

Traumatic Experiences of Ex-militants in Kashmir

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Abstract:

An armed struggle in the areas of Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) started in 1989. Hundreds of young men crossed the border into Pakistan for arms training, riding the wave of popular sentiments (Sonpar, 2001). Statistics on the number of people involved in militancy through the years vary depending on the source, but all agree that the numbers are considerable. It is estimated that the number of ex-militants in Jammu & Kashmir would be least 30,000. The militancy in Kashmir valley has existed in various forms. Thousands of lives have been lost since 1989 due to militancy and fight against it. Nathan (2002) reported 3,400 disappeared cases and the conflict has left more than 47,000 people dead. The present study focuses on the lives and experiences of men in Kashmir who chose violent means towards achieving their political goals. The purpose of the research was to study the reasons of joining militancy and psycho-social aspects of their life. A purposive sample of 20 released militants was taken from different districts of Kashmir valley. The study revealed that majority of them joined militancy voluntarily, without any external pressure. At the time of joining, they all were young and studied up to 10th standard. They joined militant groups to set free Kashmir from India and all of them were victims of torture and trauma. Feelings of inadequacy, frustration anxiety and depression

were commonly manifested in their behaviour. The case studies are discussed in detail.

Key words: Kashmir, Ex-militants, torture and trauma

Kashmir which is considered as a paradise in the world has seen a lot of difficult situations. If we look at the history than the freedom struggle in Kashmir started as far back as 16th century. The unarmed Kashmiri never accepted foreign rule for too long. They invited one foreign power to fight another foreign power. The Moghals, the Pathans and the Sikhs came with the connivance of the local population. Before Independence from British in 1947, Kashmir from 1820 was governed by the Maharaja of Kashmir. In 1947, British rule in India ended with creation of two new nations, India and Pakistan. In October 1947, Pakistani tribal's from Dir entered Kashmir intending to liberate it from Dogra rule. Unable to withstand invasion, the Maharaja signed "The Instrument of Accession" on October 26, 1947 and it was accepted by Government of India, the following day. The document is highly disputed and Kashmiri Separatist's organizations and Pakistanis deny existence of any such agreement between Indian government and Maharaja of Kashmir. Because of this dispute an armed struggle in the areas of Jammu & Kashmir (J&K) started in 1989. Hundreds of young men crossed the border for arms training, riding the wave of popular sentiment. Statistics on the number of people involved in militancy through the years vary depending on the source, but all agree that the numbers are considerable. It is estimated that the number of ex-militants in J&K is at least 30,000. The militancy in Kashmir valley has existed in various forms. Thousands of lives have been lost since 1989 due to militancy and fight against it. According to official figures released in Jammu and Kashmir assembly, there were 3,400 disappear cases and the conflict has left more than 4700 people dead as of July 2009 (Nathan, 2002). Though, there is much

discrepancy in government's records and those of NGO's about the death of people due to violence.

Trauma is the unique individual experience of an event or enduring conditions in which the individual's ability to integrate his/her emotional experience is overwhelmed and the individual experiences (either objectively or subjectively) a threat to his/her life, bodily integrity, or that of a caregiver or family (Saakvitne, Gamble, Pearlman & Lev, 2000). Technically, "trauma" refers only to the event, not the reaction and should be reserved for major events that are psychologically over-whelming for an individual. DSM-IV-TR provides a list of potentially traumatic events, including combat, sexual and physical assault, robbery, being kidnapped, being taken hostage, terrorist attacks, torture, disasters, severe automobile accidents, and life-threatening illnesses, as well as witnessing death or serious injury by violent assault, accidents, war, or disaster. Psychological and emotional trauma is the result of extraordinarily stressful events that shatter one's sense of security, making helpless and vulnerable in a dangerous world. Trauma can occur in any person's life in any shape and it varies in form, quality and time of occurrence.

In the present study, the term released militant is one who has been captured by Police, CRPF, BSF, Army etc kept in a Jail and then released after judicial formalities. Surrendered militant is one who has surrendered their arms in front of Police, CRPF, BSF, Army etc. The militancy in Kashmir valley has existed in various forms but thousands of lives have been lost since 1989 due to militancy and fight against it. An ex-militant is one who is no longer a militant and may have come about through capture and imprisonment. The mass media often uses the term "militant" in the context of terrorism (Sanders, 1990). Militant is virtually a euphemism for "terrorist", more contentious and potentially subject to action for libel. Newspapers, magazines, and other information sources may view 'militant' a neutral term, whereas 'terrorist'

conventionally indicates disapproval of the behaviour of the individual or organization so labelled, regardless of the motivations for such behaviour (Jackson, Gunning, Smyth, 2009).

Present study was planned to explore traumatic experience of being militant, experience of imprisonment, social problems, psychological issues and other related aspects. In this context mainly narrative analyses were used to understand the suffering of ex-militants. According to Ross (2001) psycho-cultural narratives are the common sense explanations that people use to make sense of complex, emotionally powerful events. Narratives matter because a narrative's metaphors and images can tell us much about how individual and groups understand the social and political worlds in which they live, and reveal the deep fears, perceived threats and past grievances that drive a conflict.

Methodology:

Design: The nature of research is exploratory and a qualitative approach was followed.

Sample: In the present study purposive sample of 20 ex-militants from different districts of Kashmir was selected.

Tools for data Collection: Looking at the nature of the study semi-structured interview was used along the lines described by Smith (1995) based on the interpretive phenomenological approach to research. This approach assumes that what the respondent says is part of his self story and is a manifestation of his psychological world. At the same time, it recognizes that meanings are constructed from the social context, so that the respondent's story also has a relationship to the 'real' world outside.

Procedure: 20 Ex-militants were contacted from different districts of Kashmir Valley such as Srinagar, Baramulla, Kupawara and Bandipora. These ex-militants were located with

the help of personal resources and then permission to interact with them was taken from Inspector General of Police (Kashmir Zone). After that they were contacted and rapport was established. Then consent was taken and the entire respondent was interviewed in second interaction for one hour and interview session took place in their respective houses.

Data Analyses: The approach to data analysis is interpretive phenomenological. This means that while learning about each respondent's life and perception of his mental and social world, there is an attempt to derive meaning that are not transparently available. Thus there is an interpretive relationship with the data. Each case were analysed manually under different themes.

Findings and Discussion: In this section few tables are explaining age of militants, age when they join militant group, education of militants, reason of joining militancy and group affiliation. Figures are explaining their duration in jail, birth order and their training place.

Table 1: Distribution of militants in terms of present age and age of joining militancy, birth order, education and parent's occupation.

Present Age (Years)	Number	Percentage (%)
Present Age (Years)		
Below 30 years	1	5%
30 years - 35 years 6months	1	5%
35 years 7 months - 40 years 6months	2	10%
40 years 7 months - 45 years 6 months	10	50%
45 years 7 months - 50 years 6 months	6	30%
Age of joining militant group		
Below 10 years	0	0%
10 years - 15 years 6 months	1	5%
15 years 7 months - 20 years 6 months	10	50%
20 years 7 months - 25 years 6 months	5	25%
25 years 7 months - 30 years 6 months	4	20%
Birth Order		
First Child	10	50%
Second Child	5	25%
Last Child	5	25%
Education		

Illiterate	-	0%
Upto 9 th Class	2	10%
10 to 12 class	16	80%
Under Graduates	2	10%
Graduates & Above	-	0%
Parents Occupation		
Government Job	2	10%
Businessmen	4	20%
Farmer	10	50%
Technical Hand	01	5%
Not Alive(when they joined militancy)	03	15%

In Table 1 the distribution of militants with respect to their age is reported, indicating that 50% of the respondents were in the age group of 40-45 years. 50% of militants join militant group when there were in between age range of 15 yr's 7 months and 20 yr's 6 months. Table also shows that 90% of them are educated upto 12th class and 50% are said that their parent's occupation was farming.

Table 2: Distribution of militants with request to their reason of joining militant group, affiliation, training place

Variables	Number of militants	Percentage (%)
Reason of joining militant Group		
Aazadi	18	90%
Uneducated	01	5%
External Forced	-	0%
To Earn Money	-	0%
Do not Know	01	5%
Affiliation		
Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front(JKLF)	06	30%
Hizbul Mujahedeen(HM)	04	20%
Al Jihad	06	30%
Al Umar Mujahedeen	02	20%
Lashkar-e-Toiba(LeT)	01	5%
Jash-e-Mohmmand	0	0%
Muslim Janbaz Force	01	5%
Training Place		
Pakistan	16	80%
Pakistan & Afghanistan	2	10%
Kashmir	2	10%

In Table 2, indicates that maximum of them join militant group to set free Kashmir from India (Aazadi) and 5% of them reported that they were uneducated. 80% of them reported that they have done their tanning from pakistain, 10% from Kashmir and remaining 10% from both pakistain and Afghanistan.

Table 3: Showing summary of ex-militant’s Interview transcripts

S. No	Code Name (Age)	Before Militancy	Experiences in Jail	Social Problems	Psychological Issues
1.	Zafar (45 year)	Voluntarily joined militancy	“Toughest period and i was beaten by rods and guns”	Father was not in support of joining militancy, “after i was released from jail. He (father) told me that it would be better to live in different house”.	Not satisfied with his life.
2.	Yawar (43 year)	I joined militancy with my own choice	“Electric shock was given to different parts of body”	Father died when he was in jail. “I am alone and have to run my family”. I earn Rs 200 per day and family members are nine”.	“I am unable to forget my two year experience in jail”.....I tried a lot to forget my experience in jail but I was unable..... “I am taking medicine for PTSD”.
3.	Tariq Hussain (40 year)	My all family knew that I am going to POK for training	“Electric shock was given to my teeth’s and to my penis”	“My family is disturbed because of me”	“Few years back army came to my house and told my wife to open all cloths and if she would not do that they will kill me. And she did that to save my life. When I

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					remember that event I want to kill everyone”.
4.	Sheikh (40 year)	Socio-economic status was low and his father was farmer	“In jail I was told to drink urine and I do it, to save my life”	“No one preferred to work with me after I was released from jail”.	Guilt feeling was present. “joining militancy has disturbed my life and my family”
5.	Captain (44 year)	I was living a happy life within nuclear family....	“In jail kerosene oil was put through my anus”	Till now i have been picked up 16 times by Army, BSF, Police and CRF. This is not only disturbing me but my daughter also. My daughter recently told me that “i will not talk to you, because her classmates always say her that your dad is always in jail”.	Frustration and anger was seen during interview.
6.	Lone (28 year)	“I was very intelligent and was good in education. I was doing graduation when I went to join militancy..”	They hanged me upside down and started beating.....they use ‘roller’ (a heavy log is rolled over a body)	“When I was released from jail and on Eid-ul-Fitr (One of the important festival of Muslims) I was not having a single Rupee in my pocket and I sell “Quran” which I have won in my childhood after winning Volley ball match”.	Sadness of mood. “I became frustrated when I saw my college friends doing Govt. Job and happy in their life”.
7.	Isfaq	My father was in	“They inserted a thin rod into	“ it is difficult for me to adjust in	Hate toward self and

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	(29 year)	Govt. job and we had a very good and happy family”	the penis and pass an electric current”.	society and I am facing difficulties to get married, because no one like to give his daughter to ex-militants”	disturbed. “My family keep on saying that you have disturbed your life”
8.	Baramulla (45 year)	He joined militancy because of peer influence	“.....exploited me sexually”	“If anything happen in my town I have to reach local army camp, because they still believe that it is because of me. I cannot wear new cloths or cannot make new house because they ask me where from you get money”.	“When I remember my two year period in jail, my body starts trembling and palpitation occurs.....”
9	Tariq (49 Year)	Born in village in a joint family	Third degree torture	“I have applied twice for the post port of my child; he is very intelligent and is topper of college. But they are not giving to him and when I ask them why? Their response is that I was militant”.	“I feel unhappy when I look back....what was our purpose and what we have achieved”.
10.	Rashid (48 year)	I was uneducated when I joined militancy and think that it was only reason of joining militancy.	I spent two years in different jail of J&K..... “I was treated very badly....they put chilli powder in my anus”	“My daughter was hit on ear by army man and she cannot hear (deaf). And my wife always keep on saying that it is because of you, if you would have not joined militancy, everything would have been fine.	Wife of ex-militant says that “he was ill and he is taking medicine of Depression”.

Table 8: Showing summary of ex-militant’s Interview transcripts (Other experiences)

S. No	Code Name (age)	Present Income	Other Experiences
11.	Imran (49 year)	5,000-6,000	“Sometimes I become angry and I believe that it was mutual decision of both countries to disturb Kashmiri youth”. When he was asked why you think so? He replied “Can you believe that I crossed broader with a group of 125 militants and how it is possible that government of India did not know that 125 militants are coming in”
12.	Abrar (36 year)	5,000	“You know one day, over area commander (name confidential) told us that he is planning to pray Friday prayer in masjid and we were near about one hundred militants around and outside masjid for our commander and we cannot pray, today I get angry to remember what I have done to my life. It always frustrates me, when I remember my past experience”.
13.	Qadir (40 year)	5,000-6,000	“We all were without plan and our leadership was poor”
14.	Nazir (47 year)	5,000-6,000	“We all are disturbed and in very bad condition, maximum of us are having low monthly family income.....lot of our leaders saved money of Tanzeem (Militants group) and they are enjoying now and they are happy in their life”.

Summary and Conclusion:

The findings indicate that 55% of them join militancy between the age of 15 yr’s to 20 yr’s & 6 months. 25% of them join militancy between the age of 20 yr’s to 25 yr’s & 6 months & 20 % of them join militancy between the age of 25 yr’s & 7 months to 30 yr’s & 6 months. These finding is supported by research of Russell & Miller (1983) who found age range of his group was between 23yr’s to 31yr’s and Clark (1983) in his study found that average age was 24 years. This finding is consistent with Hassan (2001) studied nearly 250 Hamas or Islamic Jihad members and found that that were between age of 18-38 years.

Majority of militants have educated till 10th to 12th Class and 10% of released militant reported that they were doing graduation when they joined militant group. This finding is supported by Krueger & Maleckova (2002) who studied 129 Hezbolla fighters' ages 15 yr's to 38 yr's found that 33 % have attended secondary school. And this finding is consistent with the finding of Sageman (2004) and his finding was that 94 of 132 (71%) of muslims terrorists had at least some college education and 57 of 134 (43%) were professionals.

This research also shows that 90% of released militants said that they joined militancy because they want Azadi (freedom from India) and 50% of ex-militants have spent 36 months in jail. And these finding are consistent with Sonpar (2001). 50% of them are first child in birth order, 20% are last in birth order. 80% of them have done their training in pakistain occupied Kashmir (POK). No such study has been done to access relationship between birth order and militancy or terrorism.

This research also shows that 50% of respondents reported that their parent's occupation was farming and 20% of them reported that their parent's occupation was business. This is against the finding of Segeman (2004) study on 102 Salafi Muslim terrorists from Saudi Arabia, Egypt, France, Algeria, Morrocco and Indonesia. He also found that 18 percent were upper class, 55% were middle class and 27 % were lower class.

The nature of the torture is same in all cases- *beating with lathis and belt, hanging upside down or from the wrists and being beaten on the soles of the feet, the 'roller' where a heavy log is rolled over a prone prisoners legs, inserting a thin rod into the penis and passing an electric current or giving electric shock to the testicles and other sensitive body parts, inserting sticks or iron rods.* The accounts of the respondents tally with those collated by the Public Commission on Human Rights, Srinagar.

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Competing Interests

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