

Kashmir: The Paradise Lost Crave for Everlasting Peace

Abstract

The splendour and salubriousness of the Kashmir valley is legendary! However this pristine image of Kashmir has been replaced by a much more frightening one. India and Pakistan both claim ownership of this paradise thereby causing deaths of uncounted number of innocent people, human rights violence and atrocious acts of violence. The period of militancy in the form of firing, mass rape, youth killings has left no stone unturned in making the paradise a hell in true sense. The ongoing pandemonium and bedlam has one way and the other badly affected every aspect of Kashmir like Economy, Tourism, and Education and more important the emotional life has got a greater setback. Starting from gun culture, ragdo ragdo, hartals, curfews and the high voter turnout in latest Assembly elections is sufficient to prove that the innocent people of Kashmiri hanker after for the lost paradise to bloom again. This is furthered supported by some interviews conducted by the investigator where people have been found cherishing for peaceful life.

Keywords: Pristine, Violence, Captivating.

Introduction

Fear Looms in Every Heart and Despair in Every Thought. When Shall This Tyranny End?

'Paradise Lost' John Milton's epic poem is about the fall of man, about how Satan lured Adam and Eve to commit one sin, a sin that lead to Adam and Eve being thrown out of Garden of Eden. Kashmir has a lot in common with John Milton's epic poem. It too is about fall of man and much more, fall of humanity and how a selfish few lured the people of Kashmir. A look at what we have gained and lost in the last decade reveals that destruction in the form of killings, migration of Kashmiri Pandit's, traumatism of innocent Kashmiri people has become the norm of the day. We live with this fact every day. What hurts more is what we got instead: countless number of widows, orphans, hundreds of broken dreams and diminishing hopes, unemployment, corruption, no infrastructure, poor education system and political instability. Clearly, the losses outweigh the gains. But did we gain anything? Of course we did not. The period of militancy in the form of firing, mass rape, youth killings has left no stone unturned in making the paradise a hell in true sense. The ongoing conflict has one way and the other badly affected every aspect of Kashmir like Economy, Tourism, and Education and more important the emotional life has got a greater setback.

Human Loss

Killing an innocent human means killing of whole humanity irrespective of their religion, race or gender. Since the emergence of the conflict, the killing of innocent people has become the norm of the day. The once serene and lovely Kashmir Valley with its gorgeous mountains and rivers, which inspired generations of poets to sing the praises of its beauty, has now become a Valley of Blood. Following table shows year wise human loss as a result of this long pending conflict:

Rafiq Ahmad Kumar

Research Scholar,
Deptt. of Educational Studies,
Central University of Jammu,
J&K

Jawaid Ahmad Itoo

Research Scholar,
Deptt. of Educational Studies,
Central University of Jammu,
J&K

Table Showing Year Wise Human Loss

	Incidents	Civilians	Security Force Personnel	Terrorists	Total
1988	390	29	1	1	31
1989	2154	79	13	0	92
1990	3905	862	132	183	1177
1991	3122	594	185	614	1393
1992	4971	859	177	873	1909
1993	4457	1023	216	1328	2567
1994	4484	1012	236	1651	2899
1995	4479	1161	297	1338	2796
1996	4224	1333	376	1194	2903
1997	3004	840	355	1177	2372
1998	2993	877	339	1045	2261
1999	2938	799	555	1184	2538
2000	2835	842	638	1808	3288
2001	3278	1067	590	2850	4507
2002	NA	839	469	1714	3022
2003	NA	658	338	1546	2542
2004	NA	534	325	951	1810
2005	NA	521	218	1000	1739
2006	NA	349	168	599	1116
2007	NA	164	121	492	777
2008	NA	69	90	382	541
2009	NA	55	78	242	375
2010	NA	36	69	270	375
2011	NA	34	30	119	183
2012	NA	16	17	84	117
2013	NA	20	61	100	181
2014	NA	32	51	110	193
2015	NA	2	12	22	36
Total*	47234	14706	6157	22877	43740

Data till April 12, 2015

Mental and Psychosocial Disorders

The ongoing violence, the constant threat and poor future perspective put a heavy strain on the natural coping mechanisms of the people in Kashmir. Mental health experts in the state said that there has been a staggering increase in the number of stress and trauma related cases in the Kashmir valley and these psychological problems have also given rise to general health problems like diabetes, cardiac problems and hypertension (The News, August 18, 2005). There's been a tenfold rise in the past decade in the number of cases of trauma (Izzat Jarundi, 2002). Mental disorders in both men and women have shown an alarming increase when compared to pre-conflict days in 1989.

Number of Patients Who Visited Valley's Only Psychiatric Hospital at Rainawari

Year	Number of patients
1985	755
1989	1,700
1994	18,000
1996	20,000
1999	35,000
2001	38,000
2002	45,000
2003	50,000
2005	70,000
2006	82,000

Source: Psychiatric Hospital Srinagar

Records from the outpatient department of Srinagar's Hospital for psychiatric Diseases show that

in the 1980s about 100 people were reporting for treatment in a week; today, between 200 and 300 people arrive every day. Before the onset of militancy certain mental disorders, which were unknown to Kashmir, have shown a phenomenal presence after the conflict eg. Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) no case of this kind was reported before 1990, this kind of disorder was completely unrecognized in Kashmiri society as the situation was peaceful but now 15 to 20 percent patients in outpatient department (OPD) are suffering from this mental disorder.

Tourism Sector

Conflict in the state of J & K had a multi-dimensional impact on Kashmir tourism and its related sectors. Perusing the statistics, it can clearly be understood how hard the conflict affected tourism. Tourist arrival was remarkable 7.2 lakh in 1988 but saw a drastic dip in 1991 when it was a negligible 6287.

Year Wise Number of Tourists Who Visited Kashmir from 1987

S.No.	Year	Total
1	1987	721654
2	1988	722035
3	1989	557977
4	1990	10722
5	1991	6287
6	1992	103242
7	1993	8026
8	1994	9814

9	1995	8520
10	1996	9967
11	1997	16131
12	1998	109883
13	1999	217292
14	2000	111912
15	2001	72591
16	2002	27356
17	2003	191164
18	2004	376729
19	2005	603582
20	2006	432888
21	2007	441836
22	2008	22000
23	2009	20809
24	2010	24376

Although the influx of tourists has registered an improvement after nineties, however, it is worth noting that the figures have come nowhere close to tourist arrival in pre-militancy period.

Education Sector

In Kashmir 'hartals' and the 'bandhs' that have become something of a norm has further add to the woes of our education system. No matter Kashmir is known for its talent all over the world but how can this talent flourish when the new generation is being brought up in the shadow of the gun, deprived of a normal social life, and often of education.



1990 is still infamous as the year when no exams were held and everyone was passed just because there was no way any exams could be held. 2008 onwards has been similar and these years have seen dramatic increase in the number of hartals hence leading to a further short academic year as if three months winter break, two weeks summer break and numerous national and regional holidays were not already enough. When schools and colleges remained closed for about 115 days, the adverse effect on education can be anybody's guess.

Crave for Everlasting Peace

A clear look at the above data is enough to prove that the period of militancy and conflict has been the prime source of distress, suffering and misery of innocent Kashmiri people. On every face lies a sad tale of death, destruction and abandonment. In every eye, tears are accumulated for the loss and sufferings. Behind every smile lies the misery of being a Kashmiri in today's world. Although, whole world is talking of peace process but do we

think it has made any positive impact on Kashmir side? The answer is obvious no. Recent hartals, curfews and killings have augmented the bleeding scenario of Kashmir valley. I am frank to declare that people of Kashmir are now fed up with violence and long pending conflict. They want peace process to be started once for all.

Recent Elections: A Message for Peace

In the recent Assembly Election held in Jammu and Kashmir, polling percentage was found to be very high when compared with the previous polling records. For Jammu and Kashmir, it was the highest polling percentage in the last 25 years. The close to 66 per cent voter turnout recorded in Assembly Elections 2014 is the highest that the state has reported since 1987. The turnout in Jammu and Kashmir has been historic and unprecedented. During Assembly Elections 2008 the voter turnout was 61.42 per cent while it stood at 43.09 per cent during the assembly polls of 2002 as compared to 65.90 per cent recorded in 2014. Despite the fog and the chill, enthusiastic voters queued up at polling stations. The higher voter turnout witnessed in recent Assembly Elections sends a message to the Govt. Of India that the people of Kashmir are now fed up with violence and are aspiring to see their bleeding Kashmir to bloom again.

Starting from gun culture, ragdo ragdo, hartals, curfews and the high voter turnout in latest Assembly elections is sufficient to prove that the innocent people of Kashmiri crave for the lost paradise to bloom again. This is furthered supported by some interviews conducted by the investigator where people have been found yearn for peaceful life.

Name: Sajad Ahamd

District: Anantnag

Present Status: Research Scholar

Sajad got admission in M.A. Psychology in Kashmir University. However due to 2009-10 ragdo ragdo their whole academic session was badly affected. Since Sajad was from a poor and backward family, he became scared about his future. However, with blessings of Almighty and his own efforts he managed to complete his PG with 2nd grade. After completion, he was selected for research programme in Kashmir University and in Delhi University. Keeping the hell like situation of Kashmir into consideration he preferred Delhi University. This is not only his experience but whole student community have the same story to narrate. He at this stage think that if the intellectual and fertile culture is to flourish, peace is the road way.

Name: Gull Mohd.

District: Anantnag

Present Status: Retired Z.E.O

Gull Mohd.was living a prosperous and happy life with his family. But the period of militancy was a source of agony, misery, anguish and torment for him as he lost his two lakhti jigger (Kashmiri word usually used for one's own children). His elder son was a school teacher and one day on his way to home he became the victim of Blast which was hurdled at Lal- Chowk Srinagar. His loss gave a big jolt to their family. They were trying to recover from the angst situation; his younger son whose aim was to become a doctor joined the militant group and a

period of two years he was martyred. Now what remains in his family can be anybody's guess. Jana his wife, sitting on the main gate waiting for her children to return was quite poignant and emotional trauma was the final outcome. After taking a long breath, he goes on to say that I can understand the pain of those parents who have lost their beloved ones. He said no one can bring back our lost children, but I want to convey through this interview that Govt. should take initiatives so as to restore the normalcy in Kashmir.

Name: Mohd. Sultan

District: Anantnag

Present Status: Businessman

Mohd. Sultan a businessman sent his two children outside valley for higher studies with the sole purpose of saving his children from falling in the trap of militancy and other antisocial activities. But the way the Kashmiri students are being treated especially when the train enters Punjab is quite unfortunate. Being a parent and a businessman, he said the people of Kashmir are now fed up with 20-25 years of turmoil since it has not only shattered the educational aspirations of youth but the business sector has also received a setback. We the people of Kashmir now want peace to restore in Kashmir so that we can live the life of peace and prosperity.

Name: Imtiyaz Ahmad

District: Anantnag

Present Status: Student

Imtiyaz Ahmad while narrating the destruction and setback received during the turmoil said that the curfews and hartals have made the life of people hell like. The students are not able to concentrate on their studies. No matter Kashmiri students are known for their intelligence and brilliance throughout the world, but how can this talent flourish when they are caught in a so called pressure cooker like situation, he laments. He further goes on to say that if govt. wants to restore peace then special attention should be given towards job opportunities, tourism and other development related activities.

Name: Preety Bhat

District: Jammu

Present status: Research Scholar

As a result of militancy we migrated from our mother land. Although we are living secure life in Jammu but we are badly missing the days spent in Kashmir. The social, cultural ties and religious harmony was the symbol of ultimate peace and national integration. Lamenting over the killings of innocent Kashmiri, she said that peace should return in Kashmir. She said that not only we want to return back to Kashmir but also people of Kashmir are equally willing as narrated by Kashmiri pandiths who are currently living in Kashmir. She further said that our return can play an important role in restoring peace in Kashmir.

Recommendations

In order to restore normalcy in Jammu and Kashmir, whole world in general and Govt. of India in particular should fathom the long cherishing aspirations of innocent Kashmiri. The recent Assembly elections and above cited interviews are sufficient for the whole world to know what people of Kashmir wish for. Govt. of India should come up with

an apposite solution for the long pending issue of Kashmir and should take some initiatives so as to bring sumptuousness, opulence and prosperity in the whole state thereby winning the hearts of Kashmiri people. Following are some of the recommendations that the author think are the panacea of all the turmoil, violence and mayhem in Jammu and Kashmir:

1. Stop enforcing regular curfews, locking up people in their homes and denying them religious freedom by banning Friday prayers.
2. The state of Jammu and Kashmir is also home to a large number of unemployment. Therefore government of India should come up with some employment schemes so that the Kashmiri youth may not fall in the trap of antisocial elements. Citing unemployment and lack of infrastructure as main reasons for militancy, Ghulam Nabi Azad, former Chief Minister of the state, has during his tenure till July 2008 stressed many times the need to pay attention to these areas. He was confident that 80 per cent of militancy will go "if we are able to give employment to the youth" (quoted in Bukhari, 2006). Attempts should be made to encourage professional education and self employment.
3. There are number of cases in which Kashmiri students have been victim of harassment and ill treatment of which I myself is a live example. Suspecting every Kashmiri for being terrorist is quite inhumane and callous. Every Kashmiri especially students studying outside Kashmir should be treated in the same way as others are being treated.
4. Govt. should support the return of Kashmiri Pandiths to their respective places instead of clusters as it will create a sense of exclusion among Kashmiri Migrants.
5. Since Jammu and Kashmir is home to several rushing Himalayan rivers, it should be able to generate up to 20,000 megawatts of power according to some estimates; instead it produces only around 760 MW, a quarter less than current demand. Given India's urgent need to move to cleaner forms of energy - currently more than two-thirds of its power supply depends on coal - the government should be investing heavily in hydropower projects in Kashmir and beefing up price incentives for renewable.
6. Govt. of India should come up with the plan to shift the troops out of human populated areas and stationing them along the borders. Apart from making the state more welcoming to outsiders, the move would help ease resentments among Kashmiris themselves.
7. In addition to militancy, the worst -ever flood of 7 September 2014 has further augmented the miseries of people of Jammu and Kashmir. There is an old Kashmiri saying, "Ann posh'e tael'e yali wann posh'e" but nobody seems to care. Soon we will have no Wann to support the Ann. Therefore government should further the augment environmental awareness programmes so as to make the people realise that all actions have consequences, once done they can't be undone. Environment has to be respected and nurtured. If we don't make peace with the

environment it sure is going to wage a war against us.

8. Education should be given the top priority by all the citizens as well as all the organizations and institutions. If Education system keeps on suffering at the present scale, Kashmir will surely die a silent death, with all those responsible standing as mute spectators. Therefore there is need for strengthening of education system through skill up-gradation and innovative techniques which will be possible by active cooperation and participation by all of us.
9. Revocation of AFSPA from all districts at an earliest

References

1. Bukhari, Shujaat. (2006). Unemployment, the root cause of militancy: Azad. *The Hindu*. February 6, p.1
2. <http://www.kashmirlibrary.org>.
3. Shah, Farooq A, Wani, Ambreen and Mustafa, Zuhaib (2013). Impact of armed conflict on kashmir tourism and socio-economic profile of the people of J&K. *EXCEL International Journal of Multidisciplinary Management Studies, Vol.3 (7)*
4. Ministry of Tourism, Govt. of India, (2011-2012), Annual Report

5. Ministry of Tourism, Govt. of India, New Delhi, Final Report of 20 Year Perspective Plan for Sustainable Development of Tourism In Jammu & Kashmir
6. Neumayer, E., (2004), "The Impact of Political Violence on Tourism" *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 48,2: 259- 281
7. Asima Hassan and Aneesa Shafi (2013). Impact of Conflict Situation on Mental Health in Srinagar, Kashmir. *Bangladesh e-Journal of Sociology*. Volume 10 Number 1, January 2013
8. J&K records highest voter turnout in 27 years, Monitor News Bureau, 21 December 2014
9. Izzat Jarundi, The people of Kashmir, Features, vol., 2002. Murj 21
10. New Kashmiri generation victim of chronic depression, The News, August 18, 2005 at <http://www.infopak.govt.pk/news/kashnews/kashnews2005/kash-aug18-2005.htm>
11. Dhiraj Nayyar, Peace will come to Kashmir only when growth does, Bloomberg News
12. Abeer Syed, Kashmir, a Paradise lost: how it can be found again?, Kashmir, Jan. 30
13. Shahid Iqbal Choudary, Education loses to strike in Kashmir
14. <http://www.satp.org>.