



# REVISITING THE KASHMIRI PANDIT EXODUS AND THE QUESTION OF RESETTLEMENT: THE ROAD AHEAD

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## **BACKGROUND AND ORIGIN OF PROBLEM**

The attempt is henceforth made in this write up to point out and study the issue of certain problems in Indian state and under the light of such an interest in the field of research, brings me down to conduct an extensive research on the issue of the plight of Kashmiri pandits which in turn is considered as one of the most significant instances of the problematic elements of the Indian state. Speaking about the origin of the problem, the Kashmiri pandits were the people of saraswat Brahmin origin who were born and brought up in the valley of Kashmir. The turmoil of the Kashmiri pandits has a long historical lineage of living as outcasts in the state of India. The hindu population of the Kashmir valley consisted about 4-5% during the period of British India and the chain of events popped up in the period of post 1947 period when there were a chain of events like the accession of the princely state in 1947 and the announcement of the coming of land reforms in 1950 where some 20% of the Pandit population left the valley in mass exodus. They opined the accession to be uncertain and feared the economic and social diminution in the wake of land reforms. The key highlight of events can be traced as early as January 1990 with the dismissal of Farooq Abdullah's government and the imposition of Governor's rule in the state, the Islamic extremism had snowballed into aggression against the Hindu community over the valley which in turn started giving out threatening statements over loudspeakers from the mosques with the objective of prioritizing Islam over Hinduism. A series of events then triggered off as Hindus of Kashmir became easy targets of Islamic propaganda of the Jammu and Kashmir liberation front (JKLF) and Jamaat e Islam and other militant wings. The estimates and accounts have their clear specificities of the numbers of this population whose presence is gradually receding. As per the data of a J&K migrant relief commission, as of January 2021, around 1,54,000 Kashmiri Pandits are living as migrants. Around 40,000 families are represented in Jammu and the rest 20,000 are located in Delhi and other states and cities like Mumbai, Ahmedabad etc. Thousands are still present in the valley. However there has hardly been any representation from this community that has been a part of the elected assembly in Kashmir for decades. The last time, someone from the Kashmiri pandit community made it to the assembly was in 2002. Even before migration the assembly formed in 1996 had a lone MLA who belonged to the community, despite of their population being around in the

valley at that time. Even from the period from 1951 to 1996, the Pandit community had their elected representatives from many constituencies like Kulgham and Devsar etc. and all these factors had nonetheless contributed to the political empowerment of the community. However, post migration, the community was scattered and there was not a single member to represent their demands.

With the passage of time, successive governments have nonetheless made considerable efforts to bring the pandits back in the valley but a little has changed on the ground situation which has confined the notion of return into a pure hypothetical idea. The efforts to resettle the pandits have got ghetto like structures with Kashmir getting wrapped gradually under "barbed wire" keeping a normalized life in distant forms. The NDA led government has nonetheless made promises to bring the Kashmiri pandits back and the idea also got crystalized among other sections of the people to think and harmonize with the community who had been ousted from their land almost three decades ago. Concerns regarding the safety and well being of the Kashmiri Pandits has also been raised by certain right wing Hindutva organisations and groups as well. The BJP government was finally done with the scrapping of article 370 and 35A on August 5<sup>th</sup> 2019, the Kashmiri pandit community had their moment of joy who saw it as a pending "revenge" which was finally taken.

**KEYWORDS:** Kashmiri Pandits, exodus, communalism, hindutva, migration, resettlement.

## **REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

There is no denying the fact that numerous amounts of research had been conducted and papers have been published prior initiating this research. Analyzing specifically, the works of a renowned journalist and author, Rahul Pandita's book, *Our Moon has Blood clots*, the exodus of the Pandit community had nonetheless left a dismal gap in the two communities and also the book has brought into limelight the painful memories of the Kashmiri pandit community. Reconciliation posed a tougher challenge. Some other observations have also been enriched by Charu Malhotra, where it was said that the avoidance of armed conflict had sowed the root cause of displacement on religious and even communal lines. There were also other views which were variously articulated. Sadaf Munshi has even stated that the failure to acknowledge the experiences and the bitterness among one another was the major cause of a communal disharmony in the valley. Other scholars like GL Pant and Manas Bhattacharyya has also highlighted about the plight and the sufferings of the Pandit families. An extensive review in this matter was also provided by Burton Benedict.

The sole focus in the research will be to find out the root cause of such communal disharmonies and displacement and also enrich the research paper with more facts and verifiable evidences from the earlier study from the same topic as referencing which have been embarked upon in this research paper in addition to the recent developments which have taken place in the valley after the revoking of article 370 and 35A respectively

## **RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

In the realm of the topic chosen to conduct the research upon, the research paper will seek to address the answers of mainly five questions:

Firstly, what are the impediments we intend to see in the Kashmir valley?

Secondly, what are the immediate steps taken by the union government to restore peace and normalcy in the Kashmir valley in the light of the massive exodus already occurred?

Thirdly, what is the reality in the present day?

Fourthly, why the demand of “Panun Kashmir” is raised?

Fifthly, with the revoking of article 370, Jammu and Kashmir has not been granted the status of a state. In this light, what are the factors and the problems which actually prevents it from getting the status of a state?

### **DESIGNING OF THE RESEARCH**

The key pattern of research design which is intended to be taken in order to execute the research is the exploratory method by which attempt will be made to explore new phenomenon and also to verify the facts and data hence collected. The main cause for taking up this issue of research in terms of exploratory method is to investigate the problem more precisely and the major point is the discovery of ideas and insights which can in fact also lead to certain changes in the content of the research as well. The execution of such research design will assist to provide opportunity for considering different aspects of problem under study.

### **METHODS OF CONDUCTING THE RESEARCH**

As it had already been mentioned earlier that the lion's share of the research paper will rely on exploratory means, but certain methods and techniques will be used for gathering the data. At certain points during the course of the research, a special emphasis will laid on the interview method like conducting a direct interview on one to one ratio or conducting a telephonic interview or sometimes a group interview of certain individuals. Besides these, an attempt will also be made to keep their view point in front through recorded video clips and opinions being recorded via voice recorders for certain people who might not positively consent for an interview or the conducting of the interview might not be possible due to unavoidable circumstances. Besides such methods, the use of computer and communicating via emails will also be done in certain cases. Besides these, if there certain cases where noting the grievances of the subjects can give a sharp and useful edge to the research, a careful implementation of the case study method can also be done.

Secondly, it can be also brought out to note the fact that certain research, studies and paper publications have already been established to uphold and redress the problem of the Kashmiri pandits. During the tenure of conducting this research, initiative will be made to consult and extract certain information and data from government offices as well by making references to the existing documents by referencing. Through a careful analysis and study of all the materials, documents and facts, the research will try to enrich the topic by new forms and ideas and possibly provide some conclusive remedies to assess what lies ahead for the Kashmiri pandits in addition to the existing problem. Also keeping in account about the accuracy and the authenticity of the research work, the information and data hence collected will be subjected to cross verifications and re checks in order to prevent any errors and discrepancies which might occur in the initial stage of data collection. On an ending note, after collecting all the necessary information for the research work, the research paper will be completed as early as possible.

### **SOLVING THE PROBLEM**

Speaking about the remedial measures which can be taken in the light of the contemporary malady currently existing in the valley, the government can take steps in the light of the prevailing social and economic dismal in the state, by taking adequate measures to build necessary infrastructures to professionally accomplishing the Kashmiri youth in their home state. The need is to build the feeling of trust and security among this community which was ousted almost three decades ago, followed up the boosting up of tourism and massive industrialization to create greater opportunities. Getting done away with the militancy ideologies in the valley can also cement the positive thoughts in the hearts of the ousted

community to return and resettle in their hometown. Scrapping out of article 370 and 35A had nonetheless laid the base for some sort of trust and joy among the Kashmiri Hindu community, but the concretization of the entire process seems somewhere missing. Some other steps have also been taken to make an affirmative initiative. In addition to this, the administration of the Lieutenant Governor has taken steps to build transit flats to facilitate a faster return of the Kashmiri pandits. The minority cell of the National Conference passed three resolutions which among others called for the return and rehabilitation of Kashmiri migrant pandits in their valley and their political empowerment. The resolutions which had also demanded the passage of a bill for managing of the affair of temples and shrines of the community were also raised. So the prima facie concern which needs to be kept at the center is to rebuild the sense of trust and security in the minds of the ousted Pandits and their families and to rehabilitate them without any religious clashes or unrest in the state. This in turn can be a highly sentimental issue which needs to be addressed with utmost care. So broadly speaking, these are the issues which have been highlighted here and the detailed answers of every minute problem related to the topic will be sought during the extensive conducting of the research.

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