

Plight of Divided Families in Jammu and Kashmir

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The paper would help understand the Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) conflict in its humane dimension that transcends inter-State conflict. The impact of forced division of the families in the region due to India-Pakistan conflict is the basic issue that would be addressed in due course of analysis. The research would be located in J&K that witnessed the separation of families in 1947, 1965 and 1971 India-Pakistan wars. The impact of the division on the group is the subject of special focus in the study. The plight that division brought for the group as also the much debated agency that came laden with tragedy too would be looked into. The victimization as well as attempts to survive despite all odds with a ray of hope to reunite with the separated members of their families would constitute important part of the paper.

The widest possible protection and assistance should be accorded to the family, which is the natural and fundamental group unit of society, says Article 10(1) of International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. Yet, families living on either side of the Line of Control (LOC) have been denied the right to reunite since the division of J&K in 1947. For the people of J&K the concept of divided families is a harsh reality since late 1940s. The territorial division based on ceasefire line, later converted into LOC, separated villages and even members of the same family from each other. Consequently thousands of the families in the border areas of J&K got divided on almost impenetrable basis. Despite sharing religious, ethnic, emotional, linguistic and cultural ties these people have not been able to meet each other thereafter. The opening of Srinagar-Muzaffarabad road in April 2005 is considered the first step in providing the divided families opportunity to meet each other. However, there are more divided families in the hilly belt of Jammu and Ladakh regions. Their distress remains hostage to the hostility between the two neighbouring States.

Though every one has suffered in this impromptu segregation, the worst case is of those women who got separated from their husbands. The separation has wide ranging implications for them ranging from social to cultural and economic to emotional. In fact, this one moment brought irreparable changes in their lives. Amidst this commonality of misery, the sufferings also differ from case to case. While for many there is still hope that they may get reunited with husbands in near future with whom they are in contact only through occasional letters. Many others have died with this hope. Some others were divorced by their husbands. Many of them married again and some of them continue to remain single.