

Women's Perspectives on Conflict in Jammu: A Study of Jammu and Kashmir Territory

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***Abstract** - This paper seeks to understand the women's perspective on conflict in Jammu as conflict in Jammu and Kashmir enters its thirty years. To have a general idea about the women's perspectives on conflict questions were asked from women of Jammu because most of the research work concerning women and conflict has been carried out in the Kashmir valley and little is known about the perspectives of women on conflict living in Jammu. Many questions were asked like what is the impact of conflict on women, the role of women in conflict, what kind of changes they want for the betterment of the situation, is the present step taken by the Central Government to resolve the conflict is appropriate, can women resolve the conflict better than men, do women think different from men.*

Keywords: Women, Conflict, Feminism, Jammu

I. INTRODUCTION

Even though each discipline tries to understand conflict from its own perspective, it becomes a lop sided attempt if one emphasis on only one aspect of the conflict such as taking into consideration only the economics in a social conflict or social tensions inherent in group identities. To have a holistic perspective on understanding conflict, it is pertinent to understand social, political, cultural, economic, strategic and international issues related to conflict. Such as, to understand the conflict in Jammu and Kashmir one has to get into the genesis of the issue that is political, religious, social, economic and geo strategic due to its geographical positioning between India and Pakistan and then graduate to what it means for the security of people of Jammu and Kashmir in particular and India in general, role of the armed forces and internationalization of the issue due to involvement of Pakistan and other extra-regional countries and organizations. Hence, conflict is a very complex phenomenon and it is equally complex to understand and decipher it. It exists more or less in every part of the globe, though the intensity varies according to the time and space. In

case of conflict in Jammu and Kashmir, the competing claims over Kashmir by India and Pakistan are the key source of the conflict. The claims and the consequences are the result of the opposing policies of India and Pakistan. Diverging responses associated with the claims from both sides have given birth to armed conflict and militancy in the state (Bose, 2003). The current situation that we face in Jammu and Kashmir is a continuum of the events that took place over six decades ago (Raghavan, 2012).

The term conflict has been used loosely in recent years. Broadly, conflict is understood as the pursuit of incompatible goals by different people or groups. These competing goals can range from contradictory needs within family to competition over scarce resources between members of a community or neighbouring States, to opposing factions seeking political or economic control. Many times conflict may be peacefully resolved. When it becomes violent and includes the use of weapons, the term usually used is armed conflict. Armed conflict is different from warfare. Unlike the latter, the former is an undeclared war wherein contrast to the prescribed rules of the Hague Convention of 1907 neither a formal declaration is made nor an ultimatum is given to the neutral States. Such situations where neither wars are waged legally nor the rules of war followed subsequently are called armed conflicts. Thus, it is a narrow category of the general term conflict denoting a situation where one or both sides resort to the use of force. When conflict is brought to the civilian population the group as a whole bears the consequences. But, there is a context of specificity as regarding the experiences of different categories, this is especially the case of those who otherwise are most vulnerable within the larger group-children, elderly, women, etc. women experience the conflict doubly like any other vulnerable category. On one hand, they share common experiences with the group as a major constituent of the civilian population. There is also gender specificity due to socially ascribed male and female roles on the other hand. The gender-specific experience for most of the women may also be the result of patriarchal control, lack of exposure, mobility, decision-making power, etc. they may also be rooted in the global culture of discrimination that denies women equal status with men (Shekhwat, 2006).

In this overall process for peace and reintegration, women are conspicuously invisible (Shekhwat, 2014). Though there is extensive literature on armed conflict, but it is largely gender-blind, with women's participation simply not identified. Armed conflicts were seen as male dominated domains (Moser and Clark, 2001). To have a feminine view on conflict, it is important to understand feminism. Feminism came forth, out of the women's

movement of the early 1970 and its aim was to end women's subordination. Feminists' prime concern was to find out and understand the unequal gender hierarchies that exist in all societies and their effects on the subordination of the women and other marginalized groups, with the goal of changing them (Tickner, 2006).

Sex differentiation, gradually but inevitable evolved in a manner that societal roles which are linked with production, governance and the preacher were dominated by male sex and the biological capacity of the female to reproduce the human species and ensure its survival, confined her to the home and away from the economic, political and religious arenas of societal participation (Mukherji, 2005).

II. Methodology

The present research is both exploratory and descriptive in nature aiming at gathering data and information on the impact of conflict on women particularly in Jammu. Both primary and secondary sources will be taken for gathering the data. The universe of the present study consists of women who was 18years or above. To reach or to collect information from the respondent sample was selected using snowball sampling method. Snowball sampling method was useful for the present study since the target population is related or involved in the issue which is considered inappropriate in our social set up. Questionnaire method was also used as a tool to collect data from the respondent. It consists of number of questions printed or typed in a definite order on a form or a set of forms.

III. Perception of Women on Conflict

Women's perspective particularly the perception of women of Jammu on conflict was taken to know their opinion on conflict. Conflict no doubt exists in every society whether the society is developed or developing though its intensity varies. It affects each and every section of the society. Conflict in the context of Jammu and Kashmir no doubt affects every section of the society but it affect women doubly, being a part of the society on the one hand and being a civilian population on the other hand. It is difficult to measure the degree of impact of conflict on women in Jammu. On the basis of data collected through the method of questionnaire of hundred women respondents shows that conflict did not affected the women lives. But they are of their opinion that conflict always create in our mind a kind of phobia that anything happens at any movement of time. Some respondents also get interview that live in boarder areas they are of their opinion that it is very risky job to live in boarder areas because no day had passed when cross boarder shelling does not take place. They are of the opinion that there life wholly get affected when cross firing

takes place. Ultimatum is given by the Government to leave their places as soon as possible which becomes problematic. Some respondents told that they do not send their children to their fields because of cross boarder firing. They said their cattle's, crops all get affected and government given nothing in the form of compensation as the people mostly depends on agriculture sector. Some respondents said that conflict widens the Hindu, Muslim relations.

During conflict situation more responsibility came on the shoulders of women. Many respondents said that it is difficult for them to get food from the field during conflict situation. In such situation it becomes very difficult for them to manage food for their family members. Even during night it becomes more difficult to cook food in the dark. Some respondents said that many people left their place because of felling of insecurity and shifted to other places. Education also gets affected as schools remained close during conflict situation.

When question is asked about who is responsible for the present situation, what kind of changes they want for the betterment of the society, is present step taken by the Central Government appropriate or not, can women resolve conflict better than men. Responding to these answers respondents said that Pakistan is highly responsible for the current situation in Jammu and Kashmir and some respondents said China also responsible directly or indirectly. Some said politics is behind on this. The respondents said they want peace which is possible through dialogue only. Violent means of methods should not resolve the present situation. Most of the respondents answered that the solution of the problem is possible through peace from both sides. On the question of the steps taken by the Central Government, respondents said that it is a good step taken by the Government of India to control conflict in Jammu and Kashmir. They said now we all get equal rights as enjoyed by other territories but it take time to get situation normal in Kashmir. The respondents said if they get the opportunities to solve the conflict they replied that only through dialogue they tried to solve it so that people of both sides live peacefully without any feeling of fear etc. they responded to the question that women think different from men as no two individuals are alike. They are of their opinion that in a patriarchy society it is very difficult to get an opportunity to solve the matter. They are of the opinion that both (men and women) solve conflict better as compared to men alone. They said if conflict affected men and women then both tried to solve the problem jointly not individually.

IV. CONCLUSION

To conclude it can be said that conflict affected every section of the society but women doubly due to their sex on the one hand and being a civilian population on the other hand. It affected different aspects of women's life for instance women's education, occupation, family life and freedom also. The present study was taken among the women of Jammu to know their perception on conflict. On the basis of questionnaire which is used as method of data collection it is concluded that women affected more than men during conflict situation for instance as one respondents said men has to work outside and take the responsibility of outside but in the absence of men, the whole responsibility came on the shoulders of women which is difficult for her manage and which affected women, their family, their children and society also. So, her role and responsibilities increases during conflict situation. Most of the respondents are of the view that through dialogue the solution of the problem was possible which helps the both side people to live in peace. Being a part of the society, women's participation as men is also necessary; their valuable suggestions should also be considered to solve the problem of conflict in Jammu and Kashmir. So, it is important to throw light on women's perspectives on conflict to come to know their perception on conflict as they are the most vulnerable section of the society or the soft corner of the society.

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