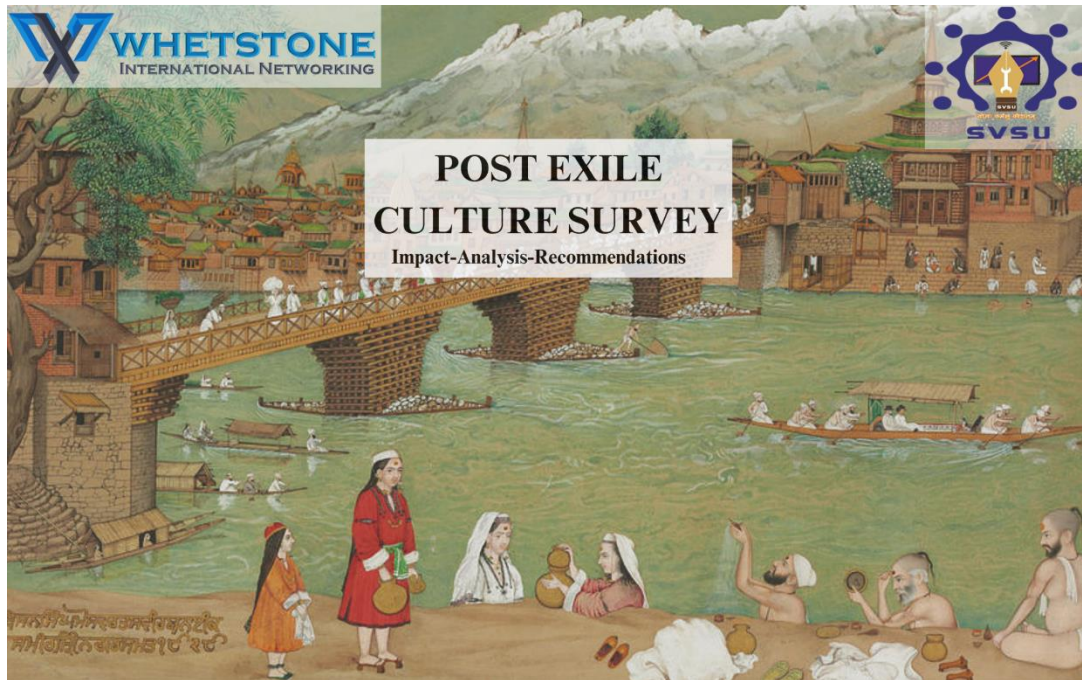




**Kashmiri Pandits
POST EXILE CULTURE SURVEY
Impact-Analysis-Recommendations**



Shri Vishwakarma Skill University

&



Whetstone International Networking

Table of Contents

About The Team

1. Introduction

2. Methodology

3. Analysis and Interpretations

3.1 Demographic Profile

3.2 Locational Displacement Impact and impact on property ownership

3.3 Impact on Family, Marriages and Birth Rate

3.4 Preservation of Cultural, Social Identity and Language

3.5 Socio-Political Participation

3.6 Return and Rehabilitation

3.7 National Risks & Concerns

4.0 Conclusion and Suggestive Actions

4.1 Immediate Actions

ABOUT THE TEAM

Shri Vishwakarma Skill University (SVSU) is a first university of its kind in India, established in 2016 at village Dudhola in District Palwal, Haryana. The objective of the University is to provide structured skill qualification programmes that are aligned with existing and emerging job roles among different sectors of industry. To attain the said objective, university is involved in various type of academic, research and social outreach activities.



The University (SVSU) has received a proposal from Whetstone International Networking organization for conduction of a cultural survey to assess the impact of exile on Kashmiri displaced, specifically focusing on aspects such as education, demography, family systems, marriages, and culture. Whetstone is a consulting firm dedicated to providing comprehensive and strategic advisory services to clients across various sectors and areas. With a team of experienced consultants and subject matter experts, we aim to deliver tailored solutions that address our clients' unique challenges and help them achieve their goals. Whetstone International Networking (WIN), founded in India in 2023, is rapidly becoming one of the fastest-growing consulting organizations. WIN is actively expanding across various sectors including education, skill development, healthcare, and technology. By offering a comprehensive range of consulting services, WIN supports its clients with strategy, operations, technology, and digital transformation initiatives. Leveraging its global network and industry expertise, WIN India aims to deliver concrete and measurable results for its clients.

The project proposed by the Whetstone International Networking was well matching with the practicing principles of SVSU. So, the university appointed consultant(s) for the proposed culture survey.

Name of Consultant(s)	Designation
Prof. Rishipal Singh	Dean, Skill Faculty of Management Studies and Research, SVSU
Dr. Dalip Raina	Assistant. Professor, Skill Faculty of Management Studies and Research, SVSU

1.0 Introduction

Kashmir, the serene and ancient heart of Indian civilization, stands as an example to the profound heritage and cultural unity of **Bharat**. Known as **Sharda Peeth**, the land of learning and wisdom, it has been home to towering intellectuals like Acharya **Abhinavagupta** and **Kalhana**, who enriched the world with their philosophical and historical insights. The vibrant confluence of **Shaivism, Buddhism, and Vaishnavism** has been a unique cultural ethos of harmony, tolerance and mutual respect. Its exquisite crafts, soulful poetry, and timeless traditions reflect the depth of its artistic and spiritual legacy. Throughout its storied history, Kashmir has remained inseparably linked with the soul of India, embodying the core values of **Sanatana Dharma** and the unity-in-diversity that defines **Bharat**. In every thread of its culture and every stone of its ancient temples, Kashmir reaffirms its integral place in the civilizational continuum of India, a land where the eternal truth of "**Ekam Sat Vipra Bahudha Vadanti**" (Truth is one, the wise call it by many names) resonates through millennia.

The Kashmir of today that we inherited post-independence and the corresponding conflict has deep-rooted historical and political causes, dating back to 1947. Kashmir's accession to India created territorial tensions. The rise of various radical groups, supported by Pakistan and the radicals intensified terrorism. The 1990 forced migration was the forced relocation of the Kashmiri Pandit community from the Kashmir Valley due to rising insurgency and ethnic tensions. The rise of Islamic militancy, fuelled by external influences created an atmosphere of fear, particularly for the minority Kashmiri Pandit community.

By late 1989, targeted killings of Kashmiri Pandits began, and by early 1990, the situation had deteriorated further. The assassinations of well-known Kashmiri Pandits, increased communal anxiety. In January 1990, as pro-secessionist slogans were raised across the Valley, threatening leaflets were distributed, explicitly calling for the Pandits to convert, leave Kashmir or die.



This environment led to evacuation of over 350,000 to 500,000 Kashmiri Pandits from the Valley between 1990 to 1992. Many left behind their ancestral homes, businesses, temples, and land, never to return. The exodus marked the loss of the Pandit community's cultural and social presence in the Valley,

and it left a lasting scar on the collective memory of the community. Many Kashmiri

Pandit families lost their properties in the Valley during the migration. Houses, land, and businesses were abandoned, seized, or sold at distress prices. Recovering these properties has been a long-standing challenge for the community.

The exile of Kashmiri Pandits resulted in deep-rooted impacts on various facets of life for the community. The exile had profound and lasting impacts on various aspects of their lives, including culture, health, demography, political participation, education and employment.

The forced displacement of this community transformed not only their social fabric but also their position in the broader Indian context. While the community has shown remarkable resilience and has managed to thrive in some areas, such as education and employment, the loss of their homeland, culture, and political voice in Kashmir remains a deep wound. The long-term effects of this displacement may continue to impact the cultural, social identity and future of the Kashmiri Pandit community, raising important questions about their potential return to the Valley and their integration into the larger Indian socio-political landscape.

2.0 Methodology

The migration thrust the Kashmiri Pandits into an entirely unfamiliar world, where they had to start from nothing. Most of them moved to refugee camps in Jammu and Delhi, where conditions were often harsh and unsanitary. To comprehensively understand the multifaceted impact of this forced migration, a research has been undertaken to assess the Kashmiri Pandit Exodus and Forced Migration from the Kashmir Valley and its consequences on demographic changes and social and cultural characteristics. The study adopted descriptive survey research design to describe cultural behaviors, attitudes, or perceptions, a descriptive survey is suitable.

To carry out the study both qualitative and quantitative approaches have been used to conduct the study. Data has been collected from the population of migrated Kashmiri pandits. By using the purposive sampling technique, a sample of 740 subjects has been taken from the said population online and more than 300 respondents offline. From the subjects of selected sample, the data was collected using structured questionnaires segregated into different sections, like demographic details, cultural practices, perceptions, and challenges. Both open and closed ended question were part of the final questionnaire. The requisite final data set of 694 respondents online and 300 offline, has been considered for the analysis and interpretation. The study's questionnaire was developed by the consultancy team and the data was collected using both the physical and online mode.

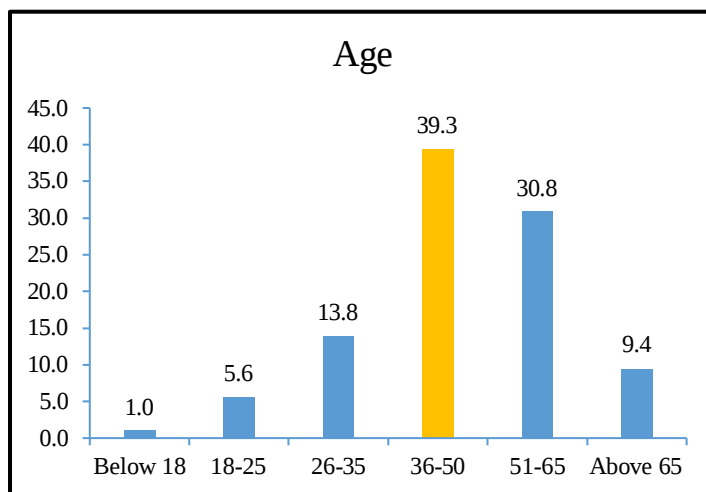
The collected data has been analyzed statistically and the findings have been presented in the form of a report to the consulting organization i.e. Whetstone

International Networking(WIN). The Use thematic analysis to identify patterns or themes in open-ended responses were made in the study. Through the systematic collection and analysis of survey data, the research project endeavors have contributed to have a deeper understanding of the Kashmiri Pandit Exodus and Forced Migration and its implications for the socio-cultural landscape of the Kashmir Valley. The present research aimed at addressing the multifaceted challenges posed by forced migration and have inferred on some of the sustainable solutions for affected communities

3.0 ANALYSIS & INTERPRETATION

3.1 Demographic Profile

During the sample collection of the study, it has been observed that majority of online respondents belong to India, with 664 individuals, making up 95.7% of the total sample. Canada comprises of 20 respondents, which is 2.9% of the total, making it the second most represented country in the data set. Other countries like Australia,



Bahrain, Indonesia, Kuwait, Uganda, United Kingdom and United States contributing very small percentages of 0.1%-0.4% to the total. The dataset heavily reflects the Indian population, with minimal representation from other countries, making it crucial to consider the Indian context when interpreting further insights or trends from this data. The bar chart displays the distribution of

individuals across different age groups, with the highest percentage in the 36-50 age group (39.3%), followed by the 51-65 group (30.8%). People aged 26-35 represent 13.8% (96 respondents), followed by 9.4% (65 respondents) for those above 65 years. Younger individuals (aged 18-25) make up 5.6% (39 respondents), while those below 18 are a very small group at 1.0%. Around 60.4% of respondents are from rural areas, while 39.6% are urban inhabitants. The majority of the population in this dataset is male (75.2%) and females make up a 24.8% of the population.

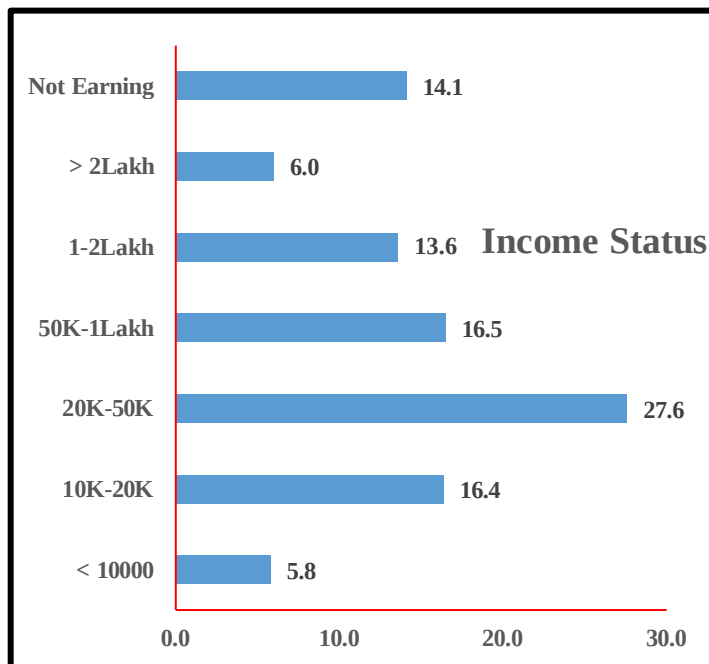
3.2 Locational Displacement Impact and Impact on Property Ownership

Out of a total of 694 online responses from India, the Jammu & Kashmir state had the most representation in the data set with 500 respondents accounting for 72.0% of the

total sample. Further Haryana, Delhi and UP constitute 17% of the total sample. However, the data has shown the representation from all states of India but are having significantly lower representation. A significant number of respondents (80.3%) have stayed within Jammu & Kashmir after exile, while a small percentage have migrated to places like Delhi (7.9%) and outside India (0.4%). This trend might have persisted due to social, cultural, and economic ties. Further, migration to other regions (e.g., Central India, Delhi, Southern India) remains low. The reason might be due to absence of significant incentives, however, younger generations seeking higher education or career opportunities have contributed to a slight increase in outward migration among the population.

The exodus caused a major demographic shift, with the Pandit population dispersing across different parts of India. The concentration of Kashmiri Pandits in the Valley dwindled from hundreds of thousands to a few thousand, diluting their demographic strength in their homeland. The data from the study depicts that 61.3% of respondents changed their place of residence up to three times, 30.7% moved four times and 7.9% moved more than four times after exile. This frequent relocation might have disrupted social networks and cultural bonds, potentially leading to a gradual erosion of collective identity. In long run, the repeated displacements could contribute to mental health issues, including stress and anxiety, especially among families who moved four or more times. *Studies have shown that traumatic experiences, such as displacement or loss of cultural identity, can lead to epigenetic changes that affect mental health, stress responses, and susceptibility to diseases. For example, research on Holocaust survivors and their descendants indicates that trauma can leave epigenetic marks, affecting how genes are expressed across generations.*

The data further indicates that while some displaced individuals are stabilizing, a significant portion continues to face challenges that necessitate further relocation. Policy measures addressing housing, employment, and psychological well-being could reduce future mobility and foster stability within the community.

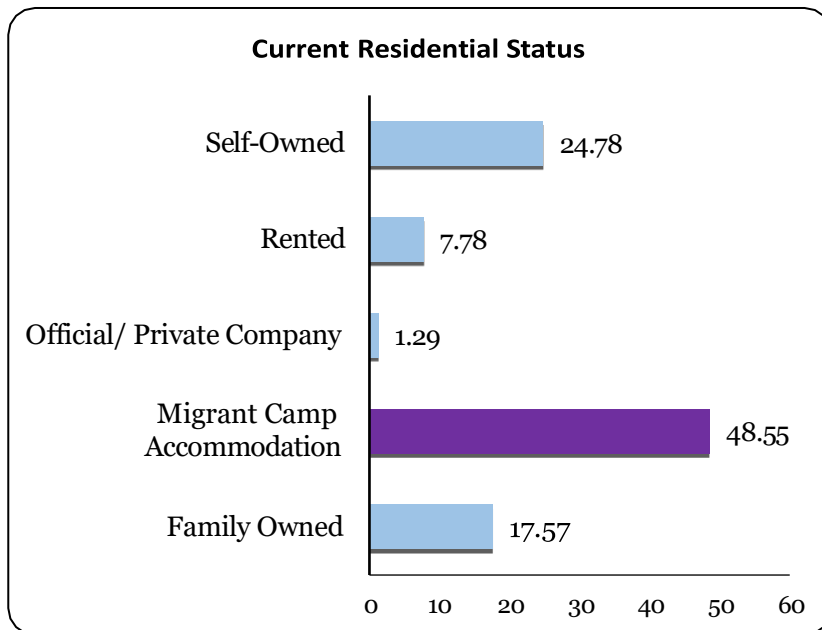


The largest segment of the respondents is working in Private Service (34.1%), followed by Government Service (28.0%). Meanwhile, Pensioners account for 11.4%, while Home Makers and Unemployed groups make up 6.8% and 6.3%, respectively. Students account for 4% while Entrepreneurs population represents 7.1% of the collected response form the respondents. This indicates a preference for stable, formal employment and highlight an opportunity to encourage entrepreneurial

initiatives and self-employment within the community. With the community's strong educational background, programs encouraging business creation and support for startups could foster a more entrepreneurial culture.

The highest proportion of respondents earn between ₹20,000 to ₹50,000 (24.9%), followed by those earning between ₹1 Lakh to ₹2 Lakh (19.6%) and ₹50,000 to ₹1 Lakh (20.5%). A significant portion is Not Earning (17.1%) and a small group earns Less than ₹10,000 (5.8%). This suggests that a significant portion falls in a lower to middle-income range, which could limit spending power and economic growth unless incomes increase over time. With only 12.1% earning more than ₹2 Lakh per month, there is room for economic growth within the community. The results highlighted that Pandits which were part of the educated middle class in Kashmir, working in government services, education, and business were impacted by the exodus. It has shattered their professional lives. Upskilling and expanding into higher-paying industries or entrepreneurial ventures could help raise income levels over time.

The absence of Pandits in the Valley changed the demographic composition of Kashmir, making it a predominantly Muslim region. This shift had repercussions for



the socio-political balance in the region. Almost half of the population (48.6%) lives in Displaced Camp Accommodation, followed by Self-Owned Homes (24.8%) and Family-Owned properties (17.6%). Only 7.8% live in rented accommodations currently after the exile of 1990. Thousands of Pandits were initially settled in makeshift camps in Jammu, Udhampur, and parts of

Delhi. The living conditions were dire, with extreme temperatures, inadequate sanitation, and limited access to healthcare. Overcrowding, lack of privacy, and emotional trauma exacerbated the suffering of the displaced community. The Pandits, accustomed to a moderate climate, had to endure the harsh heat of Jammu summers.

On the aspects of education, the majority of the respondents has a Graduation and Above level of education (59.5%), followed by Higher-level 12th Class (23.5%). A small percentage have Technical Education (7.6%) and PhD/Doctoral qualifications (4.2%). Those with No Formal Education (1.4%) or up to Middle School (3.7%) represent the least educated segments. The immediate aftermath of the exodus saw many Kashmiri Pandit children's education being severely disrupted. Families living in refugee camps had limited access to quality educational facilities.

The exodus has led to the disruption of the education of many Pandit children. With 64% of respondents holding a graduation degree or higher, the group is relatively well-educated. This aligns with the community's emphasis on education for social mobility. The high education level provides a foundation for higher-skilled jobs, especially in knowledge-based industries such as IT, healthcare, and academia. Given the trend of high educational attainment, there is potential for upskilling in technical and entrepreneurial skills to expand career opportunities beyond traditional employment sectors. Programs in digital skills, business management, and vocational training could be beneficial for the overall growth of community in long run.

Impact on Property and Ownership

Interestingly, 66.6% of the respondents own property, land, or houses in Kashmir, while 32.0% do not. It has been revealed that 74.7% report their property is Not in Use, or Dysfunctional. Only 4.9% use the property for themselves, and 1.2% have rented it out. The results from the data discovered that 48.6% have not sold their property, while 44.1% have sold after the exile un 1990. Those who have sold their property is most likely to have done in the 1990s, with fewer occurrences in more recent years. On the other hand, the majority (80.7%) have not bought property after the 1990 exile, while 4.0% have. The event or action of purchasing the property appears to have been very rare or infrequent in all periods.

Thus, it can be inferred that the community is largely employed in private and government services, with a significant portion not earning much. Education levels are high, with most individuals having graduated. Many own properties in Kashmir, but much of it remains unused. With ancestral properties remaining unsold by most, reliance on ancestral land for economic stability is likely to continue. In addition, the high percentage of property ownership indicates strong ties to Kashmir. This trend may continue as many displaced families might view property ownership as an emotional connection or a potential route for future return. However, those facing financial difficulties or lacking utility of property may consider selling in the coming years, especially if the property is in a dysfunctional state. The underutilized properties represent an untapped economic resource. Increased stability in the region may encourage owners to put these properties to productive use through self-occupation, renting, or redevelopment. On the other hand, the declining trend in property acquisitions post-1999 suggests reduced investment in the valley, likely due to instability and displacement. This trend may persist unless there is a significant improvement in socio-political conditions. The financial pressures or lack of utility of properties may push more families to sell in the future, especially if they have settled permanently outside the valley. However, if there is stabilization, individuals or families who left may return and invest in property redevelopment, especially those with ancestral ties.

3.3 Impact on Family, Marriages and Birth Rate

The study found that 40.3% of the respondents are currently living with spouse and children and 10.4% with only spouse, this trend may increase in future as younger families prefer nuclear setups for autonomy and convenience. This could lead to a gradual reduction in the proportion of those living in joint family arrangements (currently at 42.5%). Moreover, as the population ages, there may be an increase in joint family setups as elder care becomes a priority, or a move toward elder-care facilities (if available and affordable). Conversely, younger families may seek to separate from joint family setups for work or educational opportunities in other locations. It has been observed that many Pandit families, especially those who

migrated to cities like Delhi, Mumbai, and other urban centres, made significant efforts to prioritize education. This scattered population affected the cohesiveness of the community. As a result, a substantial portion of the Pandit community in exile has achieved educational success, with many young Pandits excelling in fields such as medicine, engineering, law, and academia.

The study found that with 78% of respondents marrying within the Kashmiri community, it is likely that endogamous marriages (within the community) will continue to be the norm. This strong preference may persist, especially if cultural and familial traditions are valued by younger generations. However, a slight increase in inter-community marriages (currently 17%) had occurred over the time, particularly younger individuals moving to urban areas and other parts of country for education or employment, where they meet and marry individuals from other communities. If societal openness or exposure to diverse communities' increases, we might see the percentage of inter-community marriages rise modestly, which may be a sign of worry to the lineage and cultural dispersion of Pandit community in long run. Interestingly the divorce/separation rate is very low in the community.

The results also depict that the most common age for marriage is between 26-30 years, however, after the exile the marriage has been significantly increased between 31-35 years (6.1%), or above 35 years (7.1%). The data shows that 13% of respondents now marry above the age of 30, and there is an overall trend toward later marriage. This trend might continue or even intensify as factors such as higher education, career priorities, and economic stability become more significant for younger generations. Women and men alike might choose to marry later, leading to a gradual increase in the average marriage age. The majority of respondents are having two children (54.2%), whereas, 26.7% reported having one child. A small percentage (5.5%) reported having no children.

Marriage age has increased 30+ years.

Average Children per family is 1.7.

Risk of further impact on fertility and growth rates

NOTE: Forced displacement, colonization, genocide, and other forms of persecution have led to the extinction or near-extinction of many ethnic communities, languages, and cultures. The loss of these identities is often irreversible, leaving only remnants or fragmented memories of once-thriving civilizations and

Thus, it can be inferred from the statistics that the displacement, coupled with lower birth rates and economic hardships, may have led to a demographic decline in the community. This data indicates a preference for smaller family sizes. This trend may likely to continue, with the majority of future families opting for one or two children due to economic considerations, lifestyle preferences, and potentially, educational aspirations for children. The percentage of respondents with three or more children (15%) may decrease over time, reflecting global trends toward smaller families. This

shift could be driven by a focus on providing more resources and opportunities for fewer children rather than supporting larger families. Hence, with later marriage ages and smaller family sizes, there could be a decline in population growth within the community over the long term. This may affect the age demographics, potentially leading to an older average population in the future.

In exile, the average age of marriage for Kashmiri Pandits increased. Economic instability and the displacement of the community delayed the process of finding suitable matches, particularly within the community itself. The dispersed nature of the Pandit community made it difficult to maintain traditional intra-community marriage practices. This has resulted in an increase in intercultural and inter-caste marriages among younger generations.

The results from the study found that **93.1% of respondents believe that delayed/late marriages are a significant issue in the community**, while only 6.9% think it is not an issue. The main reasons for delayed marriages are that “marriage not preferred until personal ambitions are achieved” (29.7%) followed by Tekni/Kundali Matching (27.4%) and Lack of employed spouses in the Kashmiri Pandit community (24.3%). It has been identified that the family pressures, financial problems, and other reasons account for a smaller percentage.



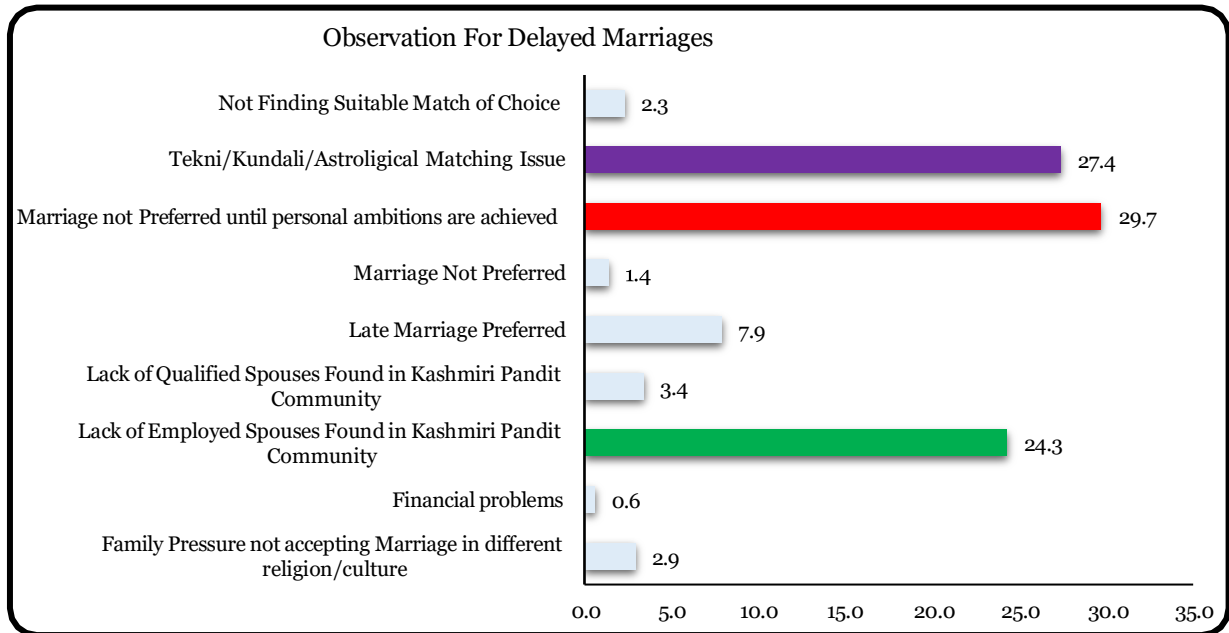
However, it has also been found that as more Kashmiri Pandit women pursued careers, the traditional gender roles within the community began to shift. Women are no longer

expected to marry young and become homemakers; instead, they are encouraged to achieve financial independence. This shift led to a more democratic approach to marriage, where both men and women prioritized career and personal development before settling down, contributing to delayed marriages.

Impact on Birth Rate

The delayed marriages naturally will result in delayed childbearing, leading to lower fertility rates within the community. Many couples who married later in life may have had fewer children, contributing to a demographic decline in the Kashmiri Pandit population. This decline in birth rates is a cause for anxiety within the community, as it threatens the preservation of the Kashmiri Pandit cultural heritage and identity in the

long run. The average children per family is 1.7 for Kashmiri Pandit community which may lead to risk of further impact on fertility and growth rates.



On the other side, with respondents considering delayed marriage a concern and acknowledging an increase in delayed marriages since exile, this issue is likely to persist. This concern may fuel community initiatives aimed at addressing delays, such as support networks for matchmaking or marriage counselling. Despite the concern, delayed marriages may become more normalized, especially as younger generations prioritize education, careers, and personal goals. As 29.7% of respondents do not

More than 43% of the participants of age group 50 and more years feel that delay in marriage is a serious concern.

29.7% do not prefer marriage until personal ambitions are achieved.

NOTE

A 2015 study in Ethnic and Racial Studies reported that the Armenian diaspora experienced a 40% intermarriage rate in countries like the United States and France, leading to a gradual dilution of Armenian ethnic identity.

prefer marriage until personal ambitions are achieved, future generations may continue to delay marriage, even if it remains a community concern. Kundli (astrological) matching issues are cited as a barrier to marriage. This cultural practice may continue to influence marriage timing, especially for families adhering strongly to traditional beliefs. If younger generations become less reliant on astrology, this barrier could decrease,

although this shift might be gradual due to the deep-rooted nature of these customs. A significant portion of the respondents in the study noted the lack of employed youth as a major concern, which likely affects marriage decisions. As long as employment challenges persist, the average marriage age may remain high. If employment opportunities improve, it could lead to earlier marriages as economic stability becomes more attainable.

It has been inferred that the average age of marriage in the Kashmiri Pandit community has risen since the exodus. This can be attributed to economic challenges, difficulty in finding suitable matches, and the uncertainty about the future, particularly for families living in camps or economically constrained environments. It can be inferred that the reduced population size may threaten the survival of Kashmiri Pandits as a distinct cultural and religious group in future. However, living in exile, especially in difficult conditions such as refugee camps, impacted family planning and birth rates within the Pandit community. The community's overall population has shown a decline, leading to concerns about the future survival of their distinct identity. The socio-economic instability following the exodus led to a decline in birth rates within the community. Many families delayed having children due to financial insecurity and the challenging living conditions in exile. The declining birth rate, combined with the exile, may raise concerns about the long-term sustainability of the community.

3.4 Preservation of Cultural, Social Identity and Language

The Kashmiri Pandits, a community with a rich cultural heritage, were uprooted from their ancestral land, resulting in a significant loss of cultural identity. Their festivals, traditions, and rituals, which were deeply rooted in the geography and ethos of the Valley, became difficult to maintain in exile. Kashmiri Pandits were deeply rooted in the cultural, linguistic, and spiritual ethos of the Kashmir Valley. In exile, this connection to their homeland was severely disrupted, leading to a gradual erosion of cultural traditions, rituals, festivals, and the use of their native language, Kashmiri.

The loss of culture and forced displacement can cause intergenerational trauma, where the psychological and biological effects of trauma are passed down to subsequent generations.

Furthermore, the community has also struggled to preserve its distinct cultural identity over the period of time. The disruption of festivals, religious ceremonies, and the traditional way of life led to a fear of losing their heritage. A majority of respondents (63.0%) celebrate the Kashmiri birthdate according to Panchang/Jantri, whereas, 26.9% follow both the English calendar and Kashmiri traditions, while 10.1% follow only the English calendar. This reflects a strong yet somewhat flexible adherence to traditional practices. Over time, these practices may continue to fragment, with younger generations possibly favouring more accessible or secularized practices. This could lead to a gradual decline in traditional observances unless there is renewed cultural education or reinforcement

The study also found that 10.37 % people do not follow Panchang regularly. The decline in the usage of Panchang within India and outside India is matter of concern for the cultural identity of the community in future. However, despite challenges, the

community has managed to retain key aspects of its cultural identity by forming small networks and celebrating significant festivals (e.g., Shivaratri, Navreh).

Festivals like Shivaratri and Yagnopavit are more commonly celebrated, while other rituals (e.g., Ashtami, Ekadashi, Pann) are observed less frequently among the community in the said sample. The limited observance of certain ceremonies may indicate selective adherence based on the ease of celebration or the perceived importance of the ritual. Over time, without concerted community efforts, less commonly celebrated ceremonies may be at greater risk of being forgotten. If the community continues to lose certain practices, cultural identity could become increasingly focused on a few key rituals, which may narrow the cultural expression of the community.

The decline in Panchang (traditional Kashmiri calendar) usage points to a concerning shift away from cultural specificity. This decline is especially pronounced outside India, where cultural reinforcement is more challenging. The continued decline in Panchang use could significantly impact the distinctiveness of the community's identity. There may be a need for digital or community-based initiatives to make the Panchang more accessible or relevant for younger generations. Without intervention, future generations may gravitate solely towards the English calendar, further diminishing ties to traditional practices. If current trends continue, community festivals may become increasingly symbolic rather than fully practiced traditions, especially in the diaspora.

As younger members assimilate into broader society, traditional practices may diminish, leading to cultural homogenization. This could be mitigated with community-

- **36% rate Children's Kashmiri speaking skills poor.**
- **10% are not following the Panchang.**
- **79.7% agree lack of community bonding**

NOTE

A 2008 study by the International Campaign for Tibet found that over 90% of Tibetan cultural sites in Tibet had been destroyed or damaged since the Chinese occupation, leading to a significant loss of cultural heritage. The same study reported that fewer than 30% of Tibetan children in exile communities could speak fluent Tibetan, with many adopting Mandarin or other languages.

driven initiatives to reinforce education about these practices, potentially through online platforms or community programs. The future preservation of this community's cultural practices will likely hinge on the adaptability of community efforts and the development of initiatives to engage the younger generation in

traditional practices.

The results from the study also highlighted that a large majority (70%) of respondents either strongly agree or agree that they have observed a change in the preservation of Kashmiri culture and traditions within their families since exile. This suggests an ongoing struggle to maintain cultural practices. Without proactive cultural preservation initiatives, such as community programs or educational resources, future generations

may experience an accelerated dilution of traditional practices. If community-driven cultural preservation measures are not enhanced, the younger generations may increasingly adopt mainstream cultural practices over traditional ones, further diminishing cultural identity over time.

However, several community organizations, are working towards preserving the cultural and religious practices of the Pandits. The cultural programs, seminars, and events are being organized regularly to keep the younger generation connected to their heritage. Language classes, especially for learning Kashmiri, are held for Pandit children born in exile. Temples and shrines that were abandoned during the exodus are being slowly revived. Efforts to rebuild damaged temples and shrines are ongoing, with the help of community organizations and government support. This initiative may in long run impact the community for their preservation of cultural identity and religious practices.

Impact on Language

The study found that 82.4% use the Kashmiri language for communication with parents, while 67.4% use it with extended family members. Moreover, 79.8% use Kashmiri with their spouse, and 60.8% with their children, although a notable portion (19.4%) does not speak Kashmiri to their children. While rating the language skills, it has been depicted from the study that 74.6% of respondents rate their Kashmiri language skills as very good. However, 37.9% rate their children's skills as poor or very poor. The study also reflected that 70% of respondents agree that there has been a change in preserving Kashmiri culture since exile.

The loss of a native language can lead to changes in cognitive processing and mental health outcomes. For example, communities that lose their native language may experience a decline in cultural identity, leading to increased stress, anxiety, and depression, which in turn can affect physical health.

In exile, the community attempted to preserve their cultural practices, but over time, the younger generation, growing up outside the Valley, began to lose touch with the traditions, language (Kashmiri), and religious practices unique to Kashmiri Pandit culture. Despite the displacement, many Kashmiri Pandit families have made efforts to preserve their traditions, albeit in different geographic and socio-cultural settings. However, younger generations, growing up outside Kashmir, face challenges in maintaining these cultural ties. The study also revealed that there is decline among respondents indicates in traditional family structures and closeness. The community bonding has weakened, with respondents agreeing that exile has affected community cohesion. This trend may reflect geographical dispersion and the challenges of maintaining cultural practices in smaller, scattered groups.

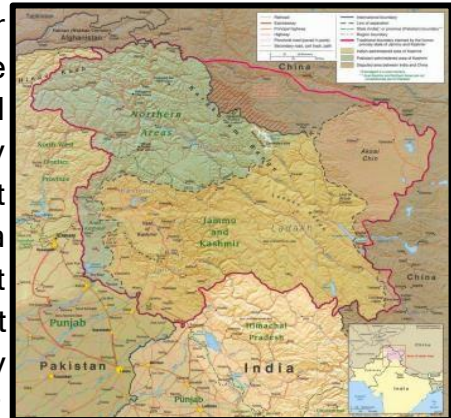
Thus, over time, family and community bonds may weaken further, particularly if there are no concerted efforts for reunions, gatherings, or virtual networks that bridge the physical gaps. This could lead to an increased sense of isolation among community members and a risk of losing collective identity of the community in the country. There is need for community's collective efforts to preserve its heritage and advocate for its rights to ensure the survival of Kashmiri Pandit culture but and a sense of hope for future generations to reclaim their connection to Kashmir.

Anthropological research often explores how the loss of cultural identity and rituals can lead to changes in social behaviour and physical health. Sociobiology examines how cultural and social factors can influence biological outcomes.

Changes in social behaviour due to cultural loss can lead to shifts in population dynamics, reproductive patterns, and overall community health. For example, the breakdown of traditional family structures and social networks can increase vulnerability to health issues and affect overall well-being.

3.5 Socio-Political Participation

To deep dive into the community bonding and their cooperation post exile, the study attempted to explore the role of community networks, social and political institutions towards the integration of the community post exile. It has been reflected from the results that the displacement scattered the Pandits across India and abroad, weakening their traditional support networks. It has been observed from the study that 69.4% believe that there has been a lack of community network support and 61.4% respondents feel that their relationship with the Kashmiri Pandit network/community has been affected after exile and its reported that 65% respondents in the study are having conflicted relationships, whereas, 26.8% feel their relationships have been curtailed.



While exploring the expectations, it has been explored that the majority have low (36.7%) or very low (31.6%) expectations from socio-political institutions supporting displaced Kashmiri Pandits. Only 42.2% of respondents feel politically represented or supported as displaced individuals, while 47.3% disagree. This indicates a perception of inadequate political support for their unique situation. Over half of respondents (58.9%) report experiencing discrimination or marginalization in politics since exile, indicating a feeling of exclusion from political rights or benefits. This perception of

limited political support may lead to further disillusionment and could decrease political engagement among younger generations. However, it might also drive efforts to establish political advocacy groups that represent this community's specific interests.



67% of the people have low or very low expectation from socio-political institutions for displaced KPs. Most people belong to age group of >50 years



More than 53% are uncertain and bleak towards cultural and social perseverance of community in future



More than 46% are also hopeless towards political empowerment of community in future.

The political outlook for the Kashmiri Pandit community is viewed as bleak by 24.9% and Only 8.4% are optimistic about political empowerment. The Kashmiri Pandit community has lost its political influence in Kashmir due to its displacement. Before the exodus, Pandits played an active role in Kashmir's administrative and political affairs, but after migration, they lost representation in

local governance and political processes. The Pandits, once an influential minority in the Kashmir Valley, lost their political voice after the exodus. Their forced departure led to an absence of representation in local governance and political bodies in the Valley, leaving them disenfranchised from the decision-making processes affecting their homeland. After the 1990 exodus, the Kashmiri Pandit community faced not only the trauma of displacement but also the challenge of finding adequate support—both within their own community and from the political system.

3.6 Return and Rehabilitation

Respondents are divided on returning to Kashmir valley. The study found that about 62% (including neutral) are hopeful about the prospects of returning and settling back in Kashmir. Among hopeful people more than 80% are above age group of 36 years. Security remains one of the primary reasons preventing the return of Kashmiri Pandits to the Valley. Even those who wish to return are sceptical of the security situation in Kashmir, where violence, insurgency, and political instability persist. The lingering fear of militancy and violence has kept many Pandits from attempting to reclaim their homes in the Valley. As reflected from the study roughly half (53%) of respondents remain somewhat hopeful about returning to Kashmir, while 37.9% express hopelessness. While security improvements could incentivize a portion of the community to return, the general sentiment indicates that without substantial changes in security and living conditions, a full-scale return is improbable. Over time, as younger generations assimilate into new regions, this aspiration may diminish, with fewer planning to return.

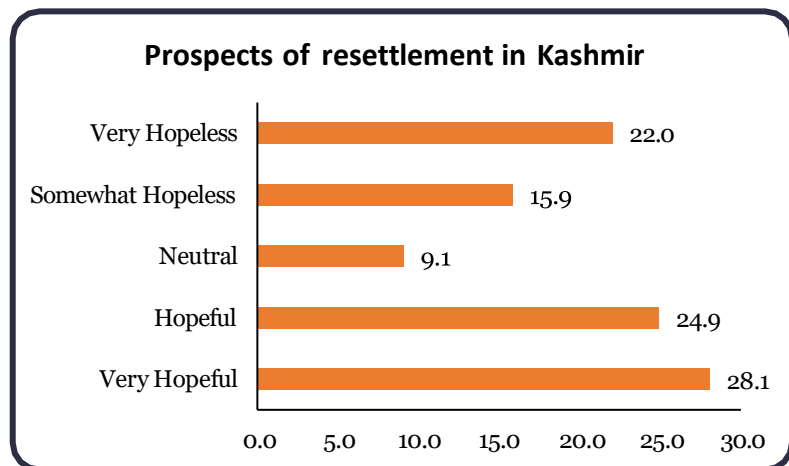
Government rehabilitation schemes, although initiated, were largely seen as inadequate. Many Pandits spent years, or even decades, living in substandard conditions in refugee camps, particularly in Jammu and Delhi. Housing and employment opportunities remained limited for many displaced

families. Some rehabilitation efforts were made, but they failed to address the larger issue of resettling Pandits in Kashmir or providing them with a secure environment for return. Over time, the Pandits in exile began to politically mobilize to seek justice, rehabilitation, and the right to return to their homeland.

In exile, Kashmiri Pandits have organized various political and cultural groups to advocate for their rights, demand justice for their displacement, and seek a safe and dignified return to the Valley. However, their political influence at the national level remains limited due to their small numbers.

Very distressing condition is that around 63% have low or very low expectations of government support for displaced Kashmiri Pandits. This reflects a potential disillusionment with external support. This lack of faith in government intervention may foster greater self-reliance within the community, potentially prompting internal community-led initiatives for support. However, continued low expectations may reduce engagement with governmental bodies. Only 25.1% consider returning to their original homes a top priority, with 49.6% rating it as a low or no priority. This suggests that attachment to ancestral homes may be waning over time.

Nearly 42.8% rank government-provided accommodation at one place as a high priority. This reflects a need for housing solutions that could facilitate a stronger community presence, potentially alleviating isolation. The interest in returning to ancestral homes is likely to continue declining, particularly if new generations are raised in other regions. However, if the government provides group housing solutions, community unity could be reinforced, reducing the cultural isolation experienced since exile.



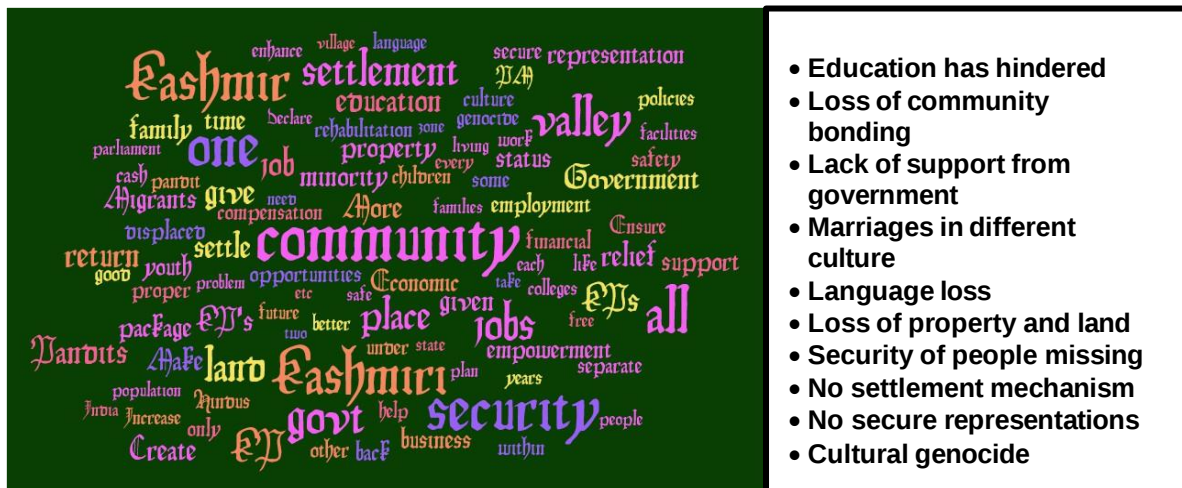
- **63.1% expects something substantial from the government.**
- **31.4% want to resettle back at any place,**
- **42.8% have priority for a specific place.**

NOTE

A 2008 study by the International Campaign for Tibet found that over 90% of Tibetan cultural sites in Tibet had been destroyed or damaged since the Chinese occupation, leading to a significant loss of cultural heritage. The same study reported that fewer than 30% of Tibetan children in exile communities could speak fluent Tibetan, with many adopting Mandarin or other languages.

Thus it can be inferred that the Security is a decisive factor, with 52.9% indicating a return is contingent on improvements. This suggests that without perceived safety, a full return to Kashmir will likely remain a distant hope for most. As security remains a critical factor in return aspirations, and without significant improvements, fewer people will plan or aspire to return. For younger generations, the idea of returning may become less relevant, leading to more permanent relocation. Further, economic and security improvements are essential for any significant movement back to Kashmir. The younger generations may feel less attachment to returning to Kashmir as they grow up in exile. However, stable property rights or special economic incentives for returnees could influence resettlement attitudes.

Issues / problems faced Post Forced Migration



Any Suggestions

- **Job opportunities and livelihood**
- **Political Empowerment and Representation**
- **Settlement and rehabilitation with dignity and security, one place**
- **Safety of existing property of KPs**
- **Govt. Security towards property and people.**
- **Representations and Education**
- **Preserve Language and Hindu Culture**



3.7 National Risks & Concerns

The prolonged absence of Kashmiri Pandits from their homeland poses significant risks not just to their community but to India's national fabric. As custodians of a unique cultural, historical, and intellectual heritage, their displacement has led to a gradual erosion of cultural diversity, pluralism, and Kashrut, a centuries-old ethos of harmony and coexistence. Their forced exile signifies more than a loss of population; it weakens the secular ethos of India and undermines its rich cultural interconnectivity.

The displacement of Kashmiri Pandits disrupts traditional Indian knowledge systems, diminishing a legacy of profound historical and intellectual contributions. The absence of this community challenges the preservation of authentic historical narratives and risks creating cultural vacuums that weaken India's socio-cultural identity. Geopolitically, their sustained marginalization amplifies instability, undermining efforts to restore balance and harmony in Kashmir.

Moreover, the loss of this integral community highlights broader concerns about social justice, human rights, and India's moral responsibility to protect its minorities. A continued delay in their dignified return and integration not only erodes pluralistic values but also serves as a stark reminder of unresolved historical injustices, threatening national unity and the credibility of India's commitment to inclusivity and secularism.

The United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNPFII) reports that 90% of Indigenous languages in North America are endangered, primarily due to displacement and assimilation.

- A 2018 study in the *Journal of Anthropological Research* found that 75% of Indigenous rituals in the Amazon were lost due to forced relocations
- A 2017 UN report documented the destruction of 68 Yazidi temples and shrines in Sinjar by ISIS, representing a severe blow to Yazidi religious practices.
- The forced displacement of Yazidis has led to a loss of unique cultural practices, with the UN estimating that 40% of Yazidi religious rituals have been abandoned in refugee camps.

The Jewish Holocaust led to the near-total destruction of Jewish cultural and religious institutions in Europe. A 2013 report by Yad Vashem noted that over 90% of Jewish synagogues, libraries, and cultural centers in Eastern Europe were destroyed.

- The Yiddish language, once spoken by 11 million Jews worldwide, saw a drastic decline after the Holocaust, with fewer than 500,000 speakers today, according to the Modern Language Association (MLA).
- A 2008 study by the International Campaign for Tibet found that over 90% of Tibetan cultural sites in Tibet had been destroyed or damaged since the Chinese occupation, leading to a significant loss of cultural heritage.
- The same study reported that fewer than 30% of Tibetan children in exile communities could speak fluent Tibetan, with many adopting Mandarin or other languages.

The indicated Key risks from the survey report are:

Psychosocial Impact on Displaced Generations

Loss of Cultural Diversity

Loss of Historical and Intellectual Heritage

Loss of Traditional Knowledge Systems

Challenges to Historical Narratives

Erosion of Pluralism

Geopolitical and Social Stability

Symbolic and Moral Implications

Weakening of India's Secular Ethos

Erosion of Kashmiriyat -Kashurut

Impact on Social Justice and Human Rights

4.0 Conclusion

1. The exodus and the subsequent hardships faced by the Pandits, including living in refugee camps, led to significant psychological trauma. The community experienced a collective sense of loss—loss of home, identity, and cultural roots.

2. The community's displacement altered its socio-economic structure, leading to shifts in family dynamics, gender roles, and social interactions. In exile, many families struggled with a diminished social status, which also affected their access to resources and opportunities. Older generations faced significant unemployment challenges after being displaced, and a large proportion of the community was unable to regain the economic stability they once had in the Valley.
3. The displacement led to severe economic hardships for many Kashmiri Pandit families, particularly those who lost their homes, businesses, and land in Kashmir. The transition from being a relatively prosperous community in the Valley to living in exile with limited economic opportunities was difficult for many. The loss of homes, properties, and businesses in Kashmir resulted in severe economic hardship for many Pandit families. Many were forced into menial jobs or positions far below their qualifications. The exile led to a sharp decline in the income of many Kashmiri Pandit families. Families that were once economically stable in Kashmir, owning properties and businesses, found themselves struggling in refugee camps or makeshift settlements.
4. Kashmiri Pandits leveraged education as a tool for social mobility. In exile, the community saw a shift from traditional occupations to more professional careers in fields like IT, education, government services, and private enterprise. In spite of initial difficulties, many Kashmiri Pandits transitioned to professional careers in urban areas. Their focus on education helped the younger generation find employment in white-collar jobs, especially in metropolitan cities. The data reflected from the study that despite such condition post exile people of community see that the economic future of their community as promising or bright.
5. Many highly educated Kashmiri Pandits have migrated abroad, especially to Western countries, in search of better employment opportunities. This has led to a "brain drain," with many skilled individuals leaving India, further diluting the community's presence in the country.
6. The majority of respondents are concerned about delayed marriages due to personal ambitions, astrological issues, and a lack of suitable or employed spouses. There has been a noticeable decline in both family and community bonding, and many feel politically marginalized. While many are still hopeful about returning to Kashmir, the security situation remains the most significant factor determining their decision. There is a general pessimism regarding government support and the preservation of cultural traditions, though there is cautious optimism about the economic future of the community.
7. The findings indicate that the majority of respondents have experienced frequent relocations since their exile, primarily staying within Jammu & Kashmir. Most marriages occurred within the Kashmiri Pandit community, with low instances of divorce. Delayed marriages are a significant issue, and two

children is the most preferred family size. Kashmiri language remains prevalent in communication with parents and spouses, though it is less common with children, and there is concern over declining language skills among younger generations.

8. The delayed marriage trend has had both advantageous and disadvantageous effects as the society tries to negotiate life in exile. On the one hand, it has promoted a more egalitarian view of marriage and given women more influence. However, it has sparked worries about the demographic shift and the long-term survival of Kashmiri Pandit culture. There is hope for striking a balance between tradition and contemporary reality thanks to the community's continued efforts to address these challenges through matchmaking programs, financial assistance, and raised social awareness. With later marriage ages and smaller family sizes, there could be a decline in population growth within the community over the long term. This may affect the age demographics, potentially leading to an older average population in the future.
9. There is a prevalent notion that ties within the community have stretched since exile, with many having conflicted or cut-off connections. Expectations from socio-political institutions are low, and the future of cultural preservation and political empowerment is dark or unknown. However, some respondents remain optimistic about returning to Kashmir, while others are pessimistic. The community expresses cautious optimism, tinged by worry about the future.
10. Although there have been calls for the return of Kashmiri Pandits to the Valley, security concerns and the political situation in Kashmir have made it difficult for most to consider returning. The fear of violence, uncertainty, and the lack of a structured rehabilitation plan have hindered large-scale return efforts. Many Kashmiri Pandits still harbour the desire to return to their homeland, though they demand security guarantees and political support for safe resettlement.
11. Economic reliance on specific sectors, growing nuclear families, political dissatisfaction, and security concerns in Kashmir will likely shape this community's trajectory. Proactive community engagement, enhanced political advocacy, and digital platforms to maintain cultural ties may become essential tools for sustaining identity and cohesion.
12. With the community's strong educational background, programs encouraging business creation and support for startups could foster a more entrepreneurial culture. The younger generation, in particular is facing a loss of employment opportunities, which may have a long-term impact on their social mobility.
13. The average age of marriage for Kashmiri Pandits increased. Economic instability and the displacement of the community delayed the process of finding suitable matches, particularly within the community itself. The dispersed nature of the Pandit community made it difficult to maintain traditional intra-community marriage practices. This has resulted in an increase in intercultural and inter-caste marriages among younger generations.

14. The limited observance of certain ceremonies may indicate selective adherence based on the ease of celebration or the perceived importance of the ritual. Over time, without concerted community efforts, less commonly celebrated ceremonies may be at greater risk of being forgotten. If the community continues to lose certain practices, cultural identity could become increasingly focused on a few key rituals, which may narrow the cultural expression of the community.
15. Over half of respondents' report experiencing discrimination or marginalization in politics since exile, indicating a feeling of exclusion from political rights or benefits. This perception of limited political support may lead to further disillusionment and could decrease political engagement among younger generations. However, it might also drive efforts to establish political advocacy groups that represent this community's specific interests.
16. The declining trend in property acquisitions post-1999 suggests reduced investment in the valley, likely due to instability and displacement. This trend may persist unless there is a significant improvement in socio-political conditions. The financial pressures or lack of utility of properties may push more families to sell in the future, especially if they have settled permanently outside the valley. However, if there is stabilization, individuals or families who left may return and invest in property redevelopment, especially those with ancestral ties.

Suggestive Actions

1. The data indicates that while some displaced individuals are stabilizing, a significant portion continues to face challenges that necessitate further relocation. Policy measures addressing housing, employment, and psychological well-being could reduce future mobility and foster stability within the community.
2. Given the trend of high educational attainment, there is potential for upskilling in technical and entrepreneurial skills to expand career opportunities beyond traditional employment sectors. Programs in digital skills, business management, and vocational training could be beneficial for the overall growth of community in long run.
3. There is room for economic growth within the community. Upskilling and expanding into higher-paying industries or entrepreneurial ventures could help raise income levels over time.
4. This cultural practice may continue to influence marriage timing, especially for families adhering strongly to traditional beliefs. If younger generations become less reliant on astrology, this barrier could decrease, although this shift might be gradual due to the deep-rooted nature of these customs. A significant portion of the respondents in the study noted the lack of employed youth as a major concern, which likely affects marriage decisions.

5. The continued decline in Panchang use could significantly impact the distinctiveness of the community's identity. There may be a need for digital or community-based initiatives to make the Panchang more accessible or relevant for younger generations. The future preservation of this community's cultural practices will likely hinge on the adaptability of community efforts and the development of initiatives to engage the younger generation in traditional practices.
6. Without proactive cultural preservation initiatives, such as community programs or educational resources, future generations may experience an accelerated dilution of traditional practices. If community-driven cultural preservation measures are not enhanced, the younger generations may increasingly adopt mainstream cultural practices over traditional ones, further diminishing cultural identity over time.
7. There is need for community's collective efforts to preserve its heritage and advocate for its rights to ensure the survival of Kashmiri Pandit culture but and a sense of hope for future generations to reclaim their connection to Kashmir.
8. As security remains a critical factor in return aspirations, and without significant improvements, fewer people will plan or aspire to return. For younger generations, the idea of returning may become less relevant, leading to more permanent relocation. Further, economic and security improvements are essential for any significant movement back to Kashmir. The younger generations may feel less attachment to returning to Kashmir as they grow up in exile. However, stable property rights or special economic incentives for returnees could influence resettlement attitudes.
9. Further following policies need to be developed for the sustainable cultural preservation of the community in long run:
 - *Policy for elderly people, women, children (less than 12 years) and marginalized section of Kashmiri displaced*
 - *Policy for Property reconstruction and restoration*
 - *Policy for return back in Kashmir and rehabilitation at the migrated locations*
 - *Policy for marriage of children (specially for girls) for migrated Kashmiri Pandits*
 - *Birth rate survey*
 - *Reservation for jobs and educational opportunities*
 - *Policy for preservation and conservation of Kashmiri Displaced heritage, shrines and culture*
 - *Policy for conservation of Kashmir language and dialect*
 - *Reservation of one Member parliament seat outside Kashmir for migrated Kashmiri candidates*
 - *Special grant for household construction and household infrastructure*
 - *Regular Yearly increment in cash assistance with provision of Dearness and other allowances*

Recommendations/Suggestions from the Respondents

Government Interventions

1. Rehabilitation Policies:

- Create secure one place settlement with multiple group housing in Kashmir to encourage resettlement. Subsidised housing solutions can act as an incentive to the same.
- Provide tax benefits and financial grants for property restoration.
- Illegal Encroachment of their properties be freed through institutionalising a proper legal system
- Effective implementation and monitoring of The Jammu and Kashmir Displaced Immovable Property (Preservation, Protection and Restraint on Distress Sales Act, 1997.

2. Economic Empowerment:

- Special economic incentives to be given to residents of displaced Kashmiris wishing to return to Kashmir to stand up on their own feet. The relief should continue for some time in Kashmir as a sustenance allowance till the person is self- dependent
- Creating a positive environment and enabling conditions where skill, experience and expertise of youngsters which will help in creating job opportunities. (Creation of SEZ's, IT Parks and BPO's).
- Introduce skill development programs tailored to high-paying industries. And Offer seed funding and mentorship for setting entrepreneurial ventures in Kashmir.
- Link Creation of Job opportunities to resettlement with housing for life in Kashmir.
- Provide incentives that encourage displaced community who still own properties in Kashmir to utilise them productively
- The community concern on declining population has led to the desire that the education of two children should be subsidised.
- Incentivising marriages performed below 28 years of age through local customs and traditions

3. Cultural Preservation:

- Government to provide grants to digitize Panchang, ancient manuscripts and other cultural resources for accessibility.
- Setup of Abhinav Gupta or Sharda Centre for Socio Cultural studies
- Mapping, Protection and Restoration of all temples and heritage sites in Kashmir.

4. Political Inclusion:

- Reserve one parliamentary seat and three legislative seats on displaced electorate and establish a dedicated political and rehabilitation council for displaced Kashmiri Pandits that takes care of their needs.

5. Social Support Schemes:

- *Implement scholarships and job reservations for Kashmiri Pandit youth.*
-

Community and Societal Actions

1. Senior Citizens

- *Creating Senior Citizen communities to incentivise their return to their homeland and help create connection between younger generation with their roots*

2. Cultural Education:

- *Organize workshops on Kashmiri language and traditions for children.*
- *Celebrate festivals and rituals collectively to strengthen community bonds.*

3. Networking and Advocacy:

- *Build global Kashmiri Pandit forums to unify efforts for cultural and political advocacy.*

4. Entrepreneurship Promotion:

- *Leverage successful community members as mentors for aspiring entrepreneurs.*

5. Youth Engagement:

- *Foster intergenerational dialogues to bridge cultural gaps and share oral histories.*

PM Package Employees

- 1. PM package employees suggested that they be provided permanent housing solutions in Kashmir as part of the rehabilitation package and if required, the instalments be adjusted against their HRA*
 - 2. For any existing contractual and temporary vacancies existing in government, the spouses of the working PM Package employees be given the preference.*
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Thanks