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DISPLACEMENT AND CULTURAL CHANGE: THE CASE OF KASHMIRI HINDUS

Introduction

Like the Nehrus and Saprus of old, today's Pandit refugees will enter into their own double edged bargains with the languages and lifestyles of the areas in which they settle down. The tunes of Kashmiriyat for all their melody and nostalgia, will begin to sound mute to them (Madan 2008: 31).

The displacement of Kashmiri Hindus and their prolonged living in the new locations resulted in cultural changes and corresponding response strategies were employed in accordance with their social, economic and cultural capital available to them. Individuals belonging to the minority community (primarily Kashmiri Hindus) were displaced from the Kashmir valley 1989–90 onwards. Maladministration and weak democracy in the state, rigging in elections and eventual rise in the sentiment of *azadi* in Kashmir to which the minority community was 'seen' as opposed culminated in the exodus of Kashmiri Hindus. Frustrated with the political turmoil and the negligence of the government, secessionist organisations called for a boycott of those opposing the sentiment of *azadi* (independence) in the state in 1989. Fear was instilled among the members of the minority community. The Kashmiri Hindus received notices through varying media as newspapers and loudspeakers in mosques to leave Kashmir (Verma 1994). Threatened in such an atmosphere the KPs were forced to migrate from Kashmir and resettle as Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) outside their homeland.

The KPs are labelled as 'migrants' by the Government of India although they are Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) and not voluntary economic migrants. IDPs are persons "who have been forced or obliged to flee or to leave their homes or places of habitual residence in particular as a result of, or in order to avoid the effects of, armed conflict, situations of generalized violence, violations of human rights or natural or human made disasters, and who have not crossed an internationally recognized state border" (Hampton 1998: 5). This definition does not encompass those who migrate because of economic causes.

Alexander Evans (2002) holds that the Kashmiri 'migrant' figure is around 160,000 as he extrapolates from the data available on the average decennial growth in the state from 1941 to 2001 census details. It was in 1941 that an accurate figure of Kashmiri Pandits (KPs) was available as 79,000. The number is however exaggerated especially by the Kashmiri Pandit Political Organisations which put the figure of the entire Kashmiri Pandit population in 1991 as 7 lakhs and the population living in Kashmir as 3.5 lakhs. A total of 1,42,042 Kashmiri migrants stand registered with the Revenue and Relief Ministry. Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre of the Norwegian Refugee Council quotes that 250,000 to 350,000 Pandits have been displaced since 1990.¹

Statistics are at best estimates and at worst misleading as there are disagreements over definition about the actual size of migrants as they may choose not to be registered with the relief authorities and may be far from the sight of media (Hampton 1998). The fact of the matter remains that a sizable portion of the Kashmiri Pandits (i.e. 90%) were forced out of their homeland leaving a miniscule minority back in Kashmir. This led to corresponding cultural changes. In the event of forced dislocation of a community there are changes that surface in the various dimensions of the social structure (kinship, domestic group, economy and ceremonial ritual) (Patnaik 2006).

Kashmiri Pandits in Field Contexts

The research is based on a comparative ethnographic study of two locations in India – Jammu camps and Noida apartments. In March 2011 the displaced Kashmiri persons residing in Jammu camps resettled in a satellite township Jagti, 14 kilometers from Jammu city. This initiative by the government in the form of provision of a township for the migrant Kashmiri population comprising of two bedroom apartments is met after the Kashmiri Hindus mainly the working class among them lived in One-Room Tenements (ORTs) in the camp regions in Jammu for nearly two decades (1990- 2010). Fieldwork was conducted among the displaced Kashmiri Pandits residing in Jammu camps and Noida apartments from 2004 to 2006, before the migrants resettled in Jagti township.

The encounters of the people with the host community and the social changes experienced after displacement were interpreted through narratives and in-depth interviews. There are highest number of registered displaced families in Jammu and NCR.² The sample represented the displaced people from the villages and the city respectively. 100 informants were interviewed in Noida and Jammu. The persons residing in the Jammu camps were displaced from the rural towns of Kashmir, that is Kulgam, Kupwara, Anantnag and Baramulla regions. The displaced persons resettled in camps in Jammu region, possessed immovable property, land in the form of poultry farms, dairy farms, orchards or engaged in agri-business. The research focused on Muthi, Gol

Quarter and the Purkhoo camps in Jammu. The persons interviewed in Noida Sector 34 apartments – Dhawalgiri, Himgiri, Aravalli and Nilgiri were government officials, retired government officials, living with their children or educated professionals working in private companies in Delhi or Noida. They had migrated from the Srinagar city.

Jammu was the first choice of resettlement for the displaced people as it is within the administrative boundary of Jammu and Kashmir. Jammu is an old historical city populated by the Dogris, Kashmiris and Punjabis. The to and fro movement of people from Jammu to Kashmir exists as Jammu serves as the winter capital of Jammu & Kashmir State. Successively, there was step migration to Noida. Noida (New Okhla Industrial Development Authority) is a department of the government of Uttar Pradesh in Gautam Buddha Nagar District, India. Noida, a modern suburb of Delhi, is a newly constituted city with abundance of job opportunities in comparison to Jammu. The research focused on how the displaced KPs were able to survive economically, socially and culturally in the new locales.

Kashmiri Way of Life

‘Culture’ does not imply a set of traits permanently defined in a society but as a set of constantly contested attributes, which come into being as a result of socio-economic dimensions of interaction among people. Bourdieu’s (1977, quoted in Jain, 2006, p.2314) ideas of cultural, social and symbolic resources are relevant to view cultural changes among displaced persons as for resettlement in a new locale. People rely on these resources to create and sustain their places in society. In the new socio-economic context of the host territory the lack/availability of economic capital (material resources), social capital (social networks) and cultural capital (skills especially in the case of younger generation) are prime determinants for the changes in the way of life after displacement (Sawhney and Mehrotra, 2013). Faced with new forms of socio-economic constraints, the displaced KPs made efforts to sustain and regenerate the structures that existed back home by utilizing the capital available to them and that they acquired after displacement.

Space has a cultural significance as there is a primary connection between culture and space. Cultures take place in defined spaces but the relation between displaced people and places implies that culture in the new locales is also informed by the culture that the migrants experienced back home. Culture is modified in the new locations in sites of different people in different settings which are sites of cultural interaction (Gupta, 2000). The displaced persons are not powerless, passive or pathological, as they employ survival strategies in the new contexts. The displaced persons have a present life, where they need to survive, to make a livelihood, and thus through their actions construct the place where they are physically present (Brun 2001).

The forced migrants before displacement are familiarized to their social network which constitutes their World. As has been the case with the displaced Kashmiri Hindus whose 'beliefs and social structures embedded in their consciousness' which are connected with their homeland cannot be erased (Punjabi, 1996). Therefore Displaced KPs (Kashmiri Pandits) reterritorialize in the new locations. Reterritorialization means to lose one's territory, and then construct a new community within a new area (Malkki 1995, quoted in Brun 2001: 19). 'Reterritorialization is to find one's place, not only finding a house or a plot of land, but as much to find one's position in the society in which one is present' (Olwig, 1997, quoted in Brun 2001: 23). The Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) after displacement create their social World within the structure. 'Our lives are inhibited by structural factors but at the same time we seek to transform our circumstances by choosing alternatives and acting upon them.' (Marlfeet, 2006: 193)

After the displacement of Kashmiri Hindus to different locations within India the community encountered varied cultural changes. In varying contexts in history it is clear that Kashmiriyat refers to a Kashmiri consciousness. Kashmiriyat denotes a Hindu-Muslim unity manifested in the Kashmiri way of life. In the past Kashmir nourished the philosophies of Buddhism, Shaivism, Vaishnavism and Sufism. The influences of the verses of saints and rishis such as Lal Ded/ Lalleshwari and Nund Rishi/ Sheikh Nur-ud-din have been influential in the building up of a syncretic culture in Kashmir in the past which focused on a universalistic religion. These saints were revered both by the Hindus and Muslims alike. The teachings of rishi Sheikh Nur-ud-din had an impact on the Kashmiri Muslim identity. In his article, 'Kashmiriyat: The Mystique of an Ethnicity', Punjabi (1996) describes the interfaith coexistence in Kashmir historically in the following paragraph.

Hari Parbat is the epicentre of Kashmir geographically, mythologically and spiritually. On the North-East of this hill is the shrine of the great Kashmiri saint, Saint Hamzah Makhdoom, the South. West part of the hillock is the abode of Chakreshwari Devi (Sharada); and on the foothills is the Gurudwara Chatti Padshahi wherein the seventeenth century the sixth Guru of the Sikhs, Hargovind, had spread the message of Guru Nanak. The hill has become the focal point where people of diverse faiths, coming from many directions, converge on one point to provide a living existence of the adage that ways might be different, but they lead to one point (Retrieved from <http://www.icpsnet.org/description.php?ID=197>).

Kashmir was influenced by Buddhism during the reign of Ashoka. The assimilative character of Kashmiri society led to an atmosphere of debate and discussion. The intellectual understanding between Hinduism and Buddhism resulted in the Kashmir Saivism or Trikka Philosophy which is a basis of unity between individuals of diverse faiths. Islam reached Kashmir in the fourteenth century A.D. and the fusion of Trikka Saivism with Islam

resulted in the emergence of Rishi cult (Bhakti). It was through the Rishi movement which provided the basis for the spread of Islam as it was practiced in Kashmir. Poetry became a medium whereby the saints, seers and sufi poets carried forward the beliefs of the Rishis (Punjabi 1996).

There are varied understandings of the concept of Kashmiriyat ranging from historical to political ones. Zutshi (2003) describes 'Kashmiriyat' as a 'state sponsored nationalist identity' that is sustained by a past which imbibes on cohesiveness in the community and the national struggle which was operational in the making of the nation state. Kashmiriyat as a cultural identity is buttressed by a historical past in which both the Kashmiri and Indian nationalist discourses have a role to play. She defines Kashmiriness as a dynamic identity which is in constant interaction with or is sidelined by other identities as the religious or national. Discourses on Kashmiri cultural identity is to be viewed in relation to the valley's politico-economic transformations. Toru Tak (2013), on the other hand, gives a political explanation and holds that the main component of the term Kashmiriyat was imbued after independence as it was a byproduct of India's need to establish itself as a secular nation and justify its presence in Kashmir. Till 1975 the term was in its embryonic stage and the ethnic identity of the Kashmiri people was to be fixed to the term when the need was felt by the Kashmir's intellectuals and Sheikh Abdullah's government to preserve Kashmir's culture. Later it took the form of Muslim centred political slogan in 1983 and in the 1990s it has taken the discourse of Indian official secularism.

According to Rattan Lal Hangloo (2012), with the onset of armed insurgency in Kashmir, Kashmiriyat as a concept has gained such currency and is used in varied contexts that one enquires whether it means the same thing at all times or has different meanings at different contexts. He takes a Kashmiri historian perspective and holds that the concept refers to communal harmony, multiculturalism and the tolerance that the majority community displays towards the minority community. It has also been defined as an ideological foundation of ethnic nationalism or a marker of Kashmiri identity that cuts across religious divide. According to T.N. Madan (2008), Kashmiriyat, the state of being Kashmiri, is not a Kashmiri word but a current usage not part of Kashmiri politics of 1930s and 1940s. It refers to an identity tied to Kashmir (*kashir*), Kashmiri language (*koshur*), customary practices, folklore, music which was the basis of mutual togetherness among the different religions of Kashmir. Despite this there were differences between the Kashmiri Hindu and Muslim communities in worship, dress, food, commensalism was absent and intermarriage was prohibited. He calls 'kashmiriyat' as a pluralistic culture of tolerance and acceptance of the religious and cultural differences and not syncretism. Kashmiriyat (or Kashmiri way of life) refers to Kashmiri Hindu and Kashmiri Muslim bonding as is manifested in their cultural practices which got affected after the displacement and resettlement of KPs outside their homeland.

Kashmiri Pandits-Ethno-Cultural Identity

The Pandits belong to the Sarasvata division of North Indian Gauda Brahmans. The Sarasvat Brahmins are named after the river Sarasvati and are residents to the West of the river. The Kashmiri Brahmins however trace their linkage to the Saraswati Goddess who is the Goddess of knowledge. Since the past they were known for their learning and achievement and were thus known as Kashmiri Pundits (*learned men*) (Madan 1965). The Kashmiri Hindus are unique in that they form one single caste group that is the Kashmiri Brahmins without any real subdivision (Witzel 2008: 38). Traditionally Kashmiri Pandits interdined but did not intermarry. The KP subgroups listed by Lawrence are the astrologer class (*jotish*), the priest class (*gor* or the *guru*) and the service class (*karkun*) (Madan 1965, Witzel 2008: 38). The majority of the Kashmiri Pandit community belongs to the *karkun* subgroup, only a few of the community belong to the *priest* class. The traditional occupation of the people belonging to the *gor* sub caste is the performance of religious rituals for Kashmiri Brahmins. *Kulgurus* are *gurus* who perform priestly functions and are associated with client families for generations. A *kulguru* (family priest) performed priestly services for two hundred to three hundred client families spread over four to five villages.

The KPs wrote their own Shastras and Vedas and developed their indigenous belief system which served their interests. As Kashmir was distant from the rest of India, the KPs, in order to avoid the long journeys to their sacred sites as Gangotri and Haridwar considered the Kashmir sites Gangabal and Shadipur respectively as representing the former, and indeed, more sacred (Punjabi 1996). However, particularly after displacement, they started emphasizing the Hindu aspects of their cultural identity and this is evident in their symbolic beliefs, practice of customs and in the participation of the religious festivals. There were corresponding changes in their way of life, religious rituals and community participation.

The significance attached to *Nag* (which meant both spring and snake in Kashmiri) and snakes were believed to be residing in the springs of Kashmir were beliefs upheld by the Kashmiris. *Nags* were believed to be the original inhabitants of Kashmir and the Aryans who came in later in Kashmir assimilated with the culture of the *Nags*. Kashmiri Hindus attached great sacred significance to the places in Kashmir as Shesh Nag in comparison to Ganges. The Kashmiris upheld their belief system and engaged in practices different from Hindus and Muslims elsewhere in India. For instance, the Kashmiri Pandits who are Kashmiri Brahmins by caste engaged in meat eating, who wrote a shastra to justify it and on the other hand beef is not consumed by both the Kashmiri Hindus and Muslims (Punjabi 1996).

Displacement, Urbanization and Cultural Changes

The trends of urbanization impacted the community partake in traditional fairs, festivals and rituals of KPs who were displaced from villages to urban areas within India or from Srinagar city to metropolitan regions within India. Apart from socio-economic constraints, distance and climate were other factors that were viewed as responsible for the decreased interaction. Tönnies' concept of *gemeinschaft* (community) was characterized by a high degree of personal closeness and emotional bonding. The KPs lived in a *gemeinschaft* community in Kashmir whether residing in Kashmir villages or Srinagar city as opposed to *gesellschaft* (society) characteristic of the experiences of anonymity in the urban host territories of Jammu and Noida.

The cultural and economic capital available to the Kashmiri Hindus in the new contexts determines the participation in Kashmiri or Hindu festivals. Because of the constraint in performing some of the Kashmiri customary practices, the KPs imitate the practices of the Hindus of the host territory and emphasize the Hindu aspects of their identity. Consequent to the fragmentation of families and the dispersal of the community to different locations in India there was decrease in the degree of interaction with relatives and friends. As persons residing in Kashmir villages were dispersed in the camps or the apartments in the urban territory, secondary relationships became predominant. Because of increased distance from Kashmir the KPs are constrained to visit the Kashmiri gardens, the shrines and the temples. 'Homesickness' is experienced by the displaced KPs for the revered sites and tourist spots of Kashmir. The impact of modernization led to a change in the 'character of leisure' as experienced in Kashmir. In modern society leisure is no longer an active principle of self-expression, spontaneous communication and social participation. Leisure becomes a passive experience, a sensation to be enjoyed in the isolation of one's living room (Singh 2000).

Anjali (a 42 years old woman) of the Dhawalgiri apartments in Noida communicated that after displacement she and her family are nostalgic about Kashmir.

She misses the various tourist spots and sacred sites in Kashmir as Pahalgam, Gulmarg, Shankracharya and Toola Moola temple. A few of the reminiscences have faded. In Kashmir her father loved to travel. He enjoyed sight-seeing and adventure sports during vacations. She desires to take her son to Kashmir, but her circumstances that is the paucity of resources and time restrict her.

The communitarian character of the traditional Kashmiri festivals is visualized by exploring the state of affairs prevailing in Kashmir before displacement. The interaction of Kashmiri Hindus with individuals of other Kashmir communities is nonexistent on traditional Kashmiri festivals in contrast to the situation in Kashmir. Dhar (1977) stated that the Urs (*Ziarats*)

held annually at the shrines of Muslim saints on their death anniversaries are typical Kashmiri festivals. These festivals attract the Muslims (the Sunnis only—the Shia sect of Muslims do not participate), Hindus and Sikhs. This participation of the various communities (Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs) in the celebrations of Urs took place at Charar-i-Sharif (the shrine of Sheikh Nur-ud-din, saint of Kashmir), at Baba Rishi (near Tangmarg), at Aishmukam (the shrine of Zaina Shah), at Anantnag (the shrine of Rishi Mol). The relationship of cooperation and reciprocity in a village contributed to collective efforts in the celebration of traditional fairs, festivals and major cultural events and so was the case in Kashmir Singh (2003).

Cultural activities in rural areas which earlier were based on the participation of the entire village or local community became lesser associative of the Kashmiri Hindu and Muslim community after the KPs resettled in urban locations. *Shivratri* for instance is considered the most significant festival of the Kashmiri Hindus. *Shivratri* festival, or *Herat*, symbolized the marriage of *Shiv* and *Parvati* and is celebrated in February-March for about a fortnight in Kashmir. After displacement in addition to delinkage with the traditional sacred sites, there is also a delinkage with the varying communities residing in the homeland.

Vanshika (a 30 years old woman) of the Himgiri apartments in Noida narrated how the emphasis on ceremonial *puja* and the inter community visiting had altered in the new locales.

In Kashmir, Shivratri festival extended for about 10 to 12 days. Kashmiri Muslims visited the homes of Kashmiri Pandits on this festival. Massive cleanliness occurred in the homes of KPs. As a part of offering during Shivratri puja, walnuts were immersed in the mud utensils and the utensils were drowned in the river Jhelum as the puja concluded. In the changed context there is a relaxation as they immerse the walnuts in brass/steel utensils. Since the Jhelum River is out of bounds they do not drown the utensils in Jhelum river. The KPs cooked non-vegetarian food on Shivratri. Although the KPs are Brahmin by caste, they differed from the other Brahmin communities of India as they consumed non-vegetarian food which extended also to their religious festivals. In the host territory, because of the influence of Hinduism, the KPs restrict the consumption of non-vegetarian food on any religious festival.

Dhar (1977) states that the Kashmiris revere the *Vitasta* (the Jhelum River). A festival connected with the Jhelum river held on the thirteenth day of the lunar fortnight of the *Bhadon* (August-September), is *Vaitha-Vatur-Truvah* (Jhelum-source-thirteenth day). A festival is held at a temple at Verinag, where the source of the Jhelum is situated and the festival witnessed the participation of both the Kashmiri Hindus and Muslims. The performance of certain festivals is modified by the displaced people due to certain constraints

that they face in the host territories. To illustrate, *Khechi Amavasya* is a religious festival that the displaced KPs celebrated in Kashmir. *Khechi Amavasya* falls in the month of *Posh* (December- January). Kashmir is believed to have been the home of *yakshas* in ancient times. The *yaksha* spirit is invited to relish *khichri* (rice cooked with *dal* and *ghee*). It was believed that at night the *yaksha* visits and relishes the *khichri* served with a fish in the attic of the KP home. The leftover *samagri* (prayer raw materials) of the *puja* was poured in Jhelum river. Since culture is associated with their home territory they cannot perform religious rituals associated with Jhelum river and they dispose the ritual raw materials in an alternate manner as practiced by other Hindus of the host territory. In the host territories, the KPs celebrate Diwali and Holi on a grand scale which was not the case in Kashmir. Because of the influence of Hinduism in the host territory particularly on the younger generation there is participation in Hindu festivals which were not celebrated in Kashmir.

Navreh is the new year of Kashmiri Hindus. In Kashmir, the Hindus and Muslims would visit Hari Parbat. In every Hindu home, it begins with an invocation to Lakshmi, the goddess of bounty. In the afternoon the Hari Parbat, the fort-topped hill, sacred to both Hindus and Muslims, is swarmed by varying communities. There would be ceremonial visiting between the community members (Dhar 1977). In the present scenario, the Kashmiri Hindu families worship the Goddess Lakshmi and speak to communicate with their relatives through the medium of phone. Hari Parbat (originally located in Kashmir) is reconstructed in Faridabad by the displaced community. Hari Parbat in Faridabad has become a place where 'Kashmiri Pandits' in and around Delhi observe their Navreh festivals. The displaced community built cultural symbols in exile to experience their cultural heritage. This construction altered the landscape of the region. *Aap Ne Is Gaaon Mein Raunak Layee* (you have brought new light to the village) say the villagers with pride (Dhar, 1999).

Krishnanath, (a 55 years old man) interviewed in the Noida apartments narrated his experience of displacement and cultural changes experienced by them.

A hill in Faridabad is converted to Hari Parbat. In Rohini an artificial replica of Kheer Bhavani is constructed. It is just an artificial feeling. It is like a nakli haar (false garland used to adorn the picture of a dead ancestor). On Kheer Bhawani festival we can fast now, nothing else. Our son enquires whether it is a festival that day and abstains from having non-vegetarian food. On Kheer Bhawani festival in Kashmir we visited Toola Moola in Kashmir, live there and perform puja. The community members gathered at the temple and there was tremendous business for Muslims too. After displacement a matador carries KPs to Kheer Bhavani, Kashmir, from Jammu. In Noida a similar bus service has started to Kheer Bhavani, Kashmir. Migration has been a boon in a way as the Hindus are in majority in the host community in comparison to Kashmir and they no longer face a minority complex. Now KPs celebrate all

Hindu festivals which they never did enthusiastically before displacement in Kashmir.

The narrative of Krishnanath throws light on the predicament and gains of displacement. The KPs are physically delinked from their traditional cultural sites associated with their religion. As a coping mechanism the Kashmiri religious sites are reconstructed and visits are made to the sacred sites in Kashmir. They have altered their way of life in the changed context where they partake in the Hindu religious festivities and do not have to be noticed as a minority.

After displacement, KPs visit the Kheerbhavani temple constructed in Jammu but it is only an artificial replica of the real. There have been attempts at 'reterritorialization' in the host community which can be visualized in the construction of a replica, Kheer Bhawani temple in Talab Tillo, Jammu. The tank constructed is an artificial replica of the natural spring in Kashmir. During my visit to the Kheer Bhawani temple in Kashmir I visualized that in addition to the Kashmiri devotional songs, in Jammu both Kashmiri and Punjabi devotional songs are sung in praise of the Goddess. Apart from the Kashmiri Hindus present in the temple, there was intercommunity participation of the Punjabis and Dogris in the worship of the Goddess.

Tila Ashtami is a festival not celebrated in the new locales as the lighting up of *kangri* symbolized that the winter was over. The festival was symbolic of a farewell to the winter months in which *kangri* was used. The use of *kangri* becomes obsolete in the host community with higher temperatures and also the celebration of a festival associated with *kangri*. Unfavourable climatic conditions and different ecological setting impacted the way of life after displacement.

Work in traditional societies was based on communitarian activities and this was reflected in its occurrence around life-cycle rituals throughout the year (Singh 2000). Changes are encountered in the performance of life-cycle ceremonies after displacement. Marriage ceremonies took place at homes in Kashmir and both the Hindus and Muslims participated in each others' marriage ceremonies by extending help in various forms. In the changed scenario the displaced Kashmiris rent community halls. There is consequent increase in the expenditure of marriage after displacement. Local priests of the host community may be called to perform the marriage ceremonies as the *kulgurus* (family priests) are dispersed. In Noida Sadhana narrated the economic constraints experienced in the host territory which hindered the lavish expenditure on KP marriages.

On marriages in Kashmir about two thousand walnuts were purchased and about two hundred would be distributed to each relative in Kashmir. In the new locale because of high walnuts cost and increased distances we do not distribute the walnuts to each relative. Now we just distribute around one or

two walnuts to each relative which in a way is symbolic of our tradition in Kashmir.

In the last decades after displacement, a few of the younger generation of the *gor* subcaste (priest) perform their traditional occupation. Also there is a dispersal of family priests. Members of the *gor* sub-caste prefer professional education. The dearth of *kulgurus* in the last two decades has brought about certain alterations in the association between the *kulgurus* and client families. In Jammu camps the *kulguru* of a neighbouring KP family is invited often to perform the religious rituals. Alternatively, audio-cassettes are played to recite the religious *mantras* (wordings). On *Saraswati Puja*, the *kulguru* (family priest) brought scroll paintings for children. Because of the dispersal of the community, the *kulgurus* settled in diverse places in India and are constrained to visit all their traditional client families. The KP children are not aware of their *kulgurus*.

At the time of death of a Kashmiri Hindu in Kashmir it was the tradition that the Kashmiri Muslims would burn the dead bodies of Kashmiri Hindus. Bazaz (1954) states that, unlike the situation in the rest of India in Kashmir, the dead bodies of Kashmiri Hindus are cremated by Kashmiri Muslims. This has changed after displacement in the host territories, because of the unavailability of Kashmiri Muslims. Back in Kashmir the norm is still adhered to for the remaining KPs in the valley. On *shradh* (death anniversary) of their ancestors the Pandits visited the temple at Mattan. In the changed context, Kashmiri Hindus who can afford it go to Haridwar visit the latter place to perform the *shradh*, while others just perform the *shradh* in the host territory.

In conjunction with the cultural, economic and social capital available to them the displaced persons in the new locations employ various response strategies after the ties with their homeland are severed. The response strategies range from the construction of replicas of cultural symbols in the host territories to the visits to the traditional sites in Kashmir. There has been an increase in the number of tourists and Amarnath Yatris during the Shraavan Poornima in Kashmir with the decline of militancy. During the Kheer Bhawani festival many Kashmiri Hindus visit Kashmir. However, there has been a decrease in intercommunity participation in festivals and life-cycle ceremonies as was the case in Kashmir symbolizing a weakening of the concept of Kashmiriyat.

Kashmiri Cultural Symbols in a Changed Context

Cultural symbols are dynamic and undergo significant changes in the context of collective experience of people, changing interests and demonstration effects. Cultural symbols enter into the socialization process in a new socio-economic setting and influence people's interests, and attitudes and their

consequent behaviour (Rao 1986: 33). The displaced KPs felt a sense of cultural loss when de-linked from territory. However, there has been an attempt by them to recreate their cultural symbols. There has been a process of recreation of 'smaller Kashmir' after displacement in locations resettled.

Despite the constraints experienced, attempts were made by the Kashmiri Hindus who were displaced to employ alternate ways of participating in their cultural space in the new locales. Culture thus traversed in the new territories. The apartments in Noida were adorned with the pictures of the Kashmiri Goddesses like Mata Roop and Sharika Bhagwati. The houses in Jammu and Noida, were decorated with Kashmiri embroidered cushions, curtains or carpets. Many of the families in the host territories follow their custom of sitting on the floor on Kashmiri rugs. The Kashmiri symbols are reminiscent of the way of life in Kashmir in their daily lives.

Due to migration to a new ecological setting significant changes have taken place with regard to dress and diet after displacement. Most of the displaced people held that they stopped wearing *pheran* (traditional Kashmiri dress) in the host territory due to high temperatures. The turnover has been to *shalwar kameez*. It is only in winters that some admitted to wearing *pherans*. Traditionally, Kashmiris largely consume rice, meat cooked in delicious varieties, and various indigenous vegetables like *karam sag* (a kind of leafy green vegetable), *nadru* (lotus stalk) and turnips. The tea Kashmiris drink is called *kahva* (Kashmiri tea). As far as the diet is concerned most of the traditional Kashmiri vegetables are available in Noida and in Jammu such as *hak* (a kind of green leafy vegetable), *karam sag* and *nadru*. *Kahva* is still the indigenous Kashmiri tea that they continue to relish after displacement. The Kashmiri Hindus are influenced by Bengali, Punjabi and South-Indian cuisines in the multicultural setup in Noida. Because of the influence of Punjabi cuisine they also relish chapattis and pulses which was not the case in Kashmir. In Kashmir, the Kashmiri Hindus largely did not include onions and garlic in their cooking which is not the case in the host territory.

Displacement, Religious Identity and Nationhood Redefined

Before displacement took place the notion of 'Kashmiriyat', which is symbolic of Hindu-Muslim unity, was very strong. With the exodus of the minority community Muslims and Hindus see themselves as separate from each other. The minority community faces an identity crisis and the 'we feeling' of belonging to the Kashmiri community is not that strong. The adverse developments in Kashmir have sharpened communal identities and 'kashmiriyat' has an uncertain future (Madan 2008). On the other hand Khan (2009) at All India Sociological Conference in Kashmir in response to the dictum that the exodus and the rise of militancy in Kashmir was followed by 'The Unmaking of Composite Culture' as held by T.N. Madan considers that the concern of a section of the Kashmiri Hindus and Kashmiri Muslims with the

negative impact of militancy on the Kashmiri composite culture shows their preoccupation with an attempt to preserve Kashmiriyat. The rites of cremation still performed by Kashmiri Muslims for the deceased Pandits in Kashmir should dismiss a misconception that Kashmiriyat in its true essence is dead. The annual visits of migrant Pandits in increasing number to Khirbawani have revived the hope of reviving Kashmiriyat.

The Kashmiri Hindus as an 'imagined community' believes in claiming their Hindu identity more than their Kashmiri identity which is symbolic of Hindu-Muslim unity. The notion of nationhood is reconstructed by the displaced community. Social identity and power relations are reformulated in the new territories after displacement. Shift to a new host community involves issues such as change in identity, change in the meanings and perceptions of ourselves and others' perceptions of us (Osella and Gadener 2004). The fact that the Kashmiri Hindus view themselves as separate from the Kashmiri Muslims after displacement is evident from the fact that 'Panun Kashmir', a collective movement of the displaced Kashmiri Hindus, has demanded a separate homeland for the Kashmiri Hindus.

Disruption in social relations not only involves personal loss; it dismantles existing power structures and decision-making processes (Sorensen, 1998). This demand clearly suggests that a section of the KPs emphasize their 'Hindu' identity more than their 'Kashmiri' identity pointing towards ethnic and regional affiliation with the Muslims. Thus Kashmiriyat, symbolic of the Kashmiri Hindu Muslim unity, is weakened. On the other hand, in the case of Muslims back in Kashmir, according to Nayak (2003), "whether the grievances of the Muslims are real or imagined, whether the Pundits fled due to a situation that was real or imagined, hardly seems the point now. The fact is that the ordinary Kashmiri Muslim saw the Pundits' leaving as a betrayal of Kashmiriyat."

Displacement to a new territory has altered the ways in which the children participate in a community life. The children displaced to the new territories had no interaction with Kashmiri Muslims. Their knowledge of Kashmir is through their parents and the media. Ram residing in the Aravalli apartments in Noida, relocated from Kashmir six years after the outbreak of militancy, pondered about the future of intercommunity relationship in Kashmir. He stated,

When I left Kashmir, I told my Kashmiri Muslim staff that when your children enquire how was a Kashmiri Hindu tell him/her that he has four legs, two horns, and two ears. A Kashmiri Muslim child when grows up will have no knowledge of Kashmiri Hindus as no Kashmiri Hindu will be left in the Kashmir valley. Similar is the case with displaced Kashmiri Hindus in the host territories who have no idea of how their ancestors lived with the Kashmiri Muslims as a community back in Kashmir.

Migration is an important element in the social construction of an identity (Osella and Gadener 2004). Individuals draw upon their experience of migration to generate alternative reckoning of their identity based on new political circumstances. There is an inherent psychological element to displacement based on self-identification. The children hold that they can never go back and settle down in Kashmir. They identify with the host community and not with the Kashmiri community living in Kashmir and are well-integrated in the new territory. The children are not proficient in the Kashmiri language. In the changed context of displacement there are also changes in the way in which a group or a community identifies itself in a new locale. The sense of solidarity and trust that a community shares with groups back in the homeland is disrupted in situations of conflict-induced displacement as the communities are de-linked not only from their home territories but also with the various communities with whom they interacted back home.

Conclusion

In the new territory, one's cultural needs are influenced by the society, and at the same time the displaced persons recreate their cultural symbols and develop new social networks based on religious affiliations. Through their active participation the KPs give a new meaning to their life in the new setting. They utilize various response strategies to cope with the changes due to displacement. Displacement leads to a situation where the displaced people exercise their choice with regard to certain aspects of their lives but at other times are constrained by the social structure. Shift to a new locale has meant that there is a disruption in the social networks. Increase in distance in urban setting and increase in the cost of transportation/goods are factors that reduced the intensity of ceremonial exchange of goods and services in the new locales. These factors have led to consequent alterations in the social structure. Ceremonial, occasional or frequent visiting patterns between the Hindus and Muslims are altered. But at the same time one acquires new social mechanisms to fulfill one's cultural needs, different from the ones that one possessed in the homeland where one interacted with individuals from various communities.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I would like to thank Nilika Mehrotra and Rekha Chowdhary for their valuable comments in the course of my research which yielded this paper. This research paper is based on my M.Phil. (2004) and Ph.D. (2009) dissertations submitted to CSSS, JNU, New Delhi.

NOTES

1. Submission from the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC) to the Norwegian Refugee Council to the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights: 40th Session: Economic, Social and Cultural Rights of the Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) in India April, 2008, Source: <http://www.internal-displacement.org/assets/library/Asia/India/pdf/IDMC-CESCR-submission-India-Apr-2008.pdf>

2. According to the data gathered from the Relief Commissioner's office in Jammu, there are around 34,131 registered displaced families living in the Jammu region. 5,889 families are living in camps around Jammu region. 28,242 families are living outside the camps in Jammu region. 19,338 families are living in Delhi and rest in other parts of country.

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