

Asian Resonance

Pakhtoons at Crossroads: A Case Study of Pakhtoons in Kashmir



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Abstract

The state of Jammu and Kashmir is not only known for its geographical landscape but for the ethno-national, social consciousness and cultural values of the Kashmiri people commonly known as "Kashmiriyat" (Kashmiriness). Several ethnic groups living in the state of Jammu and Kashmir not only add diversity to society in Kashmir but also build up the social fabric of the society.

These ethnic groups have been always area of interest and attraction for academicians, politicians and journalistic communities. However, there are some ethnic groups which have been neglected by both policy makers and journalists and have become "untouchables of academia". Pakhtoon diaspora (Afghans) living in the valley of Kashmir since more than a century is a distinct ethnic group share a common history, memories, racial and cultural origins and state of belongingness. They have been able to preserve their social and cultural identity. Their distinct socio-cultural identity in terms of language, customs, folklore, dress pattern, rituals, values, beliefs and aesthetics gives them a strong sense of belongingness. However, it also gives them a sense of otherness.

The majority also have certain stereotypes regarding the community which reinforces and strengthens the sense of otherness.

This paper attempts to explore the socio-cultural values of Pakhtoon diaspora in Kashmir and trace their history and sense of belongingness or otherness.

Keywords: Afghan, Diaspora, Ethnicity, Pakhtoons, Socio-Cultural Identity, and Kashmir.

Introduction

The state of Jammu and Kashmir known for its landscape is also famous for its social, cultural and religious ethos. The people of different faiths and ethnic groups have lived a peaceful life throughout centuries.¹ The peaceful existence of different religious faiths and cultures tempted many ethnic groups of the subcontinent to settle here. Pakhtoons of Afghanistan who have for centuries experienced political turmoil in their homeland and created an alternate home in Kashmir.

This ethnic community having distinct norms, values, customs and ethos has preserved their distinct culture and identity. The aloofness of the group from majority on the one hand played an important role to preserve their culture; however, this created a gap between the majority and minority. This gap gave rise to many misconceptions and stereotypes in majority as well as minority. The paper intends to examine the history of Afghan diaspora in Kashmir and thereof the sociology of the community.

Afghanistan has faced centuries of turmoil and strife. Its history is one steeped in conflict, distress and social unrest. Afghanistan's population has historically been moulded by a high degree of spatial mobility. The country was criss-crossed by important caravan routes on the Silk Road until the early 19th century, and it has always been dominated by nomadism and other forms of moving from place to place.

A long history of migration involving Pashtun ethnic communities has enriched and complicated regional societies across Asia and the Indian Ocean, especially in the modern period after the mid-eighteenth century, as these regions were influenced and transformed by Postcolonial dynamics (Nicholas 2010:1).

Afghans came to the Indian sub-continent as immigrants (mainly as soldiers and traders) in the middle of the 15th century when the first Afghan Empire was established in India. The Pathan dynasties of India were first introduced by Lodhi and Sur Dynasties. They were soon followed by other tribes who were generally endowed with estates by rulers from time to time.

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Trade and commerce also made these people to migrate from their native land to the plains of Hindustan and Pakistan. Pathans or Afghans are thus spread all over the Indian sub-continent in states like Hyderabad, Uttar Pradesh, Orissa etc. and not only confined to Jammu and Kashmir.

For many centuries, the Pashtuns have travelled within the Indian sub-continent and in the greater Indian Ocean arenas. After 1775 and throughout the nineteenth century, Pashtuns camping in northern India from both urban and rural settings began moving increasingly in British Imperial spheres. The Pashtun history of migration and diaspora represents one specific, but representative strand of the 'Great Diversity' of South Asian migrations experienced over centuries by multiple peoples of differing regions, religions, ethnicities and languages.

The Pathans or Afghans also came to the Indian sub-continent as immigrants (mainly as soldiers and traders) in the middle of the 15th century when the first Afghan Empire was established in India. The Pathan dynasties of India were first introduced by Lodhi and Sur Dynasties. They were soon followed by other tribes who were generally endowed with estates by rulers from time to time. Trade and commerce also made these people to migrate from their native land to the plains of Hindustan and Pakistan. Pathans are thus spread all over the Indian sub-continent in states like Hyderabad, Uttar Pradesh, Orissa etc. and not only confined to Jammu and Kashmir.

After 1857 revolt against British supremacy in India and thereof imposition of direct rule by the British crown in 1858, Pashtuns from the Peshawar valley were also recruited for positions in Colonial plantations and trade networks that linked South Asia, Africa, and various Indian Ocean archipelagos and Southeast Asia. Some Pashtuns pursued trading, which included the selling of livestock across Northern India. Others became shopkeepers and small financiers. (ibid).

The History of Afghans in Kashmir

The available literature on the history of Kashmir does not discuss Pakhtoons in Kashmir as a separate ethnic group². It does not also throw any light on the arrival of the ethnic group to Kashmir valley. However, Lawrence (1895) and Dewan (2008) give a brief account on the history and life of Pashtuns in Kashmir.

The possible reasons for the settlement of the ethnic community in Kashmir mostly seem to be socio-economic constraints coupled with political turmoil. They always yearned for greener pastures with suitable political and social environment offering better and remunerative opportunities in order to lead a peaceful and settled life. Infact Kashmiriyat, (Kashmiriness) the art of giving, respect for others, brotherhood and hospitality must have played a dominant role. It can be substantiated by the fact that there is a common saying in Afghanistan that anyone who crosses over the Khyber Pass to the Indus Basin never returns.

With the disintegration of the Mughal Empire which was established in Kashmir in 1586 A.D by Akbar, Kashmir passed into the hands of the Afghans

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in 1752 A.D.-1818 A.D. The province, as such remained under their control upto 1818, when the Afghans got ousted by the rising Sikh power.

During the Afghan period, some 32 Afghan Subahdars came to rule Kashmir. They were accompanied by a large administrative outfit including their personal servants, soldiers and fortune seekers.

In the same period not only Kashmiri Muslims but also Kashmiri Pandits were appointed to senior government positions in Kabul. Many of the Muslims stayed on, never to return to Kashmir. During the same period, a substantial Kashmiri Muslim diaspora formed in now what is called the North West Frontier Province of Pakistan. Similarly, some of the Afghans also migrated to Kashmir from Afghanistan or North West Frontier (Dewan 2008, 390). Kashmir valley had started receiving earlier batches of Afghans during Ahmad Shah Durrani's rule in about 1753 A.D. In subsequent years, other groups too came as and when inter-tribal feuds in their home took place, forcing some to leave their native land. "Much later it was Maharaja Gulab Singh, the new Dogra ruler of Kashmir who offered them employment opportunities especially for the purpose of guarding the frontiers of the kingdom and in return granted them land Jagirs and settled them in colonies of their choice" (Lawrence, 1985 : 353).

Over a period of time, various batches of immigrant Afghans settled in upper reaches of the valley with a view to occupy the virgin lands with abundance of water. The Afghans are stated to have entered Kashmir via Baramulla, where they camped for some time. Some batches moved to the west of Baramulla and settled in Uri. Others moved upwards in the north-west to the South-east of Kashmir in search of suitable greener pastures and arable land. This is how they came to Ganderbal, Pattan, Mattan and other places in the valley (Indu & Ashok, 2003:51).

The proportion of Afghans to in post 1947 Jammu and Kashmir might not be the same. Almost the entire Pashtun elite of Srinagar migrated to Pakistan after the partition of India (Dewan 2008: 390). The Pakhtoons who stayed back were granted permanent state subject status by the Government of Jammu and Kashmir in 1954.

In the valley of Kashmir, Pakhtoons are concentrated mainly in Districts of Anantnag, Baramulla, Kupwara and Ganderbal. Despite being a part of Kashmir society for over 150 years they have remained geographically isolated and treated as "untouchables" by academia. There has not been any serious and scholarly engagement to understand the community except, a study carried out on their socio-cultural identity by Qayoom (2017). In this context it is imperative to have an academic and intellectual exploration on the community to understand what Bhat (2017) refers as liquid social relations³.

Review of the Literature

Much of the history and customs of Pakhtoons has been passed down through oral narratives and allegories rather than through written text. As a result, pre-modern Pakhtoon history is often the work of foreign transcription and has been relatively vague. As such, there is still much

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uncertainty as to the precise history of the *Pashtun* people ("Understanding of the Pashtun", n.d.:4).

Different hypotheses have been put forth about the origin of the *Pakhtoons*. Describing them as descendants of Jews, *Khawaja Niamatullah* (1829) in his *Makhzan-e Afghani* connects them with the lost ten tribes of Israel. *H.W. Bellew* (1880) has also subscribed to this view on the basis of *Pakhtoon* physiognomy, as well as the striking resemblance of facial features between *Pakhtoons* and Jews. He asserts that the prevalence of biblical names, certain customs and superstitions, especially smearing of the door post and walls of the house with blood of sacrificial animals, further substantiates this theory. But these presumptions do not hold good in view of the fact that resemblance in features and certain characteristics do not provide a sound scientific explanation of the origin of a race or a section of people.

If the origin of a race can be determined on the basis of customs and traditions then *Pakhtoon* would be closer to Arabs. The study of *Arabian* and *Pakhtoon* society presents a remarkable similarity particularly in their tribal organization and social usages. Both possess the same virtues and characteristics. To both, hospitality is one of the finest virtues, retribution a sacred duty and bravery an essential pre-requisite for an honorable life. Love of independence, courage, endurance, hospitality and revenge were the supreme virtues of pre-Islamic Arabs. These very attributes also form the basis of the *Pakhtoon* code of honor (*Pashtunwali*) and anyone who repudiates them is looked down by the society. Even the Pashto script resembles the Arabic script in essence. Like the *Pakhtoon* emphasis on *Melmastia* (Hospitality), *Saritob* (Manhood), *Nang* (Dignity), the Arabs held in great esteem four moral virtues, viz., *Ziyafah* or hospitality; *Hamasah* or fortitude; *Muruah* or manliness and courage; and *Ird* or honour (*Afridi* 2009).

Historians have come across references to various ancient peoples called *Paktha* (Pactyans) between the 2nd and the 1st millennia who inhabited the region between the Hindu Kush and Indus River and may be the early ancestors of Pashtuns (*Nath*, 2002).

Other theories of *Pashtun* origin suggests that the *Pashtuns* are of Aryan descent and eastern Iranian origins. Another theory links the *Pashtun* to the original 12 tribes of Israel and the *Yusufzai* tribe. Some groups such as the *Afridis* claim to be direct descendants of Alexander the Great and his army who swept through the area in the 4th century B.C.

As far as the local folklore is concerned, all *Pakhtoons* are (mainly) patrilineal descendants of one founding father. There is, however, no agreement about the apical ancestor's name. Some call him *Qays Abdurrashid*, others say his name was *DaruNika*, or *Baba Khaled* (Khalid bin Walid-the legendary general of the army of Prophet Muhammad). The name of the common ancestor is less important than the *Pashtun*'s belief of belonging to one huge kinship group or family. The common ancestor had many sons, grandsons, great grandsons and so forth; each

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being the ancestor of one of the innumerable branches and sub-branches or tribes and sub-tribes, clans and sub-clans down to the local lineages and families (*Glatzer*, 2002).

The common *Pashtun* ancestor is said to have had four sons: *Sarban*, *Bitan* (alias *Batni* or *SheykhBeyt*), *Ghurghusht* and *Karran*- the latter was adopted.

From all these sons and grandsons of *Qays Abdurrashid* or his aliases sprang the thousands of tribes, sub tribes and local lineages of the *Pashtuns*.

The *Pakhtoon* tribal charter is based on patrilineality. In some conspicuous cases, this principle is set aside for notable exceptions. In principle, one has to be born into a tribe. Afghan pragmatism allows exceptions. Through consensus of the tribe, outsiders may be allowed to take residence in their area. If such outsiders and their offspring will successfully honour the tribal code of behaviour and succeed to intermarry with the tribe, they may be accepted as members after a generation or two (*ibid*: 267).

The *Pakhtoons* have their own unwritten norms which are collectively called as *Pakhtunwali* or *Pashtun* way of life. It dominates each sphere of the life of the *Pakhtoons*. It is a male dominated code of living and puts the *Pakhtoon* women in a subordinate status vis a vis the men.

Spain (1985: 63) observes that: "Nonetheless, there are important traditional and social factors which guide community life and in many cases influence or even determine the actions of individuals. These mores vary considerably in different parts of the Pathan area, and codification of them is virtually impossible. However, certain of them are almost universal, and some knowledge of these is essential to an understanding of what the Pathan is and how he got that way."

In considering the attributes "necessarily associated with Pathan identity", *Barth* (1969, p.123) highlighted some important socio-cultural features such as:

Patrilineal descent(i.e., Ethnic Identity and Group Membership Follows the Paternal Line)

All *Pathans* have a common ancestor who they believe lived 20-25 generations ago according to accepted genealogies. Though the genealogical interest is considerable, knowledge of accepted genealogies varies both regionally and individually. The acceptance of a strict patrilineal descent criterion is, however, universal.

Belief in Islam

A *Pathan* must be an orthodox Muslim. Their putative ancestor as per *Barth* (1969) lived at the time of the Prophet (PBUH). He embraced the faith and was given the name of *Abdur-Rashid*. Thus, *Pathans* have no infidel past, nor do they carry in their history the blemish of a defeat and forcible conversion.

The Practice of Pakhtoon Custom

This includes both speaking *Pakhtu* (i.e., the *Pakhtu* language) and following the *Pakhtun* customs (mainly the *Pashtunwali*).

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The customs which Barth (1969) includes in this final category include, among others, conventions associated with providing hospitality (*Melmastia*), reliance on the tribal council (*Jirga*) for the resolution of disputes and decision-making, and the maintenance of female seclusion (*Purdah*). According to Barth (1969), these customs and institutions provide the organizational features which allow *Pakhtoons* to maintain their identity as *Pakhtoons* and their distinctive "value orientations" which "emphasize male autonomy and equality, self-expression and aggressiveness in a syndrome which might be summarized under the concept of honor (*Izzaat*)" (Edwards, 1986:313-325).

In his analysis of what it means to 'be a *Pakhtun*', Anderson (1979) has emphasized the importance of 'doing' those actions which *Pakhtoons* considered integral to their self-identity. Of central importance here is the maintenance of what *Pakhtoons* call '*Ghairat*' in social interaction which is usually translated as "Bravery" but which is more completely realized as "zeal" expressed in the pursuit of one's own objectives.

The main tenets of *Pashtunwali* as evident from the literature are as follows:

Melmastia (Hospitality)

The hospitality and reverence to all visitors, apart from their religious, racial, regional, or social milieu is considered an obligation upon a *Pashtun*. A guest is considered a blessing and generous hospitality and warm-greeting are the finest virtues in the *Pashtun* norms.. According to the *Pashtun* tradition, one has to show hospitality and offer the best meal available even to his enemy when he pays visit to his home.

Spain (1963: 74) observes, "On occasions, protection may be extended into a wider sphere by proclaiming the visitor the guest of a particular chieftain or clan as long as he remains within the *Pathan* community. This is traditionally symbolized by giving of a possession of the sponsoring chieftain, perhaps a dagger or a garment, which the guest wears as a symbol of the protection he is under. . . . Violence or hurt of any kind is almost never offered to a bonafide guest, regardless of how poor or distasteful he may be - both because of the high regard in which the obligation of *Melmastia* is held and because of the obligation to take *Badal* which would automatically be placed upon the host".

Ghayrat and Namus

The literal meaning of *Ghayrat* is zeal, self honor or dignity. Every member of a *Pashtun* tribe must uphold his self-dignity and honor. Through the concept of *Ghayrat*, *Pashtuns* maintain their individual and tribal pride. The *Ghayrat* is also considered as a part of *Namus*, which literally means chastity; but in common usage it means honor of women. *Namus* is a norm through which *Pashtuns* defend their honor, while hospitality is a norm which enhances their honour (Naumann, 2008: 32).

Kakar (2011: 11) states that "*Namus* can be defined as that which is defended for the honour to be upheld, instead of acted upon to achieve honor." It is obligatory to defend the honor of women if someone

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offends against them. The *Pashtuns* maintain their concept of *Namus* through establishing a gender segregated society. In order to keep the segregation maintained, they have the *Pardah* system. Literally, *Pardah* means veil or a curtain. At conceptual level, both genders veil from each other. However, women observe veil physically as well. This norm is adopted in order to defend the honor of women. The underlying purpose of veil is to create a space where both genders can act freely but separately without impinging each other's domain. Another aspect of *Pardah* tradition is to control the women, though it also controls men because they have to follow the rule of *Namus* which keep them away from any interference in the women's sphere. This seclusion establishes an organization of activities which allows a simultaneous emphasis on virility and the primacy of male society.

Nang: Dignity, Honour and Shame

The central term in *Pashtunwali* is *Nang*: honor and shame, dignity, courage and bravery. A *Nangialay* brings honor and fame to his tribe. To be called *Benanga* ("shameless", "undignified") is the worst possible insult in *Pashtu* and a deadly threat to the social position of the insulted.

There is a *Pakhtu* proverb, "*Mal me da Sara Jar Sha aw Sar me da Namusna Jar sha*" or "*I will sacrifice my wealth for my head and will sacrifice my life for my Namus*". If a *Pakhtun* cannot protect his *Namus*, there is no place for him to live among the tribe.

Badal

It means revenge, feud, and vendetta, and forms the primary law of *Pashtunwali*. It is to be wreaked regardless of time, space and cost. A proverb sums up attitudes to revenge: 'He is not a *Pukhtun* who does not give a blow for a Pinch'. Another *Pashtu* saying is: "*Kacheeri Pakhtun, Khapal Badal Salkala Pas Ham Wakhle No Beya Ham-e-Berakaray Da*". It means "If a *Pakhtun* gets his revenge after 100 years, he is still in a hurry". A son, grandson, great grandson or a cousin can take his revenge even after several generations.

If a *Pakhtun* does not get revenge, it means he is a coward (*Be-Ghairat*) and this will be *Paighour* (ridicule) to his family. A *Pakhtun* would prefer to be dead than alive with *Paighour*. If the question of *Paighour* relates to a whole tribe or section of a tribe, they cannot accept it. They take revenge collectively or individually (Miakhel, 2008:6).

Thus, the *Pukhto* concept of revenge emphasizes ends rather than means the end overrides the means. This is how and why the system perpetuates itself.

Jirga

Jirga means consultative assembly, forum, council, council of the tribal chiefs. It is also spelled out as *Jarga*, *Jirgah* and *Jarga*. It has been the forum and assembly where issues of common interest have been discussed and decided. Unlike the modern Western democracy, the decisions are not made by majority votes but by consensus or in other words unanimously after the deliberations. As such, the binding force of these decisions is greatly strong. It was due to institution of *Jirga* that in absence of a central authority, government, governmental

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departments and machinery, both the personal and communal disputes were settled and the common and communal matters were conducted and dispensed in *Pukhtu*. This age-old institution still functions successfully in many ways.

Under the institution of *Jirga*, the people or stakeholders assemble and discuss the issue freely when there is any problem or issue of common interest. All the attendants are at liberty and have the right to express their viewpoints and put forward their opinions without any restriction, hindrance or taboo. The important point is that the decisions are not majority imposed but are made by consensus or unanimously after the deliberations, as mentioned earlier.

Barth (1969: 123) highlighting the role and composition of the *Jirga* writes:

"The Council among Pathans is a meeting of men, called together by several of those present so as to arrive at a joint decision on a matter of common concern, and may thus refer to an adhoc meeting or to an instituted tribunal. The matter of common interest may be a conflict between the parties present or the planning of a joint action. The relationship between the members of the council is one of equals, with no speaker or leader; the equality is emphasized by circular seating on the ground and the equal right of all to speak. The body does not finalize its decision in a vote: discussion and negotiation continue until the decision is unopposed, and thereby unanimous and binding as an individual decision by each participant. A faction which will not accept a decision can only avoid commitment by leaving the circle in protest."

Caroe (1965: 411) argues: *"there is here an opportunity for wedding Pathan ideas of tribal organization with the western concept of representative institutions. Where the tribal system is still working, its instrument is the maliks and elders sitting in conclave, surrounded by as many of the younger warriors as may have presence and personality enough to be admitted without question....The unwritten law is that the Jirga takes decisions which in the end overbear opposition and are accepted as unanimous...The essential point is that everything takes place in the open and there is nothing like secret ballot"*.

Generally the common people do not participate in the proceedings of the *Jirga*. Only the elders or representatives of the families, members of religious families and religious figures of 'note' and influence, and the persons having some degree of influence have to participate in the *Jirga* on the ward and village levels.

A *Jirga* is authorized to raise a *Lashkar* (tribal militia) to implement its decisions if disagreement emerges after the unanimous ruling. In recent history though, *Jirga's* greatest weakness has been a lack of power to implement its decisions. Assembly of elders is called to decide specific issues and their decisions are binding on parties in conflict. The *Jirga* has been called 'the closest thing to Athenian democracy that has existed since the original' (Spain 1963).

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Pakhtoon Diaspora in Kashmir from Sociological Prism

Pakhtoons living in Kashmir regard their homeland as the source of their value and identity. They have institutionalized networks of exchange and communication which transcend territorial boundaries of their current place of origin and have maintained a variety of explicit and implicit ties with their homeland. They are in touch with their relatives from across the border and many of them have applied for passports and visit Pakistan to meet relatives. Though the criteria of 'return to homeland' does not apply to the new generation of Pakhtoons who are disturbed by the frequent outbursts of violence in their original homeland and especially at times when prospects of peace in Afghanistan were dim, but for the older generation the twinge of living outside their homeland is still apparent.

The preservation of a distinctive identity vis-à-vis a host society/societies is an important characteristic of this diasporic group which is achieved through maintaining a boundary with the host society (Boundary Maintenance). The Pakhtoons have their own set of norms governing the institution of marriage institution in particular and kinship in general.

The Pakhtoons are endogamous and do not intermarry with the locals. They marry their girls only to Pakhtoon boys, though some Pakhtoon boys have got married to the Kashmiri girls. The local Kashmiris are also hesitant in intermarrying with the Pakhtoons and the Kashmiri girls who have married Pakhtoon boys have faced social boycott from their families. The Pakhtoon girls are married in an early age as compared to the local Kashmiri population. They have historically shown resistance to girl education and do not usually send their girls to schools having co-education system.

The tenants of Pastunwali are fiercely upheld by them even after having lived in Kashmir for more than a century now. Their distinct socio-cultural identity is woven around the concept of *Melmastia* i.e., hospitality, *Ghariat* i.e., courage, *Nang* i.e., *Jirgai* i.e., council of elders and *Namus* i.e., honor (Qayoom 2017). Their society is Patrilineal in nature and patrilineality dominates all aspects of their social world.

The Kashmiri society ('host society') has also shown inability or unwillingness to fully accept the Pakhtoons— who have thereby fostered feelings of alienation, or exclusion, or superiority, or other kind of 'difference'; they have historically shown a deliberate resistance to assimilation and do not mix up easily with strangers. Their women observe strict *Purdah* from male members and do not mix up with anyone except their close relatives. They do not leave their village without the company of a male relative and wear the face veil or *Burqa*. The degree of gender separation (*Namus*) maintained by them is absent in the Kashmiri populations living in the vicinity of Pakhtoon settlements as well as the broader Kashmiri society in general.

Having come to Kashmir as a result of forced migration (displacement) from their ancestral

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homeland, they have consciously maintained an ethnic identity, which is importantly sustained by reference to an ancestral homeland of common origin and common historical experience. They still maintain the customs and other cultural practices prevalent in their homeland. They have maintained a distinct cultural identity even after living in Kashmir for more than a century. Though they belong to the same faith, but their marriage patterns, birth and death rituals, eating habits, language, customs, dress patterns, and norms etc. are totally different from the local population. They hold the *Jirgas*⁴ and still prefer to settle their disputes through it. The women are not allowed to be a part of the *Jirga* even if the disputes to be settled are concerning them. They speak pure *Push-to* and prefer to call themselves Pathans. A large majority of their women do not speak any other language apart from Pashtu. (Qayoom, 2005, 2011, 2017)

Conclusion

On the bases of the above empirical and theoretical foundations, it can be concluded that Pakhtoons in Kashmir after residing since centuries in Kashmir have not only been able to maintain and preserve their identity and culture. There distinct identity and culture have reinforced the Kashmiri ethos of Kashmiriyat. However, this has given birth to confusions and stereotyping about the ethnic group for example Kashmiris generally treat them *Gujjars* which is a major ethnic group of Kashmir. The name of *Gujjars* by Pakhtoons is not treated a curse but gives them the sense of otherness. Having maintained their distinct and discreet ethnic and cultural identity after dispersion and existence outside their homeland, the Pakhtoons of Kashmir form a distinguished diaspora. They continue to retain certain outstanding characteristics of their native culture. This is evident from their preservation of Language, custom, folklore and tradition.

They have been subject of negligence by politicians, policy formulators, journalists and academicians. Most of the official reports and statistics even don't consider them a distinct identity. The report of Jammu and Kashmir Tourism report in this regard is an example which can be further substantiated by the fact that the group has been clubbed with the local population and not enumerated separately as an ethnic group in census 2011.

Their resistance to assimilation despite co-existence with the local Kashmiri community has global similarities with diasporic characteristics. It appears to have been quite natural for the first generation Pakhtoon immigrants to have maintained a 'boundary' vis a vis the Kashmiri society, but what remains sociologically significant is that even though they have been living in Kashmir for more than a century now, all their subsequent generations have exhibited resistance to assimilation with the broader Kashmiri society. Their distinct 'Pathan' identity has survived despite the challenges of time and space. They continue to remain indifferent to the local politics and are keener to know about the events occurring in their homeland. Although the '*myth of return*' of this diaspora community to their homeland seems a rare

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possibility now taking into account the conditions prevalent there, yet time will only tell whether they will succumb to the forces of assimilation or preserve their distinct identity like their original *Pashtu* language which they have preserved for more than a century now.

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Endnotes

1. Except few incidents, the history of Kashmir reveals that people have lived a peaceful life. The society in Kashmir has stood the test of many odd events. At the time of partition of India the Indian Sub-continent experienced communal riots but Kashmir remained peaceful which made Mahatma Gandhi to say, “I see a ray of hope in Kashmir.
2. ¹The official records of Government of Jammu and Kashmir regarding the ethnic groups of Jammu and Kashmir even don’t mention Pakhtoons (<http://jktourism.org/index.php/cultural/ethnic-groups>). The community has been clubbed with the local population and not enumerated separately as an ethnic group in census 2011.
3. While acknowledging the Liquid Modernity theory of Zygmunt Bauman, Bhat (2017) contends the argument that any society has never been solid. He maintains that social relations in every society behave like liquids and change form and nature with changing circumstances and social forces. The constitution of society, social relations, organisations, groups, and institutions like liquids is not apparent despite the fact that hidden bonding makes everything possible.
4. Jirga is a council of elders called to settle disputes entirely composed of males