**Cardiff University**

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# KASHMIR UNTOLD

## Alternate Narratives of Kashmiri Migrants

**A dissertation submitted for the degree of**

**MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY**

**in**

**Critical and Cultural Theory**

**By**

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**Abstract**

"*Your history gets in way of my memory*" (Farewell-Agha Shahid Ali)

Historians typically privilege documents over other non-verbal sources to gather information about the past. Documents, however, do not touch the lives of thousands of people who were impacted by cataclysmic historical events such as the Insurgency of 1989. The violence of 1989 forced minority communities from Kashmir, especially the Kashmiri Pandits, to leave their homeland. This forced displacement was accompanied by a movement of memories and possessions, belongings and anecdotes, some of which still remain concealed in silence.[1] When Pandits embarked on this arduous journey away from home, never to return, artefacts they chose to carry became their loyal companions. These objects had witnessed children wail for their homeland, they had been caressed when men and women sought comfort during rainy days, and sometimes they were sold off to get food on the plate. The objects had touched lives of many stranded families and witnessed their struggle first hand. However, when asked to recollect the past, these objects sit silently towards the periphery, in favour of written records. My dissertation will focus on the objects carried by internally displaced Kashmiris to understand their attempts to preserve their lost home and culture by preserving the artefacts from the Valley. I will begin by analysing how Kashmir is represented in public archives, national history, documents and cinema. This will highlight the discord between the popular representation of the Valley and the experiential memories of Kashmiris. After highlighting the void, through objects and oral-history interviews, I will analyse the lived experiences of Kashmiri Pandits, which have not been given ample space in national and regional histories. Focusing on these material possessions will highlight experiences that have

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[1] Malhotra, Aanchal, *Remnants of a Separation: A History of Partition through Material Memory.* (Delhi: Harpercollins, 2018), p. xxv

been cumbersomely framed in language but gracefully shaped within these artefacts, enabling us to re-present Kashmir through the memories of the locals.

# Chapter 1: Introduction

'Mothers wash the bloodstained apparel of grooms
On stream banks,
Bridal wear burns to ash
Bridesmaids cry,
And the Jhelum flows.'

Poem by Farooq Nazki[2], quoted in *Curfewed Night* by Basharat Peer[3]

'Locations, space, and time' acquire multiple meanings when diaspora remembers and re-visits home.[4] The cultural nuances that had been 'imperceptibly imbibed' and involuntarily internalised earlier, are highlighted through the act of writing about the 'self' and one's homeland.[5] However, when the diasporic communities are denied the right to write about their involuntary migration and homeland, they are compelled to search for alternative sources to preserve their unheard experiences. The Kashmiri Pandits, a minority Hindu community from the Kashmir Valley, after being forced to leave their homeland, were also denied the space to present their experiences by popular media due to the ongoing politics within the state of Jammu and Kashmir and the two newly formed nations, Independent India and Pakistan. Within this political climate of the Great Divide[6] (elaborated below) and its aftermath, the community tried to preserve their stories by preserving their tangible and intangible heritage in the new homes they had been forced to move into. My dissertation will try to record the ways in which the internally displaced community tried to redefine and assert their belongingness to the Valley of Kashmir, a place they still call home, by preserving the belongings from their lost home. In this chapter, I will introduce the history of Jammu and Kashmir and elaborate on the conflict in the state that finally culminated in the

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[2] Farooq Nazki is a renowned poet and a media personality from Jammu and Kashmir.
[3] Basharat Peer, *Curfewed Night A Frontline Memoir of Life, Love and War in Kashmir* (London and Noida: Random House India, 2008) p.160.
[4] Jasbir Jain *The Diaspora Writes Home; Subcontinental Narratives* (New Delhi: Rawat Publications, 2005) p.9.
[5] Ibid, p.9.
[6] Derived from the title of a book by Ira Pande elaborating the events of the Partition of the Indian subcontinent in 1947 and its aftermath. See Ira, Pande *The Great Divide: India and Pakistan* (Delhi: HarperCollins India, 2009)

forced expulsion of the Kashmiri Pandit community from the Valley of Kashmir. The next few chapters will analyse the gap between popular representation of the Valley and the personal memories of Kashmiri Pandits, to highlight the discord between the collective and popular memories of the Valley and the experiential memories of Kashmiris. Juxtaposing the popular narratives with anecdotes shared by Kashmiri Pandits will highlight the politics of publishing and creation of 'situated knowledges'[7] by state-sponsored institutions to re-frame the past, based on the power relations of the present. While memories of some communities are selectively remembered, other weaker groups experience erasure of their stories, which are often 'counter-memories' that challenge the seemingly universal histories.[8] Through this dissertation, I will try to understand how dominant historical narratives are constructed by powerful groups, and how minority communities preserve their counter-narratives through alternative canvases such as artefacts to challenge the history that excludes them.

## 1.1 Roots of the Kashmir Conflict: What, When and Why?

In 1947, British India was divided along the lines of religion through the Radcliffe Line, leading to formation of Independent India and Pakistan. Sir Cyril Radcliffe, a British lawyer was given five weeks to understand the geography, demography, and social structure of British India. The subcontinent was home to more than four hundred million people, and he was fated to carve it apart to form two new independent nations. In five weeks, through the assistance of deadlock advisors, inaccurate census figures, and old maps, he shaped the two nations.[9] While India adopted secularism, Pakistan became an Islamic state for the minority Muslim population, validating the two-nation theory proposed by Mohammed Ali Jinnah.

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[7] Donna Haraway, 'Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective' in *Feminist Studies*, Vol. 14, No. 3 (Autumn, 1988), pp. 575-599. (p. 581)
[8] Michel Foucault, *Language, counter-memory, practice* ed. Donald F. Bouchard (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1977), p 8.
[9] Andrew Whitehead, *Cyril Radcliffe: The man who drew the partition line* (2017) https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/av/world-asia-40788079/cyril-radcliffe-the-man-who-drew-the-partition-line [accessed 11 November 2019].

Jinnah, the first Prime Minister of Pakistan, in his theory, demanded a separate state for Muslims because he believed that Hindus and Muslims are two different autonomous entities and should live separately. According to him,

> The Hindus and the Muslims belong to two different religious philosophies, social customs and literature. They neither intermarry, nor interdine together, and indeed they belong to two different civilisations which are based mainly on conflicting ideas and conceptions. Their aspects on life and life are different.[10]

This theory became the base for the rising demand for a separate nation, Pakistan, and its final constitution, as a Muslim majority nation.

As the dynamics of Partition and creation of two nations were being finalised, the *princely states*[11] were given three options – to join one of the two new dominions, India and Pakistan, or to declare independence and exist as a separate state. However, Lord Mountbatten, the last Viceroy of India, emphasised that existing as an independent nation was just a nominal option.[12] He urged the princely rulers to merge with either India or Pakistan based on two factors: the location of their state and the religion and choice of its subjects. The ruler of the state of Jammu and Kashmir, Maharaja Hari Singh, chose to independence for his state. However, later, as a result of ongoing politics, which has been elaborated further in the subsequent sections, the state was torn apart. The line dividing the state was drawn and areas of Gilgit, Baltistan, and ten districts of the Valley of Kashmir became a part of Pakistan, and were known as Pakistan occupied Kashmir or *Azad Kashmir* (Free Kashmir). The rest of the state, including areas of Leh and Ladakh, the Kashmir Valley and Jammu joined Independent India. Although geographical areas and districts were divided between two newly formed

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[10] Mushirul Hasan *India's Partition: process, strategy, and mobilization* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001) p.56.

[11] A princely state is a vassal state (a state that has a mutual obligation to a superior state or an empire) under an indigenous ruler in a subsidiary alliance with the British Raj.

[12] Sumantra Bose, *Contested Lands: Israel-Palestine, Kashmir, Bosnia, Cyprus, and Sri Lanka.* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2010), p. 166.

nations, the princely state of Jammu and Kashmir emerged as a contested territory, desired

both by India and Pakistan, and continues to remain so even decades after the Partition of the

Indian subcontinent.
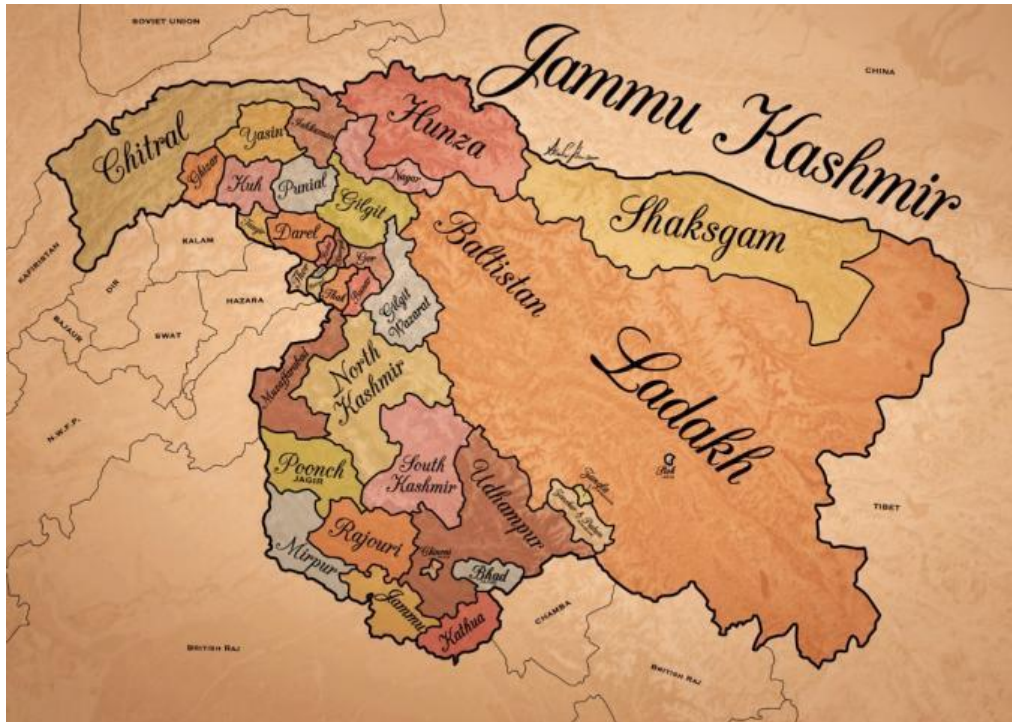


Figure 1: A sketch of united Kashmir made by a digital artist, Arsalan Khan.[13]

[13] Arsalan Khan, '*Of Myths and War'* (2021) https://www.kashmiruntold.org/post/of-myths-and-war
[Accessed January 06, 2021]

Figure 2: Map of Kashmir after the Partition of India in 1947.[14]
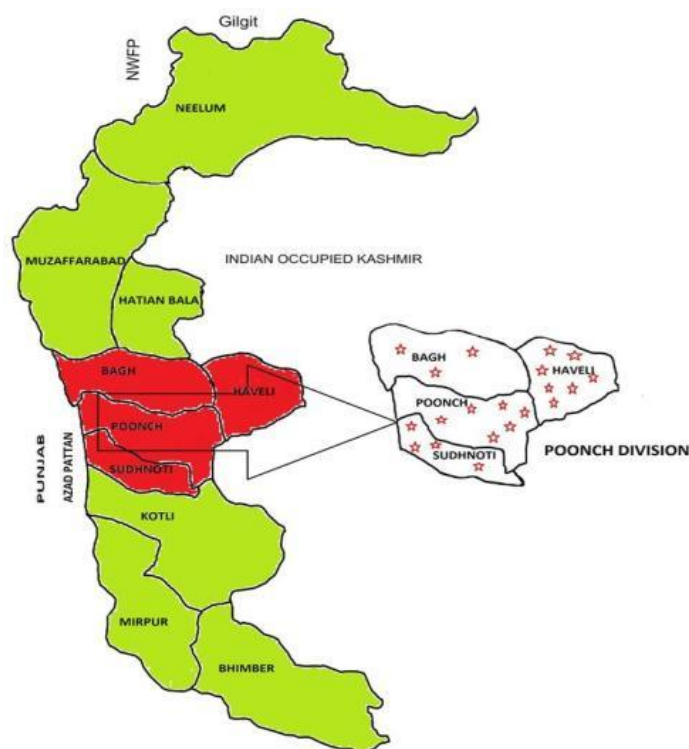


Figure 3: Map of Pakistan administered Kashmir or *Azad* Kashmir ("Free Kashmir").[15]

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[14] British Broadcasting Company, '*Kashmir territories profile*' (2019)
<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-south-asia-11693674> [Accessed November 02, 2019]
[15] Other Aspect, '*Kashmir Question and Marxism Leninism: An Analysis for Debate*' (2020)
<https://otheraspect.org/2020/02/27/kashmir-question-and-marxism-leninism-an-analysis-for-debate/> [Accessed March 03, 2020]

Within this political climate, a feeling of desire was manufactured towards the land of

Kashmir through cartography, public speeches, radio, and other popular media[16]. The maps of

both Independent India and Pakistan laid a claim over the entirety of the territory of Jammu

and Kashmir. The map of Independent India termed princely states as 'native Indian'. The

'native Indian' states also included the territory of Jammu and Kashmir, which had opted for

autonomy over becoming a part of either Independent India or Pakistan. On the other hand,

the first map of Pakistan published by Choudhary Rehmat Ali on 28 January 1993, in *'Now*

*or Never. Are we to live or perish forever?'* also laid claim to the territory of Jammu and

Kashmir. In this pamphlet, Ali published what he believed will be the eventual structure of

Pakistan, beginning with the infamous lines:

> At this solemn hour in the history of India, when British and Indian statesmen are
>
> laying the foundations of a Federal Constitution of that land, we address this appeal to
>
> you, in the name of our common heritage, on behalf of our thirty million Muslim
>
> brethren who live in PAKISTAN – by which we mean the five northern units of India,
>
> viz: **P**unjab, North-West Frontier Province (**A**fghan Province), **K**ashmir, **S**indh and
>
> Baluchis**tan**.[17]

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[16] Ananya Jahanara Kabir *Territory of Desire: Representing the Valley of Kashmir* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009) p. 14.

[17] Aanchal Malhotra, *Remnants of a Separation: A History of Partition through Material Memory* (New Delhi: Harpercollins India, 2017) p. 321.

Map 2   Chaudhry Rahmat Ali's map: The Pak Commonwealth of Nations and their flag, c. 1940
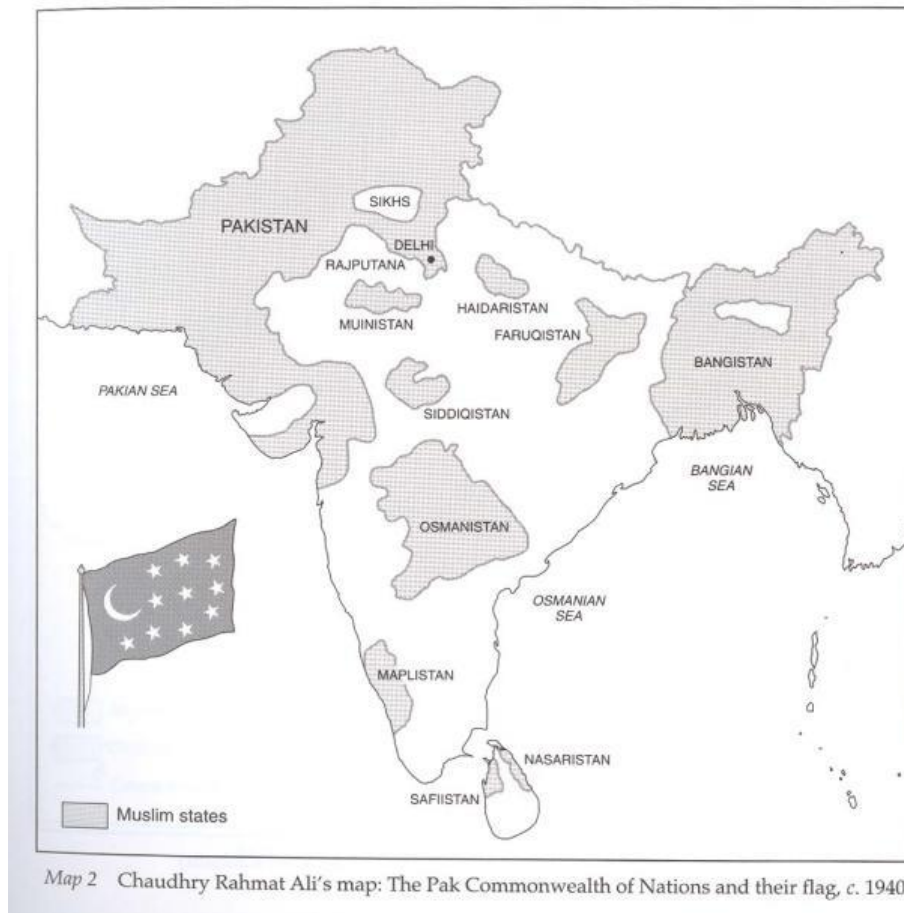
Figure 4:  The first proposed map of Pakistan drawn by Chaudhary Rehmat Ali, where he claims the state of Jammu and Kashmir as a part of the territory of Pakistan.[18]

[18] Akbar S. Ahmed, *Jinnah, Pakistan, and Islamic Identity: The Search for Saladin*. (London: Routledge Press, 1997) p.xxvii; scan by www.columbia.edu
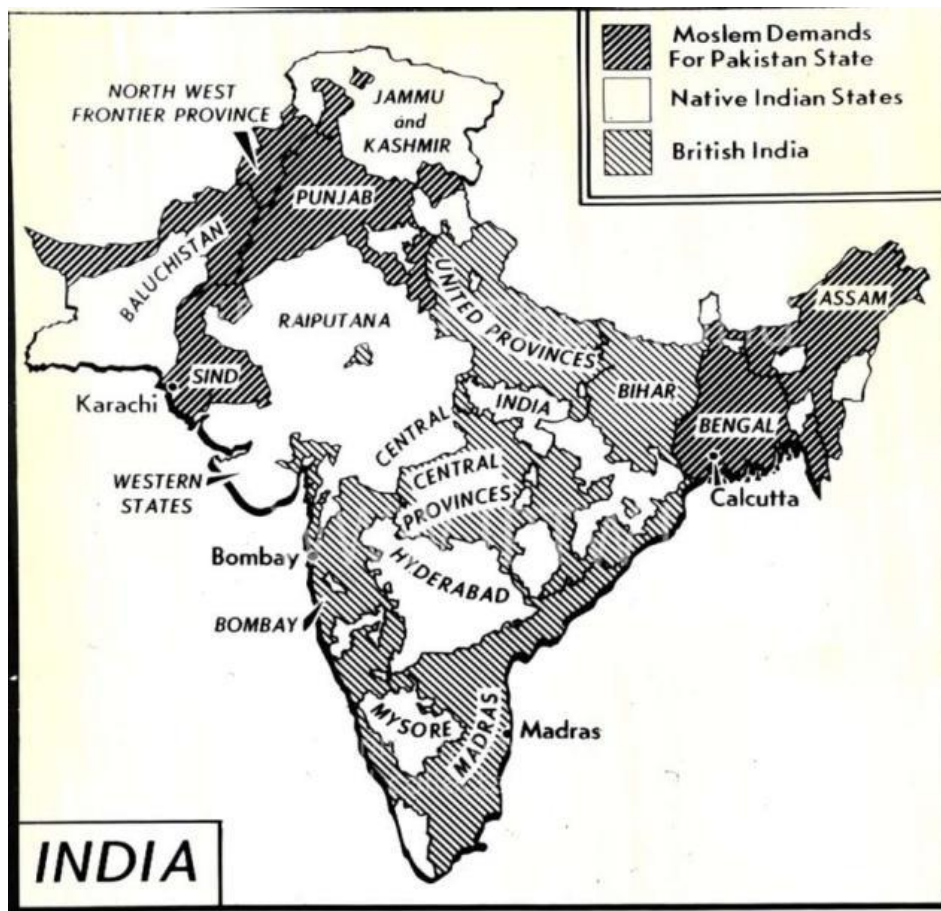
Figure 5: The division of the Indian subcontinent following the demands of a separate Muslim state. This map words the princely states as "native Indian"[19].

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[19] Columbia Education, '*A news bureau map from August 1947, pre-Partition, attempts to represent the complexities of the situation*' (2010)
http://www.columbia.edu/itc/mealac/pritchett/00maplinks/modern/maps1947/maps1947.html
[Accessed November 12, 2019]
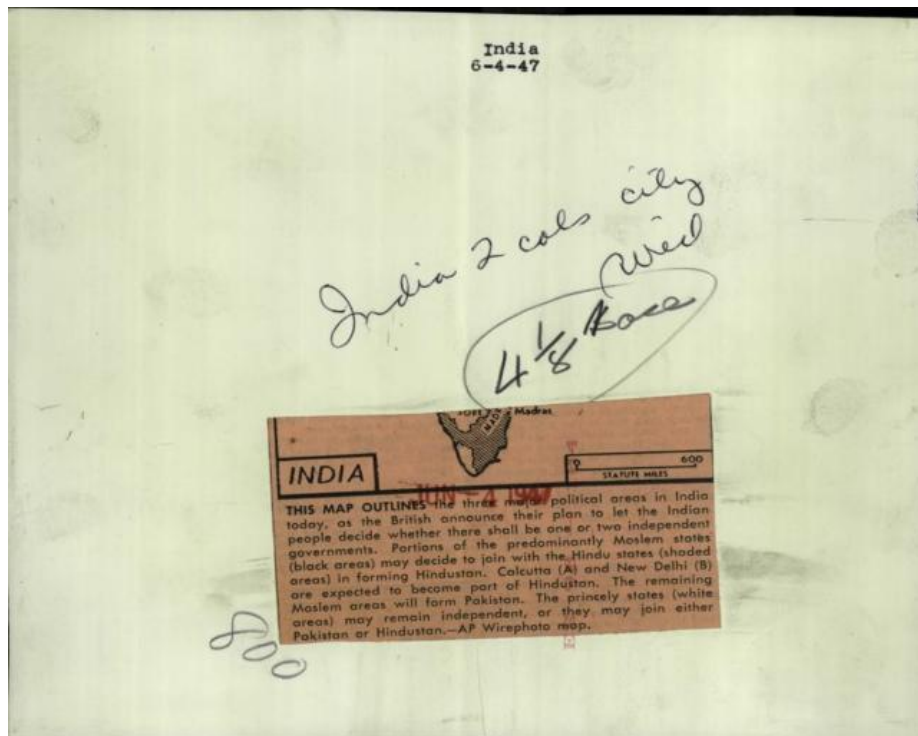
Figure 6: The original caption of the map above, depicting the division of the Indian subcontinent to form Independent India and Pakistan.[20]

In addition to cartography, photography and cinema were used as tools to cultivate the feeling of desire among the masses further.[21] In the last few decades of the twentieth century, cinema and photography, as a result of their increasing popularity and consumption, were used to circulate messages and develop a dominant scheme of representation. With the emergence of social media and third cinema, the dominance of mainstream cinema has reduced. However, it continues to be used as a medium by both India and Pakistan to defend their claim over the land of Kashmir. Movies such as *Azaadi* and *Shikara*, released in 2018 and 2020, continue to fuel the debate surrounding Kashmir through the cinematic representations of the land. The Valley of Kashmir is represented either as an idyllic space or as one caught within violence,

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[20] Columbia Education *Untitled* (2010)
<http://www.columbia.edu/itc/mealac/pritchett/00maplinks/modern/maps1947/maps1947.html >
[Accessed November 12, 2019]
[21] Kabir, p. 14.

communal discord, and turbulence. The stock image of Kashmir '*Shikara on the Dal Lake*'[22] has been integral to the fetishizing visual scheme since it focuses on the Valley's landscape, but eliminates the lived experiences of *Kashmiri*s, their culture, and their trauma. [23]



Figure 7: The stock image of Kashmir – *Shikara on the Dal Lake*.[24]

The creation of this nationalist yearning led to a hyper-focused representation of the land and its beauty. This selective representation overshadowed the everyday struggle of Kashmiris including the impact of violence on locals and the forced migration of the local communities following in Insurgency of 1989, denying them space for representing their trauma. Their experiences of forced migration, violent attacks, and scaremongering, if recorded and represented, would challenge the carefully cultivated feeling of desire towards the 'Paradise

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[22] A wooden houseboat that usually floats in water bodies, particularly in the Valley of Kashmir in Jammu & Kashmir, India. Shikaras serve multiple purpose including transportation, use for leisure and sometimes they are converted into floating hotels for tourists.

[23] Kabir, p. 178

[24] Danish Yaseen, *Objects: The Silent Story Tellers* (2019) <https://www.kashmiruntold.org> [Accessed on December 12, 2019]. Also see, Prateeksha Pathak 'Memorabilia of Kashmiri Tangible Heritage: Counter-Narratives of Kashmiri Natives' *Dialog* No. 32, (Autumn 2017), pp 1-17 (p. 4)

on Earth'.[25] This yearning was crucial to both the nations and their political manoeuvres, which focused on making Kashmir a part of their territories.

The selective gaze of the camera has not only erased humanity and human struggle of residing in a conflict zone from the popular representation of Kashmir, but has also overshadowed the culture of the communities. This popular representation has presented the Valley as a dangerous space full of violence due to terrorism and communal disharmony, thus erasing the local culture of Kashmiris completely. *Kashmiriyat,* or the culture of Kashmir, according to Chitralekha Zutshi, is symbolised by 'religious syncretism' that exists in the Valley.[26] The concept of *Kashmiriyat* relied on the harmonious intermingling of religions within the land of Kashmir. While words and selective cinematic representation has overlooked the religious intermingling in Kashmir, the artefacts preserved from earlier times give us a glimpse into the lives and the collective histories of people before communalism and religious segregation began affecting Kashmir and its people. One such artefact is an old copy of *Ramayana* in Persian Script, with unknown origins and period of publishing, was found as a part of the Dogra Arts Museum, Jammu. The yellowing tattered pages of the *Ramayana* act as a window to the distant past, where Persian and Urdu were not Muslim and Sharda[27] was not Hindu. The torn edges of the manuscript, bound by a new thread to hold it together, tell us a lot about how far we have come from our past, which has become a hazy symbol of the good times. These remnants reiterate the lost voices of Pandits, Muslims, Sikhs, and Buddhists, whose voices articulated a sense of belonging to Kashmir while simultaneously remaining faithful to their religious affiliations; the voices that were carefully omitted out to fulfil the political aspirations of the present.

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[25] Kashmir is popularly known as the Paradise on Earth as a result of the hyper-focus on its landscape and its beauty.

[26] Chitralekha Zutshi *Languages of Belonging; Islam, Regional Identity and the Making of Kashmir.* (London: Orient Blackswan, 2003) p.233.

[27] The script of Kashmiri, which is being lost as a result of ongoing politics and eroding memory.
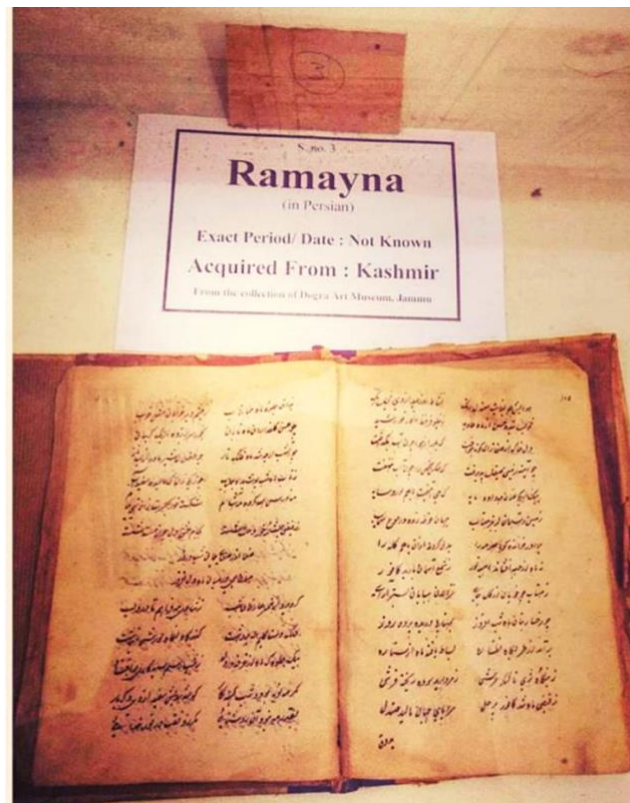
Figure 8: A manuscript of Ramayana in Persian script from the collection of Dogra Art Museum, Jammu.[28]

## 1.2 The Valley of Beauty and Blood

The princely state of Jammu and Kashmir was created by Gulab Singh, commander of the Dogra cavalry contingent in Maharaja Ranjit Singh's army who later went on to become the first Maharaja of Jammu and Kashmir. During his rule, he toiled to create a 'polyglot princely state' by conquering different smaller areas through battles, transactions and treaties.[29] After being defeated in the First Anglo-Sikh War, Maharaja Ranjit Singh and his allies were forced to give the lands of Kashmir and its surrounding areas to the British after signing the *Treaty of Lahore* on March 09, 1846. Later, Raja Gulab Singh signed the *Treaty of Amritsar* with the British on March 16, 1846 to purchase a portion of the land of Jammu and Kashmir.

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[28] Prateeksha Pathak, *Untitled* (2020) <https://www.kashmiruntold.org> [accessed October 20, 2019]
[29] Bose, *Contested Lands: Israel-Palestine, Kashmir, Bosnia, Cyprus, and Sri Lanka,* p. 164.

According to the treaty:

> '(a) the British government transfer and make over, for ever, in independent
>
> possession to Maharaja Golab Singh of Jammu, and the heirs male of his body, all the
>
> hilly or mountainous country, with its dependencies, situated to the eastward of the
>
> river Indus, and westward of river Ravee, including Chamba and excluding Lahool;
>
> and (b) in consideration of the transfer, Maharaja Golab Singh paid to the British
>
> Government the sum of Rs 75 lakh *(Nanak Shahi)* of which 50 lakh were paid on
>
> ratification of the treaty and 25 lakh subsequently by the end of September 1846 AD
>
> (Beg 1995; 406)'[30]

The princely state, formed after the treaty, included the Kashmir Valley and the Jammu

region as well as the Himalayan regions of Ladakh, Gilgit and Baltistan.[31] The population of

the state, although thinly spread, was equally diverse. The Valley of Kashmir comprised of a

substantial majority of Sunni Muslims, most of whom were skilled craftsmen and artisans. To

the East of the Valley were high mountains of Leh and Ladakh, bordering Tibet, populated

mostly by Buddhists. To the west were sparsely populated regions of Gilgit and Baltistan,

populated by Shia Muslims. To the south of the Valley was Jammu, which had a considerable

population of Hindus. These communities, although diverse, lived together in harmony,

creating the syncretic fabric of Kashmir.

With the arrival of the British in India in 1858 came the British-Indian education system,

which replaced the established system of education and exchange in the state of Jammu and

Kashmir. The indigenous Kashmiri education in the early nineteenth century was firmly

rooted in diversity, with an emphasis on discussing different traditions, cultures, customs, and

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[30] Mirza Afzal Beg 'Land Reforms in Jammu and Kashmir' in*, The Story of Kashmir: Yesterday and Today*, ed by Verinder Grover, Volume 2 (Delhi: Deep & Deep Publications, 1995), p. 406-10.
[31] Bose, *Contested Lands: Israel-Palestine, Kashmir, Bosnia, Cyprus, and Sri Lanka,* p. 164.

languages of communities, localities, castes, and religions. Nita Kumar observes that in the eighteenth and the early nineteenth century, the system of education in India was 'instance par excellence of heterogeneity' as a result of patronage received from different religious institutions as well as inculcation of various teaching methods that trained the students in a variety of ways, especially in promoting religious and political co-existence with harmony.'[32] The education systems and royal patronage, in the spirit of true enlightenment, promoted cultural exchanges, education, and debate between scholars of different communities. *'Ain-e-Dharmarth'*, an institution dedicated to the education of the youth of Kashmir supported by the royal patronage, housed more than six hundred students, studying in different temples in the Valley. At the same time, 'five state-supported' *Madrasas,* institutions dedicated to educating the Muslim youth, operated in Srinagar, namely '*Madrasa Nava Kadal, Madrasa Maharaj Gunj, Madrasa Rainawari, Madrasa Basant Bagh, and Madrasa Aishakol'[33]*. Through this institutional framework, education was intermeshed within the structures of different sects, caste groups, religious communities, and economic classes. This intercommunal exchange reflected the social fabric of Kashmir, where religious and cultural intermingling was practised and highly encouraged.

However, the arrival of the British-Indian education system challenged the indigenous methods of imparting knowledge. The ruling dynasty of the state, the *Dogras[34]* were highly influenced by the British and their systems. After the arrival of the British ambassadors, the *Dogra* rulers drew heavily from the British system and replaced the indigenous inclusive system of education with the colonial apparatus. With the introduction of the new education system, Kashmiris started feeling alienated since the system introduced new administrative

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[32] Nita Kumar, *Lessons from Schools* (New Delhi: Sage Publishers, 2000) p. 14.
[33] Zutshi, p 190.
[34] The Dogra dynasty was a Hindu Rajput Dynasty, founded by Gulab Singh who was an influential noble in court of Maharaja Ranjit Singh of Lahore. He established his supremacy over the areas surrounding the Kashmir Valley and gave shape to the princely state of Jammu and Kashmir.

languages, Urdu and English, which gradually replaced Kashmiri, the lingua franca to people of the state. The replacement of Persian with Urdu as the court language and the language of administration and instruction not only left the indigenous Kashmiris perplexed but further justified the import of outsiders from plains to the Valley since they were more proficient in the language than Persian speaking Kashmiris. Observing these changes, many Kashmiri Pandits learnt the language to secure administrative positions in the state and gradually became proficient in the language. Pandit Z.L. Kaul recalls, 'In early forties, at an all- India gathering of Urdu scholars, the delegates were asked to draw names of people who wrote correct idiomatic Urdu. Surprisingly, the panel which consisted of four names, included three *Kashmiri Pandits*. The panel comprised of Maulvi Abdul Huq of the *Anjuman-i-Taraqi-i-Urdu*, Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru, Raja Narendra Nath, and Pandit Brij Mohan.'[35] Moreover, the first Kashmiri to be regarded as a literary giant in Urdu literature was Pandit Daya Shankar Kaul *'Nasim'*. The system gradually highlighted the differences between communities, educational disparity and cultural differences between Pandits and Muslims started becoming more prominent, and inter-communal dialogue gradually came to a halt. These moves gradually disrupted the local order and harmony to establish a new hierarchy based on religion and caste.

Promoting Urdu at the expense of Kashmiri led to the creation of a gap between the administration and the people of the Valley. In addition to the change in the language of instruction, other ways were adopted to systematically create a hierarchy and induce communal tension and division. The Inspector of Schools suggested that the *Meghs* and the *Dooms*, lower-caste Kashmiri Muslims, should refrain from attending these educational institutions and should not receive compulsory primary education, further alienating the

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[35] Saligram Bhatt *Kashmiri Pandits: A Cultural Heritage.* (New Delhi: Lancers Books, 1995), p. 176.

Kashmiri population.[36] Contrary to the commonly understood belief that caste is not an important factor for Kashmiris, particularly the Muslims in the Valley, the reality is quite the opposite and fairly complex. The Kashmiri Muslim society has been divided into three caste groups. At the top are Syed castes, who claim to be descendants of the prophet. Below them are the 'occupational castes', who are descendants of businessmen.[37] The lowest group is of the 'service castes', whose ancestors did not own any land or business.[38] *Meghs* and *Dooms* belonged to the last group, and hence, were segregated\ Some historians also believe that a few religious Muslim leaders disagreed with the modern education system and discouraged their followers to gain education, leading to most of the Muslims remaining formally uneducated.[39] The orders of switching the language and replacing the indigenous systems led to a major section falling behind, thus disrupting the syncretic society of Kashmir and sowing the seeds of communal tension in the land.

This *'dual script order'* was also given a communitarian colour later by blaming the *Kashmiri Pandits,* a minority group in the Valley.[40] The order was supported by the Maharaja, who was a Hindu ruler, governing Muslim subjects. The Hindus of Kashmir, or *Kashmiri Pandits*, held important places in his administration as a result of being formally educated in the new system. Only a handful of Muslims received a formal education but were faced with discrimination as well as the harsh reality of limited jobs in the Valley as a result of poor development, which led to rising unemployment and agitation among Muslims.[41]

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[36] Political Department 101/P-102/1907, Jammu State Archives.

[37] Nandini Sen *Caste In Kashmir: Who Are Watals? Why Is Their Future Doomed?* (2020) <https://www.thequint.com/voices/opinion/caste-discrimination-kashmir-conflict-watal-sheikh-community-ghettoes-endogamy-manual-scavenging-poverty#read-more> [Accessed December 12, 2019] (para 7 of 7)

[38] Ibid (para 7 of 7)

[39] PMK Bamzai, *Culture and Political History of Kashmir, Volume 3: Modern Kashmir*, (New Delhi: M D Publications Pvt Ltd, 1994) p. 732

[40] Prem Nath Bazaz, *The History of Struggle for Freedom in Kashmir: Cultural and Political, from the Earliest Times to the Present Day* (New Delhi: Kashmir Publishing Company, 1954) p.186.

[41] Priyanka Bakaya and Sumeet Bhatti (2005) 'A *Study of what led to the Insurgency of in Kashmir Valley and Proposed Future Solutions*'

*Kashmiri Pandits*, due to their administrative positions, started being blamed for instigating the government to replace the languages to create a distinct elite class of literary and religious scholars, most of which were Hindus. This *'dual script order'* was further followed by the abolition of Sanskrit, the Sharda script, and Persian in primary departments of schools, which had a marked effect in making people feel alienated and hostile against other communities, challenging the religious syncretism and cultural interweaving in the Valley.

With the increasing communal tension, *Kashmiriyat* started fading away from the Valley gradually, beginning with the events of 1931. The incidents that challenged the concept of *Kashmiriyat* began in the Jammu Central Jail, where a Hindu constable had allegedly insulted the *Quran*, the holy book of Islam.[42] After this, a few pages of the Quran were found in a drain in Srinagar[43]. This discovery led to the violence, looting, and murder of Kashmiri Hindus and Sikhs on July 13, 1931. After this event, the Kashmiri population decided to come together and fight for 'the right of democratic self-rule'.[44] The hybrid idea of being a Kashmiri had particularly been challenged and left in tatters by these communal differences. These incidents led to the *'Kashmir for Kashmiris Movement'*; a movement conceptualized by Sheikh Abdullah and Mirza Bashiruddin Mahmud Ahmed, the founders of the *All Jammu and Kashmir Muslim Conference*, which was later renamed the *National Conference* in 1939, to represent the entire population of the state of Jammu and Kashmir. The Movement was against the autocratic rule of the Dogras and the alienation felt by the Kashmiri Muslims as a result of their decisions. The sense of being in one's homeland and the desire for the Valley in each Kashmiri's intimate being was gradually being replaced by a recognition of the other

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<http://web.stanford.edu/class/e297a/Kashmir%20Conflict%20-%20A%20Study%20of%20What%20Led%20to%20the%20Insurgency%20in%20Kashmir%20Valley.pdf> [Accessed 20 November 2019] p.5.

[42] Zutshi, p. 233.

[43] Ibid, p. 233.

[44] P.N.K. Bamzai, *Culture and Political History of Kashmir, Vol. 3, Modern Kashmir* (New Delhi: MD Publications, 1994), 732

community as 'the enemy' of their home and their own people. The 'imagined communities' began collapsing to form newer ones based on the lines of religion and communalism after citizens became conscious of their religious differences.

This consciousness of self and the distinction with the other was highlighted further in 1947, during the events of the Partition of the Indian subcontinent into India and Pakistan along the lines of religion. In 1947, when the British administrators decided to grant self-rule to India, they offered three choices to the princely states. They could either accede to one of the two new dominions, Independent India or Pakistan or choose to remain autonomous. However, Lord Mountbatten categorically insisted that the third option was not sustainable. He encouraged the rulers of all the princely states to either choose to join India or Pakistan based on their geographical location and demographical makeup. More than five hundred princely states opted to join the Indian union. The diverse stretch of 847,471 square miles of Jammu and Kashmir, however, proved to be a thorny exception to the smooth accession of princely states to either dominion.

The peculiarity of a Hindu ruler governing a state with a majority of Muslims was aggravated by the geographical contiguousness of Kashmir to both the newly formed nations, causing an interruption in the process.[45] The Maharaja of Kashmir, Hari Singh had ascended the throne on September 1925.  After the announcement of Partition in June 1947, the Maharaja announced that Kashmiris would, 'work out our own destiny without dictation from any quarter which is not an integral part of the state.'[46] He avoided joining India due to the antagonism showed by the Indian National Congress towards the princely states and their rulers. On the other hand, merging with Pakistan would directly result in the end of his Hindu dynasty that ruled the state. He proposed signing a '*Standstill Agreement*' with both the

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[45] Guha, p. 57
[46] Ibid, p. 58

countries to remain an autonomous state and allow the free movement of people and goods across the border. While Pakistan signed the agreement, India adopted the wait and watch strategy. In September 1947, the rail service between Jammu and Sialkot in West Punjab was suspended. Following the incidents of passive resistance, on September 27, 1947, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, the first Prime Minister of Independent India, wrote a letter to Sardar Patel, an influential political leader who integrated 562 princely states in the Union of India, discussing the concerning situation in Kashmir. He further wrote that Pakistan intended 'to send infiltrators to enter Kashmir in considerable numbers.'[47] Nehru wanted Kashmir to stay in India, while Patel was initially inclined to let it go to Pakistan due to its demography and geography. However, Pakistan's accession of Junagadh changed his mind. 'If Jinnah could take hold of a Hindu-majority state with a Muslim ruler, why should the Sardar not be interested in a Muslim-majority state with a Hindu ruler?'[48] Kashmir became the 'bone of contention' between the two dominions, or as a *shikara wallah (shikara* rider) commented in a personal conversation, '*India aur Pakistan ne toh Kashmir ko football hi bana diya hai*'[49] (India and Pakistan have turned Kashmir into a football).

While debates and discussions around Kashmir were at its peak, on October 12, 1947, Maharaja Hari Singh issued a statement refuting all rumours regarding his inclination to join either India or Pakistan. 'We intend to keep on friendly relations with both India and Pakistan. Despite constant rumours, we have no intention of joining either India or Pakistan…The only thing that will change our mind is if one side or the other decides to use force against us.' [50] Just after ten days of this statement, Kashmir witnessed its first

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[47] Ibid, p. 59

[48] Rajmohan Gandhi *Patel, A life*. (Ahmedabad: Navjivan Trust Publications, 1990) pp. 439

[49] While travelling in Jammu, a Kashmiri shikara-wallah expressed his disappointment through these words, comparing his land, Kashmir, to a football being kicked between two opponents.

[50] R.B Batra, quoted in Sisir Kumar Gupta, *Kashmir: A Study in India-Pakistan Relations*. (Bombay: Asian Publication House, 1966) p. 196.

infiltration. Several thousand men invaded from the North-West Frontier Province and made their way to Srinagar. Although there are no eye-witness accounts of this 'tribal invasion' from the other side of the border, the tribal fleet sealed the fate of Kashmir and its accession to India. The invaders attacked and looted Hindus and Sikhs, burnt their shops and murdered them. The justification of this brutality, once again, found its roots in the religious conflict and communal differences. Accounts of India and Pakistan on this incident are contradictory. While India claims Pakistan encouraged and trained these invaders, the latter disclaimed any involvement and called it a 'spontaneous' rushing of Pathan Muslims to the aid of their religious community persecuted by a Dogra ruler and a Kashmiri Pandit prime minister.

Unable to defend himself and his princely state from invaders who looted Kashmiri bazaars and sent lorries full of spoils back to Waziristan in NWFP, the Maharaja decided to join India. The *Instrument of Accession* was signed on October 26, 1947, and was taken to Delhi by V.P. Menon on October 27, 1947. After the accession, 28 *Dakotas*[51] flew to Srinagar to rescue the state of Kashmir, the borderland of the Indian territory from invaders. While this document is held as evidence by India, Pakistan and its government refute it unequivocally. On October 27, 1947, the Prime Minister of *Azad Kashmir*, Liaqat Ali Khan met Nehru in Delhi, with Lord Mountbatten being present as an umpire, to discuss the possibility of having the plebiscite to let the citizens of Kashmir choose which nation they wished to join or alternatively if they want to live in an independent state. On March 1, 1948, India took the issue of Kashmir to the U.N., where the Pakistani representative Sir Zafarullah Khan suggested holding a plebiscite under 'impartial interim administration'. The proposal was

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[51] Army troops and their allies

vetoed by the Soviet Union and the plebiscite never took place, making Kashmir the 'Spanish ulcer'[52]. Commenting on the geographical position of Kashmir, Philip Noel Baker says,

> In the world struggle for and against communism, Kashmir occupies a place more critical than most people realize. It is the one corner at which the British Commonwealth physically touches the Soviet Union. It is an unsuspected soft spot, in the perimeter of the Indian ocean basin, on whose inviolability the whole security of the Commonwealth and indeed world peace depend.[53]

Both geographically and as a result of its demography, the land of Kashmir was strategically important for both Independent India and Pakistan, and both the countries wanted to include the state in their geographical territory. In the words of Josef Korbel, it was 'uncompromising and perhaps uncompromisable struggle of two ways of life, two concepts of political organization, two scales of values, two spiritual attitudes.'[54]

The political climate altered both the geography as well as the demography of Kashmir drastically. As the dynamics of Partition solidified, the state of Jammu and Kashmir was split between India and Pakistan, uprooting over a million Muslims and causing a massacre of thousands of Muslims of Jammu Province. 'Thirty lorries carrying Muslim evacuees out of Kashmir state were attacked by Dogra troops at *Satwari* in Jammu. Most of the male members were massacred, while the women were abducted.'[55] Similar unspeakable massacres happened in the Rajouri and Mirpur districts of Kashmir against Hindus and Sikhs.

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[52] Untitled note by Major General T.W. Rees, in *Rees Papers*, MSS. Eur. F. 247/72, OIOC cited in Ramachandra Guha, *India After Gandhi: The History of the World's Largest Democracy.* (New Delhi: Harpercollins India, 2007) p. 62.

[53] H.V. Hodson to Philip Noel-Baker, 2 March 1948, copy in Short Papers, MSS. Eur. F. 189/1, OIOC cited in Ramachandra Guha *India After Gandhi: The History of the World's Largest Democracy.* (New Delhi: Harpercollins India, 2007) p. 65.

[54] Josef Korbel *Danger in Kashmir*, Second Edition. (Princetown: Princetown University Press, 1966). Pages 78-79.

[55] Ilyas Chattha 'The Long Shadow of 1947' *Revisiting India's Partition*, ed by Amritjit Singh, Nalini Iyer and Rahul Gairola. (London and New York: Lexington Books, 2016) p. 150.

The hybrid idea of being a Kashmiri was challenged and left in tatters as a result of this communal divide. The attack from NWFP, the integration of Kashmir in the Indian territory and the subsequent violence challenged the stance that the Maharaja had taken, where he pledged that the Kashmiris would decide their own destiny based on their aspirations and choices.[56] The fate of the state and its people was decided by the 'other(s)' and would continue to be decided and represented by the outsiders.

The accession of Kashmir raised a prominent question regarding the harmonious existence of a state with majority Muslim population, in a Hindu majority but professedly secular India. The state of Jammu and Kashmir decided to join Independent India after the Maharaja signed the *Instrument of Accession*, however, the accession was conditional. Article 370 was drafted later to grant special status to the state, according to the terms of accession. According to the article, the state government had to be consulted by the centre while taking decisions in all the matters except defence, foreign affairs and communications. In clinging to Kashmir, India wanted to weaken Partition, while in claiming the territory, Pakistan wanted to strengthen Partition and justify its events. 'To fight to the last ditch for (Kashmir) is the slogan of all Pakistanis; not to give way on it is rapidly becoming the fixed idea in India.'[57] One of the most crucial things about the Kashmir conflict was the investment in arms and armaments by both the countries. This crippled the newly formed dominions socially as well as economically since both the countries had millions of people struggling to make their ends meet every day. The decision to invest the country's capital in weapons rather than investing it towards the settlement of millions who had been uprooted not only led to a social crisis in both the countries where people were deprived of the basic necessities but also escalated the conflict further.

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[56] Guha, p. 59.
[57] Ibid, p. 251.

In February 1950, the Security Council of the United Nations recommended that both India and Pakistan 'must withdraw their armies' from the border, then known as the Ceasefire Line[58] or the CFL.[59] During this period of turbulence, Kashmiris could not comprehend why the existence of Kashmir as an independent state was not being seen as an alternative. Both Kashmiri Hindus and Kashmiri Muslims have distinct identities. Kashmiri Hindus 'by custom and traditions' differed 'from other Hindu communities in India', while the 'background of Kashmiri Muslims was quite different from the Muslims in Pakistan.'[60] The fact was that the Kashmiri community was homogenous despite the presence of the Hindu minority.[61] For the locals, Kashmir and the Kashmiri society had always been an autonomous system capable of existing as an autonomous entity and sustaining itself. Nehru seemed to have understood this sentiment and resonated with it through a declaration that his government will 'pledge…not only to the people of Kashmir but to the world…(to) hold a referendum under international auspices such as the United Nations' to determine whether the people of Kashmir wanted to merge with India or Pakistan.[62] He also consulted Sheikh Abdullah, who by then had a stronghold in the Valley of Kashmir, to understand the sentiment further. Sheikh Abdullah was staunchly against the proposal of Kashmir being included in Pakistan. Prior to the Partition of the Indian subcontinent, Abdullah requested Sadiq Sahib, his associate who later went on to become the state chief minister, to go to Islamabad to understand the sentiments of the people and the leaders of Pakistan, the newly formed nation. On returning, Sadiq Sahib informed the Sheikh that the people of Pakistan wanted to uphold Islamic principles and make it a theocratic state. After listening to this and Sadiq's observations, the Sheikh formed

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[58] The ceasefire line was a temporary border that bifurcated Jammu and Kashmir and divided it between India and Pakistan. India got about 65% of the state, while Pakistan received control of the other 35% of the territory. The CFL began in Manawar, at the south of Chenab river in Jammu and went till Keran in the north, thus tearing the state apart.

[59] Guha, p 177

[60] Ibid, p. 177.

[61] M.O. Mathai, *My Days with Nehru* (Delhi: Vikas Publishing House Pvt Ltd, 1979) p. 238.

[62] A.G. Noorani T*he Kashmir Question*. (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 1961) p. 61.

his opinion and did not agree to accept any proposal which did not meet his 'ethos of secularism'.[63] The two leaders then joined hands to work towards the inclusion of Kashmir in India on terms acceptable by both, Kashmiris and the government of Independent India.

 In August 1952 Nehru reaffirmed that he wanted 'no forced unions', strengthening the confidences of Kashmiris in his rule. His government supported plebiscite and would encourage the Kashmiris to choose either 'to part company with us, (or) they can go their way.' However, his political actions did not fall in line with what he preached. He began by offering the division of Jammu and Kashmir along the Ceasefire Line, which was rejected by the Ministry of Kashmir Affairs[64] in Pakistan. Later in March 1956, Nehru told the parliament that Plebiscite was 'beyond the point' and not a practically viable option. This political fluctuation and the lack of international intervention resulted in disappointment and discontent rising among the locals.

This systematic oppression of citizens of Kashmir continued even after the accession of the state by the Indian government and its allies. Between 1950 to 1952, elections were being conducted in other parts of independent India to form governing bodies. Jammu and Kashmir, on the other hand, was 'beset with uncertainty' on three fronts: the state was troubled by the troubled relations between the state and the central governments; the conflict between the Hindu rulers and the Muslim subjects was rising, and finally, the conflict between Muslim majority Kashmir Valley and the Hindu dominant region of Jammu was rising day after day. Sheikh Abdullah had a stronghold in the Valley but resentment started growing against him

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[63] Kuldip Nayar *Sheikh Abdullah opted for India as he believed Pakistan was determined to become a theocracy* (2019)  <https://www.telegraphindia.com/india/sheikh-abdullah-opted-for-india-as-he-believed-pakistan-was-determined-to-become-a-theocracy/cid/1695891> [Accessed 28 November 2019]
[64] The Ministry of Kashmir Affairs and Gilgit Baltistan is a ministry of the Government of Pakistan. This Ministry is responsible for the governance of 'Azad Kashmir', Gilgit and Baltistan districts of Pakistan.

in Jammu as a result of the land reform acts introduced by him as well as the lack of engagement with the minority groups and representation of their interests.

On October 18, 1950, the '*Jammu and Kashmir Big Landed Estates Abolition Act'*, introduced by Sheikh Abdullah, was passed in the Jammu and Kashmir legislative assembly. Under this act, 'every proprietor, whether he himself cultivated the land or not, could only retain 22.75 acres of land'[65]. The remaining part of his property would go to the actual 'tillers'[66] of the soil.[67] As a result of this act, Zamindars, or landowners, mostly Hindus, were dispossessed of land in the Valley. The land that had been seized by the state from the Zamindars was later handed over to the middle peasantry. The agricultural proletariat was not benefitted by this move, as was being claimed while introducing the Act. This move to reallocate lands, without matching the claims laid, not only led to resentment against the government but also created a rift between the religious communities. The land was snatched from Hindus and allotted to Muslim families (mostly) leading to growing dissatisfaction among minority groups, whose pleas fell into the deaf ears of the state government.

The impact of his decision was observed in January 1952, when Sheikh Abdullah was due to speak in Jammu. A group of Hindu students and political leaders revolted against him and his rule. They were also against the idea of the flag of his party, the National Conference, being flown alongside the Indian tricolour in Jammu.[68] These students and leaders were arrested and brutally tortured, which sparked sympathy for these protesters. The demonstrators, who were fighting for the release of the captives, entered the Secretariat, broke furniture and burnt the records of the government. These revolts were answered by a 72-hour curfew, where

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[65] Anirudh Kumar Prasad, 'Sheikh Abdullah and Land Reforms in Jammu and Kashmir' *Economic and Political Weekly*, vol. 49, no. 31, (2014), pp. 130–137, (p. 130).
[66] People who turn over the soil for planting crops.
[67] Prasad, p. 130.
[68] Guha, p. 254

hundreds of protestors were arrested once again, including a prominent Hindu leader Prem Nath Dogra. The members of the Hindu and Sikh communities were gradually being agitated by the administration because of their interests being side-lined by Sheikh Abdullah and his leadership to protect the interests of the Muslims of the Valley

In the middle of this growing tension, Sheikh Abdullah met Jawaharlal Nehru to sign the Delhi Agreement, which stated that 'Kashmiris would become full citizens of India, in exchange for an autonomy far greater than that enjoyed by the other states of the Indian union. Thus, the new flag (devised by the National Conference) would, for historical and other reasons, be flown alongside the national flag.'[69] Further, the agreement also mentioned that the central government will not interfere to 'quell internal disturbances without the consent of Srinagar'.[70] By signing this agreement with the central government, Sheikh Abdullah also confirmed his alliance with them, which in turn would let him stay in power in Kashmir with the assistance of the central government. The agreement was also a measure to eradicate any attempts to change the demography of the state, particularly the Valley of Kashmir. The government of Kashmir, led by Sheikh Abdullah, prohibited people from outside the state to purchase any land in Kashmir. By accepting these conditions, the leaders of the Indian government successfully projected their country as a secular one, which had seamlessly integrated a Muslim majority state, Jammu and Kashmir, in its territory. However, reality was strikingly different. Both the regions, Jammu and the Valley of Kashmir witnessed episodes violence, conflict and protests leading to agitated communities who were trying to pave the way to get their rights and revive peace and harmony in their homeland.

The Valley witnessed its first elections in 1951, and during these elections National Conference won all the 75 seats. On probing further, one realizes that the leaders, candidates

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[69] Ibid, p. 174
[70] Ibid, p. 179.

and volunteers of the opposing party, the *Praja Parishad* - a political party formed by the Hindu nationalists of Jammu and Kashmir, were arrested and their candidature was cancelled.[71] The arrests ensured that in many seats the candidates of the National Conference stood unopposed. Later, the elections that were held in Kashmir at 'regular five-year intervals – in 1957, 1962, 1967 and 1972… made a cruel mockery of the principles and procedures of competitive democracy.'[72] A combination of fraud and fear was used to ensure that the politicians who favoured the central government won the elections every time.[73] These events clarified the picture regarding governance of the Valley of Kashmir, where the rights of citizens of the state and 'political liberties were virtually non-existent'. 'Mass arrests, arbitrary detentions, and violence by hired thugs against political dissidents became the norm.'[74] The support of the central government continued to get absolute majority in all the subsequent elections till 1972. The 'farcical elections' held in the Valley of Kashmir in 1962 led to formation of a government where 64 out of 72 seats were 'won' by the leading party, ones that favoured the central government.[75] After seeing the results of the elections, Nehru wrote to Bakshi Ghulam Mohammed, the leader of the National Conference after Sheikh Abdullah and the *Wazir-e-Azam* or the Prime Minister of the state of Jammu and Kashmir[76], 'It would strengthen your position much more if you lost a few (more) seats.'[77] The governance of Jammu and Kashmir was controlled by the central government through placing

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[71]Ibid, p. 254.

[72] Aijaz Ashraf Wani, *What Happened to Governance in Kashmir?* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2019) p. 349.

[73] Ibid, p 349

[74] Bose, *Contested Lands: Israel-Palestine, Kashmir, Bosnia, Cyprus, and Sri Lanka,* p. 171.

[75] Ibid, p. 171

[76] Till 1965, the head of the state of Jammu and Kashmir was called the Prime Minister of the state. Later, in 1965 the position of the *Wazir-e-Azam* or the Prime Minister was abolished. The chief executive of the state was now known as the Chief Minister.

[77] Sumantra Bose *Kashmir: Roots of Conflict, Paths to Peace*. (Cambridge: Harvard University, 2003) p. 36.

its allies in power, and these episodes of manipulation and fraud created resentment among Kashmiris towards the country and its legislature.

The centre not only supported Sheikh Abdullah and his political party, the National Conference, but were also firm supporters of the *Dogras*. However, after observing the resentment created by the decisions taken by Sheikh Abdullah, the centre along with Maharaja Hari Singh's son and the Head of the State of Jammu and Kashmir, or the *Wazr-e-Riyasat*, Karan Singh, decided to replace him by his deputy Bakshi Ghulam Mohammed in 1953. They also decided to shift the government from Srinagar to Jammu to please the agitated minorities. When Karan Singh arrived in Jammu, he wrote to the government of India describing the anxiety among citizens of Jammu and Kashmir, 'an overwhelming majority of the Jammu province seem to me to be emphatically in sympathy with the agitation.'[78] He further wrote that the centre should not discard these events are dismiss the whole affair as localized disturbance and disruption created by a few notorious groups.

The anxiety against these political manoeuvres that and the disrupted communal harmony was visible through frequent protests, demonstrations and sloganeering in the state. These movements of resistance were violently curtailed by the state. In the first week of March 1953, the volunteers of the *Bharatiya Jana Sangh, the Ram Rajya Parishad and the Hindu Mahasabha* came together to support the demands of the *Praja Parishad*. The volunteers participating in the *Satyagraha*[79] were led by a prominent political leader Dr Shyama Prasad Mookherjee. These protests resulted in the arrest of 1300 people and a prohibition of the entry of Dr Shyama Prasad Mookherjee into the state of Jammu and Kashmir. Dr Mookherjee disregarded this ban and crossed the border on the morning of May 11, 1953. He was arrested and imprisoned in Srinagar jail, where he died of a heart attack on June 22, 1953. On June 24,

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[78] Karan Singh *Autobiography* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1989) p. 149-150.
[79] Peaceful revolt

1953, his body was flown back to his home in Calcutta by an air force plane. After Mookherjee's death, Sheikh Abdullah had placed a shawl on his body, while Bakshi Ghulam Mohammed helped in placing the stretcher on the plane.[80] After becoming the Prime Minister of Jammu and Kashmir, Bakshi Ghulam Mohammed also started organizing public *darbars*, or public gatherings, every Friday to listen to the grievances of the citizens of the states.[81] These acts, however, did not pacify the citizens or curb the brimming religious animosity, which would finally culminate in the exodus of the Kashmiri Hindu community from the Valley of Kashmir in 1990.

The growing hostility among citizens led to them becoming a part of organizations such as the Jammu Kashmir Liberal Front, or the JKLF. The JKLF was formed in Pakistan administered Kashmir, or Azad Kashmir in 1964, and its presence had no impact on the Indian side of the border till the 1980s. The motto of JKLF was to encourage the reunification of the Indian and the Pakistani sides of Kashmir in a 'fully sovereign state'[82]. The founder of the movement, Amanullah Khan elaborated this idea of 'a united, neutral, secular and federal republic' of Kashmir in 1970 and led to organizing people to commit to the mission of re-claiming their home which was snatched from them'.[83] The growing dissatisfaction among Kashmiris led to them joining the organization with a hope to get their home and their rights back.

Although JKLF was a Muslim organization, it was not Islamist in its nature, appeal or its motive. In the 1990s, the JKLF 'lost its leading role in the insurgency' to the Jammu and Kashmir Hizbul Mujahideen (JKHM, 'Warriors of the Faith'), a rival group which emerged as an Islamist movement and invited people from the state to join it to reclaim Kashmir and

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[80] Guha, p. 187
[81] Ibid, p. 264
[82] Bose, *Contested Lands: Israel-Palestine, Kashmir, Bosnia, Cyprus, and Sri Lanka,* p. 179
[83] Amanullah Khan, *Free Kashmir* (Karachi: Central Printing Press, 1970) pp.139-149.

change its demography.[84] 'In contrast to the JKLF's rallying cry, *'Kashmir banega khudmukhtar'* (Kashmir will be sovereign), the Hizbul's slogan was '*Kashmir banega Pakistan'* (Kashmir will become a part of the Islamic state of Pakistan).'[85] The nature of the movement changed from an appeal for demanding a separate sovereign state by militants to demanding an Islamist state by the "voices of terror".[86] This change in the nature of the movement and resistance resulted in the violent genocide of Kashmiri Hindus in the late 1980s and the early 1990s in the Valley of Kashmir as an attempt to change the demographic constitution of the region.

The concept of *Kashmiriyat,* which was preserved and practised by the locals, was uprooted under the influence of the JKMH and its representatives. Religious inter-mingling, communal meet-ups and inter-dining had come to a halt due to policies and atrocities being committed by the state-controlled institutions on one hand and the manipulated individuals, who were driven by religion and a desire to change the demography on the other. Although one could observe the growing communal resentment in the society, it did not result in any killings and mass slaughter till 1989. The first incident that shook the Kashmiri Hindu community occurred in September 1989. Pandit Tika Lal Taploo, a prominent Kashmiri Pandit leader was shot dead by terrorists and infiltrators due to his influence in different segments of the society.[87] This was followed by Anti-Pandit slogans being painted on the walls of public buildings, offices and other public places. Slogans like '*Ralive, Tsaliv ya Galive'* were heard, presenting Pandits only three choices, to convert to Islam, to leave the Valley, or to perish.

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[84] Bose, *Contested Lands: Israel-Palestine, Kashmir, Bosnia, Cyprus, and Sri Lanka,* p. 180
[85] Ibid, p. 180.
[86] Walter Laqueur *Voices of Terror*. (New York: Reed Press, 2004) p. 289.
[87] On 14 September 1989, Pandit Tika Lal Taploo, a prominent leader from the Kashmiri Pandit community, was shot by the militants from the JKLF. After his death, many other Pandit leaders and important personalities were murdered including Judge Nilkanth Ganjoo, who had given a verdict against Maqbul Bhat, a militant. These deaths of one of the most potent and audible political voices of the Kashmiri Pandit community affected their representation, confidence and communal relationships, gradually making them political orphans.

Along with this, every day the community would hear slogans such as people from a certain age group shall be abducted and killed that day, or that the tap water has been poisoned to kill the Hindu traitors, or we want Kashmir with Kashmiri Hindu women, but without Kashmiri Hindu men.[88] As a result of this physical and mental torture, about 350,000 Kashmiri Brahmins were forced to vacate the Valley of Kashmir to protect themselves and their families from impending terrorism and violence.[89] However, the atrocities did not stop even after this episode of ethnic cleansing of Kashmiri Hindus from the Valley of Kashmir.

In June 1990, Girija Tikoo, a Kashmiri Pandit who had moved to Jammu as a result of the violence in Kashmir, was raped and brutally murdered. One day, she received a phone call from someone who informed her that as a result of rising hostility and violence in Kashmir, she should come to Bandipora to collect her salary for her work as a lab assistant in a Government High School, *Treham* soon. The caller assured her that they will ensure that she returns home safe after collecting their dues. Instead of returning safe, she was kidnapped from a Muslim colleague's house and gang-raped for being a *kafir*[90], or a traitor. Later, her body was found lying on the road and after the post-mortem, it was revealed that she was brutally gang-raped. Her body, while she was still alive, was cut into two parts using a mechanical saw. Despite the brutality and defilation of this woman's body, the event received no acknowledgement or representation, either from human rights organisations or from media houses.[91] The tension and brutality in Kashmir had reached its peak, yet the centre, as well as other authorities, turned a blind eye towards these episodes of insurgency in the Valley.

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[88] Source: Interviews taken by Ms Prateeksha Pathak and Mr Amrit Burman for the Voices from Valley Foundation.

[89] Haley Duschinski 'Survival Is Now Our Politics': Kashmiri Hindu Community Identity and the Politics of Homeland' *International Journal of Hindu Studies*, vol. 12, no. 1 (2008) pp. 41–64 (p 47).

[90] Traitor

[91] Kashmir Now, *5th June, 1990: Brutal Killing of Kashmiri Woman Girija Tickoo, A story that is wiped off from our memory* (2019) <https://www.jammukashmirnow.com/Encyc/2019/6/25/25th-June-1990-Brutal-Killing-of-Kashmiri-Woman-Girija-Tickoo-A-story-that-is-wiped-off-from-our-memory.html> [accessed 25 June 2019].

**1.3 History versus Memory: Selective Remembering of the Past**

Although the Kashmiris were victimised by spine-chilling violence, the national archives, cinema and popular media turned a blind eye to the trauma of the natives. Minority communities from Kashmiri were not only victims of organized violence, but were also forced to forget their experience and trauma of losing their homes and livelihood. Their stories of trauma were erased from the dominant media in order to conceal the political manoeuvres and turmoil in the state. In the absence of representation, communities were forced to seek alternative sources such as artefacts to preserve their experiences. Objects became the new canvas for the community to remember, revisit and retell their stories of loss. The memory evoked by material remains of the lost homeland, known as material memory, becomes our source to excavate untold stories and find lost history.

'Material memory works in mysterious ways.'[92] It resides within the woven patterns of *shawls*[93], among old souvenirs, in pieces of jewellery such as *athoor and deyjhor*[94], captured in old books, in the smell of familiar food or in the stitches of embroidered *pheran*[95].[96] The objects have become repositories of untold stories and memories, and have gradually transformed from seemingly banal material possessions to makers of longing and belonging. The artefacts, thus, 'transcend' their materiality and emerge as a tangible markers of an 'intangible place or state of being.'[97] Memory extracted through their material remnants 'manifests into one's everyday life, seeps into the years and remains quiet, accumulating the

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[92] Malhotra, *Remnants of a Separation: A History of Partition through Material Memory* p. 32.
[93] A long piece of cloth to be wrapped around like a shawl or a stole.
[94] Earrings worn by Kashmiri women symbolic of marriage
[95] A traditional outfit comprising of a long coat or cloak of wool worn by Kashmiri men and women. It is usually accompanied by Poot, which makes it two sets of cloaks worn one above the other.
[96] Malhotra, *Remnants of a Separation: A History of Partition through Material Memory* p. 32.
[97] Ibid, p. 32.

past and loss like layers of dust', and 'manifests itself in the most unlikely scenarios, decades and generations later'.[98]

These memories 'woven within materiality' build a deeper understanding of the events, where 'the object remains at the centre and what emerges through such a narrative' is a way of life in the land of Kashmir.[99] The object juxtaposes these multi-spatial narratives and memories of homeland prior to the advent of colonisation, and later the events of the Partition of the Indian subcontinent, which together had sown the seeds of communalism deep within the soil of Kashmir. Through this chapter, the historical events that took place between 1846 and 1989 were discussed. Beginning with the acquisition of Jammu and Kashmir by Dogra ruler Golab Singh, the chapter emphasised on the impact of political and administrative decisions such as changing the official language and education system of Kashmir, which alienated Kashmiris and highlighted intercommunal differences. The chapter then discusses division of Jammu and Kashmir between Independent India and Pakistan after the Partition of British India. Gilgit, Baltistan and ten other districts of the Valley of Kashmir became a part of Pakistan, and were known as Pakistan occupied Kashmir or Azad Kashmir (Free Kashmir). The rest of the state merged with Independent India through the controversial Instrument of Accession and an unfulfilled promise of Plebiscite. After joining the Indian territory, Kashmiris were victimised by different politicians and denied fair elections. These political events culminated in the Insurgency of 1989, which led to involuntary displacement of minority communities from the Valley. Although these events have turned the lives of Kashmiris upside down, they have not been represented the national and popular histories, thus compelling the communities to adopt alternate canvases such as artefacts. The adoption of alternate canvases narrates these anecdotes of pain and separation as well as the politics of

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[98] Ibid, p. 32.
[99] Ibid, p. 36.

identity and the need to preserve one's self during and after the times of turbulence. The objects act as catalysts to preserve and retell these tales, which would otherwise have been lost as a result of ongoing politics, communication block and the porous nature of memory. This dissertation will collect such material repositories and analyse them further to narrate untold stories of trauma and exile and explore their role in demystifying historical myths and narratives.

## Chapter 2: Rooted in the Uprooted: Material Memory of Migration

*Beta, hum kuch nahi laaye the, sirf yaadon ke alava*, we brought nothing with us dear child, just memories of our homeland.[100]  The conversations about the monumental exodus of the Kashmiri Pandits would usually begin with these words. On probing further, different generations of the families sat together and recalled all the objects survivors had carried with them as a symbol of their association with Kashmir. Little did I know, through this enquiry all kinds of humble objects such as books, utensils, keys, heirloom, letters, paintings, photographs etc. would emerge out of people's closets, securely locked both in their homes as well as in the deep recesses of their minds. We are surrounded by objects all around us. However, on being asked to revisit and recount our past, these objects are usually located in silence, towards the periphery, overshadowed by the other grand narratives. Historians typically privilege documents and written records of these experiences over other non-verbal sources of information. Documents, however, do not touch the lives of thousands of men, women and children who were affected by cataclysmic events such as the Insurgency of 1989, which led to the mass migration of minority communities from Kashmir. People were forced to wrap their lives, pack their belongings, lock their houses and flee to save \themselves and their families after receiving threats and seeing their names on the *hit-lists*[101] issued by the militants and terrorist groups. This 'movement of population was accompanied by a movement of memories and possessions', belongings and anecdotes, some of which still remain concealed in silence.[102] When migrants embarked on this arduous journey away from home, never to return, these artefacts became their loyal companions. These objects had

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[100] While interacting with the Kashmiri Pandit families, I would ask them about the objects they brought from Kashmir or created to establish a link to their lost homeland. The interactions would usually begin with this remark, stressing on how the closets were never opened, and nothing was carried.

[101] The local militants and terrorist groups had drawn up a list of targets. This list would involve affluent and influential Kashmiri Hindus and Sikhs, and would be pasted in public areas to warn the 'targets' to leave the land or sacrifice their lives.

[102]Malhotra, *Remnants of a Separation: A History of Partition through Material Memory* p. xxv

witnessed children wail for their homeland, they had been caressed when men and women sought comfort during rainy days, and sometimes they were sold off to be able to feed the family. The objects had touched the lives of many stranded families and witnessed their struggle first hand. Later, they were inherited by children and grandchildren of survivors, for whom these artefacts became their last tangible link to the Valley. Gradually, the objects transformed and became invaluable possessions for the families as they symbolised both the homeland and the loss of familiar space and associated relationships. Yet, when we attempt to record the past, these objects are usually excluded in favour of written records.



Figure 1 – A cinematic depiction of Kashmiri Pandits looking at the hit-list from the movie *Shikara*.[103]

History, by placing emphasis on the written text, can never record the past in its entirety, with all its rich complexity, emotions, and sensations. Through official documents, we can certainly retrieve facts of what had transpired but not the spirit of those times. 'Studies focusing on words, whether written or spoken, omit whole spheres of experience(s) that are cumbersomely framed in language but gracefully shaped into artefacts.'[104] Restricting oneself to verbal documents limits us to a rigid classificatory schema that segregates objects from

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[103] *Shikara*, a movie directed by Vidhu Vinod Chopra, presents a love story set amidst the events of the Kashmiri Pandit exodus.
[104] Henry Glassie, *Material Culture* (Bloomington and Indianapolis, IN: Indiana University Press, 1999), p. 44.

people and, in turn, ignores the wordless experiences of many, that are usually poured into objects. 'Objects made or modified by humans are clumped together under the term artefact.'[105] The term artefact is made up of two Latin terms – art and fact. According to Jules D. Prown,

> The term art derives from '*ars', 'artis* (skill in joining)', and 'fact' derives through *factum* (deed or act) from *facere* (to make or to do), emphasizing the utilitarian meaning already implicit in the word *art:* thus, skill or knowledge is applied to the making of thing.[106]

 Thus, artefacts are objects created to 'represent, to memorialise, to induce veneration, evaluation or contemplation…or otherwise to affect human thought or behaviour through visual means.'[107] These objects, thus, become an evidence of the culture and the collective reality of the past. They are something that were created in the past, but unlike other forms of evidence, they continue to survive in the present. By being present, these artefacts can be re-experienced: they are primary historical material available for hands-on study and analysis of historical events to develop a more nuanced understanding of the past through anecdotes and experiences that have previously not been recorded.

Material culture is the field of study that involves extraction and analysis of the past through artefacts. According to Prown (1993), material culture refers to 'the manifestations of culture through its material productions'.[108] The material remnants of the past act as a gateway to

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[105] Jules D. Prown 'The Truth of Material Culture: History or Fiction?', in *History from Things: Essays on Material Culture,* ed. by Steven Lubar and W. David Kingery (Washington and London: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1993), pp. 1-19, p 2.
[106] Ibid, p 2.
[107]Ibid , p. 2
[108] Ibid, p. 1.

discover the thoughts, ideas, biases and attitudes of the individuals, their families and their communities at a particular span of time. Prown further elaborates,

> The underlying premise of this field of study is that human-made objects reflect, consciously or unconsciously, directly or indirectly, the beliefs of individuals who commissioned, fabricated, purchased or consumed them, and by extension the beliefs of the larger society to which these individuals belonged.[109]

Material culture is thus an object-centric approach that excavates memories of the past through its material remains that exist in the present times. Objects are regarded as repositories of meaning and value, rather than just being 'cultural receptacles that acquire meanings, which can be unearthed and read by the historian'[110]. Examining an object not only involves carefully looking at its materiality – when was it made, what it is made of, what purpose it serves etc, but also what it has captured within itself – the memories and intangible heritage of its owners. These artefacts act as catalysts and assist the survivors in narrating the stories that were previously never told because survivors were reluctant to re-visit those traumatic episodes of Exile. Through their presence and materiality - their shape, texture, function, design and embellishments – they play a role in creating, shaping and preserving the experiences from the past.

Decades later, when the next generations indulge in the quest of looking for their past, these artefacts come out of the cupboards and emerge as the only material remains of the lost homeland. These tangible evidences become the impetus for shaping the narratives of those who have lived through the episodes of violence and trauma in the past and of others who have inherited these objects seeped with family history and associated trauma. The objects

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[109] Ibid, p.1.
[110] Karen Harvey 'Introduction' in *History and Material Culture: A Student's Guide to Approaching Alternative Sources* ed. by Karen Harvey (London and New York: Routledge, 2009) p. 6.

are critical for the subsequent generations, because unlike the silence or the calculated narrative of those whose lives had directly been affected by the insurgency of 1989, the artefact still remains in all its totality, untouched from both the malleability of memory as well as the calculative precision of story-telling. Thus, artefacts such as documents, utensils, old photographs, jewellery, *shawls,* keys etc, are 'like signposts to a journey'[111] that is mapped through these silent repositories that have preserved layers of memories and anecdotes throughout the years. The artefacts, though unaltered, serve a different purpose for different people. For the survivors, they act as repositories of the past, their trauma and symbolize the place that they once called home. On the other hand, for subsequent generations the same artefact acts as a clue, not just a symbol of what has now been lost but also a repository of undiscovered knowledge. The artefact motivates the subsequent generations to begin their quest for excavating through the layers of memory to discover untold stories from the past.[112] In this quest, 'the object becomes tangible evidence of the means of detection; it gives license to proceed on the quest for knowledge.'[113] This different approach to objects is symbolic of the different ways in which different generations look at the past to retrieve their lost self and identity. While the first generation is reluctant to revisit the past, the subsequent generations are on a quest to 'dig around in the ruins of memory,' for the memories that are 'buried' but they are 'fresh and untouched by forgetfulness.'[114]

This chapter aims to examine the role of inanimate objects in the lives of forced migrants. I begin with exploring the theories proposed by Nancy K. Miller, Ida Fink, Victoria Aarons and Alan Berger, and other scholars who have interviewed survivors of the Holocaust and

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[111] Nancy K. Miller *What They Saved: Pieces of a Jewish Past*. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2011) p. 5.
[112] Victoria Aarons and Alan L. Berger. *Third Generation Holocaust Representation: Trauma, History and Memory*. (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 2017) p. 83.
[113]Miller, p 5.
[114] Ida Fink 'A Scrap of Time' in *A Scrap of Time and Other Stories*, translated by Madeline Levine and Francine Prose (New York: Pantheon Books, 1987), p. 3.

understood the role of artefacts and inherited trauma in the present. Objects serve different purposes for the first, second and third generations of survivors of cataclysmic events by signifying different meanings for them. Studying the testimonies of survivors of the Holocaust enables us to understand the impact of genocide and dispersion on communities who were forced to leave their homes. Through the Holocaust framework, the chapter will further analyse the impact of dispersion and genocide on the Kashmiri Pandit community, who were forced to leave their homes after 1989. This section will analyse how the community preserved their stories and the impact of dispersion on representation. Later, various artefacts carried by the survivors are examined and categorised to understand how they assisted in preserving the experiential memories of internally displaced people. Using the Holocaust framework helps understand the impact of forced migration and dispersion on the Kashmiri Pandits by providing a comparative theoretical basis to understand the anecdotes, selective representation and the role of artefacts in recording the untold histories of marginalised communities.

## 2.1 An Impossible Homecoming

*'Auschwitz is so deeply etched in my memory that I cannot forget one moment of it. — So, you are living with Auschwitz? No, I live next to it. [à côté de]. Auschwitz is there, unalterable, precise, but enveloped in the skin of memory, an impermeable skin that isolates it from my present self. Unlike the snake's skin, the skin of memory does not renew itself…Thinking about it makes me tremble with apprehension.'*                                       -
                         Charlotte Delbo (*Days and Memory*)[115]

Sigmund Freud begins his pathbreaking work, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, by describing an encounter with the veterans of the First World War, for whom their dreams and memories would bring them back, repeatedly, to the horrifying episodes of violence they had witnessed

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[115] Charlotte Delbo, *Days and Memory*, translated by Rosette Lamont (Marlboro, Vt.: The Marlboro Press, 2001), p. 2.

during the war. These recurring dreams and memories keep the survivors in close proximity
to the battlefield and its horrors:

> Now dreams occurring in traumatic neuroses have the characteristic of
> repeatedly bringing the patient back into the situation of his accident, a situation
> from which he wakes up in another fright. This astonishes people far too little.[116]

Similarly, for the survivors of other traumatic events such as the Holocaust, the Afghan Wars,
the Partition of the Indian subcontinent, ethnic cleansing and genocide, terrorist attacks etc,
their dreams and memories have also kept them closely tied to their past. Due to the
magnitude of the impact of these cataclysmic events on the lives of the survivors, their lives
can be divided into two parts – life before the occurrence of the traumatic event and the one
lived after it. Auerhahn and Prelinger explain this division further by stating that there is 'no
post- Holocaust present . . . other than what can be interpreted in light of the Holocaust'[117].
The first-hand accounts of survivors are structured and shaped by the violence they had
witnessed.  The traumatic event divides the lives of survivors into two distinct halves and
shapes how their present is interpreted through the lens of the past, or as 'a model of trauma
constructed from two moments— a later event which causes a reinterpretation backwards and
revivification of an original event which only now becomes traumatic and thereby
restructures all subsequent events.'[118] These testimonies of the survivors, recounting the
event that turned their life upside-down, raise urgent and unavoidable questions: *What effect
does the reappearance of the past and associated trauma have on the survivors and the
subsequent generations, decades after the occurrence of the traumatic historical event? What
impact does witnessing death of loved ones, especially under stressful, brutal and violent*

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[116] Sigmund Freud *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (New York: Liveright Publications, 1961) p. 13.
[117] C. Auerhahn Nanette and Ernst Prelinger, 'Repetition in the Concentration Camp Survivor and Her
Child' *International Review of Psychoanalysis* 10 (1983), pp 31-46 (p. 39).
[118] Ibid p. 39.

*conditions, have on the survivors? And what are the consequences of witnessing such horrors on one's own life?*

The reappearance of the past in the present, particularly when prompted by an interlocutor decades later, places the survivor in a space between the past and the present. According to Veena Das,

> The memories…were then not on the nature of something gone underground, repressed, hidden away, that would have to be excavated. In a way, these memories were very much on the surface. Yet there were fences created around them: the very language that bore these memories had a certain foreign tinge to it as if…it was spoken [with] some kind of translation from some other unknown language. [119]

This act of revisiting the past, guided by a mediator through their questions and curious comments, is an attempt to comprehend what was never fully grasped in the first place and during subsequent recollections. Ruth Franklin, in *A Thousand Darknesses*, explains the position of the first generation survivors further by explaining the impossibility of complete recall. According to her,

> Every act of memory is also an act of narrative. Total recall is beyond human capabilities, and so our minds distil and pound the chaos of life into something resembling a coherent shape. From the very moment we begin the activity of remembering, we place some kind of editorial framework, some principle of selection— no matter how simple, how neutral, or how unconscious— around the

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[119] Veena Das and Stanley Cavell *Life and Words: Violence and the Descent into the Ordinary* (BERKELEY, LOS ANGELES, LONDON: University of California Press, 2007), p. 9 .

events of the past…. a narrative…that is a faithful and yet inevitably incomplete representation of actual events.[120]

This act of recollection and narration is analogous to an attempt to join the pieces of a giant jigsaw puzzle. However, the attempt to present a cohesive narrative, despite the gaps in one's memory, also simultaneously becomes a battle between fragmentation and coherence. The traumatic memory resists any editorial framework or authorial constraint and emerges sporadically, as distinct pieces, thus making it extremely difficult to join them together and complete the puzzle.

The process of assembling these sharp fragmented shards of memory, that cut through the defences of time and concealment, is not only difficult but utterly painful too. The knowledge of the past places the survivor in a dilemma between the responsibility to share they had witnessed and the reluctance to revisit the past that had broken their spirit completely. Victoria Aarons and Alan L. Berger elaborate on this dilemma further:

> How, in other words, might the survivor go back in time and approximate the immediacy of fear and distress, returning to a condition, as Fink describes it, of an 'infantile state' of innocence, caused by what was then the 'poverty of our imaginations' ("Scrap of Time," 5)? How does the survivor return to a condition directly preceding awareness, those moments before being assaulted by cognition? That is, narratives by survivors attempt to create simultaneously conditions of unawareness and awareness.[121]

In this attempt to re-assemble the past to comprehend the events completely, the survivor experiences 'double-voicing' or 'double-vision' – a phenomenon that involves juxtaposition

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[120] Ruth Franklin, *A Thousand Darknesses: Lies and Truth in Holocaust Fiction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), p.12.
[121] Aarons and Berger, p. 50.

of different perspectives, different positions, times, voices, places and histories[122]. The traumatic return is initially thought of as an attempt to master the anxiety catalysed by the loss of one's previous life and homeland. However, as a result of this unrestrained juxtaposition of sights and sounds the return becomes exhausting for the narrator. The sudden and uncontrolled reappearance of voices and visions, in languages that seem unknown, during these conversations, also termed as 'rescue missions' that create a 'time tunnel,' or ' a double reality', one in the present moment and another in the past.[123] To preserve the memory of the past and pass this experience on to the next generation, the survivor must navigate these 'gaps and derailments caused by the erosions of time and the absence of all moorings and precedents within which to contextualize both the experience and the emotional response it evokes'.[124]

After navigating through the gaps, the narrators also face another difficulty. They struggle to find 'an organizing principle around which to talk about that fractured, isolated particle of time' that has turned their lives upside down[125]. Across the years, the survivor has built walls in their mind, guarding the memory of the cataclysmic event within these walls. The reluctance to revisit the past results not only from the emotional response it might evoke, but also the inability to find a way to talk about the traumatic event that has shaped their life due to the inadequacy of language and gaps in their memory. Decades later, perhaps due to age and passage of time, the walls begin to crumble and the guard, which the survivors held on to tightly, wears off. They finally decide to share their stories. This decision is often accompanied by a realization that if they refrain from giving voice to their stories now, there is a threat of complete erasure of their history. Even after the wall has crumbled and the

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[122] Ibid, p. 50.
[123] Ibid, p. 92.
[124] Ibid, p. 50.
[125] Ibid, p. 51.

survivor decides to share their story, the narrative is often full of verbal self- corrections while narrating the episodes of the past reflecting on the sense of inadequacy expressed by the survivors. Ida Fink expresses the inability of survivors in narrating their story,

> I want to talk about a certain time not measured in months and year. For so long I have been wanted to talk about it now…I wanted to, but I couldn't, I didn't know how. I was afraid, too, that this second time, which is measured in months and years, had buried the other time under a layer of years, that this second time had crushed the first and destroyed it within me.[126]

The reluctance and acknowledgment of inability of memory often reflect how both memory and language are inadequate when the survivor wants to re-visit and narrate the traumatic event and its after-effects. Further, the dual understanding of time also captures them within the past and the present, where they are unable to move forward and simultaneously are living in the present, in a time that has moved forward.

It is during these moments of inadequacy of memory, medium and understanding, precisely when language fails to contain and convey, that artefacts come to rescue. The artefacts, through their mere presence, become a tangible entity that the survivors could hold and 'focus on and to grasp in the absence of memory and the living voice of those who were lost'[127]. Artefacts act as surrogates for the lost lives, lands and a lost time. For the next generations, these keepsakes are precious but the lack of knowledge of stories and memories associated with them makes the next generation inquisitive.  In some ways, through their physical presence, the artefacts symbolize what is so obviously missing.

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[126] Fink, p. 3.
[127] Aarons and Berger, p. 84.

The letters, the photographs, the memoirs, the clothes, the objects of utility, the books - all become the frame upon which the narrator develops their story further, filling the perforations created by the passage of time. Within the course of narration, these shards of memory resurface in the present moment, blurring the gap between the present and the past. Thus, for the survivor, the past and the presence coalesce. Through the presence of these objects and the narratives built around them, the past gradually starts occupying more space within the present. 'Memory assaults the survivor palpably, transporting him or her back to a place from which there is no escape' and it is in these such moments, where the survivor is caught in the 'time-tunnel' that 'past and present coalesce'.[128]

The vulnerability of the narrator, in these moments when past and present diffuse, is expressed by Charlotte Delbo, 'How does one rid oneself of something buried far within: memory and the skin of memory. It clings to me yet. . . . I have no control over it.'[129]. The past is 'unalterable, precise, but enveloped in the skin of memory, an impermeable skin that isolates it from my present self.'[130] Delbo also distinguishes '*mémoire profonde*', or the memory of the traumatic events that lives deep in the minds of the survivors from *'mémoire ordinaire'*, or common memory, that regards the traumatic event as a part of history. The objects from the past enable the survivor to access the '*mémoire profonde*' and reveal the untold stories from the past. With assistance of the object, the narrator is able to access their '*mémoire des sens*', or 'sense memory' as well as '*mémoire externe',* or 'thinking memory' simultaneously to revisit the past and 'transmit the physical imprint of the ordeal' that they went through.[131]

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[128] Ibid, p. 54.
[129] Delbo, p. 55.
[130] Lawrence L. Langer ' Introduction' in Charlotte Delbo, *Auschwitz and After: Second Edition.* Translated by Rosette Lamont. (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2014) p. 23-24.

[131] Ibid, p. 26.

While the presence of object in one's personal space enables the narrator to delve deeper within the recesses of their memory and share the unthinkable horrors of the past, it also places them in a void struggling with letting go of the past and grasping the present. Through the fabric of the narrative, built with the assistance of the object, the survivor experiences the fear and distress once again. He is captured within his past and its everlasting trauma. However, as Edmond Jabès observes, 'One has to write out of that break, out of that unceasingly revived wound.'[132] The survivor, with assistance from the mediator, takes a turn, gauges his past and develops a comprehensive narrative out of it to transfer it to the next generation. The fear of complete obliteration of one's history allows the narrator to gather the courage and the strength to revisit and reassess their past, establishing a newer channel of transmission with the next generation, who participate in safeguarding the history further. The next generations not only carefully preserve the artefacts carried by the survivors but also a web of memories, stories and experiences stores within these silent store-houses. Their inheritance encourages the next generation to not forget and narrate the stories of their families and communities to keep their individual histories alive.

## 2.2 The Second Generation

The passage of anecdotes and eye-witness accounts of the traumatic past from the first generation to the second and the subsequent generations marks a shift from direct witnessing to an indirect one. Indirect witnessing and narration are accompanied by a temporal and experiential change, a noticeable shift in perspective, narrative tone and voice, as well as the nature of memory and recollection. Memory emerges as the structural and foundational link between the first-generation survivors, who share eye-witness testimonies and the second

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[132] Edmond Jabès, *From the Desert to the Book: Conversations with Marcel Cohen*. Translated by Pierre Joris. (New York: Station Hill Press, 1990) p.62 in Victoria Aarons and Alan L. Berger *Third Generation Holocaust Representation: Trauma, History and Memory*. (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 2017).

generation who inherits this haunting legacy. They narrate and write about their inherited legacy of loss and violence from 'a memory vacuum, from the liminal space constituted by the conscious awareness of a history from which one has been materially but not culturally excluded.'[133] The absence of both, the reality of the experience as well as its mention in the mainstream history and popular media haunts the second generation, and thus affects their narrative voice significantly. They often realize that they will never be able to entirely comprehend what the previous generation went through, and it is 'precisely in not knowing, in the utter lack of history, that trauma is transmitted.'[134]. This 'absent memory' is 'filled with blanks, silent moments, a void, and a feeling of guilt for not being there when their own had to go through unthinkable horrors'[135]. Along with this 'absent memory', the second generation also inherits the burden of remembering and preserving the stories passed on to them by their parents, which otherwise, would have been lost forever.

The knowledge of the past carries with itself an obligation to participate in retelling the stories and preserving them, to reckon with the moral weight of possessing such knowledge. In the lacunae created by this absent memory, the second generation tries to present and preserve the past as a response to counter the feeling of guilt and fill the void in their minds. During his interviews, Nirit Gradwohl Pisano observed that the next generations feel that it is their job to continue, and often complete, the 'feeling work' that needs to be done to 'unlock the intergenerational trauma.'[136] The testimonies of the survivors cast a long shadow over the next generation, which keeps recurring in their attempts to preserve the tales inherited by

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[133] Aarons and Berger, p. 83.
[134] Nirit Gradwohl Pisano, *Granddaughters of the Holocaust: Never Forgetting What They Didn't Experience* (Boston: Academic Studies Press, 2012) p. 14.
[135] Ellen S. Fine, "Transmission of Memory: The Post- Holocaust Generation." In *The Holocaust: Lessons for the Third Generation*, edited by Dominick A. Iorio, Richard L. Libowitz, and Marcia S. Littell, 125– 34. (Lanham, Md.: University Press of America, 1997) p.126.
[136] Pisano, p. 145.

them by shaping them as literary works, memoirs and cinematic productions. According to Ellen S. Fine,

> On one hand, this shadow is a hovering presence that will not go away, binding those who were not there to those who were, both dead and alive. On the other hand, the same shadow also marks an absence, a reflection of the reality that took place but not the reality itself.[137]

The second generation faces an obligation to tread on a difficult path, trying to collect and preserve reminiscences that can be passed on further. The burden of knowledge accompanied by a realization of lack of representation of their community in mainstream media compels them to participate in the process of passing the narratives on to the next generation.

The process of transferring narratives begins with recording coherent narratives that can be passed on further. For the first-generation survivors, it is already difficult to write about their past and shape it in coherent, transmittable narratives by recalling and rearranging the traumatic memory associated with those events. Then, for the second-generation, it becomes more labyrinthine to 'wrest imagined memory from absence, from a lack of first-hand experience of events' based on which they want to write their stories. The children of the survivors usually grow under the watchful gaze of the traumatic past they were not a part of. Their identity and perception are shaped by events that predate their existence and the violence is not experienced on one's own body but it still makes the second generation feel 'violated'[138]. The reality of leaving their homeland, surviving in slums, struggling to shape one's identity and losing family, although never directly experienced, is usually indirectly experienced by the second generation by listening to the stories told by their parents. In the words of Thane Rosenbaum 'reminiscences had become the genetic material that was to be

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[137] Fine, p. 127.
[138] Das and Cavell, p. 9 .

passed on by survivors to their children.'[139] Although for the children of survivors, the traumatic event is not a part of their lived memory, it still impacts and shapes their lives. They often possess the trauma of the first generation and the responsibility of circulating the untold stories of the survivors, 'either with a wilful, deliberate embrace or through the patterns and underlying strains of their upbringing'[140]. Thus, the second-generation survivors, 'have *had a hand amputated that they never had*. It is a phantom pain, in which amnesia takes the place of memory.'[141]

The inheritance of trauma, suffering and the burden of knowledge of the past is characteristic of the second generation of survivors. The inheritance of pain and loss happens in two ways, either directly through conversations or in an ambivalent, convoluted way. The first way involves open and constant discussions about the past, where children hear specific stories of what their families had lived through. The second way, usually much more common, is that of an indirect transfer of trauma usually through silence – a calculated silence that 'becomes solidified as felt anguish on the part of the survivor parent and dread on the part of his or her offspring.'[142] The second generation attempts to understand the past through what was told to them, as well as through what had consciously been left unsaid by the survivors. 'Whether directly or indirectly…through silence or an avalanche of words' the past has 'seeped into the collective consciousness of those born in its aftermath.'[143] The terrible visions from the haunted past are inherited through a combination of active listening, engagement and imagination – the visions of hiding to save one's life, living in one room, running from one's

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[139] Thane Rosenbaum, 'Cattle Car Complex' in *Elijah Visible: Stories* (New York: St. Martin's Griffin, 1996), p.5.
[140] Aarons and Berger, p. 56.
[141] Nadine Fresco "Remembering the Unknown." *International Review of Psycho-Analysis* 11 (1984) 417– 27, p. 419.
[142] Aarons and Berger p. 57.
[143] Fine, p.129.

home and the struggle for survival – all have been acknowledged and carried forward by the next generation like an umbilical connection between the two generations.

Judith Kestenberg has argued,

> The need to discover, to re-enact, or to live the parents' past was a major issue in the lives of survivors' children. These children feel they have a mission to live in the past and to change it so that their parents' humiliation, disgrace, and guilt can be converted into victory over the oppressors, and the threat of genocide undone with a restitution of life and worth.[144]

The children of the survivors, by preserving and circulating their tales, attempt to defeat the oppressors who had tried to erase their stories. By their very presence, these children, born to the survivors, are a symbol of their victory against their oppressors. They embody both an end of the conflict as well as the hope of a better future, distant from the struggles of the past – a continuity. They are not only symbolic of hope but also of continuity and assure the survivors that their tales will be narrated further and the relics of the past will be preserved by their children.  However, for the children themselves, they share a complicated relationship with the past and are often caught within the guilt of not being able to share and understand their parent's pain and yet being shaped by it. The relationship becomes more complicated if they are born to parents who had lost a child during the traumatic episode. The replacement fantasies and absence of a sibling further complicate the traumatic engagement and surrogacy for the second generation. Surrounded by their own bubbles of insecurity and anxiety about their own role in sharing the knowledge inherited by them and the limitation of their imagination in comprehending the horrifying reality of the past, the second- generation

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[144] Judith S. Kestenberg, 'Survivor- Parents and Their Children' in *Generations of the Holocaust*, ed by Martin S. Bergmann and Milton E. Jucovy (New York: Basic Books,1982), p. 101.

narrators and writers often emphasize on their own shortcomings in extracting a memory that does not belong to them, of a time indirectly witnessed by them and the trauma.[145]

Melvin Jules Bukiet elaborates on this phenomenon and identifies one critical difference between the survivor and the second- generation narratives – even if the first generation claims to write a fictional narrative, it is usually derived from their experiential memory. The do not need to imagine while narrating the story, while the second generation writes from 'absence' and needs to experience something they never lived through to narrate the stories of the survivors.[146] On the other hand, the second generation writes in a carefully calculated voice about memories that are not their own, as if being restrained and guided by the watchful gaze of the survivors themselves. The second-generation writing is based on borrowed memories, securely held by them like a tainted inheritance passed on to them by the survivors. The guilt of absence along with the inadequacy of language to express their emotions and comprehend the effect of the event on their lives usually leads to what Miri Scharf calls, 'secondary traumatization,' an 'indirect psychological impact' that engulfs the generation and simultaneously opens a channel for empathetic identification with the survivors.[147]

Not only are the second-generation narratives impacted by this 'secondary trauma' but they are also caught within a dilemma of allowing themselves some authority due to their proximity with the survivors as well as the lack of complete understanding. The second generation is the 'in between generation' who listen to the stories from the survivors

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[145] Aarons and Berger, p. 60.
[146] Melvin Jules Bukiet, *Nothing Makes You Free: Writings by Descendants of Jewish Holocaust Survivors*. (New York: Norton Press, 20020  p. 59.
[147] Miri Scharf, 'Long- term Effects of Trauma: Psychosocial Functioning of the Second and Third Generation of Holocaust Survivors' *Development and Psychopathology* 19 (2007), 604 in Victoria Aarons and Alan L. Berger *Third Generation Holocaust Representation: Trauma, History and Memory*. (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 2017).

themselves and then take upon themselves, the responsibility of transferring those experiences to the next generations.[148] They are the 'buffers' between their parents, who lives through the past, and their children, the next generation who will circulate the stories further, and often in the process of transferring stories, they don't get the opportunity to process their own emotions and the intergenerational trauma inherited by them.[149] The second generation narratives echo the burden of responsibility of transmitting knowledge inherited by them to those the third generation, who are distanced from it and can only comprehend the reality of it through the stories shared by this generation, thus keeping their stories alive.

## 2.3 The Third Generation

*'I keep referring to my generation as the "hinge" generation, because we are the last ones who'll have been living receptacles for the stories of those who were in the event itself; and I'm acutely conscious, obviously, of what it means to be someone who becomes the "transmitter" of another's stories, another's past.'*

Daniel Mendelsohn

The third generation, the generation of the grandchildren of the survivors, will usually be the last group of people to hear the stories from the survivors themselves. This last link or 'the 'hinge reflects the subtle shift from the remembered past to a future that must re-evaluate its relation to a history that can no longer be spoken of with the authority of first-person witness.'[150] Nancy Miller devises a similar metaphor of the 'spline', the piece that joins the frame to create a complete picture.[151] Like a 'spline', the third generation follows the 'clues' and 'traces' to gradually 'fill in the blanks between isolated points' and 'construct a complete object from limited information.'[152] By carefully navigating through the silence, the third generation tries to 'conjure stories…and telling details from a family history' that was

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[148] Tal Litvak- Hirsch and Dan Bar- On. 'To Rebuild Lives: A Longitudinal Study of the Influences of the Holocaust on Relationships among Three Generations of Women in One Family' *Family Process* 45.4 (2006) pp 465-483 (p. 475)

[149] Ibid, p. 475.

[150] Aarons and Berger, p. 57.

[151] Miller, p 85.

[152] Ibid, p. 85.

lost to them.[153] Mendelsohn has also described the 'hinge generation' as the one that controls the flow of memory and narratives across generations – just like doors depend on the hinges for inward and outward movement, the flow of memory and stories of the past hinges on the third generation.[154] Through careful articulation and preservation, the third generation becomes responsible for ensuring that the narratives are passed on to the future generations, who might not be able to hear the stories from survivors themselves.

Unlike the second generation, the third generation hears the stories through an 'intervening emissary', usually their parents or other members of the second generation, who have heard it from the survivors themselves.[155] The lack of a direct testimony compels the third generation to fill the gaps that are left by the second generation in their recollection. Unlike the first and second generations, the third generation need to 'intuit, overhear, and distil fragments', while simultaneously attempting to objectively assess the legitimacy and the facticity of the knowledge transferred to them against the 'artifices of retelling.'[156] The anxiety about speaking as the last indirect witnesses and the responsibility of passing the narratives down accurately overshadows the writings of the third generation. Nirit Gradwohl Pisano had interviewed the grandchildren of survivors, and on the basis of his interviews he concludes,

> the grandchildren of survivors are continually motivated to confront their parents' and grandparents' experiences, to articulate multifaceted narratives, and to pursue an intergenerational perspective at once removed from and connected to the Holocaust, it has become increasingly imperative for their traumas to be acknowledged and their voices to be heard.[157]

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[153] Ibid, p. 85.
[154] Aarons and Berger, p. 69.
[155] Ibid, p 69
[156] Ibid, p. 69.
[157] Pisano, p. 46.

The grandchildren of survivors often involve an acknowledgment of the fact that they are responsible for narrating stories that are not their own and are often on a mission to join the isolated pieces of a larger puzzle together to shape the narrative and pass it on further. The accounts of the third generation, thus are full of hesitation and narrative exhaustion, a feeling of not expressing it quite right. The narratives produced by the 'hinge generation' are not just devoid of the first-person authority, but simultaneously lack the subjective insights that form a major part of the narratives of the survivors. Listening to the narrative isn't just about learning about the trauma and survival skills of their grandparents, but also about a connection to the past for the third generation, which otherwise is completely divorced from it.

In an attempt to create a cohesive narrative by rearranging the information passed on to them, the third generation also comes to a bitter realization that the traumatic event was an attempt to erase their history and their story. They leapfrog back in time to understand this deliberately executed obliteration and the anguished silence, and after comprehending it, they face an irrepressible need to make their ancestors speak. Elie Weisel comments on this and asks,

> Is it because they fear that with their deaths, something precious, special, irreplaceable will be lost forever? Is this a last opportunity to take possession of a truth that weighs not only on individual histories but on History itself?[158]

The grandchildren of the survivors attempt to 'never forget what they didn't experience.'[159] This emphasis on 'not forgetting' emerges from their guilt regarding the lack of both the

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[158] Elie Weisel, 'Why Memory: Testimony about the Holocaust, from a Survivor Who Became a Great Writer and from a Man Haunted by Six Losses' *The Washington Post*, October 8, 2006. http://www.washingtonpost.com/wpdyn/content/article/2006/10/05/AR2006100501336.html in Victoria Aarons and Alan L. Berger. *Third Generation Holocaust Representation: Trauma, History and Memory*. (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 2017) p. 74.
[159] Pisano, p.18.

experience as well as the knowledge of the past. The absence of not being present when their grandparents went through shapes their lives and their identity. The narratives of the third generation, thus, involve both discovery of the long, distant past and an attempt to construct their own identity by developing their own understanding of the past and a unique association with it.

In an attempt to understand the past and its impact on their own self, the third generation begins their quest with artefacts, or the tangible markers of the past that exist in their complete form, and can be examined to understand the lives of the survivors.[160] Such artefacts, for the third generation, possess 'magical and fantasied storytelling properties'.[161] In the absence or the calculated silence of those whose lives were immediately affected by the events of the past, the artefact is all that remains in its entirety, a touchstone to the distant past. Nancy Miller, in her memoir reveals how she found her family inside an old drawer through seemingly mundane objects such as an old and crumbling cardboard, letters in Hebrew, receipt for the upkeep of graves in the cemetery, hair, bags etc – 'objects that offered hints about the missing narrative'.[162] Thus, even mute and mundane objects such as pens, books, letters, photographs, handicrafts emerge as 'signposts' that can be carefully mapped through these objects. The objects, through their very materiality, weight, design, age and presence in our space, act as 'a symbolic thread to that inherited past of untold stories'.[163]

The objects become passes or passports to another place and time, one that the third generation never lived through, which has been carefully guarded by the survivors through a mix of silence and calculated narratives. Through their presence in the lives of the third generation, these silent objects assist in navigating through the labyrinthine maze of memory

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[160] Aarons and Berger, p. 81.
[161] Miller, p 4
[162] Ibid, p.4.
[163] Ibid, p.225.

and weighed silence, when the voices of the survivors are lost. These objects act as stand-ins for those who are absent and assist us in understanding their stories, usually concealed within layers of silence and trauma. Mere presence of artefacts directs us towards what is obviously missing, as Mendelsohn suggests, 'I was rich in the keepsakes but had no memories to go with them.'[164]

In this void created by absence and silence, objects act as tangible media possessing the ability to establish a relationship with narratives of the past and the memory of the survivors, thus beginning a journey of reconstructing the past through the eyes of a third-generation memoirist. As Marianne Hirsch suggests, such 'objects, lost and again found, structure plots of return: they can embody memory and thus trigger affect shared across generations.'[165] The objects, themselves hold no value, but become priceless possessions for the grandchildren of survivors because of what they contain. Aarons and Berger suggest,

> In the substitution of the container for the thing contained, we experience a dismantling of the conventional meaning of such common terms. They become signifiers, traumatic referents, and as such, bring about a convergence of individual, collective, and historical memory. These…markers function both conceptually and perceptually; language and its associations are reconceived to specify and expand experience, opening up the possibility of interpretation of, that is, the story behind memory's artefact, the "missing narrative," contained, preserved in its material shell.[166]

[164] Mendelsohn, p. 182.

[165] Marianne Hirsch, 'Objects of Return' in *After Testimony: The Ethics and Aesthetics of Holocaust Narrative for the Future*, edited by Jakob Lothe, Susan Rubin Suleiman, and James Phelan, 198– 220. (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2012), p.200.

[166] Aarons and Berger, p. 90.

The object is not only a fragment of the past but also a piece of the memoirist's imagination, guiding them in rearranging the isolated pieces of information to develop a coherent narrative from the memories of the survivors. The third- generation narratives map a course through three different but interconnected ideas of time. Such narratives certainly consider 'historical time': 'what happened when, where, and to whom'. This historical time, however, is reshaped by an 'imaginative understanding of time: a bending, blending, and reshaping of time, time's return through its reinvention'. The third concept of time is the 'narrative time: time in the telling; narrative that is its own time, thus eroding temporal relations of past and present'.[167] These three distinct concepts of time are 'hinged' together to create a three-dimensional understanding or a triad of the past and its memories. In the third-generation narratives, time stands still, goes forwards as well as leaps backwards simultaneously. While these narratives assist the third generation in passing the narratives further, they also expose the absent core at the centre of them, the void from which these narratives have emerged. Unlike memories, that are filled with gaps, objects, though borrowed, are present in their totality and assist the third generation in developing a better understanding of the past by giving them an outlet to focus on and tread on the past of discovery with.

Although the artefacts are inanimate and static, their presence affects the survivors and the subsequent generations differently. For the first generation, these objects are remnants of a time gone by and assist them in recalling their past. Objects play a key role in assembling fragments of memories, which fill the gaps in the memories of survivors, enabling them to share their experiences. For the second and third generation, they act as 'sign-posts' and help in completing the puzzle of knowledge of the past. Using the Holocaust framework, the next section will focus on recording stories of the Kashmiri Pandits. Through objects and oral-history interviews with different generations of survivors, one learns the impact of traumatic

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[167] Ibid, p 106

episodes of the past and their memories on the lives of survivors and their children. The Kashmiri Pandits I interviewed had preserved objects such as keys, photographs, documents, jewellery among other things, and each object transgressed the dimensions of time and space to symbolise the past and lost homeland. The next section also explores the significance of material remnants and associated memories in un-learning the knowledge gained through selectively carved history that chooses to focus on memories of a few and ignores the memories of weaker groups. The alternate canvases will assist us in focusing on the rubble of memories that were previously ignored to re-create the past and expose the unevenness of history by refusing to assimilate with the selective history of the nation.

## 2.4 Objects – The Silent Storytellers

Despite being the only surviving physical repositories of the past, artefacts have been denied their due attention perhaps because learning from them requires rather more attention than reading texts. It is not easy to retrieve the past through tangible objects. They are illegible to those who have only been trained to read written records. W. David Kingrey and Steven Lubar emphasize on our inability to decipher objects:

> The grammar of things is related to, but more complex and difficult to decipher
>
> than, the grammar of words. Artefacts are tools as well as signals, signs as well
>
> as symbols. Their use and significance are multiple and intertwined with other.
>
> Much of their meaning is subliminal and unconscious.[168]

Tangible objects, by their very presence in our environment, pose a challenge to us. They challenge us because we know, as an article that had been curated carefully in the past and

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[168] David W. Kingrey, 'Introduction', in *Learning from Things: Method and Theory of Material Culture Studies,* ed, by W. David Kingrey (Washington and London: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1996), p.2.

been preserved through the traumatic times, it is laden with meaning, which we are unable to decipher. The artefacts cannot be read similar to the way we read written documents. The creators of these objects rarely thought of themselves as writing a document, and neither did the curators think that anyone would attempt to read them decades later. So, these cultural repositories were not designed to be deciphered easily. This quality of illegibility is what makes these humble objects precious since they are packed with untold stories, yet challenging because of the difficulty of unravelling them.

Through this dissertation, I will embark on a journey to collect untold stories from the past and analyse their impact on both the story-teller, or the first generation survivors, and the listeners, or the subsequent generations. The tangible objects will act both as catalysts to aid the process of memorialization and as well as repositories of untold stories and fears from the past. This engagement with primary sources enables the researcher to ask questions and deduce tentative answers which were outside the remit of conventional historical practices that were centred around the written text. Steven Lubar and W. David Kingery explain the importance of inclusion of artefacts in historical research further:

> Artefacts are remnants of the environment of earlier periods, a portion of the historical experience available for direct observation. Not only do artefacts present new evidence to support historical arguments; they also suggest new arguments and provide a level of rhetorical support to arguments that mere documents cannot begin to approach. Artefacts, especially when used in the conjunction with the sorts of history gleaned from documentary sources, widen our view of history as they increase the evidence for historical interpretations.[169]

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[169] Steven Lubar and W. David Kingrey, *History from Things: Essays on Material Culture* (London: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1993), p.ix

The presence of objects is not only crucial for their physical properties, but more for the stories and memories they have captured within their surfaces. The object will act as a catalyst and aid in the process of recollection and narration. By focusing on these material repositories as catalysts, I will embark on a cerebral excavation of untold stories which are hidden within the folds of an individual's memory. These accounts of the past that emerge through objects that have survived cataclysmic events, here the Kashmiri Pandit exodus, are what is termed as 'material memory'. Material memory is not a linear concept, but an amalgamation of different kinds of memories (explained below) that united to create a mesh of lived memories and experiences of forced migration and resettlement following the events of the Kashmiri Pandit exodus of 1989.

## 2.5 The Wound and its Shadow: The different kinds of memory

Human memory is a constantly evolving phenomenon. Our lived experiences are stored as memories in our minds.[170] However, it is equally crucial to acknowledge that our memory does not work like a 'recording device'.[171] The experiences from one's past will never be recorded as they happened, especially when memory becomes fragile and malleable, as time passes.[172] Thus, memories of an event keep changing depending on who is recalling the event and when it is being recalled, to create a mesh of what we refer to as the past.

There is no one true or universal memory, especially of a traumatic time. Each person remembers the traumatic episodes differently and has a unique relationship with the past. It is

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[170] Malhotra, *Remnants of a Separation: A History of Partition through Material Memory* p 26.
[171] Elizabeth Loftus, *How Reliable is Your Memory?,* TED Talks, September 2013, https://www.ted.com/talks/elizabeth_loftus_how_reliable_is_your_memory?language=en: '…many people believe that memory works like a recording device. You just record the information, then you call it up and play it back when you want to answer questions or identify images. But decades of work in psychology has shown that this just isn't true. Our memories are constructive. They're reconstructive. Memory works a little bit more like a Wikipedia page: You can go in there and change it, but so can other people.'
[172] Malhotra, *Remnants of a Separation: A History of Partition through Material Memory* p. 19.

a fountainhead which unravels into a largely manifold web of experiences and inherited memories. Memory is a constantly evolving phenomenon; it is 'perforated, additive, subtractive and a cohesive amalgamation of everything that came during and before one's existence'.[173] The stories of a family, a community and a society are 'spun from the memories of many'.[174] These memories, just like small tributaries of a river, flow through various passages, from where history selectively chooses anecdotes to weave a cohesive public narrative[175]. The Valley of Kashmir has been 'coloured in blood' and 'littered with possessions' of those who were forced to leave – tattered old pashmina shawls and *pherans,* precious *athoor* and *deyjhors*, documents, pages from old books and notebooks, precious handicrafts and money hidden for survival.[176] Different kinds of memories look at these objects and the stories accompanying them differently, some even choose to ignore them completely. They selectively collect a few anecdotes from the past to weave a larger uniform narrative of what can be called as a 'massive exercise in human misery.'[177]

Human memory has been classified into four categories, namely *official memory, political memory, collective memory* and *personal memory. Official memory* refers to the memory of the state, usually supplemented by facts and figures, archives and documents stored in the national and state museums and archives. These statistics shape how nations look at their histories and are coloured within the shades of nationalism and patriotism. The second category of memory is *political memory*, the kind that is recorded and popularised through newspapers, journals, cinema and books. Political memory usually weaves a historical narrative corresponding to the dominant ideology of the present times. Anecdotes and events

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[173] Ibid, p. 282.
[174] Ibid, p 291
[175] Ibid, p. 315.
[176] Ibid, p 21.
[177] An American photographer, Margaret Bourke-White, who extensively chronicled the events of the Partition of the Indian Subcontinent for Life magazine, termed the events of forced migration and violence as a 'massive exercise in human misery.'

are selectively narrated through literature and cinema to create a grand public memory of any historical event. Factors such as the column where news is published in the newspapers or how a geographical terrain is depicted in mainstream cinema play a crucial role in shaping the memory of the masses. The national dailies refrained from publishing articles about sloganeering in Kashmir and the events of ethnic cleansing that took place later, while the local dailies placed these pieces of information in small columns towards the corners, thus trivializing the events that led to the displacement of an entire community from the Valley.[178] Political memory usually aims to create a popular depiction of the events of the past to suit the needs of the present and develop a coherent understanding of the past among people. Another kind of memory is collective memory which, as the name suggests, is the memory of a community, of people, of neighbourhoods, of families, and finally of society. Then, there is the fourth kind, 'a memory that takes years to ferment: one resting between fact and fiction' - *personal memory*.[179] *Personal memory* is 'a diluted, malleable memory that encompasses attributes of the other three kinds', coupled with the crumbling of walls of the past.[180] This is the kind of memory that combines the events of the past and the inherited memories of the time gone by. This memory not just of the grand events unlike the first two, but is a story of the soil and snow, of flowing waters of the *Dal lake*[181] and the *kadals[182]*, of ties of kinship and relationships, of children and innocence, of love and longing, language and music, art and literature, poetry and landscape of a place that was once their home.

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[178] Shreya Raina*, Line of Truth with Ratnadeep Chakraborty: Episode 9*, Spotify Podcasts, April 2020. https://open.spotify.com/show/6cfaMYM3ZgoBu2PVXK5txy '…I researched the Hindustan Times and the India Today in the 1990. When I started researching, I was told by my father to not be shocked. "You are not going to find a lot about it. I went in the research thinking the same thing, but honestly, there was not a single article saying that people have left or people came on to the streets and slogans were chanted. There was no article, not one sentence that would tell people in the country that something like this is happening.'

[179] Malhotra, *Remnants of a Separation: A History of Partition through Material Memory* p 37.

[180] Ibid, p 38.

[181] A famous lake in Srinagar, Jammu and Kashmir.

[182] Kashmiri word for bridges.

By placing the object as a catalyst, we make an incision in the present to allow the past to flow freely. The stories, woven within the materiality of the artefact, unravel a deeper understanding of the individual accounts of the past, recollecting how their lives were affected by the involuntary migration and ethnic cleansing of 1989. It is equivalent to history knocking on their doors, prompting them to recollect and reconnect with their past. Through these micro-histories, emerge stories of violence, of lost friendships and relationships, of abandoned homes, of collective suffering, of a desire to get back on one's feet, of longing, and finally, of lives lived and lost in Kashmir. These micro-histories when pieced together form an alternate narrative of the historical events, providing us with a lens through which we could look at the past differently.
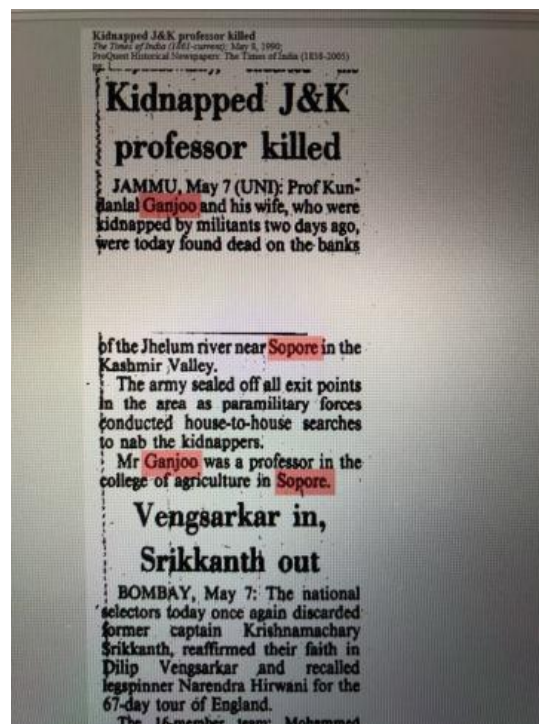


Figure 2 – A news clipping about the murder of a Kashmiri Pandit in May, 1990 after the exodus.[183]

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[183] Source: The Times of India Archives, Jammu Edition. The newspapers, not only through what they publish but also through the space devoted to the piece of information, shape how the public views it. The gravity of the situation is usually analysed through these sources, and the politics of publishing largely govern it.

**2.6 History and Things**

The tangible remains of the past reveal their stories in a number of ways, sometimes through their very materiality, while at other times through their intricate designs and patterns, or through their relationship with their creators and curators. Giorgio Riello, in his essay *'Things that shape History'* has devised three categories to describe the relationship between history and material culture, namely '*history from things', 'history of things'* and '*history and things'*.[184] On his quest to discover how objects re-present history, he begins by examining *history from things*. Through his first category, he concentrates on the material form of the object, its shape and form, its texture, the raw material used, the techniques employed in its production and the design(s) created on the surface. By considering the object analogous to a manuscript, a diary, a journal or an inventory, he tries to read the object carefully to understand its past, and through it the past of the society. This reading of the object provides deeper insights about its function in the society, the availability of the raw material to produce the finished artefact, its financial value, which would give us a glimpse of the economic status of the society, and its designs which reveal the traditions and practices of the past. Through his second category, *history of things,* he analyses the 'relationship between objects, people and their representations'[185]. In conventional historical practice, objects were usually considered props of research that were used to support the arguments put forward by historians based on the written texts and statistics. However, Riello considers the object not a prop but the very subject matter of analysis and research. By exploring objects in this light, one could seek answers to questions like why some objects were created, carried and preserved, and thereby open a new trajectory of historical enquiry focusing on the untold

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[184] Giorgio Riello, 'Things that shape history: material culture and historical narratives' in *History and Material Culture: A Student's Guide to Approaching Alternative Sources* ed. Karen Harvey (London and New York: Routledge, 2009) pp. 24-46
[185] Ibid, p 28.

stories and the forgotten memories of migrants, which resurface in the present and re-construct history through the object. The last approach defined as *history and things*, positions the objects outside the realm of history, giving the researcher a capacity to unlock more creative ways of conveying ideas about the past that are not mediated by written language in books, documents, articles and literature produced by conventional historians that rely only on verbal sources of information.[186]
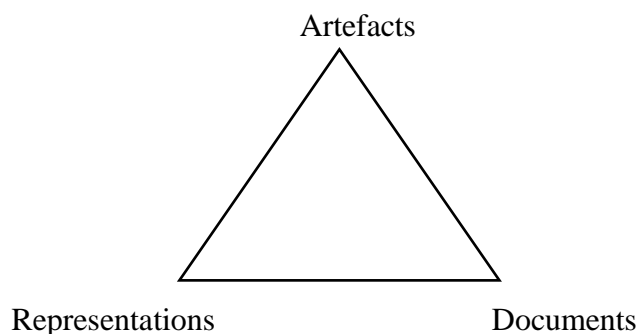
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[186] Ibid, p. 27

Artefacts

Representations                    Documents

Figure 3 – Relationship between artefacts, documents and historical representations[187]
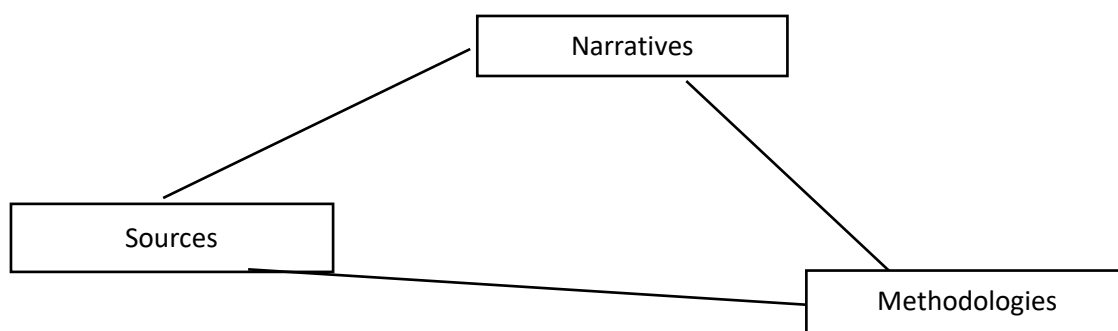
Narratives

Sources

Methodologies

Figure 4- The relationship between sources, narratives and methodologies[188]

What makes objects from the past unique is that they refer to practices and stories that have almost no written evidence in the official or popular narratives of the past. While handling these objects, or *'object survivors'* as termed by Giorgio Riello,  one raises historical questions regarding the stories of objects and of people that the object belonged to – their location, histories etc. Objects, if considered at par with documents, can re-shape how history is represented, making it an inter-related process of construction of the past. By adopting new

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[187] Ibid p. 29
[188] Ibid p. 32

sources and training oneself in reading them by adopting new methodologies, a variety of unheard narratives can be chalked out that would distort our popular understanding of the colossal events that took place in our history.

Historians and researchers can extend their remit of investigation by considering non-documentary evidence while excavating the past. The boundaries between conventional historians who value documentary evidence, art historians who attempt to understand the past through paintings, sculptures and other forms of art and archaeologists, who excavate objects to study the past are blurred when one attempts to understand history through material culture and material memory[189]. The discipline combines all the three fields to raise newer questions about the past. The narrative then, relates to what Arjun Appadurai has referred to as the 'social life of things'[190] which charts the meanings inscribed within objects and analyses them as an extension of social practices and forms instead of viewing them as isolated tangible entities.

## 2.7 Types of Objects

Memories are often erased from our mind as time passes. But, unknowingly in some cases these forgotten stories and histories are collected and stored in silent but telling objects. These tangible markers then act as triggers to pull the stories out of the 'abyss of forgetting', and let them re-surface in the present[191]. In the anthology, *Contested Objects: Material Memories of the Great War*, Dominiek Dendooven has commented on the significance of objects in tracing memories of the past:

> We all know how unreliable memory can be, how transient reminiscences
>
> are, and how inaccessible the past will always remain. Experiences can never

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[189] Ibid, p 32.

[190] Arjun Appadurai, "*The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective*" (Cambridge, New York and Oakleigh: Cambridge University Press, 1992) p.1

[191] Malhotra, *Remnants of a Separation: A History of Partition through Material Memory* p 29.

be duplicated or revived…by those who took no part in the struggle. Herein

lies the beauty and power of conflict-related objects, some of which

withstand the ravages of time in a way that memories do not. The past may be

gone, but sometimes objects retain the power to evoke aspects of that past which

gave birth to them, and thereby connect us to our own private and collective

histories.[192]

The ingredients of one's past are unique and not transferrable. The objects become

repositories of one's beliefs, biases, fear, pain, longing and disruptions, both of one's familial

and social lives. Deriving from Aanchal Malhotra's categorisation, the artefacts have been

classified into different categories based on their nature and distinct features to understand

the cultural identities enveloped within them.[193]

The first category is of objects that 'bind several generations of a family together' just by the

virtue of their presence.[194] These objects, usually inherited from one's ancestors, keep the

possessor connected to their family and its legacy. When these objects are taken out, unheard

stories from family's history start pouring out. Gradually, with utmost care, each layer is

peeled bit by bit to reveal a legacy and a past we are unable to comprehend today. The

filigree decanters, emerald glass beakers and jars inherited by Aziz Ahmad Kozgar represent

such objects; they bind him to his family and its legacy. Along the dusty by-lanes of *Fateh*

*Kadal* near *Khankah-e-Moula* shrine in Downtown Srinagar in the Valley of Kashmir, a four

hundred years old distillery shop*, 'Ark-e-Gulab'* exists quietly, freezing time within it. The

carved wooden door in a crumbling building invites the passers-by with a faint scent of roses

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[192] Dominiek Dendooven, 'The Journey Back: On the nature of the donations to the In Flanders Fields Museum' in *Contested Objects: Material Memories of the Great War* ed. By Nicholas J. Saunders and Paul Cornish (Abingdon: Routledge, 2013), p. 63.
[193] Malhotra, *Remnants of a Separation: A History of Partition through Material Memory* p 32.
[194] Ibid, p 32.

lingering around it. The make-shift shop run by Aziz Ahmad Kozgar, is one of the few manual rosewater distillery shops left in Srinagar.

Rosewater is considered auspicious in South Asia; it is sprinkled on devotees in holy shrines and mosques as well as during important ceremonies such as weddings. Pure rosewater is also added to *sherbets*[195] and squashes to provide relief in the scorching heat during the months of summer. Kozgars started this rosewater distillery nearly five hundred years ago when they arrived in Kashmir through the *Silk Route*[196]. The Turkish descendants made a variety of herbal concoctions, *Unani*[197] medicines and manually distilled flower waters to cure diseases centuries ago. The makeshift shop was passed on to Aziz Ahmad Kozgar by his father Habibullah Kozgar, who ran it for decades. Aziz recalls how his family home was filled with stacks of rose petals, all ready to be distilled manually to form pure rose water.[198] He assisted his father in the process, learnt the art, and is now keeping it alive. Along with the shop, Aziz has also inherited a collection of old glass jars and decanters imported from England and France in the shop's heyday years, decades ago. The decanters, once full of different flower waters, now remain on the shelves as empty, cracked reminders of a time gone by. The silver haired patriarch runs this shop only to follow his ancestors, who ran it for spiritual yearning rather than commercial purposes. The shop now supplies rosewater to shrines in Kashmir, but would soon shut its doors due to lack of demand. These cracked glass jars, however, will continue to bind generations of Kozgar family together through their unaltered presence in the family.

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[195] A cooling drink made of sweet diluted fruit juices.

[196] The Silk Route refers to a historical trade route that connected the East with the West and as a result affected the interactions of regions including China, Persia, the Indian Subcontinent, Japan, Europe, Africa and Arabia from the second century BC to the eighteenth century. It got its name due to silk trading that took place within these regions and through these trade routes.

[197] Unani medicine is a traditional system of medication followed in South Asia.

[198] Rohini Chaki, *Arq-e-Gulab* (2019) <https://www.atlasobscura.com/places/arq-e-gulab> [Accessed 11 November, 2019], Para 3/5

Figure 5: Aziz Ahmad Kozgar in his shop in Srinagar.[199]



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[199] Aditya Kitroo, Untitled (2019)<https://twitter.com/KitrooAaditya/status/1198889268954816519> [Accessed on September 28, 2020]

Figure 6: The glass decanters and jars inherited by Aziz Kozgar.[200]



Figure 7: The emerald green glass containers present in *Arq-e-Gulab.*[201]

The second category of objects are those carried by migrants for their sheer utility. This category includes utensils such as *samavar*[202], jewellery such as *athoor* and *deyjhor*[203], precious heirloom such as *pashmina*[204] and *kani*[205] shawls, intricately woven *pherans* and documents. Kashmiris carried utensils to refugee camps and other settlements to cook food in, after their rations were supplied to them. These utensils became essential to feed the stranded families since they could not eat raw lentils and rice. Precious jewellery and pieces

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[200] Furqan Khursheed *The Turks of old city and their 500 year old crumbling aroma empire* (2017) <https://freepresskashmir.com/2017/12/29/the-turks-of-old-city-and-their-500-yr-old-crumbling-aroma-empire/> [Accessed March 03, 2020]

[201]Ibid.

[202] The name *Samavar* has been derived from the Russian word '*Samover'* which translates to 'self-boiler' in English. Samavar is a highly decorated utensil used for brewing tea in the Valley of Kashmir.

[203] Earrings worn by Kashmiri women symbolic of marriage

[204] Pashmina Shawl is made from Pashm wool, which is derived from the rare *Capra hircus* goats, are found at the altitude of 14,000 ft or above. The wool is woven into a fine fabric with intricate designs or embroidered on. The process could take any time between six months to three years depending on the intricacy of design.

[205] A traditional Kashmiri hand-weaving technique.

of heirloom were carried to sail the families through the rough days. In some cases, these artefacts still exist silently - enduring time and weather for years. Mrs. Shukuntala Ganjoo, a Kashmiri Pandit, who was forced to flee following the events of 1989, decided to carry some copper and brass utensils with her. Her family took refuge in a relative's house in Delhi. The utensils were crucial to the family's migration and helped them re-settle in their new lives in the capital. These utensils were now locked safely in cupboards. As soon as these utensils were taken out of the closets and cleaned, something in her demeanour changed. A cursory glance at them took her to her past. The glance was followed by a prolonged caress and a careful movement of fingers through the surface of the utensil. Her fingers slowly moved over the intricate designs etched on the surface. Through these utensils, she found a gateway to the past, to Kashmir, her homeland.[206] She was present in front of us physically but her mind was wandering in the narrow by lanes of the Valley. This interaction with Shakuntala Aunty on a random afternoon shifted how I looked at the exodus and the politics of Kashmir. The events that I had just viewed purely academically became a living and breathing reality; they had changed the lives of people I was interacting with. Her words and memories were deposited in these utensils, and extracted decades later, completely out of context, to tell her story of migration.

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[206] Observations from a personal interaction with Mrs. Shukuntala Ganjoo in 2019.

Figure 8: Utensils of Mrs. Shukuntala Ganjoo[207]

Third are the objects related to one's occupation and professions. Documents such as letterheads, identity cards, bills and memos travelled with migrants as reminders of their life before the Kashmiri Pandit exodus. These artefacts, have been kept to preserve a part of one's homeland and identity. These parts are seldom locked away into silence and stored deep within the minds of Kashmiri Migrants. These old, crinkled papers are now homeless, just like their possessors. They did not serve their purpose now, and were replaced by new, crisp papers of identification and laminated state-subject certificates ascribing the status of migrants to these communities. These certificates became the last link the Pandits had with Kashmir, until the Articles 370 and 35A were revoked in August, 2019. Just like their possessors, the artefacts too fell from their former glory into the pit of purposelessness.

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[207] Prateeksha Pathak, *Objects: The Silent Story Tellers* (2020) https://www.kashmiruntold.org <Accessed January 12, 2020>

Figure 9 – The State Subject Certificate of Siddharth Gigoo.[208]

The final category of objects are the ones created by people to narrate their own histories. The objects include sketches, paintings, sculptures, shawls, architecture, papier mâché, music, carved utensils, culinary products etc. These seemingly banal objects lay a claim to a distant past that has travelled through the generations. The deep internal wound that had been left unexamined, emerges years later through these humble markers of homeland. Houses in Kashmir had three unique features, the *khatambandh* ceiling, the *pinjrakari* doors, and a Zoon *Dub* – a cantilevered balcony designed to view the moon. *Khatambandh* is an amalgamation of two words, *khatam*, which means enclosed and *bandh* which means close together. Thus, *khatambandh* is an ancient craft of joining together small pieces of geometrical shaped wood to construct a pattern on the ceiling. Usually, fir wood is used to make these patterns due to its lightness, which helps in retaining the pieces after they are

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[208] Reproduced with permission of Mr. Siddharth Gigoo.

stuck together on the ceiling. Similarly, *pinjrakari* is the skill of making doors windows and ventilators by filling them with netted lattice work done in walnut wood. These small wooden pieces are also joined together to form a geometric pattern, which defines the structure of the windows and doors. Decades after the forced migration, Kashmiri Pandits now re-settled in different parts of the country, commission the *kaarigars* or artisans to design the ceilings and doors of their new houses and offices. The presence of these intricate patterns, created specifically for them, re-connect them to the land of their birth. The architecture of newer houses as well as that of the abandoned ones narrates the stories of its owners, current residents (if any), the communities as well as the lost time.



Figure 10 – *Khatamband* Ceiling.[209]

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[209] Sandeep Sangaru, *A Puzzle to Solve* (2016) <https://gaatha.com/khatamband-craft-kashmir/> [Accessed December 19, 2019]

Figure 11 – The making of a *Khatamband* ceiling.[210]



Figure 11 – *Pinjrakari* work done on windows of a house.[211]

Through the course of conversations with different generations of Kashmiri Pandits, one

realizes how the refugees in their own ways, decades after the forced migration, had to

struggle to preserved their homes, their childhoods, their identity, their life and their sense of

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[210] Ibid
[211] Ibid

belonging. These oral-history interviews also reiterate that historical knowledge can never be obtained in a pure sense through conventional history, one that focuses on words and documents to understand the past since these selective sources often omit events that changes people's lives and livelihoods. The colossal event of the Kashmiri Pandit exodus can be considered one such event that changed the fates of thousands who were forced to leave their homes. The event is analogous to a ball of yarn, tightly enclosed by the memories of the state and those of every individual whose life turned upside down as a result of the involuntary mass migration. Decades after the event, the yarn is unravelling gradually with the narration of each experience and the knowledge of its after effects. Every act of violence, every house burnt, every life sacrificed and every hasty departure helps us understand the cataclysmic event further. Through the next few chapters, I will try to juxtapose the different memories and representations of Kashmir to develop a multi-layered portrayal of the land and its people. The next chapter shall focus on how the Valley of Kashmir has been constructed through national and state archives as well as popular literature and cinema. The combination of official memory and political memory shapes the way Kashmir is viewed by the masses. The subsequent chapter will challenge this macro-history by recording the unheard micro-histories of individuals, families and communities affected by this cataclysmic event. By placing a humble object in the centre, we will create an incision into the well spun fabric of history to allow the untold past to ooze out and alter the fabric by adding new shades of experience, precisely like history knocking on your door and asking you to stitch the fabric with threads coloured with your memory.

## Chapter 3: The Valley of Desire: Understanding the Official and Cinematic Representations of the Valley of Kashmir

'They describe us…that's all

They have the power of description, and

We succumb to the pictures they construct.'

Salman Rushdie, *Satanic Verses*

The knowledge of the past is never fixed, it is always 'subject to reconstruction and renegotiation'.[212] Historical events are constantly being revised and re-viewed, based on the needs of the present. The memories of the past, as a result of this constant reinterpretation, are malleable as well.[213] Maurice Halbwachs argues that recollection is dependent on the present circumstances. People's recollection and narration of the past is directly influenced by how the events from their past can serve their present objectives. Halbwachs further elaborates on how memory and retelling the past is not a simple and individual phenomenon. It is a complex multi-layered concept shaped by multiple factors and is also simultaneously preserved by different groups in the society, with each group attempting to preserve and circulate their version. Memories are influenced by the society and the social fabric of the times.[214] The society also influences how the past is 'recall(ed), recognize(d), and localize(d) their memories'.[215] Memory, thus, becomes a collective and relational phenomenon. It is in the first instance, 'relational in terms of family, friends and community and, in the second instance, societal and collective in terms of the social frameworks of, say, official and institutional groups, religious communities and social classes.'[216] These different social groups and communities perceive

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[212] Andreas Huyssen, 'Trauma and Memory: A New Imaginary of Temporality' in *World Memory: Personal Trajectories in Global Time*, ed. Jill Bennett and Rosanne Kennedy (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003) p. 17.

[213] Adam D Brown et al 'Memory's malleability: its role in shaping collective memory and social identity' *Front. Psychology 3:257,* (2021) doi: 10.3389/ fpsyg.2012.00257 <https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fpsyg.2012.00257/full>

[214] Maurice Halbwachs*, On Collective Memory*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), p 38.

[215] Ibid, p. 38.

[216] Joanne Garde Hansen, *Media and Memory*. (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2011) p.19.

the past independently and their versions, each influenced by different factors, might contradict the memory of other groups. Although different from each other, these memories are not given the same space of representation, thus leading to formation of a dominant version, usually called the '*official memory*'. This unequal narrative space that enables the formation of a dominant historical narrative in the society also creates 'subjugated knowledges'[217], a term coined by Michel Foucault to refer to the way in which 'dominant discourses work to delegitimate the knowledges of less powerful communities.'[218] These 'subjugated knowledges' are selectively produced to maintain the dynamics of power in favour of the dominant groups and establish a hierarchical social order. Writing history and official narratives involves creation of 'subjugated knowledges' to cement the existing social order. It further determines how those on the margins are represented to fulfil the needs of the present. This chapter looks at the dominant representations of Jammu and Kashmir in archives, cinema and media to understand how remembrance is not universal and is determined by the present conditions and influences.

## 3.1 On History and Collective Memory

The focus of conventional history has revolved around cataclysmic events and a documentation of the struggle for power. Samuel Sequeira notes how conventional history is recorded and divided through the ruling dynasties and the grand events that took place during each reign.[219] In this recorded history, the lives of ordinary people and the impact of cataclysmic events on people's lives has never been recorded in history.[220] Paul Thompson states,

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[217] Michael Foucault, *The Order of the Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences*. (New York: Vintage, 1970).

[218] Cressey Gill. *Diaspora Youth and Ancestral Homeland: British Pakistani /Kashmiri Youth Visiting Kin in Pakistan and Kashmir*, (Boston: Brill Academic Publishers, 2005). ProQuest Ebook Central, https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/cardiff/detail.action?docID=3004176, p 19.

[219] Sequeira, p 36

[220] Ibid, p. 36.

Until the present century, the focus of history was essentially political: a documentation of the struggle for power, in which the lives of ordinary people, or the workings of the economy or religion, were given little attention except in times of crisis…[221]

Even today, historical writing involves description of grand events and stories of the elite. It is hardly concerned with the day to day, with the people whose lives were either disrupted or lost. Michel-Rolph Trouillot looks at the tradition of drafting official narratives and believes that writing about the past involves people in three different ways, as *agents* or 'occupants of structural position'; as *actors* who interact with the context or as *subjects* who are aware of their participation within the discourse.[222] The social position of the participants and the power they hold influence whether their stories and experiences become a part of the archive or they are ignored and fall into the pit of '*deep silence*.'[223]

While documenting the history of Jammu and Kashmir, the representation of Kashmiris was either heavily coloured or completely erased from the narrative by the powerful 'outsiders.' The official narrative, while emphasising the landscape of the Valley of Kashmir simultaneously marginalises the locals of Kashmir by not presenting their stories and culture adequately. It dictates the identity of Kashmir and Kashmiris as the 'other' but a familiar known 'other' whose perception has been partially internalized from early childhood and carefully guarded during the later stages of life. This 'official memory' of Kashmir is also accompanied and often supported by other different memories, one of them being 'collective memory'. Collective memory is formed among people through ideas circulated by books, cinema, advertisements and other popular media, which create a *habitus*[224]. *Habitus* is a term coined by

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[221] Paul Thompson, "Voice of the Past: Oral History" in: Perks, Robert and Thompson, Alistair. eds. *The Oral History Reader*. (London and New York: Routledge) p.3.

[222] Sequeira, p. 37.

[223] Ibid 38

[224] Pierre, Bourdieu *In other words: essays towards a reflexive sociology*. (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1990).

Pierre Bourdieu to refer to a set of ideas and 'historical relations deposited within individuals in the form of perceptions, appreciations and actions.'[225] The collective memory of people cements their collective understanding, perceptions biases and opinions, thus establishing the dominant ideas created by official narratives even further. In case of Kashmir, the territory is depicted through beautiful landscapes or as a 'space inhabited by the Indian army and terrorists, who disrupt with their heavy boots and automatic weapons, its very essence…'.[226] This selective representation is heavily influenced by the political views of the present, or the 'political memory' of the period. Violence and geopolitics are intertwined within the cinematic performance, literary works, archives and museums, and the reception of Kashmir. From the first impression itself, generated through museums, posters, book covers, newspapers and trailers, the gap between Kashmir and the rest of India was made clear. By cementing this selective perception among people, groups attempt to shape their thoughts, ideas, opinions and biases, and gradually make them internalize the dominant ideology being propagated by them. Bashrat Peer comments on this 'colouring' of the land and the erasure of the stories of trauma and oppression of the locals by not giving them enough space for narration,

> There was also a sense of shame that overcame me every time I walked into a bookstore. People from almost every conflict zone had told their stories…I felt the absence of our own telling, the unwritten books about the Kashmiri experience, from the bookshelves, as vividly as the absence of a beloved…The memories and stories of Kashmir that I had carried with me like my VIP suitcase could fade away.[227]

Through the selective memories of Kashmir, mythical ideas of the land and its people become a constant subtext, with stories being spun around it, to make it a part of the everyday

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[225] Gill, p. 20.

[226] Abdul Raoof Mir, *Changing face of Kashmir in Bollywood.* (Unpublished Masters Dissertation: University of Hyderabad, Hyderabad, 2008) p 33.

[227] Bashrat Peer *Curfewed Night,* (Penguin Random house Press, New Delhi, 2008 p 98-99.

conversation in family circles and social gatherings. The combination of official, collective and political memories creates a discursive, heteroglot construction of the Valley which emphasizes on the pastoral landscape and erases the people from the national imaginary, thereby creating a familiar but distanced other.

While these three sets of memories worked together to shape the understanding of Kashmir, beyond these three, and usually contradicting it, is the memory of an individual, a personal or experiential memory that is embodied within the self through lived experiences and cannot be transferred to others.[228] This memory is 'an alternative to an allegedly objectifying or totalizing history, history written either with small or capital H, that is, history in its empiricist form or as master narrative'[229] Reflecting on the personal memory addresses the disjuncture between the current public knowledge of the past and people's understanding of their own lives experiences. Personal memory usually describes the moments that official and popular histories are too shameful to own up and describe. It contains information that has slipped out or unarchives – information that the authoritative figures deemed unworthy, not useful or damaging for their political purposes. The personal narratives of Kashmiris confront the dominant depictions and challenge the official amnesia surrounding Kashmir to expose the void between what was experienced and what is narrated.

 An amalgamation of these different memories shapes the material memory of historical events. Material memory is the accounts of the past that emerge through objects that have survived cataclysmic events, here the exodus of the Kashmiri Pandits. This chapter will elaborate on the official and the collective memory of the Valley of Kashmir to address how the currently powerful public policy discourses have excluded the Kashmiri Pandits and their exodus from

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[228] Aleida Assmann, *Transformations between history and memory*. Social Research: An International Quarterly Issue 75 (2008), pp. 49-72, (p 50)
[229] Husseyn, p 17.

the popular picture of Kashmir. Not only has the event been forgotten, but the diasporic community has been presented as socially excluded and culturally confused, falling into a ravine between two worlds, one, the 'homeland' which they long for but can no longer reside in and second, the 'host land' where they are settled now but have not entirely been accepted in.[230] A focus on museums, exhibitions and cinema will expose the erasure of the trauma of Kashmiri Pandits. Later, the next chapter will focus on 'experiential memory' or the lived experience of the Kashmiri Pandit community. It will record their narrative through the material remains and memorabilia of the past such as objects, old documents (identity papers etc), rites, ceremonies and culinary practices.[231] These chapters, when read together, will expose how narratives are carefully framed by selectively emphasizing on the experiences of privileged ones and simultaneously wiping the anecdotes of marginalised groups out.

## 3.2 Fixing the Camera's Gaze: Representing Cultures and Memories

Official documents, national archives and state sponsored institutions are usually considered genuine, authoritative and universal sources to learn about the past. Gyanendra Pandey opposes this belief and observes that the 'process of archiving' usually involves a simultaneous 'process of un-archiving', where the archive never completely records the past and 'the archive, as a site of remembrance…is also at the same time a project of forgetting.'[232] Official histories recollect and record the past based on the needs of the present. The framework of interpretation is socially constructed and sieves through historical events to present the ones deemed worthy of remembering. Stuart Hall's 'circuit of culture theory' elaborates on this selection of events and simultaneous erasures by powerful groups. Hall believes that culture comprises of 'shared meanings' and media emerges as the biggest tool employed by the dominant groups to 'make

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[230] Bhattacharya and Gabriel, 1997
[231] Assmann, p 50.
[232] Gyanendra Pandey, 'Un-archived Histories: The 'mad' and the 'Trifling''. *Economic and Political Weekly* (20120, pp. 38-41, (p 38)

sense' of things and circulate their own ideas.'[233] This emphasis on shared meanings may sometimes make a culture sound too uniform and rationalistic by intentionally deleting the marginalized histories that present counter-narratives and differ from the dominant version(s). The representation of a particular culture involves the selection of particular objects and practices, and then involves the use of language, sound, visuals and symbols, which stand for or represent a fixed set of ideas, believes, and people. Using Hall's theories of meaning making, we will understand how stereotypes surrounding Kashmir are constructed, popularised and gradually internalised, later affecting how the land and its people are seen and treated by the outsiders.

The process of meaning making, according to Stuart Hall, consolidates in five distinct 'moments' of interaction– 'representation', 'consumption', 'production', 'regulation' and 'identification'. Representation refers to the process through which meaning is formulated and consolidated. Consumption is a stage where the receivers actively promote the generated meaning by subscribing to cultural practices and using products that promote the created meaning. Production is when the creators negotiate and re-instate meaning into their creations, which are then actively promoted and circulated. Regulations are conditions that distinguish between what is allowed and what is prohibited in a certain culture. Identities are constantly evolving and fleeting meanings developed through dominant thoughts and ideologies. Through Stuart Hall's 'circuit of culture theory', this chapter will analyse the way the Valley of Kashmir is portrayed through contested meanings, circulated through archives, cinema, photography and visual art. The shared meanings are carefully compiled and formulated, and differ radically before and after 1990, creating a binary around the territory of Jammu and Kashmir.

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[233] Stuart Hall, *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practice*s. (New York: Sage Publishing, 1997), p 2.
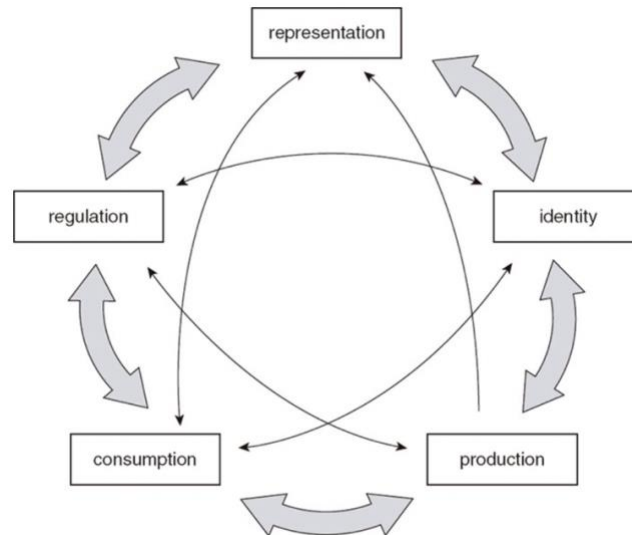
Figure 1: Model of the circuit of culture[234]

## 3.3 Touch of the past: Remembering the past through Media and Museums

'Our relations, our place in society and our identities are constructed in the stories that we tell ourselves and others. Changing these factors entails creating new stories and in so doing, (and) defining a new space.'                                         W. Richards (*Fluid Space: Engaging with the Other)*

Ranajit Guha - a founding member of the Subaltern Studies group - expresses the idea that official history speaks in the 'commanding voice of the nation' and presumes the nature and the version of history the citizens would like to believe in and subscribe to, thereby muting the 'small voice of history' – that of the oppressed, the marginalized and the persecuted.[235] Official history focuses on the grand events that 'visibly stick out of the debris of the past', and as a result of this, official history,

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[234] Paul Jones and David Holmes, 'Encoding/Decoding.' *Key Concepts in Media and Communications* (2011), pp.74–80, p. 78 <doi: 10.4135/9781473914582.n16>

[235]  'The small voice of history' is a lecture delivered by Ramachandra Guha in Hyderabad on January 11, 1993, later published in *Subaltern Studies* in 1996. The lecture invites the listeners and the readers to acknowledge the ignored and erased 'voices' of the women who participated fully and actively in the Telangana movement, but were never given their due representation in the historical records of this movement.

tends to ignore the small drama and fine detail of social existence, especially at its lower depths. A critical historiography can make up for this lacuna by bending closer to the ground in order to pick up the traces of a subaltern life in its passage through time.[236]

'Hearing', according to Guha, 'is constitutive of discourse'.[237] The forced silencing of the 'small voices' makes us question whether the subaltern can speak since their history has selectively been erased. 'In the 'small voice', the inability to 'hear' or 'listen to' what the subaltern says is represented as a structural condition of colonial, nationalist and dominant historiographies'[238]. In their aspiration for representation and power, they systematically erase 'the myriad voices in civil society'[239]. Thus, 'small voices are drowned in the noise of statist commands'.[240]

The drowning of the 'small voices' of Kashmiri Pandits and their 'subaltern' history within the 'elite' history of the state can be observed by looking at the official documents and exhibitions held in state sponsored museums.[241] The lack of census report hints at tactics employed for concealment of the event. Any record of numbers would have shown a decline in the population of minority communities in Kashmir, thereby hinting at the forced migration. The lack of data, thereby, points at the express intention of obliterating the memory of the forced mass migration and the horrifying episodes of violence that took place in the later years of the twentieth century in the Valley of Kashmir. In addition to the lack of census reports, there is no comprehensive database of the members of the community who took refuge in various refugee camps such as

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[236] Ranajit Guha, 'The Small Voice of History' *in Subaltern Studies: Writings on South Asian Studies and Society*, vol. 9, ed. Shahid Amin and Dipesh Chakrabarty (New Delhi and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997) p. 36.

[237] Ibid, p 36

[238] Anuradha Dingwaney Needham ''THE SMALL VOICE OF HISTORY' IN ARUNDHATI ROY'S *THE GOD OF SMALL THINGS'*, *Interventions*, 7:3, (2005), pp. 369-391, (p. 372) .<DOI: 10.1080/13698010500268072>

[239] Guha, p 316.

[240] Ibid, p 307.

[241] Ibid, p 36.

the Mishriwala Camp, Purkhoo Camp, Nagrota Camp, Transport Nagar, Jagti Township and other camps in Jammu. The number as well as the identity of the victims has been obliterated from the official history and memory of the state of Jammu and Kashmir. The data, if preserved, would have weakened India's claims of being a secular state which seamlessly merged Muslim dominant Kashmir Valley within its territory. It would also highlight the inadequacy of both central and state authorities in protecting the minority communities in Jammu and Kashmir leading to their forced departure.
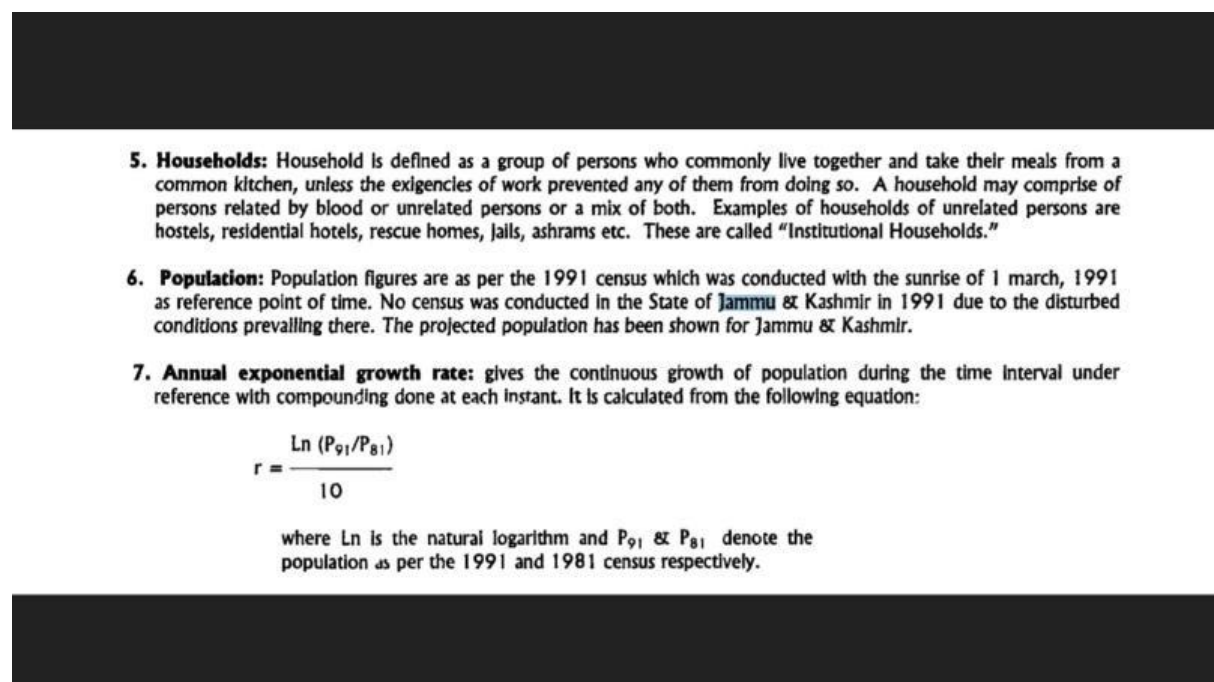


5. **Households:** Household is defined as a group of persons who commonly live together and take their meals from a common kitchen, unless the exigencies of work prevented any of them from doing so. A household may comprise of persons related by blood or unrelated persons or a mix of both. Examples of households of unrelated persons are hostels, residential hotels, rescue homes, jails, ashrams etc. These are called "Institutional Households."

6. **Population:** Population figures are as per the 1991 census which was conducted with the sunrise of 1 march, 1991 as reference point of time. No census was conducted in the State of Jammu & Kashmir in 1991 due to the disturbed conditions prevailing there. The projected population has been shown for Jammu & Kashmir.

7. **Annual exponential growth rate:** gives the continuous growth of population during the time interval under reference with compounding done at each instant. It is calculated from the following equation:

$$r = \frac{Ln\ (P_{91}/P_{81})}{10}$$

where Ln is the natural logarithm and $P_{91}$ & $P_{81}$ denote the population as per the 1991 and 1981 census respectively.

Figure 2 – Census Report of 1991, India[242]

In addition to lack of reports, one also observes the obliteration of event in national exhibitions about Jammu and Kashmir. The National Archives of India curated an exhibition '*India at 70: Jammu and Kashmir Saga*' to celebrate seventy years of accession of Jammu and Kashmir. Inaugurating the conference, Minister of Culture, Government of India observed that the purpose of the exhibition is to educate the Indian youth about how Kashmir became part of

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[242] Census India, *Census Report of India - 1991* (1991) <https://censusindia.gov.in/DigitalLibrary/data/Census_1991/Publication/India/45969_1991_CHN.pdf> [Accessed 10 January, 2021]

India. Not only did the exhibition reaffirm the validity and legality of the merger of Jammu and Kashmir, it also highlighted the valour of the army and their attempts to protect the land in multiple wars. Each of these events was described in detail, including presentation of the Treaty of Lahore, the Instrument of Accession, original letters, photographs and documents from the wars. However, the exhibition overlooked the Insurgency of 1989 and its consequences.

Museums and archives, by their very presence, play a significant role in this process of knowledge and memory formation since they act as 'sites of production of knowledge and cultural sensibilities' of individuals and communities.[243] These spaces and objects placed within them encourage the visitors to contemplate what might have happened in the past and preserve the picture they have created in their memory. Listening to stories and touching the objects of victims of mass migration leads to sensations being imprinted on the minds of people and their memory. Their minds tend to create a 'prosthetic memory' of the event, a term coined by Alison Landsberg to describe, 'memories of events through which one did not live' and which one derives from a 'mass-mediated experience of a traumatic event of the past'.[244] As 'secondary witnesses' the visitors to these museums not only remember the past but are also under an obligation to participate in retelling these stories. The lack of these sites reflects the collective attempt to erase the episode from the memory of the nation and its people. The dominant history manifests itself through a process of incorporation, subordination, and expulsion of marginalized social groups and their histories.[245] The process of official

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[243] Irit Rogoff 'From Ruins to Debris. The Feminization of Fascism in German History Museums' in *Museum Culture: Histories, Discourses, Spectacles*, ed. Daniel J. Sherman and Irit Rogoff (London: Routledge, 1994) pp. 223–249, p. 231.

[244] Alison Landsberg. *Prosthetic Memory: The Transformation of American Remembrance in the Age of Mass Culture*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004). <https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.abc.cardiff.ac.uk/lib/Cardiff/detail.action?docID=908261>, p 19.

[245] Silke Arnold-de Simine *Mediating Memory in the Museum : Trauma, Empathy, Nostalgia* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013). <EBSCOhost, earch.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=nlebk&AN=759280&site=ehost-live&scope=site>, p 202.

commemoration and memorialization of Jammu and Kashmir has always been done by the 'outsiders' who have selectively woven the history of Kashmir and discarded the violent forced displacement of Kashmiri Pandits from the fabric.

## 3.4 Collective Memory (Cinematic Representations)

Cinema in the twentieth century played a crucial role in the process of popularising the perceptions created by the official narrative. Unlike the present, where democratic nature of alternative spaces such as social media provides an opportunity to present contested narratives, the twentieth century largely relied on cinema, literature and popular media. None of these sources provide an equal and ubiquitous space for narration of experiences of the minority communities. Hence, as a result of the immense popularity of the Indian film industry, cinema became a viable choice to circulate ideas proposed by powerful communities. By fixing the 'camera's gaze', the movies prepared and presented a selective view to the audience[246]. The representation of the Valley of Kashmir has been developed by Bollywood in two phases. In the movies released before 1989, the 'cinematic metamemory' was created by emphasising on the beauty of the landscape and simultaneously erasing any trace of the lived experience of Kashmiris, both Pandits and Muslims, from the geographical terrain of the Valley of Kashmir. The pre-1989 movies represented Kashmir as a land of magnificent beauty with lush green valleys, *shikaras* floating on the Dal Lake and exotic views. Later, after 1989, a radical shift in the signifiers employed to present Kashmir can be observed. The pictorial depiction shifted from soothing and picturesque lakes and pastoral landscape to bloodshed, bomb blasts and brutality.[247] The mainstream media, particularly cinema, has stereotyped the Valley of Kashmir and its citizens to fit them perfectly within the larger framework of politics, nationalism and ideology of the ruling class. Kashmiris are either portrayed as innocent beings, too primitive to

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[246] Kabir, p 14.
[247] Fokiya Akhtar '*Representations of Peace and Conflict in Kashmir in Indian Mainstream Bollywood Cinema*' (Unpublished Doctoral dissertation, Cardiff University, 2019) p. 309.

fit in the modern world, or as fear mongers whose ethics and morals do not match the believes of the democratic and the peace-loving society of Independent India. There was a discernible change in the titles of the movies released before and after 1989. Titles shifted from *Kashmir Ki Kali* ('Bud of Kashmir'. 1964) and *Jab Jab Phool Khile* ('When the Flowers Bloom'. 1965) to more provocative ones such as *Mission Kashmir* (2000) and *Fanaa* (Destroyed, 2006), symbolising the shift in the popular understanding and the perception of Kashmir among the citizens of India. Observing these gradual but noticeable changes encourages one to ponder over the use of cinema as a 'space' for circulation of dominant ideology, which would transform into 'collective memory' of the masses and influence their ideas, perceptions, opinions and biases about Kashmir and Kashmiris.

David Harvey, in 'Space as a Keyword', proposes a tripartite division of space by introducing three categories – 'absolute space', 'relative space' and 'relational space'.[248] Absolute space refers to the fixed concept of space, which is a 'thing in itself with an existence independent of matter.'[249] Relative space refers to the space 'understood as a relationship between objects that exists only because objects exist and relate to each other.'[250] The third idea of space is that of relational space, which refers to the space being 'contained in objects in the sense that an object can be said to exist only insofar as it contains and represents within itself relationships to other objects.'[251] By implementing the technique of selective narration, Kashmir has been presented as a 'relational space', a space defined by the nationalistic desire it evokes and/or the terror it generates, in the sense that the space can be said to exist only insofar as it is capable of generating the relative emotions of desire and/or terror.[252]

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[248] David Harvey, 'Space as Keyword', in *David Harvey: A Critical Reader*, ed. Noel Castree, and Derek Gregory (Hoboken: John Wiley & Sons, Incorporated, 2006), p 272.
[249] David Harvey *Social Justice and City* (London: Edward Arnold and Baltimore, MD: John Hopkins University Press, 1973) p 13.
[250] Ibid, p 13.
[251] Ibid, p 13.
[252] Ibid pp. 119-148

Between 1960 and 1990, the Valley of Kashmir became a suitable backdrop for romantic movies and songs, to generate a fetish towards the beauty of the land and its people. It was regarded as an extended the set used either for portraying budding romance or for troubled rich Indian youth to escape from the daily struggles.[253] Later, after 1990, militancy, terrorism and violence became a 'metonymic extension' of the Valley of Kashmir, which was engulfed within the debate of freedom (to exist as an independent state) and nationalism (to exist as a part of India)[254]. This chapter will study how the cinema that admired the paradisical beauty of the Valley in the 1960s, the 1970s and 1980s shifted to representing Kashmir as a space engulfed within conflict and turbulence in the 1990s. Deriving from Fokiya Akhtar's categorization of movies made on Kashmir, the chapter will classify the movies in two categories: movies released before 1960 that 'address the beauty of Kashmir', and the second category involves movies released after 1960, especially during the late nineties, that align with the dominant ideology and selectively represent Kashmir and Kashmiris within the blanket of terrorism and violence[255]. The chapter will analyse the cinematic representation of the Valley in popular movies such as *Kashmir ki Kali* and *Mission Kashmir* to understand the schematic and selective portrayal of Kashmir and the factors determining the camera's gaze.

**3.5 The Broken World: Whose centre, whose periphery?**

'What is home and how do we encounter it? Is home about origins and place? Or is it a poetic space that unleashes the imagination? Can home be a state of becoming and unbecoming? Or is home a process that is conterminous with our minds and bodies? Are homes – as places, states, processes and relationships – almost unnecessary and disposable?'

Devika Chawla, *Home Uprooted: Oral Histories of India's Partition*

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[253] Akhtar, p 53.
[254] Kabir, p 5.
[255] Akhtar, 89-91.

Film is a product, manufactured within a given system of economic relations, involving labour to produce a material commodity, which is wrapped within ideology and the play of power. Each cinematic production is influenced by the dominant ideology, social beliefs and economic relations of the time and is used as a tool to ensure that power remains in the hands of the ruling class by circulating their beliefs among citizens[256]. Every film is political and is shaped by the ideology nexus of the time. Although the cinema claims to reproduce reality, the tools and techniques of film-making involve a selective narration of the reality itself. Further, this selective narration is influenced by the dominant ideology of the time, shaped by what the ruling class dictates. Anthony Easthope comments on this and says that camera records a 'vague, unformulated, untheorized, unthought-out world of the dominant ideology'.[257] Thus, through calculated use of camera and employment of selective angles, reality is punctured at several distinct levels and is re-created by erasing narratives the dominant class does not desire.

## 3.6 Creating a cinematic memory

Kellner Douglas asserts that 'individuals are subjected to an unprecedented flow of sights and sounds'.[258] Douglas proposes that perceptions are constructed through multiple mass-media platforms including as public speeches, radio, television, cinema and literature. These perceptions, then, are circulated and gradually become a commonly known and believed 'sense of culture which is further appropriated by mass audience, who then initiate themselves into the culture'[259]. In the 1900s, cinema was one of the most popular and influential sources of circulating information, which makes it crucial to the process of selection and substantiation of a particular version of culture. The movies released between 1960 and 1989 followed the '*pleasure principle*' and presented Kashmir as a site of refuge, gratification and pastoral

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[256] Bill Nichols, *Movies and Methods, Volume.1* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976), p.24.

[257] Antony Easthope, *Contemporary Film Theory* (London: Longman Press, 1993), p 46.

[258] Kellner Douglas *Media Culture: Cultural Studies, Identity and Politics between modern and postmodern.* (New York: Routledge, 1995) p 17.

[259] Akhtar, p 15.

innocence. The movies divorced the territory from wars, attacks and violence that its inhabitants were experiencing. Instead, they presented the Valley through a mix of beauty, music, romance and simplicity. This representation was essential to generate a feeling of 'desire' towards the land among the citizens of Independent India. Witnessing the paradisical beauty of the Valley and exotic 'Kashmiris' not only led to gratification of nationalist yearning of citizens of Independent India, but also encouraged them to develop a specific outlook towards Kashmir and lay a claim on the geographical terrain of the state of Jammu and Kashmir.

Following this agenda set by political motives, the mainstream cinema filtered stories based on what they perceived as necessary and discarded what was considered redundant to the political motives and ideological believes of the powerful and dominant groups in the society. This selection gave the movies more attention in terms of viewership, more column-inches in national dailies and repeated presentation on the radio and television, thereby instilling in the psyche of the audience a sense of authenticity, urgency and importance in the stories presented. Thus, cinema, among other forms of media, holds power not only over what is circulated, but also what is deemed significant and thought-provoking and how the thoughts about those significant issues are shaped and expressed. The next section will derive from theories of meaning making to study and analyse two mainstream movies, *Kashmir ki Kali and Mission Kashmir*. The section will emphasise on development of stereotypes about the Valley and its people and hyper focus on paradisical beauty of Kashmir to generate an image in the minds of non-Kashmiris The model assists in analysing products and markers, which become symbolic of the dominant cultural matrix and ideological apparatus. Through close analysis of these cinematic productions, the next section will aim to understand how reality is selectively

recreated and distorted to follow the prevalent ideology and the demands of the dominant classes.[260]

**Kashmir ki Kali** (*Bud of Kashmir*, 1964, Director - Shakti Samanta)

*Even death is scared of those who are willing to sacrifice their lives for the nation.*

Kashmir ki Kali



Figure 5: The poster of movie *Kashmir ki Kali*
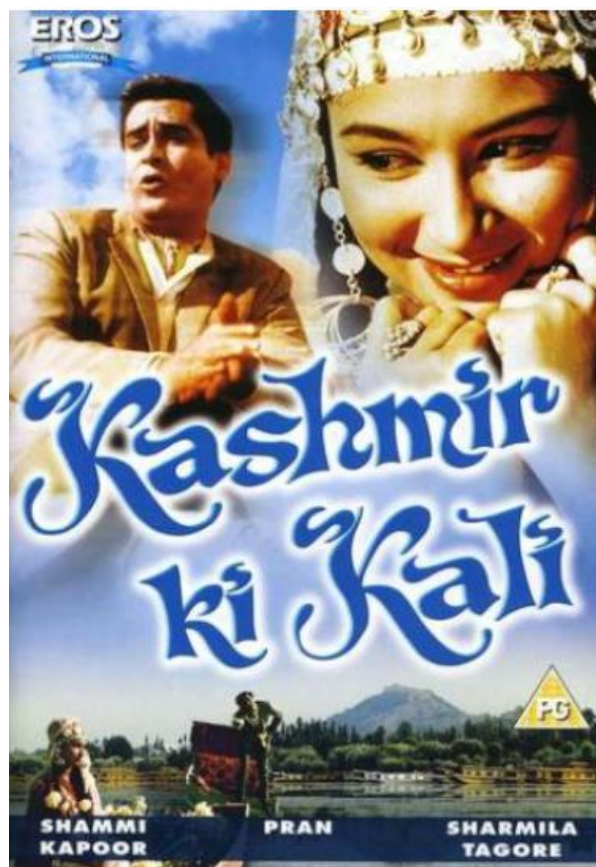
Main Cast: Shammi Kapoor as Rajiv Lal, Sharmila Tagore as Champa, Pran Saheb as Mohan

In the movies released between 1960 and 1989, Kashmir is all about Dal Lake, the Mughal gardens, picturesque locales and mountains and springs, beautiful damsels and bearded men folk. In the movie *Kashmir ki Kali*, released in 1964, Shammi Kapoor plays the role of Rajiv

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[260] Akhtar, p 68.

Lal, the only son of his widowed mother. His mother is often annoyed by his carefree attitude and decides to arrange his marriage to put an end to his reckless antics. To avoid this confrontation, he decides to go and hide in his bungalow in Kashmir, which is rarely visited by any of his family members and friends. During his stay in Kashmir, Rajiv is enamoured by the beauty of a local Kashmiri woman Champa, played by Sharmila Tagore, who sells flowers to make her ends meet. Their romance blossoms amidst the lush green, snow-capped peaks surrounding the Valley of Kashmir. Their romance, though, is short lived. Champa's father had borrowed money from Mohan, the forest manager, who starts pressuring him to get Champa married to him since he is not able to pay the money back. Champa is heartbroken and caught between her love for Rajiv and her responsibility towards her father.

After receiving a letter from his mother, Rajiv is compelled to go home as he gets to know that their house help Karuna is on her deathbed. While taking her last breath, she reveals that Rajiv is Dinu's son. Rajiv is taken aback by this revelation and as the movie progresses it is revealed that his mother gave birth to a daughter, who was kidnapped by Dinu. Rajiv's mother is devastated as she was told that she had given birth to a stillborn baby. However, before revealing the name of the girl, Karuna passes away. After hearing this news, Rajiv and his mother travel to Kashmir to find the girl again. When they reach Dinu's house, Rajiv is shocked to find that Dinu is forcing Champa to marry Mohan. On seeing Rajiv, Dinu is unable to control himself any more. He embraces Rajiv and reveals Champa is his mother's real daughter while Rajiv is his son. This revelation is followed by Champa and Rani Maa being kidnapped by Mohan's goons. The denouement projects Rajiv fighting with Mohan and his goons to free his mother and his prospective bride. The movie ends on a happy note, where Rajiv and Champa get married and are shown as living happily ever after.

**Analysis**

*Kashmir ki Kali*, like other movies released in the 1960s, follows the escapist ideology where the Valley of Kashmir acts as a refuge for the protagonist, who goes to Kashmir to escape from the tyrannical rule of his mother. It is also distinct from other parts of India as no one from the family pays a visit there. Kashmir is represented as an extended film set, where the emphasis is on fast-flowing rivers, fully bloomed flowers and shikara, providing a temporary relief to the protagonist who is escaping from the grim reality of his life. The film does not attempt to capture the real situation of Kashmir and the struggle of Kashmiris. In fact, the characters are all Hindu in a region dominated by Muslims. The real situation of Kashmir has been concealed effectively by only concentrating on the beauty of the land. The frames are carefully selected to influence the perception of Indians who will watch the movie and develop their perceptions on the basis of what is produced.



Figure 6: Sharmila Tagore in *Kashmir ki Kali*

Sharmila Tagore, the female protagonist, personifies the beauty and innocence of Kashmir and is regarded as the metaphor for Kashmir. Although her appearance is similar to that of local Kashmiri women, everything else is strikingly different. She doesn't speak Kashmiri and

makes no reference to local culture. Champa's character, a metaphor for Kashmir, is the object of desire for a rich, eligible bachelor from mainland India, who wants to escape from the reality of his world. Her confused heritage and being stuck between two powerful men are also symbolic of the ongoing politics in Kashmir. However, her decision to marry Rajiv makes her opt for one side and become a part of one of the two powerful groups. Her decision reminds the viewer of accession of Jammu and Kashmir through which the princely state joined Independent India. Moreover, the movie is 'an optimistic melodrama, which tells the rags-to-riches tale of Champa' and reinforces the idea that the smooth acquisition of Kashmir to the right nation will transform the situation and improve the lives of its people[261]. Through the characters of Champa, Rajiv and Mohan, not only are the people and the culture of Kashmir exoticized but the politics of Kashmir has also been selectively reproduced, thus influencing those who are unaware of the struggles of people living in Kashmir due to lack of representation of the stories of trauma. The subtle legitimisation of political affairs such as accession of Kashmir reminds one of the role of cinema as an ideological tool that enables development of a collective and political memory. Further, following Hall's theory, one observes how Kashmir ki Kali passes through the five distinct stages of cultural production to create a narrative that silences the small voices of Kashmiris in favour of grander narratives.

**Movies released after 1989**

During the late twentieth century, Kashmir became one of the most popular destinations for the mainstream Hindi cinema industry. Film makers devised different methods to highlight the stories about Kashmir, without echoing the struggles of its people. These representations are meant to convey the stories of Kashmiris, but eventually shaped the popular outlook towards the land, which differed significantly from the reality of Kashmir and Kashmiris. Movies were framed in a manner that seemed to clearly set Islam against the dominant principles of the

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[261] Akhtar, p 102-103.

Indian nationalism, by vocabulary, shots of terrorists calmly praying to Allah or militant groups following Islamic principles and divisive politics in Mission Kashmir. One notices a stark contrast between the movies before 1989 and the ones after and is compelled to observe the influence of ongoing politics, wars and violent disruptions on cinematic portrayal of the Valley.

**Mission Kashmir**

*Wars are not just fought with missiles, Brother Altaaf, they are also fought with cameras.*

Mission Kashmir
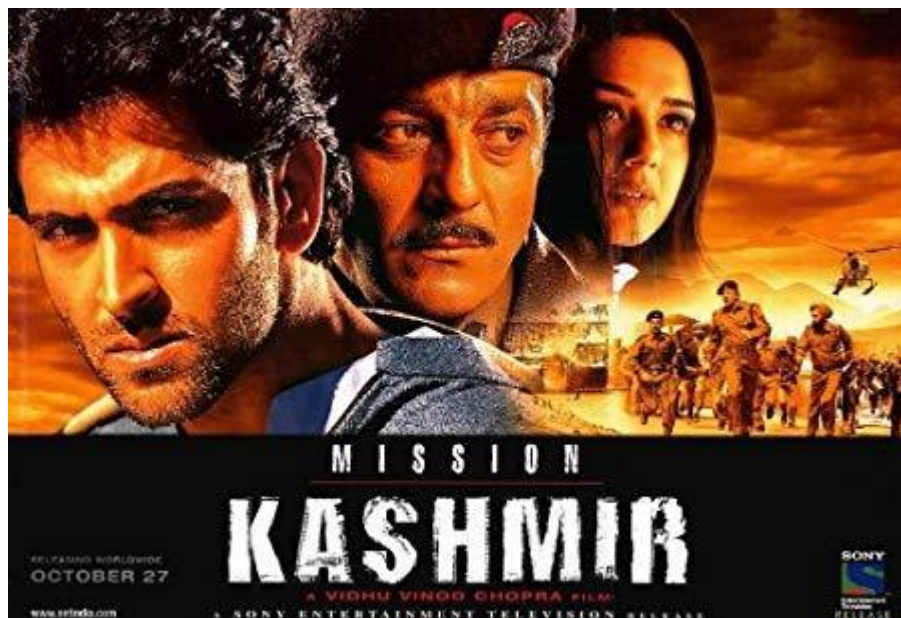


Figure 9: The poster of the movie *Mission Kashmir*

Main Cast: Sanjay Dutt as Inayat Khan, Hrithik Roshan as Altaf, Preity Zinta as Sufia Parvez

Inayat Khan, a Muslim Senior Superintendent of Police, played by Sanjay Dutt, lives in Srinagar with his wife Neelima, a Hindu, played by Sonali Kulkarni. They lose their child because all the doctors in the region refuse to attend to him as a *fatwa* (religious pronouncement) had been released by the leader of a militant group, ordering doctors to refrain from attending to police officers and their families, even in excruciating circumstances. Khan's pleas for sympathy fall on deaf ears of the medical staff, who are terrified of the consequences

of defying the orders of the militant group. Losing his son as a result of the *fatwa* made Inayat pledge to get rid of terrorism and militancy in Kashmir.

When he came to know that a few terrorists are staying in a locality in Srinagar, Inayat, along with other police men open fired to kill them. In this shoot out, the innocent members of the family, who were being forced to shelter the terrorists, lost their lives as well.[262] The youngest son of the family, Altaaf, survived, but is severely traumatized after witnessing the brutal killing of his parents and his sister. Altaaf could not register the face of the police officer who shot his family as Inayat's face was covered by balaclava, but develops a strong feeling of hate towards him. Inayat Khan's wife Neelima, having lost her son, urges Khan to adopt Altaaf and they adopt Altaaf. Few months later Altaaf realizes that Inayat was responsible for killing his family and runs away to join a militant organization, which runs on Islamic principles and divisive practices. The organization is led by Hilal Kohistani, played by Jackie Shroff, who makes Altaaf believe that his organisation is working for the freedom of Kashmir from its brutal occupation by the Indian Army, the police and the political leaders. Altaf is trained and sent to Kashmir to complete 'Mission Kashmir', which involves killing the Prime Minister of India.

Altaaf crosses the border and reaches Srinagar to find his childhood friend, and now a television personality, Sufiya Pervez, played by Preeti Zinta. Although he has been assigned just one mission, he tries to kill Inayat Khan repeatedly, but fails. Khan, on the other hand, recognizes him and tries to track him. Sufiya also learns of Altaaf's mission and breaks all ties with him, after learning that he was trying to use her as a pawn to execute the mission. On hearing that Altaaf has returned to Srinagar, Neelima is unable to control herself and meets him secretly. He confides in her his plan to kill Khan in the next few days. Altaaf plants a bomb in Khan's

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[262] Kabir, p 34.

briefcase but Neelima becomes the victim of it. Having nothing to lose now, the fight between Altaaf and Khan intensifies. Khan comes to know about the mission Altaaf has been sent for, and realizes it isn't just a murder but an attempt to create communal tension by destroying the Islamic shrines in Kashmir.

Khan manages to catch Hilal but Altaaf has already left for the mission. On finding Khan, Altaaf plans to shoot him but the memories of his step-mother, Neelima, curtail his primary instinct. On realizing the consequences of his mission, Altaaf assists Khan and shoots his mentor in the terrorist organization, Hilal instead to avoid any further damage. Towards the denouement, Altaaf has turned a new leaf and stays happily with Inayat and Sufi.

**Analysis**

South Asian cinema acts as a 'potent vehicle for the "transmission of affect", whereby disparate individuals willingly surrender their autonomy for the pleasure of the masses'.[263] Mission Kashmir becomes a repository of cultural memory, around which the feeling of nationalist and ethnic identification crystallizes. Mission Kashmir begins with the stock image of Kashmir, 'canopied shikara' floating on the Dal Lake[264]. 'The small boat, silhoutted against the mountains, poised on lake's tranquil waters'[265] presents a 'premodern, precapitalist purity'[266]. The pastoral landscape, translated as a symbol of purity, is sharply contrasted by a bomb blast in the shikara in the next scene, which is then followed by a trail of murders, blasts and howls of terror in the scenes that follow. Altaaf's entire family become victims of the attacks planned to capture terrorists, and he ends up being adopted by Inayat Khan and his wife, Neelima.[267]

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[263] Ibid, p 32.
[264] Ibid, p 33.
[265] Ibid, p 33.
[266] Ibid, p 40.
[267] Ibid, p 34

Through the first few scenes, the movie successfully places the geographical terrain within binaries, corresponding to the dominant national narrative.

The modern nation's obsession with pastoral landscape of Kashmir is sharply diverged from the actual political situation prevalent in the state of Jammu and Kashmir. 'The gap between representation and reality is marked in two songs that insert lines from Kashmiri lyrics, *Bhumbro* (O Bumblebee) and *Hrind Poshmal gindne drai lo lo* (O Intoxicated Ones, Poshmal, drunk [on spring], has come out to play)'.[268] According to Ananya Jahanara Kabir,

> These songs draw on popular *Koshur* lyrics... *Bhumbro* was written in the 1950s by Kashmiri poet Dina Nath Nadim as part of his opera *Bombur o Yamberzal* (Bumblebee and Narcissus), a thinly disguised political allegory on Sheikh Abdullah's imprisonment and his replacement by Ghulam Mohammad Bakshi. While the song's words are very loosely translated by Mission Kashmir' s lyrics writer, the original melody has been retained. *Hrind Poshmal* was written by Kashmiri romantic poet Rasul Mir (d. 1870 CE). Mission Kashmir' s version retains as its chorus its first couplet: *"Hrind Poshmal gindne drai lo lo/oobi shaabaash chani potshayi lo lo"* (O Intoxicated ones, Poshmal, drunk [on spring] has come out to play/even your shadow deserves our offerings of praise); *"lo lo"* is a typical refrain in Koshur folk lyrics. However, this couplet remains untranslated even in the DVD's subtitling, and is simply offered as a snatch of "Kashmiri exotica.[269]

These songs, presented as Sufi's television programs, certainly give a glimpse of Kashmiri culture but the lack of translation or foregrounding make them familiar but distanced.[270] *Bhumbro* also becomes the moment of Altaaf's return to Srinagar after completing his training

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[268] Ibid, p 36.
[269] Ibid, p 217.
[270] Ibid, p 35.

under Hilal. The constant juxtaposition of the eroticized landscape with violence places the Valley within the binaries. Through Altaaf and Sufi's contrasting responses to the landscape, the whole range of popular responses are consolidated. While the cinematic apparatus introduced us to timid and good-natured women through *Sufis* and *Rojas*[271], Kashmiri women continued to participate actively in defending their homes, both in 1947 as well as the 1990s. This sharp contrast between narratives of the natives and presentation on silver screen marks the creation of 'memory's truth'[272] to maintain a nationalist yearning.



DEFENDING THEIR HOME

Women's Defence Corps

"We shall prefer death rather than join Pakistan. Pakistan is the place where our daughters and sisters were sold for a paltry sum."

—*Sheikh Abdullah*—(*March 16, 1948*)

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[271] Roja is a Tamil film directed by Mani Ratnam, released on August 15, 1992, depicting the story of a womanwhose husband gets kidnapped while they are on their honeymoon in Kashmir.
[272] Salman Rushdie, 'Errata": or Unrealiable Narration in Midnight's Children' in *Imaginary Homelands*. (London: Granta Books) p.22.

Figure 11: Women's Defence Corps in Jammu and Kashmir

Contrary to Sufi's depiction is Altaaf's, who represents the other side of the coin. He is re-introduced as a mature militant in a scene where he is being offered *Kahwa* and trained to attack a TV tower in Srinagar. The scene in which Gufraan offers Kahwa to militants recurrs throughout the movie before an attack of terror is planned or executed. '*Kahwa*'[273] as well as the Kashmiri voice become symbolic of the violence that will follow. The movie creates a strong demarcation between a good Muslim, played by Inayat, who is patriotic to India and a bad Muslim, played by Hilal, who is patriotic to Pakistan. Further, Kashmiris like Altaaf are misguided and used as pawns by militants and may return to the 'good' side after realising their mistakes. Altaaf's participation in the plan and his 'desire for *aazadi* is explicated as his anger with Inayat Khan, which once defused, reunites Kashmiris and Indians into one happy family'.[274] 'The Oedipal struggle between Altaaf and his good and bad father figures (Khan and Kohistani) replicates Mission Kashmir 's own "anxiety of influence" as it struggles to diverge from its cinematic predecessors' yet gets caught up within the nexus of popular historical narrative.[275]

Further, in the movie there is no mention of Kashmiri Hindus, or even Christians, Sikhs and Buddhists, who even though are minority communities, certainly form the larger demographic fabric of the Valley of Kashmir. In the climax, "Mission Kashmir" is revealed as a mission to kill innocent people praying in the Hazratbal Shrine and the Shankaracharya Temple. The Shankaracharya Temple is a popular shrine of Kashmiri Hindus and the only symbol of the existence of the Kashmiri Pandit community in the Valley of Kashmir in the movie. There is

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[273] Kahwa is an aromatic tea consumed in the Valley of Kashmir. It is made by brewing green tea along with saffron, cinnamon, dry fruits such as almonds and spices like cardamom, cinnamon, cloves etc.
[274] Kabir, p. 37.
[275] Ibid, p 48.

no chracater who represents them in the entire movie. Altaaf's anger and final reunification with Inayat Khan, the good father figure, represents the fate of Kashmir and Kashmiri Muslims, where some young men have been misguided but will reunite with India once they realise the truth behind their struggle for *azaadi*.



Figure 12 – A still from Mission Kashmir showing Shankaracharya Temple

The onus to protect the Valley and the people is on 'good muslims' who are obligated to fight against the 'bad muslims' who have gone astray and want to kill 'innocent people' who will be praying in the shrine and the temple. Even though the movie was released just a decade after the Kashmiri Pandit exodus, it completely overlooks the events of violence against the community or their presence in the Valley. One just sees the temple for a few seconds and in a minute it becomes a part of the larger secular message the movie is trying to convey. The next scene depicts photographs of different Hindu, Sikh and Christian gods floating in water with the song *'dhuan dhuan'* playing the background, symbolising that 'Mission Kashmir' would have killed innocent devotees of all religions, thereby making people see the temple as a part of larger social message that terrorism and violence spares no one.

Figure 13 – A still from Mission Kashmir

The devotees in the temple would have been victims along with those in Hazratbal shrine and Altaaf, by realising the real motive of the mission, saves all of them. The temple thus became a part of the larger message, and the audience sees it like that. The movies gives them no time to realise that a minority community existed in the Valley and the temple was their holy shrine. Though the movie is about Kashmir and Kashmiris, it selectively frames the 'right communities' and the 'camera's gaze' is fixed to serve the larger purpose and justify the deployment of Army in the Valley and the role of terrorism in misguiding young Kashmiri minds, who once they see the truth, will join hands with India and become one happy family.

## 3.7 Resisting the representation

'The camera acts as a barometer of nationalist feeling'[276]. 'The Kashmiri who resists the nation's desire for Kashmir emerges as a version of Abraham and Torok's "phantom"'[277]. Nicolas Abraham and Maria Torok are best known for their theory of transgenerational haunting. According to the theory, 'repressed secrets are passed from one generation to the

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[276] Kabir, p 48.
[277] Ibid, p 49.

next if they are "encrypted" as unprocessed and traumatic information'.[278] The phantom that haunts the generations is unprocessed secrets and information that refuses to assimilate and emerges as an uncomfortable element in the social and individual frames of mind. National archives, media and popular cinema present Kashmiris as the residue that, refusing assimilation, is uncomfortably and forcibly incorporated within the nation's body. The experiences of the Kashmiri natives are either moulded to fit into the larger narrative of the society or remain completely unheard since they are carefully excluded from the popular stories.

The anecdotes of Kashmiri Pandits have been carefully weeded out of the histories of both the nation as well as the state of Jammu and Kashmir. Oral histories and tangible heritage emerge as the alternative canvases for the marginalized Kashmiri Pandit community to narrate their untold stories. 'Oral histories of the displaced act as an inevitable entry point into the material loss of house and home, because the displaced view home with a more urgent longing'[279]. Their alternate histories too are conscious communal efforts to guard memories and keep them alive, in a hope to rebuild and reclaim the lost home within new geographical terrains. Through this chapter, cinematic produtions released before 1960 and after that were analysed. In movies relased before 1960, the Valley of Kashmir was represented as a 'territory of desire', devoid of the trauma of Kashmiris who have suffered for decades. On the other hand, movies released after 1960, especially during the last decade of the nineties, present Kashmiris as strayed terrorists, who have been misguided and are enticed by false promises. While these representations might be strikingly different, they marginalise the experiences of locals and present them as the 'other'. Further, these cinematic productions completely erase the ethnic

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[278] Christopher Lane. 'The Testament of the Other: Abraham and Torok's Failed Expiation of Ghosts' *Diacritics*, vol. 27, no. 4, (1997), pp. 3–29 (p.3). *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/1566259 [Accessed 24 Sept. 2021]

[279] Devika Chawla, *Home, Uprooted: Oral Histories of India's Partition*. (New York: Fordham University Press, 2014) p. 288

cleansing of minority communities to preserve the nationalist yearning towards the landscape. This erasue compells the locals to find alternative sources to tell their tales of trauma and dispersion. The next chapter will shed light on the preservation practices adopted by these internally displaced communities to share their experiences, especially through the canvas of objects and material memory. By focusing on the material remains of the past and spinning the story of explusion around it, will will expose the void between the popular understanding of Kashmir and the lived life of its people. The tension between the two strands will help us understand how the oppressed communities recite their untold stories of trauma and persecution to challenge the popular perceptions about them.

## Chapter 4: The City without a Map: Mapping the Material Remnants of the Valley

'"I told you the truth," I say yet again, "Memory's truth, because memory has its own special kind. It selects, eliminates, alters, exaggerates, minimizes, glorifies, and vilifies also; but in the end it creates its own reality, its heterogeneous but usually coherent version of events; and no sane human being ever trusts someone else's version more than his own."'

Salman Rushdie, *Midnight's Children*[280]

'Happy nations are all alike; every unhappy nation is unhappy in its own way.'[281] For India, the state of Jammu and Kashmir has remained a source of 'unhappiness' and conflict since 1947, when the Partition of the Indian subcontinent was hastily executed by the British relinquishing control of the subcontinent. The political rupture caused by the conflict culminated in forced migration of minority communities from the Valley of Kashmir in 1989 and the early 1990s. The trauma of being uprooted still remains deeply embedded in the minds of many families. However, as discussed in the previous chapters, cinema, official history, archives and literature often erased or coloured the event and its impact because it is still so profoundly hurtful and has the potential of disrupting national harmony and social relations. As a result of this disruption and lack of acknowledgement, minority religious groups from Kashmir, especially the Kashmiri Pandits, continue to stay in refugee camps or settlements away from their homeland silently, awaiting justice for their forced displacement. To understand the Kashmiri narrative and the lived reality of Kashmiris, one needs to pay 'attention to the margins - the silences and contradictions - of national narratives'.[282] Homi Bhabha, in *'Nation and Narration'* has concentrated on the 'pedagogical' construction of the nation[283] that 'shuts out slippage, play, substitution and ambivalence by creating a totalizing

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[280] Salman Rushdie, *Salman Rushdie's Midnight's Children* (New York: Modern Library, 2003), p. 253.

[281] Faisal Fatehali Devji 'Hindu/Muslim/Indian' *Public Culture* vol. 5.1, (1992), pp. 1-18, (p. 1) <https://doi.org/10.1215/08992363-5-1-1 >

[282] Ibid, p.3.

[283] Homi K. Bhabha, *Nation and Narration*. (London and New York: Routledge, 1990), p 297.

narrative of the past'.[284] The history of suffering of marginalised communities needs to be liberated from this rigid, totalizing nationalist narrative in a way that it cannot be replaced by another narrative. Instead, this narrative must attempt to dismantle the dominant narrative and the practices that lead to its formation by creating an alternative space.[285] Testimonies and memorabilia of displaced Kashmiris and their struggle to survive will create an incision in the universal historical narrative and give the unheard past some space to ooze out from the gaps. The community is struggling to remember their experiences and preserve their identity. According to Richard Sennett, the act of remembering, 'requires reopening wounds in a particular way, one which people cannot do by themselves; remembering well requires a social structure in which people can address others across the boundaries of difference.'[286] However, addressing 'others across the boundaries of difference' is nearly impossible when the wounds remain fresh and unhealed in everyone's minds; when the causes of the wounds can still not be determined even for those who were forced to leave.[287] This lack of acknowledgement and interaction leads to a sharp split between disciplinary and non-disciplinary understandings of the Kashmir conflict, creating a void between the collective memory of the nation and the autobiographical memory of the Kashmiris.

To understand the experiences of Kashmiri migrants, one needs to understand the methods adopted by the community to preserve and narrate their tales, and then weave it alongside the national history that excludes them so that a careful listener can observe both the different strands of narration as well as the politics of publishing that excludes certain anecdotes from

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[284] Devji, p 3

[285] Ibid, p. 3.

[286] Richard Sennett, 'Disturbing Memories' in *Memory,* ed. Patricia Fara and Karalyn Patterson (Cambridge, UK, 1998), p. 22.

[287] Neeti Nair, *Changing Homelands*. (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2011). *JSTOR*, <www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt2jbtdc> [Accessed 29 Mar. 2021], p 10.

the dominant version.[288] This chapter examines the role of artefacts in extracting the untold stories of marginalised groups to understand how these experiences puncture the dominant historical narrative that excludes them. Artefacts and testimonies act as 'cultural survivals', in Edward Tylor's words, where they expose the relationship between histories and objects and how history is not exhaustive and often overlooks episodes of the past 'which were both never present and ever present in everyday lives.'[289] While they were never mentioned in history or treated as historical sources of inquiry, through their very presence in our lives, they challenge the commonly held notions and force us to look beyond what conventional history has served us.

Artefacts and associated narratives, or testimonies, will be regarded as 'traces', to borrow Valentina Napolitano's term, where 'traces' are signs to not only reveal the history from below but also 'signal the limits of representation'; the 'materials of knots of histories at the margins.'[290] Traces help us in recording experiences that reside at the 'intersection of the seen and the unseen, between sound and silences', words and gestures, expressions and fragments[291]. Jacques Derrida, in his conceptualisation of 'traces', regards them as something that cannot be completely located and represented, and are always placed at the periphery of what is representable and as a result of this, 'they point to a gap between the representable and the non-representable.'[292] In the case of Kashmiri Pandits, the artefacts examined and testimonies recorded through semi-structured interviews conducted in 2019 will assist us in gathering not just their untold stories but also practices of preservation of experiences and

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[288] Charles Maier, *Doing History, Doing Justice: The Narrative of the Historian and of the Truth Commission* (Princeton, New Jersey, 2000), p. 275 in Neeti Nair *Changing Homelands*. (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2011) www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt2jbtdc [Accessed 29 Mar. 2021]

[289] Edward Tylor *Anthropology: An Introduction to the Study of Man and Civilization* (London: Macmillan & Co, 1881) p. 388.

[290] Valentina Napolitano, 'Anthropology and Traces' *Anthropological Theory*, vol. 15, no. 1 (2015) pp. 47–67 <doi:10.1177/1463499614554239>, p. 47.

[291] Ibid, p 47.

[292] Ibid, p. 58.

culture through artefacts and everyday practices. These traces of the past will also uncover how unlike objects, the meaningfulness of the artefacts and the meanings ascribed to them are not constant, but keep changing based on the moment of recollection.

The interviewees were first, second and third generation Kashmiri Pandits who had either witnessed the violent episodes or were affected by its aftermath in the form of inherited trauma, witnessing their families suffer, financial difficulties and struggle for identity and re-establishment. A broad list of questions had been shared with all the participants in advance to familiarise them with the structure of the interview and the participants have consented to sharing their stories. These oral history interviews became the means to uncover a previously derided history of the marginalised communities by opening new paths of enquiry and giving a new voice to those who were previously forcibly silenced and ignored.[293] Unlike conventional history, which presents a highly selective and exclusionary retelling of the past[294], oral narratives are 'performed…by ordinary people and meaningfully constructed, simultaneously on two levels, by the interviewee and the interviewer.'[295] Thus, they involve going beyond constructing and imagining historical narratives by a historian to present a version of the past constructed by a 'thousand different hands.'[296] Unlike conventional history, which is written by the powerful 'author', oral histories are narrated, edited and interpreted by many and have undergone multiple processes and stages of decision making, performed by both the interviewer and interviewee – who both seem to have taken over the role of the 'author historian.'[297] Although oral histories involve more than one single participant, they encourage reliance on memory and recollection of the interviewee, which is often coloured by subjective perception of trauma and violence experienced. However,

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[293] Robert Perks and Alistair Thomson, *The Oral History Reader* (London: Routledge, 2006) p.26.
[294] Alun Munslow, *Narrative and History* (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2007) p. 122.
[295] Martha Rose Beard "Re-thinking oral history – a study of narrative performance", *Rethinking History*, 21:4 (2017), 529-548, <DOI: 10.1080/13642529.2017.1333285>, (p 529).
[296] Ibid, p 529.
[297] Ibid, p 529.

absolute reliance on individual versions can discounted by consideration of available textual and recorded material. In the case of Kashmiri Pandits, juxtaposition of available facts and individual versions led to a justifiable articulation to challenge the belief of the populace by presenting memoirs that provide multiple dimensions to establish a newer understanding of the Valley.

The methodology involved in-depth analysis of unique artefacts to understand their role in reflecting an alternate history. The interviews started with examining the objects carried by Kashmiri Pandits when they were forced to leave. Following a careful examination of the artefact, the interviewees described their lives before and after the exodus. Questions revolved around their life in Kashmir before the insurgency, especially their childhood, schooling and friendships, their home in Kashmir, how they spent their days and vacations, communal intermingling, festivals they celebrated and their culture including questions about the origin of their last names, what food they ate, any particular familial rituals etc. This section helped the interviewer understand the world Pandits inhabited before it was destroyed by violence and gave a glimpse of how they remembered their lost home, as an idyllic space coloured by 'memory's truth.'[298] The next section would involve questions about the violence witnessed by them in 1989, which led to their families being uprooted. Questions about how they got to know about forced migration, when they realised the extent of it, their coping mechanism, their lives in refugee camps and townships and finally their struggle for resettlement. This section was full of silences, pauses, sighs and fragments, which were stitched together later to create a coherent narrative of loss and rehabilitation. The 'voices contend with, but also co-opt aspects of official narratives and draw meaning from these to

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[298] Salman Rushdie, ""Errata": or Unrealiable Narration in Midnight's Children" *Imaginary Homelands*. (London : Granta Books) p.22.

make sense of the present world'[299]. The final section emphasised their present, any afterthoughts and what they'd like the present generation to know.

The purpose of these interviews was not to search for anecdotes that describe culture or conflict in binary terms. Instead, the interviews focused on alternative methods of preserving one's culture – through material remnants, fragments and silences. The focus on these fragments, both tangible and intangible, is crucial to understanding how the memories and trauma of the past have 'folded into ongoing relationships'.[300] Gyanendra Pandey observes that fragments often 'resist the drive for a shallow homogenization and…resist the whole (the narrative)'; they refuse to be assimilated into the narrative and its 'claims to wholeness'.[301] The fragments of memory and the past shared by the Kashmiri Pandits, through their speech, silences and material memory, evoke an unheard past that refuses to fuse within the larger history of the state or the nation. This concealed fragment exposes itself through the gaps and tears of the dominant history, encouraging the viewer to peep inside and observe the history from below.

## 4.1 Understanding the post-conflict Kashmir

Most Kashmiris, post-1990, can be classified into two distinct religious categories: Kashmiri Muslims who lived in the Valley after the Insurgency of 1989, and are surviving in a conflict zone, surrounded by spine-chilling violence, restrictions on movement, enforced disappearances 'encounters, civilian deaths, routine curfews, arbitrary suspension of telecommunications,' and suspension of human rights; and the Kashmiri Pandits, most of whom were forced to leave their homeland and find new homes in other parts of the globe, inheriting the pain of loss, longing and intergenerational trauma following the forced

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[299] Nair, p 10.
[300] Nair, p. 11.
[301] Ibid, p 67.

dispersion of their community from the Valley.[302] The story of the conflict, its causes and its repercussions differ significantly depending upon who the narrator is and the community they belong to since the lived experiences of the two communities are strikingly different after 1989. Both the communities struggled, one inside Kashmir, while the other outside their beloved homeland. Even though the experiences are different, neither is active in public memory. They continue to linger quietly and painfully in private discourse.

The testimonies of violent clashes and forced displacement are not always easily accessible, for remembering can be quite difficult, especially if the stories have remained unspoken for a long time.[303] This chapter will reflect on the testimonies and the objects carried by Kashmiri Pandits, who narrate their struggle to keep their identity and home alive in a new land, thousands of kilometres away from the Valley. The exclusion of Kashmiri Muslim stories is a result of issues of access following the recent developments in Jammu and Kashmir in August 2019, when Article 370 and 35 A were scrapped, followed by a complete communication block. Further, although these testimonies do not reflect the entire truth about the situation in and outside Kashmir, they certainly shed light on both the remembrance rituals adopted by the communities and how the pain of Kashmiris has been overshadowed by political plots and state-sponsored narratives. For my doctoral studies project, I endeavour to include interviews with Kashmiri Muslims to understand how the experiences are different and compare the lives of those living in conflict zones and those who were forced to flee following the violence of 1989.

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[302] Nitasha Kaul, 'India's Obsession with Kashmir: Democracy, Gender, (Anti-)Nationalism.' *Feminist Review*, vol. 119, no. 1, (July 2018), pp. 126–143, (p 129) <doi:10.1057/s41305-018-0123-x>

[303] Malhotra, *Remnants of a Separation: A History of Partition through Material Memory,* p. 27.

**4.2 Memories of Migration: Tracing the Kashmiri Pandit Migration through Objects**

While 1989 is central to the life of Kashmiri Pandits, the conversations never began with that moment of rupture. The interviews started with mundane fillers such as tea, coffee, weather, families, well-being, education, and gradually move towards talking about the Valley. Paving our way through the by-lanes of memory, one reaches the ignored past. Navigating through clues, signs and 'traces', one reaches the often-ignored histories of everyday life, which find no space in conventional historians. The journey of displacement is narrated through the artefacts carried from one's lost home — 'relics of a former life that are sold or hidden away; keepsakes that moulder, heirlooms pored over ritually, a subtle history inherited by the subsequent generations'.[304] All these keepsakes of a time gone by raise the same question – if you were forced to leave your home and forget your past, how would you preserve your identity and tell your stories? The Kashmiri Pandit community has been struggling with this question for decades. They have been juggling between adapting to the new host-land and trying to preserve their heritage since 1989 and have switched to alternative spaces such as objects to narrate their tales.

We deposit parts of ourselves in the objects around us without even realising it and extend our subjectivity beyond ourselves by distributing our memories 'through matter and affective traces'.[305] Despite storing a part of ourselves in these objects, they are considered banal and kept on the periphery when we feel nostalgic or try to remember our past. Although these objects have gradually transformed into repositories of memory and untold stories, they are often placed at the periphery.[306] During the interviews, we gradually recognise how these seemingly mundane objects are infused with importance. The owners relate them to a distant

[304] Aanchal Malhotra, 'Aanchal Malhotra's Notes to Self: A Human History of Partition', *Virginia Quarterly Review Online*, < https://www.vqronline.org/interviews-articles/2020/09/aanchal-malhotras-notes-self> [Accessed 13 January, 2021]

[305] Napolitano, p 48.

[306] Ibid, p. 49.

time, landscape and geography. When the speaker holds the object in their hands, it stirs up memories that had consciously been buried deep within their minds. Gradually, they dig through the layers to uncover the past. The conversations do not remain confined to the object itself though. The object is borderless and becomes an entry into the past. Beginning with the objects, the conversations span around objects people took, objects they wish they had taken and the objects that had been preserved by the second and the third generation, finally leading to more nuanced conversations about the society, gender, migration, trauma, class and hierarchy and social institutions. The space of the conversation goes beyond the materiality of the object to see what it stands for and the intangible culture it stores within itself – memories, customs, languages, and traditions.

Items of both sentimental and utilitarian value were carried by the survivors – photographs, jewellery, books, utensils, money, locks and keys, documents etc. Certain objects, particularly locks and keys, are symbolic of how unbelievable the event was for Kashmiris. Kashmiri Pandits were so sure of their return once the violence got curbed that some of them locked their houses and carried the keys with them, while others requested their neighbours to upkeep their homes till, they come back and take charge once again. The impossibility of return was so improbable that even the Governor of Jammu and Kashmir in 1990 had stated that the Pandits were to return to their homes with the restoration of normalcy. However, the belief in the possibility of return crumbled with time, and these silent objects that were symbolic of hope once, now act as reminders of the half-broken promise of going back. Material memory, however, isn't constrained to the objects, their physical presence and the memories they spur. It also focuses on the way the objects are handled – how they are handed to the listener, where they were stored, how they have preserved, how they were described by the owner, and how the owner had toiled hard and almost risked their lives to carry these artefacts, despite their banality, because they become symbolic of a physically distant place

and a distant inaccessible past.[307] These objects record the 'resilience and ingenuity of displaced people deprived of the great majority of their possessions'.[308] Examining these objects highlights the way people rely on familiar material remnants when they have been stripped off of their belongings and their home. These attempts to recreate a familiar past makes the object invaluable for the owner. Further, these remnants not only assist the owner in re-creating a familiar space and highlight the untold stories from 'below', but also shed light on the selective nature of historical writing and narration where some memories are concealed in favour of others to present a seemingly universal historical narrative. Through these interviews, one realises how the moment of dispersion not only changes stories of people, but also history of the object and its relevance once they are away from home. Deriving from the previous chapter, the objects shall be classified in three categories – inherited objects, objects carried for their utility, objects related to one's occupation and identity. Through these broad distinctions, objects will be analysed to understand the memories they trigger and their role in connecting the refugees and their children to their lost homeland. These interviews shed light on the importance of objects during distressed periods, when human relations are 'most fraught and fragile.'[309] Studying these relics from the past will assist us in understanding the untold history through scattered fragments, silences and material remains of a time gone by to reflect on the gap between how Kashmir is understood and how it had been experienced by the locals.

## 4.3 Keys to the Lost Home

'The future of museums is in our homes.'

Orhan Pamuk *(Modest Manifesto for Museums)*

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[307] Loera Auslander and Tara Zahra, 'Introduction: The Things They Carried: War, Mobility, and Material Culture' in *Objects of War: The Material Culture of Conflict and Displacement* (Ithaca; London: Cornell University Press, 2008) <10.7591/cornell/9781501720079.003.0001>, p 2.
[308] Ibid, p 2-3.
[309] Ibid, p 8.

Orhan Pamuk in *Modest Manifesto for Museums* suggests that a more democratic, egalitarian and just approach to historical narration would focus on family archives and homes rather than large, state-led institutions.[310] State-sponsored archives and museums often omit stories of marginalised groups such as refugees and internally displaced communities to present a uniform version of history by concealing the fragments from the margins. Unlike these state-led institutions, oral history interviews and family archives allow us to witness the histories from below – those of the marginalised and the oppressed.[311] Material remnants add to the testimonies by providing an unfiltered view of the past, not manipulated by political motives of the state and the ruling class. They are material reminders of 'unequal communicative practices, the left-overs of histories, or histories that never were, so to speak'.[312] For diasporic communities, objects have an added value. For centuries, people who were victims of forced displacement, have carried both objects of utility and memorabilia with them.[313] Refugees preserve, keep, and pass on items, along with their associated stories, to the next generation as their only link to the lost homeland. The next generations too, indulge in practices to keep the belongings from the past and through them the past itself, safe.[314] By carefully preserving and later sharing these objects and the stories associated with them, the community allows the viewers and the listeners to understand how diasporic communities rely on artefacts from homeland to create a sense of familiarity in their new homes.

The Kashmiri Pandits, an internally displaced community, carried and preserved belongings from Kashmir with great difficulty. Most of the community fled to safe havens in different cities of India in the first year of the conflict 'due to a combination of militant activity,

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[310] Orhan Pamuk, 'A Modest Manifesto for Museums' *American Craft,* (Jun/July 2013), Vol. 73 Issue 3, p 80-083.

[311] Alistair Thomson, 'Making the Most of Memories: The Empirical and Subjective Value of Oral History' *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* Volume 9 (1999) p 291–301, (p 291).

[312] Napolitano, p. 52.

[313] Auslander and Zahra, p. 4.

[314] Ibid, p.2.

selective assassinations, the breakdown of law and order, and the implementation of a policy of violent counter insurgency'.[315] While people are attached to their belongings even under normal circumstances, the importance ascribed to material possessions is magnified in case of forced migrants. Violence brings with it destruction of home, identity, culture, relationships and social bonds. Material remnants from the past 'take on new meanings when they are all that is left of a formerly much larger array of the stuff of everyday life.'[316] For the Pandits, these rescued remnants have physically transformed in the context of displacement, and their meaning and use have altered as well. For diasporic communities, multiple stories and histories condense into one object with time and gradually shift its meaning and value.[317] Refugee families preserve, keep, and pass on these preserved items, along with their associated stories, to the next generation with a hope that their stories and struggles will not be forgotten. One such object inherited by Pradyuman Koul, our first interviewee, (pseudonym) were the keys to his ancestral home in Kashmir.



The set of keys inherited by Pradyuman Koul

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[315] Ankur Datta, 'Uncertain Journeys: Return Migration, Home, and Uncertainty for a Displaced Kashmiri Community' *Modern Asian Studies* 51.4 (2017), pp.99-125, (p.107)
[316] Auslander and Zahra, p.4.
[317] Napolitano, p. 57.

Pradyuman's family left Kashmir soon after Pandit Tika Lal Taploo, a prominent Kashmiri Pandit leader, was shot on September 14, 1989. According to him, 'this brought violence too close to home and the family decided to leave in haste before everything was disrupted.' Although, they left early, like many other Internally Displaced Kashmiris, they couldn't fathom the reason behind their forced migration. During his fieldwork, Dr Ankur Datta witnessed a similar feeling of disbelief and shock from his interviewees, who belonged to the Kashmiri Pandit community. One of his interviewees Moha Rani shares,

> When we were in our village in Kashmir, everything was fine. We had our farm land, everything. We had our families. We were with the Muslims and the Muslims were with us. At our marriages there would be more Muslims (than Pandits). Then who knows what happened… Ahh! What water we had there. The air, it was so clean! Not like here. (Moha Rani, resident of Purkhu camp).[318]

Although many Pandit families suffered after being involuntarily displaced from the Valley, they were hopeful of their return. The Koul family was no different. With a firm belief that they would return once the violence died down, Pradyuman's mother locked all the cupboards and doors of their ancestral home. After ensuring that her belongings are safe, she carried the bunch of keys with her and boarded the bus to Jammu with her family. The bus they had boarded was stopped every 5 to 10 kilometres either by the army or by the militants, both of whom sought to find their targets. The Indian Army was looking for potential militants, while the latter wanted to capture and murder influential Kashmiri Pandits. His

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[318] Ankur Datta, '*The Politics of Place, Community and Recognition among Kashmiri Pandit Forced Migrants in Jammu and Kashmir'* (Doctoral Dissertation, The London School of Economics and Political Science, 2011), p. 139.

mother would put a *bindi*[319] on her forehead if the bus had been stopped by the army to signify that they were Kashmiri Pandits trying to flee. However, if the intruder was a militant, the *bindi* would be removed quickly and placed under her clothes to blend with the crowd. While these episodes are significant in the lives of Kashmiri Pandits and in altering the demography of the Valley of Kashmir, they were never represented in popular media until 2020. Vidhu Vinod Chopra, a Kashmiri Sikh displaced in 1990, represented the turmoil of 1989 on camera through his cinematic production, *Shikara*, a dedication to his mother and her ordeal after being uprooted from the Valley.





Cinematic depiction of a Kashmiri Pandit woman removing her *bindi*, stripping her away from her homeland and her identity.[320]

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[319] Bindi is a body adornment worn on the forehead by Hindu and Jain women from India. It is usually a dot shaped accessory that women stick on their foreheads in the subcontinent.

[320] '*Shikara: The Untold Story of Kashmiri Pandits*', dir. by Vidhu Vinod Chopra (Vinod Chopra Films and Fox Studios Hindi, 2020), online film recording, Amazon Prime

As time passed, the feeling of hope started fading away. This set of keys, which were once symbolic of hope, now became an aching reminder of the loss of home. Although these keys open no locks, they have carefully been preserved for years, and were later inherited by our narrator, for whom this became the only tangible link he has to the Valley. Having lived away from the Valley all his life, these relics are his gateway to the past and catalysts for travelling to the Kashmir. The moment of dispersion is crucial not only for the family's history, but also for the history of the object. 'It became a moment of both discontinuity and continuity'.[321] Taking both the family and the object out of Kashmir—'displacing them from what had been their "home"—presents a stark break from the contexts' that help us understand the Kashmir identity of both the people and their possessions.[322] Involuntary displacement involved a decision to maintain possession of these objects on the part of their owners and required conscious acts of selection, especially for people who were not able to carry many material possessions due to ongoing violence.

Forced migration, being pressured to leave one's home, 'provides a different optic on the things that are taken along'.[323] Not only does it alter people's relationships with their possessions, which have also been uprooted from their home and familiar surroundings, it also develops multiple perspectives and ideas as the object passes through the hands of other family members, and is finally inherited by the next generation – one divorced from the familiar surroundings of the past. The decision to preserve and pass the artefact to the next generation is an attempt to establish a link with the past and re-configure the identity of refugee communities, who are struggling to re-establish themselves. The ordinariness of these

<https://www.primevideo.com/dp/amzn1.dv.gti.80b83e28-1b78-ed13-1c88-971a29c09746?autoplay=1&ref_=atv_cf_strg_wb> [Accessed on September 21, 2020)

[321] Auslander Loera and Tara Zahra, 'Circuitous Journeys' in *Objects of War: The Material Culture of Conflict and Displacement* (Ithaca; London: Cornell University Press, 2008) <10.7591/cornell/9781501720079.003.0001> , p. 250.

[322] Ibid, p. 249.

[323] Ibid, p. 252.

seemingly banal objects along with situation in which these were taken by the owners, enables them to 'indulge in particularly pleasurable forms of remembering.'[324]

In the case of Internally Displaced Kashmiris, this continuity marked by inheritance of objects is significant since they guard and present their experiences through these artefacts. These bits of personal memories gradually challenge the dominant historical memory. According to Maurice Halbwachs, historical memory relies on verbal records such as documents and archives, while autobiographical memory is lived or inherited by people, and is often ignored by those who focus on developing the historical narrative.[325] While the community yearns for inclusion within nation's historical memory, their attempts to retain their autobiographical memory can be witnessed through everyday practices. In Pradyuman's household, Kashmir finds its mention every day. An occasional story of his parent's childhood, an anecdote of *Herath[326]*, or mention of a friend from Kashmir, find their way seamlessly in the everyday conversations in his family. The family's desire to preserve their heritage and identity can also be observed through their attempts to teach him Kashmiri language, culinary practices and customs, despite being away from the Valley. Observing these practices, Minakshi Tickoo writes,

> Children spoke Kashmiri at home but preferred to speak in Hindi or English at school. Parents were trying to inculcate the cultural values in children by stressing the use of the mother tongue and celebration of all the Kashmiri cultural and religious functions as a community.[327]

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[324] Alan Radley, 'Artefacts, Memory and a Sense of the Past' in *Collective Remembering* ed. David Middleton and Derek Edwards, (London: Sage, 1990) p 47.

[325] Sequeira, p. 51.

[326] Among the Kashmiri Pandits, the festival of Shivratri is known as *Herath* and is the biggest festival for the community. It is symbolic of the marriage of Lord Shiva with Parvati and is celebrated as an auspicious wedding ceremony between the divine figures.

[327] Minakshi, Tikoo. "The 1989–90 Migration of Kashmiri Pandits: Focus on Children." *Psychological Reports*, vol. 75, no. 1, Aug. 1994, pp. 259–263, doi:10.2466/pr0.1994.75.1.259.

The inheritance of tangible and intangible heritage gradually encourages the next generation to not forget and narrate their stories further. Many second and third generation Kashmiri Pandits have inherited similar silent artefacts, which have gradually transformed into invaluable possessions that inspire them to narrate the struggle of their families and not let the selective political history erase their marginalised stories and experiential memories.

## 4.4 The 5x7s of Memory

'Naveen was my friend
Killed he was, in Habba Kadal
while on the tailor's hanger remained hung
his warm coat.
Passing as it did through scissors and thread–needle
in the tailor's hand, till the previous day
it was merely a person's coat
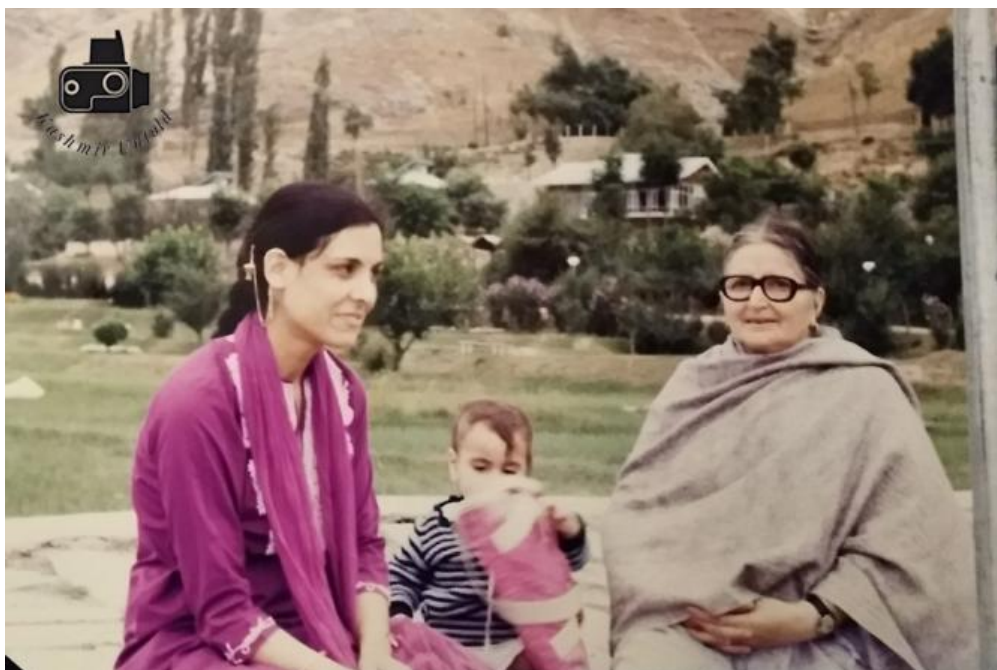that suddenly was turned into a Hindu's coat'

Poem by Maharaj Krishan Santoshi written on the death of his friend Naveen Sapru



Navita's mother and brother sitting on a *Shikara*[328] in Manasbal Lake located in Ganderbal District of Jammu and Kashmir, India

[328] A light, flat-bottomed boat.

Navita's grandmother, mother and brother in Ganderbal District of Jammu and Kashmir, India

According to Danielle Drozdzewski et al,

> Memories are powerful forces encountered via experiences, emotions, places, and things. Their traces lie everywhere: their sensory cues provoke remembrance; they install pauses and digressions in our normative thought processes; and they transport us, however momentarily, to different times and different places. These motions of memory shape and give life to our positioning as people, communities and nations, and are couched within context specific identity narratives.[329]

The process of remembering and recalling the past is not restricted to verbal sources, especially historical documents. In fact, memory tries to locate the past in a variety of non-verbal sources including architecture, culinary practices, objects, bodies, movements and

other spaces of representation.[330] Memories, both historical and autobiographical, rely on these alternate spaces. They also study 'relationships embedded within particular cultural practices and informed by culturally specific systems'.[331] Although both these memories rely heavily on material culture, they might differ significantly. In the case of Kashmir, the dominant historical memory represents the conflict in a shallow and narrow focal plane, which selectively highlights only certain angles and simultaneously erases the others to create a uniform, politically motivated, narrative. These images act as 'immutable mobiles'[332] and present a distorted version of history.[333] These images and popular coverage through popular media influence the way we understand and comprehend the past. In the case of Kashmiri Pandits, the selective coverage impacts how forced displacement is seen and understood – as a trivial and marginal issue. The newspapers and journals did mention the event, but adequate acknowledgement was not given. Only a few references were made to the events leading to forced displacement of Kashmiri Pandits. Further, the references, if made, were short and towards the margins, making it easy to flip through and ignore.

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[330] Kevin Birth, 'The immanent past: Culture and psyche at the juncture of memory and history' *Ethos* 34:2 (2006) pp.169–191, (p. 176).

[331] Alistair Thomson 'Fifty Years On: An International Perspective on Oral History', *The Journal of American History*, vol. 85, no. 2, (1998) pp. 581 – 595, (p 582).

[332] Bruno Latour, *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network-Theory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), p. 223.

[333] Zoë Robertson et al, 'Through their eyes: seeing experiences of settlement in photographs taken by refugee background youth in Melbourne, Australia', *Visual Studies*, 31:1, (2016) pp. 34-49, (p 34) <DOI: 10.1080/1472586X.2015.1128845>
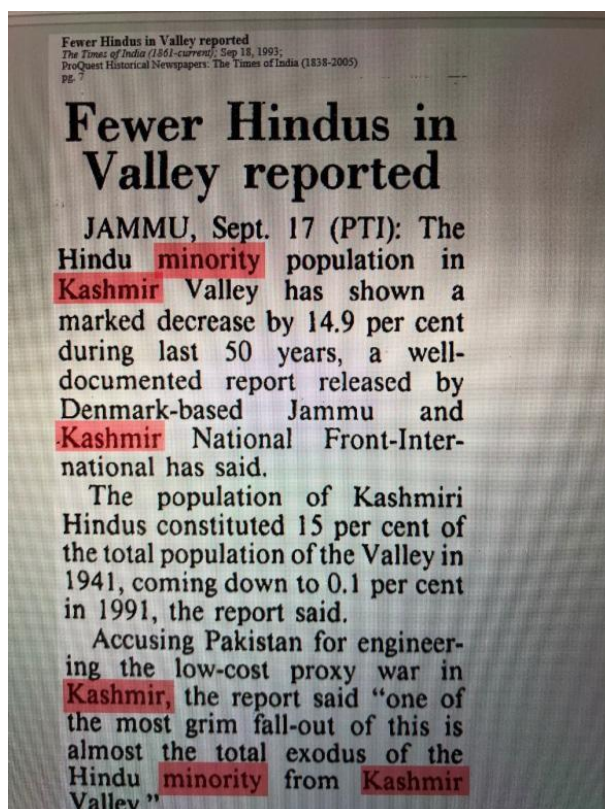
Small columns written about the exodus of the Kashmiri Pandits

The circumstances that resulted in flight and the extent of forced migration remained inadequately covered by media resulting in lack of awareness of the situation in other parts of the country. The lack of representation concealed the inadequacy of the state and the national institutions to protect their own citizens, despite multiple warnings and hit-lists being issued by militant organisations. This 'collective memory, ideology and public culture deeply influences the process of individual remembering'.[334]

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[334] Beard, p 3.
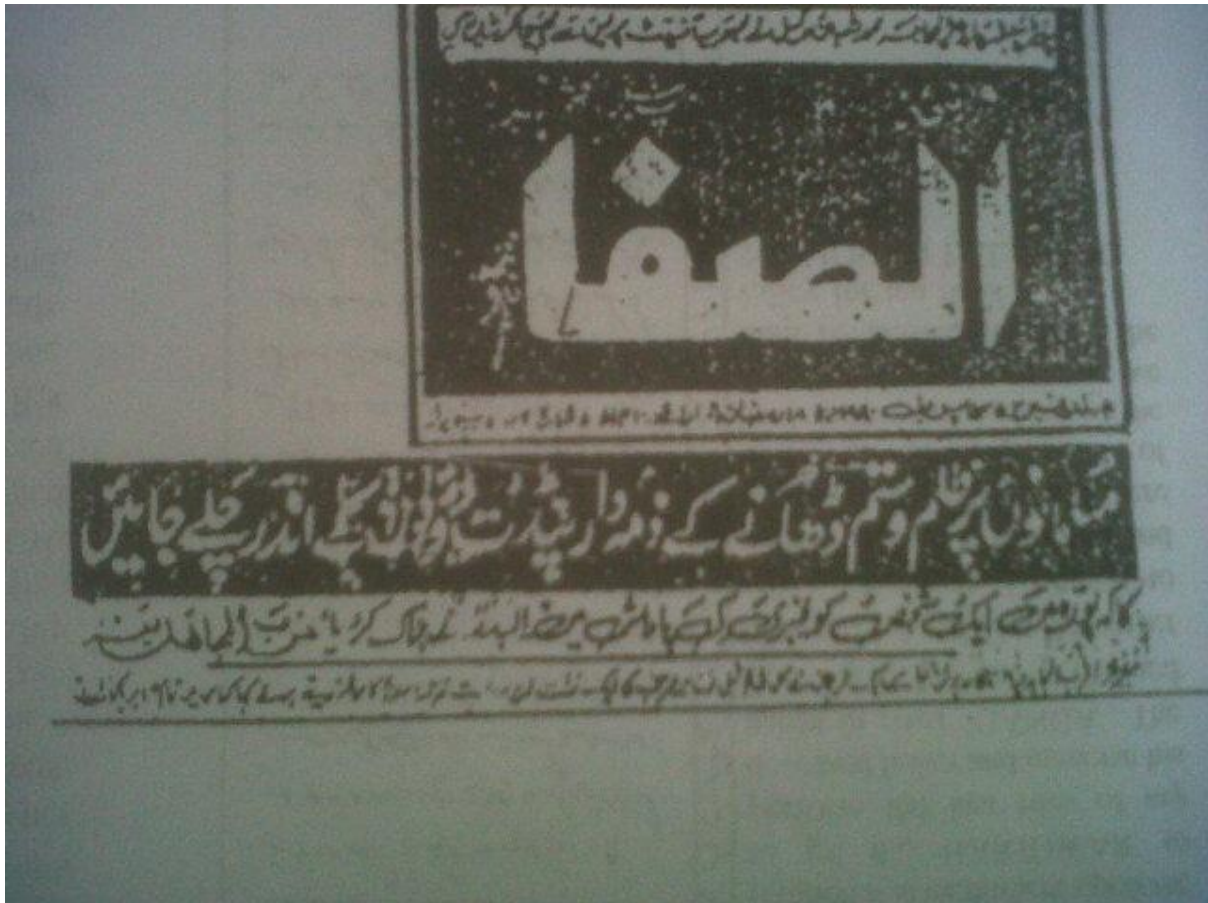
Headline of a local daily '*Al Safa'* published in Urdu from Srinagar – 'Kashmiri Pandits responsible for duress to Muslims should leave the Valley within two days.'

These selective visual and literal patterns frame the dominant perceptions of Kashmir and Kashmiris. The citizens of the state are seen either as 'passive victims' or, 'as threats to sovereignty and security, and thus to the identity and prosperity of the nation'.[335] Further, although the Valley of Kashmir was home to many minority religious groups who were forced to flee, the dominant narratives revolve around the beauty of the landscape or terrorism and violence executed by Kashmiris. These politically motivated representations shape the nation's understanding of the Kashmir conflict as well as the marginalised groups within the state.

This 'visual economy' positions the Kashmiri Pandit community either at the periphery, with no coverage, or at the immutable and silenced end of the camera lens. As a result of being

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[335] Robertson et al, p 35.

positioned this way, the Pandits and their story is often misread and misunderstood by ill-informed readers.[336] To counter these perceptions, we will shift the lens of the camera and give the Kashmiri Pandits an agency by analysing photographs clicked and carried by them as well as highlighting their stories of being uprooted from their homeland. We will analyse the photographs carried by our second narrator, Navita's (pseudonym) family in March 1990, when they decided to leave the Valley. On being asked what they had carried from Srinagar, the family informed us about a briefcase that Navita's father had carried, full of documents and some photographs. The driver of the taxi they had hired to go to the bus station, to leave for Jammu, refused to allow them to carry any other bags. The narrator's family firmly believed in the impermanence of their move, However, like Pradyuman's family, their hopes crumbled too and soon they realised that these photographs were all they had from Kashmir. When asked for the photographs, they were carefully removed from the photo-frames, that were mounted on walls, and placed on the table. These old photographs had yellowed with time and seemed to have aged after imbibing the strain of their owners within themselves. The photographs represented both longing and trauma and gradually surfaced episodes that had been buried in the minds of survivors. The change of gestures and expressions, when the narrators hold these old photographs, makes one realise that 'pictures often act as time machines'[337]. The family was carefully 'holding a faded photograph' in their hands but they were 'living a crystal clear memory'[338]. Navita and her family were flooded with memories, and tried to weave these threads into a cohesive narrative. Through these interactions, the narrator and the listener try to actively re-construct the past and develop a 'richer, more textured understanding' of the time gone by.[339] Further, Beard citing Alessandro Portelli also

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[336] Ibid, p 35.

[337] Sumedha Mahajan, "Not just a Photograph" *Museum of Material Memory* < https://museumofmaterialmemory.com/not-just-a-photograph> [Accessed September 28, 2019]

[338] Ibid

[339] Beard, p 3.

believes that, 'the volume, velocity, tone, rhythm and range of speech produced by the interviewee/interviewer carries implicit meanings and social connotations that are not re-producible in writing.'[340] Through these oral history interviews, meanings were derived from shifts of velocity, slowing down, recounting an experience for a long time, attempts to distract attentions from delicate points, silences, pauses, changes in tempo, sighs, gestures and tear, which are completely omitted in conventional history. Although there are no interpretive fixed rules, oral history interviews provide a plethora of non-verbal cues along with testimonies that add another layer to the way past is seen, heard or read about.

These gestures and additional layers add nuanced details that help reassess the past. While examining the photographs, Navita acknowledged that there's a big disparity between what people generally know about Kashmir, and what people had experienced. Gently grazing her hands on the photographs, she recalled how these thin sheets had collected within themselves multiple layers of memory and trauma. 'We surround ourselves with things and put parts of ourselves into them; they possess the ability to retain memory, to preserve the past and to a certain extent, keep alive those who have passed'.[341] These objects become untouched reservoirs of memories, retaining them layer by layer for decades. They might seem mundane or banal to an outsider, but to the family, they are reminders of a true home, of family, a feeling of belonging and of the time gone by.

Along with these physical artefacts, attempts to preserve intangible traditions have also been made, especially by women of the family. Women in refugee families are often endowed with the responsibility of transferring their heritage to the next generation. Navita's mother took the responsibility of ensuring that her children learn about Kashmiri Pandit culture, even

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[340] Ibid, p 6.

[341] Aanchal Malhotra "Letter from Montreal – Partition Objects, Delhi and Pakistan' *The Delhiwalla* < https://www.thedelhiwalla.com/2015/02/28/letter-from-montreal-partition-objects-delhi-pakistan/> [Accessed August 28, 2020]

when they were thousands of kilometres away from the Valley. She taught a variety of art and cultural practices such as knitting, embroidery and jewellery making, particularly *deyjhors,*[342] and cooking Kashmiri cuisine to her children. While passing their knowledge to the next generation, she also shared a part of herself – her identity, her memories and her trauma. In the absence of written narratives and memoires, these tangible objects and 'commemorative ceremonies' aid in transferring the Kashmiri Pandit culture to the next generation. According to Paul Connerton, commemorative ceremonies are rituals of remembrance and re-enactment in which groups symbolise their continuity in a timeless or 'metaphysical present'[343]. Memory and trauma, especially inherited ones, are very powerful things. Memories are precious; they are transferred from one generation to another. Artefacts act as catalysts in this process of intergenerational transfer and assist in keeping the past, its experiences, memories and anecdotes alive. Knowledge and memories seep 'seamlessly through generations and find themselves in children and grandchildren in the form of awe, remorse, sorrow, spite or wonderment'.[344] By passing the cultural corpus to the subsequent generations, Kashmiri Pandit families ensured that their memories are kept in new storehouses and are not forgotten by the next generations.

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[342] Dejhoors are a part of the earrings worn by Kashmiri Pandit women and are symbolic of marriage.
[343] Paul Connerton, *How Societies Remember*, Themes in the Social Sciences (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989) p. 47.http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511628061 p 43.
[344] Aanchal Malhotra "Remnants of a separation: a ghara and a gaz: from Lahore to Amritsar to Delhi", *South Asian Popular Culture*, 2016, 14:1-2, 89-100, DOI:10.1080/14746689.2016.1241354, p 100.

Deyjhors made by Navita and her mother in their new homes near Delhi

Deprivation of material possessions after involuntary displacement contributes to the unsettling feeling of alienation and 'a sense of rupture from the past lives.'[345] Observing this, Özlem Savaş states,

> It is partly the loss of objects that tells people they live in a foreign environment, that they are displaced or even misplaced and that they are no longer home. It is partly the absence or presence of objects that shows people where they belong. The loss of objects is the loss of home.[346]

[345] Robertson et al, p 43.
[346] Özlem Savaş, "Taste Diaspora: The Aesthetic and Material Practice of Belonging." *Journal of Material Culture*, vol. 19, no. 2, June 2014, pp. 185–208, doi:10.1177/1359183514521922, p 189.

For Navita's family, while everything was lost, the presence of these familiar photographs kept the homeland alive. The presence of photographs from Kashmir on the walls of their new homes provides a sense of familiarity that is sustained consciously through everyday practices within the private sphere such as cooking familiar food, speaking in the Kashmiri language, wearing Kashmiri Shawls and other domestic practices performed every day.[347] The presence of belongings from the past assist in creating a familiar sense of space, belonging and attachment in new 'host-lands'. In addition to creating a familiarity, these images also shatter multiple stereotypes by the virtue of their presence in the host lands. Zoe Robertson et al. elaborate on the significance of these images,

> The images are also a means of rendering visible their experiences of social exclusion and/or inclusion, and their sense of belonging or un-belonging to places inside the settlement landscape in which they now reside….These photographs, we contend, offer a more nuanced perspective of the migration process and have the capacity to show the interior lives and reflections of settlement … that are, more often than not, silent or unstated experiences.[348]

Although silent, these photographs capture within themselves memories of the past, resilience for the present and hopes for the future. Marginalised groups such as the Kashmiri Pandits are caught between their longing for the homeland and their desire to fit in this new space. Through the photographs, Navita and her family are able to fulfil their yearning for an integration of past lives into the present, and re-defining their identity. At the same time, these objects encourage them to take steps to rehabilitate themselves and belong in their new worlds, thus creating a familiar resemblance of the homeland within the host-land.

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[347] Robertson et al, p 43.
[348] Ibid, p 46.

## 4.5 Tokens of Identity: Tracing the Past through Documents

In sharp contrast to the way the 'exodus' of January 1990 has been talked about, the 'actual process of the flight nevertheless remained an individual or familial affair' and 'became apparent following the arrival of large numbers of Pandits in Jammu.'[349] Like the other families, our third narrator, Rohan's family too fled from Kashmir in January 1990. They were also unaware of the extent of the catastrophe till they reached Jammu. His family often talk about how Migrants were herded like cattle in buses and into the backs of trucks in Srinagar, but could not imagine the number of Pandits that faced Exile. Rahul Pandita, a Kashmiri Pandit author who left the Valley due to ethnic cleansing of 1990, writes about this moment of disruption,

> In one of the trucks, a woman lifted the tarpaulin sheet covering the back and peered outside. There was nothing peculiar about her except the blankness in her eyes. They were like a void that sucked you in. Years later, I saw a picture of a Jewish prisoner in Auschwitz. When I saw his eyes, my mind was immediately transported to that day, and I was reminded of the look in that woman's eyes.[350]

The experience of this narrator's family was no different from many others, including that of Rahul Pandita. They felt a void in their chest as they took steps away from their home, never to return. Along with violence, other passive tactics were adopted to generate fear among the minority groups, compelling them to leave. All the mosques in different parts of the Valley would chant slogans such as '*Batav bagair, batnev saan*', meaning '*We want Kashmir with Kashmiri Pandit women but without Kashmiri Pandit men*'. They were also offered three choices, '*Ralive, Tsaliv ya Galive*' – 'convert to Islam, leave the place or perish'. For a

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[349] Datta, '*The Politics of Place, Community and Recognition among Kashmiri Pandit Forced Migrants in Jammu and Kashmir*', p 85.

[350] Rahul Pandita, '*Our Moon Has Blood Clots: A Memoir of a Lost Home in Kashmir*' (India: Penguin Random House India Private Limited, 2017), p 67.

beleaguered minority, these slogans were telling them to leave the Valley. Reluctant to convert, the family was forced to leave their home, before they perish. Even in Jammu, the locals resisted the influx of Pandits in their lands and used to degrade them by various local slangs such as, '*Haath mein kangri / kandhe pe jhola / kaha se aye yeh Kashmiri Lola?*' ('A brazier in hand/a cloth bag slung on the shoulder/from where have these Kashmiri refugees come?'[351]) and through insulting acts such as placing *Deyjhors* on dogs etc.[352] Despite the antagonism, they had to settle in these regions and gradually became an indispensable part of the new lands.

Although they have re-established themselves now, these horrifying memories are still buried deep within the minds of all of Rohan's family members, who have either lived through these turbulent times or have heard about them from the previous generation of survivors. Similar to the other two families, Rohan's family too could not carry any of their belongings. His father was able to carry only a small briefcase as well. He filled it with essential documents and a letterhead of the first business he had started in Srinagar. His mother, on the other hand, wore her *dejhoors* for their significance in the Kashmiri Pandit culture[353] and their economic value during these financially stressful times. Although caried for their utility, these documents stepped beyond their utilitarian purposes to become represent counter-narratives that challenged the state-sponsored perspective.

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[351] Translated by Dr Ankur Datta.

[352] Ankur Datta, *'Here's why Kashmiri Pandits living in Hindu-majority areas remain a minority'* (2020) https://theprint.in/pageturner/excerpt/heres-why-kashmiri-pandits-living-in-hindu-majority-areas-remain-a-minority/400697/ [Accessed on November 19, 2020]

[353] In the Kashmiri Pandit culture, dejhoors are gifted to women during their weddings. They are considered as symbols of Shiva and Parvati and are believed to protect the newly married couple.
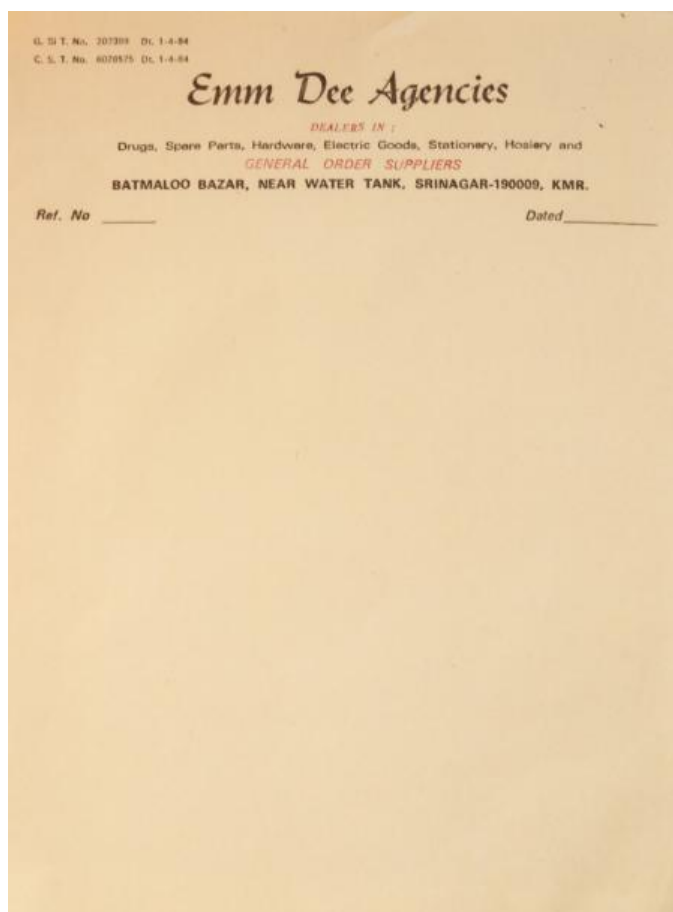
Letterhead carried by Rohan's father in 1990.

Documents, both carried by the Pandits as well as those produced by the state such as Identity

Certificates etc, are influential in their own ways even today. 'The force of written documents

does not emanate from their material qualities as things but from the social relations involved

in their production'.[354] Unlike other material artefacts, 'the documents are often designed and

constructed to act at a distance, in order to compel the objects and people that they interact

with to behave in particular ways'.[355] While other artefacts can be interpreted subjectively,

documents, by the virtue of presence of words, limit these subjective interpretations. These

carefully drafted documents such as identity papers 'delimit behaviour by promoting

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[354] Gaston Gordillo, 'The Crucible of Citizenship: Id-Paper Fetishism in the Argentinian Chaco.' *American Ethnologist* 33, no. 2 (2006): 162–176, (p 168).
[355] Georgia Cole 'How friends become foes: exploring the role of documents in shaping UNHCR's behaviour', *Third World Quarterly*, 39:8, (2018), pp. 1491-1507, (p 1494), <DOI: 10.1080/01436597.2017.1416289>

selective understandings of the issues and events they pertain too'.[356] In case of the Kashmiri Pandits, the use of the term 'Kashmiri Migrants' promotes a certain understanding of the involuntary displacement. Instead of using labels such as 'Internally Displaced People', calling the community 'Migrants' builds a hazy layer around the past and does not clarify if the move was voluntary or involuntary. By fixing a certain understanding of the event through devising the terminology surrounding it and widely circulating it through documents, 'the existence of other interpretations of the situation may be obscured'[357] Roland Barthes acknowledged this role of documents in fixing how the past is interpreted, where the documents have the potential to stifle any alternative interpretations of the past. He said, 'The text is indeed the creator's (and hence society's right) of inspection over the image …With respect to the liberty of the *signifieds* of the image, the text has thus a *repressive* value.'[358] Selective interpretations can be generated and popularised these documents as they move within multiple spheres and are archived later. In this way, these interpretations are normalised, and eventually adopting alternative ways becomes difficult since the discourse is tightly framed, popularised and accepted by the masses. For the Pandits, selective reading adopted by popular media and circulation of these state-produced documents promoted a selective reading of their displacement that encouraged the reader to think of it as a minor communal conflict or a category of 'migration', and not ethnic cleansing.

Despite their structure and stability, Law and Latour explore how these black boxes, created carefully by institutions through documents, cinema and media, are 'leaky'[359] and attempts to

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[356] Ibid, p 1494.

[357] Ibid, p 1494

[358] Roland Barthes, *Image-Music-Text*. Translated by S. Heath (New York: Hill and Wang, 1977) p. 39.

[359] Bruno Latour. 'Where are the Missing Masses: The Sociology of a Few Mundane Artifacts?' in *Shaping Technology/Building Society: Studies in Sociotechnical Change*, ed W. Bijker and J. Law, (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1992) p. 225–258, (p. 225).

make these narratives indisputable can be reversed by alternative methods of expression.[360] In case of the Pandits, while the official documents, especially their identity papers, narrated the story of their 'migration', their personal documents and memoirs differed completely. While the popular representations were trying to erase the narrative, these personal documents are doing just the opposite. This old, seemingly banal sheet of paper, narrates the struggle of his father, who was uprooted soon after he started his business. Examining the letterhead makes one realise the intention of the family to stay and flourish in Kashmir. The letterhead was printed on April 1, 1984, five years before the violence and targeted killings began in the Valley. Sudden dispersion of the family, despite having their own business in the Valley, raises questions and punctures the narrative of migration.

Although the letterhead serves no practical purpose today, it reminds his father of his time in Srinagar, the struggle of starting his business and finally all he had achieved. It is also a reminder of the worst times that the family has survived through. Similar to other interviewees and their families, Rohan's family did not believe that they would be forced to flee. This 'moment of reckoning' when the families decided to pack their belongings and flee lasted for a few minutes for some, while the decision was taken in a few months by others who believed that the violence would eventually die down and things will return to normalcy.[361] Despite taking different amounts of time to decide, the impact of this 'moment of reckoning' and after-effects of the decision to step away from the Valley can be observed through these silent expressions and sighs, that convey how the decision to leave still impacts them.

When I interviewed Rohan's family in Delhi, this fact remembered and re-iterated. Further, these traumatic memories of the past had to be excavated with utmost care and patience. The

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[360] John Law, 'Power, Discretion and Strategy' in *A Sociology of Monsters: Essays on Power, Technology, and Domination*, edited by John Law. (London: Routledge, 1991) pp. 165–191, (p. 167).
[361] Nair, p 220.

letterhead became my companion in extracting stories from the family. Discussions about the homeland were marked by a tension between desires for reclaiming their lost home and concerns about security, and the condition of uncertainty faced by the Pandits because of lack of acknowledgement of their ordeal. The presence of this relic from the past poses several questions at the national and popular histories who omit the event from their reading of the past. Through the mere presence of these documents and the words imprinted on it, the dominant narrative is punctured and constantly interrogated to narrate the ordeal and experiences that are generally erased from the historical memory to serve political purposes of the ruling classes, who failed to protect their citizens.

## 4.6 Stepping into the Past: Returning to the Valley

'Where would you like to go Panditji?' he asked…
'Home! Would you take me home? Khankah-i-Sokhta.'
'You must be settled in Jammu now? Are you coming home after many years?' the driver asked.
'Fifteen years.'
'This is your home after all. You belong here. We have lost a generation in these fifteen years. Look at the bridge here. Look at the houses. Everything is a wreck. *Will Pandits never return now?* Many have built houses in Jammu and are settled there now.'
Sridar did not know what to say. *He had no words to describe his feelings. 'Am I returning home? Am I a tourist? What strange feeling is this?'* he wondered.' (emphasis mine)

An excerpt from *In the Garden of Solitude*[362]

The experience and meaning of returning to a place, or rather a home, that one left behind involuntarily has always been crucial. The concern with return, especially with regard to forced migrants, is related to the imagination of the refugee. Nations, communities, and citizens are imagined as tied to a particular territory and the political authority that governs it. On the one hand, return suggests the end of the refugee cycle. On the other hand, as the Palestinian novelist Samir El Youssef observes, return is like an 'illusion'.[363] Roger Zetter

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[362] Siddhartha Gigoo, '*The Garden of Solitude*', (New Delhi: Rupa Publications, 2011) p. 214.
[363] Samir El-Yousseff, '*The Illusion of Return*', (London: Halban Publishers, 2008).

argues, 'the myth of return' is not about 'return per se, but home'[364] He believes that the displaced re-imagine and mythologise their home itself and continue to aspire their 'imagined homeland'. The quality of feeling at home or out of place emerges in discussions on different migrant communities, as 'a gradual process, often unplanned, as migrants are initially sojourners who plan to return to their homelands after some point in time'.[365] Unlike refugees, for these internally displaced families, returning to their homeland did not require a series of documentation or approvals. However, their idea of return was also based on how they had imagined their homeland and how it was coloured by the 'memory's truth'. They wanted to return to the Kashmir they had left, and not what it was becoming with the advent of extremism and religious intolerance.

Often, those who returned wanted to see the condition of their old homes or collect their belongings that they had buried, kept with their neighbours or left in the house. A Kashmiri Pandit's attachment to their house is invaluable. T.N. Madan, a Kashmiri Pandit scholar, has described how strong a Pandit's attachment to his house is,

> He is born and brought up in it; and here he gets his shelter food and emotional security. It is again here he receives his kith and kin; performs various rituals and ceremonies; keeps his belongings and when the end comes, it is here he wants to die. To a pandit, his *gara* (home) is symbolic of the purpose of his existence and strivings.[366]

For these families, the attachment was no different. As a result of this, they resolved to return to see the homes that were no longer their own.

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[364] Roger Zetter, 'Reconceptualising the myth of return: continuity and transition among Greek Cypriot refugees of 1974', *Journal of Refugee Studies*, vol. 12, no. 1, (1999), pp. 1-22, (p. 6).
[365] Datta, '*The Politics of Place, Community and Recognition among Kashmiri Pandit Forced Migrants in Jammu and Kashmir'*, p 133-134.
[366] Madan, p. 53.

Although the Pandits were attached to their homes, these houses were sold off much below the market price to make ends meet after displacement. According to Mr. Naveen Zalpuri, a Kashmiri Pandit interviewed by Mallika Kaur Sarkaria, 'the vast majority of Pandits didn't get any chance to sell anything. Life and honour itself was at risk. But yes, lots of people including ourselves did sell in distress after a few years but only when we were approached by the middlemen/brokers.'[367] Rahul Pandita, in his memoir *Our Moon has Blood Clots*, writes about these sudden visits made by Kashmiri Muslim neighbours, friends and middlemen when they realised that the Pandits were facing acute financial crisis. It was the right time to buy their properties at a fraction of what they were really worth.

> You would be sitting in your home when a man would suddenly arrive at your doorstep.... He would not come empty-handed. He always carried symbols of our past lives with him – a bunch of lotus stems, or a carton of apples, or a packet of saffron…. Then he would ask the crucial question: "*Tohi'e ma chhu kharchawun?* Do you wish to spend?" This was a well-thought-of euphemism he had invented to relieve you of the feeling of parting with your home. 'Do you wish to spend?' meant 'Do you want to sell your home?'
>
> 'You have had no source of income for months now,' he would continue. 'This is all I can offer you for your house. I know it is worth much more, but these are difficult times even for us.'  If you relented, he would pull out a wad of cash….'Here, take this advance. Oh no, what are you saying? Receipt? You should have hit me with your shoe instead. No receipt is required. I will come later to get the papers signed.'[368]

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[367] Mallika Kaur Sarkaria, 'Powerful Pawns of the Kashmir Conflict: Kashmiri Pandit Migrants', *Asian and Pacific Migration Journal*, Vol. 18, No. 2, (2009), pp. 197-230  (p 212).
[368] Pandita, p. 346.

Many families lost their homes in these distress sales and went back to see how the landscape and their possessions had changed. On their return, the Pandits either witnessed their abandoned homes, with or without their new owners, or rubble left after their homes had been burnt. These visits to the Valley made the trauma of separation more real for the second and third generation Kashmiri Pandits, who had only heard about their multi-storey houses from their family members. The artefacts inherited by them became their last possession from Kashmir, almost like an umbilical cord connecting them to the past.



The destroyed home of a Kashmiri Pandit family.

While the Kashmiri Pandits were struggling, the lack of acknowledgement of their forced displacement and their trauma by national and state-sponsored media as well as the intellectual class, left the Pandit community shocked and distressed. For the vast majority, the Kashmir conflict was and has largely remained 'black and white—here are a people who were victims of brutalization at the hands of the Indian state. But the media has failed to see,

and has largely ignored the fact that the same people also victimized another.'[369] This lack of acknowledgment of the pain kept the wound festering for decades, and this can be observed as the interviewees talks about their journey, resettlement and the suffering of being silenced.

## 4.7 Residue of Kashmir and Kashmiriyat

'The struggle of man against power is the struggle of memory against forgetting.'

Milan Kundera, *The Book of Laughter and Forgetting*[370]

The deep-seeded wounds of involuntary dislocation and lack of acknowledgment of pain of Pandits have been festering for decades. Kashmir, their homeland, was integral to their identity and was snatched from them and their stories were not given adequate representation. The episode had not only affected the victims personally, but had also fractured the community and their sense of belonging. Therefore, any conversation about this moment of dispersion was not encouraged or organised within the public discourse, and was mostly held within the domestic space.[371] While the discussions in the private discourse were marked by personal anecdotes, emotional recollections and grief, the representation of Pandits in the popular discourse was strikingly different. It remained unacknowledged for more than a decade, with very few articles being written about the episode.

In the last decade, the Kashmiri Pandit migration has started being acknowledged and stories are coming to light as a result of efforts of the activists. However, apart from the efforts of a few activists and organisations, the struggle of the Pandits still remains unheard. The political leaders of Jammu and Kashmir and the state government has certainly urged the Pandit community to return during their speeches, but have taken no concrete steps to ensure the

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[369] Ibid, p. 350.
[370] Milan Kundera, '*The Book of Laughter and Forgetting*' (United Kingdom: Faber & Faber, 1996)
[371] Malhotra, *Remnants of a Separation: A History of Partition through Material Memory,* p.42.

safety of the community, if they opt to return.[372] The central government, on the other hand, has attempted to make Kashmiri Pandits a part of the social fabric of the Valley by introducing postal votes for them.[373] These decisions by the central government, too, seem insufficient since the impact can't be analysed through these steps. Moreover, in the recent times, the episode has been weaponised by certain extremist organisations to fulfil their political agendas. By pitting the pain and experiences of Kashmiri Pandits and Muslims, they are trying to fragment the social sphere further and widen the gap between the communities.

While small actions were taken, nothing concrete happened to rehabilitate the Pandits. The distress sales and burning of Pandit houses became tangible markers of loss and dislocation. Thus, 'restitution of property' could pave the way for return for Kashmiri Pandits to the Valley.'[374] Although this is not the final solution, through 'property reparations' the government can take concrete steps towards 'alleviating suffering, re-establishing security, and enabling successful return of the displaced communities.'[375] However, no measures regarding property restitution or acknowledgment of loss of capital and assets have been taken or planned. The lack of concrete steps adds to the trouble of the refugees. On the one hand, they are dealing with the emotional turmoil of being uprooted, while on the other hand the apathy shown by the institutions and media increases their pain and suffering.

Through the course of these conversations with the Pandits, one realizes how the refugees in their own ways, decades after the forced migration, had to struggle to preserved their homes, their childhoods, their identity, their life and their sense of belonging. 'And strangely, how the smallest of objects could contain this heaviness of their experiences, this weight of their

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[372] Alexander Evans, 'A departure from history: Kashmiri Pandits, 1990-2001' *Contemporary South Asia* Vol.11, No. 1, (2002), pp.19-37 (p.31).
[373] Ibid, p 32.
[374] Sarkaria, p 199
[375] Ibid, p. 199.

past.'[376] Through multiple interviews with different refugee families, all kinds of objects were discovered – 'sentimental and politically charged, ephemeral and weird, mundane and precious, all tethered to the pain, confusion and survival of the community.'[377] The presence of the object adds another layer to the process of place-making, which involves 'a tension between desires for reclaiming home that existed in the past, dealing with the migrant present and the desire for a secure future in a world marked by movement.'[378] By its presence in the new homes of the families, they signify a tangible mark of the past and the hope for the future.

Conversations with Pandits reiterate that knowledge can never be completely obtained through conventional methods of obtaining information, especially through complete reliance on documents and words. Such methods of historical enquiry produce 'a series of narrative discourses fashioned by historians'.[379] Maurice Bloch, in his work, also examines how, throughout the years, the dominant historical memory and the 'personal' or 'autobiographical' memory has converged and diverged. In case of the Kashmiri Pandit community, these two strands of memories present a different, quite divorced, narrative. While the dominant narratives continue to emphasize on migration and communal hatred, presence of objects and oral history speak volumes about the erasure of trauma and apathy to dismantle the popular perceptions and create counter-narratives that compel people to focus on the margins and understand the history from the below – the omitted anecdotes, memories and individual histories.

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[376] Malhotra, 'Remnants of a separation: a ghara and a gaz: from Lahore to Amritsar to Delhi', *South Asian Popular Culture,* p 100.
[377] Aanchal Malhotra and Paul Reyes, 'Aanchal Malhotra: *A Human History of Partition'* *Virginia Quarterly Review* Vol 96 no 03 (Fall 2020) pp. 20-25, (p. 24) <muse.jhu.edu/article/765293>
[378] Ankur Datta, 'Dealing with dislocation: Migration, place and home among displaced Kashmiri Pandits in Jammu and Kashmir', *Contributions to Indian Sociology* 50 (2016), pp. 52–79, (p 53).
[379] Beard, p 5.

## Chapter 5: Conclusion

'Empty? Because so many fled, ran away,

and became refugees there, in the plains,

where they must now will a final dewfall

to turn the mountains to glass.'

Agha Shahid Ali, *The Country without a Post Office*

Involuntary displacement of communities has become a common phenomenon in the modern

world. We learn about various episodes of forced migration and violence taking place in

different parts of the world through literature, media, social media and cinema. While each

episode is unique, they lead to a number of questions – *What does being an Internally*

*Displaced Person mean? How do we attempt to understand the experience of forced*

*migration within one's own nation state? What factors affect the lives of migrants in Exile?*

*How do forced migrants remember their experiences and preserve their culture in new host*

*lands? What is the effect of displacement on identity and lives of migrants, especially when*

*they begin to settle down in their new homes?* These are some of the questions my

dissertation tries to seek answers to by analysing the forced displacement of the Kashmiri

Pandit community from the Valley in 1989 and early 1990s and their attempts to rehabilitate

in new host-lands and preserve their culture and identity.

The Kashmiri Pandits, after their involuntary displacement, were relocated either to refugee

camps in Jammu or stayed in rented accommodations. Some members of the community

opted to stay with their relatives in Jammu, Delhi and other cities in India. The dissertation

analyses the narrative of flight and struggle of resettlement through individual accounts of

survivors, hegemonic accounts developed by political organisations, cinematic

representations of the Valley and its people and national historical accounts. Although these

narratives describe the same episode, they do not develop a single 'mythico-history'.[380]

According to Liisa Malkki, 'mythico-history' is not just a description or analysis of the

events of the past, but 'a subversive recasting and reinterpretation' of the historical events.[381]

These different historical accounts of the same episode, then, are 'brought together in

different forms of historical narratives that consolidate in an uncertain mix.'[382] This

'uncertain mix' often privileges some versions of the narrative and simultaneously silences or

delegitimizes the voices from marginalised groups that lack power. These multiple versions

not only create 'a fertile field for xenophobic politics'[383] but also connect the episode to

larger concerns around historical representation, memory and its reliability, violence and

victimhood.

This dissertation looks at the distinction between individual narratives and collective memory

of forced migration of Kashmiri Pandits, to establish the factors that affect the creation of

void between the two. The personal narratives have been recorded through semi-structured

oral history interviews of victims of this epochal event in recent South Asian history.

Through these interviews, participants recall their lives in Kashmir before the Insurgency, the

turmoil of 1989 and its aftermath and finally their struggle for resettlement and

reestablishment in new territories. The interviews are supplemented by artefacts which act as

signs, clues and 'traces' that assist in remembrance and narration.[384] These interviews try to

understand how migrants have attempted to preserve their ignored experiences, culture,

language and heritage through non-verbal sources, especially objects carried by them from

their lost homes.

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[380] Liisa Malkki, *Purity and Exile: Violence, Memory, and National Cosmology among Hutu Refugees in Tanzania* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995) p. 54.
[381] Ibid, p. 54
[382] Datta, '*The Politics of Place, Community and Recognition among Kashmiri Pandit Forced Migrants in Jammu and Kashmir',* p. 284.
[383]Sequeira, p 289.
[384] Napolitano, p 49.

This section will not only summarise the main arguments, but will also reflect on some key themes that emerged during my research and help to place the episode of Kashmiri Pandit migration on a larger canvas. The themes that I will discuss further include the placement of the episode in dominant history, notions of history and memory, and the attempts to preserve fragments of ignored history through tangible heritage. Focusing on these narratives and experiences blurs the rigid boundaries created by nation states between those who belong and those who do not have the right to access state's privileges. As an internally displaced community, Kashmiri Pandits question the distinction between us and them and present an often-overlooked space of being the other in one's own homeland. Not only do these narratives and artefacts question and eventually deconstruct well established categories, but also assist us in understanding the strategies of re-construction of 'self' when stripped off of one's dwelling and identity.

## 5.1 History of Displacement, Dispossession and Disregard

Keith Jenkins comments on the nature of historical representation and says that past and history are not synonymous since history is a highly selective re-telling of the episodes of the past.[385] There is no universal representation of it past, but a variety of interpretations, opinions, realities seen through the lends of subjectivity and perceptions. [386] History, thus is a selection of interpretations, authored by powerful historians, to fit the current discourse, which is shaped by the beliefs and ideologies of the dominant groups of the time.[387] In this discursive representation, the internally displaced communities are usually located at the peripheral position within the nation-state due to their tricky position. While they continue to be citizens of the nation, their forced migration within the state of origin separates them from

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[385] Keith Jenkins and Peter Brinkley, 'Always Historicise: Unintended Opportunities in National Curriculum History' *Teaching History* (1991) *pp.*8–14, p.11.
[386] Sarah Barber and Corinna Peniston-Bird, *History Beyond the Text: A students Guide to Approaching Alternative Sources*. (London: Routledge, 2008) p. 10.
[387] Alan Munslow, *Narrative and History*. (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2007) p.3.

others. They are unable to return to their homelands and in the new lands they are often seen as intruders. As a result of this marginalisation, they believe that the nation state has failed them and their position also hampers their access to institutional representation, recognition and rights usually offered to refugees who are displaced out of their countries.[388] In case of Kashmiri Pandits, their experience of forced migration has been located outside of the normative order of everyday life. According to Ankur Datta,

> The Kashmiri Pandits are IDPs whose experience of socio-economic and political marginalisation takes place within the context of Indian politics….The Pandits are also a community of Hindu victims who are useful to Indian nationalists to discredit Kashmiri nationalism. In the process, the Pandits find themselves caught in the interstices of mainstream Indian politics over which they have limited control, becoming a prominent footnote in the politics of Kashmir and migration and violence in India.[389]

The displacement of Pandits and other minority groups is often erased while citing the history of Jammu and Kashmir. However, this episode becomes an ideological tool, often cited for political gain. In a selective representation presented by the 'author-historian'[390], this episode is represented through the ideological and epistemological choices made by them.[391] Thus, state and historians are always 'authoring' history based on the needs of the present.

The first chapter of my dissertation examines the history of Jammu and Kashmir to understand the selective 'authoring' further. While examining the historical events that led to the Insurgency of 1989, the chapter also attempts to place the experiences of the displaced Kashmiri Pandit community within them. The chapter begins by elaborating the position of

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[388] Datta, '*The Politics of Place, Community and Recognition among Kashmiri Pandit Forced Migrants in Jammu and Kashmir'*, p. 219.
[389] Ibid, p. 282.
[390] Munslow, p 122
[391] Beard, p 5.

the princely state of Jammu and Kashmir, where Maharaja Hari Singh, the ruler of the state,

opted for Independence following the events of Partition in 1947. The princely state was

heavily populated by Muslims. According to the 1941 census report by Captain R.G.

Wreford, Muslims formed 77.11% of the total population, followed by Hindus who formed

20.12% and the other minor communities (Sikhs, Buddhists etc.) formed 2.77%.[392] The

government of India wanted Kashmir to be a part of its territory as a symbol of its secular

fabric. On the other hand, Pakistan laid a claim on Kashmir due to its geography, trade

relations, and demography. While Jammu and Kashmir desired autonomy, Maharaja Hari

Singh, the ruler of the state, had to sign the Instrument of Accession soon, when he wanted

help from India to fight the attacks from Pakistani 'tribal groups'. While national history

records these events, it focuses either on the geography and territorial division or on the grand

events and politics surrounding it rather than the trauma and experiences of Kashmiris, who

are forced to suffer silently.

This selective representation continued to erase trauma of Kashmiris, their displacement and

dispossession decades later too. Initially, the erasure was to strengthen the claims of being a

secular nation which could assimilate Muslim dominant Kashmir Valley smoothly within its

territory. The hyper focus on pastoral and exotic landscape of the Valley also generated

feelings of nationalism towards the conflicted territory. However, a few decades later, the

focus shifted from beauty of the Valley to terrorism and divisive politics going on in

Kashmir. Gradually, the Valley was recognised by three tropes – 'Kashmiri handicraft,

Kashmir as a territory of desire and the Kashmir conflict'.[393] While the camera's gaze shifted

drastically from one representation to another, it continued to erase the experiences of the

locals, who became silenced victims. In case of the Pandits, along with their physical

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[392] Wreford, p 8-12.
[393] Kabir, p. 108.

presence, their experiences and forced migration were dissociated from the Valley and its history too.

Although the community inhabits a difficult position by being refugees in their own homeland, the lack of acknowledgment adds to their grief and misery. State policies not only affect their historical representation and acknowledgement of pain, but also play a key role in shaping their living conditions in the present and in the future through welfare policies, settlement townships or a potential return to the Valley.[394] Ignorance from institutions, both on representational level and in policy making, is often regarded as a 'step-motherly' treatment by Kashmiri Pandits. However, despite the lack of acknowledgement, most members of the Kashmiri Pandit community are fiercely loyal towards the Indian nation state and the values it upholds. This is an exceptional condition, where most dispersed groups are usually against the nation state, the Pandits have affirmed their loyalty multiple times, both vocally and through actions.[395] While unique in that aspect, the Pandits and their involuntary displacement gives us a glimpse of 'how divisive communalism, majoritarian politics, and nationalist ideologies destroy cultural diversity and multicultural living.'[396] Further, it also exposes how marginalised groups become victims of discourses and policies stemming from the power politics that aim to erase experiences of weaker groups in favour of grand history and political motives to retain power and control.

## 5.2 History and Memory: Narratives and Counter-narratives

Memory is not a mere storage system or a recording device that captures the events of the past and preserves them.[397] In fact, human memory is a constantly evolving phenomenon and changes how people remember the past based on the conditions of the present. Unlike history,

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[394] Datta, '*The Politics of Place, Community and Recognition among Kashmiri Pandit Forced Migrants in Jammu and Kashmir*', p 286.
[395] Ibid, p. 286
[396] Sequeira, p. 195.
[397] Loftus 2013

which is marked by periodization and linearity, memory is circular and constantly evolving based on the present. Maurice Halbwachs has elaborated on the role of group memory, socialization and communication, on individual's recollections.[398] Groups that an individual is a part of provide frameworks within which their memories are localised. Thus, unlike history, memories might be repetitive, fluid and malleable. Although interdependent, these memories of groups and individuals may differ significantly from each other. To understand the role of these distinct memories, they have been classified into four categories - *official memory, political memory, collective memory* and *personal memory. Official memory* is the memory of the state, usually supplemented by facts and figures, museums and archives, and documents stored in the national records. In case of Jammu and Kashmir, official exhibitions and literature focus on grand narratives and erase the episode of forced migration of Pandits. The official memory is often shaped by politics of the present, or the *political memory*, recorded and popularised through newspapers, journals, cinema and books. Political memory determines how history is 'authored' by state historians, who are influenced by ideology of the dominant groups. Cinema and literature present a binary representation of Kashmir, either as a territory or desire or as a land blanketed within terror and violence. Circulation and consumption of these narratives and depictions leads to creation of collective memory which, as the name suggests, is the memory of a community, of people, of neighbourhoods, of families, and finally of society. Finally, the fourth kind is personal memory, memory of an individual; 'a diluted, malleable that encompasses attributes of the other three kinds, coupled with the crumbling of walls of the past'.[399] Personal memory is often full of fragments, slippages and resides within the private sphere, supported by everyday practices. Further, unlike the other three kinds of memories which emphasize on grand events and political

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[398] Halbwachs, p 54.
[399] Malhotra, *Remnants of a Separation: A History of Partition through Material Memory,* p.19.

turmoil, personal memory records the events of the everyday, of people, their struggle and victimhood. Focusing on personal memory involves paying attention to slippages, lapses, fragments and gathering stories from below, which might seem insignificant but provide insights into the lives of common people and collecting subaltern histories, especially of those forcefully silenced.

## 5.3 Objects: The Silent Repositories of Memory

Jacques Derrida has examined the limits of language and linguistic representations.[400] He emphasised on the moments that are never fully representable through language. Traumatic episodes from the past are at the 'edge of what is consciously represented, precisely located in the gap between the representable and non-representable.'[401] Survivor stories are generally located within this gap. As a result of limits of linguistic representation, these stories can never fully represent the magnitude, depth, pain and sensoriality of what had transpired by. It is within these moments of absence, when language fails to express and convey, that artefacts come to our aid. Objects act as 'signposts to a journey'[402] that is mapped through these silent repositories that condense histories of migration, violence, struggle for rehabilitation, selective representation and political alterity. The narratives framed with the assistance of objects relate to the 'social life of things'[403] which charts the meanings inscribed within objects and analyses them as an extension of social practices and forms instead of viewing them as isolated tangible entities. Through objects, the participants recall their past and gradually attempt to voice their previously silenced experiences to re-present Kashmir beyond its binary representation.

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[400] Derrida, pp. 27-73.
[401] Napolitano, p. 54.
[402] Miller, p 5
[403] Appadurai, p.1

For migrant families, these objects from Kashmir concretely materialise their longing for their homeland. For ease of understanding, objects have been classified into four categories – *inherited objects, objects carried for their utility, objects related to one's occupation* and *objects created by people to narrate their ignored histories*. Each one of these objects point to different aspects of people's lives and encourage recollection through different lenses, as elaborated in Chapter 4. Although the nature of these objects might vary, but by their very presence, they challenge the macro-history, developed by national, state-sponsored and political institutions for their own motives. Objects act as catalysts and assist in recording the unheard micro-histories of individuals, families and communities affected by the Insurgency of 1989. Thus, situating the object in the centre enables the listener to record that which had been omitted both by the official history and linguistic representations due to political intervention as well as limits of language as a conveyer of thoughts and trauma of the survivors.

### 5.4 Concluding Remarks: What my Thesis Found

Forced migration is synonymous with marginalisation, loss and limited agency. However, for IDPs it adds another layer, where attention needs to be paid to failure of state and inadequacies of relief programmes that lead to communities being forced to leave their homes. In case of the Kashmiri Pandits, the lack of recognition of the experiences of displacement by other members of the Indian polity have contributed to the sense of being further victimised among the members of the community.[404] During the oral history interviews, the participants seemed to resonate the same thought. For them, the moment of displacement had become a divisive marker that had split their lives into two halves – life of peace and prosperity before 1989 and the one full of struggle and silencing after the

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[404] Datta, '*The Politics of Place, Community and Recognition among Kashmiri Pandit Forced Migrants in Jammu and Kashmir',* p. 290

Insurgency and displacement. Displacement emerges as the root of their struggles and hardships encountered by them in the present moment.

While dispersion is constantly being questioned and analysed within the private and familial spheres, the Pandits also acknowledge that living in Jammu and other parts of the world certainly gives them less visibility, but is also much less risky than living in the Valley, a conflict zone stripped off infrastructural and social developments of the present.[405] Through my dissertation, with a focus on artefacts from Kashmir and oral history interviews to record the stories from the everyday, new kind of history was being woven into the fabric of life in Kashmir. Unlike the official version, the experience of Kashmiri Pandits is being located within the history of the Valley. Further, as a result of acknowledgment of experiential memories of the Pandits, their experiences also accumulate and acquire newer meanings. The experiences not only reveal the pain of loss and longing, but also the struggle for belonging during the process of rehabilitation in new lands and the anxiety regarding future prospects, which the community attempts to navigate through.[406]

My research reflects on the importance of minority discourses and marginalised stories that dismantle the popular projections and assist in developing an alternate understanding of the past, especially the traumatic episodes and conflicts. The experiential memories of diasporic communities revive their forgotten histories and help them re-configure their identity. Their memory narratives, as minority discourse, continually question and reconfigure what it is meant to be a Kashmiri Pandit, how their lost home and ties to the Valley affect their present and how their presence challenges the binary representation of Kashmir, thus gradually dismantling the popular projection of the Valley and highlighting the previously overlooked experiences of its people.

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[405] Ibid, p. 286.
[406] Ibid, p. 300.

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