

ACTION AGAINST ILLEGAL ROHINGYAS

The issue of illegal Rohingya migration has emerged as a serious concern for several countries including India. The Rohingyas have fled their country in large numbers due to persecution and violence. While their plight has drawn international sympathy, the increasing illegal entry of Rohingyas poses significant national security, economic, and social challenges for host nations. It is time for a firm, humane, yet decisive policy response.

India, in particular, has witnessed a steady rise in the number of Rohingya refugees entering through porous borders. Many settle in urban slums or refugee camps in states like Jammu & Kashmir, Delhi, West Bengal, and Assam. Security agencies have repeatedly raised concerns about their undocumented presence and the potential for radicalization, illegal activities, and burden on public resources. Some arrested individuals have even been found using forged documents to access welfare schemes and jobs illegally.

While humanitarian concerns must not be ignored, the rule of law cannot be compromised. Nations have the sovereign right to protect their borders and determine who is allowed to enter and stay. Allowing unchecked entry of illegal immigrants sets a dangerous precedent and fuels resentment among local populations who face unemployment, resource shortages, and strained civic infrastructure.

Moreover, the continued presence of illegal Rohingya migrants puts additional pressure on law enforcement and administration. There is credible evidence that some Rohingya individuals have links to international crime networks and extremist groups. This cannot be brushed aside under the garb of humanitarianism. The safety and stability of the host country must come first.

The Indian government has rightly emphasized deportation and tightening of border controls, but implementation remains slow and inconsistent. It is essential to create a coordinated, nationwide strategy to identify, document, and deport illegal Rohingyas while strengthening border surveillance. At the same time, India must work with international agencies like the UNHCR and regional partners to ensure that Rohingyas takes back its nationals and works toward safe repatriation.

However, while taking strong action, authorities must also ensure that due process is followed, and that no human rights violations occur. Illegal immigrants must be treated with dignity during detention or deportation, and children, women, and vulnerable individuals should receive appropriate care and legal safeguards.

Addressing the issue of illegal Rohingya migrants requires a balanced, multi-pronged approach-strict border management, swift identification and deportation mechanisms, regional cooperation to resolve the root cause of the crisis.

Historical Legacy and Modern Realities of PoJK and Jammu & Kashmir

Historical Roots and Evolution A territory of Princely States to Partitioned land

■ DR. DEEPAK KAPOOR

The history of Jammu & Kashmir and PoJK is marked by the rise and fall of dynasties, conquests, and treaties, culminating in the partition of 1947, which reshaped territorial boundaries and laid the foundation for contemporary political realities. Volumes have been penned down on the subject, and here again is a recollection of facts on the day when a clan was forced to leave its home, marked with large-scale carnage, the 22nd October.

Jammu & Kashmir and Pakistan-occupied Jammu & Kashmir (PoJK) have diverse terrain. It extends from fertile valleys to rugged mountains, which has profoundly influenced the development of its societies, economies, and political structures over the centuries. Understanding this historical evolution is essential to appreciate the complex cultural, social, and geopolitical landscape of the region today. Geography and strategic location shaped the earliest known settlements in the Kashmir Valley and Jammu hills.

Valleys and river plains in the Kashmir region supported agriculture and small principalities, while the surrounding mountains offered natural fortifications to local chieftains. In the valley, ancient dynasties such as the Kashyapas and Gonandas ruled (4th-12th century CE), laying the foundation for administrative structures and cultural development. Trade routes connecting Kashmir to Punjab, Tibet, and Central Asia facilitated the exchange of goods, ideas, and religious traditions, including Hinduism and Buddhism, which deeply influenced the social and cultural fabric of the region. From the 14th century onwards, Kashmir experienced a period of sustained Muslim rule with the establishment of the Shah Mir dynasty (1339-1561). This dynasty consolidated power in the valley, introducing new adminis-

trative practices, coinage systems, and Islamic scholarship, while patronising arts and architecture. The Mughal Empire (1586-1752) later brought Kashmir under its influence, and the region became renowned for its gardens, shawls, and trade. Afghan governors (1752-1819) subsequently ruled Kashmir from the mid-18th century, imposing heavy taxation and often inciting local rebellions.

The Jamwal Rajputs, later known as the Dogras, trace their ancestry to Raja Jamboo Lochan, believed to have lived around the fourteenth century B.C. He founded the city of "Jamboo," named after himself, which gradually became "Jammu." This region remained the traditional seat of the Dogras for centuries. Maharaja Gulab Singh was the founder of the modern princely state of Jammu and Kashmir. A descendant of Raja Dhruv Dev (who ruled Jammu from about 1703 to 1733), Gulab Singh was born on October 21, 1792, in Jammu. Trained in warfare and strategy by his grandfather, Mian Zorawar Singh, he joined Maharaja Ranjit Singh's service at the Lahore Darbar. His courage and tactical skill quickly earned him recognition, and in 1822, Ranjit Singh granted him the title of Raja of Jammu. He established the largest princely state in British India and ruled Jammu and Kashmir till 1857.

During this period, the Jammu hills were ruled by semi-independent Dogra Rajput chiefs who maintained fortresses, local militias, and ties with powerful empires. Their constant engagement in regional affairs gave them the administrative and military experience that would later help unify the region. Under the leadership of Gulab Singh, General Zorawar Singh (1821-1841) led campaigns that expanded Dogra influence across the Himalayas, capturing Kishtwar, Ladakh, Baltistan, and even temporarily parts of west-

ern Tibet. These campaigns demonstrated remarkable logistical and military skill, enabling the Dogras to consolidate territories and establishing the princely state of Jammu & Kashmir.

The Treaty of Amritsar in 1846 formalized this consolidation. After the First Anglo-Sikh War, the British defeated the Sikh Empire, and the Treaty of Lahore ceded Kashmir to British control. The British then gave Kashmir to Gulab Singh officially recognizing him as the Maharaja of Jammu & Kashmir. This treaty established the boundaries of a princely state that encompassed Jammu, Kashmir Valley, Ladakh, and Baltistan, and it marked the beginning of Dogra administration that would last for over a century. Gulab Singh and his successors maintained a delicate balance, integrating diverse regions and populations while navigating the influence of the British Empire.

During Dogra rule (1846-1947), the administration of Jammu & Kashmir faced the challenges of governing a vast and geographically diverse territory. Centralized bureaucracy was introduced to oversee taxation, law, and order, while local leaders were co-opted to ensure loyalty in remote areas.

The economy relied heavily on agriculture, with rice, wheat, and orchards forming the backbone, supplemented by crafts such as shawl weaving, carpet making, and timber trade. The Dogra rulers also patronized temples, shrines, and cultural festivals, preserving the region's Hindu, Muslim, and Buddhist traditions. Despite these efforts, harsh winters, rugged terrain, and occasional rebellions, particularly in the Kashmir Valley, made governance complex and often difficult.

The events of 1947 dramatically reshaped the region. In October of that year, the Pakistan army disguised as tribals and invaded Kashmir, seeking to capture the princely

state. Pakistan's army launched Operation Gulmarg in October 1947 with the aim to capture Srinagar, the winter capital of the princely state, and to force the accession of the state to Pakistan. The operation began on 22 October 1947, when thousands of Pakistan's soldiers and military officers camouflaged as Pashtun tribesmen crossed into Kashmir through Muzaffarabad. They looted and killed civilians along the way, creating chaos in the region. Maharaja Hari Singh, the Dogra ruler at the time, faced a dire situation and appealed to India for help. By signing the Instrument of Accession on 26 October 1947, he formally joined Jammu & Kashmir to the Indian Union, a decision that he had been planning for quite some time. Indian troops were airlifted into Srinagar the next day, marking the beginning of the first Indo-Pak war (1947-48). Operation Gulmarg thus became a turning point in the history of Jammu and Kashmir, which led to a United Nations-brokered ceasefire in 1949, establishing the Line of Control (LoC) and dividing the former princely state. Districts such as Mirpur, Muzaffarabad, Poonch, Gilgit and Baltistan came under Pakistan-occupied Kashmir, now referred to as PoJK.

The legacy of Dogra rule and the events of partition continue to shape the region today. The historical consolidation of diverse territories, administrative experiments, and cultural integration provide essential context for understanding both the political complexities and social dynamics of Jammu & Kashmir and PoJK. The partition not only defined modern borders but also created enduring geopolitical, economic, and social challenges. This historical foundation paves the way for understanding the geography, demographics, and cultural heritage of the region.

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The Sacred festival of Bhai Dooj

■ BAIRAJ CHAWALGAMI

The whole of the Jammu and Kashmir is known for its festivals, festivities, traditions and rituals and these are the signs and symbols of its diverse and vibrant culture. One such festival and ritual is the custom of celebrating the bond of love between the sisters and brother. Honoring the sacred bond of sibling, Bhai Dooj is a heartwarming Indian festival that rejoices in the timeless bond between brothers and sisters.

This ritual and festival is celebrated every year with great enthusiasm and gaiety and it symbolizes the love and affection between the brothers and sisters.

On this auspicious occasion, sisters apply Tilak on the forehead of their brothers and pray for the safety and long life of their brothers .On this day ,brothers usually visit the house of their sisters and pay gifts to their sisters as a mark of love and respect and the sister gives a feast to his brother. Bhai Dooj is also called Yam Dutta as it falls on the Duttī Thiti of the second fortnight of the Hindu month of Kartik Shuklpaksh. Bhai Tika, Bhai Dooj, Bhaubej, Bhai Phonta, Bhatra Dwitiya, etc is one and the same festival.

Bhai Dooj festival holds an immense importance in Hindu religion as people celebrate the special bond between brothers and sisters on this auspicious day.



This year sacred festival of Bhai Dooj this year that is 2025 falls on 23rd of October Thursday. There is a unique understanding between a brother and a sister. They are the best friends of each other, admirers of each other, secret sharers of each other and has unconditional love for each other. It is difficult to decode the feelings ,emotions and love between siblings. However, there are special days or occasions that are dedicated to

strengthening the love between a brother and a sister. Bhai Dooj is one such occasion that can define the eternal love between different siblings (brother and sister). This wonderful festival is an important occasion where sisters pray to God for the longevity ,well being and prosperity of their loved brother .This occasion occurs after two days of the Diwali festival .According to the Gregorian calendar ,the occasion occurs on the 2nd day of the

Shukla Paksha of the Kartika month which falls between October and November .Bhai Dooj is celebrated among Hindus of India ,Nepal and other countries .The occasion falls on the last day of the five day long celebrations of Diwali or Tihar festival .It is also celebrated as Yama Dwitiya 'in the southern parts of India .There are few Hindu mythological based stories related to the origin of this auspicious day .According to one legend ,Lord Krishna visited his sister ,Subhadra after killing demon Narkasura .His sister gave a warm welcome to him and made the occasion really special through flowers and sweets .Subhadra also applied the ceremonial tilak on the forehead of her brother ,Krishna and hence the festival of Bhai Dooj was born from here. Another legend revolves around the story of Yama ,the God of death and his sister Yamuna .It is believed that he met his sister on Dwitheyra ,the second day after new moon and thus occasion began to be celebrated as Yamadwitheya or Yamadvitiya across the country from that day .The festival of Bhai Dooj has a literal meaning attached to it .It is made up of two words namely -Bhai meaning brother and Dooj meaning the second day after the new moon which is a day of its celebration .The day holds the special significance into the lives of a brother and a sister .It is an auspicious occasion that celebrates the strong bonding between two opposite sib-

lings .Sisters invite their brothers to visit their place and prepare the beloved dishes for them .Sisters also pray to God for the well being and longevity of their brothers against all evils and bad fortune .In return ,brothers follow their responsibilities of caring and loving their sisters .On Bhai Dooj ,sisters perform a Puja for the well being and longevity of their brothers .It involves applying a tilk (vermilion mark) on their brothers foreheads ,performing aarti and offering prayers .In return ,brothers give gifts to their sisters as a token of love and protection .The celebrations of this day are similar to the festival of Raksha Bandhan .In southern parts of India ,the day is celebrated as Yama Dwitiya .In the Kayastha community ,two Bhai Doojs are celebrated .The more famous one comes on the second day after Diwali .But lesser -known one is celebrated a day or two after Diwali .In Haryana and UP a ritual also followed ,as dry cocunut (named gola in regional language) with klewa tied along with its width for worshipping is also used at the time of doing aarti of a brother .In Bengal the day is celebrated as Bhai Phota ,which comes one day after Kali Puja. On this festival ,sisters invite their brothers for a sumptuous meal often including their favorite dishes /sweets .The procedure may be different in Bihar and central India .The whole ceremony signifies the duty of a brother to protect his sister ,as well as a

sisters blessings for her brother .Carrying forward the ceremony in traditional style ,sisters perform aarti for their brothers and apply a red tilk on the brothers forehead .This tilk ceremony on the occasion of Bhai Dooj signifies sincerest prayers for the long and happy life of her brother and treat them with gifts .In return ,elder brothers bless their sisters and may treat them also with gifts or cash .In West Bengal the day is celebrated as Bhai Phonta and is celebrated with much splendor .The ceremony is marked with rituals along with a grand feast arranged for brothers .It is necessary that ,both brother and sister are more than 5 years of age .The festival of Bhai Bij is popular in Haryana ,Gujarat ,Maharashtra and Goa and is celebrated with great fervor and gaiety .Brothers and sisters look forward to the occasion with immense enthusiasm .To add charm to the occasion Bhai Bij gifts are given to the brothers from sisters as a token of love and appreciation .Bhai Bij is a time for family reunion as all brothers and sisters in the family get together .The fact is that this festival is celebrated in different ways in different parts of the country but the central theme is same love and affection between brothers and sisters. The Jummmites celebrate the festival of Bhai Dooj with great dedication and may this festival of love and bonding fructify and strengthen the ties of love and affection between brothers and sisters.

Local Artisans and ‘Vocal for Local’: Reviving India’s Cultural Heritage During Festivals

■ DR. DUSHYANT PRADEEP

As the autumn breeze heralds another festive season across India, the streets, marketplaces, and homes transform in celebration. Bright diyas light up doorsteps, hand-made crafts adorn living rooms, and sweets are exchanged in the spirit of togetherness. This year, more than ever, India's festivals are marked by a growing chorus: Vocal for Local. The movement has surged from a slogan into a groundswell, reinvigorating local economies and breathing new life into the country's rich, diverse cultural heritage-especially in artisanal traditions that are centuries old.

The Heartbeat of the Movement

At its core, 'Vocal for Local' is a conscious, collective effort to support artisans, craftspeople, and small businesses. Spearheaded by the government and widely championed by social thought leaders, celebrities, and the business community, the campaign aims to empower indigenous producers and strengthen India's economic foundation. On Diwali, Eid, and other major festivals, citizens are encouraged to purchase Indian-made products-often from their local bazaars and artisan markets-rather than large multinational brands.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi and state leaders across India have repeatedly called upon citizens to embrace this spirit, urging everyone to say, "Garv Se Kaho Yeh Swadeshi Hai" ("Say with

pride, this is indigenous") and share local purchases on social media to inspire others. The mantra of Vocal for Local is now heard in homes, schools, and even Bollywood, as celebrities publicly shop from small businesses, endorse local brands, and celebrate the artisans whose hands craft India's festive magic.

A New Lens on Heritage

Festivals have always been about tradition and community, but globalisation threatened to dilute the country's unique handicrafts and small industries. Imported goods began to crowd out homegrown wares, and many artisan families struggled to sustain their legacy. Vocal for Local reverses this trend by spotlighting the country's rich tapestry of crafts-be it Banarasi silk, Jaipur blue pottery, Kashmiri papier-mâché, or Channapatna toys.

Government campaigns and retail efforts have opened markets for craftspeople, allowing arts like Pashmina weaving, terracotta art, Kalamkari, Madhubani, and more to flourish even amidst competition from mass-produced alternatives.

Jammu & Kashmir: Living Examples and Key Initiatives Empowering Artisans

Jammu & Kashmir, with its breathtaking mountains and valleys, has long been celebrated for its artistic mastery. Its festivals are incomplete without the color and warmth of Pashmina shawls,

intricate Kani embroidery, hand-knotted carpets, wicker baskets, copperware, and delicately painted papier-mâché.

This year, the union territory is a beacon of the Vocal for Local movement. Several key initiatives are amplifying artisan empowerment:

► Diwali Mela & Police Mela Initiatives:

Festive markets like the Diwali Mela in Jammu, organized in collaboration with the Police Wives Welfare Association and inaugurated by the Lieutenant Governor, create thriving marketplaces for local crafts, self-help groups, and traditional products during festive seasons. These events bring together artisans, shoppers, and the community with cultural showcases, stalls, and support services.

► 'Know Your Artisan' Series:

The Handicrafts & Handloom Department of J&K facilitates 'Know Your Artisan' exhibitions, connecting buyers and master craftsmen, and providing direct sales as well as storytelling platforms to foster appreciation for local skills.

► Gandhi Shilp Bazar at Kashmir Haat:

This multi-day event highlights local textiles, copperware, paper mache, and offers artisans opportunities to engage with broader markets and build networks.

► One District One Product (ODOP) & Export Hub Schemes:

ODOP spotlights unique crafts from districts-Basohli painting, Kishtwar lavender, Rajouri walnut carvings, Baramulla apple cider-offering branding, marketing, and export facilitation.

► Digital Enablement & E-commerce Integration:

Artisan groups are being connected to digital platforms and e-commerce, like Amazon Karigar and Flipkart Samarth, to reach larger audiences in the festive season and beyond.

► Skill Development & Vocational Training:

Regular government and NGO-led skill development and vocational training in weaving, wood carving, copper designing, and embroidery help young artisans revive family legacies and adapt to new markets.

► Festivals and Cultural Exhibitions:

Events such as the Kashmir Tulip Festival and Deepawali Utsav offer live demonstrations, sales, and performances, bringing visibility and economic benefits to local craftspeople.

National Impact: Festivals as Catalysts of Change

Across India, the effect is electric. Online platforms like Amazon Karigar and Flipkart Samarth showcase thousands of artisan-made products. WhatsApp groups buzz with curated lists

of local wares, pop-up exhibitions flourish in urban malls, and government-organized haats (handicraft fairs) attract crowds eager to celebrate the authentic.

The ripple effect during festivals is immediate and profound. Economic studies estimate that vocal for local trends now account for up to 20% of festive sales in urban centers, while rural markets see even greater local representation. This shift improves the livelihoods of lakhs of artisans, encourages generational skill transfer, and fosters community resilience.

Social Media and Celebrity Support

The movement's visibility has been further boosted by Bollywood and television personalities. Diwali 2025 saw stars sharing videos of their local purchases and urging fans to do likewise. Their personal endorsements encourage lakhs of fans to shop mindfully, strengthening the artisan economy from the ground up.

Challenges and Solutions

Still, challenges remain. Many artisans face competition from mass-produced imports, fluctuating demand, and access gaps to new markets. Key government programs now focus on upskilling, digital literacy, and connecting craftspeople with e-commerce platforms, banks, and mentoring networks. Educational drives at festival melas teach buyers to celebrate authentic handmade items.

NGOs and trade associations help artisans label, certify, and market their

work, enabling exports and direct sales. New branding initiatives and collective marketing pools are empowering even the smallest players to reach national and global audiences.

The Road Ahead: Resilience through Revival

The 2025 festive season proves that revival is possible. Across India, families now choose handmade diyas over plastic, home-grown mithai over imported sweets, and artisan gifts over mass-market goods. The pride of buying local is as much about economic impact as it is about identity-every purchase is a stand for tradition, every gift a link in the long chain of India's cultural story.

The expansion of Vocal for Local shows no sign of slowing. With every festival, the network of artisans, entrepreneurs, and conscious buyers grows stronger. School and college competitions, workshops, and cultural performances further cement the crafts in minds of the young.

Conclusion: Lighting New Paths

This year's festival glow shines from millions of dreams burning bright in the homes of India's artisans. The Vocal for Local movement has transformed festive celebrations into catalysts for sustainable growth, artistic revival, and national pride. As we celebrate, let us honor and support the hands that shape our culture. Because every time we buy local, we share not just a festival, but a future.

