



MONTHLY THEME

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KASHMIR RIGHTS FORUM CUSTODIANS OF HUMAN RIGHTS IN KASHMIR

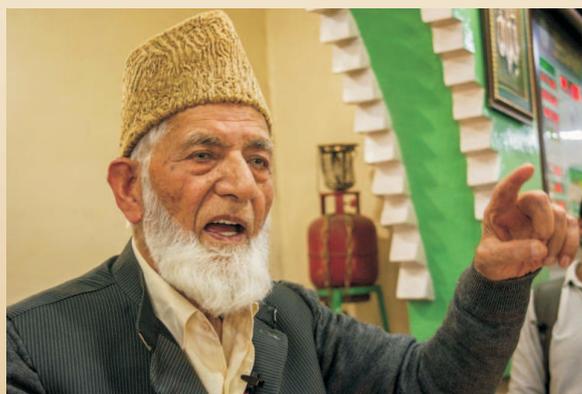
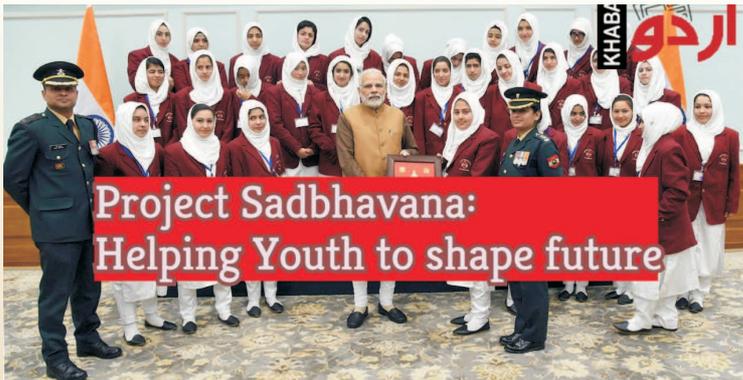
The Kashmir Rights Forum (KRF) is an informal, secular, apolitical and forward looking interactive platform highlighting human rights violations perpetuated against innocent Kashmiri population by terrorists either directly supported by separatists and their over ground workers or indirectly by sympathizers over last three decades as a result of proxywar initiated by Pakistan on our homeland.

KRF is dexterous, focused forum with overarching mission to mobilize expertise and public opinion to counter the organized attempt to violate human rights of common innocent Kashmiris of all generations by the nexus and tarnishing the image of government and security forces by certain section of media, intelligentsia and conflict entrepreneurs by flaring up allegations of human rights violations on them, thus diverting attention from the real perpetrators of these violations.

We, at KRF encourage response by likeminded or otherwise, people and organizations, on documents, articles & video content produced on multiple social media platforms by us to apprise all citizens of such violations. KRF will endeavor to expose the designs of the perpetrators by studying the past and present and producing the facts for public scrutiny as part of our research and highlight such events in present, earliest on occurrence.

Glimpses of Monthly Theme March 2022

YOUTH OF KASHMIR AN INVESTMENT INTO FUTURE



PREFACE

India's Kashmir outreach must focus on winning the youth's trust.

Kashmir imbroglio is complicated. There are wheels within wheels and there are many stakeholders in this conflict dynamics, all with varying vested interests. Pakistan and its deep state provide ideological, financial and emotional support to the proxy war. Unable to get the better of India in conventional terms, they have identified with the region the basis of religion and radicalized the Kashmiri youth willfully.

The role of Youth in nation-building or development is very important, and this is because the development of any nation lies in the future generation. And when it comes to Kashmir, every activity revolves around youth, hence requirement of giving due impetus to the youth of Kashmir. Democracy, economy, technology and the improvement of medical science all lie in the hands of the Youth. Poverty, unemployment, global warming, and pollution of many types are the problems that the world is facing today. The answer to solving all these problems lies with the next generation. History is evident that the next generation has been the answer to solve future problems. As time passes by, it is required to adapt to the changes and bring a change in society. Youth is capable of doing so; we can bring a change in society. So what is the role of the Youth for a better tomorrow so as to bring a change in society?

One such example can be taken from Kashmir where decades were wasted in futility, but now the new generation understands, how they were manipulated through religious doctrines to push the narrative of Pakistan. Youth is the most dynamic and important segment of the population in any country. Statistics show that the developing

countries which have a huge youth population could be seeing tremendous growth in all the sectors of the countries provided they invest in young people's education, health and protect and guarantee their rights. It is believed that today's young minds shall be tomorrow's leaders, creators, builders, and innovators. For Youth to be good leaders, inventors and innovators, it is important that they are supported and are provided good health, training, and education to transform the future. There will be a boost in the economy of the country when the Youth is working and earning rather than being dependent on anyone. As we all know that half of the world's population is now under the age of 25, and 1.8 billion people are between the age of 11-25. This is considered to be the largest youth generation to ever exist. Many countries such as Sweden, Japan, and Germany have already started gaining from the Youth by providing them opportunities in different sectors. It has been more than 80 years since the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in Japan. Any country would be devastated by the loss of lives and the destruction that was caused during that time, but Japan did not stop, hence over the decades, the government of Japan had started investing in the Youth and the investment they made in the Youth during that time is giving them the dividends now. More than 80% of Youth in Japan are responsible for the economic boost of the country. Industries such as Manga and Anime consist of 90% of young minds that are responsible for generating revenue of 1.3 billion every year to the country. This is the impact that Youth can make on the country's growth.



INTRODUCTION

"The power of youth is the common wealth for the entire world. The faces of young people are the faces of our past, our present and our future. No segment in the society can match with the power, idealism, enthusiasm and courage of the young people."

- *Kailash Satyarthi*

It is a well-known fact that the youth of Kashmir is a great asset. They are indeed the future of the country and represent it at every level. The role of Kashmiri youth in nation-building is more important than you might think. In other words, the intelligence and work of the youth of Kashmir will take the country on the pathway of success. As every citizen of country is equally responsible, the youth of Kashmir is too. They are the building blocks of a country. The youth of Kashmir is important because they will be our future. Today they might be our partners, tomorrow they will go on to become leaders. The youth of Kashmir is very energetic and enthusiastic. They have the ability to learn and adapt to the environment. Similarly, they are willing to learn and act to achieve their goals. Our youth can bring social reform and improvement in society. We cannot make do without the youth of a country. Furthermore, the nation requires their participation to achieve the goals and help in taking the country towards progress.

The peculiar situation brings forward an urgent need to engage with the youth and wean them away from the desire to pick up the gun for a non-existent, self destructive cause. There is a need to look deeply into the reasons behind the frustration that leads the youth towards pursuing mindless violence. A major reason for this is the lack of economic opportunity which leads to unemployment and frustration. Kashmir is

experiencing a "youth bulge," where 71 percent of the population is under the age of 35. Sadly, a large section of population between the age of 18 to 30 in the Kashmir Valley, an estimated 48 percent, is currently unemployed.

The fragile socio-political landscape, affected by continuing violent conflict and instability, has created a deep sense of uncertainty amongst the local population, particularly the youth. Kashmiri youth have grown up in this adverse environment and have faced tremendous stress. Feeling of desperation, anger and helplessness is largely prevalent among them. Pakistan exploits the situation by carrying out well honed, effective propaganda to stoke fires of dissent and dissension. Many youth get swayed by the false propaganda and adverse publicity. While the Army has played the role of a protector, well conducted propaganda by the enemy has led to the force being seen by Kashmiris, particularly the youth, as an instrument of Government of India's policy to curb their freedom. The government of India has launched a number of schemes to provide employment to youth in the state. Infrastructure in terms of schools, colleges, community development centers, ITIs etc. has also been established to impart quality education and generate self-employment opportunities. Besides, a good amount of impetus has been laid in the field of sports to encourage the young to channelize their energies in the right direction and also pick up sports as a career.

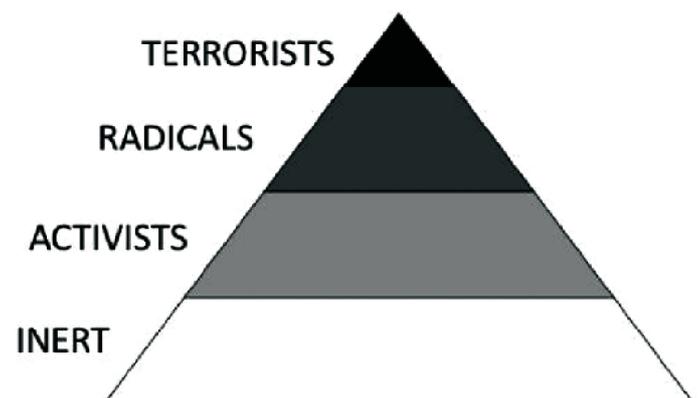


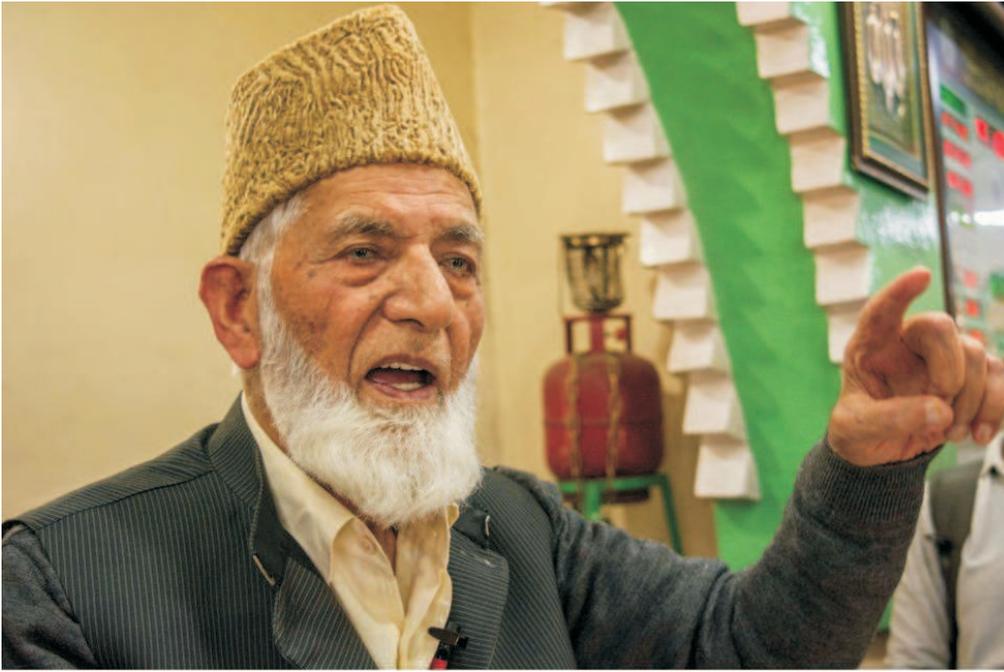
STRUCTURAL CHANGE IN THE KASHMIRI SOCIETY AND IMPACT OF PAN-ISLAMISM

By early 1990, Jammu & Kashmir witnessed a trend of Pan-Islamism, clearing Kashmir Valley of the Hindu minority presence and young boys disposed to lay down their lives in the name of jihad. This was once preached in the name of religion to meet the ends of extremist religious heads, looting consciences of the local youth in the name of religion. Later, many separatist groups perceived as secular were abandoned by the Pakistan, favouring other Islamist substitutions, when they started moving away from the Pakistani's stance to see Jammu & Kashmir merging with Pakistan. Islamic terrorists endeavoured to bring structural changes at cultural levels of the Kashmir society since the inception of militancy, as in the year 1989 and in the early 1990s there was a mushroom growth of militant organizations in Kashmir advocating '*Nizam-e-Mustafa*' (*Rule of the Prophet*) as the objective of their struggle. Simultaneously, all cinema houses, beauty salons, wine shops, bars, video centres, use of cosmetics, listening to music or any such form of entertainment were banned by militant groups. There were bans imposed on the selling of cigarettes and on the circulation of Indian national- and Jammu based newspapers in the Kashmir Valley. Islamist groups threatened to bomb houses,

where women refused to wear veils. All these were performed with the consent and backing from Pakistan. The objective of Islamization of the socio-political and economic set-up, merger of Jammu and Kashmir with Pakistan was an establishment of an Islamic Caliphate. ^[1]

The violence in the Kashmir Valley has been more religious in character than political, being dominated by a group of militant leaders acting under a Pan-Islamic ideology. Islamist intellectuals and activists have been seeking to distort the difference between Islam as a religion and nationalism, reinforcing the Islamic political consciousness by politicizing already existing religious traditions and practices and by resisting change and modernization. The young Islamic militants of today carry placards of Osama Bin Laden, hoist Taliban and ISIS flags while participating in anti-government rallies. They identify with the Sharia law and choose to remain alien to the concepts of democracy and modernization. The earlier '*Azaadi*' (*Freedom*) slogan for autonomy and dignity was transformed into the expression of revulsion and rage against Hindu India and anything else non-Muslim. This difference between Hindu and Muslim is scripted through media; it was thus basis for Pandit exodus in the valley back in 90's. As at that time there was a mutual understanding between Kashmiri Muslims and Hindus, and dividing Kashmiris on religious lines was rooted in massacre of Pandits to extend the ends of ISI in Kashmir. Now, our youth should ponder deep into the history, what sins lie on our shoulders? Whose blood lies on our hands?





SAVING YOUTH FROM GROWING PAN-ISLAMISM LEARNING FROM THE PAST

The unfortunate accidental death of a Kashmiri schoolboy, Tufail Mattoo, due to teargas shelling on 11 June 2010, was the ostensible flashpoint setting the Valley afire as mass protests erupted all over. The boy who was trying to make way home from school was immediately turned into an “*accidental martyr*” and was buried in the Martyr's graveyard against the wishes of his family who wished their son to be buried in a family graveyard point. The killing of the boy was followed by protests, demonstrations and clashes with local and Central Armed Police Forces, in which another boy was killed leading to yet other protests till several young lives were lost. The official figures reveal around 110 people lost their lives and 537 civilians were injured during stone-pelting incidents from May to September 2010.

Following these incidents, the All Party Hurriyat Conference (APHC), an amalgam of Pro-Pakistani separatist- and socio-political organizations, led by Late Syed Ali Shah Geelani and Mirwaiz Umar Farooq, once again called for the complete

demilitarization of Indian Administered Jammu & Kashmir. The protestors continued shouting pro-Islamic slogans, targeting symbols of government authority, burning vehicles and attacking police with stones. Continuous shutdowns and strikes were called by separatist leaders periodically, leading to disastrous paralysis of peace and stability in the Kashmir Valley. Kashmiri youth was being incited by

pro-Pakistan elements owing to their perceived hold on the youth to indulge in violence. The youth continued to be misinformed with biased and half-baked news on law and order developments in the Kashmir Valley while ironically, the children of these separatist leaders were conveniently out of this so-called movement, either studying in big cities or earning decent remunerations in different parts of the world, using the children of common man as foot soldiers to carry out their selfish designs. This is crucial in understanding the situation which is often utilized by Pakistan to gain sympathy of the world. It is very important to understand the ibid dynamics as the main sufferers was the Kashmiri youth.

The youth forms 65% of the population, addled between politics and religion. A report from trusted sources indicates that “61% of the Valley's youth listens to religious sermons on their audio players” and “25% is interested in Jihadi speeches”. As a corollary, of these, 52% have qualified the higher secondary or undergraduate examination and 32% are graduates or postgraduates. It is indicated that a large number from this segment also has access to information from sermons and meetings at mosques, graveyards and television channels. While it may be

contended that religious influence is not necessarily a negative sign, its possible implications could have disturbing heralds for the future. The youth are made to believe that the Muslims of the outside world are fighting for Kashmir's independence and dying for Islam, further substantiated by the fact that the Hurriyat hardliner Syed Ali Shah Geelani held funeral prayers in absentia for the slain terrorist Osama bin Laden, who had no connection with Kashmir politics whatsoever, referring to it as a '*religious duty*' of Kashmiri Muslims to hold prayers for the '*Martyr*'. It becomes critical for the state and its agencies to save the youth from alienation once we tighten the grip of youth in our hands, we could direct their energies to a certain positive corner involving them into nation building and keep them busy with the advancements that require them unlike terrorism. The young and unemployed boys, having grown up in an atmosphere of continuous fear and unrest, silently develop respect for the Islamist militants in the Valley, who they think are dying for a divine cause. Many homes in Kashmir now find no men due to terrorism which devastated their hopes and the dreams. Imagine a mother wailing for his son to help him in the old age and her son joining terrorism falling into the trap of the Pakistan and its agencies together.

The education system in the Valley has suffered an irreparable loss, lacking the efficacy to help students develop a vision, who eventually take the recourse of Islam as an escape. The three decade long armed conflict and geo-political disorder has particularly affected the psychology of the Kashmiri youth. Stone-pelting is legitimized as a vent for the young self-styled fighters to reflect their spirit of freedom and anger. The communication technology is being exploited; with young Kashmiri militants blatantly releasing their pictures and videos on social media, presenting themselves in the typical image of a virile '*warrior*' dressed in fatigues, carrying weapons, laughing or smiling in a forest background, glamorizing terrorism and thereby trying to attract more youth.

NEW TREND FOR LURING YOUTH INTO CYCLE OF VIOLENCE

MULTIMEDIA JIHAD: Social media has proven to be the most effective weapon of the new ^[2] militancy. Militants no longer need to use coercive means to get some column space in the press, as they did in the 1990s. Today, hundreds and thousands of militancy pictures and videos are on social media sites every single day. New content is published frequently through encrypted platforms such as

Telegram and Whats App, e.g. dying declarations of militants trapped in an encounter; their last phone call conversations with friends, family or even security officials; videos of training in the jungles of South Kashmir; selfies showing bonhomie amongst the cadre; pictures of militants playing cricket in the open fields of the Valley. Such content consumed mostly by young Kashmiris had flooded the popular culture of J&K. The new militants used this content to spread the call of jihad and inspire the youth to Join ^[3] their ranks.

In December 2015, LeT Chief Hafeez Sayeed launched its cyber cell, taking inspiration from ISIS. The intent was to propagate the group's ideology and propaganda, and it managed to stoke prolonged unrest in the Valley. Burhan Wani was perhaps the first tech-savvy militant of Kashmir. Even though he joined HM in 2010, he rose into becoming a cult figure only after his pictures appeared on Facebook in 2013. Social media drive the recruitment of local terrorists.

On the first death anniversary of Burhan Wani, on 8



July 2017, HM launched a propaganda campaign^[4] for the recruitment of more Kashmiri youth. These recruitment drives are similar to those conducted by the police or the army, with hordes of local youth flocking to the centres and many of them getting rejected. On the second death anniversary of Burhan Wani, the following message was put out by HM on Whats App groups: “We request all those brothers who have been kept in waiting to not lose hope and be steadfast, as very soon you will be called to join the ranks, Insha Allah. Hizbul Mujahideen JK will always uphold the principles of Justice and will continue to be at the forefront of Freedom struggle of Kashmir. We appeal to our people^[5] to stay calm and steadfast on the mission of Mujahideen brothers.” For militants, social media is not just a tool of communication; it is^[6] a weapon of war. After Wani’s death, the mantle of HM was taken over by Sabzar Bhat. As his pictures and videos started appearing on Whats App groups, Bhat went from being on the fringes of the public imagination to becoming a household name. It is here where the local youth gets wild imaginations of the savory rank and file of the terrorists.

A video of 16-year-old Fardeen Khanday calling for jihad, released after his death in a fidayeen attack

on 1 January 2018, led to a new crop of recruits for JeM. It is possible that the Pulwama suicide bomber^[7] followed the path of Fardeen after watching his video. Ahead of the Republic Day celebrations in 2018, a video appeared on social media showing the principal of a school in Pulwama pleading before a man holding an AK-47 weapon. The video was released to disrupt the Republic Day celebrations in South Kashmir by issuing a message to the youth participating in the parade. In the video, the principal pleads for mercy and promises to keep the students of his school away from the parade. Such a warning was not a new tactic, but the power of social media made this video viral and available on every smart phone, instilling a sense of fear amongst the population.

POTENTIAL OF KASHMIRI YOUTH

The UT of J&K has persistently witnessed violence and conflict due to Pakistan sponsored terrorism. They mobilized masses for an organized fight against India through proliferating false narrative and subversive propaganda focusing specially on the vulnerable minds of the youth. The barbaric acts of terrorists caused tremendous damage to the fabric of Kashmiri society. Feelings of desperation, anger and helplessness are created by the anti-



national elements to push the people into abyss by creating propaganda and stoking dissent within the society. Younger generation of Kashmir were getting wayed by the false narratives and adverse publicity. The people of J&K have now started questioning radicalization beliefs propagated to them through the impeding radicalization beliefs these decades. The common masses have shed cynicism after realizing the futility of violence sponsored by deep state of Pakistan. Society of J&K has realized an urgent need to engage with the youth and wean them away from the desire to pick up the gun for a non-existent, self-destructive cause.

The youth of J&K are highly capable of achieving anything and are at par with their Indian compatriots. They want to change the image of valley youth being portrayed as stone pelters and protestors. Efforts are being made to understand reasons behind the frustration that leads the youth towards pursuing mindless violence. To encash the opportunity of effective hannelize of Kashmir's youth bulge, efforts have been made by the administration to facilitate economic development of the region through provision of employment avenues. The government has been launching a number of schemes to provide employment to youth in the UT. Infrastructure in terms of schools, colleges, community development centres, ITIs etc have also been established to impart quality education and generate self-employment opportunities. Adequate emphasis has been given to sports to encourage the children and youth to hannelize their energies in the right direction. The policy changes instituted by the Govt of India and administration of J&K have provided stimulus to the youth to realize their dreams.

Indian Army's constructive engagement of youth has resulted in curbing the false narrative and nefarious designs of separatists and pro-militancy groups. Operation Sadhbhavana and WHAM measures have been yielding fruitful results for development of the Awaam of Kashmir. Initiative such as Skill Training and Skill Development

Courses, Kashmir Super-50, Project Himayat and Chinar 9 Jawan Club have contributed significantly towards restoration faith of local populace in Army and establishment of peace in the region. Measures such as Youth Employment Guidance Nodes, Vocational Training Centres and Project Himayat by the Indian Army has resulted in empowerment of J&K youth. The Kashmir populace are keen to experience peace and stability. Development in the region would generate employment thereby hannelize the youth towards productive pursuits. Talent hunting and nurturing by the system should be encouraged to the maximum. Media needs to contribute proactively by exposing the separatists and pro-militancy leaders who have been carrying out false propaganda to suit their agendas to target the youth of J&K.

Kashmiri youth saying no to guns now, which was forced upon them by the Pakistani handlers and with normalcy returning to Jammu and Kashmir, have unnerved the militant handlers sitting across the Line of Control (LoC). Their plan to keep J&K burning is falling apart. They are looking for other means to keep militancy alive, as local recruitment in terror groups is on the stark decline in J&K. Recently a Kashmiri girl named Mansha bagged a silver medal in Taekwondo held at an international event in Bangkok. Similarly, eight-year-old Tajamul Islam had also scripted history at the World Kickboxing Championship in Italy, where she made India proud by becoming the first player ever from the sub-junior category to clinch a gold medal. There are many such talented girls and boys in Kashmir whose potential needs to be constructively tapped. Youth are potential agents for positive societal change. But in Kashmir the ability of young people to engage in socio-political transformation is hindered by the lack of safe space and continued political insecurity. Safe spaces for dialogue within and across academic and social institutions in Kashmir, Jammu and Ladakh will enhance a sense of ownership and confidence in political processes. Young Kashmiri minds can play a distinct role in

the socio-economic and political development of their communities Education and livelihood options that support the development of relevant skills and capacity can better support youth to constructively contribute to their communities and Kashmiri society as a whole. An environment that enables youth to help address community issues should also be encouraged. These could include opportunities to affect change to the local education system and support localized entrepreneurial capacity.

SAVING YOUTH-WINNING “THE HEARTS AND MINDS”

Various separatist groups in Kashmir have conveniently exploited the sentiments of Kashmiri youth and misguided them for their own selfish gains. They lose no opportunity to exploit sensitive situations, disrupt the functioning of government and engineer deterioration of the law and order situation. They look for opportunities to use propaganda as a tool for their nefarious designs. Some segments of the media in Kashmir act in a manner that causes damage to the psyche of the

youth. For sensational copy it overplays violence; in some instances, for the sake of monetary gains, it exaggerates facts in a manner that shows the state and the security forces in poor light. All of this contributes towards instigating the masses, particularly the youth. The solution to the issues lies with the people. With development will come jobs that will channelize the energy of the youth towards productive pursuits. The state government, the elders and the civil society of Kashmir have to play a vital role to removing the prevailing feeling of hatred and frustration that envelopes' the youth of the Valley. This is undoubtedly a long term process but beginning has to be made. It cannot be denied that the government is attempting to remain focused on the issue of development despite the law and order challenges. Launching of employment generating programs like 'Himayat' are steps in the right direction. A lot more, however, needs to be done and that too in a time bound manner. Education needs to be given priority! Curriculums have to be designed in a manner that the youth gain confidence to compete at the national and international level. More and more students need to be sponsored for education in other states to widen the base The passion that the



youth have for games needs should be leveraged Searching, nurturing and talent should be followed with providing opportunities to compete within the state and in larger platforms. The government needs to create an environment to encourage more investment in the state, especially in private sector, which will increase employment opportunities for youth.

Army, by virtue of its vast organization and spread in remote places, continues to hold potential for playing a vital role Efforts by the army to reach out to the youth have been well appreciated by Kashmiri society. This is an area that needs more traction since it will accrue the best results. There is a need to bring about a realization that the Army and other security forces have, with great effort over a sustained period of time and with tremendous loss of lives of soldiers, brought down the levels of terrorism to a threshold that allows the apparatus of the state and the society to function in a modicum of normalcy. It is equally important to side line the separatist groups responsible for constantly installing hatred amongst the youth. This can be done by exposing their leaders who have been carrying out false propaganda to suit their agendas. Media too needs to be guided to channelize its power and energy in the right direction. Youth should become the centre of gravity of the government policy to curb terrorism in Jammu and Kashmir. Sincere efforts in this direction have the potential of changing the socio-political landscape of the trouble torn region. There are many ways in which we can help the youth of Kashmir to achieve their potential. For that, the government of India must introduce programs that will help in fighting off issues like unemployment, poor education institutes and more to help them prosper without any hindrance.

Furthermore, equal opportunities must be provided for all irrespective of caste, creed, gender, race, religion and more. There are various issues of nepotism and favoritism that is eating away the actual talent of the country. This must be done

away with as soon as possible. We must make sure that every youth has the chance to prove themselves worthy and that must be offered equally to all. In short, youth of Kashmir valley has the power to build a nation so we must give them the opportunity. They are the future and they have the perspective which the older generations lack. Their zeal and enthusiasm must be channelized properly to help a nation prosper and flourish.

RESPONSIBILITY OF KASHMIRI INTELLIGENTSIA

While the factors like development, putting an end to the dynastic leadership in valley other factors also fall under the category to deradicalize the region from the religious extremists spreading the instigatory material intentionally, thereby involving the religion in the terrorism to garner the support the terrorism. It now becomes first moral, ethical duty of the Kashmiri intelligentsia to fight the cyber Jihad like factors, given the understanding of the society, culture and religion providing Kashmiriyat a chance to nurture the love and harmony in the region.

SOLUTIONS IN SIGHT

The administration of the Union Territory is instituting several measures for development. In the last two years, 100 per cent electrification has taken place, and surpassing the national average, 53 per cent of rural areas have a drinking water supply. As many as 15 power projects have been inaugurated and 20 more have been started. The new All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS), Indian Institute of Technology (IT), Indian Institute of Management (IIM), and about 50 other new educational institutions will benefit 25,000 additional students. Grassroots level politics has also been empowered by putting a three-tier panchayat in place. Approximately Rs 3.800 Cr has been allocated through this route to meet local aspirations

District Development Councils: After Jammu and Kashmir lost its statehood, the political focus in Kashmir shifted to District Development Councils (DDCs) and grassroots development. Kashmiris who have long had to deal with bureaucratic red-tape can find new hope with the elected local leaders who can ensure good governance and local development. Thus to ensure grass-root level development the District Development Councils were formulated these are giving a potential result by covering all the halqas under Panchayati Raj system. The development has a direct link with the prosperity of the region which otherwise adds to the frustration of the youth leading to sidelining from the mainstream. Thus government came up with the plan to reach every corner of the society with huge stock of funds for the development.

CONCLUSION

Since the past decade, we have seen frequent references to 'youth' being made in the political discourses regarding Kashmir. Because youth as a demographic category is perceived with certain assumptions. Most clichéd description is that 'youth is the future. Social and political forces operating within Kashmir or having a view on Kashmir, and belonging to different ideologies, therefore, seek to mould Kashmiri youth' into their preferred ideal. On the political landscape of Kashmir, there are contesting views on what is an ideal youth. The status quoists project certain success stories as emblematic of their ideal youth. Since they are the status quoist, a success story that operates within the permissible boundaries of what is seen as legitimate by the status-quoism is ideal. Anything that questions, critiques or potentially disrupts the status quo is, according to the status quoists, deviant, abnormal behaviour that usually gets categorised as 'radicalisation. Responses to such deviancy range from verbal denunciation to criminalisation, formally and informally, through the coercive apparatuses of the Ostate. Anti-status quoists, on the other hand, vary in their world

views. For some anti-status quoists, an ideal youth is the one who is anchored in the core doctrinal values of religion, and exhibits standard moral behaviour in all spheres of life. Here anti-status quoism is directed at the vagaries of westernization, including secularisation of life.

Another branch of anti-status quoists is more political in orientation. Their fundamental aim is to determine their own future, and live according to their own beliefs and freely. Structures that control, restrain, regulate and interfere in their lives without their consent are what agitates their minds and triggers their visceral fears, anxieties and political responses. According to the 2011 Census,

Kashmir's youth population (15-30 years old) was over 30 percent, i.e., Kashmir had a 'youth bulge'. But what is youth bulge? Youth bulge is defined as a, "phenomenon of rapid growth of the young population of a country relative to its general population, causing considerable impact on its economy and politics." Youth bulge can become a cause of social upheaval but it can also be a source of economic development through an expanded young working-age population. Many political commentators and policymakers have viewed youth bulge in Kashmir as a source of political unrest that marked the past decade. Their main argument is that the chronic youth unemployment and lack of good governance in Kashmir is the reason why so many young people join street protests and armed groups. Youths formed the bulk of protesters who hit the streets in 2010, 2016 and 2017. In fact, the post-2008 political mobilisations in Kashmir were mostly youth-driven. As per different media reports, citing official data and confidential surveys, more than 500 local youth joined different insurgent groups since 2016. Local recruitment into militant outfits peaked in 2018 when over 200 local youth joined militancy. In the light of these developments, youth bulge in Kashmir came to be seen as a security challenge, which must be immediately addressed.

Approaches were twofold: militaristic and non-militaristic. Hard-policing under militaristic approach had its limitations, so it was overlaid with a non-militaristic approach under the 'policy of engagement. This entailed counselling (under smart-policing doctrine), special job recruitment drives, skill development courses, recreational activities, and educational scholarships. Under the Himayat program- - a skill developments program launched in 2011 - youth were given skill training for 3-12 months to make them ready for the market and increase their employability. The Prime Minister Special Scholarship Scheme (PMSSS), launched in 2011, covered course and maintenance fees up to Rs. 1,30,000 per year for students who enrolled in educational institutions in different Indian cities. The Udaan scheme (worth Rs. 175 crore) envisaged enhancing the employability of 40,000 Kashmiri youth over a period of five years (The Mission Youth now coordinates youth-related schemes and programs with all the departments of J&K government). It was partly due to these youth-centric schemes and programs that large number of Kashmiri youth landed in different cities and towns of India for jobs and education.^[8] Ostensibly, these schemes and programs aimed to channelise the energies of youth into productive labor, but jobs and scholarships served to create economic stakes and disincentives overt display of "deviant" behavior and practices.

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