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Being and Belonging in Delhi: Afghan Individuals and Communities in a Global City

Sahil K. Warsi

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Department of Anthropology and Sociology
SOAS, University of London

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Abstract

This thesis considers what it means to be and belong as Afghan in Delhi today. It argues that Afghan belonging in Delhi must be understood as inherently multiple and articulated at different scales, and that this multiplicity must be further considered with regard to the varying influence of different conceptions of belonging in migrants' everyday life. Chapters one and two present the thesis' methodological and theoretical framework, bringing together anthropological research on Afghanistan with work on personhood, ontology, and ethics. The subsequent four ethnographic chapters explore ideas of Afghan belonging in Delhi at the scales of state, individual, and community. To frame the argument, chapter three presents the state scale understanding of Afghan migrants as individuals belonging to an Afghan community rooted in the territory of Afghanistan, whose story of migration determines the legality of their presence in Delhi. Chapters four and five turn to the individual scale to respectively demonstrate how complex and varied trajectories of movement belie facile categorization of migrants as legal or illegal, and how they shape and reflect Afghan migrants' diverse affective and material ties to the city. Chapter six depicts how this diversity is also articulated at the scale of community through a comparison of two Afghan communities in the city. The ethnography illustrates how despite the fact that Afghan migrants conceive of and express multiple ways of being and belonging in Delhi, how they inhabit the city is contingent on their access to financial and social resources, and thus indicative of wider issues of belonging and urban citizenship in Delhi today. While contributing to the study of Afghan migration and urban life in India, the thesis also adds to broader discussions of personhood and relatedness by bringing together insights from anthropological research on ontology, ethics, and morality.

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1. Introduction

Bring forward those who understand language, if they exist!
The stranger in the city has much to say.[1]

This Persian verse, penned in Delhi at the turn of the nineteenth century by Mirza Ghalib, the poet laureate of the last Mughal emperor, serves as an appropriate start to this thesis about strangers in the city, about Afghan migrants living in Delhi. The research question driving the thesis is: what does it mean to be an Afghan in Delhi and how do Afghans belong in the city? Over the course of the ethnographic chapters, the thesis argues that the response to this question must be understood as a multiple, that are many meanings of being Afghan in Delhi and numerous ways in which Afghans can be understood to belong, or not belong, in the city. In recognizing this fact, this research does not just argue for incalculable social complexity of Afghan belonging in Delhi. Rather, it suggests that the plurality ways of being or belonging as Afghan in Delhi can be meaningfully considered through attending to issues of scale. Scale is used in two senses, as discussed in chapter two. The first is of different levels of ordering of knowledge, such as that of the state, individual or community, which each present different understandings of what it means to be Afghan in Delhi. The second notion of scale considered in the thesis, is that of scale as magnitude. That is, the study attends not just to the different levels at which ideas of what it means to be Afghan in Delhi exist, but also to the differential and variable bearing of these ideas on migrants' lives. The accounts and observations presented in the thesis suggest that despite a plurality of ways in which Afghan migrants belong in the city, the context within which these migrants find themselves is one where not all forms of belonging are equally viable or recognized for all persons. Furthermore, it is suggested that the experiences of Afghan migrants reflect broader issues of belonging in India today. In this vein, the thesis holds that these strangers in the city of Delhi do indeed have much to say.

This thesis is distinct in that it presents ethnographic material on contemporary

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[1] This is my own translation of Ghalib's verse: "بیاورید گراینجا بود زبان دانِ/ غریب شهر سخنهای گفتنی دارد".

Afghan migration in India, an issue on which little prior research exits. It also adds to research on personhood and identity in South Asia. While anthropological research has presented various forms of personhood across the region as unique to particular groups or areas, the thesis considers these different ideas of how people are constituted and connected to others as general forms of human relatedness that can operate contemporaneously to inform individuals' understandings of their selves. This approach to the ethnographic material is shaped by current anthropological theory on ontology and ethics and morality, and is discussed in more detail in chapter two as part of the theoretical framework of the thesis. In the remainder of this introduction, I discuss the context of the project, how it was developed and carried out methodologically, and the general structure of the thesis.

1.1   On Methodologies and Questions

The poet Abdul Qadir Bedil, an Afghan migrant living sixteenth century in Delhi whose tomb features in chapter five, is celebrated in India and considered one of the national poets of Afghanistan. Bedil writes that "There are no true barriers in this playground of life; the foot which falls asleep along the path also charts the course."[2] While my translation does not capture the multi-layered complexity of Bedil's style, what is suggested is that even what one might perceive as an obstacle in one's path, can be integral in shaping the route one takes. Indeed, as I explain below, the decision to conduct a year of fieldwork in Delhi was abrupt and unexpected, and initially felt like an obstacle to the kind of research I had planned to conduct. However, this decision ultimately led to a more nuanced project by requiring methodological change and revision of my research questions.

Doing Fieldwork in the City

I had initially intended to conduct fieldwork in Afghanistan with the aim of providing a different narrative to anthropological literature that argues for the impossibility of social cohesion among Afghans due to a 'moral incoherence' of Afghan identity (see Edwards 1996, Barfield 2005). I intended to explore how inhabitants of Kabul's hereditary musician quarter – the *Kucheye Kharabat* – strived

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[2] Personal translation of: "حائلِ نیست بجولانگه معنی بهشدار/ خواب پا در ره ما سنگ نشان می باشد".

to live in *hambastagi* (solidarity) and with *hamdardi*[3] (sympathy). I envisioned exploring the "everyday cosmopolitanism" (Bayat 2010) of an urban neighbourhood in Afghanistan through attending to the role of emotion and the affective modes through which community is formed, using a subject- and object-oriented ethnographic approach to describe both the discursive and relational nature of persons in the neighbourhood.

When circumstances resulted in my having to unexpectedly change field site shortly before departing for research, however, the decision to conduct research in Delhi seemed natural on two counts. Delhi is a city I have grown up with and where I had an network of family, friends, and colleagues. It is also a city with an estimated population of 10-20,000[4] people from Afghanistan, with whom almost no prior research had been conducted (for exceptions see Baujard 2008). I had naïvely assumed my neighbourhood study from Kabul could easily be transferred to an Afghan neighbourhood in Delhi. I was not prepared for the different dynamics of conducting research among the largely refugee population of Afghans living in the city.

It became apparent early during fieldwork that the set of questions and methodologies I came prepared with were ill suited to the context of Delhi. Where I had set out to understand community through cooperation, I was faced with a group of people only displaying ephemeral moments of what I initially thought of as 'community', seemingly marked more by fracture, suspicion, and competition. Where I had envisioned arriving at individuals through groups, I was faced with a multitude of individuals who formed groups only occasionally and with caution. Navigating Delhi as a field site was bewildering. Afghans were spread across the city, and attempts at narrowing research to a group or a place seemed to lead to dead-ends. I tried to find contacts in Delhi via acquaintances in Afghanistan, but while many recounted fond memories of holidays or medical trips, none of my friends knew any Afghans currently residing in the city. I imagined that, as in Afghanistan,

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[3] These two concepts are Dari (Afghan Persian) words used to describe the basis on which community is built and can be respectively translated as 'solidarity' and 'empathy'. They communicate an idea of reciprocity whereby one shares in the emotions of others through both speech and action in order to show compassion to others and have others act similarly toward oneself with the aim of creating warmth and closeness (Anwari 2002:8381-8393; Yousofi 2011).

[4] There are no official statistics on the number of Afghan migrants in Delhi. These are the range of figures cited by those I met in the field.

my interest in music as a novice *rubab*[5] player and in poetry might facilitate meeting Afghans in Delhi and becoming part of a network. This was unfortunately not the case either. At the time, this felt like an unforeseen obstacle, like the benumbed foot Bedil mentions, hindering the research I thought I should be conducting.

Compounding my concern was the knowledge I had to hit the ground running in Delhi. I did not have pre-existing contacts among Delhi's Afghan community and only had a faint idea of the areas Afghans lived and frequented based on personal experience in the city and stories of friends in Afghanistan. I thus began fieldwork by casting a wide net to get an understanding of the Afghan community in Delhi and the wider context within which it was situated. From an informal survey, I compiled a short list of different contexts through which I would be able to establish contact with people from Afghanistan, and divided the contexts into two categories: formal institutions and informal environments (see lists below). Naturally, there were spaces of overlap between the two categories, but I hoped that through exploring these contexts and places, I could eventually determine which networks or communities I could access and then narrow my focus on one particular group. Aside from Afghan-specific contexts, I also tried to use my own network in Delhi's music and arts community. Over the first couple of months, however, rather than being able to narrow down the contexts for research, the list only seemed to expand.

Formal Contexts	Informal Environments
Hospitals	Institutional Waiting Rooms
Foreigner Regional Registration Offices	Restaurants
UNHCR Offices & Implementing Partners	Market Places/Shopping Malls
Afghanistan Embassy	Public Gatherings
Indian Council for Cultural Relations	Music Community
University Language Departments	University Events/ Student Groups
	Shrines/Mosques, Religious Events

The expansion of the list was in some ways a result of my becoming more aware of the institutions and offices with which different kinds of Afghan migrants interacted, but also heightened my realization of how limited my access to these various

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[5] The *rubab* is an Afghan lute, also played in other parts of Central and South Asia.

networks and institutions would be. The idea that I would be able to pare down from an initially broad survey was premised on an assumption that there were extensive, organized, and open Afghan networks in Delhi that I could observe or connect with. While there definitely were some Afghan networks, like the transnational Pashtun moneylender network, discussed in chapters five and six, or the Afghan Sikh network, discussed in chapter three, these were inaccessible to me for most of the time I was in Delhi. This was partially due to the fact both networks were relatively closed, but also because of the limited time during which fieldwork had to be conducted. After twelve months in the field, I had started to build stronger relationships with some members of the Pashtun moneylender community and had there been more time to conduct fieldwork, these might have afforded more access and understanding of the community.

The constant obstacles to connecting with groups or organizations resulted in my having to continuously seek out new or different avenues for meeting people. Within the first three months of fieldwork, I found most Afghans I encountered in the city did not generally consider themselves part of a cohesive wider Afghan community in Delhi, and instead tended to associate within small, tight-knit groups of a handful of friends, joining with other people from Afghanistan perhaps briefly for trade or for religious or cultural events. People were apprehensive of others outside their small groups, particularly of other people from Afghanistan. The apprehension and suspicion of unknown people meant that individuals did not interact in an open way in public and avoided strangers, making it difficult to initiate or hold extended conversation in public places in many of the contexts listed above. Of course, the degree of avoidance depended on a number of factors including among others: the kind of migrant I was speaking to, how long the person had been in Delhi, or the individual's social and economic status.

Attitudes of suspicion also meant that most people did not want to be recorded and I was generally unable to take notes or photographs in public areas. Ultimately, I did use some audio-visual methods, but relied mostly on notes and recordings from individual, in-depth interviews. The interview became the main tool through which I carried out fieldwork, as I could not assume that the person would be interested or able to meet again. Often, when I was able to begin conversations or meet people

through contacts, it was usually made clear to me that the relationship was limited to that particular conversation or that particular space. This was the case even with people whom I developed close relationships in the field and whose stories feature prominently in this thesis. I was only ever able to visit three people at their homes[6]. In two cases, the primary reason we met at home was to avoid the gaze of others and the possible implications this might have.

Such situational constraints necessitated a shift in methodology where instead of forming a routine to observe daily life within a specific neighbourhood, community, or network, I was compelled to maintain a wide range of contacts across various neighbourhoods, organizations, and social groups, and routinely maintain contact through phone calls or personal visits in order to seize any opportunity for observation, meeting new people, conducting individual interviews, or attending and observing events. Individual interviews would often raise new questions or connections that I would have to follow up on in different parts of the city or, in one case, the country. I developed a system of pursuing any and every possible lead when and as it arose, and created a diary to complement field notes, with which I could chart connections between persons or events and the various individuals or research themes they might be connected to.

Aside from interviews with Afghan migrants, observing social dynamics in public spaces frequented by Afghans, and attending Afghan religious and social events, I also interviewed individuals working across a spectrum of institutions engaged with or connected to Afghans in the city. I observed events held by some of these institutions, and developed and maintained a network of contacts with people working on migration, refugee, and public citizenship issues across the media, humanitarian, and arts communities in Delhi. This methodological shift to working through a diffuse set of networks and focusing on individuals is perhaps indicative of the context of conducting fieldwork in the setting of a megacity like Delhi, where the fluidity of urban life can encourage and entrench individual isolation while also presenting people with a vast array for potential forms of interaction and association with others (see Barth 1983; Simmel 2002; Hannerz 1980).

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[6] As I mention in chapter four, Afghan migrants I met might not have wanted to meet me in their home for several reasons, including the inability to ensure the customary segregation of space for entertaining outside male guess.

Coming to the Research Question

As mentioned above, my initial question of how people strive to live with *hamdardi* and *hambastagi* quickly proved to not be the correct question to ask in Delhi; people did not want to talk about it. During my first month of fieldwork, I met a young Afghan *naanwai* (baker) in the south Delhi neighbourhood of Lajpat Nagar, discussed in chapter six. Upon discovering I was a US citizen, he asked incredulously why I would choose to live in Delhi. In response to my explanation, describing my research focus on emotion and community, he laughed heartily and exclaimed:

> "You won't find that here! There's no cooperation (*hamkari*), no empathy (*hamdardi*) here! Only chicanery (*duzdi*), lies (*drogh*), and deception (*fareb*). That's just how these Afghans are!"

While perhaps a tactic to deflect my conversation, his sentiments were echoed consistently throughout the many discussions I would have over the next year.

Indeed, as mentioned earlier, I spent an early period of my research trying to make inroads into an 'Afghan community' I was never able to find. I would question people about community, about poets and musicians, about gatherings or events, only to be told some version of "that doesn't exist here" (*eenja paida na mesha*). People were more interested in talking about their own stories of migration and struggle. In the thick of fieldwork, I perceived this situation as an obstacle to the research I wanted to do on emotions, community, and intersubjectivity. Half way through the year, realizing my attempts at finding a community were not bearing fruit, I took stock of the information gathered and determined I was constantly moving through the same areas to meet people and subsequently began asking questions on what constitutes an Afghan neighbourhood in Delhi, what kinds of relationships are created within it, and how do people relate to it? The topic of the city had also been repeated in conversations and interviews I had been conducting with Afghans, and seemed a potentially productive avenue. Even though I again hit a limit in that the spaces I was looking at were public areas where people had very limited interactions, taking this route opened up my focus to approach anyone (shopkeepers, workmen, loiterers, etc.) in the areas considered as Afghan neighbourhoods in the city, providing me with a range of material on Indian perceptions of Afghans and vice versa.

By the end of the year, when I was to return from the field, I felt a combination of relief and fear. I knew I had amassed a significant amount of information for analysis, but the nature of the information troubled me. Going through notes and replaying conversations and experiences in my head, I could not immediately perceive a singular thread around which to structure an argument about what constituted an Afghan neighbourhood or place in Delhi. There were examples of people desiring community as well as shunning it, stories of belonging in the city and stories of isolation, and so on. In thinking through the material and trying to mould the material to speak to issues of migration and refugee status, I began to see how my initial theoretical interest in emotions and affect were present in the individual stories and field notes I had gathered over the year in Delhi. Instead of seeking to schematize the material uniformly, I began to appreciate the multiplicity of orientations presented toward place, emotion, and personal experience of migration in the variegated stories, and the differing intersections of individuals with various networks and institutions represented. It became clear that the information I had collected spoke to individuals' social relations and the practices they engaged in as a fact of being in Delhi, as well as to ways in which these relations and practices connected migrants to a "simultaneity" (Levitt and Glick Schiller 2004) of groups, places, etc. that included and exceeded an ethnic or national frame and involved both cooperation and non-cooperation. Naturally, this made the positing of any definitive notion of Afghan 'community' or 'identity' in Delhi problematic and forced me to consider how to theoretically approach community and multiplicity.

To return to Bedil's verse quoted earlier, the obstacle I thought I had faced in not being able to find the kind of social cohesion and cooperation among Afghans in Delhi that I had expected, led me through a process which revealed a flaw in my initial orientation to fieldwork. It dawned on me that while I had intended to counter the particular focus of research on the impossibility of Afghan identity described earlier, I had not successfully broken away from the premises structuring it. To favour cooperation over fracturedness, to reject ethno-religious division and focus instead solely on humanistic or nationalistic notions of being Afghan, was in essence adhering to the very either/or binaries I found problematic. The material I had collected contended instead with the reality of the situation that includes but exceeds these binaries.

Asking what it means to be Afghan in Delhi and how do Afghans belong in the city requires exploring the diverse relationships people from Afghanistan have with and in Delhi. This research is an ethnographic examination of individuals in a situation of movement and how they understand and create ways of belonging that can be inherently multiple. In presenting the thesis in this way, I do not intend to divorce ideas of place, people, and social life completely from one another, but instead allow for fluidity in their connections to come through from the ethnographic material.

1.2   Thesis Structure

Following this chapter, the thesis is divided into an additional five chapters and a short conclusion. Chapter two continues the contextualization of the project by addressing the theoretical framework of the thesis and its place within wider anthropological studies on personhood and migration. The next four ethnographic chapters look specifically at Afghans living in Delhi today. Chapter three describes how Afghan migrants in Delhi are understood to belong in Delhi at the level of state discourse, and chapters four through six explore Afghan migrants' trajectories of movement and ways of belonging in Delhi at the level of individuals and communities. The conclusion returns to the question of Afghan belonging in Delhi in light of the previous chapters and considers broader issues raised by the research material.

To provide a theoretical context for the thesis, chapter two begins with a discussion of how Afghans in Delhi are an appropriate group to consider questions within scholarship on Afghanistan, particularly research on Afghan identity and how it handles issues of multiplicity, and on personhood in South Asia more broadly. It is suggested that the questions raised by anthropological scholarship in the region urge us to think through questions of multiplicity and scale both ethnographically and theoretically. In this vein, the chapter turns to recent anthropological theoretical work on ontology and on morality, as two areas of research that respectively address multiplicity at the level of social ordering of knowledge and at the level of individual experience. The chapter suggests such multiplicity can be considered ethnographically through considerations of scale as both epistemological levels and as social impact.

The third chapter examines the subject of the Afghan migrant in Delhi as envisaged at the state scale, where Afghan migrants' being and belonging in Delhi is considered in terms of legal and illegal presence within the state. The chapter focuses on the category of the Afghan refugee, against which other forms of Afghan identity in Delhi are shaped. Through tracing the dynamics of the Afghan refugee label, the chapter illustrates how, at the state scale, Afghan migrants are not considered to belong in the city, and how their being in Delhi is understood in terms of being foreign bodies at the end point of a unidirectional vector of movement from Afghanistan to India. Afghan migrants are considered to belong in the territory of Afghanistan, to which they are assumed to be emotionally oriented and physically grounded, both as individuals and as a community. By drawing on the United Nations High Commission for Refugees' (UNHCR) engagement with refugees and ethnographic examples from the Afghan Sikh refugee community, the chapter illustrates a gap between the state-level conceptions and refugees' lived experience in Delhi.

Chapters four through six explore this gap to argue that the state scale conception of what it means to be Afghan in Delhi is one among a plurality of understandings, but that migrants' access to financial or social resources affect the degree to which the state scale understanding shapes their experience of being and belonging the city. Chapters four and five attend to the scale of individuals, focusing respectively on (i) what it means to be Afghan in Delhi, and (ii) how Afghans belong in the city. Chapter four explores the story of three men's migration to India to illustrate the multiple trajectories of movement that place Afghan migrants in Delhi and connect them to the city in different ways. Chapter five builds on this understanding to explore how these different paths to Delhi are reflected in migrants' differing perceptions of the city as a place where they belong, attending specifically to migrants' linguistic and historic ties to the city. The chapter illustrates how Afghan migrants in the city not only understand their belonging in Delhi in different ways, but that belonging and not belonging are not always mutually exclusive. The final ethnographic chapter turns briefly to problematize the question of Afghan community, exploring two different kinds of Afghan community in Delhi and how they are shaped in relation to state scale conceptions of what it means to be Afghan in India.

Chapters five and six also both attend to the question of scale as impact. They demonstrate how, despite the variety of forms of belong in Delhi illustrated at the different scales of the state, individual, and community, migrants without financial or social resources are less able to maintain ways of belonging outside conceptions at the state scale. The conclusion builds on this observation through a reflection of the material presented in the four ethnographic chapters and a consideration of how the ethnographic material and its analysis relate to questions of citizenship and belonging in India today.

1.3   *Sukhanhaye Guftani* (Words to Say)

The verse quoted at the beginning of this chapter explains that the stranger in the city has something of worth to say[7], if only there were those to comprehend! I am fortunate and grateful for those who will read and, hopefully, understand my words, but before moving to the theoretical and ethnographic material, I too have some (further) words to say. I am aware this thesis could have materialized differently. In particular, there are two interlinked factors that affected my access to individuals and institutions, which under different circumstances might have changed the methodology described above and perhaps even the focus of my research. The first pertains to bureaucracy and the second to time; I will briefly consider these factors below.

The Indian governmental bureaucracy is infamous and one I have been acquainted with since childhood. Shortly before fieldwork, I had applied for an Overseas Citizen of India (OCI) card thinking I would make several trips between Kabul and Delhi. The OCI is a life-long visa available to former Indian citizens, their children, or grandchildren. It would have been more practical than the long-term tourist visa that I initially had, where stays in the country are limited to a maximum of six months with a mandatory two-month break between visits. Upon deciding to change fieldsite to Delhi, it seemed like a wise choice to have applied for the OCI. I would not have been allowed to conduct research in India on my tourist visa or stay in the country for the full twelve months, and applying for an Indian research visa would

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[7] The Persian "*sukhanhaye guftani darad*" lends itself to be read either as "something valuable to say" or "much to say", both are accurate and I have used the latter in translating the verse at the beginning of the chapter and the former meaning for the subtitle here.

have required engaging in a laborious, time-consuming process that can easily take over a year with little guarantee of being awarded a visa.

According to governmental guidance at the time of my OCI application, the process would take no more than three weeks. However, it took me six months to receive the OCI, during the last part of which I travelled to India, in early 2012, to directly follow up with bureaucrats at various governmental offices in Delhi. I would merely get transferred to other offices to enquire why my application was stalled, and was never given any reason for the delay in processing my OCI application. The official communication I received requesting additional documentation for my application made clear the Home Ministry was specifically concerned about the Afghanistan visa stamps in my US passport and the fact I had held an Indian passport issued in the Middle East even though I was born in the US[8]. I did not fit their idea of how people move and belong. Despite furnishing a notarized affidavit explaining this situation and the dates and purposes of travel to every country on every passport I had ever held and running between multiple ministries in Delhi, I could not move my application forward until I communicated with the Counsel General in Houston through a personal connection. My application was approved within a week, though I was required to return to the US to receive the OCI stamp in my passport. The experience, gave me a taste of the Indian governmental bureaucracy most Afghans in Delhi face every six to twelve months (discussed in chapter three).

While the OCI allowed me to live in India, access the national archives, and conduct research, the intricacies of the law prevented me from establishing an official relationship with an academic institution without a research or student visa. This was only a marginal hindrance in meeting Afghan university students, as I did so informally. It did, however, work against me in one case, when the Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR), the organization bringing many Afghan students to India, refused to meet with me on the basis of my not being affiliated with an Indian institution. The ICCR is responsible for many cultural and scholastic exchanges

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[8] I was born to Indian parents and was initially on my mother's passport and did not receive my own passport until the age of five, when we were living in Kuwait. My last valid Indian passport was issued to me in Muscat, Oman where I lived till the age of 16. Born in the US, I have also always had a US passport. I legally held both passports till the age of 16, when my Indian passport expired.

between India and Afghanistan and could have granted me access to different kinds of migrants from those I ultimately collaborated with.

Another bureaucracy I had to contend with was that of the UNHCR, which was a very important part of the lives of many I did research with, but from which I was categorically excluded (as I explain in chapter three). In her reflection on the experience of conducting anthropological research among the Burmese and Afghan refugee community in Delhi in 2001, Julie Baujard (2005) describes how she was able to procure an internship with the UNHCR Delhi office, via a family connection, to conduct her research. Though Baujard acknowledges the difficulties an official association with the UNHCR posed with regard to gaining refugees' confidence, she also acknowledges that it allowed her an insight into the workings of the organization and access to information she would not have been privy to otherwise since the UNHCR, due to its precarious situation in India, maintains "a certain suspicion toward people outside [of the organization] who observe – and critique – its actions" (130). This suspicion was an obstacle that I was partially able to overcome through repeated personal interaction with personnel of the UNHCR and its implementing partners in Delhi.

Another factor affecting my research was timing. I use timing in two senses: firstly to speak about the particular historical moment in which I conducted research and its implications on the kind of migrants I worked with, and secondly as the actual timeframe of the research itself. In the first instance, to reference Baujard again, she indicates it was significantly easier for her to develop relationships with the Afghan refugees who were just arriving in Delhi than with the Burmese refugees who had spent a significant amount of time in the city and were disillusioned with the UNHCR, agitating for resettlement, and "never ceased to consider [her], sometimes explicitly, as a UNHCR spy" (131). Most of the Afghan refugees I encountered in 2012 were in a situation similar to Baujard's Burmese informants in that they had spent six or more years in Delhi as refugees. I was generally avoided on the assumption that I was a new Afghan refugee, though sometimes the difficulty of placing me as a Dari and Urdu speaking ethnic Pashtun of Indian origin with US citizenship also complicated people's willingness to relate to me. This was only ever really a problem in two instances: once when I tried to interview an Afghan Sikh leader who told me "I don't

understand where you're from and what you want," and another time when I was accused of being a UNHCR spy at a meeting of the Afghan Refugee Solidarity Committee (discussed in chapter six).

The second aspect in which time was a factor in the type of research I was able to conduct, was that of the research time frame. Under the specific program of study, only a consecutive 12 months was available for field research, during which I was able to collect an extensive amount of information. However, it was not till my last month in Delhi, after becoming a regular presence in markets, restaurants, UNHCR meetings, etc. for a year, that people began to recognize me and approach me of their own accord. I cannot know with certainty, but I assume that had I been able to return and spend more time in Delhi, this kind of recognition might have afforded an ability to develop different kinds of relationships with people that could in turn offer additional or alternative perspectives on migrants' lives to complement and enrich the material in this thesis. In particular, additional time to conduct fieldwork might have granted me more opportunity to continue meeting and develop trusting relationships within the Afghan Sikh and Pashtun trader communities, as already discussed.

I mention these various factors and their impact on the kind of research I was able to do not to detract in any way from the material presented in the thesis, but rather to express the limits of this research and an awareness that the access I garnered to people and institutions represents a slice of a larger Afghan migrant presence in Delhi and India in general. With some exceptions, this thesis draws largely from the experiences of individuals claiming or holding refugee status and with moderate to low access to financial resources. In this sense, the stories do not speak to "migrant experience" as a monolith, but rather to part of a variegated experience of migration within the context of present-day Delhi. It is with this in mind, that the thesis attends to Afghan migrants in Delhi as people in a process of movement.

2. Situating the Research

In this chapter I consider how research with Afghan migrants in Delhi serves as an appropriate arena for investigating issues raised within the anthropological scholarship on Afghanistan and on South Asia. I describe how research in these areas raises questions requiring sensitivity to multiplicity and scale, and theoretically situate my research through considering how anthropological discussions on ontology and morality offer conceptual and methodological tools to address such questions.

2.1   Afghan Migration and India

While extensive research has been conducted on Afghan migration to Iran and Pakistan, relatively little attention has been paid to Afghan migration to India. This fact might be connected to the significantly smaller population of Afghan refugees in India. Though much of the ethnographic material presented in this thesis is drawn from the experience of Afghan refugees in Delhi, Afghan migration to India is varied, as discussed in the next chapter, and follows historic patterns of movement of peoples within the region, as discussed in chapters four and six. This constant movement of people has meant the contemporary states of India and Afghanistan share enduring historic ties through trade, the arts, religion, etc. In this section, I situate the thesis in current research on Afghan migration, and consider how the study of Afghan migration in Delhi contributes to both the study of Afghanistan and South Asia more broadly.

Afghan Migration Studies

This thesis follows contemporary trends in research on Afghans and Afghanistan that moves beyond the national framework for studying Afghan society to examine how individuals navigate social relationships at local, regional, and global scales (Green and Arabzadah 2013; Marsden 2009a; Marsden and Hopkins 2011; Oeppen 2010). By nature of its ethnographic focus, the thesis draws on and contributes to literature on Afghan migration, which, over the last decade, has taken a more nuanced approach to Afghan transnational movements beyond themes of conflict and ethno-religious identity (cf. Centlivres 1988; Edwards 1986).

Current research on Afghan migration has been shaped chiefly through Alessandro Monsutti's work on Hazara[9] migration. Taking on board the work of Marcus (1995) and Appadurai (1986b, 1991), Monsutti has carried out multi-sited ethnography with Hazaras moving between Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iran, Europe and Oceania. He has focused on the different networks through which Hazaras move, pointing to the various forms of kinship underlying and produced through these networks (2004b, 2005a) and their historical foundations (Gehrig and Monsutti 2003; Monsutti 2010a). His ethnographic accounts reveal how the line between voluntary and involuntary migration is not always clear and that, for the Hazara, migration can be understood as a coming of age rite as much as a result of economic or political necessity (2004a, 2004b). In this way, Monsutti's work echoes research on the general unsuitability of the refugee/migrant dichotomy in capturing the reality of Afghan refugees (Hanifi 2000; Kronenfeld 2008; Novak 2007b).

The study of Afghan migrants in Delhi contributes to research on Afghan migration in two distinct ways. Firstly, research on Afghan migration has largely revolved around Afghan migrants living in Pakistan (Centlivres and Centlivres-Demont 1988; Novak 2007a), Iran (Adelkhah and Olszewska 2007; Tober 2007), or North America, Western Europe, and Oceania (Baily 2005, 1010; Centlivres and Centlivres-Demont 2000; Edwards 1994; Oeppen 2010; Monsutti 2009). This thesis fills in a gap in the literature by addressing contemporary Afghan migration in India, on which little research has been conducted[10]. While not a major focus of the thesis, the Afghan Sikh experience of migration to India in particular, as discussed in chapter three, is an issue on which no in-depth ethnographic research exists.

Studies of broader Sikh migration have focused primarily on populations migrating from India to North America (Basran and Bolaria 2003; Tatla 1996), the United Kingdom (Singh and Tatla 2006), Australia (Dusenbery 2008), and more recently in Southeast Asia (Baharuddin and Kaur 2011), the former Soviet Union (Marsden 2014, 2015), and Latin America (Kahlon 2012). These studies acknowledge the heterogeneity of Sikh identities and diasporic experience, but generally propose

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[9] The Hazara are an ethnic minority spread across Iran, Afghanistan, and Pakistan.
[10] Baujard's (2008) doctoral thesis on refugee identity in Delhi considers Afghan refugees' conditions in a cursory manner within the context of the wider refugee population of Delhi.

Sikhs around the world are oriented toward India, or more specifically toward the region of Punjab, in cultivating a global shared aesthetic and history, forms of visual representation, and modes of knowledge production (Axel 2001; Hawley 2013; Tatla 1999).

The experience of Afghan Sikhs, as discussed in this thesis, confirms the heterogeneity of Sikh migrant experience, but complicates the idea of Sikhs as a diasporic community with origins in India. Indeed, while several historical studies on regional trade have remarked on the local integration of Afghan Sikhs, they connect these populations to historically mobile traders stemming from Sindh and Punjab and travelling along trade routes to Central Asia and beyond that endure today (Hanifi 2011; Markovits 2000). While many Afghan Sikh and Hindu communities do come from these trading castes, as discussed in chapter three, there are also non-trading castes among the Afghan Sikhs that are considered decedents of the Kabul Shahis (an Afghan Hindu kingdom) and other pre-Islamic inhabitants of Afghanistan who were not converted to Islam (Katib 1993). In either case, Afghan Sikhs generally consider themselves indigenous to Afghanistan with religious connections to India (Emadi 2013). Looking at how Afghan Sikhs belong in the city thus requires looking at the community as a Sikh diasporic group within India, where India's status of 'homeland' is not necessarily a given.

The second way this research adds to scholarship on Afghan migration is through exploring Afghan migrant experiences beyond an ethnic or national frame. Naturally, the place of national or ethnic identity in individuals' understandings of their selves is not denied. However, in illustrating how individuals understand belonging beyond these frames, the material from my research in Delhi provides a comparison to ethnographic accounts of Afghan migrants in Iran and Pakistan where ethnic and national identity are shown to be maintained through remittances, gifts, etc. (Monsutti 2004a, 2005b, 2010b), or created through shared experience of marginalization, racism, or economic hardship (Olszewska 2013; Rostami-Povey 2007a, 2007b). While shared experience does serve as one vehicle for coming together as Afghan nationals, as illustrated in chapter six, Afghan migrants in Delhi also contemporaneously articulate belonging beyond a national framework at the scale of the individual (discussed in chapters four and five) and of community

(discussed in chapter six) through ideas of shared language, history, and culture that reflect the continuous movement of people through the region. As discussed later in this chapter and the ethnographic chapters below, these different ways of belonging cultivated at different scales are not parallel or equal in their multiplicity, but rather are affected by and respond to notions of being Afghan envisaged at the scale of the state, impacting individual Afghan migrants' lives differentially.

Afghan-Indian Migration

Contemporary Afghan migration in India must be appreciated within a longer history of movement and exchange in the region. Ideas of what it means to be Afghan have played out across the region through various vehicles including language, power, religion, and the arts (see Bruijn and Busch 2014; Markovits *et al* 2003; Thompson 2011), and this is reflected in the enduring connectedness of peoples and places spanning the region, as well as through attempts to disentangle and separate these connections as part of a politics of national states (see discussion of the *Bagh-e Bedil* in chapter five) that have risen in the region. Asking what it means to be and belong as an Afghan in Delhi must thus entail an appreciation of the multiplicity of meanings of being Afghan and the diversity of ways through which belonging is felt.

To speak of Afghanistan and India is to speak of nation states that have taken their current geographic shape over the last century. Prior to the modern period, however, the political landscape of the region has witnessed constant flux under empires ranging from Anatolia through the Bay of Bengal. It is not within the scope of this thesis to consider the breadth of ancient and medieval history of the region, but it is important to note that since the conquests of Mahmud of Ghazni at the turn of the eleventh century through the fall of the Mughal Empire in the mid nineteenth century, the projects of the various empires and kingdoms spanning the region led to the development of what Wink (1997) has termed 'a world on the move', wherein places and communities across Central and South Asia came to creatively locate their "senses of history and memory of belonging and home" within a '*Gedächtnisraum*' which was as much territorial as ideational (Green 2012:xi). It is within this space, among Afghan courts and settlements of India, that the meaning of the term 'Afghan' began to take shape.

With the decline of the Afghan Lodi and Sur dynasties – the last Pashtun dynasties of Delhi – and the marginalization and incorporation of Pashtuns into the Mughal Empire, the Indo-Afghan community began to develop its sense of historical identity (see also CA Bayly 1989 and Nichols 2008). Where the term 'Afghan' had previously been used by particular ruling dynasties in India to differentiate their specific tribe from other Pashtun tribes, waning Pashtun power allowed for an emphasis to be placed on common ancestry as a means to unite the different Indo-Afghan tribes (see discussion on the *Makhzan-e Afghan* in chapter four). Confusion persisted, however, in that Afghan tribes had followed regional political protocol of cementing authority through identification with Sufi lineages that transcended kin and ethnic identities. It is partially through the geographical network of such lineages, and through patronizing and visiting the Sufi saints and shrines connected to these lineages, that Pashtuns and Mughals could both gain political legitimacy from Herat to the Deccan (Green 2012). Early Indo-Afghan ethno-genealogical works attempted to address this confusion through a tribalizing of Sufi saints in India. However, with the rise of Ahmad Shah Durrani in the late eighteenth century and the formation of the Afghan state, linguistic belonging came to replace religious affiliation, and Pashto language was promoted as a marker of Afghan belonging and affiliation even among Afghans in India (Green 2008).

Indeed, language was one of the mediums through which the Afghan state sought to exert its identity as distinct from Iran and (British) India. To do so was, however, no straightforward task. Written Pashto developed within a Persian language template framed by the Mughal Empire and developed in print under British Indian military bureaucracy (Hanifi 2013) and the majority of historic Pashto texts were located in libraries across India. Similarly, Persian texts celebrating the Afghans existed only in the works of the early-modern Afghan diaspora in India. The designation of Dari as the other official language of Afghanistan entailed an orientation toward the "Indian school" (sabk-e hindi) rather than Iranian style of Persian and thus an orientation towards Indian Persian poets such as Bedil or Amir Khusro (Green and Arabzadah 2013).

The entanglement of language was of course mirrored in an entanglement of peoples. Under Mughal rule, Muslim, Hindu, and Sikh merchant communities from India were brought to Afghanistan, as operators along the financial networks connecting Afghanistan to the networks of the Silk Road and Indian Ocean. This 'Hindki' community was, with time, integrated into Afghan society and state structures (Hanifi 2011). Of course, Hindus and Sikhs were not modern imports into Afghanistan, which had been ruled by Afghan Hindu kingdoms prior to the arrival of Islam and witnessed frequent changes of power between Afghan and Sikh dynastic rule along the current Afghanistan-Pakistan border. Indians were also imported in Afghanistan as part of the state-building exercise. Musicians from what is now Pakistani Punjab were imported by Sher Ali Khan in the late 1800s and would be instrumental in developing Afghan national music within the rubric of the Hindustani music tradition in the early twentieth Century (Baily 1988; Madadi 1996; Sarmast 2004). Interestingly, while Persian would not be listed as an official language of the new Indian state, the continuing expertise of Indian Muslims in Persian meant the budding state of Afghanistan would have to import a significant number of teachers from India to teach Persian in Afghanistan (Green and Arabzadah 2013). The drivers of Afghan state modernization, rulers Habibullah (r. 1901-1919), Amanullah (r. 1919-1929), and Nadir Shah (r. 1929-1933) were not only fluent in Urdu, but patronized the exchange of knowledge between Indian Muslims and young Afghan modernists through engagement with what Green (2011, 2013) has termed the "Indian Urdusphere."

This movement of people and connection of language persists today not just through claims to common poets and saints, but also to legendary Bollywood singers and actors such as Mohammad Rafi or Shahrukh Khan. While Persian has receded from the public sphere in contemporary India (Dudney 2015), Urdu is widely heard on the streets of Kabul and many Afghans are at least familiar if not competent in Urdu due to exposure of print and electronic media from Pakistan and India (Green and Arabzadah 2013). Likewise, during my fieldwork in Delhi, Dari and Pashto could be heard in almost any Delhi neighbourhood between October and April and "Afghani" style clothing was *en vogue* among young Muslim men in certain neighbourhoods. While contemporary circulation of people from Afghanistan, outside of refugee flows, has been addressed in the context of Iran (Adelkhah and Olszewska 2007), Pakistan,

and the Gulf (Nichols 2008), there is no concrete study of present-day movements of people between Afghanistan and India. This issue is addressed in chapters four and five, which attend to the movements of Afghan migrants in Delhi and how they effect and are shaped by linguistic and historical connections between Afghanistan and India.

By asserting the continuity of such historical connections between the regions of present-day Afghanistan and India, this thesis does not seek to ignore or minimise the context of conflict in Afghanistan that has shaped migration to India since the late 1970s. Bentz (2013) suggests that contemporary flows of refugees from Afghanistan to India can be considered in two waves: (i) those who migrated in the 1980s following the 1978 Saur Revolution[11] in Afghanistan and the 1979 Soviet invasion of the country, and (ii) those who fled in the 1990s following the outbreak of civil war Afghanistan in 1992 and the subsequent establishment of Taliban rule in 1996. Building on my own fieldwork and the work of Julie Baujard (2008, 2012), I would suggest a third wave of migration from Afghanistan to India might be considered as starting in the mid-2000s as a result of deteriorating economic and political conditions in post-Taliban Afghanistan. Following Kunz (1973), one could think of these three groups as "distinct 'vintages'… different in character, background and avowed political faith" (137).

Compared to those who fled to Iran and Pakistan, the Afghan refugees who came to Delhi in the 1980s and 1990s were predominantly urban elites who already possessed requisite travel documents and had the wherewithal to purchase expensive tickets for air travel to India. Bentz (2013) suggests that whereas the majority of Afghan elites entering India as refugees in the 1980s were ethnic Pashtun political exiles, those arriving in the 1990s included non-Pashtun elites connected to the Northern Alliance in Afghanistan as well as a significant number of non-elite Hindu and Sikh Afghans (this community is discussed in chapter three). Afghan migrants arriving in Delhi since the mid-2000s present an ethnically diverse group and fit a varied socio-economic profile, as discussed in chapters three through

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[11]The Saur revolution brought the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA) to power in Afghanistan and led to a series of events that ultimately culminated in the 1979 Soviet invasion. As a result of political conflict starting with the revolution, it is estimated that up to five million people fled Afghanistan during the 1980s and 90s, with the majority going to Iran and Pakistan (Bentz 2013).

six. While it is still the case that migration to India requires leveraging financial resources to arrange for air travel and visas, the recent introduction of easily obtainable and renewable medical tourist visas to India for citizens of Afghanistan has made the option of migration to India available to many outside the urban upper-classes (see also Baujard 2012).

Almost all of the migrants whom I met and worked with were part of the third 'vintage' mentioned above, and many of them had sought asylum in India after having already been refugees in Pakistan or Iran in the 80s or 90s. Through a contact in the Delhi music community, however, I was able to meet one refugee, Zabihullah, who had come to Delhi in the 1980s as a young man in his 20s and had still not been resettled. He agreed to meet me just once and refused to speak of his personal situation. He spoke fondly of the "earlier migrants" (*muhajireene qabli*) in Delhi, whom he described as urbane and cultured in comparison to the new (*jadeed*) migrants whom he considered to be either unrefined financial opportunists seeking an easy route to resettlement in the west (*gharb*), or hedonistic (*ayyash*) young men only interested in "discos".

As with other Afghan migrants I met in Delhi, migration 'vintage' presented Zabihullah with a way to assume the social class or political background of other people from Afghanistan and situate them vis-à-vis himself. However, it was not the only factor that served to distinguish different Afghan migrants from one another. As discussed in chapter three, migrants in Delhi generally distinguished themselves according to whether or not they were refugees, indirectly making a claim to the legitimacy of their being in Delhi. Their various considerations and practices of being and belonging in the city, discussed in chapters four and five, further illustrate a complex reality of trans-border migration as simultaneously shaped by the current context of conflict in Afghanistan while also building on older patterns of movement of people between India and Afghanistan.

Migration and the City

The historical connection between India and Afghanistan created through the constant movement of peoples is illustrative on the one hand of how ideas of what it means to be Afghan in the region have been fluid over the long-term, even if

contextually specific[12]. Rather than representative of a 'moral incoherence' (Edwards 1996) of Afghan identity, this malleability has been both productive and a product of identity claims within changing political and historical circumstances. The interconnectedness of people and places as just discussed points to how the place of Afghans in India can be found in history, language, memory, music, and religion, and thus within and outside the constructs of national belonging. However, even though contemporary Afghan migration to India might build upon more ancient patterns of movement between the countries, migration always takes place within particular structural conditions, power relations, and socio-economic contexts (Levitt 2011), and observing migration is to also observe this context.

Exploring what it means to be and belong as Afghan in Delhi today, thus also speaks to the contemporary urban context in India. Despite the recent spatial turn in research on South Asia, where scholarship has approached the city and its spaces as a context to understand wider processes of governmentality (Chandavarkar 2009), national belonging and citizenship (Desai and Sanyal 2012; Simpson 2006), and the impact of economic liberalization and globalization (De Neve and Donner 2006), little attention has been given to the space of the city as a lens to examine migration in India[13]. While research has considered the legal framework for refugees in India (Ananthachari 2003) and conditions of refugees and internally displaced peoples within national contexts in India and across South Asia (Chari *et al* 2003; Oberoi 2006), the study of South Asian migration has until recently largely focused on post-colonial movement of people out of India rather than intra-regional urban migration (see Bruslé and Varrel 2012 on recent developments toward this frame of research). This thesis thus adds to scholarship on migration within South Asia by exploring how Afghan migrants live in the city and how their experience both reflects and shapes the city.

Since the 1990s, research interest in urban India has risen concomitantly with India's economic liberalization and integration into global markets. This period has

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[12] For example, as Hanifi (2013) describes, the terms 'Afghan', 'Pashtun', and 'Pathan' have been used interchangeably, but also in distinction to one another. Where Hanifi posits the possibility of discrete categorization based on the words' origins in different contexts and their differential relationships to Pashto language, I believe one must work with them as categories that have been and are specific in context but overlapping more generally.
[13] A notable exception is Sanyal's (2009, 2014) work on post-partition refugees in Calcutta.

witnessed increasing demographic, political, and economic importance of cities (Lama-Rewal and Zérah 2011) and prompted Chatterjee (2004) to famously ask if "Indian cities [are] becoming bourgeois at last"? An affirmative answer has been provided by scholarship outlining the development of the middle class consumer citizen as the object of the new national vision of economic development in which economic inequality underpins access to the city and to citizenship (Deshpande 1993; Drèze and Sen 2013; Gupta 2009). Recognizing the policing of modern visions of the city, others present the city as also providing a site for "deep democracy" (Appadurai 2001) where inhabitants can come together through grassroots organising at community or interest-group levels to contest national imaginaries of belonging, playing out the "dramas of citizenship" (Holston and Appadurai 1996:200).

The city government in Delhi, aspiring to the title of a global city, has undertaken a remodelling of the built environment in a bid to attract transnational capital, human resources, etc. In one way, the remodelling of the city has transformed how people can move through the city and relate to it. Despite the city's development of spaces for increased social interaction in the form of malls and markets, ethnographic research on affective modes of being in Delhi demonstrates increasing segregation and division along connected boundaries of socio-economic class, religion, and ethnicity (Butcher 2010, 2011). Another aspect of this transformation has been the clearing of so-called illegal settlements across the city. Sundaram (2010) has argued such settlements are 'pirate' sites that contest the modernist vision of the city and that their creation as sites of concern represents a growing sense of urban disorder in the post-liberalization Delhi. Research on the legal and social context of settlement eviction, however, illustrates how the process of eviction from illegal urban settlements creates narratives of citizenship in the city that exclude those who cannot participate in its consumption, entrenching spatial illegality of income poverty (Bhan 2014; Bhan and Shivanand 2013).

In exploring how Afghan migrants belong in Delhi, this thesis affords another insight into these issues of urban citizenship. Of course, at the state scale (discussed in chapter three) Afghan migrants in Delhi are not seen to hold rights to belong in the city either as accepted refugees or irregular migrants. As McNevin (2011) explains,

irregular migrants are conceived relative to particular legal constructions of citizenship, so that their legal designation is heuristic of conceptions of citizenship against which they come into being. This point is addressed particularly in chapters three and four in exploring the construction of the category of the Afghan refugee and the experience of becoming a refugee. However, even though migrants might not possess legal citizenship rights, they are often engaged in practices that substitute and sometimes even allow for acquiring citizenship (Sadiq 2010). In this vein, based on ethnographic work with Indian migrants in the United Arab Emirates, Vora (2013) demonstrates how citizenship does not exist solely within a binary of either possessing or not possessing legal membership in the state. Rather, those excluded from legal membership can also enact citizenship-like affects and actions. These actions that highlight the exclusion of non-citizens, serve not only to give meaning to ideas of citizenship, but also reflect the particular contextual dynamics of citizenship. The conclusion of this thesis returns to this point to consider how the ethnographic material presented speaks not just to the experience of Afghan migrants in Delhi but also more generally to urban citizenship in the context of Delhi.

2.2   Individual and Society in Afghanistan and South Asia

As a thesis on Afghans in Delhi, my research takes to heart Oeppen and Schlenkhoff's (2010) statement that currently "every aspect of Afghan life is under-researched… [and] there is a need to move beyond colonial understandings… and consider what it means to be Afghan in the twenty-first century" (6-7). I also draw on anthropological research on India that asserts social scientists must "live with a destruction of certainty as the only condition for the production of knowledge about Indian society" (Das 1995:54) and develop a "multiplicity of anthropologies appropriate to the diversity of social forms and contexts [in India]" (Appadurai 1986a:759). With this in mind, I begin below by outlining the 'colonial understandings' present in research on Afghanistan and the resultant reification of notions of tribe, ethnicity, and religion in Afghanistan studies. I then consider the literature within a broader context of work on relatedness in South Asia and return to ethnographic studies from Afghanistan to consider how they can also be seen to present a complex picture of Afghan society that necessitates sensitivity to questions of multiplicity and scale.

The perspective of early colonial works on Afghanistan, such as that of Bellew (1891) or Elphinstone (1915), was shaped by imperial policy aimed primarily at grasping the political and social organization of Pashtun tribes. This interest in tribal organization stemmed from a need to understand the Afghan state ruled by Pashtun dynasties, as well as to assist in state administration of Pashtun tribes within the empire. Access to territories in Afghanistan was limited to official diplomatic missions or military incursions, and much of what was known about Afghan society was via informants from Pashtun tribes along what is now considered the Afghanistan-Pakistan border. Early ethnographic accounts more aptly represent writers' perceptions of their own society (Anderson 1991; Banerjee 2000) and a captivation with Afghans both as an 'other' resistant to colonial power, but also as representative of ideas of a "Western male romantic ideal" by virtue of this very resistance (Rubin 2002:3). This colonial, romanticized image of Afghanistan as home of warrior tribes resisting change remains with us today in popular media depictions of Afghans and Afghanistan as "wild and uncivilized, … backward and raw, or … romantic and pure" (Schadl 2007:100). While colonial accounts' inaccuracy and exoticization is easily criticized, what is of interest here is the trend of imperial or state-interests in shaping research on Afghanistan, directly or indirectly, with a focus more on corporate groups and their organization, resulting in a reification of and emphasis on ethnic and religious group identity as a heuristic for understanding society in Afghanistan (see also introduction of Marsden and Hopkins 2011).

The nation state and questions surrounding it have remained a key frame for scholarship on Afghanistan, but there is a difference in emphasis and consideration between literature preceding the 1979 Soviet invasion of the country and research conducted thereafter. Relative internal stability and heavy political and financial investment by Soviet-[14] and Western-bloc countries facilitated a blossoming of research on Afghanistan in the 1960s and 70s. This research primarily addresses the effect of state and market modernization on traditional social organization. It depicts various shared aspects of social organization across groups in the country, such as the role of Melanesian-style big men, models of exchange in maintaining intra-tribal relations, and women's roles in social organization, and how these

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[14] I have not consulted Soviet anthropological literature on Afghanistan, as I do not read Russian, and have only consulted anthropological literature on Afghanistan in Dari, English, French, or German.

modes of social organization were changing as a result of economic and political consolidation of the state (Anderson 1978; Barfield 1981; Canfield 1971; Jones 1974; Tapper 1991[15]). As a whole, society in Afghanistan is presented as rural, inward looking, non-cooperative outside the kin-group, and based on segmentary lineages where patrilineal descent is the primary principle underlying all social grouping, though regional and inter-tribal variation is acknowledged (Dupree 1973).

Pre-1979 scholarship on Afghanistan is generally focused on social groups and their organization rather than individual experience. With the exception of the work of Fredrik Barth (discussed below), this body of research is not immediately concerned with the bases of ethnic identity, but instead assumes ethnicity and tribe are coterminous. More importance is laid on kinship rules and terminologies and on the political and economic structures within tribal groups. Religion appears of interest in this scholarship only to the extent that it serves as an ideological base for tribal social structures (cf. Canfield 1971). While ethical concerns are raised about the implications of social change for individuals who stand to lose access to resources or security, the main interest of the literature is on how external forces of the state or economy affect tribal social structures. Human action and identity in Afghanistan are assumed to be almost entirely structurally determined and little attention is given to how people themselves understand social organization and experience social change (cf. Jones 1974).

The interest in political economy and group organization continues in scholarship on Afghanistan after the 1979 Soviet invasion. Research interest shifts, however, from a concern with social consequences of state building to the possibility and conditions for state building. This shift in research interest can perhaps be explained through the fact Afghanistan appeared to transition rapidly, and somewhat unexpectedly for some, into political fragmentation. Between the 1979 Soviet and 2001 US invasions, insecurity in Afghanistan meant the little research conducted in-country was carried out in rural areas (Orywal 1982; Rao 1988) and the majority of writing on the country took the form of analysis conducted from abroad (Digard 1988; Shahrani and Canfield 1984) or of research with Afghans in exile (Anderson

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[15] While this study was published in 1991, it is based on research conducted in the early 1970s. In the introduction, Tapper states she wishes to depict the findings from that period to provide a snapshot of the social processes as they were playing out prior to 1979.

and Dupree 1990; Edwards 1996). Following the 2001 US invasion, possibilities for conducting research in Afghanistan have increased, though lack of funding and steadily mounting insecurity have limited the type, geographic scope, and length of research possible (Oeppen and Schlenkhoff 2010). Additionally, the post-2001 context has seen a proliferation of research that is policy-related, strengthening research focus on the causes for social fragmentation and the feasibility of developing a stable state (Dorronsoro 2007; Giustozzi 2007a, 2007b).

Post-1979 scholarship on Afghanistan takes a more symbolic and functionalist analytical approach to culture in Afghanistan as a means to explain political developments, and is concerned with the reasons and nature of resistance to soviet rule (Shahrani 1984), the lack of unity within the resistance (Roy 1986), the appearance of the Taliban (Maley 1998), and the inability of the Afghan state to establish hegemony of political authority (Dorronsoro 2000; Giustozzi 2010). This research questions the viability of Afghanistan as a state (Christensen 1988; Newell 1986; Roy 1998), and in discussing the inability of the resistance, the Taliban, or the post-2001 government to establish broad-based political authority in the country, the literature cites a range of internal and external factors, including the urban-rural divide (Dorronsoro 2007), the politicization of religion through exile and foreign aid (Roy 1998), the ethnicization of politics (Glatzer 1998a; Newell 1986; Dorronsoro 2007), and most importantly the lack of an ideological basis for state authority (Giustozzi 2007b). It is argued that this ideological deficit is in part due to the fact the dominant moral frameworks that locate the political in Afghanistan, i.e. Islam, honour[16], and state, are discursively incongruous and internally inconsistent. The impossibility of determining a consistent ideology of meaning within and among these frameworks, it is suggested, renders the development of any moral basis for cooperation among groups in the country highly unlikely if not impossible (Barfield 2005; Christensen 1988; Edwards 1996; Giustozzi 2007a).

As with pre-1979 literature, research after the Soviet invasion presents various frameworks for group identity, explained through the lens of ethnic or religious

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[16] The literature assumes that while certain differences between ethnic groups exist, a general code of honour as enshrined in the concepts of Pashtunwali are shared across groups. See Steul (1981) on Pashtunwali. The reification of Pashtunwali itself is problematic. Barth's (1969; 1981) work demonstrates that while Pashtun groups do share certain values as part of a Pashtun identity, they are not operationalized identically or consistently across groups.

belonging rather than tribal identity, assuming that group identity is the primary vehicle for social organization. Individual experience or questioning of identity is addressed in this literature only through exploring the ideological terminology that delineates the nature of persons and the boundaries for their action. Afghans are presented as rigidly beholden to tribal or Islamic norms, uncritically striving to maintain social order through their responsibility toward their social group (Anderson 1985; Glatzer 1998b), perpetuating, sometimes unintentionally, enduring stereotypes of Afghans as honourable yet untrustworthy due to an irrational dedication to their faith or tribe (Pennell 1914; Ewans 2002).

In the case of writing on Afghans and Afghanistan, the interrelationship of knowledge production and national and regional power struggles has been well documented (see Marsden and Hopkins 2011; Monsutti 2013; Nichols 2008). While the questions research on Afghanistan has asked have shifted over time, the area of interest has largely remained at the level of the state and thus persisted in describing and understanding the functioning and interaction of corporate groups. This focus has meant that group identity, whether tribal, ethnic, or religious, has generally been treated as natural and assumed to be timeless and static before the advent of the modern nation-state. Less attention has been given to individual engagement with questions of identity and change. Rather, the multiplicity of discursive frameworks for Afghan identity has been assumed to result in incoherence at the national, local, and individual level. As discussed further below, however, this same ethnographic material can be reconsidered from a perspective that engages with multiplicity and fluidity in identity as a social fact rather than a heuristic for political conflict. In taking this perspective, this thesis follows contemporary research on Afghanistan that pursues a multi-disciplinary approach to understand society in Afghanistan, exhibiting reflexivity and an awareness of the diverse connections among social processes on local, national and global scales (Green and Arabzadah 2013; Oeppen 2010), attending to the role of individuals in social processes (Harpviken 2009; Marsden 2009a; Monsutti 2005b, 2010a), and demonstrating how people actively engage in debate and critical thought about various modes of identity (Marsden 2009b; Marsden and Hopkins 2011).

Relatedness in South Asia

In considering Afghan belonging beyond reified notions of ethnicity, religion, or tribe, this thesis draws on anthropological research on personhood and relatedness (Carsten 1995, 2000) to contribute to broader discussion on personhood in South Asia. The concept of relatedness developed as a recognition of the need to understand an express the variety of local processes and conceptions through which individuals are constituted as persons and connected to one another, which could not be done through traditional kinship studies' emphasis on biological descent and Euro-American understandings of the relationship between individual and society. While the term 'relatedness' has been criticized as being, on the one hand, so ambiguous to allow for the recognition of any social relationship as relatedness and thus become "analytically vacuous", or at another extreme to merely postpone the problems of traditional kinship studies through semantic obfuscation (Holý 1996:168), proponents have been clear in demonstrating that identifying local ways of thinking through persons and relatedness entails an appreciation of the multiple and contingent understandings of where relatedness begins and ends within a given context (Strathern 1996).

Opening up of the study of kinship to descriptions "from the inside" (Carsten 2004:45), has led to enquiry on how people understand what it means to be a person and the epistemological bases of these understandings. The scholarship demonstrates how relatedness is created through practices and discourses relating to, among other things, the sharing and transformation of substance (Hutchinson 2000), experience of temporality (Astuti 1995), considerations of locality (Lambert 2000), and the carrying out of everyday human interaction (Stafford 2000). Persons thus come to be considered as sites of embedded relationships which at once establish their personhood and also connect them to others (Astuti 1998; Howell 1996; Povinelli 2002; Strathern 1988), and personhood is treated as an on-going processes contingent on broader social developments (Haraway 1991, Strathern 1992, 1996), in which individuals are transformed through their interactions with other persons and things outside themselves (Lambert 2000; Hutchinson 2000).

This move to reconsider kinship through the study of persons and relatedness has had particular salience in the Indian context where scholarship has sought to

complicate an emphasis on holism following Dumont's (1980) work positing hierarchy and caste as the structuring principles for Indian society (see also Parry 1979 and Srinivas 1962). Itself an attempt to move beyond the primacy of descent in Indian kinship studies, Dumont's approach was critiqued for applying Western dichotomies of individual and society not found in the local ethnographic context. Marriott's (1989) "Indian Ethnosocial" approach was one response, which suggested kinship in South Asia existed within a context of relations among dividuals rather than individuals. Marriott stressed attending to local conceptions of persons to emphasize "the indivisibility of the moral and the biological orders, [and] the fluidity of biomoral substances" (Appadurai 1986a:755) in South Asian societies. While anthropological scholarship on South Asia has taken a multitude of theoretical approaches (see Berger 2012 for an overview), literature on personhood in the region has expressed the complexity and plurality of concepts of the person across South Asia and their mediation through, among other things, substance exchange (Busby 1997, Osella & Osella 1996), metaphysical categories (Kurin 1984, 1988), place (Moore 1985, Perin 1986), age (Lamb 2000), and the various interconnections among these areas. The literature on personhood from South Asia has encouraged ethnographic analysis to seriously consider the role of concepts of emotions, bodies, and objects in shaping people and their connection to others, and has also influenced analysis of the ethnographic material presented in this thesis.

One critique of South Asian scholarship on relatedness has been connected to claims of representativeness. That is, while studies on various forms of personhood have been presented as typical of particular categories of people, such as Tamil treatment of place as substance (Daniel 1984) for example, such forms of relatedness are suggested to only exist or be practiced within the specific group with whom research was conducted (e.g. rural Sri Lankan Tamils) rather than indicative of forms of relatedness understood within the broader category (Clothey 1986). This criticism might seem unfair, given ethnographic research is by its very nature situational and contingent (Rosaldo 1993). However, it emphasizes the caution against romanticizing ideas of personhood (Strathern and Lambek 1998) by attending to the social context that informs culturally-bounded notions of personhood and relatedness, and through problematizing the dynamics between persons and groups presented by those with whom research is conducted.

A second critique of scholarship on relatedness in South Asia is that the emphasis on dividuals and partability has overlooked the fact people in South Asia, like people elsewhere, do see themselves as individuals while also relating to others as dividuals. It is argued that this oversight inadvertently reproduces outmoded assumptions that western notions of the person are somehow inherently different and incommensurate with those in India (Mokherjee 2013; Rasmussen 2008). This critique echoes anthropological theory on the self that demonstrates individuals can hold multiple, inconsistent, and incoherent notions of their self, while simultaneously considering and representing their self as whole, unitary, and consistent. Anthropological theory, it is suggested, must take this fact into account, moving past a dualist-monist debate, and consider the significance of this phenomenon both contextually and comparatively across regions (Douglas 1995; Ewing 1990; Lambek 2013). The underlying assumption of this thesis is that persons are simultaneously individuals and dividuals and that various forms of personhood recounted in anthropological research represent general human ways of relating, and that this can be grasped through attending to the various ways people are constituted as persons and connected to others around them. With this in mind, the thesis endeavours to understand the multiplicity of social relations through which Afghans in Delhi are considered to belong (or not belong) in the city, and the social significance of this multiplicity.

Personhood and Relatedness in Research on Afghanistan

In exploring multiple ways Afghan migrants in Delhi are created as persons and connected to the world around them, including but not limited to national or ethnic frameworks, this thesis follows historical and recent trends in ethnographic research that, contrary to the depictions of Afghan society referenced above, illustrate a dynamism and creativeness in social organization in Afghanistan.

As indicated above, pre-1979 ethnography sought to understand changes within tribal systems resulting from development and expansion of the centralized state. While this assumes social organization preceding state consolidation was static, the very documentation of change suggests that meanings and forms of social relations within tribes were anything but static, affected by economic and political

circumstances. Nancy Tapper's (1991) work on a Durrani Pashtun tribe in Northern Afghanistan, depicts how population increase, competition over farm-land, and introduction of a cash economy disrupted traditional modes of exchange and inheritance, resulting in the social stratification of an otherwise egalitarian social group, the deterioration of agnatic relations, and the confusion of meanings in a complex system of marriage that negatively impacted women's role in social organization. Barfield (1981)[17] and Anderson's (1978) respective research with ethnic Arab pastoralists in northern Afghanistan and Ghilzai Pashtuns in southern Afghanistan, shows the introduction of a cash-based economy changed modes of production and created social stratification whereby richer clans or individuals obtained greater access to cash for investment at the expense of poorer counterparts. Among the Arabs, the near abandonment of migration for settled ranching is shown to have divided poorer and richer clans, with the former reducing their dependence on and identification with the clan while peasantization entrenched the latter's ethnic identity. Similarly, among the Ghilzai, the switch from irrigation to dry farming and the consequent change in labour requirements from is demonstrated to have jeopardized the traditional structure of relations between khans and sharecropping tribesmen, engendered sharp economic inequality, and decreased tribal solidarity. Though these ethnographies assume a static tribal system that is changing in response to state modernization, they demonstrate by the very fact tribal and clan identities are changing that the category of tribe or clan is not itself necessarily self-evident or given, but rather constructed and maintained (see Sneath 2007 for a broader critique of the concept of 'tribe').

Similarly, post-1979 ethnography's focus on ethnic identity to grasp the political situation Afghanistan treats ethnicity as a discrete category assumed to be of primacy in identity construction (Shahrani and Canfield 1984; Digard 1988; Orywal 1986). The ethnographic material presented, however, illustrates that rather than being based purely on descent or lineage, ethnic groups in Afghanistan are formed through a multiplicity of processes such as shared regional, economic, or political history (Janata 1986), as a result of social exclusion (Rao 1986, 1988), or through external influence including academic research (Ovesen 1986; R Tapper 1988).

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[17] Barfield's work reflects a wider debate at the time on integration of nomads in the region into the state (see Tapper 1983).

Concepts of ethnicity and religion are shown to affect one another, and to also be influenced by external political factors (Canfield 1988; Roy 1988; Tapper 1988). Particularly, with regard to political organization, ethnic and religious identity are shown to have an ambiguous relationship, where they are sometimes coeval and, at other times, predicated upon one another (Canfield 1984, 1988; Anderson 1984). Both are depicted as moral categories essential to ideas of what it means to be Afghan and thus as categories deployed in political language (Anderson 1984; Newell 1986; Roy 1986). Their inherent ambiguity, thus allows for the possibility of political cooperation, as in the case of fighting foreign forces, but also for internal conflict to arise over differing understandings of moral authority (Centlivres 1980; Roy 1988; Shahrani 1984). Again, primacy is given to a state-level perspective where differences in concepts, forms, and bases of ethnic identity are depicted as part of a wider pattern connecting people through a language of common origin or culture, place, and religious affiliation (Tapper 1988), but the ethnographic material also demonstrates the plasticity of ethnic terminology, its application, and ascription.

As mentioned above, Frederik Barth's work on Pathans[18] in Pakistan and Afghanistan presents a different view of Pashtun society from other studies of the time. Barth (1959a, 1969) provides a descriptive analysis of the socio-political organization of Swat Pathans to demonstrate how ecological variation, migration, and interaction with other groups has resulted in variations in organization and identity among Pathan groups. Barth's attention to difference and variability is a result of his transactionalist approach, which focuses on individual social actors making choices based on personal economic and political gain. Contrary to the dominant themes in scholarship on Afghanistan at the time, Barth's (1981) research argues that migration both changes Pathan identity and also extends it to non-Pathans, and that this is possible since, among the Pathans, political allegiance is a

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[18] In this case, 'Pathan' can be interchanged with 'Pashtun' as a term used mainly by the British Indian state and those living under it. Hanifi (2011) discusses how "the variety of geographic, social, and political components, distinctions, and relations among the terms Afghan, Pashtun, and Pathan… [make it] neither accurate nor productive to impose neat and clear divisions among Afghans, Pashtuns, and Pathans" (22). The difficulty in isolating a definition for terms such as 'Pathan' in historical records from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries is also discussed by Nichols (2008) and Sherman (2011). Barth's (1969) discussion of Pathan identity is essentially a discussion of how this difference can exist with individuals still holding concrete identities of what it means to be Pathan. In this thesis, I have used the words people I worked with used to refer to themselves or others, which generally were 'Afghan' and 'Pashtun', and have strived to explain the meanings in context.

matter of individual choice. Barth suggests that this 'freedom of choice' among Pathans where "individuals are able to make choices in terms of private advantage and personal political career… resembles that of Western [sic] societies"(1959a:2).

Barth's statement that the Pathans' freedom of choice "resembles" that of individuals in 'Western' society might not be well received today with regard to its seeming western-centricism. Yet, considered in light of the prevailing research at the time, it appears more in line with the research on personhood cited above. Barth has, however, also been criticized for this view and for being reductionist and euro-centric in the analysis of Swat Pathan society (Asad 1972). His work on Swat Pathans has been faulted for following Dumont in effectively "imposing a Brahmin's eye-view of the world on entire Hindu society" (Ahmed 1976:31) and conflating the experience of Yusufzai Pathans in a particular historical-political context with that of Pathans as a whole, ignoring the larger religious-cultural patterns connecting Swat Pathans and their ideas of the person to the wider region and the broader Muslim world (84-5).

Considering Barth's work in light of wider research on personhood in South Asia, however, one can consider both his perspective and those of his critics as presenting differing visions of Pathan society that represent a contemporaneous plurality of how the relationship between group and individual can be understood in a society. Indeed, Barth's work on Pathan identity has made critical contributions to anthropological discussions on ethnic identity, politics, and state-formation. His focus on the individual as well as the group, and his acknowledgement of complexity and variation in how individuals understand their place in Swat society, is being returned to by researchers in the region today in light of regional attempts to "theorize and develop a conceptual language to address issues important to the places and people [studied], [and] to ask and frame questions of broader historical and societal significance" (Hopkins and Marsden 2013:3-4).

In the context of the material considered in this thesis, it is Barth's attention to social complexity in an urban context, epitomized in his ethnographic work in Oman that is instructive. Barth's (1983) ethnographic account of the Omani coastal town of Sohar illustrates how in this cosmopolitan urban context, individuals are ascribed and take

on multiple social identities that connect them to a variety of social groups that are differentially connected or excluded from one another. Barth depicts this complexity as a fact of urban life and posits that an examination of the ways in which people manage this complexity reveals underlying tensions and characteristics specific to the social context of urban life.

It is in this spirit that the thesis explores Afghan being and belonging in Delhi. As mentioned in the preceding chapter, the research question driving the thesis was arrived at through thinking through the plurality of experiences and sentiments of belonging expressed by Afghan migrants I worked with in Delhi. Literature on Afghanistan and Afghans, as discussed above, reveals a similar plurality, encouraging consideration of the categories of group, individual, and nation, the varying and contradictory relations between them, and the implications or significance of this plurality. The ethnographic chapters in this thesis do this by problematizing the national lens in framing belonging (chapters three through six), complicating the idea of community as a given and primary unit of identification (chapters six), and questioning whether multiple or contradictory frames of identity necessarily lead to 'incoherence' (chapters four and five). The thesis reiterates that Afghans can hold multiple ideas of being and belonging, but suggests this is not a trait particular to Afghans rather than part of the human condition. The question remains as to what the significance of this plurality is, what does it serve to recognize it, and how does one go about doing so? Within the context of this thesis, it is argued that significance of the multiple ways Afghans belong in Delhi must be understood with regard to scale. In the next section, I discuss more concretely the theoretical orientation to multiplicity and scale taken in this thesis.

2.3   Thinking through Multiplicity and Scale

The anthropological literature on Afghanistan and on personhood in South Asia presents a dilemma of categorization. On the one hand ethnographic research must consider the existence of groups, tribes, community, nation, etc. that hold meaning for the people and contexts within which research is conducted. On the other, these categories are contingent formations within a multiplicity of possibilities within a given context. Thus, for example, while the deployment of a discrete ethnic identity in political discourse may be explanatory of political events and situations, its

analysis as an ethnographic artefact yields it pliable and inconstant. The forgoing discussion has considered how anthropological research in the region has approached this multiplicity of categories from different perspectives, providing diverging views on community, individual, and the relationship between them. This thesis takes this multiplicity of views into consideration in order to understand what it means to be Afghan in Delhi and how Afghans belong in the city. In developing a theoretical approach to thinking through multiplicity within my own research, I have turned to anthropological work on ontology and morality.

Ontological Multiplicity

Anthropology has perhaps dealt with questions of ontology *ab initio*, but the recent 'ontological turn' within the discipline presents a constructive avenue of thinking through multiplicity in how persons are constituted. Debate is on-going on the value of this turn. Some argue it presents a critical approach that has rejuvenated the field's position to tackle the political (Hage 2012), that it is a contemporary attempt at reworking older concepts such as 'culture' or 'society' (Carrithers *et al* 2010), that it dangerously approaches a former essentialist stance within anthropology (Vigh and Sausdal 2014), or that despite presenting engaging ethnographic material its theoretical manoeuvres and underlying arguments are not always cogent or necessary (Heywood 2012; Laidlaw 2012). I am in agreement with much of the critique of the ontological turn, however, following Navaro-Yashin's advice to think "against the grain of 'ruination' in being anti-, trans-, or multi-paradigmatic" (2009:17), I proceed below to consider how this turn can also present a useful perspective to think through multiplicity. In particular, it provides a useful avenue to think of persons and objects as simultaneously multiple just not cognitively, but also materially.

Rather than a unified movement, the ontological turn presents a number of different strands of research (for an overview see Scott 2007:3-5). The different approaches within the turn are represented by Henare *et al* (2007) as sharing roots in the reflexive turn of the 1980s and 90s and cultivating a methodological and theoretical position to approach ethnographic artefacts without *a priori* assumptions, to shift analytic focus from epistemology to ontology, and to thus create new analytical

concepts within the discipline[19]. Over the last two decades, this scholarship has primarily theorized indigenous peoples' ontological schemata to various ends including, among others, considering the role of ontological differences in conflict (Povinelli 2002), developing comparative typologies from different regions (Descola 2012), and drawing attention to cognitive or epistemological implications of indigenous ways of being (Pedersen 2007; Viveiros de Castro 2012).

It is perhaps the perspectivist approach (Holbraad and Willerslev 2007; Viveiros de Castro 2004) that garners both ire and appreciation for the ontological turn. Building theoretically on Amerindian ontology, perspectivism is put forward by its proponents as a response to the dualistic, multicultural anthropological approach in which different cultural representations are considered to refer to a unitary natural world. Perspectivists seek to eliminate this distance between nature and representation, suggesting in effect that different representations are incommensurate not epistemologically but ontologically. That is to say, it is not through multiple worldviews that *a* world is inhabited, but rather that people inhabit multiple worlds which they know through a consistent manner (Henare *et al* 2007:7-14). The move to collapse representation and nature is a political one. Viveiros de Castro acknowledges as much in setting the contours for this anthropological approach as "(a) a theory of peoples' ontological autodetermination and (b) a practice of the permanent decolonization of thought" (2011:128). This is in essence advocating a position for taking seriously the ontological propositions of all 'peoples', which in the case of most writing in the ontological turn are generally indigenous peoples.

One might question if this is not actually what researchers, like Evans-Pritchard (1965), Dumont (1980), or Schneider (1980) for example, do in differing ways? The distinction lies in the second proposition of decolonization of thought. Viveiros de Castro (2003) avers that the multicultural perspective instates an "ontological monarchy" under the rubric of an "epistemological democracy" by placing:

"the anthropologist and the native on an equal footing, inasmuch as it implies that the anthropologist's knowledge of other cultures is itself culturally

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[19] Such as Holbraad's (2012) concept of ontography as process of identifying emergent truth, or Viveiros de Castro's (2004) work on perspectival anthropology and radical alterity.

mediated… this sense of equality is simply empirical or *de facto*, since it refers to the common (or generic) cultural condition of the anthropologist and the native. However, their differently constituted relationships with their respective cultures… are such that this de facto sense of equality does not imply an equality *de jure* – that is, an equality with regard to their respective claims to knowledge. The anthropologist tends to have an epistemological advantage over the native. Their respective discourses are situated on different planes… much of what goes, or has gone, by the name of anthropology turns on the contrary assumption that the anthropologist has a privileged grasp of the reason for the native's reasons – reasons to which the native's reasonings are oblivious" (2013:475-6).

By positing the ontological equivalence of the anthropologists and the 'native's' perspective, ethnographic perspectivism attempts to answer the problem of representation – an issue at the crux of debates in scholarship on Afghanistan and South Asia discussed above – by claiming "*de jure*" equality between discourses.

In asserting ontological diversity, perspectivists draw attention to the multiplicity of materiality that differs from and complements considerations within anthropological work on ethics and morality (discussed further below). The simultaneous multiplicity of the material world that the ontological turn recognizes is of benefit when considering the personhood of Afghan migrants in Delhi. For example, taking the Afghan migrant as an ethnographic artefact as is done in chapters three through five, one can describe various levels at which the migrant is constituted as a person by the UNHCR, religious groups, transnational corporate networks, etc. The physical and ideational relations inhering in and constituting this 'object' differ at the various scales. Yet, this fact does not render the Afghan migrant as multiple persons. The migrant remains a singular Afghan migrant constituted materially and ideationally by multiple, simultaneous, and potentially divergent processes. As discussed in the ethnographic chapters below, this is not a passive process; rather, migrants are aware of and engage with these various processes in cultivating a sense of who they are. Against assertions of moral incoherence described above, one can thus understand how a migrant who is a unitary artefact can be apprehended materially and relationally in a diversity of ways, but how this

does not necessarily imply an experience of incoherence more than an experience of ontological complexity.

A perspectivist would likely balk at the above description of the Afghan migrant as an ethnographic artefact, arguing that it returns to asserting the unity of nature understood through multiple epistemologies and that one cannot experience ontological multiplicity due to radical ontological alterity. The assertion of radical alterity thus marks the limit of perspectivist theory for this thesis. Though radical alterity might be a possibility, it is conceptually unproductive for ethnographic thought as by its nature the existence of radical alterity cannot be recognized or communicated. The claim that ontological difference is absolute to the extent individuals cannot grasp another's ontology assumes (i) that a person understands him or herself within a sole ontological framework, (ii) that there are distinct ontologies possessed by 'peoples' such as Amerindians, Mongolian Shamans, Euro-Americans, etc., and (iii) that these ontologies are defined by radical difference.

My position draws on Keane's (2009) argument that while the move to take ontological multiplicity seriously is productive in demonstrating how material things not only exceed concepts but also exist across different concepts, times, etc., the assertion of radical alterity folds these concepts inwards, effectively reasserting a stable essence to the object. In this way, the perspectivist position repeats a similar move to the assertion of essentialized ideas of Indian personhood or Afghan identity that render the individual interlocutor invisible amidst a generalized whole[20]. The presentation and analysis of the ethnographic material in this thesis endeavours to retain the ontological complexity related in Afghan migrants' experience in Delhi without making this reductionist theoretical move.

The question still remains, however, as to how to apprehend ethnographic subjects that exist within multiple ontological systems? Within the ontological turn, there have been recent theoretical moves to consider conceptual proximities of radically different ontologies existing in tandem (Fontein 2011) that suggest rather than

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[20] A perspectivist might insist, however, that to describe a particular ontology as Amerindian for example, is not to essentialize all native peoples in the Americas, but rather to deploy a necessary synecdoche for theorization of the possibility of alternative ontologies (Viveiros de Castro 2012:62-63).

thinking of ontologies as typologically distinct, one can conceive of a state of "poly-ontology" or "small-scale mono-ontologies" (Scott 2007:15) where binaries of mind/body, essentialist/non-dualist, etc. come to be combined in variegated configurations (Scott in Venkatesan et al 2011:306-308). Candea's (2010) ethnography on Corsican identity is particularly attentive to the tension between alterity and sameness. Candea draws on work within the ontological turn to develop an idea of ontological openness, illustrating how people's thinking about, achieving, or maintaining notions of sameness and difference on the island is always contingent, partial, and incomplete. He pays particular attention to how people interact through everyday management of things, others, and languages within particular epistemological and institutional frameworks. In this sense, his ethnography can also be understood as an enquiry into the ethical practices of developing an idea of belonging in Corsica. Where the ontological turn has attended to difference at the level of groups, anthropological discussion on morality and ethics has considered how individuals manage the messiness, contradictions, and difficulties of being in the world, and thus provides theoretical and methodological models for considering individual experience of ontological multiplicity.

Morality, Ethics, and Multiplicity

Morality and ethics can be seen as continuous concerns in anthropological research to the extent the discipline has sought to explore local conceptions of the person and the attendant moral values (Durkheim 1953; Evans-Pritchard 1970; Fortes 1987). As with ontology, the last two decades have witnessed what some have termed an 'ethical turn' within the discipline (Laidlaw 2014; Zigon and Throop 2014). Contributions to this theoretical turn have come in large part from within the anthropological study of religion and attempts to reconsider categorization and analytical approach (Asad 1986, 1993; Laidlaw 1995), individual reflection and creativity in practice (Marsden 2005, 2007), and the role of religion in social change (Robbins 2004, 2007). Building from philosophical work on ethics, the studies have proffered varying definitions of morality and ethics, with some preferring one term as a subset of the other (Lambek 2010) and others making a distinction between the embodied moral ways of being in the world and the reflexive practices through which individuals consider and determine what it means to be a moral person in this world (Laidlaw 2002; Zigon 2007, 2008). Once again, it is not an aim of this thesis to

engage in an evaluation of the theoretical turn. Rather the thesis draws on anthropological work on ethics and morality to develop an analytical approach, focused on persons creatively accounting for their self through interactions, practices, and reflections. In this way, research on ethics and morality provides a methodological approach for identifying the conceptual considerations taken from work on ontology.

Those writing within the ethical turn have moved from considering morality as merely coterminous with normative social behaviour, to thinking through morality and ethics as specific experiential modalities within everyday life. In doing so, scholarship has approached the subject of morality primarily through examination of individuals and how they create relationships between "various constituent elements of the self (body, reason, emotion, volition, and so on)" (Mahmood 2003:846) that are structured within local discourses of authority (Mahmood 2003), local and transnational political and social environments (Deeb 2006, 2009; Mahmood 2005), epistemologies (Hirschkind 2001, 2006), and with specific intentions of creating not just individual but also social change (Anderson 2011; Haniffa 2008). Far from presenting individuals as exclusively dedicated to creating themselves within a single coherent discursive framework, however, scholarship has demonstrated how individuals hold multiple conflicting conceptions of the self simultaneously (Marsden 2008, 2009b; Schielke 2009) and deploy or enact particular subjectivities creatively and purposefully according to social contexts (Marsden 2007; Rasanayagam 2006), choosing and adhering to a multiplicity of conflicting moral values in developing moral selves with a degree of freedom structured by the many frameworks coexisting within a given context (Howell 1997; Laidlaw 1995). Scholarship further illustrates that personhood is created not just through discourse, but also through social experience that an individual considers as moral (Marsden 2005; Rasanayagam 2010). The process through which individuals create themselves as moral persons is thus shown to be executed against a background of ambiguity and of struggling to adjust to the complexity of an ever-changing world (Louw 2006; Schielke 2009).

In this way, research on morality and ethics provides a useful way of conceptually thinking through how individuals can consider the different ontological and

discursive frames within which they exist without succumbing to 'moral incoherence'. But how can one apprehend the manoeuvres through which individuals navigate this complexity? Scholarship suggests ethical considerations can be found implicitly in individuals' everyday practices of speech and action (Lambek 2010); in moments where individuals actively reflect on their self as an object, on their present and desired condition, and on the means to connect the two (Faubion 2001; Laidlaw 2002; Zigon 2010); and in intersubjective relations where universal values are experienced or deployed in particular settings (Kleinman 1999; Rasanayagam 2010). In calling attention to the fact ethical events require communication, Lempert (2013) further suggests that attention should be given to the communicative methods and work individuals engage in to make ethics recognizable and effective in interactions.

Taking these various reflections that locate ethics in practice, Keane (2014) puts forward an ethnographic approach to exploring ethics in everyday interaction. For Keane, ethics is always emergent, so that in making ethical evaluations and decisions, people inventively draw on existing cultural vocabularies with regard to aspects of their own experiences or those of others around them, as well as from their surroundings. Keane suggests that these 'affordances' lie at the heart of social interaction and can be apprehended ethnographically in instances of giving an account of oneself or others through the social dynamics of conversation and the propensity to seek out others' intentions. He emphasizes that verbal interaction is not merely a cognitive practice where the self is formed discursively. Rather, the very palpability of social interaction and its mediated forms, which compel, provide, or demand actors to give an account, are affective and must thus be considered materially as well as cognitively. This thesis follows Keane's approach in seeking to understand the multiplicity of what it means to be Afghan in Delhi and how Afghans belong in the city by examining how emotions, bodies, and technology are involved in 'giving an account' of migrants within institutional perspectives (chapter three), individual narratives (chapters four and five), and practices of community (chapter six).

Bringing Perspectives in Scale

Before continuing to the ethnographic chapters, it is necessary to comment briefly on the idea of scale. I draw on Strathern's (1995, 2013) conceptualization of scale in writing ethnography as (i) an ordering of knowledge and (ii) a measure of magnitude. In the first instance, scale can be understood as the "organization of perspectives on objects of knowledge and enquiry" (Strathern 1991:xvi). While this could be seen to suggest an infinite set of orderings through which to consider ethnographic material (see Holbraad and Pedersen 2009), this thesis specifically attends to three interrelated scales of the state, the individual, and the community. These are scales that were referenced by the migrants with whom I worked and I am aware they are as much socially produced as they are also constitutive of migrants' understanding of their place in the world (Smith 1984). These three scales of analysis should not be considered as linear perspectives standing in relative hierarchy. Rather, similar to Mol and Law's (1994) description of fluid spatiality, they are scales that can be differently configured and ordered within different contexts and by different individuals. For example, as discussed in chapters four and five, migrants order various notions of belonging across scales and with differing degrees of importance.

The second way this thesis attends to questions of scale, that is by examining the idea of scale as magnitude, relates to such degrees of importance. The thesis explores the relative effects of the different understandings of Afghan belonging in Delhi at various scales within specific contexts of migrants' lives. It does so by focusing on when and how Afghan migrants reflect on and engage with the different ideas of being Afghan and belonging in Delhi. This approach to scale affords an understanding of how even though there are many of ways of being and belonging as Afghan in Delhi, within the context of the city not all of these forms of belonging are equally viable or recognized for all individuals. Considering the ethnographic material through this second sense of scale also allows the study to make a broader argument. As research on migration suggests, transnational migrants' movements and practices of belonging are not only impacted by different scale-making projects in the places they move through, but also affect and reflect the broader social contexts within these places (Glick Schiller and Çağlar 2011; Xiang 2013). The study thus holds that the experience of Afghan migrants in the city is also indicative of broader issues of belonging in Delhi today.

3. The State Scale

"What you have to understand," Mr Watandar said as he took a sip of black tea, "is that there are four kinds of Afghans here in Delhi." The crystal teacup clinked back into the saucer like a full stop. I had been back in Delhi for less than a week before deciding to call the Afghanistan embassy. Confused as to what I was enquiring about, the receptionist assumed I was an Afghan student and put me in touch with the head of student affairs, Mr Watandar. He too was unsure why I was asking questions about Delhi's Afghan community and suggested it would be best if I came to speak in person. Two hours later, I was standing outside the nondescript embassy gates on Shantipath, or Peace Avenue, in Delhi's diplomatic area of Chanakyapuri. Mistaken for a confused Afghan student, I was ushered in without event and not even asked to cede my phone and laptop at the front desk, and left to find my own way to a small room crammed with three fatigued looking bureaucrats.

The cold Delhi dusk seeped in through the windows, barely held at bay by space heaters placed around the room. Pistachio curtains with gold brocade framed two slender windows, enhancing the green *chapan*[21] of an Afghan historical figure whose painted portrait covered the wall between the windows. "There are no Afghan associations or groups of the kind you're seeking," Watandar began, "except for perhaps among the *Ahle Hunood*[22]." He then proceeded to define for me the four categories of Afghans residing in Delhi:

> "As I just mentioned, there are the *Ahle Hunood* who mostly live in Faridabad, Tilak Nagar, and Vikas Puri. Then there are the refugees (*refugee-ha*), but we have nothing to do with them as they are with the UNHCR. There are, of course, the seasonal tourists (*muhajireene mausami*) who come here either for medical reasons or for pleasure, and then finally the students (*muhajireene mahsali*, lit. educational migrants)."

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[21] A kind of overcoat worn throughout Central Asia and parts of South Asia, most recently made famous through its symbolic use by Afghanistan's former President Ahmed Karzai in an outfit symbolising a pan-Afghan identity.
[22] A term used in Afghanistan to refer to Afghan Hindus and Sikhs, literally meaning "people of India". This term is discussed again below.

Mr Watandar was adamant that the embassy did not – could not – keep any kind of statistics on Afghans coming through Delhi. Instead, he suggested I approach airline companies who might have more information. He apologized for not being able to provide more assistance, but told me emphatically before I left that I should "not waste [my] time with the Afghans in Lajpat Nagar and Bhogal," i.e. the refugees, "as they [had] truly gone astray" (*bekhi gom shodand*) and that I'd be better off meeting with the Afghan Sikhs and Hindus who had retained their Afghan culture (*farhang*) and still spoke Pashto at home despite being in India for so many years. It was too early in my fieldwork for me to recognize the cold disdain with which Mr Watandar spoke of refugees, but the importance of this label would soon become clear to me.

Over the next months, I became accustomed to the ritual clarifying statement that tourists or students[23] from Afghanistan residing in Delhi would make during introductions to impress on me they were not refugees. On several occasions, when meeting an Afghan student for the first time, the student would emphasize how they did not associate with other Afghans, especially refugees who could not be trusted. As one student I met in a hospital waiting room explained: "I don't associate with those people", i.e. refugees, "they're bad people (*mardome bad*)." His reasoning echoed the numerous statements I had heard from tourists and even refugees alike, that Delhi's Afghan refugees were charlatans preying on the unassuming, newly arrived Afghans in Delhi, stealing from their own people (*az mardome khod duzdi mikonand*), prone to gossip, and willing to slander you behind your back (*poshtet yek raqam gap mizanand!*). Among the wider populace of Delhi, "Afghan" and "refugee" were generally synonymous, and Afghan refugees were viewed with ambivalence. On the one hand, refugees were afforded sympathy and placed within a narrative of loss and dispossession. This was mirrored, however, with a suspicion of the possibility of false (*naqli*) refugees residing in Delhi, of refugees potentially receiving government benefits exceeding their needs that could instead be used to help Indian citizens, or more rarely that Afghan refugees might even be a threat to safety in the city.

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[23] While Delhi's Afghan student population pales in comparison to Pune's – a centre for the Indian Council for Cultural Relations' student exchange programs – Mr Watandar had estimated Delhi hosted a sizeable group of 600 Afghan students. There was, however, no union or organization of Afghan students. Afghan students are discussed again in the following chapter.

In Delhi, Afghan refugees are thus the Afghans who matter in that "Afghan refugee" is not just a label that defines a certain kind of Afghan in the city, but also the label against which other Afghan migrants place themselves and are defined. This chapter focuses on the 'Afghan refugee' to consider what it means to be and belong as Afghan in Delhi at the state scale. The ethnographic material and analysis in this chapter serves to demonstrate how at the state scale, Afghan migrants are considered to not belong in Delhi and their presence in the city is considered in terms of their being either legal migrants or illegal economic migrants. Belonging is understood as an emotional and physical connection of an individual to a community, which in turn is grounded in a nation state. The ethnographic examples from the Afghan Sikh community discussed in section four brings into question the state scale assumptions of how Afghan migrants belong in the city, and points to the existence of multiple ways Afghan migrants consider belonging as individuals or communities, which is explored more specifically in subsequent chapters.

This chapter begins with a review of the national framework within which refugees exist in India, and the system through which they are recognized and managed. The state scale can be considered an epistemological framework grounded in the nation-state, where individuals, culture, and identity are imagined as territorialized within national boundaries. The development of refugee policy and study of refugees have largely been conducted at this scale (Malkki 1995b), where conceptions of refugee identity are naturalized through the organic metaphor of being 'rooted' in a nation state (Malkki 1992). Of course, like other transnationally mobile people, refugees create and maintain multiple social relations and can identify with multiple communities determined beyond considerations of national belonging, and taking into account access to citizenship rights (Kibreab 1999, 2003a, 2003b; Malkki 1995a).

Indeed, the international discourse on refugees takes the hierarchical model of citizen-nation-state as a given, in which refugees are citizens denied protection of their state of origin and unable to remain within the state (Soguk 1999). State bureaucrats and policy makers in turn use the refugee label to manage refugees by politically disaggregating their identity from that of the citizen (Zetter 1991). In this vein, the second and third sections of the chapter look specifically at how the refugee label is controlled through the process of Refugee Status Determination

(RSD) and how, in India, the Afghan refugee label is created as split along religious lines. The sections consider what these processes relate about the meaning of being and belonging as Afghan in Delhi at the state scale, and what this might also indicate about the nature of citizenship in India.

The category of the refugee is itself problematic for both legal practitioners and researchers alike. The incongruence of the international legal definition with host states' political or legal realities has been demonstrated to result in the development of refugee policy that can worsen refugee living conditions or even endanger refugees' lives (De Waal 1988; Kaiser 2006; Sandvik 2011). Chimni (2009) suggests this incongruence is a result of global power dynamics in which refugee policy is developed to keep refugees from the global south from migrating north, and argues for a reconsideration of the legal definition of the refugee in light of the "geographical spread of capitalism and the politics of imperialism" that have marked refugee movements since the twentieth century (1998: 359). Hayden (2006) further draws attention to how the personhood of the refugee under international law rests on the concept of the individual under bourgeois law, where a distinction is created between political rights tied to the state that are worthy of protection, and economic rights that are assumed to be inherently unequal and not meriting of state safeguarding. This fact comes out clearly in the UNHCR interactions with Afghan refugees in India mentioned in the chapter, which demonstrate how Afghan refugees are required to at once to demonstrate a lack of agency while concomitantly being encouraged to act as entrepreneurial agents to access their rights. This assumption of economic inequality and subsequent access to rights hints at the need consider how access to resources affects refugees' ways of belonging in the city: an issue addressed again in subsequent chapters.

3.1   Context: The Refugee System in India

That I turned to the Afghanistan embassy as one of the first avenues to understand the Afghan community in Delhi betrays how my own conceptions of belonging were shaped through thinking at the scale of the state. That the idea of the state is a construct, expressed and reified through diverse contexts and imbricated in state and non-state institutions and practices is well documented (Abrams 1988; Anderson 2006). Specifically within the Indian context, Gupta (2012) argues that

while the state as a system of governance is presented as a unitary whole, the conditions through which it operates must be seen as (i) decentralized and disaggregated, (ii) constituted through the intersection of local, regional, national, and international processes, and (iii) historically and culturally specific in belying notions of separation of state and civil society understood from the European experience of state formation[24]. In the following sketch of the context within which refugees exist in Delhi, I reassert this point and consider how what it means to be a refugee at the scale of the state is shaped by the interaction and operation of historical phenomena and bureaucracies at various levels.

On the whole, refugees in India are in a difficult position, lacking any legal personality *qua* refugees. According to UNHCR India (2013), the country currently hosts approximately 224,000 refugees and asylum seekers, the majority of whom are Tibetan or Sri Lankan Tamil refugees recognized and assisted by the government with partial support from the UNHCR. Roughly 24,000 persons, however, are not recognized by the government as refugees and are instead registered solely under the mandate of the UNHCR. This population represents refugees from over ten different countries in Africa, Eastern Europe, and South, Southeast, and Western Asia. Of this population, about 45% come from Afghanistan (Morand and Crisp 2013).

India, like all other South Asian countries except Afghanistan, is neither party to the 1951 Convention nor the 1967 Protocol on the Status of Refugees. The country is therefore not obliged to adhere to international standards of cooperation with the UNHCR or to enact national refugee legislation. In practice, however, the country has accepted the principle of non-refoulement, as outlined in the 1966 Bangkok Principles on the Status and Treatment of Refugees, and so persons claiming asylum in India are theoretically not forcefully deported. Additionally, India has acceded to the International Covenants on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (ECOSOC), as well as the international Convention on the Rights of the Child. These agreements all contain specific obligations toward protection of certain refugee rights. While India has not formally incorporated these international obligations into domestic law, and has reserved its right to apply its

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[24] See also Ferguson and Gupta (2002) on India and Zambia, or Nielsen 2007 on Mozambique, on the blurring of spatialization of state and government through the translation of international development norms at various levels of bureaucracy.

own municipal law in relation to the expulsion of foreigners, its judicial system allows for consideration of international obligations in the interpretation of statutory law (Ananthachari 2006; Chimni 1994).

Domestically, India does not have a national refugee law or any legislation regulating the entry or status of refugees[25]. While there have been instances of specific legal provisions made for particular groups of refugees[26], the government has historically handled refugee flows on an *ad hoc* basis at a political and administrative level rather than legally. By law, refugees are merely considered aliens[27] and are bureaucratically treated like any other foreigners residing in India, required to obtain relevant visas or stays and register their presence with the Foreigner Regional Registration Offices (FRRO). The Indian Supreme court has ruled that foreigners residing in India do not possess the right accorded to Indian citizens under Article 19(1)(e) to reside or settle freely in the country, and that foreigners' rights in India are limited to those contained in Article 21 of the Constitution, which guarantees the right to life and liberty and the right to education for children aged six to fourteen (Chimni 1994).

Refugees in India thus have no legal personality as refugees; they are not recognized by the state as refugees and have no right to claim protection from the government. The *ad hoc* nature of addressing refugee flows has, however, allowed for two exceptions to this case: the Tibetan refugees of 1959 and Sri Lankan Tamil refugees of the 1980s. In both cases the government of India decided on strategic political grounds to officially grant these groups asylum, recognize their refugee status, and take responsibility for their welfare. Consequently, both Sri Lankan Tamil and Tibetan refugees are furnished with state-recognized identification, allotted aid through rationing or settlements, and afforded varying degrees of freedom of movement, where Tibetan refugees may even travel internationally through obtaining a 'no objection to return to India' (NORI) stamp on their identification

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[25] Possible reasons given for this situation are discussed later in the chapter.
[26] For example, the 1972 Foreigners from Uganda Order, which dealt with Ugandan refugees of Indian origin (see Saxena 1986).
[27] As Chimni (1994) clarifies, the word 'alien' is not defined anywhere in Indian legislation, but appears in a number of statutes, including the Civil Procedure Code and in Article 22 of the Indian Constitution. The regulation of aliens in India is guided by the following legislation: the Foreigners Act, 1946; the Registration Act, 1939; the Passport (Entry into India) Act, 1920; and the Passport Act, 1967.

certificate. Of course, despite official recognition, the lack of a wider legal framework to recognize their rights as refugees means members of these two groups still face various bureaucratic and social obstacles to enjoyment and exercise of their rights (IRBC 2009, 2010; Oberoi 2006; USBCIS 2003).

The Tibetan and Sri Lankan Tamil refugees are, however, in a significantly more privileged position than other refugees groups who lack any legal personality whatsoever. While refugees from other countries might be entitled to stay in India, they do not *de jure* have access to employment or higher education[28]. These refuges thus face serious hurdles to ensuring their subsistence and are legally completely dependent on the UNHCR for protection. In the absence of a legal framework, however, the UNHCR can only provide limited *de facto* protection.

To elucidate the predicament of refugee protection in the country, it is useful to briefly mention the history of the UNHCR in India. Having actively participated in the development of an international refugee regime in the 1940s, India was disappointed with the ultimate UN promulgation of a regime limiting the spatial and temporal definition of refugees to only those displaced in Europe during the Second World War. As a leader of the non-aligned movement, India further distanced itself from the newly formed UNHCR, which it perceived as an arbiter of the Western-bloc countries. In the late sixties, however, when it became clear that Tibetan refugees would need long-term assistance, India allowed the UNHCR informal presence in the country to address the refugees' needs (Oberoi 2006).

With the 1971 flood of refugees into India from East Pakistan (now Bangladesh), the government of India established a formal working relationship with the UNHCR, which had already had an in-country presence for two years, and appointed it as the focal point for refugee relief efforts. The same year, upon entering the United Nations, the People's Republic of China placed an objection to the UNHCR's relief efforts for Tibetan refugees in India; resultantly, in 1975, the UNHCR unilaterally

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[28] While I was in India, the government informally agreed with the UNHCR to issue long-term visas for recognized refugees and asylum seekers from select countries. According to the UNHCR in India website, some refugees can now apply for "long term visas (LTVs) issued by the Government of India, based on UNHCR documentation" (UNHCR 2014). In personal communication with current Afghan refugees in Delhi, I have been told the government is yet to issue LTVs to refugees. The UNHCR has not responded to enquiry.

discontinued operations in India. This move soured the already tenuous relationship between the UNHCR and the government of India[29]. Following the growth of a sizeable Afghan refugee population in Delhi after 1979, the government allowed the UNHCR to establish a presence in the country in 1981 (Oberoi 2006; Rizvi 2003). Since then, the UNHCR has taken on responsibility for registration of all refugees entering India excepting Tibetans and Sri Lankan Tamils. To date, the office has not been permitted to establish a formal independent presence in India and operates under the auspices of the United Nations Development Program (UNDP).

The absence of an official framework for the UNHCR's work in India compounds problems stemming from a lack of refugee law in that it creates an ambiguity allowing for both the UNHCR and the government of India to deny responsibility toward refugees. For the government, the UNHCR holds complete responsibility for the protection and welfare of refugees. The UNHCR, on the other hand, sees its role as specifically limited to Refugee Status Determination (RSD). As one UNHCR officer related to me: "We are only responsible for identifying and registering refugees… there is only so much we can do." The institutional situation was not lost on refugees, who often expressed the sentiment of falling through the cracks. As one Afghan man explained to me, wondering if he had made the right choice in coming to India as a refugee: "the government doesn't want us, the UNHCR doesn't want us, what good is this [being a refugee]?" (*hukumat mara na mi khwahad, UNHCR mara na mi khwahad, che faida dara?"*).

Though the UNHCR accepts responsibility only for RSD, it cooperates with two implementing partners in Delhi in an effort to provide refugees with basic support services. Both organizations, the international catholic charity of Don Bosco Ashalayam (Bosco) and a non-profit legal aid and educational organization called the Socio-Legal Information Centre (SLIC), were selected through an open call for proposals by the UNHCR and have been working with the organization for over a decade through renewable contracts.

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[29] While the UNHCR's official stance is that there was no longer a justifiable need for in-country presence, the government interpreted this move as politically motivated and against the non-political mandate of the organization.

SLIC developed in the late 1980s as a product of a national workshop on Human Rights, Social Movements and the Law in India. It is currently a collective of lawyers and social activists, drawn from different socio-economic and regional backgrounds from across India, who come together on regular and *ad hoc* bases to address various issues across the country related to advancing human rights and justice through increasing and facilitating people's access to the legal system. They do so through a collective, called the Human Rights Law Network (HRLN) which runs several services nationally, aimed at defending the rights of minorities, women, children, and the poor. Since its founding, SLIC has become one of the primary national organizations working on access to justice issues among various communities across the country and works with governmental, non-governmental, and international organizations on a range of projects including human rights law training, monitoring, reform, and publishing. Under the UNHCR, SLIC provides *pro bono* legal assistance to refugees and asylum seekers, works with local authorities to ensure refugee safety and protection, and spearheads the UNHCR's efforts to obtain Indian citizenship for Hindu and Sikh refugees from Afghanistan (discussed in section four).

Bosco is a branch of the international religious network of the Salesians of Don Bosco (SDB), founded in the late 1800s in Italy to provide education and assistance for poor children. With operations all over the globe, Bosco has been operating in India since the late 1990s, primarily on providing shelter, food, and education to destitute children and marginalized youth. While the SDB do not generally work on refugee issues, the organization began its work with the UNHCR in 2003 to provide education and services for refugee youth in Delhi. Following a scandal[30] in 2012 which resulted in the UNHCR breaking relationship with the YMCA, Bosco became the UNHCR's sole implementing partner in India on refugee social services, and began providing a range of services to both refugee youth and adults. During my time in the field, the organization was providing services to refugees and asylum seekers at four centres across North, South, Central, and West Delhi in areas with large refugee populations. They ran eleven community-based youth groups for refugees and non-refugee

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[30] In my meetings with the UNHCR, I was told the relationship with the YMCA came to a close with the end of a contract and a new call for proposals. As is usual, I was provided several stories of why the relationship with the YMCA was terminated by refugees and members of civil society organizations. Various accusations were made against the YMCA ranging from organizational mismanagement, nepotism and corruption that resulted in a public protest by refugees, and allegations of financial extortion and preferential treatment by YMCA staff.

children and held a number of annual events aimed at refugee youth. Bosco was also helping refugee and asylum seeker children with school admissions, providing tuition classes, and running crèches for preschool-aged children.

For adults, Bosco offered vocational training and basic language training in English and Hindi, aimed at providing refugees access to employment in the informal sector. The Bosco centres also housed the UNHCR's Income Generation Activities (IGA) scheme where limited places are made available to refugees to work for a salary making paper plates or tailoring. The income from these centres was approximately Rs 3,000 (roughly £30) per month: a salary that fell well short of monthly expenses in a city where monthly rent alone might have cost that much[31]. Aside from employment assistance, Bosco also assisted refugees in accessing government hospitals and dispensaries, obtaining generic medicines and treatment, and provided help with psychological illness assessment and treatment.

This overview of the historical and bureaucratic context in which refugees exist in India illustrates how the refugee comes to exist as a subject of the state. While the nascent Indian state was committed to securing the rights of refugees, historical processes at the international level resulted in a situation where, aside from the above-mentioned exceptions, the Indian state does not officially recognize refugees today. Instead, refugees are considered by the state to be dealt with outside of the state through the bureaucracy of the UNHCR, which in turn engages the services of local NGOs to address the needs of refugees.

Of course, this does not mean that the state does not impact refugees' lives. As Chatterjee (2004) and Gupta (2012) have demonstrated with regard to the Indian state's relationship to the poor, the state's relationship to refugees cannot be grasped within a framework that divides governmental and non-governmental bureaucracy. What it means to be a refugee in India is shaped as much by transnational legal definitions of refugeehood as by the practices of the government of India, the UNCHR, Bosco, and SLIC. As anthropological studies of bureaucracy demonstrate, bureaucracy is not just a constitutive site but also an expression of

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[31] Over the summer of 2014, Shahrukh (introduced in the next chapter) informed me that the UNHCR had shut down the IGA service. This was not reconfirmed in my communication with the UNHCR, but information on IGA service has been removed from the UNHCR-India website.

social formation, and bureaucratic artefacts are not produced only as products of the techniques of government, but also as results of the joint interaction of bureaucratic structures and the individuals being governed (Hull 2012). Such artefacts, like documents, statements, etc., require the individuals engaged in their creation to enact certain subjectivities and it is through them that the state is brought into people's everyday lives (Navaro-Yashin 2012).

This bringing of the state into people's lives reflects the second sense in which this thesis considers scale, i.e. the impact of epistemological frameworks on the lives of individuals. In the following two sections I consider the artefact of the RSD interview and the citizenship scheme made available to Hindu and Sikh Afghans as indicative of a particular kind of personhood of the Afghan refugee at the state scale, and reflect on the scale at which the state perspective impacts migrants' lives.

3.2 Controlling the Refugee Label

It was not until several months after the trip to the Afghanistan embassy that I was finally able to get a meeting with the organization responsible for determining who fit the label: the UNHCR.[32]. Located in the upscale neighbourhood of Vasant Vihar, couched among compounds of the many embassies, diplomatic residences, and elite private schools lining the broad, winding, tree-shaded streets, the UNHCR main office is most easily reached by taxi or auto rickshaw. Given the propensity of drivers to charge extra for driving to the area and the recently increased metering charges, I opted, like many refugees, to take the one-hour bus ride along the ring road and then walk the half kilometre to the office.

As I waded through the Delhi summer heat and humidity in 'Pocket B', I was struck by the silence and tranquillity in the neighbourhood: a stark contrast to the city I inhabited. I trudged along a footpath that occasionally disappeared into gravel and

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[32] Arranging a meeting was a trying procedure that required mobilising connections of friends and family in both Afghanistan and India. Ultimately, I was able to schedule a meeting with a legal adviser and an external relations representative. It was almost impossible to schedule any further meetings during my stay in Delhi. A friend within the organization later informed me this was largely a result of the UNHCR India staff with whom I had met being reprimanded and told, along with others in the office, not to engage with me any further. This reaction to my inquiries, I was told, lay in the UNHCR Delhi office's having recently faced severe criticism from the international community following the international release of a documentary on Delhi refugees produced by independent Indian researchers with whom the UNHCR Delhi office had cooperated.

dirt, conscious that merely days ago this ground had been cleared of thousands of Rohingya refugees who had been protesting the UNHCR offices for a month. The Resident Welfare Association (RWA) did not take kindly to the presence of the picketers and had cooperated with the government and UNHCR in working out an appeasement and ejecting them[33].

When I finally arrived at the UNHCR offices, I would not have initially known where the building was. The minimalist right-angled building is hidden from view by a tall boundary wall and even taller eucalyptus and royal poinciana trees. The presence of the office was announced, however, by a combination of rusting, wheeled chain-link barriers and chain-post fencing covered in peeling red and white paint that served to corral visitors along the footpath toward a metal detector doorway placed several meters from the black iron gate entrance of the compound. The metal detector stood idly next to an empty desk, suggesting the doorway might usually be manned for long queues of people waiting to get in. Yet the two times I went to the office, there were only ever a few people loitering outside while waiting to be summoned by a security guard, seeking shade from the sun under the thick bougainvillea bushes hanging over the boundary wall.

I walked up to the empty metal detector and two men standing by the wall approached me. One of them recognized me from a Refugee Solidarity Committee meeting. After the customary round of greetings, he asked me the standard question Afghan refugees would ask each other: "and how are you with the UNHCR?" (*wa hamrahye UNHCR chetor asten*). Surprised to find out I was there for a meeting, he began recounting his story. He had been in Delhi for twenty years as a refugee. Finding out he would soon be up for resettlement, he returned to Kabul to get married. Trying to register his new bride as a refugee upon his return, he was notified of having lost his refugee status[34]. "I've been coming here every day for a year now to get somebody to listen to my story," he explained, "I have a wife and a

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[33] In a discussion with a legal NGO worker following the case of the Rohingya, it was suggested the UNHCR was complicit with the government in riling up the Rohingya to demonstrate so as to create a situation in which they would not receive refugee status but could be issued UNHCR documents and thus be easily traceable by the state. The NGO worker implied the fact Rohingya are a Muslim minority is why the state wished to track them and prevent them from gaining full refugee status.

[34] Refugee status is annulled upon return to one's country of origin. Aside from the exceptional cases of Sri Lankan and Tibetan refugees mentioned earlier, refugees who travel out of India for any reason might not be let back in the country if they do not have a valid visa.

child; I can't stay in this country. I was here for twenty years. Is this just? ... They ask me: If you're a refugee, why did you go back?" He took my number and asked if I could talk to somebody inside on his behalf or maybe find him a lawyer. In the shade of the bougainvillea, partially concealed behind a chain-link barrier, I could make out a woman in a long overcoat crouched on the ground, feeding a child. Like the UNHCR building hidden behind tall trees and high concrete walls, in the shade of which the family were waiting, the man perceived refugee status to be in reach but it was unavailable. The man had called me regularly over the next month until he realized I could not help him.

This chance meeting outside the UNHCR on my first visit was apt. It demonstrates on the one hand the particular person of the refugee at the state scale. Being registered as a refugee with the UNHCR is premised on the assumption of an impossibility of returning to Afghanistan, on the truth of having to leave one's national boundaries against one's desire. As Schuster (2011) has discussed with regard to Afghan refugees in the European context, refugees are required to demonstrate a lack of agency, to "emphatically present themselves as passive victims grateful for whatever minimal tolerance they are shown" (1403). The inability to do so in the Indian context results in their transformation into illegal economic migrants for whom the UNHCR is not accountable[35]. In this way, the man's story also suggests how the scale at which the state perspective of the refugee as a person impacts people's lives. It is true many Afghan refugees in Delhi did move back and forth with duplicate passports and documents, while officially maintaining the fiction of permanently residing in Delhi, through using both social and financial capital. This man had not done so and was bearing the consequence of demonstrating his desire and ability to move across state boundaries. Thus, on that day, unlike me, he could not enter the UNHCR compound. He no longer fit the Afghan refugee label.

My aim for this first meeting with the UNHCR was, in part, to understand the organization's perspective on what it meant to be an Afghan refugee in India and what challenges refugees faced in the country. I was also interested, however, in the process through which the UNHCR determined who fit the refugee label. Labelling refugees, as Zetter (1991) describes, is a process whereby policy makers create

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[35] See also Samers (2004) on the European context.

disaggregated, standardized institutional identities for people through the formulation of seemingly clear-cut categories allowing for easily defining and assigning 'needs' to refugee groups and creating refugee policy. The counterpart to stereotyping is control: the enforcement of conformity to the stereotype, which drives a wedge between the actual situation of a refugee and the story needed to fit the label, transforming refugees' individual identities through the reinforcement of an institutional, uniform refugee identity. While labelling depends on policy makers and bureaucrats' subjective judgements, distinctions, and political considerations, it is presented as a neutral and precise bureaucratic procedure.

As I finished my conversation with the man outside the offices, a UNHCR vehicle drew up to the gate and a security guard noticed me. He rang inside to confirm my appointment; details were checked and I was handed a visitor tag attached to a grimy green cord that I was instructed to wear around my neck by the guard who lead me through a side entrance into a stairwell. I left the Delhi I knew at the doorstep. The air was cooled through gently humming vents to a comfortable 20 degrees, the marble flooring was spotless, and doors were operated with magnetic cards. The echoes of our footsteps rippled across the rows of closed doors lining the corridors, shut presumably to keep the cool air within the offices. The silence began to make me wonder how many people were actually working in the building. We reached the intended office and the guard told me to wait outside the room until the representatives indicated I could enter.

After some inaudible deliberations between themselves, the UNHCR legal adviser and PR representative asked me to come in. Within the first minutes of the meeting I was given a categorical breakdown of Afghans in Delhi identical to that related to me at the Afghanistan embassy. The representatives indicated, however, that the UNHCR divided Afghan refugees into two categories: the "Hindu-Sikh" and the "ethnic"[36] Afghans, and that unlike other refugees, Hindu-Sikh Afghans are able to participate in a UNHCR initiative to help them procure Indian citizenship (discussed in the following section). All refugees must, however, go through the RSD process to ensure only individuals who fit the international definition of the refugee are

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[36] I discuss this problematic label further below.

accepted. Once accepted by the UNHCR, the options available to "ethnic" Afghans are either voluntary repatriation or waiting for resettlement in a third country.

While I was not allowed access to the refugee determination process, I was able to arrange a brief meeting with a UNHCR RSD officer who had recently arrived on assignment in India. Dressed in smart office clothes and exuding enthusiasm, she apologized for the complete lack of official documents explaining the RSD procedure, and instead verbally outlined of the process for me. Persons wishing to apply for asylum, she explained, must register at the UNHCR's west Delhi centre where they obtain an India-specific UNHCR registration form. The completed form, once submitted, is entered into the UNCHR's system for tracking refugees called ProGress, and refugees receive a 'White Paper' with a UNHCR stamp explaining that they are registered asylum seekers whose case is under review. Unlike in other countries, refugees in India do not have biometric data collected, but do provide other generic information such as date of birth and a photograph. After registration, they are scheduled for a RSD interview and are generally interviewed once or twice depending on the time required to record the case and the kind of information they are able to provide. In the case an applicant is rejected, they are informed via a letter and given the opportunity to lodge an appeal within 30 days. The RSD officer stated that delayed appeals were also accepted within one calendar year. She added, however, that if no new information is presented in the appeal, then applicants are unlikely to be interviewed again, but that in 99% of cases they are seen a second time. If an application is successful, the refugee is contacted by phone to come and collect their 'blue card'.

For the UNHCR representatives, the process was clear and impartial, and therefore just. For the RSD officer it was difficult to imagine otherwise since "RSD work is very logical, based on certain principles and legal frameworks." The process, she held, is designed to the logic of the international definition of the refugee so that only 'real' refugees could be recognized.

> "The person… [must fit] every element of the definition: (1) the person has left their country and can't be an Indian citizen; (2) has a well-founded fear of persecution, well-founded being that it's objective and not just in 'his' head…that it really may have happened… we have questioning techniques

using the testimony of the refugee himself... when you do a complementary interview, you just compare the answers... [and sometimes] go in detail... you confirm the country of origin information – COR – which is available on public networks, Human Rights Watch networks, etc. that confirms the general trends; (3) Then we look for the general nexus that this fear of persecution, i.e. the grave violation of human rights compatible with international law: there are 5 reasons [of] race, religion, nationality, political opinion, or membership in particular social group, and that the person cannot go back because of this well-found fear."

The RSD officer's description of the system was surgical and precise. The system controlled for a certain kind of person: one who could testify to a story of being compelled to move outside their national borders against an assumed natural desire to not do so, based on a story that "really may have happened." Despite the sterile precision of the officer's description, I wondered whether it was difficult to extricate the list of details the RSD officer had just enumerated from the complicated stories of migration where reasons for leaving, dates, stories, etc. often can be convoluted or confused. As a rejected refugee stated at a UNHCR open meeting with the Afghan community:

"... when I was going for my RSD [interview] I didn't remember what I had eaten for breakfast [that day]. This morning I asked one woman about her travels in Kabul from where she had just arrived and she couldn't remember."

His point was that for those who have been refugees multiple times over an extended period, the pressure to remember things that happened long ago or during a period of general confusion can be frustrating and, coupled with being emotionally or psychologically ill-prepared for in-depth questioning, can easily induce forgetting and absent-mindedness. "Of course," responded the RSD Officer somewhat evading the question,

"this work leads to burn out, so you need to have coping strategies. Some people start screaming and... just you need to have your own coping mechanism, you need to have a work-life balance."

I never got an answer to the question of how complicated life stories could be made to fit into the small boxes of forms, but from her statement and the frustration many

Afghans expressed to me concerning the RSD process, it was apparent it was no easy task for the interviewer or the interviewee.

One of my main insights into the refugee experience of RSD came from Jamshed, a friend of an acquaintance from the US, who had arrived in Delhi during the middle my fieldwork with his newly wed wife. Complementing what I had been told by the UNHCR RSD officer, Jamshed explained that he and his wife went to register with the UNHCR offices where they were given refugee registration forms, which they had to submit within seven to ten days. Upon submitting their forms, they received their 'White Papers', on the back of which were two columns of boxes in which the UNHCR could renew the letter multiple times with a new stamp and expiration date. Upon registration, they received an interview date for two weeks later, though others I met had had to wait for up to three months. Jamshed and his wife were interviewed separately for approximately three hours. He was very concerned his case not be rejected, and even though he was normally over-confident in his command of English, he accepted to have an interpreter at his interview whom he occasionally had to correct.

Considering the RSD interview as a bureaucratic artefact reveals how it requires the refugee to invoke a truth about the refugee's self, and also how it is a product of labour of not just the refugee, but also the UNHCR and others. I asked Jamshed what he was asked in the interview and his response indicated how it was like a test where one had to give the correct answer. "They just ask you about everything on the form," he explained, "to try and see if you're lying and if you have a reason [to leave Afghanistan]." He was initially unimpressed with the RSD officer who conducted his interview, as she was a young girl who had told him at the beginning of the interview she was working there because she wanted to gain experience. Jamshed initially felt she did not seem "very serious" (*besiyar jiddi*) about the process. He soon changed his mind however, after he saw the speed with which she typed up the notes on his interview. "They type up all your responses... and they type so fast! I can't explain it to you! ... it's all on an internal network you know, so they can compare things instantaneously." The technology of being able to verify and crosscheck information impressed Jamshed and convinced him that it was only people with "real cases" (*case-haye asli*) who would be accepted as refugees.

The story is an important part of the 'case' and so an integral part of becoming a refugee. Jamshed's story was fairly straightforward. He was in his mid-twenties with a background in law, and had been the Country Consultant for a US-based NGO working in Afghanistan on women's legal rights and empowerment. Several months before his marriage, while working in Kandahar, Jamshed was kidnapped, held hostage, and tortured. Deep grooves in his forehead and on his cheeks remained where his skin had been cut. After his release, he had received threats in Kabul for continuing to work with the NGO. His organization suggested he seek asylum in India, while they pursued connections in the US to have him and his wife resettled there. The two thus came to India on a three-month tourist visa, saying they were celebrating their honeymoon. They were lucky that they had contacts in the US and India who could assist them in finding their way through the process of becoming a refugee. Within nine months of arriving in Delhi, the two were not only accepted as refugees by the UNHCR, but their application had also been forwarded to the US Embassy, and they would be resettled in the US within a year. This was highly unusual for the refugees I met in Delhi, most of whom had been waiting for resettlement for over three years.

Jamshed did not go into his interview unprepared, but had an awareness of the UNHCR policy, and had been practicing for the interview with a former colleague from the US now based in Delhi who had worked on refugee issues. He explained how the interviewer asked him multiple times why he chose to come to India rather than Pakistan or Iran, despite Jamshed's repeated explanation of how India was a safer place for him to flee from the Taliban. Though he was irritated, Jamshed described how he understood why he was asked the question repeatedly.

> "[The] problem," he conceded, "is that for the UNHCR [India is] a third country for Afghans… They tell them they should go to Pakistan or Iran… their actual policy is to send people to a second country [not a third]."

Jamshed suggested that this was why the UNHCR

> "doesn't make any efforts for Afghans… there are so many Burmese, Bhutanese, etc. for whom India is a second country so the UNHCR feels they should help them first."

Jamshed's understanding of UNHCR policy derived in part from his own research and information from colleagues in the US, but was also gleaned, he explained, from conversations with other Afghans. In this way, the RSD process can be seen to involve the work of individuals outside of the interview who can assist the asylum seeker in developing the correct story or disposition. Rather than the neutral description offered by the RSD officer, this suggests the process operates along a power gradient[37] where those with access to social resources can be better positioned to engage in it.

That Jamshed drew on information from other refugees in navigating the RSD process reflects how Afghan refugees and asylum seekers in Delhi understood the necessity of strategically presenting oneself in a certain way when filling out the registration form and conducting the interview. People generally displayed an awareness of what it meant to be a refugee for the UNHCR and the rights that followed from that status. While Afghans did not usually hang out in groups in public in Delhi[38], there were contexts in which they would come face to face with one another, such as barber shops, waiting to pick up bread in the market, or in hospital waiting rooms. There was a reluctance to discuss personal matters with unknown people one could not trust, and discussing the ineffectiveness or injustice of the UNHCR was a safe topic. People would often criticize, in a general sense, how when talking with the UNHCR or during open meetings, others would put on airs of being in danger or of receiving threats as a way to demonstrate they deserved to be resettled. At open meetings, these same people would press for demands, reminding the UNHCR officers that "the UNHCR has a responsibility (*masooliyat*) to protect [them] as refugees."

Jamshed, like many others, held a low opinion of Afghan refugees in Delhi and saw such behaviour as another example of how many Afghans tried to "misuse" (*su istefada kardan*) refugee status as an easy ticket to the 'west' (*gharb*) through fabricated stories that fit the UNHCR's expectation. He related a story he had heard of two brothers who had applied for asylum together. When they were being

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[37] Gupta (2012) argues that governmental bureaucracy in India operates along this power gradient where those without access to social capital are not just poorly equipped at navigating bureaucracy, but also ultimately bear a greater burden in accessing it.

[38] Though people did not hang out in groups in public, they did stick to small circles of close acquaintances. Issues of community are discussed more in chapter six.

interviewed, one brother had said their father had died before they left Afghanistan and the last people they saw were their mother and sister. The second brother, on the other hand, told his interviewer the last person he had contact with before leaving was their father. While one brother had said the family came from the Shomali region, the other said the family was from Kabul. Their case was rejected. In Jamshed's opinion, it was situations like this that "oblige [UNHCR] officers to ask you questions like this [that can trip you up]. It's not the fault (*gunah*) of the UNHCR that they don't accept Afghans, it's their [i.e. Afghan's] own fault."

Such stories circulated among refugees with a double intent, linking the truth of the story to the truth of feeling and moving across borders. On the one hand, the stories provided comic relief and served as a way for both the narrator and audience to indicate through their reactions that they had 'real' cases and thus deserved to be resettled unlike the stories' protagonists. In reaction, many Afghan refugees would lament the large number of Afghans lying (*drogh goftan*) to the UNHCR with their made-up cases (*case-haye sakhtagi*) in order to be sent abroad (*ta ba kharij rawan shawan*). Statements to this effect were often meant to indicate the sincerity and misfortune of those voicing them, those with 'real' cases who were left behind (*pas mandand*) in India, but deserved to have their desire for resettled met.

On the other hand, these stories also served as a lesson, especially for new arrivals in the city, that if one wished to be resettled, one needed to ensure the consistency of one's story with the UNCHR. The existence of a distinction between one's story and one's situation, and the necessity of altering the 'truth' of one's story to meet the UNHCR requirements was generally understood as inevitable. An older Afghan gentleman who had been a refugee multiple times in Pakistan and had been denied refugee status in India explained:

> "[Refugees'] stories are mostly lies. Why is it like that here? [Because] the UNHCR will reject you [otherwise]… most [Afghans] went to Pakistan to live there (*zindagi kardan*) … 97% [of those] here [in Delhi] want to get asylum abroad."

The implication was that asylum seekers' desire for third country resettlement necessitated tailoring one's story to fit the UNHCR's requirements by not naming this desire as the cause of leaving Afghanistan.

Yet to say that refugees' stories were lies (*drogh*) did not reflect a sentiment that all stories were utterly fabricated, though such allegations were also made. Rather, there was an understanding that in order to attain the refugee status one rightly deserved but could not attain through recounting the entire truth of one's story, one needed to regulate what was narrated. As a registered refugee advised a newly arrived asylum seeker: "if your case is very complicated (*besiyar pechida mi bashad*), you will be rejected." The asylum seeker was finding it difficult to accurately complete a section on living and deceased family members in the refugee registration form. His father had multiple wives and children who all knew him by name, but whom he in turn did not know or had never met. The solution suggested was to only mention his nuclear family, as he hoped his mother and siblings would join him in India if he gained refugee status. His complicated family relations were thus pared down to the nuclear family that could fit the refugee registration form. This would become his 'real' (*asli*) story. It was indeed not false; it fit the lines on the asylum form that could not contain the excess of his actual situation.

The sentiment that Afghans were using refugee status in India as a transit to get to the west was shared by refugees as well as the UNHCR and its implementing partners. The UNHCR and SLIC representatives I met were aware there were registered refugees with false cases. The SLIC representative mentioned how in the 1990s it was very common for Afghans coming for medical treatment or vacation to India to "hear from other people that [they can get] registered with [the] UNHCR and get resettled [abroad]." She added how recently SLIC discovered a trend where women with children claiming to be widows would register for asylum, explaining they had barely escaped with their lives in the face of problems with family, forced marriage, clan disputes, etc. Once accepted, however,

> "they start to live normally (*sahi se*) but then… they find out from others that you have to create problems for yourself… You're not supposed to just live in India… the next step is to go out of India to have a better life so your husband will join you there."

The representative explained that "we can't go to Afghanistan to check everyone to see if they're really a widow or not," but it's clear many of them receive support from

Afghanistan, "money is being sent here, they're living comfortably, but they'll create problems for themselves." She was quite frank in saying while there were many people who had "genuine problems", many others "just [use] the UNHCR as a transit, expecting the UNHCR to pay for them and give assistance." In support, she mentioned how one only needed to go to the local market to see all the rich Afghans who claim one thing on paper and lead a different lifestyle.

While the difference between refugees' situation and their story did seem wrong to her, the SLIC representative was more concerned about the negative impact it had on her work in sensitizing local authorities to refugee rights.

> "While the police have been very cooperative, [the abuse of refugee status by some] makes it hard to deal with the police [when trying to sensitize them to refugee problems] because they will point out how many of the Afghans drive nice cars with loud music and drink alcohol [i.e. disturb the peace]."

For the SLIC representative, what was more important was the role she was supposed to fulfil. "I tell them: that matter is between you and them (*aap ka masla hai aur unka masla hai)*," she stated switching then to English, "as far as I'm concerned they have refugee cards." The argument was that if they had refugee cards, the police could not harass them, but had to report them to SLIC. "If they don't have identity cards, they're not our concern," she added. The SLIC representative's comments should not be taken as an expression bureaucratic indifference (Herzfeld 1992) against police harassment of a symbolic other of the migrant, but more a recognition of the limits of the meaningful action she could take as part of the bureaucracy. As she had explained earlier, it was impossible to determine completely whether refugees' stories were indeed real, but it was also not her job. The story of the refugee was 'real' even if the refugee's situation indicated otherwise.

From the UNHCR perspective, the representatives acknowledged the inevitability of individuals being accepted on the basis of fabricated cases, but also demonstrated, at least officially, a deep conviction that the RSD system was inherently impartial and thorough, and that it ensured accurate assessment of cases. During my first meeting with the UNHCR, I had asked the representative about whether they had many incidences where accepted refugees were found to have fabricated cases. She indicated that there were very few incidences, but that "some people get tired of the

refugee life, you know? Last year 50 people approached us for repatriation." Her statement was made to obliquely state that not all accepted refugee cases were genuine as some people voluntarily chose to return to Afghanistan. The possibility that one might voluntarily repatriate due to an inability to continue living in India under financial or other forms of duress, or because of better opportunities arising elsewhere was not a possibility for the UNHCR representatives. The truth of being a refugee lay in an inability to return to one's nation of origin. To return only signified one had not been a true refugee in the first place.

The forgoing discussion illustrates how the RSD system involves the creation of knowledge by the UNHCR, its implementing partners, and Afghans seeking asylum on what kind of person the refugee is. At the state perspective, the refugee is an individual person located within the state at the end point of a vector of movement from the refugee's state of origin. As a person, the refugee embodies a narrative of movement that indicates an initial desire to remain within the state of origin to which the refugee belongs emotionally. Examining the RSD system as a process of controlling refugee identity thus hints at how the kind of person the refugee is at the state scale is considered in terms of movement and desire. To attend more specifically to how Afghans are considered to belong in India at the state scale, I turn now in the next section to the process of stereotyping whereby the categories of "Hindu-Sikh" and "ethnic" Afghan refugees are created under the Afghan refugee label.

3.3   Stereotyping and Belonging: Splitting the Afghan Refugee Label

The splitting of the Afghan refugee label into the "Hindu-Sikh" and "ethnic" categories was one of the first points the PR representative impressed on me in my initial meeting with the UNHCR, explaining how

> "It's important to distinguish between "Hindu-Sikh" Afghans, and "ethnic" Afghans. [The former] have a genuine desire to stay on, because they see themselves coming home and you can't even tell the difference between the first generation and "regular" Indians. The "ethnic" Afghans want to move somewhere else."

As illustrated in the previous section, the person of the refugee is assumed to naturally desire to remain within the state of origin. The Afghan Hindu and Sikh refugees provide an interesting case in that even though their state of 'origin' is

Afghanistan, they are considered to be "coming home" to India. Indeed, it is on the basis of their "genuine desire" to be in India that the UNHCR was undertaking an effort to make Indian citizenship available to them. That the UNHCR, with the cooperation of the government of India, made citizenship an option for Hindu and Sikh Afghans relates an understanding of how the Afghan refugee can belong in the state (or not).

To push the issue, I asked the representatives why the UNHCR only focused on citizenship for Afghan Hindus and Sikhs and not other refugees? The legal adviser replied mechanistically:

> "At the end of the day it is up to the government to decide, but it's clear the Hindu-Sikh Afghans have a cultural and linguistic affinity with India and share historical ties… it just doesn't make sense to look for resettlement for them."

The PR representative added that the Hindu-Sikh Afghans' connection to India granted them the ability to blend in, unlike the "ethnic" Afghans whose cultural difference impeded them from assimilating (I return to the problematic label of 'ethnic' Afghans shortly). Presenting the matter as a logical fact, the representatives' statements not only reinforced the point of Hindu and Sikh Afghans' natural desire to belong in India rather than elsewhere, but also suggested their belonging in India was expressed in the comportment of their physical bodies, dictated by their linguistic and historical ties to India.

The UNHCR representatives also saw refugees as belonging in a community, which in turn was grounded in the nation. Thus, another reason I was given for why it made more sense to consider citizenship as an option for Hindu-Sikh Afghan refugees, was that they had a "strong sense of community" themselves and were "well integrated" into local communities in Delhi, and thus didn't necessarily require the same amount of support "ethnic" Afghan refugees might need in order to live in India. Interestingly, the PR representative later suggested "ethnic Afghan" refugees had a comparative advantage over other refugee groups, particularly Somalis, as they "have an easier time in India … [and] are able to pick up the language quickly… [as] it's close to their language… [so] it's easier for them to integrate." She did not

appear to catch any contradiction with her earlier statements about their inability to assimilate.

The SLIC representative expressed annoyance with the UNHCR's attitudes toward the Hindu and Sikh Afghans, suggesting that the program to procure citizenship for them was in large part a result of the ever dwindling funding for UNHCR India operations (this point is addressed again at the end of the chapter). "They've really been left in the lurch," the representative sighed, "it's really wrong how the UNHCR has ignored them, saying they are well-integrated." The representative's point was not so much that the UNHCR specifically strove to singly ignore the Hindu and Sikh Afghans, but that it was easier for the organization to step away from its responsibility toward them rather than the "ethnic" Afghans precisely because Hindu-Sikh Afghans are seen as belonging in India. "The UNHCR has no money and they've told the Khalsa Diwan[39] people" What she was implying was that since the UNHCR was facing severe funding cuts and had to cut back on all programming, seeking Indian citizenship for Hindu-Sikh Afghans was seen not only as logical but also cost-effective in the long-term.

As discussed above, the process of stereotyping refugee identity is presented as logical and neutral, yet it is inherently political and reflects the judgments and assumptions of bureaucrats and policy makers. This can be seen in the way the program to procure citizenship for Hindu-Sikh Afghans was affected by policy at the international level of UNHCR funding. However, the splitting of the Afghan refugee label into the Hindu-Sikh and "ethnic Afghan" categories also appeared to parallel Hindu nationalist discourse on the religious nature of the nation state. To this end, I asked the UNHCR PR representative how the two terms 'Hindu-Sikh' and 'ethnic' were arrived at, indicating the choice of 'ethnic' as a category was odd. It was not the distinction between Hindu-Sikh Afghans and other Afghans that was strange, as even in Afghanistan Hindus and Sikhs are often considered together under the label *Ahle Hunood* (people of India). Rather, the combining of all other Afghan nationals into the category of being 'ethnically' Afghan was unusual. Ethnicity in Afghanistan is a

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[39] Founded in Jalalabad in Eastern Afghanistan in the 1920s to address the social and economic needs of Afghanistan's Hindu and Sikh community, the Khalsa Diwan now has offices in Afghanistan, India, the UK, and Germany. Along with the Afghan Hindu-Sikh Welfare Society (AHSWS), the Khalsa Diwan is one of the main organizations serving the Afghan Hindu-Sikh community in Delhi.

complex issue, as indicated in the foregoing chapter, and while ethnic identities are fluid and overlapping and questions exist about the nexus of Afghan-Pashtun-national identity, Afghan nationality would not necessarily be considered as an ethnicity, just as being Indian in India is not considered an ethnicity. Surprised at the question, the UNHCR representative responded nonchalantly with "I suppose it has always been like that."

To pursue the origin of the 'ethnic Afghan' category and the splitting of the Afghan refugee label, I later spoke with a family friend[40], Yasmin, who had been involved in the setting up of the UNHCR offices in Delhi in the 1980s and now held an international post with the organization. Yasmin gave a slightly different perspective:

> "In the eighties, the government was concerned with the sudden growth of the Afghan community in Delhi, you know, 'why are they here'? So they asked the UNHCR to help... In '92/'93, suddenly, many Hindu-Sikhs arrived, but their situation is different, that is why they are a different group."

While still not providing an origin for the term "Hindu-Sikh", Yasmin's explanation points to possible rationales. Firstly, that Hindu and Sikh Afghan refugees are from a different generation of refugees and thus categorized differently. The second layer of Yasmin's statement points to the consideration of Hindu-Sikh Afghans as naturally belonging to India, and thus not worthy of government interest or suspicion. The Indian government's concern with the influx of Muslim Afghans but not with the arrival of Afghan Hindus and Sikhs was also touched upon by a worker at SLIC who confided in frustration that the term "ethnic" Afghans was merely shorthand for 'Muslim Afghans', and represented an anti-Muslim political environment.

Indeed, many Afghan refugees I met saw the Indian government's interest in Afghans as hostile. Several Afghan Sikhs related a conviction that the Indian government was biased against all Afghans regardless of religion because of their cultural affiliation to the Islamic republic, and was purposefully standing in their

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[40] As related in the first footnote of section II, UNHCR staff had been informed not to meet with me. I had thus had to resort to a sort of social ambush through family members in getting invited to Yasmin's father's house during a period where she was visiting Delhi from her international post. Though we knew each other socially and professionally from my time in Afghanistan, Yasmin was very cold and loathe to speak to me about the UNHCR's history in Delhi, keeping discussion very short and refusing my invitations to meet again socially.

way to resettlement or citizenship. The UNHCR PR representative dismissed such views and suggested the government was possibly suspicious of Afghans entering India because of threats of terrorism, but that this might also be positive in a roundabout way. She intimated that Afghan refugees were placed in a better position than other refugee groups, as

> "Afghan refugees get processed the most quickly: within six months…[since] the government wants us to process [them] very quickly. Of course, don't tell them that!"

The PR representative made this statement with reference to the 2001 and 2008 terrorist attacks in Delhi and Bombay, alluding to the government's possible suspicion of Muslims or people from Muslim majority countries being terrorists. For the representative, the government's fear of Muslims – assumed rather than explicitly stated – translated into a boon for Afghans in getting processed with more urgency[41].

If the 'ethnic Afghan' label was a way to separate the Hindus and Sikhs from the Muslims, I wondered what this meant for the many Afghan Christian converts whose population in Delhi, according to church leaders, was growing. The UNHCR representatives were sceptical on whether the population was growing and insisted that they did not keep any records on religious adherence and that the Afghan Christian converts were counted under the 'ethnic Afghan' label. The SLIC representative, who worked closely with a number of Afghan Christians claiming to receive threats from Afghanistan and within Delhi, also voiced scepticism of converts' intentions. Recognising they should be afforded recognition of their rights, the representative cynically asked:

> "The question is: How come you have lost your faith? Have you converted because you are getting benefit from the church… because, see, the church can also give you benefits: education, money, etc. … Some subsidies you do get [from the UNHCR], but that can be one attraction [of the church]. So even

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[41] There is no available documentary evidence for governmental bias against Afghan Muslims. Baujard (2008), however, mentions that the Indian Government communicated to the UNHCR in 2001 that, following the toppling of the Taliban regime in Afghanistan, it would adopt a policy of no longer furnishing residence permits to Afghan refugees, excepting Afghan Hindus and Sikhs. Baujard further describes how the UNHCR was able to sidestep this policy directive through bureaucratic procedure and negotiation with the government of India.

if you're just going there superficially, at least you're getting something to eat; which is the struggle here... Is that the reason [they are converting]?"

For the UNHCR and its implementing partners, the Afghan Christian convert refugees were a dubious category that had to be recognized, but whose actual status as 'real' Christians and, in turn, as real refugees was questionable.

The suspicion of the authenticity of the Afghan Christian converts' decision reflects in one way the general suspicion under which the refugee comes into being at the state scale (a fact that is returned to in chapter six in considering the effect on forms of Afghan community at the state scale in Delhi). Refugees are suspicious objects, but some more so than others. In this case the Afghan Christian converts serve as an interesting parallel to the Hindu-Sikh Afghans. The latter's assumed belonging in India reflects how at the state scale, language, culture, and specifically Hindu religion are being rearticulated as grounded in the Indian state. Hindu nationalist feelings are not only reproduced through the political engagement of various groups advocating and resisting ideas of a Hindu nation (Corbridge and Harriss 2000) but also through a "banal nationalism" (Billig 1995) where Hindu nationalist discourse is being normalized in everyday life via popular media consumption (Malhotra and Alagh 2004; Manuel 2008) and government practices (Bénéï 2014; Simpson 2004; Sundar 2004), and the positioning of Muslims (Jaffrelot 1996; Sbriccoli and Simpson 2013) and Christians (Froerer 2006) as national others. In this context, non-Hindu-Sikh Afghan refugees are assumed and expected to demonstrate a similar emotional connection to Afghanistan, which is seen as a Muslim country. The decision to convert to Christianity thus calls into question Afghan Christian refugees' attachment to Afghanistan and renders their truth of being refugees questionable by consequence[42].

At the state scale, belonging as Afghan in Delhi means not belonging to India emotionally or physically. In this way, Hindu-Sikh Afghans are seen as "coming home" and desiring to stay in India, whereas other Afghan refugees are considered to not feel any such desire or experience any connection to India. Of course, studies

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[42] Rasanayagam (2014) discusses how the fusion of religion with ethno-national identity in post-Soviet Uzbekistan results in a situation where religious conversion out of the religion associated with one's ethnic group is equated with cultural inauthenticity and subsequently with not being a proper citizen and rather a potential security threat. The case of Afghans converting to Christianity would not be seen as more or less dangerous because of conversion. Rather the act of conversion would be seen as a potentially dishonest way to procure refugee status in India.

of migration have moved past a "methodological nationalism" (Wimmer and Glick Schiller 2006) that addresses migrants as belonging to spatially static communities or homelands, and moving between defined places of origin and destination (Basch *et al* 1994). Instead, migrants' belonging is suggested as multi-local (Levitt 2011), where bodies, communities, and even nations come to be considered as multi-layered and variegated (Ahmed *et al* 2003). In the following chapters this process is explored through the scales of the individual and community. As a prelude to this discussion, I end this chapter with a discussion on the UNHCR's citizenship program for Hindu-Sikh Afghans. The ethnography from the Afghan Sikh community illustrates the possibility of multiple belongings and raises questions of how the categories of the individual and community are imagined at the state scale.

3.4   The Hindu-Sikh Afghans and Citizenship: Belonging and Scale

As noted at the beginning of the chapter, Afghan refugees are the category through which other Afghans in the city are considered. The discussions above illustrate how at the state scale Afghans are considered to not belong in India and are understood instead as individuals constituted through emotional and physical ties to a community grounded in the state of Afghanistan. The category of Hindu-Sikh Afghan refugee, however, destabilizes this view. In this section I explore both the bureaucratic process of the UNHCR's citizenship program for Hindu-Sikh Afghans, and the experience of these refugees in migrating to India. A description of the bureaucratic nature of the citizenship scheme illustrates, on the one hand, how the state scale operates at different levels of policy development and implementation. Individual stories of migration reveal, on the other hand, how other forms of belonging might be considered outside the state scale.

The Citizenship Scheme

During my fieldwork, one of the headline stories on the UNHCR India website was about an Afghan Sikh woman who became an Indian citizen through the UNHCR's assistance and was now teaching Hindi to Afghan refugee children in her community. Assisting Hindu-Sikh Afghans on their path to Indian citizenship was presented by the UNHCR as one of the success stories of the organization's India operations. In conversations with members of the Hindu-Sikh Afghan community, however, a very

different story emerged: that the program had not been successful and was instead used by the UNHCR as a cover for eschewing responsibility toward the community.

In my first meeting with the UNHCR, the legal adviser explained that until 2004 Indian citizenship could be granted to anyone born to an Indian parent as long as the non-Indian parent was not an illegal alien, but that very few Afghan Hindu and Sikh children were able to get citizenship that way. The UNHCR had thus discussed with the government the possibility of extending citizenship to the Afghan Hindus and Sikhs through a policy like that of the 2004 Citizenship Amendment Rules which recognized Pakistani Hindus and Sikhs living in Gujarat and Rajasthan[43] as a group to be provided a facilitated process for attaining Indian citizenship. The discussions were unsuccessful and in 2007, the adviser explained, the UNHCR decided to undertake a program to assist Afghan Hindus and Sikhs in navigating the governmental bureaucracy in applying for citizenship. "At the time approximately 7,500 people were eligible, of which around 5,000 were interested in citizenship," the adviser began,

> "the whole process is extremely labour intensive. First the applications are submitted to the local civil authority, the Subdivisional Magistrate (SDM), from where they are sent to the FRRO for police verification and then returned to the SDM to be submitted to the state government, from where they are provided to the Central Government… to the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA)."

In one breath, the adviser had reduced the "labour intensive" process to a smooth bureaucratic conveyer belt.

The adviser conceded that there had been setbacks to the program. She stated that in 2009, the government retroactively amended the application process, which had several implications. The main amendment was an increase in the application fee. Where the entire process had initially cost an applicant Rs 1,700, with Rs 200 paid upon application and the remainder at the end of the process, the new regulations required all applicants to pay a total of Rs 14,700, with Rs 1,500 due at the time of

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[43] The community concerned was of Hindus and Sikhs from Pakistan who had been displaced as a result of the 1965 war with Pakistan. Pakistani Hindus regularly arrive in India seeking asylum but are not granted citizenship. During my fieldwork there was much media coverage of a large number of such asylum seekers arrived from Sindh, as there was a possibility they might be deported. They were, in the end, not deported.

application. The increase applied not only to new applications, but also to those applications still under consideration.

The more severe implication for Afghan refugees in particular was with regard to the documents required for attaining Indian citizenship. Normally, applicants must submit evidence of renunciation of previous citizenship and their cancelled previous passport with the application for Indian citizenship. Since many Afghan Hindus and Sikhs did not have valid passports or other documentation demonstrating their Afghan citizenship, the UNHCR had reach an agreement with the government that they could be exempted from this requirement with the submission of a waiver form and an attached affidavit of UNHCR refugee status. The amendment did not take into account this exception, and from 2010 all Afghan Hindus and Sikhs were again required to provide the requisite documents (discussed in more detail below). While this was difficult for new applicants, it was even more frustrating for those who were already in process. "We would never ask them to go to their embassy," the adviser said, "plus the Afghan Embassy charges them a non-compounded fee for a new passport."

I asked the legal adviser if the UNHCR could not renegotiate an agreement with the government. "We have connections with high level government contacts," replied the adviser, "but unfortunately, for the government, a population of 4,000 people is not a big deal." She mentioned that the Khalsa Diwan had tried to lobby the National Committee of Minorities to no avail. "The most we can do, through SLIC, is to provide counselling for interested parties and conduct follow-up for applications currently in process." The description provided by the UNHCR was as clinical as the sterile office room in which I was conducting the interview. Everything was done according to a procedure; the hiccups were merely procedural hurdles in neat rows and columns on printed paper.

As discussed above, the UNHCR operates at a certain level of bureaucracy. The representatives I spoke with were at pains to explain their hands were tied as the organization could only work within the legal framework in India and take responsibility for refugee status determination. That they engaged implementing partners to provide additional services, they described, was a humanitarian action

for which funding from the international community was waning. Already, we can see in the helplessness expressed by the UNHCR representatives how the state scale operates unevenly at different levels of policy. For the government of India, the change in policy was made with considerations that did not take into account the reality of implementation for the Hindu-Sikh Afghan refugees. Nestled in the swish south Delhi neighbourhood of Vasant Vihar with other international NGOs and embassies, however, the UNHCR operated at a level where their concern was the clarification and development of policy and reporting of statistics to the international community. "If you'd like more information," the legal adviser added, "I can put you in touch with SLIC. They will be able to inform you on the citizenship issue in much more detail."

A visit to the offices of SLIC revealed a less clinical view of the process. Unlike the UNHCR, SLIC's offices are located off a small alley in Bhogal, a lower class neighbourhood home to many refugees. The nondescript offices are announced by a small Human Rights Lawyers Network (HRLN) sign dwarfed by billboards, large signs of surrounding shops, and window unit air-conditioners jutting out into the alley. One would not know there is an office building among the bustle of cars, carts, dogs, and other animals in the alley if not for a lone watchman sitting outside the office. It was raining and he asked me to stand under the small ledge over the door while checking I was indeed expected. "I'm sorry, we just have to be a little cautious," the SLIC representative later apologized.

The atmosphere inside was markedly different from the sterile silence and detachedness of the UNHCR offices. The SLIC offices lay past a small reception in a long, narrow room that had been divided into offices with plywood dividers creating a central corridor with little rooms with lockable doors onto the corridor and an internal walkway between the offices. In contrast to the UNHCR building, the SLIC offices did not get natural light, but were well lit and filled with books and papers and buzzed with the hum of chatter from phone conversations, interviews and meetings being conducted, and with a general feeling that important work was being done. The downstairs library and resource centre was comparatively quiet, with caseworkers and an intern poring over documents and books. I did not visit the two upper levels, but the shelves of paperwork and requests for documents being shouted over phones

and across the office underscored the level of implementation SLIC operated at, mediating between refugees needs and official requirements through the production of "paper truths" (Tarlo 2003) to feed the bureaucratic machinery.

The SLIC representative I spoke with sat at a busy table covered with a sheet of glass under which photographs, lists of names, phone numbers, and paperwork were frozen in place. Three chairs were crammed into the small cubicle space in front of the desk and to the wall on their side hung a corkboard affixed with informational posters in English and a flowchart of the naturalization process in Punjabi. She chuckled when I relayed the information I'd received from the UNHCR. "We started the naturalization project in 2003," she corrected me, "at the time the UNHCR had been paying the application fees." The SLIC representative suggested that the 2009 fee hike was partially due to the government trying to extract money from the UNHCR. The simple, straightforward process suggested by the UNHCR, I was told, was slightly more complicated.

> "We fill out all the forms and submit them with the fee and advertisement[44]. One of the problems though is that while on paper the process should take nine months to one year, there have been so many changes and transfers of officers and clerks that [SLIC] is constantly having to brief new people in the system on the changes… [and with] the retroactive law change… it has been taking so long… we've had to keep furnishing copies of new documents for applicants as their original documents expire while the applications have been in process."

The actual material process, it appeared, was much messier than what the UNHCR representative had described, and was further complicated by delays in the process and constant changes of governmental office personnel.

SLIC must compile seven copies of each application to submit to the SDM. One copy is provided to the office of the Deputy Commissioner of Police (DCP) and the FRRO each, so they may conduct an investigation of person for the applicant. At the same time, five copies are provided to the Delhi Secretariat (DS) to begin the citizenship application process. Once the SDM receives the completed copies of the application

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[44] Adults not married to an Indian citizen, who wish to apply for citizenship, are required to place an advertisement in the newspaper announcing their intention to apply for Indian citizenship, in case there are any objections.

from the FRRO and DCP, they are passed on to the DS to complete the application file, which is then ready to be submitted to the MHA. Once the MHA has verified the completed application, the applicant is submitted a letter with a request to provide: the final fee, their old passport, and a certificate of renunciation of their old citizenship. Once these are submitted, the applicant is invited to take an oath on a new nationality certificate.

The fallout from the 2009 Citizenship Act amendment that the UNHCR legal adviser had referenced offhand has had very serious implications for SLIC aside from the fee hike. The amendment also introduced a new form, which meant the approximately 4,000 applications still in process had to be re-filed and new documents submitted to each office, with new officers and clerks who had not been briefed and lobbied on the naturalization process or the special case of Afghan Hindus and Sikhs who had been allowed to submit a UNHCR affidavit instead of a passport. This bureaucratic hurdle on the Indian side was furthered by a recent directive from the MHA requiring that applicants not just provide a certificate of renunciation from the Afghanistan Embassy, but also a Certificate of No-Objection to ensure that the applicant had no criminal convictions or outstanding debts in Afghanistan (discussed below).

The variation between the descriptions of the citizenship process for Hindu-Sikh Afghans offered by representatives from SLIC and the UNHCR how the state scale is productive at different levels of policy creation and implementation. Governmental policy is created with an assumption of what it means to be a person at the state scale, that is a citizen with documents demonstrating previous national belonging. Policy is produced to work with such persons. The Hindu-Sikh Afghans' reality however does not align at the level of implementation and the UNHCR intervenes at a policy level, deploying concepts of belonging at the state scale to consider the Hindu-Sikh Afghans as persons naturally belonging in India. The efforts of SLIC to assist refugees in the citizenship process demonstrate how the state scale is produced bureaucratically at the individual level through the creation of the files and documents through which refugees must demonstrate their selves as eligible to be citizens.

In the case of individual Hindu-Sikh Afghan refugees, however, even demonstrating eligibility does not ensure the ability to become a naturalized citizen. In my first

meeting with Khalsa Diwan members in their West Delhi office, the first issue raised was the UNHCR citizenship scheme and how the byzantine process requiring cooperation of multiple levels of governmental bureaucracy in both India and Afghanistan, coupled with the fee hike had placed citizenship outside the reach of many in the community. "There are about 20,000 of us here in Delhi," a Diwan member explained, quoting a number much higher than the official UNHCR estimate of Afghan refugees in the city, "but we are very dispersed. Our main problem is the citizenship issue, and more precisely the issue of the no-objection certificate." The Diwan member explained that

> "Prior to 2008, people would apply for citizenship and their Afghan passports would be sent to the Afghanistan Embassy with a request to approve the change in citizenship. The embassy would not respond and the Indian government would cast a blind eye (*nazar andaz mi kona*). From 2009, the government of India started requiring a certificate saying that the applicant didn't have any remaining responsibilities (*masooliyat*) in Afghanistan and had not committed any crimes. The community approached the embassy saying 'please grant us this certificate,' and we were told the embassy had no objection to doing so but that it was not in their hands. In order to get the certificate, an individual's file is sent from the embassy to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Afghanistan, who pass it by the Ministry of Justice, after which it is sent to the presidential cabinet[45] and finally Karzai's desk for personal approval. Tell me, what need is there for this for an eighteen year-old child who was merely five or six years old when moving here [to India]?"

Many Sikhs I spoke with expressed frustration at having been left in the cold by the UNHCR and the governments of both India and Afghanistan. "You see," a man once asked me thinking I was a journalist, "they send the Muslims to another country but not us... but then why don't they give us citizenship?" He concluded: "it is because the government is afraid of us [Afghan Sikhs]... that we come from Afghanistan." Many betrayed a sense of abandonment and alienation. "As the Urdu saying goes," one Diwan member said sadly, "a washerman's donkey[46] belongs neither at the

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[45] He used the term "*majlis-e wuzura*" which would mean the presidential cabinet, but he might have meant to refer to the parliament.
[46] The idiomatic expression in Urdu refers to the washerman's dog (*dhobi ka kutta*). This could, perhaps, be a regional variation.

house nor the docks," i.e. neither here nor there. The sentiment was that he belonged in Afghanistan, but that in becoming a refugee, he could not belong anywhere.

Afghan Sikh Experiences

As discussed above, at the state scale, the Afghan refugee is considered as a person constituted through the nation-state. The various bureaucracies operating at different levels deploy this concept of the person in differing ways to different ends. However, as Navaro-Yashin has demonstrated, these institutions and their bureaucratic artefacts are not only productive of a certain reality, but also "evoke a complex spectrum of affect" (2012:82) in that they are experienced, perceived, and reacted to by individuals. In doing so, they not only produce the truth of the state scale, but also reflect an "abjected underside" (2007:95) that opposes this truth. This disjuncture comes across in the sentiments of alienation and not belonging of the Diwan member, produced as a result of proving belonging in India. These sentiments also point to other ways of considering belonging outside the state scale, and it is to these that I now turn.

One of the Afghan Sikhs I spoke with in Delhi was Mr Singh. He never spoke to me of his occupation or what he did in Delhi; I knew him only as one of the members of the Khalsa Diwan, to which he was passionately committed. As with many Afghan Sikh refugees, the Diwan had been the support that got Mr Singh through the difficult process of migration. Now a naturalized Indian citizen, Mr Singh had initially come to India with the intention to return to Afghanistan. He arrived with his family in the early 1980s, unlike most Afghan Hindu and Sikhs who migrated during the civil war period of 1989-1992. Singh had sold his *haveli* – a large house – for a small price before fleeing Afghanistan, and spoke of it several times.

I once asked Mr Singh if he had ever felt as an outsider (*beganah*) in India? "Look," he told me,

> "the younger generation don't know about Afghanistan… about those times. People like me… now have a life here and think 'that was then, it's over.' But believe me over the 29 years that I've been here – and I'm 62 now – till today, in my dreams I see Jalalabad. Delhi is not the place I see in my dreams."

He then proceeded to tell me how, in 1993, after civil war when the Taliban came to power, he went back to Afghanistan with the intent to buy back his house and return to the country. He arrived in Kabul and went to Jalalabad. His neighbours were happy to see him, but complained about the nomadic Kuchi people who were squatting on the land opposite his house. During his second night back, two masked men who he suspects were members of the Kuchi group, came to his hotel room and threatened him with a gun, telling him to leave and that he had no more business there. While telling this story, Mr Singh's eyes went misty. "I packed up the next day, left the power of attorney with my uncle, and have never been back," he told me. What Mr Singh did could have cost him his refugee status had he been found out. Luckily, he was able to come back and go through the long and – even at that time – expensive process of becoming an Indian citizen. Mr Singh's story of belonging in India was in some ways more a story about not being able to belong in Afghanistan anymore.

While many of the Afghan Sikhs I spoke with shared sentiments similar to Mr Singh's, there were of course also those who did simultaneously feel like they belonged in Afghanistan and also had a place in India (and perhaps even elsewhere). One such individual was Mr Jasmeet, who was able to maintain an identity that is both Afghan and Indian. Mr Jasmeet came from a historically wealthy, upper-class family that had historically moved between India and Afghanistan, and he had permanently moved to India in the 1970s for business purposes. He claimed to be among the first Afghan Sikhs to get Indian citizenship, and explained how he saw himself as fully Afghan and Indian. While he was well known and respected by the wider Afghan Hindu and Sikh community, he was also somewhat ostracized by community leaders and preferred to stay away from their politics. "They come to me when they need financial help," he explained, "but they're not interested in what I have to say."

The Afghan Hindus and Sikhs whom I encountered who did feel they belong more in India held political beliefs aligned with more right-wing narratives of Afghan Hindus and Sikhs as victims of Muslim violence, and would often stop speaking to me upon realizing I was Muslim. One man at a *gurudwara*[47] in the west Delhi neighbourhood of Tilak Nagar who had been cursing Muslims in my presence until somebody subtly

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[47] A *gurdwara* is a Sikh house of worship open to members of all faiths.

indicated to him I was a Muslim, turned to me and said "of course not all Muslims are like that, but you know what I mean." As I left the *gurudwara*, he walked out with me and continued to try and engage me in a discussion on how Hinduism was superior to Islam, about my Afghan ancestry, and about my 'real reason' (*maqsad*) for conducting research in Delhi. Finally, losing his temper when I would not concede to being anti-Hindu, he blurted out:

> "Everything you're saying is just cheap talk (*faqat gap ast*), a man can seduce a woman with words saying he will provide security and then once she has become a prostitute (*fahish*) he will discard her and spread rumours about her to the world. You're loyal to Pakistan, don't deny it! I know because we used to be in the same position. We would say we are Afghan, but we always had our eyes on India (*hamesha nigah beh hindustan dashtem*)[48]."

I mentioned this story once to Mr Jasmeet. "It's unfortunate," he replied in his Anglicized Indian English, "the [political] right welcomed a lot of these people with open arms in the 90s. They have nothing [financially], but their feelings are kept alive by the RSS[49] and their likes."

That the Hindu nationalist parties in Delhi might welcome Afghan Hindus and Sikhs is not unexpected. The rise of the Hindu nationalist parties in Delhi came with the influx of Hindu refugees following the partition of British India in 1947. The Hindu nationalist parties capitalized on the refugees' resentment, presenting themselves as the benefactors of the Hindu refugee community. Many refugees from West Punjab (now in Pakistan) quickly rose to prominence in the right-wing parties, and the majority of these people came from the Khatri caste (Jaffrelot 2000) to which many of the Hindus and Sikhs in Afghanistan also belong (Emadi 2014; Markovits 2000). Newly arrived refugees from Afghanistan would not only have found fellow caste members among the nationalist parties, but also a discourse of resentment that resonated with their experience of fleeing from a Muslim-majority area, as Mr Jasmeet suggested. Of course, Afghan Hindu and Sikh refugees might be drawn to the Hindu nationalist parties for a range of reasons, but unfortunately this was not

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[48] While the man was undoubtedly speaking of his own experience, his statement was also a reflection of the Hindutva assertion, mentioned further above, of national loyalties being connected to religious affiliation.

[49] The Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (National Volunteer Organization) is a right wing, paramilitary, volunteer Hindu nationalist organization based on an ideology of service to the nation.

something I could pursue, as the more right-wing Afghan Hindus and Sikhs were not willing to meet with me[50].

Where some found religious belonging in Hindu nationalist rhetoric, the majority of the Afghan Sikhs whom I met in Delhi had a more ecumenical view of how their religion connected them to India. "They think it is just in India that you have the holy sites?" Mr Singh had exclaimed, "in Afghanistan we also have holy Sikh sites. Many important *Sikhi* figures come from Afghanistan!" The oldest member of the Khalsa Diwan, Ghani Saheb, intervened saying: "You know, our Guru Nanak Devji[51]... he came to Afghanistan." Ghani Saheb's statement was a prelude to a number of stories of how Guru Nanak had performed the Hajj and brought peace to Hindus and Muslims, and how the first brick of the Golden Temple in Amritsar had been laid by a Muslim saint. Ghani Saheb even drew the Golden Temple into connection with Afghanistan. "You know, in Afghanistan they told me I could never go to Mecca, but when Zahir Shah came to visit India, he went to visit our Darbar Sahib[52]... when it was time for his prayer, the guide took his own cape (*shaale khodash*) and lay it on the floor for him to pray." Ghani Saheb told this story not to suggest Sikhism was somehow better than Islam, but to emphasize how Sikhism could flourish in India, Afghanistan, or elsewhere because of its acceptance of others.

The descriptions above demonstrate how Afghan Sikhs experience belonging to a "simultaneity" (Levitt and Glick Schiller 2004) of places that is engendered and sustained through experiences, emotions, and memories. They counter the idea of Afghan Sikhs "coming home" to India, as the UNHCR representative had suggested, and instead demonstrate how Afghan Sikhs are aware of many types of connections that serve to place them in Afghanistan or India. Indeed, as mentioned in the previous chapter, Afghan Sikhs do not generally see themselves as a return-diaspora group. Unlike Adyge-Abkhaz Circassian diaspora-returnees (Erciyes 2008), there is not a sentiment of having returned to a homeland in India[53], and thus no subsequent questioning of really being Indian or Sikh akin to Japanese-Brazilians' experience in

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[50] The relationship of Hindu nationalist parties with Sikh groups in particular has been historically fraught due to regional, political, and economic considerations. For more see Moliner (2011).
[51] The founder of the Sikh faith
[52] He was referring to the Golden Temple at Amritsar
[53] Delhi-based photographer, Gauri Gill, has explored Delhi's Afghan Sikh's ideas of Afghanistan as homeland in an exhibition entitled "What Remains". A description can be found at http://www.gaurigill.com/works.html.

moving to Japan (Ishikawa 2009). In some ways, the Afghan Sikhs I met considered themselves as a diaspora group, like the Jordanian Circassian diaspora described by Shami (2012), underscoring their distinctiveness to mark themselves as outsiders compared to local Indian Sikhs, and connected to other Afghan Sikhs in the UK or Germany. They could also be considered part of a "circulation society" (Aslanian 2011; Markovits *et al* 2003) like the Pashtun moneylender community, discussed in chapter six.

The idea presented by the UNHCR that Hindu-Sikh Afghans could easily integrate in India through being connected to local communities held some currency in the case of the Hindu nationalist parties described above. In practice however, the Afghan Sikhs in Delhi were tightly knit and while they were divided even among themselves by regional or cast affiliation, there was a hesitancy and bitterness toward Delhi's non-Afghan Sikhs that I encountered among many in the community. Mr Singh related how he had arrived in India with enough money to pay for expenses for a while, but when funds began to fall short, the Khalsa Diwan helped him with purchasing a street stall. "I started with vegetables, then some little toys for children, and then I was able to get more stalls, until I could do a business," he recounted.

Talking about relationships with Delhi's Indian Sikh community, Mr Singh grew visibly irate and exclaimed: "You think I would have to sell vegetables if they wanted to help?" Mr Singh related to me the view that the "Indians" (*hindi-ha*), as they called Indian Sikhs, wanted nothing to do with the Afghan Sikhs. "They don't accept us," he explained, "because we are different." Indeed Afghan Sikhs were culturally different from Indian Sikhs[54], eating Afghan foods at home, dressing in *perahan-tunban[55]*, practicing slightly more conservative rites, and even speaking a different Punjabi peppered with Dari and Pashto words and phrases. While Mr Singh's feelings toward Indian Sikhs were a little more nuanced and also cannot be taken as emblematic of all Afghan Sikh's feelings, his attitudes echoed the comments of many others with whom I met.

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[54] I am not aware of any ethnographic study of differences between Indian and Afghan Sikhs. Like Mr Sigh, members of the Afghan Sikh community would consistently enumerate to me the various differences between Indians and Afghans and how they were more like me (they assumed I was Afghan). Indian Sikhs on the other hand had various reactions, but there was a general sentiment that the Afghan Sikh community was deeply inward looking and religiously very conservative (*kattar*).
[55] Afghan tunic and trousers.

While the Afghan Sikhs in Delhi were tightly knit, there were also divisions within the community along caste and class lines. The two main organizations catering to the community, the Khalsa Diwan and Afghan Hindu Sikh Welfare Society (AHSWS), both worked together, but also had their differences. When the head of the Diwan had suggested I talk with somebody at the AHSWS, Ghani Saheb had added "yes, they do good work; they have their own opinions", subtly distancing himself from them. I understood more clearly what he meant after meeting with members of the AHSWS in their offices in the GK-2 neighbourhood *gurdwara*, tucked away among mansions of Delhi's millionaires. The members I met with were very suspicious of who I was and why I was talking to them, their questions indicating a distrust of me as a Muslim[56]. The meeting was interrupted by an attendant who relayed to the head of the AHSWS that he had received a message from the Khasla Diwan regarding a financial matter. It seemed the Diwan owed some money to the AHSWS. "These Khalsa-types (*Khalsa waley*) are like that. When it's a question of money (*paisey da mamla*), then everyone remembers their caste (*biradari*)!" He told the attendant to inform the Diwan they would still have to pay the requisite sum.

Again, the UNHCR representative's assertion that the Hindu-Sikh Afghans did not require as much support because of the "strong sense of community" among themselves is not necessarily untrue. That Afghan Sikhs were tight-knit ensured a modicum of economic support was available to those most in need. Ghani Saheb, at the end of the day, chose to distance himself from the AHSWS in his comments to me, but not convey any sense of division between them. However, there were many kinds of divisions among the Afghan Sikhs that I was not privy to as an outsider and as somebody who was only there for a limited time. Some divisions might have had to do with different generations of migrants. As one Sikh man from Kabul, whom I met at a west Delhi *gurdwara* and who had been in Delhi for several months with his teenage son, explained to me:

> "I've decided to go back [to Kabul]. These people [i.e. Afghan Sikhs in Delhi] have been here for years. They are rich (*paisadar*) but don't care (*parwa na*

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[56] "I don't understand who he is and why he is here, just give him something and finish this," one of the members had said uncomfortably to the head in Punjabi, assuming I was Afghan and would not be able to understand.

darand) about us [i.e. people in Afghanistan]... At least I have a job (*karobar*) in Kabul [and] family (*khwesh o qaum*).

I did not see the man or his son again at the *gurdwara*, so can only assume that they returned to Kabul. They were not the only ones happy to leave India. Though Mr Singh was now was in a good financial situation and was content with the life he had built in India, when he found out I was studying in London he exclaimed in shock: "Why are you here? You speak Dari, you are Pashtun, go and become a refugee in England!" He spoke about how it was too late for him, but that he had managed to marry one of his daughters off in London. He regretted not having sent his son there through a trafficker as some of his friends had done. "The money is there you see. If you have money there, you can have a life here." Leaving India was a goal shared by many Afghan Sikhs I met. The UNHCR assisted Afghan refugees to apply for limited scholarships under a special program with the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD), but most sought to leave through family networks or traffickers.

Still, though many Afghan Sikhs are focused on leaving India or do not feel they belong in India, it does not prevent them from making a life in the country. The same bureaucracy that prevents them from attaining citizenship allows for them to contravene regulations against setting up domicile in the country, or as Mr Singh explained:

> "Because the government doesn't help, it can't say 'don't work'... Some people have built houses, though most are renting. Also, people here prefer to rent to Afghans... because unlike Indians, people from Afghanistan are honest (*imaandar*) and don't make problems for landlords or try to occupy (*qabza kardan*) the property[57]."

The fact authorities turned a blind eye to Afghan Sikhs working or owning property was also observed by the SLIC representative who said

> "Go to Amar Colony Market and talk to the refugee shop keepers. They'll always tell you their shop is rented, but everybody knows they bought it somehow...you know, bribery and all."

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[57] This statement was repeated to me by non Hindu-Sikh Afghan refugees as well, though I believe landlords' attitudes toward Afghans has more to do with a general perception that Afghans are rich.

There is no proof as such, but it is an open secret among many people that many of the Afghans living in Delhi since the 90s, Hindu-Sikh or otherwise, have been able to attain a number of identity documents, own houses, start businesses etc. The same governmental functioning that prevents them from becoming legal citizens also allows them to operate unofficially as citizens. As Sadiq (2010) has described, such "documentary citizenship" can allow non-citizens to pass as citizens both inside and outside the country of residence. There were many stories of Afghan Sikhs in Delhi who had multiple passports and would travel to Central Asia, Eastern Europe, or even the United Kingdom to do business, though I never met anyone who openly admitted to doing so. Formally, of course, the story had to be maintained that they are not accorded rights of citizenship.

3.5   Conclusion

In this chapter, I have considered what it means to be and belong as Afghan in Delhi at the state scale, through examining the kind of person envisaged under the Afghan refugee label. The label calls forth a subject whose identity, religion, language, etc. are coterminous with national belonging, and who is connected through emotional ties to a community grounded in the nation. Thus, to be Afghan in Delhi, at the state scale, is to not belong in Delhi. That Hindu and Sikh Afghans can be eligible for citizenship is based on an assumption of their not belonging to Afghanistan. This subjectivity of the Afghan refugee is maintained and entrenched through the schemes made available by the UNHCR, which are shaped not only by the political context in the country, but also the international and local politics of the organization.

BS Chimni has argued, the current international system governing refugees exists in an "imperial global order in which… the real concern of the North… is the defence of global capitalism" (2009:24) under which "refugees are no longer welcome in the North, and the UNHCR is being forced to come to terms with this" (1998: 367). Indeed, over the course of my fieldwork, the UNHCR progressed from suggesting to refugees they be prepared to wait a very long time before resettlement, to telling them point blank that they should expect to not be resettled abroad.

In a June 2012 open meeting with the Afghan community, after fielding questions and comments from those present, the UNHCR Chief of Mission began by discussing the RSD procedure, stating that:

> "I understand that when a case is rejected, especially on appeal, it is disappointing. I know you think we made a mistake. We are human; it is possible. This is why the system has an appeals process… [but an appeal] is not a right, it is an exception [allowed by the UNHCR in India]."

She then proceeded to ask how many in the audience had received a final, second rejection, and said to the handful of people present: "I'm very sorry, the UNHCR cannot do anything for migrants – only refugees." After making this migrant/refugee distinction and excluding the former, she addressed the refugees specifically. She explained the UNHCR's efforts to procure agreement from the government of India on getting long-term visas for refugees, and indicated the community should be grateful to the government. She proceeded to describe how resettlement was "for people who arrived before 2001" and that she was not ruling out resettlement for everyone, but that they would be staying for a long time in India and it was important they "make the most of [their] time."

The crowd was getting restless; people started heckling her about having spent so much time in Delhi without any indication of being resettled. She took a breath and answered questions and comments in her stern, terse manner:

> "The countries that give us money are having problems and are giving us less money while the refugees are increasing. The UNHCR will be able to help you less and less… We expect families and communities to help people… We need to be realistic… you do need support, but getting a job is something you can capitalize on."

The meeting came to an abrupt end as the UNHCR entourage hurriedly exited, evading people trying to stop and ask them questions. The refugees in general did not appear optimistic or excited about the possibility of long-stay visas.

As the ethnographic material in this chapter illustrates, a refugee's situation does not always conform to the story that must be recounted or represented in order to be included in the refugee label. However, it is ultimately those with the financial or social capital who can navigate the process of becoming a refugee and/or procuring

alternative access to citizenship through which they can remain in the country. This raises the issue of scale as impact, as it suggests there are some for whom being Afghan at the state scale has less bearing on their daily life than others. That is there is a certain kind of refugee who can make it in India. This fact is explored in the following chapters at both the scale of individuals and of community.

The Chief of Mission's statement hints as to the kind of person that can succeed as a refugee: the entrepreneurial individual of the free market. We can take this in the literal sense directly from her statements: in order for a refugee to remain in India, she must be enterprising and willing to "capitalize on" any opportunity for assistance. The Chief of Mission's words reiterated a point the UNHCR representatives made during my first meeting with them, where they tried to assure me that Afghan refugees could easily live comfortably in India given the large informal sector. The implication was that one needed only to try. The Chief of Mission's comments also suggest that it is not only the individual who is responsible for cultivating the personhood to enable remaining in India, but that communities must also come to help each other, reiterating the idea of the individual being grounded in a community of individuals who feel a certain way toward each other.

I am reminded again of the man whom I met outside the UNHCR offices at my first meeting. I do not know about the validity of his case, but perhaps he did not possess the entrepreneurial spirit to ensure his identity strategically conform to that of the Afghan refugee label. There did not seem to be a community to assist him. It was not till the end of my time in Delhi that I revisited my conversation with him to see that perhaps what was at stake was a difference in how he perceived what it meant to be a refugee and the kind of person envisaged at the state scale. In the following two chapters I enquire into this slippage, turning from the state scale to the scale of the individual, to explore the complexity of being and belonging as Afghan in Delhi, attending to the trajectories of movement placing Afghans in Delhi and the material and affective ways they relate to the city.

Figure 1: Offices of the Khalsa Diwan in West Delhi

Figure 2: Persian Verse above Khalsa Diwan Main Office Door

Written by Nandlal Goya, a 17th century Afghan Sikh scholar, the verse has been printed in Persian and Gurmukhi transliteration and reads: "May spring stay fresh eternally/ O God, far away from the evil eye."

Figure 3: The Lal Sai Sindhi temple in Lajpat Nagar

The UNHCR would hold its open meetings with the Afghan refugee community in the large hall that comprised the top floor of the temple.

4. Migrant Trajectories: Being Afghan in Delhi

"Once Hamid Khan held a grand festival to which he invited a large body of noblemen. Malik Bahlol was among those invited. He instructed his Afghan followers to behave in this assembly in a foolish and stupid manner, so that Hamid Khan, taking them to be simpletons, might cease to have any fear or apprehension of them. Some of them tied their shoes to their waists, while others put them on a shelf above the Khan's head... they performed many other antics... "They are country bumpkins and have rarely been with civilized people. All they know is how to eat and die" [Malik Bahlol related to Hamid Khan]... at a sign from the latter... [the Afghans] all rushed together and for every guard of Hamid Khan, there were two Afghans standing by. When at the end of the banquet, the Khan's men took leave, Qutb Khan drew out a chain... [Hamid] Khan was put in irons and handed over to the guards."
(Haravī [1613] 1958:32-33) [58]

This chapter and the next turn to the scale of the individual to respectively examine the different meanings of being and belonging as Afghan in Delhi. The current chapter focuses on individual Afghan migrants' trajectories of movement that connect them to Delhi. Through attending to individual narratives of how migrants come to the city, the chapter complicates notions of migrant movement presented at the state scale in the previous chapter, illustrating the absence of a unifying logic of migration among Afghans in Delhi and highlighting the subsequent unsuitability of the economic migrant/refugee dichotomy. In outlining the reality of transnational migration at the level of the individual, where Afghan migrants are connected to Delhi in multiple ways, the chapter also sets the scene for discussion of the multiple ways Afghan migrants understand how they belong in Delhi, which is explored further in chapter five.

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[58] I am indebted to Hannah Archambault and William Warner respectively for bringing this story to my attention and assisting in locating the text. While I have used the excerpt from Roy's translation (Haravī 1958), I have also consulted Imam al-Din's in-depth analysis and compilation (Haravī 1960) and Dorn's most recent translation (Haravī 2000).

The incident outlined in the excerpt above and the manuscript from which it is taken, the *Tarikh-e Khan Jahani wa Makhzan-e Afghan* (The History of Khan Jahan and the Treasures[59] of the Afghans), serve as an appropriate starting point for introducing the following two chapters, both ethnographically and theoretically. The passage quoted above illustrates how individuals engage with different ideas of being Afghan, mirrored in the ethnographic material below, while the manuscript demonstrates how a single object can be constituted contemporaneously through multiple processes delineating different meanings of what it means to be Afghan in India, theoretically affording an appreciation of how Afghan migrants are constituted at multiple scales. As discussed in chapter two, the term "Afghan" is employed in this thesis to reflect the multiple ways it is considered by those with whom I conducted research. It should be noted that within the context of the discussion of the *Makhzan-e Afghan* below, the manuscript uses the term "Afghan" to refer specifically to Pashtuns, like other texts from the same period.

The passage from the *Makhzan-e Afghan* quoted above relates the founding moment of the Lodhi dynasty (1451-1526), the first Afghan dynasty too rule the Delhi Sultanate before establishment of Mughal imperial rule. After having launched a number of unsuccessful attacks from the Punjab, where he had already consolidated power, Bahlol Lodhi assumes the Delhi Sultanate by deposing Hamid Khan[60] through political tactic rather than military force. The text describes how Hamid Khan initially barred Bahlol Lodhi from entering Delhi, given his previous designs on the sultanate. Bahlol Lodhi, in turn, organized other Afghan tribes who had previously been in conflict against one another into a single force. His men were Afghans from Roh, a mountainous area east of Delhi, and were considered rugged mountaineers unaccustomed to the ways and intrigues of political life in the court. As the excerpt relates, Bahlol Lodhi was able to infiltrate the court through demonstrating his men were merely Afghans, i.e. "country bumpkins", and thus located outside of the existing power structure. Comparable to the incident mentioned in the previous chapter of the young Afghan boy filling out family information on the UNHCR form, Bahlol Lodhi's men's "antics" in Hamid Khan's court can be seen as a performance of

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[59] In English translations, *Makhzan-e Afghan* is translated as "History of the Afghans" referring to the genealogical account of Pashtun tribes and historical narratives of Afghan rule in India included in the text. The work is also often just referred to by its shorter title of *Makhzan-e Afghan*.
[60] Hamid Khan was not a dynastic ruler, but the minister of the last ruler of the Sayyid dynasty who had abdicated the throne and placed Hamid Khan in his stead.

a specific way of being a person, particularly an Afghan person in this case, within a particular structure. As a performance, it was "a reduction: a single act created out of composite relationships" (Strathern 1994:248) that demonstrated how being Afghan was to be a simpleton and apart from "civilized" people. It did not negate, however, another way of being Afghan, i.e. as part of a corporate cultural group that could act in tandem to overthrow the political order, which Bahlol Lodhi's men demonstrated as soon as the court setting was cleared of Hamid Khan's men. These two ways of being Afghan are addressed in the *Makhzan-e Afghan* with political aims, as I will discuss shortly.

As an ethnographic artefact, the *Makhzan-e Afghan* is an interesting object to consider meanings of being Afghan in India. The text is a panegyric to the accomplishments of Khan Jahan Lodhi, an Afghan officer who had commissioned the text and was the Mughal viceroy in the Deccan. The manuscript is also a historiographical work. It is one of the first texts to put forward a genealogy of the Afghan tribes, tracing their origins to the founding community of Islam, and one of the earliest texts to provide extensive detail on the Afghan saints of India. It is among a limited number of works from the period that record the history of early Afghan rule in India, concentrating particularly on the Lodhi and Sur dynasties. Relatively little is known of the origins of the author, Ni'mat Allah Haravi, other than his father's being a reputable scholar in Emperor Akbar's court. Ni'mat Allah himself had a distinguished career before his employment under Khan Jahan Lodhi[61]. While his name, Haravi, suggests a connection to the city of Herat in modern-day Afghanistan, Ni'mat Allah is considered to not have been Afghan given his professional background. In his introduction to the *Makhzan-e Afghan*, Ni'mat Allah credits his knowledge of Afghan genealogy to an Afghan he was introduced to during his employment under Khan Jahan Lodhi (Dale 2012; Haravī [1613] 1958; Mehta 1986:23-24).

It is not unusual that the *Makhzan-e Afghan* should be a historiography of Afghans, commissioned by an Indian Mughal officer of Pashtun descent, and written by a non-

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[61] He served as librarian to Abdul Rahim Khan-e Khanan, one of Akbar's most important ministers, and as court chronicler under Akbar's successor, Jahangir.

Pashtun[62] in Indo-Persian for an Indian elite audience. It is emblematic, rather, of a "local cosmopolitanism" (Ho 2006) characteristic of continuous movements and interactions among groups and individuals throughout and beyond South Asia from the pre-modern through the contemporary periods (Harper and Amrith 2012; Ludden 2003a; Marsden 2008; Tsing 1993). As an object, the text represents the complexity of such cosmopolitanism. As just described, its production suggests how being Afghan in India can mean, in one sense, to be part of a diverse milieu in which movement and interaction create "affect-laden spaces that include all kinds of people and foster cultural identity in and among territories" (Ludden 2003b:1069). The *Makhzan-e Afghan* presents the historical narratives and stories of saints and kings as proper to India and as part of the Indian landscape, both figuratively and physically. Even today, the history and landmarks indexed in the text are incorporated into the imaginary and material landscapes of Delhi and indeed the country more broadly.

The *Makhzan-e Afghan* appears as quite a different object, however, when considering the context and political end to which it was written. The manuscript was commissioned at a time where Khan Jahan Lodhi was consolidating his power in the Deccan. From this position, Khan Jahan would eventually launch an ultimately unsuccessful three-year rebellion against Jahangir's successor, Emperor Shah Jahan. With alternating political gain and loss heavily taxing resources on both sides, Khan Jahan's political supporters in the Deccan eventually abandoned him. Khan Jahan had foreseen this possibility and had thus been rallying Afghan nobles in the Punjab and elsewhere against Mughal rule, enabling him to move to Punjab where he would finally face defeat (Mehta 1984:420-422). The *Makhzan-e Afghan* was thus part of this effort to rally Afghans around a glorious past preceding Mughal rule, and placed Khan Jahan as an inheritor of the Lodhi dynasty. It is not coincidental then that Bahlol Lodhi's ability to bring forth the shared Afghan identity of the disunited tribes against a marginalized Afghan identity is highlighted in the text. The manuscript was indeed one among several works from the same period through which Pashtun elites in India endeavoured to articulate an "Afghan" identity by tribalizing ties to

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[62] Alam and Subrahmanyam (2007:128-129) describe, with the specific example of travelogues, how imperial court scribes of the time were expected to show dexterity in being able to relate events from contexts very different from their own.

Islam through recourse to history and genealogy (Green 2008, 2012)[63], to assert an identity separate from that of Mughals. Against this background, the *Makhzan-e Afghan* operates as an object in contrast to the multicultural context that produced it, representing instead a process wherein individuals were building on cross-cultural interaction to negotiate cultural difference[64].

The cultural difference articulated in the *Makhzan-e Afghan* is different from that assumed under the state scale discussed in chapter three, where Afghan belonging in Delhi is understood within the frame of the nation state. The *Makhzan-e Afghan* illustrates the possibility of different ways of being Afghan in Delhi: as part of a pluralist enterprise connecting people through shared cultural expression within and outside of India, or as an ethnically distinct group grounded in India through a particular history and culture. In the ethnographic material presented in the next two chapters, both of these forms of being Afghan in Delhi are referenced alongside that envisioned at the state scale. The individual narratives of Afghan migrants presented are, however, not provided to merely counter the state scale understanding of how Afghans belong in Delhi, but rather to present the latter as one among a plurality of ways Afghan migrants can be considered to belong in the city. As Kalir *et al* (2012:16) note, it is naïve to merely critique state categories' failure to capture the lived reality of transnationally mobile people, as if such categories need only be tweaked to attain greater accuracy. Instead, what must be accounted for is how such categories and their incongruence with migrants' experience reflect a reality of transnational movement, a reality that is often the basis for the very state anxieties that produce the categories. Research on Afghan migration has been attuned to this issue particularly through problematizing the dichotomous categories of refugee and illegal economic migrant ascribed to Afghan migrants by the UNHCR and other state-level bodies, as described in chapter three.

Studies on Afghan migrants echo broader research and theory that emphasizes the centrality of mobility to social life (Urry 2000, 2011) and the complex consequences

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[63] Green further argues that argues that this budding "Afghan" identity, voiced as separate from that of the pluralistic Indian Mughal identity, would later be transferred to the Afghan state upon Mughal political decline.

[64] CA Bayly (1989), Fewkes (2012), Ho (2006), and Marsden (2009) address this complexity of cosmopolitanism in demonstrating how individuals interact and integrate in multiple locales via trade and travel, developing a consciousness of the broader world within which they operate, but also cultivating a sense of separateness within the cosmopolitan miasma.

of transnational movement as both destabilizing migrant identities (Chambers 1994; Featherstone 1995) and leading to migrants' cultivation of multifaceted, multi-locational, and deterritorialized forms of belonging (Levitt and Glick Schiller 2004; Soysal 1994). Research on Afghan migration delineates how ethnic and social class affiliations can determine how Afghan migrants orient themselves toward Afghanistan or countries of settlement, and also regulate the networks and migration strategies available to these migrants (Gehrig and Monsutti 2003; Monsutti 2009). However, as is discussed in this chapter and the next, the networks through which Afghan migrants move often predate the establishment of national boundaries so that individual migrants experience places of migration through a simultaneity of overlapping place-making projects, attaching different significances to their experiences based on the logics of their own situations (Novak 2007a, 2007b). Research further illustrates how individuals, families, and other social groups deploy different migratory strategies in tandem not just in response to social, economic, or political conditions in Afghanistan, but also as part of moral and ethical considerations of being or becoming a certain kind of person (Monsutti 2005c; Marsden 2013), and that Afghan migrants' movements are also recurrent over time so that a clear distinction between refugees and economic migrants, or voluntary or in-voluntary migration, ceases to hold analytic relevance (Monsutti 2005a, 2010a). Thus, while the migratory trajectories of individual Afghans are intertwined with economic and political considerations, they cannot be reduced to solely commercial or political logics, and must also be understood as part of complex ethical decisions made in pursuing a "well-lived" life (Marsden 2014).

To attend to this moral quality of migration, this chapter explores the different meanings of being Afghan in Delhi at the scale of the individual. The simultaneously multiple and contrasting meanings of what it means to be Afghan in India presented by the *Makhzan-e Afghan* are thus instructive, not just considering the context and the constitution of the text itself as an object, but also in its descriptions of how Bahlol Lodhi's men connected to and interacted with the material world of the court[65] (foods, rugs, clothes, and language). Their "antics" demonstrate, on the one hand, a particular sense of what it meant to be Afghan outside the power structure,

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[65] I have removed most of the examples in the quotation at the beginning of the chapter, as it would render the passage quite long,

while concurrently representing an opposite meaning through the subversive intent and nature of their behaviour. This example from the *Makhzan-e Afghan* reiterates anthropological theory on morality and ethics that suggests the multiple processes through which persons are constituted can be grasped in individuals' accounting for their self and their inventiveness in their practices, reflections, and inter-subjective relations (Keane 2014; Kleinman 1999; Lambek 2010; Zigon 2010). In this vein, the chapter focuses on individual Afghan migrants' accounts of their travels to India and Delhi, attending to their relationships with persons, places, and things.

As demonstrated in chapter three, at the state scale, to be Afghan in India is to be a body in stasis at the end point of a vector of movement from Afghanistan into India, emotionally oriented toward the state of Afghanistan. What defines being Afghan in Delhi at this scale is thus an individual's story of movement to India. The accounts considered in this chapter, at the scale of the individual, reveal how Afghan migrants in Delhi consider themselves as persons on a trajectory of movement rather than at the end-point of a journey to India, even if they do feel constrained (*bandi*, lit. imprisoned) or stuck (*basta*) in Delhi. The three sections below present stories of three Afghan men's migration to India: Shahrukh, an accepted refugee; Musa Saheb, an asylum seeker whose case has been rejected by the UNHCR and who is thus classified officially as an economic migrant; and Ali, a student at a prominent university in Delhi. The accounts are based on a series of interviews with each man; they are provided below as independent narratives to retain the particularity of each case, and are compared and contrasted in the conclusion of the chapter. The three men's stories illustrate how migrant movements cannot be reduced solely to a set of rational economic considerations, and are shaped equally by coincidence, chance, and improvisation (Silverstein 2005; Amit 2012), where directionality of movement is not always pre-determined or even controlled (Wong and Suan 2012), and where connections to the nation or a homeland can be ambivalent (Oonk 2007; Vora 2013). The different patterns of movement presented in the stories reiterate the inadequacy of the dichotomous categorization of illegal economic migrants against legal refugees in the context of Afghan migration to India, and point to the multiple connections individual Afghan migrants have to Delhi as a place.

4.1   Case 1: Shahrukh, The Refugee

I met Shahrukh at the very first Sunday service I attended of the Dari Afghan Congregation, one of Delhi's several Afghan churches[66]. After interrogating me over the phone and in person, the pastor, Sharif, invited me to services and instructed me to be at the church gates at 3pm. In my eagerness I arrived half an hour early at the small church compound, located in a lower-middle class south Delhi neighbourhood. The church building belonged to an Indian church that, like the Afghan congregation, was affiliated with the Delhi Bible Fellowship. It was nestled between a large government school and an empty lot filled with refuse from the adjacent vegetable market. The Indian church allowed the Afghan congregation use of their premises on Sundays and special days of worship[67]. Arriving early, I walked into the tail end of a bible study session where Shahrukh was eagerly expounding his views on scripture in a circle of rather bored-seeming men.

Shahrukh is a dark, thin young man with sunken cheekbones and a gaunt face. Though his dark skin is weathered and his fine black hair slicked back like an old man's, he speaks with a broad, white, sincere smile and his eyes gleam with excitement and warmth, indicating that he is young (he is in his late twenties), but physically worn down. He has delicate mannerisms but a squawky voice and cackles often as he claps his hands forcefully at his own jokes. He is straightforward and looks you in the eye when talking, and one can sense his honesty in the clarity and directness of his speech. This honesty and an almost childlike inquisitiveness leads others to think he is naïve and slow-witted, but he has a voracious appetite for learning and can speak extensively and expressively about his personal experiences, travels, and self-education. He always wears the same set of clothes, but takes care

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[66] The Dari Afghan congregation's pastor related to me that the congregation is non-denominational, though the Delhi Bible Fellowship to which it was connected is an evangelical organization. It was not until my last month in Delhi that I learned through Shahrukh of a Hazara congregation and another evangelical church that allegedly held both Pashto and Dari services. I was not able to contact either congregation. Shahrukh and an Iranian pastor I met at another church in Delhi reported the Afghan congregations did not maintain good relations with each other.
[67] Several weeks before leaving, I met with the pastor of the Indian church who explained his church would be discontinuing its relationship with the Dari Afghan congregation in 2013, due the latter's lack of financial transparency. The pastor stated his church was wary of any potential investigation of the Afghan church by the Indian government or the local police that might reflect poorly on the Indian church.

to never appear dishevelled or unclean. "God loves those who are clean and pure" (*khodawand pakeezgan ra dost darad*)[68] he would say.

We did not speak that first day, but I saw him a little over a month later at the UNHCR general meeting with the Afghan Community in Lajpat Nagar, one of the more middle-class Afghan parts of Delhi. As usual, people arrived in their small groups of two or four, not chatting much with others around them. Several people whom I had spoken to at length individually pretended not to notice me, sticking instead to their small groups. Shahrukh on the other hand called out to me with a loud "Salam!" and obliquely referenced the church (which he could not directly name around other Afghans) in case I had forgotten him. It appeared he did not have friends at the meeting and I was more than happy to have somebody talk to.

Of the Afghans I met in Delhi during fieldwork, Shahrukh was the only person who actively sought me out to spend time together. Unlike many Afghans in Delhi who were wary of actively seeking friendships with people outside their circle of friends[69], Shahrukh went out of his way to meet new Afghans in the city and to spend time with them to get to know them better. His friendliness and generosity of time with others, could possibly have been a result of his feeling lonely in Delhi. He would tell me repeatedly how I was the only person he knew whom he could just call without reason or who would go with him on outings (*chakkar berand*) to different parts of the city. Every time we met during my last three months in Delhi, he would reprimand me: "Don't forget me in London, Londoners are very unfaithful (*bewafa*)! Many people from my village are there." He would talk about how he felt alone (*tanha*) even though he had the church and that perhaps what he needed was a good wife (*zane khub*).

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[68] This is a phrase from the Quran, but fits in neatly with Biblical teachings in Leviticus as well. I never asked Shahrukh which he was referring to, but his way of being Christian incorporates a lot of cultural elements of being Pashtun that are inflected with Muslim viewpoints. This is not unusual as studies of conversion to Christianity in South and Southeast Asia have shown, conversion does not entail a complete rejection of one's previous belief, but a becoming of a particular kind of Christian in an indigenous way (S Bayly 1989; Rafael 1993).

[69] Of course there is not one reason for such behaviour. In chapter six, I explore how this is perhaps partly due to the context of suspicion within which the subject of the refugee is formed in Delhi.

The need for a good wife came up frequently in my conversations with Shahrukh[70], and the issue of marriage was addressed several times in the bible study sessions I attended with him. Held in sex-segregated groups in different parts of the city, the bible study sessions took place in a private flat rented by three young Afghan men working for the church. The attendees were mostly young single men without family obligations, and after the discussion the group would congregate in the living room to talk over biscuits and soft drinks, or hot tea depending on the weather. These discussions were spaces where the men could discuss personal problems in a supportive environment, or have a good laugh at the expense of each other. The meetings also provided an arena to discuss personal spiritual revelations or moral lapses, usually those of former churchgoers or of "Afghans" (*afghanha*) more generally. The looming threat of the vices (*karhaye bad*) or sins (*gunaha*) of sleeping with women (*zenakari*) and alcoholism (*sharab khordan*) featured often in stories of those who had left the church unexpectedly. Conversations on such topics usually ended with the discussion leader making a communal prayer that all those present find good spouses (*hamsarane khub*) who would strengthen their faith. The good spouse was, of course, assumed to be a Christian. As Shahrukh once related to the group, holding his arms wide apart, "it doesn't matter to me, even if she is as fat as this (*eeraqam chaaq bashad*), she just needs to be Christian."

The way Shahrukh and his church friends spoke of a good wife contrasted with how his friends in Lajpat Nagar (a neighbourhood discussed in chapter six) would talk or brag about the "girls" (*dukhtaran*) they desired. The majority of Shahrukh's friends I met in Lajpat Nagar were young men in their 20s or 30s who had migrated to Delhi by themselves and were making a living through taking on odd jobs. They did not fit the image of young Afghan men held by many Indian inhabitants of Lajpat Nagar as being wealthy womanizers with a penchant for drinking and rash driving. As one clothing stall keeper in the central market explained to me:

> "These Afghan people are very good and peaceful (*shaant*), but their young
>
> boys (*jawan ladke*)… come here and get drunk and drive like crazy people

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[70] The possibility of finding a partner continues to be a concern for Shahrukh. There are not many options among the Delhi Afghan Christian community, which waxes and wanes with refugee flows, and he cannot rely on connections he would have had through the Pashtun network in India. He was briefly interested in an Indian Christian girl, but her family did not approve of the relationship over concerns of his ability to provide for the family.

(*pagalon ki tarha*). They do bad things (*bure kam*) here… like drugs and teasing girls (*ladkiyon ko chhedna*)[71]."

Shahrukh's friends attributed such behaviour to the Afghan tourists visiting Delhi or to the more affluent (*paisadar*) Afghan migrants who, like their Indian counterparts, could often be seen on clandestine dates in the various cafes outside the main market area of the neighbourhood, where their friends kept a look out for any potential family members in the vicinity. For Shahrukh's friends, who had very little social interaction with women, meeting a "girl" in this way was something that rarely happened but was often bragged about. Such "girls" were, however, ambivalent figures. Often, they embodied a perceived crisis of prostitution among Afghans living in Delhi (discussed again in chapter six), and represented for Shahrukh's friends their own difficult position of having become migrants in Delhi and living with financial instability. However, such women also presented the possibility of temporary sexual relief. Shahrukh's Lajpat Nagar friends would often brag about having obtained the phone number of a "girl" who worked as an interpreter (*terjuman*) for medical tourists, only to have their bluff called by others when pestered to phone the girl on the spot.

While it did not seem Shahrukh's Lajpat Nagar friends had much sexual contact with women in real life, they did have access to freely available pornography on their mobile phones. They would share videos with each other on their phones ranging from hard-core pornography to YouTube clips of women dancing in traditional Afghan clothing. On a visit to Amirkhel's shop (introduced in chapter five), Amirkhel was explaining to me how Afghan women were the most beautiful, and played one such video on his phone of the celebrated Ustad Hamahang singing for a dancing girl at a house party in Kabul. Shahrukh peeked at the video reluctantly then turned away, exclaiming loudly that this was not good culture (*farhange khub nist*) and that Aamirkhel should use his phone for something better, like good music or learning. His tone was not one of chastisement; rather it seemed Shahrukh was convincing

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[71] Such actions are, of course, not unique to Afghan men. Similar anxieties were also held about young male students from African countries living in the neighbourhood. Later that year, the highly publicized case of the rape and murder of Jyoti Singh Pandey would reignite discussion on women's harassment in the capital and in India more broadly both at the local and international level. The stall keeper's comments can perhaps also be considered in light of rising xenophobia and pervasive Hindu nationalist discourse that places Muslim masculinity as a "dangerously virile" (Anand 2007) threat to the nation (see also Chopra *et al* 2004, Murty 2009).

himself that it was right not to watch the video. Amirkhel, however, took offense and politely excused himself saying he needed to go and pray, leaving me and Shahrukh to watch the shop. Such interactions would eventually lead to a falling out between Amirkhel and Shahrukh, compounding Shahrukh's feeling of loneliness in Delhi.

I once discussed Shahrukh's loneliness with Jamal, an ethnic Uzbek refugee from Mazar-e Sharif who was training to become a pastor in the Afghan church, remarking how it seemed odd given Shahrukh was so friendly. Jamal chuckled and said "he's a good guy, but marches to the beat of his own drum" (*bachcha khob ast, ama bekhi diger raqam ast*). The implication was not just that Shahrukh was different, but that he did not fit in and was somewhat difficult to handle. From Shahrukh's descriptions of his life in Afghanistan, it appeared he had indeed never really fit in anywhere and tended to run afoul of people due to his propensity to speak his mind and live as he thought fit even if it meant holding an unpopular position. In Afghanistan, as related below, this eventually led to his having to leave his village. In Delhi, Shahrukh's eventual conversion to Christianity, discussed in chapter six, resulted in his having to leave the mostly Pashtun neighbourhood he was initially living in. Even at church, his long-winded, dramatic, and didactic interpretations of scripture would often be tolerated by Jamal and Sharif, though their displeasure would occasionally show as they cut him off curtly with an "Ok, ok, let's move forward" (*Sahi ast, berim pesh edama bedim*). In everyday settings such as at our mutual friend Aamirkhel's shop where Afghan customers would gather for chatting and buying a variety of clothing items, Shahrukh's lack of tact and his tendency to spread the good news of the Bible to anyone present, led to others excusing themselves upon hearing he was coming, avoiding him in public, or on occasion taunting him and asking him to leave.

I only ever heard from others of Shahrukh being reprimanded or taunted in public. He alleged it did not bother him as he had to deal with it on a regular basis after his conversion to Christianity. Though he would sometimes question why his life took this turn, he had faith he was doing the right thing and also felt such behaviour from others was emblematic of contemporary Afghan society, where "5% of the people are good and have a sense of humanity (*insaniyat*) in dealing with others; the other 95% have bad habits and a bad 'culture' (*farhang wa aadaate bad darand*)." He

argued that today Afghans are just interested in personal profit (*faidaye khod*) and are hypocrites (*taqallubi*), especially the Afghans in Delhi. As proof, he referenced a number of individuals he knew in Delhi who were outwardly observant Muslims, but would secretly womanize, drink, or have kept boys. While such views on Afghans were not uncommon among migrants I met in Delhi, Shahrukh's feelings appeared to arise in part from a resentment borne of his experience with other Pashtuns in India, discussed more in chapter six.

Though he was a registered refugee, he initially came to India looking for work. As described below, Shahrukh's initial sojourn in India was as part of a "circulation society" (Aslanian 2011; Markovits *et al* 2003) of Pashtun traders and moneylenders that spans across South Asia from Bangladesh to Baluchistan. It is for this reason that Shahrukh did not see being a refugee as a 'normal' (*aadi*) status for Afghans in India, but rather a status peculiar to those in Delhi. For him Afghan migration to India was akin to migrant labour to the Gulf, though he was aware Afghan migrants' status in India was not legal in the eyes of the state as it might be for those sponsored in the Gulf. He confided to me once that he chose not to go to Pakistan mainly because it would have been embarrassing when others from his village were going to Dubai or London, which he could not afford to do without connections. While his connection to the Pashtun network in India initially allowed him to move across the country in search of work, his conversion to Christianity was seen as a breach of proper conduct and resulted in his subsequent ostracism from that network.

Shahrukh's initial impetus to come to India was to seek work, but was also due to a threat to his life and livelihood in his home province of Paktia in eastern Afghanistan. Shahrukh described how in Paktia he came from a high status family. His father was an important elder of the village, and his family had a large house (*haveli*) and some land. In Paktia, Shahrukh worked as a carpenter and painter at a radio tower being built by USAID and NATO. He would hide the personal written threats he received from the Taliban from his family, but when a DVD of fifteen people being beheaded was delivered directly to his family's door with a note stating he would face the same end unless he ceased working at the station, his mother and brother, with whom his relations were already strained, ordered him to stop working or to go sleep with the "Americans" instead of causing the family more

trouble (*janjaal*). Soon after, he moved out, his friend called him and told him never to return as the Taliban had made an announcement that "any family with members cooperating with the foreigners (*kharijiha*) need not report them to the Taliban, but should [instead] just kick them out of their house and [the Taliban] will kill them." Already infamous in his village for being a statue maker[72] (*mujassama-saz*) and not being religiously observant, Shahrukh decided not to return home and to approach the district governor's office (*woleswal*) for assistance. Functionaries at the office explained that at least twenty people came every day with similar letters from the Taliban and that he should go to Kabul where "nobody says anything to anyone … there is freedom (*azadi*) … and you can find a room for yourself."

Arriving in Kabul, Shahrukh found himself in a socio-economically disadvantaged position. Without connections, and without knowing a word of Dari, he was perceived as a provincial Pashtun. He could not find work and found it increasingly difficult to make ends meet. An acquaintance suggested he go to India where there was work for statue-makers, and after a harsh winter in Kabul, he saved up 3000 Afghanis[73] for the passport application fee, and returned to his district to obtain the requisite signatures from the leader of his tribe (*malik*). He was able to move his application through the bureaucracy with the influence of a family friend who worked in the district capital and was a former Khalqi[74] and thus felt solidarity with Shahrukh who was maligned in his village for being irreligious.

"I remember I arrived in Delhi on a Sunday because everything was closed," Shahrukh told me, explaining how before coming to India he had no idea of the country or what to expect. "Besides a visa, I had no clue what I would need!" Arriving at the airport, he sat in an auto-rickshaw and asked the driver to take him to wherever there are Afghans[75]:

> "The driver told me it would be Rs 300… We drove for some time until he
> asked me if I had change … I gladly took out the Afghanis I had in my pocket

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[72] Many Muslims believe the making of statues goes against religious teachings on idolatry.

[73] The currency of Afghanistan.

[74] A faction of the former communist party in Afghanistan.

[75] This is a common story among many Afghans I met who had come to Delhi between 2006 and 2009. From my own observations at Delhi's Indira Gandhi airport in 2012, when there were at least three daily flights arriving from Afghanistan, the private taxi stands outside the international arrivals gate had unofficially employed Afghan refugees and asylum seekers as drivers. These mostly young men would wait outside the gates and solicit Afghan passengers exiting the terminal.

to show him and he yelled at me saying he needed Indian money. When he found out I didn't have any, he said he would take my watch... worth at least Rs 700-800. I asked him to take me back to the airport, but he just left me under this bridge... Luckily, half the Afghans who had come on my flight were still there [when I returned to the airport]."

He approached a man for help who asked if he had come to India to work or to become a refugee. When he explained he was looking for work, the man took him to a hotel in Ballimaran in Old Delhi. The Pashtuns he met in Ballimaran dissuaded him from registering with the FRRO, urging him instead to throw away his passport, never return to Afghanistan, and instead do "business" in India. "They played a trick on me," he said smiling, "because they all just hide their passports (*put mi konand*)." While Shahrukh didn't go to the FRRO, he did keep his passport, which would eventually come handy years later in applying for asylum with the UNHCR. The Ballimaran Pashtuns told him to go to Bombay where many Afghans had made a fortune through moneylending (*Oonja afghanha ziad astand ke bekhi paisadar shodand wa kare sood me konand*) and that there was a shrine (*ziyaret*) nearby where they would go and help poorer Afghans[76].

"They built a beautiful building [of images] for me," Shahrukh explains, "and I decided to take ... a train to Bombay." He had been given contact information for Agha Saheb who was the spiritual guide (*pir*) of a shrine known as *Makane Sharif*[77] in Akola and who distributed alms (*khairat*) collected from the Pashtun moneylenders. Agha Saheb instructed Shahrukh to come to *Makane Sharif* where people are considered guests for three days and are free to stay longer provided they render some kind of service to the shrine or its associated farms and properties. "I showed Agha Saheb the photo albums of my statues from Afghanistan and said I was looking for work," Shahrukh explains,

> "He said 'make things for me and we'll see how good you are before finding you other work.' I made many statues of camels, lions, tigers, birds... they

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[76] I did not visit *Makane Sharif*. However, on a personal trip to Bombay, I met with the Afghan Consul General who informed me of another Pashtun shrine in the city that is the centre of Bombay's 'local' Pashtun community. Shahrukh was familiar with the shrine and stated most people go there before going to Akola.

[77] The Afghanistan Consul General in Bombay explained to me that year-round there would be about 3,000 people at *Makane Sharif*, mostly Pashtuns, from Pakistan, Afghanistan, and India.

gave me a little salary of 1 to 3,000 rupees but also gave me food, clothes... I had a fun time."

Impressed by the stories and lifestyle of the moneylenders who would come through *Makane Sharif* regularly, Shahrukh decided to return to Bombay in hopes of making a better living. Despite assurances from many acquaintances, Shahrukh could not find work in Bombay, but was too embarrassed to return to Akola.

Serendipitously, a prominent Pashtun moneylender in Calcutta who had seen pictures of Shahrukh's statues at Akola, which had been sent to his mobile phone, contacted Shahrukh to come build a statue of Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan[78] for his house. Early during his time in eastern India, Shahrukh met an Afghan man in Assam who eked out his living by begging from house to house. One day, the man was in unusually good spirits and explained to Shahrukh that he was a refugee and that he had just been informed his case had been sent to the US Embassy, and that he was due to leave India in five months. "Many Pashtuns have come here and ruined their life, don't waste yours! Take your passport and go to the UNHCR!" the man urged Shahrukh. It took a year of travelling and working before Shahrukh became dissatisfied with his life in eastern India and remembered the man's words and went to Delhi to apply for refugee status.

After registering with the UNHCR, Shahrukh waited for nine months for an initial interview and another three months for a second interview. At his wits end, during the second interview he asked if the UNHCR could provide him with work while he waited to hear back. Realizing he could not get work unless he was a registered refugee, he informed the RSD officer that as he had no means to live in Delhi, he would be forced to return to Guwahati, Assam. They told him they would be in touch soon. However, to buy his ticket to Guwahati, Shahrukh had had to sell his phone. He waited two months before calling the UNHCR to check on his case and discovered he had actually been accepted the day he left for Assam.

When he returned to Delhi to pick up his 'Blue Card', the UNHCR representative he spoke with suggested that since he had little money, he live in Wazirabad in North

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[78] A freedom fighter against the British Raj from what is now Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in Pakistan, whose non-violent struggle against the British is discussed by Banerjee (2000).

Delhi where many Afghan Pashtun[79] refugees are settled and rent is cheap. Incidentally, Wazirabad was also where many of Shahrukh's acquaintances and contacts through the Pashtun moneylender network also lived, and he was able to find a room for Rs 1500 per month even though he only had Rs 900 on him at the time. He promised to pay any outstanding rent once he got a job. He initially worked at the UNHCR under their IGA (Income Generation Activities) program where he received Rs 3000 per month, but switched to a slightly better paying job with the YMCA that ended after five months when the UNHCR terminated its relationship with the organization[80]. "Since then my main problem is finances," Shahrukh explains. At least once a year he tries to meet with the UNHCR officer responsible for welfare issues "She says I just have to bear with the [financial] circumstances and find my way since the UNHCR cannot help." During the year I was in Delhi, Shahrukh managed to hold a job through his church, distributing Christian tracts and other proselytization materials across Delhi. This job was sufficient for covering his rent, and he would find odd jobs doing interpretation in the spring, autumn, and winter when many Afghans visit Delhi. In mid-2014, he was told the church could no longer fund his position. He managed to secure assistance with expenses for several months through connections abroad until he found new work doing interpretation[81].

Shahrukh's conversion to Christianity eventually led to the Pashtun community ejecting (*kharij kardan*) him from Wazirabad. The social ostracism meant Shahrukh did not feel safe living in Afghan areas of Delhi, which in turn affected his ability to find housing. While SLIC undertook sensitization training for police, Residence Welfare Associations, and landlords in areas with large refugee populations, Shahrukh was forced to look for housing in the poorer neighbourhoods away from refugee populations where landlords were suspicious of Afghans and where policemen who noticed him proselytizing in his neighbourhood market had harassed him and tried to get him to leave. Whereas Shahrukh had been able to travel across India through his involvement in the Pashtun moneylender network,

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[79] In 2012, while I was doing fieldwork, many Somali refugees had also settled in Wazirabad, presumable following the establishment of the Bosco centre there, which in turn had been established due to the large Afghan refugee population in the area.

[80] See chapter three for details on the UNHCR-YMCA relationship.

[81] From our conversations, I suspect this is not the whole story, but I have no way of knowing or asking.

he now felt stuck in Delhi. He was critical of the "Blue Card" provided by the UNHCR, as it

> "doesn't give you anything! You can't get a house, a SIM card, buy a train ticket, or even spend a night in a hotel with it. It just says on the back that they can't kick you out of India... you can sleep under a bridge for all they care... [you are] restricted to stay in Delhi. You can even travel around India right now, but as a refugee you have to reside in Delhi... the UNHCR has no authority outside of [Delhi] and can only help you here."

Of course, as discussed in chapter three, some refugees did obtain duplicate passports or find other means to travel between Afghanistan and India. Shahrukh could not do so, but was aware that others did. He believed this was dishonest, but laid the blame on the UNHCR's inability to "separate the goats from the sheep" (*oonha buz az gosfand joda na mekonand*), i.e. the rich from the poor or the deserving from the undeserving. Having worked as a volunteer on an AUSAID project identifying refugees most in need, Shahrukh conducted surveys of Afghan refugees across South and North Delhi and claimed to have seen the poorest of the poor. He pointed out, however, that

> "There are many people who came here to do business, to make hotels/restaurants and not to be sent to a third country. They came here for financial benefit. They were rich in Afghanistan and saw that here there is security, schooling for children... they have crores[82] of rupees. There are many families who are supporters of [political parties such as] Hizb-e Islami or Khalqis or Parchamis[83], but want to go to America. They all receive help from the UNHCR because the UNHCR cannot do a survey to see who is lying or telling the truth of their situation."

Shahrukh's view on the inability of the UNHCR to identify real refugees against alleged imposters recognizes, on the one hand, the inaccuracy of the state-scale dichotomization of the economic migrant and refugee dichotomy. He relates a reality

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[82] A crore is a unit of measurement equalling ten million.

[83] There are no organ offices of Afghan political parties in Delhi as in Pakistan or Iran. Shahrukh's point was that those with political connections in Afghanistan have access to financial assistance that allows them to maintain a comfortable lifestyle in India, but that the UNHCR has no way of apprehending this fact. In general it is rare to find Afghans openly discussing their political affiliations in Delhi.

of transnational migration, addressed more fully in chapter five, where different forms of migration are deployed in tandem, so that there is not a clear distinction between those who would be classified as either refugees or economic migrants. This is, of course, apparent in his own story of coming to India and eventually becoming a refugee. His comment, however, goes further as he illustrates there are those who are able to use different ideas of what it means to be Afghan in Delhi or India to their advantage through greater access to social or financial resources. This issue is also discussed in the next chapter with regard to belonging and scale.

Shahrukh's primary concern, however, was that he not waste his youth in India. He explained that:

> "They always talk about human rights, they should give us those rights! I don't ask for money from them, I just want my right [to be able to work]… I'm 28… in ten years I'll be almost 40…I will be a burden and unable to contribute to a new country. If they send me now I can work for myself and even if I just wash clothes or polish shoes it will be a service to other people in another country… [remaining] in this country, my life will be destroyed."

There was not any one country his heart was set on, though he said he'd prefer to go to Canada or the USA where he could practice his religion freely and perhaps find a wife. Israel was another possible option where he believed he would be able to assimilate due to Pashtun culture's similarity to historical Judaic culture[84], find a job, and start a family. Our meetings would often end with such reflections, and he would often say he was losing faith he would ever leave. He would, however, usually immediately correct himself and explain how before converting to Christianity he thought only the UNHCR could help him, but that now he only had faith in God who had put him here for a reason and would see him through. He said this gave him hope that ultimately the UNHCR would help him somehow. "At least I have a blue card," he would remind himself, "If I were sent back to Afghanistan they'd kill me. Even my family doesn't accept me."

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[84] Shahrukh had read on the internet about the theory that the Pashtun were descended from the lost tribe of Israel and would spend a lot of time watching documentaries on the subject on YouTube, and searching for information and theories on how Israel wished to repatriate Pashtuns.

4.2   Case 2: Musa Saheb, the Economic Migrant

Musa Saheb was one of the few people including Ali, introduced below, who invited me to meet at their house[85]. In fact, I almost only ever saw him at home as he avoided being seen with me in public[86] following an incident where I was accused of being a UNHCR spy at a meeting of the Refugee Solidarity Committee (RSC), discussed in chapter five. The RSC was a defunct group that Musa Saheb had revived during my time in Delhi and as the head of the group it would have been problematic for him to be seen with me. Though I did not see him as frequently as Shahrukh, we ended up building a close relationship because of his interest in poetry, music, and history, and we would meet and talk at his place for hours at a time. Our relationship became closer after he too left the RSC following allegations of sabotage.

I met Musa Saheb at my first RSC meeting, when he was still heading the committee. I had arrived near the end of the meeting and went to introduce myself. Musa Saheb was sitting and laughing in his usual jovial way, having doubtlessly cracked one of his jokes that were generally double-entendres. He is a short, study man, with a strong physique. Though in his late sixties, his robust frame and jovial demeanour give the impression he is much younger. What he lacks in height, Musa Saheb makes up in wit. An urbane gentleman, he is well read in the Persian classics and has a wide knowledge of both Urdu and Persian poetry. His intellectual background comes across in his speech. Unlike most of the refugees I met in Delhi, Musa Saheb almost always speaks in a very formal and genteel register, addressing others formally regardless of age or status, enunciating and pronouncing his words as if he were a newscaster. Despite the class status reflected in his speech, Musa Saheb has a way of interacting with people at their own level of discourse, setting them at ease and encouraging them to engage in conversation. An impeccable dresser, he always wears a clean, pressed, simply

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[85] The house can be a problematic space for Afghans in Delhi. Whereas in Afghanistan, houses are built with separate areas to entertain outside male guests, many of the refugees I met lived in rooms or apartments where it would have been difficult to observe the customary segregation. Additionally, for some, the state of their living conditions in Delhi compared to what they had in Afghanistan might have been a source of embarrassment.

[86] Though Musa Saheb had spearheaded the reestablishment of the RSC, his position in the group had been weakened by his status as a rejected refugee and the subsequent refusal of the UNHCR to work with the group while he was at its helm. Already having stepped down as head of the committee, his intentions and loyalty to the RSC would have been called into question if he were to be seen with me in public after members of the RSC had publically accused me of spying on the Afghan community. Though he never stated this fact explicitly, he obliquely apologized for the need to meet secretively almost every time we met.

embroidered *perahan-tunban* and, depending on the weather, a black *karakul* hat and waistcoat. His manicured, close-cropped white beard and short, silky-white hair adds coolness to the air around him that is reflected in his laughing, light brown eyes.

Musa Saheb and his family live in a flat on a small, quiet side street in a comfortable, middle-class area of Lajpat Nagar. The nondescript doorway leading to his building is almost hidden from view by a ground floor shop selling miscellaneous foodstuffs, household items, and fresh tea made on a little burner. Behind this doorway, a dark and narrow flight of stairs leads to a balcony lined with potted plants, and a screen door at the far end opens onto Musa Saheb's drawing room: only part of the flat I was privy to as a male guest. The entrance to the flat gives the impression that the accommodation is spacious. The drawing room is large and comfortable, and easily fits a party of fifteen people. Two thirds of the room is covered in a thin red carpet on top of which *toshaks*[87] are laid out neatly in a large rectangle, with bolsters provided for guests to recline on. The covers of the *toshaks* and bolsters always match the curtains in the room, changing from a cream and red, scalloped cotton material in warmer weather to a heavier, softer green and maroon material in the colder months.

Musa Saheb lived with his wife, his youngest son and daughter of twelve and eight respectively, and his eldest son who worked at the Afghanistan embassy. As an outside male guest, I never met his wife or daughter at the flat. I did, however, once bump into Musa Saheb, his wife, and a female neighbour in Lajpat Nagar's Central Market as they stood at a street stall eating *golgappe*[88] and laughing while watching each other manoeuvre the precarious snacks without spilling the contents on their clothes. I politely greeted Musa Saheb who appeared to be taken aback for an instant, before. He quickly introduced his wife and the female neighbour who smiled, briefly greeted me with a '*salam*', and then stepped aside to continue talking to each other. Though I never met his daughter, Musa Saheb would recount his fondness of her, often in the context of his love of children and their innocent outlook on life, and

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[87] Large cushions that serve as seats.
[88] *Golgappe* are a street food consisting of thin and crispy bite-sized, hollow flour pastries filled with a mixture of spicy water, chickpea filling, and tamarind chutney. They are served one at a time and in quick succession, requiring customers to exercise dexterity in eating them.

described how he would take her on outings with the whole family so that they would know about the city they lived in.

When I would visit the flat, a *dastarkhwan*[89] would be laid out ahead of my arrival with freshly brewed green tea and sweets. Sometimes during our conversations, which usually took place in the middle of the day, Musa Saheb's wife would alert him with a cough or some other indication imperceptible to me, that the food was ready. He would excuse himself and walk to the curtain at the end of the room to receive a tray laden with plates, cutlery, and food. On weekends, when his children were home, his younger son would bring out the tray and sometimes join us in the meal. Musa Saheb was always a gracious host and would recount stories of large dinners he would host of 10-20 friends, I assumed all men, who would gather and discuss politics in Afghanistan and India late into the night. Musa Saheb explained that he liked to keep the company of people of varying age groups and social backgrounds, unlike the majority of his friends of the same age who he described as not knowing "how to talk to young people (*jawanan*)." He suggested that in comparison to other Afghan men of a similar class and generation, he saw social and religious issues from an accommodating perspective (*nigaahe wasee*) and was thus able to connect well with people from different generations who would confide in him easily. "For this reason," he explained, "I understand the problems of Delhi's Afghans very well."

While Musa Saheb and I discussed a variety of issues including Afghans in Delhi, he was loath to talk about his personal history as a refugee and his experience with the UNHCR. He would generally avoid direct questions about his personal history, giving a basic outline and then changing the flow of the discussion. There were only two occasions on which he discussed his flight to Pakistan and the subsequent move to India, where he was rejected by the UNHCR and considered an economic migrant. Over the course of the year, however, between our discussions on the RSC, the Afghan community in Delhi, the connectedness of India to Afghanistan, and his political and philosophical views on man and society, his general opinion on the UNHCR came filtered through clearly; it was not favourable. In the following I will summarize Musa Saheb's story and his view of the UNHCR, as pieced together from multiple conversations.

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[89] A patterned tablecloth spread on the ground on which food or refreshment is served.

Musa Saheb comes from a religiously and ethnically mixed family, which is not unusual for a man of his background. His paternal ancestry was Hazara and Tajik and his mother, the fourth wife of his father, was a Pashtun. A Shia himself, he is currently married to his second wife, a Sunni Pashtun woman, and attends Friday prayers at a Sunni mosque for theological and social reasons. He does not agree with the theological orientation of the Afghan Shia community in Delhi, and the Sunni mosque in Defence Colony is where the majority of Afghans in is neighbourhood, Lajpat Nagar, attend Friday prayers. He does, however, participate in religious events that the Afghan Shia community hold at a Shia mosque in central Delhi.

While he never spoke in detail about his father, it was clear from Musa Saheb's stories that the man was an intellectual and politically active in Afghanistan, for which he was imprisoned several times under Zahir Shah. Musa Saheb cited growing up in a rural area between Kabul and Bamiyan, where his family would be holed up in the house during heavy winter snowfalls, as the reason he became well acquainted with the great works of Persian-language literature as a young boy and developed an interest in the study of history, religion, and linguistics. Later, as a young man, he attended Kabul University where he studied agriculture but attended lectures in the literature department on his own time, which allowed him to later take up employment as a journalist in Afghanistan, and become part of Kabul's intelligentsia (*roshan fikr*).

As a member of the intelligentsia, Musa Saheb's views led to his imprisonment under the PDPA regime in Afghanistan. "I would not have ever left Afghanistan even during the Communists' [time]," he once said, "but they said I was a supporter of the West (*goftand ke man gharbi astum*). I wasn't a communist and still say I'm not." He left after being imprisoned a second time, as he feared for his safety and that of his family. I once asked him why he did not migrate to Iran, where many Hazara and Shia fled from Afghanistan. He explained his decision to go to Pakistan initially in religious terms:

   " I didn't go to Iran even though I speak Farsi and am Shia. Why? I didn't go

   because I don't like the form of Islamic government of Khomeini... of the

Guardianship of the Jurist (*velayate faqih*)… [even if] maybe Khomeini was a good jurist."

Another complication was that Musa Saheb had changed his *mujtahed*, the religious teacher he and his family follow, which was not looked favourably upon by some in his extended family. Musa Saheb added that, as a Hazara, he was disillusioned with Iran. He explained how, in his view, the Iranian State never came to the assistance of Hazaras in Afghanistan at any point when they were being attacked "from all four sides", especially when the "ISI [via the *mujahedeen*] came in the name of 'freedom' (*nejaat*) and religion (*mazhab*) and massacred the Shias. Iran did nothing," he said lowering his voice and furrowing his brow, "Conversely, Iranians were rejecting Hazaras [from Iran]. For this I am very resentful (*gilamand*) of Iran and don't accept the Islamic-ness of their so-called Islamic Revolution."

Thus, instead of Iran, Musa Saheb decided to take his family to Pakistan, where he felt Afghans would be able to create a 'national sentiment' (*ehsase milli*) to reclaim their country. He soon became disillusioned with the situation in Peshawar, where he did not intend to stay long, but eventually remained until a series of events forced him to flee in 2008[90]. As Musa Saheb explains, in Peshawar he had been working for a political organization whose offices were broken into and the hard drive of his computer had been stolen. It was later found that a Taliban group orchestrated the theft, but by the time the perpetrators were arrested, the Taliban had already disseminated information against Musa Saheb in Peshawar and Afghanistan, saying that he had been agitating against them (*goftand ke man zidde Taliban tablighi mi kardaahm*). The organization, on the other hand, accused him of having worked with the Taliban and having given them information on the location of the offices.

Following these allegations, Musa Saheb felt his only option was to seek asylum outside of Pakistan. "I gave [the UNHCR] the strongest letter anyone could give," he explained. He described to me how not only was there the incident with the Taliban, but that the door to his house had been shot at, and that his house was always under surveillance. "There were always young men standing outside, two or three,

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[90] Several refugees who had previously been refugees in Pakistan before coming to Delhi related to me that between 2006 and 2008 the Pakistani state made conditions increasingly difficult for Afghan refugees, and claimed they were targeted by police or other state-backed actors. There is of course no way to verify this information, but it was usually related to me as an issue that could not be revealed to the UNHCR otherwise it might weaken one's case.

staring… taxis would park in front of the door so we could neither enter nor exit… it's Peshawar… you know what these things mean." The final straw came when his son, who was working with the Afghanistan Consul, was attacked. Musa Saheb's son escaped, but a bodyguard died. "[The UNHCR] had pictures, letters (*sened*), articles (*maqalaha*), but they still rejected [my case]" Musa Saheb sighed.

After the attack on his son, Musa Saheb decided he could not stay in Peshawar and that it might perhaps be safer to relocate to Kabul. Upon arrival, however, he found out the Taliban had branded him as an apostate (*murtad*). "It's a funny story, you'll laugh but it's true," he begins with a chuckle,

> "during the time of the Taliban, a poet from Mazar had written a verse attacking Mullah Omar that had become well known. Nobody knew the poet but it was obviously a big problem where the Taliban was concerned. The poet was a friend of mine and I had his files on my computer. When they stole my hard drive, they discovered it and thought it was mine and spread the word that I had left the religion and was an apostate. You know what that means for somebody in Afghanistan."

It soon became clear he could not stay in Kabul. His extended family would not meet with him out of fear of being targeted. Particularly painful for him was that he could not see his daughter who was married to his brother's son. "From when we left Kabul till today, not a single word has been exchanged between mother and daughter even telephonically." Musa Saheb describes that as he couldn't go back to Pakistan, and Iran was not an option, the only other alternative was India. Through connections, Musa Saheb's son arranged for the ticket and visa to India, and booked a hotel over the internet in Paharganj, the cheap, backpacker area of the city, as well as a taxi that would transport the family from the airport. He recounted that

> "When I escaped Afghanistan, I wasn't thinking about India. I was just thinking of getting out of Afghanistan… You might not believe it, but after arriving in Delhi I couldn't wake up. I slept for 48 hours."

Like Shahrukh, Musa Saheb explained that he had no idea of what awaited him in India or any awareness of Afghans in India, stating that: "to be honest, when I arrived, I didn't want to know any Afghans. I didn't want people to know I was here." After a week, he realized he could not stretch his limited funds if he stayed in a hotel

and rented a small 40-70 square feet house, where the family of five remained for two years until the proprietor asked them to leave. Then they moved to the flat they currently live in, in an Afghan part of the city.

He applied with the UNHCR for asylum shortly after arriving in 2008 and ultimately received his final rejection two years later, making him an illegal 'economic migrant' in the eyes of the state, as explained in the previous chapter. "I had no expectation of the UNHCR... I knew I'd be rejected," he told me, "they didn't accept me in Peshawar with such a strong case, why would they accept me here? And the Chief of Mission [in India] was the same woman [who had been] there [in Peshawar]." Musa Saheb did not have much faith in the process in general as he told me many times "they accept only the false cases and reject the real ones." One of the reasons he suggested was because of incompetence. Using his own story as an example, he explained how he was called in for interviews twice

> "once from two in the afternoon till eight at night then again from nine in the morning till eight at night, and they still could not understand my case. Other people write their case in half a page. I wrote ten pages that were translated into thirteen pages in English. I knew nobody would read it... people give them [the UNHCR] money [to look at their case]... that's it."

Though Musa Saheb does not speak English, he has good written and aural comprehension of the language. He would borrow books from me to learn more about anthropological theory and I'd often find him at home watching English language satellite television. He explained how the young lady serving as his interpreter was not as competent in English and could not express what he was saying and he consistently had to correct her. At one point he was describing his job for the department of food distribution (*arzaq*) in the ministry of agriculture and the interpreter insisted it was the "fruit department." The Indian UNHCR RSD officer, according to Musa Saheb, was thus confused and could not understand his explanations.

Not that different from Chimni (1998), Musa Saheb also saw the UNHCR as part of a global hegemony, and believed a second reason his case was rejected had to do with what he saw as a conspiracy to ensure Afghanistan does not become a stable nation-

state: a cause he had been striving for even before becoming a refugee. He described his realization of the conspiracy as follows:

"As I did not agree with the government in Kabul, I stayed back in Pakistan very long... [Initially] I thought Pakistan fears Russia and... when Afghanistan is free, Pakistan will be safe and that's it. At some point... I understood Pakistan was saying to the west that 'I'm at the front of the war with Russia, you leave it to me and follow my lead'... Pakistan led the west to believe they should lead the offensive against Russia... the west accepted...[even though] they knew Pakistan was playing dirty (*kharabi me konad*)... till today America gives a certain amount of money to Pakistan – which I'm not against as I know this money is meant for development.

If you look at the map... Pakistan is like a little foot bone between Afghanistan and India. If one day [the two countries] decide to, they can quickly finish Pakistan off...[For this reason] Pakistanis do not wish for Afghanistan to succeed. Afghanistan's life is Pakistan's death... to divide Afghanistan and take the Pashtun side will be an economic boon... giving [Pakistan] a mountainous vantage point... and cheap 'meat and blood' that can be manipulated by stupid mullahs...

Pakistan wants Afghanistan to be weak and because it leads the policy on Afghanistan... it gets what it wants. The UK's benefit is that it uses Pakistan as a proxy so [it needs] a strong Pakistan... I think the UNHCR's role therefore, to whatever extent, is to keep an eye on Afghans and Afghanistan."

Musa Saheb thus saw his case being rejected on political grounds, and while he accepted that some 'real' cases were indeed accepted, he was convinced "the majority of cases accepted are false." Like Shahrukh, he felt that "those people who make a plan and sell their house, car, land, etc. and have several thousands of dollars, it's easy for them to buy a case, [and] to write a beautifully embellished story" to be accepted as a refugee and live comfortably in Delhi.

Unlike Shahrukh, Musa Saheb was, however, not on the social margins. He was held in high esteem and well known among the Afghans living in Lajpat Nagar and Bhogal (two Afghan neighbourhoods of south Delhi), and there was never a time when I was

with him that his phone did not stop ringing with people asking him for advice, for assistance, or for connections. He admitted that he did not have a bad life in Delhi. He explained that initially he had worked intermittently providing private tuition in Persian language to refugee children, and while I was in Delhi he had some jobs editing books that poets and writers would send to him from Afghanistan electronically. Through a connection, he was also invited to speak at the Afghanistan Embassy on occasions such as Martyrs' Day. The family's main source of income, however, was from a son who worked at the Afghanistan Embassy within the consular section. Musa Saheb explained how

> "One day, I found out that my friend was the Consul in Delhi. I spoke with him and he explained they needed somebody and I suggested my son. He took an exam and as he speaks good English, Hindi, and Farsi he was accepted and he has been the best employee they have had."

When I asked how he was able to work in India, given their legal status? Musa Saheb chuckled and said: "the [Indian] government doesn't give [migrants] the right to work, but in its drowsiness (*taghaful*) it turns a blind eye (*nazar andazi me konad*)."

Again, Musa Saheb's case illustrates the incommensurability of the state scale division of the economic migrant and refugee identities. While Musa Saheb's story contains the elements required to be considered a refugee, as discussed in the previous chapter, the complicated movements in and out of Afghanistan meant that he did not fit the state-scale conception of Afghan refugees' unidirectional trajectory of movement from Afghanistan to India, and was thus classified as an economic migrant. As he could not return to Afghanistan, he relied on his networks to maintain the financial wellbeing of his family: an action that would also lead to consider him as an economic migrant. Musa Saheb's experience in Delhi points to another issue, discussed more in the conclusion of this chapter, regarding how migrants view the state and the legal recognition it affords as one among a plurality of authorities to engage with in moving across national borders.

4.3   Case 3: Ali, the Student

I came across Ali by chance. He was listed as a contact on the International Students webpage of his university, where I briefly considered getting visiting student status. His full name suggested he was Shia, and a reference to a province in Afghanistan in

his email suggested his nationality. When I first met him, he was finishing his undergraduate degree at a prominent university in Delhi and about to turn 25. Though he had not initially planned on it, and as I discuss further below, he decided to stay on for a Master's program and consulted me on potential PhD research topics he might be able to pursue either in India or abroad. For him, higher education was a way to remain outside Afghanistan.

Though Ali was born in Afghanistan, he grew up in Iran. His family moved there following the Taliban's rise to power in Afghanistan, when Ali was just five years old. Ali did not have fond memories of Iran, where he was marginalized as a Hazara. Both his parents are Hazaras. His mother is from a Pashtun dominated area of Ghazni, in eastern Afghanistan, and his father is from central Afghanistan, from a family that traces its roots to the family of the Prophet Muhammad. Though ethnicity was never discussed in his home, he did notice that others who looked like him "were marginalized in Iran not just by Iranians, but also by Pashtuns and Tajik who 'looked' like the Iranians."

Ali reports not having felt the brunt of racism against Hazaras in Iran until finishing school, when he found he could not attend university without a letter from the Afghanistan Embassy in Tehran. Ali did not have a *tezkira* (Afghan identity document) or a passport and was rebuffed by the functionaries at the embassy. "I didn't realize that there were different parties and that they were related to your ethnicity," he explained. The people at the embassy refused to help him as he had no connections (*waseta*) and was a Hazara. They told him to go to the offices of the Hazara political parties, where he was rebuffed for being a Syed[91] and not a real Hazara. "I saw my identity from the eyes of others… not my own eyes," he said. After a year of unsuccessfully trying to get ID documents, he decided to move back to his family's town in northern Afghanistan just ahead of the US-led invasion, after which his family followed him in moving to Afghanistan.

In Iran, Ali had learned his father's trade of calligraphy at home, which allowed him to take up employment in Afghanistan as a sign painter. When his family moved back

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[91] 'Syed' is a category indicating descent from the family of the Prophet, and is sometimes used by some Hazaras to differentiate themselves from other Hazaras by claiming a higher status through having an 'Arab' lineage.

to Afghanistan and his father recovered their lost land, Ali was obliged to move into his father's home, though a disagreement with his father over religious observance of the daily prayers and fasting forced him to leave home. He established his own atelier in a one-room shop where he also lived. A representative of the Ministry of Communication and Culture in his region provided him regular work and Ali eventually curated an exhibition for visiting dignitaries to the region. An official from Kabul, impressed with Ali's talent and knowledge of Persian and Afghan history, invited him to come work for the ministry's regional office. Through his growing professional network, Ali was eventually contacted by the US Embassy in Kabul to run a series of programs, which turned into a full-time job with the regional cultural affairs office of the US Embassy. His work with the US Embassy and the ministry allowed Ali to become steeped in the historical and archaeological history of Afghanistan, complementing the reading in Central Asian and Persian history and literature that he had undertaken in Iran, and also allowed him to hone his written and oral English proficiency.

Unlike the majority of Afghan students studying in India, Ali did not come to the country as a participant in the programs offered by the Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR)[92]. Ali initially visited India in 2005 as a tourist in Goa. "The first thing I understood [when I came to India] was that the Bollywood films are not right!" Ali joked. He found that people were more humble and less gregarious than he had imagined from television, and much more "modern", though he admitted there is "a big population and so [much] poverty." He was impressed with the infrastructure, which he claimed was superior to that in Iran, and with the "modern" attitudes of the people he met. While Ali had gone straight to Goa, he was particularly struck by how, driving through Delhi, he could see "there are sufi [shrines] and mosques everywhere." He thus decided to make a second trip to specifically visit Delhi's historical monuments. During this second trip, Ali met an Afghan student who urged him to meet with professors at his university, and Ali decided to put in an application for enrolment before going back to Afghanistan. He described how, in Afghanistan, the officer interviewing him for his student visa joked that he seemed to know more about Indian history than any Indian.

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[92] Ali made a point to mention this fact, so as to separate himself from other Afghan students. The unspoken implication was that they perhaps had come because of financial incentives of government programs, but he had come of his own volition and was free to do as he liked.

Unlike Shahrukh and Musa Saheb, Ali had more freedom of movement in India. Officially, he could only travel to specific places listed on his student visa and would be required to register with relevant authorities. However, with a proof of residence and student ID, he was able to easily buy tickets to travel in India, visiting many Zoroastrian, Buddhist, and Hindu sites around the country. Oddly, Ali had not been allowed into the Jama Masjid in Old Delhi the first time he visited, and did not visit for four years until I was on fieldwork. He had gone to the mosque outside of tourist visiting hours and the attendant at the gate had denied him entry because of his perceived non-Muslim appearance[93]. The incident left a bad impression on Ali, who interpreted the event as an example of the increasing narrow-mindedness of Indian Muslims, which he also saw mirrored on trips home to Afghanistan where he felt his work "is becoming more difficult... [as people] are not interested anymore for our history and culture."

Ali's experiences with religion in Iran and Afghanistan had not been pleasant and for this reason he had been wary of connecting with other Afghans when he first arrived in Delhi, assuming that they might hold more rigid religious views than his. He became deeply involved with the international student group at his university and cultivated an eclectic group of friends from around the globe. He maintained an active social life on campus and regularly travelled around the country with his friends. He did still make an effort to connect with other Afghan students in Delhi through organising an Afghan stall at the yearly International Food Festival held at his university. About twenty to thirty young Afghan men and women studying at universities across Delhi would help him in cooking large pots of *kabuli pulau* and roasting kababs, which they would serve fresh alongside bread ordered from an Afghan bakery in Lajpat Nagar. Ali explained how the students would come together for the food festival, but had no interest in socialising otherwise.

Despite his initial unease, Ali explained that he eventually became friends with three Afghan students at his own university. To his surprise, they accepted him despite

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[93] Ahmed (2006) presents a detailed account of how the monumentalization of the Jama Masjid by Muslim politicians and political parties within a context of rising Hindu Nationalism has led to its transformation into a representation of the collective political existence of India's Muslim community to the exclusion of other groups. Ali explained how his Hazara features and style of dress led to the attendant to believe he was a Christian from northeast India.

holding different views on religious practice, and it was instead other Indian Muslim acquaintances who chastised[94] him for not praying or not fasting during Ramadan: both of which he did, but not regularly. His relationship with the three Afghan students seemed to go well until he started dating a Hindu girl. While they told Ali their objections were to her personality, he believed it was because of her religious background. Once the relationship ended, she would become good friends with the other Afghan students and would go on to learn Persian and develop an academic interest in in the history and archaeology of Afghanistan. Shortly after the relationship ended, Ali began seeing another girl, a Muslim, whom he had met through one of his classes. His Afghan friends did not approve of this new relationship either, as the young woman was from a family that adhered to *deobandi* practice and thus quite conservative in her religious views.

While the two appeared to like each other very much, Ali's heterodox views and religious practices[95] put a strain on the relationship. Ali's new girlfriend suggested they get married several months into the relationship, and he was cautiously receptive to the idea. However, when the young woman's father insisted that he make an official statement regarding his adherence to Sunni Muslim practice, Ali decided to end the relationship. To get over the heartbreak, Ali explained, he threw himself into his studies.

When I first arrived in Delhi, Ali was still convinced that he wanted to eventually return to Afghanistan to work on restoration and preservation of monuments after obtaining a Masters or PhD. However, after spending a summer at home before starting his master's degree, he was not so convinced of this plan anymore. Aside from his frustration over opportunities to continue his work in Afghanistan, Ali was also disappointed by the Afghans in Delhi at the university, at the embassy, and even the refugees, whom he saw as being interested only in personal financial or social advancement. He was disappointed with the rise in what he termed 'salafism' among Indian Muslims, as much as he felt they were also victims of discrimination by the

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[94] The disappointment with Afghan students' lack of religious observance was a sentiment expressed to me by Muslim students at two other universities who were frustrated by the lack of interest young Afghan male students showed in participating in religious practices like communal prayer or fasting.
[95] Ali's interest in Afghanistan's history and archaeology led him undertake extensive research on Buddhism and Hinduism and develop a deep appreciation for both faiths. He had also managed to convince the Delhi Zoroastrian community to allow him into their services and even worshiped with them. He still maintained that he was Muslim even if he worshiped with people of other faiths.

state. Most of all, however, he was disappointed in what he saw as the Indian government's efforts to erase Delhi's Muslim history: his link to Afghanistan (discussed in the next chapter). He asked me how feasible it was to get into PhD programs in the UK or the US and started to apply to places in Europe and Australia.

Without garnering enough funding to study elsewhere, Ali continues to study in Delhi where he has become entrenched in academic circles. During my fieldwork he organized a conference on the history of the Afghan province of Bamiyan and its connection to India, bringing together academics from Afghanistan and India, which led to the publication of a special issue in an Indian academic journal. Ali also continues to create and maintain contacts with international scholars on the ancient history of the region, trying to find ways to further fund his endeavours in India and possibly find avenues for research elsewhere. Ali still makes trips to Afghanistan where he holds seminars for young people and university students on Afghan history, though he seems to be emotionally settling in India. Regularly posting links on his Facebook page that tie together the history and cultures of India, Afghanistan, Iran and Central Asia, on August 15th, 2014 Ali updated his Facebook status as follows:

"To my all dear Indian friends,

Happy Independence Day!

India is where I love the most..."

4.4   Conclusion

Building methodologically on anthropological work on ethics and morality, this chapter has attended to Shahrukh, Musa Saheb, and Ali's accounting of what it means for them to be Afghan in Delhi, and has focused on the trajectories of movement that have placed each man in the city. Against the state scale understanding of being Afghan in Delhi presented in the previous chapter, where Afghan migrants are understood as bodies out of place at the end point of a journey to India, the three cases presented above present a diversity of experience of Afghan migration to Delhi. Like the *Makhzan-e Afghan*, the three men's stories indicate how they simultaneously consider different ways of being Afghan in Delhi in their own experiences. None of them are oblivious of the state scale conception of their place in the city, but consider it as one among several ways of being Afghan in Delhi. The variation in the histories, trajectories, and networks that underpin and constitute these migrants' movement from Afghanistan to India also point to

different ways migrants are connected to Delhi, and encourage a consideration of migrant movement beyond economic or political push and pull factors.

In all three cases, the journey from Afghanistan is not a one-time, unidirectional movement. Rather, echoing research on Afghan migration it Iran and Pakistan (Monsutti 2004a:185-216; Monsutti *et al* 2006), the migrants' journeys to India appear among a series of multidirectional and recurrent movements throughout the region. Ali and Musa Saheb circulate between Afghanistan and neighbouring states, with each man taking on different forms of migration. While both of Musa Saheb's journeys out of Afghanistan were taken under situations of political duress, Ali was first a refugee in Iran, and then subsequently circulated between Afghanistan and India as a 'legal' migrant on tourist and student visas to pursue opportunities he would not have had in Afghanistan. Unlike the other two, Shahrukh followed employment opportunities in India and travelled extensively across the country, finally pursuing asylum as part of a longer-term course to seeking a better life. Shahrukh's case exemplifies how migration has been and continues to be a way of life for many in Afghanistan (Nichols 2008; Stigter and Monsutti 2005).

In this sense, a moral quality runs through each of the three men's stories of migration, alongside the economic or political considerations taken into account when undertaking their journeys to India. All three individuals leave Afghanistan with an aim to pursue a life of value: Ali to create possibilities for continuing his research and preservation work in both India and Afghanistan (discussed in more detail in the next chapter), Shahrukh to seek a life where his skills could "contribute to… [and] provide service to other people in another country", and Musa Saheb to pursue the creation of a "national sentiment" among Afghans for the ultimate betterment his country. Their stories relate how their migration to India is enveloped in these aspirations to be somebody as much as in the economic and political realities prompting them to leave Afghanistan, belying any single economic or political logic to the decision to come to India.

Unlike Jamshed and his wife, discussed in the previous chapter, who planned to travel to India and apply for asylum in a third country, the decision to migrate to India in each man's case above also involves a large element of chance. Musa Saheb and Shahrukh both came to India unprepared. For the former it was a destination of last resort, whereas for the latter a chance encounter with someone who had made a similar

journey prompted the move. Ali's decision to pursue higher education in India was similarly the product of a coincidental meeting. As much as the decision to turn to India might not have been planned, the desire or ability to remain in India is also not entirely under the three men's control, leaving the possibility for future migration open. In this way, all three men put forward an understanding of their selves as persons still in movement toward potential, indeterminate destinations, and develop different considerations of what it means to be Afghan in Delhi in this process.

The varying conditions of the three men's being in India reflect, on the one hand, the haziness of the boundary between forced and voluntary migration. The experiences of Musa Saheb and Shahrukh in particular illustrate the problematic nature of the economic migrant and refugee dichotomy. It is impossible to know the grounds of Musa Saheb's rejection of asylum, though his story was likely too complicated to fit the RSD framework. Musa Saheb admitted that while it would have been easier to tailor a story acceptable to the UNHCR, he could "only write what happened to [him]." Shahrukh never discussed his UNHCR interview with me, but intimated his flight from the Taliban was proof of his inability to return to Afghanistan; it is clear that disclosure of his initial move to India in search of work would have resulted in the rejection of his case. Musa Saheb and Shahrukh's situations reflect a recognition within refugee and migration studies that factors motivating migration are shared by both those categorized as forced and voluntary migrants (Kronenfeld 2008; Monsutti *et al* 2006), and that migrants exhibit varying degrees of agency in recognising and responding to these multiple factors across time (Connor 1987; Richmond 1993).

On the other hand, the multiple trajectories of movement on which each man sees himself, reflect a reality of transnational migration where refugee movements cannot be separated from phenomenon driving other forms of migration (Castles 2003). For example, under differing circumstances, both Shahrukh and Ali leave Afghanistan for wont of professional opportunities grounded in the political climate of the country. Shahrukh's widespread travels across India through the Pashtun network and Musa Saheb's decision to remain in India despite being rejected also depict how transnational migrants are not always immediately concerned with their legal status with regard to the state, experiencing the state rather as permeable and among a plurality of authorities they engage with (Sur 2012; Verkaaik *et al* 2012). As Wong and Suan (2012) discuss

with regard to Rohingya migrants, in creating zones of legality, such as through the construction of the category of the legal refugee, the state also creates zones of illicitness like the catchall category of the economic migrant, to which it is effectively blind in legal terms, as Shahrukh pointed out in his criticism of the UNHR. This blindness, however, does not mean that the state is absent in these areas, but that in acting against or outside the state requires a complicity of the state in turning a blind eye, or being "drowsy" as Musa Saheb described[96]. It is in this way that, as discussed in the conclusion of chapter three, that the UNHCR Chief of Mission could exhort refugees to display entrepreneurial spirit in securing their own livelihood, while at the same time refusing to speak with illegal economic migrants.

While the three men are aware of the state scale understanding of what it means to be Afghan in Delhi, they also draw on different networks to remain in the country. Shahrukh's access to the moneylender network afforded him the social capital to move freely across India outside the state structure, though his conversion to Christianity and subsequent compromising of Pashtun identity, discussed in chapter six, resulted in his being cut off from the network: an issue he continues to grapple with in trying to survive in Delhi[97]. Musa Saheb and Ali both access networks based on social background[98]. Musa Saheb's connection to the Kabul intelligentsia afforded him contacts in Pakistan and India that granted both him and his son the ability to work beyond state regulations. Ali, in turn, has created a network of academic contacts in India, Afghanistan, and beyond through which he is able to continue his work in India. In both engaging with state categories and moving across these different networks, the three men are simultaneously connected to India in different ways and in their narratives they suggest multiple orientations toward Delhi and Afghanistan. It is to this subject that I turn in the next chapter, to examine how Afghan migrants understand their belonging in Delhi.

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[96] Conversely, as Kalir 2012 describes with regard to migrant workers in Israel, states can also act illegally in ways they consider licit within these areas of legal blindness.

[97] As Aslanian discusses regarding the Julfan Armenian merchants network, the rationale of maintaining a closed network based on identity is not just rooted in identitarian politics, but also in rational economic considerations of the cost of conducting business, to minimise chances of opportunistic behaviour. Abandoning one's communal identity is to break with the social solidarity of the network and thus become a risk to the network's business (2011:166-201).

[98] Whereas Hazaras in Pakistan and Iran would appear to rely on ethnic-based networks (Monsutti 2005a, 2009), Musa Saheb and Ali do not. They can both be considered minorities within minorities politically and religiously as explained in their case stories.

5. Feeling in One's Place: Afghan Belonging in Delhi

Ali lived in one of his university's several dormitories and spent most of his time on-campus, which meant we usually met at his home. Among the doors lining his corridor, plastered predominantly with leftist political bills or movie-themed posters, Ali's was a work of art. A piece of plastic cut into the shape of the map of Afghanistan covered most of the door. "You like it? I decorated it myself," he told me. It was covered with some trinkets and the *basmala*[99], and Ali had masterfully written his name and the words '*khush amdeed*" (welcome) with glitter in flowing nastaliq Persian script in the centre (Figure 4). He had also paid equal attention to decorating the inside of his room. The walls were covered with numerous pictures from Afghanistan. Pictures of the Bamiyan Buddhas hung over a Tibetan Buddha statuette on his table. A *salabhanjika*[100] figurine similarly mirrored the beloveds in the miniature Persian paintings on the wall across the room. An entire wall was dominated by three maps: a Persian language map centred on the Arabian Peninsula that included Iran, Turkey, India, and Afghanistan; an English language political map of India; and a hand-drawn map Ali had charted himself. Drawn on several pieces of plain paper held together by translucent tape, the map covered the area of Iran, Afghanistan, and India. Ali had drawn in the main lakes, rivers, and tributaries in blue ink, and marked major cities of the region with red dots (Figure 5). Noticeably absent from the map were political boundaries. I commented on the skill and detail of the map and he explained how he had drawn the map as "this is the region I study and," he added seamlessly, "there shouldn't be borders anyway."

Like the map, the other objects in Ali's room represented some form of emotional attachment to a place, a period in his life, a person, etc. Taken together, the objects reflected a sense of how he belonged in India similar to that within which the *Makhzan-e Afghan* (discussed in chapter four) was produced, i.e. as part of a wider

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[99] The term for an Islamic phrase invoking God that Muslims frequently recite before commencing any task.
[100] A 12th century depiction of a woman with exaggerated breasts and hips holding a tree or a branch found in temples in South India. Ali had collected such items during his travels in India.

historical and cultural milieu that connected Afghanistan to India and elsewhere. Ali conceded, however, that this was a sentiment he appreciated as "somebody who studies history," that is as somebody who has learned to perceive the links between these different places across time. He described how a Hazara from Kandahar, whom he had met at the university, had recently visited with some other Delhi-based Afghan students, and that they had disapproved of some of his décor choices, namely the statuettes and miniature prints, indicating that they were not religiously or culturally appropriate. "They are good people," Ali explained and evoked the recent tumultuous history of Afghanistan to explain how "they can't see all these things, you know?"

That Ali should use the metaphor of sight to differentiate his position from that of the other Afghan students is fitting. The previous chapter illustrated how, in contrast to understandings at the state scale, Afghan migrants in Delhi are more suitably considered as individuals in motion and that the networks through which they move to and through India are varying and disparate. To move is, of course, not merely to travel or be displaced spatially, but also entails a qualitative experience of movement that is at once formed through perception and sensation of one's surroundings, but which in turn also shapes how one perceives and feels these surroundings (Ingold 2000; Massumi 2002; Svašek 2012). In this way, human mobility is also a transformative experience for individuals (Ahmed *et al* 2003; Milton 2002) as they move through the world creating diverse and complex relationships with other persons, things, and places (Marsden 2009a; Vertovec 2006; Wise and Chapman 2005). It is thus understandable that Afghan migrants' differing experiences of travelling to India would be reflected in varying perceptions of India as a place and differing dispositions to how they belong in India. Building on anthropological work on ontology, as discussed in chapter two, this chapter addresses these different understandings of belonging or not belonging in Delhi that Afghan migrants hold through considering the variety of material and affective ways Afghan migrants interact with and relate to the city.

As discussed in chapter three, at the state scale, Afghan migrants are assumed to not belong in Delhi, neither as a community nor as individuals. Chapter six returns to the issue of belonging and community, while the material below enquires into Afghan migrants' belonging in Delhi at the scale of the individual. The chapter focuses on

two areas, language and history, as the UNHCR representatives discussed in chapter three specifically outlined how non Hindu and Sikh Afghan migrants were considered to not belong in Delhi through a marked lack of linguistic or historical "affinity" to the place. Where the state scale conception of Afghan belonging places Afghan migrants as foreign bodies without linguistic or historical ties to Delhi, the material below illustrates multiple and complex relationships that individual migrants have to language and ideas of history that affect their consideration of Delhi as a place they belong to. To consider these relationships, I have drawn on a range of anthropological literature on personhood, language, memory, emotion, and place that emphasizes the relationality of persons with the world around them.

Before addressing issues of language and history, the first section of the chapter relates the story of three members of the Pashtun moneylender community to consider how Afghan migrants are constituted as persons through multiple material and cognitive processes. As stated in chapter two, this thesis is grounded in the assumption that multiple forms of personhood and relatedness described in anthropological research from South Asia or elsewhere can be seen to represent general human ways of relating, which can operate in a composite and contemporaneous fashion to inform people's understanding of their selves. Taking this position permits considering persons ethnographically as both individual and dividual (Strathern 1987; Willerslev 2007) through attending to how they navigate the plural forms of relatedness in their interactions with other persons (Leach 2008; Strathern 1994) and things (Appadurai 1986b; Latour 2005; Moore 2007) around them. People can, in this sense, be understood like the mirrors at the centre of Buriad[101] chests (Empson 2011) that reveal the exemplary personhood of the chest's owner, formed as a conglomerate reflection of the various objects contained in the chest which index and inhere multiple forms of sociality within which the chest's owner exists. Considering Afghan migrants as relational beings in this way, allows for the exploration of their relationship to language, history, and place in the two subsequent sections.

The second section of the chapter returns to experiences of the Ali, Shahrukh, and Musa Saheb to explore the linguistic and historical connections between Afghanistan

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[101] The Buriad are a northern ethnic Mongol group living across Mongolia and Russia.

and India that underlie their conceptions of how they belong in Delhi. The ethnographic material presented illustrates how language, memory, and experience are woven together in migrants' experience of Delhi, revealing the multiple and embodied nature of place (Low and Lawrence-Zúñiga 2003) as arising from individuals' particular positions and perceptions (Feld and Basso 1996; Haraway 1991). To consider the role of language in the complex social relations of place, society, and the self, I draw on Webb Keane's work that considers language as not just a semiotic system, but also a material medium or substance through which persons are connected to and affected by the world around them. Keane demonstrates how the way people interact with language reflects their relationship with others and objects (2003, 1998), and that individuals' relationship to language both shapes and is transformed by their experience and perception of the world around them (2007). The three men's experiences thus echo anthropological research that emphasizes how places are not merely empty containers of historical memory, but are "politicized, culturally relative, historically specific, local, and multiple constructions" (Rodman 1996:641), forged from social and individual experience (Kuper 1972), at once imbued with meaning and also employed in creating a sense of self (Hoelscher 2003; Humphrey 1995; Navaro-Yashin 2009).

Recognizing this fact, however, also necessitates understanding how Afghan migrants also do not belong in Delhi. In this vein, the final section turns to the experiences of Jamshed and Shahrukh to reflect on how the very links that can serve to connect some to Delhi can be experienced by others as estranging. The chapter concludes by considering how the multiple ways Afghan migrants feel belonging, or not belonging, in Delhi draw attention to the second notion of scale discussed in chapter two. That is they draw attention to the relative impact on migrants' lives of state scale understandings of Afghan belonging in Delhi in comparison to other understandings presented at the scale of individuals. The material considered below suggests that while Afghan migrants can belong in Delhi in a plurality of ways, the context within which these migrants find themselves is one where not all forms of belonging are equally viable or recognized for all persons, and those with access to sufficient financial or economic resources are more able to be Afghan and belong in Delhi outside the notions presented at the state scale.

5.1   Doing Business and Eating Spicy Food: Afghan Migrants and Personhood

I would often meet Shahrukh at our mutual friend Amirkhel's shop in Lajpat Nagar, one of Delhi's Afghan neighbourhoods discussed more in the next chapter. In his early twenties, Amirkhel had moved to Delhi with his family six years ago as a refugee from Paktia. He was one of the few people from Wazirabad who still maintained contact and friendship with Shahrukh. A possible reason, Shahrukh suggested, was that following a disagreement with neighbours, Amirkhel's family had left Wazirabad to move to east Delhi, and Amirkhel felt a sense of solidarity with Shahrukh over being forced out of the neighbourhood. Below I recount a conversation from Amirkhel's shop to consider how Afghan migrants belong in Delhi in different ways that reflect various forms of personhood constituting them as both individuals and dividuals.

One afternoon I arrived at the shop to find an older man, whom Amirkhel later introduced as his older brother Akhtar, sitting in Amirkhel's place in the shop. Akhtar was visiting from "Bengal". Shahrukh would later recount how the family were registered as refugees, but made their money through moneylending and trading across eastern India. While the older brothers spent most of their time in Assam or Bengal, Amirkhel was in charge of manning the small one-room shop sandwiched between two other shops, tucked away in a narrow corridor on the ground floor of a residential building on the periphery of the market place[102]. The shop's obscure location was not a mistake. Signs in Dari on the street front listed a number of articles of clothing and objects one could purchase inside. The use of Pashto character variants and the shop's name, the family's patronymic, indicated its Pashtun ownership. The building housing the shop was located across the street from a barbershop selling SIM cards, and was two doors down from an air ticket sales agent catering to Afghans visiting Delhi.

The shop thus welcomed many tourists wishing to buy gifts to take back to Afghanistan with them from India. The three square meter room was lined with shelves stocked with multi-coloured Banarasi Silk shawls that would be used to

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[102] Shahrukh suggested on more than one occasion that, like other Pashtun shops in Old Delhi, Amirkhel's family used the shop as a cover for other less legal revenue. This perception was common among many non-Pashtun refugees.

make "Kuchi dresses[103]" back in Afghanistan, sombre toned sarongs that doubled as men's turbans[104], shawls from Himachal Pradesh to be used as *patu[105]*, different varieties of embroidered Afghan tunics, and a couple of solar panels. Amirkhel explained that visitors from more remote areas of Afghanistan were particularly keen on buying the solar panels at a significantly cheaper price in India, which the family still made a profit on by buying them wholesale from factories in Bihar. It was with a fresh batch of such goods that Akhtar had recently returned to Delhi.

I had just been introduced to Akhtar when a friend of his arrived at the shop. Khiyalay, also a Pashtun from Paktia, had grown up in Kabul and had been living in Delhi for the last five years as a refugee. A dentist by training, Khiyalay now worked as an interpreter for Afghans visiting Delhi and seemed to be doing quite well for himself. After introductions and pleasantries, Akhtar turned to a subject nobody seemed to tire of: the Delhi heat. He complained of having to spend the end of the summer in Delhi, mentioning how he found Guwahati[106] more agreeable. Accustomed to this line of conversation, I commented on how the heat in Afghanistan is at least dry and therefore better and more bearable than Delhi's humid heat, which was the usual turn such conversations would take. Akhtar's unexpected response to my comment sparked a lively conversation among the three men that illustrates the different ways they understand their belonging in Delhi, and reflects multiple ideas about how persons are constituted and connected to other people and places.

"Forget about Afghanistan!" (*Afghanistan ra pas ko!*) Akhtar exclaimed raising his hand up forcefully as if swatting flies away from his face. "What do they have there? Insecurity (*beamniyati*)? Unemployment (*berozgari*)?" He explained how India was a good place as one could do "business" and have a good life. "Look at this guy!" he said grabbing Khiyalay's arm and slapping his back, "he has become a real *Lala[107]*, a Delhiite (*dilliwala)*." This complimentary teasing indicated how Khiyalay had the skills to live in Delhi like an Indian and to be successful. Others were less

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[103] Kuchis are a nomadic Pashtun people of Afghanistan. Their folk dress for women are sewn together from patches of brightly coloured cloth. The style is emulated by many designers in the region.
[104] Incidentally, the Afghan turban and the Indian sarong-like garment share the same name (*lungi*).
[105] A multipurpose every-day use shawl used by men in Afghanistan.
[106] Guwahati is a city in Assam with a historic Pashtun population.
[107] "Lala" means older brother, but is often used to address Hindus and Sikhs in Afghanistan.

appreciative of Khiyalay's ability. Another Afghan interpreter once advised me to stay away from Khiyalay as he did not have good habits and had become like the 'Punjabis' (*adaatash kharab shoda punjabi-ha ware*) in using people for personal benefit[108]. Khiyalay was not Indian, but he had become like an Indian in the way he acted and conducted himself, not just by having a successful business but also in how he interacted differently in different contexts with different people, i.e. Afghan medical tourists or Indian hospital officials and staff.

"He's right (*rast mega*)," Khiyalay responded. He recounted how unlike most Afghans in Delhi, he had come to India via Pakistan and that when he crossed the border he had immediately felt a sense of ease (*rahat wa asoodagi*) compared to the tension (*fishar*) of Pakistan. I asked him what he meant and he merely responded that "Indian people are the best in the world; they have humanity (*insaniyat wa bashardosti*)." He lamented having spent time studying medicine (*doktari*) in Kabul which did not benefit him, but that in India "If you have money, you have everything: a father, mother, brother, sister," he counted them out with his fingers. "I have everything," he explained, "I have a car, I pay rent, I have my family… My wife likes India so much she doesn't want to go back." I asked him if he did not miss his family in Afghanistan. "I can call them whenever I want!" he said, pulling out a new Samsung Galaxy smart phone to show me a picture of his daughter. "She can call me on Skype whenever wants," he explained, insinuating he was wealthy enough to be able to provide his young daughter with a phone. Khiyalay reiterated India was a good place to do business, and I asked him if he did not have any trouble with the government or the police. "The police?" he laughed, "sometimes they might stop you, but just hand them some CDs or DVDs from your car and that's that! They're happy."

Amirkhel had been sitting in the corner, silently following the others' stories and commentary. "I don't like India at all" he finally blurted out.

> "If I'd known I'd spend this much time here, I would never have come. Here
> we [Afghans] endure so much harassment (*aziyat*) and distress (*perishani*);
> we have no future (*sarnawesht*) here."

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[108] I wondered if Khiyalay might have some connection to the Afghan Sikhs or Hindus. It is common for Afghan Hindus and Sikhs of lesser financial means to have come to India via Pakistan; he is the only Muslim Afghan I met in Delhi who claimed to have taken this route. Some Pashtuns I met in Bombay suggested Pakistani Pashtuns regularly came to the city for travel and even marriage, but via Dubai or Kabul.

Akhtar laughed, patronizingly telling Amirkhel that he had been stuck (*bandi*, lit. imprisoned) in Delhi and had not seen anything of India (*tu heech hindustan ra na didi*). This was true. Unlike his brother, Amirkhel was financially dependent on his father and though he managed the shop, he had a specified allowance. He claimed to have not seen anything in Delhi except the neighbourhoods he lived and worked in, and would sometimes spend the night in his shop to save money by not having to pay for the metro-fare home. He had not travelled around India and claimed to have no interest in doing so. He would listen patiently to stories visitors to the shop would recount of trips to Goa, Bombay, or Agra, stating at the end that he would rather wait for the opportunity to go to the USA (*amreeka*).

"In Delhi there are only refugees, so nobody respects Afghans," Akhtar expounded, "if you go to Assam it's different. Even the police are afraid of you and call you 'Khan Saheb'[109]… Indians really have a lot of respect (*ehteram*) for Afghans." Amirkhel was unhappy and retorted: "You've eaten so much spicy food[110] (*murch-masala*) that you've become like them (*hindi ware shodi*)! I don't like this food, I don't like this heat, there's no place as good as Afghanistan (*Afghanistan qadar heech jaiy nist*)!" Aware he was not convincing the other two, Amirkhel threw his hands forward and shrugged his shoulders as if to say "come on!" and exclaimed: "it's our place!" (*da zamung zai de!*). The other two chuckled in agreement. Fresh cups of tea were poured, and the topic of conversation was changed.

In presenting their views on how they belong or don't belong in Delhi or India, the three men invoke different ideas of their selves as persons, which emphasize their being both individual agents as well as dividuals constituted through other people and places via material and affective substances. Both Khiyalay and Akhtar's assertions that one can belong in India through doing business and having a good life echo earlier ethnographic work on Pashtuns that suggests individuals rationally pursue different forms of belonging based on considerations of economic or political benefit (Barth 1959a, 1959b, 1969). Both men also recognize how they are

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[109] At this point Akhtar recounted a story of how he had gone to visit a cousin in Calcutta who was responsible for collecting debts. They had gone to collect money from a policeman who was harassing people in the street and seemed like a big shot. When he saw Akhtar and his cousin, he allegedly transformed into a subservient sycophant, whimpering and begging for extra time to return his debt after Akhtar's cousin had slapped him in the middle of the market.

[110] Incidentally, the three men were eating lamb dumplings (*mantu*) with *naan* and Kabuli *pulau* (a steamed rice dish) delivered from a nearby restaurant with a side plate of green chilies.

constructed as individuals in the eyes of the state as migrants, where this kind of individuality is at odds with the idea of belonging through doing business. Like Musa Saheb expressed in the last chapter, however, the two men express how these two different ways they are constructed as individuals can be mediated through their disregarding the law of the state through mobilising their financial resources as individuals who do business.

However, the two men's understanding of what enables them to belong in India also reflects the intersubjective nature of belonging. For Akhtar, like the image presented in the *Makhzan-e Afghan*, being Pashtun in India was part of being a historical community of India, connected to India. Like several of the Pashtuns I met in Delhi, he was fond of a joke relating how at independence the Hindus added orange to the flag, the Muslims added green, and the Christians added white; somebody asked a Pashtun "Where are you? You don't belong here," and the Pashtun responded: "we are the stick that comes to all of you from behind[111]." The joke humorously suggests Afghans have been a part of India for better or worse. For Akhtar, these historical relations and presence in the country have resulted in relationships of respect that connect people of India and Afghanistan and create a place for Afghans in India. Khiyalay similarly felt that it was the "humanity" of people in India toward Afghans that connected him to people in India and afforded him acceptance in the country. Of course, as their reaction to Amirkhel's reminder shows, neither man would deny they are also connected to Afghanistan through birth or ethnicity, but their views on how they belong in India resonate with research on relatedness from South and East Asia that indicates individuals simultaneously hold views of personhood that are immutable through concepts like decent, but that they also produce feelings of belonging and relatedness to others via affective modes such as the work of human interaction (Stafford 2000; Grima 1992) and through shared locality (Lambert 2000). It is perhaps understandable that Amirkhel's lack of such interaction and experience of harassment and distress exist alongside a sense of not belonging in Delhi.

Over the course of discussing how they belong in Delhi, the three men draw several connections between the physical and emotional experiences of being in Delhi or

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[111] Shahrukh was also fond of this joke, but told a sanitized version that afforded Pashtuns in India a greater role by having the Pashtun respond with: "We are the stick that holds you all together!"

India, and how one's connection to others is formed through sharing of substance or emotion. In this way, the men illustrate how various forms of personhood are considered simultaneously in their conceptions of how they are constituted and connected to others. Amirkhel's accusation that Akhtar had become like an Indian through developing a taste for Indian food reflects how sharing of substances integral to the physical creation of the person lead can transform one's physical and emotional being and create relatedness to others sharing the same constitutive substance (see Carsten 1995 and Hutchinson 2000). The three men's agreement that Afghanistan is indeed also their "place" (*zai/jaiy*) illustrates how place itself can also be considered as a bodily substance, integral to the person through creating a moral and emotional attachment to the land one stems from and the others connected to it (Daniel 1984). Comparatively, Akhtar's praise of Khiyalay's ability to become a Delhiite, mirrored by the other interpreter's criticism of this skill, presents how changing one's nature as a person is not just a passive effect of interaction with others, but can also entail active production of similarity with strangers through practice (Kwon 2008) and modifying one's own comportment to become a certain kind of person connected to specific places and people (Astuti 1995).

The disparate conceptions of what it means to belong in Delhi as Afghan presented by the three men, illustrate on the one hand how experience of migration to the same place and orientations toward countries of origin and residence can differ even within the same ethnic group and family. While ethnicity was indeed a factor that affected the men's migration to India, given their facility to move across the regional Pashtun network, their different feelings toward India and Delhi could relate to several factors such as different forms of migration or differences in living conditions (Malkki 1995a; Monsutti *et al* 2006). This fact gives pause to consider the role of ethnic group or community as a lens for understanding Afghan migrants' belonging in Delhi, to which I return to in the next chapter. It also connects to research on Afghan migrant networks that suggests migrants' experiences and ability to integrate in host countries is facilitated with greater freedom or ease of movement, which is often tied to access to financial resources (Harpviken 2009). Unlike Amirkhel, Akhtar and Khiyalay possessed the wherewithal to not only move freely around the city in personal transport, but also across the country. Their ability

to make a life, be financially independent and feel like they "have everything" undoubtedly affects their feelings toward living in India.

In this way, the conversation in Amirkhel's shop also points to the affective[112] nature of belonging. The men relate how their bodily experience of being in India is imbued with, generates, and is affected by emotions or emotional experience of interacting with people or being in place. This points, on the one hand, to how bodies and persons hold together as one while being multiple in their constitution as social objects (Scheper-Hughes and Lock 1987; Strathern 1988), as well as subjects of experience (Csordas 1990; Stoller 1989) that exist relationally to the world around them (Lambert and McDonald 2009; Mol and Law 2004). Khiyalay speaks of how the instance of crossing the border into India was accompanied by a feeling of ease connected to India. Amirkhel expresses how his physical aversion to heat of the climate and the taste of the food entrenches his dislike of Delhi; while Akhtar suggests Amirkhel's feelings can be transformed through new and different sensorial and emotional experiences of travelling outside of Delhi and interacting with others who are not refugees. Still, all three men agree that Afghanistan is their "place" and that they are also emotionally connected to Afghanistan, conveying how migrants articulate different kinds of belonging at different levels simultaneously (Levitt and Glick Schiller 2004; Urry 2000). With this understanding of Afghan migrants in Delhi as relational persons constituted through multiple processes, the next section turns to consider the different linguistic and historical relationships migrants have to Delhi that afford them multiple ways of belonging as Afghan in the city.

5.2   Language and History: Afghan Migrants' Connections to Delhi

As discussed in chapter two and four, northern India and Afghanistan have been historically connected through a variety of languages tied to several identity and nation building projects across the region. It is such connections that have resulted in situations such as India's last Prime Minister, Manmohan Singh, requiring his

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[112] While affect has taken several directions (Gregg and Seigworth 2010), I find Massumi's consideration of affect as a two-way relationship between bodies and their environment, between intensities and their physical and semiotic qualification, that is not one of correspondence but of "resonation ... interference, amplification or dampening" (2002:25) productive for following anthropological theory calling to bring together subject- and object-oriented approaches in ethnographic analysis (Mazzarella 2010; Navaro-Yashin 2009).

speeches to be written in Perso-Arabic script[113] (Baru 2014) rather than Devanagari or Gurmukhi scripts, or the former Afghan King Nadir Shah possessing greater fluency in Urdu than in Pashto (Green 2011). It is also such connections that allowed for Ali to feel at home in Delhi. As he related to me, despite not understanding Urdu or Hindi, from the first day he came to Delhi "I didn't feel even for a second that I'm a stranger or [that] I'm coming from the outside." He explained how at the beginning of his first term at university,

> "some [of my friends] told me 'foreigner, foreigner,' ... I became so angry I told them 'guys, I'm not a foreigner... tell me why you call this *biryani*?... why chicken Afghani and not Irani or Hindustani?... why you say '*naan*', '*tandoori*', '*kabab*'? '*Ishq*', '*muhabbat*'[114], all the beautiful words in your language are coming from my language... you have a lot of monuments all around yourself that are somehow linked to us [Afghans]... Even in Afghanistan... Hindustanis, Bangladeshis, Uzbeks... come on, they're not foreigners at all!"

It is not surprising that Ali began his argument for belonging in India with language and words, and ended with places and peoples. His comments to his friends relate how language is not just fluid as a semiotic system with words and concepts gliding across language structures, but also as a material medium which serves as an extension of the body into the world, connecting it to others (Csordas 1994; Mulder 2006). In the examples below, language thus shapes Afghan migrants' perception of Delhi as a place they belong to, while also allowing for them to be perceived as persons who belong in Delhi through language. In this way, Afghan migrants relate to Delhi as a place of belonging not just through ideas of historical connection, but also through present engagement and imagined futures in the city.

Belonging in Delhi through Language

For Ali, language could not be divorced from the very material historical connections between Delhi and Afghanistan. The linguistic bonds between Persian and Urdu-Hindi created not only objects that were familiar to him, but also reflected his perception of the broader historical connection of the city to Afghanistan. As

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[113] Manmohan Singh is originally from a part of Punjab now in Pakistan. It is not unusual for Punjabi refugees of his generation, or indeed other Hindu and Sikh Delhiites of his generation and older, to be more fluent in reading and writing in Perso-Arabic script than in Gurmukhi or Devanagari scripts.
[114] `*Ishq* and *Muhabbat* are both words used for 'love' originating from Arabic and used in several languages including Persian, Urdu, and Hindi.

explained in the previous chapter, Ali had been drawn to the city through its historical monuments. He explained that when he would feel a little homesick during his first year:

> "I would go to *Sabz Burj*. I saw the *gumbad* (dome) and the tiles and said 'come on, I'm home'. [Delhi] is full of tiles [and] the monuments are so close to me, so familiar. The inscriptions in Farsi... I said, come on!"

The *Sabz Burj*, which means green tower, is one of the earliest Mughal monuments built in Delhi and, unlike the other Mughal buildings the city is renowned for, it is distinctly Central Asian in its structure and composition. Little is known about the original purpose of building, which stands in the middle of a busy roundabout on one of Delhi's primary north-south roads. It served briefly as a police station under British rule, but the structure was a forgotten living ruin in disrepair, used by local street dwellers for shelter until just ahead of the 2010 Commonwealth Games, when it was cleaned, landscaped, and enclosed within a high metal fence. The turquoise-green tiles, from which the tower received its name, have now almost completely vanished, leaving behind patches alluding to the pattern and colour that would have plastered the tower. The structure is almost completely bereft of colour, excepting the dome, covered in bright lapis blue tiles[115]. The colour of the dome and of the few remaining tiles on the trunk of the tower are like those as those covering the famous mosques and shrines of Mazar-e Sharif (where Ali had lived), Herat, and other places across Iran, Afghanistan, and Central Asia. Like the Persian inscriptions on other monuments and buildings across the city, the colour of these tiles stirred in Ali a feeling of home, connecting Delhi to a network of places and memories outside of India, bringing them 'close' to him. In this way, the material reality of the city was not something he perceived cognitively, but felt emotionally and physically. Language was thus at the same time part of a material network connecting Delhi to Afghanistan through colour and architecture, as well as a medium through which familiar words and concepts shaped Delhi as a place in which he belonged.

Where the linguistic field Ali inhabited connected him to Delhi via words, sentiments, and the landscape they created, Shahrukh reported how the substance of language

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[115] In fact, perhaps for this reason, the *Sabz Burj* is now becoming more commonly known as the *Neela Gumbad* (blue dome), as few people know about its history prior to the 2010 facelift.

as script made space for him to belong as an Afghan in Delhi. After his expulsion from Wazirabad (discussed in chapter six), Shahrukh experienced great difficulty in finding a place to live outside the Afghan areas of the city. This was not just because he was a refugee, but also because he was an Afghan and most Hindu landlords assumed he was Muslim and would not rent to him. He eventually found a room owned by a Muslim. To avoid any future misunderstanding, Shahrukh immediately explained he was from Afghanistan but was a Christian. Shahrukh recounted how at this first meeting, the landlord noticed Shahrukh's Farsi Bible and "was very happy," telling Shahrukh that "Muslims … have a lot of respect for the Bible, [and] for Arabic and Farsi writing (*khate arabi wa farsi).*" The landlord took the book from Shahrukh's hands and placed it respectfully on a high shelf in the room, indicating Shahrukh was welcome to stay. I suggested to Shahrukh that in his majority Hindu neighbourhood, it was perhaps normal that a Muslim would feel solidarity with a Christian. He insisted, however, that he believed it was because of the Perso-Arabic script of his bible that the landlord didn't fully understand he was actually Christian and continued to explain to Shahrukh, whom he had only just met, that "Indian Christians are like Hindus; they commit idolatry (*but parast astand*) and are dirty (*napak*) but that [Shahrukh] was like a Muslim[116]." In Shahrukh's case, the actual Perso-Arabic script served as a substance making Shahrukh a certain type of person his landlord could relate to, quite literally allowing Shahrukh to belong in Delhi by affording him a place to live.

The examples of Shahrukh and Ali demonstrate how Afghan migrants can experience and perceive Delhi as a place they belong through their accessing and engaging with regional linguistic connections, as well as how these same connections create them as persons perceived by others as belonging in the city. The two men's experiences also relate how engagement with the world around them is entwined in language use. Thus, in contrast to the UNHCR representative's assertion in chapter three that non-Hindu and Sikh Afghans lacked linguistic "affinity" to the city, echoing the state scale view of linguistic ties as coterminous with national belonging, Ali and Shahrukh's accounts reveal how at the individual scale several forms of linguistic belonging in Delhi are available to Afghan migrants. The example

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[116] The landlord's comment also reflects Shahrukh's Muslim way of being Christian mentioned in the previous chapter.

of Musa Saheb, related below, further illustrates how migrants' engagement with language can also be affected by their experience of Delhi as a place they belong.

Some months after arriving in Delhi, Musa Saheb explained that he took his family to see the historical sites of the city. Like Ali, he was pleasantly surprised to see the Persian language inscriptions on the ruins dotted across the city, and was reminded of his readings on ancient history. Seeing the texts around the city jogged his memory of how "the roots of Afghan history are here [in India]", alerting him to how "India was not a country for me to see (*faqat bare gashtan na bud*), but a school to learn! ... as long as I am here, I am obliged (*majboor*) to make use of this time." Musa Saheb took this sentiment to heart. An academic man, he would always be with paper and pen, on his laptop, or on his phone discussing literature, politics, or some research he was engaged in. When I first met him, he had discovered an Urdu translation of the memoire of a Mughal princess, and was trying to track down the original Persian text. He claimed that over the last several years, he had read all the Urdu books and the lone Persian book in his local library. He was particularly impressed with an Urdu book on Emperor Aurangzeb, considered staunchly anti-Hindu by many historians, that provided documentary evidence from across India of the Emperor's personal decrees granting land for the construction of Hindu temples. Musa Saheb translated the book into Persian, as he felt it could contribute to religious discussions in Afghanistan. He also felt that amid rising anti-Muslim sentiment in India, the book should be available in Hindi and had started teaching himself the Devanagari script through the internet to this end.

I had only ever spoken in Dari with Musa Saheb and though we had discussed Urdu poetry on occasion, I was surprised that he also felt comfortable in Hindi, perhaps betraying my own conceptions of a division between the two languages. "Clearly I understand Hindi!" he exclaimed somewhat taken aback. His visceral reaction caught him by surprise and he paused, switched to a more conciliatory tone and explained that he had been a fan of Bollywood movies even before fleeing to Pakistan, and that he particularly enjoyed the lyrics of 1970s Indian film songs. "Yes, they differ in the matter of some words," he conceded, "but the primary distinction (*ikhtilafe esasi*) [between Urdu and Hindi] is in the writing." I never followed up with him to see if he had managed to learn the script, but he had expressed determination

and confidence in his ability to do so. In a roundabout way, Musa Saheb's connection to the Persian language inscribed across the city allowed him to cultivate a feeling of Delhi as a particular kind of historical Afghan place. This sense of belonging in the city resonated with him in the present to create new connections to India through language by learning the Devanagari script.

The experiences of the three men recounted above, present a range of linguistic connections, enmeshed in the shared history of India and Afghanistan, that serve to connect Afghan migrants to Delhi as a place they belong. At the same time, the examples illustrate how each man's understanding of how he belongs in Delhi is grounded in his specific migration experience. Delhi thus appears not as a singular kind of place where Afghans belong, but as different kinds of places to which Afghans connect in different ways. To consider this multiplicity of place in relation to Afghan belonging in Delhi, I turn below to the tomb of poet Abdul Qadir Bedil (mentioned in chapter one). Bedil's tomb features in both Musa Saheb and Ali's accounts of belonging in the city as a "*lieu de mémoire*" (Nora 1989) which they invest with significance, and which also shapes their practices of belonging in Delhi. Their reckoning of the place of the tomb, the poet, the language, and their selves within different scales of place and time underline the reciprocal relations of memory, society, and the self (Halbwachs 1996; Lambek and Antze 1996), in engendering multiple meanings and practices of belonging to a place (Simpson 2005; Simpson and Corbridge 2006).

History and Afghan Belonging in Delhi

Bagh-e Bedil (Bedil's Garden)[117] lies a couple of kilometres north of the *Sabz Burj*, almost hidden from the main road. Partially covered by brush, a small sign set on the boundary wall of the lot, at a distance from the entrance, indicates in Urdu and English that the site is the resting place of the Sufi Saint, Hazrat Khwaja Nooruddin and adds "& Khwaja Bedil" in smaller sized font. Though Bedil's mystic poetry remains popular in Tajikistan and in Afghanistan, his popularity has faded in India, the land where he rose to prominence (Abdulghani 1972; Siddiqi 1989). This neglect hangs over the grounds surrounding the tomb. The tomb itself was not

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[117] I am grateful to both Ali and Mr. Sohail Hashmi for taking time to provide me historical background on the tomb.

'rediscovered' until the 1930s, when a small concrete structure was built over it in Indo-Islamic style with scalloped arches and overhanging eaves. Though the structure was renovated in 2006, the remainder of the small grounds around it remain unsurfaced, dusty and grassless, shaded under a canopy of trees to tall to trim. Debris from renovation works strewn along the length of the boundary wall at the far end of the plot, half-buried in the earth, suggest the authorities have not paid attention to the site since its renovation. This does not prevent Afghan tourists from visiting the site, which is usually the second stop made after a trip to the shrine of the Sufi saint Nizamuddin Auliya, located near the *Sabz Burj*.

Appalled at the site's derelict condition when he first visited in 2005, Ali resolved to address the situation. After unsuccessful talks with the offices of the Archaeological Survey of India, he approached the Afghanistan Embassy and the Iran Culture House, the cultural arm of the Iranian Embassy in Delhi, with a proposal for a joint renovation project. "I did not want to go [there] after my experience in Iran," Ali explained, "but I said 'come on, [Bedil] belongs to all of us', you know?" Ali had developed a pitch he felt would work. He explained the structure had not been taken care of since the 1990s when some Afghan students had paid for whitewashing and placed a marble plaque above the head of the tomb. He suggested the two parties along with the municipality could undertake a modest renovation and create a space for future cultural events to revive Persian language in the city. Representatives from both institutions declined the proposal, citing a lack of funding. Ali felt the officials at the Afghanistan embassy "just didn't care", but that those at the Iran Culture House did not want to cooperate with somebody from Afghanistan, as they had spoken to him condescendingly, complementing him on his fluency in Persian, which is his first language, and stating that they were already engaged in significant promotion of Persian language in Delhi.

Sometime after the meeting at the Iran Culture House, Ali visited the tomb to find a temporary sign in Persian had been hung over the marble plaque placed by the Afghan students, which explained the role of Bedil in Persian literature and his role in connecting the cultures of Iran and India. Ali felt betrayed and organized with some friends to have the plaque removed one night. Shortly after the incident, in 2006, the tomb was renovated and repainted at the expense of the government of

Tajikistan, ahead of president Rahmanov's visit to the site in 2006. A new signboard commemorating the event and explaining the importance of Bedil in the "poetry of Persia and Tajikistan" (Persian: *adabe tajik wa fars*) was placed immediately outside the structure. The inscription in Tajik Cyrillic was placed at the top, followed in descending order by translations in Hindi, English, Persian, and Urdu.

Wary of the politics between the embassies, Ali decided to shift his academic and professional focus to the history of Mughal India. He felt his background in Persian and Central Asian history, and the resources available to him in India positioned him to contribute to the preservation of Mughal Indian history, which he believed was endangered by increasing Hindu nationalism. When I left Delhi, he was already thinking of possible PhD topics. He indicated that over years of conducting research across the city, he had documentary evidence on the systematic erasure of Mughal history from Delhi's landscape[118]. Through his readings of original Mughal manuscripts in libraries in Delhi, he also felt he could build an argument that the Mughal Empire had been developing a nascent nationalism and a form of state centralization very different from that of the contemporary Indian state. However, he conceded that both were sensitive topics in the current political climate and that perhaps it would be best if he sought funding to conduct such research abroad. Ali was adamant to continue working on historical preservation in India and Afghanistan at whatever cost. "You know, when I see these guys," he said in reference to his university friends from Ghazni and Kandahar, "I think 'wow, their ancestors were coming to this place with arrows over their shoulders', and now they are carrying instead books and pens... this is progress." Pressed on what he meant by progress, he stated: "in Afghanistan we are forgetting our identity ... [we] want to be like the Arabs[119]." He was concerned that if Delhi's Muslim history were to be gradually erased, so too would the connections that maintain Afghanistan's identity as part of the region and, I imagine, his own identity as well.

For Musa Saheb, however, it was Afghanistan's connections to the region that were problematic. His experience in Pakistan had left him with the impression that the

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[118] Taneja (2013) provides a recent anthropological overview of the erasure of Delhi's Muslim landscape in the post-colonial Indian state.

[119] As mentioned in the previous chapter, Ali was concerned with what he saw as the growing influence of Saudi Arabia's brand of "wahabbism" or "Salafism" in Afghanistan as well as India.

governments of Iran and Pakistan mobilized Afghan refugees via the creation of ethnic based 'national groups (*milli gruh-ha*) that then engaged in fractional politics (*siyasate tanzim baazi*) both abroad and in Afghanistan. As explained in the previous section, Musa Saheb was interested in creating a broad-based 'national sentiment' (*ehsase milli*) among Afghans in Delhi that could then be spread to Afghanistan. He initially attempted to do so through re-establishing the RSC, which did not ultimately succeed. Before I left, he explained he was in the process of forming a new group with the same aim that would be called the Council of Elders (*Shuraye Reesh Safedha*), the inaugural meeting of which he wished to hold at *Bagh-e Bedil*. According to Musa Saheb, Delhi was an ideal place for the development of a broad-based, pluralist Afghan national unity (*wahdate milli*), given the absence of organized political parties among the city's Afghan population and the almost complete lack of interaction between the Afghanistan embassy and the refugee community. He saw the *Bagh-e Bedil* as a site holding the memory of a past cosmopolitan Afghan identity that could be nurtured in the present to produce a new Afghan nationalism in the future. "The shared poets of Afghanistan and India [like] Bedil... represent a shared culture (*farhange moshtarak*)... that can shape the mindset (*zehen*) of refugee youth [toward Afghanistan]" he explained. The Council of Elders did not have its inaugural meeting before I left Delhi, and through recent conversations with Musa Saheb I suspect it has developed into more of a social group of his close friends. However, several months after my return to London, Musa Saheb did report enthusiastically that he had organized an informal meeting with some of the council members at the *Bagh-e Bedil* to pay their respects to the poet through offering a prayer (*fateha*) and to discuss the council's future plans.

Again, Musa Saheb and Ali's accounts stand in contrast to the state scale assumption that Afghan migrants' national origins preclude them from possessing historical connections to Delhi. The two men's accounts of belonging in Delhi as Afghans point, on the one hand, to the material presence of historical connections linking Afghan migrants to the city through emotions, ideas, colours, etc. The examples also demonstrate how migrants build on their perceptions of these links in the present to articulate different meanings of how Afghans belong in the city. The two men's ideas of Afghan belonging in Delhi echo those discussed with regard to the *Makhzan-e Afghan* in the previous chapter. For Ali, the *Bagh-e Bedil* is a symbol of ecumenical

Afghan belonging to the region, bringing together different groups of people through a pluralistic identity grounded in language and aesthetics. His account illustrates how this idea of Delhi as place allows him to cultivate a cosmopolitan way of belonging in Delhi in the present, while also revealing how this nature of Delhi makes it a place where regional rivalries of history and language endure and play out. In contrast, Musa Saheb sees the *Bagh-e Bedil* as a particularly Afghan place within the context of Delhi. Musa Saheb's view of the *Bagh-e Bedil* encourages him to make it the starting point of a project to articulate a particular Afghan identity "from within the field of India" (*az maidane hind*), similar to Khan Jahan Lodhi's cultivation of a Pashtun identity through commissioning the *Makhzan-e Afghan*.

5.3   Bridge over Troubled Waters: Not Belonging in Delhi

The examples presented above have primarily focused on the different ways Afghans are constituted as persons and connected to Delhi through networks of movement, memory, and language. The examples might appear to suggest that at the individual scale, Afghan belonging in Delhi is antithetical to conceptions at the state scale, which breaks these networks along national boundaries. In this section, I use the cases of Shahrukh and Jamshed and their differing experiences of estrangement from Delhi, exemplified in their reactions to crossing a bridge in south Delhi, to show Afghan migrants also feel they don't belong in Delhi in different ways. The experiences of alienation that Jameshed and Shahrukh have in the city draw attention to how individuals are constantly faced with the prospect of breaking from the various networks connecting them to others as both a social process and a result of individual efforts (Strathern 1996), and also how belonging and not belonging are not always mutually exclusive.

Jamshed's Frustrations: Wanting to Not Belong

In chapter three, I explained how Jamshed and his wife, Rukhsana, had been assisted in fleeing to India and eventually getting resettled in the United States through the support and efforts of Jamshed's former employer, a US-based NGO. I met the two through a mutual acquaintance, Pragya, who knew Jamshed from her previous work in the NGO's US offices. Pragya had moved to Delhi to work with a UK-based charity and live with her partner, Arnab, who was based in the city. The NGO initially requested her to assist Jamshed and Rukhsana with settling in Delhi, but soon asked

her to come on board with facilitating their resettlement process to the US. Pragya, whom I knew through another South Asian American friend, had called me to see if I might be able to help Jamshed. "My main job," Pragya explained, "[is] to keep their expectations realistic," by which she meant she needed to make them aware that relocation could potentially take several years. As explained in the last chapter, the couple was resettled within a year through the support of the NGO and Jamshed's initiative.

Unlike the cases discussed above, Jamshed did not appear to feel a linguistic or historical connection to Delhi. "We aren't going to stay here, so what need do I have to try and learn [Urdu]?" Jamshed had once explained, adding "it is very difficult with genders… like Pashto," which he also did not know. He and Rukhsana moved about the city in a way that did not require them to use much Urdu or Hindi. They lived in Bhogal, the cheaper Afghan neighbourhood next to Lajpat Nagar, and with their savings could afford to take auto rickshaws around the city, communicating with drivers in English. Jamshed and Rukhsana reported not leaving the house except for shopping in their neighbourhood, or to meet with Pragya and Arnab, who provided them with moral support and would often take them out to lunch or dinner in trendy locales like Hauz Khas Village or west Delhi shopping malls.

Jamshed appeared to be unaware of Delhi's 'Afghan' history, which I would point out when we were about the city, and he did not show interest in this aspect of the city. The first time I met the couple alone, I suggested we go to Old Delhi to see the Red Fort or Jama Masjid. "Forget about it!" Jamshed replied, "old things aren't so great… we have ruins (*kharabat*) in Kabul also!" He explained they had already seen several tourist sites in Delhi with Pragya and Arnab, including Lodhi Gardens, but that they were all "just some historical place (*jaiye tarikhi*)… It was nothing so interesting." I asked if they had seen the Persian inscriptions on the tombs at Lodhi Gardens, and Jamshed explained they had seen some tombs but had not gone to look at them as he would rather go "somewhere there is life (*zindagi*), where there is happiness (*ke dil khush mesha*)." It was for this reason that I invited them to the shrine of Nizamuddin Auliya, located between their neighbourhood and the *Sabz Burj*, on a Thursday evening when devotees and musicians throng together to sing and pray in a lively, if hectic, atmosphere.

We had agreed to meet right after sunset prayers, but Jamshed was nowhere to be found and was not answering his phone. When I finally received a call from him, he explained he had not received my calls and was waiting to meet me at the mosque of the international headquarters of the *tablighi jamaat*[120], located at the entrance of the neighbourhood. The *tablighi jamaat* is an international movement based in India, grounded in the *deobandi* spiritual tradition which discourages attending and participating in devotional events at shrines or in other such practices deemed to be cultural accretions to Islam. I looked for Jamshed among the sea of people wearing Arab *thawbs* topped with skullcaps or Tajik *dopas* or West African patterned *kufis*, but could not spot him in the smoke rising from the kebab stands, thickened by the yellow and blue haze cast by the lights from shops and restaurants lining the narrow street. Ultimately, he spotted me, and stepped out of the sea of bodies, clad in a light blue, embroidered *perahan-tunban*[121] and a new skullcap. He explained Rukhsana had not wanted to come, as she did not like crowds or going to shrines. I realized later that while Jamshed was not particularly religiously observant, his views were more aligned with the *deobandi* school and he felt more comfortable in the austere space of the *tablighi jamaat* mosque than in the chaotic, frenzied atmosphere of the shrine. He had politely avoided the shrine without declining to meet me.

I suggested we return to Bhogal for dinner, which was a fifteen-minute walk away, over a bridge crossing a tributary to the Yamuna river. "Can we really walk from here?" Jamshed asked incredulously, "I thought this would be very dangerous." Pragya and Arnab had told him that Delhi was not a safe city in general, that Bhogal in particular was not a safe neighbourhood, and that he should avoid moving around the area alone, especially at night. Their advice was consistent with the general image of Bhogal as a poorer, Muslim neighbourhood, and might have been coloured by an event from just a few months earlier when an Afghan man had murdered his Afghan-American fiancée and tried to flee the country. The advice also reflected Pragya and Arnab's way of living Delhi, where they drove in their own vehicle and

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[120] The Delhi centre draws students from across the globe. The *deobandi* teachings the *jamaat* espouses were also influential in the development of the Taliban movement in Afghanistan and Pakistan (see Maley 1998).

[121] Jamshed usually dressed in jeans and a t-shirt, but had worn traditional clothing perhaps because we were meeting in a religious place.

rarely ventured out of the south Delhi elite neighbourhoods. Nevertheless, I convinced Jamshed to walk back with me.

The footpath was old. In some places the interlocking bricks had come apart, while in others they were missing altogether. A small indentation in the boundary wall running along the road, just before the bridge, had been repeatedly used by pedestrians to relieve themselves and gave off an acrid smell that added to the heavy stench drifting off the sludgy remnants of the tributary flowing under the bridge. The humid summer air magnified the odours, making it impossible to ignore by merely covering our faces with our scarves. Jamshed was not impressed. He started discussing his interactions with auto-rickshaw drivers who would overcharge him, dishonest Afghan interpreters who colluded with the "Punjabis" to charge him extra rent, and remarked how people in Afghanistan valued cleanliness (*safaai wa paaki*): a comment on public urination in India. Jamshed had been born and raised in Kabul and identified as Kabuli. I wondered if in Kabul he had ever gone to the Old City, passed the landfills near *Tamim Saheb Ansar*, or dodged the open sewers flowing near the shrines of *Asheqan wa Arefan*? Had he ever stood by the Kabul river on a summer evening and had to turn away from the sight of men crouching down to relieve themselves? While I did not mention this on the bridge, on another occasion when I did, he suggested these facts were merely results of the social breakdown of war and of illiteracy (*besawadi*).

As we approached the end of the bridge, he became increasingly upset talking about the possibility of having to stay in India and the potential of not being resettled. He stopped suddenly and exclaimed: "They say that India has advanced more than us (*az ma qadar peshraft karda*)! Even in Afghanistan you would not see this!" He held his palm out toward the dried riverbed riddled with garbage and covered in shrub. We resumed walking. With a furrowed brow he asked: "You have a US passport, why are you here? Why don't you go back and enjoy life?" He spoke directly and tersely; his question was almost a verbal assault, a complaint that I was wasting an opportunity he was being denied despite his best efforts. Jamshed's affective experience of the bridge was not just one of fear of an unknown future, but also of a violence and estrangement experienced in his life in Delhi. I return to this issue

below after considering a similar experience I had crossing the same bridge in the opposite direction with Shahrukh.

Shahrukh's Disappointments in Trying to Belong

Not long after the walk with Jamshed, I met with Shahrukh for an afternoon in Lajpat Nagar. We decided to walk to Bhogal to get some food and then continue on to Nizamuddin, where we would eventually cross the same bridge in the opposite direction that I had taken with Jamshed. As we set out from Lajpat Nagar, we discussed Shahrukh's travels across India through the Pashtun moneylender network. Shahrukh recently had bought a new phone and discovered Google maps, which proved useful for him in navigating the city for his job of pamphleteering for the church. Google maps also allowed him to reminisce about places he had been in Afghanistan and India and he would sometimes pull out his phone in the middle of a discussion to clarify the location or name of a place. The sun had already started to set as we walked down a dark dusty road between Lajpat Nagar and Bhogal, and the topic of discussion switched to my recent trip to Bombay. When I mentioned not having time to visit *Makane Sharif*, Shahrukh instinctively reached for his phone. We were surrounded on either side by four-storied eyesores: new buildings built hastily by private individuals, without regard to structural integrity or aesthetic appeal, for renting out at exorbitant prices to medical tourists from Afghanistan and the Middle East, students from Nigeria, or anyone willing to pay Rs 700 per night. Shahrukh stopped under a streetlight and proclaimed chirpily "I found it! Look! Here is Akola!"

Shahrukh followed the road from the train station on his screen, scrolling with his forefinger, pointing out various landmarks, lands belonging to the shrine, and even the buildings of the shrine complex. "It looks like they've built a roof over the inner verandas," he exclaimed, "it was torture to sit there in the summer on that hot marble!" The field-lined Maharashtrian country roads of Akola could not have been further from the road we were walking on. The only resemblance was the train tracks we were walking toward. "You don't understand how happy I am right now," Shahrukh exclaimed as he walked staring at his phone screen. "Looking at this, I feel like I'm walking down the road in Akola. I walked down this road every day when I was there… it was my place (*jaiye ma bud*)." Shahrukh had only ever referred to his village in Paktia as his place (*jaiye ma*).

Shahrukh began telling me again of the numerous statues he had built, pulling up the pictures on his phone as we neared the bridge to Nizamuddin, but as he remembered, his tone changed. "I don't know if I can go back [to Akola] now that I'm Christian," Shahrukh sighed, " Agha Saheb and his brother [the leaders of the shrine] would not mind I'm sure... but all those other Pashtuns... you know how they are." He briefly recounted the story of his expulsion from Wazirabad, discussed in chapter six, and stopped halfway down the bridge. "This could be a picture from Europe," he said, looking at the same debris-strewn riverbed Jamshed had mocked with disdain, "but there are too many people in this country and it stinks!" Europe was somewhere Shahrukh had suggested he could belong, as he felt he would be accepted on account of being Christian; he would sometimes go on Wikipedia or YouTube to learn more about different countries or cultures in Europe or elsewhere, such as Canada or Israel, where he felt he might be able to settle. Delhi, however, which only minutes before had reminded him of "his place" had suddenly come into focus as somewhere he could not belong. In contrast to his elation a few minutes earlier, his mood was now markedly glum. "I'm immensely aggrieved (*besiyar khafa astum*)" he said after a short silence. He reiterated how he was an able-bodied young man and could contribute to any country he lived in, but even India would not accept him (*mara qabul na me konad*). "I'm losing hope day by day (*roz ba roz na-omid meshum*)" he lamented, but then corrected himself, saying that "don't think I've lost faith in God. I know God put me here for a purpose (*maqsad*)."

Belonging and Not Belonging: Analysis

For both Shahrukh and Jamshed, walking across the bridge is an affective experience. The depressing and desolate landscape of the dried riverbed affects them not just visually but through its very atmosphere, through the "unconscious olfactory" (Brennan 2004) that elicits a physical and verbal reaction of disgust ("it stinks!"). With both men, the scene represents and reflects a state where their feelings of alienation appear suspended in the muck and brush below them. Shahrukh gives this state a name in indicating he is aggrieved (*khafa*). As Nichola Khan (2013) suggests in her case study of everyday suffering among Afghan asylum seekers and

refugees in Brighton, *khapgan*[122] expresses personal evaluation of past events or of present suffering without divorcing social and individual experience from that of the material world. Thus even though Shahrukh was able to feel belonging in India and Delhi through his experiences, the reality of being a refugee that barred him from pursuing a life as he wished and the subsequent feelings of rejection and being unwanted were "embedded within a frayed everyday life so that guarantees of belonging... [were] not capable of erasing the hurts or providing means of repairing this sense of being betrayed by the everyday" (Das 2007:9).

Unlike Shahrukh, Jamshed's feelings of not belonging in Delhi appear as a labour to avoid connection to the city. As mentioned in the previous chapter, Jamshed and Rukhsana had fled Afghanistan following Jamshed's release from capture and torture by the Taliban. Afghanistan was a place to which they could not return and to which they did not wish to return. What was problematic for Jamshed was that Delhi was not different enough from Afghanistan. His constant evaluation of Delhi against Afghanistan was not one of differentiation but of comparison: both places had old ruins, were equally underdeveloped in his opinion, and dangerous. Jamshed thus experienced as alienating and traumatic the very landscape and networks that afforded Ali and Musa Saheb a feeling of belonging in the city.

Trauma is of course not just the product of an event, such as torture in Jamshed's case, but also includes the "ongoing psychic, emotional, embodied, interpersonal life" (Lester 2013:758) connected to and affected by the traumatic event, where emotions and memories of trauma persist in the background of everyday life, shaping personal experience and social relationships (Das 1995; Kirmayer *et al* 2007). Jamshed had only mentioned his torture to me in passing, but would speak directly with Pragya, who indicated she had "deleted from [her] mind" much of what he told her, but that he "was tortured for a good amount of time...and also humiliated." Pragya maintained that "it seemed [Jamshed] had not processed what had happened to him... just saying whatever came in his mouth...[without any] time to think, process, reflect... [he was] very much in a state of 'I'm still running'." It is this state that shaped Jamshed's

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[122] In different Pashto dialects the 'p' and 'f' sounds are interchanged. Shahrukh's use of "*khafa*" instead of "*khapa*" might also have been due to his speaking to me in Dari rather than Pashto. Khan translates *khapgan* as "feeling down". In both Jamshed and Shahrukh's case, the feeling is not just of being down, but also of being cheated out of a chance at making a life. This aspect is also present in Khan's ethnography.

perception of Delhi as dangerous, reconfirmed by events, such as the murder in Bhogal, that recalled the situation in Afghanistan. The suspicion of imminent violence in the context of Delhi caused Jamshed and Rukhsana to avoid other Afghans and stay at home unless they were meeting with Pragya.

Compounding this fear of physical violence was a concern that the present, untenable situation would not come to an end.

> "There are people who have been here waiting for eight or nine years … who… sold their house, car, land to come here in search of a peaceful life … and [here] their situation has worsened and the money gets eaten up and nothing is left."

Jamshed had only saved enough money to live in Delhi for a year, and was aware that if they didn't get resettled he had no other source of financial support. His everyday life was thus also imbued with concerns of the violence of possibly having to return to Afghanistan or endure penury in India. His coping mechanism was to retract from the city and pore over websites of organizations that might be able to help him and Rukhsana. After six months, when the US Embassy accepted his case, he established a regular routine of meeting with Pragya to practice for various interviews with the Embassy, UNHCR, and IOM. Luckily, Jamshed was resettled before he reached his financial limit.

Shahrukh and Jamshed thus present two different forms of not belonging in Delhi. While Shahrukh's alienation is the result of a structural denial of his ability to belong in Delhi, Jamshed labours to disassociate himself from the city. Jamshed's feelings of not belonging in Delhi are, in a way, a response to the undesired possibility of belonging. The two men's experiences illustrate that Afghan migrants can simultaneously feel they belong in Delhi and also feel excluded or estranged from the city. The stories further suggest that feelings of belonging and not belonging are not necessarily conversely related but corollary depending on context. Compared to each other and to the accounts preceding them, the two men's examples also highlight the differing degrees to which individual migrants can exercise control over how they are connected or not connected to Delhi, and point to different degrees of impact of state scale understandings of Afghan belonging in the city on individual migrants' experience of belonging in the city. I return to this issue in the conclusion below.

5.4 Conclusion

In late 2014 Ali was going through a tough time. A miscalculation by the university bureaucracy left him suddenly without a visa for a short period, during which he had to leave the country. Without a valid visa, his phone was disconnected and he lost his housing spot. Upon his return to Delhi, he was in temporary lodging, without a phone, and had limited internet access. His infrequent Facebook posts lamented current events in Afghanistan and India, such as the Indian Prime Minister's Hindu nationalist speeches asserting ancient Indian knowledge of plastic surgery and aeroplanes, or Saudi Arabia's funding of a multimillion mosque complex in Kabul. He also posted status updates of encounters with the Indian bureaucracy. After an incident where he was made to feel particularly like a foreigner, he posted the following:

> It is so difficult when others impose their identity on you. It is so difficult to be recognized with a term which does not have any relation with your past. It is so difficult when some one else owns something belongs [sic] to you... will that day come in which we could own our history, our true identity and our true position?

The post drew a long chain of comments and arguments around the issue of what it means to be Afghan and the shared history of India, Afghanistan, and Iran. Indians, Afghans, and Iranians living in different parts of the world engaged in commenting on and discussing the post with Ali and with each other. His Indian friends commented on how he was always welcome and that Afghanistan was an ally to India, while Afghans and Iranian friends of his argued with each other on issues of nationalism, shared history, and the place of the past in one's identity. The chain ended abruptly and inconclusively as people lost steam.

Indeed, the multiple opinions on how Afghanistan is and is not connected to India or Iran that Ali's friends present, reflect the reality conveyed in the narratives and stories presented in the sections above. In attending to experience at the scale of individuals, this chapter argues that what it means to belong in Delhi as Afghan must be understood as a multiple, grounded in the various trajectories and networks of movement, language, and history that place Afghan migrants in Delhi and which migrants draw on in relating to the city. It echoes research in urban settings that acknowledges the diversity of scales at which urban dwellers and migrants articulate belonging and at which their relationship to the city is mediated (Glick

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Schiller *et al* 2006; Hannerz 1992; Harzig and Juteau 2006), suggesting a condition of "super-diversity" (Vertovec 2007) in the potential forms of identity and ways of belonging available to transnational migrants. Similar to Henkel's (2007) description of the complex ways of inhabiting Istanbul in a Muslim way, the accounts of Afghan belonging in Delhi presented above relate how individual Afghan migrants recognize heterogeneous of forms of belonging in the city that they order or transcend within their own experience of belonging in Delhi.

Acknowledging the multiplicity of what it means to be and belong in Delhi as Afghan does not however suggest a relativism "unable to say much except noting how complicated and interconnected everything is" (Bloch 2005:13). Against the panoply of belonging suggested in the individual stories, the context within which Ali wrote his post draws attention to the issue of scale as impact (Jiménez 2005; Strathern 1991, 1999) as discussed in chapter two. While at the individual scale Ali articulates his belonging in Delhi through different orderings of place and time (will a present arrive in which "we could own our history"?), he is not in complete control of how his life is affected by the state-level conception of where he belongs. This theme runs throughout the stories presented in both this chapter and chapter four and illustrates what Massey (1993) has termed the "power-geometry" of how transnational flows and processes affect people differently and unequally.

The argument of this chapter that there are multiple ways in which Afghans belong in Delhi, relates to a more general argument of the thesis that while Afghan migrants in Delhi have the capacity to belong to the city in multiple ways articulated at different epistemological scales, not all individuals possess equal ability to belong in the city as they desire in their day-to-day life. As briefly mentioned in chapter four, when the experiences of the different men discussed above are compared against each another, a gradient emerges that connects the access to financial and social resources with the ability each man has to belong in Delhi in the way he desires.

Ali, Shahrukh, and Amirkhel possess limited agency in asserting their belonging in the city. Even though Ali, who has limited financial stability through a scholarship and some savings, considers himself at home in Delhi, he is obliged to leave when his visa runs out and the state deems his presence in Delhi as unlawful. While Shahrukh

might feel he is in his "place" in Delhi, his status as a refugee disallows recognition of this sentiment and prevents him from pursuing official avenues that would allow him to live a life he sees as worth living, where he could earn a living and have a family. The state-level understandings of being and belonging as Afghan in Delhi thus impact Ali and Shahrukh's experience of belonging in the city with greater magnitude than the perceptions they hold as individuals. Similarly, though Amirkhel does not feel he belongs in Delhi and wishes to leave the city, as a young man without financial resources he is beholden to his family and the Pashtun network that brought him to the city and must thus remain in Delhi.

In contrast, Jamshed, Musa Saheb, Khiyalay, and Akhtar possess relatively more facility in living in the city as they desire. For Jamshed and Musa Saheb, it is primarily through their access to social resources that their way of inhabiting Delhi is facilitated. Had Jamshed not had the support of the NGO and Pragya, it is unlikely he would have been able to move around the city in the way he did or be resettled so quickly. In the absence of these social resources, he would instead have had to face the reality of making a life in Delhi like other refugees and asylum seekers. Similarly, as an unregistered economic migrant, Musa Saheb would not have been able to maintain his lifestyle or undertake his political efforts without the financial support of his son and connections among Afghan intelligentsia in Delhi and abroad. As Musa Saheb, Khiyalay, and Akhtar all indicated in different ways, it is their financial resources that allow them to maintain their lifestyles outside the restrictions of the state through getting jobs, doing business, and bribing police. Perhaps, while there might be multiple ways to belong as Afghan in Delhi, to be able to belong in the city might be, as Khiyalay suggested, contingent on access to social and financial resources so that "If you have money, you have everything."

Figure 4: Ali's Door Decoration

The plastic cut out in the shape of Afghanistan with the *basmala* is adorned with glitter. I have removed Ali's name from the centre of the sign.

Figure 5: Ali's Hand Drawn Map

The map covers the regions Ali studies and moves through.

6. Afghan Community in Delhi

In late June, I set out to Old Delhi on a mission to find a printing press. As explained in chapter one, when I first arrived in the city, I struggled to find an Afghan 'community' and initially tried to do so by seeking out poets, artists, and musicians. This search continued alongside the other streams of research throughout my time in Delhi. Over the summer I had learned through an Afghan living in Delhi since the 1980s that a publishing press in the Old Delhi neighbourhood of Ballimaran used to print a Persian language biweekly for the city's Afghan community through the mid-1990s, and had also published works of several Delhi-based Afghan poets and writers at the time. Armed with just this loose description, I headed to Sharif Manzil: an old building in Ballimaran that was the erstwhile centre of Afghan commercial activity in the city but now housed only a smattering of half-empty Afghan shops, a one-room travel agency, and a spartan Afghan restaurant that claimed to be Delhi's first Afghan restaurant. As none of the traders at Sharif Manzil had heard of the publishing house, I decided to ask shopkeepers along Ballimaran's main road. Hugging the sides of the road to avoid the steady stream of rickshaws, motorcycles, and pedestrians struggling past each other through the din of bells, beeps, and shouting, I finally came across a newspaper vendor in one of the alleys off the main road. The man kindly pointed me in the direction of a bookseller who in turn led me to the Sohrab Press.

The whirring and clanking of large machinery filled what was most probably once the courtyard of a small *haveli* off the main artery of Ballimaran. The strong fumes of rubber and glue indicated the existence of the press. In one corner of the courtyard was a small office with wood panelling and tinted glass that housed two desks and several shelves filled with magazines, books, and uneven stacks of loose-leaf papers. A lone calendar with a mountain scene and the Sohrab press logo graced the bare, peeling yellow walls. The publisher, Mirza Saheb, a slight man with a greying beard and full head of hair, was sitting at his desk and looked up apprehensively as I walked in and introduced myself. I briefly explained I was conducting research on Afghans living in Delhi and that I wished to know if anyone was publishing or had been publishing in Persian or Pashto in the capital. His eyes lit up at the mention of

Afghanistan. "The people of Afghanistan are very good (*achchhe log*)... We used to work with the Embassy of Afghanistan," he explained. Mirza Saheb called for two cups of tea, indicating we would talk for a while.

I met with Mirza Saheb regularly over the next several months. He explained that Sohrab Press had printed many materials for the Afghanistan Embassy in Delhi until the mid 1990s, including a monthly newsletter for the city's Afghan community. Many of the embassy staff and local Afghan residents also published their books of poetry and short stories through Sohrab, though Mirza Saheb regretted they did not have any copies left. "I'm sure you can find them at the embassy," he suggested, "you know, they had the Indo-Afghan society, where they would get together and have poetry nights (*mushairas*) and readings (*nashists*)... We used to publish in Farsi, but there is nobody to read it anymore." Mirza Saheb lamented how even readership in Urdu had dwindled over the last decade and with it so had an interest in Urdu poetry and literature, with the result that Sohrab now mostly only published works in English.

On one occasion, I arrived at Mirza Saheb's office just as a former colleague of his was getting ready to leave. "This is Mr Ramprasad my esteemed teacher," Mirza Saheb said introducing him deferentially, "he is a great master (*ustad*) of Farsi, Sanskrit, and Urdu." During introductions Mr Ramprasad explained he was from one of the original (*asli*) Hindu families of Old Delhi and that he was a little boy at the time of the partition of India and Pakistan. He lamented the decline of Urdu and Persian in Delhi and asserted that these languages had been integral to keeping the community of Delhi together. When he found out I was working with Afghans in Delhi, Mr Ramprasad exclaimed that many Afghans used to live in Old Delhi, but now it is mostly just "these business-types" (*yeh businesswaale*) one came across. Mirza Saheb voiced in agreement that "those Afghans" of earlier times had unfortunately left. After Mr Ramprasad excused himself, I asked Mirza Saheb whom he meant by 'those Afghans'.

> "You know, the Afghan people who were here before were in dire straits (*bure halaat*). The Communists had taken their country, but they were very good (*achche*) and refined (*shaista*) people. They all ended up going to different places."

I asked him if he was in touch with anyone, and his eyes went misty. "No," he said with a contemplative pause and wiped away a tear as he remembered "there was an Abdulhamid Saheb at the embassy. He was very good to me."

Mirza Saheb recounted a story of Abdulhamid Saheb's last day in Delhi before leaving for Canada. Many people had gathered at his office at the embassy, and they had been discussing a book Sohrab Press had just published. One by one, people left until Mirza Saheb was the last person there. Abdulhamid Saheb asked him if he had understood the discussion and, as he didn't understand Dari, Abdulhamid Saheb explained it was a story about a red ant that had gotten separated from its colony and found its way into a colony of black ants. As much as it wanted to become a part of the colony, it never could. "You understand what the meaning (*maane*) [of the story] was, right?" Mirza Saheb asked, "about not being accepted (*qabul*) among strangers (*ghairon ke beech*)." Mirza Saheb regretted having lost touch with Abdulhamid Saheb. "He was very good to me and helped me a lot with the press," he reminisced. The discussion had made him melancholy and as an afterthought he added, "Groups are made and broken when people leave (*log aate hein aur jaate hein, groups banti hein, phir tooth jaati hein*)… [the people at the embassy] gave me a lot of affection (*bahut chaaha unhu ne mujhe*)."

Near the end of the summer, I found out that Abdulhamid Saheb had recently returned to work at the Afghanistan Embassy in Delhi, and I arranged to meet him. He was keen to meet with me to discuss my research, explaining how he had studied in Delhi and had even supervised Afghan doctoral students in the city. When we met at the embassy, he was surprised to learn I was not an Afghan national and was unimpressed with my decision to work with refugees in Delhi. "What will they tell you about Afghan culture?" he asked. He explained that I was wasting my time trying to find forms of community among Afghan refugees and insisted that I should instead go back to working on the *Kharabati* musicians of Kabul. When he realized I was not going to change my research focus, he became disinterested and disengaged.

To save the conversation, I mentioned Sohrab press. He remembered Mirza Saheb and asked for his contact details as he had something to publish. I asked Abdulhamid Saheb about the books and newsletters from the 80s and he said "yes, they're all in

the library, but they will not be of interest to you. They just have information about daily occurrences (*rawidadhaye rozmarrah*)." I tried to explain the documents' value as historical snapshots of Delhi's Afghan community in the 80s and 90s, but he was unimpressed and did not consider it a relevant academic pursuit. For the remainder of my time in Delhi, Abdulhamid Saheb avoided me, cancelling our appointments at the last minute, and I never got to visit the embassy library. He did, however get in touch with Mirza Saheb, who called me to convey his thanks for reconnecting him with his old friend. The last time I met Mirza Saheb he explained he was quite busy and could not chat for too long. He recounted with joy how he had already met Abdulhamid Saheb twice and would be printing several items for him. It appeared he had perhaps again found the community he felt was lost.

The story of Mirza Saheb and Abdulhamid Saheb provides a good starting point for this final ethnographic chapter on Afghan community in Delhi, illustrating several conceptions of community. Where the previous chapters approached what it means to be and belong in Delhi at the scale of the individual, this chapter attends to the scale of community to explore how Afghan migrants inhabit the city. The chapter argues that there are multiple forms of Afghan community in Delhi, shaped by the different processes constituting Afghan migrants as persons and connecting them to the city. In considering two particular forms of Afghan community, the Refugee Solidarity Committee and the Pashtun moneylender network, the chapter treats the concept of community itself as multiple in order to appreciate the variability in forms and meanings of community present in the ethnographic material, and to consider what this variability relates of the broader context of Afghan migrants in Delhi

As discussed in chapter three, at the state scale, Afghan community in Delhi is thought of as singular, grounded in Afghan migrants feelings of commitment to one another through shared national belonging. Anthropological work on nationalism and state-building illustrates how this abstract idea of persons being connected by their mutual belonging to a state is cultivated through mobilization of media, educational systems, and state administration that shape individuals' ideas and experiences of their place in the nation through the exclusion of others (Anderson 2006; Messick 1993). Abdulhamid Saheb's sentiments toward the Afghan refugees in Delhi, however, illustrate how, in one sense, community "is never simply the

recognition of cultural similarity of social contiguity but a categorical identity that is premised on various forms of exclusion and construction of otherness" (Gupta and Ferguson 1997:13). Thus, despite a shared national origin with Afghan refugees, Abdul Hamid Saheb did not consider them as part of his community and did not believe that I would find any sense of Afghan community through working with them. As discussed in chapter three, many Afghans in Delhi who were not refugees suspected Afghan refugees in the city of having abandoned their country for economic profit. Abdulhamid Saheb's feelings toward the Afghan refugees illustrate the symbolic nature of community as based on variable logics of identity (Cohen 1985), showing how Afghan community in Delhi is not necessarily coterminous with shared national origin, but can also reflect distinctions based on identities of different social groups and individuals.

While Abdulhamid Saheb might have not considered Afghan refugees as part of what he saw as Delhi's Afghan community, he did see the Mirza Saheb as a part of this community despite Mirza Saheb's not being an Afghan national or a Persian speaker. Mirza Saheb similarly considered himself part of the this community, not as an Afghan, but through his involvement in printing materials and in possessing the same values of the "good" (*achche*) and "refined" (*shaista*) Afghans who shared his sentiments toward language and culture. One might thus consider the Indo-Afghan society as an Afghan "community of sentiment" (Appadurai 1996:8) where individuals from a range of social backgrounds and contexts come together through imagining and feeling together through "fields of shared belonging" (Olwig 2002:124) that involve both imagination and experience. Community thus does not exist solely at a cognitive level. As Barth argues with regard to ethnic belonging, while individuals and groups develop complex reifications of social categories with social consequences on organization and perception of self and other, communities are not formed "by the mere act of imagining" (1994:13) but also through social interaction. That is, community is not just a stable reification of an imagined group identity, but a variable process dependent on the social interaction of individuals. This nature of community comes forth in the Mirza Saheb's reflection on how groups coalesce and disperse through the movement of people and is expressed in his sense of loss of community associated with Abdulhamid Saheb's departure and his

subsequent rejoicing at the potential revival of this community through Abdulhamid Saheb's return.

This last fact raises two points that are returned to in the chapter below. It suggests rupture and division might equally be an aspect of community as much as integration and cooperation. As discussed in the introduction to this thesis, research on Afghanistan, has addressed the aspect of fracturing of community among Afghans in different ways. Edwards has suggested it is a result of a "moral incoherence" (1996:3) of Afghan identity stemming from the multiple frameworks through which notions of what it means to be Afghan are imagined. Barth (1959a, 1959b) points to traditional kinship structures and their development in a context where corporate groups vie for limited natural resources. The story of Abdulhamid Saheb above suggests another factor might be the movement of people, where, as Mirza Saheb pointed out, groups are formed and broken as people come and go. This observation relates a second point regarding the nature of community and how different forms of community overlap. The Indo-Afghan society might be considered a community based on a social group of individuals with shared relationships to Afghanistan or literary culture, but it also appears to have been part of Abdulhamid Saheb's personal network that drifted apart following his departure.

The example of Abdulhamid Saheb and Mirza Saheb presents several considerations of Afghan community in Delhi as built on social categories, groups, or personal networks. Some have suggested this multiplicity of what community is and means in different contexts renders the term too ambiguous for use as an analytic concept (see Creed 2006). As Barth's (1983) study of society in the Omani coastal town of Sohar depicts, however, the existence of multiple forms of community premised on differing grounds of association is a feature of complex society, and recognizing this complexity affords an understanding of the social context within which the differing forms of communities exist. In a broader theoretical consideration, Amit and Rappaport (2002, 2012) have suggested that rather than eschewing the variety of ways in which ideas of community are created or invoked, the very notion of community can be treated as a polythetic concept to productively examine and compare conditions for and concepts of consociation across various forms of community. The three sections in the chapter below turn to ideas of community with this aim.

Instead of delineating a singular concept of Afghan community in Delhi, the sections below consider two different kinds of Afghan community in the city and the forms of association they present. The first section examines the rise and fall of the Refugee Solidarity Committee and how this community, premised on a category envisioned at the state scale, is shaped and affected by the emotional context of fear and suspicion. The second section attends to the Pashtun moneylender network and how it presents a form of community built around trade and trust. The chapter concludes with reflecting on what the differences between these forms of Afghan community in Delhi might reveal more generally.

6.1 Lajpat Nagar Refugees: W(h)ither the Afghan Community?

Two weeks into my fieldwork, hoping to perhaps make contacts or find out if there were Afghan students I could liaise with, I had arranged to meet with a prominent Indian sociologist based at Ali's university. The Sociologist regretted not being able to provide any information, but offered me moral support. "I know you anthropologists like participant observation," the Sociologist tried to console me, "but the best thing to do is simply go to Lajpat Nagar market and do a survey of the Afghan community." Named after Lala Lajpat Rai, the Punjabi freedom fighter, Lajpat Nagar was one of several areas of Delhi specifically planned and developed in post-partition Delhi to house Sindhi and Punjabi refugees arriving from what is now Pakistan. Initially considered a poorer part of town, Lajpat Nagar's fortune has changed considerably over the last decades and the neighbourhood has come to emblematize the nouveau riche, mercantile Punjabi class[123]. Since the 1980s, Lajpat Nagar and the adjoining lower-class neighbourhood of Bhogal have become known

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[123] The 2013 Bollywood blockbuster *Vicky Donor* celebrated this image through the rags to riches story of the protagonist, Vicky, who made it quick and big through sperm donation. Though Vicky might not have had 'class', he is shown as capitalizing on his virile, Punjabi manliness to transform his lower-middle class Lajpat Nagar house into a little mansion, buying appliances like a flat screen TV, modernising his mother's modest ground-floor beauty parlour, and marrying a sophisticated upper-class Bengali woman from the upscale Chittaranjan Park area of Delhi. Like Vicky, there is a part of central market that still caters to middle class tastes, but also a part that is accessible only to upper class clientele.

as a centre of the Afghan population in Delhi, and the UNHCR would mostly hold its open meetings with the Afghan community in Lajpat Nagar[124].

Afghans are, in fact, present throughout the city, and during the cooler months from September through April one can hear Pashto and Dari spoken on the streets of almost any of the central Delhi neighbourhoods. Unlike other parts of the city, however, Lajpat Nagar and Bhogal have come to possess a particular material Afghan presence. Many shops have put up signs in Dari, written by painters who do not know the meaning of the words or understand the Perso-Arabic script[125]. "For me it's a like a design. They just show me the drawing and I copy it," a painter once explained to me while working on a sign from left to right[126] (Figure 7). A number of Afghan *naanwais* (bakers) have opened up shop throughout the neighbourhoods and there are five Afghan restaurants within the 2 km^2 area, one of which has now become a chain with sister restaurants in Old Delhi and Malviya Nagar (areas frequented and inhabited by Afghans in Delhi). The entire area of Kasturba Niketan, a neighbourhood within Lajpat Nagar located two blocks from the central market, has come to be completely rented out to mostly Afghans at exorbitant rates, with single rooms starting at Rs 700-1500 per night. Almost every house has a sign outside advertising available rooms, and the boundary walls are plastered with posters in Dari and English advertising companies with properties for rent. Even signs indicating fines for littering are in Dari, English, and Hindi.

Aside from signs and shops, Afghan presence is felt in Lajpat Nagar through the very bodies of Afghans that move through the market and the local economies they produce through this movement. The people most easily recognisable as Afghan are the men dressed in *perahan-tunban[127]* and women in headscarves and dark coloured dresses with a light coat. Generally, the people wearing 'traditional' Afghan dress are middle-aged or older, either Pashtuns or people from Mazar-e-Sharif, and quite often medical tourists. During my fieldwork, Afghan men's "Pathani" suits became

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[124] This is not an entirely random choice. As a UNHCR representative explained to me, it is a neighbourhood where many Afghan and Somali refugees reside, which is easily accessible by the metro and bus system, and where a large meeting space is available through the Lal Sai Temple.

[125] This is, unfortunately, the same for many official signs in Urdu across the city, which are practically illegible. The Dari signs in the Muslim area of Hauz Rani in Malviya Nagar are beautifully written, but I never met with a sign maker there.

[126] Rather than the direction Dari is written in: right to left.

[127] Afghan tunic and trousers.

quite popular in the area. Once, dressed in *perahan-tunban* myself, I got caught in the rain under a shop awning with a tailor's assistant at one of the many suiting shops in the market. The man asked where I had bought my 'suit', and I told him it was from Kabul. "It was probably made here," he said blandly, "many of your people commission suits here and then we have to send them to Afghanistan." He explained his shop would regularly courier boxes of clothes to Afghanistan and Pakistan for "private" people (*private log*) who would come to Delhi to buy things wholesale. "Here as well, young people like you like to get Pathani suits made," he added "It is the new fashion." In general, except perhaps on religious holidays, most refugees and young Afghan tourists in Lajpat Nagar would dress in the same hip, trendy clothes as other young people, following global fashion trends. Particularly in the cooler months, the market would be full of young Afghan men down from Kabul or Kandahar on their way to a boozy holiday in Goa or Kerala. They could often be seen checking out knock-off Ray-Bans, daring each other to eat spicy street food, and generally having a good time.

After returning from fieldwork, I was listening to a recording of a conversation I had with Musa Saheb in a Lajpat Nagar park; audible in the background was a conversation of two men sitting near us. During a lull in our conversation one of the men could be heard remarking how "There are many Afghans here now… this whole area has become an Afghan settlement (*basti*)." The local economies of property rentals, prostitution, retail, food, and even fashion created by the large presence of Afghan migrants in Lajpat Nagar can give the impression of a tightly knit Afghan community. Afghans can be seen in the market, in shops and cafes, and standing in line at the many *naanwais*. Yet, as related in chapter one through my encounter with a Lajpat Nagar *naanwai*, Afghans in Lajpat Nagar and elsewhere in the city were adamant that not only did Afghans in Delhi not live as a community, but that it was not possible given the lack of empathy (*hamdardi*) and cooperation (*hamkari*) among Afghans in the city. In this section, I first explore what this alleged lack of community feeling might suggest, using the example of the establishment and dissolution of the Refugee Solidarity Committee (RSC) in the neighbourhood.

Hamdardi and Afghan Community: What's Emotion Got to Do with It?

In chapter one, I describe how Afghan migrants' consistent disavowal of the existence of an Afghan community or of *hamdardi* between Afghans in Delhi led me to realize how my own fixation on these terms was grounded in my own flawed conception of what it meant to be or feel a part of a community. I began to explore what it meant that there was no *hamdardi* among Afghans in Delhi, and started paying attention to how Afghan migrants talked about community. It struck me that most people did not generally refer to an "Afghan community" (*jam`eh afghan*), but rather spoke more broadly about "Afghans" (*afghan-ha*), which could refer at the same time to all Afghans in Delhi (or even beyond), or be qualified to refer to groups based on neighbourhood, ethno-religious background, refugee generation, and so on. "*Jam`eh afghan*" and the English equivalent "Afghan community" was used only by the UNHCR in distinction to other refugee communities. Through its activities, the UNHCR created spaces and events aimed at an "Afghan community", but it appeared this "Afghan community" existed only as a category imagined at the state level. Yet even a refugee caseworker once related to me:

> "Afghans will also help each other… [from] their own tribes or [ethnic/religious] community, but only up to a point (*lekin ek had tak*) … after that they will begin undermining each other (*ek dusrey ka jad katna shuru kar deingey*, lit. they will start cutting each other's roots)."

Afghan migrants I met in Delhi would not just deny the existence of social ideals of empathy (*hamdardi*), cooperation (*hamkari*), or humanity (*bashar dosti*) among Afghans in the city, but averred that Afghans instead lied to one another (*drogh megand*), treated each other with suspicion (*badgumani*), and cheated one another (*duzdi mikonand*). It was considered that the presence of these more antisocial modes of behaviour and absence of the more positive emotions mentioned earlier resulted in a lack of social bonds and in disunity (*ma Afghanha yekja nistem*). There were several reasons people gave for the situation. Some Afghans, particularly non-refugees and those from older refugee generations, suggested that these were Pakistani cultural influences (*aadathaye pakistani*) particular to newer refugees who had previously been displaced in Pakistan. Musa Saheb believed it was due to a lack of national sentiment among Afghans (*hiss milli*), and others proffered that it was just the nature of Afghans (*hemin tor astan*) to behave this way wherever they are.

The majority of responses I received from refugees, however, were very straightforward and realistic in relating that it was the nature of being a refugee in India that disallowed Afghans from being able to feel connected to one another. As discussed in chapter three, to be accepted as refugees, asylum seekers must recount a story of migration that fits the narrative expected by the UNHCR. This fact not only resulted in many Afghan asylum seekers having to create or alter their stories, but also produced an economy of advice on not sharing one's story with others. As Jamshed expressed in chapter three, this process created refugees as objects of suspicion. The perception that migrants "misuse" (*su istefada mi konand*) refugee status as a ticket to the west was seen to justify the UNHCR's suspicion of Afghan refugees and asylum seekers. It also created an environment where Afghan refugees would accuse others of having fabricated cases (*case-haye sakhtagi*). In this context, where everyone's story might have been altered, there was a sentiment that it was better to avoid sustained contact with other Afghans one did not know, lest they find out about the particularities of one's case.

Of course, as suggested by the ethnographic accounts in the other chapters, refugees did not generally hang out or congregate in public places, but did rely on small circles of friends or family for support. On the one hand this was because of the context of distrust and suspicion in which refugees encountered others in public places. However, after having spent a harrowing first six months in Delhi, Jamshed suggested another reason Afghans in Lajpat Nagar and Bhogal did not congregate or get to know each other was because of the sense of incapacity that permeated their daily lives. Without the right to work or pursue higher education, most refugees were either working illegally or unemployed and dependent on support from relatives, friends, or other connections abroad. Jamshed suggested that in this context, which individuals found deeply depressing, meeting with others in the same situation only entrenched one's own feelings of unhappiness.

> "What benefit does [meeting with others] have? ... one does these things out of joy (*az dil-khushi mesha*). If you are always free (*bekar*), what meaning is there to going on outings (*chakkar raftan*)? ... everyone is [always] sitting around outside talking, they get bored [of just talking]."

The reasons raised by refugees for a lack of community in Delhi demonstrate the relational aspect of emotion. As referenced in previous chapters, research on emotion has considered how emotional experience arises from the interplay of cognition, embodiment, and social context (Abu-Lughod and Lutz 1990; Elster 2000; Lutz and White 1986). Ahmed (2004) pushes these considerations further to suggest bodies and persons exist in affective economies where emotions, as material rhetoric, shape and align them with or apart from others. That is, emotions are not just something felt from within or incited from without, but are also palpably extant between and among persons while also working within and through them. Thinking in these terms, one can consider how at the state scale, Afghan migrants are created as persons within a context of suspicion that shapes how they perceive others and also affects how they understand others perceive them. Paradoxically, it is in this context of suspicion of each other at this scale that the category of Afghan Community is imagined as a way to bring individuals together.

It would be erroneous to consider, however, that Afghans did not or could not conceive of belonging together at the state scale, as the case of the RSC related below indicates. Interestingly, the emotions refugees cited as creating an atmosphere for actions (or lack of actions) preventing Afghans from coming together, e.g. fear (*tars*), distress (*parishani*, *na-aaraami*), or anxiety (*aasebe kharab, narahati*), could also in some instances allow for moments of coming together through recognition that these were shared emotions among Afghan refugees. At the most transient level, one might consider a chance discussion in a waiting room or shop where two refugees would lament the predicament of the state of being a refugee, only to part ways politely before the discussion got too personal. For newcomers, this was seen initially as a sign of Delhi's Afghan refugees being cold-hearted (*dilsard*) or unfeeling (*behiss*), and then later as a necessary technique for self-preservation. That is, while one could identify with another refugee's capacity to feel the same fear, suspicion, or anxiety that one felt, the context of these emotions also presented the other refugee as a potential object of these very emotions. To examine how this process played out at the scale understanding of Afghan community, I now turn to the story of the RSC.

As discussed in chapter four, the RSC began as a personal project of Musa Saheb and some of his colleagues, and it was through attending RSC meetings that I first met Musa Saheb. He would later explain how he had started the organization with two aims: (1) to cultivate a 'national sentiment' among Afghans in Delhi, through (2) bringing together in one group those whose cases, like his, had been rejected by the UNHCR, and those recognized refugees who did not receive the proper protection and aid due to them. I had heard of the RSC from a poster at a *naanwai* printed on an A4 sheet of paper. Musa Saheb and his circle of acquaintances had been distributing the flyers to shops and individuals in Lajpat Nagar and other Afghan areas of the city. The signs were in Dari and stated the following:

Communiqué

All Afghan migrants (*muhajireen*) residing in Delhi are informed that the UNHCR, with the Afghan Refugee Solidarity Committee, has set a date for an open meeting aimed at assessing the problems faced by Afghan migrants and possible solutions for the 7th of May 2012. We thus earnestly request all Afghan migrants residing in Delhi to write down all their problems on a piece of paper and submit it to a member of the Afghan Refugee Solidarity Committee on Sunday, 29th April, 2012 at 3:00PM at the Defence Colony mosque[128].

With respect,

Head of the Afghan Refugee Solidarity Committee

Note: For more information kindly contact the numbers below. [Four telephone numbers had been written by hand at the bottom of each flyer.]

Initially, people I spoke to about the RSC did not pay much heed to the circulated announcements. Many I spoke with about the RSC expressed scepticism indicating variously that "they say they want to help people, but they just want to get themselves to the west." Other refugees suggested the association was doomed to failure like others that had come before it. They alluded to a predecessor committee

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[128] The Defence Colony mosque was the main mosque serving Lajpat Nagar residents and frequented by many Afghans in Lajpat Nagar.

founded by a Qizilbash Saheb that also aimed to engage with the UNHCR on behalf of Afghan refugees. It was rumoured Qizilbash Saheb disbanded the original association either because he had been duped by the UNHCR into believing he would be resettled in Canada or because goons allayed with the UNHCR had threatened him to shut down the committee. One refugee suggested that there had been an even earlier iteration of the RSC before Qizilbash Saheb's efforts, but that there were no longer any refugees from that time left to remember it and learn from its failure.

Over several months, the committee held a number of meetings and more people started to attend. Negotiations began to take place with the UNHCR to have it recognized as an official Afghan refugee organization. The meetings I attended largely focused on the dishonesty and lack of transparency of the UNHCR in dealing with Afghans. Committee members and attendees aired concerns that the UNHCR was underhandedly trying to weaken and quash the RSC. Examples were presented of how the UNHCR was lying to committee members, and stories were exchanged of goons (*gundaha*) who had threatened committee members and others attending meetings. Several months later, some people suggested the stories were fabrications used to rile up attendees' feelings. In the moment, however, the allegations were real and provided proof of how the UNHCR could not be trusted.

The meetings also took the form of people coming to give testimony or tell their story to the committee. The majority of the stories rested upon the unwillingness of the UNHCR to aid individuals. The meetings thus had a specific emotional function of expressing the dissatisfaction, anger, and frustration felt by attendees as a result of not being recognized or not having one's problems acknowledged by the UNHCR. The blame was almost always placed on the UNHCR and its blindness to, or worse, distrust of refugees' claims and problems. "My case was rejected and every day I go to the UNHCR [to petition them]," one man related to me at the meeting

> "I have problems there! At home there's no money and the landlord is always knocking at the door! My child is sick and doesn't eat anything! I'm standing, watching over it all night long and I can't get the medicine it needs! How could I not lose my mind (*aasebe ma chetor kharab na mesha*)?!"

He counted out his problems on his fingers, opening them from a fist, slamming his fist into his other hand as others standing around us nodding to the cadence of his fist, gasping or voicing their acknowledgement and agreement.

These meetings were in essence examples of *hamdardi*, where people were coming together to share each other's feelings of anger and frustration and address them together. Unfortunately, as somebody who could not be seen to share the sense of resentment in the same way, I was eventually ejected from a meeting by one of the committee members. "Do you have any problems yourself [like the people here]?" the committee member had asked me publically, "can you solve these peoples' problems?" Before giving me a chance to respond, he stated sternly that "You have no business being here and you have no need to come here. I'm requesting you to kindly never bring your presence to any future meetings; this is a very serious (*besiyar jiddi*) request!" Musa Saheb tried to reason with the committee member who insisted "we have no need for outsiders (*kharijiha*) ... it's at their hands that we have been divided (*tikka shodem*)... [and] our country blown to smithereens (*tota-tota shoda ast*)."

However, even among those who could participate in the emotional context of the RSC, not everyone felt comfortable. One man from Old Delhi who travelled to several meetings, related to me at my first RSC meeting how it felt good to be among one's own people (*dar bayne mardome ma*). Soon after I was ejected from the RSC meeting, I met with him at his shop in Old Delhi. He claimed to not be a Pashtun and identified as a Persian speaker (*farsiwan/farszaban*). During his years as a refugee in Delhi, he had developed strong connections with the Pashtun shop owners of Sharif Manzil and had managed to set up his own shop there. I would see him on occasion when I was in the neighbourhood, and he informed me on one occasion that he had stopped going to RSC meetings in Lajpat Nagar. He explained that while it felt good to be in the same place (*yekja nashistan*), he indicated he preferred to stay in the quiet (*aaraam*) of his house in West Delhi or at his shop in Sharif Manzil, rather than getting involved in the messiness (*janjaal*) of the social life of committee members and other Afghans in Lajpat Nagar. "I already have enough problems," he explained. Another refugee who was ardently seeking help from organizations outside of India to be resettled derided the therapeutic nature of the meetings, saying: "They sit and

discuss… [but] they're just interested in themselves [and] talk about their own problems." For him, the RSC would not be able to settle his desire for resettlement and cooperating with them could in fact impede his efforts.

The RSC would eventually be disbanded. Though this happened much after I left the field, the process of its dissolution began while I was still in Delhi. During a meeting between representatives of the RSC and the UNHCR, Musa Saheb stated that Afghan widows who had no means to support themselves or their dependents (*bewahaye bechara*) were being forced into prostitution[129] for want of financial support from the UNHCR. For Musa Saheb, this was an example of the duress under which Afghans were living in Delhi. Representatives of the UNHCR and SLIC I had interviewed conceded they suspected there were many cases of female registered refugees turning to prostitution, but the subject remained something that could still not be broached even in the all-female gatherings they organised with Afghan refugees. Musa Saheb explained that while Afghans discussed and lamented the rise in prostitution within their communities, there was an acknowledgement that for some women there was no other option (*charaye diger nist*). He intimated that as long as it was done discretely, people would ignore it (*nazarandazi mi konand*), and there was even a woman who had done very well for herself as a prostitute who attended several RSC meetings.

Musa Saheb later maintained, however, that he should have perhaps not raised the issue in the meeting. "Most Afghans here [in Delhi] are from a lower class (*sathye paayeen*)" he explained, "for them it is a dishonour (*sharm*) to discuss these matters in front of foreigners (*kharijiha*, lit. those outside the group)." Indeed, other committee members present at the meeting considered Musa Saheb's comments as a demonstration of weakness in front of the UNHCR. Soon after the meeting, rumours began to spread that Musa Saheb was speaking disparagingly of the RSC and of

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[129] While Musa Saheb only ever spoke of prostitution in the context of widows, many Afghan men I knew believed young women working as interpreters for Afghan tourists were also probably engaged in prostitution. "Just open any newspaper," Sharif the Afghan pastor explained, "and you will see ads for Afghan girls (*dukhtaran*)." I only ever saw a couple of professional advertisements by private companies for Afghan female interpreters or guides aimed at tourists from Afghanistan. In some cases, accusations of prostitution might indicate a sentiment that women should not pursue work outside the house. However, in my experience it is more likely that, as Chakraborty (2013) suggests, for some men slighting female interpreters' personal character might reflect an envy of these women and perhaps even an embarrassment grounded in personal financial frustrations.

committee members behind their backs, that he was working with the UNHCR to secure his own position to be accepted as a refugee, and so forth. At the same time, the UNHCR informed the RSC that it would not cooperate with non-refugees like Musa Saheb and would therefore not officially recognize the group. Musa Saheb withdrew from his position as leader of the RSC to become an external adviser (*moshawer*), but he eventually resigned amidst infighting and allegations and counter-allegations of treachery and subversion among the remaining committee members.

The rise and fall of the RSC can be seen as an iteration at the community level of the brief encounter between two individuals in the waiting room mentioned above. The story of the RSC illustrates how even emotions one might consider to work against building community, like fear and suspicion, can serve as a basis of consociation. However, if such negative emotions are considered not as objects emanating from or directed toward individuals within the community of the RSC, but rather as shaping the space within which attendees were forming and maintaining relationships, one can appreciate the fragility of the community that was formed through the RSC. That is, the very emotions that served as the basis of its construction also shaped its members as potential objects of fear or suspicion for each other, thereby facilitating the RSC's eventual collapse. Thus while the idea of an "Afghan Community" was created as a category at the scale of the state, the emotional context resulting from the understanding of what it meant to be Afghan in Delhi at this scale meant that the form of Afghan community envisioned was difficult for individuals to cultivate and could be easily broken.

The example of the RSC and the fact it was preceded by other similar organizations with the same fate raises another issue around the process of fracturing, suggesting it might be as much a part of feeling community as consociation. Research on Afghans and social fragmentation referenced in chapter one and in the introduction to this chapter has discussed various economic, political, or metaphysical reasons for this occurrence, positing a "moral incoherence" (Edwards 1996) of Afghan identity as a reason for the inability for Afghans to work together at the state scale. The ethnographic material from Delhi presented here, however, suggests a more contextual explanation.

In discussing the Swedish queer leather community in the early 1990s, Mark Graham discusses the same tendency of cyclical fusion and fragmentation within the community and how it reflected a more general aspect of gay life in Sweden as being "spatially and socially fragmented to the point of invisibility ... for the most part out of sight" (1998:180). Graham asserts that this process was related to the fact gay identity did not have a space to belong legally, and subsequently spatially, in the country, and could thus only exist ephemerally in certain places and for certain times. The situation with Afghan migrants in Delhi, and refugees in particular, is comparable. As discussed in chapter three, Afghan migrants are not considered to belong in Delhi or India at the state scale, and refugees specifically are not legally recognized in the country. The state scale sense of Afghan Community would thus materialize in certain places, such as Bosco centres or other UNHCR venues, and on certain occasions, such as meetings with the UNHCR or youth and cultural events geared toward refugees. Outside of these times and places, there was no space in which the state scale conception of Afghan Community could belong in Delhi more permanently. Understanding this point gives a new perspective to the claim many refugees would make about how many people speak of community, but that it doesn't exist. As Jamshed had mentioned, this lack of recognition of community also affected individuals by contributing to their feelings of incapacity. Musa Saheb described this state to me once when the RSC was at its zenith. Sitting in a park, he asked me:

> "Do you know what is the worst kind of gaze (*deedan*)? Every seeing has an emotion attached to it, but which is the worst? I forget who said it, but you know what they say? 'The worst glance (*nigah*) is that which falls on a wall and 'looks' at it, but does not see anything'."

As alluded to in previous chapters, there are, however, other forms of community in which Afghans participate that are constructed outside the state scale understanding of 'Afghan Community'. The Afghan Sikh community was discussed in chapter three as one example. In the next section, in contrast to the RSC, I consider the situation of the Pashtun moneylending community based in the North Delhi neighbourhood of Wazirabad.

6.2   The Afghans of Wazirabad

Wazirabad village, located on the northern fringes of the city, is one of the few areas within the National Capital Territory where the Yamuna still flows as a river and water buffalo roam on tracts of agricultural land. Unlike most of the city, Wazirabad has managed to fend off the unbridled construction boom and retain its character as an urban village in part due to the 457 acre biodiversity park the Delhi Development Authority (DDA) built in 2002 on the west bank of the river. The DDA's decision was acclaimed for saving many local plant and animal species and creating an important urban resource. While I was conducting fieldwork, however, the DDA had begun construction of the eight-lane Delhi Signature Bridge, designed both as a major transport link and a tourist attraction. The move drew criticism not just for the unsightly mess and havoc on local transportation it had caused, but also because it flaunted the Archaeological Association of India's hundred meter restricted zone limit, and endangered one of the few remaining fourteenth century Tughlaq era buildings in Delhi: the tomb and mosque of the saint Shah Aalam. The little complex stands at the intersection of a main road and the road heading north to Wazirabad village. Compared to other ruins in the city, the complex is surprisingly well maintained; the road to Wazirabad, however, is less impressive. Hidden under a maze of cart vendors at the intersection selling fruit and vegetables, snacks, plastic toys, and stationary, one can make out the remains of a road that is now islands of broken bitumen, scattered across potholes and craters smeared with the grimy remains of husks and peels ground by the weight of traffic and sprinkled with fading remnants of sheeny toffee wrappers and crisps packets.

A lone rickshaw stood in the market and I approached it at the same time as an elderly gentleman wearing a dhoti and sporting a *tilak*[130]. I motioned for him to take the rickshaw, but having heard me tell the driver where I wanted to go, he suggested we ride together as he was heading in the same direction. After passing a residential area that had mushroomed around the Wazirabad water treatment plant, the road ran along the perimeter of Wazirabad village. The din of the main road disappeared and we rode along a picturesque path with a large bayou to our right. "So you are a

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[130] A *tilak* is a mark on the forehead worn by Hindus to indicate a range of things including caste or status. Both his attire and the *tilak*, indicated he was Hindu.

Mohamdan[131]?" the older gentleman asked once the rickshaw took off. "I could tell when you were speaking to the rickshaw driver … Many of you Mohamdans have moved … to settle here … But they are good, like you… friendly people." To gauge his reaction, I mentioned that I had heard there were many refugees in Wazirabad as well. He replied nonchalantly, saying "Yes, I think there are some. I do not see them… They are peaceful (*shant*) people… [and] Mohamdans like you."

We arrived at the entrance to the Muslim area of the village where the Wazirabad Bosco centre was located. Like most of Delhi's urban villages, what may have once been a village was now a checkerboard of plots of multiple-storied houses with pastel scalloped concrete walls or exposed brick skeletons of homes under construction. I had only been given a lane number and told to ask passers-by for directions. However, not a person in sight as I waded through the bleak dirt lanes and alleys where recent rainwater had collected in the deep grooves created by cars and scooters, swirling with sand, concrete and iridescent oil. I came to a lane where a faded cloth banner hung between two balconies across the street, congratulating residents in Urdu on the occasion of Eid, and alerting me to the presence of a mosque where I was able to get directions to the Bosco centre.

In contrast to Lajpat Nagar and Bhogal, Wazirabad is a purely residential area and the Afghans living in the neighbourhood mostly worked in Old Delhi or travelled to and from other parts of India, maintaining private residences alongside the other Indian Muslims in their neighbourhood. There were no signs in Dari or Pashto, or businesses catering to Afghans living in Wazirabad. Instead, as I found out from my friend Mirzal, a more recent Afghan Pashtun refugee in Wazirabad whom I had met through the Afghan church, Afghans rented out many of the shops in the neighbourhood to Indian shopkeepers. Unlike the Afghans living in Lajpat Nagar, the Afghans in Wazirabad appeared more integrated in the local neighbourhood, and as the gentleman in the rickshaw had suggested, the Afghans in Wazirabad seemed to blend in with the local Muslim population. "There's no difference between the Indian and Afghan children here," a Bosco employee had boasted to me, "if I didn't know

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[131] Many non-Muslims in India still refer to Muslims with the English term "Mohammedan", pronouncing it as 'mohamdan'. Sometimes this can indicate a refusal to use the Hindustani "*musulman*". In the case of the old man, it probably reflected his age and British colonial influenced education.

their parents came from [Afghanistan], I would think they're Indian." The employee was not just commenting on the way the children looked and interacted with other children in the neighbourhood, but also on their fluency in Hindi. Most of the young refugee children I met in Wazirabad could not speak Dari, but spoke fluent Hindi and Pashto. The latter they spoke at home and the former was taught to them alongside English in school and at the Bosco centre. The centre also held evening language and computer classes for adults, and income generation activities (like making paper plates) during the day.

The UNHCR representatives I spoke with agreed that there might be some rejected asylum seekers in the neighbourhood, but that the community was mostly comprised of Afghan refugees who moved to the area over the last six to ten years due to the area's low cost of living. This was also the story repeated to me by the Pashtun shop owners in Old Delhi who lived in Wazirabad. However, most other Afghan refugees who did not live in the neighbourhood thought otherwise. As described in chapter five and below, the Pashtuns of Wazirabad were considered to be a long-term, entrenched community who were now using refugee status as part of their business strategy. Throughout the thesis, I have referred to the Wazirabad Afghans as members of a Pashtun moneylender network, though when speaking about their own community they would merely refer to "us Afghans" or "us Pashtuns (*ma afghanha/pashtunha*). Those refugees who disapproved of the Wazirabad Pashtuns referred to them as the "people from Katawaz"[132] (*kawatazai-ha*) or just as the "Wazirabad Pashtuns" (*pashtunhaye Wazirabad*), and generally held a negative opinion of them as moneylending loan sharks (*soodkhwor*[133], lit. 'eaters of interest'), though this might have indicated an envy of the community's financial success.

The Pashtun moneylender community, as mentioned in chapter one, was mostly inaccessible to me during my time in Delhi for a number of reasons, including the

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[132] Katawazai is a patronymic indicating one's place of origin in Katawaz, in eastern Afghanistan. Though not all the Pashtuns in Wazirabad are from Katawaz, the Katawazai have conducted trade and money lending in India for many generations.

[133] The term is very offensive and would not be used in front of any of the Pashtuns from Wazirabad. To call somebody a *soodkhwor* is to accuse them of charging interest, which against the tenets of Islam and thus casts doubt on their moral character and honour. Of course, to say that the Pashtuns of Wazirabad were engaged in moneylending is to cover a vast range of financial practices to that I was not privy to. Though it is possible individuals do charge interest, none of the moneylenders would ever describe it as such; rather business is discussed in terms of the sharing of loss and profit, i.e. in terms more acceptable with regard to Muslim practice.

fact it is a relatively closed community. I did become friendly with several of the Wazirabad Afghans who owned shops in Old Delhi and Lajpat Nagar, but our relationship never went further than the shop. Most of what I learned about the moneylending community came from my discussions and observations with these shopkeepers (including Amirkhel and Akhtar in Lajpat Nagar), from discussions with Shahrukh and Mirzal, and rumours and observations of other Afghan refugees. These discussions revealed the Pashtun moneylender network as a different kind of Afghan community in Delhi in comparison to the RSC. The network operated on historical patterns of movement of people and goods across the region, outside the functioning of the state. For those associated with the network, the trading community was part of India's social fabric. What it meant to be part of the network was thus not premised on national belonging to Afghanistan, but rather to a commitment to sustaining the operations of the network and the principles that allowed it to exist. The material presented below relates how this situation and the need to maintain the community outside state involvement meant that those who were part of the Pashtun moneylender community came together in a context of trust and cooperation, rather than suspicion and distrust as in the case of the RSC.

Standing Up and Sitting Down Together: Trust and Network Membership

In describing the transnational Armenian and Sindhi trader communities, Aslanian (2011) and Markovits (2000) respectively describe how within such circulation societies kinship and ethnicity often play a minimal role in the development of relationships among traders and others. They suggest instead that since such networks are sustained and augmented through the large-scale flows of goods, people, credit, and information, the need to facilitate and maintain such flows requires that members of the community strive to prevent any action that could potentially weaken or endanger the network. This need, they demonstrate, is met by maintaining a closed network in which relationships between members are dense and multiplied across social fields, and in which strong value is placed on individuals' reputations of being trustworthy so as to increase the negative consequences of losing this reputation. This description of a circulation society also applies to the Pashtun moneylender community in Delhi.

As suggested in the discussion in Amirkhel's shop related in the last chapter, Delhi was not a place where the moneylenders carried out the bulk of their financial activities. Rather it was a "nodal centre" (Aslanian 2011:13) connected to other smaller nodes across India, through which capital and people flowed in and out of the country. Delhi was also not just a regional conduit between Afghanistan and India, but was connected to Pashtun trader communities much further afield. Once, when I was at the airport observing flights arriving from Kabul, an old man with a walking stick walked by yelling at his teenage grandson in Pashto. "You were supposed to find where they are! We've been here since morning! How can they do this to us? Nobody in this damn place knows what's going on!" I approached him and asked in Pashto if I could help him. He explained he was expecting two boxes of goods (*maal*) from Darussalam via Dubai and the shipping company told him to go to the airport, but nobody could tell him where the office was. I looked at his bill, written in English, for what seemed to be large trunks arriving from Brunei[134] via Singapore. With a quick call to a friend with internet access, I located the shipping centre near the airport terminal.

As my Pashto was not very good, I had switched to Dari during our conversation and the man seemed confused. He thanked me warily and asked if it would be possible for him to walk to the centre. I explained he would have to take a taxi, given the distance, and that it would cost at least Rs 110. "That's too much! I'm a poor man! I can't afford that!" he exclaimed. He shook my hand, thanking me for my help, and took down my name and number and asking me to come and visit him in Wazirabad anytime. Several minutes later, without realizing I was still there, he walked past me and approached one of the Afghan taxi drivers. After brief conversation to set the price, he took out some money from his wallet, got in the taxi, and left. From where I stood, I could not tell how much money he had, but could make out that he had a stack of one-hundred rupee notes.

Hearing the story several weeks later, Shahrukh laughed and exclaimed "this is how these Pashtuns live in India! When they come here, they wear bad clothes and look poor but they have lots of money." In response to my complaining about the man avoiding me when I would come to Wazirabad, Shahrukh responded frankly with

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[134] It is possible the man actually meant Brunei as the country is also known as Darussalam.

"Look, he doesn't know who you are… What can you benefit him? (*barayash che faida dari?*)" Shahrukh apparently knew the man well and suggested jokingly that he might be afraid I would find out how much money he has and report him to the UNHCR. Though speaking in jest, Shahrukh's comments reiterate the importance of trust and reputation in the Pashtun moneylender community and how it is connected to safeguarding information relating to money and business. In particular, his comments express the importance within the Pashtun moneylender community of ensuring operation continue outside the involvement or purview of the state, which viewed their business as illegal.

There was only one occasion where I was able to glimpse the scale of money that moved through the moneylender network. On one of my excursions with Shahrukh, I went to an Old Delhi restaurant where Shahrukh had been good friends with the owner before being ejected from Wazirabad. Since he did not want to introduce me to the owner himself, he arranged a meeting for me through one of the wait staff. The owner was a squat, bespectacled man in his mid to late thirties who wore tired trousers with an un-tucked faded shirt, and was speaking to clients and staff in fluent Urdu, Dari, and Pashto. He quizzed me on my background and why I was doing research, and when he was convinced I was not working for the UNHCR, he started telling me about how the Afghans in Wazirabad were poor and unfortunate (*becharaha*). As he spoke with me, seated on a plush *toshak* on the carpet-laden floor of his sizeable office, he counted stacks of money to put in a safe behind him. There were green stacks of US\$ 100 bills next to multi-coloured stacks of blue, red, and purple Afghanis and Indian Rupees, which he was separating into different bags. Three young men sat to one side of him and each was given different bags of money. Some were put in a safe in the room and others were taken away by the boys who returned promptly with receipts.

The boys seemed to be following our conversation on the sorry state of Afghan refugees with interest and I assumed they were Bengali wait staff who had learned Dari. As the conversation started to draw to a close, the owner began to distance himself from the refugees he was speaking about. Where his descriptions of the financial hardship of being Afghan in Delhi had implied personal experience, the owner changed his tone and explained his family were among a select few that had

become Indian citizens very early, and thus while he was aware of the situation of refugees, he did not have much connection to them. Shahrukh and Mirzal would later both deny this, reiterating that he was a registered refugee, though his family had been in India for multiple generations.

Once all the boys had returned, the owner pointed around the room at several of them saying "They are children of Afghans, but are now 'fully Indian' (*kaamil Hindi shodand*) and don't speak Dari." He abruptly turned to one of the boys and asked him in Hindi what his name was and where his father was from. The boy replied saying his father was from Afghanistan. "You see," he said turning to me "he can only understand Hindi. He doesn't know anything about Afghanistan." The owner went on to explain that as the boys didn't have citizenship or the right to work, they had to rely on other Afghans like him to give them jobs. He then asked permission to excuse himself, which was my cue to leave. As I walked out the restaurant door, two of the boys who had been in the room earlier were now sitting at the counter giggling about something they were watching on a mobile phone, and speaking to each other in rapid Bangla.

Whether or not the boys were of Afghan background is not necessarily important, and it is probable the restaurant owner would not have considered the boys as 'Afghan' in a different context. For example, one of the Bosco employees in Wazirabad was an Indian who claimed Afghan ancestry and had apparently tried to ingratiate himself with some of the moneylenders in the neighbourhood. The shopkeepers in Sharif Manzil derided him for trying to be something he wasn't, saying "He says 'I am Khan like you', but he is just an Indian." What the story of the restaurant owner and the boys suggests is that by nature of their trustworthiness, exemplified by their being charged with transporting the money, the boys were considered as part of the network and thus treated as Afghan. To be Afghan in the context of this moneylender community, it would appear, was not directly linked to ethnic or national identity or language but to being a kind of person who could be trusted and integrated into the network, and also perhaps it was this ability to be depended on in business that made them Afghan or at least Afghan-like.

This idea is reiterated by the story of another man from Bengal, Yusuf, who worked in the restaurant in Sharif Manzil. The owner of the Sharif Manzil restaurant lived in Canada and would spend most of his time between Canada and Afghanistan, coming to Delhi for only a couple of weeks a year. I met the owner once while he was in the city. He expressed how Sharif Manzil had gone through many changes and internal politics since the 1980s when he had first arrived as a refugee, and that he had known Yusuf for a long time and thus entrusted management of the restaurant to him. The Afghan shopkeepers in Sharif Manzil who would order lunch from the restaurant treated Yusuf with the same respect they extended to each other, unlike the way they treated the other Bengali wait staff. Yusuf spoke Dari and some Pashto with a Bengali accent. We became friends as I would often drink tea at the restaurant after interviews and he seemed intrigued by my research. One of the last times we met, I asked him how he came to work at the restaurant. He explained that after working with Afghans in Bengal, he was invited by the restaurant owner to come to Delhi, where he had now remained for almost a decade. "After spending so much time with Afghan people (*unke saath utthna baithna*, Lit: getting up and sitting down with them), I became like them... they know who and what I am (*woh jaante hein mein kaun hoon aur kaisa hoon*)." It was his reputation that afforded him the respect and trust to work with the moneylenders.

The network was not just open to anyone, however, and the mere fact of being Pashtun or from Afghanistan did not provide a basis for cooperation. Mirzal, who was also a Pashtun from eastern Afghanistan, felt betrayed by the Afghans in Wazirabad. He was unemployed with a wife and five children, and was in extreme financial need. He had twice unsuccessfully turned to the Wazirabad Pashtun community for financial help. Once when his son was severely ill and he needed money for hospital fees, and he was told to "just be patient." On another occasion, he had asked if the moneylenders would help him start a business. "I wanted to start a little shop... I told them I could do something with Rs 3000...[but] they said you don't have a visa, you don't have money, or a license... you won't be able to pay rent or get sufficient items to sell." Mirzal expressed how that "for them a lakh rupees is nothing," but they still refused to help him. He complained that

> "These Katawazais are living here for twenty to thirty years... they make a
> business of interest (*kare sood*)... [they] understand languages... English,

> Hindi, Pashto, and some Farsi… their work is set. Money comes from outside… They don't care about others."

While Mirzal's emotional reaction is understandable, the response of the Wazirabad Pashtuns to his requests suggests more that he was rejected for being a liability as he could not guarantee that he would be able to repay any money they might loan to him.

The examples above present the Pashtun moneylender network as a different kind of Afghan community in Delhi. Unlike the RSC, where members came together within a context of fear and suspicion, the Pashtun moneylender network was closed and participation controlled so that only those who could be trusted and cooperated with could be part of the community. As Mirzal experienced, entry and membership into the network is monitored to ensure financial viability of members of the network. By the same token, as the case of Yusuf and the boys in the other restaurant demonstrate, members of the network share responsibility to support and assist each other to ensure the continued viability of business. In this way, rather than coming together through a sense of belonging together, the Pashtun moneylender network appears to operate on a more practical interdependence between members and within an emotional context of trust[135]. There were of course disagreements and breaches of trust. As alluded to in chapter five, Amirkhel's family had had a falling out with other moneylenders and moved to east Delhi from Wazirabad along with some other families because of power politics in the community. Trust was, however, not premised only on business dealings, but also on maintaining the social relationships that constituted members as particular kinds of people who could be trusted and included in the network. This fact comes out in the story of Shahrukh's conversion and ejection from Wazirabad.

Shahrukh's Conversion

It was through the Pashtun moneylender network that Shahrukh was able to travel across India and cultivate his sense of belonging in the country and in Delhi as an Afghan. When he first arrived in Delhi as a refugee, it was through his connection to the network that he was able to find a room on credit even though he did not have money for rent. However, as mentioned in previous chapters, after converting to

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[135] Edwina Thompson (2011) provides an in-depth analysis of this role of trust among traders in Afghanistan and the broader region.

Christianity he was cast out of Wazirabad by the other Pashtuns, which left him emotionally and physically unmoored. Though Shahrukh was not somebody to wish ill on others, he would speak with resentment about the Pashtuns of Wazirabad and those involved in the moneylender network. Even Amirkhel, with whom Shahrukh was close, was not spared criticism for being part of the community loan sharks (*soodkhwor*). Shahrukh expressed that he did not understand why the Pashtuns of Wazirabad treated him so poorly, but from the story he recounted of his conversion, it appears the problem was not uniquely that he had converted, but the ambiguity this created regarding his status as somebody who could be trusted. I consider this fact below through a comparison of Shahrukh's story of conversion and ejection from Wazirabad with the situation of Mirzal who continues to live in the neighbourhood.

After Shahrukh was accepted as a refugee, he had started to take up jobs as an interpreter for Afghans visiting Delhi. One of his clients had left him a stack of informational materials among which was a pamphlet distributed by the Afghan Dari Congregation that contained information pertinent to Afghan tourists and refugees, some quotations from the bible, and contact information for the church. Shahrukh's experiences with development workers in Afghanistan had piqued his interest in Christianity, but he was uncomfortable contacting the church as he wasn't sure if it would affect his status with the UNHCR. After several months and the encouragement of an Iranian Christian he had met, he decided to call the number and was put in touch with the Afghan pastor, Sharif.

The two arranged to meet in Lajpat Nagar, and following this meeting Shahrukh started to attend Bible study more regularly and frequently over a period of six months before he "arrived at faith" (*imaan awardan*, Lit: to bring faith). The Pashtuns in Wazirabad noticed that he had stopped attending congregational prayers (*namaz*) and that he would be away all day on Saturdays and Sundays when the men would hang out at the Bosco centre. Sitting together at the Bosco centre appeared to be an important social event among the Wazirabad Pashtuns. "Nothing happens," Shahrukh had complained, "they just sit and talk all day." His descriptions of the whole affair was that the men sat on the ground in a room making paper plates while gossiping and watching television. Shahrukh indicated that after his conversion, he found the men's conversations at the Bosco centre upsetting as they

often revolved around political support of the Taliban, which he did not support, or the superiority of Islam, which he no longer believed in.

One day, when he was at the Bosco centre, one of the men asked him directly if he had abandoned his religion (*deen ra ela kardi?*). He felt he could not lie and told them he had become a Christian. According to Shahrukh, since they could not kick him out for changing his religion without drawing the ire of the UNHCR, they devised a plan to get the local Indian Muslims to expel him from the neighbourhood. One afternoon, somebody came and knocked on his door and told him people wanted to talk to him outside. When he stepped outside, a group of people from the mosque, Indian and Afghan, had gathered and informed him he had been accused of burning the Quran. He protested saying he had never done such a thing. He asked who had accused him and was told it was "an African," but when he pressed them for a name so that he could confront the person, one of the Pashtuns threatened him with a knife, telling him not to run his mouth (*ziyad gap na bezan*), to pack his belongings, and leave that night. They told him never to tell anyone that he had been Pashtun before converting. That instead he should tell them he was "a *kafir*, an Indian, or whatever [he] wanted, because no Pashtun had ever changed religion up till now and it was a dishonour (*sharm ast*)."

The experience was naturally traumatic for Shahrukh. That night he stayed with a Hindu friend in Wazirabad and moved from place to place over the next several months before finding a flat he could rent in south Delhi. The psychological stress left him afraid of enemies (*dushmanha*) who might seek him out and the anxiety left him in a state where he could not keep down any food, could not sleep, and rapidly lost weight. The doctors at the public hospital told him his symptoms were due to stress (*ghabrahat*), but he was worried that

> "Maybe somebody [in Wazirabad] gave me something [poisonous] to eat and I didn't die… Maybe it was just the fear that had developed in me after leaving there… I was so scared that even in the summer heat I would keep my door closed in case somebody might come to attack me."

He recounted how during this period he met one of the Wazirabad Pashtuns who reprimanded him for converting, saying "When you became Christian your face

became like a dog's (*sag-ware*)… You were beautiful when you were Muslim." Shahrukh recounted how

> "I told them 'Yes, I've changed. My colour [has darkened], my body [has thinned], but it is not because I'm Christian. It is because of fear of you! You [Pashtuns] are always treating people poorly, saying bad things, embarrassing and teasing them everyday and this blackens their hearts toward everyone! If I'm now in this state it is because of illness at your hands… Why did you treat me this way?"

Throughout the time I have known Shahrukh, he professes to not understand why he was ejected from Wazirabad and abandoned by many of his friends in this way. He pins it on their hatred of Christianity and on their fanaticism (*shiddat*). However, comparing Shahrukh's story to the case of Mirzal presents another possible explanation.

Descriptions of Pashtun social organization and conceptions of personhood have emphasized the entwined nature of practices being a Pashtun (*pashto kawal*, Lit: doing Pashto) and being Muslim (Anderson 1985; Glatzer 1998; Steul 1981), for many Pashtuns. Shahrukh's story would seem to confirm this view that by converting he had lost his "honour" and was no longer a Pashtun, and could thus not be a part of the network. While religious identity was indeed an important part of the lives of many refugees I worked with, and religious markers such as attending Friday prayers (*namaze juma*) or fasting (*roza*) were activities that brought Afghans together, it would be facile and simplistic to reduce the Wazirabad Pashtun's reaction to Shahrukh as an expression of Afghan or Muslim religious fanaticism.

To approach Shahrukh's case with more nuance, one can consider the situation of Mirzal, who had also converted to Christianity, stopped praying in congregation, and had started spending less time with the other Wazirabad Pashtuns at the Bosco centre. Mirzal explained how the men in Wazirabad had also asked him if he had converted. Given Shahrukh's experience, Mirzal reported that he evaded the question and Shahrukh later alleged he had denied his conversion. Mirzal told me how he had managed to keep his conversion a secret by continuing to attend the Bosco centre and telling the men he had a job in south Delhi on the weekends as an alibi for attending the church. Shahrukh explained that Mirzal's young son, who

accompanied him to church, had told all the children where they went on Sundays, but because Mirzal had not publically confessed his conversion, the Wazirabad Pashtuns had no reason to expel him from the neighbourhood.

From what I knew of Shahrukh and Mirzal's connections to the Wazirabad Pashtuns, I believe there was another issue at stake. As Aslanian (2011) describes, it is through the sedimentation of multiple social relationships that members of a network build reputations and reciprocal connections of trust over time. Unlike Shahrukh, Mirzal had not built these connections, nor had he been invested in by the Wazirabad Pashtuns or accepted as part of the network, and thus had no in-depth experience or knowledge of its operation beyond Delhi. Shahrukh, on the other hand, had been deeply integrated into the network before his conversion and had to work over time to cement his place in the network. In ceasing his involvement in the social engagements of the network, i.e. congregational prayer and gathering at the Bosco centre, Shahrukh had managed to work, perhaps unwittingly, to undo those relationships that constituted him as a person who could be trusted as part of the network.

Shahrukh's public admission of having converted undoubtedly reinforced questions around his trustworthiness as a member of the network. Research from South and Southeast Asia depicts how, among Muslim communities, conversion from Islam is seen as something that should not happen (Marsden 2005), and while it does not necessarily entail an individual's abandoning of former belief (S Bayly 1989), it presents a person's reconfiguring of relationships with others around them (Beatty 2002) that can also be seen as a political act of separating oneself from others to whom one was formerly connected (Viswanathan 1998). It is thus likely the combination of Shahrukh's conversion with his social withdrawal indicated a breaking of social ties to the Wazirabad Pashtun community, which meant he would not be equally concerned about his reputation in the same way as other members of the community. Shahrukh indicated as much when he would express how he didn't care for the way the Wazirabad Pashtuns "think they are better (*beshtar*) than everyone... the bible says, right, what is important is in your heart, not that you are Pashtun or Tajik." Shahrukh's actions would have called his reliability into question,

rendering him a liability and potential leak in the operations of the network, requiring in his expulsion from the community and from the neighbourhood.

6.3   Conclusion

Several months after returning from fieldwork, I was invited to a dinner party at the home of an Afghan anthropologist doing research in London. As a joke, the Anthropologist introduced me to her friends as an acquaintance from Daikundi province in central Afghanistan, which nobody had initially questioned. Over the course of the meal, the charade became increasingly difficult to maintain and both the Anthropologist and I revealed the truth to much laughter and teasing. When it came out that I had recently returned from fieldwork in Delhi, conversation took an interesting turn. I had mentioned some of the stories related above and the general obstacles I was facing in trying to describe what Afghan community in Delhi might mean. During this conversation, two of the guests had a disagreement on the nature of Afghan community in Delhi.

Azizeh and Farzaneh had both grown up primarily in Iran as refugees, but returned to Afghanistan in the early 2000s. Both women had eventually left Afghanistan and settled in London, and had also spent a significant amount of time in Delhi. Azizeh had family living in the affluent Defence Colony neighbourhood next to Lajpat Nagar, and had recently returned from accompanying her mother, who lived in Afghanistan, on a trip to Delhi for medical purposes. Farzaneh had spent some time in Delhi with her mother as well several years earlier, when she had left Afghanistan to work in Delhi as a professional in the arts and music industry. During her time in Delhi, she lived in one of the many deluxe skyscraper apartment buildings on the outskirts of the city, in the posh industrial and financial suburb of Gurgaon.

Farzaneh empathized with the difficulty I professed in getting to know people. She expressed how she found Delhi to be a boring (*khasta kon*) city where not just Afghans but Delhiites in general were only interested in making money, and where nobody made an effort to know one another unless they stood to profit from the relationship. She explained that while she was living there she had collected a group of Afghan friends who, like her, didn't generally associate with other Afghans. As a group, they felt Afghans in the city were critical of them and would talk about them

behind their backs, and they felt ideologically displaced among the more socially conservative Afghans who lived in Delhi. While they had a fun time together, holding parties in farmhouses in the suburbs or going out in the city, they all eventually left Delhi and Farzaneh saw no reason to ever return.

Azizeh, a mild mannered woman, who was good friends with Farzaneh, did not agree with the stream of conversation. "Farzaneh dear," she said measuring her words, "I don't mean to say you're wrong, but my experience of Delhi was completely different (*bekhi diger bud*)." Azizeh described how she regularly visited Delhi, how her family there had feted her and her mother and took them to many beautiful places and restaurants around the city, and how the Afghans she knew in Delhi were a warm, tight knit community. "The women visit each other from house to house... when we were there we didn't have blankets and several people brought us blankets...[and] many people came to visit my mother in hospital." Azizeh expressed how she enjoyed going to Delhi, especially during London winters, and that the Afghans she knew there made it feel like home (*hech beganagi ehsas na meshe*). She suggested that "maybe because [Farzaneh] did not actually live in Lajpat Nagar itself, that [she] did not see this side of people there." Both women agreed, however, that Delhi was a good place for buying or tailoring Afghan, Indian, or western style clothing and while they disagreed on the aesthetics of Bollywood films, they agreed that they enjoyed watching movies in the central and south Delhi theatres.

On the one hand, Farzaneh and Azizeh's stories point to forms of Afghan community in the city that were unavailable to me as a researcher. I had little or no exposure to the lives of Afghan women, to Afghan families and family networks, or to the lifestyle of affluent upper class Afghans in the city. On the other hand, against the state scale understanding of Delhi's Afghan community as a unitary category grounded in a shared national belonging, the two women's experiences and the ethnographic material presented in the chapter above illustrate how there are multiple forms of Afghan community in the city. Attending to analysis at the level of community, this chapter demonstrated that the various forms of Afghan community in Delhi are linked to the multiple ways Afghan migrants are constituted as persons and connected to the city, and shaped by the different emotional contexts within which Afghan migrants are considered at different scales.

Recognizing there are many forms of Afghan community in the city does not, however, assume a flat 'superdiversity' of Afghan consociation within the context of Delhi. Rather, the stories and material presented above encourage considering for whom these various Afghan communities exist and why? Research on transnational migration asserts that (i) that observing migration is to observe the particular structural conditions, power relations, and socio-economic contexts within which it takes place (Levitt 2011), and (ii) that transnational migrants can be seen as scale makers whose experiences of the city at once shape and reflect its social context (Glick Schiller and Çağlar 2011). This last point can be considered at the level of neighbourhood with regard to the different kinds of transnational flows represented by the communities of Lajpat Nagar and Wazirabad.

Both Lajpat Nagar and Wazirabad serve as conduits for flows of people and things between India and Afghanistan, yet only the former was considered an Afghan part of the city. This recognition was due to the visible economies of bodies, fashion, food, etc. that reinforced the state scale understanding of foreignness and exclusion of Afghans from belonging in Delhi or India. The emotional atmosphere created by this exclusion within the context of the Indian state, however, prevented Afghan refugees in Lajpat Nagar from cultivating a community of cooperation. The Pashtun community in Wazirabad, conversely, considered themselves as part of Delhi and India more broadly, beyond the limited perception of the state scale. While there was not a visible Afghan economy in Wazirabad as there as in Lajpat Nagar, the Pashtun moneylenders held power in the local economy through their control of property and business, and operated not so much against the state than around it, avoiding state interaction in their affairs. They were able to do so not only by mobilizing their extensive financial resources, but also through maintaining a closed social network to ensure the viability of their operations.

When compared to the communities briefly described by Farzaneh and Azizeh, the differences between the communities of Lajpat Nagar and Wazirabad also highlight the issue of scale as impact, discussed in chapter five. There is a qualitative difference between Farzaneh and Azizeh's experience of community in Delhi, the experience of the Pashtuns of Wazirabad, and that of the refugees of Lajpat Nagar. Farzaneh and

Azizeh, like Ong's (1999) Chinese businessmen, display forms of belonging "finely tuned to the turbulence of late capitalism" (136), where they possess the financial resources and citizenship status (first as citizens of Afghanistan and now as British citizens) to travel between Afghanistan, India, and elsewhere, choosing or not choosing to cultivate a sense of community or belonging in Delhi. The Pashtun moneylenders are similarly in a financial position to circumvent state scale understandings of the place of Afghan community in India, though as the case of Shahrukh illustrates, this ability is tempered but the constant threat of legal intrusion by the state, so that membership is tightly controlled within this closed network.

As in the last chapter, Shahrukh's case is particularly instructive in illustrating how even though individuals can 'sense' community in a multiplicity of ways, the structural conditions within which Afghan migrants find themselves in Delhi means that not all migrants can choose to which community they belong or are perceived to belong to. Again, the example of Shahrukh suggests that the absence of financial or social resources increases the impact of state scale conceptions of what community migrants belong to in their day-to-day experience of the city, limiting the space for them to belong in the city. This situation is not, however, particular to Afghan migrants, and in the next and final section of this thesis I consider how the material presented above connects to arguments presented in previous chapters and to wider research on issues of citizenship and the city in South Asia.

Figure 6: Street Scene Outside the Sohrab Press Offices

Above the busy main artery of Ballimaran, a sign advertises the nearby "Kabul Zaeqah" restaurant, a competitor to Yusuf's restaurant.

Figure 8: Sign Painting in Lajpat Nagar

An artist paints a sign in Persian from left to right.

Figure 7: Lajpat Nagar Shops Catering to Afghans

Shops owned by Afghan Sikhs catering to the needs of Afghans in the area (visa extension registration, money change, chemists, and mobile phones).

Figure 9: Rental Properties in Kasturba Niketan

An empty street in Kasturba Niketan (Lajpat Nagar) with a "for rent" sign in English, Dari, and Arabic.
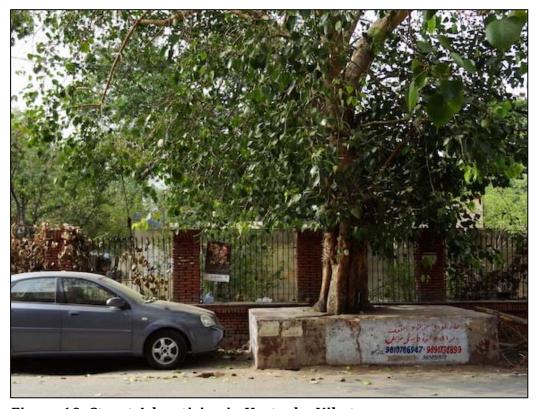

Figure 10: Street Advertising in Kasturba Niketan

Strategic advertising for a property rental agency.

7. Conclusion

As discussed in the introduction, the research question driving this thesis arose from the context of my fieldwork in which I could identify no single generalizable trend or form of Afghan community, neighbourhood, or migrant experience. Given the diversity of themes in the ethnographic material I collected, I might have written a very different thesis, and indeed had initially planned to do so focusing on the role of suspicion and distrust among Afghan migrants in Delhi. However, in deciding instead to attend to the plurality of what it means to be and belong as an Afghan in Delhi, I have endeavoured to portray more fully the ethnographic material I collected. In this way, the accounts and analysis presented in this thesis not only address a gap in research on Afghans an Afghan migration, but also speak directly to themes in the study of urban life in Delhi. Below I briefly summarize the arguments and issues presented in the preceding chapters and consider how they connect to these areas of research, and anthropological thought more broadly.

The argument of this thesis has been two-fold. On the one hand, the study argues that what it means to be and belong as Afghan in Delhi must be considered as a multiple, reflecting different scales at which Afghan migrants in the city are considered and constituted as persons. The ethnographic chapters thus demonstrate a variety of conceptions of Afghan belonging in the city as articulated at the scales of the state, the individual, and the community. The thesis extends a second central argument regarding this multiplicity of Afghan belonging in Delhi with regard to ideas of scale as magnitude, as discussed in chapter two. The study contends that rather than presenting an incalculable complexity, the multiple forms of Afghan belonging in Delhi can be productively brought into focus through considering how the various scales at which Afghan belonging in Delhi is envisioned, hold different degrees of influence in individual migrants' lives. Seen in this light, the ethnography suggests that while individual Afghan migrants possess the capacity to belong in Delhi in multiple ways, not all migrants are able to belong in the city according to their understanding or desire. The trend emerging across the chapters points to how the state scale conception of Afghan migrants' place in the city holds greater salience in structuring migrant experience, and it is those migrants with access to financial or

social resources who are able to cultivate ways of being and belonging in the city outside that envisioned at the state scale.

To frame the argument, the first ethnographic chapter examined how Afghan migrants' presence in Delhi is considered at the state scale, exploring the category of the Afghan refugee, against which other forms of Afghan identity in Delhi are measured. Afghan belonging was shown at this scale to be thought of as contiguous with national borders, so that Afghan migrants were seen to not possess any connection, figurative or otherwise, to the territory of the Indian state or subsequently to Delhi. Thus, to be Afghan in Delhi at this scale was revealed to be a body out of place at the end-point of a vector of movement from Afghanistan to Delhi, where the nature of one's story of movement determined, for the state, the licitness of one's presence in Delhi. While Afghan migrants were not seen to belong in Delhi, they were understood as having affective ties to an Afghan community present in Delhi but emotionally oriented toward the state of Afghanistan.

The subsequent three chapters attended to the scales of the individual and of the community to argue that the state scale conception of what it meant to be and belong as Afghan in Delhi was one among a plurality of understandings that Afghan migrants in the city engaged with. Building on anthropological work on ontology and on ethics and morality, chapters four and five drew on Afghan migrants' narratives to illustrate how they are constituted as persons through multiple processes in relation to the world around them. Chapter four followed the paths bringing migrants to Delhi, demonstrating how rather than being at the end point of a trajectory of movement, Afghan migrants are people in movement, where their patterns of movement are multidirectional, recurrent over time, affected by a variety of social processes that prevent their being reduced to singular economic or political logics, and reveal a moral character of migrants' movement as being driven by aspirations to become particular kinds of persons. Chapter five delved into this moral aspect by considering how individual migrants cultivated belonging in Delhi. The chapter focused on the material and affective ways linguistic and historical connections between Afghanistan and India can both serve to provide migrants with a sense of belonging in Delhi or also make them feel alienated from it, suggesting that feelings of belonging and not belonging are not necessarily mutually exclusive,

but dependant on the dynamics of individual migrants' situations and conditions in the city. The final ethnographic chapter similarly attended to the material and affective conditions of two kinds of Afghan community in Delhi to illustrate how multiple forms of Afghan community exist in the city, and how they are shaped by the varying emotional contexts afforded by the different understandings of Afghan belonging in Delhi at different scales.

While the three scales of the state, the individual, and community arose from the ethnographic material collected during fieldwork, the thesis could also have considered other epistemological scales such as gender, which has not been a primary focus of analysis but to which much of the ethnographic material also speaks. Echoing literature on South Asian masculinities (Osella and Osella 2006; Srivastava 2004), the different cases presented in the ethnographic chapters illustrate a plurality of masculinities ascribed to and enacted by Afghan migrants in Delhi. Shahrukh, Musa Saheb, and Ali in particular present different masculine styles in endeavouring to live meaningful lives. They do so sometimes in accordance with and sometimes against multiple and conflicting social understandings of what it means to be an Afghan man, e.g. religiously observant, sexually aggressive, wealthy and generous, a poor refugee, etc. However, as is particularly striking in Musa Saheb's experience with the RSC, this plurality of masculinities is not apolitical. Rather, as social relations, these masculinities inherently signify power relations (Dasgupta and Gokulsing 2014; Scott 1988; Sinha 1995, 1999) that play out through people's lived experience. To attend to this underlying issue of power traversing the different scales considered in the ethnographic chapters, the thesis has employed the second concept of scale as magnitude to illustrate how Afghan migrants' asymmetrical experience and engagement with the multiple meanings of being and belonging in the city is shaped by their unequal access to financial and social capital in the form of cash, respect, both, or neither.

The ethnographic material presented and analysed in the chapters both resonates with and contributes to anthropological research on Afghan migration. In presenting the multiple and connected forms of Afghan migration to Delhi, the thesis echoes research with Afghan migrants elsewhere that demonstrates (i) how multiple migration strategies are used by individuals and groups in response to conditions in

Afghanistan and as part of moral and ethical considerations of being or becoming a certain kind of person (Monsutti 2005c; Marsden 2013); (ii) that migration patterns are determined by a variety of factors including but not limited to ethnicity and social class (Gehrig and Monsutti 2003; Monsutti 2009) and that experience of migration is unique to individuals as they engage with a simultaneity of overlapping place-making projects (Novak 2007a); and (iii) distinctions between voluntary and involuntary migration or between categories such as economic migrant and refugee are analytically inappropriate (Monsutti 2005a; Marsden 2014) and fail to capture the reality and historicity of migrant movements.

The thesis has added to this literature on Afghan migration in two ways. First, there have hitherto been no detailed ethnographic studies of contemporary Afghan migration to India, and this thesis has sought to fill this significant gap in the literature. The accounts of the Afghan Hindu and Sikh community presented in chapter three and on the Pashtun moneylender community in chapter six provide descriptions of historic Afghan communities connected to India that have till now not been the focus of sustained research by anthropologists. The work on Afghan Sikhs living in India in particular contributes to the study of broader Sikh migration. As discussed in the introduction to the thesis, while there is an expanding body of literature on Sikh diasporic networks, the Afghan Sikh community has not been addressed in this research that tends to focus on Sikh migration from India to other parts of the world. Secondly, where other studies of Afghan migration have illustrated the strong role of ethnic, regional, and national belonging in shaping experience of migration (Monsutti 2004a; Olszewska 2013; Rostami-Povey 2007b), this thesis has emphasized that while national and ethnic belonging do undoubtedly play a role in Afghan experience of migration to Delhi, Afghan migrants also articulate belonging in the city at different scales beyond ideas of national or ethnic belonging that are linked to the historic and continuous movement of people through the region. Through demonstrating how this is the case, the thesis, as I now suggest, has also contributed to wider anthropological discussions.

While the focus of the thesis has been on the experience of Afghan migrants in Delhi, the arguments around how they are considered to belong in the city have also contributed more broadly to anthropological discussions of personhood and

relatedness and to bringing together anthropological work on ontology and ethics and morality (discussed further below). Following Janet Carsten's (2004) call to understand what it means to be a person through descriptions "from the inside" (45), this thesis has engaged with the ethnographic material presented to argue that the various forms of personhood identified in studies within and beyond South Asia can be considered as general forms of human relatedness that operate contemporaneously in constituting persons as complex beings, rather than ways of relatedness specific only to certain peoples or places. This assertion is in line with research on how personhood is an on-going processes contingent on broader social developments (Haraway 1991, Strathern 1992, 1996). In bringing the literature on personhood and relatedness to bear in a novel way on the study of Afghans and Afghanistan, this thesis has addressed assertions that there is a moral incoherence of Afghan identity that results from and is productive of social fragmentation in Afghan society (see Barfield 2005; Giustozzi 2007b; Edwards 1996). In presenting how individuals engage with the multiple meanings of being Afghan in Delhi, this thesis has instead contributed to a growing body of literature that recognizes the different ways of being Afghan as reflective of the diverse processes operating at different scales that situate people in the world around them (see also Green and Arabzadah 2013; Marsden and Hopkins 2011; Oeppen 2010).

By endeavoring to productively think through the multiplicity of what it means to be Afghan in Delhi, the thesis has also contributed to anthropological thought by bringing together research within what have come to be known as the ontological and ethical turns within anthropology. This is important analytically as these two bodies of literature are often thought to be incompatible with one another. However, they can be brought into conversation to think through questions of multiplicity and personhood as I discuss below. While analysis of the material presented in the preceding chapters draws on considerations from both areas of research, the discussion in Amirkhel's shop described in chapter five is a clear example of how methodological insights from research on morality and ethics, which draw attention to individuals' practices of reflection on the self, can be used to apprehend the different ontological systems constituting individuals in multiple material ways. As discussed in chapter two, the assertion of ontological multiplicity is productive in emphasizing how persons and things are complex, multiply constituted material

objects that exist across concepts, times, etc. This study has distanced itself, however, from the move within the ontological turn to typologize different ontologies via the concept of radical alterity, which negates this complexity by suggesting a coherence of people's way of being in the world at the level of corporate groups[136]. It is possible the positing of radical alterity is a product of individual researchers' efforts to assert the legitimacy and theoretical viability of the indigenous peoples' views with whom they work (see Viveiros de Castro 2012) in "out-of-the-way" (Tsing 1993) places. However, in order to think through the various ways persons are constituted in a complex urban environment and reflect more completely the ethnographic material collected during fieldwork, this thesis has endeavoured to maintain the complexity presented by ideas of ontological multiplicity. To do so, the study has brought theoretical considerations within the ontological turn on how individuals exist in "ontological openness" (Candea 2010) in contexts of "poly-ontology" (Scott 2007) where ontological orderings exist in tandem (Fontein 2011) into conversation with anthropological research on ethics and morality, which provides a methodological approach to examining how individuals navigate this complexity of being the world by attending to their accounting for their selves and others (Keane 2014; Lambek 2010; Schielke 2015; Zigon 2010). It is through bringing these two theoretical strands in conversation with each other that the thesis has put forward its second argument to treat the multiple ways of being Afghan in Delhi as not just indicative of a 'superdiversity' (Vertovec 2007) of ways of belonging in the city, but as reflective of the social context of the city and indicative of broader issues of urban life in Delhi.

Across all four ethnographic chapters, the state scale of belonging, where Afghan migrants' status is categorized as either legal or illegal, appears to structure and affect other ways of being and belonging in Delhi at both the level of the individual and of the community. Thus, while individuals illustrate the capacity to cultivate and sense a plurality of connections to the city and forms of belonging in it, either individually or as a group, they are consistently faced with the need to address an official denial of these forms of belonging or association. As reiterated in each chapter, this fact was reflected in migrants' day-to-day ability to inhabit the city, to secure housing, to remain in the country, pursue employment, or form community in

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[136] This assumption undergirds the argument of moral incoherence of Afghan identity against which this thesis argues.

the ways that they desired. One ethnographic fact comes across as being stable across the different chapters: a person's ability to create and live according to how they feel they belong in the city is premised on access to financial or social resources that allow them to operate outside the parameters and limitations imposed by the state scale conception of Afghan migrants' place in Delhi. It is through this second stream of argument that the ethnographic material presented in this thesis connects with discussions of urban life in Delhi.

Studies of transnational migration have documented how state level legal categorization of migrants is carried out against ideas of citizenship, and that migrants' practices of belonging in countries of destination in turn reflect practices of citizenship (McNevin 2011; Sadiq 2010; Vora 2013). The accounts and experiences presented in this thesis thus not only contribute new ethnographic material on Afghan migration, but also add to the study of urban life in India through the lens of migration. That is, to ask what it means to be and belong as Afghan in Delhi is to also enquire into belonging in the city more generally. Research interest in Indian cities has risen following the country's economic liberalization and integration into global markets in the 1990s (Lama-Rewal and Zérah 2011), and particular interest has been given to questions of urban citizenship and access to the city[137]. Given literature on the relationship between economic liberalization, the rise of the Hindutva movement, and urban marginalization of Muslims (Gopalakrishnan 2006; Oza 2006; Gayer and Jaffrelot 2012), it might be tempting to consider Afghan migrants' experience in Delhi through a religious lens. However, while questions of religious identity do figure in state scale considerations of Afghan migrants' place in the city, it is not integral in informing migrants' experience of belonging in Delhi. As reiterated in the ethnographic chapters, Afghan migrants' ability to live and belong in Delhi outside of the strictures imposed at the state scale is dependent on their access to financial and social resources. Resultantly, while Afghan migrants are able to conceive of multiple ways of belonging in the city, it is only those with financial prowess or social connections who can belong in the city as they desire.

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[137] See Desai and Sanyal (2012) for a recent overview of critical approaches to the question of urban citizenship in India.

In arguing that access to financial and social resources can allow for Afghan migrants to procure rights to the city, the thesis contributes to current research on citizenship and urban life in India, and adds to the recent scholarship highlighting how refugees' experiences in the city are paralleled in the situation of the urban poor (Sanyal 2012). Despite research illustrating the rise of a "deep democracy" (Appadurai 2013:153-77) in India's urban centres, where global processes of deterritorialization allow the poor to mobilize and claim citizenship rights in the city, studies of urban citizenship across India illustrate how recent market-driven policies have resulted in disempowering and excluding the urban poor from the city (Chatterjee 2009; Doshi 2012; Ranganathan 2012). Research on Delhi has specifically documented the influence of the business classes in controlling politics and urban policy (Jaffrelot 2000), that has resulted in citizenship in the city being tied to the ability to participate in society as a middle-class consumer (see Gupta 2009 for a broader, national view). Those who lack the resources to participate in this consumer class, i.e. the urban poor, are made legally and spatially invisible in the city, and denied access to citizenship and rights to belong in the Delhi (Bhan 2014; Bhan *et al* 2014). This fact is reflected throughout the ethnographic chapters at different levels, in the UNHCR Chief of Mission's exhortation that refugees must be willing to "capitalize on" any opportunity to remain in the city, in Shahrukh's frustrations at not being able to belong in Delhi as he felt, or in the Pashtun moneylender network's ability to maintain operation in India through maintaining a tightly controlled, closed financial network, and can be encapsulated in Khiyalay's statement that in Delhi "If you have money, you have everything."

In this way, returning to Mirza Ghalib's couplet quoted in the introduction[138], this thesis is not just about Afghans in the city, but also about how their experiences in Delhi reveal a wider social context. Of course, the accounts and contexts discussed in this thesis describe only a segment of a variegated and diverse set of people living in the city. As already discussed in chapters one and six, there were groups and individuals from Afghanistan residing in Delhi to whom I had limited access as an outsider, such as the Afghan Sikh and Pashtun moneylender communities, or groups to which I had no access at all as a single middle-class man, like the family networks

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[138] Bring forward those who understand language, if they exist! / The stranger in the city has much to say

or elite upper-class circles referenced in chapter six. This fact does not, however, detract from the ethnographic material and analysis presented here, but does provide impetus for future research.

As discussed in chapter one, time constraints on conducting fieldwork and the inability to return to the field impacted my ability to make inroads with the moneylender and Afghan Sikh communities. As I have now built relationships with members of both communities, the opportunity to return to the field would allow for deepening my relationships to the community and could potentially grant me access I did not have during my initial fieldwork. Rather than casting a wide net and narrowing down, as I had done when I first arrived in Delhi, I would now be able to focus on specific groups and on a set of questions that have risen from the ethnographic material.

In particular, while the thesis only dealt obliquely with the question of emotions, there is significant space to focus and develop an understanding of the role of hope in Afghan migrants' experience in Delhi, particularly those without access to financial or social resources. Two terms relating to hope appear with some frequency in the interviews and accounts I collected during fieldwork: *omid* which entails a degree of expectation, and *arzu* suggesting a desire without such a sense. This was an issue I recognized only after returning from the field, and could serve as the basis for future enquiry. Focusing on these emotional aspects of Afghan experience in Delhi could allow for a more nuanced understanding of how migrants identify and engage with the structural inequalities outlined above, for while the ethnographic material presented in this thesis relates this rather bleak aspect of urban life in Delhi, it is also true that the individuals with whom I conducted fieldwork were remarkably resilient and framed their experiences realistically, identifying both despair and hope for a better future. As Mirzal said to me in our last meeting, he had become hopeless (*na-omid*) after petitioning the UNHCR, the moneylenders, and the church to no avail. In discussing his inability to provide for his family and his consternation at being a refugee, he explained that he kept on going as even though

"My heart is angry (*khapa*), It has become hard, there is nobody to whom I can tell my problems [and] I don't know if saying this to you will help me or not. But I have a desire (*arzu*) that my life should get better."

Mirzal's sentiments are not particular to being Afghan or being a refugee, but they do illumine his reality of living in Delhi. It would appear, as Ghalib indicated, that the strangers in the city still have much to say.

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