

## Amarnath Vaishnavi

Amarnath Vaishnavi (24 August 1925 – 1 July 2012) was an Indian political and social activist and a freedom fighter from Kashmir. Originally an activist of the [nationalist](#) organisation [Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh](#) (RSS), he later became the president of All State Kashmiri Pandit Conference (ASKPC) in 1987 and led the organization till the year 2012. ASKPC is the oldest organization representing Kashmiri Pandits. He also worked as a politician in Bhartiya Janata Party and contested election from Srinagar constituency in the year 1996. He became the head of RSS in Kashmir in the year 1973. He also set up Sahayata Samiti in Jammu after the exodus of Kashmiri Pandits with support from BJP and RSS functionaries Kidar Nath Sahani and Indresh Kumar and also the top brass of BJP such as L K Advani and Atal Bihari Vajpayee. Sahayata samiti worked for the rehabilitation of the displaced Kashmiri Pandits after their mass exodus from Kashmir Valley in the year 1990 after the valley was hit by terrorism.

### Early Life

Pandit Amarnath Vaishnavi was born to Shri Sarvanand Vaishnavi and Divyamali on 24th August 1925 at Mastgarh in Jammu. His father was born in Srinagar and was a Kashmiri Pandit. He worked as an official with Public works department in Jammu & Kashmir. Amarnath Vaishnavi's first school was "State Primary school", Nai Dhaki, Jammu and his first friends were, Mehta Gaje Singh Mohan and Vaid Vishno Datt.

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vishno\\_Datt\\_Sharma](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vishno_Datt_Sharma)

He studied in Srinagar in Amarsingh college and completed a three-year diploma in Fine Arts, conducted by "City & Guilds" London, in 1947, followed by a Diploma in interior decoration.

### Personal Life

He was married to Smt. Laxmishwari, who passed away just four years after the marriage due to ill health. He had an elder brother Shri Gopinath Vaishnavi who was the founder member of Hindu High School in Srinagar.

### Social Activist and reformer

He played a major role in Praja Parishad movement with Dr Shyama Prasad Mukherjee at its helm. The movement called for scrapping of the special status of J & K which the state received on account of the Article 370. Shyama Prasad Mukherjee once said, "*Ek desh mein do Vidhan, do Pradhan aur Do Nishan nahi challenge*" (A single country can't have two [constitutions](#), two [prime ministers](#), and two [national emblems](#)).<sup>[72]</sup> Bharatiya Jana Sangh along with Hindu Mahasabha and [Jammu Praja Parishad](#) launched a massive Satyagraha to get the provisions removed. Vaishnavi was jailed for nine months for his role in the movement by the congress government.

Amarnath Vaishnavi Led the Kashmiri Pandit agitation (also known as Parmeshwari agitation) in 1967

under the leadership of All-State Kashmiri Pandit Conference Yuvak Sabha Sheetal Nath with Pandit Shiv Narayan Fotedar as its President, other members were Amarnath Ganjoo and Tika Lal Taploo.

In 1969 he led a crusade against the conversion of Buddhists in Laddakh who were being forcibly converted to Shia faith. This agitation paved way for forming the Laddakh Buddhist Association permanently.

In 1973 he was appointed as the Sarsanghchhalak (head) of RSS in Kashmir. He was appointed by the Central RSS leadership as a Pracharak of Vishwa Hindu Parishad for Jammu region in April 1983. He was also jailed in the year 1975 during emergency declared by then Prime minister Indira Gandhi.

### **Setting up Sahayata Samiti**

He played a major role in rehabilitating Kashmiri Pandits after their mass exodus from Kashmir in 1990 due to the onset of terrorism in the Kashmir Valley.

In the month of February 1990 with support from R.S.S Jammu under the guidance of Sh.Indresh Kumar ji Pracharak RSS and Shri Kidar Nath Sahani, then General Secretary All India BJP and Incharge of Jammu & Kashmir, formation of J K Sahayita Samiti was declared by Kidarnath Sahani. His childhood friend and MP Vaid Vishu Dutt was declared President and Chaman Lal Gupta & Amarnath Vaishnavi were Vice Presidents. The working of Sahayata samiti was handled by Amarnath Vaishnavi and Hiralal Chatta. The organization worked to mobilise resources for the rehabilitation of the displaced Kashmiri Pandits who became refugees in their own country. Sahayata Samiti negotiated with the government, which was represented by Vijay Bakaya, then divisional commissioner and managed to get tents, food and cash relief. After tough negotiations and perseverant follow ups Sahayata Samiti persuaded the government to construct small flats for those living in tents. These colonies exist in Jagtee township near Nagrota Jammu, Buta Nagar Jammu and Purkhoo in Jammu. Sahayata Samiti converted regular colleges and schools of Jammu into camp colleges and schools by starting an evening shift for the displaced community.

### **Reservations for Kashmiri Pandits in educational institutions.**

Amar Nath Vaishnavi was the man behind the reservations in educational institutions for Kashmiri Pandits in institutions all over India. With the support of leaders of Maharashtra Shiv Sena and BJP including Bal Thackeray and Gopi Nath Munday, he managed to secure the reservation of seats in the educational institutions in Maharashtra. Subsequently with support from Murli Manohar Joshi, who was the HRD minister in the cabinet of Atal Bihari Vajpayee and also L K Advani he managed to secure reservations in many BJP led states. Subsequently, this spread to almost all states of India. This was an effort of almost one decade. Even today the arrangement continues.

Amarnath Vaishnavi is known widely as a Karmayogi who lived a simple life in one of the migrant quarters in Jammu while working for the rehabilitation of Kashmiri Pandits.

He worked till his last day and passed away on July 1, 2012 after a brief illness.