

Representation of multiculturalism and thriving unity in Kashmir through two regional newspapers: Daily excelsior and Greater Kashmir.

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ABSTRACT:

The pious land of Kashmir was created from a sacrosanct river by revered sage Kashyap. The ethereal province of Kashmir withholding its Hindu roots has witnessed the torrential rains of violence proselytization, cooperation, displacement and now invigorating breeze of Chinar leaves with unity and multiculturalism. Regional newspapers hold an important value to disseminate news carrying proximity value. Thus, making it a notable carrier for representation of local people's precious culture. Regional newspapers create a powerful impact on readers portraying the importance of their identity and thus fostering the cultural discourse among people. The resplendent snowy land of Jammu & Kashmir and its hospitable inhabitants carry rich cultural tapestry that is vast just like its high piqued picturesque vanilla draped mountains. In this study the coverage by two prominent regional newspapers, Daily Excelsior and Greater Kashmir of significant aspects of culture, unity in faith, identical traditional delicacies along with rearrival of Hindu festivals in form of news, articles, editorials and features will be examined.

KEYWORDS:

Multiculturalism in Kashmir, Regional newspapers, Cultural discourse, Daily excelsior, Greater Kashmir.

Introduction:

In Kashmir flows the unique air of Kashmiriyat signifying the exquisite ideology of Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam that carries the breeze of multiculturalism and has a fusion of both divine Hinduism and Islam. The radiant valley is in fact the active spot of diversity with religious pluralism being its primary characteristic. Desiccated from water where streams of different cultures and religion later converged to form amalgamation of pious land created by sediments of different traditions and beliefs, has got permanent impressions on its beauty of almost every era. With its mention in Mahabharata as Kasmira, the kingdom of Nagas (6, 9). The Kashmir valley was once an important study centre of Hinduism with Shaivism in every segment of it. In 1339 Islam monarchs invaded Kashmir and thus began the continuous process of conversion of indigenous people during which peace and violence alternately visited the valley. Finally, in 1819, Sikh rulers got hold over the valley and a serene time was enjoyed by the valley until partition of India in 1947 when Pakistan started sending its Pashtun and Tanoli tribe people to loot people of Kashmir thus causing havoc in the valley. To save the people, Maharja Hari Singh signed instrument of accession and Kashmir became integral part of India on 26th October 1949 but Pakistan led terrorism and corruption set in minds of gullible Kashmiri Muslim youth persuaded them to walk on evil path resulting in mass rapes and killings of Kashmiri Pandits who were given threats, 'Raliv, galiv ya schaliv' meaning 'convert, die or leave the valley' from the loudspeakers in mosques compelling them to leave their original homeland thus bringing an eclipse on the tranquil multicultural society of the Kashmir valley(Tikoo, 2024). However, after the abrogation of article 370 and multiple reforms made by government the old days have also returned. Through this study, the blissful days of multiculturalism and unity among the two communities won't only be recalled but the changing scenario in the valley will be analyzed. The published content related to multiculturalism in Kashmir in Daily Excelsior newspaper, that is read more in Jammu province (<https://www.4imn.com/reviews/14976.htm>) and Greater Kashmir newspaper, that has more readers in Kashmir will be

studied. (<https://www.4imn.com/reviews/14976.htm>). The research will showcase how frequently these two oldest regional newspapers are covering the concerned topic related to multiculturalism and blossoming light of unity in the valley.

Need for the study:

The wave of multiculturalism is prominent in Kashmir today. The study will help to know which popular regional newspaper of the both Daily Excelsior and Greater Kashmir is promoting the facets of Kashmiri multiculturalism the most.

Objectives:

- » To analyze which regional newspaper of the most read Daily Excelsior and Greater Kashmir is valorizing the topic related to multiculturalism and rearrival of Hindu festivals in Kashmir.
- » To know whether topics published by newspapers are totally centered around majority of readers reading it in that region.

Methodology:

Secondary Data: Sample of two regional newspapers Daily Excelsior and Greater Kashmir's January 2024 edition has been taken.

Qualitative analysis: News, articles and features are coded for thematic analysis on categories :- 1.Unity in Faith 2.Identical traditional delicacies 3. Rearrival of Hindu festivals in Kashmir Temples

Quantitative analysis: Doing quantitative analysis by calculating the frequency of topics being covered in each newspaper.

Scope of the study:

Regional newspapers play an important role in conveying information to local people. In this study, one of the oldest newspapers of J&K UT Daily Excelsior started in year 1965 and Greater Kashmir started in year 1989 have been taken to analyze one month of January, 2024. And analyzing how often the content is getting published is important to see the priority given to the particular topic by the newspaper.

Limitations:

1. The study has been conducted on two regional newspapers only.
2. The study has been done for a month period only.
3. The study has taken into consideration only some aspects of Kashmir's multiculturalism
4. The study includes only the news, articles and features published in printed version of both regional newspapers.

Unity in Faith: There was a time when Kashmir valley along being known for its exceptional and dazzling beauty was also recognized for being an embodiment of brotherhood and everlasting friendship between Hindu and Muslim community. The saints and beliefs belonging to both the communities were idolized and respected symbolizing unity in faith of both Kashmiri Pandit and Muslim communities.

Headline: 'Uma Devi Temple A sacred oasis in the Himalayan folds of Kashmir.'

Summary: The feature published in 'Daily Excelsior' on January 21 on page 2 of the Sunday Magazine written by Shakeel Bin Abdul Ali highlights the harmony between muslims and Pandits of Kashmiri community. The feature elucidates how author visited the pious land with his old friend from Brari Angan - a place known for sacred site of Mata Uma Bagwati Temple. They were given temple keys by Fatima Apa, a lady from the Muslim community. The author appreciates this gesture which in turn shows the unity in between two religious communities. The author states, "The deep - rooted history, spiritual significance and the captivating convergence of diverse communities position Mata Uma Devi Temple as a symbol of unity in the embracing Himalayan landscape of Kashmir."

The author then narrates the story of Shree Shiv Ram Jalali also known as Swami Shivananda who was a tax collector during the reign of Afghan governor of Kashmir, Haji Karam Dad Khan. On reaching Brari Angan Shiv Ram felt a deep spiritual devotion towards Mata Uma Devi

and became a saint. As guided by Mata Uma devi to follow a crow in wee hours of the next day Shiv Ram reached in the dense forest where five springs – Brahma Kund, Vishnu Kund, Rudra Kund and Shiv Shakti Kund joined to form a shape of Omkara. He did meditation there and lid Akhant Jyoti which persisted till the mass exodus of Kashmiri Pandits. When the governor summoned the saint he didn't arrive so the army soldiers were deployed to bring him back. But as they reached there they were shocked to see two lions flanking the saint. Hearing the incident the governor also visited the saint and witnessing his transformative power the governor offered 1600 of revenue – free agricultural land and a forest strip for the shrine's management and pilgrims' usage. And hence the place came to be known as Brari Angan (cat's compound). The author cherishes the rich history of this sacred temple which unites faith in spiritualism in both Hindus and Muslims together.

The author mentions that the revered temple conjoins the faith of Kashmiri Pandits and Muslims , known for its five pious springs Brahma Kund, Vishnu Kund, Rudra Kund and Shiv Shakti Kund formig the shape of Omkara and magnificent transformation of tax collector Shree Shiv Ram Koul during Afghan governor's rule to Swami Shivananda through enlightenment achieved at the same place.

Headline: Lal Ded united divided minds.

Summary: One of the most snappy news published in 'Greater Kashmir' newspaper on January 28 on page no. 03 was related to Lal Ded National Award 2024 being bestowed to Kashmiri IRS officer Nirupama Kotru. The speakers present on the occasion were all in praise of Lal Ded's philosophy that is and will be forever inspirational for humanity. Anecdotes of various speakers are mentioned in news admiring beliefs and immense spiritual knowledge of Lal Ded. Minister for Higher and Technical Education, Maharashtra Chandrakant Patil stated that when teachings of Lal Ded were flourishing in Kashmir at the same time Maharastrian saints also worked towards creating social awareness. According to Patil, from Lalleshwari to Sheikh Nooruddin Noordani saints played a significant role in fostering tradition of harmony in Kashmir.

Citing a verse of Lal Ded Kotru explained its meaning that Lord shiva throbs in each and every being dissipating the differences between Hindu and Muslim religions.

Headline: Islam, Kashmiri Islam, and Islamic Kashmir

Summary: "While we look at Kashmir from Kashmir, we look at our culture from within our culture, there is a God that looks at us from above, from below, from right and left; He talks to a human, no matter he lives in Khanyar ot Khybar, Kabul or Kerela, Abu Dhabi or Ayodhya, Mecca or Dhaka. All languages belong to him, and all peoples, Kashmiri Muslims or Kashmiri Pandits, are His" This beautifully written excerpt is from a well written article by Mehmood ur Rashid in 'Greater Kashmir' newspaper on January 21 page no. 06 describing Kashmiriyat as a synonym of secularism the author states that Kashmiriyat was wrongly represented in a way as if it is bringing down natural Muslimness of the Kashmiri society. There was a political motive behind it that brought turmoil and impacted Kashmir. The author mentions that there are three types of mental Islamic fabrics in Kashmir with one being the Kashmiri version of Islam while others feel that this kind of Islam which is binding it to Kashmiri culture somehow disconnects it from the representatives of Muslim world. And then comes the Sufi Islam that is thought to be the mild one and act as a mediator. According to the author only when one reads Quran one comes to know that everyone is the same and Islam too is peaceful to carry with it culture and syncretism. The author mentions how Shah e Hamadan (Sufi Muslim saint from Iran who spread Islam in Kashmir) added to the culture of Kashmir but he was not solely a culturalist and he did spread Islam but was not only an Islamist. In fact he was both, so culture and Islam can actually co - exist and spread harmony and equality everywhere.

Identical traditional delicacies: Kashmiri Pandits and Muslims cuisines are almost identical representing fusion of two different religious communities to form a harmonized structure of multiculturalism that holds Kashmiriyat in a unified framework.

Headline: Our Traditional Gulkand

Summary: The article featured in 'Greater Kashmir', January 9 on page no. 10 authored by Manzoor Akash elucidates on 'Khambeer', the sugary local Gulkand of Kashmir. The author claims, "It is not only a sweet preserve used in Kashmiri kitchens from decades, but also a part of our rich culture." Fresh Damascus roses of valley are mixed with sugar and different spices creating palatable flavored 'Khambeer' which is then sun-cooked in air-tight bottle kept hanging in balcony during autumn. The article underscores how market based, full of preservatives Gulkand is replacing traditionally prepared Gulkand in households. The article reflects upon the diminishing legacy of creating Gulkand in okhli, locally known as Nyeam in Kashmir by crushing rose petals with sugar in it. According to the author this relishing rose delicacy was brought in Kashmir by Mughal rulers and is in fact a super food having cooling effect on the body. The word Gulkand is a compound word with Gul meaning flower and kand meaning sweet. The author mentions about innumerable benefits of consuming this royal treat that acts as Ayurvedic medicine from alleviating inflammation, improving hair and skin quality to aiding digestion thus acting as an elixir for gut. And although made in every house of Kashmir when ran out of this delicacy people would never hesitate to fetch it from nearby household to mix it with their warmth instilling tea beverage Kahwa.

Identical to jam this pure cultural cuisine of Kashmir is on verge of being shrouded by clouds of modernity as people of Kashmir are becoming more and more relied on market products,

Headline: Makkai Sout : A Winter Tradition in Kashmir

Summary: The article published in 'Greater Kashmir', page no. 6 on January 22 written by Manzoor Akash delves into the intricacies of preparing traditional satu in Kashmir during winters. The author states, "Kashmiri gatherings are incomplete without the warmth of Makkai sout shared among friends and family. It serves not as a dish but as a vessel for the bonds that tie the Kashmiri people together." And the traditional Makkai satu is not only rich in protein and delectable but also free from preservatives. Made by maize seeds of higher quality and flavor

which are half burnt and then grinded in stone mills, the traditional flour mill Grutte (Ath –e –Grutte and Aab – e – Grutte , the former being the name of manual flour mill while the latter being the watermill) adds additional natural flavor to the tasty sout that is indeed a part of Kashmiri culture which when added to Kahwa and Kashmiri Nun Chai enhances its taste manifold. The author recalls how his mother used to roast maize seeds in pans made of clay on Dambur , the traditional chulha of Kashmir and then send it to nearest watermill.

Revival of Hindu festivals in Kashmir temples: Some tough measures taken by government to eradicate militancy in the valley some Kashmiri Pandits have started visiting the valley.

Headline: Special prayers held in Kashmir temples

Summary: The most anticipated and fortunate news was published on January 23 in Greater Kashmir's spectacular page no. 1st where Shabir Ibn Yusuf reported about several temples in Kashmir performing special pooja to mark the consecration of the Ram Temple in Ayodhya.

On this occasion, several Kashmiri Pandits along with Hindu tourists visited the temples in Kashmir valley. The Shankaracharya temple, located on the Zabarwan hills in Srinagar was the main point of these prayers.

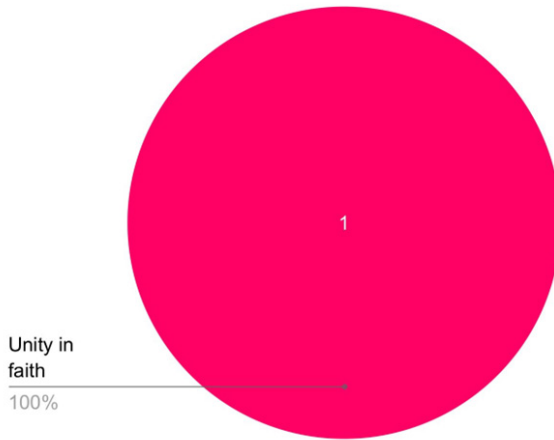
Hanuman temple located on the banks of River Jhelum was also decorated on arrival of Ram Lala to his home.

In Anantnag district, a Havan was organized in Martand Sun temple where Kashmiri Pandits prayed for restoration of peace and brotherhood in the valley.

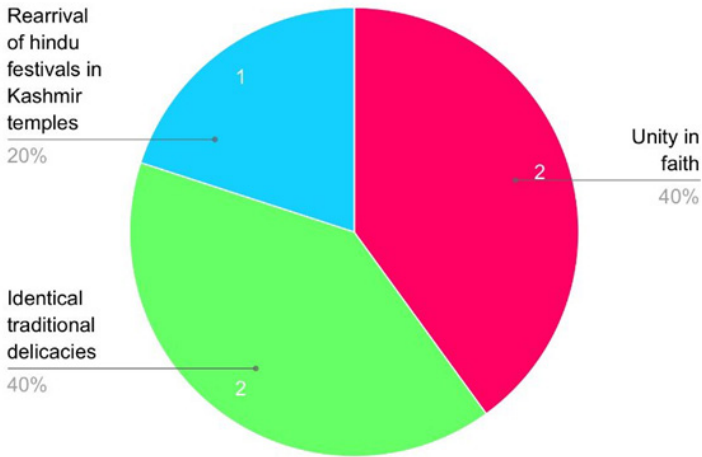
Result

Coverage of different aspects of multiculturalism in Kashmir covered collectively by Daily Excelsior and Greater Kashmir

Coverage by Daily Excelsior



Coverage by Greater Kashmir



While Greater Kashmir has covered every aspect of multiculturalism in Kashmir. Daily Excelsior has covered a well written feature showcasing unity in faith.

Conclusion

Daily Excelsior has covered a well written feature showcasing unity in faith. While Greater Kashmir has covered all aspects of multiculturalism and rearrival of Kashmiri Hindus.

The difference in coverage has provided new insights as Daily Excelsior being read more in Jammu has covered only one topic representing multiculturalism in the valley. While Greater Kashmir being read more in the valley has covered more news and articles showcasing multiculturalism in Kashmir.

Suggestions

1. The topic related to rearrival of hindu festivals in Kashmir temples should be covered more by both newspapers.

2. Daily Excelsior should also try to showcase different aspects of multiculturalism in Kashmir so that the people living in Jammu can also have knowledge about the same.

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Conflict of interest:

The Authors have no conflict of interest to declare that they are relevant to the content of this article.

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