

#UNPLUGGED

Rediscover Life Offline

Screen-Free Week 2025 (May 5-11) invites you to unplug and reconnect, are you in?



In a world where scrolling, streaming, and swiping are second nature, Screen-Free Week comes as a breath of fresh air. Celebrated this year from May 5 to May 11, the global initiative encourages people of all ages to switch off their screens and switch on real-life experiences. Whether you're a student, professional, parent, or teen, you probably spend more time than you'd like on your phone or laptop. But what if, just for one week, you paused the pings, muted the notifications, and rediscovered the world beyond the screen?



What's Screen-Free Week All About?

Started in 1994 as TV-Turnoff Week and rebranded in 2010 to reflect the rise of smartphones, tablets, and streaming services, Screen-Free Week is now a

Why Go Screen-Free?

Here's what a week without screens can gift you!

- **Better Sleep** - No more blue light before bed.
- **More Focus** - Say goodbye to constant multitasking.
- **Stronger Relationships** - More face time, less FaceTime.
- **Mental Clarity** - Create

Fun Ideas to Try (No WiFi Required!)

Not sure how to spend your screen-free hours? Try these!

- Picnic in the park
- Paint or draw something, just for fun
- Read that book you've been meaning to start
- Play a board game with family

How to Make It Work

Unplugging doesn't have to be all or nothing. Here's how to ease into Screen-Free Week!

- Set daily screen-free hours.
- Create tech-free zones at home (like the dinner table or bedroom).
- Inform your circle, let them

Beyond the Week: Creating Lasting Balance

After Screen-Free Week ends, reflect on how it felt. Which activities did you love? What surprised you? Carry forward what worked

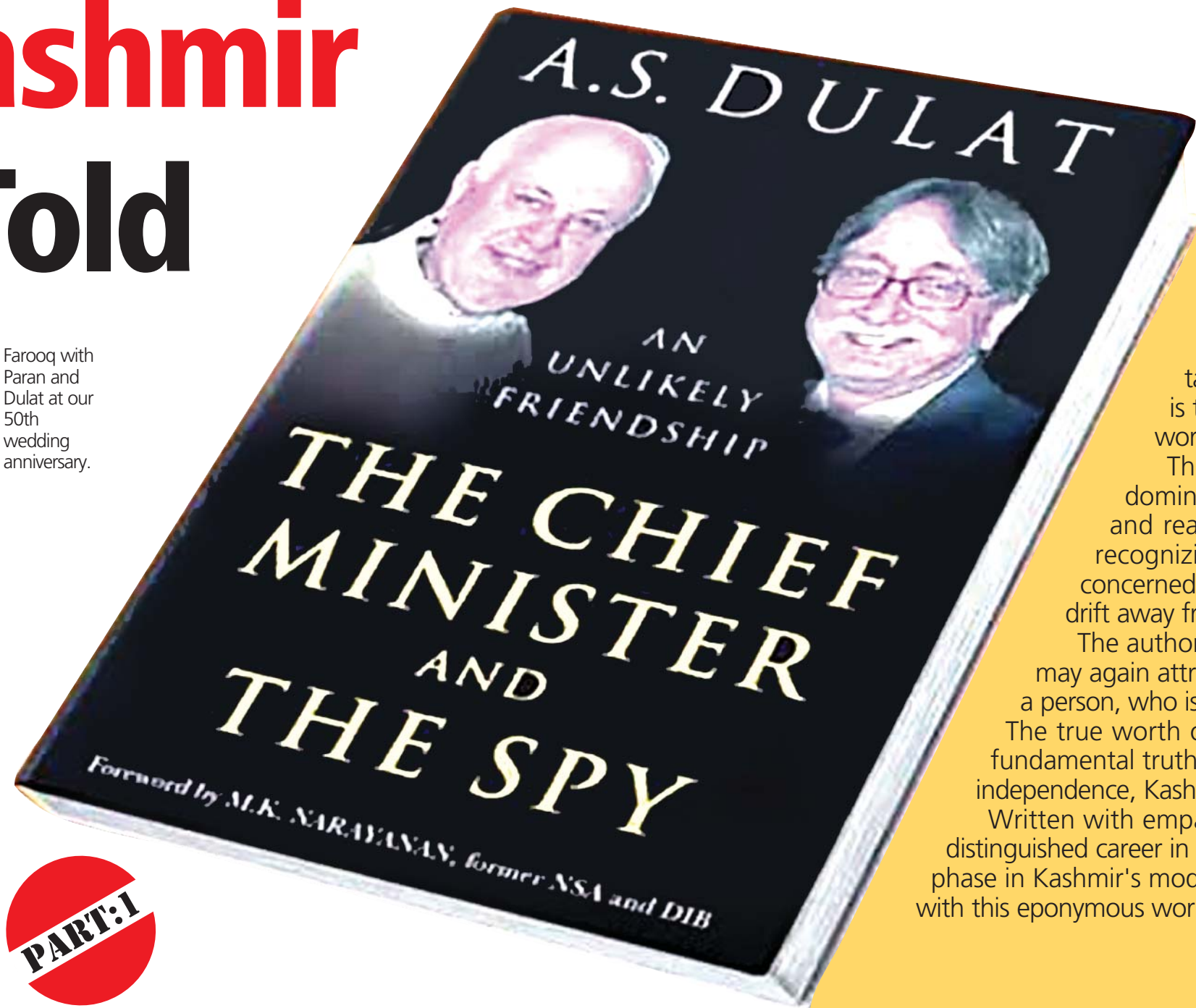
**So, are you up for the challenge?**  
This May 5-11, unplug to reconnect, with yourself, your people, and your passions. The screen can wait, real life is calling.



# The Story Of Kashmir Waiting To Be Told



Farooq with Paran and Dulat at our 50th wedding anniversary.



(Text is based on the conversations with A. S. Dulat)

Last month, on the night of 15th April, there was a book launch of A. S. Dulat's latest book, *The Chief Minister and The Spy*, at the India International Centre. This was Mr. Dulat's sixth book in the last launch in India or London had done well.

Farooq's absence at the book launch became more glaring when, as Dulat recalls, in May 2024, he flew down to Delhi for the launch of Dulat's book *Covered Covert* at the India International Centre (IIC). It was on the day that Omar's constituency in Baramulla went to the polls for the parliamentary elections. At first, Dulat had been



At the launch of the book, Kashmir: The Vajpayee Years, in 2015.

unsure that Farooq would come. "No, no, of course, I will come," he assured. "It is Omar's election, ours in Srinagar is already over."

But it is reported that the book launch at IIC lacked all the exuberance and gaiety that always marked the book events of Dulat's books. About 15 to 17 people were present, and the atmosphere was sombre. People were mostly professional colleagues, there more as a corps-de-spirit than celebrating a triumph. Most, explaining Farooq Abdullah's absence, wrote with a sense of regret, framing their words in hushed tones: "Why did he do it? Why did he write the book?"

Farooq put a stamp of approval on this feeling by putting out a statement in the press a few days later: "A. Dulat is a friend, he shouldn't have written this book!"

Dulat, however, says that when he began thinking of writing this, he talked it over with Doctor Sahib (as Dr. Farooq Abdullah is more commonly known in Kashmir). In fact, they spoke about it umpteen times. He never said no, but there was never a clear 'yes' until the summer of 2004, when Dulat finally began writing it.

"Karo, na," he said. (Go ahead.)

It was a response typical of the man, Doctor Sahib could be both reticent and forthcoming, depending on the time, place, and mood. That is why, rather than a biography, Dulat likes to think of it as a story.

One that had been wanting to be told ever since he first met Doctor Sahib in the winter of 1987.

In October that year, Dulat had received a call from his friend. According to Dulat, at the very first time he heard of Farooq Abdullah, United Front (M.U.F). By all accounts, MUF leader Mohammed Yusuf Shah had won. Disillusioned, he took the name Sayed Salahuddin and went to lead the rigid Mujahideen. Yasin went to lead the J.K.L.F.

One morning, Romesh Bhandari, the secretary travelling with President Giani Zail Singh, excitedly brought a copy of The Times of India and exclaimed, "Dekho Giani ji ki khabar aayi hai."

The news was, of course, the signing of the accord between Farooq and Rajiv.

Giani responded to this accord with typical fatalism, "This is the beginning of the end of Farooq Abdullah."

But like many others, according to Dulat, who tried to estimate where Farooq stood on the great political chessboard that is Kashmir, he was wrong.

According to Dulat, the subtitle of the book refers to an unlikely friendship, not friendship in its truest sense, which implies that you are on intimate terms with another person.

Dulat says that in the three decades he had known Farooq, he couldn't say with confidence that he truly knew him. "You see, he is the enigma of Doctor Sahib."

Anyway, as the story goes, in November 1986, the Rajiv-Farooq accord was signed as a roadmap to stabilizing the state, and Rajiv had Farooq installed as Chief Minister in Srinagar, after removing the then Chief Minister, Gul Shah. On 23rd March 1987, elections were held in the state. Conducted only four

months after Farooq had been appointed Chief Minister, it is widely believed that the elections were rigged in order to prevent Delhi from losing control of Kashmir. The contestants were Congress, National Conference, and Muslim United Front (M.U.F). By all accounts, MUF leader Mohammed Yusuf Shah had won. Disillusioned, he took the name Sayed Salahuddin and went to lead the rigid Mujahideen. Yasin went to lead the J.K.L.F.

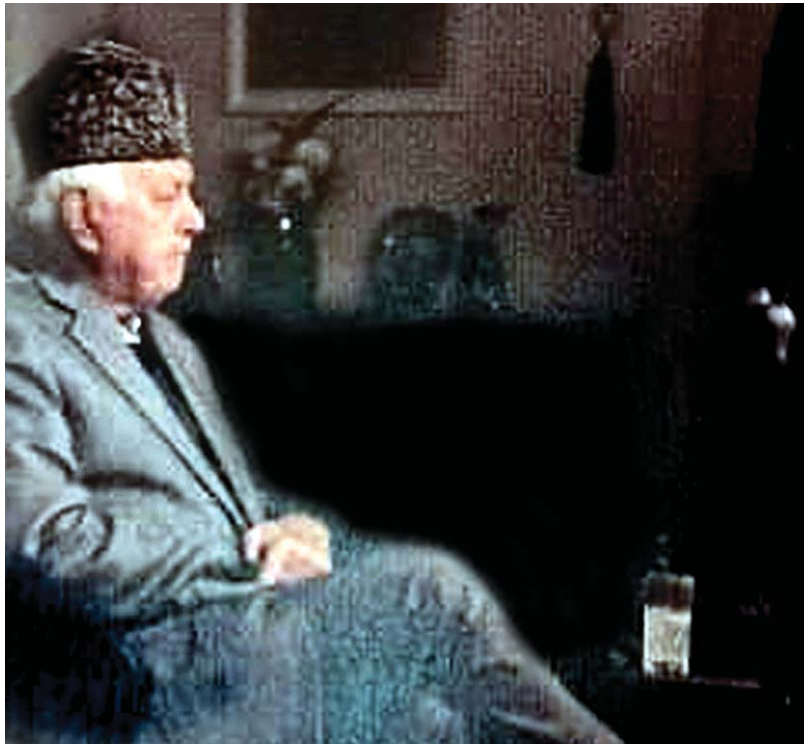
In the spring of 1987, the turnout in the valley was massive. As counting progressed, it became apparent that Sayed Salahuddin was way ahead of his opponent, Ghulam Mohiuddin Shah of the N.C. With Salahuddin's lead growing by the hour, Mohiuddin left the counting centre thoroughly disappointed. However, he was soon called back and declared the winner of the Assembly seat by 4,289 votes.

The backlash was immediate and vicious. The so-called rigging of the 1987 election became the focus of a bloodbath that rocked Kashmir. With the shadow of these stormy elections still over Kashmir, Dulat was advised by IB headquarters to visit Srinagar on a reconnaissance before his predecessor left on his new assignment.

Before leaving for Srinagar, Dulat was called by I.B. Director M.K. Narayan and told, "Please make sure Dr. Farooq is kept in good humour, our relationship with him is okay and he is on our side. Please, see to that."

It was puzzling because it was something he had also heard from Chief Minister Arjun Singh, when he had gone to say goodbye before shifting to his new posting in Srinagar. Arjun Singh had said, "Doctor Sahib is a nationalist and our best bet, so stay close to him."

With this background, Dulat



Farooq in a thoughtful mood at Dulat's residence in December 2024.

was introduced to Farooq at the farewell tea party of his predecessor. "I shook hands with Doctor Sahib and then sat quietly in a corner." Farooq appeared to take absolutely no notice of Dulat, and as Dulat wrote, to be fair to Farooq, why should he have noticed a young fellow on his first posting to Kashmir?

It was only later he realised that even though Doctor Sahib appeared not to notice anything, in reality he noticed everything. It was a quality that kept even the laziest of Dulat's tribe alert. "You never knew what Doctor Sahib was observing and how he would bring it to your notice at a time of his choosing."

## Honouring the Unsung Heroes of Communication: Interpreter Appreciation Day

Observed annually on the first Wednesday of May, Interpreter Appreciation Day celebrates the vital role interpreters play in bridging language gaps across various sectors, including healthcare, legal, and community services. In 2025, it falls on May 7. Established in 2013 by Joshua Jones, a deaf-blind advocate, the day acknowledges the dedication and skill of interpreters who facilitate clear and accurate communication, ensuring inclusivity and understanding in our diverse society. Whether through spoken languages or sign language, interpreters are essential in connecting people and fostering meaningful interactions across linguistic and cultural boundaries.

FAROOQ WENT A STEP FURTHER AND OFFERED HIS OWN HELICOPTER TO DULAT'S SISTER TO FLY ADITYA TO DELHI IF SHE PREFERRED. HOWEVER, POMA, DULAT'S SISTER, DECLINED, EXPRESSING HER FULL FAITH IN THE KASHMIRI DOCTORS AT SOURA.

This is a fascinating account of Kashmir, written by one who is not merely an expert but, more importantly, whose emotional attachment to Kashmir and with the mercurial Dr. Farooq Abdullah is, perhaps, unrivalled. On one level, this is an honest and unvarnished account of events that have taken place in Kashmir since the 1980s to the present, but what is more fascinating is that it is an insider's account, unrivalled in terms of understanding the forces at work during a very turbulent period.

The author's sympathetic portrayal of Dr. Farooq Abdullah as a 'colossus' who dominated the course of many, if not most, events in Kashmir is closest to the truth and reality than most other portrayals. The true merit of the work, though, lies in recognizing the centrality of Dr. Abdullah's role as far as contemporary Kashmir is concerned, and also how critical Dr. Abdullah's role was in ensuring that Kashmir did not drift away from India.

The author's reference to Dr. Abdullah as the tallest of the modern-day Kashmiri leaders may again attract criticism from many, but it is the unvarnished truth and is acknowledged by a person, who is among the very few in the world who can be considered an expert on Kashmir. The true worth of this book, written in conversation style, is how the narrative brings out a fundamental truth, that notwithstanding several other problems that India has had to face since independence, Kashmir is probably the most complex and enduring.

Written with empathy and sympathy, but 'seeing with the mind's eye,' the author, who has a distinguished career in intelligence over several decades, has provided an insightful account of a chaotic phase in Kashmir's modern history. Few accounts of similar situations across the world quite compare with this eponymous work.

-M. K. Narayanan, former National Security Adviser to the Government of India

She was intelligent, attractive and restless. Mollie came from a working-class family in Suffolk. Her father worked for a transport company, her brother had joined the Royal Air Force, and her sister taught at a school. They were traditional English folks with a quiet, sturdy characteristic that defined them.

From the start, Dulat and his wife liked Mollie very much. She was English to her tips, though she wore her salwar kameez beautifully, merging perfectly with the Abdullah family.

Farooq asked as soon as Dulat and his wife arrived for their first meal of the house, heading towards his car with an impatient air.

"Come on," he said brusquely, registering Dulat's question. "Hop into the car with me. We will talk on the way."

"Where are we going?" "To the airport," as it turned out. Farooq had a flight to Delhi.

Dulat writes, "I have forgotten what we talked about that day." But he discovered on that scenic drive that Farooq loved to be behind the wheel of a car. It was a pleasant way to start an acquaintance, albeit a trifle unusual.

As they neared the airport, Farooq glanced at Dulat and said, "I am coming back in a few days and we will meet again."

Dulat went back to the office, wondering what sort of unconventional interaction this was. Chief Ministers did not frequently command the IB head to hop into a car on the way to the airport, nor did they care to drive themselves.

But these were still the early days, and Dulat wasn't quite used to flinging protocol out of the window in his interactions with Farooq. So, he phoned him and requested time when his wife and he could call on him.

Farooq immediately disarmed him. "What is this all-on-one business?" he demanded. "Come and have a meal with us at home."

Dinner at the Abdullah home soon became a regular part of Dulat and his wife's life. The food was always superb, and they soon got to know Mollie, Farooq's wife.

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however, walked across to Doctor Sahib's lane to seek help from Mollie. Instead, she met Farooq at the gate. Without hesitation, he calmed her and advised that Aditya be transferred to the Soura Medical Institute. Srinagar's equivalent of AIIMS, where he assured her that the doctors would take good care of him.

Aditya, who had suffered serious injuries, regained consciousness after two days. Farooq went a step further and offered his own helicopter to Dulat's sister to fly Aditya to Delhi if she preferred. However, Poma, Dulat's sister, declined, expressing her full faith in the Kashmiri doctors at Soura.

To this day, Dulat says that Poma has not forgotten that moment. For her, Farooq, more than even the skilled doctors, was the man who saved her son's life. Farooq, too, never forgot Aditya. He continued to inquire about him at every opportunity, and years later, he attended Aditya's wedding, a gesture that Dulat and his family remember with deep gratitude.

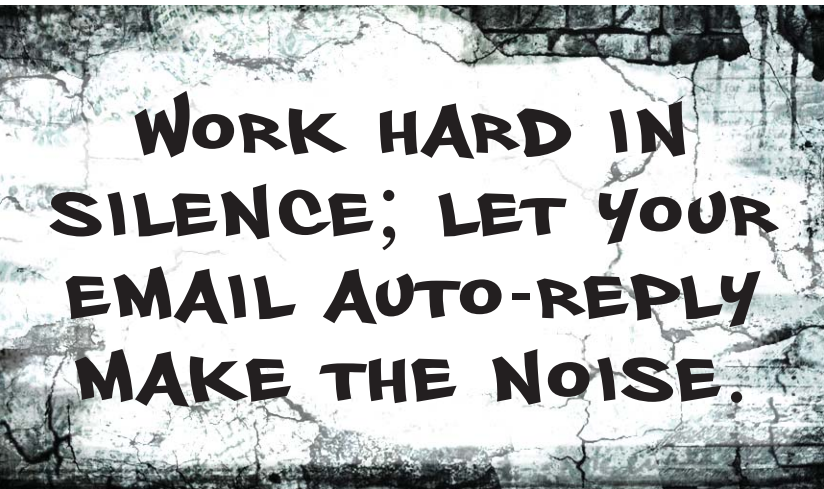
To be continued...

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Dulat with Farooq.

## THE WALL



## BABY BLUES



By Rick Kirkman & Jerry Scott

## ZITS



By Jerry Scott & Jim Borgman