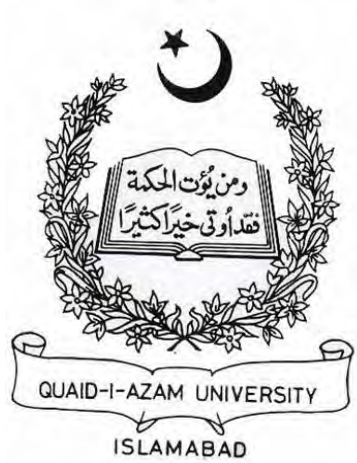


# **Lived Experiences and Narratives of Forced Displacement: Reunion Strategies of Cross Border Separated Balti Families of Chorbit**



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**QUAID-I- AZAM UNIVERSITY**

**DEPARTMENT OF ANTHROPOLOGY**

**ISLAMABAD – PAKISTAN**

**2021**

# **Lived Experiences and Narratives of Forced Displacement: Reunion Strategies of Cross Border Separated Balti Families of Chorbhat**



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Thesis submitted to the Department of Anthropology, Quaid-i-Azam University  
Islamabad, in partial fulfillment of the degree of Master of Philosophy in Anthropology

**QUAID-I- AZAM UNIVERSITY**

**DEPARTMENT OF ANTHROPOLOGY**

**ISLAMABAD – PAKISTAN**

**2021**

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Final Approval of Thesis

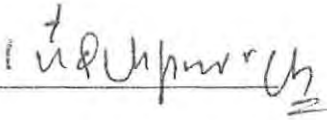
This is to certify that we have read the thesis submitted by Ms. Shazia Batool. It is our judgment that this thesis is of sufficient standard to warrant its acceptance by the Quaid-i-Azam University, Islamabad for the award of the Degree of M.Phil in Anthropology.

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share their life stories and struggle experiences, thus making my overall research experience pleasant and unforgettable. Without their support I can never successfully complete my project.

## **DEDICATION**

This work is dedicated to the hardworking forcibly displaced persons of Chorbat valley and especially to the separated families who have been waiting for the reunion with their kin and kith across the Line of Control for fifty years.

## ABSTRACT

Despite globalization, border conflicts among states have been observed as a major concern in the contemporary world. This study envisions the border conflict between India and Pakistan on the Kashmir issue through humanitarian aspects. Thus, it aims to document the narratives and lived experiences of the forcibly displaced borderlanders of Chorbat valley during the Indo-Pak war of 1971. It also attempts to explore the reunion strategies employed by the separated families to reconnect with their kins and kith across the border. The displaced people residing in Skardu district of Baltistan were studied through qualitative research methods such as in-depth interviews, participants' observation, case studies and Focus Group Discussions to collect data from a sample of 30 forcibly displaced persons of Chorbat valley. Indo-Pak conflict of 1971 compelled them to leave behind all hearts and homes, moveable and immovable property and personal belongings. Narratives of displaced people echoed the hardships and sufferings of the forcibly displaced persons during displacement. Lack of food, cold temperature, complicated routes and fear of the enemy over their head added to their distress throughout the way. Role of state in the settlement of displaced people is considered inadequate and even negligible after fifty years of displacement. The displaced people lost their homeland, identity, familiar social settings, social relations and most importantly family members. Owing to strict borders, the separated families' opted novel ways for the reunion over the years. People contacted each other through letters, cassettes, radio Pakistan, telephone and internet but virtual reunion could not alleviate the agony and anguish of separated families and they longed for the physical reunion. Physical reunion in India and Pakistan by crossing international borders and meeting in third countries at religious sites located in Saudi Arabia, Iran and Iraq are alternative reunion strategies. These strategies are not only an economic challenge but also a physically exhausting journey for them. People live just a stone's throw away from their native place but they have to travel a long way through international borders to reach their villages instead of a short route. The rigidity of the borders and complicated system of visa acquisitions has made the process of unification harder for the people. For that reason, the separated families demand for the opening of Kargil-Skardu and Turtuk-Khaplu roads for the smooth and affordable reunion of the separated families especially for female and older people. Sense of belonging and longing for the homeland and also for the separated kin groups was prevalent among them which kindled the sense of nostalgia among the forcibly displaced persons. Displaced persons shared Balti songs and poetry across the border and expressed their longing for



their loved ones. Place making and community organization acted as a coping strategy to minimize the alienation of the new place and also maintain collective memory of the displaced persons.

**Key Words:** Balti Separated Families, Belonging, Chorbat Valley, Forced Displacement, Lived Experiences, Longing, Narratives, Nostalgia, Skardu.

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# 1. INTRODUCTION

Displacement is part and parcel of war and one of the massive humanitarian problems of our era (Cotter, 2020). Generally displacement has been understood as a consequence of conflict and violence (Lischer, 2007). The major reason for displacement is considered as conflict. Other causes of migration include environmental degradation, natural disasters, and economic incentives. The type of conflict that causes displacement, such as civil war, international intervention, wild genocidal government or military, which influences the safety of the displaced people, reasons for prolonged violence, and many other political factors (ibid, 2007).

Historically millions of people have been displaced from their territories due to war and conflict. Massive forced migrations or displacements of millions of people took place across most countries involved in World War II (Weiner, 1996). Currently, the most deadly conflicts in the world such as the conflicts of Syria, Afghanistan, Nigeria, Yemen and Somalia were also associated with some of the highest rates of forced displacement. As of mid- June 2018, the conflicts in Syria, Afghanistan and South Sudan accounted for some 57% of the refugees worldwide (Grandi, 2019). Afghanistan, Myanmar, Somalia, South Sudan and Syria produced more than two-thirds of the world's total refugees (Cumming-Bruce, 2019).

The emergence of newly independent states in Africa and Asia after the Second World War generated a new global refugee phenomenon. The breakup of the colonial empires and the creation of multi-ethnic states produced displaced people (Weiner, 1996).

Weiner established the earliest category of conflict induced displacement, which produced refugees (ibid, 1996). In examining the causes of displacement through the lens of Weiner model<sup>1</sup>, Lischer focuses on civil conflict and international conflict. She divides the former into four categories: civil war, genocide, failed state, and persecution; the category of international conflict in turn includes border wars, third party intervention, and Invasion (Lischer, 2007). The typologies of war of conflicts described by Lischer have been prevalent in the whole world, the forcible displacement of people studied in current research falls in the category of border wars of

---

<sup>1</sup> He described four categories of conflict as: interstate wars, ethnic conflicts, non-ethnic conflicts and flights from authoritarian and revolutionary regimes.

International conflict mentioned by Lischer. The conflict-induced displaced people were moved from the border area of India and Pakistan due to the war of 1971.

Hard borders were considered to symbolize and represent political unrest between neighbors. Physical borders of Europe have been depleted in the last one and half decades while south Asian borders are still intact and remain rigid most of the time (Tripathi, 2015). South Asian borders are extremely conflicted and to understand the nature of their criticality we need to thoroughly examine the geo historical perspective. It is really important to gain the historical information of the creation of that particular border in the region. Van Schendel and De Maaker wrote that many of South Asia's borders are the product of the establishment of colonial powers in the area and the resulting violent history (Van Schendel & De Maaker, 2014). South Asia borders are believed to be the active agents of politics and the way British delimited the borders has kept the issue more tense and full with conflicts (Banerjee, 1998). These borders are formed due to war, conflict and victories but sometimes they were demarcated as a result of political efforts and administrative ease (Tripathi & Chaturvedi, 2020).

Despite occasional sparks of hope, political animosity in South Asia still cast a shadow over the visions for economic ties and trade flows. Apart from politics and economics, culture is the central element which binds the South Asian countries. Ironically, South Asian states overlook the cultural similarity and closeness while making policies for the political and economic adjustments (Ahmed, 2012). Such denial of socio-cultural ties across the border further eliminates the vision of disabling political partitions. Thus, in South Asia, boundaries and borders acquire utmost distinctions, confining societies to the lines of separations drawn by the power elites (Tripathi & Chaturvedi, 2020). At times there are theoretical changes but again territorial issues came in the way. Paasi argued that de-and re-territorialization occurs in various institutional practices and discourses and displays economic, cultural and political power relations (Paasi, 2011). With existing boundaries and borders of South Asia considerably alleviated the difficulties and added to the misfortune of the South Asians people, especially border communities. The borderlanders would hope on both sides of the dividing line that South Asian countries would connect their borders and blur the political boundaries in a near future (Tripathi & Chaturvedi, 2020). South Asian countries ignored the borderlanders while demarcating the geographical lines. Several examples present how social realities were overlooked and haphazard lines were drawn in South Asia. The controversial Durand



line reflects the British strategic interests in the South Asian border making process. The Pashtun community was residing between Afghanistan and the United India before 1947. The Durand line politically bisects people belonging to the same ethnicity (Omrani, 2009).

In the context of the Sub-Continent, some of the colonial political themes are not only present but also getting renewed with the passage of time. Despite the division of borders, the persistent fear seemed concerning parts of their territory being held or contested by other countries which is termed as “cartographic anxiety” by (Krishna, 1994). This sort of condition is quite evident in the case of India and Pakistan and it can be defined as an unalterable legacy of the British rule. The geopolitical triangle bordering, ordering and othering (van Houtum & van Naerssen, 2002) comes with quite heavy outcomes for the residents, specifically those communities whose homeland converted into a borderland in an abrupt event of partition of British India. British India disintegrated and resulted in the formation of India and Pakistan. Both of these states were not pleased with the partition and expressed dissatisfaction over the demarcation of borders and until now both states make claims on Kashmir (Tripathi & Chaturvedi, 2020). The outcomes of partition and bordering are full of unforgettable memories, narratives, shortened territories, destroyed economies, divided people and cultures. Samaddar (2005) described it as “Not one partition, not even two, not even three but several partitions, partitions of several territories, several units, several identities and several visions” (pp. 95).

Many critical anthropologists in this respect contended the insignificance of the borders and suggested removing the borders (Chowdhary, 2012). According to their stance, the border is land where the countries meet but inhabitants of borderlands separate. Most of the time they part with heavy hearts and they are forced to separate from one another against their will. Borders have been created without any needed consideration paid to the identity, blood relations and the mutual culture of the inhabitants or borderlands. This bordering has worsened the difficulties for the border people because of the continuous inter-state border conflicts (Shekhawat & Mahapatra, 2008). Borders have long been associated with the tensions caused to people and have frequently been seen as the source of all problems between neighboring countries and individuals.

The division of the subcontinent into India and Pakistan resulted in a lot of displaced persons in the region. The separation has created several borders between India and Pakistan but the Line of Control (LoC) between them has remained tense and the most conflicted one. This tension has not

only affected the people living around the LoC but it has created long lasting hurdles in the lives of people who were dislocated due to the abrupt formation of the LoC (Banerjee & Choudhury, 2011). Due to bordering and formation of two states the movement of people and families around the border took place and families got divided. Blood relations separated and acquired different national identities and people had lost all kinds of interactions with their relatives. These divided families across the border could not connect or interact with each other which has been the most saddened part of the whole situation (Chowdhary, 2012). The bilateral animosity between India and Pakistan resulted in numerous wars after partition which were 1948, 1965, 1971 and 1999. This study is based on the forcibly displaced people of 1971 war between both the states. During the 1971 war between Pakistan and India, Indian army captured the last four villages Chulunkha, Turtuk and Tyakshi of Chorbat valley which are the last areas of the Pakistani administered area. All villagers of Chulunkha migrated to Khaplu and Skardu during the night but several families belonging to Turtuk, Tyakshi and Dowe Thang remained divided on both sides of the LoC (Baltistani, 2014). The migrated families suffered a lot and they finally got permanent accommodation in Skardu, one of the largest cities of Baltistan. This issue has been reported through print media but has not been addressed through anthropological work. Thus, current research explores the hardships and documents the lived experiences and narratives of the forcibly displaced people of these villagers regarding migration, settlement and separation. Furthermore, it investigates the various strategies opted by the divided Balti families of Chorbat valley to reunite with their families across the border.

## **1.1. Statement of the Problem**

The conflict situation between India and Pakistan due to unresolved Kashmir issue has always been under spotlight. Border landers between India and Pakistan have been suffering from the conflict since the inception of both states. This study focuses on the humanitarian aspect of the conflict between India and Pakistan and strives to examine the forcibly displaced people of Chorbat valley inhabited in the vicinity of Line of Control during the war of 1971. The study explores hurdles experienced by the forcibly displaced people during the migration and settlement process. Moreover, due to the persistent political conflict between Pakistan and India, these people cannot cross the Line of Control to meet their relatives. Further, the study analyzes the reunification mechanisms opted by the cross border separated Balti families to meet their loved ones

and also sheds some light on their sense of belonging and longing for the lost homeland and separated relations.

## **1.2. Objectives**

Following were the main objectives of the study:

- To investigate the narratives of forcibly displaced persons of the Chorbat valley.
- To unpack the reunion strategies employed by the cross border separated families of Chorbat valley.
- To discover the sense of belonging and longing of the displaced persons for their homeland and the separated families across the border.

## **1.3. Definitions of the key terms**

### **1.3.1. Lived Experience**

Live experience is referred to as the personal knowledge about the world obtained through direct and direct participation in daily activities rather than through depictions constructed by others. It may also define that knowledge acquired by direct face to face interaction rather than through other mediums (Chandler & Munday, 2020). Lived experience is the experience of people directly affected by a social problem or combination of problems (Sandhu, 2017).

In the current research the lived experience is used to understand the feelings and the emotional state of the displaced people of Chorbat valley developed by their direct involvement during the war of 1971. Lived experience in this study is also taken for the experiences of these displaced people of the war and its aftermath consequences which they have gone through and the hurdles that came across their way while they left their homes and migrated towards the safer place.

### **1.3.2. Narratives**

Narrative is a way of presenting or understanding a situation of a series of events that reflects and promotes a particular point of view or set of values (Merriam Webster online, 2021). Narrative refers to telling a certain real or imaginary experience or related sequence of events. It is usually communicated by the narrator to the narrate (Baldick, 1996).

In this research narrative is used for the accounts and stories of war affected people in which they told the whole scenario of the incidents and events that occurred with them at the time of war and also during the entire journey of migration and settlement in the new place.

### **1.3.3. Forced Displacement or Migration**

Forced migration is an umbrella term which comprises multiple types of displacement or involuntary mobility of people. This displacement can be both across international borders and within a country (UNHCR, 2016). According to the Migration Data Portal (2020), forced migration is a migratory movement and it has various driving factors, which involves force, compulsion, or coercion. Forced migration has been used to define the movements of refugees, displaced persons and victims of trafficking.

Forced displacement is defined by the International organization on migration as the forced movement of people from their homes and habitual places. This forced displacement of people is mostly resulted in order to escape the effects of armed conflict, violation of human rights, situations of generalized violence or natural or human-made disasters.

In this research forced migration or forced displacement is used interchangeably in the whole study. Forced migration is used for the involuntary movement of war affected borderlands of Chorbat valley. These people dislocated from their original habitats to other areas of Baltistan like Skardu due to the eruption of 1971 Indo-Pak war at the LoC.

### **1.3.4. Chorbat Valley**

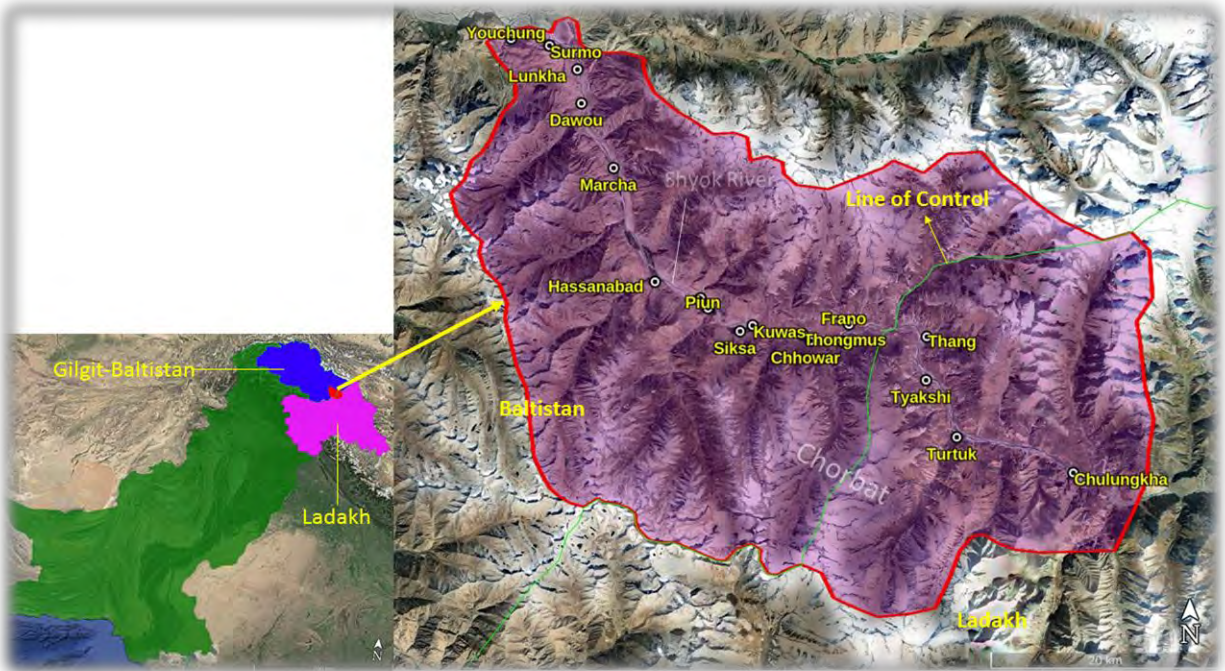
Chorbat valley is extended along the Shyok River from Chulungkha on the frontier of Ladakh to the boundary of Khaplu in Baltistan (Gazetteers, 1890)<sup>2</sup>. After the partition of the Subcontinent the whole Chorbat valley was part of Pakistan. Chorbat valley comprises multiple villages after the 1971 war it was split into parts and Indian state captured some of the villages from this side of LoC. Currently Pakistani side of Chorbat valley comprises more than thirteen villages while four villages were incorporated by India during the war. In Pakistan, the villages are Dawou, Marcha, Kuwas, Hassanabad, Partuk, Piun, Siksa, Kalaan, Sukhmos, Chhowar, Thongmus, Siari, & Franu,

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<sup>2</sup> Gazetteer of Kashmir and Ladak together with routes in the territories of the Maharaja of Jammu and Kashmir  
<https://archive.org/details/dli.csl.3042>

and in India, they are Thang, Tyakshi, Turtuk and Chulungkha. As Figure 1 shows the division of villages across the LoC after the 1971 war. This research has studied the forcibly displaced people of Chorbat valley which were captured by Indian army in 1971, hereafter the Chorbat valley used in the study for these occupied villages and forcibly displaced people of Chorbat valley will refer the inhabitants of these villages.

Figure 1. Chorbat



Source: (Author, 2021)

### 1.3.5. Reunion Strategies

The separated families of Chorbat valley could not meet their relatives and kin groups across the LoC due to the political hostility of India and Pakistan. Thus, these families or people use various tactics or ways to reunify with their families across the border. In current study the reunion strategies referred to identify those ways of unification employed by the divided Balti families.

### 1.4. Significance of the Study

There is an ample work done on the conflicted border of India and Pakistan but most of them address the political dimension and overlook the humanitarian aspect of it. The border context of conflicts has remained out of the mainstream researchers and political analysts but the conflict situation of India and Pakistan due to Kashmir conflict has always been under spotlight and many studies have been carried out on this subject. Borderlanders between India and Pakistan has been suffering from the conflict from the emergence of both states.

During the literature review, I found out that limited literature available on the issues of separated families due to abrupt demarcation of border in the context of Pakistan. The current study is based on a people oriented approach of the border which focused on devastations and brutality produced on the borderlanders who were residing on Pakistani side of the border resulting from the redrawing of the Indo-Pak LoC during the 1971 war. Current study is unique in the sense that it is highlighting the narratives and lived experiences of the displaced persons of Chorbit valley. It also gives voice to the untold versions of the stories of the displaced people and highlights the micro perspective of it. It is crucial to comprehend the conflict and its consequences through the perspective of the victims or sufferers. These victims went through the atrocious outcomes by directly or openly experiencing the conflict. It is expected to pull out some unseen realities regarding the problem and that could further be used by the concerned authorities searching for the convincing resolution of it.

Furthermore, this research gives better insights about the issues of divided Balti families across the border in the broader framework of the conflict. These findings may be supportive for the human right activities to advocate on cause and it can also useful for the government and NGOs in taking measures to reunite the separated families. Moreover, little work has done on separated families inhabiting in Indian side of LoC but limited work has been observed on the forcibly displaced persons of the 1971 war residing in the Pakistani area specifically on the people of Chorbit valley. Hence, this research has produced anthropological literature on the forced migration and separated families of conflict induced displacements.

## **1.5. Thesis Outline**

This study comprises seven chapters. The chapter one of the study includes introduction of the study, statement of the problem, objectives, definition of key terms and significance of the study. The second chapter covers the relevant literature on forced displacement, separated families and place belonging and longing of migration and displacement. The third chapter gives a detailed description of the research setting and research methodology including research method, sampling technique, research tools, data collection and data analysis. The fourth chapter presents the lived experiences related to war and hardships of these displaced people faced during the migration. Hurdles in the way of settlement in the new place and role of state in their settlement are also discussed. The fifth chapter sheds light on the techniques and means of communication employed

by these people to contact their separated families and role of social media as a uniting factor are also studied. The sixth chapter focuses on the sense of place belonging, Identity, Nostalgia for homeland, longing for separated families and place making of the displaced people in the new place. The seventh chapter summarizes the whole study along with recommendations.



## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

This chapter reviews relevant literature generally on forced displacement which leads towards the aftermaths of the phenomenon on the displaced people. Division of families and place belonging due to the arbitrarily drawn bordering has also been analyzed in this chapter. The chapter opens with the reviewing literature on Forced displacement and brief history of forced migration and refugees. Prominent anthropological scholars' work on forced migration have been reviewed in this section. Further it explains the relationship of borders and borderlanders in the contested nature of Kashmir. It further discusses the humanitarian consequences of the border on the aspects of separation of families across LoC and role of technology in their reunion strategies. The last part of this chapter reviews literature on the belonging and identity and also longing of people for their homeland and family members. Lastly it confers the efforts made by the displaced persons to reduce place belonging through the place making strategy.

### **2.1. Forced Displacement or Migration**

The broad phenomenon of migration or displacement is mostly distinct into two main classifications that are voluntary migration it is mostly economically motivated, and forced migration or displacement, which is defined as coerced or involuntary movement from one's home (Reed, Ludwig, & Braslow, 2016). There are many factors in the process of forced displacement. It is evident that people experience violence of any type and eventually they decide to move from that place (Davenport, Moore, & Poe, 2003). Most of the scholars' determine the relationship in which displacement is considered to be similar to migration. That's why in this study forced displacement is used interchangeably with the term forced migration. According to UNHCR, there are about 79.5 million individuals were forcibly displaced worldwide including refugees and internally displaced persons who have fled their homes to escape violence, conflict and persecution (UNHCR, 2020). Due to the alarming numbers of forced human displacement in the world, the World Economic Forum's Global Risks Report (2019) reported that involuntary migration is one of the major global challenges facing the world today.

Forced migrations has been well-defined by the International Association for the Study of Forced Migration (IASFM) (2012) as a broad category that contains the mobility of refugees and internally displaced people as well as people displaced by environmental or natural catastrophes, chemical or nuclear disasters, famine and development plans. From this definition it reveals that the study

of forced migration has not been limited to some specific group rather it also contains other displaced groups such as conflict-induced displacement, environmentally displaced, and developmentally displaced<sup>3</sup>. Conflict-induced displacement is the most typical type of displacement within the broader category of forced migration. This kind of displacement includes displacement caused by war, civil strife, or other political or social processes that lead to violence or persecution, including threats due to race, religion, nationality, or nationality, specific social groups or political opinions as cited by Heintze and Thielbörger (2018). This research is conducted on the conflict-induced displaced people of Chorbat valley including Chulungkha, Turtuk, Tyakshi and Thang. They were forcefully displaced from their native land and Indian army incorporated these villages during the 1971 Indo-Pak war. These forcibly displaced people were now residing in different locations of Baltistan.

The causes of migration such as violent conflict and its outcomes are considered as the main reasons for migration. It is increasingly becoming one of the driving factors for individual migration (Singh, Sharma, Mills, Poudel, & Jimba, 2007). Though the changes brought about by involuntary migration may cause stress on people. The effect of involuntary migration is always higher than voluntary migration (Weeks, 2005).

Individual impacts of involuntary migration include physical impacts such as physical damage to the elderly and very young children during the move; food insecurity, sanitation issues; lack of housing; unemployment; economic devastation from liquidation or abandonment of assets and most importantly separation from family (Cohen & Deng, 2012). While describing the causes and consequences of migration to Humli Tibetan in Kathmandu, Guthrie explained that due to abrupt departure people suffered a lot and separated from their families, friends, assets, lands and livelihoods (Guthrie, 2014).

## **2.2. Brief History of Forced Migration and Refugees**

Historical research on refugees and forced migration began before the birth of the discipline of force migration in the 1980s (Skran & Daughtry, 2007), interdisciplinary research on refugees and forced displacement has a long and important history. Study of Forced migrants and refugees has

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<sup>3</sup> Development-induced displacement relates to people who are compelled to move as a result of policies or projects aiming to enhance development, such as dams, roads, and mining and conservation reserves. Disaster-induced displacement refers to people displaced as a result of natural disasters (floods, Earthquakes), environmental change (deforestation, global warming) and man-made disasters (industrial accidents).

gained momentum and legal recognition internationally after world wars. The 'refugee' as a political category is the product of the recent Second World War era (Ghosal, 2014). During the interwar and post-Second World War eras, when there was a large-scale destruction of life and property, created conditions for displacement of population in mass, historians have studied refugee movements and the role of international organizations established to protect and support refugees during this period (Elie, 2014). The need for a central organization to address exclusive needs of the refugees was realized. Thus, the United Convention on Refugees in 1951 was signed. It was in this Convention that the refugee first defined (Ghosal, 2014). Despite claims of universality, the main focus of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has long been on Western Europe (Elie, 2014). Historians often overlook the large-scale forced movements that occurred outside Europe in the 1950s and 1960s and even before that time as cited by Elie.

Historians not only began to repair the Eurocentric bias by writing about other parts of the world but also challenged the difference between classical refugees originating in Europe and new refugees from other parts of the globe as cited by Elie, such as the division of the Indian subcontinent which was considered the massive migrations in history (Ballinger, 2012),. The 1951 Refugee Convention is a key legal document and defines a refugee as:

“Someone who is unable or unwilling to return to their country of origin owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion (pp, 4)”.

According to the legal definition of refugees given by UNHCR (2010) on the basis of 1951 Refugee Convention, refugees are those people who have fled war, violence, conflict or persecution and have crossed an international border to find safety in another country<sup>4</sup>. This definition of UNHCR was highly criticized by many researchers, especially anthropologists. Martin argued that throughout most of the 20th century, the emphasis of international protection has been on those people who crossed international borders in order to escape war and persecution. Those who stay in their own country receive rare international attention, who encounter dangers similar to those experienced by international refugees (Martin, 2010). Hathaway has pointed out

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<sup>4</sup> Convention and Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees. <https://www.unhcr.org/3b66c2aa10>

that the legal categorization of the term refugee based on the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, which was itself largely based on the strategic political goals of Western powers at that particular historical moment. He further distinguished the "five basic elements" in the "Convention" definition, the first of which is alienation, requiring claimants for refugee status to be outside their country of origin. He argued that the exclusion of 'internal refugees' from the Convention definition was representing the limited access of international law (Hathaway, 1991). According to Shacknove alienage is not an indispensable form to gain the status of refugee, but depends on the physical reach of the international community with the displaced (Shacknove, 1985). Similarly most anthropologists and other social scientists would believe that there are many reasons for uprooting. It occurs in different contexts and affects peoples differently, causing them to fall into different predicaments and bringing them into new social and natural environments, including new institutional orders and labels. Malkki continues to challenge the validity of research concentrating on refugees per se. Thus it also increases the broader category of involuntary displacement. According to her, Refugees do not constitute a naturally self-delimiting domain of anthropological knowledge, since their uprooting is due to extraordinarily diverse historical and political causes and involve people who, while all displaced, find themselves in qualitatively different situations and predicaments (Malkki, 1995).

The United States Committee for Refugees attempts to use a more functional definition of refugees. A person was considered to be a refugee if his forced movement (whether within his own country or to asylum elsewhere) means that he is deprived of a minimally decent life as cited by Austin & Fragomen (1970). In essence, the primary element of refugee and forced migrants status, under this criterion, is forced movement and consequent deprivation. In this respect, in this research, I studied the displaced people of Chorbat valley including Chulungkha, Turtuk and Tyakshi come under this broad definition of refugees and forced migrants. As during the Indo-Pak war of 1971, these people were involuntarily displaced from their homeland which was located at the border of Pakistan. The residents of Chorbat valley had to leave the violent war zone to safeguard their lives. After the war, LoC was redrawn and their homeland was captured by Indian state. They were unable to go back to their native land. In such a way the legal category of both refugees and internally displaced people. They did not cross any international border to fit in the definition of refugees. Due to LoC and lack of access to their homeland their identity became blurred. It means they also do not fall in the category of internally displaced persons. There is no

effect on identity in the internal displacement of people. Thus I, as an anthropologist, don't agree with the narrow definition of refugees by UNHCR and agree with the broader definition given by most of the anthropologists.

### **2.3. Anthropological Work on Forced Migration**

Anthropologists are extremely involved in ethnographic research, including displacement, uprooting, migration and resettlement. For a field that sets out to understand life experience and relies on participant observation as its basic research tool, it is not surprising that forced migration has attracted the attention of many anthropologists. Detailed ethnographic research and attention to recording the real experience of forced migration reflect the important contributions of anthropologists to forced migration (Chatty, 2014).

Elizabeth Colson's political-anthropological research in Japanese-American detention camps in the 1940s and her study of colonized populations' experiences of displacement and forced resettlement in the 1950s and 1960s (Colson, 2003). Since the 1950s, labor migration has been an important research center in the field of anthropology, but the forced migration caused by development and conflict has become a subject of recent concerns in anthropology (Sorensen, 2003). Other anthropologists have studied the humanitarian community because of its profound impact on the experience of the displaced. Anthropologist Peter Loizos was one of the pioneers in the study of the plight of refugees. Loizos' *The Heart Grown Bitter* (Loizos, 1981) and *Imposing Aid* (Harrell-Bond, 1986) ethnographies have described the experience of refugees and internally displaced people in camps, spontaneous settlement, and countries of asylum.

The migration theory in anthropology focuses on looking for the answers of two questions in its discourse. First, it looks at the reasons for migration, and second, it tries to find out the impact of migration on individuals. In the past, studies on migration generally focused on the causes of migration, and these studies largely ignored the consequences of migration on the individual level. Greenwood was of the view that the consequences of migration have long been understudied in comparison to its causes. In general, migration research has maintained a firm direction on the determinants (Greenwood, 1985).

An anthropologist Caroline Brettell (2003), a professor of anthropology at Southern Methodist University who specializes in migration studies, describes that in contrast to migration researchers,

Anthropologists tend to study both sides of migration. In other words, they are trying to find out what are the factors that cause the displacement of individuals. They seek to find out those factors which force them to leave a particular community or their hometown, and then what happens to them in a new place (Brettell, 2003). Turning to lived experiences of forced migration, Dawn Chatty argues that anthropology's unique contributions to the field of refugee and forced migration studies include carefully documenting what happens to people, their culture, and society when they are forcibly displaced and wrenched from their territorial moorings (Chatty, 2014). Similarly, this study is conducted to study the implications of war brought upon the Balti people of Chorbat valley after being forcibly displaced from their place of origin and explains the hardships endured throughout their migration process and also during their settlement in Skardu and other areas of Baltistan.

Anthropology is a discipline that has always emphasized on the marginalized group of the society. It continues to pay attention to the voice of the subalterns. The anthropology of migration has made a significant contribution to understanding how displaced persons experience geographic mobility. It involves the choices they make and why they are made, how these choices affect their lives as individuals and family members. It would also engage in the forms of marginalization, mistreatment and discrimination they experience in the new place, and what kind of new identities they have built for themselves in the local and global context (Brettell, 2003). Current study also concerns the narratives and lived experiences of the displaced people of Chorbat who had made the decision to leave their homeland due to conflict and war, and endured hardships in the new place as well. The most important and primary vision of Anthropology has been the perspective and voice of the forced migrant and due to its efforts in the field of forced migration, it broke out refugees or displaced persons from the category of 'object of study' and to bring to life the individual experience of dispossession (Chatty, 2014).

Anthropologists believed that displacement can be experienced in different ways over space and time. Anthropologists pay special attention to deconstructing the definition and limitation of the research agenda and international labeling of displacement issues. They also challenged the idea that refugees and forced migration research should be mainly related to refugees in refugee camps in the developing world (Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, Elena, Loescher, Long, Sigona, 2014). It began with Oliver Bakewell's work in which he explored that the international community was more

interested in those refugees who are living in fixed camps and the refugees who are living in self-settlements in towns (Bakewell, 2014). Self-settled refugees are being left out of research and policy because most research on refugees in the global South takes place in refugee camp settings rather than among self-settled communities, leaving a large number of people invisible outside the knowledge of refugees and forced migration (Bakewell, 2008). The uprooted people understudy were also self-settled in various remote villages of Baltistan and remained overlooked for years.

The traditional Anthropological conceptualization of culture and space prominent in earlier studies were undermined where lines clearly defined geographic territories (spaces) with distinctive cultures (places) (Chatty, 2014). By the 1990s, social constructivist studies were done by Malkki, Gupta and Ferguson, and Appadurai which have adapted a distance from the 'roots' and territorial orientation of previous studies (Appadurai, 1995; Gupta & Ferguson, 1992; Malkki, 1992, 1995). They believed that the metaphorical concept of having roots involves intimate linkages between people and place-linkages that are increasingly recognized in anthropology need to be denatured and explored again. Space and place, home and homeland came to be reconsidered as a result of this body of work and these concepts employed highly in research with refugees, exiles, and other forced migrations. Their work challenged the inherent link between cultural difference and space or physical territory so prominent in earlier anthropology (Chatty, 2014).

Anthropologist Malkki makes clear in her work that people are frequently mobile and routinely displaced. They invent homes and homelands in the absence of territorial bases. It is through such memories that they can inhabit their imagined nation (Malkki, 1992). Here, what we see is the 'imagined community' striving to become attached to imagined places (Anderson, 1983). Dispossessed people everywhere remember their 'imagined' homelands in a world that increasingly denies such firm identification of place with geographic space. The place to be remembered usually served as symbolic anchors for forced migrants and other dispersed, diasporic, and transnational people. Thus 'homeland' is one of the most powerful unifying symbols for the dispossessed even though the way in which that place is constructed in the social imagination may be quite different among the far-flung members of the imagined community. Geographic space, as anthropology has long argued, is made meaningful by people. The experience of space is always socially constructed. Spatial meanings are thus established by those with the power to make places out of spaces (Chatty, 2014).

## 2.4. Borders and Borderlands

The study of borders was not the main area of research during the 1950s-1970s (Newman, 2002). In the early 1960s the field of border studies was predominantly focused on the study of the demarcation of boundaries and the borderline, now the focus has arguably shifted to examining the continuous construction of borders to the process of bordering (Newman, 2006; van Houtum & van Naerssen, 2002). Today the attention of the concept of border has moved away from the study of the evolution and changes of the territorial line to borders seen as differentiators of socially constructed mindscapes, identities and meanings. Nowadays, the focus of the concept of borders has shifted from the study of the evolution and changes of geographical lines to the borders which is regarded as the socially constructed mindscapes, identities and meanings (Donnan & Wilson, 1999; Wilson & Donnan, 1998). It shows that the assumption of the border has changed that it is not a stand – alone entity, detached from other territories or societies, but is a socio-spatially constructed and always dynamic configuration of social relations and networks. Rekha Chaudhary emphasized on the people oriented approach of the border rather than on the territory oriented approach. In a territory oriented approach the state gives more value and priority to the territory over the people and controls borders in a rigorous way. While the people oriented approach supports the idea that borders are the human constructions and can be dissolved (Chowdhary, 2012). The interests of the state and the people residing on the borderlands may be inconsistent which can be visible during war times. States destroy the lives of the people living on the margins of the state territories (Banerjee, 2004). Militarization and national security leads these vulnerable people to war prone situations and ruin their fundamental rights to life, livelihood and mobility (Gill, Manchanda, Ghosh, & Bose, (2012). Thus the conflicts on borders became the reason for the displacement of the borderlanders for security reasons.

All political borders are created by human beings. Many towns and cities are usually regarded as a single functional entity. They are divided along national and state boundaries. The degree of cross-border coordination and integration depends on the nature of the political and power relations between them (Buursink, 2001). The form and function of the border indicate the nature of the relationship between neighboring countries. For example, a borderline that is not clearly monitored indicates a relationship that is friendlier than a borderline that is strictly fortified and guarded (Wachowiak, 2012). For this purpose (Martinez, 1994) gives a four-fold model of borderland



based on the level of cross-border interactions and prevailing conditions within a borderland that are alienated, coexistent, and interdependent and integrated. Many borderlands have not experienced such evolutionary trends, and the notion of sequential change is not applicable to them.

- The **coexistent** borderlands provide some basis of formal and limited interaction between the two sides.
- The **interdependent** borderlands represent a very dynamic cross-border interaction. A stable international environment as well as a favorable economic scenario makes way for the interaction between the two sides.
- The **integrated** borderlands represent a close interaction both between the states as well as the people of the two bordering countries.
- The **Alienated** Borderlands model refers to borderlands that actually lack conventional cross-border exchanges due to extremely hostile conditions. Warfare, political disputes, intense nationalism, ideological animosity, religious enmity, cultural dissimilarity, and ethnic rivalry constitute major causes of such alienation. International conflicts have led to militarization and strict control of cross-border traffic (Martinez, 1994).

## 2.5. The Alienated Borderland

An alienated borderland is a habituated land near a border. The main features of which are strictness, control and militarization. There are no cross-border interchanges and all cross-border interactions are considered illegal (ibid, 1994). There are various such examples that can be seen in the whole world. The most heavily fortified and strict borders which divided national frontiers are the borders between Israel and Jordan, India and Pakistan, and North Korea and South Korea. Many such examples can be observed in Central America and Africa (Donnan & Wilson, 1999).

The borderland in Kashmir was engraved in a hostile situation since partition of the Subcontinent. This borderland arose as an alienated habitation having extremely unfavorable conditions (Martinez, 1994). Being caught in a state of hostility between India and Pakistan, people in the J&K border area are constantly falling into turmoil. As residents of the border regions, they face challenges that the mainland people do not necessarily have to face (Chowdhary, 2012).

The nature of the border of Kashmir between India and Pakistan is not simple and straightforward like other borders of Pakistan. Border is not a simple and uncomplicated phenomenon in this state. Border is also not necessarily fixed and settled in many ways; it remains uncertain, problematic and contested. The difficulty about analyzing the border in J&K starts from the fact that apart from the relatively settled border touching a few districts of the Jammu division of the state, known as International Border (IB), there is a large part of unsettled border now known as Line of Control between India and Pakistan (Chowdhary, 2012). The length of Pakistan's border with India is 3133 kilometers, in which 700 kilometers including LoC, 193 kilometers of Working Boundary and 2240 kilometers of International border (Khan, 2018). The Line of Control is drawn on the basis of positions held by the opponents at the time the fighting between them ended (Wirsing, 1998). This line instead of being only a line of cessation of hostilities which led to four wars and more than two near-war situations between the two countries of India and Pakistan (Samaddar, 2017). This dividing Line was marginally altered during India-Pakistan wars in 1965 and 1971 and was renamed the Line of Control (LOC) by India-Pakistan agreement in July 1972 (Bose, 2009).

The LoC has an ambivalent status as a border because, under international law, it is unsettled. What is separated by this 'line' remains unclear – two states, different peoples or 'ethnic' groups, different political cultures (Bouzas, 2019). The borders drawn and redrawn in Kashmir during the wars of 1947-1948, 1965 and 1971 get maximum attention at the cost of those who live in that territory (Shekhawat & Mahapatra, 2009). The ceasefires that followed India-Pakistan wars led to repeated drawing of lines of division in Kashmir. Consequently, the border of Baltistan with India witnessed repetitive changes in its geographic outlines and ultimately considerable humanitarian consequences. This study focuses on the humanitarian concerns of the division of border on the borderlanders of Chorbat valley who were residing on Pakistani side of the dividing line before the war in terms of forced displacement and separation of families.

## **2.6. Borders and Division of Families**

Demarcation of borders and division of people are always correlated. In the process of bordering and movement of people most of the families got divided and blood relations came to acquire different national and even religious identities (Bouzas, 2019). Separated families are referred to those family members whose kin are separated, lost, or dispersed under the tragic circumstances of national division and adversity. The term, divided, is used interchangeably with separated or

dispersed (Boo & Lee, 1992). Hyo-jae Lee defined separated family from a sociological perspective, according to him separated family involve all direct lineal family members such as parents, children, brothers, sisters, grandparents, grandchildren, and first cousins who have been split or separated in the process of national disaster such as a seizure of national sovereignty by a foreign power, national division, or war as cited by Boo and Lee (1992). Due to the barriers in the forms of borders, some scholars argued that separation of families leads towards slow death of the individual. The slow death or violence means that separation harms the individual slowly, that's why it is mostly overlooked or unnoticed by the people. At the border regions such kind of harm was observed. Imprisonment and removal, create terrestrial and physical barriers for family members. These barricades subjected forcibly displaced people into difficult circumstances. The mundane nature of the suffering experienced by these separated families concealed how these sufferings differ in degree and type for those at the border (Lee, 2019). The consequences of separation become even worse, when these divided families across borders cannot even contact or communicate with each other (Bouzas, 2019).

In Korea most of the divided family members were separated as refugees fleeing the Korean War in 1945, leading to the displacement and separation of up to 10 million family units. After the Korean War, communication and travel between North Korea and the rest of the world (especially South Korea and the United States) became severely restricted (Lee, 2020). Divided families cannot meet across national borders, but they employ numerous strategies to meet each other, such as exchanging letters, conducting live video meetings or family reunion in a third country, if someone ends up living outside Korea. Some separated families also take a private route to contact their families in the North through Chinese brokers. Unofficial reunions can cost high, but the procedure can be faster and most importantly do not rely on the political situation of North and South Korea ('Korea Family Reunions', 2018). The inter-Korean exchange program, operated on the South Korean side by the Republic of Korea (ROK) Red Cross in association with the Ministry of Unification. It allowed people to register for the inter-Korean reunion lottery and had gained an opportunity to submit a video message to family in the North or to obtain information on the identity of their relatives (Lee, 2020). The dozens of elderly North and South Koreans are meeting with their divided families who are spending three days together in a tourist resort in North Korea but only be with their relatives for a few hours each day. The union and interactions of separated families was also heavily controlled ('Korea Family Reunions', 2018).

In South Asia the division of the subcontinent 1947 witnessed the biggest mass migration in human history as a result 20 millions of people were displaced (Zamindar, 2013). Eventually due to this great movement in the subcontinent, people got separated from their families and migrated to either side of the border of India and Pakistan (Khan, 2017). After that the movement of people and goods across the international borderline between India and Pakistan remains extremely constrained. Notwithstanding the continuous acrimonies between the countries, a paradoxical obsession and attraction to the ancestral homeland lingers in both sides of the people (ibid, 2017). When it comes to the partition of India and Pakistan, most of the literature is about Punjab and Kashmir. There is very rare literature found for the division of Ladakh and Baltistan, which was equally influenced by the partition.

Due to the Indo-Pak division in 1947, the people from Ladakh Wazarat of pre-partition were also greatly influenced. Prior to the partition of the subcontinent, Kargil, Leh and Baltistan constituted a kingdom called “Ladakh Wazarat”, all the inhabitants of this region were related to each other due to linguistic and religious harmony. These people used to flee to the other areas of Ladakh and found themselves on the opposite side of their homeland after the division (Gupta, 2014). The cross border dwellers (Rahman & van Schendel, 2003) a category of people whose postcolonial difficulties remained relatively neglected in comparison with other refugees of the Indo-Pak Partition. These were mostly the Baltis, who settled in Kargil and Leh for their economic means and some of them migrated in search of labor work to other parts of North India. Thus due to the Great partition they unexpectedly found themselves on the wrong side of the border and consequently separated from their close families and ancestral lands (Gupta, 2014). In the case of Kargil (district of Ladakh) during the division of the Sub-Continent, sliced up the Baltistan region between India and Pakistan and left the Kargil on the Indian side while the rest of Baltistan went under the control of Pakistan (Shekhawat & Mahapatra, 2009). There were mostly divided families who were living in different places when the conflict erupted and who cannot reunite. For example, the people from villages of Kharmang sub-district (now in Baltistan) were part of the Kargil (or sub-district, now in India), and many lived in the town of Kargil. After the ceasefire line was established after the division of the Sub-Continent, Kharmang went to the Pakistani side, while Kargil remained on the Indian side, and inhabitants could no longer return to their former villages (Bouzas, 2017). In this way many people separated from their families. Similarly in the 1971 war between India and Pakistan, India also held several villages from the Chorbat La region close to

Khaplu in Baltistan (ibid, 2017). This study conducted to shed light on the divided Balti families of Chorbat La (Chorbat valley) across the LoC who have been suffering with the anguish and pain of separation from their families for decades now.

### **2.6.1. Right to family**

Due to randomly created borders, the most major humanitarian tragedy befalling on the separated families is the denial of a person's right to live with the family and that these separated families of Baltistan were deprived of this right for decades. Right to family is one of the basic human needs. The family is recognized by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948, article 16(3)) as the fundamental unit of society and the State which says that the family is the natural and fundamental group unit of society and is entitled to protection by society.

The legal outline on which the right to family life and to family unity is centered is based on numerous provisions in international human rights law, international humanitarian law, and international refugee law, as outlined in more detail below.

Jastram and Newland summarize these rights as follows:

“As the foundation, there is universal consensus that, as the fundamental unit of society, the family is entitled to respect and protection. A right to family unity is inherent in recognizing the family as a ‘group’ unit: if members of the family did not have a right to live together, there would not be a ‘group’ to respect or protect. In addition, the right to marry and start a family includes the right to maintain a family life together. The right to a shared family life is also drawn from the prohibition against arbitrary interference with the family and from the special family rights accorded to children under international law (pp. 555-603).”<sup>5</sup>

Thus due to drawing and redrawing of LoC on different political upheavals between the states abruptly separated individuals of the same family and compelled them to remain separated. The migrants of Balti families have been separated from their kin groups or immediate families due to this bordering process.

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<sup>5</sup> Jastram and Newland, “Family Unity and Refugee Protection” pp. 555-603.

Pakistan is the signatory state of the Geneva Convention, which has given a substantial amount of devotion to the separated families due to war. Fourth Geneva Convention (1949) not only aimed at maintaining family unity during internment or evacuation, it also aimed to provide mechanisms such as family messages and tracing of family members to facilitate family communication and even family reunification if it is possible for the states. Still many people were deprived of this basic human right and separated from their loved ones.<sup>6</sup>

### **2.6.2. Softening of Border**

Pakistan and India have been involved in numerous attempts to improve their relationships. The restoration of the composite Dialogue Process in 2004 was helpful in accepting a more people-centric approach and changing the traditional state centric of both the states which encouraged cross LoC connectedness between the countries (Akhter, 2020). The most substantial step towards increasing cross-border movement has been the reestablishment of bus services between India and Pakistan. Routes were opened mainly in Jammu and Kashmir to give impetus to the cross border mobility and provide facility to separated families to be reunited across the LoC (ibid, 2020). After decades of separation, the opening of Srinagar-Muzaffarabad road on May 7, 2005 and another intra-Kashmir route, between Poonch in J&K and Rawalakot in AJK, was opened On June 20, 2006 (Shekhawat & Mahapatra, 2009), which renewed hopes of reunion for divided families and finally resulted in reunion of separated families of Kashmir. However, despite several official announcements, the third long-awaited route in the Ladakh region is still closed. The closed Kargil-Skardu route separated hundreds of Balti families in the Kargil region from their relatives living in Baltistan. Their reunion continues to remain hostage to the conflicts between two neighboring countries (Bouzas, 2019).

From the review of above literature it is concluded that forced migration is not a new phenomenon. It is widely prevalent in the whole world. It also depicts from the available literature that limited academic work has been done on separated families due to war and restricted borders. A least academically explored theme is the suffering of the separated families of Baltistan generally and forcibly displaced persons of Chhorbat specifically, who have faced division of their families due to the redrawing of LoC. Little work has been done on the separated families of the Kargil side of

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<sup>6</sup> Geneva Convention 1949, Art.26, pp, 178

the LoC (Gupta, 2014; Shekhawat & Mahapatra, 2009), and limited work has been done on the separated families residing in Pakistani side of LoC. The villages of Chorbat valley located on the District Leh and the separated families due to war of 1971 have remained understudies and even overlooked on either side of the border. It contains 4 villages (Chulungkha, Turtuk, Tyakshi, and Thang) which were part of Pakistan before 1971 but due to the Indo-Pak war these villagers were deprived of their homeland. Thus this research has particularly focused on the divided families of Chorbat valley residing in Skardu and its surrounding areas.

### **2.6.3. Role of Technology**

The most common way to contact with the transnational separated families has become a virtual co-presence, which is constructed through various communication technologies (Baldassar, 2008). In recent times, the national borders have been increasingly traversed by the internet (Johnson & Post, 1996). It is widely used and more common strategy among the refugees or migrants to use information and communication technologies (Hereafter ICTs) to maintain contact with their families which include mobile phones, the internet, and social media sites, such as Facebook, WhatsApp, Skype, and Viber (Shah, Hess, & Goodkind, 2019).

Van Dijk (2002) mentioned four kinds of barriers to access the digital technology such as lack of basic digital experience (mental access), no ownership of computers and network connections (material access), lack of digital skills (skills access) and lack of significant usage opportunities (usage access).

Refugees remain in contact with their family members through the use of Information and communication technology (ICTs) which enable them to be emotionally connected with their distant families (Baldassar, 2016). The overall emotional wellbeing and capacity to settle are highly dependent on sustaining their communication networks with family members for knowledge and guarantee of their locations and security (Leung, Finney, & Emrys, 2009).

## **2.7. Place, Identity and Forced Displacement**

The conceptualization of place, people and identity has been increasingly debated in recent times. Some scholars thought that humans have been more mobile due to globalization and loss of borders. People, irrespective of their territorial origin, have become or are in the process of becoming citizens of a deterritorialized global world called “generalized condition of homelessness” (Said, 1979, 18). Thus the concepts of place and identity have become

deterritorialized. But Kibreab raised the question for the refugees not to leave their territory or habitual residence for adventure and tourism rather they are forced to leave it in search of safety and security (Kibreab, 1999). Some anti-sedentarist scholars reject the idea of Home in the first place and also denied the relationship of place and identity. The conceptualization that roots people in a place, space or country is a product of a sedentary thinking, which is said to be not anchored in the objective reality of our time (Malkki, 1992; Turton, 1996). Cooke argued that despite understanding and treating all the people as global citizens regardless of their place of origin in the modernized global world, territory still remains the major source of rights and membership as cited by (Kibreab, 1999). In many refugee situations, scarcity of land is a major problem in the relief work and settlement process of displaced people, and often the source of tension between different groups (Brun, 2001). It seems that in so many societies land is still the main source of livelihood and social mooring. For example, in most third world countries, e.g. in Africa, rights of access to, and use of, sources of livelihood are still apportioned on the basis of territorially anchored identity. In such a condition, it is not possible to detach from this kind of identity. Being out of the natural environment usually results in the loss of ethnic or national rights based on physical locality. The sense of identity that people gain from their connection with a certain place is an indispensable tool for achieving a socially and economically fulfilling life (Kibreab, 1999). It is also reflected from the attachment of forcibly displaced persons of Chorbat valley to their homeland and identify themselves with reference to their lost land that place and identity are interlinked.

In such societies, the original inhabitants have the right to dismiss or reject the entry to outsiders. In any case if they allow them to enter, they can impose conditions of entry and residence and the use of resources. Thus. It undoubtedly shows the relationship of place and identity or the territorialization of space (ibid, 1999). Being a third world country, land is also an extremely indispensable entity in Pakistani society. Specifically in Gilgit Baltistan land is the main source of income of most of the people. While being uprooted from their own homeland the forcibly displaced people of Chorbat valley went through various hardships in the process of acquiring land and settlement in the new place.

### **2.7.1. Place Belonging and Identity**

Identity and belonging are concepts often used interchangeably in academia (Antonsich, 2010). For instance, according to Loader, questions about ‘who am I?’ ultimately lead to questions about



‘where do I belong?’ (Loader, 2006, p. 214). The concept of belonging itself is loosely defined and ill-theorized (Antonsich, 2010). According to (Probyn, 2015), belonging to a certain place is a process in which belonging becomes part of someone’s identity. The place one feels they belong to might become a way to describe oneself. It is argued that place attachment is an emotional bond that people develop in relation to a place where they prefer to remain, and where they feel comfortable and safe (Hernández, Hidalgo, Salazar-Laplace, & Hess-Medler, 2007; Knez, 2005). Place identity is a component of personal identity, a process by which, through interaction with places, people describe themselves in terms of belonging to a specific place (Hernández et al., 2007). Self-identity of the person consisting of, broadly conceived, cognitions about the physical world of the past. This environment-related cognition is termed as the 'environmental past' of the person; a past consisting of places, spaces and their properties which have served instrumentally in the satisfaction of the person's biological, psychological, social, and cultural needs (Proshansky, Fabian, & Kaminoff, 1983).

The displaced persons not only lose their home but everything changes and loss of identity has a paramount impact on their lives so they establish their identity in the new place. To give oneself meaning is a way to establish one's own identity (Castells & Ince, 2003). Feeling at home is more of an ideal state that people desire, but at home is an ambiguous term that can include many different aspects. Home can not only be understood as a place of living in an apartment or house. However, it can also represent a village, city, region or country (Mallett, 2004). Home has always a spatial dimension, but this dimension in itself is not sufficient to describe home as a phenomenon. A home is more than a place when it contains social, cultural and psychological aspects of people’s lives (Mallett, 2004; Saunders & Williams, 1988).

Some scholars conferred home as a multidimensional term, a concept in which temporality intersects with spatiality and social relations (Kabachnik, Regulska, & Mitchneck, 2010). This relates to how (Massey, 2009) understands space as the product of social relations. In that sense, spaces without social relations are just empty spaces. Spaces get their meaning from connections, network, ties and relations with others (Massey, 2009). This can be concluded that for people to feel at home, social relations and connectedness are of great importance and displaced persons longed for their home and desire for their left behind social and kin relations. They symbolically express their craving or longing for their relations in distant areas. Gupta (2014) used poetics of

longing for Baltistan in her study conducted in Kargil is not only literal poetry, poetics of longing is a phrase that expresses the sadness of longing of Kargil people to their separated relatives across the LoC. The sharing of poetry is an important example of the circulation of cultural forms across the border despite limited mobility. She added that the demand of opening the Kargil-Skardu road by the Balti people of Kargil Balti people stands at the symbolic intersection of the poetics of longing and politics of belonging. For the Balti community the demand for opening the road is particularly emotional because it would facilitate travel to meet relatives more easily (ibid, 2014).

While explaining the aspects of emotions Schieffelin wrote that emotions have two aspects that are internal and external. Emotions are the internal and experiential side of feelings, while effects are more expressive through behaviors (Schieffelin, 1983). Baldassar has given four ways through which separated families express their emotions of longing for the left behind people and places. They conveyed their feelings discursively (through words), physically (through the body), through actions (practice) and imagination (ideas) (Baldassar, 2008). Talking about their emotions of longing for their separated families is a discursive way, the longing shown physically is the most observable way of expressing their feelings by tearing down for the separated ones and also through the dealing of certain items which had embody the longed for kin or homeland. The most common practices that feelings of missing kin included making phone calls, sending emails and SMS text messages and exchanging greeting cards and gifts. All of these activities and experiences involved people imagining transnational family life into being through their feelings of absence and loss (ibid, 2008). The separated families of Chorbat valley had expressed their emotions of longing for their separated families across the LoC through the ways given by Baldassar.

In the context of forced migration, border changes or displacement, the sense of belonging may be especially important, which can lead people to bring their perception and memory of home into new territory (Eckersley, 2017). People can form a representation of home with which the displaced persons can generate an attachment. There must be something that someone and somewhere to feel at home and belong to for the people. Although that something can be both material and non-material, it might be a person (someone) or/and place (somewhere) (ibid, 2017). This leads towards the place making of the displaced persons in the new place through various ways. Next section explained it briefly.

### **2.7.2. Place Making**

Reterritorialization in Malkki's (1995) understanding means to lose one's territory, and then construct a new community within a new area. Observing that more and more of the world lives in a 'generalized condition of homelessness' is not to deny the importance of place in the construction of identities. On the contrary, as I have attempted to show that deterritorialization and identity are intimately linked. Anthropologist Malkki makes clear in her work that people are frequently mobile and routinely displaced. They invent homes and homelands in the absence of territorial bases. It is through such memories that they can inhabit their imagined nation (Malkki, 1992).

Place is a cultural construction, not a fixed entity; a location, not only about ideas, but about embodied practices that shape identities and enable resistance (Gupta & Ferguson, 1997b). Massey's (1993, 1994a) understanding of space and place as created through social relations.

The feeling of being at home is not only familiarity with a particular place, but familiarity itself is also one of the key aspects of its definition. The relationship between displacement and emotional attachment to a place can also be expressed through efforts to change the new environment and recreate the one they left behind. (Brook, 2003) suggests that one of the techniques that displaced people employ in these processes of change is by introducing familiar plants into their environment and producing and rebuilding familiar gardens in alien environments. Because the new environment feels alien, you introduce features of the place where you feel at home.

The community organizations and their activities are common elements for the migrants in adapting and integrating in the new environment. The most prominent theory on sense of community is (McMillan & Chavis, 1986) sense of community model. They defined the concept as "a feeling that members have of belonging, a feeling that members matter to one another and to the group, and a shared faith that members' needs will be met through their commitment to be together" (pp. 9). The model consists of four elements: membership, influence, integration and fulfillment of needs, and shared emotional connection. The integration and satisfaction of requirements is also very important, because it refers to the resources obtained through group membership. Social support provided by the community organizations to their members has been defined as a coping resource and usually refers to the functions performed for the individual by significant others, such as family members, friends, and coworkers (Thoits, 1995). It would lead

to a sense of community among the people in which the collective behavior helps in coping with the alien feeling of the new society.

### **3. RESEARCH SETTING AND RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

This chapter includes detailed description about research setting and research methods that were employed for data collection while conducting research in District Skardu of Gilgit Baltistan. The first part of the chapter deals with the locale of the study and its administrative, demographic, socio-economic, religious sects and other cultural details. However, the second part discusses the applied research methodology for the purpose of data collection. The third and last part deals with the sampling method and tools or techniques utilized for targeting, sorting, categorizing or analysis of data. The researcher adopted a combination of purposive and convenient sampling to document and record narratives and lived experiences of migrated people of Chorbat valley from different locations of Skardu. In-depth, Semi-structured interviews, participant observation, case studies and key informants have been utilized for efficient data collection and analysis.

#### **3.1. Gilgit Baltistan**

Gilgit Baltistan (GB) is located in the Northern part of Pakistan. With a territorial area of 72,496 km<sup>2</sup>, its population is over 1.4 million as per estimates of the 2017 National Census of Pakistan (Khan, 2017). The region has lush green landscape, extensive glaciers, and high mountainous area where four mountainous famous ranges; Karakorum, Himalaya, Pamir, and Hindukush collide (Sökefeld, 2014). This region is famous because it is home to the world's second and third largest peaks K2 (8611mt) and Nanga Parbat (7500mt). The twelve out of thirty topmost peaks of the world are also in GB with altitudes of 7500 mt (Zain, 2010).

Gilgit-Baltistan is located between Xinjiang Autonomous Region of China, Wakhan Corridor of Afghanistan, and the Ladakh region of Indian Occupied Kashmir, Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJ&K) and Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa province of Pakistan. Central Asia and the Tibet region of China are distant neighbors (ibid, 2010). GB is administratively divided into three divisions to include Gilgit, Diamer and Baltistan and ten districts to include Gilgit, Ghizer, Hunza and Nagar districts in Gilgit Division, Diamer and Astore districts in Diamer division and Skardu, Shigar, Ghanche and Kharmang in Baltistan division. Each district is further divided into tehsils and subdivisions.

Figure 2. Geographical Map of Gilgit Baltistan



Source: Author, 2021

### 3.1.1. Gilgit Baltistan – The Disputed Territory

The status of GB has remained problematic for the Pakistani state from its inception. GB was deprived of administrative powers and governed by the bureaucracy and federal ministry. After the region joined Pakistan, the Pakistani government did not develop an appropriate governance and administrative structure, but implemented the Border Crimes Regulations (FCR) for the region. FCR is a colonial law due to which local people of Baltistan were deprived of their basic rights. This rule gave the Political Agent a civil servant supreme authority, with executive, legislative and judicial powers (Ahmad, 2020).

In 1971, the secession of Bangladesh, the former East Pakistan, succeeded and the military government of Pakistan gave way to the civilian president Zulfikar Ali Bhutto who subsequently became elected as prime minister. Bhutto took a special interest in Gilgit-Baltistan. He amnestied all prisoners, replaced the agency system with a more regular administration, and renamed the

region which before was still known as “Gilgit Agency” as “Northern Areas of Pakistan” (Sökefeld, 2014).

Pakistan failed to officially incorporate GB into its territory, mainly because of its contest with India for control of Jammu and Kashmir. Therefore, the Pakistani government linked GB with Kashmir in order to win more votes in a possible UN referendum to resolve the Kashmir dispute (Ali, 2019). Because of this connection, the region remains in the status of a disputed territory. Subsequently, the region is in a constitutional limbo and is deprived of representation in the national legislature. Successive governments have tried various measures to disentangle the problem and solve the puzzle. However, the anomaly still exists. The issue of GB's integration into Pakistan is very complicated, because both Pakistan and India consider GB to be part of Kashmir. When India brought the Kashmir case to the United Nations, India’s demand for Kashmir was denied, and the entire Kashmir state, including the GB, became a disputed territory. The issue should have been resolved by a referendum with certain preconditions (Ahmad, 2020).

### 3.1.1.1. Literacy rate of Gilgit Baltistan

Table 1. Gilgit-Baltistan District Education Rankings

National Rank	Provincial Rank	District	Education Score	Enrolment Score	Learning Score	Retention Score	Gender Parity
14	1	Skardu	78.58	72.6	57.46	97.56	86.7
21	2	Hunza-Nagar	77.33	74.55	54.29	84.64	95.85
32	3	Astor	75.86	71.22	65.43	75.23	91.54
35	4	Gilgit	74.88	69.92	54.12	80.22	95.27
52	5	Ghizer	69.58	76.26	55.73	61.02	85.3
54	6	Ghanche	68.79	71.95	50.63	56.05	96.55
95	7	Diamer	58.36	38.54	69.65	77.9	47.34

Source: Alif Ailaan Pakistan District Education Rankings, 2015

The society of Gilgit-Baltistan is diverse in terms of language, religion and ethnicity. GB is a multi-sectarian, multi-ethnic, multi-linguistic and largely multicultural society. All over Gilgit-Baltistan, people are divided into patrilineal *qoms* which are often locally ranked. Membership in the *jirgas* was mostly limited to the men of the landowning *qoms* like Shin and Yeshkun while “menial” and artisan groups like Kammin, Dom or Gujjur were excluded (Sökefeld, 2014).

### 3.1.1.2. Religious Sects

Gilgit-Baltistan has a diverse nature in relation to religious sects. All the major sects of the country are prevailing in this region. There are four sects in Gilgit-Baltistan: Shia, Sunni, Noorbakhshi, and Ismailis communities. The Noorbakhshi community has two sub-sects Sofia Noorbakhshi and Imamia Noorbakhshi (Feyyaz, 2011).

Approximately 75% of the population in this region follow some form of Shia Islam, which almost completely subverts the norms of other parts of Pakistan. This makes the northern region the only Shiite majority political unit in Pakistan controlled by Sunni (Ali, 2008).

Shia is the largest sect in Gilgit-Baltistan. It possesses majority in Gilgit, Skardu and Ghanche District. The first two districts are more populous in the region. In Astore and Ghizer districts Shias are in minority. Sunni is the second largest community in Gilgit-Baltistan. It possesses 100% population in Diamer District, they also live in Astore, Ghizer, Gilgit and Skardu. Ismailis hold majority in Ghizer District and Sub-Division of Hunza; in Skardu they are in minority. Noorbakhshi Community only resides in Skardu and Ghanche, they are in majority in the latter (Feyyaz, 2011).

Table 1. Religious Sects

S. No.	Sects of Islam in GB	Percentage
1.	Sunni	27
2.	Shia	39
3.	Ismaili	18
4.	Noorbakhshi	16

Note. Division of prevailing Sects in Gilgit Baltistan

Source: (Hunzai, 2013)

### 3.1.1.3. Languages of Gilgit Baltistan

Dr. Ghulam Hyder Sindhi writes that Tibeto-Burman languages, the Iranian languages, the Indo-European family and the Indo-Aryan family presence in this region validate to the fact that the Gilgit-Baltistan of Pakistan served as a linking area of South Asia, Central Asia, China, and Iran in ancient times as cited by Khan (2017). Seven major languages are spoken in GB: Shina, Balti, Khowar, Maiyan, Burushaski, Wakhi, Dhomaki. Dardic languages spoken in Northern Areas of



Pakistan are Khowar, Shina, Maiyan. The only non-Dardic languages used as a mother tongue by the local people are Burushaski, Dhomaki, Wakhi and Balti. In main bazaars of cities of Gilgit Baltistan like in Aliabad, Gilgit, Chilas and Skardu Urdu, Punjabi and little Pushto can be heard. Persian is also understood by a few individuals. People learnt them as third languages (Dani, 2001).

In Chitral mainly Khowar or Kalasha and also some offshoots of shina, Phalura are spoken. In Yasin valley Shina, Khowar, Burushaski and Wakhi are mostly used. In Gilgit mainly Shina but in some places Burushaski is also spoken as a first language. In Hunza largely Burushaski while in Baltistan mainly Balti and in Chilas shina is widely used as a first language (ibid, 2001).

Besides these some other languages are also found in the region like Pashtu, Hindko, Gujri, Punjabi and other languages, who have migrated from other areas of Pakistan into the area. The national language of Pakistan, Urdu, serves as the lingua franca and English plays a growing role as the language of education (Sökefeld, 2014).

### **3.2. Brief History of Baltistan**

Historically Baltistan was well-known for different names. Muhammad Yousaf Hassanabadi, is an authentic historical Balti writer of Baltistan, who has mentioned different historical names of Baltistan in his book “*Tareekh-e-Baltistan*” (literally the History of Baltistan). In ancient times, at the beginning of the 5<sup>th</sup> century, there was an empire consisting of present-day Baltistan and its surrounding areas called as *Pololo*. No history is available about the establishment of this empire. In some Chinese accounts, Baltistan has been referred to as the Large *Pololo* or *Pololo* Major and Upper *Pololo* and Gilgit as the *Pololo* Minor or Lower *Pololo*. Baltistan was also known as Palore, which the Arabs later wrote as Balore and was also called Baloritsan or Balawaristan as cited by (Hussainabadi, 2019). Dr. Ahmed Hassan Dani also identified different names of Baltistan in his Book History of Northern areas of Pakistan. He mentioned that Karl Jettmar derived evidence from some Chinese accounts that Baltistan was also known as Great Tibet and Little Tibet and Little Balor was identical to Gilgit valley (Dani, 2001). Yousaf Hassanabadi explained that the ruler of this empire may have belonged to the Balti race because even today the Baltis are known as *Pololo* in other parts of Gilgit Baltistan. The Kingdom of *Pololo* remained in power in this area until 737 A.D. It was also suggested that Skardu could be its capital at that time (Hussainabadi, 2019). In 721 A.D large *Pololo* (Baltistan) was conquered by the Tibetan Ruler. But the King of *Pololo* ran

away to Small *Pololo*, where he ruled for about sixteen years. Tibetan King attacked several times on small *Pololo* but could not succeed. In 737 A.D. The Tibetan King (*KRI-LDE-GSUG-BRTSAN*) attacked on the other half of *Pololo* and conquered the *Pololo* minor (ibid, 2019).

After the assassination of the Tibetan king, like other Tibetan occupied territories, Baltistan was also liberated from the Tibetan rule. The small states (*Tawaif-ul-Maluki*) were formed there and no central government was formed in Baltistan (Hussainabadi, 2019). Before and during Dogra rule, the regions of Gilgit and Baltistan were divided between small kingdoms which were ruled by Rajas and Mirs or local rulers (Dani, 2001). Dogra rule was started in Baltistan when Ladakh was invaded by Zorawar Singh, the General of Maharaja Ranjit Singh in 1834 and invaded some areas such as Suru, Kargil, Drass and Zaskar. After spending winters in Suru, Zorawar Singh annexed Ladakh in May 1835. In the preceding years Dogras succeeded in conquering the whole Baltistan. In 1940 Skardu was incorporated in their reign and included the region into the State of Jammu and Kashmir (ibid, 2019). In this way Baltistan became part of the princely state of Jammu and Kashmir called Ladakh Wazarat. This state was created in 1846 after the signing of a treaty between the British and Gulab Singh of the Dogra dynasty (Ahmad, 2020). During the first Anglo-Sikh war (1845-1846), Gulab Singh, who was serving as the ruler of Jammu in the Sikh empire, chose to side with the British East India Company by remaining neutral. Acknowledging Singh's loyalty during the war, in 1846, the East India Company sold Kashmir to him for 7.5 million rupees of that time. With this accord, Gulab Singh eventually became the first Maharaja of Jammu and Kashmir (ibid, 2020). Dogra rule remained there until the partition of the British India in 1947.

During the Partition of Sub-Continent Gilgit Scouts, which had rebelled against the decision of the Hindu Dogra Maharaja of Kashmir to accede to India, reached Ladakh in October 1947 (Gupta, 2014). Although the war had officially ended on January 1, 1949, the conflict continued for about half a year in the Ladakh Wazarat (today's Baltistan and Ladakh) due to this indigenous movement that arose at the northern periphery centered in the town of Gilgit. As it spread south, it incorporated armed groups from Baltistan in an effort to displace the maharaja's and Indian forces that were controlling it. These armed groups finally came close to Leh but despite support from the Pakistani army, they were later forced to retreat back north to the area around Kargil (Bouzas, 2017). In this process of shifting territorial control, Ladakh Wazarat was divided, with Kargil and Leh incorporated into the Indian state of Jammu and Kashmir and Baltistan into the Northern areas of Pakistan or the present day Pakistan administered region of Gilgit- Baltistan (Gupta, 2014).

Baltistan was cut off from the rest of Ladakh, a territory with which it shared historic, economic, and cultural ties primarily language and a similar ethnic identity (Bouzas, 2017).

Later, in the aftermath of the 1971 India-Pakistan war, India also seized several villages from the Pakistan administered area of Baltistan. Three villages were captured from the Kharmang side which are Hundurmu, Kirkit and Muzbar while four villages were also incorporated by India from the Chorbat La region close to Khaplu, the largest village in Baltistan. These four villages of Chorbat valley are Chulunkha, Turtuk, Tyakshi and Thang (Hussainabadi, 2019).

Table 2. Forced Displacement in 1971 from areas near to Line of Control

<b>Serial No.</b>	<b>Migrated from</b>	<b>Number of Households</b>
<b>01.</b>	<b>Muzbar</b>	29
<b>02.</b>	<b>Kirkit</b>	20
<b>03.</b>	<b>Hundurmu</b>	21
<b>04.</b>	<b>Farol</b>	12
<b>05.</b>	<b>Kargil</b>	2
<b>06.</b>	<b>Chulungkha</b>	83
<b>07.</b>	<b>Turtuk</b>	37
<b>08.</b>	<b>Tyakshi</b>	47
<b>09.</b>	<b>Thang</b>	15

Source: Khan, 2017

The current study focuses on the migrants of Chulungkha, Turtuk, Tyakshi and Thang. The present day Baltistan is divided into three districts Skardu, Shigar and Ghanche districts. Baltistan is surrounded by China, India, Afghanistan and Pakistan.

Table 3: Demography of Baltistan District

<b>Division</b>	<b>District</b>	<b>Area (kms)</b>	<b>Estimated Population</b>
<b>Baltistan</b>	<b>Skardu</b>	10,568	253,200
	<b>Kharmang</b>	7,183	54,400
	<b>Shigar</b>	4,373	74,300
	<b>Ghanche</b>	6,267	156,400
<b>Total</b>		28391	538,300

Source: (Khan, 2017)

### 3.2.1. Research Site: Skardu City

Skardu district of Baltistan division was selected as research locale for the field work. The early travelers called the town *Iskardo*, but according to Thomson, the real Tibetan name is Skardo or *Kardo* (De Filippi, 1912). Skardu was just a village but today it is a growing city. Skardu is the Capital of Baltistan and it is an absolute picturesque valley. This is a farming valley with an old castle (Kharphocho Fort) above it, sitting on a big rock near the Indus River. The valley is enclosed by huge bare mountains from every side so that it seems like it's a locked area with absolutely no exit point with scattered stretches of cultivation in the centre (Dani, 2001).

Skardu is the largest town of Baltistan. I have done my field work mainly in the city of Skardu because most of the displaced persons settled there after being displaced from their villages. In the main town I have visited some areas where the majority of the displaced persons are residing such as Shairthang, Satellite Town and Hassan Colony and Manthal valley were visited for the research purpose.

Figure 3. Skardu City



Source: (Author, 2021)

### **3.2.1.1. Manthal valley**

Manthal valley which is located on the way to Satpara from Skardu in the left side of the stream. It became a tourist spot recently and people visit this place mostly in the summer. Manthal is famous due to the Buddha Rock at its margin. Historically this place was well known for its name Mandela. Pictures of Buddha and phrases in Tibetan language were engraved on this rock. The circle with pictures of Buddha is called Mandela by the Buddhists. With the passage of time, the word has now become Manthal (Hussainabadi, 2019).

It is hardly 10 minutes' drive from the main city Skardu. It was also visited for the research purpose. It has a great significance in my research because the whole inhabitants of Manthal are the displaced persons of Chorbat valley. They belong to Chulungkha village which is now part of Indian administered territory. They came here and settled in this area.

Figure 4. Manthal valley



Source: (Author, 2021)

Figure 5. Manthal Buddha Rock



Source: (Author, 2021)

### **3.2.2. Social Composition of Skardu**

Skardu is mostly inhabited by displaced persons' from the surrounding area. Due to the closeness of the town to the LoC, most of them are borderlanders who were forcibly displaced by the hostile character of the LoC between India and Pakistan. For example some elderly people who moved to Skardu from the neighboring area of Ladakh in 1947. There are some families also residing in Skardu who migrated from the Siachen area after conflict flared up in the mid-1980s. More recently, two relatively new colonies were established in the peripheries of the Skardu as a result

of the 1999 Kargil war. Apart from these groups, some scattered families live in Skardu who are not necessarily from Baltistan but from adjacent areas such as Astore or Diamer (Bouzas, 2019). Similarly the displaced community of Chorbat valley were also residing in Skardu when the Indian forces took over their villages as a result of the third India–Pakistan war in 1971. These people, whom some locals called as refugees, moved from their villages in Chorbat La area (ibid, 2019).

### **3.2.3. Climate and Agriculture of Skardu**

As a whole the climate of Baltistan is cold and dry. The spring season lasts from the beginning of April to the third week of June. Then the summer season ends in August and the autumn season ends in early September to the end of October. The rainy and snowy season lasts from November to March. The maximum temperature during spring is between 10 to 20 degrees Celsius. While in summer it is usually less than 35 Degree Celsius. In Skardu the Rainfall is relatively low in the spring season, when it is needed the most for crops. But in the early days of autumn, the rains are heavy, causing severe damage to crops. In winter, it snows in different parts of Baltistan in terms of feet and yards (Hussainabadi, 2019).

In Baltistan, most of the time, there is a shortage of water in the area. Due to dryness in the climate agriculture is not possible here. The river is flowing hundreds of miles below the settlements. For this reason, these areas are not irrigated by the river. Arid land is not even imagined here. Agricultural system is totally based on springs, natural and artificial glaciers and melted ice waters from mountains. Due to the presence of sand in the land and low availability of fertile land in the area, the land needs more fertilizers for the production of crops. The fertilization of animals has been closely related with the agriculture in the region (ibid, 2019).

Agriculture remains the backbone of the economy. It shows that most people in GB depend on agricultural income for their livelihoods and subsistence. Agriculture takes many shapes to include: crops cultivation, animal husbandry, fishery, social forestry (comprising both fruit and non-fruit trees), agro-forestry and urban forestry. It is important to note that even people whose main source of income is non-agricultural occupations are indeed linked to agriculture in one form or another. Only about 4% to 5% of people in GB do not own land, but most of them are linked to agriculture in other forms such as livestock (Khan, 2017).



Different varieties of fruits and vegetables are cultivated in Baltistan. Vegetables include potatoes, cauliflower, tomatoes, eggplants, radishes, peppers, plums, salads, onions etc. are cultivated in different regions. Melons and watermelons are abundant in Skardu. Potatoes are hugely cultivated in Khaplu valley. On a commercial scale, potato cultivation has become widespread in Baltistan since the late 1980s which has revolutionized the economy of the region. Dr. Abdul Gafoor Bhatti, an expert in agriculture from Lahore, has started this work. For the first time in Al-Baltistan, Raja Ahmad Shah of Skardu brought seeds of potato from Ludhiana and introduced it in the region (Hussainabadi, 2019).

Glacier water is normally used for drinking and irrigation. Therefore, it has been an ancient and unique tradition of its kind to grow glaciers in the surrounding mountains to irrigate small areas (ibid, 2019). Local people of Gilgit Baltistan have been grafting, glaciers for so many years. It is considered that glaciers were grown in mountain passes as early as the twelfth century to block the invasions of Genghis Khan and the Mongols. This indigenous method of growing the glaciers has been that dozens of local people pick up a lot of pieces of ice from the ancient glaciers and carry it to that particular place where the glaciers are intended to grow. It is forbidden to talk to each other or rest on the way. There are two different sexual categories of ice, and they are thought to be kept away from each other. These people climb to shaded areas above the snow line in September and October with packs full of glacial ice and pots of Indus River water, as well as other ingredients (saw dust, wheat husk, charcoal and salt). These ingredients are placed in a cave or depression and then covered with soil.

#### **3.2.4. Languages of Skardu**

Most of the inhabitants of the Skardu speak Balti, a dialect belonging to the Tibeto-Burman branch of Sino-Tibetan family. Different dialects of the same language are spoken in Baltistan, Tibet, Ladakh, Bhutan, Sikkim and Northern Nepal (Hussainabadi, 2019). There is a shina spoken group, who come from surrounding areas speak Shina language. This language belongs to the Dardic subgroup of the Indo- Aryan family. However, the widely used language in market places and in offices is Urdu (Sökefeld, 2014).

### 3.2.5. Faith and Religion

The religious makeup of Skardu is quite diverse. Majority of Skardu Population belong to Shia sect of Islam. In Skardu total 88% Shia, 6% Sunni and 6% Noorbakhshi sect are inhabiting. It can be observed that there is a growing Noorbakhshi population largely in Ghanche district but some of them are also found in Skardu. Today the majority of Noorbakhshi Muslims live in Ghanche and Shigar district, while 30% of Noorbakhshi live in Skardu (Iqbal, 2019). There are also Shiite Ismaili families who came in from Gilgit and Hunza, most of whom are skilled workers. To some extent, the human landscape of Skardu provides a representative portrait of Baltistan as a whole (Bouzas, 2019).

It was believed that in the beginning of 15<sup>th</sup> century AD, the spread of Islam was due to the arrival of Islamic missionaries to the area. Among the indigenous people of Khaplu it is a strong tradition that the Amir Kabir Sayyid Ali Hamadani came there and won the local Buddhist lamas or monks in debate and converted people to Islam and built the Chakchan mosque which is still present there (Dani, 2001). Similar statement has seen in Vohra's book that 16<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup> Century, the Islamic missionaries came, for example who in a contest was able to defeat the Lama and convert Turtuk to Islam. Another saint, Sayyad NurBaksh, also came and converted the people to the NurBaksh sect of Islam and most are living in Bogdang though there are a considerable Chulungkha and Tyakshi (Vohra, 1990). Thus it cleared from the available literature that the indigenous population were the followers of Buddhist until the advent of Islam. It was also evident from many Tibetan inscriptions of this era, which reflects the Tibetan form of Buddhism. The region still has a large number of Buddhist archaeological sites such as Buddha Rock at Manthal valley in Skardu and near *Gol*<sup>7</sup> Mehdi Abad. Most of the people of Turtuk, Tyakshi and Chulunkha are belong to the Noorbakhshi sect and some of them latter converted into the Sunni sect of Islam. Some people went to get Islamic knowledge to the madrasas in different regions of Pakistan and converted into the Sunni sect of Islam.

### 3.2.6. Balti Culture and Food

There are many types of traditional dishes in Baltistan. However, *Mar Zan*, *Strap khour*, *Plappo*, *Trasfah* dishes are highly famous in Baltistan. *Khurba*, *Zaan*, *Squr khor*, *Kiseer*, *Azok*, *khulcha*,

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<sup>7</sup> Name of a place

*khulaq* are also very famous. Tibetan salted *chai* (tea) is commonly used which includes green chai, soda, milk, salt and butter. *Mar Zan* is made from barley flour and butter. Now these dishes are made occasionally but with the passage of time, people started liking and adopting food patterns of other regions for example *Biryani, Karahi and chowmen* which are most loved foreign dishes.

The dress pattern of people of Baltistan is *Shalwar Kameez*. Balti women use a hat made of black wool under the shawl on which special gold and silver ornaments are used. Balti dress for women is vanishing from society due to usage of modern dresses but Balti older women still wear Balti dresses on a daily basis along with the Balti cap. Mostly men wear *Shalwar Kameez*.

People in Baltistan, practice both exogamous and endogamous marriages. Marriages are practiced among other sects and there are no restrictions on getting married to other ethnic communities. Displaced persons of Chorbat valley also engage in inter-sect marriages. It was observed that sectarianism has not affected the relationships among the Balti community. Wedding festivals and traditions are celebrated with great enthusiasm. Different traditions are practiced during and after the wedding day. There is a least concept of dowry among the Balti community of this region. Bride brings nothing along with her as a dowry except few essentials for herself.

### **3.2.7. Festivals and Cultural Sports**

Baltistan has several cultural sports and festivals held every year. Many rituals and festivals are celebrated in Baltistan. Such as May Fung, Nowruz, Eid e Ghadeer, Eid ul Fitar, etc. Most famous are explained below:

The festival of *May Fung* is celebrated every year on the evening of December 21. It is also known as *Dawat* and *Shari Bidat* (in Shina and Burushaski languages) was held. This festival has been almost non-existent since the 1980s and has been active for some years now. During 2020, it was held in different areas of Baltistan. It was celebrated by a large population in Sarfaranga desert Skardu. It is an ancient festival of Baltis, but the elders are unable to find its origin (Hussainabadi, 2019).

The religious community objects to the event thinking that it is a Buddhist celebration. Some people find its link with the Bon religion and some people also think that it is an Iranian festival due to the use of fire because of Zoroastrian linkage with ancient Iran. No one knows from where

it actually originated but it is clear that it's a part of Baltistan culture and is strongly embedded in it. During the fieldwork it was found that In *May Fung* ceremony, the male members of the village used to go up the nearby mountains in the afternoon. They hold a juniper made of flame lamp in their hands. They will light the juniper lamps and then put down the locally made chandeliers. After that, they came to the village in a line with juniper lamps in their hands. After arriving in the village, they released a locally made chandelier. The *May Fung* dinner which is full of local dishes such as *Strabkhor* (sweet bread), *Ballaay* (local soup), *Prrappo* (prepared by walnut paste), meat items, apricot and butter etc.

***Stroop La*** is the ceremony, which is held near the ripening of the new crop. On this day, a feast has been arranged for all the relatives. In the same way, when it is time to bring the flower home after the straw has been separated from the threshing floor, the rest of the people are fed this evening as well. This festival is called ***Ong Chus***. It is traditionally forbidden to talk while putting the pile of crop in the bags (Hussainabadi, 2019).

***Phiakhtap*** is a centuries old tradition among the Balti people of Baltistan. Different items are given to relatives during the joyous moment in order to celebrate the happiness. It was traditionally given at the occasions of marriage, childbirth, arrival from pilgrimage, but now with the passage of time, it changes its shape now Phiakhtap is given after the promotion of job, success in exams etc. various items were given to the relatives like eggs, dry fruits, clothes, money etc.

***Zakh*** competition was repeatedly held in GB in older times, albeit now it is played in a lesser frequency in the region. This year it was held in the Indus River at Skardu in 2021. Actually *Zakh* is a locally formed raft out of wood and leather. The wooden *zakh* is named *shinzakh* (here shin means wood) in Balti language. In ancient times, for crossing rivers such wooden made *Zakh* was utilized. Earlier *zakh* was made with goat skin (*Chaanskayl*). The usage of *Zakh* has been declining due to the construction of bridges. Hardly some of the people now construct and use *Zakh* in the whole region.

***Dafang*** (Archery) was one of the famous games played in GB historically. It was practiced and played in the end of the spring season which is May-June. *Dafang* is still prevalent in the remote areas of Baltistan. It used to be held in the common hall of the village called *chopal*. On the last day of *Dafang* competition, a festival called ***Grong Haltanmo*** used to be held in each village. All male members of the village used to go to the adjoining mountains. The night used to be spent in

cooking, eating, dancing and festivity. Next night, they used to come down and perform sword dance in the village *chopal*. Alongside, there used to be many other events in the *chopal* such as storytelling, joke narration and comedy by certain village men. *Grong Haltanmo* is no longer held widely in the region.

*Handawaal* is a feast organized by the young boys. They arrange food items or slaughtered a goat and celebrate feast outdoors. This is still celebrated in the Shairthang and Manthal areas among the displaced persons of Chorbat valley.

*Polo* is another local sport, played in GB and the adjacent mountainous areas. In the pre-Dogra period, these events were hitherto held under the auspices of Rajas, who provided funding and supervision for these events. Under the sponsorship of the Raja family, these games and festivals are still held in certain areas of GB. According to some traditions, *polo* originated in Central Asia in sometime between sixth century BCE and first century BCE. The Mughal introduced it in the subcontinent. There are other traditions that suggest that *pulu* was a word of the Tibetan language meaning ball, and for that reason we can say that it started in Tibet as cited by Khan (2017). Anyhow, in Balti language the word *polo* also means ball, therefore it is assumed in GB that the game of polo originated in Baltistan. It was played in Chorbat valley including Chulungkha, Turtuk, and Tyakshi as well. My research respondents were the great players of *polo* back in the village and their village was invited by the Raja of Khaplu and tournaments were held for *polo*.

Figure 6. Skardu Polo Ground



Source: (Skardu Polo Match, 2021)

### **3.2.8. Information and Communication Technology**

Pakistan Telecommunication Company Limited (PTCL) has supplied telephone networks to most of the regions where people can easily get connected to other people. Mostly mobile networks have started functioning recently but SCO provides best services for the region because it is a smooth connection and easy to communicate and it has no signal issues. Some specific locations have poor signals, so it is hard to communicate through the internet. Generally the Internet system is not satisfactory in the region, there is no strong internet connection which creates problems for the people who need to communicate through the internet. People have less access to social media and internet connection in Skardu as compared to other areas of Pakistan. It creates problems for the displaced persons of Baltistan to connect with their separated families across the border through the internet or social media.

### **3.2.9. Roads and Transport**

Historically, movement in and through GB region has been for the purposes of trade, preaching of religion and movement of military forces. All these brought new ideas, culture and customs. Trade caravans have been moving to and fro Central Asia, Xinjiang, Ladakh, Tibet, Kashmir, Chitral,

Swat and Hazara. After the creation of Pakistan, the notion of movement changed radically (Khan, 2017).

Construction of the Karakoram Highway between Pakistan and China, the road across Babusar Pass connecting Diamer district and Naran district of KPK, and through Shandur Pass connecting Ghizer district and Chitral district in KPK have brought qualitative change. Air transport connecting Skardu and Gilgit with other provinces of Pakistan adds to movement (Khan, 2017).

Karakoram Highway (KKH) is the most famous highway which links Pakistan with China through the route of Gilgit Baltistan. The construction of KKH opened a lot of avenues for the local people in terms of trade and business. This route is also used for travelling purposes towards the down cities of Pakistan. The KKH route is quite unpredictable because it is often blocked due to landsliding or sometimes due to political events, protests, or sectarian violence. Currently the construction of Skardu-Gilgit road is mostly blocked in different locations. It might take weeks to reach from Skardu to Pindi.

The air link has the same condition as the road link. In GB, there are two airports, one in Gilgit city and the other one is in Skardu. Most of the flights get cancelled due to harsh weather conditions, the non-availability of aircraft and there is usually a huge backlog of people waiting for a seat. The ticket prices are usually very high from Skardu to Islamabad but the price of tickets from Islamabad to Skardu is relatively low. The local people face high difficulty in travelling by air due to PIA's high end prices. Thus, the long critical road from Skardu to Rawalpindi and expensive flights of PIA affects the lives of local people of Baltistan and specially separated families of Chhorbat valley, who have to travel to meet their separated families across international borders.

### **3.3. Research Methodology**

Research method is the way to represent the research layout, while methodology is the general method for investigating research themes. It also includes the overall process of collecting data from the field and then analyzing it (Islam, 2012). According to Bernard, “Method is about choice of technique, whether to stratify a sample or not, whether to do face-to-face interviews or use the telephone or internet, whether to use a Solomon four-group design or a static-group comparison design in running an experiment, and so on (Bernard, 2001 ,p. 2). Research method mainly depends upon the nature of the research problem, research aim, resource constraints, audience, and personal experience of the researcher. So, it can be inferred that various research methods can be applied in different studies in social sciences.

In anthropological research it is not uncommon to use ethnographic research which is equated with qualitative, naturalistic, case study, participant observant, or field based research (Goetz & LeCompte, 1984; Smith, 1979). Ethnographic research methodology usually involves direct observations of behaviors, conversations with varying degrees of formality ranging from the daily chitchats to prolonged interviews (both unstructured and structured). It also includes detailed work with key consultants and informants about details of their personal struggles. It may also employ in-depth interviewing with respondents often leading to the collection of life stories and struggles which help to understand and document the phenomena under study (Kottak, 2014).

#### **3.3.1. Qualitative Research Method**

In this research Qualitative research methodology was used to discover insights into real-life events through the lived experiences of the displaced people and separated families. Burns and Grove (2009) have provided their opinions that qualitative research is a systematic and subjective approach to highlight and explain daily life experiences, and to further give them proper meaning. It investigates local knowledge and understanding of a given program, people’s experiences, meanings and relationships, and social processes and contextual factors that marginalize a group of people (Leedy & Ormrod, 2001). Qualitative researchers are interested in understanding how people interpret their experiences, how they construct their worlds, and what meaning they attribute to their experiences (Merriam, 2009). The research aimed to document the lived experiences of displaced people of Chorbat valley regarding their struggles during migration,



settlement and separation with their family members. Qualitative research methodology referred to a wide range of methods which were considered as the most relevant and suitable for the current study. Qualitative research method is used for conducting detailed research.

This research has mainly focused on the stories and narratives of the forcibly displaced people of Chorbat valley which is the significant part of the current research. Narrative or anecdotes from the displaced persons were recorded to understand their lived experiences. In the field of forced migration, narratives of the displaced persons have been important to researchers, because it is the only source through which we know about life in any particular times and places to which we have little other access. Narratives have become interesting for researchers also because through narratives they can tell us about how people themselves, as ‘experiencing subjects’, make sense of violence and turbulent change (Eastmond, 2007).

The narrative analysis used in many qualitative studies today is based on phenomenological assumption that a meaning is assigned to a phenomenon through experience. We can only know and learn about other people's experiences from their expressions given to others (Schutz, 1962). Expression has a significant role in narrative studies in order to understand the depth of the emotion. Stories cannot be viewed as simply reflecting life how it is lived rather as a creative construction or interpretation of the past under the specific circumstances of the present. For example, a therapeutic, legal or research environment, each with its specific purpose and power relations, will generate different versions of the same event (Eastmond, 2007). That’s why narratives are not transparent versions of reality but they call for our interpretation. This means that, to understand the stories people tell us and one another about who they are and their pasts, researchers must relate them to the social and political contexts that have shaped and continue shaping the circumstances of their lives and which engage their commitments (ibid, 2007). For narrative studies, the researcher should be native and understand the local context to extract the meaning hidden in the stories of the respondent. In this narrative research, being a local resident of Baltistan and also belonging to the Balti community, I was able to understand the stories and narratives of the respondents due to the same social, cultural and political background.

Methodologically, in Narrative studies, narrative might be the phenomenon being studied or it might be the method used in a study, such as the procedures of analyzing stories told (Chase, 2005; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Pinnegar & Daynes, 2007). As a method, it begins with the

experiences as expressed in lived and told stories of individuals (Creswell, 2013). Czarniawska (2004) defines narratives as a research design as a specific type of qualitative design in which narrative is understood as a spoken or written text giving an account of an event/action or series of events/actions, chronologically connected.

Other than narrative research methodology, this research study employed different methods and techniques for the in-depth data acquisition related to the various reunion techniques and strategies used by the separated families such as detailed in-depth semi-structured interviews, case studies, participant observation and Focus Group Discussions. These methodologies were also helpful to explore the sense of belonging and longing of displaced people for the left behind homeland and families.

### **3.3.1.2 Formulating Research Questions**

The first and foremost step towards conducting qualitative research is to prepare research questions. According to Marvasti (2004), “A good question is important because it helps to guide the research project. It informs researchers what to attend, what to ignore and sometimes questions do change in the course of fieldwork” (Marvasti, 2004, p. 44). In this research, I have made a series of questions which were aimed to ask the displacement journey of the individual. Questions formulated in such a way that it gives the respondent the space to give a longer answer. Such answers can yield more insights because they can elaborate on their thoughts which helped to understand their lived experiences. Some relevant questionnaires formulated with the help of literature review. After interviewing the first few respondents, it was understood that more questions were required to extract more data from the respondents. Lastly rest of the interviews were conducted with the help of this list of questionnaires known as interview guide.

### **3.3.1.2 Interview guide**

Interview guide is an important tool for conducting field interviews so it is necessary to frame it in such a way that every theme of the research should be covered. That is why before entering the field, I prepared a detailed list of questions comprising the three main themes of the study along with the interviewee's background, former village, gender and age.

### **3.3.1.3 Choosing Research site**

The next step of the research process is to choose a locale for executing fieldwork. According to Marvasti (2004), “One of the important points to keep in mind while choosing a research site is

the role of pragmatic considerations. One must consider how hard it is to enter a particular setting and what the emotional and financial cost might be and so on” (Marvasti, 2004), p, 45). I chose this research site due to multiple reasons. Firstly I belong to Skardu and it was quite practically feasible for me to reach out to the subjects of the study who are residing in different localities of Skardu. Secondly, some of these displaced people of Chorbat valley are my relatives from my mother's side. That helped me a lot and prevented me from facing difficulty in the field.

#### **3.3.1.4 Selection of Respondents**

After choosing a locale, the next step of the research is selecting respondents of the study. It mainly involves which people should be observed and interviewed, what will be the context and time (Marvasti, 2004). In Skardu various groups of migrated people are residing. Specifically, I had taken the displaced persons of Chorbat valley as my respondents. The reason behind this was that I had heard the stories of these displaced persons and their villages and seen them talking about their relatives across the border while growing up. I have seen their relatives who had come to Skardu from India many years ago. I have realized their pain of separation and wanted to work on the separated families. As an anthropologist I have got this opportunity to do anthropological work on the people and recover their lived experiences and bring the problems of separated families into the mainstream.

Thus, I identified those people who were directly related to my focus of study. I interviewed the displaced persons who belong to the Chorbat villages which were occupied by India in 1971. As per requirement of the topic, I had to study the narratives and lived experiences of the forcibly displaced persons, and also those who got separated from their relatives across the border. On the basis of this criteria, I have selected the respondents for my study.

#### **3.3.1.5 Accessing Research Field**

While exploring about gaining access to the research field, it is very helpful for researchers to identify someone who can provide easy access to the specific areas and relevant information. Such people are known as Gatekeepers (ibid, 2004). According to Neuman, the gatekeeper is the one who has full authority to control access to a research site (Neuman, 2007). I have to say here that the displaced people of Chulunkha of Chorbat valley are my relatives but I never met most of them before. I met them for the very first time, especially with the people of Turtuk, Tyakshi and Thang. Thus it was quite difficult for me to access them on my own. For this purpose I had selected key

informants who helped me in finding the people who are best for my research. They gave me information about their address and background details of the displaced persons.

### **3.3.1.6 Key informants/Gatekeepers**

The key informant approach is used in qualitative research which has been enormously used in different research studies of social sciences. Key informants are those important contributors who acquire a lot of knowledge about their culture and are willing to share. Good key informants easily understand the vision of study (Bernard, 2001). They provide an in-depth insight of a certain society based on their experience, knowledge, and position (Marshall, 1996). Key informants helped me in building a rapport and trustworthy relationship with respondents and access to those displaced persons that served the purpose of my research study. Social networks and personal relations of key informants were used to get access to the forcibly displaced persons. I have chosen 02 key informants which included the local people belonging to various walks of life, which are discussed in the following lines.

#### **Key Informant 1**

My first key informant was Mr. Muhammed Khan who is a 65 years old man. He is a contractor by profession. He belongs to the Chulungkha village and also head of the All Muhajireen 1971 Kargil and Ladakh organization. He is socially active and deals with all the problems concerned with the displaced persons of Chorbat valley. The main purpose of taking him as my key informant is that being the representative of all displaced persons, he knows all the people of Chorbat valley and was well informed about the details of all the displaced people of 1971 war. He contributed to this research by identifying the concerned people for the study. Because of Mr. Muhammed Khan's reference: a lot of displaced persons gave interviews without any objection.

#### **Key Informant 2**

My second key informant was 41 years old Mr. Musa Ali who lives in Manthal. He is a journalist by profession for BBC Urdu. He has been working as a journalist for more than five years now. His family belongs to Chulungkha village. Thus he has changed his last name as Musa Chulungkha and is also famous in social media by this name. He has been working for separated families and played a main role in unifying the separated families of these villages. He was the founder of the famous Whatsapp group through which many families were reunited after decades. That's why he

was chosen as one of the key informants for this study as he has much knowledge about the separated families.

### **3.3.1.7. Rapport Building**

Rapport building can relieve the hesitation about the researcher and nature of research in the respondents. Sharing stories about one's personal struggles needs time, energy, space as well as privacy and most importantly willingness. To establish good relations and understanding with my respondents, I tried to be transparent, honest in my communication, clear, responsive, and friendly. It was an effort to put them at ease to talk about their journeys with a confidence for confidentiality. Neuman (2007) argued that it is very important for a researcher to have good relationships with members in the field to get authentic data. Therefore, to uncover the hidden knowledge, researchers should quickly build a strong bond, trust, and confidence with the respondents of the study.

There are some important points to be kept in mind while building rapport in the field. Researchers should always take care about the use of language in-front of respondents. Speaking English with local people does not make sense and they might feel uneasy and left out. That is why researchers should try to converse in the local language (Marvasti, 2004). Researchers claim that getting the insider's views is an important element of narrative studies (Cole & Knowles, 2001; Denzin, 1989a, 1989b) for which they have to know the cultural norms, values and language of the participants. Literature shows that understanding the language, connotations and their meanings and essence pose real questions in trustworthiness and authenticity of the data interpretation (Atkinson, 2001; Denzin, 1989a, 1989b), which is also true for making sense of the contextual realities of the research site (Cole & Knowles, 2001; Goodson & Sikes, 2001). Being a resident of Baltistan and familiarization with the Balti language helped me in understanding the narratives of the Balti people but I had to face little trouble in speaking proper Balti language to convey my research questions to them. For that purpose, I was willingly joined by one of my Balti relatives (girl) to assist me during the interviews and also helped me translate the questionnaire into Balti language. Some respondents already knew me (researcher) due to my mother's relation with them which added a plus point in my research. Due to these factors, along with the help of key informants gaining rapport with the target group did not take much time as anticipated.

### 3.3.2. Sampling Strategy and Sample Size

Sample is basically a small segment of a population (Etikan, Musa, & Alkassim, 2016). One of the most crucial steps of research was to choose respondents for collecting reliable and relevant information. The research focuses on collecting variant narratives of people who migrated from Chorbat valley during the 1971 war and got separated from their family members and also documents narratives and lived experiences regarding their reunion strategies across borders. Therefore the study required special focus on only those displaced people who belong to villages of Chorbat valley now located in Indian administered territory.

The unit of analysis of this research consisted of 30 men and women of Chorbat valley. Though many villages were affected during the course of repeated drawing and redrawing of LoC between India and Pakistan in different wars but for this current study the criteria of selection of respondents was that the researcher took people as respondents who belong to specific areas includes Chulunkha, Turtuk, Tiakhshi and Thang.

Table 4: Unit of analysis

<b>S. No.</b>	<b>Villages Captured by Indian Army in 1971 War From Chorbat valley</b>	<b>Respondents</b>
<b>1</b>	<b>Chulungkha village</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>2</b>	<b>Tyakshi Village</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>3</b>	<b>Turtuk village</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>4</b>	<b>Thang Village</b>	<b>1</b>
	<b>Total</b>	<b>30</b>

Note: Division of respondents with respect to their native Villages

(Source: Author, 2021)

I have recorded the narratives and lived experiences of displaced persons of Chulungkha regarding their hurdles endured throughout the journey. I have found many respondents from Chulungkha village during my field work as the whole village was displaced during the war and these are mostly settled in Skardu. Moreover, most of the people from Turtuk, Tyakshi and Thang were

separated from their families as compared to Chulungkha, so for this purpose, researchers document the accounts of these people from the previously mentioned villages whose family members were left behind or separated during the Indo-Pak war 1971. I have further interviewed the displaced persons from these villages who managed to either visit their relatives in India or utilized various other meeting strategies. Lastly, I was informed that very few people of Thang Village remained in Baltistan during the war and those were mostly residing in the other villages of Baltistan that's why I just found one person from Thang village for my research.

### **3.3.2.2. Convenient and Purposive Sampling**

Non-probability sampling methods and techniques are always most appropriate for in depth qualitative studies. Researchers tend to rely on purposive sampling in studies where the target population is hard-to-find (Bernard, 2006). The purposive sampling facilitated in gaining access to the research subjects who were easily or conveniently available for the researcher and purposive sampling served the purpose and objectives of the research. Purposive sampling is also called judgement sampling and focuses on choosing cases on purpose and not randomly. The displaced people of Chorbat valley were residing in different localities of Skardu. Skardu is inhabited by various displaced persons due to its closeness to LoC. Thus, it became a hard process to identify and approach them. This problem of the research was resolved by opting a combination of purposive and convenience sampling techniques.

### **3.3.2.1 Field research**

The field work was stretched to 04 months' time to explore maximum possible dimensions. An effort was made to spend maximum time with respondents to document as much information as possible. Ethnographic research methodology usually involves direct observations of behaviors, conversations with varying degrees of formality ranging from the daily chitchats to prolonged interviews (both unstructured and semi-structured). It also includes detailed work with key consultants and informants about details of community life. It may also employ in-depth interviewing with most of the respondents often leading to the collection of life stories and struggles of particular people (narrators) to help the researcher understand and document the phenomena under study (Kottak, 2014).

### **3.3.3. Data Collection Techniques**

In order to record data from the stories and narratives of the displaced people certain data collection methods were required. In the following study, different tools of qualitative research like in-depth interviews, participant observation, Focus Group Discussions and case study methods were used for collecting narrative data. An interview guide was developed to gather data from research participants. The forcibly displaced people of Chulungkha, Turtuk, Tyakshi and Thang were interviewed using the interview guide. After data collection, whole data was divided into themes and sub themes for data analysis. I used pseudonyms for respondents who wanted to hide their identity to assure their anonymity as per research ethics. But most of the respondents want to reveal their identity in my research.

#### **3.3.3.1. In-depth- Semi Structured Interview**

Most of the anthropologists gather data during their fieldwork while remaining in the field, observe, and listen, and take notes of the data every single day. And then and bring along the whole data back to home (Bernard, 2001). In-depth interviews are detailed sharing of information which involves asking questions, probing, listening, recording, observing body language, and analyzing the tone of voice. It is a reciprocal interaction in which participants' perceptions, feelings and cooperation play crucial roles in the discussion process which reveals the implicit meaning (Neuman, 2007). I have conducted a total 15 in-depth interviews. Semi-structured interviews are useful for the narrative studies because they give space to the respondents to convey their internal narratives in more detail. Otherwise structured interviews bind them and are not suitable for narrative studies. I have recorded their stories which is the primary source of data acquisition for narrative studies, other than that, I have also gathered data about the respondent from their relatives and family members. Semi structured interviews helped me in discovering how displaced persons shared their belonging and longing for their homeland and separated families across the border.

#### **3.3.3.2. Participant Observation**

Participant observation is the most effective research tool to know about the people in a particular context. According to Bernard (2001), "Participant observation is about stalking culture in the wild. The data collected during participant observation is all qualitative; field notes are taken, audio recording of people telling folktales, video of people getting married, having an argument;



transcription of taped, open ended interviews and so on” (Bernard, 2001, p. 257). During my field work, I have visited my respondents multiple times, and got involved in daily conversation with them. I have observed the letters, videos and photographs sent to the respondent from their separated families across the border and also had watched videos of reunion with the families. The informal conversation revealed their emotions and feelings for their homeland and separated families. They showed me gifts and other things related to their native land and explained each and everything in detail.

#### **3.3.3.4. Case Study Method**

Case study was is an effectual method to inspect an issue in detail and explore the nuances of real-life situations (Islam, 2012). Case study is one of those research tools which provides a holistic and humanistic view of complex phenomena (Brown, 2008). Case studies were used in this study to examine the data at micro level. It also provides better insights into the detailed behaviors of the respondents. Personal narratives of an individual take an important tool in recording narratives. I have used 05 case studies in my study.

#### **3.3.3.5. Focus Group Discussion**

Focus Group Discussion is another research tool used in this study. It is basically one of the qualitative research techniques in which participants share their ideas informally in a group discussion setting (Neuman, 2014). This technique is quite helpful in gaining maximum data in a short period of time. I have conducted one Focus Group Discussion including 8 to 10 individuals. Focus group discussion was helpful in finding out the collective hardships of the displaced persons during their journey from their homeland to the settlement in the new place. During Focus Group Discussion displaced persons revealed their mutual pain and sufferings and also discussed how they mutually help each other to reduce the strangeness of the new place in Skardu. I have found different responses during FGD regarding the role of the state in their settlement process.

#### **3.3.3.6. Modes of recording data**

Human memory is not so effective in terms of recording data for a long period. That is why it is very important for a researcher to record data in various ways i.e., field notes, maps, diagrams, photographs, or any memory art piece (Neuman, 2007). While conducting research in the field, I used three modes of storing data which comprises field notes, audio/video recordings and photographs.

## **Field Notes**

Field notes really help researchers to keep a record on a daily basis (Neuman, 2007). During in-depth interviews, I observed and wrote about respondent expressions, emotions, body language and behavior in my notepad. Like, most of my respondents cried and expressed their pain on some specific moments during the interview while sharing their lived experiences. Sometimes they show lack of interest towards certain topics and do not want to answer the question or try to skip the question. I also noted down my own thoughts and impressions during participant observation in the field.

## **Audio Recordings**

Majority of in-depth interviews were recorded using mobile phones with respondents' consent. While interviewing the respondents, all were comfortable enough to record their voices but some of the respondents did not allow me to record their voices. Thus their voices were not recorded instead penned down in a notepad. It is because tape recording interviews is an essential part of the interview process. If you are gifted with unlimited memory, it will also be necessary to record your conversations so that you can later go back and analyze the data from your interviews (Farber, 2016).

After conducting interviews, the recorded interviews were transferred to my laptop and also backed up in my personal drive to ensure the information or data was not lost. At times, I needed further details about the event or story about the displacement or reunion practices. I had to reconnect with the respondents, for that purpose telephone calls were used to gather additional data for the research as the nature of the narrative study is a nonlinear process involving multiple cycles of interactions and consultations with the participants (Khan, 2020). I had to contact them again and again to verify, validate or approve the data after the interview through telephone calls.

## **Video and Photography**

During the fieldwork, I took photographs of the items or gifts the separated families have sent for their families living in Skardu. I have made videos of the Old men singing Balti songs in longing for their native land and also in the pain of separation from their kin groups. Some interviews were also recorded in a video form to keenly observe their emotions and expressions.

### **3.3.4. Data Analysis**

To analyze the data collected for this research the conducted interviews were transcribed. The field notes were also revised before data analysis. Most of the interviews were conducted in Balti language. The preserved recordings of interviews were listened to carefully, transcribed into Urdu language as it is so that it does not lose its essence. After that, it was translated into English and then typed in Microsoft word. There are a few non-English terms used in this study and these terms are italicized and defined in English in quotations. Some of the quotes used for the research got translated from Balti to English. Some repeatedly used phrases were added in original Balti quotes and then translated afterwards. I did that because when working in two languages, certain things might get lost in the translation. I tried to translate quotes in such a way that they made sense in English, but tried to keep their initial meaning and real essence intact.

Narrative stories are analyzed in varied ways. An analysis can be made about what was said (thematically) and the nature of the telling of the story (structural). Thus the layout of the study is also set in such a way that it reflects the story of the displaced people which further help to understand their displacement and the consequential effects of it on the displaced people as well as it has some important themes emerging out of their stories.

The transcripts were analyzed by labelling common themes. Quotes were then organized within these themes in order to make them into a story in such a way that it does justice to how the interviewees intended what they said. I have also gone through the relevant literature to check how far my findings differ or related from other authors who worked on the same topic.

### **3.3.5. Ethics of Research**

While conducting the Research, the ethics of research involving human subjects, including the principles of prior consent and respect of persons were observed. The utmost care was taken to make the subjects comfortable and prior consent of all the subjects was taken before conducting the interviews. All the apprehensions of the respondents, ranging from doubts about identity of the authors to questions about the purpose of this research, were clarified. The subjects were also assured that the information given by them would not be used for any other purpose except research. Some of the respondents had the impression that the authors could facilitate the opening

of the Kargil-Skardu route and could get them passports and permits for their visits across the LoC. It was made clear to them that the study had no policy mandate and was being undertaken to bring their plight to the notice of concerned circles. Some of the interviews were recorded and later translated and transcribed in English. Many respondents did not feel comfortable recording their voices, so their responses were noted down with simultaneous translation being done by the interpreter. The respondents were asked whether they want their identity to be shown or hidden. Most of them gave permission to reveal their identity and said that they want me to write their names as well and also be ready to give a video interview. Except for a few people who requested to hide their identity in the research.

### **3.3.6. Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research**

There are some limitations which might be addressed in future studies. Firstly, I admit that my research study was limited to a few small villages of Chorbat valley taken by Indian army during the 1971 war. Similarly India captured Pakistani villages from Kharmang and Kargil side of LoC during different wars. In 1971, people were also displaced from Mazbar, Kirkit, Hundurmo, Farol and Kargil. I could not focus on all these villages during my field work and was not able to study the forced displacement in a larger context. Secondly, the sample of the study was small in my opinion, and it might be greater but due to prevalence of Covid 19 in the region, I could not approach many of them. Thus in future more studies might be done to explore other aspects of forced displacement.

### **3.3.7. Self-Reflexivity of Researcher**

Patton (2002) uses the term reflexivity to describe the researcher's role in reducing researchers influence on the setting or individual being studied. In qualitative studies, unlike quantitative studies, researchers assume that the total elimination of researcher influence is impossible. Maxwell (2005) points out that the goal is not to eliminate researcher influence but rather understand it and use it appropriately. My research position is insider rather than outsider. Cooper and Rogers (2014) explain that the "insider" role is an influential and powerful reflexive position used to increase deeper engagement and comprehension into participants' understanding of lived experience, which has always been part of the nature of qualitative research.

Being an insider, it was not difficult for me to access the research field and communicate with the Balti people because I can speak and understand the local Balti language. Researchers claim that getting the insider's views is an important element of narrative studies (Cole & Knowles, 2001; Denzin, 1989a, 1989b) for which they have to know the cultural norms, values and language of the participants. Being the inhabitant of Baltistan and Skardu and particularly part of the Balti community, I was well informed about the contextual realities of the areas situated near the Line of control and generally the political situation of Gilgit Baltistan which influenced the life of displaced persons. Thus it is quite helpful for me to study the research subjects, understand their insights and how they see certain political structures of the society and how they are deprived from their political and economic rights.

Being a student of Anthropology, I have studied the forcibly displaced persons and issue of separated families from the emic perspective. Recorded narratives and their lived experiences represents the diverse layers of problems hidden in the individual level. Anthropological lens provides the better understanding of the subjective perception of the forced displacement and its consequences on the local level.

### **3.3.8. Field Experience**

I have spent four months in the research field. Before going into the field for conducting proper interviews, I have met with some members of the displaced persons who later became my key informants. During the discussion, I have introduced them with my topic and they guide in finding the relevant respondents from the Skardu.

When I started meeting people and told them about the research topic, they expressed so much affection and were happy that no one has ever asked about the issues and problems of separated families of Chorbat valley. They told their stories with so much enthusiasm. Displaced persons of Chorbat valley were highly hospitable and welcoming. I was treated extremely well and they also served tea and offered meals.

But some respondents gave me a tough time. It took some time to gain the respondents willingness and trust and openly express their stories because it is very hard for people to tell about their life. Trust is the only element which facilitates thick description (Geertz, 1973). I was able to gain trust of the respondent and built rapport by giving reference to the key informants.

I have also faced difficulties during my field work. Some people thought I was a member of some kind of organization and expected from me that I would help them in providing funds or some other form of assistance. Some people likely have this idea in their mind that I would in any way help them in opening the Skardu-Kargil or Turtuk-Khaplu road. I have cleared it in the beginning of the interview that the purpose of this research is solely academic and it is not guaranteed to bring any benefit for them. It remained completely transparent with my respondents throughout the research and made them aware of the purpose and probability of the benefits of the research.

The whole research process has happened to be quite emotionally loaded for me. During the interviews with the separated families, most of my respondents got extremely emotional and broke down into tears while narrating about their family's separation or reunion. I found that the process of field work was pretty emotionally exhausting for me.

## **4. NARRATIVES OF FORCED DISPLACEMENT**

This chapter addresses the first objective of the study which records the lived experiences and narratives of the villagers who were residing in the close proximity of Line of Control (hereafter LoC) before the war between India and Pakistan in 1971. Four villages Chulungkha, Turtuk, Tyakshi and Thang were heavily affected by the war which changed the lives of hundreds of people at once. This arrangement of this chapter was done in such a way that it showed the lived experiences and narratives of forced displacement of the people as well as maintain the story of displacement. The chronology of events and time sequence will help to understand and follow the research for the reader. Thus this chapter explores the hardships and hurdles endured along the way by the conflict-induced displaced people of Chulungkha village. Turtuk, Tyakshi and Dhothang villagers were not mostly displaced but being the closest village to LoC almost the whole villagers of Chulungkha were displaced. Therefore, I have primarily focused on the displaced people of Chulungkha in this chapter. Furthermore, the research has managed to evaluate the narratives of their hardships on the way and during their settlement in the new place.

### **4.1. Beginning of War**

During field work, I realized that before going into the details of the aftermath of war it was crucial to have the contextual understanding of the village earlier the war erupted. It is important in narrative studies to describe in detail the place where the story physically occurs. Most of the respondents shared about their life back in the village with great enthusiasm. It was observed that the villagers used to cultivate different crops and domesticate animals. Everyone had their own lands for cultivation of crops and hundreds of cattle to provide milk and butter. They used to send their cattle to the mountains in summer. Respondents mentioned the lush green highlands of Chulungkha were enough for all the animals of the whole village. It was observed that there was an abundance of everything and this community was quite self-subsistent. Most of the respondents elaborated when they were asked about the situation during the war, that it was the time of the year when the villagers collected all the products of the summer and saved them for winter. It has been perceived that the native people of Chulungkha were doing their daily chores when the war of 1971 broke out. The war started on third December, when they finished their farming activities and had prepared themselves for the harsh winters.

It was explained by a 64 years old lady Khadija (*Appi Khatti*) from Chulungkha as:

*“We picked up all our crops, milled the grains in our Renthaq (desi mill which was driven by water), and collected the flour which was stored in the large wooden box for the winters (Stunthak). There were fruits of all kinds in abundance in our village that were dried up in summers and also saved Lsczhu and Pharing (dried fruits) to consume in winters. We had lots of livestock and they were back to the village from the mountains with plenty of meat and makkhan. The war broke out during the period of the year when we had finished all the activities of saving our products for winters. But we were forced to leave all these stuff as it was.”*

One of the respondent narrated that:

*“We prepared meal on bukhaari (desi stove) for our men who were gone to the picket<sup>8</sup>. We had made Balti chai, Marzan, roti and Strabkhor (sweet bread), to eat on their arrival but we had to leave everything due to war.”*

It shows that native people of Chulungkha just collected their crops, fruits and other food items for the severe and tough winters. The land of these areas were used to be extremely fertile and productive to harvest every form of crop and fruits there. Due to the abrupt war these people had to leave everything behind and moved with empty handed. Respondents were aware of the political situation between India and Pakistan. They mentioned that as a borderlanders they knew that the war between Bengalis and Pakistanis had been started for many months ago and situation could possibly be worse in future.

Ghulam Rasool, 64 years an Oldman from Chulungkha narrated that *“We used to listen to radio in which news was broadcast in Balti Language from Skardu. On 2<sup>nd</sup> December 1971 on 3 pm Yahya khan declared war against India and ordered the Pakistan Army to attack on the enemy in the name of Islam and for the sake of their country. That night, some young boys slaughtered a goat in a garden and had a party which we called as Handawaal. After that we all slept there. While sleeping, we all had fear of war but anyhow we laid down for some sleep. At that time, there were no blankets, we used to put Kaarr (Desi chador) as a blanket and millet straws were used on the floor as a bedding covered it with a Chhara (Desi carpet made of cattle’s fur). At midnight, I woke up to the sound of shelling and earth shaking. After six or seven sounds of blasts I woke my*

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<sup>8</sup> A picket is placed on an extreme line of observation of an army to provide warning of an enemy.



*friends up. When we all woke up and reached outside, the whole villagers were out of their houses. Children and women were crying. Then firing started at Gangchen picket. Subhedar Babar Shah from Gilgit, he ordered to our Trangpa (village leader) that one person from every family get ready to take military goods to the Gangchen picket urgently.”*

But still the people were hopeful that their army and young people would never let the enemy capture the military front. The local people used to help the Army in every way. Ibrahim, eighty two years old man described that:

*“We used to carry rifles, ammunition, firewood, water and ration to the Gangchen for the Pak army. We had to go up to the Gangchen picket with goods, as it was located at a very high altitude that one could see the whole region from there. It was our responsibility to support them and during the shortage of ration, we would take food from our homes as well.”*

Fida Hussain added that:

*“We voluntarily took food items like dried fruits, barley roasted flour (Sattu) from our homes for the soldiers. Apart from that we used to fetch them water, it took us two days to reach the top of the Gangchen with the jerry cane filled with water.”*

Narrations of people demonstrated that these people of Chulungkha used to work as a porter for the military of Pakistan. They used to carry all kind of goods to them up in the Gangchen Mountain<sup>9</sup> without any pay. It has been observed that these people used to make food items in their homes for the army in case they had limited resources. Some people explained that Pak army served there for their protection on the cold temperature on the mountains so it was their obligation to do favor for the army. But few of them did not agree with this and mentioned that in these areas the military has used free human labor of the native people and it had severely affected the lives of borderlanders. Narrations showed that in border areas civilians not only worked as a source of labor for the soldiers to carry military luggage but also used these people in fighting against the enemy which was also mentioned by Bouzas (2017) in his work. Unlike Bouzas work the local people were not gaining any benefit from helping the Army. The respondents showed their loyalty and responsibility to assist their soldiers and they considered that it was their obligation to assist their army who were standing at the cold mountain top just to protect them from the enemy. They

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<sup>9</sup> Gangchen is the mountain which was used as a military front by Pakistani Army before 1971.

never gained any advantage out of this from the army. Thus mutual benefit was not found in the case of Chulungkha village.

#### **4.1.1. Case study of *Appo Singay***

*Appo Singay*<sup>10</sup> is a seventy year old man from Chulungkha. He narrated his lived experience about the scenario of breaking out war between India and Pakistan at the military front.

“I was twenty one years old during the 1971 war. I was quite young at that time and used to work with the Pakistan Army to defend our area in Chulungkha. I fought in the military front with the Pak Army without any pay. To get trained to use the weapons was not necessary for us.” *Appo Singay* while talking about his training described that “I used to go hunting for birds and pigeons with the old gun present in my house so I was aware of how to use guns. Single shot firearms were utilized by the people during that time but now the guns and weapons have become very advanced so people need training. I was one of the civilians, who were present at the Military front at the moment when war broke out. Gangchen picket was attacked by the Indian troops early in the morning before the *Azaan* (call for Prayer). I have seen the Indian army coming upwards to the Pakistani Military front. The soldiers at the front were waiting for the orders. They were instructed not to act until and unless the enemy showed any movement towards them. I have seen that Indian soldiers were more in numbers as compared to Pakistani army. There were only seven army soldiers and seven civilians at the Gangchen front during the war. Pakistani soldiers attacked them when they got closer to them. We (local people) also fought against the Indian army along with the Pakistani army to safeguard the picket. I cannot even explain the moment they attacked when the two antagonist armies of India and Pakistan clashed, a storm of bullets erupted. One of the Indian soldiers threw a bomb on Pakistani army as a result some of Pakistani soldiers died during the encounter and few had escaped. The Army of Pakistan fought courageously and bravely but due to limited weapons and bullets they could not resist them longer. The Pakistan soldiers before the eruption of war had requested the higher majors to provide weapons for the Army as they had few weapons to encounter them. But unfortunately, that Major General of that time delayed sending the required weapons. That’s why Pakistan had lost the Gangchen picket and India

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<sup>10</sup> Pseudo name on the request of the key informant.

succeeded in taking control over it. We decided to go down to the village in a hurry to inform our people.”

An Oldman spoke with disappointment:

*“They (Pakistani army) lost the Gangchen picket because there were traitors in the Pakistani army at that time, otherwise it was not that much easy for them to take control of it.”*

Many respondents during their interviews mentioned that in 1971 due to the Bangladesh liberation war against West Pakistan caused Pakistan’s loss against India in this area of LoC. Many Bengali Army personnel who were allocated to the Army post of Pakistan, betrayed Pakistan in the 1971 war. Otherwise, it was not possible for the Indian army to take control over Pakistani territory. People mentioned that one of the Bengali Generals had run away from the war zone.

Moving forward, When the Indian Army reached at the top of the Gangchen picket, the Pakistani army emptied the village of Chulungkha. The local inhabitants were advised by army officers to get away from the war zone. Shelling and firing could endanger their lives. Thus the villagers took their families and left the village.

Another respondent *Appo Kareem* narrated:

*“We took our families to the place (thang) near the village called ChamamaarPa in order to be safe from enemy attack.”*

ChamamaarPa was a place between Chulungkha and Turtuk and there was a water canal between Chulungkha and *ChamamaarPa*. They used to cross the water through a chair lift (*Garradi*<sup>11</sup>) and also visit Turtuk via this *Garradi*. Further, they explained that they used to make a temporary passage in winters by using wooden logs to shift the animals to that place when water level got low and in summers they picked the wooden logs up as the water level was high.

One of the respondents narrated that:

*We all villagers made a bridge to cross it with our cattle and goods a few months before the war. We cut trees (Safaiday) of 3 feet in width and brought those wet tree logs to this place and made*

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<sup>11</sup>It seems like a chair lift but it is more like a desi cable car which consists of a small wooden floor and a rope. A person has to pull the rope so it can go to the other side of the river.

*a bridge for the people to pass through. It was tough to cross this bridge in darkness with the fear of the enemy along with animals and children.”*

It was highlighted by some respondents that the elders of Chulungkha were extremely wise and farsighted people. They made the wooden bridge between Chulungkha and ChamamaarPa when the war between East and West Pakistan (at that time now Bangladesh and Pakistan) started in March 1971. They sensed that there was no way out for the residents of Chulungkha as a result of war in their part of LoC. As already mentioned that there was only a chair lift to cross that water canal. So a few months before the war broke out, they built that wooden bridge. Thus they crossed the bridge along with their cattle, children, women and old age people.

## **4.2. Hardships of Forced Displacement**

Hardships are the main constituent in the lives of the displaced people from the inception of forced displacement. It was evident from narratives that all the villagers were evacuated from Chulungkha by Pakistani army. They left their village along with some of their cattle and few things that they could carry. Some people mentioned that they locked their houses and took the bunch of keys with them with the hope that it's a temporary war and they will return soon when war is over. In this situation they didn't take anything with them and left all their precious things behind. Women even left behind their Jewelry and other expensive materials.

*“My brother had sent me some amount of money from Lahore, which was almost twenty thousand rupees. I put them in a box and kept them in a safe place and then came out of the village during the war.”* Disclosed one of the oldman from Chulunkha.

The people left Chulungkha in the evening, when it was dark to avoid being seen by the enemies. They reached the next village, Turtuk by midnight. The villagers of Turtuk refused to leave their village and asked the people of Chulungkha to stay as well. They were all scared and someone came with the news that Indian army captured Chulungkha village and some houses were burnt down. With such an emotional situation and physical fatigue, they all just kept crying for their homeland.

They started to move from there as well and that was the beginning of their troubles and hardships of the long journey. Hardships suffered by these people are beyond comprehension of normal

human beings. According to the respondents the winter season took a harsh toll on them. They had nothing to keep themselves warm which made the journey even more hardened for the people. Older people and children suffered a lot on their way to Khaplu. Some aged people later on died due to severe Pneumonia and cold. Respondents shared the difficulties and hurdles they faced while migrating with their families on those challenging routes of Chorbat valley. These displaced people could not let their ill and aged parents walk on dangerous paths in the mountainous area. People used to hold their parents on their back on steep areas and when they got tired they let their parents walk with the help of stick on plane areas.

Fida Hussain from Chulungkha said remembering those hard and cold nights of migration:

*“I remember, my mother was ill at that time when we were leaving the village, so I put her in a basket (Chouroung) and carried her all the way to Khaplu by holding her on my back. We used to carry our old parents and walk through the mountains at night on narrow and steep paths. On these narrow paths along the hill only one person could pass through it. There was the edge of mountain on one side and a deep abyss on the other side.”*

Respondents mentioned that on the way some people got sick due to cold temperature. These people suffered from diarrhea and fever with high temperature. At the same time Indian rockets were hovering in the sky and these people were walking without overhead protection. Thus the fear of death added to their sufferings even more.

Appi Saeeda from Chulungkha narrated:

*“At nightfall, we used to crumple along the sideways with our cattle, children and old people, and hide ourselves under the hills and caves during daylight in order to protect ourselves from the enemy's eye. We went through all these horrifying and painful times of our life. Words cannot explain that pain”*

Another respondents told that:

*“When we spent a night at someone's house in Turtuk, we could not even sleep at night and did not take off our shoes and luggage in the fear of enemy attack and always ready to go.”*

These people left their village in a rush so they couldn't take many food items with them to eat. They survived with dried bread until they arrived at Tyakshi, the next village after Turtuk in Pakistani side. Some people of Tyakshi offered help to them.

Ghulam Rasool 64 year's old man from Chulungkha said:

*“A man at Tyakshi had tried to convince us not to leave the place but when we refused he asked us to wait there. After some time, he returned with a bag full of dried apricot (Halman Pharing) for the journey.”*

These people carried some cattle along with them. When nothing was found to eat they used to slaughter their animals to feed their family. Most of the people of Turtuk and Tyakshi were very kind and they gave them a place to stay and provide food. Moreover, on their arrival most of the residents cried along with the villagers of Chulungkha with their grief.

*“When we reached Pari<sup>12</sup> Appo Haider fell on the ground and injured his foot and could not move it. He was not able to walk by himself and told us to leave him behind. Trangpa Hassan was also with us. He had a horse loaded with some luggage. We threw the luggage into the river and let him sit on the horse. In this we managed to take him along with us.”*

#### **4.2.1. Hurdles for Women**

Women have been the most vulnerable group among the forcibly displaced persons. Gender of the women added to their misery during the whole journey. The reproductive responsibilities or gendered expectations of womanhood engendered emotional burden during the time of war. Women had to take care of themselves as well as their family members especially children and elders who couldn't walk.

Gul Chahra, a 72 years old woman described that:

*“I held my grandmother at my back while leaving Chulungkha because she couldn't walk and my six month old child was tied behind my little brother.”*

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<sup>12</sup> Name of a place near Tyakshi.

*“We used to feed our children with bread (roti) and dried fruits, while we were hungry.”* Narrated another woman.

Married women at the time of war had to leave with their husband and could not stay with their families. In this way a lot of women were separated from their families<sup>13</sup>. Gul Chahra a woman, who was married at that time had to separate from her family and moved with her husband. Another trouble came in the way of married pregnant women that they put up with the health issue and complications during delivery. Some of them gave birth in different villages along the way to Skardu.

*“My wife was pregnant at the time of war. On our way to Khaplu, My wife endured the pain of pregnancy and gave birth to my daughter when we reached at Bara<sup>14</sup>.”* Appo Muhammed cho<sup>15</sup> from Chulungkha recalled.

*“I was married and had a three months old son back in Chulungkha. I had to carry him in basket (Chouroung) all the way long.”* Responded a woman.

It has been observed that women had to take care of their children as well as their family members at that critical situation as well as to protect the prudency (Ghairat) of their male members. Most of the men had the fear of losing their dignity as the Army of the enemy was behind them. Thus, these displaced and helpless women were frightened to lose their honor and ready to do anything to save their honor.

*Appo Kareem identified that:*

*“It was already decided that if Indian military arrived, women would jump into the river to protect their honor (Izzat).”*

*“I would rather prefer to jump into the water and die than to be touched by the enemy.”* Said khalima, a sixty years old woman from Chulungkha.

From the above narratives and lived experiences in relation to women it was understood that they were the worst affected victims of the war and the following events. Being women, they had to

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<sup>13</sup> This part is discussed in the next chapter in more detail.

<sup>14</sup> Name of a place near Khaplu

<sup>15</sup> Family name

look after their whole family. While living in the border area, they had experienced several wars between India and Pakistan which were the 1947 division of the Sub-Continent and 1965 war. It was the common perception among these people that the attitudes of the enemy towards the local people had been so abusive and violent during the war time. Therefore it was very crucial for them to protect their families and especially females during the times of war in order to protect their honor. Women were also very concerned regarding their honor (*Izaat*) which created an additional burden on the women during that acute situation of war.

### 4.3. Dispersion of Villagers

Chulungkha was considered as a pastoral society in which people were highly dependent on animals as they domesticated animals for centuries. It was observed that these people had a special corner for animals. Majority of the respondents showed their emotions and affection for the animals they left behind.

*“When we reached the field (Thang) of Tyakshi, we saw the whole villagers of Chulungkha were moving forward. We were the last ones among the displaced persons due to various incidents on our way. The people of Chulungkha were leaving almost fifty goats and goat kids behind them. Due to severe cold the goats and their kids were not able to walk anymore. Some goats were standing at the corner head to head and others were contracted and shriveled with cold and could not move forward.”* Ghulam Rasool expressed his feelings and emotions and could not control his tears during this conversation.

Most of the respondents of this research were from Chulungkha village as already mentioned that apparently Chulungkha was the bordered village before 1971. Almost all the respondents mentioned this incident in their interviews and all of them burst into tears while narrating this event. All of them were gathered at a place where the current LoC was redrawn by the states and from where they were split into groups.

*“We reached Moroschay oull<sup>16</sup> and decide to divide the people. This decision was made because we did not want to be a burden on one area as we were 50 to 60 households with 1000-1500 goats, 150-200 cows, and 50-60 horses as a whole. So it was not possible to accommodate all villagers*

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<sup>16</sup> Moroschay oull is a place after Tyakshi where the current LoC has been drawn.



*and animals for grazing in one place. Finally our people who have lived together from generations had to separate now onwards. All villagers together cried out loud that the sound echoed through the mountains. It was the most painful and extremely heartbreaking moment in our lives. Everyone apologized to each other and separated from one another. Some people moved towards Frano<sup>17</sup> and some left for Siari<sup>18</sup>.*” Recalled by a respondent while breaking into tears.

After Moroschay oull the place came where the LoC was redrawn between India and Pakistan on the basis on Shimla Agreement as already identified. The agreement changed the ceasefire line of 17 December 1971 into a new Line of Control. It was shared by the respondent that:

*“At the end of war when Indian Army captured four villages of Chorbat valley, following the ceasefire line, the Indian army had sent a man with a white flag and carried a letter in his hand. The letter stated that if the villagers of Chulungkha return to their village if they want to, they would not be harmed. Their lands will become barren and villages will be abandoned. The Pakistan Army asked us to make the decision but we refused to return to the country of the disbelievers (Bout di Yul).”*

It was observed from the above narrative of the respondent that the Indian Army invited them to come back, but they chose to not go. But I observed that some respondents wanted to go back to their village but the Pak Army did not allow them to return to their village. Respondents pointed out that Pakistani Army did not even return the man who had brought the letter of invitation to India. The man is still living in Khaplu and separated from his two sons who were living at another side of LoC. It was perceived from the above discussion that some of the people were scared of the arrival of another religion in their area which was mentioned as bout and did not go back to live under the rule of infidels in India and decided to migrate to Pakistani side of LoC to live among the Muslims, while others believed that their Pakistani Army refrained them from going back to their *Atti Yul* (Ancestral Land) due to their traditional political enmity.

This is not the end of the problems of these displaced people. It was observed that they faced a lot of troubles and difficulties during their stay in various villages. Initial years were spent in the houses of native people of Khaplu, Bara, Saling, Marcha, Talis, Thaghas and other nearby villages.

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<sup>17</sup> Name of the last village of Baltistan near LoC After the 1971 war.

<sup>18</sup> Name of a village

Some people gave them space in their homes. Some respondents said that they worked in the fields of native people of Khaplu and most of the men worked as drivers and laborers to make a living. The narratives of the people reflected that they had a hope to return to their homeland somehow after the war which made them live in the close vicinity of LoC but it has remained just a hope till date.

Mehdi from Chulungkha narrated that:

*“Hoping to return to our homeland, neither we built a house nor did we buy land for settlement for many years. One of my uncle, Ghulam Ali stayed in Marcha<sup>19</sup> and did not come with us to Skardu and died there with the hope of return in his heart.”*

Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto visited them in Khaplu in 1974 which kindled hope among the people that they would return to their village. They assured that Bhutto would now send them back to their village.

*Appi Khadija* responded that:

*“When Bhutto came to Khaplu in a helicopter, all the people rushed towards the Shagharan (ground) to see him. Some were climbing a high rock to hear what he was saying. Everyone was happy that now Bhutto would take our villages back from the enemy and we would be able to go back to our village. But that was not the case, instead he announced to provide ration for the displaced people of war for five years.”*

For some years they relied on the government's ration which included various things. Explained another respondent:

*“The rations included wheat, milk powder, oil, blankets, mattress, utensils’ etc. for three to four years. Distribution was done in such a way that some people got more than others.”*

Some people showed displeasure for the unequal distribution of ration among the people and fewer things came their way in all those years of migration. After some years the ration was stopped by the government of Pakistan then it became difficult for these people as their bread and butter came from the ration.

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<sup>19</sup> Name of a village near LoC.

In the meantime some respondents gave up hope to return back and chose different professions. Few of them joined the army and police to run their houses. Others worked as laborers, mason and some became drivers who used to carry materials for army contractors. In this way they were spending their lives but the most important thing that they felt urgently needed was their own house to live in. Some people mentioned that after five to six years of being migrants and living among the native people of Khaplu, Bara, Saling and various other villages, they realized that the attitude of the locals was changing towards them. Local people started to misbehave and rudely with them. When there was an argument between the females and the children, they used to abuse refugees.

*“We were living in a room given to our family by an old widow woman. My sister and the old woman’s daughter had an argument and she insulted her for being Muhajir in such a way that I couldn’t tolerate that insult and decided to find a place and move out of that place. Now it has become impossible to live in their house anymore”* shared one of the respondents.

Most of the respondents shared similar stories of being cursed and disrespected by the local people and called them “*Zhalkhan Muhajir*” that means beggar refugees that hit them the most. These people used to live respectful and honorable life back in their village so couldn’t bear such kind of humiliation in a foreign land. Thus, the elderly people of Chorbhat valley realized that life couldn’t be spent in this way and they had to find a permanent place for their settlement.

#### **4.4. Settlement of Displaced Persons**

Settlement of forcibly displaced persons is considered the most difficult process in the whole journey. This migrant community has settled on their own in various areas of Baltistan. In this part, I will analyze the narratives and discuss the hurdles of the people who came to Skardu to find land and settled there as it was not an easy task to start a new life from nothing.

##### **4.4.1. Self-Settlement**

It was observed from the narrations of these war affected people that they had settled by their own in Skardu. The Role of State is negligible in the settlement process. Few people visited Skardu for several other reasons but most of them never travelled to Skardu. At that time the roads were uneven and vehicles were not easily available.

Few people visited Skardu in search of land among them Muhammed *cho* and Azam were more prominent. Muhammed *cho* was among the elder people of Chulungkha. First he, along with Azam (his nephew) came to Skardu, found a suitable place for their people, checked every matter related to land with the landowner and then he brought all his people and settled them in Manthal Skardu. As Muhammed *cho* belonged to the renowned family named as “*Abba Pa*” which was considered honorable and noble Family of Chulungkha. Their Family used to rule the whole village and managed every matter. Maintaining that ritual, he settled his people even after he had lost his land and status. When they visited Manthal valley for the first time it captured their heart as it was the perfect place for them. Azam emphasized on the fact and described that “*Nowadays, people prefer to live close to the city for jobs, but their people accustomed to farming, looked for a vast land with the availability of water to cultivate crops and where they could inhabit their people and have a space to graze their livestock.*”

*Appo* Muhammed *cho* explained the process of acquiring the land from the landowners as:

*“We went to the landowner Haji Hussain who lived in the main bazar Skardu at that time. They were the landlords of most of the areas of Skardu. We went to him and told him about ourselves. We had done the agreement with the landowner. At that time an agreement between landowner and the laborer used to be done according to which on clearing the land for the owner we get half the part of the in return which is called “cho phait saa phait” in Balti. After that we brought our male villagers to analyze the land. Some people were not happy with the place because there was minimum availability of water. But we didn’t leave this place.”*

It seems that settling in a new place from scratch was not easy for these people. They had to work hard for them. The settlement of these people at Manthal valley in Skardu was explained by Azam who lived over three years alone with his wife to take care of that place.

#### **4.4.1.1. Case study of Azam**

Azam is a seventy year old man from Chulungkha. He was thirty year old when he came to Manthal in 1980. When the state stopped supply of ration to the people of Chulungkha who were living in different villages of Baltistan. Everyone went to work as a laborer to feed their families. People were not ready to stay in Manthal without work, so they set out in search of labor towards Skardu. The land of Manthal was a barren and uneven land where only rocks and thorns were in abundance. It was not enough to meet the needs of all the people so they decided to leave it and start different

types of work (*Mazdoori*). At that moment Azam realized that if we leave this place (Manthal) now, we will lose it forever. Then he decided to stay there to look after the land and for watering the fields. All the people who occupied land in Manthal paid him for taking care and watering the land. He was provided with 2000 Rupees, two bags of flour, a tin of oil and other things like salt and milk which were needed for three months. It took three months from the time the wheat was sown to the time it was harvested. Azam remained there to water the fields twice a week. There was a ruined house which was used as a shed by the shepherds; he stayed there at nights. Cattle were being kept in that shed due to which insects and maggots used to bite him all the night. There were plenty of snakes, lizards and other animals. Wild dogs barked at the door all night. In such circumstances Azam didn't give up and remained there for months.

A few months later, Azam's wife and one-year-old daughter who were living at Bara, were also invited to Manthal to stay with him. He had decided to stay in Manthal but it was not easy for him to live with his wife and daughter in that desolate and barren place. He was in such a state of worry that he could not sleep all night and spent the nights thinking about the problems. It was his responsibility to keep his wife and daughter away from wild animals in that isolated place. He made a bed (*Charpayi*) to save them from snakes and other animals. For a few days he would go down to Skardu to the house of *Appo* Ali Hussain, his relative who was already living there. Then they would go to Manthal to water the fields.

Once he asked his wife if she can cope with these difficulties and can manage to live in Manthal. He was satisfied and pleased with the answer of his wife. His wife responded that he could not find a place like this anywhere else and she would happily live there. Hence the husband and wife played an important role in the whole process of the settlement of displaced people in Manthal. Later on, most of the displaced people came there with their families and cattle and together they settled in Manthal. The people of Manthal did a lot of effort for the irrigation system, as there was no proper system for channeling the water to the Manthal. These people made a water channel with their own support to bring water to Manthal but whenever it rains, it destroys the water channel made with sand. They went to clear and maintain the channel every year at the end of February. One person from each family had to go and contribute in clearing the channel each year. Anyhow, with their own effort, now there are trees and greenery in abundance.

The case study shows that these people have settled in Manthal with their own hard work. The laborious and untiring nature of this community had made them succeed to adjust and accommodate in that harsh environment of Manthal in their initial years of settlement. They coped up with all the hurdles that came their way and turned that barren land of Manthal into a tourist resort. It shows their commitment which is commendable.

All the displaced people of Chulungkha had not settled at Manthal. Some people settled in different areas of Skardu. Most of them settled in Shairthang, some of them in Division and others were in Hassan colony. In this research, interviews were taken from the people residing in these areas. Narratives revealed that most of the displaced persons acquired land through signing the contract with the landlords as discussed above. The process of clearing the land needed so much effort and struggle.

*“In Skardu we had to struggle a lot and started a whole new life from scratch. We came to Shairthang which was initially a dry and arid land. Local people of Skardu had been scared to come to this place. We did efforts for clearing the land and the land owners gave a part of it to us in return. In this way we gained a little part of the land and settled here.”* Responded Gul Chahra, a woman from Chulungkha.

#### **4.4.1.2. Case study of Ibrahim**

Ibrahim belongs to the Chulungkha Village of Chorbat Valley. He was twenty five years old at the time of war. After being migrant due to war he also struggled with his village fellows. He also came to Skardu in search of land. One of the landlords from Kharmang met him in Skardu. He had vast barren land near Shairthang and Ibrahim needed land for settlement. When he told him about his matter, he gave him the land on the contract. According to this contract they (who need land) had to clear the whole land and make it a clear field and will receive the half part of the whole land. In simple words by making the barren land clear it would be divided between the person and the landlord. In such a way they managed to get land. Ibrahim and his family worked day and night to clean it. The landlord gave them a mini room (*Khotu*) to live in. This place was full of black bare rocks which were shattered by fire setting method (*Soloung*). They had to use three to four *Soloung* to make one field. They worked (*Mazdoori*) all day and started working and cleared the ground (*Throumbos*) at night. He adapted various occupations to feed his children. He worked as a shopkeeper, tailor, laborer (construction) and mason. His wife was also very hardworking when

he went to work during the day, she worked in the ground in the intense heat. While building a house, she used to fetch water from a distant place for making mud mortar and also helped him in breaking stone to form bricks. Now the landlord legally gave three canals land to him.

In this way after years of effort they had cleared the land and lived in this place now called (*Soqbar*). *Soqbar* was not the name of this place before. This place was already full of thorns and still one can observe the thrones everywhere. There were no trees and plants but only thorny bushes. People used to call them folks of *Soqbar* which means people living in the center of a thorny alley. In this way gradually its name became *Soqbar*. This case study of Ibrahim in regards to settlement shows that these forcibly displaced people of Chulungkha were not compensated by the state. They settled in Skardu by the hard work of their own blood and sweat.

#### **4.4.1.3. Efforts of Women**

Women from Chulungkha had played a vital role in the process of settlement in Skardu. They worked day and night for their family. People still praise and remember the hard work and struggles of these women. Even respondents from Turtuk and Tyakshi revealed that they witnessed how the women of Chulungkha worked side by side with their male partners in every aspect of life. These women are known for their sacrifices and hard work even now. In this connection, respondents from Tyakshi recalled the hurdles of the women of Chulungkha during their settlement in Skardu.

Ghulam Qadir from Tyakshi recalled that:

*“It was a heart wrenching moment to see the women working day and night, clearing the fields of landowners to get a piece of land for themselves. ”*

These women, working along with men in the fields carried muds and stones during clearing the fields and constructing the houses in the new place. *“We used to carry baskets (Chouroung) on our back all day long and never put it down until evening. We worked as laborers alongside men and carried gravel (Bajri) and heavy stones in the basket for the construction of houses or animal sheds. Due to which blisters were made on our backs”* Recalled by an old woman in a painful voice with teary eyes.

*“When we arrived in this place (Soqbar), all the women went to the nearest mountain and hilly areas to bring wood and sagebrush (Burshay) for cooking and heating purposes. Apart from this,*

*we had to go to Nallah (Channel) and fetch water in Jerry cane for consumption.”* Addressed a woman from Soqbar.

One of the respondents told about the struggle of his family in finding land in Skardu and making it worth living.

*“While I was working as a driver, one of my acquaintances was showing land to my relative Shamshair Ali. He didn’t like the desolate place and refused by saying that I would rather prefer to purchase a cleared fertile land. I was very happy because I was also in search of land. I surveyed the whole area and found it appropriate for us. Then after getting information about the landowner I went in search of him. Once I got this land on agreement my family worked hard on this land. My father, mother and sister built a small stone room. My father was a mason (Mistri) and my mother and sister helped him day and night in breaking stones and making bricks for the construction of the room. In summers we used to cry by remembering our homeland in front of the room when the hot summers start burning our body. At that time there were no trees and shadows like this. The whole area is a clear barren area with no water availability.”* Recalled one of the respondents from the Satellite town.

During my field work, I have observed that women of Chulungkha are more active in every matter than men. Their hard work nature has shown from their surrounding areas. I have observed during that time that the houses/rooms where they used to live and some are still living there, are mostly made of stones. As time went on, things got better and they built new modern houses along with the old one.

#### **4.4.2. Perception of the Role of Government**

During the interviews, people mentioned that the government provided measures in early years of migration but later on, no one asked about their condition. During their initial years of being migrants, Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto provided ration to these displaced people to fulfil their basic needs for five years. The items included in the ration were blankets, mattress, clothes, utensils and food items containing oil, wheat, milk powder, sugar etc. The quantity of ration was not enough for these people which compelled them to do work in the fields and houses of people to meet their ends. Some of the respondents mentioned that due to the lack of unequal distribution of food items and other materials some people were deprived from obtaining ration and few of them got a limited



amount of ration. One of the respondents shed light on the weaknesses these people had during their early years of migration. He believed that the government's lack of interest in this matter as well as the ignorance of the people became a reason for not getting the proper rights of these people. He didn't allow me to record his interview and also refused to reveal his name and identity in the research during the interview. He opened up that:

*“We can't just blame the government for not getting aid. There were some faults of our own people too. Due to the lack of knowledge and awareness our people failed in many matters. Our people were simple and absence of the well-educated leader, who would lead us in the correct direction, resulted in a number of problems and these problems were not solved properly.”*

A few years later, in 1980 and 1981, the government gave them nineteen thousand rupees per family. The amount of money was given to them in installments. For the first time they got ten thousand rupees and another year got nine thousand rupees. During the field work, almost all the respondents seemed heartbroken and depressed with the response of the state towards them. Pakistani State has the responsibility to take measures for the resettlement of the displaced persons of war. All the people suffered and were uprooted from their native place due to the 1971 war. It is the right of these destitute people to be resettled. These people appeared not satisfied with the role of the government in their settlement. In the previous section, it has been explained that these people had settled themselves on their own, no one helped them in finding land in a new place. Some of the elder people among these displaced persons struggled a lot to get land for these displaced persons and also submit applications to the relevant authorities and requested the higher officials for the allocation of land for these people

Some respondents said that the government had offered us the land in Kinnae Dash but the local residents of that area objected due to which they couldn't settle there. Muhammed khan, who is the President of All *Muhajireen* 1971, who have been at the forefront of all these matters from the beginning addressed that:

*“The government was about to give us a piece of land in Kinnae Das but the local people objected and we could not get that land. Afterwards our people were offered land at Sethang in Skardu. It was also cancelled because people of Olding complained that it was their pasture area. One of the government officials visited us and promised us to give land in Fateh Jang Pindi, we were ready to go there but he just said this for the sake of saying. So in this way there were lots of promises*

*made for the land allocations but had not been implemented. Lastly, the Government of Pakistan had allotted land in Sarfaranga desert in 1978. Twenty two canal land was transferred to the head of the family. In such a way sixty four Muhajir families of 1971 war acquired land from the State of Pakistan with legal documents. But still the state isn't able to settle us there.”*

Various challenges came up in the way of settlement and so far they are struggling with it. Firstly the Sarfaranga is a vast desert area, there is no water and electricity access thus it is extremely difficult for the people to settle there. It was mentioned by some respondents that an attempt was made to get water out of the ground by boring. They tried to get water out of the ground at their own expense, which cost them a lot of money. Secondly some people from the surrounding areas of Sarfaranga filed a case against these people, claiming that the land belonged to them and they never let anybody occupy this land. They had to fight the case against these people in the court.

*“In the First place, we needed a lawyer to fight the case, for this purpose we arranged a lawyer for our case. Then with the help of contributions from all the refugees we were able to pay the lawyer's fee. We have been going round the court for years but those people were not ready to solve the land matter even after many years. However, the court asked us to resolve the matter through mutual negotiation. Then we took out two canals of land from each family and gave it to them. In this way, after six years of constant struggle we settled the land case. After that some people from Shigar filed a case against us. It took 4 years to settle the problem. This is not the end of the story. Muhajir of 1947-1948 claimed this land and started to ask for their share in the land of Sarfaranga. This case is still ongoing in the court.”* The hurdles of these displaced people of Chorbat valley are not over after fifty years of migration. Thus these people identified that they have been suffering more than benefiting from this land for so many years.

*“During the division of the land, we had to pay for the Munshi. When we started to dig out water from the ground, we had to appoint a watchman to safeguard it. We have spent a lot of our hard earned money on this land.”* Complained one of the respondents.

*“We have spent a lot of money and time on this land. Till date, neither the government nor the concerned authorities (Tehsil Office) tried to find a solution to this problem. Otherwise this is not a big issue for them. If these other Muhajireen wanted to take this land, give it to them and settle our people somewhere else. We just don't understand the reason for hanging the issue like this for almost forty years now. Even though we did not take possession of this land by ourselves, it was*

*legally provided to our people by the government of Pakistan with official papers (Intiqaal Shudah). If someone interferes in this matter, the government should be supposed to resolve the issue, not us. We want our people to be given the land in exchange for their land they left behind in their homeland (Atti Yul) due to war. If the state can't settle our people, then we should be compensated for this land.”* Azam clarified the issue. *“We have left our movable and immovable land because of the war. No one can challenge this land which was given to our people during Zia ul Haq’s regime.”* Narrated by Bilal Zubairi from Tyakshi.

It is cleared from the above discussion that the state failed to fulfil its responsibilities regarding the settlement of these migrated people. Instead of settling them in Sarfaranga land, these people have been put in more trouble by the State. It has deprived these people from their basic rights. Due to the ongoing case in session court regarding the land which has not reached to any conclusion, the community suffered with the uncertainty and insecurity that the land they owned legally may be taken away from them. They can neither build a house there nor sell it. If someone sold the land, he has the fear of returning the money as a result of losing the case in the court. People were trying their best to solve the matter. Some leaders of these Muhajireen are struggling and communicating with the higher authorities. In order to resolve their issues, these displaced persons got affiliated with different political parties. They collectively gave vote to one political party in return the associated political party reassured them that they will solve their problems. Muhammed khan is a representative of All Muhajireen 1971, he has put all their issues before them, including resettlement, but till date no one has helped them.

These displaced persons of Chorbat valley are disappointed with the government of Pakistan. One of the major concerns of these people is to settle the land case which is creating a lot of difficulty for them, Due to lack of attention and interest expressed by the government and other political leaders towards them made them ignored and neglected by the State. Some respondents got very emotional when asked about this issue and spoke out that if Pakistani State can't give the rights to the refugees then open Nubra-Kargil Road and let our people go back to their homeland.

#### **4.5. Conclusion**

It is concluded from this chapter that the political war between India and Pakistan in 1971 has rigorously affected the local borderlanders of Chorbat valley. This chapter portrays the sequence of the story of the Chulungkha villagers in a structural way along with the thematic description.

The villagers of Chulungkha were spending their normal lives and preserved the summer's products for winters. The war has irreversibly changed their lives. The narratives and lived experiences articulated by these people reflected the intensity of pain and agony experienced by these forcibly displaced people. People of Chulungkha were uprooted from their homeland and suffered a lot in many ways. On the way, they suffered from airstrikes and shelling of the enemy over their head and fear of losing their life were constantly there. They also suffered from starvation, thirst and cold climate which caused the rise of the problems to a great extent. Women endured additional hurdles along their way of displacement due to their gender. These women carried children and elderly people on their back throughout the journey. Likewise, pregnant married women suffered a lot of health issues during migration. Due to the historical background of war, women had the mental pressure and fear of the enemy and the danger of losing their honor created extra terror among them.

Forced displacement always leads towards homelessness. These homeless people lived in the various villages near the LoC for many years hoping to return to their homeland. State supplied relief for a few years to these displaced persons but did nothing for their permanent settlement. These people settled themselves with their own hard work and diligence in Skardu. Women of Chulungkha were known for their countless and exceptional efforts along with men during their self-settlement process in various areas of Skardu. Role of the state was perceived as negligible in the settlement of these people. A barren land was allotted in Sarfaranga desert Skardu for the displaced persons but due to various intervention from surrounding local people for this land and corruption of other institutions, the state has failed to settle them. Despite being migrants due to war these people have been overlooked by the Pakistani state and concerned authorities over the fifty years of span.

## **5. SEPARATION OF FAMILIES ACROSS LINE OF CONTROL**

This chapter seeks to focus on the second objective of the study referring to the pangs of separation of the families due to the Indo-Pak war in 1971. The sudden and arbitrary creation of the border due to war ended up separating thousands of families in this part of LoC, and brought upon them the never ending poignant effects on their lives. This chapter also documents the means of communication which the separated families used to be in touch and make contacts with the loved ones across the border. It further explores the novel ways opted by the separated families for the reunification process and also investigates the difficulties they encountered on their way of reunion.

When the LoC between India and Pakistan was redrawn after the war of 1971, people of Chorbat valley who were away from their homes for different reasons were forced to remain on either side of the border without giving them any chance to go back to their native places. This impromptu division of the border that separates villages and families irretrievably changes the lives of residents of both sides of the border. The redrawn of LoC resulted in separating parents from their sons and/or daughters and husbands lost their wives, which is the denial of the human rights of the single unit for decades (Mahapatra, 2011). Some members of one household were then in Pakistan administered areas and due to the ceasefire line they remained in Pakistan and their village became part of India. Due to the redrawing of LoC many blood relations split apart from their family and got different national identities (Bouzas, 2019). Their pain of separation from their family was evident from their expressions and narratives. During my field work, I have experienced their feeling of helplessness and distress of living away from their families. All the respondents who were separated from their family members across the border could not stop their tears during the interview and some of them cried so much that they could not even verbally communicate and I took a break for a while till they regained the strength to speak. The relatives who were present there during the interview, also started crying with them. Every person seemed to be tormented by the grief of separation.

### **5.1. Separated Women of Chulungkha**

During the war of 1971, Indian Army captured four villages from the Baltistan side of LoC Chulungkha, Turtuk, Tyakshi and Thang. The war changed the lives of these villagers altogether. Due to the fact that Chulungkha village was located in the close proximity of LoC, all the villagers

left the village for security reasons. Almost 95% of Chulungkha villagers had left their homes except few people who were unable to walk or suffering from any illness. Therefore, a few individuals were separated from their family members. Most of the women of Chulungkha were separated from their families due to their gendered role. One of them was Gul Chahra who narrated the heart-wrenching story of separation from her family. She was married and she had to leave with her husband's family at the age of 22. Her whole family had to stay due to the old and blind grandparents who could not go on such a long journey. Gul Chahra narrated as:

*“My parents had to stay due to my grandparent's old age. My grandfather and grandmother were not able to walk due to their blindness. My uncle (Chacha) had an injury in his foot while serving the Pak army as a potter on the mountains. All these reasons made them stay there at the village. I had to leave them behind and migrate with my husband and a six months old child. Throughout the journey, I wept for my family and I am still mourning for them. My baby died during the journey and after two years, I had another baby boy but he also could not live. They left me for whom I lost my family.”* She expressed while bursting into tears.

Similarly the cousin of Gul Chahra named Zaiba also migrated along with her husband and left her family behind. Both sisters mourned for their family over the years and yearned for the reunion. Gul Chahra could not go to her village in her father's life while Zaiba after a long struggle managed to make it possible to visit her mother in 2016. Similarly some other women of Chulungkha who were married to neighboring villages Turtuk, Tyakshi or Thang had to stay there with their husbands and children.

*“My sister was already married to someone in Turtuk. When we were coming here (Skardu) as displaced persons, she was ready to come along but I didn't want to separate her from her little children. So she had to stay”* Azam shared while remembering his sister.

## **5.2. Separated Families of Turtuk and Tyakshi**

Most of the residents of Turtuk and Tyakshi had suffered a lot of separation from relatives as these people decided not to leave their villages. But their family members who were out of the village or went to Skardu and other parts of Pakistan for educational, economic and other reasons at the time of war 1971 were forced to remain on the other side of LoC and could not return to their families and native places. In such a way many families split apart from their loved ones. Similar

separations of families were observed in Kargil where after the division of Sub-Continent, LoC bisected the villages. The people of Kargil who were spread over different regions of Baltistan for different purposes got separated from their families and remained in Pakistan (Shekhawat & Mahapatra, 2009).

Some of the respondents who were out of their village at the time of war as they were studying in different madrasas of Pakistan also separated from their families. Khaliq from Tyakshi and Javaid from Turtuk were in Faisalabad for studies before the 1971 war broke out. Bashir from Turtuk, who was eighteen years old and studying at Inter College Skardu, separated from his family. Bilal Zubairi from Tyakshi had come to Skardu with his father at that time to take his brother home when the war started and they got stranded in Pakistan. His mother, sister and two other brothers remained on the other side of LoC. Due to the two-sided hostility between India and Pakistan these separated families could not even meet, living just a few kilometers away from each other. The border also separated wives from their husbands who were away from homes for jobs.

*“I was thirty four year old, serving in the army when the 1971 war started. I had visited my family during my vacation in October 1971 and went back to duty. After that the LoC had been drawn and I could not meet my wife as she was on the other side of the border. I waited for eight years, with a hope to go back to my village but I failed. When there was no hope left for the reunion, I sent a divorce letter to my wife. So that she could live her life.”* Shared 83 year old Sufi Muhammed from Tyakshi with tears in his eyes.

Another respondent Haji Qadir from Tyakshi was serving in the Army during the separation and shared his heart aching story of separation from his wife. He narrated:

*“I joined the army in 1962. During the war of 1971, I was appointed in Gilgit. I went home to spend my fifteen days’ vacation to celebrate Eid ul Azha with my family in 1971. That was the last time I had celebrated Eid with my family. My father died earlier but my mother, sister, aunts and uncles were living in Tyakshi. When I went back to Gilgit, war started at the border and my village was taken by the Indian Army. I was married in 1960 but we did not have children. I had been waiting to be reunited with my wife and my family for a long time. In 1984 my wife fell in the Indus River while crossing a bridge. The Pakistan army saw some people running alongside the Indus River and realized that someone had fallen into the river. I was informed by my family from the other side of the border. Havildar Rasool got the news and he along with Ghurzchay villagers*

*buried the dead body of my wife. I reached Frano after three to four days of her burial. Then I made the tombstone and food was served to all the people who helped in burying my wife's body. Even now, I arrange reciting of the Quran and Duas for my wife every year.”*

After 1947, contrary to the pre-partition, the residents of Chulungkha, Turtuk, Tyakshi and Thang started to move into the areas governed by Pakistan for the search of jobs, education and health related issues. They started to join the military, driving and other professions. But a limited number of people were included in this category. It was observed during the fieldwork that most of the men separated from their families because they were working at Skardu and other places of Pakistan at the time of war 1971. Moreover, some respondents from Tyakshi mentioned that only female members of the family remained in Indian side and all the male members of the family were stranded in Pakistan. Some wives remained in India and their husbands stuck in Pakistan. Similarly women of Chulungkha who were married at the time of war were compelled to stay with their husbands in Turtuk, Tyakshi or Thang and they got separated from their parents and siblings. Some women were compelled to flee with their husbands leaving their parents behind who were not able to move to Pakistan. In such a way numerous women were torn apart from their families and endured psychological suffering. These divided families stranded and lingered in different regions of Baltistan.

I have observed that when asked about the separated family members, they looked saddened and most of them cried remembering the loved ones. Majority of my respondents repeatedly said a sentence during interviews which I quoted here as “*Chu mindu khuda si dikha minay yud suk.*” It means “God had written our food (*Rizq*) here”.

For many years these separated families worried for their family as they were in a war zone and they didn't know how the Indian Army treated them after controlling their village. The grief of separation gives them heart aches over the years. These separated people have taken many ways to reduce this distance. The ways adopted by these divided families to communicate with the left behind family members have been discussed in the following section.

### **5.3. Means of Communication**

After the 1971 war, people remained near the villages of LoC with a hope to go back to their homeland but with time that hope diminished. It has been five decades now and these people are



still separated from their loved ones. The rigidly controlled LoC has not been able to reduce the desire of these separated people to be connected. They had somehow contacted each other by different means. Virtual modes of communication traverse borders that are difficult to cross physically. This section chronologically discussed the means of communication utilized by the separated families in order to contact their families over the past decades. The divided families could not even know the whereabouts of their families after five to six years of separation. Gradually letters began to be exchanged among the separated families. The respondents narrated that when letters arrived people used to gather to listen to the news from the relatives across the border. They used to gather at one place to share the news because most of the letters contained news of the death of their family members or close relatives.

A respondent Gul Chahra narrated;

*“After five years of separation from my family, I received a letter from my father with his picture. We all were worried about their well-being back in the village. We didn’t know what happened to them after the war and how the Indian army treated them. But my father in the letter after Salam and Dua informed us about their safety and good health and further explained how the emptiness of the village added to the pain of separation even more and they were more concerned about our security and good health.”* Gul Chahra was crying vehemently while talking about her father.

*“It took two to three months and sometimes even six months for the letters to reach Skardu and very few people could read and write the letter. I used to take the letter to Appo Munshi to read and write answers to the letters.”* Narrated Appo Azam.

The circuitous and difficult roads of Skardu as well as the inspection of letters for security reasons on both sides of the border caused the delay of letters. The distance between Frano and Turtuk is less than 30 kms but people couldn’t meet and even letters were not being sent via this route. The letters had to travel via Skardu post office to Islamabad, Islamabad to New Delhi, and New Delhi to Leh sector from where they were delivered to the respective villages of Chorbat. The letters used to reach the receiver in three to four months after passing through all these procedures. The lengthy procedure of sending or receiving letters added to the miseries of the separated families. Due to the delayed communication some separated families got the news of the death of their loved ones after several months of the burial.

Gradually people started to exchange gifts as some respondents mentioned that their families residing on Indian side of LoC used to send them Kashmiri Shawls, Ladakhi rings and other items famous in that area. They also sent them money to help their separated family members who were left behind in Skardu and were not well off financially.

*“As we were stuck here at Skardu due to war and had nothing for our survival so that's why my brother used to send me money occasionally. He sent me one lac rupees till now on different occasions.”* Said one of the respondents from Turtuk.

After ten to fifteen years of separation of the people, a period of exchange of cassettes began. These cassettes were either sent by courier or sent with the pilgrims who used to meet the relatives in Makkah. Through cassettes they were able to hear the voices of their family members after so many years.

*“Few years later, a cassette was sent to Skardu in which my father sang and recorded a song for us. I bought a tape recorder especially to listen to my father's voice. All of the relatives who heard that song could not control their emotions and cried. When I first heard my father's voice, after decades, I felt my throat aching and started crying out of overwhelming emotions. Later on, that continuous pain in my throat converted into this goiter.”* Recalled by Gul Chahra while mentioning her goiter.

Many of the separated families never received letters and cassettes from their relatives. They never found each other's address to send letters and gifts. Some of the letters went missing or never came back. They did not know whether they were alive or dead. Separated family members opted every possible way to contact their loved ones across the border. One of my respondents Bashir from Turtuk used to work at Radio Pakistan Skardu shared that in the late 1980s, they used to greet each other across the border through writing letters to the Radio Pakistan Skardu. At that time the separated people used to write their own name, relatives name, village and name of family which mostly end with *Pa* in the letters in order to identify easily. So it also became a source of communication for these divided families. Some respondents mentioned that, at that time everyone had a radio in their houses and even if they didn't have any they bought one with a hope that a letter from their relatives could come on air at Radio Station Skardu. Dedication of Balti songs to their relatives across the border was also a way of communication that happened through Radio. A few years later, radio signals across the border were banned by Indian government and that way

of communication ended. Banning Radio could not refrain them from trying to make ways to meet their separated families across the LoC.

These families continued to make efforts to connect with their divided families. After fifteen to twenty years of separation, India restored the phone services across the border in the Ladakh region; still the villages were deprived of the proper phone call service. Whenever Indo-Pak relations deteriorated, the phone services in the region suspended which ultimately terminated the communication of the separated families across the border. Families exchanged phone numbers through letters and then started to communicate with each other via telephonic calls.

Some of the respondents expressed that it was extremely poignant and heartbreaking to be away from their family and yearn for a meeting with their families. It was a miserable situation that they could not meet their own families despite living a few kilometers away. The craving for their loved ones compelled them to find various means to reach their families.

## **5.4. Family Reunion Strategies**

Divided families could not endure the pangs of separation and opted various strategies to be reunited with their families. Family reunion means a state of being reunified and connected with the separated family members after a long period of time. Family reunion helps in reconnecting the face-to-face interaction to keep alive family bonds and also to revive the memories of family. People express and rejoice their concept of family through reunion (Sutton, 2004).

### **5.4.1. Reunion in Respective Countries**

Virtual communication among the separated families didn't alleviate the grief of separation. Thus, the displaced persons applied for the visa for India to meet their divided families. Some displaced persons shared that it took several years for them to make enough money to visit their families across the border because it costs a considerable amount of money as well as time. In addition, the bilateral animosity and hostility between the two states generated obstacles in acquiring visas for the residents of the border area. One of my respondents Javaid from Turtuk shared the procedure of the visa acquisition process for the residents of the border area. He narrated that he faced a lot of problems in acquiring a visa for India.

*“The procedure for the visa application process is extremely complex. It is not an easy task for a common man to get a visa, and even when a person is a resident of a border area, then it becomes*

*more problematic. We have to get an invitation from the other side of the border from our relatives along with the service copy of an officer for verification. Along with all the necessary documents, we apply for a visa by filling the form. Then it is sent to India again for inquiry, if it is approved by Indian authorities; we will be able to get a visa”.*

The complicated procedures for passport and visa applications have created obstacles for the reunion of separated families. The economic conditions and illiteracy caused more hindrance in the way of their reunion. They either travel from Skardu to Islamabad by road via Karakoram highway or by airplane which is considered the most expensive domestic flight in Pakistan. From Islamabad either they take flight from Islamabad or travel by road via Lahore. Majority of the population of the displaced persons are not educated and they cannot deal with the complicated process of visa application. Most of the displaced persons are old and they need someone who can deal with all the complicated paperwork. Thus, for many separated people the reunion and visit to their own homeland has become a dream.

#### **5.4.1.1. Case Study of Javaid**

Javaid belonged to Turtuk village, he was ten years old when he went to Faisalabad to study in 1969. He was in contact with his family before the 1971 war but never visited his family during holidays. He mentioned that he was too young to travel alone as well as due to the difficult travel routes he never tried to go on vacations to his village. He never visited his family in two years because transportation was a big problem for the people back then. He explained that he travelled from Turtuk to Skardu on foot in 1969 which took almost a month from his village to Skardu. He waited for a flight for ten day in Skardu but could not have one due to bad weather conditions. At last he went to Gilgit and after ten days got a flight to Islamabad. At that time one Ticket of Pakistan International Airline cost sixty rupees to travel from Gilgit to Islamabad, but he was ten years old so he paid a compensated price of twenty five rupees and reached his destination. When the war broke out, he was separated from his village and family. Then in 1974, he wrote them a letter and luckily got their reply after a few months. In this way he built a connection again but the grief of separation was not letting him settle and he struggled to meet his family.

After decades he managed to apply for the visa. First time, when he applied for the visa to Turtuk it was rejected because of its bordered nature, then he applied for Delhi and it was rejected again and his family members who came to Delhi to meet him, went back to Turtuk with disappointment.

After that he could not apply for a visa due to financial issues. He tried again for a visa in 2006, but he got it a year later in 2007, which was also only for Srinagar not for Turtuk. It also took three more months for the passport submission and other documentations. After all the procedures it took fifteen months for him to visit his family. Finally he went to Srinagar and met his family after thirty eight years. Talking about the time of his union with family his voice was shaking and eyes were filled with tears. He expressed that his family was craving for him more than he was for them. It was such a pleasant as well as painful moment for all of them. When they met each other at Srinagar airport everyone was crying for hours and they could not talk. Then they stayed at someone's relative's house. His family tried extremely hard to get him a visa to Turtuk and somehow managed to extend his visa to Ladakh. He lived in Ladakh for forty five days with his family. He was not able to visit his homeland that time but he was happy that at least he got a chance to meet his family in their life. After that when he tried for a visa he succeeded in getting a visa for Turtuk village for a month. But this time his parents were not alive. He revealed the changes he felt during his visit to his village after almost 4 and half decades. He elaborated that the infrastructure and physical outlook was changed there and it's better than the Pakistani side of villages. He also mentioned that Ladakhi effects can be seen in the ways of their Balti people. The new generation has adopted the ways of Ladakhi culture and the style of speaking. Balti language seemed quite changed as compared to the one spoken in Baltistan. He met the new nephews and nieces who called him Pakistani *Appo* (Grandfather) and when they met on phone calls they insisted him to visit them again that reunions are meaningful because new family members are introduced, family histories are shared, and connections are recalled (Ayoub, 1966). Physical meetings get them more close to each other and also helps to know the separated family members. Family reunions required that “knowing your family is knowing yourself” (Sutton, 2004, p. 253).

#### **5.4.1.2. Case study of Zaiba**

Zaiba is a more than sixty years old woman who belongs to Chulungkha village. She was a teenager during the war of 1971. She was separated from her whole family and fled with her husband to the Pakistani administered territory. At that time she kept crying the entire journey for leaving her family behind. According to her, she was so young that she felt scared even to ask someone about her family. When she heard that a bomb had been detonated at her village, she would weep silently in a corner for her family. In this way years passed, but she could not be reunited with her family. She remains in Thogmus village near the LoC with her husband. This village is only 30kms away

from her native village and still she could not meet her mother and siblings. Finally her family managed to send her to India (Chulungkha) via the International Border of Pakistan and India after completing the complex procedure of visa acquisition. When they applied for a visa for the first time in 2015, their application was rejected. After that they applied multiple times but always there was some paper issue that emerged. Meanwhile, she was receiving messages that her mother's health is not well. After several attempts her family completed the paperwork for the visa and succeeded in getting visa approval for her in 2016. Zaiba was extremely excited and started buying gifts for her family. All the relatives were happy for her and they also sent gifts and messages to their separated family members. She travelled to Islamabad by road and from there she reached at Wagah-Attari border with her nephew who was with her to manage all the matters as she didn't even travel outside Skardu in her entire life. After the strict document inspection and luggage assessment she was able to reach Delhi. His brother came there to receive his sister. They met after 45 years of separation. The people of Chulungkha welcome her with garlands and she was finally able to meet her beloved mother after a prolonged separation who was in bed and could move from there. She wanted to take care of her mother and she remained there for six months by extending her visa duration. She left the village when her mother died in her presence.

Similarly separated families from India also visit Pakistan to meet their families. *All-Muhajireen* 1971 of Chorbat valley reached Skardu Airport on Arrival of Abbas and his son from Chulungkha. Abbas met his sisters Gul Chahra and Zaiba after 38 years of separation. It was an immensely heart touching scene of reunion. A huge rally of vehicles and motorbikes had been witnessed at the Skardu airport Road. It was a tearful welcome to the guests from their ancestral homeland. They were warmly welcomed by their relatives with the garlands of flowers and money. The separated siblings wept so much on first meeting that they fell on the ground. They were taken to the Shairthang and Manthal from the airport where they were welcomed by the remaining villagers. After greetings and lunch they were taken to the graves of the dead relatives”.

*“I couldn't go to my village when my father was alive, due to economic reasons but in 2008 my brother and his son visited Skardu to meet me. We met after 38 years of separation. I could not control my emotions and fainted on their arrival. We all cried and couldn't talk to each other. It was like meeting them after being reincarnated. When they were here, all of our relatives and Muhajireen of 1971 came to meet them and wanted to invite them for a meal at their homes so*

*much that I couldn't even spend a whole day with them. They spent about seven months among us and then returned back to India. I wanted to stop them but I couldn't". Gul Chahra shared with tears in her eyes."*

After five years Gul Chahra met her remaining siblings in 2014. Shah Jahan and her younger brother came to Pakistan via Wagah border to meet their sister in Skardu. In this way, these separated families met through international borders and spent a considerable amount of time and money to reach Skardu. Not all people are financially strong enough to meet their separated relatives across the border. Some people have not yet met their separated family members and many of them have died with this grief. Through the case studies it was understood how these separated families tolerated the hurdles in their way of reunion with their families. Complicated visa processes and elongated travel routes made their life harder. The plight of separated families of Chhorbat valley has not been addressed in any platform and they are continuously facing these issues.

#### **5.4.2. Reunion in Third Countries**

Many separated families of Chhorbat valley employed various ways to meet their divided family members. As some people never got visas to go to India due to various reasons. People who have served in the Pakistan Army or Police cannot get an Indian visa due to the nature of their jobs. They go to a third country outside India and Pakistan to meet their family members. These people used to go to Iran, Iraq and Saudi Arabia for religious purposes (Hajj, Umrah, and Ziyarat) where they met their divided relatives. However, very few people got this opportunity to go for Hajj or Umrah. Most of them only wish to go there and meet the pilgrims and send gifts, photographs and Cassettes for their relatives. These pilgrims' became a source of communication for many years through whom they could indirectly connect with their relatives across the border. Those who were able to meet their relatives directly, shared their emotional experience of reunion. Haji Ghulam Qadir from Tyakshi narrated that in 1990 he met his brother and other relatives at Makkah during his visit. He was informed by his brother earlier through a letter that he was coming for Hajj that year. He said;

*"I travelled for Hajj in Behri Jahaz (Ship) in 1990. When I reached there I was very anxious and excited to meet my brother. I was looking for my brother for some days but they did not reach Makkah. After a few days, I saw a Balti old man between Safa and Marwa, who had lost his*

*companions in the crowd. He was calling them in Balti language. So I went close to him to ask. He told me that he belongs to India, so I came to know that he was one of my relatives from Tyakshi with whom my brother also was to come. I was glad at the thought that they were so close to me. He didn't recognize me but after some time I told him about myself and we both hugged each other and cried so much. Then on another day someone told me that my brother is coming to meet me. I was so nervous to meet my brother. We met each other almost after 19 years of separation and that too in the holy city of Makkah. We just could not control our tears and broke down in each other's arms and together we cried for a few moments till our overwhelming emotions settled down a little"*

The story of Zainab is the most interesting story of the reunion of a husband and wife. They were separated in the war of 1971, husband stuck in Pakistan while wife remained in India with their two sons. They were in touch through letters but they could not stand the distress of separation and decided to meet during Hajj at Saudi Arabia after twelve years of separation. When they reunited at Makkah in 1984 it seemed impossible for them to be separated again. Thus they decided to remain with each other for the remaining life. They met with the Balti person who was working at Khanna e Kaabah at that time. With the help of the person he was able to show his wife dead in the document. In this way he succeeded in bringing his wife along with him to Pakistan. After that they were living together in a far-flung village of Pakistan for many years. After many years her husband died and she is still living in Pakistan. I have come across several such fascinating and heart touching stories of reunion. One of my respondents shared the story of a man, who was stranded in Pakistan after the war and separated from his whole family. After so many years of separation, he applied for a visa and went to his village in India to meet his family. When his visa expired Indian Government forced him to be sent back to Pakistan, he resisted and never came back. The Indian army, after many failed attempts to send him back, allowed him to stay with a condition that he will never travel outside his village. He accepted the condition and remained with his family for the rest of his life. Thus separation of family and to live without family is extremely hard and painful for the left behind family members and they leave no stone unturned to be with their families.

Most of the respondents from Turtuk and Tyakshi are still separated from their families. They are hardly making a living in Skardu and it's not possible for them to travel to any other country. Some



people can't travel long distances due to illness and old age. Thus these people can only meet their relatives by using phone and social media. With the age of IT and social media, social apps played a key role in reuniting these separated families.

## **5.5. Role of Information and Communication Technology**

In recent times, the national borders have been increasingly traversed by the internet (Johnson & Post, 1996). The contested nature of LoC between Pakistan and India has stringently restricted the movement of people but it could not refrain them from connecting with their relatives across the border. Thus it is increasingly the more common strategy among the refugees to use information and communication technologies (hereafter ICTs) to maintain contact with their families which include mobile phones, the internet, and social media sites, such as Facebook, WhatsApp, Skype, and Viber (Shah, Hess, & Goodkind, 2019). These new forms of means of communication facilitated the divided families of war to get in touch with their families across the LoC. They managed to contact them by engaging mostly through social media sites like Facebook and Whatsapp. The communication through ICTs need to have proper connectivity of the Internet and necessary knowledge of using the technology.

### **5.5.1. Barriers in Adapting Information and Communication Technologies**

This new medium of communication has become more famous among these families which is considered more effective in connecting them with their divided families in recent years. Before that, due to border locality these people were deprived from this opportunity in Baltistan. Barriers in adopting the ICTs were numerous among these displaced people. Physical access and network connectivity was seen as a major barrier in adapting the ICTs among the displaced people of Chorbit valley living close to LoC. The internet connection was initially limited to a few areas on both sides of the border and that too with a low bandwidth and speed. In Skardu the availability of the internet has been possible since 2004. Recently a 3G and 4G network facility have been launched in Skardu but it is not working properly. Before mobile Internet People used to visit the internet cafes in the markets even now many people visit internet cafes for speedy internet access. The internet helped people to connect with the divided families in many ways but all of the people had no access to the internet. The internet cafes were considered the men's place in the context of Skardu and females were hesitant and uncomfortable to go there to use the internet. Besides the physical access to ICTs as a barrier factor, the skill access and the usage access factors were

pointed out by Van Dijk (2003). Majority of the respondents of this study were older than 50 years, thus these old displaced people lacked the required expertise for the usage of new technology and mentioned that they were totally dependent on their family members who were able to use the internet. The younger and educated family members helped them to connect with the family members in Indian side of the border.

Some of the respondents knew the basic skills of using smartphones. Some of the older respondents mentioned that their eyesight with age faded, thus they were not able to see the faces of their loved ones and their homeland through internet (video call) like other people but could hear their voices. Through ICTs separated families were united after decades which was a blessing for the people whose hopes of meeting their loved ones were dwindling. Numerous people found their lost family members with whom they were unable to contact. They are now informed about the conditions of the families and share sad and happy moments of life.

*“I am in contact with my whole family in India. I meet and talk to every person in my family on video call. Even they show me houses and fields of my village. Sometimes, they send me videos and pictures through whatsapp. Seeing them gives me peace and happiness even though we cannot meet physically but this is how we make ourselves happy.”* Shared one of my respondents.

Communication with relatives through ICTs helped decrease the burden of separation from their families and fulfilled some of their emotional and mental needs by making them feel at home when they were away from their homes.

*“It was amazing to talk to the family members on video call. It is just like you and me talking now.”* One of the old women said with astonishing amusement in her eyes.

The overall emotional wellbeing and capacity to settle are highly dependent on sustaining their communication networks with family members for knowledge and assurance of their whereabouts and safety (Leung, 2011). Some respondents mentioned that when they saw the faces of their older parents through video call. They were short of words to express their emotions. They were so happy because they were able to see their parents while they were alive. It is observed that digital technology can contribute to bridging the separation gap and can provide separated families the chance to retain communication with their families. Some people expressed their wish that if they had the internet facility when their parents were alive, they could at least see their parents' faces.

Refugees remain in contact with their family members through the use of Information and communication technology (ICTs) which enable them to be emotionally connected with their distant families (Baldassar, 2016). It was observed that educated young people of separated families tried to find their relatives across the border in Nubra valley of Leh through the internet. The people became friends with strangers of the areas where they belonged and found connections to their families.

We can observe from the transformation of the means of communication of these separated Balti families from Chorbat that it got advanced with the progress of technology in the world. Sharing of photographs and videos via Facebook has been increasingly observed across the border. With the proliferation of the Internet. Young people on the other side of the border began to search for their lost loved ones. People met with each other through Facebook pages and groups. Territorial limitations were minimized by the internet and created pluri-local spaces in the transnationalization of social space as cited by Gupta (2014). One of the most popular social apps was the whatsapp which helped the separated families to recreate a virtual community in the form of a whatsapp group.

### **5.5.2. Role of Whatsapp in Reunion**

Gradually a whatsapp group played a vital role in connecting people across the border which was founded by Musa Chulungkha who was one of my key informants who is well informed about the displaced persons of Chorbat valley. He was currently living in Manthal valley at Skardu. He was the founder of a WhatsApp group named “*Hum sab kab milain gy?*” which means “when will we all meet?” His father and whole family migrated from their village Chulungkha. According to him, he created this group back in 2014 when he was found by an Indian through his name on Facebook. His name is not actually Musa Chulungkha but he wrote his ancestral village name on Facebook profile which helped Indian Turtuk people to find him on Facebook. During his interview he mentioned that all this began with his name “Chulungkha” on Facebook. The group had 112 members and it initially helped a lot in reuniting the separated families of 1947 through tracing their long-lost family name *Pa*. The family name helped them in identification of family members mentioned by Gupta (2014) as families were classified into larger units with the suffix *pa* added to the name in Kargil Bazar. Musa Chulungkha elaborated that their grandfather used to visit Ladakh and Shimla before 1947 for economic reasons; they never went to Lahore or Pindi at that

time. Similarly many people who had gone to the urban areas were stranded there due to the division of the Subcontinent and after that they never met their families. The people added in the group from Indian side mentioned the person's name with his family name such as *Masan Pa* and *Musa Chulungkha*, asked for more details and exchanged contact numbers and in this way they helped in reuniting the separated families across the border. Similarly, they started to bring the divided families of 1971 in contact by exchanging the available details of families.

In the Group "*Hum Sab Kab Milain Gy*" People shared pictures and videos of their native place Turtuk, Tyakshi, Chulungkha and Thang with their relatives in Pakistani side of LoC because separated families longing for a glimpse of their homeland. Furthermore, the group let them know the death news of the person who belonged to them or their areas. They often get updates about the people if someone from Pakistan is visiting India or vice versa to meet their relatives. Political developments on the opening of roads and videos of Balti cultural events were also being shared through the group.

When I joined the group I observed that most of the news shared was about the death of older people from separated families. During the field work, three respondents who were interviewed for this study passed away and their death news was shared in the group and all the group members from the other side of LoC were informed by sharing the picture of the deceased person. Their relatives from the other side of LoC expressed their condolences and sympathies to the family. It shows that the first generation of these divided families are passing away with the pain and agony of separation keeping in their hearts. Their deep desire to reunite with their families and their ancestral land should be fulfilled by providing them the opportunity of reunion (Hassainabadi, 2019). It is necessary to emphasize on this human tragedy of separated families and give voice to the problem of these ordinary Balti separated families of Chorbat valley. The problem of separated families is a moral issue which should be highlighted by both the governments of India and Pakistan beyond the ideological and national interest and must resolve the problem by making the passports and visa acquisition procedure more easy and convenient. Other than that, the urgent need is to open the Kargil-Skardu road or Franu-Turtuk road so that these separated families could reunite and visit their homeland at least once in their life.

## **5.6. Opening of Ladakh-Baltistan Roads**

The traditional routes between Ladakh and Baltistan region were Kargil-Skardu, Turtuk-Khaplu, Leh-Marol and Drass-Gultari. These routes were frequently used in the pre-partition times and were a great trade route that once was full of life and activities. These routes became forbidden routes in the post-partition era, with the division of families, culture and economic life.

The people of Baltistan believed that the Ladakh and Baltistan region was never the part of Kashmir valley and it stretches from Kargil and Leh (Ladakh) on the Indian side to Gilgit and Baltistan on the Pakistani side. Both sides of the region are intertwined by common geography, history and cultural values but they were cut off with the LoC. Since 1947, the inhabitants of the region have suffered in silence and both the states made no efforts for them. By the time, the changing attitudes and softening of LoC was observed between the states. Intra-Kashmir bus services were started between Srinagar-Muzaffarabad in 2005 and Poonch-Rawalakote in 2006 for the separated families across LoC (Chari & Rizvi, 2008). These measures rekindled hope among the Balti separated families of Baltistan and they were expecting that it would also pay a way to eradicate the miseries of their separated families. They are waiting for the roads between Kargil and Skardu, and Khaplu and Turtuk to be opened but their hopes remain unfulfilled till date. There was a strong perception among the Balti people of Baltistan that the very reason of conflict between India and Pakistan is the Kashmir issue and they were unwillingly dragged into this dispute. They believed that they were part of the state of Jammu and Kashmir under the Dogra Maharaja but they have never been ruled by a Kashmiri ruler. Some people explained that they don't relate with the people of Kashmir ethnically or culturally. The conglomeration of geography and history brought them under the state of Jammu & Kashmir (AJK).

Balti people understand the fact that the conflict between India and Pakistan is for the Kashmir valley and it is tightly linked with the whole conflict between the both the states but they were suffering only from this issue despite having a marginal position in the whole issue. They argued that if the road between Srinagar and Muzaffarabad in Kashmir, at the epi-centre of the conflict, could be opened for all kinds of exchanges and movement of people then why the Kargil-Skardu road is still not opened. They questioned the biased and unfair attitude of the state towards the people of highlanders and demanded the opening of Kargil-Skardu along with the Khaplu-Turtuk road for the wellbeing of separated families of Baltistan who have been mourning for five decades.

They started peaceful protests, gathered thousands of people in Skardu and demanded for the opening of Kargil-Skardu and Khaplu-Turtuk road.

The Balti people have been protesting for the opening of Kargil-Skardu and Turtuk-Khaplu roads from the first few years of division. These people have held multiple peaceful protests in Yadgar Chowk and Pareshan Chowk Skardu. Thousands of people had joined them in their protest. Bilal Zubairi, General secretary of all *Muhajireen* 1971 Kargil and Ladakh, who has always been on the front rows for protesting for the opening of roads across LoC. According to him, they were protesting in a civilized and peaceful manner for the rights of separated families for so many years. Opening of Kargil-Skardu and Turtuk-Khaplu road is one of the major demands of 1971 *Muhajireen*. Their voice was never heard and noticed by the higher authorities. Thus in 2006, when both the states opened bus service in Kashmir, they started to put pressure on the Pakistani government and announced a peaceful long March towards the border in a protest. After that they were called by the Pakistan Army Officer and were assured that the road would be reopened soon but no serious step was taken afterwards. Similar demands were also observed on the other side of LoC in the recent past. Public protests and rallies were arranged in different parts of Kargil and Turtuk. The communities living on both sides and particularly close to the LoC never accepted this line as their ultimate destiny and people always urged for revival of natural routes. The division of this area deeply affected the communities' socio-economic lives as well as devastated several families who were forcefully cut off from their native place.

The difference in the political situation of Baltistan and Azad Jammu Kashmir is one of the reasons for opening roads in Kashmir. The Azad Kashmir Government and legislative assembly are the autonomous political institutions that symbolizes their own authority in the region (Bouzas, 2019). The refugees or separated families have their own political representation in their assembly to give voice to the rights of the separated families. On the other hand, the separated families of Baltistan are deprived from this opportunity and have no political representation on any level. The Balti separated families made alliances with the dominant political parties of Pakistan to compensate them regarding this issue. The refugees of Chorbat valley gave their votes to the particular political parties of their choice in return they demanded their rights but most of the time they were disappointed by the political leaders of Pakistan. Unlike the people of the Kashmir Valley and AJK, Balti inhabitants in the Baltistan region have never been involved in any violent or anti-state

activities and do not generally sympathize with the nationalist cause (Bouzas, 2019). Majority of the people of Gilgit-Baltistan want to be fully a part of Pakistan as the fifth province (Ali & Akhunzada, 2015). Instead all the separated families of Baltistan are still deprived from reconnecting across the border. The voice of the Balti people has been ignored unlike the people of Kashmir who are allowed to cross the LoC to meet their relatives.

One of respondent told:

*“Pakistan has started bus services for the people of Muzaffarabad and Rawalakote which is a good step for the separated families of Kashmir. We also want our government to take similar measures for the separated families of Baltistan as well.”*

Although they appreciate the bus services for the separated families in Kashmir region, they demand such measures for the poor separated families of Baltistan as well. The opening of the Kartarpur corridor has facilitated the Sikh community from both sides of the borders to visit their religious sites. Similarly in the Batalik district of Kargil there is a religious site known as *ziyarat* (tomb) of Sheikh Ali locally famous as Brolmo Sheikh Ali Ziyarat and is sacred equally for the people of Kargil and Baltistan. A religious corridor for the Baltis just like the Kartarpur corridor for the Sikhs, this place can be a meeting point for the divided people across the LoC. Balti divided people on each side of the border wish for a Kartarpur-like corridor to enable divided families to meet for a religious purpose if not for trade and tourism. Some people even suggested that a camp should be set up at the border where the separated people could meet their loved ones before dying. Due to the opening of these roads 15,000 divided families can meet their families and also visit their ancestral land after several decades. Recently it has been observed that the opening of the Kargil-Ladakh road bill was presented in the Gilgit Baltistan Assembly and it was supported by many members of the assembly. The road was still not opened during the course of the research work.

### **5.6.1. Turtuk-Khaplu Road**

The Opening of Turtuk-Khaplu road has been considered one of the best solutions for the reunion of Balti divided families of Chorbat valley. They are living just a stone throw away from their native village but have not been able to meet their family members for five decades. It is not a very far-off distance from each other but the Line of control (LoC) between them has made it so. The

actual distance between Franu, the last village of Pakistan administered Gilgit Baltistan at the LoC to the Thang, the closest village at Indian Administered Ladakh at the LoC is 13kms and people can reach their native place by walking. In the following image the red line has shown the real distance and route from Franu to Thang. There is an old bridge to cross Franu and reach Dewy Thang. This road had been used widely before the partition of the Subcontinent. The yellow line in the Figure 7 indicates the Line of Control which divided the separated families and they are bound to cross the elongated route through international borders to reach the villages instead of the walking distance route marked with red line.



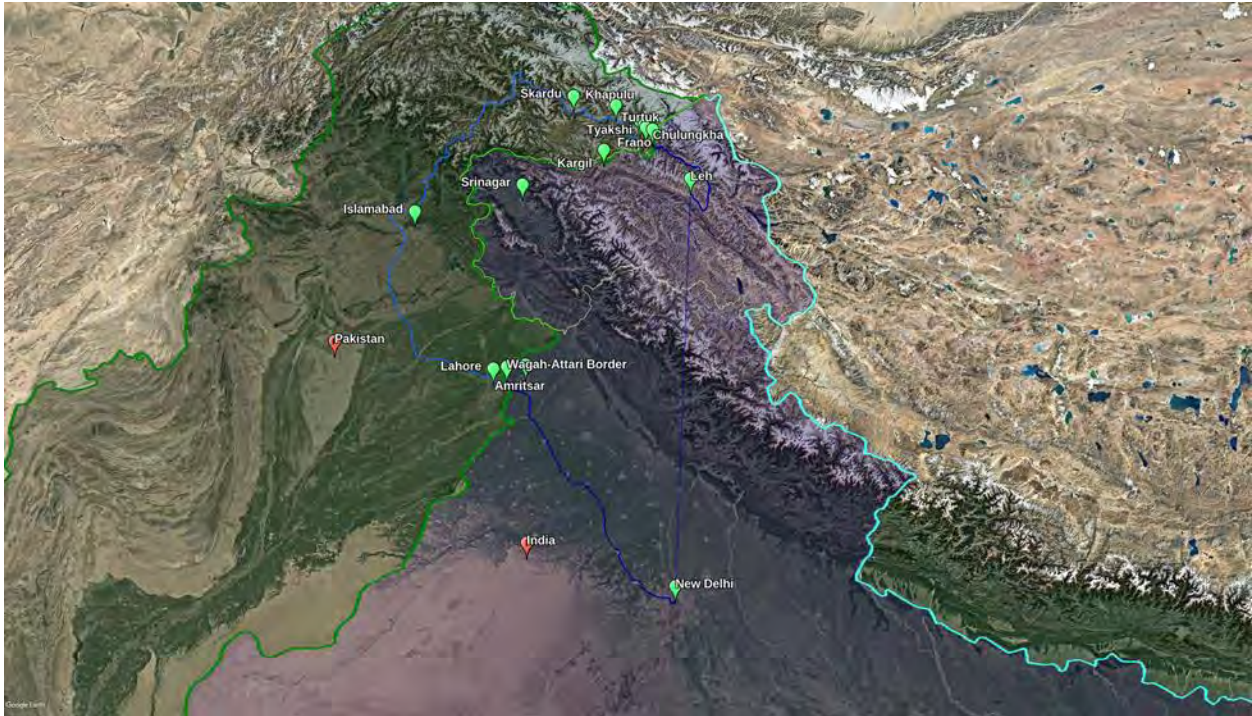
Figure 7: Route across Line of Control



Source: (Author, 2021)

These people are bound to travel around 3000kms to meet their relatives across the border. It might be easy for the people who are financially well off to cover 3000 kms and meet their relatives but for those families who are living in the remote village of Pakistan it is not less challenging than visiting another planet. The figure 8 below shows the full route the separated families need to cover in order to reach their native village. The separated families from different villages of Baltistan and mostly from Skardu travel to Islamabad, from Islamabad to Lahore, Lahore to Delhi across Wagah-Attari border via Bus. They can directly travel from Islamabad to Delhi via airplane but it costs them more that's why most of them prefer the bus service from Lahore. They take flight from New Delhi to Leh and then by road they reach their destination to meet their separated family members. This is not only an economic challenge but also a physically exhausting journey for them. Because of these reasons, so far very few families have been able to reunite with their divided families. The rest of the poor and helpless people are still looking forward to the roads opening for decades.

Figure 8: Route Covered by Separated Families through International Border



Source: (Author, 2021)

The opening of Turtuk-Khaplu road can relieve the separation pain of divided families as a whole and particularly it can lessen the melancholies of the females of Chorbat valley who cannot travel alone without any male companion. They have to bear a double cost if they travel with a male companion. Thus opening of this road can lessen the miseries of the women and help them to be reunited with their families and native place. All of my female respondents expressed their desire to go to their ancestral homeland once in their lifetime if the road had opened otherwise it was hard for them to travel such a long distance alone.

*“I was planning to go to India with my husband but unfortunately he died a few days ago but if this road opens I will definitely go to meet my sister.”* Told Appi Khatti from Chulungkha.

*My only wish in this life is to get an opportunity to visit my father's grave back in my homeland Chulungkha. I only want to visit his grave and meet my family there. That's my last wish and after that I don't care if I die. I could not go through the visa due to my knee pain but if this road opens I will go even with the support of a stick (Supporting aid).* Narrated by Gul Chahra.

Bilal Zubairi from Tyakshi, who is 56 years old is a renowned religious scholar and social activist narrated that:

*“Demand of opening these roads for the reunion with the separated families is one of our basic human rights. I have met the Prime Minister of Pakistan and also appealed to all the previous governments to take necessary steps for the reunion of these separated families but nobody gave due consideration to our demands and voices.”*

Most of the respondents supported the opening of the Kargil-Skardu road but some of them mentioned that Khaplu-Turtuk route is a more convenient and easy route for them to reach their homeland directly.

Another respondent Haji Qadir from Tyakshi who has served in Pakistani Army during 1971 war and now he is a retired Oldman. He is socially active and usually spoke up for the rights and problems of 1971 refugees of Chorbat valley. He narrated that he made requests to higher authorities multiple times for the opening of Kargil-Skardu road. He further said that they have their own Franu-Turtuk road which should be open for them. The distance between Franu (Last Village of Pakistan- administered Baltistan) and Thang (the last village of Indian- administered Ladakh) is less than 10kms, but these people have to travel through International borders of Pakistan.

*“If the government has any difficulty in opening the road, then at least open the check posts, Asghar Check post and Islam Check post. We will also pay for the work that needs to be done in opening these check posts. We just want our people to be allowed to visit once in at least 6 or 7 months. In this way these people can reunite with their separated families more easily.”* Narrated Qadir.

Recently, in 2020 a woman Khairun Nisa from Chorbat valley had fallen in Shyok River just miles away from the LoC in Chorbat Nubra valley, was found in Khaplu GB, and her body was sent to her hometown Bogdang through the Muzaffarabad-Srinagar route. The dead body could have been taken through Turtuk-Khaplu in time and more easily, if it was open.

All of the respondents stressed on the opening of the Kargil-Skardu Road and Turtuk-Khaplu road. Muhammed Khan from Chulungkha who is the President of All *Muhajireen* 1971 Organization and is involved in all the social and legal problems of the people. He was considered the

Representative of all 1971 *Muhajireen* Ladakh and Kargil, who presented their problems to the higher authorities. He met all political leaders of Baltistan and discussed the issues of 1971 refugees in all forums. The separated people have some demands for the refugees of Kargil Ladakh that they have included in their resolution and protested for them at different forums. The demand for opening the roads tops the list. The major demands were mentioned by the president of All *Muhajireen* 1971 as:

- The Kargil Skardu and Turtuk-Khaplu roads should be opened immediately to reunite separated families.
- These refugees should be resettled permanently in Sarfaranga land immediately and development schemes should be started.
- The refugees of Gilgit-Baltistan should be given the same rights as the refugees of Azad Kashmir.
- Like Kashmir Muhajireen, Kargil Ladakh Muhajireen should also be given seats in the Legislative Assembly.
- Immigrants are clearly not getting jobs because of the quota system in all areas. Therefore, the displaced persons should also be given quotas in jobs.
- Allocate seats for the children of the refugees in various colleges and universities across the country.

It shows that the Muhajireen of Kargil Ladakh 1971 are destitute from their basic rights. The opening of Kargil-Skardu road and Turtuk-Khaplu road has been the major concern for these displaced persons. Being a migrant created more problems in their lives and lack of jobs and educational opportunities pushed them further back from the main social and economic domain of the society. The first generation of displaced persons is not well educated due to lack of resources but literacy rate among them is gradually increasing in recent years. Still some families do not afford the expenses of education. Government of Pakistan overlooked the situation of Gilgit Baltistan in general, and the displaced persons of Baltistan in particular have been deprived of their rights since inception.

## **5.7. Conclusion**

It is concluded from the above discussion that the bilateral animosity between India and Pakistan ended up separating thousands of families across the border. By the war of 1971, families from four villages were sliced up and separated from each other. These separated families across the border utilized every possible means of communication in order to get connected with their relatives. People used to contact each other through letters, cassettes, radio, telephone and internet but virtual reunion could not lessen the agony of separated families and they yearned for the physical reunion. The rigidity of the borders and complicated system of visa acquisitions has made the process of unification harder for these unfortunate people. Meeting outside India and Pakistan in a third country mostly at Hajj pilgrimage was expensive for most of the local Balti people but very few people get this chance. Thus divided families of Chorbat valley on different occasions arranged protests and demand for the opening of Kargil-Skardu and Turtuk-Khaplu roads for the easy and low cost reunion of these separated families.

## **6. BELONGING AND LONGING**

This chapter covers the third objective of this study which is related to the belonging and longing of these displaced people of Chorbat valley. Firstly this chapter shed light on the relationship between belonging and identity of the displaced people and explored the perception of self-identity of the displaced persons in relation to place belonging. This chapter further explored the nostalgia of displaced people for their homeland and also longing for separated families across the border. This is further elaborated by explaining the local Balti folk songs to symbolize their longing for the people. Last sections identified some place making efforts these people made to reduce the homesickness and alien nature of the new place.

### **6.1. Belonging and Identity**

The constant changes in the LoC between India and Pakistan never ended up after their division in 1947. The Balti people of Baltistan always found themselves shifting with the shifting in LoC due to its mercurial nature. Villages of Chorbat valley were cut off across the LoC and its residents scattered around other nearby areas of Baltistan. The displaced persons have lost everything in the process of displacement. Loss of identity has a huge impact on their lives so they establish their identity in the new place. Giving meaning to oneself is a way of constructing one's identity (Castells & Ince, 2003). Identity can be seen as how people describe themselves to others.

These displaced people still feel close attachment with their villages as the relationship between an individual and a place is quite deep and emotional. According to Probyn (2015), belonging to a certain place is a process in which belonging becomes part of someone's identity. The place one feels they belong to might become a way to describe oneself. Place identity is a component of personal identity, a process by which, through interaction with places, people describe themselves in terms of belonging to a specific place (Hernández et al., 2007). The displaced people of Chorbat valley identify themselves with their left behind villages. These villages are now located in India but they still associate themselves to their ancestral homeland. Most of them believed that their roots are connected with that land and it can never be eradicated by any force in this world. Some families write their village name along with their first name or outside their houses. I have visited a colony in Skardu which was named Turtuk Colony and displaced people of Turtuk are living there. It shows the attachment and sense of belonging of these displaced persons to their homeland.

### **6.1.1. Perception of Self Identity**

The identity of these displaced people is discussed in two stages. How others understand their identity and also their own self perceived identity. The land of these displaced people was captured by Indian army due to which initially the identity of the migrated people of Chorbat became blurred. At that time they were neither the citizens of Pakistani state nor the citizens of Indian state. But according to a Citizenship Act (1952) of Pakistan which says:

“A person who has after the first day of March 1947, migrated from the territories now included in Pakistan to the territories now included in India shall not be a citizen of Pakistan under the provision of these sections.

Provided that nothing in this section shall apply to a person who, after having migrated to the territories now included in India has returned to the territories now included in Pakistan under a permit for resettlement or permanent return issued by or under the authority of any law for the time being in force”.

The people migrated from the villages of Chulungkha, Turtuk, Tyakshi and Thang, which were part of Pakistani territory before 1971 are now part of Indian state, to the areas of Baltistan. Thus according to this citizenship act these people were not the citizens of Pakistan until and unless the Pakistan state has granted them any permit for resettlement and permanent return order. Pakistani State under this citizenship had declared them its citizens by allocating land for their permanent settlement. However, displaced persons of Chorbat valley became legal citizens of Pakistan under this citizenship act of 1952. For this process the government of Pakistan has to provide settlement or land for settlement for these displaced people of war. Government has allocated land for the refugees of 1971 war at Sarfaranga Desert Skardu and issued domiciles on the basis of that land and legally identified them as the citizens of Pakistan.

But according to the respondent, the government of Pakistan has not played any role in their settlement in Skardu or any other village of Baltistan. They believed that they were self-settled with their own effort and hard work. The Sarfaranga land which was allotted by the Government has not been fruitful for them up till now. Different groups of people from the surrounding areas have filed cases against them for the land and they have been facing the land case in the court for

many years.<sup>20</sup> Still they have not settled on the land provided by the government. Thus, that's why these displaced people thought that they were not treated well as the citizens of Pakistan and they perceived and identified themselves as *Muhajirin* (Refugees) of 1971. On asking about their identity as a *Muhajir* the displaced people of Chulunkha explained that:

*"We had left our village, land and everything and we came here with nothing. What do you call such people?"* Shared one of the respondents from Chulungkha.

Most of the people relate and understand the meaning of Muhajir in the connotation of Islamic history. They shared that they left their homeland due to war to safeguard their lives and they left everything and were forcefully removed from their land just like our Prophet had left his land. This conceptualization of *Muhajirin* came from the Islamic Laws and Jurisdiction. This term is derived from the Arabic word *Hijra* which means flight or forced displaced persons. Muhajirin are those people who fled their homes in the fear of death and they fled in panic as cited by Zaat (2007)<sup>21</sup> in his study.

Their collective self-identity as *Muhajirin* has manifested from their general perception of refugees. They have established an Organization named as All-Muhajirin 1971 Kargil and Ladakh, it includes all the displaced persons of Baltistan who were displaced from the vicinity of LoC during 1971 war between India and Pakistan. All the displaced people of Chorbat valley also came under this organization which shows their collective self-Identity as a refugee. This organization gives voice to all their problems as refugees for example they all collectively demand for the opening of Kargil-Skardu and Turtuk-Khaplu road across LoC for the reunion of separated families. During my field work I have explored that every village of Chorbat valley has their own individual organizations that work for the people of their respective village. For example forcibly displaced persons of Chulungkha are more in population, they formed an organization named as Chulungkha Tanzeem which works for the settlement and betterment of people of Chulungkha. Likewise other villages also have organizations for the welfare of their people.

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<sup>20</sup> Discussed in the previous chapter in detail

<sup>21</sup> It is mentioned in Quran, Surah 3 and Verse 153.



## 6.2. Displacement and Socio-Cultural Changes

Displacement brings change in the personal identity and social status of the individual due to disruption of its social structure. It was found during the research that these displaced people of Chorbat have experienced the identity change. In a setting of displacement, everything changes and loss of identity has a paramount impact on their lives (Castells & Ince, 2003). People who were considered as the Noble families of the village like *Abba pa* family have high status in the village of Chulungkha. While interviewing with the family members of *Abba Pa*, it was cleared that they found a drastic change in status due to migration. *Appo* Muhammed *Cho* and *Appo* Rustam belonged to the *Abba Pa* family of Chulungkha. They had hundreds of cattle, goats, sheep, *yaks* and horses. They had people to take care of their animals and lands. These brothers were living a lavish life back in their village, playing sports such as polo and hunting animals on the mountain. They used to consume Markhour and deer. Migration brought all the people on the same page. One of my respondents mentioned that he cried when he saw the *Abba Pa* boys, working on the fields of people and breaking stones for constructing small stone houses for them who had servants at their house in Chulungkha.

Respondents shared that they played *polo* in their homeland. Matches were arranged and supervised by the Raja and invited them to play *polo* matches. These matches were normally held in Nowruz. They were well known in the region due to being the best polo team of the region.

*“I was a well-known polo player in my village. There were polo competitions held in different villages of Chorbat valley. We were invited for the competition in Piun and Turtuk normally. We always won the tournaments. My horse was a great rider for polo. When we became refugees, I had to sell my cattle but I could not sell my horse for a few years. I was invited to play polo matches after being a migrant by the Cho pa family of Khaplu. In the end, I had to sell my horse due to inability to bear the expenses, for instance lack of grass to feed my horse.”* Shared Ibrahim from Chulungkha.

It was observed that forced displacement not only brought changes in the identity and status of the displaced persons but due to moving away from their villages their language and cultures have also changed. They were assimilated and integrated with the people and culture of Baltistan to some extent. Their Balti accent and language was also influenced by the acculturation and it was identified by their separated families. The daughter of Gul Chahra, Saima said that when their

uncle and aunt came to Skardu they have mentioned that the Balti language of these displaced persons of Chorbat was changed a lot from the original language of Chulungkha. Saima also felt that their uncle's family had used different Balti words which were new for her. She pointed out some original words of Balti their uncle used such as "*Biyān*" for Breakfast, "*Zara*" for meal and "*Spera*" for talk. Similarly, I have watched videos on YouTube in which a person from Chulungkha was making videos of Chorbat villages of India. He was in conversation with Abbas Chulungkha, Gul Chahra's brother. I have observed from their conversation that their Balti accent and some words are quite different from the displaced persons of Chorbat valley of Skardu. It shows that due to displacement and living among the local people of Baltistan for years, their language and culture got influenced.

### **6.3. Nostalgia for Lost Homeland**

Place belonging can be understood as the "emotional feeling of being at home in a place" (Antonsich, 2010). Nostalgia means a wistful desire for the left behind home. It is a sentimental and affectionate feeling for the past home. Home is considered as a multidimensional term, a concept in which temporality intersects with spatiality and social relations (Kabachnik et al., 2010). These migrated people of Chorbat valley after five decades of dislocation still associate themselves to their ancestral homeland. The loss of home, the necessity of movement, and the impossibility of return were becoming facts of their life, but accepting these facts was painful. Consequently, the nostalgia is deeply rooted among the displaced people of Chorbat valley. Nostalgia, the acute emotional feeling of a person for going back to their lost home, which is unachievable, has been highly observed among the older people of Chorbat valley.

During my interview with elderly and aged people, I have seen that the oldest people reminisce about their homeland more. While talking about their homeland they said that it's very hard for them to forget their native village. The painful nostalgic emotions were reflecting from their narratives. Some statements that were repeatedly used by most of the respondents were quoted as it is. For instance Abdul Rehman narrated: "*Skaspi malso eeshin ittu oomin.*" "*We miss the place where we were born.*" He was separated from his homeland and never returned once in his life. "*Aatay yul po chi beyaasay saang jaat pa medang.*" "*The ancestral homeland cannot be forgotten in any way.*" He added his emotions for his homeland.

These narratives showed that these migrated people have a strong emotional bond with their native land and can never forget it. According to them they would never be able to forget their village no matter how worthy and lavish life they get here, they can't find mental peace and comfort anywhere else except their homeland. Home was considered a place with which people have strong social, psychological and emotional attachments (Easthope, 2004). The older people among these displaced persons have a clear memory of the minute details of the things back in the village. As one of my respondent *Appo* Ali Muhammad, 100+ years old was the oldest man of all the Chorbat valley refugees had clear image of his homeland. I had seen his affection and love from his facial expressions which came out by taking the name of his village 'Chulungkha'. He was quite young and married at the time of war. When he was asking about Chulungkha his eyes were full of tears and he narrated about the beauty of Chulungkha as:

*"I could not take out the memory of my homeland from my mind. I never saw a valley like my Chulungkha anywhere else. The lush green mountains of Chulungkha is one of its own kind. It is incomparable to any mountain in the whole region. We used to take our cattle to graze on that mountain. The mountain had enough herbs, shrubs and trees to feed all the cattle our people had. The pine (Shukpa), populous (Chaangma) and other trees were abundantly available to meet our household needs of firewood. We got separated from all of it".*

Figure 9. Oldest Living Person of Chulungkha



Source: (Author, 2020)

He also used to sing Balti songs for his separated homeland and people of Chorbat valley. He was called to sing Balti songs in Radio Pakistan Skardu which was heard on the other side of LoC by his co-villagers. He also sang a song during the interview. His lovingness and feelings of desire for his village reflected from his emotions. He was so overwhelmed by the memories of Chulungkha that during the interview when I tried to ask him questions about the consequential experiences after being displaced, he used to take the conversation towards his homeland. His deep emotions for his village were appearing from his lined and frail face which was reminiscing with joy while talking about the beauty of his village. He repeatedly narrated the landscape of Chulungkha with great love.

*“The water of Chulungkha was so sweet that people from surrounding villages used to come with their Mashkeeza (Goatskin bags for carrying water). Its fruits were so delicious and nourishing*

*that I never found fruits like them in any place I ever visited. The apricots of Chulunkha especially Halman<sup>22</sup> and Marghulam<sup>23</sup> were tastier than the ones we have here”.*

*Appo Ali Muhammad mentioned that back in Chulungkha people never died with any diseases or illness, they have died with natural causes or by falling from a high hill. Otherwise all people were strong enough. He said ‘Now here, everyone is dying in their youth, all my fellows have died, I am the only one left alive.’*

He was looking very aged and frail at the time of interview. He walked with the help of a stick and could not hear and see properly. After three months of my fieldwork, I got the news of his death. He has died carrying the dream to see his homeland in his eyes.

These separated families also expressed their nostalgia for their lost land and believed that due to the political division they alienated from their whole social structure i-e culture, family, land and only physically present here. *“My family, land, relatives and language were remained in my homeland after the war and I physically present here.”* Shared one of the respondents. They shared that their families have sent them gifts from their village, particularly those cultural items made in their own village. Some families showed me the jewelry like rings and necklaces made of original stone of *Feroza* (Turquoise), Bangles and *Kaar* (Chaddor) made of wool and utensils etc. They expressed their emotions of craving for their homeland as *“These things might be ordinary and have no value for other people but these are extremely close to my heart as these things came from my birthplace.”* Shared one of the respondents while showing his gifts sent to his family from his lost village.

## **6.4. Longing for Separated Families**

Longing is interpreted as the yearning of the migrated people for their separated families. Home is not only limited to the physical spaces but spaces without social relations are just empty spaces. Spaces get their meaning from connections, network, ties and relations with others (Massey, 2009). Home can not only be understood as a place of living in an apartment or a house. However, it can also signify a village, city, region or country (Mallett, 2004). Home has always a spatial dimension, but this dimension in itself is not sufficient to describe home as a phenomenon. A home is more

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<sup>22</sup> Local variety of an apricot fruit

<sup>23</sup> Local variety of an apricot fruit

than a place when it contains social, cultural and psychological aspects of people's lives (Mallett, 2004; Saunders & Williams, 1988). Home as a multidimensional term, a concept in which temporality intersects with spatiality and social relations (Kabachnik et al., 2010). It is understood from already established literature that longing for home also included the family, social relations, social and cultural aspect of it. The separated families from both sides of LoC longed for their social relations and kin groups. Some of the old people remembered their oral history of their villages, old traditions, cultural folk songs, romantic songs and songs of longing. *"Once everything is divided, we are left with our poetry, our rituals, our stories, history. That's what helps us survive. That's what keeps us together as a people."* Narrated one of the respondents by reminiscing his home.

#### **6.4.1. Balti Poetry and Folk Songs**

Divided from their spaces and places due to the politics of separation, one thing that has tied the Balti people together, despite an impermeable geo-political distance from their families across the border, is their rich poetry and Folk songs. Gupta's (2013) work on divided families of Kargil in the Poetics of longing as a phrase that expresses the sadness of longing Balti people of Kargil to their separated relatives across the LoC. These separated people manifested their grief of separation through poetics and Balti songs and shared among their Balti people across the border. Similarly the separated families of Chorbat valley residing in Leh of Nubra valley and Baltistan share their emotions and sorrow with the help of *Rgyang Lhu* (Balti folk songs). There were several genres of Balti folk songs but this genre is more popular among Baltis. Themes in this genre include history, love, sorrow, admirers, etc. (Hussainabadi, 2019). Respondents shared that such types of *Rgyang Lhu* were extremely famous for centuries in their area. These songs carry different contexts and emotions and everyone knows the meaning of that particular song. When they were separated from their own people, relatives and families, they sent them songs as a gift through letters or Cassette. In Balti it is described as: *"Di lhu rhtaq la kalba."* "Gifted a Song for someone." Said an Oldman from Tyakshi. Sometimes they just ask people who were travelling to their relatives across the border to convey the name of that song to their friend, parents, husband, wife etc. their separated families across the border understood their emotions and yearned for them by the name of the song. The Names of such ancient Balti famous longing songs are *Zcchay Maamoori Lhu, Ya tu meer Gyial*, etc.

Another most important medium to express their longing for their separated families across the border was the Radio Pakistan Skardu. It was a popular source of entertainment for the people in those days. The separated women who didn't understand Urdu used to hear the Balti songs through radio across the border and could not control their tears and emotions while listening to those songs. Separated families dedicated songs for each other by writing letters to Radio stations. Respondents shared that they were eagerly waiting for Balti songs dedicated to them from their relatives. One of my respondents, *Appo* Mahma, was quite famous for singing Balti songs. He was invited to Radio Pakistan Skardu most often to sing Balti Songs.

One of the most painful separation songs sung by *Appo* Raza who was the father of Gul Chahra and sent it to Skardu through a Cassette. When all the villagers left the village along with their cattle, the family of Raza remained there due to his aged parents who could not walk. His family was all alone in the whole village. When he found nobody in the empty village which was earlier full of its people and animals, he was extremely heartbroken and wretched that he sung a Balti song for the whole villagers of Chulungkha in the pain of their separation. Here the Balti song was written in roman English and then explained below for the reader.

*Ngiti Di Yul Po Yul Stung Biyasaay Na Sharba Nachoun Kun Yidaang Gaaltaay Soong*

*Yidaang Gama Soungfhi Sningkhoulle Daag Po Ngari Sningi na Mabuongma Song*

*Abbas Na Shairi Nimsaar Zchalain Chi Ngiti De Yul Ping Khong Khourpa Gwaid*

*Nimsaar Kun Zchaly Mathouba Ichaadi Khoungi Hu Hu Tangnait*

*Yaakhri Spaangi nu Nour Khairbi Wakh la Ghulam Hairdery Chik Drull Tangnait*

*Ghumbay Dey Rchis Po Yeti ittu Ongsaay Mik pori Chhemu rchu rchu Tangait*

### **Explanation**

*Appo* Raza has expressed his feeling of loneliness after the war. He was very sad to see the whole village deserted and silent and he could not bear the grief of being away from their co-villagers. After the native people of Chulungkha left the village due to war, he conveyed to them the scene of the desolate village and the expression of his feelings and grief through this song. He was left alone only with his family in the village and the grief of losing everyone from his village that could not leave his heart. Her sons were wandering around the empty village looking for their friends

(peers). His children were also very saddened by the loss of their childhood friends. In Chulungkha all the villagers took their cattle and goats to the mountains. Mentioning to that time *Appo* Raza expressed the feeling of loneliness and beautifully explained that, while taking goats to the pastureland of Yakhra<sup>24</sup>. His brother Ghulam Hussain shed tears every step of the way when he took the goats to the mountains alone. In this way he picturizes the whole situation of the village and their state of being alone and separated from their loved ones. After living together for centuries, it is not possible for him to express the grief of being suddenly left alone in the whole village. He recorded this song in cassettes and sent it to their villagers. When the cassette arrived to his daughter Gul Chahra residing in Skardu, all the close relatives cried when they heard this painful song.

His daughter, Gul Chahra had been tormented by her father's separation for so many years but she could not meet his father in his life and now he is dead. She wanted to meet her father and old grandparents for the last time, but the war between the two countries did not allow her to meet and take care of them in the last moments of their life and they all left the world. During the interview, Gul Chahra cried a lot while telling me about the Song and when her daughter played that song for us and then everyone present at that room started crying.

There are several such stories of people who gifted songs to each other. Ibrahim Sani from Tyakshi, who is a poet, cultural activist and also a singer of Balti folk songs. He has sent painful songs for his father and other family members, who were residing in Baltistan. He has got a chance to visit his family through a visa as well. He wrote these lines for his family in the pain of separation.

*Shina su Qabari kha Soung say Kochik Ngusna Khafiyung Guaid*

*Ngi la Yang Shish pa na Zokh Soung*

*Dosay yo Thuktuga Jaak Chik Zaibi Draang po Khouraay Sning La*

*Ngi di Spalbaing rbisaay Yud Sukh Sussung na Besay Luss pi*

*Dosay nga Janma na Phiyuk Soung*

**Explanation:**

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<sup>24</sup> Name of a very vast pastureland back in Chulungkha Mountain.



Ibrahim Sani had expressed his immense emotions and pain of splitting from his father and other relatives through this song. He even associated the separation of his family to death and considered the grief of this separation to be equivalent to the separation of our loved one after their death. He expressed the irony that the grief of the dying person goes a little lighter by going to their grave and weeping heartily but their contextual reality do not allow them to meet each other even when they are alive and even living on a walking distance and the despair of this situation is more greater than the melancholy of the dead person. He longs to see his loved ones who have been separated for so many years now and his desire to reunite with them remains in his heart which does not seem to be fulfilling in his life. As he remained at Tyakshi after the war. The residents of Turtuk, Tyakshi, Chulungkha and Thang were already friends and relatives but after the war, when these areas became part of India, they would start mingling with the people on the other side. In this way their economic and social relations have begun to grow with them. Thus he expressed that his destiny was to be separated from his family and to meet and make relations with unknown people.

From the above songs the longing for the separated families have been observed deeply. They cannot meet in person as every family does in this world. The man made borders and demarcations divided the kin groups for five decades. The contested borders between India and Pakistan deprived these people from their fundamental human rights to live as a family. The family is recognized by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948, article 16(3)) as the fundamental unit of society. But this issue is not highlighted by any dominant authority and these people have been raising their voice for years but their voices were never heard.

This research identified that the separated Balti families have expressed their feelings of longing for their separated families through various ways. First of all they expressed it through their words, telling us stories about their separated families, how much they crave for them and to be with them. Secondly, it was observed that these families could not control their tears while talking about their separated families and their emotions were explicitly observed during the interviews. Physical manifestation of emotion was also shown by their lovingness to the materials sent to them across the border. They framed the photos of distant family members such as photos of their faraway parents and siblings. They hugged those photos and kept the letters with so much affection and folded with great care indicating their emotional value for the things. The collection of photos in large albums and sometimes shown to me the photos and videos on a computer or mobile phones

were also revealing their longing for their loved ones. Other than that, showing gifts such as jewelry, shawls, caps which were saved with great care for so many years and such actions were often accompanied by tearfulness. Thirdly, findings of this research also revealed their practical expression of longing. They never stopped from the beginning of displacement to be reunited with their separated family. They always made efforts to be reconnected and even travelled to India or a third country via international borders to meet them besides the hurdles of the long journey. Their practical manifestation of longing has also revealed from making phone calls and video calls to their family. Lastly these people believed that they were always keeping them in their minds and connected with them in their imaginations and thoughts all the time. Literature review has also endorsed such four ways through which separated families express their emotions of longing for the left behind people and places. Baldassar identified these ways in which they conveyed their feelings discursively (through words), physically (through the body), through actions (practice) and imagination (ideas) (Baldassar, 2008). The emotion of longing for and missing people and places therefore appears to be an integral feature needed to maintain relationships across the border. For that reason Baldassar gave the ways of separated families to overcome the emotion of missing. Baldassar (2008) has also defined missing as the inwardly felt emotion, and its effect is a practice of coexistence. They cope with the pain of longing and desire to be with them by managing reunion or coexistence. The practices of co-presences mentioned by her are virtual co-presence, proxy co-presence, and physical co-presence and imagined co-presence. Current research shows similar findings in which the most common connection among the separated families to reduce the distances of time and geography is virtual contact, which is constructed through modern communication technologies. They have employed various means of communication over time to be in contact with their family across the border.<sup>25</sup> The coexistence through proxy is realized indirectly through the existence of objects and people. The physical existence of these objects and people symbolizes the essence of longing for the person or place who is absent. People go in masses to meet those who go to India and come back. Separated families have exchanged gifts, photos and other material items across the border which hold special importance for them. Most extreme form has manifested by the women who emotionally touched the water of the Indus River thinking that it travelled through her homeland. It is generally felt that

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<sup>25</sup> Discussed in previous chapter

longing, missing and nostalgia are best fixed through physical co-presence. Some of them have managed to get physical reunion with their families across the border. They experienced the reunion as extremely painful as well as pleasant for them. Imagined co-presence is possibly an omnipresent aspect of the life of separated families and exists in every stage of life. When they can do nothing else then pray daily for the good health and safety of their sundered families.

## **6.5. Place making**

Common emotional response of humans to forced displacement is to make where they are now like where their house in the homeland used to be. This is usually done by making several efforts that are intended to change and remove the strangeness of the new place, and create a sense of community to maintain the collective memory. When a new environment feels strange, the loss of the old is felt deeply and this sense of loss generates the desire for the rejuvenation of the essence of the old homeland in the new environment. One of my oldest respondents Mohammed Chu from Chulungkha village said that he came to Skardu in search of a place for the settlement of his community. While passing by the area in Skardu he observed that there is a familiar place which was giving him nostalgia for his lost homeland as its topography and physical appearance was similar to the area *Shairthang* back in the mountain of Chulungkha. Thus he as a community elder named the area *Shairthang*, although it has another name earlier. People came from scattered areas of Khaplu to Skardu and some of them were settled here and from that time, the name of that area became *Shairthang* for all the people of Skardu. It is perceived that creating places familiar and known enable them to feel at home in the new community.

Most of the forcibly displaced persons of Chulungkha settled in Manthal valley and it shows that the landscape of Manthal has looks similar to the Chulungkha village. Muhammed Chu is a senior member of the community Chulungkha who is now a resident of Manthal valley of Skardu. He gathered all his co villagers and settled them in Manthal. All the relatives and villagers of Chulungkha have been able to inhabit this area for forty years now. In this way they construct their habitat familiar by surrounding themselves with their own people and social structure and feel at home. Although Manthal is not exactly the same with their homeland. It is different in various other ways but the concept of homeland is a unifying symbol for these displaced people of Chulungkha.

Some of the respondents explained that when they arrived at Skardu as refugees and settled at different locations of Skardu, there was no proper agricultural system.

*“When we arrived here at Skardu, people did not cultivate crops that much. They cultivate once a year and then no one cultivate crops the second time. We started cultivating twice a year and produced a large amount of vegetables and crops. We accumulate surplus products that we used to sell in a market. The other local people started cultivating afterwards.”* Shared one of the respondents.

The people do change the new place either consciously or unconsciously planting familiar plants or familiar forms of gardening that they were doing in their homeland. According to them they started gardening and growing flowers in their homes in skardu and this flowering culture was brought here by displaced persons of Chulungkha. They thought that they were the first ones in skardu in the 1980s who started gardening flowers as mentioned by (Brook, 2003). Domestication of animals and farming remain part of their life in the new place. This need to change the place showed the emotional attachment of the people to their homeland. Some people also shared that in Skardu no one uses *Chadoung* (a wooden utensil to make Balti tea), so they started using it. They claimed that it was their people who brought their culture and their traditions along with them which made changes in the new place. It also helped them in making the environment more familiar for them. Literature also validates that displaced people invent homes and homelands in the absence of territorial bases through memories that they can inhabit their imagined nation (Malkki, 1992).

Nostalgia and homesickness took on a communal face among these displaced people. These people found that the villagers from their native homeland felt difficulty in adjusting to a new place. The leaders or elder persons of the Chorbat valley realized that their people had gone through several problems in the new land. To maintain the bond these immigrants band together with the people and recollect the communal past. Community organization manifests the collective identity of the people having familiar background and same sense of belonging. It has been observed that the Balti displaced persons of Chorbat valley have made organizations which provide support for their community members. Social support provided by the community organizations to their members has been defined as a coping resource (Thoits, 1995). *Tanzeem* (org.) All-Muhajirin 1971 Ladakh-o-Kargil was established to give voice to the borderland displaced persons of war between India

and Pakistan. This organization works for these displaced persons. It serves several functions for the community, some of the most important functions for the Balti community are sustaining social identity, developing social support within the community and creating negotiating power at a larger level. Similarly I observed that the Chorbat displaced persons founded their respective organizations which are working for their own village people. For example Chulungkha organization established in Shairthang and it provides services to the families of Chulungkha during weddings and death of the person. It provides tents, utensils and other services to the people. It also provides monetary help for the needy people of Chulungkha. They support each other in the times of need, it might be financial or emotional support. These associations soothed nostalgia and provided a sense of the familiar as immigrants created new identities. In this way they soothed the communal nostalgia and created a sense of collectivism among the displaced persons. It was necessary for the displaced persons of Chorbat to engage in such activities because of them. It was not possible to return to their home, in such circumstances recreating a sense of home was easier for them.

## **6.6. Conclusion**

It is concluded from this chapter that place belonging is a significant part in the lives of migrated people of Chorbat valley. The displaced people of Chorbat valley relate their identity to their native place. The place attachment brought new identities of forcibly displaced persons in the new place. State identified them as a citizen of Pakistan but they still perceived themselves as Muhajir. Nostalgia and longing for the homeland has immensely influenced the emotions of the people in the new place. To cope up with this nostalgic feeling they remain connected with their homeland and separated families through various means. Their families across the border send them material things of their village to alleviate their nostalgia and they have special attachment with these things. Balti folk songs and poetry are exchanged across the border to express their longing symbolically.

Homeland plays a great role in the adjustment of the displaced persons in the new place. They made efforts to reconstruct their homeland in the new place. Through various strategies they try to lessen the alien nature of the new place. By adopting familiar means of plantation or gardening, living in a place collectively, giving familiar names to the place and making community organization to facilitate their fellow refugees are the main efforts explored during the study.

## **7. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION**

The main purpose of this study was to document the lived experiences and narratives of forced displacement and family separation of displaced people of Chorbat valley. This study focused on displaced people of four villages of Chorbat valley such as Chulungkha, Turtuk, Tyakshi and Thang which were incorporated by Indian army during the 1971 war. Therefore, the first objective of this research was to record the hardships endured by these forcibly displaced people of Chorbat valley on the way and also during their settlement in the new place called Skardu. Furthermore, the second objective unearth the various strategies adopted by the displaced people to reunite with their separated families across the LoC. Since these displaced people can never return to their home place due to LoC, thus the last objective aimed to assess the belonging and longing of these displaced persons for their homeland and separated families and coping strategies or place making to reduce the alien nature of the new place.

Third chapter of this thesis focused on the research setting and methodology applied. Field work was conducted in Skardu, a district of Baltistan division, of Gilgit Baltistan. Gilgit Baltistan is located in the north of Pakistan. The research is purely qualitative and field work was conducted in the summer season of 2020. Qualitative research tools such as in-depth interviews, participant observation, case study methods and Focus Group Discussion were employed for gathering data. The sample size of the present study was 30 determined through purposive as well as convenient sampling techniques. The researcher conducted 15 semi-structured interviews accompanied by probing and took 05 case studies for the purpose of data collection from Skardu and Manthal valley. Besides, Focus Group Discussion including 10 individuals and participant observation were also vital sources of data collection. Note-taking and audio/video recordings of the respondents proved helpful in documenting information from the field.

Fourth chapter of this thesis documents narratives and lived experiences of forced displacement. This chapter shed some light on the pre-war situation of the chulungkha village before going into the main objective because it was necessary to understand the context before the war. Findings showed that before the war villagers of Chulungkha had worked as porters for the military of Pakistan. They carried all kinds of goods up the Gangchen Mountain without any pay. They carried rifles, ammunition, firewood, water and ration to the Gangchen for the Pak army. During the shortage of ration, they voluntarily take foods from their homes as well like dried fruits, barley

roasted flour (*Sattu*) for the soldiers. Apart from that they fetched them water in jerry canes at the top of the Gangchen which take two days for them to reach at the top. They considered it their responsibility to support them. Pak army served there for their protection on the cold temperature on the mountains so it was their obligation to do favor for the army. But some people did not agree with this and complained that in these areas the military has used free human labor of the native people and it had severely affected the lives of borderlanders.

People of Chorbat valley left their villages due to the fear of death and destruction of war that broke out in December 1971 between India and Pakistan. The prevailing chaos and clash resulting from the conflict compelled them to leave behind all hearts and homes, moveable and immovable property and all livestock including personal belongings. These people suffered hardships along the way of migration due to the constant fear of the enemy over their head and fear of losing their life. Starvation due to lack of food and cold climate enhanced their problems to a great extent. Older people died later on due to pneumonia and fever.

Thesis explored that women were the worst affected victims of the war and the following events. Women tolerated additional hurdles along their way of displacement due to their gender. In times of war, reproductive obligation or gender roles of women increase the emotional burden. They held their grandparents and children at their back or in baskets (*Chouroung*) while walking on the dangerous rocky routes. Being women, they had to look after their whole family. Women's mental pressure and fear of the enemy, and the danger of losing their honor, have caused additional panic among them. Likewise, pregnant married women suffered a lot of health issues during migration. Pregnant women endured the pain of pregnancy and gave birth at different villages during migration.

Findings uncovered that the displaced people of Chorbat valley dispersed in different villages of Baltistan and majority of them settled in Skardu. Study showed that the displaced persons have self-settled in different areas of Skardu with their own hard work and diligence. They settled majorly in Manthal, Shairthang, Satellite town and Hassan Colony. Study identified the local land agreement process through which the displaced persons acquired land from the local landowners of Skardu. This agreement is known as "*cho phait saa phait*"<sup>26</sup> in Balti. According to this

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<sup>26</sup> See chapter 4<sup>th</sup>

agreement, on clearing the barren land for the owner they can get half part of the cleared land in return. With the continuous hard work of day and night on that barren land they finally were able to gain a patch of land and settled themselves in Skardu.

Findings disclosed that the role of state was negligible to support these forcibly displaced people. In early years of displacement, the government of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto has provided the displaced persons some kind of relief. The relief consisted of wheat, milk powder, oil, blankets, mattress, utensils' etc. which was provided for three to four years which was not sufficient for them and also not distributed properly due to which some people were not able to get it. Some years later nineteen thousand rupees were given to each family of the displaced persons. But the displaced persons believed that the government of Pakistan had nothing meaningful done for their settlement. A barren land was allotted in Sarfaranga desert Skardu for the displaced persons. Twenty two kanals of land was legally transferred to each family. But due to various intervention from surrounding local people for this land and other institutions, the state has failed to settle them. As the undecided land case is still in progress in the court, the community feels uncertain and insecure for the land they legally own. They can neither build houses there nor sell that land. If they sell the land they would be liable to refund the money if they lose the lawsuit in court.

Fifth chapter unveiled the various strategies or means of communications adopted by the separated families across the border in order to get connected with their relatives. This chapter mentioned the means of communication utilized by the separated families in a chronological order. Historically these separated families contacted across the border through letters, cassettes and radio. These sources are outdated with the time and telephone and internet became the most frequently used mediums. The Internet played a vital role in connecting people across the border. Separated families reconnected through social networking sites like Whatsapp and Facebook. Digital technology contributed to a large extent to bridging the separation gap and provided them the chance to retain a communication link with their families. Study found a famous whatsapp group "*Hum Sab Kb Milain Gy*"<sup>27</sup> which built a connection across the border and people shared photos and videos of Chulungkha, Turtuk, Tyakshi and Thang to their relatives residing in Pakistani side of LoC because separated families longed to have a glimpse of their homeland.

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<sup>27</sup> See Chapter 5<sup>th</sup>



The contact and regularity of communication across the border depends to a large extent on the availability of reliable, affordable and appropriate technology. Physical access to ICTs and network connectivity were found the major barriers in connection of separated families through technology. It was evident from the findings that internet services in the region of Gilgit Baltistan are not functioning properly as it is working in other parts of Pakistan. Therefore, not all the separated families have access to the communication technologies or internet and still are not able to contact their families on a regular basis. Other barriers were also found from the findings of the research in using modern technology by the people to connect with separated families. These older people have not been able to utilize these technologies due to lack of usage skill or knowledge. They depend on their younger generation to contact their separated families across the LoC older people could see the faces of their loved ones through video calls due to low eye sightedness.

Findings disclosed that virtual communication among the separated families didn't alleviate the grief of separation. Some people applied for Indian visas to visit their homeland and family. It took numerous years for them to save enough money to visit their families across the border because it costs a considerable amount of money as well as time. Apart from that, the bilateral acrimony and hostility between the two countries engendered hindrances in acquiring visas for the residents of the border area. The complicated paperwork and visa process was not an easy task for these old age and mostly illiterate Balti displaced persons. It further added to their hurdles to meet their separated families across the border.

The rigidity of the borders and complicated system of visa acquisitions has made the process of unification harder for these unfortunate people. Findings revealed that these people started meeting third countries outside India and Pakistan mostly at religious sites such as Saudi Arabia or Iraq. Meeting outside India and Pakistan in a third country mostly at Hajj pilgrimage was expensive for most of the local Balti people but very few people get this chance. That's why these separated families demand for the opening of Kargil-Skardu and Turtuk-Khaplu roads for the easy and low cost reunion of these separated families. They protest at various locales of Skardu and demand from the government for the opening of these roads just like Kashmir roads for the reunion of separated families. Their voices are not heard or listened to yet and they are still separated from their families and most of the elder people are dying with time without fulfilling their dream to meet their family.

The Opening of Turtuk-Khaplu road is considered one of the best solutions for the reunion of Balti divided families of Chorbat valley. The distance between Franu which is the last village of Pakistan administered Gilgit Baltistan at LoC to Thang, the last village at Indian Administered Ladakh at the LoC is 13kms. People can reach their native place by walk but the Line of Control divided the separated families and they have to travel the elongated route through international borders to reach these villages instead of this small route. These people have to travel around 3000kms to meet their relatives across the border. For them, this is not only an economic challenge, but also a physically exhausting journey. That's the reason, so far very few families have been able to reunite with their divided families. Opening of this road can alleviate the pains of separation of women who cannot travel internationally without their male partners.

Sixth chapter discussed the belonging and place identity of the displaced persons. Findings uncovered that these people have strong attachment to their homeland which is now in Indian Territory. They still identify themselves with reference to their homeland. Findings reflected that these displaced people of Chorbat valley were legally identified as the citizens of Pakistan by the state by allocating land at Sarfaranga Desert Skardu and providing Domiciles to them. But these people perceived themselves *Muhajarin* (Refugees) due to the failure of government to settle them on that land. It was revealed from the findings of the study that the understanding of *Muhajarin* of these displaced people is driven from the *Hijra* (movement) of Prophet Muhammed and this understanding is totally different from the meaning of refugees used in contemporary world.

Displacement has brought about changes in personal identity and social status due to the devastation of the social structures. Findings discovered that the social status of various Noble families back in the village has changed due to displacement. *Abba Pa* family of Chulungkha has seen the demise of their social status in the new place. Similarly, the personal identity of people was severely affected by the displacement. People who were well known by playing *polo* and hunting back in the village were eliminated by the vicissitudes of life after migration. Displacement has also influenced their language to a great extent. The accent and vocabulary of Balti language spoken in Chorbat valley was observed differently from the language of the displaced persons.

The deep attachment to their homeland was observed in the findings of the study. Nostalgia for homeland was profoundly prevalent among the Chorbat valley, especially older people. The older

people have a clear memory of the minute details of the things back in the village. Longing for the left behind people was found more deeply among the younger.

Findings showed that these separated families have shared their emotions and sorrow with the help of *Rgyang Lhu* (Balti folk songs) and poetry among each other across the border to alleviate the pain of separation and also to show their longing and yearning for their family and relatives.<sup>28</sup> Their longing for their separated families across the border was shared through Radio Pakistan Skardu. Separated families dedicated songs for each other by writing letters to Radio stations. It was a popular source of entertainment for the people in those days. The separated women who didn't understand Urdu used to hear the Balti songs through the radio across the border and could not control their tears and emotions while listening to these songs. Separated families dedicated songs for each other by writing letters to Radio stations.

Results accentuated on the matter that contested borders between India and Pakistan deprived the people from their fundamental human right to live as a family. The family is recognized by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948, article 16(3)) as the fundamental unit of society. They cannot meet in person as every family does in this world. The man made borders and land demarcations divided the kin groups and left them separated for five decades. Despite being the member of Geneva Convention, Pakistani State has nothing done for the reunion of separated Balti families of Baltistan.

The displaced people of Chorbat valley have consciously or unconsciously made several efforts to change and remove the strangeness of the new place, and created a sense of community to maintain the collective memory. Findings unwrapped that displaced persons named the new place with the existing name of a place in their homeland such as *Shairthang*. Domesticating animals and adapting familiar forms of gardening and plants in the new place helped them out in adjusting in the new place. Living collectively in the new place such as in Manthal shows that they live together and maintain the previous social organizations to lessen the alienation of the new place. It has been observed that the Balti displaced persons of Chorbat valley have made organizations which provide support for their community members. Community organization manifests the collective identity of the people having familiar background and same sense of belonging. Social support provided

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<sup>28</sup> See chapter 6<sup>th</sup>

by the community organizations to their members was considered as a coping strategy to minimize the nostalgia of the people.

In conclusion, forced displacement brought drastic socio-economic changes in the lives of displaced persons of Chorbat valley. The most important and overlooked outcome of the whole process was the problem of the separated Balti families across the border. Despite all the physical barriers, the separated families had made every possible effort to reconnect with their families across the border through various mediums and the internet played a crucial role in their reunion. But virtual reunion did not ease their miseries. They still longed for their homeland and separated kin groups. This research will open up more ways for future research on border studies, displacement and separated families. I would suggest the researchers explore the impact of displacement on the physical well-being of the individual and also they must study the effects of family separation on the psychological or mental health of the divided families.

## **7.1. Recommendations**

The current study pointed out the issues of forcibly displaced people of Chorbat valley. Acquisition of land is one of the most basic problem of the displaced persons. There is a dire need of providing land for the displaced people. It was suggested to the government of Pakistan to allocate lands for the displaced persons in a feasible area, where they can settle for the rest of their life. The Chorbat refugees have been fighting land cases in the court for many years now. The concerned authorities should resolve the matter at earliest and lessen the added miseries of the displaced people.

Findings brought out that most of the displaced persons of Chorbat valley had less access to employment and educational fields. It is recommended that Government should provide them separate quota in respective fields so that they can ameliorate their life styles.

Among all the problems, the issue of separated families is the most imperative and needs urgent actions for their reunion. Most of the separated families are dying with the passing years. I would suggest to the authorities and other human right organizations to take immediate steps for the unification of the separated families of Baltistan. Both the governments of Pakistan and India should consider the opening of the Kargil-Skardu and Turtuk-Khaplu roads to alleviate the sufferings of the divided families. The Kashmir issue should be resolved and divert the attention of the state centric approach and time has come to focus on the humanitarian aspect of the issue.

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## **Glossary**

<b>Abba Pa</b>	A Nobel Family name
<b>Atti Yul</b>	Father's Land
<b>Appi</b>	Title used for old lady
<b>Appo</b>	Title used for old man
<b>Azok</b>	Bread made with oil, eggs, flour and milk
<b>Bajri</b>	A small pieces of stone (Gravel)
<b>Ballay</b>	Soup made of grains
<b>Bout di Yul</b>	Land of Disbelievers
<b>Bukhaari</b>	Hearth
<b>Burshay</b>	A wild plant
<b>Chaangma</b>	Populous tress
<b>Chaanskayl</b>	A sack made of goat skin
<b>Chadoung</b>	A wooden made funnel with a stirrer to make Balti tea
<b>Chhara</b>	Desi carpet made of cattle's fur
<b>Cho</b>	Name of a Nobel family
<b>Chouroung</b>	A wooden basket to carry things at the Back
<b>Charpayi</b>	A four legs bed
<b>Dafang</b>	Archery
<b>Garradi</b>	A small wooden chair fastened to a rope over a river or Water canal to cross it
<b>Grong Haltanmo</b>	Local musical dance and celebration

<b>Halman</b>	A famous kind of apricot
<b>Hijra</b>	Arabic term for separation
<b>Handawaal</b>	Feast held by young boys
<b>Intiqaal Shudah</b>	A Legally transferred
<b>Izzat</b>	Honor of family attached with women
<b>Kaarr</b>	Chador made of wool
<b>Kiseer</b>	A bread made with eggs
<b>Khurba</b>	Bread
<b>Khotu</b>	A small room made of stones
<b>Lsczhu</b>	Apricot nuts
<b>Lhu</b>	Song
<b>Mar Zan</b>	Balti dish with melted butter and mixture of gram flour
<b>May Fung</b>	A festival in which people set fire and dance around it.
<b>Mazdoori</b>	Wage labor
<b>Marghulam</b>	A kind of apricot
<b>Masan Pa</b>	Family name
<b>Ong Chus</b>	Feast held after bringing the threshed flour home
<b>Pa</b>	Used at the end of family name for identification
<b>Prappo</b>	Local Balti dish made of seeds of walnut and apricot
<b>Pharing</b>	Dried apricot
<b>Phiakhtap</b>	A custom to give gifts at joyful occasions
<b>Polo</b>	A traditional Balti sport
<b>Renthaq</b>	A desi mill driven by water



<b>Rgyang Lhu</b>	Balti folk songs
<b>Shinzakh</b>	A flat floating boat made of wood
<b>Shukpa</b>	Juniper tree
<b>Soloung</b>	Blasting
<b>Strap khour</b>	Sweet bread
<b>Stroop La</b>	A ceremony held at the occasion of ripening crops
<b>Stunthak</b>	A time period of the year when grains are grinded and Stored for winters
<b>Tanzeem</b>	Organization for community
<b>Thang</b>	A wide area of land
<b>Trasfah</b>	Soup made of
<b>Throumbus</b>	Process of clearing a barren land
<b>Zakh</b>	A flat buoyant boat made of goat skin bags Fastened together
<b>Zhalkhan</b>	Beggar, used to demean someone

## **Annexure: Interview Guide**

This study is aimed to explore the hardships of the forcibly displaced people of Chorbat valley during the War of 1971 at the LoC. It tries to find out the reunion strategies employed by the separated families across the border. Furthermore, it shed light on the belonging and longing of the displaced people for their lost homeland and the separated families.

### **DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE:**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Village: \_\_\_\_\_

Age: \_\_\_\_\_

Occupation: \_\_\_\_\_


Education: \_\_\_\_\_

1. Where did you belong from Chorbat valley?
2. What was your economic condition there?
3. What were your means of livelihood before migration?
4. Were you married at the time of migration?
5. If yes, how many children did you have?
6. How was your bordered life affected by the presence of the army in your area?
7. How many times have you faced such situations before migration?
8. How did you know that war broke out?
9. What were you doing when the war started?
10. Did you have any information about the war before its inception?
11. Did you have any idea that it was your last migration from your homeland?
12. How old were you during the migration?

13. What is the last memory of your village?
14. What were your means of transportation for the migration?
15. What were your belongings when you left your village?
16. Did all your family members were willing to migrate?
17. How many of them stayed and why?
18. Why did you not stay with your family?
19. How did you get separated from any other family member?
20. Share your journey of migration.
21. What difficulties did you face during the migration?
22. What do you think is the worst memory of the whole journey?
23. Being a female have you faced more difficulties during migration?
24. How did you manage the challenges to survive in a new place?
25. How did you settle yourself economically in a new place?
26. How long did it take to reach the Skardu at that time?
27. What was the response of the state towards the newly migrated people?
28. Do you think the state did adequate measures to aid the displaced persons?
29. What kind of facilities were provided by the state?
30. How did the state help you in your settlement in the new place?
31. Are you satisfied with the role of the state so far?
32. What do you think should be done for the welfare of displaced people of Chorbit valley?
33. Are you in contact with your separated family members across the border?
34. How long were you not able to contact your relatives across the border?
35. How did you reconnect with your separated families for the first time?

36. What means of communication do you utilize to communicate with them?
37. Explain how the modern means of communications helped you to reach the separated loved ones?
38. Which is the most useful medium of communication in your opinion?
39. Did the state or any organization help in unifying the separated families across the border?
40. How do the political situations between countries affect your lives?
41. What do you think should be the role of both states to reduce the miseries of war victims across the border and softening of borders?
42. Have you ever got a chance to visit India to meet your separated relatives?
43. If yes, Share your journey to India and the reunion experience.
44. Being a female what kind of hurdles have you confronted on the way to meet your relatives?
45. In your opinion, how to reduce the pain of separation of these divided families.
46. What measure should be taken by the state for the reunion of separated families?
47. Have you used any other way to meet your separated family? If yes, explain
48. Do you feel any homesickness or nostalgia for your lost land?
49. Do you still attach yourself with your homeland?
50. How did you manage to overcome the nostalgia for your homeland?
51. What do you think is a good way to reduce longing for separated families?

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