

#J'ADORE
Scarlet Statement

Shannon K stuns in custom Red Gown by Josh Birch Jones at Mission: Impossible 8 Cannes Premiere!



Sebetina Reddy
International singer and actress, Shannon K, turned heads at the Mission: Impossible 8 premiere at the Cannes Film Festival, dazzling in a breathtaking custom red gown by award-winning British designer, Josh Birch Jones. The show-stopping couture piece, flown in from London, showcased Birch Jones' signature blend of structured elegance and modern glamour. As one of the youngest and most celebrated members of the British Fashion Council, Birch Jones collaborated with Shannon to create a look that perfectly embodied her bold, yet sophisticated red-carpet style. The vibrant gown, tailored to perfection, earned widespread praise for its timeless silhouette and statement colour. "Cannes always feels magical, but this year was even more special," said Shannon. "Wearing Josh



It was an evening thick with memory, candour, and unanswered questions as A.S. Dulat, former RAW chief, Kashmir whisperer, and now a three-time author, arrived in Jaipur to discuss his latest book, *The Chief Minister and The Spy*. Seated alongside Rajesh Sharma, Editor, Rashtradrast, and Ajay Singha, Senior Advisor, FICCI, Dulat took the audience on a journey through Kashmir's shadowed corridors, interlaced with loyalty, betrayal, and a peculiar intimacy with one man: Dr. Farooq Abdullah. This was Dulat unplugged, reminiscing, revealing, refusing to spin.

● Farooq Was Delhi's Man, And Yet, Always Let Down by Delhi

Dulat's loyalty to Farooq Abdullah is not disguised; it is at the very heart of his book. "He was always Delhi's man," Dulat said, "and yet Delhi never gave him his due." From his anointment in 1981 as Sheikh Abdullah's successor, Farooq positioned himself as the bridge between Srinagar and New Delhi. "But Delhi never saw the value," Dulat

laments. "They wasted him." Through the 1980s and '90s, Dr. Abdullah was the face of moderation in Kashmir, a man willing to work with the Centre, to keep the state within the Union's fold. And yet, Delhi treated him with suspicion. "He should have been our Foreign Minister. Hell, he could have been President. Instead, he was repeatedly sidelined."

Dulat's bitterness is personal. He wasn't just a spy watching from the wings. He was Farooq's handler. His friend. His sounding board. The man to whom Farooq once said, "Don't lie to Delhi. But don't lie for Delhi either."

● The Jagmohan Betrayal and The 1990 Breakpoint

One moment remains etched in Dulat's memory, January 1990. "Farooq resigned the day Jagmohan was reappointed Governor," Dulat recalls. "He saw it as betrayal. Delhi had promised him Jagmohan wouldn't return. George Fernandes had even assured him."

When Jagmohan was reimposed, Farooq knew what was coming. So did Dulat.

"By then, I was branded as Farooq's man. I left Kashmir soon after. Booted out, to be blunt." He chuckles at the memory but the bitterness is palpable. "And the winter of 1989-90? Horrific. Militancy had broken out. The Valley was on fire."

● A Relationship Beyond Politics

If the book is about espionage and power, it is also deeply about friend-

The Key Is Understanding Kashmir



ship. Dulat does not hide his affection for Farooq. "He's not just a politician. He's a doctor. He's a son of Jaipur. I still call him when I'm worried about my blood pressure."

There is a recurring note of warmth, almost romantic nostalgia. Dulat insists that Farooq Abdullah is "one of the tallest leaders in the country," perhaps even "the world."

Is this exaggeration? Perhaps. But for a man who has seen prime ministers up close, from Atal Bihari Vajpayee to Narasimha Rao, Dulat's praise doesn't come cheap.

"Farooq was sharp. Shrewd. He played the game. But he never betrayed India. Not once."

● On Article 370: "The Hurt Wasn't the Law. It Was the Humiliation."

Much of the post-publication buzz around *The Chief Minister and The Spy* has come from Dulat's remarks on Article 370. Some media headlines interpreted his words as suggesting that Farooq might have supported the abrogation if taken into confidence.

Dulat is quick to correct this: "Farooq knew 370 would go eventually. The BJP had said it clearly.

What lingered in the room long after A.S. Dulat left wasn't what he said, it was what he didn't. The silences. The careful deflections. The understated mastery of saying just enough to stay interesting, but never dangerous. That, in many ways, is the hallmark of a seasoned intelligence man, but in a public forum, especially in front of a curious, educated audience, it created unease. There were people in that room who had lived through the exodus of Kashmiri Pandits.

That wasn't the hurt. The hurt was that no one spoke to him. That he, a lifelong supporter of the Indian state, was detained without a word.

He goes further. "Even his daughter and sister were picked up for a night. That...humiliation? That's what cut deep."

He didn't raise his voice. He didn't plead. Just said, quietly, that Delhi always does what it wants, and Kashmiris, well, they're left to feel whatever's left behind.

● Always a Spy, even in a Book Launch

But Dulat is a spy at the core, always has been. Throughout the conversation, he sat with half-

#A. S. DULAT



closed eyes, as if mulling over something distant, possibly unrelated. And yet, he missed nothing. People tried to corner him with direct questions, about militancy, Farooq Abdullah, and intelligence lapses, but he parried each one with grace and ambiguity. Never lying, never revealing. It was a performance honed over decades, and it left some in the audience unsatisfied, especially those who had come hoping for a scoop. That's Dulat for you, generous with words, stingy with truth. He made the room feel close, even as he held the real story far, far away.

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By Rick Kirkman & Jerry Scott

BABY BLUES



ZITS



By Jerry Scott & Jim Borgman



World Turtle Day: Shelled Wonders Need Saving

celebrated every year on May 23, World Turtle Day raises awareness about the protection of turtles and tortoises and their rapidly disappearing habitats. Founded by the American Tortoise Rescue in 2000, the day encourages conservation efforts, responsible pet care, and habitat preservation. With many species threatened by pollution, poaching, and climate change, turtles play a vital role in maintaining marine and terrestrial ecosystems. From beach cleanups to awareness drives, people worldwide participate in efforts to protect these ancient reptiles. This World Turtle Day, let's pledge to safeguard these slow-moving yet essential guardians of our planet's biodiversity.



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who sat before him. His loyalty is still, it seems, to silence.

And perhaps, in that, lies the real scoop, not what Dulat revealed, but what he proved: that in the world of intelligence, even after retirement, the truth is never free. It is rationed, coded, and cloaked. And men like Dulat are not here to tell you what happened. They are here to make you realise you'll never quite know.

● Restraint as Power: Why Dulat's Silence Still Matters

And yet, for all the frustration his silence provokes, there's another way to look at Dulat's evasions. Not as cowardice. Not as indifference. But as a form of practiced loyalty, not to governments, but to a deeper idea of continuity.

In Kashmir, where betrayal is the currency of politics, restraint is often more powerful than rhetoric. Dulat, more than anyone else, understands that words in the wrong hands can ignite fires that take decades to put out. He's seen it happen when casual promises by Delhi went unkept, when whispered threats were misinterpreted as policy, when one public misstep

Because in the Valley, the ones who shout rarely last. But the ones who whisper, endure.

● "You Can't Fix Kashmir Without Understanding It"

The discussion wasn't limited to Farooq Abdullah. Dulat fielded questions on intelligence failures, integration, and identity.

Why does he feel such empathy for Kashmir? "Maybe because I was taught to side with the underdog," he says. "Maybe it's Sikh values. Maybe it's just decency."

He brushes off the criticism that Kashmir's identity is being made exceptional. "Every state has identity. But Kashmir is different. It's the only Muslim-majority state. It's where the idea of India is tested most."

On intelligence failures, Dulat is blunt: "Every time something goes wrong, it's called an intelligence failure. Whether it's 9/11 or Hamas. But we don't talk about how many failures we prevent."

● Why Jaipur Still Matters

The event also had a local, personal flavour. Dulat spoke at length about his early IPS days in Jaipur, serving under Ajay Singha's father and living in Sultan Singh ji's home. "They treated me and my wife like family," he recalled. "Those were golden years."

Even Dr. Farooq's medical college years in Jaipur came up. "He hasn't forgotten. Jaipur is part of who he is."

And that perhaps is the thread of Dulat's narrative, past and present woven together, people remembered not just for their politics but for their kindness, their humanity, their contradictions.

● Delhi, Always Distrustful Why did Delhi never trust the Abdullahs? Dulat offers layered answers.

Sheikh Abdullah's long jail stints, his flirtations with independence, and his alleged links with Americans and Chinese seeded a paranoia that never quite left Nehru's successors. Farooq, despite his loyalty, inherited that suspicion.

"Delhi wanted him to follow. But Farooq was his own man. And Delhi doesn't like independent men."

● "No, I Never Played Games With Farooq. He Was Too Big."

One of the most poignant moments came when Dulat was asked if he had played a double game, being Farooq's friend and Delhi's informant. "No," he said firmly. "You couldn't play with Farooq. He was too big. He knew I reported back. But he trusted me anyway. That's the kind of man he was."

● The Legacy

So, what is Farooq Abdullah's legacy? Dulat doesn't hesitate. "He was never a separatist. Never asked for independence. Only autonomy. Only dignity. And he always believed that Kashmir belongs with India, if India treats it with respect."

That, perhaps, is the heart of the book. Not just about a chief minister and a spy. But about a relationship, tested, bruised, but never broken. And about a valley that still waits to be understood, not just administered.

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