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Ethnographic Account of Flooding in North-Western Himalayas: A Study of Kashmir Valley

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Abstract

Narratives, human experiences, life histories and stories are powerful tools to understand a social phenomenon. Different kinds of pandemics and disasters create different types of stories and experiences. The human response to disasters seems to be generating or at least permitting an increase in property losses, especially in societies where economic growth is rapid and modern technology is spreading fast. Some hazards are created by persistent inhabitance of dangerous areas or by alteration of land or water, while others are exacerbated by efforts to reduce the risk. The disasters adversely affect societies but also give rise to heroic stories of survival and resilience. The North-Western Himalayan region is prone to several kinds of disasters like floods, earthquakes, landslides etc. One of the most disaster prone regions in North-Western Himalayas is Kashmir Valley. Kashmir Valley has witnessed several disastrous floods in the last century but the most disastrous flood in the recent history of the Union Territory is the September 2014 flood which affected all the aspects of life and resulted into death of 277 people. It also witnessed floods in 2015, 2017 and most recently in 2019 but they were not as devastating as the 2014 flood. The present study gives the ethnographic account of the recent floods in Kashmir Valley with special focus on 2014 flood. It gives account of the devastating loss and suffering of people due to the floods. The present ethnographic study goes deeper into understanding narratives of people, their experiences of the floods, account of several survival stories, the politics involved in relief and rescue, history of the people of Kashmir, the meaning behind the narratives and the meaning of belonging and communitarianism. It also provides insight into vulnerability of different classes of people to floods.

Key words: Ethnography, flooding, vulnerability, politics, narratives, communitarianism

Introduction

"It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, it was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of incredulity, it was the season of light, it was the season of darkness, it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair."— Charles Dickens, A Tale of Two Cities (1859). These opening lines of the novel of Charles Dickens capture the climate of social crisis and the sense of belonging and selflessness but they also capture the picture of selfishness and political rupture in times of crisis. They capture the picture of self-sacrificing acts and heroics and how social solidarities emerge in times of crisis that make people put aside their differences and self-interests temporarily and contribute to the common cause of saving humanity. Charles Dickens's indelible lines can been used to characterize the social climate of disasters. In order to understand the social climate of disasters and social solidarities, it is important to use the ethnographic approach. Ethnography takes us to our roots where social interaction is at the base of interaction and research. Its essence helps to study what Thomas Hobbes called the problem of order as the most basic. A lot of research approaches have been devised by social scientists to cope with the issues of social research—social surveys, observation, interviewing, social experiments—but only ethnography gives us insight into the social diversity and richness of life. It makes us contemporaneously stand outside and inside the mise en scène as we study the experience of different floods. It is both a scientific and literary endeavour which doesn't privilege one over the other. Kashmir Valley is located among the highest mountain systems in the world (the Himalayas). The surrounding of Valley by Himalayas has a profound impact on its climate and extreme weather events like floods. According to historical geography of Kashmir, floods are not exactly uncommon phenomena in the region, which has witnessed 30 major floods. The region witnessed disastrous floods in the years 1893, 1928, 1950, 1959, 1992, 2010 and most recently in 2014, 2015, 2017 and 2019. All these floods had different impact but the flood of 2014 is the most devastating flood in the history of Kashmir Valley which affected all the socio-economic and environmental aspects and created political rupture in the Valley.

The present study has the following objectives;

1. To give ethnographic account of floods in Kashmir with special focus on 2014 flood.
2. To highlight the emergence of conscious community and communitarianism during floods and understand social capital in Kashmir.

3. To highlight the politics involved in rescue and relief and the apathy of the administration in tackling floods.
4. To analyse the causes and consequences of the flood.
5. To understand vulnerability of different classes of people to floods in Kashmir Valley.
6. To understand how narratives of Kashmir floods can be used in theory building.

The present ethnographic study is significant because it is the first ethnographic study on floods in Kashmir that gives a detailed account of different narratives that were witnessed during floods in Kashmir and provides a deeper understanding of communitarianism and social capital in the Kashmiri society. It also highlights administrative laxity and the politics involved in the relief and rescue operations and vulnerability of different classes to floods. In the present study, socio-economic impact has been analysed to know the potential loss from the flood, which was derived by assessing the vulnerability of population, buildings and infrastructure to the floods. The major knowledge gap that the present study is contributing to is the fact that there aren't empirical studies on Kashmir and floods and the study is a contribution to a less understood empirical context such as Kashmir. The present research asks and answers questions like;

a) How do the narratives of Kashmir floods add to the theory building and existing literature?
b) What does such framing of risks do to the society?
c) What do these interpretations signify?
d) How do we understand the concept of social capital in Kashmir in the context of floods?

Literature Review: The research process for ethnography is different from others: it is tentative, multi-textured, open-ended and discursive. It starts from a point of learning and enquiry that recognises we know little rather than supposing a state of knowledge which is subject to ex post facto ratification (Flood, 2005). Ethnographic studies or small level studies, as they are known now, try to understand the phenomenon in social, cultural, and historical contexts (Lewis, 1985). This method can be done through long informal interviews, direct observation, group discussions, class room participation, and participation in rituals, celebrations, and mourning, and so on. Ethnographic method is an inductive method which tries to build the theory on the basis of the data on the ground (Suhail, 2018). It is, as Neumann (2003) explained, “theory is built from data or grounded in that data. Moreover,

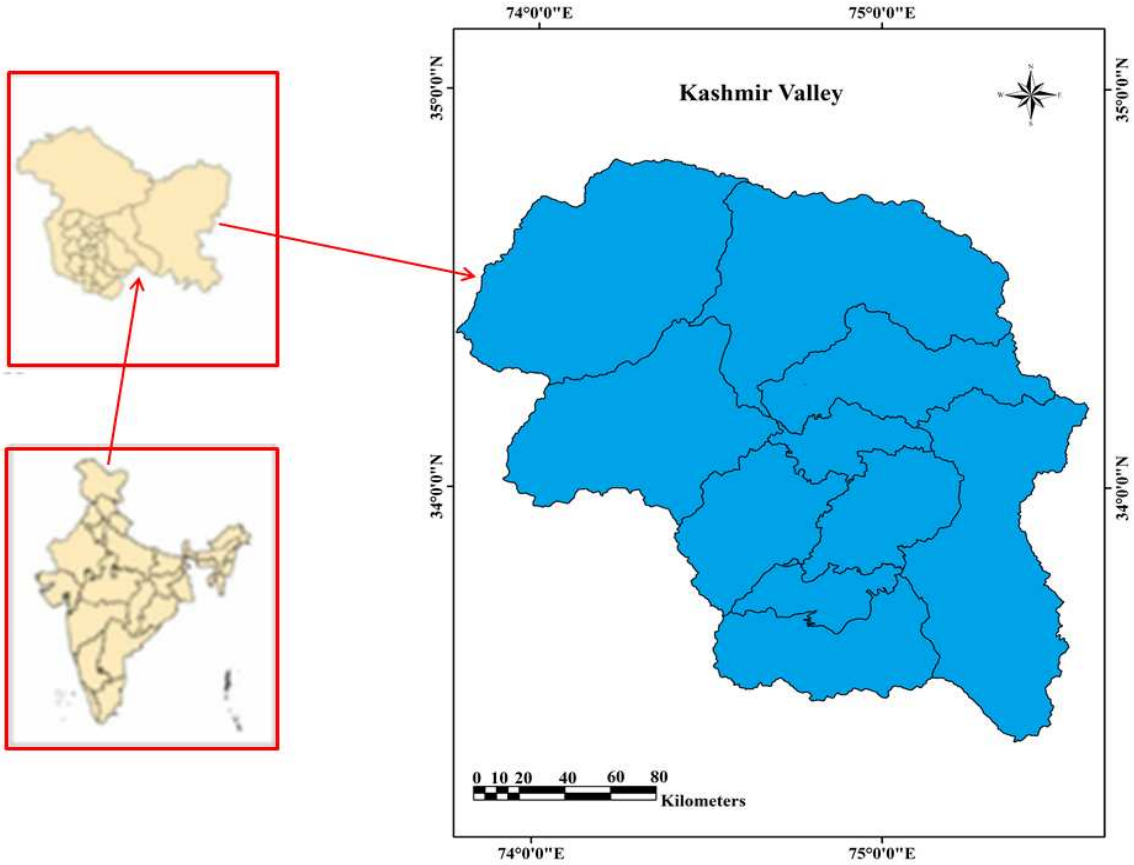
conceptualization and operationalization of data occur simultaneously with data collection and preliminary data analysis." The benefit of doing informal interviews is to get the clear understanding of the phenomena you are observing, and more importantly to understand the complex social relations without giving a sense of policing to the respondents. Following this approach, here the attempt was made to understand the phenomena by applying interpretive social science research method, which as pointed out by Neumann (2003) helps to understand "the personal reasons or motives that shape the internal feelings and guide decisions to act in a particular way." In the field of disaster anthropology, Hoffman and Oliver-Smith (1999) redefined disasters as chronic elements that are, to some degree, constructed by humans, and argued that societies were "established settings within dangerous zones" because of neoliberal advantages, which often, as they put it, put some segments of the population in more perilous situations than others. Interpretive social science believes that social life or reality is socially constructed and thus it stresses on the point that multiple realities can occur as people start communicating or interacting with each other and their environment. Due to its geographic, climatic and geological setup, the Kashmir Valley is vulnerable to all types of the hazards (Meraj et al. 2015; Romshoo et al. 2012; Ray et al. 2009). The historical records reveal that the Kashmir Himalayan region has suffered heavy causalities and loss of property due to the recurrent floods, earthquakes, avalanches and other hydro-meteorological disasters (Mohammed et al. 2015). The hydrographic features of the Jhelum river system establish that the frequency of floods has been very high ever since the valley assumed its present form after draining out of the primeval Karewa Lake, the Satisar (Raza et al. 1975; Dar et al. 2014).

Study area: Kashmir Valley, known as paradise on earth because of its panoramic beauty, is situated in the North-Western part of the Himalayas. The name "Kashmir" means "a land desiccated from water." The oval shaped valley extends over an area of 15,853 km^2 giving the appearance of an old lacustrine bed. According to Unique Identification Authority of India, the population of Kashmir in 2020 is 7.5 million dispersed in 10 districts. It is surrounded by two mighty Himalayan Ranges i.e, the Pir Panjal Range from south and Great Himalayan Range in the north. They are the source of some mighty rivers like Indus, Jhelum etc., which have been the cause of several devastating floods in the region. Its snow-clad Himalayan Mountains, scenic spots, exquisite pleasure Mughal gardens, exquisite health resorts and hill stations, rich culture and marvellous architecture enhance its grandeur which makes it one of the best tourist destinations in the world. Agricultural activities are practised on a large scale in Kashmir, which is famous for different types of agricultural and

horticultural products like apples, walnuts, almonds, saffron, and handicrafts like shawls, woollen carpets, and beautiful embroidery on different types of clothes.

Due to the political turmoil in Kashmir, thousands of people have been killed which has led to several socio-economic and political problems. It has become a bone of contention between Pakistan, India and China, and has eminent geopolitical significance in South Asia as well as the world.

Fig. 1: Kashmir Valley (Study Area)



Data Base and Methodology: In the present study, ethnographic, historical, political sociology and political economy methods were employed to understand the power politics and the situation and narratives of floods in Kashmir valley. To know the causes, consequences and narratives of floods in Kashmir Valley especially that of 2014 flood and to examine relief and rescue operations and developments after it, a total number of 1100 families were interviewed during fieldwork from the year 2014 to 2020. Snowball sampling technique, which is also known as referral sampling method or chain sampling method, was

used for the field survey. The samples were collected from ten districts i.e, Anantnag, Kulgam, Pulwama, Shopian, Srinagar, Bandipora, Baramulla, Ganderbal, Budgam and Kupwara. In Anantnag district 120 households were surveyed from Qazigund, Dooru, Mirbazar, Bijbehara and Anantnag main town. In Srinagar city 350 households were surveyed from Natipora, Rajbagh, Nowgam, Lalchowk and Dal Lake. In Kulgam district 100 households were surveyed from Kulgam main town and Laroo. In Bandipora district 100 households were surveyed from Hajin, Mukdamyari, Banyari, Bohn, Indekot and Wular Lake. In Baramulla district 100 households were surveyed from Pattan, Palhalan and Gojbugh. 100 households each from Pulwama and Budam districts while as 50 households each from Shopian and Ganderbal districts and 30 households from Kupwara were surveyed. Relief deprivation index was used to calculate the deprivation of relief.

The methodology of the present study is that primary data was collected with the help of questionnaires and interviews of affected people, activists and experts in the field of disaster management in Kashmir. Primary data was also collected through interactions with people who were actively involved in relief and rescue operations during 2014 flood in Kashmir Valley. The softwares used in the present study are Erdas Image and Arc GIS 10.2. The ethnographic study was done by direct observation of situation of the flood, direct participation in relief and rescue operations, group discussions, focussed group discussions (FCD) and interviews. Within these dynamics, the present ethnographic study goes deep into understanding narratives of people, their experience of the flood, history of the people of Kashmir, the meaning behind the narratives and the meaning of belonging and communitarianism. Nevertheless, life stories reflect the culture where they are created or told (McAdams, 2006). Even though, people's memory fades with the passage of time, and they may or may not accurately remember the events which have happened in the past, yet it is the narrative which explains the embedded power relation of the development and underdevelopment, vulnerability, the power to decide and control and the power to own and disown.

Strengths of Narratives: Narratives keep the history alive. Narratives, life histories, and stories are powerful tools to understand a social phenomenon. Narratives in the rural context are more useful, as rural areas in Kashmir are given less attention as compared to the urban areas, and also literacy is less in rural areas and written records are often absent. Thus oral narratives provide grassroots information about the village happenings, history, culture, changes as well as people's actions and reactions to the events and changes. Therefore, the present ethnographic study is about storytelling. It talks about the meanings, relations, and

connections of the people of Kashmir with themselves, water, land and natural habitat, and their actions and reactions during and after the flood. It highlights the actions and reactions to the political and elite power from the below. The narratives help in explaining the intricacies of owning and losing the material and non-material resources. Thus, the strength of narratives is that they provide unique experiences and stories that help in understanding the social phenomenon.

Weaknesses of Narratives: Narratives have their shortcomings, such as, 'narratives are always immersed in history and never innocent' (Escobar, 1995). They can occasionally create confusion about some social phenomenon. The narratives provided could be sometimes biased due to certain socio-political conditions.

Results and Discussion

Besides the damage and physical injuries which they cause, disasters also have a profound impact on survivors, who can be considered sociologically, as communities, and psychologically, as individuals. In both cases there is a wealth of definable regularities in human perception and behaviour. To begin with, the very fact of human settlement in high risk zones implies social attitudes connected with "bounded rationality" (Burton et al. 1978). Often, the net social benefit to be deprived from living in such areas has not been calculated, and hence "optimizing man" must be replaced with a "satisficer", whose limited perception of risks or alternatives results in continued occupation of land that has the potential to be devastated by geophysical forces. The chronology of the 2014 flood (Table 1) gives a detailed account of the events during and after the flood, which shows that the flood had disastrous impact.

TABLE 1: CHRONOLOGY OF EVENTS

DATE	EVENT
28th August, 2014	• Rainfall started in Kashmir Valley due to the combination of Western Disturbances and monsoon.
2nd September, 2014	•Department of Meteorology Srinagar's warning "Moderate rain along with thunder showers would occur at most places across Jammu and Kashmir for next four days."
3rd September	•The level of water in Jhelum, Chenab, Sind and Tawi rivers rose. •Flood alert was declared in the districts of South Kashmir; Kulgam, Anantnag, Shopian and Pulwama because water level at Sangam Gauge in Bejbehara Anantnag crossed flood level (21 feet). •Control Room was setup at Police Control Room Batamaloo, Srinagar

	•Department of Meteorology Srinagar Forecast: "Heavy to very heavy rainfall/thundershower would occur at few places for next 48 hours."
4th September	•Flood Alert was declared throughout Kashmir. •Major tributaries of river Jhelum like Vaishav, Lidder, Rambiara flowed above the danger level affecting around 70 villages. •Director Department of Meteorology Srinagar Sonam Lotus said, "Rainfall will continue till Friday but with significant decrease in its intensity from tomorrow." •Gauge of Jhelum River at Sangam got submerged due to 32.6 feet of water. •Kulgam district was submerged completely. •Evacuation order for people living along the riverbanks was issued by Chief Engineer Irrigation and Flood Control. •National Disaster Relief Force (NDRF) was approached for the help. •Department of Meteorology Srinagar Forecast: "Rather heavy to very heavy rains will occur at most places."
5th September	• A bus carrying 44 people for a marriage party was drowned by the flood on the Lam-Darhal Road in Nowshehra. •About 70 villages were submerged in district Anantnag. •Overflow of water at Pantha Chowk, Pandrethan and Lasjan in South Srinagar. •Breach at two sites in Pampore i.e., Drangbal and Kandizaal and one site in Shopian i.e., Rambiara Nallah. •Home Minister of India Rajnath Singh, accompanied by Minister of State Jitendra Singh, conducted the aerial survey of the flood affected areas of Kashmir and directed the government to use Rs 11000 million of the State Disaster Relief Fund to deal with the flood. •Department of Meteorology Srinagar Forecast: "Vigorous monsoon conditions are prevailing over the state, associated with strong Westerlies."
6th September	•Gauge in river Jhelum at Ram Munshi Bagh, Srinagar was submerged as water level was 26.25 feet. •Breaches at Amira Kadal, Shivpora and Athwajan Bund in South Srinagar. •Indira Gandhi Road that connects Srinagar city with the Srinagar International Airport was submerged.

7th September	•Reports of about 15 feet of inundation from different parts of Srinagar city like Amira Kadal, Rajbagh, Tengpora, Shaheed Gunj, Nowgam, Jawahar Nagar, Sonwar, Lasjan, Bemina, Batamaloo, Shivpora and Mahjoor Nagar. •Red alert was declared in the districts of Bandipora and Baramulla in North Kashmir. •Prime Minister of India Narendra Modi took an aerial survey of affected areas of Kashmir, and announced Rs 11000 Crores in disaster relief payments and compensation to victims of flood and their relatives. He also announced, "It is a National Disaster. 100,000 blankets, 5,000 tents, and 50 tonnes of milk powder will be distributed to those who have been forced to leave their homes."
8th September	• Rainfall stops.
11th September	• Army distributes 100 Mobile Cell Communication Sets and 9 satellite phones to civil officials for coordinating the relief operations.
14th September	•Supreme Court of India asks the Government of India to provide the details of the efforts and steps taken to accelerate relief, rescue and rehabilitation processes for flood victims.
19th September	•Army calls off its "Operation Megh Rahat" to rescue the people of Kashmir. •Supreme Court of India directs the Govt. of India "to ensure that the flood acted people of Jammu and Kashmir get food, fuel, drinking water and medicines, and that their damaged houses are restored as it concerned their right to life under Article 21 of the constitution."
30th September	•The Central Water Commission (CWC) states, "the clearance to a multi-crore flood management project for river Jhelum was held up since 2010 due to the failure of the Jammu and Kashmir State Govt. to furnish the requisite information." •The Jammu and Kashmir High Court "orders insurance companies operating in the State to pay 50 percent of insured amount for policies above Rs 25 lakh and 95 percent for policies below Rs 25 lakh as interim relief to the flood-affected people." (Jammu Kashmir Coalition of Civil Society, 2015).
1st October, 2014	• 277 people were recorded dead and 87 were from the Kashmir Valley, in which 44 were from Srinagar alone, 11 from Anantnag, 5 each from Bandipora, Kulgam, Kupwara and Pulwama, 4 from Budgam, 3 each from Ganderbal and Shopian, and 2 from Baramulla

The ethnographic account of flooding in Kashmir Valley especially the flood of 2014 can be understood by the following points;

(A) Narratives of the 2014 Flood in Kashmir Valley:

Anthropologists have uncovered complex interactions between physical, biological, and sociological systems that involve people's adaptations to and manipulations of their physical environment and construction of sociocultural institutions, beliefs, and ethos. As part of a social process, these interactions produce disaster, the event that involves a potentially destructive natural or technological agent and a population under varying conditions of vulnerability. Anthropological work has shed light on the social production of disasters and the social structures that contribute to vulnerability and risk. Theories of "embodiment" have contributed to a better understanding of how culture affects individuals' experiences, along with how they comprehend and cope with traumatic experiences (Oliver-Smith, 1999). According to Krüger et al. (2015), "culture cannot be understood as a defined set of social factors, but as a constantly changing and shifting configuration of social practices or as outcome of experiences, social arrangements, and so on, that are imbedded in society." While trying to give the religious explanation of the occurrence of the flood in Kashmir Valley and the resultant destruction, several respondents said that it is due to their own sins as one way of understanding such a complex web of relations is that disasters were historically constructed as natural-political devices for "naturalizing" political and economic inequality (Oliver-Smith & Hoff man, 1999). Mohd. Ramzan of district Anantnag said, *"It is God's fury because of our sins. We are sinful people who are unfaithful and unthankful to God that is why God brought such a wrath on us. It is His way of telling us to mend our ways and habits otherwise there is going to be destruction"*. Another respondent while trying to support Mohd. Ramzan's argument of God's fury said, "Earlier people were so simple, their way of life was so simple that nature wasn't even disturbed, leave aside degraded. But now people have become greedy in their own self-righteousness and have cursed and disturbed the nature. So the flood was God's way of warning them to mend their ways and live a simple life". Farooq Ahmad of district Srinagar said, *"God is merciful and benevolent, so why would He curse the people? It is because the people of Kashmir made God angry due to their sins and greed that is why the flood occurred".* A religious preacher from Srinagar, Bashir Ahmad Dar, while trying to give a sufi explanation of the event, said, *"Kashmir was called Peer Vaer (Land of Sufi saints) but in last few decades the people of Kashmir have forgotten the God and the saints and their teachings and have become greedy to accumulate more and more private property for themselves and their children. They have forgotten the values that the saints taught us, that is why Kashmir experienced such a devastating flood.*"

Geography is a scientific discipline that relies on observation, experimentation, logic, rationality and scientific explanations. So, a geographical event needs to be explained through scientific evidences and logic. For the geographical explanation of the 2014 flood in Kashmir Valley, some respondents gave some logical explanations of the occurrence of the flood and the resultant chaos and destruction. A resident of the Jhelum river bank in Srinagar, Shakeel Ahmad said, *"The 2014 flood in Kashmir occurred due to shrinkage of bunds of the Jhelum River. People have constructed houses and other establishments on the banks of Jhelum River which caused the spillage during the 2014 flood and drowned most parts of the Srinagar city."* Showket Ahmad from district Budgam said, "Most of the rivers in Kashmir lack bunds, and if there is large amount of water in the rivers during rainy seasons, the water spills out of the river and causes flood. Same thing happened during 2014 flood in Kashmir." A respondent from Anantnag said that encroachment on Jhelum River banks in Anantnag district near Khanabal led to the deluge of some parts of Anantnag during the flood. Some people narrated that they heard some glacier in the upper parts of the valley had melted. They saw ice floating on the flood water in Srinagar. Encroachment on Jhelum River banks in the form of houses, shops and restaurants mostly at Rajbagh led to the occurrence of flood. Government is also responsible because it doesn't take care of flood channel that runs through Srinagar city. Its bunds are weak. The dumping of garbage in the Jhelum River along its course especially in Srinagar city was one of the reasons of the occurrence of flood. Due to the neo-liberal policies, several hotels and restaurants have been constructed along the Jhelum River and Dal Lake banks to attract more tourists, which has resulted into grave environmental degradation and thus floods.

"Death seemed too certain. We thought life is going to end and had no hope to live. There was despair all around and our survival chances were bleak", said 70 years old Abdul Ahad from Bandipora, one of the survivors of 2014 flood in Kashmir Valley. While recollecting the memories of the flood, a respondent in district Anantnag said, *"we have horrible memories of the flood and it was a fearful situation and death seemed too near".* Another respondent in Srinagar said, *"I cannot forget the flood till death. It was the most horrible memory of my life and everything looked so destructed"* while as another respondent said that he has never seen such a flood in his life. "*We can't forget the flood because we thought that we will die. Nothing was there",* said Jameela of Banyari, Bandipora.

The analysis of responses shows that several important narratives converged during the flood, like, problems faced by people, lack of warning, the suddenness of the disaster, the absence and paralysis of the state, the unpreparedness for its extent, the role of local

youth, local social networks and voluntary organizations, unfairness and prioritization in relief and rescue operations. Some of these issues are discussed below;

1. **Problems faced by the people:**

Disasters are clearly periods in which people experience a vast spectrum of intense emotions – anxiety, fear, terror, loss, grief, gratitude, anger, frustration, relief, and resignation – in all their shadings and intensities (Oliver-Smith, 1999:163). Birkland (1996) points out that there is a human "dread" of disaster. On September 3, 2014, after about 30 hours of continuous rainfall, rivers such as Jhelum, Chenab, Sindh and Tawi began to flow at dangerous levels. Due to the devastating flood in Jammu division, the bodies of 159 people were recovered from the flood-hit areas. A bus carrying 44 people for a marriage party was drowned by the flood in Tawi River but the bodies were not recovered. In Kashmir Valley, the intensity of flood was low in the beginning of September which abruptly turned into high intense flood across all the districts in the Valley which resulted into cancelling of Hajj flights (Hajj is the religious pilgrimage to Mecca) and tourist related flights along with the closure of all educational institutions.

Kashmir being a conflict zone lacks a proper disaster management plan, which was one of the main reasons that it got affected so much. The political instability has increased the vulnerability of people to floods. The political set up in Kashmir is vital to manage the floods as according to Oliver-Smith (1999), "the conjunction of a human population and potentially destructive agent does not, however, inevitably produce a disaster. The society's pattern of vulnerability – or in other words, its adaptive failure – is an essential element of a disaster. A disaster is made inevitable by the historically produced pattern of vulnerability, evidenced in the location, infrastructure, socio-political structure, production patterns and ideology that characterizes a society. The pattern of vulnerability will condition the behaviour of individuals and organizations throughout the life history of a disaster far more profoundly than will the physical force of the destructive agent."

People faced a lot of problems during and after the flood in the form of rescue, relief and the availability of essential commodities and basic needs. They faced the problem of food, medicines, drinking water and toilet which resulted in sickness like vomiting of many people especially children and old people. Sick and pregnant women faced the problem of required medicines. They were sent to the hospitals by boats at several places.

Table 2: Relief Deprivation Index of 2014 Flood in Kashmir Valley

	RELIEF DEPRIVATION INDEX	

S.No.	DISTRICT	NO. OF HOUSES SURVEYED	LOSS (Rs.)	RELIEF (Rs.)	DEPRIVATION (% age)
1	**SRINAGAR**	350	12,92,90,000	7,69,23,500	59
2	**ANANTNAG**	120	2,25,00,000	1,21,76,000	54
3	**BUDGAM**	100	1,99,10,000	1,05,73,000	53
4	**PULWAMA**	100	1,95,50,000	1,06,33,000	54
5	**BARAMULLA**	100	1,91,50,000	1,04,03,000	54
6	**BANDIPORA**	100	1,99,50,000	1,07,42,000	53
7	**KULGAM**	100	1,98,00,000	1,06,37,000	53
8	**SHOPIAN**	50	98,50,000	54,44,000	55
9	**GANDERBAL**	50	98,10,000	54,32,000	55
10	**KUPWARA**	30	35,00,000	12,99,000	37
11	**TOTAL**	**1100**	**27,33,10,000**	**15,42,62,500**	**56**

Source: Primary Survey

Fig. 2: Relief Deprivation Index of 2014 flood in Kashmir Valley

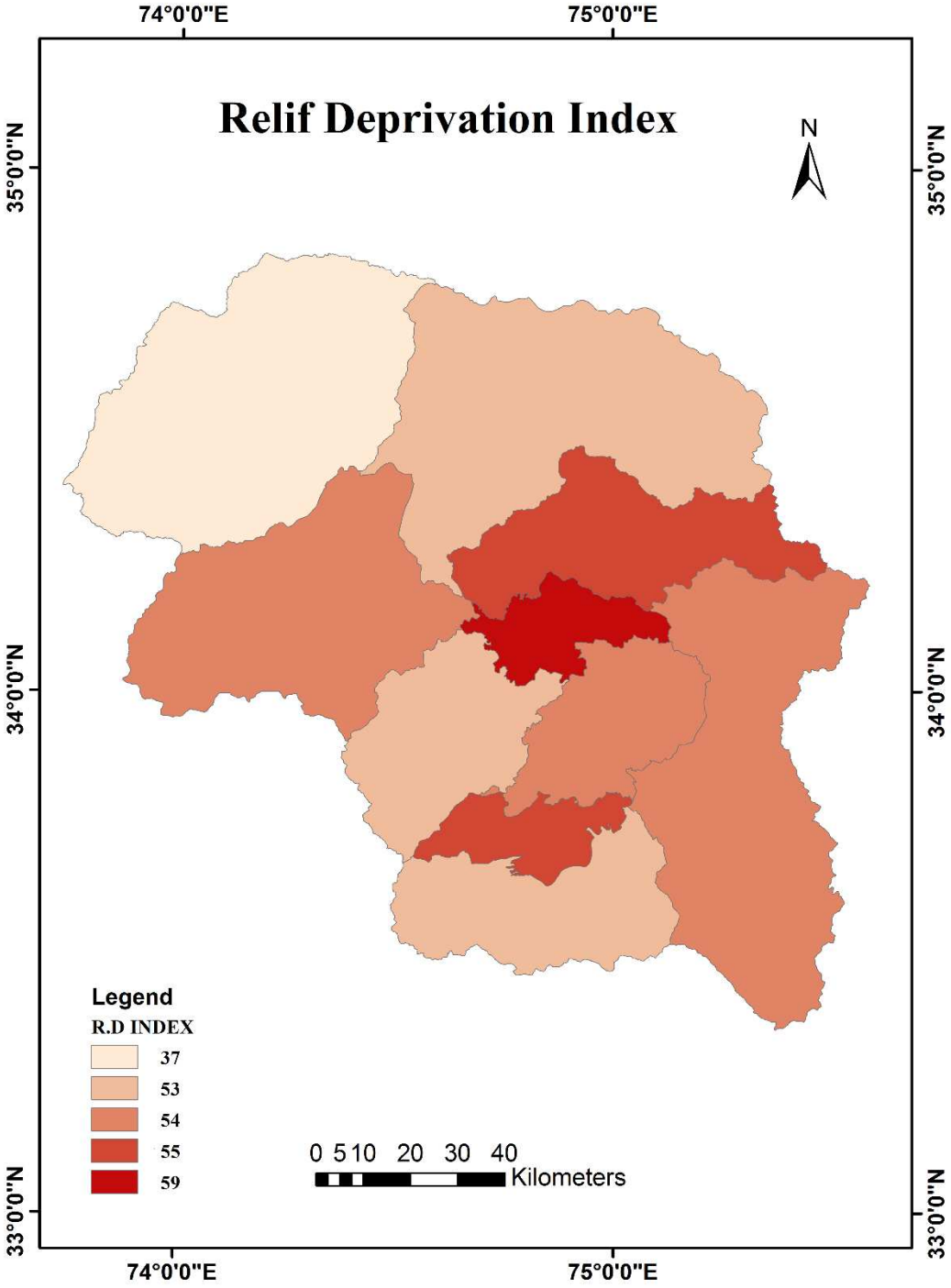


Table 2 and Figure 2 show the relief deprivation index of 2014 flood in Kashmir Valley, which was calculated on the basis of loss that people suffered and the relief received from different sources. The calculation was done by the following method;

$$\textbf{Deprivation Percentage} = \frac{\boldsymbol{Relief\ Received}}{\boldsymbol{Loss}} \times \mathbf{100}$$

Deprivation index shows how much a household has been deprived of the amount that it should have got. It can be seen from Table 2 and Figure 2 that the district of Srinagar has the

highest relief deprivation index (59%). It reveals that Srinagar got 41% relief (100% - 59%), which means that Srinagar got less relief as compared to the loss incurred. Deprivation index of Srinagar was followed by the districts of Ganderbal (55%), Shopian (55%), Anantnag (54%), Pulwama (54%), Baramulla (54%), Bandipora (53%), Kulgam (53%), and Kupwara (37%). Thus, it can be deduced that lesser the deprivation index, more the relief received, which shows that there is an inverse relationship between deprivation index and relief received.

A lot of people faced the problem of food like rice, wheat and vegetables and so many people left their homes and took some utensils, gas cylinders, clothes and livestock with them and stayed at safer places. People from Banyari and Mukdamyari in Bandipora district stayed at Safapora for almost three months because Safapora was a safer place as it is located at higher altitude and didn't get much affected. A respondent in Srinagar said, *"We boiled flood water for the purpose of drinking."* Lot of people stayed in boats for several days as water came from all sides while as many others shifted to safer places. There was lack of space in boats e.g, 1 boat had to accommodate 7 people or sometimes 9 people. Some basic needs like rice was given by the government during the flood but it wasn't enough to feed all the members of the family. A lot of people faced the problem of clothes and blankets. Some people waited till morning to flee from their homes and some were helped by relatives. According to some people in Banyari, Bandipora, *"the flood damaged roads, bridges and water facility, which caused problems in arrangement of marriages after the flood. The guests had to bring drinking water with themselves."* Three people got paralysed during the flood in Mukdamyari, Bandipora. The flood damaged thousands of buildings, bridges, schools, government buildings, houses and other establishments. It gravely hampered the economy and the socio-economic development of the valley. According to several respondents, they cannot forget the flood and the destruction till their last breath. It also rendered many people to poverty as their land, livestock and food items were seriously damaged. Thousands of apple orchards were damaged at several places in South and North Kashmir.

On 3rd September, 2014 a Kulgam farmer recalled, *"When we woke up there was water all around us. We were not expecting such large scale damage."* 2 days later, when Anantnag, 20 kms away from district Kulgam was flooded, a businessman said, "the flood caught people unaware." About 80 kms away from Ananatnag, after four days, when the floods reached Pattan in Baramulla district, a family of carpet weavers recounted their shock at how "water burst into the house all of a sudden at 5 a.m.". The rural areas of the

districts of Anantnag, Kulgam and Pulwama were flooded within first two days of the rainfall which led to fleeing of the people from their homes on foot because their houses were destroyed due to the high speed of the flood water. A family from Indra Nagar, Srinagar recounted, "12 feet high tide of water first entered their house at 4 a.m., after which in eight minutes the ground floor was inundated." Another family from Bemina, Srinagar described, *"Our ground floor got inundated in just half an hour after the flood entered the city."* Water chestnuts got damaged and their rate increased after the flood due to their less production.

Ab Qayoom from Natipora Srinagar narrated the story of the flood and said, "Flood water from Jhelum and Doodh Ganga met at Natipora. About 5 feet water was accumulated which damaged houses. Around 1 lakh houses were damaged in Srinagar. Rajbagh was the most affected part in Srinagar followed by Jawahar Nagar, Lal chowk, Gogji Bagh and Padsha Bagh. About 25 days later, water in Rajbagh was drawn out by using water motors. Water came from Shopari Bund of Jhelum. Kurus Rajbagh Bund was damaged which inundated many parts of Srinagar city. There was about 4 feet water above bunds which resulted into damage of his cement shop that was worth 1 lakh rupees. We lost the phone connection on second day when power plant of the area got inundated, which was restored after 45 days. Police came just to tell to come out of houses. They rescued children from Darul uloom Natipora. The first floor of our house was damaged and there was about 18 feet water in Rajbagh. We came out and went to Dalgate by boat with the help of the local people. We came back to our home after 1 month. The relief of 1 lakh rupees was given by the government, which was distributed among two families. The walls and the paint of our house were damaged and the cost of the damage was Rs. 4 lakh rupees." A barber from Kulgam narrated, "My daughter was getting married next month and all the preparations had been completed. All those objects were washed away in front of my eyes." The families with infirm or elderly members having medical conditions had a great difficulty in escaping the wrath of the floods and evacuation (Venugopal and Yasir, 2015). A shopkeeper from Rajbagh in Srinagar city narrated, "My father is visually challenged, and we had great difficulty in evacuating him." A teacher from district Pulwama said, "My father is paralyzed for last nine years. He couldn't take medicines for many days because all the medicines were washed away and we were not able to buy new medicines." Several respondents across Kashmir described similar problems of diabetics and heart patients suffering due to unavailability of medication for several days. A number of families got separated in flood circumstances, and due to collapse of phone networks they remained separated without any contact from one another for several days and weeks. A household from Srinagar city narrated, "We were out of touch from my father and brother and it was only after a month that we were able to contact each

other." A respondent from Srinagar narrated, "I lost contact with my son for eleven days. Later we found him in a different camp. I only know how we managed to spend those days without him." Several families across Kashmir lost contact with one or more family members for several days.

2. Narrative of Elderly People:

Most of the elderly people interviewed said that there is more temperature nowadays due to deforestation. They narrated that earlier there used to be floods almost every year but now there are less floods but more dangerous. Earlier people used to flee their homes and reside at some other places for longer times but now they shift to near their houses. They recollected the memories of the floods of 1957 and 1959 and said that 1959 flood was almost similar to 2014 flood but the 2014 flood was more dangerous and caused more damage.

3. Muddled Stories:

During a disaster, the stories of disarray, pandemonium, predicament, plight, death, perplexity, turmoil, destruction and chaos do the rounds. Similar muddled stories were heard by people across different parts of Kashmir Valley. The people living near Wular Lake in Bandipora heard stories that the whole Kashmir got inundated and some dead Kashmiris reached Pakistan. The people of Srinagar city heard stories that in the districts of north Kashmir, the dead bodies are hanging on trees. While as the people of South Kashmir heard stories that hundreds of people in Srinagar city were killed due to flood. However, there was no truth to these muddled stories.

4. Relief and Rescue Operations and the Politics of Relief and Rescue:

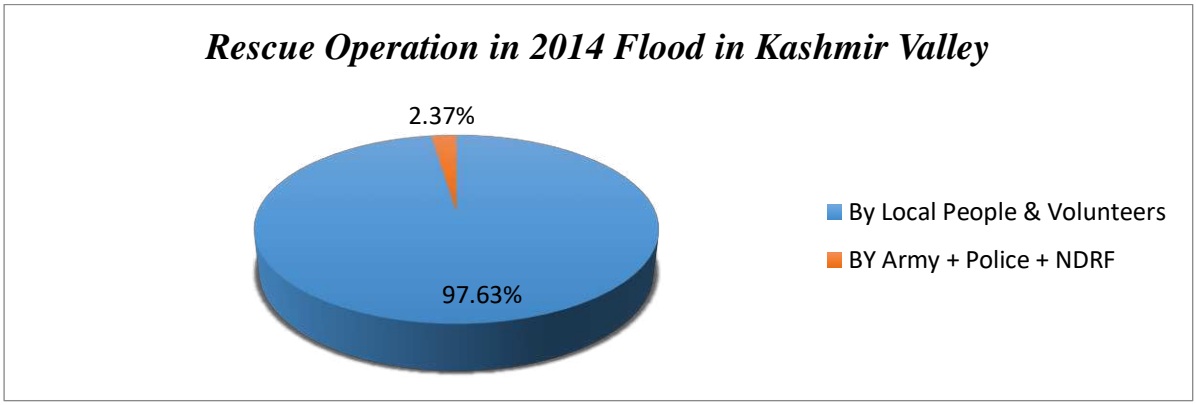
Disasters act as moments of political & social revelations. Guggenheim (2014) says, "Disasters are empirical sites to understand politics. They decompose what is usually difficult to analyse. The abrupt suspension of normal life lifts the veil and provides profound, raw, undisguised – and frequently very shocking – insights into the inner structures of that world and provides access to the landscape of disaster politics. The relationship between state and society, tested under duress, becomes transparent in the public domain." When any disaster happens, all the stakeholders come into play for relief and rescue operations. During the September 2014 flood in Kashmir Valley, the tales of rescue and relief were greatly witnessed. The local people emerged the heroes in the whole devastation as they were the ones who did most of the rescue and relief operation. The administration was clueless about the whole devastation. Police, army and National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) did not do much to help the people as according to some respondents they came and asked the people to come out of their homes and also took some photographs after the flood.

Table 3: Rescue Operation during 2014 Flood in Kashmir Valley

RESCUE OPERATION			
District	**No. of Houses Surveyed**	**RESCUE**	
		Local People and Volunteers	**Army + Police + NDRF**
Srinagar	350	346	4
Anantnag	120	117	3
Budgam	100	98	2
Pulwama	100	98	2
Baramulla	100	97	3
Bandipora	100	98	2
Kulgam	100	97	3
Shopian	50	49	1
Ganderbal	50	47	3
Kupwara	30	27	3
Total	**1100**	**1074**	**26**
		97.63%	**2.37%**

Source: Primary Survey

Fig. 3: ***Rescue Operation in 2014 Flood in Kashmir Valley***



The analysis of Table 3 and Figure 3 shows that 97.63% rescue operation was done by the local people of Kashmir and only 2.37% rescue operation was done by the army, police and National Disaster Response Force (NDRF), which means that the administration did very less for the rescue of the population which deepened the already fractured trust between the people and the government. The local people emerged as brave soldiers who rescued most of the drowned population of Kashmir and took them to safer places and relief camps in Srinagar city and other parts of the Kashmir Valley. The people from villages brought food items like rice, vegetables, drinking water bottles, medicines, blankets etc and provided it to the people of the Srinagar city. This showed a great sense of communitarianism among the distressed population. Some Non-governmental Organisations (NGOs) like GOONJ and Oxfam did some relief and rescue work in some parts of the valley.

They provided blankets, tents and food packets to some people in the districts of Anantnag, Srinagar, Baramulla and Bandipora. Many respondents said that the people of villages got relief only because urban areas like Srinagar got it, which is why they had to give to villagers too, otherwise it would not have happened. At the time of flood, government sent drinking water to some places. People complained of unfair treatment and said that politicians and bureaucrats were rescued first, then non locals and tourists and lastly few Kashmiris. After the flood was over, some families received relief from the government i.e, Rs. 3000, Rs. 4800, Rs. 25000, Rs. 75000, Rs. 1, 50,000, Rs. 2, 75,000 and more than Rs. 3, 00,000 depending on the type of damage. However, many cases of favouritism were recorded.

The economically poor people have been deprived of relief. **Class difference** was one of the important criteria in getting relief from the government. The lower class people who suffered huge loss got less relief. They usually got the relief or Rs. 2300 while as the upper class people got more relief. The people and traders of Srinagar were paid more than the villagers of the Valley. Thus class and social inequalities acted as major factors of relief distribution as there is no such thing as a natural disaster: all disasters are socially produced (Oliver-Smith, Hoffman, & Hoffman, 1999; Wisner, Blaikie, Blaikie, Cannon, & Davis, 2004) and disasters should not be understood as sudden events, but rather the outcome of long processes of slow, structural violence (Carrigan, 2015; Davies, 2018; Kwate & Threadcraft, 2018; Nixon, 2011).

During the flood, the villagers went to Srinagar city to distribute relief but some people of Srinagar showed resentment and abused them due to rural-urban animosity. Some of the city people shifted to their relatives in villages and the villagers had to bear the cost of their living. A respondent in Srinagar, while lauding the efforts of the Kashmiri youth, said, "*I saw only one thing at work during the floods and that was the local volunteers. No one else did anything."* With the failure of state machinery during the flood, how did thousands of people trapped in Kashmir find relief and get rescued? The evidence from the ethnographic study as well as NGOs and media suggests the role of impromptu groups of local NGOs, charitable organizations, religious trusts, activists and local volunteers in the rescue for relief. Volunteer groups were also active in organizing assistance and relief to thousands of displaced and suffering people: "The local volunteers from the Old Town did a tremendous job in arranging food and accommodation for people", said a respondent in Srinagar.

5. Survival Stories:

A number of heroic and survival stories came up during the 2014 flood in Kashmir Valley. People tried their best and applied different methods to survive the deluge.

The curious case of Mohd. Shaban Dar of Mukdamyari, Hajin Bandipora district:

Mohd. Shaban Dar of Mukdamyari, Hajin of Bandipora district. Age: 42, Males: 3, Females: 4; Labourer; monthly income: Rs. 5000; Pucca House.

When the flood water reached their locality, they left their home and ***constructed a hut on trees and stayed in it for 2 months.*** He said that people were left to themselves. Their house was pucca which got fully damaged, and the cost of damage was Rs. 5 lakh. They also suffered the loss of cow shed and 1 cow worth Rs. 45,000. They received the relief of Rs. 62,600 (12,600+50,000), which was less because authorities didn't record fully damaged house instead they recorded severely damaged pucca house. So, by the calculations, the family of Mr. Shaban has received Rs. 12,600 under State Disaster Response Fund (SDRF) and Rs. 50, 000 under Prime Minister's National Relief Fund (PMNRF) and no money under Prime Minister's Development Package (PMDP). They didn't have any food to eat during the flood and ate only water chestnuts. No person from government came to help them. During the flood, they feared death and were just trying to save themselves. After the flood was over, they constructed a new temporary hut that cost them Rs. 30,000.

Fig. 4: Rescue operation by local people in Srinagar city

(Source:https://www.oneindia.com/india/digital-volunteers-use-social-media-for-rescue-efforts-during-jammu-floods1524180.html)

Fig. 5: National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) along with locals distributing relief in Natipora Srinagar

6. Stories of Distress:

Disasters often highlight the social struggles in a society and underscore the inherent inequities within a political system (Cuny, 1983). Any disaster causes great loss to life and property and it is believed that women and children suffer the most due to any disaster. The 2014 flood in Kashmir wasn't an exception in this regard. Where there were stories of heroism and survival, there were stories of distress and loss too. Here two cases of distress are discussed;

Case I: Rahti from Banyari, Bandipora (Single Mother):

Rahti suffered a great loss due to the flood. Her house and cow shed were damaged. Because of being a single mother and a patient, she couldn't go to different government offices for relief. They are 10 family members in which 1 is male and 9 are females. She gets widow fund from the government. Rahti, while breaking down and sobbing and narrating her miserable economic condition, said that she got the relief of 1500 rupees only from the government and complained that government didn't help them. They hoped that authorities will come to their house to record the damage. Patwari along with some elders of the village came to record the damage but didn't record it properly.

Case II: Posha from Inderkote, Bandipora (Single Mother):

Posha's family is composed of two members-Posha and her daughter. A total of 3 kanals of Posha's land got damaged due to the flood. Their house was also damaged and the cost of the damage was Rs. 1.5 lakh. They stayed with her brother's family for two months. She got the

relief of total Rs. 48,500 (Rs. 3500+ Rs. 20,000+Rs. 25,000) from the government and one blanket and one bucket from some NGO but no help from police during the flood. According to Posha, *"the people who are poor get the lowest amount of relief. The poorer you are the less relief you get. Brothers helped me in restoration of the house. About 4 feet water was accumulated in the house during the flood."*

7. People's Mistakes, Efforts and Communitarianism:

The culture of a people plays a key role in disaster risk reduction. Failure to recognise the influence of people's culture and its significance in everyday lives has been known to lead to increased vulnerability to hazards (Oliver- Smith and Hoffman, 1999). Vulnerability to natural hazards, disasters, and displacement cannot be disentangled from harmful historical social and political-economic processes (O'Keefe, 1976; Oliver-Smith and Hoffman 1999; Wisner et al. 2004). Manzoor Ahmad, principal of a high school in Hajin Bandipora gave a detailed account of the flood and the steps taken by the people to survive and help others. He narrated that on the third day of flood, the ground floors of the houses in Srinagar were inundated and people shifted to the first floor of their houses. At this time, the water level at Jhelum bund at Paribal, Badipora near Wular was less by 8 feet as compared to previous flood two years ago. There was enormous amount of water in upper areas but the speed of water wasn't as much as it should have been in Jhelum. The reasons for it were;

a) Spillage of water from the Jhelum to surrounding areas, and

b) Blockade of water by the trees that had fallen in the river which reduced the flow and thus the speed of water.

The authorities didn't care much during the flood and were clueless to minimise the damage and control the flood. The bund at Vache Kundal, Hajin Bandipora was destroyed for about 25 feet. There is difference of height at this place between Jheum River and the places near Vache Kundal. Jhelum is at a greater height and the breaching of the bund resulted into spillage of enormous amount of water to the surrounding areas. It was difficult to control the water at this place, so the people of Hajin, Naidkhak and surrounding areas tried to control the water at other places. The breaching of bund at Aelchak at Naidkhah used to flood many villages in the past and was a danger point in 2014. It wasn't renovated fully. The people protected the bund. The systems had not been renovated at many places. The outlets were blocked and rusted. There are many outlets or gates at the bunds of Jhelum which are opened to distribute the overflow of the water but these outlets were blocked and rusted which resulted into overflow in the Jhelum River. The drainage system of Srinagar is connected with Jhelum River. When there was overflow of water in the river, it retrieved to upper areas

like Srinagar and the people of Srinagar couldn't block these outlets. This was another reason for flood in Srinagar. Bakshi Ghulam Mohammad, the Prime Minister of Jammu and Kashmir from the year 1953 to 1964, had appointed Chief Engineer named Abdul Rashid who had developed a sophisticated mechanism in the form of branches like veins in human body for the distribution of water in Jhelum during floods. He developed outlets at proper places to distribute the flood water and buy time to rescue the people. But these outlets have been blocked which resulted into inundation of many places like Sumbul near Jhelum river. When the water retrieved in Jhelum due to over flow, the people breached bunds at different places which resulted into spillage of water in the surrounding areas. But some people strengthened the bund at places like Hajin which saved many areas from inundation. The status of Wular lake is under the grip of deterioration due to land use/land cover changes; Lake area has reduced to 900 ha in 2008 from 2400 ha in 1992 (Mushtaq and Pandey 2014). The LULC changes in the catchment of Wular Lake are reinforced by the use of pesticides and fertilizers in the surrounding orchards to enhance the better production of fruits which plays an essential role towards eutrophication of water bodies in the study area (Badar and Romshoo, 2007). This changing land use-land cover pattern in Wular catchment signifies the ill effects of flooding on the biodiversity of Wular Lake (Ahmad et al. 2017). Any disturbance in Jhelum basin has its impacts on Wular ecosystem whether it is the regional rainfall pattern or deforestation resulting in submergence of various land use/land cover and inundation of surrounding Wular areas as well as the problems of siltation. The flooding situations in the recent years also play an important role in disbalancing the ecosystem of the wetland (Ahmad et al. 2018).

One reason among the people's mistakes for the flood was the reduction of capacity of water in Jhelum River due to filling up of the river by waste materials and high level of silt for many years as according to World Development Report (1994), "rivers associated with hydroelectric projects, flood control, or irrigation can give rise to environmental problems, both upstream (inundation of land) and downstream (sedimentation)." Commentators and reports on the Kashmir floods, have overwhelmingly attributed the devastating nature of the flooding to the degradation of Kashmir's ecology, including the effects of trans Himalayan climate change, and the fragmentation and destruction of wetlands, depletion of forest cover, soil erosion, urbanization of flood plains, and encroachments on water bodies and river embankments (Chauhan, 2014). People have extracted only sand from the river and other materials have been left in the river. Encroachment on the river like planting of trees and houses has reduced the capacity of the

river Jhelum which resulted into devastating flood. Almost one feet of waste material like polythene, bottles, wastage from drainage in upper areas like Srinagar, branches of trees, soil from mountains and upper areas are accumulated in Jhelum River and Wular Lake every year. This is a continuous perennial process. A large portion of area in Wular Lake has been filled up by the waste materials. Earlier there used to be large production of water chestnuts that people used to extract water chestnuts at the margins of the Wular Lake but now they have to travel few kilometres by boat inside Wular Lake to extract them. This means that Wular Lake has been filled up by the waste materials.

Fig. 6: Trees inside Wular Lake, Kashmir

The Wular Barrage is being constructed which would determine and control how much water would be allowed to flow to Pakistan. It has been damaged due to the 2014 flood and again by 2015 flood. Its concrete block has been damaged. The water of the Kishan Ganga project will flow into Wular Lake with great speed. The water that used to flow through Gurez to Pakistan has been stopped for Kishan Ganga project and it will flow into Wular. It is a matter of concern for the people living near Wular Lake. During the time of flood, it will create a lot of damage as according to Suhail, (2018), "because of the Indus Water Treaty we have immensely suffered on account of producing hydro-electricity. Under this treaty we cannot build dams beyond specified height prescribed in this treaty. Moreover, all the power projects have to be made on the run-of-the-river. We cannot store water, so the optimization of the electricity project varies because from time to time water levels vary. In winters it decreases but in summers it increases. However, during summers we cannot

harness the potential of electricity; this treaty is at worst to the interest of Kashmir." The bund has been damaged and became weaker and reduced by about 7 feet. It has not been renovated yet. The Sheikh Abdullah Bund of Wular Lake has been reduced to 2 feet and at some places to 4 feet while as at some places the bund has been reduced to ground and is not visible. It should be greater in height than the Bakshi Bund of the Wular Lake because it is inside the Wular Lake but it is not of greater height. The Wular Cleaning Plan from Bakhshi Bund is a vote bank politics. It is a political gimmick. The cleaning plan has resulted into demolition of houses and shops near the lake. Thousands of trees have been planted in the Wular Lake as seen in Fig. 4 which has reduced the carrying capacity of the river. Buildings have been constructed inside Wular like High School Mukdamyari. Encroachment has resulted in shrinkage of the lake. There is no proper relocation plan. The government is mainly concerned about the development of Srinagar city and earning money and ignoring other places. ***Jhelum is not a river now, it is a big drain.***

Social capital is an important aspect during disasters. Yuko Nakagawa and Rajib Shaw (2004) define social capital as, "the function of mutual trust, social networks of both individuals and groups, and social norms such as obligation and willingness toward mutually beneficial collective action, which is, the post-disaster recovery process. This social capital will be facilitated and/or enforced by trust for community leaders and also by the political maturity of the community. Political maturity means that the community is accustomed to consensus building by having meetings and discussions among community members." In recent years, disaster management has become closely connected to various fields such as environment, city planning, and community participation. Natural disasters not only cause life and economic losses, but in many cases create social divisions within communities (e.g., Aeta after the eruption of Mt. Pinatubo, the Philippines in 1991, as noted by Tsuda and Tamaki 2001) and sometimes even create political upheaval (e.g., the famine in Bangladesh in 1974 triggered by flood, as noted by Sen 1981, 1999). As a recent argument of the importance of civil society for community development explains, safety of a community should be the issue, which is discussed and determined by the community, since ultimately the community and/or individuals should be responsible for their own safety. As witnessed in Kobe, the government has limited capacity during times of crisis like an earthquake (Shaw and Goda 2004). It was individuals and their neighbours, who saved most of the victims right after the earthquake. And it was the community which determined whether each member was satisfied by the rehabilitation. But in order to meet such community needs, individual effort is

essential. Disaster recovery is not only about building houses but the reconstruction of the whole community as a safer place. To mobilize each member of the community in this collective action (community development), social capital is a crucial need (Nakagawa and Shaw, 2004). Hajin is the biggest town in Bandipora district. The people of Hajin collected money of around 7 to 8 lakh rupees, rice, mineral water, edible oil, daals and vegetables during the flood which they distributed to needy people and to the people whose houses were damaged in areas like Shahgund, Zaalpur, Pushwara, Markundal, Mukdamyari, Baniyar, Vejpora, Sumbul and Bonn. The shortage of fodder for animals was reported at several places. Some people contributed their whole produce of that year and some contributed fruits like apples and other materials like rice. The funds were also distributed among sick people and widowed. The categorization of damage was done and funds and other essential items were given accordingly.

A Category: Fully damaged houses and cattle loss. Money was given like Rs. 4000, Rs. 3000, Rs. 1000 etc

B Category: Food for families. Some NGOs also contributed.

C Category: Water bottles, edible oil and other essential materials. The things of immediate need were provided to people.

The distribution of relief during the 2014 flood in Kashmir Valley by the local population depicts that social capital and communitarianism is an important element during any disaster. The coordination and cooperation of the people and putting aside their differences in times of crisis are crucial factors to manage the disasters and reduce their impact. Several such examples throughout the world, like 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami, teach us that the contribution of people in mitigating disasters is an important factor.

Disasters don't simply flatten landscapes, washing them smooth. Rather they deepen and erode the ruts of social difference they encounter (Smith, 2006). Whether it is a drought, a famine, an epidemic, earthquake or tsunami, studies have revealed that the social and political context has much to do with how a particular natural event is defined, perceived and responded to (Sainath, 1996). Understanding the ways in which a particular 'humanitarian disaster' is manufactured and experienced can therefore tell us much about the society and the polity which produced and suffered it. The 2014 flood was more devastating as compared to other floods in recent times because the government was not ready for such a devastation. The wastage had accumulated in rivers for many years and little cleaning of rivers had been done. The government claims that it has done a lot for the development and protection of rivers but the ground reality is something different. Unplanned urbanisation is

one of the main reasons for flood in Srinagar. Recycling of water in drains is lacking. If this water is recycled to be made fit for drinking then the flow into the Jhelum will be lower. The drains got accumulated by water by lower areas. The flood channel and nallas in Srinagar have been used to construct buildings and other structures. People used to drink the water of lakes of the Kashmir Valley but now they can't even wash their faces with it. The waste material from house boats is dumped in lakes like Dal Lake. A lot of deforestation has happened in last few years. Forest fires are a recurring phenomenon. The cutting down of trees results into fast melting of glaciers.

The 2014 flood showed the earlier actual roots and paths of the rivers. Temperature has increased in Kashmir due to automobiles. Now in villages too the number of vehicles has increased, which increases the temperature which in turn results into melting of glaciers. Snow melts quickly these days, which is why there are frequent floods in Kashmir nowadays.

8. Narrative of Shikara Walas (Boatmen) of Dal Lake and Wular Lake:

The boatmen of the Dal Lake in Srinagar narrated their stories of the flood. They said that they provided their boats to the government for rescue operation at the rate of 600 rupees per day. They received the money but late. It was repeated in 2015 flood for about 8 days. Some boatmen provided their boats for 3 days while as some provided their boats for 4 days. But when Srinagar got inundated in 2014 they kept their boats for themselves. Dal Lake was full of water including the road along the Dal and the shops near Dal Lake got filled with water including hotels up to first storey. All the business got damaged and tourism industry suffered a heavy loss. The families of boatmen left their homes and stayed in boats. Most of the people have never witnessed such a devastating flood. It is said that almost 100 years ago Kashmir witnessed a devastating flood during which people tied their boats on hills to live in them to save themselves from the deluge. The people living in houseboats feared of drowning. Several houseboats got damaged due to the flood. If there was strong wind at that time then some houseboats would have collided with each other which would have caused a great loss to the people. The stories of some boatmen demanding money from some people for rescue were also reported. Some people even gave gold to the rescuers for rescue. Some people paid Rs. 500 or Rs. 1000 or Rs. 2000 rupees while as some even paid Rs. 6000 rupees for rescue. During the flood, some people claimed that some things like gold, utensils and money were stolen from some houses at Rajbagh, Srinagar. Some people provided their boats for free for rescue operations.

The cost of Shikara is usually 160,000 rupees while as the cost of small boat locally known as Demb Waer is about Rs. 10,000. Some boatmen lost some of these boats, thus

resulting into huge financial loss. These boats were used for rescue operations in Srinagar city and some other parts of the valley. Government provided some boats for recue while as army and police recued tourists and some non-locals. Relief camps were established at places like Habba Kadal, Lal Chowk, Dalgate in Srinagar city. People stayed in relief camps for about 15 days. The people from villages sent vegetables and other food items to the people of Srinagar. Some people stayed in hotels. In Rajbagh area, water was accumulated for two months. Motors were used to draw out water. Hotels got seriously damaged. A lot of things were washed away by the flood. Earlier the water of Dal Lake and Wular Lake was used for the purpose of drinking as it was clean but now it is unfit for drinking and domestic use. It is because the wastage from Srinagar city is dumped in Dal Lake. The wastage from house boats is also dumped in it. Its area has also been reduced. A lot of encroachment has happened in Dal Lake in last few years. Many houses have been constructed in the lake area. People bribe the Lakes and Waterways Development Authority (LAWDA) and other authorities so that they can be allowed to construct houses and shops in the houseboats inside the lake. Dargah Hazratbal, Srinagar (Hazratbal Shrine, Srinagar) was surrounded by water and people used to go by boats to offer prayers. According to some people, the flood was God's fury and said that no Hindu, Muslim and Christian or any human being should witness such a devastation. The water of the Jhelum River finally goes into the Wular Lake and during the floods the Wular Lake is filled with tremendous amount of water which results into flooding of areas near the lake.

(B) Inequities of Relief Distribution:

Power relations both within and between institutions have been identified as an important influence on the decision-making process (Koch et al., 2007). Vulnerable populations are those that are at risk (Blaikie et al, 1994) not simply because they are exposed to hazard, but as a result of marginality that makes their life a permanent emergency. This marginality, in turn, is determined by the combination of a set of variables such as class, gender, age, ethnicity and disability (Wisner, 1993) that affects people's entitlement and empowerment or their command over basic necessities and rights as broadly defined (Hewitt, 1997, Watts, 1995, Akerkar et al. 2016). According to Akerkar et al. (2016), "Evidence from our research on reach of social protection programmes in Bahraich, Uttar Pradesh, India, shows that in places where social contract does not work effectively, those who are culturally entitled reap maximum benefits. India has a plethora of social protection programmes, however, these programmes do not always reach the poor – they have both inclusion and exclusion errors. As

a result, the social protection programmes are not able to fully meet their stated objectives of enabling access of food and livelihoods to the most vulnerable. A literature review of studies, both global and India focused, identifies various operational gaps for the inclusion and exclusion errors, namely: a) political clientalism b) exclusion due to social vulnerability c) elite capture d) targeting inefficiency e) leakages and corruption and f) lack of information and transparency g) Improper designing of social transfers: universal or targeted, conditional or unconditional, cash or kind." In 2014 Kashmir flood, the relief was not distributed properly during and after the flood. According to respondents, following were the reasons for it;

a) There was no mention of damage by the authorities.
b) Biasness from authorities.
c) Government did not come to record the damage and did not reach at affected places
d) Nepotism by Panchs, Sarpanchs and other representatives of local government, e.g, if the cost of damage was 1 or 2 lakh rupees, they recorded only 5300 rupees.
e) Favouritism because of influential elderly people. They got relief for themselves but not for others. Authorities said that their names are not in the list of affected people.
f) The authorities only recorded the damage but did not give any relief to some people.
g) Patwaris and other officials were responsible for not providing relief to some people.
h) There was no proper recording of the damage.
i) Some people were not present in their houses at the time of recording of damage by the authorities. The authorities did not go again to record the damage.
j) Favouritism done by the Patwaris and other government officials. Some economically well off people bribed them to record more damage. The people who could not or did not bribe them didn't get any compensation. Some people who did not suffer any damage got compensation.

Through ethnographic study of floods in Kashmir Valley, vulnerable areas were studied and analysed. It was found that the population and areas near Jhelum River were the most vulnerable to floods because of their location and their encroachment on the banks of Jhelum River. The narratives of floods in Kashmir provide empirical knowledge which is an important addition to the existing literature. The study provides important addition to the theoretical framework in the sense that during floods the contribution coordination of local population is the most crucial element in saving lives and social capital forms an important foundation about mitigation of disasters.

Conclusion: The ethnographic study of floods in Kashmir Valley depicts different narratives of the flood including the problems faced by the people, their heroism and efforts to survive in times of crisis and distress. The moments of chaos and crisis provide a reality check and sometimes give moments of clarity into the mechanism of social relationships and power dynamics that is fundamental to their lives, thus showing the status-quo painfully visible. In their dire need, the Kashmiris realised that they were served largely by themselves: by the benevolence and generosity of their own people and by heroic spiritedness of its own youth that saved thousands of lives. In their moment of grief, the people of Kashmir showed great communitarianism and emerged as the saviours.

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