

# Identifying Conflict driven Displaced Communities: A Study of Kashmir Region

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**Abstract:** Through the twentieth century, there has been a significant growth in the frequency of armed conflicts across the globe and India is no exception to it. These conflicts have not only led to widespread death but extensive displacement, fear, and economic devastation. The most affected of these conflicts are those who get dislocated from their native places under unbearable violent conditions. In the Indian state of Jammu and Kashmir, the armed struggle of 1989 forced most of the Pandit families to leave the Valley for the safety of their lives. But the displacement was not confined to the Pandit community alone, there were other communities too who got displaced due to the conflict in the region. In this regard, the paper aims to examine the different communities displaced due to the armed conflict in Kashmir valley and the impact on their lives. The paper is based on secondary sources of data and the results of the paper describe that not only Pandits have got displaced in Jammu and Kashmir, but there are other communities in the state which got affected by the conflict and remained out of the discussion at local, national and international levels. The paper aims to explore those unvoiced communities.

**Keywords:** Partition, Conflict, Displacement, Communities, Kashmir, exodus

## I. INTRODUCTION

After the armed conflict in Kashmir valley in 1989, the place became insecure to live for many communities and consequently they left the valley for the reasons of security. Many Muslims migrated to Pakistan occupied Kashmir and got settled there in refugee camps. These refugee camps became the space for both providing the relief to displaced people and for organising insurgent groups with the aim fighting in Indian Occupied Kashmir in the name of Kashmir Jihad-freeing Kashmir from the rule of India. The other communities of the valley which include Kashmiri Pandits and Sikhs and other Hindus in general migrated to Jammu, Delhi and other parts of the country, where most of them got settled in the camps established by the government at Jammu [1].

The Kashmir which is known as Paradise on earth has now become the synonymous to death, destruction and genocide. The Kashmir conflict has its roots in colonialism when the British Raj sold the Kashmir to a Hindu Dogra King Gulab Singh for Rs 75 lakhs under the Treaty of Amritsar in 1846. It was the time when British adopted policy of 'divide and rule' to gain control over the whole country. People who used to live in harmony irrespective of their religion were separated by creating artificial boundaries between them.

And this policy had its major impact on Hindus and Muslims, which later became the fundamental instrument of bifurcation of the country [2].

The cataclysm that visited Kashmir in the early 1990s wounded the society so deep that the wounds are yet to heal. While the armed movement heralded the promise of freedom for some, for others it was a bonfire of hopes, dreams, and futures. Of the late, there is no greater marker than the exodus of the Kashmiri Pandits from the valley [3]. The elections of 1987 are believed to be the turning point in the history of Kashmir conflict. It was the election when members of the currently Hurriyat leaders contested the election in addition to the mainstream political parties with the aim to resolve the Kashmir issue democratically. But unfortunately, the elections were heavily rigged, and the state power was misused which was acknowledged both by the national and international media. The people of Kashmir in general and the members of Muslim United Front (MUF) in particular lost the faith in Indian democracy which resulted that the most of its members crossed the border to get armed training and one of its member Mohammad Yousuf Shah became the chief of one of the militant outfit Hizb-ul-Mujahedin and is now popularly known by the name of Syed Salahuddin. His allies which were known by the HAJY group included Abdul Hamid Shaikh, Ashfaq

Majid Wani, Javed Ahmed Mir and Mohammed Yasin Malik who later formed the Jammu Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF). This rigging of elections is considered as the root cause of the Kashmir conflict in 1990s which forced most of the Kashmiri Pandits to migrate to other parts of the country [4].

## II. DISPLACED COMMUNITIES

Most of the displaced population in India is concentrated in its State of Jammu and Kashmir, where more than 251,000 people were forced to migrate to other parts of India. The main reason for displacement in Jammu and Kashmir is the conflict, which popularly is known as 'Kashmir conflict' in the mainstream media, between the Indian forces and the militants who seek either Independence from India or accession to Pakistan. Since 1989 more than 90% of the Kashmiri Pandits left the Valley and majority of them started living in camps in Jammu city where as some got settled in New Delhi [5].

## III. 1989 UPRISING AND PANDIT DISPLACEMENT

The 1990s Kashmir conflict was a tragedy seemingly without end. It is that, but not only. It is now also a political whip, one to beat those who have a divergent view of the issue. And in the hands of the Hindu fundamentalist political forces, which have come to dominate its articulation of late, the issues of the Pandit migration is being used to discredit the Kashmir movement. Therefore, the Kashmiri society has been forced to articulate two competing narratives of victimhood and suffering—one by the Pandits, of their exile, and the other by the Muslims, of their oppression and bloodletting by the Indian state. It has been unfortunate that even today we raise the questions as which community suffered the most, whose narrative has more weight and which tragedy is greater. It could have been better if both the communities would have looked at what events have surrounded the Pandit exodus, without any blinkers of political expediency and self-serving ideological stands [6]. Though it is a fact that there was mass migration of Kashmiri Pandits from valley to other parts of the country but there were other communities who got displaced because of the conflict in Kashmir. Below table gives us an account of families migrated from Kashmir valley due to continued conflict.

Table-1 Showing Community wise break up of registered IDPs

	Hindu	Muslim	Sikh	Total
<b>No. of Families</b>	34,202	2,168	1,749	38,119
<b>No. of Souls</b>	1,24,381	10,930	7,113	1,42,424

Source: Relief Organisation (Migrants), Jammu, Government of Jammu & Kashmir, 2009. available at <http://jkmigrantrelief.nic.in/migrantdetails.aspx>

The total number of Kashmiri Migrant families registered by Government of Jammu and Kashmir at Jammu till the end of November 2009 were 38,119. The number of Hindu families was 34,202, Muslim families were 2,168 and Sikhs were 1,749.

A survey conducted by the Kashmiri Pandit Sangharash Samiti- 'a voluntary organisation that aims to connect with the left out Kashmiri Pandits and boost their socio-economic status' in 2008 revealed that 77,540 Kashmiri Pandits left the valley. In November 1990 alone 17,000 families migrated from the valley, reveals the report. The survey has something more to say about which less is known. From May to November 1990, over 1,500 migrated families returned to Kashmir but most of them became easy targets and forced them to migrate again. The migration of the Pandits has not stopped at all and it is still going on. According to the report there were 651 Pandit families residing at 192 locations across the Kashmir [7]. The data given by the above table reveals that, though the Hindus constitute the most of the displaced, but it is a fact that other communities were too displaced because of the conflict in the Kashmir valley.

## IV. DISPLACEMENT OF BORDER RESIDENTS

The clashes along the Line of Control (LOC) between the Indian army and their Pakistani counterpart have led to the displacement of thousands of people from nearby villages. Also, due the plantation of land mines and building of fencing along the LOC by the Indian army had displaced at least 15,000 people from 22 surveyed villages. The people were separated by the fence which the Indian army have erected five kilometres away from the LOC from their land, education and livelihoods [8].

Apart from the Kashmiri Pandits and border displaced persons there were displacements in other districts of the state such as in Doda, Rajouri and Poonch. These people are mostly nomadic tribes consisting of Gujjars and Bakerwals and are Muslims by faith. Their exact numbers have never been known as the government never has shown any seriousness towards these people. Sometimes their displacement is temporary but continuous. The region has been affected by both the insurgent groups as well as the security forces. The women of this region have suffered a lot in absence of their male counterparts. The region has been neglected by the media as the people living in these areas are generally illiterate and inaccessible. These displaced people blame the government that they have not been provided relief on par with the Kashmiri Pandits, though the reasons of migration for both the communities are same. The 'Sarp Vinash' Operation which was carried out by the Indian army in 2003 against the militants in the Poonch district displaced at least 3,000 to 4,000 people from their native places. There was no registration of the displaced and no assistance was

provided to them by the government, though the army claimed that they were providing but that was based on pick and choose basis [9].

There were other communities like Sikhs and non-Kashmiri Hindus, but they were neglected by the media. There were Muslim families who had a communist ideology suffered at the hands of militants, army and state supported groups like Ikhwanis. One member of these displaced families argued, "We proved we believe in an undivided J&K and also disproves the stereotype that only Hindus are suffering in my state". Not only the media began to ignore the other displaced groups or the genuine displaced in the camps, but it created strains and made divisions within the Kashmiri society [10].

There are 1.5 lakh Hindu refugees who got displaced to India's Jammu and Kashmir state from Pakistan's Punjab province during the communal riots in 1947. Though these people are residing in the State for past 62 years but still are lacking statehood rights. As these people lack Permanent Residence Certificate these are also ineligible for basic rights like buying of property, getting government jobs etc. Though the community could vote in the Lok Shaba elections but were denied right to vote in the Assembly elections. The community has suffered large scale human rights violation, maltreatment and denial of statehood rights. They lack their social identity, political rights and are economically backward [11]. The Government of India has announced a package amounting Rs 49 crore for the allotment of land and other related measures for rehabilitation of these displaced people. Besides, other measures have been taken for these people by the Government of India such as admission to their children in professional and other educational institutes, loans from the banks without any mortgage to start their business. The Ministry of Labour and Employment under its Skill development initiatives have also started vocational training programmes for the unemployed youth of this community [12].

Conflict in Kashmir does not affect any region but Kashmir as a whole. There was displacement of masses from all the ten districts of the valley irrespective of the religion. The Pandits largely blame militants for their exile while Muslims and Sikhs blame the government security forces for their forced migration. Only those persons or families were registered by the Government official who left valley and settled either in government made camps or in other parts of the country. But there was displacement of people within the Kashmir division which was unnoticed by the authorities and their figures are missing. The displaced families which were registered at Jammu by the Relief Organisation (Migrants), Jammu, an Organisation which was set up by the Government of Jammu and Kashmir to deal with the

migrants from the Kashmir valley, has provided a district wise breakup of IDPs from the valley which is given below.

Table Showing District Wise Break up of Registered IDPs

S No.	District	Hindu	Muslim	Sikh	Total
1	ANANTNAG	6784	985	80	7849
2	BADGAM	2671	168	336	3175
3	BANDIPUR	379	69	5	453
4	BARAMULA	2997	131	655	3783
5	GANDERBAL	682	35	6	723
6	KULGAM	2734	276	26	3036
7	KUPWARA	2595	209	138	2942
8	PULWAMA	2155	51	160	2366
9	SHOPIAN	1307	59	7	1373
10	SRINAGAR	11898	185	336	12419
	<b>Total Families</b>	<b>34202</b>	<b>2168</b>	<b>1749</b>	<b>38119</b>

Source: Relief Organisation (Migrants), Jammu, Government of Jammu & Kashmir, 2009, available at <http://jkmigrantrelief.nic.in/migrantdetails.aspx>

The above table indicates the families displaced from the district of Kashmir valley. The conflict in Kashmir has not affected a district but whole valley. Also, it is to be noted that only pandit families have not migrated from the valley, but other communities too have migrated for the reason of safety. From district Srinagar most of the families had migrated while Ganderbal had the least. Srinagar was densely populated with Pandit families prior to displacement and most of them were having government jobs. The reason for having maximum number of migrant families from Srinagar was the armed conflict had its epicentre in the district. Though Pandits were being the larger in number, the other cannot be neglected. Though the Sikhs were lesser in numbers as compared to other minorities of the valley, but they too had their share from the conflict of Kashmir.

## V. CONCLUSION AND FUTURE SCOPE

The displacement of people in Kashmir valley is not a new phenomenon but has its roots in the partition of the sub-continent. Since 1947 there has been displacement of people across the borders and within the state. After the partition there was inter-religious communal violence in Jammu division of the state which forced millions of Muslims to take refuge in the Pakistan and left at least 2, 50,000-300,000 Muslims dead. The people did not migrate from the state to Pakistan but there was also migration of Hindu people from west-Pakistan and got resettled in Jammu division of the state Kumar. The displacement due to conflicts and ethnic violence in Kashmir did not stop at partition but it continued. It was in 1989 when there was mass displacement of Kashmiri Pandits from the valley due to the armed conflict. It is believed that the assembly elections of 1987 were rigged and subsequently resulted in armed conflict in Kashmir. Though the Kashmiri Pandits suffered a lot but the Muslims of the valley too suffered.

There were many communities who left the valley for the reasons of safety. The Kashmiri Pandits got international attention while the others were neglected. There is a need to have a holistic approach to identify all the displaced communities of the state.

There are other communities of the state who got displaced from their native places since the beginning of the conflict in the state. Three wars were fought between India and Pakistan since 1947 on the soil of the Kashmir and resulted in mass displacement of the people but their numbers are not known. The conflict in the three border districts of the state-Doda, Rajouri and Poonch has forced thousands of people to flee from their homes but no attention was paid towards them by the state. The return and resettlement of Pandits has become a vote bank for political parties and in this they do not pay any attention towards other displaced communities. Newspapers, editorials, Bollywood stars and so on are highlighting the issues of Pandits and demand return and rehabilitation for them, but no one has taken any pains for the displaced people of state other than Pandits. The rehabilitation measures therefore in the state have been ad-hoc and varied. There is a need of an equal concern and responsibility of the state to identify all the displaced communities in the state and provide equal distribution of relief among the various displaced communities of the state as they all belong to the same state.

The paper will provide a base to scholars who are interested in conflict related displacements and will help the policy makers to have an inclusive policy while dealing with the conflict induced displaced communities.

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Mr. Tajamul Maqbool is currently a doctoral student at central university of Gujarat, India. He completed his M.Phil. from the same university in 2016 and his Masters in Sociology from Pondicherry University, India in the year 2014. He has several publications in national and international journals. His major areas of interest include Kashmir conflict, Displacements, Developmental studies, Human Rights and NGOs.