International Journal of Social Science Research and Review

http://ijssrr.com
editor@ijssrr.com
Volume 8, Issue 8
August, 2025
Pages: 189-210

Forgotten Homelands: Memory and Displacement of Kashmiri Pandits and Sindhi Hindus

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http://dx.doi.org/10.47814/ijssrr.v8i8.2897

Abstract

This paper investigates public awareness, perceptions and lived experiences of two displaced and underrepresented South Asian communities: the Kashmiri Pandits and the Sindhi Hindus. Adopting a mixed-methods approach, the study combines quantitative and qualitative survey data from approximately hundred respondents of South Asian ancestry with in-depth interviews with members of both communities. The survey aims to assess familiarity, emotional response, and perceptions of government support of the wider South Asian community. Additionally, the interviews examine how displaced individuals have preserved their identity. The main broader finding of the study reveals that the Kashmiri Pandit exodus receives significantly more public recognition in comparison to the Sindhi Migration. This disparity is shaped by the contemporary political relevance and media intention in the case of the Kashmiri Pandits versus the relative invisibility of the Sinshi experience. Furthermore,this is attributed to the perceived economic integration. The interview insights corroborate the role of community agency in shaping resilience and cultural identity in the aftermath of displacement. The study hopes to contribute to broader discussions on collective memory, historical justice, and the politics of representation. Overall, this highlights the need for a more inclusive approach to understanding and supporting displaced groups.

Keywords: *Internal Displacement; Kashmiri Pandits; Sindhi Hindus; Collective Memory; Diaspora Studies; Post-Partition India*

Introduction

The Indian subcontinent is a country of diversity and a history built up over time. The country has been shaped by its multi-migrations, religious tolerance, caste structure, colonial exploitation and regional and ethnic identity. Despite the heterogeneity of Indian society, Indian identity is not a single, monolithic national story but a textured tapestry of communities and tradition. One needs to look at the complexity

and the stratification of society since modern media and historiography individually fail to comprehend pluralism.

Rather, they give us flat narratives, frequently rooted in colonial and nationalist discourses, that efface the complexity of daily life, particularly of displaced and marginalised people. In an attempt to understand the contests in the space, specifically those of identity, memory, and displacement- we must understand the fragility and fluidity of its social life. This means moving beyond inductive reductionism such as Hindu-Muslim or India-Pakistan, and towards a historiographical approach capable of perceiving complexity, contradiction, and nuance.

Historians argue that these understandings fail to take note of the social, economic, and cultural processes which have shaped Indian society in the long run (Pandey, 2001). New paradigms, on the other hand, emphasize the dynamics between societies and the state, local histories, and long-term continuities spanning political ruptures. These are crucial for deciphering how identity is constituted and deconstructed, especially in the case of sub-represented communities.

This essay seeks to address the impact of historical displacement and current misrepresentation on two otherwise different but marginalised groups: the Kashmiri Pandits and the Sindhi Hindus. Through comparative examination of these two groups, this essay probes how displacement, memory, and identity intersect, and how dominant discourses have resulted in their erasure or instrumentalisation.

The Kashmir conflict, for example, shows how political and historical narrative can suppress minority perspectives. While Kashmiris are more familiar in the lens of Indo-Pakistani rivalry or Muslim majority victimhood, there is an unusual lack of discussion of the life of Kashmiri Pandits. During the insurgency in 1989 and 1990, over 150,000 Pandits were killed or forced to flee the Kashmir Valley due to targeted killings, harassment, and growing Islamist extremism (Puri and Escobar, 2023). Kashmiri identity is typically conflated with Muslim identity in books and the media, excluding the region's internal heterogeneity. This discursive exclusion contributes to physical displacement in 1990, creating a double marginalisation process that persists until the present time. Another, no less enlightening, trajectory is that of Sindhi Hindus, who were displaced during 1947 Partition (Bhavnani, 2014). The Radcliffe Line partition forced nearly half a million Sindhi Hindus to migrate to India and all over the world, where they arrived stateless and without territoriality (Bhavnani, 2014). Unlike Punjabi or Bengali refugees, Hindu Sindhi didn't have a state that they could return to, or state to claim on their behalf. In spite of their abundant contribution to Indian public life, Hindu Sindhi has been invisible in national history. Statelessness has led to a gradual loss of culture, language, and social cohesion (Bhavnani, 2014). This essay raises issues about religious or ethnic identity as a panacea for social inclusion.

The experiences of Kashmiri Pandits and Sindhi Hindus demonstrate that Hindu identity is not sufficient to guarantee political recognition or cultural preservation. The process of trauma and survival by both communities is informed by distinctive regional, historical, and political parameters. Sindhi experience involves cultural erasure and gradual assimilation, while that of Kashmiri Pandits consists of being kept to memory, on pending political issues, and betrayal. These accounts highlight the need for representation that is mindful of intersectionality, recognizing how caste, language, region, and history complicate the hegemonic categories used in academia and in politics. The internally displaced persons category is accorded little attention and no legal safeguards that are given to refugees.

To address these lacunae, this paper employs a mixed-methods research strategy, utilizing quantitative survey data and qualitative in-depth interviews. The aim of this is to assess general knowledge about displacement histories of the two groups and to analyze how diasporic members of the two groups think about their displacement, their identity, and relation with the homeland and state of residence. Convenience sampling was employed to get participants because it was hard to access geographically scattered communities. While this method limits generalisability, it provides qualitative

initial information about the means by which history and identity are shaped by historical trauma. The study recognizes that every community constructs its own collective memory and that these memories are significant in constructing a more inclusive historiography (Pandey, 2001).

Situating the Study: The Exodus of Kashmiri Pandits in 1989

The Kashmiri Pandit Community has situated itself in the Kashmir Valley for over 5000 years (Puri and Escobar, 2023). They are a community of Brahmin Hindus and were the original inhabitants of the Kashmir Valley, now in Northern India. The community has built resilience over time, facing a syncretism of influences from the Shah Mir Dynasty to the Dogras. These waves of migration and domination of Muslim Kashmiris have caused a significant decline in the population. The exodus of 1989 directly led to the historic decline of 98% of the population of Kashmiri Pandits from the late 1980s to 2011 in Kashmir (Kashmir Rechords, 2025). This decimation of the population serves to raise the question of the future of the Valley's social fabric as well as the implications for a community severed from its homeland. Schofield (2000) notes that to date, no consensus has been reached. Instead, an unacknowledged status quo persists, where all parties remain in limbo to preserve a semblance of peace. The fear among the people of Jammu and Kashmir , coupled with long-standing divisions, has prevented the emergence of a unified political voice and persistence of a human cost that centres Kashmiri people as the victims (Schofield, 2000: xv).

The Kashmir Valley and the Partition of India in 1947

Before the abrogation of Article 370 in 2019, Kashmir was considered a state within the Indian Republic that was characterised by independent governance, except in matters relating to defence, foreign affairs, finance and communication, where it was dependent on the national government (Al Jazeera, 2023). Hari Singh's decision, as the *Maharaja* of the Princely State of Kashmir, was significant because Kashmir was the only Muslim-majority region in mainland India to accede to India. In the lead-up to the independence of India and Pakistan in 1947, the fate of princely states was to be determined largely by their respective rulers, who were expected to represent the will of their people (Schofield, 2000: 47). The state was unique as it was ruled by a Hindu with a Muslim majority population. Although a referendum was proposed, the Congress Party boycotted it because the option of an independent "Pashtunistan" was excluded, a decision shaped in part by the influence of the Muslim League, led by Sheikh Abdullah. However, despite the League's influence, the final decision ultimately rested with the *Maharaja*, who held the authority to determine the state's accession (Schofield, 2000: 47).

Essentially, Hari Singh's decision for Kashmir to join the Indian subcontinent is rooted in the tribal invasion or the "jihad" of the tribesmen from Pakistan's North-West Frontier Province (Schofield, 2000: 47). However, this came after a culmination of diplomatic negotiations between Pakistan's and India's leaders in collaboration with Lord Mountbatten. India's attachment to Kashmir was primarily due to Jawaharlal Nehru's attachment to his homeland (Schofield, 2000: 47). This was further reinforced by his strong connection to Abdullah, and the political opportunity of having a Muslim-Majority state like Jammu and Kashmir accede to India, which would directly challenge and undermine the legitimacy of Mohammad Ali Jinnah's "two-nation theory" (Schofield, 2000: 47). On the other hand, Jinnah also endorsed the right of princely states to remain independent, aiming to secure a strategic advantage along the north-eastern border, particularly to gain control over crucial rivers that irrigated the plains of the Indus valley (Schofield, 2000: 39).

In the days leading up to the Indian Independence, Pakistan made a "standstill" agreement with Hari Singh where they ensured that those services which existed for trade, travel and communication would continue as they were in British India (Schofield, 2000: 40). India however delayed making an agreement which only confused the Pakistanis even more (Schofield, 2000).

Arguably, Hari Singh was leaning toward the accession of Kashmir to India largely due to his response to the reaction of staunch Muslim League supporters who believed that Kashmir had become part of Pakistan on 15 August, 1947 (Schofield, 2000). The display of the Pakistani flag on most post offices was met with the *Maharaja* ordering the removal of such pro-Pakistan paraphernalia in culmination with all pro-Pakistan newspapers being shut down. Such demonstrations showcase the main rhetoric of the Kashmiri population in 1947 (Schofield, 2000). This was followed by his anti-Muslim policies, which initiated a divide between the Muslims and Hindus in the valley. For example, in July 1947, he ordered all Muslims in the district of Poonch to hand over their weapons to the authorities, while the same weapons continued to remain in the hands of Hindus and Sikhs (Schofield, 2000). This systematic purge of Muslims in the region resulted in the displacement of 500,000 Muslims within the region (Schofield, 2000: 43).

Despite such atrocities, Sheikh Abdullah continued to support Kashmir's accession to India. While the actions of the *Maharaja* contributed to tensions, they were ultimately less influential than the 1947 invasion by Pashtun tribesmen from Pakistan's North-West Frontier Province (NWFP). These invaders looted and burned down towns such as Baramulla and killed civilians, posing a direct threat to the region's distinct cultural identity known as *Kashmiriyat*, a secular ethos rooted in non pan-Islamic Kashmiri tradition (Snedden, 2015). Sheikh Abdullah's support for India was further shaped by his close relationship with Jawaharlal Nehru and his belief in secularism and democracy, which he felt were more in line with India's constitutional values. In contrast, he viewed Pakistan as a feudal society where meaningful land reforms and the vision of an egalitarian Kashmir would be difficult to implement (Snedden, 2015). His beliefs found widespread support amongst the Kashmiri Muslims, especially the rural and poor Muslims (Snedden, 2015). This support was voiced through the popular slogan of "*Hamlaavar Khabardar! Hum Kashmiri hain tayyar*!" which translates to "Invaders beware! We Kashmiris are ready!" (Snedden, 2015). However, there were still sections of the population that supported accession to Pakistan, particularly Muslims in regions like Gilgit, where local officers revolted against the Maharaja, and in Jammu, where widespread communal tensions further fueled dissent (Lamb, 2003).

Abdullah was the only Kashmiri politician with a significant mass following, and ultimately the decision hinged on his influence, bolstered by the political support he received from Nehru. Crucially, his relationship with Nehru provided the political legitimacy that underpinned the promise of autonomy for Kashmir under Article 370. This provision granted Abdullah and the National Conference greater political space. The process culminated in Maharaja Hari Singh signing the Instrument of Accession in October 1947, officially making Kashmir a part of India (Britannica, 2019).

Events Leading up to Exodus of 1989

The accession of the Kashmir Valley to India significantly influenced the region's political, social, and cultural landscape. Over time, key developments, such as Pakistan's shift in foreign policy toward Kashmir, following its defeat in 1971 war and the subsequent surrender in Dhaka, became turning points that laid the backbone for the rise in insurgency in the region. During this period, Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto sought to redirect Pakistani foreign policy to increase its influence in Kashmir. Despite the increase in violence, there was little change in local leadership, as the dominant sentiment among the Kashmiri population at that time remained one of general acceptance of Kashmir's status within the Indian Union (Gupta, 2025).

From the time of Partition in 1947, Pakistan has made repeated attempts to wrest control of Kashmir, such as Operation Gulmarg in 1947 and Operation Gibraltar in 1965. This was rooted in a major misconception by key leaders within the Pakistan army that the Kashmiri populace, more specifically the muslims, would support their attack. However, they were mistaken. This was evident in October 1975

when Prime Minister Indira Gandhi visited Srinagar with her family and thousands of Kashmiris lined the Boulevard chanting "Indira Gandhi Zindabad" (Gupta, 2025). Essentially, this trust in the Indian political system was pivotal to undermining Pakistan's influence in using militancy as a method of spreading dissidence within the region. This mindset of fomenting unrest was bolstered by Prime Minister Zia's new approach in March 1976, as he sought to appease public demand for the implementation of Nizam-e-Mustafa (Rule of the Prophet). As a result, Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) began increasing its support and funding for separatist groups in Kashmir. Zia's broader objective was to maintain the support of the Pakistani military by keeping the Kashmir issue active and unresolved. However, he knew he could not directly send Pakistani troops so instead he promulgated the policy with the intention to "bleed India with a thousand cuts" through funding and training Kashmiris for armed insurrection (Gupta, 2025). Critically, this would prevent backlash from other members of the international community and undermine India's ability to publicly condemn their covert agenda. Although the ISI's approach to acquiring the Kashmir Valley was largely a failure in the 70s, their policy still served as a catalyst for the long-term militancy and insurgency in the region.

The shift in the internal political climate of Kashmir in the 1980s created a power vacuum, which combined with the consistent threat of the rise of militancy culminated in the 1989 Kashmiri Pandit Exodus. On August 21, 1981, the National Conference (NC), the primary political party in the region, held a gathering at Iqbal Park in Srinagar, where its leader, Sheikh Abdullah, introduced his son, Farooq Abdullah, as his political successor. While Sheikh Abdullah never advocated for secession from India, he strongly supported preserving Kashmir's special status, rooted in the cultural ethos of *Kashmiriyat* (Gupta, 2025). Following Sheikh Abdullah's death in September 1982, Farooq assumed leadership of both the party and the state as Chief Minister, marking a significant shift in Kashmir's political dynamics. The 1983 elections introduced religion as a critical point of contention, especially as Indira Gandhi sought an alliance with Farooq Abdullah which was rejected. This failure of co-existence with the Indian Government prompted Farooq Abdullah's change in approach with the next election.

The 1987 elections also coincided with the execution of militant leader Maqbool Bhat, further radicalizing segments of the population. Pro-Pakistan and pro-*azadi* (independence) parties gained traction, especially as Farooq Abdullah signed a peace accord with Rajiv Gandhi, an act perceived as a betrayal by many in the National Conference's own ranks. This uneasy Congress–NC alliance gave rise to renewed secessionist fervor and lent legitimacy to political dissidence in the Valley. One of the most symbolic figures of the unrest was Mohammad Ysusf Shah of the Muslim United Front, who contested from Amira Kadal, seen as the financial and political nerve centre of Srinagar (Gupta, 2025). His defeat became emblematic of widespread electoral rigging. This growing dissent was starkly demonstrated on August 15, 1989, when a general *hartal* (protest) and blackout were called across the Valley. The dynamic between the Central and State governments was the main source of contention within Kashmir and set the stage for the rise in distrust especially from the Muslim Kashmiris. This exacerbated an already contentious climate and acted as the direct catalyst that allowed the events of the Kashmiri Pandit Exodus to occur. Critically, previous attempts of insurgency by militant groups had a marginal impact on the broader Kashmiri Muslim population due to the fact that the power vacuum ceased to exist. Essentially, the widespread mistrust within the Kashmiri Muslim population was the driving factor that caused the Kashmiri Pandit Exodus of 1989.

By January 4, 1990, local newspapers like *Al Safa* and *Aftab* published warnings targeting the Hindu priestly community. Although the community had gradually grown accustomed to the Islamisation of the Valley, these events marked a dangerous shift in the political and social atmosphere that eventually led to their large-scale displacement. By January 19, 1990, as was made abundantly clear, their only options were to convert, leave or die (*raliv, galiv, chaliv*). Around 9 pm at night, loudspeakers from mosques across the valley warned the pandits that if they didn't conform to the new Islamisation of

Kashmir, they would be dead. Over the next few months, during this period of heightened insurgency, between 100,000-150,000 Kashmiri Pandits fled their homes. Critically, this showcases the extent of the historical endurance of the Kashmiri Pandit population to Islamist aggression and how it was only through direct aggression that the majority of the Kashmiri Pandit population were triggered to flee.

The proliferation of fear and violence towards Kashmiri Pandits was essentially the critical turning point in the exodus. However, this persecution is a culmination of long-standing contention within the Kashmiri populace, driven mainly by the failures of Farooq Abdullah in maintaining an atmosphere of trust within the Kashmiri Muslim populace. This was the push factor that allowed insurgency and militancy to gain legitimacy. Furthermore, the targeting of Kashmiri Pandits was deeply tied to their perceived association with Indian authority and the broader objective of transforming Kashmir into an Islamist state. Thus, their persecution was not simply a product of sudden unrest, but rather the tragic outcome of deep-rooted tensions and systemic failures that had been festering for decades.

Rehabilitation Efforts

According to Amnesty International (AI) in 1993, the majority of Kashmiri Pandit homes and temples had been damaged and destroyed (Puri and Escobar, 2023). Attempts to recognise massive human rights violations by the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) in 1995, have yet to gain legitimacy because First Information Reports (FIRs) have failed to be addressed. This is primarily because a time-bound charge sheet with a police record of the details of the crime in a chronological manner has failed to be submitted to ascertain alleged genocide (Puri and Escobar, 2023).

The Indian government has made an effort to ensure rehabilitation by confirming that 44,684 Kashmir migrant families have registered with the Office of the Relief and Rehabilitation Commissioner as migrants within the Union territory of Jammu and Kashmir. In March 2019, the Ministry of Home Affairs declared the JKLF as an unlawful organisation, and the ministry accused JKLF Chief Yasin Malik of participating in the violations against the Kashmiri Hindu Pandits. However, significant delays in the Indian judicial processes limited effective rehabilitation (Puri and Escobar, 2023).

On August 5 2019, Article 370 in the constitution was abrogated and was accompanied by a brutal “siege” (Aman, 2023). The special status of Kashmir was central to the idea of “Kashmiriyat”, which is the foundation of Abdullah's ideology. The abrogation of Kashmir’s special status has seen 3,800 migrants return to Kashmir for employment options, mostly in 2021 (Puri and Escobar, 2023).

Additionally, 610 Kashmiri Pandits were able to reclaim properties they had left behind (Puri and Escobar, 2023). As part of efforts to restore the displaced population in Kashmir, the United Progressive Alliance (UPA) government introduced a rehabilitation package. This included a lump-sum payment of $9,875 to each returning Kashmiri Pandit family and the creation of 3,000 state government jobs across India under the Prime Minister’s Development Package (2015), with a total outlay of $142.2 million (Puri and Escobar, 2023). Furthermore, 6,000 transit accommodations have been built in the Kashmir Valley to house employed Kashmiri migrants, alongside the provision of free food rations for 44,000 Kashmiri Pandit families.

Moreover, despite many attempts at rehabilitation, the government’s lack of monitoring of such internally displaced persons (IDPs) means that many outside the camps lack sufficient food, clean water, shelter, sanitation and health care (Puri and Escobar, 2023). However, Kashmiri Pandits are not officially reported as IDPs as the NHRC decided that Kashmiri Pandits did not fit into the definition of IDPs and that the term 'migrant' was more appropriate (Puri and Escobar, 2023). The government responded by ordering the NHRC to oversee the human rights violations in Jammu and Kashmir, but this is again limited by the lack of establishment of a Truth and Reconciliation Commission (Puri and Escobar, 2023).

The Kashmir issue remains a highly pertinent topic in contemporary global politics. Viewed through the lens of preserving ethnic diversity in South Asia, a comparative analysis of Sindhi Hindus and Kashmiri Pandits offers critical insights into questions of identity, nationhood, and collective memory. Sindhi Hindus, as the largest Hindu community in the region without a territorial homeland, represent a poignant case of cultural survival in diaspora. In light of the persistent uncertainty surrounding the future of the Kashmir Valley, examining the historical context of Sindhis provides valuable perspectives for understanding and supporting the preservation of Kashmiri Pandit identity and heritage.

Social Organisation of the Sindhi Hindu Community

The Hindu Sindhi community of pre-Partition Sindh was a complex combination of castes and regional affiliations, each distinguished by specific socio-economic roles and cultural practices. Prominent among these were the *Lohanas*, subdivided into *Bhangnarees, Chhaprus, Sahitis, Bhaibands,* and *Amils*, along with *Bhatias* and *Brahmins* (Falzon, 2004: 36), among other smaller groups. Each caste, or *Jati*, performed occupationally specialised functions, which served to reinforce a hierarchical social order. *Amils*, whose name derives from the Arabic term for "government agent", took the roles of administrative and clerical elite, assuming similar roles during different periods of rule, such as during the Muslim Talpur Mirs where they served as munshis (scribes) and revenue collectors. The *Amils* were not merely bureaucratic functionaries; they wielded significant political influence and were entrusted with legal matters and Persian correspondence, cementing their position as a prestigious, educated class (Falzon, 2004: 36). Under British rule, this manifested as the *Amils* adapting to the colonial bureaucracy, becoming English-speaking and Western-educated civil servants.

Furthermore, many participated in the Indian Civil Services (ICS), which was regarded as a pinnacle of achievement in colonial India. The *Amils'* elevated status is documented in a Sindhi proverb during the colonial period, "Never cross the corpse of an Amil," reflecting the reverence and authority they commanded within society (Falzon, 2004: 36). Historically associated with Hyderabad, the capital of the Talpurs, *Amils* retained their reputation as the most prestigious Sindhi caste. However, they were considered under the *Sahitis* and the *Bhaibands* amongst the *Lohana* Hindus. The *Bhaibands* considered themselves superior as they were the wealthiest. However, they were often derided by the *Amils* for their perceived lack of refinement, vulgar displays of wealth, and poor aesthetic sensibilities (Falzon, 2004: 36 - 37).

The *Bhaibands*, whose name translates to "brotherhood," represented the largest segment of Sindhi Hindus. As a mercantile community, they seldom engaged in salaried labour, and instead focused on commerce and trade, which brought them significant economic prosperity. Their dominance in trade extended beyond Sindh, as many established international networks across India and overseas. Despite their wealth, they occupied a socially subordinate position relative to the *Amils*, who regarded them as unpolished and lacking cultural sophistication (Falzon, 2004: 36). The *Sahitis*, positioned between *Amils* and *Bhaibands* in terms of status, were less occupationally defined, bridging the gap between the bureaucratic and mercantile spheres. Another notable subgroup, the *Chhaprus*, constituted an endogamous *Jati* centred in Karachi, specializing in the trade of dried fruit, food and groceries, and textiles (Falzon, 2004: 37). The *Bhatias*, on the other hand, engaged in long-distance trade, particularly within the Gulf region. Before the rise of Hyderabad and Karachi as urban centres, the *Bhatias* dominated trade in Tatta (an earlier Sindhi trading hub), and traced their lineage to *Kshatriya* origins, upheld strict vegetarianism, and avoided intermarriage with other castes, further emphasizing their exclusivity (Falzon, 2004: 37). The *Brahmins*, meanwhile, occupied the traditional role of ritual specialists, performing religious functions and ceremonies for the community (Falzon, 2004: 37).

The caste system among the Sindhi Hindus, while structural in nature, was functionally very different from the traditional Hindu caste system in India. Unlike the deeply entrenched and rigid caste

hierarchies of southern India, where notions of purity, untouchability, and strict ritual prohibitions defined social interactions, the Sindhi caste system was relatively fluid and less governed by ritual restrictions. Inter-caste interactions, particularly in terms of eating and worship, were far less taboo in Sindh than in regions like Tamil Nadu or Kerala. Similarly, while endogamy was strictly observed in Sindh, there was no equivalent to the "pollution" taboos that excluded Dalits from public spaces or religious practices in other parts of India. This difference can partly be attributed to the mercantile and cosmopolitan character of Sindhi society, shaped by trade networks and its integration with Islamic rule under the Talpurs, which tempered Hindu orthodoxy in the region. However, like in other parts of India, caste distinctions in Sindh were closely tied to occupational roles, lineage, and kinship networks, highlighting a shared structural foundation with the broader Indian caste system (Falzon, 2004: 36 - 37). The elitism present among the Hindu population in Sindh contributed marginally to the resentment felt by some Muslim youth, most of whom came from peasant or working-class backgrounds. However, this resentment remained limited in scope. Despite living in separate neighborhoods, Hindus and Muslims continued to share public spaces such as markets, schools, and offices (Bhavnani, 2014). While class-based elitism and residential segregation could have been fertile ground for deep communal divisions, the continued overlap in shared spaces and daily interactions helped maintain a stable social balance in pre-Partition Sindh. This suggests that identity-based resentment was moderated by the practical interdependence of communities. A balance that would later be disrupted by nationalist politics and migration pressures.

The specific *Jati* you belong to is not the sole defining factor for one's position in Sindhi society. Their caste identities were further intersected by regional and territorial distinctions, which introduced more nuanced layers of social complexity. Sindh was broadly divided into lower Sindh, encompassing Hyderabad, Karachi, and smaller towns like Tando Adam and Tando Muhammad Khan, and upper Sindh, which included Dadu, Sehwan, Sukkur, Larkana, and Shikarpur. A subtle yet significant cultural hierarchy existed between these regions, with lower Sindh often viewed as more cosmopolitan and sophisticated, while upper Sindh was considered boorish and rough by comparison. This divide is evident in linguistic differences, with people from lower Sindh mocking the dialect and speech patterns of those from upper Sindh. Among the strongest regional identities were the Hyderabadi and Shikarpuri affiliations. Hyderabad, as the heartland of the *Amils* and *Bhaibands*, symbolised affluence, education, and cosmopolitanism, earning it the moniker "Paris of Sindh." Shikarpur, on the other hand, was renowned for its moneylenders, who were so closely associated with the town that "*Shikarpuri*" came to signify a *Jati* rather than merely a place of origin. However, the status of Shikarpuri moneylenders was less prestigious than that of Bhaibands (Falzon, 2004: 36 - 37).

Understanding the structure of pre-Partition Sindh is essential to understanding the significance of their migration. While arguably not genocidal in nature like with the Kashmiri Pandits, the exploitation of religious differences in both cases showcases how the prioritisation of non-temporal differences creates a vacuum for contention. Sindh is considered a special case due to the fact that there was never potent contention between the native Muslim Sindhis and the Hindus but it was through the broader Partition violence that Sindhi Hindus were forced to migrate out of their homeland. Arguably, the only source of contention in pre-Partition Sindh that might have catalysed latent contempt for the Sindhi Hindus is the rise of clerical mobilisation of Muslims in the 1930-40s where the Muslim political consciousness aligned with pan-Islamic and pro-pakistan movements. This is solidified by the Bombay Presidency in 1936 where Muslims gained more power (Bhavnani, 2014). However, the enlightenment of Islam within Sindhi Society wasn't a significant cause of contention between the Muslims and Hindus in pre-war 1947. In fact, pre-1947 rural and urban Sindh was categorised as more pluralist as both communities were united by language, folklore and music.

The Migration of Sindhi Hindus in 1947

The migration of Sindhi Hindus, during and after the Partition of India in 1947, was a deeply traumatic and complex event, shaped by fear, uncertainty, and a fast-deteriorating communal environment. Drawing upon Nandita Bhavnani's extensive research (Bhavnani, 2014), the migration can be described as a gradual, distress-driven process rather than an immediate exodus, and was significantly influenced by political upheavals, social violence, and economic restructuring in the newly formed Pakistan.

The Partition not only carved a political boundary between India and Pakistan, but also ruptured centuries-old social fabric, especially in provinces like Sindh, where a substantial Hindu population continued to exist. Unlike in Punjab or Bengal, where violence led to rapid and large-scale population exchanges, the Sindhi Hindu migration was more gradual, but not less devastating.

In September 1947, Hindu temples in southern Sindh, such as *Uderolal and Tirth Laki*, were attacked, priests were killed, and gold ornaments looted, giving rise to a wave of fear within the community (Bhavnani, 2014: 69). This was followed by communal riots in Nawabshah and other regions, where violence against Hindus escalated sharply.

The Ajmer riots of December 1947, which began due to a clash between Sindhi Hindu refugees and local Muslims, had a ripple effect, especially after false rumours about the desecration of a *dargah* (Muslim shrine or tomb). These rumours intensified communal hatred and contributed to the anti-Hindu pogrom in Hyderabad (Sindh) on 17 December, where looting, arson, and violence were rampant, despite the presence of military and police forces (Bhavnani, 2014: 117). Post-Partition, the economic fabric of Sindh, traditionally reliant on Hindu entrepreneurs and professionals, began to unravel. The Sindh Economic Rehabilitation Ordinance (October 1947) allowed the state to forcibly seize unoccupied Hindu businesses and hand them over to incoming Muslim refugees, colloquially referred to as *muhajirs*. As a consequence, what followed, has been described by many as a state-enabled economic takeover of Hindu assets (Bhavnani, 2014: 68). As inflation soared, streets of Karachi and Hyderabad were lined with furniture and household items being sold off by Hindus attempting to liquidate assets before fleeing. Due to the economic resentment of Sindhi Muslims, prices were artificially depressed during these distress sales (Bhavnani, 2014: 288). Even government institutions participated in this discrimination. Hindu press outlets were censored or banned. Hindu civil servants were dismissed or prevented from leaving without official permission. Over 2,000 Hindu employees petitioned for exchange transfers to India, but this remained largely unfulfilled. Recognising the looming demographic crisis, the Sindh government and Pakistani Prime Minister Muhammad Ali Jinnah made half-hearted attempts to reassure Hindus and prevent mass emigration. However, to project Pakistan as a tolerant nation, contrasting it with the continuing violence in India, the government implemented measures such as the creation of a Sindh Minorities Association, reserved cabinet seats, and boards for the Hindu religion and culture in Sindh University (Bhavnani, 2014: 117).

These gestures, however, were undercut by overt bias, such as a 70:30 Muslim-Hindu quota in public service appointments and communal ration shop licenses, which Hindu traders circumvented by operating through Muslim dummies (Bhavnani, 2014: 130). These efforts were neither consistent nor sincere, and communal bias continued to shape policy. While upper and middle-class Hindus managed to emigrate, the Dalits and Harijans, the most marginalised, struggled. Gandhi had long voiced concerns for them, as seen during his 1929 Jacobabad visit where he refused to meet upper-caste Hindus who excluded Dalits (Bhavnani, 2014: 123).

In 1947, only about 10,000 Dalits managed to leave Sindh, despite efforts by the Sindh Congress and the Indian government. A Displaced Harijan Rehabilitation Board was established in India, but the

Sindh government actively tried to block their departure, seeing them as essential for sanitation work in cities like Karachi, which was even considering importing 10,000 Muslim sweepers from Bihar to make up for the shortage (Bhavnani, 2014: 125). By mid-September 1947, over 50,000 Hindus and Sikhs had registered for help with leaving Sindh (Bhavnani, 2014: 96). Many hoped to return, believing the migration was temporary. But escalating violence, worsening economic conditions, and institutional bias made a return impossible. Women suffered immensely, though there were fewer reports of acts of violence against Hindu women in Sindh than in Punjab and Bengal, where atrocities like rape and mutilation were widespread (Bhavnani, 2014: 105).

The departure of Sindhi Hindus created a massive socio-economic vacuum. Businesses collapsed. Government offices faced staff shortages. The Sindh economy was stretched, facing a deficit of Rs 2.57 crores by February 1948 (Bhavnani, 2014: 115). Hence, the Sindhi Hindu migration was less about physical violence and more about systemic exclusion and economic dispossession.

In understanding the context of the violence for both the Sindhi Hindus and Kashmiri Pandits, we gain insight into how differing ethnic communities within the South Asian Region adapt to conflict based on the social fabric and political climate. Only through engagement with the existing literature on both groups can we begin to understand how to fill the gaps to promulgate more systemic and structural changes to promote rehabilitation and to preserve the unique ethnic diversity of the South Asian Region.

Research Questions

Against this historical backdrop, this paper aims to research into the following critical questions:

1. How do communities understand, reflect and respond to their histories of displacement and adapt in the aftermath?

2. How does the way that general citizens understand the events around displacement shape the dominant narrative for such communities amongst the populace?

Research Method

This study employed a mixed-methods approach, combining both quantitative and qualitative aspects of the survey and qualitative interviews to explore and compare the experiences of Kashmiri and Sindhi diasporic groups, focusing on how their distinct histories have shaped their contemporary identities. The survey and interview participants were informed that their responses and contributions would be included in this study anonymously.

The combination of these methods allowed for a more nuanced understanding of both statistical trends and individual perspectives, while mitigating the biases in the results of the convenience sampling approach. As Halbwachs (1992) points out, there are as many memories as there are communities, stressing the significance of memories from different communities within the Indian subcontinent in shaping the Partition narrative. The interrelationship of history and memory is key to sound research. Interviews contribute to the building of "collective memory," offering information that is dissimilar from the kind constructed through traditional historical sources. By the process of drawing upon different individual opinions, they expand our understanding of events and contribute to the building of a more refined historiography.

To enhance comprehension of perspectives that may be diverging from common narratives, this study involved in-depth interviews with the people within the community to gather first-hand data on victimhood of violence and membership of a group characterized by intergenerational trauma. This allowed for an in-depth examination of the impact of violence on different generations of the specified community. The survey had carefully crafted questions across each category to gauge awareness and perceptions in the sample population. Multiple-choice responses were augmented by open-ended responses, which are elaborated on in the "Discussion" section along with first-hand experiences to compile a more complete picture. Participants were surveyed if they identified themselves as being part of the South Asian community regardless of which country they resided in.

Participants for both the survey and interviews were recruited through convenience sampling. This method was chosen due to practical considerations, including time constraints and the challenges of accessing dispersed diasporic communities. This approach allowed for engagement at length with available participants from both communities who were willing to share their experiences and opinions. While the sampling method has limitations in terms of generalizability, it was effective in generating initial insights into complex identity dynamics within these two groups. The study acknowledges the inherent biases of this method, which are reflected in the demographic composition of the overall survey sample. As detailed below, the final sample size comprises 94 participants, after excluding incomplete responses.

Research Findings

Table 1: Nature of Respondents

Category		Frequency	Sample % (rounded)
Age	18-20	10	10.6
	21-30	12	12.8
	31-40	7	7.5
	41-50	35	37.2
	51-60	24	25.5
	61-70	5	5.3
	71-80	1	1.1
Gender	Female	38	40.4
	Male	56	59.6
Religion	Hinduism	80	85.1
	Christianity	4	4.3
	Islam	4	4.3
	Sikhism	1	1.1
	None	3	3.2
	Multi-Faith	2	2.1
Highest level of education	Post-Graduate	39	41.5
	Graduate	28	29.8
	Completed Class 12th	12	12.8
	Above post-graduation	12	12.8
	Completed Class 10th	1	1.1
	Diploma	1	1.1
	Masters	1	1.1

The table above showcases the demographics of the survey carried out to gauge ethnically Indian people's awareness of both the Kashmiri Pandit Exodus and the Sindhi Migration. The most common archetype of candidates (taking the majority in each category) is the Hindu male category from India. This showcases how the responses might be skewed from a socially privileged male gaze. Nevertheless, we can gauge the extent of the awareness even within such a demographic.

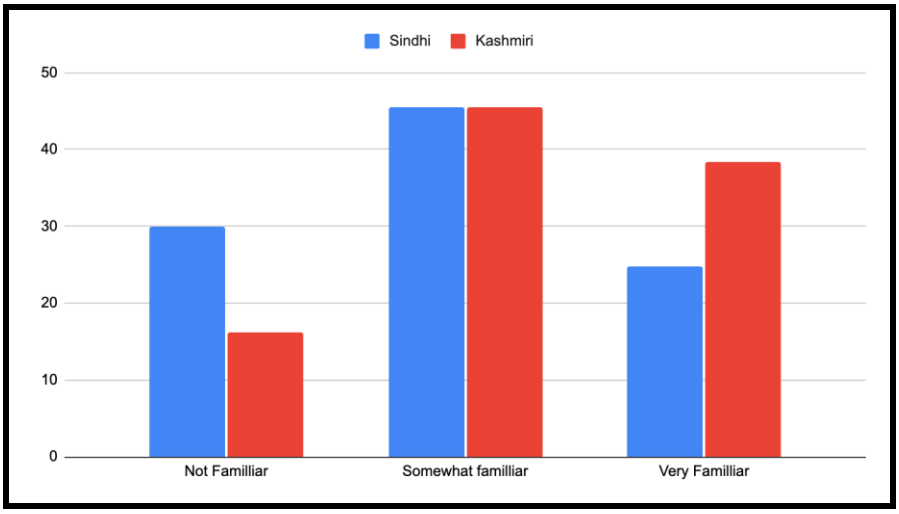

Figure 1: Familiarity with the exodus of Kashmiri Pandits and/or the migration of the Sindhi community during the Partition?

This figure shows a significant difference in public familiarity. Most respondents were aware of the Kashmiri Pandit exodus, while far fewer had heard of the Sindhi migration. This supports the argument from the literature review that Kashmir has become a politically and emotionally charged issue in the Indian media landscape, while the Sindhi story has remained largely excluded from public discourse. It reflects how historical visibility is often shaped not by the severity of displacement but by its proximity to ongoing territorial and nationalistic debates. The limited awareness of the Sindhi experience, despite its scale, reinforces how entire communities can be excluded from national memory when their displacement lacks immediate political utility.

Table 2: Spearman's Correlation between Age and Familiarity with Kashmiri and Sindhi Exodus

Kashmir	**r**	**p**
Age and how familiar are you with the exodus of Kashmiri Pandits from the Kashmir Valley in the 1990s?	-0.29	0.005

Sindh	**r**	**p**
Age and how familiar are you with the migration of the Sindhi community during the Partition of India in 1947?	-0.25	0.013

Both p-values being under 0.05 showcases how the results of this experiment are not due to chance. Both tests come to the same conclusion of there being a low negative correlation with age and familiarity. Hence, as age increases, familiarity decreases. The Spearman's r-coefficient is statistically greater for Kashmiri Pandits than it is for Sindhi Hindus, suggesting that the youth know significantly

more about the Kashmiri Pandit than older generations. This is likely to be since the Kashmiri issue is more popularised by the media today, while Sindhi narratives are often overlooked.

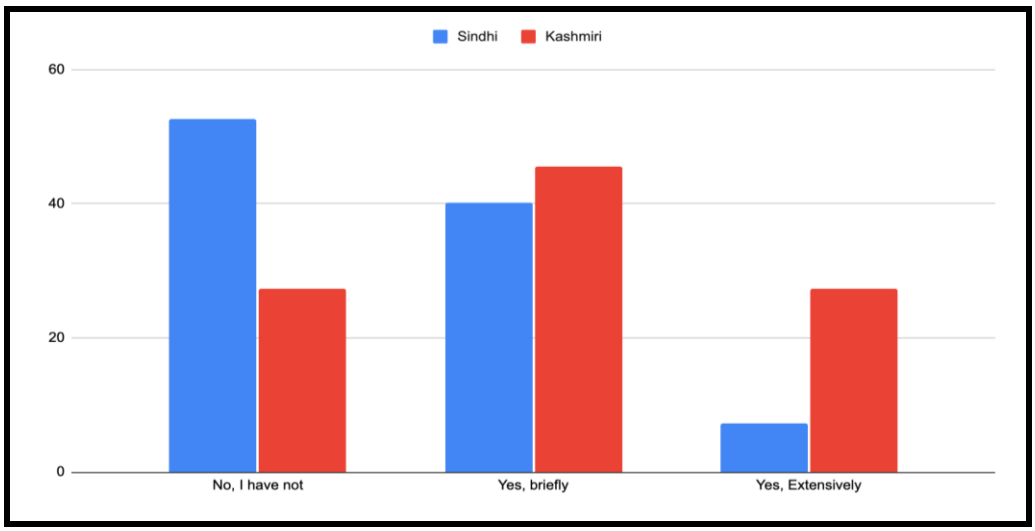

Figure 2: Formal reading or teaching about the events of the exodus of the Kashmiri Pandits and/or the Sindhis after their migration from Pakistan to India?

This graph further emphasises the knowledge gap revealed in Figure 1. The number of respondents who have studied or read about the Kashmiri Pandit Exodus extensively or briefly is significantly greater than the Sindhi Migration in 1947, with over half of respondents saying that they have never studied or read about the events of the Sindhi Migration in 1947.

Table 3: Country of Residence and Familiarity of Displaced Histories

	Familiarity with Kashmir Pandits exodus of 1990s?	Familiarity with Sindhi Migration during Partition of India in 1947?	Total
India	1.67	2.24	1.95
Singapore	1.80	1.85	1.83
Canada	2.00	2.00	2.00
Hong Kong	2.50	1.50	2.00
USA	2.25	2.50	2.38
Ireland	1.00	3.00	2.00
United Kingdom	2.00	2.00	2.00
Sri Lanka	3.00	1.00	2.00
Thailand	3.00	2.00	2.50
Total	1.80	2.05	1.93

The table above showcases the average level of familiarity of the two groups, with 1 being "Very Familiar", 2 being "Somewhat Familiar", and 3 being "Not familiar at all". However, due to the varied sample sizes of participants within the countries, we will compare the two largest sample sizes - Singapore and India. We can see a significant difference in the average level of familiarity with both countries being more aware of the Kashmiri Exodus than the Sindhi Migration.

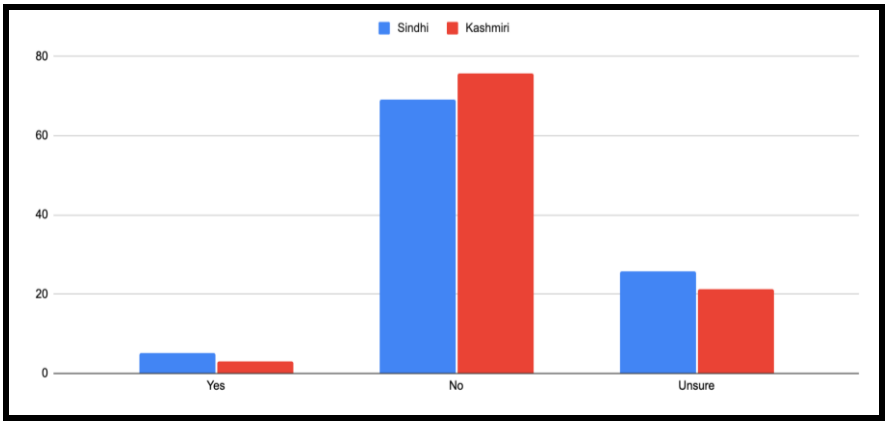

Figure 3: Do you think the history and displacements of Kashmiri Pandits and/or Sindhis is adequately represented in school curricula and mainstream media?

The responses to this question were overwhelmingly negative, with the vast majority of participants indicating that they do not believe these histories are adequately represented. This finding underscores a central concern of this paper: the systemic erasure of internal displacement narratives from institutional memory and public consciousness.

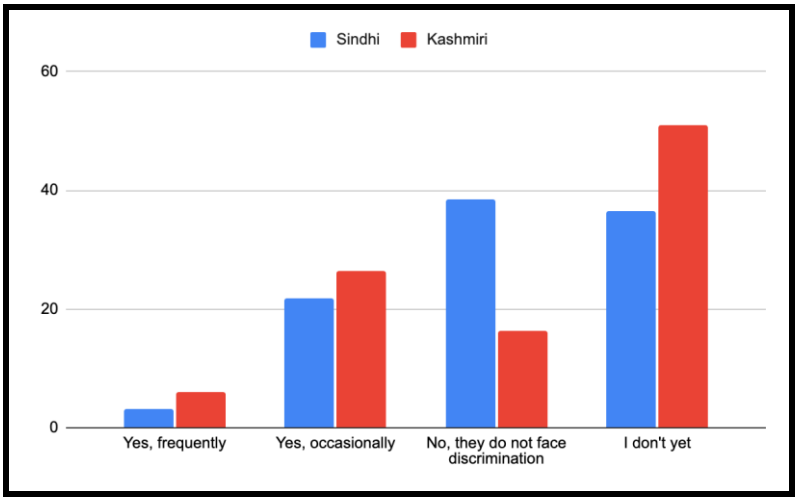

Figure 4: Do you believe that Kashmiri Pandits and/or Sindhis face discrimination in India today?

Most respondents answered "unsure," while fewer said "yes" or "no." This widespread uncertainty points to a lack of public discourse about the lived experiences of these communities today. It reflects how discrimination becomes less visible when it is not institutional or overt. The literature review highlights how Sindhi economic resilience has led to the mistaken belief that they have not suffered, while Kashmiri Pandits are often seen through a political lens rather than a humanitarian one. This figure reinforces the idea that public understanding of marginalisation is shaped more by media narratives than by informed awareness.

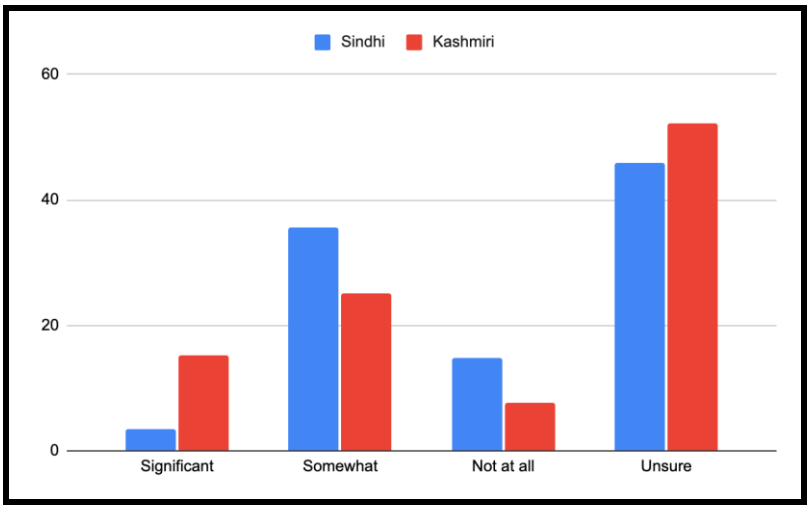

Figure 5: Do you think these stereotypes affect the way Kashmiri Pandits and/or Sindhis are treated in society?

The majority of respondents are "unsure" of the impact of stereotypes on such communities, which highlights the lack of awareness of the struggles of both communities. Furthermore, the relatively higher percentage of respondents indicating that stereotypes about Kashmiri Pandits significantly influenced how they were treated in society reflects the heightened public attention surrounding Kashmir, which in turn amplifies societal reactions toward the community.

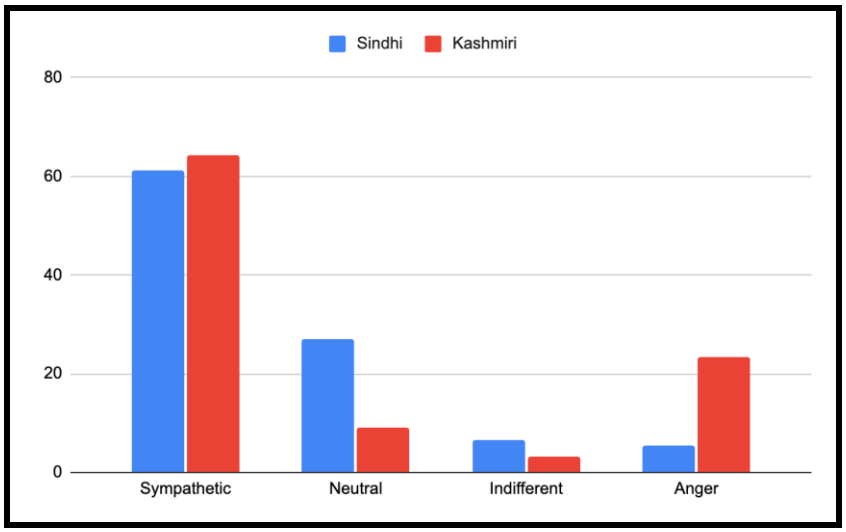

Figure 6: What is your emotional response to the hardships faced by Kashmiri Pandits/ Sindhi Community after their displacement/ Partition?

More than 60% of respondents picked "Sympathetic", which showcases how respondents usually react to trauma or crises with sympathy. With Figure 1, we can see the gap between familiarity and sympathy, and that an emotional response does not always have an impact on the level of familiarity. Furthermore, the significant difference with anger associated with the Kashmiri Pandit Exodus of 1989 is likely rooted in how recent the conflict is and the amplified media attention it finds as a Hindu-Muslim issue, or a background for terrorism across India and Pakistan.

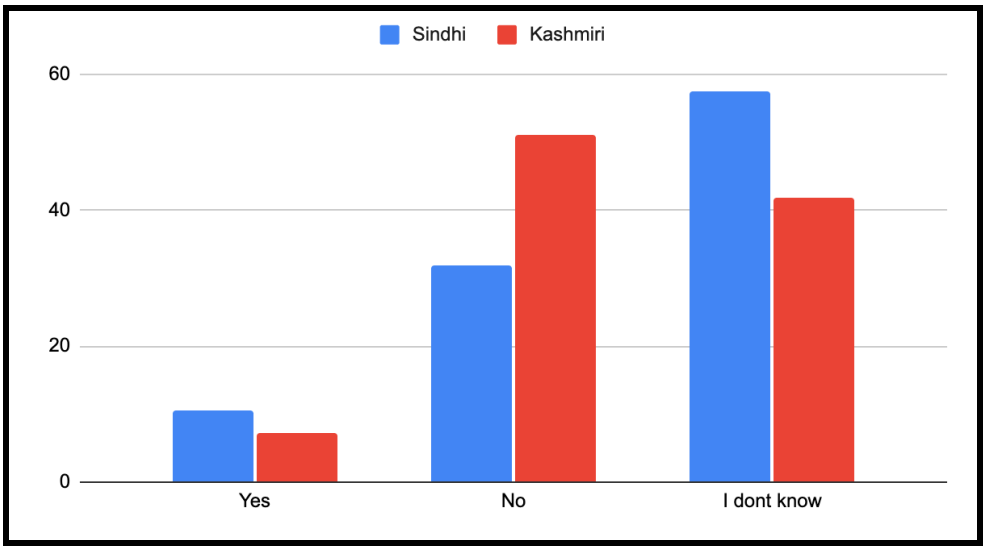

Figure 7: Do you believe that Kashmiri Pandits have / the Sindhi Community has received adequate support from the government to rebuild after displacement/ Partition?

The majority of respondents selected "no" or "I don't know," indicating a widely shared perception of governmental inadequacy or neglect. The survey illustrates a sharp decline in respondent confidence when asked about integration and government response.

Table 3: Familiarity and Support for Kashmiris

	r	p
How familiar are you with the exodus of Kashmiri Pandits from the Kashmir Valley in the 1990s? and Do you believe that Kashmiri Pandits have received adequate government support for rehabilitation since their displacement?	-0.48	<.001

To evaluate the relationship between public awareness of the 1990 Kashmiri Pandit exodus and perceptions of state-led rehabilitation, a Pearson correlation test was conducted. The null hypothesis stated that there would be no correlation between a respondent's familiarity with the exodus and their belief regarding the adequacy of government support. The alternative hypothesis posited that such a correlation does exist.

The results yielded a correlation coefficient of $r = -0.48$ with a p-value $< .001$, indicating a statistically significant moderate negative correlation between the two variables. This means that the more familiar a respondent was with the events of the exodus, the less likely they were to believe that the government provided adequate support.

Table 4: Familiarity and Support for Sindhis

	r	p
How familiar are you with the migration of the Sindhi community during the Partition of India in 1947? and Do you believe that the Sindhi community has received adequate support from the government to rebuild after Partition	0.280	0.007

The test returned a correlation coefficient of r = 0.28 and a p-value = 0.007. Since the p-value is below the commonly accepted significance level of 0.05, we reject the null hypothesis. This indicates a statistically significant weak-to-moderate positive correlation between the two variables.

This result suggests that as familiarity with the Sindhi migration increases, respondents are slightly more likely to believe that the community has received adequate support. However, the strength of the correlation is limited, reflecting the complexity and ambiguity that surrounds perceptions of state responsibility.

This weak positive correlation contrasts sharply with the Kashmir data, where greater awareness was linked to greater scepticism. In the case of Sindhi Hindus, several factors may explain this difference. Firstly, the migration happened earlier and has been more fully absorbed into the Indian economic and urban fabric. Secondly, economic success among Sindhi diasporas may mask the historical trauma and lack of formal support, creating the illusion of adequate rehabilitation.

Discussion

This study sought to explore the level of awareness of South Asian people of the Kashmiri Pandit Exodus and the Sindhi Migration of 1947. The study's findings indicate a significantly higher awareness of the Kashmiri Pandit displacement, as shown in Figure 1. This is primarily due to the continued media coverage of Kashmir, as it remains a focal point of political contention. The comparative value of examining both communities lies in how the Sindhi experience offers a blueprint for coping with the loss of a homeland caused by religious violence and extremism. Although the Kashmiri Valley is under Indian claim, existing scholarship highlights the ongoing influence of militancy and insurgency within the region, as well as the government's efforts to provide rehabilitation and rebuild trust - key factors in addressing the challenges of return and reconnection with a historic homeland.

Examining the relationship between demographic variables (age, country of residence) and levels of awareness, reveals key trends in public familiarity with the displaced histories of Kashmiri Pandits and Sindhi Hindus, as shown in Tables 2 and 3 respectively. Younger respondents are generally more aware of these historical events, and particularly more so of the Kashmiri Pandit exodus. Exploring familiarity by country of residence suggests that awareness levels vary across the diaspora, though the overall trend also shows higher recognition of the Kashmiri Pandit exodus compared to the Sindhi migration. This supports the broader observation that media emphasis and contemporary geopolitical discourse disproportionately shape public knowledge, often at the expense of lesser-known displacement histories such as that of the Sindhi Hindus.

This is corroborated in the interview stage for both Kashmiris and Sindhis, with respondents repeatedly stating how discussing such trauma with friends and family is not common. This contrasts with another Kashmiri Pandit respondent who said that talking about identity is common during family mealtimes, leading to younger generations having a hear-say opinion on such conflicts.

The struggles of Sindhi Hindus have often been overlooked, largely subsumed within the broader and generalised narrative of the 1947 Partition. This marginalisation is evident in the relatively low public awareness of the Sindhi displacement compared to the Kashmiri Pandit exodus. The disparity can be attributed to the complex and multifaceted nature of the Partition, which affected numerous communities, as well as the obvious fact that a lot of time has elapsed since 1947. Despite this historical obscurity, Sindhi Hindus exemplify the resilience of a community that has maintained its cultural identity in the face of displacement. According to first-hand Sindhi Hindu narratives gathered during the interviews, candidates emphasised the community's cohesion through shared elements of Sindhi culture—particularly

spirituality, cuisine, and a deeply rooted survivor ethos. Nonetheless, migration has inevitably led to the loss of language and certain cultural traditions. Interviewees also noted that this sense of cultural loss has been exacerbated by globalisation and the growing influence of Western culture on younger generations.

The Indian diaspora is one of the biggest in the world, with over 35.4 million people ("Population of Overseas Indians," 2025). Understanding the awareness of participants both within India and overseas helps to identify key gaps and nuances in understanding, which may reflect differences in exposure, education, and engagement with these historical narratives across contexts. For simplicity, the study will focus specifically on participants from India and Singapore, as these two groups constitute the largest segments of the sample.

We can see a significant difference in the average level of familiarity with participants from both India and Singapore being more aware of the Kashmiri Exodus than the Sindhi Migration, as shown in Table 3. This is despite the fact that the Sindhi Diaspora in Singapore is significantly greater in number than the Kashmiri Diaspora. There are only 250 Kashmiri Pandits (Tabla, 2018) while there are 7,000 Sindhis in Singapore as of 2022 (SM Lee Hsien Loong, 2022). This demonstrates that awareness even within the wider Indian diaspora tends to reflect the larger narrative popularised by the media. Interestingly, awareness of the 1947 Sindhi Migration in Singapore appears disproportionately higher relative to the sample size in India. This is likely to be because of the historical migration of many Sindhi Hindus to Singapore during Partition, leading to greater recognition of this event within the diaspora. While the number of migrants in 1947 is not exactly known, the Singapore Sindhi Association is reportedly the oldest Sindhi organisation outside of India (The Straits Times, 2022).

Another angle when judging awareness is gauging the level of nuance of participants' perspectives when engaging with media representations. The survey revealed that there was a relatively high degree of critical engagement, as fewer than 10% of respondents affirmed that the media accurately represents these communities. This scepticism likely reflects broader concerns about the commercialisation and editorial biases of news networks both within the Indian subcontinent and globally. The results of this question coincide with the results of whether either community experiences discrimination and the impact of stereotypes on society. The value in understanding such results lies in showcasing intrinsically the intercommunity perception of both Sindhis and Kashmiris. The results of the survey also highlight the level of integration from the Sindhi community, as the majority of participants agree that Sindhis don't face discrimination, while the majority of participants don't know how society is treating members of the Kashmiri Pandit community.

By the qualitative component of the survey, study of stereotypes revealed shared themes in their view of Kashmiri Pandits. A number of respondents equated the community with positive qualities such as being educated, intellectual, and culturally advanced, using the words "peaceful," "cultured," and "intellectual." These positive descriptions were, however, followed or preceded by matching accounts of arrogance, casteism, and reliance on government support, an indication that such praise has a tendency to mask deeper dimensions of marginalisation. One of the respondents highlighted how while Pandits are favorably perceived in mainland India, they are discriminated against within the Kashmir Valley, where they are even referred to as outsiders or politically sympathetic to state oppression by some. Another respondent indicated that they have been disrespectfully labeled "Pakistani," highlighting how these political misperceptions, like the false association of all Kashmiris with separatism, drive exclusionary behaviors in a region.

Some remarked that the Pandit community is fragmented or invisible in claiming their political rights, which is part of what keeps them marginaledest. This is echoed by research in political science literature about political invisibility and state tokenism in the aftermath of the 1990 exodus.

For Sindhis, the responses were a different kind of stereotype, one of class- and commerce-oriented kind. Common tags were "chindi Sindhi" (miserly) or "shrewd businessmen," reflecting a long-standing stereotype that Sindhis are economically exploitative and socially cliquish. Others spoke of Sindhis as "the Jews of India," a phrase that reflects both respect for fiscal acumen as well as barely contained wrath. Others rebutted such notions, citing the common contributions by the community towards India's education and development. Yet, the stereotype of Sindhis as a closed group was cited as a reason for misinterpretation and exclusion. These assumptions bring out the challenge faced by Sindhis in being fully understood within the multicultural scenario of India.

A key conclusion of the research is the discrepancy that is evident between emotional response and knowledge of history. Since Figure 6 demonstrates, the most frequent responses were highly emotive, with sympathy being a dominant response. However when contrasted with Figure 2, which indicates overall ignorance, it can be observed that emotional response will occur irrespective of subtle knowledge of history. This means that empathy can be evoked even in situations of limited awareness, which can reveal the potential for higher public interest if these stories are widely disseminated. The study suggests the significant contribution of education and moral media in going beyond this awareness gap, not merely historical understanding but also sustained emotional identification with the marginalized groups.

Additionally, when respondents were asked if the above-mentioned communities had been supported properly, results fell in line with the broader trends of the survey. Again, the majority of the respondents checked "I don't know" for the Sindhi community, again pointing to the overall lack of public revelation of their agony and lack of representation in the mainstream debate. This disconnect is also attested to by testimony from a Singaporean Sindhi Hindu of third-generation Singaporean birth, who reported that she could only sign up for Overseas Citizenship of India as a mere appendage to her Indian citizen husband, while the community's historical refuge in India was made obsolete. Exclusions like these administrative ones underscore disintegration of Sindhi Hindu identity and amount to very serious questions about the value of an historical collective homeland. This case highlights the broader lacunae in India's institutional approach to the displacement and cultural displacement of the Sindhi Hindu community.

Finally, the connection between familiarity and perception of support for both communities reveals a striking contrast, as shown in Table 3 and 4. As awareness increased, more respondents believed that Sindhi Hindus had received adequate support, whereas greater familiarity with the Kashmiri Pandit exodus was associated with a stronger belief that sufficient support had not been provided. Despite the relative economic success of both communities, many participants noted a disconnect between material integration and the deeper challenges of cultural preservation and identity loss. One Kashmiri Pandit respondent described revisiting their childhood home as emotionally devastating, highlighting how memory and place remain central to the trauma of forced migration.

Other interviewees emphasised that their communities have been in survival mode, functioning without institutional support while attempting to maintain identity across generations. Another noted how discussions within families around Kashmir and identity remain highly charged, particularly due to politicised coverage in mainstream media. However, this respondent was significantly younger, showcasing how younger demographics are more likely to be advocates for change within internally displaced communities.

Overall, this analysis highlights a significant contrast in how awareness shapes perceptions of support. Increased familiarity with the Kashmiri Pandit experience tends to sharpen perceptions of state neglect, whereas greater awareness of the Sindhi Hindu migration often obscures systemic shortcomings, as it is filtered through dominant narratives of resilience and economic success. These differences expose how public understanding is unevenly influenced by state narratives, media visibility, and prevailing

social stereotypes. The quantitative findings not only provide empirical support but also reveal the disconnect between public perception and the lived experience, emphasising the urgent need for more nuanced, community-informed approaches to historical representation.

Conclusion

Thus, under these findings, it can be concluded that not only is displacement a matter of loss of territory, but also loss of narrative. The Kashmiri Pandits and the Sindhi Hindus have suffered a double erasure; an early erasure through physical displacement from their homelands, and another erasure through marginalisation in national memory. The inference made here is that familiarity does not conflate recognition, and sympathy does not equal justice.

For Sindhi Hindus, trauma has been integrated into narratives of economic success, glossing over the extent of loss of culture and language. Resilience by the community has often been mistaken for complete integration, when in reality, many feel a lingering sense of erasure, especially as intergenerational memory fades. Conversely, the Kashmiri Pandit experience is closer to the public discourse center, but once more reduced far too often to a politicized slogan, rather than the psychological and affective effects of displacement. Overall, the erasure of Sindhi Hindus' memory might be an example reference in ensuring that ethnic minority groups in the South Asian Region, like the Kashmiri Pandits, possess the ability of maintaining collective memory in spite of violence and displacement-based intergenerational trauma. Memory plays a central role in defining both communities' vision of the past and vision for the future. As revealed in the interviews, memory was fragmented, personalized, and passed on informally between family members and not institutions. That lack of institutional formalization does not only limit healing but also keeps sustaining the feelings of abandonment. The emotional reaction vs. factual familiarity disparity manifested in the survey answers serves also to highlight just how much history remains untold or misinterpreted.

Lastly, the histories of these communities call for us to take on a more inclusive model of how one remembers and represents displacement. Plain retrospective or selective acknowledgment of suffering will no longer suffice. There has to be a deliberate effort to listen and reconnect with the memories, voices, and histories that have been pushed to the edges.

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