

KASHMIR MILITANCY AND THE KASHMIRI PANDITS

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Abstract

Kashmiri Pandits are the original inhabitants of the Kashmir valley. The beginning of the 14th century and the period that followed witnessed so many incidents in the life of the Pandits. Origin of Kashmiri Pandit community covers more than a period of five thousand years. Kashmiri Pandits are Saraswat Brahmins. According to Kalahana, his Rajatarangini explained the origin of the community their beliefs, customs, traditions, Socio-Economic situations along with certain festivals of Pandits. Before Independence, Kashmiri Pandits lived a peaceful life in the valley and enjoyed all rights available to the citizens. They formed an important part of Kashmiriyath. During the communal flare-ups of the partition, their land lordship over agricultural land got eschewed under the tenancy and land reforms initiated by the people's government in 1952 affected a large number of Pandit families. In course of time Pakistan's militancy operation destroyed the peace and unity of secular minded Kashmiris and minority Pandit community. After independence; the Pakistanis fought more than four wars with India. These war games between India and Pakistan destroyed the peace and security, not only of the Kashmir Pandit community, but the whole Kashmir valley. Human rights abuses have been a cause as well as a consequence of the insurgency in Kashmir. During the year that followed Pakistan sent guerillas to Kashmir in 1965 under "operation Gibraltar" which lead to a full-scale war. Six years later another war between India and Pakistan resulted in the bifurcation of Pakistan and formation of Bangladesh and subsequent signing of Shimla Agreement under which both countries were to resolve the issue bilaterally. The minority Pandits of the valley became the victims of this operation and they were gunned down indiscriminately, hanged or murdered by other brutal means. Torture, molestation and rape, threatening letters and telephone calls, posters and bit notices pasted on doors and warnings through newspapers for the whole community to leave the valley within short and specified time. Nearly Three thousand members of this community have been done to death, and nearly three hundred thousand forced into exile. Thousands of civilians got killed and many more injured in Kashmir as a result of military

operations. Militancy had taken more than 500000 innocent woman, men and children lives. Every year Central & State Governments spending cores for creating everlasting peace and upliftment of Pandit communities. But still they are living like a scared rabbits in various parts of India like refugees.

Introduction

Origin of Kashmiri Pandit community covers more than a period of five thousand years. Kashmiri Pandits are Saraswat Brahmins (ChitralkhaZuthshi, 2003: 11). Kashmir is the land of their ancestors and forefathers. Kashmiri Pandits are a unique set of people and are handsome, civilized, educated, gentle, and with good communicative skill. They are intelligent, and excel in whatever they do; they have a role and a mission given by God. They are like the salt of the earth. They have adopted, Saptarishi Calendar (current year-5078), and follow rituals formulated by Rishi Logaksha, as against those of Rishi Katyayan followed in other parts of the country (Pandit R S, 1963: 13). Kashmiri Pandits were divided into the astrologer clay (Jotish), the Priest (Guru), and those who follow secular occupations (Karkun). The vast majority of Kashmiri Pandits, who belong to the Karkun category, were salaried state employees in the lower ranges of the administration, while others practice agriculture and related occupations. A small minority, primarily from the first two categories, engage themselves in various religious occupations, such as astrology and performance of Pandit rites and ceremonies (Kaul RU, 1999: 68).

Their thirst for knowledge is an abiding virtue with them which shall illuminate many minds and societies. In fact, in the 21st century, Saraswati has become Mahalakshmi. Culture and society of these Pandits can further be structured on the values held by the prominent Kashmiri Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru (Bhatt, 1995: 217). This community believes in Shiva and Shakti workship and follows Kashmir ShaivaDarshan for spiritual purposes and the Vedas for rituals. Apart from the common festivals and religious functions like Diwali, Dussehra,

Ganesh and Lakshmi Pooja, they have some peculiar festivals. The most important of this is Shiva Ratri, a socio-religious function celebrated over a period of a fortnight (the dark fortnight of Falguna of the lunar calendar). The New Year's Day is celebrated on the first day of the Bright fortnight of Chaitra (Ahmed Feroz, 1998: 76).

Odyssey of Kashmiri Pandits

Kashmiri Pandits at no stage of history ceased to make contributions. The gifts supplied to northern India by Haimastavas of Sabhaparvas of Mahabharata included even Kashmiris. They presented silks and woolens. Kashmiri Pandit monks and missionaries dared the trek across and spread the message of the great Buddha at the cost of their lives. A few of the notables were GautamSangha, Buddhayasas, VimalakshaBuddajiva, ShakyashriBadhra, Ratanvira and ShamaBhatta etc. Even Kumarijiva, referred to in China as “one of the four suns of Buddhism” received education in Buddhist thought and tradition at the hands of Kashmiri scholars (Syed Ali ShaGilani, 2002: 9).

It was he who, along with a group of Kashmiri Pandit Scholars made Kucha a seat of Buddhist learning in Central Asia. Kashmir once represented a laboratory in which Buddhist thought and philosophy were dissected at the hands of learned Kashmiri Pandit scholars. It attracted chain of scholar-pilgrims from distant lands (Kapur M L, 1983: 19-20). HuenTsiang, Che-mong, Fa-yong, and Qu-kong all visited Kashmir to study Sanskrit and Buddhist philosophy. Kanishka chose it as the proud place for a Buddhist conference. The philosophical thought which Kashmiri Pandit scholars propounded and advocated was ever-evolving and growing. At the end of Eighth Century Buddhism in Kashmir lost its glory and the new thought of ”Advaita” of Sankaracharya made an impact, Kashmiri scholars gave monastic interpretation to Saivism in Kashmir (BhattacharjeaAjith, 1994: 127-128).Kashmir Shaivism is possibly the most rational, logical and pragmatic science of spirituality propagated anywhere in the world. Instead of saying that the

world is illusory, it declares emphatically that the world is as real as God. Kashmiri Pandits culture includes festivals, language, cuisine, rituals, music, literature and customs. They preserve distinct cultural identity, document it, and practice it, pass it on to their children, and are proud of it. They patronize artists and writers, buy their books and tapes, go and watch them or listen to them and encourage them with acclaim and recognition. They read, write and speak the Kashmiri language (Prem Shankar jha, 1996: 82).

Pakistan - A Nursery for Terrorists and University for Super Terrorists

Kashmir is unique among all the crisis points along the Indo-Pakistani border in that a marked escalation of the fighting – both insurgency and regular is virtually inevitable before any effort for a peaceful solution can succeed. The primary reason is the extent of the ideological commitment and self-interests of several of the key players involved. For Islamabad, the liberation of Kashmir is a sacred mission, the only task unfulfilled since Muhammed Ali Jinnah's days. Moreover, a crisis in Kashmir constitutes an excellent outlet for the frustration at home, an instrument for the mobilization of the masses, as well as gaining the support of the Islamist parties and primarily their loyalists in the military and the Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI). The ISI has a major interest to continue the crisis.

Back in the 1970s, Pakistan started to train Sikhs and other Indian separatist movements as part of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto's strategy for forward strategic depth. Pakistan adopted the sponsorship of terrorism and subversion as an instrument to substitute for the lack of strategic depth and early warning capabilities. The Pakistani sponsored terrorists and the Pakistani intelligence operatives in their ranks would be able to warn Pakistan of any impending Indian invasion, and then launch guerrilla warfare against the Indian Army even before it reached the border with Pakistan. Therefore, sponsoring separatist subversion has become a crucial component of Islamabad's national military strategy. Since 1990 planned and organized secessionist-terrorism has brutalized Kashmir, the valley of peace and

exquisite beauty. Systematic efforts have been made to destroy its synergetic culture, traditions, and heritage, by an orgy of mindless violence feruled by religious fanaticism and extremism, aided and abetted from across India's borders.

Terrorism has taken the lives of more than 70000 innocent men women and children; the terrorists have indulged want only in abduction, rape, murder, arson, extortion and looting. Government officials, political leaders and workers, members of judiciary, print and electronic presspersons, and prominent citizens have been threatened, attacked and killed. Religious "codes of conduct" have been imposed on common people, and there has been large scale destruction of public and private property including over 400 secular state schools. More than 350,000 people of the minority community have had to flee their homes in the valley and today live as refugees in other parts of their own state and country. This is the 'accomplishment' of the secessionist's proxy-war in Kashmir

Pandits become victims of Militancy

Militancy destroyed life of Kashmiri Pandits. After the independence Pakistan send tribal peoples to grab Kashmir with the help of its army. It created so much of conflicts and disputes between both nations. In 1989 militancy conducted massive attacks against minority Pandits. Fundamentalist stole their land and homes, even right to life also. The five thousand old Saraswth Brahmin communities had lost their traditions, customs and civilizations. Pandit communities are in exile. They are getting some subsidies and financial helps from authorities. But they had lost their freedom. Nothing is precious than freedom. They are living in two room tin shaded camps. Physically and mentally they are weak. Their children become the victims of great fear. Family envisages are broken, not getting proper education, all basic facilities are denied due to militancy. They are not getting any justice from National or State Human Right Commissions. A realistic evaluation of the variance of the sentiment and the majority nature of the sentiment for an independent homeland are imperative

inputs in quest for any resolution process. The current phase of dialogue and negotiations is a derivative of the sentiment. From 1989 the sentiment has acquired a central role in reviving a dispute, which was seen as defunct and settled by default.

Life of Migrant Pandit Families

The present review is available materials that had been undertaken. So as to determine the consequences of migration on lifestyle, Relationships among family member's changes in family dynamics and health conditions of Kashmiri Pandits. Placement in a particular ecological setting drastically changed the life patterns of the group. For Kashmiri Pandits, forced migration has led them to geographical areas grossly incomparable to their original habitation in terms of weather conditions and assets available. The inhabitants are using more than half of the portion of verandah as kitchen. Each block consists of 12 toilets and 12 bathrooms (6 each for male and females). These are to be shared by the families residing in that particular block only. In phase II, four different families live under one roof having four rooms, one room for each family. All these rooms have their individual entrance and verandahs. These four families share one toilet and bathroom, which are locked after every use. The basic items which the resident's posses in these tenements are double beds, television, refrigerator, air cooler, almirah and rack .All the families have floor sitting arrangement (Data collected from survey).

Benefits from the Government

Government is providing relief to those displaced families who have registered themselves as migrants and have no other source of income after migration. Those who were government employees prior to migration were adjusted in their respective departments, in Jammu, Delhi and other parts of the country. The relief measures provides by the central Government (distributed by state government) to migrant Kashmiri Pandit families. The total amount of relief given is for four family members only. If the number of family members is more

than four, even then the amount is restricted to Rs. 4000. But in case the number of members is less than four i.e. 3 or 2 the amount is curtailed accordingly, like Rs. 3000 for family of two members. In terms of ration provided to families, if a family is having a newly born baby then it is provided with an extra quantity of sugar (250 Gms per month) for next 4 years. However the migrants are not satisfied with their provisions from Government, because it can never satisfy the primary needs of the family members (Data collected through various interactions from migrant Camps).

Environmental and lifestyle change forced on the refugees

This led to profound heat-related morbidity and mortality besides snake and scorpion bites. Exposure to a new variety of microbes and parasites caused epidemic of infectious diseases and infestations. New antigenic challenges from the environment gave rise to allergic disorders like dermal allergies, vasomotor rhinitis, asthma, etc. They became the victims of climate and were suffering from subhuman life in exile. In refugee camps conditions are very bad. The researcher visited Muthi, Nagrota, Mishriwala, Battalbalian, and Jihri camps in 2008, 2009, 2010 and 2011 August. The condition was very bad. Most of the camps are overcrowded; it leads to lack of privacy. There were no water facilities, No drainage facilities and denial of all types of basic facilities. Camp hospitals or Medical aid for exile peoples were also denied. They were struggling for survival by living under climatic difficulties. The frequent changes from one place to another created struggle for survival. Migrants were complaining that food materials were not provided by Government sufficiently in refugee camps. They lost their traditional festivals, cultural activities, worshipping their shrines almost socially and culturally deprived their glorious past. Family set up was damaged, forced exile created forced separation of parents who lost their children and children lost their parents such incidents are common. Discriminations, denial and deprivation are common. The dignity and worth of human person was disturbed.

Thus social erosion leading to break down of family structure, social and cultural deprivation was affecting the people at large (Data collected from migrant camps).

Conclusion

Kashmiri Pandits were living in Srinagar, Anantanag, Baramullah, Pulwama, Shopian, Badgam and Kupwara districts of Kashmir valley and were following five thousand years old customs, believes traditions and celebrations. Militancy has placed Kashmiri Pandits on the crossroads. They took shelter in Dharma Salas, temples and in private rooms along with their relations. Many of them went beyond Jammu, North, South and East and west of India. Delhi became the hub of KP migrants. There is feeling shy of calling them as refugees in their own land. The basic Human Right like right to life and the pursuit of happiness is denied in the case of Pandits. The dignity of the individual is ignored; women and children who are the weaker segments and deserve protection were attacked. It is a savage battle that the community is fighting for shelter, livelihood, education, health care, employment and above all for its survival. It is heading towards unmitigated disaster as the deprivation hurt and humiliation have worked havoc on the physical, psychological and mental well-being of the community and taken a huge toll of its members. The community continues to perish while the nation looks on unconcerned. More lives have been lost due to starvation, malnutrition, disease and accidents than due to militant bullets. The community is facing dispersal and extinction. The displaced yearn to return to their homes and hearths, to till their own land, pursue their own professional calling and visit their Gods and temples; but all doors are closed to them. Pandits become the victims of militants and wicked Politicians. Their jobs have been usurped, houses burnt down or looted, lands mutilated and encroached upon or annexed and their temples desecrated. The community is at a loss to pick the loose ends of the tangle and to free itself from the web in which it finds itself enmeshed. It is hard pressed to preserve its religious and ethnic identity and maintain its glorious cultural

traditions. It is at pains to uphold the principles of secularism, social justice, freedom of faith, democratic pluralism and nationalism, the very principles at the altar of which it was sacrificed in the valley and driven into exile.

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