REHABILITATION OF KASHMIRI PANDITS – A CRITICAL REVIEW

ANAND SAGAR
Department of Management, Shri JJT University, Jhunjhunu, Rajasthan(India)
E-mail: anandsagar1973@gmail.com

Abstract - The night of 19th January, 1990 is said to have seen a demented assault on Kashmiri Pandits living in the Valley. Screaming from loud speakers and crowded streets was a message for the Sikhs and Hindus living in Kashmir - to flee their homeland, convert or die. Islamists, who had stage-managed the whole event with great care; choosing its timing and the slogans to be used. A host of highly provocative, communal and threatening slogans, interspersed with martial songs, incited the Muslims to come out on the streets and break the chains of 'slavery'. These exhortations urged the faithful to give a final push to the Kafir in order to ring in the true Islamic order.

After 26 year the same day, i.e. on 19th January, 2017, Jammu and Kashmir Legislative Assembly passed a resolution calling for a return of migrant Pandits and other communities displaced by the militancy to the Valley. The same day, Panun Kashmir ('My Kashmir'), a frontline organisation of the internally-displaced Kashmiri Hindus, adopted two resolutions urging the Union government to declare 19 January as “National Holocaust Day” and create a separate “homeland in Kashmir North-East of River Jhelum invested with Union Territory status where Indian Constitution flows freely”.

Keywords - Kashmir Valley, Militancy, Homeland, Kashmiri Pandits, Islamists, Exodus, Panun Kashmir(My Kashmir), National Holocaust Day,

I. INTRODUCTION

The threats to the Kashmiri Pandits for fleeing the Kashmir valley had been coming in for a long time, but the night of 19th January, 1990 is said to have seen a demented assault of a different level. Screaming from loud speakers and crowded streets was a message for the Sikhs and Hindus living in Kashmir - to flee their homeland, convert or die.” Even 26 years later, Kashmiri Pandits shiver remembering the night that forced them into exodus. Islamists, who had stage-managed the whole event with great care; choosing its timing and the slogans to be used. A host of highly provocative, communal and threatening slogans, interspersed with martial songs, incited the Muslims to come out on the streets and break the chains of 'slavery'. These exhortations urged the faithful to give a final push to the Kafir in order to ring in the true Islamic order.

On 19th January, 2017, Jammu and Kashmir Legislative Assembly passed a resolution calling for a return of migrant Pandits and other communities displaced by the militancy to the Valley. The same day, Panun Kashmir ('My Kashmir'), a frontline organisation of the internally-displaced Kashmiri Hindus, adopted two resolutions at the jam-packed Abhinav theatre in Jammu. The resolutions urged the Union government to declare 19 January as “National Holocaust Day” and create a separate “homeland in Kashmir North-East of River Jhelum invested with Union Territory status where Indian Constitution flows freely”.

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE:

(1) Col. Tej Kumar Tikoo (2013), “Kashmir: Its Aborigines and Their Exodus” - “As the night fell, the microscopic community became panic-stricken when the Valley began reverberating with the war cries of Islamists, who had stage-managed the whole event with great care; choosing its timing and the slogans to be used. A host of highly provocative, communal and threatening slogans, interspersed with blood curdling shouts and shrieks, threatening Kashmiri Pandits with dire consequences, became a routine 'Mantra' of the Muslims of the Valley, to force them to flee their homeland, convert or die.”

(2) Shreya Biswas (2016): The cold, dark night of January 19, 1990, had stirred into life the worst nightmares of Kashmiri Pandits living in the valley. Screaming from loud speakers and crowded streets was a message for the Sikhs and Hindus living in Kashmir - to flee their homeland, convert or die.” The threats had been coming in for a long time, but...
the night of January 19 is said to have seen a
demented assault of a different level. Even 26 years
later, Kashmiri Pandits shiver remembering the night
that forced them into exodus. Ticket to exile: Bus
purchased by family on 19th Jan., 1990 when we
were forced out of Kashmir.

(3) Sagnik Chowdhury (2016): The Union Home
Ministry's plan to set up “composite townships” for
displaced Kashmiri Pandit migrants in the Valley
appears to have made little headway after it was
announced in April last year. Sources said the plan is
yet to be approved by the Union cabinet. According
to sources, while the Centre had written to the state
government, asking it to provide land for the
townships, there has been no movement so far. “The
modalities are yet to be worked out. Cabinet approval
is required for the composite townships. However,
cabinet’s approval will be sought only after land is
identified and set aside in the Valley,” said a
government source.

On April 7 last year, when late Chief Minister Mufti
Mohammed Sayeed met central leaders in the Capital,
a Home Ministry release had stated, “The Union
Home Minister asked the chief minister of J&K to
provide land in the state for composite townships for
Kashmiri Pandits. The chief minister assured the
Union Home Minister that the state government will
acquire and provide land at the earliest for composite
townships in the Valley.” The government’s move sparked a controversy as
several parties and separatists objected. The National
Conference said it would be dangerous for the
integrity of the state and the country, while separatist
leader Yasin Malik said a separate colony on the
basis of religion would only build walls of hate, like
in Israel. Home Minister Rajnath Singh had initially
written a letter to the previous Omar Abdullah
government, which was followed by another
communication to Governor N N Vohra, asking for
identification of land for such migrants.

At present, there are about 62,000 registered
Kashmiri migrant families in the country, who have
moved from the Valley to Jammu, Delhi and other
parts of the country after the state was rocked by
militancy in 1989. The BJP-PDP alliance had
mentioned rehabilitation of Kashmiri Pandits in their
common minimum programme.

(4) Fayaz Wani (2017): On the 27th anniversary of
migration of Kashmiri Pandits from Valley, Jammu
and Kashmir Legislative Assembly passed a
resolution calling for a return of migrant Pandits
and other communities displaced by the militancy
to the Valley. The opposition party, National
Conference working president and former Chief
Minister Omar Abdullah proposed that House
should pass a resolution for the return of migrant
Kashmiri Pandits, Sikhs and Muslims, who
migrated from Valley due to unfortunate
circumstances.

Speaker Kavinder Gupta moved the resolution and
stressed that everybody should work towards
creating a good and conducive atmosphere for
a safe return of migrant Pandits and other displaced
people to the Valley. Barring independent
legislator and MLA Langate, Er Sheikh Abdur
Rashid, all legislators supported the resolution and
it was passed by the voice vote.

After an eruption of militancy in the State in 1989,
the majority of the Pandits living in Kashmir fled
by January 19, 1990, and migrated to Jammu and
other parts of the country. The Muslims in Valley
blame the then State Governor Jagmohan for the
migration of Pandits.

(5) J&K Government identified 100 acres of land
in Valley: The Jammu and Kashmir government has
identified 100 acres of land at eight places in the
valley for rehabilitation of Kashmiri Pandits who
migrated from the state in the early 1990s following
outbreak of militancy. These pockets, where Kashmiri Pandits are likely to be rehabilitated,
will be spread across all 10 districts of the valley,
officials in the Union Home Ministry said today.

Taking up the issue of their rehabilitation, Union
Home Minister Rajnath Singh had written to the then
Chief Minister Omar Abdullah to identify land for
resettling them. The Union Home Minister had
suggested that land may be identified near their native
places also keeping in mind the security aspect.
However, the Abdullah government had cited the
model code of conduct for elections, which was in
existence at that time, as the reason for not taking up
the task immediately but told the Centre that the idea
was fraught with a danger as they could become easy
targets for militants.

two very significant developments took place, both in
Jammu, and both related to Kashmiri Hindus, who on
this day in 1990 quit their land of Vitasta (Jhelum) to
save their lives, culture, dignity and religion, and
became refugees in their own country. They left
behind their houses, business establishments,
orchards, agricultural tracts, ancient temples, shrines
and what not. Their exodus was a blot on the Indian
state.)

That day (19th January, 2017), the Jammu & Kashmir
Legislative Assembly sprung a big surprise by
adopting unanimously a resolution seeking the
creation of a congenial atmosphere that could induce
the internally-displaced Kashmiri Hindus to return to
their original habitat. Interestingly, the resolution was
moved by Leader of Opposition and former Jammu &
Kashmir Chief Minister Omar Abdullah.

The same day, Panun Kashmir (’My Kashmir’), a
frontline organisation of the internally-displaced
Kashmiri Hindus, adopted two resolutions at the jam-
packed Abhinav theatre in Jammu. The resolutions urged the Union government to declare 19 January as “National Holocaust Day” and create a separate “homeland in Kashmir North-East of River Jhelum invested with Union Territory status where Indian Constitution flows freely”.

III. FINDINGS

- After an eruption of militancy in the State in 1989, the majority of the Pandits living in Kashmir fled by January 19, 1990, and migrated to Jammu and other parts of the country.
- The internal displacement of the entire population of Hindus of Kashmir in 1989-90 was the result of a planned religious cleansing campaign. This campaign was a campaign of genocide.
- Kashmiri Hindus, were forced to quit their land of Vitasta (Jhelum) to save their lives, culture, dignity and religion, and became refugees in their own country. They left behind their houses, business establishments, orchards, agricultural tracts, ancient temples, shrines and what not. (Their exodus was a blot on the Indian state.)
- The governments of the day in the state (in this case Farooq Abdullah’s Government) and at the Centre (read late VP Singh’s Government) did not only behave as bystanders when the genocide started but actually collaborated in its denial.
- Taking up the issue of their rehabilitation, Union Home Minister Rajnath Singh had written to the then Chief Minister Omar Abdullah to identify land for resettling them. However, the Abdullah government had cited the model code of conduct for elections, which was in existence at that time, as the reason for not taking up the task immediately but told the Centre that the idea was fraught with a danger as they could become easy targets for militants.
- After 27 years, on 19th January, 2017, Jammu and Kashmir Legislative Assembly passed a resolution calling for a return of migrant Pandits and other communities displaced by the militancy to the Valley. The same day, Panun Kashmir (‘My Kashmir’), a frontline organisation of the internally-displaced Kashmiri Hindus, adopted two resolutions at the jam-packed Abhinav theatre in Jammu. The resolutions urged the Union government to declare 19 January as “National Holocaust Day” and create a separate “homeland in Kashmir North-East of River Jhelum invested with Union Territory status where Indian Constitution flows freely”.
- The sources said that out of 6000 jobs created by the Government for displaced Pandits, Sikhs & Hindus, 1700 had already been filled and the selection process for the remaining 4300 was being completed.
- Recently, the Jammu and Kashmir government has identified 100 acres of land at eight places in the valley for rehabilitation of Kashmiri Pandits who migrated from the state in the early 1990s following outbreak of militancy. These pockets, where Kashmiri Pandits are likely to be rehabilitated, will be spread across all 10 districts of the valley, officials in the Union Home Ministry said today.

CONCLUSION

- On resettlement of displaced Kashmiri Pandits, Omar Abdullah, former Chief Minister of the State told the Centre that the idea of settling displaced Pandits or Hindus in a separate and isolated location was fraught with a danger as they could become easy targets for militants. It would rather be better if they are resettled in the mainstream localities. In fact a separate colony on the basis of religion may build walls of hate, like the one in Israel.
- On the other hand the fear of Kashmiri Pandits is also genuine, that resettling again in the Muslim dominated area will always keep a dagger of danger and insecurity dangling over their head. Keeping in mind the presence of separatist elements in the valley, their resettlement in the Muslim dominated areas will not bring about the peace among the Hindu community there.
- Under the circumstances, the idea of Punun Kashmir (My Kashmir) a frontline organization of the internally-displaced Kashmiri Hindus sounds more workable and seems to bring about a permanent solution to the problem. Their idea is the Creation of Union Territory in North and East of River Jhelum for the settlement of all Hindus belonging to Kashmir. The Government of India should give a serious thought in this direction so as to find a permanent solution to this burning issue.
- Moreover, the Centre must ask the state government to fill all the vacancies earmarked for Kashmiri Pandits as fast as possible. The NDA government, after assuming office in 2014, had earmarked Rs 500 crore for rehabilitation of the Kashmiri Pandits but keeping in mind the huge number of 62,000 families, the amount is not enough, hence, announce a bigger package forthwith.

REFERENCES

Rehabilitation of Kashmiri Pandits – A Critical Review

94


