

IMPACT OF MIGRATION ON KASHMIRI PANDITHS

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Abstract

Migration is generally a movement of people from their origin of place to another place for the purpose of setting down permanent or temporary and the nature of migration is broadly classified in terms of type of choice (voluntary or involuntary) or geographical territory (international or internal), rural to rural, rural to urban, urban to urban etc. The involuntary or voluntary forced migration is caused due to a variety of reasons. However, the state of J&K has experienced the various types of migration due to number of reasons like growth of militancy especially in Kashmir valley and its adjoining areas since the year 1988. The early 1990's period, witnessed killing of many people supporting Indian rule especially Kashmiri Pandits, in Kashmir valley. The government had failed to control militancy conflicts and to provide security to minority of Kashmiri Pandits and under these bad circumstances Kashmiri Pandits started migration and left their native Kashmir valley. Now these Pandits have settled in various parts of the country.

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** **Research Guide.**

INTRODUCTION

Kashmir history is five thousand years old. In the course of time, many invaders from outside led incursions into Kashmir. Recurrent turmoil within, too, have been part of her destiny. However, inter community clashes did not show their ugly face as engrained culture. There is hardly any substantial historical evidence to prove that in a complex society people belonging to majority religious group compassed extirpation or decimation of a minority group. It should be reminded that at a time when (in 1947-48) human beings had turned beastly in the sub-continent; it was only Kashmir where the flame of humanism flickered.¹

No minority in any given society can live with honour and dignity and prosper in an atmosphere of security unless its leaders and elders share the joy and pain of the majority group. This was felt by the Pandith leadership as far back as 1947 when they found that it was the valley of Kashmir alone where the majority community took upon itself the task of guarding the houses of minority community. But the tragedy with the Pandits and their short - sighted leaders is that after the events of 1947, they Shifted their loyalties from the masses of Kashmir to the rulers in New Delhi. Barring a few Pandith leaders who bore long incarceration with Sheikh Abdullah, most of the rest pretending to protect the interests of Kashmiri Community actually served their own interests. They colluded with some intransigent political leaders in New Delhi and worked against the interests of Kashmir not out of ingrained malice but only to seek personal aggrandizement. These elements became the catalyst in poisoning the minds of the majority community against their own community.²

In a mass exodus, at the beginning of March 1990, about 1, 40,000 Kashmiri Pandits left the valley for refugee camps outside Jammu. The more affluent took up residence in their second homes in Delhi, but the vast majority was housed in squalid tents in over fifty camps on the outskirts of both Jammu and Delhi.³

Impact of Migration on Kashmiri Pandiths

It was observed that majority of the migrants after migration faced most serious problem of accommodation for their families in Jammu and other cities what they were provided in the

1. Hashim Qureshi, "Kashmir; unveiling of truth", Jeddojud Publications, Lahore Pakistan, 1999, p-23

2. Ibid.

3. Victoria Schofield, "Kashmir in Conflicts India, Pakistan and the Unending war", Viva Books Private Limited, New Delhi – 2004, p-51

migrant camps was a "shame accommodation". In some aspects, it was worse than the established slums. It was observed in Jammu that while upper and middle class Kashmiri Pandit migrants got needed though not sufficient and descent accommodation, the lower class Kashmiri Pandit migrants got worst one room for entire family in the camps. At the same time, while the urban based Kashmiri Pandit migrants could grab minimum accommodation at the early stage, the rural based Kashmiri Pandit migrants could not do that. The investigation revealed that some among the former got accommodation in the camps but after some time, lived outside camps. Some of them also leased the camp accommodation to others in lieu of money. The latter could not do this.

One the whole, it was found in Jammu (through estimates) that the following types of residential accommodation was taken by the Kashmiri Pandit and Kashmiri Muslim and other migrants in the proportion mentioned below:

S. No.	Type of Accommodation	Occupied by no. of migrants (%)
1.	Self constructed houses	12.00
2.	JK Government Flats	30.00
3.	Rented Flats/Sets	13.00
4.	One room set	30.00
	Total	85.00

It follows that while about 85.00 percent (based on estimates) migrants lived in different types of residential accommodation in the city of Jammu and its suburban areas and nearby towns, about 15 percent migrants lived after migration outside Jammu in cities and towns in the country. These migrants opted for out of Jammu settlement, though temporarily, because one or more family members were working in those cities and towns. They faced no serious problem for residential accommodation because their family members employed there already established the household there. As per an unofficial estimate, there seems no city in India where the Kashmiri Pandits are not working in different areas, on different positions and for different periods.

First, the above statistical details based on estimates reveal that 12.00 percent migrants faced no problem of accommodation in Jammu. They had constructed their own houses in

Jammu and they shifted to their houses at the initial stage of out migration from Kashmir. They were in a position to shift some valuable things from Kashmir to Jammu. These houses were constructed in advance before some years or decades, In fact, some of them had anticipated about their problems in the valley because of the disputed status of J & K and the consequent conflict on it between India and Pakistan. Most of these house owners were businessmen, bureaucrats, technicians, professionals, and government employees. These houses were constructed in different colonies which included Trikota Nagar, Bhagwati Nagar, Gandhi Nagar, Karan Nagar, Bakshi Nagar, Muthi, Subhash Nagar, Jani Pur and Sarwal.⁴

Second, the above statistics show the KP state government employees of different cadres had legally occupied various types of government accommodation. They shifted to Jammu as they used to go there every year with “darbar move”. Earlier they used to go for six months only, but now for full year, in fact, years together. These Kashmiri Pandit employees accommodated the Kashmiri Pandit migrants from Kashmir who were their relatives, friends, neighbour and other relations. These migrants were given the shelter temporarily till they arranged their own accommodation. These migrants had taken some valuable things with them while leaving Kashmir.

Third, the above statistics says that about 13% of the total Kashmiri Pandit migrants took shelter in residential flats/ sets in and around Jammu, which were usually owned by Jammu Dogras and others. These (flats/sets) were rented to the Kashmiri Pandit migrant families on higher rates, but the needy had no alternative in that abnormal situation. The Kashmiri Pandit occupants of this accommodation were from rural as well as from urban areas and belonged to the small / medium business upper middle cadre employees, professionals, technicians and upper salarid groups which could afford to pay the rent. While a significant number among these Kashmiri Pandit migrants left Jammu after some time and settled with their family members and relatives outside J & K in different cities of the country. Some other families among these KP migrants bought the land in and around Jammu city (and in the neighboring states) and constructed houses in newly established colonies where the Kashmiri Pandit either dominated or maintained a sizeable number of total households.

Fourth, the above statistical estimates reveal that about 30.00 percent of the Kashmiri Pandit migrants in Jammu had to take shelter in one room accommodation provided by the state

4. Y. R. Sharma, "Political Dynamics of J & K" Radha Krishan Anand & Co., Jammu, 2002, p-67

government in several migrant camps. The KPs who had to go to this shame accommodation were usually lower cadre government employees and rural inhabitants. They were not in a position either to construct their own houses nor to take flats/ sets on rent. Some of these Kashmiri Pandit migrants managed to get a meager sum of money and rent a flat or a set outside the migrant camps. In the camps, the accommodation was horrible for it could not fulfill any purpose of the house.⁵

It was observed that the Kashmiri Pandit migrants, especially living in one room sets inside and outside the camps, faced extremely harsh and completely not suitable weather conditions. The people who suffered more in these conditions were old, women, children and disabled handicapped. The extreme heat in Jammu, even up to 44 degrees Celsius, was not bearable for these categories of people. In actuality, many individuals belonging to these groups suffered/ collapsed/died because of dehydration, sun strokes, skin reactions, neurological disorders, cardiac attacks, snake bites and so on. The worst kind of situation in this regard prevailed in the migrant camps than in other types of accommodation where in the inhabitant could manage to avoid / save from the extreme heat. Children preparing for exams women in pre-natal or post - natal stage, old people having already several diseases were the primary targets of the heat.⁶

Loss of Property

It has been observed that there was near total loss of movable and immovable property (including houses, valuable household things, land animals, and so on) of the Kashmiri Pandits throughout the valley during militancy. In actuality, in the first phase of militancy which started in 1989, not many Kashmiri Pandits (even not 25 percent migrants at that time) could not take with them all valuable things nor could they dispose off things. It was primarily because they left the valley in extreme hurry and with the impression that they have to come back to Kashmir shortly. It is estimated that about 80 per cent Kashmiri Pandit migrants in the first stage of out migration left back their houses and most of the household things inside. Only about 20 percent Kashmiri Pandit migrants took some valuable things with them to Jammu and other destinations.

During the second stage of Kashmiri Pandit out migration which composed of mid and late 1990s they were able to take some valuable things, except their houses, with them. Most of

5. Ibid.

6. Victoria Schofield, op.cit., p-33

them at that time, developed the feeling that militancy may not be controlled in very short time, and their houses and valuable things may get spoiled in the natural process of decay. Consequently at the last leg of this stage, the Kashmiri Pandits started selling their houses in the valley at very cheap rates. They had three specific reasons for this crucial action. First, the widespread feeling among the Kashmiri Pandits that they may not be going back to the valley shortly. Second their deserted houses may get spoiled in the natural process of decay. Third the militants other locals (including thieves neighbors and hoodlums) may loot, destroy, burnt and occupy their houses. While the security forces may take shelter in these vacant houses, the militants too may use these deserted houses as their hide outs.⁷ The entire process of selling and buying of these houses and land was carried out by the dalals (agents) who were all local Kashmiri Muslims. The modus operandi of these transactions was that the agent, after locating the buyer and fixing / deciding the cost of the house, house/s, the agent/s will make the legal documents for the deal/s and take the signatures of the owner/s and fix their charges. Then they used to come back to the valley, get the signatures of the buyer/s and register the deal/s in the local courts. Then they used to go to Jammu, deliver the documents to the seller's and pay them the amount after deducting their service charges, which were above 5 percent of the total cost. Later on this lengthy procedure was simplified and a short cut method was adopted. In this method, after fixing the cost of a house, the owner through the agent will make a 'gift deed' of the property for the buyer and got it registered in the court. After getting the deed papers from the agent, the buyer used to make the agreed payment to the agent, who paid this amount to the KP owner in Jammu after deducting his service charges. Though these actions seem legal and normal apparently, there were many abnormalities involved.⁸

At the initial stage, hundreds of Kashmiri Pandits sold their houses and land to the Kashmiri Muslims in this framework. In return, the Kashmiri Pandits got money which enabled them to purchase land and construct a house outside Kashmir and outside JK state. However, when this process expanded without limits, the state government banned these deals through a formal legislation. In order to justify this legislation, the government maintained that these deals go against the collective interests of the Kashmiri Pandits and all Kashmiris living anywhere in the state. But the Kashmiri Pandit organizations challenged the validity of this law in supreme

7. Anjali Nirmal & Virendra Bartaria, "Kashmir: An experience Gone Sour", pointer Publishers, Jaipur, 1996., p-49

8. Nasir Ahmad Shah & G.M. Shah, op.cit., p-35

court of India on the argument that it violates the fundamental rights of the Kashmiri Pandit citizens. Thus the process continues though at the lower level. Its details are not made public either by the Kashmiri Pandit owners or by the Kashmiri Muslims buyers and agents. All three involved parties feel it in their interest not to reveal the details about these deals. As per a rough estimates about 28 percent of the total Kashmiri Pandit houses and lands have been sold in this process till late 1990s.⁹

The third stage of this process started from 2000. This stage experienced increase in property deals and thousands of Kashmiri Pandit houses and land were sold to the Kashmiri Muslims on comparatively higher rates. Some of the Kashmiri Pandit owners came to Kashmir themselves and sold their property with the help of Kashmiri Muslims agents. The whole money of these transactions was taken outside kashmir and was mainly used for buying land, constructing houses or purchasing flats. However, the number of deals during previous years decreased mainly because neither many Kashmiri Pandits were ready to sell their property on cheaper rates nor many local KMs were interested in buying KP houses on higher rates. As per a rough estimate, about 36 percent of the total KP houses and lands were sold up to the middle of 2004. Following are the details about selling of the Kashmiri Pundits property in Kashmir.

S. No.	Stage of Selling	% age of total property sold	
		Houses	Land
1.	First (1989-1992)	upto 14.00	07.00
2.	Second (1993-1999)	upto 28.00	20.00
3.	Third (2000-2004)	upto 36.00	28.00

The above estimates based figures reveal that a significant trend of selling their properties on comparatively lower rates has emerged with disastrous implications for all Kashmiris in general and the KPs in particular. First, disposal of their property essentially means cutting their and their children's roots with Kashmir and all that which it represents. Second, after selling land and houses in Kashmir, constructing houses or purchase of flats and establishing family household outside Kashmir impose certain structural and functional limitation which in all

9. Abdul Majid Mattu, "Kashmir Issue, A Historical Perspective", Ali Mohd & Sons, Srinagar, 2002, p-72

possibilities, will not allow the KPs to return back to the valley. The more this process increases, the more chances of forgetting Kashmir rises.

The estimates, based on the information provided by the KP migrants, give the figure picture in totality regarding disposal of their property in Kashmir district wise and in percentages as follows:

S.No.	District	I Stage		II Stage		III stage	
		Houses	Land	Houses	Land	Houses	Land
1.	Srinagar upto	14.00	07.00	26.00	20.00	36.00	21.00
2.	Budgam	11.00	07.00	24.00	12.00	34.00	30.00
3.	Anantnag	12.00	08.00	23.00	14.00	30.00	16.00
4.	Baramulla	08.00	05.00	16.00	14.00	24.00	19.00
5.	Pulwana	12.00	06.00	18.00	12.00	23.00	15.00
6.	Kupwara	09.00	04.00	13.00	08.00	19.00	10.00

The above statistics is completely based on estimates which were determined on the respondent's information. So, this data stands primarily as indicative and directional. It seems that most of these deals were carried out in Srinagar and mainly during the second stage.¹⁰

Impact on Educational Facilities

There is a general feeling in the whole state that though the KPs faced extremely disastrous implications of migration, but they continued the tradition of giving education to their children, boys as well as girls. This feeling got confirmed and reconfirmed during the investigation, even in the migrant camps. Thus the facts stands that despite the migrant status, financial and other problems, the KPs at the community level maintained continued the children's education at all levels and in all fields. In actuality, after their mass migration from Kashmir, the KPs at the 100 percent literacy level. After lot of efforts, the KP children, who usually maintained higher merit comparatively, technical and other most modern courses in

10. Ibid.

several states in India. Some state governments were more sympathetic to them and they provided reservation to the KP children in professional technical institutions in their states.

It seems important to note that the “educational suffering” categorically revealed that some KP boys and girls who were left behind by other community boys and girls usually belonged to the rural areas and to the poorer sections of the community. Since the urban based KPs has developed proper contacts with people and institution outside the JK state, even before their mass migration from Kashmir, their children didn't face many problems in admissions or employment. While the rural based, lower employee and poor KP children faced serious problems in getting admission as well as employment.¹¹

On the other hand, in Kashmir education as a system and its network of facilities and activities got collapsed. This situation emerged from early 1990s when majority of school buildings were burnt by militants or occupied by security forces, educational infrastructure was damaged or made functionless, and educational facilities activities were disrupted completely in the valley. As a result of this devastation of education, not many students could study fully and according to minimum standards. The relevant point of importance related to migration of the KPs is that quality, standard, efficiency and excellence of education in Kashmir had gone with them. Since they had achieved the status of education in Kashmir for hundreds of years, the KPs at the community level had developed tradition of maintaining and continuing it (the educational status) in a standard and ideal form. The local KMs got benefited from it in the entire post independence period. But, that was not possible after 1989. Thus the total departure of the KPs from Kashmir created deep crisis in the educational system, especially efficiency - excellence and standard education cannot be claimed or monopolized by any particular group or community, the KMs with the active support of the state government, started organizing efforts in this regard. The results are open in today's Kashmir.¹²

Deteriorating Health

It was observed in general that the health was one of the major targets of mass migration of the KPs from Kashmir. During investigation in the camps and outside that, after migration, all KP migrants, especially their children, women and aged, got involved in one or other disease which needed immediate medical treatment. In this background, the most important fact is that

11. Gull Mohd Wani, op.cit., p-58

12. Ibid., p-61

the weather conditions in Jammu and effected adversely all KP migrants, especially the aged and those (of all age groups) who lived in the migrant camps. The extreme heat in the summer months in Jammu, which goes up to 44 degrees Celsius in the peak season, could hardly be tolerated in the initial months/ years by the KPs who had left the heaven like valley some time ago. Most of the migrants faced this extreme heat first time in their lives. This situation gave rise to many diseases (Particularly Sun strokes and dehydration) and other complication in their health. Consequently some KPs died and many others developed health complication. Others developed the feeling of living a miserable life. Some others felt that it was better for them to die in Kashmir than to live here in miserable conditions. In that situation, the KPs in general could develop the needed resistance level in their bodies only after facing and tolerating some years of extreme heat in Jammu.¹³ It was found that the Kashmiri Pandits migrants generally developed one or more diseases which had no previous record on the community level. These Kashmiri Pandits lived in sub standard accommodation inside and outside migrant camps and some of them lived in their own houses. On the basis of information provided by the Kashmiri Pandit migrants living in and around the Jammu city. There are certain estimates about the prevalence of some dreaded diseases among them. The details in this regard are:

S.No.	Name of Disease	Prevalence of disease (Percentage)
1.	Cardiac / heart related diseases	30.00 - 45.00
2.	Neurological diseases	25.00 - 35.00
3.	Hypertension and other related diseases	40.00 - 60.00
4.	Blood Pressure and related diseases	45.00 - 65.00
5.	Depression and related diseases	47.00 - 65.00
6.	Other physical and mental disabilities	30.00 - 40.00

First the above details of the prevalence of complex diseases reveal the nature and enormity of the "health cost" which all Kashmiri Pandit migrants had to pay more or less for their mass migration from the valley. The level of the incidence of grave diseases was alarming and needed government and non- governmental efforts to control it effectively and immediately.

13. Balraj Puri, op. cit.

Other unofficial estimate about health conditions of the Kashmiri Pandit migrants in Jammu region revealed that every individual on an average fell victim to a simple or complex disease in the migration syndrome.

Second, though the above-mentioned data stands quantitative in nature, it needs to be considered qualitatively too. It is partly because these figures are based on rough estimates (and migrants own information) and partly because no related - relevant official figures are available even after 22 years of Kashmiri Pandit total migration from Kashmir. In this context, the above statistical figures, primarily and essentially, stand indicative and directional figures. It means that these figures show the trends of emerging diseases among the Kashmiri Pandit migrants at that time mainly because of their mass migration.¹⁴

Third, all above mentioned diseases are complex and dangerous and so needed immediate and long term treatment. But even the minimum needed medical facilities were not available in Jammu. At the same time all Kashmiri Pandit migrants could not afford to pay the costly but highly needed medical facilities. In that situation, some Kashmiri Pandit migrants died and others suffered from chronic illness. These Kashmiri Pandit migrants usually belonged to poorer sections, lower cadre employees and lower middle class. But on the other hand, other groups and classes, of the Kashmiri Pandit migrants could easily afford the long term treatment of these dangerous diseases. They went outside JK state, especially to Chandigarh, Delhi and other cities in India got their diseases cured. Some of them could also afford to go abroad for medical treatment.

Another set of health problems emerged because of disturbance of normal sex life among the KP migrants in Jammu. The intensity of the sex - related problems was highest among those who lived in the migrant camps for a longer time. In actuality, this problem disturbed the whole life of a concerned people. Moreover it led to common depression and other psychological - physiological problems among majority of the migrants. When sex could not be regulated properly, it led to the rise of abnormal sex relationship in the community.

S.No.	Category of the migrants in sex-performance (% age)	Degree of disturbance
1.	Migrants living in the camps	95.00 - 100.00

14. Nasir Ahmad Shah & G.M. Shah, op.cit., p-76

2.	Migrants living in room sets - official rented	80.00 - 85.00
		60.00 - 70.00
3.	Migrants living in several room flats	50.00 - 60.00
4.	Migrants living in their own houses	40.00 - 50.00

The above details related to the disturbance in sex behavior prevalent among the migrants in Jammu reveals clearly the co- relation between the degree or performance of sex behavior and degree level of migration and availability and nature of the accommodation to the migrants. It follows that if the accommodation to the migrants is sufficient / desirable, the level / degree of the performance of sex will be normal / desirable. If the former does not happen, the later will not follow. That is what has actually happened in Jammu after mass migration of the Kashmiri Pandits there.¹⁵

Last, but not the least, another set of health problems prevailing among the KP migrants in Jammu is related to the psychological impact of their mass migration from Kashmir. It was observed that the psychological impact of migration and subsequent life of the migrants has engulfed the individuals, the community and the whole ethos. Consequently, it has given rise to some dangerous diseases which includes depression, trauma, stress, phobia, schizophrenia, some neurological diseases, and other tension based diseases. It was observed that every second migrant is the victim of psychological disorder in one way or the other inside as well as outside the migrant camps, investigation in a migrant camp located around Jammu revealed that 70.00 to 80.00 percent migrants have developed depression and other related psychological diseases after they underwent the process of mass migration from Kashmir. Another unofficial estimate that above 55.00 percent of the KP migrants living in Jammu face complex psychological problems which need the immediate professional treatment on the part of the state government. Since these professional treatment/ facilities are not available fully in Jammu. The government must sponsor these cases outside the state.¹⁶

15. Kakar Sudhir, op. cit., p-39

16. Ibid.