Chapter IV

Perspective of Kashmiri Muslims:
The Older Generation

This chapter is an attempt to understand how the older generation of Kashmiri Muslims makes meaning of Kashmiriyat, the Kashmiri culture, Sufism in Kashmir and the social relationship among the people in Kashmir. It is based on the analysis of narratives obtained from in-depth interviews with that generation of Kashmiri Muslims which has personal experiences of Kashmiriyat before the onset of turmoil in Kashmir. They are a generation of people who have spent the significant years of their life with their Kashmiri Pandit compatriots; this generation covers the age group of forty to sixty. The in-depth interviews with this category of participants, who were drawn from Srinagar, Ganderbal and Anantnag in Kashmir, covered a course of time from the past to the present, focusing on the key components of Kashmiriyat as it existed before 1989 and the changes this idea has undergone since then.

The themes derived from the research participants’ narratives are presented in three parts. The first part deals with Kashmiri Muslims’ views on Kashmiriyat. It presents their perceptions of Kashmiriyat, that is, the meaning they make out of the past reality and that of the reality as it exists now. The second part focuses on their narrations on Sufi practices, their beliefs about Sufi Islam, and the impact of Islam on Sufi practices and belief system. And the third part will reflect on the nature of social relationships between Kashmiri Muslims and Kashmiri Pandits before and after the turmoil.

Attempting to understand the different meanings attached to the idea of Kashmiriyat at different points in time and their relative significance, I probed the influences and factors that had shaped the social construction of Kashmiriyat earlier and that are reconstructing it now. “What are the components that are an important part of Kashmiriyat?” “Has Kashmiriyat lost its meaning and replaced by something else now?” Responses provided by the participants to such questions as these form the thematic substance presented in this chapter. The focus here is on the influence of religious turmoil and politics on the changing perspective and practicality of Kashmiri ethnic identity, or Kashmiriyat.
I

Kashmiriyat: Single Term, Many Meanings

“Kashmiriyat is an ideology of those who have composed Kashmiri way of life.”

The people who have contributed to the social construction of Kashmiriyat have attached various meanings to it. The participants talked about several components of Kashmiriyat. As they have personal experiences of living in the Valley, memories of the past have not faded in their mind. Maqbool Butt (a university professor of sociology) observed:

Kashmiriyat has various meanings. First of all, it can be interpreted as an ideology, ideology of those who composed the Kashmiri way of life. In the cultural sense, it means a way of life, special traits of culture... Kashmir has a particular ideology which is secular in nature... religion and culture are both related and unrelated in the Kashmir context; it is the kind of composite culture which emphasises on religion, region and language.

Thus, Maqbool Butt describes Kashmiriyat as an “ideology” that constitutes the Kashmiri way of life. It includes the special traits of culture of Kashmir, including religion. According to him, as an ideology, Kashmiriyat is secular in nature; it is not constructed on the basis of any one cultural or religious dimension. It represents the composite culture of a region. This composite culture is a contribution of the people who belong to different religious faiths, but whose belongingness to the Kashmir region and Kashmiri language is same.

Nazir Ahmed (a shopkeeper) explains Kashmiriyat in terms of culture: “Yes I know it is like how we conduct our life and we are different”. His perception emphasises that Kashmiriyat refers to the way of life of Kashmiris that makes them different from others. Rabia Kutub (working as a library assistant) sees Kashmiriyat in terms of place and culture. She says, “Kashmiriyat is a basically a place [sic] where we have our own culture that our ancestors gave us. It is the system or the way to live”.

Rasool Malik (university professor of history) talks about the various components of Kashmiriyat as follows:

...the tremendous love and devotion that Kashmiris have for their motherland; generally Kashmiris refer to Kashmir as mother...Kashmiris have abiding love for their language. Kashmiri language is [an] important dimension of their identity. Kashmiris have also been very proud and zealous of a distinct economic profile of the state, that is, the handicrafts have through centuries contributed to the state’s economy. I must also add that the typical religious orientation that Kashmiris have: whether they were the Pandits... or the Muslim majority community, they were not fanatic as far as their religions are concerned. Pandits were largely influenced by the Muslim culture. Muslims were also influenced by the Pandits... the type of influence they made upon Muslims through education,... for centuries there was good relation between Hindus and Muslims. It is a different question that there was a class division between the two: Pandits belonged to affluent sections of the society and Muslims broadly constituted the peasants section. But the two communities have lived together, except for brief period of turmoil in the history and there has been broader understanding and commonality between two these constituents of Kashmiriyat.
In brief, Rasool Malik sees language, region, the harmonious relationship between the Kashmiri Muslims and Kashmiri Pandits, and the devotion for mother Kashmir as the components that have contributed to the making of Kashmiriyat. According to him, neither Islam nor Hinduism was ever fanatic in practice in Kashmir. These two faiths mutually influenced each other positively and this contributed to a harmonious relationship between Kashmiri Muslims and Kashmiri Pandits. This was notwithstanding the class differences between these two communities.

Sheikh Mohammad (worked in government sector, now retired), who has all memories of a “Happy Valley”, when asked about Kashmiriyat, said: “I will tell you, in Kashmir, there was a time when people were so soft even with animals, and death of an animal also affected the people in Kashmir. People believed in justice; even now, those who are older are still like that, but it is still not the same”.

Sheikh Mohammad, who is sixty-year old, seems to have no understanding of the term Kashmiriyat, but he is aware of the idea connoted by it. He talked about the relationship between Kashmiri Muslims and Kashmiri Pandits that can be understood in terms of that concept only. He talks about a society in which people were concerned about each others feelings. He gave the impression that he missed these in the present day Kashmiri society. Similarly, during conversation with fifty-year-old Abbas Kak (working in excise department in the government sector), I told him that I have been in Kashmir for the last one-and-half months and that I have been having very pleasant experience there and that people have been very nice to me. He replied with great enthusiasm: “This is Kashmiriyat, that is only Kashmiriyat. People were so simple here, there was nothing like differences between Hindus and Muslims. People used to know only humanity. Kashmiriyat is humanity”.

It was the general perception among the participants that, in the past, people were very simple and loving, they lived a very simple life and that they had more interpersonal relationships as compared with the present. There was a genuine feeling of humanity and people never paid that much attention to the differences in religion, especially those between the Hindus and the Muslims.

Zahoor Butt (retired school teacher), and Firak Shah (retired school teacher) have similar opinions about the concept of Kashmiriyat. They think that this is our way of living and being a human being. “There is no difference of caste, creed and religion” said Zahoor Butt. Gulam Dar (Imam of a shrine) proudly said: “This kind of example you will not find anywhere in the world, that is, Kashmiri culture and the Kasmirs way of living, like taking part in each others marriage ceremonies; the difference is only that they are Hindus and we are Muslims, but the culture is same”.

Thus, the difference in religion does not seem to have been significant in the face of cultural attributes of Kashmiris. There was a sense of pride in Imam Gulam Dar’s gestures while he was talking about Kashmiriyat. Gulam Dar (who works in a shrine) understands Kashmiriyat in terms
of brethren relationship and harmony between the people of different religions: “There was brethren relationship/bahichara in Kashmir. Everybody was equal; there was no difference between the people, nobody used to say that they are Muslims they are Hindus”.

“Bahichara” literally means brotherhood and bahichara among people of different religions in Kashmir is another way to explain Kashmiriyat. Various people in villages as well as the urban setting use the word bahichara when they talk about the concept Kashmiriyat. Some, who do not know about Kashmiriyat, understand the concept when it is explained by using the word bahichara. Kashmiriyat is reflective not only of certain way of life that Kashmiris have, but also of their worldviews and view of the world around them.

Ahad Mir (artisan) and Parvaiz Hussain (businessman) see Kashmiriyat as hospitality of the people of Kashmir. Parvaiz Hussain said: “The main meaning attached to Kashmiriyat is our hospitality, because Kashmir is a tourist place and if we do not treat them well they will not come back to this place again”.

“Kashmiriyat has changed”, “children born in the last twenty years have no idea about Kashmiriyat and meaning attached to it”

Sajid Khan (retired school teacher) initially said that nothing has changed about Kashmiriyat or in bahichara, as he understands Kashmiriyat in terms of bahichara. But, when asked how he sees Kashmiriyat today, he said:

See, in a garden there are different kinds of flowers and the garden looks very beautiful. But if there is only flower in the garden, then the garden would not look that beautiful. If Hindus [Kashmiri Pandits] would have been in Kashmir, the place could have been more beautiful: there would be hustle-bustle. Now they are not here and that has affected, and if they do not come back, days are passing and there will be only one flower in the garden. This is the difference and already it has affected a little bit.

Thus, Sajid Khan understands Kashmiriyat in terms of the brethren relationship between Kashmiri Muslims and Kashmiri Pandits. He beautifully described Kashmiri Muslims and Kashmiri Pandits as flowers of different kind in the garden of Kashmir; though they belong to different religious faiths, they make Kashmir beautiful. According to him, diversity makes the place and the atmosphere more beautiful.

Nazir Ahemad is not so hopeful: “that old time is gone, that enjoyment is not there now. Kashmiriyat has changed we don’t have Kashmiriyat now”. For the people of his age, the generation that had experienced Kashmir before the turmoil, it is very difficult and painful to accept that things have changed during the last twenty years, although they are observing and experiencing the change.

Ayesha (housewife) lives in an area that was earlier predominated by the Pandits. Now Pandits have migrated and, in their houses, Muslim families are living. This change in the neighbourhood has many consequences: “The atmosphere [maholl] has changed now. What was earlier here is finished; there are new ways now,” she says. Ayesha is not familiar with the term
Kashmiriyat, but she is aware of the changes taking place in the society. Ishaq Wani (worked in electricity department, now retired) said in a very sad way that there is no more Kashmiriyat now:

There was Kashmiriyat; [sadness in gesture and voice] a ray of peace was there in Kashmir. Now Kashmiriyat is not there, for their vested interest they have ruined it. The brotherhood of Kashmir was an example in the whole world. We would not find this kind of brotherhood in Pakistan as well as Hindustan....

Rabia Kutub also thinks that: “The way our parents used to follow the cultural patterns we are not following; our children will not follow that we are following. It is all changing with the pace of time”. However, she thinks that the composite culture and Kashmiri identity will not change: “It will remain the same... if you talk to any Pandit who is here or who wants to come back and those who have come back their neighbours have welcomed them”.

Maqsood Kadri (retired from health department in the state government) thinks that values attached to Kashmiriyat are changing now:

Kashmiriyat, is actually is [sic] boundaries of the values, the residents, our social values. We used to respect Hindu temples.... We eat beef and when we used to cut it we tried to cut it in a place where Hindus could not see it. We did not want to hurt their sentiments. Similarly, Kashmiri Pandits also used to take care of our emotions and sentiments and never did anything that Muslims would not tolerate. But now it is not like that.

Maqsood Kadri’s reflection on Kashmiriyat is focused on the close relationship between Kashmiri Muslims and Kashmiri Pandits. He talked about Kashmiriyat in terms of the mutual respect between the two. Kashmiri Muslims and Kashmiri Pandits took care of each other’s sentiments. This explains the brotherhood/bahichara between the two communities as an important component of Kashmiriyat. But, he says that it is not the same anymore.

Rasool Malik also perceives the attrition of composite culture in Kashmir:

For last twenty years, there has been an erosion of the composite culture and identity for political and ideological reasons. But, as for as the Kashmiriyat is concerned, debate is going on it, as a dimension pertaining to the unique culture that Kashmiris have. It is reflective of that; it is also reflective of type of view, world view and regional view that Kashmiris have about the world around them and also the society and culture.

The interview with Abbas Kak on what is Kashmiriyat today\(^1\) went on as follows:

Abbas Kak: In these last twenty years, there is lot of change that has came in Kashmiriyat.

KB: What difference or change are you feeling?

Abbas Kak: I feel that the children of the new generation from the five-year old to twenty-year old hate. Whom?... They hate Hindustan; because they are getting tortured....Children who have lost their fathers are living like beggars now.

KB: Does the younger generation also have that understanding of Kashmiriyat you know or the way you understand it?

\(^1\)At this point, his young son commented in Kashmiri as to where I had been in the 1990s: “she should have come at that time and should have seen the situation here”. Abbas Kak laughed at his son’s comment, but did not elaborate on that. Evidently, Abbas Kak’s son was angry about whatever has happened in Kashmir during the last twenty year.
Abbas Kak: That time Kashmiriyat was there. People were very simple. There was no problem. Now, everybody is in frustration, whether it is five-year-old child or hundred-year-old person. When you leave home in the morning you never know if you will return home alive. We get worried about our children when they are out of home. There is lot of difference: the children of Pandits who have left Kashmir do not know what Kashmiriyat is. They must have heard, but how much they can rely on that is kind of myth for them. In Kashmir, children who are ten or fifteen-year-old very emotionally agitated; if you had come ten years ago, they would have killed you.

This shows how the meaning of composite culture, inter-community relations and Kashmiri ethnic identity has changed during the last twenty years. The concept of Kashmiriyat for the older generation, or those who had experienced it before the turmoil, has a special meaning. Abbas Kak explains the reason behind the change in this concept. The comment made by his son (see footnote 1), during the interview has also influenced him to talk about the factors that have changed the understanding of Kashmiriyat. He feels that the younger generation of both Kashmiri Muslims and Kashmiri Pandits have no opportunities for interaction or there is no relationship between them. According to him, they do not pay any attention to this concept.

Zahoor Butt also thinks that Kashmiriyat has changed significantly in the last twenty years:

...the new generation, [pointing towards his son] like him has not seen anything. He was 10 years old at that time and the children of Kashmiri Pandits who were his friends are not here now. The way they perceive each other [now] we were not like that... now we don’t have the same feeling; there is difference in our way of thinking and younger generation’s way of thinking about each other.

Zahoor Butt’s son also said, that Kashmiriyat is gone now, it cannot come back:

When Kashmiri Pandits were there earlier and whenever India and Pakistan match happened, if Pakistan won then we used to dance and send sweets to Pandits to irritate them [laughs], and if India won Pandits used to send sweets to us. But all those things used to happen in lighter moods. Now that kind of brotherhood is not possible or Kashmiriyat cannot come back. Things are changed now.

The older generation thinks that the younger generation has no idea of Kashmiriyat, which they have experienced; they perceive a difference between their perception of Kashmiriyat and that of the younger generation’s. This is mainly because their experiences are different. There is only one dominant population in the Kashmir Valley now, namely, the Kashmiri Muslims, and in this kind of atmosphere to think of Kashmiriyat as in the past is very difficult. Thus, the meanings attached to Kashmiriyat are changing. Zahoor Butt said “ennme Kusch hai”, which means the younger generation has some kind of feeling that the older generation cannot think of. Similarly, Firak Shah said “there is some change, the differences have increased now”.

The meaning Firak Shah attached to Kashmiriyat is equality of all religions, togetherness of living and brotherhood among the people of all religions. So, he also feels that change has come in this span of time and division or disconnection among people belonging to different religion is more pronounced now.

There is another meaning that is attached to Kashmiriyat, that is, it is a political term or political tool. When he was asked what his views about Kashmiriyat were, Shameem Dar (working in Kashmir Administrative Service) asked “are you talking about the political ‘thing’? ’
KB: Do you think that it is political?

Shameem Dar: No, no, I don’t understand it as political,

Shameem Dar’s first reaction implies that now Kashmiriyat is also perceived by people as a political term.

KB: How do people generally understand Kashmiriyat?

Shameem Dar: People in Kashmir don’t know about Kashmiriyat. Generally people have no clue as to what actually is Kashmiriyat. In a real sense, every place has its own cultural heritage and we have to save our cultural heritage. The Kashmiris gave this cultural heritage the name of Kashmiriyat to safeguard it.... Kashmir is always a separate state that is why its cultural heritage is called as Kashmiriyat like Indian civilisation. It includes our culture, our education, marriages, social conduct and the way of our life: that is Kashmiriyat.

When he was asked if people in Kashmir also understand it as bahichara, he said:

No, not bahichara. In actual and real sense Kashmiriyat is culture and cultural heritage of people of Kashmir, of those who live here.

KB: Who has contributed to make this Kashmiriyat?

Shameem Dar: Actually, Kashmiriyat is here from thousand years Kashmir was a separate state and so many rulers came and ruled it. We have different language, different culture. Our way of life is different. So the people of Kashmir have played the role in its making. It is basically to preserve the culture, politician has not played that much role but now the politician and intellectuals are playing the role. Sufi saints also played a role in the making of Kashmiriyat...one Sufi saint was Sheikh Noorudin Noorani

KB: Have Kashmiri Pandits’ also contributed to this?

Shameem Dar: They have contributed a lot. I will say Kashmir Pandits have preserved the Kashmiri culture and Kashmiriyat more than Muslims. Their language was pure Kashmiri language. There are some words in Kashmiri language that only Kashmiri Pandits use but we [Muslims] have forgotten. Their Kashmiri dress is little different from the Muslims dress, but it is Kashmiri dress only. They tried to preserve and safeguard Kashmiri dress Kashmiri language. They have contributed to Kashmiri literature.

According to Shameem Dar, Kashmiriyat represents the cultural heritage of Kashmir, as Kashmir was always a separate state and Kashmiriyat originated to safeguard the cultural heritage of Kashmir. Kashmiriyat is contribution of Sufi-saints of Kashmir like Sheikh Nooru-din-Noorani. He also talked about the Kashmiri Pandits’ contribution in preserving the Kashmiri culture. But he points to the fact that Kashmiriyat has now acquired a political connotation, as it is also one way to argue that Kashmir has always been a separate state and Kashmiriyat is to safeguard the cultural heritage of the people who live there.

“I don’t know Kashmiriyat”/ “It is only a political tool”/ “Why our identity is given the name of Kashmiriyat”

Another aspect that came out is that Kashmiriyat is simplicity, hospitality, or bahichara (brethren relations) among the people of different religions. However, some people also think that Kashmiriyat is maligned, it has changed now, and it is more a political tool than anything else. There are participants who also got irritated when asked about Kashmiriyat and they first retorted
“I don’t know about Kashmiriyat”. Tabbassum (a lecturer) thinks that the term Kashmiriyat has become a political instrument in the hands of politicians and that they are using it for their own vested interests (outside Kashmir and in Kashmir also). Her response is as follows:

I have not heard about Kashmiriyat. For me, it is different, for you it can be different, for somebody else it is different, how can you people can devise this type of concept? I feel people who are not living in Kashmir, who are not the part and parcel of Kashmir, are talking about the concept of Kashmiriyat. I feel this concept has become a political tool. Every region has its own culture and there is yardstick of each culture in every region. If we talk at international level there is a specificity and special trait of the place that makes the place special and differentiates it from the rest of the world. It is something, it is your identity, but I don’t understand why our Identity is given the name of Kashmiriyat. Kashmiriyat simply is political, that we just want to preserve Kashmiriyat, this is Kashmiriyat, that is Kashmiriyat, outside world says. Our special Identity markers are being treated as Kashmiriyat. Till the militancy started, or during pre-militancy period no one talk much about Kashmiriyat, now it has emerged as tool. Everybody is giving explanation, her/his own definition of Kashmiriyat. Specifically in politics, they are using it now, why it was not popular before? It has become the device now. We only see our specificities under Kashmiriyat nothing else.

Imtiaz Khan (professor of history) also feels that the message and meaning attached to Kashmiriyat is distorted by many factors:

After all, I am a Kashmiri and am just trying to explain the concept of Kashmiriyat on the basis of my own experiences. What is Kashmiriyat? They [political people or politicians] have made a mockery of Kashmiriyat to a great extent. In the local newspapers there is lot of material you will find against Kashmiriyat. Now I realise the danger posed to Kashmiriyat, the challenge posed by the top leadership who want to distort the meaning, image of Kashmiriyat, on the one hand, and the militant, on the other hand. I feel it is threatened. Kashmiriyat is inherent in me. First, I am a Kashmiri Muslim. Kashmiriyat cannot be defined in one word ... who have experiences would feel about it, the “nostalgia” you know. It can’t be understood by everyone unless one is familiar with the ethos of Kashmiri culture. Only the Kashmiri Pandits could understand. Kashmiriyat is actually an ideology and I don’t attach religion to an ideology.

Imtiaz Khan also thinks that politicians are trying to saffronise Kashmiriyat:

They just talk about ancient roots. That period is not counted as Muslims period. But don’t they think Shah-i-Hamadan has his role in Kashmiriyat, Islam has its contribution in Kashmiriyat, to the growth of civilisation of Kashmir. Hindutava only understands that [not see the role of Islam and Islamic Sufi] Kashmiriyat, only glorifying the element of Hindu rule.

Thus, various meaning were attached to Kashmiriyat in the past and there are new meanings given to the concept at present. The next section would discuss the role of Sufi practices and Sufi saints in the construction of Kashmiriyat.

II

Sufi Practices and Impact of Islam

The second part of the chapter focuses on the perception of the participants on Sufi practices, their beliefs in the Sufi and Rishi traditions and the impact of Islam on these practices. The Sufi and Rishi traditions have a lot of impact on the Kashmiri social set-up and are considered an important component of Kashmiriyat. The Sufi practices and belief system are important parts of the social life of the people of Kashmir. The shrines and the sayings of various saints have
significance for all Kashmiris irrespective of their religion, and they have played an important role in the construction of Kashmiriyat.

The older generation has experienced the cultural context in which various (shrines of Sufi saints) were an important part of their belief system. It is important to know the significance of these beliefs and practices for them in the present context and how people perceive the Sufi practices now. This part reflects on the answer to the questions like “What do you think is the role of Sufism and Rishism in Kashmiri society and Kashmiriyat, or building the bond between Kashmiri Muslims and Kashmiri Pandits?”, “What are the changes they observed in Sufi Practices?”, and “What is the impact of Islam on Sufi practices ?”.

“Sufism and Rishism was started in the context of the reciprocal interaction of Islamic and pre-Islamic practices” / “Sufism has its role in making of Kashmiriyat”.

Participants think that Sufi practices evolved through gradual development by mixing of various faiths and cultures in Kashmir. They see the roots of Sufism in the centuries old culture of Kashmir that is deep rooted in society. Maqbool Butt talks about the historical background of Sufism, which emerged through a process of mixing of Hinduism, Buddhism and Islam:

....Whenever a new religion came in, there was not much confrontation rather there was a kind of interaction between people and [culture].... So it was Sufism preached Islam here.... The different kind of cultural ethos was the combination of Islamic and pre-Islamic practices that is Hindu practices. Some of these past practices were continued in the new religious behaviour.... In this way Kashmiri culture became composite in character and known as Kashmiriyat. These entire different features taken together that composed the whole of Kashmiri, whole of Kashmiriyat, in this way idea in written, practicalised....

Maqbool Butt further talked about Kashmiri Pandits devotion towards these shrines: “In fact Pandits used to visit these shrines more than Muslims, even they would visit a Muslim saint dargah before going to the temple... Even now they send money to these dargah as a part of their offering”. He also told about a Kashmiri Pandit friend, now living in Delhi, who gave him money to offer in the shrine: “Once I was in Delhi, one Kashmiri Pandit gave me money and asked me to offer that at Dastgeer Sahib shrine”.

The extract shows that in Kashmir whenever people have adopted a new faith, they have continued some practices of the old faith. Sufism and Rishi traditions are a representation of the mixed cultural history of Kashmir. Both Kashmiri Muslims and Kashmiri Pandits have showed an immense faith in Sufism. According to Maqbool Butt, the amalgamation of different religious faiths resulted in Rishi and Sufi traditions and this has played a significant role in the making of Kashmiriyat.

Sajid Khan also thinks that Sufi and Rishi traditions are a part of the Kashmiri culture:

I think Kashmiri culture is based on Sufi and Rishi traditions. There is a one shrine of a Sufi saint here. My Kashmiri Pandit friend is in Jammu and once I went to meet him, he gave five rupees to buy a bulb/lamp for the shrine which is situated nearby. This much we have influence on each others’ cultural patterns.
When Abbas Kak was asked whether he believes in Sufism and goes to these shrines, he replied, “Yes even now belief is there and there was a time everyone would go together. There was faith and belief”. Taslima (housewife) talked about the yearly festival (urs) people celebrate in the shrine called Rishi Sahib, which is situated near the place she lives. She said: “Every year people celebrate in that shrine”. When she was asked whether Kashmiri Pandits also go there, she replied: “That [the shrine] belongs to Muslims, but the Pandits used to visits more and believe in it even more than Muslims”.

“It depends on the family some follow Sufi practices some not”

Gulam Dar (working in a shrine) and Zahoor Butt have similar opinion that there were people who had no faith in Sufi practices and belief system in the past and presently also there are people who have no inclination towards it. Gulam Dar thinks that “it depends on the family; if parents believe in Sufi practices, their children also follow them”. Zahoor Butt’s views are as follows:

Sufism is still prevailing in Kashmir, not much difference has occurred. In the past also some were believers of Sufism and some were not. Today also some people believe, some do not... However, the exodus of Kashmiri Pandits has decreased the number of believers by one or two percent.

“My faith is not developed in one day”/ “Sufism is eternal to Kashmir”

Maqsood Kadri has immense faith in Sufism. When Maqsood Kadri was asked whether he believes in these /shrines and goes to pray over there, he replied with pride:

Maqsood: Why not?

KB: Do you go to Makhdoom sahib?

Maqsood: Why not? Definitely, I go everywhere

KB: Do you believe in it?

Maqsood: Why not? If we go to some shrine and for example we pray for rain there and only once in happens, we should not believe that. But if it keeps on happening we should believe it, thinking that there is some divine power. I have seen personally that whenever it did not rain we went there [in the shrine], prayed for that collectively, it has always rained [as wish fulfilment].

Maqsood’s young son was sitting nearby and he has no inclination towards Sufism or Sufi practices. I asked him why his son has no faith in Sufi practices? He said:

They [young generation] do not believe. They have different approach. They have no exposure, no experiences. When they would get exposure and experience it themselves then they will also start believing. Twenty years ago I also did not believe, but when I faced hardships, I went to a shrine. Then I experienced [the divine power] myself and started believing in it. It happens.

The son interrupted and said “it is only because of emotional outburst”, but Maqsood Kadri thoroughly disagreed and said:

Whatever it is, I said that, if something [miracle] happens only once, it is co-incidence. But when something happens again and again, it is not natural. Some intervention is there.
Maqsood Kadri also believes that these shrines have played a key role in creating a strong bond between Kashmiri Muslims and Kashmiri Pandits. He said:

Definitely, Kashmiri Pandits also used to believe in the shrines they used to go to the shrines with reverence. That was their belief in these shrines and no one could stop them from entering the shrines. They may not offer namaz [practice of formal prayer in Islam] but they would calmly sit there [in shrine] because they had faith and reverence.

Small arguments that occurred between Maqsood Kadri and his son during this particular conversation reflect that the belief system of Maqsood Kadri and the generation he belongs to is questioned by the generation to which his son belongs. However, Maqsood Kadri does not get influenced by his son’s opinion and has been persistent that his belief system is not superficial, but it has substance behind it. Similarly, Frida Khan (housewife) believes in Sufi practices and goes to the shrine, but her daughter and her husband are of the opinion that she is wrong, that she should not follow these practices. During the interview, when she was asked whether she believes in Sufi saints and prays in the shrines, her husband interrupted and said: “We tried to tell her that she should not go to the shrines, but she does not listen to me. If you are going fine, but you are not supposed to bow down and ask for anything in these shrine that is wrong”.

Frida Khan did not say anything then and just smiled, but her gestures conveyed that what others say it did not matter for her. She does not get influenced by her husband and her daughter’s belief systems. She said that she has immense faith in Sufi saints and goes to the shrines and prays there. This explains that not only the younger generation but her fifty-year-old husband also challenges her belief system.

Imtiaz Khan believes that Sufism is eternal to Kashmir and it will remain there. He said: “Sufism prevails in Kashmir; you are here, you can see it... nothing will happen to Sufism, because it is eternal ...”. When I explained to him that people say that there is only one Allah and to offer prayer in these shrines is wrong, he replied:

This is because few television channels spread this, and that is influencing. I think this is just ignorance and nothing else. I also used to say like this [laugh]. This is true that there is revivalist movement going on but Sufism is still there. When a human being faces problems, then what gives one [us] support? This support is one’s inner strength that comes from Almighty; one looks up to him. One can say that s/he believes in God, but to reach him one need an intermediate.... who introduced me to Allah? I did not know Allah, there are 360 idols in Kaba, and it is only through Muhammad Sallallahu-alayhi-wasallam I learned how to worship. He did not ask us to worship him. He preached to worship one Kudhal/Almighty. But the teacher who taught us to worship, he deserves respect. What is in Sufism? It is the teacher-taught relationship, nothing else. Strengthening of these relationships leads to the stability in society because then you will stable inside your soul. To say that I believe in one God is superficial and believing in Sufi saint does not affect one’s belief in Allah/Almighty.

According to Imtiaz Khan, Sufism is eternal to Kashmir. He believes that the Sufi saints had a role to play in the society. He considers these saints as teachers because they have shown the path to people to reach Allah. Further, Sufism grants inner stability to an individual, thereby giving stability to the society as a whole. Imtiaz Khan also refers to the Islamic revivalist movement in Kashmir which is against the Sufi practices. He said:
For our so-called reformist such as Jamaat-i-Islami, they are mushirk２; they go to /shrines, to offer prayer with all the rituals so they are polytheist. This is sin in Islam [for reformists]. It [Sufism and Rishiyat] is a part of our culture, not religion. But unless we understand the role of Rishiyat, how can we understand Kashmiriyat. They [Kashmiri Pandits] are Brahmins they are outside the Islam. But Rishis and Sufis are the mixture of Brahmanism and Islam. Sufism is the response of Kashmir to Islam. This is how Kashmiri Muslims became Muslim earlier they were Hindus, Buddhist, and were divided among different caste groups. Rishi movement was against the caste system and Brahmanical rituals. Lal Ded³ was against those rituals. Brahmins disowned her. She did not accept the Islam but Muslims owned her and called her Lalla Arifa.

The extract shows that Imitiaz Khan thinks that Sufism and “Rishiyat” contributed to the making of Kashmiriyat and it is not possible to understand Kashmiriyat without understanding Sufism and Rishism. But, on the other hand, he talked about reformists, posing challenges to these practices by saying that this is sin and is prohibited in Islam.

“To offer prayer to someone, other than Allah is not permitted in Islam”/ “our Kashmir is finished because of Sufism”

Shameem Dar thinks that the meanings attached to Sufi practices are getting distorted:

The definition of Sufism that is projected is wrong. There are many definitions of Sufism. But, in real sense to understand Sufism is very tough, specially the Sufism they are preaching to Muslims these days. They believe that Sufism means [pause]. One thing is non-violence, that is fine because Islam did not spread [in Kashmir] through weapons; it spread through values. ...when Shah-i-Hamadan came to Kashmir, he also believed in non-violence. He came with 700-800 people and they all preached God’s message and never forced anyone to change her/his religion. Those who believed became Muslims and those who did not remained Pandits. Around ten-twenty lakh Pandits were living in Kashmir; they also know that there was no violence in Islam. Sufism preaches non-violence and that Sufism is the soul of Islam...

When I asked him if the way people recite prayer loudly in dargah/shrine/ Hazratbal is it not permitted in Islam? He replied: “This [the way people recite prayer] is different from other places actually it is only in Kashmir ... people loudly recite prayer. Otherwise, people recite [sic] same thing everywhere” When I asked him further if Islam in Kashmir is different from the rest of India, he explained:

It is not that. But your question is very important because, in Kashmir, all were Hindus till Shah-i-Hamadan arrived. We were also Hindus our ancestors were Hindus, only seven hundred years ago we converted into Islam. All the Pandits used to pray in a loud manner; then Shah-i-Hamadan told them to continue the way they used to pray or conduct their prayers, but only instead of Ram you say Allah-Allah, and gradually the habit will go off. Now these traditions are diminishing with the time because of education. Our grandparents and great grandparents were illiterate whatever they used to listen they used to follow. Now children have read literature related to religion; they have knowledge about it.

Shameem Dar does not say that he has no faith in Sufi practices; he considers Sufism as the soul of Islam, which also preaches non-violence. But he thinks that if someone prays in shrines it means that a person is not devoted completely to Allah, it means to worship more than one God

２ Those who go to the shrines and bow down their head, offer prayer in the shrines, they are mushirk/polytheist and creating a counter part of Allah. They are doing shirk (polytheism)
３ See Chapter 3
and Islam does not permit that. Tabassum completely denies that she has any knowledge of Sufi practices. She said:

There is lot of change in that also because people are getting education. Earlier there was culture of going to shrines but with the passage of time, people got educated they become aware of the religion [Islam] in true sense. But there is no harm in their going to the shrines; this is again our culture. It seems this is the influence of pre-conversion culture but this is undergoing some change now.

Rabia Kutub thinks that Sufism is “declining in Kashmir”. Parvaiz Hussain perceives that Sufism has done nothing good to Kashmir:

It is because of Sufism our Kashmir is finished ... what our religion says about our relationship to Allah, Sufism has weakened that. One of the Kashmiri poets has said not to go behind these shrines, but do good deeds as these Sufi saints have done. Our Dr. Gulam Dar Abdullah few days back said that if somebody wants to meet me, first he has to meet my secretary. Similarly, if you want to establish a relationship with Allah you have to go to these shrines. But, I think this logic is wrong and they [politicians] are misleading people. Our mother loves us; in the same manner Allah also loves us. If we want something from our mother we will not take the help of somebody else, we can ask directly from the mother. Similarly, Allah is like our mother; we can maintain the direct relation to Allah; there is no need of mediator. Our religion is diminishing because of Sufism; people are fascinated by Sufism. But for those who serve in these shrines it is just a kind of business; they have become priests and ruined everything. This Sufism exists because of no exposure to education. I do not believe in Sufism. Earlier there were Sufi saints who did good deeds and society got benefits from them ... and people started considering them as a God. In these Khangah [place for spiritual retreat] people used to go and repeat Allah-Allah for forty days so that people can purify themselves with the name of Allah. Hindus of Kashmir also used to believe in Sufism and these shrines also helped to build brotherhood among the people of different religious faiths. I still remember one incident of childhood: once there was an earthquake in Kashmir. The Kashmiri Hindus asked Kashmiri Muslims to recite kalima [Islamic prayer] ... so that earthquake will stop. I believe in Allah. But people [who believe in Sufi practices] say we [those who do not believe in Sufi practices or do not go to the shrines] do not love and respect these Sufi saints. Shah-i-Hamadan converted us into Muslims. Before that, around six hundred years ago, we all were Pandits or Hindus. Shah-i-Hamadan brought us back from hell, but to consider him everything is wrong. A person says: we have become Allah-vaie [who only believes in one Allaha] only because of these Sufis-saints; they bestowed their blessing on us. I know and I agree with that, it is only because of them, and Allah will give rewards to them for their good deeds, but whatever is wrong is wrong.

Rabia Kutub talked about two “factions” in Kashmir: one believes in Sufi practices, and the other believes that there is only one Allah and that going to the shrines is un-Islamic. Parvaiz Hussain explains that the Sufi saints have bestowed their blessings on Kashmiris and worked hard for the society in Kashmir. They have shown the right path to the people of Kashmir by converting them to Islam, but to consider them as God, he thinks, is incorrect. Rameez Shah (a school teacher) also thinks in a similar manner:

They are saints of that time, but they cannot help us in the present times. They have worked a lot, they have devoted a lot, and they have done everything for the society, but in my opinion their work is over. If people go and gather around these shrines it is not good for them or for the society... their work was over when they died, they have no role in the present society. You will find very less people of this ideology now. There is no restriction to go into the shrines, but you cannot ask for anything ... there is nobody to hear you; there is no body to help you. I never went to these shrines, but no one stops me from going there. I have learned about Islam in a real sense about twenty years ago. My father was also influenced by me. Those who are educated are not going to the shrines because that is not real Islam. We go to the shrines to seek the help of the God. There is nothing, nobody other than God, only God has given us life. But the government agencies are propagating that people should go to the shrines because they do not like Islam in the real
sense. The people in the government are of different ideology; they do not like Islam in the real sense.

In Kashmir, people who are puritan, that is those who believe in pure Islam, perceive Sufism to be an obstacle in understanding Islam in the “real sense”. According to Parvaiz Hussain and Rameez Shah, the Sufi saints had done their work in the past and in present times they cannot help the society; to worship the saints as God is wrong. They also think that Sufism is misleading people and that politician and government agencies are also responsible for propagating Sufism in Kashmir because they do not like Islam in the “real sense”.

III

Kashmiri Muslims and Kashmiri Pandits: The Nature of Social Relationship

This part of the chapter is an attempt to understand the nature of the relationship between Kashmiri Muslims and Kashmiri Pandits before and after the turmoil. Their mutual relationship is considered as a significant component of Kashmriyati. Having, lived in close association for centuries, the camaraderie between them had contributed to the making of the composite culture of Kashmir.

This part reflects on the experiences of Kashmiri Muslims living with Kashmiri Pandits before the turmoil and the absence of that close interaction after the turmoil. How do they perceive the absence of Kashmiri Pandits? How has the absence of Kashmiri Pandits affected the composite culture of Kashmir? What are Kashmiri Muslims views on the prospects of Kashmiri Pandits returning to their homeland? How do Kashmiri Muslims perceive the role of religion and politics in straining the relationship between the two religious communities? What are the thoughts of the younger generation when it hears about the earlier closeness between Kashmiri Muslims and Kashmiri Pandits? Responses to such questions as these would throw the light on the earlier existing reality of inter-community relationship and the reality as it exists now.

“There were harmonious relationships among the Kashmiri Muslims and Kashmiri Pandits”

Suriya Zabbin remembers the past experiences of her life in Kashmir with Kashmiri Pandits:

It was very good that time. Pandits were living in the vicinity and they used to come to our house and we also visited them. There was a mandir [temple] nearby where I used to live before. My elder brother, God bless him, had Pandits friends, they used to come to our house and there was no difference and there were complete harmonious relationships between us. We used to take part in each others marriage ceremony.

She describes the marriage ceremony of one of her Pandit friends with nostalgia:

In our vicinity, there was a marriage of one of my Pandit friends, Phulla; they invited us. We went on that occasion to their house. Kashmiri Pandit women did not know that much wan-wun [songs Kashmiris sing on the occasion of marriage]. All the Muslim women sang so much on that
occasion. Her groom was so much surprised that he wondered whether this is a Pandit house or a Muslim house [laughs]. We used to celebrate festival Herath/Shivratri also. Pandits used to give us wet walnuts on that occasion. In my marriage, my brother’s Pandit friend, Shankar was just like my brother and he used to take care of me as if I was his sister and he was my elder brother. I mean to say that there was no difference between my elder brother and his Pandit friend for me.

Suriya Zabbin describes her experience of living with Kashmiri Pandits. Taking part in each other’s marriage ceremonies with enthusiasm and celebrating various festivals together sums up the close association between Kashmiri Muslims and Kashmiri Pandits. Her brother’s Pandit friends used to treat her as their own younger sister and that explains the care, love, and trust towards each other among Kashmiri Muslims and Kashmiri Pandits. Similarly, Taslima also talked about the close connection with the Kashmiri Pandits: “We lived in harmony. We used to take part in each others’ marriages and festivals. They used to invite us for their festivals and we also used to invite them on Eid”.

Ishaq Wani talked about his experiences of that Kashmir, which was beautiful as well as peaceful. He reminisces: his memories:

I cannot express in words about the earlier Kashmir. It was so beautiful. Everything was so nice here. Social relationship was so good, there was brotherhood among people. We used to celebrate all the social functions like marriage ceremonies together. Whether it would be the occasion of happiness or sad moment in our lives, we [Kashmiri Pandits and Kashmiri Muslims] were always together. This animosity, controversy, this kind of hatred was not there at all. We were always there for each other in troublesome times. It was so wonderful; they would come to our house, we would also frequently visit them. The concept of Hindu and Muslims was never there in our mind at all. It was so good. I do not know what happened, may be evil eye cast on brotherhood among us. No one knows who was behind the curtain. Suddenly, in the 1990s movement for freedom started. Everyone was involved in that movement, but suddenly Hindus started moving out of Kashmir.

Ishaq Wani becomes very nostalgic and feels short of words to express his experiences of living in the peaceful Valley with Kashmiri Pandits. The society was simple and people loved each other. There was no controversy, no hatred for each other. In his emotional outburst he says that some evil eye was cast on brotherhood among Kashmiri Muslims and Kashmiri Pandits. It speaks of the affinity, very close bond between the Kashmiri Pandits and Kashmiri Muslims in the past; something that people of his age are feeling absent now.

Abbas Kak also talked about the close relationship among the Muslims and Pandits of Kashmir:

The biggest thing was that we shared the joys and sorrows of each other. The divisive concept of Hindu and Muslims never existed because no one was that conscious of the differences ... if one suffered the other got pained. This was something given by the God... This was Kashmiriyat in Kashmir... among the ten families around if one cooked something special, all would share it. This was the love of that time.

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4 Shivratri is the festival related to Hindu god Shiva, in Kashmiri it is called Herath, Kashmiri Pandits distribute wet walnut on the occasion of this festival.
Firak Shah also said that “earlier people had love and sympathy for each other. There was brotherhood among them. People would help each other in marriage ceremonies and problematic situations”. Ahad Mir is very grateful to his Kashmiri Pandit compatriots: “I stayed with Kashmiri Pandits. It is only because of Kashmiri Pandits, I have learnt everything. They were officers. Today, I am working only because of them, they were very nice”. Similarly, Maqsood Kadri also said about the contribution of Kashmiri Pandits in his education:

In those days we enjoyed education together. Kashmiri Pandits were economically prosperous they would arrange the tuition for their children in Hindu house and then Muslims would also join those classes. For twelve years I availed that opportunity in a Hindu [Kashmiri Pandits] family. They taught me like brothers. Social relations were very close.

Imtiaz Khan, going down the memory, lane said:

My neighbors were non-Muslims who belonged to Pandit elite-class ... The best relation we had with Kashmiri Pandits. Strange phenomena! every morning one Pandits woman [he is talking about his mother’s friend] used to come to our house in the search of flowers. My mother used to sit ready with samovar [traditional Kashmiri kettle to keep the tea warm] the moment that lady would come my mother would stand and wish salam [to wish each other]. Then they would engage in conversation; this was a regular affair. I am sixty three, I have seen whenever marriage used to happen, the traditional cook would sit in the open kitchen area [specially constructed for functions] and there also two-three Kashmiri Pandits used to sit with pink turban. They might not take even a cup of tea; we called them orthodox Pandits ...same as there were orthodox Muslims. Even then such a kind of relations we had in the traditional society. We might not dine with each other but even then we would take care of each others house during marriages.

Imtiaz Khan explains the very strong relationships his family shared with Kashmiri Pandit neighbours. He reminisces about his mother’s friendship with one Kashmiri Pandit woman and their daily routine of discussion on various things. Kashmiri Pandits would not take food in a Muslim house, but the trust factor between them was very strong, it shows through their conduct and the ways they would take care of each others needs in everyday life and during important occasions.

“There was tradition of celebrating each and every festival together whether it was Herath/Shivratri or Eid”

The web of social relationship is constructed by social beings through many activities. The celebration of various festivals together and taking part in different social functions contribute to the development and reinforcement of social relationships. Rasool Malik elucidates his experience of living in a village with Kashmiri Pandits and celebrating festivals with them:

In my village, I found complete brotherhood among the people, complete amity and harmony in their [Kashmiri Muslim and Kashmiri Pandits] relations. You should talk to these people who lived life together… In my village there is no Kashmiri Pandit now … but there are some sacred spring there, where these people [Kashmiri Pandits] used take holy bath…. during our childhood we used to wait for that event dewey that is mela [fair]…. Actually the Muslims used to installed the market in that fair, they were both sellers as well as buyer… the Muslims used to come from the neighboring village also to celebrate that…. they would not recite those Mantras but it was the occasion of celebration. I still remember with nostalgia.
He showed me a tattoo of moon that he had got done during that particular Kashmiri Pandit festival during his childhood: “I cried and asked my father that I want to get this done on my hand”.

Rasool Malik talked about the village fair that used to take place in his village on the occasion of Kashmiri Pandits’ festival. All Kashmiri Muslims from his village and neighbouring village used to take part in that fair. Muslims would also arrange stalls of various things to sell in those fairs. It speaks of interdependency among both the communities in Kashmiri society on various occasions. The festivals of Kashmiri Pandits were not theirs alone; Kashmiri Muslims participated in them with all zeal and enthusiasm.

Similarly, Maqbool Butt, Farida Khan, Sheikh Mohmmad and Zahoor Butt talked about the celebration of Eid and Shivratri by Kashmiri Muslims and Kashmiri Pandits together. Parvaiz Hussain talked about his participation in the celebration related to Kashmiri Pandits’ festival Herath/Shivratri.

There was no concept of Hindu and Muslim; we had celebrated all the festivals together. There is one festival, Herath/Shivratri, that is also called festivals of walnuts. I had participated in that Hindu festival; I myself distributed walnuts to everyone on that occasion. I still remember when Kashmiri Pandits celebrated last Herath/Shivratri in Kashmir they were very sad and had tears in their eyes. Because they knew that now they are leaving Kashmir and after two days they left. So I mean to say there was no religious difference, only the distinction was of our names. One is Hari Krishan and other is Parvaiz Hussain.

Nazir Ahmed talked about Janmashtami [Lord Krishna’s birthday] festival celebration before the turmoil: “Whenever festivals/bada din and fairs took place in some shrines we would go together. On the occasion of Janmashtami, people got together, moved in procession and recited Radhe-Sham, Radhe-Sham. Now nothing is there...” Gulam Dar also talked about the festival that Kashmiri Muslims and Kashmiri Pandits celebrated in the memory of Sufi saint Dastgeer Sahib: “even now Kashmiri Pandits send money in the name of shrine”. Suriya Zabbin describes one particular festival in which all Kashmiris welcomed the spring season:

When Kashmiri Pandits were in Kashmir, we celebrated many festivals together such as Hazratbal fair, fair on the shrine of Dastgeer Sahib and Makhdoom Sahib... During Navreh festival Kashmiri Muslims and Kashmiri Pandits used to go to place called Badamwari [the place full of almond trees] together. Beautiful almonds flowers bloomed on the tree of almonds. Muslims and Pandits all used to take part in that fair together, carrying Kashmiri tea in samovar. No one would able to differentiate Kashmiri Muslims and Kashmiri Pandits. Religions were practised in our homes only socially we were always together.

Whether it was Lord Krishna’s birthday or the festival related to Sufi saint Dastgeer Sahib, the celebration carried equal importance for both Kashmiri Muslims and Kashmiri Pandits. Kashmiri Muslims might not have taken part in all the rituals of the Kashmiri Pandits festivals and Kashmiri Pandits may not have recited the same prayer that Muslims recited, but there was a

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5 The festivals related to some Sufi saint shrines and celebrated in memory of a saint is called bada din.

6 Kashmiri Pandit celebrate the new year on this day called Navreh.
collective consciousness of being Kashmiri. Because of this, the respect for each others’ sentiments had significance in Kashmiri society. This explains the close social bonding among Kashmiri Muslims and Kashmiri Pandits. There was no exclusion of religious practices in these festivals, and the respect for each others’ faith prevailed. As Parvaiz Hussain, said “the difference was in only in our names one is Hari Krishna, the other is Parvaiz Hussain”. Zahoor Butt also emphasised that “Kashmiri Muslims and Kashmiri Pandits were like the children of same mother”. The participation in various festivals and providing help to each other in problematic situations reflects on the nature of social relationships among Kashmiri Muslims and Kashmiri Pandits in the past and how it helped to keep the bond stronger, transcending the religious boundaries through unique process of absorbing each others’ cultural specificities with respect and happiness.

“They are separated from us now.”/ “Governor Jagmohan is responsible for their migration.”

Migration of Kashmiri Pandits due to conflict-ridden situation in Kashmir affected the nature of social relationship between Kashmiri Muslims and Kashmiri Pandits. This theme would present the narratives on migration of Kashmiri Pandits and its impact on the nature of inter-community social relationship. When asked about the reason for the migration of Kashmiri Pandits, Abbas Kak explains:

They [Kashmiri Pandits] have separated from us. We feel as if one finger is cut out of five fingers. Because they controlled education system very well, their absence affected it. Everything was got done by the Centre government... They separated us from the each other. Pandits will tell you also, that this is deliberately done by the government. Because they knew when Pandits will be not there, bullet will hit only Muslims. They told Kashmiri Pandits to shift from Kashmir for one or two months only. The policy behind that got exposed later on. If Pandits had stayed situation could have not worsened so much. The biggest mistake lies in the [rigged] election of 1987; that created it all. They call it democracy! Democracy means the use of democratic rights [angry]. That is what made us hate Hindustan.

This extract explains the sadness and anger at the situation society in Kashmir now going through. Abbas Kak thinks government policy was responsible for separating Kashmiri Pandits from Kashmiri Muslims. Government wanted to save Kashmiri Pandits during the peak of militancy. He also thinks that the elections of 1987 was full of errors that led to the kind of development which Kashmir is going through, which has further created the hate among the Kashmiri Muslims towards ‘Hindustan’. His narrative also suggests that the migration of Kashmiri Pandits also affected the education sector of Kashmir, because Kashmiri Pandits were highly educated and were handling the education sector very efficiently. Ahad Mir, when asked about the reason behind the migration, says:

They have left Kashmir to save themselves. Actually, there were very few Hindus and majority are Muslims. Nobody touched them; what can we say about militants: they can do anything. Some people say that this was the plan of Jagmohan [the then Governor of Jammu and Kashmir]. He wanted to do a bombardment in Kashmir, and that is why he evacuated all the Pandits from Kashmir.
Ahad Mir’s narrative suggests that Kashmiri Pandits migrated because of militancy in Kashmir. They were in a minority and so they got scared. This shows that the social relationships they shared could not withstand that turmoil. Kashmiri Pandits did not feel safe among those with whom they lived for centuries and celebrated every occasion of their life. The second reason was that Governor Jagmohan wanted to save Kashmiri Pandits, because, Ahad Mir perceives, there was a plan to curb the movement and bombard Kashmir. Similarly, Rabia Kutub, Frida Khan, Gulam Dar, Maqbool Butt, and Suriya Zabbin perceive that the then Governor Jagmohan was the factor behind the migration. There was politics and politicians behind the migration of Kashmiri Pandits Kashmir. According to Rabia Kutub,

Everybody will tell you that Jagmohan instructed them to leave. The whole Kashmir says that. I think that is the blunder that Jagmohan has done [laughs]; some are still here, they have not left. They do not feel insecure. They do not have these policeman or guards outside their home. Kashmiri Pandits have still not got adjusted in other culture outside the Kashmir.... I think all the politicians are to blame for all these petty games.

It is the general perception of Kashmiri Muslims that Governor Jagmohan was behind the migration, as he was responsible for creating a panic among Kashmiri Pandits and providing the necessary facilities, like transport facility and accommodation in camps in Jammu, for their migration. People consider it as a mistake committed by politicians. Because, for Kashmiri Pandits, it is very difficult to get adjusted in an altogether different culture out of Kashmir. The nature of social relationship that prevailed in Kashmir could not be found outside Kashmir. However, Frida Khan said that “Kashmiri Muslims did counsel Kashmiri Pandits that there is no danger and encouraged them to stay back”.

“Kashmiri Pandits migration is part of separatist movement”/ “They got scared because of killings”

Parvaiz Hussain thinks that “Pandits left only because of the separatist movement. This was the only reason, there was no issue with the Pandits and no one had troubled them”. Sajid Khan talked about uncertainty of the situation and the fear complex that led to Pandits exodus:

Neither they spoke anything about the reason for their leaving, nor did we ask them. They were also crying and we were also crying. That time everything was uncertain. More than us, Kashmiri Pandits were under fear. So they got scared and ran-away. We are unfortunate that Kashmiri Pandits left; they may be fine living outside Kashmir. Their migration has affected everything in Kashmir.

The narratives of Parvaiz Hussain and Sajid Khan suggest that militancy made the situation so fearful that Kashmiri Pandits felt unsafe in Kashmir and so they left. However, Sajid Khan feels that the migration of Pandits has had its impact on everything in Kashmir. Taslima said that the Kashmiri Pandits got killed during that time so they were terrified and they left:

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7 The impact of Kashmiri Pandits migration on societal set-up of Kashmir would be discussed under different themes
One Kashmiri Pandit got killed here; in that lane ... Militant killed him in a very ruthless way. So they all got scared. All Kashmiri Pandits in the vicinity did not come out of their houses for two-three days. Then one night they left. Only one family is there all other families of Kashmiri Pandits left during night.

When she was asked if politics or politicians had played a role in their migration, she said:

No, no, they were frightened; no body forced them to leave. I told you they were under fear.... When two-four Pandits got killed, others became scared and left Kashmir over night. If they were forced to leave, then why some Pandits are still in Kashmir?

Taslima’s narration emphasises that, the fear factor consequent upon the killing of few Kashmiri Pandits created panic among them, and made them leave Kashmir.

“Pandits were initially with the movement but later withdrew”/“Pandits were not in favour of Tehrik/movement”

During 1931, when the “Quit Kashmir” movement started against the Dogra Maharaja, Kashmiri Pandits were the part of the movement. “Kashmir for Kashmiris” was the popular slogan during that period. But, later on, Kashmiri Pandits remained aloof from the movement. Ishaq Wani explains why Kashmiri Pandits did not take part in the movement for the freedom of Kashmir in 1989:

During 1990, people of Kashmir unanimously claimed freedom. Kashmiri Pandits and Sikhs were also with this demand of freedom. But suddenly Kashmiri Pandits started moving out of the Kashmir. As far as we [Kashmiri Muslims] concerned whatever we did there was an objective behind that. I will tell you frankly our [Kashmiri Muslims] version first. Movement started with the slogan ‘we want freedom’.... There was also a loophole in the movement of freedom, because we did not have the leader like Sheikh Abdullah in1990 as we had during 1947 [in 1947, Pakistan sent troops to attack Kashmir]. When Pandits tried to flee in 1947, Sheikh Abdullah stood in a way and said if we die, we will die together. If there had been a leader like him in 1990, migration would not have happened. This is what I think. Now I will tell you what Kashmiri Pandits said. They questioned the separatists that when they demanded freedom no doubt Kashmiri Pandits were with them. But what did they [separatist] think when they voiced the slogan ‘Yahn kya chalega, Nizam-i-Mustafa chalega’ (Quranic rule would prevail in Kashmir).

KB: Was such kind of slogan voiced there?

Ishaq Wani: Yes that was there. It might be under some conspiracy but this kind of slogan was there. When this kind of slogan or slogan in favour of Pakistan came in the picture then Kashmiri Pandits were forced to think about the movement related to freedom. Now they were in dilemma about their position in it and their saviour. When it was the question of freedom it was like people were thinking that everyone will get freedom whether Hindu or Muslims and would live together as they all were living in Kashmir. But when the slogan of freedom took the turn into religious slogan then they doubted the whole process of the movement and questioned the separatists what they [separatists] thought about Kashmiri Pandits while voicing these kinds of slogans. They realised that there was nothing for them....

Thus, Ishaq Wani’ narrative points out that there was a leadership lacuna in 1990 and the religious slogan led the minority Kashmiri Pandits to rethink about their position in the separatist movement. They preferred to stay away from the separatist movement, and left Kashmir in
conditions of adversity. However, Ishaq Wani also thinks that Kashmiri Pandits still living in Kashmir have the complete support of Kashmiri Muslims. During the interview, he was sitting with one Kashmiri Pandit friend and he pointed out: “He is also a Kashmiri Pandit living in Kashmir with us. If something troubles him all the people will come together to help him”.

Shameem Dar thinks that the separatist movement did not have well-defined goals:

Earlier when Kashmiri initiated the movement against the Maharaja of Jammu and Kashmir state, Kashmiri Pandits were also involved in that movement.... That was secular only though earlier it was led by Muslims conference but later Sheikh Abdullah changed it to National Conference, and then all the Pandits participated.

KB: Then why they did not take part in the movement of 1990?

Shameem Dar: Kashmiri Pandits did not get involved in the movement. But to be very frank all the Kashmiris are not with this movement. When militancy began [pause] it did not have a very well defined and specific goal. All the young people were involved in it. They did not know anything about politics. They had no knowledge about the value of human life. They just killed both Kashmiri Muslims and Kashmiri Pandits. Since Kashmiri Pandits migrated so they were not a part of the movement. But initially they were a part of it. Because there are two types of sections: mainstream politics and separatists. The Kashmiri Pandits were with the mainstream. Many Muslims are also with the mainstream. And the separatist have nothing to do with mainstream.

Shameem Dar’s narrative shows that “Quit Kashmir” movement led by Sheikh Abdullah had a secular ring to it, but the separatist movement had many ambiguities and so people had their doubts about it. All Kashmiris were not in favour of the separatist movement that divides the people into two sections: one supporting the mainstream leadership, and the other supporting the separatists; Kashmiri Pandits were with the mainstream leadership. Suriya Zabbin perceives that Kashmiri Pandits were not in favour of the separatist movement:

Some Kashmiri Pandits got killed by militants that time because they were not in favour of militants.

KB: They were against whom?

Suriya: Pandits were against the movement/tehrik. If Pandits came to know about militants’ locations, they used to report to the police. The militants came to know that Pandits are informing about militants? Militants also had appointed people to know that who is involved in providing information to the police about them. Because of that Pandits life was under risk in Kashmir....

Rasool Malik explains the reasons behind Kashmiri Pandits self-exclusion from the separatist movement:

It is clear that there was no communalism in Kashmir of 1990. Hindus and Muslims of the Kashmir were together. Politically it is different story. I will tell you Kashmiri Pandits are pro-Indian completely pro-Indian. Among Kashmiri Muslims you will find some flexibility. Some people you will find pro-Indian, majority of them you find pro-azadi, may be in minority now. There was the time people was more in favour of Pakistan. But those voices are now in minority. Majority is in favour of freedom/azadi. Still among Kashmiri Muslims there are pro-Indian but Kashmiri Pandits absolutely are pro-Indian, they never said that this was political right of Kashmiris. They would never lay their claim for autonomous Kashmir. One thing I tell you so far as Kashmiri Muslims and Kashmiri Pandits too are concerned that communalism was absolutely missing among Kashmiris. I do not know what the reasons are, otherwise if we see our past it may be there some bitter moments. For instance Muslim rulers patronised the Muslims. Hindu rulers patronised the Hindus. Still Kashmiris by nature are not violent. They are the one who will not like
to pelt a stone... But you may question about the violence happening in the last ten-fifteen years in Kashmir. This is imported culture that is why it could not take roots in Kashmir. That is why it could not; it could not take roots.... certain factors working here.... then some historical factor may also be there. Kashmir is a problem. That is there, that works here. No one can deny the fact that Kashmir problem is working in the minds of the people. But they have never taken those communal tools. Yes, in 1990 some Hindus were killed. But 10 times, 100 times that many Muslims were killed, out numbering the killings of Hindus. They wanted to create a movement out of nothing. In every “gun politics” situation, there are elements [those are involved] those want to create a movement so they have do this to create a disturbance in the society by killing people here and there. And some Pandits also got killed. Muslims were also killed but they [those who provide the picture about the situation] simply select the Hindus and ignored the Muslims to give it a communal colour. If together they had been killed by some other community the situation would have been different... Political factor was there, there is no doubt that Jagmohan wanted to crush the Kashmir movement by giving it communal colours. And he engineered that. There were mass rallies in those days. Slogans like Quranic rule will prevail here, we want freedom were there that time. They got afraid because they were not ready to be or wanted to be part of this discourse neither freedom [azadi] nor some other kind of political dispensation. Kashmiri Pandits got threatened; that fear was perhaps there that there will be an Islamic rule. Then they [involved in the movement] will force Kashmiri Pandits to get converted.... So they thought that if Kashmir gets freedom there will be a Muslim rule. They will be discriminated, fear actually gripped them. Politicians created panic among them. They arranged the transport. There was not a communal problem but there was slogan, not against the Kashmiri Pandits but Islamic slogan, religious slogan was there to create euphoria.

This long narrative shows the various reasons that keep Kashmiri Pandits away from the separatist movement. There are different political aspirations of Kashmiri Pandits and Kashmiri Muslims as far as Kashmir is concerned. Islamic slogans scared the Pandits and they anticipated that there will be an Islamic rule if Kashmir became an independent state. However, Rasool Malik thinks that communalism was never in Kashmir and gun politics was an imported culture, not in the nature of Kashmiri people, and that it cannot take roots in Kashmir. Dissimilar political aspirations divide them because Kashmiri Pandits are absolutely pro-Indian and Kashmiri Muslims have variations among them, some are in favour of separation and some are pro-India.

“When they left our relationship ended”/“this is my complain (shikayat) about Kashmiri Pandits: they left us”/ “The trust is lost”

Parvaiz Hussain thinks that the physical absence of Kashmiri Pandits from Kashmir has wrecked the relationship between Kashmiri Muslims and Kashmiri Pandits. He said:

When they left our relationship also ended. Those feelings about Pandits are also not there now.... Because you can feel about those with whom you live day to day life. In these past few years, it has come to our [Kashmiri Muslims] minds that if they knew about the situation why they did not protest about it at their own level. They were educated and were on the higher posts. They had direct contacts with the centre government. Because Pandits were Hindu and government in Delhi was also Hindus’. Had they stayed here and if one Kashmiri Pandit out of five people was killed, it would create sensation in the entire India. This [complain] is settled deep in our hearts and created differences between us. I had gone to Kolkata our neighbours’ Kashmiri Pandits’ house, as they living in Kolkata now. They treated me as if I was their family member. If they come back even today they can settle here. But it is in our heart that if they were our brothers why did leave us here in difficult time.

Parvaiz Hussain thinks that there are no feelings for each other now. However, he mentioned about his visit to a Kashmiri Pandit’s house in Kolkata, where he was treated as a family member.
But he thinks Kashmiri Muslims feel that the Pandits did not do anything for them, they left them in a difficult situation that led to the emotional separation between the two communities. Similarly, Abbas Kak also perceives that, “Kashmiri Pandits have just saved their selves; they did not think about us. They left us [Kashmiri Muslims] here to get killed...They betrayed us”.

Rameez Shah compares the relationships people shared earlier with the changing situation now:

My father and his friends have shared love. Now people are materialistic. Kashmiri Pandits never allowed Muslims in their kitchen but I used to go into my Kashmiri Pandits friends’ kitchen. Similarly they also used to eat in our kitchen. Earlier people did not have bitter kind of experiences. They had love between them. It will definitely be different now.

Then he narrates an incident that explains the changes that have taken place in the relationships between Kashmiri Muslims and Kashmiri Pandits.

I will tell you. I were standing on the Delhi railway station, I saw one couple which I thought was Kashmiri Pandits. When they talked in Kashmiri with each other, it was pure Kashmiri. First I thought I will speak to them, but then I stopped, myself thinking about their bitter experiences while they left Kashmir and I was unsure about their reaction. But I felt affection towards them. This is because of that bond that we shared once.

Rameez Shah’s narrative shows the changed relationships between Kashmiri Muslims and Kashmiri Pandits. Even while seeing Kashmiri Pandit couple in the Delhi railway station and feeling the belongingness to the language (Kashmiri) they were speaking, he could not dare talk to them because of his apprehension that Kashmiri Pandits migration may have left bitterness in their hearts towards Kashmiri Muslims. He was not sure about their reaction. Thus, the barrier of hesitation, doubts, complains and bitterness towards each other seems to have become explicit. Of course, Rameez Shah felt affection towards the Kashmiri Pandit couple because of the feeling of belongingness to the same language and region and the nature of relationship they once shared.

When Tabbassum was asked if she still has Kashmiri Pandit friends, she replied: “I do, but I have not seen them since1989... I have a photograph”. She showed me a black-and-white photograph of her Kashmiri Pandit friend that she kept in her office drawer. Both Tabbasum and her friend were in school dress and worn pheran:

She is my friend, my college friend, Anupama. She got married, but I do not know where she is now. Lot of hatred has developed now between the children of Kashmiri Muslims and Kashmiri Pandits, this is a strange feeling of hatred, but not among the elderly people...

Rasool Malik explains the reasons which created the differences between the Kashmiri Pandits and Kashmiri Muslims:

Generally people of our side [Kashmiri Muslims] do not know about the campaign that their neighbour brethren [Kashmiri Pandits] have launched against them. We educated people know that when the Kashmiri Pandits left Kashmir they put baseless allegations against Kashmiri Muslims. But the common people do not know about the campaign, they only know them as good neighbours... I am complaining as a brother, that they put blame and maligned whole Kashmiri Muslims community.... Then Hindutva forces created explosive situation. It spread a poison; it

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8 Pheran is a traditional Kashmiri gown
created a different situation... Kashmiri Pandits ignited the situation by saying that their sisters and daughters ill treated by Kashmiri Muslims. We only have this complain [shikayat] against Kashmiri Pandits that they should not have done this....

According to Rasool Malik, thus, the campaign led by Kashmiri Pandits against Kashmiri Muslims has created the differences. It was publicised that Kashmiri Pandits were killed by Kashmiri Muslims, and this actually “spread the poison”, because it maligned the Kashmiri Muslim community. Further, the forces like Hindutva made the situation more critical; the element of religion worsened the condition, which ultimately soured the relationship between the two communities. Maqbool Butt said that he still has the connection with his old friends at individual level:

Whenever we visit Pandit family and meet our old friends, we share our sorrows and happiness, we share about our old days, we remember old times and memories. This is the story of every Kashmiri Muslim and the story of every Kashmiri Pandit.

Older generation of Kashmiri Muslims and Kashmiri Pandits reminiscence old days and become emotional about that. But there are new, emerging social realities. Maqbool Butt missed his Kashmiri Pandit friends, but is making meaning of the emerging social reality which has given new twist to their relationship with each other. Suriya Zabbin thinks there is nothing left between them:

After 1990 everything has changed when they left. Kashmiri Pandits have their own fears and Muslims also have their own. So in this way slowly- slowly differences crept in between us. There was a friend of my son in Jammu, little-bit connection was there, but when we got separated we all were forced to think about ourselves only.

Suriya Zabbin thinks that the development of 1990 in Kashmir has forced people to think about their own safety, rather than that of others. Thus, differences came in relationships because everyone was forced to bother about her/his own self and security.

Turning emotional, Imtiaz Khan said that Kashmiri Pandits did not trust Kahmiri Muslims:

Trusted persecutor [army] trusted the army, who is now the care taker of Goddess Sharika. They trusted army to take care of that temple. My mother belongs to that place [place near Hari-Parbat where the temple of Goddess Sharika is situated] she used to relate stories about the visit of Kashmiri Pandits to the shrine of Sharika that time. The point is which [stories] flows in my mind. But the dilemma is that he now does not trust me. What is my fault? It is that we claim for freedom, the azadi in particular context; it was not like azadi from India. It can be complete azadi or azadi within Indian union.

He further said:

We did not disrespect their temples but they themselves have deserted the Goddess Sharika. There is complaint that. They were intellectuals they could have give us leadership. Once they gave the slogan ‘Kashmir for Kashmiris’. Only after this the state subject becomes necessary for the citizens of state of Jammu and Kashmir. It is they who gave this slogan.

Imtiaz Khan thinks that Kashmiri Pandits have abandoned the land of their birth and their compatriot Kashmiri Muslims. He perceives that Kashmiri Pandits did not trust Kashmiri Muslims. Kashmiri Pandits were educated; they could have given the leadership in the “freedom”
movement. They had given the slogan Kashmir for Kashmiris once in the past. The past realities and the emerging realities are creating a sort of dilemma for the older generation. It is getting difficult for them to digest that now they do not trust each other.

Firak Shah thinks that Kashmiri Muslims and Kashmiri Pandits cannot live like neighbours again in the present situation. The reason he gives is as follows:

This political thing is there, if they come back and start living in our neighborhood, we will make them comfortable but who knows somebody may attack on them in the name of religion

KB: But otherwise that brethren relationship will be not there?

Firak Shah: For the time being, that is the only way that they should be given a separate space.

KB: Why do you think like that?

Firak Shah: See, there are different political parties. One party says we belong to one religion, some other says we belong to other religion. Then they can misuse the power also. So, for the time being, they should stay in a separate colony.

Thus, the ongoing politics on the Kashmir issue seems to be forcing Firak Shah to think that Kashmiri Muslims and Kashmiri Pandits cannot live together as neighbours in the present situation. There is a feeling that living together as neighbours is not feasible anymore.

Politics and Religion: Different Aspirations

We now turn to the role politics and religions have played in this emerging social reality. The migration of Kashmiri Pandits resulting from the separatist movement, and the non-involvement of the Kashmiri Pandits in the separatist movement has affected the social set-up of Kashmir demographically and culturally. When asked how religion playing the role, Ishaq Wani said,

Yes, religion is misused by both the sides. Muslims misused religion here in Kashmir and BJP did it in Jammu. If we can think above religion, only about Kashmir and Kashmiri then everything will be fine.

KB: Is religion becoming more important than the Kashmiri identity?

Ishaq Wani: Yes, absolutely, on both sides. One is more inclined towards Hinduism and other is more inclined towards Islam.

KB: Do you think that politics has created boundaries between Kashmiri Muslims and Kashmiri Pandits.

Ishaq Wani: Yes absolutely. Politics has played its role.

Thus, Kashmiri Muslims of the older generation perceive political parties, in the name of religion, have created the division between Kashmiri Muslims and Kashmiri Pandits. The religious ideologies of Hinduism and Islam have undermined the Kashmiri aspect of their ethnic identity. Some think that things will get alright if people start thinking above religion, and that they are Kashmiris first. Similarly, Rasool Malik also thinks that the religious factor reflected in the movement through religious slogans, and the political aspiration of Kashmiri Pandits and Kashmiri Muslims are different. He said:
Absolutely, politics influences. When we say ‘long live Pakistan’, ‘we want freedom’ obviously Kashmiri Pandits do not feel good. They do not like it, not at all. They may not retaliate but they do not appreciate it. Similarly if I say something wrong about Iran, Iran is not a religious place of Muslims but still Muslims may have emotional attachment to it...

K.B: What are the boundary markers created by the political factor?

Rasool Malik: Yes, boundary markers are there. We are on the one side and they are on the other side opposite to us. They are minority in Kashmir obviously they will always be with Hindustan.....I have friend in Jammu, who is a supporter of BJP; he is very-very good to me.... Politically we are different....they will not like our stand politically.

The narrative of Rasool Malik shows that the religious dimension of the Kashmiri ethnicity has become more important than its cultural, linguistic or regional dimensions. He talked about the religious slogans and the Kashmiri Muslims inclination towards another Islamic country – that is, Pakistan – that might not be appreciated by Kashmiri Pandits as a fact. And Kashmiri Pandits leaning towards “Hindustan” obviously does not go well with Kashmiri Muslims. Being a minority in Kashmir, they may not have power to retaliate, but Kashmiri Pandits perceives that Kashmir is an integral part of India. However, by giving an example of his friendship with a person, who is supporter of BJP, Rasool Malik explains that individual relationships persist, but, collectively, they are different now because their aspirations stand apart from each other.

Similarly, Maqbool Butt also thinks that politics has affected the relationship between Kashmiri Muslims and Kashmiri Pandits to the extent that they do not have a common objective for Kashmir. He says:

In fact, religion has been present in Kashmir politics from the very beginning. It had not played negative role till 1989. Religion has more emphasised the pluralistic character of the Kashmir. But in the recent time religion has played the divide and rule role..... religion was the binding force earlier...Now it is dividing force...that has fractured [the connection that binds both the communities].

Imtiaz Khan thinks that the divide is just political, not religious. He says:

There is gap between old generation and new generation [long pause]... when we study Kashmir and Kashmiri culture we cannot forget the people who were the part and parcel of our culture, that is, Kashmiri Pandits. The old generation cannot forget Kashmiri Pandits nor can they forget us, because we lived together so many years. But so far as new generation is concerned, I don’t think so that they can understand our sentiments, our bonds; the difference is there. But I do not know whether we [older generation] would be able to have same feelings same sentiments, same relationship in the near future given the fact that... what has actually divided is not religion, but it is politics. The two communities have different perception of Kashmir politics, the divide is political, it is not religious.

KB: You think religion has its role in politics?

Imtiaz Khan: Yes, yes obviously yes...Kashmiri Muslims as a whole consider Kashmir as a problem, the problem...Kashmiri Pandits consider Kashmir as integral part of India.... The mainstream leadership stand for composite culture....they look at the problem in a broader framework. The separatists, Yasin Malik also believes in our culture.

KB: Geelani also?

Imtiaz Khan: Yes, he also, but I do not think so, I cannot see the certainty [laughs]. I suspect....he is ideologically conscious person. Ideologically, he wants Pakistan so I cannot believe in religious
divide. It is another matter that he talks that Hindu should come back or so on. I belong to the generation I would say [pause] I cannot forget those days I can’t [goes nostalgic]

KB: Is politics also playing a role in politicizing the religion to undermine the Kashmiri ethnic Identity?

Imtiaz Khan: For all that both Kashmiri Muslims and Kashmiri Pandits are responsible, fundamentalists among Muslims and Kashmiri Pandits in general.

Thus, people like Imtiaz Kahn think that the divide between Kashmiri Muslims and Kashmiri Pandits is political and not religious. They also think that the older generation’s sentiments and feelings for Kashmiri Pandits are different from those of the younger generation. They belong to the generation that has lived together with their Kashmiri Pandit compatriots and cannot forget those days. They are not sure about the future, and they doubt if the sentiments would remain intact. Viewed in this light, the rift that has come in between Kashmiri Muslims and Kashmiri Pandits explained their different political aspirations: Kashmiri Pandits consider Kashmir as an integral part of India, whereas for Kashmiri Muslims, Kashmir is an unresolved problem. There are separatists among Kashmiri Muslims, like Yasin Malik of Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front, who are in favour of the composite culture. There are others, like Sayed Ali Shah Geelani of Hurriyat Conference, who are ideologically different, and want Kashmir to be merged with Pakistan. The latter, Imtiaz Khan thinks, is religious division and, he, therefore, does not believe in that. He does not deny that religion is overpowering the Kashmiri ethnic identity now, and, for that, he blames the fundamentalists among Kashmiri Muslims and Kashmiri Pandits.

However, Rabia Kutub thinks that the “connection between Kashmiri Pandits and Kashmiri Muslims is still there, and both mainstream leaders and separatists want Kashmiri Pandits back in Kashmir”. She also feels that in Kashmir they would not be threatened by anyone, as the “Muslims minority in India”.

“There was elite tussle between Kashmiri Muslims and Kashmiri Pandits”

Rasool Malik said that “in villages there might be complete amity between Kashmiri Muslims and Kashmiri Pandits”, but there was elite tussle, in cities and towns. He explains:

In cities and town in 1930s we find tussle among the elite, because Muslims started getting education, the modern education; it caused resentment among Kashmiri Pandits. They started thinking that their livelihood was now threatened… Then Kashmiri Muslims started demanding that they should be given equal opportunities in service sector… it created difference between the Hindus and the Muslims because Hindus did not want their monopolised sector to be shared by the others...Kashmiri Pandits kept their selves separate from Kashmiri Muslims in many ways their salani/cuisines would be different, their pheran would be different. Their hair style would be different. This is the fact [yeh tou bikul enhone salan bi alag alag pakya pheran bi alag alag apna banya, bal bi alag alag tarike se banaye main appko batamu fact yeh hai …]

Maqbool Butt talked about the domination of Kashmiri Pandits in the service sector. He said:
Kashmiri Pandits is a literate community. They had good job occupancy in all the sectors because of their education. For hundred posts hundred per cent Kashmiri Pandits contested.... Now who was doing harm to others? [koun kiska gala kat raha tha?]

Thus, the dominance of Kashmiri Pandits in the entire service sector when Muslims started getting education is offered as an explanation for the elite tussle in urban areas. Parvaiz Hussain thinks that earlier Kashmiri Muslims were naïve; they were not aware of their rights, but the new generation is intelligent and more aware of its rights. He said:

New generation is more intelligent. Today it is being realised that on all the high posts mostly were Hindus. Since we were innocent so no one paid heed to that. But after 1990 a change came in Kashmir which enlightened our mind. Now our people [Kashmiri Muslims], have started going to the departments. Somebody told me that when people would get selected for jobs, Kashmiri Pandits used to keep the name of Kashmiri Pandit candidates on the top of the list, When one Muslim saw that he kept the Muslims’ name on the top of the list and Pandits below that. This is how differences come. Otherwise, before 1990, there was no such thing in our mind. It was not that we were not capable, but Kashmiri Pandits were more in service class. But they were nice also. For my college admission, one Kashmiri Pandit helped me. Every community has good as well as bad people. Now see there is Muslim terrorism in the whole world [laughs]. But till 1990 there was nothing about freedom in our mind, or whether we go to Pakistan or not, whether we are deprived or not so on and so forth. Some people among us even today question why this disturbance happened in the society, we were fine earlier also. This is temporary and there is bit tension in the society because of this disturbance.

Kashmiri Muslims perceive that they were deprived of various job-related opportunities because Kashmiri Pandits were more educated and influential. But education and awareness has made them realise that they should be given equal opportunities in all sectors and that did not go well with Kashmiri Pandits. This led to elite tussle between Kashmiri Muslims and Kashmiri Pandits much before the turmoil of the 1990s. But, in the late eighties Kashmiri Muslims thought of fighting perceived discrimination against them. However, some people among Kashmiri Muslims still question the necessity of a separatist movement, because they think that things were fine earlier also.

“Culture has lost its composite domination”/“after migration unified type of culture is not evolving”.

The separatist movement led to instant demographic changes in the Kashmiri society. With this, gradually, society is changing in terms of its culture also. In what follows, we discuss the impact of Kashmiri Pandits’ absence in the society, especially on the centuries old culture of Kashmir, the Kashmiriyat. Tabbassum explains this in the following extract:

Our culture is not just only Kashmiri Pandits; they are just part and parcel “they are” [emphasizing] but we cannot say whether they will be. If they have state subject they have every right to say that Kashmir is their birth place. They will be treated as part and parcel of Kashmiri society. Obviously there is a vacuum created by their migration. Kashmiri society was a heterogeneous type of society not homogeneous. The culture of Kashmir emerged as amalgam with contributions of both. It was neither Muslim-dominated culture nor Pandit-dominated culture. It was mixing of the two cultures. And that culture is sociologically called Kashmiriyat. Though religiously we were different, our practices were different. From educational point of view and economically we were different. Pandits were mostly in service class and we were business class community. But as for our culture is concerned, the special features of culture like the way of
living, food habits, all this was the amalgamation of two communities’ cultures. Earlier even our way of living and conduct influenced each other. Muslims living in some areas which were dominated by the Kashmiri Pandits, like Jawahar Nagar, Karan Nagar. Rainawari, were also very much influenced by the Kashmiri Pandits’ culture. If we compare those Muslims who lived in Kashmiri Pandits-dominated areas with the Muslims who lived in Muslim-dominated area, there is considerable difference in their attitude, their living style, their eating habits and their conduct. Now since one community is gone, so vacuum is but natural. With the passage of time it is going to be history because it is not a matter of two or three days now. Had it been two-three or five years, we would have secured that kind of image of Pandits but it has been twenty years now. No now people will say that they used to live here. Cultural change has automatically occurred. That unifying component of culture that would emerge from mixing of two cultures is not been evolving, so there is cultural shift. It is gradual, not intentional. I can see that unified type of culture is changing and keep on diminishing.

As Tabassum perceives, Kashmiriyat represents the culture of Kashmir which has evolved through the harmonious interaction and jelling of two cultures. Differences in religion were not a hindrance in the emergence of that kind of culture, which is a unique feature of the societal set-up of Kashmir. But this culture of Kashmir is now changing from being heterogeneous (in religion) to a homogeneous (in religion) type. The culture which is talked about as Kashmiriyat, that is, composite culture, is gradually becoming a part of history, as the dominant minority of Kashmir, that is, Kashmiri Pandits, has been out of its homeland for two decades.

Similar views were expressed by Maqbool Butt and Ishaq Wani. Ishaq Wani is angry about whatever has happened and thinks that the coming generation will blame the administration and Hindustan for that. But, he thinks that “everyone in Kashmir once again wants that peaceful Kashmir” and he hopes the return of that era. Pointing towards his friends9 with whom he was sitting and chatting, he said:

There has been improvement in the situation since 1996. Otherwise it was impossible even to think that we would able to sit outside like this, the way we all are sitting and talking to each other in the premises of the temple. In 1994, we even could not think that Kashmiri Pandit migrants would return and will meet us again. This was impossible but we had faith in Kudha, Bhagvan, so it is happening, things are changing now.

Ayesha and Zahoor Butt expresses that they are noticing changes, specifically changes in neighbourhood. They feel that they have to adopt new ways in the pattern of living in the process of interaction with their new neighbours, as their neighbours before the turmoil were Kashmiri Pandits. Zahoor Butt expresses his agony thus:

I do not like Rainawari now because earlier there were more Kashmiri Pandits we had fifty per cent Pandits and fifty per cent Muslims there. Pandits were educated class, environment was different. Now Pandits have sold their houses to Muslims from outside [outsiders in that vicinity]. They [the new resident] have different living style. We were pretty comfortable with Pandits.

Asked about the impact of Kashmiri Pandits migration that she has observed on the culture of Kashmir, Rabia Kutub talked about changing dress patterns of Kashmiri women:

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9 Ishaq Wani was sitting with his friends in the premises of the temple. Among them, one was a Kashmiri Pandit and the other was a Sikh.
It was in Kashmir earlier like when a girl got married, then she had to cover her head, then that also started vanishing. When I got married I never covered my head. But when the turmoil began, mostly veil was forced upon us. We used to take shawl [dupatta] we had no problem with that. In cities we did not even cover our head, in rural areas women used to do it. But in cities it was diminishing. The movement which is religious-cum-freedom movement, mostly had Muslims and they started that one should put on veil [burka] which became essential that time. There was a time when we were forbidden to even show our face...

In Kashmir, women generally wore pheran and they covered their head with traditional kasaba/headgear or dupatta, a kind of shawl. Veil/burka was there earlier also, but it was not that common in Kashmir before the turmoil.

Shameem Dar describes the composite culture of Kashmir which united the people of Kashmir, during the adverse situation of 1947, when Kashmir was attacked by the Pakistani intruders. He also talked about the impact of cultural changes on the society:

There will be a huge impact [pause] because when one component of the culture in the society absents itself.... Pandits are very few in number, so they can cast no affect; two in hundred or thousand cannot save their culture. Obviously that part of the culture is diminished. There is no composite culture but only unilateral one.

In brief, for the survival of composite character of Kashmiri culture, the Pandits’ return to the valley is very important. Maqbool Butt also said: “new generation of Kashmiri Muslims and Kashmiri Pandits have no experiences of composite character of Kashmiri culture. This is a cultural loss”.

Thus, the changes that society in Kashmir has undergone are mainly due to conflict-ridden situation there. Children born during the last twenty years are experiencing only one culture that is dominated by Islam and Muslims. Most of the time they interact only with Kashmiri Muslims and hardly get any opportunity to go out of Kashmir to interact with people outside. The absence of Kashmiri Pandits in the social set-up of Kashmir has created a void. Similarly, the later generation of Kashmiri Pandits born in other parts of the country may have heard about Kashmiriyat as the composite culture of Kashmir, but they too have not experienced it. There has been no scope for interaction between the new generations of Kashmiri Muslims and Kashmiri Pandits, and hence no opportunity for existentially understanding the concept of Kashmiriyat or the composite nature of Kashmiri culture.

Imtiaz Khan was very sad when he said:

They are not loyal; they have deserted the Valley. Now we do not see people going to the temple of [goddess] Sharika Devi.10 I cannot bear this. I always remember those days when my mother used to say that here in Kashmir we can hear on one side azan in the Mosque, in the shrine of Makhdoom Sahib, and on the other side we can see people going to the temple of goddess Sharika. Kashmiri culture is symbiotic in nature... this thesis of culture was written [developed and matured] by both Kashmiri Muslims and Kashmiri Pandits. That time, every morning, both Kashmiri Muslims and Kashmiri Pandits would go to the river Vitasta to purify themselves before their prayers. But where is that culture today...?

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10 Temple of Goddess Sharika Devi is situated on Hari-Parbat in Srinagar city.
The elder generations of Kashmiri Muslims are experiencing the transformation in their neighbourhood, social set-up and culture. The houses in which their Kashmiri Pandit neighbours were living are now occupied by co-religionists. The new social reality is a fact of Kashmiri society, but to accept this fact is not easy for Kashmiri Muslims.

“Practically it is impossible for Kashmiri Pandits to come back to Kashmir”/ “Older generation may come back, but new generation is settled outside now”.

Tabbassum feels that there is no assurance that Kashmiri Pandits will return: “will they come back [pause], there is no guarantee. Because Kashmiri Pandits are living in different places and they have to imbibe different culture also, as a result they are different now. Now there is no hope of their returning”. Similarly, Parvaiz Hussain also said:

Practically speaking, it seems impossible that Kashmiri Pandits will return to Kashmir. It is not going to be the same. They have no houses over there now. Their children are also have settled outside. Why will they come back now? Only one thing both of us missing is brotherhood of Kashmir....Government is playing politics now. It says that there will be separate colony for them. But that will be like a jail for them. Then how will they celebrate Janmashtami procession in a manner they used to celebrate with us earlier.

Abbas Kak thinks that Kashmiri Pandit will never return to the Valley:

They will never come back. There is no question.... This is just propaganda of the government. Kashmiri Pandits who left Kashmir have not lost much rather they have gained out of it. Government has provided them all the facilities.

KB: Suppose they come back, will the new generation stay together like as older generation?

Abbas Kak: No, it is not possible; this is just a misinformation for the people. If the ministers are promising like that it is just for their vested interest.

KB: You do not have any hope that that Kashmiriyat will return to Kashmir?

Abbas Kak: No, there is no possibility of that.

However, Frida Khan thinks that government should make an effort to bring Kashmiri Pandits back to the Valley. She said:

This is my suggestion to government that let them come to Kashmir, we will stay together; celebrate festivals with each other with enthusiasm.

KB: Would the brethren relationship be there again?

Farida: Why not, yes, same as it was there. There is a saying, old is gold and new is silver, so it is same as old is gold.

Firak Shah thinks that people of his age can be helpful in developing the bond between the new generation of Kashmiri Muslims and Kashmiri Pandits. But for that “Kashmiri Pandits should return as early as possible because people of my age are there now”. He is worried that if Kashmiri Pandits will take more time then “no one of his generation will be there to tell the new generation what kind of relations Kashmiri Muslims and Kashmiri Pandits shared in the past”.
Rasool Malik and Shameem Dar think that Kashmiri Muslims want Kashmiri Pandits to be back in the Valley. Rasool Malik reflects on the Pandits’ return to Kashmir: “I tell you about that. So far as common folk is concerned, they want them back. They should come back and we will live together. These politicians are also saying the same thing but this is not going to happen…it is not washable”. He also thinks that the settlement of new generation of Kashmiri Pandits outside Kashmir is another hindrance in their returning: “Those who are born out of Kashmir are in their twenties. Therefore, they are different. Kashmiri Pandits also know that Kashmir is a problem. Therefore, to say that they will come back is all politics; may be few will come back”.

Shameem Dar also thinks that people want them back because “feelings are still there”, but he also said “I think differences have come-up between us”. Maqsood Kadri thinks that it is Kashmiri Pandits right to come back. But he has his doubts also:

It is difficult to say whether they will come back or not, because it depends on the situation. Who knows what will be the situation in future? Kashmir has become a battlefield now. There is no safety, you cannot trust anybody. But no one can deny their rights.

KB: If they will come back, is it possible to establish that kind of brethren relationship again?

Maqsood Kadri: Why not, we all are human beings

KB: Because you said that there is no trust even among Muslims neighbours.

Maqsood Kadri: This is because of the situation. In this kind of situation Muslims have no trust on each other, then how they will trust others... First there should be stability and peace. Presently, there is uncertainty, there is no trust. If some guest comes to my house today I may think that person is sent by the army to get some information. These kind of doubts come to our mind...We are feeling their absence in the society; they should come back, but only after the situation gets better.

When Maqsood Kadri was asked how long will it take the situation to get better, he replied: “Who knows after twenty years what will happen? Then they may want to return or not, because then they will not be Kashmiri any more”. Imtiaz thinks that pluralism in Kashmir is necessary and, without Kashmiri Pandits, Kashmir is not Kashmir:

Kashmir without Pandits is not Kashmir, this I can see from the Quranic point of view. You enter a garden, there is not one variety of flowers…. Pluralism is the only concept that sustains the challenges. Muslim fundamentalists and Hindus do not understand this. We cannot survive as a nation without pluralism. It is your religion to you and my religion to me, I respect that. This is a process of an interaction and it is symbiosis. Pandits do worship in their way and Muslims also offer prayer; these are the ways to reach God, nothing is wrong in it...

Imtiaz Khan is sad that “Kashmiri Pandits have turned a visitor now...this is pathetic. They got job out of Kashmir. They are getting outside Kashmir everything, why they will come back”. Thus, most of the participants are not sure about the return of Kashmiri Pandits to Kashmir. They think that Kashmiri Pandits are settled outside now. The older generation may have the desire to return but the younger generation would not like to come back. They are born and brought up in a different society and culture. There is no connection between the new generations of both the sides, a bond that their older generations shared. Abhul Rehman Wani thinks they may come
back only “if the government gives them jobs in Kashmir” and if they do not come back “the scar will be there forever”. Abbas Kak denies that Kashmiriyat can be regained, whereas Intiaz Khan thinks pluralism in the society is an important requirement to face the challenges, but he sees no hope because the fundamentalists on both sides do not want to understand this.

“New generation do not have that connection that older generation had”

Tabbassum said that her children have no connection with the Kashmiri Pandits. She explains:

My children do not know about Kashmiri Pandits, because they are the new generation. I have to narrate the stories about Kashmiri Pandits to my children. Now we will have to keep a chapter “Pandits of Kashmir” in the curriculum [laughs]. The new generation hardly knows about them. Because of the long gap, the shift has begun from heterogeneous to homogenous type of culture. Earlier it was like on one side on the Hari-Parbat in the temple of Goddess Sharika you could hear of bells ringing, whereas on the other side you could hear the azan. Since new generation is not experiencing that kind of culture, we also feel strange when we tell them about those things; of the temple on the Hari-Parbat, how Kashmiri Pandits used to go there, their dress, dehzoor [ornament that Kashmiri Pandit women wear in ears after marriage], so on and so forth. Those things are gone now.

Tabbassum also feels that no effort has been made to preserve the old culture and relationship ties:

Something should have to be done to preserve those things. I feel this is a fantasy that Kashmiri Pandits will come back and stay there again. I do not know when they will come back. I do not say that it has affected culture, but there is a shift in the culture. Now it is totally Muslim type of culture in Kashmir. It was not pure Muslim culture earlier, because there was Kashmiri Pandits’ influence in the society. It has also been said that Muslims of Kashmir are converts, so we were the same, our culture was the same. When Kashmiri Pandits were here, atmosphere was very different; culture, dress pattern, everything was different, that is gone now. Now we have to preserve that. We have to have introduction programme for that but nothing has been done yet.

On the one side new generation experiencing predominantly Muslim culture in Kashmir, and on the other side, the older generation has gone through the pain of breaking of their centuries-old relationships with Kashmiri Pandits. Tabbassum describes:

Our elders left this world with a dream and desire to meet their Pandit friends again; they died with that desire only. Similarly, some Kashmiri Pandits of their age also died with that yearning to meet their Kashmiri Muslims friends again. New generation will not be affected much because they do not have emotions of that kind. The older generation, which had spent time together, got affected severely as the roots of their friendships got uprooted. For them neither the government nor the civil society did anything. No interactive programme that could provide them a platform to meet again was organised. Because the older generation had emotional ties, if that could have been preserved then there was a hope that new generation could learn something from those relationships. But we have already ruptured that; now practically there is no hope. I hope may be.

Thus, the new generation of Kashmiri Muslims has no idea about the relationships the older generation shared with Kashmiri Pandits. Tabbassum’s children have no familiarity with the heterogeneous culture that she had experienced. During the situation of turmoil no one might have thought of, the government and or the civil society to preserve those emotional ties. There is always an after effect and that is realised by people now when they feel strange to talk about the
past phenomenon to their children. They are helpless to find a method or a formula to get the younger generation of Kashmiri Muslims acquainted with Kashmiri Pandits and their culture. So, for one, it is the loss of friendship and emotional ties, and for the other, it is just an alien thing.

Ayesa told that her children were very young when Kashmiri Pandits left. When asked, if Kashmiri Pandits come back will the younger generation be able to live with them in the earlier manner, she said: “the older generation can live together in a same earlier way, but what can I say about the new generation”. Ahad Mir and Shameem Dar said that children have no connection with Kashmiri Pandits now: “They do not know who Kashmiri Pandits are, how they speak, what was their dress pattern, how they behave...they have no idea they have no idea” said Bashir Ahmad.

Parvaiz Hussain, Rameez Shah, and Gulam Dar think that the new generation has no idea about Kashmiri Pandits. Gulam Dar said, his children have no connection with Kashmiri Pandits. He thinks “there is a huge difference, they do not know each other, and they have not seen each other”. Similarly, Rameez Shah’s children do not know about his Kashmiri Pandit friends. When he was asked if he spoke to his children about his Kashmiri Pandits friend, he said:

They won’t care about these things that who my friend is. My elder one is in twelfth standard but he does not know anyone.

KB: Are they aware of the fact that Pandits used to live here?

Rameez Shah: Yes they know that. They come and they see ruins of Kashmiri Pandits’ houses. Whenever one Kashmiri Pandit, the most respectable of this area, comes he gets something or the other for my children. If we talk about him in home sometimes then my children ask me about him. I told him [his son] that he is Shambu-tott. His name is Shambu Nath but we say ‘tott’; tott in Kashmiri means whom you like most. My elder son knows him, the other does not.

Rameez Shah’s children came to know that Kashmiri Pandits used to reside in the village by seeing the ruins of their houses. He talked about Kashmiri Pandits who still come to the village to meet their Kashmiri Muslim friends. May be their belongingness to the place and its people compel them to visit the village. But, in near future these, the ruins of Kashmiri Pandit houses also will vanish; there may be no reason to talk about Kashmiri Pandits\textsuperscript{11} for the coming generation.

Summary

To summarise, people attach different meanings to the notion of \textit{Kashmiriyat}. The various meanings by which participants understand \textit{Kashmiriyat} are as “Kashmiri way of life”, “cultural heritage”, “hospitality”, “simplicity”, “humanity”, “\textit{bahichara}/brotherhood among the people of

\textsuperscript{11} There is a spring in that village, near the ruins of Kashmiri Pandits houses, which everyone knows belongs to Bhatta (Kashmiri Pandits). I was told by a young girl that no one comes to take water from this spring because it belongs to Kashmiri Pandits. I saw one temple besides that spring sans idol.
Kashmir of different religious faith” and “secular Ideology” of Kashmir. The participants have experienced Kashmiriyat in these ways before the turmoil and are now observing and experiencing the changes that it is undergoing in the course of time.

The discussion with the participants brought out the understanding that the meanings as well as values attached to Kashmiriyat are changing after the turmoil. Earlier, people were careful about not hurting each others’ sentiments, but it is not so anymore. Most of the participants are not sure that Kashmiriyat will survive much longer, while others are convinced that the sentiment has already faded or died down. A reason for this is that the younger generation has had no experience of Kashmiriyat as it existed in the past. Participants also think that the original essence of Kashmiriyat is being coloured by the definitions given by both politicians and separatists, be it saffronising Kashmiriyat or developing aversion towards the concept. Thus it is clear that the term Kashmiriyat is getting politicised now, and as a result people do not want to consider it as the Kashmiri ethnic identity. This explains Tabbassum’s annoyance: “why our identity is given the name of Kashmiriyat?” According to Imtiaz Khan’s interpretation, Kashmiriyat represents the composite culture and identity of Kashmiri people, but the element of Hindutva is now twisting it by negating the contributions of Islam and Sufi saints in making it.

Discussion on Sufi practices also brought out that Sufi-saints in Kashmir significantly contributed in the making of the composite culture that is Kashmiriyat. People understand Sufism as having evolved through the mixing of Hindu, Buddhist and Islamic cultures. They are aware of the fact that people got converted to Islam, but some traditions of previous faiths continued. Loud recital of prayers, going to shrines and worshiping Sufi saints are all considered as residues of Hindu traditions.

Although Maqsood Kadri and Imtiaz Khan are both well educated, they have deep faith in Sufi practices and belief system. There is a general perception that those who are not educated are more inclined towards Sufism, because they have no knowledge of “real” Islam and they have not explored it completely. Belief systems of participants like Farida and Maqsood Kadri are challenged by their own children and other family members. Reasons given for decline of Sufi practices are that people are getting education, becoming more aware of religious literature and exploring “real” Islam, and that they believe that there is no one in the shrines to listen to their prayers. It is also believed that those who go to the shrines are not doing good to themselves or to the society. Thus, there are processes emerging in the society which are resulting in the decline of Sufi practices in Kashmir. Hence, the weakening of the component that contributed to the making of Kashmiriyat that represents the composite culture of Kashmir.

The web of social relationships builds through the different social practices in the society. Going to the Sufi shrines together, the celebration of various festivals, participation in the marriage functions and supporting each other in problematic situations explained the nature of social relationship Kashmiri Muslims and Kashmiri Pandits shared in the past. Obviously the
harmonious social relationships played an important role in the making of the composite culture of Kashmir. Although participants talked about “elite tussle” and “class differences” between the two communities, these factors were not explicit before the turmoil.

The turmoil has changed the Kashmiri society demographically and culturally. The mass migration of Kashmiri Pandits not only affected but transformed the social structure of the society. The nature of social relationships has changed. The fact is that, in the absence of one important component of Kashmiriyat, that is Kashmiri Pandits, Kashmiriyat cannot survive. And there is no certainty of their returning to Kashmir. The new generation has no experiences of that “brotherhood”/bahichara, going to Sufi saints shrines with Kashmiri Pandit compatriots or celebrating various festivals together. The consciousness of being Kashmiri in the older generation transcended the boundaries of religion. This kind of collective consciousness does not develop without “living together” and that too in a peaceful atmosphere. That “living together” with Kashmiri Pandits in one social set up is absent in the experiences of the younger generation. The discussion in the next chapter would focus on the aspect of how it is affecting them. The narratives of Kashmiri Muslims younger generation on Kashmiriyat, Sufism and the nature of social relationship between Kashmiri Muslims and Kashmiri Pandits reflect on the meaning they attach with Kashmiriyat, how they perceive Sufi practices and how they look at the past and present realities of the social relationship between Kashmiri Muslims and Kashmiri Pandits.

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