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# THINKING OF WOMEN'S ROLE IN THE PEACE PROCESS WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO THE KASHMIR CONFLICT

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#### **Abstract**

This paper will evaluate women's political participation and their role in the peace process. Using the electoral data from 1972 to 2014, the paper will show as to how women in J&K remain underrepresented in the decision making positions and have a very poor record of their visibility at the level of leadership. Very few women contest elections and still fewer women are elected and are part of the process of governance. In fact the situation is so precarious that the electoral politics of the state can be termed as completely in the control of men. This is despite the fact that the state had a gender-friendly ideological base of its politics. The New Kashmir Manifesto which represents the ideological ethos not only of National Conference but of the Kashmiri society as a whole, and made special mention of rights of women and had even incorporated a separate charter for women with forward looking agenda for them. However, the question of women's representation had largely remained unaddressed. Although every political party had a women's wing, yet, the presence of women is minimal at the decision making committees. There are few individual women who play some role in electoral politics. Since 1999, MsMehboba Mufti has been leading the PDP. However, her presence also has not made much impact on the prevalent political culture which inhibits the participation of women in leadership positions. Other than Mehbooba Mufti, there is not a very big presence of women even in the PDP. Similar has been the situation of NC which had Begam Abdullah as patron of the party and also as MP. However, on the whole, the NC also has remained a male dominated party. While analysing the limited role of women leaders in the electoral politics, this paper would pose the question of their role in peace making processes, with special reference to the Kashmir conflict. It will identify the different trajectories through

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which women's role in the peace process can be identified. It will also analyze the peace building initiatives so far and the role of local women in these initiatives.

## Introduction

Peace, as Johan Galtung (2015: 3) had pointed out, 'is a positive relation between parties, of union, togetherness. The condition for peace is mutual respect, dignity, equality, and reciprocity; in all three areas, spirit, or culture, mind, or polity, and body, or economy'. At the international level, there has been consensus that women should be included in all peace talks. UNSCR 1325 acknowledges the disproportionate impact of violent conflict on women and recognizes the critical roles women can and should play in the processes of peace building and conflict prevention. These include participating in peace talks, conflict mediation and all aspects of post conflict reconstruction. Since the adoption of ECOSOC agreement conclusions 1997/2 the United Nation system has given more systematic attention to the interpretation of gender perspective in peace operations. The adoption of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on women peace and security is a path breaking endorsement of women's inclusion in the peace process. It calls for interpretation of a gender perspective in peace keeping operations when negotiating and implementing peace agreements in humanitarian activities and in planning for disarmament, mobilization and reintegration and reconstruction efforts.

Women's organizations are interrogating the traditional view of peace. It is argued that Peace is not just the absence of war. There could be no peace even if there is no violence at all. Violence can be done to a person by depriving her/ him basic rights essential for leading a dignified life, Women's socially subordinate role places them at the risk of gender based violence, at the same time it is invisible. Violence against women is a universal reality but the extreme violence that women suffer is directly related to the violence that exists in women's everyday life in "peace times" be it physical, structural or cultural. The violence against women in conditions of conflict stands in a continuum alongside the violence experienced by women in 'normal' conditions (Manchanda, 2005). According to Caroline Moser, social violence has political and economic aspects. Violence against women with sexual control and allocation of resources are undoubtedly an aspect of political and economic violence (Moser and Clark,2001). The greater is the gap between the actual and potential, the greater the invisible violence. The irony is that what goes into

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preventing war or building co-operation is not seen as a peace. As if peace can't precede war, as if peace must always follow. Thus, peace should be conceptualized not in a negative sense as absence of war, but one must look at a broader connotation of positive peace. And, this positive peace should include social security, economic equality, political stability and environmental stability.

This paper has been divided into four sections. The first section deals with women's political participation in Jammu and Kashmir. Women's role in the peace process has been elaborated in the second section. The third section evaluates the Women's role in the Kashmir conflict. The following fourth section deals with Conclusion.

I

# Women's Political Participation in Jammu and Kashmir

Women's role in politics and peace processes had been a subject matter of debate in contemporary discourses on gender and peace. Women have been kept out of the political domain in the past. India is no exception; here also they were not welcomed at the helm of political affairs. But the state of Jammu and Kashmir is such where the sensitivity towards issues related to the marginal groups, including women can be traced back to the preindependence period. The status of women in Kashmir has also been defined by the patriarchal nature of society as elsewhere in India. Due to demographic heterogeneity in the state, women are governed by a different set of norms and value pattern operating at various levels of culture, religion and region. Inthe state of Jammu and Kashmir, Kashmir had relatively speaking a tradition of reasonably high level of political awareness, political consciousness and political mobilization. Some of the oppressive practices of northern India were not practiced in Kashmiri society. Making a case of Kashmir being an exceptional area, Ather Zia (2007) had argued that one do not find the kind of structured oppression of women in Kashmiri society as compared to the other north Indian states. The incidences of female infanticide or widow oppression are much lesser in Kashmir. While, the upper class women were bound with the relatively strict patriarchal norms, the women from the working classes were relatively speaking in a better off situation (Zia, 2007).

Mostly women from the lower stratas of the society enjoyed the freedom to move around. The practice of purdah (veiling) was not applicable to them as they were actively

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involved with their men folk in the fieldand in the productive activities. 'Most of the women across the valley have always been engaged with the historic cottage industry of spinning (pashmina and other famous yarns). This vocation was pursued within the confines of their homes, in tandem with tending to house and children, never leaving the premises except to procure raw material' (Zia, 2007).

The type of political mobilization, which took the form of political movement in 1930's and 1940's, has initiated the process of political transformation in the State, in which the focus was on rights and ideals of equality. The ideological manifestation of this movement is to be found in the 'New Kashmir Manifesto', which had the agenda of total restructuring of the Kashmir society, polity and its economy. The National Conferenceled by Sheikh Abdullah had initiated this movement, had evolved radical ideology and had organized the political consciousness of Kashmir around the basic socio-economic issues. The exploitation of peasantry, workers and artisans' classes had been the basic concern of the party. In response to the existing demands of the masses, the party had articulated the idea of restructured Kashmiri society in this manifesto (Jammu and Kashmir National Conference - New Kashmir Manifesto, 1944). It aimed at bringing about a democratic framework of governance, a radical reorganization of agrarian structures and social justice to its classes and masses.

The New Kashmir Manifesto had developed a perspective which was quite broad. The preamble of this manifesto defined its scope to include socio-economic and political issues and declared its purpose as the attainment of equality, liberty and overcoming the 'abyss of oppression, poverty and degradation...' the gender question being an essential part of the manifesto was addressed not only through the concepts of equality and justice but also through the 'Women's Charter', which specifically laid down the rights and privileges of women in Kashmir. This Charter declared its purpose 'to help women in the attainment of their just, equal and rightful place in the society and to enable them to make their full contribution to the task of nation building'. It promised complete equality for women in all fields of life including political, social and economic. The charter was broad enough to provide for equal rights to women in the administrative and political bodies. It aimed at laying down the condition for ensuring their active participation. It incorporated a provision of reservation of seats for them, '...provision shall be made for their (women)

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minimum representation through reservation of seats'. It also favoured 'substantial equality' for women and special facilities for them as follows:

- Ante-natal and maternal facilities.
- Adequate arrangement for nursing during maternity period.
- Maternity leave for all working women.
- Nurseries and kindergarten shall be set up for children of working women.
- Leave to feed the suckling children after every four hours during the working period (New Kashmir Manifesto, 1944)

It also addressed questions like immoral traffic in women, the right to consent for marriage, abolition of dowry and cultural development of women. As is clear from the following:

- The status of women should be protected by law, socio-economic causes of immoral traffic in women shall be examined and measures shall be taken for its complete ratification.
- Every woman shall have the right to consent for marriage. Dowry system shall be abolished through social awakening and direct legal provisions.
- Special provisions shall be made for the cultural development of women in the villages and remote areas (New Kashmir Manifesto, 1944).

The Charter committed to the universal suffrage for women above the age of 18 years; right to be elected as members in elected institutions; right to have all matters concerning women that are decided by elected organs of the state to be adopted after due consideration with the representatives of the women; right to employment in all the departments of the state. Among other commitments included those related to the same wages as men for similar work; right to follow any trade or profession that women are capable of according to their will and consent; to the women working in industries; same social insurance schemes as available to men; special rights for antenatal and post natal care and medical help; paid maternity leave for six months prior and six months after the delivery; baby care and kindergarten facility etc. among the social rights of women included legal protection to the status of women; protection from trafficking and prostitution; the special care of

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problems of women belonging to the backward tribes and backward regions of the state. The charter also provided legal and educational rights of women. The legal rights included the right to choose husband according to her own will; abolition of dowry system; right to get divorce or separation; equal and humane treatment of women prisoners. The educational rights included compulsory and free education for all women, mobile schools for nomadic and schools in boats for boat women; scholarship for all girls at all levels(New Kashmir Manifesto, 1944). These goals were incorporated in the constitution of the state as well. The Directive Principles incorporated in the state constitution were much wider than those incorporated in the Indian Constitution.

Such a perspective was in line with the peculiar nature of Kashmir politics, which had a social purposiveness and was in tune with the nature of political participation of Kashmiri women who from the very beginning had been equal participant in the political movement of the time. This radicalized tradition of Kashmiri politics initiated in the 1930's and 1940's continued for some time even in the post-independence period. It was in this direction that some of the most progressive land reform legislations were passed in the state.

Despite the radical orientation of the tradition of Kashmir's politics and sufficient scope for women in politics and despite the initial sensitivity to the gender question, in however limited form it may be, the post independent scenario of Kashmir politics neither addressed the gender question in Jammu and Kashmir nor provides a conducive environment for women in politics. In a state where women came out and equally shared with men the political space of Kashmir, the thing did not turn out as expected for them. The role of women in the politics of the state could not result in greater public role for them. As the record of the post-1947 period reveals, women did not play any significant role in democratic politics. Though women were visible in the politics of agitation, yet they could not find place in power politics of the state(Jamwal, 2010).

Though from the very beginning women's political participation in the protest activities had been very high- they came out in large numbers to demonstrate and their vocal and physical as well as political visibility had been continuous and persistent. Yet as regards the formal participation, except for the voter participation, women are not visible in electoral politics. They have not emerged as a significant political constituency in the state. In the electoral politics, women are not visible beyond the level of voting. But, as

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Table 1 shows, even within the level of voting, there remains a gap between men and women. The electoral data available since 1972 brings out some clear trends in the context of female voters. The gap between the male and female voters was around 15% in 1972 was decreased in successive elections when sufficient progress was made in the voter turnout of women. In the last Assembly Elections of 2014, women outnumber men in voting turnout as the pan Indian phenomenon (Table-1).

Table 1: Men and Women Voters Voting Percentage – 1972-2014 Assembly Elections in Jammu & Kashmir

Year	Male Voters in %	Female Voters in %	Gap between Male	
			Voters and Female	
			Voters in %	
1972	69.27	53.92	15.35	
1977	73.14	60.39	12.75	
1983	75.56	70.48	5.08	
1987	78.65	70.36	8.29	
1996	60.57	46.08	14.49	
2002	48.26	38.27	9.99	
2008	63.25	58.86	4.39	
2014	64.85	66.27	-1.42	

**Source:** Election Commission of India – Segregated Data of different years compiled by the Author.

Beyond the voter participation, the visibility of women is quite negligible. Despite high level of political mobilization as mentioned earlier, women could not find place in competitive politics. Political parties have setup women's wing that have appropriated women without giving them much space in the higher echelons. However, the woman's wings in most of the political parties are of nominal significance and do not have much role to play in the crucial decision making within the party. The role of these is confined to the occasional rallies and public meetings of the party where the token presence of women is considered important. Even long association with the party does not bring them political returns and they are not seen as serious contenders for the party positions. The cadre and

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the leaders of the women wings are also placed quite low in hierarchy and women feel constrained within the large party framework. Very few women rise within the party and reach at the position where they can play a crucial role in the organizational set up of the party or where they can be considered as serious candidates for contesting elections. That is the reason that the number of women candidates in Assembly elections remains very small. Following is the data regarding the women candidates in the Assembly elections (Table2).

Table 2: Women candidates and their Percentage & Female Winners – 1972-2014 Assembly Elections in Jammu & Kashmir

Year	Total	Number of	Percentage	Percentage	Number of	Total	Total no. of
	Number of	Female	of Female	of Female	Women	no. of	Independent
	Candidates	Candidates	Candidates	Winners to	who	female	Female
				Total	forfeited	winners	candidates
				Female	deposits		
				Candidates			
1972	342	8	2.33	50	4	4	4
1977	409	4	0.97	25		1	1
1983	505	7	1.38		6	-	5
1987	528	13	2.46	7.69	11	1	9
1996	1027	15	1.46	13.33	5	2	3
2002	709	30	4.23	6.66	26	2	8
2008	1354	67	4.95	4.48	56	3	21
2014	831	28	3.37	7.14	25	2	7

Source: Election Commission of India.

The percentage of women contestants to total contestants has not exceeded 5% till the last Assembly Election. This itself is a reflection as to how the electoral process remain dominated by men. During 1972 Assembly election, only 8of the 342 candidates were women. The number of women contestants was smallest in 1977 when only 4 women joined the election fray. The percentage of women candidates was slightly increased in subsequent elections; however, their percentage remained quite minimal. In 1996, when number of candidates was increased twofold compared to 1983 and 1987 elections, the number of female candidates remained quite low. During 1996, there was less than 2% participation of women as contestants. Since this was the period of peak of militancy, not many women come forward to contest election. The number of women increased to 30 in

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2002. The highest number of women contested in 2008 when 67 women filled their form as contestants. The number of women who are elected as member of legislature is still more disappointing. While four women were elected in 1972, only onewoman could get elected in 1977. No women could win election in 1983 Assembly election. During 1987 Assembly Election, only one woman could win the election. Two female candidates each were elected in 1996 and 2002. Three women emerged as winners in 2008 and 2 in 2014. The poor representation of women in the Legislative Assembly has its implications for other decision-making positions. Not many women can make it to the position of ministry. After 1996 election, in the 24-member ministry, SakinaIttoo was the only woman minister who was having the rank of Minister of State. Though after 2014 assembly elections, Mehbooba Mufti became first women chief minister of the state.

Among the women contestants, there is large number whose deposits were forfeited. In 1972, while four contestants won the election, four had to forfeit their deposits. In 1983, six of the seven contesting female contestants lost their deposits. In 1987, eleven out of the thirteen candidates were forced to forfeit their deposits. In 1996, the situation of female candidates was much better since only one-third of the candidates, that is five out of the fifteen candidates forfeited their deposits. However, in 2002, the number of women contestants who forfeited their deposits was very high. As many as 26 out of thirty women candidates had to forfeit their deposits. As the number of women candidates increase to 67, so number of women who forfeited their deposits also increases to 56 in 2008. In 2014, out of 28 women contestants 25 had to forfeit their deposits.

Women's entry into the electoral politics was restricted after the onset of militancy in Kashmir. This is not to say that women were very much active in the party and electoral politics before the onset of militancy, and yet one can say that the situation become less conducive for women to join politics after militancy. Militancy pushed women back to their conventional roles. This might be the reason that we don't find many women who have been holding important political positions in the party or contesting election or joining the government. It appears that women's role in the decision making and at the elite level is negligible. As part of the highly mobilized and political conscious mobility women share the characteristics of exceptionally high level of participation, but we can't name many women who are active in electoral politics or who have independent political following of their own. The principle of nomination in the legislature brings some women

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at that level but they also failed to make a dent in active politics. Women in the leadership positions are nominated by the party leaders and more often they are relatives of male leaders of the party. The number of women who are elected as members of the legislatures is still more disappointing.

II

### Women's Role in the Peace Process

In order to understand the implications of women's role in the process of peace it is important to ask, how to make women's agency in peace building in conflict areas, how to make visible the role of women and their impact on the peace process. Peace is a dynamic, indivisible and holistic concept. It is inextricably linked to the equality between women and men. In the absence of peace and security, women as well as men are unable to participate in the political, economic and social development at the family, community and the national level(Seminar, 2011). Unfortunately, the role that women can play in maintaining peace has received very little attention. They continue to be excluded in the peace keeping efforts and their perspective and their concerns continue to be sidelined. Their concerns and suggestions too are relegated to the margins. Despite the fact that women can be best negotiators and peace makers they are rarely invited to lead the peace efforts (Chowdhary, 2011) Women make peace in the family, across the family and yet few names among the best-known peace makers are of women. Around the world, they have made critical differences in promoting peace, through informal peace initiatives as in Congo, Northern Ireland, Rwanda, Kosovo, Sierra Leone and even in Afghanistan. Even the Prestigious Nobel Peace Prize 2011was given to three women (Three women- Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, Africa's first democratically elected women president; Leymah Gbowee, Women's Rights Campaigner; and Tawakkol Karman, Female icon of the protest movement in Yemen received 2011 prestigious Nobel Peace Prize), who fought against injustice, dictatorship, and sexual violence. But the ground reality has not changed much.

Within India also, women are playing significant role in promoting peace in conflict ridden areas of Kashmir and Northeast. There are countless examples of women, who have intervened in conflicts in different capacities, but their stories and experiences have never been recorded and their efforts are not counted substantially. Generally, the conflict of all types continues to cause serious obstacles to the advancement of women. It has been argued that in the context of conflict situation of Jammu and Kashmir, what

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remains problematic in the context of gender is that women and their issues do not form the central form of discourse of conflict. Although cases related to the sexual abuse of women by the security forces and militants are the major issues. But the issues are seen more from the political perspective rather from the gender perspective. This lack of sensitivity towards the women's issues may be traced in the very nature of public debate that is obsessed with the political issues of all kinds. Even the public imagination does not stretch beyond the political issues and gendered causes and consequences of conflict are not given needed attention. If any group in the state is affected by the militancy, across the religious, community and regional lines, it is the group of women. Women have suffered in multiple ways because of militancy- they have been molested, and raped, they have been widowed, they have been displaced and they have been psychologically affected. It is difficult to differentiate the misery of women who have suffered the loss of her husband or children due to cross firing or due to the explosion of a bomb planted by the militants. It is also difficult to differentiate the sufferings of women who have been left to fend on their own for themselves and the sufferings of those who have been forced to live unsettled life due to the displacement they had from their native lands. And yet there is no serious debate on the effect of militancy on women. If the issue has become a matter of public debate, it has been raised in an isolated manner and has not been posed in its totality. In the whole scenario, the concern or empathy for women is missing. Analysis of numerous peace records reveals that this arena remains a male preserve (Coomaraswamy, 2005).

As the universality of the structural inequality between women and men remain a dominant ordering principle of society, the effect of conflict and violence can't be assumed to be same for women and men. The brunt of instability, armed conflict and violence was borne disproportionately by women. The first cost they have to pay is the damage to their health. The health consequences can also be fatal such as homicide, suicide, mortality maternal mortality and age-related mortality. One of the greatest consequences of violence against women is fear and chilling effect, it has on women's empowerment and mobility. Though women and children are worst affected in post conflict situation, little effort is made at addressing their major concerns. In numerous conflicts, the women's concerns are admitted as victim's only, requiring help, thus continuing to underplay their capacities and agency. The absence of women from the formal peace negotiations is all the more astonishing given the fact that women are increasingly parties to the conflict. In addition to

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be recruited into regular and irregular armed forces, they have also become powerful voices opposing conflict. For example, in Sudan, women and girls played active roles on the frontlines of the two north-south civil wars, both as combatants and peace activists (Foreign Service Journal, 2011). On the whole, their role as a potential perpetuator of violence as well as their capacity as leaders and administrator in development programmes is not sufficiently highlighted.

Probably, it is the traditional patriarchal structure with a demarcation of roles for women and men which keep the women away from politics. Women don't find a substantial place in mainstream politics as they are unable to attain position of significance. Under representation of women persists in the higher level of political and military hierarchies. So pervasive is the hierarchy governed by gender division that political processes and political institutions are influenced by such differences. It is because of the operation of gendered processes and institutions that images, symbols and ideologies reinforcing power versus powerlessness get legitimized. Segregation, exclusion and constructions of power relations based on gender are some of the mechanisms through which patriarchy expresses itself. It is the end product of patriarchy that one can findwomen being excluded from certain political and economic activities. Equally disturbing is the tendency to stress women's distinct relationship with nature, their compassion and capacity to care, love and nurture, continually seeking consensus and harmony (Manchanda, 2011). Such an essentialist orientation not only reduces and confines them as homemakers but creates a false dichotomy between women and men. Acknowledging the powerlessness and vulnerability of women, the involvement of women in the peace building process is considered necessary. Gender is a relevant dimension in peace building and women are essential components in implementing the outcomes of peace negotiations and rebuilding the community cohesion. Gender provides a common identity to women and through this common identity, they can bridge builders between the communities and regions, and they have the potential to give a new direction to the peace process. It is argued that unless women are seriously involved, there is not much possibility of sustaining peace processes. Bringing gender concerns at the centre of peace building process and redefining peace from the perspective of women are considered as the basic factors necessitating the participation of women in these processes and from the fact that they are equal citizens along with men and have equal stake in the peace process. There is

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a continuous need to complement the gender mainstream strategy with targeted interventions to promote gender equality and women's empowerment particularly where there are glaring instances of persistent discrimination of women and inequality between women and men.

Women are playing role in peace process, yet their role does not get appropriately recognized when formal processes are organized. Marginalization of women in the formal processes is due to the dearth of women in the leadership positions and due to relatively lower level of influence they have in active or competitive politics. Due to very few women in authoritative positions even if they manage to play a role in the peace negotiations, they tend to be relegated to background when it comes to rebuilding destroyed economies and restructuring the war-torn society. Men at the helm of affairs consider it as their prerogative to deliberate on these issues of national importance.

Ш

#### Women and the Kashmir Conflict

Though the conflict situation has started in Kashmir immediately after independence, women invented their own innovative ways of dealing with the situation since then, for example, in the wake of tribal invasion in 1947, women militia was formed which had a symbolic value for the Kashmir society. Women's self-defence corpse with its multifaceted and radical activities emerged as a harbinger of social change. Though they didn't actually entered the battlefield, yet they patrolled the city day and night with arms, kept vigil, guarded strategic bridges, approaches to the city, bank, offices, etc (Mistri cited in Khan, 2009). Zunni Gujjari, an ordinary gujjar woman was known to be a supporter of National conference and her participation in resistance of common woman. She was member of Women's Self-Defence Corps.

On the onset of militancy and separatist upsurge in the late 1980's, women of Kashmir emerged as a backbone of militancy as they glorified militants. They played a crucial role in legitimizing the armed militancy. "They considered the militants as their heroes, called them as 'our boys', sung songs in praise of them and were ready to provide whatever support they could. They gave them shelter when required and felt a sense of pride in having contributed to the 'cause'" (Chowdhary & Ubbot, 2016). In the laterperiod

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of militancy i.e. in the middle of the decade of 1990's, it is the same women who supported militancy in the earlier phase became instrumental in de-legitimising it. Very soon the romanticism was over when they bore the worst brunt of violence against them by the militants and security forces simultaneously."The armed militancy led to the militarization of society and deeply impacted the social and cultural processes. With an overwhelming influence of 'gun-wielding' people and their intervention in cultural, religious and social matters and the assertion of the masculinised discourse, women found space shrinking for them. Basically, it was the change in the nature of militancy that resulted in a change in their attitude towards violence as a means of political resistance" (Chowdhary & Ubbot, 2016). There was no organized resistance, not even a campaign in Kashmir against the fundamentalist forces. It was therefore at the individual level that the women offered their resistance to any attempt to intervene with the traditional freedom that they used to enjoy. They have shown their resilience through the period of conflict. The number of girls increased in all educational institutions including co-educational institutions. The presence of women can also be seen in all spheres be it scientific, technical and management related fields. In the post militancy period, the death of any local militant was not appreciated by women, rather register their emotional response. The political response of women was visible in the way they mourn the death of militant and consider him a 'martyr', but nevertheless, there is overall rejection of armed militancy.

Women used their agency in many ways. One of the ways in which the agency of women can be analyzed is in relation to participation of women in protest activities. They participated in mass demonstrations. Women negotiated for their husbands and sons. Whenever, men had been picked up by the security forces, women had to visit the police station or the army camp and pleadfor the release of their men (Chowdhary & Ubbot, 2016). Women also asserted their agencies silently both individually and collectively. When fundamental organisations try to impose moral codes for women, they resist in their on way. This becomes clear from the response of women to veiling and other dictates from fundamentalist forces from to time. It can be said that they adopted various strategies to cope with the pressure.

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# IV

# **Conclusion**

To conclude, one can argue that tapping women as a resource in peace building and reconstruction will not happen without including them at the level of policy making, planning and direction of peace process and reconstruction. WISCOMP (Women in Security, Conflict Management and Peace) is one of the major transnational peace-building initiativesestablished in 1999 to build bridges of cooperation and peace in the South Asian sub-continent. It seeks to relate peace and humane democracy and gender-based as well as gender-sensitive discourse on peace and security.

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