded (लल दद) and Roopa Bhawani (रूपु बवॉनी) continue through Khir Bhavani in the modern times.

May the Goddess preserve us all! Click on the URL and sing along the devotional bhajan: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RLWFrC-TQAg>

The month of Shravan, Shravan Punim, Amarnath Yatra

During the month of Shravan, *samudra manthan* (churning of the ocean) (समुद्र मन्थन) was accomplished by the devatas (good guys) and *ashuras*

(असुर) (bad guys). Legend has it that long time ago, to produce some useful material for the benefit of the universe, a certain ocean (*Samudra*) needed be churned (*Manthan*). In a rare spirit of cooperation the devatas and ashuras collaborated. The churning floated up a pot of poison, and a pot of Amrit (elixir for immortality). Immediately Lord Shiva drank the poison to protect the universe from destruction. Interestingly his wife Paravati choked Him to prevent the poison from going down into his body! The throat of Lord Shiva turned blue. Thus we have blue-throated Shiva- the Neelakantha, and Shiva is showered down with Ganges water to wash away the effect of poison.



Source: <http://www.newsx.com>

This simple story is loaded with worldly and esoteric interpretations.

Religious Festivals in Kashmir

FESTIVALS CELEBRATED BY KASHMIRI PANDITS

In this world, we produce poisons and pollutants. We have no place to store our pollutants, and prevent poisoning the environment. A washout system for the pollutant/poison is essentially a page from the First Responder's manual, just as Ganges is for Shiva. Green concepts before their time. And quick thinking women rescue men from their hasty decisions.

Esoteric interpretations of the legend allude to the constant churning of our thoughts by forces of good and evil. And the individual is rescued from the fruits of evil by constant vigilance of dynamic Shakti and Shiva. The blue throat (नील कण्ठ, *neel kaṇaṭh*) tells us to restrict our vices (poisons) lest they overtake our whole life. In simple terms, good and evil, poison and sweet are equally around, and we need to learn to deal with them.

The last day of the month is celebrated as *Shravan Punim* (Kashmiri for Shravan Purnimashi). This is the day to worship Amarnath, the Lord of immortality, Lord Shiva.

It is the fourteenth day of the bright-half of the month. The day is marked with a fast and worship of Shiva at home-one meal allowed in the afternoon. The major ingredients of the meal include cooked rice, collard greens and kohlrabi.

Shravan Poonim is reserved for the darshan of ice lingam in Amarnath cave situated at about 13,000 ft. above sea level in the snowy mountains of southern Kashmir. The lingam is a column of ice formed by dripping water inside the cold cave.

The hike to the cave takes four to five days from resort town of Pahalgam and covers nearly 26 miles of treacherous path up through the mountains, frozen rivers and over glaciers. The pilgrim's progress is punctuated by nightly stop-overs a few miles apart. Along the route a few places of importance are: Pahalgam, *Chandanvari* (चन्दन वारि), *Pissu-top* (पिशु बाल), Sheshnag, Mahagunas, and Panjtarni. This pilgrimage is called Amarnath yatra. The aim of this yatra is the darshan of the ice lingam- a column formed by dripping ice-water inside the cold cave.



Religious Festivals in Kashmir

FESTIVALS CELEBRATED BY KASHMIRI PANDITS

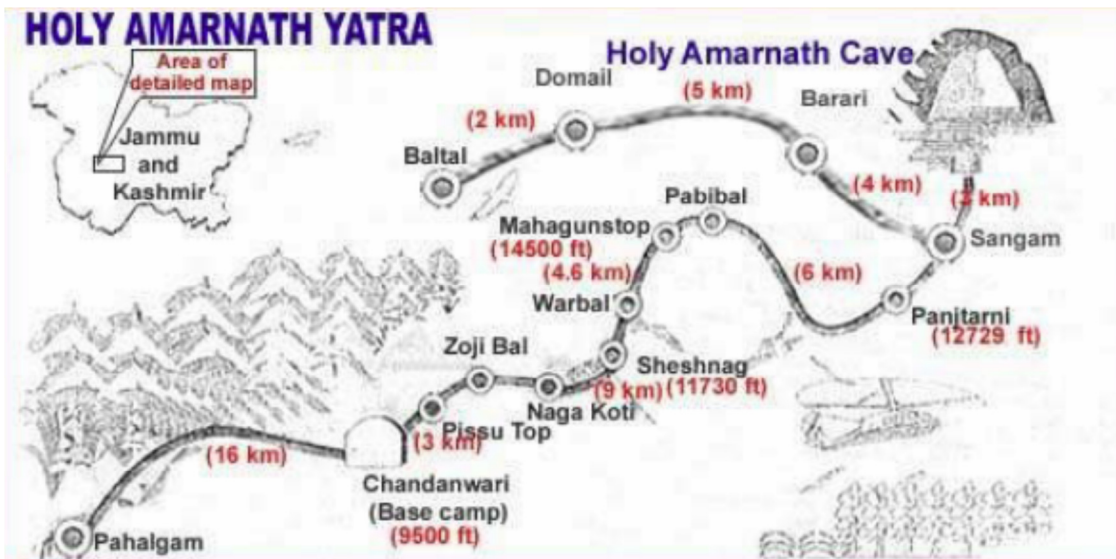


Legend has it that on the day of Shravan punim, Shiva narrated the secret of immortality (Amar- in Sanskrit) to Parvati. Hence the name 'Amarnath'- lord of immortality. Since Shiva wanted to be alone with Parvati during this time, He left Nandi (the Bull, His vehicle) at Pahalgam. At Chandanwari, He removed the moon that adorned His head. At the lake shore of Sheshnag the snakes around His neck came off. His son Ganesha was left off at *Mahagunas* (माहागुनस). The five *tattwa* (तत्त्व) were dropped off at

Panjtarni (पञ्चतरनी) (five basic components of our body: loosely translated from their Sanskrit names as earth, water, air, fire and space). Then reaching the cave site, He enlisted *Rudra Kaalaagni* (रुद्र

कालाग्नि) - the flame of time (a manifestation of Shiva) to burn down everything around the cave site.

Thus Shiva and Parvati, seemingly by themselves, entered the Amarnath cave. However, a pigeon-couple had secreted themselves in there and eaves dropped on the conversation and thus became beneficiaries of the secret formula of immortality. Another variation on this is that pigeon eggs left under the deerskin mat of Shiva gave birth to the two that came forth and became immortal. Hence during the darshan, sighting a pair of pigeons at the cave site is taken as an auspicious sign of a successful journey!

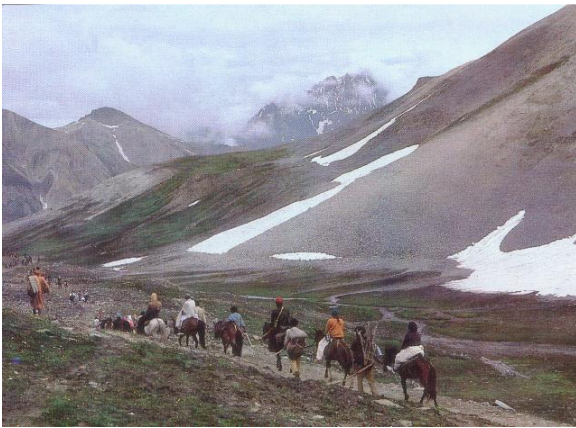


Source: amarnathjourney.com

Religious Festivals in Kashmir

FESTIVALS CELEBRATED BY KASHMIRI PANDITS

Traditionally the pilgrims would trek up to the cave in a procession lead by a sadhu-a holy man-carrying the holy mace (छड़ी, *chhadāee*, छेड़ा, *chhoday*) of Shiva. The holy mace is the Trishul-the trident of Shiva - to protect pilgrims from any hazards along the way. The holy mace is called *Chhaddi Mubarak* (Chaddi Maharaj) and is described as a gift from Shiva to a Rishi who used to lead the pilgrimage a long time ago. Then there is the story of an interaction long time ago between a saint at the cave-site and the Muslim shepherd Buta Malik who received what he thought was a sack of coal that turned out to be gold. Because of interaction with the saint, and associated publicity, the incident led to rediscovery of the pilgrimage site. And that turned out to be a source of ongoing steady income for the Malik family -they used to receive a portion of all proceeds collected at the cave.



Mahagunas pass



Sheshnag Lake

The arduous nature of the traditional trek of the yatra demands dedication, and persistence in quest for solitude of Amarnath cave. It compels the pilgrims to go through a process of forced physical preparation, and mental contemplation. During this hike, traditional stopovers used by the pilgrims follow those undertaken by Shiva and Parvati to the cave while shedding various adornments and elements culminating in the knowledge of immortality at the cave site.

The arduous nature of the traditional route and physical stopovers allude to the tough meditative path of Shaivism. The individual on the path of meditation and prayer, goes through a sequential de-attachment from 'desire', and a need of analyzing each thought. And finally gain the capability to recognize the bondage of our ego (अहंकार, *ahamkaar*) and the tools to burn it up with the help of Kala Rudra. Success is achieved when the five elements (the five tatwas) of one's own body (Shareer) are in union with the soul (Atman) and

Religious Festivals in Kashmir

FESTIVALS CELEBRATED BY KASHMIRI PANDITS

the rest of the universe. The individual filled with joy is drawn into the ecstatic *TanDava* (ताण्डव, *taanadaav*) dance at one's own cave-site within, just as Shiva.

Now with the use of nontraditional routes, different dates of darshan, and accelerated mechanisms employed to reach the cave in shorter amount of time are seemingly eroding away at these contemplative correlations.

May Lord Shiva provide us with clear thoughts and be with us at all times to protect and preserve us.

Raksha Bandhan (रक्षाबन्धन)



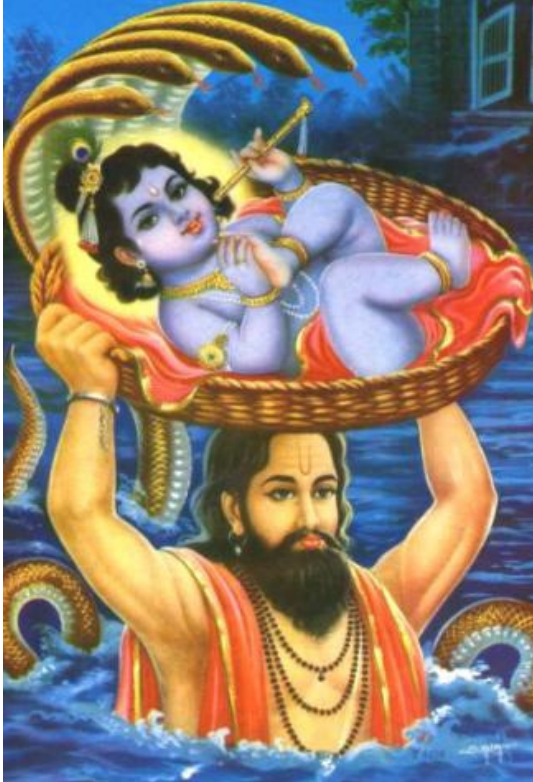
Source: tourmyindia.com

The festival of Rakhi (a decorated wrist band) is also celebrated on the day of Shravan Purnima. Rakhi is tied by a sister on her brother's wrist to signify and celebrate the bond of love between a sister and a brother. Rakhsha means protection, hence the Rakhi signifies the willingness of a brother to help and protect his sister at any cost. One can become a Rakhi brother to someone unrelated by blood after accepting a Rakhi. Legends in India describe such Rakhi brothers and sisters across religious boundaries.

After the involuntary emigration of Pandits in 1990, this festival has become more popular among the diaspora.

Janama Ashtami - Zanam Ashtami-Zarama Satam

The birthday of Bhagwan Krishna is on the eighth day of the dark-fortnight of the lunar month of Bhadra. Lord Krishna was born in India before the war of Mahabharata more than 5000 years ago. Krishna is supposed to have been born during the *dvaapar yug* (द्वापर युग), the second of the four yugas in Hindu cosmological reckoning of time.



Krishna's birth is full of miracles and intrigue. He was born inside a prison cell in the Indian city of Mathura to the imprisoned mother Devaki (देवकी, *devakee*) and father Vasudeva (वासुदेव, *vaasudev*) of the Yadava clan (यादव कुल, *yaadav kul*). Vasudeva hid the newborn Krishna in a basket and stealthily carried him out of the prison and across the miraculously parted turbulent waters of the river Yamuna. He left him in the care of the cowherd Nanda (नन्द गूर, *nand goor*) and his wife Yasoda (यशोदा)/Jasoda (जसोदा). Vasudeva did it to save the child from death at the hands of Kansa (कंस), the brother of Devaki and the then ruler of Mathura.

Kansa had the routine of killing each of his sister's sons because his death was foretold to occur at the hands of Devaki's eighth son. Not taking any chances, Kansa imprisoned his sister and Vasudeva so none of their children would escape his wrath. Vasudeva was able to save Krishna only because at the time of his birth, miraculously, the guards lay asleep and the prison doors flung open.

Living with Nanda and Yasoda, Krishna, along with other cowboys and cowgirls (gopis), tended cows and enjoyed a happy and normal development. Tales of those childhood and youthful days are replete with his pranks, transgressions and miracles in the company of various gopis. This part of his life story is affectionately described as Krishna *baala leela* (बाल लीला) and the young

Krishna is described as *Baala Gopaala* (बाल गोपाल). Krishna seemed to have lived in a relatively liberated society that allowed gender equality at work and

Religious Festivals in Kashmir

FESTIVALS CELEBRATED BY KASHMIRI PANDITS

play. A case in point: the temples of Krishna are dedicated to Krishna along with Radha. Radha was His untiring devotee, a consort and a faithful partner. We do not need to invent silly excuses for this to fit in with the Abrahamic religious system. Instead, celebrate and cherish that heritage: That was the Glorious India long before Gloria Steinem! Be proud!

The historic Krishna is associated with the Bhagavata Gita (भगवद्गीता) - a conversation between Arjuna (अर्जुन) and Lord Krishna. The valiant warrior Arjuna, one of the five Pandava (पाण्डव) brothers, taught singing and dance as a eunuch for one year before the war, and then transitioned back as a man. The Gita emphasizes the need for and the value of work at all levels, and explains the transitory nature of our life. It helps us understand that we arrive and leave this world empty handed. Whatever will be the future becomes the present and soon transitions into the past. Whatever belonged to someone else yesterday belongs to us today, and will go to someone else tomorrow. Why worry? And why feel miserable? Work to the best of your capacity at the place you find yourself in, and enjoy the moment. Soon the body perishes and the eternal soul becomes free to move on. The goal of an individual is *jigyaasaa* (जिज्ञासा) (a journey to seek the truth and salvation), and not of going to heaven. The Gita provides experimental techniques to achieve harmony in daily life, and for personal evolution towards salvation. The Gita was born when the Mahabharata (महाभारत) war was to begin and the despondent Arjuna expressed his misgivings to Krishna, and was feeling jittery about the war. Krishna then provided the necessary pre-combat counseling in the form of the Gita to a bewildered and psychologically moribund Arjuna in the battlefield!



The adult human Krishna played and enjoyed life's pleasures to the fullest and gathered a few consorts. He became a friend and teacher of Arjuna, the warrior-prince of the Pandu clan (पाण्डु कुल). Krishna's message of the Bhagavat Gita was delivered to Arjuna in the battlefield. Krishna helped his friends in need, and once rescued the Pandu princess Draupadi (द्रौपदी, द्रुपदी) from the atrocities of the Kuru clan (कुरु कुल, कौरव कुल). He acted as wise counsel during

Religious Festivals in Kashmir

FESTIVALS CELEBRATED BY KASHMIRI PANDITS

times of war and peace. Much later, when Kansa was eventually killed, the revengeful father-in-law of Kansa invaded Mathura to drive Yadavas and Krishna out, and thus the kingdom of Krishna was established in *Dwarkaa* (द्वारका) on the western coast of India. Krishna thus lived a life of a very complex personality. Since historic Krishna was born, lived, fought, enjoyed life, and finally died as a human, he is an example to emulate- an Avatar come to this earth.

Later, Krishna was recognized as the Avatar of Vishnu. In the Avatar story, the esoteric Krishna is the eternal Atman, Arjuna the individual Jiva inside the body represented by Arjuna's chariot (used in the Mahabharata). Arjuna is the individual that has to face the daily battle between good and evil and needs the message of the Bhagavat Gita. Thus each soul has to surrender to the eternal Atman for guidance and direction although we are responsible for our own *Karma* (कर्म, karm).

This much-expanded personality has provided Hindus a versatile icon of Krishna for Bhakti that is worthy of adoration in the form of an innocent venerated child, a friend, a lover playing raasa leela with gopis, or mentor; and a vehicle to attain the state of Vishnu. Thus we get the Krishna of Mirabai (मीरा भाई), or the bala gopala for a mother's adoration. A poignant example is presented in this line



from a Kashmiri leela, “*jasadaa nand gooris kun chhi vanaan,*
vanaan chhi raadhaa kriṣṇa aav (जसदा नन्दु गूरिस कुन छि वनान, वनान छि राधा कृष्ण आव)” Which translated is, “Yasoda, longing to meet Krishna, tells Nanda

Religious Festivals in Kashmir

FESTIVALS CELEBRATED BY KASHMIRI PANDITS

that Krishna and his consort Radha are rumored to have arrived." This is supplication to and arriving into the state of Vishnu through Krishna Baala Gopala as expressed through a mother's longing. Similarly expressed by Adi Shankaracharya is his recitation “*bhaj govindn, bhaj govindn moodh mate* (भज गोविन्दं, भज गोविन्दं मूढ मते): sing the glories of Lord Krishna.” Just to add to the complexity of the Avatar story, the number of Krishna's consorts increases and equals the number 16,108 - or roughly the number of breaths we take in a 24 hour period.

In Kashmir, Krishna's birthday is celebrated on the 7th of Bhadra, since that precedes the midnight when Krishna was born. This is why we have Zanam Satam, which is actually called Zarama Satam, and not Janam Ashtami. The day is celebrated with a fast during which one is allowed to drink water, tea, coffee, milk, and fried dumplings made from water-chestnut flour. After moon rise, the fast concludes with a meal of fruit and halwa. May this year's moon rise bring rich blessings from Krishna!

Oh come let us adore Him,

For He is Alone worthy,

We give Him all the glory,

Krishna the Lord.

Punn Festival - *Celebration to Eat Sweet Fried Dough*

Story of Beeb Ghar-Moaj

A Kashmiri story is narrated during the function. One version of the ‘story’ that is told during the Punn (पन्न, *pann*) ceremony is that of an obstinate king who would not listen to his wife and not allow her to perform the pooza of *Beeb Ghar Moaj* (bib dharm maej). And as a consequence, he lost his kingdom and became a prisoner. His wife and daughter had to go into servitude and work as stable hands. While cleaning the stables they would garner grains of wheat out of horse dung! They collected enough to have wheat flour made for preparing the sweet fried dough *roath* (रोठ, *roṭh*). Because they offered roath to the deity, the kingdom was regained and they all lived happily ever after.

Legend has it that Beeb Ghar Moaj was a village woman of meagre means who obtained untold riches after she performed this pooza. Since she could not even afford flowers for the deity, grass was offered instead. Thus a village tradition was born, and followed for generations. This pooza of Beeb Ghar-moaj is led by women. Of course men may help in preparation of roath.

This festival is celebrated during the lunar month of Bhadrapada (*Bhadoon*) around the festival of *Ganesh Chaturthi* or *Vinayak Chaturthi* (बिनायक चोरम, *vyanaayak tchoram*): usually around the first week of September.

The following description is a Standard Operating Protocol to prepare and enjoy sweet Roath.

A: Cotton thread hand spun by an unmarried girl

Punn - that is the thread worn by the chief celebrant lady around her ear).

B: Roath (रोठ, *roṭh*)

Circular thick bread of sweet dough, fried. The roath is made up of wheat flour, ghee, augar, black cardamom, poppy seeds, and water). For more details you can go to <http://koausa.org/punn/index.html>.

C: A decorated metal pitcher (गडवु, *gaḍay*): represent Vinayaka (Ganesha)

1. A freshly cleaned small bronze/steel pitcher (*gaḍay*) filled with fresh cold water.

Religious Festivals in Kashmir
FESTIVALS CELEBRATED BY KASHMIRI PANDITS

2. Tie a garland of flowers and a nairwan, around the neck of the gaḍay.
3. Place tilak of sindhoor on the gaḍay.
4. Place one, three, or five Roath on top of the mouth of the gaḍay; as a lid.
5. Place a few pieces of fruit (slices of cucumber and pear) and walnut (fresh green kernels; or dried kernels) and almonds on top of the bread as naved.
6. Now this gaḍay is ready for pooza.



D: The celebration

1. The family gathers in front of the gaḍay.
2. The lady of the house (organizer) is in front and faces east towards gaḍay.
3. The lady then places a tilak on the forehead, and a nairwan (नॉर्यवन, *noṛyavan*) on wrist of each celebrant in the family.
4. The celebrants cup their hands together to receive a handful of uncooked dry rice, dry barley, and a few strands of fresh grass (from the yard) and a few fresh flowers (usually marigolds).
5. The lady takes the Pun, cotton thread until now hanging from her ear, and places it in her own cupped hands along with uncooked dry rice, barley, grass, and flowers. (This is the ritual offering of the Pun)
6. The lady then recites the katha (story) of Beeb-moaj to the family. The story begins with the line in Kashmiri, “*ryatan manz ryathaa boḍryapyathaa, tyathan manz tyathaa vyanaayak chxoram ṭ dohan manz dohaa aathavaar*” (र्यतन मन्ज़ र्यथा बौदुर्यप्यथा, त्यथन मन्स त्यथा व्यनायक च़ोरम तु दोहन मन्ज़ दोहा आथवार). And ends with, “thus may we too be bestowed with

Religious Festivals in Kashmir

FESTIVALS CELEBRATED BY KASHMIRI PANDITS

mounds of happiness, riches and good health”. The story line is similar to that of *Satyanaarayan Kathaa* (सत्यनारायण कथा) that details gloom and doom if, “you neglect the ritual as prescribed’. Dutifully performed pooza in good faith brings riches a plenty. Ignore it at your own peril!

7. At the end of katha, all celebrants make the offerings to Ganesha represented by the gaḍaay.

E: Enjoy the Roath

After the pooza, roath is eaten with mashed eggplant (वान्गुन, *vaangun*) (बैन्गन भुर्था, *baingan bhurthaa*, बुज्जु वान्गुन, *buz vaangun*) or with Kashmiri sweet tea, kahwa. This is the Naveed. And later some of the roath is distributed to friends and relatives.

I pray for blessings and mounds of health and happiness for us all!

Divali (Dipavali) and Dussehra

The story of Divali (दिवाली, *divaalee*, दीपावली, *deepaavalee*, दीपमाला, *deepamaalaa*) began a long time ago with the birth of Lord Ram on **January 10, 5114 BC**. Lord Ram was born in the city of Ayodhya in the current state of Uttar Pradesh in India. His mother was queen Kaushaliya and his father was Dhashratha, the king of Ayodhya. The zodiac details given by Valmiki in Ramayana (the epic on Ram) have recently been used to determine the date of birth of Ram.

As detailed in the epic Ramayana, Ram was the heir apparent of the kingdom. However, his luck takes a tragic turn at the insistence of *Kaikeyi* (कैकेई) - the second wife of Dhashratha. In order to appease Kaikeyi, king Dhashratha orders Ram into exile for 14 years along with wife Sita, and brother Lakhshman. While living in exile Sita is abducted by Ravana, the king of Lanka. Ram goes to war to rescue Sita, and the king of Lanka is killed. Ram and Sita return to Ayodhya in an airplane named *Pushpak-Vimaan* (पुष्पक विमान). The joyous citizens of Ayodhya welcome Ram and Sita by decorating the city and lighting rows and rows of oil lamps. Imagine flying into a town at night decorated by townsfolk with rows of lighted lamps. Thus began the festival of lights-Dipavali (literally rows of lamps). Hence, Divali as an annual celebration marks the return of the exiled hero of Ramayana to his hometown in central India. The day when Ravan was killed is marked by the festival of *Dussehra* (दशहरा, *dashaharaa*).

For Rama, Divali was made possible by his collaborators- both human and non-human. Hanuman, the non-human Vanar friend and ultimate disciple of Lord Ram is just one example. We need to appreciate and value that earthly Ram had to and sought technological, intelligence, military and strategic assistance from people who did not look like him. There we have the practice of 'world is one family' (वसुदेव कुटुम्बकम्, *vasudev kutumbakam*) as espoused in the Hindu scriptures. The major lesson is to respect and recognize the value of each individual on this earth whether they look like us or not. Each individual has a place and a contribution to make.

The altruistic devotee Hanuman and his clan of warriors made Ram triumphant in war. Although Hanuman can fly, talk, recite the *mantras* (मन्त्र), is knowledgeable about geography, and is also a diplomat, yet his physical attributes are not completely human. His devotion and service attained him a

Religious Festivals in Kashmir

FESTIVALS CELEBRATED BY KASHMIRI PANDITS

special place in Ram's heart. Hanuman is considered a son of air god (वायु देवता, *vaayu devataa*). Philosophically that alludes to our life breath (प्राण, *praana*) which is indispensable for life. In fact, the esoteric terms Hanuman represents our vast potential to strive for. Hanuman is one of the seven Chiranjeevis (the immortals) in India.

Our deep respect and worship of Hanuman-the non-human superman- is living proof that the message of Divali permeates the daily ethos of an Indian as no other. We even seek the intercession of Hanuman to get us to the place of esoteric Ram.

Annually, Divali festival occurs on the amavasya (last day of the dark fortnight of lunar month of Kartik of Vikrami calendar: October/November) when both the sun and the moon are located in Tula rashi. According to some sources the master of *Tula raashi* (तुला राशि) is *Shukra* (शुक्र), the planetary influence on wealth and prosperity. And hence the pooza of Laxmi on the day of Divali is mandatory. And of course, in order to be able to stay in control of the wealth and prosperity one needs wisdom, hence pooza of Ganesha-the provider of wisdom- is offered along with Laxmi. Since Laxmi cannot be invited without Her husband Vishnu-the husband is also invited and worshipped. Thus the trio of Gansha, Laxmi, and Vishnu are invited into the household and worshipped to stay in. The continual propitiation and respect of the household Laxmi brings wealth and prosperity throughout the year, since every woman is considered a manifestation of goddess Laxmi. Interestingly, for the business community the new fiscal year begins a day after the Divali.

I pray that the lights of Divali night dispel darkness of ignorance, bring in prosperity, wealth, health and wisdom into our lives. And may the strength, vigor and youthfulness of Hanuman lead us forward and make us triumphant.

Khechi Mawas and Gadda Bhatta - Celebrating our Ancient Ancestry

The feast of the Yachh (यक्ष, *yaksh*, योछ, *yochh*, येछ, *yochhy*) is held on the last day (Amavasya (मावस, *maavas*): the dark fortnight (the waning moon) of Pausha (पोह, *poh*) of the Indian calendar (December/January).

This is the day to eat khichdi (or khecher/ kheched (ख्यचुर, *khyatchar*, ख्यचुड, *khyatchda*): a hodgepodge), the ultimate winter comfort food. This is cooked for dinner. Khichdi is a dish made with rice, whole-moong beans, turmeric, other spices, salt and ghee. This provides a good supply of protein, carbohydrate, and fat with a spicy taste and aroma. The first helping of this khichdi is ceremoniously placed on a freshly made plate of circular grass mat (aear), decorated with a little vermillion, and kept at an isolated spot outside the house- preferably on top of a fence for the Yachh. The family then enjoys the feast of khichdi with some ghee, anchar (आन्चार, *aanchaar*) of Kohlraabi (म्बजि, *mvanji*), or cooked meat, or fish with radishes. Later-on, all hush up to listen for the possible call of the Yachh passing by in the dark night, supposed to be disguised as a large cat-like creature. Legend has it that the Yachh dons a golden cap which, if snatched away would bestow the lucky guy enormous amounts of wealth. We wish!

Who is this Yachh?

Yachh (योछ, *yochh*) is a Kashmiri corruption of the Sanskrit word *Yaksha* (यक्ष, *yaksh*). Apparently Yakshas were meat eating people who lived in northern India (including Kashmir and beyond). They possessed knowledge, wealth, technology and power. In the epic Mahabharata the famous discourse between the king *Yudhishtara* (युधिष्ठिर) and a Yaksha illustrates a deep understanding of the mundane and the subtle by these people. This episode is called *yaksha prashn* (यक्ष प्रश्न): the questions by the yaksha to Yudhishtara. In the epic Ramayana, king Rama returns from Lanka to his kingdom Ayodhya in an aeroplane named Pushpak Vimana that belonged to *Kubera*-the king of Yakshas.

Legend has it that Kubera, depicted as a three legged dwarf, was bestowed with enormous super-natural powers despite his physical deformities. Since Lakshmi lives in the kingdom of Kubera, he is the treasurer of wealth, with the responsibility to distribute it. Thus propitiating Kubera bestows wealth on the

Religious Festivals in Kashmir

FESTIVALS CELEBRATED BY KASHMIRI PANDITS

devotee. Our little festival of *Yacch mawas* gives us an opportunity to offer our gifts to Kubera (कुबेर) (the king of Yakshas).

Yakshas as a tribe, have been a part of the Indian landscape since ancient times. With the passage of time, folklore has ascribed supernatural powers to them, both bad and good. They have gradually become a part of the pantheon of deities for Hindus, Buddhists and Jains, just as the Elves of the North have become part of the Christian traditions.

Some of the famous deities that we adore in Kashmir probably have Yaksha origins directly or indirectly with Shaivite, Buddhist and Jain influences mixed together. The modern Kashmiris may in fact be the descendants of the original tribes of Yakshas and Nagas, who lived in Kashmir from times immemorial, intermingled with the lineages of the sage Kashyapa. Thus, *Yaccha Mawas* is an occasion to celebrate our ancient ancestry as well as to propitiate Kubera. For now, hush....and get ready to snatch away that golden cap! And may Lord Kubera bestow us all with wealth and happiness.



Fish offering to propitiate house-guardian deity



This is a tradition to offer cooked rice and fish to the deity of our home-the 'ghara devata'. On this day during the middle of winter (mostly in December), cooked white rice, and cooked fish would be prepared for dinner. One serving of this meal would be kept in the attic for the house deity.

Next morning, the dish is brought back and the food served as a *Naveed* for the family.

In Kashmiri language a house used to be called a 'Lar'. Strange thing, it is the name of 'household guardian deity' in ancient pre-Christian Roman religion. Romans would have a celebration for their guardian deity 'Lar' in December. A strange coincidence or a global village?

Kawa Punim - Tradition, A Connection

Kawa punim ((काव पुनिम, *kaav punim*) of the crows) is celebrated on the fourteenth day of the bright fortnight (Shukla (शुक्ल, *shukl*) purnima) of the month of Magha (माघ, *maagh*).

Winter time in Kashmir is cold, snowy and dark. Not so long ago most of the people were forced indoors, designing handicrafts, telling stories and whiling away their time until spring. The average life, though dreary, was by no means monotonous thanks to punctuated celebrations of various feast days throughout the winter. One such is that of Kawa Punim, when food is offered to the crows!

The offering of food to the crows seemingly takes Kashmiri Thanks giving to new heights, yet the tradition is steeped in our long history of living in Kashmir valley with and as the *Nagas* (नाग, *naag*), *Pisachas* (पिशाच, *pishaach*), Buddhists and Shaivites.

During the winter, when birds have slim pickings, Kashmiris have found an opportunity for redemption and put into practice the Vedic invocation, "[May all beings dwell in happiness, May all beings dwell in peace]". Ironically though, we want the crows to come into our house as true *Battas* (बट, *bat*) (Kashmiri Pandits) with a Tilak on the forehead (made from red clay) having bathed ceremoniously at Gangabal (गङ्ग बल, *gang bal*) (the *Ganga/Ganges* for Kashmir), and wish them to roost on the porch of our new house and feast on the cooked rice. The cooked rice is placed on a large ladle made by weaving a grass mat at the end of a cross made with two unequal length sticks of willow. The offering (white rice, *Khichri*, or yellow rice) varies with local custom or reeti. And our children recite in Kashmiri:

Why the crow?



We have the tradition of ancestor (pitris (पितृ, *pitr*, प्यतर, *pyatar*)) worship, and crows are considered either the transporters of food to the ancestors or actual representative ancestors themselves. In Tibetan Buddhism the crow is the herald and protector of the Dalai Lama. Since Kashmiri scholars were instrumental in spreading what eventually became Tibetan Buddhism, they - while drawing heavily upon the *Tantrik* (तांत्रिक, *taantrik*) and Shaivite systems of Kashmir - may have taken the crow along as a part of their legacy. As the vehicle of *Shani* (शनि) (Saturn), the crow under Shani's influence is a harbinger of hope even in most dreary times of winter. The crow therefore symbolically brings together our tradition of giving thanks to the ancestors, connection to Buddhism, with *Saraswat* (सारस्वत) and Dravidian practices in the harbinger of hope. Having propitiated the ancestors, *Kawa punim* also provides a transition to the next day of *Huræ okdoh* (हुर्य ओकदोह, *hury okadoh*) --the first day of cleaning of houses for the great feast of *Herath* [Shivaratri].

Religious Festivals in Kashmir
FESTIVALS CELEBRATED BY KASHMIRI PANDITS

Kawa batta kawo, [the Pandit crow] (काव बटु कावो, *kaav bat kaavo*)

Khichiray kawo, [the crow who likes Khichdi] (ख्यच्चरे कावो, *khyatchre kaavo*)

Gangabala srana karith [bathed at Gangabal] (गन्गु बलु श्राना कैरिथ, *gang bal shraanaa karith*)

Gurute metchi teuka karith [with tilak] (गुरुत्य मेचि ट्योका कैरिथ, *gurty metchi tyokaa karith*)

Sanei nawe larei kanna darey beh. [perch on our new house] (साने नवि लरि कनुदारे बेह, *saane navi lari kanndaare boh*)

Kashmiri Calendar - *The Panchang and the Janthari*

[Kashmiri Pandits follow a lunisolar calendar. The lunar calendar dates are based on speed of the moon around the earth, and speed of the sun through the galaxy. Since lunar year is shorter, a discrepancy of 11 days creeps in between the lunar and the solar calendar. To synchronize the calendars, an extra month is added to lunar calendar after every thirty months.

Therefore, one cannot reconcile the dates from one calendar to the other without knowledge of astronomy and associated intricate calculations. Hence the birthdates keep moving around].

Why is my Kashmiri Birthday not on the same day every year?

The answer to the question is in the Hindu calendar that is based on Hindu astronomy. We all know that earth revolves around the sun, and the moon revolves around the earth. And the sun moves around in the galaxy. The Hindu/Kashmiri Calendar is based on precise calculations of movement of these and other stars in the sky. The calendar or the record of time in Hindu astronomy is called a *Panchanga* (पञ्चांग, *panchaang*). Panchanga is a Sanskrit word made up of two syllables pancha (five) and anga (parts). Hence a panchanga is a document that records astronomical information based on five parameters. These are the tithi (lunar day), the *vara* (वार, *vaar*) (day of the week), the *nakshatra* (constellation (नक्षत्र, *nakshtr*, नख्यैत, *nakhyaṭ*), lunar house), the *yoga* (योग, *yog*, यूग, *yoog*) (luni-solar day) and the *karana* (half lunar day). Our calendar can be called a lunisolar calendar.

Tithi (lunar day)

This is a unit of time measured as distance covered in degrees of a circle in the sky. A *tithi* (त्यथ, *tyath*) is a measurement of 12 degrees of longitudinal separation between the sun and the moon in their orbits. For example, at new moon (अमावस्या, *amavasya*) the sun and the moon are separated by zero degrees (celestial overlap). Soon, the overlap ends and the sun and moon move away from each other, and reckoning of time begins. One tithi is 12 degrees of longitudinal separation between sun and the moon. Each tithi adds an incremental separation of the moon from the sun until 180 degrees of distance in the orbit are covered by the 15th tithi of full moon or poornima. These 15 tithis of the moon make up the waxing phase of the moon called the *Shukla-*

pakhsha, or the bright fortnight of the lunar month (शोकल पछ, *shokal pachh*, जून पछ, *zoon pachh*).

After the event of the full moon (*purnima*) (पुनिम, *punim*), the moon begins the return journey, and tithis are counted again from one until the longitudinal distance between sun and the moon is back to zero. This second phase of fifteen days is the waning phase of the moon or the *krishna-pakhsha* or dark fortnight of the lunar month (गट पछ, *gat pachh*). In this reckoning we have travelled a complete 360 degree celestial circle in thirty tithis of one lunar month (a masa). And then we start again with the waxing phase of shukla paksha moon cycle. Because of the cyclical nature of this movement and reckoning, one may begin a lunar month either from the time of the full moon or the new moon.

How long is a tithi?

Since a tithi measures time in terms of distance covered in degrees by the moon, one has to determine the precise speed of moon at individual points in the cycle. The speed of moon is variable and depends on its distance from the sun and earth. A tithi can therefore last between 19 to 26 solar hours. An average tithi lasts for about 0.95 of a solar day.

When does a lunar tithi (lunar day) and a solar day begin?

A solar day begins at midnight. The lunar tithi can begin at any time of the solar day as it depends on the relative distance of the moon from the sun at a given time. This way of reckoning moves the beginning of a lunar tithi around in relation to the solar day. The tithi that is prevalent at sunrise is the prevailing tithi for the solar day. And by convention, if a tithi begins after sunrise and ends before sunrise of the next day, it gets eliminated. In such a case the numerical sequence of the tithis is broken. Thus sometimes we get a lost tithi, and other times we gain a tithi. This is possible because the total time of each tithi is variable. Since a Kashmiri Pandit's birthdate is determined based on tithis, and tithis are of variable lengths, the birthday keeps moving around every year.

An additional wrinkle of time

Since our lunar twelve months are based on lunar days (*tithis*), a calendar year adds to about 354 days. Thus every year a cumulative discrepancy of 11 days creeps in between the solar and the lunar calendars. Therefore after every 30 months a correction to synchronize the two has to be introduced. An extra month is added to lunar calendar at that time. By convention, this leap-month

Religious Festivals in Kashmir

FESTIVALS CELEBRATED BY KASHMIRI PANDITS

(*adhika-masa*) (अधि मास, *adhi maas*) is inserted after the months of *Ashadha* (हार, *haar*) or *Shravana* (श्रावन, *shraavan*) and is called either a second *Ashadha* or *Shravana*. Thus every second or third year in the lunar calendar we get 13 months in a year.

This addition of a month further contributes to differences between the lunar and solar calendars, and adds to confusion of not having the lunar birthday on the same solar day every year.

And of course, one cannot reconcile the dates from one calendar to the other without knowledge of astronomy and associated intricate calculations.

Vara (day of the week)

Vara is the Sanskrit word for day of the week. Each day of the week is named after seven major astrological figures:

Lunar Calendar day	Astrological Figure	Gregorian Calendar
<i>Ravi-vara</i> (रवि वार)	Sun	Sunday
<i>Soma-vara</i> (सोम वार)	Moon	Monday
<i>Mangala-vara</i> (मंगल वार)	Mars	Tuesday
<i>Budha-vara</i> (बुध वार)	Mercury	Wednesday
<i>Guru-vara</i> (गुरु वार)	Jupiter	Thursday
<i>Shukra-vara</i> (शुक्र वार)	Venus	Friday
<i>Shani-vara</i> (शनि वार)	Saturn	Saturday

Nakhshatra (Constellation: Lunar house)

When the moon moves eastward in its orbit, it traverses various star groups along the way. Each of the portions of space traversed in a day is called a *nakhshatra* or a lunar house. There are 27 such houses. Each of these houses is named after a star or a group of stars.

Each day the moon moves about 13 degrees and 20 minutes in its orbit. And thus in one lunar month of 360 degrees, the moon moves through these 27 houses.

Religious Festivals in Kashmir

FESTIVALS CELEBRATED BY KASHMIRI PANDITS

A Hindu horoscope is based on the *nakhshatra* at the time of birth. Many elements of a person's character are thought to be determined by the *nakhshatra* (नक्षत्र, *nakshtr*, नख्यत्तु, *nakhyat*).

The *nakhshatra* of the person performing a religious service is recited in the opening statement of the pooza called the *Sankalpa*. Matching of horoscopes between prospective mates includes a comparison of *nakhshatras* to check for psychological compatibility. An addition of twelve Rashis (राशि, *raashi*) (based on the moon) to the system of *nakhashtras* further complicates our horoscopes. Commonly read newspaper horoscopes based on Sun-signs are not the same as that based on the *nakhshatras* and Moon-signs.

Yoga (The luni-solar day) (not yoga exercises)

The *yoga* (योग, *yog*, यूग, *yoog*) is the time period during which the combined longitudinal motion of the sun and moon amounts to 13 degrees and 20 minutes. Like the *nakhshatras* there are 27 *yogas*.

Karana (a half tithi)

There are two *karanas* in each *tithi*. Thus a *karana* is half a *tithi*. The *karana* is calculated to be 6 degrees of longitudinal separation between the sun and moon.

Thus we have covered the five components of the *panchanga*. All this information is put together to calculate a lunar month or *Masa*.

Each of the lunar months (*Masa*) is given a Sanskrit name. The Hindu year contains twelve months named after the *nakhshatra* in which the full moon is seen.

A Kashmiri year begins in the month of *Chaitra*.

Thus a *panchanga* defines a particular time of a day using the five parameters listed above. The *panchanga* provides dates of important Hindu festivals, and also the most auspicious time and day to undertake any task during the year.

Panchanga is precisely calculated, computed and tabulated in a document called the *Janthari* (जन्त्री, *jantree*, नेछि पॅतुर, *nechhi pat*). Every year we get a new *Janthari* before *Navreh* (the Kashmiri New year's day). Religious festivals and family events are solemnized on dates based on this system of *Panchanga*.

Religious Festivals in Kashmir
FESTIVALS CELEBRATED BY KASHMIRI PANDITS

Lunar Month	Kashmiri Name	Solar Month	Nakhshatra
Chaitra	चिथुर, <i>tchithr</i>	March - April	चित्रा, <i>chitraa</i>
Vaisakha	वह्यख, <i>vahyakh</i>	April - May	विशाखा, <i>vishaakhaa</i>
Jyaistha	जेठ, <i>zeṭh</i>	May - June	ज्येष्ठा, <i>jyēṣṭhaa</i>
Asadha	हार, <i>haar</i>	June - July	पूर्व-आशाढा, <i>poorv-aashaaḍhaa</i>
Sravana	श्रावन, <i>shraavan</i>	July - August	श्रवणा, <i>shravanaa</i>
Bhadrapada	बौदुर्य-प्यथ, <i>boḍry-pyath</i>	August - September	पूर्व भाद्रपदा, <i>poorv bhaadrapadaa</i>
Asvina	औशुद, <i>oṣhud</i>	September - October	अश्विनी, <i>ashvinee</i>
Karttika	कार्तिक, <i>kaartik</i>	October - November	कार्तिका, <i>kaartikaa</i>
Margasirsa	मँजहोर, <i>mañjahor</i>	November - December	मार्गशीष, <i>maargashees</i>
Pausa	पोह, <i>poh</i>	December - January	पुषा, <i>puṣaa</i>
Magha	माग, <i>maag</i>	January - February	मघा, <i>maghaa</i>
Phalguna	फागुन, <i>faagun</i>	February - March	फाल्गुनि, <i>faalguni</i>

Religious Festivals in Kashmir
FESTIVALS CELEBRATED BY KASHMIRI PANDITS

Kashmiri Glossary

Original Word	Roman font in Unicode	Devnagari font in Unicode	Meaning
Adi Shankaracharya	Aadi shnkaraachaary	आदि शंकराचार्य	eighth century Indian philosopher
Ahamkara	ahnkaar	अहंकार	personal identity of ego (I-ness)
Amar	amar	अमर	Immortality
Amarnath	amaranaath	अमरनाथ	a name for Lord Shiva
Amavasya	amaavasyaa (maavas)	अमावस्या (मावस)	new moon last day of the dark fortnight in lunar calendar
Arjuna	arjun (arazan)	अर्जुन (अरज़न)	the Pandava to whom Shri Krishna revealed Gita <i>gyaan</i>
Ashuras	asur	असुर	the evil doers opposed to the Devatas
Asuj	asooj (o'shud)	असूज (ऑशुद)	seventh month in Kashmiri Calendar
Atman	aatman, aatmaa	आत्मन, आत्मा	the personification of the Almighty in a person, a Soul
Attagat	atgat	अतुगत	Pocket money parents give to married daughters on a visit to their house
Avatar	avataar	अवतार	an incarnation of the Almighty
Ayodhya	ayodhyaa	अयोध्या	a city in Central India, birthplace of Rama
Baala Gopala	baal goopaal	बाल गूपाल	Krishna as an infant
Baala leela	baal leelaa	बाल लीला	the plays of Krishna during childhood
Baingan bhhujia	buz vaangun	बुजु वान्गुन	a dish made from eggplant
Batavar	batvaar	बटुवार	Saturday
Batuka or Vatuk	Vatuk	वटुक	the celestial messenger during Herath
Beeb Ghar-Moj (Bib Dharam moj)	beeb gar moj (moj)	बीब गर मोज (मौज)	Woman associated with Pan ceremony who used to do the Pooja
Bhader, Bhadra (Bhadrapeth)	boḍr, badaraa, (boḍryapyath)	बौदुर, बदरा, (बौदुर्यप्यथ)	Sixth month in Kashmiri Calendar
Bhagavat Gita	bhagavat geetaa	भगवत् गीता	the discourse between Krishna to Arjuna at the battlefield in Mahabharata
Bhagwan Ram	bhagavaan raam	भगवान राम	an incarnation of Lord Vishnu
Bhairav	boḥrav	बौरव	the ascetic Shiva
Bhakti	baktee	बक्ती	Devotion
Bhavani	bavoṇee	बवौनी	the Goddess worshipped at

Religious Festivals in Kashmir
FESTIVALS CELEBRATED BY KASHMIRI PANDITS

Original Word	Roman font in Unicode	Devnagari font in Unicode	Meaning
Bhresavar	brasavaar	ब्रसवार	Tulmul (Thursday) fourth day of week in Kashmiri
Bomvar	bomavaar	बोमवार	(Tuesday) second day of week in Kashmiri
Brahma	bramhaa	ब्रम्हा	the aspect of Almighty responsible for Creation
Bringisha Samhita	bringish snhitaa	बृन्निश संहिता	a treatise describing Tulamul story
Bodha-vara (Budhvara)	bvadavaar	बुधवार	(Wednesday) third day of the week in Kashmiri
Chaitra (Tsither)	tchitr (tchithr)	चित्र (चित्रुर)	the first month of the year in Kashmiri
Chhaddi Mubarak	chhaḍaee mubaarak (chhoḍay)	छडी मुबारक (छेड)	the holy mace of Shiva
Chiranjeevi	chirnjeevee (tchrizeev)	चिरंजीवी (चरिंजीव)	immortal being
Devaki (Deeveki)	devakee (deevakee)	देवकी (दीवकी)	the birth mother of Krishna
Devata (Divta)	devataa (divataah)	देवता (दिवताह)	the celestial good guys
Dhashratha	Dasharath	दशरथ	King of Ayodya, Shri Ram's father
Dritrashtra	dhritaraasṭr	धृतराष्ट्र	the blind Kuru king during the Mahabharata
Dhull	ḍul	डुल	a large vessel used in Herath Pooja
Divali (Deevali, Dipavali)	deevolee, deepamaalaa	दीवोली, दीपमाला	the festival of lights
Doonya Mavas	ḍaony maavas	डून्य मावस	the last day of herath ritual
Dulji (Duljees)	ḍaulij (ḍaulaji)	डुलिज (डुलजि)	small vessels used during hearth pooja
Dvapara Yuga	dvaapar yvag	द्वापर युग	name of an epoch in Indian cosmology
Dwarka	dvaarakaa	द्वारका	a city in western India, the city of Krishna
Dyara Daham	dyaar daḥam	द्यारु दहम	the tenth day of Herath festival
Faagun	faagun	फागुन	the month during which we celebrate herath
Five tatwas (Paantsch Twath)	pnch tatv (paantch tvat)	पंच तत्व (पान्च त्वत)	the five elements or components that make up our body
Gadda Bhatta	gaadḍa baṭ	गाडु बतु	fish offering to propitiate house-guardian deity
Gadda Kaah	gaadḍa kaah	गाडु काह	the day of fish feast during herath
Gadhwa	gaḍaay	गॅडवु	a tumber vessel

Religious Festivals in Kashmir
FESTIVALS CELEBRATED BY KASHMIRI PANDITS

Original Word	Roman font in Unicode	Devnagari font in Unicode	Meaning
Ganesha	gaṇaeesh (ganapat)	गणीश (गनपत)	the elephant headed son of Parvati
Gita	geetaa	गीता	discourse between Krishna and Arjuna during the Mahabharata war
Gopi (Goopy)	gopee (goopee)	गोपी (गूपी)	the female friends of Krishna
Guru-vara	gvaṛ vaar	ग्वरु वार	the alternate name for Thursday in Kashmiri
Hanuman	Hanumaan	हनुमान	non-human disciple of Ram
Haarr (Haadd)	haar (haaḍa)	हार (हाड)	fourth month in Kashmiri Calendar
Herath	herat (herath)	हेरत (हेरथ)	festival to welcome Shiva and Parvati in her parental home
Herath Kharcha	herath kharḥch	हेरथ खरुच	pocket money given during Herath
Himavant	himavant (hemavant)	हिमवन्त (हेमवन्त)	the King who ruled the Himalayas and father of Parvati
Huri Atham	hury oṭham	हुर्य ओठम	the eighth day during Herath
Huri Navam	hury navam	हुर्य नवम	the ninth day during Herath
Huri Okdoh	hury okadoh	हुर्य ओकदोह	the first day during Herath
Huri Sattam	hury satam	हुर्य सतम	the seventh day during Herath
Huri Shiyam	hury shoyam	हुर्य शेयम	the sixth day during Herath
Ikshawaku	ikshavaak	इक्शवाक	ancestor of Rama
Janama Ashtami	janṃ aṣṭamee	जन्म अष्टमी	the birthday of Krishna
Janthari	jantree (nechhipaṭr)	जन्त्री (नेछिपेतर)	a booklet containing a Kashmiri Calendar
Jigyasa	jigyaasaa	जिग्यासा	the thirst to seek knowledge
Kaikeyi	kaika_ii (keekeey)	कैकई (कीकीय)	second wife of Dashrath, King of Ayodya
Kailash	kailaas (kolaas)	कैलास (कॉलास)	the mountain in Himalayas as the place of Shiva
Kaloosh (Kalusha)	kalush	कलुश	a vessel filled with water and walnuts representing the deity abandoned son of Kunti (from Sun God)
Karana	karṇa (karan)	कर्ण (करन)	all our actions in this world
Karma	karm (kaṛm)	कर्म (करुम)	
Kartik	kaartik	कार्तिक	eighth month in Kashmiri Calendar
Kashmiri Leela (Kaesher Leela)	kashameeri leelaa (kōshṛ leelaa)	कश्मीरि लीला (कॉशुर लीला)	hymns in Kashmiri language
Katha	kathaa	कथा	a story

Religious Festivals in Kashmir

FESTIVALS CELEBRATED BY KASHMIRI PANDITS

Original Word	Roman font in Unicode	Devnagari font in Unicode	Meaning
Kaushaliya	kaushalyaa	कौशल्या	the mother of Rama
Kawa punim	kaay punim	कावु पुनिम	the day we offer food to birds in the winter
Khecher/kheched	khyatchr (khyatchda)	ख्यचुर (ख्यचुड)	a porridge
Khechi Mawas	khotchi maavas	खेचि मावस	a festival in winter when Khichdi is offered to the diety
Khira Bhawani (Kheer Bhawaeni)	ksheer bhavaanee (kheer bavonee)	क्षीर भवानी (खीर बवोनी)	the goddess resident in Tulmul
Krama/kurma	kram	क्रम	a philosophical tradition of Kashmir Shaivism
Krishna	kriṣṇa (kriṣhṇ)	कृष्ण (कृशुन)	incarnation of Vishnu
Kubera	kuber (kubeer)	कुबेर (कुबीर)	the rich king of Pisachas
Kuru	kuroo, (korav)	कुरू, (कोरव)	the cousins of Pandavas
Laayi	laayi	लायि	puffed rice
Lakshman (Lakhiman)	lakshmaṇa (lakhyaman)	लक्ष्मण (लैख्यमन)	a brother of Rama
Lalla Ded	lal dyad	लल द्यद	the philosopher poetess in Kashmir
Lanka	lankaa	लन्का	the place that was ruled by Ravana
Lingam	lingam (shiv ling)	लिंगम (शिव लिंग)	the symbol of Lord Shiva
Maagh	maagh (maag)	माघ (माग)	eleventh month in Kashmiri Calendar
Maghar/Manjahor	magar, (mañjahor)	मगर, (मँझहोर)	ninth month in Kashmiri Calendar
Mahabharath	mahaa baarat	महा बारत	the war of Mahabharatha as well as the book describing it
Manas	maanas	मानस	a Sanskrit term closely translates to the mind
Mangala-vara	mangal vaar	मन्गल वार	(Tuesday) second day of week in Kashmiri
Mathura	mathuraa (matharaa)	मथुरा (मथरा)	birthplace of Lord Krishna in central India
Meenawati	Meenaavaṭee	मीनावती	the mother of Parvati
Mesha	meṣ (meesh)	मेघ (मीश)	the ram in Indian astrology
Naarivan	noṛyavan, (noṛivan)	नौर्यवन, (नौरिवन)	the multicolored thread worn during a Pooja
Nakhshatra (Nekhther)	n· tr, (nakhyaṭr)	नक्षत्र, (नख्यैतुर)	Constellation
Nanda (Nanda goor)	nand, (nand goor)	नन्द, (नन्दु गूर)	foster father of Krishna
Nandi	nandee	नन्दी	the Bull vehicle of Shiva

Religious Festivals in Kashmir

FESTIVALS CELEBRATED BY KASHMIRI PANDITS

Original Word	Roman font in Unicode	Devnagari font in Unicode	Meaning
Naveed	naʋeed	नैवीद	a portion of food offered to a diety and eaten by participants
Navratra	navaraatr	नवरात्र	nine days of goddess pooja
Navroz	navaroz	नवरोज़	Iranian new years' day
Nealakantha	neelakaṇaṭh (neelkōṇṭh)	नीलकण्ठ (नीलुकाँन्ठ)	the blue throated one - another name for Shiva
Nott	noṭ	नोट	a pitcher of clay
Paad	paad	पाद	Foot
Parama Shiva	param shiv	परम शिव	the name given to the Almighty in Kashmir Shaivism
Parvati	paarvatee (paaravaṭee)	पार्वती (पारवैती)	wife of Shiva
Pausha (Poh)	pauṣ (poh)	पौष (पोह)	tenth month in Kashmiri Calendar
Pavither	pavitr (pavyaṭhr)	पवित्र (पव्यैथुर)	a ring made of Dharbh or Kush grass and worn during a Pooja
Phalgun (Faagun)	faalgun (faagun)	फाल्गुन (फागुन)	The twelfth lunar month during which herath is celebrated
Pitris (pither) petras (petar)	pyataras, pyatar	प्यतरस, प्यतर	the dead ancestors
Poha	poh	पोह	tenth month in Kashmiri Calendar
Pooza	poozaa	पूज़ा	Kashmiri term for Pooja
Pun	pan	पन	a festival when Roath are made
Pandit (pandit saeb)	pnḍit (paḍit soḅ)	पंडित (पेंडित सौब)	the vernacular description of a Kashmiri Hindu male
Radha	raadhaa	राधा	the consort of Krishna
Rakhi	raakhee	राखी	the band tied by a sister around a brothers's wrist
Raksha Bandhan	rakshaabandhan, rakshaabandan	रक्षाबन्धन, रक्षाबन्दन	festival during which Raakhi is tied
Ramanavmi (Rama navam)	raam navamee (raamṇavam)	राम नवमी (रामुनवम)	the birthday of Rama
Ravi-vara	ravi-vaar	रवि-वार	(Aathvar) Sunday in Kashmiri
Reeth	reet, reeth	रीत, रीथ	the unique traditions in a family for celebration of festivals
Roath	roṭh	रोठ	a sweet bread prepared on special occasions
Rudra Kalagni	rudr kaalaagni	रुद्र कालाग्नि	an aspect of Shiva as the destroyer
Salaam	salaam	सलाम	the day following Herath pooja

Religious Festivals in Kashmir
FESTIVALS CELEBRATED BY KASHMIRI PANDITS

Original Word	Roman font in Unicode	Devnagari font in Unicode	Meaning
Sani Potul	sani pvatul (sani potul)	सनि प्वतुल (सनि पोटुल)	a stone symbolizing a diety
Sani wari	sani vör	सनि वॉर	two small utensils used in Herath, and later kept on the hearth
Sankranti (Sankraat)	sankraanti (sōnkaraat)	सन्क्रान्ति (सॉन्करात)	the last day of a solar month
Saptarishi (saptareush)	sapt rriṣi (sat ryosh, sat ryosh)	सप्त ऋषि (सतु र्योश, सतु र्येश)	Sataresh, the seven sages of the ancient time
Satyanarayan Katha	satya naaraayana katha	सत्य नारायण कथा	a festival offering pooja to Satyanarayana (the Almighty)
Shakti	shaktee	शक्ती	the female aspect of the Almighty
Shani-vara	shani vaar (baṭ vaar)	शनि वार (बटु वार)	(Batavaar) Saturday in Hindi
Shareer	shareer (shoreer)	शरीर (शेरीर)	the body
Sharika	shaarikaa	शारिका	the female diety worshipped in Kashmir
Shir	sheer (dvaḍ)	शीर (द्वद)	Milk
Shiva	shiv	शिव	the aspect of Almighty involved in destruction and creation
Shivaratri	shiv raatree (herath)	शिव रात्री (हेरथ)	the major festival of Kashmiri Pandits
Shokervar	shokṛ vaar	शोकुर वार	Friday in Kashmiri
Shravan Poonim	shraavaṇ punim	श्रावण पुनिम	the day we celebrate Shiva and visit the Amanath cave
Shravun	shraavan	श्रावन	fifth month in Kashmiri Calendar
Soma-vara	som vaar (tchāṇḍṛ vaar)	सोम वार (चैन्द्र वार)	(Tsandervar) Monday
Sonth and Navreh	sonth ṭ navaroh	सोन्थ तु नवरेह	Spring time, and the festival
Tandava	taanḍaav	तान्दव	dance performed by Shiva
Tchandervar	tchāṇḍṛ vaar (tchāṇḍṛ vaar)	चैन्दुर वार (चैन्द्र वार)	first day of the week – Monday
Teel Aatham	teeḷ oṭham	तीलु ऑठम	the tenth day after Herath, special for donating lamp oil for the departed
Thaal Bharun	thaal barun	थाल बरुन	ritual of collecting accouterments for the Thaal
Thali	thaalee (thaal)	थाली (थाल)	a metal plate

Religious Festivals in Kashmir

FESTIVALS CELEBRATED BY KASHMIRI PANDITS

Original Word	Roman font in Unicode	Devnagari font in Unicode	Meaning
Tilak (Teuk)	tilak (tyok)	तिलक (ट्योक)	a mark placed on the forehead during a Pooja
Tithi	tithi (tyath)	तिथि (त्यथ)	a time period in Lunar calendar
Tsittter	tchithr (tchitr)	चिथुर (चित्र)	the first month of Kashmiri year
Tulmul	tulamul	तुलमुल	a place in Kashmir
Uma (Woma Bhagvati)	umaa (vvamaa)	उमा (वमा)	female goddess in Shaivism, and consort of Shiva
Vahekh	vahyak (vahyakh)	वह्यक (वह्यख)	second month of the year
Vaishnavite	vaishnavaa_it	वैश्रवाइट	person acknowledging Vishnu as the Almighty
Valmiki	vaalmeekee	वाल्मीकी	author of Ramayana
Vanars	vaanar	वानर	a clan of non-human soldiers who helped Rama in battle
Vara	vaar	वार	a day in lunar calendar
Vasudeva (Vasadeev)	vaasudev (vaaṣḍeev)	वासुदेव (वासुदीव)	birth father of Krishna
Vasudhaiva Kutumbhakam	vasudev kuṭumbakam	वसुदेव कुटुम्बकम्	whole world is our family
Vatuka Pooza	vaṭak poozaa	वटक पूजा	pooja for Vatuk at Herath
Vikrami	vikramee (bikramee)	विक्रमी (बिक्रमी)	an Indian Calendar
Vinayak Chaturthi (Venayak Tchorum)	vinaayak chaturthee (vyanaayak tchoram)	विनायक चतुर्थी (व्यनायक चोरम)	the day of Ganesha
Wager Baah	vaagry baah	वागुर्य बाह	the day when a messenger comes to inform about Shiva's visit
Wagur	vaagur	वागुर	a pither filled with walnuts and water, meant for herath Pooja
Wye	vai, vay (vaayi gaṇḍar)	वै, वय (वायि गन्डुर)	the bitter herb eaten at the time of Nowreh
Yachh (yochh)	yochhy (yochh)	येछ्य (योछ)	possibly a clan of people who lived in Kashmir and associated regions of Himalyas
Yadava	yaadav	यादव	a clan in central India - the clan of Krishna
Yasoda (Jasoda)	yashodaa, (jasudaa) (jasadaa)	यशोदा, (जसुदा) (जसदा)	the foster mother of Krishna
Yoga	yug (yvag)	युग (य्वग)	(Yuga) a time period in a lunar calendar
Zaeth	zeth	ज़ेठ	third month in Kashmiri calendar
Zanam Ashtami	janm aṣṭamee	जन्म अष्टमी	birthday of Krishna

Religious Festivals in Kashmir
FESTIVALS CELEBRATED BY KASHMIRI PANDITS

Original Word	Roman font in Unicode	Devnagari font in Unicode	Meaning
Zanga Treye	zang tri	ज़न्गु त्रय	third day after (Navreh)
Zarama Satam	zaram satam	ज़रमु सतम	the day before Janam Ashtami
Zetha Ashtami	zeth otham	ज़ेठु ऑठम	Kashmiri for Ragnya Bhawani's day, Tulmul)
Kawa batta kawo	kaav baṭ kaavo	काव बटु कावो	the Pundit crow
Khichiray kawo	khyatchre kaavo	ख्यच्चेरे कावो	the crow who likes Khichdi
Gangabala srana karith	gang baḷ shraanaah kaṛith	गन्गु बलु श्रानाह कैरिथ	bathed at Gangabal
Gurute metchi teuka karith	guruṭy motchi	गुरुट्य मेच्ची	with tilak (of brown loam)
Sanei nawe larei kanna darey beh	ṭyokaah kaṛith saani navi lare kaṇ daare boh	ट्योकाह कैरिथ सानि नवि लरे कनु दारे बेह	perch on our new house (a wooden projection on the outer side of a window for bird feeding)
Rethav manza rethah, Baedarpethah, Venayaka Choram te Aathavar	ryataṭ manṭ ryathaa boḍṛyapyathaa vyanaayak tchoram ṭ aathavaar	र्यतव मन्जु र्यथा बौदुर्यप्यथा व्यनायक चोरम तु आथवार	the first line recited during the Pan Pooja - It was the night of all nights, during the month of Bhadoon, the fourth day of the fortnight birthday of Ganesha on a Sunday (the most auspicious night because the three occur together)
Bhaja govindam, Bhaja govindam mooda mate	bhaj govindam bhaj govindam moodh mate	भज गोविन्दम भज गोविन्दम मूढ मते	recite Govinda (Krishna) ,recite Govinda, O' you fool
Jasada Nandagooris koon chhi wanan, wanan chhi Radha Krishan au	Jasadaa nand gooris kun chhi vanaan, vanaan chhi raadhaa kriṣṇa aav	जसदा नन्दु गूरिस कुन छि वनान, वनान छि राधा कृष्ण आव	Mother Yasoda tells Nanda the dairyman, rumor is Radha and Krishna are in town

Link to Download Audio for Kashmiri Glossary:

<http://koausa.org/omanandkoul/audio/glossary.mp3>

KOA Executive Committee and Board (Year 2016)

Executive Committee



PRESIDENT
Sunil Fotedar



VICE-PRESIDENT
Sudesh Saraf
Illinois



SECRETARY
Ajay Tikoo
New Jersey



TREASURER
Rajeev Kaul
New York

Board of Directors



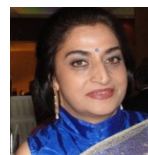
Anil Mattoo
Zone 1 Director



Sudesh Kaul
Zone 2 Director



Nirja Sadhu
Zone 3 Director



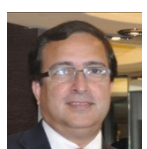
Shakun Malik
Zone 4 Director



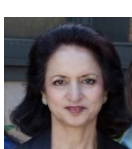
Randhir Wokhlu
Zone 5 Director



Suresh Sus
Zone 6 Director



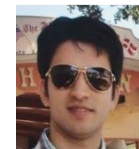
Sudesh Saraf
Zone 7 Director



Veena Kaul
Zone 8 Director



Maneesha Munshi
Zone 9 Director



Piyush Mattoo
Zone 10 Director



Kashmiri Overseas Association (KOA), Inc.

Promote, Preserve and Protect Kashmiri Pandit Ethnic & Socio-Cultural Heritage

www.koausa.org

A 501(c)(3) non-profit, tax-exempt socio-cultural organization registered in Maryland, USA

Mission

The KOA's mission is to promote Kashmir Pandit ethnic and socio-cultural heritage (language, history, art, etc), celebrate religious festivals of importance to Kashmiri Pandits; provide financial assistance to needy and deserving individuals, educational institutions, places of worship and shrines, both in the US and in India; preserve historical monuments and sites of religious and cultural significance in Kashmir, India; and provide assistance to displaced Kashmiri Pandits.

Vision

The KOA shall serve as the premier Kashmiri Pandit institution with a fundamental purpose that lies in promoting Kashmiri Pandit heritage and its way of living, Kashmiri Brahmanism and its philosophies; and be a center of social learning that caters to the spiritual, cultural, physical, humanitarian and educational needs of the community.

Appeal for Donations

KOA runs a number of programs whose purpose is to protect, preserve, and promote Kashmiri ethnic and socio-cultural heritage, to promote and celebrate festivals, and to provide financial assistance to the needy and deserving. Your contribution in US dollars is tax-deductible. Please donate generously and make KOA a stronger organization. Visit www.koausa.org