

# Armed Conflicts in J&K and Its Impact on Society: A Case Study of Kashmir Valley

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**Abstract-** Kashmir's conflict with India started immediately after the partition of the country in 1947. The protest movements / peaceful struggle for right to Self Determination continued till 1988-89. Thereafter resistance to Indian rule in Kashmir was taken up by some Muslims of the state who very often resorted to violent means to achieve their objective of Independence. By and large people supported the cause. In 1990s several mass rallies were conducted which led to the imposition of president's rule. The government of India brought around 700,000 military and paramilitary troops to suppress the movement in Kashmir. This all resulted in frequent curfews, crackdowns, search operations, arrest, torture, custodial killings, and disappearances of youth, firing, shelling and the implementation of draconian laws like Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA), Prevention of Terrorist Activities (POTA) and Public Safety Act (PSA) which in turn gave birth to various kinds of human rights violations in Kashmir.

**Index Terms-** Kashmir, Conflict, Military, Militant, Families, Compulsions, Employment.

## I. INTRODUCTION

The armed conflict in Kashmir valley led killing and displacement of people, destruction of infrastructure, and crumbling of support systems, etc. The general consequences of armed conflict in Kashmir (which started in 1947)<sup>i</sup> are military harassment, deaths, human rights violation,<sup>ii</sup> loss of security, disrupted schooling, displacements and the like. Every section in the society was affected badly. The impact has put into challenge the major consequences for survival, development, health and overall well being. In this paper we will try to discuss the major problem faced by people like social disruption, loss of service access, impoverishment, civil and political violations, transformation in roles and responsibilities and vulnerability to children.

## II. IMPACT

Since 1989 when armed conflict started in the valley, property worth hundreds of thousands was raised to the ground or else destroyed. It led to social disorder, disorganization, educational backwardness, physical and mental health deterioration, mass psychological depression, mass humiliation and extreme helplessness and the degenerated cultural aggression.<sup>iii</sup> The conflict had resulted in loss of a significant number of people. According to conservative official estimates nearly 40,000 people have been killed since 1989, however

unofficial estimates put the figure around 80,000 (half of them were civilians).<sup>iv</sup> The death to family member has created a challenge to the family as a whole, socially as well as economically.<sup>v</sup> Most alarming aspect of the conflict is that prominent victims of violence during the last two decades were the youth. They at once become the targets, perpetrators as well as survivors of conflict.<sup>vi</sup> While their childhood was lost in the incidents of armed conflict, they could not be socialized in proper cultural and religious ethos of Kashmir.<sup>vii</sup>

During the last two decades the Kashmir society has scattered, leaving children either orphaned or as household heads.<sup>viii</sup> The loss of a family member generated a number of problems which has to be reflected practically in a number of ways in day to day life of the leftovers. More commonly the widows has to be psychology under stress and economically dependent on the labour of their children.<sup>ix</sup>

Conflict destroys the safe environment provided by a house and a family, leads to inadequate nutrition, education and inemployment.<sup>x</sup> The civic services became inaccessible. Education, civic amenities and health care,<sup>xi</sup> etc. remained there in name. As many as 891 schools have been destroyed since 1989 in Kashmir during the course of military confrontation.<sup>xii</sup> Strikes, security threats, bomb blasts, arrest of teachers and absenteeism have left the educational performance and Health care facilities in the Valley paralyzed<sup>xiii</sup> on the one hand and on the other hand the number of patients is increasing constantly. A large percentage of population is on medication these days. In this conflict-ridden society, some dreaded disease could not be stopped to emerge with dangerous implications. At average every family on an average the conflict has rendered family members as patients of cardio logical, neurological, oncological, cancer related and other dreaded diseases.<sup>xiv</sup> However, the most common disorder developed as a consequence of the conflict is of psychological nature. The number of patients who visited Srinagar's only psychiatric hospital increased from 6 per day in 1990 to 250-300 in 2000 per day. The total number of patients rose from 1,760 in 1990 to 18,000 in 1994, to over 50,000 in 2003.<sup>xv</sup> And in 2006 the number patients had increased to 82000.<sup>xvi</sup>

The armed conflict in the Kashmir valley has resulted in the impoverishment of the Kashmiri society through the channels of reduction of the capital, income and employment, physical destruction of agricultural resources, reduced investment and mass displacement of human resources.<sup>xvii</sup> In addition to falling within "grey zone", death, conscription, injury, disappearance, curfew and other mobility restrictions have added fuel to the fire. Perhaps the real story of the deaths and destruction is well expressed in the following couplet composed by a Kashmiri poet.<sup>xviii</sup>

"I cannot drink water  
It is mingled with the blood of young men who have died up in  
the mountains.  
I cannot look at the sky; It is no longer blue; but painted red.  
I cannot listen to the roar of the gushing stream  
It reminds me of a wailing mother next to the bullet-ridden body  
of her only son.  
I cannot listen to the thunder of the clouds It reminds me of a  
bomb blast.  
I feel the green of my garden has faded Perhaps it too mourns.  
I feel the sparrow and cuckoo are silent Perhaps they too are  
sad."

The impoverished families have a direct impact on their children in a number of ways such as compelling young kids to work, at the expense of their schooling, under-nourishment and malnutrition.<sup>xix</sup> On the other side the loss of revenue from tourism due to the two decade long armed conflict also added in impoverishment of people in the valley.<sup>xx</sup> Thus result in the overall backwardness of the valley and particularly of those families who are the victims of the two decade long conflict in Kashmir.

Yet another impact of the conflict is the human rights violations. The excessive presence of security forces on the one side and militants on the other side has resulted in human rights violations in Kashmir. Movement of both of these is characterized by the strain of life under constant vigilance,

restrictions of movement, frequent harassment and intimidations leading to direct violation of civil and political rights. Meanwhile, the check points, surveillance operations, interrogations, search of homes and at places of work, restrictions on the press and other activities all have affected normal interactions and community life in Kashmir.

### III. CONCLUSION

In the last two decades of conflict, Kashmir has witnessed transformation of families and communities for survival, like children were employed, very often on exploitative basis and at hazardous occupations,<sup>xxi</sup> potential of youth was not properly cultivated for a kind of psychological fear was set permanently in their minds, and the net result was therefore the wastage of human resources. Since 1989 Kashmiris have lost in both men as well as material, and needed to turn to their children as an economic resource instead of letting them on recreation and play and education.<sup>xxii</sup>

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- <sup>i</sup> "Jammu and Kashmir", *Conciliation Resources: Working together for Peace*, <http://www.c-r.org/our-work/jammu-and-kashmir?gclid=CO-wh6u647QCFQob6wodRRAAew>
- <sup>ii</sup> According to [officially estimates](#) 6673 civilians were killed by militants by 1998; [http://www.kashmirlibrary.org/kashmir\\_timeline/kashmir\\_chapters/human-rights.shtml](http://www.kashmirlibrary.org/kashmir_timeline/kashmir_chapters/human-rights.shtml)
- <sup>iii</sup> Asima Hassan, "The Cost of Conflict", *Greater Kashmir*, dated 27 July 2011, available online at <http://www.greaterkashmir.com/news/2011/Jul/27/the-cost-of-conflict-12.asp>
- <sup>iv</sup> <http://www.kashmirlibrary.org/>
- <sup>v</sup> Wilson, Lawrence (2011), "*the family unit and its importance*", <http://www.drlwilson.com/ARTICLES/FAMILIES.htm>
- <sup>vi</sup> Asima Hassan, "The Cost of Conflict", *Greater Kashmir*, dated 27 July 2011, available online at <http://www.greaterkashmir.com/news/2011/Jul/27/the-cost-of-conflict-12.asp>
- <sup>vii</sup> Asima Hassan, "The Cost of Conflict", *Greater Kashmir*, dated 27 July 2011, available online at <http://www.greaterkashmir.com/news/2011/Jul/27/the-cost-of-conflict-12.asp>
- <sup>viii</sup> <http://www.kashmirlibrary.org/>
- <sup>ix</sup> Dabla, B. A. (2010). *A Sociological Study of Widows and Orphans in Kashmir*. Srinagar: Jay Kay Publishers.
- <sup>x</sup> During conflict, youth health risks increase, especially for female youth. Anxiety and depression, extreme stress, high-risk drug use and suicide are disturbing aspects of youth health that are particularly prevalent in societies experiencing conflict; Asima Hassan, "The Cost of Conflict", *Greater Kashmir*, dated 27 July 2011, available online at <http://www.greaterkashmir.com/news/2011/Jul/27/the-cost-of-conflict-12.asp>
- <sup>xi</sup> Since 1989 Kashmir witnessed a complete disruption of daily social life and infrastructure. The accompanying traumas have devastating consequences on a whole lot of people. The health impact of conflict situation cannot be seen only the lines of absolute number of casualties and trauma-related disorders among survivors, but also on the individual and at collective levels. Psychological consequences associated with the conflicts include sleeplessness, psychological fear, nervousness, anger, aggressiveness, depression, flashbacks, alcohol and other substance abuse, suicide, and domestic and sexual violence; Asima Hassan, "The Cost of Conflict", *Greater Kashmir*, dated 27 July 2011, available online at <http://www.greaterkashmir.com/news/2011/Jul/27/the-cost-of-conflict-12.asp>
- <sup>xii</sup> Bose, *op.cit.*,
- <sup>xiii</sup> The mobilization of health care professionals remained restricted adding more to inaccessibility of health services; Madhosh .A.G. 1996, *The Present Turmoil and Plight of Children in Kashmir*, Kashmir University Faculty of Education Sponsored by the Indian Ministry of Welfare.
- <sup>xiv</sup> Asima Hassan, "The Cost of Conflict", *Greater Kashmir*, dated 27 July 2011, available online at <http://www.greaterkashmir.com/news/2011/Jul/27/the-cost-of-conflict-12.asp>
- <sup>xv</sup> "Impact of armed conflict on reproductive health of women in Kashmir-India", available online at <http://iussp2009.princeton.edu/papers/91185>
- <sup>xvi</sup> Asima Hassan, "The Cost of Conflict", *Greater Kashmir*, dated 27 July 2011, available online at <http://www.greaterkashmir.com/news/2011/Jul/27/the-cost-of-conflict-12.asp>
- <sup>xvii</sup> Jo Boyden, Jo de Berry, Thomas Feeny, & Jason Hart PhD 2002. *Children Affected by Armed Conflict in South Asia: International Development Centre University of Oxford*.
- <sup>xviii</sup> [http://www.kashmirlibrary.org/kashmir\\_timeline/Introduction.shtml](http://www.kashmirlibrary.org/kashmir_timeline/Introduction.shtml)
- <sup>xix</sup> Due to inability of their parents to pay for the basic necessities of a school education, such as uniform and writing materials; and to a child's withdrawal from religious, social and cultural events, including festivals, for which some offering is necessary; Ibid

- <sup>xx</sup> In Kashmir, the Hanji community has been particularly affected by the loss of revenue from tourism due to the conflict. Increasing numbers of men and boys from this community are becoming a migrant laborer which entails family separation.
- <sup>xxi</sup> Save the Children Fund UK, North West India Zone, 2000 A Pilot Study About the Situation of Child Workers Among the Hanjis
- <sup>xxii</sup> The importance of recreation to children was acknowledged in Art 31 of the Convention on Rights of Children (CRC). Thus, in Kashmir there is a direct violation of art 31 of CRC.