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Science**

The Politics of Place, Community and Recognition
among Kashmiri Pandit Forced Migrants in Jammu
and Kashmir

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the London School of Economics for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy, London, January 2011

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Page 301-307 –Photographs 1-11.

Page i- Map 1

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Declaration

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Abstract

Since 1989 the state of Jammu and Kashmir has been the site of conflict between the Indian state and a separatist movement demanding independence. This thesis explores the impact of the conflict on the historically prominent Hindu Pandit minority of Kashmir who were displaced from their homes in the Kashmir valley. Most displaced Pandits have relocated to Jammu and other parts of India following the outbreak of violence.

The thesis examines processes of resettlement in the city of Jammu by analysing categories of place, home and settlement. By paying attention to these categories the thesis shows that the migrants express an absence of attachment to Jammu and treat the city as a waiting room. Some migrants desire to return to their old homes while others hope for future opportunities elsewhere. Hence, contrary to life in the present defined by migration there is a desire for rootedness or a stable future in a fixed location. The thesis then explores how the Pandits engage with the Indian nation state through an examination of their political discourse and their relationship with the state welfare regime. The thesis therefore shows that the Pandits continuously affirm their loyalty to the Indian state in order to demand assistance and recognition as loyal citizens. The thesis also explores what it means to be a Kashmiri Pandit after displacement with reference to class, caste, religion and history.

The Kashmiri Pandits are a historically prominent upper caste Hindu community who enjoyed high status in Kashmir. Their experience of displacement allows an examination of notions of decline and injustice due to the loss of socio-economic and political status. The Pandit case also demonstrates that socio-economic differentiation influences the ability to rebuild lives after displacement. Those who constitute the well-to-do strata are better placed to successfully rebuild lives while poorer Pandits enjoy fewer opportunities. The thesis however situates them in the context of Jammu where indigent Pandits do not constitute the most depressed sections of the city's population. On a wider level, the thesis argues that for forced migrants in general, ideas of home and place remain contested and incomplete in spite of having achieved some measure of physical settlement.

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Contents

		Pg i
Maps		
Chapter 1	Introduction	1
	1.1 Categories of Forced Migration	3
	1.2 The Category of the Internally Displaced Person	8
	1.3 The View from South Asia	13
	1.4 The Anthropology of Jammu and Kashmir	30
	1.5 Field site	34
	1.6 Methods	39
	1.7 Chapter Plan	46
Chapter 2	Accounting for Displacement: The historical context of the Kashmir conflict and the exodus of the Kashmiri Pandits	51
	2.1 The context of Jammu and Kashmir	52
	2.2 Locating the Kashmiri Pandits	61
	2.3 Accounting for Displacement, 1990	68
	2.4 Accounting for Displacement: The time before flight	71
	2.5 Accounting for Displacement: Flight	82
	2.6 Accounting for Displacement: Arrival	85
	2.7 Conclusion	90
Chapter 3	Living in a Place of Exception: The politics of place and everyday life in a displaced persons	

	camp in Jammu and Kashmir	92
	3.1 The camp as context and Object	94
	3.2 The Kashmiri Pandit Migrant Camps	101
	3.3 The case of Purkhu camp	110
	3.3.1 The Road	113
	3.3.2 The Inner Lanes	117
	3.3.3 The Bhatt Household	119
	3.4 Conclusion	122
Chapter 4	Dealing with Dislocation: Making Home and Place in Jammu	129
	4.1 Home and Attachment	130
	4.2 A History of Settlement	135
	4.3 The Interfering Past: Home in the past Home in the present	139
	4.4 The Interfering Past: relations with Muslims	149
	4.5 Engaging and Claiming the Local	153
	4.6 The Waiting Room	159
	4.7 Conclusion	163
Chapter 5	Being a Kashmiri Pandit Migrant: The role of Caste, Class and Religion after displacement	166
	5.1 The Ideal Kashmiri Pandit	168
	5.2 Losing the Ideal	176
	5.3 The Migrant Label	182
	5.4 Class and Caste	187
	5.5 The Role of Religion	198

	5.6 Conclusion	204
Chapter 6	Making a Claim on the Nation: The Politics of Victimhood and Marginality among Kashmiri Pandits	207 207
	6.1 Victimhood	207
	6.2 Victims like other Indians	211
	6.3 Victims unlike other Indians	222
	6.4 The Terrain of Victimhood	235
	6.5 Conclusion	245
Chapter 7	Rights, Claims and Community: The Kashmiri Pandits and the Relief and Rehabilitation Programme	247
	7.1 Tracking Relief	249
	7.2 A Migrant critique of 'Relief': Relief as a Right	256
	7.3 A Migrant critique of 'Relief': Issues of Sustenance	264
	7.4 A Community generated through Relief	269
	7.5 Conclusion	278
Chapter 8	Conclusion	281
	8.1 The Importance of History	283
	8.2 Internal Displacement and the Nation-State	285
	8.3 The Politics of Place, Home and Settlement	286
	8.4 Victimhood and Suffering	289

8.5 Questions of status and quality of life	293
8.6 Coda	296
Photographs	301
Bibliography	308

Illustrations

Maps

Map 1: Location of Jammu and Kashmir	i
Map 2: Administrative map of Jammu and Kashmir after 1948	ii
Map3: Purkhu Camp	112

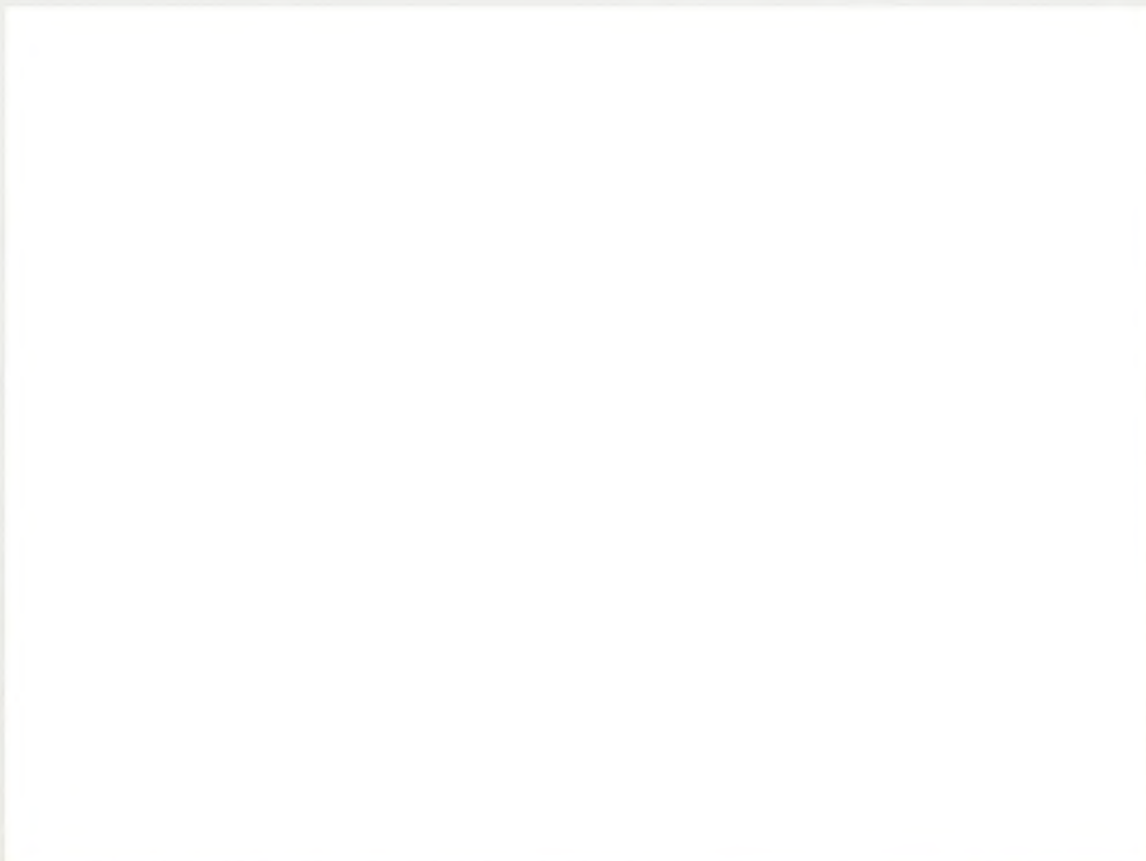
Photographs

Photograph 1: Entrance to Purkhu Camp	301
Photograph 2: Purkhu Camp Road	302
Photograph 3: Selling fireworks for Diwali, Purkhu Camp	302
Photograph 4: Religious Function, Community Hall, Purkhu Camp	
Phase 2	303
Photograph 5: Temple, Purkhu Camp	304
Photograph 6: Muthi Camp, inner lanes	304
Photograph 7: Inner lanes Purkhu Camp	305
Photograph 8: Purkhu Camp	305
Photograph 9: Vinod, Shopkeeper Purkhu Camp	306
Photograph 10: Demonstration for Holocaust day	306
Photograph 11: Tented Accommodation,1990	307

Tables

Table 1: List of Camps in Jammu City, 2007	103
Table 2: List camps established in 1990 and disbanded before 2008	104
Table 3: Total Number of Migrants	257
Table 4: Total Number of Migrants in Purkhu Camp	257

Maps



Map 1: Location of Jammu and Kashmir (Area marked in Blue)



Map 2: Administrative Map of Jammu and Kashmir after 1948

Chapter 1

Introduction

Since the end of 1989, the Indian state of Jammu and Kashmir has been embroiled in a conflict involving insurgent groups and political organisations seeking the independence of Kashmir from the Indian state. The conflict is often depicted as an unfinished agenda of decolonisation, when the status of Jammu and Kashmir fell into question as to whether the state would accede either to India or Pakistan. This approach persists with the Indian state seeking to maintain its territorial integrity and authority in Jammu and Kashmir, and with the indirect involvement of the Pakistani state, which has provided moral and material support to militants and secessionist political groups. The state of Jammu and Kashmir is home to a number of communities distinguished by region, language and religious affiliation, who have been affected by the conflict in various ways. Inhabitants of the Kashmir valley have had to endure the gradual militarisation of everyday life, state oppression, widespread violence and the loss of life. Communities who live along the Line of Control that separates Indian and Pakistani administered territories have been affected for many years by artillery shelling and occasional military action. The conflict has also complicated inter-ethnic relations among the differently located communities in the sub-regions of Jammu and Ladakh.

This mosaic of politics provides the setting for the experiences of the Hindu minority of the Kashmir valley, better known as the Kashmiri Pandits. Following the outbreak of insurgency and the escalation of violence perpetrated by Indian security forces and militant groups, a number of key incidents took place. A series of selective assassinations of Kashmiri Pandits by militants, large scale protests against the Indian state and a general breakdown in law and order resulted in a sense of fear among

members of the community. Many of the individuals assassinated were involved in the state establishment and mainstream politics. The demonstrations that expressed the demand for the independence of the Kashmir valley have been controversial for condemning any association with the Indian state. The Kashmiri Pandits occupy an especially difficult location, having been associated with the Indian state in an area where a vast majority of the population desire independence.

Following large scale protests that took place in 1990 from the 19th and 20th of January onwards, large numbers of Kashmiri Pandits began to leave the Kashmir valley, fleeing to Jammu in the southern part of the state where life has remained relatively peaceful. Many left with few possessions leaving their properties and livelihoods behind, expecting to return when the violence would subside. Since then, the Kashmiri Pandits have found themselves constituting one of the largest groups of internally displaced peoples in India, with an estimate of 120,000 to 140,000 individuals having fled the violence within a span of year. Displaced Kashmiri Pandits are to be found in large numbers in the city of Jammu, with other prominent populations living in and around New Delhi. This thesis aims to examine their experience of forced migration and the conflict over Kashmir.

This thesis is an ethnographic study of displaced Kashmiri Pandits settled in Jammu. They are to be found across a wide range of settlements ranging from government established camp colonies to middle class localities that have mushroomed in Jammu since mid-1990s. They fall in the category of Internally Displaced Persons (IDP), a subgroup of forced migrants who are defined by the fact that they remain within the borders of their own state. However the Indian state does not employ the category of the IDP, preferring to use the nomenclature 'migrant'. The Kashmiri Pandits on the other hand argue that they are 'refugees in their own country'. While they reside in Jammu, a city

which has remained relatively peaceful and whose populace supports the accession of the state to India, they remain in the field of politics associated with the conflict. Most Pandits have not returned to the Kashmir valley since they took flight, finding themselves in exile for more than a decade and half. The thesis will examine the experience of forced migration by exploring the ways the Pandits have engaged with issues of home and place in Jammu. I will also explore the processes by which the Pandits present their experiences of violence and suffering in ways that set them apart as a community with a unique and traumatic history.

In contrast to the vast majority of inhabitants of the Kashmir valley who are Muslim, the Kashmiri Pandits are a uniquely Hindu community of a single caste. They have historically been regarded as an elite community in Kashmir due to their involvement in the bureaucracies of the regimes that have ruled Kashmir until the accession of Jammu and Kashmir to India. There is also a great deal of internal socio-economic differentiation within the community, which suggests the possibility for variation in the experience of forced migration among differently positioned Kashmiri Pandits. This introduction will first seek to review earlier studies and literature pertaining to forced migration with a special focus on South Asia. This will be followed by a brief discussion of studies by anthropologists of Jammu and Kashmir, a description of the field site and a discussion of methodology.

1.1 Categories of Forced Migration

Since the early 20th century there has been growing awareness of situations of forced migration in a number of contexts ranging from war, communal and civil conflict, natural disasters and displacement resulting from development projects. Instances of coercion, persecution, violence and suffering have also come to define the lives of those

displaced. However there is little consensus on the definition of forced migration. Different authors indicate the potential difficulties incurred in identifying forced migrants due to the presence of numerous sub-categories comprising Refugees, Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs), people displaced by development projects, victims of natural disasters and marginalised people caught in transnational circuits such as human trafficking (Ager 1992, Castles 2003:15, Turton 2003a: 5-7).

This thesis deals with forced migrants who have been displaced by violence and conflict. Hence I will primarily focus on the categories of the Refugee and the Internally Displaced Person (IDP). The Refugee has been the ubiquitous figure in the history of forced migration, subject to a great deal of interest, analysis and imagination. As per the Conventions relating to the Status of the Refugee from the United Nations Conference of 1951, a refugee refers to any person who:

Owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality, membership of a particular social group and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it (Goodwin-Gill and McAdam 2007: 573).

In spite of the legal definition, there remain certain difficulties in defining who a refugee is. In a seminal text in refugee studies, Zolberg, Suhrke and Aguayo (1989) point out that displacement and exile has been a significant part of history since the medieval period, usually involving populations that find themselves at odds with the regimes in home areas. The authors identify various groups as refugees including those who constitute a political opposition to governing regimes, national minorities escaping

persecution from majority populations and those rendered as 'stateless' (Zolberg, Suhrke and Aguayo 1989: 8-13). However the category of the refugee has acquired import as it enables international organisations and states to 'engage in a process of worldwide triage' (Zolberg, Suhrke and Aguayo 1989: 3). In the process, that refugee has also become a legally defined category and is consequently often used to speak for all forced migrants (Ager 1992:2).

Other authors have attempted to refine the category of the refugee. Several studies in the past have attempted to examine the experience of forced migration by distilling 'the refugee experience' (Stein 1981), in terms of personal, socio-economic, cultural and political dimensions of refugee situations. Other writers propose that forced migrants must be studied in terms of social networks that frame the refugee's social world (Marx 1990), or by identifying stages of forced migration in terms of the periods before flight, during flight and after flight (Desjarlais et al 1996, Keller 1975). Nevertheless, recent studies and debate have continued to reveal the complexity of the issues at hand. As Turton argues, given the wide range of situations that have resulted in mass displacement and the diversity of communities who have been affected, one should speak of 'experiences' as opposed to a single refugee experience (2003a: 7).

There have been a number of attempts to understand forced migration through developing typologies of movement, as seen in the work of Kunz who proposed different forms of mass movement that typify refugees. Kunz distinguishes between 'anticipatory mass movements' which take place before a cataclysmic event and 'acute mass movements' which take place when large numbers of people flee due to an event of large scale violence (1973: 131-132). Informing these two categories are several variables such as identity, attitudes to flight and ideological orientation of the refugees (Kunz 1981: 42-45). Recent studies that have drawn on such efforts however, indicate

that current analytical categories and approaches are difficult to apply in practice. According to Van Hear, the growing evidence signifies that the displaced tend to fall between the polarities of analytical frameworks. Communities affected by mass exodus exhibit a wide range of migratory patterns which render them as vulnerable (Van Hear 1998: 42-49, 53).

However, certain characteristics have been observed across all cases of refugee situations. The experience of violence, persecution, and threat to life and uncertainty are treated as critical indicators of forced migration. According to Shacknove there are three critical markers to consider for identifying refugees: 1) deprivation of basic rights 2) inability to take recourse assistance from the state and 3) access to international assistance (1985: 282). Shacknove's definition focuses specifically on the sub-category of the refugee, the most well-known of all categories of forced migrants. At first, refugees can be distinguished from other categories of migrants as it is a legally defined category subject to international law. This definition emerged in the aftermath of the Second World War, when post-war reconstruction included the management of those made refugees by the war across Europe (See Malkki 1995: 495-503). Notable research that reflects the emergence of refugee studies and the refugee regime include Murphy (1955) and Proudfoot (1957), whose studies focus on refugees in the aftermath of the Second World War. Many themes that have come to define refugee life, such as the experience of 'statelessness', bureaucratised humanitarianism and the refugee camp emerged in this period. Other authors argue that forced migration and refugee regimes predate the post-war conceptualisation of refugees, taking the case of the exchange of populations between Turkey and Greece in the 1920s (Loizos 1999, Zolberg, Suhrke and Aguayo 1989: 18-21).

As Daniel points out, many of the understandings of forced migration and refugee situations have emerged in the context of western Europe, while increasingly most situations of displacement are taking place in the non-western world where different approaches to forced migration circulate (2002: 273-274). Recent approaches, especially involving anthropologists, have been able to question many of the presuppositions associated with forced migration. Malkki argues that refugees are located in a world in which communities are 'rooted' and fixed into particular spaces constituted by nation-states. Refugees, and for that matter all forced migrants, draw our interest as their condition is disruptive to a scheme of fixing communities and nations to a territory (Malkki 1992: 26). Similarly, Agamben observes that refugees acquire significance 'by breaking the continuity between man and citizen, *nativity* and *nationality*, they put the originary fiction of modern sovereignty in crisis' (1998: 131). In another review article, Malkki traces the evolution of refugee studies, asserting that the refugee must not be treated as a clearly defined type or label, but as a descriptive term that can account for a wide range of experiences connected to socio-economic issues, nationalism and state practice, citizenship and emotional issues among others (1995a: 496).

These concerns have been extensively examined by anthropologists, who pay close attention to the experiences of refugees in the context of everyday life. The scope and scale of these studies, to name a few, vary from Malkki's (1995b) seminal ethnography that examines issues of nationalism, history and memory among Hutu refugees, to Loizos' studies of Greek Cypriot refugees (1981, 2008) and Chatterjee's study of East Bengali Hindu Refugees (1992) that examine the experience of conflict, displacement and remaking life after displacement. Issues of humanitarian aid and assistance have also been interrogated extensively in studies by Harrell-Bond (1986) and Feldman

(2008). The question of place and territory have also been discussed extensively in the ethnographies authored by Hirschon (1988) and Peteet (2005), while the theme of citizenship and exile has been examined by Ong (2003) in the case of Asian refugees in the United States. Knudsen (2005) examines the experiences of Vietnamese refugees in terms of the larger existential dilemmas they have faced in dealing with refugee regimes and the idea of exile. These are but a few of the ethnographies which suggest the range of interests and approaches that anthropologists have brought to the table.

1.2 The Category of the Internally Displaced Person

Moving on from the refugee, it is imperative to return to the broader field of analysis of forced migration. To some extent, the conscious shift to forced migration results from a growing awareness of situations where communities are forced to leave their homes but do not cross national borders. Reports of communities being displaced from their homes due to development projects embarked upon by the nation-state, natural disasters or by conflict, have become too numerous to ignore. Colson's (1971) seminal ethnography of communities displaced and forcibly resettled by the state to make way for a large scale development project in Gwembe-Tonga examines the travails of displacement and its impact on ritual, kinship and social life among the displaced. Studies of displacement in the context of natural disasters also delineate experiences of material and existential loss and reconstruction which parallel the experience of refugees (Oliver-Smith 1996). In fact, Cernea argues for the theoretical, empirical and political gains that can be made by comparing and sharing work between scholars studying development induced displacement and refugee situations (2000: 17).

Nevertheless there remains a possibility for analytical confusion. As Turton (2003a) summarises, while there is scope for considering a broad range of sub-categories of

forced migration, others may criticise the term for lacking specificity. For Turton, the 'other forced migrants' consists of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPS):

These are people who, because of the circumstances causing them to move (in practice military conflict and violence), would have been considered worthy of international protection, under existing interpretations of international law and of the mandate of the UNHCR, if their move had taken them across an international border (Turton 2003b: 5).

The category of the IDP has acquired significant interest in recent years due to its prevalence in different parts of the world. It is estimated that as of 2009, there are 27.1 million people in fifty four countries who fall in this category (IDMC 2010: 8). Many of the features typically associated with refugees, such as the fear and experience of violence and persecution, have been seen to apply for many IDPs. According to Mooney, IDPs are distinguished by the involuntary aspect of their migration, even though it takes place within national borders (2005:10). The fact that IDPs remain within national borders serves to distinguish them from refugees, who are able to access a set of legally guaranteed safeguards and support from international organizations. IDPs in contrast do not enjoy this recognition, which often prevents organizations such as the United Nations High Commission for Refugees to enter the picture (Bennet 1998: 4).

In the absence of a legal definition for IDPs, a set of guiding principles have been implemented by the UNHCR, which states:

Persons or groups of persons who have been forced to flee or leave their homes or places of habitual residence as a result of, or in order to avoid, in particular, the

effects of armed conflict, situations of generalized violence, violations of human rights or natural or human made disasters, and who have not crossed an internationally recognized state border (Hampton 1998: xv).

The working definition of IDPs thus covers a wide range of constituencies comprising conflict affected people and those displaced by development projects. According to Cohen (1998), the working definition provides vital recognition for IDPs, who otherwise do not acquire the same visibility as refugees. She also points out that the guiding principles are subject to problems of legality, applicability to contexts and problems of consensus with regards to who can constitute an IDP (Cohen 2000: 77). As Cohen and Deng, two of the foremost authors who have engaged extensively with the issue of IDPs, point out, the definition focuses on those who are displaced unexpectedly in large numbers. In the process the definition misses out communities who take to flight in small numbers to avoid being detected, as well as leaving out the consideration of victims of disaster or developed induced displacement (Cohen and Deng 1998a, 1998b: 16-18). But as Mooney argues, the focus must lie with communities who have been coerced into displacement (2005: 13).

There is an emphasis of the role of the nation-state and its responsibility for the displacement of people. It is broadly understood, given the numerous situations of internal displacement, that the state at times is responsible for forcing people to flee from their homes and also prevents international humanitarian organisations from intervening, which contrasts with many corresponding cases of refugee situations. In that sense IDPs may not be able to access other sources of aid and support. It is not my intention to suggest that refugees are comparatively less disadvantaged than IDPs. However refugees have a greater possibility of receiving recognition and assistance. As Cohen points out:

What distinguishes IDPs and should make them of concern to the international community is the coercion that impels their movement, their subjection to human rights abuse emanating from their displacement and the lack of protection available within their own countries (1998: 5).

By not crossing borders, IDPs remain invisible to those who can help them and vulnerable to groups who may have been responsible for persecuting and displacing them. The guiding principles regarding IDPs do not constitute a legal definition but have been argued to be consistent with humanitarian law and policy and provide a comprehensive way to identify and care for the displaced (Kalin 2005:8). Supporters of the category are aware of the difficulties of demarcating IDPs from other vulnerable migrant groups, including those displaced by development projects and those who migrate to escape acute poverty (Turton 2003b). In a stringent critique, Hathaway argues against inclusion of refugees as a sub-group in forced migration as it diminishes the effectiveness of the category of the refugee (2007: 351-354). He particularly accuses the concept of the IDP for diminishing the refugee agenda and criticises the guiding principles for IDPs as achieving little in practice (Hathaway 2007: 357,359). In response, Cohen argues that Hathaway ignores the difficulties inherent in presenting any category and that the experiences of IDPs are similar to refugees (2007:13).

While I am sympathetic to Cohen's argument, other studies reveal the complexities involved in internal displacement which appear to be overlooked in forced migration policy. For example, a study of IDPs in Peru by Stepputat and Sorenson (2001) locates displacement in the context of communities who have historically participated in urban-rural migration networks. However with violence breaking out between insurgents and the state, these networks were sundered and many found themselves permanently displaced after fleeing violence between state security forces and the insurgents.

However the discourse regarding the category of IDPs that was used in local politics did not necessarily relate to the way it is visualised at the level of international politics (Stepputat and Sorenson 2001: 780-785). Furthermore, IDPs have been observed to risk losing visibility in mingling with other migrant populations. This has been observed by Hutchinson (1996) with regards to the Nuer in Sudan. While Hutchinson's ethnography looks broadly at the changes in Nuer society, she also tracks many who fled violent conflict in the country by moving to the slums in the capital city of Khartoum and became indistinguishable from existing slum populations. This can be considered representative of many of the problems IDPs face.

Categories of displacement, whether of refugees or IDPs, remain open to re-appraisal and transformation with their implementation or imposition by aid agencies and states and adoption by displaced persons. IDPs and Refugees are understood to have been forced to flee under threat and duress. Turton argues that the term 'forced migrant' is contradictory as it acknowledges the involuntary nature of movement. Yet, to be a migrant implies some measure of agency (Turton 2003a: 11). He argues for the need to locate Forced Migrants as 'purposive actors':

Different forced migrants, however they are categorised, have different areas of choice, different alternatives, available to them, depending not just on external constraining factors but also on such factors as their sex, age, wealth, connections, networks etc. This means that we have to understand the point of view and experiences of the people making the decision to move. We have to emphasise their embeddedness in a particular social, political and historical situation. We have to see them as agents, however limited, in a physical sense, their room for manoeuvre may be (Turton 2003a: 12).

This awareness is important for understanding the different cases of displacement, ethnographically and historically. But this also necessitates the need to consider migration as a back drop to displacement. Voutira (1991) shows that Pontic Greek refugees at times had experiences typical of refugees in general and at other junctures, exhibited practices and strategies indistinguishable from economic groups of migrants. Similarly Al-Madawi's (1994) work on Iraqi immigrants distinguished between Muslim immigrants who migrated to escape poverty and seek greener economic pastures, and Christians who came to Britain for the same reasons as well as to escape discrimination and marginalisation. Cases of protracted displacement reveal displaced groups who find themselves in limbo over decades, being neither able to return to their old homes nor able to locate a socio-economic and legally secure place for themselves in the present (Knudsen 2009). In the following section, I will examine how some of the debates and issues of forced migration are understood and engaged within the South Asian subcontinent.

1.3 The View from South Asia

Forced migration has been a significant part of the geo-political landscape in South Asia, shaping the biographies of nation-states such as India, Pakistan and Bangladesh. All categories of forced migrants have been observed in the sub-continent. Since decolonisation, many communities in South Asia have also been internally displaced in the face of communal conflict, insurgency, war, natural disasters and development projects. The population of IDPs in India and Pakistan alone are estimated to be 500,000 and 1,230,000 respectively (IDMC 2010: 78, 81). South Asian countries are also host to refugee populations from other regions ranging from Tibetans in India and Nepal,

Afghans in Pakistan and Rohingyas in Bangladesh (Mishra 2004). In this section I shall focus on specific themes which emerge in the context of forced migration studies in South Asia. I shall also engage with the themes by comparing South Asian cases and experiences with studies that focus on communities in other parts of the world.

At an initial glance, the problems faced by forced migrants in South Asia are similar to situations witnessed in other parts of the world. But with a closer look, certain themes can be discerned amidst the noise. It has been observed that there are a variety of experiences with regards to forced migration in the subcontinent comprising refugees, IDPs and development oustees (Ahmed, Dasgupta, Sinha-Kerkhof 2004: 6). Forced migrants in South Asia have to contend with issues of the nation-state, citizenship and welfare, violence, suffering and human rights violations. Themes of resettlement, remaking lives, place and home are also critical constituents of the experience of forced migrants in the region. Forced Migration must also be seen in a larger context of historical migration within South Asia to escape poverty and structural violence. In the process the categories of forced migration, namely the refugee and the IDP, potentially have different meanings and uses in practice.

The first theme of significance relates to the state. In many cases the state and state institutions have been held responsible for mass displacement. But the role of the state in South Asia appears ambiguous. One characteristic of the sub-continent is the absence of a clearly defined refugee regime in any of the constituent states. Neither have any of the states in the subcontinent signed international agreements on displaced persons, nor have they worked out a consistent policy to manage displacement (Rolfe 2008). Rather, South Asian states respond to moments of crisis as and when they take place (Choudhury 2004: 191-192, Chimni 1994). South Asian nation-states have often been directly and indirectly responsible for large scale displacement or fail to provide adequate protection

to the displaced. However the displaced in South Asia also look to the institutions of the state for aid, relief and sustenance. This is important especially in light of a general assumption that refugees and IDPs are often understood to consist of populations that receive neither any support nor protection from their state. While some situations of displacement like Darfur indicate the absence of a state and the need for international intervention (Grono 2006), South Asian state institutions take responsibility for the displaced and provide care and support, however imperfect that may be.

South Asian states are also able to influence the role of international humanitarian organisations by enforcing limits on their mandates. It has been observed that the presence of liberal democratic institutions in India often render victims of violence unable to seek asylum in other countries, as an ostensibly liberal democratic state would not pursue policies of persecution (Zolberg, Suhrke, Aguayo 1989: 137-139). The presence and role of the state in South Asia also connects the displaced to other sections of a citizenry. This contrasts with the popular understanding of the displaced as located outside a national normative order. This has been seen during the Partition of India when refugees actively engaged in representational and confrontational politics with the state to seek their claims as citizens. Integral to the mobilisation efforts of the refugees was the sense of entitlement that they expressed on the basis of being refugees and citizens (Chatterjee 1992, Zamindar 2007).

Forced migrants in the sub-continent have also been observed to engage with political parties to secure access to local power. This has been observed in the case of East Bengali refugee who became closely tied to the Communist Party of India (Chakrabarti 1999) and Muslim refugees from India who formed a political party in Pakistan, which plays an influential role in politics in Karachi (Verkaaik 2004). These efforts were premised on acquiring entitlements and seeking representation to the state delivered on

the promise of equal citizenship. In the process, forced migrants have been witnessed to have transformed local politics in places of refuge (Chatterji 2007a: 260, Khan 2007). However confrontations between forced migrants and the state may not always succeed, with state authorities often able to brutally suppress protest by refugees (Jalais 2005). Yet, contrary to the image of helplessness, forced migrants in the sub-continent have been able to demonstrate high levels of agency with varying levels of success and failure.

Nationalist ideologies and practices have also featured in studies of forced migration. Malkki's (1995b) seminal ethnography of Hutu refugees focuses on 'mythico-histories' and demonstrates the capability of refugees to develop and narrate national identity and histories that produce identity in exile. Authors such as Khalili (2004) and Peteet (2004) have paid special attention to the way places associated with forced migrants, such as camps, provide fertile ground for pursuing nationalist politics among exiled Palestinians. Tibetan refugees in particular have been observed to use refugee camps and networks accessed through humanitarian agencies to maintain and promote links among Tibetan refugees and exiles globally (Frechette 2002). Forced migrants have also been observed to participate in extremist interpretations of nationalism as a response to their suffering and marginality, as seen in the case of the Pied Noir in France (Cohen 2003, Manes 2005). Furthermore as Pattie shows in the case of Armenians, nationalist politics within a community affected by violence and forced migration may have different meanings across generations (1997:242). Hence there is a diverse range of responses among forced migrants towards nationalism in terms of ideologies and practices.

Nationalist ideologies and practices have a significant impact on the affairs of forced migrants in South Asia. The birth of the independent nation-states of India and Pakistan were accompanied by widespread violence, mass displacement and refugee flows. The

partition transformed the inhabitants of British India into Indians and Pakistanis, Muslims and Hindu, national majorities and minorities, which had implications for conflict and displacement in the future (Ghosh 2010, Hassan 1997, Pandey 2001). Partition refugees also had to contend with different state administrations to secure recognition and assistance and negotiate for a place among new neighbours and fellow nationals. These experiences have raised various issues of significance in forced migration studies such as welfare, citizenship and sentiments of national belonging (Chatterjee 2001, Zamindar 2007). Authors such as Butalia (1998) and Das (1995a, 2000) have also demonstrated that the violence and suffering associated with an event of displacement, such as the partition, continue to influence the lives of the displaced and their descendants by influencing communal politics, the relationship between citizens and the nation-state and interpersonal relations.

Other studies have examined the diaspora and the use of different media as sites for nationalist politics among displaced South Asian populations affected by warfare, insurgency and state oppression (Axel 2002, Jeganathan 1998, McDowell 1996). Yet Daniel (1998) points out in the case of Sri Lankan Tamils in the United Kingdom that the 'nation in exile' is differentiated according to class and generation. Refugee conceptions of the nation have also been observed to differ from hegemonic constructions of the nation that alternate between the nation-state and homeland (Basu Raychoudhury 2004: 5659). Recent studies from Jammu and Kashmir also consider the relationship between forced migrants and nationalism. Robinson's (2004) research on Kashmiri refugee camps in Pakistani administered Kashmir situates the formation of political consciousness within the context of refugee spaces such as the camps. Duschinski's (2004, 2007) work on Kashmiri Pandit migrants in New Delhi raises the

dilemma faced by many Pandits of being loyal constituents of the Indian nation-state who come from a peripheral territory that defies the Indian nation-state.

Another set of themes I address in this thesis pertains to processes of dispossession. This comprises a number of concerns ranging from modes of sustenance amidst dispossession, changes in identity and ritual practice, to engaging and negotiating with relief and aid agencies. The period after flight faced by forced migrants is often beset by numerous difficulties. Apart from issues of sustenance and providing for basic needs such as food and accommodation, the period after flight is marked by a tremendous level of uncertainty.

Loizos's (1981) ethnography of Greek Cypriots displaced by war in Cyprus pays special attention to problems of providing for basic needs, and the immense sense of deprivation emanating from the loss of past livelihoods and especially the loss of status and self-worth due to dispossession and having to depend on charity. It has also been observed that the displaced have often been forced into relationship of dependence with humanitarian agencies, which may lead to a loss of status and self-respect (Harrell-Bond 1986). A similar situation has also been reported in studies of development induced displacement as displacement resulted not only in the loss of land, but also in putting pressure on political authority within the community that has been displaced, communal and kinship relations, disruption to ritual activity and a general loss of standard of living (Colson 1971, Scudder 2009). Loss and dispossession therefore involves both material and psycho-social considerations.

The theme of loss has also been observed in studies of South Asian forced migrants. Authors such as Ghosh (2004) and Dasgupta (2004) point out that upper caste and middle class refugees from East Bengal were especially affected by the loss of property

as well as the loss of class and caste status. The East Bengalis had fled to protect their honour and status. Yet, they found themselves forced into living conditions that lacked privacy and an acceptable standard of living, which would have enabled them to maintain a claim to being middle class. Upper caste refugees also found themselves in densely populated areas such as camps and squatter colonies, thereby being unable to maintain distance from lower castes. Banerjee (2003) in particular, reveals the impact of displacement in the domestic sphere, when older men who wielded power within the household, found themselves unable to provide for their families, which diminished their status within the household.

The issue of place has special resonance for communities marked by movement. Often, the relationship between place and movement is affected by a number of concerns and questions. Is place to be merely seen as a point of departure or arrival? To what extent does place influence the experience of migration? These concerns acquire urgency in the case of forced migrants, who can be characterised superficially as people who have lost their place in the world. However, the issue of place has many layers. Place can be treated in material and environmental terms. Yet, place can also be seen as shaping, and being shaped by, social and political relations. The processes by which people relate to place also draw upon psychological variables and emotions, especially if we consider feelings of attachment to place.

Place as a concept and an object of study, has received much attention, especially in revealing the interweaving and disentangling of the material, social, political and psychological qualities that define its meaning (Basso and Feld 1998, Gieryn 2000, Rodman 1992). Studies of forced migration also reveal the different elements that coalesce into place. They also depict the uncertainty associated with making place faced by forced migrants. Hirschon's (1988) ethnography of refugees from Asia Minor in

Greece describes the establishment and construction of a refugee housing colony in Athens, which has transformed into a fully-fledged locality integrated with the city of Athens over a period of time. Other authors such as Peteet (2004) have examined refugee places such as the camps, as places of dynamic transformation and yet, affected by the vagaries of local politics and marginalisation in the context of cities they are located in. Place is thus a generative context for the social world of refugees. Taking the case of the refugee camp, other authors on the other hand have treated place in terms of processes of containment and separating refugees from local populations (Fassin 2005, Colson 2003). This suggests that there are different meanings and forms of place with regards to forced migration.

The topic of place making has been extensively discussed by scholars engaging with forced migration in South Asia. One of the obvious points of interest for scholars has been the refugee camp and emergence of settlements. For example, in a study of Afghan refugees in Pakistan, it was observed that refugee camps on hand could be visualised by ubiquitous scenes of long queues of refugees waiting for rations alongside the actual presence and re-establishment of village based associations and councils within the camp (Edwards 1986: 320). During the Partition of India, it had been observed that most refugees preferred to secure shelter away from camps (Keller 1975). Studies of East Bengali refugees in Calcutta have dealt extensively with place making projects. Refugees were observed to have taken over undeveloped or empty land and established 'squatter colonies'. The initial years of the establishment of these colonies were fraught with conflict due to their illegal status, resulting in clashes between refugees, land owners and the state (Chatterjee 1992). Eventually these colonies became legally recognised and incorporated into the urban landscape and infrastructure (Sanyal 2009, Ray 2002). Apart from demonstrating the agency of refugees, the case of refugee

squatter colonies demonstrates how place is a site for negotiating relations between forced migrants and the state.

The studies of forced migration in South Asia also complicate the meaning of the 'local'. Questions of locality involve both the physical aspects of space and the need to consider social relations, especially in terms of relations with host populations and the place of refuge. There is a need to acknowledge the potential for difficulties to emerge when forced migrants relocate to areas where local populations themselves face socio-economic difficulties. Brun (2001, 2003) discusses the problems internally displaced Sri Lankans faced in the area they had been relocated in, as they were not part of local networks and lacked relations with local communities. Brun (2010) also suggests that the hospitality granted to the displaced must be seen as conditional, subject to the conditions of host populations and the possibilities of leading life as determined by state authorities.

The ability of the displaced to deal with local level politics has also been subject to difficulty as seen in the case of Muslim refugees in East Pakistan who often found locals, who were for all purposes co-religionists and fellow citizens, hostile to their presence (Rehman and Van Schendel 2003). Tensions between migrants and locals sometimes break out in violence as evidenced in riots involving local Assamese and Bengali refugees and migrants (Baruah 1999). Taking the case of Afghan refugees in Pakistan, Novak argues that the relationship between forced migrants and place is mediated by how forced migrants enter a place (2007: 557). Hence Afghans who entered Pakistan as refugees recognised by the Pakistani state and international humanitarian organisations, had experiences that differed from those who were not officially recognised and hence did not have legal safeguards to shelter or assistance (Novak 2007:

557). This dimension of official recognition is crucial for setting the stage for relations between forced migrants, local populations and the state.

The interest in the ways forced migrants relate to and make place also raises the issue of home. The condition of homelessness is intrinsic to the experience of forced migration, especially if we treat forced migrants as being out of place in this world. Home does not merely refer to material or physical spaces, but also draws upon issues of emotion, sentiment and memory (Blunt and Dowling 2006). Home for that matter is not limited to material structures, but also includes and invokes social relationships (Carsten and Hugh-Jones 1995). As Loizos (1981) observed in the case of Greek Cypriot refugees, most people often recollected and mourned the loss of homes and property as they represented socio-economic status in the past. Home also constitutes a form of journey, mediated by memory and nostalgia for an idealised home, which is compared with homes in the present and influences hopes for the future (Kabachnic, Regulska and Mitchnek 2010). In his follow up ethnography examining the lives of refugees after displacement, Loizos (2008) shows how the experience of displacement and eventual struggles in resettlement continued to shape the lives of his informants, especially in the distinctions made by older refugees between old homes and 'refugee homes'.

Similar issues have been considered in the context of South Asia. Thiranagama explores the lives of Sri Lankan Muslims who have been displaced from their homes and were relocated to another part of the country. She observed that for an older generation of IDPs, home remains in the area left behind, while younger forced migrants adjust better to new areas (Thiranagama 2007). While Thiranagama (2009) also raises the need to consider if the displaced truly 'feel at home', Chakrabarty (2000) examines the case of East Bengali Hindu refugees to show how memories and nostalgia create home and homeland in an idealised form, which may result in the effacement of Muslims from the

landscape. In other words as Duschinski (2004) suggests, forced migrants are faced with 'inconstant homelands', subject to changes in memory and physical access.

The themes of history and memory also emerge in studies of displacement. Authors such as Butalia (1998) and Pandey (2001) who have studied the Partition, suggest that the memory of the events that lead to the widespread loss of life and dispossession, affects the way contemporary politics is understood in India and Pakistan. Rather, the violence and suffering of Partition, while subject to shifts in meaning over time and different techniques of remembering, are essential to shaping community (Pandey 2001: 4). These approaches have interesting parallels with studies of mass displacement and work that examines the aftermath of widespread violence and genocide (Malkki 1995b).

History and memory however operate in other registers as well, which brings into focus issues of nostalgia and the contingencies of memory. One study that epitomises the contingency of the past memories in the present is by Slyomovics (1998), who takes the case of a Palestinian village whose inhabitants were expelled during the establishment of the Israeli state and transformed into an Israeli artists' village. Drawing on two groups of informants, Slyomovics skilfully explores the ways former residents remember the village through activities such as producing narratives and maps. However for the former inhabitants, the past faces a disjuncture with the present due to the ways new settlers have transformed the village.

To presume that forced migrants remain trapped in the past and unable to rebuild lives and homes would be erroneous. Several authors have shown the ability of forced migrants in the region to build home and transform places they relocate to, as seen in the case of East Bengali refugees (Chatterjee 1992, Sanyal 2009, Ray 2002). In some cases the displaced may embrace change in a manner which defies expectations of nostalgia.

This has been observed in a study of a community displaced by the construction of a dam in western India who embraced their new place rather than mourn for their old home (Hakim 2000). Nevertheless memories of life in the past before displacement and traumatic memories of the events that have led to displacement can persist years after the event, even during a period of a stability and seeming rehabilitation. For example, Jing (1996) presents the case of a community displaced by dam projects in China who are still affected the memory of homes left behind. As Das (1991, 2000) argues in the context of Partition refugees, the past may persist as a form of 'poisonous knowledge', indistinguishable from other aspects of everyday life for the displaced.

While this review covers some of themes with regards to forced migration in South Asia, there is another issue that must be considered. How does one address forced migration in a sub-continent where communities have historically been marked by migration? For authors such as Castles and Miller (1998) and Zolberg (2006) the period since the Second World War and decolonisation, is the 'age of migration', with forced migration treated as a subset of global migration. Authors such as Appadurai (1996), Gupta and Ferguson (1992), Brettel and Hollifield (2000) have argued that movement, especially through regional and global networks, has come to shape contemporary societies. Other authors such as Clifford (1997) and Rapport (2002) suggest it is movement and travel that defines people rather than place. Yet this approach has recently been tempered by scholars who argue that forced migrants may desire rootedness rather than embrace it, as migration and place making are refracted through socio-economic and political inequality and affected by institutions such as the nation-state, which can enforce restrictions on movement (Jansen and Lofving 2009, Kibraeb 1999).

Countries in South Asia have been marked by long history of migration. As Spencer points out with reference to Sri Lanka, there is a disjuncture between the supposed rootedness of communities as envisioned by the nation-state and the actual history of mobility across regions, ranging from labour migration in the colonial period to the displacements of the civil war (2003: 3). Gidwani and Sivaramakrishnan's (2003) concept of the 'rural cosmopolitan' as a way of being, indicates the need to acknowledge that migration and movement across regions has also been embraced by many people in the sub-continent. The sub-continent has also historically been a point of out-migration to different parts of the world, which further complicates what migration means in South Asia (Anwar 1979, Ballard 2003, Gardner 1995).

It is often difficult to establish a distinction between different categories of disadvantaged migrants. A single cohort of migrants may also have different categories within it. Jefferey's (1976) study of Pakistani immigrants to the United Kingdom distinguishes between Muslims who migrate for better economic opportunities and Christians who migrate to escape discrimination as a national minority. Falzon's (2004) study of the Sindhis examines a community that has actively participated in national and transnational economic networks since the colonial period, as well as having faced the displacement of the partition. Hence there are numerous communities in South Asia that experience different forms of migration simultaneously.

Other studies also raise the importance of locating migrants on the margins precariously placed in the economy, such as low wage labour migrants in India (Bremen 1996); or find their ability to move across regions severely curtailed by nation-states in the sub-continent, as seen with cross border migrants on the Indo-Bangladeshi border (Van

Schendel 2005). As Samaddar points out, the line between economic migrants, refugees and illegal immigrants is blurred. He argues:

Migrants and refugees always remain on the margins of the system—they are there to be ignored, to be eternally peripheralised. But they are required to define the system, to define the core and the periphery of nation in South Asia (Samaddar1999: 44)

The case of the Kashmiri Pandits responds to the existing literature ways that are similar to and different from experiences that have been subject to analysis and documentation. The Kashmiri Pandits are first and foremost, a community of conflict-displaced forced migrants who constitute a significant proportion of IDPs in India. Since the beginning of the conflict, they have been dependent upon a relief and rehabilitation programme established by the Indian state. As a result, the state has become implicated in the everyday lives of the displaced Pandits and shapes the possibilities for future options, be it through a policy of return to the Kashmir valley or resettlement elsewhere.

It must be pointed out that the Pandits are not officially listed as IDPs but are officially categorised as ‘migrants’ by the Indian state. The category of ‘migrant’ as enforced by the state refers to all conflict displaced persons in Jammu and Kashmir and has entered everyday parlance in the languages spoken in the region. On one hand this corroborates the view that the Indian state lacks a clearly defined regime for managing the displaced. Yet as I will show in the thesis, state imposed categories such as ‘migrants’ and the humanitarian regime in the region have had unexpected consequences for the political identity of the Kashmiri Pandits. Kashmiri Pandit political claim making is also directed specifically towards the Indian state. This may seem reflective of the importance of the state in everyday life in India (Fuller and Harris 2001). However the claims presented by the Pandits upon the Indian state are made not only as a displaced community, but

also as a community of Indian citizens. This differs significantly from most refugee and IDP situations across the world.

The Kashmiri Pandits also have a peculiar encounter with nationalist politics. As Duschinski (2007, 2008) points out, the Pandits portray themselves as a loyal citizens of the Indian nation-state originating from a region where Indian nationalism has not been accepted by a large section of the populace. Consequently the Kashmiri Pandits also have a difficult relationship with Kashmiri nationalism. In this thesis I examine the different sites and conceptions of nationalism, mediated by physical and socio-economic location. I explore the way Kashmiri Pandit nationalism is articulated in public and attempt to relate it to conceptions and discussions held by Pandits in private. Various anthropologists have studied nationalist politics among the displaced and successfully demonstrate the different layers involved. Malkki (1995b) specifically shows how the nation constructed in exile for Hutu refugees is connected to a larger politics of victimhood. Similarly Pandit nationalism is also embedded in a feeling of victimhood. I will show that the Pandit claim for victimhood is caught in a double bind, in which the Pandits draw upon dominant themes in Indian nationalism to indicate their similarity with other Indian citizens and simultaneously insist on their difference from other Indian citizens. As a result nationalist politics among displaced Kashmiri Pandits remains contingent and contradictory.

The issue of place and resettlement plays a significant role in the lives of the Kashmiri Pandits. The loss of material possessions, assets and livelihoods along with the loss of socio-economic and political status and self-respect figures in any discussion with the Pandits. Hence their experiences share a remarkable continuity with previous studies. What complicates the scene is the fact that more than a decade and half has passed since their displacement. Many Kashmiri Pandits have rebuilt their lives with varying degrees

of success. Yet the sense of loss with displacement persists across generations. There is an inability to make a secure place and home in spite of settlement in a physical sense.

One of the ways I examine these issues is in the context of camp colonies that have been established by the state for the accommodation of a section of the displaced population. Typically camps have been treated as spaces of exception and beyond the norm (Agamben 1998, Hanafi and Long 2010, Turner 2005). In South Asian contexts, areas occupied by forced migrants eventually become integrated with the larger areas they are located in and normalised over time, which I shall discuss further. The Kashmiri Pandit case is of special interest due to the emergence of localities in Jammu as well as the establishment by the state of large camp colonies. The camps were established as a short term solution to deal with large numbers of homeless displaced persons. But over the years, the camps have gradually become integrated into the cityscape of Jammu. I will show that the camps are still subject to the vagaries of state policy, suggesting that the Pandits inhabit a space that is marked as exceptional and ordinary simultaneously.

Another aspect of place I examine pertains to the ways the Pandits deal with Jammu. As mentioned earlier, studies of forced migration have documented the complicated relationship between the displaced and local place and host populations. The case of the Pandits is interesting since they have been able to carve their own space in Jammu. There have been points of contention between the Pandits and local people in Jammu, which have not necessarily resulted in the open violence witnessed elsewhere. Nevertheless, Jammu is imagined as a place hostile to the Pandits. Once displaced, the Kashmiri Pandits are forced into a world of insecure migration alongside other economic migrants. Many Pandits are in search of better opportunities and increasingly have to deal with the possibility of relocating elsewhere in search of livelihoods and better opportunities. As I will discuss in the following chapters, the Kashmiri Pandits are

historically associated with migratory flows within the sub-continent. Hence they are caught in a world of movement increasingly seen as definitive of societies. However such approaches are complicated by the desire displaced Kashmiri Pandits express for 'rooted lives'.

I will also discuss the experience of loss among the Kashmiri Pandits. The experience of material loss among the Pandits is significant and represents continuity with cases documented in the past. Rather than treat the Pandits as a homogenous cohort, I will consider the extent of variation in material loss and attempts to recoup those losses according to socio-economic differences within the community. While many Pandits have been able to remake life and acquire property in Jammu and elsewhere, a large proportion continues to face economic hardship. The Kashmiri Pandits were historically associated with bourgeois professions in Jammu and Kashmir, such as the state bureaucracy, as well as having been significant land owners. Hence they enjoyed a high standard and quality of life in the past. They are a community of Brahmins and enjoy a high status within the Hindu caste hierarchy. It is the history of having possessed a high status in relation to other communities that renders loss as particularly painful. Hence I will argue in this thesis that much of the trauma of displacement is related to reconciling the loss of prior status with the discontent of the present.

The question of loss is also related to history and memory. The memory of displacement among Pandits is still fairly recent and must be seen in terms of a conflict that shows no sign of resolution. However the Pandits distinguish between a time of peace and prosperity before the troubles in 1989-1990 and time of suffering with the displacement. They also articulate a history in which they have faced persecution since the 14th century, which has acquired significance in the present. I will consider history and memory in shaping the background and attitudes to place, settlement and political

identity. The memory of the events leading to their displacement is also crucial because the circumstances of their displacement have been subject to controversy, denial and exaggeration which I will consider in the chapter dealing with the history of Jammu and Kashmir and the Kashmiri Pandits. Needless to say, these themes are deeply interconnected. Each of these themes will be unpacked and assessed in the following chapters. In the next section I shall situate my thesis in the context of anthropological studies set in Jammu and Kashmir.

1.4 The Anthropology of Jammu and Kashmir

Jammu and Kashmir appears to have been relatively understudied by Anthropologists in comparison to other parts of South Asia. Much of the early interest in the state is represented in the form of publications by European visitors, travellers and surveyors. The most notable of these contributions come in the form of books authored by Walter Lawrence and Francis Younghusband who have contributed to a particular imagination of the region, and especially the Kashmir valley, which are still popular in the present. However representations of the region in the colonial period impressed the landscape into popular Indian and Hindu nationalist imagination (Kabir 2009).

Academic interest in Jammu and Kashmir has been largely spurred by its troubled location during Partition, eventually becoming the prize in two wars between India and Pakistan. Some of these studies examined the politics of Kashmir immediately after Independence and conflict, acknowledging some of the complexities and ethnic diversity in region in spite of a persisting colonial tone (Birdwood 1952, Korbel 1949, 1953, Lockwood 1969). The outbreak of the insurgency in Indian administered Jammu and Kashmir spurred renewed interest in the region. Consequently a vast amount of

scholarship has emerged examining the history of the region, the terms of accession of the kingdom to India and the background to the current conflict. These studies have been largely conducted by Political Scientists, Historians, Strategic Studies specialists and Journalists, which I shall cover in the next chapter.

While studies by anthropologists in Jammu and Kashmir are considerably fewer in number compared to other regions in the sub-continent, there have been some significant contributions. The most well-known ethnographic study in Jammu and Kashmir was authored by T.N. Madan (2002). Madan's ethnography, *Family and Kinship: a study of Pandits in rural Kashmir*, is based on fieldwork conducted in the later 1950s and was first published in the 1960s. It was also the first proper ethnographic study of Kashmiri Pandits. While Madan did not cover the politics of the state, he acknowledged the changing political climate, which in hindsight comes across as prophetic. During a personal meeting, Madan spoke of his monograph as a historical text, rather than as ethnography, not only because of the time that has passed since its publication, but also because all of the Kashmiri Pandits from his field site had fled from the Kashmir valley when the troubles began.

Nevertheless his ethnography provides a vital picture of life in Kashmir ostensibly before politics took over, examining the structure of Pandit society in great detail. His observations and analyses continue to hold relevance for my informants who are located in a different time and political setting. His research has also generated important observations and debates concerning the notion of community and identity especially with regards to concept of Kashmiriyat, an ideology that promotes a regional identity which supersedes religious identity (Madan 1994). Madan's studies thus remain relevant to current anthropological engagement with communities in the region in general and Kashmiri Pandits in particular.

Other anthropologists have also conducted fieldwork on Kashmiris. Misri's (1985, 1989) ethnography, set in the same village where Madan conducted fieldwork, examines processes of socialisation of children in Pandits families. While her ethnography does not deal with political life in Kashmir, her analysis also helps us to comprehend relations between Kashmiri Pandits and Muslims. Jammu and Kashmir is made up of several different regions which have contributed to ethnic diversity in the state. Hence other anthropological studies have covered communities such as the Bakerwals (Rao 1998), a prominent nomadic pastoralist community who seasonally migrate across the state. Several authors have also explored the region of Ladakh, focussing on relations between communities and the Indian nation-state in terms of nationalist ideologies and issues of local governance and autonomy (Agarwal 2004, Bhan 2008, Van Beek 2001).

Since the last few years, anthropologists who work on the region have begun to focus on the direct and indirect impact of conflict in everyday life. Duschinski (2004) studies the experience of forced migration among Kashmiri Pandit migrants in New Delhi, examining the processes of place making, the meaning of home for a community unable to return to a peaceful Kashmir and having to deal with concerns of a secure future and issues of victimhood. She also introduces the discourse of displaced Pandits condensed in the statement 'Indians sacrificed for the sake of India', to demonstrate the travails of a community of loyal Indian citizens who receive little recognition from the Indian nation-state (Duschinski 2007, 2008). Much of my thesis responds to Duschinski's work and builds upon the themes of victimhood in arguing that Pandit victimhood involves a double bind whereby they are victims because of their support for India and yet, are victims unlike other Indians. Apart from these studies, Aggarwal (2007, 2008) has conducted anthropologically informed research set in Jammu, taking the case of both

psychological health problems among displaced Kashmiri Pandits and Sikhs and proposing a critique of the ideology of *Kashmiriyat*.

There has also been valuable research conducted among communities in support of Kashmiri independence. The experiences and motivations for Kashmiris to participate in the insurgency have been explored in a study by Mahmood (2000). Robinson's (2004) ethnography draws attention to Pakistani Administered Kashmir, or *Azad* (Free) Jammu and Kashmir as it is better known. She examines the experience of Kashmiri refugees who fled Indian administered territories, paying special attention to the refugee camps as an important site for developing nationalist sentiment among the refugees in support for the insurgency. This is set in a context determined by international refugee regimes and interactions with the Pakistani state. Current work by Duschinski (2009, 2010) moves away from the Kashmiri Pandits to the city of Srinagar where she explores issues of human rights violations and the adverse effects of militarisation on everyday life in the Kashmir valley itself. Similarly Aggarwal and Bhan (2009) continue with their work on Ladakh, examining the ways in which militarisation shapes governance and civil society. Surprisingly, there has been little work conducted in the past by anthropologists on Kashmiri Muslim society and culture independent of the conflict.

This thesis examines the experience of Kashmiri Pandit migrants, building upon anthropological studies of the region and of Kashmiri Pandits in particular, in the context of the conflict since 1989-1990. It is located in the city of Jammu which provides an interesting dimension since it deals with Internally Displaced Persons within the setting of Jammu and Kashmir State. The thesis falls in line with a latter period of ethnographic research on Kashmir owing to an interest in the impact of the conflict on communities in the state as well as building upon work on the Kashmiri Pandits. Nevertheless there is a need for current research of Kashmir to acknowledge

earlier studies, as there are certain continuities in Kashmiri society that persist after displacement.

The interplay of change and continuity operates in processes of making place and home, and in political claim making. While places like camps or localities in Jammu are a significant source of rupture, the Kashmiri Pandit migrants constantly make efforts to restore and maintain a quality of life which existed in past. Similarly claims for recognition of their experience of victimhood and for support are premised on their historical association with state bureaucracies and their position as a minority in Kashmir. The backdrop that informs this thesis is seen with the persistence of ideals associated with socio-economic and caste based status among the Kashmiri Pandits (Madan 1987, 1994). At the same, the ruptures in nationalist politics examined by authors I have referred to, inform new processes that interact with pre-existing ideals. The purpose of this section has been to situate the thesis in the context of anthropological literature of Jammu and Kashmir. The political and historical studies which are also essential to current ethnographic studies in the region will be examined in the following chapter with a detailed historical review of the state and the conflict.

1.5 Field Site

In this section I will present critical information to provide a sense of my field-site, the city of Jammu. The Indian state of Jammu and Kashmir is located at the northern periphery bordering the Indian states of Punjab and Himachal Pradesh to the South, Pakistan to North and West and China to the East. The state has an area of 2,22,236 square kilometres, which includes 78,114 square kilometres of territory administered by Pakistan and 5,180 square kilometres occupied by China. Demographic data for the state is limited to the areas under Indian administration. According to data collected for

the Census of India for the year 2001, the population for the state stands at 10,143,700. Due to the outbreak of conflict in 1989-90 the census was not conducted in 1991. The population of Jammu and Kashmir was enumerated to be 5,987,389 during the Census of 1981 (Verma 1988). Estimates made by the Census of India place the population growth rate at 29.04 percent for the decade 1991-2001 (Ahmed 2001: 15). The growth rates for the cities of Srinagar and Jammu are listed as 33.02 percent and 29.78 percent respectively for 1981-1991 and 31.45 percent and 28.39 percent respectively for 1991-2001 (Census of India 2001: 15). Srinagar and Jammu are the cities with the largest concentrations of population in the state with 988,210 and 612,163 residents respectively (Census of India 2001: 72).

Jammu city is located in the southern plains of Jammu and Kashmir and is well connected by air, road and rail to the Indian mainland. Until a few years back, it was the main junction for Indian railways with the line ending at Jammu Tawi terminal. In recent years the railway line has been extended to Udhampur in the north and there are efforts in building a railway network in the Kashmir valley. The city remains an important halfway point for people travelling to and from the rest of the state and the Indian mainland. Travellers passing through Jammu comprise military personnel, traders, businessmen, regular tourists heading to Kashmir and Ladakh and pilgrims visiting Hindu pilgrimage sites such as the Amarnath Yatra in Kashmir and Vaishno Mata in Jammu.

According to legend, Jammu was established by Raja Jambulochan (1350-1320 B.C.) from whom the city acquired its name (Shivanath 2005: 12). While the origins of the city are shrouded in myth, Jammu has served as a capital for various Dogra rulers since the 14th century and has been affected by political formations in north west India (Shivanath 2005:33). The older parts of the city bear the stamp of royal patronage with

old buildings such as the court of the Maharajah surviving in various states of decline and disrepair. In recent years, various organisations such as the state tourism board and the Jammu Municipal Corporation have attempted to present the history and culture of the city through large festivals and events. I suspect these efforts have also been encouraged as a response to the attention received by the Kashmir valley, which is not only the area of contentious politics, but is also the part of the state that is ‘culturally’ well known.

Most ethnographic studies conducted in South Asia tend to be situated in villages or metropolitan cities as opposed to the mid-level towns. The city of Jammu however stands out in comparison to other similarly sized urban agglomerations owing to its geo-political location and history. Many of the amenities associated with large cities can be found in Jammu such as communication and transportation infrastructure and health facilities. Jammu boasts of an active local media with a large number of newspapers and tabloids published in Hindi, Urdu, Punjabi and English. Another characteristic of Jammu, which distinguishes it from other similar sized towns in India, is the diversity of its population. While the majority of residents who claim to be ‘local’ or native to the city are speakers of Dogri, the city is host to a number of other communities including Paharis, Punjabis, Gujjars, Bakerwals and Kashmiris. There is a significant floating population of economic migrants from different parts of India, especially from states such as Bihar and Chattisgarh. The official language of Jammu and Kashmir is Urdu. However, an observant flaneur ambling through the main market district can eavesdrop upon a number of tongues spoken from Dogri to Koshur, Gojri, Punjabi, Hindi and Urdu. Most residents of Jammu are at least bilingual, fluent in one language spoken in the state alongside Urdu or Hindi. Most middle class residents of Jammu are fluent in English.

The administrative region of Jammu includes the plains districts of Kathua, Udhampur and Jammu, as well as the *Pahari* or mountainous districts of Poonch, Rajouri and Doda. The population of the Jammu division unlike the Kashmir division has a Hindu majority. While Jammu is the centre of Hindu oriented politics in the state and is presented to visitors as the 'City of Temples', the cityscape is marked by a number of prominent places of worship for Muslims, beginning with the Jama Masjid, to numerous Sufi shrines. Jammu also shares much with cities in the North Indian plains in terms of climate. The year is marked by a full range of seasons including dry hot summers with temperatures going as high as 48°C and biting cold winters. The contrast with the Kashmir valley and its temperate ecology, pleasant summers and snow laden winters could not be more apparent.

Fieldwork was conducted primarily in Jammu from November 2005 to December 2006 and from March to April 2007. I also conducted a short period of fieldwork in New Delhi in the period of January-March 2007. I had chosen to conduct fieldwork in Jammu which is where most Kashmiri Pandit migrants relocated to after displacement. According to data made available from the office of the Relief Commission, state government of Jammu and Kashmir, there are a total of 36,015 families covering 1,34,376 individuals registered in Jammu¹. These figures include 6,036 families residing in migrant camp colonies in Jammu and in the towns of Kathua and Udhampur.

From statistical records it is obvious that the Kashmiri Pandits constitute a significant proportion of the population of Jammu. It is difficult to assess the extent to which the migration of the Kashmiri Pandits has affected demographic dimensions in Kashmir, considering that population growth has been observed both in Jammu and Srinagar. It is

¹ These statistics were dated as 31.01.2007 and made available by the office of the Relief Commission, Department of revenue, State Government of Jammu and Kashmir.

also difficult to evaluate the extent of further migration that has taken place over the years, with Pandits leaving Jammu for different parts in India, primarily New Delhi. It is common to meet Pandit families who live in Jammu with members moving to cities such as New Delhi or Mumbai for various reasons. By the time fieldwork came to an end, the camps in Kathua and Udhampur were closed with their populations being relocated to Jammu. Hence the population of the Kashmiri Pandits in Jammu has remained fluid.

There are several locations where the Pandit migrants are concentrated. These include the well-known migrant colonies, which will be described and discussed in detail in this thesis. The four main camp colonies in the city are Muthi, Purkhu, Misriwala and Nagrota camps. These camps have been in existence since 1990 and were established and managed by the Relief Commission, which is a part of the Department of Revenue, State Government of Jammu and Kashmir. The Relief Commission is entrusted with the care of displaced persons in the region. The camps are connected by regular public transport to the city centre and located close to several residential areas. In some respects, the Pandits have shaped the city of Jammu with large residential areas emerging from the mid-1990s onwards when many Pandits decided to invest and settle in Jammu. Many organisations and places of association such as ashrams and temples have also been built in these areas, which have contributed to the character of these localities.

Nevertheless, many Pandit migrants neither live in the camps nor own their own homes. These include families across different socio-economic strata and who can be found residing in rented accommodation all across the city. While many of these migrants live in localities where other Pandits have settled in large numbers, others can be found living in ethnically mixed localities as well. A number of well-to-do Pandits have also

chosen to settle in suburbs largely populated by other upper class residents of Jammu. It must also be mentioned that some Kashmiri Pandits have also been living in the city before the troubles and the exodus of 1990. An indication of this presence can be seen in *Kashmiri Pandit Sabha* (Kashmiri Pandit Association), which was established in 1914 for the Pandit diaspora and now plays a significant role in representing the community. The Kashmiri Pandit migrants are thus a community of forced migrants who have had to take their chances in a city with a history of demographic diversity and providing shelter to migrants. Since 1990, the Pandits themselves have contributed to the way the city has transformed over the years, leaving their own mark for the future.

1.6 Methods

Fieldwork was conducted primarily in Jammu from late October 2005 to December 2006 and from April to May 2007. Fieldwork was also conducted in the city of New Delhi where many displaced Kashmiri Pandits also reside in significant numbers from January to March 2007. While this thesis primarily depends on data that reflects the situation in Jammu, the data collected in New Delhi contributes towards a better understanding of experience of Pandit migrants. Many of my informants in Jammu are also connected to New Delhi through relatives who have settled there and where they see a future. I had also travelled to the city of Srinagar on two occasions during the summer of 2006 for visits of up to a week each, which yielded some insight on the situation in the Kashmir valley.

During the early period of fieldwork I visited all the major camps in Jammu to get a sense of the ground situation among Pandit migrants, including the migrant camp in Kathua, a town located south of Jammu. I also visited the offices of organisations that represent the Kashmiri Pandits whose members directed me to visit the camps and to

meet camp residents who are also members of these organisations. These visits helped me to understand the situation of the Pandits in the context of Jammu city in terms of their political location and to also to get to know the city at large. Eventually I decided to focus specifically on Purkhu Camp which became the main camp I conducted fieldwork in. The early visits to other camps enabled me to understand the full range of conditions in camp colonies.

Ethnographic fieldwork in the context of conflict and violence calls upon a certain degree of sensitivity as conventional methods of fieldwork are often of limited utility (Robben1995, Robben and Nordstrom 1995). Within Jammu and Kashmir, issues of identity and political ideologies influence relations between different communities. As Jammu is the part of the state where the majority of the population support the union with India, there is strong opposition to separatist politics expressed in Kashmir. Alongside such political differences there is a sentiment of difference between the different regions within the state. The Kashmiri Pandits therefore find themselves in a difficult relationship with the Dogras. On one hand, the Kashmiri Pandits and the Dogras are supporters of the Indian state. On the other hand, regional differences have resulted in misunderstandings between the two communities, which I explore further in this thesis. Hence I had to conduct fieldwork in manner that enabled me to navigate through potential controversies, which required occasionally withholding the subject of my research from those critical of Kashmiris and Kashmiri Pandits.

Working on displaced Kashmiri Pandits also lends the issue of trust increased value. It has been observed that the displaced experience a deficit of trust on an existential and a practical level (Daniel and Knudsen 1995). Hence my presence was also subject to some measure of suspicion, which necessitated that I be clear and honest about my work. The inhabitants of Jammu and Kashmir are used to visitors interested in their stories but

receive little in return. As a consequence Pandit migrants are often unwilling to engage with researchers and see little utility in the endeavour for themselves.

I drew extensively on the conventional ethnographic methods of participant observation and informal interviews. I first visited all the camps in the first two months of fieldwork, eventually deciding to focus on Purkhu camp owing to the ease of access and its location between the two camps of Muthi and Mishriwala. I approached residents gradually through initial contacts provided by Pandit organisations and also by visiting important individuals such as presidents of different phases of each camp elected by the residents. I also visited offices of the camp commandants, who are state employees assigned for the administration of the camp and distribution of relief in the form of financial and food aid to ensure that my presence would not cause any problems.

I then approached migrants in Purkhu camp on my own, following up on potential informants through repeated visits and occasionally by appointment. Over time I allowed my sample to snowball when informants who were amenable to my presence introduced me to their acquaintances. After a few months of conducting fieldwork and having built a relationship of trust with informants, I started to conduct structured interviews with the use of audio recording equipment. I persisted with participant observation, semi-structured interviews and informal conversations as many informants would reveal different facets of their experiences and personal details of their lives, which they would not raise during recorded interviews. Nevertheless most informants did not object whenever I made notes during conversations.

After several months, I started to meet migrants who were settled outside the camps. The purpose of this approach was to understand the relationship of Pandits with the city of Jammu across different spatial and socio-economic locations. I was able to therefore

interact with well-to-do members of the migrant community. The camp as a site provided certain advantages in allowing for public spaces where people could gather such as community halls, shop fronts and street corners. In the process camp residents were often easier to approach. In the case of migrants living in the city, such spaces were limited. Hence meetings were arranged through formal appointments and involved semi-structured interviews, sometimes one off or over a period of time. My first contacts with non-camp migrants was made possible through two human rights activists who had put me in touch with Pandits involved in NGO work, who then helped me to meet other non-camp migrants. Once I was able to build a relationship with some core informants outside the camp, I proceeded to conduct recorded structured interviews.

Another method of meeting Pandit migrants was by following large scale public events, organised by different groups ranging from political to religious associations. The events I covered also included commemorative events and political demonstrations. Visits to these events enabled me to meet a wide cross section of the community and understand political processes within the community. I also visited shrines and temples constructed in Jammu during the 1990s, which are visited by the Kashmiri Pandits. One shrine I focused on was the replica of the Kheer Bhavani Shrine in Kashmir constructed in a residential area in Jammu. Visits to this shrine during special occasions and on regular days provided an opportunity to meet and converse with non-camp migrants on neutral territory.

I also conducted a small sample household survey in Purkhu camp. Purkhu camp is home to more than a thousand families and therefore it was impossible to cover the entire camp. There were certain challenges to conducting the survey. Most migrants are acquainted with visiting journalists, researchers and data collection methods. When I started the survey with the intention of following a random sampling technique, many

potential respondents refused to cooperate and expressed their annoyance with surveys. Hence, I proceeded with the survey by employing a mix of random sampling and by including my main informants as respondents who introduced me to neighbours and acquaintances. Eventually, I ended the survey upon the advice of some informants. I also conducted a short period of archival research at a research centre at Jammu University and the office of the Kashmir Times, one of the oldest and most well-known English language newspapers in the state, which had extensively covered the early days of the conflict and the Pandit exodus. I followed a similar approach to fieldwork in New Delhi approaching individuals through contacts made in Jammu and fixing meetings, as well as attending public demonstrations.

During the period of research spent in Jammu I lived in a hostel for students enrolled at the University of Jammu. The choice of accommodation was made owing to difficulties I had encountered in fieldwork. Few researchers from outside the region have attempted to conduct research in Jammu for a long duration of time. Initially I tried to find a place to stay at one of the camps from which I was discouraged by camp officials and by residents. I also found myself uncomfortable with the ideal option of living for a long period of time with a family as most of my informants complain openly about the limited amount of space that is available in the camp. Others revealed that camp residents discourage outsiders from staying in the camp due to a fear of squatters. While I am an Indian citizen, many residents in the city found my presence to some extent inexplicable. I was neither employed in any concern in the city nor enrolled at the University of Jammu. I had also discovered that unmarried men are regarded as undesirable tenants in Jammu.

However there were benefits in living in the hostel. First of all, it provided an opportunity to encounter a wide cross section of people from Jammu and Kashmir,

including Kashmiri Muslims. In spite of Jammu being peaceful in contrast to Kashmir, everyday life Jammu is marked by a heavy presence of armed security personnel who are empowered to conduct random frisking and searches of individuals in public. The hostel enabled me to credibly present myself as a student to Indian security personnel. Eventually I would divide my time with a family in Purkhu Camp and staying in the hostel, which was convenient for meeting migrants in the main city. Staying in the hostel also helped me to understand the larger context of urban life the Pandits faced.

While I did not intentionally plan multi-sited ethnographic fieldwork, the short visits to Kashmir and my stay in New Delhi enabled a wider understanding of the experiences of a community affected by movement. Many Pandits regard Jammu as lacking in opportunities and as a result a younger generation of Pandits visualise a shift to other cities in India. Therefore Jammu is occasionally spoken of as an old age home while New Delhi is the city of jobs and youth. Hence I was able to discern certain differences between Pandits settled in Jammu and in New Delhi. I was also able to access some archival material in the form of back issues of the *Koshur Samachar*, an important community journal published by the Kashmiri Samiti Delhi, which many Pandits in Jammu also subscribe to. The period of fieldwork in New Delhi also allowed me to meet many well-to-do Pandit Migrants who are better able to adjust to a cosmopolitan atmosphere, while most of my informants in Jammu came from the lower socio-economic strata of the community.

As an Indian citizen, I did not require a research visa or other forms of official clearance to conduct fieldwork. I went to the field without being able to speak Kashmiri. However all Kashmiris are equally fluent in Urdu and Hindi which are languages I am conversant in. During fieldwork I was able to learn some Kashmiri through daily interaction. The status of the Kashmiri language has been subject to some controversy. Kashmiri or

Koshur, is recognised as a language by the Indian state. However the official language of Jammu and Kashmir is Urdu. Kashmiri is also a language that does not have a single script. While Kashmiris have used the Urdu script, a group of Kashmiri Pandits have developed a primer for using the *devnagiri* script. However many younger Kashmiris, Pandits and Muslims, talk among themselves in Hindi. Hence Hindi and spoken Urdu were the main language in which I conducted fieldwork. My informants from the upper strata of Pandit society preferred to interact with me in English.

Certain methodological challenges persisted throughout the course of fieldwork. Some of these challenges are typical of the concerns associated with research in heavily urbanised areas. As the Pandits are located across different areas in Jammu, a certain amount of time would be spent in travelling and commuting. Fieldwork in New Delhi made this concern more relevant as most Pandits I interacted with are working professionals with very little time to spare. I also found that I had to employ different means of dealing with migrants from the lower socio-economic strata and with informants from a higher economic stratum.

Given the long history of political activity in Jammu and Kashmir, most people are relatively well informed and aware of the extreme polarities that characterise politics in the region. Ideally anthropologists are expected to be honest to their informants about the purpose and intentions of research. I made the goals of my research clear to my informants, emphasising that I was a student rather than a journalist or an NGO worker with aid and rations to spare. I also maintained the confidentiality of facts, accounts and experiences revealed by my informants and made clear that I did not represent any politically motivated group. However most of my informants questioned me from time to time with regards to my own opinions regarding the Indian state and politics in the region. I observed that many Pandits, especially activists or leaders, have an idea of

what I ought to be studying or ignore. As I have mentioned earlier, many migrants have become annoyed with visitors. Hence after a certain point, a number of informants expressed their reluctance in talking to me. I also realised that it was imperative to be discrete about opinions and findings with members of other communities who are often critical of Kashmiris, Pandit and Muslim.

There were certain norms on the basis of gender which have influenced my research. Most of my informants are males of different age groups, ranging from teenage boys to elderly retired men. As an unmarried man, there were limits in interacting with women especially teenage girls, unmarried women and married women of a young age. Most women who responded to me positively were usually mothers of male informants. In order to interact with younger women, I accompanied women who worked in varying capacities as activists or met with groups through acquaintances in neutral and public spaces.

1.7 Chapter Plan

The chapters of thesis are broadly arranged around two arcs of inquiry, which are broadly place making and political claim making. But first, I begin with a chapter that examines the historical of Kashmir and presents the account of the Kashmiri Pandits, which will inform the context of the thesis. Chapter two is titled *Accounting for Displacement: the historical context of the Kashmir conflict and the exodus of the Kashmiri Pandits*. This chapter serves two purposes. First, the chapter will provide the historical background of the conflict of Jammu and Kashmir introducing the period which lead to the establishment of the kingdom of Jammu and Kashmir in the mid-nineteenth century, the inception of the Kashmir problem during independence in the sub-continent in 1947 and finally to the point when the insurgency broke out in the

Kashmir valley in 1989-1990. The chapter will then proceed to discuss the Kashmiri Pandit perspective of the history of the region. I will then present an account of the exodus developed from data collected from Pandit migrants. While the exodus had taken place within a single year, there is a great deal of controversy and confusion with regards to the causes and the events that have triggered the mass migration of the Kashmiri Pandits. The account of the Pandit exodus is subject to confusion, denial and ignorance. This account is essential to understanding the Pandit experience and the politics that affects them.

The next chapter is titled *Living in a place of Exception: the politics of place and everyday life in a displaced person's camp in Jammu and Kashmir*. Here I explore the experience of rebuilding life after displacement and place making in the context of a Kashmiri Pandit camp. The forced migrant camp constitutes a significant component in imagining the experience of forced migration. The camp has typically been presented as a space of exception to normal life for accommodating forced migrants. This chapter takes the case of a camp colony established by the Indian state to accommodate the Kashmiri Pandits who were displaced in 1990 and were unable to secure shelter at the time. Since their establishment, the camps have evolved from sites of humanitarian intervention to thriving localities connected to the civic infrastructure of Jammu. Through close ethnographic attention to one particular camp colony, I examine the vagaries of everyday life in that 'place of exception', while considering the spatial politics of the camp within the larger context of the city-scape of Jammu. The meanings of the camp colonies are refracted through the discourses and practices of various political actors, including state agents, political organizations, and differently-positioned residents. The chapter therefore argues for a more nuanced position of exceptionality, showing that camps over a period of time transform from places of exception into

ordinary sites of everyday life and settlement. Yet, this transformation remains incomplete due to changing political contexts and their political use as a place to represent the interests of the migrants.

Chapter four is titled *Dealing with Dislocation: making home and place in Jammu*, which examines processes of emplacement and notions of home and attachment to place held by Pandit migrants in Jammu. I first consider processes of place making by drawing upon an oral history of Purkhu camp to show how the Pandits have established a place for themselves in Jammu after displacement. However, the ability to feel an attachment is mediated by memories of the past and hopes for the future. The present in Jammu is contrasted first with nostalgia for home which works to devalue home in Jammu. Yet memories of unpleasant experiences in the past and the fear of violence and conflict render the past as a place of no return. The present is then affected by experiences of settling in Jammu and possibilities of the future in search of better opportunities. While Jammu has acquired the status of a transit point to other destinations, the ability to leave Jammu is mediated by socio-economic factors and familial obligations. This chapter thus responds to the existing body of literature on forced migration, which either describes forced migrants as being permanently unable to establish home and place or as people who embrace movement and migration. I argue that forced migrants over time are located in between, on the one hand seeking to participate in larger processes in migration and on the other hand, desire to establish roots in a safe and secure place.

The fifth chapter is titled *Being a Kashmiri Pandit Migrant: the role of caste, class and religion after displacement*, which examines what it means to be a forced migrant. A dominant image of the forced migrant is to be associated with loss that is both material and existential. This chapter is primarily concerned with how displacement results in a

loss of self and socio-economic and political status. The Kashmiri Pandits as an upper caste Hindu minority have historically been associated with power in the region. The exodus of 1990 is regarded by many migrants as resulting in a loss of their status and influence in the region and even nationally. I situate this discussion in the context of a historical construction of the popular Kashmiri Pandit stereotype which forms a benchmark against which life in the present as migrants is compared. I also examine their present lives as migrants mediated by class, caste and religion and the impact of state policy with the implementation of labelling through the relief and rehabilitation policy of the Indian state enacted for the benefit of Kashmiri Pandit migrants.

I then begin the second arc of inquiry which examines the efforts in political claim making by the Pandits in two chapters. Chapter six is titled *Making a Claim on the Nation: the politics of victimhood and marginality among Kashmiri Pandits*. This examines the attempts of Kashmiri Pandit migrants to claim the status of victims of violence. The Kashmiri Pandits represent themselves as Indian state citizens who were forced to leave Kashmir as a result of their support of the Indian state. Hence as a community who have suffered for their support of the Indian nation-state in contrast to secessionist political activity in Kashmir, they make a claim on the Indian nation state for recognition and support. However to understand the politics of victimhood, it is necessary to assess the repertoires and vocabularies of victimhood employed by the Pandits. By drawing upon testimonies of violence and displacement in 1990 and political mobilisation efforts by Pandit organisations in the present, this chapter explores political claim-making as caught in a tension between being similar to other communities who faced grievous trauma and violence and then claiming that their experience is unique. The chapter also argues that success in claiming victimhood is

also subject to counter narratives and political contexts which threaten to deny their significance or truthfulness.

The final chapter of this thesis is titled *Rights, Claims and Community: the Kashmiri Pandits and the Relief and Rehabilitation Programme*. The chapter continues the discussion of claim making efforts by the Kashmiri Pandits towards the Indian nation-state taking the case of their interaction with the relief and rehabilitation regime. Humanitarian assistance for forced migrants is an issue that has been extensively studied by academics including anthropologists. By taking the case of the Pandits, this chapter seeks to explore the interaction between humanitarian activities and Internally Displaced Persons. The chapter follows two tracks of inquiry. The chapter first analyses relief and rehabilitation from a migrant's point of view. As prior studies have shown, humanitarian assistance imposes a gift-relationship between aid providers and recipients. However Kashmiri Pandits regard the relief and rehabilitation programme of the Indian state as merely efforts of a state observing its duties towards loyal citizens. Furthermore the discourse of relief as right is related to the issue of political claim making. The Pandits demand assistance as they have sacrificed for their support of the Indian nation-state. I also discuss the dissatisfaction the Pandits express towards the corpus of relief they receive. Relief as provided by the state is subject to ideas the migrants hold of a minimum requirement to be able live a life of a certain quality. The second track of inquiry examines the impact relief has in generating community. I show that the promise of relief not only forces the Pandits to retain their official status as migrants, it causes them to emerge as a community seen by others in Jammu as being privileged by the state.

Chapter 2

Accounting for Displacement: the historical context of the Kashmir conflict and the exodus of the Kashmiri Pandits

This chapter aims to provide the historical context that informs this thesis. Owing to the prominence of the conflict in Kashmir there has been a great deal of interest in the Kashmir valley and its inhabitants. The Kashmir valley is a part of Jammu and Kashmir, a 'patchwork' state that emerged during the period of colonial rule in South Asia. It is home to diverse communities first brought together in the context of colonialism, who face a present defined by rupture and doubt in the context of nationalist politics in the post-colonial period. The diversity of Jammu and Kashmir also determines the history of the region with each community possessing its own perspective on the land and the people. Due to the range of interests involved, including the states of India and Pakistan, separatist and loyalist political figures, militant groups and security forces and the common people of the state, the history of Kashmir remains caught in obfuscation.

The chapter will first present the history of Jammu and Kashmir covering the period from the mid 19th century till 1947. I will also consider the period after independence and accession to India till the outbreak of conflict in 1989-1990. Following this, the chapter will present the history of the Kashmiri Pandits and their account of the events that have led to their displacement. The Kashmir valley can claim a measure of historical depth best seen in the *Rajatarangini*, a chronicle of life in Kashmir during the period of Hindu rule, which lasted until the 14th Century. The Kashmiri Pandits continued in this tradition with different authors from the community engaging with the task of composing the history of Kashmir since the early 20th century. In the process the

Kashmiri Pandits have a specific view of the history of Kashmir, which privileges their perspective on events that have marked life for all Kashmiris.

2.1 The context of Jammu and Kashmir

It is difficult to identify a specific event that signalled the onset of violence. The years of 1988 and 1989 were marked by sporadic incidents of violence, riots and strikes (Ganguly 1997: 102). However the event which indicated that militant activity could no longer be ignored was the kidnapping of Rubaiya Sayid, the daughter of the Indian Union Minister of Home Affairs, by militant groups demanding the independence of Kashmir. The kidnapping of Rubaiya Sayid, who was released following the release of five militants who were incarcerated in Indian prison, is believed to emboldened militant groups and indicated the inability of the Indian state to deal with militancy (Ganguly 1997: 104). We can also consider the beginning of the conflict in the form of mass public protests that erupted all across the Kashmir valley from the month of January in 1990. These demonstrations involved thousands of Kashmiris coming onto the streets demanding *azaadi* or freedom from Indian rule, while militant groups commenced armed attacks on state institutions, agents and infrastructure. The violence was exacerbated by the response of the Indian state in the form of military crackdowns and the imposition of law and order by force resulting in numerous casualties among the protestors and bystanders.

In an attempt to restore stability, the Indian state had appointed Jagmohan as the Governor of Jammu and Kashmir in early January, 1990. While Jagmohan had promised to solve the problems and address the grievances of Kashmiris, protests, militant attacks and suppressive counter insurgent operations continued unabated. Jagmohan was eventually dismissed from his post as the violence escalated at a time

when security forces of the Indian state resorted to firing upon protesting crowds. Politics in the valley since then can be explained as a product of a 'military/repression cycle' (Kohli 1992), with everyday life in the Kashmir valley shaped by militant attacks, counter-insurgency operations by Indian security forces and periodic situations of mass protest and political mobilisation. Since 1990, there have also been numerous incidents of human rights violations by the security forces in the form of illegal detainment, extra judicial assassinations and forced disappearances of ordinary citizens (Hewitt 2001: 166, 178). Militants have also participated in similar actions. This has resulted in what Duschinski (2010) terms a 'regime of impunity' that benefited armed groups irrespective of their affiliation. It was also during the early period of the conflict when the mass migration of the Kashmiri Pandits took place.

To understand the conflict better it is necessary to go into the past. Jammu and Kashmir was one of the princely states in India subject to indirect rule by the colonial administration. With the end of colonialism and the birth of the new nation-states of India and Pakistan, the princely states were given the choice of integrating with either India or Pakistan. The majority of the subjects in Jammu and Kashmir were Muslim and hence the kingdom was expected to accede to Muslim Pakistan. However Jammu and Kashmir was ruled by a Hindu king presiding over an ethnically diverse kingdom. Thus the kingdom could also have acceded to secular India. The future of Jammu and Kashmir became a matter of further concern when the last Maharajah of Jammu and Kashmir, Raja Hari Singh (1925-47), delayed in expressing his choice for accession to either India or Pakistan. Hari Singh was also faced with rising dissent against his rule emanating from the Kashmir valley since the 1930s that culminated in the 'Quit Kashmir Movement' of the 1940s. From 1947 an armed rebellion had begun against Hari Singh's regime among his Muslim subjects in the *Pahari* or mountainous region of

the kingdom. This rebellion soon received support from Tribesman from the North West Frontier Province in Pakistan and elements of the Pakistani army (Robinson 2004, Lamb 1991). Eventually Hari Singh acceded to India allowing soldiers of the Indian army to enter the state to quell the rebellion and invasion by Pakistani troops. This resulted in the first war between India and Pakistan, which ended with a ceasefire between the countries in 1948.

A great deal has been written concerning the accession of Jammu and Kashmir to the Indian state (Bose 1996, Jha 1996, Lamb 1991, Behera 2000, 2006). The significance of Jammu and Kashmir can be seen in the way its incorporation into the new post-colonial states embodied the logic of the nation state. Authors such as Varshney (1991) and Thomas (1992) interpret the conflict as a result of the 'two nation-theory', which marked the partition of the sub-continent. Pakistan's claim on Kashmir was based on the presence of a Muslim majority in the kingdom, while the presence of this very majority backed India's claim as a secular republic on the valley (Cheema 1992, Mattoo 2003). In a discussion of the Indian state's initial policy towards Jammu and Kashmir following independence, Behera argues that Kashmir was integral to the Indian Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru's plan to establish a secular and pluralist India. The presence of a Muslim majority state in a country with a Hindu majority, promised to oppose the two nation theory that led to the creation of Pakistan and serve as a foil against Hindu nationalist groups in India (Behera 2006: 30). The eventual division of the territories between Indian and Pakistan has even been conceived as paradigmatic in the history of borders in the subcontinent (Van Schendel 2007:37).

The Kingdom of Jammu and Kashmir was thus incorporated not only as a constituent territory of India but also as part of the Indian nationalist imagination. The Indian claim to Jammu and Kashmir and the Kashmiri valley is connected to a quandary of Indian

nationalism. As Pandey (1987) points out, the nationalist question in India involved a search for 'pure nationalism', which remained undefined. Both secular nationalists such as Jawaharlal Nehru, as well as Hindu nationalists drew on a particular construction of the past framed by colonial historiography, which sought to establish unity of all communities in India (Pandey 1993: 984). In the process, the Kashmir valley is imagined as always having been a part of the Indian nation, becoming what Kabir (2009) refers to as a 'territory of desire' in Indian popular imagination.

Until the mid 19th century, the Kashmir valley had been subjected to conquest by various regimes ranging from the Mughal empire, Afghan and finally to the Sikh Kingdom of Punjab. The region of Jammu was ruled by the Dogra chieftain Gulabh Singh, who was a powerful vassal to the Sikh Kingdom of Punjab. Gulabh Singh's territories also included Ladakh which had been conquered by his army from Tibet. During the war between Punjab and the East India Company in the 1840's, Gulabh Singh observed a policy of neutrality instead of coming to the aid of the Punjabi court. Following the conclusion of the war and with the Treaty of Lahore in 1846, Gulabh Singh was rewarded for the position he had taken. Not only were his territories left untouched, the Kashmir valley was sold to him by the East India Company for seven million five hundred thousand Rupees as the spoils of war. The East India Company also recognised Gulabh Singh's coronation as Maharajah of the new Kingdom of Jammu and Kashmir. Jammu and Kashmir became a princely state under the British Empire, with Gulabh Singh and his heirs allowed full control of the region. Gulabh Singh's ascendancy to power was also supported because the kingdom would serve as a buffer zone between British India and Russian imperial expansion in Central Asia.

The subjects of the kingdom represented different territories, spoke different languages and followed different faiths brought together in the context of imperialism and colonial

expansion. While the majority of the subjects of the kingdom were Sunni Muslim, much of the Muslim population resided in the Kashmir valley and Pahari districts of Poonch, Rajouri and Doda. The Hindu population consisted of the small minority of Pandits in Kashmir while the population of Jammu was, and remains, predominantly Hindu. Ladakh provided Buddhist subjects along with small Sunni Muslim and Shia Muslim populations. The Kingdom was also home to a Sikh minority settled mainly in Jammu and in the Kashmir valley, which had migrated to the region during Sikh and Dogra rule. Gulabh Singh's subjects also included the pastoralist Gujjar and Bakerwal communities, known for migrating seasonally between the different regions of Jammu and Kashmir.

The Kingdom of Jammu and Kashmir was in existence from 1846-1947. While the kings of Jammu and Kashmir presided over a diverse population, there was a great deal of regional inequality with much of the power lying in the hands of the Dogras of Jammu (Chandra 1985: 37). The Dogra rulers also identified themselves as Hindu and *Vaisnavite* and sought to promote *Vaisnava* practices to enhance their own power. The regime pursued activities such as the construction and restoration of temples, while withdrawing patronage for Muslim places of worship. Hence apart from regional differences, there was a great deal of inequality between communities on the basis of religion, with policies such as the outlawing of cow slaughter serving to divide Hindu and Muslim subjects (Rai 2004: 100-101). The promotion of Vaisnavite practices, which includes vegetarianism, was also carried out at the expense of the Kashmiri Pandits who are Saivites and non-vegetarians. This is demonstrated in the promotion of the Kheer Bhavani Shrine, which is dedicated to the worship of 'milk' drinking mother goddess as opposed to the worship of Sharika, another form of the goddess Durga, who is propitiated through offerings of meat (Madan 2006: 189-190).

On the whole, the policies of the Dogra kings resulted in the disenfranchisement and persecution of Muslim subjects in Kashmir, Jammu and also of the Muslims and Buddhists in Ladakh (Agarwal 2004, Rai 2004, Thorner 1948). While many Kashmiri Pandits achieved influence as the bureaucrats and as important land owners in Kashmir, eventual power lay in the hands of the Dogras (Chandra 1985). The royal administration did embark on projects of public works and promotion of education during the rule of the last king, Hari Singh (Madan 2006, Zutshi 2004:173-177). In spite of such measures, the vast majority of Muslim subjects, especially in Kashmir were politically and economically marginalised. The Dogra state administration had even excluded Muslims and low caste Hindus from the new reforms pertaining to education, promoting technical and vocational training for the two groups (Zutshi 2004: 180-181).

In 1931, the Kashmir valley was affected for the first time by mass protest. These demonstrations emerged from a growing mass movement against dominance of Dogras and Punjabis in the state bureaucracy and a history of discrimination against Muslims by Sikh and later Hindu rulers (Behera 2000: 45). The demonstrations were also accompanied by demands of reservations in the state bureaucracy where Kashmiris felt they were unrepresented (Zutshi 1986:7, 205-208). From this period onwards, Dogra rule was consistently challenged by a popular movement emerging in the Kashmir valley. This movement was spearheaded by an organisation known as the Muslim Conference led by Sheikh Mohammed Abdullah, a Kashmiri Muslim school teacher and activist, who went to become one of the most influential politicians in the history of Jammu and Kashmir.

The Muslim Conference at first represented the interests of Muslims in the Kingdom and especially in Kashmir. By 1939 the Muslim Conference eventually transformed into the National Conference to be more representative of the population. While senior

leaders of the National Conference like Sheikh Abdullah had a close relationship with the Indian National Congress, it was a party with regional aspirations. The thrust of the movement was directed primarily against the Maharajah and Dogra domination in Kashmir, culminating in the Quit Kashmir movement in the 1940s.

Much has been written on Kashmiri politics in this period and of the role of Sheikh Abdullah and the National Conference in establishing the connection with Indian nationalist parties and eventually the Indian state (Behera 2005, Hewitt 2001, Schofield 2001). However certain contradictions also became evident regarding the role of religion and region. Regional identity became a significant point of mobilisation with Kashmiris, comprising a large Muslim majority and a Hindu Pandit minority, pitted against a state dominated by Hindu Dogras. It is in this context that the ideology of *Kashmiriyat*, a regional identity specific to the Kashmir valley independent of faith, began to circulate. However religion remained significant. Rai's work shows that political activists worked from an inclusive regional approach alongside approaches which appeared exclusive of non-Kashmiris and non-Muslims (2004:265-273). Thus the movement articulated an identity which drew on both claims of region and religion. This contradiction remained within Kashmiri society, the significance of which would become obvious in the post-colonial period.

Jammu and Kashmir's accession to India at first appeared to acknowledge a special relationship between the state and India with the passing of Article 370 in the Indian constitution. As per this article, the state government of Jammu and Kashmir held considerable autonomy in all spheres of administration except in communications, defence and foreign affairs. Hindu nationalist organisations objected to this article and protests opposing this had been organised by the Hindu nationalist *Jan Sangh* as early as 1952 (Jaffrelot 1996:128-129). The growth of Hindu nationalism and the

concomitant position of the Indian state and citizenry towards Kashmir resulted in a lingering suspicion among Kashmiris of the future of a Muslim majority state in India (Chandra 1985: 51). Alongside such developments, a group known as the *Praja Parishad* (subject's organisation) had emerged in the late 1940's claiming to represent the interests of Jammu as an integral part of the new Indian nation-state. The Parishad emerged as a response to the decline of Dogra and Hindu dominance and fears of the rise of Kashmiri, and Muslim dominance (Puri 1996). While the Parishad has not survived into the present, there is a sentiment in Jammu of political and economic life in the state being dominated by Kashmiri Muslims. Similarly, Ladakhi Buddhist leaders observed the continued marginalisation of their region by the Indian state and Kashmiri leaders (Agarwal 2004: 39-40).

Within Kashmir, politics acquired a fragmented tone. Sheikh Abdullah had become the first Prime Minister of Kashmir and the most important source of support for the Indian state in the region. However his relationship with the Indian nation-state, and Jawaharlal Nehru in particular, was affected by two trends. At one level, Kashmiri nationalist aspirations, which first found expression in the 1930s continued to grow. The possibility of Kashmir, independent from both Pakistan and India, was entertained by a small but growing constituency calling itself the Plebiscite Front. This group based its politics on a promise made by Nehru to allow for a plebiscite in the state for its inhabitants to decide if they want to accede to India or Pakistan. Needless to say, this offer was caught in the simultaneously vacillating and recalcitrant positions of India and Pakistan (Bose 1997: 36-38). Sheikh Abdullah also began to feel insecure at having led a Muslim majority state into union with India following the rise of Hindu Nationalist politicians who criticised the terms of accession (Guha 2004: 3906). From the point of view of the Indian state, a closer integration of Jammu and Kashmir into the Indian federal system

was desired. Eventually in 1953 Sheikh Abdullah was placed under arrest when he opened secret negotiations to gather American support (Guha 2004: 3905-6).

In the process the relationship between Kashmiris and the Indian state remained flawed. Many Kashmiri leaders were often removed from office if their politics lay at odds with the Indian state (Puri 1993). Politicians who were supported by India were accused of corruption, which increasingly delegitimized the Indian state for Kashmiris. These leaders were key members of the National Conference and included Sheikh Abdullah, who often used his position to curb local opposition towards his policies within Kashmir. Thus from 1948, the relationship between Jammu and Kashmir and the Central Indian authorities was marked by what Bose refers to as a 'denial of democracy' by the Indian state, with the reduction of the powers of representative government through repression, fraudulent electoral politics and subversion of federal autonomy (Bose 1997: 19, Bose 2003). What complicates the relationship between Kashmir and the Indian state is the fact that much of the problems are related to periods when Jawaharlal Nehru, his daughter Indira Gandhi and grandson Rajiv Gandhi served as Prime Ministers of India and who were of Kashmiri Pandits origin.

A key event, which is now acknowledged as the breaking point, was the state elections of 1987. The elections were won by an alliance between the National Conference and the Indian National Congress, which defeated the opposition parties represented by the Muslim United Front. It is now understood that a new group under the name of the Muslim United Front (MUF) was leading the polls. The results in favour of the electoral alliance of the National Conference and the Indian National Congress indicated that the elections were rigged in their favour (Bose 1997: 42-46, Ganguly 1997: 98-100, Ganguly, Blank and Devotta 2003: 5). It is significant that members of the MUF included Yasin Malik who is one of the founders of the Jammu and Kashmir Liberation

Front (JKLF), one of the first militant groups in Kashmir. The insurgency that erupted from 1989 onwards was thus a movement to reclaim democratic politics in Kashmir. Furthermore, in spite of agrarian reforms implemented after independence, bureaucratic corruption and misconceived policy resulted in low levels of economic development in the state and allowed the fostering of predatory practices of rural elite and middlemen in collusion with politicians (Prakash 2000, Panjabi 1992: 143).

Caught amidst the range of events, interests and political formations that have marked life in the Kashmir valley are the Kashmiri Hindus, better known as the Kashmiri Pandits. The Kashmiri Pandits occupy a difficult place constituting a Hindu minority in a Muslim majority region. While the Kashmiri Pandits historically formed an important constituent of the state bureaucracy in Jammu and Kashmir, notable figures such as Prem Nath Bazaz played an important role in the Kashmiri nationalist movement in the 1930s and 1940s. Following independence in the subcontinent many Kashmiri Pandits continued to occupy a prominent position in Kashmir. Yet by the late 1980s their place in the world would change drastically, resulting in the largest conflict related displacement in Indian administered territory since the partition of India. In the following section I will try to locate the Kashmiri Pandit in the scheme of Kashmir's history and politics.

2.2 Locating the Kashmiri Pandits

At one level the conflict over Jammu and Kashmir has been explained as a result of two decolonising nation-states seeking to assert their claims on people and territory. Violence in Kashmir can also be understood in a context where a nation-state is asserting its authority and legitimacy over people demanding the right to self-determination. Following the outbreak of violence and political instability, the vast

majority of the Kashmiri Pandits fled the Kashmir valley in a short span of time, heading to the city of Jammu and other parts of the North India. Approximately 100,000 to 140,000 Kashmiri Pandits had fled the Kashmir valley by the end of 1990 (Bose 1997: 71). It is also estimated that 3,500 Pandits have remained in the Kashmir valley (Barve 2003).

The exodus of the Kashmiri Pandits, or the 'migration', as it is known in everyday parlance, is an event that is difficult to locate. The Pandit exodus is often featured as a fragment in the mosaic of politics in the state. However the Pandits themselves regard the exodus as definitive of Kashmiri politics. From their perspective, they were largely excluded from nationalist politics in Kashmir and targeted by militants and other separatist groups as supporters of the Indian state. A series of actions directed at members of the community, alongside the general breakdown of law and order, resulted not only in a process of their alienation from the emergent politics of the Kashmiri mainstream but also placed them within Indian nationalist formations.

The Kashmiri Pandits constituted a minuscule proportion of the population of the Kashmir valley of approximately 3 per cent of the population in the Kashmir valley (Madan 1993: 694). They share with the Muslims the claim of originating from the Kashmir valley and speaking the same language. Representatives of the community present themselves as the 'aborigines' of the Kashmir valley, emphasising an autochthonous claim that precedes the arrival of Islam in the valley. Another quality that sets Kashmiri Pandit society apart from other Hindus is that they are a society of only

one caste. The Kashmiri Pandits are a community of Saraswat Brahmins whose theological and ritual practices draw on *Saivite* philosophy².

Prior to the advent and spread of Islam in Kashmir from the fourteenth century onwards, a number of different Hindu castes existed. The Brahmins constituted one of the most privileged castes who wielded significant power and were responsible for the preserving Hinduism in Kashmir (Bamzai 1962: 173-179). Following the spread of Islam, the Brahmins remained the only Hindus in the valley. There have been other Hindu groups who have lived in Kashmir, namely the Khattris whose presence in valley was recorded in the late 19th century. While Khattris have regarded the valley as home for generations, speak *Koshur* (Kashmiri) and were also displaced in 1990, they claim their land of origin in Punjab or the *Pahari* districts of Jammu and Kashmir. Madan mentioned in his ethnography other Hindu communities such as the *Buher* and *Purib* who were not Kashmiri but were absorbed into Kashmiri Pandit society (2002: 14).

The history I present here is a summary of texts published by a number of Kashmiri Pandit writers (Bamzai 1962, Kilam 2003, Koul 1991, Parmu 1969)³. These texts expectedly privilege the Pandits of Kashmir. But they are essential to gaining the view of history that exists among them. According to these texts, the ascendancy of the Brahmins changed in 1320 following an invasion by the Tartar warlord Dulucha, which resulted in the end of the Hindu kingdom in the valley. However significant changes in Kashmir were initiated first by Dulucha's son, Rinchana. Rinchana sought to become

² The Pandits are divided into two sub-castes, the *Karkuns* and the *Gors*. The *Karkuns* refers to the Pandits who engage in secular professions while the *Gors* consists of those who worked as priests (Madan 2002: 19-20). During fieldwork I observed that this distinction, while acknowledged, did not exist in practice.

³ The books authored by Anand Koul and Jia Lal Kilam are reprints, having been published first in 1921 and 1954 respectively. Authors such as Parmu and Bamzai also refer to them.

Hindu but was denied his wish by the Brahmins. Consequently under the influence of Muslim missionaries he converted to Islam, thereby starting the period of Muslim rule in the valley. For Pandit historians the time beginning with the accession of Rinchana till the conquest of the valley by Sikhs in the first quarter of the 19th century, is presented as a single period of alien Muslim rule in Kashmir. This period of history witnessed a number of regimes from Kashmiri Sultans to periods of Mughal (1586-1768) and Afghan domination (1768-1819) in the valley. Most Pandits do not distinguish between these regimes. For Kashmiri Muslim nationalists, there is a distinction made with the Mughals and Afghans treated as foreigners. Hence from a Kashmiri Muslim point of view, Kashmir has been occupied by foreign rulers starting with the Mughals and continuing with Afghan, Sikh and Dogra rule (Rai 2004).

The spread of Islam in Kashmir is presented as a time of great difficulty by the Pandits in terms of the decline of their influence and also in terms of numbers. The large scale demographic transformation in this period resulting in a Muslim majority population is attributed by Pandit migrants in the present to forcible conversion of Hindus. Muslim missionaries were said to have influenced the Sultans to aggressively convert Hindus to Islam. The reign of Sultan Sikander (1360-78) is often characterised as a particularly brutal period with forced conversions of non-Muslims in Kashmir. Those who refused to convert were said to have been killed or forced to flee the valley. It is said that towards the end of Sikander's reign, only eleven Pandit families remained in Kashmir. The actions of Sikander who was advised by his Prime Minister Suha Bhatta, a Brahmin convert to Islam, eventually earned him the sobriquet *But Shikan* (iconoclast). With the accession of Sultan Zain ul-Abidin (1420-70), to the Kashmiri throne the fortunes of the surviving Kashmiri Hindus changed. It is said that Zain ul-Abidin was suffering from a serious illness, which was cured by a Pandit physician. As a reward to the physician,

Zain ul-Abidin ended the persecution of the Pandits and invited them to return to Kashmir. In a new encouraging environment fostered by the Sultan who earned the sobriquet *Budshah* (great king), many Pandits returned and took to learning Persian which was the language of the Kashmiri Court. This enabled them to take up positions in the state as clerks and bureaucrats and re-acquiring status and privileges once lost.

The history of persecution and victimisation at the hands of Muslims continued during the conquest of the Kashmir valley by Mughals and especially the Afghans. However this is tempered by the fact that Muslims were also persecuted by foreign regimes imposed on the valley. Other historical studies on Kashmir argue that conversion to Islam took place over a long period of time through peaceful means facilitated by Sufi missionaries, which contrast with Pandit authored histories of Kashmir (Khan 1994). It has also been argued that the spread of Islam was facilitated by Sufi missionary activity and active support from the court of the Sultan of Kashmir without any significant policy of violence (Hangloo 2000). Furthermore, some prominent Pandits played an important role in the affairs of the state as bureaucrats during Mughal and Afghan rule. They also constituted an important section of the middle class and the influential bureaucratic elite in Kashmir in the period of Dogra rule and in the post-independence period.

After independence in the subcontinent, significant political changes had been initiated by the state government of Jammu and Kashmir such as wide ranging land reforms in 1953, greater representation of the Kashmiri masses in state politics and the rise of a Kashmiri Muslim middle class. The anthropologist T.N. Madan, who conducted fieldwork and research on Pandits in the late 1950s, observed:

An instance of the lack of solidarity among Kashmiri Pandits can be seen in their attitude to the recent political and economic changes in the state. These changes had, among other consequences, the effect of endangering the economic solvency of the Pandits. All households that owned more than twenty three acres have lost the land exceeding the limit to their tenants; the tenants share in agricultural produce has been raised, benefiting the Muslims more than the Pandits, because not many Pandits had been tenants; and government jobs have been thrown open to the Muslims on a favoured treatment basis...They are divided into two opinion groups; those who want to co-operate with the Muslims and work for a united village community, and those who want to seek protection from the government as a religious minority (Madan 2002: 38).

One important thread in popular Kashmiri history pertains to migration and displacement. Historically large numbers of Kashmiri Pandits have migrated from Kashmir in the 18th and 19th centuries resulting in the community to spread across large parts of Northern India, especially in cities such as Delhi and Lucknow, where a Kashmiri Pandit *mohalla* (neighbourhood) had emerged in the mid 19th century. In her study of Kashmiri Pandits in North India in the pre-colonial and colonial period, Pant (1987) attributes migration to the lure of work and opportunity, alongside persecution at the hands of Muslim rulers. Many of the Pandits who migrated to Kingdoms in the North Indian plains, particularly in Mughal administered areas, found employment at various levels of state bureaucracy. Consequently this engendered an image of the Pandits as a community of elites outside Kashmir.

The history of persecution, migration and displacement exists at a popular level and has acquired significance for the migrants displaced by the current conflict. As I was told by one man at the beginning of fieldwork, the Pandits had faced displacement several times in past and that the exodus of 1990 was another episode of displacement. Often

individuals refer to names from South Asian history, most notably the Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb who holds a reputation for persecuting non-Muslims in nationalist Indian history. The manner in which history is discussed implies that little distinction is made between Kashmiri Muslim Sultans, Mughal and Afghan governors. Therefore, the events of 1989-1990 are a new chapter in this history of persecution and flight.

However there have been incidents after 1947 suggesting that a problematic relationship between Pandits and Muslims existed before the exodus. Elderly informants spoke of events in the 1960s which had raised communal tensions in Kashmir, such as the theft of a relic of the Prophet Mohammed kept at the Hazratbal Shrine in Srinagar. I was also told of an incident from 1967 when organisations representing the Pandits had organised large protests in Srinagar over the elopement of a Pandit woman with a Muslim man. Political activists among the Pandit community argue that the woman was kidnapped and forced into a marriage against her wishes. This event is not very well known but I had encountered brief references to this at various points in time during fieldwork and meetings with elderly Pandits.

An event that truly reverberated across Kashmir took place in mid 1980s. In 1986, the district of Anantnag in South Kashmir was affected by series of riots between Pandits and Muslims. According to a report published by the Kashmiri Samiti Delhi (KSD), a prominent Pandit organisation based in New Delhi, the riots were organised by 'vested interests' without pointing the blame at any specific group or organisation. The riots of 1986 were largely localised and limited to the district of Anantnag. While the report brought out by the KSD described the violence as one sided with most losses incurred by the Pandits, it also mentions that many were helped and protected by Muslims (KSD 1986:7-9). However a letter to the editor of the *Koshur Samachar*, using the incident of rioting to make a point, suggested the difficulty of living in Kashmir as a Pandit:

During the last thirty nine years, this unfortunate community has nobody to represent their grievances in the state or central legislature...The last alternative is migration. Let us hope the Indian bride leaves her purdah and sees realities (Munshi 1986: 13).

It thus appears that the history of persecution and violence, which characterises the past for Kashmiri Pandits, had continued with new chapters written from time to time. Any account of the events of 1989-1990 is inflected with a prior sense of victimhood and a popular history of mass flight. I will now present an account put together of the time around the exodus and the experience of flight.

2.3 Accounting for Displacement, 1990

According to Evans (2002), and Mishra and Datta (2004), two sets of causes are commonly understood to have precipitated the exodus of the Pandits from Kashmir. One of the reasons for mass migration pertains to the breakdown in law and order due to large scale public demonstrations taking place daily across the Kashmir valley, together with attacks by a number of armed militant groups who targeted individuals and places associated with the Indian state. These attacks included the assassination of several Kashmiri Pandits who held prominent positions in everyday life in the valley. The Indian state's response caused violence to spiral through the brutal suppression of protests and counter insurgency operations against militant groups. Large scale demonstrations demanding independence for Kashmir from India and attacks by militant groups on individual Pandits as supporters of the Indian state, led the community to feel specifically targeted. Hence temporary migration was seen as a possible solution for survival. For many Pandits the protests and demonstrations not only expressed demands for independence from India, the slogans of protests specifically demanded that Kashmiri Pandits leave Kashmir. Another cause for the exodus is attributed to the Indian

state and especially Jagmohan, the appointed governor of the time who is said to have engineered and encouraged the Pandits to leave the valley to prevent casualties among supporters of the Indian state and to discredit the movement for independence (Evans 2002: 212-22, Mishra and Datta 2004: 379-381).

According to Evans, these two views suggest the ambiguity that marks the issue commenting that the truth perhaps lies in between (2001:22). It is significant to note that since 1990 a number of militant groups have been active in the Kashmir valley. These groups initially varied in ideology from the overtly Islamist Hizb-ul-Mujahedin to the secular nationalist Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF), which received tacit and material support from the Pakistani state. Over the years the importance of different groups has fluctuated with the Lashkar-e-Taiba having taken over as the dominant group, while the JKLF has transformed into a separatist organisation that follows non-violence. However it is interesting to note that the Pandit exodus took place when the Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front, which professed a secular nationalist ideology, was active as a militant group.

The exodus serves as a critical event (Das 1995a). It is the starting point for the narrative of suffering and violence articulated by the Pandits in the present. However the account of their experiences is forced to contend with concerns of truthfulness when different groups such as Kashmiri Muslims, politicians and activists deny that the Pandits were specifically targeted or argue that Pandit claims are exaggerated. In a book written the year following the beginning of the conflict, the former governor Jagmohan denied his involvement in causing the exodus of the Pandits, criticising journalists and human rights activists for fabricating the truth and insisted that he had initiated the correct response of the Indian state to the emerging crisis (1991: 480-483). Conversely most Kashmiri Pandits dismiss claims of oppression faced by Kashmiris at the hands of

the Indian state and criticise the movement for Kashmiri independence as an Islamic fundamentalist movement spurred by Pakistani machinations.

Events of mass violence in South Asia are often subject to explanatory difficulties due to concerns of veracity or the potential of fading from public memory. Amin's (1995) study of a public uprising during the anti-colonial movement shows how an event can be effaced from public consciousness and nationalist history. As Tarlo shows in her study of the Emergency when democratic rights were suspended by the Indian state, records of the event may be consigned to margins or made inaccessible, resulting in a divide between 'what is implicitly known and what is officially recorded' (2003: 9).

Records regarding the Pandit exodus are available but must be located within the noise of other events occurring simultaneously in Kashmir. The records I draw upon here consist of news reports of the crisis as it unfolded in 1990. However the majority of news reports of the time expectedly focus upon political demonstrations and violence in Kashmir. While the arrival of the Pandits in Jammu and New Delhi was recorded as well, the circumstances that resulted in flight remain inadequately covered. I was unable to locate any published report that corroborates events such the slogans of the demonstrations, which Pandit migrants place emphasis upon. Thus the account presented here draws primarily upon interviews, testimonies and conversations with informants in Jammu.

As Pandey points out with reference to communal violence in India, it is difficult to write a history of an event for which records may have been inadequately maintained, suppressed or destroyed (1992: 34). Therefore the testimonies of the victims should be considered in order to construct an account of the event. This chapter similarly draws upon fragments collected from Pandit migrants to frame their account of violence and

flight⁴. However, I acknowledge that memory is subject to the current political climate. In the following sections I will present the Kashmiri Pandit narrative of the migration of 1990. As Keller suggests, the trajectory of forced migration can be divided into stages: 1) the early stage during which communities react to the threat, 2) the middle stage of extreme danger followed by flight 3) the stage of arrival and initial settlement (1977: 42, 50). The narrative presented will be divided into three stages as well.

2.4 Accounting for displacement: The time before Flight

By the beginning of 1990 the conflict broke into the open with battles between militant groups and Indian security forces. The streets of Srinagar became arenas of large scale public protests and demonstrations demanding *azaadi* (freedom) from the Indian state, which were brutally suppressed by security forces resulting in significant casualties (Crosette 1990). One report of protestors gathering in front of the office of the UNMOGIP⁵ gives a good sense of the scene that was unfolding:

A senior police official said that more than 400,000 people, or more than half the population of Srinagar city, were on the streets, but they remained peaceful...Some demonstrators said they had travelled on from the town of Anantnag, about 30 miles south of here and many Kashmiris wearing their loose traditional gowns, known as the phirin , sat on top of buses waving green, white and red flags of the Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front and shouting slogans favouring independence (Hazarika 1990: 13).

⁴ Pandey however also raises another significant point when he argues that victims of an event after being repeatedly asked to share their experience eventually produce a single ritualised account themselves (1992: 36).

⁵ United Nations Monitoring Group for India and Pakistan

Militant groups also had an impact upon the everyday life of the city, not only through acts of violence but also by imposing restrictions on civil life such as banning cinema halls (Haku 1990). Other acts which contributed to the climate of terror included the issuing of personal threats to individuals and the posting of hit lists in public spaces with names of individuals to be assassinated (Mishra and Datta 2004: 379). A letter to the editor published in the Kashmir Times, one of the most well known English language newspapers in the state, reveals the sense of confusion that prevailed at the local level:

Dear Editor, Kashmir, the once paradise on Earth has now turned into a virtual hell. Never before had the beautiful valley witnessed such a grave violence as it is witnessing now. Killings, whether of a common innocent man or a terrorist or a death from a security force is almost a daily routine now. Bomb blasts occur as if the little firecrackers are bursted (sic) on some occasion. Only difference is that these blasts occur leaving masses terrified and tense. Common man is fed up with this day to day violence. He cannot even complain against this. The moment he does a bullet will pierce his or her heart or a bomb blast will blow up his/her carefully built house (sic) (Koul 1990).

The gradual break down of peace and the permeation of fear and uncertainty into everyday life had a tremendous effect across the valley. Asha⁶, a middle aged woman from rural Kashmir, attributed her family's flight to the changing climate in her village:

At that time we had no choice. There were militants. They detonated a bomb at our neighbour's house. They would not let us sleep. All night I heard *kat kat kat kat* (sound of gunfire). We were afraid and then we decided to leave.

According to Richmond a precipitating event is 'one that disrupts the normal functioning of the system and thus destroys the capacity of a population to survive under the

⁶ All names of informants have been changed to pseudonyms

prevailing conditions' (Richmond 1994:65). The precipitating factors which predisposed the Pandits to migrate are several, of which the climate of fear was a basic factor. However a number of other incidents acquired visibility and significance. In the autumn of 1989, Tika Lal Taploo, a member of the Bharatiya Janata Party in Kashmir, was assassinated. Taploo's assassination held a special resonance. He was not only a politician with a prominent Indian political party but also happened to be a Kashmiri Pandit and the first in a number of assassinations of Pandits who held prominent positions in the establishment. Other victims included Neel Kanth Ganjoo, a former magistrate who had passed the death sentence on one of the first Kashmiri political activists to take to militancy and Lassa Koul, the assistant director of the state television broadcast service (Kashmir Times Correspondent 1990b:1). Another key event is related to an issue of the *Al-Safa*, an Urdu language newspaper, which published an announcement by a militant group demanding that the Kashmiri Pandits leave Kashmir. The armed response of security forces also often led militant groups to target the Pandits as a form of reprisal and to terrorise others (Mishra and Datta 2004: 379-380).

But one precipitating event which migrants raise in any discussion of the early days of the conflict pertains not to militant activity, but to the protests and demonstrations for the independence of Kashmir from India. The perspective of the Pandits on the demonstrations is particularly controversial since it portrays the demonstrations directed against them. Reports of public demonstrations represented the mood in the valley towards the Indian state. For the Pandits however, the demonstrations were something else. During a meeting with the president of a prominent Pandit organisation in Jammu, I was introduced to the account of the procession:

I will tell you what happened. It was 19 January, Saturday, 1990 in Srinagar where a procession was taken out to a *ziarat* dedicated to a Sufi Saint who believed in

Secularism. The procession of lakhs walked from distances of twenty five kilometres in the night crying ‘*Azaadi*’ and were demanding *batav bagair, batnevsan* (without Pandit men, with Pandit women)...We want Azadi without the Pandits! Thousands of masjids in Srinagar and the rural areas made announcements with posters affixed on walls asking Hindus to leave the valley without their women or to convert. The aim of all of this was to form *Nizam-E-Mustapha*. It was from that day that the exodus started. It was a spontaneous reaction and many killings of leaders took place. Three lakh (300,000) people left in an unorganised manner. They wanted to save their skins leaving shops, business or jobs to save their honour and dignity. They did save their honour and dignity getting all of their womenfolk with them.

This account is a significant component of the Pandit narrative and widely circulates among the community. The slogans that were heard during the demonstrations were interpreted by Pandits as an unambiguous articulation of threat, as a way to exclude Pandits from the Kashmiri mainstream and threaten their lives and dignity. They are recalled constantly by all Kashmiri Pandits as a humiliating experience. This account also plays into building the processions as an event by establishing the 19th of January as a particular day when the troubles had begun. There is a remarkable level of similarity in recollections of the processions in terms of their core content, which makes it difficult to distinguish between a hegemonic account and individual or personal account. One essay recollecting the events of the day indicate the shock and fear many Pandits felt:

Only a short time had passed when I began to hear shouting and screaming in the streets. There were cries of ‘Allah O Akbar’, and I could make out people shouting. And the sounds seemed to come closer. I was terrified, but there was nothing I could do...And then suddenly they were all outside our home, shouting, ‘come out Dr. Bhan we know you are inside’ ...Strangely enough, I’d looked out earlier from

the upper part of the house and seen that many of the young people in the crowd were boys I had delivered at the hospital! And here they were shouting for my blood” (Raina 2002: 178-179).

Another article first published in the early 1990s in which a journalist describes a meeting a displaced Kashmiri Pandit in Jammu also gives a sense of the times:

They left Srinagar immediately after the big “azadi” processions in late January. “It was getting too tense”, she says, “everyone seemed so agitated especially in our locality ... all day and all night there were loud slogans from mosques around our house....”There was no direct threat to her family she admits, the family had been living there for generations and the neighbours never gave any trouble. “But we kept hearing people being killed specially Kashmiri Pandits and the younger lot of men kept shouting *azadi, azadi*. At night we could hear shooting and blasts...It was getting too much so we had to move...nobody likes leaving home but we had to” (Thakur 1991:185).

Individual accounts also suggest a sense of bewilderment about Kashmiri politics. Many Pandits were truly surprised by the turn of events. Here is an excerpt from an interview, with the Kouls, a couple from Srinagar:

Mrs. Koul-I was staying all alone with two kids. On 19th of January we never knew that this thing will happen in Kashmir. We had no idea. Absolutely nothing. Then on 19th January 1990, the first slogan of *Azaadi* was heard. We were terrified. We thought they may come. They may enter our house and start looting our property. Then we become conscious about this whole scenario. Until then no one realised. There were one or two incidents but no problems. Still we stayed in the month of January. I still remember. We celebrated Shiv Ratri, you know our festival, on 24th of February and on 26th of February, we left Kashmir. 26th of February we left....

AD- Could you tell me what happened on the 19th January?

Mrs.Koul.-I will tell you definitely. I will never forget that night. It was Saturday, the 19th of January. It was Saturday. At about 10 o' clock...

Mr.Koul- There was a slogan

Mrs.Koul- Just a minute. Let me tell you one thing to be clear about. There was some picture shown on TV. Just right after dinner we sat down to view the movie. Then all of a sudden some slogans started shouting from nearby mosques. We just closed the TV and started listening. Then everywhere. From every Mosque...

Mr.Koul- There was only one slogan.

Mrs.Koul- We want independence! At the same time from each and every mosque

Mr.Koul- There was a tape recorder played at the same time from every mosque. Wherever there was a Mosque you could hear the slogans. I called my elder brother. I asked him what was going on. He said 'we are hearing it too. Don't worry we can hear them too.'

Mrs.Koul- He consoled us. He said relax, it is happening from here as well. He said wait till morning. These slogans were heard everywhere. And we stayed awake for whole of the night... afraid that they may enter the house.

Mr.Koul- We said (to our daughters) 'watch TV'. We also locked the door of our house from the outside.

Mrs.Koul- We checked all sides to see that no one could come in. We went to third floor (of the house) and switched the lights off and watched everything. We had daughters. They were young. Who knows? We were so much worried and we kept them in one bedroom, small TV kept on. A procession emerged from the mosque. Then his brother consoled us and told us not to worry...

Mr.Koul- anything could have happened.

The account shared by the Koul's testifies to the confusion they felt. The processions appear to have emerged suddenly re-casting the city into a zone of danger. Like many other Pandits, the Kouls saw the processions as a threat directed towards them. Another account I feature here was shared by Chuni Lal, a middle aged migrant from South Kashmir. While he acknowledged the events of the 19th of January, he had continued to stay on in his village until a final procession served as a trigger for his flight:

I have a friend by the name of Bashir who is from my department. He had bought a TV and called me to his house fix the TV antennae. I took my father-in-law along. I told him 'Bashir has bought a TV we have to fix the antennae.' My father-in-law knew how to do these things. We walked to Bashir's village, which was as far as from say here to Gumpul⁷. This would be after 19th January. While fixing the antennae, a boy from the village came and told Bashir that a *julsa* (procession) would leave the village and that he must participate. I did not hear it since I was in another room smoking. I could not smoke in front of my father-in-law.

However when I finished smoking, I saw he (father-in-law) had left. I asked what had happened and where my father-in-law was. They told me he had left. I returned to my village with *kangri* (brazier) in hand. When I reached my village, all the girls, wives, mothers and sisters were locked up in one house. My house was on the road leading to three villages which was a main road for coming and going. So I sat down there. I was ready. If they attack, I will attack two or four of them. I was smoking a cigarette and then a Julsa left from the village. There were some two hundred-three hundred people. All 'Mohammedans'. It included elderly people to youth, the well-educated and qualified and the illiterate. When they reached the

⁷ The area in which the Purkhu camp entrance is located was formerly known as Gumpul.

village they came to the *Mandir* (temple) which was on the road and they were about to stone it. But one man stopped them and told them not to stone the temple. He then raised a slogan 'Hindu, Muslim, Sikh *ittehad* (unity)' but no one responded by shouting *zindabad*. This happened right in front of me. Their intention was to go from village to village to gather more people and then raid our village.

These two accounts come from migrants from different walks of life. The Kouls are from the well-to-do strata of Kashmiri society while Chuni Lal is a migrant from rural Kashmir. But both accounts are similar in terms of showing the unexpectedness of the political situation and also the perception of a threat. The accounts of the demonstrations also emphasise that Pandits did not participate in the demands for independence. The inability to connect with emergent Kashmiri mainstream at the time before the exodus can be seen in accounts from other migrants. Mr. Bhan, a retired government employee happened to be on the road and found himself dragged into participating in the procession by the gathering crowd. Ratan Lal recalled a large gathering preparing to demonstrate outside the offices of the UN monitoring agency for India and Pakistan:

One woman forcibly took me into the public gathering. She said 'You are a Kashmiri you must participate.' I was with them for a while. Some of the women and children insisted I have tea. Somehow I managed to leave. Where was the Police? No one was stopping them.

Indira Koul was surprised by the initial signs of change in the status quo as she was living north of Srinagar where she taught at a local college. The area she lived in was relatively quiet and she was unaware of the events of 19th of January. However she had received news from other parts of Kashmir and decided to return to her own home in

Srinagar. It was after returning to Srinagar that she heard the announcements on public loudspeakers insisting that everyone participate in public demonstrations, which influenced her to leave. It was the demand that all Kashmiris participate in the processions which angered and alienated her from the emerging political scenario.

While most accounts and reports of events in Kashmir featured militancy and demonstrations against the Indian state, few references are made to the Pandits. The slogans the Pandits refer to have never been reported or recorded officially at the time and suggest a gap between what was recorded and what the Pandits describe. Rather news reports of the 19th and 20th of January instead focus on 'mob violence', casualties due to Police action and large numbers of arrests (Kashmir Times Correspondent 1990a: 1, 8)

Mrs. Wanchu, a former resident from Srinagar, considered the slogans a core factor in precipitating flight:

You could hear the announcements from all Masjids saying Kashmiri Pandits should vacate in 48 hours and then 'bhattav bagair, bhatt navsan'. That means ladies should stay here so that they can marry the ladies. The male folk should leave. This announcement frightened us.

Prem Nath, whose family migrated from North Kashmir, shared his own experience:

The *julus* (procession) would take place and people would gather in large numbers on the street. They would shout 'Oppressors. *Kaffirs* (Unbelievers). Leave our Kashmir. Leave our Kashmir.' And then would all say 'What do we want? Azaadi! What is the meaning of azaadi? La illa-il-allah. What will have here? *Nizam-E-Mustapha* (Islamic state). Indian dogs go back.

The slogans resulted in a feeling among the Pandits to be targeted and associated with the Indian state and hence outside formations of nationalism in Kashmir. In the process it can also be suggested that since the displacement, the Pandits have indeed become overt supporters of the Indian state who imagine the Kashmir valley as an integral part of India. One of the slogans that became especially controversial is '*bhattav bagair batnevsan*', which translates into a demand for Pandit men to leave but for women to stay behind. The sexualised form with which the threat was perceived lends the events of the time a particular quality. As many other informants would assert, they had fled to not only save their own lives but also to save their honour by ensuring women would not be harmed. The slogan has also been denied by many Kashmiri Muslims and some activists. A letter published in the Kashmir Times criticised the Pandits:

It is pathetic to know that some individuals from the minority community are giving misleading statement regarding their security, economy and equality in the valley and it becomes necessary that everybody should get acquainted with the fact. That the minority community have never been discriminated...Even militant organisations have claimed not to harm minority as we are all brothers and belong to the same origin, irrespective of religion (Ahmed 1990).

This letter published during the early days of the conflict encapsulates the feelings of many Muslims towards the Pandit exodus. Yet in numerous meetings with Pandits, the killings and the demonstrations, especially the slogans heard slogan readily emerge in conversation and is often regarded by many as the main trigger for flight.

The gendered dimension to violence and displacement has been a constituent of conflict in South Asia. As Kakkar points out, sexualised violence has been a part of the morality

of violence between Hindus and Muslims, which draws its value on repercussions on future interactions between communities in conflict (1996: 134,135). Authors such as Butalia (2000), and Menon and Bhasin (1998), point out that violence against women became a matter of national honour for the Indian and Pakistani states, as well as Hindu and Muslim communities affected by violence. At first it seems that the Pandits face a similar situation as flight took place to protect women and hence the honour of community. What also plays a role here is the fact that the Pandits are a community associated with a high socio-economic, political and cultural status. Hence any event that threatens their honour will be taken seriously.

However dominant accounts of the Pandit migration miss out the range of immediate responses at the time. For example after coming to Jammu, Asha got her daughters married as quickly as possible even though they were below the legal age for marriage for women. She explained she did this as she had heard of incidents of the abduction of unmarried women and saw marriage as way to protect them. One middle aged man I interviewed spoke of making his daughter wear two layers of clothing in case people broke into their house, which would have made it difficult to rape her. He also instructed her that if she could not escape from a mob, she was to go to the roof of their house and then jump onto the street to commit suicide. While the fear of violence directed towards women is genuine, there are also cases of Pandits being looked after by Muslims. One of my closest informants, Priyadarshini had found herself left alone when the rest of her family had scattered to escape an immediate threat. However her neighbours had looked after her in the time she had spent alone, until she decided to leave for Jammu.

If we look at the period before flight when violence broke out into the open, it is obvious that a range of factors precipitated the migration of the Pandits. While certain events such as the protests or individual acts of violence can be understood as triggers, the emergent climate of fear predisposed Pandits to flight. The overall deterioration in law and order, alongside selective assassinations and the content of demonstrations are regarded by Pandits as rendering them unwanted in Kashmir. However, the next section will demonstrate there is no single mode in which flight to Jammu and other 'safe havens' took place.

2.5 Accounting for displacement: Flight

By the month of March in 1990 the exodus was noticed with large numbers of migrants arriving in Jammu. The Pandit exodus represents an *acute refugee movement*, which takes place at a time of great political upheaval (Kunz 1976: 132). However the evidence indicates that full experience of the flight of the Pandits is difficult to characterise. Some migrants acted as part of a *reactive fate group* responding immediately to conflict by escaping (Kunz 1981:44), while others tried to exercise some agency amidst the constraints. Pawan, a young Pandit whose family came from Kupwara district in northern Kashmir, pointed out that most families left Kashmir on their own:

Never trust Kashmiri Pandits. I mean do not take what they say as the truth. I will tell you what happened. When people left Kashmir, they left without telling anyone. They never told their neighbours even if their neighbours were also Pandits. One day you will see a family. The next day you see that the windows are shut and there is a heavy padlock on their front door. One by one, families started to leave. When my father saw everyone leaving he decided that we should leave as well. Like others we pretended as if it was all fine and left when we felt nobody would be watching.

But other migrants emphasise that the decision to leave was made at the spur of the moment and often due to a perceived, immediate threat. Mrs. Wanchu recalled leaving her home in a hurry when an acquaintance had come to their house and warned them that they would possibly be attacked. Other informants decided to leave upon hearing the news of the murder of a family member, relative or acquaintance. While the Pandit account emphasises the 19th of January as the day when the processions demanding independence took place triggering flight, conversations with informants reveal other chronological markers. Many stayed on till the months of March and April and left only when the situation deteriorated further. The festival of *Shiv Ratri*⁸ is often recounted to mark the day when families started to leave, which had taken place that year at the end of February. Most Pandits recalled leaving their home with only clothes and personal belongings, expecting to return home at the end of summer.

Close informants through whom I would begin to understand the 'migration', revealed that they were often caught alone or separated from other family members. The flight of Mohan Lal's family is a case in point. Now living in a camp in Jammu, Mohan Lal told me that he was forced to flee when his house was fired upon by gunmen. He felt that he was targeted for being a local level worker for the Indian National Congress Party and his involvement in a dispute with his neighbour. He fled with his two sons to Jammu where he joined his brothers and their families as well. When his father Amber Nath and his wife Priyadarshini, who were visiting Srinagar at the time, returned to their village, they found an empty house. Priyadarshini remained in their village alone while Amber Nath stayed with a relative in Srinagar, until they decided to go to Jammu to locate the rest of their family. Other informants share similar experiences and have

⁸ The festival of Shiv Ratri is the most important festival for Kashmiri Pandits.

contributed to a common saying concerning how the conflict and migration made the community 'scatter like rice'.

Other migrants tried to plan their flight from Kashmir to the extent possible. Madan Lal, a middle aged migrant in Jammu who came from North Kashmir, had decided to leave when he realised that his family was one of the last two Pandits families left in his village. He explained that he delayed flight, waiting to receive his salary as he did not want to leave Kashmir without a means of financial support. He was not the only one to attempt to stay on. Others Pandits, especially those from rural areas and of a lower socio-economic status also waited for some time to receive salaries or to dispose of property such as livestock, to pay for the journey to Jammu and to sustain families to the extent possible. Roshan Lal, a migrant from South Kashmir, explained that his family tried to stay in Kashmir as long as they could, in the hope that the troubles would subside. With the deterioration in law and order, he observed other Pandits leaving the village. Eventually his family was one of only a handful of Pandit families remaining in the village, which used to be home to a hundred families. When his family had decided to leave, he first visited Jammu on his own:

I took only one attaché case with me and got into a bus to Jammu. I was afraid that I would be murdered on the way. I went to Jammu to first to see how things were over there. I saw so many people who were barefoot, lost and forlorn. There was no space in Jammu. When was Jammu ever a large city? It was even smaller then than what it is today. There was no place. I managed to find a cowshed. I cleaned it up though it still smelled bad. I then brought my family here. In some time we looked around and found a room which we took hold of. It was difficult at first since ours was a large family. Where could so many go? We struggled so much.

The actual process of flight nevertheless remained an individual or familial affair. Nevertheless the mass exodus became apparent following the arrival of large numbers of Pandits in Jammu, leaving Kashmir in any way possible. Some informants made deals with truck drivers to transport families to Jammu. Roshan Lal's travelled to Jammu on regular public transportation. Furthermore the exodus was the first time some had ever left the Kashmir valley. As one middle aged migrant had remarked, most people in Kashmir seldom went beyond their home districts. Two women who were children at the time of migration even confessed to being excited by the journey to Jammu as it was the first time they had they had left their village to go to the city.

Nevertheless flight is recalled by most as a tense experience. While many were worried that they would be attacked on the way to Jammu, it was often pointed out to me that in many cases the drivers of the trucks and other passengers on the buses were Muslims. Ashok, a college lecturer, spoke of his own experience around the time of the migration. He had already been assigned to a teaching post in a town near Jammu. He returned to Srinagar when his family made the decision to leave. Before loading their belongings onto a bus hired for the purpose, a group of militants had come and waited in front of the house and they were forced to load and leave from the back of the house. But what Ashok remembered most of all was that when they drove away, no one spoke until they crossed the Banihal pass that divides the Kashmir valley from Jammu. He said, 'we started to talk with one another only after crossing the tunnel into Jammu as we reached the "Hindu belt". We finally felt safe.'

2.6 Accounting for displacement: arrival

In a newspaper article from the 7th of March 1990, it was reported that six thousand families had arrived in Jammu and awaited assistance from the state at the premises of

the *Sanatan Dharma Sabha*, popularly known as *Geeta Bhavan*. According to unofficial estimates, a total of nineteen thousand families had come to Jammu (Kashmir Times Correspondent 1990c: 3). Similarly, nine thousand families were reported to have arrived in New Delhi by the month of July (Samachar Bureau 1990b: 14). Jammu has never been directly affected by conflict. But its proximity to Kashmir and its status as a constituent of a disputed state has meant that it was not immune to the politics of the region. Large scale demonstrations took place in Jammu following the outbreak of the insurgency in Kashmir. However, these demonstrations were directed against secessionist politics and held the Pakistani state responsible for the violence through its support for militant groups.

Many of these demonstrations were organised by or involved representatives of the Pandits in an effort to have their voices heard and to draw attention to their plight. The demonstrations conducted by migrants were largely organised through the *Jammu and Kashmir Sahayata Samiti* (JKSS), which had been formed by members of different Pandit organisations to represent the community and manage the practical affairs of relief and assistance. Several Indian politicians associated with Hindu nationalist parties also participated and it is here that the association of the Kashmiri Pandits with Hindu nationalism truly begins (Kashmir Times Correspondent 1990d: 1).

The reception the migrants faced at the local level remains subject to controversy. While camps were established to accommodate arrivals, space was few and far in between. Many Pandits acknowledge the assistance that had been provided to them by local communities in Jammu. But others recall the period as unpleasant, owing to the apparent 'hostility' of the locals and for being mocked as 'refugees'. Many of my

informants felt that they were taken advantage of by being charged exorbitant rent for 'cowsheds' and 'pigeon holes', a consequence of the huge demand for accommodation at the time. However this was interpreted by Pandits as unreasonable as they were displaced and had not come to Jammu by choice. This was also noticed at the time by local journalists:

While some look at it from the eye of a humane person showering sympathies on the unfortunate migrants who have been rendered homeless and status of nomads, others scoff at the infiltrating population which they feel might eventually burden the economy of the city...what is indeed shocking as well as disheartening is that the response of most of the *Jammuites* to the situation has been more opportunistic rather than humane. The sky rocketing rents for accommodation and the rise in costs of consumer item is a clear indication (Jammu Jottings 1990: 3)

The arrival of large numbers of displaced persons in a short span of time was an emergency that the state was unprepared to handle. Although a large number of displaced people had arrived, only six thousand migrants were registered with the state relief commission and allotted shelter in emergency camps. The process of registration for migrants took place at Geeta Bhavan where the JKSS held an emergency office. The experience of dealing with the bureaucratic procedures of registration was largely alienating and Pandits often felt humiliated in having to prove their credentials as residents of Kashmir. It was in the process of registering with state relief authorities that the Pandits received the official nomenclature of 'migrant', the term used by the state to refer to all individuals who have been displaced by the conflict in Jammu and Kashmir. Since then, the official category of migrant has come to refer to displaced Kashmiri

Pandits in Jammu and Kashmir in everyday parlance as well. It is significant that the English word 'migrant' is used in conversations in Hindi, Urdu and Koshur.

As Keller (1976) argues, arrival in a safe haven poses a significant challenge as refugees have to engage with new concerns such as having to provide for basic needs in an alien and often hostile environment. Everything about Jammu-the city, the architecture, the people, the weather and climate-was alienating. Arrival did not necessarily end the chain of migration. At the time, Pandits held on to the possibility of returning home. Yet they often moved to different places, either stopping in Jammu before moving on to other cities or first moving to other places before reaching Jammu. Sunny, a young Pandit who grew up in Jammu, told me that his family had first moved to Doda, a district which is located between the plains of Jammu and the Kashmir valley as his mother's natal family was settled there.

Sunny's case was far from atypical. Sharad's family falls in the upper socio-economic strata of the community that faced adversity and they were able to successfully leave those times behind. Sharad was first taken by relatives to Jammu while his sister stayed with his father's uncle in New Delhi. He found himself going back and forth between Jammu and Srinagar until the rest of his family moved to Jammu having first scouted for suitable accommodation in these cities. Unlike Sunny, Sharad was able to obtain admission at a prominent missionary school in Jammu before proceeding to university in Mumbai where he has lived ever since. While Pandits with a migrant background like Sharad were deeply affected by the exodus, his family had the benefit of pre-existing networks outside Kashmir to withstand incipient pressures. But neither does this

alleviate the memory of those days nor does it enable forgetting the experience of being displaced.

For those who lacked resources, the first few months and even years were characterised by having to move several times, even within Jammu. Madan Lal's family first sought shelter in Geeta Bhavan after being directed by volunteers who would wait at the city bus station for migrants. His family was then moved into an empty school, which had been pressed into providing temporary shelter, until they were allocated space in a camp. Numerous families I met at Purkhu Camp were able to get housing only a few years after the migration, so that they were forced to move from one rented accommodation to another. Those who secured accommodation in the camps were moved when several of the camps were shut down by 1994. However not everyone sought a space in the camps at first. While well-to-do migrants could afford to look for rented accommodation, some poorer informants from the camps originally sought rented accommodation as well. Kishore Lal moved his family into rented accommodation since he wanted to live in a place that afforded some measure of domestic privacy that the camps, where three to four families were accommodated in a single tent, did not allow. He eventually had to move into a camp colony when he was no longer able to afford rented accommodation.

Nevertheless well-to-do migrants were also left temporarily insecure. Even though some had acquired property in Jammu before the migration, much of this property was undeveloped at the time. Such is the case of Indira who already owned land in Jammu from before. However because she had not developed her property in Jammu, she had nowhere else to go. She sought shelter with other migrant government officials in a hostel for members of the state legislative assembly for several months, until they were evicted by the Police. In any case, for most Pandit migrants, the early days in Jammu

were shaped at first by the thought that their sojourn would be temporary and that they would return to Srinagar once things cooled down. It would be a matter of time until the hope of returning home to Kashmir would begin to fade.

2.7 Conclusion

In this chapter I have addressed the history of Jammu and Kashmir and of the Kashmiri Pandits to give a sense of the basis of the current conflict. There has been a great deal written about Kashmir in recent years with each piece of writing aiming to explain the causes of conflict. It can be asserted that the conflict is a result of a denial of democratic processes in Kashmir by the Indian state and an inability of the Indian state to acknowledge alternative nationalist aspirations. However the narrative of the Kashmiri Pandits provides a different view of the history and politics of the Kashmir valley.

The fact that there is a history of violence and persecution faced by the Kashmiri Pandits, which goes back to the medieval period is indeed relevant. The events of 1989-1990 thus come across as a continuation in a linear history of violence and persecution. The account of the factors leading to the exodus of 1990 has to contend with denial, counter claims and inadequate documentation. While the purpose of the chapter has been to set the story for the thesis, many of the elements and experiences I deal with will surface in the various issues covered in the following chapters. In an essay on the Partition of India, Samaddar considers the history of a violent and traumatic event in terms of numerous interests, ranging from the nation-state to the victims of event and the problems of documentation and historiography. He argues:

For as partition shows, as against events-in-history, we also witness history-in-event, in other words against a history that had never anticipated partition, we now

have a history of the region created by partition and a history that lives under it (Samaddar 1997: 7).

These concerns apply to the case of the Kashmiri Pandits with the displacement being the starting point for a new history of the community, as well as influencing the history of Kashmir as we look back. It may be argued that the Pandit account of recent violence and suffering is but one of the histories in the region, with Kashmiris in the valley caught in a separate history of suffering that also goes back in the past, which continues in the midst of an oppressive militarised environment. The dilemmas raised by the displacement will be reflected in the issues I examine in the following chapters, where the past casts a shadow in every aspect of life in the present.

Chapter 3

Living in a place of Exception: the politics of place and everyday life in a displaced person's camp in Jammu and Kashmir

'Take a seat. Secretary *saab* will be here shortly' said the man pointing to a rusting steel chair with a frayed woven plastic seat. 'So you are student?' he asked as I sat down. I nodded and without a response he returned to pore over an old frayed ledger that lay open before him. It had only been a week since I had arrived in Jammu. When I started fieldwork I was first advised that I should visit the office of the All State Kashmiri Pandit Sabha (ASKPC), one of the most prominent Pandit organisations in the region that plays an active role in political life of the community. As one of my first informants had said to me, 'Go to ASKPC. They will tell you where to go. They have all the data. Spend a week there and you will finish your fieldwork'. With this in mind I soon found myself in a small office in Geeta Bhavan, a complex located in the main market district in Jammu, which had provided the first place of shelter for most Pandits in 1990. The office of the ASKPC was a dimly lit room where a group of elderly men were working or sitting quietly by themselves. While I waited, one man sitting at a table briefly peered at me, then shut his eyes, leaned forward and rested his head on the knuckles of his hand supported by an old walking stick. The other men in the office took cursory glances at me as I sat and then looked away. I looked around the rest of the office, noticing the old framed photographs hanging from the walls in black and white and sepia of prominent Kashmiri Pandits from the past, which were obscured by the reflection from the light bulb.

Shortly after, Hira Lal, the secretary of the ASKPC had arrived and the room immediately came to life. Everyone stood up and greeted him formally and he returned

the greetings of '*ware chu*' (how are you?) and '*orzu*'(how is your health?) with '*orzu durkhor*'. Hira Lal played the part of the leader, dominating the room with his imposing frame and commanding voice. After he took a chair next to the table and everyone had settled back into the room, I approached him and introduced myself, emphasising that I had been advised to meet him by a mutual acquaintance. After he heard me out he said to me somewhat disdainfully:

Many students like you have come! We have given so much data. So many MAs and PhDs have been done on us. What you must do is go to Muthi, Purkhu and Misriwala camps! Then only you will see.

At first I was surprised by the prominence Hira Lal had placed on the camps. However after some time spent in the field, I realised that there was nothing to be surprised about. Others I met who lead lives at a distance from political organisation or those who belonged to other communities always spoke of the camps. I was often told throughout fieldwork, 'If you are to understand the plight of the Kashmiri Pandits you must go the camps.'

This chapter will explore the forced migrant camp. First, I will examine how the camp has been imagined as a site of emergency or exception and as an abnormal place in social sciences, policy and in anthropological studies of forced migrant populations. I also discuss how this discourse is reproduced by forced migrants themselves. I then respond to this discourse by showing how everyday life in the camp complicates this view, drawing upon the case of the Kashmiri Pandits. The Kashmiri Pandit experience shows that camps over time transform from sites of exception to places where everyday life has been remade to some degree of success. Nevertheless, the transformation of the camp or places inhabited by communities who occupy a precarious socio-economic and political location is a process shadowed by political contingencies.

3.1 The Camp as context and object

Since the beginning of the 20th century the camp has been synonymous with the experience of force migration and constitutes a stage of the 'refugee experience' in popular imagination (Stein 1981: 324). Given its ubiquity, the camp has been extensively examined by social scientists and policy analysts. Nevertheless, the meaning and significance of the camp has been subject to changes over time and specific contexts. Within academic explorations, I identify two sets of studies, which represent the critical ways of understanding and imagining the camp. In the late 1940s and early 1950s a number of studies had been conducted taking the case of populations in Europe displaced by the war and enemy citizens interned during the war. As Malkki points out, 'it was toward the end of World War II that the refugee camp became enmeshed as a standardized, generalisable technology of power in the management of mass displacement (1995a:498)'.

In the research that emerged in the period Malkki refers to, authors such as Murphy observed camps to be 'uniform', characterised by particular conditions such as overcrowding, the absence of privacy and the limiting of people to a specific space (Murphy 1955:59, see Proudfoot 1957). Another contributor dwells on the abnormal nature of the life in the camp, treating it as a psychological laboratory for studying 'd.p. apathy' (displaced persons apathy) and the apparent helplessness of displaced people (Stern 1955:65).

In a study with significant parallels, Leighton documented the case of the relocation camps where Japanese Americans were forcefully interned during the Second World War. In a book, tellingly titled 'The Governing of Men' (1949), Leighton provides a detailed account of the establishment of the camps in harsh and isolated areas deemed

necessary for containing and maintaining surveillance over a suspicious population. He also describes in detail the hardships faced by the internees, which are similar to experiences of inmates of refugee camps. He shows how the camps were planned by a specific State department which, in this case was the Bureau of Indian affairs. This suggests that the management of unfixed people has a longer history than is presumed in the context of refugee studies. Leighton makes a critical point by arguing that the camps allowed for the 'dehumanising' of the internees. But like others, his work implies that the camp is an 'abnormal' space, occupied by people who find themselves outside the norm of everyday life in a nation-state.

Studies from the period during and shortly after the Second World War must be understood in their context. They were written at the time of the establishment of the modern refugee regime, contemporaneous to the United Nations declaration of the Rights of the Refugee, with an emphasis on reconstruction, governance and sovereignty. They do reveal the interconnections of different forms of encamped people, not necessarily limited to refugees. The main refugee camps in Europe, in fact, were previously employed as concentration camps during the war associated with the holocaust (see Melendy 2005). Hence the camps were clearly tied to a politics of exceptionality of a different form. The question that needs to be asked is whether the meaning of the camp has changed over time in different geo-political contexts?

Since the mid 1990s, studies of forced migrant groups have interrogated the idea of the camps and reveal complexities that characterise life in the camp. Such studies include Malkki's (1995b) seminal ethnography of Hutu refugees from Burundi, Feldman's (2008) and Peteet's (2004) work on Palestinian refugees. Malkki and Peteet pay special attention to the camp as a subject of study as well as the context for study. Malkki's work distinguishes between the experiences of refugees who were located in a refugee

camp and of those who were found in a town. She observed that the camp served a vital context and setting for developing a conception of history and nation associated with victimisation. The camp thus appears to provide fertile ground for generating historical memory, however isolating residents from the outside world (Malkki 1995b: 105-152). Burundian refugees Malkki encountered in towns outside the camp, in contrast had adjusted to life in exile (1995b: 153). Khalili makes a similar argument in the case of Palestinian refugees and shows how memory was facilitated by renaming parts of the camp according to villages left behind, thereby reliving and commemorating village life in the camps (2004:11).

Peteet's (2004) work on refugee camps in Lebanon shows how the camps provided a setting for nationalist politics and a source for building networks and recruiting potential activists. However she also critically discusses the emergence of the camps as lived places with their own social and economic dynamics, affected by their marginalised positions in the cities they are located in. A similar situation has been observed in the context of Kashmiri refugees in Pakistani administered Jammu and Kashmir by Robinson (2004), who describes how the refugee camp became an important site for recruitment in militant groups to fight the Indian security forces. This is not to say that situations where refugees are treated as powerless individuals, corralled in limited spaces have become rare. Knudsen's study of Vietnamese refugees describes in moving detail the experiences of the refugees in camps in Hong Kong that physically separate and isolate them from the rest of the population. He discusses those camps as part of a 'humane deterrence policy', where men, women and children were 'stockpiled' in a 'concrete hell' (Knudsen 2005: 41, 42). The main differences between these ethnographies with earlier studies is that the inhabitants of the camps are accorded

agency and that the camp is treated as a place in its own right, as opposed to being merely an instrument of humanitarian policy.

Nevertheless while the studies I refer to explore the idea of the camp with regards to issues of sovereignty, place making and identity politics, they also reproduce the idea that the camp remains an 'exceptional place' borne out of emergency. Perhaps the image of the camp is best encapsulated in the words of Agamben who argues that the camp is located outside norms of sovereignty and citizenship. He writes 'the camp is the space that opens up when the state of exception becomes the rule' (Agamben 1996: 38). The most direct application of the state of exception in the context of displaced populations has been made in the context of Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon by Hanafi and Long (2010). Hanafi and Long treat the camp as exceptional, in terms of the denial of legal rights to Palestinian refugees and in the absence of coherent governance in the camps with regards to issues of security and everyday civic life.

Nevertheless, the issue of exception has also been criticised as a bias forced on refugees, which limits the possibility of comparing and locating similarities between different groups of forced migrants (Kagan 2009: 419). In a study of asylum and immigration policy in France, Fassin subjects the perspective of the state of exception to further scrutiny. As Fassin points out, camps have a long history and have varied in purpose ranging from concentration camps to housing the displaced. He argues:

The camps correspond to a specific response to problems of public order by instituting small territories of exception. What justifies these local states of exception is an emergency that makes the gathering up of people appear as a practical solution. But the suspension of the usual social norms is accepted only because it is implemented for 'undesirable' subjects. A situation that should be considered intolerable is in fact tolerated because the public order is threatened by

immigrants, enemies, communists, gypsies, Jews, and collaborators (Fassin 2005: 379).

As Fassin argues, there is no single conception of the camp. The camp must be seen in plural terms, with different ideas informing their inception, establishment and governance. There is also a limit to applying ideas of 'exception' in practice, as it is important to locate places such as the camp, in its historical and geo-political context in order to evaluate conditions and status. Another question that emerges is with regards to whose conception of the camp is being drawn upon? Do inmates or residents of a camp also regard it as an exceptional place? What terms do they draw upon to describe the camp? This issue will be addressed further in the ethnography I present in subsequent sections.

Studies on displacement in South Asia are simultaneously similar to and different from post-war western approaches. South Asian experiences suggest that there is a tension between the extraordinary qualities of displacement and its interaction with the mundane and ordinary over time. For example it was observed by Edwards that Afghan refugee camps in Pakistan initially resembled villages when the refugees converted their tents into relatively more permanent mud huts. Nevertheless refugees were unable to carry out their lives as they had done in the past, spending their days queuing at camp offices to collect rations (Edwards 1986:321). Zamindar's monograph on the Partition of the Indian sub-continent provides an account of the formation of Muslim refugee camps in New Delhi in 1947, which had emerged spontaneously. Only after their establishment did they come under the purview and management of the Indian state (Zamindar 2007:34-35). Sanyal's (2009) work on refugee squatter colonies in Calcutta pays special attention to processes of resettlement when refugees coming from East Bengal took over undeveloped land or former barracks abandoned after the war. The

squatters were in conflict with the state and were permitted to settle only after years of negotiation and struggle. In an poignant article, Ray (2002) describes life in the squatter colonies and traces their transformation as refugee areas located on the outskirts into constituents of the city, fully integrated into the urban infrastructure and social life

However other studies on South Asia suggest that the state is often unable to fully govern the lives and movement of unfixed people. As Rolfe (2008) observes, the Indian state, despite the experiences of Partition, has never developed a coherent policy on displacement, and instead periodically enacts ad hoc measures according to each new emergency. Keller (1975) shows in his study of Punjabi refugees in India that many refugees avoided camps or moved out of the camp at the soonest possible moment. A similar situation was observed in the case of East Pakistani refugees who entered India in 1971 following the Bangladesh liberation war. These refugees were beneficiaries of a resettlement project, through which they were placed in camps across different parts of India. While the state facilitated settlement and rehabilitation, many of the refugees ended up leaving the camp sites in search of better places, though not without facing conflict and harassment for challenging the wishes of the state (Elahi 1981, Malick 1999). Rather, the evidence in the South Asian context suggests that displaced persons in the long term, either settle outside the camp or that the camps become organic constituents of towns and cities they are located in proximity to.

In approaching my own data, I would like to return to an observation made by Peteet who argues that camps must be viewed as socially produced places and not merely as objects and tools of policy:

Refugees creatively imposed their own imprint on the space and meaning of the camps...In their stark and bounded physical form, they symbolized colossal loss

and defeat, but they also became a potent political field in which to organise and express national identity and sentiment (Peteeet 2005:94).

The camp thus becomes a place that generates community and identity. This also raises concerns regarding the role and meaning of place. It is significant that the interest in forced migrants and places they are located in coincides with the interest in studies of space and place (see Basso and Feld 1998, Low 1996, Gupta and Ferguson 1992). While I will engage with issues of place in greater detail in the next chapter, I intend to draw on some of the perspectives on place for this chapter as well. As Rodman cautions us, it is imperative to keep in mind that places are socially constructed and hold different meanings for different interests and individuals (1992: 641). Hence the perception of the camps varies from those who reside in the camps to migrants residing outside the camps, government employees of the Relief Commission as well as the Dogras of Jammu, otherwise spoken of as *locals* by the migrants, journalists and other visitors. What is essential to the understanding of the camp as a place is the fact, that like any other place, it is regarded in moral terms (Casey 1998).

A potential source of problems however remains as the camp after all is an instrument of humanitarian action with its origins in policy and in particular political contexts. In understanding and presenting the data I have collected, I have found Hirsch's work on landscape useful for providing an analytical frame. Hirsch distinguishes between two ways in which landscape and place can be understood:

We can consider the first as 'fore-grounded' in order to suggest the concrete actuality of everyday social life ('the way we are now'). The second we can consider as a 'background', in order to suggest the perceived potentiality thrown into relief by our foreground existence ('the way we might be') (Hirsch1995:3).

Hirsch suggests that we must pay attention to immediate realities and pragmatics of the place as inhabited and physically transformed, as well as the discursive formation that underlies the way a place can be approached. The following sections will deal with this interplay of foreground and background in the context of the Pandit migrant camps taking the case of one camp in particular. First, the 'background' of the camp will be revealed through the words and views shared by different informants; non-camp middle class informants, political organisations and their involvement in the camp from the outside, local communities and the camp residents themselves. This material will be used to first construct how the camps are imagined and understood. The following section will discuss the 'foreground', which will be revealed through data collected in the course of participant observation and fieldwork at Purkhu camp.

3.2 The Kashmiri Pandit Migrant Camps

The Kashmiri Pandit Migrant camps were first established in early 1990 as tented colonies to provide immediate and short term shelter for displaced Pandits arriving in the city in large numbers. The camps were established across a number of locations in Jammu, within the city and in the outskirts, and in the towns of Kathua and Udhampur located within the Jammu administrative division. By the time I started fieldwork in 2005, a number of camps had been closed down, leaving four main colonies located in Jammu, which are Muthi, Purkhu, Misriwala and Nagrota Camps. The camps located in the towns of Kathua and Udhampur were dismantled shortly after beginning fieldwork, with populations shifted to Jammu.

The main camps, which vary in size and scale, are located near prominent localities and are well connected to the Jammu city centre by regular public transport. Many of the localities that neighbour the camps are now inhabited by large numbers of Kashmiri

Pandits who have built homes and settled in Jammu. The camps are part of a larger programme of relief and rehabilitation established by the Indian state in 1990, which includes the provision of financial and food aid and the payment of salaries and pensions to migrants who are state employees. This has been followed by other benefits accorded by the governments of a few Indian states, notably the state of Maharashtra which established a reservation policy in engineering colleges and other institutions of professional education for Kashmiri Pandits. The camps are a part of this programme and are thus seen as a practical resource for Kashmiri Pandits.

As mentioned earlier, several camp sites, which were established in 1990, were closed down in 1994 when the period of displacement among the Pandits prolonged. The memory of these former camps may persist in different ways. For example, the population of one camp located near a village called *Jhiri* was shifted to Purkhu camp into the section officially listed as *Jhiri Purkhu*. Not only were the populations of those camps consolidated into the four main colonies, a number of other changes had been initiated. In 1994 the tents were replaced by One Room Tenements (ORT) constructed by the state Relief Commission, which consists of a 9x14 feet room. The ORT, referred to as 'quarters' in everyday parlance by the migrants, constitutes the basic accommodation unit. They are of a standardised design with one window, a kitchen counter, electricity connections and a ceiling fan. There are two types of ORTs constructed; one of brick and cement and another of prefabricated materials with tin roofs. The allocation of ORTs is made upon the ownership of a ration card. Each migrant ration card holder, usually the male head of the household, is allotted a room for his family.

Each camp is divided into 'phases' under the administration of a Camp Commandant who is responsible for the distribution of relief and maintenance of the camp. The phase

numbers are listed according to the time they were established. For example, Purkhu camp Phase one was the first section of the camp to be transformed from tented spaces to rows and columns of ORTs, later followed by Phases two and three. Facilities provided include public toilet blocks, a school, community halls and first aid centres manned by state employed medical personnel. At an initial gaze, the camps represent the only ordered spaces of habitation in Jammu in terms of lay out and standardisation. While the camps were built by the state, residents have made additions to the quarters allotted such as constructing boundary walls to taking up space to form small private compounds, kitchens and bathrooms.

Camp		Number of ORTs	Number of registered families	Area (Kanals)
Muthi Camp	Phase I	501	499	110
	Phase II	499	619	
Mishriwala Camp	Mishriwala	689	877	143.07
	Jhiri Mishriwala	267	458	
Purkhu Camp	GSI Purkhu		199	180
	Jhiri Purkhu		116	
	Phase I	664	646	
	Phase II	132	212	
	Phase III	924	370	
Nagrota	Phase I	408	450	133
	Phase II	268	327	
	Phase III	100	106	
	Nagrota		236	
	Nagrota Indira Nagar	32	32	

Table 1: List of Camps in Jammu City, 2007

Camp	Date of Establishment	Date of Closure
Jhiri	1990	1993
Gajan Sumud	1990	1993
GSI Transport Nagar	1990	2008
Railway Camp	1991	2008
Labour Sarai	1990	2005

Table 2: List of Camps in Jammu established in 1990 and disbanded before 2008⁹

The establishment of the camps in 1990 as an emergency measure was controversial, as the number of people migrating to Jammu exceeded the camp space. To make up for the shortfall in space, many migrants were temporarily allotted shelter in government owned buildings, such as disused educational institutions and offices. One of these places, called the 'Railway camp', due its location near the city Railway Station, accommodated families in two government buildings which were in construction and had been pressed into providing shelter in an unfinished state. Several families continue to occupy space in these buildings and a group of forced migrants from Doda district of Jammu have been accommodated in the premises as well. A community, comprising Hindus and Muslims from Doda had also set up camp along the banks of the Tawi River that cuts through Jammu city, which they established in the mid 1990s. Unlike the Pandit camps, these camps emerged without state support, consequently allowing the camp dwellers to develop the land they occupied by setting up small agricultural plots, which the Pandits have not been able to do. While not far from the city centre, the Doda

⁹ Information regarding the closure of other camps is not available and I draw on oral testimony from Relief Commission staff. The dates of closure coincide with the period when the four major camps in Jammu were rebuilt into ORT colonies with populations consolidated in those camps. The dates coincide with information provided by informants in Purkhu camp who were initially housed in the camps listed. Railway camp was still inhabited during fieldwork and closed after I had left. This information was made available when I returned to Jammu in March 2008 for a period of three weeks. The population of Jhiri Camps is known to have been divided between Purkhu and Mishriwala Camps.

migrant's camp neighbours other camps belonging to labour migrants and Gujjar settlements. What we can see here is that there are already different modes and sites of habitation which are regarded as 'camps' in Jammu.

According to the Relief Commission which is the state department that manages displaced persons in Jammu and Kashmir, there are officially 1,34,376 registered 'Migrants' in Jammu who comprise 39,606 families as enumerated in 2007. However the camps accommodate only 23,567 migrants in 6,036 registered families thus accommodating a minority of all Kashmiri migrants. This basic fact is interesting as the constant reference to the camp gives the impression that all Pandits live in camps. Thus the camp residents are used to 'speak' for the rest, playing into a politics of visibility, accessibility and recognition. Camps thus serve as a 'ware house' for the displaced (Colson 2003: 10) and as a means of 'communicating' identity (Hirschon and Gold 1982: 64-65). Malkki perspicaciously observes that 'the camps made people accessible to a whole gamut of interventions, including study and documentation' (1995a: 500). The Kashmiri Pandit camps thus serve a practical function. A visit to the camps in Jammu provides quick and immediate access to the Kashmiri Pandit issue for itinerant researchers, journalists, government officials and anyone else associated with Kashmir Studies or Policy.

The camps are property of the state having been established and built by the Relief Commission of the state revenue department and managed by Camp Commandants. Residents are allotted ORTs but are not owners of their quarters. Nevertheless, the state does not completely regulate the camp space in terms of access. There are cases of residents who leave the camp and yet retain the ORT registered in their name, which they often pass on to other migrants who were unable to secure a place. The free movement of people allows for the camps to serve as sites of intervention in terms of

limited political activity by Pandit organisations. When I had started fieldwork and made my first visit to a camp, I witnessed a meeting presided by representatives of mainstream political parties who used the opportunity to canvas support from the migrants. Other events which serve as examples of interventions include a health camp conducted by a Kashmiri Pandit organisation which also sought to reach out and form a constituency for their organisation. Another noteworthy event was a release of a soundtrack for the only fiction film about the Kashmiri Pandit exodus for which Purkhu camp was specifically chosen to host the press conference.

The residents however may have objections to the form of access to the camp. One day when I was chatting with Vinod, a shop keeper in Purkhu camp, a middle aged man had stopped by for cigarettes. Vinod introduced me to his customer, Bishamber Nath. Bishamber Nath looked at me disdainfully when I introduced myself and explained why I was there. He lit his cigarette and remarked as he walked away, 'Research. That is all we are good for nowadays!' I was often told by acquaintances that many journalists had come to the camp and published their findings in a matter of days. Many feel that such efforts have had little effect in alleviating the hardships that mark their lives and have become a source of annoyance. When I had attempted to conduct a sample household survey, my informants often appeared reluctant or disinterested in participating. One day while I was having tea with Ratan Lal, a resident and a school master, I spoke of the difficulties in attempting to conduct the survey. He pointed to the door of his quarter, which was usually left open for ventilation. I noticed under the neatly stencilled number which marked his ORT, another number messily scrawled in black paint. Between taking sips from his cup, Ratan Lal explained that the number painted in black was done by a group of surveyors. He was not aware of who they were and where they had come

from. 'People here have become bothered by so many people coming and going. Who knows who they are?' he said.

Different imaginaries are often presented in talking about the camp, which reproduce academic and popular perspectives of camps. Often pre-existing images of camps from the first half of the 20th century inform the ways people talk about the Pandit migrant camps. One prominent activist shared his idea during a meeting for composing a poem that describes the camp as a 'gulag'. Kashmiri Pandit organisations also often draw upon the general vocabulary of the Holocaust, comparing the camps to concentration camps in Europe such as Auschwitz. Articles published from the mid 1990s onwards give prominence to the camps emphasising the hardships they face and often include informants exclusively from the camps. Journalists also draw upon the historic stereotype of the Pandits as elites in writing about camp life:

Muthi camp is just another camp like Purkhu, Nagrotta, Kathua and Battal Balian where more than one lakh (100,000) displaced Pandits have been living after militancy drove them out of their homeland. Bereft of basic amenities, the camps are like ghettos where the once proud Pandit community lives like refugees (Bhat 2003: 16).

These terms of reference are striking due to the moral load, values and history that inform them. To compare the Pandit camps to concentration camps or ghettos is interesting on two counts. At first, a particular quality is imputed to the Pandits camps, suggesting an extreme level of suffering and marginalisation faced by those who inhabit them. The comparisons are also essential for presenting the camps in morally negative terms. Secondly, the uses of historical forms of the camp, which have become recognisable and archetypal, enable communicating the experience to others with ease and directness. The camps are simultaneously the context and the object for articulating

a politics of victimhood, which I shall explore in greater detail later on in the thesis. The camps are therefore employed to speak for the whole community.

Hence alongside the theme of the camp as a warehouse, it must also be mentioned that the camp serves as a political resource as well. Organisations that represent the Kashmiri Pandits actively engage with the camps and also speak of the camps to represent the community. These representatives, who were also displaced, are often well-to-do members of the community located in middle class areas of Jammu and New Delhi. In some respects the political use of camps is not new in South Asia. As Robinson (2004) shows in her study of Kashmiri refugees in Pakistani Administered Kashmir, refugee camps were used by elites to attract humanitarian aid, as well as to recruit members into militant and political organisations. A similar process is seen here with appeals for recognition for the status of victimhood made by Pandit organisation by using the camps and those who inhabit them.

The way the camp is discussed also influences how its inhabitants are seen. One Camp Commandant had warned me that the migrants were 'untrustworthy' and constantly making unnecessary demands, which is a view that resonates with most people in Jammu. Ironically, non-camp middle class migrants share the same view. A Kashmiri Pandit long settled in Bombay who was involved in charity work complained about how dependent camp residents were upon outside support and that they showed very little initiative of their own to improve their lives. Indira, a college lecturer in the Jammu who is a migrant with aristocratic roots from Srinagar, warned me to be careful while I conducted fieldwork:

You must go to the camps first, Muthi, Purkhu and Misriwala. Then you will see. But you should be careful. We have become corrupt. You will see people playing cards, drinking... We have heard some unpleasant stories.

Indigent non-camp migrants in turn envy camp residents who do not have to pay rent or bills for utilities.

The views of non-camp migrants are related to the history of the Kashmiri Pandits being associated with power and status. The stereotype of the Kashmiri Pandit held by others and often by themselves is that of having been well bred elites of the state. What complicates this is socio-economic status. The camp residents in absolute terms are not the poorest people in Jammu. Most heads of households have some years of schooling and were engaged in careers as clerks, peons and small businessmen. But within the Pandit community they constitute the lower socio-economic strata. The camp is therefore a place that marks a fall in status. Particular visible features of camp life are raised by critics such as groups of men who play cards and drink through most of the afternoon as opposed to working. A young Pandit journalist spoke of young people in the camps as behaving like 'slum dwellers'. Neha, a management studies student whose family had migrated from Kashmir, once asked me like many others, if I have visited the camps. She then spoke of how young people, her peers, have become 'corrupt'. 'You see they will become so,' she said 'They share one room with the whole family and hence get to see and learn about, you know, sex.'

Many camp residents also speak of the camp as a negative space. Prem Nath, a shopkeeper had explained that he had sent his son away to attend a boarding school through the help of charity run by a well known Indian guru as the *mahaul* (atmosphere)

is not conducive to raising children properly. Sandeep a young college student who runs a small shop in Purkhu camp talked about the camp as a corrupting influence:

See how children misbehave here. And *larki chhedna* (harassing girls) is so common. All the children come to my shop after school to buy lozenges and toffees and some of them also want to buy *paan masala*. Sixteen year olds are also taking up smoking. It was not like this before.

He shook his head as he spoke, looking onto the main road just outside his shop. Just then, two young boys roared passed in motorcycles who were cursed by two men walking alongside of the road. 'See. What did I tell you!' Sandeep said looking at me with a frown etched on his face.

Camp residents also hold on to the discourse of decline in other ways. Memories of homes and property from the past often emerge as a yardstick with which to compare their conditions in the present. The inadequacies of the ORTs are evident. The ORTs are built with materials that are unable to deal with the varied weather of Jammu especially during summer where the temperature can reach up to 47.c. The ORTs were also built with a 'shelf life' expected to last only for ten years. Built in 1994, the ORTs have technically reached the end of their use in 2004 and yet they are still inhabited. While the camps are provided electricity and water by the state, the supply is erratic which exacerbates conditions in the summer. One informant complained bitterly about having to raise children, live, sleep and entertain visitors like me in a single room which he regarded as 'slow poisoning'. The camps are thus regarded by its residents themselves as a place which does not allow for a life of dignity and respect.

3.3 The Case of Purkhu Camp

Purkhu Camp is one of the four camps in Jammu with a population of 1554 families spread across three phases. Phase 1 and Phase 2, which are the two phases I got to know best, have populations of 699 and 226 families each. Phase 3 is listed to have 429 families. Within Phase 3, there are two other separate administrative phases: 'GSI Purkhu' and 'Jhiri Special Purkhu' with 227 and 130 registered families. By and large residents of the camp speak of only three phases, with the last two phases regarded as being part of phase 3. The total area of land the camps occupies, according to data from the relief commission is listed at approximately 180 *Kanals* which is 22.5 acres¹⁰. However thirty five kanals of land are listed as vacant and meant for Purkhu phase four, which is where multi-storied Two Room Tenement (TRT) blocks have been constructed and currently occupied by migrants shifted from the camps in Kathua and Udhampur. In comparison with other camps, Purkhu Camp is also the largest camp in terms of area and population.

The camp is not only an instrument of humanitarian operations, but is also a locality connected to the larger urban agglomeration of Jammu. Purkhu Camp serves as a terminal point for minibus service routes in Jammu and neighbours pre-existing villages which have also gradually been absorbed into the city. Large sections of land that are in direct proximity to the camp are owned by the local community. While the camp is identified as a Kashmiri Pandit area, residents engage with locals through various ways such as renting shop spaces to negotiating the right to play at a cricket pitch nearby. The first two phases of the camp are separated by a large expanse of space from the third phase, as a privately owned polytechnic institute had been built within the camp, which

¹⁰ One acre is equal to eight kanals. One Kanal consists of twenty marlas. One Marla is equal to 25.3 square metres.

is attended by students outside the area and even from outside the state. The residents of phase two of the camp are often witness to large parties thrown at a banquet hall on the other side of the camp road, complete with fake plastic palm trees next to a shopping complex where several shop spaces are taken on rent by camp residents.



Map 3: Purkhu Camp

The ORTs in Purkhu camp are arranged in parallel lanes alongside a paved road that breaks from the highway and runs through the camp area. This road is plied by a minibus service which connects the entire camp to the city and is provided street lighting at intervals. There are several temples located throughout the camp which were built by the residents and which serve as spaces for social occasions. Many residents have also built shop spaces as attachments to their ORTs or take shop spaces on rent from other residents. These shops deal in a variety of commodities ranging from groceries to garments and electronics. One shop space was even used as a pathology laboratory but which had closed down when the tenant, a resident of Mishriwala camp, moved away from Jammu to look for work in New Delhi. This space was later

converted into a shop used by itinerant Kashmiri Muslim weavers and traders who come to sell handicrafts and textile products in winter.

Each phase of the camp accommodates a Camp Commandant's office and a ration shop for the distribution of food aid. Other facilities provided by the state include community halls for each phase and which are the venues for *pujas*, marriages and events organised by political organisations. The community halls are often provided for free or with minor charges for hosting private events such as weddings. Despite the presence of state employees who ostensibly administer the area, movement is unhindered with people coming and going freely. I personally found it easy to bypass offices of the Camp Commandants, which close for the day usually by late afternoon. To get a better sense of place, I will describe the scene on the Purkhu camp road and the inner lanes. This will be followed by the case of one camp household.

3.3.1 The Road

Purkhu camp is defined by a road that passes through the entire camp, which provides the camp its public space. The road is the site of intense social activity and everyday life and most of the shops, temples and the camp school are located on this road. Groups of middle aged and elderly men sit or squat by the road either chatting or simply looking on. There are a few gatherings of dedicated card players who, despite reputation, do not gamble money. Young men gather and socialise in corners on the road or simply amble along in groups. I was often told by teenage boys and young men that there is little to do except walk up and down the road with friends. Residents visit the various shops on the road to purchase household essentials and food ranging from fruit and produce to even dried vegetables brought from Kashmir. However, the shops also provide corners for people to socialise and it is not uncommon, for small groups of men to spend time gathering by a shop front of a close acquaintance. The road is also the site for

celebrations during festivals such as *Diwali* when residents come out to play with fireworks. It is on this road where the residents of the camp, especially men and boys live out their public lives.

The entrance to Purkhu camp un-worked the understanding I held pertaining to camps and counteracts images presented even by Pandit organisations. While the road provides access to the camp, it is not gated. It is flanked by the fence and the gate of the phase 1 community hall, a confectionery shop, and a vegetable and poultry vendor which are owned by members of the local communities that neighbour the camp. The community hall of phase 1 marks out the beginning of the camp. There is a large open ground attached to the hall with well tended grass and is separated from the road by a fence and a gate. The community hall is used for many occasions such as marriages and public meetings by different organisations inside and outside the camp. But the most common sight during the mornings and evenings is that of small groups of elderly men and on the weekends, teenage boys sitting in groups and chatting while younger children play furious games of catch. After the hall, there is a wide cemented tiled lane and the ORT lanes begin from this point which is used by itinerant peddlers and fish mongers.

There are a number of shops run by Kashmiri Pandits before the ORT lanes begin. The first shop belongs to Bhushan Lal who sells household essentials such as salt, detergent powder, cooking oil and kerosene. There is no shop counter and rather Bhushan Lal sits on the floor of the shop space. Whenever I passed by his shop and if he saw me, he would wave or nod. However whenever I stopped to talk to him at his shop he would all of a sudden start concentrating on his work, tend to his accounts in a flimsy note book and on one occasion shut his eyes to pretend to be asleep. He had once dismissed his shop earnings as meagre and that the shop was essentially 'time pass', a common refrain among most shop keepers in the camp.

The feel of the road in Purkhu camp depends upon the time of day. In the morning the road bustles with residents shopping for vegetables and household essentials, meeting to chat or attending to card games. The walls of the quarters facing the road are often painted by residents, though they bear marks of age and defacement with numerous notices and posters pasted on them. These notices vary from advertisements of products and shops in Jammu to announcements made by political organisation with different messages. The political organisations which put up posters range from prominent Pandit organisations to camp specific associations. The spaces outside larger shops are often the equivalent of street corners and are preferred places for men to sit and chat. One of the most well known shops belongs to Kishore Lal, a migrant from a village near the prominent resort of Gulmarg. Kishore Lal had invested in a shop space attached to his ORT which is the first in the lane next to the road. It is one of the largest shops in the camp stocking household essentials and grain. The shop is thriving one and I have seen calendars gifted by him with the name of his shop on the walls of different households in the camp. Many of Kishore Lal's middle aged peers come to the shop to sit on a concrete bench built into the shop facade to pass their time.

Automobiles, ranging from minibuses plying the route from the camp to the city centre to cars and scooters, regularly move through the road raising trails of dust and exhaust. Construction crews, usually migrants from Eastern and Central India, can be seen walking in groups with their tools after providing renovation work on an ORT or for other projects. By the afternoon, there is a brief surge of activity with young school children rushing home unattended or accompanied by a parent, or more than often a grandparent. With grandparents there is a greater possibility to stop at a shop for sweets before heading home. The road gradually empties as shops close for lunch. The only shop I have seen open in the afternoon is run by a Kashmiri Pandit who takes the shop

space on rent and lives outside the camp. In the summer, the afternoon languidness is exacerbated by temperatures hovering in the upper forties. On one occasion, local newspapers reported a day time temperature of 47.5.celsius. To be out in the summer at this time means either you have work of critical importance or you are foolish.

By four o' clock in the afternoon, the road gradually returns to life. People leave their ORTs and start gathering in twos, larger groups or even stay alone and apart from others, standing or squatting by the roadside. Card games and conversations left behind resume while other men simply stand or sit by the road looking on. Shop keepers raise their shutters and doors for business. Children attending schools outside the camp run home to quickly wash up and have a small meal before heading out to be with their friends. Women and girls can also be seen about walking up and down the road on their way to shop, to visit friends or relatives in their ORTs in the lanes. Seldom do they stop to socialise on the road.

As the intensity of the sun begins to diminish, more people venture onto the road. Groups of adolescent boys and young men walk about like flaneurs or gather near the barbers shop in phase 1 under posters of popular Hindi film actors. In fact, several shops and businesses, such as the barber's saloon, are owned run by outsiders while the butcher's shop is run by a Muslim. The helpers in the confectionary, which is owned by a Pandit, are not Kashmiri but Hindus from the mountains north of Jammu. I was rebuked when I asked a friend if the people working in that shop were Pandits. I was sternly told, 'They are not. We do not do such work, we are Brahmins after all.' As I have mentioned the Kashmiri Pandits are a community of Saraswat Brahmins. As Madan (1994) observed in rural Kashmir in the late 1950s, Kashmiri Pandits desisted from engaging in polluting professions such as barbers, butchers and other work that involved physical labour and incommensurate to their caste status. The fact that shops

providing such services are run by outsiders indicates that they have tried to maintain their notion of status based on who they are. By twilight, residents who work in the city can be seen walking down the road from the highway while minibuses continue to ply the camp road. By nightfall, the residents return indoors to have their dinner and watch television, as long as there is no power cut. As a shopkeeper had once remarked, the road made the camp 'feel like a town'.

3.3.2 The Inner lanes

While the road provides the setting for men and adolescent boys to gather and spend time, women are more likely to gather and spend time in the inner lanes that branch off from the road. It is common to see groups of women sitting on the door steps of their compounds chatting with neighbours across the lane. However during summer months as the sun sets, most residents gather in the lanes in spite of the stench from the open drains as it is cooler outside than in the ORTs. The lanes also provide younger children a safe place to play. Small plates of food offered to deceased family members are left in corners against the walls which are eaten by stray dogs and birds are a common sight.

Each lane accommodates approximately three to five ORT blocks on either side with four ORTs each. The position of one's ORT matters. Usually the residents allotted ORTs at the end of each lane are more fortunate as they were able to take up much more space when walls were erected. This allowed them to construct additional rooms such as store rooms, kitchens, bath spaces and in a few cases, toilets, keep plants and incorporate trees that had not been cut down when the ORTs were constructed. In any case these modifications are an on-going process conducted whenever required or when permitted by finances. While the residents have erected walls to take in more space and attain a measure of privacy, they are usually erected next to each other forming a continuous boundary of dull red and greying brick, interspersed with tin sheet doors.

Some families, which include three generations, were able to have allotted a second ORT for an elderly member receiving a pension and hence able to take up much more space and to accumulate resources. Household sizes are by and large small which has been calculated to be 4.5 persons per household (Kaul 2005: 80). A small sample survey I had conducted of forty households also brought up the figure of four members per household.

The allotment of ORTs does not follow regional distinction and few informants reported living in close proximity to former neighbours in Kashmir. Some have even remarked that it was only after the migration, that they had met Kashmiri Pandits from other districts. One of my closest informants who came from Kupwara district in North Kashmir revealed that Pandits from Southern Kashmir, where the largest concentration of Pandits was to be found before the conflict, did not even know that other Pandits lived in Kupwara. Thus the period of 1990 and after has seen the forging of new relations.

The camp provides a measure of anonymity as well on different occasions. A police constable who had come to visit and verify the address of one migrant in the camp had a difficult time as no one could direct him to the correct ORT. Whenever I tried to follow up on political organisations in the camp my informants were often genuinely unaware about such activities. Similarly the question of sharing and cooperation seemed difficult to discuss. My acquaintances often state that no one in the camp shared as they did not have enough for themselves. For example, water taps were originally intended to be shared between every four ORTs. Due to constant disputes, all residents eventually arranged for their own water connections. At one level this can be seen as exceptional. Many speak of a lack of community in the camp and compare it to an imagined view of harmonious community life in the past with neighbours, most of whom were Muslim.

This appears to be acute for those from rural areas. Nevertheless, in practice and in spite of the demands of living in a high density urban context, people have forged close relations with neighbours over the last fifteen years. People visit each other's ORTs regularly and leave the gates to their compounds unlocked with little fear of theft within the lane.

3.3.3 The Bhatt Household

The purpose of this section is to give a sense of how life has been remade after displacement and to suggest how Pandits have turned a place of exception into one that is a constituent of ordinary life. The Bhatt family have been residents of Purkhu camp since 1994 after being relocated from Gajansumad camp. The household consists of Mohan Lal, his wife Priyadarshini, his elderly father Amber Nath and his son Rohit. His elder son Ramesh is a policeman posted in Srinagar. The family had been allotted two ORTs; one registered under Mohan Lal and the other Amber Nath. The entrance to their ORTs is through a plain tin sheet door which is never locked. The doors of the ORTs are locked only if no one is home. As they have two ORTs located at the end of the lane close to the road, they have been able to incorporate a lot of space into their homestead. The compound of their ORTs is also shaped by the walls they have erected, which also enabled them to incorporate a tree. Like other migrants, they have invested in the homestead by cementing the entire compound ground and constructing a kitchen, store room, a toilet and bath space and water tank.

The floors of the ORTs, as seen in many other households, are covered by a thick red and white woven cloth. There is a large single bed propped against the wall with another wooden cabinet on top on which the television set is placed. On the other side of the room is a large steel wardrobe, a set of shelves and the refrigerator. A wooden

storage space has been built by the family just above the wardrobe. The walls of the ORT are covered and decorated with posters and pictures of various kinds. Most of these pictures consist of depictions of gods and goddesses from the Hindu Pantheon taken from old calendars with the pages of dates removed.

Usually the day begins at six o' clock in the morning when Mohan Lal and Rohit both conduct *puja* in the compound. They start in the *thokurkoth* (place where images of Hindu deities are kept) in the kitchen and then proceed to the compound to pour water from a copper vessel into a small patch of carefully tended plants. The family then sits down in the kitchen for breakfast. After breakfast, Priyadarshini cooks some lunch for Mohan Lal to take to work as he gets ready to leave. Rohit is usually indoors at this time or goes out to run some errands though he is also responsible for filling the water tank immediately after waking up. Priyadarshini then prepares tea served in a brass cup for Amber Nath. The compound and the verandah then are swept of the leaves that have fallen during the night. The cleaning up of the compound can almost take an hour. Usually Priyadarshini does this work though Rohit will sometimes help.

Priyadarshini is clearly the busiest person in the household, working till lunch time. After washing clothes she has her own bath and then prepares lunch. Lunch on a daily course consist of rice with spinach, karam (kohlrabi) and rajma (kidney beans). However Priyadarshini would often prepare certain delicacies such as nadru (lotus stems), and pumpkin chutney with walnuts and apple curry. Usually the preparation of special dishes coincided with visits from Rahul, Rohit's brother, who would arrive with packets of nadru from the Dal Lake and karam and pumpkins from Kashmir. Once lunch is prepared, Amber Nath is served first in his ORT. Later Priyadarshini and Rohit have lunch together before Rohit leaves for his part time job at a Computer training institute.

Lunch is followed by a moment of break for Priyadarshini. The afternoon is spent watching afternoon soap operas. However I noticed that the afternoon is the only time Priyadarshini gets to watch television programmes uninterrupted. If there is a cricket match, the television is left switched on to the sports channels, which is the case for nearly all camp households. In the evenings, when Mohan Lal is home, the Kashmiri state broadcast service is tuned into with news and other programmes in Koshur and Urdu. Kashmiri programmes are popular especially among older people. It is common to see elderly men like Amber Nath sit with radios held close to their ears listening to broadcasts from Radio Kashmir and concentrating on news bulletins usually pertaining to number of people killed during the day. By the late afternoon the power to the camp is cut, which is always met with curses especially during summer. During the weekdays, Rohit leaves for work at this time and hence this is the only time of respite for Priyadarshini. Amber Nath is also fast asleep by then. But by around four o' clock, the electricity usually returns announced by the television and the rumble of the ceiling fans and the air cooler installed on the window of the ORT, which are usually left switched on as seen in nearly every household I have visited.

Mohan Lal returns from work in the evening always worn out. He first washes his face by the compound tap before entering and then changes into kurta and pyjamas inside in front of other members of the households. For Mohan Lal, this lack of privacy is one of the problems of their present situation and which he always pointed out to me. While everyone else drinks tea from regular ceramic tea cups, Mohan Lal is also served tea in a brass cup called a *khosh*. After tea, he then leaves to sit outside on the road to chat with neighbours. Sometimes Priyadarshini goes out to someone else's ORT to chat or for some shopping. But often she remains at home and tends to guests and visitors. Most visitors to their household are women who usually stay for a short while as they have

return to look after their families. Once in a while their immediate neighbour visits them with whom they enjoy a close relationship. When Mohan Lal and Priyadarshini were supervising Chattisgarhi labourers who were redoing the cement of their compound, their neighbour came to help since he used to have a *thekedari* (construction work) business in Kashmir.

The problem shared by almost all households in the camp is power cuts. Power cuts are a great inconvenience in the summers since the fans and air cooler cannot be switched on. Furthermore, for women the power cuts prevent them from catching up with the evening soap operas. During weekdays, Rohit returns in the evening and everyone sits down for a meal and to watch television, if there is electricity. The choice of programming varies from a Hindi language cable channel to state broadcasts. But after dinner and a session in front of the television, all the members of the household begin to prepare for bed. While Mohan Lal, Ramesh or any guest (including myself) sleep on the bed, Rohit and Priyadarshini pull out a mattress from the steel cupboard which they cover with a bed sheet and then a thick duvet. By eleven o'clock they are asleep, leaving only a small light bulb on their verandah switched on. Not a sound can be heard from outside except for the occasional howl of a stray dog.

3.4 Conclusion

This chapter has examined the Kashmiri Pandit migrant camp in Jammu as an object and a context for examining the experience of forced migration among the Pandits. I first initiate the discussion from the standpoint of camps being associated with zones or sites of exception. I discuss how this has persisted not only in the work of researchers from various disciplines, including Anthropology, but also how it informs popular imagination and discourse about camps for forced migrants themselves. However, the

ethnography I have presented suggests that the Pandits have converted these sites of exception into lived organic place.

It is not my intention to belittle the problems camp residents face. But by contrasting what is seen from what is said, I show that the discourse around the camps misses out on the experience of rebuilding life after an event of trauma. While the engagement of the state and outsiders and the general response of camp residents to outside interventions suggest a sense of helplessness, the transformation of the camp also demonstrates that the migrants have responded in some form to their situation. I also show the importance of situating the discussion of the camp in a specific context. While the camps were born in an emergency, over time they have become integrated into the everyday life of Jammu city. People live in the camp and new members become part of the camp following birth and marriage while others leave in cases of death or in search of better opportunities. Hence at one glance the camp as a transient space, subject to control and intervention, has eventually become ordinary.

The discussion of camps and other places inhabited by forced migrants, in terms of exceptionality or as ordinary poses significant problems. The exceptional and the ordinary are treated in a bipolar way, representing two extreme points of departure for analysis. A way out of the limitations imposed by this binary can be seen in Das's study of communities affected by violence. For Das, the distinction between the event of violence and the ordinary is blurred. The event or the cause of violence and consequent pain and suffering persists in everyday life (Das 2000). Rather, she asserts that the sphere of the ordinary and the everyday provides the site where violence and suffering is to be understood (Das 2007: 7).

If we apply this approach to the case of forced migration and places such as camps, the ethnographic evidence implies that a straightforward statement of exceptionality cannot be presumed. However it is also essential to consider the different voices involved. For the anthropologist, the binary of the exception and the ordinary may be easily contested in analysis. But for communities of forced migrants, the situation will be different. Even if there is a semblance of everyday life, for many of my informants, the camp and for that matter life in displacement, is not what ideal ordinary life should be. As I have mentioned earlier, the camps are criticised and compared unfavourably with homes and properties in the past, which will be examined in greater detail in the following chapter. However ordinary the camp as a place may be seen, it is not what forced migrants themselves expect or approve of and especially for those whose memory of dispossession and loss are still very recent.

As Das perspicaciously observes, the eventful (or the exceptional) becomes significant and distinct from the ordinary, when the 'grammar of the ordinary' fails, and when 'one's access to context is lost' (2007: 7, 9). For the Pandits, the camps represent a morally negative place, subject to a measure of eventual control by the state. It is a place they have been allotted but which they do not legally own. The morally laden ways of talking about the camp, especially through the existing vocabularies from past experiences elsewhere, provide the ability for the Pandits to represent one aspect of their experience of displacement, when other ways prove difficult to access. Yet, residents of Purkhu camp also recognise their role in transforming place and slowly getting on with the business of life. Rather than follow a neat distinction between exception and ordinary, the two should be seen as complementary. Hence life in the camp is both

ordinary and the exceptional¹¹. I will discuss the aspect of life lived in the past in terms of home in further in the following chapter.

Another problem, faced in understanding the camp is that the ordinariness of the place implies a sense of familiarity. References to concentration camps work because of their familiarity. Research on experiences in the partition suggests similarities with the Pandits, suggesting a continuation, not a rupture, in the narrative of displacement in India. But often, familiarity can be manifest in other ways. The scene from road presented in this chapter suggests that the road is a lively space for sociality in ways that are not dissimilar from studies on street life elsewhere in India and other parts of the non-western world (Edensor 1998, Drummond 2000). It can also be argued that the setting of the Pandits camps is similar to studies of low income urban areas and slums in India which have been sites of competing claims based on citizenship (Appadurai 2002, Chatterji 2005). How is Purkhu migrant camp to be distinguished then from other low income areas in urban India?

There are two other issues I want to return to as I conclude. First of all the camp is an important economic and political resource. It is a component of the overall relief and rehabilitation project of the Indian state for all people who have been displaced by violence in Kashmir. While many criticise the relief efforts, few are willing to forgo whatever benefits they receive from the state. As I have pointed out, the Pandits argue that they, unlike Kashmiri Muslims, are supporters of the Indian state and had been forced to leave Kashmir because they are supporters of the Indian state's claim upon Kashmir. Hence it is the obligation of the Indian nation-state to assist them. In the process the camp also becomes a political resource for Kashmiri Pandit organisations as

¹¹ I am grateful to Dr. Michael Scott for pointing this out.

they are tangible evidence of loss and imperfect compensation. The camp is the site in which the politics of victimhood of the Pandits can be enacted and played out for outsiders. However these organisations are primarily led by well-to-do Pandits who live outside the camp. While they too have been displaced and also share an experience of loss and humiliation, many have been able to achieve a certain measure of status in exile and hence do not experience some of the hardships camp residents face. My non-camp informants in Jammu and especially in New Delhi would constantly begin any discussion using the camp and yet actually knew very little about them. Often they would see me as an informant to give them an idea of camp life. In the process the camp and its residents have become iconic of Pandit suffering. Yet the residents have very little say in the way they are iconicised.

The other issue I want to conclude with is the tension between permanence and impermanence. From the data present, it is evident the Pandits have remade life as other forced migrants in India have done in the past. As authors such as Chakrabarty (1999), Sanyal (2009) and Ray (2002) show in the case of squatter colonies established by East Bengali Hindu refugees in Calcutta, refugees took over land forcibly and established settlements deemed illegal at first by the Indian state. Eventually these colonies were accepted by the state, legally incorporated in the city's infrastructure and transformed into a constituent of the city. The camps in Jammu have followed a similar trajectory but there are some differences.

First of all, the camps were seen as a temporary measure by the state and by the Pandits. Most migrants had expected that their sojourn in Jammu would last only for a few months thinking that the Indian security forces would eventually law and order following which they would return home. The political establishment often addresses the Pandits by promising to arrange for their return to Kashmir. Hence, while many

have chosen to settle in Jammu, others in the camps look towards a future elsewhere, waiting to see what happens before committing to any plans. This may explain why many choose to stay in the camp even if they find life in the camp hard. Escape also incurs costs. Many of the modifications carried in the camp have been funded by disposing of property in Kashmir, but most of my informants claim that the funds thus acquired are inadequate for time being to secure land or property of their own in Jammu or New Delhi. While many young people in the camp speak of the possibility of escape through education quotas they are entitled to in Maharashtra, their fathers often point out that the quotas do not guarantee financial assistance, making the prospect of leaving as a student unaffordable or requiring significant sacrifice. Those who have tried to leave the camp and the city in search of employment elsewhere have often had to return to Jammu due to unemployment or to look after elderly family members unable to live on their own.

To reiterate, the camps were established by the state and residents do not own the ORTs in spite of modifications they have invested in. This became significant in the period after I finished fieldwork. In 2008 the state declared that a new colony is to be established in the outskirts of Jammu consisting of multi-storied buildings of Two Room Tenements (TRTs). It is expected that camp populations will be shifted to this colony to be followed by the dismantling of the existing camps. During a short return trip undertaken in 2008 I observed that the TRTs have received a mixed response. Priyadarshini for example did not look forward to leaving the camp as they were able to modify their ORTs and take in more space, which would be impossible in the TRT. Muthi camp had already been dismantled by then and families who moved into these apartments were unhappy when official notices put up declaring that it was illegal to make modifications to their new quarters. Yet as a young migrant had pointed out, the

TRTs are an improvement, providing attached bathrooms. He commented, 'Once we move in I can call my friends from college over as I can say I live in flat. Not a camp'. Hence there remains a tension. On one hand, permanence has been achieved by people who live in a camp and who see the camp as a town and have sought to reclaim life of a certain standard of living. The new TRTs offer a new form of permanence as well. On the other hand, for the Kashmiri Pandits, the camp renders the lives of those displaced to remain marked by impermanence.

Chapter 4

Dealing with dislocation: Making Home and Place in Jammu

It was the time of the evening power cut as I sat with Rajinder and his family in their One Room Tenement (ORT) in Muthi Camp. The only pieces of furniture in the room consisted of a large cupboard covered in flowing canvas and a television set. Like most Kashmiri households, the floor was covered in a light cotton sheet. The windows and the door were left open for ventilation through which the receding rays of the sun filled the room with an ephemeral copper tint. I chatted with Rajinder and his brother-in-law who had come on a visit, while Rajinder's wife tended to their son, Nausheen, who was six months old. As we talked, Nausheen crawled on all fours to the dictaphone, which I had placed between us and then stopped to stare at me. Rajinder's brother-in-law laughed mildly and reached out to pick up his nephew. He placed Nausheen on his lap and said 'Look. He is trying to make friends. Maybe this friend may help him in the next migration'.

I start with this account as it encapsulates the dilemmas faced by my informants. Rajinder's family is fortunate in comparison to many other families. They have shelter and a network of relatives and neighbours. Rajinder is also employed with a company in Jammu and Kashmir and a volunteer with local organisations in Jammu. Yet the sense of insecurity of having to 'leave' or 'migrate' again at any moment, as opposed to being settled, persists.

In the previous chapter I introduced the question of place with regards to forced migration, examining politics and everyday life in the context of the Pandit migrant camp colonies. This chapter will continue the discussion, drawing on data collected from the camps and from informants located outside the camps in Jammu. Various

studies have attempted to treat migration as constitutive of everyday life. Communities are therefore defined by movement as opposed to place. However I intend to examine the relationship of migration and place in the context of forced migrants, by focusing on the 'meaning of place in a world of movement' (Turton 2005). The Pandits have remade life in exile in objective and material terms according to varying levels of success. However there is a tension between their objective reality as a community shaped by displacement and their desire for rootedness. Hence I argue that while communities may be shaped by movement, they may crave and express greater value in the security place and fixed location offers.

I will begin the chapter with a discussion of ideas and practices of home held among the Pandit migrants. The notion of home is critical to understanding the relationship to place for forced migrants. However the attempts for Pandits to make place in Jammu is mediated by conditions of the present and nostalgia for life in Kashmir. Nostalgia not only serves to devalue the present for the Pandits, affecting their ability to consider Jammu as home, but also represents the expectations and ideals that define home for them. Hence home is not only to be understood as a physical place, but it is also to be assessed according to considerations of quality, dignity and social relations within the community and with other communities. I will also show that memories of home and life in the past are fluid and subject to generational variation. The chapter will also discuss the ways Pandits have tried to deal with Jammu by also stating a claim and right to the city.

4.1 Home and Attachment

Irrespective of their class and location- in a camp colony or a house in the middle class localities of Jammu- the Pandit migrants appear to get on with life with varying degrees

of success. While a large number of migrants do not work, many have secured employment in different fields ranging from teaching, clerical work in offices to shop assistants. Many have also started small businesses and shops. Western bio-medical professionals restarted their practices in Jammu and sometimes attract patients from the Kashmir valley. Pandit children attend schools and colleges in pursuit of an education. Visits to places outside Jammu such as New Delhi and Mumbai are often made by those with connections, resources or simply in search of something better. The migrants also comprise a significant section of the population of Jammu since their arrival in 1990. Statistics aside, the impact of migrants on the Jammu cityscape can be seen immediately with large suburbs emerging in the span of sixteen years as pointed out by numerous Kashmiris and Jammu residents.

Yet under this seeming sense of normalcy, it is impossible not to notice feelings of insecurity and bitterness that lurk underneath. The palpable mood of insecurity that affects all Pandits is tied to a sense of feeling unsettled and lacking attachment to home in exile. There is also a practical dimension to this feeling, especially with regard to families who have lived in exile since 1990 and yet have not been able to invest in a home of their own. There are also the fears of a never-ending conflict spilling into Jammu and continuing socio-economic insecurity. However, even for those who have been able to make a secure investment in a house, home cannot be taken for granted. As Ramesh, a Pandit in his thirties who works as an executive for an MNC in New Delhi had put it, 'I have a house in Jammu. But it is a house, not a home.'

According to Malkki, migrant communities have often been a subject of interest and consternation for nation-states. Much of this concern she asserts, emerges from the tendency to subject nations and communities to a 'sedentary metaphysic' (Malkki 1992), which involves fixing communities to a particular territory. Their presence in any other

territory in the process is deemed almost unnatural. Migrants in general and displaced populations in particular violate such a schema (Malkki 1992:31-33). Other writers such as Clifford (1997), Gupta and Ferguson (1992), Rapport (2002) and Rapport and Dawson (1998) have also criticised the tendency to 'root' communities into one place. Instead, they argue that movement and travel, as opposed to rootedness, define community. One could argue that a community such as the Kashmiri Pandits, like any other displaced community, lead lives marked by migration and defined by movement. The English word 'migration' itself figures in any conversation in Hindi and Koshur. However while the Pandits recognise the significance of a world characterised by movement, it is a world they are uncomfortable with.

Theorists of migration have not been beyond criticism. For an author such as Kibraeb, it is important to recognise that the ability to migrate and travel varies for different categories of migrants. He argues that such approaches overlook the fact that in actual practice, rights and entitlements are still associated with territory and that movement across territories is heavily curtailed by repressive migration regimes (Kibraeb 1999:387-388). Furthermore forced migrants themselves, such as the Pandits may not respond to the notion of migration as positive. Displaced Kashmiri Pandits are unlike refugees, as they are still within the borders of Jammu and Kashmir, and hence retain their status as state subjects. This has resulted in the Pandits being within their nation-state of origin and yet, outsiders to a place like Jammu. Many migrants argue that they are 'refugees in their own country'. As I have mentioned earlier in this thesis, the Kashmiri Pandits share a history of migration. Historical studies of Kashmiri Pandits present a section of the community as active seekers of new opportunities outside Kashmir from the late 18th century onwards (Pant 1987, Sender 1988). However the displaced Pandits present themselves as people who are not 'travellers'. They are a

people who had homes and well settled lives in the past as opposed to seeking shelter in the present wherever it may be available.

The notion of home has also been subject to discussion and debate. Home may be seen as enabling a person to have an identity and be understood by others (Kateb 1991: 37). Rapport and Dawson regard the notion of 'home' as a fluid and ambiguous concept, but also insist that it is a marker of identity for individuals and communities (1998:9). Basu argues that home may be notional for some but a material reality for others (2001: 346). A more inclusive definition is provided by Blunt and Dowling who argue that 'home is both a physical location and a set of feelings...a process of creating and understanding forms of dwelling and belonging' (2006: 254). An incisive approach to issues of home, place and migration is proposed by Jansen and Lofving who suggest that these three issues must be seen as an inter-linked. They argue that the 'struggle for home' involves a simultaneous play of displacement and emplacement, where 'home' relates to the power to 'emplace oneself' (Jansen and Lofving 2009: 13).

However emplacement is a process fraught with difficulties caught in the interstices of agencies such as the state and negotiation between communities at a local level. For instance Siu (2007) discusses the difficulties faced by Chinese rural labour migrants who have to negotiate their lives between strict surveillance of migrants by the state and hostile urban residents. Similarly Shah's (2006) study of casual seasonal labour migration from the Indian state of Jharkhand, reveals that the participants in migratory flows regard migration as liberating, while state agents and activists regard it as a problem for issues of governance and political movements.

The establishment of place by migrants as settlers is a gradual process, often unplanned, as migrants are often initially sojourners who plan to return to their homelands after

some point in time (Anwar 1979, Gardner 1995). Yet as Osella and Osella (2000) show, migrants from South India to the Persian Gulf States are able to make home away from home for a short period of time, without compromising final settlement and a return home to their place of origin after a period of time. Ballard's (2003) study of Mirpuri migrants from Pakistan to the United Kingdom portrays a community that successfully creates home in both countries. Studies therefore indicate that a wide range of possibilities are demonstrated by different groups of migrants. Hence there is a need to also understand how home is made in terms of forging an attachment to place.

Based on his study of the Mursi in Ethiopia, Turton argues that displacement is not only about loss of place but also entails a struggle for making a place in the world and that movement and place are connected in a mutually productive relationship (2005: 258). He argues that factors such as the state policy, as well as economic imperatives, can influence and limit the agency exercised by community to emplace themselves (Turton 2005: 270-271). Novak also argues for the importance of considering migration, place and identity as interlinked. Using the case of Afghan refugees in Pakistan, Novak emphasises the need to identify different 'domains' and 'regimes' through which migrants are incorporated into a place (2007:557). Hence the experience of refugees officially registered with humanitarian agencies in the 1980s during the Soviet involvement in Afghanistan will differ from Afghans who came to Pakistan later, entering as illegal migrants.

The process of emplacement for Kashmiri Pandits raises similar concerns. While Pandits have been able to make place and home in some form, their efforts have been subjects to the policy of the Indian state as seen with the camp. Yet it will be evident that the efforts in place making and developing an attachment to place are mediated by considerations of socio-economic differentiation among the Pandits, the obligations

associated with interpersonal relationships, emotions, relations with local communities in Jammu and nostalgia and memory of life in homes left behind in Kashmir.

4.2 A History of Settlement

One of the ways I will enter this discussion is by accessing a history of settlement among Kashmiri Pandits who were settled in the emergency camp colonies located in the outskirts of the Jammu. The history of Purkhu Camp provides a sense of how some Pandits settled into the Jammu cityscape. Ratan Lal, a retired school teacher who continued his career teaching at the camp school, had revealed to me that the land was originally the site of a Muslim village until the time of Indian independence. The earliest residents of the area were attacked during the communal rioting of the Indian Partition and those who survived had crossed over to Pakistan as *Mohajirs*¹². Ratan Lal also mentioned that the land on which the camp was established was state property and had been open to development only with the establishment of the camp in 1990.

My interest in the history of the camp first came in the form of a ghost story. I had been told by several residents of phase one and phase two of the camp that spirits occasionally visited the camp at night. However the identities of the spirits vary. According to one informant the ghosts were the spirits of the Muslims who lived in the village on which the camp is now located. He explained that the ghosts existed because the previous residents of the area did not receive their last rites and hence were caught in limbo. My informant Satish rationalised that people may believe in ghosts because the area was not good, which introduces the way many residents treat the camp. This also takes us back to the tendency to treat the camp in morally negative terms. His peer

¹² The word used to refer to refugees in Muslim societies in South Asia. Jammu was affected by the communal riots during the partitioning of the India due to its proximity to Punjab and the new border dividing India and Pakistan.

Raju on the other hand affirmed the presence of the ghost and once told me 'I have heard him. Sometimes at night you can hear a loud sound 'dham dham' on the roof. At first he used to disturb us. But he does not do anything else.' Mrs. Bhatt, a resident of phase 1, insisted the ghosts came from the cremation ground located next to the camp and said 'They (the ghosts) should be thanked along with the snakes that used to live in the bushes all around. They had given us space to settle here.'

Both Ratan Lal and Kishore Lal directed me to Prem Nath, one of the first settlers in the area, who came from Kupwara in north Kashmir. A friendly and jovial man, Prem Nath lives in phase one and rents a shop space attached to one of the non-Kashmiri houses in the camp area, selling ready-made garments. The account he shared amidst dealing with customers, covered a wide range of themes. He explained that the camp was first established with rows of tents in 1990. As he shared his account, a number of qualities began to emerge:

Then in 1994 the Sarkar (government) built 'pigeon holes' (i.e. the ORTs). A 'kabutar khana' (Pigeon aviary), in which you cannot even keep buffaloes. The government set up tents in a place where men would be afraid to go alone. When they erected tents here we saw nothing but snakes and scorpions. We would have to do this every night (he swung his hands and slapped the desk he sat behind wildly to demonstrate). Snakes would come out of the ground in thousands. The comfort of the night would be ruined. It was jungle, all the way to where we are sitting now. When we would go out to urinate, we would take a large stick and lantern...This would be around the time of 1990, 91, 96 and 94. The locals would say that a *Churel*¹³ lived here. The locals would come

¹³ A female malevolent spirit

here to graze their buffaloes but after sunset no one would dare to come since the Churel will be prowling.

The image of the Purkhu camp area as a former wilderness that was gradually transformed into a place of habitation is further accentuated in other accounts shared by residents. One of the most commonly encountered stories tells of the difficulties of living in tents during '*aandhis*' or dust storms, which are common during summer. According to Asha, families would hold on to the support beams of the tents to prevent them from collapsing from the storm winds. There were also many 'snake stories'. Many informants would comment that the land on which camp stood was a prime habitat for snakes. Priyadarshini recalled that on one occasion after the ORTs were built, a snake had entered their quarters while she was asleep and had bitten her. Ratan Lal also recalled that once his daughter had interrupted him when he was taking class in the camp school asking him to return to their tent as quickly as possible. On arrival, he saw a snake in the middle of the tent. Such stories accentuate the view of Jammu as being a wilderness and lacking the quality desired in a secure place.

Pandits also raise the weather and climate of Jammu in conversations. A common way of speaking of problems in general is to discuss the heat during a summer. The inadequacy of the tents in providing respite from the summer sun would be pointed out. The ORTs, while seen as a somewhat of an improvement, are regarded as a continuation of their hardships. Many people pointed to the corrugated tin roofs of the ORTs and the inadequacy of these materials to provide proper shelter from the heat. These recollections were always remembered with a wry smile suggesting a mix of amusement and disbelief. When I had visited Kishore Lal, he also recounted such problems faced at the time. However during the conversation at his quarters, his wife

and daughter who were present during our conversation sniggered at each recollection eventually commenting, 'who knows how we managed to survive at that time?'

Shortly after my arrival, I was told by many migrants about an elderly man who had come with his family in 1990 to Jammu and who died shortly after. As I was told by many informants, 'He had gone to the bank and had to wait in a queue for a long time. At the end of the day he sat down on a chair and laid his head against the wall, and then *bas*, he died there and then! Because of heatstroke!' Community organisations have also referred to such experiences and have attributed mortality due to factors such as snake bites and heatstroke due to exposure to the sun. The documentation project by the Panun Kashmir Movement (PKM) also describes the living conditions of the camp in great detail. The conditions of overcrowding, where entire families were forced into single rooms, are regarded as having had 'terrible consequences' for a community, especially since the Kashmiris were unused to the environment of Jammu which has been described as 'entirely different and hostile' (PKM 2004: 60-63).

However the sense of unsettledness becomes truly apparent in the case of Madan Lal who lives with his family in Purkhu Camp. Madan Lal talked about providing for the future, especially since his eldest son was getting married. He then revealed that he had already purchased a plot of land in Jammu. He explained that just as his father had left him land which he claims to still partly own in Kashmir, it was his duty to leave something for his sons. He pointed out that the quarters his family had been allocated and which he has invested in over the years, is ultimately not his property but belongs to the state. This brought home to me that the camp was never place of settlement despite the years, but a place of transit.

4.3 The Interfering Past: Home in the past, home in the present

When we were in our village in Kashmir, everything was fine. We had our farm land, everything. We had our families. We were with the Muslims and the Muslims were with us. At our marriages there would be more Muslims (than Pandits). Then who knows what happened. Many Kashmiris have died here. Some had heart attacks, some had cancer. No one is without illness. Kashmiris are not used to heat. We are from a colder climate. Ahh! What water we had there. The air. It was so beautiful! Not like here. Here it is all stone. Now there is nothing. I feel sad to say this. We have built something here but it is only 'time-pass'. It is all *kismet* (fate). I will tell you it is our kismet. We have sinned and hence we were told to leave. Lord Rama was in exile. We are also in exile.

Moha Rani, resident of Purkhu Camp

This section discusses the role of nostalgia in influencing attachment to the city of Jammu. For the Pandits, Jammu is a city that pales in comparison to villages and towns in Kashmir in different ways. The deficiency of Jammu is often seen in terms of the weather and the qualities of soil and water. The scorching summers and dry and semi-arid landscape, accompanied by occasional dust storms, are constant sources of complaint for many Kashmiris who compare their present location with the cooler temperatures, verdant landscape and snow laden winters of the Kashmir valley. Landscape and environment have been seen to play a critical role in nostalgic recollections of forced migrants. Bardenstien discusses the place of environment in the case of uprooted Palestinians. She writes 'in these representations a Palestine of the past is imagined not only as authentic and secure, but also as not (yet) marred by the

tragedies awaiting it' (Bardenstien 1999: 150-151). These qualities are similar to the way the Kashmiri landscape and climate are spoken of.

Younger Kashmiris who were children at the time of the exodus make comments about the weather and geography of Jammu in ways very similar to their elders. Such statements and comments contribute to the image of the Kashmir valley in romanticised and idealised terms. Other environmental properties like water also bring back people's memories. 'We could drink the water straight from the river or springs near the village. Can you think of doing this in Jammu?' as one young Pandit had asked me. My informant Asha would often tell me that 'In Kashmir you never needed the fan, you never needed a fridge. It is only after coming here that we found out what these things were used for.'

According to Stewart, nostalgia entails a juxtaposition of two lives- a life known before and life in the present that has displaced the former (1988: 236). Turner further argues that nostalgia is characterised by sense of historical loss and decline, the absence of moral certainty, the loss of autonomy and social relationships and loss of simplicity, personal authenticity and emotional spontaneity (1987: 150-151). The recollections of the past among the Pandits however also draw on issues of social relations, locality, place and materiality. Gardner points out in her work on Bangladeshi immigrants in Britain that locality and place are used to discuss changes in social and economic relations, enabled by the contrast made between images of *desh* (home) and *bidesh* (foreign) (1993:1). Chakrabarty (2000) shows how memories of East Bengali Hindu refugees transformed East Bengal into an idealised zone where everything was better. Kashmir is imagined in a similar way. While Chakrabarty observes that Muslims are excised in memories of East Bengali Hindus, Muslims in Kashmir have a strong presence in Pandit memories.

Migrants are often able to build new homes by incorporating practices and memories from homes and homelands left behind. This has been explored by Leonard who describes how Japanese and Punjabi settlers in California in the early 20th century saw similarities in the Californian landscape and social life with Japan and Punjab (Leonard 2001: 123-126,132). At first it may seem that the Pandits have created reminders of home in various forms, ranging from the construction of relatively accurate replicas of shrines in Kashmir to printing the names of villages on nameplates of their residences in Jammu. Nevertheless Pandits focus on the dissimilarities between home in the past and in the present. Dissimilarities in the landscape, climate and life between Kashmir and Jammu are constantly emphasised. Even food serves as an important marker of difference. The Kashmiri diet, which includes the use of particular spices, non-vegetarian items such as mutton, fish and green vegetables are contrasted with Dogra cuisine which draws heavily on pulses and beans. Particular vegetables available in the market such as *nadru* (lotus stem) and kohlrabi that are consumed primarily by Kashmiris became available in the markets in Jammu after the arrival of the Pandits in large numbers. Nevertheless many Pandits compare produce in Jammu with the memory of produce in Kashmir, which in their view tasted better.

However taste memory also contends with the present. Increasingly migrants often attribute ill health to the continued consumption of Kashmiri cuisine, which they emphasise is suited for the colder climate of the valley and not for the heat they face in Jammu. They explain that the consumption of non-vegetarian items and recipes involving spices and oil were necessary to withstand the cold weather of Kashmir. In the warmer climate of Jammu, it is allegedly difficult to digest such food. One young informant explained that Hindus ideally should be vegetarian and because Jammu is a Hindu majority area, they should behave accordingly. But the Pandits have also faced

pressure from locals. The Dogra Hindu diet is largely vegetarian and many Dogra Hindus openly criticise the consumption of meat, occasionally referring to non-vegetarians as *rakshasas*¹⁴ (demons). Some informants pointed out that particular ritual practices common in Kashmir which involved the sacrifice of fish especially during funerals were discontinued when Dogra neighbours voiced their displeasure.

One significant theme of conversation involves houses and property in Kashmir. Nearly all migrants, poor and well-to-do, speak of having owned large houses and significant amounts of property in Kashmir. It is common to hear migrants comment that while they occupy single rooms in the camp or on rent in Jammu, they owned houses of at least two to three stories. As I was once told, 'even a *nikumma* (incompetent) could get by and live well in Kashmir'. Well to do migrants make similar claims, and lament the sale of old family homes at a fraction of what they should have been sold for. The Kashmiri anthropologist T.N. Madan, a long time New Delhi resident, remembered his return to Kashmir after his family had left the valley to sell their ancestral home. According to Madan, his family home was the first house to have electricity in Srinagar. He recalled:

I sold my house for one seventh of what it was actually valued. When I entered it, I saw that it was completely looted. Even the electrical fittings, were stripped off from the walls. There was nothing left inside. But what pains me most is that my

¹⁴ Rakshasas refer to Demons in Hindu mythology. Non-vegetarian food is also associated with the 'Muslim diet'. The distinction between Hindu and Muslim diets is significant though. Kashmiri Pandit cooking ideally prohibits the use of onions and garlic while Kashmiri Muslim cuisine makes use of these two ingredients. Furthermore, while there are many restaurants offering *Wazwan*, which is the word used to refer to Kashmiri Cuisine, I was often discouraged by my informants from visiting these restaurants as the owners and cooks were Muslim and hence risked eating beef. Instead I was recommended to visit a hotel owned by a Kashmiri Pandit where I could eat food cooked by Hindus. Even among communities that did eat meat in Jammu, a distinction is made between *halal* meat (slaughter by bleeding) and *jhatka* meat (the animal is slaughtered by beheading), the former consumed only by Muslims and some Hindus, including the Kashmiri Pandits, and the later consumed only by Sikhs and other Hindus, usually Dogra Rajputs.

father's book collection was gone. He had an excellent collection. Many of his books in English and Urdu were first print editions. You see the people who looted the house would not have recognised the value of those books.

Madan's experience is not unique. Often, those who have returned to see their old homes, either on a visit or specifically to arrange a sale lay emphasis on the house having been looted and stripped bare in their absence. In a way this can be seen as a forced devaluing of the property itself.

It is difficult to prove how well migrants actually lived in Kashmir. However ownership of a house in some cases may be divided with more than one owner. This may indicate support for the claim made by migrants of having lived in 'joint families'. Hence a single large house would have been occupied and owned among several men of the *kotamb* (extended family) and their families. However such memories indicate that the past is associated with living a life of a certain standard in one's own land, which ensured privacy and clean conditions in contrast to the present, where they live in quarters dismissed as 'pigeon holes' and akin to 'cow sheds', which migrants from rural Kashmir would have owned before as part of their homesteads.

In his ethnographic study set in rural Kashmir, Madan described the Kashmiri Pandit house in great detail. A Pandit house in general consisted on an average of three stories and included a yard, cowshed and a kitchen garden though a granary may be shared by several *chulahs* (hearths) (Madan 2002:39-40). During a short trip to Srinagar, I had visited areas in the 'Down Town' section of the city where many of the Pandit localities were situated. I could not help but notice the large numbers of empty houses of two to three stories that lay in various states of disrepair, which local residents pointed out to me as Pandit houses. During a visit to a village in South Kashmir, I saw several houses

of at least three stories that were unoccupied, which local villagers revealed, belonged to Pandits who had left in 1990. After the visit, I had shown some of the photographs I had taken of my visit to some interested young men in Purkhu camp and the pictures of abandoned houses were the ones that resonated with them the most. Even photographs taken of an abandoned house in an area where no Pandit localities existed, were assumed to be Pandit property. As Madan stated:

The Pandit's attachment to his house is great. He is born and brought up in it and here he gets his shelter food and emotional security. It is again here he receives his kith and kin; performs various rituals and ceremonies; keeps his belongings and when the end comes, it is here he wants to die. To a pandit, his *gara* (home) is symbolic of the purpose of his existence and strivings (2002: 47).

While Madan's work is situated in the 1950s and 1960s, the attitudes he distils from his data are also reflected in other studies that argue that house is a locus for kinship (Carsten 2004:37). In an article published in the Koshur Samachar community journal, the house served a locus and point of return for all Kashmiris. The present is characterised by migrant men who have managed to save and build a house in Jammu but who eventually discover their efforts are in vain as their sons eventually work outside Jammu. The author concludes that 'the property becomes a dead structure of brick and mortar devoid of soul' (Shah 2006: 41).

Kinship also provides a way to talk about the migration and the pain of the present. One of the costs of migration that has acquired rhetorical quality is separation within families. As Moti Lal, a middle aged resident of Purkhu camp had put it, families had scattered like 'rice'. The migration has led to *chulahs* (hearth) and *kotambs* (lineage) breaking up, with members being forced to live in different areas in the city of Jammu and elsewhere. An example of how migration is regarded to have affected kinship can

be seen in Brij Nath's account. Brij Nath, a resident of Purkhu camp treated the partitioning of families as inevitable in the period after migration. Prior to the displacement, his household consisted of ten members which included his brother's family. He dated the breakup of his household to the moment when he was allotted a quarter, which was far too small to accommodate all members. However Brij Nath's household had grown after migration when his sons got married and had children. Yet even this appears disagreeable. While his son and son's wife now live in New Delhi where they work, he denied receiving financial assistance from him as he stated rather bluntly, 'My son can barely support himself. How can he send me money?' Therefore much of the pain of the displacement emerges in the face of a lived reality that fails to live up to expectations of family life.

The fragmentation of families has also acquired political significance as evidenced in interviews with political activists. According to a prominent political leader:

The greatest cost for me has been the loss of my kith and kin. Our boys and girls have to go to other places for work. They cannot stay back and look after their parents. Here is my case. My daughter lives with her family in Delhi. I go to visit them. But I have nothing to do. I am on my own. My daughter works all day and is not home. My son-in-law works all day and is not at home. My grandson is at school, he is also not at home. When I go to Delhi, I am on my own. At least in Jammu I have my acquaintances, with whom I can spend a few hours.

The present is thus regarded as a period where kinship relations are marked by an absence of closeness and intimacy, even by migrants who seem to have stable relations. Mrs. Wanchu, the librarian of a local college, appears fortunate. Her family came from the Srinagar middle class and managed to retain employment in middle and higher positions of the state bureaucracy. They were able to build a house in Jammu and continue living as a 'joint family'. Nevertheless,

she still feels that the sense of intimacy that defined life in Kashmir is missing. Her sons, who have studied engineering and management sciences like many other middle class youth with ambition, see opportunities elsewhere and do not live in Jammu any more. Discussions of kinship also draw on imaginaries of the ideal household and domestic space. As Purkhu camp resident Veerji Zaru recalls:

Before, twenty five people would eat from one chulah. It was a pleasure then.

Where has it all gone now? Then, the saas (mother-in-law) would eat first, the daughter-in-law would eat after. Now the daughter-in-law will eat first. Then, Hindu, Muslim, Sikh, all four varnas had love. Where has it all gone?

Yet as my informant Priyadarshini pointed out, displacement has allowed for some 'azaadi'(freedom) because newly married women do not have to live with their in-laws anymore and have less authority enforced upon them, in contrast to family life in the past.

Family life in the ideal past also overwrites the possibility of pre-existing tensions. A small survey conducted in Purkhu camp included respondents who indicated that the partitioning of their families had taken place in pre-conflict Kashmir. Moti Lal's family for example had partitioned much before the conflict. Following the death of his father, Moti Lal and three of his brothers continued to live together until they divided into two separate *chulahs* (hearths). Triloki Nath, a former resident of Srinagar who lives in Purkhu camp with his wife and daughter, is the only recipient of a quarter in a camp while other members of his family live across the city. But he revealed that he had separated from his ancestral household since the early 1980s. Hence, just as joint families are regarded to have defined family life in the past, separation and partitioning of households were not unheard of, often owing to work and personal choice. Ratan Lal shared a rich account of his family history in which different members were spread

across the region, owing to job assignments and business interests, including areas currently under Pakistani administration. Well-to-do informants, who have retained some status after migration, are often related to Pandits who had migrated from Kashmir even before the conflict. Migration merely accelerated the process of separation.

Forced migrants have been observed to face great difficulty in developing attachment to a new place. One of the causes of suffering identified in some studies is the relocation of the displaced into areas which have little geographical and climatic similarity with their old homes (Elahi 1981, Colson 1971). There are exceptions as Hakim (1995) shows in the case of the Vasava who were displaced with the construction of a dam in western India and who embraced and adapted to their changed environment. The Pandits may have adapted to Jammu, but express an inability to embrace the city as a place of their own. Their experiences also often relate to studies among communities who have not faced displacement, violence and conflict, especially in the discourse of the breakdown of kinship. The fragmentation of families by displacement is similar to Cohen's (1998) review of the debate on the Indian joint family. While Cohen discusses that the Indian joint family is popularly regarded to be in decline due to 'modernity', for the Pandits the root cause of decline and disruption is displacement.

In his work on Greek Cypriot refugees, Loizos makes an interesting observation:

The refugees talked, obsessively I thought, about the *things* they had lost—the orchards, the houses, their contents —and rather less about any disruption of social relations, although they did sometimes talk of the village as a whole with great sadness, and this metaphorically included social relations (1981: 200).

This observation leads Loizos to acknowledge the importance of 'things' in the context of social relations such as the transmission of property through generations and that life in the village was a relationship 'between people and place' (Loizos 1981: 201). When we examine nostalgia for the past among the Pandits we can see a similar process at work. However nostalgia is not merely tied to a loss of objects or landscapes. The Kashmiri Pandit conception of life in the past is not only an imagined past of home and homeland, but also of a life of a certain quality. Parkin argues that displaced people often invest emotionally in objects rather than people (1999: 308). However feelings of loss do not merely relate to the loss of a house but for the house of a certain size and quality. It is not merely a landscape and climate they miss but rather that the weather and climate in Kashmir was much better than what they face in Jammu in the present. It is not that they do not have relations with kin in Jammu, but rather that they had potentially better relations in Kashmir. All of these elements together contribute to making place and home.

As Taylor points out, ideas of the self are related strongly to notions of respect, understandings of the 'full life' and dignity (1989: 15). For my older informants, especially in Purkhu camp, living in a single room quarter is a contrast to the good life they claim to have had in the past. Instead, life in the present is defined by forcing families into single rooms which compromise a life led with dignity. Even among families who live in their own homes in Jammu, the hardships faced shortly after the displacement for a few years suggest that notions of dignity were compromised for a period of time. The emphasis on alienation from Jammu is further accentuated when informants point out that living in Jammu requires investments such as fans, fridges and air coolers which they never needed in Kashmir. Consumer goods of the sort were probably not in heavy use in Jammu at the time of migration as the conflict and

migration coincided with the transition of the Indian economy from a planned to a liberalised one. But the Pandits associate these commodities with a basic level of survival in Jammu. Thus nostalgia for the past is thus premised for a full life that existed in the past which makes the present pale in comparison.

4.4 The Interfering Past: Relations with Muslims

During fieldwork I often carried with me a copy of the ethnography *Family and Kinship: A study of the Pandits in rural Kashmir* by T.N. Madan (2002). On one occasion I showed photographs of village life from the book to Kanhaiya Lal, a migrant from north Kashmir. Kanhaiya Lal paid particular attention to a photograph of some Pandit men awaiting their turn to be shaved by a Muslim barber. As he dwelled on this photograph he said to me, 'this is how it was like. There was only *bhai chara* (brotherly bonds). We would help each other. But then suddenly things changed.' The migration in that sense marks a specific rupture in terms of relationships and this can be found for migrants all socio-economic background. Many Kashmiri Pandit migrants speak of having enjoyed close relations and friendships with Muslims in Kashmir. Intimate relationships characterised by trust extended to neighbours across the socio-economic spectrum as well. Critically, there is an idealisation of relationships with Muslims. Community in Kashmir has often defined by the notion of *Kashmiriyat*. This ideology can be regarded as one of communal harmony where society in Kashmir was defined by a regional, syncretistic and accepting 'culture' able to overwrite religious identities and instead tie Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs to the Kashmir valley. However as Zutshi (2004) points out, this ideology has been subject to considerations of class, and differing definitions of nation in the pre-colonial, colonial and post colonial period of Kashmiri history.

During fieldwork I observed that Kashmiriyat is largely ignored by Kashmiris, Pandit and Muslim. Many often claim that the ideology never really existed in practice, suggesting that as an ideology it has become an 'empty signifier' (Agarwal 2008). Nevertheless older migrants recalled living in harmony with their Muslim neighbours and friends without resorting to claims of Kashmiriyat. Many often use the phrases *hum saya* (intimates) and *bhai chara* (brotherhood) to describe the state of relations in the past. One of the key dimensions of the refugee experience is the issue of trust, following the breakdown of social relationships and networks (Knudsen and Daniel 1995). Mourning for the past therefore includes mourning for the loss of these relationships as well. Omkar Nath, a middle aged man who had lost family in the first Kashmir war in 1948, lamented at a gathering of old men I was present at and said, 'Our children know nothing of Kashmir. They know nothing of our friends. But then just as they know nothing of Kashmir, the Muslims of Kashmir, especially the youth and children do not know what a Pandit is.' This observation made by Omkar Nath is accurate especially with regards to younger generations of Pandits who grew up in Jammu. While many young Pandits also speak of Kashmir as an idealised territory imagined with the help of their parents and elders, harmonious relationships with Muslims do not figure in the narrative. Rather, for especially younger Pandits and for some of their elders, the Muslims are responsible for the expulsion and dispossession of their community.

In some respects this friction resonates with problems of conflict elsewhere in South Asia. As Saberwal points out, Hindu-Muslim relations have been characterised by shared spaces in the context of governance and everyday life and a sharp separation on the basis of scripturally stated truths (2005: 13). The distinction he raises between shared spaces and points of absolute separation apply here to some extent. On an everyday level Pandits and Muslims perhaps may find a shared space. However

nationalist politics here appears to work as scripturally stated truths, resulting in an inability to bridge the gap. Memories of relations between Hindus and Muslims in Kashmir nevertheless suggest the possibility for ambivalence. The celebration of festivals often reveals the ambivalence among Kashmiris. Many of my informants recalled being greeted by Muslim friends during festivals such as Shiv Ratri and visiting Muslim friends on the occasion of Eid. However, certain rules were maintained such as the acceptance of raw meat as gifts from Muslims, because Pandits as Hindu Brahmins are ideally not supposed to consume food cooked by Muslims. Apart from shared spaces, communal relations are influenced marked by social distance and separation of religious networks (Saberwal 1996:137). As Madan (1994) argues in a sociological critique of Kashmiriyat, Pandit-Muslim relations were premised on inclusion and exclusion according to ritual and everyday practice. As a result while being Kashmiri may allow for shared spaces to build relations, religious practice and more significantly, political formations that take the place of scriptural truths, lend Pandit-Muslim relations a certain level of complexity in the present.

Expectedly, the displacement and conflict prevents the maintenance of the context for everyday relations and shared spaces between Pandits and Muslims. Hence while the present seems unpleasant, the past is also being rethought, even among Pandits who have experienced life in the Kashmir valley. According to Neeru, one of my main non-camp informants who had started her university career just before the conflict, the possibility of friction did exist in the past. She once said to me during a meeting 'You know they (Kashmiri Muslims) were always...they were always supporters of Pakistan. They were the majority. I always felt they were always trying to convert me.' Mrs.Koul recalled that often her colleagues would have discussions on politics but would turn

quiet if she was present. Her relative Indira shared her experiences in terms of a common expression that marks the other side of Pandit-Muslim relations:

If there was an India-Pakistan cricket match, we would have to be careful. If India won, Pandit houses would be stoned. If Pakistan won, Pandit houses would be stoned. You know they would always do these things... But this (the conflict and displacement) was different.

In the process, amidst the recollections of brotherly bonds, certain other memories begin to emerge. Utpal, a former activist within the community, recalled celebrations to mark *Navreh* or the Kashmiri New Year at Hari Parbat, a mountain located in the middle of Srinagar, which is of significance to Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs. He enthusiastically described the gatherings there as a *mela* (fair) where Hindus and Muslims would come together to enjoy themselves. The story he shared with me went beyond recollections of worship and celebrations. He narrated an incident in the 1980s where local groups attempted to claim land belonging to the temple at Hari Parbat and in which the state was allegedly involved as well. The group he was involved with resisted the encroachment. Utpal's recollections are significant since they represent a shift away from ideologies such as Kashmiriyat. Contrary to memories of lost relations and brotherly bonds, Utpal presented an account in which Muslims were trying to force their power in number and political influence on the Pandits.

As discussed in chapter two of this thesis, Kashmiri Pandit perspectives on the histories of the valley can be seen as accounts of violent interaction that is thoroughly communalised. It is largely understood as one where the Muslim majority grew at the expense of the Hindu population. The accounts of Sultan Sikander, the *butshikan*, and Sultan Zain-ul-Abidin, the *budhsah* feature in daily conversation. Such accounts, authored years ago by different writers among the Pandits appear as a contradiction to a

past associated with communal harmony. After 1990, such perspectives have acquired value in establishing a linear history of persecution at the hands of Muslims in which the exodus of 1990 is a consequent result. Utpal's approach to the past can be seen as a continuation from this approach to history. But I also consider Utpal's story as a reference and a new starting point to see the formation of a personal narrative, which contradicts nostalgia. What such accounts suggest is that the memory of local level conflict has also started to shape the history of life as Kashmiri Pandits to the point that statements about Muslims as friends transform to 'people who always trouble us'.

4.5 Engaging and Claiming the Local

Here I use the term 'local' to refer not only to the locale of Jammu but to also with reference to the Dogras. As I have shown, most Pandits compare Jammu unfavourably with the land they have left. Very often, the city is derided as lacking any opportunity. A common statement I often came across was '*Yahan pe bas bandar, dangar aur mandir*' (There is nothing but monkeys, donkeys and temples here). Alongside this statement of the city is the ambivalence with which local communities are regarded. For many Pandits the distinction between themselves and the 'locals', the word they use to refer to Dogras and other residents of Jammu, cuts across socio-economic strata. Much of this draws on a self image of the Kashmiri Pandit as better educated and well mannered. As one informant would constantly tell me:

If you go to a Pandit household, the weekend is spent with the parents making sure the children do their homework. In a Dogra household, it is the opposite. The parents will instead spend the weekend going out. It is after our arrival that they have learnt the value of education.

Many migrants, especially in the camps, constantly compare the neighbouring communities unfavourably with themselves. As I was once told, 'The people here did not know what a tap was. They did not know what carpets were and used few utensils. They would go to the canal for water. It is from us that they learnt all these things.' These comments are similar to the experiences of the displaced elsewhere as seen in Hirschon's work on refugees from Asia Minor who settled in Greece, who disparaged host communities as people with limited education and etiquette and that it was the refugees, who had taught the local residents new practices (1989:31).

On the surface, Dogras and Pandits appear to enjoy communal harmony. During an interview with a Pandit insurance agent at his office, his Dogra colleague joined in the conversation and insisted that relations between migrants and locals are absolutely fine, even adding that had the migrants come to Jammu thirty years before the city would have developed to compete with New Delhi. In private, Dogra attitudes are different. Many Dogras are indeed sympathetic to the Pandits, but fear increased competition for employment in government posts in the city and enrolment in educational institutions. The relief and rehabilitation policy, of which the Pandits are beneficiaries, has also caused some friction, which I examine in detail in a separate chapter in this thesis. For the Dogras and others in the city, the relief policy is seen to privilege the Pandits in comparison to other communities. It must be mentioned that most Pandits and Dogras are aware of how they are perceived by each other.

Problems between locals and migrants emerge from time to time. In Purkhu camp power cuts, an endemic feature of life in Jammu, are attributed to neighbouring localities who tap into the power supply of the camp which is provided at no cost. But the struggle between local groups and migrants at times emerges into the open. An altercation between the residents of Purkhu camp and the minibus crews which operated

from the camp resulted in a fight. Consequently as a response, the camp residents boycotted the minibus route leading to the minibus crews to cease service to the inner parts of the camp. This boycott lasted two weeks, with all buses to the camp stopping only at the highway outside the camp colony. Eventually the boycott was called off by the residents, many of whom were supportive of the boycott until the resulting inconvenience affected them.

These sentiments may have also emerged due to tensions with local communities around the time of migration. Many Pandits were resentful of certain practices such as the raising of rents by landlords around the time of migration. Younger people remember harassment by local youth through derogatory comments and songs. This emerged during a meeting with a group of young Pandits -Sunny, Vicky and Bharat, and Bharat's sister Bharati. During the meeting they recalled a song local youth would recite during and for a few years after the displacement:

haat mein kangri/

kandhe pe jhola/

kaha se aye yeh Kashmiri Lola?

(a brazier in hand/ a cloth bag slung on the shoulder/ from where have these Kashmiri refugees come?)

While Bharat emphasised that the behaviour of and relations with local people in Jammu have improved, Bharati refuted him and insisted that local people still misbehave, though she did not elaborate. But others have also reported being witness to offensive behaviour from local people in Jammu. Amar Nath, a prominent Pandit leader, also had talked about this during a meeting. Amar Nath was involved with an

Indian nationalist organisation in Kashmir with links to the Bharatiya Janata Party, the most well known Hindu nationalist political party in India. However he had realistic expectations about parties that speak on behalf of the Pandits and recalled that members of the local Shiv Sena also harassed the migrants in Jammu in the early 1990s, referring to an incident when some men had put *dijihurs*, a gold ornament worn as a mark of marriage by Pandit women, on a dog. Such incidents thus colour the impressions of the city of Jammu for the migrants.

But other situations, seemingly mundane, play a part. Many recall being insulted and harassed on crowded buses in Jammu. Even in the present tensions may remain. Adolescent boys and young men in Purkhu camp often go to a large field to play cricket with a group of Dogras from a neighbouring area. However they are able to play only if they are invited or allowed to. I was surprised to see them on one occasion forced off the cricket pitch by an adolescent Dogra boy. When I asked a friend of mine why they let a young boy push out people elder to him, he told me that the pitch was on 'their (Dogra) land'. What these incidents underscore for the migrants is the sense that these incidents are possible since they are not in their home areas.

One account which provides a window into the ways Pandits have experienced Jammu was shared by Roshan Lal. Roshan Lal is a middle aged migrant who has worked at the library of the evening section for nearly a decade and half at one of the undergraduate colleges in Jammu. The 'evening section' at local colleges in Jammu was started in 1990 as the 'migrant' section to accommodate undergraduate university students from Kashmir with classes held after regular teaching hours for local students. While they are now open to all students, the evening section is staffed by lecturers and supporting personnel who are themselves migrants.

At the time, Roshan Lal felt that they would be welcomed by the residents of Jammu as fellow Hindus. But he experienced otherwise. When he first arrived, he stayed for two days with a relative till he found accommodation available for renting in Paloura, an area at some distance from the city centre. However his mother passed away shortly after coming to Jammu. His landlord then insisted that the body could not be kept in the house for the duration of the funerary rituals. Visitors who came to pay their respects were shown away by the landlord who eventually evicted him. This forced him to stay in a hotel for some time. This experience angered him since the thought of staying in a hotel when his mother had passed away was unimaginable.

Years later, Roshan Lal built a house, ostensibly settling in the city. But he stated with bitterness that no migrant has built a house with 'pleasure'. Roshan Lal held views that differed from other migrants. He often stated, to the amusement of his colleagues, that had the Pandits sided with the separatists, who he referred to interchangeably as Muslims and Pakistanis, they would not have had to leave Kashmir and endure loss and hardship. The present for Roshan Lal is thus defined by the house he has built and his work in the evening section of a library at a job, which he and his colleagues constantly deride as 'time-pass', till he retires.

Attempts made by migrants to settle in a new place are often fraught with difficulty. As Rahman and Van Schendel show in their study of the settlement of Muslims from India in East Pakistan, local communities often troubled refugee settlers, treating them as strangers rather than as fellow Pakistanis (2003: 572-75). Sinha-Kerkhoff's study conducted in Jharkhand examines the cases of Muslims who did not move to Pakistan and Bengali partition refugees arriving in to that state, raising the distinction between local and refugee. She shows both Bengali Hindus and local Muslims claimed Jharkhand as their own land due to the years they have spent living in the region and the

fact their children were born and brought up in Jharkhand. Both groups also emphasised their claim to the local by highlighting their contribution and support to the Indian national movement and to the economy of Jharkhand (Sinha-Kerkhoff 2004: 160-165).

Kashmiri migrants lay claim to the city of Jammu in a way similar to Sinha-Kerkhoffs informants. On one level, the Kashmiri Pandits emphasise their status as Indian citizens and supporters of the Indian nation-state, who therefore have a right to reside in Indian Territory of which Jammu is seen as a part of. This is a significant strand in Pandit political processes and activity which I shall deal with later in this thesis. Yet, apart from making claims through citizenship, the Pandits also claim a place for themselves in Jammu by their contribution to the city itself. This became apparent to me for the first time when Madan Lal shared an account of a local meeting he had attended. At that meeting he had challenged a 'local' who made a derogatory comment about migrants by presenting a particular argument:

I told him that Jammu has grown because of the migrants. See all these *Jan Jigars* (banquet halls) all across Jammu. There are many now. Before, there were hardly any. These Jan Jigars have flourished because Kashmiri Pandits like to celebrate *dhoom dham se* (with much fanfare). The locals here before would buy oil in only small bottles. We like to buy in bulk. You see, we make more business for shop keepers. Before, you would have to wait for one hour for a matador (local mini bus) to come. Now see. Every five minutes there is a matador. It is because there are so many *Bhattas*¹⁵ that the matador business has increased. It is because of us that the businesses of Jammu have flourished.

Thus the Pandits see themselves as having incurred costs for which they are entitled to a share of the city. To some extent this is to counter the opinion held by many others that

¹⁵ Another title used to refer to Kashmiri Pandits. Used most commonly by Kashmiris, Pandit and Muslim

the migrants are lazy and live off state benefits they receive as migrants. As Amar Nath, the president of the ASKPC had put it during a meeting 'We owe Jammu a debt, but we have paid it!' The question remains whether such a claim is recognised.

4.6 The Waiting room

Migrants, who have been able to settle in Jammu in terms of owning property and are professionally employed, continue to express a persistent sense of despondence and a lack of attachment to the city. As Indira, a former resident of Srinagar had put it:

It is pathetic we have not been able to lay down our roots for 17 years. I still say 'my college in Anantnag', not Jammu. Here I am earning. I have to work. But I still think of going to Srinagar, of the *Chinars*. I still have clothes made in Srinagar. Here they have no sense of fashion and wear too much Jewellery...You know, it was easy to make friends with me, but here it has changed. I have not been able to find my feet. I like to be centre stage but I have taken to the wings...At times I feel, looking at my potential, I feel my life is a waste. I remember when I would enter the college gate and feel younger. Now I feel crestfallen. I am dependent on this money (from teaching) for existence.

This sentiment is shared by Kashmiri Pandits who are presently middle aged or older. The sentiment cuts across socio-economic barriers as well. Kanhaiya Lal, who was an orchard owner in Kashmir now in Purkhu camp, treats his present in a manner similar to Indira. Once, when I was at his quarter, he looked at his clock and remarked, 'It is 4' o'clock. I would have been at my *bagh* (orchard) finishing for the day. Now look. It is 4' o'clock, I have nothing. There is nothing here.'

In her study on conflict displaced Sri Lankan Muslims, Thiranagama points out that recollection of home, lives, work and neighbours and relations are shared by older

informants who had established their lives before the displacement and conflict. She writes:

It was a struggle to survive that intimately recalled loss in every possible way. Strategies of person making here were not for them; it was their former home that had made them into persons (Thiranagama 2007:141).

Young Kashmiri Pandit informants do not really speak of relations in Kashmir, but having grown up in Jammu, they are closer to the people they have grown up with. In this case, old villages are replaced expectedly by camps or neighbourhoods in Jammu. For younger migrants, there is indeed the possibility of feeling attached to Jammu. Suresh, a young journalist, shared his desire not to leave Jammu. While he recalled having spent his early years in Jammu in hardship, once his family had built a home and he completed his education and secured a job, things seemed to settle down. He rationalised that the difficult experiences with local communities at the beginning of the exodus are fairly common in all cases of forced migration. However Suresh's views are rare in comparison with his peers. Most young migrants regard Jammu as a city that lacks in opportunities, which are located ideally in the Indian metropolitan cities. Members of well-to-do families express ambitions in white collar professions such as business management, computing and media which cannot be satisfied in Jammu.

But as Roshan Lal, who I feature earlier, emphasised in our conversation and stated, 'not every Pandit succeeds'. Some of my older informants in their thirties and forties included men who had left Jammu in search of employment but returned owing to family obligations or unemployment. Several informants of mine, who were employees of the state in professions ranging from clerical work such as teaching in the state education system at secondary and university levels, found their careers stalled by

staying on in Jammu and working in the 'migrant' capacity. Migrant government employees are registered as migrants but receive salaries in absentia as they are officially attached to offices in the Kashmir valley. While some have been able to secure transfers to Jammu or elsewhere, others have not been engaged in work since the displacement. Often those who are able to find work in Jammu in the state remain attached to their original department in Kashmir. In the process, they forego opportunities for promotions and other benefits which they can access only if they return to their departments in Kashmir.

As a result a large group of migrant men, who are currently middle age, express a sense of boredom and have endured the loss of status for not being engaged in work. Furthermore prior to the displacement, the ideal professions for Pandits lay in employment in the state sector. However displacement from Kashmir has resulted in a loss of this source of support. They have to compete for the limited pool of opportunities with Dogras for jobs in Jammu. While some Pandits I have met have secured employment commensurate to their skill and qualifications, others have not been as fortunate. It is due to the loss of secure state employment that younger Pandits look at 'private' jobs elsewhere.

As part of the relief benefits, certain political parties came to offer assistance to the Pandits. One of these benefits included the maintenance of quotas in engineering colleges in Maharashtra and which later expanded to quotas at universities in other Indian states. These quotas are seen as a way out for better opportunities and stories abound of Pandit youth, mostly school leaving boys leaving for their studies. Consequently many migrants speak of the migration as having both 'demerits' in terms of the loss of home, and 'merits' in terms of new opportunities and vistas for progress. New Delhi, being the nearest metropolis is a preferred destination. The desire to move

to other cities is shaped by other factors as well namely in finding a place of one's own that is more secure than Jammu. As one Pandit I had met at a demonstration had said, 'Look Jammu is *Duggar Desh* (Dogra Country). Bengal belongs to Bengalis. Kashmir belongs to Kashmiris. But New Delhi belongs to all Indians, and not any one community.' In an article on labour migration to a central Indian steel town, Parry writes about the village becoming a 'waiting room' for its residents who visualise a possible future in terms of work and eventual settlement in the town. The village in turn is seen as an 'area of darkness' (Parry 2003: 221). Jammu appears to be a waiting room as well for the uprooted, unpleasant and lacking in possibility.

A thesis by Colson suggests that settlement is never complete for the displaced (cited in Parkin 1999: 304). This uncertainty is demonstrated by Surinder and his family, whose case I use to begin this chapter. Thiranagama points out that home among communities affected by violence and conflict 'is not just about relationships to the *past*, but about the possibilities of belonging in the future, the possibilities of finding a future in which one can flourish personally and collectively' (2009:130). Due to the difficulties of relocation and settlement faced in Jammu, many Pandits are uncertain if Jammu provides a possible future. But there is another dimension to their dilemma owing to the passing of time. While the displaced rightfully claim status as refugees of IDPs at during after the event of displacement, what happens when displacement lasts for a long period of time? Do the displaced remain forced migrants or do they transform into potential migrants of other types over time (Voutira 1991, Turton 2004b)? The move from Jammu to other cities years after the exodus from Kashmir in many respects sees the Pandits becoming 'economic' migrants, indistinguishable from and having to take their chances alongside economic migrants from other parts of India.

While many younger Pandits wish to leave, there are other considerations to be made. Taking advantage of the quotas in Maharashtra state requires resources to pay for tuition and maintenance costs which are often significant for poorer families. The Pandits I had met who have been able to proceed outside of Jammu and Kashmir have been able to do so, because their families have been able to muster the necessary finances. Inevitably it is the children of better educated and well exposed families who have been able to leave the Jammu waiting room. Some poorer families work to provide for their children's education but others are caught in limbo. Considering that the first experience of migration for a large proportion of Kashmiri Pandit migrants is the displacement of 1990, it is understandable that any other occasion for migrating will be met with trepidation. As my informant Satish had remarked shortly before I left the field:

I envy you. You can come and go as you please. You travel great distances. I cannot do that. I cannot leave my family behind. I do not have an education. I have no money. I work hard at my job and I am a 'technical' person. But I have only finished High School. My brothers have no interest in studies. And I cannot leave my family. I do not know how you can.

4.7 Conclusion

In this chapter I discuss the experience of remaking home after displacement. A great deal of time has passed for the Kashmiri Pandits after their displacement. At the time of commencing fieldwork, it appeared on the surface that the Pandits have got on with life to varying degrees of success. A generation has grown up in exile and has emplaced themselves in Jammu. However what defines life for the Pandits in Jammu is an inability to feel entirely settled and at home despite apparent settlement. I show that feelings of dislocation are influenced by past experiences, memories of life before

displacement and the period after. I also show that relations with local communities often render attempt to settle to be precarious and incomplete.

Yet memories of the past take different forms. For some migrants the past may be recalled through nostalgia. But for others, home left behind also begins to lose the qualities it once held, causing the memory of home to change. The critical elements that define memory focus on property, domestic life and social relations with other communities. The conditions of the present on these counts pale in comparison with what existed in the past. But these claims upon the past must be seen as an aspiration for a particular quality of life that is deemed essential for leading lives with dignity. In a present defined by socio-economic hardship, difficult living conditions and relations, problems in meeting kinship obligations and engaging with local communities, it becomes difficult to feel attached to a place. It is also imperative to acknowledge the fact that the conflict in Kashmir is yet to be resolved, which prevents a future characterised by a return home someday. In the process the Pandits like many other displaced communities become defined by dislocation. While there is an attempt by the Pandits to claim their own space in Jammu, possibilities and hopes for the future for younger Kashmiri Pandits render the prospects of fixing new roots in Jammu as difficult. While not every Pandit can afford to leave and move as freely as imagined, there is a potential in the future for the Pandits to metamorphose from forced migrants to economic migrants over time.

To reiterate the Pandits, like communities observed and documented across the world, see their lives shaped by migration. However they remain uncomfortable by the prospects of being migrants and desire roots or a place that they can call home, which offers stability and security. As I have mentioned earlier, the Pandits have over the years remade lives at varying levels of success and have been able to leave an impression on

the cityscape of Jammu. In objective and material terms, the Pandits have a comparatively higher quality of life as compared to the poorest communities in the region. However the inability to make place and feel at home in Jammu persists. Nostalgia for life in the past in Kashmir in terms of material possessions and social relationships are essential to understand the way Jammu is treated. It is not simply a matter of material loss. Rather nostalgic yearnings are made for material possessions and social relations of a certain quality. While I agree that communities are shaped by movement, I also argue that the potential to embrace movement depends on a range of factors mediated by socio-economic differences, the political context and also the desire for migrant communities to have a secure place to feel attached to. While the Pandits may have adapted to rootless existence, they also desire find a place for themselves in a secure location, wherever that may be.

Chapter 5

Being a Kashmiri Pandit Migrant: The role of Caste, Class and Religion after displacement

Our forefathers did everything properly. But our *karma* (deeds) was such that we ended up here. I will tell you my story. Where is the son, where is the mother? Where is my brother, where am I? Where is the *sasural* (in-laws)? There is something wrong with our *karma*, which is why we have scattered. We eat, we drink, but we have no peace. There is no peace of mind. We attend marriages. We dance. But is this life? There are only worries and sorrows. Only worries. My son is so far away. If I fall ill, how can he come? *Chhoro* (leave it) there are four people nearby, they will carry me... We had a house; everything was in that house...so much has changed. We have fallen behind by forty years. This is what is called 'migration'. If we think about it, we have fallen behind by forty years. Forget about us, our children have fallen behind by forty years. We were in Kashmir but are not anymore. Our ways of living and clothes were all shaped by the climate. So much change. Younger children now say some things are fine, but I think they are wrong. Everything that was ours is lost. There was love then. Our elders lived in comfort, but we have been finished. I called my son. How can I not worry? I have not bought a fridge, maybe I have to go to be with my son. Our parents hardly experienced anything like this. A mother's worry. This is the migration.

Kanta Sharma, Purkhu camp

Studies of forced migrants often portray life in exile as characterized by loss. However loss is difficult to define. As Loizos observed in the case of Greek Cypriot refugees,

forced migrants are often pre-occupied with loss, which was often expressed in different ways, such as providing lists of objects they used to own, to remembering the way of life that existed in the village which they deemed superior to life anywhere else (1981: 129). Hence loss can be regarded as both material and most critically existential. The experience of loss also includes the loss of socio-economic status and dignity as seen in several cases of forced migration across the world and especially in South Asia (Ghosh 2004 , Portes 1987, Zamindar 2007). The Kashmiri Pandits share a similar experience. However what marks the experience of the Pandits is that they have also been historically associated with socio-economic and political power in Jammu and Kashmir. Furthermore, the Pandits find themselves caught in a region shaped by inequality, political oppression and nationalist politics. The conflict and consequent displacement has thus resulted in a loss of political prominence that was once enjoyed in the past.

The narrative of loss and decline has other aspects. There is a public facet which emerges readily in the context of everyday life. But there is also a personal aspect to being a migrant. Hence this chapter seeks to address a basic question: what does it mean to be a 'Kashmiri Pandit migrant'? I will explore this question through a discussion of Kashmiri Pandit identity politics in terms of an idealised notion of community, which in turn calls upon an engagement of caste, class and religion. The ideal way of being a Kashmiri Pandit is determined by an imaginary of the good life many Pandits aspire to. However this imaginary serves as a contrast with lived reality and enhances the sense of suffering and pain in the present as a displaced people. In the course of this chapter I will uncover the ambivalence that marks life as a Kashmiri Pandit migrant: a life marked by the loss of status and well being and characterized by uncertainty, disrespect and dependence.

5.1 The ideal Kashmiri Pandit

The experience and discourse of decline of the Kashmiri Pandit community can be understood through a contrast of their identity in the present as 'migrants' and an image of their lives in the past. In the past, the Pandits stood out as an indigenous Hindu minority surrounded by a large Muslim majority in Kashmir. They are an exclusively Brahmin community and as we shall see, caste plays a significant role in shaping Pandit identity. As Berremen argues, caste identity includes a specific set of attributes and expectations (1967:355). The Brahmin attributes of purity, education and high status, in popular terms, are not only attributed to the Pandits by themselves but also shape the way others regard them.

Pandit authored histories of the Kashmir valley expectedly place emphasis on their Hindu and Brahmin identity. These histories focus on the medieval period of Kashmiri history and present the Pandits as a community of victims persecuted by Muslims with the advent of Islam in Kashmir (Kilam 2003, Parmu 1966, Koul 1991). As discussed in an earlier chapter that deals with the history of the community, the Pandits are depicted not only as having suffered immensely but also having survived persecution and maintaining their faith and traditions in Kashmir, being the only Hindu caste in the region to do so. With the accession of Sultan Zain ul-Abidin (1420-70) to the Kashmiri throne who ended the persecution of the Pandits, the fortunes of the surviving Kashmiri Hindus changed. The Pandits quickly took to learning Persian, which was the language of the Kashmiri Court. This enabled them to take up positions in the state as clerks and bureaucrats. This is important since their survival and subsequent success has been attributed to traditional association of Brahmins with learning and education, which is a view that continues to hold wide credence among all Pandits in the present.

In Jia Lal's Kilam's *History of the Kashmiri Pandits* it is written:

The Brahman, the Pandit or the *Bhatta* proved a source of great strength to the sultan. In the intellectual field he enriched his court and in the land assessment work his services were unique. The land settlement records were placed in charge of and prepared by the Brahmans. The village administration was totally in the Brahman's hands. Being the only literate person in the village he was a useful member of the village community. This accounts for the existence of Pandits, though in very small numbers, in villages with a predominant Muslim population in spite of vicissitudes through which he had to pass in the course of centuries that rolled by from the time Zain ul Abidin held sway. Their aptitude for literary pursuits took them to study Persian and within a short time acquiring a sound and workable knowledge of the language made their entry into subordinate services both easy and possible (Kilam 2003: 43).

The emphasis on language learning has also been discussed in studies on Kashmiri Pandit migrants in North India in by Sender (1988) and Pant (1987). Pant points out that while Kashmiri Pandits were persecuted when Kashmir was under Mughal and then Afghan rule, many Pandits served as high officials in the Mughal and Afghan courts. Owing to their educational attainment, many Pandits secured employment in the territories under the Mughal Empire followed by the Sikh Kingdom of Punjab, the Nawabdom of Awadh and the British colonial regime due to their knowledge of the courtly and business languages of Persian, and later Urdu and English. The honorific 'Pandit' is in fact relatively recent and was conferred by the Mughal Court to Kashmiri Brahmin bureaucrats, prior to which they were collectively known as *Bhattas*, a word used since then only by Kashmiri Hindus and Muslims.

While violence and persecution plays an important part in Pandit history, migration during the periods of Mughal and Afghan rule to other power centres in North India was also motivated by the lure of economic and professional opportunities which continued in the nineteenth century when many Pandits continued working for the British colonial state (Pant 1987: 15, 78-92). The value placed on education has remained for Pandit families. Many well-to-do informants, who were engaged in white collar work in Kashmir, emphasised that while they left most of their possessions in migration, they ensured that they had their educational certificates to seek employment elsewhere. Pandit families in the present are also characterised by the investment made by families, despite varying financial capabilities and educational backgrounds, to provide for the education of their wards up to a certain standard.

Therefore in contrast to the history of victimisation, there is also an image of the Pandits being associated with important institutions and holding positions of power and influence. This image circulates widely across much of India and among Pandits themselves. I would often be reminded by informants that two of the most important prime ministers of India, namely Jawaharlal Nehru and Indira Gandhi, were Kashmiri Pandits. Others raise the names of prominent civil servants who held much influence in policy and administration in post-independence India. The association with state institutions as bureaucrats consequently contributes to an image of the Kashmiri Pandits as a community of 'elites'. This is not as straight forward as it seems. While many Pandits did indeed secure positions in the bureaucracies of the different regimes ruling Kashmir, ranging from clerks to school teachers and to high ranking officials, they were not necessarily the rulers themselves, with final power lying in the hands of Sultans, Mughal, Afghan and Sikh governors and the Dogra Kings over the last five centuries (Prakash 1985). Thus the Pandits in many respects constituted a community largely

attached to the middle and upper classes in Kashmir, at least until 1990, in contrast to the Kashmir Muslim majority who did share in the middle and upper classes of Kashmir, but also critically constituted the poorer sections of Kashmiri society (see Rai 2004).

The history and experience of the Kashmiri Pandits parallel other Hindu upper caste communities studied in the past such as the Saraswat Brahmins of South West India studied by Conlon (1977) and the Tamil Brahmins studied by Fuller and Narasimhan (2007, 2008a). The Saraswat Brahmins and the Tamil Brahmins, like the Pandits, secured intermediate positions in the Colonial Indian State bureaucracy and gradually acquired positions of a relatively high status in comparison with other communities. Both Conlon and Fuller and Narasimhan show how these Brahmin communities actively dealt with educational regimes, whereby acquiring a modern, secular education became an essential value which fitted with their 'traditional' identity as a caste associated with learning. We can see this process with the Pandits through their pursuit of the study of Persian, Urdu and English since the medieval period in Kashmiri history.

Another community Pandits share similarities with are the Kayasthas of Hyderabad. Leonard (1978) shows how the Kayasthas, who are a non-Brahmin Hindu caste engaged in scribal professions, migrated from North India to the princely state of Hyderabad in Southern India where they constituted a large proportion of high level bureaucrats and military officers, which enabled them to acquire much influence in public life. Another similarity between the Pandits and the Kayasthas is their participation in Indo-Islamic culture, which was not the case for Saraswat and Tamil Brahmins. Pandits who worked in Muslim ruled states, like the Kayasthas, embraced symbols of 'Islamic culture' such as dress, fluency in literary Urdu and Persian and consumption of non-vegetarian food. Pandit histories also indicate that those who were courtiers of the Sikh dominated

Kingdom of Punjab often adopted the Sikh dress code. These practices distinguished the Kashmiri Pandits from other Hindus. As Pant points out:

While their regional or Kashmiri Hindu culture distinguished them from North Indian Hindus, their mixed Hindu-Muslim social and literary culture created a gulf between them and most North Indian Hindus except such Hindu castes as Kayasthas and Khatri (Pant 1987:29).

The 'ideal Kashmiri Pandit' also acquires prominence due to claims of exceptionality. Most Kashmiris, Pandits and Muslims, emphasise their uniqueness in cultural terms, to distinguish themselves from other communities in South Asia. Pandits in turn differentiated themselves from their Muslim counterparts through the claim of being 'educated' and by following Brahminical practices of purity and separation, which I will discuss in the following sections. As the only Hindu caste 'indigenous' to Kashmir, many Pandits see themselves as responsible for preserving the pre-Islamic heritage of Kashmir with the advent of Islam. This is best exemplified in an excerpt from Kashmiri Pandit newsletter published in Jammu:

What is in a name! They say some names do appear insignificant, but they contain multitudes. For example, Kashmiri Pandit is not just a name of a community that has been driven out of its homeland, it is the name of a 5000 year old culture (sic). It is the name of a cultural ethos which despite the genocide unleashed on it has never reacted with violence. Kashmiri Pandit is a name of a civilization that has survived through a long history of barbaric assaults. It is a community which hates to see its existence wiped out from the face of the earth (Ogra 2006:5).

While it is difficult to ascertain how old the ideas that inform Pandit identity are, an excerpt from a book first published in 1921 is indicative:

The Pandit is truly of a 'simple breed'-simple in food and simple in dress. Patience and resignation are writ large on his behaviour. Give him a slap on his right cheek and he will turn the left but will never provoke you in a quarrel. So law abiding he is that he regards a state official as a fiat of destiny...He is free from crime against the person and from burglary and thievery. Being naturally sober minded, he has no lust for passion...He is fond of beautiful things. He likes rich food. In calligraphy he has a good taste and a Pandit's handwriting is really distinguishable. He is an excellent clerk with a good accounts head. His pronunciation in any language is distinct and accurate. With even a little knowledge he polishes his intellect to a high degree. He has got a peculiar kind of genius (Koul 1991: 37, 41)

These words were written by Anand Koul, the author of a book titled '*The Kashmiri Pandit*'. Koul's book, first published in 1921 and based on early ethnological approaches, provides a typology of practices, customs and behavioural attributes in defining who a Kashmiri Pandit ideally is. As the passage above also indicates, these attributes are often contradictory. For many informants, authors like Koul, or colonial officers and surveyors, notably Walter Lawrence and Francis Younghusband, have contributed to their understanding and knowledge of themselves. I was often advised by a range of informants to consult such authors, which they argued would give a true picture and understanding of the historical context of Kashmir. An initial reaction to this is to consider research on the construction of knowledge in Colonial India. Authors such as Cohn (1987), Inden (1990) and Peabody (2001) have situated the context in which knowledge about India and its peoples were constructed, embodying ideological imperatives and inequalities of the time, as well as involving a degree of collaboration between coloniser and colonised. As Cohn points out in his essay on the Indian census, colonial knowledge came to constitute knowledge for Indians about themselves (1987: 250). Thus it appears that the recourse to such forms of knowledge and publications are

indeed essential to consider. Such publications may not present critical knowledge. However the value they hold provides a sense of attitudes in the present.

The problem of engaging historically with Kashmir has been affected by colonial historians and writers in different ways, which focused on the land and natural formations and treated the region as a source of handicrafts. In the process, Kashmir has been imagined as a 'landscape devoid of people' (Rai 2004, Zutshi 2004). Kabir situates the construction of the Kashmir valley as 'paradise' in the writings of European travellers and Indologists in the 19th century. She shows how many of the texts produced at the time emphasised the antiquity of the region and cast Kashmir essentially in terms of its Hindu heritage, even though the vast majority of Kashmiris have been Muslim (Kabir 2009: 89-94). The manner in which these texts were produced also tied in with the political imperatives of colonial rule, with studies of antiquity patronised by the Dogra Court to emphasise the primacy of Hinduism in Kashmir at the expense of Islam. In the process Kabir writes that 'the Indologists had increasingly privileged Kashmir not merely as a Hindu enclave within a degenerate Muslim population, but, in retrospect rather shamefully, as a "pure", Brahmin Hindu enclave' (Kabir 2009: 89-90).

This may explain the significance of colonial texts for a section of the Pandit community, who often reproduce the image of the Kashmir valley as a Hindu area, affected by centuries of Muslim interlopers. Kashmiri writers who represent the community continue to draw on this approach and link Kashmir with India as a cradle for Hinduism and Buddhism and insist the Pandits as Hindus have prior claim on the valley in contrast to the Muslims (Dhar 1995: 528, 531, Warikoo 2001: 221). Colonial publications enjoy shelf life in the region often going into reprint since their publication in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. They are easily available in

bookshops in Jammu and in local libraries. The library of a local Jammu college which is run by migrant Pandit staff proudly displayed texts by Walter Lawrence in their section of books covering Kashmiri History. In fact from the collection of the library, the history of Kashmir is essentially a Kashmiri Pandit history with very few books dealing with Kashmiri Muslims. The value of such publications lies perhaps not in treating them as an authoritative history, but rather as emblematic of the way some Kashmiri Pandits see themselves.

One incident which brought sentiments concerning identity that circulate among Pandits into sharp relief, took place in Purkhu camp when I had come across Pritam ji. Pritam ji is a migrant in his thirties whose family lives in Misriwala Camp and is actively involved in the Kashmiri Pandit Sabha, travelling widely to Pandit settlements across the city. On the several occasions we had met, he struck me as someone who dealt with people in a confident and friendly manner. When I met Pritam ji on the Purkhu camp roadside one day, he was not above berating me in public, to the amusement of a few young boys and men with whom I was talking to:

See I have been talking to you for five minutes and you have not taken any notes. Don't you know 'we people'? 'We people' are like books! We have so much knowledge. Why you can just go to that boy sitting there, that little boy and he will tell you everything. That old woman there, she will tell you everything!

Hence we can discern certain characteristics of a Kashmiri Pandit popular among the community: A person who is a member of an upper caste community and associated with the middle and upper classes in terms of occupation and mannerisms. They are associated with education and regarded as bearers of knowledge in comparison to other communities. Rules of purity and pollution also influence life styles and interaction. As

my informant Satish would emphasise, Pandits are a '*naram*'(soft) people. They are devoted to their faith which urges them to be peaceful and not take recourse to violence. I was often told by Pandits and Dogras that if a Kashmiri Pandit gets into an argument, he will use harsh words, but limit physical aggression to throwing a *kangri* (*brazier*) on to the ground and walk away, thereby avoiding a physical altercation. There is a strong emphasis on etiquette and I observed anyone showing deference and politeness is regarded as behaving like a Kashmiri Pandit. But certain contradictions have emerged in the post-migration period in which the Pandit ideal is increasingly seen as myth within the community.

5.2 Losing the Ideal

Shortly after arriving in Jammu to conduct fieldwork, I had attended a public meeting at Muthi Camp. A large group of residents had gathered in the community hall compound of the camp. Men and women sat separately, listening to the speeches made by politicians who had been invited on the occasion of the election of the president of the camp. Each of the mainstream parties in the state was represented by the speakers. The audience listened to them with apparent attention, occasionally whispering among themselves and tending to accompanying young children, while volunteers distributed cups of *kehwa* tea and *khulcha* pastry. One particular speaker then took the stage and spoke to the audience in a strident tone and said, 'Look at your selves. You people are Kashmiri Pandits. You were the elites, the intellectuals of the state. But look at yourselves now. Look at what you have become.'

The audience listened to him quietly, seemingly tolerant of the insult. It was difficult to gauge what went on in their minds. This particular meeting has remained in my mind partly out of my surprise with how poorer migrants seemed to accept admonishment

from politically powerful individuals. But the terms the speaker drew on, also indicate a problem faced by Pandit Migrants in Jammu. Often the Pandits find it difficult to present their story of suffering and pain and claim to victimhood owing to a stereotype held by others, and often by themselves, of being elites who have fallen from a higher status.

It may be controversial to say that the Pandits have lost a sense of self. Rather, within a span of a generation since the exodus, many Pandits find themselves unable to conform to the ideal of being a Kashmiri Pandit. The discussion of loss however is beset in controversy. A Kashmiri Pandit academic once described his experience of presenting a lecture to a gathering of prominent members of the community in New Delhi. His lecture acknowledged the difficulties faced by the Pandits following the outbreak of conflict in Kashmir, but also urged the audience that they must look forward to opportunities possible in the future rather than to the past. However, he recalled the experience to be difficult as the audience was critical of his lecture and in his opinion, wanted to mourn and look back rather than ahead. This anecdote which he shared with me reveals some of the difficulties in the engagement with loss. Loss becomes a significant component of life as a Kashmiri Pandit, even for those who have achieved a high measure success since the displacement.

Different generations articulate loss in particular ways. Many older informants lament that the migration has resulted to a loss of status, culture and traditions. The loss of language has been cited by many older migrants who point out their children raised in Jammu speak Hindi and Dogri instead of Koshur. While some remark that their children speak these languages better than the locals, Koshur has become a language spoken within households or at community specific functions and not in larger public spaces. Hence older migrants describe the condition of their children as being 'neither here nor

there'. In his study among East Bengali Hindu refugees in India, Ghosh argues that partition and displacement resulted in a loss of 'moral prominence' for East Bengali Hindus (2004: 39). Ghosh looks specifically at the case of middle class refugees who enjoyed a relatively high standard of living and status before displacement (Ghosh 2004: 40-41). As Banerjee observes in the case of the same group, male refugees in particular were unable to observe their duties as guardians of the household and thus lost much of their authority within the family to younger males (Banerjee 2003: 201). Similar processes are also seen in the case of the Kashmiri Pandits. While most male heads of households I have encountered do not appear to face this problem, they are aware of the difficulties ahead. Madan Lal ensured that he bought land in Jammu to live up to the expectation of passing on property to his sons. Makhan Lal mentioned how his sons often complain about life in Jammu by challenging his decision to have not moved to New Delhi where they would have enjoyed better opportunities.

Others see the problems in the older ideals which may have been important in the past, but have become difficult to maintain in the present. Ashok, a middle aged professor spoke of an older image:

There is a saying in Kashmiri that if you have to cross the seas to seek knowledge, then you must do so. Hence we were over involved in teaching. But knowledge has made us weak. If someone hits, we will think ten times and then choose not hit. I will tell you that this is all *maya*(illusion). Hence we become passive.

Unlike Ashok, younger Pandits growing up in Jammu increasingly see themselves as different from their elders. 'We have changed,' as my friend Rohit once commented, 'if you show us a gun, we won't run like we used to. The younger boys will show you knife in return.'

Many speak of loss in terms of the access to shrines and temples in Kashmir, some of which have been destroyed or have fallen to decay due to the absence of patronage over the years. While replicas of some of the most important Pandit shrines have been built in Jammu and elsewhere, the acceptance of these places remains difficult to ascertain. The replica of the prominent Kheer Bhavani shrine in Kashmir, built in suburban Jammu for example enjoys regular visitors, although many of my camp informants dismiss it as 'artificial'. Furthermore, while these replicas can be seen as attempts to recreate the past, the recreation is never successful due to their new settings. The Kheer Bhavani shrine in Jammu is regularly visited by Dogras who live in the vicinity and consequently the activities during congregational gatherings feature *bhajans* (devotional songs) sung in the Dogri.

When I had the opportunity to visit the Hari Parbat replica located in a village on the outskirts of the New Delhi capital region, I was told by a regular visitor that in the past offerings to *Sharika Mata*, the deity of Hari Parbat, consisted of *kaleeji* (liver), *tuhur* (yellow rice) and *shushnor* (goat lungs). However non-vegetarian offerings cannot be made at the replica as it would offend the residents of the village where it is located. This relates well to the views of visitors I had met during the annual pilgrimage to the Kheer Bhavani shrine on *Jaeth ashtami*, who feel that later generations will forget their traditions in spite of efforts.

Concerns with regards to the 'loss of culture' have a prior history among the Kashmiri Pandits. Writing about the Kashmiri Pandit migrants in the pre-colonial and colonial period, Sender discusses some of the dilemmas the community faced. In spite of their successful integration into the political economy of the Mughal Empire and later in the colonial state, Sender writes that the Pandits 'had always regarded themselves as a minority community. Whether their exile was forced or voluntary, they never were and

never felt themselves to be fully assimilated in their new domicile' (1988:132). Sender traces this dilemma concerning identity through an analysis of community journals which began to receive patronage in the second half of the nineteenth century. These journals brought a discussion of issues such as the loss of language and customs over the years and that the Pandits remained Kashmiri only in name and merely imitated the dominant cultures of their immediate environment (Sender 1988:136-138).

In 1986, a series of articles titled 'Wanted: a Kashmiri' was published in a Kashmiri Pandit journal, around the same time when Pandit-Muslim riots had taken place in South Kashmir. Written from the point of a view of a *taza* (new) Kashmiri in New Delhi, the author writes about his experiences of a chance meeting with a *Pouran*¹⁶ (old) Kashmiri on a train:

He complained that their children had started marrying outside their community. According to him, many matches were not available within the 'old Kashmiri' community. He was sorry that the purity of their community was getting sullied (Sarvanand 1986a: 3).

In the continuation of the article published in the following issue of the journal, the author writes about a Kashmiri marriage he had been invited to in New Delhi:

The groom was then led to a special erected stage and to sit in chair. So was the bride...I did not understand this custom. In Kashmir the bride meets the groom on the *vyug*.¹⁷ ...A little later, some girls from bride's side brought garlands and somebody shouted: "Ah, here is the jayamala". The bride and groom garlanded each other amidst

¹⁶ Prior to the migration, Kashmiri Pandits who came directly from Kashmir were regarded as *Taza* or fresh/new. Kashmiri Pandit settled outside Kashmir for several generations were regarded as *Pouran* or old.

¹⁷ *Vyug* refers to designs made on the ground using white paste. It is similar to Kolam practices in Tamil Nadu and is essential part of Kashmiri Pandit weddings.

thunderous clapping. I could not remember any ceremony known as 'jayamala' in any marriages in Kashmir...Two oldish ladies sang the *vanvun*¹⁸(Kashmiri Marriage songs). They looked so odd as no other women joined in. It looked as if the two *vanvun* singers had been hired for the occasion. They commenced the 'dwarpuja'. I was dumbfounded and I did not open my mouth. How could I call it a Kashmiri marriage? (Sarvanand 1986b:6-7).

These concerns have acquired an urgent quality following the exodus of 1990. An article titled, 'Monsoons and the KP Pandit community' lists certain aspects that define culture in terms of language, dress, places of association such as important temples and figures from Kashmiri history such as the mystic Lal Ded (Dhar 2006: 34-35). The author of the article argues that all of these elements have been lost and it will be a matter of time when the migrants will cease being Kashmiri Pandits. What is interesting here is that there is continuity in the discussion and fear of loss of 'culture' and identity. The events of 1990 and after can be treated as a continuation of an age old dilemma. Hence the conception of an ideal way of being has also been historically subject to doubt and loss. The sense of loss following the displacement of 1990 however differs from past discussions in other ways. While there is a concern with loss of culture in conventional terms such as language and loss of religious property and land marks, there is a discernable sense of loss in terms of political and economic status within the community as well as. State policy and nationalist politics have also affected loss of status in ways I shall describe further on.

For many Pandits the displacement has sundered access to political and socio-economic prominence that many enjoyed in the past in Kashmir and which younger generations expected to achieve as well. The Pandit ideal often gives the impression that Pandit

¹⁸ These songs are always sung by groups of women from the wife givers.

identity is monolithic. However conceptions of community are refracted through class, caste and minority cultures, which are often subsumed within a single 'nation' (Nigam 2006: 17, 20, Sarkar 2002). The Kashmiri Pandit ideal similarly presents a homogeneous community, which many openly claim and believe in. However there is a great deal of heterogeneity especially on socio-economic grounds and also with regards to expectations and plans for the future. Displacement in its modern form through categories of humanitarian intervention has also shaped new ways in which identity is understood by the Pandits. In the following sections I will discuss the experience of loss at the community level through a discussion of the Migrant label, class and caste and religion.

5.3 The Migrant Label

One of the aspects of life as a Kashmiri Pandit in Jammu is being a 'migrant'. The migrant label is an official label implemented by the State in Jammu and Kashmir and is used to refer to all individuals and communities who have left their homes in the state due to the conflict. Official recognition as a displaced person necessitates being registered as a migrant to receive different forms of support and welfare. However the term 'migrant' itself has never been clearly defined by the state or its functionaries. Throughout the entire period of fieldwork spent in Jammu, I observed that the word migrant has acquired meaning and currency in popular usage. The English word 'migrant' is used in everyday conversation concerning displaced persons in Jammu and Kashmir. The Kashmiri Pandits were the first of the different communities displaced by the conflict and constitute the largest proportion of registered migrants. Whenever I would tell anyone in Jammu that I had come to study 'migrants', most people immediately assumed that it was the Pandits I was referring to. Consequently in the city of Jammu, being a Kashmiri Pandit is synonymous with being a migrant. A bureaucratic

label has thus acquired a life of its own in the everyday context of communal life in Jammu.

Despite the apparent ordinariness of the term, the migrant label is not to be taken lightly. All Pandits including political leaders and organizers I had met in person may employ the term 'migrant' in an unproblematic manner. But the term migrant has a short and difficult history. Articles in *The Martand*, which is a journal published by the ASKPC indicate a different engagement when the migration had taken place. While some of the headings of the articles did indeed use the term migrant in reports, other articles used the term 'displaced Kashmiri Pandits'. One article published shortly after displacement points to the discomfort with the label. This article presents several definitions of a 'migrant' to the point of distinguishing between 'migrant Hindu' and 'migrant non-Hindu', the former being defined as someone who is displaced and who has lost home and property while the latter includes those who reap state benefits and yet visit the Kashmir valley. This sentiment coincides with a view held by several informants who feel that Kashmiri Muslim 'migrants' are not true migrants as they continue to visit Kashmir but receive the full spectrum of state support. The article continues with definitions of 'migrant school', 'migrant promotees' and 'migrant doctors'. At the end of the article, the author coins an acronym for the word migrant- 'Maimed Indian Gravely Roughed, Abused Neglected Tribe the Kashmiri Hindus Naturally' (Tickoo 1992:3).

As Aditya, a young Kashmiri Pandit university student and activist stated to me in straightforward terms, 'I don't get the word migrant. We should have been listed as IDPs. Anybody is a migrant!' Intriguingly, the Pandits do not use indigenous terms with regards to their displacement. As Centlivres and Centlivres discuss in their work on Afghan refugees in Pakistan, the official category of the refugee as implemented by

international aid organizations clashed with Pashtu nomenclature such as *Mohajir*, which draws on a different history and set of meanings (1988: 143-148). Chakrabarty's (2000) discussion of East Pakistani refugees after 1947 raises the difficulties for refugees in relating to the Bengali words for refugee such as *sharanarathi* (at the mercy of god) and *udvastu* (lacking foundation), which possessed negative connotations. But for the Pandits it is the English word 'migrant' that is frequently used. Therefore the seemingly neutral word 'migrant' has come to have a quality similar to the Bengali and Afghan cases. While Pandit authors writing in Hindi have been observed to use the word *visthapan* (displacement), the English word 'migration' itself featured in conversations in Hindi and elicits greater response and recognition among Pandits across all strata.

To be a migrant implies facing a quandary. At one level, it is by registering as a migrant that one can seek and receive the support of the state and some measure of official recognition. Yet it is a label with other consequences. In an influential article, Zetter discusses the issue of labelling refugees. His analysis examines the intended and unintended consequence of imposing a bureaucratic category on a particular group of people, which acquires force owing to the refugee identity itself being 'dynamic' and 'malleable' (1988:40). He argues that the refugee label is an imposed identity that risks stereotyping and stigmatizing refugees (Zetter 1988:44). Yet he also points out that labels are not only symbolic, but also transform identity and sustain a feeling of transience when displacement becomes protracted (Zetter 1988:60). As de Voe (1981) shows effectively in her study of Tibetan refugees in India, the refugee label turns displaced peoples into clients subordinate to various humanitarian agencies. The refugee label thus implies an identity of weakness.

For the Pandits in Jammu, being a migrant is first seen as debilitating. While the migrant label has turned the Pandits into a group dependent upon state welfare, the label also plays out in everyday life and in interactions with other communities. In a meeting with a group of young women enrolled as 'migrant' students of Kashmir University, the feeling of anger at being called migrants emerged prominently. One member of the group argued:

Dekhiye (look), when we go for submitting an application form and the clerk collecting it sees it and then says 'oh? You are a migrant?' In school our teachers would come and look at our marks in exams and say 'uhhf, migrants'. We have grown up hearing people say such things. It feels strange.

Raju, a college student, faced a similar experience when he went to apply for a seat in one of the leading undergraduate colleges in the city and had to show his father's ration card to prove he is a migrant. The sense of the being recognized as a migrant allows for a persisting sense of being regarded differently in comparison to others.

What has stigmatized the Pandits has been their transformation into a state category receiving assistance from the state. The Kashmiri Pandits, as registered migrants, are entitled to different forms of assistance comprising financial and food aid through a special programme instituted since 1990. The relief and rehabilitation policy is seen by other groups in the city as a privilege. In the process the Pandits are regarded as a people who receive support from the state in the form of financial and material assistance and yet do not have to work for a living. Consequently for many Jammu residents, the Pandits are a group who only make demands on the State and others with apparently little to give back in return. The Pandits are also derided for having fled Kashmir instead of posing any resistance to the militants.

The lack of respect and disdain with which migrants are seen in the city became clear to me during an attempt to start a side project on other migrants in the city taking the case of the Nepalese colony of Gorakh Nagar. I had obtained a reference from the Nepalese security guard at the Kheer Bhavani Shrine who suggested that I see the *Pradhan* (head) of the colony. When I had introduced myself to the Pradhan and explained that I was a researcher studying the Pandits and interested in learning about other migrants, he rebuked me and said, 'We are not migrants. The Kashmiris ran away. They are migrants. Don't make that mistake'. At this point, it becomes apparent that the word migrant is no longer neutral and ambiguous and in some respect supports the stereotype of Pandit peacefulness and non-aggression, which is seen as Pandit 'cowardice' by others.

There is wide variation in existing socio-economic conditions and status among the migrants and I argue that heterogeneity is a feature of the Kashmiri Pandits and other similar migrant communities. Yet the label also encapsulates migrants of all statuses as well. Hence some informants of mine who have friends among the Kashmiri middle classes and elites and whose children are employed in high paying professions in urban India and abroad become the same as my camp informants whose lives are limited to Jammu. The label thus generates a specific and perhaps limited political identity.

What complicates the discussion is the fact that being a migrant also has its benefits. Few are willing to give up the migrant label even if they can afford to, as it would imply giving up state support and others benefits such as the reservations for their children to gain admission to institutes of higher education in different parts of India. Indeed, it is common to hear migrants regard migration as having 'merits' and 'de-merits'. Many speak of the migration as providing a 'boost' to the community as it has opened up options that did not exist in the past for a new generation. It was pointed out to me that

while Pandits traditionally sought work in the state sector, such aspirations were affected by the fact that the state was the most important employer at the time. Therefore a world of opportunity, with its associated insecurities, is seen to have opened up as exemplified in the case of young well-to-do migrants who are engaged in high skilled white collar work and well settled in a neo-liberal environment. Kashmiri Muslims often remark that life has indeed become better for the Kashmiri Pandits as they have been able to escape a conflict zone. As Zetter observes, displaced persons themselves may subvert and use the label that have been imposed upon them to their advantage. The refugee label is therefore also a 'prized status and commodity' (Zetter 2007: 188).

5.4 Class and Caste

While all Pandits are Brahmins and hence claim a high status within the Hindu caste hierarchy, they have also been associated with the middle and upper classes of Kashmir. The Pandits were engaged in professions such as such as teaching in the state school system and in higher education, in the medical sector and in other white collar professions, especially in the state sector which was the most valued form of employment for the Pandits in the past. Until the enactment of land reforms in Jammu and Kashmir in 1953, the Pandits were among the most important land owners in Kashmir. Hence it would appear that the Pandits were able to claim the status of elites as Hindus of a high caste and being engaged in bourgeois professions. Class and caste therefore coincide in shaping the Kashmiri Pandit identity. However claims that draw upon references to class and caste are essential for understanding the notion of decline. For the Pandits, lives in the past were defined by a high status owing to their identity as upper caste Hindus and as members of the middle class. The displacement is regarded to

have disrupted this claim, resulting in an inability to lead a quality of life associated with being Brahmin and middle class.

The discussion of class germane to this theme is affected by the lack of consensus to the definition of the middle class in India (Fuller and Narsimhan 2008b: 749, Hariss 2006: 447). As Fernandes points out, there is a rift between the values and representation of the middle class in India and lived realities (2006: xix). Other authors acknowledge difficulties for analysis due to the lack of a precise definition in delineating certain critical features of the middle class. According to Beteille, the middle class can be understood to refer to those characterised by education, income and a desire for non-manual work (2001: 76). Deshpande argues that the Indian middle class is characterised in terms of possessing cultural capital such as education and white collar work and as a consuming class (2003: 134-148). If we take these parameters into consideration, the Kashmiri Pandits are indeed middle class objectively and in terms of self-ascription owing to their claims of educational attainment, which has historically allowed many of them to access white-collar professions and positions of power and influence in the state.

In some respects, Pandit claims and experiences also affirm a particular image of the middle class in India. Fernandes points out that the Indian middle class was strongly shaped by the dependence upon the state in first few decades of independence (2006: 20). As I have mentioned, the Pandits have historically been associated with employment in the state sector at all levels. Pandits have worked as senior officers in the Kashmir Administrative Service and the Indian Administrative Service and as peons and clerks in government departments. Those engaged in the teaching profession or in engineering often worked at institutions that belonged to the state and hence were also state employees. The migration is regarded many Pandits to have ruptured the

relationship between the Pandits and the state, forcing a younger generation to look for employment in the insecure private sector. Therefore many migrants often demand state support in the form of guaranteed employment in the state sector outside Kashmir. While it has been difficult to acquire precise statistical data concerning employment in the state sector, it is estimated that 24,000 Kashmiri Pandits were employed by the state before 1990 which has fallen to 3,000 Kashmiri Pandit active state employees after displacement (Schaffer 2005: 25). The demand for state employment parallels middle class values among other communities such as the Bengalis. Donner summarises Indian middle class values in the following:

The definition of 'middle-class' ...primarily refers to a lifestyle based on male employment in white-collar jobs, oriented towards professional careers or government service, and a shared value system centred on related notions of propriety, a fulfilled life, and an opposition between tradition and modernity...At the heart of this appreciation of formal education lies a tradition of employment in government service, which has from the turn of the last century onwards provided the basis of middle-class identity and domestic organization for this community (Donner 2005: 121).

While Donner's discussion is based on work conducted among Bengalis, these features apply to my informants as well and contribute to the overall 'middle-classness' of the Kashmiri Pandit migrants.

However being a Kashmiri Pandit involves an overlap of class with caste. In some respects, this overlap is reflective broadly of modern Hindu society and has been documented in the case of the Tamil Brahmins, who are not only well represented in middle class in terms to relation to their actual numbers, but also regard themselves as mainly an urban middle class (Fuller and Narasimhan 2008b: 749). As Fuller suggests,

caste often provides a vocabulary for class (1996: 17). One of the ways in which caste and class interact is with the association of the Pandits with scribal professions historically. A common self description is that of being *kalam pesh* or working in professions involving the pen. Hence employment in administration, teaching, medicine and clerical work fall into the ambit of professions valued by the Pandits. Furthermore, several well-to-do informants also emphasise that not only did they constitute a significant section of these professions; they were also valued in Kashmir for being competent, skilled and trustworthy.

Consequently there is an aversion to certain professions. As Brahmins, the Kashmiri Pandits do not engage with particular professions deemed polluting such as barbers, sweepers and cleaners. Interestingly, this has continued with the barbers shops in the camps and exclusive Pandit neighbourhoods manned by members of other castes. However as Madan observed in rural Kashmir, there are certain non-polluting forms of work Pandits will not engage in as they involve some form of manual labour (1994:185). Shortly after commencing fieldwork in Purkhu Migrant camp, I sat with a group of middle aged men outside Kishore Lal's shop. The conversation veered to their recollections of their lives and the loss of their land. It was during this conversation that one of the men present, Omkar Nath, remarked that 'we have lost everything. And now our children have to do *mazdoori* (manual labour).' When I asked Omkar Nath what *mazdoori* involved, his reply was that it included work such as helping out at shops, pointing to Kishore Lal's son, who ran the shop in his father's absence, rather than other forms of manual work.

For many Pandits, one's profession is not merely a source of income but also a source of respect and claims to status and dignity. This is clear for well to do migrants who are qualified teachers, lecturers, doctors, bureaucrats or engaged in other white collar

professions. However for my camp based informants, the occupational spread included a few school teachers, state employees engaged formerly in clerical work, peons, small business men and shop keepers. Blue collar workers in terms of those engaged in manual labour were indeed few among the people I had met. As one migrant in his thirties, who works as a sales representative for a firm based in Kashmir had said, 'Look, we are Pandits, we don't want the work of *mazdoors*. We want *dimag wala kaam* (work that involved using one's mind).'

While caste and class may overlap in practice, many Pandits distinguish between caste and class in discourse. Some Pandits openly speak of losing their positions in the context of class due to the migration. This theme emerged readily during a meeting with Prashant Kumar, a migrant government officer who is actively involved with an NGO that runs a training centre imparting skills in computing and a tailoring centre in Purkhu camp. According to Prashant Kumar the primary problem the migrants face is that displacement resulted in what he terms the '*de-classing*' of the Pandits due to a loss of earlier forms economic support through their traditional occupations and property. Sweety, one of the instructors hired to teach tailoring, pointed out that many of girls coming for training are from poorer families with minimal school level education. Yet Prashant Kumar emphasised that in the past, irrespective of education and economic standing, Pandits would not engage in work such as tailoring. Neeru, a Kashmiri Pandit university lecturer in Jammu who helps run another women's centre in Purkhu camp which also imparts tailoring skills, similarly emphasised that in the past Pandits would not engage in such professions. These attitudes also draw heavily on traditional views of degrading and low status work found among the middle classes and upper castes. From clients and patrons, the Pandits have now become the workers and service providers. Perhaps the clearest statement of this came from my informant Mohan Lal:

We had so much wealth. Now I am myself a *mazdoor* (labourer). I had a bought a car since there was no English medium school in my village. In that car, my children would go to an English medium school far away. I even had a driver for the car. It was that driver who had advised me to go to Jammu for ten-fifteen days.

The discussion of caste also takes place at times independent from class. Many Pandits often openly deny caste in politically correct terms, in the sense that they have never discriminated against lower castes as seen in India. During a political gathering the organisers stated that the Pandits were the only Brahmins to have never discriminated against lower castes. This view is also articulated by well-to-do Kashmiri Pandits, though none of my camp informants have ever made such exhortations. As Chaman Lal, a journalist I had interviewed in New Delhi, had said, 'We have never followed caste. My father would tell other Indians in Kashmir, that we Pandits have never followed caste. We have never had a role in that disease.' As Beteille observes, the urban middle class in India operates in a 'truncated system', whereby caste is disparaged in public and affirmed in private (1996: 161). It can be argued in response that in Kashmir the Pandits were only Hindu caste present and hence dealt with others who were Muslims and not Hindus. As a result, the Pandits have never been involved in the politics of caste as seen in different parts of India.

While Pandits may deny the significance of caste in public, caste is significant in defining who a Kashmiri Pandit is. Ideas of cleanliness, purity and pollution determine everyday household and ritual practice. But caste specifically provides a vocabulary to talk about status as well. As a friend's father had lamented, Brahmins have now become *sudras* due to displacement. My own caste identity also came up for questioning. Kanta,

whom I have cited in the opening of this chapter, once asked me if I was a Brahmin¹⁹. When I replied that I was not, she went to the next logical category, *Rajput*²⁰. When I explained that my parents are *Kayastha*²¹, she was surprised and clearly had never heard the word before. After moment of silence when she looked at me in puzzlement, she whispered a question, 'Are you a *Sudra*?' In another incident, a young Kashmiri journalist, Suresh, shared his views in an informal meeting and said 'We Pandits, you know we Brahmins have a different sort of mind and intelligence. As a fellow Brahmin you will understand.' Suresh however became surprised when I informed him that I was not a Brahmin²². To some extent the Pandits share ideas of being Brahmin which are similar to Brahmins elsewhere. The main shift for the Pandits has been with the migration where as the only Hindus in Kashmir, they are now another Brahmin community in Jammu where other Hindu castes as well as Muslims live.

The displacement of the Pandits as I have mentioned has a resulted in a feeling of a loss of status in terms of class or caste. Claims made on the basis of an exclusive class based discourse of being upper class and middle class are repeatedly made by Pandit that override questions of religious affiliation and caste. As one of my informants, Indira, had shared when I was introduced to her tenant who is a Kashmiri Muslim:

¹⁹ Perhaps Kanta's puzzlement is expected. There are no Kayastha communities in the region and the Hindu castes traditionally associated with scribal professions are Brahmins. Among the Kashmiri Pandits, there is a distinction of *Gor* who are the priests and the *Karkun* who are engaged in secular white collar work. Between these two groups, the *Karkun* have a higher status as they are the patrons of the *Gor*.

²⁰ Another term for Kshatriyas, the upper caste of warriors

²¹ Kayasthas are a Hindu upper caste associated with the traditional occupation of scribes

²² Perhaps it is unfair to mention this. My surname is a common Brahmin surname in Punjab and Jammu.

In the past we were truly secular. We Pandits never lived in ghettos. But those of us who came from good families would mix with only *khandani*²³ people. Pandit, Muslim or Sikh. It did not matter. See, you saw that my new tenant is a Kashmiri Muslim. But it does not matter what he is. His family knows mine for a long time. And he is *khandani*. Didn't you see how he spoke and behaved?

This becomes significant in the context of the conflict and the displacement when Pandits and Muslims from Kashmir find themselves in politically opposed positions. But this comment also directs us to the differentiation in status within the Kashmiri Pandits. In Jammu I have observed a significant level of socio-economic differentiation. There are many migrants who are well-to-do and at present live in comfortable circumstances having recovered materially from the losses of displacement. Their children, who have been raised in Jammu and New Delhi, work in white collar professions and have made a seamless transition from state sector employment to private sector white collar professions.

Alongside this group are migrants who have been severely affected by the displacement and who face financial hardship and are dependent upon relief and aid provided by the state. From their point of view discrepancies within the community are significant. Often, well-to-do migrants are regarded in disparaging terms, to the extent that one informant spoke of the Kashmiri Pandits as being divided between *chota machchli* (small fry) and *bara machchli* (big fish), the latter of whom continue to enjoy a better quality of life. The leadership of community organisations is invariably formed by well-to-do migrants. Expectedly, poorer migrants accuse organisations of ineptitude and corruption and whose members and leaders corner benefits which are otherwise meant

²³ The word *Khandan* is of Persian origin. It refers to family and is often used to refer upper class and high status families.

for them. Yet these sentiments remain private and seldom do the poorer migrants challenge their patrons in public. One is more likely to hear statements of general despair from poorer migrants than from well-to-do migrants outside the camp. Some went as extreme as Purkhu camp resident Janaki Nath, who bitterly commented on the camp roadside, 'We are insects in the gutter. What else is there to be said?'

However poorer migrants cannot be categorised as members of the working class. While my informants from the camp may not hold the levels of educational attainment held by well-to-do migrants, basic literacy levels among poorer Pandits are relatively high. All male heads of household I am acquainted with are literate with at least several years of schooling and were involved in different kinds work including teaching, clerical work and small businesses. Poorer families invest in the education of children and most young men I have met have completed their schooling. Many pursue higher education by attending diploma courses or even acquiring university level education. It is not uncommon to come across poor Pandit families with a member attending university in Jammu or in New Delhi and Maharashtra making use of the reservation quotas provided to the Pandits by the Maharashtra state government.

The aspirations of the poor migrants in many respects are similar to those understood to be characteristic of the lower middle class. In his study of clerks in Britain, Lockwood identifies some of the problems faced in understanding class consciousness of the lower middle class. Clerks occupied a contradictory position as their engagement in non-manual work and educational attainment led them to support bourgeois values. In terms of their economic position and lack of property they were believed to have shared much with the working classes and that their attitudes to the working class were representative of false consciousness (Lockwood 1989: 14-15). However, Lockwood challenges some of the presuppositions, pointing out that in terms of work and income, lower middle

class professionals were comparatively at a greater advantage in comparison to the working class, though he also detected a diversity of views on class among his subjects owing to the gradual devaluing of non-manual work and the clerical profession with economic changes of the time (1989: 211).

A similar issue is at play with the poorer stratum of the Pandits who see themselves as superior to neighbouring communities, often deriding the lower quality of life their neighbours have. In terms of lifestyles, I observed that the basic minimum enjoyed by the migrants is considerably higher than that of neighbouring Dogra localities and camps of labour migrants from eastern and central India, often located in close proximity to the Pandit areas. However the lower strata of the migrant community are conscious of the precariousness of their position and conceptualise the middle class on the whole as a vulnerable group. This is best exemplified in a conversation with Sunil, a migrant who resides in the city and runs a photocopying business in Purkhu Camp:

Number one is someone who is rich, Number two are those in the middle like us, and number three, those who are lower. Here, those who are either number one or number three are the best off. Because those who are number one have money and those who are number three have no expectations. Those who are number one are never poor. Have you ever heard of the rich becoming poor? And those who are number three know that nothing will ever happen for them. But those who are number two know that they can lose everything and they are concerned. They are afraid to go to the Police because they are afraid what people will think. *Bas*. It is these people who get stuck and they never feature in the media.

Their status as lower middle class has also led to problems of unfulfilled aspirations among many Pandits. Young migrants openly speak of their aspirations for work in the private sector as qualified engineers and even hope to earn post-graduate degrees in

business administration. While I have mentioned that poor families ensure the education of children up to a certain extent, higher education is also difficult to sustain financially. While all heads of the families I know are literate, their levels of educational attainment are not high enough to access highly paid work. Many of these families also come from rural Kashmir and lack the exposure possessed by well-to-do members of the migrant community to provide guidance to their wards who are interested in realising their aspirations.

Yet even among these families, the aversion to manual labour remains which exacerbate the conflict between aspirations and the current situation. The quandary of poorer migrants who are aware of the ideal way of being a Kashmiri Pandit facing difficult circumstances is best seen in the case of Satish. Satish, who I feature at various points in the thesis and who currently works as a printer in Jammu, often invited me to visit him at his workplace. During one visit, I sat with him at his workstation, which he shared with another Pandit who was slightly older than him. Since Satish had been working at this press for a long time, he was professionally the senior employee. He was proud of his skill and yet expressed an awareness of the way his work may be seen by others:

I didn't go to college. I am *unpud* (uneducated). But I got into 'technical work'. I had to learn how to do this work. But none of the others in the camp will want to get into to this. The guys of my age feel ashamed to do this work. Ask Rohit (another informant). He won't be able to do this work. They all feel ashamed to do *mazdoori*.

A starker expression of this could be found in the case of two brothers, Romesh and Ashok. Their father, who candidly mentioned that he had only a few years of formal schooling, is angry at the two of them for not finding work, having failed in their school leaving examinations. But Romesh and Ashok are clear about the sort of work they do

not want to do. Ashok in particular, emphasised that he is a Brahman and belongs to 'the highest caste'. One day, pointing to the minibus crews who were repairing their buses in an open space used as a terminal in the camp, Ashok said, 'Those people there are Duggar (Dogra) and they are doing the work Duggars do. But we are Pandits, Brahmins. The highest caste. We can't do that sort of work.' Therefore class and caste matter in shaping the ideal life for Kashmiri Pandits. However for poorer migrants the ideal is a burden they are trapped within.

5.5 The Role of Religion

Religion plays a critical role in defining what it means to be a Kashmiri Pandit. In general there is a sentiment shared among the migrants that power in Jammu and Kashmir lies with the Muslims. Political life in Jammu and Kashmir is regarded by many outside the Kashmir valley as *Mussalman ki Raj* (Rule by Muslims). This sentiment emerges from the fact that much of the attention from the Indian state and other outsiders tends to focus on the Kashmir valley and its inhabitants. For people in Jammu the fact that nearly all Chief Ministers of Jammu and Kashmir have been Kashmiri Muslims, in spite of the difficult history involved in the relationship between Kashmiri politicians and the Indian state, is indicative of the supposed dominance of Muslims in the region. For Pandits being Hindu is associated with being marginalised broadly in the region, first as a small minority in Muslim majority Kashmir and then as a displaced Hindu community residing in an area seemingly marginalised by the Kashmir valley. What I want to raise here in this discussion is how being Hindu is important for the Pandits and the ways in which this reflects upon their shifting fortunes and communal politics in Kashmir.

One of the bases of political community in Kashmir has been the notion of *Kashmiriyat*, which I have approached in an earlier chapter in this thesis. *Kashmiriyat* as a concept is widely referred to by many Kashmiris, political parties and the state and can be minimally defined as a claim of community in Kashmir, which goes beyond being Muslim, Hindu or Sikh. However, as Zutshi (2004) discusses in her monograph of pre-colonial and colonial Kashmir, the meaning of *Kashmiriyat* itself has changed depending on the historical and political economic context as Kashmir moved between Sultanate, Afghan, Mughal, Sikh, Dogra, and Indian state rule. Madan's (1994) critique of *Kashmiriyat* offers other nuances when he argues that relations between Muslims and Pandits in rural Kashmir were shaped by mutual avoidance and contact. The approach Madan presents suggests the dependence of Kashmiri Hindu identity upon Kashmiri Muslim identity. His argument is particularly intriguing when he points out that Muslims and Pandits lived together and but led lives that were starkly separated on certain grounds. Muslims were not allowed by Pandits in particular parts of their homes, especially kitchens due to the risk of pollution. Pandits in particular would not eat food cooked by a Muslim owing to different dietary rules (Madan 1994:186). In some respects, the governing of relations between Pandits and Muslims draw on caste based ideas of purity and pollution. The Pandits were dependent on Muslims for the provision of services such as barbers, supplies of certain food items such as dairy products and even for services as *Doms* (cremation attendants) (Madan 1994: 196-197), which are services provided by lower Hindu castes elsewhere in India. Muslims on the other hand faced no such dependencies on the Pandits.

Much of the data I have collected corroborates Madan's critique. Many of my informants would tell me that they never shared meals with Muslims. During Pandit festivals, walnuts constitute an important part of the *Prasad/Naved* (food offering) and

are distributed to relatives and friends, but were never shared with Muslims owing to their use in ritual. My data also relates to Madan's discussion of how the two communities see each other. Pandits and Muslims hold a particular impression of each other based on positive and negative qualities. Madan pointed out that Muslims regarded Pandits as *kafir* (misbelievers) and patrons. Hence Pandits were seen during the end of the 1950s as 'cowardly', 'corrupt', 'double dealer' and through other similar terms (Madan 1994: 193). While I have a limited pool of data collected from Muslims, my Kashmiri Muslim acquaintances would explain the Pandit exodus as a consequence of the Pandits being a 'cowardly' community, who dominated life in Kashmir and treated Muslims badly in the past. As two Kashmiri Muslim friends stated upfront, 'The Pandits are our Kashmiri brothers. But you must be on your guard. They can make a fool of you.'

According to Madan, Muslims were in turn regarded by Pandits as *mlechcha* (outsiders), 'ritually impure', 'dirty' and 'lustful' and other related terms (1994: 186,191). Class also influences Pandit perceptions of Muslims. Some Kashmiri Muslims friends had taught me some words and phrases in Koshur. When I listed the few words I had learnt randomly in a conversation with Mrs. Wanchu who is a staff member at a local college ranging from greetings to vegetable names and kinship terminology, she seemed impressed until I cited the phrase *akh dam* (give me one sip). She immediately asked if I had been spending time with Muslims. When I told her that this phrase was indeed taught to me by a Muslim, she urged me not to use the phrase as it was Muslim and 'lower class'. The resort to class is related to the claims made by my informants of also being better educated in contrast to the vast majority of Muslims who are seen as uneducated. A general sentiment among the community is that Muslims received education much later and only through Pandit teachers. Misri's (1985, 1989)

study of childhood in rural Kashmir furthermore shows that Pandit children were socialised by their parents by being made to see undesirable behaviour as Muslim. Pandit identity hence is relational and an obverse to the Kashmiri Muslim. To be a Hindu requires the presence of a Muslim and vice versa.

While Gottschalk points out that these developments in communal politics in India are recent, it is difficult to say if the same applies for Kashmir. Historical evidence suggests that not only were a higher proportion of Pandits able to access modern formal education before the Muslims (Rai 2004: 250, Zutshi 2004: 181), texts written by authors such as Koul (1991) and Kilam (2003), emphasise the differences between Pandits and Muslims and which were first written decades before the current conflict. The political sensitivities between Pandits and Muslims have also been documented, suggested that points of unease and uncertainty have been in existence in the past (Zutshi 2004). What can be conclusively stated is that differences between Pandits and Muslims have acquired significance at least from the 1980s, since the Anantnag riots of 1986, which I have referred to in the second chapter.

In the present, many of the same terms Madan encountered are still used. During a visit to the Bhan household, Mr. Bhan shared memories of life in Kashmir explaining to his granddaughters how Muslims taste food by putting the cooking ladle directly to their lips polluting all of the food cooked, suggesting that the prejudice that Muslims lack a sense of hygiene still persists. Muslim 'lust' plays an important part in the migration narrative especially with regards to the slogan reported by Pandits demanding that Pandit men leave but that they should leave their women behind. More generally, Muslims are seen as intolerant of those who are not of their faith, as opposed to the 'broad-minded' Hindu.

Questions of status also figure in distinctions between Pandits and Muslims. While Muslim critiques focus on the socio-economic dominance of the Pandits in Kashmir, Pandits have often seen themselves as having earned their position due to their levels of education. As I have mentioned earlier, while there is stratification within the Pandits, the community as a whole is regarded by others and themselves as having enjoyed a high socio-economic status in Kashmir with a proportionately greater share in white collar professions and property in the valley. Furthermore, several well-to-do informants emphasise that not only did they constitute a significant section of professional fields such as the bureaucracy, education and medicine, they were valued in Kashmir for being competent, skilled and trustworthy. One man had even commented that the Muslims preferred a Pandit doctor over a Muslim doctor or having their daughters tutored by male Pandit teachers because Muslim men could not be trusted.

The comparison of Pandit and Muslim has moreover a further dimension which is a recent development. For many Pandits, being a faithful Hindu is important. Furthermore, as Hindus, they have an autochthonous claim on Kashmir, citing the fact that many Muslims have Brahmin surnames, which they offer as proof in demonstrating that the Muslims in Kashmir were originally Hindu. It must be mentioned that that few Muslims dispute this. Other Pandits argue that Kashmiri Muslims cannot claim Kashmir as Islam is a 'foreign' religion, preceded by Hinduism in the valley. Yet being Hindu has also come to have negative connotations. Being Hindu means being disunited, individualistic, arrogant, selfish, greedy and dependent on others. A migrant, who was introduced to me as a 'leader', had surprised me by attributing the migration not only to Islamic nationalism in Kashmir, but also to Pandit arrogance. According to him:

A problem with us is that we never do anything for ourselves. If I want a glass of water, I won't go and get it. I will send someone else below. This is what happened in Kashmir. We had *ghamand* (arrogance).

Muslims in contrast are seen as united and loyal to their own. A friend of mine defined a Muslim as someone who will do anything for his *mazhab* (religion). One prominent activist had stated during a conversation, 'The Muslim is a fine man. The best man there is. They make good friends. Many of our friends were Muslims. But when they get together, they change.' This statement is expressed by many who had spent a significant part of their lives in Kashmir and enjoyed the friendship of many Muslims. Yet for many Pandits, Muslims are seen as a single collective who will abandon everything, including friendships, in defence of their faith. The processions cited by many in discussing their flight and the continued politics in the valley are indicative of Muslim unity. Pandits often describe themselves as peaceful, intelligent, honest and educated, which in turn prevents unity. The attributes of Muslims, largely negative, appear to be envied especially when Muslims are seen to be a united community devoted to their faith, which allegedly enables them to access power. While Pandits regard themselves as morally superior, they see themselves on some grounds as inferior, which prevents them from organising and coming together to achieve political ends. The Muslim, while reviled in light of recent politics, also becomes an object of envy. These formations resonate with Hindu nationalist politics, which is premised on correcting the weaknesses of Hindus (Jaffrelot 1996, Van der Veer 1994), which will be explored in greater detail in the next chapter.

5.6 Conclusion

This chapter began with the question of what it means to be a forced migrant for displaced Kashmiri Pandits. The initial trajectory that informs the discussion is directed towards discussions of loss and especially the loss of status faced by the dispossessed. While earlier research have discussed the loss of status and socio-economic well being of forced migrants in the period after displacement, I have explored how the loss of status is connected to historical conceptions of community and political and nationalist formations. However, status is dependent upon a history and understanding of identity in which socio-economic markers of class and caste interact with communitarian ideas. In the context of a conflict marked by nationalist ideologies, a history of identity exists among the Pandits, which influence aspirations and questions of identity.

Historically speaking, Kashmiri Pandits are associated with having enjoyed high socio-economic and political positions in Kashmir and in India. Their caste status as Brahmins also contributes to a stereotype of the Pandits as a community of elites. The concept of identity has been subject to criticism as ambiguous in practice (Brubaker and Cooper 2000). Nevertheless, questions of identity remain significant for communities. For the Kashmiri Pandits, their identities as Kashmiris and Hindus are essential to understanding their aspirations and claims. Loss among the Kashmiri Pandits therefore must be understood in terms of being unable to meet the expectations of the ideal Kashmiri Pandit identity. The ideal Kashmiri Pandit is not merely a claim for identity but is a narrative of the 'good life', which many expected they would have achieved had politics not intruded. The qualities that defined a Kashmiri Pandit serve as a popular ideal type. It must be seen as a point of comparison to understand the notion of decline and loss as discussed by the Pandits.

While there is a discussion of loss in terms of culture and language that has been articulated by different communities of Kashmiri Pandit migrants over time, their displacement in the face of the conflict and insurgency in Kashmir is significant, as the terms of loss and identity operate are influenced by modern political formations such as the nation-state. The category of the 'migrant' shows the extent to which Pandit identity is shaped by state policy. While the Pandits find the category of the 'migrant' to be debilitating, they have also engaged and responded to it in ways that suggest that category is a political and economic resource. Religious affiliation also continues to play a role in shaping the politics of identity among the Pandits. While Hindu identity continues to be defined in relation to Muslims, the notions of being Hindu and Muslim are shaped by the conflict and that resonate with the dominant trajectories in communal politics in South Asia. For the Pandits, being Hindu is increasingly characterised as being weak that resonates with Hindu nationalist politics in India. The difference however is the claim made on the past. Unlike dominant Hindu nationalist discourse which locates its ideal in the classical period of Indian history, the sense of decline among the Pandits faces a considerably compressed time frame, essentially limited to transformations in the post-colonial period.

While the Pandit ideal provides a monolithic notion of identity, in practice there is a great deal of stratification, which draws on a mix of concerns from caste and class. While all Pandits profess a claim to high socio-economic status, a large proportion of my informants are aware of differentiation of status within the community. Throughout this thesis, I distinguish between poor and well-to-do migrants. However the discussion of class is complicated by the fact that in terms of values and professional history and aspirations, all Pandits can be located across the spectrum of the middle classes. It is their location within the middle class that influences the way the experience of forced

migration is shaped. It is poorer section of lower middle-class migrants who express an extreme sense loss especially as there is a disjuncture between aspirations to meet the demands of the Kashmiri Pandit ideal and their current lived reality.

However, poorer migrants are unable to break away from the stereotype they are associated with. As a result, they experience material loss and the loss of status and respect harder than others. The experience of displacement among the Kashmiri Pandits is thus to be understood as an existence in which they are trapped within the Kashmiri Pandit ideal. The discussion of identity, status and conceptions of the ideal life are also critical for situating any discussion of suffering and victimhood articulated by the Pandits. The conceptions of identity and status provide the key vocabulary for making political claims to the Indian nation-state and for making demands for services and welfare of a certain quality. Having discussed what it means to be a Kashmiri Pandit migrant in the context of displacement over time and ongoing insecurity, the following chapters of this thesis will examine the ways in which the Pandits engage with the Indian nation-state.

Chapter 6

Making a Claim on the Nation: The politics of Victimhood and Marginality among Kashmiri Pandits

This chapter explores the attempts of Kashmiri Pandit migrants to claim status as victims of violence. In order to understand the politics of victimhood, it is necessary to assess the repertoires and vocabularies of victimhood employed by the Pandits. This chapter examines this theme by drawing upon testimonies of violence and displacement in the past and political mobilisation efforts by Pandit organisations in the present. I argue that political claim-making efforts are caught in a tension that results from the claims made by Pandits of having experiences similar to other Indians who have faced grievous trauma and violence, and then asserting that their experiences are unique in comparison with other Indians. The chapter also argues that success in claiming victimhood is dependent upon the political context in which the claims are presented and counter narratives that challenge the experience and politics of the Pandits. I conclude the chapter by examining what effect this may have in shaping narratives of violence and suffering.

6.1 Victimhood

One of the defining features of politics in Jammu and Kashmir is the claim made by different communities of the region to being victims of violence and gross injustice. The Kashmiri Pandits are not an exception and articulate their own discourse of victimhood. During one conversation, a political activist had said:

When the earthquake happened in Kashmir, the whole world came to help them.

But when we were made to flee and came to Jammu, no one came. No one cared.

We were on the streets. No Hindustan *Sarkar*, no UN, no partywale. No one from the public. No one came to help us. No one cares for us.

On the whole, there is a sentiment among migrants of their experiences being ignored and unrecognised. But what can be further discerned in this statement is a set of claims for recognition from different groups, which range from international humanitarian organisations to Indian political parties, Indian citizens and most crucially the Indian nation-state. Kashmiri Pandit politics is characterised by a claim made by and on behalf of migrants upon the Indian state and polity, which can be summarised as follows:

The Kashmiri Pandits must be recognised and helped because they are Indian Nationals who have 'sacrificed' for India. Hence the Indian nation state and other Indians are obligated to help them.

Studies of violence and suffering to great extent explicitly and implicitly deal with victimhood. Various authors such as Das and Kleinman (2000) and Daniel (1996) have shown how violence and suffering can produce different forms of subjectivities during and in the aftermath of violence. Anthropologists have paid special attention to the processes for claiming victimhood, demonstrating that the claims are subject to contingencies of local contexts and institutions. In some case the state plays an important role in shaping the discourse of victimhood. Authors such as Das (1995a) and Petryna (2002) discuss the problems of representation in the case of the Bhopal gas disaster and the Chernobyl nuclear plant disaster, where the victims had to adjust their experience and biographies according to legal parameters to secure official recognition and assistance. Similarly, displaced peoples have often faced the problem of having to adjust and fit into defined categories in order to secure recognition and consequent assistance (Centlivres and Centlivres 1998).

Nevertheless, communities that have faced violence and trauma also respond to and harness notions of victimhood in different ways. For example, Chatterjee's (1992) work on East Bengali refugees describes how refugees challenged and confronted the state, using victimhood as a basis for political mobilisation within the community. Victimhood has also served as a resource to legitimate nationalist and state based ideologies. This has been shown in studies of Hindu nationalism where the historical victimisation of Hindus in India is used to justify Hindu nationalist politics (Jaffrelot 1996, Pandey 2006), while in Israel the experience of the holocaust is employed by the state to legitimise the state and security related policies (Young 1993, Zertal 2000).

The ability of the state to seek legitimacy through victimhood is often challenged by groups who locate themselves in opposition to the state (Biner 2006). Yet, the ability of communities to harness victimhood as a political resource remains contingent and uncertain, subject to the political context they inhabit. Using the case of Protestant victims of violence in Northern Ireland, Donnan and Simpson (2007) suggest that victims of violence may desist from open expressions of victimhood owing to fears of incurring further violence. They may also see little utility in it if a willing audience for the claims, such as the state, is not present. In other words, victimhood constitutes a particular field of politics (Jefferies and Candea 2006: 289). While I agree with this position I intend to argue further that victimhood must be seen in relation to other political fields especially the nation state and nationalist discourse and practice.

In her ethnographic of study of Kashmiri Pandits who relocated to New Delhi in 1990, Duschinski discusses Pandit claims of victimhood. One meeting she writes about is particularly revealing:

As I introduced myself to the president of the organization in the main office, one of the men standing across the room broke off his conversation and strode towards me, his fist in the air. "She will tell them," he announced, "that India is displacing Indians for the sake of India...I must have looked confused, because the president waved his hand to silence their laughter and said thoughtfully, "she will see it in time." This it turned out, was a powerful claim in community discourse: that the Indian state, through its specific policies and programs, was responsible for the displacement of its own Indian citizens, the Kashmiri Hindus, in the name of a specific vision of the Indian nation (2007: 90-91).

In another article, Duschinski identifies a particular way of presenting the history and politics of Kashmir which argues against the idea that conflict emerged out of the political and economic deprivation of Kashmiris. Rather, Kashmiri nationalism is presented as an Islamic fundamentalist movement assisted by Pakistan to destabilise the Indian state. The Kashmiri Pandits as Hindus in turn represented the Indian nation state in Kashmir. Yet they have not received the recognition due to them from the Indian state (Duschinski 2008: 49-50).

Based on the data I have collected, I agree with Duschinski's observations. However I want to argue that a certain tension exists in the claims of victimhood made by the Kashmiri Pandits. I will show that the claim is used to express a commonality of experience and sentiment with other citizens of the Indian nation-state. Kashmiri politics is largely understood as a demand for independence and secession from the Indian nation-state. By stating their support for Indian nationalism, the Pandits locate themselves within the Indian nation-state and outside Kashmiri nationalist formations. Alongside the claim made by the Pandits as Indian citizens who have sacrificed for the Indian nation-state, is the desire to emphasise experiences that set them apart from other

Indian citizens. The tension is a result of the Pandits asserting their rights and claims as Indian citizens, but who are also unlike other Indian citizens.

6.2 Victims like other Indians

It was a cold winter morning when I reached the gates of *Jantar Mantar*, the 18th century Observatory located in the heart of New Delhi. There is a stretch of road that runs along one side of the monument where protests and demonstrations regularly take place without sanction from the state. The demonstration I was interested in following was organised by the All India Kashmiri Samaj (AIKS), a prominent Pandit organisation based in New Delhi. When I had reached the venue a group of people, mostly middle aged, had already gathered. A young participant was distributing pamphlets to pedestrians passing by while his associates were putting posters against an iron fence that ran alongside the pavement. Office goers, flaneurs and tourists took the pamphlets almost as a reflex, occasionally stealing a glance and then moving on.

The posters they had tied to the wrought iron fence of the Jantar Mantar complex depicted a map of Jammu and Kashmir as featured in Indian maps, comprising the borders of the former kingdom. The demonstration finally commenced when a group of approximately fifty individuals took their place on white mattresses laid on the pavement. The programme of the demonstration remained simple, consisting of a series of speakers lecturing in Koshur and Hindi. They had to compete with other demonstrations taking place simultaneously in the area such as a gathering of the Small Businesses Association, a group demanding autonomy for a district in West Bengal and a Tibetan solidarity rally. In the course of the day, the air was filled by competing sound systems, with voices and slogans spilling into each other. At various points the members of the AIKS shouted the slogan from the pamphlet and banners: 'Save Kashmiri

Pandits, to save Kashmir, to Save India.’ This was soon followed by a slogan shouted by the participants in unison:

Kashmir Bachao, Kashmiri Pandit Bachao. Kashmiri Pandit bachaoge, Kashmir bachaonge, desh Bachaonge (Save Kashmir, Save Kashmiri Pandits. If you save Kashmiri Pandits, Kashmir will be saved and the country will be saved).

Further down the road, another demonstration organised by the Kashmiri Samiti Delhi (KSD) was already in progress. Here, the sloganeering adopted an earthier tone while the members presented a large straw effigy with a prominent beard representing ‘terrorism’ that was set alight. The slogans included:

Yadi Kashmir main rehena hoga, Vande Mataram kehna hoga

(if you wish to stay in Kashmir/ you must say hail the motherland).

Pakistan Hai Hai, Musharaf Hai Hai,

desh ki gaddaron ko, goli maron salon ko

(Shame on Pakistan, shame on Musharaf, the traitors to the country, shoot the bastards).

This vignette emerges from my field notes of ‘Holocaust Day’, a commemorative event that takes place annually on 19 January in Jammu and New Delhi organised by different groups that claim to represent the Pandits. This event marks the day when mass processions took place all over Kashmir in 1990 demanding independence from India. I start with a glimpse of this event organised in New Delhi to introduce the claim the Pandits make of being a part of the Indian nation-state. At first we can treat the content of the event as a straightforward statement, that the Kashmir valley is an integral part of the Indian nation-state and that the situation in Kashmir is critical to the future of the

Indian state. But it also suggests an intertwining of the fates of the Kashmiri Pandits with India, where the survival of one implies the survival of the other. The Kashmiri Pandits embody the Indian nation-state and the idea of India.

Support for Indian nationalism is heavily implicated in everyday conversation among Pandits. Many of my informants emphasise that they have always been supporters of India as opposed to Kashmiri Muslims, who are often be spoken of as 'Pakistanis'. Such sentiments vary from mild statements made during moments of pleasure at the news of the Indian cricket team winning a match, to recollections of the processions in support of independence in Kashmir when demands for freedom were linked with demands for the Pandits to leave. One man I had met in Muthi camp even shared a story of his attempt to warn the authorities of a militant group attempting to assassinate the Governor of Jammu and Kashmir to emphasise their opposition to secessionist politics and their loyalty to India.

Their position with regards to the Kashmiri Muslims also expresses some of the ambiguity with which Muslims are regarded. Often the Indian state is criticised by the Pandits for being soft on militants and those who oppose the Indian state, often extending their experiences with contemporary events that tie with the discourse on terrorism. For example, during fieldwork, the Indian news media reported that a bomb attack had taken place in the town of Ayodhya, allegedly by Islamist militants²⁴. For many of my informants this brought back memories of the first year of conflict or reminded younger migrants of experiences shared with them by their elders. As my informant Indira had once said, 'Before, only we had seen all of this, with the exception

²⁴ Ayodhya is town in northern India which a flashpoint in Hindu Muslim relations due to a dispute of Mosque that Hindu nationalists believe was built on shrine that marked the birthplace of Lord Rama. The dispute eventually led to the destruction of the Mosque followed by large scale communal riots in 1992.

of the Punjabis. Now terrorism is common everywhere. We can understand what people are going through.’ Satish, a Purkhu camp resident and one of my close informants was more direct when he said ‘Wherever you look it is always these people who cause problems. Which people you ask? Those who say *allah-hu-akbar*. Just watch all the films, the news, it is always them.’

In some respects the experience of Kashmiris raises classic questions regarding nationalism in terms of issues of power, hegemony, resistance and oppression (Alonso 1994: 393). Often, the ways in which politicised forms of community are understood, reproduce earlier experiences in the sub-continent. In his study of memories of the Indian Partition, Pandey (2001) points out that the formation of the Indian and Pakistani states produced Hindus and Muslim. The conflict in Kashmir, with the emergence of the movement for independence and the insurgency and the exodus of the Pandits, has similarly produced the ways in which Kashmiri Muslims and Kashmiri Hindus are understood in the present. Critically, the conflict has established the loyalties of the Kashmiris with regards to the Indian nation state. While Jammu and Kashmir is treated as an integral part of India, Kashmiri Muslims are often portrayed as a threat to the Indian nation, which necessitates stern military action to enforce the national order (Duschinski 2009). Kashmiri Pandits in contrast are made into the patriotic constituent of the India nation-state and citizenry.

The questions of nationalism and expressions of loyalty or resistance to the nation-state have been interrogated in earlier studies. It has been argued that nationalism and the idea of nation-state are often violently imposed upon communities who inhabit socio-economic and communal margins (Mayaram 1997). For Appadurai, patriotism is an ‘unstable sentiment, which thrives only at the level of the nation-state’ (1993: 413). Yet, Spencer argues for the need to constantly interrogate nationalist politics and the

idea of the nation-state, pointing out that many ostensibly imported ideas, such as democracy and the nation state have become a part of politics the inhabitants of South Asian countries firmly believe in (Spencer 1990a, 2007). Furthermore, the idea of the nation may still represent a positive utopian idea for many people in post-colonial states (Gupta 2004: 271).

Nevertheless the response of communities to nationalist ideas varies tremendously. As authors such as Jean-Klein (2001) observe in the case of Palestinian political activity during the Intifada, Palestinians engaged with different conceptions of nationalist politics, drawing on both hegemonic forms and practices in the realm of the everyday, which are counter hegemonic. Similarly, Allen (2006) points out that certain forms of mass politics essential to nationalist mobilisation such as the commemoration of martyrs have different levels of acceptance and approval among Palestinians. This suggests the need to be sensitive to a wide range of possibilities when dealing with claims made on the grounds of nationalism.

For many Pandits, the response of the state and political parties has been inadequate since 1990. Various issues are referred to by the migrants that arouse a great deal of anger and disillusionment. These include the continuation of a relief programme (which is essentially of a short term nature and merely updated periodically) and contradictory statements from politicians and bureaucrats concerning their resettlement in Kashmir or elsewhere. Often the quality of relief and assistance, which I explore in greater detail in the following chapter, is heavily criticised. Madan Lal, one of my informants from Purkhu camp, believes this is the result of a policy of 'slow poisoning' towards the Pandits. Another phrase I encountered many times is that the Indian state's treatment of the migrants is 'step-motherly'. But few are able to explain why the Indian state mistreats them. Sunil Kumar, a local activist, feels that the Pandits are too few in

number to constitute a 'vote bank' and hence secure the interest of politicians. Others are further troubled by the attention the inhabitants of the valley receive, which contributes to a sense of being ignored and neglected.

The experience of the Pandits parallels that of East Bengali refugees from the Indian partition. East Bengali refugees argued for their incorporation and acceptance in India drawing on an ideology that stressed the connection of Bengal with India. The contradiction they faced was that while they were in their native land of Bengal, they also found themselves in Pakistan and outside India. Hence the refugees pursued an active process of representation in which they were not outsiders but 'sons of the nation' (Chatterjee 1992: 111). Furthermore, authors such as Chatterjee and Ghosh identify another strand when refugees often emphasised the involvement of Bengalis in history of the anti-colonial movement in India. Hence the East Bengalis were not only 'sons of the nation' they were also 'liberators' of the nation (Chatterjee 1992: 115, Ghosh 2004: 34). These developments connect with an earlier observation concerning the refugee label. The East Bengalis employed the word 'refugee' to critique the Indian state since the continued presence of refugees, rather than citizens, meant that the state had not succeeded in accommodating them (Chatterjee 1992:87).

If we return to the vignette this section begins with, overt political claims stress the connection between Kashmir and India. Kashmir is often described as an *atoot ang* or an inseparable part of India in popular Indian nationalism. This rhetoric also surfaces in public and private discussions among Pandits as well. Pandits emphasise that Jawaharlal Nehru, one of the leaders of the anti-colonial movement and first prime minister of India was a Kashmiri Pandit. Therefore the Pandits have also made invaluable contributions to the social and political life of the Indian nation-state. Similar references are made to a host of prominent members of the Indian

Administrative Service, the influential bureaucratic elite of the Indian state, who were of Kashmiri Pandit origin. Like the East Bengali refugees from half a century before, the Pandits too are 'sons' and 'liberators' of the nation. There is an essential difference that distinguishes between the Pandits and East Bengali refugees. Chatterjee's informants were officially refugees having crossed the borders of one nation-state, while the Pandits are internally displaced, remaining within the borders of Indian administered territory. Hence they also present themselves as 'refugees in their own country'.

The Pandits also find their forms of political expression affected by certain ideologies of nationalist politics that have come to prevail in India since independence. Interestingly Kashmiri Pandit political expression draws upon and connects in different ways with both Hindu nationalist politics, as well as secular nationalist politics. What the Pandit rhetoric essentially shares with Hindu nationalist ideology is the notion of the nation being under attack. According to Jaffrelot one of the integral features of the latter is the sentiment of vulnerability and insecurity, whereby Hindu society is threatened by internal and external forces in the form of non-Hindus (1996: 338, 342-344). This perception of threat has a long history in the context of Hindu nationalism. For instance, Datta (1999) locates the imagining of Hindus in India as threatened by other communities, forcing the former into becoming a 'dying race', as early as the 1920s. Hansen's study of Hindu nationalism makes a similar argument, adding the importance of considering the claim to territory (1999: 78-79).

For many of my informants India is a 'Hindu' country. A region like Jammu is often referred to as the 'Hindu belt' as opposed to Kashmir, which is dominated by Muslims. They also insist that it was their presence that enabled the Indian state to claim the Kashmir valley. The connection appears to be further fostered by allusions often made

by Pandits and their representatives of the diminished strength of Hindus in general and the alleged preferential treatment given to Muslims in Kashmir and other parts of India, which have featured in broader debates regarding secularism and communalism in India. The Kashmiri Pandits therefore make a claim on the Indian nation state that is caught within ideological currents of the political mainstream in India.

One of the consequences of the exodus has been the association of the Pandits with Hindu nationalist parties and organisations such as the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and the Shiv Sena. In the early days of displacement many of the demonstrations by and on behalf of the migrants were supported by Hindu nationalist organisations while prominent leaders of the BJP purported to represent the Pandits in parliament. It has been suggested that the crisis in Kashmir and the mass migration of Pandits gave Hindu nationalists one important cause for political mobilisation (Varshney 2002: 74). Many Pandit organisations are led by individuals who have been associated with Hindu nationalist organisations in the past. As Duschinski observes:

Hindu nationalist rhetoric presented the anxieties of the Kashmiri Hindu migrant community as a mirror to the anxieties of the Indian middle classes, who felt themselves vulnerable to increasing mobilization among minority and impoverished class....In the 1990s , Kashmiri Hindu community organizations positioned themselves within this framework through their own forms of community discourse (Duschinski 2008: 43).

Nevertheless the relationship between Kashmiri Pandit politics and Hindu nationalism must be treated with caution. To express anger at Muslims and to draw upon ideas of victimhood and nation, which are similar to Hindu nationalist constructions does not make one a Hindu nationalist. As Pandey points out, both Hindu nationalists as well as secular nationalists drew on a particular construction of the past framed by colonial

historiography, which sought to establish the unity of all communities in India (Pandey 1993: 984). Similarly, the Pandits also make their claims as a constituent of the Indian nation in both its Hindu nationalist and secular forms. Hence appeals to India are also made in secular terms. Bhushan Zaru, a former university professor, articulated this perspective eloquently:

I support India. What the separatists want is an Islamic state, a theocratic state. India is not that. It is a *pluralist* state. It is a secular state which allows for all kinds of people to live side by side.

These sentiments can also be encountered as easily as those predicated on faith. During a visit to the Railway Camp, an unfinished state office building that had been used to accommodate a migrants, I was struck by graffiti scrawled on the wall. While much of the writing had faded, part of the text that remained stated, 'I am a Kashmiri Pandit. I believed in democracy and in the Indian state...' Such statements are uttered across the socio-economic spectrum of the Pandit community, heard more prominently among well off and better educated migrants. This relates with pre-existing dilemmas of secular politics in India when the Indian state is criticised on the one hand for privileging 'disloyal' minorities at the expense of the 'loyal' majority, and on the other hand enforcing the will of the majority upon minorities (Madan 1997, Vanaik 1997). The Pandits, as a Kashmiri minority, locate themselves as part of the loyal majority of India and yet express disappointment towards the Indian state for the lack of recognition and support.

While the Pandits locate themselves within the Indian nation-state, they are also simultaneously located outside Kashmiri politics. What I observed among the Pandits is a view of having been marginalised from Kashmir political formations and I refer to

marginalisation as an inability to connect to Kashmiri politics. In the chapter two, I showed that the Kashmiri Pandits were surprised by the violence and the new form of politics that broke into the public sphere. They were and remain unable to identify with or understand the demand for Kashmiri independence from the Indian state. The demonstrations and the processions witnessed in Kashmir at the time were deeply alienating for the Pandits.

It is difficult to determine if the Pandits were indeed unaware of developments in Kashmir. In a memoir of life before the troubles in Kashmir, Sudha Koul writes about her family's life in Kashmir in the post-Independence period. Her evocative account provides a rare glimpse of everyday life in a Pandit family and their hopes and dreams. However, throughout her recollections, which are seemingly innocent of politics, there lurk significant undercurrents. She writes about a meeting with Prime Minister Nehru, a moment which she felt proud of as she had met an important nationalist figure who happened to be a Kashmiri Pandit. However an incident which bewildered her was of a demonstration in the 1960s in rural Kashmir in support of Pakistan and against India, which she was unable to comprehend (Koul 2002: 106).

To some extent this inability to comprehend certain strands in Kashmiri politics suggests the Pandits have been politically marginalised in Kashmir and find themselves displaced, politically and ideologically. The Pandit account of a 'popular' event diverges significantly from Muslim recollections and news reports of the time. From the perspective of the Pandits, the processions for independence alongside actual events of violence and killings were not only threatening, they also situate the Pandits outside Kashmir and within the Indian state. But even in contemporary politics, the inability of the Pandits to relate to Kashmiri politics has persisted.

One of the ways that this is demonstrated can be seen with groups emerging in New Delhi. One of these groups calls itself 'Roots in Kashmir' (RIK), which is a collective made up of members who were children during the time of displacement and who came of age in exile. The members are engaged in white collar professions in the private sector and appear to be well settled in New Delhi, seemingly indistinguishable from other metropolitan Indians. Unlike their elders in pre-existing organisations, the members of RIK have adopted a confrontational approach overtly challenging Kashmiri nationalists and those who sympathise with them. After I had met members in New Delhi I attended two demonstrations they had organised. The first demonstration was put together quickly to challenge one organised by Association of Parents of Disappeared Persons (APDP), a Kashmiri organisation that fights for the rights of families who have members that have gone missing and were most probably murdered in extrajudicial assassinations carried out by the state security forces.

The protest by RIK was not directed at the APDP per se. The actual target of the demonstration was Yasin Malik, one of the most prominent Kashmiri secessionist leaders, who was a part of the gathering organised by the APDP. The slogans they shouted comprised of condemnations of Yasin Malik²⁵, specifically '*Kashmiri Pandit ki Qatilon ko Phasi do!*' (Hang the murderers of Kashmiri Pandits). Another slogan used was a simple '*Hindustan Zindabad*' (Long live India). One member talked to the Police constables who stood guard telling them about the Kashmiri Pandit migration and that Kashmiri Muslims are the source of terrorism, and yet complained when their rights are violated. After the protest I realised that some of the members of RIK were unaware of

²⁵ Yasin Malik's organisation, the Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front, was a former militant group and one of the first armed groups to enter the scene in Kashmir. The JKLF claims to speak for the whole state and the people who inhabit it and also to not discriminate on religion. However the Pandit migration and selective killings took place when the JKLF was active as a militant group.

the work of APDP. What mattered for the participants was the chance to protest against Yasin Malik. As one participant commented, 'Disappeared persons? No. All those disappeared persons are not disappeared. They are all in militant training camps in Pakistan.'

The members of RIK in many respects are different from their predecessors, taking a directly confrontational approach. However they reproduce a politics that locates Kashmir within India and reveal further alienation from political currents in the Kashmir valley. This vignette illustrates the persistence of a quandary faced by the Kashmiri Pandits. The claim made on the Indian nation state is thus subject to different concerns. At one level, there is a connection made between the Pandits, Kashmir and India in terms of Hindu nationalist as well as secular nationalist ideas. These claims are subject to the indisputable status of the Pandits as Indian citizens. The Pandits also locate themselves conspicuously outside secessionist nationalism as well. Hence the Kashmiri Pandits are victims like other Indians. In the following section I will discuss another aspect of the Pandit claim for victimhood in which they distinguish themselves from other Indians.

6.3 Victims unlike other Indians

Violence constitutes an important component in the repertoire of political action by representatives of both separatists as well as the Indian state. The experience of violence has also shaped the way social and political life is understood by the inhabitants of the state, often framing citizens of Jammu and Kashmir into the triangle of victim, perpetrator and witness (Riches 1986). Violence in the form of militant actions, operations by security forces and the overall militarization suggests that it is the corner stone of everyday life in the Kashmir valley.

The city of Jammu, which has been relatively peaceful over the years, offers another view of the way conflict can be understood. Much of this seeming contrast with its counterpart, Srinagar, is possible through its location in geo-political terms. Nevertheless, there is a large presence of the Indian state in the form of military bases and camps across the city. The daily presence of violence at a short distance in Kashmir is experienced with regular news reports. A local newspaper publishes a daily body count of casualties. Military, para-military and police personnel are also empowered to conduct random frisking and identity verifications in public.

Violence is never far away. In 2006, two massacres had taken place in the Pahari regions that divide the Jammu Plains from the Kashmir valley and in Udhampur district, which is a two hour's drive from Jammu. The massacres were widely reported and discussed in Jammu for some time as it involved the murder of Hindu villagers by militants, though little was known with regards to the identity of the culprits. Hence, while Jammu is not defined by violence, it is still affected by a warzone that is only a short distance away. Unlike other cities in India, all strata of society in Jammu are affected by and show an interest in the conflict. Middle and upper class residents are not immune from security checks. Amidst this environment, how do we look at the experience of violence among the Kashmiri Pandits? In this section I intend to examine the discourse of violence to show how the Pandits present their experience as unique in comparison with other Indians.

Much has been written and discussed concerning violence. However, the notion of violence remains difficult to define (Bourgois and Scheper-Hughes 2004: 1-2, Whitehead 2004). Violence is a meaningful act. As Chatterjee points out:

Violence may be committed for vengeance, for punishment, for justice, for practising an occupation, for a host of reasons...but rarely, perhaps never, as a senseless act without deliberate cause (2005: 97).

In areas where populations have been exposed to conflict in the form of armed struggle and state oppression, acts of violence are constitutive of political expression and social memory and shape subjectivities and political processes (Das 1995a, Das and Kleinman 2000). However Whitehead argues that while studies have explored the production of violence, 'it tells us little of the meanings of violence that are so essential to the cultural production of both perpetrators and victims' (2004: 64). He proposes the need to focus on the 'poetics' of violence understood in terms symbols and ideas associated with violence and how these symbols are used politically (2004: 68).

In his discussion of everyday violence, Kleinman makes a number of observations that will be of relevance to this chapter. Apart from exploring the multiple forms of violence, he argues:

Violence is what lends to culture its authoritativeness. Violence creates (and re-emerges from) fear, anger and loss- what might be called the infra-political emotions. Violence in this perspective, is the vector of cultural processes that work through the salient images, structures and engagement of everyday life to shape local worlds (Kleinman 2000: 238).

For the Kashmiri Pandits, the raw material for any discussion of violence is situated in the first year of the conflict with the emergence of militant groups, the breakdown of law and order and the early years of displacement. These experiences constitute the subject of their account and are drawn upon to differentiate themselves from other Indian nationals. Hence I will discuss another aspect of victimhood whereby the Pandits

assert their difference from other Indian citizens and examine how particular ways of discussing violence are drawn upon to lend authority to their claims.

As Das and Nandy point out, one of the problems of approaching violence has been a tendency to present communal violence in equalising terms, with each group violating the other in equal measure (1985: 189). However much of the evidence collected and analysed suggests that communal violence in South Asia has been one sided with one group, usually a minority, facing the brunt of losses in terms of life and property (Peabody 2009: 372). One of the ways of understanding the meaning of violence according to context has been examined in different cases by Das (1990, 1995a) and Spencer (1990, 1992). Both Das and Spencer have demonstrated the importance of understanding violence according to the logic of everyday life and in relation to local political and socio-economic contexts. According to Spencer, violence is 'far from being an eruption of unreasoning pre-social passions, it seems to display not merely a logic, but a logic which is both moral and collective' (1992: 271).

Das and Spencer's discussion of collective violence in the form of rampaging mobs and crowds raise many points of interest. In particular, the role of menacing crowds and rumour has been examined as the context that justifies aggressive violence. Spencer writes about the justification of attacks against Tamils in Sri Lanka by Sinhallas due to rumours regarding the presence of Tamil Tigers in areas where there were none (1990: 618). Similarly, anti-Sikh riots in New Delhi where Sikhs were attacked by large Hindu mobs was justified on the grounds that a Sikh had assassinated the Indian prime minister and further exacerbated by rumours of Sikh violence and fear of retribution (Srinivasan 1990: 314-315). Das's study of the anti-Sikh riots also examines the meaning of violence from the point of view of the victims. A dominant strand in Das's

work is the breakdown of signification and an inability to articulate a clear meaning of violence (Das 1990, 2007, Das and Nandy 1985: 188). As she shows in the case of Sikhs who survived the rioting, victims often could not articulate the violence in words. Taking the cases of Sikh women and children who lost family, the experience of violence could be expressed through non-verbal means such as mime, gestures and physical appearances to express what cannot be said (Das 1990:363, 376).

Other authors have continued to build on the corpus of research on violence in South Asia. The role of the state in allowing, abetting and participating in the perpetration of violence has been examined by in the case of conflict in Sri Lanka (Daniel 1996, Spencer 1990, 1992) and in western India, where law enforcement agencies have been observed to facilitate violence (Hansen 2001, Simpson 2006). Such events threaten the legitimacy of the state for groups of victims. Other authors discuss the variable meaning of violence in the context of gender, where women are seen as objects of violation and rescue by the state (Mukherjee 2006), or as active participants in violence (Sen 2007). Research on South Asia thus reveals a wide variation in meaning, forms and participation in violence and conflict.

But the experiences from Jammu and Kashmir offer another way to consider violence and conflict. Individual accounts of Pandit migrants draw on rhetoric and images similar to studies of communal violence in India. Demonstrating crowds in Kashmir are depicted in the way collective violence and mobs have been seen in South Asia (Tambiah 1997). The activities of militant groups and the threats issued towards Pandit women are similar to cases recorded where organised Hindu groups have attacked Muslim minorities. The Pandits also treat state institutions and functionaries, such as the

state police, as permissive of the breakdown in law and order. However the key event of violence in India is seen in terms of large crowds of rioters, looters and arsonists, permitted and assisted by the state as per the logic of communal violence and politics. Jammu and Kashmir is caught in a different setting where terrorism, militancy and counter insurgency operations take precedence as the definitive event of violence. While the Pandits may regard state institutions guilty for the exodus, Kashmiris in the valley as a Muslim majority are equally suspicious and critical of state institutions, having to deal with a better organised and equipped security apparatus.

There is an overlap of approaches to violence in the cases of limited warfare and communal politics. During a public gathering for Holocaust day in Jammu, residents at Muthi camp were audience to a lecture by a fellow resident and school teacher who spoke of the menace of global fundamentalist Islam. The Pandits were spoken of as the first Indian victims of a global movement. While the discourse concerning terrorism is quite common, many Pandits often emphasise that they were among the first communities in India to bear witness to militant related violence. But unlike communal conflict where issues of locality are important (Das 1995b), militancy and armed violence in the state is seen in terms that encompass the local. This is seen most noticeably in the case of commemorative events and efforts in political mobilisation. Pandit associations draw upon different vocabulary which can be often seen in commemorative events organised throughout the year such as 'Holocaust Day' and 'Martyrs day'. Various organisations assert that the Pandits did not merely endure communal problems in Kashmir as understood in South Asian history, but rather faced 'ethnic cleansing' and even genocide.

According to Teng, a prominent Pandit scholar from Kashmir, the period after independence witnessed the violation of the rights of the Pandits by successive state governments, following a populist policy of promoting the interests of the Kashmiri masses, which was constituted largely by Muslims (Teng 2005, Teng and Wanchu 1992). Teng states:

For forty three years of Indian freedom the Kashmiri Pandits were deprived by the state of India of the rights envisaged by the universal declaration of Human Rights...In January 1990, the Muslim Jihad proclaimed the seizure of the only right they had: their right of life (Teng 2005: 60).

This argument, which focuses on the denial of rights, has been a significant current among Pandit among organisations. One of the most significant of these efforts is by the Panun Kashmir Movement (PKM), a faction of *Panun Kashmir* (Our Kashmir), which is an organisation that seeks to establish a Kashmiri Pandit homeland in the region. The PKM documentation project provides a wider engagement with violence covering murders and assassinations and the destruction of private and communal property. The larger discussion of violence among the Pandits differs from earlier positions in South Asia by drawing on discussions of genocide and ethnic cleansing. The PKM not only presents Kashmiri nationalism as an Islamic fundamentalist movement, it specifically describes the targeting of the Pandits by Kashmiri Muslims as consistent with acts of genocide, ethnic cleansing and as part of a strategy to remove all non-Muslims from Kashmir:

The mass attacks on the Hindus began in January 1990, and by the onset of August more than eight hundred of them had been murdered in cold blood. Most of the victims were innocent people who lived in poverty and persecution under

the Muslim dominated constitutional organisation of the state...The genocide of Hindus continues still and by now more than a thousand Hindus have been liquidated (PKM 2004:160).

Following this statement, the document also presents a few cases of people who were murdered. The details and circumstances of the deaths are alarming for the brutality with which they were carried out. The following is one such case:

Sham Lal of Charigam in Anantnag, Kashmir, was kidnapped in May 1990. The hands and feet of the unfortunate man were chopped off and skull battered. Sham Lal's dead body was stuffed in a sack and left on the threshold of his house, wherefrom it was recovered by his brother (PKM 2004: 166).

Pandits who were killed in brutal and unfortunate circumstances were conferred the status of *shaheed* (martyr) by the PKM. But the preparation of lists of martyrs precedes the PKM documentation project. In the first year of the conflict and exile, community journals such as the Koshur Samachar and the Martand, published lists of all Pandits who were murdered. By and large, the names that feature in these lists appear to have been of ordinary people from all walks of life as opposed to being prominent participants of the establishment whose deaths were covered in news reports. However I want to argue that a larger definition of violence must be employed which accounts for fear and the threat of violence.

Memories of the potential threat to violence emerge far more readily, especially when migrants are posed with the question of why they had left. Satish, who was a boy during the exodus, told me that his grandfather had heard young children say that the *beej*

(seed) of the Hindus will be finished. He said, 'My grandfather was shocked when he heard little children say this. He realised that the children must have overheard their elders'. Manohar Lal, a retired school teacher who came from a village, which was home to a large community of Pandits, spoke of the time of the exodus in terms of the number of killings that took place and listed the names of prominent victims like Tika Lal Taploo. He was especially troubled by the murder of a shopkeeper in his village:

They killed Tika Lal Taploo, that man who was with the BJP .But when they killed this shop keeper, it made me afraid. Taploo *ji* was a big man. But that shop keeper. He was no one! They killed him. I thought if they could kill an ordinary man too, maybe they could kill me.

Another way the experience of violence is presented is in terms of sacrifice. One day during fieldwork I had found myself in a conversation with two men in their thirties in a shop in Purkhu camp. The conversation started in a benign manner when I was called over by Karan, the shop keeper who had seen me a few days before. As I walked by his shop he invited me to sit with him and his friend Ashok. They listened to me explain my research. Just as I ended Ashok spoke up. '*Hum hain asli Hindustani!* (We are real Indians). Do you understand?' he said. Karan looked on at first, before telling his friend that I did not follow what he had said. Ashok resumed:

We are *real Indians*. You see we have more nationalism than anyone else. India is our *Matribhumi* (mother land). We left our homes in Kashmir because we are Indians. You can see that we have sacrificed more for India than others.

Such sentiments are expressed across the socio-economic spectrum of the community. For the Pandits sacrifice distinguishes them from other Indian nationals. However this

sentiment is far from unique in the case of the displaced. East Bengali Hindu refugees in India made their claims for state support and recognition to the Indian state by emphasising that they had sacrificed their homes and lives by coming to India (Chatterjee 1992, Chatterjee 2007). Similarly, Muslim refugees from India to East and West Pakistan made claims upon the Pakistani state, which were premised on the fact that their sacrifice gave legitimacy to Pakistan as a Muslim homeland as opposed to Muslims who were not displaced (Rehman and van Schendel 2003, Zamindar 2007). While I have discussed the notion of sacrifice in the previous section to argue that Pandits consider themselves as a part of the Indian nation, sacrifice in this context can also work in distinguishing them from other Indians.

What complicates the discussion of sacrifice is the fact that English words such as 'sacrifice' and 'martyr' and their near equivalent terms in Hindi and Urdu, *bali* and *shaheed*, are used interchangeably. Martyrdom by itself is a claim for special status. In Varzi's study of post-revolution Iran, Iranians who volunteered to go to war against Iraq in the 1980s and became *shaheed* when they were killed in battle, were honoured by the Iranian state by making them objects of love and admiration for the nation (2006: 47). Critical to this process was the 'choice' was made by young Iranian men to become martyrs. While Varzi examines the context and processes that enabled Iranians to choose martyrdom, it raises the need to identify who benefits from those being sacrificed.

When the Pandits draw on the Hindu notion of *bali* (sacrifice), there is a possibility of a negative meaning. As Parry (2008) suggests, the word *bali*, can have multiple meanings. *Bali* can refer to Hindu ritual discourse for removing anything bad or inauspicious (Hubert and Mauss 1964). However *bali* can also draw upon claims of *tyag* or renunciation of personal benefit as seen with nationalist rhetoric during the anti-colonial

movement in India (Parry 2008: 234). Community representatives may speak of their experience as *balidaan* (to give sacrifice), which is represented in a commemorative event known as ‘Martyrs day’ or alternatively *Shaheed divas* or *Balidaan divas*. But in private, Pandits often describe themselves as *bali ki baqra* (the sacrificial goat). This suggests a negative use of the term as opposed to the empowering position the claim may have in the context of nationalist politics. Unlike the case in Iran, the Pandits do not find themselves honoured by the state nor do they see themselves recognised as forced migrants and hence as a people who were compelled to leave their homes.

I also want to return to attempts to present the exodus in relation to genocide and ethnic cleansing. References to such occurrences in South Asia are relatively recent. Much of the interest appears to have emerged in the aftermath of the Gujarat pogrom, with studies indicating the complicity of state institutions in the perpetration of violence against and the continued marginalisation of Muslims (see Ohm 2007, Simpson 2006, Vardarajan 2002). There is still some degree of confusion in defining genocide. Ali suggests that genocide and terrorism are related, with genocide defined as ‘state terrorism’ (2004: 521). Such claims constitute an extreme form of violence when the existence of entire communities is threatened. But what is also of interest is the fact that concepts such as genocide and ethnic cleansing implicate a universal discourse of extreme and catastrophic violence that is well known.

The efforts of activists to use such concepts may not always succeed. However these concepts enable activists in particular to draw upon parallels beyond India and the history of the South Asian sub-continent. For educated and well-to-do Kashmiri Pandits, the Jewish Holocaust is regarded as the closest parallel for their experiences and it is common to hear references made to the popular history of the Holocaust. Sumit, a

young Pandit who works as a journalist in Jammu, felt the processions of 1990 were reminiscent of *kristalnacht*. The fact that a commemorative event has been called 'Holocaust day' to commemorate the time that led to flight is indicative of the ideas some Pandits draw upon. The text of the posters used by a group observing Holocaust day in Jammu is highly suggestive of the public use of the terms:

19 January 1990

The day when arms broke through the façade of Kashmiriyat and exiled Hindus from Kashmir under pre-meditated, well planned, ruthly(sic) executed genocide of the minority community

This is the Holocaust Day of Kashmir

Remember the Martyrs,

Remember this genocide

Remember this exile

Remember our wish to Return and regain our mother land Kashmir

During this event, references to Jews and Israel were continuously made. One speaker addressing an audience at a locality in Jammu had this to say:

Many of you may have heard of a country called Israel. The people of Israel are the Jews who like us have always been persecuted for many centuries. Like us, they also had an inferiority complex. But then they came together and became strong. They made their own country. We have to learn from them.

For some Pandits the parallel seems obvious. One group of Pandit youth activists had pointed out that European Jews had been historically persecuted, which is similar to histories of Kashmir written by Pandit authors. The comparison with Israel also

emerges since Israel, in their view, is consistently under attack by 'terrorists' and besieged by Muslim countries. The claim on the holocaust as an event thus connects the Pandit migration to a universal history as a form of 'allusive victimhood' (Ochs 2006).

The use of ideas and references to an event and history that took place outside India appears surprising at first²⁶. Benson writes about the rhetoric of September 11 attacks as used in post-war Guatemala. For Benson, the attempts to draw upon the imagery of the twin tower attacks to mobilise local political action is initially unexpected. However he observes:

The narratives of protestors and other locals, by casting those ideals against global events, were able to get beyond dominant framing and respond to experiences of menacing new modes of social control and violence that have arisen in the post war phase. Much of this ability had to do with the creative use of collage or montage (Benson 2004: 439).

By drawing upon the Jewish holocaust, the Pandits can claim their experience to be unique in comparison with other Indians as well as revealing the creative potential of such efforts. The parallels allow for the adoption of a recognisable identity of catastrophic loss and 'blameless' victimhood²⁷. Such a parallel is ironically not

²⁶ Whenever I shared my knowledge and heritage of the Indian partition that I had been raised with as a descendent of East Bengalis, my informants often seemed surprised or even disinterested. Little mention was ever made of the partition of the Indian sub-continent and which perhaps serves as a more effective parallel. While the Kashmir valley was threatened with war in 1948, Jammu was affected by the partition in terms of the out migration of local Muslims from the region, the arrival of refugees from West Pakistan and incidents of rioting and bloodshed. The descendents of the West Pakistani refugees who settled in Jammu had also begun to openly demonstrate for rights denied to them by the Jammu and Kashmir state government in 2005, which introduced me to the history of the Partition in Jammu. The Pandits on the other hand do not concern themselves with this aspect of the region's history.

²⁷ I owe this insight to Dr. Roma Chatterji

recognised by poorer and less educated migrants for whom the Jewish Holocaust is an unknown and foreign event. Hence the parallel with the Holocaust is limited to a particular section of the migrant community. This raises a concern with regards to ability to generalise claims of genocide for all migrants. Nevertheless, well-to-do migrants are the section of the community who shape representations in the public space. The claim for victimhood that parallels an event such as the Holocaust and drawing upon associated vocabulary of genocide is essential to laying claim to victimhood of a particular quality. Hence drawing upon such examples establishes differences between themselves and other Indians.

6.4 The Terrain of Victimhood

Martyrs Day is a commemorative event held annually on 14th September to mark the day a Pandit politician, Tika Lal Taploo was assassinated in 1989 thereby becoming the first Pandit 'martyr'. The event I had attended was organised by one of the factions of Panun Kashmir at a large theatre in the city centre. While much of the audience comprised of middle aged men, a number of women and young boys were present as well. The speakers at the event consisted of a number of Pandit activists followed by local supporters, including a local academic who was a prominent member of the BJP in the state. Another ally present at the event was the leader of the local branch of the Shiv Sena, a prominent Hindu nationalist party primarily based in western India. The expression of the Pandit claim came from one middle-aged activist who argued that within Jammu and Kashmir, it was not the Kashmiri Muslims, but rather the Kashmiri Pandits who were the 'worst sufferers'. The Kashmiri Pandits were seen as having suffered more than anyone especially because they were law abiding citizens who had lost their homes unlike the Kashmiri Muslims who were not displaced. Then another

activist talked about the threat of terrorism to India and criticised human rights activists and academics pursuing research that questioned the Indian nation-state rather than conducting work that promotes national unity and integration.

When the representative of the Shiv Sena party was invited to address the audience, the tone changed. At first he was able to evoke a response when he openly criticised the Kashmiri Muslims as a traitors to the Indian nation-state. Some of the audience members clapped when he proposed that people in Jammu should have killed a few Muslims in response to the actions of militants. However the mood changed when he criticised the Pandits for organising Martyrs day and said to them 'You call today *Shaheedi* divas (Martyr's day). Why? You cannot call yourselves shaheed. You are all alive!' The audience fell silent and appeared embarrassed by this criticism. However it is not uncommon for the Kashmiri Pandits to be criticised by fellow citizens and sympathisers. So far this chapter has attempted to explore and examine the discourse of victimhood among Kashmiri Pandits and to see victimhood as a way of making a political claim. In this final section, I intend to assess whether claims of victimhood are recognised or misrecognised.

From this vignette of Martyr's day, it appears that the Pandits are not entirely successful in presenting their claims. While Pandits insist upon a chain of events that led to their displacement, the facts they draw upon are often denied or inadequately acknowledged by others. Most Kashmiri Muslims deny that the Pandits were specifically targeted in any way. One Indian human rights activist I had met had spoken of her trip in Kashmir where she met Pandits who remained in the valley who denied hearing the slogans targeting them. The Pandit exodus is also popularly believed to have been engineered

by the Indian state. In the process the Pandit exodus is forced to contend with claims of veracity. According to Bose, the exodus has the potential to colour the movement for Kashmiri independence as an intolerant Islamic fundamentalist movement (1997: 72). While Bose's discussion is based on his own data and features interviews with Pandits who stayed back in Kashmir, he also draws on investigative studies conducted by Human Rights activists. The most notable of these studies is by the People's Union for Civil Liberties in New Delhi (PUCL 1991), which reported that Pandits were not specifically targeted and that their properties and institutional structures such as temples were not destroyed. Hence even before a claim for victimhood can be heard, the overall history of the migration is subject to doubt.

In some respects the Kashmiri Pandits have a difficult relationship with Human Rights activists and organisations. Human Rights workers in Jammu and Kashmir, consisting of those who work from within Kashmir and those outside, largely focus on the Kashmir valley and those who continue to live there. Expectedly many activists are sympathetic to people in the valley and report on the excesses of the Indian state. An effect of this is the perception among the Pandits that Kashmiri Muslims receive most of the attention. Consequently organisations such as Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch are criticised by Pandits for their bias towards the Kashmir valley and their criticisms of the Indian state, though it must be pointed out that Human Rights Watch has documented violations committed by militant groups, including attacks on the Pandits (HRW 1999). Indian Human rights groups have also been similarly criticised, with the ASKPC at one point demanding that the authors of the PUCL report be prosecuted by the Indian state for misrepresenting the situation, for presenting 'evidence' that denies Pandit claims and maligning the reputation of the Indian state (ASKPC 1990: 1).

The relationship with Hindu Nationalist Parties has also been a source of consternation. Support for Hindu nationalist parties does indeed exist among the Pandits and expressions of anger at Kashmiri Muslims in particular and Muslims in general, are difficult to ignore. But it is impossible to say whether all Pandits support parties such as the BJP and the Shiv Sena. During 1990, support for the BJP appears to have been rather limited. However many well-to-do Pandits, aware of the problems of receiving the support of Hindu nationalist groups, argue that that no other political party or group had come to speak for them or help them in any way. The Shiv Sena party in particular often receives praise due the provision of quotas in institutions of higher education in Maharashtra state for Kashmiri Pandit students. It is common to hear Bal Thackeray, the leader of the Shiv Sena praised by ordinary Pandits. As one elderly man had put it, 'Bal Thackeray is like God. At least he made that quota so our sons and daughter can get an education.'

In a rich and detailed study, Sen (2007) explores the involvement of women activists in violent nationalist politics in Mumbai. Sen situates her informants at the socio-economic margins of urban life. While she emphasises that their motivations cannot be easily generalised, she shows that their participation in Hindu nationalist politics promises them a sense of agency, control and power over their lives at a local level (2007: 23-40). Their involvement in violent and intolerant politics is situated in a context where institutions of law and justice are marked by ineptitude (Sen 2007: 60). The response of Sen's informants to progressive NGOs has been affected by the fact that they see themselves marginalised and perceive Human Rights activists to be biased towards Muslims and other groups (Sen 2007: 148-150).

While the Pandits have not participated directly in violence, their support for Hindu nationalism is similar. For many Pandits, the BJP and its allies were the only parties that had given them some attention at the time of exodus. Furthermore, human rights activists and the media, as I have mentioned, are seen to privilege the voice of the Kashmiri Muslim. With claims made as supporters of the Indian nation-state and who are critical of Muslims, the Pandits, like Sen's informants, also come across as intolerant to activists. However it can be argued that there is a reason for Pandit extremism, which demonstrates their peculiar form of political marginalisation. Eventually claims to the Indian nationalism, however limiting they may be, do provide a way for the Pandit to claim some political space.

It must also be acknowledged that the attitude of the Pandits towards Hindu nationalist parties changed in subtle ways. During a meeting with a group of well-to-do Pandits who had migrated when they were young children to New Delhi, the issue of the support from political parties emerged. One of the members of this group praised the BJP for being the first party to represent their interests and the Shiv Sena for the provision of education quotas. However one of the senior members of the group grumbled that even though the BJP had formed the central government in India for a whole term, very little had been done for the Pandits.

The relationship with such parties is also affected by a denial of respect. As seen in the vignette from martyr's day, the Pandits are ironically derided by those who would support them as unlikely victims or martyrs, whose sacrifice for the Indian nation is inadequate. While the Kashmiri Pandits value themselves in terms of their avoidance of violence, which I discuss in the previous chapter, other communities such as the Dogras

and even some Kashmiri Muslims I have met treat the exodus as an act of cowardice. An incident which illustrates this view took place following the massacres at Kulhand and Basantgarh. A number of Hindus from the Pahari areas had come to Jammu to participate in a protest organised by the BJP. The event was also attended by Kashmiri Pandit activists to demonstrate solidarity. A problem emerged when one of the men addressing the crowd, articulated their demands and said, 'We want to go back to our homes. We want to be given guns and other weapons with which we can fight back. We are not like the Kashmiri Pandits who ran away.' When one of the Pandit activists present tried to respond and explain the problems they faced in 1990, his words fell to deaf ears.

Kwon describes the attempts of Vietnamese civilians to be recognised as martyrs due to the support they had provided communist military units during the Vietnam War. The Vietnamese authorities recognised the importance of remembering the casualties of war but insisted that only combatants killed could be considered martyrs. Kwon uses the case to point that out the civilians and political authorities hold on to differing notions of self sacrifice (2006: 130-133). His study raises an important point with regards to differing values attached to different categories of victims. The Pandits however face a problem as their experience loses value in the context of India nationalist politics and due to the response of prominent local political leadership from nationalist parties. Their claim of being martyrs is derided by supposedly sympathetic political parties as neither did they pay a higher price in blood, nor did they 'fight' for the nation. The relocation of the Pandits to a relatively peaceful place also puts them at a disadvantage in comparison with communities who live directly in a militarized and violent zone. Nationalist political parties and human rights groups thus betray a limited understanding of

victimhood and violence, which does not recognise that to survive, is to bear witness to violence (Srinivasan 1992).

The terrain for victimhood is further confounded by an equalising of experience. The recognition of all victims is laudable but this requires recognition of each community and each individual. While I have not focused on conflict reconciliation programmes in the region, some informants of mine were participants in efforts to bring Pandits and Muslims together. However such efforts are not always successful. Indira, one of my main informants, had pointed out to me that it became difficult to tell of one's own experience. She said 'each time a Pandit says something a Muslim will get up and say, "So what? That has happened to me as well."' Neeru, another informant who is involved with such work, spoke of her own misgivings when she said 'You know these initiatives run by people from Delhi are good. But it is as if they bring us Pandits along just to include us. It seems that they only want to really help the Muslims.' The point I want to make is that Pandit claims are also premised upon a desire to be acknowledged with respect and not be subject to scrutiny.

Claims of victimhood are also connected to a basic point. Victimhood does not exist in a vacuum but requires a supporting narrative which in this case is the narrative of the Pandit exodus itself. As I have mentioned, the Pandit account of the troubles not only has been subject to doubt from some quarters, it is also treated as ordinary within a sub-continental context where a long history of suffering, marginalisation and displacement already exists. Victims of state violence may try various means and repertoires to share their experiences. According to Daniel, moments and acts of violence are often difficult to put into words that communicate effectively for both victims and anthropologists

(1996: 106). As he shows in the case of Sri Lankan Tamil refugees in India, refugees found it difficult to describe their experiences in a way state authorities would understand (Daniel 1996: 120). Even when victims of violence are able to articulate their experiences it may not always be possible to do so. For instance, Donnan and Simpson focus on marginalised Protestants who inhabit Catholic dominated areas. While Protestants in Northern Ireland express their loyalty to the United Kingdom and have historically enforced their power upon Catholics, Donnan and Simpson characterise the history of marginalised Protestants as a 'shadow history', as they do not find recognition among other loyalists and larger British nationalist narratives (2007:9).

Similarly, the experience of Pandits constitutes a shadow history from the margins, under-recognised by the Indian nation-state and its supporters. Like the Northern Irish Protestants, the Pandits express their support for the Indian state in nationalist terms but find themselves in a situation where their loyalty is seldom acknowledged. Unlike Daniel's informants who were unable to describe their experiences and hence access 'justice', the Pandits draw on a well articulated and recognisable vocabulary. As Gallinat observes in the case of post-unification Germany where victims of state repression were also able to articulate their experiences clearly, there is no guarantee that the victims will still be heard (2006: 362). Similarly, the Pandits seem to be caught in the same quandary, which suggests that it is essential to locate the everyday lived context victims find themselves in as well as the contingent quality of all claims of victimhood.

While the Pandits regard their history, and rightly so, as extraordinary, it loses its value in the noise of politics in India and Jammu and Kashmir. This has perhaps resulted in a contradiction. Many Pandits insist that their story needs to be told and listened to. The expression of a need to convey an account of violence is reminiscent of Das' seminal

essay on survivors of the anti-Sikh riots of New Delhi in 1984. While Das situates the need to tell the story in the context of riot affected localities and the communities that inhabited them, she discusses the growing awareness among survivors of the procedures of representation and how they should represent themselves to agencies such as the state (1990: 372, 374).

While Das found herself as someone who was seen by the victims as capable of telling their story, my own experience has been ambivalent. I was after all not the first person to collect data on the Pandit experience. Several months into the field, Ravinder, a young migrant who moved to Jammu when he was a boy, once asked me why I was still collecting 'data'. I tried to explain that I wanted to know more and hear what other Pandits had to say. He responded:

What can they tell you? Look. Your hand has five fingers. They are not the same. But they are fingers. People will tell you the same thing. There will be a few differences. But what they will tell you is no different from what others have told you before.

Ravinder was not the exception and I often encountered similar sentiments from others. I was also told that all I needed to know has already been published and if I read the material circulating in print there was no need to go around talking to people. Another young Pandit, Raju, once commented, 'I don't understand. You are still here. Some Americans came for few days and already published their report. And you are still not finished.' While Raju expressed amusement at my apparent incompetence, this interaction suggests that the Pandits are well aware of practices and the politics of representation. As Said commented while writing about Palestinians:

Yet the problem of writing about and representing –in all senses of the word– Palestinians in some fresh way is part of a much larger problem. For it is not as if no one speaks about or portrays the Palestinians. The difficulty is that everyone, including the Palestinians themselves, speaks a great deal (Said and Mohr 1986: 4).

Various authors have argued that studies of violence often overlook the experiences of people who choose not to be directly involved in political activity (Kelly 2008, Spencer 2000) and instead, adjust and adapt to extraordinary situations in everyday life (Allen 2008). As Kelly points out in the case of Palestinians in the West Bank, the efforts to observe an ordinary life, which emerges in a context of political disillusionment, is both personal and political. It involves meeting social and familial obligations and personal desires for seeking a fulfilling profession, which can be seen as a form of resistance to Israeli state oppression (Kelly 2008: 362). Throughout this thesis, I have hopefully given a sense of the ways Pandits have continued with the business of getting on with life. While many Pandits often willingly express an opinion on politics in the state, there are others who feel otherwise. One young Pandit student of business management I had met even felt his peers are more interested in seeking opportunities for the future rather than in mourning for the past.

However, much of the annoyance and disdain with which Pandits respond to researchers comes out of a sense of disillusionment. It is common to meet Pandits who are tired of telling their story such as Kanhaiya Lal, a former orchard owner from North Kashmir. When we first met, I was made to stay for lunch and tea when he candidly spoke of his family's experiences. He recalled how peaceful life was in the valley and how he would have been busy at work in his orchards, unlike his life in Purkhu camp where sits around and somehow passes the time. When I returned hoping to properly record what he had to say, his response differed sharply when he said, 'I am not going to say

anything. What difference does it make? We have told many things to many people before. We have got nothing out of it.'

This statement is a stark expression of victimhood and reveals a sense of betrayal and disillusionment among the Pandits at the hands of the Indian nation-state, political parties, Kashmiri Muslims, local people in Jammu, human rights organisations and journalists and researchers. It may be argued that betrayal may give meaning to the lives of refugees (Layoum 1995: 76). But Kanhaya Lal's sentiments are shared by many. The migrants often argue that while they have tried to tell many people about their experiences, representations of their situation have neither enabled them to secure the recognition they desire nor have they resulted in any significant amelioration of their situation. The Kashmiri Pandits thus simultaneously express a desire to present their history and betray a reticence to speak.

6.5 Conclusion

In this chapter I have tried to explore political claim making among the Kashmiri Pandit migrants. I first point out that Pandit claims of victimhood are situated within the logic of the nation-state and are directed towards the Indian nation-state. I also try to show that claims of victimhood are caught in a tension. The tension emerges from the attempts of the Pandits to present themselves as Indian victims or victims for India and hence draw upon nationalist politics of all forms. In the process the Pandits seek recognition of their experience primarily by locating themselves within India and outside Kashmiri nationalism. However to enhance their claim to victimhood the Pandits focus on setting themselves apart from other Indians. The tension of victimhood lies in this shift between these two positions. However in both cases a range of experiences and discourses are drawn upon ranging from nationalist rhetoric to universal discussion of violence and conflict. However, I also hope to have shown that

claims of victimhood are not always successful. The reception of the claims of victimhood is subject to political contexts which may be inadequately recognised. Nevertheless it is through the claim of being victimised that the Pandits participate in a political space. In the following chapter I will show how claims of suffering and victimisation are drawn upon to present demands for assistance and aid from the Indian state.

Chapter 7

Rights, Claims and Community: the Kashmiri Pandits and the Relief and Rehabilitation Programme

Upon commencing fieldwork, I was often struck by the frequency with which many Pandits referred to the relief and rehabilitation programme established by the state since the beginning of the displacement. This programme is the main instrument of humanitarian assistance in Jammu and Kashmir, which is managed through the state government and funded by the Indian government. Often, the Pandits speak of humanitarian assistance in a single word: 'relief'. Relief is a significant issue and appears to encapsulate the dilemmas and trials the Pandits have to endure. During the early part of fieldwork, it was often the only topic of conversation. On different occasions, I was asked by Pandits whether I was an '*aid-walla*' (bearer of aid) or if I had any rations to distribute. As I settled into Jammu and started to build relationships of varying degrees of intimacy, other issues emerged, which have been explored in this thesis. Yet the concern with relief never ceased, surfacing in conversations and in news reports with regard to the Kashmiri Pandits. Relief and rehabilitation measures are seen by Pandits as a right that they are entitled to, not only as loyal citizens of India, but because they have sacrificed for the Indian nation-state. 'Relief' therefore offers a way to further think about the sense of victimhood among Pandits.

In the previous chapter I examined the claims of victimhood in relation to competing nationalist ideologies and larger discourses of violence and trauma. In this chapter I will situate the discussion of victimhood and suffering in the context of the relief and rehabilitation regime that was instituted by the state when the Pandits were displaced.

The relief and rehabilitation regime in Jammu and Kashmir has been subject to criticism from the Kashmiri Pandits and other communities in the region. These critiques allow us to observe the claims made by Pandits as victims based on practical and everyday concerns such as economic well being and sustenance. For many Pandits the inadequacies of 'relief' indicate the unjust and 'step-motherly' treatment meted out to them by the Indian nation-state. The programme has been controversial owing to discrepancies between the amount of aid provided and expectations of the Pandits, which has further contributed to a sense of being inadequately recognised and ignored by the Indian nation-state even after displacement.

While most cases of humanitarian assistance for forced migrants involve various organisations, assistance for Kashmiri Pandits primarily involves the Indian state. Hence the programme, since its inception, has established a particular relationship between the Pandits and the state. The politics of this relationship are premised on a sense of victimhood whereby the Pandits, as a vulnerable section of the Indian population, require special assistance. The relief programme has also had the unintended consequence of making the Pandits appear as a privileged community to other communities in Jammu, and to functionaries of the state. However, I will also argue that the criticisms articulated by the Pandits towards relief must be considered in relation to issues of relative deprivation and quality of life, which I have introduced earlier in this thesis. The chapter will first describe the relief and rehabilitation programme in Jammu and Kashmir. This will be followed by the migrant critique of the relief programme, which will focus on relief and aid as a right and in relation to issues of sustenance. The chapter will then examine the ways in which the Pandits have become associated with 'relief' in the region and how it complicates the terrain of victimhood for the Pandits.

7.1 Tracking Relief

There is little consensus with regards to the definition of humanitarian intervention, due to its complex nature (Wiener 1998). Part of this problem is due the complex nature of intervention, involving a number of methods and aims. According to Fassin humanitarianism constitutes a 'politics of life', involving institutions of the state, non-governmental organisations, places such as refugee camps, the provision of welfare and material assistance to those deemed to have legitimate claims and producing public representations of people to be helped (2007: 501). The different aspects of humanitarian assistance have been explored in the South Asian context with regard to communities displaced by conflict (Brun 2003, Chatterjee 1992, Chakrabarti 1999), development projects (Baviskar 1997a) and those who have suffered from natural and industrial disasters (Fortun 2001, Simpson 2005). What is significant in South Asian experiences is the presence and role of the state, with regards to which the situation in Jammu and Kashmir is no exception. However, while the Indian state has a definite history in dealing with refugees and other displaced groups, state policy is marked by the absence of a clearly defined humanitarian regime (Rolfe 2008).

Humanitarian assistance in Jammu and Kashmir is administered by the Relief Commission, which is under the Department of Revenue, State Government of Jammu and Kashmir. This agency is headed by a Relief Commissioner and Deputy Relief Commissioner who are assigned from the Indian Administrative Service and Kashmir Administrative Service²⁸. The Commission is responsible for the administration of relief and rehabilitation efforts for communities affected by disasters in the state. The Kashmiri Pandits are the most prominent community that receives assistance from the

²⁸ The IAS or Indian Administrative Service is the premiere bureaucratic organisation of the Indian state. The KAS or Kashmir Administrative Service is the main bureaucratic cadre of Jammu and Kashmir state.

Relief Commission. The assistance that is provided comprises of food aid, financial assistance and accommodation for a section of migrants in the camps.

The migrants are also divided into two categories: 'Relief Category' and 'Government Category'. The 'Relief Category' comprises migrants who were not employees of the state before displacement. Each registered 'relief category' family is entitled to nine kilograms of rice, two kilograms of flour and one kilogram of sugar per month. At the beginning of fieldwork in November 2005, each member of a registered family was provided Rupees 750 (approximately £11) per month with a ceiling of Rupees. 3000 (approximately £44) for a household exceeding more than four members. In 2007, the financial assistance component was amended and increased to Rupees.1000 (approximately £15) per family member and a household ceiling established at Rupees. 4000 (approximately £60).

The 'Government Category' covers all migrants who were employees in various departments of the state before the displacement. This category includes migrants who worked as clerks, peons, school teachers and lecturers in the state education system, medical professionals attached to the state health service and engineers employed by public corporations and agencies such as the Public Works Department. While many migrants in this category have been accommodated in the camp colonies, they are not eligible for financial and food aid. They depend upon the basic salaries which they continue to receive from the departments they had been recruited into originally.

In some cases government category migrants have secured transfers and work assignments in places like Jammu and Ladakh. However there are migrants in the government category who have not been adjusted in work places in Jammu and are therefore unemployed in practice. All government category migrants, whether they are

actively working or have been left idle, remain on government payroll until they reach the age of retirement. Those who have not been appointed to work places since displacement are not eligible for promotions and additional allowances. Government category migrants who have been assigned to workplaces remain marked by their status as migrants. This is the case for many of my informants who work as school teachers and lecturers who teach at institutions set up for migrants. The problem they face is that they can access promotions and benefits only if they return to assignments in Kashmir. The reason for this is because they are still officially listed in their original offices in Kashmir and placed on 'leave' status.

On first impression, the relief policy appears to be of a short term nature with plans and programmes devised and implemented depending upon the emergency at hand. The commandant of one camp had explained to me that the commission receives its mandate to manage the aftermath of a disaster as and when they take place. As a result the task of the commission is usually of a 'temporary' nature. Each operation managed by the Commission ends when communities affected by disasters have been resettled. The Kashmiri Pandits became recipients of support from the Relief Commission when the exodus took place in 1990. A Camp Commandant, who explained the workings of the commission to me, stated that the Kashmiri migrants were initially regarded to be a temporary problem, which she jested, had become 'permanent' over the years. Therefore like the migrants, functionaries of the Indian central government and the Jammu and Kashmir state government were of the view that the insurgency and the displacement was a temporary phenomenon and that once law and order had been re-established, the Pandits would be able to return home. Current state policy for rehabilitation still include plans for re-settling Pandits in Kashmir, though it is yet to be implemented in practice. When I started fieldwork, the relief commission's

responsibilities included providing assistance to communities affected by the earthquake that had devastated the region in 2005.

Most migrants are conversant in the components of relief and often list the amounts of financial aid they have received over the years. The migrants often refer back to the time in 1990, when each family received only Rs.500 per month. In an attempt to trace changes to the quanta of relief provided over the years, I had requested access to official announcements concerning increments in relief at the office of the Relief Commissioner. Locating precise information about relief and registration with the Relief Commission was easier said than done. I was fortunate to have Ashok, one of the Relief Commission staff members and a migrant, assigned by the deputy commissioner to assist me in this matter. Ashok took me to every single office room at the Relief Commission head office to locate basic statistical information and records of relief and rehabilitation. However, most staff members denied any knowledge with regards to the whereabouts of such data. We stopped at one final office room where three clerks sat at tables with stacks of files and reclining on their chairs against walls blackened by dirt and time. Ashok introduced me to the clerks and requested them to assist me as someone who had 'come all the way from Bombay.' The senior clerk acceded to Ashok's request and instructed me to pull out my notebook. He said:

Note it down. First it was Rupees. 500 in 1990. Then it became Rupees 1000. Then Rupees. 1500, Rupees. 1800, Rupees. 2500 and now it is Rupees. 4000. Yes, before it was Rs3000. Is that alright? Just divide by four to see how much each person gets²⁹.

²⁹ The clerks were unable to provide specific dates for incremental changes made to the relief programme. According to newspaper reports pertaining to the Pandits and found out that cash relief had been

While there have been incremental adjustments in the relief programme since 1990, the structure of the programme has essentially remained unchanged. As Sanyal points out in her work on the settlement of East Bengali refugees in post-Partition India, there is a need to distinguish between 'relief' and 'rehabilitation'. An essential difference between relief and rehabilitation is that relief consists of assistance of a short term nature, whereas rehabilitation deals with considerably longer term concerns such as permanent settlement (Sanyal 2009: 69). Chatterji makes a similar distinction with regards to East Bengali Refugees when the government of India pursued short term methods by running camps and distributing aid rather than implement long term resettlement plans, ostensibly to encourage refugees to return to their original homes (Chatterji 2001: 77-80, Chatterji 2007b). The relief programme in Jammu and Kashmir similarly has followed this approach, employing a series of short term measures, which contributes to the sense of impermanence that has come to characterise life as a migrant for the Kashmiri Pandits in Jammu.

The issue of rehabilitation in the context of Jammu and Kashmir is best seen in the plans for the township of Jakti, where all migrants who do not own property are to be relocated. The establishment of the township is to be followed by the planned closure of the migrant camp colonies. One of the features of the new township is the Two Room Tenement (TRT) which is to replace the ORT. As mentioned in chapter three, TRTs had already been in construction during the time I had spent in the field. Unlike the existing camp quarters, the TRTs are essentially flats in multi-storied apartment buildings. By March 2008, Muthi Camp and the camps of Udampur and Kathua had already been

increased to Rs1500 in 1994 and later had been increased from Rs600 to Rs750 per head per month in 2003 (Express News Service 2003).

dismantled, with the residents of those camps having been shifted to TRT blocks already built near Muthi and Purkhu Camp. For some migrants who have been shifted to the TRTs, the new quarters are a marked improvement. However, the residents of the TRT blocks are subject to some measure of control and are not permitted to make any modifications seen with the ORTs. According to residents of the TRTs constructed near Purkhu Camp where migrants from Udampur camp have been resettled, the directives from the Relief Commission forbidding modifications signal the intention of the state to eventually move them from their current location to Jakti.

The data I have collected concerning the TRTs is limited as only a few blocks had been opened for accommodation as late as 2008. However there is a great deal of interest in the TRTs. During a short return trip I had made to Jammu that year, I was told by Relief Commission staff that the number of applications made for a TRT exceeded the total number of quarters planned for construction at Jakti. Furthermore, they complained that many migrants who already owned property were trying to acquire a TRT quarter, which was in violation of the directive that only those who do not own any property since 1990 are eligible for consideration. It is difficult to state with certainty what impact the TRTs and the township will have in the future. But this is also one indicator of the extent to which the migrants have seen their lives rendered uncertain by the state.

While the migrants are dependent upon the relief commission for support and most critically for the recognition of their status as migrants, there is a history of support provided to the Pandits from non-state groups since their displacement. As early as 1990, local charities and well known national charities such as Bharat Sevashram provided assistance in the form of food and blankets (Kashmir Times Correspondent 1990e). At the behest of Jagmohan, the former Governor of Jammu and Kashmir, the Vaishno Mata Shrine Board Trust which manages the Hindu pilgrimage site of Vaishno

Mata, provided essential supplies and rations to the migrants. However these measures constitute short term relief and charity. For some migrants these measures, while essential and accepted, were in fact seen to be humiliating. As Sunny, a young migrant, said, 'People would come with a truck and then throw out rations and other things as if we were beggars.'

Earlier accounts suggest that the relief commission worked closely with Kashmiri Pandit organisations. One of the organisations that worked extensively with the Relief Commission when the displacement took place was the Jammu and Kashmir Sahayata Samiti (JKSS). The JKSS was an organisation formed when the migration took place and drew its members from existing Pandit organisations, the foremost being the ASKPC which continues to represent the migrant cause in Jammu in the present. The JKSS had set up an office in the premises of the *Sanatan Dharma Sabha* located in the market district of Jammu city and is popularly known as Geeta Bhavan, which was the nodal point of relief operations for the Pandit migrants. The premises served as a sorting office and holding centre for migrants before being dispatched to emergency accommodation at various camps across the city and the state. Over the years, the relief programme has been consolidated with many of the migrants directly approaching the Relief Commission with the JKSS disbanding. Nevertheless the ASKPC, which took over the functioning of the JKSS, remains busy with visitors approaching them to seek some form of assistance³⁰.

³⁰ One of the most important resources managed by the ASKPC pertains to applications for the Kashmiri Pandit quota for university courses in engineering and other professional courses in various states in India. The quotas for Kashmiri Pandit students was established in Maharashtra state as per the orders of Bal Thackeray, the leader of the Shiv Sena party which was in power in Maharashtra state at the time. These quotas are seen as an important resource by migrants and are treated as a gateway to university and hopefully a better life outside Jammu. Several other Indian states have also established quotas for Kashmiri Pandit students. However the ASKPC office is also visited by migrants facing other problems. While the secretary of the ASKPC insisted that relief is now managed entirely by the Relief Commission,

Various non-state actors continue to provide support to the migrants from time to time. These groups include Kashmiri Pandit political and diasporic associations such as the ASKPC, the Kashmiri Pandit Sabha and the Panun Kashmir factions. The assistance they provide varies from political representation, distributing scholarships for students in need to conducting occasional events such as temporary medical camps. The Indian chapter of an international NGO founded by a Kashmiri Pandit, which is engaged in the care of underprivileged children, is also known for helping the community providing facilities and support. The services provided by these groups come out of need to help members of their community and to build a political constituency. One prominent activist even drew on personal networks to raise funds for the medical treatment of a Pandit girl who had been in a coma following an accident and whose family could not afford the expenses for her care. Nevertheless these forms of assistance are of a short term nature and the disparity between relief and rehabilitation remains.

7.2 A Migrant critique of 'Relief': Relief as a Right

In this section I will introduce and discuss the critique of relief that circulates among Pandit migrants. Relief constitutes a significant subject of discussion among the Kashmiri Pandit migrants and offers a way to express the sentiment of being marginalised, inadequately recognised and ignored. It is a focal point for the Pandits to express persistent feelings of victimhood and suffering. The subject of relief also provides the Pandits a space to criticise the Indian state. Both migrant category and government category criticise relief in terms of the levels of financial assistance and the quality of food aid provided, even though only the 'migrant category' Pandits are eligible for financial and food aid.

Relief Commission staff revealed to me that members of the ASKPC very often visit the Relief Commission Head office to put forth their demands.

According to data made available from the Relief Commission, it is apparent that the 'government category' outnumbers the 'migrant category':

Relief Category (Families)	Government Category (Families)
11973	31367

Table 3: Total number of migrants

The relative proportion of government category and relief category migrants can also be seen in the context of Purkhu Camp where most of my primary data has been collected:

Phase	Total Number of Families	Government	Relief
Purkhu Phase 1	647	360	287
Purkhu Phase 2	195	103	92
Purkhu Phase 3	333	143	190
GSI Purkhu-3	161	79	82
Jiri Purkhu-3 ³¹	108	62	46
Total	1444	747	697

Table 4: Total number of migrants in Purkhu Camp

Therefore it is obvious that a large proportion of migrants do not actually receive relief. Yet many of my informants who are in the government category also raise the issue of relief and rehabilitation, especially during initial conversations. I will argue that relief provides a general vocabulary for the Kashmiri Pandits to make a claim upon the Indian state for their rights as citizens and also for recognition of their status as victims.

The controversy regarding humanitarian intervention and assistance is well known in Jammu and many employees and representatives of the state who are involved in the relief work are aware of the potential for criticism. Shortly after my arrival in Jammu I visited Nagrota migrant camp where I had introduced myself to the Camp Commandant. The Camp Commandant was amenable to my presence and even arranged for a resident who had been sitting in his office to take me on a tour of the camp. Before I began my 'tour', the commandant offered a word of advice:

Remember. We are doing a lot for these people. When you go back to your university you must write this. Otherwise, people outside will think badly of us. As an Indian, it is your duty to ensure that no one sees India in bad light. Irrespective of what people say, a lot of work is being done for the welfare of Kashmiri Pandits by the government.

Once I had left the office, the resident I was entrusted to, took me aside and urged me to disregard the words of the commandant. He said 'They say they do a lot for the migrants. They do nothing! You will see!'

The relationship between humanitarian agencies and forced migrants is subject to conflict over differing intentions and expectations. Difficulties in the interaction between humanitarian agencies and forced migrants have been documented in various cases from the past. According to Colson, humanitarian initiatives are often ameliorative

projects executed by the international community in the absence of efforts to deal with the causes of forced migration and displacement (2007: 320). Consequently there is an internal contradiction embedded within humanitarian intervention whereby the basic causes and impact of displacement remain neither acknowledged nor addressed. The dynamics of the interaction between forced migrants and those assist them has been critically examined by Harell-Bond. She argues that refugee aid specifically establishes a 'gift relationship' (1986, 1999:153-154). By providing aid, the refugees are obligated towards their benefactors. However she points out that for refugees, aid is a right merely being arranged for them and do not recognise any immediate obligation to be grateful to the aid agencies. A similar observation is made by Malkki (1996), who points out in her study that aid workers regarded refugees as ungrateful for the assistance they had been provided. This also appears to characterise the relationship between the State and the Kashmiri Pandits. As one Camp Commandant commented, 'See these migrants, all they want is more and more. Nothing satisfies them.'

For many of the Relief Commission staff and local residents of Jammu, the Kashmiri Pandits have been provided assistance for which they should be grateful and hence not complain. But this ignores one important dimension with regards to the Kashmiri Pandits, which is the presence of the Indian state as the most significant source of humanitarian assistance. My informants express appreciation for assistance that had been provided to them, but mainly with reference to the controversial figure of Jagmohan, the former governor of the Jammu and Kashmir under whose aegis the relief programme had been established. In fact, it is common to hear many Pandits state that it was only Jagmohan who had helped them and not the Indian state or political parties, who have merely made promises that have not been kept. Bal Thackeray, the founder of the nationalist Shiv Sena party in Maharashtra, also receives much praise from the

Kashmiri Pandits, having arranged for the reservation of places at institutions of higher education, which has become another valuable resource. As a Kashmiri humorist and migrant remarked, 'We have only two gods now...Jagmohan and Bal Thakeray' (Gigoo 2006: 47). Otherwise taking advantage of state assistance does not imply any sense of gratefulness to the Indian state.

A critical point to be made lies in the fact that the Pandits are Indian citizens provided assistance by the state and not by non-state organisations foreign to the region. Furthermore the Pandits are internally displaced and hence remain subject to the policy of a functioning state. Therefore there exists a sentiment where 'relief' is not a gift from the Indian state. Rather, it is an entitlement that the migrants expect to be granted to them as loyal Indian citizens. As discussed in the previous chapter, the Kashmiri Pandits present themselves as a people who have sacrificed for the Indian state and hence deserve recognition, which is their due. The Pandits are therefore Indian victims who are owed assistance and support by the Indian nation-state.

Criticisms of the relief programme emerge not only in complaints of the inadequacy of relief corpus but also in terms of comparisons with other communities who receive state assistance of various forms. Often the comparisons are used to highlight the denial of rights to the Pandits, which have been accorded to other communities including Kashmiri Muslims. Many Pandits regularly accuse Muslims of misusing the relief programme by registering themselves as displaced persons to secure benefits. Kashmiri Muslims who are said to receive relief are particularly criticised by Pandits, as the former are not supporters of the Indian state, unlike them. This claim also expresses the feeling Pandits have of being denied any justice or recognition of their condition.

The event that helps situate accusations of discrepancy in the distribution of relief between different communities is the earthquake that affected the region in 2005, which resulted in the extensive loss of life and property in Indian and Pakistani administered Jammu and Kashmir. When I had arrived in Jammu to start fieldwork, the basic relief operations for earthquake victims had reached the final stages and plans for reconstruction were about to be implemented by the Relief Commission which was one of the primary government agencies involved in relief operations. The earthquake was a prominent subject of conversation among the Pandits, with some informants describing the disaster as *bhagavan ki garbh* (grace of god) on a few occasions. In fact a few informants derived some measure of satisfaction from the disaster because the areas that suffered the greatest devastation lay across the border in areas administered by Pakistan where militant training camps are located.

However the mood quickly changed. Following news reports on the scale of operations to assist the earthquake victims, which included extensive donations and aid from national and international sources and the arrival of International and Indian volunteer groups and units of the Indian Army to physically assist rescue operations and reconstruction efforts, many Pandits expressed their anger and disappointment because they did not receive such assistance and attention from such a wide range of beneficiaries when they were displaced. This relates with the strand of the Pandit discourse of having been consistently ignored and neglected over the years. One resident of Nagrota camp compared the earthquake relief to the assistance they receive:

The *sarkar* (government) has rehabilitated victims of the earthquake well. Even those who did not suffer any deaths in the family received thirty thousand rupees each. Where was the *Sarkar* when we were forced to leave? Why do they torture us like this?

According to another informant, the earthquake was a 'natural' disaster whereas the migration was a 'man-made disaster' that is yet to end with the English language terms specifically used. The contrast between natural and man-made is important. To imply a disaster as natural is to exclude human agency. By distinguishing their displacement as 'man-made', the Pandits attribute blame for their plight to particular groups of people who they can identify. As a result, this experience connects with a larger discussion of justice and victimhood explored in the previous chapter. The core basis of Pandit critiques of relief and apparent injustice when other communities receive assistance from the state must be seen in the way the Pandits locate themselves with as 'Indian victims'.

This strand of victimhood finds expression in comparisons many Pandits make in relation to other communities outside Jammu and Kashmir. One day I had visited a printing press where my informant Satish worked. The visit proved interesting as it gave me a feel of migrant businesses and provided a case of life being remade after migration. However during my first visit made to the press, another visitor by the name of Behari Lal had come to see the owner, Ratan Lal. The conversation that the two engaged in focused on the relief and rehabilitation programme. Behari Lal raised the case of Tibetans in India who have refugee status and allegedly receive twenty five thousand rupees per month from the Indian state, which is far higher than what they as Indian nationals received. Ratan Lal seemed surprised and listened with wry smile on his face as Behari Lal spoke of the Tibetans being involved in different forms of *dhandra* (business), whereas the Kashmiri Pandits are denied such recognition and opportunities.

Whether the perception the Pandits hold in this regard is correct is difficult to confirm. Yet references to communities such as Tibetan refugees provide a significant way for the Pandits to express their sense of marginalisation. While the Pandits see themselves

as Indian victims, they are angered by the apparent support given to non-Indian communities or to communities that are against the Indian state such as Kashmiri Muslims. Hence Pandit victimhood is premised on their identity not only as a community of victims, but as Indians ignored in favour of those who are not Indian nationals. What accentuates the sense of anger expressed by the Pandit migrants is the perception that the relief they receive is considerably less than what other communities receive, which contributes to a sense of being further devalued by the Indian state and polity.

Hence at one level, the migrant critique of the relief programme emerges from a larger discourse of politics held by the Pandits, which I have discussed in chapter six. The discussion of relief also relates to a particular view of the Indian state. While different refugee communities make a claim on the international public as being displaced and stateless individuals, the Pandits remain Indian citizens after displacement and hence have to compete for recognition of their claims along with other groups in India who may not have faced the experience of displacement. IDPs are not able to access legally guaranteed safeguards and therefore may not be able claim additional rights over their fellow citizens (Vincent 2000: 30).

What complicates the situation is the importance of the state in understanding rights. While there are multiple ways in which citizenship is understood, the nation-state remains the primary focus for citizenship and the distribution of rights and entitlements (Paley 2002: 480-481). The recognition of rights involves the state as entitlements are dependent upon officially recognised claims and rights (Gledhill 2003: 209). This is critical to keep in mind as the critique of relief articulated by the Pandits is not a position taken against the state as seen in the Kashmir valley. Rather, it is a demand

presented by loyal citizens for the state to do its job properly. As Kaviraj suggests, Indian citizens express a set of expectations towards the state:

They see it (the state) as the obvious provider of relief after natural calamities...they see it as the provider of education and as recourse in extreme cases of distress. What is significant in a narrative of the state is that disadvantaged groups who often volubly declare their disillusionment with the Indian nation- its offer of common citizenship- and are bitterly resentful of all incumbent or potential governments, still need something like a strangely disembodied idea of the state to articulate their grievances in the modern social world (Kaviraj 2005: 295).

Kaviraj's argument holds true for the Pandits whose claims are directed towards the Indian state with rights framed in the context of measures and policy such as relief. As I have discussed in this chapter, the migrants expect to receive support from the state and often present claims based upon relief. While relief is negotiated and challenged by the migrants it has become a critical part of their lives. At the same time the grievances are directed towards the Indian state by a people who see themselves clearly as citizens being denied their rights. Relief therefore provides a vocabulary to present a 'rights' based approach for Pandits to emphasise their suffering and victimhood.

7.3 A Migrant Critique of 'Relief': Issues of sustenance

In the chapters three and four, I engaged with the processes of remaking lives and place among the Kashmiri Pandits in Jammu. In chapter five I examined the conceptions of community and status among the Pandits. In those chapters, I argue that much of the pain and suffering of displacement is due to the disjuncture between conditions in the present with past memories and aspirations for leading a life of a certain quality. The criticisms Pandits articulate with regards to 'relief' are made on similar grounds. There

is a certain quality of life they aspire to and try to accomplish. However this cannot be met by the benefits they receive from the state as a relief. In this section I will focus on the discrepancy of expectations and actual welfare as it provides a site for the Pandits to articulate a persistent sense of suffering that goes beyond physical violence.

Issues of sustenance, welfare and assistance are significant concerns in the experiences of communities that have faced displacement and forced migration. Authors such as Amirthalingam and Lakshman (2009) have documented the difficulties faced by Sri Lankan IDPs with the loss of assets and resources in displacement. Studies on tribal communities in India who have been displaced by dam construction raise similar concerns. It was observed that prior to their displacement they enjoyed a large basket of resources for consumption. However displacement resulted in acute impoverishment and vulnerability due to the loss of earlier means of sustenance and due to their forced inclusion into a monetised market economy, which they had never participated in before (Baviskar 1997b, TISS 1997: 190-193). Similarly, displaced communities face a number of threats related to landlessness, homelessness, joblessness, marginalization, loss of access to common property resources, food insecurity, increased mortality and morbidity and social disintegration (Cernea 1993: 304). As Zaman observes in the case of people displaced by flooding in Bangladesh, problems of sustenance and economic hardship are often chronic (1999: 194). Hence, the displaced face the possibility and risk of continued economic hardship and impoverishment. However it is necessary to locate them in the context of expectations, aspirations and practices in meeting everyday needs.

Displacement and loss of property, livelihoods and assets has resulted in a great deal of economic insecurity for the Kashmiri Pandits. Many informants, particularly those from rural Kashmir, claimed that they lived off the produce of their land or enjoyed

additional income from the sale of surplus produce. As I was told by one informant, 'we would only have to pay for things like salt, tea and cloth. The rest was all grown at our own homes. Now we have to even spend money on rice.' From the perspective of a dispossessed community, assistance and relief will be important. However the Pandits controversially argue that the relief provided over the years has been inadequate, which indicates that it does not meet basic needs. But what do they conceive these needs to be? In his study of displaced Palestinians, Hejoj shows that refugee conceptions of poverty are based on their perceptions of bare subsistence (2007: 131). Hejoj's informants list a variety of household appliances not as luxuries, but as necessities and poverty is then defined as being unable to meet such needs (Hejoj 2007: 137). The Pandits I have interacted are very similar. During visits I would try to make sense of the range of consumer goods that were on display from branded television sets with cable connections, refrigerators and the occasional DVD player and air coolers³². The point is that such consumer items are by and large seen as essential and a part of life with dignity in Jammu, as opposed to luxuries.

Other significant expenses prioritised by migrants are the education of children and medical expenses. The state has provided for the health and education of Pandits by establishing schools for migrant children and health centres often manned by migrant medical staff. However many families seek to enrol their wards in private schools in Jammu, as the quality of education is considered to be better than what is provided at government schools. Many parents also try to ensure that their children receive private tuition to improve their performance at school. Families also encourage children who

³² The air cooler is a box like appliance consisting of a fan surrounded by surfaces made of Jute over which water is poured. The fan pulls air through these surfaces, which is cooled by the water. One advantage in the camp was that electricity provided to the ORTS was free of cost and hence the Air Coolers could be kept running all day.

have successfully completed school to pursue further education at the polytechnic or university level, though some of my informants started working immediately after completing their schooling out of financial necessity.

Pandit criticisms of relief are complicated by the fact that in practice, relief or basic salaries in the case of government category migrants are not the only sources of income available. While many households rely upon welfare, other households among the poorer families often have other sources of financial support. Often, members of households manage to find some form of employment, sometimes in relation to their skills such as basic accounting or clerical work or through work as shop assistants. Even government category migrants, who have not been adjusted to offices in Jammu, seek and find means of earning an income, which supplements their basic salaries. However those seeking employment often complain about having to search for work in the private sector, which lacks the security state sector employment provides. Many migrants also run small businesses and shops, which are however dismissed due to the allegedly small income they generate. These sources of income are pooled with financial assistance received. It is not uncommon for a household to live off cash relief or basic salaries, combined with income earned by other members of the household.

Nevertheless, the Pandits constantly raise the issue of relief treating it as the main and at times, only source of support they have that is available to them. In some respects, relief is indeed the only stable and guaranteed form of support they receive from the state. However it is premised on the basis of their rights as Indian victims. As Rakesh Kumar, a Nagrota camp resident had put it, 'the government should do everything to help us breathe'. However relief allows for two possibilities. Often, it is through proposals on the basis of relief that a more practical engagement with the state is possible. For example in 2006, a memorandum was submitted to the Indian government to raise the

cash relief of migrants based in New Delhi from Rs. 3200 to Rs. 6000 per month to deal with inflation along with other demands such as the provision of employment guarantees (Dhar 2006: 10). One author who conducted a detailed quantitative study of the migrants, also provides 'suggestions' to various agencies including the state, for alleviating the problems faced by Kashmiri Pandits, which consist of cash allowances, improvements to existing camps and employment guarantee schemes (Kaul 2005: 186-188). Similarly a number of different proposals have been put forth by the Indian state in 1997 and 2000 comprising a host of measures ranging from grants to housing benefits and allowances in the Kashmir valley, which were rejected by Pandit representatives since it involved returning to an area still subject to militancy (Kaul 2005: 1994-1999). Criticisms of the increments have also been noted in the past. When cash relief had been raised from Rs.2400-Rs.3000 per month, the migrants still felt that the Indian government was not committed to permanent rehabilitation (HT correspondent 2004).

In the previous chapter, I argue that the Pandits present themselves as Indian victims and victims unlike other Indians. The criticism of relief also falls into the same double bind. On the one hand, relief is seen as part of a claim on the Indian nation-state because the Pandits are Indian citizens. For employees of the state involved in relief work, the Pandits receive a generous level of benefits and enjoy a higher standard of living in comparison to other communities in Jammu, including labour migrants from different parts of India. For the Pandits, the quantum of relief is inadequate because the Pandits also situate themselves in terms of being different from other Indians. One informant remarked, 'Look. We are not like the Biharis who come to Jammu to work. They are poor and should receive help. But we have been displaced. We lived better and then lost

everything'. Eventually it is the claim of having led lives of a certain quality in the past that results in state assistance to be seen as inadequate.

7.4 A Community generated through 'Relief'

Humanitarian assistance has been observed to play a role in shaping communities in contradictory ways. In her study of humanitarian projects in Gaza shortly after the mass expulsion of Palestinians with the formation of Israel, Feldman shows how Palestinian refugees engaged with the prevailing refugee regime by using the humanitarian assistance structure and symbols of their status as refugees, such their identity cards, to claim 'political visibility' (Feldman 2008: 500-501). The Kashmiri Pandits have a similar engagement with the humanitarian project, though they remain Indian citizens as IDPs and receive aid primarily from the Indian state.

To be recognised as a victim or as someone who suffers, often requires recognition from the state. As authors such as Das (1996) and Petryna (2004) point out in the case of communities that have suffered industrial disasters, official recognition is crucial to securing assistance. Petryna specifically situates her observations in the context of the victims of the Chernobyl nuclear accident who require official recognition to obtain benefits that have become increasingly difficult to obtain for non-affected citizens in a liberalising economy. This observation holds significant parallels in Jammu and Kashmir. For the Pandits, to be registered as a migrant is critical not only for accessing benefits but also for securing some form of official recognition as sufferers in a context shaped first by volatile nationalism and then by the trend towards economic liberalisation in India. In fact many well-to-do informants, who do not lay an emphasis on receiving financial and food aid, have also gone through the process of registering as migrants and obtaining the migrant's ration card, the primary document required for

being recognised as displaced in order to access other benefits such as the reservation of places at universities for their children.

For functionaries of the state, 'relief' also influences interactions with Pandits, albeit in negative terms. As mentioned earlier, a fundamental problem with humanitarianism is the tendency to transform forced migrants into dependents (Harell-Bond 1986). This aspect of humanitarian intervention has also been seen during the partition of India, whereby the apparent helplessness and dependency of refugees left them open to criticism from the state (Chatterjee 1992). Relief Commission staff regard the Pandits in a similar vein, often commenting that the migrants demand relief and allegedly do little to improve their own lives. This feeling is not limited to representatives of the state but can be found among other groups who have attempted to help the Pandits. During a meeting with a Kashmiri Pandit settled in Mumbai since the 1940s, the helplessness of the migrants emerged as a subject of consternation. He spoke of his efforts in providing some measure of assistance but felt that migrants 'only want things to be given to them but do nothing to improve their own lives.' While the evidence indicates otherwise, this view of the migrants as dependents persists among non-migrants who are engaged in assisting them.

At times representatives of the state may play upon the fears and prejudices of local communities. An article from the *Martand* journal published by the ASKPC reported an incident from the state of Himachal Pradesh where some Pandits had relocated. A Bengali officer of the Indian Administrative Service (IAS) assigned to the area had made a speech on a public occasion, warning locals of the risks the Pandit migrants posed:

He made the local population apprehensive by creating a sense of fear in their minds while saying 'the migrants will occupy government land, jobs in Himachal Pradesh and nothing will be left for locals here.' To make the locals believe he cited the imaginary example of West Bengal saying that the same thing happened in West Bengal when people migrated from the Eastern part... (Martand 1990: 2).

Many Dogra employees of the state criticise the Pandits on a similar basis, responding to the migrants in terms of local fears of being swamped by Kashmiris. Therefore it is necessary to consider the views of the local communities in Jammu for whom the relief programme transforms Kashmiri Pandits from victims to a people privileged by the state.

Brun (2010) points out that a problematic relationship between refugees and host communities emerges when a large proportion of the host population may also experience pre-existing socio-economic disadvantages. It has been pointed that the rate of economic growth in Jammu and Kashmir has been calculated at 35.8 percent which is below the all India growth rate of 54.1 percent (Schaffer 2005: 11). Jammu and Kashmir on the whole is heavily dependent on grants provided by the Central government in New Delhi. Due to the conflict, opportunities for economic growth and investment have been affected with unemployment in the state calculated to be 18 percent for 1998 (Waslekar and Futehally 2002: 38, cited in Schaffer 2005: 15). Therefore the value of state support must be understood in the context of the economic climate in Jammu and Kashmir.

As a researcher working on the Kashmiri Pandit issue, numerous Dogra, Pahari and Kashmiri Muslim acquaintances of mine often sought to 'inform' me about the Pandits. While many acknowledge the impact of the conflict and the insecurity of life in the Kashmir valley, others argue that the Pandits stand to benefit by not returning to

Kashmir. A Dogra research student, who had introduced me to a group of Kashmiri Pandit students, shared a sentiment that is widespread among locals in Jammu:

What happened to them is bad. I think it is painful to be displaced. But many years have passed. *Yahan pe mast hain woh log* (they are comfortable here). They get everything they need. Why will they want to return (to Kashmir)?

The provision of cash relief, food aid, salaries on leave status (for government category migrants) and education quotas is seized upon by local communities to create an image in which the Pandits are a community who live off the largesse of the state and who do not have to work for their living.

These experiences parallel cases documented elsewhere which show how humanitarian intervention serves to divide forced migrants from host populations. Duncan's study explores the tensions between IDPs displaced by communal conflict and local communities in Indonesia especially due to the support received from the state in the form of aid and housing projects for the displaced, which angered local communities who felt that they were being ignored by the authorities (2005: 35). Feldman points out that the refugee regime in the Gaza strip resulted in a divide between 'refugees' and local residents of Gaza as 'natives' (2007: 130). In Sri Lanka, aid provided by the state resulted in a divide between the displaced communities from local host communities, with the former having access to special entitlements as IDPs (Brun 2003: 394, Brun 2010: 341). Similarly, the relief programme in Jammu and Kashmir also has resulted in distinguishing between two groups of Indian citizens.

Consequently the continued access to relief is repeatedly questioned in Jammu. Many people in Jammu, including those employed by the state, express the view that even though the Pandits had been dispossessed, they are not economically vulnerable

anymore and instead enjoy a relatively high standard of living in comparison to other groups in Jammu. As Malkki shows in her study of Burundian refugees in Tanzania, staff members of aid agencies felt that many refugees enjoyed conditions and standard of living higher than neighbouring local communities (1996:383). On the whole, it appears that while the displaced are commonly imagined in policy as helpless victims, there is a fairly widespread notion of refugees being privileged and better off than others in practice. The Pandits in this sense are not an exception. It can also be argued that even when the suffering of the displaced must be understood in terms of relative deprivation as Loizos suggests (1981: 200), the nuances of loss and suffering are missed out in the context of state policy and practice and in the face of the local politics in Jammu. One of the difficulties faced by Kashmiri Pandit migrants thus lies in the fact that what appears to be their immediate situation, fails to measure up to a popular image of a suffering mass or as deserving recipients of assistance. The heterogeneity among the migrants in terms of class is also used to discredit their claims, when the focus falls on well-to-do migrants who enjoy a certain standard of living on par with middle class communities in Jammu.

The changing situation in Jammu and Kashmir has also affected the terrain of politics the Pandits face. The Pandits are no longer the only 'migrant' community in the state (see Bhasin-Jamwal 2004). There have been other communities such as Hindus and Muslims from Poonch, Rajouri and recently the Doda region, who have come to Jammu to escape violence. There is also the case of rural communities living near the India-Pakistani border who have been forced to leave their homes due to incessant military action, which has rendered life in those areas difficult. While I did not focus on these groups, I had visited some Doda migrants including a Migrant camp in Jammu. The Doda camp of Belicharana contrasts strongly with the Pandit camps. While the latter

were established by the state government and consists of rows of ORTs which are neatly and symmetrically arranged, Belicharana consists of housing constructed by the migrants themselves, to the extent of setting up small agricultural plots. One of the 'leaders' of the camp, a Hindu Brahmin, criticised the Pandits for dominating the space that represents the interests of migrants. While the Doda migrant camp included residents who had arrived in Jammu in the mid 1990s, it was only until 2004 that they started to receive relief on a level equivalent to the package provided to the Kashmiri Pandits after years of petitions. It is interesting to note that the petitions they have presented specifically demand parity with the assistance received by the Pandits.

Discrepancy in the distribution of relief between different migrant communities in the state has been discussed by Bhasin-Jamwal (2004). Kashmiri Hindu migrants are reported to receive more relief (and hence more attention) as compared to other communities. She attributes this to the relative influence of Pandit 'leaders' as opposed to representatives of other migrant communities. While this report is insightful and criticises state policy, it argues that the Pandits were 'favoured' by the Indian state over communities who have been displaced from areas close to the India-Pakistan border or Partition refugees from West Punjab³³. Rather than representing communities as dependent victims, Bhasin-Jamwal's report and the views of people in Jammu portray the relief programme as a part of state policy that lends the Pandits some measure of power, visibility and influence.

³³ Many refugees from Pakistani Punjab had fled to Jammu to escape communal violence in 1947. While they are naturalised citizens of the Indian state they are unable secure locally specific rights as they are not state-subjects of Jammu and Kashmir. During fieldwork I witnessed several large processions by the descendents of these partition refugees demanding recognition of their difficulties from the Indian state.

While issues of relief and rehabilitation provide the Pandits a political vocabulary, they are aware of the ways other communities regard them due their acceptance of relief. My informants would often ask me about my interactions with members of other communities in Jammu. As my informants Satish and Rohit once said to me in jest, 'I am sure that everyone tells you that we only live off others.' The Pandits are also aware of the potential for dependency on a state that may have provided short term relief measures but offers little in terms of long term rehabilitation. What the Pandits often criticise is their lack of involvement in programmes proposed for their benefit. While migrants may present themselves to outsiders as helpless sufferers, an announcement from a poster in English concerning the TRT projects I came across during a trip to Jammu in 2008 is illustrative of a different discourse within the community:

Rehabilitation of Muthi migrants at Jakti is again forcing Kashmiri Pandits for another exodus after experiencing 19 years of exile from Valley which is clearly a human rights violation. Kashmiri Pandits could not be ignored, because it is a well renowned pious community hailed from every corner of the world. So it is not the moment to which all these dominations of the government on Pandit community as a mute spectator. Time has come to raise voice against such discriminations. It would be likely to say that time has come to fight for our rights...if we come forward and join hands and unite with a single thought we change the direction of winds. Nothing is impossible in this world so let us come together and join hands to fight for this noble cause which gives us better future for our next generation (sic).

The sentiment in this announcement is widespread and it is not uncommon for persevering researchers and writers to hear critiques of state policy, which reflect the anger among Pandits and their representatives of not being adequately consulted by the Indian state. It has been argued that humanitarian discourse and activity depoliticises

communities by converting them into beneficiaries devoid of history and agency (Jefferies 2006). The Pandits however seem to be thoroughly politicised, constantly approaching the Indian nation-state and political parties with proposals premised on their rights as Indian citizens who have sacrificed for India. As I have pointed out, humanitarian assistance influences the way the Pandits engage with other communities in the course of everyday life. Furthermore, unlike cases of humanitarian work elsewhere, the Indian state is the primary source of aid. Hence the relationship between the Pandits and the Indian state is understood in terms of citizens who are served by the state. Their association with a sensitive region also serves to keep them politicised. Nevertheless, the Pandits have become inexorably associated with relief, which serves to cast them as victims and sufferers to themselves and to others as a privileged community that enjoys political prominence.

The association of the migrants with relief acquires new potential. In January 2007, I came across two teenage boys who were moving around Delhi University soliciting donations. They introduced themselves to students and faculty gathered in the open space of the campus as 'Kashmiri Pandit migrants'. However the appeal they carried indicated that they were conflict affected migrants from the Doda region. I later visited their camp in Delhi. The migrants at the camp insisted they were Kashmiri Pandits, though many of the people present were ostensibly Muslim. The camp was located between a large slum and construction sites associated with the New Delhi Metro Rail system alongside a highway.

When I visited the camp, I was reminded of the recollections of my informants about the early days of displacement. The settlement consisted of rows of canvas tents erected alongside a large sewage pipe line. According to the camp residents, the tents had been

provided by the state government of Jammu and Kashmir and brought to New Delhi. Other material such as crates and plywood sheets used to support the tents had been provided by the residents of the neighbouring slum. Upon entering the camp, I was accosted by several youth clad in *Pherans* who asked me whether I had come from an organisation and if I could arrange for rations. I was then escorted by some young boys to meet the camp secretary who explained that they have come directly from Doda and not Jammu. While the camp secretary was a Hindu, several of youth turned out to have Muslim names and were recent arrivals to New Delhi, emphasising that there is little space in Jammu to move into. According to them, their time in New Delhi is spent soliciting donations from across the city and through daily wage labour at a whole-sale market.

A few days later I had the opportunity to meet a man from the Camp who had come to Delhi University. This man was a Hindu from Kashmir but emphasised that the camp was mixed in composition, comprising both Hindus and Muslims. He explained to me that his family had chosen to remain in Kashmir until recently, when incidents of violence increased. They maintained their old homesteads to ensure that nobody encroached on their property. While camp residents insisted that they had only recently come to New Delhi, university students recall seeing the man I had spoken to for the past three to four years. When I had visited this camp, I was told by the camp secretary that they were preparing to pack and return to Jammu in a few days. When I returned to the camp several days after the meeting, the site was empty with a piles of refuse strewn the camp land. I discussed what I saw with Kashmiri Pandits in New Delhi. One former activist unequivocally dismissed the 'migrants' I had encountered as frauds and stated,

‘They give Pandits a bad name. Don’t you know Kashmiri Pandits do not beg! These people go around asking for money and rations.’

A Kashmiri Pandit journalist who knew about this group expressed her own bewilderment and mentioned that this camp has been observed for the past few years in the winter. In her view, the inhabitants of the camp most probably come to New Delhi from Kashmir to seek seasonal work during winter and to test to the waters, trying to maintain a connection with their homes, and yet seek other options just in case. In New Delhi, they adopt the identity of the Kashmiri Pandit which has become well known. While this case remains more or less a personal anecdote from the field, I see this as an example of how the Pandit migration and relief have come to be associated with each other. In this case, posing as a Kashmiri Pandit is a useful guise.

7.5 Conclusion

This chapter emerges from an interest in the claims Kashmiri Pandit migrants make on the Indian nation-state. In the previous chapter I had discussed the efforts made by Pandits in presenting their narrative of victimhood and suffering. This chapter aims to examine issues of victimhood and efforts in making claims pertaining to clearly defined needs of sustenance and aid. Humanitarian projects have been extensively examined in various studies of forced migration, especially with regards to refugees. A critical point that relates to South Asia, and especially to the case of the Pandits as IDPs, is the fact that humanitarian endeavours have been continuously carried out by the state and not by non-state agencies foreign to the region. While studies have examined the relationship between humanitarian agencies and beneficiaries in terms of a controversial ‘gift-relationship’, the situation in the case I present is markedly different since the involvement of the Indian state implies a relationship between a state and its citizens.

Hence aid is a field for negotiating this relationship. For the Pandits, critiques of the relief programme serve as a way to criticise the Indian state and make claims of continued suffering beyond the discussion of physical violence and conflict.

To explore these issues, I have examined the critique of the relief programme as articulated by the migrants. One component of the critique is based on the denial of rights. The amount of relief provided is judged in relation to the claim that the Pandits have suffered extensively and deserve better aid as they have sacrificed for the Indian nation-state. The migrants also make comparisons with other communities that receive support from the Indian state. This point is drawn to upon to criticise the relief programme as unfair and a denial of citizenship. This relates to one strand of the political discourse of the Pandits whereby they are Indian victims and hence must be granted the claim they make upon the Indian nation-state.

The second aspect of the migrant critique of relief deals with inadequacy of the assistance provided to lead life in a way that is desired. It is difficult to assess whether common means of relief and compensation such as cash can actually fill the void left by the loss of livelihoods and resources (Shihata 1993: 45). However the Pandits also base their critique on the premise that relief must provide for a life with dignity at a level that is informed by their notion of an acceptable standard of living, which must be located at a level that compensates for the loss of forms of economic support they enjoyed in the past. This is premised on both claims of relative deprivation and of being victims and sufferers unlike other Indian citizens. This discourse is however often ignored or misunderstood by the state as well as local communities.

What complicates the situation is also the fact that a state programme of support may have been established since the beginning of the conflict and the displacement, but

which remains trapped within a short term approach. While the Kashmiri Pandits are accessible to anyone interested, state institutions involved are often not amenable to visitors and the opportunity to discuss issues with the staff members of the Relief Commission came only for a short while at the very end of fieldwork. However, it is apparent that state policy with regards to the Pandits consists of a series of short term and contingent measures that have been merely extended over the years. Yet 'relief' has also served to influence what means to be a migrant. The discourse of relief has permeated across Jammu and has resulted in the Kashmiri Pandits being seen as an influential community that received preferential treatment from the Indian state in comparison with new displaced communities in the region.

In the process 'relief' has shaped the relationship between the Kashmiri Pandits and the Indian state and other citizens. While humanitarianism may be seen to enforce dependency among forced migrant populations, the case of the Pandits is not clear cut. The Pandits are open about their criticism of the 'relief', about which Relief Commission staff are well aware of. The migrants have also exercised a certain degree of agency. While most migrants openly raise the issue of relief and assert their dependence upon it, most households pursue a number of income generating activities through small businesses or employment in private concerns. What sets the Pandits apart is that their status as IDPs is dependent upon recognition by the Indian state. Hence in spite of exercising a great deal of agency, they remain dependent upon the state in practice. Humanitarian assistance is therefore a site for forced migrants, such as the Pandits, to constantly maintain the fact that they have been victims of violence at one point in time.

Chapter 8

Conclusion

Forced migrants are a significant presence in nation states across the world. The frequency with which they are found in various contexts proffers a significant challenge for understanding the experience of forced migration. With growing awareness of the diverse categories of forced migrants, a number of questions constantly come to mind. What does it mean to be a forced migrant in a world defined by migration? How do we understand the experience of a population affected by forced migration, which acknowledges both the unique qualities of their experiences and similarities with other displaced populations? These concerns continue to be raised especially when the experience of displacement has become common place in South Asia.

This thesis has presented the case of the Kashmiri Pandits who are one of the most prominent conflict displaced communities in recent Indian history. The thesis first involved a reconstruction of the narrative of flight and early settlement, followed by a discussion of the ways forced migrants carve out a place for themselves after displacement. The evidence I have presented reveals the conflicted quality in the ways forced migrants relate to place when considerations of living standards, security and fears of an uncertain future are in play. The discussions of place, especially in the engagement with camps and life in the city also allow us to question the meaning of forced migration over time. Do displaced communities remain forced migrants once they begin to settle down and get on with ordinary and everyday life? Or does the meaning of forced migration change with the case of protracted displacement?

This thesis also addresses themes of violence, suffering and victimhood in the context of forced migration. In particular, I examine victimhood as a field of politics where

claims are made for recognition of the experience of violence and suffering to different agencies such as the state and the Indian nation. I also demonstrate the ways these claims are contested. The politics of victimhood is implicated in the ways in which the Kashmiri Pandits relate to the Indian state and polity, the city of Jammu and host populations. It influences the different meanings of being a forced migrant, which exceed standard academic and official definitions of victimhood in the context of everyday life. The discussion of displacement, loss, violence and suffering has also been situated in the context of a community that enjoyed a high level of socio-economic and political status in the past.

In this final discussion, I shall distil the key arguments of this thesis and their relevance to studies of forced migration and internal displacement. While I will summarise the main arguments, I shall also consider certain themes that constitute the broader canvas against which the thesis must be understood. The elements of the canvas are constituted by the nation state, notions of history, narrative and status. I will end with a consideration of new trends in the politics of Jammu and Kashmir

Forced migrants of all categories are typically seen as vulnerable. They are located at the margins of the nation-state and faced with limited and imperfect access to recognition, rights and assistance. Institutions such as the state, humanitarian organisations and political parties treat forced migrants as different from other groups and as subjects for intervention. Forced migrants are therefore located outside the normative order of everyday life in popular and academic imagination. However this approach needs to be tempered according to different cases. The Kashmiri Pandits are IDPs whose experience of socio-economic and political marginalisation takes place within the context of Indian politics. This is seen in ways ranging from the direction of all claims by the Pandits to the Indian state as citizens of India to criticisms of the

community as privileged by the Indian state. The Pandits are also a community of Hindu victims who are useful to Indian nationalists to discredit Kashmiri nationalism. In the process, the Pandits find themselves caught in the interstices of mainstream Indian politics over which they have limited control, becoming a prominent footnote in the politics of Kashmir and migration and violence in India.

8.1 The importance of History

To understand the experience of forced migration, it is necessary to situate the experiences of displaced persons historically. The Kashmiri Pandits are a community who have historically inhabited a difficult position. The position they occupy is due to a large proportion of the community having been involved in state bureaucracies and representing a large section of the middle and upper classes in Kashmir. They are also a community that is exclusively Brahmin, which gives them a high status in the Hindu caste hierarchy. Consequently the thesis examines the experience of displacement and dispossession of a community that once enjoyed a measure of socio-economic prominence and now faces a degree of marginalisation. The conception of the past associated with high status is found among the Kashmiri Pandits and shapes how other communities in the region regard them as well. Hence it is essential to situate the experience of forced migration in the context of the biography of a particular community.

The role of history as a narrative or account is also significant in shaping the experience of forced migration. The Kashmiri Pandits articulate a popular history of victimisation and persecution at the hands of Muslims since the advent of Islam in the region. The events of 1989-1990 have been presented by representatives of the Pandits as an extension of this history. Yet, accounts of the past must be seen in terms of circulation

and reception. While the Pandits present a specific account of the events leading to their exodus, their perspective faces denial and scrutiny from groups such as political parties, Kashmiri Muslims and human rights activists. The problems faced by the Pandits in framing and presenting their narratives of violence and displacement connect with studies of history, memory and violence at large. Sources of knowledge about the past here can take multiple forms from individual accounts, hegemonic accounts developed by political organisations, documentation in the form of newspaper reports and popular communal histories that have been in existence before displacement. But rather than developing a single 'mythico-history', there are different forms of historical narratives that are brought together in an uncertain mix.

The concern with the truthfulness of an account reminds us of situations of violence and suffering outside situations of displacement. Notable studies of projects such as Truth and Reconciliation Commissions have especially focused on the question of truth of an account of violence and suffering (Borneman 1997, Wilson 2001). While these authors discuss the contingency of 'truth', incidents of forced migration proffer a different challenge. The narrative of a community that has suffered forced migration draws on many layers. It includes a history that is independent of the event of displacement, conceptions of the past determined by the event of displacement and narratives of violence, flight and the early period of relocation. The narrative of forced migration also involves paying attention to the experience of resettlement and problems and challenges of remaking life in exile. Furthermore, with the passage of time in cases of protracted displacement, history is influenced by contemporary politics, emerging events and by new generations coming of age. History for the forced migrants is therefore an open ended project.

8.2 Internal Displacement and the Nation-State

South Asian states manage and deal with displaced populations of all sub-categories comprising refugees, IDPs and development induced displaced populations. Many of these cases include displaced communities who are unable to return to their homes due to the persistence of events that have triggered forced migration and the imperfect policies for their resettlement. The different states of the subcontinent have been observed to lack a coherent regime for displaced populations responding to emergencies as and when they take place. The issues of security and communal conflict have also played an integral part in shaping politics in the sub-continent. Forced migrants will therefore find themselves encountering other communities, apparently rooted, who have suffered grievous violence and insecurity. Forced migrants must also be situated in the larger history of migration within and emanating from South Asia.

Refugees have been characterised, among other things, as being located outside the national order. They are the obverse of the rights bearing citizen. However, this thesis deals with a community of IDPs, forced migrants who remain within their state of origin. While refugees signal the limits of the nation-state, IDPs occupy an ambivalent space. Their location within the borders of a nation-state does not render them as 'stateless'. Furthermore IDPs in South Asia are linked to the nation-state in various ways through relief and rehabilitation measures and larger spheres of nationalist politics. Policy on IDPs, especially among authors of the guiding principles on internal displacement, constantly emphasise the vulnerability of the displaced on the grounds of being failed by their state and unable to access assistance refugees are legally entitled to. But the South Asian experience provides a different picture where the state continues to have a significant presence in everyday life. The case of the Pandits suggests that IDPs are located within the national order, coming under the jurisdiction of state and

directly implicated in politics of the places they are from and have relocated to. However the evidence also makes it clear that the position they occupy remains one of relative disadvantage.

The ways in which forced migrants are connected to the nation-state have been explored in this thesis. Significantly, the Kashmiri Pandits affirm their loyalties to Indian nationalist values, which is in contrast to most conflict related situations where the displaced are in opposition to dominant nationalist politics. The Indian nation-state is the object of all claims, with state institutions having a strong presence in the lives of the migrants. State policy shapes the prospects of life and settlement in the present and future, be it in the form of official acknowledgement of their experience, the distribution of welfare benefits and settlement in a new township or a possible return to the Kashmir valley.

The relationship between the Kashmiri Pandits and the Indian state also suggests significant points of criticism and tension. The state is criticised for inept and inadequate handling of the needs of the displaced, which Pandits speak of as 'step-motherly' treatment. However the Pandits, like other forced migrants, also express significant agency in practice, carving a place of their own in the city of Jammu. They are subject to state policy, but are not subsumed by it. In that sense the Kashmiri Pandits behave like other citizens of India, suggesting that the divide between forced migrants and those relatively more settled and rooted is not as clear cut as it seems.

8.3 The Politics of Place, Home and Settlement

The issues pertaining to place and home have been examined by first focusing on camp colonies that were established by the Indian state and then examining the attitudes and processes of making home and place in Jammu. The camp is ubiquitous in the study of

forced migrants, imagined as a warehouse for the displaced. Earlier studies by authors and theorists interested in the camp portray it as a place of exception, which resonate with broader approaches to refugees as being exceptional to the normative order of nation-states. The Kashmiri Pandit camp colonies also emerged out of an emergency. But over time, they have integrated into the city space becoming seemingly ordinary places of habitation for low income groups, yet remaining vulnerable to closure and policy changes. In this sense the Pandit camps appear to be an extension of experiences from the past in India. Hence, what we have here is a situation where place is both marked by the exceptional and the ordinary simultaneously. Yet places such as camps must be recognised as both physical localities and as subjects of discourse, integral to the politics of community and recognition experienced by forced migrants. They have their use in making political claims and to showcase suffering and marginalisation.

The question of place acquires greater complexity with regards to ideas of home. The Kashmiri Pandits have settled in Jammu with varying degrees of success, with many having constructed houses and purchased property. As Indian citizens and state subjects of Jammu and Kashmir, they are legally entitled to settle anywhere in Jammu and Kashmir and India. However to build lives does not imply that one can feel at home. For many of the migrants home is an ideal, which is influenced by nostalgia for home and lives in Kashmir. This nostalgia is not merely limited to property but also extends to social relations with kin, neighbours and members of other communities and to the environment. Home is also defined by leading a life of quality and enjoying a certain standard of living, these being essential to understanding the experiences of communities that have been affected by forced migration. If the place of relocation lacks these qualities, home will remain an unfinished agenda for the displaced.

Alongside place and home, the issue of the local plays an important part. Locality is contextual and relational (Appadurai 1996: 178). However the local may refer both to place as well as 'host communities'. Often, the experiences of interaction with local communities also shape the way place is perceived by forced migrants. With an increasing awareness of resettlement projects taking place in the developing world in areas with pre-existing communities who face various forms of marginalisation, place becomes the subject of negotiation and conflict.

Many Pandits may work towards acquiring property in Jammu. But whether property implies home is another matter. Home must allow for leading a life of a certain quality. For many older migrants this has been difficult to accomplish. The loss of property and limited amount of space available in Jammu makes it difficult to adhere to values of domesticity, such as privacy, which are privileged by Pandits. For a younger generation who have come of age in exile, making home in a place depends on personal aspirations, ambitions and employment. Neither are they easily able to meet the aspirations of the past, nor are they able to find adequate work opportunities in Jammu. Hence Jammu has become for many Pandits a 'waiting room' from where they will move on to potentially greener pastures such as the Indian metropolises, which promise work and future settlement.

Another matter of concern is the relationship between place and migration. There are two polarities to the debate, with some authors insisting that migration defines our political and social world, while others argue for the importance of a secure access to place and territory. While migration does indeed shape the world, it must be understood according to socio-economic and political contexts. There must be a consideration of how migrants regard and locate themselves in a world of migration, and of the discourse of place and roots that may circulate among migrants in general and forced migrants in

particular. Forced migrants are understood in terms of marginalisation, loss and limited agency with regards to the ways they migrate. While the Kashmiri Pandits have become participants in a world of migration, there is a desire for roots and a secure place they can regard as their own. While the criticism of the tendency to imagine communities as fixed to a particular place are well founded, it is necessary to acknowledge the desire for rootedness among migrant populations. While statistics concerning the numbers of Pandits who have left Jammu are unavailable, there are many who have left the city or plan to in the future. Over time, the Pandits potentially transform from forced migrants to the seemingly less politicised, but ambiguous, category of economic migrants. However the potential to migrate from Jammu is influenced by restrictions such as educational attainment, family obligations and the employment opportunities elsewhere.

8.4 Victimhood and Suffering

Victimisation and suffering constitute the state of being for forced migrants. While studies have examined the role of victimisation in the experience of forced migration, it is also necessary to examine the ways in which forced migrants conceptualise and deal with the idea of being a victim in the everyday life of the displaced. The sentiment of victimhood among forced migrants must also be seen in relation to the larger politics of the region they are located in.

The theme of victimhood is significant since it provides a vocabulary for political action and for presenting claims of recognition and support from different agencies. The communities who inhabit Jammu and Kashmir have been affected by violent conflict and oppressive politics since the 19th century and articulate their own experiences of violence and suffering. This has resulted in a competition for victimhood, with each community claiming that in some way, they have suffered more than others. For the

Kashmiri Pandits, the claim of victimhood is linked to the idea of their sacrifice for the Indian nation-state. However there are levels of victimhood. While the experience of violence and suffering during the displacement are important, the period of resettlement is also critical. Over time, inadequacies of the relief programme and the apparent lack of recognition of the experience of displacement by other members of the Indian polity have contributed to the sense being further victimised among the Pandits.

The Pandit engagement with victimhood in many respects draws heavily on mainstream South Asian politics, further suggesting that the displaced are not necessarily beyond the norm. The Pandits emphasise their loyalty to the Indian state in ways that link with Indian and Hindu nationalist history, as well as drawing on comparisons with internationally better known cases. As discussed in chapter six, the Pandits are caught in a double bind of sorts as they are portrayed as Indian victims and simultaneously having experienced violence and suffering not experienced by other Indians.

Victimhood by itself is a claim for uniqueness. Yet the claim must be comprehended and understood by those it is directed to. As discussed in the final two chapters of this thesis, the Pandit claims for victimhood and suffering have been unevenly accepted. For employees of the Indian state, political parties and local communities, Pandit demands and statements are seen to be excessive. The experience of displacement and the larger context of the conflict in Kashmir place a great deal of attention on all Kashmiris in the form of media reports and the relief programme. Consequently the Pandits are seen as politically influential, enjoying a certain amount of attention, recognition and assistance in comparison to local communities.

This refers us back to a growing awareness of the need to locate the displaced in the full context of the place of relocation and their relationship with host communities. Host

communities themselves respond to the arrival and the apparent settlement of the displaced in different ways over the years, varying from supportive to indifferent and hostile. This also affects the way victimhood and suffering is understood, as the Pandits provide a case of displaced people who are regarded by the larger public as influential and hence unlikely victims. Forced Migrants, especially IDPs, are consequently caught within problems of local politics and are treated within the ambit of the nation-state, as opposed to being located outside the nation-state as seen in the case of refugees. This also raises the need to acknowledge that claims of victimhood may often have unintended consequences, where victims become associated with power.

There is a wealth of valuable literature that examines the experience of violence, as well as addressing the ways violence is represented and understood in the aftermath of the event. Often, the representations of violence can be criticised for providing a limited way of approaching the topic. A fundamental problem in studying violence is the tendency for researchers, journalists, communities and individuals to imagine the victim of violence in a particular way, often in abject terms. The Pandits are often regarded as unconvincing victims in terms of material wellbeing, the support they receive from the state, their location outside an immediate war zone and relatively smaller number of casualties sustained. These qualities are significant when brought into comparison with cases of other communities in Jammu such as impoverished labour migrants from eastern and central India, victims of ongoing state and militancy violence and oppression in the Kashmir valley and communities who were displaced due to military activity on the border between India and Pakistan and have been inadequately compensated. Victims of violence are thus ideally expected to be dispossessed of at least everything just short of life, in order to acquire some form of justifiable

recognition. The Pandits struggle to present their story in the context of other marginalised and victimised groups.

The Kashmiri Pandits face the problem of being unlikely victims and sufferers due to their association with power and privilege in the past. They face criticism in the present for having achieved a certain standard of living and recognition from the Indian state in a particular form. Their location in Jammu, which has not witnessed the form of violence that has taken in the Kashmir valley, also denies them the claim of continued existence in a zone of a war. Their political location in the context of mainstream Indian politics has also pushed them into an ambiguous relationship with nationalist political parties, which places them at odds with a progressive politics that is sensitive to human rights. However, the experience of the Kashmiri Pandits with mainstream politics also indicates that an uncertain relationship exists with nationalist political parties as well. The context that generates the image of the Kashmiri Pandits as a community of unlikely victims is understandable. Yet this raises the question then of who truly constitutes the 'likeliest' and ideal victim?

Furthermore, the history of South Asia has been marked by various events of violence, conflict and displacement. While it is not my intention to suggest that the peoples of South Asia have a natural predilection to violence and suffering, prior images and experiences of all forms of violence and suffering are in circulation. Events of violence, while exceptional, have been frequent enough to be considered unremarkable by citizens. Furthermore given that there is an awareness of less dramatic and mundane forms of structural violence, especially in the case of poverty affected communities, any new experience may be deemed unremarkable. In an area saturated with stories and experiences of violence and suffering, victims have to develop ways of making to be heard and recognised.

This context is worth acknowledging when assessing the claims made by the Kashmiri Pandits. As I have discussed in this thesis, the Pandits attempt to seek recognition as victims of genocide and ethnic cleansing, which represent violence and suffering in their most extreme forms. Claims of genocide and ethnic cleansing, while not unheard of elsewhere in the world, have only recently begun to receive attention in South Asia since communal riots in the Indian state of Gujarat in 2002. These claims are made to come across as unique in comparison to previous experiences in the subcontinent. This is also complicated by the fact that displacement in all forms, has increased in frequency in the post-colonial period. Hence displacement also has to be transformed and represented by communities into ways that elicit some response.

But it is also necessary to see how discourses of victimhood are understood within the community. The event of displacement becomes a chronological marker in the lives of forced migrants, serving to distinguish between a life of peace and prosperity in the past with the present. Displacement becomes the source of all ruptures and failures and in everyday life. This is a point of interest especially when displaced communities face problems, such as the breakdown of kinship and problems of unemployment, which also affect other non-displaced communities in an increasingly liberalised political economy. However for forced migrants, displacement becomes an overwhelming cause and symbol of suffering and is perhaps the only way to claim a measure of recognition that all victims are entitled to.

8.5 Questions of status and quality of life

In chapter five, I examined the stereotype of the Kashmiri Pandit associated with upper caste and middle and bourgeois values. This stereotype is often drawn upon by critics to portray the Pandits as a community of unlikely victims. But interrogating the stereotype

of the Kashmiri Pandit raises the need to consider claims of status and quality of life as understood and envisioned by forced migrants. The history of the Pandits portrays the community as patrons and elites in Kashmir. But even if we return to recollections of life in the past shared by informants, we can see that a relatively high standard of living was enjoyed by members of the community. These memories are constantly drawn upon and brought into comparison with conditions in the present.

The issue of status involves different layers comprising class affiliation, caste based status and politico-legal status as Indian citizens. While these layers constitute themes of research in their own right, everyday life as a Kashmiri Pandit 'migrant' involves dealing with them simultaneously. Furthermore, the claims of a higher status among the Kashmiri Pandits must be seen in terms of their relation with institutions of power and authority before and especially after 1990. The Pandits are often regarded by others and themselves in terms of their relationship with various state regimes and of their relatively advantageous location within the political economy of Jammu and Kashmir. Their claims must also be understood in their relationship with Muslim communities in Kashmir and communities in Jammu. By and large any form of displacement involves loss, which also includes the loss of socio-economic and political status. Yet attention must be paid to status as understood in terms of class, caste and religion. While these topics have been extensively explored and examined by anthropologists of South Asia, they also play a significant role in shaping the values and aspirations of forced migrants in the sub-continent. However the experience of forced migration also includes issues of social change and potential transformation. The Pandits may have been associated with elites of the region at one point in time. But can they claim to have retained some measure of power and status, which they had in the past?

Forced migrants are understood to have a low political status, characterised by victimisation, helplessness, dependency and marginalisation. Pandit migrants are acutely aware of these problems, all of which testify to a diminished effective political influence. However, their claim to a reduced political status is contested by other communities in Jammu who constantly focus on the past image of the Kashmiri Pandits, as well as the prominence they have locally with regards to the form of state attention they receive. This contradictory experience suggests the need to consider that the decline of political influence for communities that have faced displacement can proceed in unexpected ways. Forced migrants, while disadvantaged, are not completely powerless and must engage with different forms of politics and constraints within a specific context. The image of forced migrants as helpless victims may resonate with humanitarian discourse and organisations. But at the level of everyday life in relation to host communities and state institutions, this claim may be difficult to maintain.

The question of status in relation to socio-economic standing presents the greatest rift for lives before the event of displacement and after. The loss of property and assets has been significant for poorer migrants in Jammu who came from rural Kashmir. The loss of secured employment in the state sector, which guaranteed the claim to middle class status, has been difficult for many Pandits to recover from. Based on memories, values and attitudes, the Kashmiri Pandits are largely associated with the middle classes, which is also a claim to a status of a particular form. Being middle class implies a claim to education, respect, dignity and a certain quality of life. It is also a claim to knowing better, having limited power and political influence, and also being aware of potential risks and uncertainty. The continued association with and aspiration for a particular status is a claim for a standard of living and quality of life in its fullest sense.

Here, I would like to return to a point Loizos (1981) makes in the conclusion of his first study of Greek Cypriot refugees. Loizos argues that loss must be seen in terms of relative deprivation to understand each case of forced migration in a specific context (1981: 200). This point applies to the case of the Kashmiri Pandits in every sense possible. The Kashmiri Pandits have inherited a history of having enjoyed a life of a certain quality and status. Hence the sense of loss among the Pandits must be understood in terms of deprivation relative to their past lives.

The stereotype of the Pandits as elites in Jammu and Kashmir was based on their involvement and participation in white collar work, especially in state sector employment. The securing of white collar work is also dependent on achieving a minimum level of education, a quality also historically associated with the Pandits by themselves and others. However, many migrants, particularly those who are from the poorer strata face significant difficulties in meeting these aspirations. This is indeed the case for young migrants facing economic hardship, whose limited educational attainment and resources prevent them from accessing white collar jobs that will live up to their aspirations as Kashmiri Pandits. In many respects the Pandit stereotype, which is still a matter of pride for the community, is also a trap. Hence the themes of status, quality and life and aspirations, are important in shaping the experiences of forced migrants after the event of displacement, especially in situations of protracted displacement. These themes need to be further interrogated in the context of the larger discipline of forced migration studies.

8.6 Coda

Understanding the experience of forced migration in the case of the Kashmiri Pandits is an endeavour that remains incomplete, due to the protracted nature of their displacement

and the conflict in Kashmir. While the Pandits are located outside the Kashmir valley and hence risk losing visibility, many of my informants also admit that life in Jammu has spared them the risks associated with living in a conflict zone. Their understanding of the conflict remains partial owing to their displacement within the first year of the insurgency. However, in Kashmir the conflict has undergone significant shifts and changes. One of the dimensions of the insurgency in Kashmir has been the presence of numerous militant groups. The most prominent shift in method and approach lies with the Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF), one of the first militant groups which fought ostensibly for a secular politics. Over the years, the JKLF has ceased violent politics and is now a prominent component of the All Party Hurriyat Conference (APHC), a coalition of Kashmiri Nationalist parties. Other militant groups that profess an Islamist ideology have taken over, which enables the casting of Kashmiri independence as an Islamic fundamentalist movement by critics of Kashmiri nationalism. But militancy has become a part of the mosaic, losing its position in centre stage.

Since 2008, the valley has been affected by periodic bouts of large scale public protests against the Indian state. Very little mention is made of the militant groups who otherwise receive most of the attention in the media. The protests of 2008 had erupted over a land dispute involving a board that managed one of the most well-known Hindu pilgrimages in Kashmir. The impact of the protests was significant, with large numbers of civilians coming to the fore and revitalising memories of protests and demonstrations in the early days of the conflict in 1990 (Sahay and Hamid 2008). However, Jammu was also affected in a different way. Following the protests in Kashmir, large protests were organised in Jammu to counter the Kashmiris.

On one level, the events of the last few years signal the sharp polarities that characterise politics in the state. In Jammu, the protests in Kashmir were seen to be against the interests of Hindus as the dispute was centred on a land acquisition by a trust that manages the *Amarnath Yatra*, one of the most important Hindu pilgrimages that takes place annually in the Kashmir valley. Yet it has also been observed that the protests in Jammu were primarily motivated by a feeling of being marginalised by Kashmir since independence (Bhatia 2009). Since 2007, every summer has been marked by large scale public protests in Kashmir over different issues such as human rights violations perpetrated by Indian security forces in Kashmir. This raises new questions about the nature of the relationship between Jammu and Kashmir and India.

But just as new histories are being etched into the fabric of life in Kashmir, the experience of the Kashmiri Pandits also accumulates and acquires new dimensions. A new generation of Kashmiri Pandits who were children at the time of exodus have begun to come into their own. Roots in Kashmir has been actively contesting representations of Kashmir that are sympathetic to demands for independence and confronting groups and individuals who criticise the policy of the Indian state in Kashmir. Informants have also confirmed that Kashmiri Pandits participated in protests in Jammu in 2008, which has allegedly earned the community some respect from the Dogras. The involvement of the Kashmiri Pandits in protests against Kashmiri demands for independence are difficult to assess at this stage, though the stand of some groups have rendered the Pandits once again as supporters of the flawed policies of the Indian state. Nevertheless it will be interesting to see Pandit politics in the context of a generation that has come into its own outside the Kashmir valley.

Even for an older generation of Kashmiri Pandits, the terms of presenting their experience have also changed. Towards the end of fieldwork, there was a public

meeting in Purkhu Camp called by the prominent organisation, Panun Kashmir. During this meeting, the representatives of the Panun Kashmir spoke of the trials faced by the community during the exodus. The speakers raised the case of Pandits who had been killed by militants and how these actions are part of a policy of ethnic cleansing and genocide. They then spoke of the need to consider all Pandits who have passed away since their arrival in Jammu, listing a figure of 35,000 deaths. These casualties are not attributed to militant groups but rather to the conditions faced in Jammu and elsewhere. It appears that years after the event, organisations are now attempting to include those who have passed on in exile. The claim that appears to be developing is that many of the deaths after displacement are untimely and have taken place due to the inability of many migrants to deal with the social and physical climate of Jammu. This argument is also specifically made with reference to mental health problems and diabetes, which were allegedly rare in the past. It will be interesting to see how this strain in the discourse of victimhood develops over the years.

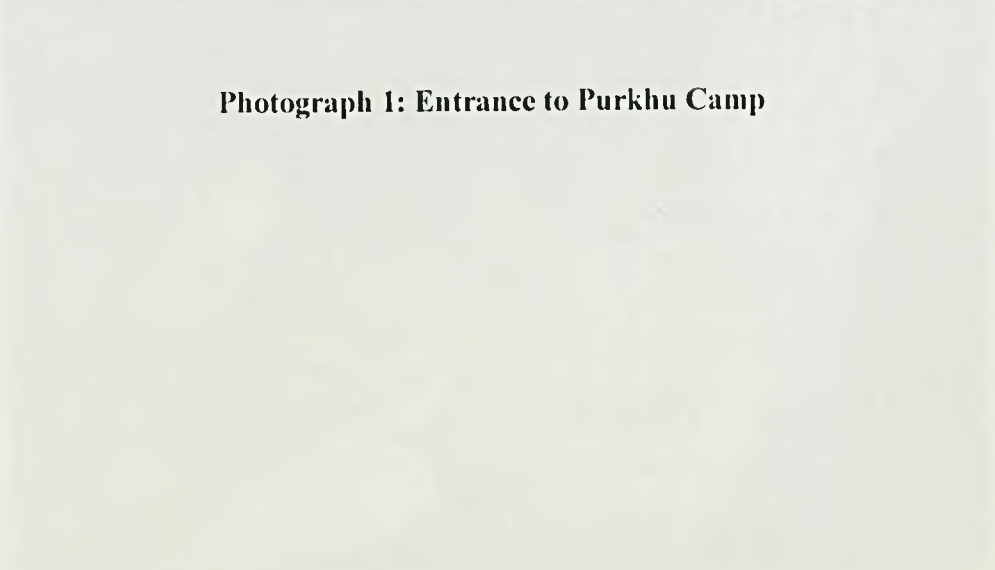
As mentioned earlier, there is a plan in progress for dismantling the camps and moving the Kashmiri Pandits into a new housing colony. Apart from signalling the continued dependence upon the state, the policy also raises questions of settlement with some measure of finality. Often, the question of return to Kashmir acquires a different value in the face of a conflict that evolves, rather than being resolved. But as discussed in this thesis, many of the migrants have faced various pressures to imagine and enact strategies for survival and settlement in Jammu or elsewhere. Another development has been seen in cases of Pandits taking return trips to Kashmir. While these trips do not indicate a desire to return to Kashmir for resettlement, they may increase in frequency and reshape how Kashmir is understood, imagined and remembered by the Pandits. The Kashmiri Pandits are but one community among many in a world marked by migration.

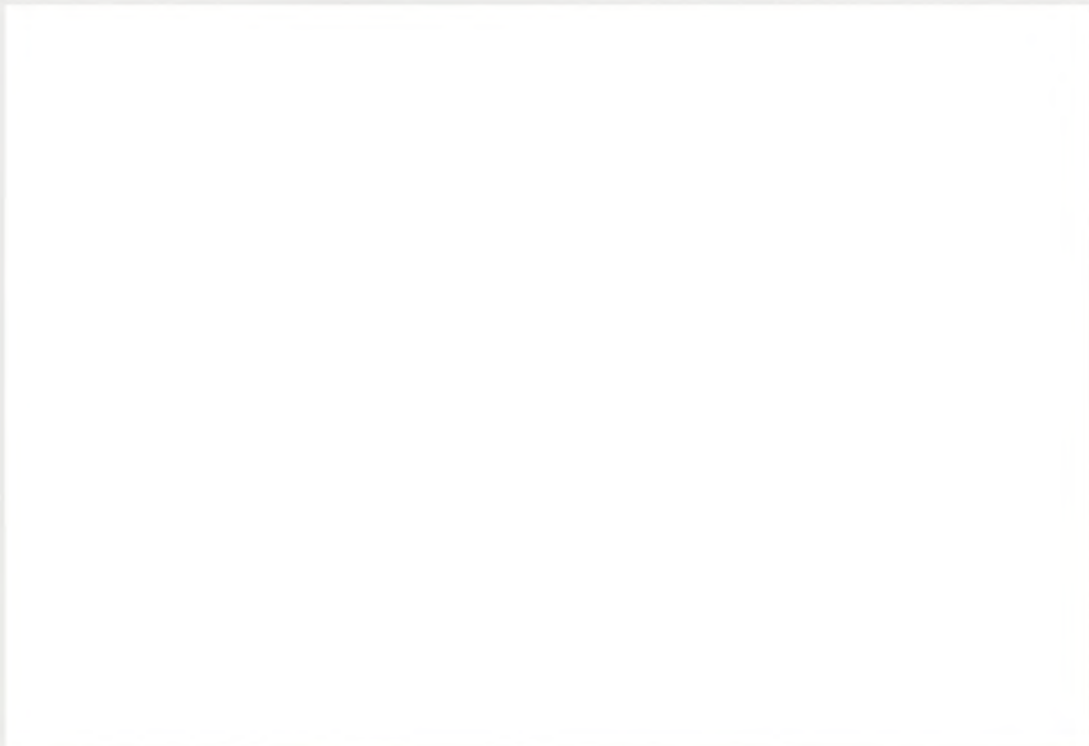
Nevertheless the experiences of the Kashmiri Pandits testify to the dynamic and conflicted qualities that characterise forced migration. Their experiences reveal the pain and suffering of dislocation and yet demonstrate that forced migrants actively deal with the vicissitudes of a difficult present and an uncertain future.

Photographs

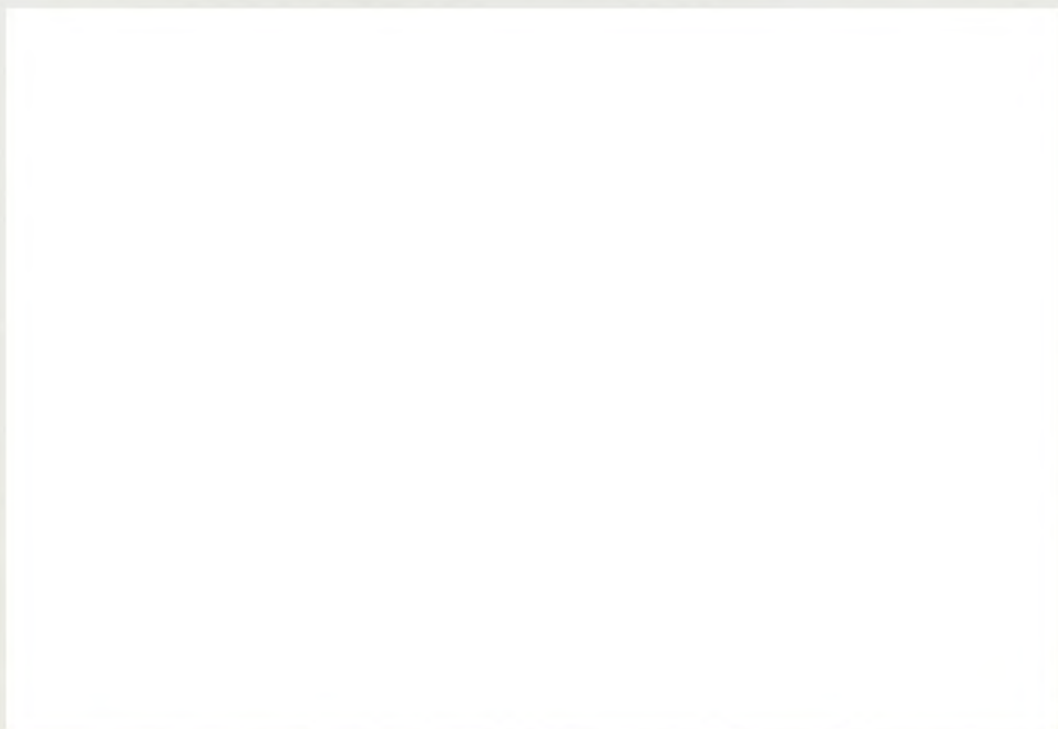


Photograph 1: Entrance to Purkhu Camp





Photograph 2: Purkhu Camp Road



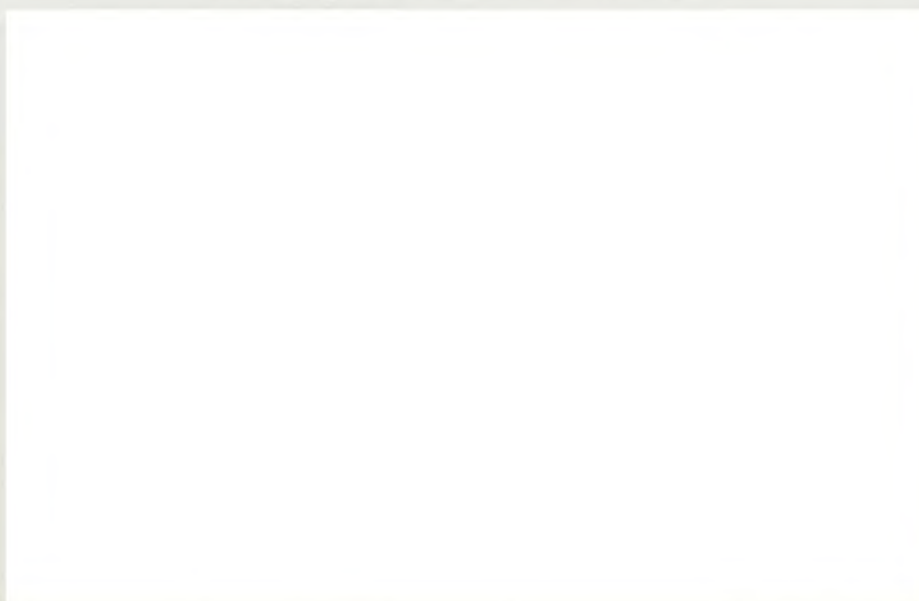
Photograph 3: Selling fireworks for Diwali, Purkhu Camp



Photograph 4: Religious Function, Community Hall, Purkhu Camp Phase 2



Photograph 5: Temple, Purkhu Camp



Photograph 6: Inner lanes, Muthi Camp



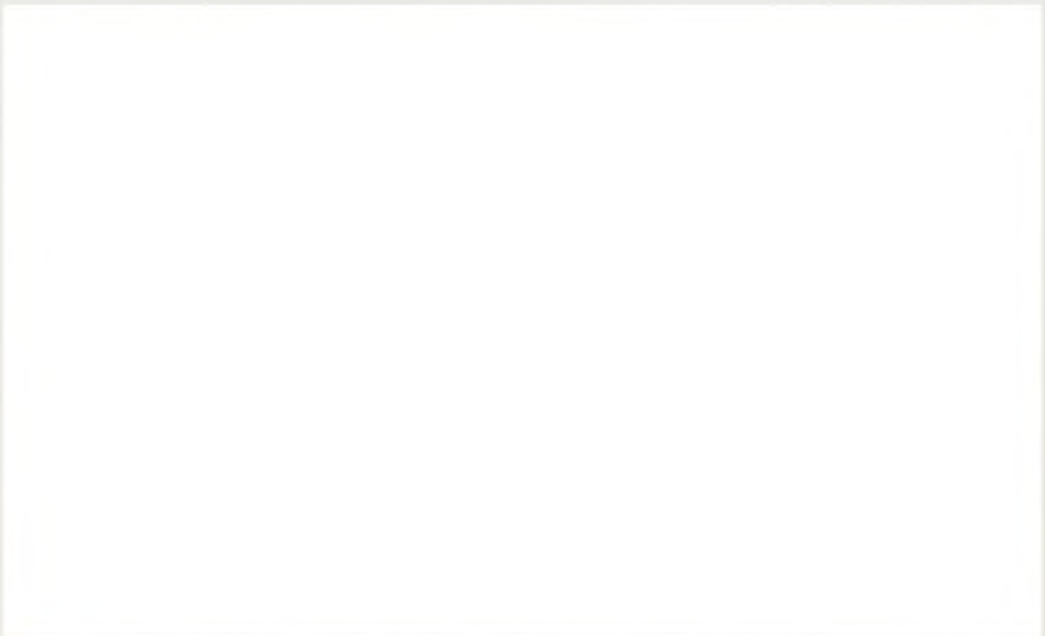
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Photograph 9: Vinod, Shopkeeper, Purkhu Camp



Photograph 10: Demonstration for Holocaust Day



Photograph 11: Tented Accommodation. From *Kashmir Times* 18 March 1990

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