

# Casual Racism Against Kashmiri Students And Their Otherization

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## **Abstract:**

*This paper intends to investigate the occurrence of racism against the people of Kashmir in mainland India, its manifestations over time, and its effects on the personal and professional life of Kashmiris currently residing outside Kashmir. Casual racism is a form of racism which involves making subtle racist remarks, usually in the form of jokes and off-handed comments, and subjecting them to certain prejudices and stereotypes against them. While it has always been present in India, there has been a significant rise in recent years, resulting in several incidents like hate-crimes, evictions, and a general sense of fear in the community. Through a review of literature and data analysis, this study aims to comprehend the factors contributing to the escalation of this form of racism, its manifestations in society, and its consequences for Kashmiris. The research also suggests potential solutions to combat this type of behaviour and promote tolerable environment in general.*

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## **I. Research Methodology:**

The methodology for this study will involve a quantitative research approach, utilizing primary data and secondary data collection method. In secondary data, various academic journals, books, political commentary, and news articles/editorials will be used to collect data. In primary data, survey method would be used employing an exhaustive questionnaire method. Sampling method used will be a combination of purposive and snowball sampling.

## **II. Literature Review**

“Racism In India: Equality Constitutionalism And Lego-Institutional Response” By Nafees Ahmad:

The paper by (Khalid, 2016) analyzes racism in India and the role of egalitarian constitutionalism in combating it. It emphasizes that racial discrimination is a violation of international human rights law, and that India, as a signatory to the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, is required to assure non-discrimination and equality before the law. The study also underlines the importance of legal aid services, law enforcement agency strengthening, special police activities, and educating people about the history and culture of India's underprivileged communities. Overall, the paper advocates for the passage of comprehensive anti-racist legislation in India to prevent racial violence, hate crimes, and xenophobia.<sup>1</sup>

“The Revocation Of Kashmir’s Autonomy: High-Risk Hindutva Politics At Play” By Medha

(Menon, 2019) in this paper explores the intricate dynamics behind India's decision to withdraw Kashmir's autonomy. The author highlights the unilateral and covert nature of the revocation while examining the decision's ramifications in the context of Hindutva politics. The severe lockdown imposed on the region, the lack of consultation with the people of Kashmir, and the subsequent detention of political figures are all discussed in the paper. The paper clarifies the possible effects of this move on India's domestic politics and international relations by examining the larger ideological forces at work.

“The Valley Of Desire : A Study Of Kashmir As Portrayed Through Popular Indian Cinema” By Maliha Siddiqi

(Siddiqi, The Valley of Desire : A study of Kashmir as portrayed through popular Indian cinema, 2020)’s paper examines the prejudiced portrayal of Kashmiris in Indian cinema. The majority of the films examined serve to defend India's control of Kashmir rather than to provide an accurate portrayal of the conflict.

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<sup>1</sup> Ahmad, Nafees, Racism in India: Equality Constitutionalism and Lego-Institutional Response (January 01, 2017). Available at SSRN: <https://ssrn.com/abstract=2903995>

Only two films, "Haider" and "Hamid," attempted to address the issues in a genuine manner. The films' substance is strongly Islamophobic and hyper-nationalistic, belittling the local population's role in the war. Kashmir is frequently portrayed as a "territory of desire" in Bollywood films, which exoticizes the local Kashmiri people. These films' directors are not native Kashmiris, which limits their awareness of the region's political and social intricacies. Overall, the study demonstrates how popular Hindi films mislead and underrepresent Kashmir and its civilian population.<sup>2</sup>

“Fear And Othering In Delhi: Assessing Non-Belonging Of Kashmiri Muslims” By Charlotte Thomas

(Thomas, 2020)'S paper "Fear and Othering in Delhi: Assessing Non-Belonging of Kashmiri Muslims" investigates the extent to which residing in New Delhi effects Kashmiri Muslims' sense of national belonging in India. The study investigates Kashmiri Muslims' feelings and impressions of New Delhi, as well as the area and its population. The study found that staying in New Delhi contributes to an othering process between Kashmiri Muslims and Delhi's non-Kashmiri Muslim community. This is a two-way dynamic that affects both groups. Non-belongingness is discovered to be an uncertain process, but the sensation of non-belonging ultimately prevails among Kashmiri Muslims. The study also demonstrates how Kashmiri Muslims' views against New Delhi are connected with their feelings toward the Indian state. Based on their experiences with state-led violence in Indian-Administered Kashmir and their interactions in New Delhi, Kashmiri Muslims express a sense of national disaffiliation with "India." The study is based on interviews with twenty Kashmiri Muslims who had resided in New Delhi for varied lengths of time prior to the interviews.<sup>3</sup>

“The Othering Of Kashmiri Muslims” By Bashir Ahmad Veeri

This article dives into the complicated subject of Kashmiri Muslims being othered, offering light on its historical roots and current expressions. It investigates the historical context of the desire for a separate state of Pakistan, which was motivated by worries about the security and welfare of Muslims in postcolonial Hindu-majority India. Despite the fact that Jammu and Kashmir's political leadership chose India because of its secular and democratic promise, the reality of contemporary India has prompted concerns about the safety and security of minorities, notably Indian Muslims. The state's penetration of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) has contributed to the formation of new communal fault lines, resulting in the marginalization and othering of Kashmiri Muslims. Discriminatory conduct, such as attacks on students and traders, as well as calls for their removal from certain districts, have worsened the difficulties that Kashmiri Muslims face. This abstract offers a glimpse into the various variables that have led to Kashmiri Muslims' othering, influencing their experiences within the larger sociopolitical landscape.<sup>4</sup>

“The Forgotten Muslims: How Kashmiris Breathe Islam Under Occupation” By Ahmed Bin Qasim

The paper emphasizes the otherization of Kashmiris, notably Indian Muslims and non-Brahmanical and non-Hindu minorities. It emphasizes India's lengthy history of conquering Kashmir and otherizing these populations. The essay condemns the liberal intellectuals for romanticizing pre-Modi India while disregarding the colonialism of Kashmir and the othering of Indian Muslims. It implies that if the colonizer had chosen a secular-liberal political theology, the liberal intellectuals might have acquiesced or excused the violence through discourses of progress, modernity, or democracy.<sup>5</sup>

### **III. Introduction:**

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<sup>2</sup> Siddiqi, Maliha, The valley of desire : A study of Kashmir as portrayed through popular Indian cinema. (Summer, 2020). Available at SFU: [https://summit.sfu.ca/\\_flysystem/fedora/2022-08/input\\_data/21139/etd21066.pdf](https://summit.sfu.ca/_flysystem/fedora/2022-08/input_data/21139/etd21066.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> Thomas, Charlotte. 2020. Fear and Othering in Delhi: Assessing Non-Belonging of Kashmiri Muslims. Fear and Othering in Delhi: Assessing Non-Belonging of Kashmiri Muslims.

<sup>4</sup> Veeri, Bashir Ahmad (2018, March 4). The othering of Kashmiri Muslims - Greater Kashmir. Greater Kashmir. <https://www.greaterkashmir.com/todays-paper/op-ed/the-othering-of-kashmiri-muslims/>

<sup>5</sup> The Forgotten Muslims: How Kashmiris Breathe Islam Under Occupation | Yaqeen Institute for Islamic Research. (n.d.). Yaqeen Institute for Islamic Research. <https://yaqeeninstitute.org/read/paper/the-forgotten-muslims-how-kashmiris-breathe-islam-under-occupation>

Racism at its core is a belief system of prejudice and discrimination against someone on their race or ethnicity. It merely is not just a hateful word; it's a deeply entrenched system of bias and discrimination woven into the fabric of societies.

*"Racism is an attitude of systematic hostility or contempt for particular individuals or groups of individuals based on their nationality, skin colour, origin, national or ethnic origin."*<sup>6</sup> Its fundamental belief is that humanity can be neatly divided into distinct "races" with inherent and immutable differences in abilities, intelligence, and worth. This flawed ideology, often coupled with a distorted interpretation of history and biology, fuels the conviction that some groups are superior to others, justifying their unfair treatment and exclusion.

But racism isn't merely a collection of hateful thoughts; it manifests in tangible ways, perpetuating a cycle of disadvantage and oppression. It can be blatant and brutal, like hate crimes fuelled by racial hatred or discriminatory laws designed to disenfranchise specific groups. However, it also lurks in more subtle forms, from microaggressions that belittle and alienate to institutional biases woven into policies and practices that disproportionately harm certain communities. These insidious forms, often masked by claims of neutrality or objectivity, perpetuate inequality in education, healthcare, housing, and criminal justice.

Understanding racism requires acknowledging its historical roots, the legacy of colonialism and slavery that created and reinforced systems of racial hierarchy. It means recognizing the power dynamics that allow dominant groups to enforce their privilege and maintain control over resources and opportunities. It necessitates confronting the complex interplay of prejudice, discrimination, and structural disadvantage that traps marginalised communities in a cycle of hardship.

The term "casual racism" describes actions that involve unfavourable assumptions or stereotypes about individuals based on their race, colour, or ethnicity. It's not always coupled with a desire to offend or cause harm. Furthermore, it doesn't require any conviction about racial superiority. Instead, it usually relates to unfavourable bias or stereotypes, which are frequently conveyed through jokes or casual remarks.<sup>7</sup> saying something is casual can mean several different things. We talk about people who work casual jobs and talk about dressing casually. We talk about a casual observation or a casual remark. Racist expressions that are casual are also covered by these different definitions of casual. Racism is frequently understood to be primarily motivated by racial hatred or superiority complex. But you don't have to support harmful ideologies or acts of violence to take racist action. It is possible to act or say in a racist manner without planning ahead of time. It might occur by accident. The consequences of discriminatory remarks or actions are independent of an individual's status as a committed bigot (Soutphommasane, 2014).<sup>8</sup>

### **Historical Background To Racism In India**

(KHAIR, 2017) in his article, *The roots of Indian racism*, states the main reason why many prejudices and racist suppositions predominate in Indian caste circles has to do with internal reasons. As a nation, we are yet to face up to the racism and sexism that runs through many caste narratives. We had our own stories of cannibalism before the British introduced us to tales of "African" cannibalism. These stories were typically connected with dark-skinned, non-Aryan-looking creatures, from classical texts to some modern Chitra comics. Comparably, it is shocking how we have frequently treated indigenous women in India, in part because of the ways in which their social mores and dress codes deviate from those of mainstream Hindustani (Hindu and Muslim).<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> *What is racism?* | Unia. (n.d.). Unia. <https://www.unia.be/en/grounds-of-discrimination/racism>

<sup>7</sup> *Reflections on casual racism and the sentiments*. (2014, November 12). Reflections on Casual Racism and the Sentiments | Australian Human Rights Commission. <https://humanrights.gov.au/about/news/speeches/reflections-casual-racism-and-sentiments>

<sup>8</sup> Ibid

<sup>9</sup> *The roots of Indian racism*. (2017, April 15). The Hindu. <https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/columns/the-roots-of-indian-racism/article18061795.ece>

There is a link between colour of the skin and racism but a claim can be made that other types of racism can and have also existed. A well-known writer and novelist from Ireland recently referred to the Irish as “the niggers of Britain”. The motive behind the claim was that in the 17th century, thousands of prisoners of the Irish descent “were sold off” to English colonial settlers in the Americas as slaves. As late as the early 20th century, with skin colour taking over, some English scholars were arguing that the Irish were related to “negroes” and not to the English — despite of the fact that both the English and the Irish seem unquestionably ‘white’ to us (KHAIR, 2017).<sup>10</sup>

#### Rig Veda Period

In terms of stratification, the Indian caste system has always remained extremely intricate. There are four categories within the caste system: Shudras, Vaishyas, Kshatriyas, and Brahmins (Fowler, 1997).<sup>11</sup> Racism was first observed as early as the Rig Veda era. The Brahmins were regarded as the highest caste, followed by the Vaishyas and Kshatriyas. The lowest of all were the Shudras. They were referred to as untouchables because of their background. Because they were considered impure by the Brahmins, no one was allowed to eat or sleep with them. Their social status made them vulnerable to exploitation, and they were commonly referred to as the Black Tribe.<sup>12</sup> There were two other important groups: the Dasyus (non-Aryans) and the Aryans. Due to their fair skin tone, the Aryans were considered members of the noble society. They severely condemned and treated the Dasyus as slaves (Sharma, 1980).<sup>13</sup> However, it should be highlighted that there were no such instances of racial discrimination in ancient mythology (Hiltebeitel, 2011).<sup>14</sup>

Because of their strength and bravery, the warriors and heroes with dark skin received great praise. Lord Vishnu, who is also dark-skinned, is embodied in Lord Krishna<sup>15</sup>. The main female character in the Mahabharat, Draupadi, is described as a young, attractive, dark woman.<sup>16</sup> This demonstrated that people of all skin tones found charm and beauty in the same things. It is also said of the goddesses Kali and Parvati that they are extremely beautiful but also dark (Siripurapu, 2020).<sup>17</sup> This demonstrates that during the Vedic era, caste discrimination undoubtedly influenced color discrimination. Nevertheless, regardless of skin color, every human being was shown in ancient mythology with the same respect and decency.<sup>18</sup>

#### The Mughal Era

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid

<sup>11</sup> Fowler, J. (2014, July 1). *Hinduism Beliefs and Practices: Volume I -- Major Deities and Social Structures* (Vol. 1).

<sup>12</sup> Ibid

<sup>13</sup> Sharma, R. S. (2002, October 31). *Sudras in Ancient India: A Social History of the Lower Order down to Circa A. D. 600*.

<sup>14</sup> Hiltebeitel, A. (2011, October 6). *Dharma: Its Early History in Law, Religion, and Narrative*.

<sup>15</sup> Siripurapu, V. (2020, March 30). *Dark Goddesses and Me: Religious Colorism in Hindu India*. Brown Girl Magazine. <https://browngirlmagazine.com/dark-goddesses-and-me-religious-colorism-in-hindu-india/>

<sup>16</sup> Ibid

<sup>17</sup> Ibid

<sup>18</sup> Supra 9

The empire known as the Mughal Empire also made their home in India. Due to these, the Mughal rule was established in 1526. The Mughal emperors' depiction of dislike and prejudice towards people based on their skin colour, caste, or background is not entirely clear. The Arabs and Muslims, however, did have considerably lighter skin than the Indians. However, the local population was not in danger or harmed by the differences in skin tone (Asher, 2006).<sup>19</sup>

#### The British Raj

The British ruled India from 1858 until 1947. During this time, racial discrimination reached its height. Because of their exceptionally fair skin, the British believed they were the most powerful and superior race. Because they were dark-skinned, the Indians were despised and looked down upon, the British rulers and administration exploited and harassed the Indian population to their utmost limit (Elkins, 2022).<sup>20</sup> The Indians with darker skin tones were either denied employment opportunities or assigned to menial jobs, while their lighter-skinned counterparts managed to secure a spot in the Army.<sup>21</sup> The British rule is characterized by incredible nature of oppressive, brutal and racist rule. Mahatma Gandhi, BR Ambedkar, Jyotiba Phule, and other freedom fighters fought valiantly to end untouchability (JOSH, 2018).<sup>22</sup>

#### IV. Causes:

Scholars all over the world have tried to demonstrate various standpoints as to why racism exists and specifically why racist behaviour is against a certain community, religion, ethnicity, and colour. The reasons that I will be mentioning can be broadly classified such as societal, political, and religious. As a resident of Kashmir myself I have also faced some variation of racism or racist behaviour in the last 7 years I have studied in New Delhi. Almost all my friends have similar anecdotes about various incidents where they were on the receiving end of some racist remark or act. Some were denied a place to live, some were harassed in public simply because of dressing up in traditional Kashmir dresses, many were forced to say various slogans to test their patriotism, and some were even beaten for saying something back when a comment was made at them. The incidents are numerous.

**SOCIETAL ASPECT:** This aspect can include what the society outside Kashmir thinks or how it behaves towards the Kashmiri people. The human beings in general tend to fear what they don't know or have little knowledge of. For many living in India, the people from Kashmir are like someone about whom they know little or whatever they do know is eclipsed by the lens of xenophobia. The basic truth here is that they don't see Kashmiris as a part of their society. They're seen as outsiders, people from some faraway place, and having a different skin tone than them also doesn't help. According to (Ahmad, 2022) another significant factor here is language. "There is a consensus among historical linguistics that Kashmiri belongs to the Dardic branch and is closely akin to Shina. Shina is also a sub-group of Dard language."<sup>23</sup> While most languages spoken in India have an Indo-Aryan origin, Kashmiri has a Dardic root. This vast distinction in spoken language also supplements the already problematic social outlook.

**POLITICAL ASPECT:** Kashmir has always been an epicentre of political conflicts between the central government and its immediate neighbours. To assert its dominance over the land, the Indian State

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<sup>19</sup> Asher, C. B., & Talbot, C. (2006, March 16). *India Before Europe*. <https://doi.org/10.1604/9780521809047>

<sup>20</sup> Elkins, C. (2022, April 24). *Legacy of Violence: A History of the British Empire*. Jonathan Cape.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid

<sup>22</sup> *List of Caste or Dalit Movement in India before independence*. (2018, February 5). Jagranjosh.com. <https://www.jagranjosh.com/general-knowledge/list-of-caste-or-dalit-movement-in-india-before-independence-1517837843-1>

<sup>23</sup> Ahmad. (2022). KASHMIRI LANGUAGE: HISTORY, ISSUES AND CHALLENGES. *Journal of the Oriental Institute M.S. University of Baroda*, 71(4), 123–130.

always tries to keep a tight grip on the political situation in Kashmir. One of the conventional ways was to appoint the Governor who acts as the agent of the centre. Although it's common in most states, in Kashmir it rears its ugly head with constant and significant interfering in the local politics. Since 2018, the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir has been under President's rule.<sup>24</sup> This is testament to the level of control and authority the Centre has over Kashmir. The present government along with the previous governments have been able to do this by presenting the solution to political situation in Kashmir through intervention. Politics over Kashmir issue has been the long standing tradition of all political parties. The opinion of the general public also shifts due to this politics. Politicians play the most important role in mobilizing the public over to a xenophobic attitude towards Kashmir. An ex-BJP legislator called for violence against Kashmiri over celebrating a win of Pakistan cricket team. "They have an affection for Pakistan in their blood. Agencies are active. They must have taken note of it ... Whoever is involved in it, each one of them should be skinned alive."<sup>25</sup> There are various other instances where incendiary or inflammatory remarks have been made by the politicians against Kashmiris which has directly or indirectly radicalized the people on both sides.

**RELIGIOUS ASPECT:** The religious issue is the most prominent marker for the hatred and ultimately the racist behaviour towards Kashmiris. There have been a significant rise in Islamophobia and related incidents in India. A Washington D.C. based research group of journalists, academicians, and researchers, India Hate Lab (IHL), on 25 February 2024 released a report titled (Hate Speech Events in India— Report, 2023). The report claims 668 documented hate speech events in 2023 which specifically targeted Muslims. The first half of the year documented 255 such incidents and the number of incidents rose to 413, a 62% increase.<sup>26</sup> This rise in Islamophobic remarks was particularly fuelled by October 7 attack by Hamas and the subsequent Israel's war on Gaza. Conspiracy theories about love jihad, land jihad, halal jihad, and population jihad were mentioned in 420 (63%) of the events.<sup>27</sup> The report also found rapid growth of new Hindu nationalist groups and actors employing in hate speech. Ironically, In BJP-ruled states, the figure showed about 11% of events starred BJP leaders, whereas in non-BJP-ruled states, this figure rose to 28%.<sup>28</sup> This data can be attributed to the BJP's tactic of employing hate speech when trying to make inroads in a non-BJP state by wooing the popular sentiments of the audiences. These tactics along the data shows a clear trend of rising Islamophobia in India. This coupled with xenophobia puts the already vulnerable population of Kashmiri students in even more peril.

### **Political Alienation**

The intricate process of developing and solidifying political identity in Kashmir involves a complex interplay between ethno-cultural factors and collective political awareness. The concept of ethno-cultural identity encompasses both tangible and conceptual elements, shaping the distinctiveness of the Kashmiri people through various facets such as language, customs, and traditions. This notion of 'Kashmiriyat' influences fundamental aspects of life in an abstract manner, reflecting a unique blend of influences from Buddhism, Shaivism, and Islam that have enriched Kashmir's philosophical landscape over centuries.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> *Supreme Court judgment delivered four decades ago counters President's rule in J&K.* (2023, August 20). The Hindu. <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/supreme-court-judgment-delivered-four-decades-ago-counters-president-rule-in-jk/article67216398.ece>

<sup>25</sup> Fareed, R. (2021, November 2). 'Skin them alive': Kashmir BJP politician booked for hate speech. *Al Jazeera*. <https://www.aljazeera.com/amp/news/2021/11/2/india-pakistan-cricket-skin-them-alive-kashmir-bjp-hate-speech>

<sup>26</sup> India Hate Lab. (2023). Hate Speech Events in India— Report 2023. In <https://indiahatelab.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/Hate-Speech-Events-in-India—Report-2023-1-1.pdf>. Retrieved March 2, 2024, from <https://indiahatelab.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/Hate-Speech-Events-in-India—Report-2023-1-1.pdf>

<sup>27</sup> Ibid

<sup>28</sup> Ibid

Despite the profound impact of religious traditions on Kashmiri society, the core essence remains rooted in their ethno-cultural identity. This enduring aspect has served as a cornerstone for the people of Kashmir amidst transitions between different religions, ensuring continuity in their cultural and philosophical heritage. Notably, the transitions between religious beliefs have been characterized by a seamless integration rather than abrupt shifts, underscoring the organic evolution of Kashmir's societal fabric.<sup>30</sup>

In essence, Kashmir's societal structure is underpinned by this amalgamation of diverse influences on a synthetic foundation. This synthesis has fostered an environment where society and culture inherently embrace openness to various perspectives while preserving the intrinsic ethno-cultural identity that defines the essence of being Kashmiri.<sup>31</sup>

In order to protect the ethno-cultural identity, Jammu and Kashmir held a distinctive position within India that allowed it certain privileges such as the autonomy to govern with its own constitution, flag, and the authority to determine who could be recognized as permanent residents. This unique status was a product of lengthy discussions and negotiations that eventually led to this former princely state joining the Indian union. At the time of India's independence in August 1947, Kashmir was just one of approximately 560 princely states that made up nearly 40 percent of British Indian territory. As Britain prepared to leave, most of these princely states were encouraged to align themselves either with India or Pakistan based on factors like territorial continuity or religious demographics.

Sheikh Abdullah's persistent efforts led to the strengthening of Kashmir's unique status within the framework of the Indian constitution in 1952 through the incorporation of Article 370. This provision granted exclusive authority to the Jammu and Kashmir constitutional assembly to deliberate on whether additional powers should be transferred to the central government. Additionally, Article 35A reinforced Kashmir's autonomy by affirming its prerogative to define and safeguard its local populace, including imposing regulations that limited land ownership solely to those recognized as permanent residents.

The primary focus in this chapter is on exploring the sense of political isolation experienced by the people of Kashmir among other issues, especially after the revocation of Article 370.

The Indian authorities have justified their decision to revoke the special privileges granted to Kashmir by emphasizing their intention to bring Kashmiris closer into the fabric of mainstream Indian society.<sup>32</sup> They argue that this move aims to provide Kashmiris with equal rights and opportunities enjoyed by other citizens of India. The rationale behind this action is rooted in the belief that by removing these special provisions, it will facilitate greater unity and integration within the diverse population of India.<sup>33</sup> The assertion that the government's actions were conducted with transparency and consultation is contradicted by the covert and independent nature of the decision-making process. The decision concerning Kashmir was executed without any pretence of involving or seeking input from the local populace. In the days preceding the announcement, a veil of secrecy cloaked the government's true intentions, as they exploited alleged security concerns to justify imposing a strict lockdown on Kashmir. Alongside existing troops, a significant influx of military personnel descended upon the region while stringent movement controls were enforced on residents. This clampdown was further reinforced by an unparalleled communication blackout that severed Kashmir from external contact channels, deepening its isolation.<sup>34</sup> The residents of Kashmir were isolated within their homes, stripped of communication through television, internet, mobile devices, and even landlines. This severe disconnect likely

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<sup>29</sup> Chowdhary, Rekha (1998), 'Politics of Identity and Political Alienation in Kashmir'.

Monograph submitted in Queen Elizabeth House, University of Oxford on completion of Commonwealth Fellowship

<sup>30</sup> Bazaz, Prem Nath (1954). *The History of Struggle for Freedom in Kashmir: Cultural and Political*, New Delhi: Kashmir Publishing company.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid

<sup>32</sup> Jacob, H. (n.d.). *Toward a Kashmir Endgame?*  
[http://books.google.ie/books?id=RDQ4zgEACAAJ&dq=978-1-60127-815-9&hl=&cd=1&source=gbs\\_api](http://books.google.ie/books?id=RDQ4zgEACAAJ&dq=978-1-60127-815-9&hl=&cd=1&source=gbs_api)

<sup>33</sup> Ibid

<sup>34</sup> Setyorini, F. A., & Mukti, T. A. (2020, December 31). The Revocation of Kashmir's Special Status by Narendra Modi Administration in 2019. *Nation State: Journal of International Studies*, 3(2), 130–155. <https://doi.org/10.24076/nsjls.2020v3i2.233>

prevented them from receiving the news when the Indian home minister declared a significant announcement aimed at assimilating them into the larger framework of Indian politics. Notably, Kashmiri leaders and advocates for civil society - some of whom have expressed pro-India sentiments - such as former chief ministers Omar Abdullah and Mehbooba Mufti, were apprehended as a precautionary measure during this period.<sup>35</sup> The remaining Indian population found themselves just as susceptible to the deceitful tactics and misleading information disseminated by their democratically elected leaders. Gossip regarding potential terrorist threats and the discovery of arms stockpiles along the Pakistan border circulated, serving as convenient justifications for the stringent curfews imposed in Kashmir. Without warning, a traditional Hindu pilgrimage to a revered shrine nestled in the valley was abruptly called off, and tourists were urged to vacate the region. Furthermore, with a sudden declaration by the home minister, India's decision to strip away Kashmir's autonomy through an immediate presidential decree left no room for debate or deliberation within the Indian Parliament.<sup>36</sup> The legality of amending a constitutional provision through a presidential decree is highly debatable. In India, any alteration to the constitution necessitates the approval of at least two-thirds of the members in both chambers of the Indian Parliament. Although the BJP holds enough seats to easily pass such amendments, it opted not to pursue this course of action. Rather than following the established procedure, the party has been emphasizing its overwhelming majority as justification for implementing policies that cater predominantly to the desires of the majority population.<sup>37</sup>

The presidential order declared by the home minister on 5 August 2019 invalidated these two crucial articles, leading to significant changes in the state's administrative structure. This move resulted in the division of the state into Jammu and Kashmir, and Ladakh, with both regions losing their previous status and being designated as union territories under direct central government control.

Although no official explanation was provided for this division, it is widely speculated that it was influenced by longstanding requests from Ladakh's Buddhist community (representing 41% of the population) to separate from Kashmir. Previously enjoying special constitutional provisions, Kashmir has now been stripped of much of its autonomy compared to other states in India.

These developments have left the people of Kashmir feeling disheartened and humiliated, especially considering their history of advocating for greater independence or autonomy within India.

The abolition of the article not only stripped away the thin veil of justification for India's territorial claim over Kashmir, but it also shattered the deeply held beliefs of those who supported the region's integration into India.<sup>38</sup> By rescinding this provision, Kashmir is essentially being transformed into a territory under Indian dominance, a move that instils fear and uncertainty among its residents.<sup>39</sup> The removal of Article 35A, which had placed restrictions on land ownership in Jammu and Kashmir, has fuelled concerns that the central government aims to change the demographic makeup of the area by encouraging migration from other parts of India. This strategy mirrors China's approach in Tibet, raising suspicions that India seeks to undermine any dispute over Kashmir by diluting its distinct identity through demographic engineering.<sup>40</sup>

Substituting the role of a properly chosen legislative assembly with an individual appointed by the federal government can be likened to a clever legal manoeuvre. The effortless and quick manner in which the government has modified a fundamental constitutional assurance sparks worries about India's status as a constitutional democracy, casting doubt on the protective measures that it provides for its people particularly those of Kashmiris.<sup>41</sup>

The more worrying trend is that the decision regarding Kashmir has sparked enthusiastic support from the BJP's Hindu majority voter base, who have embraced the move with celebratory joy. The response to the

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<sup>35</sup> Medha. (2019). The Revocation of Kashmir's Autonomy: High-Risk Hindutva Politics at Play. German Institute of Global and Area Studies (GIGA). <http://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep24808>

<sup>36</sup> Ibid

<sup>37</sup> Varshney, A. (2019, August 16). By numbers alone. The Indian Express. <https://indianexpress.com/article/opinion/columns/by-numbers-alone-bjp-jammu-and-kashmir-bifurcation-article-370-5911290/>

<sup>38</sup> Supra 35

<sup>39</sup> Ibid

<sup>40</sup> Ibid

<sup>41</sup> Ibid



revocation of India's only Muslim-majority province's special status exudes a palpable sense of triumph, evident in the elation expressed by individuals and various pro-government media outlets. Social media platforms quickly filled with messages rejoicing over the newfound ability to purchase land in "the paradise on Earth," as Kashmir is often described. Additionally, there were references to marrying "fair Kashmiri women," a statement that is both peculiar and revealing.<sup>42</sup>

This unusual claim underscores a historical element within Hindu nationalism that revolves around asserting masculine dominance through the control and possession of women. Such sentiments were echoed by prominent BJP figures, including a chief minister who jestingly mentioned bringing girls from Kashmir. Furthermore, an emerging trend of songs glorifying claims to Kashmiri brides and territory has surfaced on YouTube.<sup>43</sup>

Amidst this fervour, considerations for the consent of these women or the overall population of Kashmir seem non-existent. The government appears resolute in its actions, seemingly unconcerned about any breaches of democratic principles as long as they align with what is perceived as reflecting the "will of the people."

### **Media Portrayal: Role Of Media In Reiterating Stereotypes Against Kashmiris**

Indian media along with the Indian cinema have led the way in shaping public opinion since a long time. Having access to all the homes of India via newspaper and T.V, and via theatres to huge masses, this institution stands to have the most power and say in people's lives. Incidentally it also stands to be the most susceptible to corruption, jingoism, and take over by hate groups and narratives. In following the easiest way to success, using mantras like "any publicity is good publicity" and "the news that sells", the Indian media (particularly digital) have been hate spewing, creating false narratives, inciting and harbouring violence against minorities, creating an invisible image of nationalism which is just a mask over power hungry and xenophobic agendas. The most dangerous and detrimental effect on the portrayal Kashmir and Kashmiris have been because of how the picture of Kashmir has been shown on the national television. (Sreedharan, 2009) profiled the type of news coverage given to the Kashmir conflict by Indian and Pakistani newspapers by conducting a thorough analysis of media material. He came to the conclusion that the coverage was "vigorously government-led" and vehemently "negative" using the study's results. Because of the very unfavourable coverage on both sides of the border, pro-peace news was not as prominently shown as anti-peace news. He said, "Journalists mostly relied on government sources and promoted official stances, with inadequate exploration of alternative perspectives," making the coverage on both sides "ethnocentric."<sup>44</sup> This report in his thesis gave a conclusive proof of the complicity of the Indian Media in otherizing Kashmiris. In her paper, (TERESA, 2000) concludes that the identification of the sources that inform the accounts about Kashmir is the fundamental factor that determines their nature. The Indian press's stories on Kashmir seem to be plagued by an over-reliance on official sources, which gives them an innate bias towards the government's perspective on the problems at hand while disregarding the realities on the ground.<sup>45</sup> The media has frequently gone so far as to defend instances of security abuses and cast doubt on the authenticity of human rights reports about Kashmir. Even international

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<sup>42</sup> Sarkar, T. (2001, January 1). *Hindu Wife, Hindu Nation*. Virago Press.

[http://books.google.ie/books?id=WCvaAAAAMAAJ&q=Sarkar,+Tanika+\(2001\),+Hindu+Wife,+Hindu+Nation:+Community,+Religion,+and+Cultural+Nationalism,+New+Delhi:+India:+Permanent+Black.&dq=Sarkar,+Tanika+\(2001\),+Hindu+Wife,+Hindu+Nation:+Community,+Religion,+and+Cultural+Nationalism,+New+Delhi:+India:+Permanent+Black.&hl=&cd=1&source=gbs\\_api](http://books.google.ie/books?id=WCvaAAAAMAAJ&q=Sarkar,+Tanika+(2001),+Hindu+Wife,+Hindu+Nation:+Community,+Religion,+and+Cultural+Nationalism,+New+Delhi:+India:+Permanent+Black.&dq=Sarkar,+Tanika+(2001),+Hindu+Wife,+Hindu+Nation:+Community,+Religion,+and+Cultural+Nationalism,+New+Delhi:+India:+Permanent+Black.&hl=&cd=1&source=gbs_api)

<sup>43</sup> Staff, S. (2019, August 12). Watch: A whole new sub-genre of songs emerges about getting Kashmiri bahu, buying land in Valley. Scroll.in. <https://scroll.in/video/933520/watch-there-is-a-whole-new-sub-genre-of-songs-inspired-by-kashmir-and-the-article-370-controversy>

<sup>44</sup> *Reporting Kashmir: an analysis of the conflict coverage in Indian and Pakistani newspapers*. - Bournemouth University Staff Profile Pages. (n.d.). Reporting Kashmir: An Analysis of the Conflict Coverage in Indian and Pakistani Newspapers. - Bournemouth University Staff Profile Pages. <https://staffprofiles.bournemouth.ac.uk/display/thesis/15974>

<sup>45</sup> *Kashmir, human rights and the Indian press*. (n.d.). Kashmir, Human Rights and the Indian Press. <https://www-tandfonline-com.jmi.remotlog.com/doi/epdf/10.1080/713658719?needAccess=true>

condemnation of human rights abuses in Kashmir is frequently suppressed. Newspapers don't seem to publish anything critical of the security forces, as if there were a self-censorship policy based on a misguided sense of patriotism. The degree of near-jingoism in the media is demonstrated by their strong disapproval of stories about human rights abuses in India. Tavleen Singh (Singh, 1996) has gone so far as to claim in her book *Kashmir: A Tragedy of Errors*, that the press was mostly to blame for Kashmir's first isolation. The public was sensitive to the way they were covered by the national press, which was purposefully distorting events and facts to allow governments to pass any short-sighted policies.<sup>46</sup> The sycophancy of the major media outlets has rendered the news just a mouthpiece for the government. (Reporters Without Borders, 2023) The Reporters Without Borders (RWB), an international non-profit organisation ranked India at 161<sup>st</sup> position out of 180 countries in media freedom index in 2023.<sup>47</sup> Compared to 122<sup>nd</sup> position in 2010<sup>48</sup>, the position of the media legitimacy has deteriorated significantly in the past decade and a half. Press freedom is under attack in "the world's largest democracy," which has been led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the head of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and the personification of the Hindu nationalist right, since 2014. This is demonstrated by the violence against journalists, the politically partisan media, and the concentration of media ownership. (Reporters Without Borders, 2023) attributes this downfall to the political change and say that the press freedom is under attack in "the world's largest democracy," which has been led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the head of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and the personification of the Hindu nationalist right, since 2014. This is demonstrated by the violence against journalists, the politically partisan media, and the concentration of media ownership.<sup>49</sup>

The Indian cinema and film industry have percolated their essence into the Indian society, particularly into the minds and lives of the youth. Plato says in his Theory of Mimesis in his book *Republic*, that art imitates life; art is the imitation of what we see in everyday life, which itself are the imitations of ideas. "Twice removed from reality" and therefore are susceptible to be a source of corruption.<sup>50</sup> His explanation of this argument is a matter of extensive debate but we can all agree that art is basically a form of imitation of ideas. But its inverse also holds true that is that life can also imitate art. And cinema is nothing if not a form of art. Cinema shows the reality in a grandeur, extravagant and hyperbolic manner. It invokes pathos; appeals to the emotions of the audience. It moves its audience and can have a lasting effect on them. This effect can however, be whichever way the filmmaker deems it to be. Love, admiration, pity, pride, hate, vengeance, disgust, fear are some of the emotions that a film has control of over a human being. the Indian cinema has a rich and varied history of doing exactly that. From movies like *Sholay* about friendship, *Rang De Basanti* about student activism, *Three Idiots* about education system and *DDLJ* about young love, the Indian cinema has left no emotion unturned with its movies. Movies have invoked sense of patriotism and nationalism with movies like *Swades*, *Mother India*, *Lagaan* and *Lakshya*. They did so by elevating the love for your country, your people and your culture while at the same time not demoting some other nation, culture or people. But nowadays that's not the case. With the movies coming and have come out in the past 2 decades have treated the subject of nationalism, patriotism and religion as a zero sum game while boosting one narrative by degrading another. The tropes like terrorists belonging to only a certain community, the bad guys are with a certain accent and clothes, a certain religion depicted as repressive and a protagonist from other community freeing them from the tyranny are only a few examples. In the recent years there have been numerous examples of this type of cinema.

(The Kashmir Files, 2022) alluded to the bigger picture by piecing together the truth about Kashmir from the ruins of facts and carelessly combining them with divisive fictions. The best way to put this is in a lengthy monologue that the movie's main character, Krishna, delivers toward the end. The young man suggests that Kashmir is the source of all India's greatness, as everything flourished there in the past, including literature, grammar, science, and medicine, as well as scholarship and theatre. He describes Kashmir as "our own Silicon

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<sup>46</sup> Singh. (1996). *Kashmir: A Tragedy of Errors*. Penguin Books. pp 20-38

<sup>47</sup> 2023 Press Freedom Index. (2023). In *Reporters Without Borders*. Reporters sans frontières. Retrieved February 7, 2024, from <https://rsf.org/en/index>

<sup>48</sup> Ibid

<sup>49</sup> Ibid

<sup>50</sup> Plato. (1943). *Plato's The Republic*. New York :Books, Inc.,

Valley," which is likely true in a banal but meaningful way. The Pandits of Kashmir left in the 1990s, indicating the complete collapse of Hindu civilization that has since occurred—possibly as a result of Muslim rule—and that disgrace needs to be erased. The film seems to be interested in more than just presenting the truth about Kashmir in the 1990s, based on the monologue. It is, in fact, proposing a new one, based on the notion of the homeland, but for all Hindus, not just Kashmiri Pandits.<sup>51</sup> (Kak, 2022) states “Eventually, The Kashmir Files is not about setting straight a historical record of Kashmir in the 1990s, or creating an environment that might ease the return home of a community in exile. Its narrative is instead powered by a visceral demonisation of the Kashmiri Muslim, one that renders reconciliation ever more difficult. And by connecting the return of the Kashmiri Pandit to the dream of a glorious ancient past, a political project that elides Kashmir’s complicated history of 700 years, it seeds the idea of a return to a Hindu homeland. This is an idea that is redolent with implications of dispossession and settlement. That is what makes its “truth” dangerous”<sup>52</sup>. The movie was made tax free in multiple BJP-ruling states like Uttar Pradesh, Goa, Tripura, Madhya Pradesh, Karnataka, Gujrat, Uttarakhand and Haryana. Opposition parties dismissed it as a ‘propaganda tool’.<sup>53</sup>

A one recent movie which came only this year was *Article 370*. As the title suggests, it is the movie about the abrogation of the article 370 which happened on 4 August 2019. Directed by Aditya Suhas Jambhale and starring Yami Gautam, Priya Mani and Arun Govil, the movie is yet another blatantly visible propaganda movie which at best is a Modi-Shah apologist and at worst, a call for systematic violence and persecution of Kashmiri Muslims. (Mukund Setlur, 2024) at the *Deccan Herald* calls it “Another thinly veiled propaganda movie”<sup>54</sup> A researcher from Kashmir, who wanted to remain anonymous due to obvious reasons, told *This Week in Asia*: “Their goal is to create a narrative that presents the abrogation of Article 370 as the correct decision, normalising the situation and suggesting that both Kashmiris and India are content with it, solely because it was initiated by Modi. It’s all about reinforcing that narrative. (Kaisar Andrabi, 2024)”<sup>55</sup>

He stressed: “This narrative imposition is widespread in Kashmir. Even if Kashmiris are not actively protesting, it doesn’t mean they have accepted the new reality ... but they are unable to express their feelings freely because the state resorts to force to silence them (Kaisar Andrabi, 2024).”<sup>56</sup>

(Siddiqi, 2020) says Bollywood has profited from nationalism and war in light of the desire for a film genre that addresses conflict in a nation like India that fetishizes the status and exoticism of the state of Kashmir. A phenomenon known as "cine-patriotism" dominates most of these stories, stifling the opportunities for unrestricted film content flow.<sup>57</sup> Producing content that has been heavily altered and only partially

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<sup>51</sup> Kak, S. (202213, April 13). *The dangerous ‘truth’ of The Kashmir Files*. Al Jazeera. <https://www.aljazeera.com/opinions/2022/4/13/the-dangerous-truth-of-the-kashmiri-files>

<sup>52</sup> Ibid

<sup>53</sup> *‘The Kashmir Files’: List of states which have declared the film tax-free*. (2022, March 15). Hindustan Times. <https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/the-kashmir-files-list-of-states-which-have-declared-the-film-taxfree-101647344856004.html>

<sup>54</sup> Setlur, M. (n.d.). *“Article 370” movie review: Another thinly veiled propaganda film*. Deccan Herald. <https://www.deccanherald.com/entertainment/article-370-movie-review-another-thinly-veiled-propaganda-film-2908141>

<sup>55</sup> *Modi-backed Article 370 film rankles as political jousting moves to cinema*. (2024, February 28). Is Cinema India’s New Political Battleground? Modi-backed Article 370 Film Stirs Kashmiri Outrage | South China Morning Post. <https://www.scmp.com/week-asia/politics/article/3253529/indias-kashmir-residents-outraged-modi-backed-article-370-propaganda-film-over-historical-distortion>

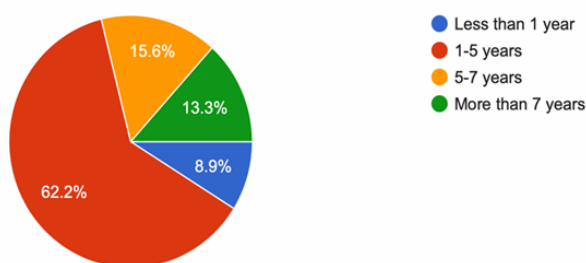
<sup>56</sup> Ibid

researched is very risky when it comes to delicate subjects. The majority of movies give extremely limited and myopic summaries of the conflict; context and subtleties are mainly absent. The conflict that has resulted in millions of deaths and thousands of maimed people deserves more thoughtful and well-researched filmmaking that does the state's citizens some justice rather than just destroying their memories through distortion or even underrepresentation.<sup>58</sup>

### Survey Analysis

In this chapter, I will elaborate the findings of my survey which was conducted. I conducted a survey which was titled “Casual Racism against Kashmiri Students” in which students from Kashmir currently studying in New Delhi were asked a series of questions regarding their experience with racism in New Delhi. A total of 45 responses were recorded as of 13 March 2024 with 33 male responses and 12 female responses. The snowball sampling was used to collect data with the help of an exhaustive questionnaire distributed among the students. As the survey was done in the vicinity of Jamia Millia Islamia campus and the snowball sampling was employed, the majority of the students were from Jamia Millia Islamia itself, numbering at 30 students while Jamia Hamdard and Delhi University coming on 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> place with 8 and 4 respondents respectively. The aim of the study was to determine whether or not the students from Kashmir in New Delhi face any form of casual racism and if yes then to what extent and in which form. Furthermore, I tried to evaluate the effect of the said behaviour on our respondents; if there was any mental or psychological distress present. 82% came in the age bracket of 18-24 and 15.6% were between 25-30. Regarding the time for which they had been in New Delhi, more than 60% were residing for 1-5 years as shown in *figure 1*.

How long have you been studying in Delhi?  
45 responses



**Figure 1**

When asked directly “Have you ever been discriminated against on the grounds of belonging from Kashmir?”, the answer was an overwhelming yes, as clear in the figure 2. More than 70% replied in yes and just 22% claimed that they were not discriminated against for being from Kashmir. This is a distressing figure especially for students who have been out of their home and this far away for the first time. Incidents like these can be severely frightening and has a higher chances of discouraging further students to leave their home for further education in a safe environment.

<sup>57</sup> Siddiqi.M. 2020. The valley of desire : A study of Kashmir as portrayed through popular Indian cinema. (Master’ thesis, Simon Fraser University) Simon Fraser University Communication Theses. [https://summit.sfu.ca/\\_flysystem/fedora/2022-08/input\\_data/21139/etd21066.pdf](https://summit.sfu.ca/_flysystem/fedora/2022-08/input_data/21139/etd21066.pdf)

<sup>58</sup> Ibid

Have you ever been discriminated against on the grounds of belonging from Kashmir?  
45 responses

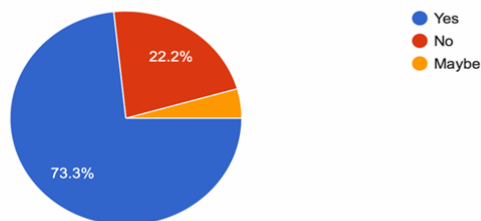


Figure 2

When asked about the frequency of this racism “How frequently do you encounter casual racism in your daily life in Delhi?” the answers were as shown in figure 3

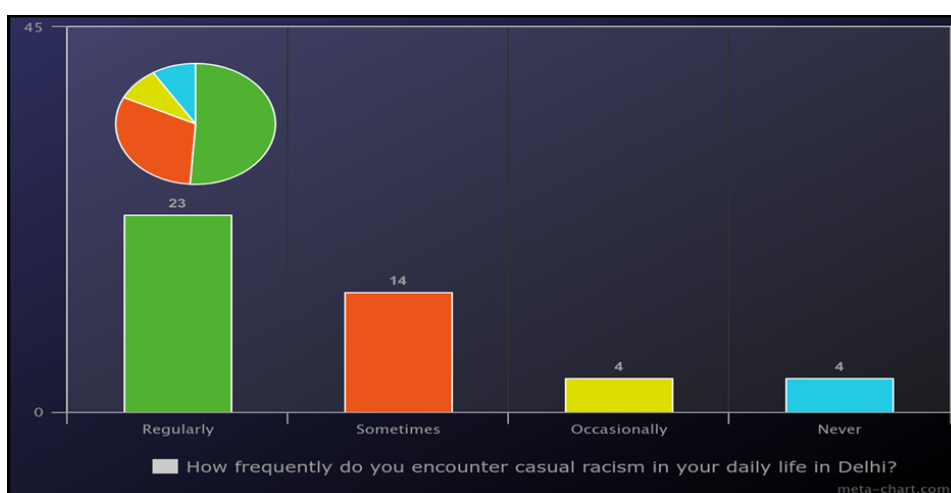


Figure 3

As evident from the above graph, around half of the respondents face some variation of racist advances towards them on a regular basis. While about 40% face casual racism in once in every while.

To determine the settings where these incidents occur, the places where students have the chances to interact with other people or find themselves around people, the response to the question “In what settings do you typically encounter casual racism?” half of the respondents had their educational institute as one of their answers. More than 50% also chose public spaces as a place where they encountered some form of racism. It is important to note that the responses were in a checkbox manner, meaning that respondents could choose more than one option. After carefully evaluating the data, it was concluded that only 16 students chose just one venue where they encountered racism whereas 14 had two venues in their answer, 6 chose three venues and 5 claimed they had faced casual racism at 4 different places. And finally 5 claimed they hadn’t faced any such incident anywhere in these places. Figure 4 illustrates it clearly.

In what settings do you typically encounter casual racism?

45 responses

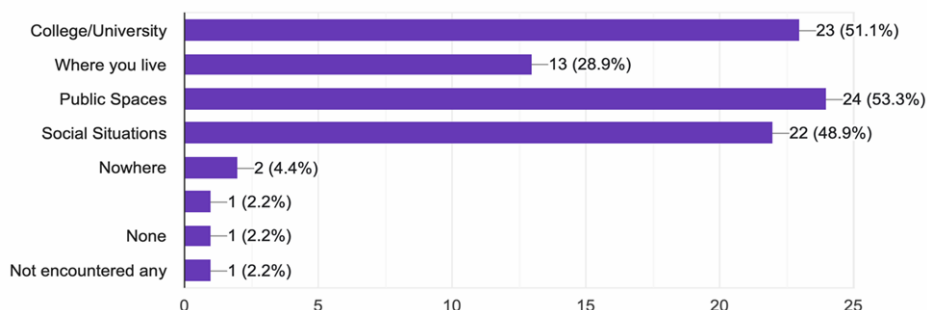


Figure 4

When it came to sharing these incidents with the relevant authorities, the response to that was overwhelmingly negative with only 15% students responding in a yes. *Figure 5* demonstrates it clearly. This indicates to the fear among Kashmiri students of approaching the authorities like the police, professors, wardens, landlords etc. it also can point to the distrust for these agencies among the students which ought to be rectified.

Would you feel comfortable sharing instances of racism with relevant authorities?

45 responses

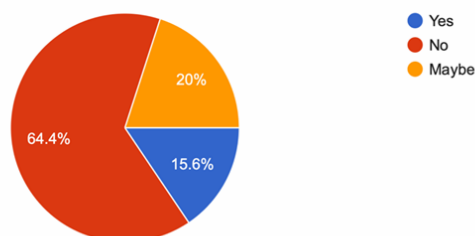
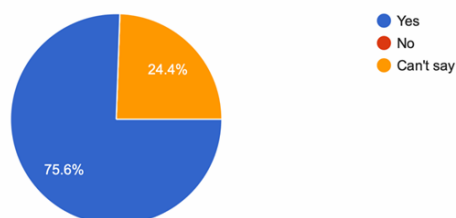


Figure 5

When asked if there is “a sense of fear” among Kashmiri in New Delhi, 0 people said no. 76% said outright yes and the rest displayed ambiguity. As shown in figure 6, this response was a very concerning and shocking in nature. An invisible gag is shown here in the responses which is actually not so shocking when one gets to know that almost all male Kashmiri students are “trained” at home before leaving not engage in political, religious or Kashmir revolving debate. a conformist attitude is developed where one cannot speak his mind about things which concern his homeland. There is fear of being persecuted for just speaking out or trying engage in a political debate with your friends. When asked how comfortable they were to share their political opinion with a non-Kashmiri friend, more than 70% were reluctant with around 40% completely uncomfortable.

Do you feel that there is a sense of fear among Kashmiris living in New Delhi to speak their mind freely?

45 responses



**Figure 6**  
**V. Impact:**

On 14 February 2019, one of the deadliest attack on Indian Army took place in Lethpora Pulwama, Jammu & Kashmir where 40 Central Reserve Police Forces (CRPF) were killed. It was a suicide attack on a convoy which was going through at that time. It was a horrific incident which shook the nation to its core. It was done by a terror outfit based in Pakistan and the main perpetrator was also from Pakistan. I was doing my 12<sup>th</sup> at the time in New Delhi. Mine along with all my friends' kept ringing that day from the calls from our home telling us to stay at home and not go to the school for some time. It was an expected reaction from them because they were scared of what will follow. We were scared too because we too knew what might come next. And soon the news and reports started flowing from official and other sources that Kashmiris are being harassed, evicted, abused and even beaten over the Pulwama attack. Many of my friends came to live with me during that time because the area around Jamia Millia Islamia is considered relatively safe for Kashmiris and I used to live there. These incidents came flowing day after day and the law enforcement were not keen on stopping them any time soon. (The Wire, 2019) on 24 February just 10 after the attack, wrote "Ever since a suicide bomb attack claimed the lives of 40 Central Reserve Police Force personnel at Pulwama in south Kashmir on February 14, there have been at least 40 cases of assault or harassment of Kashmiris in other parts of the country."<sup>59</sup> The people were rightly angry and hurt but they found the preys of their frustration in poor Kashmiri people who were trying to make a living or students who had nothing to do with the attack. It got so bad that the Supreme Court of India had to intervene telling the centre to take "prompt actions" to ensure that the people of Kashmir do not face social boycott or attacks amid Pulwama attacks (NDTV, 2019).<sup>60</sup> These attacks and social boycotts have taken place many times in the last decade. As mentioned earlier, the Kashmiris are victim to the outcome of frustration and dirty politics that is played by the legislatures for their own political gain. These demagogues use Kashmir as a cash cow by giving inflammatory speeches and statements against them to appeal to the mass conscious of their audience and gain votes.

In 2016 students from Kashmir were the target of a formal surveillance and harassment policies that had been directly started by the Central Government. The police's intelligence division gave Kolkata colleges an order at the end of February, 2016 to compile a list of every student whose address was in Jammu and Kashmir and send this dossier to New Delhi's Ministry of Home Affairs. The stated goal was to "sensitize" campuses to incidents like those at JNU and the protests that followed at Jadavpur University; however, senior police officials reportedly stated that this data will be used to monitor the activities of Kashmiri students, according to *The Indian Express* (Aamir Ali, Shah Mohsin, 2016).<sup>61</sup> During the same time many newspaper reports stated that the Home Ministry had sent out a general advisory to all states. In order to reduce crime, the ATS had been directed to perform door-to-door checks of tenements where Kashmiris reside and gather information, Goa Chief Minister Laxmikant Parsekar informed the State Assembly in March. These are egregious examples of ethnic profiling that go against the most basic rights of freedom and equality. In summary, Kashmiri students who attend educational institutions for academic purposes (often through government programs) or job seekers are routinely harassed and forced to live in a state of fear and uncertainty (Moushumi Basu, Deepika Tandon, 2016).<sup>62</sup> *The Diplomat* reported "Already the subject of suspicion, following the abrogation of Article 370,

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<sup>59</sup> *As Hate Incidents Pile Up, Modi Finally Breaks Silence on Attacks on Kashmiris.* (n.d.). The Wire. <https://thewire.in/rights/as-hate-incidents-pile-up-modi-finally-breaks-silence-on-attacks-on-kashmiris>

<sup>60</sup> *Prevent Kashmiris' Boycott, Attacks: Top Court To States After Pulwama.* (2019, February 22). NDTV.com. <https://www.ndtv.com/india-news/supreme-court-issues-notice-to-centre-10-states-asks-for-prompt-action-to-prevent-attacks-on-kashmir-1997536>

<sup>61</sup> *L-G Najeed Jung asks senior police officer to look into issues of Kashmiri students.* (2016, February 25). The Indian Express. <https://indianexpress.com/article/cities/delhi/l-g-najeed-jung-asks-senior-police-officer-to-look-into-issues-of-kashmiri-students/>

<sup>62</sup> *Stop surveillance and harassment of Kashmiri students! | People Union for Democratic Rights.* (2016, May 24). Stop Surveillance and Harassment of Kashmiri Students! | People Union for

Kashmiris in India have faced escalating prejudice.”<sup>63</sup> The suspicion and gazes of the locals follow Kashmiris everywhere and at every step they have to prove their innocence (Danish Pandit, 2020)<sup>64</sup>.

These incidents have a long history of repeating themselves. In 2001 after the parliament attack, similar situation ensued and Kashmiris living in Delhi were harassed and attacked by the people as well as the police. A report in (AL JAZEERA, 2001), asked the Shawl-sellers, carpet-weavers, fruit traders and students present in Delhi from Kashmir about their condition and they complained about daily their victimisation at the hands of police and society.<sup>65</sup> One Kashmiri student in Delhi said “Our Kashmiri Muslim identity is a curse,” and a shawl seller said “The attitude of the local people towards Kashmiris is that of cops towards criminals.” When asked why they do not seek police assistance and protection, he said, “It would take a madcap to approach the very people who are victimising us for protection,” while his co-workers said “The atmosphere is so vicious that no matter what happens, we would never approach the police. That would only mean more trouble.”<sup>66</sup> In their final remarks, one aptly puts the situation of Kashmir students and workers in outside Kashmir as “And those who can do something to stem the growing sense of alienation of these people seem blissfully unaware of what it means to be a Kashmiri Muslim in the Indian capital – a big punishment for no crime.”<sup>67</sup>

## **VI. Conclusion/Suggestions**

In the concluding question of the survey mentioned above, a question was asked about the steps could be taken to address and reduce casual racism against Kashmiris in Delhi. It was optional to answer this but nonetheless many suggestions were provided. Some are as following:

“1.Kashmiri’s should not be discriminated just because of their ethnicity. 2.There should be proper investigation and action against any harassment faced by the Kashmiri’s( but there won’t be any). 3. Last but most importantly there wouldn’t be any such discrimination or unbiased opinion against the Kashmiri’s if the people treat them as equal because we are usually tagged as “Patharbaaz” , “Pakistani” and other words. There is a reason why the students from the valley are always targeted.”

One student answered “Promoting cultural awareness programs in Delhi to foster understanding and empathy among communities could help reduce casual racism against Kashmiris. Establishing support groups for Kashmiris can provide a sense of community and assistance in times of need. Encouraging open dialogue through awareness campaigns can contribute to breaking stereotypes and fostering inclusivity. Additionally, enforcing strict consequences for discriminatory behaviour, along with a streamlined process for reporting and addressing complaints, is crucial to ensuring a safer environment for Kashmiris in Delhi.”

“Sessions on inclusivity , people should be made aware of the issues related to Kashmir and how disputes have affected the socio-emotional well-being of the Kashmiris.”

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Democratic Rights. <https://www.pudr.org/press-statements/stop-surveillance-and-harassment-of-kashmiri-students/>

<sup>63</sup> *In India, Kashmiris Face Deepening Discrimination.* (2020, March 20). In India, Kashmiris Face Deepening Discrimination – the Diplomat. <https://thediplomat.com/2020/03/in-india-kashmiris-face-deepening-discrimination/>

<sup>64</sup> Ibid

<sup>65</sup> *In Delhi, Kashmiri Muslims lead uneasy lives.* (200320, November 20). Al Jazeera. <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2003/11/20/in-delhi-kashmiri-muslims-lead-uneasy-lives>

<sup>66</sup> Ibid

<sup>67</sup> Ibid



“There should be sensitisation programmes held in order to create awareness of the gravity of the issue. Awareness talks should be held in academic institutions. There should be proper grievance redressal in institutions wherein people can address their concerns and accordingly some action could be taken.”

However, there were some responses which showed the helplessness of the respondents and the unchanging nature of the situation.

“Best thing a Kashmiri can do is shut up.”

“Change lies to be made in the basic structure which doesn't seem possible looking at the current scenario. We just try to exist. Unchanging perspective at least for this century!”

“There have been incidents in Delhi where in Kashmiris were targeted later on grounds of something unfortunate happening in Kashmir. Such untoward behaviour towards Kashmiris studying or working outside of JK can be avoided. There has to be a social acceptance which I currently feel is missing.”

There are many instances of solidarity and compassion which the people of Delhi have shown towards Kashmiri students and people in general. In the aftermath of the Pulwama attack, many Kashmiris students and traders were harassed and forced to vacate their accommodations. During that time some good Samaritans from New Delhi opened up their places for the distraught Kashmiri people who had been forced out and had no choice but to go back to their home. Three people, based in Delhi, with whom *Patriot* spoke to created safe houses for Kashmiri students with the aim to make them feel safe and facilitate their safe return to their home if they wanted to (Shubham Bhatia, 2019).<sup>68</sup> Despite getting attacked by online trolls with death and rape threats, they did not budge in their determination to help the Kashmiri students in need. These people are the ones who keep the moral fabric of our country intact and remind us of our values and principles in these tumultuous times.<sup>69</sup> They ought not to go unnoticed as they can serve as an example for the rest of the citizens. In this grim situation, they act as a beam of hope and assurance for many residing outside in New Delhi. There is a need to address these issues seriously and bring about some changes. Education and awareness is much needed initiative to raise awareness and understanding of our different cultures. We ought to embrace the multitudinous of our diverse nature and see it as a strength of our nation. Promoting cultural exchange will also go a long way. Some respondents in the survey put it aptly “We should host some cultural programme like other states do to show the people that there's more than what they think of Kashmiris”, Sensitisation of people can play a crucial role. Cultural amalgamation particularly in cities also plays a role in doing away with xenophobia. Socio-political scenario in the state is quite different thereby requires clearer understanding of the situation and people from a ground zero perspective.” Sensitization training along with the support networks will help students to better coordinate amongst themselves and the locals can be made more sympathetic and sensitive to the situation. Government initiatives are also necessary where they can give assurance through their law enforcement authorities about their safety and do away with the baseless suspicion and prejudice against Kashmiris. Finally the most important part has to be played by the media. Media has played the most pivotal role in constructing the image of Kashmir and people of Kashmir among the general masses, however way they have seen fit. They have done minimal research and have done away with the facts to suit their own narrative. This has to change. Responses like these can better narrate the gravity of the effect media has on people. “In my opinion, Political awareness and the proper media portrayal by Indian media authorities will be an effective tool to curb the menace of this racism and discrimination.” and “First of all we need better leadership in our country and a true media outlet which will bring out the ground news to whole India.” It is also important to point out that the change cannot be done only from one side. Both parties have to be willing for the change and have to increasingly work towards it. The people of Kashmir whether living in Kashmir or outside have to be better at communicating themselves, be aware and mindful of the cultures and customs of the place they are in. They have to get rid of any superiority complex or any narcissistic ideology they might believe in to truly integrate and be on equal terms with everyone. With these changes and adjustments, one can hope that these racist remarks, attacks, harassments, comments and other manifestations will soon be a thing of the past no Kashmiri will have to think twice before leaving their home alone for studying or in search of job in any corner of India.

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<sup>68</sup> Bhatia, S. (2019, February 28). *Dire straits, timely help*. The Patriot. <https://thepatriot.in/reports/dire-straits-timely-help-7513>

<sup>69</sup> Ibid

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