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The Dull Pain of Simmering Anger: Affective and Emotional Experiences among Displaced Kashmiri Pandits

Ankur Datta

The displacement of the Kashmiri Pandits, the Hindu minority of the Kashmir valley, following the insurgency remains a controversial event in the region, especially with regards to the cause of their 'exodus.' While the Pandits have lived since then in Jammu, New Delhi and elsewhere, remaking their lives that were disrupted in displacement, they inhabit a complex political location. Pandit political expression, especially for those outside Kashmir, is framed in opposition to Kashmiri nationalism and in line with Indian nationalism in its various forms, including Hindu nationalist politics. This paper attempts to understand Pandit victimhood in relation to their emotional experience, with emphases on anger and despair. Drawing on ethnographic fieldwork, conversations and discussions during fieldwork in Jammu among displaced Pandits from 2005-2007, followed by short visits in 2008 and 2012, I will first describe two brief encounters where sentiments of anger are expressed, that are seemingly

minor and ordinary, but which provide a way to understand anger and rage in shaping everyday social and political life. I will then discuss another set of encounters where anger transforms into despair. In this paper, I explore if these sentiments and forms of expression constitute a continued form of pain and despair that remains unrecognized. Through these encounters and an exploration of sentiments expressed, I will discuss how anger is a form of continuous pain, which is caught in a tension between distinct and extraordinary forms of expression and experiences and feelings that appear ordinary and universal.

Keywords: Kashmiri Pandits; displacement; despair; anger; affect

Introduction

With the commencement of the movement for *azaadi* (Persian for freedom, used in both Urdu and Hindi), in Indian-administered Jammu and Kashmir from 1989-90, there is one event that took place that remains a point of contention: the mass displacement of the Hindu minority of the Kashmir valley, better known as the Kashmiri Pandits¹. The departure of the Pandits from Kashmir took place within the first year of the current conflict. The dominant Pandit narrative emphasizes the 19 January 1990 as the date the ‘exodus’², as the Pandits refer to their displacement began. Any engagement suggests that flight took place in an unorganized manner by small groups, with a mass displacement becoming apparent only in Jammu when large numbers of Pandits would be found gathering in the city. In a short span of time, the vast majority of Pandits had fled their homes in Kashmir to places like Jammu, Udhampur, and Kathua (in Jammu and Kashmir) and cities like New Delhi. It remains one of the most drastic situations of internal displacement in post-partition South Asia. The Pandits are known as ‘migrants’, which is the official nomenclature for displaced people in Jammu and Kashmir. Their flight is either blamed on the movement for independence in Kashmir for forcing the Pandits to leave owing to their faith affiliation and apparent association with the Indian nation-state, or on the machinations of the Indian state which engineered the exodus to discredit the movement for *azaadi* (Evans 2002).

In the context of the larger canvas of political life in Kashmir, the displacement of the Pandits is one chapter in a continuing narrative. Once in a while the Pandits feature in a news report as a special interest story or as a case to criticize Kashmiri nationalism and defend the policies and actions of the Indian state in Kashmir. Sometimes these reports feature Pandit voices in the form of disembodied soundbites to statements by organisations that represent the Pandits in exile, which are supportive of the Indian state and critical of *azaadi* in Kashmir. In this paper, I draw on my ethnographic research among Kashmiri Pandit migrants in Jammu and New Delhi conducted from 2005-2007, followed by shorter visits to Jammu in 2008 and 2012. This paper emerges from a larger interest in the politics of victimhood. Within this theme, I am especially interested in understanding two aspects: anger and despair. Anger is a significant part of all forms of politics and especially in demands for justice in the face of extraordinary violence and suffering. Anger is an emotion that is public and personal, and it is always addressed to someone or something. For this paper I first draw on two vignettes of differing scale where anger is expressed. But to whom are

expressions of anger and rage addressed? Where do such expressions lead to? How does it shape everyday life for a displaced people? After considering these questions in reference to the vignettes, I then consider the question of despair in two further vignettes. Displaced populations are often marked by feelings of despair, which may be obvious or often unremarkable. I explore how despair is connected to anger, and how it shapes protracted forms of suffering. I argue that anger and despair work together as a form of *dull pain* that lurks and affects a life that is being remade in exile.

Anger and rage have been intrinsic to political life in South Asia and the Himalayan regions. The scholarship on inter-ethnic and communal violence speaks of “leveling crowds” (e.g., Tambiah 1996) and the enactment of violence on one group on behalf of another, often premised on some articulation of sentiment or emotion. Veena Das’s (1990) discussion of the pogrom against Sikhs in New Delhi in 1984 gives an example of an area where a massacre took place. While different political tracks were in play comprising party politics and the Indian state of alleged anger over the assassination of prime minister Indira Gandhi by her Sikh body guards, there was a prior history of envy of the local Hindus towards the Sikhs in the area, as the latter had achieved a greater measure of social mobility (ibid). In his work on ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka, Jeganathan (2000) argues for the need to attend to affective experience in mediating experiences of violence. In areas caught in conflict between the state and Maoist revolutionaries like Nepal and India, emotions such as anger have been documented as an expression of demands for justice (Schneiderman 2003; Shah 2017). In other sites, violent politics associated with everyday life can even give rise to feelings of ‘fun’ (Verkaaik 2004). What makes affect and emotion difficult to capture is that they are phenomena not always easily articulated, but often inferred and especially *felt*, circulating in the environment inhabited by different societies alongside the physical effects and experiences of violence. Yet capturing feelings in description and analysis remains incomplete.

Anger in Kashmir is articulated in various forms. Young Kashmiris, embodied in the figure of the ‘stone pelter,’ are seen to constitute a “generation of rage” towards a violent state (Devadas 2018: 23, 212), who have lived a lifetime marked by extraordinary violence. Sometimes specific events allow for the expression of anger. During the trial of Afzal Guru, a Kashmiri man who was tried and later executed for allegedly helping a plot that led to an attack on the Indian parliament, the Indian state facilitated a climate of anger and rage in India which could only be

satiated though his execution. This was accompanied by acts of violence of the state security apparatus towards Kashmiris, in turn fuelling more anger against the Indian state (Zia 2018). Whether we are looking at different forms of resistance towards state violence or the enactment of violence in terms of action or rhetoric by the Indian state, emotions such as anger and despair are critical to understanding political life in relation to Kashmir and Kashmiris and perhaps even Indian citizens.

When I started my research, one writer who had visited the Pandit camps in Jammu had remarked to me how angry the Pandits seemed, to the point that it seemed “scary”. I would later understand what she meant when I started fieldwork in the fall of 2005 and made my first visit to a camp where I had gone to meet the Camp Commandant, under the impression that I would need permission to work there³. The person I met at the Camp Commandant’s office happened to be a Kashmiri Pandit employee. After I introduced myself to him as a student interested in conducting research on the Pandits, he gnashed his teeth and muttered, as if he was trying to stifle a full burst of rage: “research, huh, research! What research? *Pura desh ko khokla kar denge* [Hindi, Hd: they will make this country hollow]! Research, huh!” To whom was his anger directed? Kashmiris? The Indian state? Visiting researchers?

As Duschinski (2008: 43) points out, the Pandits are located at a clash point between secular politics, governance, and emergent forms of Hindu nationalism. What is especially important is that the Pandits are not only located within Indian nationalist formations; there is a framing of victimhood whereby the Pandits sacrifice for India, becoming “Indians displaced by India for the sake of India” (Duschinski 2007: 91). The location of the Pandits within Indian, and consequently against Kashmiri, nationalist aspirations becomes complicated by their presence as an upper caste Hindu community of victims. Duschinski’s observations become rather more potent in recent years in India where a regime led by a Hindu nationalist party has been in government since 2014, and whose rule has been marked by incidents of violence against Muslims and Dalits.

Relations between Hindus and Muslims in Kashmir have been marked by certain complexities. The Pandits are also Saraswat Brahmins. Historically, many Pandits were associated with access to education and command over languages such as Sanskrit, Persian, Urdu, and later English, which were at some point the languages of government in Kashmir and other parts of South Asia. This enabled them to secure work as bureaucrats in medieval

to early modern Kashmir, colonial Jammu and Kashmir, the Mughal courts and their successor principalities across India, and finally in the bureaucracies introduced by British Colonial rule in the subcontinent. Hence, they became associated with the state and the bourgeoisie across South Asia, consequently being seen as elites (see Sender 1988). It also sets the stage for imagining Hindu-Muslim relations in Kashmir through a prism of inequality. Community in Kashmir is often defined by the ideology of *Kashmiriyat* (Kashmiriness), where a connection to the Kashmir valley overrides religious difference. Madan insists it is a corruption of *Punjabiyat* (Punjabiness; 1995: 63), while Tak traces its changing meanings in academic and journalistic discourse around Kashmir since the 1970s in Urdu and English language media (see Tak 2013: 29-30). This ideology has been increasingly critiqued in terms of its complex history and use in different political movements in the 20th century (Zutshi 2004). Anthropologists like Madan (1972) have complicated the matter of communal relations in Kashmir in another way. Rather than discuss *Kashmiriyat*, Madan focuses on everyday relations in rural Kashmir in the 1950s, where Pandits were dependent on Muslims for services such as labor. This places the Pandits as patrons of some Muslims in Kashmir, which points to the framing of Pandits as potential elites. While the image of the Pandit elite circulates widely among Kashmiri Muslims and Kashmiri Pandits, there is a risk of essentializing. While many Pandits were a prominent part of the middle and upper classes in Kashmir, and express middle class aspirations, many like those in the camps led lives that were far from that of an elite in times before and during displacement⁴.

Just as there are many different groups and ideologies among Kashmiri Muslims, the same can be said of Pandits, even if most identify with the Indian nation-state. These groups vary from a project like Panun Kashmir (Panun Kashmir Movement 2004), which demands the carving of a union territory from Kashmir as a Pandit homeland within the Indian state, to diasporic organisations such as the All India Kashmiri Samaj and Kashmir Samiti Delhi who also regard Kashmir as Indian territory. Political parties such as the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and the Shiv Sena, which dominate Hindu nationalist politics in India, were active in the early days of the displacement, providing aid and some publicity which helped them build some kind of constituency among the Pandits. It was not uncommon to hear politicians like Bal Thakeray, who was known for his anti-immigrant and anti-Muslim stance in western India, be praised, as he had directed certain benefits for Pandit migrants⁵. Many place their hopes for a final settlement in Narendra Modi when he became the Prime Minister of

India, which is premised on the absence of any attempt to resolve their continued exile from Kashmir by any regime in India since 1990 (Kak 2015).

There are also groups like the Kashmiri Pandit Sangharsh Samiti (KPSS), which is run by Pandits who remained in Kashmir and who engage with groups committed to Kashmiri independence. Groups like the KPSS distinguish between militants who threatened Pandits and common Muslims who did not (Hassan 2010: 8). However, there is a sense that the conflict and displacement resulted in mistrust between Pandits and Muslims. As one of my closest respondents had once remarked, “the difference between us (Pandits) and them (Muslims) is that they blame the Indian state and we blame them”. To some extent, it seems that any reading of the displacement of the Pandits is caught in a zero-sum game and a competitive form of victimhood.

Over the years since 2008 when protests began in Kashmir, signalling a new period of political activity, protests in Jammu had also taken place to counter Kashmir, in which some Pandits also participated. According to a Pandit student who had left Jammu but knew many people in the camps, participating in the Jammu protests gave them a new credibility in the city. Other events that focused on violence in Kashmir and which were critical of the Indian state would often be met by groups of Pandits protesting as well against such events. For instance, an event organized by Amnesty International on Kashmir in the Indian city of Bangalore which focused on violence in Kashmir also included a Pandit representative whose position was one of criticism of the organisation and of Kashmiri Muslims which according to an observer, harmed the Pandit narrative to some extent (Pandita 2016).

Such moments are not uncommon and have been emerging since the mid-2000s. The protests against the film *Jashn-E-Azaadi* are a case in point where one group followed its screenings across different locations, and whose protests offended an ostensibly ‘liberal’ audience⁶. While aggressive in expression, there is never any major incident of violence from the Pandits, though that does not preclude the intimation of violence or the justification of violence towards Muslims in Kashmir. In August 2019, the Indian state abrogated Article 370, bifurcating Jammu and Kashmir into Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh as separate union territories. The step was accompanied by a lockdown of Kashmir and limitations on communication. There were reports of Pandits supportive of this step as the righting of a ‘historical wrong’. This sense was reiterated in news reports of Pandits ‘celebrating the decision’, or of

Pandit delegates participating in rallies organized by the BJP (e.g., Asian News International 2019; Livemint 2019). While this may be the case for many, some Pandits I know are apprehensive of this step.

Many Kashmiri Muslims I have met over the years were aware of the condition of the Pandits, either expressing sympathy along with a denial of the targeting of the Pandits, or criticizing them for having left Kashmir. While I was in Jammu, I would encounter Muslims who mourned the displacement and its effects, while others would draw on the image of the Pandit elite to dismiss them. A prominent Kashmiri journalist who had Pandit friends and who on occasion meets with old Pandit friends of his father commented in a conversation: “I used to be sympathetic. But now when I hear Pandits on TV saying that Muslims committed genocide, I switch off!” In the following set of vignettes, I will now consider the Kashmiri Pandit experience of anger.

Anger: The power to shake the earth and other diminishing matters

Whenever I think of a moment where despair and anger meet, I return to an encounter with Dr. Kaul⁷, a Pandit migrant⁸. It was the summer of 2006 and I had decided to focus on Purkhu camp, one of several migrant camps in the city of Jammu⁹. Purkhu camp was one of the largest and most accessible camps in Jammu. It had its own feel as a township in its own right. It was well-connected to the larger city, neighbouring many other localities and settlements, and was often visited by those who did not live in the camp such as itinerant researchers and Pandits who lived elsewhere. The camp was built along a single road with quarters alongside, allowing for accessible public spaces such as community halls and temples. On one visit, I stopped to greet Bhushan, a migrant whom I had met on many occasions before, and who kept a small shop close to the entrance of the camp. I still recall Bhushan replying to a question when I conducted a short household survey with the answer “life is a syllabus to completed one way or another”. This time he was not alone and he had a visitor sitting in his shop. While Bhushan and I exchanged greetings, his visitor introduced himself. He asked Bhushan how he knew me and then said that he said that he had seen me attend a protest organized by an organisation which he had also attended. Even though I could not recognize him or recall speaking to him at that protest, he was not offended and introduced himself as Dr. Kaul.

While Bhushan tended his ledgers, Dr. Kaul remarked that my visit coincided with an auspicious occasion and that a

jaqrata, a local term for *jaqrana* which in Hindi refers to an all night vigil in honor of a deity, scheduled to begin later that evening at the camp. I was aware of this programme, having heard about it from another resident the day before. Dr. Kaul and I walked to the community hall just across the road where the *jaqrata* was to be held. We spent some time there watching preparations being made and met with the organizer who I knew from earlier interactions. I ended up spending the day with Dr. Kaul, who also took me to his house in an area close to the camp where many Pandits have built homes, to have lunch. He was well-travelled, having studied outside Kashmir, and claimed to have worked alongside a prominent civil rights activist in the 1970s. Dr. Kaul spoke wistfully of his youth and his work as a doctor. He was employed as a 'migrant' employee in the state medical system and was officially attached to a workplace in Kashmir. Hence, he reported to a state-run hospital in Jammu whenever there was a vacancy on occasion. Many government category migrants who were adjusted at offices in Jammu would often remain effectively unemployed and were only eligible for promotions and other schemes of job improvement if they return to Kashmir. He spoke of selling his family house at a throwaway price, sharing the proceeds with other family members. In between he would make derisive comments about Muslims. He also kept mentioning that he was becoming a spiritual person and eventually would leave behind worldly attachments. I could not help notice his reiteration of renouncing the world at lunch while his wife who served us ignored everything he said to her and ignored me when I greeted her.

We later returned to Purkhu camp. The organizers were completing the decorations of the hall. Some children were getting dressed to portray figures from Hindu mythology, while the singer who would lead the congregation was tuning his harmonium. There were also some teenage boys in the hall who I had come to know from earlier visits, who suggested that we sit in the grounds of the community hall. Even though it was summer, the sky was heavy with dark clouds making it cooler outside. We sat in a rough circle while Dr. Kaul stayed back first and then came out and asked if he could join us.

Dr. Kaul asked the boys many questions. The boys replied formally but sounded uncertain talking to a stranger. Kaul spoke to them in Hindi and Koshur but then turned to me and spoke in English. "Look at them", he said. "What talent and promise they have. It is so sad".

He then asked the boys, "What is the first veda?" The youngest of the lot who was about twelve, raised his hand and shouted "rig veda!"

And who do we pray to first?

Ganeshji!

Very good. Look son. We are Kashmiri Pandits. We have so much *taqrata* (Urdu; strength). With one stroke of a finger we can cause *bhuchal* (Hindi; earthquake)!

On hearing this the boys were stunned. The boy who replied to his earlier question spoke first: "Bhuchal?"

Yes. This *bhai saab* (Hindi, Urdu; brother), he said, pointing to the organizer who had come outside to finish the decorations by the door, prayed to Lord Shiva and asked him teach those people and Lord Shiva caused an earthquake.

The boys muttered among themselves as they realized that the doctor was referring to the 2005 earthquake that affected Jammu and Kashmir. Dr. Kaul, perhaps sensing my shock, told me that even he had prayed to god for some kind of vengeance. The doctor was about to say more but the boys got up and started to play among themselves. We were soon summoned to the *jaqrata*. Dr. Kaul again tried to speak to the boys who were sitting at the end of the hall slightly apart from their elders, but the boys ignored him. Eventually the doctor moved closer to the singers. I remained in touch with Dr. Kaul for a while, though I began to avoid him for personal reasons.

I have no idea how he is doing now. But this encounter remained with me perhaps for a strain of oddness that runs through it. In that one day, the doctor moved back and forth between different topics of conversation. He talked about spirituality, his domestic difficulties, and anger and hate. While his views were extreme, the sentiments he expressed were not entirely uncommon. Pandits with whom I had stronger relations with would also move through different expressions of sentiment. While drinking tea with a Pandit family outside the camp, we were discussing how Pandits and Muslims were so close, while the television was switched on broadcasting the news. When the Kashmir correspondent reported how people were 'freezing' in the valley due to an especially cold winter, one of them remarked "Good, I hope you all freeze!" The expressions of such statements appeared endless sometimes.

Anger: Out on the streets

As mentioned earlier, many Pandit organisations gave voice to anger in their forms of protest about their condition, locating themselves as supporters of the Indian state.

My concern for now remains with expressions of anger, which I explore further in the second vignette of this section.

Later during my doctoral fieldwork, I spent a short period of time in 2007 in New Delhi conducting research among those who had moved to the Indian capital, where I encountered a group of Pandit migrants who were either in university or worked as white-collar professionals. While they were connected to Jammu through friends and relatives, unlike many of my respondents from Jammu, especially from the camp, they were better educated, travelled and able to take advantage of what a metropolis like Delhi had to offer. This particular group also organized protests that sought to direct attention to the Pandit migration and to confront any event, from public demonstrations to film screenings, taking place in the city that was organized by Kashmiris or deemed sympathetic to *azaadi* and critical of the Indian state. One particular protest I remember took place at Jantar Mantar, a historic observatory which is also the site where mass protests of all kinds take place in New Delhi. One day, I received a text message from one of the members of this group: “Meet at Jantar Mantar. Be there or forget about it”.

By the time I reached they had finished protesting. It turned out that they had heard that Yasin Malik of the Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF) was planning to participate at a protest at Jantar Mantar and that they had come confront him. Malik had already left by the time I had arrived, but one member was clearly excited and kept telling me that they had jeered as he left. “We kept yelling at him, *Kana Kana* (Hindi; Kana is a word for someone hard of hearing).” When I told her that I did not understand, she replied that Malik was deaf in one ear. Another member, who was a student, and the only one whose family lived in a camp in Jammu, joked about how he stood at Malik’s event wearing a t-shirt with the symbol “Om” on it. Looking around, I noticed a large poster at the site where they confronted Yasin Malik which bore the abbreviation ‘APDP’. I realized then that Yasin Malik had come to participate at an event organized by the Association of the Parents of Disappeared Persons (APDP). For the Pandits gathered, Yasin Malik was all that mattered and the members I spoke to seemed to know little about the APDP.

The protestors came together before returning to everyday life. One senior member spoke, praising them for coming on short notice and sparing time from their busy schedules as they had gathered during office hours. Two police constables stood close to the group and one member told me that these constables had arrived to make sure

that a distance was kept between them and Yasin Malik’s party. The person who had been addressing the group then started to praise the police and suggested that the entire group shout a slogan in support of the Delhi Police Service. While they chanted their slogan of praise, the constables looked at each other bewildered. Everyone started to disperse while I remained for a while scratching rough notes on a pad when the constables approached me, asked me if I was one of them or a journalist, and then asked “who are these [expletive used] people?”.

Dealing with anger

In the first vignette, I presented an encounter in Jammu with someone whose life embodied many tensions, both personal and political. I realized that Dr. Kaul faced domestic problems, as he candidly told me that his wife and son dismissed his claims of seeking spirituality as a way to shirk domestic responsibilities. The group of protestors in New Delhi, better off and seemingly more cosmopolitan than other migrants, aspired to a larger cause. One of their main organizers later told me during an individual meeting that they sought to reinvigorate other groups as most Pandit organisations were dominated by older men.

Yet both cases involved moments marked by a sense of oddness. Dr. Kaul moved back and forth between expressions of hope such as his praise of the boys’ talents, claims for a spiritual world, and open expressions of anger and even vengeance when he claimed that earthquake was divine punishment for Kashmiri Muslims. However, when he tried addressing the boys at the camp, who were his people, he found himself addressing an uninterested audience. Similarly, the protestors were addressing their claims to Yasin Malik but inadvertently protesting the APDP, and by extension a cause that spoke to a specific form of violence. To anyone looking from the outside, they seemed to position themselves against progressive forms of politics aimed at rights and justice. Their lack of awareness of the APDP also revealed a sense of being completely outside the valley. The reaction to the Police, as representatives of the state in some way, to their praise was also tragic and comical.

While the Pandits feature in human rights reports, there is a sense among many that their condition is not as widely reported as that of Kashmiris in the valley. Any criticism leveled against the Indian state in recent years is labelled as anti-national or an interference in national affairs, which is also applied to Indian state violence in Kashmir. A problem perhaps emerges from early reports,

such as a fact-finding team from the early nineties that criticized the Indian state's policies, violence against Kashmiris and suggests the involvement of the Governor of the state in facilitating the departure of the Pandits (Bose et al 1990: 654). While this report does mention Pandits being killed by militants, it seemed to question the authenticity of the Pandit experience. Much of the discomfort between the Pandits and liberal engagements emerges out of a questioning of the 'exodus' and a potential dismissal of the experience of displacement. Others would speak of any attempt to present a Pandit perspective, even when attempts focus on displacement rather than critiquing *aazadi*, being dismissed readily as right-wing propaganda. The actions of some, like the protestors I have described exacerbate a certain image for liberals in India, which seems to have expanded in the past year where any criticism of the Indian state's actions is now met with the rhetoric 'what about the Kashmiri Pandits'. Kashmir, as Hafsa Kanjwal (2019) points out, in any case represents a blind spot, as the same liberals who may condemn Indian state policy stop short of considering Kashmiri perspectives. On the other side of the political fence, while Hindu nationalist groups may draw attention to the Pandits, and while some Pandits praise politicians such as Bal Thakeray and Narendra Modi whose involvement in Hindu nationalist politics is well-known, in my experience, at the local level they were spoken of by the same nationalists as privileged victims receiving state patronage and derided for 'running way'¹⁰. Kashmiri Pandits appear to fall in a blind spot for both Hindu nationalist and liberal politics.

Hence while the protestors were clear in addressing their support to the police as loyal Indian citizens, they clearly came across to the policemen as strange and almost comic. Somehow for both Dr. Kaul and the protestors in New Delhi, their anger fell flat.

As writers like Beatty (2010) point out, emotions remain difficult to understand anthropologically in terms of their impact and presence. Rosaldo (2004), in a famous essay, pushes the point that emotions such as anger are often beyond the scope of theory. While Rosaldo found a way to understand anger by relating a personal experience through which he could empathize with his respondents, and as Beatty (2005: 120-122) quite rightly sees emotions as indicating the limits of ethnographic work, there is perhaps a way to unpack anger or rage, as Myers (1988) suggests, in terms of its logic.

Based on research among the Pintupi, an indigenous community in Australia, Myers describes how emotional

life is understood in relation to a larger world of sociality where the overriding value is compassion. In moments when the Pintupi experience the denial of care or support from others (i.e., a violation of compassion), anger becomes a sentiment that is expressed in action (ibid: 594-596). If the logic of anger makes sense in what Myers shows as a dialectical relation with compassion, where do we locate the logic of Pandit anger? If we return to the statement recorded by Duschinski (2007: 91) as a point of departure, "India displacing Indians displaced for the sake of India", we can see that anger communicates a condition of 'unrecognized' suffering and sacrifice. Such statements emerge and circulate easily in public. One statement I came across on a poster in Jammu made parallels to the holocaust of European Jews: "The Pandits are victims in the gas chambers of secular democracy". Anger is publicly directed to state and public that is expected to recognize their plight which has apparently failed to do so. Anger is tied to desires of vengeance, as Dr. Kaul brought up, even if it does not result in actual vengeance. Anger is also tied to a frustration that emerges out of the seeming lack of recognition of their suffering on their own terms and hence being denied justice whereas others seem to be receiving care. The earthquake of 2005 for example becomes an interesting point in this regard. While Dr. Kaul may have regarded the earthquake as divine intervention, at that time many Pandits I had met would comment upon how so much assistance and attention was being provided to affected populations, whereas when they became displaced they did not receive that attention and care in 1990.

While Myers locates anger in a dialectic to compassion, the logic of Pandit anger made public in political rhetoric places it in line with a politics of recognition and especially a demand for recognition owed to them. Yet emotions such as anger are communicative and directed at someone who is then expected to provide some recognition. While anger is clearly directed towards Muslims of Kashmir, anger is also aimed at a larger audience such as the Indian public as seen in the second case, and in the case of the doctor, within Pandits themselves. Affect and emotion operate as a system of signs, aligning individuals to each other as they circulate (Ahmed 2004: 120-12). But what are the effects of the kinds of circulation that we see here in moments of seeking recognition? What is fundamental to the politics of recognition is a claim for acknowledgement, respect and dignity, and whose denial is a form of suffering (Taylor 1993). This process however requires a certain 'cunning' to elicit recognition in states and societies marked by different kinds of inequalities (Povinelli 2002).

The lack of recognition in both cases is a moment of failure and becomes a form of further disrespect. In the case of the protestors I must confess my own discomfort over their public face, especially as they inadvertently protested against the APDP and did not realize that the representatives of the state they were praising did not take them seriously. Whenever I have shared that story, I wonder if I am contributing to their state of disrespect. Understanding the logic of anger for the Pandits, while directed to claims of recognition and justice, must also consider the possibility of pathos and tragedy.

Despair: The pain of passing time

In this section, I return to my time at Purkhu camp and my encounter with Kanhaiya Lal, a migrant from northern Kashmir, about whom I have written elsewhere (Datta 2017). I had met Kanhaiya Lal some time before meeting the doctor. Kanhaiya Lal was a pleasant, soft-spoken, and hospitable man who I visited for a period of time off and on. On one occasion I showed him my copy of T.N. Madan's classic ethnography, *Family and Kinship: A study of the Pandits of Rural Kashmir*, and how he dwelled on the photographs of Pandits in rural Kashmir taken in the 1950s. On another occasion, we sat in their quarters and Kanhaiya pointed to the clock on the wall and said, "See, it is 4pm. In Kashmir I would have been at my orchards at this time. Now I am just sitting here doing nothing".

One day I was at the local university talking to two professors who were explaining what Pandits were like to an outsider like me. According to them, whether the Pandits were rural or urban, they were defined by clerical work or engaging in any work that was not physical, and knew nothing of farming. I spoke of people like Kanhaiya Lal who yearned to return to their orchards and farms, which the professors dismissed. The next day I returned to Purkhu to interview Kanhaiya Lal, entertaining visions of proving those professors wrong. When I explained my intentions, however, Kanhaiya Lal got angry and said that he had had enough of things like interviews. I apologized and left. While I bumped into his teenage son from time to time, that was my last meeting with Kanhaiya Lal. While anthropologists emphasize the worth of the discipline in paying heed to the lives of people they study with, there is an extractive aspect in the encounter. Others I had met in the camp would often remark that many researchers or journalists would visit the camp and that they would receive very little in return. While those who will write about the camp leave, people like Kanhaiya Lal will remain uncertain of where they will go to next. Apart from this, I feel that years outside Kashmir contribute to a sense of

pointlessness to their lives. Even if I were to use Kanhaiya Lal's words to argue with someone, what difference would it make on his life?

Despair: A matter of life of any worth

I now turn to my final vignette from Jammu, of an encounter at the premises of the Sanatan Dharma Sabha popularly known as Geeta Bhavan. This is the place where many of the migrants had first gathered in 1990 after flight and where the All State Kashmiri Pandit Conference (ASKPC), a prominent community organisation maintains an office. One day, I visited Geeta Bhavan to meet office holders of the ASKPC and possibly collect data on the migrant quota for admissions to colleges in India¹¹. When I reached the office, the members of the ASKPC were busy dealing with queries of men and women seeking advice to help their children get a place on the quota. I met the president of the ASKPC when he came out of his office. He recognized me from previous visits. When I explained why I had come, he told me that I could wait but that they were very busy. He then spoke to a middle-aged man who was sitting on a chair close to the queue against a wall just outside the office before leaving. When the president left, the man sitting on the chair called me over and asked me what I was doing there. I explained I was a doctoral student and we ended up talking. The following passage is my attempt to piece together what he shared with me:

The main question is, what is the effect of migration? Thinking of a person... Look there has come a time. You will see a man simply talking to himself. Fifty men will come. Follow them. You will see some are letting their hands drop, some are talking to themselves. That means they are not mentally sound! Not mentally fit. Some depression is there...Recently I read in a paper that in Jammu and Kashmir, there are lakhs¹² of people who take tranquilizers. They can't lie down, they can't sleep. There is depression on their mind. Depression from terrorism. Depression from insecurity. They are not sure they wake up tomorrow. What will happen to us? There are not sure of the condition of the market. Condition of schools. Especially ladies folk (sic). Of Muslims, just about fifty percent are mentally unsound. They are more afraid. Their children are gone. Their men have gone out to earn money. What will happen to them, will they return in the evening? You are here to see our condition. Otherwise you wouldn't be here if we were sound. That means something has happened to

we people. You have to see how mentally unsound they are. Their thinking, their vision of India, the world.

I listened, unsure how to respond. When I replied, attempting to sound reassuring, and expressed my view that the migrants are recovering and are moving on with their lives, he seemed surprised and asked me to be specific. I could only think of educational and professional successes of a few migrants I knew. He replied:

That does not mean I am fit. Never. It is never possible. He should be fit in every respect. He should be smiling. You should look at their faces; no one is smiling. No doubt they put on their shirts, but internally they are weeping. The put on “laughter challenge shows”¹³—ha ha ha. But no one is looking inside. ...Every Kashmiri are thinking they are getting better? What more do they need. Only death. Simple. If you are alive, what for are you alive? Kashmiri Pandits are alive only for death. Take my case. I am not getting promotion. What for am I there? I am living, I am sleeping. Man is not born for these things. If he was born for these things, then there is no difference between a dog and a man. You want to do something, show progress. Only difference between a dog and human? Thinking power. Dog is alive, I am alive, what is the difference? They are perspiring. They are reproducing. ...Is a man happy? He is fighting everybody. Nobody can bare others. They will start fighting just now, “hey you are talking aloud.” Why is this man talking aloud? Is he not calm? That means something has happened. That is the law of nature. A human being is supposed to talk beautifully, nicely.

After some time, he got tired of talking and we parted ways. While I never met this man again, he articulated sentiments I felt in the background but which were seldom expressed directly by respondents I knew well. What affected me was the sense of despair and frustration that seemed universal. There was no reference to the state, to political parties, to Kashmiri Muslims that were derogatory or claims of national sentiment, which was far more common. Whatever that man shared could have been shared by anyone, anywhere.

Approaching Despair

In these two vignettes there was no sense of absolute rage at anyone or at any group. Both men spoke to a condition where anger seemed to give way to a palpable sense of despair. For Kanhaiya Lal, the sense of despair was tied to

the limitations of his life in the camp where an item like a clock reminded him of how time could have been spent elsewhere in a way that was more worthwhile. The man at Geeta Bhavan shared a starker sense of despair and frustration at his condition. By invoking a universal and common language, there were certain values emerging such as the expectation of what a life should be and how lives in the present are unable to meet that vision of a life. This is perhaps expressed when he not only spoke of mental illness but also invoked a state of ‘being alive’ which any organism, can do in contrast to how a human being ought to be. This conversation can be read as an ‘anthroposemiotic’ statement, where in drawing references to images and actions, such as disturbed behaviour, unusual laughter and an animal, an image of what a human being should be is offered (Daniel 1996). Yet it could also be dismissed as something anyone, anywhere could say.

The question of mental health has been explored by different scholars working with populations affected by conflict and displacement. While anger and bitterness have been recorded as a part of the experience of dislocation (Loizos 2008), the broader question of mental health provokes important arguments about how conflict and social structure are seen to impact well-being. Soren Kierkegaard had written that “the biggest danger, that of losing oneself, can pass off in the world as quietly as if it were nothing; every other loss, an arm, a leg, five dollars, a wife, etc. is bound to be noticed” (1989: 62-63). The engagement with mental and emotional wellbeing in any form often poses this problem. It is easier to notice and react to physical loss and the infliction of tangible violence and suffering. Saiba Verma (2018) and Neil Aggarwal (2007) who have worked among different populations of Kashmiris have provided a valuable insight to mental health, relating the framing of mental wellbeing in relation to political economy of health and state institutions, as well as indicating the ways mental wellbeing is subject to structural violence. How to approach wellbeing in relation to cases I have described then?

While physical suffering and loss are spoken of by the Pandits, I also heard talk about more seemingly minor things, such as people being loud, unhappy, and stressed. One memory I have is of seeing men and women raise their hands to the sides of their heads and then shake them, uttering the word ‘tension’ and nothing else. It is a gesture that remains inextricably tied to Pandit migrants in my mind, which I sometimes enact when remembering my time in Jammu. I was often told by people I knew if I saw anyone talking to themselves on the streets in Jammu,

then that person was a Kashmiri Pandit. Sometimes this became difficult to deal with as I am someone who talks incessantly to himself and who does not find it abnormal. Hence, such comments about well-being were immensely unremarkable even though the Pandits, like other Kashmiris, are dealing with an extraordinary history. What is striking is the extent to which talk about well-being, especially mental and emotional well-being, circulated. This does not mean that physical well-being is not a serious matter. I would also encounter 'illness talk' where many Pandits would openly discuss illnesses such as diabetes which are believed to have become widespread among Pandits after their displacement, which in turn is attributed to the extraordinary stress of dislocation and uncertainty. The cases I have discussed emerged out of a larger context where talk of emotional and mental well-being featured in ordinary conversations with the Pandits. The encounters with Kanhaiya Lal and the conversation with the man from Geeta Bhavan are compelling for their ordinariness. The ordinary is by now a recognized space for understanding the experience of violence and trauma. As Veena Das (2007) points out in the case of women who survived the ravages of the Indian partition of 1947 and subsequent conflicts, the ordinary is the site of recovery from violence or traumatic experiences. But what happens when the ordinary remains a site of continued pain, however small?

One of the most intriguing aspects of Das's work emerges in the fact that the testimonies of women survivors of the Indian partition emphasized sites like the household and kinship which were affected by partition, as opposed to any invocation of the nation-state or any political ideology. The lives of these women saw an interweaving of personal, familial and national in the process of composing one voice (ibid: 1991). The testimonies she features raise a conundrum. For example, in the testimony of Asha, one of her most important respondents, Das points to how partition disrupted the family. Yet when Asha speaks of harassment within the household and the pain of domestic life, such causes of pain and suffering are universal and can happen among people not affected by specific forms of political violence. Therein lies a problem: what happens when a testimony, without belittling it, can be ordinary and universal to the point that it may be dismissed as unremarkable? This is the difficulty that the Pandits sometimes face, who have experienced dislocation and continue to experience uncertainty, but who are located outside the conflict zone, do not face an everyday life of militarized conflict and whose anger can be easily and tragically dismissed or treated as ordinary and unremarkable.

From Anger to Despair

In this paper, I brought together four encounters that speak to expressions of anger and sense of despair. With the exception of the protestors in New Delhi, none of the Pandits featured are participants in organized politics of any kind. None of them face the present complex of violence their Muslim counterparts live with in Kashmir, though they are not strangers to violence and have a different history of suffering associated with exile and unsettledness. They are survivors dealing with a different track in Kashmiri history. To present any of them as shaped by any sense of total abjection misses a point made by scholars writing in other contexts: that the displaced survive by dealing simultaneously with hope and despair (Petee 2005). Hope attests to survival and attempts to claim or aspire to dignity. Sylvain Perdigon (2008), in his discussion of the "pessoptimist," explores the connection between the two. In Perdigon's formulation, emerging from his work on Palestinian refugees, hope and despair, trauma and recovery, and questions of existence work together in a discussion of attachments to life. What is essential to keep in mind is that these elements work towards the future.

The question of a future, however uncertain, can be discerned in the vignettes. Whether it is the anger of the doctor, the protestors, Kanhaiya Lal, or the man at Geeta Bhavan, there is an attempt to move away from the past defined by the trauma of displacement to some kind of future, even if efforts seem to not work and whereby the anger of the present persists. The question of a future also remains critical to despair. According to Kierkegaard, despair often emerges from a tension between possibility and necessity. When possibility outstrips necessity, there is despair (Kierkegaard 1989: 65-66). For Kashmiri Pandits, there are several futures or possibilities, such as the reclaiming of home, homeland, lost property, lost status, sense of dignity, peace of mind, and even access to newer worlds of opportunity outside of Kashmir. The absence of possibility means "either that everything has become necessary or that everything has become trivial" (ibid: 70).

Kierkegaard's discussion of possibility must be located in a discussion of the self. Despair can be in not wanting to be oneself, not wanting to be a self, or wanting to be something else (ibid: 77-83). Think back to the doctor in his claims of being spiritual, soliciting divine intervention of a vengeful kind and seeking to enlighten young Pandits who are far from interested. Or return to Kanhaiya Lal, whose vision of life was tied to running his orchard, and for whom passing time in a camp makes life become pointless. Think of the protestors who wanted to present

a more aggressive face and yet whose actions potentially miss the mark and risk becoming an irrelevant sideshow. Or revisit the conversation with the man from Geeta Bhavan who addressed all three dimensions of the self in despair. The first two encounters are embedded in some form of anger, which resonate with the involvement of Kashmiri Pandits in some forums dominated by Hindu nationalist organisations. A singular focus on those who participate in situations supporting the Indian state and Hindu nationalist politics may prevent an understanding of Pandit experiences that are neither reflected in either the Indian or Hindu nationalist use of Hindu victims, or even liberal projects if they remain unreflexive. Despair attests to a form of continued suffering. The four encounters represent different forms of despair due to a loss of what the Pandits believe they could have been, even if the experience is made more painful by the kinds of acknowledgement, or its lack, from others.

While the Pandits survive and remake life at varying degrees of success and failure and inhabit an ambivalent location within the politics in, of, and about Kashmir, there is a sense that anger and despair are intrinsically bound together. Crapanzano (2011) depicts this well in a moving account of the Harkis who are Algerians who become associated with the French colonial apparatus in Algeria. As they were seen as traitors to liberation, many fled to France where they were treated with racist contempt and remain caught in a cycle of anger and despair. While Crapanzano traces the experience of the Harkis as a “wound that never heals”, what exacerbates the experience is the difficulty of seeking acknowledgement on one’s own terms. It is never clear whether the Harkis demand an apology from the French or Algerians or whether anyone cares. And if so, how they would show care and will this care relieve bitterness? Rather than a wound, anger persists like rage held still that leads to despair. What emerges in the interweave of expressions of anger and despair is a kind of dull pain that shapes ordinary life for one society among many others affected by conflict in Jammu and Kashmir.

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Endnotes

1. The Hindus of Kashmir are colloquially known among Kashmiris as *Bhatta*. The term Pandit is an honorific awarded by the Mughal court in recognition of services provided by Kashmiri Bhatta bureaucrats. By and large by the time I began fieldwork Kashmiri Hindus were referred to as Kashmiri Pandits by most people in and outside the region. While there is a complex history here, I will use the term Pandit in the way it is used currently.
2. The departure of the Pandits from the Kashmir valley in 1990 is often referred to as an exodus by the Pandits. Terms like ‘exodus’ call upon a complex history and vocabulary. Pandit organisations such as Panun Kashmir or Our Kashmir speak of their condition as a form of ethnic cleansing and even genocide (PKM 2004). In any case, analytical categories in situations of forced migration are never neutral. A category like the refugee, while a legal definition, are culturally loaded, while internal displacement is affected by the lack of a legal framework and the risk of being lost amidst other forms of movement such as the migration of low income wage labour across the world. As Turton points out, the category of forced migration is itself caught in an oxymoron as the term ‘forced’ refers to being compelled whereas migration will always suggest some form of agency (2003: 8-9). I will refer to the Pandit migrants as displaced people as they have incurred loss in terms of homes, forms of life, forms of relatedness which they have had to remake over the years in new places. Interestingly in conversation with Pandits in languages other than English such as Hindi, Urdu, and Koshur, and especially among those who occupy a lower socio-economic stratum, the word ‘migration’ is often used to refer to their displacement.

3. For a detailed description and discussion of the camps, see Datta (2017).
4. See the chapter on caste and class in Datta (2017).
5. Bal Thakeray, was a prominent politician in the western Indian state of Maharashtra. The Shiv Sena, the political party he founded, was instrumental in attacks on migrants coming to Mumbai from different parts of India and in rioting during the communal riots in Mumbai in 1992. In the early 1990s he had directed the government of Maharashtra to institute a 'quota' system reserving places for Kashmiri Pandit migrant youth to study in institutions of higher education in the state. This programme later expanded to other states. Many Pandits remain grateful for the 'quotas' in colleges in the state as it provided an avenue for young Pandits to study and move ahead. It also connected the Pandits to a Hindu nationalist party.
6. The film *Jashn-E-Azaadi* provided a rare glimpse of life in Kashmir for people outside the valley. The film has also attracted protests by Pandits as a place to articulate their anger. I witnessed Pandits protesting against the film on its premiere in New Delhi in 2007.
7. Pseudonyms or anonymization used for all respondents.
8. The word migrant, is a label officially used by the state to refer to people officially recognized as displaced in Jammu and Kashmir. Consequently, for people like the Pandits in Jammu, the word migrants, while ordinary, becomes doubly meaningful.
9. The migrant camps were established in 1990 and were inhabited by Pandit migrants until 2011 with their closure and replacement in Jammu by the Jagti township project located outside Jammu city.
10. In my book, I describe incidents where Pandits are derided by local members of the BJP in Jammu for fleeing Kashmir and for not having fought Muslims (Datta 2017).
11. The education quotas for Pandit migrants covers any applicant who is a registered Kashmiri Pandit migrant and has expanded to other Indian states
12. One Lakh is 100,000.
13. A popular Hindi language comedy show on television.

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