

Bonhomie and vibrance

SUPARNA-SARASWATI PURI

IN times where independent living is considered a better option, witnessing the strength of community living comes across as quite refreshing. During a recent visit to an apple orchard in Himachal's Kotkhai district, I came across an interesting tradition called 'kheen' or 'khiin'.

As a region, Himachal is known for its vibrant deity-centric way of life, where 'every devta or devi lays down rules that determine the daily lives of villagers, and which the people of that locality abide by'. This structure continues to determine the region's societal customs and practices and 'kheen' is a living testimony of that.

The 'kheen' I attended was held at Purag pind, hosted by an affluent Rajput family. The village, an hour-long jeep ride away, also boasts of century-old houses that are reminders of the rich and diverse Himalayan tribal history.

When we reached there, we found almost 500 people seated in an open ground. Some of the women present told us that more than four local deities from the neighbouring villages were also congregating at 'kheen'. Women in bright, local costumes were talking excitedly, while men

were busy overseeing the arrangements. The scene echoed of bonhomie and vibrant community living.

Essentially a community feast, 'kheen' is hosted by a family of the village to celebrate a deity (*kul devta*). Over the years, its purpose also includes gratitude and familial commemoration. Given that folk music and dance are symbolic of the cultural diversity, and the fact that the locals enjoy pleasing their gods through dancing and singing, 'kheen' is a popular example of local heritage.

A traditional Himachali feast, 'kheen' is also a celebration of community ties, often missing in urban life

Depending on the host family's wishes and means, 'kheen' can range from being a normal fair to an elaborate festival. In either case, the preparations are significant. The 'kheen' celebrations stirred in me a need for socio-cultural belonging, a feeling forgotten by people in the hustle and bustle of urban living. 'Kheen' reacquainted me with ethnicity and community ties that nurture our baser instincts.

— The writer is a freelancer



Shyam Sundar Palwal (L) with director Suraj Kumar

SIMRAN SANDHU

IN a small village in Rajasthan's Rajasmand district — set inside one of the region's largest marble mining belts — a tradition began with heartbreak. When Padma Shri awardee Shyam Sundar Palwal lost his 16-year-old daughter to dehydration, he turned his grief into a local custom: whenever a girl is born in Piplantri, the village plants 111 tree saplings and opens a bank account in her name. Decades on, this single act of remembrance has grown into a forest, a movement, and now a National Award-winning documentary.

'Piplantri: A Tale of Eco-Feminism' has won the 72nd National Film Award, announced last month, for Best Non-Feature Film Promoting Social and Environmental Values.

Directed by Suraj Kumar, the documentary follows the story of a village that, before Palwal's movement, was known for its marble quarries. Groundwater had sunk very low, the topsoil lay buried under mining dust and there was barely enough farmland left to till.

The documentary captures the story of a landscape rebuilt tree by tree — groundwater levels climbing back up, native flora and fauna returning and a community that decided a daughter's birth deserved to be celebrated rather than merely accepted as fate.

Kumar chanced upon the idea while trawling the Internet for 'a positive story'. His research led him to Palwal and the story of Piplantri.

While building the film's narrative, Kumar felt it needed a perspective beyond the village — proof that Piplantri's model mattered globally, not just locally. That search led him to Shombi Sharp, then the United Nations



Left: Newborn girls at the Paryavaran Diwas celebrations at Piplantri. Below: A poster of the film.

Where daughters are celebrated with trees

An award-winning documentary captures the story behind an unusual tradition in Rajasthan's Piplantri village — every time a girl is born, the village plants 111 tree saplings and opens a bank account in her name



down in the district. The movement has also been connected to Raksha Bandhan — every year, the daughters of Piplantri tie the sacred thread to the trees planted the day they were born, treating them as brothers of their own.

"Visiting Piplantri was much more than a filmmaking experience — it was a life lesson," Kumar says. "I realised that real change begins not with big policies, but with small acts of compassion and collective responsibility. I returned not just with a film, but with a new perspective on life."

The film's festival journey has been substantial. It had its world premiere at the International Film Festival of India 2025 at Goa, under the prestigious Indian Panorama section. It was then selected in the National Competition section of the Mumbai International Film Festival 2026, South Asia's oldest and largest non-feature film festival dedicated to documentaries, short fiction, and animation. The film will have its international premiere at the 17th Indian Film Festival of Ireland in September.

Each of these recognitions, Kumar says, has helped the film reach wider audiences and reinforced its message on environmental conservation and women's empowerment.

Resident Coordinator in India, who had visited Piplantri and participated at its environment festival earlier.

"I watched his address online and was deeply impressed," Kumar says. Sharp agreed to be interviewed for the film where he explained how Piplantri's model connected to several UN Sustainable Development Goals — climate action, gender equality, sustainable communities — and echoed the spirit of Mission LiFE (Lifestyle for Environment).

At the heart of the film was an idea Kumar kept returning to: that ecology and feminism were never separate stories in Piplantri — they grew from the same root. "It was about ecology and also about the girl child growing up," says the filmmaker. "When you plant a tree for a daughter, you're changing how she's welcomed into the world. That's where the concept of feminism comes in."

The plantation drive, he adds, has helped bring the local temperatures

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E-AUCTION SALE NOTICE

PUBLIC NOTICE FOR E-AUCTION FOR SALE OF IMMOVABLE PROPERTIES under SARFAESI Act, 2002
DATE & TIME OF E-AUCTION ON 07.09.2026 BETWEEN 11:00 AM TO 05:00 PM (WITH 10 MINUTES UNLIMITED AUTO EXTENSIONS)
EMD SHALL BE DEPOSITED AND LINKED/MAPPED WITH THE PROPERTY ID BEFORE THE EXPIRY OF AUCTION TIME PRIOR TO PLACING THE BID

Whereas, the Authorized Officer of UCO Bank, Respective Branches as under had taken possession of the following properties to the notice issued under Section 13(2) of the SARFAESI Act in the following loan accounts with right to sell the same strictly on "AS IS WHERE IS BASIS" & "AS IS WHAT IS BASIS" & "WHATEVER THERE IS BASIS" & "WITHOUT RECOURSE BASIS" under section 13(4) of the (SARFAESI) Act 2002 propose to realize the Bank's dues by sale of the said properties. The sale will be done by the undersigned through e-auction platform provided at the website.

Name of the Branch/ Borrower(s)/ Guarantor(s)	Details of the Immovable Properties	Date of Demand Notice Outstanding Amount (Secured Debts)	Date of Symbolic/ Physical Possession concerned	25% Deposit Account No. & IFSC CODE	Reserve Price EMD Bid Increase Amount	Date & Time Of E-Auction
Bio: NIGAM VIGAR, SHIMLA Borrower: Ms. Snowflake Prop. Mr. Anil Kumar S/o Sh. Mr. Ram Dass, Village Fairlawn, Near HIPA, Mashobra Shimla, (H.P.) Guarantor(s): 1. Mr. Manish Kumar S/o Ram Chand, R/o Dharma Niwas First Floor, Vikas Nagar, Shimla, Himachal Pradesh 171009. 2. Mrs. Radha Devi W/o Mr. Ram Chand, R/o Dharma Niwas, First Floor, Vikas Nagar, Shimla, Himachal Pradesh 171009.	Hotel cum Guest House (Snow Flake) built upon land comprised in Khata/Khatauni No. 14 min/28min, Khasra No. 171007. Situated at Mauza Jangal, Mahdud Mashobra, Tehsil and Distt. Shimla, Owned by Anil Kumar S/o Late Ram Chand (Prop.) and Manish Kumar S/o Ram Chand.	15.01.2026 Rs. 2,71,99,994.94 plus further interest and incidental charges costs w.e.f. 01.09.2025	15.01.2026/Symbolic	Account No. 09810210002032 IFSC CODE UCBA0000981 Name of Account: No Lien Account	Rs. 3,76,00,000/- Rs. 37,60,000/- Rs. 25,000/-	07.09.2026 11:00 AM to 05:00 PM (with unlimited auto extension of 10 minutes each)
Bio: NIGAM VIGAR, SHIMLA Borrowers: M/s Hotel Candlewood through its Prop. Shri Hem Chand Thakur, Village Dhayla, P.O. Pansh Kanda, Distt. Shimla (H.P.) -171011. Guarantor(s): 1. Shri Hem Chand Thakur and Smt. Kirna W/o Sh. Hem Chand Thakur, Village Dhayla, P.O. Pansh Kanda, Distt. Shimla (H.P.) -171011. 2. Mrs. Lata Devi W/o Sh. Nalin Verma C/o St. Mary's School, Lower Chakkar, Shimla 171005.	All that part and parcel (with Two + Parking Storied Building) of land measuring 00-02-63 Hectare and 00-01-74 Hectare being Comprised in Khata/Khatauni No. 1min/1min, Khasra No. 269/240/2 and 278/243/2 respectively, Situated in Muhai Dhayla, Village Dhayla Revenue Circle Kanda, Tehsil and Distt. Shimla as per jamabandi for the year 2015-2016. Owned by Hem Chand Bounded-On the North by: Forest Land, On the South by: Road, On the East by: Land of Sh. Tilak Ram, On the West By: Land of Sh. Manohar Singh.	20.04.2026 Rs. 31,51,960.38 with further interest and incidental charges costs w.e.f. 30.03.2026 Rs. 9,98,160.10 with further interest and incidental charges costs w.e.f. 31.03.2026	17.07.2025/Symbolic	Account No. 09810210002032 IFSC CODE UCBA0000981 Name of Account: No Lien Account	Rs. 1,18,00,000/- Rs. 11,80,000/- Rs. 25,000/-	11.09.2026 11:00 AM to 05:00 PM (with unlimited auto extension of 10 minutes each)
Bio: KASUMPTI Borrowers: St. Mary's School (Trustee Sh. Nalin Verma Lower Chakkar, Shimla 171005) and Guarantor(s) 1. Sh. Nalin Verma S/o Sh. Hargovind Singh, C/o St. Mary's School, Lower Chakkar Shimla 171005. 2. Mrs. Lata Devi W/o Sh. Nalin Verma C/o St. Mary's School, Lower Chakkar, Shimla 171005.	All part and parcel of land and building measuring 0-09 biswa comprised in old Khasra No. 344/293/2/2 and New Khasra No. 141 measuring 0-03-81 Hectares Bearing Khata Khatauni No. 35/56 Situated in Muhai Bharyal, Tehsil - Shimla Rural, District Shimla (H.P.), Sale Deed No. 521/1996 dated 24-09-1996.	24.01.2019 Rs. 1,81,79,152.80 with further interest and incidental charges costs w.e.f. 30.06.2026	19.06.2019/Symbolic	Account No. 05650210001608 IFSC CODE UCBA0000565 Name of Account: No Lien Account	Rs. 2,36,00,000/- Rs. 23,60,000/- Rs. 25,000/-	11.09.2026 11:00 AM to 05:00 PM (with unlimited auto extension of 10 minutes each)

TERMS AND CONDITIONS OF E-AUCTION SALE: 1. Bids should be submitted only ONLINE in the prescribed form. Online bids can be submitted by accessing the <https://baanknet.com>. 2. Bids should be submitted along with a copy of identity document as an attachment to the bid form. Original identity Document must be produced on demand. 3. 10% of the Upset Price/Reserve Price must be remitted towards EMD Through RTGS/NEFT/ Money Transfer to the Account Details Mentioned Against each account or the EMD can also be deposited to e-wallet of Auction Provider by accessing the website mentioned in the point No. 6, in case of sole bidder, bid amount quoted must be one Bid higher than Reserve Price. The Authorised Officer reserve absolute right to accept or reject any one or more bids or to postpone/cancel the auction without assigning any reasons. 4. On sale of immovable property, the Successful Bidder shall immediately pay a deposit of Twenty Five percent (25%) of the amount of the sale price through RTGS / NEFT / Money Transfer to the Bank A/c as mentioned above against each account, to the authorized officer conducting the sale falling which the Earnest Money Deposit shall be forfeited and property shall forthwith be sold again. 5. The successful bidder shall remit the balance bid amount within 15 (fifteen) days of confirmation of sale in his favor. If the successful bidder fails to remit the balance bid amount within the said period, deposit shall be forfeited and the property shall be resold. 6. The interested bidders who require assistance in creating Login ID & Password, uploading data, submitting Bid Documents, Training/ Demonstration, Terms & Conditions on Online Inter-se Bidding etc., may visit Website <https://baanknet.com>, Helpline No. +91 82912 20220, Helpline E-mail id : support.baanknet@psballiance.com. For any property related query may contact the Authorised Officer or Branch manager, As details of Authorised officer/ Branch Manager/s mentioned above against each account. Sale will not be confirmed if the borrower tenders to the Bank contractual dues along with other expenses prior to the Authorized Officer issuing Sale Confirmation Letter to the successful bidder(s). In such case, the Bank shall refund without interest the entire amount remitted by the successful bidder. 7. Statutory dues / liabilities etc., due to the Government / Local Body, if any, shall be borne by the Successful bidders. The Successful Bidder has to bear the TDS of 1% if the property value exceed Rs. 50 Lacs. Bidders are advised to go through the service provider's website <https://baanknet.com> or Contact respective Branch Manager before participating in the auction. All participating bidders shall be deemed to have read and understood all the conditions of sale given on website and be bound by all the conditions. The Auction sale is subject to confirmation of the secured creditor Bank. Further inquiries, if any, in particular details of the properties, verification of documents and / or terms and conditions of sale can be obtained from the respective Branch Managers as mentioned above during office hours. 8. The Property will be sold on "As is where is and what is where" basis and the intending bidder should make discreet enquiries as regards to the property of any authority besides the bank's charges and should satisfy themselves about the title, extent, quality and quantity of the property before submitting their bid. No claim of whatsoever nature regarding the property put for sale, charges, encumbrances over the property on any other matter etc. will be entertained after submission of the online bid. rding the property put for sale, charges, encumbrances over the property on any other matter etc. will be entertained after submission of the online bid.

STATUTORY 30 DAYS SALE NOTICE UNDER THE SARFAESI ACT-2002

The borrowers/ guarantors are hereby notified to pay the sum as mentioned above along with up to date interest and ancillary expenses before confirmation of sale falling which the properties will be auctioned/ sold and balance dues, if any, will be recovered with interest and cost.

Date: 01.08.2026

AUTHORISED OFFICER

SHAHARNAMA

Pay monkey tax, proceed with caution

SHAMA RANA

S HIMLA, once the summer capital of the British Raj, has a very different establishment. Forget municipal bodies and elected representatives; it is a fur-covered bureaucracy of macaques and langurs that truly governs the hill station.

Across the Mall Road, Jakhoo Hill, and other tourist hotspots, this simian syndicate operates a thriving parallel economy. Tourists have to routinely "pay taxes" in the form of bananas, chips, and sometimes even mobile phones or designer sunglasses. As the human-run administration debates about plastic

waste and heritage preservation, the monkeys have already pioneered a circular economy. They expertly liberate packaged snacks, discarding the wrappers across the city, ensuring a steady stream of employment for sanitation workers.

What's more, these monkeys run an impressive surveillance state. Perched on rooftops, electric wires, and balconies, they monitor human activity, and their intelligence network could shame any modern agency. The moment a tourist reaches for a bag of goodies, an interception squad swoops in within seconds. Government responses — ranging from faded 'Don't feed monkeys' boards to sporadic anti-monkey drives — are met with bemused indifference. For every relocated monkey, his three cousins arrive to reclaim the lost territory. If nothing else, it is a lesson in grassroots leadership and adaptability.

Ultimately, Shimla's monkeys offer a perfect satire of governance — wily, opportunistic, eternally resourceful. As long as tourists come bearing snacks, the Monkey Republic will flourish.

So, the next time you visit, pay the monkey tax — and proceed with caution.

Biji, and memories that will never fade

HARNEET KAUR SANDHU

GOING through some old photos of college years, one picture caught my attention — a *jatha* (group) of women reciting *shabad kirtan* in a college. The lady in the middle was none other than my *Dadi*, whom we fondly called Biji. She had spent most of her life on the Panjab University campus and had formed a group called the Istri Satsang Sabha, which recited *shabad kirtan* wherever they were invited. These middle-aged and elderly women would pile their musical instruments onto a rickshaw and travel across Chandigarh to perform *kirtan* in homes, gurdwaras and institutions.

Biji, who belonged to a village in Punjab, was married at around 16. My grandparents lived on the university campus. Biji loved gardening and plants, a passion which her children imbibed.

Long before Rose Garden installed the green

toadstools, Biji had split an *atta chakki* into two, plastered together bricks and cement, installed the *chakki* on top and painted it green to adorn her garden. This particular photo was over 50 years' old. My father and aunts, pleasantly surprised, even remembered the colour of Biji's sari.

I have always felt that Biji is here, in me, in my work, in my life. Knowing that Biji once treaded the corridors of the same college that I studied in has only inspired me to follow in her footsteps.

Contributors are invited to send vignettes of the cities they love at shaharnama@tribunemail.com in no more than 400-450 words.

