

Abstract

Title: Life of West Pakistan Refugees at Jammu borders

This paper attempts to explore, analyze and understand the different state of affairs of West Pakistan Refugees (hereafter WPRs) settled in J&K after the partition of 1947. Despite having many other refugee segments, settled in Jammu and Kashmir, the WPR's becomes significant, in view of their relatively marginal status in the society being lower caste, fragile economical status and dangerous geographical location of their settlements, along Indo-Pakistan international border. The denial of Permanent Resident Certificate (PRC) or citizenship of Jammu and Kashmir to the WPR refugees for over seven decades, has kept them at lowest ebb in socio-economic ladder. Given this long exclusion as citizens, the WPRs have been forced to engage in agricultural jobs, in unorganised sector, in shops or as casual labourers in nearby factories. Apart from being socially and economically marginalized, the paper will also attempt to explore how many of them, have been relegated to living at margins of the society, settled along the border areas, which witness regular military conflicts and escalating tensions between India and Pakistan forces. The militarized borderland presents an exception place, where the fundamental rights of life, livelihood and movement are constantly undermined. The paper will explore the role of successive central and state governments as well as that of regional parties with regard to this exclusion, forcing the WPRs to live in precarious conditions for many decades. Despite their significant number, the regional parties ignored them because of a perceived fear of demographic change in sensitive state of Jammu and Kashmir. With the revocation of Article-370 and Article 35A-which grants special status and citizenship rights to Jammu and Kashmir-the condition of WPR is not going to change instantly. The inequity and weaknesses perpetuated by the 70 years of deprivation will take a long time to recover along with effect of bringing these marginalized WPR dalit families with whole of country's population.

Keywords: Refugees, Border, Rehabilitation Constitution, Citizenship, Government Policies