

## **Disasters in Kashmir: Impact & Response**

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**Abstract:** *The state of Jammu and Kashmir has a unique geographical personality. It is well endowed in renewable natural resources. Its mighty rivers, evergreen forest, snow covered peaks, invigorating climate and humane population are unparalleled in the world. The valley of Kashmir is famous for its beauty and natural scenery throughout the world. Its high snow-clad mountains, scenic spots, beautiful valleys, rivers with ice-cold water, attractive lakes and springs and ever-green fields, dense forests and beautiful health resorts, enhance its grandeur and are a source of great attraction for tourists.*

*The State is distinct from rest of the states in terms of its topography, climate, economy, social setting and because of its strategic location. Besides all this, the State is a multi-hazard prone region of the country. It has a long history of natural hazards like floods, famines, fires, earthquakes, high velocity winds and landslides. The earthquakes have a very high frequency of occurrence in whole of the State, incessant floods are recurrently occurring in the valley, high velocity windstorms occur in Ladakh and the valley while as landslides / avalanches is a widespread phenomenon in the hilly areas of the State.*

*Despite being so vulnerable and prone to disasters, there is no literature available on the subject. No serious research has been conducted in this direction so far. The purpose of this paper is to provide an overview of natural disaster scenario, to understand the historicity of disasters in Kashmir with their frequency, document the disaster mitigation mechanism in Jammu and Kashmir and to suggest measures for reducing vulnerability to hazards.*

**Keywords:** *Disasters, Kashmir, Earthquakes, Mitigation, vulnerability.*

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### **I. Introduction**

The state of Jammu and Kashmir has a unique geographical personality. It is well endowed in renewable natural resources. Its mighty rivers, evergreen forest, snow covered peaks, invigorating climate and humane population are unparalleled in the world. The valley of Kashmir is famous for its beauty and natural scenery throughout the world. Its high snow-clad mountains, scenic spots, beautiful valleys, rivers with ice-cold water, attractive lakes and springs and ever-green fields, dense forests and beautiful health resorts, enhance its grandeur and are a source of great attraction for tourists.

The State is distinct from rest of the states in terms of its topography, climate, economy, social setting and last but not least a strategic location. Besides all this, the State is a multi-hazard prone region of the country. It has a long history of natural hazards like floods, famines, fires, earthquakes, high velocity winds and landslides. The earthquakes have a very high frequency of occurrence in whole of the State, incessant floods are recurrently occurring in the valley, high velocity windstorms occur in Ladakh and the valley while as landslides / avalanches is a widespread phenomenon in the hilly areas of the State.

Despite being so vulnerable and prone to disasters, there is no literature available on the subject. No serious research has been conducted in this direction so far. The purpose of this paper is to provide an overview of natural disaster scenario, to understand the historicity of disasters in Kashmir with their frequency, document the disaster mitigation mechanism in Jammu and Kashmir and to suggest measures for reducing vulnerability to hazards.

The data pertaining to the topic has been extracted and researched from primary and secondary sources. Primary sources include books, manuscripts, texts, agreement documents, etc. while as secondary sources include diaries, magazines, books, articles, reports that analyze events and people in order to put them into a historical context, newspapers, Interviews of subject experts, etc.

Strategically located Jammu And Kashmir State constitutes the northern most extremity of India. The entire State lies between 32.17" and 36.58" North altitude and East to West, the State lies between 73.26" and 80.30" longitude. There are many low lying valleys in the state like Tawi Valley, Chenab Valley, Poonch Valley, Sind Valley and Liddar Valley, but the main Valley is the valley of Kashmir, which is 100 kms. wide and 15520.3 sq. kms. in area. Through this valley flows the river Jhelum with its tributaries. The height of the valley above sea level is about 1700 meters. The total area of the state is 2, 22, 236 sq kms including 78114 sq kms under the occupation of Pakistan and 37,555 sq kms under that of China. The state is bounded by Pakistan,