DISCOURSES AROUND THE KASHMIRI PANDITS:

ENGAGING WITH THE 'FRACTURED IDENTITY' AND THE 'POLITICS OF DEADLOCK'

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ZARNAIN MANZOOR

UNDER THE GUIDANCE OF

DR. ANSHUMAN BEHERA
ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR
CONFLICT RESOLUTION AND PEACE
RESEARCH PROGRAMME

NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF ADVANCED STUDIES (NIAS),
INDIAN INSTITUTE OF SCIENCE CAMPUS,
BENGALURU

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DECLARATION BY THE CANDIDATE

I declare that this thesis entitled "**Discourses around the Kashmiri Pandits: Engaging with the 'Fractured Identify' and the 'Politics of Deadlock'**" submitted for the award of Doctor of Philosophy to THE UNIVERSITY OF TRANS-DISCIPLINARY HEALTH SCIENCES AND TECHNOLOGY, Bengaluru, is my original work, conducted under the supervision of my guide **Dr. Anshuman Behera**. I also wish to inform that no part of the research has been submitted for a degree or examination at any university. References, help and material obtained from other sources have been duly acknowledged

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Place: Bengaluru **Signature**

Date: 25/04/2025

Name of candidate: Zarnain Manzoor

Reg. No.: 20319010049

Month/ Year of Admission: May, 2019

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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the work incorporated in this thesis "**Discourses aroundthe Kashmiri Pandits: Engaging with the 'Fractured Identify' and the 'Politics of Deadlock'**" submitted by **Ms. Zarnain Manzoor** was carried out under my supervision. No part of this thesis has been submitted for a degree or examination atany university. References, help and material obtained from other sources have beenduly acknowledged. I hereby confirm the originality of the work and that there is no plagiarism in any part of the dissertation.

Dr. Anshuman Behera
Associate Professor,
Conflict Resolution and Peace Research Programme
National Institute of Advanced Studies, Bengaluru

Date: 25/04/2025

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Chapter One

Exploring the Kashmiri Pandit Discourse: from a territorially bounded community to a displaced one?

Introduction

The Kashmiri Pandit community has largely been understood as a single caste, cohesive community with strong territorial and cultural roots to the Valley of Kashmir. Much of the discussion around the community follows this idea of a unified identity with little discussion around the possibility differentiated identities and multiplicity of experiences that might be present within the community. Against such an undivided background, the migration of the community from the Valley, specifically in 1990's is seen as a major disruptive event that changes everything within and around the Pandit discourse. It divides the discussion around the Kashmiri Pandits into two separate eras of pre and post migration. While the pre migration era is typified by literature on cultural and social aspects of their identity, the post migration ear weaves the idea of Pandit identity solely around the 'migrant' status of the community. In the present work, I move beyond this strict separation and explore a contextualized idea of the Kashmiri Pandit identity through the themes of 'politics of deadlock' and 'fractured identity' that remain inadequately researched so far. I locate the present assertions of Pandit identity in historical and socio-political contexts to understand how it was traditionally produced through the societal position the community held and how this position was sustained over time through interactions with other communities as well. Through the theme of politics of deadlock, I try to explore the influence discursive factors produced at community level, have on the grassroot experiences of individual members in shaping the debates on identity, migration and return to homeland. Further, through the idea of fractured identity, I try to build a layered understanding of Pandit identity to broaden the discussion as opposed to a singular Kashmiri Pandit identity that might not be accommodative of individual experiences that do not conform to such identity.

The study is based on a multi-sited ethnography conducted in three cities i.e. Kashmir Valley, Jammu city, Delhi and the National Capital Region

(NCR) over a period of ten months. Not restricted to the migrant section of the community in Delhi and Jammu, it also covers the lesser analyzed sections like that of the non-migrants, i.e., those who did not migrate from the Valley in 1990's, returnees or those who have chosen to return to the Valley and to some extent pre 1990 settlers or those who had migrated from the Valley before 1990. The motive is to bring forth the plausible diversity in the Pandit experiences with respect to processes like migration, non-migration, resettlement outside Kashmir Valley and return to the Valley, so as to broaden the debate beyond a narrow understanding guided by a security perspective.

To contextualize the findings of the study detailed later in the following chapters, I will first begin with a detailed discussion tracing the evolving and changing socio-political dynamics the Pandit community was engaged in, within and beyond Kashmir Valley. This includes exploring the rhetorical positions and beliefs they subscribed to in terms of articulating their caste centric identity, the negotiation of this identity in daily exchanges with Kashmiri Muslims, the nature and degree of their interaction with co-religious communities beyond the Valley. Lastly, I also explore the process of mass migration from the Valley the community experienced around early 1990's owing to the growing political volatility in Kashmir, which arguably raised questions about their security and future in the Valley.

Contextualizing the Kashmiri Pandit Identity

Before we narrow down our discussion to Kashmiri Pandits and their identity assertions, we must indulge in a detailed theoretical enquiry about what identity possibly means and what are the likely reasons or needs for individuals and communities to engage in identity politics. Identity politics understood either from the standpoint of western individualism or as an entity of a group, dominantly revolves around the idea of category creation between the 'self' and the 'other' (Appiah, 2006), the 'critic' and the 'target' (Gergen, 1995), the 'majority' and the 'minority', where both are tied in a hierarchical relationship with one at the center and the other at the periphery (JanMohamed & Lloyd, 1987). This relationship is often marked by differentiation wherein an ingroup is created around the idea of similarity and is used for the purpose

of association and identification and an outgroup(s) is/are identified to accord differential treatment (Appiah, 2006). So, one's identity is as much about association with the ingroup as it is about differentiation with the outgroup.

However, this is not an activity in vain; identity assertion is not a dormant endeavor. It is undertaken to flourish (Appiah, 2006) and follows the 'rhetoric of rights' (Gergen, 1995). A group demands rights based on its claimed identity against the outgroups either as a matter of protection from perceived threats or historic wrongdoings faced by the group or as a natural extension of attributes, they associate with themselves. Charles Taylor's seminal work on identity influences much of our contemporary debates. He understands identity in two ways. First, at an individual level like Rousseau and then at a group or community level. He proposes an understanding of the concept wherein on the one hand, one's identity is a fundamental characteristic of a human being guided by an embedded sense of morality. Following this logic, one's sense of identity is based on a being's innate nature that one must be true to in order to protect the 'authentic self'. Politics of authenticity then as Tylor argues, must be engaged with in order to avoid diluting or corrupting the essence of a moral self that lies within the individual. This makes identity an individualistic phenomenon. Much like the realist though, it focuses on the essentialization of attributes that are believed to be central to a particular identity. However, Taylor also moves beyond an individual to placing identity formation in a social context where it more importantly depends on recognition or its absence by the external 'other'. Terming this, 'politics of recognition', Taylor recognizes the dialogic nature of identity that is fluid. It is both individualistic and social at the same time. He therefore identifies two main players, the self and the other in and around the politics of identity.

To further problematize the differentiation between the self and the other, one must explore how strict this separation is. This is especially important since the self and the other are dependent on each other's recognition to make sense of their respective identities. Thinkers like Locke and Mill break down the idea of the 'isolated or authentic self' to recognize that the production of self in a vacuum is a myth. No individual is separable

from the social processes around him/her. Imperative here is to remember that an individual's quest for identity is an activity directed to the end of attaining rights and relative benefits against others. The politics of identity is a deliberate, volatile activity or a slippery slope (Appiah, 2006) that is based on a 'relational process' (Gergen, 1995) between the self and the other. The differentiation is porous and is often overcast by negotiations wherein the self, interacts with the other in order to constitute/ reconstitute itself. So not only is identity a dialogic process, the self too is a dialogic entity produced contextually. Gergen (1995) therefore defines identity as a relational achievement.

Identity politics as most scholars recognize is also a risky double-edged sword that engages both in divisive politics (Gergen, 1995) by focusing on essentialization of in group behavior that gives identity a fixed and rigid outlook, but also initiates coalition building processes (Siebers et al., 2017). On the one hand, it promotes group cohesion and provides a meaning making anchor by connecting an individual to a similar group of individuals. This is however paralleled by a divisive out casting of those who don't fit the group and identifying them as an existing or potential threat. Competing identities, each involved in strengthening the in group are formed to extend their rights over resources as compared to the other.

However, identity politics is equally a site of coalition building where alliances are forged between somewhat similar or maybe hitherto opposing identities to make a more secure claim to such resources or to protect one identity against a usually bigger threat. This is particularly witnessed in majority- minority relationships where the minorities often form coalitions around their marginalized nature to counter a majority (JanMohamed & Lloyd, 1987; Siebers et al, 2017). The risk involved in coalition building is that they might end up becoming an umbrella for uniting multiple identities with some similar experience but also at the same time dilute their individual aspects. The open-ended nature of the coalition building runs the risk of rendering identity a non-entity in itself (Gergen, 1995). Taylor to some extent tries to explore this challenge that identity politics faces. He recognizes that identity is not a closed process. One can shift between multiple identities without

losing or disregarding any one aspect in particular. This makes identity a multi-faceted process. Each identity caters to an aspect of an individual without the necessity of having to discredit one facet for the other.

If this coalition building dilutes the authenticity is a question that still remains unanswered. The risk compounds further. Forming of ingroups in asserting one's identity often rests on notions of homogenization of the ingroup (JanMohamed & Lloyd, 1987; Appiah, 2006). This stresses on essentialization of behavioral aspects, political opinions, social and economic experiences within the group, that negates the idea of identity as a multiple faceted phenomenon and the latter is often traded for a more grounded, organic and permanent appearance of an identity. Distinctions are made just for the outgroup and not recognized and appreciated within the group thereby promoting an idea of assumed homogenization of the ingroup.

Homogenization encourages a reductionist understanding of identity, neglecting the macro processes that may contribute to the formation of that identity in the first place. JanMohamed and Lloyd (1987) move further to develop a layered understanding of identity to contextualize the game of recognition within a broader system. He talks of three players here. The self, the other and the system. In identifying the self and the other, these categories interact not just with each other but also create and interact with the larger hegemonic system that sustains this relationship often in favor of those who dominate it. This cultural approach to identity politics explores the role an established system plays in sustaining, perpetuating and reproducing the hierarchical relationship between the self and the other systematically. The other is forced into an 'identity war' to reestablish the existing dominance (du Preez 1980 in Gergen, 1995). This brings us to the idea of social construction of identity which is cognizant of the influence social, cultural, political and economic context has on the identity creation of a group.

Throughout this dissertation, I will follow a similar approach and look at the Kashmiri Pandit identity as one embedded in a context and explore it through three ways: the position the community holds in the society, their interactions with the 'other' communities and the discourses generated around the Pandit community. I will explore the historical position and patterns of

interaction the community has maintained with the 'other' communities like the Kashmiri Muslims and Indian Hindus and the challenges, if any, such identity assertions have faced over time either in the form of mass migration from the Valley or sharing of socio-economic resources with these 'other' communities. I will also highlight the effect these changes have had on the larger Kashmiri Pandit discourse and how it affects the ideas and subsequent discussions on return to the homeland of Kashmir.

Kashmiri Pandit Identity: pillars of rhetorical construction and negotiations on ground

The Kashmiri Pandit identity has been traditionally defined and academically captured around certain 'ideals' (Datta, 2017). This is particularly true of literature published from within and to some extent, outside the community. Essentially the focus of such studies captures the claimed mythological origins of the Kashmir Valley, aboriginality of Pandits to the Valley, stated caste superiority of Kashmiri Pandits to Sarasvat Brahmins elsewhere in India and class and caste distinctions with Muslims in the Valley (Rai, 2021). The ideal Pandit (Datta, 2017) can be understood through engagement with dimensions of caste, class and the nature of the relationship maintained with the State. Henceforth, I use the term 'the state' to denote the Indian State, in places where exclusive reference is made to the State of Jammu and Kashmir, words like Jammu and Kashmir administration and the Government of Jammu and Kashmir will be specifically mentioned. In this section I'll review the literature on each dimension of the ideal Pandit identity separately.

The Kashmiri Pandits claim to be a single caste community native to Kashmir Valley. The caste consciousness translated into practices of religio-territorial distinction, maintained through separation of rituals with the Hindus outside the Valley and by limiting daily exchanges with the Kashmiri Muslims. Madan (1989) in his detailed analysis of a typical Pandit household highlights the role caste plays in the identity construction of the community and the corresponding interactions with their Muslim neighbors. He describes the relationship between the Pandits and Muslims as one based on 'mutual avoidance and contact'. The high-caste Hindus though coexisted with the

Muslims, the line that demarcated them was quite clear. It was evident in cultural practices like not accepting cooked food from Muslims and restricting the entry of Muslims in certain areas of the house especially the kitchen for the fear of pollution. The cases of transgression of such boundaries existed although in exception to the generally observed behavior. I too found this to be true in my field interactions. Some respondents while stressing their 'closeness' to the Muslim friends before 1990 migration (and some after) said that they had '*even dined in their (Muslims) houses'* going against their caste etiquette. The dependence of the Pandits on the Muslims was restricted to providing services like that of barbers, milkmen etc., ideally avoided by the high caste Pandit community. The hierarchy was equally visible in the language used to address the Muslims as *mlechha*[1] (Datta, 2017). Malik (2011) highlights the cast-based interaction, on the other hand, pointing out the use of the word '*mahara*' (short for Maharaj) by Muslims (and within Pandits to address each other or refer specifically to the Pandit men) in addressing the Pandits. I found the use of the word mahara common in addressing Pandit neighbors by Muslims or even among the Pandits too during my field survey.

The idea of exceptionality was maintained not just in comparison to the Muslims but also to the Indian Hindus as Rai (2004) highlights the lack of enthusiasm on part of the Pandits in identifying with the Hindus elsewhere on the basis of shared religion. This sense of exceptionality emanating from the community's belief of being the highest of the Sarasvat Brahmans was maintained through strict matrimonial practices and distinct rituals compared to Hindus including the Brahmins elsewhere. Pant's account (1987) too corroborates that a sense of exceptionality was prevalent in the community based on the peculiar nature of Kashmiri Hindu culture that was a sort of syncretic culture possibly influenced by Muslims of the Valley. She opines that it distinguished Kashmiri Pandits from other north Indian Hindu castes. Sender (1988) further highlights the role of community journals in mediating

[1] Mlechha is term used to refer to a one who is essentially of foreign origins. The term in historical connotations has been used for those considered outside the castes of Hinduism.

community affairs like marriages that were kept caste specific even in the diasporic section of the community in the eighteenth and nineteenth century. Although, migrations for occupation were prevalent in the community, those who had migrated were considered lower in stature by the Kashmiri Pandits of the Valley for having mixed with supposably lower castes even among the Brahmins. So, the efforts of preservation of culture were not just an attempt to save identity but can also be understood as attempts to protect a sense of assumed superiority and purity.

The second attribute of the Pandit identity that corroborates the status of the ideal Pandit is that of class. Datta (2017) compares the class affiliations dominant in Pandits to those found in the Tamil Brahmans where the caste and class overlap heavily. Both these castes had a generous historic represented in the state sponsored employment compared to their actual numbers. Copland (1981) and Evans (2002), highlight in their respective accounts that the population of Pandits in the Valley around 1990 was close to four percent. Their representation in the government jobs was disproportionately high as compared to their population. According to the census of 1931, 78 percent of the government jobs were occupied by Hindus and Sikhs who had a respective population of 4 percent and 1.5 percent at the time (Copland, 1981). Johar (2018) also highlights that the report of the Glancy Commission of 1931 corroborated the overwhelming presence of the community members in government jobs particularly in revenue department. This was true of districts within and outside Kashmir. In Mirpur for example, 94 percent patwaris or land revenue recorders were Pandits (Copland, 1981). Pandit community was mostly involved in professions that did not demand manual labor but intellect. Professions like that of sweepers, 'barbers, cleaners were therefore, taken up by the Muslims in the Valley while Pandits engaged themselves in professions that required some academic qualification.

Kashmiri Pandits also played distinguished roles outside the then princely state of Jammu and Kashmir[2]. The Chhatarpath Raja of Darpan in

[2] Princely states or native states were regions ruled by local kings rather than the British empire directly before 1947.

Odisha, Dina Nath, the Diwan (Finance Minister) of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, for example, were Pandits of Kashmiri origins. Tipu Sultan's administration too had a significant number of Kashmiri Pandits as advisors (Chandel, 2017). Sender (1988) in great detail explains how the Kashmiri (Pandit) associations flourished outside Kashmir in the nineteenth and early twentieth century among community members settled in the Northwestern Provinces and Oudh, the British province of Punjab and some princely states of central India like Rajputana. The Pandits in these areas formed the educated elite who had worked in the government services for generations. They formed the Kashmiri 'mohallas' (settlements) in cities like Allahabad, Amritsar, Lahore and Lucknow (Duschinski, 2008). Through these mohallas, the community kept the Kashmiri culture alive and functioned as a close knit '*biradari*' (Pant, 1987). Sound knowledge of Persian language (Pant, 1987; Sender, 1988) too helped the community members to acquire positions of power in the state machinery from the Mughal Empire to the Sikh kingdoms as clerical staff or senior administrators especially in the revenue department. Hence it is not just the innate caste and class stature but social position amassed through control over knowledge that sustained the Kashmiri Pandit identity.

The third aspect that defined the ideal Pandit was the relation they maintained with the state. It borrows from the aspect of caste and class, however here the emphasis is more on the permanence and the embeddedness of the community in the state machinery regardless of the regime in power (Wani, 2013). The state employment was viewed as a mark of respect and in-fact an integral part of the Pandit identity, way beyond a mere source of income (Datta, 2017). A. Koul (1991) discusses the genius of the ideal Pandit at length defining him as "*a sober minded, lust-free person who is fond of beautiful things and regards the state official as the fiat of destiny*." Bazaz (1941) along the same lines emphasizes that the community was one "*trained for services from birth"* and that it *"determined their being.*"

An in-depth understanding of the Pandit identity, therefore looks not just at the aspects considered innate to the Kashmiri Pandits by virtue of their birth like the belief of being born to a superior caste that was involved in noble and intellectual professions, but can also be understood in terms of the

particular position they held in the societal context that sustained their identity. The Kashmiri Pandit identity is believed by the community to be deeply tied to their claimed aboriginality to the Valley and the mythical origins of the Valley itself which not only makes the Pandits the original and first inhabitants of the Valley but also influences beliefs of exclusivity and superiority that is maintained in the society compared to others. As Rai (2021) summarizes in her account,

> "*Pandit maintain it was 'their Gods' which made the Valley inhabitable. The present Valley of Kashmir originated from underneath a lake called 'Satisar' that was later populated with Hindus brought from various countries only after the demon Jalodhbhava was defeated by Lord Vishnu on being invoked by Kashyapa. The appropriation of this myth from Buddhist traditions which then was replicated by various Pandit scholars has become the 'common truth' of Pandits with little critical evaluation of any evidence*."

It is popularly believed by Pandits that this 'Hindu origin' of the Valley fosters an innate connection with the distinct and superior identity of Kashmiri Pandits as compared to any Saraswat Brahmin. It also rests on the superior stature Pandits accord to their rishi, Kashyapa over others in Hindu mythology. The place has also acquired great stature in the Vedic tradition because of the scholars it bore, be it Patanjali or Kalhana (Puri, 1995). Subsequently, the present Muslims of the Valley are also popularly believed by the Pandit community to be those who succumbed to Muslim rulers and converted to other faiths with the advent of Islam in the Valley. The same is also used, as opined by many respondents to the study, to solidify their claims of being the '*original inhabitants who honored their authenticity by resisting religious conversion'*.

Challenges to the Kashmiri Pandit Identity

The Kashmiri Pandit identity has encountered challenges mainly owing to the change in their respective position and the subsequent fallout of the same in the interactions within and outside the Kashmir Valley. I'll discuss two such changes next.

First is the establishment of a Muslim leadership in the Valley in 1930 and second, is the mass migration of the community from the Valley in 1990's. However, my focus is not to analyze these events in an isolated fashion but rather look at how they contributed to the changing relations between the self (Kashmiri Pandit) and the other (s) (Kashmiri Muslims and Indian Hindus).

Political Mobilization in the Valley

In light of an acute lack of any political space carved out for expressing their displeasure with the Dogra[3] policies, the economically weak Muslims of Kashmir were caught in an unending cycle of backwardness. This has been highlighted in historical accounts of scholars like Rai (2004) and Copland (1981) as a prime contributor in keeping them at the frays of polity. The British by and large maintained a policy of indifference to the daily functioning of the princely state[3] under the Maharaja who acted at will to keep the law and order just under control (Rai, 2004). Welfare schemes were given least importance. These policies disempowered the already poor Muslim section. High land taxes, censorship of newspapers especially those published in Urdu and ban on any kind of political activity mitigated any chance for the Muslims to come out of this perpetual backwardness (Copland, 1981). What changed in 1930 was what looked like an initiation of emergence of a local, young, Muslim leadership that was now not ready to pocket the continuation

[3] The Dogra dynasty was a Hindu Rajput dynasty that ruled the region of Jammu and Kashmir from 1846 to 1947. By virtue of their ethnicity and religion they varied hugely from the majority of their Muslim subjects. This also reflected in their ruling disposition towards the Muslims, that was targeted later by the newly emerged Muslim leadership in the Valley under Sheikh Abdullah. He accused the Dogra leadership of selectively targeting and according step-motherly treatment to their Muslim subjects. Abdullah subsequently mobilized the Muslim majority to revolt against their alienation and the backward state it had left them in.

of such policies without a fight. The 13 July, 1930 incident of arrest of a Muslim man, Abdul Qadir in Jammu that sparked a huge mobilization against the act and the subsequent protest outside Central Jail in Srinagar on the day he was to be tried, is seen by many as waking up of the Kashmiri Muslims to actively mobilize against the Dogra rule and its atrocities. The crowd dispersed by police then targeted shops and assaulted civilians mainly the Pandits in the Hindu dominated Maharajgung area resulting in panic among the community (Copland, 1981). What was surprising here to the community more than the violence was the hitherto missing mass mobilization by the Muslims in the first place.

An important figure that emerged as the face of this mobilization was Sheikh Abdullah, an educated Muslim youth. From organizing a Muslim Reading Room to deliberate on the Muslim plight with fellow youngsters to becoming a strong voice that refused to meet the Maharaja on sixth August when summoned in the aftermath of the 1930 riots, Sheikh was fast emerging as the leader Kashmiri Muslims never had. In a bold move, the same month 14th August was declared 'Kashmir Day'. Abdullah went on to establish Jammu Kashmir Muslim Conference in 1932 and was speaking for almost all sections of the Kashmiri Muslims, a consolidation not witnessed before. Abdullah though over the course of time shifted stance from being a political leader that represented Muslims and their sufferings to a more secular central figure. He changed the Muslim Conference to Jammu Kashmir National Conference (JKNC) in 1939 but at the same time for long maintained that Muslims of the state were discriminated on the basis of religion in the Hindu Dogra state and deserved compensation and not just equal treatment. The emergence of this confident leadership significantly hit the hitherto maintained composure that Pandits maintained about their minority status. It also brought to shore the fact that not many from the Pandit community were engaged in active politics, making the community hyperaware about their leaderless-ness.

Glancy Commission of 1932 and Levelling of the Playing Field

The Dogra rule permitted really little public space for the any political activity. While the former was completely banned, social and

religious activity was permitted subject to obedience to law. This hindered any attempt by Muslims to come together as a whole to discuss their grievances. Not that there existed no leadership or elites among Kashmiri Muslims but there was a level of tokenism attached to it. Rai (2004) points out the case of influential Naqshbandis who were allowed to present their concerns to the British Government, mainly asking for better representation in government jobs and employment compared to Kashmiri Pandits and Punjabi Hindus. However, these occasional concessions to certain elite were seen as co- opting mechanisms to channelize discontent from snowballing into a mass mobilized anger.

There also existed internal stratification and social cleavages within the Muslims of the Valley. There was a stark division between the Muslims based on their allegiance to either of the two Mirwaiz or religious leaders, one followed Wahhabi thought and the other propagated Sufi Islam. This too inhibited any consolidated Muslim leadership. Maharaja in fact intervened on many occasions of disagreement between the followers of the two sects on matters of division of shrines. However, with the advent of Sheikh's leadership and its eventual consolidation, he used mosques especially Hazratbal (Wani, 2007) to not just deliver motivational religious sermons but to fire up the exploited Muslim conscience.

In fear of a spillover of mobilization to other states especially Punjab, on. In the follow-up of the mass support of the protests by the Muslims in the Valley, Glancy Commission was appointed on 20th October in 1932 by the Maharaja of Kashmir on the instructions of the British, to instigate the claims of differential treatment of the community. This was majorly done to stop the protests from spiraling into a bigger movement. The recommendations of the commission gave voting rights among other benefits to the Muslim community, thereby making them a politically active majority community. It recommended a limited legislature that followed separate electorate with 21 seats reserved for Muslims and 11 for Hindus. Apart from the voting rights, Censorship on newspapers too was curbed which only meant further mobilization of the Muslim sentiment and a realization of their majority which would ultimately transcend into the political realm. However, a

simultaneous process that unfurled was the exacerbation of vulnerable tendencies if the numerically minor Pandits as numbers mattered now more than ever.

Land Reforms in Jammu and Kashmir

With a socialist bent of mind that the National Conference professed, its followers came from the artisans, weavers, middle class professionals like teachers who looked up to the party as the source of hope after a long dry spell of exploitation and unequal distribution of resources. Cultivators, mostly Muslims suffered great deal at the hand of landowners, who were mostly Hindus amid the harsh policies of high revenue by the Dogra regime. There always existed great resentment among the Muslim peasantry on this pretext. Jammu region saw an uprising on the same grounds when Muslim cultivators of Mirpur in Rajouri and some other tehsils decided to go on the offensive by launching the no-revenue campaign. It was brutally crushed by the Dogra rule with use of force to collect the revenue anyhow. This sparked agitation against Hindu collectors and traders in the region. To tackle the situation the Maharaja had to look to British troops for help. When Glancy Commission met representatives of different communities, Sheikh Abdullah represented the case of the impoverished agricultural laborers vehemently. The point that stands out was the agricultural workers and their grievances were long overlooked and with the leadership of Sheikh Abdullah, a ray of hope emerged for them. Under the New Kashmir Manifesto of 1944, National Conference sought to abolish landlordism.

It however affected the Pandits adversely as many owned sizable portions of land. Prior to the reforms, Pandits who were four percent of the population owned thirty percent of the land in the Valley (Rai, 2004). Under Abolition of Jagirs Act, 1948, state owned land was distributed free of cost among the landless laborers. The beneficiaries of this were mostly the former landless Muslim cultivators. Still worse for the Pandit landowners, the Big Estates Abolition Act, 1950 limited ownership of land holdings except for orchards under the ceiling of twenty-two and a quarter acres per landowner. Any one in possession would lose that land to state which was then distributed to tiller without any compensation to the landowner. These radical

curtailments of power adversely affected the landowning Pandits who owned land and bit into their former position of comfort making then vary of further concession to Muslims.

State Subject and Kashmiri Pandits

The Dogra administration during their reign had appointed many Hindus from Punjab in their administration which made the Kashmiri Hindus who had better representation over local Muslims, insecure of losing prestigious jobs to the Punjabi Hindus. A similar inhibition existed about the Pandits who had left Kashmir to reside in other parts of the country (Rai, 2004). For protection against the former, Pandits pressed for a strict restriction of employment to state subjects. The first step was to tighten the definition to suit the need of the Kashmiris. Sentiments on regional identity were made the bedrock of such demands against 'outsiders'. Not satisfied with loose definition based on land ownership that would still allow Punjabi Hindus working in the Valley for years to qualify for the same, Pandits toiled to make hereditary the basis of this demand. They rallied under the idea of protecting the purity of regional distinction. In 1927, law finally adopted stated that everyone settled in the State before the commencement of Gulab Singh's[4] reign or settled before 1885, who still continue to reside in the State are deemed its subjects.

While it was battle won for the Pandits, it brought in Kashmiri Muslims to in the purview and that would seek to outnumber the Pandits. This also gave impetus to further demands from Muslims for better representation and educational opportunities. Pandits found a new majority that they had to compete with and share resources gained in the name of regional identity. Apart from the detailed factors discussed above, the changing of the official court language from Persian to Urdu as early as 1889 also increased the insecurities of the Pandit community on losing out on the monopoly over government jobs to outsiders as they weren't fluent in Urdu. The mobilization of Muslims in the Valley was paralleled by two processes.

[4] Maharaja Gulab Singh was the founder of Dogra dynasty in Jammu and Kashmir.

Firstly, it led to mushrooming of a sense of insecurity among the Pandits due to their numerical deficiency and leaderless-ness. Secondly, the hitherto maintained overtly regional character of the Kashmiri Pandits was diluted to give cognizance to its religious aspects.

Changing of the court language from Persian to Urdu in 1889, application of State Subject for employment in the state in 1927 in the state, the formation for the Jammu Kashmir Muslim Conference in 1932, appointment of Glancy Commission to allot voting rights and reservation to Kashmiri Muslims in 1932, National Conference's Naya Kashmir Manifesto of 1944 and the Abolition of Jagirs act 1948 that led to end of landlordism, can be contextualized as few watershed moments that paved the way for minority sentiment to solidify in the community as the Muslim majority was now a competitor for resources -political, social and economic.

Mass Migration of Kashmiri Pandits from Kashmir Valley in 1990

A further threat to the security around the Kashmiri Pandit identity is articulated around the mass migration of the community from the Valley in late 1990's. Although understood as a singular episodic event that altered the Kashmiri Pandit discourse in popular understanding, the migration can also be contextualized as a process that majorly exasperated the already mushrooming discontent of minority sentiment within the community. These can be explored through an analysis of the dynamic complications that arose in the relationship between self (Kashmiri Pandit) and the other (Kashmiri Muslims) within the larger system (Kashmiri conflict) owing to the socio-political situations of not just the 1990's that marked a period of migration, but also the of thirty-three years the migration has sustained. I will now briefly highlight the process of mass migration of the 1990's before we discuss the critical question of how it has changed the discourse around the Pandit community, if at all.

The migration of 1990's is seen by many as a direct fall out of the volatile political situation in the Valley post the alleged rigging of the Legislative Assembly elections of 1987[5]. Interpreted as a total loss of

[5] The State Assembly Elections held in 1987 that resulted in appointment of Dr. Farooq Abdullah

legitimacy of all forms of electoral process, the Valley witnessed widespread escalation of popular agitation against the 'broken system' that ultimately led to violence and militancy (Bose, 2003). At target were those who were seen as sympathizers of the Indian State. This included mostly political activists associated with National Conference and Kashmiri Pandits (Evans, 2002). The community became 'easy targets' because of their alleged loyalties with the Indian State and their non-participation in the agitation against the Indian rule. In 1990, this put the community in a vulnerable state with a heightened awareness of its minority status. The period saw targeted killings of members from the Kashmiri Pandit community. It began with the well-known personalities of the community like Tika Lal Taploo who was associated with the Bharatiya Janta Party (BJP) or Lassa Kaul, the then director of Doordarshan who were believed to have significant socio-political clout. However, the period also saw killing of common Pandits like Sheela Tickoo, a housewife who fell to the militant bullet near Habba Kadal in 1989. The period after, saw a mass migration of the Kashmiri Pandits to 'safer' places owing to what has mostly been understood as an 'atmosphere of fear' in the Valley. A significant part of the population migrated from the Valley in the winter of 1998-99.

Rai (2021) calls the explanation of the migration of 1990 an 'ideological manifest'. There are multiple perspectives that highlight the reasons that led the community to migrate in huge numbers. Broadly, the migration has been explained as a combination of the following two factors. First, was the targeted attack on the Pandit community that through began with elites but also trickled down to the common people who were seen by the militants as 'informers' of the Indian state. Second factor pointed out by many like Evans (2002) and Rai (2021) was the inadequate action by the State in maintaining law and order or containing the situation. In the popular understanding of the Muslims of the State, Jagmohan, the then Governor

as the chief minister of the State, faced heavy criticism by the people of the State for allegedly being rigged in the favor of the Indian State backed National Conference. Seen as the only window to democratic expression of particular demands of the majority Kashmiris it was deemed inauthentic after the popular Muslim United Front leaders lost to National conference candidates. Many disappointed in the false promises of Indian democracy, like Yusuf Shah who later came to be known as Sayeed Salahudeen, joined militant ranks against the Indian State.

of Jammu and Kashmir played a significant role in 'facilitating' the migration of the Pandits. However, this claim is discredited by the Pandit community. As many of my respondents argue *"why would we leave behind everything just at the provocation of a state official? Who would leave everything behind for something like that."* In the popular discourse of the migration of 1990, many highlight the events of the night of 19th January, 1990. Accounts from community members talk of announcements from loudspeakers from mosques with slogans of self- determination asking all Muslims to take to the roads against massive raids and crackdown underway in the city by the Indian security forces to search for militants. A total of 400 people (both Muslims and Pandits) were arrested that night. This for many Pandits as many interactions from field suggest was a shock because of the gravitas of the sentiment against the Indian State. As many say, *"every man, woman, child from the Muslims was on the streets"*. A respondent of the study in Delhi says: "*no one entered our house that night, no one targeted my family, but when you see such a big procession, you don't wait for things to get worse. It was just an atmosphere of fear*."

The impact of 19th January alone is however rejected by many scholars (and respondent) as politically motivated exaggerations or an under satisfactory explanation of the mass migration which they corroborate did not happen overnight. Most of the migration was spread out from late 1989 to the summer of 1990 (Although many claim to have migrated after that too). Rai (2021) questions the neglect of already existing cleavages between the Pandits and Muslims in understanding the migration of 1990. Devoid this context and thereafter reconstructed in retrospect, the migration of the community is seen or remembered with a sense of 'sudden-ness' without any prior provocation. In the subsequent chapters I will try to critically analyze the 'atmosphere of fear' that is generally understood as the cause of mass migration of the community, by distinguishing between immediate causes and prolonged social processes that contributed to the mass migration of 1990.

Similar to accounts by other scholars (Hassan, 2010; Dutta, 2017; Rai, 2021), I also gathered from my respondents that the mass migration overlapped with the habitual migration, they undertook every year because of

harsh winters in the Valley. For others, the migration was only temporary to escape the unrest. Most people migrated with the understanding that they would come back once the situation was better. Some respondents reiterate lack of leaders who they could rally behind or who could take a consolidated decision for the community, as other popular reason for migration. There existed no unified leadership within the community that could either forward negotiation with the State or take a stand for the community to either stay or leave. Everyone was thus left to do their best as per their individual understanding and resources. As I too infer from my field observations and shall elaborate in the subsequent chapters, though bulked together as one homogeneous incident, the migration was a very individual experience for the members of the community. While some migrated because of lived experiences of violence, many migrated due to vicarious experiences of violence. Many others migrated temporarily just to escape the volatile atmosphere or even to spend winters elsewhere as usual. A lot of people, as I learnt, migrated just because most Pandits did and so it made little sense of them to stay back.

What went into this decision was every individual family's socio-economic status and associated concerns like having places to migrate to and connections like friends or relatives in other states. Among my respondents were also those who could not migrate at all due to financial constraints. Many respondents spoke of how they left at night or in the wee hours, taking just bare essentials so that no one would know. For most people who participated in the study, the realization that they had 'migrated' only became a reality after a few months of relocating when all touch with the home was lost. The only way of communication or gaining information was news bulletins on the state television or Doordarshan. The loss of channels of communication for many brought the realization of 'permanence' of their migration.

The same is the case with return. While many wish to go back to their homeland, for many others, more so among people born after 1990 or those who have lucrative jobs or lifestyles outside, going back may not as attractive an idea. This heterogeneity of experiences often gets subdued in the

overarching discourse that propagates the idea of an en-masse return to the homeland. Whether it was just the immediate reasons of targeted killings or prolonged sense of insecurity as a minority that contributed to migration, given the number of people who left, the migration cannot be seen as voluntary (Rai, 2021). However, one must also be cautious in calling the migration of 1990 a singular event because as highlighted it was a highly stratified one encouraged not just by immediate violence but also minority sentiments that had crept into the community long before. Individual capital in terms of place to migrate, knowledge and exposure to other cities, financial condition too mattered in either staying or leaving. Neera Chandhoke in a different study (2005) uses the idea of 'breaking of social contract' to explain the presence of conflict in the Valley. I found, the atmosphere of fear in 1990, as many of my respondents said followed a similar idea of tarnishing of '*haya'* or a deliberate and mutual subtility that Pandits and Muslims had till date observed despite varied political allegiances or views. The differences in political predispositions and social belief that always existed but were not spoken of mutually, now had come to the shore.

The exact figures of migration are contested. The government of Jammu and Kashmir maintains that a total of 1,54,080 people migrated from the Valley in 1990 and 89 Pandits were killed. Both migrant and non-migrant organizations reject these figures. While, Jammu based Panun Kashmir maintains that the migration figure is 300,000- 600,000, and some float the number of 700,000 Srinagar based non-migrant organization, Kashmiri Pandit Sangharsh Samiti (KPSS) contests that the actual numbers are around seventy thousand families and the total casualties from the Pandit community till 2020 stand at 672. The ambiguity over the numbers apart from politically motivated exaggerations, possibly also stems from lack of census data on how many Pandits lived in the Valley in before migration. The last reliable census to record the population of Brahmins in the Valley was that of 1941. The number recorded was 76, 868 or 4.4 percent of the Valley's population. 1981 census showed their population to be 3.96 percent (Evans, 2002). Evans (2002) quotes the migration number at 160,000-170,000 while Rai (2021) rough estimate of 100,000-140,000 individuals migrated from the Valley.

According to Evans (2002) to meet the migration numbers as high as 70,000 the Pandit population's growth in the Valley would have had to grow exponentially multi-fold which wasn't a practical possibility. As of 2020 a small population of 672 families or 2500-3000 Pandits live in the Valley as non-migrants according to KPSS. The government has put forth no official number for those who have returned to the Valley but a total of 5928 posts had been occupied in rehabilitation packages (both by migrants and non-migrants) till 2022 as per the Relief Commission, Jammu.

Rebuilding Identity: changes in position and interaction around the Pandit identity

Migration has deeply altered the divisions between the self and the other in the Pandit identity discourse. This becomes particularly complicated because the traditional understanding of the Pandit identity is based on strict distinction between them and the other communities owing mainly to caste and territorial distinctions. The 'self' or the community that was earlier considered a single caste community native to the Valley, is now dispersed throughout the country and word-wide. The self has disintegrated into factions. However, to reduce it to loss of identity is an oversimplification of a very complicated process where multiple and often competing identities have now arisen within the community in the form of migrants, non-migrants, pre 1990 migrants, camp and non- camp migrants and returnees. Each section now finds itself surrounded by a different social context and a different immediate 'other'. Their respective position and interaction with the immediate 'other' communities and with each other now influences their struggles to reinvent or preserve their identity as a whole.

Migrants form the most numerically and socially dominant group among the Kashmiri Pandit community today. Datta (2017) in his detailed analysis of the Pandit migrants in the Jammu city, highlighting the idea of a continuous struggle the community faces in the attempt of maintaining their memories of 'home' of the past which serves as an ideal and at the same time building a new home in Jammu in the hope of a secure future. The community finds itself mired in a politics of recognition (of their victimhood). Datta also focuses on the losses the community has suffered due to migration that he

terms as ‘de-classing and losing ‘exceptionality.’ However, in a different study Sawhney (2019) talks of the ‘agency’ that the Kashmiri Pandits still maintain in rebuilding themselves as opposed to just being dependent on the government help. The basis of this agency is the ‘social and cultural capital’ like an educated caste background and a history of migration which has arguably made it somewhat easier for the Pandit community to re-establish themselves. He calls it a process of continuous negotiation. The community has also erected replicas of major shrines like Kheer Bhawani (in Jammu) in their respective cities of settlement (Singh, 2015, Datta, 2019) to maintain a connection to their home and culture. These act as community centers for the members to gather on special days like functions or even Sundays.

Duschinski (2008) on the other hand talks of the idea of exceptionality in a different light. She focuses on the attempts directed at maintaining exclusivity and exceptionality by the community like settling in migrant enclaves post migration and active presence of Kashmiri bhavans and samitis and also separate schools like Vishwa Bharti in Noida that is majorly run by Pandit teachers. The community also runs magazines dedicated to preserving their cultural heritage especially the Kashmiri language. Datta (2017) highlights the role of the obituary section in such community in keeping the community members well informed of deaths in the community. He captures that as “*new form of kinship based on death.”*

A different struggle to hold on to the idea of the authentic self can be seen in the non-migrant section of the community who chose to not or did not or could not migrate from the Valley in the 1990’s. Numerically they are a miniscule proportion of the Kashmiri Pandit population. The figures range roughly between 2000-3000 individuals (KPSS data). I found no pattern of significant concentration of their population in any specific parts of the Valley presently. They are scattered, sometimes even a lone Pandit household in a locality both in the rural and urban parts of the Valley. The term non- migrant as the name suggests is only to indicate their relative position to the migrant section of the community. It also allows one to understand how dependent their current politics and identity is on that of the migrant section. They mostly find representation of their demands in the Kashmiri Pandit

Sangharsh Samiti headed by Sanjay Tickoo. Apart from articulating their demands of equal share in government concessions that are presently directly mostly towards migrants, a significant purpose for its existence, as Tickoo (in an interview with me) articulates, is to counter the 'brazen manipulation' of migration figures by migrant organizations. This as they say harms their relationship with the Muslim neighbors who they have to interact with on a daily basis unlike the migrants. A migrant registration initiative[6] by the Government of Jammu and Kashmir post 2016 has met with severe criticism from the non- migrant Pandit community for being directed only at political party workers leaving out the non-migrants. The non- migrants assert that they have wrongly been left out of any such policies as the State's selectively recognizes the migrant suffering while leaving them out. The community claims to face the dual challenges of being marginalized not just in the Valley as a politically insignificant numerical minority but also as a culturally isolated community that are often disowned even by the migrants for not migrating in the 1990's. Though their position in terms of territoriality has not changed (as opposed to the migrants), the nature of their interaction with the Muslim community in the current atmosphere has altered. They face challenges especially of not just visibility in government policies, but popular media too as compared to migrants who maintain better 'access' to have their voice heard. Facing the challenges of survival as a community many say they are forced to migrate now because of lack of jobs or limited matrimonial alliances in the shrinking non-migrant community. Non-migrants opine being overlooked by government's affirmative policies but also undervalued by all, including the migrants, Kashmiri Muslims, media and government in saving 'Kashmiri brotherhood' by choosing not to migrate (Trisal, 2007). This is compounded by the continued under- recognition of their present struggles in living as a timid minority in the shadow of 1990 mass migration.

One finds the story of those who had earlier migrated but have now

[6] The People's Democratic Party (PDP)-BJP coalition government in J&K opened a fresh registration of migrants after 2016 in wake of unrest in the Valley. The initiative was criticized both the already registered migrants as dilution of 1990 and by the non-migrants for being directed towards political party workers only.

returned to the Valley different from the aforementioned categories. While they, in some sense, have reclaimed a part of their self in terms of territorial aspect of their identity, they find themselves interacting with a social scenario much different from the one they had left and were familiar with thirty years back. Only some Pandits who still have properties have migrated back presumably for the purpose of settling in the Valley. Most figures of rehabilitation come from Prime Minister's Package[7] (henceforth, PM package) employees. Although categorizing them as permanent returnees would be an overstretch at this point. Among the returnees I also found some business families involved in handicraft industry, pharmaceutical industry, wholesale dealers of local spices and education intuitions who never entirely stopped their businesses in the Valley had returned. Even during their stay elsewhere, they had made frequent visits to the Valley. The two categories, as I will elaborate in the following chapters, face different challenges in re-establishing themselves in their homeland.

This is not to suggest that the different sections of the community have nothing in common. In fact, the overall and often homogenizing community discourse that connects them is still very popular. Their immediate surroundings and challenges might differ, but the sense of a unified identity based on claims of aboriginally superior caste guides much of the present discourses. However, due to the scattered nature of the community many sections (as I will explore in the following chapters) find themselves in relative disadvantage compared to the other. Most of the respondents I met chose to identify themselves first as Kashmiri Pandits and then as Hindus. Interestingly, even for those born after the migration of 1990, their Kashmiri Pandit identity was a matter of pride. Many boasted of the knowledge they or their children possess of Kashmiri language, the cuisine, the architecture despite the migration. But for most the points of contact with the homeland were extremely limited. Most third generation Kashmiri Pandits had never been to the homeland, they claim to know about in great detail. Most first and second-generation migrants who had faced migration and had to struggle to

[7] PM package was introduced by the Manmohan Singh led government in 2008 as a rehabilitative measure for Kashmiri Pandit youth through permanent employment in the Valley.

resettle in their new places of migration and some third- generation migrants, who had vague memories of having experienced it as children, too had hardly ever gone back.

Most respondents also claim to have sold their ancestral property through middlemen and brokers who approached them to seal the deals on their behalf. Many also say that their properties have been encroached or illegally occupied in their absence. Even though most people claim to have sold off properties for peanuts as a distress sale, the number of people who have made provisional returns even for such sales is very less. Only some people said they retained friendships and bonds from the old days who also helped them in property sales. The main point of contact or the source of information, about the day-to-day happenings of the homeland remained television news and the internet. The sense of identity therefore for many is based on either what they remember of the homeland from thirty years back or oral histories passed down through generations. The returnees are in a unique position where the attributes of their identity based on these faded or vicarious experiences are now juxtaposed against the changed social scenarios in their homeland.

While the discourse around return rests on territoriality based on distinctness, it is overpowered by a sense of 'threat' that has led homecoming become an issue essentially secondary and subject to the idea of security. It therefore is accorded a symbolic value and seen as part of a greater process of returning to a land 'sanitized' (Panun Kashmir, 2010) from threat and just religious in nature. This posturing has influenced the 'securitization of (the Pandit) identity' itself. Community organizations seem to influence individual agency in deciding how safe the return is. Evident in the en-masse rejection of all rehabilitation programs as political gimmick to divide the community (Duschinski, 2008) and in subsequent criticism of those community members who hold contrary views, the organizations dictate not just any debate around return but also shape the personal sense of belonging that individuals hold towards their homeland.

Community organizations have become important platforms not just for preserving identity but also to reshape and to an extent, revive and (re) essentialize the identity. The number of community organizations that

represent the demands and highlight the migration of 1990's is an ever-growing one. They become even more imperative in the absence of territorial containment of the community. One of such organizations is the Panun Kashmir Movement. Based in Jammu, Panun Kashmir is often taken as the singular voice of negotiation that represents the community. Founded in Jammu in 1990 immediately after the migration by Kuldeep Submly (Agnishekhar), it adopted the 'Margdarshan' or the 'Homeland Resolution' in December the same year. The primary demand put was the carving of a separate Pandit 'homeland' to the east and north of Jhelum which would be governed in accordance with federal laws.

A second demand was to establish a Special Crime Tribunal to enquire into the 'excesses, genocide and ethnic cleansing' against the community. The Margdarshan was a blueprint of return of not just the Hindus who had migrated in 1990 but as the resolution read of 'all seventy hundred thousand' Hindus who had ever migrated from their homeland. The Panun Kashmir Movement (2010), referring to the 'forced migration' of 1990 blames it on the 'Islamic terrorism' they hold responsible for forcing the original inhabitants of Kashmir out of their 'sacred land.' (Teng, 2005 a cited in Datta, 2017). The migration is seen not just an act of aggression but as a part of a larger plan to destabilize the secular Indian Nation. The sense of insecurity here isn't limited to being a vulnerable minority as in the 1930's but rather community at the verge of '*extinction as a race'* (Panun Kashmir Movement, 2010) due to atrocities targeted against it. The aim as the movement articulates is to tackle a greater security threat by '*reconquering Kashmir'* in order to 'save Kashmiri Pandits, to save Kashmir, to save India' (PKM, 2010). This also features in the discourse around the return mostly shaped by organizations of similar nature. The narrative around the return therefore puts forward conditions to be fulfilled before the possible return that would ensure the security and dignity of the Pandits. Datta (2017) highlights that the community organizations observe 19th January as 'Holocaust Day'. The Panun Kashmir Movement also criticizes the Indian state for its failure to protect its minorities when they were '*persecuted by the Islamic terrorists'* (PKM, 2010).

A second organization worth mentioning is Roots in Kashmir that identifies as a social movement (and not a political organization) to reclaim the roots of the Pandit community that still lie in the '*Vitasta Valley'* (Kashmir Valley). They support the idea of return along the lines of PKM's Margdarshan resolution, but maintain that their purpose is limited to protesting and creating awareness among people to 'fight for their roots'. Kashmiri Samiti in Moolchand, Delhi is another significant community organization. I will elaborate on their role further in the following chapters. Apart from migrant organizations the non- migrant demands are articulated by the Kashmiri Pandit Sangharsh Samiti headed by Sanjay Tickoo. He defines the purpose of the organization to not only work for those who stayed but also put forth an accurate assessment of the 1990 migration figures against the overinflated figures of Panun Kashmir and other migrant organizations. Among many other are the Jammu Kashmir Vichar Manch (JKVM), All Party Migrant Coordination Committee (APMCC), Kashmiri Pandits Organizations Alliance (KPOA) to name a few.

Community organizations apart from acting as platforms of community's identity solidarity and preservation also act as watchdog for what most members of the community as reflected in field interactions, term inadequate action by the state to reestablish the community in its homeland. Soon after the migration in 1990, the Relief and Rehabilitation Commission was set up by the government of Jammu and Kashmir on 23rd March, 1990 not just to maintain a register of the migrants but also to distribute relief and monthly allowance to the displaced community. The total number of migrants registered with the Relief Commission till 2022 stands around 65,422 families (approximate figure). Jammu houses 44089 families or 150273 persons (this figure includes both relief and non-relief category migrants as per Relief and Rehabilitation Commission, Jammu), while Delhi and NCR a total of 19,338 families (approximate figure) registered migrant. Other states have a registered migrant population of 1,995 families (approximate figure). Relief measures were announced immediately in 1990 as the migration was in progress, subsequently rehabilitation schemes were released in 1996, 2004, 2008 and 2015 along with grievance redressal portal released in 2021 that is

integrated with the Centralized Public Grievance Redress and Monitoring System (CPGRAMS) to solve claims of property damage or encroachment under the J&K Migrant Immovable Property (Preservation, Protection and Restrain on distress sale) Act, 1997. Apart from aiming to stop further distress sale of the Pandit property or solving matters of encroachment of the same, these packages have mainly focused on rehabilitation schemes that provide employment and lodging opportunities for the youth of the community.

After the migration in 1990, transit accommodation was provided to migrants in government buildings and tents in Battal Billian, Nagrota, Muthi phase I and II, Purkhoo, Mishriwala, Jhiri and Brij Nagar. In 1991, 21 one room tenements were constructed at Muthi phase I and II, Nagrota, Purkhoo, Mishriwala and Nagrota. It was only in 2005 that the migrants were shifted into concrete two room tenements or flats, the ones they live in today. 1024 flats became operational in Purkhoo, Muthi and Nagrota in 2005 and 4224 in Jagti township in 2007. In 2008 a 'Concrete Economic Package' or PM Package was announced by the Manmohan Singh Government for rehabilitation of the Pandit community that mainly included 6000 jobs for youth in their ancestral districts, 6000 transit accommodations, 2.5 lakh-7.5 lakh for house repair/ purchase, monthly monetary support of rupees 13000 per family along with medical and scholarship benefits.

These were implemented in the spirit of rehabilitation and confidence building for a permanent return to the Valley under non-transferable jobs. The relief commission also manages under construction transitory accommodation of returnee migrant employees in migrant colonies like Sheikhpura in Budgam and Vessu in Kulgam. However, it took over a decade for 5928 vacancies out of those 6000 to be filled (as of 2022). Economic packages alone have not been able to attract enough popularity among the migrants to convince them to return. On a closer look as to why such measures have not yielded much success one encounters that such packages might not appeal to all Pandits who have migrated outside the Valley especially ones who are now settled in bigger cosmopolitan cities. For many people the focus is on settling in the new places of habitation.

Elaborating the role of the Indian State in marginalizing the Pandit

community beyond migration, Tremblay (1996), adds a dimension in defining the intervening role the Indian State has played at the very level of identity formation leaving certain communities highly insecure. She asserts that it was with the biased acceptance of the victimhood of the Muslims and subsequent directing of all political resources towards them as a tool of appeasement, did the state marginalize the Pandit population. She further corroborates that the Pandits were perceived guilty because of their historical association with the Dogra rule and later their undying support for the Indian State was taken for granted that made them insecure in their own state even before the migration. Therefore, the narrative around security draws both from the episodes of violence and from the breakdown of the state machinery in protecting those who then became easy targets.

Hangloo (in Khan, 2012) in his work on the alliance between community elite (organizations) and political forces, focuses on the individual interests of community members who side with religious nationalist forces for personal gains while Duschinski (2008) highlights the role of the community organizations that claim to be social in nature but often cross the line into the political realm and strongly manipulate the community discourse. Apart from maintaining exclusivity she also highlights the say the socio-political organizations have in articulating the greater discourse of the community through their opinion columns on varied issues relating to the return packages, memories of exodus and more. Duschinski (2007) also highlights the proximity that these socio-religious organizations managed to forge with Hindu Nationalists, thereby engaging in 'politics aimed at survival' (Duschinski, 2008). What needs to be further highlighted here is that while identity and homecoming remain significantly important in shaping the future course of the community discourse, focus now needs to be directed towards the nature of interaction between the community elites and the 'common Pandits'. The agency of an average Pandit migrant or nom-migrant needs to be critically engaged with and not assumed.

Need for Engagement with the Present Discourse: why the deadlock?

To understand why we need to engage with the present discourse of the Kashmiri Pandits, we must return to our discussion on the two main risks

of identity politics: essentialization and assumed homogeneity. While every section of the Pandit community is engaged in preserving the vulnerable essentials of its identity, it is also simultaneously engaged in a 'identity war' with the other sections to prove that its version of identity is more authentic than the other. While this creates fissures in the claims of a singular identity, a parallel attempt is also pushed simultaneously to establish a homogeneous identity to make the Kashmiri Pandit identity and its connection to homeland, secure. This can be understood as a rebuttal to fear of losing the Pandit identity altogether. However, in doing so a homogenous discourse is articulated at a community level that might not resonate with the individual experiences of each section within the community. Identity is treated as a fixed concept that is unaffected by the changing position and interactions of the community members.

Therefore, in this study I try to separate grassroot experiences from popular narratives giving primacy to individual stories of migration and resettlement and analyze Pandit discourse independent of the dominant security narrative and religious nationalism that often overlap it. While the Kashmiri Pandit community has been extensively studied and written about, the hitherto published literature broadly covers two main themes. One set of scholarship deals with the traditional attributes of the Pandit identity and highlights their specific position as an educated community and their contribution to fields like mythology, literature and administration (Chandel, 2017; Rai 2004; Madan 2010; Sender 1988; Pant 1987) within and beyond the former state of Jammu and Kashmir. The other set of literature brings forth at length the experiences of the community in dealing with its mass migration from the Valley and the subsequent resettlement in new places of habitation (Tremblay, 1996; Trisal, 2007; Duschinski, 2008; Datta, 2016, 2017; Singh 2015; Sawhney 2019; Vijaykumar, 2020). A plethora of literature has also come up from the community members in the recent past too speaking of their individual accounts of migration, displacement and belonging (Pandita, 2013; Gigoo et al., 2015; Bhat, 2020; Tikoo, 2021). The former portrays the community as well settled with firm territorial roots and the latter explores their struggles as mostly an uprooted one.

What remains inadequately researched, is a thread of continuity, if any, between these two- the pre and post migration discourses of the community. Most studies on the community either take the mass migration of 1990 as the starting point of analysis or as an episode that signifies a complete change of lens of analysis. This is where the study makes a departure from the exiting debate. Instead of looking at the history of the community as fragmented eras divided by episodic migration, I try to make sense of the prolonged migration of the community in light of their historical socio-cultural stature and contextualize their present circumstances by linking it to their traditional positions as part of a structure that includes their position in the Kashmiri society before 1990, their equations and interactions with the Kashmiri Muslims and that with the Hindus elsewhere in India. This is to avoid falling into mutually exclusive labels like displaced community or regionally dominant community while approaching the community discourse.

I will explore two main themes in this study: the politics of deadlock and the idea of fractured identity. They both try to delink community discourse from individual experiences and explore a layered understanding of the Kashmiri Pandit Identity that corroborates with the respective positions of the different sections, thereby direct the further discourse away from a deadlock that is based on essentialization and a rigid understanding of identity.

Politics of Deadlock

Let's first talk of politics of deadlock, where I broadly try to understand the prolonged migration of the Pandit community or the nature of the delay in their return to the homeland. The basic factor that politics of deadlock theorizes on is a 'lack of consensus' among stakeholders to an issue in order to reach an agreement of any sorts. It builds on Burnard Crick's (1962) understanding of politics as the art of civilization. Crick understands politics as the process of consensus building among groups in a society with divergent or rival interests. So, an imperative here for any kind of politics to exist is that a society should be 'complex' and not ideal. He builds on Aristotle's critique of Plato's Polis to say that Polis understood as mere harmony or absence of any competing interests, is where '*polis ceases to be polis'*. A

complex society is an aggerate that is textured and divided. In recognizing so he also allows for what he terms the '*tolerance of multiple truths'.* Politics therefore is the art of according legal and popular recognition to these conflicting truths articulated by divergent sections and initiate a deliberate conciliation towards the end goal of 'survival of the society as a whole'. Consensus is not an entity that sections of the society arrive at but rather the understanding and activity that keeps the 'ship afloat'. What is prerequisite here is for the politics to avoid complete dependence on either the principles or ideals of future or the traditions of the past. Accordingly, one can argue that the process of involvement or consensus building is directed to a 'useful' end of survival.

The breakdown of consensus may happen when any group or groups stop associating with the common interest of survival with the rest of the society. Alex de Tocqueville (1954) too understands a complex society as one that balances between political cleavages and consensus at the same time. Like Crick he does not understand a 'harmonious society' to be an entity of the future but a constantly evolving one. It is both the source of conflict and the source of consensus. In consonance with Crick's account, he too reiterates that the breakdown of consensus results in low participation by individuals who then lack interest in any kind of political involvement or running of the society at large.

Building on this understanding of politic as art of consensus I articulate that 'politics of deadlock' is one which results from and operates on lack of consensus around mutual interests and survival. I use the case of the Kashmiri Pandit discourse to elucidate the nature of this 'deadlock' which is produced by the forceful congruence of grassroot realities with community discourse(s) while the two might not necessarily align. The deadlock is characterized primarily by three features:

a) Overemphasis on ceremoniality or symbolism:

b) Constantly changing nature or meaning of the goal

c) Pursuance of goal as an end in itself as compared to achieving the goal.

The first feature of symbolism attaches ceremoniality to a cause making the preconditions to the cause and symbolic meaning attached to the cause more important than the case itself. The discourse then often feeds off of a 'deliberate delay' which results in a politics aimed at deadlock. In this case, symbolism rests on three features:

a) Lack of practical or immediate connection with the causes

b) Reconstruction of an 'ideal' past

c) Reliance on historical narratives or belief systems.

As far as the first feature is concerned, what is to be kept in mind that within a community, and more so in a dispersed community, people have differentiated power to articulate and/or manipulate the discourse. In case of lack of touch with the motherland, people may fall back on representatives of the community for such articulations. Most members have little space to have their individual experiences heard. While this creates a strong discourse, it simultaneously creates a community alienated from contributing to that discourse. It snowballs overtime with many losing touch with the day-to-day politics of the discourse and ultimately losing interest in active participation. This reflects in many choosing to identify as 'apolitical' or maintain a mere 'social' attachment to a cause. In case of actual involvement many fall back on symbolic assertions to maintain a connection to the cause. This limited association with the discourse furthers a politics of deadlock.

The second feature that contributes to symbolism is the construction of an ideal past or an ideal homeland. I look at the concept of 'homeland' from two different perspectives. Firstly, a practical approach that refers to a space with a physical manifestation and secondly, as an idea, a construction that holds an emotional resonance. Dispersed communities with limited connection to their homeland tend to reconstruct a homogeneous, singular representation of the past devoid of social or political cleavages. Brah (1996) points out that there exists indeed a sea of a difference between what he terms as 'homing desire' and 'desire for the homeland'. While the former is symbolic desire the latter entails an actual return. The two hardly are ever congruent. This illuminates the evolving nature of the very mirage innate to

the very concept of homeland. While homeland primarily talks of the place of origin, it is envisioned far away from it.

For a better understanding of this dynamic evolution of the concept of homeland I treat it as an intersection between the past, the present and the future. The concept of homeland essentially caters to the place of origin in three ways. As far as the element of past is concerned, it deals with the memories of the 'original home' and answers the questions of 'what was' or 'what could have been'. The element of present engages with the idea of homeland through the lens of a continuous struggle of reinventing one's own identity in the new place of habitation but in association with the homeland. Thirdly, the element of future, engages with the idea of homeland in terms of 'what should be' or 'what ought to be'. The idea of homeland especially in the case of those who have migrated from conflict ridden territories of origin, is intimately connected with the emotion of 'going back some day'. This influences the way the diasporic or migrant discourses visualize the homeland or rather the idea of the homeland as one that is ideal enough for them to go back to one day. This visualization is often spread out through generations, passed down orally to from one to the next. In most cases the conceptualization of homeland by future generation is based less on lived experiences but more on the vicarious experiences and folklore shared by the previous generations. It is important to remember that the idea of homeland is thus an ever- evolving idea mostly conceived in the place of migration and is neither a sole entity of the past, nor the present, and nor of the future alone. It is a continuous bargain that lies at an intersection where the three interact and borrow from each other.

Further, three factors are essential to the construction of the idea of homeland- time, distance and point of contact. In my study of the Kashmiri Pandit who migrated outside of their homeland, I found that it was true for most respondents to have very limited contact in terms of actual lived experience when it came to knowledge of the day-to-day happenings of the homeland. This is more so in case of generations born after migration whose only source of knowledge is their family, relatives and the literature available apart from community organizations and online debates or televised

news about the community. A common trend that such community discourses tend to follow is that of an 'ideal' homeland' that is sanitized to fit the imagined land the community would want to return to rather than the actual state of affairs as it might exist. Here, less focus is paid to the past aspect of what was. In fact, the lack of direct point of contact, inordinate amount of time elapsed since the time of migration compounded with the physical distance from the place of origin, overshadow actuality and the idea of homeland is constructed from the future perspective of what ought to be or what the community desires to be true. This leads to the construction of a near perfect ideal that is experienced only in perceptual understanding. In most cases idea of a sanitized homeland is heavily dominant on the actual lived experiences, exacerbating the community discourse's tendency to write history backwards. The resulting incongruence between the ideal homeland a community wants to go back to and the alien one that presently exists promotes a deadlock at the discursive level.

The third feature i.e., reliance on historical beliefs is observed in particular with dislocated communities who use such narratives in order to make sense of their present circumstances. Winland (2002) in his study of diasporas argues that connection with homeland also forms the bedrock upon which the 'self-image' of the diasporic communities is built. The process of relocation essentially entails trying to reinvent one's identity in the new place of habitation while borrowing from the 'homeland'. Brah (1996) highlights that the process of migration is not just about dislocation but essentially about settling down too. In order to make sense of this deadlock, I explore the importance 'narratives' hold in the Kashmiri Pandit community. As I will highlight through field observations, the community members rely heavily on oral and written accounts of literature that guide their belief system and day to day activities. Based on these beliefs, members accept migration and subsequent return, as fate predicted and written for them. While many a times such popular beliefs lack critical evaluation, they contribute heavily in helping Pandits create their self-image and world view, even when faced with realities and experiences that won't align with their beliefs. Creating an incongruence, it might contribute to a posturing that leads to a deadlock.

Now let's understand the second feature of politics of deadlock. The primary contributor here is the changing meaning of the goal. In this case the main goal is the return of the Kashmiri Pandits to their homeland. But what entails a return is 'appropriated' by many within and outside the community making the goal difficult to reach. In the case of the Pandit community, the community discourse traditionally ran on claims of distinction and exclusivity both territorial and religious. The community discourse overtime has been popularized beyond the community and sometimes also co-opted by the religious nationalistic discourses. Although this has also given the community, especially migrants, better visibility and wider acceptance in the national media, it has simultaneously resulted in the community's loss or compromise of monopoly over the discourse. It can be explored further given the changing affiliation of territoriality has changed over years. The Kashmiri Pandit identity was defined essentially around religio-territorial aspects. It was the sacred place, Kashmir held in the Hindu mythology that legitimized the claimed supremacy Kashmiri Pandits enjoyed over the other Sarasvat Brahmins and Hindus in general. The mass migration of 1990 has altered this significantly. Earlier the focus was on the idea of distinctiveness from the co-religionists on the basis of territory. The community, now dispersed throughout the country shares a complicated relationship with its native territory.

For most people in the community now, the direct connection they had with their homeland is viewed through the prism of security and to some extent religion. Many whose personal experiences don't align with an overtly religious ideology, find themselves sidelined in their own discourse too. The ideas around return to homeland or the end goal too has been manipulated by such ideological influences. Does the return mean a mere return of those Kashmiri Pandits who migrated in 1990? Or is it a return of the Hindus in general to the religious land that was lost? In that case the territorial aspect of the identity is overpowered by the religious aspect compromising the exclusivity that were traditionally maintained with co-religionists. There exist competing interpretations of question of return, mode of returning, time of return and more importantly what qualifies a satisfactory return. Such

factors forward a politics of deadlock. The right to return gains more prominence than the act of returning itself promoting a politics of delay and deadlock. The community discourse becomes overpowering with little scope for identification or accommodation of multiple discourses within the community to help move beyond an impasse.

The last feature of deadlock can be explained through the pursuance of the goal as an end in itself. The politics of deadlock also comes from the incongruence of the current posture and the current situation most people find themselves in. The process of asserting the right to return and settling down in a new place often happen at the same time. While many are better 'settled' in new places, some are not. Therefore, it matters who articulates the discourse of return. If the former talks of return, does it mean an actual return to the homeland or a just a choice they may or may not exercise after getting some government assistance. For the latter, return would mean a necessity in terms of rehabilitation in the homeland. Sometimes the idea of return may hold different meaning and significance for people within the community. The complication here is that irrespective of different interpretations, all participate in the discourse. The discourse is vehemently articulated, but who it applies to is unclear. This confusion furthers a deadlock wherein the demands for return grow louder and so does the differentiated pace of settling down in the new home.

Things get complicated by the assumption of homogeneity of experiences when it comes to both the migration and the return of the Pandits. Given that the community has mostly maintained an identity around certain Brahmin ideals as a single caste community with most of its members involved in acquiring knowledge and serving the State as government employees, the possibility of differentiated affects that the process of migration has had on them is largely ignored. The assumed homogeneity here, stands in sharp contrast to the lived experiences of many where agency in making decisions pertaining migration and return are not evenly and equally enjoyed by all and are highly influenced by socio-cultural and economic capital at individual level. (Sawhney, 2019). As I will detail in our further discussion, the agency of a migrant living in a government accommodation

in making a decision to go back is hugely different from the one in Delhi who might be a member of a socio-political community organization. Similarly, the agency someone who had a place of alternate residence outside the state in 1990 compared to a villager who had never stepped outside the Valley may fundamentally differ.

Kashmiri Pandits as a Fractured Identity

Another theme that will be explored throughout this dissertation deals with the idea of 'fractured identity'. The concept of fractured identity responds to assumptions of homogeneity around the Kashmiri Pandit identity. It does so by recognizing the differentiated experiences of the sections of the Pandit community and the effect such experiences have had on their identity assertions.

The Kashmiri Pandit community has for long been presented as a consolidated one. This was done firstly by denying any caste stratification within the Pandit community in the Valley and secondly, by maintaining a caste superiority with the Hindus including the Sarasvat Brahmins everywhere in India. Rai (2021) challenges these claims of consolidation within the community by highlighting that there existed subcastes like the *Gors, Krkuns* and *Bacha Batta* based on the occupational hierarchy within the community. Further she highlights accounts of religious similarities Kashmiri Pandits share with other Sarasvat Brahmins like those from Bengal to say that the claims of being distinct from other Sarasvat Brahmins does not hold ground on scrutiny. Regardless, I found that notions of caste based regio-territorial exclusivity and distinction remain central to the belief system of Pandits. Post migration these claims of homogeneity as a community have become intertwined with a clean portrayal of the homeland. The need to stress for a near perfect homeland that existed pre 1990 has exasperated tendencies to overlook any divisions that might have existed within the community. Following this logic, 1990 is read as a major shift in the history of the community that resulted in the disintegration of an otherwise homogeneous community. What marks the post 1990 discourse is a sense of alleged loss of identity shared equally and similarly throughout the community. Through the concept of fractured identity, I try to locate fractures or diversity based on

individual experiences of migration, resettlement and return within the community that challenge the homogenization.

The present study identifies fractures that exist among differently placed sections of the community. The first fracture can be identified between the migrants and the non-migrants. A second, between migrants of the 1990 migration and those who had migrated before 1990. A third between migrants and the returnees and also between the non-migrants and the returnees. The point is not just to highlight different sections of Pandit community but to problematize the seemingly homogeneous discourse where these sections compete and engage in 'politics of authenticity' in claiming to be more ideal or more original than the rest. The tussle of authenticity between the groups is expressed in two ways. First one comes from proximity to traditional Pandit identity and second is competitive victimization. This ideal-ness is measured in terms of proximity to the virtues held central in the traditional understanding of the Kashmiri Pandit community and these claims are mutually disregarding. The non-migrant section of the community claim they are 'more ideal' or rather 'true sons of the soil' who did not abandoned their motherland in times of crisis. By deciding not to migrate they gave primacy to their direct bond with their territory. On the other hand, the migrant identity is now a more visibly accepted and popular identity, not just within the community but also outside the community as well. Many migrants argue that they left their territory to protect their religious faith. Here primacy is given to religious affiliation as compared to territory alone in stressing that they are the 'ideal' Pandits. While the non-migrants at the level of discourse reject the claims of migrant counterparts, they do seem to inch close to the migrant discourse when it comes to demanding a share in affirmative policies, benefits and popular attention directed towards migrants.

Both the migrants and the non-migrants see the returnees who have settled back in the Valley under government schemes as less of Pandits for their own reasons that I will explore in the subsequent chapters. Apart from that, divisions based on the rural-urban divide, class and caste (to a lesser extent now because of intermarriages) exist even now. Claims of being more ideal are also measured around competitive victimization. Those who claim

to have suffered most, claim to be the most ideal too. While non-migrants disqualify migrant sufferings as an over exaggeration. The latter blame the non-migrants for their relative backwardness. The rural claim to have suffered more than the urban who as they allege were compensated by insurance for the houses they lost as compared to the villagers who were uprooted not just from their houses but their rural lifestyles with no skill to survive in new urban settings with lesser money since all their agricultural land and cattle were left behind.

Although most Pandits experience a sense of loss of identity at a personal level, on a community level Kashmiri Pandits are presented as a strong identity. The fact that a strong community discourse fails to give its members a secure sense of identity can be explained through the homogenizing efforts of trying to define the identity in strict terms. Identity is understood and maintained in strict and restrictive sense here. This results in elimination of members who don't fit this strict definition. Now, before 1990 there was only one definition defined by territorial distinction. Those who migrated outside the Valley were considered less of Pandits within the community. What has changed now is that there are many sections of the community and all have their own definition of an ideal Pandit. All these definitions are mutually exclusive. There exist multiple loci of legitimacy that cancel out each other's claims to be the (more) 'ideal' Pandit identity. The study recognizes these variations within the Pandit identity. However, it does not present them as competing identities, rather it tries to normalize differentiated experiences of various community members under the same umbrella of Pandit identity.

The point of highlighting these fractures is not simply to counter the claims of homogenization but to highlight the existence of multiple beliefs and experiences either in nature or degree that exist within the community. This helps in giving space to individual experiences within a dominant community discourse and also contributes to a better understanding of the politics of deadlock. As opposed to homogenization which discounts any layers within the community, looking at the fractures helps recognize social and political limitations or rather realities of the past and present that might lead to a

consensus- oriented debate in the future while accommodating the lived experience of those who will have to deal with the end results.

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Chapter Two

Creating the field space: the ethnographer-respondent dialectic amid the contextual volitivity of the field

Introduction

The scholarly engagement with the Kashmiri Pandit community has mostly been limited to analyzing the macro processes of migration and their effect on the community as a whole. Subsequently, certain generalizations have been assumed to be true of the entire community. A sense of homogenizing is witnessed in the effect of and response to the dislocation of the community from Kashmir Valley, in the hitherto published accounts. This leaves space and opportunity for the present study to explore the Kashmiri Pandit discourse taking a bottom-up approach. It therefore tries to first capture the grassroot narratives and experiences of individual Pandits and only then juxtapose them against the community-wide discourse, popular in the journalistic and academic accounts. An immersive study through a prolonged ethnographic engagement therefore has been adopted for the study.

Apart from a mere method of gathering qualitative narratives, the ethnographic approach here has been used to generate and detail the simultaneous weaving of the field itself through a dialectical exchange between the ethnographer and the respondents. The knowledge produced in the form of 'data' collected is therefore considered an act of generating a reality highly contextualized for the circumstances and relational give and take it was produced in. It moves beyond a mere collection of 'facts' to generating subjective realities. The study revolves around three main phenomena, i.e., capturing the memory of the home respondents have left behind, engaging with their present lives and getting a sense of the home (land) they envision for themselves in the future. The data collection (or generation) for the study therefore was extensive and was carried out through a multi- sited ethnography in three separate phases and in three cities, i.e. Kashmir Valley, Jammu city and Delhi/ National Capital Region (NCR). A fourth city of Allahabad (now Prayagraj) had to be dropped from the study in the later stages due to the 2020 Covid pandemic. The rationale behind choosing the

respective sites was to identify and involve the supposedly experientially varied sections of non-migrants, returnees, 1990 migrants and the pre-1990 migrants. This coincides with the aim of the study to go beyond a narrow understanding of the Kashmiri Pandits as a homogeneous migrant community. In this chapter I will detail the topography of the respective field sites and the overall field space. I will begin with setting out the research gaps, objectives and questions and then present an account of the ethnographic field engagements and the generation of data that the study is based on.

Research Gap

The existing scholarship engages in an in-depth analysis of various aspects that cover the discourse on a community level and experiences (mostly of migration) on an individual level. However, as highlighted in the previous chapter, I identify certain aspects that can be dealt with further. For most scholarship the analysis of discourse around Kashmiri Pandits is anchored in the mass migration of 1990. Few, like Rai, (2004), Evans (2002) and Copland (1981), focus on the dominant discourse before1990.While the separation gives insights into the construction of narratives of victimization in respective time-frames; it misses out on exploring the possibility of a continuity (or a shift) in the discourse. The pre-1990 discourse is seen as regional with a religious undercurrent; the latter however is analyzed as overtly religious. To see whether the two are distinct or borrow from each other may offer wider explanation of the discourse. The following gaps call for further research that the study aims at addressing:

a) The hitherto published literature looks at migration as an episode and not as a process which can possibly provide further explanation for the prolonged stay of the majority of the community members.

b) The Pandit community is usually seen as a numerical minority and hence as a disadvantaged, marginalized group which inhibits a deeper engagement to understand the nature of their minority assertion that can possibly go beyond their numerical strength or migration alone

c) There is a need for further engagement with the functioning of

the community organizations pre-1990, to see if and how they have taken on new roles after 1990. The present study focuses on the intra and inter community interactions of these organizations and the influence they have in articulating or affecting the community discourse both rhetorically and on ground.

d) Another aspect yet to be highlighted is that of the heterogeneity around the discourse within the community where experiences of migrants are extrapolated to all. The community is assumed to be homogeneous irrespective of the variation that is highly possible given the geographical dispersion and different degrees of proximity of the community members to corridors of power. Though recent literature does distinguish between the experiences of migrants and non-migrants, the migrant community still is seen as a united whole.

e) Lastly, most scholars in their account of the Pandit migration describe it as 'forced migration', however there is little critical engagement with the factors that contribute to the factors that make it forced. Most accounts take the immediate causes of 1990 unrest in the Valley into consideration while conceptualizing the idea. An engagement with the role discursive factors can possibly play in the migration or return have not been sufficiently addressed.

Objectives of the Study

The study will broadly address the following objectives:

a) The study broadly aims to critically analyze the discourse of the Kashmiri Pandit community independent of the dominant security narrative and grand narratives of religious nationalism. In doing so, it seeks to contextualize the Pandit discourse and explore the relationships, conflictual or affiliative they shared with other communities. It also looks at any changes these relationships have gone through over time.

b) Apart from attempting to link the pre- and post-1990 narratives seen and studied as temporally distinct, the study also aims to conceptualize the idea of 'forced migration' when applied to a well-placed community like the Kashmiri Pandits. In doing so it especially focuses on the effect discursive factors may play a role in making migration and subsequent prolonged stay

'forced' or otherwise.

c) The study also aims to explore the acceptance of community narratives at the grass-root levels and the interaction of such narratives with the experiences at individual level. Further, it is also interested in exploring the acceptance of provisional or individual experiences (of return, migration, non-migration) within the community.

d) Lastly, the study tries to explore if there is a link between vulnerability experienced by a dispersed community and the need for a stronger, seemingly homogeneous community discourse.

Research Questions

The questions the study is based on can be divided into two sets. The first set of questions look into the nature of the present discourse of the Kashmiri Pandits. The aim here is to identify the actors who mainly shape the discourse and critically analyze the discourse for its accommodation of individual experiences of the community members. The last question specifically tries to problematize the idea of 'forced migration' as applied to an otherwise well-placed community like the Kashmiri Pandit.

a) Has the *'politics of survival'* (Duschinski, 2008) changed into a '*politics of deadlock'*, and how have socio-religious community organizations contributed, if at all, in shaping such a discourse before and after the mass migration of 1990?

b) What are the political resources available to the migrant part of the community outside 'home'? Does their availability make the Kashmiri Pandit identity function better from outside and possibly make it desirable for the non-migrant part of the community too?

c) How has the community discourse been popularized among masses in outside the Kashmir Valley?

d) In doing so, how does the community negotiate the monopoly based on distinction (of the Pandit identity) hitherto maintained over the discourse?

e) What is the acceptance of and the contribution to such

discourse by ordinary actors in the community?

f) Does a seemingly homogeneous discourse give a sense of security to the dispersed Pandit community? If so, does it also influence the individual capacity of making decisions pertaining to return or not?

g) In that case, can the discursive factors also be seen as contributing to the 'prolonged' and 'forced' migration of Pandits?

The second set of questions make an attempt to look into the claims of identity loss that the community experiences especially post migration; however, it widens the ambit from just migrants to include non-migrants (and variations within migrants) to also look into the hitherto less debated factors that might contribute to loss of identity especially among the non-migrants.

a) What is the nature of the sense of loss of identity, if any, that permeates the Kashmiri Pandit discourse?

b) Is the sense of loss of identity experienced only by migrants or by the non- migrants as well?

c) If experienced by both, are the reasons for loss of identity for migrants and non- migrants different? Within the migrants does it vary with differently placed migrants?

Weaving a Field Space: exploring the locale of the study

A pilot study was carried out for nearly two months from May-July, 2019, in the Kashmir Valley. The field for the pilot study was confined mainly to Sheikhpura Pandit Colony, Budgam district and dispersed Pandit households throughout Srinagar district in the Kashmir Valley. The former offered a sample of both migrant and internally displaced non -migrant Pandits. The second sample mainly consisted of non-migrants and a few returnees. The dispersed sample in Srinagar was chosen from areas like Chanapora, Shankerpora, Shiv Pora, Indra Nagar and Ganpatyar. On an average three households were identified in each of these areas.

The sample chosen consisted of 20 respondents including migrant Pandits, non- migrant Pandits and the returnees. Although, the third category of permanent returnees were very few in number. Apart from those who have

permanently returned, those who have returned temporarily for employment were also interviewed. The samples have mainly been identified through snowballing and gaining contacts from previous respondents. The sample also included two distinguished personalities from the community.

Main Study

(1) Kashmir: (July-September, 2019)

The first part of the study was carried out in Kashmir Valley from July to September, 2019. The sample consisted on non-migrants who were chosen through snowballing technique randomly from following locations:

Sl.no.	District	Field Location
1.	Srinagar	a. Chanapora b. Nowgam c. Sanat Nagar d. Indra Nagar e. Shiv Pora f. Habba Kadal g. Ganpatyar
2.	Budgam	a. Sheikhpura Migrant Colony
3.	Ganderbal	a. Tulmula (Kheer Bhavani) b. Lar
4.	Pulwama	a. Sirnoo b. Murran c. Wahibugh
5.	Baramulla	a. Hanjiwera b. Magam
6.	Anantnag	a. Mattan

Number of respondents: 75

Nature of the sample: The sample mainly consisted of non-migrant and returnee Pandit individuals spread across the three generations, both genders and varied socioeconomic backgrounds belonging to the Pandit community. However, most respondents happened to be middle aged males. Apart from individuals, heads of community organizations like Kashmiri Pandit

Sangharsh Samiti, Hindu Welfare Forum, Srinagar were also included. Places of significance to the community like the Ganpatyar Mandir, Mattan Kashmiri Pandit Mandir, Kheer Bhawani Shrine in Tulmula were also covered, especially during Sunday *darshans*.

(2) Jammu: (October- December, 2019)

Second part of the survey was conducted in Jammu. Respondents were chosen from the following locations:

Field Locations	
a. Raghunath Bazar	b. Janipur
c. Pamposh Colony	d. Durgapur
e. Bantalab	f. Udaiwala
g. Jagti Migrant Colony	

Number of respondents: 75

Nature of sample**:** The interviews in the Jammu city were focused on migrant Pandit families. The sample consisted of migrants who reside in Government migrant colonies (Jagti Migrant colony in particular) and also those who reside in their own accommodation. Here again the sample consisted of individuals from all age groups, genders and socioeconomic background, however, the number of female respondents and younger respondents of less than 30 years happened to be more in number compared to Kashmir. Apart from interaction with individuals, frequent visits were also made to transition camps of Jagti, Purkhu and Mishriwala. The last one is now being used as Juvenile correction center by the Government of Jammu and Kashmir.

(3) Delhi (January –March, 2020)

Field space in Delhi was more spread out as compared to the previous two cities as the sample here was chosen randomly from among the migrant Kashmiri Pandits settled in Delhi and the National Capital Region. The places covered during the field survey range from individual households in Kashmiri Pandit dominated *mohallas* (settlements) and residential apartments, individual offices and organizations and community offices like

Kashmiri Samiti in Amar Colony, migrant markets set up by Government of Delhi in INA (Indian National Airways), Yusuf Sarai and Shankar Market in Connaught Place.

Field Location (Residential)	**Field Location (Office)**
a. Pitampura	a. Gurugram
b. Noida	b. Nehru Place
c. Najafgarh	c. Okhla Industrial Estate
d. Khanpur	d. Azadpur Mandi

Number of respondents: 54

Covering respondents from a spread-out field in Delhi made the sample diverse both in terms of age groups, socio-economic background, professions etc., which had a direct bearing on the nature of experiences of the community members in terms of hardships during migration, ease of resettling and access to and awareness of state sponsored monetary benefits and rehabilitation initiatives. However, it made multiple visits to the same field site which was practiced in the previous cities, a bit difficult.

Nature of sample: The sample chosen here consisted majorly of migrant Kashmiri Pandits settled in Delhi after 1990, however some participants were pre 1990 migrants as well who had settled in Delhi mostly to pursue work opportunities or had already been living in Delhi with their families, sometimes for generations. Delhi, as noted by many scholars like Duschinski (2008) and (Raina, 1995) in their respective accounts, was considered the hub of Kashmiri Pandits outside of the Valley before 1990. One would find a lot of affluent families who either came to Delhi for winter vacations and had a house of their own in the city or had settled there temporarily due to their employment in government departments that came under the Central Government's purview. However, a lot of these people are now settled abroad according to interviews conducted with kin of such people. Delhi still remains the hub for the community after migration mainly due to the presence of Kashmir Samiti Delhi, which is one of the oldest bodies of socio-political nature that acts as the mouthpiece of the community apart from maintaining records of migrants for issuing migrant certificates and

affiliated benefits. Interviews were conducted with members of such organizations as well. However, it must be noted that although the members agreed for interviews, access to statistical figures and empirical records was denied even after repeated requests. The sample here also consisted of all three generations of migrants with a substantial section of younger respondents compared to both Kashmir and Jammu.

Generating Qualitative Narratives

The process of collecting or generating qualitative narratives began with a limited open-ended questionnaire that was used to collect initial information and as a general guide for the interviews. Apart from that, a detailed interview, spanning for an average of 50 minutes was conducted with each respondent that dealt with their individual experiences. Respondents were given the freedom to contribute in deciding the course of the interview. As the study is ethnographic in nature, the data collection was not limited to the full-fledged interviews but observations were recorded beyond detailed interaction on each field visit. Apart from onsite experiences, I also collected data from the websites of community organizations, news portals online and offline and government bodies like Relief and Rehabilitation Commission, Jammu in particular.

Questionnaire

The questionnaire was a qualitative one with limited quantitative questions and a total number of 78 questions divided into the following subcategories:

a) Personal and Household details (7)

b) Economic Status (6)

c) Identity (20)

d) Migration (7)

e) Post Migration (8)

f) Social status and social integration (8)

g) Community and Kinship (9)

h) Views on return (13)

Apart from the questionnaire, for Focused Group Discussions, held two per city, questions were also charted out on the broader themes like identity, role of community organizations and debate on return of the community post migration.

The method of data collection apart from making qualitative observations based on multiple visits to the field sites was in depth, informal interviews with the community members. Most interviews were conducted in a one-on-one manner either following an appointment fixed beforehand (mostly Delhi) or impromptu (mostly in Kashmir and Jammu). However, this usually began with a long discussion on the Kashmir Conflict, current political happenings to build trust and rapport. Apart from interviews, Focused Group Discussions were also conducted with approximately 6 or more people at a time. The sample for group discussions were mostly chosen on occasions like religious functions where people were already gathered. As efforts to convince multiple people to be available for a group discussion was difficult, given the busy lifestyle especially for respondents in Delhi. In such cases, respondents were informed beforehand, sometimes weeks in advance to fit their schedule as most respondents were office goers. Majority of the interviews in Delhi were conducted in offices or coffee shops during lunch hours as opposed to their homes which was majorly the case in Kashmir and Jammu. A considerable number of interviews in Delhi were also scheduled over the weekend.

The nature of the questions (mostly in the form of informal discussions) revolved around the journey, lived experience, vicarious experiences, oral histories of migration, process of rebuilding, thoughts and feasibility of return to the Valley, cultural and political affiliation to Kashmiri, reflections on the community discourse as covered by media, academic literature and participation in the local discourse at the community level apart from a structured questionnaire that collected information based on the following pre-decided themes : household/personal information, economic status, Identity, migration and post-migration experiences, social status and social integration, community, kinship and their ideas on return to

the Valley.

The difficulty faced in Delhi as compared to the field experiences in Jammu city and earlier in Kashmir was hesitation on the part of respondents to suggest further references who would be interested in participating in the study either on account of lack of time given their busy schedule or unwillingness to participate due to lack of trust on the interviewer and the doubt over intentions of the study. Also, unlike Jammu and Kashmir, the population is far more scattered with very few areas with a relatively dense Kashmiri Pandit population making the interview process slower. Apart from interviews, a community function on the eve of Herath (Shivratri) organized by a cultural organization by the name of Jammu Kashmir Vichar Mach at the National Museum, Janpath was also attended. This not only gave me an opportunity to hold group discussions, but also provided insights into discussions that usually happen at such community gatherings where I was sometimes just a passive witness to conversations people had with each other around the issues of migration and return and were not necessarily an answer to a question posed by the interviewer. The responses therefore sometimes were much more casual and candid than in an interview. To maintain anonymity of respondents, I will use fictitious name for them.

The Ethnographic Field: a collaborative intervention

The study has been conducted through a multi-sited ethnography carried out for a period of eleven months from May 2019 to March 2020. Data collection/generation in each city was stretched over a period of three months, except Kashmir Valley, where the pilot was conducted for two months before commencing the main study. The ethnographic engagement entailed repeated visits, interactions and immersion within the community's daily lives and special occasions, as much as possible. However, it needs to be highlighted, going back to the primary aim and objective of the study, that the motive was to understand the idea of 'home' and 'identity' in the Kashmiri Pandit community, most of whom at present are scattered beyond a geographically contained home (land). In consonance with the same, my study also could not be limited to a specific locale. The field space, to an extent mirrors the special dispersion of the community, hence the multiple

and dispersed sites. Within each city or district too, respondents were chosen through snowballing. Some were clustered in Pandit localities, as was the case in Jammu and to some extent in Indra Nagar and Shiv Pora in Kashmir. Others, like most cases in Delhi and within the Valley were dispersed with no specific pattern. It is for this reason; I prefer the phrase 'field space' as opposed to field site for the purpose of this dissertation. I also do not maintain that the study is multi-sited merely because it was conducted in multiple cities. Rather, I build on Gassan Hage's (2005), understanding which treats a 'phenomenon as a field site'. In my case, the idea of Pandit homeland and Pandit identity become my field sites or spaces. I look at as them as abstract constructions that go beyond fixed geographies. And through an engagement with multiple sections of the Pandit community, I try to understand how each of those contribute to or engage with this abstract.

Apart from engaging with the present lives of the respondents, the study also engaged in retrospective ethnography and memory work with the interviewees. Detailed interactions were held regarding life in Kashmir Valley before migration that many, but not all respondents had a lived experienced of. Many respondents displayed resistance or discomfort or appeared selective in recalling memories and answering questions about their experiences of displacement (or non-migration). However, repeated engagement with the ethnographer, trust building efforts, multiple meetings, ethical declaration of intention of research and obtaining consent, in many cases led to 'collaborative knowledge production', that as Sandberg (2020), highlights, is a particular feature of retrospective ethnography. He calls it an 'intervening enterprise'. The line between the ethnographer as the sole receiver and the respondent as the exclusive narrator gets blurred and the ethnographer though simple acts like asking follow-up questions or refraining from asking certain questions, helps the respondent re-enact their past into the present. In this case too, interactions were held about a homeland that was either an ideal of the past that existed no longer or an idea of a homeland that did not exist yet. However, though collaborative efforts with the ethnographer, most respondents were able to recall/visualize their idea of the homeland and what it meant for them in their current lives. In that sense the

ethnographic space was not a given but produced during the study.

Let us look particularly at the following excerpt. In this case with some initial hesitation, the middle-aged, non-migrant female respondent who lived with her husband in the Valley, while their only son had settled abroad, opens about the moral dilemma she faces when I ask her about her decision to not migrate. She is partly concerned about revealing sensitive information to me, a stranger and at the same time she feels emotional about revisiting experiences that no one had spoken to her about in a while. While revealing she pauses and exclaims,

> *"I don't know if I should reveal this to you. I have never spoken about it like this… it was so far back… but you are doing academic research…."*
>
> *"To this day I don't know if we took the right decision or not. If things (news or vicarious accounts of violence against the community) were true or just rumors. I am only thinking about it now that you asked me…who knows what was going on…but we had to decide (to migrate or not) …here I am, I left that mohalla (Habba Kadal) and fled to a safer one (Shiv Pora)."*

The account is not a mere narration or recollection but also a revisiting and re- engaging with the events of the past in the presence of and perhaps in collaboration with the ethnographer.

An important factor that needs to be spelled out then becomes the agency of the ethnographer in the production of this knowledge. The reflexivity or simply put, awareness of the researcher becomes imperative in an ethnographic or immersive study. In the present study, I played the role of an insider/outsider. While my regional identity which was the same as the respondents helped me gain access to conversations often in their homes. My religious affiliation as a Kashmiri Muslim and the respondents' memories of mass migration that has left an ambiguity between the two communities,

on other occasions, transpired into refusal to engage with me. My agency as a researcher, in some cases depended on how I was viewed on field. The equation was hardly straightforward or limited to my presence as a mere ethnographer. Rather I was a young female researcher of Kashmiri Muslim background. This affected whether or not, how and how much respondents wanted to interact with me. For many respondents of the older generation, the declaration that I was there to collect material for educational purposes was enough to be a part of the study. For many others, a common regional identity did the job. I highlight a few exhibits.

> *"We understand the value of education. Doesn't matter if it's a Muslim or Batta (Kashmiri Pandit). It gives me happiness to share anything educational, our history with our youth.",* says an elderly respondent in Srinagar.

> Another middle-aged shop-keeper in Jagti township says: *"you can go to any flat here. Just say I am a Kaeshir koor (Kashmiri girl) and they will open the door for you."*

However, this was not always the case. For many others the process of trust building was slower and came with a few qualifiers. In an incident in Tulmula, Ganderbal, a young Pandit boy in his early twenties, upon being approached, questions why I would be interested in knowing about the community. While I explained the background and the purpose of my study, he questions if I can speak in Kashmiri-our common mother tongue. Not satisfied with my affirmation, he was convinced only after, on his insistence I delivered a monologue in Kashmiri or 'proper Kashmiri' as he put it. Similarly, trust building with many respondents grew over time or with the presence of other people around. In Habba Kadal, Srinagar, for instance, a respondent stuck to very concise answers, not revealing much of his personal experience of having lived through and not migrating from the Valley in 1990 as a youth. However, after the interview, he offered to introduce me to some of his neighbors to help find more respondents, for which he accompanied me. Surprisingly, with each interview, and perhaps seeing others share their

experience, he too started sharing much more than he did during his own interview.

Some cases presented the opposite situation, wherein many respondents expressed comfort in being interviewed or entertaining a conversation about their experiences, but did not feel comfortable giving me further suggestions of possible respondents, for fear of how it would be received within the Pandit community. I quote a case from Delhi where after enthusiastically engaging with me in a community festival in Janpath where many people joined the conversation in a Focused Group Discussion, respondents held reservations about continuing the engagement in a one- on-one setting in their apartment complex that happened to be a Pandit exclusive residence.

Apart from the ethnographer and the respondent, a third factor that plays a role in the collaborative production of knowledge is the contextual situation. The study in Kashmir Valley and Jammu was conducted around the abrogation of Article 370[8] and the subsequent lockdown that followed. That in Delhi coincided with the anti CAA[9] protest and the Supreme Court verdict on Ayodhya dispute. The three specific events impacted the accessibility I had to the field (specifically in Jammu and Kashmir due to lack of transportation amidst the lockdown) and the willingness of respondents to interact with me. *"You can read this about us. It's all written. What else will you find out here",* says a shopkeeper in the outskirts of Jammu, stressing his hesitation to speak further especially on his individual experiences. On many occasions it also resulted in the eagerness of the respondents to debate and know my opinions on such issues. As says a middle-aged female respondent in Delhi, after I concluded her interview, *"now let me interview you, what do you think about CAA".*

[8] Constitutionally guaranteed special status that the princely state of Jammu and Kashmir was accorded upon accession with the Indian State. The same was revoked on 5th August, 2019. The event was followed by a prolonged lockdown and internet suspension in Kashmir Valley.

[9] Citizenship Law or Citizenship Amendment Act proposed and passed in the Indian Parliament during the BJP led government's tenure in 2019. It seeks to amend Indian Citizenship act in order to provide citizenship to illegal migrants of Hindu, Sikh, Jain, Parsi and Buddhist background. It was criticized widely for leaving out the Muslim community.

The findings of the study need to be contextualized and read with an understanding of this dynamic between the researcher, the respondent and the spatial and temporal aspects of the study. The account is neither a passive mirror of the 'reality' nor absolute subjectivism. Rather it is an actively created interpretation or an intentional communication (Watson, 1987). However, one must be cautious in overstating the absolute reflexivity of the ethnographer too. While the researcher does exercise reflexivity in choosing what to study, who to choose as a respondent and above all how to interpret and present the collected data, it might be an overstretch to think of reflexivity as a monopoly of the researcher. I borrow from and build on Watson's (1987) strategies to manage reflexivity. He elaborates that reflexivity is not something that an author exercises, rather it goes beyond the author and is a feature of any interpretative account. What is essential is that an author manages reflexivity by being self-conscious about methodological and epistemological concerns so that the reader assumes the producer, the process and the product are a coherent whole (Myerhoff and Ruby, 1982, in Watson, 1987).

A Hybrid Approach to Thematic Analysis

To analyze the data collected/generated from field, I have used thematic analysis with a hybrid approach to generate inductive and deductive themes. I have specifically followed Miles and Huberman's (1994) three step Thematic Analysis model that involves data reduction, data display and conclusion drawing. Given that the data generated was both extensive and collected in different phases, Thematic Analysis served as a compatible analytical method. Most importantly, as Alhojailan (2012), points out about the flexibility of thematic analysis as a tool, I was able to merge data analysis and data collection, wherein a preliminary theme generation of initial data guided and continuously modified my subsequent data collection. The themes generated were partly inductively generated after the analysis of the field data and partly deductively decided before the field study began. As the ethnography was guided by the objectives of the study that reflected both in the research questions set out in the beginning and the semi-structured questionnaire that contained broad areas of interaction that the interviews

would ultimately follow, I was able to deduce certain pre- empirical themes. Most themes however, were generated during and after the ethnographic engagement. The data collected was segregated into themes or codes that I designate interchangeably. As Swain (2018), points out, even though most studies, separate the two categories, with the code designating a smaller or concise finding and a theme is a broader pattern that often lumps multiple codes together, both highlight an atom of data that can be used to answer a research question or help in identifying a relationship with the broader context of the study. In my study too, I do not always treat them as two separate steps of analysis. Beyond interpretation, thematic analysis also helps with theory generation and associates frequency of the theme with the whole context. It captures both implicit and explicit ideas that go beyond a sole focus on the language used in the data (Alhojailan 2012). Even though the study is a multi-sited one, it is not necessarily or just a comparative study between findings of the three cities and their respective samples. Rather the study tries to bring together the findings of the three cities to make sense of the community discourse.

Chapterization and Structure of the Thesis

The thesis is divided into a total of seven chapters and a concluding section on the findings of the study. Five chapters analyze the data from the ethnographic study. Chapter three details the findings of Kashmir Valley through the sub theme of *resistance identity* of non-migrant section of the community in manufacturing a counter discourse against a perceived overshadowing of their specific contributions and regional identity by the 'migrant driven' discourse. Chapter four, is based on the findings of Jammu city. Here I use the subtheme of *'non-binary differentiated agency'* to bring forth the often- overlooked agency that migrants maintain in living a life of supposed precarity while in migration. I distinguish between analytical categories of camp and non- camp migrants to highlight that even though all migrants exercise agency either in successfully rebuilding a life for themselves or asserting their right to go back to their homeland, its expression varies based on the socio-cultural and economic positionality of individuals within the community. While migrant agency cannot be denied, it can also

not be overstated or assumed homogeneously. In chapter five, I will detail the role community organizations, based in Delhi play in manufacturing or influencing the community discourse. I use the subtheme of '*collective memory'* that can be a pivotal tool of community cohesion and mobilization in a dispersed community like the Kashmiri Pandits. Chapter six, sheds light on the cases of self-facilitated and government institutionalized returns to the Valley. Through the theme of *'reacculturation'*, I highlight the process of re-settlement and refamiliarization that the returnees have had to undergo after their return migration. I juxtapose this adjustment with the idea of a pilgrimized return, that is discursively conceived of and popularized among the community members. In doing so I try to reconceptualize the idea of return migration as process rather than an achievement while highlighting a need for further theoretical and empirical engagement with the phenomenon. In the seventh chapter, I bring the subthemes together under the purview of 'discourse'. I elaborate on the nature of the Kashmiri Pandit discourse and bring the findings of the study together to theoretically develop the two main themes of the dissertation-Fractured Identity and Politics of Deadlock. The last section concludes the study by highlighting the amin findings and proving some recommendations for further research on the topic.

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Chapter Three

Exploring the Resistance Identity of 'Non-Migrant' Kashmiri Pandits as a counter to the Migrant Identity

Introduction

Identity formation, as a context bound process is understood as inseparable from the conditions of its existence (Makoni, 2018; Appadurai, 1986). This implies that identification has a purpose. Often that purpose at an individual or group level corresponds to search for meaning for one's existence (Jing, 2020). A context that majorly informs this formation of identity is that of a bounded space or location. The notion that an identity is tied to a location comes from locational 'distinctiveness' based on the concept of 'naturally occurring discontinuous spaces' that contain distinct identities (Gupta & Ferguson,2008). Any change to such identities therefore can only occur upon 'contact' with the outside. This change inducing contact has been understood through phenomenon like globalization (Castells, 1997), tourism (Routledge, 2001) or migration (Makoni, 2018) etc., which challenge the presupposed unaltering nature of location-identity nexus. Identification with a culture surpasses the altering of boundaries of a space and evidently may grow even stronger upon the same (Zimmerbauer & Paasi, 2013). Supporting cases can be found in identity assertions of displaced communities like refugees and globalized citizens and their strong connections to their homeland (Gupta & Ferguson, 2008). It would be safe to say that while identity is heavily influenced by location, it might not be limited by the same.

In this chapter I will deal with the non-migrant section of Kashmiri Pandit community to highlight the identity movements that arise within a displaced community post migration. The mass migration of the members of the community that took place in the 1990's left behind a miniscule section popularly referred to as the 'non-migrants' as opposed to a the numerically dominant 'migrant' Kashmiri Pandits. Post migration, the community is mostly seen as a migrant community with little attention to non-migrants causing dissatisfaction among them particularly due to their claimed under-recognition both by the state and the migrants who as the former claim have amassed better socio- economic capital and hence dominate the Kashmiri Pandit discourse often

overshadowing the non-migrants and their claimed victimhood of having stayed back in a conflict zone. In opposing the migrant driven discourse, Pandits who still live in the Valley, engage in a discursive manufacturing of a distinct 'non-migrant' identity to counter and resist being overrun by the migrant identity. I will analyze this counter assertion as 'resistance identity' a concept put forth by Castells (1997) that primarily rests on two parallel processes of fostering homogenization within the non-migrants and a separation with the migrants.

Migration, Identity Crisis and Resistance among Kashmiri Pandits

Before we analyze identity movements among the non-migrants, a brief discussion of Castells' identity formation in a globalized or 'network society' is imperative. Castells identifies three main categories of identity. The first, legitimizing identity is one introduced and backed by the institutions of power (both State and civil society) to rationalize their dominance. Taking a top-down approach therefore, it functions through monopolizing both violence and discourse (Jing, 2020). It perpetuates through a pervasive social contract which buys the docility of the masses in exchange for services (Lim, 2003) thereby maintaining the status quo of its dominance. In case of breakdown of this implicit contact (which can be triggered by any internal change in power relations, an external event or a relational process that encompasses both, in this case migration), a resistance identity is formed by those 'devalued and subjugated by the logic of dominance'. The resistance identity is therefore often seen as defensive and reactive in nature (Zimmerbauer & Paasi, 2013). It falls back on traditional values like culture for collective resistance against the legitimizing identity to do away with its subjugation.

A third category, identified as project identity is seen (again in opposition to dominance) as a new identity that not only redefines its position, but in the process also transforms the social structure of the society. In that sense, it is different from resistance identity which is merely concerned with its own marginality and not the overthrowing of the dominant social structure. It also relies on resources less traditional than resistance identity and rather uses a fresh urban outlook often bolstered by a neoliberal experience. It therefore may see resistance identity as culturally stubborn, development resistant, geographically fixed and incompatible with a modern interconnected world. In the case of

Kashmiri Pandits, the migrants can be used for analytical purpose as a project identity that self identifies as more global and contemporary in outlook while the non-migrants are seen as traditionally driven and often stuck in the past. To reject this mis-categorization (Trujillo et al., 2015) that often comes with ridicule, non-migrants engage in a discursive construction of a counter identity as a form of resistance. We shall look at the construction of this non-migrant resistance identity first at a discursive level where it's often articulated by civil society institutions (but popularized among the masses as well), and then at the grassroot level through the narratives collected during the study.

Discursive Construction of the Non-Migrant Identity

Discursively, a major role in creating the non-migrant identity is played by community organizations particularly the KPSS, that acts as the mouthpiece for the non- migrants. The reason for their existence is linked foremost, as reiterated by most respondents, to fight for the rights of the non-migrants and to call for equal recognition of their losses at par with the migrants. Highlighting a collective demand of the non-migrants, Sanjay Tickoo, KPSS chief, in an interview with author in August, 2019, argues "*Why does migration define loss. This selective recognition of suffering should end. We did not leave, that doesn't mean we did not suffer*." He asks when everybody suffered, how come only those who left are considered victims. After all, the present compensation directed towards the community aims at bringing relief for the past sufferings. In that sense, they claim, they too have suffered and shouldn't be neglected by the state's 'partial recognition of victimhood'. The prime demand that the community has toiled for is a share in the jobs advertised under the PM Package, 2008, aimed at bringing the migrant youth back to the Valley. The non-migrants claim they too deserve to be included in the special provisions as their youth are left, high and dry given the shrinking job market in the Valley which forces them to migrate outside the Valley. Out of the number of jobs advertised under the Package, nearly 2000 were left unfulfilled (at the time of field study in 2019). The reason, most respondents claim is the clerical nature of these jobs in departments like Primary Education, Social Welfare etc., that do not seem attractive enough for the qualified migrant youth now living in metropolitan cities, engrossed in private jobs that pay much more and are better suited for them.

Apart from representing non-migrant grievances, they also claim to 'fact check the migrant discourse' especially migration and casualty figures of 1990. KPSS, as one of its demands insists that a fair inquiry of the 1990's migration should throw light on the 'actual figures of migration' (interview with Sanjay Tickoo, August, 2019). KPSS maintains a figure of 77, 245 Pandit families who migrated in the 1990's as opposed to many migrant organizations (like the Jammu based Panun Kashmir) who they accuse of throwing unverified figures in lakhs. It is deemed important for the non-migrant community, since they co-exist with *the Muslim brethren,* to put an end to what they term as nonfactual articulations. A pressing (now accepted) demand made by the community (organizations) is to be declared a minority at par with other communities like Sikhs and Christians in the Valley. The justifying pretext here, is that the community claims it is indeed a numeric minority and more so now after the migration most Pandits. Like other minorities they are less represented politically and face isolation culturally and thus do qualify for being declared a minority within the state. Those who remain, say that they should not be punished for the fact that Hindus generally are a religious majority nationally as that does not affect their lives within the Muslim majority Kashmir Valley. However, there is also a rhetorical caution on not clubbing them with other minorities like Sikhs from the Valley. Though a numeric minority now, the belief of being 'original inhabitants' native to the religiously distinct territory of Kashmir is widely upheld.

On a rhetorical level, resistance identity is also informed by a symbolic reading of the decision of non-migration. Trisal (2007), in her account of the non-migrant experience builds on the popular sentiment that by choosing not to migrate, non-migrants 'saved Kashmiri Pandit identity and Kashmiri brotherhood understood as Kashmiriyat' (for a detailed discussion on Kashmiriyat, see Tak, 2013; Khan, 2012; Aggarwal, 2008; Tremblay, 1996; Puri, 1995). It is a widely held belief among non-migrants that it is because of the sacrifices they made; can the migrant Kashmiri Pandits claim to have an anchor or a permanent place of origin and without them, Kashmiri Pandits would be left a landless, homeless community. They also stress, that their contribution doesn't end with the decision of staying back but they have since 1990 too made

continuous sacrifices being an invisible minority in the midst of a conflict to maintain the social fabric of the Valley. By not migrating the non-migrant respondents emphasize on being '*true sons of the soil'* who '*did not abandon their motherland at the time of crisis'*. The non-migrants carve out a strong identity centered around territoriality that rests on the claims of their aboriginality and mythological origins of the land of Kashmir Valley (see, Rai, 2004; Puri, 1995).

The non-migrant identity however faces a challenge of eclipsing under the migrant identity. As far as education is concerned, the migrants are more securely placed than the non-migrants. They not only received protection in the form of affirmative policies of reservation in colleges[10] in the country in the immediate settling phase of their migration but also, now have better social and cultural capital in the form of exposure (Sawhney, 2019) to use this education for future betterment. The migrants also use the network that had to some extent been already established by the pre 1990 settlers elsewhere in the country and abroad (Pant, 1987; Sender, 1988; Duschinski, 2008; Chandel, 2017). Although one can argue that displacement has uprooted any cohesion that the migrants had formed with the state before 1990, but as compared to non-migrants the former have a recognition from the state that maintains a record of their official numbers, provides them monthly ration and relief subsidy, has accommodated them in concrete colonies both in Jammu and Kashmir and on multiple occasions has come up with resettlement and recruitment packages for them. The state also has on multiple occasions displayed full responsibility in rehabilitating the migrants in their homeland, compensating their grievances and lost property as well (Rai, 2021). This can be seen as an institutionalization of the migrant identity as compared to the non-migrants who lack any such recognition.

The second factor that influences the current favorable positioning of the 'migrant' status is the wider recognition it enjoys among the masses in the country. The migrant experience is well documented by the community and

[10] In the aftermath of the 1990 migration, the then chief minister and the founder of Shiv Sena offered reservation to Pandit youth in colleges in Maharashtra. A similar initiative was also taken by his successor Uddhav Thakrey.

acknowledged by a larger audience as well. The pivotal role played here is of the community organizations who hold workshops, seminars and talks to highlight the claims, experiences and demands of the migrant Pandits. They also maintain sufficient visibility in films and news debates online and on the television in order to spread awareness of their claimed struggles. An interesting point here is that the appeal is not just garnered on account of dislocation but on religious grounds as well. This is often clubbed with larger debates co-opted by Hindu nationalists to profess the perceived threat of Muslim majoritarianism.

Resistance Identity on Ground: everyday experiences of the non-migrants

Having looked at the discursive construction of the resistance identity of non- migrants that rests on non-migrant homogeneity, migrant-non-migrant separation, symbolic and stable attributions of non-migrant identity, we now turn to how this identity is negotiated on a daily basis.

Migrant/Non-migrant Binary: a construction

As understood in popular media, government recognition or even as presented by non-migrant organizations themselves, the non-migrant is presented as a unified body separate from the migrants. However, my study reveals a different case. I highlight findings that trespass this strict separation and focus on a negotiation between these two supposedly separate categories. The first such case is presented by families where the parents are non-migrants while the children are migrants. A sizable number of respondents in the Valley were fresh retirees who had not migrated however, their children and grandchildren were registered migrants settled outside. So, while on an individual level they were non-migrants and mainly spoke of government neglect towards them, at family level, it is difficult to categorize them as either. It has fueled a common complication with the non-migrants who feel isolated now from their own children. I found it is often a willful decision for most respondents to send their children outside to pursue higher education, many of whom also then marry, work and settle outside. However, parallelly it also seems to be creating a crisis for older generation who find themselves alone in the Valley. As an old man explaining to me the state of loneliness elders face says: "*our generation is here just to die in these houses, what else*?"

A second case is presented by non-migrants who remain in the Valley with their children but their immediate family like siblings, relatives or in-laws live outside as registered migrants. There were almost no cases wherein non-migrants don't have immediate migrant relatives or family members. For most people migrants are not an alien category as is presented. To varying degrees respondents identified with both the decisions of migrating and that of staying back. The third case is of those who are settled in the Valley but also have with time acquired 'migrant certificates'. A respondent I interviewed in Ganpatiyar Ashram in Habba Kadal, Srinagar after a Sunday *darshan* highlights that though he has not migrated, the only way his children will 'go forward' is by getting the same benefits as migrant children. When I enquired how it was possible for a non-migrant to get a migrant certificate for college admissions, he said "*all can be arranged."*

A fourth category was presented by those who although were not classified as migrants by the government but had faced internal displacement within the Valley. I came across cases of both voluntary and involuntary migration in this regard. In case of voluntary migration, I found some respondents living in abandoned Pandit houses in what they believed were safer locations in the city. The exact state of ownership of such houses is not clear here, however in the aftermath of 1990 many claim they 'fled' from more disturbed areas like Downtown, Srinagar, to relatively safer places.

I present a case in Shivpora, Srinagar where I interviewed a middle-aged couple, both retired from government services. Their only daughter works and lives with her nuclear family in Singapore. After having migrated temporarily to Jammu in 1990, they came back to the Valley upon witnessing the state of transition camps in Jammu. As a safer place of accommodation, they had broken into this house that some Pandit family had left behind. After living there for years, they got in touch with the owners as the situation improved in the Valley. They had bought the first floor of the house only three years ago while the ground floor was bought by their migrant relative who visited the Valley on and off. In a similar case, their neighbor also lives in a Pandit house that was left unattended after 1990; however, the neighbor hasn't yet bought the house. Such incidents are not that uncommon as a lot of Pandits who left, trusted non-migrant

Pandits to live in their houses for the fear of illegal occupation or encroachment if the property was left vacant. I found many Pandit houses are now rental spaces for non-migrants from Villages who require a room or two in the city instead of a full house. A respondent I met in the same area was a resident of Pulwama, Sirnoo who now lives in the city so his children can attend coaching classes. This urban migration to rented accommodations has become common with increase in nuclear family system in the Valley.

On the other hand, the case of involuntary migration can be seen in those who now live in rehabilitative migrant colonies that the government established in 2008. In Sheikhpura migrant colony for example, I met families from Sangrampura village who had been shifted by the government in these accommodations for the purpose of safety after the Pandit community faced a targeted massacre in 1997 that killed 7 non-migrant Pandits. While they still own their houses, 31 non-migrant families stay in Sheikhpura Migrant Colony. One cannot say for certain if they can be categorized as migrants or non-migrants. While they maintain that they resisted leaving Kashmir in 1990 and therefore are different from the other migrants, at the same time they highlight their displacement within the Valley to stress that they are non-migrants just in name. This is accompanied by strict division with the rehabilitated migrant employees who live in the same compound but mostly different buildings. Most non-migrant families in Sheikhpura did not identify with the migrant counterparts and often took offence to being misidentified as 'package people'.

Therefore, as opposed to the stark separation between the migrants and the non- migrant projected at discursive level, my study finds that this categorization in fact does not hold ground in reality. These boundaries are fluid, migrants and non-migrants often are part of the same immediate or extended family too. Many are also hard to categories as one.

Non-Migration a Deliberate Choice or a Matter of Chance?

As a natural extension of the notion that draws a wedge between migrants and non- migrants as separate categories, non-migration is also presented and celebrated as a deliberate choice. This can easily lead one to simplify non-migration as an informed choice and a rejection of migration altogether. However, when

broken down to analyze individual experiences, non-migration (like migration) is a much-layered process. I found the pattern of non-migration was random. Interestingly, in colonies where most Pandit houses lay empty after 1990's, certain respondents reiterated that they did not leave because they never felt threatened and that their neighborhood was very calm. Such a case was presented in Hanjiwera, Baramulla, where I found a colony that had about eight Pandit households. Six had migrated and only two stayed. Members of these household say that they had no reason to migrate as the neighborhood witnessed no violence and they had the support of their *mohalla*. It is interesting that in such localities most people had left too. Almost all respondents to the study revealed that those who left did so without informing even the closest neighbor or relative sometimes in the middle of the night without even taking their belongings with them to avoid being noticed. As a forty-year-old non-migrant man while interacting with me in Downtown Srinagar reveals,

> "*My paternal relatives lived hardly half a kilometer away, we couldn't visit them for months together. We only learned of their migration after the entire season of winter (of 1989-1990) had passed. People left like that without informing. Sometimes people in the same building wouldn't know and we would see a locked door suddenly one morning."*

Almost all respondents when asked how they feel about their decision of not migrating, give an unsure reply of "*we are still figuring out*." The reasons that I gathered for people's choice of not migrating revealed that the former wasn't always an informed choice. Some did not migrate for the lack of resources to resettle anywhere else outside the State, many lacked knowledge of what existed beyond the State borders because they had never travelled that far. Another set of people were those who did leave, but returned within months or days, seeing the living conditions in government tents in Jammu. As reveals a respondent in Shivpora, Srinagar,

> "*I had gone like everyone else to check what was there in Jammu for us. I didn't take my*

family at first. I returned within days on seeing the shabby tents. I decided that if I have to die, it's better I die in my own house than a dilapidated tent in Jammu's scorching heat. If Kashmir was unsafe, what I saw in Jammu was no better."

In other cases, the reason for not leaving as stated by the participants was also the support, they received from their neighbors either on an individual level or through *mohalla* committees or mosque committees who assured them of safety. In many such cases people relied on strong bonds of friendship and togetherness they had enjoyed in their place of birth for years. There are many counter accounts from migrants that state feeling unsafe in their localities after they received anonymous threat letters stuck to their gates or their names featuring on a 'hit' lists (Hassan, 2010). Yet another and the most prominent reason that is put forward is that people decided to wait and watch how things pan out for a while and would leave subsequently when travel seemed feasible. One such respondent says:

"For us that phase never ended, time went by and we lived a day at a time." Another says *"those who say we stayed for the love of our land are lying to you. No one had an idea about what exactly to do including those who left or those who stayed. We decided to wait and watch, we are still waiting."*

The point to stress here is that while decisions were made on an individual on the basis of financial resources, exposure, connections outside the State, reliance on friendships or neighborhood relations, the decision does not necessarily or decisively seem a symbolic one at least at the time of migration. Responses to the study reveal that migration and non-migration by and large was a personal choice guided by one's immediate needs and resources. It was mostly a matter of chance. As a respondent highlights "*by the time I thought of migrating, the sympathy wave (in India) had ended, so it would not have made sense*". Those who stayed to this day could not categorize their decision as right or wrong, especially when some people of family as close as different

generations or siblings are migrants while they are non-migrants.

Changing Nature of the Relationship of Non-Migrants with the Valley

Another aspect of the construction of the resistance identity among non-migrants is that of ascribing a stability to the non-migrant way of life that is constructed as firm and to an extent, unchanged. On ground however one can see life has altered politically and socially for those who stayed back as well. As one of my respondents who belonged to an affluent Pandit family from Rajbagh, Srinagar reveals:

> "*This is our reality now. We have to maintain cordial relations with all, …all my Muslim friends are doctors now. You people (Kashmiri Muslims) have come a long way. Its but natural... only when the powerful leave can others take their place."*

Culturally, most respondents claim that they have had to change the way they experience community affairs, from celebrating their festivals to mourning deaths within the community. Out of the 854 temples that were functional in the Valley before 1990, only 34 remain according to KPSS (Hussain & Rashid, 2018). The Kashmiri Pandits traditionally held special pooja for all significant occasions from birth to death like *Kahanethar*, *Mekhal*, *Kriya Karam* and *Shradha* (Jahangir & Shafi, 2016). Many say that they now don't find priests for rituals and mostly have to call one from Jammu which isn't always a possibility. This has resulted in decline in the number of rituals they follow as a community.

The mass migration also seems to have influenced the daily interactions of the non- migrants with the other communities in the Valley. In contrast to Trisal's (2007) findings, my study revealed that interaction of the non-migrants with the Kashmiri Muslims in general has become limited. On multiple occasions, I encountered that Pandit houses were locked from outside in broad day light even if people were present inside. During my visit to Mattan village in Ganderbal in a not so common occurrence I found Kashmiri Pandit youth playing cricket with their Muslim friends in the street. As they cheered loudly, my Pandit neighbor who had accompanied me to the village in order to visit a temple there, exclaims

"*I didn't know this still happened….! Look at how they are moving about freely. That one is even roaming around riding a bike…. Who will say he is a Batta kot (a Pandit boy).*" The 'reserved' nature of Pandits that was earlier attributed to caste (Datta, 2017), was now seen by some as a necessity to go unnoticed. This is also paralleled by stories of continued bonds of friendship with the Muslims (among migrants as well). Many cases of participation in burial rituals on the passing away of Pandit neighbor especially in the absence of close relatives is often highlighted especially in the local news.

Another observation that can pose a challenge to the manufactured stability is 'sense' of temporariness' that surrounds the Kashmiri Pandits in the Valley. It seems that for certain members, non-migration is not of permanent nature. In case of non-migrant elderly couples, the passing away of one meant an automatic migration of the other with their children (outside the Valley). This was a not uncommon. I learnt in the later stages of my field work in Delhi that a former respondent in Chanapora, Srinagar had expired. And since the only daughter to the couple was settled abroad, the mother too left. In another case I interviewed an old widower, whose children were migrants. He said that he spends half of his time outside the Valley with them. This is also true for parents who send their children outside the state for education. As says a woman in Indra Nagar whose children study in Delhi: *"it is understood that future is outside. One day or the other we have to leave. First our children and then us. We have to go where they go."*

I found this temporariness was also reflected in the appearance/condition of Pandit houses many of which stand distinct from other houses that have a relatively modern architecture. For most houses I visited, it was apparent that they have not been renovated in a long time. Most old Pandit houses had a separate entrance for tenants who I found in most cases were people from outside the State, employed in the Valley. In many cases it was done to combat loneliness but for many this ensured safety of the property when the owner would go out of the State for prolonged stays especially in winters. Highlighting the possibility of migration, a respondent tells me, "*You see how are homes are, why do you think a Pandit never mends his house? We know its futile*." Although one also finds exceptions especially in rural Kashmir where many who possess agricultural land

and cattle, continue with their established lifestyles and seem much more embedded in the *biradri.* In another exception in Habba Kadal, Srinagar, I interacted with a forty-year-old Pandit, a government employee who had recently constructed a five-storey house, adding three storeys to his already existing two storey ancestral house. Admitting that not many Pandits see investing in fresh construction as a viable option, he argues that he plans on staying in the Valley permanently against the general opinion held by all including his Muslim neighbors. He also wants to revive the Pandit organizations as he sees KPSS as self- fulfilling project of a few non-migrants who he says use it more like a source of personal income. He adds: "*my next-door neighbor thought I would sell of my property for peanuts or live like shy Pandit all my life. Now I have the tallest house in the entire neighborhood. No one expects a Pandit to do that these days.* "

Assumed Homogeneity of the Resistance Identity of Non-Migrants

The findings of the study indicate that there exists a difference between the discursive presentation of the non-migrant identity and how it's negotiated on ground, on a daily basis. While the former weaves a storey of (ingroup) homogenization and (outgroup) separation, the latter is riddled with instances of interconnectedness and exchanges between the migrants and the non-migrants. The contradictions should not be seen as an incompatibility, rather, I argue, they are baked into the creation of a resistance identity that is tactfully created as overtly homogeneous in appearance despite internal divisions, in order to counter a stronger project identity. This is primarily done through an aspect of performativity (Roseneil & Seymour, 1999) that is attached to resistance identity highlighting the urgency to protect it against perceived encroachments. The non- migrants mobilize 'identity packages' (Blommaert as quoted in Roseneil & Seymour 1999) to achieve a preferred identity and resort to 'cultural gatekeeping' (Roseneil & Seymour, 1999; Appadurai, 1986) wherein territoriality is used as a hallmark of Pandit identity by non-migrants to strengthen their case in comparison to the migrants. As the narratives highlight, the decision to not migrate is often in retrospect reappropriated especially at the discursive level as a deliberate one to secure the territorial distinctiveness of the community. While many individual testimonies stand in contradiction, an

exclusive focus on a stable connection with their territory vis a vis the migrants, is used as the most widely endorsed tool against the project identity of migrants.

Another feature of identity movements shared both by resistance and project identities, that encourages manufacturing of homogeneity is that of 'self-identification' (Routledge, 2001). Both these identities are based on self-ascribed values and codes and therefore take the liberty to manipulate and employ identity tools as they see fit to their respective goals. The resistance identity of non-migrants aligns with traditional and cultural capital and the project identity seeks to create a social setup accommodative of their lifestyle. It therefore uses any 'accessible cultural resource' (Jing, 2020) to redefine not just its own position but alters the society too. In addition, the project identity also has the 'benefit of distance' (due to migration in this case) and unlike the non-migrant resistance identity is not bound by the considerations of the effects of its agendas on its social standing at least within the native society. Project identity is therefore often associated with flexibility, dynamism and inclusivity (Zimmerbauer & Paasi, 2013). This, makes the migrant project identity somewhat a dominant force that espouses a fear of invisibility among the non-migrants. The resistance identity on the other hand is seen as locationally and culturally fixed and uncompromising and even repressive by the project identity. In any case, both are pretty much 'what they chose to say they are' (Routledge, 2001).

It is important to understand here that identity movements are associated with 'meaning making' of one's existence (Jing, 2020). Through self - identification therefore they can tailor the meaning they attach to their respective identities and use homogenizing as a tool to sustain discursive constructs often in direct violation of lived experiences. The freedom to define does not stop with self-identification but extends to the other as well. The perception of 'threat' from a foreign project identity can be used and manipulated in degree or nature to create a moral obligation (Routledge, 2001; Lim, 2003) to present a united front, strong enough to resist a perceived overshadowing by the project identity. The resistance identity therefore may resort to identity atavism (Makoni, 2018) and stress on 'holding on to their roots' even more strongly and often symbolically to resist being marginalized. This overlooks any cultural

differences that exist within the resistance identity and also negates any cultural dilution that might have occurred within the community over time especially among the younger generations who even in the Valley live more interconnected lives due to the internet compared to the older generations. The insistence on using 'pure' Kashmiri language that sets the non-migrant youth apart not just from the migrants but also from the Kashmiri Muslims as claimed, was a common encounter on ground.

Another feature that fosters homogeneity in the resistance identity is their dependence on 'alliance making'. Resistance identities are usually 'place bound' both in reach and resources (Routledge, 2001). Faced with a much more connected project identity, the former seeks to forge alliances in this case with its co-regionalists to solidify a reginal identity. However, in doing so, it also forwards certain abstractions (Routledge, 2001) like regional harmony in an absolute sense. This not to deny the existence of the former, but as shown in the discussion above that, highlight social cleavages based on religion, socio-economic opportunities and reading of historical events does exist between the non-migrant Pandits and the other communities in the Valley. To establish a strong regional identity in resistance to the migrants, these differences are discursively covered up and may create 'conflict of allegiance' (Cerezo, 2020) for may non-migrants especially if their lived experiences do not align with the rhetorical stance. This becomes compounded by the fact that most have family ties with the migrant section of the community.

Identity Negotiations between the Migrants and the Non-Migrants

Migration like any other 'disturbance', as Castells identifies, challenges the centrality of location in identity formation. This can be understood in terms of 'deinstitutionalization' (Zimmerbauer & Paasi 2013) of the pre migration legitimizing identity of the Kashmiri Pandits. Does it then signify that the non-migrant identity that is based on regional consciousness stands delegitimized? Does it also mean that the project identity of the migrants, since they remain outside a bounded territory they can identify with, also have no territorial legitimization that grounds it? Evidently, the answer in this case points to the contrary. In the post migration identity assertions among the Kashmiri Pandits, territoriality is not an obsolete concept. In the case of non-migrants, territoriality

is stressed even more when faced with the challenges posed by an 'extraterritorial' migrant identity. Collective memory is mobilized through education and popular media in face of a challenge and the regional identity is seen as a single entity which derives its legitimacy from the idea of a shared past. Any threat to that shared past and the associated way of life is resisted and seen not just as an attack on the traditional way of life or the symbolic meaning attached to their association to the motherland, but also as a practical concern of sharing of economic resources and disturbances in daily patterns of life. This causes a sense of discomfort and therefore there is a resistance to project identities. Cultural particularities like territorial brotherhood or Kashmiriyat, religio-territorial distinction from Hindus based on caste superiority, religious distinction and mythological origins of the Valley are stressed as they reinstate an identity tied to its location.

On the other hand, the migrants even far from home reconstruct their 'new identity' in consonance with the idea of their homeland (Gupta & Ferguson, 2008). Even though migration seems to present them with the 'infinite choices of possible identities' but as Roseneil & Seymour (1999), point out, 'not all identities are culturally valued'. Migrants use the idea of their homeland to create a trans-territorial space (Green, 1998) in their new locales in order to derive meaning for their existence. It must be noted here that their new homes away from their homeland cannot be understood as neutral spaces devoid of power relations. Some amount of resistance from the new unfamiliar environment also propels their identity assertions towards their homeland. As Anderson (1986) too points, the idea of territorial distinction based on culture and ethnicity remains alive in 'imagined communities' while they live far. This remains true for the Kashmiri Pandit community too. While most have lost touch with their motherland, their migrant identity is still woven around Kashmiri as the homeland. Having better access now to resources as compared to the non-migrant counter parts, in fact they are in a better position to articulate their territorial connections and dominate the discourse.

This presents a challenge for those who did not leave but have to now readjust to their own homes and its changing political hierarchies. As Bhabha (1989) highlights in case of communities who continue to stay in their

homeland, the *"natural and essential connection between place and culture is broken"* and they too have to reinvent their place. This entails an engagement both by the migrants and non-migrants in redefining their relationship with their native land. "*As places and locations become blurred, ideas of culturally and ethnically distinct places become even more salient"* (Gupta & Fergusen, 2008). It can be argued therefore that in face of challenge from opposing forces like migration, location becomes 'reterritorialized'. This is the point where the seemingly separate identities i.e. resistance identity of non-migrants and project identity of migrants find a point of merger. In trying to selectively reappropriate territoriality for their self- actualizing identity projects (Makoni, 2008), both acquire 'legitimizing tendencies' as they seek institutional validation and propagation of their ideas through state recognition and manipulation of civil society. The three distinct identities which are mere temporary categorizations have a time and scale value (Zimmerbauer & Paasi, 2013) and should be understood as context bound conceptual constructs that try to project an ontological character through resistance (Roseneil & Seymour, 1999).

A congruent conclusion can also be drawn from the analysis of the resistance identity of the non-migrant Kashmiri Pandits where a discursive construction of stability, homogeneity and symbolism is challenged by grassroot experiences of temporariness in the midst of changing societal situations experienced in daily lives by non-migrants, socio-cultural layering and practical constraints, respectively. Even then a resistance identity is sustained through discourse to create a perception of a homogenized and secure identity as an act of resistance. The denial of recognition or space results fosters the creation of a separate space (Green, 1998) and to some extent a rhetorical rejection of the migrant identity. The rejection of 'migrant politics' is however accompanied by parallel demands of accommodation in the 'migrant benefits'. Enforcing a strict division comes from strict mapping of culture and identity onto a space with a strict line of demarcation between 'us' and 'them'. (Gupta & Ferguson 2008). It also assumes absence of any contact before with the 'other' which inhibits us from looking at the construction of the community and its identity in itself as one based on hierarchical power relations that can change. The latter can help an understanding of different factions of an assumingly unified identity as

subjective fractures and not competing identities.

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Chapter Four

A Non-Binary, Differentiated account of Agency of Jammu Migrants: Positionality and Social Capital among Camp and Non-Camp Migrants

Introduction

To deconstruct and critically evaluate the assumptions of homogenization of the Kashmiri Pandit community, migrants who form the numerically dominant section within the community need to be broken down into analytical categories. However, for the purpose of simplifying our job, this process or the criteria for such an exercise cannot be random. Rather, a much more resourceful direction can be taken by dividing the migrant section according to diversity in experiences and distance or proximity they currently maintain from home. The migrants in Jammu city therefore are unlike those in Delhi or any other state which takes them father away from their homeland. It can especially be engaged with from the perspective of agency the migrants display in terms of their cultural cohesion as a community, pace and extent of having settled down in the new city, nature of interaction with the locals in the new city and most importantly, in their articulation of demands of return to Kashmir. Agency or simply put one's choice and freedom to exercise their will can be a highly stratified concept that varies with positionality and individual circumstances. It also displays an evolving nature through temporal changes. Jammu that way resents a ripe analytical opportunity to engage with simultaneous post migration processes of dealing with dislocation and resettlement in a new home. As compared to respondents in Kashmir or Delhi, In Jammu respondents of the older generation are faced with a transitory conundrum of holding on to the 'original' home and the culture of familiarity with the hope of reuniting with it someday and the pressing need to construct a home in their new place of habitation i.e. Jammu (Datta, 2017). There also exist noticeable patterns of secondary migrations, mostly of the younger generation from Jammu to bigger metropolitan cities within and outside the country. Jammu therefore, encapsulates a rather layered picture of what migration; a long-drawn-out process entails for the heterogeneous sections of the Kashmiri Pandit community. Besides, Jammu also houses some notable

government and non- government organizations like the Relief Commission and the Panun Kashmir, respectively, that also arguably make it the sociocultural epicenter of the community in some capacity.

The lens that I adorn to look at the findings of the field survey in Jammu is that of *differentiated agency.* Within the broader field of migration studies, agency often becomes an easily sidestepped concept over the assumption that migration, typically conflict induced migration automatically snatches any kind of agency from the one who is displaced. In developing the case for precarity, that uncontestably follows the process of dislocation in varying degrees and forms migrants, agency is seen as antithetical to the idea of a migrant. The latter is restrictively understood as dependent on state' recognition and to an extent, their exclusive identification as disenfranchised citizens (see Arendt, 1973). While the case of precarity of the displaced is imperative in terms of policy implications (Bradley, 2014), there is room for a nuanced understanding of the agency that the displaced can and as I present in this case, do display especially in case of internally displaced people who still enjoy the civil liberties within their home country (Bradley, 2014). By extension, this exercise also helps us understand migration as a process that moves beyond initial motivations. While the former can be understood through a macroanalysis of the circumstantial factors to an extent, the perpetuation of migration for extended durations, which in this case is beyond thirty years, calls for a microanalysis of subjective factors that sustain the migration at an individual (and community) level. This is where a detailed discussion of agency can serve as an essential compass for migration theory in general.

Structure-Agency and the Migration discourse

Within and beyond migration literature, agency is usually understood in relation to or in opposition to a structure. Agency can be seen as the self-reflective capacity of social actors to develop strategies and exhibit behavior that either results in decision making to achieve desired results (Anderson, 2016; also see Wharton, 1991) or can also seek to transform the social relations one is embedded in (Sewell, 1992). In both these understandings, be it individualistic or relational, the agent is seen as a knowledgeable and

purposive being (Wharton, 1991) with some about of deterministic freedom to maneuver or manipulate the structural constraints. Structure on the other hand, can be understood as an amalgamation of social relations or recurring patterns of behavior between the elements of a social system (Scott & Marshall, 2009). In a broader sense, and more appropriate to our discussion, it is a virtual representation or a metaphor of the social discourse (Sewell, 1992). Most theoretical explanations of the phenomenon of agency are biased towards either.

While a traditional understanding emanating from a more critical realist (see Bates, 2006; Archer, 1995) or systems approach (see Johnson, 2008; Mabogunje, 1970) looks at agency as a property of the structure, fairly infant research particularly from the subaltern and feminist studies (McNay, 2003) representing the marginalized have associated agency with the supposedly atomized individual. Both however, either downplay the interdependence of the two or overstress the independence of either. Some accounts like Foucault's, do talk of the dialectic relation between the two, however, in his account too, the agent is reproduced as a discursive effect (Huijer, 1999) with little resistance to power that is synonymously used with the system or structure. The dominant understanding even in dialectic is one based on dichotomies, firstly between the structure and the agent and secondly, even in recognition of individual agency, the categorization remains limited to the binary of a vulnerable victim or an agentic social actor.

For our discussion, I build on Giddens' (1984) and Bourdieu's (1992) understanding to illustrate the individualistic recognition of agency and Archer's (1995) idea of structural dominance. While an elaboration of these theoretical dispositions will ground our discussion, I will borrow from a Massey (1999) and in particular from Mahmood (2001) in placing the case of the Kashmiri migrants of Jammu in the midst of the two understandings of agency. I develop a relational understanding of migrant agency that is neither a romanticization of resistance in face of coercion, nor a disempowering account of non-agentic migrants treated as passive receptors of structural challenges. To accomplish the same, I will elaborate on aspects of positionality and temporality of agency that help contextualize the tactical

use of the latter even among the supposedly disadvantaged groups such as the displaced migrants.

Both Giddens and Bourdieu recognize the agency of an individual or rather the potential effect of manipulation an individual maintains in his/her interaction with the structure. This is not to say that they view individual actions outside the structural constraints, but both maintain a relational give and take, albeit a lopsided one, between the agent and the structure. Bourdieu counters the social theorists' argument of *indeterminacy* of agentic action in the overarchingly complex globalized structure, with a temporal understanding of subject formation which according to him is an active process of involvement for the social actor. Social norms aren't a mere imposition absorbed by the actor but a social agent, a terminology her prefers over social actor, also with time develops anticipatory impulses to live through those normative impositions of the structure. The reception therefore isn't a docile one. The actor reserves agency to transcend the present through potentialities (Wacquant & Bourdieu, 1992) based on past experiences and future goals. In doing so, the subject manipulates the subordination to the system. This understanding presents actor's agentic dimension in a more praxeological way (McNay, 2003; Butler, 1993; Wacquant & Bourdieu, 1992).

To similar effect, Giddens' theory of structuration (1984) critically engages with the functioning of the structure. Against the assumption of the omniscience of the preexisting, ever-present structure, Giddens' looks at the dual nature of the structure that he presents both as the medium and the outcome of social action. Structure therefore, he proposes not only shapes social action but is also transformed by it. This is not a mere act of replication but a significant reproduction, wherein self-aware social actor, maintains leverage to influence and possibly alter the structural properties. The process is one of negotiation. Structural subjectification therefore is not to be confused with actor subjection (McNay, 2003). Both Bourdieu and Giddens in some capacity stress on the hyperactivity of agency (see Bakewell, 2010) based on reflexivity and autonomy. Giddens points out that it is used to carve out a *space of control* in some capacity by the social actors even in the positions of marginality (Giddens, 1982).

Attacking the alleged conflation of agency in Giddens' theory, Archer's theory of Morphogenesis (1995), sides with the dominance of the system over an agentic actor. Interestingly Archer, like Bourdieu uses the idea of temporality, however, in this case the temporality is associated not just with the actor who uses agency to manipulate structure but rather is seen as an aspect of the system to support the system's emergent properties. Acknowledging the role of social actors in trying to influence the system, Archer says that the system in its morphogenic cycle develops structural elaborations which outgrow the intention and the anticipated result of any social actor who meddles with the structure. Therefore, even in interaction, the system maintains its indeterminacy and eclipsing tendencies. The discourse on agency and structure is guided by a competitive dialectic that almost always ends up in disproportionate accordance of power to either one.

The polarizing engagement with structure and agency in migration theory has been a particular source of impasse (Bakewell et. al, 2012). Considered outside the ambit of making and following through with conscious decision making, migrants and refugees in particular are seen as victims with little to no agency in fending for themselves. Arendt's (see Bradley, 2014) writings influence much of this line of thought. Written in the context of the Jewish displacement, Arendt vociferously refutes any agentic attribution to the displaced refugee. Caution however must be maintained, the absolute loss of agency in this case emanates from 'loss of membership in a political community of a state' (Bradley, 2014) and not from the feeling of statelessness that a displaced may articulate for themselves. So, while determining agency might be a challenge for refugees to a greater extent, it however is evidently not impossible, especially with their legal recognition internationally (Bradley, 2014). This also separates the internally displaced from the refugees in terms of scope of exercising agency as the latter never lose the state recognition and protection. The agency of the displaced, it is safe to say cannot be dismissed at once. The ardent group consciousness (Bradley, 2014; Arendt, 1973) among displaced articulated particularly in terms of return can be seen as the displaced actor's effort to reclaim their space of control. Identity assertions among such groups are also overly

centered around a homeland that influences not just the idea of return but also a reconstruction of their identity in the secondary place of habitation (Brah, 1996). In the case of Kashmiri Pandits too this is evident in the migrant discourse on homeland and the rejection of rehabilitation plans put forth by the government that the community deems not at par with their desired return. So, in negotiating the 'kind of return' they envision, migrants do retain some form of agency.

However, agency cannot be understood in terms of valorizations of any voluntary action or daily experience (McNay, 2003; Bourdieu, 1992) or a romantic view of resistance (Rydzik & Anitha, 2019). Its existence cannot be ascertained or denied in absolute terms. A contextualized view of agency recognizes conditions where agency can be exercised or even withheld (Wharton, 1991). Massey et al., (1999) in dealing with migrant agency recognizes both the motivation of individual refugees, the structural conditions of the emigrant and immigrant countries (for refugees), and the exchanges that take place between the two in forming a geographical structure. This highlights the role networks play in forming structures and expanding or curtailing their scope for individual agency. Nonetheless, it provides us with a middle path between the structure/ agency dominant theoretical positions. In terms of migration this may also solve the impasse of avoiding any engagement with agency. As migration is a broad umbrella term that encompasses both reactive and proactive migrants (Richmond, 1993), ranging from conflict refugees, to economic migrants, international students, multinational corporations etc., Bakewell (2010) therefore, postulates that given the heterogeneity of migration motives, establishing a single migration theory is a fundamental weakness of the field and a mid-range theory might be a more realizable goal.

In any case, the discourse within migration studies has considerably shifted from denial of agency in migrants to exploring forms of agency they display. Here, a deeper understanding of agency is to be developed that goes beyond apparent examples of successful application of individual agency in influencing a structure. Agency can be delinked from the desired aftermath and seen solely as the freedom to act as seen appropriate by the actors

(Mahmood, 2001; see Rydzik & Anitha, 2019). This is especially important when agency is tested in coercion like in the case of displacement and migration. While the most apparent way to witness agency might be decision making and collective action (Van Eerdewijk et al., 2017; also see Renkens, 2022) but Mahmood (2001) highlights that it is not restricted to measurable events. Agency in this regard goes beyond the goal of emancipation to survival of the actor. Agency can alternatively also be expressed as resilience or endurance of suffering for a higher goal (Mahmood, 2001; Renkens, 2022) or to improve immediate conditions through tactical resistance and reworking of ones surrounding conditions without necessarily attacking the system. Agency in this regard lies not just in the attainment of the goal but the art of working towards resilience (Rydzik & Anitha, 2019; Katz, 2004). This is a calculated act the actors engage in after making a sound assessment of the risks and the potential benefits of employing a carefully chosen tactic.

Resettlement in Jammu: expanding ambit of migrant agency

The tactical use of agency assumes that the social actor is aware of the potential consequences of exercising his/her agency. This partly borrows from Bourdieu's idea of anticipatory impulses that are applied in understanding and maneuvering the system by the actor as an active agent. How this is done can be explained in part by the employing differential consciousness (Sandoval, 2013; also see Perera, 2013) by the actors to navigate, choose and apply a specific aspect of their identity in asserting their agency against the system. This also gives the actor the option of be a seemingly docile receptor of the structural conditions, if he/she sees it beneficial. Again, Bourdieu's idea of transcending the present with an eye on the future can be of help here in explaining how an actor can choose to appropriate his/her agency according to the structural constraints. As an analytical category, agency can be understood a multilayered phenomenon.

Emirbayer and Mishe (1998) recognize that agency works at three levels. Iterational, projective and evaluative. The first concerns itself with the conditions of the past, which they argue have the power to shape the present disposition of the actor through habit and repetition. It influences how the actor perceives not just structural obstacles and opportunities but also how

resource equipped he/she is to make a choice about the course of their action. Projective consideration of agency on the other hand, is oriented towards a new possibility for the future. In a way it counters the iterational tendencies that restrict the agentic power of the actor in choosing to break free from the established schemes of the past and rather use one's agency to counter them. A pushing force is recognized in the evaluative tendencies that take cognizance of the present situation and tweak the action of the actor to suit the present practicalities. This compromises both the over exaggeratedly stated goals of the future and restrictive behavioral patterns of the past. Agency can be an interplay of the three tendencies (Perera, 2013). The survival strategies especially of populations living in prolonged displacement are based on a careful weighing of the three. This pragmatic survivalism (Perera, 2013) typifies agency in migrant populations.

Jammu -the 'new home'

To highlight the evolving nature and scope of agency migrants have over time developed and demonstrated in their resettlement process in Jammu, I will trace the graded process of settlement of the community in the city in a phased manner.

First phase: immediate relocation to camps

The first finding in Jammu highlights the transition of Jammu from a 'temporary' home to a somewhat 'permanent' one. Soon after migration began in 1990, most of those who left their 'home' found an interim residence in Jammu. These were tents that the then government/administration of Jammu and Kashmir under Governor Jagmohan had arranged in the outskirts of the city. Many use their location in the peripherals of Jammu as a metaphor for their removed existence from a stable society. "*We were left in jungles. Miles away from Jammu as untouchables."* These areas like Mishriwala, Purkhu, Nagrota that housed such camps are easily thirty kilometers from the main city. The connectivity to these areas has now improved but as many migrants pointed out, the limited bus services to the migrant camps back then kept them cut off even from Jammu. The tented accommodations provided were not concrete structures but what the migrants describe as '*kabutar-khana*

(pigeon nest)' that were difficult to live in for Jammu summers. Many migrants who were not used to the scorching temperatures describe the immediate period after migration as that of misery. A respondent recalls that she migrated with her parents and sisters to Jammu totally underprepared for a permanent migration.

> "*My mother, sisters and I took very limited utensils from home while my father was mostly busy arranging for transportation. When we reached Jammu, my father was still wearing a Phiran (a Kashmiri garment worn in winters), totally unsuitable for this city."*

Many say they were caught unaware in the Jammu summers as the winter subsided. Most respondents claim that they faced losses in terms of elders passing away from heat strokes and others claim that they would often find snakes in their tents at night. A second apparent difference in their new homes was the absence of any privacy. As is common in the Valley, most Pandits who had migrated had their own houses with multiple rooms and often storeys. In a lot of cases different storeys of the same house accommodated different families, but none the less, it was a full-fledged house. Here, the accommodation provided was a single room that had to be used by all family members as kitchen, guestroom and bedroom. No matter the size of the family, the accommodation was the same unless a joint family would register as multiple nuclear families or a daughter would be married off to another family.

A common understanding in the migrant experience highlights this shift in the 'home' that the community went through. Respondents assert it was not just dislocation from the Valley, but what they saw after that, which made migration real for them. As says a respondent in Jagti township:

> "*The anger in the community is not just about leaving our homes in Kashmir but the pain of relocation while seeing our elders die… that haunts us even today*."

This struggle to adjust was most for the elderly who as many say to this day do not feel at home. Another migrant businessman in Jammu summarizes:

> "*I constructed a house; I own a business here in Jammu but my mother still says she wishes to be buried at home when she dies. I built everything for her, she still looks for her home… what do I do now?"* as he recalls his journey of resettlement in the city.

This reality of migration hit many as summers approached in Jammu and living in tents became increasingly difficult. This led many to construct their own houses in Jammu. For a lot of them, it meant selling off their property in the Valley, if they didn't have enough resources. Some say they sold off properties through middlemen who belonged to both Pandit and Muslim community. But very few claim to have gotten a fair price and describe the transaction as a 'distress sale'. Few say they maintained contact with neighbors who helped them get a relatively fair deal on the property. Whatever the nature of the deal, most respondents maintain that they couldn't afford to construct a new house without selling off their houses in the Valley. Either way, the construction of their new houses, created two categories among the migrants in Jammu. Those who lived in the camps and those who had their own houses. These separations however were not fixed. Especially after the allocation of flats in concrete townships. Meant for direct relocation of those in tents, the allotment of flats is often not that transparent many allege. As a Jagti resident highlights:

> "*When they were allotting flats, people came back from America, took possession, locked their doors and left again*."

However, the separation between the camp and non-camp migrants can be seen in the respective quality of life they live. While for the non-camp migrants, Jagti is their past, for the camp migrants, it is their present reality and many fear probably their future as well.

Second phase: division of camp and non- camp migrants

The process of resettlement can be witnessed in areas like Pamposh Colony that as the name suggests can easily be termed a 'Pandit area'. From the peripherals like Mishriwala and Purkhu, the migrants have over time not only managed to construct homes for themselves but also as they claim 'developed' these peripherals of the city into decent residential colonies. Many count this as one of many contributions they have made to Jammu. I stress that the community has gotten reasonable success in resettling themselves in Jammu. These Pandit areas are somehow more 'Pandit' than the localities I visited in Kashmir. There is a sense of neighborhood here. The community reportedly feels and displays confidence in their everyday actions as a secure majority in the localities. Unlike in Srinagar, one can witness a more pronounced expression of the Pandit identity. Of course, numerical strength helps. On many occasions I found Pandit women roaming the local streets after lunch, talking to the neighbor over their wall. For many Jammu has now become home, one can argue. This is true more so in case of younger generations born here. A majority of them have never seen Kashmir or have just made occasional visits to tourist destinations. As says a woman in Pamposh colony, Jammu:

> *"My son is a Dogra. All his friends are from Jammu. You can't stop children from mixing with the locals. We have taken him to Srinagar but he gets bored there… he doesn't know anyone there."*

For most children after a certain age Jammu too presents limited opportunity in terms of higher education and employment. They migrate to Delhi, Bengaluru or other big cities for the same. Here, I point out the layers of migration that has unfurled as a continuous process. For the elders, migration is about leaving Kashmir and the desire of going back and dying in their homeland. For their children (now middle aged), migration is about the process of settling down in Jammu and for the youth migration is about leaving Jammu (their new home) for cities like Delhi. Migration and 'home' making in Jammu therefore is a heterogeneous process experienced along lines

of class, social resources and age. In an interaction, a Delhi based, Jammu born Pandit youth explains when his family talks of migration from Kashmir, he can only empathize like a third person. Drawing a parallel, he says that the only time he has faced migration personally was leaving Jammu to attend college in Delhi. He adds:

> "*I use my own experience of leaving Jammu to understand the pain of my elders when they talk of Kashmir… I have visited the Valley with my relatives who cried on visiting their old houses, I could only relate to the Valley as a tourist…I couldn't see what they saw."*

Manufacturing permanence

Another finding that needs attention is the efforts of the community not just to survive but at the same time maintain their community traditions in Jammu. Taking another step towards finding a 'home' in Jammu, the community has set up replicas of various shrines in the city often with the help of community organizations. One among such shrines, is the Kheer Bhawani replica. The original shrine in Tulmula, Ganderbal is a revered one for the community. It still holds an annual *mela* that is attended by many including migrants who also find assistance in transportation and accommodation from the government, along with security from the police and armed forces. This replica however received a mixed reaction from my respondents. While some welcomed it as a way to hold on to some form of cohesion as a community, for others it was a mere replica that looked completely different from the original. To begin with, many highlight the *insufficiency* of replica-building, by saying that the water in the pond at the temple was pipe water and not spring water. As highlighted by Datta (2019) in his account, it was rejected as 'artificial' by some members. It amounted to playing with authenticity of the original. This has a deeper meaning than just the imperfections of the replica. I found it made the feeling of displacement more real for people who saw it as desperate attempts to hold on to the shadows of the past. It also made migration permanent for people who wish to see an end to it in the form of return to the 'original'. In a similar finding as Datta, I found that enjoying

Kheer Bhawani was not just a religious experience but it is rather embedded in the cultural and territorial essence of the Valley-its mountains and its springs. The replica was a mere place, a structure not an experience. Many also saw this as 'appropriation' of their distinctness by powerful sections of their community for their own gains like popularity in petty politics. After all the replica, many respondents argue, was not just for the Pandits, it was open to all alike.

Third phase: rejection of the 'Dogra' local

As the community over time has 'settled' in the city, comparisons with the Dogra majority are often drawn to ascertain their distinctiveness. On the one hand, respondents while talking of how they feel like a minority against the Dogra majority in Jammu recall their struggle of settling down in the city. *"In the initial days they used to taunt us…. Kashmiri lole bhag ke aa gaye…. (Coward, unruly Kashmiri Pandits... you ran off from your place)*." Many said they faced difficulties in finding accommodation on rent and even when they did, the houseowner either rented them extortionately or put strict restriction on how they lived, what they ate, who and how many people visited them. *"On public transport we faced a lot of discrimination. Especially as young girls we were teased on our way to tuition classes.",* says a woman who had migrated to the city as a young girl. While many acknowledge that Dogra Hindus gave them places to live in their worst times, they soon add that the latter made fortune off of their misery too. "*They even rented out their cowsheds to us. We had no option but to take it.*", says a woman who now lives with her family in their own house in Udaiwala in the outskirts of Jammu. Although, there is clear recognition of the vulnerable minority sentiment against the local majority of Jammu, the Kashmiri Pandits in Jammu often reject mingling with or identifying with what was described as '*crude, business minded majority'* of Dogra Hindus and prefer being a minority albeit a superior one.

> "*Jammu was nothing before we settled here. Their children never studied…they were involved in smoking and drinking. It's only after they saw our children study even in misery, did they*

feel threatened. What you see today is because of that competition. Of all people they (the Dogra Hindus) don't want us to go back to Kashmir the most…. because their business will collapse.", reiterates a respondent.

A sentiment shared by most Pandits respondents in Jammu city, the Dogras are seen as petty business minded community that made money off of the misfortune of the Kashmiri Pandit community. While marrying outside of the community is now not that uncommon and is considered a natural fallout of the migration and the subsequent dispersion of the community, many still hesitate marrying off their daughters into Dogra families as oppose to accepting a daughter- in- law from the Dogra background which seems to have greater acceptance than the former.

In a lot of conversations, members of the community also seek to establish similarity with the Muslims of the Valley in distancing from the Dogra locals. Like the following statement from a respondent indicates:

"*You and I, we are same, you know? We come from the same gene-pool. That's why even after so much (forced migration), we still have so much in common with you rather than them (the Dogra community)."*

In another statement a young migrant woman who I interviewed in Pamposh colony says:

"We *are not Hindus. We are Pandits of Kashmir. It was the land that gave us identity. What do these people (Dogra) know of who we are. We just share some aspects of their religion. Hamara Bhagwan ek hai bas baaki sab alag. (Only our God is one, rest everything is different)."*

From a displaced community in camps to owning their own houses in the outskirts of the city and to then contributing in transforming those outskirts into residential and commercially viable localities, the Pandits have

seen a transformation from a discriminated minority to a rooted community that now prefers maintain a distance from the majority. However, this has not been shared equally by all. Circumstances vary for camp and non-camp migrants. While the latter a more 'settled' the former still live in a relative state of temporariness.

Life as a new Pandit: challenges in resettlement

In this section, I will talk of the challenges many respondents state they faced in readjusting to life in the city. In the last chapter I discussed the cultural and political isolation non-migrants face after the migration of most of their fellow community members. In Jammu, I found that not many (especially those who live in their own houses) talk of isolation, cultural or religious. This is obvious because in most localities where Pandits live in Jammu, they are not a shy minority. However, people do talk of a sense of loss, culturally. As shown in the case of replica structures, even in a vehement assertion of identity people feel a sense of inauthenticity. The basis is the traditional connection that is missing in all the rituals that are now performed in a different environmental setup in Jammu. The changes in surroundings have led many to adjust their identity to cope up with the new reality. The sober and non-confrontational nature of the Pandits traditionally understood as a matter of pride has inversely been attacked by many fellow Kashmiris is 'cowardly' (Datta, 2017). Many say that the conditions in Jammu have made this coward Pandit a 'rough' individual now who is no longer restricted by his idealistic values. A middle-aged man who migrated to the city as a youngster, thirty years ago says that Pandits stood out as '*soft, fair skinned handsome'* people when they landed in Jammu but the '*struggles, they have had to endure in the Jammu heat has now made them (as he says) like the darker skinned and rough Dogras'.* By equating the fairness to being soft and shy, his experience tells us that the process of resettlement has altered the way Jammu migrants create their 'self-image'.

Looking at migration in retrospect, some migrants assert that they did gain something out of the dislocation. For most it was described under the umbrella term- 'exposure'. Some meant that it gave them a chance of interacting with the world and get out of their 'inward looking' Kashmiri

identity. It has albeit come at a cost. The first such cost comes as the dilution of the identity, hitherto maintained earlier strictly through endogamy. Now marriage within the community (which still cannot be termed as uncommon) is a challenge. Most people rely on Koshur Samachar, a community magazine published in Delhi to place an advertisement to find partners for themselves within the community. It has had a considerable amount of success till date but most migrants see a decline in intra-community marriages. The reasons here a multifold. First, the scattered nature of the community makes it difficult to find matches because, for many marrying within the community would mean relocating to another city too. Secondly, parents are now increasingly aware and also in some capacity accept that their children who grew up in relatively multicultural societies might want to marry out of their own choice. A young mother of a twelve-year-old says:

> "*As a mother I would prefer if they marry a Pandit but I also know that I will have to ask if they already like someone from some other community. It's not their fault. They grew up with Dogra friends."*

Most people define the 'creeping' of Jammu culture in their identity as inevitable. Many families I visited had daughters-in-law from the Dogra community. Even though many said (often in presence of their daughters-in -law) that the marriage situation is far from ideal, they express some relief with how fast the daughter-in -law was picking up Kashmiri habits like learning to make *nun chai* (Kashmiri tea) and *haakh* (collard greens). This somehow compensated the compromise of their identity.

A second area of struggle is highlighted in the rate at which youth are leaving Jammu for better opportunities. This also means that like the non-migrants in Kashmir, Jammu too is becoming the city of the old. Many highlight that it also leaves the elderly in a vulnerable position. While Jammu is a stepping stone to the future for the youth, it leaves the elderly in a lonely state who have to stay back as the caretakers of the Pandit identity. A lady in Udaiwala highlights that going out in a way has become a matter of competition among young adults. One hardly finds Kashmiri Pandits in

colleges in Jammu now. Almost all leave for Delhi or abroad. She says: "*they (young migrants) know their parents will arrange migrant certificate or some connection to get college admission elsewhere".* The point here is to stress that migration to places with brighter future might be a logical and sometimes compulsory choice for the youth, it is often measured against the sacrifices their parents have made by selling their houses in Kashmir to resettle in Jammu. The migration of youth from on some level is also viewed as futility of those sacrifices.

Another fallout of the migration on the self-image of the migrants comes from their dependence on monthly subsidy. After migration, individuals registered with the Relief Commission were given both ration and monetary subsidy. This was done in order to help the community bear immediate costs of settling down. On the one hand, practical demands to increase the subsidy are expressed by the community members. At the same time, it is also seen as a gimmick to keep the community 'hanging'. A respondent described the relief measures as a 'trap'. He says that the government has reduced the community to "*beggars made to stand in queues for a can of kerosene oil."* He describes this monthly subsidy as a distraction for the migrants who have forgotten about their need to return so long as they get the monetary relief. Reiterating that the community was caught in a vicious cycle of dependence on the subsidy, he adds, that many have become complacent in critically questioning the progress on return. The relief is just enough for them to hold on to the government, but as the last thirty years have shown, won't help them go any further. The continuous subsidy, he vehemently adds, is also a way of keeping the community hopeful about government's intentions on their resettlement; but it is highly inadequate too.

Deconstructing Agency: camp and non- camp migrants

As I have tried to show in the previous sections, Pandit colonies in Jammu display a sense of community unlike those I visited in Kashmir Valley or the camp townships in Jammu. In this section I will compare this composure of Pandit localities with the environment of government townships. What is interesting in analyzing the township of Jagti is that it is both the site of 'ideal migrants' and that of 'underachieving migrant'.

I highlight three perceptions about the camp settlers. First, is the one they hold about each other within these settlements. A camp is ideally understood as a site of residence for those who don't have or who could not establish an alternate residence for themselves in thirty years. But this is not always the rule. I met various exceptions to this case. In one case, I interviewed a nuclear family whose older generation resides in the Valley. They stated that they use the 'flat' when they have to visit Jammu. Unlike others they had not 'migrated' to Jammu. Another family lived in a flat that had been allotted to their relatives who lived in Delhi and did not need it as a permanent place of residence. In the meantime, the respondent and his family who were not allotted one by the government were using it. Many such cases exist in the Jagti Migrant Colony where most people are suspicious of the ideal ownership of these flats. Walking in the parking lot of the compound in Jagti, a respondent says that the township *hardly looks like a migrant one.* He adds:

> "*Look at the number of cars parked here; what kind of a migrant has the luxury of a car. This looks like a mall*."

Most migrants also claim that the township is full of people who ideally should not 'qualify' to be allotted one as they all live outside. Many point to the locked flats saying that people merely use it for occasional visits from outside the State and keep them locked otherwise.

The second perception is about how migrants with own residential houses see camp settlers. One perception treats the camp settlers as 'lazy' people who feed off of subsidy and are undermotivated to progress in life. Living in camp is seen as deliberate choice or rather an opportunity to live on government subsidies. The third view, people hold of them is that they are the 'real migrants' whose living conditions capture the magnitude of 1990 migrants. This recognition as real migrants is also accompanied a third perspective of recognition camp settlers as those who failed to reestablish themselves after migration. They are seen as less integrated into the 'new society' with complete dependence on the state. A similar undertone of 'failure' is also witnessed in the self-image of camp settlers.

> "*You don't need permission to enter this flat. It is not mine. It is a government flat. It is as much mine as it is yours. Anyone can come and go as they like.*", says an elderly man as I ask for permission to enter his flat in Jagti township.

It immediately stands in contrast with a sense of ownership and permanence that one experiences in Pandit localities. It speaks of the self-image of those in Jagti often spoken of as the 'underachievers' within the migrant community. The camp settlers are not just hyper aware of this perception others hold for them, they also to some extent share it. It is articulated in the form of lack of 'agency' to change their present conditions or decide for their future. Many respondents from the camp say that it is not by 'choice' that they live in government accommodations. Although this is contested by many accounts of people who live in camps occasionally despite having other residence. None the less, camp life for most may not essentially be ideal. Many need these camps because they are heavily dependent on government after migration. They stayed in sheds till 2011 and were shifted to concrete structures by the government. So, where they live and how they live is essentially decided by the government. This is true in case of return and resettlement in the Valley too. As says a migrant in Jagti, if tomorrow the government decides to relocate them, the camp migrants have no choice but to follow the government '*from one migrant camp in Jammu to a similar one in Kashmir'.* Looking from their perspective, return does not look like a 'choice' but a compulsion unless they make arrangements for themselves. Their present condition denies them the agency to decide for themselves. Resettlement for them can be interpreted as another migration dictated by circumstances.

This stands in sharp contrast to the agency of the non-camp migrants who look at return as an idea they associate to but maintain a choice or privilege to accept or decline its personal application in their own lives. The lack of agency of camp settlers is compounded by the appropriation of their return by the migrants who don't live in camps. On a discursive level, return 'of the community' is seen essential by all, irrespective of where a migrant is

placed. For most return represents a choice, but for the camp settlers it is a compulsion. In glorifying return, the migrants assume agency or willingness of the camp settlers which might not always exist. I argue therefore that the camp settlers carry the burden of 'return of the community' without having any independent agency. Although, I don't deny that many within camps too see return as a favorable option or desire, I merely point out that their agency is not independently informed by the 'choice' to go back but also a need to go back in the absence of any property accumulated in Jammu where they could stay instead. For the debate of return to survive, it is imperative that the category of 'displaced migrant' should survive too. The camp migrants are an easy scapegoat on which figures and rhetoric of return are based. For many to have the choice of 'summer homes' for occasional visits, the camp settlers will have to migrate irrespective of their willingness. This is also an unattractive idea because returns that have taken place till date have not met with positive response from the larger Pandit community. As says a respondent in Durgapur, Jammu:

> "*Those who went back for jobs, broke our migration at the first penny government threw at them."*

Discrediting that return for some might be 'need based', individual return is seen as a self-serving purpose that goes against the community. This is more pronounced in case of individual returns of PM package employees. Migration here is seen as a community project not based on individual circumstances and that can be a highly restrictive interpretation. The non-camp migrants might exalt the 'real migrant' status of the camp settlers but not many would want to be one themselves.

Positionality, Resources and Agency: differentiated account of camp and non- camp migrants

The above illustrated account presents a differentiated concept of agency that varies in its expression within the Kashmiri Pandit community. The identifiable axes along which one can see agency either changing or evolving are-temporality, positionality and resource accumulation. With

regard to temporality, in line with Bourdieu's theoretical construction, the agency of the Kashmiri Pandits as migrants in a new city that many were not as familiar with in the beginning of resettlement, has evolved with time. From occupying a position of peripherality to expanding their space of control the community has now been able to establish migrant colonies. All this of course is to be understood contextually with the geographical expansion of the city with time beyond the Pandit contribution and discourse. But one cannot still write off the observation that Kashmiri Pandits in Jammu city, more so when compared to Kashmir or Delhi have reinstated a community life apparent on the streets of these colonies. To an extent, this can be taken as a successful case of integration into the new society. It gets compounded by erection of replicas of religious shrines and celebration of festivals at community levels in a much celebratory display of their particular cultural and religious identity. It is now also parallelled with the often times distancing from the locals in Jammu. Mostly done to protect their perceived distinctiveness be it religious, territorial or cultural as was reported by the respondents, it can be understood as an active use of one's agency which has changed in degree and space and also form over time. However, this gradient has not been the same for everyone. Agency seems to be deployed varyingly by differently-placed members of the community. An easy distinction can be made between the camp and non- camp migrants. The former express agency in terms of better integration in close and sometimes same neighborhoods as the Jammu locals. They are part of the workforce along with the local residents and therefore can be counted as contributors to the local economy of the city. This also reflects in the perception they maintain about their secure position in the society and the agency it brings along.

This stands in contrast, with the camp migrants as explained who still live a lesser integrated life in Jammu. While they do exercise agency, particularly in term of expected return to their homeland, it varies from that of the non-camp migrants. However, it is imperative in our discussion to point out that these categories are not to be understood as mutually exclusive. Many who don't reside in camps continue being the official allotee and contrasting cases of those who live in camps without any formal allocation are also

present. The compartmentalization between camp and non-camp is an analytical construct and they should be understood as theoretical classes (Bourdieu, 1987).

The purpose of this construction is to highlight the influence of *positional inequality* on agency. To put it simply, where an actor is located affects how and how much he/she can exercise his/her agency. But this positionality is not to be distilled down to a structural determinism immune to manipulation by the agent. It cannot be treated as a given attribute of the system that dictates the actor's agency forever. A deeper analysis of the macro processes like positionality are to be read with micro processes of subjective decision making in determining agency. An actor's default condition may not be enough of an explanation for the exercise of his/her agency, either positive or negative. For similarity in position does not automatically guarantee collective forms or patterns of behavior. The camp-based migrants are not a collective identity with similar disposition just because they reside in the camps together. This will likely condense their identity unitarily giving us a premature conclusion. For a position to determine agency it needs necessary corroborators like similar routine, similar conditions, similar conditioning (Wharton, 1991) that can increase the chance of a similar behavioral pattern and maybe similar expression of agency in all those who occupy similar positions.

So, a modified understanding of agency is based on conscious activity of members whose dispositions are not strictly a function of their position but an outcome of a complex interaction of various aspects of their identity. To an extent this argument circles back to the deterministic value of the structure over an actor but it should not be confused with absolute stability of the structure. Rather, it highlights the intersectional nature of social activity, agency included, that is multifaceted. It signifies a constant interaction between the structure and the agent. Tools that can in particular be used by migrants in deciphering and navigating the structure to gain agency and advantage are microlevel structures like migrant or diasporic networks and prior knowledge of the migration adventures or obstacles (Massey et al., 1999; Bakewell, 2010). The case in point can use these factors in determining

agency. Jammu based migrants employed not just family and community networks but also state facilitated (although premature) infrastructure to not only settle down immediately after migration but also relied heavily on their prior knowledge, at least for some to varying degrees, of the topography, political climate, religious organizations that facilitated relief distribution and rehabilitation and so forth. Though not entirely, some form of feedback mechanism (Mabogunje, 1970; Bakewell et al., 2012) also influenced many in deciding to migrate.

For many others, as highlighted in the previous chapters, the state of camps in Jammu became a deterrent in migrating. The agency in the latter case was used to resist migration amidst the uncertain conditions of the Valley. Social capital attached to an actor also influences their ability to exercise agency. But the capital does not exist outside the network. Extrapolating this line of argument, we can look at the current positionality of the camp migrants in a much more contextualized way. The present position of those who ended up living for prolonged durations in camps cannot be seen as the sole doing of migration alone. For this would make migration an isolated episode devoid any social and economic layering. While Datta (2017) classifies the camp migrants as the most economically disadvantaged group that constitute about 18 percent of the total Pandit population, my study reveals that the distinction between camp and non-camp migrants is not that strict. In the discussion above I have listed several instances of ambiguity of the status of ownership or exclusive camp residence among many migrants. This is not to deny the relative economic backwardness of the camp migrants overall, especially compared to those in Delhi, but it should also not be assumed that the camp migrants are agency less. For many who are now settled in their own houses in Jammu, the transition from camps was only possible overtime, often after selling off their property in the Valley. This is paralleled with many examples for camp migrants who (as mentioned above) maintain dual residences.

Theoretically, it helps us understand the intimacy of the structure and actor interaction. While most accounts acknowledge the micro effects of structure like that of migration on the socio-economic position of the

migrants, they however fall short of recognizing that migration as a process itself is also embedded in socio-economic factors. The latter are not just a result of migration but in some sense a perpetuation of such factors. Many with relatively stable networks and resources, displayed better or at least different agency in coping with migration, while for others, especially of rural background, migration altered their base and thus their agency. While it remains true in this case too, that resources and agency act to mutually reinforce each other (Renkens, 2022), however, this should not discount resilience or be equated with lack of agency. Agency cannot be monopolized as an attribute of either of the two groups. While camp migrants might occupy an apparently disadvantaged position and lack relative resources, they at the same time also are beneficiaries of government assistance and possible candidates for state facilitated return to their homeland. Agency can therefore be understood through a non-binary (Huijsmans, 2012), differentiated approach wherein vulnerability and agency can coexist. The social actor even in a disadvantaged position is capable of manufacturing his/her space of control to transcend the present constrains of the structure or to take advantage of the structure.

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Chapter Five

Role of the Community Elite, Institutionalized Articulation and Representation of the Collective Memory: an engagement with Delhi based Kashmiri Pandit Migrants

Introduction

Collective memory can be a pivotal fodder for identity construction in dispersed communities. In migrant discourses therefore, it often acts as the base for community cohesion and their subjective politics. Of particular interest to our discussion will be the role of the migrant organizations that attempt to erect some form of civil society amid lack of bounding forces in such communities. They provide organizational resource (Harris, 1994) for the purpose of mobilization of the community often for causes that concern not just the resettlement of the community but mostly in reification of the demand of return. This common aspiration provides grounds of solidarity within the community that is used in grounding the Kashmiri Pandit Identity. Collective memory is used as a catalyst to bolster this process through discursive iteration of the idea of homeland, the ideal life of the past, the collective trauma of migration and the urgency to return. Given the withdrawal of a secure territoriality, organizational resource provided by these socio-religious community platforms, assume a leadership role in maintaining integration, peoplehood and historic continuity (Paul, 2007) for the community.

Migrant respondents in Delhi, noticeably present a particular case of relatively successful social integration as compared to the previously studied migrant respondents in Jammu city and the non-migrants in Kashmir Valley. However, the successful integration is also, not ironically, paralleled by a much more random dispersion of the community in the city. Comparatively, the Delhi based Kashmiri Pandit migrants, are a scattered population, spread throughout the length and breadth of the city with no specific ghettoization or concentration in any area. It stands in contrast with the findings of the study in Jammu city where Pandit neighborhoods with a fairly homogenized population of the community have come into being, mostly on the outskirts of the city. It lends some amount of concretion to the public display of the Kashmiri

Pandit identity in a geographically bound context in Jammu. Arguably, the expression can be categorized as more organic and localized in nature. In Delhi on the other hand, the expression is patchier. This is not to suggest a pale presentation of Pandit identity in general among the Pandit inhabitants of the capital, nor is it to be distilled down, at least not simplistically, to a sense of loss of the Pandit identity experienced en masse by the community.

While many accounts do equate the veiled expression of identity with an absolutist verbalization of loss of identity (Tripathi, 2014), this study departs to critically engage with its symbolic and perhaps strategic expression/use, a phenomenon more apparent in respondents in Delhi. In doing so, I avoid prematurely associating lack of proximity to homeland, constructed as the source or center of identity, with the idea of dilution or loss of identity. Rather, the chapter will focus on the retention, reconstruction and renewal of the Pandit identity among the Delhi based migrants. I argue that the identity assertions are mediated by the community organizations and appear more formal and organized as compared to both Jammu and Kashmir.

Geographical Dispersion and Cultural Dilution in Delhi

The process of migration, influenced by the socioeconomic considerations of individuals (or individual units like family) has been a subjective experience. The present day Pandit residents in Delhi form a heterogeneous collective of members. Although they may share some commonalities in their identity articulation and standard of way of life, given their common urban settings, they have had different journeys of arriving where they are today. I present two analytical categories. The first, of those who settled in Delhi immediately after migration and a second of those who first settled (mostly) in Jammu (or any other smaller city) and have undertaken a secondary migration to settle in Delhi. Taking into consideration the immediate phase of resettlement, post migration, close to 1990, only a few respondents managed to relocate to Delhi as their first choice. Bifurcating it further, the category consists of those who either resettled with their families and those who came searching for employment, mostly alone, leaving their families in Jammu. A clear class division marked this separation at the time. For those of the first category, Delhi was not entirely unfamiliar.

For elite of the community, who were also the initial targets of the militant violence in the Valley (Bose, 2003; Rai, 2004), circular migration to their alternate places of residence in Delhi, especially in winters was somewhat a routine that in this case cushioned their migration. For many who did not have their own residence, managed to find one in the form of close relatives in the city, many of whom were permanently settled in Delhi.

One such respondent, a (now) middle aged pre-1990 settler in Delhi (in his late teens at the time of the mass migration), who works as a professor in Delhi, elaborates:

> "*For us relatives coming to our place was a routine. Many of my cousins would stay the winters... it was not new for me. As a kid I was used to extended visits from relatives… only with time we realized this was different… more permanent, people grew suspicious only with time*."

Although the experience of migration was vicarious for them and like in his case did not alter much of how he associated with his community or cultural identity, for some it (re)kindled their identity assertions.

> "*My family and I have always been in Delhi; I don't know much…. but I know my father goes to these organizations. He knows many people there…. I accompanied him just once… I just know they exist. But my mother is more passionate about the migration…news... you know. She has become interested and emotional after that (1990's migration) even more…In our house it is a big topic now. For me I have just heard them talk."*

...says a third generation pre 1990 settler in Delhi who only relates to the idea of his homeland culturally, but points out the generational difference in the affiliation with migration and the Kashmiri Pandit identity, in his own house.

Much before the migration of 1990's, the Pandit community had a presence both as a localized neighborhood and a representational organization in the form of Kashmiri Samiti. The Kashmiri Cooperative House Building Society founded in 1950 in Delhi went on to establish the Pamposh Enclave, an exclusive area of residence for the community to secure their culture and tradition in the city (Raina, 1995). Located in south east Delhi, it housed an intimate Pandit neighborhood (Duschinski, 2007).

> "*We had everything there, a kandur (Kashmiri baker), samiti nearby, gatherings for festivals, so it was never a feeling of displacement as such in the community at least with people like us…now it's all mixed up.",* says another pre 1990 settler.

Those who migrated with their families either depended on their relatives for a limited amount of time or in a minority of case had their own properties. Most took up rented accommodations with time. A second subcategory is of those who came to Delhi to look for jobs independent of their families.

> *"I hopped between hostels and cheap hotels for a while in my initial days. I was a student and a budding artist so I wanted to look for opportunity, Delhi was more suitable for that, but you can't bring the family along, I could barely survive myself."*

…says a now well settled middle aged migrant in Gurugram. His extended family lives in the city. Compared to most respondents he has a more elaborate social (and professional) circle within and beyond the community. However, it is starkly different from the nascent phase of his resettlement, as he puts it:

> "*We were reduced to mere queues, from standing in line for a (migrant) card to kerosene…. that was all you could see us doing."*

Many respondents recall receiving some help from the local administration under the NDMC (New Delhi Municipal Corporation) especially during the Sheila Dixit government in the allotment of makeshift shops under the Tehbazari system in Yusuf Sarai and INA market (both in South Delhi) in April, 1991.

> *"In the initial days, I had no shop as such, no roof no walls, just a cart. When it rained, we would fold the carts and run to the opposite building you see there… that's how we survived till the NDMC allotted us these shops. Now we have representation here, everyone knows these are Kashmiri shops. All of us in line (the shops) are from same place so now we have baradari. The only thing is at least our children moved ahead.",*
> says a shopkeeper in Yousuf Sarai.

While most respondents now exhibit much security in their present lives especially with respect to the future of their children, those who migrated without prior experience or lack of resources to Delhi do recall the daunting nature of the metropolitan city that came as a cultural shock to many, exacerbating their vulnerability.

A second category is of those who have only recently relocated to Delhi after solidifying their roots in cities like Jammu. A subcategorization can be drawn between third generation migrants who like many of their peers have relocated to Delhi for higher studies and the older generations who now live in the city temporarily to support their newly employed children. For most youngsters of the first subcategory, the relocation is linked to opportunity and employment. Many therefore are in the least connected to community organizations or platforms. Like their peers, their connections are mostly professional.

> "*We are here for our jobs like everyone else, my aunt lives here though, so I initially shifted with her but got a hostel accommodation soon after,*

I prefer that, it is always convenient, living on your own as a student.", says a Pandit student in Delhi.

For the older generation however, relocating to Delhi for their children was in some capacity a step further away from home.

"*Like all parents, we are also here to support our children but it also makes us realize that returning to Kashmir is now not possible for us, at least in Jammu I have (Pandit) neighbors, she (respondent's daughter) has office, so she has people here, we become caged in flats. So, I keep visiting here but go back to Jammu very often.",* says a middle-aged Jammu based migrant who visits the city on and off to meet his newly employed daughter.

While for the first category, the resettlement in Delhi is linked directly to the 1990 migration and in most accounts the initial phases of resettlement compound the associated trauma, for the recently relocated migrants, the move is more about economic betterment. However, here too, migration is experienced differently across generations.

The present spatial dissemination of the community in Delhi can be termed haphazard. Most respondents lived in residential apartments mixed with neighbors from other states and cultural backgrounds. Although I did come across one case of a gated colony, Satisar Apartments in Pitampura, north Delhi that, as the name suggests is an exclusive Pandit residence.

"*We feel the need to conserve our culture, when it's Shivratri, it feels like a community. Festivals, our poojas, our cooking habits, it's the same (as before migration).",* says a resident of the colony.

He asserts that living in such a colony was a willful decision to maintain not just the cultural distinction of the community but also a sense of community living in the overwhelmingly homogenizing urban environment

in Delhi. This is particularly done keeping the children in mind who as the respondent asserts '*should have a chance to grow up in a Kashmiri environment'*. Apart from such exceptions, accounts of most respondents who live in mixed societies, highlight a sense of cultural isolation to varying degrees.

The customary practices followed by the Pandits of Kashmir have always been different than the Hindus including Brahmins elsewhere in India (Pant, 1987). After migration many customs that were central to Pandit culture like non- vegetarianism, seem misfit to many respondents in the new context outside the Valley, where pure vegetarianism is essential to Brahmin conduct. While many have shifted to vegetarianism, others continue to consume meat but do express certain discomfort in doing so publicly.

> "*We still eat meat but avoid it on certain auspicious days like Shivratri now. Things are different here… you have to think about how the neighbors (other Hindus) will feel. People say what kind of Brahmins are they (Kashmiri Pandits*).", says a respondent in Noida, Delhi.

Unlike most Hindus, who celebrate many festivals throughout the course of the year where celebrations that include huge public gatherings, crackers, lights and music and last days together, Shivratri or Herath, celebrated soberly is considered most significant of all festivals by the Pandit community. Many respondents express their inability to celebrate Herath as they used to, back home in the Valley.

> "*After pooja (prayer) we immerse offerings in a water body. Most of our mandirs (temples) are located on the banks of Jhelum… you must have seen (during field work in Kashmir Valley). We don't go to mandir for pooja, we pray at home because we know how to recite the Vedas (unlike other Hindus who depend on priests and go to temples). We used to start cleaning our entire*

> *house weeks before Herath. Those were big individual houses, not flats. A lot of us now go to community functions of our own organizations, but it's not the same….",* says an elderly lady while elaborating on the loneliness she feels being secluded, culturally.

Here, the focus is on cultural characteristics that are now incompatible with the new environment. While much of this seclusion is attributed to migration, Kashmiri Pandits even before migration maintained a distinction with the Hindus of rest of India on account of maintaining their caste purity (Pant, 1987). Many practices like loud music, crackers are seen by most respondents (albeit mostly in the older generations), as behavior not befitting Kashmiri Brahmins who as they state "*are simple people and would rather perform pooja in their own homes since they are knowledgeable people fluent in Vedic scriptures and do not need to depend on any priests like the rest."* As the abovementioned conversation with the respondent indicates, the exclusive practice, maintains a sense of distinctiveness in the community that not only stresses their communal unity as a group but also acts marks their cultural separation and in this case caste superiority, as compared to the other religious communities in the city.

Yet another source of cultural dilution is attached to the changes they have has to make in adjusting to their new 'homes'. The geography of their homeland is a stark opposite of what most people find themselves living in now. This has brought with it major lifestyle changes. From the houses they live in, to the kind of food they consume, all has witnessed a shift. On multiple occasions, I found people talking of 'flat system' as opposed to living in individual houses, as a metaphor for how their lifestyles have degraded over the years.

> "*In Kashmir however poor we were, we all had our own houses. We all live in flats now…. my floor is someone else's ceiling and my ceiling is someone else's floor*."

…says a housewife In Pitampura, Delhi. Many respondents also talk of how they now have to purchase fruits, vegetables at high rates that many claim were freely available to them in their kitchen gardens. "*We use walnuts as offering to our God in Mahashivratri pooja, in Kashmir they were abundantly available to us, here... I have to depend on someone from Kashmir to send it or buy at high prices.*", says an elderly man who insists on keeping traditions alive for his future generations.

Institutionalization of Identity: role of the socio-political organizations

Community organizations harness central role in cultivating solidarity and a sense of leadership in dispersed communities that have witnessed migratory experiences. In the event of geographical dispersion, which is usually followed by a slow withdrawal of the state as the exclusive agent of change (Hsu, 2012), these community organizations engage in the simultaneous efforts of consolidating some semblance of a civil society for its members. One particular reason for this activity uncontestably can be articulating the demands of the community with regard to short term resettlement and highlighting grievances and long term demands like negotiating return and resettlement on behalf of the now scattered community. This is true in case of Kashmiri Pandits too, who saw a mushrooming of community organizations and forums, ranging from socio-religious community organizations to quasi political pressure groups, immediately after the 1990 migration. Delhi in particular being closer to the corridors of power is the hub of such organizations for the community.

A dominant understanding of the migrant organizations is biased towards their role in connecting the dispersed migrants to their homeland. They are often seen as fixated on cultural identity of the community and therefore suspiciously categorized as non-integrative in host cultures (Tanaka, 2019; Hsu, 2012). An alternate lens is provided by a functionalist approach that looks at the membership patterns of such organizations and the practical or discursive function they carry out in the community's sustenance (Tanaka, 2019). Following Pries's (2013) classification of migrant organizations, I divide the Pandit organizations either as advocacy organizations or member-based organizations. The former take on the task handing scenarios

that extend beyond the community. This could include either making alliances or negotiating with state or civil society on issues that concern the community. The latter are more nuanced in their focus and mainly work for social service delivery (Hsu, 2012). I will highlight both with one example each.

First is the case of Kashmiri Samiti Delhi. With its office in Amar Colony, the Samiti was established well before 1990. Like in all major cities of Allahabad, Lucknow, Agra that had some clustered Kashmiri Pandit population and a Kashmiri Bhavan built by members for cultural cohesion, Delhi Samiti too was more or less a dormant organization up until 1989-90, that saw a sizable influx of Pandit migrants into the city. Springing into action through relief and rehabilitation measures, the Bhawan initially provided accommodation to migrants who lived there, some even for years before the municipal corporation shifted them to government camps in the city (Duschinski, 2007). Post 1990, the Delhi Samiti has assumed a central role in migrant registration, migrant certificate issuance and relief distribution in coordination with the both the Delhi government and the Union Government that now recognizes it as the nodal organization for the migrant Kashmiris. The focus therefore, as the Samiti insists, is on the survival of the community in the city. The samitis now active in almost all major cities, have formed a migrant network that works for the application of affirmative policies like admission quotas in higher education institutions, directed towards the community.

The most celebrated service that has socially embedded this network is that of matrimony. Delhi Samiti runs the monthly magazine, Koshur Samachar that although was functional before the 1990 migration, has increased in popularity because of its matrimonial adds, a service much needed now in the previously endogamous caste community of Kashmiri Pandits. Most respondents of the study, those who wished to or had found an alliance within the community, claimed they depended on the magazine for their matchmaking. Given the dispersion of the community, the magazine acts as a connecting link between the members. Endogamous matrimonial alliances, though hard to find in the present scenario with the diversification of professional and lifestyle choices of the community youth, still remain a preferred way of maintaining the distinctiveness of the community.

Apart from the matrimonial column, respondents also used to depend on the obituary columns (less so now due to the internet) for news on demise of members they might be familiar with, but have lost contact with over the years. The magazine also runs opinion pieces by community members reflecting on concerns that face the community. The topic of such columns ranges from highlighting the victimhood of the community to remembrance of the olden days. The magazine therefore provides a space for expression and communication within the community but also influences the articulation of the community discourse, keeping members au fait with the devolvement in and around the community, particularly regarding the return policies, rehabilitation packages and such. The community organizations therefore are not just a blank space for articulating the community voices but also intern shape the community discourse. It also acts in negotiating capacity with the state in forwarding cases of improving relief measures and hastening the process of an acceptable and permanent return for the members of the community. The Samiti qualifies both as an advocacy body and a social service delivery organization. While its pre 1990 functions were limited in nature, with particular concerns of maintaining social and cultural peculiarities, post migration it has acquired greater advocacy functions wherein it now is not only a nodal body of negotiation but also coordinates efforts within a network of samitis throughout the country. It can arguably be seen as a representational body that codifies the Pandit identity in the present context and curates the popular stance of the community on issues of return and rehabilitation. After the 1990 migration, the scope of activity of the Samiti has significantly increased from a mere cultural agglomerate to a quasi-political, representational body.

A second body that focuses more on advocacy than social service is Roots in Kashmir (RIK). The initiative defines its objective as '*highlighting the victimhood of the community and seeking justice for the 1990's'.* Although a prominent one, unlike, the samiti(s), it is not involved in the present resettlement and relief distribution to the community members. Its focus rather is on the redressal of alleged grievances of the community. With the same purpose RIK filed a petition with the Supreme Court of India to

investigate "*the mass murder of the Kashmiri Pandits during 1989-90".* The plea was dismissed on account of grim possibilities of unveiling any substantial evidence in the case after almost 27 years (at the time of the judgement in 2017). The organization however continues with its goal of highlighting the community's concerns through active participation in sit-ins, protests, seminars and talks. As says an RIK member:

> "*Our work is to make noise, we disrupt things, take our voices wherever we can so that people don't forget what happened with us."*

Unlike the Samiti, whose focus (apart from negotiations with the state) is intracommunity service and policy delivery, RIK focuses on gaining support by popularizing the community discourse beyond the community. Many district-based or neighborhood groups (of previous residences in Kashmir) have also been formed by the members to maintain intimate ties with previous neighbors. Residents of Habba Kadal, for example, I found have a separate group. Such small-scale groups are used to socialize in familiar circles mostly on festive occasions. Apart from social exchange, a special focus is on language preservation initiatives especially to encourage younger generations pick up and retain fluency in their mother tongue. On Mahashivratri, during the field study in 2020, I got to attend a function organized jointly by community organizations at National Museum in Janpath, Delhi. The organizers lined up theatrical performances to showcase the heritage and culture of the community. Attendees were dressed in their traditional attires and a special literary competition in Kashmiri was also held for children. Beyond a congregational opportunity, the event was also used by the organizers to highlight through banners, the contribution of prominent community members towards the community. As the function was open to all, the moment was also used to highlight the victimhood of the community and the prolongation of the migration of the community for over thirty years (in 2020, at the time of field study). It was both an intimate affair used to consolidate a sense of community among the members of the community and familiarize younger generation with their traditions and equally an opportunity to publicize the community's discourse beyond its members.

The migrant organizations therefore are to be looked at as multidimensional in function and nature. They traverse the boundaries between their social and political nature often engaging in manufacturing the community discourse and building alliances for the survival and popularization of the same. This is apparent in Kashmiri Pandit organizations too. Although most claim to steer clear of any apparent political activity, they do provide the organizational resource for the political mobilization of the community members (Harris, 1994). Their activity is not immune to the outside influence. In the present context it is boosted by a growing influence of the Hindu Nationalist politics and supporting public opinion where the Kashmiri Pandit experience is widely acknowledged and also seen as an attack not just on the Pandit community but on Hindus as a whole. The Pandit experience thus has acquired the stance of a political rebuttal between opposing ideologies in the Indian political arena.

A case in point during the field survey was presented during the anti-CAA protests that were provoked a counter response or protest highlighting the victimization of the Pandit community. The supporters of the latter attacked the alleged silence of the masses on the Pandit issue. This also created 'camps' within the Pandit community between those who lent a voice to the anti-CAA protests and those who pitted their own victimization against the recognition anti-CAA protests received. It can be argued, that the community's victimhood, in the process of gaining popular attention and acknowledgement mostly through the involvement of community organizations, somewhat drifts away from the community. The community organizations here play a contradictory role of, on the one hand maintaining the cultural exclusivity of the community and on the other hand further political dilution of the community discourse to gain recognition. There do exist some specialized groups directed at education, though they cannot be counted as organizations exclusive to the community. One such case is the Vishwa Bharti Public School in Noida where a majority of the teaching staff and students are Kashmiri Pandits. While the school acts as a network to provide employment, it also gives the younger generation a platform to consolidate a cultural identity whilst providing education for better integrating

opportunities. In this sense the platform both enables integration and can be identified as forward looking as opposed to the general perception about the migrant organizations. It equally promotes community cohesion and cultural preservation.

The question that confronts us is it to what extent do these organizations hold popularity at the grassroots. The findings of the study reveal that in Delhi, more so in comparison to Jammu and Kashmir, the dependence on organizations is both necessary and irrelevant for respondents at the same time. The Delhi migrants find themselves in a busy urban setting where they seem better integrated. What comes with it, is also a life that need not necessarily be accommodative of the traditional value systems or cultural practices of the community. As highlighted in the account above, for many respondents it translated into cultural isolation. This is more of a common finding with the older generations of the community who in some capacity have a lived experience of how the same rituals were followed before migration. In contrast, most respondents in the younger generation have only been introduced to their culture in the post migration scenario.

Nonetheless, in a state of dispersion it is a plausibility that identity and cultural affiliation become a responsive phenomenon (Gans, 1994). Particularly in metropolitan multiculturalism, a secularizing tendency of the daily lives can lead to symbolic use of religion and culture that doesn't interfere with the daily lives of the community members but also maintains a sense of culture and community in some capacity (Gans, 1994). Here organizational gatherings play a huge role. For most festivals, community organizations hold celebratory gatherings to keep the community together. This also marks a sense of distinctiveness in the way the community celebrates its festivals. While the community might share the festival with other co-religionists, it insists on maintaining a difference in how it chooses to celebrate those festivals too.

However, with a busy life that focuses on earning a living, both the young and the middle-aged respondents, who despite some organizational help, have had to strive to start from scratch to resettle themselves in the city, maintain a distance from any exclusive membership or affiliation with

community organizations. For most respondents, the association with Delhi Samiti was limited to obtaining migrant certificates and exploring their matrimonial services. As far as active involvement is concerned, most respondents seem unsure of the facilitative capacity of these organizations in demanding and pressurizing the government for the return of the community. The migrant organizations in juggling the dual task of resettlement during migration and demanding the end of migration, foster a relationship of interdependence on the administration, as seen with the NDMC, the Union Government or political parties. However, as Hsu (2012) points out in his analysis of migrant organizations, this relationship in many cases slides into one of dependence wherein the organization adorns a non-provocative stance against the state to ensure their own survival as well. Therefore, while the organizations do bridge the gap of proximity between the homeland, the state and the migrant, it also feeds the irony of fragmentation where the increase in the number of the migrant organizations only ostracizes both the administration and the migrants from them, creating a crisis of credibility.

I found distancing from the need of political leadership is more common among Delhi based middle class migrants who have lost touch with the politics of the Valley and live busier and integrated lives as compared to Jammu where respondents are more in touch with the State's politics on a daily basis. Within Delhi too, third generation migrants who were either born or raised in the city don't express much concern about political leaderless-ness as a community and view leadership as an individual trait. As a young Delhi based migrant entrepreneur says: *'We have leaders but they are busy leading companies.'* The issue of leaderless-ness, stems not out of a scarcity but often a plethora of leaders, most of whom are seen as self-appointed and involved in factional rivalries and assembling petty benefits at the cost of pulling the community's discourse in different directions. I bring in a similar response from Jammu.

> "*We don't have a leader…. because we are all leaders. Farooq Abdullah (leader of Jammu and Kashmir National Conference) once himself said…. I (Farooq)want to negotiate (about*

return to Kashmir Valley) with Kashmiri Pandits but who to talk to… there is a leader in every street.", says a shopkeeper in Jagti Township, sarcastically.

The community elite provide some socio-cultural leadership but not many identify with them. This is not just due to varied experiences within the community but also comes from a sense of disappointment expressed by a majority of respondents in Delhi and Jammu (and Kashmir) on lack of any concrete development by the leadership in facilitating the community's return to the Valley.

Migration and Collective Memory

Collective memory conceptually can be understood as the aggregate of all knowledge or widely shared knowledge about and within a community (Assmann & Czaplicka,1995). The element of sharing also entails that it is collectively constructed and every social event that forms a part of the collective memory of a community might not necessarily be experienced by every member individually. Rather, experiences are communicated, passed on and solidified (Schuman & Scott, 1989 in Paez and Liu, 2010). However, it is a purposive activity that does not address mere curiosity by simple act of gathering knowledge to construct a repository of community's social experiences and history. Collective memory is used and propagated with the agenda of fostering identification (Assmann & Czaplicka,1995) which not only gives a sense of community and meaning to individual members of the community, but also helps form and maintain the community's image, a sense of historic continuity (Paul, 2007). It also sets behavioral boundaries by deciding on normative values that the respective members are expected to follow, preserve and if need be, revive (Assmann & Czaplicka, 1995).

Therefore, collective memory moves much beyond a mere descriptive reading of history to a resource of mobilization (Esman, 1994). It has particularly been studied in migration literature, as migrants in general are understood as uprooted ethnic groups that need to reconstruct their present lives and a sense of belonging on the basis of what they were in the past. There is

a simultaneous a desire to return to or at least preserve the same. While much of the organizational resource for the task comes in handy from the migrant organizations or pressure groups who take on the messy task of consolidating the scattered community under the umbrella of a shared past, the psychological resource (Harris, 1994) is often sought in religion and historic memory of community. Trauma in particular is exploited (Paul, 2007).

In the case of Kashmiri Pandits, the idea of religio-territorial distinction, the caste and territorial superiority of the Shivite rituals of the community and the stature of their rishis is used to anchor the religious aspect of their Identity. The 1990 migration, is believed by many Pandits to be the seventh (and eleventh according to some respondents) migration of the community. For them it marks their continued persecution and victimhood that informs the historic trauma and the subsequent collective memory of the community. As Esman (1994) recognizes, an ethnic group cannot be mobilized for collective action without provoking the underlying core of memory, experience or meaning. An expected and aimed for outcome is a sense of solidarity among the group members who historically share an experience and whose present circumstances collectively can be attributed to such experiences, at least to some degree. The process of mobilization may not be linear though. While it entails a process of socialization i.e. sharing or passing of experiences among the members of the community, it equally leaves room for manipulation of memory by those who hold the power to do so (Hirsch, 1995). The process of manufacturing collective memory of a community is contextualized in the intersectional socio-economic dynamics within and beyond the community.

Since collective memory is an amalgamation of all those shared experiences of the community, the individual member of the community must also be a contributor to it. While this cannot be disputed, the question remains if every individual has the same power to influence the collective memory. The concretion of collective memory (Assmann & Czaplicka, 1995) usually is a graded process that entails both the communicative (Halbwachs, 2020) aspect of it and the objectivized (Assmann & Czaplicka, 1995) part of it. The communicative memory as Halbwachs (2020) in his pioneering work on

collective memory explains is only a limited part of collective knowledge. It mainly covers the transmission of oral history from generation to the next over years. It therefore maintains a non-specialized nature with inconsistencies, duplicity and thematic instability (Halbwachs, 2020). Such communicative oral histories find expression in folklore popular within the community. They might over time gain uncritical acceptance and may assume the form of the subjective truths within the community's belief system. This tradition however has a life span that usually transpires for a century or three to four generations (Assmann & Czaplicka, 1995). Once past its span of iteration in daily lives of people, such beliefs might not find expression or relevance in the community's life.

This is where the objectivization of culture in the form of texts, scriptures or institutionalized practices expand the temporal horizon of memories. This influences the group consciousness of the community by way of formative and normative impulses (Assmann & Czaplicka, 1995) that are used both for the purposes of unity within the community and correspond to the questions of '*who we are'.* But can equally be used for maintaining specificity or separation from others to address the notion of *'what we are not'.* As such, through the process of concretion, the community's collective memories and with it the normative behavioral patterns they exhibit also become immortalized. It gives the culture and memory a mnemonic energy (Verovšek, 2016) that forms the basis of identification for its members, irrespective of the temporal limitations. Therefore, while individuals or individual family units contribute to the communicative memory, the elite have the opportunity to use the organizational resources at their disposal to institutionalize it so that a group can reproduce its identity time and again. Culture therefore, Assmann and Czaplicka (1995) argue has a structure of memory that gets stabilized over time.

I highlight two important aspects of this process of institutionalization. Firstly, memory construction is socially mediated. Which implies, what is to be retained and what is to be left out becomes imperative as it informs the identity construction of the masses and the generations to come. The memory of an individual is not untouched by the social. It is created, refined and

reproduced in relation to the group dynamics that go beyond an individual. It leaves room for social appropriation, criticism, and transformation of individual or communicative memories before they are all crystallized as the community's collective memory.

The second aspect is that of the illocutionary nature of collective memory (Verovšek, 2016). The purpose of collective memory is often some form of collective action or mobilization for a cause. The cause may be distant or urgent, passive or active. In any case, the process of evoking the collective memory of a community is to contemporize the past (Assmann & Czaplicka, 1995). As Halbwachs (2020) recognizes, politics of memory is as much about remembering as it is about forgetting. It is based on a rather selective process of cherry-picking events and attributions from the past that serve a relance in the present context. Constructed for the purpose of identification and mobilization, collective memory is used for a desired effect motivated by the contemporary conditions. Distinct memories can be brought back to life through politically motivated dialogue (Schwartz, 1996). A renewed interest in the past that addresses the present needs.

However, as pointed out in the last chapter highlighting the agentic nature of the migrant even in the condition of supposed precarity, migrants should not be understood as the passive recipients of collective memory that they cannot critically distance from or adhere to, if they see the association relevant to their subjective circumstances. Not all stories can be equally convincing and worth buying. In the particular case in point, one must recognize that most migrants live an atomized (community wise) life compared to their experiences before migration. So, it is understandably easy for people to disassociate with the community organizations. In particular for the upper middle class or corporate employees who envision their future in metropolitan cities or even abroad and for whom returning to the Valley might neither be a need nor a practical possibility or apparent desire. Their exclusive dependence on community organizations for the purpose of identification is considerably less. Even if most such respondents were aware of the existence of community organizations or their family elders were associated with the latter in some capacity, they themselves did not see the

organizations occupy any specific role in their lives. The influence of organizations on collective memory therefore has a generative dynamic (Verovšek, 2016). Further, many with the use of social media also bypass the dependence on such organizations in connecting to people or exploring their history on their own and find their respective ways of contributing to and gaining from the community discourse.

This brings us to the discursive nature of collective memory (Benhabib, 2002; Habermas, 1991). Collective memory is highly sensitive to elite influence especially due to lack of daily engagement and enthusiasm from community members in an urban setting. The task is often outsourced to their representatives, social or political. In this case most respondents even if they do associate with the cause of going back to their homeland, are too engrained in the struggles of earning and moving ahead in life. Most do not have the adequate information on the latest happenings, particularly the daily events that unfold in their homeland in general or the return policies that the government comes up with from time to time. In such a scenario, for those who consider going back but lack any direct link or source of information about the Valley, the dependence on organizations deepens. Even then, they cannot be qualified as mere consumers. Most respondents are critical of the 'dream of homecoming' and weigh it for themselves in terms of the practical changes such a shift would bring. The demand for return is mostly seen as a freedom of choice, on whether and how they would want to go back, if at all. As says a corporate executive in Gurugram:

> "*See for me, I have a job here. I left Kashmir when I was in school so I don't relate to it as such. All my life experiences are connected to Delhi, my college, my friends, my job and now my family. But yes, I feel we should be given a choice. Doesn't matter if I want to go back or not… maybe I can have a summer home in Kashmir and take my children on vacation."*

The collective memory is not an exclusive territory of the elite, as Habermas explains in his discursive model. While the center (which he

understands as state) yields much power to control the flow of information from the periphery, discourse construction is still an interaction between the center and the periphery, where both can bring about change. The center's power of 'will making' and that of the periphery which is about 'opinion making' both contribute to the discourse. Using this model for our present analysis, the study does recognize the power the migrant organizations hold in articulating the collective memory of the community. Especially in the absence of a unified civil society and territorial boundaries that could otherwise have been used for identity construction, they act as platforms of expression and dissemination of information. Most importantly they articulate their community's 'official stance' on return. This is apparent in the unified rejection of return packages that according to the organizations only partly address the community's victimhood. This influences the general perception among the Pandits who see return only as an en masse community exercise. Even respondents who did not see return as a feasible option for them personally mainly due to the settled nature of their lives in the city, saw security in the Valley as a concern for a hypothesized scenario of the community's return. However, there are many exceptions here. For individuals who have maintained some connecting link with their homeland, the dependence on organizations is not much. Therefore, for such cases the official stance of organizations regarding return is not the prime reference for decision making.

I present a case of a successful young, businessman from who runs his office in south Delhi. At the time of the interview, he had bought a joint property in the Valley for the purpose of his frequent visits. More than a chance to return to his homeland, he saw this move as a necessity for his children to experience the daily life in the Valley and not depend on social media, that he maintained did not portray a balanced reality like he had experienced. He credited his financial security in taking the plunge that many in his circles consider but are often discouraged to go through with. *"I know people won't oppose my decision because I have the capital to maintain the property. Even my relatives started talking… but I don't have to depend on them."*

Another contradictory opinion is expressed by those who do not

associate with the cause of going back at all. However, a total rejection remains a stance rarely expressed publicly. It does draw a faultline though between those who tend to side with a romanticized idea of homecoming contingent on absolute assurance of safety, as professed by many community organizations and those who disagree with such a vision. The second group apart from many youngsters for whom community association is not the only source of identity, also consist of some pre 1990 settlers. I highlight a case of a pre-1990 settler I interviewed in Azadpur Mandi in north Delhi. He works in a juice factory that has a branch in the Valley. Many of his post 1990 migrant colleagues, shifted base in 1990 due to migration but their jobs remained intact. While he identifies as a Kashmiri Pandit, he only counts his days in Kashmir as a part of his identity and asserts that going back might not be for *'people like him or his colleagues'.*

> *"For those who say they will leave everything and go back, I don't think they are saying the truth, their life is here, children are here.",* he adds.

Unlike Jammu (camp migrants), however, I did not come across cases of exclusive dependence on government assistance. Most respondents therefore associate with organizations either to maintain a sense of oneness in festival celebrations as observed in local associations or for obtaining migrant certificates from Kashmiri Samiti or for matrimonial services through Koshur Samachar. A smaller group of respondents reported any direct links with the organizations that they occasionally use for the purpose of mobilization, as and when the need arises.

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Chapter Six

Understanding the idea and process of Homecoming among returnee Kashmiri Migrants: Identity negotiations of those who have returned [11]

Introduction

Return migration (to a place of origin or former residence) remains a fairly under-researched phenomenon within migration literature (Arowolo, 2000). To some extent this may be attributed to problems of measurement (Dustmann & Weiss, 2007) in attaining consolidated figures of those who return at varied times, for varying durations, through different channels and for multiple purposes. The limited attention it garners, focuses on institutional policies of rehabilitation or the act of 'bringing people back' (Arowolo, 2000). While this might explain the initiation of the rehabilitation process, an important element of 're-integration' of the returnee into the society they come back to is inadequately addressed, making return mostly a shallow endeavor, susceptible to remigration. It is more pronounced in Internally Displaced Persons (IDP's) who often face prolonged periods of displacement, arguably due to hesitance of individual states in involving international agencies to protect their sovereignty (Shekhawat, 2012). Unlike refugees, there is a lack of an internationally recognized treaty that caters to IDP's. Much of the resettlement follows the non- binding United Nations Guidelines on Internal Displacement, 1998, that call for resettlement and integration of the displaced through sections concerning their protection during displacement (Article 18) and restitution of their property (Article 29). Even though I use the term 'migrants' to describe the displaced Kashmir Pandits, as it is the official nomenclature used by the Indian State for the community, there exist demands from within the community to be termed as IDP's (Nath, 2015) or even 'refugees in their own country' (Datta, 2017) as elaborated in previous chapters.

[11] The findings of the chapter have already been published by the author in a research article titled "Pilgrimization of the return and re-acculturation of the returnee: A study of homecoming among Kashmiri Pandits" in International Journal of Intercultural Relations. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijintrel.2024.102010

Evolution of the Academic Debate on Return Migration

The hitherto published literature understands return migration through a success/failure paradigm (Cassarino, 2004), wherein purpose of migration is linked to attainment of certain assets like wealth in a neoclassical understanding of economic migrants or security for refugees or conflict driven migrants. A failure to attain the same may be seen as a facilitator of return (Gashi & Adnett, 2015). In this case, return is an unwanted outcome of migration. Conversely, return is also possible on successful attainment of these goals. In which case, return is understood as the logical outcome aimed for from the conception of the migratory journey (Stark,1997, 2019). In both cases, the dichotomy of perceived fertility of the place of migration and the barren-ness of the home territory in terms of opportunities is maintained (henceforth in this chapter, 'place of migration', 'host society' or 'interim places of residence' will be used for Jammu and Delhi and 'home territory' or 'homeland' 'receiving society' 'territory of origin' will refer to Kashmir Valley).

Stepping further, the structural approach looks at the success/failure of return migration by juxtaposing the reality of home (experienced on return) with the returnee expectations (envisioned before return) (Cerase, 1974). In all the approaches, migration and return are based on an assumption of an implicit disconnect between the 'place of origin' and the 'place of migration'. This gap is bridged to a degree by the transnational approach (Ali & Koser, 2003) that looks at sustained social contact migrants maintain with the 'home' during migration. They might pick up 'skills' that can be put to use after return, giving the migrants a choice to dismantle the dichotomy (Teo, 2011). Social network theorists (Munshi, 2020) highlight the role pre-established familial, social, financial or religious networks play in harnessing these skills to fruition post return. Both rely on possibly continuing exchanges between the home and the migrant, dominating much of our present understanding of (return)migration in a globalized world. They present the returnees as less vulnerable and better equipped to negotiate their return (Cassarino, 2004). The decision to return then becomes a push/pull phenomenon (Alrababah, 2023; Kunuroglu et al., 2015; Zhao, 2002) where the migrants are engrossed

in dual calculations (Dustmann & Weiss, 2007), weighing the possible benefits of staying in migration versus returning home. It also possibly presents them with a choice to decide on whether, when and how they should go back, if at all.

Nonetheless, it may be premature to conclude that the individual returnee retains the privilege of choice. Especially in case of conflict generated migrants, the present condition of the host society is seen as a greater pull in facilitating or discouraging return (Alrababah et al., 2023). While individual agency and capability of the migrants do play a role, return is equally affected by the security migrants demand as a precondition of their return. However, beyond practical concerns of security, an emotional yearning of going back to the place of origin (Schramm, 2004) that is conceived of as a 'homeland' and (re)produced emphatically during migration to be the cultural and spiritual center, parallelly reaffirms return as a communal necessity (Brah, 1996).

Coping Strategies among Returnee Kashmiri Pandits

The chapter will primarily be based on the in-depth interactions collected through 30 interviews with returnee migrants in Kashmir Valley. Out of which 22 (individuals) were chosen from the Sheikhpura Migrant Colony in Budgam. In their case the return is voluntary but institutionally facilitated. The second group of respondents (8) were self-facilitated returnees with little to no help from the Government. All the individuals in the second case happen to be business owners. The discussion is also informed by reactions of the respondents from the receiving community in the Valley (mostly non-migrant Kashmiri Pandits) and that of the migrant Kashmiri Pandits (in Delhi and Jammu) who are yet to return or stated no plans to return. The chapter has two main aims. Firstly, to understand how the idea of return is conceived of by the members of the community. I use the idea of 'pilgrimization' here to bring forth the romanticization that tends to seep into the community discourse pertaining the nature of the homeland and subsequent return to it. Due to lack of physical proximity and daily connection with the former for most respondents of the study, the desire to return is driven by an emotional yearning rather than a practical assessment

of one's preparedness to accomplish the same. Secondly, I juxtapose the discursive construction of return with the lived experiences of those who have returned, to see if there is any congruence between the two. For the latter, I rely on the idea of re-acculturation (Doná & Berry, 1999; also see Kunuroglu et al., 2015) to make sense of the post return challenges returnees encounter in refamiliarizing themselves with their own culture and society.

To analyze the data collected, thematic analysis has been used to generate re-acculturation codes to makes sense of the post return experiences. This was done manually in three steps. I began with making a distinction between institutionalized (facilitated by the State) and individualized (self-facilitated) returns to elaborate on the varying patterns of integration based on migrant preparedness (Alrababah et al., 2023) and coping strategies (Talawanich et al., 2019). To understand migrant preparedness in making an informed decision to return and sustaining the return, I categorized data under codes of returnee motivation (in deciding to return or not), returnee expectation (of what return would look like), returnee contribution (to the home society after return) and returnee awareness (of the situation and possible changes to the home society) (Cassarino, 2004). These factors are heavily influenced by the socio- economic background of the returnee, presence of tangible connections like ancestral property in the Valley (Sarkaria, 2009), social contacts maintained and renewed with acquaintances through provisional returns, either for work or leisure during the course of the migration. Codes ascribed to the aforementioned categories were condensed into codes for preparedness that informed the analysis on how and on what basis migrants conceive the idea of return. They were also used further to generate re-acculturation codes. Post return coping strategies for re-acculturation adopted in the process of integration by the returnees were put under the family codes- proactive, resocialization (Adler,1981) compartmentalization (Saar, 2018), and avoidance (Ward and Kennedy, 2001). Returnees who display proactive coping strategy, encouraged by either by their individual preparedness or institutional support, which can both arguably diminish the need for interpersonal connections to motivate return, tend to maintain an active optimism while negotiating their re-

integration in the home society. This reflects in public promotion of their return, willful initiations to reconnect with (lost) friends and neighbors and may even in some cases, if the opportunity presents itself, be willing to talk about the uncomfortable past.

The second strategy of resocialization, follows a passive optimism. While like proactive strategy, here too the goal is to integrate, however it is mostly done passively so as to fit in. This may sometimes be done at the cost of avoiding controversial topics and confrontations. Preference is given to successful individual reintegration rather than extrapolating bigger social connotations of one's return on a community level. This might be displayed in discomfort in interacting with popular media or refraining from engaging in legal battles over property disputes. Such cases usually tend to maintain a low profile, trying to balance both old contacts (made during migration) and new contacts (cultivated after return). In avoidance strategy, respondents mostly see return in a limited sense. In this case, it can be as a source of employment. Therefore, the focus is mostly on survival or learning to live together (Talawanich, 2019), much less about integration in a heterogeneous society. A complementary strategy, i.e., compartmentalization creates a distinction between 'work' associated with the receiving society and 'leisure' associated with the interim place of migration. So, the idea of home in this case is one of flexibility and return is embedded in the ever-running migration cycle.

To avoid repetition while incorporating diverse views, I will not give surface details of all 30 respondents of the study. I will rather present in-depth cases of five individualized returnees, three institutionalized returnees, two non-migrants from the receiving community and five migrants or prospective returnees.

The Idea of Homecoming among Kashmiri Pandits

There remain contested ideas within the Kashmiri Pandit community, that are articulated mostly by organizations and have percolated into common vocabulary about what return means. In conceptualizing a return, migrants popularly float the idea of returning to their original houses, an idea

that has much emotional resonance among the respondents but is unachievable for many who either have sold off their property or have little information or association with their now dilapidated or encroached properties. For many, the houses are just not livable, even if intact, while for others, ancestral properties are disputed over by post- migration nuclear families. The other popular choice (followed in the Indian State's rehabilitation policies) is that of district- wise gated migrant colonies where returnees' security would be managed by the state. While this might pacify inhibitions regarding safety, there is some concern among the migrants about confinement that such gated settlements would bring. Migrants also point out that it would not be much different from the lives they presently live in migrant colonies in Jammu.

A third proposed return, is that of a separate homeland to be carved out for the community within the Valley. It was put forward by Panun Kashmir Movement (PKM), founded in Jammu in 1990 after migration, that adopted the 'Margdarshan' or 'Homeland resolution' in December the same year. As highlighted in the introductory chapter, among other demands, it sought resettlement to a 'homeland' to be established east and north of river Jhelum which would be governed in accordance with Indian federal laws. As says an elderly member, Prem Kishan of the Delhi based organization Kashmiri Samiti, when I asked him about the feasibility of a separate homeland in the midst of an already populated Srinagar city, "we don't know how they'll (refers to the Indian State) do it. We just know it is our land. We should be settled there with security." Beyond the 1990 migrants, the resolution also called for return of 'all seventy hundred thousand' Hindus (PKM, 2004) who they claim have ever migrated from their homeland. The popularly held claims of aboriginality of the Pandits and mythical origins of the sacred land of Kashmir (Puri, 1995; Rai, 2021) or Vitasta Valley[12] (quoted by Delhi based Roots in Kashmir) were stressed on. According to widely held beliefs popular within the community, the Pandits claim first right to the land of Kashmir as the aboriginals who resisted converting to other faiths after the advent of Islam in the region. This according to many

[12] Vitasta is the Sanskrit name for river Jhelum in Kashmir Valley. The stress here is returning to the 'original' name of the pre-Islamic period.

respondents was a testimony to their commitment in keeping their connection with the sacred land intact. Apart from the aboriginal Pandit population, the community also stresses on the claimed mythical origins of the Valley of Kashmir from underneath a lake called Satisar. The origin is credited to their saints or rishis solidifying the claims of first right and an intimate connection with the land (Rai, 2021). Return therefore is deemed important not just to reverse the mass migration but to address claimed threat of their 'extinction as a race' (PKM, 2004). While most respondents do partake in discussions on the kind of return they would prefer, fewer (especially in Delhi) see it translating into an actual return personally.

Return to Homeland: rhetoric and praxis

Let's now turn to the experiential accounts of those who have returned. First, I will detail five cases of self-facilitated return. The first respondent is a business magnate and philanthropist, octogenarian Mr. Bhat whose family currently runs multiple businesses and a popular educational institution established after returning to the Valley. Bhat comes from an affluent Kashmiri Pandit family involved in social work. Since much of the violence in the 1990's was targeted towards the elite within the Pandit community, Bhat, like many others, migrated to Delhi with his family, where he had an already established alternate residence the family would usually use during winters. After spending seven years in migration, Bhat decided to move back to the Valley despite unfavorable suggestions from the Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India, pertaining the security situation in the Valley which they cautioned him was not conducive for his return. Bhat returned to Kashmir, but was suggested by the Ministry to do so under an alias while keeping a low profile upon his return.

> *"That obviously could never work. After I returned…. people could see my house help going to the butcher shop every other day to buy meat… why would he buy that much meat if the owner wasn't home… we know how things are here... things seem exaggerated from afar….", he adds.*

Stated as one of his prime motives to return, Bhat has been a vociferous advocate of and a contributor to creating academic opportunities for young Kashmiris who mostly have to travel out of the Valley for higher education. Mr. Bhat presents a case of a well-prepared returnee who not only had a place to migrate to in the 1990's but during his migration maintained a residence in the Valley that was taken care of by his domestic staff. He had multiple sources of information at his disposal to keep track of the situation in the Valley. On his return too, he claims to have received amicable response from the neighbors and acquaintances. Most importantly, his return comes with social contribution to the education of youth in the Valley, which influences how his return might have been perceived and possibly better accepted by the receiving community. Additionally, compared to most, his migratory journey was concise so return seemed both sensible and possible for him. His re-acculturation into the society can arguably be seen as relatively uncomplicated. This also reflects in his coping strategy for better societal integration that is safe to be categorized as proactive.

The second case also seems to be that of a proactive, well-prepared returnee, Roshan Lal, a spice trader who returned to his home in Downtown, Srinagar, with the intention of permanently settling in the Valley in 2019. His return was extensively covered and appreciated in the local press. Roshan Lal had retained his house in Kashmir and therefore had a secure place of residence and a running business that had been active throughout his migration. This was also the reason for Roshan Lal's many provisional returns during the last 30 years and probably acted as a reliable source of information he could base his decision on. During his interaction with the press, he reasserts that his reason for returning is to be closer to his homeland and his people; a sentiment that resonates with the locals and draws on the common values of co- existence and traditional space-sharing in the Valley. In both the cases, respondents had maintained tangible links with the homeland in terms of retaining local friendships, residential property and functioning businesses that were locally based. The last factor however, is more prominent in Mr. Bhat's case. Both remain proactive in their

interaction with the media to highlight their return. Such cases often gain attention and are popularized by the local press as examples for inspiring others to return home. The only difference between the two is the length of their migration, however both visited the Valley frequently, making their migration circular (Dustmann & Weiss, 2007).

The third case highlights a much-layered decision-making process behind return. Rajesh, a garment shop owner in Srinagar returned home with his family in 2018 from Delhi. While Rajesh's family retained their house on the outskirts of Srinagar, his father's handicraft factory is now dysfunctional due their prolonged absence and the now advanced age of his father. The ancestral property jointly owned by the extended family, part of which was sold off during migration through brokers at times without visiting the Valley as claimed, is now a matter of dispute within the family. Rajesh, also points out to land grab and petty encroachments by neighbors into his property in his absence which as he states hasn't been pursued legally. The reason stated for the return was his father's insistence on wanting to spend the rest of his life 'at home' where he now has a kitchen garden that he tends to, in order to occupy himself. The compound also has an abandoned temple that the family has not yet made functional. Rajesh, steering clear of the disputed ancestral property and abandoned factory has dedicated his resources towards a fresh business. While he seems financially secure, he does express concern for his pre-teen son who has relocated to an environment different than the one he was born in. He is also mindful of his migrant friends' disapproval of his decision to return. As his wife, Meera puts it:

> *"We have to think about both (adjusting with locals in the Valley and maintaining relationships with the migrant friends and family) you see…it creates problems for us there (among migrants)……. it's very easy to figure out…. people come to know (insists on withholding crucial information like their name and property dealings or details of their return)."*

Rajesh and his family seem well prepared, but unlike the first two cases, they have had to restart or at least diverge to an extent from the way their family's life was before migration. The motivation for his return comes from his father's longing for a familiar home, but at the same time it remains ambiguous what the return would mean for his son's future. The duration and permanence of the return therefore remain a constant question for them. Consequently, his coping strategy can be classified as one of resocialization that is passive in nature and avoids delving into disputable areas both with respect to the exchanges with the locals his family now lives among and the migrant acquaintances, they have left behind but remain connected to.

I take a fourth case of individualized return from Srinagar, who like the three aforementioned cases is that of a business family. The respondent, Mr. Koul, the patriarch, has returned to Srinagar after being away for almost 20 years. He now lives in a freshly constructed house after losing his older one to turmoil. He also claims to have suffered other financial losses connected to his property in the Valley while in migration, that he prefers not to disclose. He deals in Kashmiri carpets, a trade that has kept him intimately connected to the Valley. During migration, he showcased Kashmiri carpets in exhibitions throughout India and relocated many times for his business while maintaining a base mostly in Delhi. He has also made frequent visits, mostly work related, to the Valley since his family's departure in 1990. This new house is a retirement home for him and his wife who have returned while their children still live outside.

> *"I always knew we would return…. he (Mr. Koul) has a soft corner for Kashmir... he can't live any other way……even in Delhi we would stand out in our society because of our ways… our looks….", says his wife, Namrata.*

Mr. Koul himself emphasizes that he wanted to shed the tag of a 'migrant' that has been ascribed to the community and come back to his roots. Admitting that things have changed in the Valley, he points out that Pandits are not the only community to have experienced this temporal dilution of culture, many of his Kashmiri Muslim friends' children too are

settled outside due to lack of opportunities back home, inflicting many cultural and communal changes that he attributes to time.

> He adds, *"In those days we had haya (communal consideration) ... when my (Kashmiri)Musalman (Muslim) friends would cook beef (considered sacred and therefore avoided in Hindu culture) ... they politely asked me not to come (to their house) ...and I understood... those things are gone now... it's all in the open... but it's happened everywhere... not just to us."*

Mr. Koul can be categorized as a well-prepared returnee with economic and social resources to make an informed decision about his return. Although he always wanted to return, he has chosen a time wherein his children are settled in their respective lives and he can direct his time and resources towards retirement. In that sense, his return is unincumbered. His coping strategy resonates with resocialization. He focuses on grabbing the opportunity to resettle in a familiar environment while simultaneously recognizing that he'll have to adopt to the changes it has gone through with time. Lesser attention seems to be given to larger meaning associated to the return in terms of reclaiming what was lost or securing a place for the future generations of the community or his family. All the above cases are affirmatively prepared returnees who maintain flexibility and choice in tailoring how and when they wanted to return and possibly remigrate or oscillate between the Kashmir and residences outside Kashmir for work, family or leisure. Similarly, many respondents (mostly based in Delhi) also express their desire to have 'summer homes' in the Valley.

A fifth case is presented by a businessman, Mr. Suresh, who has bought a part of a multistoried house in Srinagar just for vacation, to maintain a sense of return while he continues to live in Delhi. The remaining portion of the house has been bought and is currently inhabited by his non-migrant relative. This not only gives him safety in terms of the well-being of his property but he also gets to return to his roots without having to relocate or leave behind his

professional or family life in Delhi. His interaction with the locals is mainly limited to his vacations and business trips. This is also reflected in his cosmopolitan sense of identifying with different cultures. He adopted a proactive approach in talking rather candidly and confidently about his return. Although he mentions, not many relatives were thrilled with his decision, he nevertheless found the confidence to go ahead due to his financial independence and professional success. The coping strategies for the abovementioned cases differs with positionality, concerns for safety and social approval with respect to the host community and their migrant counterparts.

The second set of respondents have been chosen from Sheikhpura Migrant Colony, Budgam. The motive of return as most respondents of this category stated, is directed towards employment and may not entirely be congruent with those who claim to have returned for their roots. Beyond motives of the two groups, which can be disputed, I found certain distinctions in both the resources they return with and the subsequent process of reintegration they witness.

Migrant employees have been rehabilitated to special security zones or enclosed compounds of gated colonies with security checkpoints at the entrances. To gain access, one has to produce a proof of identity and state the reason for their visit, making casual visits to the colony cumbersome, if not difficult. Barring some heterogeneity due to the presence of thirty-one internally displaced non-migrant Pandit families, the Colony is predominantly inhabited by migrant employees. Neighborly ties within the Colony seem to be somewhat weak with an unspoken division between the migrants and the non-migrants. This is more pronounced among the non-migrants who stress their comparative embeddedness in the Kashmiri society they never migrated from, to mark a separation from the migrants seen as too dependent on the State and at times, partially favored in affirmative policies (for details see Johar, 2018). As says a non-migrant woman, Anjana, relocated to the colony by the Government of Jammu and Kashmir, after Sangrampura massacre of 1997 that resulted in the targeted killing of seven non-migrant Pandits: *"I go out (of the colony to local market) …. to buy milk early in the*

morning all alone…. you won't see any (migrant)Pandit woman do that here." The Colony has some grocery shops in its enclosure that suffice the daily requirements of the returnees but by no means are enough for extended needs. Most are run by non- migrants who oscillate between their native villages and the Colony, their present residence. Pointing to a group of middle-aged men, playing a game of cards in the forenoon, a non-migrant shopkeeper, Veerji, draws a comparison between his schedule and theirs.

> *"They have no work…. gambling in the morning…. not us(non-migrants) … you see I am at my job…they have all the free time "*

Most migrant returnees stated that they continue to go to Jammu for festival celebrations as heir migrant relatives still live outside, making the non-migrants, who complain of the deserted look the Colony adorns during festivals, question the authenticity, intentions and permanence of the return.

Beyond space sharing within the walled compounds of the Sheikhpura Colony, deeper fissures can be seen in the re-acculturation process with reference to the reception of the migrants by the locals. Interviews conducted with the non-migrant Pandits suggest a lack of enthusiasm among the former in associating with the returnees. A couple of factors influence this stance of apprehension. Firstly, return of those who had migrated in 1990's is seen as a discursive delegitimization of the specific contribution of those who assert to have stayed back willfully in challenging conditions. Secondly, non-migrants point to the state's (and also migrants') unrecognition of their contribution and suffering after having stayed back as an even smaller minority. This is most importantly reflected in the non-migrant criticism of being left out of employment policies like the PM Package. Locals also argue that the nature of the clerical jobs offered is not to the taste of the now urbanized migrant youth. The fact that it took almost a decade to fill the 6000 vacancies advertised under the PM Package is used to evidentially corroborate the stance especially of non- migrants who have long demanded being included in such policies. There is a significant outflow of non-migrant youth (and Kashmiri youth of other religious and ethnic backgrounds alike) from Kashmir due lack of employment in the

Valley. This parallels the efforts of rehabilitating migrant employees, creating an imbalance in the host community and drawing a possible fault line of resentment.

Apart from the conflict on resource sharing, there also exist often conflicting differences in the historical narratives about the happenings of 1990. This not only exists between migrants and non-migrants who accuse the former of exaggeration and factual misrepresentation especially regarding the figures of killings and migration in the 1990, but a more prominent divide in this regard exists between the migrant Pandits and Muslims of the Valley. While the former are seen as sympathizers of the Indian State, the latter are seen as biased towards self-determination.

I found a generational variation in the post return experiences among returnees. While the migrant employee from the state's perspective can be seen as the target returnee or the carrier of change, the older generation often get classified as the retirement returnees (Cassarino, 2004, p. 4) who accompany the employee in many cases as caretakers of their grandchildren while the young parents are at work.

> *"We have no life here, I'm just here for the kid (points to his grandchild in his lap). My daughter got employed (under the PM Package) … I have to look after him…we don't have anyone here (to share responsibility or socialize beyond the Colony as most relatives continue to live in Jammu) …how will we spend time…now I just take a walk in the park and some migrants come out for evening walls.",* says an elderly returnee, Brij Nath, as he sits aimlessly on a bright afternoon in the Colony compound.

While the younger generation has the opportunity to expand their social circle through colleagues at work, the older generation, many of whom have to reacquaint themselves to the place after a gap of more than thirty years, face challenges of boredom and isolation given the fairly

limited scope of social interaction with other communities in the Valley. This poses challenges for re-acculturation of the generation who has actually experienced a life in the Valley pre- migration.

A second group that displays particular challenges in re-acculturation is that of the employees. For most young returnee employees who are derivative return migrants (Arowolo, 2000), and were mostly born after migration, rehabilitation under the PM Package marks their first experience of living in the Valley as native residents. Most rely on mere ideas of what life was like for the community before migration. A major portion of this is based on vernacular experiences and oral accounts passed down through generations. In most cases, this has influenced their expectations as migrants before experiencing return for themselves. Born in relatively cosmopolitan towns with a comparatively diverse communal, regional and ethnic settings, colony life for many presents a challenge to cope up with. This is however less prominent in migrants with prior experience of living in Pandit migrant colonies in Jammu. Most respondents still report some challenging discrepancies between their expectations and the rather dragged-out experiences of return that are to be negotiated on a daily basis. In the aftermath of abrogation of Article 370 and the lockdown that followed in 2019, I found many employees had temporarily shifted back to Jammu. I present one such case of a young female employee, Sonal, I interviewed in Jagti township, Jammu.

> *"I had nothing to do there…. there's lockdown (in Kashmir) … no one goes to office... so I came home…. I come home on all extended holidays when I get a chance."*

It is interesting to note that the idea of home or origin territory remains a contested one for the younger generation and return brings along cursory moments of dislocation and resettlement for most respondents in that age group. Elaborating further on her experience of working with colleagues in Kashmir she says:

> *"Personally…. no one is bad to me…*

it's normal…but everyone knows what it is… so we manage… I don't talk about politics… and no one talks to me about it. everyone is just doing their own job."

In May, 2022 targeted killing of a Kashmiri Pandit employee sparked fresh demands by the returnee employees to be transferred en masse to Jammu citing their security. While the demand was rejected by the administration of Jammu and Kashmir, it sparked a 310-day protest by the employees, many of whom remained absent from their jobs for over two months amid salary suspension. The Indian State's idea of rehabilitation of the family unit though the course of employment of the youth seems to be falling short in retaining the employees or their families especially in times of crises. Rehabilitation in that sense can be and is often criticized by non-migrants and returnees and migrants as one of mere compensation while abandoning rehabilitation (Sarkaria, 2009).

What holds importance is not just the reaction of host society but also of the migrant section on the graded returns (as opposed to an en masse community-wide return). I found most cases of individual return were viewed with some suspicion within the migrant community. Reflecting on the return of Roshan Lal (the spice trader), a woman respondent, Sagarika, in Delhi opines, "*you never know with such cases…what connections he had…. how he managed to do it... must be one of those business…political... people."* Even for those employed under rehabilitative schemes, a sentiment of "betrayal to the cause" is expressed by many migrants who see returning for employment as preferring personal gains over community goal, defeating the "*purpose of the migration*" (interview with the author, September, 2019, Jammu).

For many respondents among the migrants, especially those who are yet to return but do express a desire to do so, the litmus test for whether the time and conditions are conducive for them to return, which they especially measure in terms of security, is based on their annual pilgrimage to shrines in the Valley. Even after migration, many migrants continue visiting the Valley for an annual religious pilgrimage to holy shrines, in

particular the Kheer Bhawani mela in Tulmula, Ganderbal district. Considered the seat of Goddess Bhawani, revered by the community, the pilgrimage sees a significant footfall amid tight security cover provided by the State. Community guest houses are made available to accommodate pilgrims from outside the Valley. The Jammu and Kashmir administration also arranges for commute of the migrants from Sheikhpura and other migrant colonies. As says a middle-aged female migrant respondent, Rajni: *"this time there was no place to set foot during darshan in Tulmula (Kheer Bhawani) ... it was like before… I think they (migrants)… are not scared now.*" Such returns have also been encouraging for some migrants in facilitating their return. Prem Nath, who works in a shrine in Mattan, Anantnag is one such returnee. He adds:

> *"I work here and live in the temple compound……anyway they need people for office work… my family is in Jammu though... my house is gone… its expensive to buy land here… we'll see what happens."*

Concerns of having to compromise on the kind of employment one might find and the lifestyle changes attached to the return, can also be seen in the accounts of some migrant youth who do contemplate going back to the Valley but have not yet done so. A Delhi based, Jammu born Pandit youth, Nikhil says that he would "*ideally want to go back*" but, is skeptical if he would get the same professional opportunities in the Valley. He elaborates:

> "*Now that I have a job and I am starting to settle down…. I do think of going back… you know... I have visited Kashmir… our culture is different…. that's what I was taught but I am not sure if my girlfriend would agree… both of us can't get jobs we desire there…. I mean most Kashmiri Muslims I met in college… they are outside too…."*

The uncertainty of not fitting in also creates an ambiguity beyond professional choices as I highlighted in the case of Priya, a forty-year-old, single, migrant female who lives in Jammu. She migrated as a young girl with her mother who passed away while they lived in a camp on the city peripherals. Now Priya lives alone but has some relatives in Jammu city. She has visited her village in Anantnag district once as she says, "*just to see where she comes from*". Though Priya claims she is not living an ideal life in Jammu, she does express discomfort in remigrating to a rural setting despite the emotional attachment. In her case she terms return 'futile' as she adds:

> *"Who do I return for. Who I knew... what I knew… is all gone… I lost my mother… I also lost the prime of my life…return will not bring it back….at least here I feel freer. I have friends. I can go out... I felt a little heavy when I visited my village… don't you think life is a bit restricted there?"*

As compared to the self-facilitated returns, the employee respondents seem less prepared and informed to sustain their return in the Valley. As detailed in the cases of the Sonal, Brij Nath and Prem Nath, most respondents of the institutionalized category have little to no residential property left in the Valley. Especially for the employees, their employment marks their first elaborate stay in the Valley. They are therefore dependent on the state or now established small migrant employee groups as their source of information about the Valley. Socially too, not many even in the older generations have retained their contacts or friendships (in comparison to the self- facilitated returnees). Beyond setbacks like employee strikes that saw return migration to Jammu, the isolated colonies too seem to curtain free exchange with the local communities. Office spaces which can provide alternate platforms are also maneuvered with caution. For most institutional respondents, re-acculturation is based on the coping strategies of avoidance and compartmentalization wherein a strict segregation of work and leisure or family time are maintained with Kashmir mostly seen as a place of

employment and Jammu as home that most respondents return to for festivals, holidays or even crises. Their strategies also tend to be much passive compared to proactive nature displayed among the individualized returnees. It was reflected in the discomfort most such respondents expressed with questions related to the turmoil of 1990. Majority preferred restricting the discussion to their employment experiences.

Pilgrimization of Return

The findings of the study suggest that the rhetoric and praxis of return in the Kashmiri Pandit community seem of follow divergent trajectories. It can be argued that many returnees fall casualty to the dilemma of balancing their moral commitment to homeland and their practical inability to do so (Christofi & Thompson, 2007; Schramm, 2004). The returnee expectations predominantly for those with limited connection to their home territory before return, are guided by the conception of an ideal home they wish to go back to. I argue that the idea of homecoming in that sense is constructed like a pilgrimage and the returnee like a pilgrim. The pilgrim returnee is constructed as an ageless, background-less personification looking for meaning outside of his present place of inhabitance. The meaning is attributed to a distant center (Cohen, 1979) or the original and the ultimate home, the existence of which is intertwined with that of the pilgrim's being (Cohen, 1979). Physical proximity to the center that is to be achieved with permanence is treated as imperative both for the pilgrim and the center. Retrospectively, life spent before this reunion is treated as exile. The pilgrimization of return presupposes a couple of assumptions.

Firstly, it implies that all migrants are and remain the same, unchanged by their experiences of migration which also extrapolates to their preparedness in terms of return, discrediting any variation influenced by the economic background they come from, tangible connections like property they retain in the host territory, sources of information they have about the daily happenings in the homeland and skills they have acquired during migration which can be used in resettlement. The preparedness for return is based solely on the manifestation of assumed emotional willingness to re-root oneself in the ancestral home. A second assumption, is that once a pilgrim

returnee reunites with his home, an instant connection or emotional attachment ought to be espoused with little regard to the possibility of a laborious and often isolating process of re-acculturation experienced by most respondents especially of the institutionalized category in this study. Thirdly, it also assumes an unchanged character of the home itself. The returnee pilgrim therefore works with the expectation of coming back to a home, exactly as they left it. While for those with prior experiences of living in the home territory before migrating, these expectations are based on lived experiences and as Arowolo (2000) terms it, on "assumed graveyard socio-economic stability of the home". For the younger generation such expectations are reproduced through community beliefs as many of them have never experienced 'home' on their own. The pilgrimization of the return, also misses the factoring in the chances of 'reacceptance' (Cassarino, 2004) of the returnee by the receiving host community.

In case of conflict driven migration, migrants have sparse choice in deciding the timing of their migration and the preferred destination of settlement. In the case of migrant Pandits too, most initial migration was concentrated to the nearest 'safer' city of Jammu and a bulk of the migration happened around 1989-1990 with many respondents claiming to have fled overnight without a plan in place. However, return migration still remains relatively an elective matter. Most migrants, unless they are totally dependent on the state (which can be the case of camp-based migrants in Jammu) for their sustenance, do exercise some choice in deciding the specifics of their possible return. Return therefore can be used by some as a redemption of choice by migrants who not only decide when they want to return but also employ non- compensatory decision making (Alrababah et al., 2023) in deciding whether the situation in the home territory is conducive enough for them to return. Security mostly takes precedence over other concerns. Most migrants do not evidently trade their security for any other benefits, especially economic, that are being offered for return to a home that they might deem unsafe for themselves in the present circumstances. The migrant choice is exercised around the politics of homecoming in deciding the threshold (Alrababah et al., 2023, p. 1110) that should be met

before a return can be thought of. Return migration to a conflicted territory therefore remains intrinsically connected to the security related reasons for departure in the first place (Arowolo, 2000). The politics of homecoming in deciding the threshold prerequisite for physical return is often woven to achieve not just the return of the migrants but taking an emotional and spiritual possession of the homeland (Schramm, 2004). Anything short of that is dismissed, as is the case with most rehabilitative employment packages seen as distractions or gimmicks (Duschinski, 2008) to cover up the Indian State's failure in creating an environment for the community to return (Nath, 2015). One also finds a similar outlook regarding monthly relief funds and resettlement of migrants from temporary to concrete camps like Jagti within Jammu. Paradoxically, every effort of institutionalized temporary resettlement outside the Valley, seems to make migration more permanent to the migrants (Nath, 2015; Shekhawat, 2012).

The migrant choice is also applied in determining the optimal length (King, 2015,) of migration after which the return is not only safe but beneficial as well. This is highly dependent on acquiring skills during the migratory stay which might not be that beneficial in competitive environment of the host territory but provide marginal utility (Dustmann & Weiss, 2007) on return. It is usually skills with super transferability (Dustmann & Weiss, 2007, p. 20) in terms of relevance from the host to home territory that play decisive roles in determining for whom return would make sense. As shown, for most corporate employees based in Delhi, retuning is not a feasible choice despite willingness in some cases because of lack of opportunities that correspond to their skills. On the other hand, reserved clerical jobs under the rehabilitation scheme resonate with many camp-based migrant youth in Jammu who struggle to find permanent jobs in the city otherwise.

From the perspective of the host community, especially in terms of resource sharing in a conflict zone, serious questions arise on the returnee's contribution to the society he wants to reintegrate into. This possibly influences the level of reacceptance one is accorded. Most cases of individualized return, in this study, involved in businesses bring in their own

livelihood and may generate some for others too. The institutionalized return of employees on the other hand, is often associated with resource seeking behavior (Cassarino, 2004) of the migrants that cuts into the share of the locals. Within the institutionalized returnees, a distinction is made between generations. Those who are part of the workforce manage to gain some legitimacy for their presence and so greater acceptance, but the generation of the retired parents are seen as returnee liability (Mreji & Barnard, 2021; Zhao, 2002) by the locals.

The question of liability plays both ways. Many returnee employees, enmeshed in the process of reintegrating into a society that is both different from the one many grew up in and less ideal than they had preconceived, associate liability with the host society that is seen as holding them back. Returnee employees engage in temporal comparisons (McGhee, 2012) vertically with not just their prospect achievements had they not returned but also horizontally with peers from the host societies they met during migration. Most respondents also report intra-subjective conflict (Saar, 2017) between aspects of their personas some of which are incompatible with the surrounding environment of the Valley. As seen in case of Nikhil, challenges of finding suitable job can be a deterrent for many to initiate return. Return is therefore also measured against professional success that might run contrary to emotional impulses. In Priya's case, the lack of familiarity or relocating to a rural setting from an urban one especially in the absence of any relatives in the Valley, made return futile.

For maintaining caste purity, the Pandit community has traditionally been and still would ideally prefer to be an endogamous one. As a major chunk of the community lives outside, the scope of finding matrimonial alliances within the migrant employees who have relocated to the Valley, is another concern for many respondents. Marriages between migrants and non-migrants were evidently not preferred too. Many respondents like Sonal with limited family presence in the Valley shuttle between family and work in Jammu and Kashmir respectively. Between the overarching discourse on the necessary and pilgrimized return and the experiential challenges of re-acculturation, the burden of the community's homecoming rests heavily on

the underprepared returnee employee.

The study suggests that the idea of return is to be engaged with beyond the act of physical return. For those who return, going back also entails facing the social cleavages in the host society that already existed when they left and might have widened or changed since their migration. The re-acculturation of the migrants back into the society is highly influenced by the social, cultural and economic absorptive capacity (see for example Arowolo, 2000) of the present society and the people one is returning to. This is even more prominent in a resource scares, conflict zone where communities with divergent socio-political interests co-exist. Any influx, especially one that causes further division of already limited resources, is likely to challenge that capacity. Once the proximal distance is mitigated through return, the cultural distance (Babiker et al., 1980; also see Ward et al., 2020) between those who left and those who stayed get accentuated during everyday interactions in close yet segregated quarters. While returnee employees associate close mindedness with the locals, be it the non-migrants for having chosen to not migrate evident in the lack of marriages between the two or the Kashmiri Muslims whose general sympathy with the self-determination is understood as development resistant behavior, the latter see migrant employees as opportunist freeloaders. The migrants also get criticized for the 'urban ways of life they bring with them' that are seen as dilution of culture by locals. Migration is often associated with 'change of values' (Martin, 1984; Sussman, 2000) without much realization among those who travel, often to resurface after their return to community settings (Martin, 1984; also see Kunuroglu et al., 2015). This may generate a tendency to consolidate ingroup solidarities promoting subtractive behavior (Sussman, 2000) among returnees who possibly become an outgroup within the larger home community (Sussman, 2000, p. 365), inhibiting re-acculturation by limiting scope of social mixing. To an extend this can be seen in Sheikhpura Migrant Colony where migrants and non- migrants co-exist with some division. The shy interactions leave space for mismatched expectations (Mreji & Barnard, 2021) both for the returnee and the non-migrant who both probably envisioned a return different and perhaps more

symbolic than what they are experiencing.

Since much of the return in the case of Kashmiri Pandits is institutionalized with relatively few provisional or individual returns, the post return reintegration also becomes straightjacketed. The aim stated by the Indian Government for rolling out the PM Package was not just rehabilitation but as stated, "*reintegration of the Kashmiri Pandit community with the land of their ancestors with dignity*." The subsequent policies, like providing commute to shines and facilitation of community festivals is focused on rekindling the supposedly broken bond between the Kashmiri Pandits and their homeland. This is prematurely equated with the reintegration of the community in the Kashmiri society, especially when most returnee respondents remain concentrated within migrant colonies and use avoidance and compartmentalization strategies to maintain surface relations with colleagues at work. The rehabilitation therefore may reinforce already growing segregation between the communities within the Valley (Evans, 2002). In case of breakdown of this carefully choregraphed co- existence, an example of which was witnessed in the 2022, limitations of rehabilitation without reintegration policy get exposed.

It must be noted that at the time of the study, returnee respondents had spent close to a decade in Kashmir. The lengthy process of re-acculturation, is bound to be time consuming and will likely follow phases of initial adjustment, adjustment crisis and second good adjustment, as Gullahorn and Gullahorn (1963) illustrate using the W curve for returnees who re-enter their own cultures after a break. The responses must be viewed contextually as behaviors that are susceptible to further change as time progresses. In this case however, as was witnessed in 2022, security situation experienced on a community level takes precedence over individual level of adjustment. One cannot be certain therefore if the Pandit return will follow a W curve. However, the abovementioned cases remain helpful to build an understanding of the pre-return preparedness and conceptualization on the post-return re-acculturation.

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Chapter Seven

Community Discourse, Fractured Subjectivities and the Politics of Deadlock

Introduction

The study traces the evolution of the discourse of the Kashmiri Pandits that envelopes seemingly contradicting positions of an original inhabitant of the Valley and a de-territorialized migrant. The first position rests on the innate religio-territorial connection that the community discursively constructs though an ideal presentation of mythological origins of the Valley of Kashmir and the claims of aboriginality. These do not just highlight the claim of first right the community maintains to their homeland but also has an othering effect that distinguishes their right and connection to the land from all others, including those who cohabitate the land with them and those who are geographical outsiders.

The second position rests on the irreparable breakage of the bond with the land, brought about by migration. This manifests in a sense of loss of identity in the community discourse that is supposed to be experienced by all members, uniformly. Migration is created as a community experience that has equal sentimental value for all. The discourse to commemorate the victimhood of the community, influences a homogenizing tendency that masks the rather layered experiences of migration, resettlement and return of the community members. The individual experience is often traded for a strong community discourse to gain visibility. A second aspect of this discourse is its disassociation with the pre migration society. The latter is constructed as an ideal, a blueprint for the future on which return is hinged. The discourse revolves around the idea of return to this ideal homeland devoid any cleavages, ignoring the process of negotiation in coexisting with the other community or communities who may have different political and social interests.

Construction and Power of the Community Discourse among Kashmiri Pandits

So far, we have engaged with the current debates, historic, political

and social developments that abound the Kashmiri Pandits, though the perspective of discourse. The term though widely used in and beyond anthropological studies, is loosely defined as 'everything we know'. This vague definition runs the risk of the concept losing its explanatory and analytical powers and usage. For the purpose of our discussion, I rely on Foucault's concept of discourse that defines it, although not conclusively, as representation. I use the term to define and present the system of thoughts, ideas and events around the Kashmiri Pandits in a coherent and contextualized manner. This approach takes cognizance of the present politics of the community and as laid out in the beginning, in one of the objectives of the study, connects it with the historically continuous or discontinuous but nonetheless contextually embedded power relations the community has been a part of. I engage with the discourse to understand three main processes. First is that of the identity construction in the Kashmiri Pandits in the post migration scenario. Second, is to deconstruct the prolonged migration as a process not just as an effect of 'lack of state action' but rather a layered process of dislocation, relocation, marginalization and socio-economic betterment, experienced in a differentiated manner by community members, although at the same time. The third motive is to understand the 'idea of return' that is weaved parallel to the process of migration, that can be argued, is still unfolding. The three processes are not temporally separated. While they might seem antithetical to each other by nature, they can occupy the same time frame.

Discourse can be a helpful analytical tool here. It is all encompassing, as the Foucauldian tradition sees it (Tripathy & Padmanabhan, 2014). Employing discourse allows me to take a dialectic approach that is different than a simpler historical reading of events. In comparison, discourse leaves and recognizes that scope of manipulation, power and change that connects historical events. Additionally, it also delves into the process of selection. Not all events garner the same attention, impact and space in historic accounts. This automatically sieves out less structured or supposedly 'background' events, power relations and processes that might have led to or affected a particular historic event. Discourse also offers benefit of both the macro and

the micro processes, it deals equally, and in a relational manner, with the dominance of the structure and the agentic power of the individual actor. Bringing us back to yet another objective of the study that aims to connect the community discourse and the grassroot experiences, not just a matter of curiosity to juxtaposition the two but to see how they potentially interact and influence each other in helping individuals construct their identity, deciding on whether to migrate or not, which city to settle in and whether or when to return to their homeland.

However, in using Foucault's understanding of discourse, I depart on several points, mainly to develop a balanced understanding that is not ideologically tilted towards the deterministic nature of discourse over an individual. To locate these dissenting arguments, it is useful to elaborate on some basic features of Foucauldian Discourse, i.e., knowledge and power. It warrants a clarification here that I don't not look at discourse as a unified, ontological entity, the focus is rather on the discursive construction of narratives and the multiplicity of discourses that exist, are challenged, strengthened and sustained by power relations (Wodak, et al., 1999). It is through discourse that ideologically motivated meanings are produced and legitimized by actors (van Dijek, 2001). This explains the interplay between discourse, power and knowledge.

For Foucault, knowledge is perspective(s) that is a reflection of the conditions it is produced it. It is an externally imposed or discovered phenomenon, not inherent to an individual. These perspectives and their relevance go beyond their objectivity. The purpose or the most important purpose of knowledge is not its truthfulness or falsehood in an objective sense but rather highlighting its subjectivity. Discourse is concerned with exploring meaning associated with any knowledge, but this meaning is subject dependent. It only holds meaning in relation to and for a particular subject who intern is embedded in the power dynamics of the social order. The unfolding of knowledge is therefore an act of either challenging or perpetuating power.

Power somewhat inseparably from discourse (as understood by Foucault) is the raison d' etre for discourse. While some interpretations due to

the central role of power in discourse, equate the two as one entity, power in any way forms the constitutive element of discourse (Miller, 1990). For Foucault, discourse may possess and also originate from power relations. It has an omnipresent, pervasive nature that acts with a domino effect. Those in position of power, immolate power, affecting the position (power structure) and possibly dictating the further propagation of power. So, power generates more power and also the powerful. However, as Miller (1990), points out this overapplication of the discourse is both an analytical and practical impediment. If everything is discourse then one cannot access it independently as there is nothing that lies outside it. In the same vein, not every relation can be a power relation. Some associations are made for identification. It is not to deny the possibility that they can develop into power relations but the intention of associations cannot be reduced solely to power. This in a way challenges the need to engage with the subject of power. If the discourse which revolves around power explains the motives and actions of the individual in a scope and reason, then it ironically confronts Foucault's idea of discourse itself.

This is where I depart from Foucault's overdependence on the centrality of power and the overplaying of discourse as the explanation of individual action. Using Miller's (1990), understanding of Foucauldian discourse, I explore the concept of discursive power not in deterministic sense but to elaborate on how socially embedded elements function in relation to one another in producing some sense of power for themselves. This deals with power in a diffused sense with neither the discourse, nor the individual as its exclusive custodian. Subject although gains positionality (in relation to power) from discourse, it is not however a mere effect of the discourse.

Negating this dependence as a reductionist sociology of culture (discourse), Benhabib (2002) conceptualizes, discourse as an interlocutor for identity construction. These interlocutors help navigate between multiple choices of association one finds him/her self in. However, she also makes references to the power of master narratives that even though present us with the opportunity to construct our realities (truths) for ourselves, do put limitation against those realities that can potentially threaten the master

narrative. So, even in identifying the power or agency of the individual, Benhabib also charts out the boundaries of the individual agency within which it acts and beyond which an individual interpellates oneself to the discourse (Tripathy & Padmanabhan, 2014). While my analysis also supports this position, I go a step further to dissociate it with disenfranchisement. The interaction of discourse and the individual, can be an unequal one, however, it is not always to the disadvantage of the individual. Agreeing with or going along with the discourse, even if it may not coincide with one's own realities can at time be a calculated decision that brings power to the individual. In that sense, individual can borrow the power of the discourse. This also circles back of Foucault's position which does not treat power, culture or any phenomenon as stagnant or concentrated.

In particular case of migration studies, and more nuanced for our discussion, Massey's analysis (1999) can be useful in locating the power of discourse over a migrant. He distinguishes between the forces that correspond to the initiation of the migration and those that perpetuate the same. While the former can be associated with occupational, economic or security reasons that can be immediate or apparent. The latter calls for us to look deeper into the socio-economic and political relations that can cause migration to prolong. For the same reason Massey shows interest in the structural makeup of the host and home country, the possible networks that have developed between them over time apart from the motivations that encourage decision making at an individual level. Although Massey's analysis is limited to the role of structure and networks in migration, it can be extrapolated to fit our discussion on discourse too. The latter can possess generative and causal powers (Massey et al., 1999) whereby they can prove overpowering to individual agent, causing them to migrate or prolong their migration, overpowering their will. The exchange however cannot be so linear. Massey finds answers in studying the conditions that make such discursive dominance possible. Here again the power is not treated simply as a property of the discourse but as a possible addition that can creep in, if the conditions i.e. the power relations are favorable.

In applying the concept of discourse to the case in point, I will

recognize the multiple discourses I encountered during the study. Although I do not use discourse analysis as my methodology in general for the thesis, I will in this section highlight use of phrases and metaphors used in the construction of these multiple discourses.

The Discourse of Religio-Territorial Association

The association with the homeland is expressed in terms of attachment that draws on the memories of the time spent in the Valley. For many Kashmir was where they had spent most of their lives, had gotten married, grown up with friends in local streets with at times harsh but familiar weather condition. However, there are generational variations of how or how much people associate with the homeland. For respondents mostly elderly who have a lived through their experiences in the Valley, the association is expressed in terms of unfamiliarity of the new surroundings and a recollection of the incidents that happened before their migration. Mention of neighborhoods, friendship beyond the Pandit community, commonly with Muslim neighbors is often brought up. For those of the next generation, who also share some experience of living in the Valley, although in their youth, mostly recall experiences of school friends, a relaxed pace of life, a favorable weather and the traditionally suited attire and food. For most such respondents, the early part of their adulthood, which is arguably where they made most acquaintances independent of family relations was after migration, so was their college or early job experiences to settle down outside the Valley. So, attachment is not expressed in terms of missing the olden days. Those of the younger generation mostly base homeland attachment on stories they have heard from family elders or have been able to access via the internet. The attachment is therefore expressed more in cultural terms and a desire to visit the place, not necessarily with the aim of returning permanently.

However, attachment only forms a part of the association. The discourse is also and in fact majorly constructed in terms of religious affiliation to the homeland. This, as explained in chapter one, is based on the claims of innate link with the land by virtue of being the original inhabitants (Rai, 2004). Building on the popular beliefs of aboriginality and mythical origin, the affiliation is considered as mutually dependent. It is not only the

attachment with the territory that is based in religion but also the religious nature of the land itself (by virtue of its birth) that make the connection unbreakable, according the discourse.

> [1] "*You (refers to Kashmiri Muslims) don't know anything of this place yet. Why else would you come to me… you know I can give you the information. If you read the Rajatarangini (a historical account of the history of the Kashmir and its rulers by Kalhana), you will be able to tell what lies inside this leaf (points to a plant nearby). The reality of this place, its soil, it's all connected to us.",* says a middle-aged male respondent in Srinagar.

As highlighted in the excerpt 1, the association with Kashmir is not just constructed as a homeland or a place of birth but also a holy land that not only gives the community its identity and essence but also distinguishes it from the others within the homeland and beyond. As highlighted in chapter four, this religio-territorial distinction conflated with caste identity is often used in marking a separation with the locals in Jammu that are seen as *crude*. In chapter five, responses from Delhi also show the religious distinction is maintained vis a vis the local Hindu population in the sobriety maintained in celebration of festivals as compared to other co-religionists who to the disapproval of respondents indulge in cracker bursting and dancing to loud music. The discourse therefore often features use of words like *asali Kaeshir* or original inhabitant, *shooch batta* or sober Pandit. Kashyapa rishi's name also featured heavily in the accounts of respondents. They also used metaphors like "*all (inhabitants of the Valley) were originally pandits*" to describe their territorial aboriginality. The discourse here is constructed to associate to the homeland not just as a matter of attachment but also to reinstate the religious and territorial distinction compared to the rest.

The Discourse of Dislocation and Victimhood

The second discourse that is popularly iterated is that of the loss of the

aforementioned innate bond and the victimhood it has produced for the community. The main source of this victimhood in most respondents' accounts is the mass migration of the community in 1990. It is constructed as an irony of not only the dislocation of a population but the original population from their home. This is also expressed in terms of a continuous sense of loss that no amount of resettlement can mend. It finds expression in the insistence on keeping victimhood central in the identity assertion by rejecting the nomenclature of 'migrants' as the government categorizes the community and instead self-identifying as '*refugees in their own land'*. As pointed out by Datta (2017) too, compared to 'migrants' which isn't an internationally recognised legal category, the term refugee seems to capture their claimed victimhood better. The 1990 migration even though treated as the biggest in the community's history is only treated as one of the seven (or eleven at times as quoted by respondents) migrations faced by the community. The discourse of victimhood therefore goes beyond migration to historic and perpetual persecution. Apart from associating victimhood to a particular event, it is also constructed in the daily changes, seen by many as degradation, in their daily lives. Be the shift from independent houses to flats, as elaborated in chapter five, or the rise of the exogamous marriages, these changes are associated with a compounding sense of victimhood.

There are also competing victimhood(s) between the (analytic) factions like migrants and non-migrants, urban and the rural migrant, to name a few. People who migrated from rural areas reiterate that they not only gave up their homes but also their agricultural land, their livestock, their way of being in the rural setting as opposed to urban migrants who they say were *better suited to lives in cities and therefore could resettle easily*. Many (mostly middle aged or elderly) see resettlement only in terms of returning to the Valley permanently, however they too find themselves caught in a transition between catering to their present homes, remembering the old ones and hoping for better future homes for their children. The resettlement therefore has produced many victimhood(s) within the migrants that not only feel alienated from their new surroundings but also relatively from each other within the community. Non-migrants, as detailed in chapter three also project

a separate and at times opposing discourse of being victims of the migrant neglect. The label 'non-migrant' is seen by those in Valley as dependence on migrants for recognition that belittles their territorial essence and contributions made over time.

The victimhood is not constructed just around dislocation but losing a position/stature in the native society. It is also expressed with an element of permanence.

> [2] "*We are one. I need you (Kashmiri Muslims) and you need me (Kashmiri Pandits). If there are no Kashmiri Muslims, who will do petty chores like bringing my ration, my morning bottle of milk for me? Where will I find a Pandit who does these jobs? If there are no Kashmiri Pandits, who will teach you? We function well when we are together, we are interdependent."*

In excerpt 2, a response of an elderly non-migrant male, in Srinagar, highlights the discourse of changed social relations that the community (some members) were familiar with. The slipping away of those familiar bonds or power relations is also seen as a sense of permanent change that creates alienation. What is stressed while remembering the way of life before migration is a sense of stable co-existence that is possibly difficult to achieve now. The discourse is manufactured around the idea of Kashmiriyat or a Kashmiri-ness.

The concept of Kashmiriyat is understood as a shared culture of tolerance or as religious and cultural syncretism. One important perspective offered by Punjabi (1995) talks of Kashmiriyat as a '*common culture'*. Punjabi says this in reference to the interaction in the daily lives of Kashmiri Pandits and Muslims. The common culture here is based on the common association and common cultural spaces shred by the two. The similarities in language, attire, food habits formed the basis of such shared space that fostered mutual sense of toleration and made cultural harmony an unspoken norm to be observed in the daily practices. Puri (1995) along the same lines

too explains the concept of Kashmiriyat as essentially based on the idea of distinctiveness. He stresses that Kashmiriyat is the most homogeneous part of the Kashmiri identity which has its roots in the distinctiveness compared to the sub-continent as perceived by the Kashmiris. The vitality of this distinct identity rests on geographic, historic and ethnic factors. Geographically, the externally isolated (at least historically) but internally well-connected Valley has a close-knit culture where a majority of the population speaks Kashmiri as their mother tongue. Kashmiri unlike most other languages of the region is not Indo Aryan but of Dardic origin. He calls Kashmir a unique civilizational experiment being the only region in India to have an uninterrupted series of written records of its history in Dardic script. Following the course of rise of Islam, he concedes that Kashmir is a '*melting pot of ideas'* and races. The stress in the Kashmiriyat discourse is on the ease of transition from Nagas to Buddhists and from Pre- Vedic to Vedic society where people of the former were admitted to the latter with their own distinct cultures intact, thereby symbolizing the accommodative nature of the religion as practiced in Jammu and Kashmir. The '*indigenous religions'* of Vedic thought and Buddhism were synthesized by Vasugupta and Abhinav Gupta into Kashmiri Shaivism. It affects the way the abovementioned religions are practiced in the state. The mass conversion of people in the Valley is attributed to Nund Rishi, the patron saint of Kashmir who himself claimed to the spiritual son of Lal Ded, the mystic Hindu poetess who represented the pre-Islamic culture of Kashmir.

There also exist contrary views critical of Kashmiriyat as a politically manufactured concept promoted by the National Conference to cover up social cleavages and gain prominence as a secular party. The term Kashmiriyat is of a recent coinage compared to its conceptual usage. The exact origins of the word are difficult to trace though. Madan (2010) in his account says that Kashmiriyat is an 'artificially produced' concept alien to the Kashmiri culture. The fact that the term itself is not Kashmiri also corroborates the same. Elsewhere he says that terms like '*humsaya*' or '*biradari* 'are better representative of the Kashmiri identity especially in defining the social exchange between the Hindus and the Muslims of the

Valley. Apart from the accounts of seminal ethnographic work like his, journalistic accounts also help trace the usage of the word in the discourse around the conflict in Kashmir in general. In his description of the growth 'mass culture' in the Kashmir Valley, Tak (2010) says that Kashmir, as elsewhere post the Second World War witnessed a surge in assertion of identity as the concept gained momentum. It was compounded with the use of media, mostly print journalism to assert the distinctiveness of particular cultures. In case of Kashmir, as he highlights, it was through the Valley based Urdu newspapers, that popularized the concept. Academicians especially reacting to the 1975 Indira- Abdullah Accord[13] too played major part in stressing the need to save the cultural identity of the 'nation'. It was seen as the only possible way left to save of what was left from the 'imperialistic' inclusions of the 'foreign state'.

However, neither the print media nor did the academic scholarship officially used the term. In fact, Sheikh Abdullah, though popularized the concept, never used the term officially. It was only in the 1983 election campaign that Farooq, Sheikh's son and the next Chief Minister used it in the campaign in fighting the Indian National Congress. Since then, the term has been used by various actors with diverse political understandings. JKLF[14] too employed the concept in stressing their leaning towards an all-inclusive 'independent Kashmir', however in 1980's the term was not a part of their narrative. Also, it was only after 1990 that the term was used outside Kashmir too by academicians to popularize it as 'sub culture' based on secularism-a common thread between India and Kashmir. Rai (2004) however argues that, "*Kashmiri regional identity (Kashmiriyat) was embraced through political and economic compromise between religiously defined communities*." However, in the present articulation of the mutual existence of the two communities, many respondents subscribe to an ideal conceptualization of

[13] Signed on 13th November, 1974 between Sheikh Abdullah and Indira Gandhi, the accord led the erstwhile Plebiscite Front led by Sheikh Abdullah formally enter into competitive politics and later assume the chair of the Chief Minister of the state of Jammu and Kashmir.

[14] Jammu Kashmir Liberation Front is a formerly armed, separatist organization founded by Amanatullah Khan in 1976.

Kashmiriyat.

The present discourse also encapsulates fears and insecurities of the future of what the migration and geographical distinction would bring for the community, especially with the growing inter-community marriages. An example can be seen in the following response of a Srinagar based non-migrant, middle aged male respondent.

> [3] "*All our children are marrying out of choice, it's not difficult to find matches (within the community) …it's only a matter of time. soon there will be no Kashmiri Pandit... we will be extinct."*

The discourse on victimization therefore often features works like, 'exodus', 'statelessness', 'easy targets', 'dispersed community', 'community extinction' and 'Kashmiriyat' when the respondents talk of their identity. Metaphors like, '*refugees in our own land*', *'reduced to relief seeking migrants' and "Kashmiri Pandit is a lost identity",* are stressed upon to articulate the compounding sense of loss of identity they face.

Discourse on Return to Homeland

Perhaps the most debated discourse that concerns the community, and is popularized beyond its boundaries, arguably for political milage too, is that of return of the Kashmiri Pandit community, to their homeland- Kashmir Valley. The responses to the question of return, are dealt with on two levels, individual return and community return. Most respondents hold some opinion on the community's return (as a whole), while the considerations on the former are based on individual circumstances. Community return is articulated as a right and the individual return is seen as a choice. The two do not necessarily coincide. Many who demand a community return do not see it as a practicality for themselves but also affirm the right to demand it for the community as a whole. The answers on willingness and feasibility of return vary with generation, the city of resettlement and level of social and economic integration.

I will analyze the narrative around community and individual returns

separately. Most respondents saw it morally necessary for the state to facilitate the return of the community to their homeland. This was in a way seen as the least sense of compensation the community could get for the victimhood it had endured. The discourse is created around the failure of the state in not doing enough to protect the community from successionist violence. Return therefore is seen as the sole responsibility of the state not just in terms of their physical relocation, but also in achieving as a precondition, a conducive security situation in the Valley. It is only after the demands are met to the satisfaction of the community, that a return is seen as a possibility.

On the other hand, return is also seen as destined and definite. The basis of this construction is the collective memory, folklore and predictions many respondents trace back, though ambiguously, to the scholars and saints of the community.

> [4] *"It (migration) has happened before too, but this is the biggest and the last time, this one will last thirty years…we have to return after that… it's written."*

> [5] *"Our land is incomplete without us... just like we are incomplete without it...we will reunite."*

The two abovementioned excerpts highlight the construction of the discourse around return that gains its power of surety from the community's indigenous knowledge and belief systems. It is also used by community members for making sense of migration as an adversity that many believe is written for them but also as something they will be able to endure based on their partly inherent (by virtue of caste) and partly acquired educational resources. The following excerpt is an example:

> [6] *"We fell from the sky …. on to the ground. Yet we have remade our life. No other community can do this. It's because we are inherently inclined to education… as Brahmins.*

We will survive wherever we go."

Return however is also alternatively constructed as insufficient and unattainable, although it a goal pursued vehemently at a discursive level. Constructed in an ideal sense, return is not connected to a piece of land but to the homeland that is to be restored to its (constructed) historical glory. The intimate bond between the community is to restored and revived. The Valley in its present form is not seen a one ideal enough to return to. As elaborated in chapter six, the pilgrimization of the return and the sanitization of the homeland, create a romanticized notion of what a return would entail. For most respondents, this romanticization also clouds any individual connection, provisional visits, self-facilitated returns as not an *actual return*. The latter is constructed as a community affair, viewing any interim returns as either motivated by greed or suspicion of political links.

The discourse therefore is constructed to stress the innate uniqueness of the Kashmiri Pandit identity, with the aim to maintain a sense of distinction with the rest. This gives discourse an essentializing power, wherein it can build on, reemphasize and then to an extent, dictate what/who an ideal Kashmiri Pandit is.

Kashmiri Pandit Identity: fractured subjectivities or multiple identities

To explore the possibly dictating nature of discourse further, I will analyze the concepts of essentialization and authenticity. Essence, is understood as an inherent quality that is attached to an individual's being and therefore has both descriptive value and normative power over an individual. It is tied to certain aspects like location, gender, race or ethnicity that are seen as the source of essence. Ascribing essence or essentialization of an identity (of a group) is tied to the question of power of qualification or disqualification of membership of that group. Essentialization of identity rests on certain aspects like immutability, distinctiveness and universality (Morton and Postmes, 2009) that cement identity in particular geography, biology or race. This supposedly grants the identity a validity that transcends any temporal change and marks a permanent separation from the other.

The debate of essentializing runs deep in the contestation between

humanist and anti-humanist approaches. For proponents of humanistic approach like liberalism, individual self is a given and so is any quality that is considered innate to it. They rest on the self-sufficient unity of a human self that is seen as universally equal. In some sense, it can be argued that such an approach is based on the universal suppression of differences (Bondi, 2004). The pre given essentialist identities are taken for granted. A second competing approach is offered by anti-humanistic approaches like Marxist theory, which sees the human self as one embedded in the power structure. The source of power is taken to be the dominant system. Although it is the consciousness and the political awakening of the self that is seen as a necessary requirement for the overhaul of the system, the source of this consciousness is also understood as the ultimate function of the excessively exploitative nature of the system.

These approaches present contradicting view of where power rests. For the humanists it is the individual and for the anti-humanists, it is outside the self, attached to the system. While poststructuralist thought offers some middle ground between the two by explaining the interaction of the system and the self, it sides too rigorously with the absolute fluidity and deconstruction of the concept of the self and its identity (Bondi, 2004). This implies that any attempt at essentializing or constructing identity of the self in a definite way is seen as restrictive. A special focus is given rather to experience, which can be the basis of identification. While subjective experience does help develop a differentiated and layered understanding of identity, experience for the postmodernist thought is stretched to the status of authenticity. This invariably circles back to a concept of identity that is woven around politics of authenticity and essentialization. A better approach therefore is to recognize the necessity of essentialization to maintain the fiction of identity (Bondi, 2004).

This takes the debate further from essentialization vs non-essentialization to focus on the discursive usage of essentialization. As is recognized by the social identity theory (Turner & Tajfel et al., 1979) which looks at 'identity management strategies' employed by groups, even those at the margins, based on perceived nature of interaction with the other and

opportunities that may be offered by the social structure. A group may choose to 'positively essentialize' certain facets of its identity to ascertain agency in securing entitativity (Morton and Postmes, 2009) and social significance or even a favorable change for itself. Although essentialism runs the opposite risk where in resistance to 'other', a group may end up 'negatively essentializing' its identity to construct an inward looking, assumingly homogeneous, victim identity. Here, a group may perpetually associate vulnerability with their *essence* while further capitalizing on it to create social and political capital (Sawhney, 2019). Strategic essentialism therefore can be a double-edged sword. Minority ingroup essentialism can get further complicated when coupled with the continuous formation of new subsets within a group each involved in essentializing their identity sometimes competitively to disprove each other's claimed 'authenticity'.

To understand politics of authenticity, we resume our discussion of Charles Taylor's identity construction (see Lyshaug, 2004), wherein he elaborates that the identity of an individual is dependents on the recognition or its absence from the other. While he acknowledges the influence of the environment in identity articulation of the self, he reserves the idea of authenticity within the self. However, the self is understood not in unitary terms but as the amalgamation of conflicting ideas that constitute the self. Authenticity of identity he maintains is in attending to these conflicting ideas and *'being true and committed to ones' (conflicted) self'.* However, Taylor also extends the concept of identity beyond an individual to the social. The Narrative identity that connects an individual to a collective, possibly a group is also a part of the authentic self. The assumption is a harmony between the inner self and the narrative. The ultimate goal is a 'meaningful life'. Lyshaug (2004), points out the Taylor underdresses the plausible conflict between the two. Politics of authenticity only enters the picture when an individual enters a power relation with the other. Authenticity can therefore be used as discursive tool to engage with the 'other'. Discourse and the individual are engaged in a dialectic.

The contemporary identity discourse in the community involves multiples factions competing for the status of the most ideal representation of

a Kashmiri Pandit. This competition assumes distinguishable, fixed and competing categories of 'self' and the 'other'. However, as we see in the above account, the self or previously assumed unified category of Kashmiri Pandits has undergone various fissions and new categories have evolved. The metamorphosed self is underacknowledged by these factions who see the now separate factions not as versions of the self but as the 'other'. The demarcation rests on notions of 'authenticity'. While 'other' is seen as an inauthentic deviant, one's self is equated as the 'true', 'original' or 'authentic self'. The engagement that follows between the two perceived groups follows a 'politics of authenticity'.

Authenticity here is related to keeping the 'essence' of an identity alive where the latter is seen as an innate characteristic of an identity tied to its being and used by the group to derive a meaning and purpose of its existence (Wagner, et.al, 2009). It is conceived of as a 'natural quality' of an atomized self, immune to any external influence. The subsequent line of thought assumes that self's essence should remain unaltered even if social or temporal context changes giving essence a universal standing. Two consequences follow. One, is that self must remain tied to its immutable essence to be authentic. Second, that essence has an inductive potency (Wagner, et.al, 2009) i.e., an ingroup, that shares this essence is assumed to be a homogeneous entity with predictable and expected behavior and distinct boundaries that separate it from the outgroup(s). Every individual in the ingroup is to identify and contribute similarly to identity building. Those who don't conform or are 'influenced by the outside' are deemed inauthentic. What this essentialist understanding does not take into account is, as in the presented case of Kashmiri Pandits, the inevitable division of subsets within the ingroup based on differing claims or experiences (Gergen, 1995). It also belittles the influence environment may have on the identity project of a group. Here it might be useful to explore the dialogic nature in which the self and its identity are created in the first place. As Locke understands, self cannot be autonomous of the social and is (re)produced through a constant engagement with the latter.

This understanding of self that is untied and capable of engaging in

interactive opportunities with varied social networks it finds itself in. Self uses its cultural identity (or perceived essence) as a tool kit (Anthias, 2018) to navigate the new territories creating 'new worlds of interaction' or 'new locals' wherever it goes (Hall, 2013). So, one's essence is not always used for boundary making processes or maintaining distinctiveness but to get acquainted to new settings. From a constructivist perspective, a constitutive self is gathered over time through interactions. Identity construction therefore is both a domain of agency (of self) and the power of a larger structure (Harris, et.al, 2013). Extrapolating this logic, the migrant communities like the Pandits who articulate their identity in relation to a home that is now physically distant, have to reconfigure their assertions so as to fit their new realities. As do the non-migrants to adjust to changing times in their original places. It can be misleading to think of cultural identity as something that can be uprooted and relocated as they are (Bramadat, 2015).

Chrales Tayor understands authenticity (of identity) as recognition of internal and external plurality of the self rather than focusing solely on the unitary self and its origins. He sees self as a multivocal being with different potential values. To be authentic entails for one to acknowledge the 'genuine dilemmas' one encounters while accommodating and choosing facets within one's self that might run contrary to each other (Lyshaug, 2004). So, every individual or faction in a group will have their own dilemmas to cater to, their own particular identities to assert. This intersectional understanding recognizes differential belonging that exists within members of a group and gives them the freedom to belong to different groups simultaneously without negating any one in particular (Anthias, 2018). This also highlights that one's social location and positionality along lines of socioeconomic strength and gender, so to say, within a group, also influence how or how much one identifies or feels belongingness to a group. Arguably, authenticity can be retained in many ways. Essentialism or going back to a claimed core of one's identity can be positively and differently used through the power of remembrance, history and folklore in connecting to one's identity (Lattas, 1993).

However, identity, as Taylor explains is mostly recognition dependent.

Further, authenticity and essentialism are mostly used in a comparative sense. A politics of authenticity based on competitive essentialism can be used to disregard the competing claims of other factions. In this case as the field interactions highlight, competing claims of authenticity exist broadly between the migrants and non-migrants but also within these perceived ingroups too based on positionality along economic lines, rural- urban divide, generational affiliations, pace and degree of resettlement, to name a few. For migrants the essence is religious and for the non-migrants its territorial. Each highlights their victimhood and sacrifices made in saving what they believe to be the essence of the Pandit identity. Each faction (re)defines the essentials of Pandit identity to further their claims of being more victimised, more vulnerable, more authentic than the other. The counter narratives of the other faction are often met with a condescending response of '*what have they seen or what have they lost'*.

The selective assertion also features in comparison to the Kashmiri Muslims (for non-migrants) and Indian Hindus (for migrants). I argue that the relationship of Kashmiri Pandits and with the other be it the Kashmiri Muslins or Indian Hindus, is not constructed directly here. It is mediated by the idea of 'former self' that is constructed as the authentic self. The present is seen as a vulnerable self not just in comparison to other communities but in comparison to the dominant position of the past that the Kashmiri Pandits claim to have held. Citing historical constructs like aboriginality and the myth of origin, the Pandit community maintains its belief of being a distinct/superior one. The original, ideal Kashmiri Pandit was (constructed as) a caste affluent, educationally forward individual with territorial and religious particularities. A distance is maintained with the present other(s) to preserve what is left of the authenticity of the original identity. The community is both the original authentic and superior identity of the past and vulnerable identity of the present. In this sense, the discourse of vulnerability offers a position that is both an imposed undesirable position of precarity and also a position of power of a community who may choose to be an exalted minority. At the same time, there is hyper awareness of 'becoming' powerless in the future. These insecurities increase with 'politics of accommodation'

(Wallace, 1986) where 'political anxiety' of former dominant castes can culminate into stronger identity assertions as the system no longer supports their former glory (Deshpande, 2014). While migration invokes a sense of loss of territoriality in dislocated communities, it is equally conceived as a feature of a historically advantaged group that is capable of navigating through calamities based on the social and cultural capital they have acquired historically.

From Politics of Survival to Politics of Deadlock

The initiation and perpetuation of migration in the case of Kashmiri Pandits needs to be separated, to avoid the exclusive reliance on the security perspective as the only explanatory frame of reference. Broadening our analytical horizon, allows us to situate migration as a socially embedded process that cannot be condensed to an incident. Even if it is discursively projected as one, one must look at the factors that constitute the projection. I fall back on the idea of 'politics of deadlock' to elaborate on the present nature of the political discourse, mainly around return within the Kashmiri Pandit community. I will trace the evolution of how the politics of convenience changes to politics of survival (Abélès & Kleinman, 2010), that gives way to the politics of deadlock.

As stated in chapter one, I base the idea on Burnard Crick's (1962) understanding of politics as the art of civilization. At the heart of the politics lies consensus building within a political society that is understood as a necessarily complex one. The complexity here emerges from the accepted existence of competing interests that exist within the society. The competing interests are a part of the fabric of the society and not impediments. What keeps the society 'going' is the yearning to survive which is understood in terms of a process rather than a position that can be achieved. Consensus building, in its process and not the result is therefore, politics.

Abélès and Kleinman (2010), take a similar understanding of this collective interest in survival the abounds a society as politics of convenience. The convenience is about 'harmonious living together'. The harmony here can be and he argues, is a constructed one. It should not be

confused with lack of conflict or coercion. In fact, the harmony depends on some sort of 'institutionalized' or 'routinized' violence as part of what keeps the harmonious society afloat. Harmony is equated with stability, which is the main goal for politics of convenience. The stability in his analysis, rests on the discursive construction of sovereignty entrusted in a nation state. What our discussion can borrow from his work, is the 'outsourcing' of politics to structures that are assumed as the source of power. While this understanding rests on locating power, Foucault talks of a diffused presence of power. The focus shifts from the source of power to the way it operates. What it does for the discourse of politics of convenience is to destabilize the notion of 'outsourcing' responsibility that in the former seen as exclusively managed by a stable structure like the nation state. Foucault explores this discursively created arrangement to explore the power relationships that condition the subjects within the stable system to project power onto a bigger structure.

While politics of convenience, short-lived in its very conception, explains the 'routine' functioning of the state, it fails to do so immediately when any disturbance occurs. Foucault would say that the disturbance is not foreign but rater embedded in the existing power relations. I build on his understanding to explain the change in the nature of politics when the discursively constructed institutions of stability, 'fail' to maintain harmony. What concerns politics in terms of its scope is redefined. If the 'guardian' of politics is assumed to have been weakened, it forces the individual right in the center stage. Now the individual is the one who engages in politics. This time, not for consensus or convenience but for his 'survival'. The nature of this politics of survival is centered around a withdrawal of the previously assumed assurance of stability. This phase is therefore defined by a syndrome of insecurity, heightened political awareness and a simultaneous lack of power (Abélès & Kleinman, 2010). The insecurity may arise from the permanent state of precarity of the individual, newly exposed to vagaries of politics without a stable state to protect him. It brings with itself an uncertain future that no one is in charge of. Simultaneously, the scope of what is political also expands. What might previously have been in the domain of the individuals' personal, not to be interfered with by the state (or politics), is now

open to and desperate for political action, because politics is everywhere. It no longer rests only with the state, the discursively constructed personification of stability. The insecurity is manifested in an urge to be hyperpolitical, to engage in a politics of survival. This version of politics, is marked by a desire to 'return to the ear of stability' and the 'equation of future with insecurity'. However, it does not deter one from or present the option of withdrawal from politics. Although there is a constant fear of the unknown future, there also exists a simultaneous hope. Abélès traces the cornerstone of this hope to scientific development. In our discussion, economic development can be a source of hope for the dislocated migrants.

An important element that we need to account for in our analysis at this point is that of potential mobilization. Given the loci of politics increase multifold, so does the power and scope of collective mobilization. Here anyone can and does mobilize the masses based on an idea of future stability that rests on the remembrance of a secure past. The politics of survival therefore can be used by leaders to mobilize masses by manufacturing fears. While there exists a deep-rooted cognizance among the masses that certain goals of stability that are desired in the context of an insecure present and an unpredictable and daunting future, going back to the past (to attain stability) might not be possible, it none the less is accompanied by indulging and mobilizing for the cause of desired stability, under the garb of politics of survival.

I build on this premise further to highlight that the politics of survival changes to politics of deadlock by virtue of this hyperactive political self that can easily be mobilized for political gains. Here I bring in the importance of discourse to highlight that in a position of constructed precarity, that in this case is attributed to a forced distance from the institutions of power or the weakening of the state, the individual self partly disassociates from the common goal of survival that was the basis of politics of convenience. It no longer sees the congruence of his personal betterment with that of the larger collective. However, it does not stop being part of the collective as an active political agent. The community discourse here is used, manipulated and engaged with in ideal terms since it does not affect the individual's personal

choices. The ideal that is projected as the ultimate goal of stability might not be a realizable target, causing inordinate delays in its achievement. The individual however associates with this idealization and the discourse feeds off of a deliberate delay, resulting in a perpetual deadlock.

In the case of a migrant community like Kashmiri Pandit, migration is often seen as the 'episode' that highlights the tarnishing of the state as the exclusive provider of safety. Even though as highlighted in our findings throughout the study, migration and the subsequent patterns of resettlement and desires to return of the community members was deeply influenced by their socio-economic position in the society. On a community level, the migration can be associated with the minority sentiment that had been mushrooming in the community much before the 1990 migration, given the political mobilization among the Kashmiri Muslims from the early 1930's. The episodic understanding of 1990 migration however is a discursive construct that foregrounds the dominant security perspective woven by the community organizations, arguably to consolidate the victimhood of the community. The discourse on return is also constructed in ideal term just to undo the episode of 1990. The pre 1990 conditions are manufactured as stable and devoid any social or political cleavages. As elaborated both in chapter two regarding the experiences of non-migrants and chapter six about the daily social negotiations of those who have returned, this stands far from the grassroot realities. However, the ideal discourse is still a powerful tool to associate with. In the (assumed) absence of the protection of the state, community members associate with and contribute to the ideal construction of a discourse, even if their own experience goes against it. The community is seen as the replacement of the state as the source of stability.

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Conclusion

The assumed homogenization of the Kashmiri Pandit community and its discourse, overwhelmingly dominates the hitherto published literature on the community. The present study problematizes this assumption to give way to the recognition not just of the existence of heterogeneous layers within the community, but also highlights the extent and the nature of their interactions with each other. It identifies factions like migrants, non- migrants, pre-1990 settlers and the returnees, broadly to counter shortsighted generalizations about the Pandits, who are clubbed as a migrant community without any critical engagement with what the labelling entails and who it may or may not apply to within the community. The study stresses that the community is indeed a heterogeneous one. This is reflected in the varied socio- economic backgrounds the respondents of the study belonged to, the subcaste categories within the community that they ascribe to and the way they engage in identity politics, often in opposition to other factions within the community. As noted throughout the dissertation, the interaction of the factions within the Pandit community is marked by simultaneous processes of unifying under a strong Pandit identity and competing against each other to establish their authentic character and relative victimhood.

The two broad themes of politics of deadlock and fractured identity shape the findings of the dissertation. The focus is on the dialectic between the discourse and its power to manipulate or influence the individual Kashmiri Pandit and the power of the latter to selectively associate and disassociate with, it in order to influence the power relations and manufacture a sense of stability even in a position of claimed precarity and dislocation. The sub themes of each chapter connect to these two themes. Each chapter is based on a section of the community that may vary from the others based on their current geographical location, proximity to the homeland and access to corridors of power. The purpose of the division is not to separate the groups as opposing factions, though they may at times engage in oppositional politics, but rather to highlight the multiplicity of

experiences that can exist within a community. In view of the objective of the study to deconstruct the assumed homogeneity around the community, identifying factions and differentiated experiences, helps us understand the nature of the Kashmiri Pandit identity and move beyond an episodic understanding of their migration.

The first faction that I have dealt with is that of non-migrants. I use the sub theme of resistance identity to highlight their subjective politics. Not only do they differ from the migrants in the fact that they did not migrate, they also engage in a politics of dissociating with the migrant victimhood. However, it does not mean that the two groups are not connected at all. I highlight cases of familial and organizational linkages between the two communities. The two are often part of the same family or social circle wherein bonds are maintained even after migration. A separation is manufactured at a discursive level, as a willful act or a strategic tool to separate the non-migrant victimhood from that of the migrants. It is done mainly to counter the assumed threat of being eclipsed by the dominant migrant discourse that often underrecognizes the non-migrant existence or contribution. The non-migrant discourse based on territoriality is woven to resist the migrant discourse that is seen as politically powerful, but culturally deviant. The discourse in rejecting the migrant position, essentializes the Kashmiri Pandit identity around territory.

The second faction studied is that of the Jammu based migrants under the sub- theme of non-binary differentiated agency. Here I try to deconstruct the discursive assumption that associates migrants with complete lack of agency. Migration is equated with tarnishing of agency of any kind. The findings of the study however reveal, that even in positions of precarity, an actor, in this case a migrant, retains some form or degree of agency in dealing with dislocation. But agency cannot be homogenized for all migrants. I draw a distinction between camp based and non-camp migrants and argue that even though both possess and exercise agency, their respective agencies differ from each other. While the non-camp migrant might have exhibited agency in integrating better in the host city, the camp migrant who is seen as a community peripheral, also uses his position and at times dependence on the government as an agentic stance. The dependence on the state is used to

forward an argument for the need to return that dominates the community discourse. The camp migrant retains his agency in being projected as the ideal migrant and a potential and preferred returnee. So, the discourse can be manipulated or influenced even from the periphery.

The third category is that of the Delhi based migrants. I use the sub theme of collective memory to highlight the role community organizations play in consolidating a sense of identity in a migrant population that lives a busy and much more integrated life in their host city, compared to the migrants in Jammu or non-migrants in Kashmir. The community organizations at time become the mouthpieces of the community that now associates with its cultural identity only symbolically. Again, I do not homogenize this for the entire migrant population based in Delhi. Cases of generational difference in experiences are highlighted to give a layered account of resettlement. However, collective memory plays a central role in informing the identity construction, especially of those with limited connection and experience of living in the homeland. In common finding with many studies on diasporic and migrant communities, the identity of the Kashmiri Pandit is woven around the homeland. In fact, given the assumptions of loss of identity and the fears of cultural extinction in the future, reliance on collective memory becomes even stronger and so does the power of the elite or community organizations in influencing the collective identity of the group.

The last sub category is that of a relatively small group of returnees. I use the sub-theme of pilgrimization of return to highlight the incongruence of the constructed idea of return and the actual experiences of those who have returned. Categorizing them into two sets of self-facilitated and government-assisted returnees, I highlight the use of coping strategies employed by the two groups in the process of reacculturation or re- familiarizing themselves with the culture they either already knew or had an idea of. The process of return migration has been one of adjustment for most. The idea of return on the one hand I argue, is based on the pilgrimization of the return to a homeland constructed in ideal terms. The actual act of returning and the process of resettlement on the other hand, are often very far from this discursively constructed ideal.

Going back to the stated objectives of the study, a gap that the findings of the study try to address is the disconnect between the pre- and post-1990 discourses. Taking a rather ahistoric viewpoint, the two are seen as separate. However, the study reveals that the present disposition of the individual members of the community and that of the community as a whole are fairly influenced by their historic placement in the social fabric both within and outside the Kashmir Valley. I identify and differentiate two factors about the 1990 migration. Some can be called immediate factors that led to people either choosing to migrate or staying and the other factors concern the prolonged social and economic processes that could have played a part as well. To begin with, the findings of the study suggest that the decision to migrate or not was highly influenced by immediate factors, mainly the security threat either perceived or experienced, adding to the 'atmosphere of fear' that resulted in the mass migration of the community. However here too, not everyone was equally or similarly affected by such factors. Apart from the fear that most Pandits claim to have experienced in varying degrees, the socio-economic background of each family, their contacts and pre-established ties or networks outside the Valley, availability of places to relocate to either temporarily or permanently, knowledge or exposure of what life would be like outside the Valley, etc., were equally important for individual decision making.

These observations further bring forth two important findings. Firstly, the pre- migration circumstances of individual households dictated their decision making during the 1990 migration apart from a general environment of fear. Secondly, migration was not an isolated episode but a graded process. As opposed to the general perception prevalent in the media, migration was a long-drawn-out process. For some, the relocation was undertaken as a temporary measure to escape the tension in the Valley. This is reflected in the fact that many families first sent their daughters outside the Valley as a temporary measure. The timeline reflected in the accounts collected during the study also reveal that migration was spread out, with a bulk of it concentrated from late 1989 to the summer of 1990. Migration was also circular for many who migrated for a few months but returned, dissatisfied with the living conditions in Jammu camps. Apart from the immediate factors,

a prolonged sense of being a minority had crept into the community well before 1990, starting with the political mobilization of Kashmiri Muslims in 1930.This also played a role in influencing migration. It can be argued that it was the changing nature of the societal relations within the Valley that compounded a growing sense of insecurity among the members of the Pandit community.

Migration is also not limited to the early displacement of the Pandit community from the Valley. As the narratives collected from respondents in Delhi and Jammu reflect, it is a multilayered process that is still unfolding for many. Most importantly, I noticed that there is a generational aspect to it. For the elder generation, migration mainly refers to the feeling of being dislocated from a home they had spent most of their lives in. This uprooting, by the older respondents was equated with 'loss of everything familiar', be it food, language, topography, daily activities to spend time, the pattern of houses they lived in, the temperatures they were used to and the kinship ties they had earned in their lifetime. For the middle-aged respondents, migration was mostly about the struggles of settling down afresh in an unfamiliar and challenging environment. The younger generation sees migration mostly as cultural dilution. For many, the only source of information about the cultural knowhows of the community are the older generations who pass down oral accounts of how life was before migration. Apart from generational difference, people who faced multiple displacements, first to Jammu and then to bigger cities like Delhi, migration has been a continuous reality. Apart from helping us move beyond an episodic understanding of the Pandit migration, it also highlights the role of positional inequalities, socioeconomic or generational within the Pandit community, which deconstruct the assumed homogeneity further.

A similar trend is also noticed in processes of resettlement and return which are simultaneous processes that run parallel to migration. Socio-economic and generational factors have largely dictated which city an individual migrant has settled in, for how long and in what circumstances. It is evident in the analytical distinction I draw between the camp and the non-camp migrants. Further, I try to contextualize the 'process of return' by delinking it from the 'idea of return'. While the former is based on the process of re-acculturation that

is a practical journey returnees have to undertake upon returning to the Valley, the idea of return is often based on a rhetorical idealization done mostly from afar. The study also distinguishes between individual return and community return. Though often muddled together and used interchangeably, the study highlights that community return is mostly treated as a moral necessity by most respondents, but it does not automatically translate into individual return. Most respondents evaluate the practical sense returning to the Valley would make for them. It is therefore a choice that they demand. Another significant finding that I would like to highlight is that return, as opposed to its idealistic construction, is not a phenomenon in the offing. It is a reality of the present. To an extent, it has already begun to unfold. The returnees who have been resettled by the government or those who have returned on their own are testimonies that 'return' is in operation. However, a large section of the community disregards such returns. They are compared with the idea of a return that is constructed rhetorically. The practical and graded return of some does not satisfy the inflated conceptualization and the optics of an ideal return.

The patterns of incongruence between the rhetoric and praxis in the Kashmiri Pandit discourse, especially when it comes to the idea of return to the homeland has been engaged with through the concept of 'politics of deadlock'. In simple terms, through the idea of deadlock, I want to understand the nature of delay in the homecoming of Kashmir Pandits and the simultaneous factors that encourage their prolonged stay outside. While I detail that there are individual considerations like feasibility to relocate for every respondent, there is also a discursive dimension to it. This demands a critical look at the nature of interaction and involvement the Pandit community exhibits with its homeland. I stress on the limited contact with the motherland that most respondents reported during the study and the simulations dependence of such people on the community organizations and political ideologies beyond the community to reestablish or maintain any link to with Kashmir. Theoretically, I build on Abélès and Kleinman's (2010) idea of politics as a consensus building activity that aims at mutual existence of competing interests and the survival of the society at large. An assumption here is that members of the society have some benefit in mutual co-existence.

Arguably, migration has altered this shared interest most respondents from the Pandit community have with those who continue to live in the Valley. Compounded with the lack of direct contact on a daily basis, it fuels a tendency of symbolic posturing. In case of return it is articulated in the form of demands of a grand return that has a symbolic resonance rather than practical viability. The simultaneous pursuance of both, I argue has been a significant contributor to the current state of deadlock. It is interesting that the deadlock is pursued at a discursive level and may continue even after the practical return of the community members, in whatever form as seen in the case of returnee employees.

A parallel theme central to the present study is that of fractured identity. As highlighted throughout the thesis, in contrast to the widely popularized belief, Kashmiri Pandits, like any other community, are a heterogeneous one. The fact that they are spread throughout the country (not just from the perspective of their current migration, but historically too) calls for a deeper scholarly scrutiny of the assumptions of homogeneity. By identifying different factions, the study highlights that such groups have varied and often competing interests, political dispositions and demands, as is evident in the case of migrants and non-migrants. Each group within the community employs tools like essentialization and politics of authenticity to establish their claims of being more 'original' than the rest. This process is marked by ingroup homogenization and outgroup distancing that are mostly created artificially as identity management strategies by each group. While I capture the cleavages within the Pandit community to challenge assumptions of homogeneity, I also highlight cases of daily exchanges between these groups to stress that they are not entirely separate categories. In fact, they are often linked to each other through familial ties. The factions therefore are not competing identities as they are often presented but can be better understood as fractured subjectivities within the Kashmiri Pandit identity. Apart from highlighting multiplicity of experiences within the Pandit community, this also contributes to larger debates on a fluid understanding of identity politics by stressing that there exist multiple ways to retain authenticity of one's identity.

I explore the abovementioned themes further through the prism of

discourse. Building on Foucault's work, I see discourse as a dialectic exchange between the larger system or a phenomenon and the individual actor. The findings suggest that both retain power to influence each other. While the discourse may seek to over-ride individual autonomy of deciding on issues of migration, degree of resettlement and choice of return among the migrants; I argue that the individual actor in his interaction with the discourse is not a passive recipient. The relationship, though of unequal interdependence, can be manipulated to the benefit of the individual. Discourse in that sense is not as an overarching alien force untouched and beyond the influence of an individual, rather the two are reproduced in a relational power dynamic. Discourse can be manipulated to produce and maintain precarity and victimhood which can act as mobilizing forces for political incentives. It is also important to highlight that there exist multiple discourses. Every faction of the Pandit community engages in creating its own discourse, at time to disregard that of the other. In this case, dispersed community with factions that engage in competitive victimization, problematize precarity to manufacture agency in varying degrees and forms. While they might not always be in a position to display active decision making, they often borrow power from and appropriate the dominant discourse to claim benefits. The dominance of the discourse therefore should not be equated with absolute or assumed loss of agency of the dispersed agent.

Recommendations for Further Research

Based on the ethnographic engagement with the community members and a survey of the literature published on the community, the study offers a few suggestions for further research in fields like migrant and diaspora studies, minority identity politics, caste politics and conflict studies.

a) Migration, especially one influenced or caused by conflict should be engaged with beyond immediate factors that seem to cause it.

b) The study identifies a need to further highlight individual accounts of migration and resettlement among the Kashmiri Pandits. A detailed ethnographic study is suitable to step away from a security dominant approach that has proved to give a reductionist understanding of the Kashmiri

Pandit discourse.

c) Agency must not be delinked from migrant communities. A layered understanding of agency can help locate subtle and unconventional forms of agency displayed by migrants in negotiating precarity on a daily basis.

d) While migrant agency cannot be denied, it should also not be assumed or romanticized as docile endurance of marginalization by the migrants. This calls for a differentiated understanding of agency.

e) Positionality must be explored as a concept when dealing with migrant agency and capacity of decision making on returning to homeland. Subsequently, the demands that emanate from differently positioned sections must be differentiated to accorded a need-based approach in addressing those demands.

f) A nuanced understanding of the effects of migration or relocation must be analyzed along lines of gender, especially in conflict induced migrations.

g) Return migration as a phenomenon remains understudied and must be explored further. Apart from the discursive bias towards a 'final return' that is seen in migrant populations, there also exists a bias within the academic scholarship regarding what counts as an 'actual return'. It is evident in the lack of sufficient studies and figures maintained of provisional returns of community members who return in smaller numbers over a distributed period of time.

h) A mere act of relocating a migrant population to their homeland seems to be inadequate in helping return take roots until intercommunity relations are smoothened and encouraged. The idea of return therefore needs to move beyond resettling the displaced people in their place of origin, to resettling into their society.

i) Lastly, the role of discourse as a tool that can influence decision making among migrant or dispersed communities, needs to engaged with further. The articulation and source of the discourse can be explored as sites of further research. However, as this study too shows, the influence of

discourse should not be seen as all- encompassing or one sided. Rather, it should be explored as an interaction between the actor (migrant) and the larger structures or phenomena.

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