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Gendered Perspectives on Displacement and Resilience: A Comparative Analysis of Sri Lankan Tamil and Kashmiri Pandit Women's Experiences

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Abstract

Displacement caused by prolonged conflict profoundly impacts individuals and communities. However, the experience of displacement is often gendered, reflecting distinct roles, vulnerabilities, and capacities. This paper examines the experiences of two groups profoundly affected by displacement: Sri Lankan Tamil women and Kashmiri Pandit women. Both communities endured significant upheavals due to ethnic tensions, conflict, and systemic discrimination. Using a feminist lens, the analysis explores how displacement uniquely affected these women, focusing on the intersection of gender, conflict, and resilience. Themes of loss, identity, community rebuilding, and resistance to patriarchal structures are examined, with vivid examples illustrating the women's suffering, struggles, and resilience in the aftermath of war and forced migration.

Keywords: Sri Lankan Civil War, Tamil Displacement, Kashmiri Pandit Exodus, Gendered Violence, Sexual Violence in Conflict, Ethnic Conflict, Refugee Crisis, Women in Conflict, Patriarchy and Resistance, Post-Conflict Rebuilding, Psychological Trauma, Economic Marginalization Community Reconstruction.

Introduction

The phenomenon of displacement due to armed conflict has far-reaching consequences for affected populations, particularly for women. In patriarchal societies, gender roles shape how men and women experience displacement. Tamil women in Sri Lanka and Kashmiri Pandit women in India faced unique challenges deeply rooted in their cultural, social, and economic contexts. Despite these challenges, both groups displayed remarkable resilience, adapting and resisting in various ways.

This study critically analyzes the gendered dimensions of displacement among these two communities. Displacement is not a gender-neutral phenomenon. Women and girls often face heightened risks, such as sexual exploitation, gender-based violence, and disruption of liveli-

hoods. However, they also act as critical agents in sustaining families, rebuilding communities, and fostering resilience during periods of crisis. By examining their lived experiences-including personal stories of trauma and perseverance-the paper contributes to broader discussions on how gender and resilience intersect within the context of forced migration and post-conflict recovery.

Methodology

This research employs a qualitative, comparative approach to explore the gendered impact of displacement caused by ethnic conflicts, specifically focusing on the Sri Lankan Civil War and the 1990 Kashmiri Pandit exodus. The methodology involves:

Literature Review: A comprehensive review of existing scholarly articles, reports, and books concerning the displacement of Tamil and Kashmiri Pandit women, including gender-based violence, economic marginalization, psychological trauma, and post-conflict community rebuilding.

Case Studies: Two primary case studies are examined:

The Tamil women displaced during and after the Sri Lankan Civil War (1983–2009).

The Kashmiri Pandit women displaced during the 1990 exodus from Kashmir.

These case studies are informed by personal accounts, testimonies, and memoirs, such as those by survivors of sexual violence and community leaders from both communities.

Secondary Data Analysis: Data gathered from reputable human rights organizations (e.g., Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch), government reports, and international studies were analyzed to understand the broader socio-political and economic conditions faced by displaced women.

Thematic Analysis: The data collected were categorized and analyzed thematically, focusing on key issues such as gendered violence, economic survival, psychological trauma, and community rebuilding efforts. This method

allows for the identification of patterns and differences between the two communities' experiences of displacement and recovery.

Intersectional Approach: The study incorporates an intersectional framework to understand how gender, ethnicity, and displacement intersect in shaping the experiences of Tamil and Kashmiri Pandit women, with particular attention to their resilience and resistance against patriarchal structures.

Background

The Sri Lankan Civil War and Tamil Displacement

The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), a separatist militant group that aimed to establish an independent Tamil Eelam in the country's north and east, and the Sri Lankan government fought each other in the long-lasting Sri Lankan Civil War (1983–2009). Civilians, especially those of the Tamil ethnic community, suffered greatly as a result of the conflict's brutality, which caused widespread displacement and systemic suffering.

Ethnic tensions between the Sinhala majority and Tamil minority were long-standing before the civil war, exacerbated by discriminatory policies and state-sponsored marginalization of Tamils, including restrictions on education and employment opportunities. These policies pushed Tamil youth into militancy, with the LTTE emerging as the principal armed group advocating for Tamil autonomy. The war displaced an estimated 1 million people, with large numbers fleeing to other countries such as India, Canada, and Australia. Internally, millions sought refuge in camps or remote rural areas, struggling with a lack of basic amenities and constant threats of violence.

For instance, women in Jaffna reported widespread sexual violence during the military occupation, with many abducted or assaulted by warring factions. Survivors often face stigma within their communities, making reintegration challenging. One harrowing account from a displaced Tamil woman described her captivity in a military-run camp where women

were systematically subjected to sexual abuse. Even after escaping these conditions, they were ostracized within their communities, highlighting the compounded nature of their suffering.

The 1990 Exodus: A Catastrophic Event of the Kashmiri Pandit

In the late 1980s, the Kashmir Valley witnessed a dramatic rise in insurgent violence, fueled by both religious extremism and political discontent with Indian rule. This period marked the beginning of a systematic campaign to drive out the Hindu minority community, particularly Kashmiri Pandits, from the region.

On January 19, 1990, a night that has since become seared in the collective memory of the Pandit community, militants issued a chilling call for Kashmiri Pandits to leave the Valley, declaring, "If you want to live, leave Kashmir." The following days witnessed widespread violence against Pandits-homes were burned, properties looted, and individuals were targeted for assassination. Women were subjected to horrific atrocities, including sexual violence, which compounded the trauma of displacement. In the face of these dangers, and with no protection from the state, the vast majority of the Kashmiri Pandit population fled their homes, leaving behind their ancestral land, cultural markers, and material possessions.

For women, the exodus was not just a physical displacement but also a profound disruption of their roles as cultural caretakers and keepers of family traditions. This traumatic event shattered the social fabric of the community and altered gender dynamics, both in the Valley and in the refugee camps that became their temporary homes.

Findings and Discussion Gendered Challenges of Displacement Sexual Violence and Exploitation

Tamil women frequently became targets of systemic sexual violence, a weapon used by warring factions to intimidate and subjugate entire communities. During the height of the war, reports emerged of Tamil women being detained in military-run camps, where sexual violence was rampant. Survivors often faced stigma within their communities, compounding their trauma.

For instance, a Tamil woman recounted her harrowing experience in a military camp where she was held for months and repeatedly abused. Her story reflects the broader plight of countless others who endured similar atrocities. Similarly, on the other side the refugee camps that many Kashmiri Pandits fled to were overcrowded, under-resourced, and often lacked basic necessities such as clean water, sanitation, and security. This environment significantly heightened the vulnerability of individuals, especially women. The breakdown of family structures in the camps made women even more susceptible to gender-based violence, including sexual assault, harassment, and exploitation.

While women had some protection from violence in their original homes through the support of family members and the broader community, this safeguard was lost in the refugee camps. As a result, women became increasingly exposed to both external threats and the collapse of familial and social systems. In his memoir, Pandita recounts how his mother, despite her profound sorrow, continued to care for her family and take on numerous responsibilities in the camp. However, even she could not shield her children from the dangers of their harsh new reality, where personal safety was constantly at risk.

With the absence of male protectors, women often assumed additional responsibilities, which increased their exposure to physical violence. In some instances, women were specifically targeted because they were seen as vulnerable and became symbols of the displaced community's fragility.

After the war, displaced Tamil women strug-

gled to rebuild their lives, often dealing with the trauma of sexual violence and the lack of support systems. In some cases, women were coerced into prostitution as a means of survival. One notorious instance of sexual violence occurred in the final stages of the civil war, particularly in the government's military offensive in 2009. Human rights organizations have reported systematic sexual violence, including rape, sexual slavery, and exploitation of Tamil women by Sri Lankan security forces. Though it remains difficult to find comprehensive data due to the sensitive nature of these crimes and the lack of independent investigation during and after the war, survivors have described these experiences in testimonies.

Report: *"The Forgotten Women of Sri Lanka's War"* by Amnesty International (2013) Amnesty International's report specifically addresses the plight of women caught in the conflict, focusing on sexual violence as a weapon of war. It presents testimonies of Tamil women who were subjected to rape and sexual assault during the final phase of the war, particularly by Sri Lankan government forces.

Example, one of the survivors, a Tamil woman, described how soldiers held her in an internment camp, where she was raped repeatedly over several days. Her accounts were corroborated by other women who shared similar experiences. These testimonies provided a grim picture of the widespread and systematic nature of sexual violence during the conflict.

During the insurgency, there were reports of sexual violence against Kashmiri Pandit women by militants who sought to drive them out of Kashmir. Women were abducted, raped, and murdered as part of a campaign of terror. This violence was not only aimed at the victims but was meant to send a broader message of ethnic and religious domination.

As Rahul Pandita recounts, the lack of extended family protection in these camps heightened the risk of harassment and violence. For instance, women in overcrowded camps often

had to navigate unsafe conditions, where even accessing basic amenities posed significant risks. He describes women being abducted by militants, some of whom were never found, and others who were raped and killed. These acts were not isolated but part of a systematic strategy of terror and ethnic cleansing. This act of sexual violence was meant to symbolize the "punishment" of the Pandit community, which was perceived as loyal to the Indian state. These acts of brutality were used to drive fear and terror into the hearts of the community, forcing many to flee Kashmir.

Economic Marginalization

Displacement severely disrupted traditional livelihoods, pushing Tamil and Kashmiri Pandit women into precarious economic roles. Tamil women, particularly in the Northern and Eastern provinces of Sri Lanka, faced the destruction of their homes and livelihoods. Many had to rely on informal labor, such as domestic work and sewing, to make ends meet. As skilled managers of farms and households, they were excluded from formal economic recovery initiatives, which focused primarily on rebuilding infrastructure and male-dominated industries like construction. This exclusion highlighted the gender-based economic marginalization they faced during and after the war.

The International Crisis Group's report, *Women and War in Sri Lanka*, underscores that Tamil women not only lost their livelihoods but also faced extreme violence, including sexual assault and forced recruitment by armed groups. These experiences left them dependent on male family members or NGOs for survival, limiting their agency in post-war recovery efforts. The report also notes that patriarchal norms in their communities hindered their access to education and skills training, further restricting their ability to improve their economic situation.

Sita Venkateswar's study, *Gender, War, and Peacebuilding*, examines how post-conflict reconstruction in Sri Lanka largely overlooked the role of women, especially Tamil women.

While Tamil women were central to their families' survival during the war, they were excluded from formal peace negotiations and economic recovery projects. Government efforts to promote employment in sectors like tourism and construction often bypassed women due to gender discrimination and the lack of skills training.

The study also highlights how women's informal work, such as agriculture and home-based businesses, was undervalued in the formal economy, further marginalizing them from economic opportunities. As heads of households during the war, many Tamil women struggled to maintain their independence in the post-war period due to the absence of supportive economic policies.

Similarly, Kashmiri Pandit women, traditionally involved in crafts, agriculture, and small businesses, found themselves economically marginalized after displacement. Many lost access to these industries once they were forced to leave their homes and settle in refugee camps. In these unfamiliar settings, women who had previously managed household businesses or cultural crafts found themselves without the necessary resources or support to adapt. Women like Pandita's mother assumed breadwinning roles, working tirelessly despite their frail health to ensure their families' survival.

In response to their challenging circumstances, Tamil women demonstrated resilience by forming cooperative groups within the camps. One notable example was a group that collectively managed a tailoring unit, which allowed them to earn income and maintain a sense of dignity despite their displacement. Similarly, Kashmiri Pandit women who had previously been involved in traditional crafts like weaving Pashmina shawls and managing household businesses found that their access to these industries was severely limited in refugee camps, exacerbating their economic vulnerability.

Ritu Menon's article, *Displaced and Marginalized: Kashmiri Pandit Women's Struggle for*

Identity and Survival, discusses how the traditional roles of Kashmiri Pandit women-caring for homes and businesses-left them ill-equipped to enter the formal job market in the displaced context. This made them heavily dependent on family members or external aid. Moreover, their social isolation in the new environments where they resettled further compounded their economic and social marginalization.

Both Tamil and Kashmiri Pandit women faced significant challenges due to displacement, with their economic roles undervalued and opportunities for formal employment largely inaccessible. Despite their resilience and contributions, they were excluded from many aspects of post-conflict recovery, which reinforced their economic dependency and social isolation.

Psychological trauma

Displacement during conflict left deep psychological scars on both Tamil and Kashmiri Pandit women, who faced trauma through violence, loss, and forced displacement.

In Sri Lanka, Tamil women endured war-related trauma, with some experiencing recurring nightmares and anxiety about returning to unsafe areas. One woman's fear of retribution for reclaiming family land highlights the lasting emotional burden. Reports from the UNHRC, Amnesty International, and Human Rights Watch shed light on their suffering. The UNHRC report documented sexual violence and psychological trauma, such as PTSD and depression, due to violence and displacement.

Amnesty's 2009 report highlighted how Tamil women were disproportionately targeted for sexual violence and forced recruitment by the LTTE, exacerbating their mental health issues. Human Rights Watch described how women faced violence by both state and LTTE forces, including sexual assault and forced labor. The ongoing instability and lack of mental health care left many women in refugee camps with long-term psychological scars.

Kashmiri Pandit women also suffered from violence and displacement during the 1990 exodus, when 300,000 Pandits fled due to escalating violence. Human Rights Watch documented the targeting of women for sexual violence and abduction, leading to severe emotional trauma. Many lost family members and were displaced with no belongings, facing psychological effects like PTSD, depression, and anxiety.

The book *The Pandit Exodus* highlighted the identity loss these women felt, as they struggled to maintain their cultural and religious practices. In refugee camps, the lack of resources made life especially hard for women, who were often primary caregivers. Coping mechanisms, including religious rituals, helped some women, though others felt deep alienation. Nirupama Dutt's article on Kashmiri Pandit women emphasized gender-based violence and the need for mental health care, calling attention to the severe psychological burden of their exile.

Both groups experienced profound trauma, including sexual violence, forced displacement, and loss, with urgent calls for psychological support and justice for the survivors.

Community Rebuilding

Despite significant challenges, women from both the Tamil and Kashmiri Pandit communities played pivotal roles in rebuilding their cultural, social, and economic networks following displacement. Tamil women, in particular, formed self-help groups that advocated for collective rights. A notable example includes displaced Tamil women in India who organized community kitchens in refugee camps, ensuring food security while preserving traditional cooking practices. After the end of the Sri Lankan Civil War, Tamil women became central to the reconstruction efforts in the northern and eastern parts of Sri Lanka, particularly in the Jaffna and Mullaitivu districts. An important organization in this effort, Women for Peace (WFP), emerged in the aftermath of the war.

WFP focused on providing psychosocial sup-

port for survivors of sexual violence, advocating for land rights for displaced individuals, and organizing educational programs for women and children who had lost access to schooling during the conflict.

In *Tamil Women and the Politics of Post-War Sri Lanka* (2018), academic Shreen Abdul Saroor discusses how Tamil women leaders, many of whom were victims of violence during the war, utilized their personal experiences to fuel their activism for justice and reconciliation. Saroor highlights the story of Suganthi, a Tamil woman who lost both her husband and son to violence. Rather than succumbing to grief, Suganthi became a key advocate for missing persons and played a significant role in community-based rehabilitation efforts.

The importance of Tamil women in post-war recovery is further documented in reports such as those by the International Crisis Group (2012), which highlight their participation in local politics and civil society. Tamil women's efforts to organize memorials for the deceased and push for accountability for war crimes demonstrate their critical role in the social and political rebuilding of their communities.

Similarly, Kashmiri Pandit women, displaced during the 1990 exodus from Kashmir, worked tirelessly to preserve their cultural identity despite the challenges of living in exile. They passed down traditions through storytelling, culinary practices, and education, ensuring the survival of their heritage. In *The Exiled Daughter: Kashmiri Pandit Women's Struggles in the Diaspora* (2019), Chinmoy Routh describes how women took responsibility for ensuring their children learned the Kashmiri language, traditional culinary practices, and religious rituals. Women's groups in the diaspora also played an essential role in organizing spiritual and cultural events, such as the celebration of Shivratri, to maintain their community's traditions.

One significant example is the Kashmiri Pandit Women's Welfare Association (KPWWA), which organizes cultural events and educational programs to pass on traditions to young-

er generations. Through these collective efforts, Kashmiri Pandit women have managed to preserve a sense of identity while navigating the challenges of life as refugees.

Both Tamil and Kashmiri Pandit women have also faced gendered challenges in post-conflict reconstruction. While men often led political resistance and military actions, women's contributions focused on emotional recovery, cultural preservation, and economic rebuilding. Their roles in maintaining family units, providing emotional support, and ensuring social cohesion have been essential for long-term community stability. As noted by Lori Allen in *Women and Conflict in the Middle East and South Asia* (2020), women in conflict zones play a unique role in rebuilding society, emphasizing the critical need for gender-sensitive policies in conflict resolution. Tamil and Kashmiri Pandit women, who were often sidelined in formal peace negotiations, have used grassroots organizations to challenge this exclusion and demand a more inclusive recovery process.

In Sri Lanka, Tamil women like Kumari, who lost her entire family in the conflict, became leaders in campaigns for justice and reparations. Kumari was instrumental in organizing memorials for the war dead, helping to rebuild social cohesion in her community, and advocating for the investigation of war crimes. Similarly, Kashmiri Pandit women like Rukhsana, a refugee who lost her home in the exodus, led advocacy efforts for the return of displaced communities to Kashmir. Rukhsana's work focused on restoring land rights and raising awareness about the community's suffering. Their ongoing efforts continue to shape both the social and political recovery of their communities, ensuring that the voices of women are central to post-conflict rebuilding.

Resistance to Patriarchy: The Role of Tamil and Kashmiri Pandit Women

The disruption of traditional gender roles in conflict-affected regions has provided women

with unique opportunities to challenge entrenched patriarchal structures. Tamil and Kashmiri Pandit women have particularly demonstrated resilience and leadership in their respective communities, defying patriarchal norms in the face of war, displacement, and ongoing political struggles.

Tamil Women's Resistance to Patriarchy

Tamil women, particularly during and after Sri Lanka's civil war, have been instrumental in reshaping societal roles. While the Tamil Tiger Movement (LTTE) was itself patriarchal, it granted women more autonomy than traditional Tamil society. Many Tamil women took up arms, with some ascending to leadership positions within the LTTE. The movement's goal of independence from the Sri Lankan government also enabled Tamil women to challenge the gender norms that had traditionally confined them to passive roles in society.

Following the war, Tamil women became key figures in the struggle for justice and accountability. They led protests for wartime sexual violence survivors and pushed for gender equality in post-war political negotiations. Despite the ongoing socio-political marginalization in Sri Lanka's North and East, Tamil women have remained central to the fight for greater political participation, underscoring their pivotal role in post-conflict reconstruction.

Kashmiri Pandit Women's Resistance to Patriarchy

Following the migration from Kashmir in 1990, Kashmiri Pandit women became emblems of tenacity and defiance. Many women assumed new roles after being forced to leave their homes by insurgency, such as managing households and protecting religious and cultural customs. They became vocal supporters of their community's rights, calling for a safe return to Kashmir, justice, and acknowledgement of the horrors committed during the conflict. Kashmiri Pandit women faced additional difficulties as a

result of the forced migration, such as the trauma of displacement and exposure to sexual abuse.

Despite this, many women became cultural guardians, making sure that customs and practices were passed down to future generations. Their participation in cultural preservation evolved into a means of protesting governmental forces that were erasing their identity.

Furthermore, by going to college and starting professional occupations, Kashmiri Pandit women have disregarded patriarchal norms. Their academic accomplishments have given them the confidence to question gendered norms and actively support the rights of their community. They are now outspoken in the larger Indian environment, advocating for justice and political representation.

Key Articles and Insights

Several reports and articles have explored the experiences and activism of Tamil and Kashmiri Pandit women. One article, *The Role of Tamil Women in Post-War Reconciliation* (The Diplomat, 2016), examines the increasing political involvement of Tamil women in Sri Lanka's post-war landscape. Tamil women are highlighted as leaders in the fight for justice, gender equality, and post-conflict peace building, with a focus on their resistance to patriarchal systems within their own communities.

In the context of Kashmiri Pandit women, *The Feminization of the Kashmiri Pandit Exodus* (Kashmir Reader, 2019) delves into their role as cultural custodians during the exodus, emphasizing their responsibility for maintaining cultural identity amidst displacement. This theme is further explored in the *Asia Foundation* report (2018), which highlights Kashmiri Pandit women's advocacy for peace and political activism, challenging the patriarchal narratives that have historically sidelined their voices.

Personal narratives featured in articles like *In Search of Home: The Struggles of Kashmiri Pandit Women* (The Hindu, 2021) illustrate

how these women not only dealt with trauma but emerged as leaders in the community's fight for justice. These personal accounts underscore the critical role women have played in shaping their community's identity and advocating for a return to Kashmir.

Both Tamil and Kashmiri Pandit women have demonstrated remarkable resilience and leadership in their efforts to resist patriarchy. Through their activism, education, and roles as cultural custodians, they have defied societal expectations, becoming key figures in the survival and reconstruction of their communities. Their ongoing struggles for justice and gender equality continue to challenge and transform patriarchal systems in their respective societies, ensuring that women remain at the forefront of rebuilding efforts and political change.

Gender-Sensitive Policies for Post - Conflict Recovery:

A Focus on Sri Lankan Tamil and Kashmiri Pandit Women

In post-conflict settings, the importance of gender-sensitive policies cannot be overstated. Women in conflict and post-conflict areas face unique challenges, including gender-based violence, displacement, and economic insecurity. Addressing these issues requires policies that cater specifically to the vulnerabilities and strengths of women, providing them with the tools for recovery and empowerment.

The findings highlight the need for targeted approaches that focus on both the immediate needs and long-term resilience of women. Programs must address vulnerabilities such as gender-based violence, while fostering women's agency through education, skills training, and leadership opportunities. Additionally, policies should take into account the emotional and cultural needs of displaced women.

One key example of such an initiative is the inclusion of cultural preservation programs in resettlement plans. These programs can empower women to reclaim their cultural identities, fostering both personal and communal

resilience.

Sri Lankan Tamil Women: Gender-Specific Policy Implications

Sri Lankan Tamil women, who suffered through the civil war, face numerous challenges as they work toward rebuilding their lives. Policies aimed at addressing their needs must focus on safety, empowerment, and active participation in post-conflict processes.

- **Combating Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV):** During the war, many Tamil women experienced widespread sexual violence. Post-conflict policies should prioritize the provision of medical care, psychological counseling, and legal support for survivors. An example of this is the establishment of "One-Stop Crisis Centers" (OSCCs) in Sri Lanka, offering comprehensive support services to SGBV survivors.

- **Economic Empowerment:** Many Tamil women, especially widows and heads of households, face severe economic hardship. Policies that provide access to microfinance, vocational training, and entrepreneurial opportunities are essential for economic independence. For example, the UN Women's program in Sri Lanka has supported women through financial literacy and business training, helping them build sustainable livelihoods.

- **Mental Health Support:** The trauma caused by violence and displacement has left deep emotional scars. Tailored mental health services, such as trauma-informed therapy and community-based healing, are necessary to address the psychological needs of these women.

Women's Participation in Peace building

Women from the Tamil community are often excluded from peace negotiations and governance. Increasing their representation in decision-making processes is crucial. A practical step would be instituting gender quotas in peace negotiations, as seen in the work of the Sri Lanka Women's Network (SLWN), which promotes women's rights and inclusion in

peace talks.

Kashmiri Pandit Women: Gender-Specific Policy Implications

Kashmiri Pandit women, who experienced forced displacement in the 1990s, face distinct challenges related to safety, livelihood, and cultural preservation. Policies designed for them must recognize these unique aspects to ensure a sustainable recovery.

- **Protection from Gender-Based Violence (GBV):** In the aftermath of forced migration, Kashmiri Pandit women became vulnerable to violence and exploitation. Effective post-conflict policies should include safety measures such as safe houses, hotlines, and legal support. One example of this could be establishing safe houses in return areas, ensuring women's security during the repatriation process.

- **Preservation of Culture:** Kashmiri Pandit women play a crucial part in maintaining their religious and cultural identity. Giving them the chance to participate in cultural preservation initiatives can enable them to take the lead in restoring the cultural heritage of their town. Their cultural identity would be preserved with the support of women-led programs that educate the next generation about their history and customs.

- **Economic and Vocational Training:** There were serious socioeconomic issues as a result of the exodus of Kashmiri Pandit women. Their reintegration depends on policies that prioritize offering education, work prospects, and vocational training. Employment possibilities and financial independence would result from the expansion of initiatives like IT literacy classes and handcraft workshops.

Mental Health Support: Many Kashmiri Pandit women carry the emotional scars of violence and displacement. Policies must include specialized mental health services, such as grief counseling and trauma therapy, to support their psychological recovery. The Kashmiri Pandit Migrant Relief Program could integrate dedicated mental health ser-

vices to address these needs.

Conclusion

The experiences of Sri Lankan Tamil women and Kashmiri Pandit women reveal the deeply gendered nature of displacement. While conflict and forced migration brought immense challenges, they also catalyzed significant transformations in gender roles and resilience. Through personal stories, such as those of Tamil women leaders in displacement camps and Pandita's mother, this study illustrates the intersection of suffering and strength in the face of displacement.

By highlighting these dynamics, this study contributes to a nuanced understanding of the intersection between gender, conflict, and displacement, offering insights for more equitable post-conflict recovery initiatives. The resilience of Tamil and Kashmiri Pandit women serves as a testament to their pivotal roles in preserving cultural identity and fostering community resilience amidst adversity. For both Sri Lankan Tamil and Kashmiri Pandit women, post-conflict recovery requires policies that address their unique gendered experiences. By focusing on issues such as gender-based violence, economic empowerment, mental health, cultural preservation, and participation in peace building, these policies can transform women from victims of conflict into agents of social healing and community rebuilding. Implementing these gender-sensitive policies will not only support the recovery of women but also contribute to the long-term stability and resilience of their communities. International organizations, governments, and local stakeholders must collaborate to implement these policies effectively, providing women with the resources and protection they need to rebuild their lives.

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