

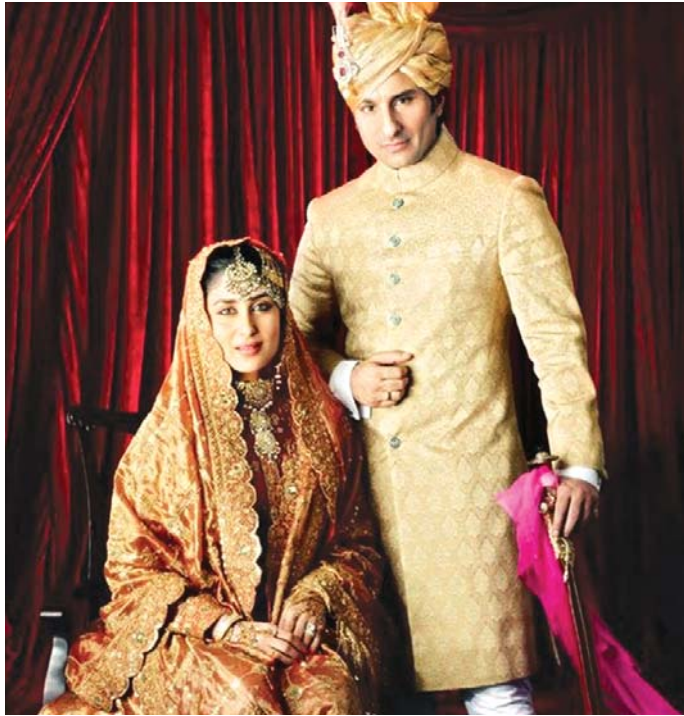


Observed each year on January 3, International Mind-Body Wellness Day encourages people to embrace practices that strengthen the connection between physical health and mental well-being. The day serves as a reminder to slow down, realign priorities, and start the year with intentional self-care. From mindful breathing and meditation to yoga, journaling, and balanced nutrition, the focus is on adopting habits that nurture both body and mind. It's an opportunity to learn new wellness techniques, reflect on personal growth, and build routines that support long-term inner harmony, stress reduction, and overall health.

#SOPHISTICATION

How The Gharara Should Be Worn

The Gharara and Shaluka: A Timeless Tale of Tradition and Style



The gharara, a traditional attire celebrated for its flowing elegance and regal charm, carries with it a history far richer than its graceful appearance suggests. Paired once with a small blouse known as the shaluka, this ensemble reveals fascinating insights into the cultural and sartorial heritage of South Asia. The shaluka, snugly fitting and often beautifully embroidered, resembled what we today would call a corset. This garment hugged the torso, offering support and structure, much like its Victorian-era Western counterpart, yet, its origins in the region date back centuries, long before corsets became synonymous with European fashion. Complementing the gharara and shaluka was a three-yard dupatta, draped with a certain elegance and intricacy that often echoed the style of a saree. Together, these elements created an iconic silhouette that symbolized not just beauty and grace but also cultural identity, modesty, and poise. The gharara's wide-legged, pleated pants flared dramatically, creating movement and volume, while the shaluka shaped the torso with precision, and the flowing dupatta added an air of sophistication and tradition. In today's fashion world, where heritage and modernity increasingly intertwine, the shaluka holds exciting potential for

revival. As contemporary designers blend ethnic and western styles, this structured blouse could emerge as a statement piece, pairing seamlessly with lehengas, ghararas, or even western skirts. By reimagining the shaluka in modern fabrics such as stretch textiles, comfort can be achieved without sacrificing the traditional silhouette, making it appealing to the modern wearer. The cyclical nature of fashion means that vintage and heritage styles are being rediscovered and celebrated, and the shaluka, with its unique blend of tradition and empowerment, could very well take center stage once again. Beyond its aesthetic appeal, the story of the gharara and shaluka reminds us that many modern fashion concepts have deep historical roots. The delicate balance of form, function, and beauty transcends time and culture. By reconnecting with garments like the shaluka, fashion embraces not just style but the rich stories and identities woven into fabric, turning every outfit into a celebration of heritage. The legacy of the gharara and its companion shaluka goes beyond their exquisite look; they embody centuries of cultural richness, expert tailoring, and subtle strength. As fashion continues to evolve, it may be time for the shaluka to make a graceful comeback, bridging history and contemporary style to inspire new generations.



Rahman was based out of Hawa Bhaban, a two-floor building once described darkly by one senior official as a 'wind tunnel.' It was, on paper, his office. It was really a shadow PMO. Diplomats, intelligence officials and party insiders later confirmed, in hushed voices and whispers, that Hawa Bhaban was a parallel, if not the main, seat of power. In the years that followed, the BNP-Jamaat government's fall, and Rahman's self-exile, intelligence and media reports painted grim portraits of the 'prince's rule,' including allegations of the 2004 grenade attack on Sheikh Hasina, Zia's arch-rival, which was planned in Hawa Bhaban.

Return Of The 'Dark Prince' Who Ran Bangladesh

● Jal Khambatta

Christmas Day saw the triumphant homecoming of Bangladesh's 'dark prince,' Tarique Rahman, the son of three-time former Bangladesh Prime Minister Khaleda Zia and a central figure in her Bangladesh Nationalist Party, after nearly 17 years in self-imposed exile. Political 'royalty' by any standard, the 60-year-old is also the son of ex-President Ziaur Rahman, he returned to a country on the boil, after a violent civil uprising in July overthrew Sheikh Hasina, now in exile in India and facing a death sentence, and brought down her Awami League government. Rahman returned to an ecstatic welcome from lakhs, many of whom walked long distances, some overnight, to line the streets of Dhaka, waving flags and chanting slogans to support the 'prince.' And he returned with echoes of American civil rights activist Martin Luther King's 'I have a dream' speech. "Like him, I want to say, I have a plan for Bangladesh," Rahman thundered, kickstarting the BNP's campaign for the general election on February 12, an election his mother and he are expected to contest and one, if they win, could see him become the next Prime Minister. "We want peace," Rahman said. "We have people from the hills and the

plains in this country. Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists and Christians. We want to build a safe Bangladesh, where every woman, man and child can leave home safely and return safely." Analysts say that Tarique Rahman's return and his speech are likely to help calm the country's political waters and reinforce the momentum for Bangladesh to hold its election as planned. Rahman, of course, is no stranger to power. And he is no stranger to running a country either; if his critics are to be believed. The 'dark prince,' his detractors have often claimed, was the de facto boss from 2001 to 2006, when a coalition led by the BNP and Jamaat-e-Islami Bangladeshis was in power and Khaleda Zia was in Ganabhaban, in the prime minister's chair. Six kilometres separated mother and son Rahman was based out of Hawa Bhaban, a two-floor building once described darkly by one senior official as a 'wind tunnel.' It was, on paper, his office. It was really a shadow PMO. Diplomats, intelligence officials and party insiders later confirmed, in hushed voices and whispers, that Hawa Bhaban was a parallel, if not the main, seat of power. In the years that followed, the BNP-Jamaat government's fall, and Rahman's self-exile, intelligence and

#HOPE OR DISASTER



Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) Acting Chairman, Tarique Rahman, delivers a speech to supporters.

media reports painted grim portraits of the 'prince's rule,' including allegations of the 2004 grenade attack on Sheikh Hasina, Zia's arch-rival, which was planned in Hawa Bhaban. There are also reports that Hawa Bhaban was the nerve centre of an audacious weapons smuggling network that supplied guns and ammunition to the ULFA separatist group in Assam. Hasina. Eventually that failed, and an election was held in 2008 that the Awami League won. Arrest, exile, and return Rahman, meanwhile, was arrested by the caretaker government in May 2007 and held for 17 months on various charges, including corruption, extortion, and money-laundering. These, and other charges, including colourful descriptions of Rahman as a symbol of 'kleptocratic' politics, have been rubbished by the BNP of which he is the Acting Chairman. The BNP has always held that the charges are politically motivated. He was released in 2008 to receive medical treatment in London. And this week, 17 years later, Bangladesh's 'dark prince' came home. 'Dark prince' is home His return comes with his country at a crossroads. Rahman is widely

viewed as the frontrunner in the February 2026 election. The BNP has already collected papers on behalf of Zia, for the Gatabali-Shajahanpur, and Rahman will contest his mother's Sadar seat, which she held from 1991 to 2018. Rahman has positioned himself and the BNP as a 'champion of democracy' and the return to an elected government. Earlier, this month, he said, "Only democracy can save us... and it is you, each and every member of the Bangladesh Nationalist Party, who can strengthen the foundation of that democracy." Rahman himself had demurred on committing to return. His arrival now clears that uncertainty but opens up a new question, said Shahab: Can Rahman truly lead? Mubashar Hasan, an adjunct researcher at the Humanitarian and Development Research Initiative (HADRI) at Western Sydney University, said that the public fervour visible on Thursday over



External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar, left, with Acting Chairman of BNP and son of former PM of Bangladesh (Begum Khaleda Zia), Tarique Rahman.



Rahman's return suggested that he might benefit from support beyond the traditional BNP voter base. "People's interest and reaction to his return is not limited to the BNP alone, but includes people from all walks of life," Hasan said, adding that many in Bangladesh will likely see the party as a stabilising force amid the chaos of the past 16 months, since the ouster of former PM Sheikh Hasina following massive student-led protests. The interim government of Nobel laureate Muhammad Yunus, which assumed office after Hasina fled to India in August 2024, has faced increasing criticism over its failures to ensure law and order, and to deliver on broader promised reforms. On the streets of Bangladesh, many believe that Khaleda Zia's son was treated unjustly and forced to leave the country. Under a military-backed caretaker government that was in power between 2006 and 2009, Rahman faced a range of charges. He was subsequently convicted, in absentia, in some of those cases. All the cases against him were dropped over the last year and a half, and convictions were stayed, paving the way for his return. "Tarique Rahman's defining trait as a politician will be his focus on policy. He is known as a policy buff within his inner circle and in today's speech in front of millions of supporters, he stated repeatedly that he has a plan," said US-based Bangladeshi geopolitical columnist Shaqkat Rabbee. One key aspect of his plan that will be watched closely across South Asia is his approach to India. Although Tarique Rahman has adopted a 'Bangladesh First' slogan, political observers believe he is unlikely to be a firebrand anti-Indian politician. "The baseline assumption for India with Tarique back in Bangladesh will be that the Indians will finally have an adult in the room with serious political muscle to negotiate with," Rabbee said. External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar on Wednesday flew to Dhaka and not only attended the funeral of Bangladesh Nationalist Party's supreme, Begum Khaleda Zia, but also met her son, Tarique Rahman, and handed over to him a personal condolence letter from Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Jaishankar, however, did not meet Muhammad Yunus, who had taken over as the head of the interim government in Dhaka after a mass agitation across Bangladesh in July-August 2024 had led to the fall of the Awami League government headed by Sheikh Hasina. The relations between New Delhi and Yunus's regime in Dhaka worsened over the past few weeks. Yunus, however, posted on social media a picture of Jaishankar with Pakistan's National Assembly Speaker Ayaz Sadiq, who represented Islamabad at the funeral of Khaleda Zia in Dhaka. A source in New Delhi clarified that Jaishankar had just exchanged pleasantries with Sadiq.

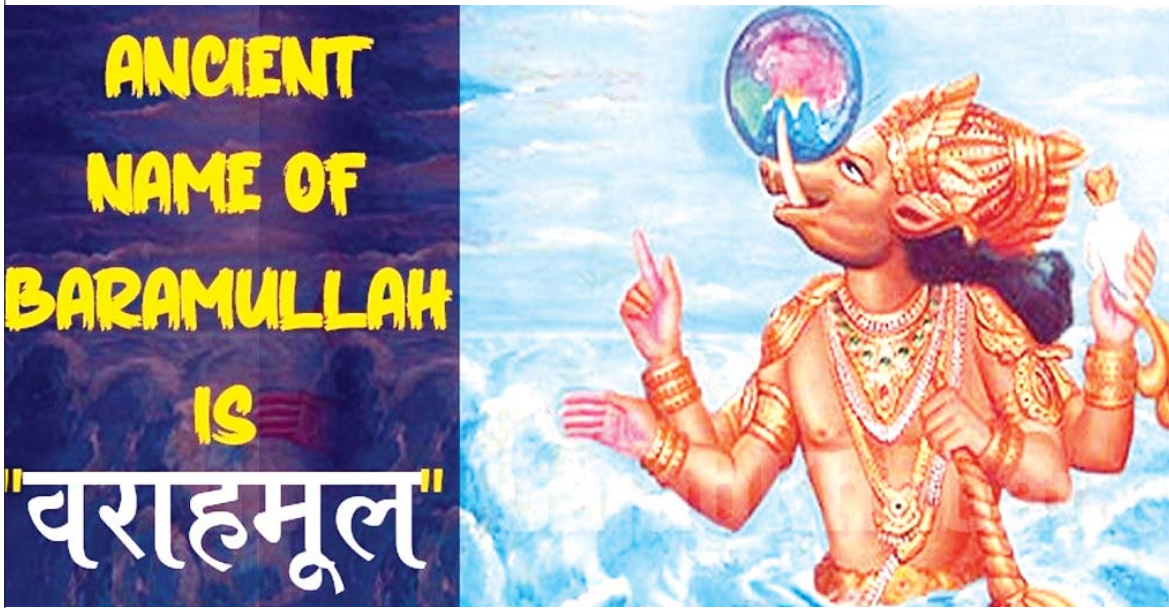
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#ROOTS

Naming Changing

Tracing Hindu Roots: The Ancient Derivations of Baramulla, Sopore, and Ushkur



As Jammu and Kashmir continues to draw global attention for its natural beauty and strategic importance, a deeper look into the etymology of its towns reveals a rich cultural and religious heritage deeply rooted in Hindu mythology and Sanskrit linguistics. Three towns in North Kashmir, Baramulla, Sopore, and Ushkur, offer compelling insights into the region's ancient Hindu past, with names that echo centuries of myth, governance, and religious transformation.



Baramulla: From Boar's Molar to Spiritual Gateway

The town of Baramulla, nestled along the banks of the Jhelum River, finds its origins in the Sanskrit name *Varahamula*, a compound of *varaha* (boar) and *mula* (molar root). According to Hindu mythology, the Kashmir Valley was once a vast lake known as Satisarasa. It was Lord Vishnu, in his *Varaha* (boar) incarnation, who pierced the mountains at Varahamula to release the waters and create the valley, defeating the demon Jalodbhava in the process. Ancient texts and archaeological findings suggest that Baramulla was once a vibrant spiritual center, with temples and Vaishnavite shrines supported by rulers such as Queen

Sugandha and King Kshemagupta in the 9th and 10th centuries CE.

Sopore: The Legacy of a Visionary Engineer

Just a few kilometers east lies Sopore, known in ancient times as Suyyapura. This name honors Suyya, a legendary engineer and minister under King Avantivarman of the Utpala dynasty (reigned 855-883 CE). Suyya is remembered for his pioneering work in flood management, notably draining parts of the silted Jhelum River and making the area habitable and cultivable. The transformation from Suyyapura to Sopore is attributed to natural

linguistic evolution. The suffix 'pura' (town or city) is common in Sanskrit, and the contraction into 'pora' is consistent with local dialectal shifts over centuries. Suyya's contributions were so impactful that the settlement he developed continued to bear his name long after his death, symbolizing the union of engineering prowess and place-making in ancient Kashmir.

Ushkur: A Forgotten Kushan Capital

On the other side of the river from Baramulla lies Ushkur, a site whose ancient name was Huskapura, attributed to the Kushan emperor Huvisika (2nd-3rd century CE). Huskapura was an early urban settlement, possibly founded by or named after the Kushan ruler during a period when Buddhism flourished in the region. The Chinese monk-traveler Xuanzang, who visited Kashmir in the 7th century CE, mentions Huskapura as a prominent Buddhist center. Excavations in the region have revealed ruins of monasteries and stupas, suggesting that Ushkur was a major node in the spiritual and educational landscape of ancient Kashmir.

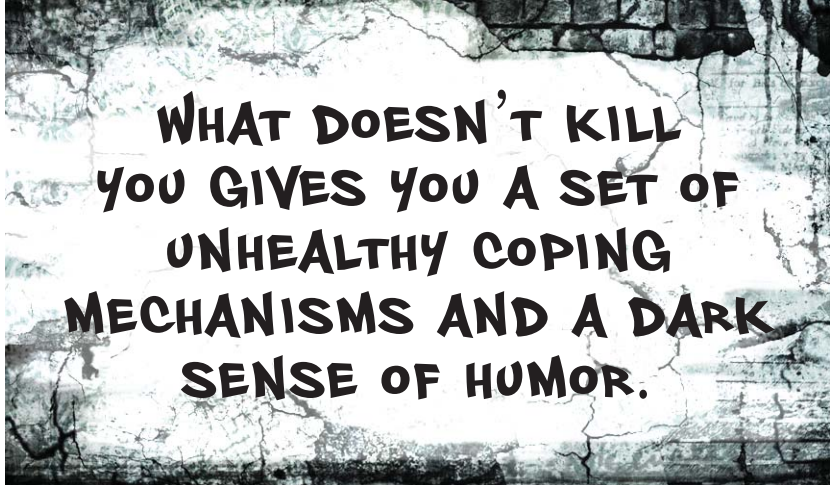
A Triad of Culture and Civilization

The etymological roots of these three towns, Varahamula (Baramulla), Suyyapura (Sopore), and Huskapura (Ushkur), underscore Kashmir's historical depth as a cultural confluence. These names reflect not just geography but also the spiritual and intellectual aspirations of ancient Kashmiris. Historians and archaeologists argue that re-examining such place names offers a clearer understanding of Kashmir's pre-Islamic Hindu and Buddhist past, enriching contemporary perspectives on identity, heritage, and regional history. As efforts continue to document and preserve these sites, they stand as enduring reminders of a time when Kashmir was not just a valley of beauty, but a cradle of civilization.



Ushkur Buddhist temple

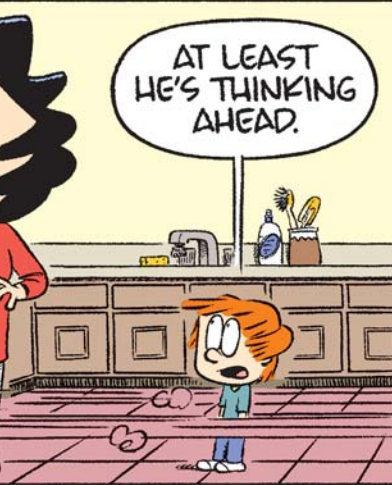
THE WALL



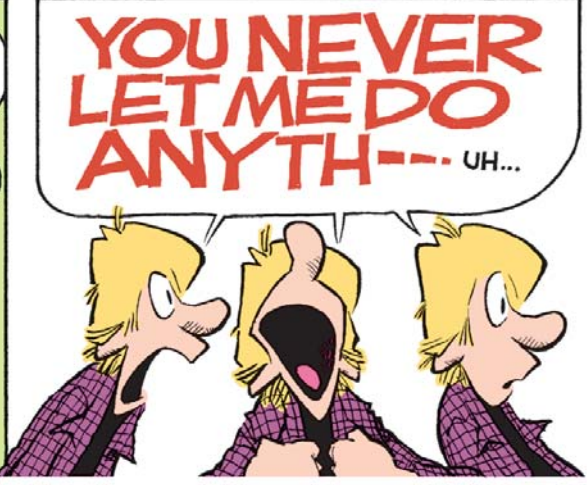
BABY BLUES



By Rick Kirkman & Jerry Scott



ZITS



By Jerry Scott & Jim Borgman