

Vol 4 Issue 1 Feb 2014

ISSN No : 2230-7850

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International Multidisciplinary  
Research Journal

*Indian Streams  
Research Journal*

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**RNI MAHMUL/2011/38595**

**ISSN No.2230-7850**

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## DISPLACEMENT AND IDENTITY: A CASE STUDY OF WEST PAKISTANI REFUGEES IN THE STATE OF JAMMU AND KASHMIR

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**Abstract:-**West Pakistan Refugees a displaced community in Jammu Region of Jammu and Kashmir is till date even after six decades of Independence or 1947 Riots or since Partition of India are fighting for the statehood rights, citizenship rights which makes their life miserable. The study explore the issue of displacement and resulted problem of social Identity, their various demands ,political reasons behind this long pending Humanitarian issue. Purposive sampling method, interview schedule vis-a-vis both Primary and Secondary method has been used to collect data for the study.

**Keywords:** economic , environmental , physical , political reasons .

### INTRODUCTION: DISPLACEMENT, REFUGEE, SOCIAL IDENTITY

The modern world is witnessing vast changes in peoples ways of life. Such changes are the product of several factors. Migration is one among such factors that influence socio-economic and other institutional changes. It is said that migration is a response of human beings to the social, environmental, economic or other forces. People migrate only when they are forced by some factors. They, when any society migrates from its original or traditional habitat to a new habitat, it is called as displacement because its traditional culture, norms, values, undergo change to cope with the new physical and socio-cultural settings.(Reddy 1995:01)

Emanuel Marx suggests that the key experience affecting refugees is that of displacement. He gives a minimalist definition of refugee as "a person whose social world has been disturbed". The idea of disturbance does not in fact accommodate compulsion and the narrowing of the choice which are invariably related with refugee crisis; it does, however, focus attention on refugees as people affected by forces which fundamentally change their circumstances, moving them physically and radically changing their accustomed relationships. He further argued that displacement can bring loss of 'social competence' because of the loss of resources and a rupture in the social environment of those displacement.(Philip 2006:193-194)

According to Merriam-Webster displacement is 'the act or process of displacing: the state of being displaced' Indeed, mobility, displacement and emplacement have become defining features of our times. As long as there are wars and large scale development projects, forced up rootedness is here to stay. At the end of 2009, UNHCR recorded 43.3 million people who were forcibly displaced worldwide, of which 15.2 million were refugees, with the rest as asylum seekers cases pending, and internally displaced peoples, or IDPs. (UNHCR:2010).

**Conflict-Induced Displacement:** People who are forced to flee their homes for one or more of the following reasons and where the state authorities are unable or unwilling to protect them: armed conflict including civil war; generalized violence; and persecution on the grounds of nationality, race, religion, political opinion or social group.

The term 'refugee' has a long history of usage to describe 'a person who has sought refuge' in broad and non-specific terms. However, there is also a legal definition of a refugee, which is enshrined in the 1951 United Nations Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees. Article 1 of the Convention defines a refugee as a person residing outside his or her country of nationality, who is unable or unwilling to return because of a 'well-founded fear of persecution on account of race, religion, nationality, membership in a political social group, or political opinion'. Some 150 of the world's 200 or so states have undertaken to protect refugees and not return them to a country where they may be persecuted, by signing the 1951 Refugee Convention and/or its 1967 Protocol.(UNHCR: 2012 )

Refugee is by definition 'transitory and depends upon social recognition'. According to "Papadimitriou" both pure

refugees and purely economic migrants are ideal constructs rarely found in real life; many among those who routinely meet the refugee definition are clearly fleeing both political and economic oppression and economic dislocation. (Philip 2006:12-13)

Displacement of people has occurred time and again in the history of India. The main focus of this research is on one such large scale displacement of people from "West-Pakistan" in the partition of India, 1947. There are over 1.5 lakh West Pakistan refugees living in border districts of Jammu, Samba and Kathua in the state of Jammu and Kashmir for the past 62 years, but have been denied statehood rights till date. The core of this research is to examine how displacement has affected their livelihood which involve human rights abuses, maltreatment and denial of statehood and raises questions of vital importance like their social identity, political rights and economic status.

West Pakistan Refugees are Hindu refugees from West Pakistan who in 1947 migrated to India's Jammu and Kashmir state from Pakistan's Punjab province during the communal riots. Though they are Indian citizens and residing in the state for more than sixty years, they cannot buy property, get government jobs or vote in the Assembly elections since they do not have the Permanent Resident Certificate. Therefore the issue of their rehabilitation and state citizenship has become the major challenge before the state government.

Social Identity: Who am I? It looks like a question that cannot be answered without some reference to you, us and them; to the other people with whom I have contact. Who I am is closely interwoven with ideas about the society in which I live and the views of others who also inhabit that same social context. Ideas about who I am and possible answers to the opening question demand acknowledgement of the social as well as the personal. Identity involves personal investment, often on a massive scale, to the extent that people are willing to die to claim or protect their own identities, but it is always socially located. Identity matters, but how and why it matters depends on time and place and on specific historical, social and material circumstances. Identity offers a way of thinking about the links between the personal and the social; of the meeting place of the psychological and the social, of the psyche and the society. It is the embodiment and location of the psycho-social. (Kath Woodward, 2002)

Identity is a human capacity rooted in language to know 'who's who'. This involves knowing who we are, knowing who they are, and so on a multidimensional classification or mapping of the human world and our places in it, as individuals as members of collectivities. It is a process –Identification— not a thing. It is not something that one can have, or not, it is something that one does. (Richard Jenkins, 2008)

There are certain factors responsible which determine the social identity of group or an individual like Language, Culture, Ethnicity, Power of place, Nationality etc, of which Nationality is of great importance in relation to West Pakistan Refugees of Jammu and Kashmir. Nationality, in the geographic-political sense of identity- with or without an ethnic foundation- can be formidable social identity, especially in more developed countries with great internal mobility.

#### RESEARCH OBJECTIVES:

- 1.To understand the perceptions of the West Pakistan refugees on the issue of displacement and social identity particularly belonging to two villages of Bishnah Constituency near Indo-Pak border.
- 2.To study their politico-socio-economic conditions and present status.
- 3.Political reasons and social Identity of Refugees from West Pakistan.

#### RESEARCH QUESTION /LOCATION

My research question is to find out life of West Pakistan refugees living displaced in the border villages of Bishnah constituency in the state of Jammu and Kashmir and the resulted impact on their social identity. I have focussed on various factors of their social life, particularly displacement and its impact on their social identity in their economic, political and social life. I have also asked questions about their vocational status, marital status, political participation, link with government or non-government agency of welfare which runs their livelihood, about how the next generations are reacting to this long pending demand of social identity and lastly about the impact of being border residents.

#### METHODOLOGY

The present study included West Pakistan refugees of Bishnah Tehsil of Jammu Distt. 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.

#### Displaced People in Jammu and Kashmir:

The Jammu region known for its temples and holy shrines could be given the status of refugee capital of India. Close to 17 lakh displaced people live here under manifold difficult circumstances. The various displaced groups are:

1. Displaced from Pakistan occupied Kashmir:- These migrants belongs to Mirpur, Poonch and Muzaffrabad district of Jammu and Kashmir. All these refugees are Hindus and Sikhs. Non-Kashmir's as such were not allowed to settle in the valley

even though Muzaffrabad district was part of Kashmir province before 1947. The estimated population of these refugees presently settled in Jammu province is about 10 lakhs. Almost 4 lakh have settled in the rest of the country.

2. Displaced from Chhamb Areas in 1965:- There are about 2.5 lakh migrants from Chhamb. These migrants belonging to about 4600 families which were displaced in 1971 from Chhamb under Shimla Agreement. These migrants were mainly farmers and are settled along the border line from Akhnoor to Kathua district.

3. Displaced from Pakistan areas adjoining J&K in 1947:- These migrants are commonly called as West-Pakistan refugees. These are settled in the areas adjoining India and Pakistan border right from Jaurian to Kathua. Their population is about 2.5 to 3 lakh. They have been leading miserable life in India as stateless community. They have been denied State Subject benefits of Jammu and Kashmir State, and are not considered as the citizens of Jammu and Kashmir State.

4. Displaced from Kashmir i.e. Kashmiri Pandits:- These are called as Kashmiri migrants. These migrants are the original inhabitants of Kashmir valley. They were forced to flee from the valley in 1989-90 due to militancy. They are about 3 lakh in number living an uncertain life in various Government build accommodations in Jammu, New Delhi and elsewhere.

#### **BACKGROUND:**

Of special focus in this study is the problem of the migrant population from mainly Sialkot in West Pakistan, who currently reside in Jammu in India. These refugees (80 per cent of them are from the Scheduled Castes) migrated during the Partition from Sialkot to Jammu & Kashmir. Historically, Sialkot in West Pakistan and Gurdaspur in India's Punjab state had very close cultural links. At the time of Partition however, this group chose to take refuge in Jammu, as it was the closest town across the line of Partition from Sialkot. Gurdaspur and Amritsar in Punjab were 92 km and 98 km from Sialkot respectively compared to Jammu, which was only 38 km away. Today, they reside in villages from Kathua to Palla walla on the Jammu borders. For 65 years this population of now about 250,000 to 300,000 (majority Scheduled Caste) refugees has been denied state subject benefits of J&K, as they are not considered citizens of the State.

It was Partition time of 1947 in India and millions were crossing over to either side. It was a bloody trail-hundreds of thousands were killed and many more hundreds of thousands raped, maimed and looted. Fear, haplessness and desperation were the companions of millions pouring into India at that time. When the land on which they were born was declared foreign overnight by the leaders the hapless people had to run across the borders in search of their new homeland. They came to Punjab, Rajasthan, Gujarat and Delhi on the Western side and Bengal, Assam and Tripura on the East.

#### **POLITICAL REASONS**

They were in a way lucky as they were received by the people and Government of Bharat well and were helped in rebuilding their lives, but these West Pakistani group of displaced people can't own property; they can't get government employment; they can't even own a ration card and of course they can't vote in Panchayat or State election also. For the Government of J&K these people are non-existent; or at the most aliens in its land. Armed with Article 370 that grants it the power to discriminate people in the name of state subjects and non-state subjects, the J&K government is perpetuating worst human rights violations against these 250,000 refugee Indians.

According to official statistics, as many as 1,14,987 West Pakistan refugees are living in 137 hamlets most along Indo-Pak border in R S Pura and Suchetgarh and Bishnah constituencies of Jammu district. Many of the refugees have been complaining of living in sub-human conditions in mud house without water and power supplies. The youth, mostly illiterate, earn their livelihood by working as labourers in agriculture fields in border belts of R S Pura, Samba, Hiranagar and Jammu, while elderly people work as domestic helpers and children beg. (Outlookindia.india.com. 2007: Aug.30)

In a development seen as a setback to three lakh persons living in Jammu and Kashmir as "West Pakistan refugees," the Jammu and Kashmir Legislative Assembly on Thursday(8th feb.,2007) rejected an important bill giving them the right to become citizens of the State. Besides Indian citizenship, a Permanent Resident Certificate (PRC) is given to people whose ancestors have lived in the State for at least 10 years before May 14,1954. Only those with PRC can buy property, get employment in the State, vote in the J&K Legislative Assembly and are entitled to other privileges. During the 1947 Partition riots, a chunk of the population migrated from the present Sialkot district of Punjab province of Pakistan to Jammu and Kashmir. As the "West Pakistan refugees" had come from outside J&K territory, they were not given the PRC. The State Finance, Law and Parliamentary Minister, Tariq Hamid Karra, said: "We have full sympathies for West Pakistan refugees. But the matter has to be resolved in a consensual manner as it has many dimensions." He said the matter would be discussed at an appropriate forum and the decision would be taken on the basis of the collective will of the political parties. (Luv Puri)

#### **Demands of West Pakistani Refugees**

Main demands projected by the West Pakistan Refugees include:

1. Implementation of Wadhwa Committee report, no restriction on state subject for West Pakistan 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. West Pakistan Refugees ' Development Board should be constituted with all financial powers and liberal aid for their upliftment and betterment.
7. Job reservation for refugee youth in State/Central Administrative services.
8. Improvement in civic amenities in the camps where West Pakistan Refugees are putting up.
9. Inclusion of refugees in the dialogue on J&K at every level.

#### **FINDINGS:**

##### **About the field:**

Villages Ranjitpur (Nandpur) and Village Joian in Bishnah constituency under Distt. Jammu were in my universe of study. The first village of study is Ranjitpur, Tehsil Bishnah Distt. Jammu. It is a border town of Jammu district. It is 39 kilometres from Jammu and 22 kilometres from Bishnah. In this village total number of households is 60 i.e. approximately 3000 population. Hierarchically the village is dominated by Choudhary Caste (55%), followed by Scheduled Castes (20% bhagats, 10% Ramdasia) and rest OBCs. In this village population of West Pakistan Refugees is about 100 plus and comprises of almost all the castes and majority population is of scheduled castes.

Village Joian is one kilometre from the village Ranjitpur and is quite small in its composition, having only 20 households of scheduled caste (Bhagat community) and 97% people are West Pakistan Refugees.

Both the villages are on the border touching zero line frequently affected by ceasefire violations. All the men and women in these two villages jobless and mostly involve in labour works, reason being displacement. When asked about the impact of this unreasonable displacement on their social identity, they responded with anger that in this state only the West Pakistan refugees are denied citizenship rights and we people are identity less because of being no state subject, jobless, no political participation, no land allotment.

We people are suffering from all aspects whether social, political, or economic. There is no direction for the present as well as coming generations. The aged highlighted this issue very much about the future of young generations. These villages are run by the Panchayats and their representation is zero responded Captain Madan Lal, Naib Sarpanch of village Ranjitpur.

Multiple times the Government has promised them change, but since they migrated to India the two or three generations that have been born in Jammu & Kashmir state have also been denied Permanent Resident Certificates. In 2009 Parliamentary elections the Congress assured them state-subject hood but so far nothing has moved in this direction. These people who set out to make India their own home, today find themselves to be aliens in the country of their choice. In the largest democracy in the world, they have become politically invisible and non-existent.

Three generations of these refugees have been denied basic human rights like the right to employment, education, ownership of property and political participation. While refugees who settled in other parts of India received substantial rehabilitation packages and had opportunities to rise to power like Dr Manmohan Singh, the Prime Minister of India, these refugees on the other hand continue to live even today like 'slave people of a free country'.

The Wadhwa Committee report after studying the situation of West Pakistan refugees concluded that their demand was valid and deserves a sympathetic consideration. The Committee also directed the Deputy Commissioner to offer domicile certificates and ensure a special package for their upliftment. As they are mostly from the SC/ST social castes the Committee emphasized on the granting of Reserve Category Certificates applicable for recruitment to posts under the Central Governments or other State Governments and para-military forces.

So far the Report has not been acted on. The Government of J&K that ordered for a Committee to be set up has failed to follow up on its initiative leaving many questions unanswered. Questions as to whether the government's apathetic view on this situation is an indication that in the 21st century biases still exist, on the basis of caste and religion even in the highest echelons of society or is a 2/3rd majority in the Jammu & Kashmir Legislative Assembly so inconceivable even when 50 thousand families suffer daily for basic fundamental needs?

These West Pakistan Refugees are a community in the state of Jammu and Kashmir who migrated from Sialkot Distt. of Punjab Province in Pakistan. Unlike other migrants West Pakistan Refugee People are declared refugee in the state of Jammu & Kashmir and are denied basic fundamental rights on the basis of migration from a place which is now in Pakistan and according to article 6 of the Constitution of Jammu and Kashmir

Today's situation of the West Pakistan refugees in Jammu & Kashmir is one where their future still seems bleak. Left homeless by the State Government and with the indecisiveness of the Central Government to take corrective measures, they have been isolated.

#### **CONCLUSION**

In concluding remarks about the research of West Pakistan Refugees a community in the state of Jammu and Kashmir I must add that this community is in no man's land as they feel Identity less in the state even after 65 years of India's

Independence and no one has come forward to address their grievances. They say they are denied their basic fundamental rights in the state due to various political reasons which bar them from enjoying a life of an Indian citizen. There are a number of questions in the mind of these refugees of West Pakistan which remain unanswered and effort is to highlight the issue which is not in the limelight as it should have been. Still the fight for fundamental and Humanitarian rights is on and they need the support of we all. The problems of refugees and displaced persons have strong societal dimensions also. It is a proven fact that where governments dither, the societal pressure works. This pressure not only spurs the governments to act but also have the power and capacity to isolate the prophets of doom, so the study expects the same from the readers to act collectively for the genuine and touching cause.

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