



Echoes of Terror: The Silent Sufferings of Victims of Terrorism in Jammu and Kashmir

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Abstract

Terrorism is a global menace that has perturbed the entire world. It also had a profound impact, both directly and indirectly, on the people of Jammu & Kashmir for a long time. Terrorist groups reflect a radical ideology that has threatened the ordinary human being's mundane life. Violence against a few to place many in fear or kill one and frighten a thousand is firmly rooted in their minds. The use of illegal force and violence to gain political, economic, religious and social goals through fear and coercion is the foremost goal of terrorists. This paper seeks to explore the afflicted section of terrorism in J&K, which are less known in popular parlance. These affected sections are Jammu Migrants and Families of Martyrs of the Jammu and Kashmir Police. This paper aims to bring to attention the misfortunes and troubles these affected people in J&K have faced while surviving the terrorist attacks. It also highlights the hidden sufferings these affected people faced over the last few decades to protect what was left for them to bring about their survival.

Keywords: Jammu and Kashmir, Terrorism, Jammu Migrants, Families of Martyrs, and Sufferings.
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Introduction

Terrorists' acts are believed to be anti-social, anti-national, inhumane, heinous and antithetical to peace and tranquillity. Terrorists' activities have no logic behind their demands, no humanity, no philosophy, no concrete ideology; they are causing a nuisance in the world by their shallow mentality and abysmal deeds. They want complete subversion of society according to their own group laws. Each terrorist organisation in the world operates with a motive, i.e., subversion and destabilisation of the nation. Their interests are always in contrast to the dominant ideology of the system. They fulfil their abysmal deeds by controlling the minds of people to follow them and always target that section of society whose minds are obstructed and blindfolded from reality; those who cannot think beyond the circle become their easy targets (Jagmohan, 2017).

Terrorism has equally affected the people of Jammu & Kashmir (J&K) since independence. Jagmohan has said in the context of terrorism in J&K that "terrorism

does not happen by accident or by mere outside stimulus; it has a long gestation period. It makes its inroads slowly. If unchecked at the initial stage, it soon attains the takeoff stage, accelerates, gathers momentum, spreads in different directions, rolls over its victims, and destroys them ruthlessly. Like a blood-fed hound, it becomes more and more ferocious and gobbles up more innocent people. This is exactly what has happened in Jammu and Kashmir". Many factors led to the growth of terrorism in J&K, but the most important is the lack of belief in democracy, i.e. Islamisation and political vacuum of the erstwhile state. Mass killings in the name of religion, looting, plundering, rigging elections, threatening people to leave their native land and occupations, bomb blasts, armed violence and jihad all these led to initiation of terrorist activities in J&K. The death of Tikka Tal Taploo, advocate of High Court and Vice President of Bhartiya Janta Party, N.K Ganjoo district and session judge, P.N Bhatt well known journalist killed in Anantnag has fanned the terrorist's terror in J&K (Jagmohan, 2017).

If we read Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act amendment 2012 which says “whosoever does any act with the intent to threaten or likely to threaten the unity, integrity, economic security or sovereignty of India or with intent to strike terror or likely to strike terror on the people or any section of people in India or any foreign country, by using bombs, dynamites other explosive substances or firearms or lethal weapons or poisonous or non-poisonous gasses or other chemicals or any other substance because of which there is death, injuries to people, destruction of property, disruption of any supplies or services essential to the life of community in India or any foreign country and damage the monetary stability of India” is unlawful in the eyes of laws. Terrorism is such an unlawful activity that has been occurring in the land of Jammu and Kashmir for many decades. Training camps for arms, religious, physical and mental training were set up in Pakistan occupied Jammu and Kashmir (PoJK), the Pakistan-Afghanistan border, and other peripheral areas of Pakistan for the volunteers coming from India and the world to be trained for the global cause, i.e. terrorism. A business of producing trained sleeper cells in the form of jihadis was started in Pakistan, at the dictates of the Pakistani Army, with the motive to bleed India through a thousand cuts (Prakash, 2008; Jagmohan, 2017).

The Pakistan-recruited terrorists later crossed the Indo-Pak border. Border towards India to spread their network of terrorism and terror in the minds of people through relentless killing. Wherever these jihadi terrorists operate in the world, their delight in killing and displaying the slaughter of humans is pervasive. Gruesome murder and infliction of pain are celebrated and suggested as models, as exemplary actions pleasing to God and opening the gates to paradise, where 72 wives will be found. The psycho-cultural pre-condition for such disdain is due to the existence in the mind of the killers of an absolute, unbridgeable difference between themselves and those they kill: we (jihadi terrorists) are humans, and they (victims) are animals. Jihadi terrorists are taught to inflict pain and be the masters of life and death. *I kill;*

therefore I am’. Killing becomes the supreme expression of power (Murawiec, 2008).

When we look at the history of terrorism in J&K, it is believed that terrorism is valley-centric. However, it is partial to say terrorism has not affected the people of the Jammu division; they are also affected by this global menace. Violence, terrorism, untimely deaths and displacement are side by side phenomena where the former receive due attention, but the latter go unnoticed and remain invisible.

According to the sociologist Anthony Giddens, we are living in a ‘Risk Society’. He developed this term in the context of modern society, which has evolved due to the growth in science and technology. We have seen people exposed in modern society to a variety of risks, whether natural or anthropogenic, such as war. Due to globalisation, time has become spaceless and timeless, and hazards such as terrorism have emerged in the globalised world. Each day, new hazards build upon existing ones, and society adapts to cope with the new hazards and risks (Ritzer, 2011).

Forced displacement and untimely deaths while protecting the state are hazards of modern risk society due to another threat, namely terrorism. In J&K, thousands of people have faced forced displacement to escape the dark shadows of terrorism, to avoid slaughter, and to save their families and their souls; these are called Jammu Migrants. Another affected group, namely the Families of Martyrs of Jammu and Kashmir Police, have experienced untimely deaths while providing relentless service in the state. The paper has highlighted the challenges faced by Jammu Migrants post-displacement and the endless suffering faced by the grieving families of martyrs after the loss of their family member in encounters with terrorists.

Literature Review

The discourse around terrorism in Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) has been largely valley-centric, with a predominant focus on the Kashmir division, the exodus of Kashmiri

Pandits, and the insurgency post-1989. Scholars like Jagmohan (2017) and Prakash (2008) have extensively documented the ideological and geopolitical motivations behind terrorism in the region, emphasizing how religious extremism, cross-border infiltration, and a breakdown of democratic processes have contributed to decades-long unrest. These analyses rightly highlight the brutal nature of terrorism and the spread of jihadist ideology, particularly originating from Pakistan-sponsored groups, which aimed to disrupt the secular-democratic fabric of India.

However, there exists a significant gap in the academic and policy literature concerning other affected groups, such as Jammu Migrants—those displaced from hilly and peripheral regions of the Jammu division—and the Families of Martyrs from the Jammu and Kashmir Police (FoM), who continue to bear the emotional, economic, and social consequences of terrorism. Existing works and government reports, such as those by the Relief and Rehabilitation Office (2021), provide fragmented information about these groups, often treating them as peripheral to the larger Kashmir conflict.

Anthony Giddens' (as cited in Ritzer, 2011) theory of the "Risk Society" provides a sociological framework for understanding how modern threats—like terrorism—create conditions of chronic insecurity, forced displacement, and structural inequality. While this theoretical lens is widely applied in broader terrorism studies, its application to the specific context of Jammu & Kashmir's less visible victims remains limited.

The work of Khajuria (2017) and the intervention of political figures like Prof. Bhim Singh have brought some visibility to the legal and humanitarian demands of the Jammu Migrants. Yet, scholarly attention to their post-displacement struggles—ranging from health and education to identity and representation—remains sparse. Similarly, there is minimal academic engagement with the compounded challenges faced by the families of state security personnel martyred in terror-related

operations. While media coverage frequently acknowledges their sacrifices, systematic analysis of their socio-economic and psychological trauma is largely absent.

This study addresses these lacunae by focusing on the everyday suffering, institutional neglect, and structural challenges faced by these lesser-known victims of terrorism in J&K. It situates their experiences within the larger framework of citizenship, recognition, and justice, advocating for a more inclusive and nuanced understanding of victimhood in conflict zones.

Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative research design to explore the socio-economic, psychological, and political challenges faced by two less-discussed victim groups of terrorism in Jammu & Kashmir: The research is grounded in an interpretivist paradigm that seeks to understand the lived experiences, narratives, and perceptions of affected individuals through an empathetic and bottom-up approach.

Jammu Migrants

People from different terrorist hit regions in the valley, like Kashmiri Migrants, displaced due to terrorism in 1989-90, to safer places in Jammu division and other states like New Delhi, Mumbai, Himachal Pradesh, etc. They have some special needs because of their displacement, and each state where they were rehabilitated is providing them with all they can to make their survival easier. But despite all this, there are some people in the peripheral hilly region of the Jammu division, who have also faced forced displacement when Kashmiri Migrants were displaced from the Kashmir region. Such displaced families from the Jammu region remained unnoticed and less recognised, or a silent migrant community staying in the heart of the Jammu division and hoping for their rights to be protected for a long time. Thus, those families who belonged to peripheral hilly areas of Jammu division, displaced to Jammu division only because of terrorism, excluding the people of Kashmir division, are known as Jammu Migrants. The

major areas of displacement of Jammu Migrants were district Doda, Ramban, Kishtwar, Udhampur, Reasi, Rajouri, and Poonch (Ordeals of Jammu Migrants: From Frying Pan to Fire, 2010).

After migration, these displaced people get settled in various camps and non-camp areas in different areas of the Jammu division, like the majority of people are living at National Hydroelectric Power Corporation (NHPC) Colony, Talwara (Reasi district), Panthal (Reasi district), Belicharana (Jammu district), Udhampur, and Ramban (Relief and Rehabilitation (M) Office, Government of Jammu and Kashmir, 2021). The people from the above-mentioned areas faced displacement because they did not join hands with separatists, did not support their ideologies, and hence were subjected to migration and terror.

Their migration began in 1996 and continued until 1998, and then again in 2004 heavy displacement took place in the Jammu division. These people in the very beginning years of their displacement were not even acknowledged as migrants and were not assisted by the state or central government. However, it was only after the consistent efforts of Professor Bhim Singh, leader of the National Panthers Party (NPP) in J&K, that these people received some relief and rehabilitation from the central and state governments. Nevertheless, this assistance fell short of the turmoil faced by these migrants. Then, in the year 2004, the Supreme Court of India directed the state government that it couldn't have two sets of parameters for the same people of Jammu and Kashmir, and further directed the state government to treat Jammu Migrants at par with Kashmiri Migrants in terms of ration, relief, and cash assistance. Professor Bhim Singh also demanded that Jammu Migrants should be provided with all their arrears from 2004 to 2017, amounting to Rs 21 crores (Khajuria, 2017)

The Social, Economic and Political Challenges Faced by Jammu Migrants

Health Issues (physical, psychological, nutritional)

- Impact of climate variability on the lifestyle of displaced families
- Heatstroke
- Skin diseases
- Loss of appetite

Impact on Children

- Limited access to school;
- Loss of quality education
- Challenging to secure admissions
- Identity Issues
- Sense of uprootedness
- Marginalization

Political Issues

- Lack of representation
- Government indifference
- Voting Issues

Economic Issues

- Poverty
- Lack of economic opportunities
- Lack of life skills
- Insufficient earnings
- Issues related to Relief and Rehabilitation:
- Discrepancy in relief and ration
- Irregularity in the distribution of Ration

Kith and Kins of Martyrs of Jammu and Kashmir Police (FoM)

There is one more group of affected people in Jammu and Kashmir, about whom the media reports almost daily, security personnel being martyred. Throughout the history of terror attacks, India and J&K have faced numerous assaults, including the Indian Parliament attack of 2001, the Mumbai terror attack of 2008, the J&K Pathankot terror attack of 2016, the Pulwama attack of February 2019, and the Pahalgam attack of 2025. Many other terrorist incidents in Jammu and Kashmir have changed the lives of countless individuals. Thousands of soldiers in the State Forces have been killed and martyred during encounters with terrorists, risking their lives for the nation. Their

sacrifices leave behind grieving families who continue to suffer from the trauma of loss. The government attempts to support them through employment or compensation, but these measures often fall short of fully compensating for their loss. Administrative procedures are lengthy, bureaucratic, and slow, leaving families dissatisfied, whether regarding job placement or compensation, often delaying justice. As a result, many are forced to relocate from their native areas to protect their remaining loved ones and assets from terror threats, seeking a better life ahead. Their lives are struck twice by terrorism: once through the loss of a family member, and again by fighting the state procedures, which are lengthy and time-consuming, often driven by fear or the need to safeguard their future.

Challenges Faced by Families of Martyrs

The families of martyrs in Jammu and Kashmir endure a profound and enduring burden following the death of a loved one in the line of duty. A deep sense of insecurity often emerges after martyrdom, as the protective presence of the deceased officer—frequently the sole breadwinner—is suddenly lost. Many families experience disruption in their familial structures, particularly when extended relatives distance themselves due to fear of further threats or political complications. Social isolation is common, as the community often regards martyrdom with silent reverence but fails to provide long-term support to those left behind. The widows and children of martyrs live with chronic fear and anxiety, often unsure of their future in a region marked by ongoing conflict.

The emotional toll is compounded by a burdened existence, where grief is accompanied by economic distress. Despite government promises, many families receive inadequate compensation relative to the sacrifice made. Widows face significant adjustment challenges, especially if they were homemakers with little exposure to financial or legal matters. The sudden increase in financial responsibility forces many to seek informal work or rely on external aid. With limited

savings and few resources to fund children's education, many FoM are compelled to depend on loans, sometimes at exploitative interest rates. While some scholarships exist for martyrs' children, they are often limited, poorly publicized, or bureaucratically difficult to access. As a result, these families face a complex web of emotional, social, and financial vulnerabilities that remain insufficiently addressed in public policy and discourse.

Conclusion

Terrorism extends beyond acts of killing, abduction, bomb explosions, threats to peace, or internal security disruptions of any nation. It is a phenomenon of far greater magnitude. When citizens in a country suffer from the denial of their fundamental rights, where their demand of basic rights are met with deafness by the government; when individuals are deprived of basic necessities such as food, clothing, shelter, education, health, and sanitation; and when equality, as enshrined in various articles of the constitution, is not upheld, resulting in the denial of the right to life and liberty. The very spread of terrorism has made Jammu Migrants and Families of Martyrs face such deniability for a long time. Approaches to aid the affected one in the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir should be from bottom-up, i.e. from individual to society. Therefore, it became essential to identify those affected by terrorism in society in order to mainstream them and their sufferings.

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