

PRESERVING MANUSCRIPTS

Human civilization is built upon memory-memories of ideas, beliefs, discoveries, struggles, and achievements. These memories are not stored only in monuments or oral traditions but are carefully recorded in manuscripts, documents, and ancient texts. Heritage and manuscript preservation is therefore not a luxury or an academic obsession; it is a vital responsibility that connects past generations to the present and safeguards knowledge for the future.

Manuscripts are among the most fragile yet valuable components of cultural heritage. Written on materials such as palm leaves, parchment, paper, or bark, they contain religious teachings, scientific observations, literary masterpieces, historical records, and philosophical reflections. Many of the foundations of modern science, medicine, law, and literature can be traced back to handwritten texts preserved across centuries. Losing these manuscripts would mean losing original voices of history-voices that no printed summary or modern interpretation can fully replace.

Heritage preservation goes beyond protecting physical objects. It preserves identity. Every society derives a sense of belonging from its history, language, and intellectual traditions. Manuscripts often reflect local knowledge systems, regional languages, and cultural practices that may no longer exist in daily life. When such materials decay or are destroyed, communities lose access to their roots. This loss can weaken cultural confidence and create gaps in historical understanding, especially for younger generations trying to understand who they are and where they come from.

Despite their importance, manuscripts face constant threats. Time, humidity, insects, natural disasters, neglect, and lack of awareness slowly damage these irreplaceable resources. In many regions, manuscripts lie forgotten in private collections, temples, monasteries, libraries, or family trunks, exposed to decay. Modernization, urban expansion, and conflict have further accelerated destruction. Without timely intervention, thousands of manuscripts risk being lost forever.

Preservation efforts must therefore be both scientific and inclusive. Conservation techniques such as proper storage, temperature control, restoration, and digitization are essential. Digitization, in particular, has emerged as a powerful tool. By creating high-quality digital copies, institutions can reduce physical handling of fragile originals while making content accessible to researchers and students worldwide. However, digitization should complement-not replace-the care of original manuscripts, which hold historical and material value beyond their text.

Equally important is public awareness. Preservation cannot succeed if it is limited to experts alone. Governments, educational institutions, and cultural organizations must work together to promote respect for heritage. Including manuscript studies in education, organizing exhibitions, and encouraging community participation can transform preservation into a shared mission rather than a specialized task.

Policy support and funding also play a crucial role. Preservation requires trained professionals, modern facilities, and long-term planning. When heritage protection is treated as a national priority, it sends a clear message that history and knowledge matter. International cooperation can further strengthen efforts, as cultural heritage often transcends modern political boundaries.

Plastic Pollution and its Impact on Environment

■ DR. BANARSI LAL

Plastic pollution has become ubiquitous in natural and built environments,raising concerns about potential harm to humans and nature. It is estimated that every year around 5 trillion plastic bags are used worldwide and at least 13 million tonnes of plastic end up in the oceans. In the last decade we produced plastic more than the whole century.50 per cent of plastic is single use or disposable and we buy around 1 million plastic bottles in every minute.10 per cent of the waste is made by the plastic. There is need to focus on environmental concerns ranging from pollution to global warming and sustainable food production to protection of wildlife. There is need to educate people on the risks associated with the use and disposal of plastics, including pollution in our oceans, water and wildlife. Plastics are poisoning and injuring the marine life. Plastics are disrupting human hormones and causing major life-threatening diseases and early puberty. The exponential growth of plastics is threatening our planet's survival. There is need to reject, reduce and recycle plastics and for this purpose local government should come forward. There is dire need to find out the innovative ways to reduce the plastic pollution. There is urgent need to change the attitude and behaviour of the people towards plastics.Plastic is a necessary evil. It is estimated that every year the amount of disposed plastics can four times circle the earth. We can't live without plastics as every day we come across plastic in various forms such as bottles, grocery bags, food containers, computer keyboards, plastic mouse, coffee cup lids etc. It is startling to note that billions of tons of plastics are ending up in the oceans. Plastics take thousands of years to decay. Plastic is an incredibly useful material but it is made up of toxic compounds known to cause illness as it is non-biodegradable. Plastics negatively impact the natural environment and create problems for plants, wildlife and human beings. It should be noted that in order to make paper bags we need to cut trees which ultimately can affect our lives. The jute or cloth bags can be promoted as the alternatives of plastics bags.

Environmental and climate literacy is the engine not only for creating the environmental and climate laws and policies but also to promote green technologies. It is worthwhile to mention here that our Earth planet is losing the 15 billion trees every year i.e. around 56 acres of forest in every minute. Many

species are going extinct rapidly. With our efforts we can protect hundreds of species. Lack of environment education has led man to be harsh to nature. There is dire need to empower everybody with the knowledge to inspire action in defense of environmental protection. Environmental quality is an integral part of development. Without environmental ethics development is simply undermined. Natural resources are the wealth of any nation. Presently they are facing environmental hazards due to many reasons. Sustainable development is focused on any kind of betterment that should not harm the environment so that the well being of future generations is guaranteed and the harmonious relationship environment and development is sustained. The process of sustainable development tries to build social and economic progress satisfying the needs and values of the social groups without foreclosing future options. Rio-Earth Summit (1992) highlights the view that socio-economic development and environment protection are inter-dependent and mutually reinforcing processes. Recently, the healthy rural environment has encountered divergent environmental hazards as an addition to their existing issues of social and economic hardships. Such threats badly affect the local community which is the impetus behind research for alternative sources such as cultivation in marginal lands. It constitutes a growing class of environment refugees. Sustainable rural development is felt as a necessary intervention to fight against poverty, unemployment and other complicated problems in rural areas. Sustainable rural development can promote growth and equity simultaneously and also promote the development of democratic process at the grass root level by creating awareness on social forestry, soil conservation, population control, protection of tanks, rural energy management, biodiversity, popularization of eco-friendly activities etc. Sustainable rural development on the one hand benefits local people and safeguards the flora and fauna of a particular region on the other. At this stage common property resources are important but they are being neglected. They should be protected and organized through people's participation. Common property resources can generate more employment opportunities in rural areas. The sustainability of development for the rural people should dexterously and lucratively aim at motivating the people to get involved in community action and to

ensure their participation in diverse and numerous environmental protection and optimum utilization of natural resources. Committed involvement of each and every one is expected in this process.

Plastic pollution affects all land,freshwater and marine ecosystems.It is a major driver of biodiversity loss and ecosystem degradation and contributes to climate change.Environment protection is an essential part of development. Without adequate environment protection, development is useless. It has been estimated that by 2030 food production will need to double and industrial output and energy use will increase three times in the world and five times in the developing nations. This growth can bring the risk of appalling environmental damage. It can also bring with it better environment protection, clean air water and eradication of poverty. Environmental damage affects the present and future human welfare. It affects human health and reduces agricultural productivity. Some problems are associated with the lack of economic development, inadequate sanitation, clean water; air pollution from biomass burning. Plastic pollution, illegal cutting of forests is a matter of great concern. The lack of appropriate technology for maximum utilization of the raw materials, poor silvicultural practices, low recovery, low budgetary provision for forest operations have all hampered effective management. As a result, fuel wood, timber, pole wood and carving wood are being exploited at unsustainable levels. Ecological degradation of wetlands together with pollution has resulted in the loss of flora and fauna. The high amount of fertilizers and other inputs required in agriculture for increasing the productivity has led to the degradation of the environment. Despite decades of warning about pollution and efforts to control it, people are still being exposed to toxic pollutants. Pollution from agricultural land caused by leaching of nitrogen fertilizers has been detected in the ground water in many areas. In Hararyana, for example, some well water is reported to have nitrate concentration ranging from 114 mg./litre to 1800 mg./litre far above the national standard 45 mg./litre. Government should monitor and implement policies to reduce pollution and environment degradation and safeguard the natural system that supports renewable resources. Action should be taken for achieving a sustainable future.

Environment is one of the most important

pillars of sustainable development. There is a need to establish a sustainable development process in rural India. Environmental aspect assumes great significance in growing deforestation, soil erosion, land degradation, water pollution, biodiversity loss and the like which continue to worsen economic development in rural India. The common property resources which are mostly natural must be protected for overall growth of the rural areas. The natural resources should be protected for overall growth of the rural areas. Such efforts not only lead to optimum utilization of natural resources but also generate more employment for the rural people. This initiative requires people's participation. For instance, afforestation activities cannot be successful without the help of local communities. The relationship between development and environment is well established. This requires the awareness on environmental issues. People's participation plays an inevitable role for the protection of environment. Afforestation and arresting of deforestation can be carried with the help of local people. Protection of environment is mainly in the hands of the people. People's participation is imperative need. All the stakeholders should understand the present environmental crisis and find out suitable solutions to tackle this awful situation. The dictum, prevention is better than cure is more related to the present day's environmental issues as it is directly proportional to man's survival problems. A multifarious strategy needs to be formulated to protect the environment through community participation. A renowned environmentalist Sh. Anil Agarwal proposed a seven-point environment agenda for India. One of them is "Rural development should become holistic, at the same time, village ecosystem should be protected." It will help to an evergreen revolution in agriculture where productivity can be increased without any harm to social and economic fabric. Thus, the holistic approach towards environment protection is needed. We can recycle the papers and stop using plastic bags. We should make collective efforts to protect the environment. Proper legislation and the enhancement of ecological consciousness through education are the best ways to solve the problem of plastic pollution. There is need to focus on the connections between plastic pollution ,biodiversity loss and degradation of ecosystems at the global,regional and national levels.

(The writer is Chief Scientist and Head of KVK Reasi)

Harsh Cold, Fading Snow, and the Warmth of Tradition

■ MOHAMMAD HANIEF

Winter has always shaped the rhythm of life in Kashmir, but few periods define it as powerfully as ChillaiKalan. As the harshest forty-day stretch of winter unfolds, the valley once again experiences freezing temperatures, intermittent snowfall, and the familiar struggle to maintain daily routines under extreme conditions. Yet alongside the cold and uncertainty, winter also brings moments of cultural assertion and collective warmth, most visibly reflected in the growing celebration of Pheran Day, which has emerged as a symbol of identity, resilience, and adaptation during Kashmir's coldest season.

Traditionally, ChillaiKalan marked a period of continuous snowfall that blanketed the valley and established a predictable winter pattern. In recent years, however, the current scenario reflects a noticeable shift. While cold waves remain intense, snowfall has become irregular, with long dry spells punctuated by short but sharp precipitation events. Higher reaches have received snow intermittently, while large parts of the plains continue to endure dry, biting cold. This changing pattern has altered not only the visual landscape of winter but also its practical consequences.

The absence of sustained snow cover has raised concerns about water security, particularly as winter snowmelt remains the primary source for rivers, springs, and groundwater systems. At the same time, prolonged sub-zero temperatures have caused widespread freezing of water supply lines, leading to daily hardships even without heavy snowfall. ChillaiKalan, once associated equally with snow and cold, is increasingly defined by extreme temperatures rather than consistent precipitation.

Power supply remains under pressure during this period. Increased demand for heating, combined with weather-related disruptions, has resulted in frequent outages, especially during peak cold



spells. The strain on infrastructure has reinforced dependence on traditional heating practices. Kangris, wood stoves, and layered clothing continue to play a central role in keeping homes warm, underscoring the limits of modern systems when confronted with prolonged winter stress.

Transportation during the current ChillaiKalan has remained functional but fragile. Major roads have largely stayed open, though frequent advisories and short-term closures due to snowfall, black ice, and avalanche threats have disrupted movement. Air travel has faced repeated delays, affecting both residents and visitors. These disruptions have impacted supply chains, influencing the availability and cost of essential commodities during winter months.

Economic activity slows significantly during this phase. Daily wage earners, construction workers, and outdoor laborers face reduced opportunities as severe cold limits work hours. Tourism, which

has increasingly become a winter-dependent sector, reflects a mixed picture. Snow tourism destinations have attracted visitors when conditions permit, but fluctuating snowfall and safety concerns have shortened the effective season. Winter tourism now depends on narrow windows of favorable weather rather than sustained snow cover, making it more vulnerable to climatic uncertainty. Agriculture and horticulture remain deeply tied to the performance of ChillaiKalan. Apple orchards require adequate winter chilling, which has largely been met due to sustained low temperatures. However, inconsistent snowfall has raised concerns about soil moisture and long-term productivity. Farmers increasingly acknowledge that traditional seasonal expectations no longer fully align with present conditions, prompting gradual shifts toward adaptive practices.

Amid these environmental and economic pres-

sures, cultural life in Kashmir has found renewed expression through winter traditions. One such expression is the growing observance of Pheran Day, celebrated during ChillaiKalan as an affirmation of Kashmiri identity and heritage. The pheran, a long traditional woolen garment, has for centuries been an essential defense against the valley's severe winters. In the current context, its celebration has taken on broader meaning.

Pheran Day has evolved into a collective cultural event, particularly among younger generations, who wear traditional attire in public spaces, educational institutions, and workplaces. During ChillaiKalan, when the cold is most intense, the pheran's practical relevance becomes immediately evident. Its loose structure allows warmth retention, especially when paired with traditional heating methods, making it both functional and symbolic. The celebration reinforces indigenous knowledge of winter survival that predates modern heating systems.

The impact of Pheran Day extends beyond clothing. Markets see increased demand for locally made woolens, supporting artisans, tailors, and small traders during an otherwise slow economic period. Social media and community gatherings associated with the celebration have helped project a narrative of cultural pride, countering the gloom often associated with winter hardship. In a season marked by isolation and reduced mobility, Pheran Day encourages public engagement, albeit within the constraints imposed by cold weather.

Educational institutions that observe winter schedules have also acknowledged the cultural relevance of the day, allowing students to participate in celebrations that strengthen their connection to local traditions. At a time when global influences increasingly shape youth culture, the resurgence of interest in traditional winter attire reflects a broader effort to preserve cultural continuity amid change.

Environmental observers note that such cultural practices gain greater significance as climate patterns shift. With winters becoming less pre-

dictable, traditional responses to cold, refined over generations, offer valuable lessons in adaptation. The pheran, designed specifically for Kashmir's climate, stands as an example of sustainable, locally appropriate clothing that aligns with both environmental conditions and cultural identity.

Urban life during ChillaiKalan continues to adapt to these evolving realities. Schools remain closed for extended winter vacations, reducing exposure to extreme cold while easing pressure on public infrastructure. Markets operate on shorter schedules, and public spaces see limited but meaningful activity, often centeredaround cultural events rather than routine commerce.

Changes in the natural environment are increasingly visible. Lakes show partial freezing rather than solid ice sheets, and snowlines fluctuate frequently. These observations reinforce concerns about long-term climate trends in the Himalayan region, where rising temperatures threaten traditional water systems and seasonal balance. ChillaiKalan now serves not only as a climatic phase but also as an indicator of environmental transformation.

As the coldest days of winter pass under present conditions, ChillaiKalan continues to test Kashmir's resilience. Its challenges are no longer confined to snowbound isolation but extend to managing uncertainty in weather patterns, infrastructure stress, and economic vulnerability. At the same time, cultural practices such as the celebration of Pheran Day offer a counterbalance, reinforcing community bonds and reminding people of inherited strategies for endurance.

Winter in Kashmir remains a season of contrasts. The cold is as severe as ever, yet the snow is less predictable. Modern systems struggle under pressure, while traditional practices regain relevance. In this intersection of change and continuity, ChillaiKalan endures as both a hardship and a defining element of Kashmiri life, shaped not only by climate but also by the enduring warmth of cultural identity.

(The author is a senior analyst)

Chandrabhaga-Free flowing river through Indian Civilization

■ G.L KHAJURIA

Literally speaking, Chenab acronymises a Persian derivation,Cheen means china and aab means water, annotating thereby China's water. But with the revolving wheel of time, the learned school of thought negated it and attributed that the origin of Chenab is from 'Tandi'-a small village or hamlet in Himachal Pradesh (HP)adjoining our state. Even in Sanskrit texts, Chenab river finds its mention as a nectar-clear water having its origin from higher reaches of Himachal Pradesh.

According to our great epics, the Mahabharatand the Harivansha Purana, there is mention of the origin of these two mighty rivers- Chandra and Bhaga from higher reaches amidst the Himalayan region of Himachal Pradesh. And after traversing

through longer distances ultimately confluence at Atholi, little below paddar (Kishtwar) around306 kmsserpentinely is named as chandrabhaga, Chandra literally means Moon and BhagaCannotates Luck or virtue. The Chenab or Chandrabhaga as well occupies a very significant place in our revered Rigveda, wherein it has been mentioned as 'Askini'.

Apart from, the Greeks have made a mention about Chenab riverin more than many ways. Askesines and Chandrabhaga as Sandrop agos viz the man eater or Alexandra pagas as the devour of Alexander the great, who attempted to cross this mighty river and had to suffer disastrously.

The Neelmat Purana, a historical tratise of Kashmir mentions about Chenab or chandrabhaga most prominently. Poster, a well-renowned traveller in 1783 AD extensively Journeyed through Kashmir and named this mighty river as chanan. And Vigne, another traveller- cum-explorer in 1783 AD, exten-

sively travelled the valley of Kashmir and recorded in his travelogue the chenab's water from Moon.

And very rightly has as such 'Jean Naudon' a French traveller- cum-authorhas commented about Chenab as a beautiful, eechanting river having the biggest vibrant, lush green forest in its back drop and explains further regarding the location together with other affiliations as such: 'To the east and the south-east, Kashmir is in communication with upper valley of chandrabhaga and at the foot of frontier ridge which separates the basin of vistasta' the Jhellum. Kashavata used to constute an independent principality mentioned one single time in Rajatrangni (Kalhana) but many times in the modern chronicles.

Downstream, Bhadaravakasa was attached to champapura, while more to the south and west campa, vallapura was an independent state where Biksacra were taking refuge, and of whom, a princess was forming a part

of harem of Sussala, mentioned many times by Kalhana.

The river Chenab or chandrabhaga after confluence at Atholi sweeps down surpentinely taking turns and twists onsharp bends sometimes too narrow and deep and at places oftenlywith broader width all along its under lying bed -rocks of sub-Himalayan , pre-cambrian region relatively unchangeable in its entire route. The river,of course,accumulates various rivulets,Nallahson its either side of thecatchmentsthereby enhancing its quantitative flow like fiery flames. The river as such forms a narrow gorge cut out of hard rock filled up with perpetual flow of water and is locked up in the rock forming a dam-like shape. And a mega DulHasti project generating huge power potential is the first of the formation in the history of the Charming Chenab.

And still downbelow ,the river has been dammed at Bagliharhydroelectric power

project near Batote. The damming of these two hydro- electric projects have provided an ample scope of power generation. But at the same time has indeed lost its natural beauty, it enchanting tones and charming white foaming watery upheavels forever and ever.

The mighty and majestic Chenab or Chandrabhaga is having a nectar-like crystal water with very fast flow spanning its either bank, debouches from hills down and travels hundreds of thousand kilometres in the land-locked mountainousterrain and the plains down below.The river as such emerges out at Aknhoor after passing through Salal and Sawalakot power project and the river flows to Pakistan intermingling Tawi, Ravi, Satluj, Beas and other rivers, rivulets and streams. The river as such confluences other mega rivers, en route, with gushing flowand finallydrains down intoArabian sea.

(The author is former Deputy Conservator, J&K forests)

