

A Case Study of Kashmiri Pandits' Exodus : Causes, Circumstances, and Consequences

Vipin Kumar

House No 260, Sector 4, Rohtak, Haryana, India

ABSTRACT

Modern men have become highly ambitious, materialistic and get-going just because they have delimited their desires. They have to go from one place to another for the fulfillment of their dreams and desires. It is a universal rule that every human being is selfish to less or the greater degree. This greed gives birth to many social evils which make some people's life miserable. According to the Manu smriti, Hindu society was divided into four parts: Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas and Shudras. This classification of the society was made for the benefit of the society so that there may be balance in the work profile of the people. People further divided the society into different religions, sects and communities. This religion has become a major problem in the present context because people have forgotten that the path of all religions goes to the same ultimate goal of one God whom people of different religions call from different names. In other words, the objective of all regions is salvation. India is a secular country and people from different religions live in it and that's why unity in diversity is called the specialty of India. People go from one state to another for their livelihood. Migration from place to another is generally considered for some positive motive and it gives happiness to the people. But the forced migration gives birth to the problems of people. The agony of the Kashmiri Pandits can be felt only from those people who have undergone this suffering. Present paper attempts to find a sociological analysis of modern scenario of the Kashmiri Pandits who were forced to leave Kashmir Valley. Fanaticism always leads to communal riots, terror and anarchy in any country. It will be attempted to explore and analyze in detail why lakhs of Kashmiri Pandits became homeless and what were diabolic consequences due to their exodus on 19 January, 1990.

Keywords : Kashmiri Pandits, Fanaticism, Conversion to Islam, Terror in Kashmir Valley, Minority vs. Majority, Communal Riots, Islamic Influence.

Jammu and Kashmir is a place of historical importance for India. People from different parts of India and abroad come to visit Kashmir Valley. Now a union territory, it has also been in controversy and conflict for a long time on different issues. Srinagar, the capital of this state, has been the centre of terrorism for a long time. And which is the reason that terrorism has become one of the terrifying and serious problems to India. 21 May is celebrated every year as Anti-Terrorism Day. At the same time, the worst impact of this terror spread in the Kashmir Valley had on the

Pandits of this state. Due to terrorism, Pandits of this state had to leave their state. The Kashmiri Hindus who migrated from Kashmir settled in Jammu and the other places of the country in order to save their lives. Apart from being a very beautiful place before Indian independence, Kashmir was a very serene place for its residents and most of the people here were Kashmiri Pandits who were engaged in various religious activities. Though this is a hilly area devoid of any good product, yet it is liked by its visitors due to its scenic beauty and calm environment. Many Muslim

emperors also attacked and ruled over it but its peace remained uninterrupted and the people of this state remain satisfied with what they had.

There were different categories of Kashmiri Pandits who were residing at Kashmir Valley and on the basis of all these categories, these Kashmiri Pandits had their own way of living their life and had different customs, rituals and traditions. There were mainly two types of Kashmiri Pandits there: Banamasi and Malamasi. In the first category there were those pundits who had left the valley during the rule of Muslim kings. They came here again and settled after some time. The second type of pundits is Malamasi who were true to their religion and they faced all kinds of difficulties there during the reign of different rulers but they did not think to leave their motherland. There was other category of Pundits also "the Buhir Pandits". They were those pundits who were engaged in one or the other type of business there.

It was a strange thing in the valley that these Kashmiri Pandits or Bhattas were not liked by the native Muslim people because they thought that the Kashmiri Pandits were a big threat for Islam. Muslims thought that Kashmir was made for Muslims only and they wanted that Hindu Pandits should not be given any space in public life of Kashmir life.

Some intellectuals believe that Terrorists invoked and provoked the Kashmiri Muslim population that Kashmir was only for Muslims and that's why they decided that they will make the life of other people pitiable there. That's why they started bullying and oppressing the people of other religions especially Hindus. They would tell that Kashmir is a paradise but if you will live here we will make your life a hell. The terrorists' organizations started pressurizing Kashmir Pandits to convert to Islam otherwise consequences would not be good for them.

After it, a tug of war started between these two religious groups. The Kashmiri Pandits were rebelling but they were in minority group. That's why they were helpless. The Kashmiri pundits were forced to change their religion and those who did not succumb and raised their voice; they were mentally and physically tortured. There were the open slogans in the streets either to embrace Islam, quit or die. Most of the people who got afraid of the present situation decided to quit the place. The night of 19 January 1990 was much terrifying as the houses of the Kashmiri Pandits were burned; the women and girls' honor was lost; many women were raped; and many people were murdered. Even the children were not spared. It was the worst time for the Kashmiri Pandits.

Role of Pakistan

When India became independent, at that time a war broke out between India and Pakistan for the authority of Kashmir.

At that time, it was the effort of Pakistan to take over Kashmir but India did not allow it. Indian Army inflicted a humiliating defeat on Pakistan Armed Forces. Since then Pakistan tried to adopt new ways to gain control over Kashmir. If it could not win Kashmir by force, it tried to do it by spreading anarchy in the Kashmir Valley. Spreading terror in the Valley was easiest way to do this. Pakistan's intelligence agency ISI openly got involved in these notorious objectives. Terrorists were given training in Pakistan occupied Kashmir across the border. Pakistan Army planned and facilitated infiltration of these terrorists into Indian Territory. Pakistani Government arranged funding and instigated anti Indian forces in Kashmir Valley. A number of anti-Indian protests started taking place in Kashmir. By the 1980s, anti-Indian protests in Kashmir started increasing significantly

Rise of Separatism

In the 1980s, the Jammu Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF) and several Islamist groups supporting Pakistan

began to strengthen themselves and started intensifying the spread of hatred towards India among the Muslim people in the valley. The effect of which began to fall on the Kashmiri Pandits there.

In 1988, the Jammu Kashmir Liberation Front started separatist rebellions to liberate Kashmir from India. Due to this separatist rebellion, in 1989, a Kashmiri Hindu named Tika Lal Taplu was killed. Tika Lal was a well-known leader, who belonged to the Bharatiya Janata Party.

Due to this murder, the fear of the Kashmiri Pandit community began to arise and the people of this community started feeling insecure. On January 4, 1990, an advertisement was published in the Urdu newspapers of Kashmir by the terrorist organization Hizb-ul-Mujahideen. In this advertisement, Hizb-ul-Mujahideen ordered all the Pandits to leave the valley immediately. It was written in this advertisement that, either leave Kashmir or change religion, otherwise get ready to die. This advertisement was published in newspapers for a long time, so that the fear of the Pandits may remain stable. A few days after this advertisement, this terrorist organization started torturing and killing the Kashmiri Pandits of the valley.

In the month of January 1990, two government employees were killed in Srinagar, named ML Bhan and Baldev Raj Dutta. Both of them were Kashmiri Pandits, both of them were murdered on 15 January. Not only this, some more influential figures were also murdered. After all these killings, the tension in the valley increased further and after four days of their murder, the situation in the valley started deteriorating for the Kashmiri Pandits.

The atmosphere of the valley was so tensed that the open threatening were given to Kashmiri pandits. The Pandits were being told to vacate the valley through loudspeakers and open announcements were made in

the streets. Not only this, posters were also adhered outside the houses of Kashmiri Pandits and they were openly challenged and threatened either to leave or do what is being directed to them. These types of slogans were announced openly at the loud speakers: “अगर कश्मीर में रहना होगा/ अल्लाह-हू-अकबर कहना होगा” (“If you want to live in Kashmir, You must accept Allah as your God” Trans. Mine).

The night of 19 January, 1990 was unforgettable and most terrifying to the Kashmiri Pandits because the majority people living there came out in the streets and started threatening the Pandits to leave Kashmir immediately or they must be ready to face the consequences. After which the Pandits sought help from the government, but neither the state government nor the central government helped them. To make them frightened, Muslims started raping Hindu Pandits women and their children were also killed. These circumstances made the people vacate the valley.

By the end of the month of January, lakhs of Pandits living in Kashmir left the valley and went to different parts of the country. Some Pandits settled in Jammu and some Pandits left this state. At that time Sh. VP Singh was the Prime Minister of India and Farookh Abdullah was the Chief Minister of the Jammu and Kashmir. But neither the central nor the state governments came forward to help the Kashmiri Pandits. It was a complete meltdown of State Machinery. Police did nothing and Kashmiri Pandits were left at their own.

So far as the data is concerned, government says that 1 lakh 70 thousand Kashmiri Pandits lived in Kashmir in 1990 but other sources state that more than three lakh Kashmiri Pandits lived there but after the riots only 4000 Kashmiri Pandits remained in the valley. The government data say that around 300 Kashmiri Pandits were killed but according to the oral

statements of Kashmiri Pandits, thousands of pundits were killed. The women were humiliated, raped, mutilated and finally killed. The Kashmir Valley was completely vacated from the Kashmiri Pandits.

In 2008, UPA government planned to rehabilitate the Kashmiri Pandits and a package of 1168 crore was also announced. Most of the people hesitated to settle again in that risk zone and only around one thousand people returned in Kashmir and started living again.

Rahul Pandita writes that on October 14, 1989 Muslim people gathered at the occasion of the Eid-e-Milad-un-Nabi but their activities were dubious. They were shouting the slogan which is being translated into English here: "What will work here? The rule of Mustafa No eastern, no western, only Islamic, only Islamic" (qtd in Tripathi 2). This type of environment was really full of terror.

This incidence was so heartbreaking that people wrote some books on these incidences. Jagmohan's book *My Frozen Turbulence in Kashmir* is an account of the entire tragedy how the terrorists forced the Kashmiri Pandits to vacate their house and all the people would not be able to take a nap the whole night. PNK Bamzai's book *Culture and Political History of Kashmir* also has been written on the same topic in which he has described the culture and politics of that time. He has written how the internal politics made the people blind and they became devoid of human feelings and then whatever happened is not concealed from anyone. Rahul Pandita's book *Our Moon Has Blood Clots* is a tale of his own family and the problems faced by his family members. Not only this, there are few more books which have been written on the same topic and have universal appeal.

So far as the aftermaths of the Kashmiri Pandits's exodus are concerned. The miscreants took away all the valuable goods, electronic gadgets, kitchenware, furniture and what not. Even the electricity fittings

were also pulled out and sold. It was further reported that the thieves stole even the doors and windows of the house. Shops were looted though a few people got a little bit money for it. The properties were sold out at the throw-away price. The public properties such as temples, crematoriums and shrines were usurped and vandalized.

Now this Kashmir Valley has completely become a theocratic Islamic place within its secular Indian Union. Now there are almost 100% Muslims and there may be around one percent minority group people except the government recently immigrated some people. The economy of Kashmir depends on the financial doles from Delhi. The return of the Kashmiri Pandits now depends at the mercy of the majority group and it will not be an exaggeration to state that the minority groups must remain in harmony and under the goodwill of the majority group otherwise there may be risk involved in the state of conflicts. The Kashmiri Pandits should open their eyes wide and they should know that the fetters which they wore for seven centuries are now broken forever. Though there were many factors behind this mass massacre and such kind of inhuman acts are always condemnable. Human beings, to whatever religion they belong, should not forget that all the human beings, men and women of every religion, have equal rights and the minority group in any country or state should not be suppressed or exploited. The identity of the Kashmiri Pandits is now under serious threat because they have lost their unity, integrity and property and come into the category of a dispersed community but one has to survive in all circumstances and that is called the fight for survival and this rule is followed by every creature on this earth including human beings.

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