



ECONOMIC ASPIRATIONS AND RISE OF VIOLENCE IN KASHMIR: POTENTIAL INTERCONNECTIONS

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ABSTRACT

The paper is interwoven through three sections, wherein each section is inter linked to the rest, and is crucial in understanding the dynamics of different factors. The main aim of the paper is to understand how and what role does economy play in the rise of violence in the Kashmir region. The purpose is to understand the dynamics of development in Kashmir region after the postcolonial nation building – how it impacted the political dimension, what are the areas of mutual convergences and divergences. These questions play a significant part in understanding if and what was the role of economic factor in shaping the rise of violence in the Kashmir region. The paper focuses on the development of Kashmir region in the decades of 50s, 60s, 70s and 80s. To understand the interlink ages better, help of some elaborate narratives is taken from the field, addressing a distinct but related aspect of the political economy of Kashmir Conflict. Not dichotomy but dialogue is taken up as an approach in understanding the intersections between violence and the economic factor.

Keywords: Economy, Development, Violence, Region, Nation building

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this paper is to provide explanation of the inter-connectedness between the economic dynamics and the causes of separatism and rise of violence. The dynamics of uprising cannot be understood in isolation from the economic and political variables. By interweaving the economic dynamics of the Kashmir region with the periods of uprising one can get a deeper understanding of the connections and dis junctures between economic dimension and the rise of violence. Although economic factors do matter to violence dynamics, but there is a lack of clarity as how they matter, how much they matter and in what ways. An attempt will be made to ascertain whether the salience of economic variables among other fundamental causes/factors like repression, political exclusion, contests over power or the insecurity born out of ethnic issues.

1950's: DECADE OF LAND REFORMS

The decade of 1950s in Kashmir was a decade marked by Agrarian Reforms¹, led by Sheikh Abdullah. Land reforms which led to the abolishing of landlordism by distributing the land to the landless tiller were seen as a revolutionary step of correcting the historical wrongs against the landless peasants. The total cultivable area of the land belonged to the Maharaja and his privileged persons who included: muafidars, jagirdars and mukarraries. The privileges and benefits received by these classes were abolished by Sheikh Abdullah and his government. Passing of this Act (Big Landed Estates Abolition Act) led to the expropriation of 9,000 land owners (both in Jammu and Kashmir) who owned among themselves 8 lakh acres, without payment of compensation for the surplus land. Thus, 2.3 lakh acres were transferred to about 2 lakh tillers out of 4.5 lakh