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## Impact of Internal Displacement in Jammu and Kashmir: Study of Pakistan occupied Kashmir Refugees

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### Abstract

*In the state of Jammu and Kashmir Pakistan occupied Kashmir (PoK) refugees migrated from PoK are living in sub-human conditions in 34 camps in Jammu province for last 64 years. Moreover these displaced refugees lack official status because PoK is not a foreign soil and are yet to be settled and have been deprived of all the benefits given to refugees according to national and international law. The study analyses the impact of internal displacement on these refugees. It has also tried to highlight their different issues, problems and sets of demands. It also studies the role of Government in their rehabilitation. PoK refugees are scattered in 34 camps in Jammu province. Therefore the stratified random sampling method is used. Interview schedule is used to collect data. Data includes both primary and secondary sources.*

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The main finding of the researcher is that the refugees of PoK are struggling hard for their rights and fulfillment of demands since long but neglected by all the successive governments. It also finds that their continual neglect for 64 years has created resentment in their minds.

#### Introduction

South Asia has had been some of the largest population movements across national boundaries of any region in the world. Approximately 35 to 40 million people have moved between India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Srilanka, Nepal and Bhutan since 1947, some as economic migrants, and a greater no. of refugees. These population movements can be categorized into three types; people rejected by governments or by majority of ethnic communities engaged in ethnic cleansing; political refugees from repressive regimes and illegal migrants.

The largest single flow within South Asia and perhaps the largest internal flow in the world

history took place in 1947 after the partition of India. An estimated six to seven million Muslims moved from India to Pakistan and nearly eight million Hindus and Sikhs moved from Pakistan to India.... The areas on the border that were ravaged by Pakistan's aggression in 1947 included Mirpur, Poonch, Muzaffrabad and frontier districts of Ladakh and Gilgit. Those refugees who were displaced from Mirpur, Poonch, Muzaffrabad what now called as Pakistan occupied Kashmir are PoK refugees. These displaced refugees required immediate protection as well as a permanent solution in India.

The turmoil of 1947 resulted in large scale migration of people of all communities on either sides of the border. The people were forced to migrate with bitter memories of betrayal and sufferings in PoK and had to start lives in new surroundings. They had few choices and were prepared to do or accept anything to make a living. Thus the people migrated from PoK had to seek

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relief in new surroundings. The forced migration has not brought changes only in their places of residence but in their overall attitudes, habits and outlooks.

The holocaust following the partition not only forced the refugees to shift their residences, from rural homes to new urban centers but also forced on them distinct changes in their habitats and attitudes. Officially 1,58,000 refugees were accounted for as refugees, while many others living close to the affected areas shifted to safe regions among their friends and relatives. The enforced movement of the people was determined purely by a desire to survive and escape and the bloodhounds of communalism. The panic-stricken people in Indian sub-continent, fled for their lives to an uncertain future, but at least to safety. From the figures in Appendix "A" based on the census report of 1941 it is presumed that 1,42,7 Hindus and 32,034 Sikhs, previously occupying 161,813 houses in the Pakistan occupied area, left their homes for settlement in safer regions of Jammu and in other parts of India, and it is their resettlement that constituted the core problem of the state since their displacement.

The number of people directly affected and uprooted during partition were 12,00,000. Out of total 12,00,000 PoK migrants population in India, at least 40 percent of them have been leading a miserable life for the past three generations in Jammu, Kathua, Rajouri, Poonch and Udhampur districts of Jammu and Kashmir. These displaced persons not only involve human rights abuses, maltreatment and denial of livelihood for those displaced but demand accommodation with state sovereignty and raise questions of identity, power and other related concerns. With an estimate about two lakh PoK migrants are residing in sub-human conditions in 34 camps in Jammu province, especially in RS Pura and Jammu areas. They require immediate protection as well as permanent solution in India. The partition destroyed not only the life and property of lakhs of people but also the very fabric of human society and relationships.

The present study analyzed the impact of internal displacement on PoK refugees of 1947 living in different camps. PoK refugees belonged to two distinct categories, the urban and the rural. The former were being educated and traders reestablished and found better living conditions in the urban colonies at different parts of India. But this cannot be said about rural population who had no option but to seek admission to relief camps set up by the government. They had no other option

but to avail of the relief in those camps until they were rehabilitated in different areas. Most of them, mostly belonging to lower castes, were uneducated and were engaged in cultivation or in poorly paid rural crafts. A majority of them now had to find a living in non-agricultural pursuits in completely new settings of which they had faintest knowledge. Dictated by the urge for survival and helped with small loans and some opportunities most of them had to settle down in unfamiliar occupations in exotic urban surroundings. For them the shift in residence and occupation was much more than a change; it was a virtual transformation over a short period of time.

Hypotheses

**The study tests the following hypotheses:**

1. Internal Displacement of PoK refugees has brought distinct changes in their lives after partition. It has not only shifted their residences into new settings in camps but also changed their habitats, occupation and culture as well.
2. These migrants are neglected for sixty four years by all the successive governments. Unresolved issue of PoK migrants is a major challenge before state as well as centre govt.

**Objectives of the study**

1. To analyze the impact of Internal Displacement on PoK refugees.
2. To study the socio-economic conditions of PoK refugees migrants and their present status.
3. To analyze their problems and sets of demands.
4. To examine the role of government in their relief and rehabilitation.

**Methodology**

The present study included PoK refugees of Bakshi Nagar, Rehari, Bhour camp and Simbal camp. The purposive sampling method was used to collect the data. Data will be collected both through primary and secondary sources. The primary data was collected through Interview Schedule and Interview method. The secondary data was collected through books, reports, articles, journals, newspapers, etc.

**Area of study**

PoK refugees are living in different areas in Jammu province. In Jammu city these migrants are settled at Digiana camp, Bhor camp, Simbal camp, Gadigarh, Bakshi Nagar, Rehari colony, Karan Nagar, Keerian, Gangyal, Badyal Brahmana, and R.S. Pura. The area of the present study included PoK refugees of Bakshi Nagar, Rehari, Bhour camp and Simbal camp were selected for the study.

**Impact of Internal Displacement**

Internal Displacement of PoK refugees has multi-faceted impacts. Partition and displacement not only affected the geography and history of these displaced persons but also the citizens of PoK who were living together in their earlier settings. Refugees from PoK have still not forgotten the trauma of displacement. Most of them lost their near and dears on their way to migrant camps. People saw their close ones dying of hunger, thirst and diseases. Unfavorable weather conditions also posed problems taking toll of lives. While interviewing some old aged respondents, they started shedding tears when they regretted upon their failure to leave their family members or relatives due to fear of losing their own lives. PoK 'refugees' after going through the trauma of displacement and subsequent hurdles in rehabilitation have established themselves in the camps. The impact of displacement on PoK refugees is analyzed as:-

- 1. Ever large scale forced migration in J&K:** The turmoil of 1947 resulted into large scale migration of POK refugees. The number of people who migrated during the holocaust was 12,000,00. Officially 1,58,00 refugees were accounted for as refugees, while many others living close to the affected areas shifted to safe regions among their friends and relatives. Approximately 2,000,00 refugees from the total population are settled in 34 camps in Jammu province, especially in RS Pura and Jammu areas. Most of them were compelled to quit their native soil in Muzaffarabad, Mirpur and Poonch first in 1947 and then again in two phases in 1965 and 1971 after India-Pakistan wars.
- 2. Migration to new settings:** PoK refugees belonged to two types of categories, urban and rural. The former were mostly engaged in petty trades and professions joined or started it again in new settings after a gap of few months. But rural population had no option and had to seek admissions to relief camps set up by the govt. They mostly lived in Nagrota and Yol camp in distress on govt. grants until they were allotted lands in different areas.
- 3. Change in socio-economic status:** The respondents shifted their occupation from earlier ones to variety of other occupations. The PoK 'refugees' who migrated from urban areas joined or started their earlier trades and professions. But those from rural areas firstly dependent on govt. grants but later on started agricultural activities on allotted lands. In some cases the land allotted was either far away or uncultivable.

**4. Impact on in their culture and tradition:**

Displacement of POK refugees not only shifted their residence and occupation but also degenerated their cultural values and traditions. For instance marriages, festivals and other occasions which used to be a village affair also become a short term and formal affair.

**5. Impact on education level:** Displacement affected the education of displaced people. The refugees from urban settings being educated members of upper castes are often better than their native homes. Many of them are in govt. jobs. But those from rural villages had to leave their schools in between. In the new settings they opted for lower jobs or daily wage jobs for economic reasons.

**6. Decline in self-esteem:** Due to displacement those who were well off in their native places left their immovable and moveable property and fled with very few resources.

**7. Change in family structure:** Family structure in these camps is shifting from joint families in native places to nuclear in new settings.

**Demands of PoK Refugees**

Main demands projected by the PoK refugees include:

1. Implementation of Wadhwa Committee report, no restriction on state subject for PoK refugees settled outside the State.
2. Ownership of right over evacuee land.
3. Claim over property left behind.
4. Relief at par with Kashmiri Pandits.
5. Reservation in professional colleges and scholarships for their students.
6. One time settlement package of Rs 16 lakh per family for the refugees of 1947.
7. Eight Assembly seats for PoK refugees here out of 24 reserved for PoK in Legislative Assembly, reservation for refugees in the Upper House,
8. PoK 'Refugee's' Development Board should be constituted with all financial powers and liberal aid for their upliftment and betterment.
9. Job reservation for refugee youth in State/Central Administrative services.
10. Improvement in civic amenities in the basties where PoK refugees are putting up,
11. Bringing back the money of refugees which was left in Mirpur branch of J&K Bank in 1947 at the time of migration.
12. Inclusion of refugees in the dialogue on J&K at every level.
13. The Central Act of 1954 (Displaced



Persons Compensation and Rehabilitation Act), should also be applied in the case of PoK 'refugees'.

#### **Role of Government**

The partition of the subcontinent at the very dawn of independence of India was a defining moment for the future direction and psyche of the new nation. The vicious communal violence and refugee crisis, which ensued, resulted in wide scale destruction of life, property and traumatized millions of people. The refugee had to start a new life as part of the newly independent state of India, and the government had to respond to an extraordinary situation at a time when it hardly had any resources and experience in dealing with humanitarian emergencies involving such large number of people (Mahiga, 2003:11). The government accordingly constituted the Central Refugee Committee vide Council Order No. J/13/47 on November 19, 1947 (Report of Wazir Committee, 1953). The refugee relief camps were opened at Palanwala and Jourian to accommodate them in government and private buildings. Thereafter, the Relief And Rehabilitation Department was established on April 14, 1948, under the Ministry of Health and Rehabilitation. This department took charge of refugee camps in Jammu province and immediately reorganized the refugee camps officers. For the displaced persons from Tehsil of Haveli, Mendhar, Bagh, Sandhuti, who were collected in Poonch town ration valuing Rs 318,741 was arranged and dropped from air at Poonch town through Army Dakotas for free distribution among displaced persons. The Government of India set their Relief Organisation in Jammu at June 1, 1948. It established refugee relief camps at Nagrota, Chathe and Company Bagh. In addition to that a Home for the unattached women and children at Frashkhana at Jammu city was of state were admitted into the refugee camps at Jalandar and Hoshiarpur. About 3000 displaced persons originally admitted in Jalandar camp was transferred to Hoshiarpur relief camp and then to Nagrota camp in June 1950 (Report of Wazir Committee 1953:63). At one time the strength of the Nagrota camp rose to 35,000 constituting 8,870 families. The camp was managed entirely by the government of India and by the end of 1949, an approximate amount of Rs 2 crore and 60 lakhs had been spent on it. During their stay at Nagrota camp, displaced persons were provided with tents for shelter. Free ration and cash dole. The scale of cash dole for those above six was Rs 4. Besides their free ration comprised atta, rice,

sugar and pulses. These relief camps were closed in 1951 when the refugee relief camps were opened at Yol near Dharamshala in Himachal Pradesh

There was another category of refugees who stayed outside the camps either by arranging private accommodation or by staying with their relatives. For such persons the government had sanctioned Rs 6 as daily cash dole for those up to six months of age and Rs 12 for those above it, without any cereal ration. In Jammu city and other town's widows, orphans and invalid refugees were exempted from payment of rent for evacuee houses occupied by them. The total amount spent by both the state and the central government on the rehabilitation of refugees came to Rs 7 crores. It included Rs 2 crores and 60 lakhs on displaced persons at Nagrota camp, Rs 2 crores on Yol camp refugee and Rs 1 crore through the Joint Rehabilitation Board.

#### **Allotment of Land to the Displaced People**

Immediately on the dispersal of the displaced persons from the relief camps, a unit of land measuring acres of irrigated or 12 acres of non-irrigated was allotted to some of the displaced families by the Joint Rehabilitation Board. But soon after it was felt by the government that it might not be possible for them to provide land to each family at such a higher scale. Accordingly, vide Cabinet Order no. 578-C of 1954, which contains rules for allotment of agricultural land, fresh scale of land for allotment was prescribed which ranged from 2 acres irrigated or 3 acres non-irrigated or 6 acres non-irrigated depending upon the strength of displaced family. Besides land, cash loans were granted by the government to the displaced persons for the construction of houses and purchase of other necessary equipments.

#### **Cash loans**

These loans were recoverable after two years with simple interest at 4.5% in ten equal installments, commencing from the date of their grant. However, the recovery of these loans could not be made within the period stipulated in the agreements owing to weak economic condition of these refugees. Out of 40 respondents only 35 respondents availed loan given by the government whereas 5 respondents did not avail cash loan. Moreover, those who availed cash loan were of the view that this loan was not sufficient for the purpose it was given.

On analyzing the data collected from the field as well as secondary sources, it can be said that PoK 'refugees' have been victim of forced

displacement which was ensued soon after partition. As revealed from the data these refugee had to go through lot of miseries and sufferings on their way to relief camps. The role of govt. both at State and Centre level was rated satisfactory by only 10% of the respondents and 90% expressed dissatisfaction over government's role.

#### **Socio-Economic Profile of PoK Refugees**

After going through trauma of displacement and subsequent hurdles in rehabilitation, most of PoK refugees have been fully established in the camps. The present socio-economic conditions of these PoK refugees can be analysed as:

1. Age-wise distribution of respondents: Out of total 40 respondents 30 i.e. 75% falls in the age group of 66-70 and above.
2. Present occupation of the heads of the household: Out of 40 respondents 20 i.e. 50% falls in the age group of 71-80 and above do not take any occupation. Two are engaged in agriculture while 12 of them are engaged as self employed in occupations like transporter ship, shop keeping, driving, etc. out of rest only 6 have taken some private job.
3. Educational level of family members on the basis of sex above 14 years: The data reveals that females are more literate than males in terms of their concentration in higher educational institutions.
4. Size of the household: It has been analysed that maximum respondents i.e. 30 have medium size of the household 5-8 members, 6 have large family size having 9 members and above and only 4 respondents have small size family up to 4 members.
5. Main source of income: Source of income varied for different respondents. But the results revealed that 18 generate income through self employment. 10 households have income through private jobs and 10 have government services. Only 2 households depend upon agriculture.
6. Monthly income of the household: Monthly income level of majority of the households i.e. 30 is above 10000 rupees per month. The 6 have income between Rs 8000-1000 per month and only 4 have income below 8000 rupees a month.
7. Status of the house: After 64 years of displacement almost all have succeeded in rebuilding their houses. Out of 40 respondents 36 have their own houses where as only 4 are living in rented houses.
8. Type of family: After these people settled in these camps they have joint families. But now

most of the respondents have nuclear type of family. Out of 40 respondents only 15 have joint family structure and 25 are living in nuclear families.

#### **MAIN FINDINGS OF THE STUDY**

The main findings of the study are:

1. POK refugees have been the victims to the forced migration owing to post-partition disturbances and can be very aptly classified under the category of internally displaced people as POK is still considered a part and parcel of India.
2. On account of being uprooted from their birth place, their historical moorings to the native place seem to be distorted due to their dislocation from native land.
3. Due to displacement, POK refugees have suffered a lot. Right from their migration, and then to subsequent rehabilitation, POK refugee went through a lot of problems related to health and medical facilities, educational facilities, safety and comfort of aged and children and women particularly.
4. The studied reveals that they lost much but compensated less. Although some of the compensation granted to these refugees do not repay the loss of their lost cultural identities. The study concludes that still land allotment and ownership rights over the land are major issues.
5. PoK refugees are dissatisfied with the attitude of the successive Government's rehabilitation policies. They consider the role of Government as discriminatory in providing them relief and rehabilitation at par with displaced Kashmiris. They blame that they are continuously neglected for 64 years and are still unconscious of their status and identity.
6. Displacement forced them to stay in camps with people of diverse cultural backgrounds. This led to emergence of a new collective culture in which their own peculiar cultural traits seem to be losing in some obscure corridor of history.

#### **CONCLUSION**

In the end it can be said that two lakhs of people who had survived that holocaust of ethnic cleansing were discriminated by all successive governments and denied their share in socio-political processes. One can often see this forgotten on roads, watch in televisions read in striving hard for their rights but all in vain. Whenever any stranger people visit these camps the old aged eyes start seeing with hope that if somebody is going to heal their wounds and will make effort to make the future better at least of their upcoming generations. It was for the first

time Interlocutors on Kashmir today for the first time visited Bhour Camp to meet the PoK refugees dwelling there. Veteran journalist Dilip Padgaonkar, former Information Commissioner M M Ansari and academician Radha Kumar listened to the grievances of the displaced people camping there and assured them to raise their voice.

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