

Hindu Temples in Pakistan: During Partition and Aftermath

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Abstract

In the religious based partition of India in 1947, Pakistan was created with a Muslim majority by combining West Punjab, the North-West Frontier Province, Sindh and a while later, Baluchistan. The tragic outcome of this partition was the mass migration of around ten million people, with about a million being killed in communal violence. Sikhs and Hindus were targeted in West Punjab with Muslim suffering a backlash on the Indian side. During this tragedy, not only people, but religious establishments were also targeted. Many historical temples along with gurdwaras were attacked and demolished by the violent mob. With the migration of the Hindus in large numbers in East Punjab, many historical temples that once adorned West Punjab, now remained in a deserted state, among them only a few are presently functional. Following the partition, all the temples are administered by the Evacuee Trust Property Board (ETPB). These temples are located in Lahore, Montgomery, Muzaffargarh, Karachi, Multan, Shahpur, Sargodha, Chakwal, Rawalpindi and Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa. These temples are not only of religious importance but also evidences of many historical events. Thus, the golden heritage of Punjab is in neglected state. In this paper, an attempt has been made to study the status of the temples in Pakistan during the partition and aftermath.

I

Before the partition, communal violence broke out in the Punjab. The exodus of Hindu population from the North-west had started from winter of 1946 when the agitation of Pakistan was at its peak. The Muslim League tried to consolidate the hold of Muslims on land owned by Hindus and Sikhs as well as the vast property they owned. It started from Hazara district in North West Frontier Provinces (NWFP) where Hindus and Sikhs were only 5 percent of the population and later extended to Attock and Rawalpindi and the rest of the Punjab. Most Muslims wanted to grab Hindu property by force them to leave. That was the initial motive, which led to mass murder of Hindus and Sikhs in the Punjab that became Pakistan. In this violence, many innocent people lost their life. Many had to abandoned their villages and house to save their lives.

This is noteworthy that before the partition, in every partition plan, gurdwaras were discussed but this type of concern was not shown to the Hindu temples. This is the main reason that during and after partition, many temples were attacked and demolished in Pakistan. In the Multan district, in March 1947, nearly 200 non-Muslims were murdered and many temples situated outside the city like Jog Maya, Dev Shella and Maswan Nath were burnt and before burning the same, the idols of the same were dishonoured and broken into pieces. The temples of the Majha Kotla and Jamala, except Jain Temple in the city (which was still sealed and locked) were desecrated and the marbles of several buildings were removed. The huge building of temple Bhairon Nath situated on the Suraj Kund Road near the City Railway Station Multan was completely destroyed so much so that not a single brick was left.

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In the towns of Okara, Chichawatni, Arifwala and Pakpatan in the Montgomery district, non-Muslim were attacked continuously from 23rd August to 29th August 1947. It was discovered later on that more than 2 lakh of people had become converts, copies of the sacred Guru Granth Sahib and the Sacred Hindu scriptures were burnt by the violent mob in the presence of the non-Muslims in order to terrify them. Places of worship like the gurdwaras and temples were demolished and were occupied by the attackers for their personal uses. The temple of Baba Lalu Jas Rai at Divalpur and temple of Baba Jawala Singh at Noor Shah was also damaged and all the images were destroyed. Similarly, before partition, in the Sargodha *district*, every village had either a temple or gurdwara. In Khushab *tehsil* of Sargodha district, the violent crowd burnt all the religious places of Hindus and Sikhs. Even Pujaris of some temple were also murdered. At Kund village 11 miles from Khushab, violent mob burnt the temple there and murdered non-Muslims. The temple of village Nihang was raised to the ground and the temple and gurdwara of Kot Bhai Khan was demolished and encroachment had been made on them. The Gopal ji Mandir of village Kinjar in Muzaffargarh district was also burnt down during the disturbances. There might be many big and small temples in every district of the West Punjab. Unfortunately, we do not have information what happened to them during the partition. It seems that during the partition violence, many of them were attacked and demolished.

It is pertinent to note that after the partition, though many houses were still vacant in the cities of West Punjab and there was no need to occupying the religious institutions, but these religious establishments were occupied by the refugees for personal uses. In the town of Lahore, Hindus were in considerably numbers. The Arya Samaj, the Sanathan Dharam Sabha, the Dayal Singh Trust, the Ganga Ram Trust, and various other non-Muslim institutions had made Lahore their centre. After partition, these establishments were occupied and converted to personal and public buildings by the refugees.

It was reported by the District Liaison Officer that the temples in Sahiwal *tehsil*, in *Shahpur district* were used as latrine. It is also noticed that in the Muzaffargarh district, many religious places of worship were occupied by the refugees, who converted them as residential quarters. The big temple of Sargodha was occupied by the refugees and the most sacred place of worship was used a latrine. Same thing happened to the temples of Bhera, Sargodha, Bhalwal and Khushab, refugees occupied these religious establishments and used them as kitchens. Idols were also found demolished in certain temples in many districts.

The Hanuman Mandir of Muzaffargarh situated in the Chowk had been razed to the ground and the platform was being used by a refugee, to roast *kababs*, where thousands of non-Muslims used to bow their heads in reverence while passing through it. At the Arya Samaj Mandir, the Yug Shala had been converted and beef was being roasted there. The Shivala of Lachhu Lal was used as latrines. It is significant that Shivala was near the police line and opposite the quarter of Inspector of Police. The Dharamshala of the cremation grounds was being used as a shed of donkeys. The same was the condition of Dharamshala Puran Das at Leiah. The Gopal ji Mandir of village Kinjar (Muzaffargarh) was burnt down during the disturbances now used as latrines by the refugees' residing in the neighbourhood. Thus, if no sanctity attached to our places of the worship at the head quarters of the district, one can very well imagine their fate in the *tehsils*.

After the partition, many gurdwaras and temples were closed in the Rawalpindi district and still they are non-functional. Similarly, in the Sahiwal district, there is a doomed building, distinctively looking like a Gurdwara but droned with copper, triangular pennant, just like the saffron-coloured flags atop most Hindu temples, indicating that it would be a Hindu temple. This temple is also non-

functional. At Multan, ancient Prahadpuri Temple is situated and lies in ruins. There is lot of rubbish lying at these places. Almost all the temples were lying vacant but they were not properly managed by Evacuee Trust Property Board. Thus, one can well imagine the sanctity that is being attached to our places of worship by the Pakistan Government.

II

After the creation of Pakistan, every assurance was given to the minorities. Muhammad Ali Jinnah in the inauguration of the Pakistan Constituent Assembly, in his speech declared that 'in the new formed State of Pakistan, everyone is free to go temple, mosque and other place of worship'. He further mentions that 'in Pakistan, there will be no discrimination based on religion, caste and creed, all will be treated equal'. Later, in Pakistan a 'hostage theory' had been formulated. According to this theory, the Hindus being in minority in Pakistan were to be given a fair deal in Pakistan in order to ensure the protection of the Muslims in India. Khawaja Nazimuddin, the 2nd Prime Minister of Pakistan, declared that 'I do not agree that religion is a private affair of the individual nor do I agree that in the Islamic state every citizen has identical rights, irrespective his or her caste, creed or faith be'.

It was assumed that after the partition and migration, these types of things would settle down. But it was only a false hope, reality was different. In the Census of 1951 of Pakistan, it was noted that Pakistan had 1.6% Hindu population. After that it declined rapidly. Farahnaz Ispahani, media advisor of the president of Pakistan from 2008 to 2012, mentions that the population of Pakistan's religious minorities has declined from 23% in 1947 to around 3-4% of the population. According to the report of Human Rights Commission of Pakistan, just around 1,000 Hindu families fled to India in 2013.

It is very unfortunate that religious establishments were not only targeted during the partition violence, this type of things happens in Pakistan till now. Reema Abbasi, a journalist, noted that in the 1990s, around 1000 Hindu temples were demolished by the orthodox Islamists. After the Babri Masjid demolition in India, as reaction, Hindus in Pakistani faced violence. Five Hindu temples were attacked in Karachi and 25 temples across the southern province of Sind (where 95 percent Hindus of Pakistan lived) were set on fire. Temples were also attacked in Sukkur (a town in Sind) and in the western city of Quetta. Homes and Shops of Hindus were also attacked. Famous Jain Mandir near Jain Mandir Chowk at Lahore was demolished by the violent mob in 1992 and the government changed the name of Jain Mandir Chowk to Babri Masjid Chowk.

In 2006, a Krishna Mandir at Wachhowali in Rang Mahal in Lahore was demolished just only to pave the way for construction of a multi-storied commercial building. Later it was said that no temple existed at that site. In January 2014, a temple in Peshawar was attacked and its guard was killed. On 15 March 2014, a violent crowd damaged a Hindu temple and a *dharmashala* in Larkana, Sindh, just hearing the rumours that a Hindu boy had desecrated Holy Quran. In January 2017, a Hindu temple at Haripur District was demolished.

All Pakistan Hindu Rights Movement in its survey, conducted in 2014, pointed that out of 428 Hindu temples, 408 have been converted into government offices, schools, restaurants and stores after 1990, only around 20 are survived in Pakistan and these remain neglected by the Evacuee Trust Property Board, which controls these temples. On 25 March 2014, *The Express Tribune* of Pakistan reported that Kali Bari Hindu Temple in Dera Ismail Khan has been rented to a firm and this temple is converted into Taj Mehal Hotel. Similarly, a Hindu temple of Bannu district has been converted into a

sweet shop and other historic Asamai temple has been closed down in the Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa. In Kohat, Shiv Temple has been converted into a Government Primary School. Government Girls High School, Peshawar Cantonment is also stands on the remains of a historical Hindu temple. Similarly, Raam Kunde complex of temples at Said Pur Model village (Islamabad) has been converted to a picnic site and a second temple at Rawal Dam (Islamabad) has been closed. In Rawalpindi, a Hindu temple was demolished and reconstructed as a community centre, while in Chakwal, ten famous temples collectively known as Bhuwan are being used by the local Muslim community for commercial purposes. It is also alleged that with the help of the ETPB, Frontier Constabulary officials has occupied the Shamshan Ghaat in Dera Ismail Khan. Now, Hindu community of the area is unable to cremate their dead because of the unavailability of Shamshan Ghaat.

III

Some measures are taken by the government of Pakistan towards these religious establishments. Few temples are opened for the Hindu pilgrims of Pakistan and India. In Peshwar, Gor-Khatri temple, an eminent hub of Gorakhnath Jogi sect which had remained closed since partition, was reopened in 2011 under a special order by the Peshawar High Court to provide Hindus of the city a place of worship. Unfortunately, ever since the opening of this temple, it has been violently targeted more than three times. Katas Raj in the Chakwal district indicates that this region was once a venerated spot of Buddhist, Jains, Hindus and Sikhs. Katas Raj has a large Hindu temple complex dedicated to Lord Shiva, the Pandavas from the epic Mahabharata and other deities. It is famous for *Tilla Jogiyan*. On creation of Pakistan in 1947, with the *jogis* having left for India, the temples now stand abandoned, lost in the wilderness. Within the scattered remains of Katas Raj, exists a Shiva temple, the only temple in the complex that has been recently opened and is attracting members of the Hindu community. Unfortunately, not much attention has been paid to its restoration. After the partition, this place was in neglected state. In February 2017, 200 pilgrims from India visited the temple to participate in the Katas Raj Dham Festival.

Thus, from the above discussion, we can conclude that during the partition violence, many temples were attacked and demolished in Pakistan. We cannot blame any specific community for this destruction and bloodshed, everyone was responsible for it. Unfortunately, after the partition, no care was given to these religious establishments. Many temples and other religious establishments were occupied by the refugees. Occupation of heritage buildings by *refugees* has caused immense damage to these heritage buildings. Many temples were being used either as schools or as residential houses for the refugees. Little effort is done to restore and preserve these historical temples. Though it was responsibility of the Evacuee Trust Property Board (ETPB) to protect these temples after the partition, unfortunately, this agency has been failed to protect these monuments. The role of Evacuee Trust Property Board (ETPB) is also suspicious because still many temples are occupied by the refugees. Thus, there is need to draft a policy to preserve this heritage, otherwise we will lose this valuable evidence of the past. It is the responsibility of government of Pakistan and India to frame a policy to protect, preserve and restore historical buildings either secular or religious to save our glorious past.

Notes and References

1. Kirpal Singh (ed.), *Select Documents on Partition of Punjab - 1947: India and Pakistan, Punjab, Haryana and Himachal - India and Punjab - Pakistan*, Delhi: National Book Shop, 1991, pp. 650 & 656

2. Ibid., pp. 642, 649, 669, 674 & 680.
3. On the social plane, the Hindus were faring reasonably well. However, they were divided into a number of sects, such as Bairagis, Udasis, Sanyasis, Gorak Panthis, Dadu Panthis, Kabir Panthis, Kalu Panthis, Ram Dasias, Arya Samajists and Sanathan Dharmis. Economically the Hindus were better off. In upper Punjab, though they were in minority, they dominated the economic life in urban areas. They held sway over the realms of industry, trade and commerce. More than 75 percent of the commerce of the town was in the hands of non-Muslims. The banks, the commercial institutions, insurance companies and industrial concerns were in the hands of non-Muslims. In Lahore, the instance, the Hindus owned 60 percent of the registered factories and paid eight as such sales tax as the Muslim traders. The majority of the banks, shops and commercial institutions belonged to them throughout Punjab. The Hindus owned substantial amount of land in the eastern Punjab. The educational interests to non-Muslims preponderate over the Muslims in the town. The non Muslims have built costly and palatial buildings. The urban property tax, the income tax and other taxes paid by the non-Muslims are in excess of the Muslims: Amarjit Singh, *Punjab Divided: Politics of the Muslim League and Partition 1935-1947*, New Delhi: Kanishka Publishers, 2001, p. 12.
4. Kirpal Singh (ed.), *Select Documents on Partition of Punjab*, p. 333.
5. Ibid., pp. 691, 696 & 699.
6. Ibid., p. 670.
7. Hindu Satsang Sabha was written on its dome in Hindi but at its entrance a plaque engraved in Gurmukhi, had the Sikh invocation 'Ik Onkar Satgur Parshad' with the names of donors inscribed: Amardeep Singh, *Lost Heritage: The Sikh Legacy in Pakistan*, ed. Monica Arora, New Delhi: Himalayan Press, 2016, pp. 144, 151-52 & 199.
8. Tai Yong Tan and Gyanesh Kudaisya, *The Aftermath of Partition in South Asia*, London: Routledge, 2000, pp. 44-45.
9. Vazira Fazila-Yacoobali Zamindar, *The Long Partition and the Making of Modern South Asia: Refugees, Boundaries, Histories*, Columbia University Press, 2010, p. 72. See also, Venkat Dhulipala, *Creating a New Medina: State Power, Islam, and the Quest for Pakistan in Late Colonial North India*, Cambridge University Press, 2015, p. 19.
10. Ali Usman Qasmi, *The Ahmadis and the Politics of Religious Exclusion in Pakistan*, London: Anthem Press, 2015, p. 149.
11. 'While East Pakistan (modern Bangladesh) had 22.05% Hindus. By 1997, the percentage of Hindus remained stable at 1.6% in Pakistan, while it dropped to 10.2% in Bangladesh': <https://www.livemint.com/Politics/F4r3Tmf51k8Sm6DGjPRaEN/Slow-genocide-of-minorities-in-Pakistan-Farahnaz-Ispahani.html>
12. '5,000 Hindus migrating to India every year', *Dawn (Pakistan)*, 13 May 2014.
13. 'Hindus often live in fear, have to hide their identity, adopt Muslim names and mannerisms to survive and avoid persecution while hundreds of temples have been vandalized or demolished', *Friday Times*, Oct 2014.
14. 'Muslims attacked more than 30 Hindu temples across Pakistan today, and the Government of

- this overwhelmingly Muslim nation closed offices and schools for a day to protest the destruction of a mosque in India', *New York Times*, 08 December 1992.
15. ", *Scroll.in*, 9 Aug 2015. This temple was built in the early half of the 20th century and was an important place for the Jains. After the partition, when Jains left Lahore, still the temple remained city's most important landmarks.
 16. 'Wachhowali, is a narrow commercial and residential lane which reached through Sooha Bazar and Chhatta Bazaar, is to Lahore what Katas is to Pakistan because of the presence of several Hindu temples, which are managed and maintained by the EPTB', *Dawn (Pakistan)*, 28 May 2006.
 17. 'Hindu temple guard gunned down in Peshawar', *Dawn (Pakistan)*, 26 January 2014.
 18. 'Hindu temple set on fire in Pakistan over blasphemy', *Reuters*, 16 March 2014; see also, *Firstpost*, 15 March 2014
 19. 'Minority rights: Another Hindu temple demolished', *The Express Tribune (Pakistan)*, 21 January 2017.
 20. '95 percent of religious establishments of Hindus are converted to commercial use', *The Express Tribune (Pakistan)*, 25 March 2014.
 21. During foreign invasions of Peshwar, Gor-Khatri was destroyed numerous times. When Hari Singh Nalwa took over Peshawar, he had the complex re-built: Amardeep Singh, *Lost Heritage: The Sikh Legacy in Pakistan*, p. 218.
 22. Guru Nanak had stopped at this place while on his way to *Tilla Jogiyana*, where he met the *jogis*. In remembrance of Guru Nanak Dev ji, a gurdwara Chowa Guru Nanak was built amongst other temples at *Tilla Jogiyana*. Guru Nanak had stopped at this place while on his way to *Tilla Jogiyana*, where he met the *jogis*. In remembrance of Guru Nanak Dev ji, a Gurdwara Chowa Guru Nanak was built amongst other temples at *Tilla Jogiyana*. In the tragic story of 'Heer-Ranjha' when the star-crossed lovers were unable to unite, disillusioned with life, Ranjha headed to *Tilla Jogiyana* at Rohtas Fort. Here in the company of the Kanphatta Jogis, he renounced worldly pursuit and adopted the cult's practice which included piercing of ears: Amardeep Singh, *Lost Heritage: The Sikh Legacy in Pakistan*, ed. Monica Arora, New Delhi: Himalayan Press, 2016, pp. 287-88 & 295-97.