

MIGRATION OF KASHMIRI PANDITS: AN APPRAISAL OF RELIEF AND REHABILITATION MEASURES

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Abstract

After the forced migration from the valley, the Kashmiri Pandits faced various problems in J&K and outside, and have been on cross roads economically, culturally, politically and in many other ways. The state as well as central governments must be accountable for their protection, rehabilitation, and humanitarian assistance to these internally displaced persons. The Government of Jammu and Kashmir has set up relief organization for Kashmiri migrants and to provide them immediate relief such as cash assistance, free ration, shelter, education, health, employment etc. The current study was an attempt to explore the Kashmiri Pandits' migration and mainly the government's policy of relief and protection to their security since their displacement in 1990.

Key words: Migration, Kashmiri Pandits, Relief and Jammu and Kashmir.

Introduction

Migration of Kashmiri Pandits in Jammu and Kashmir was a forcible movement rather than for jobs or any other justifiable cause. This as an internal migration and globally known was an outcome of socio-religious and political chaos. The community left their homes because of the civil and political disturbance, can be described as Refugees or displaced persons. The Kashmiri Pandits in Jammu and Kashmir originally were the dominant community in every life sphere. In one perspective, it claims majority in the

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region before Muslim rulers could enter and influence the region religiously. Before that, the Pandits stayed with other Hindu castes and neither migrated nor converted to any other religion. About 4 percent of the total population in the Valley was those of Pandits who claimed ethnically descendants of the Proto-Rigvedic people. The Kashmiri Pandits had their own distinct class highlighting their fair and tall physical and forward- looking, dynamic and vibrant personality due to their earlier educational accessibility. They had been also the inheritors of a rich cultural heritage, well known for various branches of learning i.e., Philosophy, dance, drama, painting, architecture and sculpture and their role in converting the land of scenic beauty into an intellectual centre namely Sharda peeth or Sarvajnanpeetha. The migration of Kashmiri Pandits has been a crucial issue for every successive government in the centre especially Narendra Modi. His Cabinet proposed 3,000 state government jobs and 6,000 transit accommodations in Kashmir for the rehabilitation of Kashmiri migrants at a cost of Rs 2,000 crore. It was an attempt to address the issues of 62,000 registered militancy, ethnic cleansing and forced migration affected minority. The proposal also included additional 3,000 state government jobs with financial aid for construction of transit accommodations in Valley.

Review of Literature

According to Haley (2018), the community was a numerically small yet historically advantaged cultural and religious community in the region. The state has identified 100 acres of land at eight places in the valley for their rehabilitation who migrated following outbreak of militancy, threats and ethnic cleansing (The Times of India, 2017). The resolution was adopted by the Union government to declare 19 January as “National Holocaust Day” and create a separate “homeland in Kashmir North-East of River Jhelum” (Mahajan, 2017). In the view of socio-political status of the state, the central government had provided the continuous financial support over and above the usual central plan (Munmun, 2017). According to various ministries, the government seemed committed to address the grievances of Kashmiri migrants with regard to relief and other basic amenities. The Ministers, while reviewing relief and rehabilitation issues, directed the process of renovation and lifting of Migrant flats at Jagti, Purkhoo, Nargotra, and various other places with special focus on sanitation, health and cleanliness in and around the

residential areas. The establishment of flats at Vessu and Sheikhpora and 48 flats at Sheikhpora were also part of the policy (Free press Kashmir, 2017). Despite the BJP-PDP alliance and its agreement on rehabilitation of Kashmiri Pandits in their common minimum programme, the Union Home Ministry's planned to set up "composite townships" for Kashmiri Pandits migrants in the Valley (Chowdhury (2016). Since the end of 1989, the state has been embroiled in a conflict following the outbreak of a movement for self-determination in Kashmir valley. Since then, the Kashmiri Pandits have come to constitute one of the most visible groups of internally displaced persons in the region. Approximately 39,000 registered migrant families, including 6,036 families who were accommodated in transit camps since the beginning of their exodus. These camp colonies were important centre of the migrant community until residents were relocated to a new township in the outskirts of the city in 2011 (Datta 2016). The Amnesty International India also welcomed the recent overtures made to rehabilitate families of an estimated 150,000 to 200,000 Kashmiri Pandits who were forced to leave the state between 1990 and 1994. According to Press Information Bureau, about 38,119 registered Kashmiri migrant families are residing in Jammu and about 19,338 registered Kashmiri migrant families are living in Delhi and besides Jammu and Delhi, about 1995 families are settled in other states. MHA officials put their number at 55,476 families of whom 34088 live in Jammu, 19,338 in 14 camps in Delhi and the remaining are in other states - Haryana (929), UP (500), Punjab (319), Maharashtra (208), MP (169), Chandigarh (114), Rajasthan (58), and Karnataka (38), as the neighboring Himachal hosts just 181 families. Those living in Jammu camps were in upgraded accommodations.²¹ According to Relief and Rehabilitation Department of Government of India, the number of migrant families was estimated around 57000.

Objectives of the Study

1. To explore the various Trends in Kashmiri Pandits' Migration and State's response and rehabilitation Policy towards their Welfare.

Methodology

The study provides the present status of the relief and rehabilitation of the Kashmiri migrants and mainly focused on the management of relief and rehabilitation of the

Kashmiri migrants. The present study was conducted at Jagtiand Muthi Camp, Jammu. It was both primary and secondary in nature. The primary data was collected through a comprehensive questionnaire. Due to high concentration of migrants in these places, a sample of 30 households from Jagti camp and 30 from Muthi camp in Jammu district were taken on random basis to complete the study. Most of the respondents that is 36(60 percent) were females and 24(40 percent) of the respondents were male. Age wise, most of the respondents that is 29(48.3 percent) were in the age group 41-50, 12(20 percent) of the respondents were in the age group 31-40, 8 (13.3 percent) of the respondents were in the age group 51-60, 6(10 percent) of the respondents were in the age group 61 & above and 5(8.4 percent) of the respondents were in the age group 21-30.

Table 1: Gender Distribution of Respondent's Gender

Gender wise Distribution of Respondents			
S. No	Gender	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
1	Male	24	40
2	Female	36	60
Total		60	100
Age Wise Distribution of the Respondents			
S. No	Age	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
1	21-30	5	8.4
2	31-40	12	20
3	41-50	29	48.3
4	51-60	8	13.3
5	61 & above	6	10
Total		60	100

Source: Field Survey

Migration of Kashmiri Pandits

Migration has become an unresolved issue for Kashmiri Pandits. A large concentration of Kashmiri Pandits had to live outside the Kashmir forcibly. The terms 'refugee' and 'internally displaced person' (IDP) have been tacitly accepted as a kind of proxy for vulnerability and such movement. Initially, the community witnessed selective killing of prominent people supporting the state's accession to Indian Union. Due to the failure of state apparatus to tackle the militancy and religious radicalization, majority of Kashmiris i.e. 250,000 people became victims of exodus.

The understanding of Kashmiri migration has been a historical and contextual study i.e.,

process of construction, de-construction of Kashmiriyat and genesis of secular nation Indian state and its units. The migration was preceded by selective killings that included lawyers, political leaders, academicians, Artists largely from the Kashmiri Pandits community who one or other way opposed the secessionist organizations. Tens of thousands Kashmiri Pandits (the Hindus of Kashmir) had left the Kashmir Valley during the Kashmir movement of 1989–1990. Though, the debate on their migration all over the country and abroad covered the issues viz. human rights, civil rights, security, psychological and emotional depression, suffering of women and children and their return to their native place. The resolution of the Kashmiri Migrants also depended on the peaceful atmosphere in the region and communal harmony in the country.

Almost 2.5 to 3 lakh Kashmiri people have been displaced from the valley. According to the data gathered from the Relief Commissioner's office in Jammu. There are highest number of registered displaced families in Jammu and Delhi. There are around 34,131 registered displaced families living in the Jammu region. 5,889 families are living in camps around Jammu region. 28,242 families are living outside the camps in Jammu region. 19,338 families are living in Delhi and rest in other parts of country. The total number of registered families living outside J&K is 21,684. The registered families in various parts of India could be also highlighted as follows:

Table 2: Details of State wise Registered Families

S. No	Name of State	Number of Families
1.	Haryana	929 families
2.	Punjab	319 families
3.	Uttar Pradesh	500 Families
4.	Madhya Pradesh	169 Families
5.	Maharashtra	208 Families
6.	Chandigarh	114 Families
7.	Rajasthan	58 Families
8.	Karnataka	38 Families
9.	Himachal Pradesh	11 Families

Source: Relief Commissioner's office in Jammu

The dislocation of Kashmiri Pandits from Kashmir has affected their socio-cultural, economic and political life in both negative as well as positive way. The loss of home, property and homeliness have been there but their mix up with other culture has also made them the most adaptive and vibrant community in the country. The displaced Kashmiri

people need to be recognized not simply as 'victims' but also agent for various changes and their identity assertion. Through their active participation, they have given a new meaning to their life in the current setting. The community had taken over various roles in keeping their movement alive.

Relief and Rehabilitation of Kashmiri Pandits

Rehabilitation and security are twin issues. Rehabilitation will automatically follow once violence, militancy and terrorism are completely buried and eliminated. Without restoring security, return and rehabilitation of these displaced persons is not feasible. The existing conditions since 1990, could not contribute to either relief or rehabilitation. In order to look after the welfare of such families who had to leave the valley in difficult conditions leaving both movable and immovable property behind and to meet their day-to-day requirements, the state government created the Relief Organization for looking after such families and to provide them immediate relief such as Cash Assistance, Free Ration, and Shelter etc.

The Relief Organization is headed by Relief and Rehabilitation Commissioner and is working under the administrative control of the Revenue Department. More than 30 field offices are functional in and around Jammu city for providing of necessary assistance to the migrants. During 1990 many relief camps in Jammu, Udhampur, Kathua, Reasi were established where more than 5500 families were accommodated and over a period time these camps have been shifted to Jammu District and presently Relief & Rehabilitation Department has five Camps with facility of Two Room Tenement (TRT). Rest of the families has either constructed their own houses and some 2500 families are still residing on rent as tenants.

Initially in the year 1990, the cash assistance ceiling was Rs 500/- per family which has been enhanced from time to time and present scale is as under:

Table 3: Relief in Cash Assistance and Ration

Cash Assistance	From Rs. 3250/- per soul subject to a ceiling of Rs. 13000/- per family per Month
Ration	9 Kg Rice per Soul per Month, 2 Kg Atta per Soul per Month, 1 Kg Sugar per Family per Month

Source: Relief & Rehabilitation Department, Jammu

The families registered under non-Relief category are not entitled for cash assistance and free ration. However, facilities have been made for providing of ration to such families against cash payment. At present there are about 60452 registered Kashmiri migrant families in the country. About 38,119 registered Kashmiri migrant families are residing in Jammu and about 19,338 registered Kashmiri migrant families are living in Delhi and besides Jammu and Delhi, about 1995 families are settled in other states. At present, the Government has been providing Cash relief of Rs. 1650/- per head per month (maximum Rs.6600/- per family per month) plus Dry ration (9 Kg. Rice, 2 Kg. Atta per person per month and 1 Kg. Sugar per family per month) to eligible 17,248 families living in Jammu. Expenditure in this respect (approx. Rs. 136 Crore per annum) is being reimbursed by Ministry of Home Affairs under Security Related Expenditure (Return & Rehabilitation) - SRE (R&R). The Government of NCT of Delhi is also providing cash relief of Rs. 1650/- per head per month (maximum Rs.6600/- per family per month) to eligible 3,385 families from their own budget. Other States are providing relief as per scales fixed by them from their own budget.

It has been the Government's stated Policy to provide various rehabilitation facilities to the Kashmiri migrants and to create an environment conducive enough to make them return to the Valley. Various Packages from time to time for the Kashmiri Migrants are as under:

Prime Minister's Package 2004

Under this, 5242 two room tenements have been constructed in Jammu at four locations i.e. Purkhoo, Muthi, Nagrota and Jagti and allotted to the migrants, who were living in various one room tenements, Govt. Buildings, Temples etc. in Jammu. Further, 200 flats have been constructed at Sheikhpora in Budgam district (Kashmir Valley) for the migrants who have joined the government jobs under the employment component.

Comprehensive Package

The Government's announcement of a Comprehensive Package amounting to Rs. 1618.40 Crore in 2008 for return and Rehabilitation of Kashmiri Migrants included detailed facilities for the migrants e.g. financial assistance for purchase/ construction of houses, repair/ renovation of damaged houses and dilapidated/ unused houses, construction of transit accommodation, Continuations of Cash relief to migrants, students scholarship, Employment, Assistance to the Agriculturists and the Horticulturist and Waiver of interest on unpaid loan etc. Further, 1474 state government jobs have been provided to the migrant youths and 505 Transit accommodations in Kashmir Valley to newly appointed migrant employees.¹⁷ The Budget of 2014-15, also carry 500/- Crore for the rehabilitation of Kashmiri Migrants.

Table 4: Assistance in terms of Relief provided by the Centre

S. no.	Year	Amount (per family) in Rs.
1	1990-1992	500
2	1993-1996	1000
3	1997-2003	1800
4	2004-2006	3000
5	2007 onwards	4000
6	March 2010	5000 (1000 per person subject to 8a ceiling of 5000 per family)
7	2013 onwards	6600 (1650 per souls up to 4 family members)

Source: Relief and Rehabilitation (M) Government of Jammu & Kashmir

The Government of Jammu and Kashmir, where Kashmiri Pandit migrants are living have provided the migrants with food rations and cash relief. Construction of more than 5000 two- room tenements for Kashmiri Pandits were staying in one-room shelters in camps in Jammu, this plan was completed by December 2010. More than 5000 sets of two-room tenements have been completed and allocated to Kashmiri Pandit migrants. The 3.20 shows that 12 (20 percent) of the respondents are satisfied with the rehabilitation facilities and 48 (80 percent) of the respondents are not satisfied with the rehabilitation facilities.

Jammu and Kashmir Act of 1997

The Jammu and Kashmir Immovable property (preservation, protection and restraint on distress sales) Act of 1997 specified that District Magistrate has taken the possession of immovable property of migrants for preservation, protection through vacating the unauthorized occupants. For return and rehabilitation of Pandits, the government

approved construction of 200 flats at Sheikhpora in Budgam district on an experimental basis at an expenditure of 22.90 crore. Consequently, 120 flats have been completed. Beside this, a package of 1,618.40 crore for return and rehabilitation was announced by the congress and the construction of 350 transit accommodation at Kulgam, Baramulla, Pulwama and Kupwara is under process.

Formation of Apex Advisory Committee

There has been an Apex Advisory Committee under the Chairmanship of Revenue Minister of state to overseethe implementation of the package. The shrines in Mattan and Kheer Bhavani have been developed into model clusters with temporary shelter and about 18 flats at Mattan and 100 one room tenements at Kheer Bhavani have been constructed besides repairing/renovating the shrine.¹⁸

Reservation of Job

The State reserved large numbers of posts for migrants and in this endeavor 3,000 have already been advertised and numbers of them have been appointed. As of January 2017, out of 6000 jobs, 1700 had already been filled and the selection process for the remaining 4300 was being completed.

The government at centre has taken various steps for the rehabilitation and welfare to cover the 62,000 Kashmiri registered migrant families out of which 40,000 were registered in Jammu, 20,000 in the national capital and remaining 2,000 in the rest of the country. In 2004, UPA Govt. provided Prime Minister's Package- 5242 two room tenements in Jammu at four locations including 200 flats at Sheikhpora in Budgam district of Kashmir Valley. In 2008, the same government announced a Comprehensive package of 1618.40 crores as a financial assistance for purchase or construction or repair of houses covering the 505 transit accommodations in Kashmir Valley, Cash relief to migrants, Students scholarship, Self –Employment and Assistance to the Agriculturists and the Horticulturist and Waiver of interest on unpaid loans. Though despite of package is being implemented by the Jammu and Kashmir government, only one family has returned to the Valley availing the benefit of Rs 7.5 lakh for construction of house. Under state government jobs 1,446 migrant youths were covered and 469 transit accommodations have been constructed in the Kashmir Valley and allotted to the newly appointed migrant employees

under the package. During the PDP-BJP coalition government, 723 kanals of land was identified in Kashmir for setting up 6000 transit accommodations for migrant Kashmiri Pandit with the tentative cost of Rs 374.65 crores for setting up these transit accommodations.

Table 5: Estimate of Relief extended to the migrated people from Kashmir

Parameters	Jammu	Delhi	Other states
Families (no's)	34305*	19338*	2603*
Families entitled for relief	13378	12685	2483
Relief package (cash)	Rs. 3000 per family permonth	Rs. 2400	Rs. 2400
Relief expenses perannum	Rs. 481.6 million	Rs. 365.3 million	Rs. 71.5 million
Ration expenditure per annum	Rs. 25.68 million perannum	Rs. 24.24 million	Rs. 4.68 million
Shelter**	Not included	NA	NA
Total relief extended per annum in all the locations	Rs. 973 million	NA	NA

Source: Ministry of Home Affairs Annual Report, 2002

According to Ministry of Home Affairs, Annual Report 2002-03, 27-29, the Government employees and pensioners numbering 21824 are not entitled for relief. For the sake of calculations these numbers have been divided among the three locations as per the weighted average of number of families living in each of the places. The prices tagged per unit of each item are roughly the market price. This relief package could not take into consideration the construction and maintenance of camps and the expenditures on related physical and social infrastructure including toilets, roads, shops, water, electricity, hospital, education and communications.

State Initiatives

The state in order to return or rehabilitate the migrated community to return into the Valley, has taken various financial assistance/relief and other state initiatives. Under the state's immovable property Act of 1997, every District Magistrate has taken the custody of migrant's immovable property. The unauthorized occupants of any usufruct of immovable property of migrants had to pay compensation for the period of unauthorized occupation to be determined by the District Magistrate. For the return and rehabilitation of Pandits, government of India approved construction of 200 flats at Sheikhpora in Budgam district on an experimental basis at an expenditure of 22.90 crore. Consequently,

120 flats have been completed. The construction of 350 transit accommodation at Kulgam, Baramulla, Pulwama and Kupwara is about to complete. In addition, a package of 1,618.40 crore for return and rehabilitation of Pandits under the congress government includes provision of assistance in terms of shelter, transit accommodation, cash relief, scholarship, and job, assistance to agriculturalists / horticulturists and waiver of interest on loans. Under the state government, the shrines in Mattan and Kheer Bhavani have been developed into model clusters with temporary shelter and about 18 flats at Mattan and 100 one room tenements at Kheer Bhavani. The State government under the scheme approved in 2008, has allotted flats to 31 Kashmiri Pandit families, who did not leave the valley during 1990s including 3000 additional State Government jobs to Kashmiri migrants and construction of 6000 transit accommodations in the Kashmir valley after 2015.

Life in the Camps

Culturally, they celebrate their festivals since Kashmiri traditions inherited by them at their native place. The most important festivals were Shivratri, Diwali, Holi, Baisakhi, Janamashtmi etc. Thus, local culture has its impact on these households because these households have relatively more interaction the locals than of camp household. The present living conditions of the population is an important indicator of the well-being of a community and can be assessed by studying the indicators such as demographic profile and civic amenities. An attempt has been made to investigate the socio-living conditions of the Kashmiri Pandits migrants in Jagti camp and Muthi camp areas.

Size of the Families: So far as nature of family is concerned, nuclear families were most a trend found under the study especially in Nagrota camp. Nuclear family was prevalent because of their economic and social compulsions. Though nuclear family has been an offshoot of modern civilization but structure of Kashmiri Pandits migrants was mostly economy oriented. Population influx and migration to cities were also contributing factors in reducing the family size.

Size of their Houses: The households were found to have two rooms, one kitchen and one bathroom in the camps i.e. in Jagti camp. Initially, these households were compelled to live in a single room in camp area with poor hygienic conditions and in difficult

circumstances. These households were not having good living conditions which adversely affected the education of the children especially those who have single room in their houses. Since all the activities are done in the same room, children were unable to concentrate on their studies. There was no privacy and the adequate space for family members.

Occupation: 15 (25 percent) belonged to the agricultural background, 24 (40 percent) of the respondents were self-employed or had their own business, 14 (23.3 percent) of the respondents are government employees and 7 (11.7 percent) were from private sector. The interaction highlighted 16 (25.7 percent) were moderately satisfied, 22 (37.6 percent) of the respondents were less satisfied against the rest unsatisfied. In terms of income also, only 23 (38.3 percent) of the respondents were satisfied with their present income.

Economic Problems faced by the migrants: With reference to economic problems in the camps, the data highlighted that 47 (78.3 percent) of the respondents expressed about facing various economic problems.

Electricity: Electricity cuts were commonly observed in camps. The usual duration of cuts ranges from six to eight hours per day particularly in hot summers and cold winters. Electricity cuts to more than 10-12 hours per day to force them to live without electricity. The poor availability of electricity was affecting the health and education of the children of the households. Domestic chores also suffer due to poor availability of electricity supply. During the summers, these households had to face various hardships due to long electricity cuts in the areas.

Supply of Drinking Water: The main source of water to these households in camp area was hand pumps. In other sources, the supply of water is not regular during summers. It was twice in a week, that too for one hour with no fix timing. The people have to spend and suffer a lot for getting water through departmental water tank supply.

Latrine Facilities: Health has been an important asset for the individual as well as community. Good health and Hygienic practice of person is shaped by the socio-cultural, economic physical condition of the environment. Availability of latrine facility was found available in majority of the cases. Though, at Muthi camp, some families also used to go outside due to non-availability of such facility.

Sanitation Facilities: As the lack of sanitation facility leads to breeding of a numbers of diseases thereby affecting health, health expenditure and performance of the households' members, almost all the households at Muthi camp as well as the Jagti camp had sanitation facilities.

Education: There was one government higher Secondary school in both the camps. Educational problems faced by migrants in the camps, were lack of various educational facilities. The issues also included lack of educational opportunities, nature of present education system and scholarships for their children by the government.

Health and Hospital: Both the camp areas were provided with one governmental hospital which provided all the medical facilities to the migrants. The available health facility might address the daily health issues but could not help in major problems. Thus, fifty-three i.e., 88.4 percent of the respondents highlighted resentment about medical facilities.

Suggestions

A multipronged approach needs to be undertaken to facilitate the Kashmiri migrants in the Jammu and outside. Creation of living spaces for the migrants should be considered. The decision of resettling them back to their original place through establishing the community-to-community faith must be taken on priority. The prospects of economic survival, growth and prosperity can be also important factors to achieve the goal. In addition, a people-to-people connect can be a significant way to build trust and sense of security among communities in society.

The lasting rehabilitation of the migrants would be possible only if there is an end to current insecure atmosphere and lack of peace and harmony in the Valley. In order to provide the relief and rehabilitation, the state needs to guarantee the socio-economic, physical and other securities to the minority.

The rehabilitation of Kashmiri migrants also needs to be seen and projected in the larger perspective of Indian secularism and multiculturalism, which received a setback at the hands of socio-religious and political divisive forces. The lack of socio-economic, political

and regional and cultural equality has been one of the main drawbacks and instigating and implicit force behind the trust destruction and end to peaceful coexistence of two communities in the society. The process of good governance to provide equality and justice in the valley can be fruitful in permanent relief and settlement of not only issue of Kashmiris Pandits but also the Kashmir Issue in general.

Conclusion

The state of Jammu and Kashmir has experienced the various types of migration which has taken place due to number of reasons. Sometime war and war like situation between India and her neighbours resulting into displacement in the border areas of the state, whereas in other time migration or displacement has been due to terrorism that existed in the state of Jammu and Kashmir. The growth of militancy in the Kashmir and its adjoining areas since 1988, religious fanaticism, and lack of peace and security led to politico-ethnic divide between the two major communities inhabiting the valley and displacement of innocent Kashmiri Minority from the region to other places. The Pandits, an integral part of Kashmiri Culture needs permanent relief and resettlement in terms of peace, security, and homeliness in their natural places. The current packages, aid and assistance may be only a temporary means to handle the crisis but not a permanent solution. No doubt, the government has been taking various steps for Kashmiri migrants. Government employees were adjusted in the respective departments and various jobs, scholarship and other facilities were being provided till time to each family in various camps and other places where these people were located. The facilities and relief included free ration, special packages for Jobs, education, water supply, hospitals, electricity etc. But these could not satisfy the community fully and expressed for restoration of the old trust and composite culture in the region through people to people contact, community to community relation based on favorable peaceful environment. The Kashmir issue could be resolved only when displaced Pandits return to the Valley preceded by clear implementation of policy on the Kashmir. Violence, coercion, and enemy approach has to be destabilized from each side send back these communities and eventually restoring the peace and development

in the region. The successive governments must shun the outdated tactics to address either Kashmiri Pandit migration or Kashmir issue.

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