

Gopi Krishna Shivpuri: The Forgotten Yogi of Kashmir

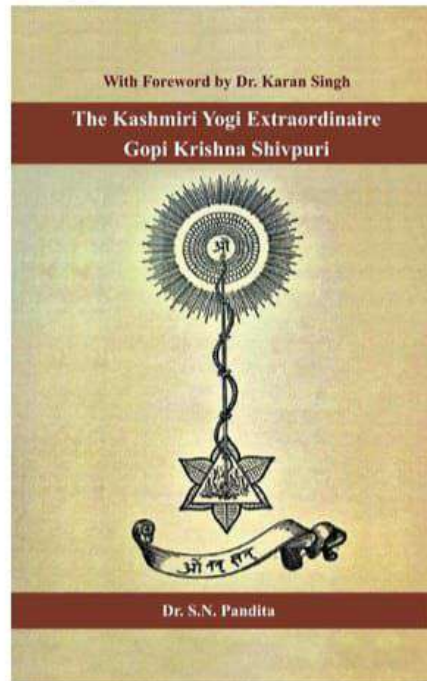
DR. MAHESH KAUL

Dr. S.N. Pandita opens his own contribution with a philological observation that only a scholar steeped in Kashmiri Pandit linguistic habit would think to make: that "Gopi Krishna" carries within it the community's characteristic phonetic rendering of Krishna as Krishen, Kishen or Krishan. This is more than an etymological aside. It roots the yogi immediately in a specific civilisational lineage — the Kashmiri Pandit naming convention shaped by centuries of Sanskrit devotional practice filtered through the Kashmiri tongue — before a single biographical fact has been offered. It is a fitting opening for a book whose central irony, as the author will make explicit by its close, is that a community so particular about its own linguistic and devotional inheritance failed almost entirely to recognise one of its own as a figure of global consequence.

Dr. Karan Singh's foreword to this monograph is not the customary courtesy that eminent statesmen extend to authors seeking a marquee name on their jacket. It is a testimony, written by a man who knew Gopi Krishna personally and who, as this review will return to later, became instrumental in institutionalising his ideas within India's own scientific establishment. Dr. Singh's opening pages give the reader something a biographer working purely from archives could not: a first-hand sense of Gopi Krishna's yogic bearing, the seriousness with which he approached the question of Kundalini as an evolutionary rather than merely mystical phenomenon, and the quiet persistence with which he pursued scientific validation for an experience the modern world had largely relegated to folklore. The foreword sets the register for everything that follows — reverential without being hagiographic, and insistent that Gopi Krishna's mission was never self-promotion but the establishment of Kundalini as a subject worthy of serious inquiry.

Author's Note: Introducing the Yogi

The Author's Note functions as the monograph's biographical anchor, sketching Gopi Krishna's early life and the awakening experience that set him on his lifelong pursuit. Dr. Pandita is economical here, resisting the temptation to over-narrate the moment of spiritual transformation and instead using the Note to establish the throughline that will govern the rest of the book: that Gopi Krishna regarded his own Kundalini



Book: The Kashmiri Yogi Extraordinaire

Gopi Krishna Shivpuri

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awakening not as a private mystical attainment to be guarded but as evidence of a biological and evolutionary mechanism latent in every human being, one that could and should be investigated through the instruments of modern science. This framing — Kundalini as evolutionary energy rather than esoteric secret — is the intellectual spine on which the entire monograph is built.

A Monograph & Not a Chaptered Biography

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About the Book

Gopi Krishna (Krishan) Shivpuri was a Kashmiri Pandit Yogi, who has remained nearly unknown within his own community, less known in India but universally renowned in the West during his lifetime (1903-1984). The pages that fill this monograph demonstrate that Gopi Krishna was the greatest Kashmiri Pandit. Kashmir has produced in more than one thousand years since the time of Acharya Ashvaghosha in the 1st century. Many in the West have opined that Gopi Krishna was a genius. In the least, he was extraordinary. His work and ideas on Kundalini, the fountain-head of Yoga and higher state of consciousness revolutionized the idea and awareness of Yoga in the western world during the twentieth century.

Among the big spiritual Masters that India produced during the twentieth century, Gopi Krishna alone stood to the scientific scrutiny of his claims. As an exceptional Yogi, Gopi Krishna exhorted the scientific world at the highest levels to check and test the claims of his spiritual and meditative claims under the strictest scientific testing. In his lifelong crusade to promote his ideas on Kundalini to the Western world as a scientific, evidentiary potential in human beings than merely a spiritual experience as based in religious culture.

While there is plethora of international literature and recorded references about the life and ideas of Gopi Krishna on the awakening of Kundalini and his efforts to promote it in the West on scientific lines, there is little awareness of these aspects about him in India in general and almost a near vacuum among the Kashmiri Pandits, to whom he belonged, in particular.

Hence, the monograph is a humble attempt to place before the readers, Kashmiris in particular, all the existing major references and accounts based on Gopi Krishna's own writings and those written by western scholars about him and thereby introduce the Kashmiri Pandit community to one of its great sons in their entire history of more than five thousand years and the greatest the community has produced in the twentieth century.

From this consideration, it may be hoped that this monograph ignites some interest in other Kashmiri Pandit scholars and writers to explore more about this genius.

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The Crusader for Women's Dignity & Cosmic Consciousness

Early in the narrative, Dr. Pandita establishes a dimension of Gopi Krishna's public life that is too often eclipsed by his later fame as a Kundalini theorist: his crusading commitment to women's dignity and welfare within Kashmiri society. The author situates this social activism alongside Gopi Krishna's evolving articulation of cosmic consciousness, presenting the two as expressions of a single underlying conviction — that spiritual evolution and social justice were inseparable, and that a society could not claim access to higher consciousness while tolerating the degradation of women. This section, brief as it is within the continuous narrative, does important work in establishing Gopi Krishna as a public intellectual and reformer rather than a recluse absorbed only in inner experience.

The Long Struggle to Publish & the Call for Research

The monograph then turns to what may be its most affecting passage: Gopi Krishna's protracted struggle to secure publication for his account of Kundalini awakening, and his parallel, insistent call for scientific

research into the phenomenon. Dr. Pandita documents the difficulty of finding an Indian publisher willing to take seriously a manuscript that sat uneasily between memoir, physiology and metaphysics, and the eventual arrival of the first Indian edition — a milestone that the author treats with the gravity it deserves, given how much resistance preceded it. Alongside this runs Gopi Krishna's collaboration with foreign partners who helped carry his ideas to the Western world and into Europe, Germany prominent among the destinations, at a time when very few Indian spiritual thinkers were finding serious scientific audiences abroad.

Connecting the Cosmic Dots: The Best Seller & Barbara Pleyer

The section Dr. Pandita titles around "connecting the cosmic dots" covers the publication of Gopi Krishna's best-known work, "Kundalini: The Evolutionary Energy in Man," and his consequential encounter with the German peace crusader Barbara Rotraut Pleyer. This relationship, as the author presents it, was pivotal to Gopi Krishna's international emergence — Pleyer's involvement helped carry his ideas into German intellectual circles at a formative moment. The narrative then takes an unexpected but historically significant turn into the Parmeshwari agitation of 1967, in which the Kashmiri Pandit community took to the streets protesting the alleged abduction and subsequent marriage of a Kashmiri Pandit girl. Dr. Pandita's decision to place Gopi Krishna's involvement in this community agitation directly alongside his international scientific collaborations is one of the monograph's more illuminating juxtapositions: it shows a man simultaneously engaged in the most local of communal concerns and the most global of intellectual projects, refusing to let either eclipse the other. Barbara Pleyer's eventual departure from Kashmir closes this segment of the narrative.

Nishat, Germany & the Building of an International Network

The establishment of the Kundalini Research centre at Nishat in Kashmir, followed by parallel developments in Germany, marks the monograph's transition into Gopi Krishna's most internationally active period. Dr. Pandita traces his arrival in Germany and his subsequent engagements there with evident care for sequence and detail, building toward what the author frames as one of the

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book's central arguments: that Gopi Krishna achieved a level of global recognition among scientists and spiritual seekers that was strikingly disproportionate to his obscurity within his own Kashmiri Pandit community. This is a point Dr Pandita returns to more than once, and rightly so, for it is the paradox around which the entire biographical project turns. Equally significant is the author's insistence — advanced with the confidence of long research — that Gopi Krishna's efforts were pivotal in securing yoga's international recognition, and that the eventual global celebration of International Yoga Day owes an unacknowledged debt to the groundwork he laid decades earlier.

Weizsacker, Kashmir Shaiva Texts, Kieffer & Tompkins

Among the monograph's most valuable contributions is its account of Gopi Krishna's momentous meeting with the physicist and philosopher Carl Friedrich von Weizsäcker, a meeting that lent his ideas a credibility within European scientific circles that few Indian spiritual thinkers of his generation achieved. Dr Pandita also documents, with evident appreciation for its significance, Gopi Krishna's work translating foundational Kashmir Shaiva texts — the Panchastavi and the Vijñāna Bhairava — so that the essence of Kashmir's own sophisticated tradition of Kundalini Shakti could reach practitioners and scholars worldwide rather than remaining confined within a shrinking regional readership. His subsequent engagement with Gene Kieffer and George Tompkins to establish international research institutions dedicated to Kundalini rounds out this phase, before the narrative follows him back to India after his extended European sojourn.

Nishat Revisited :Science, Scripture & the 1972 Surge

Returning to Nishat, Dr Pandita describes Gopi Krishna's determined effort to draw working scientists into direct engagement with Kundalini research, alongside his completion of work on the Shaiva textual corpus. The author is careful to convey the coherence of Gopi Krishna's larger claim: that Kundalini is an evolutionary mechanism operative in all human beings, carrying the species toward a higher developmental stage, and that this claim was falsifiable and demonstrable through scientific method rather than a matter of faith alone. By 1972, the narrative shows, this persistence had begun to pay dividends — invitations arrived in growing numbers from international

About the Author

Author, Researcher and Writer, Dr. S.N. Pandita is a Kashmiri to the core, who, gravitates more to old Kashmir. He has authored and co-authored more than ten books that deal with the cultural and literary history of Kashmir.



Known as a keen researcher of subjects and topics that deal with old Kashmir, Dr. Pandita has been called a "Stein Pilgrim" for his pioneering studies on Stein (Aurel) in Kashmir. With his foundational work on the interface of scholarship between the Western Indologists and Sanskrit Savants of Kashmir, Dr. Pandita has introduced a new area of studies in contemporary Kashmir.

Presenting his research work at several international and national conferences and seminars, Dr. Pandita is well-received among the scholarly circles both in India and overseas, especially Asia and most of Europe. To name a few prestigious universities like the British Library, Nehru Centre London, The Universities of De Montfort & Oxford and notable institutions like, India International Centre (IIC), India Habitat Centre (IHC) and many more, add to his portfolio.

Dr. Pandita has also worked as the Principal Research Investigator of the UK based website Stein's Kashmir Heritage Legacy funded by the British Heritage Lottery Fund, Cambridge with the support of Stein archives in Oxford and native sources in Kashmir. The website was inaugurated at the Indian High Commission, London in 2002 and launched at the British Museum in 2005 and later also at the Parliament of European Union in Brussels in 2007.

He served as the main curator and core member of the National Committee of the First National Exhibition on the Sharada Alphabet, under the aegis of the Ministry of Education, Government of India and National Book Trust (NBT) held at Srinagar in 2025.

More recently, Dr. Pandita was chosen as a valued national representative to Russia as the Member of the Indian Cultural Delegation for the Moscow International Book Fair 2025.

al bodies, and his publications found demand well beyond India's borders.

Contested Ground: Altered States, AIIMS & the Challenges of 1973

The monograph does not shy from the intellectual resistance Gopi Krishna faced. A dedicated stretch of the narrative addresses the challenges levelled at his theory of altered states of consciousness, situating these debates within his considerable achievements of 1973, a year in which he continued to host visitors and sustain an demanding pace of writing even as his ideas were being tested and contested by sceptical scientific opinion.

Dr. Karan Singh, AIIMS & the Institutionalisation of Yoga Research

Perhaps the monograph's most consequential section concerns Dr Karan Singh's direct patronage of Gopi Krishna's work, which the author credits with securing him a formal project at the All India Institute of Medical Sciences aimed at bringing yoga into dialogue with medical science. As Union Minister for Health and Family Planning, Dr Singh's personal involvement turned yoga studies into a genuine institutional priority rather than a fringe interest, and Dr Pandita traces the project's progress with attention to the luminaries it brought into Gopi Krishna's orbit. The AIIMS conference at which Gopi Krishna was, by the author's account, the unmistakable centre of attention is presented as a high-water mark of his domestic recognition, even as his

international reputation continued to outpace it.

Srinagar, Blitz & the Widening Circle

Gopi Krishna's return to Srinagar and continued work there is followed by his meeting with the influential Blitz editor R.K. Karanjia, whose promotion of Gopi Krishna's ideas extended his visibility within India's press establishment. His 1975 visit to Zurich, where he worked to sensitise wider audiences to the Kundalini phenomenon, and the subsequent World Conference on Kundalini held in Srinagar, mark the continued internationalisation of a project that had begun as an intensely personal spiritual experience.

Setbacks, Publications & the New Centre at Dheradun

The narrative's later sections track the uneven rhythm of Gopi Krishna's final decade: further publications in 1977, progress achieved against continuing institutional setbacks, and the establishment of a new Yoga centre at Dheradun in 1980–81. Dr Pandita presents 1981 as a year of significant activity and 1983 as arguably his most productive year for Kundalini consciousness research, before turning, with evident poignancy, to 1984 — the incomplete year, in which an experimental centre was left unfinished and Gopi Krishna's own life's work was, in a literal sense, cut short.

Legacy, Western Recognition & the Road to International Yoga Day

The monograph's closing sections

step back to assess the legacy Gopi Krishna left behind: the endurance of his ideas and crusade, the sustained appreciation he received from Western scholars and scientists long after his passing, and the case Dr Pandita builds, cumulatively and convincingly, that Gopi Krishna's decades of advocacy fed directly into the eventual international adoption of yoga and the establishment of International Yoga Day.

Photo Annexure

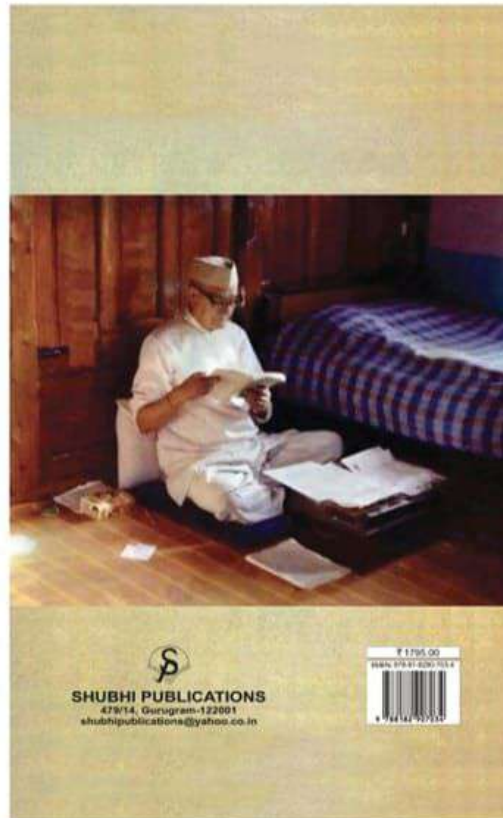
The book closes with a photo annexure of real documentary value, gathering colour photographs of Gopi Krishna alongside the international collaborators who populate the narrative — scientists, yogic practitioners, intellectuals and scholars, men and women of eminence whose association with him corroborates, image by image, the claims of international stature that the text advances.

Assessment: A Necessary Corrective, with a Room for Refinement

The paradox Dr Pandita places at the heart of this monograph is also its most important argument: that India, and specifically Gopi Krishna's own Kashmiri Pandit community — inheritors of the Shaiva Darshana, or Trika, tradition from which his understanding of Kundalini ultimately drew — allowed a figure of genuine international consequence to remain largely unrecognised at home. The book has come out well, and Dr Pandita's research is thorough and evidently drawn from close personal and archival familiarity with his subject. Two reservations nonetheless deserve honest notice. The absence of formally defined chapters, while lending the narrative a continuous, monograph-like quality, does come at some cost to the reader's ability to navigate and return to specific phases of Gopi Krishna's life; clearly segmented chapters would have given the considerable material a more usable architecture. The book's price is also on the higher side, and a paperback edition would go some distance toward placing this important corrective history within reach of general readers and researchers of more modest means.

None of this diminishes the achievement. Shubhi Publications, Gurugram, has once again demonstrated why it has become a pioneering presence in Indic civilisational research, and this monograph — with Dr Karan Singh's foreword lending it both authority and warmth — is a valuable and overdue addition to the record of modern India's spiritual and scientific history.

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