

CONFLICT IN KASHMIR: THE GENDER DIMENSION

ABSTRACT

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Generally, women's experiences of armed conflict are multiple and may be classified as- vulnerable victims and associated with it is their experiences as survivors, peace-builders, and perpetrators of conflict. However, in all these contexts the effect is both negative as well as positive. Conflict may have grave implications for women while at the same time it may create new opportunities for them.

It is in the light of above discussion the paper will aim at exploring various roles played by women in Kashmir conflict. Women in Kashmir have been continuously the victims of physical/psychological, cultural as well as economic violence. The problems that they have to face on almost daily basis range from eve teasing to rape, body searches to cordon searches, getting injured to being killed in the militancy-related violence. Interestingly, women in Kashmir are victims of violence from both sides: security forces as also the militants. They are caught amidst two guns with no neutral space. Yet, they have shown resistance, by, for instance, refusing to veil. They have emerged as survivors by not only continuing with their lives but also providing support to their families in both economic and emotional terms. The setting up of the Association of the Parents of Disappeared Persons (APDP) in 1994 by Parveena Ahangar is arguably an important initiative on the part of women towards bringing peace in Kashmir. In another role, the women in Kashmir have been at the forefront in the initial period of militancy when there was a mass uprising. Besides, they have also been active in supporting the militant movement. The all-women fundamentalist group Dukhtaran-e-Millat is an example in this context. Notwithstanding, it is quite interesting to note that women have remained almost invisible as far as the separatist politics is concerned. Their 'contribution' to the militancy has though not remained unnoticed due to media but the same has remained unrecognized. Even, in the peace processes, initiated from time to time, the gender dimension has remained invisible. Thus, the whole saga of women is that of getting 'used' and 'abused' amidst conflict led violence.