

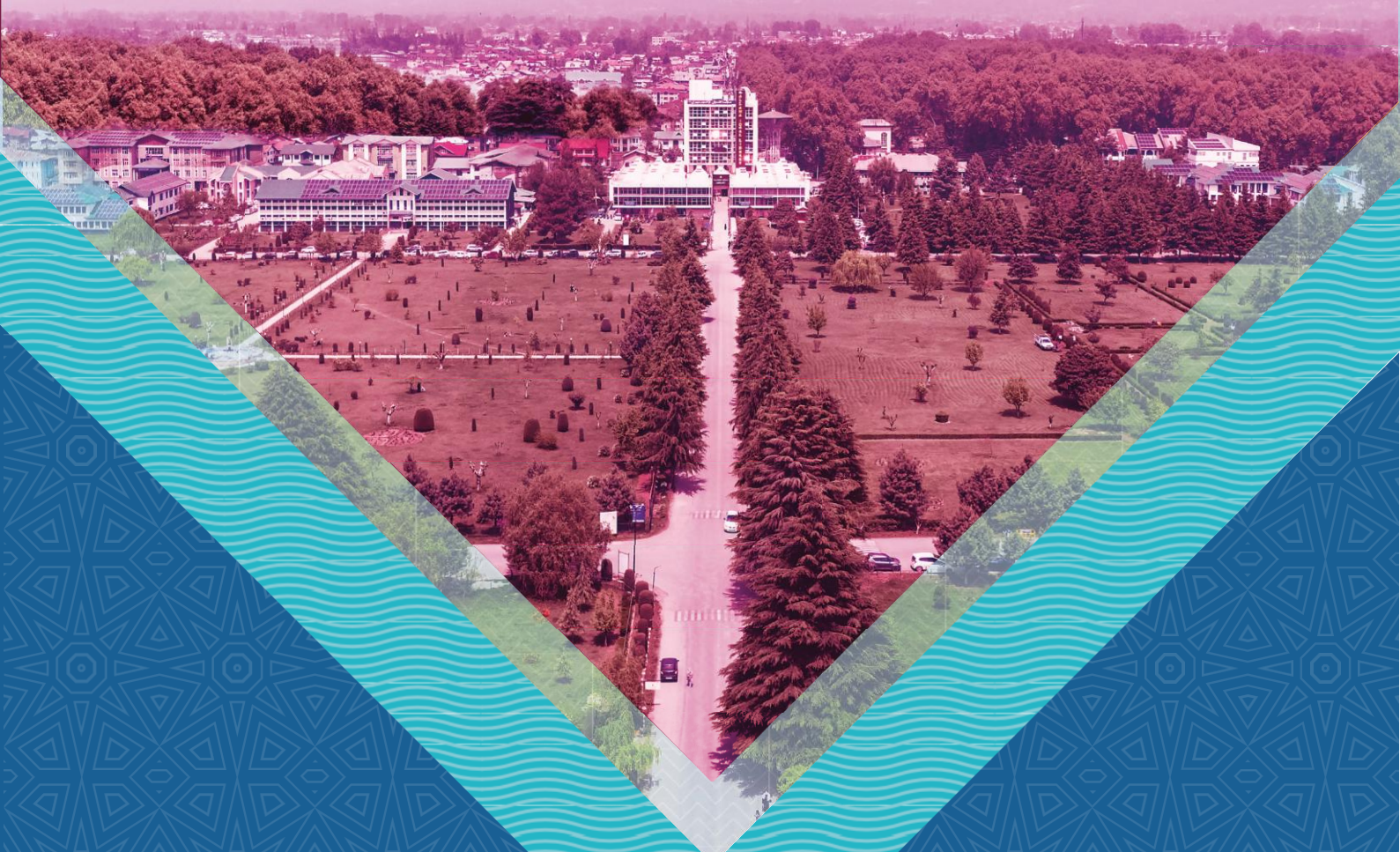
Volume : IX (2025)

ISSN:0975-6612



THE JOURNAL OF **KASHMIR STUDIES**

Peer reviewed/Refereed



Editor
Prof. Aaliya Ahmed



THE JOURNAL OF KASHMIR STUDIES

Peer reviewed/Refereed

Volume: IX

ISSN:0975-6612

2025

Editor

Prof. Aaliya Ahmed

All rights are reserved with the Institute of Kashmir Studies, University of Kashmir. No part of the content of the journal may be reproduced by photo print, microfilm or any other means without the written permission of the publishers.

Published by:

Institute of Kashmir Studies University of Kashmir

Hazratbal, Srinagar-190006

Mail Id: kashmirstudies@kashmiruniversity.ac.in

Website: iks.uok.edu.in

Journal Link: iks.uok.edu.in/Main/ViewPage.aspx?Page=Publications

Phone No: 0194-2420405, Ext. 2253, 2288.

©Institute of Kashmir Studies, 2026

ISSN: 0975-6612

Peer Reviewed/Refereed and Indexed Journal

For sales and subscription

Email Id: kashmirstudies@kashmiruniversity.ac.in

Phone No: 01942420405, Ext.-2253, 2288,

Editorial Advisory Board

Farrukh Faheem

Assistant Professor

Institute of Kashmir Studies

Humaira Showkat

Assistant Professor

Institute of Kashmir Studies

Muhammad Ibrahim Wani

Assistant Professor

Institute of Kashmir Studies

Hashmat Habib

Assistant Professor (c)

Institute of Kashmir Studies

Tanveer Ahmad Khan

Assistant Professor (c)

Institute of Kashmir Studie

Acknowledgements

On behalf of the editorial team, I extend my heartfelt gratitude to all the editorial members for their dedication and valuable

contributions to the development of this journal. Their efforts in reviewing, editing, and refining the work have been critical to maintaining the high standards of scholarship we aim to achieve.

A special thanks to Prof. Sabiya Mufti, Dean School of Social Sciences, whose continuous support and expert guidance have greatly enriched the quality and impact of this issue. Your knowledge and leadership are invaluable to the success of our work.

I would also like to express my sincere appreciation to all the peer reviewers, whose thorough evaluations and constructive feedback have been essential in ensuring the rigor and integrity of the published research.

Thank you all for your commitment and contributions.

Contents

S.NO.	Title	Authors	Page Number
1	Religious Spaces and the Public Sphere: Platforms for Discourse, Social Action, and Intercultural Dialogue	Aqib Rashid Sheikh1 & Azra Jan	07-25
2	Perceived Parental Rejection, Emotional Adjustment: A Systematic Review	Mohd Ashraf Waza	26-36
3	Creativity and Emotional Intelligence among Adolescents: Comparative Profiles and Correlation Insights	Munazah Hassan & Prof. Mahmood Ahmad Khan	37-58
4	Human Resilience in High Altitudes: Mountaineering Narratives as Climatological Tales	Fathimath Naufeera M A	59-65
5	The Bedrock of Tradition: A Comprehensive Research Analysis of U.A. Khader's Narrative Aesthetics	Yoonus. MTP	66-71
6	Digital Media and Everyday Religious Practices in Kashmir: An Ethnographic Study	Prof. Malik Zahra Khalid, Sheikh Mustafa Ali and Andleeb	72-84
7	The Evolution and Growth of Kashmiri Short Story	Dr. Shakir Naik	85-90
8	Social Spaces and Lived Experiences: An Ethnographic Study of Girls' Hostel Life at Kashmir University	Mehvish Yousuf	91-112
9	Marriage Migration and Cross-Cultural Adaptation: The Lived Experiences of Bengali Women in Kulgam, Kashmir	Aarisa Abbas	113-132
10	Multi-Sited Ethnography of a Transhumant Pastoral Community: Following Seasonal Mobility among the Gujjars of Kashmir Valley	Sakib Afroz Marazi	133-151
10	Film Review: Kayo Kayo Colour	Muntaha Amin	152-156

Religious Spaces and the Public Sphere: Platforms for Discourse, Social Action, and Intercultural Dialogue

Aqib Rashid Sheikh¹ & Azra Jan²

Abstract

Religious spaces have historically functioned as much more than sites of ritual and worship; they have been central arenas for public discourse, cultural exchange, intellectual debate, and political mobilization. This paper undertakes a comprehensive examination of the intersection between religious spaces and the public sphere, arguing that these sacred sites serve as dynamic platforms for the exchange of ideas, community engagement, social action, and intercultural dialogue. Drawing upon critical revisions of Jürgen Habermas's public sphere theory-particularly the work of Nancy Fraser, Michael Warner, and José Casanova-the paper situates religious spaces as counter publics and sites of public religion that actively shape public opinion, influence political movements, and negotiate the boundaries between the sacred and the secular. Through an interdisciplinary approach that incorporates sociology of religion, political theory, urban studies, and gender studies, the paper explores the multifaceted roles of mosques, churches, temples, gurdwaras, and other religious sites. It examines historical and contemporary case studies, including the Black Church in the American Civil Rights Movement, liberation theology in Latin America, the role of mosques in the Arab Spring, and the interfaith initiatives in post-conflict societies. The paper also critically engages with the inherent tensions within these spaces: issues of inclusivity, gender and caste hierarchies, power dynamics, the co-optation of religious authority by nationalist movements, and the representation of marginalized voices. It argues that despite these challenges, religious spaces remain indispensable sites of ideological transformation, collective identity formation, and democratic deliberation in both local and global contexts. By reconceptualizing the public sphere as a plural, contested, and embodied domain, this study

¹ Research Scholar, Centre of Central Asian Studies, University of Kashmir, Email: aqibrashid36@gmail.com

² Research Scholar, Centre of Central Asian Studies, University of Kashmir, Email: azra45520@gmail.com

underscores the continued relevance of religious spaces in addressing contemporary crises of social justice, political polarization, and intercultural communication.

Keywords: Religious Spaces; Public Sphere; Discourse; Social Action; Intercultural Dialogue; Public Religion; Political Activism

1. Introduction

The turn of the twenty-first century has witnessed a profound paradox: while theories of secularization once predicted the inevitable privatization and decline of religion (Berger, 1967; Wilson, 1966), religion has instead reasserted itself as a powerful force in public life across the globe (Casanova, 1994; Habermas, 2008). From the mobilization of religious symbols in nationalist politics to the role of faith-based organizations in humanitarian crises, the boundaries between the sacred and the secular have become increasingly porous and contested. Within this context, religious spaces—mosques, churches, temples, gurdwaras, synagogues, and other sites of worship—have emerged as critical nodes in the public sphere, functioning simultaneously as sanctuaries for spiritual practice and as arenas for public debate, social action, and intercultural encounter (Kilde, 2022; Dei, 2022).

The scholarly re-evaluation of religious spaces has been driven by a growing recognition that these sites are not merely passive backdrops to social life but are active producers of social meaning, political identity, and collective memory (Knott, 2005; Vasquez & Marquardt, 2003). In an era marked by increasing globalization, mass migration, and the rise of identity-based conflicts, religious spaces have become sites where fundamental questions of belonging, justice, and coexistence are negotiated. They serve as platforms for marginalized communities to articulate counter-narratives, as stages for political dissent, and as laboratories for interfaith cooperation. Yet, they are also spaces of exclusion, hierarchy, and contestation, reflecting the complex power dynamics that pervade the broader society (Mahmood, 2005; Warner, 2002).

This paper aims to provide a comprehensive and theoretically grounded exploration of the multifaceted roles of religious spaces in the contemporary public sphere. It is guided by three central research questions: (1) how have religious spaces historically and presently functioned as

platforms for public discourse and political activism? (2) In what ways do these spaces facilitate social action and community welfare, and what are the implications for state-civil society relations? (3) What role do religious spaces play in fostering intercultural and interfaith dialogue, and what are the structural and ideological barriers to their inclusive functioning? By addressing these questions, the paper seeks to move beyond simplistic binaries that view religion as either a private matter or a source of public conflict, instead offering a nuanced account of the ambivalent potential of sacred sites in democratic public life.

The paper is structured as follows. The next section provides a detailed theoretical framework, critically revisiting the concept of the public sphere and its applicability to religious spaces. It draws on the foundational work of Jürgen Habermas, the feminist and postcolonial critiques of Nancy Fraser and Michael Warner, and José Casanova's theory of public religion. Following this, the paper examines the historical and contemporary role of religious spaces in political discourse and activism, drawing on case studies such as the Black Church in the United States, liberation theology in Latin America, and the role of mosques in the Middle East and South Asia. The fourth section explores the social action and welfare functions of religious spaces, analyzing their role in service provision, community resilience, and their complex relationship with the state. The fifth section focuses on intercultural and interfaith dialogue, examining how religious spaces can function as sites of encounter and conflict transformation. The sixth section critically engages with the challenges and tensions within these spaces, including gender inequality, caste discrimination, and the rise of religious nationalism. The conclusion synthesizes the findings and reflects on the future of religious spaces in an increasingly interconnected and polarized world.

2. Theoretical Framework: Rethinking the Public Sphere and Religious Spaces

2.1. Habermas and the Bourgeois Public Sphere

The concept of the public sphere, as articulated by Jürgen Habermas in *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* (1989), provides an indispensable starting point for understanding the relationship between religion and public life. Habermas defined the public sphere as a domain of social life where private individuals could come together to form a public, engage in rational-critical debate, and exercise influence on political action. Historically, this

sphere emerged in the coffeehouses, salons, and literary societies of eighteenth-century Europe, where citizens debated matters of common concern independent of the state and the market. The Habermasian public sphere was characterized by principles of inclusivity, rational deliberation, and a commitment to the common good.

However, Habermas's model has been subjected to extensive critique. Feminist and postcolonial scholars have pointed out that the bourgeois public sphere was, in reality, exclusionary: it was predicated on the exclusion of women, the working class, and colonial subjects (Fraser, 1990; Landes, 1988). The idealized notion of rational deliberation often masked the operation of gender, class, and racial hierarchies. Moreover, Habermas's framework initially marginalized religion, relegating it to the private realm—a position he would later revise in his work on post-secular society (Habermas, 2008).

2.2. Counter-publics and the Plural Public Sphere

Nancy Fraser's (1990) seminal essay "Rethinking the Public Sphere" offered a crucial corrective. Fraser argued that in stratified societies, multiple, competing public spheres exist alongside the dominant bourgeois public sphere. She introduced the concept of *subaltern counter-publics*—parallel discursive arenas where members of subordinated groups formulate oppositional interpretations of their identities, interests, and needs. These counter-publics serve as spaces for withdrawal and regroupment, as well as bases for broader social mobilization. Fraser's framework opens the door for understanding religious spaces as counter-publics: sites where marginalized communities—whether defined by race, class, gender, or religion—can articulate alternative worldviews and organize for social change.

Michael Warner (2002) further developed the concept of *counter-publics* by emphasizing the role of discourse, performance, and embodied practice in the constitution of publics. For Warner, publics are not merely rational assemblies but are created through the circulation of texts, rituals, and embodied practices. Religious spaces, with their rich traditions of liturgy, preaching, and collective ritual, are paradigmatic sites for the formation of publics. A sermon in a Black church, a *khutbah* in a mosque, or a *kirtan* in a gurdwara are not simply acts of worship; they are

performative acts that call a public into being, articulate shared grievances, and mobilize collective action.

2.3. Public Religion and Deprivatization

The work of José Casanova (1994) has been foundational in shifting the discourse from secularization to *deprivatization* of religion. In *Public Religions in the Modern World*, Casanova argued that religion was refusing to accept its assigned place in the private sphere and was instead entering the public sphere to contest the boundaries between the sacred and the secular. He identified three distinct ways in which religion goes public: (1) by defending traditional beliefs and practices against state encroachment; (2) by challenging the legitimacy of secular states and advocating for religiously grounded political alternatives; and (3) by entering civil society to address issues of social justice, human rights, and democracy. Casanova's framework helps to explain the diverse ways in which religious spaces function as platforms for public engagement, from the political mobilization of the Catholic Church in Poland and Latin America to the role of Islamic movements in Egypt and Turkey.

Casanova's work, however, has been critiqued for its Eurocentric assumptions and its tendency to view public religion primarily through the lens of liberal democratic politics. Recent scholarship has sought to expand the concept of public religion to encompass non-Western contexts and non-liberal forms of political engagement (Mahmood, 2005; Deeb, 2006). Saba Mahmood's (2005) ethnography of the women's mosque movement in Cairo, for instance, demonstrates how pious subjects engage in forms of ethical self-formation that challenge liberal assumptions about agency, autonomy, and the public/private divide. For Mahmood, religious spaces are sites not only of political mobilization but also of profound ethical and political subjectivation.

2.4. Religious Space as Material and Embodied

A fully developed theoretical framework must also attend to the materiality of religious space. As Jeanne Halgren Kilde (2022) argues, religious spaces are not neutral containers but active agents that shape social relations, power dynamics, and religious experience. The architecture, location, and design of sacred sites communicate messages of inclusion or exclusion, hierarchy or equality,

openness or seclusion. A cathedral's soaring Gothic arches evoke transcendence and hierarchy; a Quaker meeting house's plain interior signals egalitarianism; a mosque's minaret in a European city becomes a symbol of Muslim presence and a flashpoint for debates about national identity. The materiality of religious spaces thus intersects with the public sphere in profound ways, shaping who can enter, who can speak, and what forms of action are possible.

Building on this, scholars of religion and urban studies have examined how religious spaces participate in the production of urban space and public culture (Beaumont & Baker, 2011; Gökarıksel & Secor, 2009). In cities characterized by super-diversity, religious spaces become sites of negotiation between different ethnic, religious, and national communities. The conversion of a church into a mosque, the construction of a Buddhist temple in a suburban neighborhood, or the establishment of a Sikh gurdwara in a post-industrial city all involve contestations over the meaning and use of public space. These material and spatial dimensions are essential to understanding the role of religious spaces in the public sphere.

3. Religious Spaces as Arenas for Public Discourse and Political Activism

3.1. The Black Church and the Civil Rights Movement

Perhaps no historical example better illustrates the role of religious spaces as counter-publics than the Black Church in the United States. During the era of Jim Crow segregation, African American churches served as the central institutions of Black civil society—spaces where political strategies were debated, leaders were trained, and collective action was organized (Lincoln & Mamiya, 1990; Calhoun-Brown, 2000). The church was not merely a refuge from the violence and humiliation of segregation; it was the primary site for the articulation of a counter-public discourse that challenged the legitimacy of white supremacy.

The Montgomery Bus Boycott of 1955–1956 exemplifies this dynamic. The boycott was organized from the Dexter Avenue Baptist Church and the Holt Street Baptist Church, where Martin Luther King Jr. and other ministers mobilized the Black community through sermons, mass meetings, and organizational networks. The churches provided not only moral and spiritual resources but also material infrastructure: meeting spaces, communication networks, and a trusted leadership

structure (Morris, 1984). As Aldon Morris (1984) argues in *The Origins of the Civil Rights Movement*, the Black Church provided the “institutional infrastructure” that made mass mobilization possible. This infrastructure was deeply embedded in religious spaces: the churches themselves became symbols of resistance and solidarity.

The discursive practices within these spaces were equally significant. The sermonic tradition of the Black Church, with its roots in African American vernacular culture and its fusion of biblical narrative and contemporary political critique, created a powerful language of liberation (West, 1990). Preachers drew on the Exodus story, the prophetic tradition, and the life of Jesus to articulate a vision of justice that challenged the prevailing racial order. This religiously grounded discourse enabled the civil rights movement to frame its demands not merely as political claims but as moral imperatives rooted in a transcendent vision of justice.

3.2. Liberation Theology and the Catholic Church in Latin America

In Latin America, the emergence of liberation theology in the 1960s and 1970s transformed Catholic churches into sites of radical political engagement. Drawing on the insights of the Second Vatican Council and the 1968 Medellín conference, liberation theologians such as Gustavo Gutiérrez (1988), Leonardo Boff, and Jon Sobrino argued that the church had a preferential option for the poor and a mandate to engage in the struggle against structural injustice. This theology was not merely an intellectual project; it was embodied in *comunidades eclesiales de base* (base ecclesial communities)—small, lay-led groups that gathered in churches, chapels, and homes to read scripture, analyze social reality, and organize for change.

These base communities served as counterpublics in the Fraserian sense. In the context of military dictatorships and extreme inequality, they provided spaces where the poor could develop political consciousness, challenge authoritarian regimes, and imagine alternative social orders. Churches became sanctuaries for political dissidents, sites for literacy campaigns, and centers for grassroots organizing (Burdick, 1993; Levine, 1992). The martyrdom of figures like Archbishop Óscar Romero of El Salvador, assassinated in 1980 while celebrating Mass, exemplifies the dangerous intersection of religious space and political activism. Romero’s cathedral became a site of

resistance and memory, and his legacy continues to inspire movements for social justice across the region.

However, liberation theology also faced internal tensions and external repression. The Vatican under Pope John Paul II moved to curb what it saw as Marxist influences in the movement, and many liberation theologians were silenced or marginalized. Moreover, the role of the church as a public actor was contested by conservative bishops who allied with authoritarian regimes. These internal conflicts highlight the contested nature of religious spaces and the ongoing struggles over their political orientation.

3.3. Mosques and Political Mobilization in the Muslim World

In Muslim-majority societies, mosques have historically served as sites for both spiritual practice and political discourse. The early Islamic tradition, in which the mosque (*masjid*) functioned as a community center, court, and military headquarters, established a precedent for the integration of religious and public life. In the modern period, mosques have continued to play a significant role in political mobilization, from anti-colonial struggles to contemporary social movements.

The role of mosques in the Iranian Revolution of 1979 is a paradigmatic case. Under the leadership of Ayatollah Khomeini, mosques became the organizational backbone of the opposition to the Shah. The network of mosques, *husayniyyas*, and religious seminaries provided a structure for disseminating oppositional discourse, mobilizing mass demonstrations, and coordinating revolutionary action (Kurzman, 2004). The use of the mosque as a site of political assembly drew on deep cultural and religious resources, allowing the opposition to frame its struggle in terms of authentic Islamic values against a corrupt and Western-aligned regime.

More recently, mosques have played a central role in the Arab Spring uprisings. In Egypt, the protests of 2011 were organized in part through mosque networks, and Tahrir Square itself was often the site of collective prayers that served to unify and inspire demonstrators. The state's response, which included the repression of mosque-based activism and the co-optation of religious institutions, underscores the political significance of these spaces (Duderija, 2021; Kepel, 2004). In countries such as Turkey, the AKP government has used its control over the Directorate of

Religious Affairs (*Diyanet*) to shape mosque discourse and consolidate political power, demonstrating the ways in which religious spaces can also be instrumentalized by state actors (Turam, 2007).

4. Social Action and Community Welfare: Religious Spaces as Engines of Service

4.1. The Ethical Imperative of Care

The social action function of religious spaces is rooted in the ethical core of most religious traditions, which mandate care for the vulnerable, the poor, and the marginalized. From the Christian concept of *caritas* to the Islamic principle of *zakat* (obligatory alms) and the Sikh practice of *seva* (selfless service), religious traditions generate powerful normative commitments to social welfare. These commitments are institutionalized in religious spaces, which serve as hubs for a wide range of social services, including food banks, homeless shelters, healthcare clinics, educational programs, and disaster relief.

Robert Wuthnow's (1991) study *Acts of Compassion* documented the extensive involvement of religious congregations in social service provision in the United States. Wuthnow argued that religious organizations are not simply sources of private charity but are key components of civil society, contributing to social capital and community resilience. More recent research has confirmed the continued importance of faith-based organizations in the social safety net, particularly in contexts where state welfare provision has been reduced (Cnaan, Boddie, & Yancey, 2007).

4.2. The Sikh Gurdwara and the Langar

The Sikh gurdwara offers a compelling example of the integration of worship and social action. Central to Sikh practice is the *langar*, or community kitchen, which serves free meals to all visitors regardless of faith, caste, gender, or social status. The langar is not merely an act of charity; it is a theological and political statement about equality and the rejection of caste hierarchy. As Doris Jakobsh (2012) notes, the langar embodies the Sikh commitment to *seva* and challenges social

distinctions that are pervasive in South Asian society. During crises, gurdwaras have become critical sites for relief efforts, providing meals, shelter, and medical care to affected populations. The response of Sikh communities to the COVID-19 pandemic, the 9/11 attacks, and various natural disasters illustrates the capacity of religious spaces to mobilize resources and provide essential services in times of need.

4.3. Islamic Relief and Mosque-Based Social Services

In Muslim communities, the practice of *zakat* (almsgiving) is institutionalized through mosque-based collection and distribution systems. Many mosques operate food pantries, clothing banks, and emergency assistance programs, often in partnership with local social service agencies. Islamic Relief, a transnational humanitarian organization, coordinates the efforts of mosque networks to provide development and relief services in Muslim-majority countries and in Western contexts. These initiatives serve not only to meet material needs but also to reinforce communal bonds and express religious identity in the public sphere (Benthall & Bellion-Jourdan, 2003).

In the United States and Europe, mosque-based social services have taken on additional significance as sites for immigrant integration. Mosques often offer citizenship classes, language instruction, and legal assistance, helping Muslim communities navigate the complexities of life in non-Muslim societies. At the same time, these spaces are sometimes scrutinized by state authorities, reflecting the tensions that surround Muslim visibility in the public sphere (Gökarıksel & McLarney, 2020).

4.4. The Catholic Church and the Welfare State

The Catholic Church has historically played a major role in social welfare provision, operating extensive networks of hospitals, schools, and charities. The relationship between the church and the state has often been contested, with the church positioning itself as an alternative or complement to state welfare. In Latin America, the church's involvement in social services has been intertwined with its political role, with progressive sectors advocating for a "preferential option for the poor" and conservative sectors focusing on traditional charity (Levine, 1992).

In the United States, the “charitable choice” provisions of welfare reform in the 1990s and the subsequent establishment of the White House Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives under President George W. Bush institutionalized the role of religious organizations in public service provision. This development sparked debate about the constitutional separation of church and state, as well as concerns about religious discrimination in hiring and service delivery (Wineburg, 2007). These debates highlight the complex and contested nature of the social action function of religious spaces in liberal democratic contexts.

5. Intercultural and Interfaith Dialogue: Religious Spaces as Sites of Encounter

5.1. The Imperative of Dialogue in a Pluralist Age

Globalization and mass migration have made religious diversity a defining feature of contemporary societies. In cities around the world, people of different faiths live in close proximity, and the need for mutual understanding and conflict transformation has become urgent. Religious spaces, when approached with openness, can serve as crucial sites for intercultural and interfaith dialogue. By providing a context for encounter, they can help to dismantle stereotypes, build trust, and foster cooperation across religious and cultural boundaries (Patel & Meyer, 2011).

Interfaith dialogue takes many forms, from formal theological exchanges to shared social action projects. Many religious spaces host interfaith *iftars* during Ramadan, joint prayer services for peace, and educational programs that introduce visitors to the traditions and practices of the host community. These initiatives can be transformative, allowing participants to experience religious diversity not as a threat but as a source of enrichment.

5.2. Architectural Repurposing and Urban Interfaith Dynamics

The material dimension of religious space is particularly salient in the context of interfaith dynamics. The conversion of religious buildings from one tradition to another—a church becoming a mosque, a synagogue becoming a Buddhist temple—often becomes a flashpoint for public debate. These transformations raise questions about heritage, belonging, and the changing

demographics of neighborhoods. Scholars have examined how such conversions can become sites of both conflict and accommodation (Beaumont & Baker, 2011). In some cases, the repurposing of a church as a mosque is met with hostility and vandalism; in others, it becomes an occasion for interfaith cooperation and mutual recognition.

The architectural design of new religious spaces also carries implications for intercultural dialogue. The design of mosques in Western cities, for example, often involves negotiations with planning authorities and local communities about aesthetic features such as minarets and domes. These negotiations can become forums for broader conversations about Muslim identity and integration (Gökarıksel & Secor, 2009). Some communities have deliberately adopted architectural styles that blend local traditions with Islamic forms, signaling a commitment to integration and dialogue.

5.3. Interfaith Initiatives in Post-Conflict Contexts

In societies that have experienced religious violence, religious spaces can play a critical role in reconciliation and peacebuilding. The Interreligious Council of Bosnia and Herzegovina, established after the 1992–1995 war, uses religious spaces as sites for joint initiatives that bring together Muslim, Orthodox, Catholic, and Jewish leaders. The rebuilding of destroyed mosques and churches has become a symbolic act of reconciliation, with religious communities cooperating to restore each other's sacred sites (Powers, 2017).

Similarly, in the Middle East, initiatives such as the “Abrahamic Family House” in Abu Dhabi—which includes a mosque, a church, and a synagogue on a shared site—represent an attempt to institutionalize interfaith dialogue at the level of built space. While such initiatives have been critiqued for their association with state agendas, they nonetheless illustrate the potential of religious spaces to model coexistence.

6. Challenges and Tensions: Inclusivity, Power, and the Limits of Religious Spaces

6.1. Gender Inequality and the Politics of Women's Access

One of the most persistent challenges facing religious spaces is gender inequality. In many religious traditions, sacred spaces have been historically controlled by men, and women's access, participation, and leadership are circumscribed by formal rules and informal practices. Feminist scholars of religion have extensively documented the ways in which religious spaces are sites of gendered exclusion, and have explored how women have negotiated, contested, and transformed these spaces (Gross, 1996; Mahmood, 2005).

The debate over women's entry into the Sabarimala temple in Kerala, India, is a striking contemporary example. The temple traditionally barred women of menstruating age from entering, a practice that was challenged in the Supreme Court, which ruled in 2018 that the prohibition was unconstitutional. The ruling sparked widespread protests, with conservative groups arguing that the court had violated religious freedom and that the practice was central to the temple's tradition. The subsequent backlash, including attacks on women activists and attempts to prevent women from entering the temple, highlighted the deep tensions between gender justice and religious authority (Khan, 2019).

Similar debates have occurred in other contexts. In Orthodox Judaism, the issue of *mechitzot* (barriers separating men and women) in synagogues, and the exclusion of women from Torah reading and leadership roles, have been contested by feminist movements such as Women of the Wall. In Islam, the issue of women's space in mosques—whether women are relegated to separate, often inferior, spaces, and whether they can serve as imams—has been a focus of feminist activism and scholarly debate (Karam, 2018).

6.2. Caste, Race, and Class Hierarchies

Religious spaces are also sites of hierarchy based on caste, race, and class. Despite the universalist claims of many religious traditions, actual religious spaces often reflect and reinforce social inequalities. In South Asia, caste discrimination persists in many Hindu temples, with Dalits (formerly “untouchables”) barred from entry or relegated to separate spaces. While there have been movements for temple entry and for the appointment of Dalit priests, these practices remain deeply entrenched (Zelliot, 1996).

In the United States, the “11 o’clock hour” remains the most segregated hour of the week, with racial segregation in churches persisting despite the diversity of American society. This segregation reflects broader patterns of residential segregation and social division, and it limits the capacity of religious spaces to serve as sites of intercultural encounter (Emerson & Smith, 2000). Class divisions are also evident in religious spaces, with wealthy congregations often separated from poor ones, and with the aesthetics and practices of worship reflecting class distinctions.

7. Conclusion: Religious Spaces and the Future of the Public Sphere

This paper has argued that religious spaces are indispensable yet contested platforms for discourse, social action, and intercultural dialogue in the contemporary public sphere. Drawing on a theoretical framework that integrates Habermasian public sphere theory with the critical insights of Fraser, Warner, Casanova, and others, it has demonstrated that religious spaces function as counter-publics for marginalized communities, as sites of public religion that challenge secular boundaries, and as material and embodied arenas where social meaning is produced and contested.

The historical and contemporary case studies examined in this paper—from the Black Church and liberation theology to mosque-based mobilization and the rise of Hindu nationalism—illustrate the ambivalent potential of religious spaces. On the one hand, they are sites of resistance, social service, and interfaith encounter, playing crucial roles in movements for justice and peace. On the other hand, they are also sites of exclusion, hierarchy, and nationalist mobilization, reflecting and reinforcing the inequalities that pervade the broader society.

The challenges facing religious spaces in the public sphere are formidable. Gender inequality, caste and class hierarchies, and state co-optation all threaten the capacity of these spaces to serve as inclusive sites of democratic deliberation. Addressing these challenges requires not only internal reforms within religious communities but also broader struggles for social justice, pluralism, and the protection of religious freedom.

Looking forward, the future of religious spaces in the public sphere will depend on the ability of religious communities, civil society actors, and state institutions to navigate the complex tensions between religious identity and democratic pluralism. In an increasingly interconnected and

polarized world, religious spaces will continue to be sites where fundamental questions of belonging, justice, and coexistence are negotiated. Their potential to contribute to critical societal discussions—whether on climate change, economic inequality, or political violence—depends on their capacity to remain open, inclusive, and responsive to the needs of the communities they serve.

Further research is needed to deepen our understanding of the diverse ways in which religious spaces function in different geographical and cultural contexts. Comparative studies that examine the role of religious spaces in urban governance, in peace-building, and in the articulation of alternative political imaginaries would be particularly valuable. Ethnographic research that centers the voices of marginalized groups within religious spaces—women, LGBTQ+ individuals, ethnic and caste minorities—would also contribute to a more nuanced understanding of the power dynamics that shape these spaces. Ultimately, the study of religious spaces and the public sphere is not merely an academic exercise; it is an essential undertaking for anyone concerned with the future of democracy, justice, and coexistence in a pluralistic world.

References

- Beaumont, J., & Baker, C. (Eds.). (2011). *Postsecular Cities: Space, Theory and Practice*. Continuum.
- Benthall, J., & Bellion-Jourdan, J. (2003). *The Charitable Crescent: Politics of Aid in the Muslim World*. I.B. Tauris.
- Berger, P. L. (1967). *The Sacred Canopy: Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion*. Doubleday.
- Bowen, J. R. (2012). *A New Anthropology of Islam*. Cambridge University Press.

Burdick, J. (1993). *Looking for God in Brazil: The Progressive Catholic Church in Urban Brazil's Religious Arena*. University of California Press.

Calhoun-Brown, A. (2000). Upon This Rock: The Black Church, Nonviolence, and the Civil Rights Movement. *PS: Political Science and Politics*, 33(2), 168–174.

Casanova, J. (1994). *Public Religions in the Modern World*. University of Chicago Press.

Cnaan, R. A., Boddie, S. C., & Yancey, G. I. (2007). *The Invisible Caring Hand: American Congregations and the Provision of Welfare*. New York University Press.

Dar, F. A. (2022). The Mosque as a Site of Resistance and Political Mobilization in Kashmir. *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies*, 45(3), 512-528.

Deeb, L. (2006). *An Enchanted Modern: Gender and Public Piety in Shi'i Lebanon*. Princeton University Press.

Dei, G. J. S. (2022). Religious Spaces as Sites of Decolonial Resistance and Indigenous Knowledge. In J. H. Kilde (Ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Religious Space*. Oxford University Press.

Derosé, K. P., Kanouse, D. E., Bogart, L. M., Griffin, B. A., & Haas, A. C. (2020). The Role of Faith-Based Organizations in the COVID-19 Response. *American Journal of Public Health*, 110(8), 1148-1151.

Duderija, A. (2021). *The Public Sphere and Contemporary Muslim Subjectivities*. Palgrave Macmillan.

Emerson, M. O., & Smith, C. (2000). *Divided by Faith: Evangelical Religion and the Problem of Race in America*. Oxford University Press.

Fraser, N. (1990). Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy. **Social Text*, 25/26*, 56–80.

Gökarıksel, B., & McLarney, E. (2020). The Geopolitics of Religious Space: Mosques, Visibility, and the Public Sphere. *Geopolitics*, 25(1), 1-14.

Gökarıksel, B., & Secor, A. (2009). New Transnational Geographies of Islamism, Capitalism, and Subjectivity: The Veiling-Fashion Industry in Turkey. *Environment and Planning A*, 41(3), 631-649.

Gross, R. M. (1996). *Feminism and Religion: An Introduction*. Beacon Press.

Gutiérrez, G. (1988). *A Theology of Liberation: History, Politics, and Salvation*. Orbis Books.

Habermas, J. (1989). *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*. MIT Press.

Habermas, J. (2008). Notes on Post-Secular Society. *New Perspectives Quarterly*, 25(4), 17-29.

Halafoff, A. (2013). *The Multifaith Movement: Global Risks and Cosmopolitan Solutions*. Springer.

Jaffrelot, C. (2021). *Modi's India: Hindu Nationalism and the Rise of Ethnic Democracy*. Princeton University Press.

Jakobsh, D. R. (2012). *Sikhism*. University of Hawaii Press.

Karam, A. (Ed.). (2018). *Women, Islam, and the State: Contemporary Feminist Engagements*. Temple University Press.

Kepel, G. (2004). *The War for Muslim Minds: Islam and the West*. Belknap Press.

Khan, F. (2019). Sabarimala: A Feminist Reading of the Constitutional and Political Debates. *Indian Journal of Gender Studies*, 26(1-2), 142-165.

Kilde, J. H. (2022). *The Oxford Handbook of Religious Space*. Oxford University Press.

Knott, K. (2005). *The Location of Religion: A Spatial Analysis*. Equinox.

Kurzman, C. (2004). *The Unthinkable Revolution in Iran*. Harvard University Press.

Laliberté, A. (2019). State Regulation of Religion in China: A Comparative Perspective. *Journal of Contemporary Asia*, 49(3), 443-462.

- Landes, J. B. (1988). *Women and the Public Sphere in the Age of the French Revolution*. Cornell University Press.
- Levine, D. H. (1992). *Popular Voices in Latin American Catholicism*. Princeton University Press.
- Lincoln, C. E., & Mamiya, L. H. (1990). *The Black Church in the African American Experience*. Duke University Press.
- Mahmood, S. (2005). *Politics of Piety: The Islamic Revival and the Feminist Subject*. Princeton University Press.
- Morris, A. D. (1984). *The Origins of the Civil Rights Movement: Black Communities Organizing for Change*. Free Press.
- Patel, E., & Meyer, C. (2011). The Role of Interfaith Leadership in a Multifaith World. *The Review of Faith & International Affairs*, 9(3), 3-10.
- Powers, J. M. (2017). *Religion and Peacebuilding in Bosnia and Herzegovina: The Role of the Interreligious Council*. United States Institute of Peace.
- Turam, B. (2007). *Between Islam and the State: The Politics of Engagement*. Stanford University Press.
- van der Veer, P. (1994). *Religious Nationalism: Hindus and Muslims in India*. University of California Press.
- Vasquez, M. A., & Marquardt, M. F. (2003). *Globalizing the Sacred: Religion Across the Americas*. Rutgers University Press.
- Warner, M. (2002). *Publics and Counterpublics*. Zone Books.
- West, C. (1990). *Prophetic Fragments*. Eerdmans.
- Wilson, B. R. (1966). *Religion in Secular Society: A Sociological Comment*. Watts.

Wineburg, B. (2007). *Faith-Based Inefficiency: The Follies of Bush's Initiatives*. Greenwood Publishing Group.

Wuthnow, R. (1991). *Acts of Compassion: Caring for Others and Helping Ourselves*. Princeton University Press.

Zelliot, E. (1996). *From Untouchable to Dalit: Essays on the Ambedkar Movement*. Manohar.

Perceived Parental Rejection, Emotional Adjustment: A Systematic Review

Mohd Ashraf Waza³

Abstract

Parental-Rejection is a growing concern of modern industrial society which is affecting our future generation in every respect. The findings of the previous studies reported that parental rejection is mutilating the emotional health of the children. The systematic review examined the effect of parental rejection on the emotional adjustment of the children. A total of 15 studies conducted from 2015-2023 were included in the review and the total sample size was 9786 and the average age of the sample was 8-18. The results revealed that parental rejection had a significant impact on the emotional adjustment of the children. The study further uncloaked that there was no regional disparity in parental rejection. The findings of the study provide relevant and valuable suggestions for further research.

Keywords: Parental Rejection; Children; Emotional Adjustment; Modern Society

Introduction

Beginning in the 1960's interpersonal acceptance-rejection theory (IPARTheory) is an evidence based theory of socialization and life span development which predicts and investigates the interpersonal acceptance-rejection and its consequences related to different aspects of human adjustment personal, social and emotional during the childhood, adolescence and adulthood (Rohner, 1986,2004,Rohner and Rohner, 1980, Rohner and Rising 2021). Historically, the theory was known as the parental acceptance-rejection theory (PAR Theory), but after 2000 the theory broadens its scope and include other important intimate relationships in it and in 2014 the theory came to be known as "Interpersonal Acceptance-Rejection Theory" (IPAR Theory).

Parental acceptance-rejection is a bipolar dimension and together they form the warmth dimension of parenting. On the one dimension there is parental acceptance which refers to warmth, affection, care, comfort, concern, nurturance, support or to put it simple it means love which any child can experience from his parents or care givers. The second end or dimension is the parental rejection which refers to the absence or significant withdrawal of these feeling and behaviours, and by the

³ Research Scholar, School of Education and Behavioural Sciences, University of Kashmir, email

muhammadashedu@gmail.com

presence of a variety of physically and psychologically hurtful behaviours. Parental rejection is based or can be expressed by the four principal expressions: (1) cold and unaffectionate, opposite of warm and affectionate, (2) hostile and aggressive, (3) indifferent and neglecting, and (4) undifferentiated rejection, undifferentiated rejection is a belief that an individual have about the attachment figure does not love them even though it is not shown by that attachment figure (Rohner et al., 2012).

The IPAR Theory has drawn an assumption from the bio-cultural evolution or sometimes also known as phylogenetic perspective that human beings have developed a need of positive response or love from their intimate one's when this need is not being fulfilled by their parents or caregivers or sometimes by significant ones children have this tendency to develop different kinds of negative personality dispositions (Khalequem, 2012). Perceived parental rejection in childhood is responsible for the development of cognitive distortion which gives birth to the tendency to personalize the things, sometimes be hypervigilant and oversensitive, to overreact, threatened and imagined rejection(Ibrahim, Rohner, Smith and Flannery 2014).

The Personality sub-theory of IPAR Theory put forward the thought that a person who is not being emotionally accepted by the parents or significant others are likely to respond emotionally like being anxious and feel insecure and show a specific behavioural tendency called dependency. The term dependency in the IPAR Theory means the internal, psychologically felt wish or yearning for emotional (opposed to instrumental or task-oriented) support, care, comfort, attention, nurturance and similar behaviours from significant other(Rohner 2016). The personality sub-theory of IPAR Theory recognized the fact that those children or adults who feel rejection from the parents or significant others develops different kinds of personality problems or negative emotions like aggression, anger, hostility, behavioural management problems, dependency, poor or negative self-esteem, negative self-adequacy, emotional instability, and they see this world a place full of hatred and dangerous to live(Khaleque 2012). The rejected children or adults also develops certain characteristics like fear of intimacy, and they construct the such kind of image of the people where they see them as untrustworthy, and they always think no matter what they will be hurted.It was also found that those children who perceive their parents or attachment figures as rejected can develop a developmental trauma disorder(DTD) (Van der Kolk 2010) and sometimes complex posttraumatic stress disorder(CPSTD) (Courtosis, 2004). The *f MRI* (Functional Magnetic Resonance Imaging) revealed that the pain of the rejection is real as it was found through these image that certain parts of the brain that is Anterior Cingulate Cortex, and the Right Ventral

Prefrontal Cortex gets activated when someone feels rejection(Eisenberger,2012). The rejection effects the central nervous system and psychosocial development as it has been found from different neurobiological and neuropsychological studies (Ford, 2005). The first meta-analysis of parental acceptance was conducted by Khaleque and Rohner(2002) was based on 43 research studies and participants were from 15 nation. So far as the current study is concerned the basic purpose of this is to examine the effect of the perceived parental rejection up on the emotional adjustment of the children.

Selection of the Studies:

The selection process for the current study was very simple, first, only those studies were included which assess the impact or relationship between perceived parental acceptance- rejection and emotional adjustment or psychological maladjustment. Second, only those studies were included in this meta-analysis which were conducted from 2015 to 2023 onwards and were selected after a comprehensive review related to parental acceptance-rejection, and third, and last important thing about the selection of these studies was that of the definition of emotional adjustment as defined in IPAR Theory and assessed by the Parental Acceptance-Rejection Questionnaire(PARQ) Mother, Father and Child version(Long and Short version) and the Personality Assessment Questionnaire(PAQ).

Research Question

The objective of the present review is to address the two basic questions (a) To analyze the impact of Perceived Parental Rejection on the Emotional Adjustment of the Children? And (b) How children respond to Perceived Parental Rejection and future outcome of the Perceived Parental Rejection?

Sample Size:

A total of 15 studies were included in the current systematic review. These studies were conducted from 2015 to 2023. All these studies were conducted in different parts of the world like America, Bangladesh,China, Italy, Pakistan,Russia, South Africa, and Turkey. The total sample of all these studies includes 9786(Children-Boys and Girls). The average age of the children was 08-18.

Methodology:

All the studies which included in this systematic review used the (1) Parental Acceptance Rejection Questionnaire(PARQ) Mother, Father, Child and Adult Version(Long and Short Version Rohner,2005), Personality Assessment Questionnaire(PAQ) (Rohner and Khaleque, 2005).In some of the studies Regression and Correlation as well as the some parametric and non-parametric

techniques were used to interpret the data and make the results possible. All these techniques are valid and reliable. For the present study a comprehensive review of literature was conducted and deeply analyzed. All those related studies were selected and finally adopted for the current review. The studies focus on the emotional adjustment of parentally rejected children as reported in IPAR Theory and data was analyzed to prepare the results of these studies. The study also focused on the size of the sample, nature of the study, location of the study, age of the participants.

Description of the tools used for data collection in these studies:

All the studies that are the part of the present meta-analysis used the Parental Acceptance Rejection Questionnaire(PARQ) Father, Mother and Child version, short and long version developed by Rohner in (1978 and 2005). **Parental Acceptance Rejection Questionnaire(PARQ).** The Parental Acceptance Rejection Questionnaire(PARQ) is a self-report questionnaire designed to assess the children's current perceptions and adult's retrospective remembrances of the degree to which they experienced parental(Maternal and Paternal) acceptance and rejection in childhood. The PARQ consists of four sub-scales (a) warmth/affection opposite of it is coldness and lack of affection when scores are being reversed,(b) hostility/aggression,(c) indifference/neglect and undifferentiated rejection which refers individuals feelings that the parent does not love the child, does not want them, does not care or showing any kind positive attitude towards the child. All the four sub-scales constitute the Parental Acceptance Rejection Questionnaire(PARQ). There are four versions of PARQ which are being used all the world(1) Early Childhood PARQ,(2) Child PARQ,(3) Adult PARQ and (4) Parent PARQ. But the studies which used the Early Childhood PARQ were excluded and only those studies were included which used the rest of the three scales were the part of the present meta-analysis. Child PARQ is being used to assess the Child Parental Acceptance Rejection from 7 years to Adolescence. The Adult version of the PARQ is being used to when adults are being to reflect on their earlier times when they were children and how their parents were with them, and the Parent PARQ is used when the parents want to reflect on their current accepting-rejecting behaviours towards their children. All the forms and versions of the PARQ are identical except for verb tense(Present or Past Tense). The PARQ is available in two forms long form contains 60 items and short form contains 24 items, both of these forms are being globally. All the forms and versions of the PARQ uses the same response and scoring sheet. The scores of the long version of the PARQ ranges from 60 to 240. Lower score on the scale reflect more acceptance and higher score on the scale reflects more rejection. On the short version the scores range from the 24 to 96. Here also lower score means

more acceptance and higher score means more rejection. All the versions of the PARQ are being used in every culture and society of the world with .89.95 and .84 reliability and .81 and .64 validity. All these results are constant as it has also reported by Rohner(2005), Gomez and Rohner(2011) and Senese et al.(2016) thus providing a strong evidence of all the versions of PARQ.

Personality Assessment Questionnaire(PAQ).

The Personality Assessment Questionnaire(PAQ) is a self-reporting questionnaire developed to assess the seven personality dispositions discussed in personality sub-theory of IPAR Theory. The PAQ consists of seven sub-scales which includes (a) hostility and aggression including aggression in different forms like physical aggression, verbal aggression, passive aggression and problems with the management of hostility and aggression, (b) dependence, (c) self-esteem, (d) self-adequacy, (e) emotional responsiveness, (f) emotional stability and (g) worldview. By obtaining the composite score of all the seven sub-scales we can assess the psychological adjustment of a person. There are two versions of PAQ one is Child PAQ which consists of 42 items (6 in each sub-scale) and Adult PAQ which consist of 63 items (9 in each sub-scale). Both the versions are written in present tense which assesses the individual's true image of themselves. The scores of the child PAQ ranges from 42 (lower score is the indication of healthy psychological adjustment) and 168 (the higher score which is the indication of severe psychological mal-adjustment). The scores of Adult PAQ ranges from 63 which reflects the healthy psychological adjustment to 252 which reveals the severe psychological maladjustment of the person. The mid-value of the Child PAQ of 105 and the Adult PAQ of 157 revealed that the person is suffering from the psychological mal-adjustment. Both the versions of the PAQ (Child and Adult version) are reliable and valid as it is evident from the cross-cultural research. For example, a meta-analysis of 51 cross-cultural studies provided a mean weighted coefficient alpha on Child PAQ of .83 and on Adult PAQ it is .86 (Khaleque & Rohner 2002). On test-retest reliability across time periods ranging from 1 through 18 months for the Child PAQ was .61, and on Adult PAQ it was .76 on test-retest across time periods of 6 through 12 months.

Results

The results of the current study revealed that parentally rejected children are emotionally mutilated which had incapacitated their life. While conducting the present review all the studies showed that parentally rejected children were emotionally wounded and they felt traumatized. **Lan & Wang (2023)** found that parental rejection badly affects the self-esteem of the adolescents. These

children feel emotionally dejected and become the victims of stress, depression, anxiety and loneliness. **Lee et al. (2023)** found that parental rejection was deeply affecting the emotional adjustment of the children. **Vignando&Bizumic (2023)** narcissistic parental behaviour, scapegoating in a family causes anxiety and depression in emerging adults. **Noori&Siddiue(2023)** found that parentally rejected children were suffering from psychological maladjustment. **Wu et al. (2023)** examined the effect of parenting practices on the mental health of the young adolescents and how ineffective parenting styles and behaviour, undemocratic discipline, punishment and poor monitoring of the children would damage the mental setup of these children. **Gillette(2022)** identified the fifty four possible effects of physical and emotional rejection. The most common emotional pain, sadness, feeling lonely, self-isolation, depression, anger outbursts, emotional avoidance, insecure attachment practices and rejected child syndrome. **Rohner(2021)** found that parental rejection has a serious behavioural, social, neuro-biological and emotional consequences like loneliness, guilt, jealousy, guilt, shame, anxiety, sadness are the common emotional responses of the parental rejection. **Rothenberg et al. (2021)** conducted the study to assess the impact of parental rejoin on the emotional development of the children and found that paternal and maternal rejection was deeply effecting the emotional status of the children. **Yilmaz et al. (2021)** found that parental rejection was causing the enuresis among the children. **Krieger(2021)** found that parental rejection causes different negative emotions among the children like anxiety and bullying and these emotions are universal in nature. **Carrasco et al. (2019)** maternal acceptance had a higher contribution to psychological adjustment in children of age group of 9 to 10 years. **Curcio et al. (2019)** conformed that those male adolescents who perceive their parents less caring (Rejected) were suffering from psychological distress and low self-esteem. **Rohner et al. (2019)** rejection both maternal rejection and paternal rejection in childhood is associated with fear of intimacy, psychological mal-adjustment and relationship anxiety in adulthood. **Dekel et al. (2018)** The findings of this study revealed that how traumatic and obnoxious poor parent child relationship could have as it developed the negative instincts in the children in South African society. Child abuse, absent parent, neglect etc., effects the relationship of a person in adulthood as parents. The findings of the study also showed that all these people were abused physically, mentally, emotionally and sometimes sexually by their parents that was the main reason they got involved in child homicide. **Golubeva&Istratova, (2018)** found that parental rejection was the main cause of frustration and emotional stability among the young children. **Ramirez-Ucles(2018)** found that perceived parental acceptance causes psychological maladjustment among young

adolescents. **Rohner et al.(2016)** found that parentally rejected children experience serious emotional breakups in their life. They are feeling sadness, depression, anxiety, guilt throughout their life. All these things are affecting their other intimate relationships. **Leary(2015)** conducted the study to assess the emotional responses of interpersonal relationships and found that people often experience sadness, social anxiety, loneliness, shame, guilt, embarrassment and jealousy when they experience rejection in their life. He also found that rejection has other behavioural, social, developmental, clinical and interpersonal repercussions.

Discussion

The objective of the present review was to analyze deeply the available literature on Parental Acceptance Rejection and to investigate what is the effect of Perceived Parental Rejection on the emotional adjustment of the children and on adult or on their Psychological adjustment and what are the outcomes and future consequences of this rejection on the children and adults. Results of the meta-analysis reveals that Perceived Parental Rejection is directly relate with the emotional problems and psychological maladjustment among the children and adults across all the cultures in the world. The results also show that perceived rejection is also negatively affecting the mental health of the children and adults. At the same time it was found that rejected children and those adults who feel rejection during their childhood days are suffering from different kinds of psychological problems like emotional unresponsiveness, distrust, anxiety, fear of intimacy, fear of loneliness etc.

All these findings are strongly supported by the results of all the previous meta-analysis studies or other research works conducted from time to time. Pond, Terrizzi&Kamble(2023) argued that people who are being socially rejected experience different negative emotions like anger, disgust, sadness and emotional numbness. Morin (2023) people who perceive their parents as rejected suffer from rejection sensitivity. Because of rejection sensitivity they feel emotional pain, anger, sadness, and they engage in aggressiveness, social isolation and self-injury. Brown et al.(2019) conduct the study on rejection and found that rejection has some serious mental health and emotional consequences one such problem is rejection sensitivity. The study further found that rejection sensitivity can lead to suicide ideation. Shin &Bae (2023) found that rejected children are aggressive, feel depression, emotional pain and anxiety which is affecting their life very badly. Marici(2023) found that parental rejection and abandonment is closely associated with guilt and shame among adolescents. The study also revealed that children who came from abusive and

broken families were indulged in self-damaging behaviour like drug abuse, illegal sexual activities and harming their siblings. Adcox(2023) reported that family estrangement causes different psychological and emotional scars in the children. Bonlor(2019) found that rejection sensitivity dysphoria is the outcome of parental rejection. In rejection sensitivity dysphoria children feel intense emotional pain, social anxiety, social phobia, negativity, guilt and shame. The meta-analysis conducted by Ali, Khaleque, & Rohner(2015) and Khaleque, (2013,2015, 2016) supported the fact that Perceived Parental Rejection is strongly related with the psychological adjustment of the children and adults. Khaleque and Rohner(2002) also found that all the four dimensions of Parental Acceptance Rejection Questionnaire (PARQ) are the strong predictors which shows that the rejected children and adults are suffering from different developmental problems. Demetrious & Christodoulides(2011) also found that the children who perceive their parents as rejected were suffering from the emotional instability. Rohner et al.(2021) found that Perceived Parental Rejection is closely related with loneliness and psychological maladjustment among the children and adults. Dural & Yalcin (2014) revealed that parental rejection is a strong indicator which negatively affects the emotional and psychological adjustment of the children. Rohner & Buehler(2017) found that Perceived Parental Rejection among children and adults is not only responsible for the Psychological Maladjustment but it can also affect their other behavioural traits as they could go for substance use, having fear of intimacy, loneliness and other problem which affects them very badly. Ali, Khatun, Khaleque & Rohner(2018) conducted a comprehensive meta-analysis 102 studies (89 published and 13 unpublished) found that paternal and maternal undifferentiated rejection is strongly related with the psychological maladjustment of the children, adults and even on off springs. It was also found that maternal rejection more related with psychological maladjustment than the paternal rejection. Dwairy(2010) found that parentally rejected children were suffering from different psychological disorders and psychological maladjustment. Perceived rejection is directly related with the etiology of depression and emotional disturbance. The emotional outcomes of the perceived parental rejection lead to the severe behavioral problems in the children. Fear, disenfranchised grief, guilt, depression, emotional outbursts, loss of emotional control. Fatigue, chills, chest pain, rapid heart rate, confusion, nightmares, poor problem solving, poor concentration, withdrawal, loss or increase in appetite and emotional shocks. All the studies which were reviewed reported these problems in the children who perceive their parents as rejected.

Conclusion

The current systematic review analyzed the impact of parental rejection on the emotional adjustment of the children and how children respond this rejection. The children who are facing parental rejection often suffer from insecurity, discomfort with intimacy, inconsistency related conversations, hyper-independence, struggle with feelings and thoughts, sabotage their relationships and are emotionally numb. All the studies which were reviewed reported that parentally rejection children have a strong fear of abandonment, experience lots of relationship anxiety and they feel reluctant about getting close to others, does not invest in emotional relationships, become stumble to share feelings and thoughts. Research conducted in different parts of world across different cultures showed that perceived parental rejection affect the self-concept, self-adequacy, negative self-image, sadness and depression, hostility in social interaction, bullying, shame and guilt and loneliness and social withdrawal are the common emotions experienced by the parentally rejected children. `

References

- Adcox, S.(2021). What is family estrangement? *Verywell family*, July 2, 2021.
- Ali, S. Khatun, N., Khaleque, A. &Rohner, R.P.,(2018) They Love Me Not: A Meta-Analysis of Relations Between Parental Undifferentiated Rejection and Off springs Psychological Maladjustment *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology*(SAGE)1-5 DOI: 10.1177/0022022118815599.
- Bonlor, A.(2019). What is rejection sensitivity dysphoria. *Psychology Today*, July 20, 2019.
- Demetriou, L.,& Christodoulides, P.(2011) Personality and Psychological Adjustment of Greek-Cypriot Youth in the Context of the Parental Acceptance Rejection Theory *The Cyprus Review* 23(1) 81-96.
- Dural, G. &Yalcin, I. (2014) Investigation of relationship between parental acceptance and psychological adjustment among university students.*Dusunen Adam The Journal of Psychiatry and Neurological Sciences* 27, 221-232 DOI: 10.5350/DAJPN2014270305.
- Dwairy, M.(2010). Parental acceptance-rejection: a youth cross-cultural research on parenting and psychological adjustment of children. *Journal of child and families studies*. 19 (1) 30-35. Doi: 10.1007/s10286.009-9338-y
- Gillette, H. (2022). 54 possible effects of physical and emotional rejection in childhood. *Psyche Central*, August 18, 2022.

- Gomez, R. & Rohner, R.P. (2011) Tests of Factor Structure and Measurement Invariance in the USA and Australia Using the Adult Version of Parental Acceptance Rejection Questionnaire. *Cross Cultural Research* 45, 267-285.
- Ibrahim, D.M., Rohner, R.P., Smith, R.L., Flannery, K.M. (2014) Adults remembrances of Parental Acceptance- Rejection in Childhood and Association with Current Rejection Sensitivity. *Family and Consumer Sciences Research Journal*, 44.51-62. doi:10.1111/fcsr.12119.
- Khaleque, A. & Rohner, R. P. (2002) Reliability of Measures Assessing the Relationship Between Perceived Parental Acceptance Rejection and Psychological Assessment: A Meta-analysis of Cross-Cultural and Inter-Cultural Studies. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology* 33 86-98.
- Khaleque, A. (2013) Perceived Parental Warmth, and Children's Psychological Adjustment, and Personality Dispositions: A Meta-analysis. *J Child Fam Stud* 22: 297-306. DOI 10.1007/s 10826-012-9579-z
- Lan, L. & Wang, X. (2023). Parental rejection and adolescents learning abilities: A multiple mediating effects of values and self-esteem. *Behav.Sci.* 13(2)143.
- Lila, M., Garcia, F., & Gracia, E. (2007) Perceived Paternal and Maternal Acceptance and Children's Outcome in Colombia *Social Behavior and Personality* 35(1) 115-124.
- Marici, M., Clipa, O, Runcan, R., & Pirghi, L. (2023). Is rejection, parental abandonment or neglect a trigger higher perceived shame and guilt in adolescents? *Healthcare (Basel)* 12:11(12):1724. Doi: 10.3390/healthcare 111211726
- Rohner et al. (2021) Psychological Maladjustment Mediates the Link Between Remembrances of Parental Rejection in Childhood and Loneliness in Adulthood: A Cross- Cultural Comparative Study. *Int. J Psychol.* 55(4): 590-600. doi:10.1002/IJOP.12621.
- Rohner, R. P. (2005) Parental Acceptance Rejection Questionnaire (PARQ): Test Manual. In R.P. Rohner & A. Khaleque (Eds.) *Handbook for the Study of Parental Acceptance Rejection* (4th ed., 43-106). Storrs: Rohner Research Publications.
- Rohner, R.P. (2016) Introduction to Interpersonal Acceptance-Rejection Theory (IPAR Theory) and Evidence. *Online Readings in Psychology and Culture*. 6 (1) 1-38. <https://doi.org/10.9707>.
- Rohner, R.P. (2004) The "Parental Acceptance Rejection Syndrome": Universal Correlates of Perceived Rejection. *American Psychologists* 59 827-840.
- Rohner, R. P., Khaleque, A., Cournoyer, D.E. (2012) Introduction to Parental Acceptance-Rejection Theory, Methods, Evidence, and Implications. *University of Connecticut*.

Rohner, R. P., & Rising, D.G., (2021) *Recovery From Rejection: A Manual of Client Handouts for Clinical Practice. Second Edition 2.0 Rohner Research Publications. Storrs, CT, USA.*

Senese, V.P., Bacchini, D., Miranda, M.C., Aurino, C., & Rohner, R. P. (2016) The Adult Parental Acceptance-Rejection Questionnaire: A Cross -Cultural Comparison of Italian and American Short Form *Parenting 16* 219-236.

Shin, J. & Bae, S.M. (2023). Moderating effects of emotional recognition competency in rejective parenting and adolescent depression and aggression. *Int J Environ Res Public Health*, 20(18), 6775. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph20186775>

Creativity and Emotional Intelligence among Adolescents: Comparative Profiles and Correlation Insights

Munazah Hassan⁵ & Prof. Mahmood Ahmad Khan⁶

Abstract

Adolescence marks a pivotal phase where creativity and emotional intelligence converge to shape cognitive flexibility, social competence, and lifelong resilience. This study examines the relationship between creativity and emotional intelligence (EI) among 400 secondary school adolescents in district Pulwama, J&K. Using a descriptive quantitative design, high-creative ($n = 200$, ≥ 75 th percentile) and low-creative ($n = 200$, ≤ 25 th percentile) students were identified via Mehdi's Verbal Test of Creative Thinking Abilities (2019), which measures fluency, flexibility, and originality. EI was assessed using Hyde et al.'s (2002) 34-item scale across 10 dimensions (e.g., self-awareness, empathy, self-motivation). Independent t-tests revealed significant mean differences favoring high-creative students on EI composite scores ($M = 136.99$ vs. 123.01 ; $t = 8.3$, $p < .01$) and all dimensions (t -range: 2.96 – 8.7 , $p < .01$). Karl Pearson correlations showed strong positive associations between creativity dimensions and EI factors (r -range: $.299^{**}$ – $.626^{**}$), with the highest for total scores ($r = .622^{**}$, $p < .01$). Findings align with prior research (e.g., Ivcevic et al., 2020; Sánchez-Ruiz et al., 2011), suggesting EI underpins creative processes through enhanced self-regulation and empathy. Educational implications include integrating EI workshops, creative activities, and supportive mentoring to foster holistic adolescent development. This research addresses a gap in Indian contexts, informing strategies for nurturing creativity and emotional well-being.

Keywords: *Creativity; Emotional Intelligence; Adolescents; Correlation; Educational Psychology*

Introduction

⁵ Department of Education, University of Kashmir, Srinagar, India. Email-bhatmunazah99@gmail.com

⁶ Dean and HOD Islamic University of Science and Technology. Email- drmahmood1962@yahoo.co.in

In today's rapidly evolving educational landscape, fostering holistic development in adolescents has become paramount. Adolescence is the most critical period marked not only by physical and emotional changes but also by the emergence and refinement of creative abilities, integral to individual growth and societal progress (Barbot & Hunter, 2012; Sternberg & Lubart, 1996). Creativity, defined as the ability to generate novel and valuable ideas (Guilford, 1967) emerge as critical psychological construct influencing academic success, mental health, and life adaptability. In recent decades, creativity has been increasingly important in the realm of education (Bailin, 1994; Robinson, 2001). Its significance has long been highlighted (Torrance, 1962; Guilford, 1950; Rogers, 1976). Creative tendencies reflect an adolescent's predisposition and inclination to engage in innovative thinking and problem-solving, often influenced by complex cognitive, affective, and environmental factors (Feldhusen, 2005). Creative tendencies can vary widely among individuals based on intrinsic attributes and context (Cropley, 2015; Runco & Jaeger, 2012). Furthermore, motivational and emotional factors including intrinsic interest, self-efficacy, and emotional intelligence significantly influence the activation and sustainability of creative thinking (Amabile, 1996; Ivcevic et al., 2022). Creativity is not merely an innate trait but also an attitude and habit cultivated through supportive environments and educational practices (Beghetto & Kaufman, 2014). Early adolescence is a formative window for the emergence of creative thinking tendencies, which, if nurtured, can increase academic engagement and lifelong learning skills (Sung & Walker, 2022).

Emotions are personal experiences that arise from a very complex interplay among physiological, cognitive and situational variables. Emotional intelligence (EI) is defined as the ability of individuals to recognize their own emotions and those of others, discern between different feelings and label them appropriately, use emotional information to guide thinking and behavior, and adjust emotions to adapt to environments (Salovey & Mayer, 1990). Although the term first appeared in 1964, but it was popularized by Daniel Golman in his book 'Emotional Intelligence' in 1995. Emotional intelligence consists of a learned set of competencies which determine how we interact with people which may be personal and social competencies. A personal competency includes self-awareness, self-regulation as well as the motivation, while the social competencies include empathy and social skills. It plays a foundational role in adolescents' social and emotional development, influencing their adaptability, interpersonal relationships, and overall well-being during this critical phase of life (Parker et al., 2004; Schutte et al., 2007). Adolescents with higher emotional intelligence tend to experience better mental health, heightened resilience, and superior

academic and social functioning (Moreno et al., 2023; Collado-Soler et al., 2023). This is because EI facilitates healthy emotion regulation, reduces anxiety and depressive symptoms, and fosters positive interactions with peers and adults (Seale et al., 2013; Rajappa et al., 2012). Self-regulation, as a core aspect of EI, enables teens to manage impulsive and potentially risky behaviors, contributing to improved social competence and decreased involvement in maladaptive behaviors (Spinrad et al., 2006; Parker et al., 2004). Notably, EI serves as a protective factor during adolescence, a period often characterized by emotional volatility and psychosocial challenges. Adolescents with strong emotional intelligence have better stress management, maintain motivation, and navigate complex social environments (Weare & Nind, 2011; Ivcevic et al., 2022). Furthermore, emotion based competencies support constructive problem-solving, empathy-driven decision-making, and effective communication, which collectively promote academic resilience and mental well-being (Magnano et al., 2016; Moreno et al., 2023).

A thorough review of the literature illustrates that extensive research has been conducted on creativity in relation to various psychological and educational variables. Previous studies like Salari & Jenaabadi (2015) examined creativity and self-confidence. Mehrinejad et al. (2015) investigated creativity alongside parenting styles. Ojha (2013), Dalal (2013), Rani (2013), and Tambawal (2013) explored links with academic achievement, intelligence, achievement motivation, and self-esteem, respectively; Parveen (2013) focused on personality traits. Ganie (2012) studied need patterns, while Padhan (1990) and Babu (1977) addressed socio-economic status and personality traits. Researchers such as Hafeez (2017), Yadav (2015), Shukla (2014), Pandith (2012), Sarsani (2008), Matto (1992), Asthana (1987), Kumar (1981), Gupta (1981), and Nair (1975) have also focused on high and low creative students, studying diverse factors like personality, motivation, anxiety, adjustment, cognition, learning styles, need patterns, interest patterns, scholastic achievement, vocational interests, and self-regulated learning. However, there lies a noticeable gap in research addressing emotional intelligence of adolescents with varying degrees of creativity within the Indian context particularly with regard to J&K. In light of this, the current study aims to examine the emotional intelligence and creativity among adolescent students in secondary school education. Thus, the research study aims to provide substantial theoretical and practical value, as understanding emotional intelligence of students with respect to their varying creativity levels will help policymakers as well as educators in developing proper strategies to foster emotional intelligence among creative adolescents in particular and adolescents in general.

Objectives:

1. To identify high creative and low creative adolescents.
2. To compare the emotional intelligence of high creative and low creative adolescents.
3. To study the relationship between creativity and emotional intelligence of adolescents.

Hypotheses:

H1(a) There is a significant difference in emotional intelligence of high creative and low creative secondary school adolescent students. (Factor wise)

H1(b) There is a significant difference in emotional intelligence of high creative and low creative secondary school adolescent students. (Composite score)

H1 (c): There is significant relationship between emotional intelligence and creativity of secondary school adolescent students. (Factor wise)

H1 (d): There is significant relationship between emotional intelligence and creativity of secondary school adolescent students. (Composite score)

Methodology and Procedure:

The study is based on quantitative research paradigm. A descriptive research design was employed to verify the above stated objectives. ‘Descriptive research method is associated with the conditions, correlations that exist, practices that prevail, beliefs, points of view or attitudes that are held, processes that are going on, effects that are being felt or trends that are developing’ (Best and Kahn, 2016).

Sample:

A sample is classified as a subset of the population that is to be selected for the actual data collection. There are 10 districts in the Kashmir region, this limited the possibility of collecting data from all the districts. Consequently, by using Simple random technique one district i.e district Pulwama was selected for this study using lottery method. This district is divided into different educational zones. To ensure representative sampling, three educational zones were randomly selected. All the students studying in the government schools of these zones were selected as the initial sample for the study. The initial sample comprised of 960 secondary school. However, 92 students from different institutions were marked absent and 07 were dropped-out. Upon scrutiny, 28 response sheets were not returned and 33 additional response sheets were excluded due to incomplete responses. Consequently, the final sample size that was available for analysis was reduced to 800 students. Afterwards, Mehdi’s Test of Creative Thinking Abilities (2019) was administered on the subjects for the purpose of identification of high and low creative students. By using percentile analysis, students whose creativity scores fall 75th percentile and above were

considered as high creative students ($n = 200$) and the subjects whose mean creativity scores fall 25th percentile and below were labelled as low creative students ($n = 200$). Consequently, 400 students were pooled from the initial sample with each group i.e. high creative and low creative represented by 200 students. This process resulted in a final sample size of 400 secondary school students, which formed the basis of the present study. The criterion of extreme case selection has been conducted in various studies (Dar & Rather, 2024; Hafeez, 2017; Nazima, 2014; Noor, 2012; Sugra, 2007; Matto, 1992; Dhar, 1987; Kumar, 1981; Gupta, 1979).

Tools used:

1. Mehdi's Verbal Test of Creative Thinking Abilities (2019) was used for the measurement of Creativity. This tool consists of 10 items having three dimensions i.e. Fluency, flexibility and originality.
2. Emotional Intelligence Scale by Hyde, et al. (2002) was used for the measurement of Emotional Intelligence. This scale constitutes of 34 items, comprising of ten dimensions viz: Self Awareness, Empathy, Self-Motivation, Emotional Stability, Managing Relations, Integrity, Self-Development, Value Orientation, Commitment, Altruistic Behaviour.

Analysis and Interpretation:

The data was statistically analyzed using measures such as Mean, S.D., and the "t" test to determine the significance of the differences in emotional intelligence of high creative and low creative students. Karl Pearson's Coefficient of Correlation was used to examine the relationship between the creativity and emotional intelligence. For the analysis of data, IBM SPSS 26.0 software was employed.

Table 01: significance of mean difference between High Creative and Low Creative students on the Composite Score of Emotional Intelligence ($N = 400$)

Emotional Intelligence (Composite Score)	Group	N	Mean	S.D	t- value	Level of Significance
	High Creative	200	136.99	16.16	8.3	Sig. at 0.01 level
	Low Creative	200	123.01	17.35		

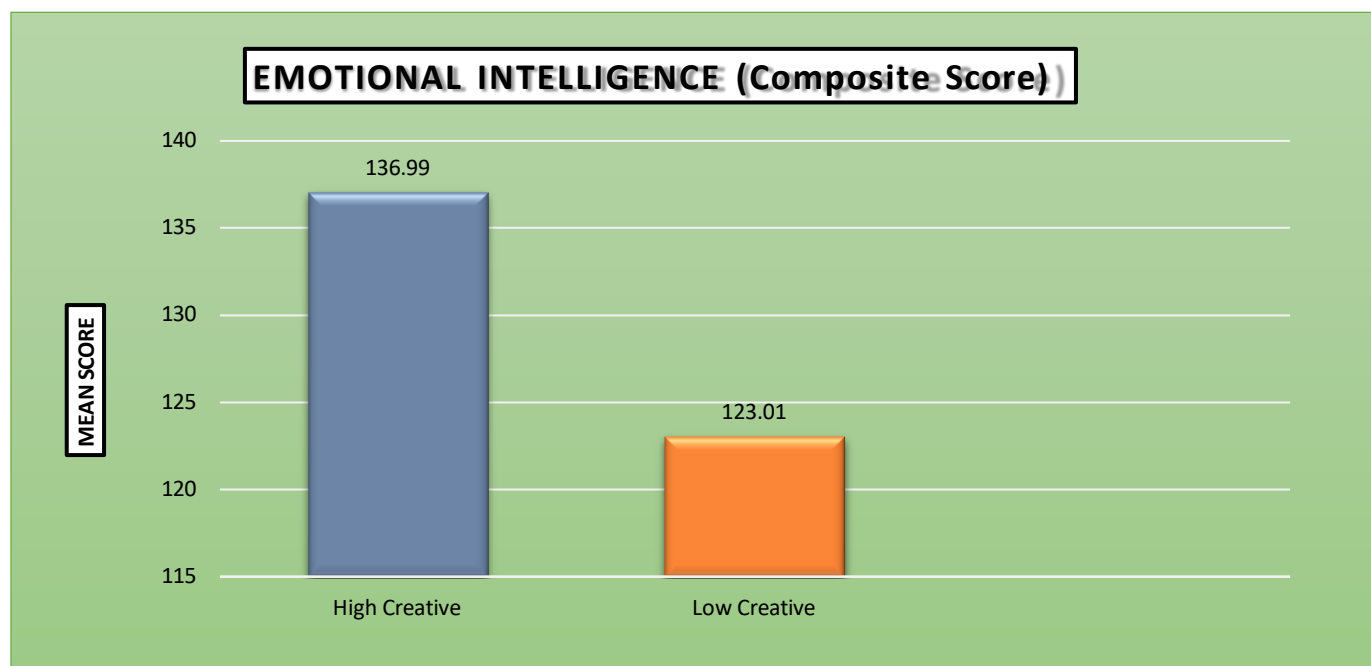


Fig 01. bar graph showing the difference in mean scores between High Creative and Low

Creative students on the Composite Score of Emotional Intelligence (N = 400)

When high creative and low creative students were compared on the Composite Score of Emotional Intelligence, a substantially significant mean difference was to be found. The high creative students has a mean score of 136.99 and low creative students exhibit a mean Emotional Intelligence score of 123.01. The obtained 't' value is 8.3 which is beyond the table 't' value at 0.01 level. Therefore, it is acceptable that high creative students are decidedly better than low creative students on Emotional Intelligence. Thus, the hypothesis that *there is a significant difference in Emotional Intelligence between the high creative and low creative secondary school adolescent students (Composite Score)* is accepted.

Table 02: significance of mean difference between High Creative and Low Creative students on the various dimensions of Emotional Intelligence (Factor wise) N=400

Dimensions	Group	N	Mean	S.D	t- value	Level of Significance
Self-Awareness	High Creative	200	17.17	3.37	4.32	Sig. at 0.01 level
	Low Creative	200	15.63	3.76		
Empathy	High Creative	200	19.18	2.68	6.48	Sig. at 0.01 level
	Low Creative	200	17.35	2.97		

Self-Motivation	High Creative	200	22.87	3.99	2.96	Sig. at 0.01 level
	Low Creative	200	21.66	4.12		
Emotional Stability	High Creative	200	15.48	2.77	6.40	Sig. at 0.01 level
	Low Creative	200	13.64	2.95		
Managing Relations	High Creative	200	15.59	3.32	3.23	Sig. at 0.01 level
	Low Creative	200	14.53	3.23		
Integrity	High Creative	200	12.99	2.17	6.34	Sig. at 0.01 level
	Low Creative	200	11.54	2.39		
Self-Development	High Creative	200	8.72	1.82	7.05	Sig. at 0.01 level
	Low Creative	200	7.46	1.76		
Value-Orientation	High Creative	200	7.80	1.89	5.84	Sig. at 0.01 level
	Low Creative	200	6.65	2.01		
Commitment	High Creative	200	8.60	1.76	7.7	Sig. at 0.01 level
	Low Creative	200	7.21	1.80		
Altruistic Behaviour	High Creative	200	8.57	1.36	8.7	Sig. at 0.01 level
	Low Creative	200	7.32	1.49		

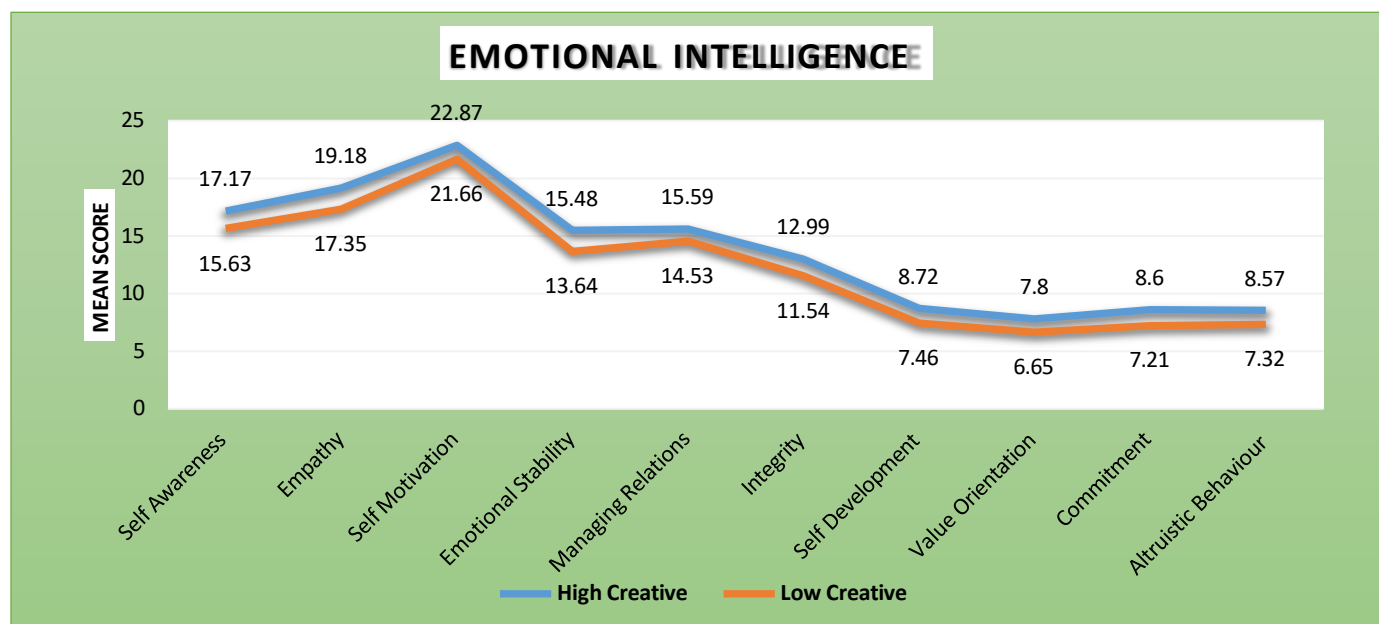


Fig 02. line graph showing the difference in mean scores between High Creative and Low Creative students on the Composite Score of Emotional Intelligence (N = 400)

From the perusal of the Table 02, the results of the independent 't' test indicate that on Factor A (Self-Awareness) of Emotional Intelligence, high creative and low creative students differ significantly at 0.01 level. The results depict a 't' value of 4.32. The comparison of mean scores for self-awareness reveal that the mean score for high creative students is 17.17 which is higher than the mean score of 15.63 for the low creative students. The mean score of High Creative on Factor B (Empathy) of Emotional Intelligence is 19.18 and that of low creative students is 17.35 and the obtained 't' value computed is 6.48 that is significant at 0.01 level. The results in the Table 02 confirms that high creative and low creative students vary significantly on the dimension of empathy of Emotional Intelligence. A significant difference on the dimension (Self-Motivation) of Emotional Intelligence between the high creative and low creative students was observed. The mean score for self-motivation in high creative students was revealed to be 22.87 while as for the low creative students it is 21.66. The 't' value was calculated to be 2.96 which is significant on 0.01 level. On the factor 'D' (Emotional Stability) of Emotional Intelligence, the Table shows that high creative and low creative students revealed significant difference in their mean scores. The mean score for high creative students is 15.48 which is higher than the score of low creative students of 13.64. The obtained 't' value is 6.40 being significant at 0.01 level. Table 02 makes it clear that high creative and low creative students differ significantly on the Factor 'E' (Managing Relations) of Emotional Intelligence. The mean score of high creative students on this dimension

is 15.59 while that of low creative students is 14.53. The 't' value obtained from the results is 3.23, significant at 0.01 level. A statistically significant difference was found between the mean scores on the Integrity dimension of Emotional Intelligence between the high creative and low creative school students with a 't' value of 6.34, significant at 0.01 level whereby the high creative exhibit a higher mean score of 12.99 compared to the low creative students mean score of 11.54. The results of the independent 't' test shown in the Table 02 reveals a significant difference on Factor G (Self-Development) of Emotional Intelligence between the high creative and low creative students ($t = 7.05, p < 0.01$) with the high creative students exhibiting a higher mean score of 8.72 compared to the low creative students mean score of 7.46. The perusal of the Table makes it clear that high creative and low creative students differ significantly on Factor H (Value-Orientation) of Emotional Intelligence. The mean score of high creative is 7.80 and that of low creative students is 6.65 and the 't' value is 5.84 which reveals significant difference between two groups at 0.01 level. The results for Factor I (Commitment) of Emotional Intelligence between the high creative and low creative students revealed a statistically significant difference within the mean scores. The mean score for high creative was indicated by 8.60 whereas for low creative students it is 7.21 ('t' = 7.7, $p < 0.01$). The perusal of the Table 02 makes it clear that high creative and low creative students differ significantly on Factor J (Altruistic Behaviour) of Emotional Intelligence. The mean score of high creative is 8.57 and that of low creative students is 7.32. The 't' value is 8.7 which shows significant difference among two groups on this dimension at 0.01 level.

Thus, the hypothesis that *there is a significant difference in Emotional Intelligence between the high creative and low creative secondary school adolescent students (Factor-wise)* is accepted.

ble 03: co efficient of correlation between Creativity and Emotional Intelligence of students factor-wise and composite score (N = 400)

		Creativity			
Dimensions		Fluency	Flexibility	Originality	Total creativity
Emotional Intelligence	Self-Awareness	.321**	.356**	.394**	.387**
	Empathy	.356**	.373**	.340**	.384**
	Self-Motivation	.311**	.299**	.325**	.336**
	Emotional Stability	.371**	.417**	.417**	.434**
	Managing Relations	.349**	.343**	.373**	.384**

	Integrity	.387**	.411**	.409**	.434**
	Self-Development	.479**	.490**	.495**	.526**
	Value- Orientation	.429**	.463**	.429**	.474**
	Commitment	.460**	.502**	.479**	.518**
	Altruistic Behaviour	.473**	.471**	.462**	.502**
	TOTAL	.557**	.583**	.590**	.622**

Table 03 presents the coefficient of correlation between the dimensions of Emotional Intelligence i.e. (*Self-Awareness, Empathy, Self-Motivation, Emotional Stability, Managing Relations, Integrity, Self-Development, Value Orientation, Commitment, and Altruistic Behaviour*) and the dimensions of Creativity (*Fluency, Flexibility, and Originality*) and their composite scores. The results indicate that all correlations are positive, statistically significant at 0.01 level, indicating that higher emotional intelligence is associated with greater creativity among students.

The Self-Awareness dimension of emotional intelligence shows significant positive correlations with Fluency ($r = 0.321, p < 0.01$), Flexibility ($r = 0.356, p < 0.01$), Originality ($r = 0.394, p < 0.01$), and Total Creativity ($r = 0.387, p < 0.01$). The Empathy dimension also exhibits a significant positive relationship with creativity—Fluency ($r = 0.356, p < 0.01$), Flexibility ($r = 0.373, p < 0.01$), Originality ($r = 0.340, p < 0.01$), and Total Creativity ($r = 0.384, p < 0.01$). The Self-Motivation dimension displays moderate but significant correlations with creativity. Fluency ($r = 0.311, p < 0.01$), Flexibility ($r = 0.299, p < 0.01$), Originality ($r = 0.325, p < 0.01$), and Total Creativity ($r = 0.336, p < 0.01$). Likewise, Emotional Stability correlates significantly with Fluency ($r = 0.371, p < 0.01$), Flexibility ($r = 0.417, p < 0.01$), Originality ($r = 0.417, p < 0.01$), and Total Creativity ($r = 0.434, p < 0.01$). The dimension of Managing Relations shows positive correlations with creativity at 0.01 level. i.e. Fluency ($r = 0.349, p < 0.01$), Flexibility ($r = 0.343, p < 0.01$), Originality ($r = 0.373, p < 0.01$), and Total Creativity ($r = 0.384, p < 0.01$). The Integrity dimension of Emotional Intelligence demonstrates positive correlations with Fluency ($r = 0.387, p < 0.01$), Flexibility ($r = 0.411, p < 0.01$), Originality ($r = 0.409, p < 0.01$), and Total Creativity ($r = 0.434, p < 0.01$). The results further reveals that Self-Development shows one of the strongest relationships with creativity; Fluency ($r = 0.479, p < 0.01$), Flexibility ($r = 0.490, p < 0.01$), Originality ($r = 0.495, p < 0.01$), and Total Creativity ($r = 0.526, p < 0.01$). The Value Orientation dimension also exhibits strong positive correlations with the dimensions of Creativity viz Fluency

($r = 0.429$, $p < 0.01$), Flexibility ($r = 0.463$, $p < 0.01$), Originality ($r = 0.429$, $p < 0.01$), and Total Creativity ($r = 0.474$, $p < 0.01$). The Commitment dimension of emotional intelligence reflects significant positive correlations with Fluency ($r = 0.460$, $p < 0.01$), Flexibility ($r = 0.502$, $p < 0.01$), Originality ($r = 0.479$, $p < 0.01$), and Total Creativity ($r = 0.518$, $p < 0.01$). Lastly, for the dimension Altruistic Behaviour of Emotional Intelligence, it shows strong positive correlations with Fluency ($r = 0.473$, $p < 0.01$), Flexibility ($r = 0.471$, $p < 0.01$), Originality ($r = 0.462$, $p < 0.01$), and Total Creativity ($r = 0.502$, $p < 0.01$). The coefficient of correlation between composite score of emotional intelligence and composite score of creativity indicates a strong and positive relationship between the two variables ($r = 0.622$, $p < 0.01$).

Thus, the hypothesis that *there is a significant relationship between Emotional Intelligence and Creativity of secondary school adolescent students (factor-wise) is accepted*.

Thus, the hypothesis that *there is a significant relationship between Emotional Intelligence and Creativity of secondary school adolescent students (composite score) is accepted*.

Discussion and conclusion:

The findings of this study indicate that high creative adolescents have greater emotional intelligence than low creative adolescents. Creative thinking involves metacognitive skills, like evaluating one's own knowledge, attitudes, and approaches, which is fundamental to self-awareness. High creative individuals frequently display enhanced emotional intelligence and self-reflection, supporting greater awareness of their internal self and influencing their behaviour. Creative thinking involves imagining new scenarios, considering diverse viewpoints, and engaging in problem-solving that usually requires perspective taking and emotional sensibility. High creative students score better on empathy than their less creative peers because creativity trains an individual to understand and connect with others' feelings, emotions and needs, making empathy a natural complement to creative skill development. High creative students tend to score better in self-motivation because of their intrinsic motivation, which is both a precursor and product of creativity, thus allowing them to be naturally more driven, self-directed, and resilient in comparison to low creative peers. Creative students are better at managing stress, processing the emotions, and transforming the negative experiences into opportunities for growth, all of which contribute to greater emotional stability. Creative individuals have the ability to understand diverse viewpoints, resolve conflicts constructively, and build a positive, supportive inter personal relationships, which are essential for effective relationship management. High creative students are more likely to act consistently with their values, demonstrating greater integrity when

compared to the low creative students. This internal orientation promotes honesty, authenticity, and adherence to one's principles which form the core aspects of integrity. High creative students tend to reflect greater progress in developing their potential, personality, and competencies than low creative students, who mainly rely more on routine thinking and show less initiative for self-growth, resulting in greater self-development. High creative students possess greater value orientation, as they can guide their thoughts and behaviors more ethically and purposefully than low creative students, who exhibit less reflective or value-driven decision-making. Since creativity involves personal investment of time, energy, and emotion within a task, that naturally strengthens one's sense of responsibility and dedication. High creative students are more likely to show greater commitment to their work. The results reveal that high creative students score greater on altruistic behaviour because creativity is closely linked with empathy, perspective-taking, and social sensitivity. High creative individuals have the ability to imagine and understand others' feelings and needs, which enhances compassion and motivates them to act for the general welfare of the society. On the other hand, low creative students tend to be more self-centered and less attuned to others' emotions and needs.

The results that are presented in the Table 01, Table 02 substantiated by Figure 01, Figure 02 analyzed and discussed on Emotional Intelligence (factor-wise and composite score) are in line with (Wang et al., 2024; Ghosh and Chopra, 2017; Sánchez-Ruiz et al., 2011; Salovey and Mayer, 1990). Salovey & Mayer (1990) the pioneers of the emotional intelligence, proposed that emotionally intelligent individuals are better able to perceive, understand, and manage emotions, which promotes flexible and creative thinking within an individual. Sánchez-Ruiz et al., (2011) revealed that emotional intelligence remarkably predicted creativity, indicating that students that are high in Emotional Intelligence tend to be more imaginative, open, and innovative. Ghosh and Chopra (2017) conducted a study on adolescents and revealed that creative students show greater emotional intelligence scores than less creative adolescents, especially in the area of self-awareness and empathy. Wang et al., (2024) demonstrated that EI positively predicts creative self-efficacy in gifted children.

Thus, it can be said that when high creative adolescents are compared with low creative adolescents on Emotional Intelligence and its dimensions, adolescent students with high creative thinking ability tend to have greater emotional intelligence and vice versa. High creative individuals often tend to excel on each dimension of emotional intelligence. The greater emotional intelligence among high creative adolescents is indicated by the fact that creativity often requires enhanced

self-awareness and greater empathy. High creativity is driven by greater self-motivation, emotional stability, better interpersonal relationships, greater sense of integrity, and higher self-development. High creative adolescents often tend to be committed towards self and work towards the betterment of the society by displaying greater altruistic behaviour than low creative adolescents.

The results of the study explores the coefficient of correlation between the dimensions of Emotional Intelligence i.e. (*Self-Awareness, Empathy, Self-Motivation, Emotional Stability, Managing Relations, Integrity, Self-Development, Value Orientation, Commitment, and Altruistic Behaviour*) and the dimensions of Creativity (*Fluency, Flexibility, and Originality*) and their composite scores. The results indicate that all correlations are positive, statistically significant at 0.01 level, indicating that higher emotional intelligence is associated with greater creativity among adolescents. The Self-Awareness dimension of emotional intelligence shows significant positive correlations with Creativity and its dimensions. This indicates that students who possess higher awareness of their own emotions and feelings are better able to channelize their internal experiences into creative expression, leading to greater originality and adaptability in their ideas. The Empathy dimension also exhibits a significant positive relationship with creativity. This suggests that empathetic students, who can feel and identify with others' emotions and perspectives are more capable of divergent and inclusive thinking, fostering their creative thinking abilities. The Self-Motivation dimension displays moderate but significant correlations with creativity. This implies that students with stronger inner will and persistence are better equipped to sustain creative thinking processes and overcome psychological barriers during problem-solving. Likewise, Emotional Stability correlates significantly with Creativity. Emotionally stable individuals tend to manage stress and anxiety effectively, allowing their cognitive resources to focus on creative ideation and innovation. The dimension of Managing Relations shows positive correlations with creativity at 0.01 level. The results suggests that the ability to enjoy positive interpersonal relationships and maintain social adaptability facilitates imaginative thinking which is essential for creative development of a student. The Integrity dimension of Emotional Intelligence demonstrates positive correlations with Creativity. This indicates that students who have good moral consistency and honesty display their judgment and have authenticity in their creative expression, leading to originality and problem-solving. The results further reveals that Self-Development shows one of the strongest relationships with creativity. The findings suggests that students actively engaged in personal growth and learning are more open to new experiences, thus promoting higher levels of creativity and divergent thinking among themselves. The Value

Orientation dimension also exhibits strong positive correlations with the Creativity indicating that students with good ethics and better value orientation show greater consistency, confidence, and motivation in their creative endeavors. The Commitment dimension of EI reflects significant positive correlations with Creativity. This suggests that dedicated and goal-oriented students exhibit persistence and focus on their purpose that enhance their creative thinking processes. Lastly, for the dimension of Altruistic Behaviour of Emotional Intelligence, it shows strong positive correlations with Creativity. It indicates students who engage in selfless and altruistic behavior are more likely to experience positive thinking, empathy, and social connectedness, all of these stimulate creativity among them. Thus, it can be stated that there is a significant positive correlation between emotional intelligence and creativity at both factor-wise and composite score. The present findings are in line with the previous studies (Ivcevic et al., 2020; Rastogi, 2009; Fredrickson, 2001) which highlight the integral role of emotional intelligence in creativity. Rastogi (2009) observed that individuals with greater emotional intelligence demonstrate increased creative performance due to their enhanced emotional regulation and motivation. Similarly, Ivcevic et al. (2020) found that emotional awareness and self-regulation predict originality and flexibility in thinking. Fredrickson (2001) further explained that positive emotions promote cognitive and behavioral repertoires, thereby fostering creative thinking abilities. These studies substantiate that emotional intelligence provides the emotional and motivational foundation which is necessary for fostering creativity among adolescent students.

Educational Implications:

- The study highlights that the EI of adolescents can be enhanced by fostering emotionally supportive relationships among parents, teachers, and peers. A balanced combination of warmth, empathy, and guidance in these relationships can strengthen their EI and overall psychological well-being and promote a positive classroom engagement.
- The study reveals that emotionally intelligent students are better equipped to handle stress and academic challenges. Schools should therefore organize, counseling sessions, workshops and activities that build self-awareness, empathy, and emotional regulation skills among students.
- The findings indicate that students with high creativity often display greater adaptability and problem-solving abilities when emotionally supported. Educational institutions should thus focus on encouraging creative expression through art, brainstorming sessions, and innovation clubs to nurture both creativity and emotional well-being.

- Schools should implement mentoring systems wherein teachers or peers provide emotional and academic support, helping students, particularly those with low creative potential, to build self-esteem, confidence, motivation, and resilience against academic setbacks.
- The study elucidates that fear of failure and low emotional competence can heighten academic anxiety. Thus, encouraging reflective practices, mindfulness training, and self-awareness exercises will help students manage stress, accept failure as part of their learning process, and strengthen their emotional stability.
- It is essential for the teachers to create such a classroom environment that balances academic challenge with emotional support. Teachers should celebrate effort, creativity, and resilience, provide suitable feedback so to transform their failures into opportunities for growth and self-improvement.
- The study indicates that parental attitudes significantly impact students' mental health and emotional stability. Schools should therefore initiate parent orientation and guidance programs to promote emotionally supportive home environments that fosters students' creative and academic growth.
- To enhance resilience and creativity, co-curricular activities such as debates, drama, art, and innovation challenges should be integrated into school curriculum. Such activities not only engage students' emotions positively, but help them in building confidence, and strengthen their ability to deal with academic stress and pressure.
- The study reinforces that educational practices must integrate psychological principles, ensuring that each student's personal, emotional, and creative dimensions are nurtured equally. This holistic approach can lead to improved emotional competence among adolescents.
- The findings encourage educational policymakers and administrators to design school climates that prioritize the emotional well-being alongside academic achievement. Infrastructure development should include spaces for relaxation, peer collaboration, and counseling.

References:

Amabile, T. M. (1996). *Creativity in context: Update to the social psychology of creativity*. Westview Press.

- Asthana, B. (1987). *A study of creativity in relation to certain personality and environmental variables among high school students* [Unpublished doctoral dissertation]. University of Saugar.
- Babu, N. (1977). *Creativity in relation to socio-economic status and personality characteristics* [Master's thesis]. Andhra University.
- Bailin, S. (1994). *Achieving extraordinary ends: An essay on creativity*. Kluwer Academic Publishers. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-009-2053-5>
- Barbot, B., Lubart, T. I., & Besançon, M. (2016). "Peaks, slumps, and bumps": Individual differences in the development of creativity in children and adolescents. *Child Development Perspectives*, 10(4), 264–269. <https://doi.org/10.1111/cdep.12182>
- Beghetto, R. A., & Kaufman, J. C. (2014). *Nurturing creativity in the classroom* (2nd ed.). Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781139814825>
- Best, J. W., & Kahn, J. V. (2016). *Research in education* (10th ed.). Pearson.
- Collado-Soler, R., Picazo-Tomás, C., & Cava, M.-J. (2023). Emotional intelligence and resilience in adolescents: A systematic review. *Journal of Adolescence*, 95(3), 456–472. <https://doi.org/10.1002/jad.12123>
- Cropley, D. H. (2015). *Teaching science, creativity, and innovation: A teacher's guide*. Routledge.
- Dalal, N. (2013). *Relationship between intelligence and creativity among secondary school students* [Master's thesis]. University of Jammu.
- Dar, A. A., & Rather, G. M. (2024). *Creativity and academic resilience among secondary school students in Jammu and Kashmir* [Doctoral dissertation]. University of Kashmir.
- Dhar, P. (1987). *Personality correlates of creativity in adolescents* [Doctoral dissertation]. University of Kashmir.

Feldhusen, J. F. (2005). Creativity in the classroom: A psychological view. *Gifted Education International*, 20(2-3), 246–254. <https://doi.org/10.1177/026142940502000307>

Fredrickson, B. L. (2001). The role of positive emotions in positive psychology: The broaden-and-build theory of positive emotions. *American Psychologist*, 56(3), 218–226. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0003-066X.56.3.218>

Ganie, M. Y. (2012). *Need patterns and creativity among adolescents* [Master's thesis]. University of Kashmir.

Ghosh, S., & Chopra, I. (2017). Emotional intelligence and creativity among adolescents: A comparative study. *International Journal of Indian Psychology*, 4(3), 45–56. <https://doi.org/10.25215/0403.045>

Goleman, D. (1995). *Emotional intelligence: Why it can matter more than IQ*. Bantam Books.

Gupta, S. (1981). *Personality factors and creativity in school children* [Doctoral dissertation]. Agra University.

Guilford, J. P. (1950). Creativity. *American Psychologist*, 5(9), 444–454. <https://doi.org/10.1037/h0063487>

Hafeez, N. (2017). *Personality, motivation, and creativity among high and low creative students* [Doctoral dissertation]. University of Kashmir.

Hyde, A., Pethe, S., & Dhar, U. (2002). *Emotional Intelligence Scale (EIS)*. Vedant Publications.

Ivcevic, Z., Mayer, J. D., & Brackett, M. A. (2020). Emotional intelligence and creativity: A dynamic interplay. *Journal of Personality*, 88(4), 678–692. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jopy.12523>

Kumar, A. (1981). Interest patterns of high and low creatives. *Journal of Creative Behavior*, 15(4), 270–275. <https://doi.org/10.1002/j.2162-6057.1981.tb00305.x>

Kumar, S. (1981). *Cognitive styles and creativity achievement* [Master's thesis]. Banaras Hindu University.

Magnano, P., Guarnera, M., & Santisi, G. (2016). Creativity and emotional intelligence: A correlational study in adolescents. *Europe's Journal of Psychology*, 12(4), 625–635. <https://doi.org/10.5964/ejop.v12i4.1274>

Matto, M. R. (1992). *Personality and motivational correlates of creativity among high school students* [Doctoral dissertation]. University of Kashmir.

Mehrinejad, S. A., & Rajabi, M. (2015). Creativity and parenting styles in adolescents. *Journal of School Psychology*, 4(13), 7–24.

Mehdi, B. (2019). *Verbal test of creative thinking abilities* (Revised ed.). National Psychological Corporation.

Moreno, A., Rico, V., & Casado, M. (2023). Emotional intelligence profiles and mental health in Spanish adolescents. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 14, Article 1123456. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2023.1123456>

Nair, V. K. G. (1975). *Vocational interests and scholastic achievement of creative children* [Doctoral dissertation]. University of Kerala.

Nazima, A. (2014). *Emotional intelligence and creativity in adolescents* [Master's thesis]. University of Kashmir.

Noor, A. (2012). *Locus of control and creative thinking abilities* [Master's thesis]. Aligarh Muslim University.

Ojha, S. (2013). *Creativity and academic achievement among secondary school students* [Master's thesis]. Devi Ahilya University.

Padhan, S. K. (1990). *Socio-economic status and creativity* [Master's thesis]. Utkal University.

Pandith, F. A. (2012). *Learning styles and creativity in Kashmiri adolescents* [Master's thesis]. University of Kashmir.

Parker, J. D. A., Creque, R. E., Barnhart, D. L., Harris, J. I., Majeski, S. A., Wood, L. M., Bond, B. J., & Hogan, M. J. (2004). Academic achievement in high school: Does emotional intelligence matter? *Personality and Individual Differences*, 37(7), 1321–1330. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.paid.2004.01.002>

Parveen, S. (2013). *Personality traits and creative thinking abilities* [Master's thesis]. Aligarh Muslim University.

Rajappa, K., Sedlacek, J. C., & Petritis, S. J. (2012). Emotional intelligence and anxiety in adolescents. *Journal of Clinical Psychology*, 68(5), 554–568. <https://doi.org/10.1002/jclp.21867>

Rani, P. (2013). *Achievement motivation and creativity among school students* [Master's thesis]. Kurukshetra University.

Rastogi, R. (2009). Emotional intelligence and creativity: A study of Indian professionals. *Journal of the Indian Academy of Applied Psychology*, 35(2), 287–294.

Robinson, K. (2001). *Out of our minds: Learning to be creative*. Capstone.

Rogers, C. R. (1976). Some new challenges. *ETC: A Review of General Semantics*, 33(2), 144–154.

Runco, M. A., & Jaeger, G. J. (2012). The standard definition of creativity. *Creativity Research Journal*, 24(1), 92–96. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10400419.2012.650092>

Salari, G., & Jenaabadi, H. (2015). The relationship between creativity and self-confidence in high school students. *Journal of Educational Sciences*, 12(2), 45–60.

Salovey, P., & Mayer, J. D. (1990). Emotional intelligence. *Imagination, Cognition and Personality*, 9(3), 185–211. <https://doi.org/10.2190/DUGG-P24E-52WK-6CDG>

Sánchez-Ruiz, M. J., Hernández-Torrano, D., Pérez-García, A. M., Buéla-Casal, G., & Ionescu, C. M. (2011). The relationship between emotional intelligence and creativity. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 51(6), 712–717. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.paid.2011.06.016>

- Sarsani, M. R. (2008). *Cognitive and affective correlates of creativity* [Doctoral dissertation]. Saurashtra University.
- Schutte, N. S., Malouff, J. M., Simunek, M., McKenley, J., & Hollander, S. (2007). Characteristic emotional intelligence and emotional well-being. *Cognition and Emotion, 21*(6), 1249–1260. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02699930601045789>
- Seale, C., Cross, D., & Walsh, J. (2013). Emotional intelligence and peer relationships in adolescence. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence, 42*(8), 1289–1301. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10964-013-9952-4>
- Shukla, R. (2014). *Anxiety, adjustment, and creativity among adolescents* [Master's thesis]. University of Lucknow.
- Spinrad, T. L., Eisenberg, N., Cumberland, A., Fabes, R. A., Reiser, M., Shepard, S. A., Losoya, S., & Guthrie, I. K. (2006). Relation of emotion-related regulation to children's social competence, maladjustment, and competency. *Child Development, 77*(1), 174–189. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8624.2006.00857.x>
- Sternberg, R. J., & Lubart, T. I. (1996). Investing in creativity. *American Psychologist, 51*(7), 677–688. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0003-066X.51.7.677>
- Sugra, B. (2007). *Adjustment patterns of high and low creative students* [Master's thesis]. University of Kashmir.
- Sung, E., & Walker, E. (2022). Creativity development in adolescence: The role of early experiences. *Journal of Creative Behavior, 56*(3), 345–358.
- Tambawala, S. (2013). *Self-esteem and creative potential* [Master's thesis]. SNTD Women's University.
- Torrance, E. P. (1962). *Guiding creative talent*. Prentice-Hall.

Wang, Y., Li, X., & Zhang, Q. (2024). Emotional intelligence and creative self-efficacy in gifted children: A longitudinal study. *Gifted Child Quarterly*, 68(1), 23–35. <https://doi.org/10.1177/00169862231123456>

Weare, K., & Nind, M. (2011). Mental health promotion and problem prevention in schools: What does the evidence say? *Health Promotion International*, 26(Suppl 1), i29–i69. <https://doi.org/10.1093/heapro/dar075>

Human Resilience in High Altitudes: Mountaineering Narratives as Climatological Tales

Fathimath Naufiera M A⁷

Abstract

This paper examines human resilience based on the autobiography of one man, Seven Summits by Sheikh Hassan Khan. Khan, a famous Indian mountaineering, who has shown his skills in conquering the highest mountains of all seven continents, makes mountaineering not just an adventure, but also a theoretical and practical fight with severe climatological and geographical disasters. The study examines how he grew up in the countryside to come out as a world climber, with his deep, spiritual but existential relationship with nature. Through the study of how dramatic climate changes challenge physical and mental strength, this paper reveals how the lessons of high-altitude survival can create considerable internal development.

Keywords: Resilience; Mountaineering Narratives; Climatological Tales; Seven Summits; High Altitudes; Deep Ecology; Psychological Hardiness

Introduction

Resilience has been the central theme of human race history. Because of primitive life, human beings have been continuing to maintain their lives through struggling with the harsh weather conditions and unfriendly climates. This ability to overcome crises, in addition to the very survival of a person, is the key to human advancement and culture uplifting. Humanity had as its major lesson of survival in nature. The teachings of the natural trials and experience make the human race move forward.

Analyzing the current view of resilience, the White House Report defines it in the following way: "Resilience is the ability to adapt to changing conditions and withstand and rapidly recover from disruption due to emergencies" (The White House 2011, p.6) Instead of being an additional defense mechanism, one should consider it as a natural human ability to take in the environmental and physical change. The concept of resilience is not perceived in the elementary meaning of being

⁷ Research Scholar, Department of Malayalam, Central University of Kerala. Email: naufeerama@gmail.com

able to recover after a crisis but is psychologically characterized as a complicated process of bouncing back with greater strength following a crisis. It is not a way of merely coping well with things. According to Mancini and Bonanno, resilience is absolutely different to a normal recovery. It means an in-built ability to stand stable amid crisis and faster recuperation power following the occurrence of the trauma.

The most dramatic manifestations of the complicated oppositions of nature and humans are observed in modern mountaineering stories. Mountains such as Everest that have nature at its wild and unpredictable nature are not only sources of adventure but are testing grounds of toughness. The stories that are being told by the mountaineers in their writings are not mere travelogues but are testaments on how man defeats the climatological crises of nature. It is because of such writings that the severity of survival and the strong mutual attachment between human beings and nature are conveyed to the readers.

Autobiographical narratives are like a special place of mountaineering narratives in world literature. The subjectivity and extreme experience are in the writing when the mountaineer is the one who writes.

The One Man, Seven Summits by Sheikh Hassan Khan is one of the best creations in this category with an Indian background. Nature and people are not associated with each other only aesthetically, but they are engaged in an unceasing struggle for life. This paper explores how extreme climate changes and geographical complications provoke both physical and mental resilience of a mountaineer. The topicality of the given study is that one can comprehend the contribution that the lessons of survival taught by nature bring to the inner development of a person.

Sheikh Hassan Khan & ‘One Man, Seven Summits’

The native of Pandalam Kerala is Sheikh Hassan Khan who has left a distinctive imprint in the history of Indian mountaineering. He is a mountaineer and also an official in the Kerala Government Secretariat in the Finance Department. In January 2021, he started the journey to achieving his objectives by climbing Mt. Kilimanjaro in Africa. On May 15, 2022, his explorations were in the news all over the world when he reached the highest point in the world, the Mt. Everest. He conquered all other major world peaks in a relatively short duration in the subsequent years. He became the first Keralite to complete the historic climb of the highest peaks in all seven continents: the Seven Summits with the completion of Mt. Denali (North America) in June 2023,

Mt. Elbrus (Europe) in September, Mt. Vinson (Antarctica) in December, Mt. Aconcagua (South America) in February 2024, and Mt. Kosciuszko (Australia) in November. These expeditions, which were made by the survivor of various climatological catastrophes and geological difficulties of various continents, is a true tribute to the human soul.

Sheikh Hassan Khan's autobiography, *One Man, Seven Summits* by S. Arun Sankar, gives precedence to human feelings than the details involved in mountaineering. The crux of this work is the fears and heroism of a human person who is confronted with reality without imagery hyperboles. These Seven Summits are not seven geographical destinations here but seven geographical destinations of trying the internal strength. This paper breaks down the connection between nature and people with this set of experiences in the context of the contemporary theories of resilience.

In the case of the analysis of a mountaineer autobiography, the mental strength that he holds above all the physical difficulties should be located. This essay focuses on the resilience of Sheikh Hassan Khan using a multi-dimensional framework of some of the psychological theories. They are mainly divided into the Individual Resilience Theories and Environment-linked Resilience Theories.

The Grit Theory: Angela Duckworth explains the concept of resilience as not a lucky or situational event, but as a relentless drive and persistence to achieve long-term objectives unlike raw talent or short-lived excitement, is about endurance. Grit is the psychological engine that keeps a person going in extreme circumstances such as mountaineering, which requires years of preparation and physical effort. It assumes that the capability to stay interested and work hard despite failure and stagnation is the major indicator of great success.

Psychological Hardiness: Suzanne Kobasa presents such an attitude as a personality feature that assists in getting through extreme stress and is divided into three aspects, including Commitment, Control, and Challenge.

Commitment is the inclination to engage in the affairs of life, to have a purpose and significance rather than to feel alienated. Control is the inner conviction that a person can affect the processes in their life by their efforts, but not to be a victim of destiny. Challenge is the view that change, stress and uncertainty are chances to grow and get to know oneself instead of threats to the safety. **Self-Efficacy:** Albert Bandura refers to the belief and confidence of an individual that he/she has the skills required to accomplish his/her goals. Self-efficacy is the belief, attitude of the individual, his/her self-motivation and action. Self-efficacy in high-altitude survival is developed on the basis

of mastery experience (overcoming smaller challenges) and reinforces the determination of the individual to overcome larger and life-threatening challenges.

Biophilia Hypothesis: E.O. Wilson makes it clear that human beings are psychologically connected to nature, and human interactions may be regarded as its extension. Biophilia is a survival narrative within the context of explaining the great sense of place and emotional rejuvenation that people are experiencing in the wilderness. It makes the natural environment a hostile nothingness into an environment of familiarity and religious nourishment, whereby the survival of human beings is negotiated by the means of a subliminal biological attachment of the topographies of the earth.

Relational Resilience: Linda Theron notes that resilience is not only a personal attribute, but also a socio-ecological phenomenon in which survival and thriving of individuals depend on the quality of their social scaffold, that is, family, community support, and cooperative partnership in stressful life conditions.

The nature and human experiences in mountaineering are fascinating areas and pose this form of resilience at very complex levels due to the exposure of nature and humans. The ability of Sheikh Hassan Khan to be resilient was not shaped in the Himalayan plateaus but in the countryside of his childhood home, Pandalam. We can read his childhood experience of picking mangoes and climbing trees in the midst of the freezing cold and loneliness of the mountains through the Biophilia Hypothesis provided by E.O. Wilson. The childish conversation with nature had created a natural relationship in his heart. It is these experiences that made him have the courage to challenge crises such as Everest in accordance to Suzanne Kobasa in her Psychological Hardiness. Resilience is not a one size fits all response, but a result of passion and endurance to long term aims as the Grit theory of Angela Duckworth describes. The fact that he mortgaged the gold of his wife and the money that was contributed by his friends to the 40-lakh rupee mission to Everest gave Sheikh a tremendous feeling of responsibility. His dedication to his long term goal was supported by the idea of this being the only opportunity... this is not something that should be thrown away (Sankar 2025, p.47). The high altitude resilience is closely related to accountability and sanctity of motivation particularly when the technology and human stamina are in the face of extremes. This feeling of duty tended to give him the impetus onwards.

Sheikh was having a soul-bond with his travelling companion, Indrajit. His success is simply because of his Grit which is the capacity to proceed with no thought of a failure hence the idea that there is no place of feeling in this place is the result of his success (Sankar 2025,p.35).

At Camp 2, Hassan proceeded disregarding the death nature of Pulmonary Edema and his continuous cough as the doctor advised him. This may be perceived through the Self-Efficacy of Albert Bandura; he was so confident in his own capabilities to the point that he was confident enough to say that despite having the body in its present state that is barely living, the feet would still move forward (Sankar 2025, p.50). The worst part of survival is depicted by the fact that he had to live days after urine had spilled in his sleeping bag, absorb or dry it with socks without any other piece of clothing. The self-efficacy which allows managing the situation, however poor it may be, represents the Control aspect of Psychological Hardiness.

Acclimatization in which the body adjusts to low oxygen levels is extremely important in the story of Sheikh Hassan. An example of preparation of the body by spending one month in the base camps, when analyzed on the Self-efficacy concept by Bandura, is a preparation to get more confidence on oneself before a challenging operation. The mechanism by which the body becomes stronger because of the pressure of a low-oxygen environment can be associated with the concept of Antifragility that was described by Nassim Taleb. It is a conversation which is waged with regard to the laws of nature.

Although the field of mountaineering can be perceived as an individual problem, it acquires new dimensions in the narrative by Hassan Khan with the idea of Relational Resilience. He claims that friendship is higher than mountains. The theory of Judith Jordan holds that human beings manage to come out of crises by having profound connections with others. His safety shields of his survival were the support of his friend Shebin and the financial assistance of other friends. His encounters with such personalities as Asmitha, Subir Bakshi, and Selvi on Everest and Denali are examples of this type of collective struggle (Mutual Empowerment).

A good example of Relational Resilience and Deep Ecology is his prayer to Miolang Sangma, the protector of Everest. This ecocentric humility that nature ought to be viewed as superior and consulted as opposed to being a foe and conquerable is expressed in the lines of Sheikh by Khan who further explains that it is the human ego that is the main opponent that should be overcome in the survival struggle. He assumes that the only people who are really victorious are those who do not share the anthropocentric hubris of trying to be a conqueror or fighter against nature. A strategic retreat cannot be considered an act of defeat in his philosophical perspective, but a strong gesture of not letting down or salvaging the possibilities of a potential success down the line. In this view lies a strong reflection of the essence of Arne Naess Deep Ecology which proposes a change of human supremacy to a co-existing humble attitude. In recognition of the sovereignty of

the mountain, the story has reconstructed the meaning of survival to mean the process of demeaning the self to align it with the ultimate laws of nature. The notion proposed by Solvejg Nitzke also proves here: Climate is not a barrier to be overcome, but a narrating factor that carries more and more precarious relationships between humans and nature (Nitzke 2018, p.1-15)

Moreover, in *Antifragility*, Nassim Taleb states that challenges only make one stronger in terms of achieving a goal. He manages enduring the ridicule of the Sherpa called Sheru, and the horrors of Khumbu Icefall, as his energy to proceed even more resiliently. The Sherpa Lagpa Dai gave up his own oxygen tank when Sheikh was tired of shortage of oxygen, which once again proved that the only solution to a crisis situation is to co-exist as humans.

The fact that Sheikh insisted on hoisting the Indian national flag on the top of the world during the 75th anniversary of Independence is an indication that a personal ambition that had been turned into a national mission. Even though Sheru had recommended that the flag be dropped because of its weight, his denial of this proposal shows that there was a Higher Purpose. The process of transforming crises into fuel of growth is supported by his Skiing Principle which sees the goal only and disregards the obstacles.

Conclusion

As can be seen in the perspective on the mountaineering expedition of Sheikh Hassan Khan, human resilience in high-altitudes is not a specific physical property, but a multi-faceted combination of psychological strength, social support, and environmental interrelatedness. By the prism of his autobiography, *One Man, Seven Summits*, survival is re-defined as an advanced mode of bouncing back and not just an enduring process. The paper shows that personal factors like Grit and Psychological Hardiness which were developed in the rural setting of Pandalam, offered the resilience needed to overcome deadly weather disasters.

Moreover, the story of Khan criticizes the cliché about the rugged individualist by featuring Relational Resilience. Friends support and the common struggle with other climbers helps to highlight that survival is collaborative in nature. Most importantly, the change in an anthropocentric ego towards an ecocentric humility can be considered the ultimate goal of high-altitude resilience. In accordance with the postulates of Deep ecology, Khan shows that we can never succeed in conquering nature but in harmonious coexistence with the highest laws of nature.

The final testimony to the human spirit is the achievement of Khan to reach the Seven Summits but turning the physical obstacles into the stories of inner development and national pride.

Reference

1. Bandura, A. (1977). Self-efficacy: Toward a unifying theory of behavioral change, *Psychological Review*, Vol.84, No.2, 191-215
2. Duckworth, A. (2016). *Grit: The power of passion and perseverance*, Scribner.
3. Jordan, J.V. (1992). Relational resilience (Work in Progress No. 57). Stone Center Working Paper Series.
4. Kobasa, S. C. (1979). Stressful life events, personality, and health: An inquiry into hardiness, *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 37(1), 1–11.
5. Næss, A. (1973). The shallow and the deep, long-range ecology movement: A summary. *Inquiry*, 16(1-4), 95–100.
6. Nitzke, S. (2018). The end of the world that is not one: Writing about earth hyperobjects, *Metaphora*, 2
7. Sankar, S. A. (2025). *Oru Manushyan Ezhu Kodumudikal [One Man, Seven Summits]*. Mathribhoomi Books.
8. Taleb, N. N. (2013). *Antifragile: Things that gain from disorder*, Random House.
9. The White House. (2011). Presidential policy directive / PPD-8: National preparedness.
10. Wilson, E. O. (1984). *Biophilia*, Harvard University Press.

**The Bedrock of Tradition: A Comprehensive Research Analysis of U.A. Khader's
Narrative Aesthetics
Yoonus. MTP⁸**

Abstract

This research paper examines the narrative aesthetics of **U.A. Khader**, positioning his work as a linguistic excavation of tradition that serves as a dynamic Style rather than a stagnant relic. By exploring Khader's dual identity as a **Burmese-Malayali** displaced by the Second World War, the study illustrates how his writing preserves a "Burma" of memory against geopolitical erasure while simultaneously constructing the fictional headquarters of **Thrikkottoor** in North Malabar. The analysis comes into Khader's unique prose-chant style, his meticulous use of ethno-linguistics and caste dialects, and his realistic style that utilizes archaic legal language to anchor folklore in tangible history. Ultimately, the paper concludes that Khader's legacy lies in his role as a cultural archivist who transformed the trauma of displacement into a sovereign literary territory, ensuring that the vanishing vernaculars and "rhythm of the soil" remain an important part of the Malayalam canon.

Keywords: *Bedrock of Tradition; Narrative Aesthetics; Research Analysis*

U.A. Khader (1935-2020) remains one of the most enigmatic and structurally profound figures in Malayalam literature. His writing is not merely a vehicle for storytelling but a linguistic excavation of a lost world. The foundational strength of his work lies in tradition-not as a stagnant relic of the past, but as a dynamic, "living material" essential for propelling a culture into the future. Khader's literary journey, spanning from the shores of Burma to the red earth of North Malabar, represents a unique synthesis of displacement, identity, and the preservation of folklore.

The Philosophy of the "Backward Step"

To understand Khader, one will need to know the way he is in contact with time. By drawing a poetic maxim in his seminal introduction to *Thrikkottoor Vilakku* (The Lamp of Thrikkottoor), Dr. Soman Kadaloor gets to the heart of the Khaderian aesthetics: The pages that fly forward, move backward only in their feet. In a time when Modernism was attempting to move forward by denying the past, Khader understood that the past is an equipape-a treasure chest and should not be cut, or thrown away. Although his contemporaries tended to dwell on the issue of

⁸Research Scholar, Malayalam Section, Modern Indian Languages Department, Aligarh Muslim University. Email-
mtpnuhairi@gmail.com

city alienation and existentialism, Khader looked at the mythic past of the village. His creations allude that tradition is not a cage, but a catapult. He was not saying that we can blindly revert the past, nor was he saying that we should use tradition as a destructive fire. He instead used tradition as a renewing factor. In the case of Khader, the liberatory discovery was that history and heritage offers the bone-strength needed to ensure a narrative to survive through time.

II. The Burma Connection: A Soil Beyond Renaming

U.A. Khader was born in Bilin, Burma, to a Malabari migrant father, Moideenkutty Haji, and a Burmese mother, Mamaidi. This dual heritage is central to his psyche. Even when the nation was politically renamed Myanmar, Khader was a son of two different civilisations born in the town of Bilin in British Burma to Moideenkutty Haji, a Malabar coast migrant, and to Mamaidi, who was a native Burmese woman. This meeting of two cultures was, however, earmarked by a tragic early event the death of his mother only three days after he was born. This subjective trauma was what turned Burma into not an ordinary place of birth but rather a sacred space of desire, disappearance and ghosts of ancestors. To Khader the Burmese soil was saturated with the recollection of a mother whom he had never seen and thus his attachment to the land was spiritual and not just political.

Even when the country was renamed Myanmar by its military government, Khader still felt emotionally and creatively clung to the Burma name. This was not just a mere denial of geopolitical changes but a massive one of linguistic and emotional revolt. Names to Khader were never titles or even titles of the administration, titles that can be exchanged by an order of a state. He saw names as containers of memory, full of the smell, the sounds, and the definite historical frequency of a time and a place. To refer to his place of birth as Myanmar would have meant in his consciousness, an erasure--a betrayal of the particular childhood world that he had been living and the maternal memory he was trying to preserve.

Khader had in his prose taken the word Burma out of the reach of modern mapmaking in a very thorough way. In not allowing the new name to creep into his stories, he kept the Burma of his identity untouched in the amber of his writing, stagnant, gold, and sealed off the destructive influence of time and political revolution. This opposition enabled him to have a foothold between the wet, teak-scented places of his infancy in Burma and the red-soiled, folklore-infested land of Thrikkottoor in Kerala.

His writing is a refuge of a version of Burma that does not exist on official maps anymore. To a boy who was displaced by the Second World War, and who was transported to a fatherland,

in which he was himself a linguistic foreigner, the name of a country, Burma, was a beacon of identity. It was a pre-linguistic part of his life, a period of sheer sensual experience and maternal shadow. This focus on personal geography as compared to political reality allowed Khader to show that what is depicted by the writer in his map is not created by ink, but blood of heritage and tears of memory. His writing can therefore be seen as a rebellion against the map in that the real whereabouts of a human soul is determined by where it loved and where it lost and not by the changing boundaries of a nation-state.

III. The Migration of a Soul: From War-Cry to Mother Tongue

The Second World War was the violent catalyst that reshaped Malayalam literary history. As writer Shihabuddin Poythumkadavu profoundly notes, human "sentimentalism" often views war as purely destructive, but nature's sense of time is different. Poythumkadavu suggests that if the Second World War had not occurred, the Malayalam language would never have received U.A. Khader. Khader arrived in Kerala at the age of seven, a refugee of war who knew not a single word of Malayalam. He was a child of the "in-between," forced to seek shelter in his father's homeland. However, this lack of initial language became his greatest strength. He approached Malayalam not as a native who takes the language for granted, but as an outsider who had to "win" the language. He dissolved his soul into the alphabet, climbing the steps of literacy to eventually build his own sovereign territory in literature: Thrikkottoor.

IV. Thrikkottoor: The Fictional Headquarters of Folklore

Khader has done what R.K. Narayan had done with Malgudi through the village of Thrikkottoor, but with a more intense interest in ethno-linguistics. He brought Kerala to the realms of folklore that were foreign to the majority of the Malayalis. He was an archivist of culture, compiling the myths, rituals and the Theyyam tradition of North Malabar, and making it part of the very warp of his tales. His works, such as *Khaderinte Pathu Laghu Novelukal* (Khader's Ten Short Novels), are treasure troves of regional metaphors. Examples of Khader's Linguistic Treasures: "Aduppuzhinhitta kozhiyepole" (Like a chicken circled over the hearth): This refers to a ritual where a chicken is charmed to stay within the house. Khader uses this to describe the character Kunjiraman Nair, illustrating a psychological state of being "tethered" or unable to escape one's circumstances. "Thavidu umiyil chinthiya pole" (Like bran scattered in husk): Denoting a state of confusion or something valuable being lost in the mundane. "Kuttiyum koluthum" (The peg and the hook): A metaphor for a perfect, often inevitable, match or a systemic

connection. "Ullam kaiyile nellikka pole" (Like a gooseberry in the palm): Used to describe a truth that is so evident it requires no proof.

V. The Rhythmic Architecture: Prose as a Chant

One of the most striking features of Khader's style is the musicality of his prose. His writing is not meant to be read silently in the modern, detached sense; it demands to be "heard." There is a specific "beat" (thaalam) to his sentences. As noted in Thrikkottoor Thayvazhi, Khader's prose utilizes "Supra-segmentals"-linguistic features like pitch, stress, and juncture-that turn prose into a Gadyathottam (a prose-chant). His long, winding sentences often mirror the rhythmic incantations of a temple oracle (Velichappadu). Consider this excerpt from Aghorashivam: "Can a truth that has escaped the lips be swallowed back, even if it is by the Oracle of the Kallarthedikkaavu temple, who scatters camphor in the eyes of the beholder and turns the twilight red in the swimming pool of the Kanjirathungal mansion?" The momentum of the sentence, starting with a vivid image and ending with a rhetorical punch, creates a "wave" (olam) that carries the reader along.

VI. Sociolinguistic Realism and Caste Dialects

Khader was a keen commentator on the power relations that are inherent in language. The language of Kerala was highly caste segregated in the mid 20 th century. Khader was not afraid of this fact. He employed dialogue to identify the social structure of his characters. In the novel Vaye Pathalam, the conversation between Bhajanamadham Gopalan (an upper-caste man) and Kunkar (a man from the Pulaya community) is a study in sociolinguistics. Gopalan uses the informal and often derogatory "Edo," "Nee," and "Cherumi" to address Kunkar. In contrast, Kunkar responds with the respectful suffix "Olee", acknowledging his lower status in the social ladder of that time. Khader's ability to capture these nuances provides a "bone-deep" authenticity to his characters. He doesn't just tell us they are from different castes; he lets us hear the distance between them.

VII. The Lexicon of the Soil: A Glossary of Vernaculars

Khader's "literary cupboard" was filled with words that have no direct equivalent in "standard" Malayalam. These words carry the scent of the red earth, the salt of the sea, and the sweat of the laborer.

Khader's Vernacular Standard

Meaning	Contextual Nuance	Pothannayum	Entirely / Wholly	Implies a sense of completion that is absolute.
Reesam	A day	A phonetic corruption of Divasam,	typical of the region.	Vambathi
Shrewd	Arrogant woman	A woman who carries herself with a sense of power.	Pattangu	The absolute truth
Often used in the context of a divine or undeniable fact.	Pokkanam	kettavan	A man of no character	Someone who has lost his social "vessel" or

dignity. Opparam Along with / Together Denotes a close, physical proximity in travel or work. Tampatti Mistress / Goddess A regional variation of Thampuratti.

VIII. Professional Precision: The Language of the Trade

The devotion to realism in the work of U.A. Khader goes beyond the description of the plot; it is a complex type of linguistic imitation, when the writer takes the vocabularies of different social and professional layers and uses them. In the novel *Janmam Theeradharam*, this is the most evident on how he handles land and law. At the point where the story shifts to the issue of ownership of property and the rights of ancestors, Khader abandons the prosaic writing traditions to adopt the inflexible and archaic and rhythmic language of an *Adharam Ezhuthukaran* (a traditional deed-writer).

This stylistic choice is a deliberate attempt to anchor the fictional world of Thrikkottoor in a tangible, bureaucratic reality. By writing, "Thrikkottooramsham Paloordesham Rarichamkandi Thazhemadham parambil parkkum..." (Residing in the Thazhemadham property of Rarichamkandi in the village of Paloore within the Thrikkottoor region...), Khader is not just identifying a location; he is recreating the historical and administrative identity of a person. In the era Khader describes, a person's identity was inseparable from the specific survey numbers, boundaries, and regional divisions mentioned in land documents. The language is dense with legalistic precision, utilizing terms that evoke the authority of the Registrar's office and the weight of inherited property.

First, it establishes historical authenticity. During the mid-20th century in North Malabar, the transition of land and the documentation of *Janmam* (allodial title) and *Kanam* (tenure) rights were central to social life. By mimicking the exact phrasing found in revenue records, Khader transports the reader into the dusty, ink-stained atmosphere of village administrative offices. The rhythmic cadence of these descriptions-listing the village (*Amsham*), the region (*Desham*), and the specific house name (*Tharavadu*)-mirrors the oral tradition of reciting genealogies.

Second, it raises the issue of the personal and the political. In *Janmam Theeradharam*, the land is not merely soil, it is a place of family pride and court cases. Khader uses the exact terms of an activity to emphasize the ways in which the life of a character can be narrowed down to or even defined by a series of legal terms. It is this bureaucratic realism that causes the loss or gain of land by the character to be palpable and irreversible. The prose has something cold and objective about it, as the law approaches human emotions with the same coldness and objectivity as it approaches acre of land.

Third, it shows that Khader is a linguistic archivist. The terms of the language of the old deed-writers-such as Anandiraval (successor), Sthaani (titleholder), and certain units of land-are dying out of use. Khader keeps these words alive in his text so that the language history of the legal tradition of Malabar is not lost to the homogenization of modern Malayalam.

In the final analysis, his folklore passages are rhythmical and mystical, his legalistic passages are rhythmical and structural. He demonstrates that language is the major means with which human beings seek to establish themselves in the world, whether by a prayer to a divine power or a request to an official of a revenue. Such care over professional detail makes sure that Thrikkottoor is not merely a metaphorical village, but a socio-legal entity breathing life through the same documents that delimit it.

IX. Conclusion:

The Legacy of a "Burmese-Malayali" U.A. Khader's narrative path is one that modern Malayalam literature is still learning to fully map. He was a man who grew up in the "silence" of not knowing the local language, only to eventually become its most vocal guardian. By treating tradition as an active weapon rather than a museum piece, Khader created a body of work that is both a historical archive and a psychological masterpiece. He proved that to move forward, one must be brave enough to look back. His stories are the "prose-thottams" of a people, ensuring that the proverbs, the dialects, and the "rhythm of the soil" are never forgotten. Khader's life and work remind us that literature is often born from the cracks of history-between wars, between nations, and between languages. And he remains the Spring of Malayalam, the writer who gave the bile of displacement of the Nux-vomica to the honey of eternal art.

Bibliography:

1. Khader, U. A. (2020). Thrikkottoor Peruma. Kottayam: D.C. Books.
2. Khader, U. A. (2003). Khaderinte Pathu Laghunovelukal (Khader's Ten Short Novels). Kozhikode: Mathrubhumi Printing and Publishing Company.
3. Khader, U. A. (1991). Aghorasivam. (Referenced as published by SPCS/D.C. Books).
4. Khader, U. A. Vaayepaathalam. Kozhukode: Poorna Publications.
5. Khader, U. A. Janmam Theeraadharam, (2003). Khaderinte Pathu Laghunovelukal (Khader's Ten Short Novels). Kozhikode: Mathrubhumi Printing and Publishing Company.
6. Dr.V.Rija.(2011).Thrikkottoor Thaivazhi. Kerala Bhasha Institute. Trivandrum
7. Cheruppa, T. P. (Ed.). Mamaidiyude Makan U.A. Khader Orma Pusthakam (A Memoir of U.A. Khader, Son of Mamaidi).

Digital Media and Everyday Religious Practices in Kashmir: An Ethnographic Study

Prof. Malik Zahra Khalid⁹, Sheikh Mustafa Ali¹¹ and Andleeb¹²

Abstract

This ethnographic study explores the role of digital media in everyday religious practices among Muslims in Kashmir. Using a digital ethnographic approach, the paper examines how platforms such as WhatsApp, Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube are integrated into daily routines, social interactions, and religious rituals. Grounded in Hjarvard's Mediatization Framework, the study draws on participant observation, in-depth interviews, and digital ethnography. It aims to address key questions such as: How do digital media mediate religious authority and knowledge? And how does digital religiosity transform offline rituals and traditions? Our findings suggest that social media not only facilitates the widespread dissemination of religious narratives but also reconfigures the roles of traditional religious authorities, blurring the boundaries between offline rituals and online engagement. This research offers valuable insights into how digital practices shape everyday religiosity and redefine communal identities. In this context, it is especially relevant to explore the influence of digital media on Kashmir's prominent Islamic shrines such as Dargah Hazratbal, Charar-e-Sharif, and Maqdoom Sahib (RA). For this study, a sample of participants was selected from selected shrines using purposive sampling. Historically, these shrines have served as centres of religious and cultural celebration and storytelling. Today, however, digital media extends these traditions into virtual spaces, transforming how devotees engage with religious authority.

Keywords: *Digital Media; Everyday Religion; Islamic Shrines; Kashmir; Digital Ethnography*

Introduction

Digital media is profoundly transforming how people experience, express, and practice religion, giving rise to what scholars increasingly describe as “digital religion” (Cambell, 2013). Social Networking Sites, messaging apps, and video-sharing services are examples of platforms that have become ingrained in the daily routines of religious life in a variety of cultural contexts, changing patterns of belief, belonging, and authority. Digital technologies today form important areas where

⁹ Professor, Media Education Research Centre, University of Kashmir. Email- Zaramlk94@gmail.com

¹¹ Research Scholar, Institute of Kashmir Studies, University of Kashmir. Email- mustafa.iksscholar@kashmiruniversity.net

¹² Research Scholar, Media Education Research Centre, University of Kashmir. Email- andleeb675@gmail.com

religious meanings are created, negotiated, and lived, rather than just being vehicles for religious communication.

These changes interact with long-standing customs of religious education, ritual practice, and group worship in Muslim countries. The boundaries between online and offline religious spaces are becoming blurry due to the growing use of cellphones and internet platforms, which have made it possible to access sermons, devotional content, and religious networks in new ways. This convergence is a reflection of larger mediatization processes, as media technologies influence both the conditions under which religious life is lived and the dissemination of religious teachings (Hjarvard, 2011).

The adoption of digital technologies since the early 2000s has brought about profound changes in the religious practices of Muslims in Kashmir, India. This integration has significantly enhanced the visibility of religious information throughout the region, extending access to individuals from all walks of life. The utilization of various media platforms, such as print, television, mobile phones, and the internet, has fostered a heightened awareness of internal divisions within the Kashmiri Muslim community, as religious ideologies and practices are disseminated more widely. It is necessary to examine how individuals or groups use digital technologies to construct religious narratives in order to understand the influence of these technologies on the formation of new religious identities among Kashmiri Muslims (Mir, 2025).

The use of digital media in the learning process is now one of the innovations expected to improve the quality of education in general, including Islamic Religious Education (Susanti et al., 2024). Digital media offers various conveniences in access to information, learning interactions, and flexibility in learning time and place so that it can provide a more interesting and effective learning experience for students (Kumi-Yeboah et al., 2020)

Religious practices such as prayer and worship constitute a form of dialogue, either directly with the divine, or indirectly with fellow members of a worship community. In recent times, advances in digital media have transformed the ways religion is practised and experienced, including the ways in which religious dialogue is carried out. Such technologies play a mediatory role in the transmission and affective feeling of 'the religious' among individuals. Whilst the encroachment of digital technologies into everyday life has disrupted socio-cultural norms, relatively little consideration has been given by geographers to the effects of such disruption on religion, specifically the spatiotemporal organisation of its practices and experiences (Kong, 2001, 2013). In cognate disciplines such as sociology, anthropology, religion and media studies, however,

research has suggested that digital advancements have not only yielded new forms of religious communication, but have also opened up new affordances for the everyday enactment of religion beyond institutional spheres (Burroughs & Feller, 2015; Campbell, 2017).

As less emphasis is placed on sharing a physical presence, digitally-mediated religious practices call into question the ways in which religious experience is being structured, negotiated and transformed in a digital age (Kong, 2001, 2013). Digital technologies have extended and reconfigured the socio-spatial networks of religion and thereby produced new affordances for religious communication and participation (Shelton et al., 2012). Digital media enable religious groups to 'translate religious practices and beliefs into new contexts' wherein the daily enactments of faiths and theologies are made possible (Campbell, 2017, p. 18). In this sense, digital technology is a crucial sphere where lived religious subjectivities may be engendered. For example, religious memes have been practised as a new way of religious expression, 'which boils down meaningful moments of faith into facile, non threatening avenues for sharing religion' (Burroughs & Feller, 2015, p. 357). Digital spaces have increasingly blurred boundaries between the secular and the sacred, and between the institutional and the everyday life (Cheong, 2013), thus engendering new power relations within religious communities.

Many facets of contemporary life, including religious practice, have been impacted by the widespread use of mobile technology. While religious mobile applications (apps) are the subject of significant research, earlier scholars have examined how various religious organisations adopted, negotiated, or rejected mobile technology in accordance with their fundamental beliefs and values. Studies of "digital religion," which aims to comprehend the intricate relationship between digital technology and religion, include research on the interface of mobile technology and religion (Campbell, Altenhofen, Bellar, & Cho, 2014).

Kashmir provides a distinctive setting for examining how religious practices are negotiated in digital realms since it is situated at the nexus of tradition, modernity, and mediated communication. Social media sites like Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, and WhatsApp have become ingrained in daily life, allowing for the sharing of devotional content, community development, and new forms of religious expression (Mir, 2024).

This study explores the topic of "digital religion" in the Kashmir Valley, concentrating on how local Muslims' religious practices, beliefs, and experiences are being altered by social media sites like Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, and WhatsApp. This research highlights the significance of digital media in everyday religious life, emphasizing how digital tools impact daily rituals,

devotional habits, and communal relationships, in contrast to earlier studies that mainly examine general applications of digital media. By doing this, it fills a major need in the body of knowledge regarding the relationship between religion and digital technology in this region.

Review of Literature

A literature review is a critical overview of the research that academics, researchers, and scholars have undertaken on a particular topic. It presents a comprehensive overview of what is already known, brings out significant arguments and themes, and points out any gaps or anomalies in the corpus of research on the topic. The application of digital media in Kashmiri Muslims' daily practices of religion is explored in this anthropological study. It investigates how social media sites like Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, and WhatsApp are incorporated into everyday activities, religious rites, and social interactions using a digital ethnographic approach.

The researchers have found several studies addressing various aspects of Digital Media and Everyday Religious Practices in Kashmir. Whilst there has not been sufficient research from ethnography that focuses exclusively on the Kashmiri context, pertinent literature offers an established basis for understanding how digital technology, and religion interplay.

A study titled as *Dynamics of Digital Media Use in Religious Communities—A Theoretical Model* by Muller, J., & Friemel, T. N. Friemel (2024) emphasises how crucial it is for social ties, religious meaning systems, and the use of digital religious media to interact within a mediatised religious community. The following list highlights four of our model's advantages and possible uses for further study.

First, as recommended by Rota and Krüger (2019), our model offers a way to link people at the community level and promotes research that takes a dynamic approach. In this case, religious people should be viewed in their social circumstances rather than in isolation from their surroundings, and co-orientation processes should be taken into account. Second, our model highlights the importance of identifying the role that digital media plays in the fulfillment of religious functions. Even though previous research did connect mediatization and religious functions (Hjarvard 2008a; Hoover and Park 2004), little research, to the authors' knowledge, has looked at the religious functions of religious meaning-making and social connection as effects of digital media use.

Third, the offline and online aspects of the analogue environment of today are taken into account by future research thanks to our model (Tsuria and Campbell 2022). Since our model links the

consumption of digital religious media with people's offline lives (mostly their offline connections and meaning system), it aids in addressing this connection between online and offline perspectives. Fourth, by linking the elements of social ties and people's meaning systems in connection to digitalisation, our model will enable future study to examine dynamics within a community.

Matthew N. O. Sadiku, Grace A. Adegoye, Abayomi Ajayi-Majebi and Sarhan M. Musa (2022) conducted a study entitled *Digital Religion: An Introduction* provides a comprehensive overview of the most common types of religious activities occurring in online spaces. It identifies key modes of digital religiosity, including the dissemination of religious information, online worship through cyber churches, and participation in virtual rituals (such as e-prayer and virtual pilgrimages), online missionary efforts, and engagement within digital religious communities (Campbell and Connelly 2017). The intersection of digital media and religion has become increasingly significant as the internet integrates deeper into everyday life. For digital natives, especially youth, social media has become an essential part of their everyday life. They use these platforms to stay in touch with others, access global information, and access educational materials. Religious figures and preachers in Muslim communities are becoming increasingly conscious of social media's potential as a tool for connecting with young people and directing their spiritual growth (Helland and Yamane 2016).

In a study titled *Communicating Islam in Kashmir Intersection of Religion and Media* by M. Raoof explores how the dominant forms of communication have influenced the religious customs of Muslims in Kashmir. Digital media has been a major factor in the current acceleration of cultural, religious, and social transformation. Access to religious writings was previously constrained by low literacy, but the growth of mass literacy in conjunction with new media technologies has made it possible to interact directly with Islamic texts. The proliferation of new media technologies has facilitated the entry of many new actors to join the religious marketplace and disseminate their religious ideology. In the process of this multiplication of diversified opinions on religion through new media platforms, there has been a veritable discursive explosion on the concept of religious identities (Hall 2000: 15).

There has been a surge of interest among the scholars to understand religious practices in relation with different media forms. This increasing scholarly attention to conceptualise religious practices in the backdrop of media technologies has been termed as a media turn in the study of religions (Engelke 2010: 371). In accordance with this study that considers media to be essential to the

definition and practice of religion itself, this article sees the media as a pivotal arena for the formation and dissemination of religious ideas and symbols.

Campbell (2017) conducted a study entitled *Religious communication and Technology* reviews recent research on religious communication and technology through the framework of Digital Religion Studies, a field that examines how digital culture blends and blurs the boundaries between online and offline religious. It charts the evolution of research on religion and the Internet, emphasizing the ways in which religious communities and people traverse between digital and physical realms for participation in their religious practices (Lagerkvist, 2017). A variety of theoretical frameworks have made an especially significant effect on the development of academic discourse in the field of Digital Religion Studies. The study of Mediatization theory looks at how the media creates and spreads public perceptions of religion, emphasizing how media logics influence religious discourse.

The study of how people understand and reconcile media content with their fundamental values and beliefs is known as mediation of meaning. Furthermore, according to the religious-social shaping of technology approach, religious communities' use of digital technologies is influenced and limited by their historical traditions, social structures, and moral beliefs (Campbell 2016). When taken as a whole, these frameworks have given academics critical tools for comprehending how digital media support individual religious expression, influence group spiritual activities, especially offline, and allow the fusion of online and offline religious practices. In a research study "*Religious Use of Mobile Phone*" by Kyong J. Choo and Heidi A. Campbell (2015) presents an overview of the investigation on mobile phones and religion. The findings of the study reveal that the several aspects of contemporary life, including religious practice, have been significantly impacted by mobile phones. The importance of the relationship between religion and mobile phone technology is discussed in this article (Jensen 2013).

This study is viewed as being related to the broader field of "digital religion," which focusses mostly on how religion and the Internet interact as well as how religious communities and individuals interact with digital cultures and technologies. Since the 1980s, religion has been and been a significant part of digital culture and the Internet, where it still persists today. (Campbell, 2013)

R, Cortney and H. Emily (2016) carried a study on *Religious Apps for Smartphones and Tablets: Transforming Religious Authority and the Nature of Religion*. This study focuses on the intricate and close relationship between religion and technology. It investigates at how religious

applications which are frequently referred to as "apps" are used on tablets and smart phones. Apps are computer programs that can be purchased from stores like the Apple iTunes store or are accessible for free. Smart phones and tablets are simple and practical devices for connecting to consumers' worldwide and accessing information on the Internet. The introduction of these new technologies has not removed religion. Hundreds of religious apps catering to various faiths are accessible. The experiences of Christian and Muslim college students who self-report regularly using religious applications and reside close to Washington, D.C., are described in this article (Fader 2013).

The findings of the research highlight how the usage of mobile apps is reshaping religious authority by enabling people to interact with their faith more often and personally rather than depending on formal institutions. According to the participants, apps help individuals investigate religious issues on their own, which lessen their reliance on conventional authority figures like pastors or imams (Bunt 2013). This change is made possible by the accessibility and mobility of smart phones and tablets, which enable individuals to take charge of their spiritual journeys by conducting their own research. While institutional settings are no longer the main source of spiritual education or involvement, religious practice becomes increasingly interwoven into daily life, but it also contributes to the diminution of communal faith experiences.

Despite the growing body of literature on digital religion and mediatization, there remains a significant gap in understanding how digital media shapes everyday religious practices in the specific socio-cultural context of Kashmir. The majority of current research focuses on survey-based or platform-focused analyses and pays little attention to in-depth ethnographic interaction that captures the lived, online-offline religious experiences of common practitioners. Additionally, the reconfiguration of religious authority and knowledge creation has received little scholarly attention, especially when it comes to local priests, shrine custodians, and up-and-coming internet influencers. By using a persistent digital ethnographic approach that places ordinary religion in both real-world and virtual contexts, our study aim to close these gaps.

Significance of the Study

This study explores how digital media shapes everyday religious practices in Kashmir, highlighting how global trends in digital religion are locally interpreted within the region's unique socio-cultural and religious context. Using an ethnographic approach, it examines the emerging hybrid space where online and offline religious lives intersect and documents how marginalized

groups use digital platforms to express faith and negotiate religious identity. The study contributes to theories of mediatization and everyday religion by providing context-specific, empirical insights into digital religiosity in Kashmir region.

Theoretical Framework

This study uses **Hjarvard's Mediatization Theory** to explain how digital media reshapes religious authority and community by linking online and offline religious practices.

Mediatization Theory

The concept most central to an understanding of the importance of media to culture and society is mediatization. Mediatization theory does place emphasis on the role of the media, for instance by examining how media mould social interaction and shape 'communicative figurations' (Hepp, 2013; Hepp and Hasebrink, 2014) or how the logics of the media come to influence the logics of other institutions like religion or politics (Hjarvard, 2013). The theory of mediatization has proved fruitful for the analysis of how media spread to , become intertwined with and influence other social institutions and cultural phenomena like religion, politics, power etc.

Stig Hjarvard , Professor and Vice-Chair at the Department of Media, Cognition and Communication, University of Copenhagen, Denmark proposed the theory of Mediatization. According to Stig Hjarvard's Mediatization theory, media have developed into a separate social institution with its own logic that increasingly influences the communication and operations of other institutions, including politics, religion, and education (Hjarvard, 2013). Media actively alter social relationships, cultural meanings, and institutional behaviours rather than merely conveying information. Hjarvard presents the idea of "banal religion" in relation to religion, arguing that religious concepts, symbols, and stories frequently make their way through popular media in commonplace, non-institutionalized forms. This means that media platforms, audiences, and cultural sectors are increasingly influencing religious authority and meaning-making rather than just formal religious institutions. Hjarvard also highlights the ways in which media logics, including visibility, popularity, immediacy, and personalization, impact religious actors' self-presentation as well as the creation and consumption of religious content. As a result, rather than being limited to customary locations like mosques, shrines, or formal ceremonies, religious practices become increasingly personalized, mediated, and integrated into daily life. When Mediatization theory is used to digital media, it helps explain how social media and other platforms reorganize religious authority, participation, and community building, resulting in

hybrid environments where offline and online religious activities interact and change one another. This study, which is based on Hjarvard's Mediatization paradigm, emphasizes the significance of digital media as institutional factors that influence religious authority, knowledge creation, and daily practice, viewing them as more than just communication tools. Platforms like Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, and WhatsApp mediate the creation, dissemination, and negotiation of religious meanings in the Kashmiri setting, leading to hybrid forms of religiosity that conflate offline ritual life with online interaction.

Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative, exploratory research design to examine the relationship between digital media and religious practices in Kashmir. It combines participant observation, digital ethnography, including physical presence and “digital lurking,” with 30 in- depth interviews of individuals from three shrines, Dargah Hazratbal, Charar-e-Sharif, and Maqdoom Sahib (RA) to capture personal experiences of digital religion. In order to investigate digital congregations and practices, digital ethnography was also carried out by methodically analysing information on websites like YouTube, Facebook, Instagram, and WhatsApp. Fieldwork was conducted from July 2025- September 2025.

Purposive sampling was used to choose respondents in order to improve representativeness and reduce selection bias. To find recurrent themes about mediated religious behaviours and evolving forms of religious authority, data gathered from these many sources was methodically examined. The objectives and research questions of the study are outlined as follows:

Research Objectives

- To assess how digital media reshapes religious practices and community life among Muslims in the Kashmir Valley.
- To examine how religious identities are negotiated and expressed in online spaces through an ethnographic lens.

Research Questions

- How do digital media platforms reshape religious communities and foster mediated devotion in Kashmir?
- How does digital ethnography reveal shifts in religious authority and new forms of piety?

Findings and Analysis

The study found that digital media has become a core component of religious life for many Kashmiri Muslims. The discussion is presented thematically as follows:

Key Themes and Observations Emerging from Data

Mediated Devotion and Emergence of Digital Communities:

Digital spaces, particularly WhatsApp groups, serve as “virtual mosques” that foster community and connection. These platforms have become a primary medium for religious communication, enabling individuals to share daily prayers, listen to audio sermons, and engage in discussions on religious matters. Participants described these digital spaces as important sources of comfort, belonging, and spiritual support.

In the first interview with Abdul Hameed Ganee (34) claims that he often uses “*The QuranApp, a Google Play app that prioritises user privacy and is ad-free. He pointed out that users can interact with the Qur'an in languages they are comfortable with thanks to the app's straightforward UI and more than 30 translations. This represents an increasing understanding that people can engage with sacred texts in a flexible way, based on their own time, location, and devotional rhythms, thanks to digital tools*”.

Shifts in Authority and Gendered Experiences:

The widespread adoption of digital media has produced a notable shift in religious authority. Previously, guidance was primarily sought from local imams or respected family elders. However, interview data indicates that many young Kashmiris are now turning to “online scholars” individuals with large followings on YouTube and social media for spiritual and legal advice. This change is part of a larger trend where religious authority is no longer only determined by institutional status but also by visibility, accessibility, and digital reach.

Lateef Ahmad (34) constantly listens to Naats and uses messaging apps to spread religious content about the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). For him and many others, these rituals serve as both significant ways to spread Islamic knowledge throughout technologically connected societies and

acts of devotion. By means of this mediated circulation, new media not only maintains but also amplifies and adapts the tradition of naat recitation, expanding its reach beyond close social circles and integrating it into networked forms of religious communication that transcend social boundaries and digital platforms.

New forms of Piety and Religious Expression:

The emergence of new forms of personal religious practice is enabled by digital media. The use of Islamic mobile apps for daily prayers, Quran recitation, and finding the Qibla has become commonplace. Participants described these apps as a means of personal discipline and a way to integrate their faith into their busy modern lives. Furthermore, public displays of piety are now possible on social media. People post hadith, religious tales, and verses from the Quran on social media sites like Facebook, Instagram, and WhatsApp. For some people, performing a public religious identity is a source of empowerment and a means of navigating their identity in a digitally connected world. This is made possible by these visual and narrative forms of religious expression. In line with Saniya (18), she mostly uses YouTube to listen to Qur'anic recitations and to learn more about their meanings through a variety of lectures, commentary, and educational videos. She explained how these internet resources enable her to access a variety of scholarly viewpoints that might not be easily accessible in her immediate social or institutional milieu, pause and repeat sections for clarity, and explore intricate interpretations at her own leisure.

Intertwining of Commerce and Piety:

The mushrooming ritual of purchasing religious products such as prayer mats, Qur'ans, Islamic apparel, tasbeih (prayer beads), and devotional media through internet platforms and social media is referred to as the "emergence of a digital Islamic marketplace." As acts of religion are increasingly encouraged and influenced by digital consumption, this development combines religious devotion with business activity. In Kashmir, digital platforms offer new, accessible means for people to express and uphold their religious identities through market-based activities, reflecting the local adaptation of global trends in the commodification of religion.

Conclusion

This study shows how religious practice and digital media in Kashmir have a dynamic interaction that is intricately linked to the social and cultural setting of the region. Digital media is both a stabilising and an empowering factor at the same time. On the one hand, by establishing alternative venues for religious engagement, expression, and education that go beyond the actual walls of mosques and shrines, it strengthens marginalised groups, especially women and young people. By making prayers, sermons, and devotional materials more accessible across time and location, it also promotes the continuation of customs and rituals.

The findings contribute to the anthropology of digital religion by demonstrating that digital religious practices in Kashmir are not merely technological adaptations but are socially and culturally embedded processes shaped by local infrastructures, power relations, and everyday lived realities. By creating networked groups that blur the lines between private devotion and public expression, people use digital spaces to increase the breadth and depth of their religious participation.

Simultaneously, traditional manifestations of religious authority are not merely displaced; rather, they are reconstructed through constant negotiation with influential people and digitally visible "online scholars," whose legitimacy frequently depends on accessibility, popularity, and mediated presence. This ambivalence draws attention to the ways in which digital platforms simultaneously foster spiritual support, devotion, and a sense of belonging while dismantling authority, pluralising interpretations, and changing the meanings and customs that govern daily religious life in Kashmir.

References

- ❖ **Bellar, W. R., Cho, K. J., & Campbell, H. A. (2018).** The Intersection of Religion and Mobile Technology. In M. Khosrow-Pour (Ed.), *Encyclopedia of Information Science and Technology* (4th ed., pp. 6161–6170). IGI Global. <https://doi.org/10.4018/978-1-5225-2255-3.CH53>
- ❖ Campbell, H. A., & Hjarvard, S. (2017). *Religious communication and technology*. *Annals of the International Communication Association*, 41(1), 1–7. <https://doi.org/10.1080/23808985.2017.1374200>
- ❖ Gao, Q., Woods, O., Kong, L., & Shee, S. Y. (2024). Lived religion in a digital age: Technology, affect and the pervasive space-times of 'new' religious praxis. *Social & Cultural Geography*, 25(1), 29–48. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14649365.2022.2121979>

- ❖ Mir, R. (2018). Communicating Islam in Kashmir: Intersection of religion and media. *Society and Culture in South Asia*, 5(1), 47–69. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2393861718787871>
- ❖ Muller, J., & Friemel, T. N. (2024). *Dynamics of Digital Media Use in Religious Communities: A Theoretical Model*. **Religions**, 15(7), 762. <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel15070762>
- ❖ Mir, R. (2025). *New Media Practices and Religious Change in Kashmir*. *Social Media in Society and Culture* (pp. 1–20). Oxford University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1093/9780198945253.003.0043>
- ❖ Sadiku, M. N. O., Adegoye, G. A., Ajayi-Majebi, A., & Musa, S. M. (2022). *Digital religion: An Introduction*. **International Journal of Trend in Research and Development**, 9(4), 77–81. <https://www.ijtrd.com>

The Evolution and Growth of Kashmiri Short Story

Dr. Shakir Naik¹³

Abstract

The evolution of the Kashmiri short story reflects the socio-political, cultural, and ideological transformations of Kashmir from the mid-twentieth century to the contemporary era. Beginning with the pioneering contributions of writers such as Som Nath Zutshi and Dina Nath Nadim, Kashmiri fiction gradually developed into a mature literary tradition shaped by Marxist thought, social disillusionment, modernism, and global literary influences. Writers like Akhtar Mohiuddin, Amil Kamil, and Hari Krishen Koul enriched the genre through satire, psychological depth, symbolism, and innovative narrative styles. The literature of the 1990s, deeply influenced by conflict, migration, and the exodus of Kashmiri Pandits, foregrounded themes of exile, trauma, nostalgia, and identity. Contemporary Kashmiri fiction continues to engage with issues of globalization, technology, cultural transformation, environmental concerns, and human suffering while preserving a profound attachment to Kashmir and humanity. Thus, Kashmiri short fiction stands as a dynamic reflection of collective memory, resistance, and changing social realities.

Keywords: *Kashmiri Short Story; Modern Kashmiri Literature; Identity; Displacement; Nostalgia; Satire; Modernism; Kashmiri Pandits; Contemporary Fiction*

Introduction

In the 1950, Som Nath Zutshi and Dena Nath Nadim started writing short stories in Kashmiri. Som Nath Zutshi wrote ‘Yeli Phol Gash,’ while Dena Nath Nadim wrote ‘Jawabi Card.’ Each claimed to have authored the first short story in Kashmiri. Rather than focusing on who wrote the very first short story in Kashmiri, it is more meaningful to recognize that both Som Nath Zutshi’s *Yeli Phol Gash* and Dena Nath Nadim’s *Jawabi Card* mark the important beginning of the short story genre in Kashmiri literature. Their works collectively represent the emergence of Kashmiri prose fiction and paved the way for future writers. Dena Nath Nadim wrote only three short stories before stepping away from the genre, and similarly, Som Nath Zutshi also did not remain active for an

¹³ Assistant Professor, Modern Indian Languages, Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh. Email.shakir.kmr@gmail.com

extended period. The new wave of Kashmiri writers, much like their counterparts across India, were initially influenced by Marxist ideology, which shaped their literary themes and aspirations. This trend continued until around 1955, a period marked by a strong sense of hope and ambition among writers and intellectuals who aspired to create an ideal, transformative society through their literary work.

However, about five years later, when Kashmiri society faced harsh realities, many of these dreams were shattered. The promises of democracy and revolution proved hollow, leading to widespread disillusionment. In response, sensitive writers began to shift their focus inward, turning towards a more introspective examination of their immediate surroundings and personal emotions, reflecting the changed social and political climate in their work. With the shift in thinking and the growing disillusionment, both style and subject matter in Kashmiri literature evolved significantly. Sarcasm and satire emerged as powerful tools, replacing earlier modes such as advice and overt propaganda. Akhtar Mohiuddin notably pioneered this approach in his short story *Dandwazun*, where he skillfully employed satire to critique societal issues and express deeper truths. This stylistic evolution allowed writers to engage readers more effectively and reflect the complexities of their changing world. Akhter Mohi Ud Din stands out as the only writer to have consistently written in the Kashmiri short story genre. Unlike his predecessors, who contributed briefly, his sustained engagement has been crucial in developing and enriching the short story tradition in Kashmiri literature. His continuous work has helped keep the genre alive and evolving, making him a significant figure in this literary field. Akhter Mohi Ud Din's fiction not only laid a strong foundation for the Kashmiri short story but also reflects the genre's entire evolution within his body of work. Through his stories, one can trace the development of themes, styles, and narrative techniques that mark the growth of Kashmiri short story over time. His writing serves as both a cornerstone and a comprehensive reflection of the genre's progress, making his contribution uniquely valuable to Kashmiri literature.

Amil Kamil has made a significant contribution to Kashmiri fiction. His insightful storytelling and portrayal of contemporary themes have enriched the literary landscape, adding depth and relevance to Kashmiri prose. His work not only reflects social realities but also elevates the standards of narrative and thematic exploration within Kashmiri fiction. Amil Kamil has a remarkable ability to capture timely truths and social conditions with such authenticity and insight that the freshness and relevance of his work remain enduring. His stories resonate deeply because they reflect real-

life experiences and issues in a way that continues to engage readers over time. This quality makes his contribution invaluable in portraying contemporary realities through Kashmiri literature.

From 1959 until 1970, Kashmiri literature experienced significant exposure to international fiction, which brought fresh influences in terms of subjects and narrative techniques. This period saw writers experimenting with diverse themes and styles inspired by global literary movements. However, after 1970, there was a marked shift in perspective. A new thematic focus emerged in Western literature—‘the search for humanity’—which began to influence writers in Kashmir as well, encouraging deeper exploration of human values, identity, and existential concerns in their works. After 1975, Kashmiri fiction was regarded as modern literature. On the one hand, it was characterized by a shift from the conventional compositional elements to a direct style of speech; on the other hand, it observed and explained the economic, social, intellectual, and cultural life of people in a global context, along with the status of the fiction writer as an individual in this society or on a global level, and his individual thought processes.

Deepak Koul and Umaish Koul also began writing; their initial works showed potential, but they did not significantly advance or enrich the Kashmiri short story tradition and fell short of the expectations of the Kashmiri readership. Bansi Nirdoosh maintained a consistent presence in Kashmiri literature for decades. Over his career, he authored three collections of short stories and one novel, contributing significantly to the body of Kashmiri fiction through his sustained creative output. Ghulam Ahmad Sofi is indeed a significant figure in Kashmiri fiction. Although he published only two collections of short stories before stepping away from writing, his contributions remain important, and his name continues to be recognized in the field of Kashmiri short stories. Hari Krishen Koul is renowned for his distinctive and vivid writing style. His works, such as *Shamshan Varag*, *Yath Razdaney*, and *Halas Chu Rotul*, vividly showcase the brilliance and creativity of his imaginative journey. These stories highlight his ability to blend rich imagination with compelling narrative, making him a notable figure in Kashmiri literature. Hari Krishen Koul’s first short story, *Taaph*, remains profoundly relevant across time. It evokes a sense of loss—something that was deeply shaken and carried away by the harsh waves of time. The story captures this enduring feeling, resonating with readers who have experienced similar upheavals.

Farooq Masoodi wrote differently from others, bringing changes both thematically and structurally to the short story. He wrote for a brief period and then never produced any work in this field again. Similarly, Shankar Raina wrote in a distinctive manner. The central theme of almost all his short stories is death, with little emphasis on other subjects. It seemed that death had cast its shadow

over him very early, which is why death is the sole focus of his short stories. His stories carry a dense, pervasive shadow of death (Saqi, 1997). Hardey Koul Bharti, drawing on his vast knowledge, deep observations, and rich experiences, transformed the Kashmiri short story into a new realm. He incorporates both myth and history in his short stories. Ratan Lal Shant is another prominent figure in Kashmiri fiction. His short stories serve as an open mirror reflecting the complexities of human nature. Avatar Krishna Rahbar's writing style freed Kashmiri stories from the constraints of traditional narratives by embracing symbolic, abstract, and metaphorical forms. His works, like '*Nirvan*' and '*Yeli Parda Woth*', embody a realm detached from mundane daily life, where every element of the narrative reflects the characters' psychological and spiritual struggles. The strength of these stories lies not in clear, linear comprehension or coherence, but in their ability to propel the plot, evoke an appropriate atmosphere, and create fitting identities for the characters (Shauq 1998).

Bashir Akhter has a unique style. He is a master of expressing ideas indirectly and allegorically. His imaginative use of language is a distinctive feature of his short stories. His short stories are layered and multifaceted rather than straightforward. Gulshan Majeed also writes in a unique way. Some of his short stories exhibit the simplicity, purity, and freshness of the local dialect pattern. His writing is crisp, and he effectively conveys his ideas and feelings in succinct phrases.

The mass exodus of Kashmiri Pandits from Kashmir in 1990 gave rise to the community's pain, pathos, displacement, anger, nostalgia, and protest. In the 1990s, when political turmoil caused unprecedented suffering among the people and the complete dissolution of time-honoured values, Kashmiri fiction writers felt a moral responsibility to break their silence and use their art to depict the people's plight. The agony of the people and the forms of violence were numerous; every member of the society became an individual tale of pain and suffering. So, the themes deviate from conventional storylines to explore issues of militancy, identity, exile, and the inner psyche. Many Kashmiri prose writers, especially from the displaced Kashmiri Pandit community, have chronicled the 1990 mass exodus, emphasizing themes such as exile, nostalgia, trauma, and the loss of homeland. Their writings frequently combine personal memoirs with historical narratives of the conflict.

After some years, there was a clear shift in themes, style, and craft. The writers wrote about the human condition in a world of science and technology, nature, love and romance, the erosion of values, politics, human suffering, psychological issues, and cultural isolation. Today's Kashmiri literature is the result of collective efforts by all writers. Even as individuals, they emerge as a

group by demonstrating their skills. However different their attitudes and styles may be, their art shares many values , giving them a contemporary identity.

Mushtaq Ahmad Mushtaq's short stories are marked by swift and impactful narrative progressions. His thematic focus centers on the complexities of human emotions, relationships, and social challenges. By incorporating personal experiences into his themes, Mushtaq adds authenticity and emotional depth to his stories, making them more relatable and meaningful to readers. His stories offer insightful reflections on life, often highlighting the struggles and resilience of individuals through a vivid, concise style.

The current century is the age of information technology; it is, in many ways, thematically, intellectually, and culturally different from the previous century. This is the era of discoveries, inventions, science, and technology, influencing every aspect of human life. 21st-century literature is a multidisciplinary humanities project that includes social sciences, law, education, psychology, and sociology. This is a consolidated, coordinated effort by such disciplines to study aspects of knowledge, life, and related phenomena. There is an exciting move in literature. There is now a merging of different fields of expertise. Boundaries are now being dissolved and, in some cases, removed altogether; e.g., earlier, historiography was considered the concern of historians alone, but history has entered literature, as in the historical novel.

In the meantime, despite the rapid advancements in technology, Kashmiri literature continues to deeply engage with enduring themes. Writers persistently reflect on the lasting impact of decades-long conflict, violence, and political instability in the region. They explore experiences of migration, loss, and the emotional toll of displacement, particularly among Kashmiri Pandits and others affected by the turmoil. Although the dominant themes of the literature of this period have been suffering, nostalgia, an uncertain future, pangs of separation, etc., the undercurrent of such writings remains a love for humanity and for Kashmir as a motherland. Questions of cultural, religious, and regional identity remain central as the social landscape shifts. Writers are currently addressing the loss of humanity, greed, lack of conscience, religious hatred, sectarianism, women's freedom, environmental protection, global warming, etc. Unemployment, the youth's obsession with getting adjusted in government sectors, has become a part of society's collective identity. This situation is the root of many problems in the community. Kashmiris leave their ancestral homes and live in other states, dreaming of prosperity. Behind their seemingly silent, smooth, peaceful lifestyle, their inner torment can be seen as predominant in contemporary Kashmiri prose. Additionally, the effects of modernization, globalization, and evolving social norms on traditional

Kashmiri life are thoughtfully examined. There is also a strong sense of longing for a lost or idealized past, often intertwined with both personal and collective histories. Alongside these, narratives delve into family dynamics, love, and interpersonal conflicts within the broader societal challenges. Amidst these complex themes, stories of survival, endurance, and hope continue to resonate powerfully in Kashmiri literature.

References:

1. Naji, Munawar & Shouq, Shafi. (1992). *Nov Kaeshiri Adbuk Tawarikh*. Kashur Department, Kashmir University, Hazratbal, Srinagar.
2. Saqi, Moti, Lal. (1997). *Kashur Afsana-Phabun, Phanphlun Ti Yawun*. Sheeraza, Volume 32 (Issue 1/2), page 212.
3. Shouq, Shafi. (Ed.). (1992). *Kaeshur Afsana Az*. Sahitya Academi, New Delhi.

Social Spaces and Lived Experiences: An Ethnographic Study of Girls' Hostel Life at Kashmir University

Mehvish Yousuf¹⁴

Abstract

This ethnographic study examines how hostel life shapes the marriage preferences and expectations of female students at Kashmir University. Drawing on a qualitative methodology, the study is based on in-depth interviews and participant observation conducted among women residing in university hostels. The research reveals that prolonged communal living fosters emotional maturity, exposure to diverse worldviews, and a gradual re-evaluation of marriage ideals. Before entering the hostel, most participants viewed marriage as a family-controlled arrangement rooted in tradition, caste, and appearance. However, everyday interactions with peers led to significant attitudinal shifts toward valuing compatibility, emotional understanding, and the right to choose one's partner. While financial stability and social respectability remained important, the hostel experience expanded the girls' perspectives on autonomy, equality, and consent. Yet, caste-based hierarchies and religious boundaries continued to influence their choices, reflecting the complex intersection of freedom and conformity. The findings highlight a shift from appearance-based ideals toward economic security, emotional compatibility, acceptance of choice marriage, and emerging preferences for nuclear family structures, alongside the persistence of caste endogamy. The study concludes that hostel life acts as a transformative social space where Kashmiri women learn to balance inherited norms with new ideals of selfhood and relational independence. By foregrounding hostel life as a critical site of gendered socialization, the study contributes to broader debates on youth, marriage, and women's agency in contemporary South Asian societies.

Keywords: Hostel Life; Marriage Preferences; Gender; Autonomy; Caste; Emotional Growth; Kashmir; Ethnography

Introduction

¹⁴ Former Post-graduate student, Institute of Kashmir [Anthropology], University of Kashmir. Email-tantraymehvish@gmail.com

Hostels have increasingly become important social spaces for young women pursuing higher education, especially those who leave home for the first time. Beyond offering accommodation, hostels create everyday living environments where students learn social skills, interact with diverse peers, and develop new forms of emotional understanding. As demonstrated by Niveditha (2024), shared routines and peer interactions play a key role in shaping how students think, behave, and negotiate relationships. Such environments foster informal learning processes through daily conversations, collaborative living, and exposure to different personalities and perspectives.

Similarly, Kales (2014) demonstrated that hostel life significantly influences university girls' attitudes and social adjustment. The study observed that shared living promotes friendships, emotional support, and openness to new viewpoints while also generating interpersonal challenges that require negotiation and adaptation. Taken together, these studies suggest that hostels operate not just as residential spaces but as meaningful social settings where young women rethink identity, expectations, and everyday practices.

In Kashmir, however, the lived experiences of girls in university hostels remain largely undocumented. While the region has scholarship on women's education and cultural norms, very few studies have captured the everyday realities of hostel life—how girls talk, cope, and reflect on personal matters in a shared, semi-autonomous environment. Given the strong influence of family norms, community expectations, and cultural restrictions in Kashmir, hostel life becomes a significant context in which young women encounter viewpoints and discussions that may differ from those prevalent in their home environments.

Despite the growing literature on hostel experiences in India, no research has examined how hostel-based interactions shape female students' marriage preferences, including attitudes toward arranged and self-choice marriages, expectations regarding partner qualities, and the role of caste and financial stability in decision-making. These aspects are especially important in Kashmir, where marriage remains a central and deeply regulated institution.

This study addresses that gap through an ethnographic exploration of the Qurat-ul-Ain Hyder Girls Hostel at the University of Kashmir. Using participant observation and interviews, it examines how everyday hostel interactions—shared rooms, peer discussions, and emotional exchanges—shape the ways young women imagine their future relationships and marriage choices. Grounded

in the insights of Niveditha (2024) and Kales (2014), the study positions the hostel as a socially influential environment where students negotiate between inherited norms and emerging ideals of autonomy, compatibility, and personal choice.

Literature Review

Niveditha (2024) conceptualized the hostel as a social space where micro-processes of socialization occur beyond the formal classroom. Drawing on qualitative interviews and observations, the study demonstrated that communal living promotes cross-cultural exchange, emotional support, communication skills, and conflict-resolution abilities. The author argued that hostel settings function as micro-communities where identity, independence, and belonging are continuously negotiated through everyday interactions, aligning hostel residence with ethnographic perspectives that treat it as a site of learning and meaning-making.

Kales (2014) provided a quantitative understanding of students' attitudes toward hostel life through a survey-based approach involving university girls. The findings indicated that attitudes toward hostel life did not vary significantly by religion or academic semester. However, locality played a notable role, as rural students tended to report more favorable attitudes than urban students. The study highlighted that hostel experiences are not uniform and are shaped by students' social backgrounds and prior living norms.

Jafar (2005) examined women's hostels in urban Pakistan and found that hostel life becomes a space where female students continuously negotiate autonomy under strict rules framed through safety and protection. The study highlighted that hostel regulations concerning mobility, timings, and discipline often reflect broader gender norms, whereby women's freedom is managed in the name of security. The findings suggested that hostels function as gendered institutions where care and restriction coexist, shaping students' daily routines, decision-making processes, and emotional experiences. The study is significant because it demonstrates that hostel life is not merely a residential experience but also a site of gendered control and identity negotiation.

Rather and Shah (2017) explored young women's educational experiences in Kashmir and demonstrated that gender strongly influences mobility and access to educational opportunities. Although the study was not exclusively focused on hostels, it provided a useful framework for

understanding how restrictions on movement, safety concerns, and social expectations affect female students' everyday lives, including those residing in hostels. The findings revealed that young women frequently face limitations that shape their choices, freedom, and participation in academic life. This study is particularly relevant because it connects women's education with the lived realities of gendered restrictions, which are highly significant for understanding hostel girls' experiences in Kashmir.

Samad (2015) examined changing patterns of marriage and family life in Bangladesh within the context of modernization and socio-economic development. The study highlighted that increased access to education, employment opportunities, microfinance, legal reforms, and technological advancements have transformed traditional family structures, particularly contributing to the weakening of the joint family system. While these changes have promoted empowerment and awareness, they have also generated challenges, including rising dowry demands, divorce, marital conflict, neglect of elderly dependents, and increasing family disputes. The author emphasized the need for social work interventions, effective legal enforcement, counseling services, and community awareness programs to address these challenges.

Mawere and Mawere (2010) critically examined the changing philosophy of African marriage through the Shona customary practice of *Kukumbira* in Zimbabwe. The study highlighted how modernization, colonial influence, and increasing bridewealth demands have challenged the continuity of traditional marriage practices. Although some respondents acknowledged the decline of *Kukumbira* due to commercialization and its association with patriarchy, the majority viewed it positively as a cultural institution that promotes family cohesion, social capital, and respect for women's consent. The authors argued that customary marriage practices continue to hold cultural relevance when practiced without exploitation and emphasized the need to reform rather than abolish traditional marriage systems to uphold women's rights and strengthen inter-family relationships.

Abela and Walker (2014) provided a comprehensive overview of global transformations in marriage, parenting, and family life amid rapid social, cultural, and economic change. They argued that contemporary societies are witnessing increasing diversity in family forms, declining marriage rates, delayed marriages, rising cohabitation, and changing expectations regarding intimate relationships. The authors highlighted that marriage has undergone a process of

deinstitutionalization, particularly in Western societies, where greater emphasis is placed on individual choice, emotional satisfaction, and relationship quality rather than legal status alone. Despite these transformations, marriage continues to retain symbolic significance as a marker of commitment. The study further noted that children's well-being is more closely linked to the quality of parental relationships than to family structure itself, underscoring the importance of family-friendly policies that support stable and nurturing environments.

Furstenberg (2015) critically examined the historical evolution of marriage in the United States to assess whether marriage is declining or disappearing in contemporary society. Drawing on a long-term historical perspective, the author argued that there has never been a single, uniform model of "traditional" marriage and that marriage has continually adapted to changing economic, demographic, and cultural conditions. The study highlighted that the post-World War II nuclear family model was relatively short-lived and heavily dependent on rigid gender-based divisions of labor. Furthermore, rising educational attainment, women's labor force participation, economic restructuring, delayed marriage, cohabitation, and changing expectations of intimacy have transformed marriage patterns. Furstenberg identified the emergence of a two-tier family system in which marriage remains relatively stable among highly educated groups but is increasingly unattainable for economically disadvantaged populations, linking shifts in marriage patterns to broader social inequalities rather than moral decline.

Iftikhar and Ajmal (2015) conducted a qualitative study using a grounded theory approach to explore the impact of hostel life on students' behavior and personality development in Pakistan. The findings revealed that hostel life contributes significantly to students' educational journeys by fostering independence, responsibility, confidence, social skills, and adaptability. Living in a multicultural hostel environment exposes students to diverse social backgrounds, thereby enhancing socialization and personality development. However, the study also identified several challenges associated with hostel life, including homesickness, adjustment difficulties, stress, changes in eating and sleeping patterns, and negative influences such as drug use, particularly among male students. The authors concluded that while hostel life contributes positively to personal growth and maturity, adequate support systems and improved hostel facilities are necessary to minimize adverse psychological and behavioral outcomes.

Iqbal et al. (2024) investigated the impact of hostel life on students' academic performance and found that hostel residence influences learning outcomes in both supportive and challenging ways. The study highlighted that hostel living can positively contribute to academic success through peer learning, teamwork, and access to educational resources such as study spaces, libraries, and internet facilities. At the same time, the authors identified several negative factors, including lack of privacy, social disturbances, peer pressure, poor living conditions, unhealthy routines, and sleep disruption, all of which can create stress and reduce concentration. The findings suggested that students' academic performance depends substantially on the quality of the hostel environment and institutional support. The study is important because it demonstrates the direct relationship between hostel life and academic achievement while emphasizing the need for improved hostel services and student welfare policies.

Omar-Fauzee et al. (2014) explored the challenges faced by adolescents in adapting to hostel life in a Malaysian government boarding school. Using a random sample of 105 students and the Michigan International Student Problem Inventory (MISPI), the authors assessed adaptation difficulties related to finances, academics, food and lodging, social orientation, and institutional facilities. The findings indicated that adaptation problems were not significantly associated with gender, family income, parents' educational attainment, or the number of siblings enrolled in higher education. However, the study emphasized the importance of structured support mechanisms, particularly counseling and mentoring programs, in facilitating students' adjustment to hostel environments. The authors concluded that orientation programs, counseling services, and institutional support systems are essential for reducing adjustment-related stress and promoting smoother social and academic adaptation among hostel residents.

Barich and Bielby (1996) examined changes and continuities in marriage expectations by comparing two cohorts of young adults from 1967 and 1994 through a neo-institutionalist perspective. Their findings suggest that marriage expectations are shaped by cultural norms, public discourse, and socially accepted beliefs rather than solely by individual preferences. The study identified both continuity and change in how young adults conceptualized marriage over time and demonstrated that understandings of marriage differed significantly between men and women. The authors argued that marriage expectations are socially constructed within broader institutional contexts that influence individuals' perceptions of relationships and family life.

Pauli and van Dijk (2017) examined the transformation of marriage in Southern Africa from a nearly universal life-stage institution to one that is increasingly rare, expensive, and socially exclusive. Although marriage rates have declined, the authors argued that marriage remains a powerful social ideal and an important marker of adulthood, respectability, and social status. They identified rising bridewealth (lobola) costs, expensive wedding ceremonies, changing gender relations, women's increased educational and employment opportunities, and growing expectations of romantic companionship as major factors contributing to marriage decline. The study further highlighted how public health discourses surrounding HIV/AIDS and counseling initiatives continue to promote monogamous marriage as a moral and socially desirable institution despite its declining accessibility. Overall, the authors emphasized the need for contemporary ethnographic research to understand the continuing significance of marriage in everyday social life (Pauli & van Dijk, 2017).

Budlender et al. (2006) examined marriage patterns in South Africa and argued that analyzing marital status is complicated by diverse marriage forms, cultural practices, religious traditions, and linguistic variations. The authors noted that inconsistencies arise because survey and census data often reflect respondents' perceptions of marriage, whereas administrative records are based on legal definitions. Drawing on multiple national datasets, including census records, household surveys, demographic and health surveys, and marriage registration records, they demonstrated how reporting biases, misunderstandings regarding cohabitation, and practices such as bridewealth payments complicate estimates of marriage prevalence and timing. Despite these limitations, the authors concluded that meaningful trends in South African marriage patterns can still be identified through careful analysis.

Palamuleni (2010) investigated changing marriage patterns in South Africa between 1996 and 2007 using national demographic data. The findings revealed a steady increase in the singulate mean age at marriage (SMAM) for both men and women, accompanied by a growing proportion of individuals who remained unmarried. The study also identified a decline in formal marriage among women and a corresponding increase in cohabitation. These trends were linked to broader socioeconomic transformations, including educational expansion, women's labor force participation, urbanization, and modernization, suggesting that marriage is becoming less universal and increasingly delayed in South Africa.

Yadav et al. (2017) analyzed long-term changes in marriage patterns across North and South India using Census data from 1971 to 2011. Their findings demonstrated a substantial increase in the singulate mean age at marriage for women in both regions, indicating a clear shift toward later marriage. The authors also reported a decline in early marriages among women aged 15–19 and observed relatively stable spousal age differences over time. Additionally, increasing rates of divorce and separation were linked to modernization, educational advancement, and employment opportunities. The study concluded that changes in marriage patterns have occurred more rapidly in North India than in South India.

Bhagat (2016) examined long-term trends in women's age at marriage in India using Census-based estimates such as the singulate mean age at marriage. The findings indicated that although the average age at marriage for women increased substantially during the twentieth century, early marriage continues to persist in several underdeveloped and patriarchal regions of North India. Bhagat further noted that marriage remains nearly universal among women and that substantial spousal age differences continue due to age hypergamy. The persistence of early marriage was linked to sociocultural pressures, caste endogamy, dowry practices, and limited female autonomy, all of which continue to constrain women's educational and life opportunities despite increasing urbanization and educational attainment.

Ma and Rizzi (2017) examined the diversification of first marriage patterns in China, documenting a shift from direct marriage to alternative pathways involving premarital conception and cohabitation. Using longitudinal data from the China Family Panel Studies and event-history analysis, the authors identified four distinct routes into first marriage: direct marriage, conception marriage, cohabitation marriage, and conception-plus-cohabitation marriage. The findings showed a decline in direct marriage and a substantial increase in cohabitation-related pathways following economic reforms. Educational attainment, employment status, rural–urban origin, ethnicity, and parental education were found to influence marriage trajectories. The study demonstrated that marriage behavior in contemporary China is becoming increasingly diverse rather than following a single traditional pattern.

Cottrell (1990) reviewed the literature on cross-national marriages and observed that scholarly attention to this area remained limited despite increasing international mobility. The study

proposed an early typology of cross-national marriages and identified several conceptual and methodological gaps requiring further investigation.

Kirkland (2006) examined the Julia Drummond Residence in Montreal (1920–1971) as a gendered hostel space for young working women. While the residence provided accommodation and basic necessities, it also functioned as a mechanism of moral and social regulation. Through institutional rules, supervision, and disciplinary practices, middle-class women volunteers sought to shape residents' behavior according to prevailing ideals of femininity. The study highlighted the influence of class, religion, ethnicity, and respectability on hostel life and demonstrated how residents increasingly challenged these restrictions following the Second World War.

Stringer (2019) explored the biblical story of Hannah to illustrate how cultural expectations surrounding motherhood can contribute to women's emotional distress. The analysis showed that Hannah's identity was negatively affected by her inability to bear children, resulting in social humiliation, isolation, and psychological suffering. The author argued that Hannah's recovery began when she expressed her pain and reconstructed her sense of self beyond motherhood, demonstrating how identity is shaped through social expectations and personal meaning-making processes.

Reneflot (2006) examined gender differences in marriage preferences among cohabiting couples and investigated why some individuals preferred consensual unions over legal marriage. The study found that cohabitation has increased alongside delayed marriage and rising rates of permanent singlehood in many Western societies. Drawing on a gender perspective, Reneflot argued that marriage carries different costs and benefits for men and women. Using survey data and qualitative interviews from Norway, the study revealed that men were generally more reluctant to marry than women, often due to concerns about independence, whereas women viewed marriage as a source of emotional security and legal stability. The findings highlighted the importance of gendered expectations, social norms, and relationship dynamics in shaping marriage decisions.

Albas and Albas (1989) examined love and marriage from a cross-cultural perspective and argued that marriage is not merely a private emotional relationship but also a social institution shaped by cultural values, family expectations, and community norms. The authors demonstrated that concepts of love vary across societies and are often linked to responsibility, duty, respect, and

long-term commitment. They further emphasized that marriage decisions are frequently embedded within kinship networks, economic considerations, and collective approval processes, although romantic attachment may also develop within arranged marriages. The study underscored the culturally constructed nature of both love and marriage.

Cherlin (2009) argued that contemporary American families experience a pattern of high marriage, high divorce, and frequent remarriage. Although marriage remains highly valued, broader structural conditions such as economic inequality, unstable employment, and changing gender roles make long-term marital stability difficult to achieve. Cherlin suggested that marriage has become increasingly associated with personal fulfillment and emotional satisfaction, thereby increasing relationship instability when such expectations are unmet. The study linked changing marriage patterns to wider social and economic transformations rather than individual choices alone.

Coontz (2004) argued that marriage has undergone a major historical transformation from an institution centered on economic cooperation, kinship alliances, and social stability to one increasingly based on individual choice, love, and personal fulfillment. Processes such as modernization, urbanization, women's education, and labor force participation have contributed to this transformation. However, Coontz also noted that the emphasis on emotional satisfaction has introduced new forms of instability, as intimate relationships are expected to fulfill needs once met by extended kinship networks and communities.

Waerzeggers (2020) reexamined Late Babylonian marriage contracts to investigate patterns of marital formation across different social groups. The study demonstrated that marriage served as an important mechanism of class stratification, with elites and non-elites following distinct marital practices regarding dowry arrangements, household formation, and legal regulations. Although marriage practices initially reflected strong class divisions, these distinctions weakened during the Persian period as elite marriage models became more widespread (Waerzeggers, 2020).

Abraham (1992) examined dowry clauses in first-millennium B.C.E. marriage contracts from the ancient Near East and demonstrated that dowry functioned as a legally regulated transfer of property rather than merely a cultural custom. The analysis showed how marriage contracts

specified the composition, management, and legal implications of dowries, highlighting the role of marriage in regulating property rights, inheritance, and family wealth.

Edlund (1999) examined the relationship between son preference and marriage markets, arguing that prenatal sex selection contributes to long-term social stratification. The study suggested that skewed sex ratios may lead to the emergence of a disadvantaged female population while simultaneously reinforcing practices such as hypergamy, caste endogamy, and large spousal age gaps. The findings demonstrated how gender bias can shape marriage opportunities and reproduce social inequalities across generations.

Ariho and Kabagenyi (2020) investigated fertility decline in Uganda between 2006 and 2016 by examining factors such as age at first sexual intercourse, age at first marriage, contraceptive use, and ideal family size preferences. Using Demographic and Health Survey data and multivariate decomposition analysis, the authors found that behavioral changes accounted for a larger proportion of fertility decline than demographic composition changes. Increased educational attainment, urban residence, delayed sexual debut, and contraceptive use contributed significantly to fertility reduction, whereas pronatalist norms and large desired family sizes continued to slow fertility transition. The authors concluded that expanding educational opportunities and access to family planning services remains crucial for sustaining fertility decline.

Methodology

Objective of the Study

This study examines how hostel life influences the marriage preferences and expectations of female students at the University of Kashmir. Specifically, it explores how shared living arrangements, peer interactions, and exposure to diverse perspectives shape attitudes toward arranged and self-choice marriages, caste boundaries, financial expectations, and personal autonomy in marital decision-making.

Area of the Study

The study was conducted at Qurat-ul-Ain Hyder Girls Hostel, University of Kashmir. The hostel accommodates approximately 272 residents in 58 shared rooms. Facilities such as the mess hall, reading room, gymnasium, and common recreational spaces facilitate daily interactions among

residents, making the hostel an appropriate setting for examining the influence of hostel life on students' marital attitudes and preferences.

Research Design and Fieldwork Duration

A qualitative ethnographic research design was employed to gain an in-depth understanding of students' lived experiences and perspectives. The researcher resided in the hostel for approximately one and a half years, from January 2023 to June 2024, allowing prolonged engagement with participants and immersion in their everyday routines, social interactions, and emotional experiences.

Sampling and Recruitment

A purposive sampling strategy was adopted to ensure variation in participants' academic backgrounds, socioeconomic status, and duration of hostel residence.

A total of 20 participants were recruited through direct invitations in hostel corridors, common rooms, and other shared spaces. Participants were selected based on the following inclusion criteria:

- Female students residing in the hostel for a minimum of three months.
- Willingness to discuss their experiences of hostel life and views regarding marriage.

All interviews were conducted in private hostel rooms or quiet common areas without the presence of hostel staff to ensure participants' comfort, privacy, and confidentiality.

Data Collection Methods

Participant Observation

Participant observation constituted a primary method of data collection. The researcher observed daily interactions, room-based conversations, emotional exchanges, social gatherings, and routine activities within the hostel. Observations were systematically documented in a reflexive field diary throughout the fieldwork period.

In-Depth Interviews

Twenty semi-structured interviews were conducted between March and June 2024. Interview durations ranged from 30 to 55 minutes. Interviews were conducted in Kashmiri, Urdu, or English according to participants' preferences. With participants' informed consent, 16 interviews were audio-recorded, while detailed written notes were maintained for the remaining four interviews.

Data Management and Storage

All audio recordings and interview transcripts were anonymized through the use of pseudonyms. Digital data were stored in password-protected and encrypted folders accessible only to the researcher. In accordance with institutional research guidelines, all research data will be retained for five years following the completion of the study for verification purposes and will subsequently be permanently deleted from all devices and backup systems.

Data Analysis

The data were analyzed using Braun and Clarke's (2006) reflexive thematic analysis framework. The analytical process involved the following six stages:

1. Familiarization with the data.
2. Generation of initial codes.
3. Searching for themes.
4. Reviewing themes.
5. Defining and naming themes.
6. Producing the final report.

This approach enabled the identification and interpretation of recurring patterns and meanings within participants' narratives.

Researcher Characteristics and Positionality

The researcher occupied an insider ethnographic position due to residing in the hostel during the fieldwork period. This positionality facilitated the development of trust and rapport with participants and provided enhanced access to everyday interactions and experiences. At the same

time, the researcher maintained reflexive awareness throughout the research process to minimize potential bias and ensure analytical rigor. Training in qualitative interviewing and ethnographic methods further supported the credibility and trustworthiness of the findings.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical clearance for this study was obtained from the Department of Anthropology, University of Kashmir. As the department does not issue numerical approval identifiers for postgraduate (MA-level) research projects, no approval number was assigned.

The study adhered to established ethical principles, including voluntary participation, informed consent, confidentiality, privacy, and the protection of participants' identities. Interviews were conducted in private settings to ensure confidentiality and participant comfort. Pseudonyms were used in all transcripts, field notes, and research reports to protect participants' identities.

All digital recordings and transcripts were securely stored in encrypted, password-protected folders accessible only to the researcher. Research data will be retained for five years after the completion of the study and will thereafter be permanently deleted from all storage devices and backup systems.

Limitations of the Study

The findings of this study are based on the experiences of residents of a single university hostel and, therefore, may not be generalizable to all young women in Kashmir. Additionally, certain culturally sensitive issues related to marriage and relationships may have been underreported due to social norms and personal reservations. Nevertheless, the prolonged period of ethnographic engagement and sustained participant observation enhanced the depth, credibility, and contextual richness of the findings.

Findings and Results

Hostel Life and Marriage Preferences

The findings reveal that hostel life plays a significant role in shaping the marriage preferences and expectations of female students at the University of Kashmir. Living away from family supervision and interacting with peers from diverse social, economic, and cultural backgrounds exposes students to alternative viewpoints regarding marriage. Through everyday conversations, shared experiences, and observations of others' lives, participants reported changes in their attitudes toward partner selection, love marriage, financial stability, caste boundaries, and family arrangements.

Analysis of the narratives generated five major themes.

From Physical Attraction to Financial Security

A prominent theme emerging from the interviews was the shift from prioritizing physical appearance to emphasizing financial stability in a prospective spouse.

Participant A explained that before joining the hostel, physical appearance was her primary criterion in selecting a partner. She stated that a man's looks mattered more than his economic status. However, after living independently in the hostel and discussing future life challenges with peers, she began to view financial security as more important than physical attractiveness. According to her, economic stability ensures comfort and reduces future hardships.

Similarly, Participant D reported that she initially preferred a good-looking and religious partner. However, hostel discussions repeatedly highlighted the importance of marrying a financially secure man, preferably one holding a stable government position. Through these conversations, she came to associate financial stability with dignity, independence, and a better quality of life after marriage.

These narratives indicate that hostel life encourages a more pragmatic understanding of marriage, where economic considerations increasingly outweigh aesthetic preferences.

Normalization of Love Marriage and Individual Choice

Another significant finding was the growing acceptance of love marriage and individual choice in partner selection.

Participant B noted that before entering the hostel, she considered love marriage socially unacceptable and even sinful. However, regular interactions with hostel residents exposed her to different perspectives. Observing that many students were in relationships and openly discussing marriage choices led her to reconsider her earlier beliefs. Consequently, she began to view love marriage as a legitimate option.

Participant C described a family environment in which marriage decisions were made exclusively by elders. She explained that daughters were rarely consulted regarding their preferences. After engaging in conversations with roommates and hearing discussions about forced marriages and marital violence, she began questioning the practice of unquestioningly accepting family decisions. She argued that choosing one's own partner allows sufficient time to understand a person's character, behaviour, and values before marriage.

These accounts suggest that hostel life functions as a space of re-socialization where young women develop greater awareness of personal agency and decision-making in marital matters.

Learning Through Shared Experiences and Marital Narratives

The hostel environment also emerged as an important site for informal learning through the exchange of personal and family experiences.

Participant E recounted hearing stories from fellow residents about troubled arranged marriages. One narrative involved a woman who felt trapped in an unhappy marriage and regretted not knowing her spouse before marriage. Such stories influenced Participant E's perception of arranged marriage and strengthened her preference for choice marriage. She also referred to a successful love marriage within her neighbourhood, which reinforced her belief that mutual understanding before marriage contributes to marital happiness.

Similarly, Participant F narrated the experience of a relative whose arranged marriage was marked by emotional neglect, infidelity, and repeated attempts at reconciliation. Witnessing the psychological suffering endured by her relative convinced her that personal compatibility and mutual respect are more important than wealth alone. Consequently, she expressed a preference for choice marriage while emphasizing the importance of a partner's character and earning capacity.

These narratives demonstrate how shared experiences within hostel settings transform private family events into collective sources of knowledge that shape marital expectations.

Persistence of Caste and Community Boundaries

Despite increasing openness toward love marriage and personal choice, caste and community boundaries remained highly influential in participants' marriage preferences.

Participant G strongly rejected the possibility of marrying into communities she perceived as socially lower in status. She explicitly stated that caste background remained an important consideration and expressed a preference for marriage within socially respected groups, particularly Syed families. Financial stability was also viewed as an essential criterion.

Participant H similarly rejected the idea of marrying outside her preferred caste group. When asked whether she would consider marrying a wealthy man from a lower caste background, she firmly refused. Although hostel life had made her more accepting of choice marriage, caste boundaries remained non-negotiable.

Participant I also emphasized the importance of endogamy within her community. While she acknowledged that hostel life had increased her acceptance of choice marriage, she maintained that such marriages should occur within caste boundaries because of family expectations and social norms.

These findings indicate that although hostel life promotes individual autonomy in some areas, deeply rooted caste-based preferences continue to shape acceptable marital choices.

Preference for Nuclear Families and Personal Space

Another emerging theme was the preference for nuclear family arrangements.

Participant H explained that living in the hostel exposed her to frequent interpersonal conflicts among roommates. Observing these tensions made her value privacy, independence, and emotional peace. As a result, she developed a preference for a nuclear family after marriage rather than a large joint family system.

This finding suggests that everyday experiences within shared living spaces influence not only partner preferences but also expectations regarding family structure after marriage.

This study demonstrates that hostel life functions as an important site of socialization that significantly influences the marriage preferences and expectations of female students at the University of Kashmir. Living away from the direct supervision of family and engaging in everyday interactions with peers exposes young women to diverse viewpoints, experiences, and narratives that encourage critical reflection on conventional marriage practices.

The findings reveal that hostel life contributes to a noticeable shift in marital priorities. Many participants moved beyond earlier preferences based primarily on physical appearance and began to emphasize financial security, emotional compatibility, mutual respect, and personal understanding in selecting a life partner. Exposure to discussions surrounding successful and unsuccessful marriages also increased acceptance of choice (love) marriage, as participants viewed prior acquaintance with a partner as a means of ensuring compatibility and reducing the risks associated with marital conflict.

At the same time, hostel life emerged as a space of emotional learning where participants exchanged personal and family experiences that shaped their perceptions of marriage. Narratives of domestic conflict, forced marriages, and relationship breakdowns encouraged many students to reconsider traditional assumptions and place greater value on individual agency in marital decision-making. Hostel experiences also influenced broader expectations regarding family life, including a preference among some participants for nuclear family arrangements that offer greater autonomy and personal space.

However, the findings also reveal the limits of social change. Despite increasing support for personal choice and greater openness toward love marriage, deeply rooted cultural norms concerning caste, community, and social status continued to influence participants' preferences. Several participants remained committed to caste endogamy and expressed reluctance to marry outside their own social groups, demonstrating the enduring power of traditional social hierarchies even within a modern university environment.

Overall, the study highlights that hostel life is neither a space of complete transformation nor one of cultural continuity alone. Rather, it represents a dynamic social environment where young women actively negotiate between emerging ideals of autonomy, equality, and self-determination and the enduring influence of family, caste, religion, and community expectations. The experiences of hostel residents suggest that contemporary marriage preferences among educated Kashmiri women are shaped through a complex interaction between modern aspirations and traditional cultural values, resulting in evolving yet culturally grounded understandings of marriage and partner selection.

References

- Abela, A., & Walker, J. (2014). Global changes in marriage, parenting and family life: An overview. In A. Abela & J. Walker (Eds.), *Contemporary issues in family studies: Global perspectives on partnerships, parenting and support in a changing world* (pp. 1–10). John Wiley & Sons.
- Abraham, K. (1992). The dowry clause in marriage documents from the first millennium B.C.E. In D. Charpin & F. Joannès (Eds.), *La circulation des biens, des personnes et des idées dans le Proche-Orient ancien* (pp. 311–320). Éditions Recherche sur les Civilisations.
- Albas, D., & Albas, C. M. (1989). Love and marriage. In K. Ishwaran (Ed.), *Family and marriage: Cross-cultural perspectives* (pp. 125–144). Wall & Thompson.
- Ariho, P., & Kabagenyi, A. (2020). Age at first marriage, age at first sex, family size preferences, contraception and change in fertility among women in Uganda: Analysis of the 2006–2016 period. *BMC Women's Health*, 20, Article 8. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12905-020-0881-4>

Barich, R. R., & Bielby, D. D. (1996). Rethinking marriage: Change and stability in expectations, 1967–1994. *Journal of Family Issues*, 17(2), 139–169.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/019251396017002001>

Bhagat, R. B. (2016). *The practice of early marriages among females in India: Persistence and change* (IIPS Working Paper No. 10). International Institute for Population Sciences.

Blimling, G. S. (1999). *The resident assistant: Applications and strategies for working with college students in residence halls*. Kendall/Hunt Publishing.

Budlender, D., Chobokoane, N., & Simelane, S. (2006). Marriage patterns in South Africa: Methodological and substantive issues. *Southern African Journal of Demography*, 9(1), 1–26.

Cherlin, A. J. (2009). *The marriage-go-round: The state of marriage and the American family today*. Knopf.

Coontz, S. (2004). The world historical transformation of marriage. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 66(4), 974–979.

Cottrell, A. B. (1990). Cross-national marriages: A review of the literature. *Journal of Comparative Family Studies*, 21(2), 151–169.

Edlund, L. (1999). Son preference, sex ratios, and marriage patterns. *Journal of Political Economy*, 107(6), 1275–1304.

Furstenberg, F. F. (2015). Will marriage disappear? *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*, 158(3), 241–246.

Goffman, E. (1961). *Asylums: Essays on the social situation of mental patients and other inmates*. Anchor Books.

Iftikhar, A., & Ajmal, A. (2015). A qualitative study investigating the impact of hostel life. *International Journal of Emergency Mental Health and Human Resilience*, 17(2), 511–515.
<https://doi.org/10.4172/1522-4821.1000204>

- Iqbal, M. R., Iqbal, U. B., Kumar, S. S., Devi, S. R., & Kumar, S. (2024). Exploring the impact of students' hostel life on academic performance. *Journal of Ecohumanism*, 3(8), 2144–2158. <https://doi.org/10.62754/joe.v3i8.4895>
- Jafar, A. (2005). Women's hostels and the negotiation of autonomy: Gender, safety, and restrictions in urban Pakistan. *Gender & Society*, 19(2), 236–255. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0891243204272961>
- Kales, M. Z. (2014). *A study of attitude of university girls towards hostel life* (Master's dissertation, University of Kashmir).
- Kales, M. Z. (2014). A study of attitude of university girls towards hostel life. *Asian Resonance*, 3(1), 112–118.
- Ma, L., & Rizzi, E. (2017). Entry into first marriage in China. *Demographic Research*, 37, 1231–1244. <https://doi.org/10.4054/DemRes.2017.37.36>
- Mawere, M., & Mawere, A. M. (2010). The changing philosophy of African marriage: The relevance of the Shona customary marriage practice of Kukumbira. *Journal of African Studies and Development*, 2(9), 224–233.
- Niveditha, R. S. (2024). *Dynamics of socialization beyond the classroom: The hostel as a social space* (Master's dissertation, Loyola College of Social Sciences, University of Kerala).
- Omar-Fauzee, M. S., Shaikh-Abdul-Karim, S. M. S., Wan-Othman, W. N., Hean, T. P., Don, Y., Daud, Y., Husin, F., Raman, A., Amzat, I. H., Khalid, R., & Muhamadul, B. Y. (2014). The problems faced by adolescents in adapting themselves with hostel life. *Humanities and Social Sciences Review*, 3(4), 249–255.
- Palamuleni, M. E. (2010). Recent marriage patterns in South Africa, 1996–2007. *Bangladesh e-Journal of Sociology*, 7(1), 47–56.
- Pauli, J., & van Dijk, R. (2017). Marriage as an end or the end of marriage? Change and continuity in Southern African marriages. *Anthropology Southern Africa*, 39(4), 257–266. <https://doi.org/10.1080/23323256.2016.1243451>

Rather, T. A., & Shah, R. (2017). Gender, mobility, and education: Experiences of young women in Kashmir. *International Journal of Social Sciences*, 5(3), 45–58.

Reneflot, A. (2006). A gender perspective on preferences for marriage among cohabiting couples. *Demographic Research*, 15, 311–328. <https://doi.org/10.4054/DemRes.2006.15.10>

Samad, M. (2015). Marriage in changing family pattern of Bangladesh: The present trends. *International Journal of Social Work and Human Services Practice*, 3(4), 155–161.

Stringer, T. (2019). Hannah: More than a mother. *Priscilla Papers*, 33(1), 3–6.

Waerzeggers, C. (2020). Changing marriage practices in Babylonia from the Late Assyrian to the Persian period. *Journal of Ancient Near Eastern History*, 7(2), 101–131. <https://doi.org/10.1515/janeh-2020-0006>

Yadav, A., Singh, T. B., & Vishwakarma, M. (2017). Changes in the marriage patterns of northern and southern states of India, 1971–2011. *Social Science Spectrum*, 3(2), 93–103.

Marriage Migration and Cross-Cultural Adaptation: The Lived Experiences of Bengali Women in Kulgam, Kashmir

Aarisa Abbas¹⁵

Abstract

This study examines the phenomenon of cross-regional marriages between Bengali women and Kashmiri men in District Kulgam, Kashmir, with a particular focus on the socio-economic and cultural processes that shape these marital unions. Employing a qualitative research design, the study draws on in-depth interviews with Bengali women who migrated to Kashmir through marriage. The findings indicate that poverty, economic insecurity, limited livelihood opportunities, and dowry-related pressures in their places of origin serve as significant push factors influencing marriage migration. Simultaneously, demographic imbalances, rising marriage expenses, and high dowry expectations within Kashmiri society act as pull factors encouraging men to seek spouses from outside the region. The study further reveals the central role of intermediaries in facilitating these marriages, often through informal and commercialized networks that raise concerns regarding exploitation and trafficking. Participants' narratives demonstrate varying degrees of consent, ranging from family pressure and constrained choice to pragmatic decision-making shaped by socio-economic circumstances. Despite numerous challenges associated with cultural adaptation, language barriers, and social acceptance, many women display resilience and agency in negotiating their new lives. The study argues that cross-regional marriages should be understood as complex social phenomena situated at the intersection of gender, migration, poverty, and social inequality in contemporary South Asia.

***Keywords:* Cross-regional marriage; Marriage Migration; Bengali Women; Kashmir; Gender; Social Inequality; Cultural Adaptation**

Introduction

¹⁵ Field investigator, Sher-e-Kashmir University of Agriculture Science and Technology, Shuhama, Div. Of Public Health, FVSc & AH. Email-aarisaabbas123@gmail.com

Marriage is one of the most enduring and universal social institutions across cultures and civilizations. It serves as a central mechanism for family formation, social reproduction, regulation of sexual behavior, economic cooperation, and the transmission of cultural values across generations. As such, marriage is not merely a private relationship between two individuals but a socially and legally sanctioned institution with significant implications for individuals, families, and communities. From an anthropological perspective, marriage is understood as a social arrangement that structures kinship relations, alliances, inheritance systems, and social organization (Lévi-Strauss, 1969; Murdock, 1949).

In the Indian context, marriage occupies a sacred and institutional position within society. Traditionally, it has been conceptualized as a *sanskara* (rite of passage) in Hindu philosophy, intended to fulfill the goals of *dharma* (righteousness), *artha* (livelihood), *kama* (desire), and *moksha* (liberation). Scholars such as Srinivas (1962) and Karve (1965) have demonstrated that marriage in India has historically been shaped by caste hierarchies, religious norms, patriarchal structures, and regional customs. However, processes such as urbanization, educational expansion, economic liberalization, migration, and globalization have transformed traditional marriage practices. Consequently, inter-caste, inter-religious, and inter-regional marriages have become increasingly visible in contemporary Indian society.

Recent decades have witnessed a growing trend of cross-regional marriages involving men from demographically imbalanced regions, particularly northern and northwestern states such as Haryana, Punjab, and Jammu and Kashmir, and women from economically disadvantaged regions of eastern India, including West Bengal, Assam, Jharkhand, and Odisha. Scholars have attributed this phenomenon to a combination of factors, including bride shortages, rising marriage costs, gender imbalances, persistent dowry practices, and socio-economic inequalities (Kaur, 2004; Mishra, 2013). While media reports and advocacy organizations often portray such marriages through the lens of “bride trafficking,” feminist scholars caution against simplistic interpretations that overlook women's agency and the broader structural conditions influencing migration and marriage decisions (Mohanty, 2003; Narayan, 1997).

This study focuses on one such understudied context: the experiences of Bengali women who have married Kashmiri men and settled in Kulgam district of South Kashmir. Many of these women originate from economically marginalized communities in West Bengal and migrate to Kashmir

following marriage. Their migration involves not only geographical relocation but also adjustment to new linguistic, cultural, social, and environmental settings. Consequently, these women must negotiate unfamiliar social norms while simultaneously establishing their place within their marital households and communities.

Drawing upon ethnographic fieldwork, semi-structured interviews, and participant observation, this study explores the lived experiences of Bengali brides in Kulgam. Particular attention is paid to the challenges they encounter, including language barriers, social isolation, emotional labor, unpaid domestic work, cultural adaptation, and social marginalization. At the same time, the study highlights women's resilience, coping strategies, identity negotiations, and capacity for adaptation within unfamiliar social environments.

The marriages examined in this study are diverse in nature. Some are formally solemnized through religious ceremonies and legally recognized, whereas others are arranged informally through kinship networks, acquaintances, or marriage brokers. Feminist anthropologists have emphasized the importance of examining women's experiences within their specific cultural contexts rather than reducing them to simplistic categories of victimhood or empowerment (Abu-Lughod, 1990; Ortner, 1996). Adopting this perspective, the present study investigates how Bengali women navigate life in Kashmir through processes of accommodation, negotiation, resistance, and hybrid identity formation.

Another important dimension explored in this research concerns the motivations underlying such marital alliances. In several parts of West Bengal, particularly among economically disadvantaged Muslim, Dalit, and tribal communities, marriage has become increasingly difficult due to poverty, unemployment, and escalating dowry demands. Simultaneously, some men in rural Kashmir face challenges in finding local brides because of economic constraints, demographic factors, and changing marriage expectations. Within this context, cross-regional marriages emerge as strategies of social and economic survival, shaped by structural inequalities rather than solely individual preferences.

It is important to acknowledge that these marriages cannot be uniformly categorized as exploitative. Evidence gathered during fieldwork suggests that many marriages are consensual, socially recognized, and integrated into local kinship networks. In several cases, women

subsequently facilitate marriages for their sisters, relatives, or acquaintances, creating patterns of chain migration. Nevertheless, such migration processes are frequently misrepresented as trafficking, reflecting broader tensions surrounding migration, marital agency, and social stigma. Scholars and activists have emphasized the need for nuanced understandings of these marriages rather than automatic assumptions of exploitation in the absence of adequate evidence (Khan, 2018; Kant, 2017).

The study also examines the emotional and psychological dimensions of migration through marriage. Relocation to Kashmir often requires women to adjust to unfamiliar languages, customs, social expectations, and climatic conditions. Despite these challenges, many participants derive strength from their roles as wives, mothers, and community members. Over time, they develop strategies for negotiating their position within both family and society, balancing multiple identities and expectations.

By centering the voices of Bengali women in Kulgam district—women who remain largely invisible within official statistics and academic literature—this study contributes to broader debates on gender, migration, kinship, and marriage in South Asia. It challenges simplistic binaries of victimhood and agency and instead presents a nuanced understanding of cross-regional marriages as complex social phenomena shaped by structural inequalities, cultural adaptation, and individual aspirations.

Ultimately, the study highlights the human dimensions of cross-cultural marriage, revealing experiences marked by hardship, resilience, adaptation, negotiation, and transformation. In doing so, it offers valuable insights for scholars, policymakers, and practitioners seeking to understand the intersection of gender, migration, and marriage in contemporary South Asia.

Literature Review

In her influential study, *Bengali Bridal Diaspora: Marriage as a Livelihood Strategy*, Kaur (2004) examines the intersection of marriage, migration, and economic survival in rural India. The study conceptualizes marriage not merely as a cultural institution but also as a livelihood strategy employed by economically vulnerable households in West Bengal. By documenting the increasing movement of Bengali women through marriage to distant regions of northern and western India,

Kaur demonstrates how marriage has become an important mechanism for social mobility and economic adjustment.

Kaur (2004) argues that the migration of Bengali women as brides to states such as Haryana, Punjab, Uttar Pradesh, and Jammu and Kashmir is closely linked to structural inequalities. For many poor families in West Bengal, arranging marriages outside the state serves as a strategy to avoid escalating dowry demands and financial burdens associated with local marriage markets. Simultaneously, men in regions experiencing a shortage of marriageable women are often willing to marry without demanding dowry, creating a cross-regional marriage market that connects economically disadvantaged populations across different states.

The study identifies three major factors driving these marriage migrations: persistent poverty, the commercialization of dowry practices, and skewed sex ratios in bride-receiving regions. Due to a shortage of women caused by son preference and gender discrimination, many men in northern Indian states face difficulties in finding local spouses. Consequently, marriages with women from economically disadvantaged regions emerge as a practical solution for both parties, albeit within unequal social and economic conditions.

A significant contribution of Kaur's work lies in its demonstration that these marriages serve multiple functions. While they fulfill the social obligation of marrying daughters, they also facilitate economic migration. Women often assume diverse roles within their marital households, including those of wives, mothers, caregivers, and economic contributors. In some cases, married daughters continue to support their natal families through financial assistance, illustrating the close relationship between marriage migration and household survival strategies.

Kaur (2004) also highlights the vulnerabilities associated with such marriages. Many women marry older men, widowers, or men who face disadvantages within local marriage markets. Relocation to unfamiliar linguistic and cultural environments often results in social isolation, limited support networks, and increased vulnerability to exploitation and domestic abuse. Nevertheless, many families perceive these marriages as preferable alternatives to local unions that require substantial dowry payments and offer limited economic opportunities.

The study further situates contemporary marriage migration within a broader historical context. Kaur draws attention to earlier patterns of gendered migration and displacement, arguing that although the forms and mechanisms of movement have changed over time, underlying inequalities related to gender and poverty remain largely intact. She also notes that the relative flexibility of caste boundaries in parts of West Bengal may facilitate cross-regional marriage migration compared to neighbouring regions where caste restrictions remain more rigid.

Overall, Kaur's (2004) analysis reconceptualizes marriage as an institution shaped not only by cultural norms but also by demographic imbalances, economic constraints, and market forces. The study contributes significantly to the literature on gendered migration by demonstrating how poverty, social obligations, and structural inequalities intersect to influence women's mobility and marital trajectories. Its insights are particularly relevant to the present study, which examines the experiences of Bengali brides living in Kulgam district of Kashmir.

In their ethnographic study, *Marriage and Migration: Bengali and Bihari Brides in a U.P. Village*, Chaudhry and Mohan (2012) examine the phenomenon of cross-regional marriages involving Bengali and Bihari women who migrated to Badaun district in Uttar Pradesh through marriage. The authors challenge dominant narratives that portray such marriages solely as cases of bride trafficking or bride purchase. Instead, they argue that these unions represent a distinct form of commercially mediated marriage that has emerged in response to changing demographic and socio-economic conditions in rural North India.

The study highlights marriage as a significant driver of female migration in India. Drawing on Census of India (2001) data, the authors note that a majority of female migration is marriage-related and generally occurs within nearby villages or districts. However, they identify a growing trend of long-distance marriages that transcend regional, linguistic, caste, and cultural boundaries. In the village under study, such marriages were particularly common among economically disadvantaged men who faced difficulties in securing local brides due to factors such as poverty, landlessness, advanced age, disability, or previous marital status. These challenges were further intensified by the shortage of marriageable women resulting from skewed sex ratios.

Based on interviews with nine cross-regional brides and their families, Chaudhry and Mohan (2012) demonstrate that these marriages are typically facilitated by intermediaries, many of whom

are themselves migrant brides. Unlike conventional dowry-based marriages, payments are not made to the bride's natal family. Instead, the groom's family bears the costs associated with marriage arrangements and intermediary services. The authors argue that this arrangement differs from both dowry and bride-price systems and should not automatically be categorized as trafficking. Rather, it represents an adaptive response to demographic imbalances and constraints within local marriage markets.

The study further reveals that despite considerable linguistic, cultural, and social differences, many migrant brides gradually become integrated into their marital households and local communities. Over time, they acquire social legitimacy and establish new social networks within their destination villages. These findings challenge simplistic portrayals of cross-regional brides as passive victims and highlight their active role in negotiating new social and cultural environments.

Chaudhry and Mohan's (2012) work makes an important contribution to the literature on marriage migration by demonstrating how demographic pressures, economic marginalization, and gender imbalances have contributed to the emergence of new marriage practices in rural India. Their study underscores the need to move beyond binary understandings of trafficking and voluntary marriage and instead examine the complex social, economic, and cultural factors that shape cross-regional marital migration. The authors also call for further research on the long-term experiences, social integration, and legal rights of migrant brides and their children in destination communities.

In her study *Trafficked or Married?*, Kukreja (2024) critically examines the tendency to equate cross-regional marriages in India with bride trafficking. Using a postcolonial feminist perspective, she argues that anti-trafficking discourses often overlook the agency of women who migrate through marriage. Based on a large-scale mixed-methods study conducted across 246 villages in Haryana, Rajasthan, Odisha, and West Bengal, the research draws on data from more than 1,500 cross-region brides and 154 natal families.

Kukreja argues that while trafficking does occur, it represents only a small proportion of cross-regional marriages. She situates these marriages within broader structural inequalities, including poverty, rising dowry demands, and skewed sex ratios. For many economically disadvantaged families, marriage migration becomes a practical strategy when local marriage options are financially unattainable. Many women reported that their marriages were socially recognized and

performed according to religious or legal norms, challenging assumptions that they were merely victims of coercion.

A key contribution of the study is its distinction between different types of marriage intermediaries, including *dalals* (traffickers), *agents* (paid facilitators), and *bicholias* (informal matchmakers). This classification highlights the complexity of marriage arrangements and questions the tendency of state and NGO narratives to treat all brokers as traffickers.

Kukreja (2024) further critiques paternalistic anti-trafficking frameworks that portray poor rural women as passive victims while ignoring the structural conditions shaping their choices. The study demonstrates that women exercise agency within contexts of economic and social constraint, thereby reframing marriage migration as a process of negotiated choice rather than simple victimization.

Overall, the study contributes significantly to the literature on gender, migration, and marriage by offering a nuanced understanding of cross-regional marriages. It complements earlier works on marriage migration while advocating for more context-sensitive and evidence-based approaches to understanding women's mobility and marital migration in contemporary India.

In her paper *Missing Women and Brides from Faraway: Social Consequences of the Skewed Sex Ratio in India*, Kaur (2008) examines the social implications of declining female sex ratios in India. Drawing on Amartya Sen's concept of "missing women," she argues that the shortage of women has created a deficit of marriageable brides, particularly in northern India.

Kaur highlights how this demographic imbalance has led to various social responses, including cross-regional marriages, the import of brides from distant states, and the re-emergence of practices such as polyandry in some regions. She attributes these developments to persistent gender discrimination, son preference, and unequal access to resources despite improvements in education and economic growth.

The study demonstrates that declining sex ratios are not merely demographic indicators but reflections of deep-rooted gender inequalities. Kaur concludes that the growing demand for brides from other regions represents one of the most significant social consequences of India's skewed sex ratio, reshaping traditional marriage patterns and migration practices.

In their ethnographic study, *Of Marriage and Migration: Bengali and Bihari Brides in a U.P. Village*, Chaudhry and Mohan (2011) examine long-distance marriages involving women from West Bengal and Bihar who migrated to rural Uttar Pradesh through marriage. The study focuses on marriages that cross regional, linguistic, and caste boundaries, often covering distances of more than 1,000 kilometres.

The authors identify both destination and source factors driving these marriages. In Uttar Pradesh, a shortage of local brides, low sex ratios, poverty, landlessness, and social disadvantages limit men's marriage prospects. In the source regions, poverty and rising dowry demands encourage families to seek marriage opportunities outside their communities.

Chaudhry and Mohan argue that these marriages should not be viewed simply as cases of trafficking or bride purchase. Instead, they describe them as a form of commercially mediated marriage facilitated by intermediaries. The study further shows that many women gradually integrate into their marital communities, adapting to new cultural and linguistic environments. Their research highlights the complex relationship between marriage, migration, demographic imbalance, and socio-economic inequality in contemporary India.

In this article, Ravinder Kaur (2004) examines the social consequences of declining sex ratios in North India and their impact on marriage patterns. Drawing on Census 2001 data, she argues that the shortage of marriageable women in states such as Haryana and Punjab has encouraged the emergence of across-region marriages, in which men marry women from economically disadvantaged states like West Bengal, Assam, and Bihar. These marriages often cross regional, linguistic, religious, and caste boundaries. Kaur highlights that while the causes of adverse sex ratios have received considerable scholarly attention, their effects on marriage practices remain underexplored. The study demonstrates how demographic imbalance, poverty, and female migration are interconnected, reshaping traditional marriage systems and contributing to new forms of marital mobility. The paper also discusses broader social implications, including bachelorhood, polyandry, and changing dowry practices.

Anamika Roy (2023) explores the relationship between marriage, migration, and citizenship in the former Bangladeshi enclaves along the India–Bangladesh border. Using an ethnographic approach, the study examines the experiences of women living in stateless conditions before the 2015 Land

Boundary Agreement. Roy argues that marriage migration often served as a strategy for accessing legal identity, citizenship rights, and public services unavailable within the enclaves. Marrying a resident of the host country provided opportunities for social mobility and inclusion through access to documents such as ration cards and Aadhaar cards. However, the study also highlights the constraints on women's agency within these migration processes. By adopting a gendered perspective, Roy demonstrates how marriage functions as a means of negotiating borders, belonging, and citizenship in marginalized borderland communities.

Aim of the study

To investigate the migration patterns and reasons behind Bengali girls' relocation to Kashmir.

Research techniques

Two principal tools guided data collection:

Personal Interviews

The primary source of data for this study was a series of semi-structured, in-depth interviews conducted with women who had migrated to Kashmir following marriage to local men. The semi-structured format provided participants with the flexibility to narrate their experiences in their own words while allowing the researcher to explore emerging themes through follow-up questions. These interviews generated rich qualitative data, offering valuable insights into the participants' social, cultural, emotional, and economic experiences.

Observational Visit

To complement the interview data and enhance the depth of the study, observational visits were conducted in the participants' local communities. These visits enabled the researcher to observe the social and living conditions of the respondents and gather contextual information regarding their everyday lives. In addition, demographic details such as age, educational background, family size, number of children, and marriage patterns were documented, providing a broader context for interpreting the qualitative findings.

Role and Approach of the Researcher

As a researcher belonging to the same cultural and geographical context as the participants, I adopted an insider perspective throughout the study. This positionality facilitated the development of trust and rapport, enabling participants to openly share personal and often sensitive experiences. Familiarity with local customs, language, social norms, and community dynamics helped in establishing meaningful interactions and provided deeper insight into both explicit narratives and implicit meanings embedded within participants' accounts. This insider status enhanced the richness and contextual understanding of the data collected.

Data Collection Procedures

Participant Identification

Participants were selected through purposive sampling with the assistance of local community members, social networks, and village elders. Women whose experiences were relevant to the objectives of the study were identified and approached for participation.

Establishing Trust and Rapport

Prior to conducting formal interviews, sufficient time was spent interacting informally with participants to build trust, reduce apprehension, and create a comfortable environment for open discussion.

Interview Setting

Interviews were conducted at locations chosen by the participants, most commonly in their homes. This ensured privacy, comfort, and confidentiality, allowing participants to express their views freely.

Documentation

Data were documented through detailed field notes, observational records, reflective memos, audio recordings, and photographs where appropriate and with participants' consent. Interview recordings were transcribed verbatim, and all identifying information was removed to protect participants' anonymity and confidentiality.

Analytical Techniques

The collected data were analyzed using thematic analysis. Interview transcripts, field notes, and observational records were carefully reviewed to identify recurring themes, patterns, and categories. Particular attention was paid to issues such as motivations for marriage migration, processes of cultural adaptation, household roles, social relationships, emotional well-being, and aspirations for the future. Data from interviews and observations were cross-checked to enhance the credibility and depth of the findings. The use of purposive sampling ensured that participants possessed relevant experiences and insights related to the research objectives.

Interview Structure

The interview schedule was designed to gather comprehensive information about the participants' backgrounds and lived experiences. Questions focused on socio-demographic characteristics, family background, marital history, circumstances leading to marriage migration, and reasons for relocating to Kashmir. Participants were also asked about their everyday experiences, challenges encountered in the host community, social relationships, and the strategies they adopted to cope with and adapt to their new environment.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical principles were strictly observed throughout the research process. Informed consent was obtained from all participants before data collection. Participants were assured of confidentiality and anonymity, and all identifying information was removed from the transcripts and research records. Participation was entirely voluntary, and participants were informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any stage without providing any explanation. Every effort was made to ensure that the research process respected the dignity, privacy, and well-being of the participants.

Advantages of the Local Perspective

As a member of the local community, the researcher possessed a deeper understanding of the cultural norms, language, and social dynamics of the study setting. This insider position facilitated the establishment of trust and rapport with participants, encouraging open and honest

communication. It also enabled a more nuanced interpretation of participants' experiences and narratives, thereby enhancing the depth, authenticity, and contextual richness of the findings.

Objectives of the Study

The study was guided by the following objectives:

1. To explore the factors contributing to the migration of Bengali women to Kashmir through marriage.
2. To understand the social, cultural, and economic challenges faced by Bengali women after migration.
3. To examine the motivations underlying cross-regional marriages between Bengali women and Kashmiri men.
4. To investigate the coping and adaptation strategies employed by Bengali women in negotiating their lives within a new socio-cultural environment.

Results and Discussion

This section presents the empirical findings derived from in-depth interviews with Bengali Women who have migrated to Kashmir through marriage. It delves into the complex Motivations behind these cross-regional unions, the multifaceted challenges encountered upon Migration, and the diverse strategies of resilience, adaptation, and agency employed by these Women in navigating their new lives. By integrating these qualitative narratives with existing Anthropological literature on marriage migration, gender, and social integration in South Asia, This chapter aims to provide a nuanced understanding of their lived experiences, highlighting Both the structural forces that shape their journeys and their individual capacities to forge new Identities and homes.

Drivers and dynamics of cross-regional marriages

This section explores the primary factors compelling Bengali women to marry men in Kashmir, Analyzing the interplay of economic pressures, social norms, and the mechanisms through which these unions are facilitated.

Poverty, Dowry, and Economic Imperatives

Economic hardship and the persistent burden of dowry demands in Bengal emerged as the most significant drivers behind the cross-regional marriages of Bengali women to Kashmiri men. Interviews consistently indicate that marriage becomes a strategic response to financial distress, where parents seek relief from economic insecurity by marrying off their daughters to distant grooms who do not demand dowry. As Sara Banu recounted, her parents “began searching for a suitor when I was just fifteen, but no one wanted to marry a girl from such a struggling family.” Similar experiences were echoed by Shameema Banoo, who succinctly stated, “I came here because of my poverty,” and by Fatima Banu, who emphasized that “there’s a lot of poverty there, and weddings cost a lot.” For Ajmeeri Khatoon’s family, the decision was facilitated because “the groom was not demanding anything.”

These narratives underscore how poverty operates not merely as a background condition but as an active force shaping marital decisions. Marriage, in this context, functions as an economic coping mechanism, transforming daughters into instruments of familial survival. Such findings align with Ravinder Kaur’s (2010, 2012) studies, which highlight that poor parents across North India often marry their daughters far from home to escape dowry demands. The interviews further suggest that the economic calculus of these unions frequently blurs the boundaries between agency and coercion, as financial desperation compels families to prioritize economic relief over the personal preferences or well-being of the bride. These narratives suggest that poverty is not merely a general backdrop to these women’s lives but an instrumental force that transforms marriage into an economic strategy for natal families. The imperative to escape dowry burdens becomes a calculated decision, often prioritizing financial relief over geographical proximity or personal preference for the bride. This aligns with academic research on marriage migration in India, which identifies poverty and the dowry system as significant push factors, particularly for women from economically deprived regions. Scholars such as Ravinder Kaur (2010, 2012) highlight how “poor parents are being driven to marry their daughters hundreds of miles away from home” to escape dowry demands. The literature further emphasizes that “child marriage results from an interplay of economic and social forces,” with “poor economic background” and “low level of education” being consistently associated factors. The dowry system, prevalent in many parts of India, makes girls a perceived “burden” for poor parents, and early marriage can reduce these demands, thereby

making marriage migration an economically viable, albeit often difficult, option. This Phenomenon, where economic desperation of the natal family leads to a daughter's marriage, Can in some instances approach the commodification of women, where their marital status Becomes a commercial opportunity, blurring the lines between agency and coercion.

The Role of Middlemen and Brokerage

The narratives reveal that middlemen play a pivotal role in facilitating cross-regional marriages between Bengali women and Kashmiri men. Far from being neutral intermediaries, these brokers frequently act as commercial agents who profit from the vulnerabilities of both sides impoverished families in Bengal seeking dowry-free matches and Kashmiri men struggling to find local brides. Their involvement transforms marriage into an economic transaction rather than a social or emotional bond.

Sara Banu recalled how a neighbour who had previously married his own daughter to a Kashmiri man introduced her family to a broker named Ab Samad, who later arranged her marriage. In another account, Safeena Akther narrated that “a middleman approached my mamu and offered him 10,000 rupees to marry me off to a man in Kashmir.” Similarly, Ajmeeri Khatoon's marriage involved a broker, while another respondent described a more exploitative pattern in which an intermediary, Ali Kak, arranged marriages in exchange for large payments, reportedly treating women as “rejected goods” to be sent to Kashmir when “no one wanted them” in Bengal.

These cases illustrate that middlemen operate within a commercialized system of bride exchange, where monetary transactions often constitute a bride price rather than a traditional dowry. Such practices blur the boundary between marriage facilitation and human trafficking, aligning with scholarly observations that brokers exploit structural inequalities and gendered economic distress (Kaur, 2012; Blanchet, 2005). Traffickers frequently pose as marriage agents, promising “dowry-free” unions that appeal to poor families burdened by social and financial obligations.

The traumatic experiences shared by women like Sara Banu—who reported that “the middleman himself married me, and that day was the scariest day of my life”—underscore how deception and coercion are embedded in these arrangements. The involvement of brokers thus reveals how marriage migration is entangled with exploitative market logics, where women's bodies and choices become sites of negotiation, commodification, and control.

Skewed Marriage Markets and Demographic Imbalances

The narratives from Kashmir reveal a significant pull factor driving cross-regional marriages—a shortage of local brides and the high economic costs of marriage within the region. Ajmeeri Khatoon’s husband, for instance, “was alone—his parents had died, and his friends told him they would arrange his marriage outside. He was poor and could not afford marriage here because it is very expensive in Kashmir. People need gold and money to get married here, and he could not afford that, so he had to marry outside.” This economic reality underscores the structural barriers men face within the local marriage market.

Field observations further highlight how such imbalances shape community practices. In one case study, it was reported that “many old men in the village of Nipora have three Bengali wives,” and that “anyone who can’t find a partner gets in touch with Ali Kak,” a local broker. These accounts align with anthropological studies on obstructed marriage markets and abnormal sex ratios across parts of India and South Asia. Gender imbalances—often resulting from sex-selective abortions and cultural preferences for male children—have created a scarcity of marriageable women in certain regions.

Consequently, men from areas with low sex ratios and high dowry expectations seek brides from distant, economically disadvantaged regions such as West Bengal. The high cost of local weddings and dowry practices further intensify this demand, making “imported” brides a socially and economically viable alternative. This system reflects a structural response to intersecting socio-economic and demographic pressures in Kashmir: inflated marriage costs, dowry inflation, and a shortage of eligible women. Together, these dynamics produce a form of gendered migration often described as the “male-order bride phenomenon,” where women from marginalized regions are relocated through marriage into deficit regions, transforming the institution of marriage into a trans-regional, economic exchange system.

Family Agency and Individual Choice

The narratives of Bengali brides in Kashmir reveal a deeply complex and often contradictory understanding of agency, where “choice” exists within severe structural and cultural constraints. Many accounts illustrate forms of coercion and limited autonomy. For instance, Sara Banu recalls, “When I agreed and came to Kashmir, unfortunately the middleman himself married me, and that

day was the scariest day of my life. Feeling isolated, I had to bind myself in this mismatched bond.” Similarly, Safeena Akther notes, “I didn’t have a choice,” explaining that her mamu accepted ₹10,000 to arrange her marriage “for the sake of my younger sister.”

Other accounts reflect more culturally embedded forms of compliance rather than outright coercion. Ajmeeri Khatoon explains that in her community, “children follow whatever the parents say, so she agreed,” later adding that “she has to be happy—there is no other option” and that “this was her fate.” For her, obedience and acceptance are framed as moral and social expectations rather than signs of victimhood.

Yet, not all marriages were devoid of consent. Fatima Banu asserts that her marriage “happened by choice, not by force or deceit,” stating, “There were four or five girls standing in a line. He came and chose me.” Her emphasis on personal decision—“No, I did it myself”—suggests a pragmatic choice rooted in circumstance, not romantic affection. Shabroza, too, mentions that she “fell in love with him,” though she admits poverty and the idea that marriage in Kashmir would be “cheaper” influenced her decision. Sabeena describes agreeing to marry a bald man because “he clearly told the truth,” interpreting her choice as an act of “destiny.”

These diverse experiences demonstrate that the idea of “choice” in such marriages cannot be neatly categorized as either forced or free. Instead, these decisions occupy a spectrum shaped by poverty, familial obligation, gender norms, and limited alternatives. The repeated invocation of “destiny” reflects a cultural idiom through which women make sense of constrained circumstances. Anthropological literature on gendered migration and marriage supports this interpretation, arguing that agency operates within constraints rather than outside them. As scholars note, coercion and consent are not binary opposites but part of a continuum shaped by structural inequality, economic precarity, and cultural expectations.

Thus, these narratives highlight not passivity but a form of negotiated agency—where women act pragmatically within the limits imposed by poverty and patriarchy. Their stories reveal both resilience and constraint, challenging simplistic portrayals of them as mere victims of circumstance and underscoring the entanglement of choice, coercion, and survival in transregional marriage migration.

Conclusion

This study set out to investigate the migration patterns and underlying reasons behind the relocation of Bengali brides to Kashmir through marriage. The findings reveal that these cross-regional marital migrations are not isolated incidents but part of a broader socio-economic and

demographic pattern shaped by structural inequalities, economic distress, and cultural expectations. The primary “push factors” driving this migration stem from acute poverty, dowry pressures, and limited marriage prospects in rural Bengal. Families, constrained by economic hardship, often perceive marriage migration as a pragmatic solution to alleviate financial burdens and secure social stability for their daughters.

Conversely, the “pull factors” operating in Kashmir include a shortage of local brides, high marriage costs, and the marginalization of men who are economically disadvantaged or socially excluded within local marriage markets. These intersecting pressures create a bridge between two regions marked by contrasting demographic and economic realities. The role of middlemen or marriage brokers further institutionalizes this movement, transforming personal unions into transactions that, in some cases, verge on commodification and exploitation.

The migration pattern thus emerges as both a response to and a reproduction of structural inequalities—linking poverty and dowry in Bengal with demographic imbalance and gendered expectations in Kashmir. Upon arrival, the women’s experiences vary widely: while some encounter severe hardship, others manage to reconstruct belonging and stability through adaptation, labour, and resilience. Their narratives collectively reveal how migration through marriage operates not merely as a social arrangement but as a survival strategy shaped by intertwined economic, cultural, and demographic forces.

Ultimately, these findings underscore that the migration of Bengali brides to Kashmir represents a complex human response to systemic inequities rather than a simple act of mobility. Understanding these migration patterns requires recognizing the interplay between compulsion and choice, vulnerability and agency. The study thus contributes to a broader anthropological understanding of gendered migration, showing how structural pressures at the macro level manifest in the intimate sphere of marriage, reshaping the social and emotional geographies of both regions.

References

Anthropological Survey of India. (2024). *Regional-specific research project: Interstate borders study flyer*. <https://ansi.gov.in/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/INTERSTATE-BOARDERS-STUDYFLYER.pdf>

Chatterjee, P. (2019). *Marriage migration in India*. CiteSeerX. <https://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/document?repid=rep1&type=pdf&doi=42b4648b6f9bdcfb834e35b37f917aeab2aac83a>

Chaudhry, S., & Mohan, T. D. (2011). Of marriage and migration: Bengali and Bihari brides in a U.P. village. *Indian Journal of Gender Studies*, 18(3), 311–340.

Indira Gandhi National Open University. (n.d.). *Unit 12: Marriage and migration*. <https://egyankosh.ac.in/bitstream/123456789/87360/1/Unit-12.pdf>

International Organization for Migration. (2023). *Gender and labour migration in Asia*. IOM Publications. https://publications.iom.int/system/files/pdf/gender_and_labour_migration_asia.pdf

Kaur, R. (2004). Across-region marriages: Poverty, female migration and the sex ratio. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 39(25), 2595–2603.

Kaur, R. (2008). *Missing women and brides from faraway: Social consequences of the skewed sex ratio in India* (AAS Working Papers in Social Anthropology No. 1). Australian Anthropological Society.

Kaur, R. (2010). Bengali bridal diaspora: Marriage as a livelihood strategy. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 45(5), 16–18.

Kukreja, R. (2024). Trafficked or married? Unpacking dispossession of matrimonial choice in cross-region marriage migration in India. *Journal of Asian and African Studies*, 59(7), 2170–2185.

Patel, S., & Arya, C. C. (2022). The woman as a commodity and marriage as a commercial opportunity: An investigation into the unpleasant truth of marriage trafficking in India. *International Journal of Research and Review*, 9(1), 689–704. https://www.ijrrjournal.com/IJRR_Vol.9_Issue.1_Jan2022/IJRR080.pdf

Raj, A. (2025). Beyond force: An intersectional understanding of coercion and marriage migration. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*. <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/1369183X.2025.2464108>

- Roy, A. (2023). Women, marriage and migration in the Bangladeshi enclaves in the India–Bangladesh borderland. *India Quarterly*.
- Sharma, N. (2021). *A review of bride trafficking in India*. ResearchGate. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/354747515_A_Review_of_Bride_Trafficking_in_India
- Uberoi, P. (2012). Introduction: Family realities in South Asia: Adaptations and resilience. *South Asia Multidisciplinary Academic Journal*, 6. <https://journals.openedition.org/samaj/4365>
- Wodon, Q., & Siddiqi, M. (2022). Child marriage in South Asia: A systematic review. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 19(22), 15138. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph192215138>
- World Bank. (2025). *Education, social norms, and the marriage penalty*. World Bank Publications. <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/entities/publication/6fde6256-6d8b-4de9-9b4e-609651bb5f4a>
- Zhang, L. (2024). The migration of women due to imbalanced sex ratios in rural India. *Population Review*, 63(2), 183–209. <https://populationreview.com/files/pp183-209>

Multi-Sited Ethnography of a Transhumant Pastoral Community: Following Seasonal Mobility among the Gujjars of Kashmir Valley

¹⁰Sakib Afroz Marazi

Abstract

Anthropological fieldwork has historically been associated with prolonged immersion in a relatively bounded locality, where the village or settlement functions as the principal site of ethnographic observation. Such an approach becomes problematic when the community under study is itself constituted through mobility. This article examines the methodological possibilities and challenges of multi-sited ethnography through an eighteen-month ethnographic study of the Gujjars of the Kashmir Valley, a transhumant pastoral community whose social, economic and cultural life is organised around seasonal movement between high-altitude summer pastures and lower-altitude winter settlements. The research was conducted across nine villages and settlements in different districts of Kashmir, encompassing summer and winter locations as well as sites incorporated during the course of fieldwork. Participant observation, interviews, household surveys, life history, visual documentation, field diaries and documentary sources were employed to follow the community across changing ecological, social and political settings. The ethnography demonstrates that the Gujjar field cannot be understood as a fixed geographical location. Rather, it is constituted through a network of interconnected places, routes, relationships, practices and seasonal rhythms. Following the Gujjars required the researcher to move between settlements, observe migration routes, participate in everyday pastoral activities, and repeatedly renegotiate access and rapport. The study further shows that contemporary mobility is neither wholly traditional nor simply displaced by modern infrastructure. Traditional forest routes coexist with macadamised roads; livestock movement continues alongside hired transport; and dual residency is simultaneously a cultural practice and an administratively recognised arrangement. Security regulations, harsh winter conditions, language differences and restrictions on visual documentation further shaped the ethnographic study.

¹⁰Sakib Afroz Marazi

Assistant Professor (Ad-hoc) Anthropology, Government Degree College Sopore.

Email: sakibmarazi10@gmail.com

The article argues that multi-sited ethnography is particularly appropriate for studying transhumant pastoralists because it allows mobility itself to become an object of ethnographic analysis rather than merely a logistical problem of fieldwork. It concludes that following people across seasonal landscapes reveals the relational character of place, the continuing significance of pastoral mobility, and the ways in which tradition and modernity are negotiated through movement.

Keywords: multi-sited ethnography; transhumance; pastoralism; Gujjars; Kashmir Valley; seasonal mobility; ethnographic fieldwork; pastoral landscape

Introduction

“The work of the anthropologist is to study other cultures. Through them he learns to understand his own culture, and equally important, himself. He remains essentially a seeker. In the distant village and among strange people he comes face to face with himself- a chilling prospect. In that encounter is reflected his true self. His writing too reflects the encounter” (Ahmed, 1987:28). Ethnography occupies a distinctive position within anthropology because it seeks to understand social life through sustained engagement with the people whose lives constitute the object of study. Rather than approaching culture exclusively through documentary sources or externally generated categories, ethnography seeks to understand practices, meanings and relationships through prolonged field engagement. Classical anthropological fieldwork established the importance of participant observation, immersion and the systematic study of everyday life, making the field site a central epistemological location for anthropological knowledge (Malinowski, 1922). Over time, however, the conventional image of the anthropologist residing for an extended period in a single village or geographically bounded community has increasingly been questioned. Contemporary social formations frequently exceed the boundaries of any one locality, and the methodological consequences of this have become particularly important for the study of migrants, transnational communities, mobile populations and dispersed social networks. The development of multi-sited ethnography represents one significant response to this problem. Marcus (1995) argued that ethnographic research increasingly needs to move beyond the conventional single-site model by following connections, processes, objects, people and relationships across different locations. Rather than treating the field as a naturally bounded geographical container, multi-sited ethnography conceptualises the field as something produced through relationships and movements between places. Hannerz (2003) similarly emphasised that

multi-site fieldwork requires the researcher to reconsider the construction of field sites, the temporal dimensions of fieldwork, relationships with interlocutors and the forms of data produced through movement between locations.

This methodological reorientation is especially relevant to pastoral communities whose livelihoods depend upon mobility. Pastoralism is not simply an economic system based on livestock ownership; mobility is frequently integral to its ecological logic. Pastoralists move animals and, in many cases, households between different resource zones in response to seasonal availability of pasture, water and climatic conditions. Contemporary scholarship likewise emphasises that pastoral mobility should not be interpreted as an absence of settlement or social organisation. Rather, mobility constitutes a distinctive way of organising livelihood, social relationships and environmental knowledge. The Food and Agriculture Organization, for example, identifies animal mobility and the use of natural resources as key features of pastoral production systems and emphasises the importance of mobility in responding to environmental variability.

The Gujjars of the Kashmir Valley provide an especially productive context in which to examine these methodological questions. A section of the Gujjar population continues to practise transhumant pastoralism, moving seasonally between high-altitude summer pastures and lower-altitude winter settlements. The movement is not simply a periodic economic transaction involving livestock. It structures domestic arrangements, housing, labour, social interaction, environmental knowledge and relations with neighbouring communities. The Gujjars maintain summer residences known locally as *kotha*, *bakh* or *doka*, while winter residences are referred to as *ghar*, *makan* or *nichay wala ghar*. The two forms of residence reflect different ecological and social conditions. The ethnographic problem therefore becomes methodological as much as substantive: where is the field when the people themselves move?

A study of the Gujjars cannot be adequately confined to a single summer settlement because the social world observed there is connected to a winter settlement, a migratory route, grazing grounds, markets, administrative institutions and increasingly tourist spaces. The winter household cannot be fully understood without considering its summer counterpart, just as the summer *kotha* cannot be understood independently of the household's winter residence. Seasonal movement connects these locations into a social and ecological system.

This article develops an argument from eighteen months of multi-sited ethnographic fieldwork among the Gujjars of the Kashmir Valley. The research was conducted across nine villages and settlements—Hokarpathar, Khilanmarg, Botapather, Katianwali, Chandoosa, Kehnoosa,

Doodhpathri, Sonmarg and Rangmarg—with particularly intensive engagement in the Gulmarg area and the principal summer and winter settlements associated with seasonal movement. The fieldwork was organised around three phases: a summer phase from April to September 2023, a winter phase from October 2023 to March 2024, and a third phase from April to September 2024 devoted to revisiting sites, cross-checking information and following emerging questions.

The article has two related objectives. First, it examines the methodological implications of conducting ethnography among a transhumant pastoral community. Second, it demonstrates how following seasonal mobility produces a different understanding of Gujjar social life—one in which place and movement are mutually constitutive. The paper argues that multi-sited ethnography should not be understood merely as visiting several villages. Its significance lies in reconstructing the relationships between sites and recognising movement as an ethnographically meaningful practice.

From the Bounded Field to the Mobile Field

The idea of the field has been fundamental to anthropology. Classical ethnography frequently assumed that social life could be studied through sustained residence within a relatively bounded community. The anthropologist entered a field, established rapport, participated in everyday activities and produced an account of the social world from prolonged observation. This model was enormously productive, particularly because it challenged armchair anthropology and established direct engagement as a foundation of anthropological knowledge (Malinowski, 1922). Yet the field has never been as naturally bounded as the classical model might suggest. Communities have always interacted with neighbouring populations, participated in trade networks, migrated seasonally and maintained relationships extending beyond the village. Gupta and Ferguson (1997) therefore questioned the tendency to treat the field as a self-evident geographical entity. They argued that anthropological locations are socially and politically produced and that the conventional boundaries of the field require critical examination.

This insight is particularly important when studying mobile populations. For a sedentary village, it may be possible to speak provisionally of the village as a principal field site. For a transhumant pastoral community, however, the settlement is only one component of a wider spatial system. The pasture, route, winter settlement, market, forest and administrative checkpoint may all become part of the community's social world.

Marcus's (1995) formulation of multi-sited ethnography provides a useful methodological framework for understanding such social formations. Multi-sited ethnography does not simply multiply the number of field sites. Rather, it follows the connections that constitute the object of

study. Marcus identified different strategies through which ethnographers can construct multi-sited research, including following people, objects, metaphors, stories, biographies and conflicts. For the present study, following people is particularly important. The Gujjars' seasonal movement creates a natural ethnographic pathway. The researcher does not need to artificially construct connections between sites because those connections already exist within the community's pastoral system. The same households that occupy the summer pastures return to their winter settlements. The same livestock move between ecological zones. Kinship networks extend across seasonal residences. Material possessions, memories, labour arrangements and social relationships circulate with the household.

Clifford's (1997) emphasis on routes, travel and movement further helps illuminate this methodological shift. Rather than assuming that culture exists only in fixed places, Clifford draws attention to the ways in which cultural identities and social worlds are produced through travel, encounter, translation and movement. The Gujar case illustrates this proposition in a particularly tangible way: movement between summer and winter locations is not peripheral to culture; it is one of the practices through which culture is reproduced.

Falzon (2009) similarly notes that multi-sited ethnography has developed as a methodological response to social worlds that extend across several localities while still requiring ethnographic depth. In this sense, the methodological challenge is not simply to move from one site to another but to retain the depth traditionally associated with ethnography while following the social relations that connect different locations.

The Gujar field therefore requires a conceptual shift from field site to field system. A summer *kotha*, a winter *makan*, a migratory path and a grazing area are not independent sites. They are components of an interconnected pastoral landscape.

The Gujjars of the Kashmir Valley: A Pastoral and Transhumant Context

The Gujjars are widely distributed across northern India and have historically maintained diverse combinations of pastoralism, animal husbandry, agriculture and settlement. Within Jammu and Kashmir, a section continues to practise seasonal mobility between highland and lowland areas. The literature reviewed in the work identifies transhumance as a central characteristic of pastoral Gujar life, with seasonal movement linked to pasture availability and climatic conditions. Pastoralism among the Gujjars of Kashmir is primarily associated with cattle and buffalo rearing, alongside smaller numbers of goats and sheep. The livestock economy has historically structured patterns of mobility and environmental engagement. The Gujjars move between ecological zones in response to seasonal conditions, enabling them to utilise high-altitude grazing areas during

warmer months and lower-altitude environments during winter (Marazi & Zaman, 2024).

The wider Himalayan context demonstrates the importance of mobility to pastoral production. Bhasin's work on Himalayan pastoralism identifies transhumance as a system in which herders move between ecologically differentiated locations according to seasonal conditions. Her study of Himalayan transhumant communities demonstrates that ecological adaptation cannot be separated from social organisation. Research on the Gujjar-Bakarwal communities has likewise documented the continuing importance of seasonal movement in Jammu and Kashmir. Contemporary studies have also drawn attention to pressures associated with sedentarisation, changes in resource access, climate variability and changing economic conditions. The present ethnography contributes to this literature by approaching transhumance not primarily as an economic or ecological phenomenon but as a methodological condition of ethnographic research. The community's movement required the researcher to rethink the meaning of residence, access, observation, rapport and temporality.

Constructing a Multi-Sited Field

The study covered three districts as the initial universe of research: Baramulla, Bandipora and Budgam. The Gulmarg area of Baramulla emerged as the principal field setting because of the concentration of Gujjar settlements and the opportunity to observe the relationship between pastoralism, tourism and socio-economic change. The field subsequently expanded beyond the initial locations. This expansion was not simply the result of an arbitrary decision to increase geographical coverage. It emerged from the ethnographic process itself. The movement of the community, the differences between settlements and the need to understand variations in social and environmental conditions required the inclusion of additional locations. The principal sites included Hokarpathar, Khilanmarg and Botapather in the Gulmarg region; Katianwali and Chandoosa as important winter settlements; Kehnoosa in Bandipora district; Doodhpathri in Budgam district; and Sonmarg and Rangmarg as additional sites. The thesis identifies nine villages in the overall multi-sited fieldwork, while the methodological chapter records the inclusion of Thajwas/Sonmarg as a summer site. This geographical diversity was analytically productive. The sites did not simply reproduce the same cultural pattern. They differed in ecological setting, degree of interaction with outsiders, tourism exposure, accessibility and degree of settlement. Kehnoosa was especially significant as a comparative site because it represented a more settled form of Gujjar life. The Gujjars there lived in a comparatively settled environment and grazed livestock in pastures located approximately twenty to thirty minutes from the village. This contrasted with the more strongly transhumant pattern observed elsewhere. Doodhpathri and

Gulmarg, by contrast, provided environments where tourism had become an important component of everyday life. The Gujjars' proximity to tourists created opportunities for livelihood diversification and intensified interaction with outsiders. The Doodhpathri field site was particularly useful for observing how tourism, pastoralism and cultural adaptation coexisted. Rangmarg offered another kind of comparative perspective because its winter settlements were relatively close to the summer locations and connected to a district highway. The ethnographic material from this site also revealed interaction and cultural exchange with neighbouring Kashmiri populations. Thus, the multi-sited field was not simply geographically extensive. It was analytically differentiated. Each location illuminated a different relationship between mobility, ecology, economy and social interaction.

Following the Seasonal Calendar

The most important organising principle of the fieldwork was the seasonal cycle. The first phase began in April 2023 and continued until September 2023, corresponding broadly with the movement of Gujjar households towards high-altitude summer pastures. Fieldwork during this period included Hokarpathar, Botapathar, Kehnoosa, Doodhpathri, Rangmarg and Thajwas. The second phase began in October 2023 and continued until March 2024, when fieldwork shifted towards winter settlements including Chandoosa, Katianwali and Kehnoosa. The third phase began in April 2024. Rather than representing another conventional fieldwork period, this phase involved returning to earlier sites, reviewing information and cross-checking findings with community members. This process of revisiting became particularly valuable because ethnographic interpretation had developed during the earlier phases. Questions that had remained unresolved in the summer could be revisited in winter, while observations made in winter could be reconsidered after returning to the summer landscape. This temporal organisation illustrates an important advantage of multi-sited ethnography: temporality becomes part of the field rather than simply the background to fieldwork. The Gujjar field changed with the seasons. The same household could appear differently in summer and winter because the material environment, household composition, labour demands, connectivity and social interactions differed. In the summer highlands, the absence of electricity and network connectivity encouraged storytelling, interpersonal interaction and games. In winter settlements, access to electricity, smartphones and television altered patterns of leisure and communication. The ethnographic significance of this contrast lies in demonstrating that the community does not inhabit one stable cultural environment. Instead, Gujjar sociality is produced across changing seasonal settings.

Mobility as an Ethnographic Object

One of the most important findings emerging from the fieldwork is that migration cannot be reduced to movement between two points. The journey between Katianwali and Botapather provides a particularly useful example. The research documented two broad types of migratory routes: traditional routes through forests and rugged terrain, and modern macadamised roads. Historically, forest routes and shortcuts constituted important pathways, developed through generations of familiarity with the terrain. With infrastructural development, main roads have increasingly become more convenient for migration. Yet the traditional routes have not disappeared. They continue to exist within community knowledge and remain particularly significant for men travelling with livestock. The routes therefore constitute a form of indigenous spatial knowledge. They are not simply lines on a map; they encode accumulated knowledge about terrain, slopes, forests, grazing conditions and the movement of animals. The migration from Katianwali to Botapather also demonstrates the differentiated character of household mobility. Women and children frequently travel using local transport and hired load carriers, while men move with livestock and may combine roads with traditional shortcuts. This gendered differentiation reveals that there is no single Gujjar migration. There are multiple mobilities occurring simultaneously within the same household. The journey may therefore be understood as a socially differentiated mobility system. Men's movement is organised around livestock and pastoral responsibilities; women's and children's movement is more closely associated with household goods, comfort and safety; transport infrastructure increasingly mediates these movements; and the timing of migration remains responsive to environmental conditions. The journey between Katianwali and Botapather reportedly takes substantially longer on foot than by the main road, further illustrating how infrastructural modernisation has altered the temporal experience of migration. Yet the continued use of shortcuts by men travelling with animals demonstrates that modern infrastructure does not simply replace indigenous mobility practices. Instead, the two systems coexist. Mobility, therefore, becomes a site of negotiation between tradition and modernity.

Seasonal Emplacement: The Kotha and the Makan

The Gujjar case also challenges the assumption that mobility necessarily implies the absence of attachment to place. The Gujjars maintain dual residences. The summer *kotha* is located in the highlands, while the winter *makan* is situated in lower-altitude areas. These residences are not temporary points in an otherwise continuous journey. They are socially meaningful places that contain memories, possessions, kinship relations and forms of belonging. The *kotha* is particularly adapted to the summer environment. In different districts it may be constructed from

wood, mud, stone and locally available materials. In Baramulla and Budgam, wood and mud are commonly used, whereas in Ganderbal and Bandipora stone, mud and wood are more prominent. The structure of the *kotha* itself reflects the pastoral economy. Human and livestock spaces may exist within the same compact architectural arrangement. Its modest size and multifunctional organisation are adapted to seasonal residence and the demands of pastoral life. The winter *makan*, by contrast, tends to be more substantial. Its architecture reflects longer periods of habitation and harsher winter requirements. The contrast between the two forms of residence demonstrates how material culture responds to mobility. The dual-residence system is also visible within administrative documentation. The research records the summer *bakh/kotha* number and the winter address associated with the Aadhaar record, demonstrating that the community's mobile residence pattern has entered bureaucratic systems rather than existing outside the state. This is analytically significant. Transhumance is sometimes represented as existing in opposition to sedentary governance. The Gujjar case suggests something more complex. The mobile household is simultaneously pastoral and bureaucratically legible. It has a summer address and a winter address. It moves, but its movement is recognised through administrative identifiers. The field therefore reveals an important relationship between mobility and state legibility.

Landscape as Social Knowledge

The multi-sited fieldwork also demonstrates that the pastoral landscape is not merely an environmental backdrop. The Gujjars inhabit ecologically diverse areas containing forests, high-altitude pastures, streams and wildlife. The field sites included environments characterised by fir, birch, pine, deodar, blue pine, West Himalayan fir and Indian horse chestnut, alongside diverse fauna. The Gujjars' everyday engagement with these environments requires detailed knowledge of local resources and risks. Such knowledge is embodied in everyday practices. The collection of firewood, management of livestock, selection of routes, identification of grazing areas and movement through forested terrain all require familiarity with the landscape. The traditional migration routes are perhaps the clearest expression of this knowledge. Shortcuts through forests and mountainous terrain are not simply alternatives to roads. They represent a spatial archive of accumulated experience. This finding resonates with broader anthropological approaches to pastoralism that understand mobility as an adaptive strategy rather than a cultural deficiency. Pastoralists use mobility to access spatially variable resources, respond to environmental uncertainty and distribute pressure on particular grazing areas. In the Gujjar case, however, mobility is simultaneously ecological, economic and cultural. It is necessary for livestock management, but it is also embedded within memories, identities and social relationships.

The Comparative Value of Multiple Sites

One of the principal advantages of multi-sited ethnography in this research was the possibility of comparison. The comparison between Gulmarg, Doodhpathri and Kehnoosa, for instance, revealed that Gujjar cultural practices vary according to the degree and nature of external interaction. Gulmarg is a major tourist destination. Gujjar settlements there are located within a landscape of intensive tourism, and members of the community have increasingly developed tourism-related activities. Doodhpathri similarly exposes Gujjar households to substantial interaction with visitors. Kehnoosa, by contrast, is relatively insulated from tourism and external influence. These contrasts challenge simplistic notions of "Gujjar culture" as a uniform entity. The multi-sited approach reveals variation within continuity. Across locations, Gojri remains an important marker of identity, pastoral practices continue to shape social life, and kinship remains significant. Yet the expression of these practices varies according to ecological setting, infrastructure, tourism exposure and settlement pattern. In this respect, multi-sited ethnography allows the anthropologist to avoid treating the community as internally homogeneous. It makes visible the local variations through which broader cultural patterns are reproduced. The approach is therefore not only useful for following movement; it is also valuable for identifying differentiation within the social field.

The Ethnographic Encounter and the Construction of Rapport

Following a mobile community also changes the relationship between researcher and research participants. The initial stages of fieldwork were marked by uncertainty. The researcher entered the field through a key person, Mohammad Iqbal, who facilitated introductions and helped establish trust. The relationship originated in an earlier informal encounter during the researcher's Master's period, when a horseback excursion with a young Gujjar boy named Iqbal developed into a conversation and subsequent contact. That earlier relationship later became important during doctoral fieldwork. This illustrates the importance of relational entry into ethnographic fields. Access was not simply granted through an institutional letter or formal introduction. It was mediated through an existing interpersonal relationship. During the initial stages of fieldwork, the researcher consciously refrained from using the camera. Informal conversations and trust-building were prioritised before visual documentation began. General consent was subsequently sought from community elders and family heads, while individual consent was obtained for photographs. This sequence is important methodologically because it demonstrates that ethnographic tools do not operate independently of social relationships. The camera, interview schedule and household survey all became meaningful only after a relationship had been

established. Participant observation likewise involved practical participation in everyday life. The researcher participated in seasonal migration, assisted with carrying goods, engaged in agricultural activities, shared meals, participated in household work and observed activities involving livestock and life-cycle events. Such participation transformed the researcher from an external observer into a participant in particular moments of community life, while still requiring analytical distance. The research describes this tension as "participant objectivity": immersion in lived experience combined with an external analytical perspective. For a multi-sited study, this balance is particularly important because rapport must be sustained across different locations and social situations. The researcher is repeatedly entering, leaving and re-entering communities.

Language, Translation and the Limits of Access

Language represented an important methodological limitation. The Gujjars' native language is Gojri, but the researcher conducted interviews primarily in Kashmiri and Urdu. While these languages facilitated communication with many participants, particularly those with greater interaction with neighbouring populations, some participants were more comfortable using Urdu and others used Kashmiri more extensively. This produced a layer of translation between the researcher and the community. Anthropological fieldwork depends upon understanding not merely what people say but the meanings embedded in their expressions and idioms. Translation can therefore affect ethnographic interpretation. The research acknowledges that greater proficiency in Gojri would have enabled deeper engagement with cultural meanings, particularly in relation to rituals, kinship terminology and songs. This limitation is particularly significant in a multi-sited context because linguistic competence may vary between locations. The relationship between Gojri, Kashmiri and Urdu is itself part of the social landscape. Rather than treating language as merely a technical obstacle, it is therefore more appropriate to understand it as part of the ethnographic field. The use of Gojri terms in the final ethnography consequently becomes an act of methodological recognition. Retaining culturally specific terms such as *kotha*, *bakh*, *makan*, *mohalla*, *Sardar*, *Gojri* and other emic categories preserves aspects of the conceptual world through which participants understand their lives.

Negotiating the State: Security, Mobility and the Field

The geography of the field also meant that ethnographic mobility was constrained by political and administrative conditions. Several Gujjar settlements are located close to the Line of Control, where access is regulated. Botapather was particularly significant in this regard. Access was subject to restricted hours and overnight stays were prohibited. The researcher consequently had to organise fieldwork around these limitations, frequently alternating between different sites to

maximise observation within the available period. The irony is striking: the researcher was studying a mobile community but could not always move freely through the community's own spatial world. The Gujjars themselves occupy a distinctive position in these locations because their *bakh/kotha* numbers and Aadhaar documentation provide recognition of their longstanding residence. This reveals a complex relationship between mobility and territorial governance. For the state, the area is a securitised border landscape. For the Gujjars, it is simultaneously a lived pastoral landscape and an ancestral residence. For the ethnographer, it becomes a field site shaped by both realities. Thus, multi-sited ethnography does not simply follow social connections; it also encounters the political infrastructures that regulate movement between sites. The field is therefore produced through the intersection of community mobility, state regulation and researcher mobility.

Seasonality as a Constraint on Ethnographic Knowledge

The seasonal character of the community's life also imposed practical limits on research. Winter fieldwork was particularly difficult. Heavy snowfall, slippery roads, severe weather and restrictions on vehicular movement reduced access to settlements and prevented overnight stays in many locations. Consequently, winter observations were often limited to daytime visits. This limitation has an important epistemological implication. Ethnography is often valued for continuity and prolonged observation. Yet among mobile pastoralists, continuity may be impossible in the conventional sense. The researcher cannot always remain in one location throughout the year, just as the community itself does not. The solution is not necessarily to treat seasonal gaps as methodological failure. Instead, the gaps themselves can reveal the structure of the social world. The inability to observe certain sites continuously made the researcher more attentive to seasonal transitions, access routes and changes in household organisation. Returning to sites during the third phase also allowed earlier observations to be revisited and verified. The multi-sited method thus operated through movement, interruption and return.

Visual Ethnography and Ethical Negotiation

Visual documentation formed another important dimension of the research. Approximately ten thousand photographs were taken during fieldwork, from which fewer than two hundred were selected for the thesis. The process of selection was guided not merely by visual quality but by relevance to the ethnographic argument and ethical considerations. Yet photography was not universally permitted. The community placed restrictions on photographing women, particularly during culturally sensitive events such as marriages and funerals. Concerns about privacy, embarrassment, distraction during rituals and potential misuse of photographs through social

media influenced these restrictions. This is methodologically important because it demonstrates that visual ethnography is negotiated rather than simply conducted by the researcher. The absence of photographs is itself ethnographically meaningful. Where permission was refused, the researcher was required to accept that some aspects of community life would remain outside visual representation. The refusal therefore became part of the ethnographic encounter and an expression of community agency. This challenges an extractive understanding of ethnographic documentation in which the researcher assumes an automatic right to record. Instead, visual documentation becomes a negotiated practice governed by consent, trust and cultural norms. The research consequently demonstrates that ethical limitation can produce methodological sensitivity.

Following People Rather than Merely Visiting Places

The strongest methodological lesson from the study is that the multi-sited field emerged by following the community rather than by constructing a series of unrelated field sites. The summer settlement led to the winter settlement. The winter settlement led to the migration route. The migration route connected households to grazing areas. Tourism connected summer settlements to external markets and visitors. Administrative arrangements connected seasonal residences to the state. The field therefore resembled a network rather than a collection of isolated points. This corresponds closely with Marcus's (1995) proposition that multi-sited ethnography follows connections and processes rather than simply multiplying locations. Hannerz (2003) similarly stresses that multi-site fieldwork requires attention to relationships between sites, their temporal dimensions and the changing quality of ethnographic relationships. The Gujjar case demonstrates that following people is particularly appropriate where movement itself is a social institution. The ethnographer followed the community's seasonal rhythm, but this did not mean mechanically reproducing every movement of every household. Rather, the research selected key locations through which the broader pastoral system could be understood. This distinction is important. Multi-sited ethnography does not require the researcher to become permanently mobile. It requires the researcher to construct an analytical field that corresponds to the social connections of the people being studied.

Mobility, Modernity and Transformation

The Gujjar field also demonstrates that mobility should not be understood as a simple opposition between tradition and modernity. The community continues to practise transhumance, but the material form of mobility has changed. Traditional forest paths coexist with roads. Men may continue to use shortcuts with livestock while women and children use local transport. Summer

kothas remain important, but tourism has encouraged some households to transform parts of these spaces into shops. Livestock remains economically important while tourism has emerged as an increasingly attractive livelihood for younger generations. These developments indicate not the disappearance of pastoralism but its reconfiguration. The Gujjars are not simply abandoning pastoralism for modernity. Rather, they are combining different livelihood strategies. Tourism has become particularly significant among young Gujjars, who use skills developed through pastoral life—horse riding, trekking, navigation of mountain terrain and knowledge of the landscape—as marketable services. The study documents activities such as guiding, horse riding, skiing, snowboarding and other tourism-related services. The irony is that skills derived from pastoral mobility are being converted into resources within the tourism economy. Mobility therefore persists, but its economic meaning is changing. The same landscape that historically functioned as a grazing environment increasingly operates simultaneously as a tourism landscape. Gujjar knowledge of mountains becomes both a pastoral resource and a tourist commodity. This transformation demonstrates why the multi-sited perspective is valuable. A single summer settlement might reveal tourism-related economic change, while a winter settlement reveals the continuing importance of livestock and household production. Only by moving between locations can the coexistence of these processes be adequately understood.

The Settled Village and the Question of Sedentarisation

Kehnoosa provides an important counterpoint to the more mobile sites. Among the sites studied, Kehnoosa was the only clearly settled Gujjar village. Livestock were still taken to nearby grazing areas, but the movement involved relatively short distances rather than a major seasonal relocation of the entire household. Kehnoosa therefore provides an important ethnographic window onto the transition from pastoralism towards semi-pastoralism and settlement. The significance of the site lies not in treating it as an exception but in recognising it as part of a continuum. Gujjar mobility exists along a spectrum. At one end are households maintaining substantial seasonal movement between highland and lowland residences; at another are households practising shorter-distance livestock mobility while remaining settled; and elsewhere, livelihood diversification increasingly incorporates agriculture, wage labour and tourism. This spectrum challenges binary categories such as "nomadic" versus "sedentary". Sedentarisation is not necessarily an abrupt transformation. It can occur through gradual modification of movement patterns, changes in housing, diversification of livelihoods and increased engagement with state institutions. Research on Gujjar and Bakarwal communities has similarly identified transitions from nomadism towards more sedentary forms of life. Hussain and Khaliq (2016), for instance,

examined socio-economic transformation associated with movement from nomadism towards sedentarisation among Gujjar and Bakarwal communities. The present ethnography adds a micro-level perspective by showing how such transformation becomes visible in everyday spatial practices.

The Researcher in a Mobile Field

Multi-sited ethnography also transforms the researcher. In a single-site study, the anthropologist may gradually become familiar with a particular locality and its social rhythms. In a multi-sited study, familiarity must repeatedly be reconstructed. The researcher in this study experienced this directly. Initial encounters in Hokarpathar were marked by uncertainty about how to interact with busy pastoralists. Gujjar men were often occupied with livestock, wood collection, tourism or other livelihood activities, while women were engaged in domestic work and childcare. Gradually, repeated visits and informal interaction produced mutual familiarity. The researcher's own identity also influenced the encounter. Shared religious affiliation and familiarity with Kashmiri society helped facilitate trust. This demonstrates that fieldwork is never a neutral encounter between an abstract "researcher" and "community". It is a relationship shaped by identity, language, gender, class, religion, familiarity and social networks. The mobile field intensified this reflexive dimension because the researcher was constantly negotiating his position in different contexts. A relationship established in one site could facilitate access elsewhere. A community member could introduce the researcher to another household. A key person could provide information about migration routes. Repeated visits transformed initial unfamiliarity into social familiarity. The ethnographic field was therefore relationally produced.

The Limits of the Multi-Sited Method

Although multi-sited ethnography offered considerable analytical advantages, it also created challenges. The first was depth. Moving between locations can potentially reduce the duration of engagement at any one site. Hannerz (2003) identifies this as one of the central tensions of multi-site research: relationships, temporality and the quality of engagement differ across locations. The second was logistical complexity. Remote terrain, weather, security restrictions and transportation requirements made movement difficult. The fieldworker had to continually adapt schedules and sometimes abandon planned visits. The third was language. Limited proficiency in Gojri restricted access to some meanings and required the use of Kashmiri and Urdu. The fourth was visual and ethical restriction. The researcher could not photograph all aspects of Gujjar life, particularly rituals and women. The fifth was the unevenness of seasonal access. Winter conditions restricted observation and prevented continuous residence. These limitations,

however, are not merely weaknesses. They are part of the ethnographic knowledge produced by the study. The restrictions revealed the political geography of the field. The language barrier revealed the importance of linguistic competence. The prohibition on photography revealed community concerns about privacy and digital circulation. Seasonal inaccessibility demonstrated the environmental conditions within which both Gujjars and researchers operate. In this sense, methodological constraints became ethnographic data.

Beyond the Bounded Village

The findings suggest that the village is an insufficient unit for understanding transhumant Gujjar life. A village-based ethnography could document household organisation, kinship, rituals and everyday life. Yet it might miss the seasonal processes that connect one settlement to another. The *kotha* cannot be understood without the *madan*. The winter household cannot be understood without the summer pasture. The pasture cannot be understood without the migration route. The route cannot be understood without livestock. Livestock cannot be understood without household labour. Household labour cannot be understood without gendered mobility. And mobility cannot be understood without the environmental and political infrastructures through which it occurs. This relational structure is the central methodological contribution of the study. The Gujjar social world is not located in one place. It is distributed across places and connected through movement. The implication is broader than the Gujjar case. Pastoral communities, migrant workers, trading communities, seasonal labourers, pilgrimage networks and diasporic populations may all require ethnographic designs capable of following social relationships beyond a single locality. Multi-sited ethnography therefore does not represent the abandonment of classical ethnographic immersion. Instead, it represents an attempt to preserve ethnographic depth while adapting the field to the spatial organisation of contemporary social worlds.

Discussion

The ethnographic material demonstrates that the methodological value of multi-sited ethnography lies in its ability to reveal relationships that remain invisible within a single-site framework. Three analytical observations emerge. First, mobility is constitutive rather than incidental. The Gujjars do not merely happen to move between summer and winter locations. Their movement structures livelihood, housing, household organisation and environmental adaptation. The pastoral landscape is therefore produced through movement. Second, place is relational. The summer *kotha* acquires meaning through its relationship with the winter *madan*. A grazing area is meaningful because it forms part of a seasonal cycle. A route is meaningful because it connects settlements. A tourist site becomes economically significant because it intersects with pastoral

knowledge and seasonal residence. Third, mobility is negotiated rather than uniform. Men, women and children may move differently. Some households remain more strongly pastoral, while others settle. Some use traditional routes, while others rely on roads and transport. Some communities are relatively insulated from tourism, while others participate extensively in the tourist economy. The multi-sited approach therefore makes it possible to identify both continuity and differentiation. This finding also complicates the notion that modernisation necessarily results in the disappearance of pastoralism. The evidence instead suggests processes of adaptation, diversification and selective incorporation. Tourism, road infrastructure, smartphones, formal education and state documentation coexist with pastoralism, traditional routes, Gojri language, livestock rearing and seasonal residence. The resulting social world is neither wholly traditional nor wholly modern. It is a hybrid and negotiated pastoral modernity. The study also demonstrates the importance of considering infrastructure as part of ethnographic analysis. Roads have altered migration routes. Security regulations influence access to pastoral landscapes. Government documentation recognises dual residence. Tourism transforms mountain landscapes into economic spaces. Telecommunications and electricity reshape seasonal leisure. These infrastructures do not simply exist around the community. They actively participate in the transformation of Gujjar mobility. In this sense, the field is produced through an interaction between pastoral agency and external structures.

Conclusion

This article has examined multi-sited ethnography through an eighteen-month study of the Gujjars of the Kashmir Valley. The ethnography demonstrates that studying a transhumant pastoral community requires a methodological approach capable of following people, places, routes and seasonal rhythms. The central argument is that the Gujjar field cannot be reduced to a single village or settlement. Their social world is constituted through a network of interconnected locations that includes summer *kothas*, winter *makans*, grazing areas, migration routes, markets, tourist sites and administrative spaces. The relationships between these locations are as significant as the locations themselves. Following the Gujjars across seasons made it possible to observe how mobility operates simultaneously as an economic strategy, ecological adaptation, cultural practice and social institution. The migration route between Katianwali and Botapather demonstrates that mobility incorporates both inherited environmental knowledge and contemporary infrastructure. Traditional forest routes continue alongside macadamised roads, while different members of the household adopt different modes of movement. The study also shows that mobility does not imply placelessness. The Gujjars maintain meaningful attachments

to their summer and winter residences. The *kotha* is not merely a temporary shelter, nor is the winter *madan* simply a place of retreat. Together, they constitute a dual residential system through which seasonal life is organised. At the same time, the ethnography reveals significant transformation. Sedentarisation, tourism, roads, education, state administration and digital technologies are altering the conditions within which pastoral life is reproduced. Yet these changes have not simply displaced pastoralism. Instead, the Gujjars selectively incorporate new opportunities while retaining important elements of their pastoral identity.

The methodological experience further demonstrates that multi-sited ethnography requires flexibility, reflexivity and ethical sensitivity. Language barriers, security restrictions, severe winter conditions and restrictions on visual documentation all shaped the research process. Rather than being merely obstacles, these conditions became part of the ethnographic understanding of the community and the wider political and environmental landscape.

Ultimately, the study suggests that the most productive way to ethnographically understand a transhumant community is not to ask where the community lives, but rather how the community lives across places. For the Gujjars of Kashmir, the answer lies in movement. Their social world unfolds between highland and lowland, summer and winter, pasture and settlement, route and destination, tradition and modernity. To follow that world ethnographically is therefore to follow not simply people across geographical locations but the relationships through which a mobile pastoral society continually reproduces itself. Multi-sited ethnography, in this context, is more than a methodological convenience. It is an epistemological necessity.

References

- Ahmed, A. S. (1986). *Toward Islamic anthropology: Definition, dogma, and direction*. International Institute of Islamic Thought.
- Bhasin, V. (1988). *Himalayan ecology, transhumance and social organisation: Gaddis of Himachal Pradesh*. Kamla-Raj Enterprises.
- Bhasin, V. (2013). Pastoralists of Himalayas. *Journal of Biodiversity*, 4(2), 83–113. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09766901.2013.11884746>
- Clifford, J. (1997). *Routes: Travel and translation in the late twentieth century*. Harvard University Press.
- Falzon, M.-A. (Ed.). (2009). *Multi-sited ethnography: Theory, praxis and locality in contemporary research*. Ashgate.
- Geertz, C. (1973). *The interpretation of cultures*. Basic Books.
- Gupta, A., & Ferguson, J. (Eds.). (1997). *Anthropological locations: Boundaries and grounds of*

a field science. University of California Press.

Hannerz, U. (2003). Being there... and there... and there!: Reflections on multi-site ethnography. *Ethnography*, 4(2), 201–216. <https://doi.org/10.1177/14661381030042003>

Hussain, M., & Khaliq, N. (2016). Socio-economic transformation of Gujjar and Bakerwals of J&K from nomadism to sedentarization. *Journal of Rural Studies*, 44, 113–124.

Malinowski, B. (1922). *Argonauts of the Western Pacific*. George Routledge & Sons.

Marazi, S., & Zaman, R. (2024). Exploring lifecycle rituals of the Gujjar tribe in Kashmir Valley. *Studies in Indian Anthropology and Sociology*, 1(1), 1–23.

Marcus, G. E. (1995). Ethnography in/of the world system: The emergence of multi-sited ethnography. *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 24, 95–117. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.an.24.100195.000523>

Naikoo, A. A., Thakur, S. S., & Guroo, T. A. (2018). Socio-economic conditions of Gujjars in South Kashmir: Their challenges and strategies. *International Journal of Research and Analytical Reviews*, 5(1), 101–108.

Rollefson, I., et al. (2003). *Scoping study on pastoralism in India*. Centre for Management in Agriculture, Indian Institute of Management Ahmedabad & League for Pastoral Peoples.

Sharma, V. P., & Köhler-Rollefson, I. (2003). *Scoping study on pastoralism in India*. Centre for Management in Agriculture, Indian Institute of Management Ahmedabad & League for Pastoral Peoples.

Suri, K. (2014). Impact of armed conflict on the seasonal migratory practices of Gujjar and Bakkarwal tribes in Jammu and Kashmir. *IOSR Journal of Humanities and Social Science*, 19(2), 54–62.

Tufail, M. (2014). Impact of the climatic change on the seasonal movement of the Gujjar and Bakarwals: Community perceptions. *IOSR Journal of Environmental Science, Toxicology and Food Technology*, 8(1), 41–46. <https://doi.org/10.9790/2402-08114146>

Film Review: Kayo Kayo Colour

Muntaha Amin⁴

Abstract

This paper reviews *Kayo Kayo Colour*, directed by Shahrukh Khan Chevada, as an important cinematic intervention in the representation of Muslims in contemporary Indian cinema. Set in the Kalupur ghetto of Ahmedabad, the film follows the everyday struggles of a working-class Muslim family negotiating poverty, gendered spaces, and aspirations within a marginalized socio-political environment. Employing neorealist aesthetics through black-and-white cinematography, long takes, and non-professional actors, the film foregrounds ordinary Muslim lives with dignity and empathy. The review argues that the film challenges dominant stereotypes and propaganda-driven portrayals of Muslims by presenting multidimensional characters rooted in lived experience. It further explores themes of class inequality, gender socialization, displacement after the 2002 Gujarat riots, and ethical questions of representation and positionality in filmmaking. The film ultimately emerges as a powerful example of fair, humane, and authentic representation of marginalized Muslim identities in Indian cinema.

Keywords: Muslim Representation; Indian Cinema; Neorealism; Identity; Class Inequality; Gender; Marginalization; Everyday life; Visual Politics

Kayo Kayo Colour (Which Colour), in Gujarati, directed by Shahrukh Khan Chevada and produced by Wafa Refai, becomes a poignant exploration of the everyday life of a working-class Muslim family living in the Kalupur Ghetto of Ahmedabad, Gujarat.

Chevada and Wafa, the filmmakers, are a Muslim couple from Ahmedabad who lived and were raised in a similar Muslim neighbourhood as the one depicted in the film. *Kayo Kayo Colour* made its international premiere at the International Film Festival Rotterdam 2023 and thus travelled to many prestigious international film festivals across the world. The film emerges as an intimate portrayal of a Muslim family navigating the everydayness of life in present-day Gujarat.

The story revolves around Razzak (Imtiyaz Shaikh), his wife Raziya (Samina Shaikh), and their children, Ruba (Yushra Shaikh) and Faiz (Fahim Shaikh). Razzak has struggled to support his family with the meagre income from his small job and has quit it, now looking to buy an autorickshaw to earn a living. His daughter, Ruba, becomes intrigued after seeing a drink that costs 100 rs, and she wants to raise that 100 rs amount to see what such an expensive drink would taste like.

In the film, we see Raziya doing everyday chores, women having conversations in domestic spaces, children playing, and Razzak navigating and arranging expenses for his autorickshaw, all given slow-paced, contemplative screentime that makes this film reminiscent of the films of Vittorio De Sica. The film's neorealist aesthetics remind us of the vanguard Italian Neorealist films. Shot in black and white, with scenes filmed in long takes and still frames, the film unfolds in the semblance of real-time, using people playing themselves and cast in the same relations in the film as in their real lives.

In an ocean of coordinated, deliberate, and skewed representation of the Muslim community in mainstream Indian cinema, Muslims have often been portrayed through tropes: either terrorist, savage, the evil other, or constantly having to exclusively prove their belongingness and patriotism.

As such, a Muslim person often feels a sense of never having been represented in media as wholesome and dignified. One wants representations where one can feel seen, visible, related, and represented, but is only met with disappointment. One longs to see representations where we as Muslims are seen not as one-dimensional caricatures but as rounded, opinionated, multidimensional characters with the same universal feelings of longing, desires, love, heartbreak, grief, happiness, confusions, learnings, dreams, and so on. One longs to see even one character on screen that feels like us. I, for one, do not ever feel represented, and neither do my friends and family. We have never seen anyone like ourselves on screen. This makes us go through identity crises where we look up to people or cultural markers from other identities for some kind of identification.

We yearn for simple, mundane, and dignified representation of ours as Muslims, as women, and as other intersectional identities we find ourselves in. We yearn for dignified representation of our spaces, our faith, our human struggles, our lives, or our everyday. The mainstream cinema and media of the world have failed the international Muslim community, and so has Indian mainstream cinema. The Indian mainstream has rather done more harm than good. The earlier films in India, including the recent propaganda films, have led to targeted violence and hate against the Muslim community. Representation of a certain kind does that to a certain community it is directed at. In the sea of misinformation and propaganda, some non-mainstream films arrive as a breath of fresh air for the Indian Muslim community.

Kayo Kayo Colour has finally answered much of our unexpressed yearning for fair and dignified representation.

Through an everyday story, Chevada manages to fracture an entire ecosystem of caricatured representations of Muslims in all kinds of media spaces. The characters in the film are practising Muslims who are not sorry, insecure, or apologetic about their Muslim identity. This kind of politics in the film becomes a refreshing change. It is visually revolutionary how ample screen time has been given to characters offering namaz, children praying in the Madrasa, Quran recitation being done, and the way other forms of worship are shown. These long takes are lyrical and explore the rhythms of the life of Muslims in the neighbourhood, giving the location and the spaces objective empathy.

The camera work is poignant, as cramped spaces are used to simultaneously show many planes of action through windows, doors, and creative top shots. The representation of Muslim culture and cultural practices, along with the visual politics of the ghetto spaces, is another striking feature of the film. They are framed with empathy and a distant, objective camera.

The use of an objective perspective becomes an ethical distance quite telling. Chevada shows sensitivity in understanding his place as an outsider in the family that he films. In most places, he chooses not to go too close to the subjects, showing that no matter how much we claim to know and understand our subjects' lives, we never truly can fully.

Some stark questions regarding gender are raised by how the subjects are framed vis-à-vis their locations and vice versa. Girls playing houses and playing with dolls in delicate, feminine gender-role training, in contrast to the boys indulging in a rooster fight like a sport in an excessively fast-

paced masculine energy, points to the exposing of the stark nature of the gendered spaces of the ghetto.

Questions regarding class are introduced and engaged with in the film through the use of dialogue. Through the people Razzak meets to deal with his rickshaw expenses, and through Shaista Bhabhi's conversation about Jio sims and Ambani's daily expenditure, we see how the class struggle of the family, and by extension the ghettoised community, is foregrounded. This becomes a poignant comment on the income disparity in India.

The film also makes subtle socio-political commentary by referring to the family's displacement during the 2002 Gujarat riots, providing context to its present financial and other precarious situation. This aspect is woven brilliantly in an understated way by the director.

One very remarkable thing about the film is how Chevada makes a self-conscious decision of visibilising his presence in the characters' world. This is done by breaking the fourth wall at times when characters directly talk to him while the shots are rolling. At one point, a child comes very close to the camera on the street. It is also done by abrupt changes in the pace of the film at times, especially in the rooster fight sequence at the end of the film and at the last shot of the film. This makes us too conscious of the camera and is a deliberate ethical choice.

Who tells the story according to their identity and particular lived reality is very instrumental in understanding the representation of the characters' lived experiences. Through Chevada's gaze, his Muslim identity becomes all too evident, and this positionality of the filmmaker probes for more questions in the film world about lived experience, identity, one's politics, location, positionality, and representation on-screen and offscreen. Who is telling whose story is an important question to ask and look for while exploring artistic works on stories of marginalized identities and communities of the world.

Kayo Kayo Colour is a remarkably intimate film regarding Muslim identity, their class and gender issues, filmed with empathy and dignity, amounting to setting a precedent in the world of fair representation for the Indian Muslim community. This film, by that merit, is one of a kind.