PREFACE
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Armed conflict is not a new phenomenon, nor is it the exclusive problem of the State of Jammu & Kashmir. It has a long and checkered history with its roots in ancient civilizations. It is no longer confined to jungles and deserts; it has spread its tentacles to State establishments and civilian areas. It is this new trend that is alarming and more disturbing. Militancy/armed conflicts, it ought to be remembered do not emerge like rabbits out of magician's box. It is the product of exploitations, suppressions and denial of rights. The seeds of militancy were unconsciously sown during the Dogra rule in the State. As Ted Robert Gur in his "Why Men Rebel", rightly argued, that political violence is a consequence of a significant gap between the value expectations of a given group and the value capabilities of that group. This explains the current wave of militancy in Kashmir. Over the years, right from the independence, the leadership betrayed the citizens by pursuing their own narrow and selfish political interests. Politics of convenience has been the hallmarks of the State of Jammu & Kashmir whether it was the Congress, the National Conference or other seasonal political groups who happened to rule the State from time to time.

In fact, the problem of Jammu and Kashmir as it is faced by the people of the State and Indian and Pakistani political establishments as well are mired into endless distortions, half-truths misinterpretations and deliberate concealments. The problem was ignited, to begin with, by tribal
raiders from North-Western Frontier Areas of Pakistan who put up great fight to usurp Kashmir by force. The then Maharaja of Jammu and Kashmir State was put to a great strain and on the horns of political dilemma. The leader of Kashmiri people, Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah was also deeply resentful to the forced occupation of the State by the then newly emerged Pakistan. In such trying circumstances, it was deemed prudent to seek help from India with a view to liberating Kashmir from raiders. However, India put its own terms and conditions and finally, as was repeatedly underlined by late Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah, a temporary accession was signed by Maharaja with the Government of India with the proviso that a referendum will be held to settle their political destiny. When war broke out in 1948 between India and Pakistan, the matter was referred to the United Nations Organization, where again it was stipulated through a resolution of the United Nations to hold a plebiscite in the State of Jammu and Kashmir at an opportune time. Subsequently, both India and Pakistan took turns to violate their commitments and the net result was an intractable ‘Kashmir Problem’ which presently defies all political analysis and therapies. The problem is so complex and intractable that after sixty-three long years of Subcontinental independence from British Yoke, the present Chief Minister of the Jammu and Kashmir State thundered on the floor of the J&K State Legislature that unlike Junagarh and Hyderabad, J & K State has not merged with India but accessed to it on certain implicit and explicit
conditions. Such a statement brings out the unique nature and complexity of the J&K State imbroglio.

The armed conflict or militancy finally exploded in Kashmir in 1989. The youngsters of Kashmir took to violent means targeting Government offices, public institutions and military establishments and put up an armed fight against the continued occupation of Kashmir by India which occupation they believe to be illegal. Different measures used to suppress this movement have had a deep demoralizing impact on the wellbeing of the civilian population particularly women. There is hardly any sphere of life which has remained unaffected. The economy of the state, tourism, agriculture, trade, industry, education and health sector, all suffered a setback. It is estimated that around one lac people mostly youth have lost their lives. Women however, have been the worst sufferers of this conflict. Those who have been dying for the last two decades have been their fathers or sons, husbands or brothers. Further women have been burdened by their new role of being the sole bread earners and their traditional role of functioning as family makers. New situations and contingencies have put her under immense stress and feeling of insecurity, powerlessness and depression. Fear of family’s future in such an uncertain environment is a question of deep concern for the women.

The present thesis is a modest attempt to study as to how the economic conditions of women in Kashmir, their psychological and physical health as
well as their educational proficiency have fared during the past two decades of militancy.

Despite my efforts and help of others, there still may be some deficiencies of argument and solecism for which I alone shoulder the whole responsibility.

Shahida Kounsar