

do symbols and concepts become a powerful source of inspiration and legitimate the struggle for political identity?

Hypotheses and Methodology

The research questions are answered by testing the following hypotheses.

- The first is Kashmiri nationalism, essentially a contestation of 'self' and 'other'.
- The second one is the weakness of democratic institutions, which has created social categories for the distribution of patronage, resulting in chasms based on ethnicity, religion, and region.

This work utilises primary as well as secondary sources to test the hypotheses. Data from existing literature, such as books, research articles, and news articles from different magazines and internet sites, has been collected. Primary sources are also used extensively, including the published material of various Kashmiri political organisations, personal diaries, observer accounts, posters, unpublished documents, and memoirs. The researcher's knowledge of Urdu and Kashmiri languages enabled the use of books and newspapers from these languages.

The thesis was compiled after elaborate fieldwork in Kashmir from April to July 2017, including a field trip to Jammu in December 2017. In addition to using the available material in local libraries, interviews were conducted with various political actors, analysts, journalists, and scholars. The interviews were primarily narrative-based, without a specific questionnaire, allowing the interviewee to speak without inhibitions. The interviewees were chosen through snowball sampling, where they introduced me to their acquaintances, and the circle grew.

Chapterisation

The study is divided into five main chapters. This first chapter develops an analytical framework for examining the form, meaning, and conceptualisation of nationalism. The section explores the development of the concept of nationalism through theoretical debates. It further examines how exclusion and the desire to access later power result in nationalism. It looks at the sources of other nationalisms and what instrumental factors combine to form other nationalisms. It further tries to find out the goals and objectives of other nationalisms.

The second chapter locates the origin of Kashmiri nationalism by examining the historical, political, and social factors that contributed to its development. It sketches out how Kashmir and Kashmiri nationalism is understood in the popular imagination. It also examines whether Kashmiri nationalism is geographically exclusive to a particular territory or extends to the state's length and breadth. Additionally, it traces how the religious and ethnic complexities of the Kashmiri society have interacted with Kashmiri nationalism. The role of different political formulations in defining and promoting Kashmiri nationalism will also be examined. The chapter argues that to garner a better picture of Kashmiri nationalism, one needs to evaluate its interaction with forces of modernity. A deeply rooted sense of regional identity in Kashmir was channelled when education offered access to understanding the nature of Kashmiri nationalism. The development of education, social communications, and the growth of print enabled the masses to think of themselves profoundly.

The third chapter explains the transition of Kashmir nationalism from the political to militant terrain. It traces the assertions and objectives of different political actors. The chapter examines how civic Kashmiri nationalism remains a cornerstone in mainstream and separatist projects and how and where the differences are marked. Further, it examines how the militant transition also brings ethnic Kashmiri nationalism to the fore, which otherwise had been latent. It looks at how the contestations within the militant groups are a contestation of ethnic and civic variants of nationalism. The chapter explains the transition of