

**Speech delivered by Hon'ble Justice Pankaj Mithal,  
Chief Justice, on 7<sup>th</sup> September, 2022 at the  
valedictory function of International Conference on  
"Society, Culture & Social Change: Kashmir &  
Beyond" at Islamic University of Science and  
Technology, Awantipora, Kashmir**

---

Prof. Shakil Ahmad Romshoo, Vice Chancellor, Islamic University of Science and Technology, Prof. Abha Chauhan, Chairperson, Indian Sociological Society, Prof. Peerzada Mohammad Amin, Controller of Examination and Organising Secretary of the Conference, other dignitaries from far and abroad, delegates of the conference, Faculty members and students of the University, ladies and gentlemen.

I feel privileged to be part of this Valedictory function of the International Conference on "Society, Culture & Social Change: Kashmir & Beyond" organized by the Islamic University of Science and Technology, Kashmir (IUST) in collaboration with Indian Sociological Society (ISS).

I have learnt that it has been a two days of intellectual feast while this conference was in progress.

The speakers of national and international repute have addressed the delegates. The deliberations held in the conference shall surely form bedrock for further discussions and research in order to have a better understanding of the direction we are heading for, so far as the society in Kashmir or for that matter India is concerned.

It is trite to say that Kashmir valley is famous world-over for its scenic beauty, mountains covered with conifers, mesmerizing pastures, heavenly gardens and above all beautiful people with golden hearts. Apart from the natural beauty, the valley is famous for its rich cultural heritage, which includes sweet language, exquisite cuisine, distinguishing wearing apparels, folkways, festivals, beliefs, norms, family structure, marriage celebrations, immortalising Sufi music and dance. The unity and brotherhood of Muslims, Hindus, Sikhs and Buddhist, and the Shaiv and Sufi philosophies have created an amalgamated and complex culture that is based on unity, honesty, respect, humanism, tolerance etc., which, former Prime Minister Sh. Atal Bihari Vajpai termed as 'Kashmiriyat'. The whole of the territory of Jammu & Kashmir is recognized for these embedded traits.

Every society is recognized by its uniqueness in culture and identity. The identity of the society can't be and should not be compromised for the contemporary developmental goals. But inevitable it is unless we as a society take up the challenge and plunge to take up the cause of cultural renaissance.

In Jammu & Kashmir, we have experienced a long turmoil and ordeal for decades, and the resilience to such upheavals could be seen to be a direct outcome of the composite culture practiced by the people of this beautiful part of India. The situation equally holds true for Indian subcontinent in general and India in particular, which has thrived through several vicissitudes by the dint of rich social and cultural diversity.

The recent times have seen a transformation of great magnitude owing to the processes of modernization and globalization facilitated by the ever penetrating reach of Information and Communication Technology (ICT). Print and Electronic Media has largely impacted the society and culture of people both in Kashmir and India in varied ways of language, economy, literature and tradition. Globalisation has brought about a revolution resulting in shrinking of physical, mental and economical barriers. ICT carried the process still further, and now social media has

the potential of disrupting all the social and cultural barriers at least in the virtual world. It is posing a great challenge to the sociologists and social scientists to understand enormous potential it is presenting and the impending threat, and calls for preparing the societies to face the worst that can come. These problems and challenges you all must have pondered upon while deliberating in the conference and you must be alive to the situation. I am sure the renowned sociologists shall in near future be able to come up with new theories to describe the social change nay transformation.

I am happy that the present International Conference has brought people from diverse regions, locally from the UT of J&K, India and abroad on a common platform to collectively deliberate on the society and culture of Kashmir and India from the viewpoint of socio-economic, philosophic and religious dimensions including the study of communities, ethnic groups, institutions, traditions and linguistic and regional diversities. The Conference did focus on the transition that society and culture are going through due to the effect of modern forces of change and globalization and the participants have articulated on the genesis, processes and consequences of these changes based on their respective researches.

In the present scenario, ecological concerns and environmental issues require special attention from all the stakeholders of society. Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) has already made special emphasis on ecology and environment. These goals are achievable only through the process of integration and due acknowledgement of economic, environmental, and social concerns. Environmental challenges have emerged due to indiscriminate and unplanned development that has resulted in irreparable damage to the environment in various parts of the country in general and Kashmir in particular. Current status of the Dal – a world famous lake in Kashmir is a live example of how ruthless we have been in treating ecology. Without saying much further on this aspect, I urge the academic world to take these issues with utmost seriousness. I hope all these issues will be deliberated in further such conferences in details and recommendations will be made towards shaping a better future of Kashmir and India.

The Valley of Kashmir with its natural scenic beauty, climate wise and location wise as a great potential of developing into a big educational centre/hub. Shri Sharda Sarvagya Mahashakti Peeth in the Neelam Ghati at the banks of river Kishanganga is an ancient education centre where even Adhi Shankracharya had visited to seek

blessings of Maa Sharda. This peeth is within the valley of Kashmir. Efforts should be made to explore our roots to have better understanding of our cultural heritage.

Today's International Conference on "Society, Culture & Social Change" is one step forward in establishing the valley as an educational hub. I am glad that Islamic University of Science and Technology and the Indian Sociological Society took an initiative to hold this Conference in Srinagar. It has opened gates for such similar Conferences, Seminars, Symposiums, Lectures, and Talks in the valley which is going to attract intellectuals from far and abroad, giving immense exposure to the intellectual and the common people of Kashmir.

I hope and trust frequent conferences of the like would be the order of the day and the valley will emerge as a global education centre.

I am grateful to the organizers of this conference to have invited me and given a chance to express my views.

Thanks to all.

**Jai Hind, Jai Bharat.**