

On uncertain ground: displaced Kashmiri Pandits in Jammu and Kashmir

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Abstrak

Since 1989, Jammu and Kashmir has been affected by conflict between the Indian state and a movement demanding independence. This book explores the effect of that conflict on the Hindu Pandit minority of the Kashmir Valley. The displacement of the Kashmir Pandits has been drastic with the majority having fled Kashmir within the first year of the conflict and relocating to Jammu and elsewhere. They are one of the most prominent internally displaced persons (IDPs) in the region. Kashmiri Pandits are historically associated with state bureaucracies from the precolonial to postcolonial regimes and having been prominent landowners in Kashmir. While Kashmiri nationalism declares independence from the Indian state, the Pandits are located in the union between India and Kashmir. This book attempts to explore their experiences by looking at their relationship to Kashmir and the place they have relocated to, where they have rebuilt their lives. Focusing on camp colonies and the lives of Pandits across the city, the book reveals a tension between the recovery of ordinary life after loss and the inability to feel truly settled and to find one's place in the world. This book explores how they seek recognition as victims through engagements with political parties, organizations, and organs of the Indian welfare state. But this process is caught in a struggle between the uniqueness of victimhood and the universality of violence and suffering. Thus, this book attempts to understand experiences of dispossession among people who occupy a politically ambivalent location.