Chapter Four
Research Methodology and the Camp

Introduction
The first three chapters were instrumental in introducing the topic of the thesis, mainly, forced migration and cultural changes. The first chapter was a general introduction delineating the area, objectives and limitations of the study. The second chapter defined the concepts of forced migration, refugees and forced migration. It also traced various studies on cultural change bought about by forced migration. The third chapter focused on the historical and political background of Kashmir thus bringing forth the basis of the problem of Kashmir and the subsequent migration of Kashmiri Pandits. The present chapter as the heading suggests will focus on the logic behind the process of collecting data, description of the field (camp) and experiences on the field. The study is about Kashmiri Pandits in camps in Delhi. They are referred to as refugees, but as per the definitions discussed in the second chapter they fit into the category of internally displaced people. However, they have not been given recognition as Internally Displaced People either because of which they have not been the recipient of international aid. The importance of a study of forced migration and cultural change can be further reinforced by the following observation by J.A. Jackson:

Apart from change in physical environment, migration of people involves a change in his social, cultural, economic environment. Every geographical movement implies an element of dissociation from usual and familiar world, a transition and an involvement with a new environment, a new context of physical space and most significantly new social relationship. Thus, the new environment, which may be totally unfamiliar, makes the
process of social adaptation problematic for the migrants. [Jackson, 1969: 10].

One such exhaustive study on the Kashmiri Pandits, which shall be used as extensively for comparisons, is by Prof. T.N. Madan. His book called 'Family and Kinship: a study of Kashmiri Pandits in rural Kashmir' is an anthropological study and has been useful in getting a picture of how things were before migration. It is of greater importance as the Pandits in the camps were from the rural areas as well.

The complex nature of the study meant that the method of collecting information from the field had to be carefully thought over. The method chosen by was a combination of many so as to optimize the chances of getting accurate information. Hence multiple methods – interview, ethnography and everyday interaction were used.

Before we start discussing the actual fieldwork, it is imperative that we discuss the research methodology used. John W. Berry in his work on acculturation of refugees writes that the method of participant observation and unstructured interviews as the preferred tools to study acculturation at the individual and community level. The method, which encompasses both participant observation and interviews, is the ethnographic method and was used in this research on Kashmiri Pandits. Anthropologists have been using this method for the study of cultures and many such studies have been commissioned by the Census organization. Some of the studies are -: W.H.R Rivers did an ethnological study on the Todas (1906); Harimohan studied the Chero tribe in Palamau- all aspects of Chero life and culture under the aspect of acculturation (1973); Saileshwar Prasad wrote a monograph on the Santhals – cooperation, conflict cultural diffusion (1974); Fuhrer Haimendorf revisited the place where he had done his field work earlier.
in the 1930s on the Nagas (1976); R.N.Pareekh wrote in great detail on the culture of the tatapu living in the Eastern Ghats- their pattern of living, economic life, religious beliefs and rituals etc (1977). Ghanshyam Shah did a study on the Chodras known as the Choudhury – the changes in the various spheres of their life, impact and consequence of change. (1977); S.B.Dasgupta did an ethnographic study of Chotanagpur- details of social organization, economic life, material culture, beliefs, festivals and rituals (1978).

So we see that the studies on cultural changes or on culture per say have been undertaken mostly by ethnographers and has proven to be the effective. For this reason, ethnography has been chosen as the methodology for studying the effect of forced migration on the culture of the Kashmiri Pandits.

Girton, who did an ethnographic study on Kung fu, explains that there are two aspects to ethnography:

1. Ethnography is based on a detailed observation of everyday life and it utilizes commonsense notions in carrying out these observations. He defines commonsense as “how a world is seen, heard, felt and known in common is assumed and relied upon by ethnographers”.(67, 1986) the ethnographers sees the world as being made up of several parts which are observable and accountable and it is world which the ethnographer has to study. Girton believes that the ethnographer is not just an observer but also a participant.

2. Ethnographers are concerned not only about providing knowledge about the situation they are studying, they also want to give insight into the situation. Any ethnographic study, which is done from the perspective of the people being studied, does not speak of the ethnographer’s views, beliefs, knowledge on the topic.
Hall writes that in an ethnographic and participant observer field research the narrator interacts with the individuals in a 'we-relationship'. Historians believe that when studying any socio-historical object, religious group one should look at it from its own cultural perspective and not from that of the ethnographer's. This approach is followed even with the emic and postmodern ethnography, which "refuse to interpret a culturally defined group in the alien framework of anthropological concepts". (Hall, 1999:53).

The logic behind this approach is that if the enquiries are based on the interests of the ethnographer then the unique qualities of the phenomenon under study will be lost. Campbell is of the opinion that ethnographic studies are useful prior to experimental studies. An ethnographer might offer more interpretable data/results if there was a basis of comparisons. Campbell and Levine suggest that when one is comparing cultures or studying a particular one the studies should be used to generate hypothesis rather than indulge in hypothesis testing. They feel that when using comparative methods it is difficult to ascertain whether the noted differences reflect the actual differences between cultures or the differences are due to the different methods used by each researcher. The authors believe that it is important to investigate methods that would increase validity and therefore encourage comparisons in ethnographic research.

One method by which ethnography can produce more valid comparison is through coordinated full time research in which the ethnographer dedicates a full year to comparable fieldwork. Quantitative tests cannot be used to test hypothesis and an adherence to decisions taken prior to research work may prove to be erroneous. A strict adherence to an interview schedule may reduce
rather enhance the interpretability of data. Secondly, the same information obtained from two sources or even two different definitions of a term is more reliable than data received from a rigid interview schedule. The field worker must ask questions rather than just listen.

Campbell and Russo (2001) discuss some methodological considerations where ethnography is concerned. These are:

- **Indigenous instances and retrospective focus:** A casual observation of daily events offers convincing evidence that there is no shortage of material. In science, the instances and the variables are so many that it will never exhaust its ability to test hypotheses. However, where social organizations are concerned it is different and it is necessary to every unique culture before it disappears.

- **Number of respondents:** This is as situation of anthropological research verses survey research. Some social scientists believe that two to five individuals should be interviewed, while many believe that about fifty is the least number. The topics which are covered are more important than the number of people interviewed. The assumption is that the reliability is greater when the respondent takes the role of the informant and reporting on the group consensus rather than focusing on one's own views.

- **Uniformity of interview administered and confounded error:** Here what is discussed is the rigidity or the uniformity with which the inquiry schedule is administered. The authors feel that there is no point in collecting data which cannot be relied on. The researcher should be rigid in his approach—using the exact words as printed in the schedule as this may lead to
inadequate or false data. Uniformity in certain cases may reduce rather than enhance interpretability. The example given is that if the ethnographer gives a certain example to explain an abstract question may bias the results, giving the interviews higher consistency but a spurious one.

- Ethnographer’s awareness of the purpose of the study: “there is an increasing awareness of the possible bias in fieldwork of strong commitment to pre observational hypothesis or of knowledge.” (Campbell and Russo, 2001:335).

- Degree of specification of procedures: The ethnographer sets the agenda for the fieldwork. Many topics and content areas should be left to the respondent to bring up for best results. This means that one should patiently wait for certain topics to come up in conversations rather than force it.

- Variations in the data quality and observational base: the ethnographic data quality varies with the total time spent in the field, mastery over the local language, exposure to the cultural behavior of interest. The more experienced and knowledgeable the fieldworker is, has gone through socialization into the cultural group, such a fieldworker can bring a complete contextual understanding. The fieldworker can also attain a more valid set of data for comparative analysis. Today ethnographic data collection entails recording of information, views on behavior and the observation of behavior separately.

- Recording and transmitting of field notes: the most common mode is that of paper and pencil. The ethnographer immediately after the interview records the information obtained. Some may use it to transcribe notes. The data could be written in the form of integrated ethnographic essays.
addressed to the questions raised. The essay is consistent, integrated, interpreted and uses the data obtained in the fieldwork.

Much has been written about fieldwork and research of one’s own culture and that of another. Byron (1992: 170) writes that:

People or community studied become the other in fieldwork primarily because anthropologists often do research in situations or contexts far removed from their own academic/social/cultural worlds. The writing of ethnographic text itself creates barriers, creating and distancing effect which leads us to speak of individuals as “others” as actors who perform cultural roles.

One of the greatest fears while doing a fieldwork is the loss of objectivity. It is necessary to maintain a certain distance from the subject under study as emotional involvement may lead to a skewed report or research. As it has been observed were anthropologists are concerned:

The self and the subject are therefore viewed in an intersubjective relationship with very fine demarcating lines. In this sense, the self is not external to or different from the subject whose life and being is often internalized or reproduced by the researcher... Anthropologists fear losing their objectivity and strive for mandatory distance between self and subject. Fieldwork does not take place in a vacuum; it is centrally located in the life of the anthropologists... The subject becomes the other and therefore the object of research”. (Thapan 1998: 6-7)
M.N Srinivas has expressed his views on the study of culture by anthropologists and sociologists. He writes that sociological thinkers like Weber, Marx Mannheim began with a study of their own cultures. Srinivas also believes that sociologist/anthropologists should begin by studying their own culture. He thus advocated the study of one’s culture rather than the ‘other culture’. At the same time, he was not against the study of the ‘other’ culture. The diversity in Indian culture provides many opportunities to study a different culture from one’s own. When a researcher sets out to study an alien culture then one must first create conceptual frameworks and then do the fieldwork.

According to Meenakshi Thapan fieldwork is the best method of understanding social life and that sociology and anthropology are essentially fieldwork based disciplines. Fieldwork is used by these two disciplines to conduct research on “one’s own culture and society in its different forms, contexts and situation” (Thapan 1998: 13). She also writes that in any fieldwork-oriented research, it is the personality of the researcher, his/her cultural background and the academic training received forms the subjective element. “Caste, class, gender, race, historical and personal mark and shape the social world as we experience it and as we understand and interpret it” (Thapan 1998: 11).

This brief introduction to ethnography clearly shows its suitability as a method for conducting research for this thesis. About a year was spent on the field, excluding the actual preparation for the field. A list of Kashmiri Pandits camps in Delhi was first drawn up and the camps were chosen were keeping in mind the distance factor. The exact addresses were not given and so the Kashmiri was contacted as they have a list of all the migrants and the locations of the camp. An initial pilot survey showed that some camps no longer existed, some housed the Punjabis
while some had very few. After a process of elimination a camp was decided (this we shall discuss in detail in the following section).

A semi-structured questionnaire was prepared, which was to act more as a guideline for conversations, than something to be actually to be strictly adhered to. The fact that so many different aspects were to be studied made the study complex.

Kashmiri Pandit Camps in Delhi

The reasons for the migration of the Kashmiri Pandits from the valley have been discussed in detail in chapter 3 and to some extent in chapter 2. Therefore, we shall now straight go the problems faced by the migrants on their forced migration. The Kashmiri Pandits are referred to as refugees by the media, articles and by the community themselves, but if we refer to the definition of the refugee, we see that the Pandits do not technically fit into the definition. They actually fit into the definition of Internally Displaced Persons(IDPs), but the government of India has not recognized them as IDPs.

With the rise of militancy, the Pandits left Kashmir without any inkling of what the future held for them. The obvious choices for most migrants were Jammu and Delhi, due to proximity to the valley. Many had relatives in these places, which further influenced their decision. Places close to home were chosen as the Pandits were of the view that they would be returning their homes soon. They had faith in the government to restore law and order. They imagined that the problem would be solved in about a fortnight and they would be returning to their homes. Therefore, they were not prepared mentally, financially and materially for a long stay away from home, certainly not 16 years.
Kashmiri Samiti

One of the main reasons for choosing Delhi camps for research was that language would not be a problem. I assumed that the migrants would have learnt the local language, Hindi, during their long stay. The exact location of the camps was not known. The Kashmiri Pandit Samiti (Lajpat Nagar, Amar Colony) was contacted and an interview with the general secretary was sought. He gave some dismal news (from the point of view of a researcher), most of the Kashmiri Pandits had moved out of camps. The government had built some alternate accommodation for them and most of them had moved out of the camps. The general secretary looked skeptical about the topic of research. He himself was a victim of the politics of the valley. He had come to Delhi as a kid and had not gone back since. He was bitter about the lack of political interest in the condition of the Pandits and inaction on the part of the government. He said that credit any improvement in the condition of the Pandits goes to the community, which handled the situation with lot of courage.

On the question of cultural change, he insisted that there has almost no change. He said that the cultural change could be put at a mere 5% and this was because of the efforts made by the community to maintain their culture in camps and outside. Probably because of this, he was not very enthusiastic about the research. Added to this was the fact a number of researches have been carried out, mainly on the issue of forced migration of the Pandits, which have not made any difference to their condition. This was reflected in the reluctance to give the addresses of the camps. He mentioned that the Pandits were living in community halls in several areas. He agreed to give the addresses in a week’s time. I asked him whether the respondents would mind answering my questions, as it would mean devoting a lot of time. He seemed offended and answered that “Madam, our women are educated and we are known for our
hospitality so you need not be scared in spite of everything (persecution, forced migration, hardships) we still treat others with respect."

I was eager to start my fieldwork and decided to find out the community halls on my own. I started with Lajpat Nagar area. It was not easy to find the community without the exact address. On finally locating it after some 40 minutes, it came as a shock. I knew that the camps were deplorable but I was unprepared for the actual sight. It was a single storied structure surrounded by empty ground. A middle-aged woman was washing clothes in the open ground; the dirty water was slowly seeping through the area. I stood there talking to her as she continued her work. She did not look very surprised when I told her the purpose of my visit. It was because I had many predecessors. On the question of culture, she remarked “what culture? Our culture, everything has ‘gone’ after we migrated. How can we preserve our culture in these circumstances, we barely managing to live here?” She then called out her son who thought would be of help. He was busy preparing for his college exams and I did not want to take up too much of his time. He offered to show around the camp. It consisted of on large room; housing around 17 families. Each family had delineated its area with a bed sheet and many household items were dumped in a space, which looked like it was meant for garbage disposal. The bathrooms were common for all and looked quite dirty. It was hard to imagine families’ strangers to each other staying in such close quarters.

The names of the people in the camp made it clear that there were not Kashmiri Pandits but Sikhs. The young man named Prakash quite helpful. I enquired about the camps were only Kashmiri Pandits dwelt. He named Aliganj and Bapu Dham. He too repeated what the general secretary had said that most of the ‘migrants’ had shifted into independent flats built by the government. They were waiting to shift into
one such flat in a few months' time. On being, questioned Prakash said that the women would be more apt to answer questions on culture. Most women were busy doing household work in the morning and thus did not have time to answer any questions. I knew that since I was focusing on Kashmiri Pandits interviewing Kashmir Sikhs would be a digression.

Finding the camps
My next step was to locate the camps in Aliganj and Bapu Dham. I went through the same procedure as before as I had no definite address. The Aliganj camp took a lot of time to find. It took nearly two hours to find the community hall of Aliganj. This camp looked better than the previous one; at least the people lived in separate rooms. I spoke to a woman sitting outside her room and explained my purpose. I knew that she was a Pandit as she was wearing the 'dejoor' (earring worn exclusively by the Pandits). She looked a little amused and then told me that they were busy with preparations for Shiva Ratri, and would have no time until then. An old lady sitting there did not understand Hindi asked the woman what I wanted and as I left I could hear the woman explaining in Kashmiri. Though I do understand the language I could hear, the word 'culture' repeated a number of times. I hoped that she had understood exactly what I wanted.

My next search was for Bapu Dham, which was easier to find, as it was located on the main road opposite the famous Jesus and Mary College. This camp looked similar to the one at Aliganj though not so clean. I saw a man in his thirties coming out of room and introduced myself. I told him the purpose of my visit. He said that an older person in the camp would be more 'qualified person' to tell me all that I wanted to know. It was then that I was introduced to Mr. Triloknath with whom I was to spend a lot of time in the coming months.
I would go at a time specified by the respondents themselves so that they could answer my questions at leisure. I carried a voice recorder, which I used with their permission, many a times they would ask me to switch it off, as they did not want the information to be used. I would reach the camp at around 11 am everyday and be there till three or four o'clock. Since the number of respondents was not important for me, I had decided to interview some elderly people who knew the past and the present, a few young people and some children. I hoped to get an overall view on what were the changes in the culture and what the present generation felt about their own culture.

I spend about time in the camp for about a year interviewing the people in the camp. I would go after a break so that the people would not lose interest too. It is not possible to write down every interview in detail but I will quote the ones of importance. I would like to mention here that I had initially though of going to two camps. I went to the Aliganj camp a number of times but the response was negative. A woman nearly screamed and told me "We do not have any culture? What are you asking about culture? We do not have any culture left. You talk to the Pandit organizations." During another visit, I was told that most of the people were on vacation so the camp was almost empty. A number of such fruitless trips made me decide that it was better to concentrate on respondents who were ready to talk and after a while I found that most of had similar views with of course some individual opinions. Before starting my fieldwork, I had read books and articles on the Kashmiri culture to familiarize myself with the terms and customs. It was imperative that I had some knowledge so that I would spend time on the changes rather than discovering the actual culture. It proved to be useful. I had prepared a tentative questionnaire so that in the initial days, I would at least know where to begin from and it proved useful in bridging gaps in conversations and proving a certain flow to the
interviews. It also meant that I would not forget any important point. I made certain improvements in the questionnaire as the days went by because I realized that I had not covered many aspects. A copy of the questionnaire will be included here so that the exact scope and objective becomes clearer. The questionnaire was as follows:

**A Semi-Structured Questionnaire**

Name:
Age: Sex:
Place of origin (name of city/town/village in Kashmir):
Number of family members/size of the family:
Year of migration:
Educational Background of respondent:

Family Structure:
- Whether respondent had a nuclear or joint family in Kashmir
- The family structure in the camp.
- Effect of forced migration and the camp conditions on the family structure.
- Division of labour in the family in Kashmir and in the camp.
- The problems of bringing up children in a city far from native place.

Occupation:
- Occupation before migration
- Occupation after migration
- Number of earning members in the family
- Particulars of working women
- Did women work before the displacement took place?
Education of children:
- Schooling of children
- Future plans of children
- What were the job prospects in Jammu & Kashmir?
- What kind of jobs do they want now or are doing now?
- Desire for education, keeping in mind the high percentage of literacy among Pandits.

Marriage:
- Age of marriage then and now.
- Process of selection of bride and groom today.
- Instances of 'love marriage' specially, with people of other communities.
- Attitude towards the above.
- The marriage customs/ ceremonies that are followed today as opposed to what used to happen earlier.
- The breakdown of marriages, if any; the reasons for the same; majority view on divorce.
- Any increase in marital discord among couples.
- Is dowry a part of KP culture? if no, then has it been introduced today.
- In case of dowry cases the reaction and opinion.

Religion/ Festivals:
- The important festivals of the Pandits
- Which festivals are celebrated in camps?
- What are the differences in the customs followed – e.g. due to non-availability of certain items.
• Their opinion on the changes in ceremonies and festivals and what do they think are the reasons.
• Involvement / knowledge of the children about the various festivals.

Cuisine:
• Kind of food eaten in the camps. Whether there have been any differences in the cuisine.
• Was it difficult to adjust to changes in the above, if any?
• Has there been any change in the food cooked at weddings? Reaction to the changes, if any.

Dress:
• Do people (specially the women) still wear the traditional dress of Kashmir- the pheran, headgear, jewellery etc?
• What are occasions when men and women wear the traditional dress?
• Availability of such dresses and jewellery in Delhi.
• Interest in wearing the traditional garb- women, men and children

Political affiliation:
• Political interest shown in the condition of the Pandits.
• Do which party do they extend their support and why.
• Interest in political activity and if any undertaken by residents in the camp.
• Attitude towards Muslims

As stated earlier this is semi-structured questionnaire and was meant to provide a direction to the interview being conducted. It was helpful as it bought back conversations back on track. During long interviews, the
danger of digressing from the topic always looms large. I wanted to get as much information as possible. The respondents often wanted to talk about the situation on Kashmir, which I listened to, but after two or three similar conversations, I had to tactfully change the topic. We shall discuss all this a little later.

**Bapu Dham- A Kashmiri Pandit Camp in Delhi**

The community hall is also known as the *baraat ghar* in the local language. It is meant to house the out-station marriage parties. There is hall too where the wedding is held. Bapu dham was initially divided into a hospital (homoepathy laboratory), library and a crèche. The Pandits were housed in two rooms and three halls. The halls held six families each and there were two families in each room. The ceiling in one section collapsed which meant that a larger number of people had to be adjusted in the hall. Like in the Lajpat Nagar camp, people used bed-sheets to create their separate space. This was obviously not a very convenient arrangement. It was due to the action of certain local politicians that half walls were built which were later made permanent walls. This meant that each family could have its own room. In each room four to five members would stay.

The camp was a three-storied grey coloured building. Several windows open on to the road and one can see many plants on the windowsills. The interior was dark and dingy. Many things like tables and cartons were piled up in the corridors. Each room has a door, which has some decoration on it. I discovered the meaning of the decorations later during the interviews. The first day that I visited the camp it was a Sunday, I hoped to meet the men who otherwise may be at work. All the doors were closed and as I was deliberating which door to knock at a man came out of a room. He was of medium height, fair complexioned and looked
around thirty-five. I introduced myself and told him the purpose of my visit. He told me that another gentleman might be able to help me better. Meanwhile a few children had also gathered and looking on rather curiously. They rushed to call somebody. I was then introduced a tall, fair person in his fifties to whom I repeated the purpose of my visit. I could see that they were not very convinced about the importance of what I wanted to know. They told me that number of people – media, politicians some students had come to their camp. Most of the visitors were interested in knowing the reasons of forced migration, the political – social situation in Kashmir and the conditions in the camp. Since nothing had come out of these visits (improvement in living conditions) they were not so receptive to visitors. They told me that I could ask them what I wanted to but they were not sure whether it would be useful. We were joined by another elderly lady who did not know Hindi.

Meanwhile, a few women had come out of their rooms and were observing the happenings curiously. All of us went into the room of the elderly man whose name was Triloknath. He stayed with his wife in the room. The room was a small one. It had a steel almirah, a dressing table, three chairs and a television. There was a carpet on the floor and a self on the wall. There was an attached small kitchen. The bathrooms were of course common for all. The seating arrangement was similar to what I had seen in Kashmir, though without the plush carpets. The shelf was used to keep the blankets, religious books and photographs, clock etc. With five people in the room, it looked packed. I told them that I was going to use the voice recorder and if at any time they wanted me to switch it off they should tell me. There was a stink as the room was near the bathroom. The people in the camp had migrated in the year 1990. Most of the people had left the camps and now there were around seventeen families in the camp. They too were waiting to shift into the apartments built for them by the government at a place called Dwarka.
They had to pay for the apartment about two lakhs. It was one room set, much like the camp, but little bigger with an attached bathroom. They did not sound too excited at the prospect of living in the small flats. Many of those who had shifted out earlier were the affluent people.

I saw other rooms too in the next few months. Some had made certain alterations in the dwellings. One family had built a wall to partition a certain section of the room and thus make a two room set. This was to provide some privacy to the son and daughter-in-law. Another family had managed to fit in a double bed in the room. I found out that this was because the room was built initially for two families. The space in each room was the almost the same with some differences due to personal renovations done. There is a fan and a light, which the residents claim to have put themselves. There is no rent taken for the rooms and no electricity charges as well. There is a monthly ration given by the government comprising of eight kilograms of rice, 2 and half kilograms of atta (flour), one and half kilograms of sugar and some lentils. The food given is for four members and not more than that. It was estimated that the government spent around 50 lakhs on the fourteen camps in Delhi.

It was quite difficult to imagine so many people living in the same room. It was obvious that they had faced lot of problems in the camps. The camps too were allocated only when the government, both in J&K and Delhi realized that the Kashmiri Pandits would not be returning to their homes for some time now. Until such time the homeless Pandits lived in temples, verandas of houses and many on the streets. The community hall also called refugee camp by the Pandits and many others came as a relief. Then again living in close proximity with so many strangers was not easy which bought in different kinds of problems, which we will discuss later. With no employment and monetary resources running out many had to live on borrowed clothes and eat whatever little they could
mange from sympathetic people. We should remember that most of these people were comfortably off in Kashmir, which made life more difficult. As mentioned earlier the Pandits had come in a hurry with bare minimum clothes and money. The problem in J&K showed no signs of being solved and the government could not guarantee the safety of the Pandits. In both rural and urban areas the atrocities on the Pandits were increasing as the militants were emboldened by the passive stand taken by government. What the Pandits had imagined to be a fifteen day affair turned out to be a long exile of sixteen years with no signs of it ending. Today there is no hope of going back and most have settled down in the place of migration.

Most of the families in the camp were from rural Kashmir and were agriculturists. Initially the camp housed people from Srinagar also, but they were among the first ones to move out. This was because the families from the city could sell their property more easily as it was mostly a house and secondly as they were able to get their jobs transferred to another city, say Delhi in this case. The rural people had land, which they did not want to sell and it was difficult to sell, as the papers were not with them. Another problem was that the property had been taken over the local population (the Muslims). The Pandits were bitter, as they had lost their land to the very people who had worked for them as laborers. Some were embroiled in court cases that were going on for almost a decade. It was an added burden for the Pandits, as they did not have the financial resources to carry on a legal for so many years. The accompanying photographs of the camp make the picture clearer.

I was asked my name and other particulars by residents which I did not mind, as it was an obvious question. One day I heard an old lady asking my main respondent what my name was. She then said that probably I was a Muslim. He said my name the word 'shree' that was definitely
Hindu. Nevertheless, before the interview that day he asked me my name again (I had known him for a month then). Since I heard the previous conversation, I was more or less prepared for the question I told him name and meaning, which convinced him of my religion. This was a question, which I faced many times. Consequently, I started putting a bindi, which would leave no room for any doubt.

Before the interviews, I had read on the various festivals of the Pandits. I had made a list of the important festivals on which I would talk about. This proved useful as I could ask them say for example “Do you celebrate pun deun in the camp”? The old lady, I had met on the first day, was surprised and excited, when I asked questions like the one mentioned above. She asked my other two respondents to ask me how I knew about it. It helped to break the ice and at the same time, the respondents knew exactly what I wanted to know. It also made it clear that I knew something about their culture. One important factor was that they had never been asked about their culture, (at least in such detail) before. Usually the interviews were centered on the reasons of migration so a different topic created some interest in them. Everyday the respondents offered Kashmiri tea (kahva), Kashmiri bread and other such things. Each household felt that their tea was the best and the original ’kahva’.

Let us now move on to the interview held with the residents on the issues of family, marriage, education and career, political affiliations, dress and cuisine. As regards details like the job profile, income and education of the people in the camp a chart in the appendix so that one can go through the information at a glance. Since the topics covered were vast and interviews detailed, it will be dealt with in a separate chapter.