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## RETURN OF KASHMIRIS: PROBLEMS AND PROSPECTS



Narinder Sharma

### ABSTRACT :

The militant activity intensified since 1989 has led to the process of displacement of the people at larger scale. It was a minority who had to suffer in the hands of this scourge. Until the militancy movement is continuing in Kashmir, which the State has not been able to end so far. Infact, militants and Muslim groups occupied their religious places and their property, with this intention that the Kashmir could become a territory reserved for Muslims only<sup>1</sup>. The misfortune thing is that they have been victimized for no reason of them and now their survival is reduced on insufficient rations and deteriorated conditions in the camps. Now, they are entirely disbeliever about their rehabilitation.

**KEYWORDS :** *Return of kashmiris, militants, Muslim groups*

### INTRODUCTION :

Beyond this mass displacement, some families are still staying back in different region of the Valley.<sup>2</sup> It is projected that an estimated number of 10,000 Hindus preferred to stay behind in Valley despite of insecurity. The people who chose to stay in the Valley were farmers, small businessmen and small-income employees. The main problem they faced in the Valley is threat of militant activity.

Continuing killing of minority community, forceful occupation of their property and dismantling process of their religious places of this community were prevalent. There are many examples which show that the condition was extremely unsafe for Hindu families who had return to their place in Kashmir after 1990s. In June 1997, the militant killed three young Kashmiri pandits who were serving as teachers in Gulabgarh. Selective killings of the minority community were once again witnessed when 26 baratis of two marriage parties were murdered only because of there being as Hindus<sup>3</sup>. In Valley the militants and local Muslims youth definitely work under the ISI commands to communalise the situation but it was also acceptable that lots of Muslim youth did not join the pro-Pakistan forces. Many Muslims asked their Pandit neighbours and friends not go away and they also take guarantee for their



security. However when the condition deteriorated, they asked the Pandits to leave with this confession that they could not defend them to any further extent<sup>4</sup>.

Continued incidents throughout the nineties illustrate that the government failed to defend the minority communities from upsurge of violence and killings. This has been always remained main reason behind the non restoration of normalcy in Valley. Often stuck with the question whether they would be able to return to their native place or not? In these circumstances the victims of mass exodus are ready for their return on conditional basis. They argue that they would return provided the adequate security is provided to them in the Valley. According to the survey report many displaced persons were found ready to return to the Valley if they are ensured of the security of their life. They are depressed from the miserable life in the migrant camps and wanted to restart and re-establish their life in their original house.

Besides this, displaced Kashmiris also wanted that government should make a plan to save the community from a further genocide in future. Whereas, many people are confident that the condition is not irreparable and they are prepared to accept to this fact that they have lost the Valley forever, because the present situation is not conducive for their return<sup>5</sup>. Now the question arises why their return is not possible. In this context, there are many viewpoints like, the condition in the Valley is not favorable for their return. There are many reasons, which became obstacle in the way of returning process of Kashmiri Pandits to Valley. In this context, the main reasons are as follows which in one or the other way hampered the idea of rehabilitation and resettlement policies.

**Militant threats in Valley:** Firstly, the main reason is that the violence activity is continuing in the Valley<sup>6</sup>. The form of expression of interest even asks migrants to specify whether the entire family intends to return to Kashmir or only a few family members want to go back. Displaced persons have rejected rehabilitation proposals due to security threat in Valley<sup>7</sup>. Due to this cause, neither the government nor the Kashmiri Pandits organizations are approaching for their instant return. However, from time to time government gives a call for return to the Valley but without making any serious attempts to return to the Valley<sup>8</sup>.

In addition to this, Islamist militant groups have continued to launch attacks against local authorities and civilians to disrupt the peace process. As a result, many Pandits families are also not willing to return their places because they do not have faith in the government for the guarantee of their security<sup>9</sup>. The displaced people claim that they will return to the Valley only when they verify that the conditions are conducive for their protection. During the field survey the question was asked that do you want to go back to their village again. Out of 150 respondents, 140 respondents said yes they want to go back to their village again. On the other hand they also argued that we are prepared to return, but the government should ensure us about our security and component of compensation for our property which was damaged during turmoil<sup>10</sup>. The Kashmiri Pandit Sabha (KPS) welcomes the efforts of the government but also maintains that the process of return of Pandits to the Valley will remain incomplete until they are made sure about their security<sup>11</sup>. They cannot go back in these situations that are now prevailing in Kashmir. It was always seen that whenever fresh proposals has been politicized and publicized by the governments in the State. A major event of militant activity has happened and the plan was suffered due to the massacre of many innocent people.

For example, the Mufti Mohammad Sayeed government after coming to power intended to rehabilitate the Pandits in Mattan, Anantnag and the holy place of Khirbhawani in Srinagar. After some days, the mass murder of the Pandits was carried out at Nadimarg on March 23, 2003 by the militant group. This gruesome act further delayed the process<sup>12</sup>. There were also many examples of the

militant's activities which aborted the proposal for their return and put a negative impact upon this process of rehabilitation. It was demanded by the displaced community that government should give a practical shape to this proposal and take instant and actual action. It was affirmed that government firstly should create a peaceful atmosphere and then make any public announcement. Besides all this, it seems that government could not do any serious effort for the rehabilitation process of displaced Kashmiris. In this situation how displaced families can be ready to go back to their habitat. It seems that all these incidents of targeted individual killings and continuous murdered became the main hindrances in the way of their returning process.

Besides this, the section of people who chose to stay back in Valley, are not able to carry up their customs in Valley. It is not easy for them to maintain their culture and religious worship by being a tiny community in the Kashmir. On the other hand it was also very difficult for non Muslims in Valley to perform worship in their own local language and to gratify their socio-cultural life in Valley.<sup>13</sup> It was also observed that during displacement, the Pandits were in minority in the Valley and they did not make up a large vote bank. Now, they can neither make much sound as a political supporter for earning a large vote bank for the politicians. Hence the government's approach towards this community has been lacking the real spirit.<sup>14</sup>

Besides this, the violence against the particular minority community in Kashmir always influenced the minorities that they probably cannot go back to their original places in the near future. Those who are staying in the Valley are striving hard for their survival. This hardship ridden experience is also forcing displaced members to remain in exile. As a result, there was further displacement of remaining Pandit families in the Kashmir Valley in the year of 2003 and 2004 that joined with the displaced Kashmiri Pandit camps.<sup>15</sup>

### **Different generations have different opinion for their return**

People belong to different generations have different opinion for their return. On the question of the return of the displaced community to the Valley, many respondents expressed different opinion about their rehabilitation process. Some sections of people are willing to return to their places, where from they were displaced 14 years ago but some are not in favour of return. To make the task easier, it can be categorized into two different sections. The first section consists of old aged people and middle aged people who still have the memories and the emotional attachment to this place, where they spent maximum time of their life. Most of the peoples who have shown willingness to return that are of older generation and now living in Muthi, Purkhoo and Udhampur migrant camps in Jammu region.<sup>16</sup> The middle generations seem insensitive on the matter that they all want to return to the Valley with security and self-respect and on restoration of normalcy in Kashmir. It is sure that the displaced persons want to go back, but the thing they are waiting for is the normalcy in the Valley. In the absence of the same they cannot go back to their original places. On the other hand, the preparation which is in making by the administration for their return is also suggesting that the conditions are not favourable of their rehabilitation in Valley.

On the other hand, second section consists of young generation of this community which dislikes the idea of rehabilitation and are not willing to return to their land of original habitat which is really unknown for them. The main reason is that they do not have any emotional feeling for the Valley. Some youngsters have settled their life in better conditions over the past 14 years. They either have migrated abroad or are working at top posts in Multi-National Companies. Any idea of return may upset their sense of protection. Besides this, there is changing perception within the younger generation, which has grown up in an unknown culture and adopted it as they had no choice. On the



other hand, some youths in the camps told that they would go back only to their own homeland in Kashmir.<sup>17</sup>

#### **Demand for Separate Homeland**

NGOs like, Panun Kashmir, Kashmiri Pandits Sabha, Kashmiri Samiti and Voluntary Health Association of India (VHAI) are working for the displaced Kashmiri Pandits and all these organizations rejected the proposal of the return of Kashmiris and they demand separate homeland like union territory with free flow of Indian constitution as well as its flag flags<sup>18</sup>. Panun Kashmir, the frontline organization of displaced Kashmiri Pandits, has been fighting for their cause. Through the Margdarshan Resolution of December 28, 1991, this organization tried to draw the attention of the world community towards the genocide, exodus, ethnic cleansing and apartheid against the Kashmiri Pandit community in Kashmir Valley by the Islamic fundamentalists and terrorists. Panun Kashmir, an organization representing the Kashmiri Pandits, has demanded to carve out a separate homeland for the Kashmiri Hindus in the Valley within the Indian Union. Panun Kashmir demanded a geo-political re-organisation of the State and the carving of a separate homeland for them<sup>19</sup>. Homeland is not just a dreamland of the displaced Kashmiri Pandit for his habitat and place but also as a place of assurance for his political identity.

The demand of union territory for seven lakh Kashmiri Hindus within South Kashmir along with free flow of Indian Constitution and flag. According to them, it is the term of their right to live like other Indian citizens without any special privileges of regional trends and act like Indians without any fear. Homeland is an appearance of the deepest expectations of the Kashmiris displaced from the Valley. It is a normal and natural aspiration of the community to find its ancestry, to safeguard its identity and to affirm its historical, political and legal rights. A Root in Kashmir is another organisation which is always fighting for the legitimate rights of the displaced Kashmiri Pandits.

Besides this, Kashmiri Samiti president Sunil Shakhder said in response to the then Farooq Abdullah proposed rehabilitation agenda, "We cannot go back in the conditions prevailing in Kashmir. We will go back on our own terms," At the minimum level, these terms would include security to life and property and, at a broader level and a strong rehabilitation scheme with proper implementation.<sup>20</sup> The association and other organisation also demanded that State should set up a committee to deal with illegal occupation of Pandit property and releasing of moveable and immoveable property from the illegally ownership. They also want compensation for the property damaged and houses burnt.

The Panun Kashmir association rejected the rehabilitation policy of the government that they never go back to their original places where fear of militant activity is always high. They all demanded that they wanted resettlement with dignity and honour in separate homeland. It was also correct that they want appropriate protected settlement where they can breathe liberally without any fear of gun<sup>21</sup>. Kashmiri Hindu asserted that being aborigines of Valley they will return and live on their own terms and conditions and not on the whims of majority community<sup>22</sup>. According to the respondents that the creation of homeland is not just to reverse the exodus but to return Indian democratic and secular values back in the Valley. In this situation, M.L.Koul said there is no alternative except to creation of homeland with union territory status and the demand of separate homeland for over 7 lakh Kashmiri pandits, which seems the only solution for the Kashmir problem<sup>23</sup>.

#### **Role of State and Central Government to the Return to Valley**

Whether state government is rushing for their rehabilitation or not? In this regard, there is a different opinion. The government has adopted a defensive posture on Kashmir issue. Several schemes

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of their rehabilitation had been proposed in the past<sup>24</sup>. It should be made clear that the many peace processes and political solutions are initiated in J&K from time to time, but all this have little meaning until these include some concrete steps regarding the rehabilitation of displaced community. Both state and union government take extraordinary care to sidetrack the core of Kashmir issue and talk only of peripheries, but the act has not been put into action.<sup>25</sup>

According to the survey report, out of 150 persons, 145 said that the State government is not making any serious efforts for their resettlement. Many displaced persons are not satisfied for their efforts. Behind all these responses, it was also correct that the Prime Minister Manmohan Singh declared Rs 1,600-crore package for the return of Kashmiri Pandits to the Valley. According to the present government that it was happened for the first time in the last 18 years of the displacement that government trying to rehabilitate all the displaced Kashmiris in Valley for which it started allocating registration forms for those who wanted to go back to Valley. Jammu and Kashmir relief commissioner, Vinod Koul said: "this is the first-ever official exercise in which migrants are being registered their names in the relief department to facilitate their return."

Addition to this, government also proclaimed that displaced family would be given Rs 7.5 lakh for construction of new houses and would also give land through the co-operative societies for the construction of their houses. Whereas, on the other hand, all the Kashmiri migrant who took the form said that the amount was not enough that they received by the administration. In addition to that, they demanded that government should compensate us even for the agricultural land, which we are forced to lose in the Valley<sup>26</sup>," On the other hand present government argued that it constructed a colony for the Kashmiri Hindus, with this intention that the displaced communities start living in Kashmir. According to the administrations, these clusters have basically been constructed for the displaced persons as well as non-migrant Kashmiri Pandits. The agreement of this plan is made by the central government. A single cluster for the entire displaced community would be the perfect and workable choice to draw the attention of migrants back to their original places. Moreover, the possibility and efficiency of the cluster became an option for the displaced community to settle in Kashmir. The struggle to pursue minority community back to the Valley has received a boost with over 1,000 displaced persons communicating their eagerness to return to their homeland.<sup>27</sup> But on the other hand, it is also correct that no one can give a foolproof guarantee of their security in Valley.

Besides this, administration said that we will be providing all sorts of relief to the Pandits who intend to return to their homes in Kashmir," We hope the return of Pandits will start soon. We will be settling them wherever they wish to stay. We have started constructing the safe zones in Sheikhpora Budgam in Central Kashmir where initially 220 families would be settled.<sup>28</sup> " On the other hand, a commission headed by former Financial Commissioner SL Koul was established in 1997. It prepared a full report for the rehabilitation of Pandits and suggested a financial support of Rs 2,589.73 crores for the rehabilitation.<sup>29</sup> Giving out details government said that in the first phase, 300 two room sets would be structured in Sheikhpora village of Budgam district for the displaced families. For this function, Rs. 2.5 crores had been allotted, though Rs. 1 crore each will be given to other districts under this plan<sup>29</sup>. The government also started another plan and recognized 144 places in the Valley where Pandits could be rehabilitated<sup>31</sup>. Nevertheless the scheme fails to get significance in view of persistent violence and this entire plan has still not been implemented<sup>32</sup>. One more time displaced community loose hope to failure of this proposal of the rehabilitation of Kashmiri migrants.

Earlier, in 1996, the then Chief Minister Farooq Abdullah had formed a six-member Apex Committee under the chairmanship of Abdul Ahmed Vakil, then Relief and Revenue Minister, with the purpose to drawing an action plan for assisting a secure and respectable return of the migrants to the

Valley.<sup>33</sup> However, no serious efforts have been made for the proposal of the displaced Kashmiri and it was again bringing lack of confidence among the displaced community to failure of this proposal. On the other hand Panun Kashmir organization said that the government policy to rehabilitate Pandits at different places in Valley is largely seen as an eyewash<sup>34</sup> because if they have any positive approach for our settlement then why they make flats in different places of Jammu area. In this way, we did not see any hope from the government".

Besides this, government also talked about their rehabilitation grant which was given to each family including help for repairs of broken houses; grant for domestic goods and furniture, business loans, security measures and incentives for unemployed youth<sup>35</sup>. Their ambitious return plan including cash assistance, interest-free loans and the building apartments in the Anantnag district for the displaced Pandits that they would be able to stay until they have repaired their own houses. However, displaced community denies above all this support from the government. According to them, "in Srinagar government completed the work of haj complex for Muslims residing there and this work was done in day and night shift but in Jammu we are still waiting for two room set.<sup>36</sup> According to the respondents that from time to time many political leaders visited our camps and promised to do something for our community but did not do anything. The State government always got funds in the name of Kashmiri pandits and used this aid for Muslims residing in Mutton and Sheikhpora in Valley<sup>37</sup>. If they want to solve this problem they can make some efforts in a practically way not only in their speeches. In reality it seems that both the governments has only given inadequate relief fund but neither have any confidence building measures which has been initiated to do any serious attempts to re-establish them. The cash compensation from the Union government to the State has not granted anything despite the insufficient healing touch for the displaced Kashmiris<sup>38</sup>.

Besides this, the Mufti Mohammed Sayeed said that the rehabilitation of displaced Kashmiris was one of his government's main concerns. Nevertheless, during his regime the healing touch policy that was for the militants only is provoke distrust among the displaced community<sup>39</sup>. The government decides to liberate terrorists with proper security on bail and also suggested to hold talks with them without any conditions<sup>40</sup>. It is certainly a subject of embarrassment that India is the only country where its own citizens suffer in migrant camps surrounded by the unhealthy environment and anti Indian elements got sufficient help from the administration.

Besides this, all the political parties have demoralized their emotional sentiments after their displacement. Every one of them has articulated the return of Pandits as their first line of duty, but none of them exhibited its serious concern for them. As a result, displaced community blamed government for treating them as non state subjects as well as non Indian citizens. Now the fact is that from the last eighteen years the displaced families are still living as refugees in its own country, although with assurances from the successive governments to rehabilitate them.

At present, they are surviving on meager relief and conditions evoking to depression. Additionally, protest against the government apathy by the displaced community including different organizations, the youth wing of all India Kashmiri Samaj. They alleged that the State and union government have failed to redress the problems of displaced community. There are major grievances of displaced persons from the both governments, to which they require immediate attention. A few suggestions that are given by the displaced persons that they claim that government should give quota in government job and share in promotion because unemployment became a main problem among the displaced community in Jammu. About many Pandit families live below the poverty line in the camps. According to a survey report taken up by the Hindu Welfare Society Kashmir in 2003, many educated youth were found unemployed.<sup>41</sup> It claims that approximately 3,000 jobs had fallen vacant since many



Pandits in government service had retired over the years, and that not a single person had been appointed from the community so far<sup>42</sup>. According to the survey report out of 150 respondents, 85 said unemployment is a main problem in this community. Another 65 said that proper settlement is a major grievance of displaced persons, which require immediate attention. On the other hand, All India Kashmiri Pandit conference also expressed grave concern about that, that there are number of unemployed youth among the Kashmiri displaced persons<sup>43</sup>. As a result they demanded special employment package for migrant youth in State and central departments and reservations of the jobs for the Kashmiri Pandits youth and the appointment of the displaced youth against the retired migrants<sup>44</sup>. They have not received any help in related to the employment by the Government. Respondents told that when we left the Valley, there were 13,000 Kashmiri employees and by the passage of time 11,000 employed have been retired and only 2,000 remaining in the job. There is not a single displaced Kashmiri who is recruited against the retired persons. Those who employed in the jobs are in 4th class employee in the government service, in police department as a constable or teacher in far flung areas. It was argued that government failed to provide them job, they demanded for investigation of missing 18,000 job applications which are invited by the Abdullah government from the displaced Kashmiri Persons. On the other hand it was also clear that the displaced government employees continue to receive their salaries without performing any duties which is not gave them mentally satisfaction to their mind.

Highlighting the problems of displaced community they assert for compensation to the community for the losses suffered by it during last 18 years of turmoil. Government should sanction special loans for Kashmiri youth, release of total payment against the damaged properties and houses. Relief benefits are given to all those families who are not in government job, enhancement of cash assistance to Rs.5000 monthly. In view of the fact that these displaced Kashmiris have lost their primary source of income, therefore they require loans and employment packages.<sup>45</sup> The government at the State and Central level should start a process of economic reconstruction for this community.

Besides this, they demanded representation of community in the State legislature and parliament, so that their matters are accurately presented among the whole nation. They also want that they should be involved in every step to originate policy for them. The displaced persons are the aboriginal people of the Valley, any practice in quest of their resettlement in Kashmir could not be completed without the participation of the displaced Kashmiris. Community should be included into the dialogue process to facilitate their safe and honourable rehabilitation in Kashmir. However, there is no signal that the displaced Kashmiris would be involved in any debate on resolving the problem of Kashmir.

In addition to this, displaced people suggested that, if the State government is really wanted to settle the problem of displacement, the government of India should hold talks with all ethnic groups and minority communities in the State, including Jammuities, Ladakhis, and Kashmiri Hindus to know about their aspirations. Government should bring all the leaders from the different community like Gujjars, Dogras, Muslims and Hindus to take decision for their rehabilitation in Kashmir and restore the confidence between the majority and minority community in Valley to resettle this issue<sup>46</sup>. It is not possible to draw a solution of Kashmir issue without accommodating these people into dialogue process. Besides this, to help this practice, the government should form a team comprising of representatives from the Pandits and Muslim community besides the government officials.<sup>47</sup> On the other hand, they also demanded that government should make an exclusive plan for affected community like widow handicapped and Nehru rozgar yozna, because according to them they feel orphan in their own State.

On the other hand, they suggested that it should give adequate protection cover for the Pandits living in the Valley. These procedures would encourage the confidence among the displaced community. Once this is accomplished, the government could start relocation to the displaced community. Due to some reasons, the government is incapable to relocate the displaced Pandits in their home place; it should acquire steps to resettle them in other areas in the Kashmir Valley itself. Once this is done, the government should ensure foolproof security and basic amenities for them.

### Prospects of their return

Their miserable living in low income and hostile weather conditions have brought about various changes in their perceptions and attitudes of the displaced community. It was affirmed that the prospects of their return seen impossible due to different reasons. Their approach towards their continuing dilemma of homelessness and their expectations of return to their original place have undergone a much more change over the years and are noticeably different from what they were when the migrants landed in Jammu and elsewhere. According to them, “our houses burning down in Valley and now there is nothing left for us, no home no property where do we go”. It was observed that after the 18 years of displacement, the opinion of displaced people have changed with regard to their resettlement process. At present, the issue of their return emerges to be less sentimental, more hardened and more realistic about their life.

But it was also correct that after their displacement many options of their occupations open up for them in these years. Apart from the government servants among the community, whose number is reduced due to the retirements, most of others just managing their life by government relief, some by doing better jobs here and there than Valley and some depends on that money for their survival where they had saved in the past. On the other hand, most of the families of this community have been settled in Jammu city. After selling their property in a cheap rate in Valley, some of them are settled here in different colonies in Durga Nagar, Udaynagar, Adarsh Nagar.

Nevertheless, rest of the people are still living in camps or in rented house, where there is no drainage system, no roads. On the other hand, it is also evident that the people feel more secure in Jammu than the Valley.

Besides this, the faith of displaced community has eroded that was on the State and the union governments for their resettlement policies. Basically their rehabilitation back to their native places is seen impossible. In this way it was observed that homeland type relocation is the only practical option, where they can settle down with security and generations to pursue can perform the way of life of their forefathers without any fear. It is important to understand that the demand for a homeland is not a phrase of ethnic and regional chauvinism, but one of the survivals of a community on the edge of destruction. The homeland will provide a safe place for the minorities traumatized by the loss and abuse of their human rights. Some experts argued that if the displaced community again starts living with the Muslims in Valley it may possible that earlier situation may be arosed again in the Valley.

### Restoration of Lands

It was also observed that properties of Kashmiri Pandits were either destroyed or taken over by terrorists or by local Muslims. At present, they did not know anything that related about their property, whether it is in Valley or destroyed by the local Muslims and militants. Nevertheless, the property of displaced Muslims is also in their hand. They have been visiting Valley from time to time to see their property. During the field survey, the question asked regarding that what you have done with the immoveable property. Out of 150 persons, 72 said it was taken over by the militants, 38 said don't know,

25 said disposed and another 15 said still possess. From those interviewed, 139 admitted that their properties were destroyed, 124 complained about not receiving any compensation, only 15 claimed they had received some compensation. Those left out have distorted or become falling down over the years in the lack of care and repairs. Many houses were set in flames after the mass departure in 1990s. In the rural areas, most residential houses may be in crumbling conditions and still under possession of the majority community but on the other hand the farming land and orchards put disposed off<sup>48</sup>. It is common knowledge that rural life is not even imaginable without the farming and cropping land to raise some food and vegetables. As well, the people displaced from the rural areas living in urban areas for the last fifteen years of displacement, in this way it became very tough for them to regulate their life in the urban areas. Because they did not know any work except farming in agricultural land. As a result they wanted that government got vacated their land from the possession of local Muslims so that they can start life afresh by doing agricultural on their land. It was also observed that some displaced persons already disposed off their places of residence as well as other immovable property. The minority community migrates from the urban areas where houses and plots fascinated purchaser from the majority community. It is inferred from the aforesaid account that a huge majority of urban houses and residential plots have already been sold out.

Moreover, the Jammu and Kashmir government passed three legislations acts to check the distress sale of properties belonging to displaced Kashmiri Pandits. The legislations include the Jammu and Kashmir Migrant's Immovable Property, Preservation, Protection, and Restraint on Distress Sales Act of 1997 and Jammu and Kashmir Migrant Proceeding Act 1997<sup>49</sup>. M.L.Koul, Congress workers said that, despite three legislations passed by the State government, however the sale of Pandits property<sup>50</sup> continues and government seems unable to check the distress sales.<sup>51</sup> According to him, government should introduce a "Temple Bill"<sup>52</sup> to prohibit the distress sale of displaced persons property. Our aim is to safe guard our religious places in Valley. Government always seen to make promise for the return of Kashmir Pandits to their places but it was also correct that the government is not in a position to get back that land which is originally belonged to the Pandits and now in the hands of the militants and the local Muslims<sup>53</sup>. However, on the one side government is claiming to relocate the displaced families in valley, on the other side government is trying to capture their lands. According to the respondents, "this is our ancestral land. We are emotionally attached to it. We want to settle back in Kashmir but our property is being grabbed by the government," Government always gave assurances that they safeguard their religious places and land in Valley. However, displaced persons learnt from the locals of that place that some agencies are trying to sell the land of displaced community. We also learnt that government planned to build a bus stand on their land. Local MLA Ghulam Ahmad Mir has reportedly told them, that they will be given land in compensation, but the displaced persons are not satisfied. According to the respondent that, "why they build a bus stand on their property." They want to save their property from the government's illegal action.<sup>54</sup> "One of the landowners told that the government has not given any notice to them on the subject of the construction of the bus stand. It seems government's insincerity to convey wrong messages in the camp among the displaced community by asserting to re-establish them in valley. On the whole it gives the impression that the government only makes promise to take benefit from the Kashmiri Pandit votes because the process of capture their land is sufficient confirmation that the government is not willing for the return of displaced families to Valley. The State government does not acquire the essential political will to go ahead with the proposal of Pandits resettlement because for resettling them, the government has to make sure return of their original properties in the Valley, which is seemingly impossible.

It was also correct that if they are ready to go back to their original habitat, the speculations arises that whether the Muslim community wants them back or not. In this regard, there are also different opinions, as the Kashmiri Muslims who are staying in Valley are not happy with their return. It was observed that they were losing faith in the goodness of the fellow Kashmiri Muslim back home. According to the respondents, some Kashmiris Muslims are not ready to welcome their return, because they have captured our property, land, orchards, house even our jobs<sup>55</sup>. During the field survey the question asked to the respondent that do you think that your neighbours want you to come back. Out of 150 respondents, 130 said no and 20 said yes.

It seems that local Muslims became beneficiary to the displacement of Kashmiri pandits. During the last ten years, beside the militant activity a new generation of local Muslims had qualified to obtain their places in the civil service, the universities and the services. Likewise in the Valley, among the majority community too, there is a similar generational gap in the understanding and acceptance of migrant and displaced Pandits back into the Valley. The younger generation is not used to their presence and many do not take the issue of their return very kindly<sup>56</sup>. It become very important to understand that it is crucial need to build bridges between two communities so that it clarify that these two communities lived so well together in a land called paradise on earth.

The majority community of Kashmir has continually neglected to survive with the Kashmiri Pandits. It was affirmed that many people were not interested in offering warmly and resettlement of the minority community in Kashmir Valley. Some harsh voices boomed in opposition to their welcome. That made their relocation in Kashmir uncertain and risky<sup>57</sup>. A few examples of the uttered views of dominant leaders and influential people like, Moulvi Umar Faroukh, Chairman of Hurriyat Conference announced, "We have great concern for the pandits but they are themselves responsible for their displacement from the Valley. The Indian government exploited them in order to give a communal colour to our movement. We want them to come back as they are part of our culture, but they will have to take active part in our movement as we are taking". Abdul Gani, a spokesperson of Jammu and Kashmir Hurriyat Conference "I wish Pandits could back to their land and participate as actively in the freedom movement as we do."<sup>58</sup>

Separatists groups even persist to refuse any discussion of a return. It has neither stopped nor condemned militants from committing destruction against the Pandits. Nor did it try to bring the Pandits back. The leaders of Muslim community always show their anger against the Pandits because of the mistreatment by the Dogras" and of the post-Maharaja rule when the Hindus were at the prime positions in government<sup>59</sup>. For whatever reason, their anger manifested in their views. Hurriyat Conference leaders frequently threatened the Muslims to attend the meeting of the Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC).<sup>60</sup> Under the Hurriyat Conference many militants and fundamentalists groups in the Valley have also stepped up their campaign for azadi from India. A number of leaders of this group have started a collection of millions of dollars in favour of their Nizema-i-Mustafa, both in India and outside from India.<sup>61</sup> Some Hurriyat leaders have generated more religious consciousness to divide the Kashmiris further.<sup>62</sup> They viewed, "every Indian Muslims involve themselves in the 'war of independence and Kashmir should be a part of Pakistan'"<sup>63</sup>. The militant leadership made continued announcements that the Pandits can come back but only in one situation that they should join the movement against India. According to them, "We impose a ban on the return of Kashmiri Pandits migrants to the Valley."<sup>64</sup> Above all these views illustrate that the resettlement of the non-Muslims in the Valley was not directly but indirectly denied, by imposing conditions which are unreasonable, unrealistic and dictatorial. It was also clear that these separatist leaders would welcome the Kashmiri Pandits provided they fulfil the conditions imposed by them. But on the other hand, this conditions

have not been imposed on Muslims of the Valley who left the Valley and have bought property (houses and land) in different parts of the country. But the pandits could return only if they are ready to participate actively in their movement which is against the Indian government.

On the other hand, State government said: "we would take all steps to restore confidence among the Pandits, who are presently staying in the Valley. They are our priority."<sup>65</sup> "In spite of the threats from separatist militant groups, the government of Jammu and Kashmir maintains that it ready to give guarantee to the Pandits for their return to Valley<sup>66</sup>. However, it was affirmed that the minority community is forced to return to the Valley and the safety measures have to come not just from the government or the organization but also from the majority community or separatists forces in Valley.

### CONCLUSION

The dislocation of Kashmiri Pandits from Valley is already a decade and a half old story. Their return and resettlement back in the Valley of Kashmir continue to be an indescribable fantasy. Like many other national issues, this issue has also lost its feeling and significance and has been curved into yet one more topic of continued discourse and discussion. To observe the present circumstances in the Kashmir, it seem impossible for the displaced community to return to the Valley soon because the guns are still ruling the Valley. However, the many rehabilitation policies started by the State government and Union government did not bring any change at the ground level because of their non-implementation. It is argued that both the governments have become unsuccessful for the rehabilitation of displaced Kashmiris families to Kashmir Valley.

It is argued that their return is not possible because of several reasons. While rejecting the proposal of the return of Kashmiri Pandits to the Valley, they said that the conditions were not conducive for their safe return as still a large number of peoples are being killed by the militants. They would return to the Valley when the separate homeland will be created for them. Panun Kashmir, Kashmiri Samiti Delhi, Kashmiri Pandit Sabha Bangalore and All State Kashmiri Pandit Conference categorically stated that the homeland for Kashmiri Hindus is the demand of entire Kashmiri pandits. A separate homeland within the Valley might turn out to be a blessing for the entire community.

Besides this the government has not done anything except to sustain relief operations for a very long period of time for those Kashmiri Pandits who are now living in Jammu and other parts of the country.

Today the matter of displacement of Kashmiri people has become important for the politicians to serve their vested political interests and to build their own images and vote-banks. The rehabilitation and employment package that is announced by the different chief ministers of Jammu and Kashmir from time to time has become the case of more sound and less bite. Although, these announcements of their return may give them some hope but the net result is zero. About, ten thousand peoples were dislocated from their ancestral land in an organized movement of ethnic cleansing from the last 18 years the Kashmiri people were forced to live with the label of migrants and surviving with severe feeling of insecurity and homelessness in the camps. Undoubtedly, after some years of effort many of them well settled in their new habitats in Jammu and other States in India. However, it seems that their demands for protection and rehabilitation have been vanished in the corridors of power. Despite the fact that the government has been urging them to return by stressing the normalcy mantra but they have refused this suggestion due to the security concerns.

It is inferred that the minority community did not flee due to economic reasons. It happened in the wake of Islamic insurgency together with the government's breakdown to establish the essential confidence among the lot. Though the government always has been repetitively back to its decision of



resolving this issues to settle the displaced persons back in their places of birth, nevertheless the community themselves have been doubtful about their return. As succeeding central governments are gripped by selflessness of vote banks, they have indecisive and insensible about the issues of Kashmiri Hindus and not address their dilemma with realness. This approach has just provided to encourage the communal elements in state administration. On the other hand, centre continues to stay unclear about the conditions in which Kashmiri refugees will return to Valley. It maintains to assign this charge to those leaders and such bureaucrat in state administration as have been responsible for its damage in the main. In this situation, the Kashmiri migrant looks puzzled as to how he can go back in security, dignity and honour especially with the coming out of ground realities in Kashmir.

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