

# Trauma, Memories, And A Lost Identity: A Tale Of Two People — The Kashmiri Pandits And The Jews

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## ABSTRACT

The genocide of the Kashmiri Pandits present striking parallels and divergences, reflecting complex socio-political landscapes and the human toll of displacement. The genocide of Kashmiri Pandits in the late 1980s and early 1990s stemmed from political turmoil and religious persecution. On the other hand, the Jewish holocaust, notably the Biblical exodus from Egypt, signify forced displacement triggered by religious and political conflicts. The Jewish narrative spans centuries and is intertwined with religious texts, while the genocide of the Kashmiri Pandits is a more recent event shaped by contemporary political turmoil. Moreover, the international response and recognition of these events differ significantly. The Jewish holocaust has garnered global acknowledgment and commemoration, shaping discussions on human rights and persecution, while the genocide of Kashmiri Pandit has received less global attention despite its profound impact on a regional scale. Both exoduses underscore the resilience of communities in the face of adversity and the enduring struggle to preserve cultural identity in diaspora. Yet, their treatment in historical narratives, socio-political contexts, and global recognition highlight the complexities and nuances in the experiences of displaced communities with a certain degree of prejudice towards the Jews. The paper will analyse a close study that shows trauma faced by the Kashmiri Pandits during their genocide and the Jewish holocaust through select texts, A Long Dream of Home: The Persecution, Exodus and Exile of Kashmiri Pandits by Siddhartha Gigoo and Varad Sharma and Exodus by Leon Uris. Understanding and acknowledging these forced migrations can contribute to broader discussions on human rights, displacement, and the preservation of cultural heritage, emphasizing the importance of empathy, recognition, the trauma they faced during the genocide and support for affected communities striving to rebuild their lives amidst upheaval and loss. Emerging interdisciplinary perspectives further suggest that the long-term effects of displacement and persecution may extend across generations through psychological and epigenetic mechanisms associated with trauma transmission. The paper also deals with how Kashmiri Pandits have endured persecution throughout history, and utilised various tactics of resistance to oppose unfair treatment, like ranging from armed struggle to cultural preservation and advocacy.

**KEYWORDS:** Forced migration, Genocide, Loss of Identity, Resilience, Trauma, Memories, Persecution, Intergenerational Trauma, Epigenetics.

## INTRODUCTION

The Holocaust is among the most outrageous examples of genocide in the history when millions of innocent people were being killed in a well-organized manner on the basis of their ethnicity, religion and political ideology. The term "Holocaust" can usually be used to refer to the state-sponsored systematized persecution and murder of about 6 million Jews by Nazi Germany and its allies in World War II. The name itself is a Greek word, holokauston, or sacrifice by fire, a name that is used to describe the atrocious means of killing millions of people in concentration and extermination camps. In the religion of Hellenism, holokauston was the act of giving dark animals to earth and underworld gods during the night and incinerating them to ashes. Although it is widely known that the Holocaust was the genocide of the Jewish people, there were other marginalised groups that were also subjected to the Holocaust such as the Roma, disabled people, political dissidents, and Polish and Soviet civilians. Holocaust is one of the most shocking and disastrous of all inhumanities and it has been a chilling experience as a lesson of the dangers of bigotry, hatred and unmitigated power. Its legacy continues to inform talk about memory, human rights and the need to prevent such tragedies in future. Conversely, intentional and organized persecution to a racial, ethnic, religious, or national group of people carried out on a large scale is termed as genocide. It is one of the most severe forms of violence that are driven by a desire to annihilate a particular group of individuals, either physically, by murdering them or enticing them into a trap so that they do not survive, flourish or

procreate. Genocides may be carried out using different horrors, and these may include mass executions, torture, starvation, and forced migrations. The effects of genocide are hideous and they create a scar on the survivors and the society, which has a long-lasting effect on culture, identity, and social integrity. The issue of accountability and prevention has become a crucial point in the perceptions of the international community, and genocides are still occurring, hence the need to be more attentive, implement justice and safeguard vulnerable populations. It results in a drastic social, cultural and economic unrest with entire communities displaced and leaving their homes, customs and identities behind. Not only do these events lead to severe trauma and misery of the immediate recipients of such movements, but also cause a long-term negative impact in those areas to which people are relocating, and those who are not. The mass exodus may be traumatic across generations since people that have been displaced find it hard to restore their lives and preserve their culture. Recent advances in trauma studies, psychology, and molecular biology suggest that the effects of extreme violence and forced displacement may extend beyond immediate survivors. Research has demonstrated that prolonged exposure to traumatic events can influence stress-response systems and contribute to epigenetic modifications associated with trauma-related disorders. Such findings have expanded the understanding of trauma from a purely psychological and cultural phenomenon to one that may also possess biological and intergenerational dimensions (Yehuda & Lehrner, 2018). Although the present study primarily adopts a literary and comparative approach, these developments provide an important interdisciplinary framework for understanding the enduring impact of collective suffering, memory, and identity formation among displaced communities. However, the name Genocide is overused, in the opinion of Noam Chomsky, “Hitler carried out genocide. That’s true. It happened to the case of the Nazis, a relentless and explicit attempt to virtually exterminate groups that they desired to be erased off the face of the earth.. The Gypsies and the Jews were the main targets. There were other cases where there had been mass killing. The highest per capita death rate in the world since the 1970s has been in East Timor. In the late 1970s, it was by far in the lead. Nevertheless, I wouldn’t call it genocide. I don’t think it was a planned effort to wipe out the entire population, though it may well have killed off a quarter or so of the population. In the case of Bosnia, where the proportions killed are far less, it was horrifying, but it was certainly far less than that, whatever judgment one makes, even the more extreme judgments. I am just reluctant to use the term. I don’t think it’s an appropriate one. So, I don’t use it myself. But if people want to use it, fine. It’s like most of the other terms of political discourse. It has whatever meaning you decide to give it. So, the question is basically unanswerable. It depends on what your criteria are for calling something genocide.” (Chomsky, *Class Warfare*, 1996 and Jones, Chomsky and *Genocide*, 2020) Chomsky never used the term Holocaust of Jews; rather, he always preferred genocide, and sometimes he also refused to use the term Genocide for the suffering of Jews.

The Jewish Holocaust and the genocide of Kashmiri Pandits represent two profound and tragic chapters in history, each marked by unimaginable loss, displacement, and the enduring struggle for justice and recognition. During the Holocaust, the Nazi German state, its allies, and collaborators ruthlessly persecuted and killed six million European Jews. In addition to the Holocaust, Nazi Germany persecuted and murdered millions of other people. The Holocaust was an incremental event that occurred across Europe between 1933 and 1945. This radicalisation led to the wholesale massacre of six million Jews. During World War II, Nazi Germany and its allies and collaborators murdered roughly two out of every three European Jews through lethal living conditions, horrific torture, mass shootings, gassings, and specifically built killing facilities. The Holocaust era began in January 1933, when Adolf Hitler and the Nazi Party took power in Germany. It concluded in May 1945, when the Allies defeated Nazi Germany in World War II. The “Holocaust” is also known as “the Shoah,” which is Hebrew for “catastrophe.” When the Nazis took power in Germany, they did not immediately begin with the mass killing of Jews. Soon after, though, they started using the government to single out and drive Jews out of German society. The Nazi German government organised violence against Germany’s Jews and enacted discriminatory legislation, among other antisemitic measures. The Nazi persecution of Jews intensified between 1933 and 1945. This radicalisation resulted in what Nazi leaders referred to as the “Final Solution to the Jewish Question.” The “Final Solution” involved the organised and systematic extermination of European Jews. The Holocaust was perpetrated by the Nazi German government from 1941 until 1945. Six million European Jews had been killed by the Nazi German government, their allies, and collaborators by the conclusion of the Holocaust.

### **End of the Holocaust**

The Holocaust ended in May 1945 with the defeat of Nazi Germany by the main Allied Powers (the US, the UK, and the USSR) in World War II. In a string of attacks, Allied armies occupied concentration centres throughout Europe. The remaining inmates, many of whom were Jews, were freed there. In addition, the Allies met and released the survivors of the so-called death marches. These forced marches consisted of groups of individuals who had been evacuated on foot from both Jewish and non-Jewish concentration camps. But there was no closure after liberation. As they attempted to start over, many Holocaust survivors had to deal with constant threats of violent antisemitism and displacement. Many had lost family members, while others had spent years trying to find their missing siblings, parents, and kids. (United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Introduction to the Holocaust: What Was the Holocaust?)

### **Jews’ survival from the Holocaust**

Nazi Germany sought to eradicate all Jews in Europe, yet some Jews managed to survive the Holocaust. There were several strategies for surviving. However, survival was only possible in each case due to a unique combination of events, decisions, and assistance from both Jewish and non-Jewish people.

Some Jews managed to escape German-controlled Europe and survive the Holocaust. Despite severe immigration restrictions, hundreds of thousands of Jews left Nazi Germany before World War II. Nazi violence did not affect those who went to the United States, Great Britain, and other countries that were still outside of German rule. Some Jews were able to flee German-controlled Europe even after World War II broke out. For instance, when Germany occupied Poland, around 200,000 Polish Jews escaped. After being sent farther east into the Soviet Union's interior by Soviet authorities, several Jews managed to survive the war in difficult circumstances. Lastly, despite overwhelming odds, a few Jews survived being imprisoned in ghettos, concentration camps, and even execution sites. (United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Introduction to the Holocaust: What Was the Holocaust?)

### **Aftermath of the Holocaust**

The Holocaust was over, and war changed nothing in this regard. By the end of the World War II, six million Jews and millions of others had died. Nazi Germany, its allies and collaborators had destroyed or ravaged thousands of Jewish communities all over Europe.

The Jews that managed to survive the Holocaust were often faced with the tragic reality that they lost their entire family and community. Others managed to get back to their home and decide to begin afresh in Europe. Many people were frightened to do so due to the antisemitism and then violence. During the immediate aftermath those people who could not or did not want to go home often were placed in displaced people camps. Most of them were forced to wait years before they could immigrate to the new countries. The world has found it hard to remember the victims, accept the atrocities of the genocide and take the murderers to task. These large-scale projects are still carried out. (United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Introduction to the Holocaust: What Was the Holocaust?)

Its genocide of the Kashmiri Pandits is in its turn a tragic and a complex phenomenon in the history of the Kashmir Valley that left its people in the bloodshed, exile, and loss, which still torments the community today. The causes of the genocide can be traced back to political and social violence in Kashmir, which grew more in the late 20th century.

### **Pre-Conflict Kashmir**

Historically, Kashmir was a diverse and multiethnic region, in which a significant role in intellectual, cultural, and religious life of the valley was traditionally played by Kashmiri Pandits that were mostly Hindus. A number of centuries the Pandits, the Muslims, Sikhs, and the Buddhists were in harmony and peace. However, there were long-standing tensions founded on political and religious grounds, prior to this. After the partitioning of India into different regions in 1947, the Kashmir territory was a disputed region between India and Pakistan.

### **Rise of Militancy in the 1980s**

This happened to shift towards the end 80s when the insurgency in Kashmir was gaining strength. After contentious state elections conducted in 1987 when most of the Kashmiris felt that their democratic rights were being trampled on, armed movements and later which became more radicalized, started emerging against the Indian government. These groups desired to either transform Kashmir into an autonomous state or annex it to Pakistan, and began to reconsider the Kashmiri Pandits since they were seen to be the proponents of the Indian state, the Indian military and the Indian establishment.

### **Escalation of Violence (1989-1990)**

Later in the 1980s, however, the insurgency had grown quite robust, with the encouragement of Pakistan and growing desire to secede Kashmir out of India. It was also when radical Islamist ideologies were being formulated and the situation of the Pandit people was becoming worse since it had been long enough since it was a minority in a Muslim dominant nation. The violence increased in winter 1989-1990. A series of armed militants carried out an operation of killings, explosions and intimidations, demanding Hindus either to convert into Muslims or to leave Kashmir, or they will be killed. The burning of houses, desecration of temples among other intimidation methods were used in the campaign.

The first signs of mass murder of the Pandits were in the form of kidnappings and bombings as well as targeted assassination. The rebels were also aiming at high profile Pandits like political leaders, teachers and intellectuals, a strong message of intimidation was being sent. It culminated in the notorious events of January 1990 when a wave of terror made hundreds of thousands of Kashmiri Pandits to flee their houses.

On January 19, 1990, an enormous movement of Pandit families took place, when tens of thousands of Pandit-families fled, in fear of being murdered in the Kashmir Valley. The rebels also threatened and demanded the Hindus to either convert to their religion or Islam or leave the area or they would be executed. Numerous families were subjected to violence of rape, torture and murder. Many of the temples were torn down, and the houses belonging to the Pandit families were plundered and burnt. In this anarchy, there occurred a large-scale exodus of the Kashmiri Pandit population, with a population estimated to have been 350,000 to 400,000 people abandoning the Valley and their homes, their property, and their cultural heritages within several days. Although they displaced the Pandits, a considerable number of them were killed and others were subjected to unimaginable persecutions, including rape, torture and humiliation. This Kashmiri

Hindu culture that had been thriving in the region was virtually destroyed as they would no longer be a community, but were reduced to refugees in their own nation, who were scattered throughout India and camped mainly in Jammu, Delhi, and other cities.

### **Displacement and Aftermath (1990s - Present)**

The expelled Kashmiri Pandit community were forced to live in their own country as refugees in camps in Jammu, Delhi and other regions of India. The exodus was considered to be one of the greatest and saddest displacements in contemporary Indian history. The stress of losing houses, relatives and cultural heritage was added to the violence that was still flowing in the area and the emergence of an insurgency led by Islamists. Pandits were not just physically beaten up but also socially ostracised, as most of them were regarded as aliens even in the new regions where they found their way.

The violence did not come to an end during the years after the exodus. Besides the killings and rape, other atrocities against the Pandits, such as forced conversion, harassment, etc., were practised. The fact that the Indian government did not even speak about the genocide of the Kashmiri Pandits, and there was no justice to those whose life was taken away, has placed the community in a state of grief and frustration that has lasted long.

### **Political and Legal Dimensions**

Although the amount of tragedy is enormous, the genocide of the Kashmiri Pandits has remained a very controversial concern in Indian politics. Although most Pandit organisations and human rights campaigners have demanded that the events be declared a genocide, action has been slow by the Indian government as well as the mainstream political parties and organisations. The absence of responsibility for the violence, coupled with the political instability that continues to hit Kashmir, has ensured that the community is not able to seek justice or to go back to their own home.

Sporadic dialogue efforts have been made in the years after the genocide, such as efforts to help Kashmiri Pandits return to the Valley. Nonetheless, things are still not very safe, and there are several Pandits who are not eager to go to the land of great violence and loss they went through. Moreover, there are also the political processes in Kashmir, particularly the fact that the Indian government has removed the special status of the region (abrogation of Article 370) in 2019, and this has complicated the situation even more.

The genocide survivors that are now widely scattered in the world and India alone find it difficult to seek justice, recognition and as they also assert the ancestral lands. The society remains united on its course to assert that they have fallen victim to violence and that its history should be upheld. The efforts to make writing on the history of the genocide and the impact it has had on the community of the Pandits have not ceased and a number of books, documentaries and research papers have uncovered the horrors.

The problem of the Kashmiri Pandits genocide is highly sensitive and controversial, despite the decades, despite the fact that the genocide of the Kashmiri has taken place. Inequality, absence of responsibility and sensitivity towards the horrors that the Pandit community went through have led to irreversible pain and disillusionment. The majority of the survivors maintain, up to this day, that the occurred events ought to be referred to as a genocide and their people ought to be returned to their native land together with the victims and the preservation of their cultural identity. Kashmiri Pandit genocide has become a symbolic symbol of the human, ethnic, and political conflict when it all collided in the Kashmir region and the phenomenon has stayed to affect the Human rights, displacement and identity discourse.

The genocide of Kashmiri Pandits is a painful chapter in the history of India, marked by extreme violence, loss, and displacement. The Pandit community's experiences of suffering, exile, and struggle for justice continue to shape their identity, even as they live in diaspora across the world. According to Barbara Harff, professor of political science emerita at the U.S. Naval Academy, "When an atrocity is not recognised as a genocide, a dangerous precedent is set for future acts of semantic avoidance, and the ability of areas affected by genocide to recover is severely hampered." (Harff, *No Lessons Learned from the Holocaust? Assessing Risks of Genocide and Political Mass Murder since 1955*, 2003 and Ringrose, *The Politicisation of the Genocide Label: Genocide Rhetoric in the UN Security Council*, 2020). While the violence may have ended, the scars of the past remain, and the demand for recognition, justice, and the right to return to the Kashmir Valley remains an enduring cause for the community.

### **RESEARCH METHODS**

This research work employs a close textual and descriptive research analysis and a qualitative comparative study between the Jews' Holocaust and the Genocide of Kashmiri Pandits through the chosen novels. The novels have not received sufficient critical attention academically and mostly not been studied together.

### **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

#### **Understanding Jews' Trauma and their Holocaust through the historical novel Exodus by Leon Uris**

Leon Uris' *Exodus* is a sprawling historical novel published in 1958 that focuses on the establishment of the State of Israel. It is an epic story about heroism, resilience, and the fight for Jewish survival and independence in the aftermath of the Holocaust. The novel is both a dramatic story and a tribute to the Jewish people's perseverance. The trauma of the Holocaust and the redemptive hope of rebuilding a nation. The novel is separated into five Books, depicts the resilience

of the Jewish people in the face of centuries of persecution. It portrays the tension between Jews, Arabs, and the British in Palestine, and the characters are involved in the violent and political struggle for the establishment of Israel. The conflict and denouement are narrated sympathetically to the Israelis' situation, and any group that opposes the State of Israel through violence and tyranny is portrayed as the collective opponent. The book's opponents include the British, Arabs, Nazis, and all other organisations that have marginalised Jews during the last two millennia. The novel is written in the third-person omniscient, thus, no single character speaks for the entire book, but Uris relates the story through the eyes of the Jewish people. Romantic and familial relationships were linked with the larger liberation struggle. Palmach members endure days without food or water, Israelis start building new settlements soon after the partition vote, and new immigrants are compelled to join the front lines of the violent conflict despite all obstacles and while fighting for their land. The new nation was founded as a result of the fervour and tenacity of the Jewish people.

With its minimal linguistic embellishments, sentimentalised and simplified Jewish history, an abundance of Zionist, someone who advocates for an independent Jewish state where Jews can live in safety and believe in the right of existence of a Jewish state. They can be both religious and non-religious Jews, as well as non-Jews (Anne Frank House, Are all Jews Zionists?). In a propaganda leaflet, Exodus is not truly a novel at all, but rather a scenario sketch. The decades-long narrative of Israel's 1948 independence is known as Exodus. American combat correspondent Mark Parker and his childhood friend Kitty Fremont reunite at the beginning of the novel. Shortly after World War II, Mark is travelling to Palestine to report on the heated events there, while Kitty is a nurse working with Greek orphans on Cyprus. Ari Ben Canaan, a Palestinian Jewish guy who needs Mark's assistance creating headlines, and Kitty is a nursing expert, join the two for dinner one evening. Ari is employed by Mossad Aliyah Bet, a Jewish group that helps people flee to Palestine. The Holocaust and the trauma faced by the Jewish people are key themes explored in Leon Uris's novel Exodus. Uris introduces these themes by the experiences of his characters, who are both the survivors of Holocaust and those who participated in the fight to build state of Israel. The novel describes emotional, psychological and physical trauma caused by the horrors of the Holocaust that shattered the Jews.

The following are some of the ways Uris attempts to examine the trauma of the Jews in the course of the holocaust.

### **1. Survival Guilt and Psychological Scars**

Ari Ben Canaan is one of the central characters of Exodus with the psychological trauma as the eye witness of the horrors of the Holocaust. He identifies himself as a survivor and occasionally he has problems with feeling guilty about surviving when so many others did not. This is one of the psychological impacts that a survivor of the holocaust has and is referred to as survivor guilt. Uris shows this in a number of interactions of the survivors and the emotional weight they bear particularly of those who lost their loved ones and friends in the genocide. As an illustration, Karen Hansen, a Norwegian woman who survived the Holocaust, is struggling with his or her own trauma in the novel. When she identifies with the other characters, she also shows her suffering not just at the loss of her family but also her guilt and shame of surviving as so many other people had been killed.

### **2. The Inhumanity of the Camps**

Uris delves into the atrocities committed in the concentration camps through detailed descriptions of what survivors went through. This physical and emotional torment of Jews in Nazi camps is captured in the novel and is a dehumanizing process that had inexplicable imprints. To illustrate this point, the experience of death under concentration camps is echoed in the plot of the ship called Exodus that the Jewish refugees are boarding to Palestine. The passengers, most of them being Holocaust survivors, are constantly persecuted and violated, which recalls them the painful memories of the time being in the camp. The narrative also portrays the destruction of human dignity in the camps, where Jews were systematically stripped of their identity, rights, and humanity. The survivors of such camps, the people on the Holocaust, bring the unerasable images of such horrors with them, which influence their identities and relations.



**Figure 1** Clandestine photograph, taken by a German civilian, of Dachau concentration camp prisoners on a death march south through a village on the way to Wolfratshausen. Germany, between April 26 and 30, 1945. Holocaust Encyclopedia.

(<https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/gallery/concentration-camps-1942-45-photographs> )

### **3. The Impact on Identity and Memory**

Another aspect of the Holocaust that has remained unchanged is the influence on the Jewish identity. The Holocaust had a great influence on the perception of the survivors themselves and their role in the world. Exodus reveals the sense of crisis of identity that the Holocaust triggered in the survivors through their experiences of trying to fit in their new lives in Palestine and how they managed to rediscover themselves. Uris also examines the role of memory in healing yet at the same time impairs healing. The survivors are always haunted by trauma of remembering on what happened during the Holocaust, some of them do it so as to repress their own memories, and others feel the necessity to remember and to make sure that such things never get forgotten. In the novel, most of the characters, mostly the survivors cannot bear the emotional burden of narration of their past events, and this leads the survivor into silence or anger.

### **4. The Struggle for a New Life**

The desperate need to have a new life and safe haven can also be seen as the reflection of trauma of the Holocaust. Uris stresses the importance of the Jewish refugee movement with particular reference to the struggle to establish a homeland in Palestine to be found after the war. The survivors are also shown to be determined to revisit their dignity, self-worth and security by establishing a Jewish state. Such desperation and urgency is based on the trauma of the holocaust whereby the survivors are keen on making sure that what they experienced will not be repeated.

### **5. Post-Traumatic Growth and Resilience**

Despite the deep wounds left by the Holocaust, Uris also shows the resilience of the Jewish people. The survivors of the Holocaust in Exodus are portrayed as people who, while deeply scarred, are capable of healing and building new lives. Uris explores how they channel their suffering into positive action, fighting for the creation of Israel and a better future. This represents an important aspect of trauma recovery, the ability to find meaning and purpose in the aftermath of trauma. In Chapter 4 of Book 2 of Exodus, Uris explained the trauma among young Jews student during their Holocaust. "A rock smashed through the seminary window. The rabbi hurried the students out through the back to the safety of the cellar. In the streets, Jews scampered wildly for cover ahead of a frenzied mob of over a thousand students and Cossacks.

"Kill the Jews!" they screamed. "Kill the Jews!"

It was another pogrom inspired by Andreev, the hump-backed headmaster of a local gymnasium-high school-and foremost Jew hater in Zhitomir. Andreev's students swaggered down the streets of the ghetto, smashing up store fronts and dragging any Jews they could find into the streets and beating them mercilessly.

"Kill the Jews... kill the Jews... kill the Jews!" Yakov and Jossi raced from the seminary. Using a route through back alleys, they sped over deserted cobblestone streets to reach their home and protect their parents. They ducked frequently for cover and worked away from the sounds of hoofbeats of Cossack horses and from the blood-curdling screams of the students.

They turned the corner into their street and ran head-on into a dozen hoodlums wearing university caps, disciples of Andreev.

"There go two of them!"

Yakov and Jossi turned around and fled, leading the pack of pursuers away from their own home. The students howled with glee as they sprinted after the brothers. For fifteen minutes, they wove in and out of streets and alleys until the students trapped them against a dead-end wall. Jossi and Yakov stood with their backs to the wall, dripping sweat and panting for breath as the students formed a semicircle and closed in on them. His eyes gleaming, the leader stepped forward with an iron pipe and swung at Jossi!

Jossi blocked the blow and snatched up the student, spun him around, lifted him over his head, and hurled him at the rest of his companions. Yakov, whose pocket full of rocks was for just such occasions, bounced two stones off the heads of two students, sending them to the ground unconscious. The other students scattered in flight.

The boys dashed home and flung open the door of the shop." (Uris, Exodus, 205-06)

In Exodus, Leon Uris captures the immense trauma suffered by Jews during the Holocaust through the characters' struggles with survival guilt, loss, and the impact of the concentration camps. However, he also highlights their resilience, determination, and the hope they find in the creation of Israel, which serves as both a symbol of healing and a sanctuary for the Jewish people. The trauma is not just about loss, but about rebuilding and reclaiming one's identity and future. The novel gives readers a powerful and poignant portrayal of how the Holocaust shaped the lives of Jewish survivors and the broader Jewish community.

## **Understanding Trauma and Genocide of Kashmiri Pandits through A Long Dream of Home: The Persecution, Exodus, And Exile of Kashmiri Pandits by Siddhartha Gigoo and Varad Sharma**

*A Long Dream of Home: The Persecution, Exodus and Exile of Kashmiri Pandits* by Siddhartha Gigoo and Varad Sharma is a powerful anthology of personal narratives that explores the deep trauma and loss of identity experienced by the Kashmiri Pandit community following their forced exodus from Kashmir during the late 1980s and early 1990s. These are a body of mourning of displacement, the need to possess a motherland and struggle to retain cultural identity amid the struggle. The compilation of narratives explains the trauma of the entire populace of Kashmir of the Pandits that were brought up by the militancy as the issue in the nation. They turned into refugees in their own land and they lived in unsuitable camps and were forced to live under harsh weather, diseases, and alienation. The survivors are struggling to make sense of nightmares, memories of violence, and the reason that it occurred to them never leaves their minds. This kind of torture, which is long-term psychological torture, is manifested in voices that are documented in the anthology. The Kashmiri Pandits were forgotten and visible nowhere in the political and social discourses, which only made them more alienated and alienated their identity further. Unlike the Kashmiri born youth, these youths fail to connect with their roots leaving them with a disorganized feeling of identity. *A Long Dream of Home* is not a simple narration of the genocide of the Kashmiri Pandits, it is the appreciation of the power of a people who are torn between knowing what happened and what happens today. It also touches upon the issue of how trauma and identity are interconnected with each other, which proves that despite the fact that displacement can make a community depressed, the process of remembering can also result in recovery and restoration.

The collection of stories in this anthology is a compilation of first-person narratives of the acts of violence, persecution, and suffering that this community underwent. The trauma in the book is summarised as follows.

### **1. Sudden Uprooting and Forced Migration**

**Forced Migration:** The book highlights the abruptness of the genocide whereby families had to run overnight under threats of militants as heightened by a wave of targeted killings and intimidations. Pandits were sent away or meet with terrible results.

**Loss of Homeland:** The writers emphasize on the intense sense of displacement and otherness of the people as they were torn off their ancestral homelands and territories since they were part of it since time immemorial.

### **2. Violence and Persecution**

**Targeted Killings:** The stories describe the cruel murder of Kashmiri Hindus of high ranking, and this caused a sense of fear. The society was targeted with violence that was committed against them due to their religious and cultural identity.

**Psychological Terror:** Slogans and messages that were playing through the loud speakers of the mosques combined with open demand that the Pandits either left or were killed caused a lot of fear.

### **3. Life in Refugee Camps**

**Poor Living Conditions:** The book illuminates on the pathetic conditions in the refugee camps where the displaced Pandits had gone to seek refuge. Families would live in a overcrowded area, usually struggling against harsh weather, substandard sanitation as well as access to basic amenities. Another account of the Genocide Fundamentally at Home to Camp by Santosh Kumar Sani tells the life of the Kashmiri Pandit in Refugee Camps. Sani said “Lack of adequate living space is also a grave problem for the migrants of Jagti camp. In the one-room-one-lobby-kitchen-and-bathroom setting, there is very little space to spare. It becomes very hot and claustrophobic for the residents during the summer and on the humid monsoon days. The material used for the construction of the buildings is quite inferior. Some of the apartment’s walls have cracked. The camp is cut off from the life that one finds in a city. There is no interaction with the people belonging to the other sections of society. The camp dwellers live in a closed system. They are not exposed to other aspects of life. Their life is boring.” (Gigoo and Sharma, *A Long Dream of Home: The Persecution, Exile, and Exodus of Kashmiri Pandits*, 125)

**Loss of Dignity:** Many Pandits, who had lived respectable lives as teachers, civil servants, and intellectuals, were reduced to a state of dependency, struggling to rebuild their lives in unfamiliar cities.



**Figure 2:** A Kashmiri Pandit woman at a refugee camp. Hindustan Times. (<https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/living-as-a-refugee-in-one-s-own-country/story-y0qXanNR4kx6RPxuczCcQP.html> )

#### 4. Intergenerational Trauma

**Cultural and Emotional Displacement:** The stories address the psychological effects on the new generation, who got to possess the suffering of exile and alienation to their own cultural landscape.

**Loss of Identity:** The exodus caused a fragmentation of the Pandits’ cultural and linguistic identity, leading to a sense of rootlessness among the displaced.

Recent interdisciplinary scholarship has suggested that intergenerational trauma may involve not only cultural transmission through stories, memories, and collective experiences but also biological pathways associated with chronic stress exposure. Studies involving descendants of Holocaust survivors have reported alterations in stress-related physiological responses and DNA methylation patterns linked to trauma adaptation and inheritance (Yehuda et al., 2016). Furthermore, investigations examining the transmission of stress responses across generations indicate that traumatic experiences may influence descendants through complex interactions between environmental exposure, psychological adaptation, and biological mechanisms (Bowers & Yehuda, 2016). Research has further indicated that exposure to severe stress may be associated with epigenetic alterations that can persist across generations, providing additional evidence for the biological dimensions of intergenerational trauma and adaptation (Serpeloni et al., 2017). These findings indicate that traumatic experiences can shape family narratives, emotional responses, and patterns of identity across generations. While similar large-scale biological studies remain limited among displaced Kashmiri Pandit communities, the recurring themes of inherited fear, loss, displacement, and cultural fragmentation documented in personal narratives suggest the importance of future interdisciplinary investigations connecting literary testimony, psychological trauma, and emerging evidence from epigenetic research.

#### 5. Erasure and Silence

**Forgotten Plight:** The book reveals the element of marginalization by the larger Indian society and the world. The Kashmiri Pandit genocide was at many points bumped to the bottom of the agenda as far as political and media coverage are concerned.

**Unfulfilled Dreams of Return:** The ambition of majority of contributors to revisit their motherland is what has been denied most of them.

#### 6. The Power of Memory

**Saving History:** The anthology is a wake-up call, the effort to ensure that the stories of pain, perseverance, and survival will not be forgotten by history.

**Rebuilding Identity:** The contributors, through the application of personal experience, point out how they have attempted to preserve the Kashmiri culture and traditions in exile despite having to contend with the trauma.

Therefore, it is possible to state that the book *A Long Dream of Home* does not only tell the collective trauma of the Kashmiri Pandit people, but also provides evidence of the fact that they survived the persecution and exile. The first-hand experiences provide a fantastic idea of the human cost of political war and the permanent scarring it can leave on the displaced communities.

#### Commonalities and Differences between the Genocide of Kashmiri Pandits and the Jewish Holocaust

The genocide of Kashmiri Pandits in India and the Holocaust of Jews during World War II share certain commonalities as they both involve persecution and mass violence against a specific ethnic or religious group. However, they differ significantly in scale, historical context, and methods. Below is a comparative analysis:

##### Commonalities

Aspects	Genocide of Kashmiri Pandits	Jewish Holocaust
Targeted Group	Kashmiri Pandits (Hindus of Kashmir)	Jews
Perpetrators	Extremist Islamist groups, supported by radicals	Nazi regime and collaborators
Time Period	Late 1980s and early 1990s	1933-1945
Primary Motivation	Religious and political reasons (Islamization, secession)	Anti-Semitism, racial purity, Nazi ideology

Methods of Persecution	Assassinations, threats, arson, destruction of homes and temples	Mass killings, concentration camps, gas chambers
Forced Displacement	Over 300,000-400,000 Pandits forced to flee from the Kashmir Valley	Millions of Jews were deported to ghettos and camps
Impact on Survivors	Refugee status, cultural disintegration, loss of homeland	Holocaust survivors faced PTSD, statelessness
Global Awareness	Very limited global attention; perceived as a regional issue	Global recognition as one of history's worst genocides

**Table-1 Differences**

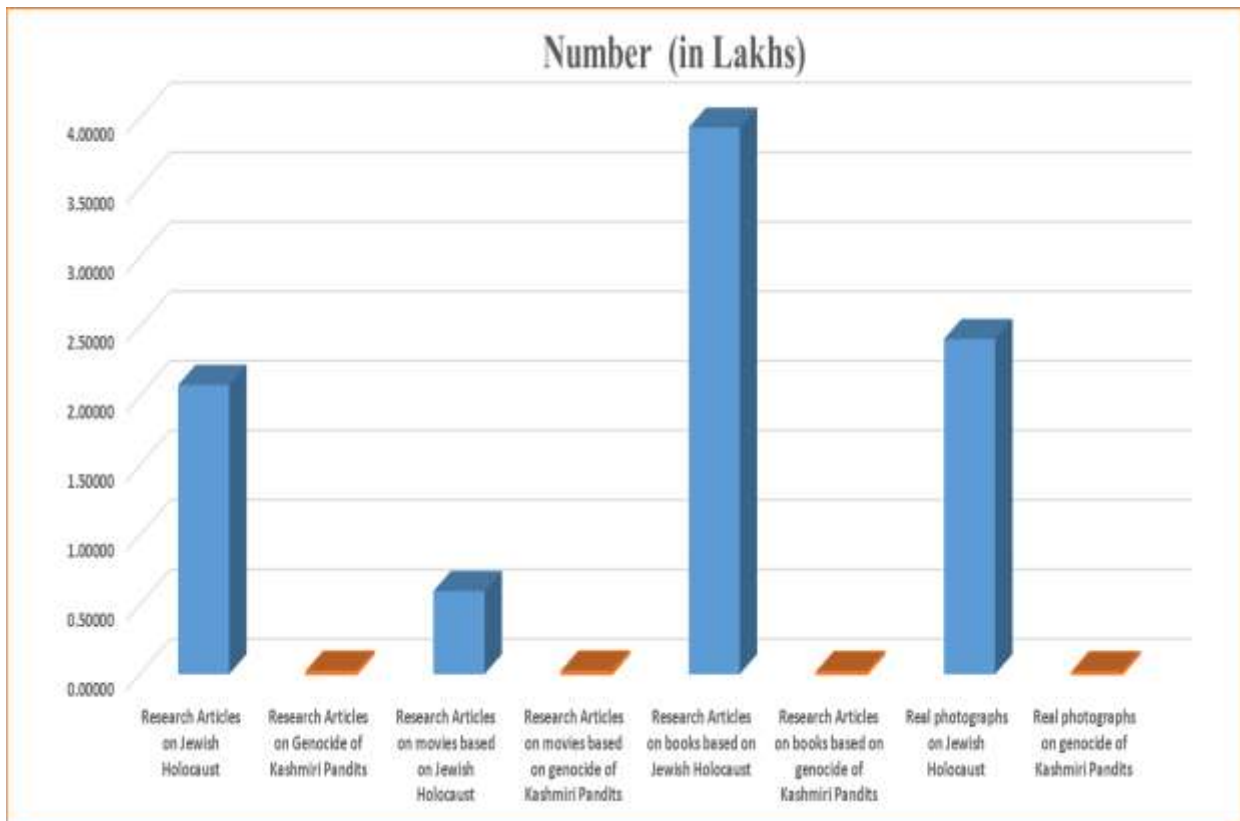
Aspects	Genocide of Kashmiri Pandits	Jewish Holocaust
Perpetrators	Islamic militant groups, with complicity from some local actors and a lack of protection by the government	The Nazi regime, led by Adolf Hitler, and collaborators in the occupied territories
Immediate Cause	Rise of Islamic militancy, calls for "ethnic cleansing" of Kashmiri Pandits in the region, and demand for Sharia law.	Anti-Semitic ideology, Nazi racial purity policies, and the implementation of the "Final Solution"
Nature of Violence	Ethnic and religious persecution in a specific region	Racial and ethnic extermination on a global scale
Outcome	The majority of Kashmiri Pandits live in exile, with minimal return to Kashmir despite efforts.	Led to the establishment of Israel and global acknowledgement of genocide laws
Recognition as Genocide	Debate exists; officially not recognized as genocide in India or internationally.	Universally recognized as an exodus/genocide, leading to the term "Holocaust"
Documentation	Limited documentation and media coverage, primarily survivor accounts	Extensive documentation, photographs, films, survivor testimonies, and Nazi records

Legacy and Impact	Ongoing struggles for resettlement, justice, and recognition	Global remembrance (e.g., Holocaust museums), impact on human rights and international law
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**Table-2 Academic awareness regarding the Jewish Holocaust and the Genocide of Kashmiri Pandits**

Sl. No.	Text	Number (in Lakhs) (Approx.)
1	Research Articles on the Jewish Holocaust	2.08000
2	Research Articles on the Genocide of Kashmiri Pandits	0.01950
3	Research Articles on movies based on the Jewish Holocaust	0.59800
4	Research Articles on movies based on the genocide of Kashmiri Pandits	0.02120
5	Research Articles on books based on the Jewish Holocaust	3.93000
6	Research Articles on books based on the genocide of Kashmiri Pandits	0.01740
7	Real photographs of the Jewish Holocaust	2.41000
8	Real photographs of the genocide of Kashmiri Pandits	0.01572

**Table-3** \*Source: Results found on Scopus, Web of Science, and Google Scholar Databases on an average basis.



**Figure 3 (Graphical representation of Table 3)**

The above table and gap it is clearly states that the Holocaust of the Jews is very well-known globally as well as academically, whereas academicians are not much aware of the Genocide of the Kashmiri Pandits.

## CONCLUSION

The genocide of Kashmiri Pandits and the Jewish Holocaust are two distinct historical tragedies characterised by systemic violence, discrimination, and persecution of specific groups. While they differ in context, scale, and outcomes, both events underline the dangers of hatred, intolerance, and identity-based violence. They both act as reminders of the necessity of tolerance, extreme watchfulness and safeguarding minority rights. The two incidents were based on the idea that certain populations were targeted based on their religion or ethnicity. Family members were destroyed, houses were ruined, and societies were displaced. Resultant displacement led to culture, property and loss of livelihood. Pandits are now in exile, and there are no chances of them going back, because of the security issues and no compensation for their losses. The holocaust affected Jewish societies around the globe terribly. It led to the virtual extermination of Jewish communities in most European states and established the awareness of the atrocities of genocide across the world, which impacted international law and human rights. Two of the most significant human tragedies covered in the novel Exodus by Leon Uris and in the book A Long Dream of Home: The Persecution, Exile, and Exodus of Kashmiri Pandits by Siddhartha Gigoo and Varad Sharma are the Jewish Holocaust and the forced exodus of Kashmiri Pandits. Although offering a perfect analysis of the historical events that have taken place in their respective historical context, these works also focus on the conspicuous gap in what people know about these horrors.

Exodus by Leon Uris is a historical novel that tracks the events of the creation of the State of Israel and of the Jewish refugees, who occurred in the post-World War II period. Uris narrates the events that followed the Holocaust through his colourful storytelling and his characters, who are interesting enough to follow the storyline of the narration of the historical persecution of Jews through the centuries. The main character of the novel, Ari Ben Canaan, can be viewed as the spirit of the Jewish nation that is impossible to defeat because of the terrible crimes inflicted upon it. The description of the Holocaust, the ghettos, the concentration camps, and the displacement of Jews after the war by Uris resonated with readers all over the world. The exhaustive memoirs of agony, coupled with the narrative of survival and hope, have made immense contributions to the knowledge of the holocaust. The rise to fame of the novel and its adaptation as a successful movie were key in establishing the holocaust as a well-known historical occurrence, and that the world has not forgotten the systemic massacre of the Jewish people of six million.

Moreover, the concerted efforts that are being considered to the Holocaust history preservation through memorials, museums, literature and the media have made sure that the memory is not forgotten. The Holocaust is even more visible because the world has accepted it as a tragedy of unheard-of proportions.

A Long Dream of Home: The Persecution, Exile, in its turn, consists of autobiographical essays and memoirs of other people, who experienced ethnic cleansing and forced migration from their native territory in Kashmir. The list includes the information about the violence, threats, and systematic marginalisation which led to the genocide of the Kashmiri Pandit community in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Whatever may be stated in this set of dystopian stories, the case of the Kashmiri Pandits is one of the most neglected genocide cases in the recent past. The authors of the book present their stories of targeted killings, eradication, and the pain of being a refugee on the soil they call their home. However, the reality that there is a lack of overall consciousness about this tragedy across the world is extremely high when compared to the Holocaust.

This disparity is due to several factors. Kashmiri Pandits' genocide has never been commemorated together with the holocaust. It has an insufficient global advocacy, scarce international media coverage and a scramble of scholarly debate over their persecution. Also, their narrative has been silenced because geopolitical complexities in the region have tended to take centre stage over the human rights crisis that this community experiences. Future interdisciplinary research may further explore the relationship between collective memory, trauma transmission, and emerging evidence from epigenetic studies of displaced and persecuted communities.

The Jewish holocaust is known all over the world, as huge documentation, memorialization, and advocacy have been done. In its turn, the exodus of the Kashmiri Pandits is the victim of the global discourse, as it did not receive the attention it deserved, given the suffering that the community experienced. Thus, Exodus, as a historical novel that is well known worldwide, and A Long Dream of Home, as a compilation of eyewitness testimonies on Kashmiri Pandits during the Genocide is not even familiar to the Indians in the other case, they are so remote to the rest of the world.

Jewish Holocaust and the genocide of Kashmiri Pandits are two different but very painful events in the history of humankind. Although Exodus has done much to raise awareness about the suffering of the Jews the world over, A Long Dream of Home puts more emphasis on the issue of the Kashmiri Pandits needing to be more visible. The necessity to write down and make the voices of the marginalized heard so that no tragedy is ignored. Through reading these stories, we can endeavour at creating a more comprehensive picture of history and create the desire to ensure that such atrocities do not happen again.

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