

Impact of Violence on Women's Education in Kashmir

Kavita Suri

Impact of Violence on Women's Education in Kashmir

Copyright©

WISCOMP

Foundation for Universal Responsibility

of His Holiness the Dalai Lama, New Delhi, India, 2006.

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted in any form or by any means, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise, without the prior written permission of the publisher.

Published by

WISCOMP

Foundation for Universal Responsibility

of His Holiness the Dalai Lama

Core 4A, Upper Ground Floor

India Habitat Centre

Lodhi Road

New Delhi 110 003, India

**This initiative was made possible
by a grant from the Ford Foundation.**

The views expressed here are those of the author. They do not necessarily reflect those of WISCOMP or the Foundation for Universal Responsibility of HH the Dalai Lama, nor are they endorsed by them.

Dedication

To my dad Mr. Vijay Suri whom I lost soon after
this fellowship was awarded to me. But for him,
I would not have been here today.
Thanks Dad for believing in me.

Contents

Preface	7
Acknowledgements	10
Introduction	11
Silent sufferers behind the veils of illiteracy	11
Away from school	13
Bleak windows	15
Education the casualty	22
Room to play truant	26
Backward writ large	29
Scarred for life	32
Never too late	35
Flesh trade in Kashmir	38
Valley of despair	41
The long road to university	45
All tressed up, nowhere to go	49
That elusive chalk	53
One door shut, many opened	56
Conclusion	59
District-wise Educational Profile of Kashmir Valley	60

Preface

The Scholar of Peace Fellowships awarded by WISCOMP for academic research, media projects and special projects are designed to encourage original and innovative work by academics, policy makers, defense and foreign policy practitioners, NGO workers and others. The series WISCOMP Discussion Papers in conjunction with WISCOMP Perspectives brings the work of some of these scholars to a wider readership.

The twelfth in the series of WISCOMP Discussion Papers, *Impact of Violence on Women's Education in Kashmir* is the outcome of a media project awarded to Kavita Suri to explore the linkages between armed conflict and women's education in Kashmir and to highlight the ways in which violence has affected the education of the girl child and women's academic pursuits.

Body counts and missing person reports reveal one side of the human toll from Kashmir's insurgency, but they are unable to tell us the qualitative dimension of the violence inflicted on the people of Jammu and Kashmir. Beginning in 1989, the violence has claimed numerous lives and has affected the society and polity of the state. The militancy has touched every aspect of the Kashmiri society and each individual has suffered either directly or indirectly. While the loss of lives is innumerable, the cycle of violence has affected the women and children in a significant way. In the absence of the men, women and children have had to face manifold challenges, often related to basic issues of survival. These struggles have also impacted the lives of the children of Kashmir and in particular the girl child.

Written against the backdrop of the militancy in the state of Jammu and Kashmir, Kavita Suri highlights the state of education in the war-torn state. Through a series of articles that also appeared in *The Statesman*, a leading English daily, Kavita Suri documents the plight of ordinary people in the state and the sociological and psychological impact of violence in their lives. She asserts that the most important institution affected by the militancy is the education sector.

Traveling across the state, Kavita Suri studies the impact of violence on the educational institutions. The narratives highlight how the crucial

aspects of education in particular education of the girl child have been placed on the back burner owing to the violence and prevalent militancy. In her articles, Kavita raises a range of issues that have cropped up owing to the insurgency, such as the infrastructural damage to educational institutions; fall in educational standards; issues of mental health and fear psychosis among the population leading to the withdrawal of children especially girls from schools; the plight of the nomadic Gujjar community; as well as the migration and condition of the Kashmiri Pandit community.

Through her articles Kavita Suri brings to light the damage to the educational standards in the state beginning primarily through a loss of infrastructure. The education sector had to bear the brunt of damaging and destruction of school buildings as well as the occupation of school compounds by security forces and militants. As she highlights in her work, at least 828 educational institutions were gutted. Of the 596 school buildings destroyed in the Kashmiri region, about 276 were primary schools, 146 middle schools and 129 high schools. Innumerable curfews and strikes also played a major role in the falling educational standards in the state. Education also suffered due to the migration of the minority Kashmiri Pandit community from the valley, who were key components of the educational community.

An immediate impact of the militancy was the violence and the militarisation of the Kashmiri society and the study highlights its direct impact on the educational system in the state. A major impact on the girl's education was owing to the fear psychosis that prevailed in the state with the outbreak of violence. The fear of harm to children and especially the daughters, led the parents to withdraw the children from the schools, with many of them never to return. Through the case studies of the affected widows of *Dardpora* and *Kanun Poshpora*, Kavita Suri brings to the surface the imminent reality of this fear psychosis. She brings to the fore the predicament of Shahmali, a widow from Dardpora village, who had to adopt multiple roles owing to the death of her husband and whose experiences highlight how issues of livelihood take precedence over the need for providing basic education to her daughters.

Providing an insight into the attempted Islamization of Kashmiri society, Kavita Suri brings to the reader the story of Kulsooma, targeted simply for her refusal to accept the diktats of the militants that girls should

drop out of schools and colleges and stay at home. Through Kulsooma's experience and the experiences of other such targeted women in Kashmir, the articles inform the reader about the fear psychosis prevalent, thereby adding to the deteriorating educational scenario.

Through her articles Kavita Suri also brings to light the significant work done by non-governmental organizations like MANWA, Yateem trust etc. who have attempted to alleviate the problems of the people either through assistance in providing livelihoods or through the redressal of the varied problems faced by the common people. In her attempts to study the impact of violence on women's education in Kashmir, Kavita Suri's work brings to the wider audience the entire gamut of issues plaguing the state today and makes crucial linkages between violence and its impact on societal structures in the state of Jammu and Kashmir.

The WISCOMP Research Team

Acknowledgements

First of all, my deepest gratitude to the entire WISCOMP team for not only making the research grant available to me for carrying out this research in Kashmir but also for not losing out their patience on me when for personal reasons, this project was getting delayed. Thanks to you Dr Meenakshi Gopinath, Dr Sumona Das Gupta, Manjri, Soumita and Stuti for understanding me and giving me time to complete the project.

It would be great injustice if I would not thank those Kashmiri women whom I interviewed in far flung villages of Kashmir, those women who not only took out their precious time to talk to me and poured their hearts out to me, but also wanted me to portray their strong yearning for peace with the hope that their lives would change for good.

Perhaps, to reach to most of these women scattered all over the valley would have been very difficult if I would not have the support of my friends and well wishers. While few provided moral support and guidance for undertaking this research work, there were others who actually identified such women and girls with whom I required to interact for my study. My thanks to Mr. Hashim Qureshi, Anita Kumari, Sana Qureshi, Manzoor Ahmed Masoodi, Bashir Ahmad Shiekh, Zainul-abdin Shabir, Madan Mantoo, S D Singh, Rajinder Chawla, Ishfaq-ul-Hassan, Tariq Bhat, and many others who contributed in their own way towards completion of the project.

The support of my office The Statesman needs a special mention as they published all the research articles sent by me from time to time irrespective of the fact that sometimes, it becomes very difficult for the newspapers, that too with a national coverage area, to carry features on one single theme. My thanks to our Managing Editor/Director Mr. Ravindra Kumar and Deputy Editor Mr. Ishan Joshi.

My thanks to Mr. Bashir Manzar, editor-owner-publisher Kashmir Images, Srinagar for introducing me to a wonderful WISCOMP family with whom I would always like to remain associated. And as always, my mother is a pillar of strength to me. Thanks to you Mom.

Kavita Suri

Introduction

Silent sufferers behind the veils of illiteracy

Having spent my childhood in Kashmir and having seen it from very close quarter, what makes my heart bleed is to see so much of bloodshed and violence in once a paradise on Earth and the impact it has left on girl's education.

While gathering news reports for my newspaper, once I came across a report that in the first 12 years of insurgency in the Kashmir valley, the trouble torn paradise observed strikes popularly known as 'hartals' for over 1302 days (which is for three and a half years). It left me to ponder for many days over its impact on the education system in Kashmir. As observers commented on the impact of 'hartal politics' on Kashmir's economy, nobody seemed to bother about its impact on education.

When in the year 1991 alone, there were hartals for 207 out of the 365 days and academic calendar was just reduced to 50 or 60 days out of 200 plus days, then how and why education system could have remained untouched?

Perhaps the theme was always in my mind in all these years of turmoil. And thus a reason quite strong enough to inspire me to work on the theme.

Thanks to Women In Security, Conflict Management and Peace – WISCOMP, the peace fellowship provided me an opportunity to research on it.

Tracing the impact of violence on girl's education in Kashmir, as I traveled further deep in the far-flung militancy infested areas of Kashmir valley, the picture that emerged wasn't a rosy one. Interacting with the Kashmiri women in their native Kashmiri language, they opened their hearts out to me and I felt sad to see the trauma they were going through. Subsequently, I met many girls who were forced to quit their studies and remain confined to their homes.

The observations in the study were quite painful. Not only has the violence influenced women in Kashmir but it has also left a deep impact over

their lives. There has been a sociological and psychological impact of violence on these young girls who have been denied education.

The most important institution hit hard by the violence in Kashmir is certainly the education sector. Being the prime mover in the social system, it suffered much. In the first phase of violence (1989-1999), education on all stages (primary, secondary and higher) was critically influenced by the turbulence.

Living in constant fear of the gun meant an increase in the number of girl drop outs as their parents, mostly in rural Kashmir did not allow them to go to schools due to violence and uncertainty that has plagued their minds in the past over a decade, resulting in depression and anxiety which is not so uncommon among the girls.

Traveling in rural Kashmir, I had only one main observation – the women of Kashmir are the most affected and silent sufferers of over a decade long turmoil. As they don't form a strong vote bank, no political party fights for their rights and no social group is willing to take up their cause. Thus they continue suffering silently behind the veils of ignorance, illiteracy and discrimination.

There are a number of such instances wherein I was left pondering for days together, thinking and visualizing their innocent faces, which had so many unanswered questions. And all these observations, interactions and statistical data formed a part of the study on impact of violence on Kashmiri women's education.

Away from School

Kavita Suri travelled in the insurgency-ravaged rural heartland of Kashmir to find that women's education has been a major casualty of the years of terrorism

Never in my life can I forget that bright sunny afternoon in Srinagar when I left the State Legislature complex only minutes before a deadly fidayeen attack launched on it by a suicide squad of terrorists. That first day of October almost four years ago is still very clear in my memory. The deadly terrorist attack had left 40 people dead. A face among those slain innocent hapless people has been haunting me ever since.

It was of Humaira Masood, a student of Class X1, who, unfortunately, was returning from school when militants detonated a car bomb outside the Assembly complex, killing her and many others on the spot. A brilliant student, who always stood first in her class, Humaira had appeared in the 11th class examination and was waiting for her results. A couple of months ago, the results were out and Humaira had, once again, stood first in her class. Acts of violence had snatched a brilliant girl away from what looked like a promising future.

Humaira's face continued to haunt me for all these years, provoking many questions as to how violence had impacted young women's education in Kashmir. Only a few months ago another young student was killed in Lal Chowk area when the terrorists exploded a powerful bomb. She too was returning from school. And who can forget Phoola Koul, the teacher in Kupwara who was abducted, raped and then killed (her body was sliced in a sawmill). This happened in the initial years of militancy, leaving hundreds of Koul's students terrorized. Hundreds and thousands of Humairas and Phoolas have suffered in Kashmir in the past 15 years of turmoil.

Somewhere in the deep interiors of Kupwara, a young girl attended to her household chores because her father was killed by the militants and her mother could no longer afford her education, far away in yet another village of Anantnag in south Kashmir, young girls were forced to sit at home by their parents during the peak of militancy. An entire generation of young Kashmiri Pandits had to lose many precious years of study/career as they fled the Valley to save their lives. Their exams got delayed, the entire system suffered and it took years before it was regularized again.

My research on the impact of violence on girl's education in Kashmir as part of the Women in Security, Conflict Management and Peace (WISCOMP)-peace fellowship, took me to the far-flung militancy-infested areas of Kashmir Valley. I had chosen the districts Kupwara, Budgam and Anantnag for my study. Kupwara in North Kashmir is situated right on the Line of Control and is the main conduit for the terrorists to come into Kashmir. The central district of Budgam is educationally the most backward district of Kashmir and the third study area, Anantnag, is in south Kashmir. I found that there has been a sociological and psychological impact of violence on the young girls who were denied education. Women had suffered psychologically, emotionally and economically as well.

In the first phase of violence (1989-1999), education was badly hit by the turbulence. The state of Jammu and Kashmir now ranks 33rd in terms of literacy among the states of India, with a 54.46 per cent literacy rate. Living in constant fear of the gun has led to an increase in the number of girl drop-outs, as their parents would not allow them to go to school. The result is that girls often suffer from depression and anxiety. Of the 25,92,024 women in Kashmir, only 7,70,627 are literate. In the Jammu region around 8,90,960 females are literate as against a total number of 20,10,240. In Leh-Ladakh, there are about 43,312 literate females from among a total number of 1,07,069.

In the conflict zone in these past years, hundreds of schools and colleges were gutted. While many of the institutions were actually forced to shut down completely by the terrorists, on the other hand, security forces occupied many school buildings, as they had no place to stay when they arrived in Kashmir to curb insurgency. There are plenty of instances when girls were coerced into quitting studies, cowering under a Taliban-like system in the Valley. There is immense pain and anguish in the hearts of these girls who had wanted to do something meaningful, but the conflict has forced them to sit at home.

Traveling in rural Kashmir, I felt it was the women of Kashmir who had been the worst sufferers of the over-a-decade-long turmoil. No political party has addressed the issue of their rights and no social group is willing to take up their cause. They continue to suffer silently behind the veils of ignorance, illiteracy and discrimination. There are a number of such instances, which I was left pondering for days together, as their innocent faces, with so many unanswered questions writ large on them, came back to haunt me.

Bleak Windows

In Kashmir's troubled history of the past 15 years, two villages have grabbed newspaper headlines but little by way of help out of their predicament. Both Dardpora and Kunan Poshpora fall in the border district of Kupwara, situated on the Line of Control in the north of the state. While Dardpora has the dubious distinction of being the "Village of Widows" because there isn't a single male left, Kunan Poshpora's plight came to the fore when its entire female population was allegedly raped in the initial years of insurgency.

Kashmir was observing Ramadan – the month of fasting before Eid – when I set out for Kupwara. Dardpora was obviously the first place on my list. With winter around the corner, there was a chill in the air and Kupwara was busy stocking up. Dardpora, which in Urdu literally translates into "Village of Pain", reflects the tribulations the occupants of this small hamlet are saddled with. For the past 15 years they've been caught in the crossfire of militants and security forces. Being close to the Line of Control, Dardpora, like adjacent Satboin, was once a hot bed of militancy and most of its menfolk joined the "Tehreek" (freedom movement) when insurgency broke out in the Kashmir Valley. When the security forces zeroed in, most of them were killed. Young wives became widows looking after minor children.

Of Dardpora's 10,000 inhabitants, there are around 120 widows and 400-orphaned children. Ostracized by their parents and society at large, these women remain plagued by poverty, illiteracy and ignorance. With no source of livelihood, most of them are forced to beg to feed their children. With little by way of a helping hand, they suffer in silence. Every household has at least one widow.

Life hasn't been easy for Shahmali, a mother of five girls and two boys. Her farmer husband, Mohammed Abdullah Bhat, would cultivate his small piece of land and go off to work in Punjab during the winter months. The family managed to keep body and soul together, till he was killed by unidentified gunmen in June 1995. Everything crumbled. Shahmali now lives on peanuts and finds it tough managing two meals a day for the family. Asked about education for her kids, she hit back, "When we don't know what we are going to eat in the evening, when we are struggling hard for survival, how can I send my daughters to the school?"

Daughter Safeena was six years old when her father was killed. The eldest one was just 15. In the initial years, Shahmali continued to send Safeena to the Government Boys Middle School in Dardpora (there is no girl's school here), but when money became a major problem, that was it. Safeena now helps her mother at home. One of Shahmali's sons is a Class XI student in the neighbouring Kralpora Government High School, while the other sits idle. Asked if she discriminated between her son and daughter – sending one to school and forcing the other to stay at home – tears welled in her eyes. In broken Urdu she said, “Ladka to fate hua kapdoin mein bhi school ja sakta hai, ladki ko to mein aise nahin bhej sakti.” (The boy can go to school in tatters if necessary but I cannot send my girl to school in torn clothes or shoes as she is a girl). Shahmali said she wanted her daughters to continue their education but the situation didn't permit this. Somehow, she got a couple of daughters married off with the help of the villagers and the Rs 1 lakh exgratia she got from the state government (because her husband was killed in a militancy-related incident).

Shahmali was in a hurry to get Safeena, now 15, married off too. Though she agreed the girl was too young, poverty and the struggle for survival left her with little choice. She was convinced girls of her daughter's predicament should be married off early.

Other widows in the village shared the same conviction and each family had a tale of woe. Shaheena's widowed mother was very eager to get her married off.

Shaheena had done her matriculation exams and was eagerly awaiting her results. But alone at home with younger sister Afroza, who is in Class V, she was sad at the thought of not going back to school after Class X. “I lost my father when I was in Class IV. My mother somehow managed to send me to school, as she wanted me to stand on my own feet. But then survival is the problem. I studied in a boy's school but now she won't allow me to continue as there is no money,” she lamented.

But despite the trauma, the meager income and the sexual harassment, none of Dardpora's widows has remarried. Ten years ago, Subi's husband, Mangta Lone – deputy chief of the Al-Barq militant outfit – was killed by security forces in an encounter. And this mother of six lost everything. With no source of income, she now begs to be able to feed her children, among them a 20-year-old unmarried daughter. Cursing

her late husband's penchant for guns that left the family shattered, Subi said she had no alternative but to beg to survive. But her begging bowl has stigmatized the family. Her uneducated daughter has already crossed the age of marriage in a society where the knot is tied very early.

Beyond Dardpora up to the Line of Control there is no human habitation, so there is no way out for these victims of economic and other deprivations. "This has affected everything," said Manzoor Ahmed Masoodi, who works for Manwa, an NGO. He said Dardpora's villagers were victims of collective circumstance – militants, security forces and counter-insurgents – that insecurity stalked everyone there.

Even Dardpora's religious leaders were not spared. Since 1995, three imams of the Jamia Masjid have been killed by unknown gunmen. Their families have no source of livelihood, their children uneducated. Maulana Mohammed Sadiq Mir, a priest in the mosques, was arrested by the army on 8 February 1995 in Kralpora. He claimed he had no links with militants, but they still took him away. The family alleged that he was killed by them. For his wife, Jannati Begum, their three adult daughters and a son, things are very difficult. But unlike many Dardpora widows, Jannati Begum refused to beg. At times neighbors helped out, but this hardly met the basic need for food and clothing. None of her daughters is educated.

Indeed, families without male members in Dardpora must survive as best they could. Some beg, some get zakat (charity) and some get Sadka-e-Fitr (a moral duty every Muslim is bound by – to help the suffering). Because rural Kashmir has never adhered to the practices of family planning, these widows – most of them unemployed – have to support between three and six children on an average. Government support, in case of civilian killings, usually comes to widows after two or more years of their husbands' death, but Dardpora's widows aren't as lucky because their husbands were militants.

Villagers alleged that the Jama Masjid maulvis were killed by the army because they were thought to be preaching jihad and separatism. In October 1997, Khazir Mohammad Peer, an octogenarian imam, was killed while returning from the mosque after attending late evening prayers.

Hashim Qureshi, who runs Manwa, visits Dardpora occasionally to find ways of alleviating the plight of its widows and orphans.

He believes that unless the victims are involved in some development process nothing will improve. What these people need is some immediate relief – money, food, clothing and education for their children – but nothing has been done in this regard by any agency till now.

Notwithstanding the fact that minister for revenue, relief and rehabilitation, Hakeem Mohammad Yasin claimed that the government was concerned about the widows and orphans and would take steps to rehabilitate them, it has yet to come out with a concrete scheme for Dardpora's rehabilitation. But the state government has sought help from the National Council of Communal Harmony, as also the army and NGOs, to ease the widows' woes.

Valley of fear

Nineteen-year-old Kulsooma was scarred for life and lost an eye after Kashmiri militants threw acid on her face for not heeding their diktat that girls should drop out of schools and colleges and stay at home.

In the past few years, she has rarely moved out of her house. Within the "secure" walls of her small home in a congested lane in downtown Srinagar, Kulsooma (19) works non-stop, helping her mother with the daily household chores, while her 10-year-old brother who has also quit studies works in a corner on the traditional job of making copper utensils used in Kashmiri kitchens.

The friends that she once had are no longer there. After the tragedy, they did not keep in touch with their classmate and moved on with their lives.

Kulsooma and her mother can hardly forget that fateful day. Tears roll down the cheeks of Sharifa Begum, her mother. Emotions overpower her as she coughs and weeps intermittently. After all, no mother can see her daughter who was once known for her beauty, grace and intelligence, confined to her home. This is what violence has done to her only daughter.

On 6 August, 2000, Kulsooma, a student of Class IX at the Nawakadal Higher Secondary School in Srinagar, was going for tuition with her cousin sister, from her house in Maharaj Gunj to Shiekh Mohalla, when four boys appeared from nowhere and threw a bottle of acid on Kulsooma's face.

These were the times when Kashmir was gripped by fear as the Lashkar-e-Jabbar, a lesser known militant group which, with the support of Kashmir's only woman militant organization Dukhtaran-e-Millat was enforcing the Muslim dress code – veils, covered head and no cosmetics. Kashmiri women and girls were asked to quit studies and stay at home.

An attempt to Talibanize education in Kashmir was started in 1991-92 when the Allah Tigers and the Dukhtaran-e-Millat had issued diktats on the dress code. The Lashkar-e-Jabbar cadres had also thrown acid on Gazala and Rubia, government school teachers, for not wearing a veil and for wearing make-up. This happened at Rangers' Stop near Khanyar in Srinagar.

In some villages, Hizbul Mujahideen cadres had also put up posters, asking the parents not to send their children to schools. Though Kashmiri society had been facing such threats since the inception of militancy, when gun-toting militants forcibly closed cinema halls and liquor shops in the Valley in January 1990, the Dukhtaran-e-Millat chief, Asiya Andrabi, had also been asking Kashmiri women to quit all government jobs.

“Earning a livelihood is a man's responsibility and thus Kashmiri women should resign from their jobs and help in Islamic reforms,” Asiya had said.

It was heartening that not many parents paid heed to such diktats. But few of them actually did withdraw their daughters from schools and colleges.

Against this background, the acid attack on Kulsooma came as a shock to Kashmiri society. After the boys threw acid on her face, she tried to cover her face with her hands. Wearing her cousin's salwar-kameez and her father's No 9 shoes – as she did not have anything to wear – she recalls the world going blind before her eyes.

As she couldn't see anything after the attack, her cries rent the air. She requested people to come to her rescue and take her to hospital, but in vain. In fear of the terrorists, nobody came forward to help her.

Fauzia, her cousin who was with her at the time of the attack, threw water on her face to lessen the pain. But that didn't help. Fauzia then took Kulsooma to hospital in an auto-rickshaw, her parents were informed and Kulsooma was admitted to Srinagar hospital with serious burns.

Five years after the tragedy, Kulsooma is still terrorized. She rarely speaks. She only talks in monosyllables. Her mother does the talking.

“She clamped up after the attack,” says Sharifa, adding that her daughter is still to recover from the shock that she can no longer become a doctor, an ambition she nurtured for so many years. Perhaps Kulsooma could have picked up the pieces of her life, had the medical treatment been up to the mark. Behind those dark sunshades, one of her beautiful eyes has been replaced by a glass one. And that beautiful face is scarred, despite the numerous surgeries.

“When we took her to SHM Hospital, the doctors did not take the matter seriously. We thought her face would heal naturally. We could not assess the impact of the acid attack,” confesses her mother.

Neither a government representative nor any minister visited the family after the attack. Only the police came, that too, to complete formalities. An FIR was registered with the Maharaj Gunj police station and till date, nobody has been arrested for scarring the young girl for life and brutally ending her academic career.

For the past few years, the family has been going door to door, seeking financial support for Kulsooma’s medical treatment. For the poor parents, it was difficult to spend Rs 30 everyday as fee charged by the Sher-e-Kashmir Institute for Medical Sciences.

The family was finding it difficult to survive. They did not get anything from the state government as the Rs 1 lakh aid under the SRO-43 Rules of the Jammu and Kashmir government can only be given to those families whose kin have died in militancy-related incidents.

“I took Kulsooma to AIIMS to get her eyes examined. I took her to Dr Hardia in Indore, even to the world-famous eye specialist Dr Daljit Singh in Amritsar,” says Sharifa, adding that the then state chief minister Farooq Abdullah, on his own, arranged for her treatment at Apollo Hospital in Delhi for two-three years.

The senior Hurriyat leader, Mirwaiz Umar Farooq, gave them Rs 20,000 but told the media that he had given the family Rs 1 lakh for the girl’s treatment. Both mother and daughter are indebted to Times of India’s Kashmir correspondent, Salim Pandit, who managed to give them Rs 1 lakh through a charitable organization. Separatist leader Hashim Qureshi also donated some money. They used it to get her eye checked

and for plastic surgery. After years of treatment, eye surgeon Manzoor of Srinagar got her damaged eye replaced by a glass one. Tragically, Kulsooma's father could not bear the shock of the attack on her and died exactly a year later.

In the meantime, panic gripped school and college-going girls. Threatened by terrorists, some of the parents had even forced their girls to drop out of schools and colleges.

As two teachers were also attacked with acid, the attendance at girls' schools had dropped by 40 per cent. Police had to step up security outside girls' schools and colleges.

Sharifa Begum's only worry these days is who will marry her daughter. She wanted to have an identity of her own. The State Human Rights Commission had sanctioned Rs 1.50 lakh for her. But Kulsooma is yet to receive it. Her beloved father's death, coupled with her own handicap, has resulted in Kulsooma's dreams dying young in the violent Valley.

Militant attacks on women in Jammu and Kashmir

- March 1999: Two Kashmiri girls, Mehvish (16) and Nowsheen (14) are shot in their legs by Pakistan-sponsored terrorists for wearing jeans. The incident creates national headlines.
- August, 2001: Terrorists enter the house of Habib Dar of Bulbul village, Nowgam, call his daughter Humera out and accuse her of not adhering to the Islamic dress code. She is then shot and is critically injured. Though the young girl is recuperating in the Bone and Joint Hospital in Srinagar, she is in a state of shock and trauma.
- August, 2001: Militants belonging to the Lashkar-e-Jabbar throw acid on the faces of Gazala and Rubia, two teachers of Nagbal Government High School, Srinagar, while returning from a school picnic. Their only "crime" – not wearing clothes as prescribed by the Islamic dress code issued by the outfit. The incident leaves two young, energetic, beautiful teachers shocked, traumatized and scarred for life.
- August, 2001: Terrorists of the Lashkar-e-Toiba enter the Government Girls' Higher Secondary School at Kothibagh, in a high-security zone in the heart of Srinagar city, and direct girls to adhere to their dress code.

Education the casualty

When Jammu and Kashmir chief minister Mufti Mohammed Sayeed recently said vested interests and militancy affected education in Jammu and Kashmir, he was right, as education and health sectors have remained the two worst casualties in Kashmir Valley in the past 15 years of armed insurgency.

The state government is trying to streamline the education sector in Kashmir Valley. Though the government claims that the mission is under way to bring the shattered education sector back on rails, so far not much has been achieved.

Since insurgency broke out in Kashmir in 1989 amidst growing political instability, the education sector became the first target of Pakistan's Inter Services Intelligence. Its focus was students studying in various schools and colleges in the Valley. The ISI tried its best to exploit the youth to make them their operatives and join the jihad.

Today, despite education being free from the primary to the university levels, the state is lagging behind in the literacy rate and considered one of the most educationally backward states of the country.

Even though school uniforms and text books are free at the primacy level in the vast network of at least 11,000 primary schools, the literacy rate is just 54 per cent.

The state government's data shows that during the period of militancy, at least 828 educational institutions were gutted, besides extensive damage done to laboratory equipment, furniture and libraries. Of these, about 596 buildings were gutted in Kashmir Valley and 233 institutions in the Jammu division. Of the 596 schools in the Kashmir region, about 276 were primary schools, 146 middle schools, 129 high schools and 45 higher secondary schools which were razed by terrorists.

In the Jammu region, 119 primary schools, 62 middle schools, 43 high schools and eight higher secondary schools were damaged. At least 233 schools were damaged in the Jammu region alone.

The gutting or damaging of school buildings had a direct impact on the number of students. While a few parents shifted their children to other private or government schools, in many instances, parents did not send

their kids to school thereafter. In many cases, these students were girls forced to sit at home.

What added to the woes was the occupation of the remaining educational institutions by security forces.

Though the state government said it was committed to getting them to vacate educational institutions (there were at least 97 of these occupied by security forces in Jammu and Kashmir till two years ago), there were still many buildings with them.

In the past two years, the number of school buildings occupied by the security forces in Kashmir has been reduced to 46 as the Sayeed government is trying to shift them to other locations/buildings.

Of the 46 occupied schools, ten are in Srinagar district, six in Anantnag, including the DIET (District Institute of Education and Training) building, five each in Kupwara and Budgam and two in Pulwama.

In Kashmir Valley, the maximum number of educational institutions occupied by the forces is in Baramulla on the Line of Control. About 18 schools are occupied in this district, including DIET Sopore and the zonal education office, Tangmarg.

Most Kashmiri academicians concede that education was hit mainly because school buildings had been gutted. The chief education officer, Kupwara, Nazir Ahmed Lal said most of the schools were gutted because these had been occupied by the Army, BSF and CRPF during the advent of insurgency. The forces were called in from various parts of the country and there was no accommodation provided for them.

At Zohama in Budgam district of central Kashmir, the Army occupied newly constructed school buildings but after a few months, it was too cold to stay there. As soon as they vacated, terrorists burnt them so that nobody could re-occupy them.

As education was hit in all the districts, parents withdrew their daughters for fear of harassment by men in uniform.

“For formal education in Kashmir Valley, the first major causality was the time available to school-going children. Up to 1989, students would get 210 uninterrupted working days a year. The number got reduced to 60 days by the end of 1993,” said Professor Abdul Gani Madhosh,

director, Institute of Counselling and Social Research, Srinagar who till recently, also headed the education department, Kashmir University.

The University Grants Commission, which governs higher education in India, requires that an educational institution be open for a minimum of 180 days a year. “But in all institutions, including schools, during the peak of militancy from 1990 to 1994, we got between 30 and 40 working days,” Prof Madhosh said. “Even these could hardly be utilized, as not many students or teachers would turn up,” he said.

This was because of the indefinite strikes, intermittent closures, fear of bomb blasts, cross-firings, crackdowns, blind arrests and so on.

Civilian killings in cross fires, attacks on security forces, explosions, abductions, gutting of houses, bridges, schools and other government buildings also led to parents stopping their children from attending school.

As the education department suffered the most, the Jammu and Kashmir government took a bold decision and closed Jamaat-e-Islami schools in Kashmir. The notion (to some extent a fact) remained that these schools were churning out fundamentalist elements and were indoctrinating young minds with jihad.

“There was so much instability that Jamaat schools were closed down. There was too much risk. We did try to relocate schools in private buildings, tried to involve people so that students could start returning but to no use,” said Nazir Ahmed Lal, chief education officer, Kupwara who has almost served in all the districts of Kashmir in his 30 years of service.

Almost all the schools in rural Kashmir were involved in the “movement” as ISI was motivating the Kashmiri youth.

Though the madrasas were closed down much before Governor Jagmohan’s rule in the early 1990s, all their registrations were also cancelled.

The caution was mostly given by Kashmiri Pandit teachers but this era also witnessed their exodus to Jammu and other parts of the country. This was a setback, too.

The academicians in Kashmir remember those turbulent times when

students wrote on their answer-sheets with knives and hatchets on their writing desks in the examination halls. Copying was rampant and teachers were hand-cuffed.

Hundreds of teachers were involved in militancy, many of them were also arrested by the police and the Army. Besides, both teachers and students took advantage of the strikes and hartals and sat at home, even if the strikes did not have much impact in the later stages of the violence.

Impact of violence on education was prominently visible in the examination system. Intrepid militants entered examination halls, even the officers were afraid of them.

The militants even ran a parallel administration. They had their own district administrator,” said Lal. Militants issued fake identity cards for the examinations, someone else would appear for the examination on behalf of somebody else, fake examination slips were issued, fraudulent appointment orders were issued in the teaching department, mostly for Class IV appointments. They forged school leaving certificates. This continued till 1997.

Once while Lal was posted in Budgam district as the principal of a government girls’ higher secondary school, ultras would come to the school with guns and terrorise staff and students. They also demanded that all the girls wear burqa.

Room to play truant

During militancy, teachers stopped going to work at places they were posted to. And most of them got themselves attached to schools of their convenience or ZEO/CEO offices. At least 4,000 teachers were attached with schools in urban areas at the cost of students in rural areas. This was happening until two years ago. The Mufti Mohammad Sayeed government got rid of all these teachers with an ultimatum. Even the High Court upheld the government's decision, giving clear-cut directions to employees to choose between a social life and a career.

Militancy left its worst impact on education in Kashmir Valley, including severe disruption of the academic calendar, destruction of infrastructure, including school buildings, deterioration in the quality of instructors and instruction, discontinuation of extra-curricular activities, stress and depression affecting students' performance and a high number of dropouts.

Professor Abdul Gani Madhosh, director, Institute of Counselling and Social Research, Srinagar feels that the highly inflammable situation has reduced the quality of school life. The first institution to face the brunt was Islamia College of Science and Commerce. The college was burnt with more than 40,000 books, manuscripts and other important documents. This was followed by the burning of the famous Madina-Tui-Aloom library attached to the Hazratbal shrine. Kashmir Valley had to suffer prolonged arson at seats of excellence, knowledge and training.

The former National Conference government tried to change things and initiated the process to reform the education sector. Things have started looking up in the new millennium.

The academic calendar has improved and damaged school buildings are being reconstructed. The work started during Farooq Abdullah's rule is continuing. The government has tried to curb the cheating menace.

One of the measures taken was to place Section 144 in and around educational institutions during examinations. Action against supervisory staff also helped. Security in sensitive schools was beefed up.

The State Board of School Education's examination flying squads were strengthened so that cheating could be checked. As a result, mass copying has stopped, extra-curricular activities have picked up and the

quality of education improved. Education is on the road to normalcy – but it is still on a very long road.

Violence-hit Jammu and Kashmir still ranks 33rd in literacy among the states of India. Only the newly created states of Jharkhand (54.13) and Bihar (47.53) are behind Jammu and Kashmir in the literacy rate. In female literacy (41.82 per cent), the state ranks 33rd among the rest of the states in India.

The latest census report shows that Jammu district is topping in literacy, leaving the equally important district of Srinagar far behind.

While Jammu district has surpassed all other districts of the state by recording a maximum literacy percentage at 77.30, all six districts of Kashmir division have done poorly.

Srinagar district does not figure anywhere in the top three positions as the second and third places are occupied by Kathua and Leh districts, respectively. Srinagar district's literacy rate is at 59.18 per cent.

This latest census was conducted in 2001 after two decades. The census which has to be conducted after every 10 years could not be done in 1991, owing to disturbed conditions in the state.

The district that figured at the bottom of the list in literacy rate is Budgam at 40.94 per cent. The second and third most illiterate districts are Kupwara at 40.80 per cent and Anantnag at 44.10 per cent.

Srinagar occupied fourth place on the maximum literate district list and figured at sixth place on the maximum males literacy list as Kargil (73.58 per cent) and Leh (71.98 per cent) occupied third and fourth place in the maximum male literacy category.

The districts which not only figured at the bottom of the literacy rate list but even in the male and female literacy rate categories are Budgam and Kupwara.

In the male literacy rate category, Budgam recorded a minimum of 51.23 per cent literacy while Kupwara reported 53.55 per cent. In the female category again, Budgam recorded a minimum of 26.60 per cent and Kupwara at 26.83 per cent. In female literacy, Srinagar district is at fourth place.

Against the total population of 54, 41,341 in the Kashmir region, there

are 17, 79,154 literate persons. The total number of literate females is 7,70,627 as against their total population of 25,92,024.

As against the total population of 10,069,947 which comprises 75,64,608 in rural areas and 25,05,309 in urban areas, the state has 47,04,252 literate people. This figure consists of 30,81,972 people in rural areas and 16,22,280 persons in urban areas.

Primary education has been made compulsory in all areas and those without schools are covered by EGS centres. Free text books are provided to all in Classes I and II. From classes III to VIII free textbooks are provided to girls/Scheduled Caste/Scheduled Tribe students. But the situation has not improved.

The main cause for this relatively low literacy figure is poverty, insurgency and lack of awareness as well as facilities in government schools.

Perhaps it is the alarming deterioration in government education machinery, particularly in rural parts of the region that prompted the state government last year to launch the ambitious “Sarvashiksha Abhiyan.”

Backward writ large

Imagine a village in north Kashmir which has a population of at least 10,000 but not a single school exists for girl students. In a conservative society where religion does allow girls to study but in separate educational institutions, policy makers never thought of catering to the educational needs of girl students. In this part of war-ravaged Kashmir, it seems as if girl students do not exist.

Welcome to Dardpora, some 20 km from Kupwara town on Keran Road in Kralpora block. Devoid of water and electricity, Dardpora village is divided in two parts – Upper Dardpora and Lower Dardpora. Lower Dardpora is dominated by Kashmiri- speaking Muslims while Upper Dardpora has Pahari or Gujjars (nomads) who speak various dialects of Kashmir and claim to be of Pakistani origin.

Difficult terrain and the dry (Kandi) belt make this region inaccessible. Situated on the Line of Control, serving as an infiltration-and-transit route for militants, the village faced much destruction in the initial years of militancy. It also suffered huge loss of lives. There are an overwhelming number of orphans in the village, rough estimate suggests at least 400.

As I set out for Dardpora with two social activists from an NGO, MNWA, and an unemployed post-graduate youth of Kupwara with degrees in forensic science, Zain-ul-Abideen, the bumpy ride on the un-metalled road in the mountainous terrain was enough to give a severe back ache.

And as the vehicle halted to a screech near a school building which was in a shambles, hundreds of kids surrounded us. Masoodi guided me to the school, asking me to tread carefully as the only way to reach the school was through a stream. Though not in full spate, we crossed the stream by stepping on boulders. As it was the month of Ramzan, teachers were observing a fast and basking in the sun on the ground of Government Boys' Middle School, Dardpora.

Apart from the widows of Dardpora, the condition of the orphans is also grim. The village has just two schools, both for boys. According to rules, girls cannot study in boys' schools and vice-versa. But some girls have been admitted to these schools. Nazir Ahmed, teacher, Government Boys' Middle School, Dardpora says that the school which was started

in 1960 with a primary school now has 270 students. Out of these, 106 are girls and 164 boys.

The teachers do admit that girls' education has suffered much in the district. Though poverty is the main reason for the widows not sending their daughters to schools, villagers confess that their religion does not allow them to send their girls to study with boys. "Besides, religious attitudes stop parents from sending their girls to schools which are miles away," said Fatima Begum, a widow, adding that had there been a girls' school, they would have considered sending their daughters to school.

To go to a high school, students (both boys and girls) have to travel to Panzgam, which is far from Kralpora. Villagers smell a rat here. Many villagers took up arms in Dardpora when jihad started in Kashmir, donning garbs of mujahids (freedom fighters), fighting to free Kashmir from India. Most of them later got killed. This is why, they believe, the government deliberately did not do anything for Dardpora village which acquired the sobriquet "Village of widows".

Zain-ul-Abideen says: "Yes, not only Dardpora, the entire Kupwara district has been ignored by the leadership. For, they believe it is a militant-infested area."

There is also an impression that Kupwara residents side with the militants. He adds that everyday so many Central and state schemes are announced for rural areas but practically nothing has reached Kupwara. This has resulted in frustration among the youth. The education of orphans, according to Professor Abdul Gani Madhosh – former head of the department, Education, Kashmir University – was the first casualty after their fathers were killed.

Interrupted schooling and family pressure compelled many orphans to look for jobs at an early age, to shoulder their family's responsibility.

In many cases they took up employment hazardous to their health and were forced to work for long hours. The orphans suffered multiple problems, including absence of basic facilities such as drinking water, toilets, first aid, low and irregular wages, says Prof Madhosh.

In Upper Dardpora, which is dominated by tribals, including Gujjars and Paharis, a glass of water was hard to find. As there is water scarcity in this area, residents are mainly dependent on rainwater. When one has to struggle hard to survive, who thinks of education?

A few miles upwards on the same dusty and bumpy road is the Government Middle School Satboin, Dardpora which is dominated by orphans. Two schools function in one dilapidated building.

One is a regular school while the other is a mobile school for the nomadic Gujjars and Paharis. The mobile school has 30 students, while the regular one has 200 students, says Shamshada Hassan, a teacher in the regular school.

Rubeena Bano (10), a school student, is the youngest of six sisters and a brother. Her eldest sister, Resham Jahan is married in Zirhama, brother Parvez Ahmed is in class XI. Father Sasifuddin Khawaja and mother Sarwat Jahan died in 1996. Parveen Bano is in Class VII. Her father, Mohad Sadiq Khawaja, was killed in 1991 leaving behind five children, including three daughters. Her two sisters are uneducated and married.

Their stories are heart-rending. These students have now become a victim of circumstances. Life is even tougher for the girls. In a land where gun is the law and molestation and rapes are common, a widow is more worried about seeing her orphan daughters married safely, rather than getting her educated, says Professor Bashir Dabla of Kashmir University.

The number of orphans in Kashmir has increased every day. A few years ago, a survey conducted by an NGO “J&K Yateem Trust”, found that the maximum number of orphans live in Kupwara and the figure was 15,000 children at that time. The number is certainly higher by now. Abdul Rashid Bhat, a Pahari teacher in GMS Satboin, says that 65 women of the surrounding areas lost their husbands to terrorist violence. About 150-200 men died in the village.

Mr Bhat says that earlier the people were even less inclined towards educating girls. But now they feel the necessity, though boys get the preference. The village has one Anjuman Committee which distributes free books to students. Girls here still have miles to go.

Scarred for life

“You are not welcome here. Go away. We don’t want to talk to you. People of your kind have been coming here all through these years, selling the plight of our daughters and making money... Please go away, we will not talk to you...” These were the words that welcomed this correspondent in Kunan Poshpora, in Trehgam block of Kupwara district on the Line of Control in North Kashmir.

Accompanied by Md Abdul Khaliq Mir who lived in the same village and two volunteers – Md Bashir Ahmed Shiekh and Md Manzoor Ahmed Masoodi – from Maqbool National Welfare Association, an NGO that works for destitute women and orphans in Kashmir, the visit to Kunan Poshpora, one of the most infamous villages in the Valley, was meant to study the impact on the lives of the people of that fateful day in 1991 when the entire village figured in the international headlines.

The sleepy hamlets of Kunan Poshpora allegedly witnessed the mass rape of women during a cordon-and-search operation by the 4th Rajputana Rifles of the 68 Mountain Brigade on the night of 23 and 24 February 1991. The incident generated much controversy and enormous publicity, given the human rights violations and alleged excesses of the security forces. The charge was that not less than 23 – possibly up to 100 women of all ages – were raped by the troops. The matter is shrouded in mystery as the officials claim that no such incident had occurred. Yet, the fact remains that the entire village has been stigmatized for the past 15 years.

Even after all these years, the mere mention of the word “akhbar wali” (journalist) caused the entire village to rise up in arms against this correspondent. The village women did not want to talk. They said: “You make money and go away, and do nothing for us or our girls.” However, with constant persuasion by Md Khaliq, the people started opening up slowly.

Md Sadiq Dar, 50, recalls that fateful day. There was a crackdown in the entire village by the troops of Rajputana Rifles. There had been heavy snowfall the earlier night, and the troops asked all the men of the village to come out of their homes. They gathered at Kunan Chowk for interrogation. It is alleged that the troops raped the village women all through the night.

Even after 15 years, it has not been possible to erase the stigma attached with Kunan Poshpora. Nobody is willing to marry girls from here.

Kunan village consists of about 150 families. The population is over 3,000. Most of the girls are still unmarried.

Initially, it seemed that people would forget after a few years and everything would fall in place. However, that was not to happen.

Fifteen years ago, the girls of the village were young. Today, their lives still remain scarred. Most of them are unmarried, while the few that did get married returned to their maternal homes after brief stays at their in-laws'. Moreover, almost all the school and college-going girls discontinued their studies after the incident.

As a result of the incident, people of the surrounding areas and other villages began to tease the girls of Kunan. Those who ventured out to collect firewood from the nearby forests would have to face taunting remarks. People said: "You are the ones who were raped by the troops."

Gradually, the girls stopped going out to collect firewood. In fact, for the past 14 years, most of them have not left their houses.

Dar, who has two daughters, married off the elder one, Shakeela, in Poshpora in 1997 with great difficulty; few were willing to consider marrying their son to his "stigmatised" daughter. Her in-laws called her names, torturing her and often telling her that "they married their son to her, knowing she was a rape victim." After a few months when she could bear it no longer, Shakeela returned home to her father. She now has two sons and finds it very difficult to sustain the family.

Dar's younger daughter, Zarina, was married later but she, too, returned home after a year.

Dar said: "She too faced the same situation. Still, I sent her back to her in-laws, but they beat her up. They would tell her that she was a rape victim and that they took pity on her, thinking she would bring a good dowry – which she did not." He added that after the incident, he forced his daughters to quit studies. However, he now laments having done so.

He said: "Had they continued with their education, they would have been self-sufficient and independent today. I wonder what will happen to them after I am gone."

After the infamous incident, over 100 girls of the two villages quit their studies, Dar informed. This is because their classmates taunted them endlessly. At Kunan's Government Middle School (the only such school in the entire hamlet), the girls from the village discontinued going to the school for they could not take it any longer. And for the ones who travelled all the way to high schools in Heeri and Trehgam, covering 10-15 km, it was the same story.

Said Abdul Khaliq: "In the bus, people would raise fingers at them, calling them rape victims, even if they were not among the ones to have been raped... If only these girls were educated, they would have a better chance in the marriage market. Worst of all, the stigma of hailing from Kunan persisted. The result is that most of the girls are unmarried and uneducated."

Abdul Khaliq lamented the lot of the Kunan Poshpora women. He said: "It was such a heinous incident... Naturally, the girls are stigmatised. Things worsened as they were not educated and had no jobs."

The villagers are fed up with the NGOs, media persons, human rights activists and others who visited them and made promises that were never to be fulfilled. Khaira Begum said: "We were told that we would be helped, that our girls would be rehabilitated. So many promises were made to our daughters and us, but none were fulfilled..."

Nobody, not even the elected representatives, has done anything for the girls of Kunan Poshpora. Of course, with the exception of Dilafroze Qazi, a woman from Srinagar who runs the SSM College of Engineering in Parihaspora, Pattan. Qazi opened a public school for the girls of the area. Started two years ago, the school – where education is free for Kunan's residents – has 43 students on its rolls. Qazi has also opened a self-help group for young women where lessons in embroidery are given.

Perhaps Kunan Poshpora does not exist for the rest of the people.

Never too late

Their dream of getting a formal education was shattered during the insurgency-ridden years. But quite a few young women in Villigam, off the LoC, are trying to piece their lives together, by going to vocational training centres.

Far away from the hustle and bustle of Srinagar city, some 20 km from Kupwara district, Villigam is situated close to the Line of Control. A creaky wooden staircase on which one must tread cautiously would take you to a dark, dingy room where 15 girls work on a single manual sewing machine, each taking turns to stitch clothes.

Meet Ghulshan Bano, 21, who has never seen a school in her life. Most of her co-workers either dropped out of school because of the raging armed insurgency in the initial years of turmoil, or due to financial constraints. Some of them were forced by parents to sit at home for fear of security forces. Most of them are not able to read a poster in Urdu, pasted on the wooden wall of the room.

But these girls, who had lost hope, are trying to inject some colour in their otherwise dull lives by coming to a vocational centre, run by an NGO, Maqbool National Welfare Association. MNWA was started by separatist leader Hashim Qureshi to improve the lot of women suffering in far-flung areas of Kashmir.

Ghulshan heads the MNWA centre in Villigam. She teaches stitching-tailoring to the girls for a monthly salary of Rs 800. She remembers the day her brother Farooq Ahmed was killed, in the initial years of militancy. Another brother was forced by the Hizbul Mujahideen to join their ranks. He too got killed in 1997. A resident of neighbouring Panzwa, Ghulshan informs that their three houses were destroyed by the army – a punishment for having a militant brother. For years they were running from one place to another for refuge. Attending school was out of the question.

Hundreds of girls in rural Kashmir were forced to quit studies after a father or a brother – the provider – got killed. When their mothers went out looking for work, they sat at home and took care of their siblings. Now of course many of them have become the family bread-winner.

But life, in these past 15 years, has not been easy. The death of Ghulshan's militant brothers, followed by harassment by the forces, led to depression, insomnia and stress. She could not sleep for months. The psychological trauma of living with terror is still palpable as Ghulshan suddenly stops speaking and her voice gets choked.

"Though I had wanted to be educated, I could not even see the school. Things became very hard when both my brothers were killed in the turmoil," says Ghulshan Bano who makes Rs 70-100 for stitching a salwar-kameez each. She has put her sister Rubeena in the Government Higher Secondary school in Kupwara.

Mubeena Bano lives with four sisters and mother Zoona Begum in Villigam. Their suffering began after her father passed away after a massive heart attack. Initially neighbours helped them survive, but she had to forego education. It was Ghulshan who inducted her into the MNWA vocational centre where she learnt tailoring and stitching. Now she is a trained tailor but has no sewing machine of her own.

Nilofer Bano lives in Panzwa with her seven sisters. She passed 9th class from Govt High School, Panzwa but quit studies four years ago. Her brother Abdul Rasheed, an Al Burq militant, was killed in 1990 when she was just four years old. Her father, an old frail man, cannot work, and so Nilofer has had to support the family on her lean shoulders.

"Routine killings, encounters, cross firing, grenade blasts, identification parades, search and cordon operations created a fear psychosis in parents. The education of girls suffered during the turmoil. During the 1990s, concerned parents withdrew their daughters from school and college. Almost 65 per cent girls in the initial years of turmoil were forced to quit their studies due to abnormal conditions prevailing in the Valley," says Professor Bashir Ahmed Dabla, a renowned sociologist.

The Chief Education Officer, Kupwara, Nazir Ahmed Lal, also confirms that "women's education suffered in entire Kashmir, but it was more pronounced in Kupwara as it was the hub of militancy. During the turbulent years, the number of girls dropping out increased in Kupwara. Parents, mostly in rural Kashmir, did not allow them to go to school because of widespread violence and uncertainty that plagued their minds. This resulted in depression and anxiety which is not so uncommon among the girls." But he adds that things are changing for the better and the government is doing good work in the direction of increasing the number

of girl students in schools. In the districts where the total literacy rate is 43.20 per cent (56.10 per cent males and 28.70 per cent females), various schemes have been launched, including the Sarve Shiksha Abhiyaan, he adds.

Flesh trade in Kashmir

The campaign launched by the “Mariyam squad” against sex workers in Kashmir last year focused attention on the unexpected rise in prostitution in the state and the need for measures against the flesh trade.

The sight of a handful of veiled women raiding a number of hotels, restaurants and cyber-cafes in Srinagar last year was a rare one. Never before had anyone seen a women’s group campaigning against prostitution in Kashmir. Indeed, prostitution is not something many associate with Kashmir. Yet, the “Mariyam squad” of the banned women’s separatist organisation “Dukhtaran-e-Millat” (Daughters of Faith), were seen in the Civil Lines area, that includes Lal Chowk, Court Road, Regal Chowk, Lambert Lane, Maulana Azad Road and Residency Road. Daughters of the faith in burqas “advised” people, including women, present at the hotels and cafes to avoid visiting these places. They also asked the owners of these hotels, restaurants and cyber cafes not to allow any couple to sit in the privacy of cabins.

This aggressive campaign launched last year by the “Mariyam squad” against sex workers whose numbers, it claimed, had grown alarmingly in the state, puzzled sociologists as this was not only rare in the Valley that had come to be associated with death and destruction in the past 16 years but also because most Kashmiris were under the impression that their society was relatively free of social evils and quite conservative in nature. But that, it turned out, was not the case.

Prostitution and trafficking of women were unknown – even taboo – to Kashmiri society. Nobody had even heard of women indulging in such activities. Though sociologists had been discussing these activities in hushed tones over the past couple of years, the first bold statement came from renowned sociologist Prof. Bashir Ahmed Dabla, head of the department of Sociology, University of Kashmir, who termed prostitution as a “degenerative inferno” that is likely to engulf Kashmiri society. He believes that the flesh trade and prostitution in Kashmir are directly linked to the conflict situation that has prevailed in Kashmir for the past sixteen years. The flesh trade in Kashmir has to be analysed holistically and not as an issue independent of the context in which it is spreading, he adds.

Kashmir has a number of widows who have lost their husbands to violence. Rough estimates suggest that over 25,000 women have become

widows in Kashmir. There are 40,000 orphans in the Valley. Over the years, these women – many of whom lack an education – have suffered on various counts. As rural Kashmir does not follow family planning practices, Kashmiri widows have had to support three to six children on an average. Most of these women are unemployed and are sustained by relatives, neighbours, NGOs, meagre government relief, parents, brothers, in-laws, children and their husbands' pensions. Or, they make ends meet by starting part-time businesses, making handicrafts and tilling their small fields. Government-sanctioned financial support, especially in the case of civilian killings, usually reaches the widows after two or more years of the death of their husbands. In the absence of any concrete welfare programmes, some women, like those from Dardpora, in Kupwara district, have resorted to begging or to the flesh trade to fulfil their daily needs.

Ms Tabassum Ishtiyag, who works for the J&K Coalition of Civil Society (JKCCS), a Valley-based human rights NGO said: "When you have no support system, when you are not educated, when you do not have a job, you have nobody to sustain you and your kids. One option is begging. The other one is prostitution."

Similar is the case with the "half-widows" who are yet to reconcile to the deaths of their husbands. Their husbands have gone missing or have simply disappeared. They run from pillar to post to get some information about their spouses' whereabouts, trudge to police stations and courts trying to trace their sons, husbands and brothers. In the process, some are also exploited. Others just want money to keep their kitchens going.

Ms Ishtiyag said: "Illiteracy, unemployment and the conflict situation have created problems like the flesh trade in Kashmir." She added that the state has also done little to better the situation of women who really need help and are victims of the turmoil.

Isolation, poverty and social insensitivity has left many women affected by militancy without any support. As they do not have jobs, they find it difficult to make both ends meet and to bring up their orphaned children.

Dr Khurshid-ul-Islam, a Kashmiri sociologist, told *The Statesman*: "Since they do not have help from anywhere, many women are compelled to enter the flesh trade. The social and moral cost of this has not been accounted for by social scientists and reformers." There are no legal

“red light areas” in Srinagar or any other town of Kashmir but prostitution has been going on nonetheless. Professor Dabla argues that the forced imposition of Islamic dress codes by militant groups in Kashmir is also one of the factors that has had an effect on the flesh trade in Kashmir. “Five years ago, when Lashker-e-Jabbar and Dukhtaran-e-Millat tried to enforce Islamic dress codes on Kashmiri women, I told my students and fellow colleagues that this would result in a very strong, dangerous reaction from Kashmiri women. And that is what is happening.” He added that any social change that is imposed has very serious – often disastrous – implications.

Sociologists say that one of the main reasons for the flesh trade in Kashmir is the forced imposition of religious codes. Prof Dabla feels that widows living in abject poverty in various parts of Kashmir who have no source of income are forced to enter prostitution to sustain their families. He argues that security forces also entrap them.

He alleged: “The army, paramilitary forces and state police also trap these sufferers of militancy and use them for their benefit. In many cases, girls have been supplied by security forces personnel to their seniors to try and ensure a promotion.”

Orphans, too, without societal and governmental care, have picked up on prostitution. Prof Dabla said his research has shown that a significant proportion of orphans has either fallen prey to prostitution and drug addiction. Adolescents often start with the consumption expectorants and graduate to using cannabis.

Present-day Kashmir, given the backdrop of the seemingly unending conflict, has a moral vacuum. The problem is multi-faceted and needs to be countered on many fronts, feels Prof Dabla. He argues that prostitution can be controlled only if employment opportunities are given to the people of Kashmir. The government has to provide jobs for unemployed, educated youths and to persons who have become victims of militancy in the state during the last 16 years. There are thousands of widows and orphans who have suffered and continue to suffer. Till the government takes social issues such as these as seriously as it does security issues and sets up rehabilitation centres all over the state just as it does for “reformed” militants, the Happy Valley is likely to continue crying.

Valley of despair

Brackpora is associated with the infamous Pathribal killings that took place after the Chittsinghpura massacre five years ago. In this village in Anantnag district of southern Kashmir lives 22-year-old Somya Rashid. Ten years ago, Somya's father, Abdul Rashid Mir – a teacher at Hazrat Aamir Kabeer School in Anantnag – was killed before her eyes, allegedly by militants who had surrendered. Her screams horrified many people, including her five siblings. But the girl's tears seem to have dried up since then and the trauma and pain frozen in her heart. Neither has she shed a single tear, nor has she smiled since the fateful day. In fact, Somya has not even slept soundly – without headaches and nightmares bothering her – in the past 10 years. All the dreams that her father had woven for his young girl died with his death. Somya, who wanted to become a doctor, was forced to quit her studies and stay at home.

Even a decade later, Somya clearly shows symptoms of severe depression. The fear of somebody barging in and spraying a volley of bullets into her and her siblings' bodies keeps her awake at night. But strangely, she is unaware of her mental health status.

Somya's is not an isolated case. In the past 16 years, hundreds of such cases have surfaced in rural Kashmir. Be it Anantnag, Budgam, Pulwama or the border district of Kupwara, women suffer not only from severe depression but also post-traumatic stress disorders (PTSD). But most of them are unaware that they are in any way suffering from mental illness though they complain of headaches, sleep disorders, high blood pressure, anxiety, fear of the unknown, fear of security forces and militants and physical insecurity.

The armed conflict between militants and security forces in Kashmir, that started in 1989, has trapped every group, class and community. Years of strife have taken a toll on the inhabitants, but the worst sufferers seem to be the women, the soft targets. The violence by the terrorists and security forces has harmed them on the psychological and emotional front as well.

According to official figures, 38,314 people have been killed in Kashmir till 30 November 2004 due to insurgency. This includes 15,278 civilians, 18,479 terrorists and 4,557 security forces and J&K police personnel. Property worth crores has been destroyed. The education system has been derailed and business grounded. Doctors have noticed an

unprecedented increase in mental disorders. Routine killings, encounters, cross firing, grenade blasts, identification parades, and search and cordon operations have created a fear psychosis that has led to depression, anxiety and other disorders among the people. As women are said to be more sensitive than men, they become more susceptible to psychological and emotional problems.

Consider the case of Adfar Jan (13) and Nighat Jan (15), two sisters who live in Astaan Mohalla, Natipora, Srinagar. The girls, studying in Class VIII and IX respectively at Chanpora's Government Higher Secondary School, live in constant fear – to the extent that they do not mingle even with their classmates; they return to their small home straightaway from school. The sisters, who saw their father being killed by unidentified gunmen a few years ago, say they do not feel like talking to anybody. Both also complain of continuous palpitation. Their mother, who has to take care of six children, fails to understand the symptoms of acute depression.

Depression is more rampant among girls in the rural areas. Education took a backseat as parents were more concerned about their daughters' physical safety than their going to school. "In the initial years of the turmoil, almost 65 per cent of girls were forced to quit studies due to the abnormal conditions prevailing in the Valley," said Prof Bashir Ahmed Dabla, a noted sociologist. Many girls quit studies after their fathers were killed as they did not have the required means to carry on going to school. With their mothers being forced to go out to earn a living, they were compelled to remain at home and take care of siblings, do the household chores and so on. These young girls who wanted to educate themselves and be independent were instead met with destruction and despair. Gradually, they drifted into depression.

Girls suffered mental illness on other counts too. Forced by the circumstances, a few young girls were compelled to live apart from their mothers or immediate family members. Such girls have also shown strange behaviour. Shakeela's daughter is one such example. Shakeela's husband, Abdul Rashid Dar, a taxi driver, was killed by militants during the peak of militancy in 1992 at Handwara. He was kidnapped by terrorists from the Handwara bus stand and after 10-15 days, his body was found with two bullets in it. Shakeela did not get any ex-gratia relief from the state government. Her in-laws wrote a letter to the tehsildar, telling him that they should get the money. "In this state which

ranks second from the top corruption-wise, everything is possible... Her in-laws got the money,” said Abdul Khaliq Mir, Shakeela’s father. Mir brought his daughter back to his home in Doolipora, Kupwara. Shakeela’s in-laws had wanted her to marry their younger son. She declined. They, however, managed to force her into leaving behind her daughter, as they wanted at least one grandchild to be with them.

Shakeela goes to meet her 16-year-old daughter every two to three months. She said the girl is under tremendous pressure and talks little. The teenager has also told her mother that she feels suffocated. The trauma of women like Shakeela and her young daughter can sometimes become too much to bear. Psychological pain has destroyed the social fabric of the Valley and has even resulted in suicides in some instances.

Prior to the nineties, suicide was a taboo word. But not anymore. The last 15 years has seen a 10-fold increase in suicides, informed Dr Bashir Ahmad Dabla. The sociologist added that the incidence of suicide among women is much higher than among men. At least three to five suicide cases are registered every week at Srinagar’s two main hospitals, Sri Maharaj Hari Singh (SMHS) and Sher-e-Kashmir Institute of Medical Sciences.

In 1998, SMHS registered 167 suicide deaths – 92 women and 75 men. In 1999, the total was 208 – 144 women and 64 men. Between April 2000 and March 2001, altogether 567 suicides – 377 women and 190 men – were registered at the hospital. A study in 2002 revealed that among some 10 lakh psychiatric patients, around one lakh were diagnosed with suicidal tendencies. And that about 20 per cent of such people actually attempt suicide. In the urban or semi-urban areas of the Valley, women have started thronging hospitals but this has not happened in rural Kashmir. Women in the countryside find it very difficult to cope with the situation. Moreover, incidents of violence against women go unreported. Ignorance and illiteracy are high. Victims of rape or molestation – though undergoing psychological trauma – do not visit hospitals. Before the violence began, very few women paid visits to psychiatrists. But most of the women who visit hospitals now show post-traumatic stress disorders like the recurrent and distressing recollection of events, irritability, outbursts of anger, difficulty in concentrating, sleeplessness, depression and disinterest in social or domestic activities, said psychiatrist Dr Mushtaq Margoob.

Statistics reveal that in the year 1989, about 1,700 patients visited the Valley's lone psychiatric hospital and in 2002, the number had shot up to 48,000. The number of outpatient cases has also gone up from 20 to 125 per day. Following a number of news reports on the distressing situation emanating from this hospital, the state government has banned journalists from entering the building. According to Dr Abdul Gani Madhosh, an educationist, a survey conducted by the state's doctors reveals that depression among Kashmiris has increased by 30 per cent, anxiety by 40 per cent and hysteria by 20 to 30 per cent. "The resolution of the Kashmir dispute would go a long way in minimising stress-related disorders as there would eventually be no need for counselling," said Dr Madhosh. He emphasised the need for greater involvement of the administration and district resource centres across the Valley in addressing mental health concerns.

The long road to university

For hundreds of girls from rural Kashmir going to university was a dream that would be difficult to realize. Life in the strife-torn Kashmir Valley was fraught with uncertainties and higher education seemed out of bounds at a time when these young women had to face crackdowns, curfews, bombings, suicidal attacks and most of all, harassment by both militants and security forces on a regular basis.

Most of the girls from rural Kashmir who grew up in the turbulent years could never make it to colleges in their own districts. For those who have the journey from their villages in far-flung areas – Anantnag, Kupwara, Baramulla, Budgam – to the posh Kashmir University in the heart of Srinagar has been full of potholes.

Kehkashan Mumtaz, a PhD scholar from Bandipore, Baramulla, researching the life and work of the famous Kashmir poet Aga Shahid Ali has been a witness to death and destruction in Kashmir. But as she puts it, after all these years of turmoil and sufferings, she has learnt to live with the situation.

“I have learnt to live with death. I have learnt to live with bullets flying all around. Same is the case with all of us who have managed to reach Kashmir University,” says Kehkashan adding their psyche has been affected terribly by the turmoil. What has turned out to be most disastrous is the fact that they are left least ambitious and do not dream of anything.

Suraiyya Salim of village Kaichachkot, pursuing her LLM from Kashmir University, was in the sixth or seventh class when the turmoil started. Her parents wanted to send her to a good school but as violence erupted, they put her into a nearby school, only for the sake of her safety. She graduated from Government Girls Degree College, Anantnag, in 2001. That was a time when strikes became very frequent; curfews and hartals had become the order of the day, schools shut down for days, teachers remained absent and even students who thought that ‘Azadi’ was round the corner, would not attend schools regularly.

Many of Suraiyya’s class fellows were taken out of schools by their parents because of the conflict situation but her advocate father felt she should continue despite the risk.

“Today, when I meet my friends who could not study, they tell me how lucky I was to go to college and university. But even for me, the journey was not that smooth,” says Suraiyya. “We were put through trauma, agony and harassment. There was so much of psychological pressure on the girls and the very sight of security forces’ personnel was harassment. At one point of time, we had serious apprehensions whether we would be able to continue,” she says.

All of them had such apprehensions as the frequent curfews, hartals and crackdowns would force them to remain inside. Even the schools and colleges used to remain shut down. And on “normal” days when they would go to schools and colleges, their parents would wait for them anxiously worrying about their safety.

The turmoil did not effect the education of girls alone; it left indelible psychological impressions also on their minds. The girls recall that at the very outset of the turmoil, any sound of explosion would make their families quit their homes and come out in the open. Not only the girls but their parents’ psyche was also affected.

Once, one of Kehkashan Mumtaz’s friends got wounded in a grenade attack and she stayed back to help her. When she reached home much behind the scheduled time, her mother, on the verge of tears, was waiting for her at the main entrance of their house in Bandipore and gave her a tight slap. She was so psyched that she did not ask the reason for the delay.

Now of course most students who come to the city to study have been given mobile phones by their parents (cell phones were introduced just two and a half years ago in Kashmir).

The students speak about repression by security forces, terrorised, as they are, by the possibility of search, beating, torture or getting shot in indiscriminate return fire, at any given time. They also speak about the trauma they faced at losing near and dear ones.

Nuzhat Wani of Baramulla speaks about search operations when all the village’s men were asked to gather at one place. “Our father, brothers, uncles would be summoned. How could we study peacefully? We were always a terrorized lot,” she says.

Pursuing her PhD in Zoology from Kashmir University, Shabnam Khalid hails from Arampora, Sopore, North Kashmir. Going to college, she says, seemed to be a luxury.

“There is no question of not getting affected by the turmoil. It affected our brothers as much as it affected us. They could not go to play; their personalities could not be developed.”

Saima, another postgraduate student, informs that in rural Kashmir education is often affected by “blackouts”. The security forces ask people to put off the lights by 9 pm. “Night is the time when everything is calm and quiet and concentration is maximum. In winters when the suns set very early, these blackouts make students’ lives very difficult.”

Yasmin Jaan who studies political science and hails from Hakoora, Anantnag is no stranger to blackouts. She would put two to three layers of curtains on the windows to prevent the light from going out when she studied. She was in Islamia Hanifia School in Anantnag and used to travel by bus. Once the militants fired at an army bus. That’s when her parents took her out of school and put her in a local government school in Hakoora.

For most of these girls life is about working out a compromise. Kehkashan wanted to become a journalist but the situation forced her to start her research in English. Arifa Sufi graduated in mass communications and wanted to do her Masters in the subject but couldn’t. “Being in the media in Kashmir, in a strife-torn situation, is very tough for a girl, almost impossible.”

As Kehkashan puts it, “Most of us quit being ambitious, something died deep within us. One receives education to get a sense of self-respect but we have seen the times when our near and dear ones were humiliated.”

“The question was not whether you would take up medical or non-medical course of study, pursue journalism or botany. For us, hundreds of such girls, the question was whether we or the students of our generation would be able to reach home safely in the evening,” she says.

Perhaps this is the reason why most of the affluent families of Kashmir, be it rural or urban, have sent their children outside Jammu and Kashmir to study, informs Linofer who is doing the last semester of her LLB programme. Linofer’s progressive parents (her father works in the J&K Government’s Geology and Mining Department while her mother is in Finance) wanted her to get university education but her cousins were not so lucky.

They also were among hundreds who had to discontinue their education as their parents were bothered about their security

The girls of the conflict yearn for peace, a solution to Kashmir issue so that dignity is restored to all Kashmiris. None of their relatives is disgraced and there is a place to live where all of them are provided a space of their own where the territory of their thoughts is not intruded by the deafening sounds of the big explosions.









All tressed up, nowhere to go

Fatima Bi is walking non-stop for the past five hours. Clad in salwar and kurti (shirt) and Tazakastani cap with various hair braids, she finds absolutely no trouble carrying her young infant on her back tied with a piece of long cloth. But for the stout, tough and beautiful women of this tribe-Gujjars and Bakerwals- this is a routine. Since she was born, Fatima Bi has seen her mother and other women of the clan follow the same routine. Moving along with the horses, Fatima Bi, other ladies and children, flocks of sheep and goats and hunting dogs who protect animals from thieves and wild animals are coming down from the higher reaches near Zalamang, Kokernag in South Kashmir. And as she stops at the village grocery shop for a puff of “Beedi”(few women of the tribe are fond of this variety of smoking), few minutes are enough to catch up with her and other tribal ladies and find out more about them.

Most of the months in a year, Fatima and other ladies of her tribal sport a nomadic lifestyle. While during summer, the journey is upward from the foothills of the Himalayan ranges of Jammu and Kashmir to the higher reaches, it is downward during the winter season.

In winters, with the beginning of spring, these Gujjars and Bakerwals shift from Poonch-Rajouri and Kupwara, Baramulla and Anantnag areas and enter the Margs – the lush Green high pastures and Dhokes in upper reaches of Pir Panjal ranges. Most of them reach Lolab, Gurez and Sonamarg on the eastern top hills of Kashmir.

“We keep horses for riding and transportation, sheep and goats for production of wool, milk and meat and sell surplus animals and their subsidiary products and buy maize, rice and grocery from the villages for day-to-day consumption,” informs Fatima adding they travel on compact basis with their baggage, flocks of sheep, herd of goats, fleet of horses and dogs.

Quite comfortable with her routine, Fatima never complains about her life even once and adds that this is how she has lived all along. But what about their education!

“No, I haven’t studied. In fact, nobody, none of the girls and women among us is educated,” she says plainly. Fatima is one among such thousands of Gujjar-Bakerwal girls who have never been to school. They, for that matter, do not know what school is like. For these nomads are always on the move.

The apathy and woe of this apparently smiling Gujar woman is more than that of women belonging to twelve different Tribes of the State. Despite the schemes initiated by Central and State Governments for the upliftment and welfare of the women folk, these Gujar women are still a suffering lot.

In a survey conducted by Tribal Research and Cultural Foundation, J&K, while some of the sections have attained 100 per cent literacy, this ratio is just 5.5 per cent in Gujar women folk. Ladakh tribal region, considered to be the most backward is far ahead with a literacy rate of 12.09 per cent among women.

“Nomad Gujar women are under going through massive exploitation and have been victims of suppression and victimization. On one hand, they became the victim of superstitions while on the other, despite excessive hardwork, they do not get due respect and position in the tribal society. Because of early age marriage and social bindings, only 18 per cent of the Gujar girls are in a position to get admission at Primary school level. The circumstances compel them to leave their studies even at the different levels,” informs Mr Javaid Rahi, Secretary Tribal Research and Cultural Foundation, J&K.

According to the survey, nineteen girls students belonging to various tribes of the Ladakh region are presently doing various Post Graduate studies in University of Jammu while in spite of 5 per cent reservation quota, the only girl student of Gujar Tribe is doing her Master’s Degree in English Department University of Jammu and another Gujar Girl has being admitted this year to LLB course. The situation is worst in Kashmir University where despite of 5 per cent reservation for Gujjars no Gujar girl student is enrolled for Post Graduation till date.

“Out of the 12 lakh Gujar women, only 5 girls from the Gujar tribe are doing Master degree in Faculty of Arts in Jammu University while in Kashmir University, not even single Gujar girl is enrolled despite 5 per cent reservation to them,” says Rahi.

The Centre-sponsored schemes like Balika Simridhi Yojna, Sawastiki and Indira Mahila Yojna haven’t helped Gujar women at all resulting in more backwardness among them. Rahi says the status of Gujar women is worst then the women belonging to Beda, Bot, Balti, Garra, Mon, Brokpa, Purigipa, Gaddi and Sippis Tribes of the State.

Examples are galore in the history that Gujjar women have shown no less courage and willpower than any other women belonging to urban elite. Zooni, an old Gujjar lady had organized a women force in her village in Jammu and Kashmir to fight against the barbarous Pakistani invaders in 1947. With rifle in one hand and a thick stick in another hand to control her cattle in the jungles, she used to fire at the invaders.

Mali Bi was another old Gujjar women who displayed exemplary courage, faithfulness and loyalty by working shoulder to shoulder with the Indian Armed Forces in Rajouri-Poonch sector in the 1971 war with Pakistan. She was conferred Padam Shree in recognition of her services.

If the women of this tribe have significantly contributed towards the nation, then why nothing is being done for her education, her upliftment and betterment, asks Mr. Shamsheer Hakla Poonchi, a Gujjar leader of Bandichechian, Poonch. Being illiterate, poor and nomadic, Gujjars and Bakerwals have been ignored by successive governments both at the Centre and the state and there is not a single voice of Gujjar women audible anywhere in the state, he rues.

Thanks to militancy, in Gujjar society which was already lagging behind the rest of the tribes and population of the trouble region, the girls who were going to schools were forced to sit at homes.

For this nomadic community, the government had opened at least 300 mobile schools. Due to militancy, over 150 schools have been closed down or made stationary schools as the teachers refused to go to the higher reaches in these mobile schools for the scare of the militants. These mobile schools for educating Gujjars have failed in bringing a change in the educational scenario.

“Mobile primary schools for the nomadic population was a wonderful idea. Initially, it did help the community students a great deal. But all these schools were single teacher schools,” informs a state education department official on conditions on anonymity adding, as militancy started and militants started frequenting the upper areas, these mobile school teachers refused to move with the schools. It is no wonder to see most of the schools closed and those which are still running, have no teacher.

A number of Gujjar and Bakerwal student hostels, particularly in Anantnag, Pulwama, Kupwara and Doda areas are under the occupation

of the Security Forces since 1991. They are not being shifted to other houses in the vicinity. In Gujjar society which was already lagging behind the rest of the tribes and population of the trouble region, the girls who were going to schools were forced to sit at homes.

Since 1947, the Gujjar women have made very slow progress which has further been halted due to militancy:

1.	IAS and allied services	Nil
2.	KAS and allied services	Two
3.	District officers	Nil
4.	MLA/MLC	Nil
5.	Head of departments	Nil
6.	University services	Nil
7.	Lawyers	Six
8.	Judicial services	One
9.	Ph.D.	Three
10.	Journalists	Nil

Source: Tribal Research and Cultural Foundation, J & K

Though the government has started Gujjar and Bakerwals hostels at the District level with free boarding and lodging facilities up to 12th class and reservation in employment and vocational institutions, they are still backward educationally as all such efforts are half hearted.

That elusive chalk

From the salubrious environs of her village nestled in the foothills of Anantnag district in Zalangam, South Kashmir, getting uprooted and settling in a tented colony in the outskirts of Jammu city in Nagrota in the scorching, blistering heat of the plains was not easy for Sunita Kaul, all of 14 years. Leaving her entire belongings, her friends in the neighbourhood and her life to flee to Jammu in the middle of one dark night in early 1990 with her parents was a harsh reality that she could never reconcile with.

After landing in Jammu and staying in Gita Bhavan temple for few months, Sunita didn't know for the first few months what she was supposed to do, since she saw everyone around in complete disillusionment.

Then her family shifted to Nagrota Migrant camps in tents and finally few migrant schools were put in place, which she started attending. The summer (post-monsoon) heat was so scorching that once she went to a nearby temple terrace to study, had one encounter with a snake there, and on another instance brought one home in her school bag, to be discovered by her mother the next morning when her daughter was preparing to go to school again. (Over 1000 Kashmiri Pandits died due to sunstroke and snakebites in refugee camps at Jammu and Delhi).

Years passed, and she passed exams too, but percentage, on account of the circumstances, fell quite often. The girl is now well placed, but not as well placed as she would have expected, had she got proper, comfortable education.

Coping up with harsh post-April 1990 summer, hundreds of such young Kashmiri Pandit girls had to undergo more mental turmoil than the physical one as their lives came to a standstill as education got discontinued initially.

Perhaps not a single Kashmiri Pandit family in Kashmir could remain unaffected by the armed insurgency which took its roots in early nineties. This was also the period when the world witnessed the exodus of the ethnic Kashmiri Pandit community from their homeland in Kashmir. In 1990, the year of holocaust, as the KPs put it; all regular educational institutions were closed for Kashmiri students. But for a KP, any student from any other state could get admission in a regular school at Jammu

without any hassle. Makeshift arrangements for migrant students were arranged under tented accommodation in the scorching heat without any fan, toilet and drinking water facilities.

Degree classes for migrant students were arranged in Government Science College and MAM College Jammu. Migrant students were registered with the Kashmir University. During the peak of militancy in the early nineties, the three-year academic year got stretched to six to seven years. Most of the migrant students in Jammu got exhausted and lost interest in studies.

Though Kashmiri Pandit youth suffered badly due to displacement from the Kashmir valley sixteen years ago, yet the major impact of turmoil could be seen on those young boys and girls who lived in migrant camps than those who acquired private accommodation in various parts of Jammu and Delhi and few other cities of the country much later.

Most of those Pandit families who had to take shelter in government's migrant colonies were those who had no major resources for sustenance. Hence, migrants living in migrant camps had lower literacy rates than those living in the non-camp areas and the females fared the worst, as per a report on the "Impact of migration on the socio-economic conditions of Kashmiri displaced people" conducted by J&K Centre for Minority Studies (J&K CMS).

"Discontinuation of education due to inaccessibility of the educational institute/ economic reasons and other socio-cultural factors was pronounced in the migrant camps where the families were mostly from the agricultural/business and self-employed sections", the report says.

The research undertaken for studying the impact of violence on KP girls education clearly reveals that there has been a significant variation among the camp and non-camp students (the affluent ones who constructed their house or rented the accommodation but did not stay inside the tented colonies set up for the migrant Pandits which were later converted to One Room Tenements (ORTs).

Conditions in refugee camps which were set up at Muthi, Nagrota, Mishriwalla, Jhiri, Purkhoo in Jammu and Batal Ballian in Udhampur, have always been sub-human. Lack of healthcare, hygiene, education and other facilities, slowly and gradually, started reflecting on their education too.

The literacy rate in camp localities was only 56 per cent for males and 40 per cent for females. Families with rural and urban background in the camps depicted significant variations in the proportion of educated and trained population. In the camp locations, female literacy rate was 49 per cent for families with some urban origin and only 37 per cent for families with rural origin in the post migration period in March 2002. Only 11 per cent of children reach graduation level out of which hardly 3 per cent became graduates. The avenues for higher education were less among families dwelling in camps as compared to families living in non-camp localities.

Immediately after migration, though the Kashmiri Pandit community suffered badly education-wise, but after few years, the students were able to cope up to some extent, says Dr. Agnishekher, Panun Kashmir chairman.

Even the CMS findings show that the percentage of the students who discontinued after the migration due to inaccessibility of educational institutions, financial crunch and other socio-economic and cultural factors, in the age group 6-18 years and those in 18-24 years for graduation and post-graduation and professional studies was worked out at 8 per cent for boys and 11 per cent for girls at school level and 24 per cent for boys and 30 per cent for girls at college level and about 1 per cent each for boys and girls at post-graduation and professional level.

Again, there was a sharp difference in the discontinuation levels among the camp and non-camp students.

“The discontinuation of education for both the boys and girls from camps localities was as high at 24 per cent for boys and 43 per cent for girls at school level; 65 per cent for boys and 74 per cent for girls at college level and 25 per cent for boys and girls each at post-graduation and professional training level”, says the Centre for Minorities Studies report.

One door shut, many opened

The communal carnage, the forced exodus, the changed milieu, alien and hostile environment along with a torn social fabric, poor shelter, lack of privacy and security, economic distress, loss of interest among students due to non-availability of jobs, inaccessibility of appropriate education environment in the vicinity, the institutional confusion because of the change of the University, the cussed attitude of the Kashmir University and inflexibility and lack of sympathy of the state government to allow flexibility of jurisdiction resulted in discontinuation of education among Kashmiri Pandits.

Living in sub-humane existence in camps, deprived of the very basic needs of the life, growing in filth and squalor, the youth were discriminated against in education and employment and they lapsed into psychological and mental diseases including depression, anxiety disorders, and personality syndromes.

What came to the rescue of such migrant students were the reservations made by the Government of Maharashtra in various professional seats in the state.

The students interested in engineering seats outside the state could manage admissions in Maharashtra. When the compulsory primary education was denied to KP students in J&K, this state opened the gates of the choicest engineering and Medical Colleges for the KP children.

Recently, Karnataka state also became the first state in the country to allot Medical and Dental seats besides engineering seats to the wards of Kashmiri Pandit migrants for the academic year 2006-07. (On July 1, 2006, the Common Entrance Cell of the Karnataka Government allotted 60 engineering seats, four medical seats and one dental seat). And things started improving for the students of the community.

Says Dr. K.L Chowdhury, chairman, Political affairs, Panun Kashmir: “In spite of the difficult circumstances, education has been our main focus, be it girls or boys. If you visit a refugee camp and enter any one-room tenement, you will not miss a study corner in that multi-purpose room where you may have three generations living together.”

“All you have is the family support; the state has not provided even the basic infrastructure for education of the displaced lot. I remember the tent schools where the school would be blown off with the first storm of summer, where you had a ramshackle black board and no place for the girls to sit except the bare, uneven, rocky ground”, says Dr Chowdhury who himself is a renowned physician.

Of course, since then the Pandits have moved on. They had no option. They sold their properties back home in the valley for a song to generate finances for educating their children.

Dr Chowdhury also feels that opening of educational portals in some states like Maharashtra was a great gesture of goodwill and that was a strong incentive for the youth to work hard and get into professional colleges. He adds they now KPs girls are marching shoulder to shoulder with the boys and even faring better in various disciplines. They are in medicine, engineering, journalism, acting, modeling, law, IT, aviation, police etc.

“I feel one silver streak in the dark clouds of having been forced into displacement as there has been a spurt in the already education-minded community of Kashmiri Pandits,” he says.

Some years back, he even wrote a poem “Camp School” in his anthology, ‘Of Gods, Men and Militants’ (Minerva India (Pvt) Ltd. 2000) which goes as following:

In the wild outskirts of the city,
On a barren piece of land at Muthi,
Five tattered tents each twelve feet by twenty,
Flapping in the wind, holding tenuously,
Make our school for a hundred and thirty.

The only furniture or upholstery
Is a bare blackboard, solitary,
Rough and ridged and rickety,
That refuses to be writ upon
With any chalk, coloured or white,
Hard, soft or powdery.

The ‘migrant’ teachers try their best
With words, gestures and pantomime

But often leave the class in disgust
As the wind blows hot, the sun peeps through
Or the rains seep in to flood the school
And the skin smarts and burns with the 'loo'

But that doesn't dampen our spirits
In this veritable laboratory
Where the briar and bush is our botany,
The insects and worms our zoology,
The sand and stones our geology,
The elements our physics and chemistry,
Mother Nature our library
And we ourselves the history.

Ours is not just a camp school,
But a mini open university.

Conclusion

The protracted conflict in Kashmir has taken a toll on Kashmiri women's education. While not a single Kashmiri has remained unaffected by the bloodshed and violence, yet the fact remains that education was a major casualty of the conflict and women were its worst sufferers. While girls in urban areas in Kashmir valley could still get some education, the Kashmiri girls in rural Kashmir were worst affected.

For the past one decade when the Farooq Abdullah government took over, much hype was being created about the slogans like "Universalisation of education", "Education at the doorstep", "Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan", "Education Guarantee Scheme", Rehbar-e-Taleem etc." but things, seemingly have moved at a snail's pace.

Schemes like *Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan* aim at bringing all the children within the coverage of complete literacy through formal learning at the doorstep with the objectives of achieving educational attainment, general awareness and professional competence. There are special schemes for girls like NIPGEL (National Programme for Girl Education), *Kasturba Balika Vidhyalaya* etc but the half-hearted attempts for their implementation has not yielded much result.

The schemes like the SSA scheme have fallen flat as there is not adequate infrastructure available in the violence-ridden state, especially in remote parts of the state.

About 1.25 lakh children in the age group of 6-14 years are not receiving education; most of them are the victims of the turmoil who need to be given some succor. But in such a state which has been rated as the second most corrupt state after Bihar by the Transparency International, the efforts have remained half-hearted.

If, year after year, the government has to raise the same old slogans to attract vote bank, then, there certainly is no hope for the children's future.

For the betterment of the girls and making J & K a literate state, the need is to focus on such schemes whole-heartedly. As the Kashmir University girls put it, "Corruption has to go and the peace has to be returned," perhaps then only Kashmiri students have some future.

DISTRICT-WISE EDUCATIONAL PROFILE OF KASHMIR VALLEY
SRINAGAR

I. Population

Total/Rural/Urban	Population	
	Persons	Male
Total	11,83,493	6,33,360
Rural	2,53,357	1,31,633
Urban	9,30,136	5,01,727

II. Literacy Rate

Male	68.85%
Female	47.97%
Total	58.18 %

III. No. of Education Zones 12

IV. No. of CD Blocks 4

V. No. of Constituencies 10

VI. No. of Tehsils 3

VII. No. of Villages 175

VIII. Pass Percentage

	Year 2000	Year 2001	Year 2002	Year 2003
Matric	30.40	34.00	38.66	39.32
10+2	54.19	43.00	50.38	57.00

X. Teacher Pupil Ratio 1:18

X.	No. of Schools	EGS	PS*	MS**	HS	HSS	Total
	Govt: Institutions	315	411	223	75	27	1051
	Private Institutions	0	153	75	69	7	304
	Total	315	564	298	144	34	1355

* Excludes 120 Amalgamated PS

** Excludes 16 Amalgamated MS

XL Enrolment in Government Schools (During 2003)

	Boys	Girls	Total
1st to 5th	24534	18970	43504
6th to 8th	14874	11823	26697
9th to 10th	6880	6130	13010
11th and 12th	7722	6825	14547
Total	54010	43748	97758

XII. Enrolment of Government Schools during 2004 (As on 1-06-2004)

	Boys	Girls	Total	Increase over 2003	Percentage increase
K. G	3258	3563	6821	6821	100%
1st to 5th	32055	37114	69169	25665	59.00%
6th to 8th	15927	14098	30025	3328	12.37%
9th to 10th	6880	6130	13010	0	0.00%
11th and 12th	7780	7520	15300	753	5.17%
Total	65900	68425	134325	36567	27.22%

XIII. Enrolment in Private Schools

	Total
1st to 5th	37819
6th to 8th	13861
9th to 10th	7939
11th to 12th	7301
Total	66920

XIV. Number of school buildings housed in rented buildings*

S.No	District	Primary Schools (Nos)	Middle Schools Schools (Nos)	High Schools (Nos)	Higher Secondary Schools (Nos)	Total
1	Srinagar	228	78	15	2	323

* Excluding amalgamated schools

KUPWARA

I. Population

S.No	Category	Rural	Urban	Total
1	Male	3, 26,196	15,107	3,41,303
2	Female	2, 98,702	10,388	3,09,090
	Total	6,24,898	25,495	6,50,393

II. Literacy Rate

	Percentage
Male	56.10%
Female	28.70%
Total	84.80%

III. Education Zones 13

Drugmulla, Handwara, Khumriyal, Kralpora, Kupwara, Langate, Mawar, Rajwar, Sogam, Tangdar, Trehgam, Villigam, Chamkote

IV. CD Blocks 8

V. Constituencies 5

VI. Tehsils 3

VII. Villages 369

VIII. Pass Percentage

	Year 2001	Year 2002	Year 2003
Matric	26.11	20.88	29.02
10+2	37.15	24.00	30.00

IX. Teacher Pupil Ratio 1:28

X. Number of Government Institutions

	Government	Private	Total
EGS	850	0	850
PS	762	144	906
MS	212	30	242
HS	53	4	57
HSS	22	0	22
Total	1899	178	2077

XL Enrolment in Government Schools

	During 2003			Ending April 2004			Increase in enrolment	Percentage increase
	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total		
K.G Classes	0	0	0	4235	3850	8085	8085	100%
1st to 5th	25751	23202	48953	29756	27334	57090	8137	14.25%
6th to 8th	12539	9306	21845	13680	10494	24174	2329	9.63%
9th to 10th	5882	3777	9659	6179	4182	10631	972	9.14%
11th to 12th	3464	1686	5144	3377	1824	5201	57	1.1%
Total	47636	37971	85601	57227	47684	105181	19580	18.62%

XII. Enrolment in Private Schools (as on ending March 2004)

	Boys	Girls	Total
K. G classes to 5 th	10485	6007	16492
6 th to 8 th	5014	4120	9134
9 th to 10 th	413	179	592
11 th and 12 th	Nil	Nil	Nil
Total	15912	10306	26218

XIII. Status of School buildings

Level	Govt./Owned	Partly rented	Rented	Total	Occupied by Security Forces
Primary Schools	515	0	202	769	07
Middle Schools	120	05	12	212	05
High Schools	50	03	0	53	1
Higher Secondary Schools	22	0	0	22	05
Zonal Education Office	02	01	11	13	0
Total	709	9	225	1069	18

XIV. Government School buildings under occupation of Security Forces

During the turmoil in the valley, the Security Forces have occupied the following school buildings:

S.No	District	Name of the school building under the occupation of Security Forces	Fully or Partially
1	Kupwara	BHSS, Madanpora	Partially
2	Kupwara	BHSS Villgam	Partially
3	Kupwara	BHSS Handwara	Partially
4	Kupwara	BHS, Warnoo	Partially

5	Kupwara	BMS Wagoora	Partially
6	Kupwara	BPS, Warsun	Fully
7	Kupwara	BPS, Khanoo	Fully
8	Kupwara	GPS, Martgam	Fully
9	Kupwara	BPS, Hafrada	Fully
10	Kupwara	BPS, Rednard	Fully
11	Kupwara	HSS, Magam	Partially
12	Kupwara	BMS, Kuligam	Partially
13	Kupwara	BMS, Rednard	Partially
14	Kupwara	BMS, Payarpora	Partially
15	Kupwara	GPS, Gushi	Partially
16	Kupwara	HSS, Zachaldora	Partially
17	Kupwara	BMS, Burnumbal	Partially
18	Kupwara	PS, Dogripora	Partially

XV. Constituency-wise number of students provided text books during the year 2003-04 in District Kupwara

S.No	Constituency	No. of students covered
1.	Kupwara	30018
2.	Lolab	17251
3.	Handwara	18947
4.	Langate	16057
5.	Karnah	9743
	Total	92016

BARAMULLA

I. Population

S.No	Category	Rural	Urban	Total
1	Male	5, 09,182	1, 05,634	614816
2	Female	4, 64,276	90,688	554964
	Total	9,73,458	1,96,322	11,69,780

II. Literacy Rate

Male	57.1%
Female	32.3%
Total	89.4%

III. Education Zones 22

Uri, Julla, Chandanwari, Boniyar, Fatehgarh, Baramulla, Singhpura Kallan, Wagoora, Pattan, Nehalpora, Singhpura Pattan, Kunzer, Tangmarg Sumbal, Hajin, Bandipora, Quilmuqam, Sopore, Dangerpora, Rohama, Dangewacha, Gurez

IV. CD Blocks	14
V. Constituencies	10
VI. Tehsils	8
VII. Villages	660

VIII. Pass Percentage

	Year 2001	Year 2002	Year 2003
Matric	28.78	23.92	29.57
10+2	44.68	43.06	39.00

IX. Teacher Pupil Ratio: 1:25

X. Number of Government Institutions

	Government	Private	Total
EGS	587	0	587
PS	1197	82	1279
MS	369	102	471
HS	114	11	125
HSS	39	2	41
Total	2306	197	2503

XI. Enrolment in Government Schools

	During 2003			Ending April 2004			Percentage increases
	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total	
K.G Classes	49062	44858	93920	56788	53600	110388	17.53%
1 st to 5 th							
6 th to 8 th	23451	18265	41716	27137	21894	49031	17.54%
9 th to 10 th	12879	7479	20358	14393	10129	24522	20.45%
11 th to 12 th	6991	4160	11151	8203	5194	13397	20.14%
Total	55777	48584	104361	63263	59981	123244	28.93%

XII. Enrolment in Private Schools (as on ending March 2004)

1 st to 5 th	6 th to 8 th	9 th to 10 th	11 th to 12 th	Total
36251	123767	3309	22	69012

XIII. Status of School buildings

Level	Govt. housed in rented buildings
PS	450
MS	38
HS	4
HSS	0
Total	476

XIV. Government School buildings under occupation of Security Forces

During the turmoil in the valley, the Security Forces have occupied the following school buildings:

S.No	Name of the School building	
1.	HSS, Hajin	Partially
2.	HSS, Safapora	Fully
3.	BHS, Nadihal	Partially
4.	HSS, Arigam	Partially

XV. Constituency-wise number of students provided Text books during the year 2003-04 in District Baramulla

S.No.	Constituency	No. of students covered
1.	Uri	26596
2.	Baramulla	17240
3.	Sangrama	8347
4.	Sopore	22976
5.	Rafiabad	14694
6.	Sumbal	27637
7.	Pattan	26704
8.	Tangmarg	16808
9.	Bandipora	39326
10.	Gurez	7075
	Total	207403

PULWAMA

I. Population

S.No	Category	Rural	Urban	Total
1	Male	2, 99,170	36,374	3,35,544
2	Female	2, 84,930	32,133	3,17,063
	Total	5,84,100	68,507	6,52,607

II. Literacy Rate Percentage

Male	59.24%
Female	35.40%
Total	94.64%

III. Education Zones 12

Awantipora, Loorgam, Tral, Immamsahib, Keegam, Tahab, Kakapora, Pulwama, Vehil, Shopian, Shadimargh, Pampore

IV. CD Blocks 6

V. Constituencies 6

VI. Tehsils 4

VII. Villages 557

VIII. Pass Percentage

	Year 2001	Year 2002	Year 2003
Matric	50.09	32.25	36.18
10+2	41.07	34.74	43.00

IX. Teacher Pupil Ratio 1:18

X. Number of Government Institutions

	Government	Private	Total
ECS	450	0	450
PS	701	37	738
MS	232	132	364
HS	58	26	84
HSS	27	5	32
Total	1468	200	1668

XI. Enrolment in Government Schools

	During 2003			Ending April 2004			Increase in enrolment	Percentage increase
	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total		
K.G Classes	0	0	0	3725	3908	7633	7633	100%
1 st to 5 th	28752	28363	57115	31064	32707	63771	6656	11.65%
6 th to 8 th	11504	10713	22217	11986	11770	23756	1539	6.48%
9 th to 10 th	8930	6647	15577	10267	7604	17871	2294	12.84%
11 th to 12 th	6591	2861	9452	6221	3992	10213	761	7.45%
Total	55777	48584	104361	63263	59981	123244	18883	15.32%

XII. Enrolment in Private Schools (as on ending March 2004)

	Boys	Girls	Total
K. G classes to 5 th	19820	13535	33335
6 th to 8 th	9052	6697	15749
9 th to 10 th	2052	1629	3681
11 th and 12 th	272	364	636
Total	31196	22225	53421

XIII. Status of School buildings

Level	Government Schools	Government housed in rented buildings
PS	701	377
MS	232	83
HS	58	15
HSS	27	1
Total	1018	476

XIV. Government School buildings under occupation of Security Forces

During the turmoil in the valley, the Security Forces have occupied the following school buildings:

S.No.	Name of the School building	Zone	Constituency
1.	GMS, Sadepora	Tahab	Pulwama
2.	GMS, Saimoh	Tral	Tral
3.	PS, Cherbugh	Tral	Tral
4.	PS, Kangloora	Tral	Tral
5.	PS, Shikragah	Tral	Tral
6.	PS, Nazneenpora	Tral	Tral
7.	PS, Chitragam	Loorgam	Tral
8.	PS, Gadpora	Loorgam	Tral
9.	PS, Gamyrag	Loorgam	Tral

XV. Constituency-wise number of students provided Text books during the year 2003-04 in District Pulwama

S.No.	Constituency	No. of students covered
1.	Pulwama	15186
2.	Pampore	14955
3.	Shopian	17624
4.	Rajpora	14871
5.	Tral	13388
6.	Watchi	13286
	Total	89310

BUDGAM

I. Population

S.No.	Category	Rural	Urban	Total
1	Male	2,87,973	3,80,77	3,26,050
2	Female	2,70,748	32,511	3,03,259
	Total	5,58,721	70,588	6,29,309

II. Literacy Rate

	Percentage
Male	53.5%
Female	30.6%
Total	42.5%

III. Education Zones 12

Budgam, Chadoora, Charsharief, Beerwah, Khansahib, Dreygam, Souibugh, B.K. Pora, Nagam, Magam, Narbal, H. Parnzoo

IV.	CD Blocks	8
V.	Constituencies	5
VI.	Tehsils	3
VII.	Villages	496

VIII. Pass Percentage

	Year 2001	Year 2002	Year 2003
Matric	40.14	32.04	36.50
10+2	55.62	36.64	45.00

IX. Teacher Pupil Ratio 1:20

X. Number of Government Institutions

	Government	Private	Total
EGS	475	0	475
PS	652	92	744
MS	225	82	307
HS	56	36	92
HSS	22	5	27
Total	1430	215	1645

XI. Enrolment in Government Schools

	During 2003			Ending April 2004			Percentage increase
	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total	
K.G Classes	0	0	0			11598	100%
1st to 5th	29068	27941	57009	32611	30932	63543	11.46%
6th to 8th	13592	13504	27096	16486	14712	31098	14.77%
9th to 10th	6280	4209	10489	6271	4401	10672	1.74%
11th to 12th	4507	1894	6401	4507	2270	6777	5.87%
Total	53447	47548	100995	63263	59981	123288	22.47%

XII. Enrolment in Private Schools (as on ending March 2004)

	Boys	Girls	Total
K. G classes to 5 th	15521	10273	25674
6 th to 8 th	6560	4419	10979
9 th to 10 th	2227	1435	3652
11 th and 12 th	554	207	761
Total	24862	16334	4119

XIII. Status of School buildings

Level	Govt. schools housed in rented buildings
PS	426
MS	55
HS	12
HSS	0
Total	493

XIV. Government School buildings under occupation of Security Forces

During the turmoil in the valley, the Security Forces have occupied the following school buildings:

S.No.	District	Name of the school building under the occupation of Security Forces	Fully or Partially
	Fully	Budgam	MS, Hanjoora
	Fully	Budgam	MS, Loolipora

XV. Constituency-wise number of students provided Text books during the year 2003-04 in District Budgam

S.No.	Constituency	No. of students covered
1.	Budgam	20063
2.	Beerwah	23734
3.	Chari-Sharief	11517
4.	Chadura	11642
5.	Khansahib	18244
6.	Amira Kadal	3593
	Total	88793

ANANTNAG

I. Population

Total/Rural/Urban	Population	
	Persons	Males
Total	11,70,013	6,08,720
Rural	10,01,528	5,16,825
Urban	1,68,485	91,895

II. Literacy Rate

Male	55.56%
Female	31.51%
Total	44.10%

III. No. of Education Zones 18

IV. No. of CD Blocks 12

V. No. of Constituencies 10

VI. No. of Tehsils 5

VII. No. of Villages 645

VIII. Pass Percentage

	Year 2000	Year 2001	Year 2002	Year 2003
Matric	44.62	37.38	28.74	42.35
10+2	27.60	35.30	32.32	39.00

IX. Teacher Pupil Ratio 1:26

X.	No. of Govt: Institutions	EGS	PS	MS	HS	HSS	Total
		430	1056	322	78	36	1922
No. of Private Institutions	0	0	156	103	19	2	280
Total		430	1212	425	97	38	2202

XI. Enrolment in Government Schools (During 2003)

	Boys	Girls	Total
1st to 5th	45520	43768	9288
6th to 8th	19868	17720	37588
9th to 10th	10222	7176	17398
11th to 12th	7832	3955	11787
Total	83442	72619	156061

XII. Enrolment in Government Schools (Ending 5/2004)

	Boys	Girls	Total	Increase of Roll to 2003	Percentage increase
K. G. Class	8503	8386	16889	16889	100%
1st to 5th	52215	52636	104851	15563	17.43%
6th to 8th	26449	23895	50344	12756	33.94%
9th to 10th	11265	19575	2177		12.51%
11th to 12th	8662	4583	13245	1458	12.37%
Total	107094	97810	204904	48843	31.30%

XIII. Enrolment in Private Schools

	Boys	Girls	Total
1st to 5th	27000	17252	44252
6th to 8th	10615	6242	16857
9th to 10th	1760	1023	2783
11th to 12th	864	459	1323
Total	40239	24976	65215

XIV. Number of School building housed in rented buildings in District Anantnag

Primary Schools (Nos)	Middle Schools (Nos)	High Schools (Nos)	Higher Secondary Schools (Nos)	Total
690	139	17	0	846

