



## National Seminar

***Gilgit-Baltistan: Excavating Roots, Exploring Routes***

**15<sup>th</sup>-16<sup>th</sup> March 2024**

**Sponsored By**

**Indian Council of Social Science Research, New Delhi**

**Organized By**

**Centre for Kashmir Studies**

**Central University of Himachal Pradesh**

(Accredited by NAAC with 'A+' Grade with CGPA of 3.42)

Dhauladhar Parisar-II, Dharamshala, District: Kangra,

Himachal Pradesh-176215

## Invitation

It gives us great pleasure to extend an invitation to you all for the ICSSR sponsored National Seminar being organized by the Centre for Kashmir Studies, Central University of Himachal Pradesh, Dharamshala (Himachal Pradesh). The Seminar will be held on 15<sup>th</sup>-16<sup>th</sup> of March, 2024 at Dharamshala on the topic *Gilgit-Baltistan: Excavating Roots, Exploring Routes*. It will be attended by academicians, researchers, activists, journalists, policy-makers, and members of different organizations and civil society working in the related areas. We look forward to welcoming you all to the National Seminar in a spiritual place of scenic beauty-Dharamshala!

## The Theme

*Gilgit-Baltistan* is a northern part of the erstwhile princely state of Jammu and Kashmir that acceded to the Indian Dominion on 26<sup>th</sup> of October, 1947 with the signing of the Instrument of Accession by Maharaja Hari Singh. It was during Pakistan's aggression on Jammu and Kashmir in 1947-48, that Pakistan forcefully occupied Gilgit-Baltistan. But, legally the region is an integral part of India. The history of Gilgit-Baltistan goes back to 2000 BC. Since then, it has gone through boundless

changes in terms of its political regimes, legal boundaries, administrative structures, economic aspects, and social and cultural milieus. Many of these issues are not studied and analyzed that generates a partial understanding or misunderstanding of the region and its relations with India which are millenniums old. The two-day National Seminar on *Gilgit-Baltistan: Excavating Roots, Exploring Routes* is proposed to bridge this knowledge gap and set an alternative perspective by unearthing the genesis and tracing the paths traversed by the Gilgit-Baltistan region over the years.

Gilgit-Baltistan is a strategically located region, rich in natural resources, yet poor with limited job opportunities for the people. At present, it has a population of nearly one and a half million (2017) and an area of approximately 70,000 sq km. It shares borders with Pakistan, China and Afghanistan. It is home to diversified cultures, ethnic groups, and languages. Religions like Bon, Buddhism, Hinduism, Shaivism and Islam have prevailed here for centuries. Today, the region is largely Shia-dominated, with followers of other Islamic sects like Sunni, Nurbakshi, and Ismailia. Baltis, Yushkunsm, Ladakhis, Turks, Kashmiris, Pathans, Mughals, and Sheens are ethnic groups of the region. Shina is the major language with some Burushaski and Khowar speakers. After Ladakh became a new Union Territory in October 2019, the territory of Gilgit-Baltistan under the illegal control of Pakistan is known as Pakistan Occupied Territories of Ladakh (POTL).

*Gilgit*, also called Dardistan, is the land of Dardic-speaking people belonging to the Indo-Aryan language. The mention of Dards and the Shins appears in many of the old Pauranic lists of people who lived here. During the reign of the Mauryan Empire under Ashoka (268-232 BC) and later of the Kushan Empire, under Kanishka (127-151 CE), Buddhism flourished here. *Baltistan*, the land of the Balti people, known as 'Little Tibet' also saw the spread of Buddhism at the same time. Various coins and copper pieces of Kanishka and Huvishka found in the region substantiate this. Gilgit-Baltistan is also an important part of our oldest Geo-Cultural identity called as 'Sapt-Sindhu'-the land of seven sacred rivers which

are Sindhu, Vitasta, Asikni, Parusni, Vipasa, Sutudri and Saraswati.

In the subsequent centuries, as one explores the routes of the trajectory, it is seen that several Hindu kings of different dynasties like Gonanda, Karkota, Utpala, and Lohara ruled Kashmir having sway over the Gilgit-Baltistan region in varying ways. At the beginning of the 1<sup>st</sup> millennium Hinduism, and later in the ninth century, Kashmir Shaivism flourished. Under Samrat Lalitaditya (724-761 AD) and other rulers of the Karkota dynasty, Gilgit-Baltistan remained its part. Many areas of Baltistan also remained under the influence of Tibetan Buddhism till around the tenth century and later local Maqpon dynasty ruled the region for seven centuries.

During the Muslim period also, the rulers of Kashmir maintained close relations with Dardistan, Baltistan, Ladakh, and Jammu. The Chaks (1555-1586), the last major Muslim dynasty that ruled Kashmir had migrated from Gilgit. Islam came to Kashmir largely through the Sufis from Persia and Central Asia in the 14<sup>th</sup> century. Some of them like Mohammad Nur Bakhsh (1392-1464), the founder of the Noorbakshia Sufi order, and later Sufi Mir Shamsuddin Iraqi (1440-1515 CE), played an important role in spreading Shia Islam in Ladakh, Gilgit-Baltistan, and in adjoining areas. Kashmir came under the Mughals during the reign of Emperor Akbar in 1586 soon followed by the conquest of Baltistan. In 1634, Emperor Shah Jahan captured Ladakh, Baltistan, and Kishtwar and made them a part of the Kashmir province under his Empire.

From 1752-1819, Kashmir and parts of Gilgit Baltistan remained under the hands of Afghan rulers. But, in 1819, Kashmir Valley came under the Sikh ruler, Maharaja Ranjit Singh. Gulab Singh, the Raja of the Jammu region under Maharaja Ranjit Singh, annexed Ladakh in 1836. Soon, Baltistan (1840), Gilgit, and the surrounding areas of Dardistan (1842) also came under the Sikhs. However, with the defeat of the Sikhs by the British, the territories of their Empire came under the British with the signing of the Treaty of Lahore on 9<sup>th</sup> of March, 1846. Subsequently, the Treaty of Amritsar signed on 16<sup>th</sup> of

March, 1846 formalized the creation of a new state of Jammu and Kashmir and made Gulab Singh the 'Maharaja' or the absolute ruler of the Princely State of Jammu and Kashmir that included Jammu, Kashmir, and Ladakh, as well as Gilgit, Chilas, and Baltistan. When the British government announced the independence of India in 1947, the jurisdiction over the territories of Gilgit Agency and Baltistan was with Maharaja Hari Singh, the last Dogra ruler of the Princely State of Jammu and Kashmir.

Since the late 1980s, the region has seen sectarian clashes, particularly between the Shias and the Sunnis, instigated by President Zia's policy and attempts at Sunni Muslim domination. The other factors that perpetuate such divisions and violence, and have ramifications for India as well, are the construction of the Karakoram Highway connecting the region with China and mainland Pakistan, the Islamic revolution of Iran in 1979, the Afghan Jihad in the 1980s, the flourishing of extremist groups and Madrasas preaching sectarian hatred, the use of media and technology in these, and above all, the poor socio-economic condition and lack of political and legal rights of the people. The Indian Parliament Resolution on Jammu and Kashmir dated 22<sup>nd</sup> of February, 1994 clearly states that Pakistan must vacate the areas of Jammu and Kashmir under its illegal control and calls upon it to stop terrorism and human rights violation in Gilgit-Baltistan. All such issues will be discussed during the two-day national seminar.

### Sub-themes

1. Historical Roots of Gilgit-Baltistan.
2. Social, Religious, and Cultural Aspects of Gilgit-Baltistan.
3. Current Political and Legal Status of Gilgit-Baltistan.
4. Exploitation of Natural Resources in Gilgit-Baltistan and the Status of Economy, Environment & Development.
5. Sectarian Violence, Conflict and Human Rights Violation in Gilgit-Baltistan.
6. International Forces in Gilgit-Baltistan.
7. Role of Media and Information Technology.

### Himachal Pradesh

Himachal Pradesh literary meaning 'Snow-laden Mountain Province' is one of the 13 mountain states situated in the northern part of India. It is divided into 12 districts with an area of 55,673 km<sup>2</sup> and a population of 68,64,602 with nearly 90 % of people living in rural areas. Its literacy level is 86 percent, higher than the national average. The Zaskar range runs in the north-eastern part of the state and the great Himalayan range runs through the eastern and northern parts, while the Dhauladhar and the Pir Panjal ranges of the lesser Himalayas, and their valleys, form much of the core regions. The outer Himalayas, or the Shiwalik range, form southern and western Himachal Pradesh. The state is characterised by an extreme landscape featuring several peaks and extensive river systems. Himachal Pradesh is also known as *Dev Bhoomi*, meaning 'Land of Gods', and *Veer Bhoomi* i.e. 'Land of the Brave'.

Before India's independence from the British, Himachal comprised the hilly regions of the Punjab Province of British India. After independence, many of the hilly territories were organized as the Chief Commissioner's province of Himachal Pradesh, which later became a Union Territory. In 1966, hilly areas of the neighbouring Punjab state were merged into Himachal and it was granted full statehood in 1971. Himachal Pradesh is spread across valleys with many perennial rivers flowing through them. Agriculture, horticulture, hydropower, and tourism are important constituents of the state's economy. The hilly state is almost universally electrified, with 99.5% of households having electricity as of 2016. The state was declared India's second open-defecation-free state in 2016 and is India's least corrupt state according to a survey of CMS-India Corruption Study conducted in 2017.

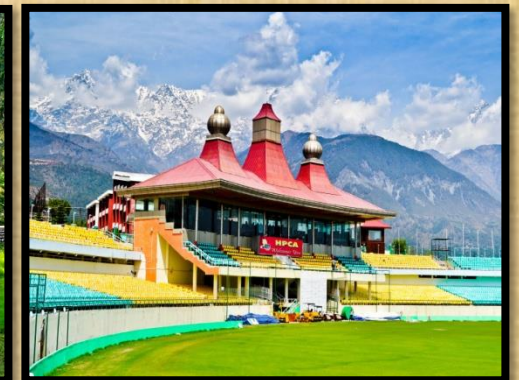
### About Dharamshala

Dharamshala is a town in Himachal Pradesh. It serves as the winter capital of the state and the administrative headquarters of the Kangra district since 1855. Dharamshala was a municipal council until 2015, when it

was upgraded to a municipal corporation. The town is located in the Kangra Valley, in the shadow of the Dhauladhar range of the Himalayas at an altitude of nearly 5,000 ft. During pre-independence time, it was a part of the British Indian province of the Punjab and after Indian independence in 1947, it remained as a small hill station. In 1960, the Central Tibetan Administration was moved to Dharamshala when the 14th Dalai Lama Tenzin Gyatso established the Tibetan administration-in-exile after he had to flee Tibet.



War Memorial



HPCA Stadium

Dharamshala had a population of 30,764 as per the 2011 Census. In 2015, the area under the administration of the municipal body was expanded with a revised population of 53,543 in 10,992 households. It has an average literacy rate of 87 percent, male literacy is 90 percent and female literacy is 83 percent with a sex-ratio of 941. Hinduism is the most practiced religion followed by Buddhism. Hindi is the official language with people speaking several dialects. The economy of the region is highly dependent on agriculture and tourism. The town is now a major hill station and spiritual center. It has been selected as one of a hundred in India to be developed as a smart city under Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi's Flagship "Smart Cities Mission".

### About the University

The Central University of Himachal Pradesh was established under the Central Universities Act 2009 (No. 25 of 2009) enacted by the Indian Parliament. The University is funded and regulated by the University Grants Commission (UGC). The University became



functional with the assumption of charge by the first Vice-Chancellor on 20<sup>th</sup> of January, 2010. It works with the Motto “नेति-नेति, चरैवेति-चरैवेति” meaning that one should make continuous and untiring efforts for progress and development. Recently in August 2023, the University has been accredited with an A+ grade by the National Assessment and Accreditation Council. More than 45 courses are offered by the University which run on its three main campuses- Dharamshala, Shahpur and Dehra. Following the National Education Policy 2020, the University strives for equitable and inclusive access to multidisciplinary higher education and research for all with a focus on quality, excellence, and relevance. It aims to emerge as the country’s premier university at par with the best universities of the world in terms of programme offerings, curricular framework, pedagogy, research, and publications.

### The Centre for Kashmir Studies

The Centre for Kashmir Studies (CKS) was established in 2019 at the Central University of Himachal Pradesh with the approval of the University Grants Commission (UGC) and is situated in Parisar-II of the Dharamshala campus. The Centre undertakes research and teaching of various aspects of the Jammu and Kashmir, and Ladakh regions in particular and the Sapt-Sindhu region in general. It progressively works towards unraveling the enclosed and constructed narratives through continuous engagements with people, issues, and problems for the peaceful resolution of conflicts, and for generating social cohesion, and nation-building. It also focuses on policy-oriented research, documentation, publication, public education, and social awareness through its projects, seminars, conferences, workshops, and other activities. The Centre for Kashmir Studies, perhaps the only Centre of its kind in the country, focuses on the interdisciplinary approach across the courses and programs that it offers to

students and researchers from different disciplines. These include: (i) Certificate Course in Kashmiri Language (Sharda Script); (ii) PG Diploma in Jammu and Kashmir Studies; (iii) MA (Jammu and Kashmir Studies); and (iv) Ph.D. in Jammu and Kashmir Studies.

### Abstract Submission

Abstracts for paper presentations are invited from the participants on any of the sub-theme of the National Seminar. The abstract should be around 250 words in English (Times New Roman, 12 pt) or Hindi (Krut Dev, 10 pt). The abstract must reach us on or before 25<sup>th</sup> of February, 2024. The abstract should contain the topic/title, name of the author, mailing address, telephone no. and email address. The seminar committee will review the presented papers and the selected papers will be published in an edited volume. The abstract should be sent to the Email ID: [cks.cuhp@gmail.com](mailto:cks.cuhp@gmail.com). All participants and paper presenters are requested to strictly adhere to the instructions and date of submission of abstracts.

### Registration

All participants and paper presenters must register for the Seminar and pay the registration fee by or before the due date. Registration can be done online through the given link: <https://forms.gle/SVtjYhh8kxVLR2qU6>. This link will direct you to the Online Registration Form. Fill in the registration form as directed along with the uploading of payment receipt and submit. **Registration Fee** includes Seminar kit, Certificate, Book of Abstracts (soft or hard copy), food and accommodation.

For Academicians	For Research Scholars
Without Accommodation: ₹1000/-	Without Accommodation: ₹500/-
With Accommodation: ₹2500/-	With Accommodation: ₹1500/-
<b>For Online Participation:</b> ₹500/-	

Registration fee must be paid through online transfer to the University Account, the details of which are as follows:

### Account Details

Account Name: Central University of Himachal Pradesh  
Name of the Bank: Canara Bank  
Branch: Dharamshala  
Account No: 2062101012323  
IFSC Number: CNRB0002062  
Or  
By scanning the QR Code



### Organizing Committee

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