

I slept and dreamt that life was joy. I awoke and saw that life was service. I acted and behold, service was joy. -Rabindranath Tagore

IMPACTS OF CLIMATE CHANGE

Climate change is one of the most pressing global challenges of our time, with widespread and far-reaching impacts across natural ecosystems, human health, economies, and geopolitical stability. Driven largely by human activities such as burning fossil fuels, deforestation, and industrial emissions, climate change is causing a rise in global temperatures, altered weather patterns, and extreme climatic events that are reshaping life on Earth.

One of the most visible impacts of climate change is the increase in global temperatures. According to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), the Earth's average surface temperature has risen by about 1.1°C since the late 19th century. This warming has led to the melting of glaciers and polar ice caps, resulting in rising sea levels. Coastal areas around the world are increasingly at risk of flooding, erosion, and saltwater intrusion, threatening communities, infrastructure, and freshwater supplies.

Weather patterns are also becoming more extreme and unpredictable. Many regions are experiencing more intense heatwaves, droughts, heavy rainfall, and powerful storms. These extreme events can cause devastating impacts on agriculture, leading to crop failures, food insecurity, and economic losses for farmers and rural populations. In some regions, prolonged droughts and erratic rainfall have already begun to disrupt traditional farming practices, pushing communities into poverty and migration.

Climate change also poses serious risks to biodiversity and ecosystems. Many plant and animal species are struggling to adapt to rapidly changing environmental conditions. Coral reefs, for example, are suffering from bleaching events due to rising ocean temperatures, while forests face threats from pests and fires. The loss of biodiversity affects ecosystem services that humans rely on, including pollination, water purification, and climate regulation. Human health is another critical area of concern. Rising temperatures and changing precipitation patterns contribute to the spread of vector-borne diseases like malaria and dengue fever. Air pollution, exacerbated by climate change, leads to respiratory and cardiovascular problems. Additionally, extreme heat events can cause heatstroke and dehydration, particularly among vulnerable populations such as the elderly, children, and those with pre-existing health conditions.

Economically, climate change can lead to reduced productivity, damage to infrastructure, and increased costs for disaster recovery and adaptation. Low-income countries, which often contribute the least to global greenhouse gas emissions, are affected and forced migration.

Need for Performing Arts higher education in J&K

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India is growing fast outpacing Japan to be the fourth largest in the World. The demand for higher education is constantly rising, likely to be 160 million by 2025, the state support in terms of funding per student as unit, is declining. India and China will be the two biggest countries seeking higher education. Demand is growing at the rate of 20 per cent per annum in India. India has over 56,000 institutions that cater to 40 million students, supported by 16 lakh teachers. India aims to add 26 million enrolments by 2035, which requires increased investments in staff, technology and infrastructure in order to reach the GER of 50%. It is important to note that Science and Technology is being given lot of significance as compared to Arts, Humanities and Social sciences. Worldwide India is known for its arts, culture, culinary and humanities. Jammu and Kashmir has shown greater emphasis for the higher education and has been able to retain their aspiring higher education students to the state as they were earlier resorting to travel to Punjab, Himachal and Delhi. Those who were moving were primarily in the Science and Engineering programs. With the advent of more colleges and addressing more student community, the number of students opting for multiple fields have increased tremendously. It is worthwhile to note here that those seeking arts and humanities subjects are not interested in pursuing their studies in other states and want to study in the local environment. Here comes the importance of programs in this direction. Harvard University, one of the oldest uni-

versities in the World offers both an extraordinary curricular program in music and musicology through the Department of Music, and a varied extracurricular music scene, with countless student groups performing throughout the year. Harvard provides opportunity to study and practice the performing arts through the Theatre, Dance, & Media concentration; to benefit from the work of the American Repertory Theatre - a world-class professional company in residence; and to create theatre outside of the curriculum through more than a dozen student theatre organizations as well as projects initiated by individual students. There is huge scope for performing arts in USA that many top scorers opt for this and become celebrities on their own.

University of Oxford provides several Master's programs related to performing arts, including Music, Film Studies, and Fine Art. The University has a range of Master's programs in Music, such as M.St. in Music (Performance) and MPhil in Music (Performance), offering specialized training in performance studies. Additionally, the University of Oxford offers an MFA in Fine Art, which encompasses performance and other expanded forms in both classical and western contemporary art. Performers College in Essex and Manchester offers MPA programmes and have ideal openings for the performer, choreographer, director and entrepreneur. Adelphi University in New York has created departments of Theatre, Music and Dance, as well as ample rehearsal spaces and concert halls.

University of the Visual and Performing Arts (UVPA) in Sri Lanka offers various degrees in performing arts, including dance, drama, and music. However, no Masters programs are to be seen. Kathmandu University in Nepal offers Master degree in

Ethnomusicology. No other universities in Nepal is offering Masters Programmes. ESRA (École Supérieure de Réalisation Audiovisuelle) in France offers international postgraduate MFA Filmmaking programs and other film-related courses. 3iS International Institute of Image & Sound offers Masters Programs in filmmaking and music production. Free University of Berlin in Germany the Master of Arts in Theatre Studies (In German) is offered, students have to pay no tuition fees. Other additional expenses that the students have to incur during their stay include books and supplies charges, rent, food, utilities, etc. However prior knowledge of German is a must. MA in Drama is offered in Canada and it focuses on Theatre Studies, Drama Therapy, and Applied Theatre, with options like Theatre Practice and Theatre Directing, offered by universities like the University of British Columbia and the University of Toronto. In the USA, several universities offer postgraduate (PG) courses in performing arts, including Masters Degrees in areas like music, dance, theatre, film, etc. Some programs are specifically designed for experienced performers seeking further education, while others focus on teaching, research, and theatre roles. Usually the programs are for two years duration. The Performing Arts can be considered as the arts that are performed for an audience such as music, dance, and drama. Usually they were offered as MA (Performing Arts) in Indian Universities and after UGC approved the Master of Performing Arts as MPA PG degree, all the universities have renamed the same as MPA. In India, the MPA programmes are on offer at Banaras Hindu University, Rabindra Bharathi University, University of Kerala, Pondicherry University, and Amity University etc. But these are far flung as for

the J&K students are concerned. What is very important in choosing the program is to see the combination of theory and practicals. There must be 50% practicals in the MPA program in order to reach the learning outcomes.

To propagate the need for Theatre and Music, those interested in this area will be subjected to a screening test to see whether they have the aptitude for the same. That is why, it has been decided that any Bachelor's degree student with 50% marks are eligible to study the same. Those who are studying Bachelors in Music, In Jammu and Kashmir, there was a demand for program like MPA. Jammu University and Kashmir University offers programmes in music and fine arts. Cluster University of Jammu becomes the first University in Jammu and Kashmir to offer the much sought after MPA program in Indian theatre and music from 2025 admission onwards with ample facilities in MAM College and also at the University premises through their expert professionals and academics. The University will utilise its auditoria for effective practical learning of the Indian theatre and also the music. By doing so, the long standing demand of the students of Jammu and Kashmir for the MPA program is now fulfilled. They need not travel to other states for this program. There is lot of demand in the area of Folk arts, Folk theatre and Folk music including that of Dogri language. Considering the growth in the economy and the disposable income in the hands of the people, this interest towards the Indian theatre and music will only grow. With growing interest among the citizens towards theatre as compared to films in this area, it is pertinent for institutions to focus on providing higher education in this direction.

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Heritage-Based Approach to Kheer Bhawani Temple: A Historical Roots and Cultural Tapestry of Kheer Bhawani Pilgrimage in KP Community

DR SONIA VERMA

The Kheer Bhawani Temple, an archaeologically significant site believed to have been built by Maharaja Pratap Singh in 1912, holds immense spiritual and socio-cultural importance for the Kashmiri Pandit community and beyond. Kheer Bhawani, the presiding deity, is revered as a manifestation of the Hindu goddess Durga, embodying both maternal love and fierce power. This essay delves into the rich history, social fabric, and cultural tapestry woven around the Kheer Bhawani pilgrimage, exploring its profound significance in the lives of devotees and its role in preserving Kashmiri identity amidst challenging circumstances.

Historical Roots and Architectural Significance

The origins of the Kheer Bhawani Temple are shrouded in local legends and folklore, passed down through generations. While the commonly accepted narrative attributes its construction to Maharaja Pratap Singh in 1912, some accounts suggest that the site's sanctity dates back to much earlier times. Regardless of the precise date, the temple's architecture reflects a blend of Kashmiri and Hindu styles, showcasing the region's unique cultural heritage. The temple complex is situated around a sacred spring, which is the focal point of the pilgrimage. The spring's waters are believed to possess healing properties,

and devotees often collect it in bottles to take home as a sacred relic. The color of the spring water is said to change at times, with different hues associated with specific events or omens. This phenomenon adds to the mystique and spiritual aura surrounding the temple. The main shrine houses the idol of Kheer Bhawani, adorned with flowers, jewelry, and vibrant clothing. The idol is not permanently fixed but is moved periodically, adding to the dynamic nature of the temple's rituals. The temple complex also includes smaller shrines dedicated to other deities, reflecting the inclusive nature of Hindu worship.

Kheer Bhawani: A Spiritual Deity of the Kashmiri Community

Kheer Bhawani is not merely a deity but a symbol of hope, resilience, and cultural identity for the Kashmiri Pandit community. She is considered the protector and nurturer of her devotees, offering solace in times of distress and guidance on their spiritual journey. The name "Kheer Bhawani" itself is derived from the offering of kheer (rice pudding) that is traditionally made to the goddess. This offering symbolizes devotion, gratitude, and the desire for blessings. The goddess is also associated with the concept of "Shakti," the divine feminine energy that permeates the universe. She is seen as the embodiment of power, strength, and the ability to overcome obstacles. This aspect of Kheer Bhawani is particularly relevant in the

context of the challenges faced by the Kashmiri Pandit community, who have endured displacement, loss, and uncertainty.

Social and Cultural Significance of the Kheer Bhawani Pilgrimage

The annual Kheer Bhawani pilgrimage is more than just a religious event; it is a vibrant expression of Kashmiri Pandit identity, a celebration of their cultural heritage, and a reaffirmation of their connection to their ancestral land. The pilgrimage brings together devotees from all over the world, fostering a sense of community and shared identity. For many Kashmiri Pandits, the pilgrimage is an opportunity to reconnect with their roots, to visit the land where their ancestors lived for centuries, and to pay homage to their family deities. It is a chance to remember their past, to celebrate their present, and to pray for a brighter future. The pilgrimage also serves as a platform for cultural exchange, with devotees sharing stories, songs, and traditions. The Kheer Bhawani pilgrimage has played a crucial role in preserving Kashmiri Pandit culture, which has been under threat due to displacement and migration. The rituals, traditions, and customs associated with the pilgrimage have been passed down through generations, ensuring that they are not forgotten. The pilgrimage also serves as a reminder of the unique cultural heritage of Kashmir, which is a blend of Hindu, Buddhist, and Sufi influences.

Congregation on the 3rd of June: A Big Fair at Janipur, Jammu, and the Kheer Bhawani Temple in Kashmir

The annual Kheer Bhawani pilgrimage typically culminates on the auspicious occasion of Jyeshtha Ashtami, which usually falls in the month of June. On this day, devotees gather at the Kheer Bhawani Temple in Kashmir and at other associated sites, such as Janipur in Jammu, to offer prayers, sing hymns, and participate in traditional rituals. The atmosphere during the congregation is festive and vibrant, with devotees dressed in their finest attire, music filling the air, and the aroma of incense and flowers permeating the surroundings. The fair at Janipur, Jammu, is a particularly significant event, attracting a large number of devotees who are unable to travel to the Kheer Bhawani Temple in Kashmir. The fair features stalls selling traditional Kashmiri handicrafts, food, and religious items, providing a platform for local artisans and businesses. The congregation on the 3rd of June is a time for reflection, prayer, and community bonding. Devotees offer kheer to the goddess, seek her blessings, and pray for peace, prosperity, and the well-being of all. It is a time to reaffirm their faith, to strengthen their bonds with each other, and to celebrate their shared cultural heritage.

"Can't Let Fear Dictate Our Faith": Resilience in the Face of Adversity

The Kheer Bhawani pilgrimage has often been conducted against the backdrop of political instability and security concerns in Kashmir. Despite these challenges, devotees have consistently demonstrated their unwavering faith and resilience, refusing to be deterred by fear or uncertainty. The phrase "Can't Let Fear Dictate Our Faith" encapsulates the spirit of the Kheer Bhawani pilgrimage. It reflects the determination of devotees to uphold their religious traditions, to celebrate their cultural heritage, and to maintain their connection to their ancestral land, regardless of the circumstances.

In recent years, the Kheer Bhawani pilgrimage has taken on even greater significance as a symbol of hope and resilience for the Kashmiri Pandit community. Following incidents of violence and unrest, the pilgrimage has served as a platform for reaffirming their commitment to peace, unity, and communal harmony. The fact that devotees continue to flock to the Kheer Bhawani Temple, even after events like the Pahalgam attack, is a testament to their unwavering faith and their determination not to be intimidated by fear. It is a powerful message that faith can transcend fear, and that hope can prevail even in the face of adversity.

Conclusion

The Kheer Bhawani Temple and the annual pilgrimage associated with it hold profound historical, social, cultur-

al, and spiritual significance for the Kashmiri Pandit community and beyond. The temple is a symbol of their cultural heritage, a reminder of their connection to their ancestral land, and a source of hope and resilience in the face of adversity. The Kheer Bhawani pilgrimage is a vibrant expression of Kashmiri Pandit identity, a celebration of their traditions, and a reaffirmation of their faith. It brings together devotees from all over the world, fostering a sense of community and shared identity. The pilgrimage also serves as a platform for cultural exchange, with devotees sharing stories, songs, and traditions. The phrase "Can't Let Fear Dictate Our Faith" encapsulates the spirit of the Kheer Bhawani pilgrimage, reflecting the determination of devotees to uphold their religious traditions, to celebrate their cultural heritage, and to maintain their connection to their ancestral land, regardless of the circumstances.

In conclusion, the Kheer Bhawani pilgrimage is a testament to the enduring power of faith, the resilience of the human spirit, and the importance of preserving cultural heritage in the face of adversity. It is a symbol of hope for a brighter future, a future where peace, unity, and communal harmony prevail in Kashmir and beyond.

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Jammu Urban Forests: Importance and Challenges

DR RAKESH VERMA

Urban forests are defined as forested areas located within or near urbanized settings, integrating elements of nature into the metropolitan landscape. These green spaces are not only essential for ecological balance but also enhance the quality of life for urban residents. In Jammu, urban forests hold significant value due to their unique ecological and cultural characteristics.

The Role of Urban Forests in Jammu

Urban forests in Jammu serve multiple purposes that benefit both the environment and the community. Here are some key roles:

**Biodiversity Enhancement:** Similar to natural forests, urban forests provide habitats for various species of flora and fauna. They support local ecosystems and encourage biodiversity, which is crucial for resilience against pests and diseases.

**Air Quality Improvement:** One of the most crucial functions of urban forests is their ability to purify the air. Trees absorb carbon dioxide, filter pollutants, and release oxygen. This process contributes significantly to improving overall air quality in densely populated urban centers like Jammu.

**Climate Moderation:** Urban forests regulate temperatures through shade and evapotranspiration, helping to combat the urban heat island effect that can be prevalent in cities.

**Recreational Spaces:** Parks like Raika Eco Park and Mahamaya City Forest and parks and walkways offer essential recreational areas that promote mental health and well-being. Spaces within urban forests can be used for walking, jogging, or simply enjoying nature, thereby fostering stronger community

bonds. The Jammu Smart city project has developed state of the art walkways and parks which act as green lungs of the city.

The Significance of Urban Forests in Jammu

Urban forests in Jammu are not merely patches of greenery but represent a vital aspect of the ecological, social, and economic fabric of the region. Their significance transcends the mere presence of trees and vegetation, encompassing a wide range of benefits that are crucial for the enhancement of life in urban settings.

Ecological Significance

Urban forests play a pivotal role in biodiversity conservation. They act as crucial habitats for various species, including birds, insects, and small mammals. In Jammu, where urbanization rapidly encroaches upon natural landscapes, these forests are essential for maintaining biodiversity.

**Habitat Preservation:** Urban forests can support over 150 species of trees and various understory plants that aid numerous bird species and pollinators like bees and butterflies. For instance, the inclusion of traditional species like the Chilgoza and Himalayan Cedar not only sustains local fauna but also helps maintain the region's ecological integrity.

**Ecosystem Services:** Beyond habitat provision, urban forests contribute significantly to ecosystem services. They absorb pollutants and mitigate noise, filtering the air and providing cleaner environments for residents. Trees in urban settings can reduce particulate matter by up to 60%, thus fostering a healthier urban atmosphere.

Social Significance

Urban forests have profound social

implications that enhance community well-being. The psychological and social benefits they provide are essential, particularly in a bustling urban environment like Jammu.

**Recreational Opportunities:** Urban forests offer spaces for recreation and leisure, which are vital for mental health. Statistics indicate that access to green spaces can lead to a 15% increase in overall community happiness. Activities such as jogging, picnicking, or meditation in these natural spaces can improve residents' physical and mental well-being.

**Community Cohesion:** These green areas serve as communal gathering zones, fostering social ties among residents. Community events, educational programs, and nature walks held in urban forests enable interaction and promote awareness around conservation practices, building a cohesive community consciousness toward environmental stewardship.

Economic Significance

The economic impact of urban forests is notable, contributing to both direct and indirect economic value.

**Property Value Enhancement:** Properties located near urban green-spaces are often valued higher than those further away. A study shows that homes near urban gardens or parks can see a price premium of 10-20%. This aspect is particularly significant in Jammu, where urban development continues to evolve.

**Tourism and Local Economy:** Urban forests can attract both local and national tourists, generating economic benefits through eco-tourism. Promoting urban forests as tourist spots can lead to increased revenue through local businesses, markets, and guided

tours, contributing to the economic vibrancy of the region.

**Cost Savings in Urban Infrastructure:** Investing in urban forests can lead to substantial cost savings. For example, a well-planned urban forest can help reduce stormwater runoff, thus lowering the expenses associated with flood management. Trees can also lower energy costs by providing shade and reducing the need for air conditioning.

Contribution to Air Quality

Air quality in Jammu, heavily impacted by vehicular emissions and industrial activities, dramatically benefits from urban forests. Trees within these urban areas can absorb up to 48 pounds of CO2 annually and significantly improve air quality by trapping dust and harmful particles, resulting in reduced respiratory problems among inhabitants.

Moreover, urban forests can play a crucial role in climate regulation, acting as natural air conditioners that help to mitigate the heat generated by urban infrastructure, which is vital in combating the urban heat island effect commonly experienced in Jammu.

Through a comprehensive understanding of their ecological, social, and economic significance, it is clear that urban forests in Jammu serve as indispensable assets for enhancing the quality of life, promoting sustainable practices, and fostering community well-being. Their conservation and expansion are imperative for maintaining both the environmental health and urban resilience of the region.

Evolution of Urban Forests in Jammu

The evolution of urban forests in Jammu provides a fascinating glimpse into how this region has adapted its green landscapes to the growing challenges of urbanization. The historical

development of these green spaces can be traced through various stages, each characterized by unique ecological and social dynamics.

Historical Development

Urban forests in Jammu have roots that extend back centuries. Traditionally, the area was characterized by lush vegetation, with communities relying on natural forests for sustenance, timber, and medicinal resources. However, as Jammu began to urbanize during the 20th century, with significant population growth and infrastructure development, many natural green spaces were compromised.

Impact of Urbanization

The rapid urbanization that began in the mid-20th century drastically altered the landscape of Jammu. Key changes include: **Deforestation:** Expanding urban areas led to the clearing of forests for housing, roads, and other infrastructure. This unprecedented deforestation has resulted in habitat loss, decreased biodiversity, and increased pollution levels.

**Fragmentation of Green Spaces:** As residential areas grew, existing forests became fragmented into smaller patches, making it difficult for wildlife to thrive and migrate. This fragmentation has directly impacted the ecological health of the region.

**Socioeconomic Pressures:** The influx of new residents in urban areas has placed strain on existing urban green spaces, leading to over-exploitation and neglect. As communities have become more urban-centric, traditional connections to nature have weakened, resulting in a decline in stewardship for these vital resources.

Reforms and Initiatives

In response to the challenges posed by

urbanization, there have been several initiatives aimed at restoring and enhancing urban green spaces across Jammu:

**Government Programs:** Local government bodies have initiated programs to reforest urban areas, often focusing on planting native species. These initiatives aim to not only restore ecological balance but also improve the quality of life for residents.

**Community Engagement:** Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and community groups have played a vital role in advocating for urban forestry. Efforts such as tree planting drives, awareness campaigns, and educational workshops have fostered community participation in urban forestry programs, creating a sense of ownership and responsibility.

**Policy Frameworks:** Urban forestry policies have emerged, guiding sustainable land-use practices that prioritize the conservation of existing green spaces while planning for future development. These frameworks focus on integrating urban forests into urban planning processes to ensure that green spaces are preserved as cities expand.

**Challenges Ahead** Despite these initiatives, significant challenges remain. Continuous pressure from urban development, climate change, and lack of resources complicate conservation efforts. Maintaining and enhancing urban forests in Jammu requires ongoing commitment from both the government and local communities, focusing on sustainable management and ecological restoration practices to ensure these vital green spaces endure for future generations.

...To be continued