

CONCLUSION

CONCLUSION

One of the primary concerns of this work was to examine the effects of violence and armed conflict on women in Kashmir. Hopefully, this study has revealed that women have been the greatest victims of the violence in Kashmir. Looking at the major indices of development-health, education, employment and property rights-this study has shown that the militancy and armed conflict in Kashmir have had extremely destructive effects on the lives of women. The routinised cycles of violence in Kashmir have also affected the family and the household and more importantly the place of women in the families, as well. Similarly the community-kin networks have been profoundly affected by the recurring cycles of violence, and since women are the primary markers of community identities, they have been the worst affected by the disruption of community and kin ties.

The second important concern of this work was to unravel the agency of women in Kashmir. The effort was to look at women's subjectivity in the face of routinised violence to see how women shaped their lives, organised their families and maintained social ties in the wake of disruptions caused by deaths, violence and conflicts.

This study has hopefully shown that women have had the most constructive engagement with the society in Kashmir. It has examined the role of women's organisations and movements in the realisation of the political goals and the fulfilment of social and cultural ideals. Indeed, this study has found ambiguities in the political roles of women's movements with some women's organisations siding with militants and the others opposing them. At the same time, women's movements in Kashmir have apparently opened up spaces of constructive dialogue and communication in the tumultuous Kashmiri society. Women's organisations have also played a crucial role in reconstructing lives and families destroyed by violence providing not only monetary support and maintenance but also emotional reassurance as well.

The present study began with a historical overview of the position of women under the Dogra rule. The first chapter of the thesis looks at the historical background and examines the impressive role of women in the independence movement. I have argued that the women in Kashmir were active political agents in the period before independence as well and fought alongside men against the oppressive rule of Dogra rule. They participated in processions, organised marches, rallies, and even took up arms against Dogra rulers. While

examining the historical background, I have also examined the position of marginalised women under the Dogra rule. My study has shown that the Dogra rulers exploited the marginalised women, in particular, the prostitutes, to raise revenue for the state. Perhaps Kashmir was the only state in the pre-independence period where prostitution was both legalised and encouraged by the state. Prostitutes were registered, and the state derived considerable revenues by taxing them. The Prostitution Rules of 1921 required the prostitutes to register with the state. The Act clearly was an important instrument of state surveillance, and brought the prostitutes within the ambit of state permitting it to stake a claim over their income and resources. The independence of India in 1947 has not ruptured the deep structured alliance between the state and patriarchal forces, but has certainly substantially modified it.

The second chapter looks at the position of women in family and community life. My study has shown that the family size in Kashmir is quite modest, and the trend of large families living together is exceptionally rare in the region. Even as women are excepted to manage the household, they enjoy an 'impressive presence in the public spaces, as well. The activities of women are not confined to the domestic sphere, but include active participation, in economic and

political activities, in the outside world, as well. The continual violence in Kashmir has forced parents to keep their girls away from schools, and this is reflected in the fall in literacy rate, in the post-insurgency period. My work also reveals that the health facilities for women are quite deficient, and this is reflected in the high Maternal Mortality Rate (MMR) in Kashmir. My study has revealed that about 35% of women's career choices were constrained by their families. Women's seclusion has also increased in the wake of the militant movement, but the rate of their seclusion, as it appears from my data, is higher in urban areas, and far more widespread among the upper and middle class women, as well. My study reveals that women in Kashmir are largely denied their inheritable rights in property. Only 22.5% among my respondents had received some property from their natal families. A correlation between the secessionist violence and the position of women in Kashmir is depicted by the decline in sex-ratio in post-insurgency period. My study has shown the wide prevalence of *Purdah* among women in Kashmir. While my work suggests that 73% of women observe *purdah* in Kashmir, it is only 49% among them, who actually don the *burqa*. My study reveals that the marriages are mostly arranged by the families and very few women marry according to their choice. The family system in Kashmir serves to sub-ordinate

women and ensure their subjugated position in family and community life. My study also showed the prevalence of dowry, domestic violence, etc. in Kashmiri families. However I have also made an effort to unravel the routinised, everyday forms through which women challenged, resisted and negotiated the condition of their social marginalisation. Clearly the family and household were patriarchal institutions that ensured subservience of women and their subordinate position in society. The women in Kashmir, however, did manage to turn it into a resource through which they constrained the patriarchal forces to minimum disadvantage.

Chapters III and IV are concerned with the impact of violence on women's lives in Kashmir, focussing in particular, their involvement in the political domain. The study has shown that women have been the prime targets of violence in Kashmir. Women in Kashmir suffer violence not only from the external forces 'the outsiders' but also from their own kin-community members. They have been forced to don veil, and their movements have come under strict surveillance and male control. They have been forced to conform to strict dress codes and the infractions are met with severe, often violent consequences. This is because women in Kashmir are viewed as markers of cultural identity, and purity of the community rests on their chaste and refined

comportment and behaviour. At the same time women have shown tremendous resilience in combating the culture of violence, organising themselves in movements and organisations through which they participate in the political process and create spaces for constructive political communication. The study has looked at the role of women in social and cultural domains and has highlighted the role of women's organisations in rebuilding lives destroyed by violence. The study has also looked at political initiatives undertaken by the women's movements. This study has noticed that there are indeed several women's movements which support the militants and their patriarchal ideologies. At the same time, these movements have not succeeded in monopolising the entire political space, and there are other movements among women who denounce them and their culture of violence. There are a large number of women's bodies which oppose violence and work to create democratic spaces in the dominant political culture in the region. Women's movements occupy an important place in the political process in Kashmir. They have been instrumental in enlarging the spaces for consensus and consent in the political process in Kashmir. More importantly, these movements have served to protect the rights of women in Kashmir and have challenged and restricted the ideologies of patriarchal domination.

BIBLIOGRAPHY