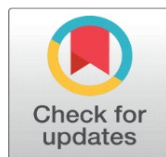
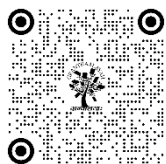


KASHMIRI PANDITS AND THEIR EXODUS

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ABSTRACT

The plight of Kashmiri Pandits have been receiving more attention in recent years. In this Paper the forceful displacement and persecution of Kashmiri Pandits will be discuss. The Pandits have been forcefully displaced from their own motherland since 13th century and their last exodus took place after 1990 under the nose of a democratic elected government. Their displacement was earlier overlooked by the government as Kashmiri Pandits themselves claimed. The displacement of Kashmiri Pandits not only impacted the Indian Political system but it also impacted the plural, federal characteristic of the Indian constitution and Indian society. So in this paper we will discuss how when and under what circumstances Kashmiri Pandits had to leave their motherland.

Keywords: Kashmir, Kashmiri Pandits, Exodus of Kashmiri Pandits

1. INTRODUCTION

Pakistan always considered Kashmir (due to its majority Muslim population) as unfinished agenda of partition as the basis of Pakistan's creation was two nation theory which defined that Hindu and Muslims are two different nations who cannot live together. The support for armed struggle in Kashmir, even in mid 1980s the ISI (Inter-Services Intelligence) of Pakistan were directly involved in Kashmir's armed struggle.¹ Since the 13th century, when Islam first appeared in the valley, the Kashmiri Pandits have been suffering in their country at the hands of radical Islam. The plight of Kashmiri Pandits has been receiving more attention in recent years, particularly following the release of movie called The Kashmir Files. Initially both the government and the Indian populace as altogether ignored the suffering and displacement of Kashmiri Pandits. The most striking feature of the forcible relocation of Kashmiri Pandits is that they started to document the events while civil society kept silent about the plight of Kashmir Pandits. Kashmiri Pandits belongs to Saraswat clan of Hinduism who are known for their deep-rooted scholarly pursuits and traditional values. In the modern history of India, the forceful displacement of Kashmiri Pandits still remains one of the tragic and painful chapters impacting India's composite cultures and secularism. Being the native people of valley this community have been playing active role in shaping Kashmir's history and culture. Many ancient scholars and thinker like Abhinavgupta,

¹ Bodansky, Youssef. (January 1998). Islamabad's Road Warriors. Houston, Texas: Freeman Centre for Strategic Studies.

Kalhana played important role. They are preserver of Shaivism in Kashmir, a school of Hindu philosophy related to metaphysical thought. They served as advisors, administrators during the period of Afghans, Sikhs Mughals and Dogras due to their skills and high literacy rate. While promoting cultural harmony they played crucial role in engagement with unique features of Kashmir Sufi Islam. After India's Independence in 1947, Kashmir Pandits significantly contributed to law academia and politics in India. Now Pandits are scattered in different parts of the world and struggling to keep alive their culture history and language.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Bansi Pandit in his work *Hindus of Kashmir* talked about the forceful displacement and genocide of Kashmir Pandits in Kashmir. In this work Bansi Pandit acknowledged that the plight of Kashmiri Pandits became targeted for a huge conspiracy of silence².

Ankur Datta in his work *On uncertain Ground: Displaced Kashmiri Pandits in Jammu and Kashmir* writes about the life of Kashmir Pandits in camp after forceful displacement in 1990s. Datta in his work covers rehabilitation and relief program and talked about the politics, identity and plight of Kashmir Pandits.³

A Long Dream of Home is edited by Siddhartha Gigoo and Varad Sharma talked about the persecution, struggle and plight of Kashmiri Pandits. This book also covers the memoirs of three generations. This book contains detail account of Kashmiri Pandits who forced into exile.⁴

Christopher Snedden in his work *Understanding Kashmir and Kashmiris* gives an overview of Jammu and Kashmir's history. This book examining the political, cultural and historical context and complex identity of Kashmiris.⁵

Our Moon has Blood Clots is a memoir by Rahul Pandita. In this book Pandita, writes about the painful exodus of Kashmiri Pandits. This book highlights the harassment, torture and violent part of Pandit community. Rahul wrote "Another problem is the apathy of the media and a majority of India's intellectual class who refuse to even acknowledge the suffering of the Pandits."⁶

Dr. Shibani Kachru his work *Kashmiri Pandits (Brief Culture & Political History)* writes about the Political history of Kashmiri Pandits. Shibani Kachru talked about the language, literature, religious practice, ceremonial marriage rites and rituals. While talking about the last exodus of Pandits Kachru stated that it has torn their social fabrics and alienated them from their roots.⁷

In *Kashmiri Pandits: Violence Exodus and Reconstruction*, T.N. Pandit writes about the contribution made by Pandits in Kashmir's culture, history, politics and philosophy of Kashmir. In his work TN Pandit also demonstrated that Pandits have been cordially living in valley with their Muslims neighbors throughout centuries.⁸

Sumit Ganguly in his article *India and the Crisis in Kashmir* explains the impact of Kashmir's situation on India's internal dynamics. This article also explores the complexities and grievances of Kashmiris.⁹

Ankur Datta in his article *Dealing with Dislocation: Migration, Place and Home among displaced Kashmiri Pandits in Jammu and Kashmir* writes about the problem faced by Kashmiri Pandits and their experience of migration. Further Datta in this article discusses the uncertainty and condition of migrant Kashmiri Pandits.¹⁰

In this article M. Rai examines the situation of displaced Kashmiri Pandits who have to leave their home in 1990. This essay focused that how the exile Kashmiri Pandits reconstruct their identity. She also talked about that how community who suffered displacement remain connected with their past while navigating with ongoing conflict.¹¹

² Pandit, B.(2022). *Hindus of Kashmir: A Genocide Forgotten*. India: Garuda Prakashan.

³ Datta, A.(2017). *On Uncertain Ground: Displaced Kashmiri Pandits in Jammu and Kashmir*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.

⁴ Gigoo, S. & Sharma, V. (Eds.). (2016). *A long Dream of home: The persecution, exodus and exile of Kashmiri Pandits*. Bloomsbury Publishing India.

⁵ Snedden, C. (2015). *Understanding Kashmir and Kashmiris*. London. Hurst and co.

⁶ Pandita, R. (2013). *Our Moon has Blood Cloths*. India: Penguin Random House.

⁷ Kachru, S.K. (2012). *Kashmiri Pandits (Brief Culture & Political History)*. Pothi.com. Mudranik Technologies Pvt. Ltd.

⁸ Pandit, T.N. (2024). *Kashmiri Pandits: Violence exodus and reconstruction*. India : Pathak Publisher and DIST

⁹ <https://Scholarworks.iu.edu/iuswrrest/api/core/bitstreams/7a0d58e7-7074-420c-be30-2ab85c75d22>

¹⁰ Datta, A. (2016). *Dealing with dislocation: Migration, place & home among displaced Kashmiri Pandits in Jammu and Kashmir*. Contributions to Indian Sociology. 50(1), 52-79.

¹¹ Rai, M. (2020) *Kashmir and the future of South Asia*, 91-115.

3. SEVEN EXODUS OF KASHMIRI PANDITS.

Kashmiri Pandits have been forced to flee from their homeland on multiple occasions due to violence, religious persecution and political instability. The exodus began with Islamic invasions and even counting till 21st century.

First exodus began during the rule of sultan Siandar Buutshikan (1389-1413). Sikandar was religious fanatic, who earned the title of idol breaker (Butshikan) after destroying many Hindu temples including Martand temple which was constructed by great Lalitaditya of Karkota dynasty. As Hasan a Kashmiri Muslim historian writes "This country possessed from the times of Hindu Kings many temples which were like the wonders of the world. Their artistry was so fine and delicate that one found himself bewildered at their sight. Sikandar, goaded by feelings of bigotry, destroyed them all and leveled them with the earth and with their material built many mosques and *Khanakas* (Muslim shrines)." ¹²

Bansi Pandit in his work *Hindus of Kashmir* writes "According to history, the persecution was so severe that Pandits either left the valley in a hurry or converted to Islam, until only eleven Pandit families were left behind." ¹³

The atrocities of Sikandar stopped Pandits from applying *Tilak* on their foreheads, compelled them to pay *Jaziya* (Islamic tax imposed on infidel) Hence, first exodus of Pandits took place.

Second exodus occurred during the rule of Ali Shah son of Sikandar carried his father's legacy. He killed converted and oppressed Pandits. The oppression compelled Pandits to leave their home. As Jona Raja writes "....A multitude of celebrated Brahmins who prided in their caste, fled from the country through by-roads as the main roads were closed. Even as men depart from this world, so did the Aryan Saraswat Brahmins, the original inhabitants of Kashmir flee to foreign countries. The difficult countries through which they passed, the limited food, painful illnesses, and the torments of hell during their lifetime, removed from the minds of the Kashmiri Pandits (Hindus) the fear of hell. Oppressed by various calamities such as encounters with the enemy, the fear of snakes, the fierce heat, and scanty food, many Brahmins perished on the way and thus obtained relief." ¹⁴

The second mass exodus also took place due to brutal horrible and cruel policies of Ali Shah.

Third exodus occurred in late 15th centuries under influence of Mir Shams-ud-Din Iraqi a Shia missionary. Baharistatn-i-Shahi describes role of Iraqi's on atrocities against Hindus of Kashmir. In his writing K.N Pandita ¹⁵ a renowned Scholar also discusses the role of Iraqi in exodus of Kashmiri Pandits. Bansi Pandit while describing the situation of Kashmiri Pandits during the time of Iraqi writes "Hindus suffered brutally under the atrocities of Shams-ud-Din Iraqi and Musa Raina. About 24,000 of them were forcibly converted to the Shia sect of Islam. Iraqi had even issued orders that 1,500 to 2,000 Brahmins be brought daily to his doorstep, their sacred thread removed, the Kalima administered (Conversion to Islam ceremony), their circumcision carried out, after which they were viciously and brutally carried out." ¹⁶

Fourth exodus of Kashmiri Pandits took place during the rule of Aurangzeb (1658-1707). He re-imposed *Jazia* which had been earlier withdrawn by Akbar. After the pain of persecution and cruelties on Hindus became unbearable, a delegation of Kashmiri Pandits approached Guru Teg Bahadur for help. Guru promised them and went to Delhi for Kashmiri Pandits grievances eventually he was brutally killed by Aurangzeb after Guru derived to convert. This event is documented in Guru Granth Sahib and Sikh hagiographies. During the rule of Aurangzeb the Kashmiri Pandits once again became vulnerable especially Aurangzeb's Governor Iftikhar Khan brutally tyrannized Pandits.

Fifth exodus of Kashmiri Pandits took place in mid-late 18th century. It was incited by Mullah Abdul Nabi, who was appointed as Master of Islamic Law (Shaikhul Islam). S.N. Fotedar identifies this period as the most cruel, tyrannized and bloodiest time for the Kashmiri Pandits population. ¹⁷

Bansi Pandits writes "The Hindus were wickedly tormented, their house burnt, and properly looted. Hundreds of them were killed, perdecuted, maimed and humiliated. They began to run away in large numbers and hide in mountainous terrain. This was the fifth dreadful mass exodus of the Kashmiri Pandits from their mystic motherland." ¹⁸

¹² Kilam, J.L.(1955). A History of Kashmiri Pandits. Kashmir: Gandhi Mmemorial college.

¹³ Pandit,B.(2022). *Hindus of Kashmir : A Genocide Forgotten*. India: Garuda Prakashan. P34

¹⁴ Lal, K.L.(1955). A History of Kashmiri Pandits. Kashmir : Gandhi Memorial College.

¹⁵ Pandita,K.N. (1991). A Muslim Missionary In Mediaeval Kashmir: Mir Shams-ud-Din Iraqi. Delhi: Voice of India.

¹⁶ Pandit, B.(2022).*Hindus of Kashmir*. P 36

¹⁷ Fotedar, S.N. (1995). *Kashmiri Pandits : A Cultural Heritage*. New Delhi: APH Publishing.

¹⁸ Pandit,B.(2022). *Hindus of Kashmir*.P 39

Mullah commanded six orders that further persecuted Kashmiri Pandits. These orders includes Hindus were not allowed to ride horse, nor to wear shoes, Jama (Mughal Costume), they were forbid to visit garden, to wear the tilak on foreheads and they were not allowed to receive education. Later, this order was not executed but the condition of Hindus in Kashmir remains terrible.¹⁹

Sixth exodus happened during Afghan rule (1753-1819) and considered as most brutal and tyrannical for Kashmiri Pandits. Contemporary Sikh accounts and Tarikh-i-Kashmir which was written during this time confirms mass displacement of Kashmiri Pandits.²⁰ Pandits were humiliated publicly and they were compelled to carry the body of dead animals.²¹ As Prem Nath Bazaz writes "Under the Afghans, the life of a Pandit was not worth the price of a hen."²²

Due to regressive situation Pandits fled to Jammu, Punjab or Delhi and many converted to Islam for the sake of families protection. In Tarikh-i-Hasan, Ghulam Hasan Khar describes Afghan rule as "Anarchy and Tyranny"²³ S.N. Fotedar while highlighting Afghan rule said that "It brought the Pandits to the edge of extinction in their own homeland."²⁴ M.K Kaw and K.N Pandita both said that the Afghan rule was not just oppressed Pandits but their rule led to "massive demographic consequences"²⁵ The Sixth exodus weakened the Hindu presence in valley. This exodus further made deep cultural and demographic transformation in valley. It collapses Pandit's social and political base and systematically eliminated their rights. Bansi Pandit in his work writes "The Afghan period was the darkest period in the history of the Kashmiri Hindus. Afghan are now remembered only for their barbarity, brutality, tyranny and cruelty. They thought no more of cutting off the heads of Hindus, than the plucking of a flower."²⁶

The seventh exodus of Kashmiri Pandits took place under the nose of democratic government in early nineteen nineties. Some valley based newspaper started to print press release issued by militant groups such as Hizbul Mujahideen, Alsafo against Kashmiri Pandits. The streets were filled with masked man and their Kalashnikovs. Throughout the valley in 1990s the anti India and anti Kashmir Pandits slogans from mosques repeatedly being played.²⁷ On 19 January, 1990 over 350,000 Kashmiri Pandits fled the Valley. It was 95% of their population.²⁸ The National Human Rights Commission received a report by the state of Jammu and Kashmir stated 72,077 Hindu Families leave the Valley in 1989-1990.²⁹ Prof. K. Warikoo stated that ".....Around 60,000 Kashmiri Pandit families comprising this entire community of more than 300,000 people were forced out from their ancient indigenous habitat in Kashmir by terrorists and religious extremists."³⁰

Pan Islamic movement too impacted the youths in valley to those who was not only satisfied by Delhi but also blames Delhi for all the misdeeds in valley. Slogan like 'Islam is in Danger' and further drawings and inscriptions in Arabic glorifying *Jihad* used as catalyst to create chaos in valley. Some said 'Paradise in the shade of sword' while others said "The law of Allah cannot be established without the sword"³¹ Pakistan used religious angle and terrorism for exploit the situation to feel the void, thus by 1989, according to the Indian Government report there was about 10,000 Kashmiri youth had crossed the border to undergo training.³² B.S Pandit in his work writes "In 1981, Sheikh Abdullah started a campaign for the islamization of Kashmir. His government changed the original Hindu names or local Kashmiri names of 684 villages to Islamic names as a part of the Kashmiri Pandits cultural genocide. In 1989-90 not only did the Kashmiri Pandits become victims of ethnic cleansing at the hands of islamists, but the terrorists also destroyed their cultural heritage."³³

¹⁹ Kilam, J.L.(1955). A History of Kashmiri Pandits. Srinagar, Kashmir : Gandhi Memorial College

²⁰ Kaw, M.K. (2004). Kashmir and its People : Studies in the Evolution of Kashmiri Society. APH Publishing.

²¹ Baza, P.N. (1954). The History of Struggle for freedom in Kashmir. Srinagar.

²² Bazaz, P.N. (1954). The History of Struggle for freedom in Kashmir. P. 28

²³ Khan, G.H. (19th Century). Tarikh-i-Hasan. (Translated and analysed in Kaw, 2004).

²⁴ Fotedar, S.N. (1955). Kashmiri Pandits : A Cultural Heritage. APH Publishing.

²⁵ Kaw, M.K. (2004). Kashmir and its People: Studies in the evolution of Kashmiri Society. APH Publishing

²⁶ Pandit, B. (2022). Hindus of Kashmir. P 40.

²⁷ Pandit, B. (2022). P91

²⁸ Gadoo, C.L. (ND). Human Rights Violations in Kashmir or <https://ikashmir.net>

²⁹ Tikoo, Tej.K. (2013). Kashmir: Its Aborigines and their exodus. New Delhi: Lancer Publisher.

³⁰ Warikoo, K. Kashmiri Pandits in retrospect and prospect in M.K. Kaw & S. Bhat (eds.). Kashmiri Pandits: Looking to the future. New Delhi, India: Kashmir Education, Culture and Science Society

³¹ Naqash, Rayan (3/20/2018). A new crop of Kashmiri militants in fighting in the name of religion- not policies. Quartz India.

³² Bakaya, P. and Bhatti, S. Kashmir Conflict : a study of what led to the insurgency in Kashmir valley & proposed future solutions. California: Stanford University.

³³ Pandit, B. (2022). P89

Thus, the cultural genocide of the Kashmiri Pandits started way before 1989-90 and it is still going on as Kashmiri Pandit's language, rituals are still fading away.