Kashmiri Pandits Amid Conflict-induced Displacement: Facts, Issues, and the Future Ahead

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Abstract

This article reviews the discourse surrounding the displacement of Kashmiri Pandits (KPs) in 1990 and the challenges they face in returning to the Kashmir Valley. The displacement of KPs has been a longstanding issue, and the community has faced several challenges. Many of them have not been able to return to their homes in the Kashmir Valley, and their displacement has become protracted. As a result, they are neither treated as refugees nor provided with any international assistance, which leaves them in a situation where they must rely on relief efforts or support provided by their own country of origin. This article sheds light on the displacement of KPs by reviewing the various determinants of their decision to flee violence in the backdrop of armed insurgency. It shows explicitly how the displacement was not a sudden event but a process that took place over a period of time. Various socio-political and economic factors contributed to their displacement, including the rise of militancy in the 1990s, discriminatory policies towards the minority community, and the lack of effective protection and support from state authorities. These factors led to a growing sense of fear and insecurity among the KPs, culminating in their mass migration in 1990. The author emphasises the need for a balanced approach toward KPs' return migration. The article suggests that the solution to the issue of KPs' return migration requires a multifaceted approach that allows for the concerns and aspirations of all parties involved, including the KPs, the Muslim community, and the government.

Keywords

Migration, internal displacement, Kashmir conflict, Kashmiri Pandits (KPs), insurgency

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Introduction

Migration and displacement have been prominent features of history across the world. Migration is a semi-permanent or permanent movement of people from one place to another (Bala, 2017). Migration can be defined as a "relatively permanent moving away of a collectivity, called migrants, from one geographical location to another, preceded by basis of a hierarchically ordered set of values or valued ends resulting in changes in the interactional system of migrants" (Mangalam & Schwarzweller, 1970, p.6). Involuntary or forced migration is different in analytical and policy terms from voluntary or economic migration (Castles, 2006). It involves several legal or political categories, including people forced to flee their original residence and seek refuge elsewhere. People, and sometimes whole sections of particular areas, have been displaced because of conflict, civil war, persecution, and natural or human-made disasters. Michael Marrus (1985), however, has aptly called the 20th century the "century of refugees" or the "century of expulsions" (Marrus, 1985) and this characterisation is a valid one considering the massive human displacements that the world has witnessed in this period.

The displacement of people due to various factors, including conflict, persecution, natural disasters, and other crises, is indeed a significant issue in the 21st century as well. According to Robert Muggah (2000), forced displacement is caused by four causal agents, including "natural disasters (e.g., drought); persecution (e.g., ethnic or religious); development programmes (e.g. dams and urban renewal projects); and violent conflict" (Muggah, 2000, p.133). Because internally displaced persons (IDPs) leave their homes within their own country and do not cross international borders, they are not classified as refugees under international law. As a result, they do not fall under the protection system designed for refugees. While there is no legally binding definition specifically for IDPs, the "Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement" describe them as:

> persons or groups of persons who have been forced or obliged to flee or to leave their homes or places of habitual residence, in particular as a result of or in order to avoid the effects of armed conflict, situations of generalized violence, violations of human rights or natural or human-made disasters, and who have not crossed an internationally recognized state border. (Cohen and Deng, Masses in Flight, p. 305)

Though important, conflict and civil war are not the only reasons which cause displacement. Other factors like development projects, climate change, and disasters also play a substantial role in widespread displacement worldwide (Parasuraman, 1999; Robinson, 2003; Bisht, 2009). It may be mentioned that development-induced displacement, as a significant concern in sociology and anthropology, came to the fore in the 1990s. It was a reaction to the sharp increase in development-induced displacement that occurred in the 1970s and 1980s, primarily caused by a boom in global infrastructure (Dwivedi, 2002, p. 709).

While displacement caused by the development projects (Nehru referred to these development projects as the new temples of India) in post-independence India like the Narmada Dam (see Mathur, 2006; Mahapatra, 1999) or the conflict-induced displacement in Northeast India (Hussain, 2006) has attained wide recognition, other lesser-known displacement situations cannot be neglected. However, this article focuses explicitly on internal displacement caused by violent

conflict in Indian-administered Kashmir Valley. It will particularly emphasize the internal displacement of Kashmiri Pandits in 1990. The conflict in Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) began with the region's complex history during the partition of India in 1947. J&K, a Muslim-majority state ruled by a Hindu king, joined India amid negotiations and violence, resulting in its division into Indian-administered Kashmir and Pakistan-administered Kashmir.

Within India, special provisions like Article 370 and Article 35A were included in the Constitution to grant autonomy to the new state (Wani, Khan & Yaseen, 2021). Over time, regional, political, and religious differences led to an insurgency in the Muslim-majority Kashmir Valley and created economic disparities among the regions of J&K—Jammu, Kashmir, and Ladakh. Before their mass displacement in 1990, the Kashmiri Pandit community played a significant role in the state's administration, politics, and culture (Chowdhary, 2019). Their displacement had social and political consequences, making them one of the most visible groups of internally displaced persons in the region. They became, as described by Datta, essentially 'refugees in their own country' (Datta, 2016a, p. 55). The Kashmiri Pandit issue is closely linked to the broader conflict in J&K and the state's relationship with the Indian Union.

In 1947, the Indian subcontinent witnessed one of its most significant displacements after it was declared independent by the colonial British Indian government. At that time, many border states like Punjab, Bengal, and Jammu and Kashmir experienced refugee movements on an unprecedented level on account of the partition population exchange. Nonetheless, in a diverse country like India, the issue of internal displacement has attained colossally more importance in the post-1947 period than refugees, even though the latter remains paramount and central in scholarly discussions and much of government policy.

Often violent (armed) conflicts have continued to cause massive displacement in India. In the early 1990s, one such situation of conflict-induced displacement occurred in Indian-administered Kashmir in which KPs[1], a Hindu minority people in Kashmir, were driven to *en masse* migration and forced to leave their homes and property behind. For KPs, however, the impetus to migrate was the emergence of militant insurgency in Kashmir against Indian rule in 1988–89. The KP's departure to Jammu and other regions of India exacerbated the conflict, giving the Kashmir self-determination movement a fresh impetus.

The departure of KPs and the subsequent efforts towards return and resettlement have contributed to the ongoing conflict. The departure event has polarised public opinion and become a heated discourse requiring serious and objective attention. However, not all those displaced from their homes in Kashmir are KPs. Other leader activists from mainstream parties were also forced to leave their homes, as many pro-India people and mainstream political leaders, like Mohammed Yousuf Tarigami and others, had to leave the conflict-stricken Kashmir Valley and seek shelter in Jammu and other parts of the country[2]. These people had to migrate because the militant threat to their life was looming large, and anything that symbolised India in Kashmir was considered a threat to the popular movement. Besides, many families who belong to 'Jamaat'[3] and sympathise with Pakistan suffered state violence and resorted to migration because of the prevailing security situation in Kashmir.

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[1] Kashmiri Pandits are basically ethnic Hindus of Kashmir who belong to the Saraswat Brahmin ancestry and had been residing in Kashmir for a long time.

[2] My personal interview with CPIM leader with M. Y. Tarigami at his Gupkar residence.

[3] Unlike the Jamaat-e-Islaami Hind, Jamaat-e-Islami Kashmir or Jamaat-e-Islami Jammu and Kashmir is a cadre-based socio-religious-political organisation.

One question that always comes to the fore while discussing the departure of KPs is why only KPs had to migrate and not other minority people like Sikhs. And what prompted non-migrant KPs to stay put when most ethnic Hindus moved to Jammu? This question, though, remains beyond the purview of this paper. My focus in this paper is on the largest group of IDPs in Jammu and Kashmir that makes up what the government commonly refers to as "migrants".[4]

The objective of this paper is to contextualise and locate the issue of Kashmiri Pandit migration in the more wider Kashmir conflict. It will then assess the existing literature on the forced displacement of KPs to recognise various determinants of their decision to flee violence. The rise of militancy in the 1990s and the resulting violence and insecurity were major factors contributing to their displacement. However, there were also other factors that had been affecting the community for several decades. The displacement of KPs was a gradual and prolonged process that occurred over a period of time. One such factor was the discriminatory policies towards the minority community, including the land reforms of 1950 that affected the ownership and control of land by the KPs (Prasad, 2014; Evans, 2001). These policies resulted in the displacement of many Pandit families from their ancestral lands and homes. Another factor was the lack of effective protection and support from the state authorities, which made the community vulnerable to targeted attacks and violence (Sarkaria, 2009). This article investigates the Kashmiri Pandit (KP) displacement within the context of armed insurgency. It analyses the various determinants behind their migration process, emphasising that KP displacement was a complex and protracted phenomenon. The study explores socio-political and economic factors, including heightened militancy in the 1990s, discriminatory policies, and insufficient state support.

Furthermore, the article advocates for a comprehensive approach to facilitate KP return migration, involving KPs, Muslim communities, and government bodies. The structure includes an initial conceptual overview of conflict-induced displacement, followed by historical context, the impact of the 1947 accession, and the political and social dynamics leading to community polarization and migration. It then delves into determinants of KP migration and examines the evolving process. Finally, it concludes by emphasizing the need for a multifaceted approach and reconciliation among stakeholders.

Overall, the displacement of KPs was a complex and multi-faceted issue that was the result of various socio-political and economic factors. The community continues to face challenges and struggles to this day, and efforts are ongoing to address their grievances and facilitate their return to their homeland. To the Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP) and its affiliate organisations like Panun Kashmir, the abrogation of Article 370 and the repeal of Article 35A on August 5, 2019[5], allegedly paved the way to resettle and rehabilitate Kashmiri Pandits back in their ancestral homeland (Nadaf, 2023). However, the situation seems far from stable, and a proper and serious understanding of the causes of the displacement of KPs is crucial for any effort towards facilitating their return migration to the region. Without such an understanding, it would be difficult to address the root causes of their displacement and ensure their safe return and reintegration into their communities. Therefore, any effort to address the issue must consider these factors and involve a

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[4] A Kashmiri migrant is a national migrant who moves from one component portion of the country to another (internal migration) and changes residency from one community to another. It frequently entails the crossing of a specific internal administrative boundary.

[5] On August 6, 2019, the Indian government removed the special status (autonomy) that had been granted to the region of Jammu and Kashmir under Article 370 of the Indian Constitution. This region, which includes a significant part of Kashmir, has been a contentious issue involving India, Pakistan, and China since 1947.

range of stakeholders, including the government, civil society organizations, and the KP community itself.

Additionally, it is important to ensure that the return of KPs is voluntary, safe, and sustainable. This involves providing adequate security measures and support systems for the returning families, as well as addressing the social, economic, and cultural challenges that they may face upon their return. In line with the 2010 IASC Framework, a durable solution for IDPs, including Kashmiri Pandits, is reached when they no longer require specialized assistance or protection due to their displacement. At this juncture, they can fully exercise their human rights without facing discrimination rooted in their displacement status (Beyani, Baal & Caterina, 2010). The Framework encompasses essential principles and criteria for identifying and achieving enduring solutions for individuals internally displaced as a consequence of conflicts or natural calamities.

Methodology
This study is an exploration of the multifaceted factors leading to the internal displacement of Kashmiri Pandits in the 1990s within the Kashmir Valley. It employs a blend of historical, descriptive, and analytical research methods to shed light on this complex issue. The primary sources for this study are secondary in nature, encompassing scholarly articles, books, and select government reports. Moreover, a theoretical understanding is incorporated to provide a broader context for understanding the experiences of Kashmiri Pandits living in exile across various regions of India. To enrich the study and offer a first-hand perspective, insights from an interview conducted with Mohammed Yousuf Tarigami, a renowned mainstream politician, have been integrated. This interview forms a part of my doctoral research, which focuses on the role of the state in the post-displacement rehabilitation of Kashmiri Pandits in 1990. The inclusion of this interview adds a valuable dimension to the study, allowing for a more comprehensive exploration of the topic. Through this amalgamation of methodologies, this research aims to offer a nuanced and holistic understanding of the Kashmiri Pandit displacement and its aftermath.

Conflict-Induced Internal Displacement: A Conceptual Overview
Policymakers and researchers typically regard internal displacement as a distinct type of movement because of its "internal" and "forced" nature.[6] But how does internal displacement vary from other related types of movement? Conflict-induced displacement is often viewed as an "internal" form of forced displacement that results in refugee flows at the external level. Conflict-induced displacement differs from more "voluntary" migration, such as that driven by economic factors, in the context of subnational (internal) movement.[7] According to a World Bank report (2017), safety-related factors appear to be the primary factor driving forced displacement in times of conflict, outweighing all other factors (as cited in Cantor and Apollo, 2020, p. 648). Even in countries witnessing conflict, forced displacement of people is usually an exception. The great majority of people in a country that is affected will not leave their homes. Still, the dynamics of the violence will decide how much of the population is displaced in the specific areas that are directly impacted by armed clashes (Cantor and Apollo, 2020, p. 648).

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[6] For example, the United Nations Guidance Principles on Internal Displacement define internally displaced persons (IDPs) as those who are "forced or obliged" to flee their homes. (para.2).
[7] Factually, the "forced"/"voluntary" distinction can be difficult to maintain since both aspects are frequently present at the level of individual decisions regarding migration, so that "economic" migration, for example, may also reflect elements of coercion.

Moreover, in affected countries, different forms of movement, such as people migrating internally for labour and work, continue alongside conflict-induced displacement. So, this makes it challenging to distinguish internal displacement from other related types of internal migration (Hear, 2000, p. 90-95).

Conflict-induced displacement or economic migration share specific key determinants. For example, people with family or social capital elsewhere are more likely to relocate in both cases (Saldarriaga & Hua, 2019). Conflict, on the other hand, poses additional safety-related risks as a significant factor of displacement and can also induce people to migrate because of the shrinking economic space. In this context, being forcibly displaced by conflict exposes IDPs to a particularly disadvantaged condition. They differ from many other internal migrants in that they have limited access to social and capital resources, such as housing and land, that have been left behind as a result of the conflict (Fagen, 2011).

Internal displacement often contrasts with the refugee in forced displacement induced by conflict and other violence. The terms *refugee* and *IDP* are not synonymous as far as their nature is concerned. Refugees differ from IDPs in many respects, as their movement is not limited to the national border. The former often move across the international border and thus acquire legal status (Mooney, 2005). On the other hand, a significant percentage of IDPs remain locked or stranded within the boundaries of their home state (Bohnet et al., 2018) and can hardly move from the actual site of conflict, thus making them more vulnerable.

According to Turton (2003a), although there are many different sub-groups of forced displacement, some scholars may object to the term's lack of specificity. Turton (2003b) also argues that 'other forced migrants' are most vulnerable and include internally displaced persons (IDPs):

> These are people who, because of the circumstances causing them to move (in practice, military conflict and violence), would have been considered worthy of international protection, under existing interpretations of international law and of the mandate of the UNHCR, if their move had taken them across an international border. (Turton, 2003b, p. 5)

Many migration scholars believe that the requirement that "IDPs" not cross international borders is what really sets them apart from "refugees" (Hathaway, 2007, p. 358). Moreover, IDPs in such contexts may be seen as mere refugees yet to cross a border.

Nonetheless, it is the responsibility of the state to protect the rights of IDPs and meet their specific needs, as no other international agency has a sole mandate to help. It may be noted that institutional changes have been substantial. Key guidelines like the 1998 Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement have been adopted, special rapporteurs appointed (like Kälin in 2006), and agencies' mandates revised (e.g., Martin's work in 2004 and Cohen's in 2005). Even major human rights NGOs like Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch have shifted their specialised refugee units towards IDP rights.

This makes the state's role more important in rehabilitating and resettling the IDPs without compromising their human rights. While the everyday discourse around refugees and IDPs might see them as people forced to flee their homes because of conflict, war or political oppression, official nomenclature is much tighter. Since the KPs' departure was limited mainly within the national borders and was bereft of international protection, they tend to fall within the IDP category. Given the context, KPs will be treated as internally displaced persons as their internal (subnational) migration did not entitle them to refugee status, making them dependent on state help.

Unlike other types of human migration, displacement is mainly caused by armed conflict. At the same time, other factors, such as natural disasters and other occurrences, may sometimes induce such movements (Steele, 2018, p. 811). While a wide range of scholars have focused on cross-national factors responsible for forced migration (Uzonyi, 2014; Rubin and Moore, 2007; Moore and Shellman, 2004, 2006), which are people migrating as refugees across international borders due to a well-founded fear of persecution (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees [UNHCR], 2020), an increasing number of research works have been carried out on the causes of internal displacement—those who are unable to cross international borders, because they either do not have the choice, or the will, to cross the international border, thus remaining within their national territory (Steele, 2017; Balcells and Steele, 2016; Oslender, 2016; Lubkemann, 2008).

This paper will attempt to add to the existing literature on the displacement of KPs at the sub-national level. O'Neill (2009) states IDPs have "specific needs not necessarily encountered by the rest of the population and face particular vulnerabilities". For example, they may lack shelter, be unable to replace or get identity papers and other official documentation, and frequently face significant difficulties in reclaiming property left behind (O'Neill, 2009, p. 153). So, the role of the state becomes more important in facilitating and meeting the basic needs of the displaced people.

In the following section, we delve into the rich history and identity of the Kashmiri Pandits (KPs), exploring their integral role in the princely state of Jammu and Kashmir prior to 1947. We examine how KPs held prominent positions and enjoyed state and Dogra patronage, which, as we will see, had repercussions on the socio-economic development of Muslims in the region. Furthermore, we shed light on the transformation of Sheikh Abdullah from a staunch secular leader to a figure who sought legitimacy through religious mobilisation, reflecting the complex political landscape of the time.

Kashmiri Pandits Before 1947
Kashmiri Pandits are a Hindu Brahmin community that originally hails from the Kashmir Valley, located in the northernmost region of India (Datta, 2019). They are considered to be one of the oldest and most prominent communities of the Kashmiri people. KPs are known for their cultural and religious practices, which are rooted in the Hindu religion. They are also known for their contributions to the fields of literature, music, art, and philosophy. The KP community has a rich history and has played a significant role in shaping the cultural and religious traditions of the Kashmiri people (Chowdhary, 2019; also see Mir and Wani, 2023).

In the late 1980s and early 1990s, the KP community faced a mass exodus from the Kashmir Valley due to escalating violence and militancy in the region (Evans, 2002). Many KPs were forced to flee their homes and seek refuge in other parts of India. The issue of the displacement of KPs remains unresolved, and efforts are ongoing to address their grievances and facilitate their return to their homeland.

Before the independence of India in 1947, the princely state of Jammu and Kashmir was a unique entity, cobbled together through military campaigns and political agreements over several decades (Snedden, 2015, p. 86-97). Hindu Dogra rulers ruled the Kashmir valley, a heterogeneous principality in the Himalayas, from the time it was founded in 1846 until the end of colonial authority in 1947 (Sohal, 2021, p. 3). Once consolidated by the 1880s, it included the two provinces of Jammu and Kashmir, with the Jammu province further subdivided into the jagirs of Poonch, Chenani, and Bhaderwah; and the frontier districts, known as the Wazarats of Ladakh and Gilgit.

It is noteworthy, however, that by the time Muslim rule in Kashmir ended, and Sikhs took over the reins of power in 1819, KPs were the only people who had neither resorted to conversion nor migrated from the Valley (Pant, 1987, p. 14).

Kashmiri Pandits, a Hindu minority also known as Kashmiri *Bhatta*, belong to the Saraswat Brahmin ancestry of the mountainous Valley of Kashmir (Evans, 2002, p.19). Kriti Arora (2006) opines that "Kashmiri Pandits have traditionally had a unique role to play in Indian culture and politics" (Arora, 2006, p.113), which would, in the Sikh and Dogra period at least, lend them disproportionate leverage to influence the politics of Jammu and Kashmir. The percentage of KPs in the top positions of State Government jobs and central services was significantly higher before the instrument of accession was signed on October 26, 1947 (Dhingra and Arora, 2005, p. 207). This can be gauged by the fact that Kashmiri Muslims' share (presence) in finance, administration and education—which were heavily dominated by other religious denominations, especially Hindus—was meagre. Indeed, taking other minority groups into consideration, Muslim presence in all the professions was disproportionately much lower relative to their population (see Table 1).

Table 1: Showing Selected Occupation by Religion in the 1931 Census in Jammu and Kashmir

Occupation	Religions
Bank managers, money lenders	2763 Hindus, 401 Muslims, 178 Sikhs
Grain and pulse dealers	5200 Hindus, 1091 Muslims, 355 Sikhs, 2 Buddhists
Storekeepers and shopkeepers	3740 Hindus, 3727 Muslims, 345 Sikhs
State service	9180 Hindus, 5052 Muslims, 712 Sikhs, 75 Buddhists
Printers	16 Hindus, 8 Muslims, 3 Sikhs
Lawyers of all kinds	127 Hindus, 33 Muslims
Professors and teachers of all kinds	1156 Hindus, 620 Muslims, 35 Sikhs, 13 Christians
Authors, editors, and journalists	31 Hindus, 1 Muslim

Source: Rai Bahadur, Pandit Anant Ram and Pandit Hira Nanad Raina, 1931 Census, Vol XXIV, Jammu and Kashmir State, Part II, Imperial and State Tables (Jammu: Ranbir Government Press, 1933, p 332.)

The Dogra dynasty started its rule in 1846 after the notorious *Treaty of Amritsar* was signed on March 16, 1846, between Maharaja Gulab Sing and the British Indian government.[8] Throughout its reign Dogras Hindus have been generous to KPs, however; they would enjoy perks and positions of power along with the ruling clans of Jammu Rajputs (Mohanty, 2018, p. 61). Under Gulab Singh, KPs held a monopoly over the "choice agricultural lands" in the area and had dominated the state bureaucracy (Ganguly, 1997, p. 6). As against Hindus, the Dogra rule has been a source of misery for Kashmiri Muslims. Ordinary people, mostly Muslims, had to bear extreme poverty under the Dogra rule. As Schofield (2000) argues, the Muslims were driven to poverty and all the influential posts were given to Hindu Rajputs and Kashmiri Pandits (see Schofield, 2000, p. 9-10,16-17). Earlier Afghan rulers had brought Muslims from outside to maintain law and order, mostly engaging them in the state bureaucracy and other influential posts. With Dogra in power, the trend changed, and KPs got state patronage and rose to prominence. By 1931, argues Ian Copland (1981), Hindus and Sikhs combined controlled 78% of gazetted posts (Copland, 1981, p. 233-234; also see Ganguly, 1997, p. 7).

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[8] The treaty transferred to Gulab Singh and his male heirs 'all the hilly and mountainous country with its dependencies situated to the eastward of the River Indus and westward of the River Ravi including Chamba and excluding Lahul', in exchange for a sum of 75 lakh rupees and an annual tribute.

To Kashmiris, the main source of occupation was the land and craft industry; the latter was to sustain the nineteenth-century boom in Kashmiri shawls. All the gains made from the industry and taxation on agriculture were to be appropriated by traders and rulers who happened to be Punjabi merchants and Dogras, respectively (Akbar, 1985, p. 218). It may be mentioned that none of the gains made during this period reached the poor ordinary Kashmiris. The harsh taxation policy adopted by the Dogra rule has been detrimental to the interest of petty farmers and favoured the Dogra state and landlords. Many of the civil servants operating in Kashmir were KPs. Henny Sender (1988) corroborates the role KPs played in the Dogra administration and the larger abject poverty prevailing in the Kashmir Valley at that point in time (Sender, 1988).

In his travelogue, a well-known British author, Sir Walter Roper Lawrence (1895), describes KPs as the people who make "their livelihood in the employment of the state" (Lawrence, 1895, p. 303). Furthermore, in the early 20th century, people were under duress and the literacy rate was abysmal, especially among Muslims. Many European travellers wrote extensively on the conditions of Kashmiri life. They were unanimous on the fact that the majority of "Muslims bore the major brunt of the princely rule of Dogras" (Kaur, 1996, p. 46) and added to that was the utter disregard for human rights as forced labour and heavy taxation was in practice. The communal nature of the princely state could be seen from the selective imposition of *begar* on Kashmiri Muslims. KPs exemption from the *begar* (Keenan, 1989, p. 60) was because Dogras were naturally inclined to anything symbolising Hinduism in Kashmir. The patronage of Hindu temples and ashramas was the order of the day, and many Hindu temples in the dilapidated condition received a renovation and many more were constructed.

The early 1930s, however, symbolised a shift from the passive unorganised socio-political movement to a more vibrant and active involvement of the masses. In response, the disadvantaged Muslims consolidated a popular movement against the oppressive Dogra rulers in 1932 in the form of an organisation called the Jammu and Kashmir Muslim Conference (Zutshi, 2019, p. 89-90). It consisted primarily of unemployed, educated men from Kashmir and Jammu, including Sheikh Muhammad Abdullah, G.M. Sadiq, Ghulam Muhammad, Muhammad Afzal Beg, and Chaudhuri Ghulam Abbas. The main objective of this organisation was to increase the share of Muslim representation in the state administration. The sectarian mobilisation of the KPs in Kashmir and Hindus in Jammu was perceived as a threat by most Kashmiri Muslims in the Valley.

Against this backdrop, Muslim leaders, disenchanted with the Dogra regime, organised a movement for the people's political, socio-economic, and religious rights. It fought vehemently against the Dogra policy of employing non-Kashmiri and Hindu people, which was deemed detrimental to the future of Kashmiri Muslims. Para (2018) points out that Abdullah and his organisation were mainly interested in employment politics in the initial years of its movement to the detriment of peasants, workers, and the exploited masses (Para, 2018); therefore, it could not focus much on minority issues. But after changing its name in 1939 from the Jammu and Kashmir Muslim Conference to the Jammu and Kashmir National Conference, it started to address issues affecting all communities and became more inclusive. After the Glancy Commission report[9] was

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[9] Following the 1931 agitation, the Maharaja of Jammu & Kashmir appointed BJ Glancy Commission of Enquiry, to examine (Muslim) grievances against his sarkar in 1932. Headed by a European, BJ Glancy the commission had members across communal/regional divide lines. Before 1932, there was no freedom of expression or political party formation allowed in Kashmir. The appointment of the Glancy Commission in 1932, after the protests in 1931, marked the beginning of public discussions for addressing issues. One significant suggestion from the Glancy Commission was to permit the creation of political parties within the state.

made public in 1932, the struggle against the Dogra Raj and the demand for a representative government became the rallying cry of the organisation and its leadership.

Sheikh Abdullah tended to mobilise people on religious lines by taking up the grievances of Muslims, which were instrumental in setting the stage for the later movement (Zutshi, 2009, p. 197-204). In this connection, he demanded the return of Muslim shrines and mosques under Dogra's control to gain a mass base and consolidate his position. (Rai, 2018b, p. 37-42). Abdullah had outmanoeuvred his opponents by this stage and emerged as Kashmiri Muslims' sole representative and leader.

Post-Accession Kashmir
When partition occurred in August 1947, the large princely state of Kashmir, adjacent to India and Pakistan, elected to remain neutral. However, on October 27, 1947, the Hindu Maharaja of Kashmir submitted his Muslim-majority province to India in response to a "peasant revolt" in the Jammu belt and a "tribal invasion" from Pakistan's frontier areas. A future plebiscite to decide Kashmir's fate after normalcy was restored was intended to ratify the conditional accession. However, contrary to United Nations (UN) resolutions, the promised plebiscite in Kashmir was never held (Bose, 2005, p. 40).

After the accession document was signed, Sheikh Abdullah, a popular leader, remained the primary choice for the premiership of Jammu and Kashmir. After taking charge as the first Prime Minister of Jammu and Kashmir, Abdullah was soon dismissed and detained on sedition charges in 1953, which, as has been witnessed, was followed by many puppet regimes that, in consort with the Indian state, relentlessly chipped away at Kashmir's autonomy within the Indian union (Zutshi, 2019, p. 152). Much to their disappointment, India poured financial aid into the state in the vain hope that it would bully Kashmir into forgetting their political disenfranchisement in favour of economic well-being (Mir, 2022, p. 4). After Sheikh Abdullah died in 1982, his son Farooq Abdullah claimed power in Jammu and Kashmir. By this time, the divide between the different regions of the state, the government, and the common people had so widened that the central government had no faith in Farooq Abdullah and his leadership, leading to his removal and imposition of the President's rule (Fernandes, 2019).

These and other events served as the setting for the 1989–1990 insurgency. As a result, the conflict entered a new phase in which a popular movement for Kashmiri independence challenged the Indian government's grip over the Kashmir valley. A highly publicised rigged election in 1987 marked the height of Kashmiris' rising discontent with the Indian government (Chowdhary, 2001). The massively rigged elections turned out to be the turning point in the history of Jammu and Kashmir, and the government lost control of the entire civil administration. By 1989, there was significant opposition to the government's control over the Valley, and an armed rebellion against Indian rule erupted. The insurgency received support from a cross-section of Kashmiri people who were up in arms against the decades of misrule in the region. The government met the insurgency with heavy military deployment and used counter-insurgency operations to quell the movement. Violent acts and militancy became what Manisha Gangahar (2013) calls 'common to both parts of the state', with targeted assassinations and kidnappings of important political and academic figures by Kashmiri insurgents becoming routine (Gangahar, 2013, p. 38). Terror, suspicion, rumour, and lawlessness became the daily headlines in national and local newspapers. The fear drove many Kashmiris out of the Valley, particularly the more significant "Kashmiri Pandits" (Dhingra and Arora, 2005, p. 217). They felt more targeted by both local as well as outside groups, further dividing Kashmiri society along religious lines.

The statements of the facts that surround the KP migration do not converge on much else. Pandit migration has been a fervently debated and deeply sensitive issue. All these events, in consort, subverted the popular nature of the insurgency, undermining and tarnishing the very political aspirations that underlay it with the brush of Islamic radicalism. Since then, the conflict in Kashmir has more often than not been coloured as communal Hindu-Muslim animosity, which is an overstated position and a denial of the political nature of the conflict.

Insurgency and Migration

Significant economic disparities between the Valley's Hindu and Muslim communities have been in vogue over the last two hundred years. Yet, major ethnic conflict in Kashmir did not begin until recently (Ganguly, 1995). Given the past communal relationship, people migrating *en masse* from the Kashmir Valley was mostly unthinkable. Despite significant material disparities between the two communities and the Hindu monopoly of "most political and economic institutions", widespread communal and sectarian antipathy was not pervasive in Kashmir. Instead, there was a shared sense of Kashmiri identity known as Kashmiriyat (Tak, 2013). Ethnic violence emerged only after the commencement of the conflict in 1989 and the subsequent displacement of a substantial number of KPs from the Valley.

With the eruption of militancy in 1989–90 and the subsequent selective assassination of people, including KPs, the minority KPs were forcibly displaced from their homeland (Sawhney, 2019, p.1064). They had to take shelter in Jammu and other parts of the country. Since then, KPs would come to constitute one of the most vibrant groups of IDPs in India (Datta, 2016, p. 53). KPs are considered an "anomalous minority" by Charu Sawhney (2019) because they are a minority in Kashmir yet are a part of the Brahmin Hindu majority in mainland India. (Sawhney, 2019, p. 1062). No other internally displaced people in India face such a precarious position as KPs, giving them substantially more limelight and recognition. Although a considerable number of KPs migrated, a small number of them chose to remain in the Valley. Also, the majority of non-migrant KPs live in Srinagar and the Muttan area near Pahalgam (Arora, 2006, p. 113).

The year 1989 became a watershed in the history of Kashmir because conflict-driven violence by various actors (both state and non-state) was unleashed on people without any regard for their identity. At best, it represented another event when KPs were forced to leave their homes behind and embark on a migration that tends to be protracted. KPs have allegedly had to resort to migration several times, precipitated by the alleged ruthless policies of Muslim rulers and, on other occasions, due to the dwindling economic opportunities within Kashmir (Pant, 1987, p. 11; also see Sender, 1988). However, the departure in 1989–1990 due to the violent separatist movement was the last and largest recorded migration in Kashmir history. The earlier migrants settled in various parts of India and achieved prominence in various fields. As a result, the earlier migrants assisted the new migrants of 1989–1990 in assimilating and resettling in an unfamiliar setting. The former had made contacts and relationships in northern India through friends and family who would be helpful in the early years of settling. Charu Sawhney (2019) argues that such connections worked as a kind of "social capital" (Sawhney, 2019, p. 1065).

According to Henny Sender (1988), a substantial number of KPs migrated to escape tyranny at the hands of both Hindu and Muslim authorities throughout the pre-sultanate and Mughal periods, particularly during the reign of Sultan Sikander (1389–1430) (Sender, 1988, p. 8, 40, 132). Sultan Sikander was believed to be responsible for forcibly imposing Islam on the KPs as his alleged tyrannical policies were generalised for the whole Sultanate period (Sender, 1988, p. 8). It should be noted that right-wing groups in India have mainstreamed and exploited this

generalisation to the point where the entire Muslim population of Kashmir is stigmatised and blamed for what happened to KPs.

There is a debate related to the statistics of KPs who were displaced in 1989; some scholars put the figure at 160,000, whereas some right-wing organisations cite a figure closer to 350,000 (Evans, 2002, p. 24-26). Due to the unavailability of census data on Kashmir, neither figure can claim to be accurate.

Determinants of Kashmiri Pandit Migration

Most of the literature on the contemporary Kashmir conflict and the growing interest in displacement issues is focused on the internal displacement of KPs. The larger Kashmiri refugees are almost invisible in the refugee discourse on Kashmir (Robinson, 2012). Migration movements from Kashmir before the partition of India were a routine affair, with push factors including famine, economics, and politics. Though the conflict-driven migration of KPs from Kashmir is important, most of those displaced from the Kashmir conflict are Muslims, including human displacements that happened in 1947–48, 1965, and 1999. The factors that induced KPs to migrate are varied and complicated at the same time. Broadly two narratives get discussed as regards KP migration.

The first narrative, perhaps more dominant, is the right-wing KP narrative which holds the guerrilla-based militant movement of Kashmir responsible for the migration. According to Khalid Bashir (2017), before the militancy started, the KP community in Kashmir was already considering mass migration from the Valley due to "dwindling employment opportunities" for them in Kashmir (Khalid Bashir, 2017, p. 225). While it was difficult for KPs to secure government jobs, H. N. Jattu, President of the All India Kashmiri Pandit Conference, alludes to the prospect of the community's "silent exodus" as early as 1988.[10] The community did not welcome even the Glancy Commission recommendations of 1932 as it would shrink their opportunities and instead enhance the possibility of Muslims getting more jobs. In 1967, when communal tension brought on by an inter-community marriage was used as a pretext to get government jobs at a rate out of proportion to the community's population, the threat of migration once again loomed large. As such, Jattu was not stating anything new when he warned of a mass migration of all the KPs (Ahmad, 2017, p. 225).

As previously covered in the article, the outbreak of insurgency in Kashmir in 1989–90 resulted in the near-complete collapse of civil government and the installation of governor rule by the centre. Kashmir during this phase saw several selective killings of people who were allegedly involved in mainstream politics and supported the Indian state and therefore considered against the *Azadi* sentiment (Jamwal, 2013). Many KPs happened to be among those killed, mostly on espionage charges. The minority KPs felt uneasy and insecure and soon left the Valley, alleging that militants from the Muslim majority made them flee. The sudden migration was considered a betrayal by the Muslims because they thought KPs pro-Indian and accused them of subscribing to the "government plan" to temporarily withdraw KPs from Kashmir and permit a punitive military action against the majority population (Munshi, 2013).

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[10]At a press conference in Srinagar, Jattu threatened the administration with the migration of all 150,000 Kashmiri Pandits living in the valley if the community's youth continued to face discrimination in government jobs and the situation did not improve. Journalists Yusuf Jameel and Mukhtar Ahmad attended the press conference and covered it for *The Telegraph*, the *British Broadcasting Corporation* (BBC), and the *Daily Excelsior* in Jammu. The statements from the press conference have been verified by Khalid Bashir while working on the migration of KPs from Kashmir Valley.

According to many KP leaders, an "atmosphere of unabated violence, particularly during January–February 1990", led the minority population of KPs to migrate *en masse* (Evans, 2002, p. 23). The allegation of nocturnal sloganeering from mosques causing fear and urging people to leave is not new. The self-appointed KP leaders, including Sushil Pandit, are the forerunners in this campaign which remains unsubstantiated. In some cases, intimidation was real, particularly from unknown or masked faces, adding to the fear psychosis triggered by the huge popular revolt. KPs living in remote areas and villages inhabited mainly by Muslims felt vulnerable.

In the second narrative, Muslims accuse the KPs of helping a hostile government suppress their insurgency by decisive army action. This view is supported by Anuradha Bhasin, who believes that the use of mosques during the uprising of the 1990s was not something that should have caused panic among KPs.[11] She points to the fact that there are no recorded documents or media reports which could prove that KPs were chased away through the use of loudspeakers. According to Keen (2013) even now, loudspeakers are common, and it is a fallacy to claim that mosques were used to drive away KPs (Keen, 2013). On the other hand, Pandits consider that Kashmiri Muslims were determined to drive them away and that most turned a blind eye when militants threatened them with death. However, this is just as absurd as considering each KP a member of the oppressive state apparatus.

Being a Kashmiri Pandit, journalist Pradeep Magazine notes:

> Whenever the Pandits exodus from the Valley is debated, anyone who says that the Muslim masses are not to blame, but is our fear of terrorist violence that led us to flee, is virtually excommunicated. The sense is that you are either with us or with "them". There are no shades of grey (Magazine, 2016, para. 4)

The migration of KPs from the Kashmir Valley is a complex and contentious issue that has been the subject of much debate and discussion. The two main narratives discussed above attribute KP migration to violence and persecution in Kashmir. Both narratives agree that the violence, particularly during the late 1980s and early 1990s insurgency peak, played a significant role. KPs faced killings and other forms of violence, although claims of rape remain largely unconfirmed (Shah, 2022). As a result, many KPs felt compelled to leave their homes and seek refuge in other parts of India.

However, the larger political and social context in which KP migration occurred remains crucial to our understanding. While violence against KPs played a significant role, the migration was not solely a consequence of this violence. Broader political and social factors prevailing at that time also exerted influence on this complex phenomenon. The role of the then Governor of Jammu and Kashmir, Jagmohan Malhotra, in the migration of KPs from the Kashmir Valley is a matter of debate and controversy. Some argue that Jagmohan had a larger role to play in the migration of KPs (Ganguly, 1998; Sawhney, 2019; Soz, 2018; Trisal, 2019). Others suggest that his role has been exaggerated (Evan, 2002). The narrative that suggests that Jagmohan collaborated with KPs in a broader design to crush militancy in Kashmir by temporarily moving them out of Kashmir is one perspective that some scholars and commentators have put forth. This narrative suggests that Jagmohan saw the KP migration as an opportunity to implement his tough anti-militancy stance and break the back of the insurgency in Kashmir. The KP migration, according to this narrative, was seen as a way to create a security vacuum that could be filled by the Indian security forces, which would then crush the militancy in Kashmir.

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[11] For more on the views of different authors on this, please see: http://www.mcrg.ac.in/md203.htm

However, it is important to note that this narrative is not universally accepted and is contested by other scholars and commentators. Datta (2016) argues that Jagmohan was not the driving force behind the KP migration but rather the result of the wider violence and insecurity faced by KPs in the Valley (Datta, 2016). Overall, the causes and consequences of KP migration from Kashmir remain complex and multifaceted, and different perspectives and narratives exist on this topic.

At the start of the armed insurgency in Kashmir, many KPs were singled out. Some faced violence, including killings, abductions, and threats. These actions were often based on suspicion, communal tensions, personal motives, or as a means to intimidate those perceived to be supporting the Indian state against the militants or the insurgency (Evans, 1999). It is worth highlighting that tension within the Kashmiri Muslim community existed, sometimes rooted in political or ideological disagreements, particularly along sectarian lines. This led to attacks and threats directed at minority groups, including the Shi'a Muslim community. As Behera (2016) argues, the majority community in the Kashmir Valley, the Kashmiri Muslims, is not a unified or homogeneous group in terms of their political beliefs, ideological leanings, or political objectives (Behera, 2016, p. 47). These threats often came with the ultimatum to either support the insurgency or face repercussions.

As a result, some Shi'a Muslims chose to align themselves with the insurgency to avoid these consequences. It is important to emphasize that individuals perceived as threats to the insurgency movement, including politicians, government officials, and those associated with mainstream political parties like the National Conference, were targeted in attacks (Behera, 2016). Based on these events, it would be simplistic to suggest that the majority of Kashmiri Muslims were actively promoting religious homogeneity or that ethnic cleansing was their primary objective in these actions.

Understanding Migration as a Process: 1989–90

Several factors precipitated the *en masse* migration of KPs in 1989–1990. Analyzing complex historical events and attributing them to a single cause is a difficult task and often oversimplifies the situation. Though the onset of violence in the early 1990s was one of the primary and immediate factors that precipitated *en masse* migration, it is difficult to relate the KP displacement to a specific event. In contrast to mainstream views, we argue that the 1990 mass migration of Kashmiri Pandits (KPs) was the result of a complex interplay of historical, socio-political, and security factors. This perspective acknowledges that KPs, along with Kashmiri Muslims and Sikhs, faced violence and insecurity during the period. A growing sense of alienation among KPs, stemming from historical grievances, political disparities, land issues, and the controversial Delimitation Commission recommendations, contributed to their migration. While figures like Jagmohan may have facilitated the KP exodus, it is crucial to recognize the multifaceted nature of the factors involved. Our unique viewpoint enriches the discourse surrounding this historical event by emphasizing the interconnectedness of these factors in the mass migration of KPs in 1990.

Though spontaneous, the departure event was more a part of a series of actions that the KPs had embarked on to save themselves from the violence inflicted on the larger Kashmiri people. 1988–1989 saw intermittent violence, strikes, and rioting in Kashmir, eventually encompassing the entire Valley and crippling state institutions (Ganguly, 1997, p. 102). The violence would engulf the whole of the Valley into its fold and render state institutions paralysed. Violence became common, wherein people from rural and urban areas would get killed in the crossfire between the security forces and militants. This situation of fear and violence would instil a sense of anger

among the common masses, which would be reflected on many occasions (Sonpar, 2016). The oppressed and disenchanted masses, mostly Kashmiri Muslims, would react with processions against the Indian rule, which would be subjected to indiscriminate firing by security forces, resulting in massacres (Kanjwal, 2023).

On a broader level, KPs had been seeing a growing sense of alienation during the Dogra period. Because Jammu and Kashmir is a predominantly Muslim state, they have a longstanding experience of fear and dread. It may be mentioned that the sense of fear and alienation was not unique to the KP community. Any other minority in any part of India was going through the same apprehensions of losing their voice and representation. Additionally, as a minority, KPs knew that democratising a region that is predominantly Muslim would be detrimental to their interests and render them insecure. Democracy was, after all, not the prerogative of the few and was certainly supposed to favour the majority. The element of fear and alienation can be gauged by the reality that a group of Pandit leaders were so scared by the prospect of Hari Singh capitulating to Muslim demands that they called on the British viceroy for protection (Zutshi, 2003, p. 222). This fear was based on the belief that Muslim leaders were not equipped to maintain the same level of justice as their Pandit counterparts.

Some even suggested that protection was required because KPs feared that the historical persecution of Hindus, which was purportedly frequent throughout the six centuries of Muslim rule in Kashmir, would resurface (Zutshi, 2003, p. 223). Before India's independence, the minority KPs were reluctant to accept any concessions that were given to Muslims in Kashmir as part of the larger democratisation process which was occurring in the Indian subcontinent. Popular Kashmiri leader Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah would have been aware of the resentment the Glancy commission's recommendations had caused among the Valley's most politicised KPs (Arakotaram, 2009). Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah was a prominent political leader in the Valley and was actively involved in the Kashmiri freedom movement. He was also known for promoting communal harmony and bridging the divide between different communities in the Valley (wani, 2007). Therefore, it is possible that he was aware of the sentiments of the KP community and their concerns regarding the Glancy Commission recommendations. The Glancy Commission was set up in 1931 by the then Dogra ruler of Jammu and Kashmir, Maharaja Hari Singh, to investigate the causes of the Kashmiri Pandit-Muslim riots that had erupted in the Valley earlier that year (Wani, 2007). The recommendations of the commission were seen by some KPs as being lenient towards the Muslim community and not providing enough protection for the rights and interests of the Pandits.

Yes, it is true that in his 1934 appeal to the Maharaja's Hindu and Sikh subjects, Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah went beyond the basic right to religious freedom and offered them "weightages" (Sohal, 2022). Sheikh Abdullah's offer of weightage was seen as a significant gesture towards the Hindu and Sikh communities in Jammu and Kashmir. It was an attempt to address their concerns about their representation and rights in a Muslim-majority state. By offering them weightages, Sheikh Abdullah was attempting to ensure that the Hindu and Sikh communities would have a significant voice in the state's legislative assembly, despite being in the minority. The offer of weightage was part of Sheikh Abdullah's broader vision for a secular and inclusive Jammu and Kashmir, where all communities would have equal rights and opportunities. However, it is important to note that the idea of weightage was a colonial mechanism that was designed to divide communities and perpetuate minority status (Bajpai, 2000). The awarding of weightage was based on the idea that some communities were inherently disadvantaged due to their smaller numbers, which Sheikh Abdullah was attempting to mitigate.

A decade later, the Naya Kashmir Manifesto[12] made a similar pledge regarding minority representation in Jammu and Kashmir (For more see Kanjwal, 2017). The manifesto called for a joint electorate in which all adult citizens would collectively elect their representatives. Still, it also provided separate electorates for three minority communities—Caste Hindus, Sikhs, and Dalits—to choose additional legislators (Navlakha, 1991).

Since 1947, the government of Jammu and Kashmir appeared to favour the Muslim majority in the Kashmir Valley, which created security concerns among the minority community, including the KPs. The political developments in the state, including the land reforms, also created opportunities for corruption and further exacerbated communal tensions (Korbel, 1954, p. 284-285; Tremblay, 2018, p. 226-227). The land reforms in Jammu and Kashmir were introduced in the 1950s to redistribute land from large landowners to peasants and landless labourers. The reforms included the abolition of large, landed estates without compensation and the redistribution of land to peasants. While these reforms were intended to promote social justice and equality, they were also controversial and faced opposition from large landowners and some segments of society. The perception among the minority community, including the KPs, that the government favoured the Muslim majority in the Kashmir Valley contributed to their sense of insecurity and marginalisation. The unequal distribution of land and resources, coupled with corruption and nepotism, further exacerbated communal tensions, and created an environment of mistrust and suspicion (Wani, 2011).

More specifically, the land reforms in Jammu and Kashmir alienated a substantial section of Jammu Hindus and KPs, who felt their lands were unfairly taken away. The reforms and the decline of the Maharaja's authority contributed to their sense of marginalisation and resentment towards the new political order (Zutshi, 2019, p. 122).

According to Bhati, the institutionalisation of land reforms in Jammu and Kashmir, which took away land from KPs without compensation and led to accusations of discrimination, was a significant factor in the alienation of the KP community. This sense of marginalisation contributed to their growing disaffection with the political process in the state.

Bhati's (2005) argument is that the Delimitation Commission, whose gerrymandering led to a significant reduction in the political power of KPs, was another reason why they felt marginalised in the state. The Delimitation Commission was formed in 1962 to redraw the boundaries of electoral constituencies in Jammu and Kashmir in line with the state's population changes. However, the commission's recommendations were controversial, with accusations of gerrymandering and political bias. Bhati argues that the Delimitation Commission's recommendations significantly diminished the political power of KPs by reducing the number of constituencies where they had a significant presence. Areas in the Kashmir Valley that were predominantly KP populated, such as Habakadal and Rainawari, became the subject of debate and politics. Thus, the Delimitation Commission's recommendations were another reason why they felt marginalised in the state. As a result, KPs, a minority community, found it increasingly challenging to win elections and gain representation in the state's political process. The informal system of reservations meant that their presence in the state's political and electoral system declined over time (Bhati, 2005). In a way, the sense of deprivation prevailed among the KP community long before the migration event of 1989–90. Therefore, the migration event of 1989–90 cannot be viewed in isolation from the broader historical and political context in which it occurred. It was a

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[12] "Naya Kashmir" was a leftist manifesto of the National Conference (NC), a secular nationalist political party in Kashmir. It emerged as a progressive initiative for state and socio-cultural reform in the late colonial period, following the Partition and Kashmir's accession to India in 1947.

culmination of several factors that had been building up for a long time, leading to a sense of despair and hopelessness among the KP community.

It can be argued that none of the policies and initiatives implemented in the state was intended to target the KP community specifically. Instead, they were intended to address the socio-economic disparities in the state. However, implementing these policies resulted in radical changes that added fear and alienation among the KP community. Therefore, one could posit that the combination of historical policies and initiatives that contributed to the sense of alienation and marginalisation among the KP community, coupled with the emergence of militancy, led to the mass migration of KPs from the Valley. The migration was not the result of any single policy or event but was a culmination of several factors that had been building up over time.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the mass migration of KPs from the Kashmir Valley during the late 1980s and early 1990s was a complex and multifaceted phenomenon, driven by a confluence of historical, socio-political, and security factors. This departure was not solely a result of one single cause but rather a culmination of various interrelated elements, each playing its part in this painful chapter of Kashmir's history. We have explored the diverse factors, such as conflict, ethnic tensions, land reforms, and changes in constituency boundaries, that contributed to the displacement of the KP community. Throughout this discussion, it has become evident that the violence and insecurity that emerged with the onset of insurgency were central factors in prompting the mass migration. Yet, it is crucial to acknowledge that the seeds of alienation had been sown long before the insurgency, stemming from historical grievances, political disparities, and controversial policies.

The Delimitation Commission's recommendations, often debated and criticized, further diminished the political representation of KPs. These factors, combined with the economic challenges, had left the KP community with a growing sense of despair and marginalization in the Valley. To fully comprehend the complexities of this migration, it is imperative to recognize the intricate interplay of these elements and the historical context within which they unfolded. The role of the then Governor of Jammu and Kashmir, Jagmohan Malhotra, in the migration remains a subject of debate, with some attributing a broader strategy to his actions, while others suggest that his influence was less significant.

There is a lack of acknowledgement of each other's painful experiences between the KP and Muslim communities in the state. This has led to confrontations and debates between the two communities regarding the former's migration and the ensuing violence and human rights violations inflicted on the latter. The result has been the development of two parallel and often conflicting narratives. To move forward and address this issue, it is essential to acknowledge the pain and suffering of both communities. A process of reconciliation needs to be initiated that acknowledges the grievances of both communities and seeks to address them fairly and justly. This process must be dealt with at multiple levels, including the individual, community, and state.

At the individual level, there needs to be a greater understanding and empathy between members of the two communities. This can be achieved through dialogue, education, and cultural exchange programs that promote greater understanding and respect for each other's culture and traditions. At the community level, there needs to be a concerted effort to build bridges between the two communities. This can be accomplished through community-based initiatives that promote inter-community dialogue, cooperation, and understanding. At the state level, there needs to be a commitment to addressing the grievances of both communities and promoting a culture of inclusivity and tolerance. This can be a reality by developing and implementing policies that

promote the rights and welfare of both communities, irrespective of their religious or ethnic backgrounds.

Indeed, the absence of KPs in the Valley of Kashmir poses a significant challenge to the idea of Kashmir as a plural and multicultural society. Their return and integration into the Valley's social, political, and economic life will be a complex and challenging task, but it is essential for the region's future stability and growth. Academics, policymakers, and civil society groups must work towards creating a conducive environment for the return of KPs. This would include addressing the security concerns of the community, creating economic opportunities, providing adequate housing, and ensuring their social and political rights.

Moreover, it is also essential to engage with the Muslim community in Kashmir and address their concerns and grievances to promote a sense of mutual trust and respect. The reconciliation process must be undertaken at multiple levels, including the state, civil society, and individuals, to create a conducive environment for the return of KPs and the revival of a plural and multicultural Kashmir.

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