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ORIGIN AND CULTURE OF KASHMIRI PANDIT COMMUNITY: AN ANALYTICAL STUDY

The present paper is an attempt to analyse the origin and cultural traditions of Pandit community in Kashmir. Historical evidence shows that, Kashmir was a place of Indian subcontinent where sages and *rishis* practiced spiritualism and spent their time to learning and teaching. They were believed that the Vedic Aryan blood in their vein. Kashmiri Hindus contained the predominant part of masses until the advent of Islam in the Kashmir Valley in early fourteenth century. The first scientific historical document of India, the 'Rajatarangini', written by a Kashmiri Brahmin (Kalhana) discusses the beginning of the mythic phases of the Valley of Kashmir and their peoples. Tradition and beliefs help them to relate supernatural, came from adjacent spirits, which highly cultural sensation beings that are seen as being basically kind. The paper assesses the origin of Kashmiri Pandits and their socio-religious practices that made a significant explanation of their social identity. In addition, this paper examines the traditions, festivals and beliefs of Kashmiri Pandit community, which is significantly, enlighten themselves to set up a new way of life in the Kashmir Valley.

Introduction

The Brahmin community had increased unique social and custom conventions intermittent from one place to another places in the Indian subcontinent. Among these people, the Brahmin groups, who lived in the valley of Kashmir is known as Kashmiri Pandits. Their limited members and partial topographical seclusion from whatever is left of the subcontinent developed through thousands of years some extraordinary rudiments of socio-religious behaviour. The commitment to the researchers of this state to Sanskrit writing has essentially been momentous (Ataov, 2001:17). On a connected plane, they are legatees of the non-dualistic school of thinking known as Kashmir Shaivism. They formed and shaped a race, which separated from the world in this Valley, remained on high by ethical and morals of the perfection and the superior manner of their inheritance. Ancient Kashmiri history has described the Pandits, the predominant inhabitants of Kashmir, very intelligent people

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with a high sense of humour and sharp foresight. The present study investigates the socio-cultural identity as well as geographical identity of Pandit community in Kashmir with a focus on their geographical and racial origin, everyday lifestyle and beliefs which is important as a contemporary research issue in the present day situation of Kashmir.

The current issues emerged when some ethnographic evidence stated that the Pandits are aboriginal of the Kashmir Valley in North India. They have a place with the most astounding position of Brahmin communities among the Hindu society and they designated as 'Saraswat Brahmin'. About the origin of Pandit community in Kashmir, Campbel raises the theory of penetration. Pandit Anand Kaul criticises the penetration theory and shows that the Pandit community is aboriginal of the Kashmir valley. It is important to know and comprehend the foremost particular elements that raise questions about the origin of the Pandit community, specifically in the setting of general religious and social practices. In this study, an attempt has been made to examine the geographical and ethical origin and the cultural pattern of Pandit community in Kashmir which is different from other than Brahmin community in India. In addition, this paper also evaluates the traditions, festivals and beliefs of Kashmiri Pandit community, which is significantly, enlighten themselves to set up a new way of life in the Kashmir Valley.

Origin of the Pandits

Before 'Kashmiri' is a significant time period which has loosely been applied for numerous streams of immigrated particularly from Turkey, Iran, primary Asia and Afghanistan, and settled inside the valley. There is a near bearing of the Ando-Aryans on the racial composition of the Kashmir's. In reality, the Indo-Aryan religions and languages have extensively affected the mode of existence of the Kashmiris. The affect of Sanskrit on Kashmiri language is powerful and cogent to at the prevailing time. Kashmir has also obtained ethnographical inclinations from Indo-Greeks which have inspired the race structure of the humans to a large extent (Husain, 1985:78). According to Dr. Kachru, "the Aryans, in search of their fertile lands, reached Kashmir. With their arrival, first the Pisacas and then the Nagas were either driven out from the Valley or assimilated by the new comers" (Husain, 1985:28). As indicated by the legend, as specified in the Rajtarangini and the Nilamatpurana, the valley of Kashmir was a major mountain lake, called Satisar or the pool of Sati¹. It was the heaven garden of the divine beings. Amongst them, one day showed up the evil spirit Sangrahasura who was overpowered by the bewitching excellence of Sachi, master of the rulers Indra's consort. His seed fell into the lake and got treated to conceive a progeny of Jalodbhava. These persons, out of fear, fled from their homes and hearths and the ruler got to be destroyed. Nilanag, their pioneer in gloom welcomed this father Kashyap to save them from the hands of evil presence Jalodbhava.

Kalhana says that, Kashyapa executed the evil presence of the lake, Jalodbhava with the help of Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva. After his passing, the water of the lake was depleted off and the area was named as 'Kashyapmar' and which is known as Kashmir (Kalhana,1900:5). The pre-notable period, as specified the Nilamatapurana and the Rajtarangini, shows that after the valley was drained out, Brahmins were brought here by Kashyapa (Shali,1993:35). In those days, it was said that the tribes from Central Asia called Nagas, Pishachas and Yakshas lived there. They used to offer inconvenience to these Brahmins and as educated by Nila the ruler regarding the Nagas, the Brahmins of and on offered sustenance's and garments to these tribes, who then permitted them a serene time. In both the Nilamatapurana and the Rajtarangini we discover the names of a few groups, to be specific Mlechhas, Nishadas, Khashas, Dards, Bhauttas, Bikhshas, Ekargas, Damaras, Tantris and Nyayaks who continually offered inconvenience to the leaders of the nation furthermore to the Brahmins. The groups of the region, be that as it may, are characterized by religion also i.e. Hindu, Muslim, Buddhist, Sikhs, and so forth (Banerjee, 1956:15). Nilmatapurana "shows that Kashmir was not only a beautiful piece of geographical territory, with its own cultural singularity but was a reservoir of thought and creativity which spilled over to India and countries beyond, contributing to some of the basic aspects of India Civilization" (Kaul, 1999: 1).

The two most usually offered understandings of the term Saraswat Brahmin are: Brahmins who live in the west of the underground river Saraswati; or Brahmins who are adherents of *Saraswati*, the Hindu goddess of learning. Another version of the origin of 'Saraswat Brahmin' is related to the descendants of great ancient sages Saraswat Muni, who lived on the bank of river *Saraswati*. One of them was settled in the western Konkon coast where they called themselves 'Saraswat Brahmins'. In the modern theory about the origin of Pandit (Brahmin) community in Kashmir raises some questions. Various historians, sociologists and anthropologists have explored two different theories. One is aboriginal and another is penetration theory. After the decisive examination of character, everyday lifestyle and continues movements of South Indian Saraswat Brahmins, S.L. Pandit stated that "...Others moved further north in to the valley of Kashmir and, permission of the Naga tribes who then ruled over this region" (Pandit, 2000: 145). Pandit Anand Koul shows that, "There are no chronicled records of Pandits having come to Kashmir from somewhere else, however numerous spectators have guessed about conceivable Jewish, Greek, or Persian roots" (Pandit, 1924: 1). But According to the study of Campbell shows that, "The Saraswatee Brahmins are also called (in the south at least) 'Kashastalee' a name which seems still to mark the time when they were considered to be of Kashmeeree or Kasha origin" (Pandit,1924:63). He also stated that, "The Kashmir Brahmins are quite High-Arian in the type of their features, very fair and handsome, with high chiselled features, and no trace of intermixture of the blood of any lower race... The figure of the ordinary

working Kashmeeree is strong and athletic. But none of them are martial, and the Brahmins are in this respect no exception" (Campbell, 1866: 57-58).

Hinduism integrated within of its fold an extensive mixture of statements of faith and doctrines. There were monotheists and polytheists all associated mutually under this religious faith. It included people innocent in one God, as similarly disciples having self-belief in thirty-three crore of *devtas*. The persons playing praise to icons and common powers likewise called themselves Hindus. They had respect for the Vedas, the cow, the class conveyance and the Brahmins. Kashmiri Hindus have uses various surnames, like, Agha, Atal, Bakshshi, Bamzai, Chak, Dhar, Gango, Jalali, Hangaloo, Kher, Mattoo, Tikko, Warikoo, Zutshi etc. But, Bhat, Kaul, Raina are the most common surname used by Kashmiri Pandits. Wakhlu stated that, "Most of the surnames of Kashmiri Pandits tell nothing of their origins and are mainly nicknames" (Wakhlu, 2011:6). Kashmiri Hindu surnames also originated from animal names, village names and traditional stone, metal pots names. But "the only genuine origin of a Kashmiri Brahmin is from his or her *Gotra*, based their origin from a respective Aryan sage" (Wakhlu, 2011: 7). According to S.K. Kachru, "*Gotra* refer to a particular Brahmanical clan. Kashmiri Brahmins are said to have originally belonged to only six *gotras*, viz., Dattatreya, Bhardwaja, paledeva, Mudgalya, Dhaumyayana and Aupamanyava. By intermarriage with other Brahmins, the number of *gotras* multiplied to 199. The belief that the Pandits are direct descendents of Kashyap Rishi is repudiated by many" (Kachru, 2012: 246).

It is comprehensively accepted occurrence that until the outset of the fourteenth century the majority population of the valley was Hindu. Tradition asserts that the prosecution of the Hindus was so ardent that only eleven families of Hindus remained in the valley. Their posterity is understood by the name of *Malmas*, as transcendent from the fugitives and the Hindu of Deccan, who came to Kashmir later on and is understood as the *Banamas* (Madan, 1989: 13). Some historians, however, settled that the *Malmas* Hindus to be the descendants of Kashyap the saviour of the valley, and that the *Banamas* Brahmins were foreigners, who came from other countries (Madan, 1989: 13). The Hindus who dwell in Kashmir now are with a few skill that the Levite Brahmins were a efficacious and numerous body, emit great prestige over the country and its rulers, there is habitual name of the fighting class, and it evident that a vast dominant part of the old Hindus more likely than not been horticultural 'Jats' of the 'Vaisya' division (Census, 1933: 290-91). Presently there is no hint of the *Jats* among the Hindus of Kashmir. Be that as it may, there are still *Khattris* in Srinagar, known as *Bohras*, are occupied with exchange and cut off from correspondence with the *Khattris* of the Punjab. Historian Michael Witzel was confused about the actual origin of Kashmiri Brahmins because, "the early books of Kalhana's history of Kashmir, the Rajatarangini, give some legendary stories about

their settlement. These accounts usually stress the role of a new king or governor or of a new royal family in carrying out the import of non-Kashmiri Brahmins” (Witzel, 1991: 3). But he cannot deny the fact that, “the history of the Kashmiri Brahmins may go back much beyond what Kalhana reports, all the way to the Vedic period” (Witzel, 1991: 4). According to Superintendent of Census Operations and Revenue Member Khan Bahadur Munshi Ghulam Ahmed Khan, “Up to 1340 A. D. there was not a single Mohammedan in Kashmir. The proselytes to Islamism in Kashmir were mostly from the original Hindu population, strangers and foreigners but few” (Census, 1902: 240).

The Brahmins of Kashmir were commended for their learning and educational accomplishments, and they are known as Kashmiri Pandits all over world. The Sanskrit word *Pandita* implies a cultured personage. Despite the fact that for the most component known as Kashmiri Pandits, they indicate themselves as *Bhatta* or *Batta*, which is the *Prakrit* word with ‘wonderful researchers’. Campbell observed that, “they rule by the brain and the pen, and not by the sword. It is this character that has gained them the favour of so many rulers of a different faith” (Campbell, 1866:58). At the season of Sultan Zain-ul-Abedin, the Pandit society was developed as an inside separation. The Sultan had restored certainty among the Brahmins and he felt the requirement for preparing themselves for the new open doors that may be offered to them and for any possibility that may emerge in future.² According to S.L. Pandit, “Apart from the tolerant phase of Muslim rule first firmly inaugurated by Zain-Ul-Abidin and later zealously revived by Akbar, the history of Kashmir was marked about this era by the emergence of other harmonizing factors among both the Muslims and Brahmins of the valley. While the scholarly Brahmins evolved a new universal aspect of Hindu ethos in the form of *Shaivism*, the Muslims were deeply involved in a tolerant aspect of Islamic *Sufism* marked by the rise of what is called the *Rishi* cult in Kashmir” (Pandit, 2000: 147). In this composite arena the Kashmiri Pandits swung progressively to the investigation of Persian, the court dialect, and looked for act as authorities, interpreters and agents in the administration (Yoyng hasband, 1909: 108). They were energized by the rulers in these interests. It appears that a tradition soon got to be set up whereby a large portion of the children in a Pandit family concentrated on Persian (the court dialect) and stand out or two gave themselves to the investigation of Sanskrit and the sacred writings. Their scholarly predominance over whatever remains of the populace must be conceded. They were snappy of dread and have great recollections. Arrogance was one of their assailing shortcomings. However, some of them were exceptionally unrivalled, reliable, genuine, lucid and innovative (Koul, 1913:15). It is absolute true observation that the Pandits are original inhabitant in the valley of Kashmir. Anthropologist P.N. Bhattacharjee observed in his studies, “Barring the secretor factor, the blood group systems-Ai A2 B 0, MNSs, and Rh denote that the Muslims and the

Pandits are homogeneous populations, as expected, because the majority of the Muslims were originally Hindus” (Bhattacharjee, 1966: 92).

It was chosen that a little girl’s child of a man ought to be made *bhasha* (dialect, i.e. Sanskrit, the dialect of the sacred writings) *Batta* to oversee to the religious needs of his maternal grandfather’s group. *Bhatta* also uses in compounds indicating their sons, such as *bhatta-putra*, *bhatta-suta*, *bhatta-taneya*, *bhatta-dayada* etc. This group is exceptionally best in class in instruction, more than seventy percent of its part being proficient. In India we have seen a considerable measure of Kashmiri Pandits have turned out to be surely understood executives and government officials. History specialists are, in any case, concurred that over the span of time this division of work advanced into a twofold division of the general public based upon occupation and invigorated by endogamy. Those Pandits who gave themselves to the investigation of the sacred writings and the execution of religious obligations were known as the *bhasha bhatta* or all the more just, the *gor* (got from the Sanskrit ‘master’ for ‘aide’ or ‘preceptor’). The writing of Albiruni shows that a Brahmin is called in various ways. “When he is busy with the service of one fire, he is called *istin* , if he serves three fires, he is called *agnihotrin*, if he besides offers an offering to the fire, he is called *diksita*” (Witzel, 1991: 39).

The individuals who kept on examining the sacred texts without taking up clerical obligations were known as the Pandit or *joytishi* (crystal gazer). The adherents of mainstream occupations were known as the *karkun* (labourers). The *joytishi* have not developed into an endogenous gathering, as have the *gor*, and may intermarry with the *karkun*, yet nor with the *gor*. The cleric class does not intermarry with both of alternate classes, but rather the *joytish* and *karkun* do this. The *joytish* Pandits are scholarly in the *Shastras* and elucidate them to the Hindus, and they draw up the timetables in which predictions are made about the occasions of the coming year. The cleric class performs the customs and services of the Hindu religion. The limitless dominant parts of the Pandits have a place with the *karkun* class and for the most part keep up their work as a state government worker (Lawrence, 1895: 302-304).

Numerically preponderant and economically better off, the *karkun* have arrogated to themselves the higher position in the Pandit social hierarchy. The *gor* are regarded as inauspicious, mean and greedy. The main reason for this attitude seems to be the fact that they receive food and other gifts from their *yajaman* (clients or patrons) in the name of the dead. According to the observation of T.N.Madan, “hereditary occupational specialization, endogamy and an explicit, differentiation in social status has thus produced an internal subdivision of Pandit society into two sub-castes” (Madan, 1989:20). It is very interesting to note that most priests do not even now wear leather made footwear because contact with leather is polluting to a Brahmin, and tie their turban in what must have been the earlier Mughal fashion. The *karkun* turban is about Persian style, though in recent years many priests also have adopted

it. The ladies and especially the Hindu persuasion prefer their clothes to be of very bright colours, light oranges and pinks being their special colours; and they certainly brighten up their surroundings.

The family priests are played a pivotal role in the religious practice of Kashmiri Hindu community. In such circumstances the *Kula-gar* (priest in the lineage) may officiate at only such important occasions as initiation and marriage. So, "The relationship of a priest with his *yajman* is hereditary. Its permanency is unaffected by any arrangement that may be made for its suspension for reasons of convenience. If a priest dies without leaving a son, or any closely related agnate, behind him, the right to serve his clientele may be inherited by his daughter's son. On every occasion that he provides his service to a client household, the priest receives a fee (*dakshina*) in cash or kind, or both, the amount of the fee varies with the economic status of each household and the importance of each occasion. In rural areas such fees are nominal, but a priest receives from all land - owning households a certain quantity of paddy at harvest time. He also gets all the money which the boys of his client - households receive from their kith and kin on the occasion of their initiation" (Madan, 1989: 20). Like the other part of India the priests are economically dependent upon their *yajman*, who include priests also as even a priestly household need on certain occasions the services of a specialist which a member of the household itself does not customarily provide. The Brahmins of Kashmir were skilled recites of the Vedas and called *Bhumideva*. They are also received the traditional designations- *vipra*, *dvija*, *dvijanman*, *agrajanman*, *bhumideva*, *vasudhadeva* and they are highly respected among various communities of Kashmir valley.

Traditional Culture of the Brahmins

The *achara* of the Kashmirians agrees in maximum respects with that of the Indian Brahmins, however indicates also some very excellent peculiarities. The rites of worship, such as the morning and the evening (*Sandhya*) prayers, as well as rites for specific activities, *sanskaras* or sacraments are executed extra or much less scrupulously. Since soonest times, the life of a Hindu has been managed by a progression of services and customs, normally known as *sanskaras*. These *sanskaras* expected awesome significance with the progression of time, started with the conception, and ruled the entire of the life of a man with the *kirya karma* being the last custom (Cunningham, 1932:75) . A Hindu child is introduced this world by nothing down the precise time of the conception, an occupation done by the celestial prophet. The crystal gazer mentioned a note of his objective facts with respect to the impacts of stars and planets as *janam kundli*. The mother is known as 'rosa' and if this is her first tyke, then she is known as a *sadh piai*. On the ninth day after the conception, called *sunder* the mother and the youngster are showered at a favourable hour and in the wake of washing, seven vessels both of dirt or

bronze are loaded with sustenance. On the eleventh day a purging function, the *kahnehar* occurred and the mother of the youngster left her room. At the point when a youngster is a month old, the day is commended for the sake of *mas-nethar* and in the third year the function of shaving the tyke's head happens –*zarkosay*, an extremely upbeat occasion. The nourishment on this event is known as *wari* end for her administrations the fatherly auntie gets salutary blessings 'zany' of rice, salt and money and every one of the relatives and companions devour healthily on the warts.

The *yagneopavit* service used to be a standout amongst the most lifted up capacities in the life of a Brahmin, especially in pleasure of the Kashmiri Pandis. When the kid has achieved the age of seven years according to the old Kashmiri conviction, and before he achieves his thirteenth year, he must turn into a genuine Brahmin-the *yagneopavit* function (Lawrence,1895:160-61). It included execution of an extraordinary *yagna*, in which every one of the house was welcomed by suitable mantras to favour the kids over the span of their introduction to the most sacrosanct mantra – *Gayatri mantra* - by the *Kula Guru* (family cleric). The *Gayatri* is symbolized by the three folds of the holy string of a settled length, purified by fitting mantra, which is worn by the kid on his introduction. On the day's after the custom of the sacrosanct string being put around the kid's neck coins and shells are tossed over his head, and he is then conveyed in the state down to the stream to perform his first supplication to God functions (Cunningham, 1932: 75). The mixture of the soul behind the *yagneopavit* service which likewise intends to advance empathy, love, kind-heartedness, peacefulness, clique, self-restraint and better human relationship and so on notwithstanding the desire to mull over the refulgence of the supreme consciousness can go about as a standout amongst the most critical instruments for accomplishing this objective.

The subsequent essential thing in the life of a Pandit is his marriage. Like India, early marriage was likewise regular amongst the Hindus of Jammu & Kashmir district. In reverse and provincial classes like Chamars, Meghs, Jats, Thakkars and Gujjars were in the bleeding edge of rehearsing prior marriage. On account of high station Rajputs, in any case, it was hard to locate a suitable match for a young lady. Accordingly, early marriage among them was not common. Engagement was the initial phase in the arrangement for marriage. The lady and the spouse were by and large excessively youthful, making it impossible to have a full grown perspective about marriage (Census, 1933: 178-179). Arrangements going before the binding were for the most part directed by the family cleric or by reliable relations. On account of a child in-law, his social position conveyed more significance than his genuine salary. Eight types of promise contracts won in the Jammu and Kashmir locale. These were: *dharm* or joke, taken or marriage by buy, *watta-satta* or marriage by trade, *gharjowatri*, *thambh* (column), polygamy, polyandry, Hypergamy (Census, 1943: 36).

Mehendirat and *devgon* are executed and decorated out in the same valiant style, as the man of the hour is another kid the pot *Maharaja* or the best man. The lagan was directed by the family ministers of both the lady and spouse who, as an inseparable unit, strolled seven times cycle a lit let go (*yagyagni*), the clerics recounting mantras at the same time. After the lagan is over, the spouse with his lady and gathering comes back to his own home. Before beginning he and the spouse are made to stand again on the *Vyug* and the service connected to it is rehashed (Lawrence, 1895: 261-22). The lady is then set in the palanquin and the spouse rides his steed and the parade comes back to the husband's home. There again the *Vyug* function is performed and after that the couple enter their home, the women singing tunes at the same time. Prior to the spouse is permitted to go into his home, he must pay cash to his maternal and fatherly close relative or sister who bars the entryway. The endowments to the lady from her dad are various however essential is a two – *dijhuru*³ and the *chandanhar*. In the middle of the first year of marriage the lady's father sends her various presents at celebrations.

Passing has its own specific manners, by method for customs that are watched inflexibly. At the point when a man inhales his last, his body is laid on the straw bed, and a light is kept land by his head, day and night. Close it is put a plate brimming with sesame seeds with a coin. The child of the perish lights the memorial service fire, however the work of cremation is finished by the Muslims called *kawji*. For ten days the house where the passing has occurred is unclean and nobody eats sustenance cooked in there, and for ten days, while the spirit of the expired is on its adventure, customs for the dead are performed on the waterway bank (Bamzai, 1973:23). Lawrence observes, “for the first three months after the death the *sharadh* service is performed every fifteen days and thereafter monthly for the next nine months. A widow mourning for her husband, and the women of the family mourning for a relative, prolong their mourning for a year, and for some months do not change their *Phir mal* (cloths). If however, they are bidden to a marriage they are allowed to wear clean cloths and they resume the neck thread which was put at on at marriage” (Lawrence, 1995: 262-63).

Everyday Life

After Aside from the traditions and functions, fiendish convictions witch pontoon, benevolence and creature penances were a portion of the superstitions saw by the occupants of the Jammu & Kashmir locale. The hostile stare was for the most part acknowledged as the interpretation of *nazar*. Youngsters were considered exceptionally subjected to *nazar* in light of the fact that they may instigate a sentiment pride or fulfilment in the individuals who looked on them. As a result of this reason, their countenances were left unwashed. Similarly, a darkened picture was hung upon a recently developed house, as a *nazar-wattu* or averter of *nazar*. The example on fancy garments

was spoilt by presenting a checked anomaly some place for the same reason (Kaul, 1924: 86-87). It was a result of the conviction that anything lovely or beguiling when looked upon by a man twisted on devilishness, prompts his to do hurt though anything monstrous in itself was sheltered from the stink eye.

Also a crow sitting on the rooftop was viewed as an indication of the happening to a visitor. Again it was regularly trusted that an adventure to slopes on Tuesday and Wednesday was not free from dangers and inconveniences. A few individuals even go to the degree of saying: "*Mongal Budh jo jay pahar, jitti baazi aaiya haar*" (Ibbetson, 1985: 210). Along these lines, before beginning voyage a Hindu used to inside of a day or two from there on. In the event that on the eve of an adventure, counsel a Brahmin to discover as to which day would be favourable. In the event that he couldn't go that day, he used to send on a *paitra* (a little heap of necessities) to some spot close to the entryway despite the fact that he himself began venture a Brahmin or *dum* (untouchable) or anybody conveying an unfilled pitcher or wicker container happened to meet, he considered that episode unfavourable and therefore crossed out this trip (Pathik, 1980: 137). In the event that a tyke or a lady conveying a pitcher loaded with water was met on the eve of the excursion, it was viewed as stopping great.

The development of the right eye-top implied euphoria or bliss though the development of the left eye-cover implied misery. So also, a development of the glimmer in the right upper arm or shoulder was taken to imply that the individual would soon meet and grasp a dear companion. Be that as it may, a development on the left implied an indication of looming calamity or malady. Moreover, shivering in the right palm was viewed as an increase of cash, though the same in the left palm was taken to imply that one may lose cash shaking one's leg while sitting on a seat was additionally viewed as a terrible sign (Pathik, 1980:137). A kite sitting on the top of a house was considered excessively unfortunate. Superstitions were likewise predominant in appreciation of agrarian operations especially among the lower classes like *Ghirths*, *Chuhras*, and so forth. Before stopping, a parcel a Brahmin was to be counselled about the day when it was propitious to start the work (Ibbetson, 1985: 223-225). Among *Chuhras*, Sunday, Monday and Friday were viewed as useful for collecting and Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday for indicating. T.N. Dhar argues that, there are many other superstitious customs that appear to have scientific basic. In his words, "fish and milk are not consumed in combination as its cause's leucoderma. Similarly a pair of shoes is left in a haphazard manner there is bound to be quarrel. The idea perhaps is to inculcate a good habit in the youngsters to leave their belongings in a proper way" (Dhar, 2006: 87-88).

Festivals

The Nilmatapurana a treasure of information about festivals, sacred places, pilgrimages, art and crafts, recreation and other cultural activities of

Kashmir's. According to Professor Somnath Wakhlu, "The religious festivals of the Brahmins of Kashmir have Vedic roots. The Kashmiri Pandits share most of their festivals with other Hindu communities and some with the Zoroastrians and other Persian and Central Asian people, the pre-Islamic elements of whose cultures are similar to the Vedic culture (Wakhlu, 2011: 4). Witzel refers to later Rajataranginis and sums up "there are forty-five Gīva (girisa), sixty Visnu (cakrayudha), three Brahma (statues), one says, and twenty-two Sakti (images) having residences with no beginnings; seven hundred serpents, with Nila at their head, who have their home in the Tirthas, and there are more than fourteen well-known (ones) in the country of Kashmir" (Witzel, 1991: 47). Kalhana's Rajatarangini refers that the Kashmiri Brahmins are celebrated various Shiva and Visnu festivals.

The most vital celebrations that are praised with enthusiasm are *Nava barso*, *Monjaher taether*, *Gada Bhatta*, *Khyachi Mavas*, *Shishur*, *Gora-Trai*, *Kaw Punim*, *Teela Aetham*, *Zetha aetham* and *Shravana punim*, *Vyatha Truvah*, *Pan Dyun*, *Divagone*, *Posh puza*, *Dodh*, *Sonder*, *Sonth*, *Navreh* and *Zanga trai*, *Shivratri*, *Janamashtami*, *Jyeshth Ashtami*, *Navresh*, *Mahanabami*, *Chaitra Nabami* and *Vastu Puja* (Kapur, 1992: 171). *Nava barso* (New Year) and *Shivratri* is the main festivals of the Kashmir valley. According to the observation of Mukund Lal, "*Nava barso* (New Year) is celebrated with somewhat refined enthusiasm by the Pandits domiciled in the Indian plains as well. On that day to the family of the *yajman* comes the priest with new-year's calendar and foretelling the events of the coming year takes his due – *dakshina* from the *yajman*. Fathers-in-law invite their sons-in-law with the daughters to their houses on this occasion, and feed and clad them according to their means" (Lal, 1912: 254). *Shivratri* is another great festival of Kashmiri Pandits which is celebrated to the honour of *Shiva* or *Bhairaba*. These celebrations are a gathering of different customs and myths, perusing and knowing of which turns out to be very fascinating. In its genuine quintessence, these celebrations instil certain orders that are instrumental in getting the entire family together furthermore preparing for an open door for the adolescents to soak up some essential attributes like comradeship, submission furthermore a feeling of custom (Census, 1933: 98). According to T.N. Dhar Kundan, "these festivals, rituals and customs have had relevance in the past, these are relevant today and they shall remain relevant for all times to come. The relevance is manifold. Firstly, they give us a distinct identity as Kashmiri Pandits" (Kaw, 2001: 52).

All celebrations separated from their religious and shared undertones have one more thought behind them. That is to unite the individuals with a string of unity and tie the individuals ethically and profoundly, trying to exchange the ethos of a group starting with one era then onto the next. Another vital part of these celebrations is to guarantee full vicinity at one's home, by method for a few ceremonies that require the individuals to tune in the

exercises, and subsequently commend the promising days with the whole family (Bahadur, 1978:112-13). The same remains constant of the Kashmiri celebrations, the soul rules high and the general temperaments is energetic; there is exhilaration and intensity that enter the sensibilities of youthful and old alike. *Nilmatapurana* portrays in subtle element which customs and celebrations are to be praised on a specific day of the year. Both men and women all are participate in these ceremonies. They kept fasts and appealed to diverse Gods and Goddesses. Truth be told, these celebrations were begun from the need to have an outlet by method for giving a few days of fun and skip and inevitably prompt thriving, wellbeing and bliss of the individuals.

Conclusion

The understanding principle of this study is to investigate the origin and culture of the Kashmiri Pandit community. The debate about the origin of Pandit community, the study discloses that they are fit in with the standard of the hundreds of year's old Indian Brahmin hood, but they are aboriginal of the Kashmir Valley. This study moreover shows the traditional culture and everyday lifestyle is anatomically involved with their ancestral religious concepts. But keeping in view the topographical elements, however they have such a great amount of manners, which they gained through age-old affiliation amongst the populace of the state and that will be a terrific undertaking to seclude them socially and culturally. The study additionally demonstrates the rituals, beliefs and festivals which give them a unique cultural blend in the Kashmir arena. As a result the theories of the origin of Kashmiri Pandit should be able to identify their original roots and their socio-cultural identity in the Indian subcontinent.

NOTES

1. According to S.L. Shali, Mata Sati meaning Parvati (consort of Lord Mahadeva), representing the full strength of Mahadeva, appeared on the scene and came out in a boat for a pleasure trip from her abode of Harmukh peak in Lar valley right up to Kaunsarnag to the west of Banihal pass. She named this vast lake Satisar, meaning thereby the 'lake of Sati' (in Sanskrit 'Sar' means a lake).
2. Zain-ul-Abidin much impressed with the Hindu *Sastras* and got many including the Mahabharata, translated into Persian for his close study. He installed many learned and experienced Pandits on high posts of trust and honour. The administration was completely run by the Kashmiri Pandits who at his bidding studied Persian, the new court language.
3. *Dijhuru* is the symbol of marriage for Kashmiri women. In other parts of India, the married ladies are identified by red vermillion in the parting of their hair, *mangalsutra*, or the little toe rings. In Kashmir *Dijhuru* is the symbol. It is worn in both the ears and there is an attachment to it which is called the *Atahore* made of gold or golden or silver thread made into a specific shape.

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