

# THE EXODUS OF KASHMIRI PANDITS AND ITS IMPACT (1989- 2002)

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## ABSTRACT

*Once the militant violence engulfed the state of J&K, majority of the Pandit community living in the valley left to other parts of the country. Some 90% of 160,000-170,000 community left in what is described as a case of ethnic cleansing. What led to the exodus of these Pandits? What was the impact of this exodus? The present paper will focus on these issues.*

*The Pandit community of Kashmir irrespective of their Hindu religion have a distinct place in the society of Kashmir. The Muslims and Pandits of Kashmir have been living together through the ages as brothers with complete amity. Kashmiri pandits sanskritised the Himalayas. The contribution of Kashmiri Pandits to language, linguistics and grammar, philosophy and religion, aesthetics and historiography, astrology and mathematics is unparalleled and is deeply embedded in the edifice of Indian civilization. However, in the wake of mass uprising in Kashmir against the Indian state, Kashmiri Pandits like their Muslim compatriots also become victims of post-1988 violence<sup>1</sup> in Kashmir, relatively little has been published on them. Two studies described history and anthropology of KP's prior to 1990<sup>2</sup>. On the other hand a number of books present communally painted pictures of the community<sup>3</sup>. Many opinions based but less informative articles have been written<sup>4</sup>. Most of the scholarly works on Kashmir since 1990 mention Kashmiri Pandits in a passing reference<sup>5</sup>. Focus of the most of the academic studies has been the majority in the valley<sup>6</sup>, wider theories of causation<sup>7</sup> or interpretations through a nationalist prism<sup>8</sup>. Leaving the Pandits overlooked or reduced to a couple of footnotes.*

*The present article tries to explain what happened to Kashmiri Pandits in 1990 and beyond examining the fallout of the mass-migration and its impact on the various facets of life.*

## INTRODUCTION

In the wake of violence engulfing the state, thousands of Kashmiri Pandits left their homeland and migrated to other parts of India in early 1990. More than 100,000 migrated in a few months and some 160,000 have left Kashmir valley since. Majority of these Kashmiri Pandit migrants left for Jammu where they lived in squalid refugee camps in the beginning but by 1997 most had moved on either to proper homes in Jammu or to other cities of India<sup>9</sup>. Conditions in the refugee camps were in no way good for life<sup>10</sup>.

What led to the mass-migration of Kashmiri Pandits was the situation of open revolt<sup>11</sup>. On 31<sup>st</sup> July 1988 Jammu & Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF) launched its armed campaign for Independence from

India, exploded two powerful bombs in Srinagar and continued attacks for the rest of the year which deteriorated the security situation. With the spread of violence Hindu-Muslim amity in Kashmir came under strain, particularly given initial targeting of Hindu officials<sup>12</sup>.

A significant number of Kashmiri Pandits who numbered around 160,000 began to leave the valley in February and March 1990 for Jammu or India<sup>13</sup>. They migrated as a number of Hindu officials were killed (including Lassa Koul, chief of Doordarshan TV, in Srinagar on 13 February 1990). Two Srinagar based newspapers carried threats against the Pandits. These threats carried in *Alsafa* and *Srinagar Times* on 16 April 1990. M.K. Teng and C.L. Gadoo published translation of an ultimatum from Hizbul Mujahideen published in *Alsafa* on 14 April 1990 that says "all Pandits from Jammu & Kashmir should leave from here in two days"<sup>14</sup>.

### WHY DID KASHMIRI PANDITS LEAVE ?

Most of Kashmiri Pandits believe that they were forced out of Kashmir valley; whether by Pakistan and the militant groups backed by Pakistan, or by Kashmiri Muslims as a community. Representing the latter vibrant, Pyarelal Kaul contends that the Pandit departure was a clear cause of communal intimidation by Muslims, designed to expel Hindus from the valley. Mosques were used as warning centers. Threatening the Hindus and conveying to them what terrorists and many Muslims of Kashmir wanted to achieve<sup>15</sup>. Anil Maheshwari also believed that the Pandit community was forced to leave the valley<sup>16</sup>.

Pakistan policy is the root cause, according to Vijay Dhar, In 1990 Kashmiri Pandits were forced to abandon the valley, because in the eyes of Pakistani strategists of the proxy war, they represented India in Kashmir<sup>17</sup>. Drawing on an Indian Defense Review assessment, Maroof Raza describes the episode as "a deliberate policy of ethnic cleansing<sup>18</sup>". The ex-governor of the state Girish Chander Saxena also agrees<sup>19</sup>.

While elements of the militancy certainly had an agenda of deliberate and enforced Islamisation, large segments of the militancy (for example JKLF) actively claimed to speak for all Kashmiris regardless of religion. Despite this, the majority of KP's left the valley during the phase when the JKLF was in the ascendant. In the early 1990, the pro-Pakistan militant organization Hizbul Mujahideen had only been going a few months while as the pro-Independence JKLF determined much of the militant agenda. Islamist leaders like Syed Andrabi of Jamaat-e-Tulba considered KP's to be traitors and agents of India<sup>20</sup>. Their fierce rhetoric had an impact on an already ittery community; the acts of violence that accompanied it could be seen as a deliberate attempt to drive out Pandits.

A second explanation for the KP's exodus in 1990 suggests that this community was deliberately removed from the valley by the Indian government, who wanted a free hand to deal with Kashmiri Muslim militants<sup>21</sup>. This explanation is supported by Muslim separatist political leaders in the Kashmir valley like Syed Ali Shah Geelani and Yasin Malik<sup>22</sup>. Even Professor Saifuddin Soz has supported it<sup>23</sup>.

This view is corroborated by many intellectuals of Kashmiri Pandit community. In a letter to an “Urdu” local daily *Alsafa* dated 18-09-1990, one K.L.Koul pointed out ; “Pandits were told that the government has plans of killing about one lakh Kashmiri Muslims in order to overcome the uprising against India”. Pandits were assured that they will be looked after well, they will be provided relief , free ration, jobs and free accommodation. They were assured that once the proposed massacre in Kashmir was completed and the movement curbed, they would be sent back to valley. My community now understands that it was a very crude way of painting the mass uprising against India as nothing but a communal flare up. The Indian government tried to fool the world by depicting the uprising as a handwork of Muslim Fundamentalists who had turned against non-Muslims and had thrown them out of their homes. I know that my community has lost the affection, love, respect and goodwill of Kashmiri Muslims for having betrayed them. I feel ashamed to admit that my community has stabbed the Muslims in the back. This all happened at the instance of Jagmohan. Some self-styled Pandit leaders exploited the situation and Pandits became refugees in their own land <sup>24</sup>. Another important person B.G.Varghese pointed out that “this mischievous campaign is not religious but political. And that is the tragedy and the danger<sup>25</sup>. Same was expressed by a group of twenty Pandits in a letter to “*Alsafa*” (a local daily paper), written in the context of their exodus <sup>26</sup>.

However, some Kashmiri Pandit leaders, vehemently deny that then Governor Jagmohan Malhotra played a part, as does Jagmohan himself <sup>27</sup>. H.N.Jattu (President of all India Kashmiri Pandit conference (ASKPC)) agrees : “It is wholly incorrect that I and other Kashmiri Pandits migrated from the valley at the instance of Mr. Jagmohan. The truth is exactly opposite. Mr. Jagmohan, in fact, did his level best to stop migration, when innocent leaders of the Pandit community were being brutally murdered and the government of Dr. Farooq Abdullah was taking no action whatsoever <sup>28</sup>.

Finally Omprakash Mishra points out; “The exodus had begun earlier to Jagmohan taking control. It is inconceivable that thousands of people would have left behind their homes, properties and means of livelihood on the bidding of Jagmohan” <sup>29</sup>.

The claim that there was official Indian government complicity in the departure of KP’s lacks corroborating evidence. There was no mass requisitioning of transport and no state-wide administered evacuation. Even if carefully concealed such an operation would leave traces. Wajahat Habibullah, a former IAS officer, insists that the Kashmir state administration did not encourage the Pandits to leave. He does say that there may have been odd examples of official transport being made available to evacuate odd families. In march, 1990, Habibullah was in the southern town of Anantnag, receiving delegation from Kashmiri Muslims seeking to prevent the Pandit exodus. Suddenly one day about 300 people arrived....led by an MLA (member of legislative assembly). They said, “Look Kashmiri Pandits are leaving, stop them” <sup>30</sup>. Habibullah offered to make an appeal through a television broadcast to Kashmiri Pandits to stay in Kashmir, assuring their safety. This was recommended to Governor Jagmohan, who choose instead to announce the establishment of three refugee camps and add that salaries of displaced civil servants would continue to be paid. This encouraged the Pandits to leave but,

as Habibullah emphasizes, this was more a failure of administration than evidence of deliberate state policy to induce their departure.

There is third possible explanation to the exodus of Kashmiri Pandits in 1990; one that acknowledges the enormity of what took place, but that examines carefully what triggered migration of KP's. Kashmiri Pandits migrated in en masse through legitimate fear. Given the killings of 1989 and 1990, and the ways in which rumour spread fast in the violent conditions of early 1990, might Kashmiri Pandits have been terrified by uncertainty as much as by direct threats? There was collective unease at the situation as it unfolded. While the numbers of dead and injured were low, militant attacks between 1988 and 1990 induced panic within the Pandit community<sup>31</sup>. There was widespread fear and a sense of impending trouble, fueled by extremist propaganda on both sides. By late march 1990, the AIKPC was appealing to the administration to assist Pandits in "shifting to Jammu"<sup>32</sup>.

The public rhetoric of some of the more Islamist militants in the valley with calls for an Islamic state, although aimed primarily at Indian rule, struck a chilling chord with KP's. This in turn sparked off an exodus, which was not actively combated by Governor Jagmohan's administration (during whose tenure, almost 90% of the departures took place). Although there is no evidence to say that Jagmohan did anything to encourage the Pandit exodus but he also did nothing to discourage it.

Sumit Ganguly agrees that the Pandits left because of Jagmohan's hints that their safety could not be guaranteed, and because the fanatical religious zeal of some of the militant groups spread fear among the Pandit community<sup>33</sup>. P.S. Verma echoes this, his interviews with migrant Pandits found few who had actually been personally harmed or threatened to leave the valley and many who had been begged to stay by their Muslim Neighbours<sup>34</sup>. A research study conducted by the post graduate students of the department of Political Science at the University Of Jammu in 2001 found that 2% of KP's survived had received threatening letters; however, over 80% had not received any form of direct threat<sup>35</sup>. Nevertheless, as Verma states, most of these migrants "felt very much threatened in an atmosphere of unabated violence, particularly during January –February 1990 when the major exodus took place"<sup>36</sup>.

Majority of the Kashmiri Pandits who left the valley reject the ethnic cleansing theory and genocide theory also. Many among them during interactions at Jammu with me hold Pakistan responsible for exodus. As Sumantra Bose observes, those Rashtriya Swamy Sevak publications claims that large numbers of Hindu Shrines were destroyed and Pandits murdered are largely false, to the extent that many of the shrines remain untouched and many of the casualties remain unsubstantiated<sup>37</sup>. Equally important is it to note that some incidents did took place. Leading KP's were targeted - some attacked, some murdered – but almost always as political targets. From the murder of Tika Lal Taploo, president of the Kashmir Bhartiya Janta Party, on 14<sup>th</sup> September 1989, to the murder of Nil Kanth Ganjoo, a former High court judge on November 04 1989, those attacked could be considered targeted for either political or communal reasons (or a combination of the two)<sup>38</sup>. Taploo was a Hindu politician, while Ganjoo had previously sentenced Maqbool Bhat, a well-known activist for Kashmiri independence, to death.

Whatever the designs behind these attacks, Kashmiri Pandits were bound to feel uneasy. Legitimate fear encouraged them to leave the valley they were born in for other parts of India. Once it became clear that the government could not protect senior Kashmiri Pandit officials – and would pay their salaries in absentia – many other Kashmiri Pandits in state employment decided to move. At the outset, few of these migrants expected their exile to last more than a few months.

## IMPACT OF EXODUS

When viewed in all its dimensions, the post 1989 migration of Kashmiri Pandits is the most calamitous having a tremendous impact on the social fabric of the state apart from the hazardous effect on the displaced community of Kashmiri Pandits.

Kashmiri Pandits left their movable and immovable property unprotected and without any local custodian in the hope of coming back shortly. Most of these properties remained unsafe. But, after sometime, while some houses and lands were taken over by security forces for accommodation and operations, some self-centered and opportunist local elements also picked up the belongings in the houses. Thus many “migrant houses” in the valley were damaged, looted and burnt by these two opposite elements<sup>39</sup> (e.g. a beautifully constructed bungalow of Pandit Mohan Lal at Aswara village in Bijbehara Tehsil of Anantnag was completely looted and burnt by a group of people living in the nearby villages in 1991<sup>40</sup>). The Jammu based organization of Kashmiri Pandits, Panun Kashmir claims that over 25,000 houses of Kashmiri Pandits have been burnt<sup>41</sup>. Since no census or survey has been carried out in this regard therefore these estimates have no academic credibility.

In the meantime, due to this migration Kashmiri Pandits started selling their property outside Kashmir. About 40-50% KP's have sold their lands and houses in legal or illegal ways in the Kashmir valley<sup>42</sup>. In Jammu these migrants face severe health- trauma-physical, mental, and psychological<sup>43</sup> as some of the camps they live in are like slums, without basic facilities of drinking water, electricity, living space and health facilities. There are common bathrooms and open latrines which creates a lot of hygienic problem. During my survey I found that there were many unemployed youths living in these camps. This situation had led to problems of deviance, delinquency, crime and drug abuse. The camps were exposed to various offences to women and children. They were completely insecure. They also faced the problem of privacy which was not available to them in one room accommodation. This effected the psychological and sex behavior of migrants<sup>44</sup>.

While most of the ailments, the exiled community suffers from, are either an exacerbation and greater incidence of the existent health problems, a host of new diseases, entities and syndromes previously unknown or rare in the community have appeared for the first time. The undercurrent of terror, sense of total deprivation, loss and uprootedness have worked havoc with the psyche of the community. Working in tandem with these factors is the trauma of migration, the problems of acclimatization to an entirely different and hostile environment, overcrowding, poor-housing, insanitary and unhygienic conditions, scarce Medicare facilities and malnutrition<sup>45</sup>.

Besides, all these ill effects, education sector was also a worse hit by the exodus of a community who were undisputedly considered very much dedicated, capable and hardworking teachers. People of Kashmir valley even today miss these great Pandit teachers like Shri Sham Lal and Shri Maharaja Krishan<sup>46</sup>. Though the overall literacy rate in the state had increased, it had not benefitted all regions equally. While the Jammu region had attained higher literacy rates, Kashmir region showed comparatively poor performance. This situation of literacy reveals in the following table.

Literacy situation in J&K in 2001 ,

S.NO	District	Total Population	Literacy Rate	Male	Female
	Kupwara	640,013	40.80	53.55	26.83
	Baramulla	1,166,722	44.57	56.29	31.42
	Srinagar	1,238,530	59.31	68.99	48.11
	Budgam	593,768	39.54	51.23	26.60
	Pulwama	632,295	47.35	58.87	34.93
	Anantnag	1,170,013	44.10	55.56	31.51
	Leh	117,037	62.24	71.98	50.03
	Kargil	115,227	58.01	73.98	40.96
	Doda	690,474	46.92	63.56	28.35
	Udhampur	738,965	54.16	66.43	39.89
	Poonch	371,561	51.07	65.41	35.30
	Rajouri	478,595	57.65	69.64	44.14
	Jammu	1,571,911	65.29	75.73	53.92
	Kathua	544,206	65.29	75.73	53.92

Source : Census Records of J&K state, Srinagar, 2001.

## THE SOCIAL MOBILIZATION OF KASHMIRI PANDITS

It was in 1914 that Kashmiri Pandits Sabha was formed in Jammu to reform the Hindu community in Kashmir, to work for their moral and spiritual upliftment and to support fellow Hindus in case of need<sup>47</sup>. Organizations like this stressed the differences between orthodox religion and Kashmiri practice. On one hand these organizations contributed a lot in the political mobilization in Kashmir but in the other hand established the roots for later communal movements in the 1950's (like the Hindu Praja Parishad and Muslim Jamat-i-islam).

These Hindu Organisations were involved in defending the Dogra Status quo in the 1930's, Kashmiri Pandits like Kashmiri Muslims were also involved in the reform movement against the autocracy of Maharaja. The educated KP's were schooled at Christian missionary schools in Srinagar. Alumni of

these schools were shaped by their teacher's vigorous views on illiteracy, social evils, orthodoxy and casteism, and formed the nucleus of the movement for political reform<sup>48</sup>.

At times, Muslim and Hindu movements fused into a unified struggle against the Dogras as well as the British<sup>49</sup>. The resulting party Sheikh Abdullah's National Conference motivated by a combination of nationalism and socialism adopted a secularist mantle. It was under his patronage that influential Pandit politicians like Prem Nath Bazaz prospered.

It is not surprising that Abdullah's key objective in the 1940's, apart from the ending of feudal rule, was to redistribute land in Kashmir. Influenced by communist and socialist thinking, his Naya Kashmir (New Kashmir) programme of 1944, a sharp reformist set of demands, set the scene for wide ranging land reforms that followed in 1949. A group of Kp's were influential in setting this agenda, including R.C. Raina and D.P.Dhar. A left-leaning agenda drew the politics of National Conference away from a communally based confrontation between Muslim activists and Hindu supporters of the Maharaja, recasting them instead along class lines.

## PANUN KASHMIR

As a result of the exodus of Kashmiri Pandits in 1990, a new Pandit political organization was formed in the name of Panun Kashmir (our Kashmir). It wants the Indian Constitution to be extended in its entirety to Kashmir, and sought a reserved homeland for KPs in the Kashmir valley.

The former demand led the Praja Parishad a Hindu led Jammu based party to boycott the 1st post accession state assembly elections. Praja Parishad sought full integration of Kashmir into India at a time when the nature of that accession was to be determined, at least in part, by elected assembly members. Opposing the ruling National Conference, the party drew votes from Hindu in the Jammu region worried about a Kashmiri Muslim ascendancy<sup>50</sup>. Until the 1980s, two state assembly constituencies guaranteed Pandit majorities, Habakadal and Rainavari<sup>51</sup>. These were lost when constituency boundaries were redrawn. Many Pandits felt locked out of patronage-based state administrative system that began to emulate its feudal predecessors.

The second demand of a separate and exclusive KP homeland in Kashmir valley is argued by Panun Kashmir to be the only option as the Kashmiri Muslim community has become „fundamentalist“. It gains ready recruits from Pandit refugees who have found little solace elsewhere and also have some support from militant Hindu organizations in India. It originated in the events of 1990 but was formalized at a meeting in 1991, which led to its “Historic Homeland Resolution” that guides Panun Kashmir agenda. The resolution demands :

1. Establishment of a homeland for the Kashmiri Pandits in Kashmir valley comprising the regions of the valley to the East and North of river Jhelum.

2. Constitution of India be made applicable in letter and spirit in this homeland, in order to ensure right to life, liberty, freedom of expression and faith, equality and rule to law.
3. The homeland be placed under the central administration with a Union territory status, so that it evolves its own economic and political infrastructure.
4. All the seven hundred thousand Kashmiri Pandits, which includes those who have been driven out of Kashmir in the past and yearn to return to their homeland and those who were forced to leave on account of the terrorist violence in Kashmir be settled in the homeland on equitable basis with dignity and honor<sup>52</sup>.

Panun Kashmir split in 1993, with some members leaving to join the Panun Kashmir Movement, which remained committed to the Historic Homeland Resolution, and blame Kashmiri Muslims not simply Pakistan for the plight of Kashmiri Pandits. Panun Kashmir, on the contrary, places less emphasis on the role of Kashmiri Muslims<sup>53</sup>.

The extravagant political demands of groups like Panun Kashmir demonstrate how marginalized Kashmiri Pandits have become. As the Kashmir study group writes, “the Pandits demands are extreme, but so are their circumstances”<sup>54</sup>. There is also an unpleasant communal aspect to some of the publications emerging on the Pandits. M.V.Kamath, who insists that “Kashmir belongs to the Kashmiri Pandits, the original inhabitants of the state and not the Muslims, adding that the list of distinguished Kashmiri poets and scholars.....tapers off following the advent of Islam in the vale”<sup>55</sup>, is one example of racist communalism that now marks some of Pandit politics. Vernon Hewitt explains how “many Pandits have co-opted the language of ethnic exclusiveness, claiming that they constitute the original Kashmir “race” and that, as such, they ought to be given specific protection in their own state”<sup>56</sup>.

## **WILL KASHMIRI PANDITS RETURN TO THE KASHMIR VALLEY?**

It is unlikely that most of the Kashmiri Pandits who have left the valley since 1990 will return. Majority of these Kashmiri Pandit families are now settled in different cities and towns of India mainly because they were highly qualified in all fields of education and got all sorts of jobs in government as well as public sector in the country and abroad. But, many among them, especially elders, still want to return to Kashmir. It is the inner desire which they would like to fulfill during their lifetime<sup>57</sup>. Our finding in this regard was that while elder KPs have still the desire to return back to Kashmir, youngsters and children do not think on these lines. While all youngsters got involved in different professions, occupations and other economic activities in different cities of India, school-age children have hardly any emotional or material commitment to Kashmir<sup>58</sup>. There had been expectations that a return to civilian rule would stabilize the security situation and pave the way for a return of Kashmiri Pandits<sup>59</sup>.

But the militants have had their say. Hizbul Mujahideen threatened Kashmiri Pandits in September 1995, advising that they would “never be allowed to settle in Kashmir” unless they joined the “freedom struggle”<sup>60</sup>. Following a number of communal massacres – at Wandhama (mostly of women and

children)<sup>61</sup>, and at Chattisingpora, a village in southern Kashmir (35 Sikhs were massacred)<sup>62</sup>. These brutal communal massacres in the Kashmir valley have continued to deter KPs thinking of return. However, beyond calling periodically for Pandits to return, the state government has done little to reassure Pandits that their future in the valley can be secured, except the construction of “Community centres” at Vessu (Kulgam), Mattan (Anantnag), Haal (Pulwama), Sheikpora (Budgam), Baramulla and Kupwara<sup>63</sup> wherein residential facilities are being provided to those 1250 Kashmiri Pandits youth who joined their services in Kashmir in various administrative departments out of 1950<sup>64</sup> appointed under Prime Minister’s special package of jobs for Kashmiri migrants under which an undertaking assuring to serve in Kashmir was taken from the appointed before allowing him to join. Similarly in response to an advertisement about return of KPs to Kashmir, “as many as 4,440 applications have been received from the families who wish to return to the valley under the policy of return and rehabilitation of Kashmiri migrants<sup>65</sup>. Among these applicants, 1,682 families are still in possession of immovable assets in Kashmir valley. So, the main source of motivation for returning back to Kashmir seems economic<sup>66</sup>. Now that time to come will decide what effect will the steps of the government both at center and state cast on the return of Kashmiri Pandits but the Kashmiri Muslim intellectuals regret the change the exodus has wrought.

## CONCLUSION

The Kashmiri Pandit exodus of 1990 has become interwoven with a political history emphasizing KP differences from the Muslim majority in valley. These are reasonable and serious concerns about the future of the identity of a fragmented and dispersed community of Kashmiri Pandits. It is exceptionally difficult to see how KPs can return to the valley while political violence continues<sup>67</sup>. Even if such a return did take place, extremist elements in both the communities might will be tempted to generate communal tensions to „prove“ the unworkability of a multicultural community in valley.

The KP tragedy neither took place in isolation in Kashmir, nor was it a nefarious Muslim campaign directed against them. The largest group that fell prey to the political violence since 1988 was that of the Kashmiri Muslims and even at the height of selective militant killings in 1989-90, relatively few KPs were killed<sup>68</sup>. It is ironic but not unexpected that Kashmiri Pandits find it difficult to understand, yet alone empathies with, the perceptions of Kashmiri Muslims who have suffered much under the punishing counter-insurgency. Equally, it is sad that some Kashmiri separatist leaders, mainly on the Islamist wing of the All Parties Hurriyat Conference, can be so quick to dismiss Pandit concerns about their security and identity.

Other Muslim leaders, like the young Mirwaiz Umar Farooq of the All Parties Hurriyat Conference, leading pro-independence figure Shabir Shah, and chairman JKLF Mohammad Yasin Malik have been careful to include KPs in their vision of Kashmir. Umar Farooq is forthright on this point, “ I will be last one to oppose them being part of Kashmir”<sup>69</sup>. Shabir Shah and Yasin Malik have even travelled to

Pandit refugee camps to try to restore a sense of harmony, for, “Pandits are an important and inalienable part of Kashmir society”<sup>70</sup>, said Yasin Malik.

However, majority of Kashmiri Pandits show little interest in returning to the valley in stark contrast to the activism of a few KPs. Those who have left the valley are integrating with their fellow Indians wherever they settle, and their children are unlikely to learn Kashmiri<sup>71</sup>. And for most KPs, there is no family left to visit : 76% respondents in a University of Jammu study of KPs in Jammu reported that they no longer had any relatives in the Kashmir valley<sup>72</sup>. Kashmiri Pandits in the Kashmir valley are also important. Vijay Sazawal has written that migratory Pandits will, a few generations hence, assimilate with the communities around them. KP identity and culture, he argues, is maintained by a small community of Pandits still in the valley<sup>73</sup>.

While the claim of Panun Kashmir for a separate homeland is clearly unrealistic, the widely held concerns about the maintenance of a Kashmiri Pandit identity and culture are well founded. Few among the Muslim separatist political leaders are taking active steps to bring their fellow Kashmiris back. The virtual absence of Kashmiri Pandits in the Kashmir valley today, along with the manner in which an extremist ethnic nationalism has gripped many Pandits since 1990, bodes ill for any attempt to renew Kashmir as a multicultural and plural political entity.

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