People, information and culture: Locating forms of capital by Afghan Sikh refugees in India through ICTs

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ABSTRACT

Based on an ethnographic study of Afghan Sikh refugees in New Delhi, India, the present paper explores the role of information and communication technologies (ICTs), especially social media, in their lives and practices to survive after the forced migration. The unique identity of being Afghan Sikhs in India is largely unknown, as the notion of Afghans is attached to the Muslims and Sikhs to the Indians. The extant knowledge on literature on their narratives of forced migration and struggles of re-settlement is inadequate. The present paper employs the concept of 'capital' by Bourdieu to argue that ICTs enable refugees to gain different forms of capital in their journey of survival in a new country post forced migration. The paper highlights the importance of ICTs being equal to the physical infrastructure for the refugees. The digital practices provide them with a collectively owned capital in the form of relevant information and experiences of being refugees. The visibility enabled by the ICTs has contributed to their social, economic and symbolic capitals.

1. Introduction

According to United Nations refugee's agency, the number of refugees and asylum seekers' population worldwide has crossed 60 million in 2015 (UNHCR, 2016). Afghan and Syrian refugees constitute a larger part of this population and are taking refuge in the neighbouring countries. They face extreme conditions and limited opportunities to revive and rebuild their lives. The present paper attempts to understand the role played by information and communication technologies (ICTs) in the refugee's survival practices.

The ICTs, especially social media, have been studied in the context of migrants - how migration is facilitated by sustaining the strong ties of family and friends in the home countries and by maintaining the weak ties at the destination with those who provide support (Dekker and Engbersen, 2014). It is also argued that social media slows down the process of integration as migrants tend to interact with their people, but facilitates potential migrants as a great source of information (Komito, 2011). The extant studies on the role of ICTs for refugees in host countries seem to be inadequate, where the context is more of forced migration. ICTs have contributed immensely to the transnationalism and transnational identities (Burrell and Anderson, 2008; Vertovec,

2004) whose understanding is informed by their reflections on the social, cultural and political dimensions of forced migration (Castells, 2003).

In the context of refugees, social media has been accelerating the process of dehumanization, where refugees are projected as un-welcomed guests or the enemies at the gate, who are attempting to invade the host countries either with the intentions of terrorism or are the carriers of diseases (Esses and Medianu, 2013; Wall, 2017). Social media's proclivity to spread negative stories has further problematized refugees' context. The present paper contends that refugees do not lead a life of passivity despite leading a life of uncertainty in the new land, but continue to live as social agents developing networks and associations. In this backdrop, it is important to understand how ICTs including social media are consumed by the refuges themselves.

The literature on refugees and ICTs is prevalent with the Syrian refugees and how they use smartphones to access Maps and GPS to find safe passages (Gear, 2015; Maitland and Xu, 2015). Other works indicate the role of ICTs in operations management. For instance, in a camp like situation, satellite images are used to plan and manage refugee camps and to organise the allocation of resources for relief activities (ICT works, 2015). The usage of internet through computers and

laptops is limited due to factors like high cost, lack of mobility, availability of electricity and poor digital literacy skills to use this equipment (Chigona et al., 2009). The easy availability of mobile phones appears to circumvent these challenges due to affordability and accessibility (Aker and Mbiti, 2010). Mobile phones have introduced new possibilities for personal networking and communication along with political activism and economic development (Kreutzer, 2009; World Bank, 2012). However, how do refugees use mobile phones and the Internet is not widely studied (Leung, 2011). There have been some attempts to analyse the social integration of the refugees in the host country (Cachia et al., 2007). Largely the role of mobile phones for refugees has been primarily to enabling continuous interaction the family members and to access information to improve their lives. The mobile phones are also used to sustain education due to long-term displacement and interruption in schooling (GSMA, 2017). For the refugees, the usage of mobile phones also contributes to income generation strategies and business transactions over long distances. Mobile phones are found to be indispensable for refugees to facilitate necessary communication for business purposes like communicating with suppliers, knowing the market information and transferring money (Betts et al., 2016). It is also an important tool for livelihood strategies of refugees, including help to run small businesses, transfer money, and undertake remittances related transactions (GSMA, 2017).

India hosts refugee populations from almost all its neighbouring countries. However, when it comes to studying the lives of refugees and ICTs, there are fewer attempts. An earlier study indicated the role of ICTs enabling Sri Lankan Tamil refugees to stay in touch with their family members and to access essential livelihood information (Sreenivasan et al., 2017). The present paper examines the role of ICTs in the lives of Afghan Sikh refugees and how different forms of capital through social media are negotiated.

Afghanistan has been one of the most disturbed regions in South Asia in the recent past. The fall of the Najibullah regime, followed by civil war, which was further followed by the American military invasions led a continuous struggle and upheaval in Afghanistan for almost three decades. This upheaval compelled many people from Afghanistan to flee and settle in different parts of the world including, Iran, Pakistan, USA, UK, Canada, Australia and India. Till 2014, the Afghans were the largest refugee population in the world. There has been very little knowledge about the fact that among those Afghan refugees, who came to India, there was a substantial population of Sikhs.[1] According to UNHCR, the total number of Afghan refugees who came to India is around 13,000 out of which 80% are Sikhs as per records; however, of the records, the total number can be much more than that (Ghosh, 2016). It was the last decade of the 20th century that witnessed the forced migration of Sikhs, Muslims and Hindus from Afghanistan to India. This was the time when India was opening its doors for the world's market, but the simultaneous upheaval in Afghanistan compelled and brought many people at the doorstep of India for shelter. They were called the Afghan refugees and settle in different parts of Delhi, especially West and South Delhi, and have been staying in India for more than two decades.

In the Indian context, the refugees' journeys are documented around the partition time when many Hindus and Sikhs from North West Frontier Provinces and West Pakistan had to make Delhi their new home (Kaur, 2007). On the other hand, the literature also deals with the issues faced by the Bengali refugees, who left East Bengal and settle in the Indian states - West Bengal, Assam, Delhi and many other parts of India (Samaddar, 1997; Chatterji, 2007). However, even after two decades of the settlement of Afghan refugees in India, there has been a minimal knowledge about them.

The existing literature on Afghan refugees discusses their plight,

including lack of worthwhile shelter when they arrived and the apathy of the government of India (Bose, 2004). It has been argued that many of the Afghan migrants made the countries they fled to, their homes, as there was no return option. They had to renegotiate their identities as they were uprooted from a naturally given space to a new social set and hierarchies (Singh, 2010). The present study also locates the role of ICTs in their survival or adjustment in India, within the narratives of Sikh Afghan refugees staying in Delhi.

The new ICTs like smartphones are playing an important role in recent refugee situations, as in the case of Syrian refugees. The Afghan refugees arrived in the early 1990s in India when ICTs we mostly inaccessible due to the availability of only personal computers and the scarce Internet during that period. It is important to examine the role of ICTs for the Afghan refugee community, which is now settled in a new country over a long time. The present study focused on the use of ICTs, especially mobile phones and social media platforms.

2. Refugees, capital and ICT

The analysis of Afghan refugees' ICT practices has been done through the concept of capital by Bourdieu. The reason to take Bourdieu's capital as the theoretical framework emerges from the review of literature. The literature on refugees can be broadly classified into two sets. The first set identifies the barriers faced by the refugees in the process of resettlement into a new country. Their fundamental priority remains to gain a significant foothold in the largely unfamiliar and subsequent access to opportunities in employment, education, health and other public utility services (Bloch, 2002; Hatoss and Huijser, 2010; Morris et al., 2009). However, access to these opportunities is restricted due to barriers like language, lack of information, and trust (McBrien, 2005; Lloyd et al., 2013). Also, the cultural differences between the refugees and locals result in a sense of alienation at the host country. Overall, the refugees feel socially excluded enhancing the overall vulnerability of their existence (Hutchinson and Dorsett, 2012).

The second set discusses the refugees' survival strategies which are primarily dependent on their social networks. The social networks form an important base for the resettlement and access to employment (Gericke et al., 2018; Morrice, 2007). The refugees' resilience strategies move beyond the individualised notion of resilience to a more communal construction of resilience (Hutchinson and Dorsett, 2012).

The extant literature on refugees discusses their negotiations with social capital only in the form of social networks. Some of the scholars (for instance, Goodson and Phillimore, 2008) have gone further to highlight the gender differentiations in the types of network and capital possessed and how they are utilised. But narrow focus on the social capital does not enable a complete understanding of refugees' settlement. On the other hand, as Bourdieu (1984) explains that in different fields, there are forms of capital which decide people's placement in the social hierarchy and power structure. For refugee communities, who are already placed at a vulnerable level in any country, the examinations of these forms of capital become more important to understand their survival practices. The present study posits that with the usage of ICTs, the refugee communities access different forms of capitals to enhance their resilience strategies and survival opportunities.

In Bourdieu's framework, the forms of capital – economic (money), cultural (Knowledge), social (network), symbolic (honour, recognition) – are resources which individuals can draw upon to secure an advantage in particular fields (Bourdieu, 1986, 1989). Crucially, for the various forms of capital to have value, people have to exist in a field in which they are recognized and can be employed (Malish and Ilavarasan, 2016; Tara, 2011). The field is not only the host country but also includes virtual spaces like social media, where these refugees access different forms of capital for their advantages.

The process of resettlement for refugees begins with very little capital (in any form- economic, cultural or social) which they could bring

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[1] Sikhs are associated with Sikhism, a monotheistic religion that originated in the 15th century based on the revelation of Guru Nanak (BBC, 2014).

with themselves. However, to expand their capabilities and capacities in the host country, the initial endowment of capitals is not enough. The sense of isolation at the host country makes it further difficult to better their socioeconomic position (Sawan, 2016). This makes it important for refugees to accumulate different forms of capital so that they overcome their vulnerabilities economically and socially.

In this backdrop, to complete the picture of refugees' survival practices beyond the social capital/networks framework, the present study found Bourdieu's concept of 'forms of capital' relevant. This fills the gap by learning about other forms of capital in the refugees' survival practices.

3. Methodology

The existing empirical studies on refugees focus on their experiences of upheaval, violence and forced migration to the new land and culture. A researcher has to ensure that the methods for data collection are least disturbing for the respondents and assure them security and privacy. Thus it requires different methods than the conventional method, which are generally employed in the anthropological studies. It has been argued that the existing studies on refugees do not provide much detailed account of the methods adopted for the study (Camino and Krulfeld, 1994). Any study of refugees, which has also been termed as forced migration involves its own methodological and conceptual issues as it involves concerns such as human agency, identity, social network (Castells, 2003). To understand the implications of forced migration, there is a need to adopt an interdisciplinary approach involving the historical understanding of both the sending and receiving communities and countries. This enables to develop a holistic approach to see the embeddedness of the forced migration into different spatial levels.

To understand the everyday realities in such complex settings, the present study has followed an ethnographic approach. This approach provides data collection from multiple sources to have rich data of the phenomena under study. Ethnography is uniquely well placed to deal with the challenges of studying the social life of refugees because it does not rely on fixed and comparable units of analysis (Gille and Riain, 2002). The central aim of ethnography is to provide rich, holistic insights into people's views and actions, as well as nature (that is, sights, sounds) of the location they inhabit (Reeves et al., 2008). In the context of refugees, ethnography facilitates an analysis, which covers a range of stakeholders and contextual factors involved (Lie, 2002). Ethnography allows the researcher to immerse within a group and build rapport with the individual to determine meanings associated with behaviours and thoughts attached to their realities (Fetterman, 2010). To any ethnographic study, the social, political and economic contexts remain central, and it highlights these contexts very well. Thus ethnography is not individual and fixed but rather social and procedural (Tedlock, 2003).

Ethnographic work commonly uses methodological triangulation—a technique designed to compare and contrast different types of methods to help provide more comprehensive insights into the phenomenon under study. This type of triangulation can be very useful, as sometimes, what people say about their actions can contrast with their actual behaviour (Reeves et al., 2008).

The ethnographic field work was conducted in 2016 in various locations of West Delhi and South Delhi, where the Afghan Sikhs are staying. In the context of refugees, a random sampling technique could not be used to collect data; therefore, the respondents were either approached through local acquaintances at the site of the study or with the reference of an NGO called Khalsa Diwan Welfare Society.[2] The first author visited the localities where the refugees gathered – places of worship, shops and meeting at the non-governmental organization. The data were collected through open-ended, in-depth qualitative

interviews with 75 refugees belonging to the age group of 20 to 60. Women were also approached for the data collection, but out of 75, only 25 interviews were of women. The reason for having fewer women in the sample was the fact that women of this refugee community were found to be less active on social media. The researcher took extensive notes while conducting the fieldwork. The conversations with the respondents were in Hindi and Punjabi. The researcher expanded the filed notes at the end of day which were used for data analysis.

The interviews included questions about their activities on the internet, their presence on social media and the kinds of a post shared/received by them. The duration of the interviews varied from 15 to 60 min, as per their presence and activities on social media. In West Delhi and South Delhi, there are Sikh temples belonging to this refugee community, which are colloquially called Kabuli Gurudwara (Sikh Temple of those Sikhs coming from Afghanistan). The interviews were taken in these Sikh temples as well. The young generation was found to be quite active on their mobile phones inside these temples, where they record the activities to be shared on social media. The researcher was shown the content being shared by the respondents. The addresses of the Facebook pages were collected and content was analysed as part of data collection and analysis. The refugees have various WhatsApp groups. With the help of NGOs who are working with them, the access to some of these groups was made possible. The researcher took notes of these groups as well. This enabled an "immersion" into the context of the respondents, thereby generating empirical insights and a rich understanding of their social practices that are normally "hidden" from the public gaze.

3.1. Description and analysis

The strength of ethnographic research lies in the richness of the observations and responses of informants. In this way, the present study gathered "thick description" of refugee's experiences in different settings after coming to India and settling in Delhi. The concept of thick and thin originates from Geertz (1973), who argues that when we describe an event, we have a couple of choices: cover its bare details (thin description); or offer a fuller elaboration (thick description). However, through this thick description, an analysis emerged that not only captures the survival experiences of refugees but rather the exploration of multifarious experiences of being a refugee; that has led the study to make comparisons across different locales. In this respect, the present study contributes to the emergent body of qualitative research on refugees, where the main aim is to understand the day to day lives of people in the context of refugees that shape and reshape their social and cultural spaces.

The data analysis was done by reading the interview transcripts multiple times. Primary themes that emerged from the fieldwork were listed. For each of the themes, key issues or sub themes were searched. Insights from personal observations, WhatsApp groups and Facebook pages were interlaced with the interview data. Through a careful analysis of the themes, the theoretical explanations were identified. The analysis followed the triangulation of data at many stages, as the data from the field note dairies of participant observations were substantially incorporated along with the interviews to have a rich interpretation of the data. The ethnographic data is approached through theoretical triangulation as well; where different concepts and theories have been adopted to analyse the responses and observations.

3.2. Ethical considerations

Given the sensitive backdrop of refugees' lives, the researcher was careful about the ethical practices to be followed (Schweitzer and Steel, 2008). Whenever the conversations with the respondents were recorded, prior permission was sought from them, and the reason to record the conversation was discussed. Some of the respondents felt that their narrative could be politically sensitive as they come from a

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[2] An NGO established by Afghan Sikhs in West Delhi, which works for the welfare of this community in India.

country like Afghanistan, which has been experiencing political upheaval for a long time. These respondents did not want the recording of their responses. With such respondents, field notes were maintained. However, some of the respondents were happy to circulate their stories and had no problem with the same. They were told that their stories would be used for publication.

The issue of confidentiality and anonymity was also ensured to them while asking for their life histories. The option of a pseudonym was given to those who did not want their names to be disclosed. Whenever the respondents were not willing to share any particular portion or period of their lives, they were not forced to do so, given the fact that they have experienced traumatic situations in their past. The field work was conducted by the first author, a woman who can read, write and speak in Hindi and English fluently. She has been a resident of New Delhi for the last thirty seven years and hence can understand Punjabi very well.

4. Findings

The role of ICTs bas been repeatedly cited by the Afghan refugees when they were asked about their interactions and connectedness with the people of their community. Age and gender are two factors that influenced the usage of ICTs among them. Elderly people and women were found less in the category of those who used different ICTs. The study finds that among the users, there is a constant shift between public/open and private/close Facebook spaces. This commuting between open and closed Facebook spaces allows them to gather, consume and process any information as refugees.

4.1. Lost in forced migration, found in social media: getting in touch, sharing struggles

Among the respondents, the young are using mobile phones, to look for people of their community in other parts of the world, in order to interact with them with a sense of belongingness. To quote a refugee who is a parent of two young children: *Though our children are born and brought up in India, they have never seen Afghanistan. Their status as refugees keeps on reminding them that they are not the citizens of the country where they are staying since their birth. Not even their parents are the citizens of India. A sense of belongingness is missing, so they look for belongingness with the people in a similar condition or from a similar background.*

The study found that there are Facebook pages of Afghan Sikhs where the members are people of this community from across the world. They share their life struggle and discrimination faced by them. People also share the lives that they have created for themselves in different countries like Australia, Austria, UK, Canada and USA. The lives of those who could not leave Afghanistan due to extreme poverty are also shared on these Facebook profiles. The social media profiles are also used to plead richer Afghan refugees to help those Afghan Sikhs who are left behind in Afghanistan due to financial constraints to migrate.

To quote a respondent: *When we came to India, it took us many years to locate people of our community who had migrated in different groups but could not meet each other, as there was no mode of communication between them. Some of them could reunite with the help of Khalsa Diwan Welfare Society because most of us got ourselves registered there. However, due to Facebook, we could reunite with more people of our community like our neighbours and friends from Afghanistan, like people we used to meet in Gurudwaras in Afghanistan. We could find those people on Facebook. When we had to migrate in the 1990s, we had never imagined that we would be able to reunite with people of our community again. Due to social media, we could get this opportunity to see those people again whom we knew in Afghanistan.*

During the partition of India in 1947, when there was a mass migration from North West Frontier Provinces to India, many people had lost touch with their relatives and friends and in some cases with their family members as well (Butalia, 2000). Many of these people could not get in touch with their family and friends due to lack of any such mode of ICTs at that period. The role of social media in tracing the lost connection has been highlighted by the Afghan Sikh refugees. Though many of them have got settled in other parts of the world, they could get in touch with each other as well.

One of the main functions of Facebook has been to bring people in contact with each other. In the context of refugees, the meaning of getting in touch is different. This is so because apart from getting in touch with people, social media also enabled refugees to know the struggle of Afghan Sikhs in other countries. This knowledge has made them appreciate their conditions in a better way. To quote: *When you are troubled and cut off from other people, you feel that your problem is biggest. However, when you get to know that there are many like you, then you see your problems differently. Sometimes you also look for collective solutions. In this way, Facebook has enabled us to revive our contacts with other people in our community and also to share our problems and challenges.*

There are different Facebook accounts belonging to Afghan Sikh refugees such as: 'The Afghan Sikhs and Hindu Global Community', which is an open group having 1337 followers. Another page 'The Afghan Sikh Society' is a closed group, where comments and posts can be seen after becoming its member. This group has 1100 members. There are other Facebook pages dedicated to Afghan Sikhs in different countries like the UK, Germany, Canada etc. A page called 'The Dutch Sikh' has been started by a young Afghan Sikh who stays in Germany and has been able to bring a large number of people together through his audio-visual and written posts about the history and contemporary conditions of Afghan Sikhs. His page has 9000 followers. The analysis of Facebook pages indicates that people have meaningful discussions related to their lives on these pages. People share information about their settlement in their respective countries and ask questions related to their experiences as refugees in different locations. The most discussed topic by the Afghan Sikhs in India is about the situation in Afghanistan and the process of settlement in the UK or the US. They inquire about the process of migration to these countries, from the people of their community, who are settled there.

Due to the sense of insecurity felt by refugees, many of the refugees confessed that they had created fake accounts to be on these Facebook groups. To quote one such respondent: *It is essential for us to have the information which is provided by these groups and the topic discussed here are quite relevant for us. For example, people discuss their struggle of settlement in these groups, and with such discussions, we get ideas and motivation to move on, but at the same time, our refugee status keeps us vulnerable all the time. Facebook provides us with opportunities to be on these groups by hiding our identities. On Whatsapp, one needs to provide the mobile number, but for Facebook, you do not need to provide any such information. Only the email id is needed, which can be created very easily. Here in India, we complain about so many things that we are not given citizenship, or we feel marginalised at many levels. But on Facebook, when we see the persecution of Afghan Sikhs in other countries, we feel that we are much better placed in India. There are groups called 'Afghan Sikhs and Hindus' in the UK; it provides information about the continuation of killings of Sikhs in Afghanistan, this takes us away from any idea or desire to go back to Afghanistan. This group also discusses how Afghan Sikhs are deported from Germany. All this make us realise that at least we are not facing any forceful eviction from India. When you listen to such discussions, then sometimes you feel that your condition is much better than many others like you.*

The presence of refugees on social media also helps in expanding their social network, which in turn brought them in touch with people of their community across the world. By reviving touch with their community, the refugees possess a durable network of mutual acquaintances and recognition. The social capital, according to Bourdieu, is the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which people gain through durable networks. The social capital is built through ICTs, as

the refugees can form membership in the groups of Afghan Sikhs across the world. This provides access to collectively owned capital in the form of relevant information and experiences of being refugees. The exchanges among the people of these groups are based on symbolic exchanges, which contribute to re-acknowledgement of proximity with each other. This is recognized as one of the characteristics of social capital (Bourdieu, 1986).

On the other hand, there are some Afghan Sikhs, who can mobilize the resources better and are leading a life of affluence in various countries. The economic capital possessed by them helps to create funds for those who could not move from Afghanistan due to poverty. The funds are used for the construction of Sikh temples. The access to the economic capital of their community is possible due to the social capital mobilized through social media, which facilitated mutual recognition and knowledge. The profits which are accrued from the memberships, according to Bourdieu (1986) also form the basis of the solidarity of the groups. Bourdieu further adds that these groups, however, are not consciously pursued such profits, but these profits can have multiple effects. In the context of Afghan refugees, the benefits from social media groups have effects at multiple levels like material gains for the poor refugees, knowledge gains from the right kind of information, and symbolic gains such as special recognition for their community, which are discussed in the subsequent sections.

4.2. Accurate information in the state of vulnerability

Apart from reviving the lost connections, the usage of internet has enabled the refugees to receive recent updates about facilities provided to them and other things. The responses from the youth indicate that the activities on social media contributed to their knowledge. To quote: *When you are placed in society as foreigners or refugees, you find yourselves confused about so many things, issues, policies, and facilities which you could have availed. The usage of ICT has helped us to know about all these things easily. We tell our other family members who do not access the internet about new facilities and policies which they can avail. Now there has been a talk about giving citizenship to the children of refugees in India. Whenever there is any update on the same, we get to know about it through the internet so easily. Recently the Government of India allowed refugees to open bank accounts and buy property; all these news were so easy to access through the Internet.*

For getting the right information at the right time, the usage of mobile phones has emerged as a necessity in all stages of their journey. It has been emphasised that through mobile phones the registered refugees can receive a text message from UNHCR about the availability of humanitarian aid and in addition to the same, any update from the parliament legislation can also be accessed (Talhouk, 2016).

Along with providing information, mobile phone usage also surges rumours and fake news (Smith, 2006). It has been argued that during any emergency or at the time of any disaster management, social media provides access to relevant and timely information. However, at the same time, individuals are exposed to large quantities of information without being aware of its validity or risk of misinformation (Simon et al., 2015). In such a situation, different sources are used by the refugees to cross-check the information. For example, if any news comes on WhatsApp, which appears like fake news or rumour, then it is cross-checked on Google news.

In a flux situation of refugees, many rumours and wrong information also spread very easily, sometimes creating difficulties. In the absence of ICTs, confirming such news or incidence used to be a challenge, but with the help of ICTs, these refugees can validate the news. To quote: *Now, with just a Google search, any news can be confirmed which earlier used to create havoc for us.*

Harney (2013) explains the role of mobile phones in resolving everyday life's uncertainties in destination countries. In the context of the present study, ICTs also helped the young Afghan refugees to understand people of different social backgrounds in India. To quote: *India*

has a variety of people and culture. If we meet someone who is the citizen of India, we get to know about their background and culture through the Internet. There are so many social identities of people staying here about their religion, caste, and region etc. Now with the help of the Internet, we get an idea about a person's background. Earlier, we used to suspect people more, but now you may know some facts about everyone from the social media sites like Facebook and helps to develop trust in that person.

The study indicates that refugees use social media at two levels. First, they gain information from open Facebook groups. These are open Facebook groups on which information is shared by Afghan Sikhs from different locations. However, due to a sense of vulnerability and due to the fear of monitoring by organizations working on refugees, the refugees use pseudonyms. This allows them to access the information provided without revealing identity. Secondly, close groups or personal pages are created to locate their friends and relatives on Facebook. These pages are created with real names so that it is possible to trace people from their family and community.

To share information among the known people of their community, WhatsApp groups are used more than Facebook. They are closed groups where the information can be shared without any fear of surveillance. Sometimes information gathered from the open Facebook group is corroborated by family friends and trusted persons of their community through closed groups and WhatsApp groups.

When it comes to the usage of Twitter, the usage seems to be limited. There are two handles - AfghanSikh@twitter.com and afghansikhs@twitter.com. They are not frequently updated or used. Both the Twitter handles have 129 and 139 followers, respectively. The content analysis of this Twitter account indicates that the news and incidences of marginalisation of Afghan Sikhs at different locations of their settlement are shared. When asked, the respondents had mentioned that Twitter is not needed with the availability of Facebook and WhatsApp. The observation of the study indicates that the identity of people is traceable on Twitter, and hence it is not appealing. The respondents are already negotiating with the issue of identity on Facebook open and close pages. They do not want to replicate the same practice on Twitter.

One of the benefits of social capital is also the transfer of knowledge among network members. The ability of Afghan refugees to access and validate the information at the right time infer such benefit. The social capital not only benefits those who are part of the network but also the community members at large (Kostova and Roth, 2003). It is seen as a public good because it is of indirect benefit to many people (Bourdieu, 1986; Coleman, 1988). The study finds that social capital available to refugees through ICTs is the one which accommodates more public good than the individual good. Tracing of own people, availability of information, and recognition to their culture are public goods in the refugees' context.

4.3. Reliving and gathering socio-cultural identities

Studies have indicated that cultural resources of Afghan refugees are very crucial for their experience of resilience (Kohistani, 2012). Mobile phones have certainly brought geographically dispersed people together, but for migrants, they help in constructing community and identity in the new locations as well. Cultural strength, such as strong kinship bonds and strong religious orientation provide a sense of resilience for refugees. The spiritual traditions have been identified to protect against stress and uncertainty (Angell et al., 1998; Carranza, 2007; Greeff and Holtzkamp, 2007).

In Delhi, Afghan Sikhs can build their Gurudwara (Sikh temples) and lead their cultural practices. The ICTs like Facebook and WhatsApp provide them information about the cultural activities of their community across the world. The refugee communities spread in different countries like USA, UK, Australia and Austria share from their respective locations. The ICTs help to express their cultural identities. It was found that the pictures of festival celebrations, marriage

ceremonies and other cultural activities are shared on such groups. These pictures not only show how different festivals of the Afghan culture are celebrated, but it also provides them with a sense of satisfaction and happiness to see how their culture is surviving. To quote: *Whenever pictures of any celebrations and activities are uploaded to the Internet, my grandson shows me the same, and I feel elated to see those pictures. Though people had to leave Afghanistan and settle in other countries, I feel very happy about the fact that in these different locations how they are trying to continue with their culture.*

Another respondent of the study explained that *when you see that your culture is also surviving with you in the difficult circumstances, you feel more motivated to carry on. You feel at least we should keep on doing something for our religion and our culture.*

For Afghan migrants, their cultural strength is quiet crucial for them in balancing the process of adaptation to the host country's culture and in maintaining their own natal culture. The Afghan society values and exhibits a strong kinship bond. This cultural characteristic provides the motivation and strength to carry on with their journey as refugees (Kohistani, 2012). The cultural identities expressed through social media provide a sense of belonging. Due to ICTs, especially on Facebook's closed pages and WhatsApp, the refugees are witnessing the survival and expansion of the culture, which contributes positively to their struggle as refugees.

It is also argued that a sense of unimportance and lack of recognition in refugee's context lead to the absence of esteem and prestige, in other words, the absence of symbolic capital. For refugees, survival in a new country also depends upon their accumulation of symbolic capital. The symbolic capital is experienced when their cultural practices are expanding or spreading through social media and WhatsApp. When a refugee shares a cultural activity or a fact with his network; which is further liked and shared by others, a gradual expansion of symbolic capital happens. With the experiences of forced migration, one of the major concerns is the loss of cultural identities of these Afghan refugees as the festivities, clothing style and food are different from the locals. However, with social media, refugees can generate recognition for their community. The ICTs provide the updated and required information about the community. Before ICTs, the knowledge about the community was lost in official documents and newspapers. The expansion of the cultural space through social media and the availability of the images and information online have provided the refugees with a sense of recognition and have generated the symbolic capital.

According to Bourdieu, every individual belongs to a social space which involves a symbolic struggle. The aim of the symbolic struggle is to make it exist visibly. The symbolic struggles have a specific logic of negotiating an identity to endow themselves with a real autonomy from the structures in which they are rooted (Bourdieu, 1989). Bringing this argument to the context of Afghan Sikh refugees, the symbolic capital generated through ICTs provides them visibilities when their identity as Afghan Sikhs was getting lost. The host societies look upon them as refugees, but their unique identity of being Afghan Sikhs was not known to many people. In India, the notion of Afghans was attached to the Muslims, and the notion of Sikhs was attached to Indians. The identity of being Afghan Sikhs is gaining visibility through ICTs. In this way, ICTs are enabling this refugee community to have a transnational identity (Castells, 2003) in the backdrop of their uprooted reality.

4.4. Refugees and class identity

One of the major implications of Bourdieu's concept of capital was to analyse the class realities of the contemporary societies. It remains imperative here to explain that apart from accessing different forms of capital for their survival, how, refugees appropriate their own class identities through social media. The present study is conscious of class differences among the refugees and not presenting them as one homogeneous community. The present study also observed that the Afghan Sikh refugees represent different class realities within a refugee community. The Afghan Sikhs were largely the business class in Afghanistan. However, some of them had their businesses in Central Asia and the Middle East, and some were having small businesses within Afghanistan, where they used to run their shops in the local markets. After having experienced forced migration, their class realities reflected the difference in their life situations in India. First of all, the decision about the destination country for migration depended upon the social capital of these people. Those who had some connections and links in Western countries migrated towards that part of the World and rest came to India. Among those who came to India, who had businesses in other countries could continue with their businesses as there was no disturbance in their business destinations but those who had their businesses within Afghanistan, they had to start everything from scratch. They had to establish their business in a new place where they were starting a new life and struggling with issues such as security, housing, local support etc. This brought two classes of refugees, business class and shopkeepers. These groups live in different conditions in Delhi. Business class lives in big houses (some of the families live in house size of 2000 sq. ft), own cars and live affluently in Delhi. They stay in higher income group localities in Vikaspuri in West Delhi.

On the other hand the families of shopkeepers faced a drastic slump in their life economically. The size of their businesses got very small with smaller returns. Such families live in the rented accommodations in the areas of lower income group housing in and around West Delhi in India.

The class realities of Afghan Sikhs were visible on their social media profiles as well, where people from different classes of their community project their capital. The choice of clothes, location and lifestyle, reflect their class reality within their refugee realities. The men from the business class could own cars, and their women would wear a lot of gold. This affluence is highlighted in their social media profiles as well. The Afghan women have free access for leisure in Delhi, which was beyond imagination in Afghanistan. The class reality is also contested by sharing women's indulgence for leisure in the city especially at shopping malls, which is not the case in the context of shopkeepers as they do not have enough means for such indulgences.

This refugee community has moved to its next generation by now, and the aspirations of the youth of this community are in congruence with the modern middle class of India. The aspirations to learn English and to hold some professional degrees are also shared by young adults on their social media profiles. This reflects their desire for new and modern forms of cultural capital. The class realities are also highlighted when the affluent class is appealed through social media to move its economic capital to help economically week fellow refugees. The study indicates that the usage of ICTs by this refugee community is to appropriate different forms of capital and also to appropriate their class identity through which they project the ownership of their economic, cultural and social capitals.

5. Conclusion

The study found that ICTs usage practices among refugees are as important as the underlying physical infrastructure. Many ICTs are accessed by the refugees such as mobile apps, websites, social media, translation services, news, phone calling and messaging. The smartphone through which all above are accessed has become an essential possession for refugees' survival and their journey in the host country.

The present paper contributes to the literature on refugees and ICTs at two levels. Firstly, it examines how ICTs help refugees to locate their lost people and culture, and how they help in the journey as refugees. The ICTs usage practices have not been studied adequately in the context of Afghan refugees, which constitutes the second biggest refugee population in the world after the Syrian refugees. India hosts refugees from almost all of its neighbouring countries, but their lives have not been studied from their ICTs usage practices. The present paper captures the ICT usage practices and presents a window to look

into the issues faced by the refugees and the agency exercised by them.

Secondly, the study provides a conceptual framework to examine the life of refugees through ICTs. The study argues that refugees' everyday life practices are to expand their capacities for survival in the host country. Therefore, the technology of every day is used to negotiate different forms of capital by the refugees. The ICTs have brought people together across the world, but for refugees, the feeling of closeness has other meanings and implications. The meanings are interpreted by the 'forms of capital' which provide an avenue to ventilate their struggles and difficulties as refugees. These forms of capital also contribute to finding the continuity with the past, which has remained in their mind, but they could never express it. The refugee status in India provides them with an incomplete identity even if they want to forget Afghanistan and get settled in India. On the other hand, the inability to get citizenship of India keeps invigorating their affiliation for Afghanistan. In this way, the social and symbolic capital through ICTs helped their struggle with social identity and provided a sense of relevance, belongingness and connectedness with the own community and also allowed them to exercise their class identity.

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