

# **Role of Women in Kashmir Freedom Movement from 1989-2018**



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SEPTEMBER, 2019

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I certify that this research work titled "*Role of Women in Kashmir Freedom Movement from 1989-2018*" is my own work. The work has not been presented elsewhere for assessment. The material that has been used from other sources, it has been properly acknowledged / referred.

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**To,**

**The living Martyrs: Survivors of Rape**

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**Here we have the killed, the tortured, the jailed, the raped, the widowed, the orphaned and the very new to the world- the 'blinded'.**

**Welcome to Kashmir!**

**Shifa - A female Kashmiri student and a poetess.**

## **Abstract:**

The aim of this study is to explore different roles of women during an armed conflict. It has been observed by scholars of peace and conflict studies that during the time of armed conflict, when male member of the society took arms and fight against the oppressor, it is the women who reaps the bitter crop of conflict in terms of sexual exploitation, daily harassment, torture and abuse from the hands of oppressor. Women are considered as national pride for every nation existing on the face of earth, therefore during the armed conflict oppressor knowingly rape women of opponent group in order to dishonour the whole community and to keep women away from plying the role of courier and informer and sometime carrier of weapons from one place to another. During armed conflict women's role shift from traditional to non-traditional, meaning they have to embrace the role of men in their absence; though few scholars disagree and argue that women role do not change even in the time of conflict they strengthen their argument by saying that when husbands, sons, fathers and brothers, are dead, women work as bread earners and beside this they never forget to play the role of mother, sister and daughter at home. The role of women in freedom movement of Kashmir since 1989 has many layers needed to be unfold. The three-decade old resistance movement against Indian oppressions in Kashmir has now produced an army of widows and half-widows, victims of rape, torture and pellet guns. Men and women face sexual harassment and torture on daily basis and while going out for jobs and education in morning, these men and women are not sure for their safe return in the evening. The purpose of this research is to explore, how did these Kashmiri women managed to play their roles successfully under the constant fear of Indian brutalities and as a result of their roles how did they impacted the ongoing Kashmir's freedom movement.

# Chapter-1

## 1. Introduction:

Armed freedom struggles reshape entire structure of the society and destroy the very fabric of it. They make the present worse and mutilate the dreams of future generations (Qayoom, 2014). The Upsala university conflict data program defines armed conflict in the following words: “An armed conflict is a contested incompatibility that concerns government and/or territory where the use of armed force between two parties, of which at least one is the government of a state, results in at least 25 battle-related deaths in one calendar year” (Manchanda,2000, p. 113). The prevalent modern conflicts and freedom struggles or movements have left unbearable scars on each and every segment of the effected societies (Qayoom, 2014). During the time of conflict men participate in fighting and women lose their loved ones for instance, husbands, fathers, brothers and sons and with the loss of these bread earners, they also face emotional trauma and with all these things they enter into their new role of household heads, in addition to this, children also face the wrath and intensity of the conflict (Qutab, 2012). The ongoing conflict in Kashmir has left behind a large number of widows whose husbands have been killed by either Indian paramilitary forces or unknown gun men. It is estimated that there are about 20,000 widows of armed conflict (Kazi, 2009) and half-widows is said to be more than 15,000 (Butalia, 2002). According to a study conducted by Save the Children UK, the number of orphans in Kashmir is 214,000; about 37 percent were orphaned during the armed conflict. (Shafi, 2014) claims that orphanages mushroomed in India-administered Kashmir after the armed struggle that began in 1989, he further narrates that Gulshan-e-Banaat the largest all-girls orphanage in Kashmir valley is home to 114 girls. However, this study is specific to the role of women in Kashmir’s freedom struggle. It has been observed that violent conflicts cause the growth of different emotional and mental

complications with in the different segments of society facing the conflict directly or indirectly (Lindsey, 2001). During armed conflict groups and individuals are affected in such a way that destroys the unity and harmony of the social networks. Families get deprive from their heads, the living of common man is threatened, the security and human rights of individuals and societies are not conserved. With respect to this, there are growing number of proofs that women and men both are actively involved in fighting during conflict. Women fighters have been part of fighting forces in 55 countries and are involved in armed conflicts in 38 countries, all of them internal conflicts during the last one decade (Bouta, 2005).

### **1.1 Framing the role of Women in Kashmir freedom Movement**

An in-depth analysis regarding the role of women in different freedom movements around the globe has been made in literature review section. This analysis gives a clear picture of women contribution alongside with their male counterparts and as a consequence of their participation, they faced death, torture, rape and mental trauma. While comparing the role of women in these freedom struggles, an important aspect emerged that with different cultures and languages and a common religion; Kashmir's freedom struggle has many similarities with Palestinian freedom struggle, both facing occupying forces who have deprived them from their land and a desire to live independently, beside this the patriarchal structure of Muslim society initially forbade both Palestinian and Kashmiri women to participate directly into the conflict, however the protracted nature of both of these conflicts changed societal attitude and women participated on both political and social fronts of the conflict (Osuri , 2016).

A segment of this research deals with women peace and security and historically there are various examples where women played an active role for international peace and security but with beginning of 1990s the issue of women peace and security got more importance and became more visible on international agenda (Azizah, 2015). It was not easy for women folk to be recognized and influence international issues, since they had made strong demands for their participation in peace and security for decades (Coomaraswamy, 2015). During the first world war in 1915, one of the most important moment saw the light of the day; when 1300 hundred women from fighting and non-fighting countries met at The Hague to demand an end to the war that was then destroying Europe. The strong women right's movement suffragist and their women decided not line up with their governments in supporting the war (McCarthy, 2015). The women meeting at Hague gave birth to Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) and since then it has played a central role in defending women's participation in International affairs and even in the approval of UNSCR 1325 it self (Confortini, 2012).

The United Nations Security Council in October 2000 adopted resolution 1325 on women peace and security (WPS). The adoption of this resolution set a turning point in the inclusion of women and the gender perspective in peacebuilding efforts and initiated the WPS agenda (Ramšak, 2015). The resolution 1325 emphasizes the role of women in peacebuilding and in prevention of conflicts. It further insists that women must be included in decision making process and peace keeping missions. The resolution also underlined the protection of women and girls in conflict zones (Anderlini, 2010). Hence, this resolution recognized the gender-specific impact of violent conflicts on women and girls and their role in peacebuilding, considering it on a larger scale ( Villellas, 2011).

It is very unfortunate that women are still missing from peace processes and decision-making areas in many parts of the world including Kashmir (Aziz, 2019). The gender-based violence within armed conflict is a harsh reality that does not receive much international attention. The credit of efforts leading to the adoption of UNSCR 1325 goes to women organizations ( IASC, 2005).

It is the fact that Kashmiri women have been very much active in the resistance movement in their own way and have shown their agency in various ways, they are not central to the peace process. Rekha Chowdary explains that there is almost no presence of women in different stages of peace processes and peace building, for instance; dialogues and negotiations. She further argues that the major reason for the absence of women from the peace process is their absence from leadership position when it comes to mainstream politics or the separatist politics, women are not able to reach positions of significance. Although women have been loyal supporters of the resistance politics, there are not many women visible in the leadership position. Considering from that point of view, the resistance leadership seems to be all male-dominated. There are exceptional cases of women leaders like Asiya Andrabi or Zamarud Habib who have some presence in the separatist politics but generally there are no women, not to mention the higher leadership position but also in the lower or middle level of separatist cadre (Chowdary & Ubbott, 2016). It is necessary to explain at this point about what is the meaning of term 'empowerment' because empowerment is very much linked to the women peace and security in Kashmir. According to Sen and Batliwala (2000) 'Empowerment is the process by which the powerless gain greater control over the circumstances of their lives. It includes both control over resources and over Ideology. Empowerment literally means 'to invest with power, and in the context of women's empowerment the term has come to denote women's increased control over their own lives, bodies and environment (G & S, 2000). During the discussion of women's empowerment, emphasis is often

placed on women's decision-making roles, their economic self-reliance, and their legal rights to equal treatment inheritance and protection against all forms of discrimination [Germaine and KYTE 1995; United Nations 1995] in addition to the elimination of barriers to their access of resources such as education and information. A recently published report “Women and Men” in India-2017 reveals that women in Jammu and Kashmir constitute a meagre 19.11% of the state’s overall workforce. It is pertinent to mention here that the state’s Economic Survey report of 2016 tells a different story of the highest unemployment rate of 24.5 percent in the age group of 18-29 years, which is the highest throughout India (MALIK, 2019).

Since 1989, Kashmir has been governed under the tight grip of 6,000,00 soldiers in uniform and another 1,000,00 civilian intelligence and surveillance operatives, this makes the region most heavily militarized zone in the world, in other words one soldier for 12 Kashmiris (KAK, 2010). The appalling brutalities of Indian paramilitary forces have been highlighted in a report published by the Jammu and Kashmir Coalition of Civil Society, it says more than 70,000 killings, about 10,000 enforced disappearances and 7,000 mass graves (Osuri , 2016). However according to (Kazi, 2009) the killings are between 80,000 to 100,000 people in Kashmir since the beginning of the crisis in 1989. In 1984, the political situation in Kashmir started getting instable when Farooq Abdullah’s democratically elected government was toppled due to the defections organized by the Congress that was the ruling party in the centre. After the death of Shaikh Abdullah, Farooq Abdullah succeeded his father as the leader of National Conference (NC) and his party won 1983 Kashmir Assembly’s elections against Congress party in a very tense situation (Chowdary & Ubbott, 2016). The dismissal of Farooq Abdullah’s government had a psychological impact on the minds of Kashmiri people and they started thinking that the governments in Jammu and Kashmir did not sustain with mandate of the people and were rather based on the pleasure of central



government. The NC led by Farooq was mean while very much convinced that without the proper support of Congress Government in Delhi, they could not have power in Jammu & Kashmir. This NC-Congress alliance was not received positively in Kashmir and led to further protest against the party. During this time of hatred and anger against NC, Muslim United Front (MUF) emerged as a strong political force. The MUF successfully mobilized the popular responses of the people and it was strongly believed that the MUF would win majority assembly seats in the elections of 1987. However, MUF failed to attain more than four seats and it developed a wide spread feeling that elections were rigged heavily. The volatile situation after 1987 gave birth to every day protests, agitations and in 1989 the armed resistance movement finally embraced the state of Jammu and Kashmir (Widmalm, 1997).

Kashmiri women neither play the role of combatant soldier nor the suicide bomber as per the vogue in other armed struggles discussed in literature review section but they played their political and social role vigorously. When their husbands, sons, and brothers were fighting against Indian brutalities and facing death, torture, imprisonment and disappearance, these were the women who suffered most in their absence and continued to struggle and raised slogans of independence in protests and agitations, as a result of their protest they also became the victim of state terrorism and repression (Qayoom, 2014). As the topic of this research suggests the role of women in Kashmir's freedom movement, therefore the entire focus would be on women's contribution to the movement, for instance their political and social role, in absence of their bread earners, what are their socio-economic grievances? How do Kashmiri women cop up with the dilemma of widowhood and half widowhood and are still part of silent resistance? These roles will ultimately define the true face of Kashmiri women of this age. The changing roles of women in Kashmir's conflict have been discussed in various studies through observation and analysis, though it plays

an important role, the present study intends to explore the Kashmiri women's understanding on their role as political activists, household heads and peacebuilders through their own stories. Through this pattern, the study intends to bring out a perspective about the roles of women in conflict, which might be different from the perspectives brought by the previous studies.

This chapter includes introduction with research design and methodology. The second chapter is an attempt of theorizing the role of women and in third chapter an effort of exploring the role of women in literature will be made. The fourth chapter contains data analysis of different roles of women in freedom movement of Kashmir through the responses of women and in the final chapter a conclusion/discussion will culminate this writing attempt.

## **1.2 Research Objectives and Questions**

This research aims to explore the role of female population in the contemporary Kashmir's freedom Movement. In doing so, following research questions have been formulated in order to achieve the overall stated objective of the research:

Q-1: How did current uprising in Kashmir motivate the female segment of the society?

Q-2 To what extent illegal Indian occupation conditioned to the participation of Kashmiri women in freedom struggle?

Q-3: How did female oriented organizations have mobilized the Kashmiri women to actively participate in the Kashmir's freedom struggle?

Q-4: What kind of (formal/informal) structures and resources are available to the female segment of the society in order to mobilize and empower them in the context of activism at grass root level?

Q-5: What kind of support do they expect from Pakistan's civil society in order to strengthen the female activism/mobilization against the Indian atrocities?

### **1.3 Importance of the Study**

This research aims to contribute to existing literature relevant to role of women in freedom struggle in context of Kashmir, where the existing literature on female political activism in general and their role in freedom struggle in particular has been largely ignored. Secondly, this research aims to reframe the role of Kashmiri women in the contemporary struggle against illegal Indian occupation. Although there is literature that explains the multifaceted face of Kashmir conflict and freedom movement. However, at a macro level it has overlooked so far the significant role of female in freedom struggle of Kashmir. In doing so this research also explicates the resource mobilization, the adopted mechanism, the role of civil society that have all together shaped the current female political activism in context of prevalent conflict in Kashmir.

### **1.4 Research Design and Methodology**

The aim of this section is to present research design and research methodology used in this study. It will also provide an outline for the methodological considerations and research design that led this study. This research is qualitative and explanatory in nature and consider the case of Kashmiri women in contemporary freedom struggle. This study is based on the interviews of Kashmiri women from Indian occupied Kashmir with different backgrounds in order to understand the roles these women played in times of conflict. This section will also explain data collection method and data analysing.

## 1.5 Data Collection

In order to understand the women, experience and their different roles, two main research methods were used for data collection. This method includes both interviews taken through e-mails/telephones. However due to the time constraints of respondents and experts on Kashmir, I also used informal talks for data collection as well. During the field work, a semi-structured interview guide was used, which had themes like this, changing dynamics of Kashmir struggle and role of women, Traditional role of Kashmiri women in the society, Understanding the role of Kashmiri women in peace and security (peacebuilding/activism/politics), Kashmiri women and women empowerment. The details of the interview were first introduced to the interviewee with a short briefing. The objective of the interview and use of tape recorder were also exposed to interviewees. I designed the themes of the interview guide in a way, more questions could be added in accordance with the answers of the interviewees. The interviewees knew about the meaning of the questions and their relevancy to the topic. The majority of the questions in our interview guide were open-ended and thus interviewee had a leverage of explaining the questions in more depth. During the research, I relied both on primary and secondary sources, but major contribution of sources was from secondary sources. I approached initially fifty respondents through e-mails in Indian occupied Kashmir, however because of insecurities attached talking to a stranger on phone were a major hurdle for extending a positive response to the researcher across the border. Furthermore, after the involvement of civil society members and journalists in Indian occupied Kashmir, circumstances become easier for me. Majority of the respondents agreed to give interviews on the condition of anonymity, only few were willing to reveal their names and back ground. As explained earlier, I had informal discussions with professors working on Kashmiri women and women peace and security from both side of the border.

## **1.6 Data Analysis**

I started analysing data after my first few interviews, initial few interviews were not according to research questions and themes given in interview guide. Most of the respondents were overpowered by emotions and discharging newspapers information instead real life stories. After rearranging and analysing research questions the future interview became more informative and relevant to research questions. The categorization and coding of first few interviews helped me understand the background of Kashmiri culture and Kashmir women and how they understand their role during this ongoing freedom movement. This analysis on the perception of Kashmiri women about themselves in conflict further leads us toward the analysis of how Kashmiri women understand the influence of the armed conflict on gender roles in Kashmiri society.

## Chapter-2

### Theorizing the role of Women

This study is an attempt to understand women's point of view and their thinking with respect to their roles supposed in the context of armed conflict and how these roles add to women's empowerment and to social change. Nonetheless, the aim of this research is not to confirm the theories presented by different scholars but to bring up the fundamental viewpoints that are extracted from women's accounts about the different roles they have taken during the conflict and their understanding of it. It has been observed that social scientists apply different kinds of theoretical frameworks relevant to many fields. For instance, according to (Arnfred, 2004), feminist theories are mostly used for the research based on gender, sexual violence, discrimination against women and women's empowerment; Galtung (1996) argues that structural theories are used in the research related to caste and gender equations of various societies; while expressing peace theories (Johnson, 2003) argues that they are mostly used for the research on war and peace, conflict transformation and peacebuilding. Similarly, the purpose of this chapter is to highlight the different viewpoints relevant to women's roles in the context of armed conflict.

(Chawade, 2016) has extensively worked on roles of women during armed conflicts and her tales of Jaffna women in Sri Lanka will solve many riddles regarding gender around the conflict and thus will ease the efforts of future peace and conflict scholars. The glimpses of her scholarly work have influenced this study of Kashmiri women in freedom struggle. While discussing the women's roles in conflict (McKay, 1998) argue that gender and conflict are interconnected. (Haider & Fraser, 2014) argue that conflict behavior and impact are gendered, which is further elaborated as men are

actors of war and women are mostly victims. (Goldstein, 2003) however says that gender has a major role to construct the armed conflict. According to him, armed conflict is designed as a symbol of manhood and victory is hallmark of men, defeat is loss of male sexual organs. He further argues that role of man as warrior has been constructed into women's mind, on the other hand women role in armed conflict is considered as supportive, for instance nurses, fellow fighters and food and arms suppliers and opposite to this, they are also considered as peace makers and anti-war protesters. Contrary to this background (Bouta & Frerks, 2002) argue that women have a capacity to play as active member of armed conflicts and as political representatives. These scholars also express that leading the peace initiatives make the women equal participants in the process of conflict, peace and social reconstruction.

Gender and feminist theories express that armed conflict in many cases change the whole scenario of the society and make various changes to gender roles and relations in societies, according to (Amico, 1998) radical and liberal feminism realize changes to gender roles, for example women being fighter and household leaders, this showcases the female potential for power and bring women rights equal to men. It is further argued by (Collins, 2000) that women's process of inequality is very much attached to racism, ethnicity and classism. However according to (Freedman, 2003) gender roles, which are socially constructed to produce an unequal status for women in society get change during the time of war and natural disaster.

However, researchers like, Benjamin & Murchison, Chogugudza, Luke & Munshi deny the concept of changing gender roles in the context of conflict. These scholars argue that the social positions of women are static and they do not change even in times of conflict and changing social conditions. Despite the changing roles of gender and relations, aforementioned scholars argue that

women never quit their household responsibilities, i.e. cooking, caring and looking after the family. They further argue that women become household heads in absence of their men and this new leadership role does not bring any change in their domestic status. The conclusion of their argument emphasizes that despite being household heads, they are still housewives in terms of performing their household tasks and domestic duties.

There are various perspectives on women and nature of their role changing during time of conflict, scholars working on feminist literature for instance (Bouta & Frerks, 2002) argue that changing role of women during the armed conflict conclude the changes in the societies. These scholars further argue that women are not only victims of armed conflict but they are also active agents of war, peace and even social change. (Mazurana, 2013) argue that women sometimes collectively and individually make choices to take up roles, these roles possess critical perspective. However, studies and experiences show that women role adopted during the armed conflict are short lived and after the end of the war, women get back to their normal roles (Handrahan, 2004).

Bouta & Frerks (2002) have discussed in details the role of women in context of armed conflict. They have also worked on women's roles in conflict prevention, conflict resolution and post-conflict reconstruction and during their studies analytically identified seven major social roles of women in the paradigm of conflict and peace. According to their study women take up these roles in times of armed conflict and after conflict. These seven major social roles are describing as; 1) Women as victims of rape which is caused by deterioration of law and order situation and a policy to demoralize enemy, 2) women as combatants who directly and indirectly participate in the armed conflict by being fighters and supporting their men in the war, 3) women in non-governmental sector who work for peace and resisting the armed conflict itself, 4) women who participate in



peace talks and sign agreements during formal peace politics, 5) women as managing and surviving actors who adjust their existing roles and activities within the conflict situation, 6) women as household heads who take up roles in the absence of their men, 7) women and (in) formal employment opportunities during the time of conflict. The current study on the roles of women in Kashmir's freedom struggle has many similarities with the study made by Bouta and Frerks (2002) in context of armed conflict. However, while looking into dynamics of Kashmir's freedom struggle, this study will focus three roles of women by exploring the narrative of women through interviews. These roles include, a) political activists who organize and campaign against the Indian Military brutalities and discriminative political policies and gender inequality, b) women as household heads who take up the responsibility both in absence and presence of men, c) women as peacebuilders both in local and national level.

The findings of Bouta and Frerks about different roles of women in context of gender and war are based on general perception and analysis. Whereas this study explores a particular case, that is the case of women from Indian occupied Jammu & Kashmir. The changing roles of women in a war zone is also studied by (Lindsey, 2001), she argues that armed conflicts greatly affect the lives of women and can completely change their role in the family as well as in community and public domain. This is normally unplanned. The breakdown or disintegration of family and community networks forces women to assume new roles. Armed conflicts have created large numbers of female-headed households where the men have been recruited, detained, displaced, have disappeared or are dead. Women invariably have to bear greater responsibility for their children and their elderly relatives - and often the wider community - when the men in the family have gone. The very fact that many of the menfolk are absent often heightens the insecurity and danger for the women and children left behind, and accelerates the breakdown of the traditional protection

and support mechanisms upon which the community - especially women - have previously relied (Lindsey, 2001). (Nykabwa, 2009) explains that how war and violence shape social representations and practices. (Chawade, 2016) notes that, the previous studies conducted on the topic suggest that how most people in conflict ridden areas cope up with war and the various social changes resulting from war. (Beckett, 1985) suggests that war and mass violence have a great ability to de-structure and re-structure the society, therefore war becomes “contributing factor of major changes”. (Marwick, 1988) explains that there is a casual relationship between war and social changes; he further goes on to say that war is a driving force for rationalization and modernization. I will expand this discussion, by quoting Marwick, according to him war leads to social changes in four different directions. First, the destructive and disruptive dimension of war. This dimension encourages people for reconstruction of society that at times builds a society better than the previous one. For example, disruption replaces the structure of the society from traditional behavioural patterns to the new behavioural patterns. (Ishizu,2011) notes that this gives people a new situation or opportunity that cannot be attained in peace time, for instance women being present in labour market in war time. Second, the test dimension, in this category, the entire social, economic and political system along with military come under test and tested to prove whether they can bear the conduct of war. Marwick argues that war brings a tremendous pressure on social, political and economic system including military and they have to adjust according to new situations. It is worth mentioning here, that various stress and strain attached with the conduct of war do not necessarily bring desirable social changes. However, when Marwick talk about ‘change’ it does not always mean a progressive change. Third, the participation dimension, explains that armed conflicts create conditions that permit people to participate in various kinds of new activities. It may be military activity, political or social activity or an activity that could

encourage them to survive the moment of destruction. Fourth, the psychological dimension, in this category people start to gain the sense that armed conflict should lead something new as a result of their sufferings. ( Chawade , 2016) notes that, though Marwick explains the different dimensions of social change directed by war, he does not differentiate gender being one of the changing aspects in the context of war. Chawade further narrates that he does not specify or even remark how gender can play a role in social changes that are clearly caused by war.

However, Marwick's four dimensions that foster social change seems quite relevant to gender in the context of armed conflict. Therefore, Marwick's theory of war and social change is applicable to this study as well. Chawade argues that by applying Marwick's four dimensions of war to the context of women, war and social change, we observe that in psychological dimension of war, women gain the sense that they cannot rely upon their men anymore for safety or even for survival. Therefore, women under these conditions realize that they have to do something new to survive. As a result of war time decision, they therefore go for new social roles. During war times, the new roles taken up by these women eventually lead them toward their direct participation in war, whether as survivors or as perpetrators and negotiators. According to Chawade, women become part of conflict knowingly or unknowingly. In case of death of her husband or disappearance, they have to take up a new role of household heads and it is more relevant in case of Kashmir, where according to Jammu & Kashmir Coalition of Civil society, there are ten thousand forced disappearances and 70,000 killings, which establishes many new roles for women in conflict zone.

## Chapter-3

### Exploring the women role in Literature

There are various theoretical approaches regarding the role of women during an armed conflict in existing literature. However, keeping in view of the topic of our research and ground realities of the Kashmir conflict, we constraint ourselves with their major roles played during the conflict and what challenges they faced while playing these roles? For instance, how they got motivation to face these challenges. women are adversely affected during any armed conflict and a new phenomenon of social transformation starts with women empowerment as household heads, political activists and peace builders. Various studies have been conducted about human rights violations in Kashmir in Pakistani academia, however when it comes to women's role only few have made this attempt. While going through literature review, both Indian and Pakistani authors have been consulted to know the viewpoint of both sides on Kashmir.

With the dawn of 20<sup>th</sup> century many countries in Africa and Asia started armed freedom struggles against their colonial masters and had broken the chains of slavery (Césaire, 1972). During protracted conflicts and liberation movements, civilian population increasingly became the victim of violence and destruction (Zolberg, 1992). Armed freedom struggles impact both men and women with variation of experiences from each other. Although females are not considered as fighting soldiers but such examples exist in recent past in Liberia and Sri Lanka, where they participated in armed struggle alongside with their male counterparts (Shepherd, 2007). In times of armed struggles men can also be the victim of violence and sexual abuse, for instance rape, however a large number of women of adult civilian population are killed, tortured and raped during

war and they are impacted economically and psychologically (Amnesty International USA 2010, as cited in Qutab, 2012).

### **3.1: The Case of Ireland and the role of women in Freedom movement**

The tale of Irish resistance between (1969-1994) would be incomplete without discussing the valuable services of women rendered to National movement against the Britain (Reinisch, 2018). The Northern Ireland conflict resulted into 3200 deaths directly attributed to violence. There were 200 deceased women during the resistance which tells us that women were relatively less involved in physical violence than men (Morgan, 1995). During the period between 1940-1960 'Cumann na mBan' the largest female organization in Northern Ireland recruited only the members from traditional known republican families. These families brought up their children with strong Catholic values and traditions. Furthermore, this organization was strongest in villages in the south and west of Ireland (Reinisch, 2018). Therefore, if on one side 'Cumann na mBan' was educating the female lot politically and socially, delivering pamphlets for marches and protests, the Irish Republican Army (IRA) was providing military training to females and introducing them to modern weapons and techniques of fighting (Reinisch, 2018). Although much of female fighters were working at initial level- for instance providing hideouts and passing messages etc. Beside this, female comrades also transported guns and bombs and had taken part in major operations. (Morgan, 1995). The Irish magazine for prisoners of war 'An Glor Gofa' comments about their female comrades in 1992 as;

'Irish women are every bit as revolutionary as Irish men and their resistance is every bit as fierce, be they IRA Volunteers, Sinn Fein activists or campaign organizers and protesters'.

The twenty-five years long Irish freedom struggle came to an end by a peace process in 1990s. It offered ceasefires, de weaponing of the IRA, police reforms and withdrawal of British troops from the streets. The Belfast or Good-Friday agreement of 1998 proposed that Northern Ireland would remain in UK unless majority of the people in Northern Ireland voted otherwise (Ford, 2012).

### **3.2: The case of Palestine and the role of women in Liberation Movement**

An analysis of Palestinian women role in their freedom struggle against Occupying Israeli forces will further enlighten the significance of women during liberation movements. According to Jamal (2001), women role in national liberation movements have always been ignored despite their significance presence and services, for instance Palestinian women's activism has been developed and matured by resistance movement and thus women have shared nation's burdens and aspirations for independence and authority since 1920 (Kuttab, 2009). Palestinian women struggled against the British mandate and their policy of Jewish immigration to Palestine in the form of demonstrations from 1929 until 1947. The different elements of struggle were congresses, memoranda to the government, arms smuggling, meetings with government officials, fundraising, support to prisoners, aid to the wounded (Fleischmann , 2003). The Arab-Israel wars of 1948, 1967 and 1973 forced thousands of Palestinians left home and take refuge in bordering countries, there are currently more than 4.6 million Palestinian refugees and their descendants living in camps in the West Bank, Gaza Strip, Syria, Jordan and Lebanon (BBC, 2015). The generation of men and women grown up in the refugee camps of Gaza Strip and West Bank gave a new life to first Intifada lasted between 1987 to 1993 and the second began in 2000 (Nasser, Barghouti, & Mousa, 2010). Kuttab (1993) argues that, the traditional Palestinian environment governed by Patriarchal structures and ideologies would not allow women to jump into male social sphere if it were not a

National cause of freedom. He further expresses that women are being affected directly by occupation, therefore they have become an inevitable and indispensable component of the revolution. As 'Arlene Eisen' has argued with regard to the Vietnamese war of Independence;

People's war is a woman's war because woman participation is essential for success. The concept that every citizen must become a soldier is tested and tried tradition in revolutions and histories of self-defense against invaders. The front has been everywhere; a peaceful village or town one day may become a combat-zone the next so everyone is needed to contribute to the battle.

(Kuttab,2009) concludes that this analysis applies closely to Palestinian situation and there are similarities between Vietnamese and Palestinian freedom struggle and necessity of involving everyone in the struggle.

### **3.3: The Case of South Africa: Women against Apartheid**

In order to further strengthen our argument about the role of women and its impact on freedom movements one must consider the services rendered by South African women against the Apartheid (an Afrikaans word meaning 'Separate development') Regime. The inequalities and oppression of Apartheid system influenced thousands of lives not only in South Africa but also in many nearby provinces and countries. The immorality of this system forced thousands of men, women and children to live like slaves with in their own country. The citizens of South Africa were forced to obey the laws of white people with a sheer brutality that horrified and killed thousands (Laber, 1999). Laber further argues that the black family lives during 1920s and 1930s were revolving mainly around villages where men were holding farms for cultivation living peacefully having two wives. These wives performed various essential tasks, for instance looking after children, ploughing in fields, taking care of livestock. With the imposition of new taxes life became difficult in villages, men needed hard cash to meet their necessities and ultimately they

went for job or work in dirty wet mines eventually they had to settle in overcrowded cities where pollution and poverty caused the deaths of hundreds, beside this they were made to work on meager wages that could barely keep one individual alive let alone an entire family (Laber, 1999). They were also deprived from opportunity of getting decent education and improve their livelihood. The new movement of black men towards cities thus culminated into break up of traditional Black family life. In absence of men, children were deprived from their male role model and women emotionally disturbed, slowly and gradually these women also started coming to cities following the footsteps of their male counterparts (Laber, 1999).

According to Apartheid System the Africans need permits to work and live in certain areas and most of time these workers were not allowed to get permits for their spouses, thus forced black workers to live separately from their spouses. These newly urbanized black families where men mostly worked less and drank more had ultimately forced women to earn money by brewing and selling beer, selling and drinking beer was unlawful for African families. But these brave women after doing menial jobs like cleaning and washing at white men houses and selling beers were able to send their children to schools (UNCAA, 1978). The Colonial masters had various conspiracy theories in their colonies and one of them about Black women was useless in industry and entirely dependent on their men, as helpless, unintelligent to the point of being useless and stupid (Kuzwayo, 1985). Black women in South Africa were denied education for a long time. It is worth mentioning that their Churches played a very important role to educate this under privilege class. The churches in African society have been an engine for the progress and development of all black women educated before the mid-1950s (Kuzwayo, 1985). The efforts made by these churches started bringing fruits for the Black families and by the 1940s many of these women were



graduating as teacher and nurses and by the mid 1940 first group of black women doctors appeared followed by a group of black women lawyers, hence strongly disproved the theory of being unintelligent. It was from here that Black women with a solid education background started their protests and demonstrations against the apartheid regime (Ndebele, 1993). In 1913, some of the new laws of Africa were introduced, the government officials in the Orange free state tried to force women to purchase entry cards every month.

In reaction to this new legislation these women sent deputation to the government, gathered many petitions and organized massive demonstrations in protest. As the consequence of the struggle against the apartheid government, women were sent to jail and faced torture but the government continued these actions till 1952 (Schmidt, 1983). The Natives Abolition of permits and coordination of Documents act (1952) replace the numerous documents that men were forced to carry with them for identification with one single document. The law also stated that, in future the Black women would also be required to carry these single documents or pass books. This mean, that there was a threat to Black people family life and they would be separated from babies and left without care, if they do not produce a Permit (Dugard & Reynolds, 2013). These events in African History gradually activated women from all walks of life and started showing their power in large numbers. The two female organizations a) African National Congress women's league and b) nonracial Federation of South African Women mainly organized the urban campaigns, while in rural areas resistance to the pass laws were unplanned. The epitome of unity was achieved during the first non-racial women national conference in April 1954 to be held in Johannesburg. The overwhelming response from 146 delegates representing 230,000 women from all parts of South Africa introduced the new ways of liberation (Schmidt, 1983). During this journey of struggle and miseries, many brave women played leadership role on different stages of the

movement, among them were, Lilian Ngoyi, Winnie Mandela, Bessie Head, Ellen Kuzwayo, Eleanor Roosevelt, Helen Joseph and Nadine Gordimer. The struggle of these brave women proved significant along with their male counterparts to bring down the draconian apartheid laws (UNCAA, 1978).

### **3.4: The case of Chechnia: Black Widows and their role in Freedom Struggle**

The fall of USSR in 1991 and the emergence of 14 new republics from it encouraged North Caucasian states of Chechnya, Daghistan and Ingustia to declare independence and were expecting to be recognized by western world and America. This led to a conflict like situation in these states, Ingustia and Daghistan preferred to stay in Russian Federation but the president of Chechnya Jokhar Dudayev declared the independence of his country in 1991. After more than three years of declaring independence, Chechnya finally faced the wrath of Russian federal troops on 11 December 1994 and by 1995 the whole of Chechnya was under firm control of Russian Army. The rebels runaway and took refuge in Caucasian mountains (Storobin, 2004). The two wars in Chechnya left thousands dead and an army of disables, poverty, unemployment and corruption were the gifts of the puppet governments installed by Moscow. The freedom movement which went underground and silent produced new kind of freedom fighters, known as “Black Widows” (Jamali, 2017). The term Black Widows were introduced by the Russian and International press when it became clear that these Chechen women are motivated by anger and grief for their loved ones (husbands, sons and brothers) this hate and grief against the oppressor motivated them to seek revenge in the form of suicide attacks (Speckhard & Akhmedova, 2006). The infamous Black Widows emerged on the scene in June 7, 2000 when a fellow female Chechen fighter ‘Khava Baraeva’ drove a truck filled with explosives into a building housing Russian Special forces in

Chechnya. Since then, 46 women transformed themselves as suicide bombers and have carried out 26 suicide attacks on Russian territory (Jamali, 2017). A careful analysis of these suicide bombers finds that majority of these women have gone through serious personal trauma and no one left in their families to look after them as a result of two-decade old continuous violence and brutality (Speckhard, 2006).

### **3.5: The case of Tamil women and their role in freedom struggle**

The various examples mentioned above have a common factor of oppression and brutality by the forces of power, which ultimately dragged the women of the society into conflict and violence. Scholars of peace and conflict studies have also monitored the element of female suicide bombings during the conflict between Tamil Tigers and Sri Lankan government. The Sri Lankan insurgent group Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) was founded in 1976 and since its inception women have been an important part of the organization. Initially their role was limited to fundraising, recruitment, medical care and information collection (Dissanayake, 2017). The women's front of Liberation Tigers was founded in 1983. Alison explains that the first batch of female cadres was trained in Tamil Nadu in 1985 and they first engaged in fighting in 1986. The same year there were LTTE camps training female cadres in the Jaffna district. The women wing of LTTE also known as "Birds of Freedom" had three major units consisting of political wing, militant wing, suicide unit (Chawade, 2016). The group was declared as most dangerous and deadly extremist outfit in the world in 2008 by Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI). The report further expresses that the LTTE pioneered the use of suicide vests and female suicide bombers as a tactic used an insurgent group in South Asia. The group has claimed hundreds of lives in attacks targeting civilians, national infrastructure and military installations. Though girls and women are

involved in various kinds of military activities but they are chosen deliberately for suicide bombings just to deceive the body search at checkpoints (Singer, 2005). Moreover, the group has assassinated some of Sri Lanka's leading military and government officials as well as the Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi (Dissanayake, 2017). (Alison, 2003) explains that the conflict in Sri Lanka took lives of 70,000 people, five hundred thousand people left Sri Lanka due to the violent conflict and half a million have been displaced, beside this seventy-five thousand are living in camps for internally displaced people. People working for Tamil Tigers were quite innovative of introducing new methods of destruction, for instance they introduced bra, underwear and pregnancy bombs to hide the explosives and increased the success of female suicide bombers. During the armed struggle against Sri Lankan government, it is estimated that around 30-40 percent of suicide attacks were executed by women. Thus, LTTE had institutionalize the practice of suicide bombings in a new way of providing a lead to other insurgent groups around the globe (Dissanayake, 2017).

### **3.6: The Case of Kashmir: Role of women in Freedom Movement**

Rita Manchanda (2000) has extensively worked on human rights abuses in Kashmir, Kashmiri women, women peace building and empowerment. She describes Kashmir as the most militarized corner of the world with presence of half a million security forces with extra centre reserved police. According to her, since 1989 there has been an active militant insurgency with the popular sentiment of 'Azadi' (freedom). Since 1995 Indian paramilitary forces have weaponized and trained local auxiliary forces made up of captured or surrendered fighters to counter freedom struggle. They do not wear uniform and work outside the normal structure of Indian army, according to international law, they are known as agents. The Indian paramilitary forces and their

local agents have committed/organized /sponsored large number of human rights violations in Kashmir, narrates Manchanda. Anuradha Chenoy explains that the root causes of separatism do not rely only in economic conditions but are a complex mix of rejection of rights, injustice, violence and human rights violations. She further elaborates that the reality and perception of denial of rights and justice leads to a sense of collective victimhood and narratives of oppression identified with a community and this collective victimization heightens identity consciousness.

(Qayoom, 2014) notes that women are often categorized into two identities in traditional societies of Indian subcontinent, i.e. as the wives of men and mother of children. Women are perceived as symbols of honour and they are dependent on their husbands or fathers; when their men died, disappeared or detained, it has serious consequences on them. For instance, widowhood is not socially acceptable in South Asia and becoming a widow means loss of dignity and individual identity, she further goes on to say that these widows become dependent on their relatives and they are frequently denied inheritance and property rights. The societal behaviour and alienation thus force women to be their own household heads. There are various definitions for household heads in existing literature but we will adopt the one which defined by UN. The United Nations defines female heads of households as,

“Women (who) are financially responsible for their families”, who are the “key decision-makers and household managers”, who “manage household economies on behalf of an absent male head or who “are the main economic contributors” (UN, 1995: 32/B).

According to this definition, the breadwinners who are financially responsible for their families and the main economic contributors of their households are accounted as household heads as well. (Shemyakina,2009) describes that violent conflicts rises responsibilities of women within households and changes the tasks assigned to them on gender basis and thus change the household composition. According to (Kumar, 2001) and (De Alwis, 2002), as a coping mechanism to survive

under war household leadership of women is usually taken under forced situations caused by violence. Forced migration and loss of male household during conflict increase the percentage of women-headed household (Shemyakina, 2009). (Deer, 2005) suggests that first of all woman household heads have to overcome the emotional and psychological pain of the loss of their husbands, fathers, sons and brothers, in order to take care of the household economic needs and to look after the dependant family members such as children and elderly. Therefore, women live adjust dramatically in response to changes in their household and their communities in context of armed conflict.

Likewise, the changing role of women in context of Kashmir conflict is further elaborated by (Butalia, 2002), she argues that the people of Kashmir after 1989 arrived in a new era of exposure and they have faced a range of psychological and social deprivation, lack of security (a daily fear of life and dignity) displacement, abuse of human rights, including random acts of violence and destruction and uncertainty among the population, loss of social networks and family structure that comprises the fabric and meaning of daily life, loss of daily activity, the loss of social roles that guide behavior, loss of livelihood and no access to employment opportunities; resulting in extreme poverty and poor environment. These Circumstances have increased the weakness of the conflict affected areas. It is largely considered that women rarely create conflict, instead majority of them (along with children and aged) are its chief victims and sufferers, nowhere is truer than in Kashmir (Butalia, 2002).

According to (Qutab, 2012) conflict in Kashmir has impacted the Kashmiri women in number of ways, they have suffered from all quarters. Conflict has a direct impact on women, some of them were tortured and punished by the security forces while others by the militants. This include the

attacks and threats on their life and safety, these women have faced rape, death of loved ones, torture, trauma and other forms of violence. Similarly, the indirect impact of conflict on women was that because of the death/disappearance of their husbands who were the main bread winners of their family, their social world was overnight transformed. Women had to suffer for no fault of their own. As a result, many women are forced to venture out of homes in search for remunerative work and also face harassment by armed forces. Even now she explains, many of such women who are left behind in the armed conflict as survivors lead an invisible existence in suffering and neglect (Qutab, 2012). Ramachandran argues that Women are regarded as the couriers of cultural and ideological traditions, women are expected to dress and behave in ways that are prescribed by tradition. In Kashmir, the traditional dress code has been imposed on women by the militants. If women are seen outside without proper attire, they are attacked. Women who chose not to cover their hair or wear trousers have experienced acid and paint thrown on their faces. (Vanniasinkam, 2010) further expresses that women are required to dress simply so as to not attract attention of men. By interpreting women powerless, the long-term impacts are devastating. Several women who have experienced violence are suffering from posttraumatic stress disorder and live in constant fear of further attacks. The patriarchal society has grown stronger with men having much more power and control over women's choices in dress, reproduction and marriage. The clear demarcation of gender roles in Kashmiri society has further alienated women.

The conflict hit Kashmiri society was unprepared to meet the staggering number of widows who still face apathy from many quarters. Often, relatives refuse to support them and they bear the burden of raising children alone. Moreover, they are often illiterate and have little knowledge of their rights and entitlements (Qutab, 2012). The conflict analysis of De Alwis (2002) also underlines the changing roles of women in the conflict situation from 'traditional' roles to 'non-

traditional' roles. Whereas the creation and content of 'traditional and 'non-traditional' can trigger debate stating that women's roles may have differed significantly at various historical moments and due to the changing trends and culture.

(Alwis, 2002) comments that women claim that primary premise to women's roles, which they call traditional have not changed until the time of armed conflict. He further argues that women taking up 'non-traditional' roles describe women taking up men's roles. However, 'traditions' are bound to change over time with changing social situations, where in women adopt to new roles, which they were 'traditionally' restricted to. Various studies have been made in Pakistani academia regarding the human rights violations in Kashmir but however the role of women in freedom movement of Kashmir has been largely overlooked. This study is an attempt to highlight the role of women and their services for the cause of freedom struggle in Kashmir.



## **Chapter-4**

### **Analysing the Role of Women in Freedom Movement of Kashmir**

#### **4.1 Defining the terms Political Activists and Peace builders**

It is worth mentioning here that peacebuilders and political activist belong to two different groups and they both work to reach different objectives. For instance, the major duty of peace builders is to initiate peace and the aim of political activist is to promote Kashmiri nationalism and speak out against the discrimination extended towards Kashmiris at national level and the women in Kashmiri society. Female political activist engages themselves in women related projects in Kashmir, on the other hand peacebuilders engage in peacebuilding through reconciliation. Most of these peacebuilding women extend their support to widow's betterment individually or at a group level and they do support the conflict affected widows who are peacebuilders. Besides, these female peacebuilders work for peace both at local and national levels. Contrary to this, female political activist engages in political and social activities at state and district level.

#### **4.2 Political Activists in context of Kashmir**

After having the understanding of important terms, we may travel towards our first respondent (R1) from South Kashmir. She describes her role as Social/Political activist (Telephonic interview, Anjum Zamarud Habib, July 26<sup>th</sup> 2018):

I started my career as a teacher in Islamia Hanfia College. In those days, there was a dowry death in South Kashmir in 1985-86 and we took this issue seriously and established a "Women Welfare Association", you will be glad to know that after 1947, it was first organization for both Hindu and Muslim Kashmiri women, a joint effort of both Kashmiri Pundits and Muslims. Therefore, I started my career from anti Dowry campaign as social activist.

Her first organization was at an infant stage, when armed freedom struggle erupted in 1989 and issues relevant to women education and empowerment went to backdrop. However, she did not surrender and founded another organisation Muslim Khwateen Markaz (MKM) and started her career as political activist. She tells her ordeal of joining and quitting the All Parties Huriat Conference (APHC) and the discrimination she faced in the organization as;

In 1993, when All Parties Huriat Conference (APHC) came into being, they invited people from all walks of life to join them. For me joining APHC was to raise women issues on a bigger and better platform, unfortunately, this element was missing there. I tried my best to continue my journey with APHC, there was no woman in executive body and in decision making body of APHC. I believe, women are 50% of the population and if you are ignoring them, that means you are ignoring peace, prosperity and everything associated to them, no Nation can afford to ignore women. In current freedom struggle, women have worked both formal and informal ways to serve the Kashmiri nation but their services have not been recognized largely.

Political activism in Kashmir was very much alive from the very beginning of the movement, during all major protests, agitation, women were always at the forefront to just shield their brothers from the direct attack of Indian Paramilitary forces and police.

#### **i. Consoling grieved families and widows**

Many women involved in Political activism never thought of joining this new phase of their life but the changing dynamics of freedom movement transformed them as political activist. For instance, respondent-1 was not interested in becoming part of any political movement or struggle. After the beginning of freedom struggle in 1989,

whenever a young boy or a man is martyred, visiting the grieved family with lots of people became part of a tradition. This interaction with the families of active male freedom fighter became the initial contact with the freedom struggle movement.

The respondent-1 further shared her transformation towards the movement as follows:

[...] I realized that this [attending funerals] is not sufficient for Kashmiri nation, I did try to open a computer centre for widows and half widows and orphans but unfortunately, I was unable to complete this project. Then I started documenting the stories of widows and half widows. There are only two books available who tells the stories of widows, I wrote one book 'Our Widows' and the other is penned down by Afsana Rasheed. Kashmiri society is full of tragic stories, I personally started visiting conflict effecting families and written their stories into newspapers so that world would know the miseries of Kashmiri people.

Since these Political activists are from different backgrounds and eventually their reasons for joining the freedom movement also vary; For instance, a female Kashmiri student from Srinagar, respondent-2(Telephonic interview,25<sup>th</sup> July 2019) describes her journey of political activism as;

In all my student life, I did participate in protests, marches and even during curfew times, I was among those students who had an opportunity to inform fellow Kashmiris about further group agitation and protests knowing about the dangers of spreading words of mouth. We have so many social issues in Kashmir and religious issues are one of them. For instance, |Beef is forbidden in Muslim majority Kashmir, and in my little capacity, I always informed my fellow female colleagues that we should raise our voices against such meaningless restrictions on people of Kashmir. I did use social media to aware people of Kashmir and outside world, like what is the significance of Kashmir conflict and why we want freedom from India. So yes, you can include me in the category of a Political activist.

## **ii. Verbal molestation and harassment**

According to our data analysis, women in Kashmir face troubles every day. For example, female students face verbal molestation in their day to day life. Self-respect and honour are pride of every human being and when both of these are tarnished by usurping forces, it provokes and creates feelings of revenge. They face the questions like, where are you going? Where are you coming from? Where do you live? And if the women or female students are covering their faces or wearing “Abbya” they become more suspected in the eyes of military men at security check posts. Women are not allowed to appear in “Burqa” or “Abaya” in public, every time, when women appear in Burqa, they are told by the security personal, to remove veil from faces and women are bound to obey their orders because they have guns in their hands, military men become extra conscious, when they see women in veil and it happens on daily basis in women lives. Female students were also active on social media to highlight the Indian atrocities in Kashmir during the peak times of the resistance. So, if men sacrificed their lives, women sacrificed their honour and dignity for this freedom struggle. The security check posts are everywhere in Kashmir like mushrooms. The respondent-2 said, such hurdles and difficulties made her strong and she vowed herself not to quit the resistance movement. In this sense respondent-2 effected the conflict by not losing her passion as a minor member of resistance movement and continue walking on the path of Political activism.

Many new themes emerged during data analysis, for instance;

### **iii. Female motivation from the current up rising**

One of our key respondents was agreed that every man who got killed was given birth by a woman, he has a sister and many of them have wives and daughters. This is directly related to women, it's not like that women are living in isolation. Women have faced lots of burden and pain, after the death of a man, it is woman, who looks after children and their food and education. Women are doing their best efforts, but there is no helping hand for their support in this conflict zone. Despite this bloodshed, women have played their role actively to maintain and desire for a peaceful and healthy Kashmiri society.

Our data analysis tells us that even in this dark and suffocating environment, women bring forward the freedom struggle. Kashmiri women have worked on all fronts simultaneously, i.e. individual, collective and formal. It has been further revealed during the analysis that despite rendering valuable services for Kashmir freedom struggle, women sacrifices have not been recognized on bigger forums. Kashmiri society is conservative and Patriarchal in nature and one of our respondents said;

### **iv. Patriarchy and Stereotyping**

I was the only woman in APHC and they have not extended that much respect, which we women deserve. This freedom struggle is alive because of women and their constant support played an important role for the continuation of this struggle. Kashmiri women have played a very important and positive role in every sphere of resistance movement. Kashmiri society is fractured because of conflict and women are there to heal the wounds given by the Indian military and police. Kashmiri women want to live peacefully, our voices are unheard and they get silenced before they come out.

During the research it was found that few dynamics of Kashmir freedom movements have not been changed, for example; Kashmiris were getting killed in pre-1947 era and they are getting killed even now. Houses were blast and illegal detention with torture and harassment were there in pre-

1947 Kashmir and they are repeated now even in 2019. It has been witnessed during the analysis that, for last five or six years that resistance dynamics in rural Kashmir are changing, now if a son gets killed by paramilitary forces, the mother take her gun out and shouts in front of public that we will not stop fighting. The dynamics of crackdown also not changed from pre to post 1947 Kashmir. Though there are various changes but violence is still there in Kashmiri society. There is a rapid change in Indian government's attitude towards Kashmiris, now they have more bias, hatred and stubbornness. Our data analysis exposed that the role of women in freedom movement has variations according to their class they represent, People from middle class and lower middle class are getting killed and they are participating in resistance movement and certainly the women from middle class and lower middle class, they know the resistance from its true sense and they are participating and reaping the brunt of conflict. Children of elite class they spend their time outside the country and bigger cities of India, on the other hand middle and lower middle-class live-in Kashmir. So middle and lower middle class are the victim of this conflict, they participate and they are keeping alive this movement. Women who are doing government jobs they have restrictions and surveillance on them, but with all these restrictions they do feel the pain of this conflict with core of their heart. During our interview sessions, I asked our respondents to comment about the few famous female political activists of Kashmir and the services they rendered for the Kashmir freedom struggle and whether they are role models for Kashmiri women or not. One of our key respondents expressed her views;

Mushaal Malik is not here, therefore I would not comment about her and certainly she is not a role model for Kashmiri women. Every Kashmiri know about Asiya Andrabi and her religious organization and people recognize her services for Kashmir cause. Mehbooba Mufti was running a puppet government backed by PJB from New Delhi, how can she be a role model for Kashmiri female? Parveena Ahangar believes in struggle and her services have been recognized by the people of Kashmir. Insha Malik and Ather Zia

are writers and are contributing through writing for Kashmir Cause. Essar Batool, Ifra Butt, Munaza Rashid, Samreena and Natasha Rather have composed a beautiful book about mass rape of Kunan-Poshpura. Asiya Jeelani gave her life for Kashmir cause, she was a very good journalist and a political activist. Nighat Pandit is running an organization and trying her best to facilitate conflict effected people, her work is recognized at the higher offices in Government. I have got a chance to travel abroad with her in different conferences and I do feel she is doing a good job and she can do much better than this. The women we have spoken about, none of them is a role model. Even I am not a role model, Asiya Andrabi and me are from resistance movement, therefore we are facing state repression.

Another important theme emerged through our data analysis;

**v. Female organizations and their role in freedom movement and addressing female issues**

Our analysis helped us to find out key female organizations and their role in freedom movement and addressing the issues of Kashmiri women. It is worth mentioning here that female organizations with separatist ideology and female political activists who are attached to it are severe victim of state repression. For Instance, Asiya Andrabi and her associates Nahida Nasreen and Sofi Fahmeeda are constant visitors of Indian Jails, Asiya has been arrested again in July 2018 and Curretnly serving imprisonment in Tihaar Jail Delhi, her organization Dukhtaran-e-Millat has been declared a terrorist organization by the Indian government. Asiya’s husband “Qasim faktoo” is in Indian Jail since 1992 and most of her relatives have been shifted to Saudi Arabia, England, Pakistan and Malaysia. Likewise, Anjum Zamarud Habib spent five years in Tihaar Jail from 2003-2008. She has been working as a political activist for last three decades and from 2013, she is heading “Kashmir Tehreek-i-Khawateen”. Parveena Ahangar after the arrest and disappearance of her teenage son in 1990s established an organization named Association of the Parents of Disappeared persons (APDP) and she has done a great job remembering the missing persons. She

along with hundreds of missing person's relatives every month gives a sit-down in Lal choke Srinagar. The sole purpose is to remind the Indian Government and peace-loving people around the world that Kashmiri parents have not forgotten their loved ones and they are still in pain and trauma. Beside this, Parveena Ahangar has raised her voice about Kashmiri women and missing persons on international forums. Women like these are the beacon of light for entire female segment of Kashmir and for freedom struggle.

“Binat-ul-Islam” (A female wing of Hizb) started looking after those widows who were usually without any economic support from their families; they built temporary shelters for such women in Taral area and vowed to help freedom fighters, because there was more militancy in villages, the average age for a militant is from two months to five years. Some of these women even married to freedom fighters, however after the discovery of such facilities to freedom fighters, the Para military forces shutdown such shelters and jailed all those women involved and thus again the families of these widows suffered badly through the hands of Military and Police. “Ahsaas” working on Psycho-Social trauma. So, they have worked a lot on providing psycho-social support to victim of violence, rape, half-widows or women living in camps, be it Kashmiri Pandits in Jammu or other displaced women living in camps. They have worked a lot on half widows and for their inheritance rights from their in-laws. So, it depends, some organizations, their line of action is more political and there are some organizations whose line of action is more humanitarian and there are some organization who purely work for women rights, for instance, issues that are faced by women. It depends, what is their line of action, there are organizations who exclusively focus on women rights, they may not raise their voice for Azadi sentiments but focusing on whatever the current situation is, the women issues must be raised and some relief must come to these women.



As mention above, various respondents shared the intensity of problems, they have been facing primarily because of their direct or indirect involvements in the freedom movement or being as political activist.

One of our respondents from resistance movement shared her views;

We are under surveillance from paramilitary forces and Indian intelligence agencies. Parveena Ahangar travels around the world to tell the stories of Kashmiri people, she can move around and has her own passport. Me and Asiya Andrabi are black listed, our passports have been confiscated, therefore we cannot go outside the country to tell people, what's going on in Kashmir. I have requested Indian government to issue me passport so that I can perform Haj in this age. All those people, who ae in resistance movement, their lives are very difficult, it does not mean that APDP is not in resistance movement, they are also resisting and playing their role to tell the truth, but however criteria is different for them. I am executive member of Huriat Conference and associated with Ali Gilani, all those organizations or persons who are linked with Huriat are under tight scrutiny. For instance, A Sikh girl "Pooja" was killed in our area during a protest, I visited their family for condolence, upon my arrival there, people from CID, Police and other agencies were gathered just to listen what I will say about this sad incident. If other people visit such an incident and they say something, they will face less anger of government as compared to us.

Our data analysis confirms that in entire Kashmir, three female organizations are widely considered, namely: Dukthran-e-Millat, Kashmir Tehreek-e-Khawateen and APDP.

While analysing female organizations and their working another interesting theme appeared;

#### **vi. Female Organizations and Female mobilization**

Female organizations and female issues are interlinked with female mobilization.

During this research I have also come to know that these female organizations are

working hard to mobilize Kashmiri women. For instance, Asiya Andrabi and her organization Dukthran-e-Millat is widely accepted in Kashmir and outside for their role in Kashmir freedom movement and female mobilization. Another woman (Anjum Zamarud Habib) and her Organization Kashmir Tehreek-e-Khawateen has been working for female mobilization since the beginning of the freedom struggle. Though she is less known outside Kashmir but within her capacity she had travelled Geneva, UK, US and shared the stories of Kashmiri women in international conferences. In her own words;

I also belong to a civil society here in South Kashmir, therefore my intense voice in favour of Kashmiri women is accepted in Kashmir and India as well. In January 2019, there was a conference about prisoners in Delhi and I spoke bluntly about the plight of Kashmiri prisoners in Indian Jails and no one objected my tone and style, because women over there knew me very well. In Calcutta literary festival, I did speak again in favour of Kashmiri women and ongoing brutalities in Kashmir and my point of view was paid full attention by the audience over there. I believe, before approaching the outside world, we must knock the conscience of Indian people and bring the opinion makers on our side. I try my best in my personal capacity to mobilize women all the time. If you google my organization and her activities, you will see, people recognize my efforts bringing women on roads to protest against crimes of Indian Paramilitary forces and police. Likewise, Dukthran-e-Millat and APDP are doing marvellous job for mobilization of women and they are always successful when it comes to women assembly and awareness among women about Indian oppression. It is very easy to speak bluntly in Pakistan, because you are an independent Nation, but we are slaves and in this environment of suffocation, surveillance and state ruthlessness, we try to do our best to mobilize women and create awareness about their rights and to some extent, all these three organization are successful to mobilize Kashmiri women.

## **vii. The Dynamics Changer**

Our data analysis found various factors that changed the dynamics of contemporary freedom struggle in Kashmir and one of the major factors was Martyrdom of Burhan Wani. Before his martyrdom the freedom struggle was a little slow and his martyrdom in July, 2016 gave a new life to the struggle and people started raising slogans of “Azadi” more frequently. Burhan Wani was an excellent student beside his good looks, he topped the Kashmir’s intermediate and secondary education board exam, one day he was beaten and insulted by police on a check post and this changed the entire course of his life. He picked up gun and became the commander of Hizb-ul-Mujahedeen, his brother was shot dead by security forces, and his family was being tortured and molested on daily basis in interrogation centres. The Indian government put prize money of Rs. 35 lacs on his head; the military officer who killed Burhan was given only Rs. 25 lacs. After the killing of Burhan, many people joined freedom movement; his martyrdom gave a new energy to Kashmiris from all walks of lives including women. Burhan was very popular in younger generation and a huge fan following on social media. Female from younger generation got inspiration from his Martyrdom and he was on face book, twitter and other social networking sites, he was always there in profile pictures. After 2016, Burhan Wani, along with Dr. Manan Wani and other intellectuals who laid their lives to this freedom struggle has immensely inspired Kashmiri women. There was a curfew of seven months in entire Kashmir from July 2016 to January 2017. People of Kashmir were only allowed to come out for two hours every day for their daily needs. During this time Kashmiris suffered badly, their businesses were packed, tourism is a major source of income for people in Kashmir and it was completely destroyed; there was no transport and Kashmiris were in house arrest.

Despite oppression from Indian paramilitary forces and restrictions at every level, in the recent years we saw Kashmiri girls hurling stones at the security forces- which indicates they don't believe in being mute spectators anymore. Moreover, the women have suffered for years in this movement, since the very beginning of the Kashmir issue, I believe. It has given rise to many feminists and political activists in the recent years.

### **4.3 Household Heads**

Our data analysis discovers the second most important theme of this research as household heads. When a bread earner dies in a house, women of the house cannot come out of the trauma of losing loved one. The current freedom movement has left behind a large number of widows whose husbands have been killed by either Indian Paramilitary forces or unknown gun men. It is estimated that there are about 20,000 widows of armed conflict (Kazi, 2009) and half-widows is said to be more than 15,000 (Butalia, 2002). If we talk about the role of women in this movement, Mothers are always at the forefront of this struggle. A child goes out from his house and there is no guaranty of his or her safe return in the evening. For instance, in 2009, a freedom fighter was shot dead by Indian military in Eid Gah Srinagar. He was an active militant and after his death, his wife was all alone with two daughters and a two-months old boy. There was no other male member in family to support her financially, she went to depression and was unable to answer the questions of her children, when kids demand different things, they do not know their father is dead; Being a widow and a mother, she struggled a lot and have to do petty jobs to keep her kids alive

One of our key respondents who devoted her life for Kashmir freedom movement as political activist and never got married, describes the miseries of these women as;

You can well imagine the life of a woman in most heavily militarized zone of the world, where military have right to barge into houses, they can break doors, they can break windows and whatever comes in their way, they can drag men while binding their hands behind them and they can rape and molest women. These things are going on and on and there must be some serious effort from the government to stop it. Secondly 80% women in Kashmir use anti-depressant medicines. There is one mental health hospital in Kashmir and most of the patients are women. Women are worried and mentally upset, you can find these women on holy shrines where they cry and seek guidance from Allah. With all these traumas, they have to go out and earn money for their family.

A female student from Srinagar tells her story, how her step father was killed and her mother survived in worst conditions with a son victim of pellet guns;

In more than a zillion ways. My mother lost her first husband to the bullets of the brutal Indian army. I am her daughter from her second husband. The six bullets pierced in the body of her husband and it did not only widow my mother, but orphaned my sister, too. In 2017, my brother was fired at with more than 250 pellets in his body. That event in my life, shattered me completely. It took me long to recover from that agony. Personally, it has affected me way too much. I am from downtown, the heart of Srinagar city. No matter how stable the situation is in times of any event, it is always put under curfew. The army/ CRPF stand all day at the gate of my house. I struggle to go out, because whenever I do, absurd comments are hurled at me. Now I have developed the resistance since I know they are the Indian puppets, but my childhood has been miserable because of them?

While analysing the problems of household heads, one theme relevant to the problems, they are facing in Kashmiri society appeared.

## **i. Exploitation**

The exploration of data revealed that widows and half-widows (whose husbands are missing for years) are widely exploited. Majority of these women are abandoned by their in-laws and maternal family. Eventually, they have to live their own for the upbringing of their children. During the course of their survival, they have to come across various problems in a male dominated society. Some of the NGOs exploit these poor women on the name of rehabilitation and job opportunity. There are more than 20-25 thousand conflict effected women, if few NGOs offer jobs to 200-300 women for bread earning, that is not sufficient. Rest of the women are getting exploited, people from political parties get assembled and tell their workers to bring those widows and half widows, during elections local MLAs use them for canvassing or voting for a meagre return of bread earning. Women are getting effected in both cities and villages, in far flung areas conflict effected women are difficult to approach. Poverty is increasing in down town areas of cities where most of the time because of curfews and strikes, shops get closed and vendors who earn money on daily basis have to stay back at home. Some of the areas in Kashmir are not conflict effected but majority of Kashmir is effected by the conflict. A beautiful thing has happened in last few years that people share bank account numbers on social media to help these conflicts effected women and men, anybody can give money from Rs. 10 to Rs. 10,000.

One of our respondents from downtown Srinagar shares her observation;

When a woman becomes widow, life has different meanings for her, when in-laws become stranger and they have to go out for bread and butter, thousand eyes chase them every day and in our patriarchal society people never abstain from wagging their tongues. The character of these widows suddenly becomes suspicious in the eyes of every one. I know there are few NGOs who are supporting such

women who have lost their bread earners. For example, these NGOs run embroidery centres, parlours and other businesses, where these widows work for them and get a daily wage of Rs. 500 or 600. But during the curfews and Hartals (Shutter down strikes) and closure of markets on Friday and Sunday, there is no work for these women, so they work for only four or five days a week and that merely run their kitchen to survive with their children. Conflicts are not good for any country, they reverse the economy and people become weak and poor.

Half widows are also widows, they are household women and they do not have money to run their affairs after the disappearance of their men. So, this conflict caused a wide spread economic repression, beside this Police and paramilitary forces also target these women for further future investigation, therefore these widows and half widows have to leave their parents or in-laws house to live separately. There is a miserable poverty, ignorance, deprivation, pain and isolation among the lives of these widows. Most of them are unable to send their children to school, when house is full of hunger, how can education be a priority to these destitute women? No one is interested to look after these women and their children, they are now their own to survive in Kashmiri society. Sexual harassment is on daily basis, Kashmir is a garrison state bunkers are everywhere, when women pass through these bunkers or check posts, dirty remarks are hurled by the men of Central Reserved Police (CRP), Indian paramilitary forces. In far flung and remote areas these cases are at a highest rate, women are not safe there. Systematically, a society has been designed where it is injected into Hindu youth that raping a Muslim woman is a noble cause for whole Hindu population. This is an intolerable India, where it is widely believed that beating and killing of Muslim men and women is a very pious act.

The next theme which appeared during the analysis that how these women are empowered with in Kashmiri society?

## ii. Women Empowerment

Women empowerment may have many manifestations, for example having a voice, you are being allowed to say your perspective, and to have a voice to have a platform, and where you can express yourself freely is an empowerment. It does not have to be something huge, large, and big that we call as empowerment. Being economically strong and independent is an empowerment, having that kind of understanding and direction, how you are going to make your part and play your role is empowerment. Bringing issues of women to table is an empowerment. There are so many different ways, in which women is empowered and these political parties and organizations have to look women empowerment in broader perspective. So that they understand the word empowerment in its true sense.

One of our respondents from southern Kashmir answers eloquently;

This question is much more relevant to government sector. Like in your country or society, a section of women is resourceful, self-confident and having their say at higher levels, they have a strong feeling of empowerment. Similarly, we also have a section of women, whose voices are heard at higher levels, who feel confident about their voice, who are empowered and resourceful. But at grass root level, there is no self-sufficiency and empowerment. It is prevailed in all societies; we cannot exempt Kashmir from it. Only few women are empowered and there is a meagre effort from the government. When a woman loses her nearest relatives in conflict how can she feel independent, secure and empowered. I do feel the women empowerment is very much attached to justice. When Kashmiri women will get justice and treated well, she will be eventually feeling empowered. The mothers, daughters and sisters of Kunan-Poshpura mass rape are still under trauma and waiting for justice, they are not coming out of pain and curse which Indian paramilitary forces have laid upon them. How can mothers and sisters of Asiya and Nilofar be empowered? they are still waiting for justice to be done with murderers and rapist of their daughters. The criminals involved in this case are still free and flourishing. How these women can feel empowered and secure? The heinous crime of rape breaks the women and her feminism, she can never be the same woman, she even goes below the status of humanity. So, I believe, all those Kashmiri



women who have been harassed, molested and raped, they must get justice for them and then the stage of empowerment comes. Women empowerment starts from free and fair justice for women.

According to data analysis, there are only few female politicians in Kashmir, Mehbooba Mufti is an exception she is a daughter of late Mufti Saeed and when her party had coalition with BJP and Gen Sung in last general elections in 2014, she got government in Kashmir. A common poor woman beside all her efforts will hardly get a school teacher job or maximum if she jumps, she will be a professor or doctor. All incompetent people are designed and engineered to sit in Kashmir government, Kashmiris even don't have a right to choose their own leadership. There are various government programs for women empowerment but everyone knows very well, how things work in government offices? A boy named Farooq in Pattan area got disappeared and his body was found under sand after two days, people came out to protest against this heinous crime committed by central reserved police, among protesters, there was a women named "Hanifa" she came directly under the fires of police and with various other bullets, she got one bullet into her spine, and for next six months she was a bed ridden. she has thirteen years old daughter "Humaira" both mother and daughter started talking to each other through their eyes, eventually Hanifa died few months later. Now with all this pain and suffering how does that teen age girl will be empowered? Her self-confidence was shattered, when her mother received bullets and was dragged on roads. She will never come out of this trauma. All these things are associated with political instability, when there is a solution of Kashmir conflict and there is a democratically elected government in Kashmir, the women empowerment and reconstruction of the society will happen naturally. It would be a joke, if we say that there would be a women empowerment without the resolution of Kashmir conflict. All these efforts of women empowerment will be put down to dust from just a

single order from Delhi Sarkar. When a woman sees, her house is burnt down by military in front of her eyes, she losses all her confidence and power. It would be unjust to say that without justice women of Kashmir will be able to achieve the status of empowerment.

#### **4.4 Peacebuilders**

Women always play the role of bridge for peace building in any conflict area. But when it comes to security, in Kashmir even men are not secured then how a woman can feel secure. If men in politics allow their women to participate freely, then their role will become more vibrant and their activism will be more successful. Women definitely have their role in peace building, men are only successful in resistance movement when their women provide them peaceful environment at home. A peaceful house give birth to a society and nation. Kashmiris are facing these brutalities pre and post 1947, so it's a long time of oppression. In last seventy years Kashmiris have lost much, they lost brothers and sisters, friends and relatives. The pain of losing is horrendous and heinous. Who bear this burden, it is woman? Therefore, every Kashmiri women desire for peace and to be a peacebuilder. People in Kashmir want a peaceful society, where they can cherish all civil liberties without having silence of a graveyard. With the presence of eight hundred thousand Indian paramilitary forces, indigenous police and intelligence agencies, children of Kashmir are not safe.

One of our respondents supports peacebuilding in her own style;

We want peace, war is not a solution of any problem, it only brings, poverty, hunger, miseries and destruction of nations and societies. We want a peaceful resolution of Kashmir conflict. India has good friendly relations with other countries but it compromises his diplomatic ties with Pakistan. Peace can only be achieved in Kashmir when India and Pakistan enjoy their friendly relations. Women want friendly relations between India and Pakistan, we desire for the people to people dialogue between both sides of Kashmiris and borders should

be eased and allow people from both sides of Kashmir to see each other and meet. Our children have faced lots of brutalities and pain, they are in jails, we want a peaceful and healthy future for them, where they do not have fear of death, torture, molestation, sexual harassment. women have faced greatest sufferings and they want to build peace within and outside Kashmir. Kashmiris are peacebuilders not war mongers and we are not worrier race.

No one likes bloodshed. Every mother is in a fear of losing her dear ones. She is not sure of the safe return of her husband, her son, her brother and her father in the evening. Every woman in Kashmir has similar pain and feelings and they want to share it with those who have not been through it yet. This uncertainty of life has made every Kashmiri mother to desire for peace and the end of decade's long conflict. Kashmiri women want the end of this conflict and desire for a peaceful life without fear. Conflict has lessened the economic resources to the lowest level and it also effect the women badly, obviously when husband is jobless or unable to find job, it is the women who suffers at home and it becomes difficult for her to have proper bread and butter. Women are peace lover and they want peace and prosperity in Kashmir, through which they can secure the future of next generation. People have different narrative about peace and peace building. A Kashmiri peace builder from bordering town of Bandi Abbaspur explains, how people in Kashmir are thriving for peace building;

Generally peace is defined as absence of war, a state or condition, where there is no war but as I already mentioned in the very beginning that if there are people who are living in peace, let's take the example of advanced countries; they are having all basic human rights, they right to live, right to security, right to education, right to food and shelter so they would not be the one who build peace and having urge for peace, these would be the people like me and you , who belong to conflict zone. Who observe violence on daily basis? Who have physically insecurity and uncertainty since childhood, I was among those who were born and raised near Line of Control (LOC), I myself experienced this uncertainty as a child, because we never knew when the firing and shelling would break out, I remember, during school days on various

occasions during the tension alongside the LOC we had to rush back to our houses to save our lives. Parents were always in panic when there would be any firing and shelling during school timings, we were as young as four, or five- or six-years old children. We would be knowing how to keep ourselves safe and how to hide. There is ten times worse situation for people who are living in occupation in Indian occupied Kashmir with huge military presence. So eventually people living in entire occupied Kashmir region have more desire for peace and women who face brunt of the war and violence would desire even more for peace building. When we talk about any Kashmiri in general and Kashmiri women in particular, the violence and physical insecurity is the main motivating factor for any Kashmiri or particularly women choosing to be a peace builder. These women want to be peace builders, because they experience violence, sexual harassment, death of their loved ones, torture, and economic repression on almost daily basis. You name any kind of human right's violation and you will see it in Indian occupied Kashmir. There are so many reasons for these women to stand up and claim that they want to build peace and make their effort as peace builder for future generation. Women from this generation and previous generation both experienced violence in different forms and they have all right to guarantee peace for their future generation. Kashmiris also have right to live in peace, the decades of violence have motivated these women to choose the path of peace building.

#### **i. Building Peace**

In various parts of Kashmir, Kashmiri Pundits families live in neighbourhood peacefully with their fellow Muslim Kashmiris. Therefore, these peace women do talk to them more often and engage them in peace building by narrating them their stories and miseries. It has developed a community like situation, where women come and share their feelings and a desire for peace. There are various communities in Kashmir who preach these angry young boys to stop throwing stones on Indian paramilitary forces and police, because if they throw stones on them, they will get bullets in return, which is absolutely no match. Kashmiri women are now tired of this conflict, because conflict has taken away many of their precious lives. Though other non-Muslim women also have their share for peace building but mainly Muslim Kashmiri women are striving for peace now.

Our data analysis confirms that there is no prosperity without peace in Kashmir, nearly three-decades old conflict now breaking the backbone of Kashmiri indigenous economy.

### **i. Economic Repression**

The impact of economic repression with reference to the class, urban versus rural is quite different because Urban class which is living in the cities is not directly associated with agriculture and land. Their source of earning may be foreign remittances, tourism, they might have some government jobs, private jobs in cities, as far as tourism is concerned, upper middle class is associated with tourism in cities like Srinagar or other urban centres. So, when it comes to violence, curfews and agitation, and environment is not safe for tourists yes, it is affecting tourism and eventually resulting economic repression of Kashmiris living in urban centres. But when it comes to rural areas. Kashmiri women equally participate in agriculture with their men folk. When we see economic dependence on agriculture in terms of survival, it's fine; they may have survived for five or six months because of being economically dependent on their lands but how long will this continue? Even agriculture needs so many things like proper irrigation, plus food crops are seasonal and they cannot bear the burden of their children's education, maybe they can survive six months on agriculture, but harsh weather is also a major factor, which slows down the economic growth in villages, their livestock even needs proper care and attention besides this there are different needs of maintaining that agricultural system that is your main source of earning, for maintaining that agriculture system, obviously villagers need an unstopped flow of every requirement to maintain that system, which is giving you an economic outcome, on which you are basically dependent. So be it the agriculture in rural areas or be it the tourism in the urban areas. So, when we talk about economic impact we cannot defend, who gets affected more, is it the man

or the woman or the kids or anyone else, it's the whole family, whole system or the whole social fabric gets effected when economic aspect is affected. There are so many things attached to economy and a depression in economy gives birth to various ills in society. Frequent curfews and force closure of businesses before or after 5 bring economic downfall and poor economic conditions within the urban centres. The conflict and violence have made people's lives very uncertain and fragile, because you do not know what is going to happen next. In Kashmir, political and economic conditions are very unpredictable. This uncertainty is not favourable for economic conditions. Yes, we may say economic factors have influenced both urban and rural areas, because of the dependence on agriculture and tourism. Recently, we have heard that Indian government has suspended Cross LOC trade, which was playing a little contribution to the economic wellbeing of Kashmiri on both sides of LOC. The struggle for freedom or conflict has damaged women from both urban and rural sector.

According to our data analysis, these peace builders have various challenges in their way to construct a peaceful society.

## **ii. Peacebuilding Challenges**

Peace building has different angles and manifestations for example, in valley there is a propaganda of Kashmiri Pandit's forced exodus, Kashmiri Pandits and Muslim Kashmiri population have been living peacefully for centuries but during the conflict this interfaith harmony was exploited by both Indian leadership and Military establishment and a fault line was created between Kashmiri Pandits and Muslim Kashmiris to demonize the legitimate freedom struggle of Kashmir. When we talk about peace building between the communities that is pertinent because the thin fault line between different ethnic and religious communities should not be exploited on the principal of divide and

rule to damage Kashmiris. Kashmir has been a place that is symbol of interfaith harmony, be it in Jammu, be it in Kashmir valley. In recent times, there are so many incidents where Kashmiris have proved that they are friendly and hospitable for every religion and every ethnicity. Conflict also leads to lack of trust between communities. So, when you build peace between the communities and engage with them, bring them together, provide them platform where they can talk, when you have different perspective and sharing those perspective and you learn to respect and tolerate each other's perspective, that creates harmony. This interfaith harmony is very important and it should not be misused. Kashmiris do support dialogue and it should continue not only with women of other ethnicities but also to local leadership and establishment both military and civil, only dialogue can eliminate the misconceptions between communities at the local level and grab the attention of women at National level in India. Female Kashmiri peace builders are facing great challenges and they have not left their efforts to highlight the desire for peace between different ethnicities living in Kashmir. For instance, a latest UN-report on Kashmir in 2018 has highlighted the Indian atrocities in Kashmir, organizations on international forums who have credibility like Amnesty International are raising their voices in favour of Kashmir. How do you bring what is happening into Kashmir into such organization's knowledge by engaging with them? Peace building is not just separatist leadership in Srinagar engaging with Indian Leadership. It's much more than that, this is just one aspect of peace building. When you believe in building peace, you engage at different platforms with different actors to have dialogue with them and you raise voice at different forums. Maybe armed resistance is one way of raising voice for Azadi. But there are so many other ways, which are more acceptable by the international community. So, you cannot isolate yourself and you cannot limit yourself to a certain domain. So, you have to raise your voice at different platforms to keep struggling and trying whatever influence they have. The recent UN

report on Kashmir has put India into trouble and it has year's long efforts of Human rights activists who had raised their voices on international forums for years. There are different ways of raising voices on international forums and peace building is one of them.

In south Asian or any Patriarchal society, women are more engaged in household domain or social domain, they are less into public domain or political domain; they have more roles to play within family and community level. So, they have always played a very important role into the community cohesion and harmony. Women are considered to be a better peace builder, when it comes to promoting community cohesion and harmony. So, in case of Kashmir, women are creating spaces where they are bringing women from different ethnicities, for instance, from Kashmiri Pandits, from Jammuwal, and they are bringing these women into those shared spaces, where they have come together, they have discussions and they discuss how conflict is impacting all of them, not just one particular ethnicity, their ways and impact might be different but source is actually conflict. These are considered as softer areas of engagement and it requires lots of passions, faith and persistence and Kashmiri women are playing marvellous role in this regard by bringing together women from different ethnicities in shared spaces and trying to rebuild and reconcile. To rebuild that harmonious relationship that goes back to centuries and having a recent unpleasant past that was planted or inflicted on them by some external forces, according to our data analysis, women who are ensuring inter-ethnic harmony and community cohesion, by engaging with women in different activities in different spaces and having open conversation so how all these things are effecting you for example, if you have people from different ethnicities in different shared spaces, such activities have to be happen. We cannot deny the importance of such conversations, people have grievances and misunderstandings about each other, and they need to come to those shared



spaces in order to rebuild that harmonious relationships which they have enjoyed for centuries. Women are playing a critical role in doing that.

## **What Kashmiris want?**

Our respondents were of the view that Kashmir should be de-militarized, Indian paramilitary forces, police and intelligence agencies have occupied everything in Kashmir.

Our lands, buildings, houses are all occupied. Our children are not safe in presence of Military. We want peace and peace cannot be achieved with the presence of political instability. We want prosperity and development in Kashmir and we want peace between India and Pakistan for the resolution of Kashmir dispute. Indian subcontinent cannot achieve peace without the peaceful resolution of Kashmir conflict.

## **Population Gap**

It has been found during our data analysis that there is a population gap between men and women, young boys have been giving their lives for last three decades and as a result Kashmiri woman are facing shortage of men, it is difficult to find a proper match for educated women. If luckily some young men of marital age are available, they are victim of pellet guns and these metal balls have damaged their internal organs, like if a man of marital age is partial blind or he has damaged intestines, heart issue and an infected kidney, no one would prefer to marry him. For example, in 2016 after the martyrdom of Burhan Wani, 150 boys were killed by security forces and in 2017 the death toll of young boys was 210 and in 2018 it was 116. Because of these pellet guns, 7000

of Kashmiri youth has lost complete or partial eyesight and this is not a joke. In November 2018, two years old “Hiba Nasir” became the youngest pellet gun victim and she lost her sight in one eye.

## CHAPTER -5

### Conclusion/Discussion

During the entire course of this research an effort has been made to restrict between research themes, research questions and the six major components of feminist theory and her applications. However, for the understanding of Students of peace and conflict studies it has touched the various aspects of women role in freedom movement of Kashmir. Before introducing the reader to Kashmir conflict and role of women, I presented a brief overview of different conflicts around the world and the role of women in it. (Bouta & Frerks) consider seven roles of women in any conflict but in context of Kashmir conflict only three roles of women are more relevant. Therefore, I tried to build my argument around three roles of women for instance, 1) Women as political activist, 2) Women as Peacebuilders, 3) Women as household heads. I took the help of Feminist theory which analyses the gender inequality in a conflict exploring themes like discrimination against women, sexual violence, stereotyping, oppression, patriarchy, women's empowerment. Kashmiri society is a religious and conservative society where women are restricted to the institutions of family and marriage, where woman's virginity and chastity matters a lot. A careful analysis of current freedom struggle in Kashmir since its very beginning in 1989 narrates the whole story of how Kashmiri women struggled and survived this three-decade old conflict. They participated slowly and gradually in the beginning, whenever someone is dead in neighbourhood; it's a tradition in Kashmir that women folk first visit the grieved family and then men join the funeral. This tradition helped further during this struggle, the martyrs of freedom struggle have always had received a very warm farewell at funeral from men and women. In conflicts oppressor use rape as war weapon to disrespect and discredit men of the opponent group. Indian paramilitary forces and central

reserved police (CRP) used “rape as war weapon” at the very beginning of Kashmir’s freedom struggle. According to UN human right’s report published in 2018, 23 women (Local sources say 53 women) including girls were gang raped in the twin towns of Kunan-Poshpora on the night of 23 February 1991 by the soldiers and officers of Border Security Force (BSF) and Central Reserved Police (CRP). The victims of Kunan-Poshpora mass rape are still waiting for justice to be done. These two towns in Kashmir are known as raped towns and the married raped victims were divorced by their husbands and those who were young girls are unmarried to this day. These women are living the life of destitution and misery. Raping and molesting Kashmiri Muslim women has become the norm among the inner circles of Indian army and police. The “Doda mass rape, Rungrate mass rape, Mugripura mass rape” the rape and murder of Nilofar Jan and Asiya Jan in 2009 and the rape and murder of Baby Asifa in 2018 are the shining example of the failure of Indian Judicial system in Kashmir. The major reason which fuelled the freedom struggle and kept it alive for three decades was injustice to the victim of violence and rape. The Indian Army Act of 1950 gives its paramilitary forces unlimited authority in conflict zones and thus has become a primary reason for the culture of impunity in Indian army and police deputed in Kashmir. When one of the male members get killed in family, it is the woman who suffers; her life becomes difficult because she might have lost her bread earner and now, she will have to look after her children and old parents of husband. During conflict women play their traditional role as well as their new role as family heads. In Kashmir, there is a culture of long curfews and shutter downs, which ultimately reduce chances of bread earning for these female household heads. Currently there are ten thousand widows and fifteen thousand half widows. Various NGOs have started computer centres, embroidery centres, parlours; where these female household heads work and earn 500 to 600 rupees per day. Friday and Sunday is considered as holiday in Kashmir, so after

working five days they merely run their kitchen. Our respondents from Kashmir have confirmed that only 300 to 400 widows are accommodated by these NGOs and rest household heads are the victim of economic repression and are therefore compelled to do petty jobs in order to feed their children and old parents. Kashmiri women have broken the chains of patriarchy and stereotyping about them, in the beginning of freedom struggle an ordinary Kashmiri woman was very reserved and shy to speak about the sexual violence and oppression but now women are coming out to tell their stories to political activists and media. The political activism of “Asiya Andrabi” has inspired the generations of Kashmiri women. She started her political activism when this freedom struggle was at an infant stage. Secondly, the social and political activism of “Anjum Zamarud Habib” and Parveena Ahangar have also encouraged the children of conflict, who were born in early 1990s and now are in full bloom to follow the footsteps of these brave ladies. Today, there is no shortage of female political activists in Kashmir, they are from every walks of life and working for missing person’s families, widows and victims of violence. Kashmiri women have seen sexual violence, discrimination, loss of loved ones and oppression from the hands of Indian Paramilitary forces and now they want peace and security for their future generation. These peace-loving women from Kashmir are coming out to meet women of other ethnicities from Jammu and Ladakh in shared spaces and telling their stories to each other and strengthening the fragile bond of their communities which they represent. One such peace building effort was initiated with the name of “Athwaas” (A Kashmiri word means ‘a warm greeting or handshake) by a Delhi based organization WISCOMP in 2001. According to our respondents, all these peace building efforts are linked with the positive response of state government and exclusion of Indian paramilitary forces from Kashmir. No peacebuilding effort can be successful in absence of justice and presence of fear and terror from Indian Army and Police. In every society, a handful of women are always

resourceful and empowered and they have their say in higher circles of society. Likewise, in Kashmir there are such women who are empowered and “Mehbooba Mufti” is one of them and it is because she got a political legacy from her father. When a woman is sexually harassed on daily basis and she is a victim of economic repression, how can she feel empowered. Kashmiri women will only attain the status of empowerment, when she is independent and secure in her daily life. While concluding these lines Kashmir valley is again under the tight grip of Indian paramilitary forces after the suspension of article 370, this time entire Indian Administered Kashmir has seen twenty days long curfew with a complete black out of media, internet and telephone lines. Hence, I conclude that in above discussion and with the primary support from our respondents in Kashmir, three roles of Kashmiri women do exist and they have survived even in worst conditions of current freedom movement.

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