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Women's Struggles in the Kashmir Militancy War

By Devina Neogi¹

Abstract

Kashmir is located in the northern part of India in the state of Jammu and Kashmir. Kashmir has been a hotbed of violence since India's independence. For the past 51 years, there has been an intense conflict between the locals of Kashmir and India's Military Force, which has directly or indirectly affected the lives of millions of people. One of the most affected communities is the women in Kashmir. History provides us with the scare chronicle of gendered experiences in political violence. Women's experiences bring to light the heterogeneity of the experiences of subgroups caught in a conflict situation. Over time, the women of Kashmir have fought a long battle against the military. Further, the women of Kashmir have been hit by physical violence by both security and the military forces. This research paper tries to understand the struggle of women during the military war in the state of Kashmir. In this research paper, a critical analysis of reported incidents and cases has been studied to understand the struggle of women in the Kashmir valley. This paper examines the accounts of violence among women in Kashmir through the same lens by reviewing relevant literature. The research paper aims to propose policy interventions through findings from secondary literature.

Keywords: Women, Atrocities, Marginalization, Militancy, Kashmir

Introduction

Kashmir has been one of the most disputed states of the Indian Union. The constant clash between the militants, the locals of Kashmir and the Indian army has led Kashmir into a hotbed of violence (Romshoo et al., 2020). Kashmir in the late eighties and early nineties saw a turning point in contemporary political history of the Kashmir Valley. The homes and streets of Kashmir were resounding and resonating with popular calls for freedom from India. Lives in Kashmir were changing every other day, meanderings to the heightened sense of injustice through history and ages to the Kashmiris' people. This led to massive popular protests against the armed forces of Indian rule, which started in the late 1980s. The Kashmiri masses were riding high on the storm for *Azaadi* (Freedom) (Anjum, 2011).

But the women population were pushed by the circumstances to engage either as activists or protesters or else become victims. Women in Kashmir often describe their position as not more than a victim (Zahar & Muzamil, 2020). In the militant war, men combatted the armed forces of India and women were left back in their homes. When the men lose their lives in the war, the women have to face the burden of a fatherless or a brotherless family. They had to bore the brunt of violence and tortures of the military forces (Biswas, 2020). Even the women who tried to go against the armed forces had to serve multiple years in jail for the overt support of the independence movement and were constantly harassed by the security apparatus because of their

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political involvement (Krushnanjana, 2018). Women gave up their possible comfortable lives for tribulations. In a conflict, the interplay of dissent and oppression often brings out human rights violations. In recent times they have been seen wearing shrouds and chanting the slogans of 'azaadi' against the Indian military forces but there again were killed or injured in the shoot-out by the armed forces (Ray, 2009).

Rationale

The rationale of my study is that women's struggle in the Kashmir Militancy War has not been explored extensively by scholars and academicians. Women in Kashmir are the worst hit by the militants. The conflict in Kashmir has created havoc in the lives of the people, and the women have suffered the most, from physically auscultation to being raped, from losing their family members to being tortured in jails (Haidar, 2019). The conflict had greater dimension and it was difficult to have a holistic idea about the problems that women faced because the area of research was a sensitive one. And over the years, their problems have multiplied. It has been more than twenty years of conflict, and it has left the women of Kashmir psychologically, economically, physically, and socially tormented. Many militants have been involved in the physical exploitation of women; however, many cases have not come under the light as all these cases were politically and socially sensitive (Ali, 2021). Since the outset of the militant war, women have always felt insecure. They have been raped, molested, murdered, and abused sexually. For the past two decades, the women of Kashmir have undergone tremendous shocks by the militants (Batul, 2020). Their sons have been killed or abducted by military personnel; their husbands killed or disappeared; thus, they are regarded as widows. The women whose husbands go missing are termed "half widows", as they had no knowledge whether their husband was alive or dead. Years have passed, but they are still facing the brunt of violence (B. A. Dar, 2016).

Literature Review

In Kashmir, the military conflict has turned violent over the last few decades. Local Kashmiris' daily lives are being harmed as a result of the insurgency and intense militarization. Despite the obvious physical crimes, such as multiple rape cases against the Indian armed forces and the killings of militants and civilians, there are numerous explicit consequences of conflicts that involve the mental trauma of living in a conflict zone (United Nation Human Rights, 2011). In response to Kashmir's long-standing demands for self-determination, India has deployed 700,000 Indian armed forces personnel to crush their desire for freedom (Ashraf, 2016). During this time, the armed forces have committed numerous war crimes in Kashmir, including extrajudicial custodial killings, enforced disappearances, mass graves, and sexual violence.

Women in Kashmir have been on the receiving end and the tragedy of women in Kashmir dates to the 1989 insurgency (Batool, 2017) (Ganguly, 1996). Kashmiri women are projected as victims while coping with their personal struggles both at private and public levels. Women experience multifaceted responses to the military conflict, and their roles should be brought into focus as part of the core of the Kashmir militancy war (Wani, 2020). Furthermore, the armed forces have used rapes against Kashmiri women, and the figures are alarming. Even though these cases have been documented by international investigative organizations such as Human Rights Watch and Physicians for Human Rights, most of such cases continue to go unreported (Bhartiya Stree Shakti, 2017). The United Nations condemned violence against women in Kashmir in 2002, highlighting how rape and humiliation of women are used as an "instrument of war." Women and children continue to be the most vulnerable during times of conflict, as they are made to suffer a

disproportionate burden (Leandro, 2013).

During a crisis situation, cases were reported where pregnant and unwell women were unable to reach or have access to hospitals due to the state-imposed curfews. The military occupation has taken its toll on women in every way, whether it is affecting their right to basic amenities or their larger freedom to live a life with dignity, free of fear of being arrested and fear of violence (Bhartiya Stree Shakti, 2017). Women have battled the socio-economic and health consequences of the conflict by losing breadwinners to a bullet or to the oblivion of a disappearance (Pandith & Chitra, 2019).

Women, on the other hand, have learned to deal with the issue over time. The scope of the Kashmir conflict and its ramifications have inadvertently fueled the growth of resistance groups and fighters. For example, the Women's Self Defense Corps is a non-profit organization that promotes self-defense and registers women for training (Whitehead, 2017). They also advocate for increased civil liberties and rights for Kashmiri women by revisiting long-standing social and cultural issues such as poverty and cultural hegemony. The invasion of women in these spaces means that more voices of women are being included, not as mothers, daughters, and sisters as they have been for years, but as independent individuals equally or more affected by occupation within an agency of their own, speaking for themselves, women standing for women creating endless solidarity, a forceful shouting of narratives and resisting in multiple roles, keeping the resistance movement's backbone intact (Batool, 2017). In addition, women have been seen on the roads more frequently in recent years, expressing themselves and shouting *azaadi* slogans (freedom). WOMEN FOR PEACE and other initiatives have worked tirelessly in addressing and bringing women's rights issues to the forefront (Sewak, 2004).

Objectives of the Study

- To systematically review the manifestation and prevalence of violence against women in Kashmir.
- To study the role of the state in perpetrating the violence.
- To study women rights violations in the conflict zone.
- To provide policy recommendations to address the issues of violence against women in conflict zone.

Method

The latest articles on women's struggle in the Kashmir militant war date till 2021. A thorough Scopus and Google Scholar search was conducted using the search string: [TITLE/ABSTRACT] OR "Women" "Struggle" OR "[TITLE/ABSTRACT] OR "Women" "Kashmir" "Conflict" "Victim" OR [TITLE/ABSTRACT/KEYWORD]. This is a Boolean Search (Beal, 2020). A total of 36,000 articles were available on women's struggle in the Indian context and 1,200 research papers were available in the Kashmir context. The articles were downloaded and stored in the reference management software, Zotero. The discussion below was formed after reviewing the 1,200 research papers/articles along with relevant newspaper articles.

Discussion

Half widows of Kashmir

The military conflict of Jammu and Kashmir has resulted in the forcible disappearance of thousands of married men, leaving their wives with a new fractured identity as 'half widows'. A half widow is a term used for the women of Kashmir whose husbands have disappeared and are

still missing under the ongoing Kashmir militant war (Qutab, 2012). People say that the men who were someone's husbands were either abducted by unknown forces or killed in combat when they came face to face with the Indian troops in their hideouts. Women are still unaware of their husbands' whereabouts, whether they are alive or dead, whether they should be called a widow or half widows (Mushtaq, 2007). Since 1989, there has been upheaval by armed rebellions. Almost 70,000 people, mostly civilians, have been killed in the disputed territory (Fareed, 2017). And the conflict has resulted in unsolved untold miseries and misfortunes of women whose husbands have disappeared (Umar, 2013). Aside from the uncertainty about the existence of loved ones, they do not receive official recognition of their status because there is no proof of their husbands' death. Under these conditions, women are under intense pressure to take over the role of breadwinner for their families. Throughout the process, the struggle between new rules and responsibilities on one hand and their vulnerabilities and deficiencies on the other is evident (Zahar & Muzamil, 2014).

Psychologically and emotionally, these women are living two lives: one in which they are propelled to believe that their husbands will return home one day, and another in which they must accept the possibility that their husbands may never return during the conflict (Noor, 2020). Initially, it was assumed that these war widows displayed symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) (Housen et al., 2019). However, this diagnosis has recently been debunked and replaced by the term "ambiguous loss", which identifies the sources of stress as external, outside, ongoing pressure. Amid their suffering over the ambiguous loss, women endure the agony of searching—often in vain—for four years (Hamid et al., 2021).

Cultures forbid them from remarrying without labeling the relationship as adulterous. Although Islamic law encourages remarriage, there was no agreement among various sects on the issue of remarriage of half widows (Mushtaq, 2007). In 2013, Islamic scholars ruled that widows can remarry after four years from the date of disappearance. However, few half-widows remarry (Staff Reporter, 2013). Some are concerned about the social stigma, while others are concerned about the fate of their children. The issue of remarriage is fraught with guilt, as many half-widows feel guilty about moving on with their lives. Women also fear being excluded from their social network because society is unwilling to accept their choice of remarriage (Bashir, 2011).

Moreover, half-widows suffer as non-widows because they cannot prove their husband's death. They are unable to access their husband's property, bank account, and insurance because they failed to provide the death certificate (Bhattacharya, 2015). They frequently face barriers to benefit, such as life insurance and government assistance programs. According to Muslim Law, a person cannot be declared dead until seven years from the time of disappearance (Uddin, 2021).

Till date, the officials are yet to figure out the exact figures on the half widows of Kashmir but a report responding to gender violence in Kashmir by human rights group in the region of Jammu and Kashmir Coalition of Civil Societies (JKCCS) estimated the number of half widow is around 1500 (Crew, 2016). Another report prepared after a survey in Kashmir's Baramullah district have found out that 2700 unnamed, mass graves have been identified in 2009. Therefore, at times the women assume that their husband must be buried in the mass graves, but they are yet to identify the grave (Peer, 2017).

Armed Forces Special Power Act (AFSPA) in Kashmir

The Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA) is legislation passed by the Government of India in the "disturbed area" of India's Northeast region since 1958, and in Jammu and Kashmir since the 1990s (Amnesty International, 2005). It has been in effect without a break for the past three decades. The Armed Forces Special Powers Act of 1958 is an Indian act that grants the Indian

armed forces special powers to maintain public order in a disturbed area. Several sections have criticized the act for an alleged concern over violations of human rights in the enforced area. AFSPA has become a permanent feature, though originally intended for a limited period (Wani & Desai, 2018). It bypasses the constitutional safeguards which are granted to its citizen, is the main concern with that act. Section 4 of the Act allows military officers to arrest any person who is reasonably suspected of committing a recognizable crime. Section 6 gives immunity to the armed forces exercising their duty by the act of prosecution or legal proceedings (Khosla, 2019). A military officer on site has the authority to make subjective evaluations which could lead to loss of life to potential innocents. AFSPA is regarded as a “draconian act” (Jaiswal, 2021). Civilians have been shot by security forces as a result of the act. Even the army has admitted that the excess power to shoot has resulted in errors, referring to this as an “error of judgment”. Many cases have come to light in which the law's enabling provisions were abused to cover up crimes against women (Fareed, 2017).

Brute Forces of AFSPA against Women

The cases of sexual violence in the valley of Kashmir depict a clear picture of intimidation and threat that the government, police, and military health deployed so the cases do not reach the trial stage. It was in the year 1991 when the army disturbed their lives, dignity, and privacy. They use the potent tool of repression in political conflict- rape, humiliation, and sexual torture. The use of sexual violence in war is neither a question of sex or lust or incident (Pervez, 2015). When a large number of soldiers lay a seize in the village, separate the woman from the men, and sexually assault them, it is indicative of brute military practices. Women have suffered as a result of the draconian act in the conflict-torn Kashmir Valley. Soldiers raped around 30 women in Kunan-Poshpora twin villages in Kashmir's Kupwara district on February 23, 1991. There have been several other incidents in which women in Kashmir have been humiliated as a result of the political conflict, including rape, sexual humiliation, sexual torture, and even murder. From rape in 1991 to the rape of a Kashmiri woman, AFSPA has harmed women in the country (Saha, 2016). The law has exacerbated mass alienation to a greater extent because people believe it empowers the military, which commits human rights violations (Saikia, 2014).

The main cause of the dichotomy between the masses and the military is AFSPA (Ganai, 2015). People have begun to question the act, believing that it is simply a license to kill, torture, arrest, and rape. Many cases have come to light in which heinous provisions of the law were abused to hide crimes against women (Parvaiz, 2015). Issues arose when despite allegations of crimes being reported in the media, the government refused to sanction prosecution. Even outside of troubled areas, women face a slew of obstacles when seeking justice in cases involving molestation or harassment. In addition to the patriarchal nature of society, the reason includes social stigma, male dominance in police forces, the burden of proof, and the slow justice process (Sharma, 2015). When the crime is allegedly committed by the defenders of the law, there is an additional risk of physical security in troubled areas. There is no denying the fact that the shadow of the act is used to commit and then cover up crimes against women (Ahlawat, 2020). There have been numerous reports of torture and arbitrary detention. Thousands of people have also gone missing in Kashmir since the conflict started. Many believed they were killed and ended up in unmarked graves, which security forces claim are the burials of unidentified militants. Human rights organizations have called for an independent investigation and forensic testing to determine the identities of those buried, but the government has yet to respond (Cathy, 2012).

The issue with such acts is that when the perpetrators of human rights violations are not

held accountable by the state. The state fails to prosecute due to a lack of capacity or will, which is often for political reasons, such as state support for the abuse or to protect high-ranking officials. Furthermore, the act has been granted legal immunity, making it even more difficult or impossible to prosecute the perpetrators for human rights violations (Peerzada, 2012). India's constitution contains several such provisions aimed at shielding its military personnel and civilian officials from legal accountability. An act like AFSPA violates their right to redress and their reputation for gross violations of international human rights law (Adrianwalla, 2012).

Human Rights Violation in Kashmir

India advances and establishes itself as a prominent state actor, but the fact remains that grave human rights violations are occurring in Kashmir. In Kashmir, the Indian army and its local agents have committed and sponsored/supported widespread human rights violations (Pal & Bukhari, 2019). Increasing evidence suggests that women experience conflict differently than men, which is supported by experts in the field. Almost every armed conflict has an impact on society, but not all of them in the same way. Mostly because women are particularly vulnerable, they suffer more than men in almost every armed conflict (Batul, 2020). Unfortunately, Kashmir has seen a lot of violence in recent years, and while it continues to affect all of Kashmir's people, women bear the scars of violence more deeply than men. One reason women are the "Prime Targets" in violent conflicts is that they are seen as markers of community identities, and by targeting women, the perpetrators target the community as a whole, its honor, symbols, and prestige (Mohiuddin, 1997). In Kashmir, the media and human rights organizations have exposed widespread molestation and rape of women by both security forces and militants. There have also been cases where family and/or community members "eliminated" women who had been abused during the armed conflict. For women, potential perpetrators of violence against them include not only the state and militants but also members of the community and family. Aside from rape and molestation, women have been subjected to forced prostitution, sexual slavery, and impregnation or termination of pregnancy without, of course, the protection of the rule of law. In almost all these cases, the state has remained a bystander, failing to provide any sense of protection to women (Shah, 2020).

Even when women are not direct victims of violence, they are affected by it. The destruction of many homes in Kashmir has resulted from violent conflicts, and for many women, the loss of the breadwinner in their families. Since the resurgence of violence in Kashmir, there has been an increase in the number of female-headed households. The number of female-headed households in Kashmir is increasing on a regular basis, owing to deaths in the conflict as well as desertion and abandonment by men (Farah, 2014).

In the year, 1992 Asia Watch and Physicians for Human Rights (PHR) came to Kashmir to document sexual violence and other abuses of human rights. They investigated the rape and other sexual violence committed by the Indian Military Forces and they condemned that these crimes are a violation of human rights and humanitarian law (Krishnan, 2017). Reports of rape have become more frequent, since the crackdown against the militant. Rape of women occurs mostly during search operations, crackdowns, and cordons. In most cases, the civilians are punished by beating or assaulting the resident or burning their homes (Pervez, 2014).

With granting the armed forces special power, the Right to Life and Right to property have been curtailed in the state of Jammu and Kashmir. Power without responsible brings massive destructions to human lives and this is exactly what Jammu and Kashmir are going through (Saxena, 2019). The second report of Asia Watch and PHR hopes to bring international focus on the use of rape as a tactic in the war in Kashmir and also on the policies of the government which

allowed the security forces to believe that they can commit any crime without having to answer any of them. Though over the period, human rights groups and international press have reported violence of rape and other sexual violence by the Indian Military Forces and power of The Armed Forces (Special Power) Act (AFSPA) still prevail in the valley of Kashmir, violating the rights of human (Crossette, 1992).

Abrogation of Article 370 and its Effect on Women

Article 370 of the Indian constitution granted special status to Jammu and Kashmir, which is administered by India as a state from 1954 to 2019, granting it the authority to have a separate constitution, a state flag, and autonomy over the state's internal administration. Article 370, Part XXI of the Indian constitution titled "Temporary, Transitional, and Special Provisions". Recently, the Indian government decided to remove article 370 from Kashmir on 5th August 2019 (Seikh, 2019). Abrogation of Article 370 removes the special status granted to the state of Kashmir. The Indian government stated that they decided to remove Article 370 from Kashmir because the article stifled state progress. After all, the investment rate was too slow to meet local demand. The article was removed without any consultation or prior notice to the Kashmiri people (Srivastava, 2019). This has led to huge instability and insecurity in the state. In 2018, the region experienced 134 communication disruptions to prevent protests against the Indian government. The current situation has exacerbated democracy and security by causing a communications blackout. Even with partial restorations, access remains restricted, with an estimated 12.5 million people still without power. This is a violation of the right to information at a crucial stage in Kashmir's history. Furthermore, government directives have rendered officers unarmed and powerless. Police officers are trusted by their communities to protect them, but now they are distrusted by the senior federal officials and the local population (Lalwani & Gayner, 2020). Also, with the sudden removal of the article, the women's community has been put in a vulnerable position (Rafiuzzaman, 2020).

Persisting Misogyny

Kashmiri women are frequently objectified in public by politicians and the media. Leaders of the central government have stated that they want to emancipate Muslim women, but they have also made misogynist remarks about them. Following August 5th, there was an increase in sexualization and objectification of Kashmiri women (Reuters, 2019). As a preventative measure against gender-based violence, women avoid going outside in the wake of the ongoing conflict. Gender-based violence, which is common during such sieges, has been previously reported by Kashmiri women. Members of the Communist Party of India (CPIM) and activists reported that women and girls were extremely anxious about the presence of paramilitaries and the military in Kashmir. One of the arguments put forwarded by the Indian Government while scrapping Article 370 was that it would lead to gender equality and upliftment of women in the Muslim-majority region. But days later, a politician from the same ruling party made a sexist comment saying, 'Indian men can have Kashmiri bride now' (Bhat, 2019). Misogyny spread online as well, with similar posts on social media networks. According to a report, after the article was removed, the phrase "How to marry a Kashmiri woman" became increasingly popular on Google. The way Kashmiri women are exoticized and objectified daily in India, their bodies portrayed as vulnerable and used to inculcate fear and intimidation, has heightened the sense of being preyed upon (Mushtaq, 2019).

Another issue that has come to the forefront is that after Kashmiri's special constitutional status ended in August 2019, the government disbanded the Women's Commission Cell in

Srinagar. Filing a complaint at the police station is a daunting task for many women. Given the scarcity of women's police stations in the former state, activists, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) working on gender issues in Kashmir saw the Commission as a viable alternative for women to come forward and report abuse (Athavale, 2020). Under Article 370 of the Constitution, the government stripped Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) of their special status and divided the restive state into two union territories. The Women's Commission, along with six other commissions, including those dealing with human rights, right to information (RTI), and disabled rights, were disbanded overnight, and approximately 160 special laws that applied to the former state were repealed (Javed, 2021). By abolishing the Women's Commission, thousands of women's only hope of providing for themselves and their children were gone. Lakhs of women, whose cases were pending before the Commission, feel abandoned and neglected now. Women in Kashmir are now facing severe hardship as a result of the Women Commission Cell's absence. Even when J&K was a state, redress for victims of violence was difficult, but the Commission provided some hope. Now, with violence against women reportedly on the rise across the country as a result of the Covid-19 lockdown, few or no places can offer help or any form of assistance (Nababi, 2020).

Policy Recommendation

1. Setting up the Women's Commission Cell in Kashmir

A Women Right Commission for the protection of women's rights should be set up in the state of Jammu and Kashmir. It must function in a quasi-judicial manner and must be vested with the power of a civil court relating to evidence matters. The main purpose of re-establishing the Women's Right Commission is to create an independent body that would work as a watchdog or guardian for women as many women are still unaware of their rights under the usual mechanisms. The cell must review the existing legislation in the state affecting women; make recommendations to the government on improving the social conditions of women, taking up cases of violations of women's right, welfare or providing reliefs and aid to women and also take up research and funding litigation involving issues affecting a large number of women.

2. Include Female Police Personnel in Jammu and Kashmir Police Forces

One of the main reasons why women in Kashmir suffer in silence is because most of the cases are under-reported. And there have been instances where the victim has refused to approach the police because they are male, and the victims are uncomfortable in discussing their physical assault in front of a male police officer. Therefore, this is one of the many reasons that cases of violence against women are not registered. Under the Jammu and Kashmir Police Act, 1983, the Special Woman Police Taskforce can be set up to address the issue. The police force can be vested with the power to act immediately once the complaint is registered. Deploying Women's Police patrol vehicles along with a helpline number by the government will also help.

3. Ensure Legal Provision for widowed and Half-Widowed Women

According to the Jammu and Kashmir Succession Act of 1956, when a male dies his property should be divided among his heirs. However, none of these provisions recognize 'half-widows' as legal heirs of their husband's property. Thus, there is no remedy provided in the Jammu and Kashmir Succession Act, 1956 for the half-widows to claim their

husband's property. Half-widows are not a legally recognized term but is coined by the general society to refer to a married woman in Kashmir whose husband's whereabouts are unknown. Therefore, the government must recognize 'Half-Widows' and legally help them to acquire their share in the husbands' assets. Also, the law must provide security to the 'half-widow' and her children from the atrocities of her in-laws after the death or disappearance of her husband.

4. *Hold Accountability of the Armed Forces*

If the army knew they would be charged, have to go to court, and be prosecuted, they would think ten times before shooting an innocent person. Section 6 of the AFSPA, which grants security personnel virtual immunity from prosecution for alleged human rights violations, has been widely criticized as an excuse for army excess power. For example, security forces can shoot to kill, detain suspects without trial, and make arrests without a warrant. There is no such thing as a perfect law, and there is always room for improvement. The AFSPA act itself can be improved by increase in their transparency and accountability. One of the most significant amendments could be to remove terms from the act such as "even to cause death," which are frequently misconstrued and used as a source of propaganda. Second, actions taken by the army to punish the guilty must be made available to victims to help bring cases to a respectful conclusion. AFSPA should be made accountable to the people and must be punished if proven guilty

Conclusion

The women of Kashmir have fought a long battle against the military forces. They have been tormented emotionally and physically. They have been immensely affected. Many agencies including the international agencies have documented sexual exploitation, torture and rape against the innocent daughters, mothers, sisters and wives. There are also allegations of constant eve-teasing by the military forces. There are only few cases that have come under the media attention but there are hundreds of cases which are still unheard because the society reacts violently towards the victims and also the victims are slut shame. The various military forces using AFSPA as a shield have committed numerous brutal crimes, but it is difficult to convict them as the civil courts are not allowed to intervene in such cases and led to mount the anger towards the military.

The condition of women in the valley of Kashmir can only be improved when the law and regulations are directed towards the betterment, safety, and security of women. The women of Kashmir have fought hard against all the odds. But Resilience and empowerment are interrelated. Empowerment enhances resilience and empowerment needs internal and external support both. Women of the Valley are resilient but more because of inherent hardship being faced by them rather than measures taken by the system for their empowerment. The condition of the Kashmiri Women can improve with educational, health and economic empowerment, legal and psychosocial counselling aligned with campaigns against stereotype patriarchal mentality can change the future of the valley.

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