

Youth Building Trust Across Faultlines

New Delhi

December 18-20, 2013

Shilpi Shabditia



Women in Security, Conflict Management and Peace
Foundation for Universal Responsibility
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Shilpi Shabditia

Introduction

The Conflict Transformation Workshop titled *Identity, Conflict, and Coexistence* brought together 52 under-graduate students, post-graduate students and young professionals from Kashmir and Delhi, representing diverse fields of education, law and media. A collaborative endeavour in the area of education for peace, the Workshop was the culmination of a partnership of Women in Security, Conflict Management, and Peace (WISCOMP) with Nelson Mandela Centre for Peace and Conflict Resolution (NMCPCR, Jamia Millia Islamia) and Lady Shri Ram College for Women (LSR), University of Delhi.

This partnership was established as part of WISCOMP's *Hum Kadam* initiative, which constructively channelizes the potential and zeal of the youth to build trust across the divisions of conflict and to foster active coexistence. Comprising of a series of dialogues, capacity building workshops, and action research projects, this initiative seeks to create a non-judgmental space where participants can engage in dialogue on issues that have, in the past, led to mistrust among young people in Jammu and Kashmir, as well as with those from other parts of India. A key focus was on efforts to improve inter-region and inter-community communication, and an understanding that this can, over time, lead to constructive personal and social change.

The Workshop **goals** were as follows:

- Deepen the process of trust-building by reducing social distance and prejudice between young women and men (in the 19-25 age-group) from Kashmir and Delhi through a positive change in individual attitudes and beliefs about 'the other'.
- Empower youth leaders in conflict transformation skills (such as active listening, dialogue, consensus building) and enhance their professional capacity to work in the area of 'education for peace'. Also envisaged is a process through which the participants' capacity and commitment to engage with the concepts of democracy and coexistence, and to resist violence at multiple levels, can be enhanced.
- A collective envisioning exercise to develop an action plan to foreground and institutionalize the learnings (from the workshop) at the centres, colleges, and universities that the participants represented.

Although the primary purpose of this Workshop was to build trust between youth leaders from Kashmir and Delhi, and to advance the sensibility that coexistence and multiculturalism are desirable, the dialogue also addressed issues around history, identity, culture, and stereotypes. The intent was to encourage the young Kashmiri and non-Kashmiri participants to work together to build trust and to generate visions for constructive social change in Jammu and Kashmir.

Representing diverse educational and professional backgrounds, participants were strategically selected to take forward the dialogue process and transform this into action plans for positive social change and partnerships for peace. In order to facilitate this, the Workshop employed an elicitive and experiential approach to education, drawing on creative and non-conventional pedagogical methods such as one-on-one dialogues, role plays, theatre, film workshops, book discussions, and heritage walks.

Ice-breakers

The workshop opened with a series of ice-breakers, active listening exercises, and exploratory conversations designed to initiate cross-cultural dialogue and understanding among the participants. The session was facilitated by WISCOMP staff members, Manjrika Sewak and Seema Kakran. Participants from Delhi and Kashmir were paired together and were invited to introduce themselves to their partners and share their views on several questions and statements such as:

- What would you like to learn about the participants from Kashmir/ Delhi?
- Share with your partner the name of one person who you admire and who is a role-model for you. Briefly explain why.
- Share with your partner one thing that even your family doesn't know about you.
- I am happy when...
- Share with your partner one aspect of your identity that you are proud of.
- Share one stereotype that people have about your family/ your community/ your country that you would like to change.
- I feel at peace when...
- One unique quality/gift that I bring to the workshop.

After several rounds of sharing, the participants were requested to introduce their partners to the group. Several participants shared positive affirmations about their counterparts, while many others were surprised to find areas of convergence with respect to interests and values. One of the participants from Delhi commented that “despite always believing that we are different, we discovered so many commonalities!”. The multiplicity of identities held by each individual was foregrounded and varying definitions of peace and happiness were shared. Some participants were intrigued by the stereotypes identified by their partners which included ‘all Kashmiris are seen as terrorists outside their state’ and ‘women from Delhi are perceived as sex-objects’. They expressed eagerness to share their experiences and engage with these stereotypes to de-construct them over the course of the workshop.

Conflict Transformation in Jammu and Kashmir: Engaging with Possibilities

The ice-breaking session was followed by a panel discussion where the participants were invited to move away from a discourse of victimhood to that of agency and empowerment. The first presentation at the session by Mr. Saleem Beg, Member of the National Monument Authority at the Ministry of Culture, explored the resilience and multicultural diversity embedded in the history of Kashmir. He began by lauding Kashmir's ability as a society to survive the challenges that the first five years of militancy posed amidst collapsing governance and disrupting education, health and public distribution systems. Furthermore, he observed that the media heavily emphasised the inter-ethnic conflict in Kashmir even when the documentation of Kashmir's history reveals it to be a land where different faiths and cultures have coexisted in harmony for centuries. He stressed that these largely unexplored positive aspects of Kashmir must be translated into spaces of agency and constructive engagement which inspire the Kashmiri youth to make positive contributions to their community and society.

Viewing Kashmir as 'a crucible of pluralism and coexistence', Beg shared that Kashmir boasts of a rich syncretic history which sensitively amalgamates diverse cultures and religious philosophies. Helping participants understand the depth of inter-religious exchange in the history of Kashmir, he highlighted that Srinagar was established as a Buddhist city in 250 B.C. during Ashoka's reign. In that period, the region developed into a major centre of Buddhist philosophy, arts and crafts, and held great significance for travellers and scholars.

The advent of Islam in the 14th Century gave new impetus to the physical and cultural development of Srinagar due to the influx of missionaries, scholars and craftsmen from Persia and Central Asia. Located at the cross-roads of diverse cultural influences, it evolved as a centre for trade and crafts. Beg foregrounded the significance of trade as not only an economic activity but also a means of social interaction which enables exchange of ideas, ideologies and philosophies. He drew the group's attention to Lal Ded, a *Shaivite yogini*, who was considered the patron saint for the whole of Kashmir and revered by Hindus and Muslims alike. He noted that this kind of inter-layering of faiths had led to the

birth of a new faith—the Rishi faith, whose practitioners believed in the essential equality of all human beings, irrespective of the different ways in which they practiced their faith.

Sharing examples from his work of cultural rehabilitation and conservation in Kashmir, Beg noted that built heritage was not dead and static; rather, it was a space of living culture and a physical reminder of our shared history and traditions. An understanding of contemporary society depends on our appreciation of the past from which we derive a sense of identity, respect and self-esteem. In this context, built heritage

is an embodiment of our collective traditions, cultural practices and skills, all of which are influenced by different religions and faiths. Therefore, he underscored that through his work he strived not only to conserve monuments which held historical and spiritual importance for diverse faiths, but also the source of Kashmiris’ collective identity.

“Living in Kashmir I have no Hindu friends. I was surprised to learn that the history of Kashmir preaches peace and unity between different religions. This talk has broadened the horizons of my mind and now I am curious to learn more about other religions.”

– A Participant from Kashmir

Proceeding further, Beg familiarized the participants to Kashmir’s rich and syncretic heritage of architecture and handicrafts. Kashmiri architecture displays an amalgamation of different styles—vernacular, wooden, colonial—each representing the traditions and cultures of a certain era which interpolate and integrate in a harmonious fusion. An example of how different cultures interact would be the integration of vernacular and colonial architecture in a monument. He highlighted that the famous *Pinjra* or wooden lattice work in Kashmir was believed to have reached the land from Central Asia. Similarly, Kashmir’s handicrafts have been influenced by layers of Buddhism, Hinduism and Islam. Beg drew the group’s attention towards Jama Masjid in Kashmir describing it as the ‘meeting place of different religions which encourages a reconstruction of identities’. In the mosque’s architecture, elements of Buddhist and Hindu pasts find a subtle resonance with Muslim traditions. He noted that the structure of the rooftops at Jama Masjid resembles temples and stupas, becoming an example of architecture that respects the collective past.



Ms. Alpana Kishore and Mr. Saleem Beg during the panel discussion at the workshop

Beg stated that armed conflict in Kashmir has had a severely adverse impact on the built heritage of the region. They either lay abandoned and neglected, or became the subject of vandalism. Expressing concern over the slowly crumbling built heritage in the Valley, he noted that we often don't treat them as cultural assets. Stressing on the urgent need to restore and rehabilitate these monuments as significant markers of our rich and syncretic history, Beg concluded by encouraging the youth to carry forward and sustain this heritage in Kashmir. He motivated them to consider engaging in social entrepreneurship and exploring spaces for sustainable economic activity through heritage conservation and revitalization of degraded urban landscapes in Kashmir.

Offering hope and encouragement for a better future in Jammu and Kashmir, Ms. Alpana Kishore, an Independent Researcher and Journalist who reported extensively on Jammu and Kashmir at the peak of the armed conflict in the state, shared inspiring accounts of how people who were at the margins of society had managed to recover agency and break the impasse even in the most difficult situations. She noted that until a decade ago, no English newspaper in India published the writings of Dalits, who were relegated to the margins of media. A positive shift was witnessed when *The Pioneer* began carrying weekly columns authored by a Dalit writer, Mr. Chandra Bhan Prasad. Over the course of a decade, she observed that his writings had shifted from vehement

criticism of the victimization which was suffered by the marginalized communities in India towards writing about the possibilities and how Dalits needed to emerge from the ‘reservation framed way of thinking’ to exploring spaces of agency and empowerment. It was inspiring to note that this encouraged Dalit entrepreneurship eventually leading to the establishing of the Dalit Indian Chamber Of Commerce and Industry. His story was a journey from grievance to agency; and from making demands for reservations to empowering members of the community towards self-sustenance.

Kishore noted that such achievements indicated an upward mobility for a community that had been repressed for generations and provided opportunities for the youth to rise above the baggage of the past. She stressed that somebody identified these possibilities and took inspiration from other movements for liberation and empowerment across the globe. On this note, she encouraged the workshop participants to rise from a position of helplessness to explore, with a sense of agency, the infinite possibilities that lay ahead of them for a future of peace and security in Jammu and Kashmir.

Discussing the way forward with the participants, Kishore critically analysed the concept of *azadi* which was a dominant idea in Kashmir. She compared the current vision of independent Kashmir as propounded by the Separatist leaders in the Valley to the ancient idea of nation-state proposed by German Chancellor, Otto von Bismarck, in the 19th century. He laid stress on a nation-state comprising of a single piece of land, a single language, a single ethnicity and a single religion – which was an impossibly narrow idea to adhere to in the contemporary globalized world.

The idea of *azadi* was becoming increasingly rigid, narrow and hostile to differences. To sustain itself, the idea must be debated thoroughly and constantly re-visited to evolve and expand. For the idea to survive in a workable form, Kishore foregrounded the need to envisage a comprehensive road map of the way forward and address several pertinent questions,

What does Azadi mean? Does it mean only the Kashmiri Sunni Muslims? How do we look at people from other religions and ethnicities? What does the citizen expect from this nation-state in terms of rights and freedoms? How do we have a very pure

state and manage it? What will be our relationship with the neighbouring countries? What resources do we have to sustain ourselves, independently? When we demand self-determination, we need to ask what it means in terms of economics, demographic composition, political leadership, religious affiliations and land area.

She further noted that in a globalized world, borders were becoming blurred and coexistence between different cultures and traditions was a growing need. In such a situation, labour, resources, thoughts and ideas – everything moves and nothing remains static. She made this point to critique the exhortation of a separatist political leader in Kashmir a year ago to ban labour inflow from Bihar. Kishore noted that it was critical to accept that without resources and labour from other states, several activities in Kashmir would come to a halt because of the lack of indigenous expertise in those domains. She stressed that there is a need for the idea of *azadi* and what it comprises of to grow; otherwise, there will be no way forward for the movement and the concept might collapse with time.

She foregrounded that *azadi* was ultimately a demand for freedom – it meant being able to dream, hold opinions and cherish the collective past. Highlighting the ideas of plurality and harmonious coexistence which were deeply embedded in the history of Kashmir, she stated that an appreciation of the past must include the whole past and not a past in which there is a selective cherry-picking of facts/incidents based on the convenience and ideology in the present times. She referred to the rich and syncretic culture of Kashmir which reveals an overlapping of diverse faiths, traditions and practices and boasts of a history with Kashmiri *Pandits* as essential parts of it. The future must also be a continuum from past cultures and shared experiences. She gave the example of Nelson Mandela, who on being released after 28 years of rigorous imprisonment embraced diversity, and called South Africa a ‘rainbow nation’. Taking inspiration from him, she urged the participants to break free from the vicious cycle of grievance and victimhood, and chart the course for a peaceful and inclusive future of Jammu and Kashmir with a spirit of optimism and agency.

Kishore’s presentations created a space for reflection and questions by the participants. A participant from Kashmir shared that on some days, he was caged in his own house and felt alienated due to a curfew outside,

blocked local television channels and suspended internet and phone lines. Other concerns which were raised included the curbed freedom of expression of media in the Valley and the lack of safe public spaces to debate and discuss politics and contentious issues of concern to the youth. Referring to Kishore's mention of the exhortation by a political leader to ban labourers from Bihar working in Kashmir, some participants described it as a purely 'emotional response'. To this, Kishore acknowledged that emotion was a very strong and legitimate part of any struggle, however, purely emotional responses do not lead to constructive social change. Emotions must be coupled with a rational mind-set and a forward-thinking vision of the future for real change to happen. On this note, the speakers encouraged the participants to develop informed mind-sets and constructively engage with various possibilities for conflict transformation in Jammu and Kashmir.

Identity, Stereotypes, and Culture: Exploring Spaces for Trust and Dialogue

The session titled '*Identity, Stereotypes, and Culture: Exploring Spaces for Trust and Dialogue*' was facilitated by Shirin, a Delhi-based Theatre Practitioner, who used a range of interactive and experiential exercises designed to help participants inculcate sensitivity and understanding towards cultures and communities which are different from their own and to develop attitudes that promote respect for differences.

After laying down the ground rules for the interaction, Shirin engaged the participants in a group activity on understanding the multiplicity of identities. She divided the participants into four groups namely, Green, Blue, Yellow and Red, and scattered some coloured building blocks on the floor. Each group was asked to construct a homogeneously coloured structure which is representative of their group's colour, symbolizing a monolithic identity. As a next step, she invited all groups to work collectively and arrange the different coloured blocks into one common structure where all colours were used and yet none dominated.

In the process of building this structure, the participants slowly began to show team spirit. Observing the construction of the final structure, Shirin noted that it looked vibrant and inclusive as compared to when all the colours remained segregated. Also, she observed that the gaps visible in the structure represented a possibility for further integrating blocks of different colours. This exercise foregrounded appreciation of diversity as a huge force in combating violence based on homogeneity.

Deepening the groups' understanding of the concept of identity, Shirin invited them to reflect over the question – 'How do we define ourselves?' Sharing examples and anecdotes, the group collectively explored how identities were moulded by the interplay of multiple factors such as gender, religion, profession, region, food, ideologies among several others. The discussion also highlighted how different aspects of one's identity assume significance in varied contexts, indicating the fluidity and layered nature of identities.

Nudging the participants to interrogate the prejudices which they harboured against the 'other', Shirin initiated an exercise on immediate



Participants engaged in a group activity at the Workshop

and spontaneous responses to words which revealed certain stereotypes around religion and nationality. Assumptions and judgments about other communities without any previous experience of interaction with members of the community were revealed by participants from Delhi as well as Kashmir. Additionally, she engaged the group in an activity where colours were assigned to different religious identities. Several participants found her deliberate association of ‘Green with Hindu identity’, ‘Orange with Muslim identity’, and ‘Purple with Christian identity’, confusing and disconcerting. These pairings, many noted, stood in direct conflict with their preconceived association of colours with religions and ensuing connotations of peace and fundamentalism.

These exercises led the participants on a path of self-reflection and exploration of prejudices and cultural constructs. The core learnings that the participants shared included:

- Understanding of different communities is largely constructed through hearsay. One can dispel stereotypes and ‘fixed identities’ only by making a genuine effort to acquire knowledge about cultures and contexts different from one’s own.
- It is incorrect to have a homogenous understanding of a community or religion. Diversity and variations in beliefs and practices must be

acknowledged and respected, rather than coerced into a monolithic image of each community.

- Each individual has multiple layers of identities and subjective opinions.
- It is crucial to interact with different people with a tolerant mind-set and be open to learning and exploring multiple truths.

In an attempt to facilitate cultivation of expansive and inclusive identities, Shirin engaged the group in a contemplative exercise. With everyone seated in a circle, she passed a toy baby around the room, not disclosing any aspect of its identity. The participants were asked to name the baby based on the emotion it evoked in them. Their responses included 'Pure, Divine, Freedom, Hope, *Jannat*, Angel, Peace, Innocent, Human, *Ram-aur-Raheem* and Trust', among others. Reflecting on the responses, Shirin observed that despite the differences, when one comes across something as innocent as a child's face without labelling it along the lines of religion, gender and community, there is a common experience of a surge of positive emotions. Ensuing discussions highlighted that most of the names given to the baby subtly define the emotions and conditions which one deeply desires, such as hope, communal harmony and peace. The exercise concluded with the participants acknowledging the need to create a condition where human beings can truly connect with each other, without making binary judgments and relish in a collective consciousness of the shared humanity.

At the end of the session, the facilitator asked the participants to share their personal stories of incidents where their families were directly affected by a conflict. In the process, while the speaker narrated his/her story, the entire group practiced active listening. Stories included families in Kashmir being denied a passport due to familial ties in Pakistan; discrimination faced by Muslims seeking to rent an apartment post demolition of the Babri Masjid and the ensuing riots; rape and massacre of relatives during forced evacuations at the time of Partition; and abject plight of refugees in Jammu surviving without identity registration and ration cards. These narratives also emerged as positive stories of courage and compassion which offered hope, like that of stories of Sikh families finding refuge in Hindu households during the 1984 anti-Sikh riots and of Kashmiri Muslims protecting their Pandit neighbours at the peak of militancy in 1990. During the exercise, the facilitator kept the morale of the group high by singing songs on peace and communal harmony.

Understanding Peacebuilding Vocabulary

Reflecting upon some of the issues and concerns, the participants were asked to share their learnings and experiences from the sessions attended so far. The WISCOMP staff also took this as an opportunity to elicit and discuss the ground rules to guide the conversations for the rest of the workshop, which was agreed to by all the participants. These were:

- Maintain confidentiality of all discussions in the workshop space,
- Listen actively with a desire to absorb and understand. There should be no interruptions or side conversations when a co-participant is speaking,
- Raise hands to indicate the desire to speak,
- Try to engage with each other and new ideas positively and constructively,
- Have respect for differences in opinions,
- In the interest of accommodating maximum perspectives, expression of opinions must be kept short and simple,
- Ask a question to clarify doubts if a point is unclear, rather than holding assumptions and misunderstandings,
- Make use of nonviolent language where we are not accusatory or judgmental,
- Talk in first person which indicates taking personal responsibility for the feelings and opinions,
- Focus on ‘putting yourself into the shoes of the other’ and understanding the other person’s underlying needs, and
- Be punctual so that the session begins and finishes on time.

The purpose was to draw out the participants’ individual understanding of the key terms: identity, conflict, co-existence and conflict transformation, and to initiate discussions around these themes to forge a deeper and a more nuanced understanding of the terminology. Each participant was asked to write down his/her comprehension of each of the terms, reflecting upon their own understanding without engaging in a conversation with the others. Some of the responses are shared below:

Coexistence

- Sharing of a common nest by diverse creatures collectively and peacefully.
- Respecting differences and identifying similarities.
- Rights are granted.
- A state where everyone can share his ideas freely and without fear.
- Learn to acknowledge differences & agree that people might disagree to you and take it peacefully.
- Tolerance and accommodation.
- Coexistence is Kashmiriyat.
- To accept others without judgment, despite differences with them.
- Two different perceptions living together meaningfully.
- Is a beautiful & liberal word-unity in diversity

Conflict

- Incompatible ideas and interests between different parties.
- Conflict will naturally happen when two or more people live together.
- Means trouble and death due to ideological differences.
- Without conflict there can't be peace.
- Denied our basic human rights.
- Constant prolonged confrontation.
- Violent but sometimes positive.
- There is always a solution.
- Arises with prejudices.
- Oppression, bloodshed, violence.
- Disturbances created by political parties where common people suffer.
- Leads to absence of harmony.
- Loss of identity and self-esteem.
- Kills time and wastes potential.

Identity

- Not a stable concept; keeps changing.
- Representation of the person that clicks us and how we understand others.
- If rigid, identity can create trouble.
- If not recognized can lead to conflict.
- Our humanity matters, not identity.
- Unique and special qualities bestowed on us by Allah.

- Ethnicity.
- Process that works continuously throughout our life; never permanent.
- It is a constructed concept.
- Identity changes due to many factors like age, region, etc.
- Impacted by gender and religion.
- Self-determination.
- Artificial barriers for better identification.
- The character we live in.

Conflict Transformation

- Transforming a conflict into creative energy.
- No use of force, only peace.
- Both a destination and a journey.
- Dialogue and communication.
- Turning unfavorable situations into favorable situations.
- Tool to change conflict from violent to nonviolent.
- Using conflict as an opportunity to transform oneself.
- I don't understand this term.
- When people will be allowed to judge their own future.
- Ending something not desirable.
- To change the outcome of conflict from adversity to middle path.
- Transforming relationships and interests of conflicting groups.

Participants shared varied interpretations of the terms based on their individual understanding. Several misperceptions were brought to fore, such as the equation of conflict with violence, and many expressed the need to foreground an understanding of conflict transformation. While each session at the workshop engaged with these concepts, the need to sensitize participants to comprehensive definitions of the words was underscored at this session.

Book Discussion: ‘Our Moon has Blood Clots’ and ‘Curfewed Night’

Kashmir boasts of a rich multicultural history of harmony and coexistence between Muslims and Pandits. This secular character of Kashmir was tarnished in the wake of the exodus of the Pandit community in 1990, followed by a period of targeted physical and psychological violence against the community. Since then, there has been a marked alienation and nurturing of grievances and hostility between the two communities. The workshop brought together Kashmiri Pandit participants who had grown up listening to stories of pain and betrayal from their families that had lived in refugee camps, and Muslim participants who lived in a environment in the Valley with limited experience of cultural and religious diversity and amidst denial of any complicity in the exodus of the Pandits.

The purpose of this session was to provide a context to initiate discussions on these colliding and adversarial narratives, and begin to acknowledge and empathize with the sufferings of ‘the other community’. It also sought to sensitize the young participants from Delhi to the narrative of violence and displacement suffered by the Pandits, which is constantly relegated to the margins in the broader picture of the Kashmir conflict. In order to facilitate the discussions on the nuances of fractured relationships between the two communities and explore multiple narratives, this session initiated discussions around two books – *Our Moon has Blood Clots: The Exodus of the Kashmiri Pandits* that documents the Pandits’ narrative of displacement, and *Curfewed Night* that highlights the continuing experience of oppression suffered by Muslims in Kashmir.

In the opening presentation, Mr. Rahul Pandita, noted journalist and author of *Our Moon has Blood Clots*, focused on the experience of displacement of the Pandit community and their struggle for justice. Sharing his own sense of rootlessness, Pandita recounted the experience of being ‘forcibly evicted’ from his homeland at the tender age of 14. His memory of the exodus was dotted with flashes of brutal murders and rapes of his relatives by members of the Kashmiri Muslim community and the sufferings of his family who had to live in abject poverty in refugee camps after abandoning their house in the Valley.



Resource persons Ms. Shazia Salam, Mr. Hakeem Irfan and Mr. Rahul Pandita at the Workshop

The complicity of Kashmiri Muslims in the exodus of the Pandits – whether actively or passively (through silence in the face of the threats issued by Islamist groups) – is an allegation that is enmeshed in controversy. There were some Muslims who have expressed guilt for not having intervened more decisively to prevent the departures of their Pandit neighbours and friends in 1990. But this guilt is mostly retrospectively expressed. The popular assertion in the Valley is of denial of any role of the majority Muslim population in the displacement of the Pandits, instead blaming the government and the fundamentalist political organizations or calling it a ‘voluntary migration’. Pandita shunned these partial narratives and stressed that ‘the removal of Pandits from the Valley was a well-planned conspiracy that had been gradually swelling in the minds of political leaders as well as the common public of Kashmir.’

Tracing the trajectory of the events culminating in the exodus, he noted that by 1990, the popular underlying desire to see the Pandits ‘being knocked off their perch’ had fed into the psyche of most of the Kashmiri Muslims. He contended that perhaps the Pandit minority was perceived as an obstacle to Kashmir’s ultimate Islamic destiny of being with Pakistan, making their elimination inevitable. 1989 onwards, hit lists with Pandit names began circulating and Pandits holding prominent

positions of leadership in the Valley were assassinated. With a sense of insecurity and threat, an intense psychosis of fear and panic permeated the lives of the Pandit community. On the night of January 19 and 20, 1990, they sat huddled in their homes as neighbourhood mosques and loudspeakers fitted to cars called out a barrage of threats aimed at them, exhorting the Pandits to leave while raising slogans of 'Independence' and 'Pakistan'. These events forced the five per cent minority to flee the Valley overnight and settle in refugee camps in Jammu city.

In the aftermath of the exodus, Pandita shared that the displaced community was living in impoverished conditions in the refugee camps. Plagued by disease, crammed into one-room tenements and rendered unemployable because of poor education and lack of employment opportunities, a whole generation of Kashmiri Pandits had grown up with anger, depression and a feeling of being alienated.

With a history of twenty five years of being trapped in exile and having faced the humiliation of forced eviction from their homeland, the sufferings of the Kashmiri Pandits have been immense. Pandita stressed that the Government of India cannot be absolved because it failed miserably in its responsibility to either provide them security in Kashmir or rehabilitate them after their forced departure. However, the 'bigger betrayal' for the Pandits has been the complete denial on part of the Kashmiri Muslims of having any role to play in the exodus. This denial and manipulation of the truth insults the collective memory of displacement and suffering of the Pandit community. Dismissing popular narratives, Pandita asserted that political organizations such as Jammu Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF) or agents of the Indian government like Mr. Jagmohan, the former Governor of Jammu and Kashmir, alone cannot be held responsible for the exodus of lakhs of people. The mass mobilisation and radicalisation of the Muslim community in the Valley suggests that a systematically engineered conspiracy had been swelling gradually and communalising the minds of the common people.

While alleging the betrayal of most Kashmiri Muslims in the exodus, he also highlighted positive examples where Kashmiri Muslims had helped Pandit families during 1990 and continue to remain friends. Envisioning a way forward, Pandita said that despite the dismal situation, reconciliation between the two communities was possible in case of the following:

- Public acknowledgement of the violence that the Pandits suffered at the hands of the majority population and complete consensus on the circumstances that led to the exodus.
- Public expression of collective remorse by all the perpetrators for their actions.

He mentioned that in Kashmir, neither of these had occurred; rather, there was an active denial of the events. For the Kashmiri society to heal and re-build an ethos of diversity and coexistence, acknowledgement of the trauma that the Pandits had endured and some respect for the losses they had suffered, was critical. Encouraging truth-telling and expressing hope for reconciliation between the Kashmiri Pandits and Muslims, he concluded his presentation with the thought,

“I would definitely engage with someone who is willing to walk half the mile and I’m willing to cover the rest”.

Following Mr. Pandita, Ms. Shazia Salam, a Ph.D. Scholar at Jawaharlal Nehru University, discussed the book *Curfewed Night* which mirrored her own life experiences in the Valley as a Kashmiri Muslim. She provided an insight into the challenges faced by Kashmiri Muslims whose lives were mired in decades of armed conflict. She introduced the book as an empowering narrative that gives an expression to the suppressed pain and anger of several generations of Muslims in Kashmir whose voices have been muzzled by the government. It also gives an opportunity to people outside Kashmir to empathize with the trauma and everyday challenges of living in the Valley.

The book traces the author’s memories of Kashmir as a ‘paradise’ and land of stability and diversity that gradually became infested with the morbidity of violence and militancy at the peak of insurgency, transitioning into a ‘heavily militarized conflict zone’. Salam noted that decades of conflict had led to multiple forms of violence, loss of identity, psychological trauma, and curbed rights and freedom for the common man in Kashmir. Feeling trapped in the armed conflict, a sense of insecurity, frustration and mistrust had permeated the societal fabric in Kashmir.

Salam drew the participants’ attention to the adverse impact of armed conflict on the impressionable minds of adolescents in Kashmir. Raised as ‘children of conflict’, an entire generation had grown up in a hostile

environment devoid of the culture of coexistence and tolerance, and with perpetual exposure to stationed forces and militancy. Jargon like ‘curfews, strikes, encounter killings’ had become central to their vocabulary. With schools often targeted and bombed, violence had vitiated the ethos of educational spaces and children neither felt happy nor excited to attend school. The very meaning of learning had changed, she noted. Extremely worrisome was how the conflict had also coloured the outdoor games played by the children in the Valley. Most games were about tussles between the army and militants, and broken guns and wasted hand-grenades were their toys. Salam foregrounded that in regions of protracted conflict, after a span of time ‘the abnormal becomes the normal.’

She also underscored the alienation that inhabitants of Kashmir experiences vis-à-vis the rest of India. Largely, people outside Jammu and Kashmir remain oblivious to the everyday trauma and upheaval that those in Kashmir encounter. Furthermore, the absence of channels of genuine communication, biased media coverage and State propaganda have meshed together to construct negative stereotypes of Kashmiris which have moulded attitudes of hostility and suspicion towards them in the rest of the country. She stated that young Kashmiris continue to linger in jails across the country on the basis of mere suspicion and are often the subject of physical and psychological violence outside the State.

Salam also foregrounded the differential impact of the protracted conflict on women in Kashmir and narrated accounts of sexual violence which was rampant in the Valley. She also gave the group a glimpse into the lives of half-widows and women whose husbands and sons had ‘disappeared’ in the wake of the armed conflict. These women had suffered victimization in the form of physical exploitation, political violence, economic deprivation, social stigmatization and a pervasive sense of insecurity in their daily lives. Highlighting the precariousness of Kashmiri life, she drew the group’s attention to incidents of gross human rights violations in the Valley, which we are constantly reminded of, by the hundreds of unmarked graves.

For most of the Kashmiris belonging to all age groups, the experience of being humiliated under the façade of frisking at multiple military checkpoints was part of their daily routines. Those living in the Valley feel suffocated by the limits imposed on their freedom (and fundamental

rights) to travel, to speak and to assemble for public meetings. There is also the ignominy of all Kashmiris who are forced to carry identification cards at all times, to prove their right to be in their own land. All of this has inevitably deepened the sense of how fragile their existence as Kashmiris is. It has undoubtedly made young Kashmiris aware that their right to survive as Kashmiris with honour and in security in their own land will have to be fought for and cannot be taken for granted, she asserted.

Salam stressed that these stories and truths have to be repeated several times; they do not become stale just because they have been told once as the trauma and suffering continues. She concluded by quoting an evocative passage from the book about the pervasiveness of the conflict in every aspect of the Kashmiri life,

The line of control did not run through 576 kilometers of militarized mountains. It ran through our souls, our hearts, and our minds. It ran through everything a Kashmiri, an Indian and a Pakistani said, wrote and did. It ran through the fingers of editors writing newspaper and magazine editorials, it ran through the eyes of reporters, it ran through the reels of Bollywood coming to life in dark theatres, it ran through conversations in coffee shops and on television screens showing cricket matches, it ran through families and dinner talk, it ran through whispers of lovers. And it ran through our grief, our anger, our tears, and our silence.

Weaving together the two narratives, Mr. Hakeem Irfan, Principal Correspondent at the DNA, stated that the two unique narratives of Kashmir's experiences provide competing yet coalescing perspectives of suffering in the conflict, thereby reiterating the multi-faceted nature of truth. Both the narratives must be seen as complementing each other to enhance the understanding of reality and open up spaces for discussion. Sharing anecdotes from his experience of growing up in Jammu and Kashmir, Irfan foregrounded the need to sift myths from facts in the disturbed political context of the state.

Substantiating his point, he narrated a story where an innocent civilian was brutally murdered by the military forces in Kashmir. Incited by the unjust killing, a young man decided to become a militant and seek revenge. Armed with a gun, he attacked a military bunker by opening



Resource persons engaging in a discussion with the workshop participants

fire. That evening during the prayers, his peers praised him as the local hero for avenging the death of an innocent boy. Later, it was identified that instead of any military personnel being wounded in the gunfire attack, the casualties had been some cows in that neighbourhood which sparked a fight in that area between civilians who accused each other for the loss. Irfan noted that when we talk about conflicts, the realities are very complex and the identities of ‘victim’ and ‘perpetrator’ are blurry and oftentimes interchangeable. Translating this understanding to the narratives presented in the two books, he foregrounded that neither should be pitched against the other nor analysed in vacuum outside the political conditions prevailing in Kashmir at that time.

Encouraging the participants to analyse the multiple perspectives which are inherent in the conflict, he stated that if the exodus of the Pandits had altered Kashmiri society in radical ways on the one hand, equally dramatic had been the loss of a whole generation, mostly the Muslim youth, at the hands of both extremists and the Indian state’s military and paramilitary forces. While thousands of Pandits were displaced in 1990, there were several thousands of Muslims who ‘disappeared’ in the wake of the armed conflict in Kashmir. Thus, both the communities have suffered in the conflict and instead of engaging in a calculus of victimhood, one must invest energies in understanding and empathizing with the other’s realities and challenges.

Post the presentations, **Dr. Kaushikee**, Associate Professor, NMCPR, facilitated the discussion. She asked the participants to consider the possibility of conciliation between the two realities in Jammu and Kashmir – the demand for *azadi* by several sections in Kashmir Valley and the longing of the Pandits in refugee camps of Jammu to return to their abandoned houses in the Valley. Among the participants, the Kashmiri Pandits voiced a sense of exclusion that they had felt from the *azadi* movement and questioned their space in an independent Jammu and Kashmir. Several expressed concerns over Pandita's book being biased in favour of the Pandits and negating the suffering of the Muslims. To this, Pandita replied by clarifying that his book was a memoir in which he had chronicled stories from his personal experience of displacement from the standpoint of a Kashmiri Pandit. His purpose, he stated, was to capture the history of the exodus and sensitize readers to alternative, and often suppressed, narratives in the Jammu and Kashmir conflict.

Discussions also ventured into the direction of the impact of the armed conflict on women. A Kashmiri Pandit participant stressed on how the narrative of the conflict was largely from a masculine lens, marginalizing the needs and sufferings of women in the discourse. Pandita noted the absence of safe toilet facilities for women and lack of access to reproductive health services, as some basic yet critical issues faced by displaced women in refugee camps. He highlighted how women had suffered disproportionately in the conflict, but their trauma had not been adequately acknowledged.

Several participants from Delhi expressed surprise at their ignorance of the rampant human rights violation in Kashmir, which they said had stemmed largely from the biased media coverage which always portrayed the Kashmiri as 'anti-national' and failed to convey stories of the violence and atrocities that inhabitants of the state experienced. Moved by the pain and frustration of the youth in Jammu and Kashmir, a Hindu participant noted that "the greater betrayal was that the majority Hindus of India had failed to protect the minority Muslims in the country".

Hoping to revive coexistence and religious diversity in Kashmir, some Kashmiri Muslim participants expressed willingness to welcome the Pandit community back to the Valley. However, they had sensed unwillingness on the part of the Pandits to return and asked Pandita what might be the reason for their scepticism. Pandita explained that in

the subsequent years after 1990, several massacres of Pandits had happened in the Valley creating a tense and fearful atmosphere. He reiterated the importance of realizing that while a few Kashmiri Muslims may welcome the Pandits back into Kashmir, in reality, they were only a minority. A handful of well-intentioned individuals cannot alone ensure the safety of 4,00,000 Pandits who may want to return to their homeland. Unless there was state intervention and complete normalization of the situation, it was not possible for the Pandits to return.

Another participant was curious to know why did the Pandits want to return to Kashmir despite doing well for themselves outside the state. Pandita explained that even for those who have managed to recover from the economic losses of migration, there is the intangible but not 'less real' loss that comes with the separation from their homeland; it has meant severing them from access to the places that were associated with their ancestors, their cultural legacies, their personal and familial memories and their own sense of pride in belonging to a land so widely celebrated for its beauty, its traditions of learning, and its spiritual and religious sanctity. He noted that many Pandits have also expressed fear of losing their cultural identity through assimilation in the wider Indian environment; the loss of their language, of their regionally specific religious traditions and indeed, even of their numbers, through their younger members marrying outside the community.

This session witnessed identities shifting, where some Kashmiri Muslim participants began to acknowledge the wrongs committed by their community in the late 1980s and early 1990s and the Kashmiri Pandit participants shared stories of 'victimization' and 'loss', a narrative that hitherto belonged only to the Kashmiri Muslims. Salam noted that pain and trauma was experienced by both communities and their sufferings must not be pitched against each other. Looking at the way forward, Pandita encouraged a dialogue between Kashmiri Muslim and Pandit communities to facilitate the process of healing and reconciliation. Salam and Irfan conceded and foregrounded the importance of listening to and respecting the other's experiences. The session concluded with the participants expressing a desire to move on and envision a future based on mutual respect and coexistence.

Diverse Narratives, Multiple Truths: Exploring Common Ground

The following session created a space for collective introspection on conflict situations that participants from Delhi and Kashmir had experienced in their respective contexts, with the aim of cultivating greater understanding and empathy. The workshop resource persons, Manjri Sewak and Seema Kakran of WISCOMP, asked the participants to use the tools of theatre and poetry to share their individual (and collective) pain. They also invited participants to explore the possibility of looking for non-violent and healing solutions to the different conflicts/problems they articulated.

The facilitators used the following structure: In pairs, the participants shared an incident from their personal lives where they had experienced direct conflict and felt physical hurt, psychological damage, humiliation, and/or frustration. Three pairs then merged to form a group and shared their partner's story of conflict with all the members. The group could then select one or two incidents from those shared and present it through any creative medium. Six groups were formed—each group consisting of participants from Kashmir and Delhi. The following issues were addressed through theatre enactments, poetry and narration, and shared with the larger group.

Group One

The Group enacted the story of a young girl in rural Kashmir who aspired to become a lawyer but was dissuaded by her parents (and her community at large) from pursuing her passion for law, which they regarded as a 'masculine field'. They instead encouraged her to pursue a profession which was more 'befitting of her gender' and where her interaction with men would be minimal. Participants in the group demonstrated how the girl felt suppressed because her family had restricted the career options available to her, owing to their belief that the primary role of women should be that of 'home-makers'. The girl also experienced deep humiliation at her sense of agency being quashed and professional aspirations silenced.

Participants in the group were vociferous in questioning the assumption that, 'men are supposed to be the primary breadwinners and women are



Manjrika Sewak facilitating the Session

supposed to perform “motherly” roles in the home’. They wanted to push the envelope on this perception because it inhibited the ability of young women to pursue careers of their choice. Pointing towards the conflict in ideologies and the gaps between the parents and the young girl, the group suggested engaging in a dialogue with the parents to enable them to understand their daughter’s aspirations and her need for their support. A male member of

the group concluded, “a strong will and belief in their dreams and abilities will take women wherever they want”.

Group Two

The Group narrated an incident experienced by the father of one of the participants during the anti-Sikh riots of 1984. The father was an eye-witness to the brutal butchering and torturing of a Sikh by the local goons on one of the streets in New Delhi, which people watched as mute spectators. The image of the dead and mutilated body of the Sikh person being dragged on the road remained etched in his mind. He also saw his Hindu neighbours, consumed with a vicarious thirst for vengeance, identifying houses belonging to the Sikh community in the vicinity for the goons to murder, rape and loot. The participant shared that the psychological impact of these incidents was so powerful that he suffered from clinical depression and became socially dysfunctional for several years. The Group foregrounded the trauma that people experience on witnessing violence and underlined the futility of communal hatred. A creative method to deal with communal tensions, they suggested, would be to lay emphasis on using religion as a ‘connector’ to promote tolerance and pluralism in society.

Group Three

The Group enacted snapshots of stories of suffering shared by several members, weaving them together to portray the continuum of interrelated conflicts in our society. The first story shared the trauma of the Kashmiri Pandits who were forced to flee the Valley and lived in refugee camps in Jammu. In most cases, large families of seven to eight members lived

together crammed into a one-room tenements, where they sat, ate and slept together. In this context, the Group highlighted the helplessness and frustration of young couples as the husband and wife had no space or privacy to deepen their relationship and procreate. This frustration manifested in the form of deep psychological problems.

The second scene depicted the rampant commodification and sexual objectification of women in our society where they are constantly subjected to multiple forms of violence. A reference was made to comments one usually hears such as *baap ka maal*, 'she was asking for it', 'it was her fault', which shift the onus of violence suffered by women on them, consequently 're-victimizing the victim'. The Group collectively reflected over how we are all complicit (men and women alike) in judging women based on their clothes and frivolously labelling them as 'whore' and 'slut', not realizing the deeper implications of such judgments. Urging self-reflection, the male members of the Group acknowledged that 'We molest women every day with our words, thoughts and actions.'

The next scene shared narratives of humiliation and discrimination experienced by a young Kashmiri boy during his search for accommodation in Mumbai. People looked at him with suspicion and labelled him 'terrorist' hailing from '*chota* Pakistan'. The Group foregrounded that in doing so, we were systematically ghettoizing the Muslim community and breeding sentiments of alienation and animosity in them. The last story presented by the Group depicted three school children in Kashmir being frisked at multiple security points on their way home, and being beaten up and verbally abused by the security personnel for no fault of theirs. The daily humiliation suffered at the hands of paramilitary forces instils a sense of insecurity in young minds. Empathizing with the pain and suffering of his Kashmiri counterparts and revealing the double standards of the rest of India which shirks the moral responsibility of alleviating the situation in Kashmir, a participant from Delhi observed,

When we think of Kashmir, we say it's a beautiful place to visit. When it comes to making a short pleasure trip to Kashmir, Kashmir becomes an integral part of India. But when it comes to discussing the conflict and listening to the problems of the people, then Kashmir is no longer a part of India.

Group Four

Group Four enacted a scene of sexual harassment experienced by a teenage girl in a public transport bus in Delhi. The scene started with two boys teasing and inappropriately touching the girl while the co-passengers remained mute. The girl pleaded for help but the passengers remained indifferent while some shrugged and said, 'This doesn't concern us'. Sheer hypocrisy was revealed in the conversations of the passengers who were lamenting over the tragedy of the Nirbhaya rape case and demanding the perpetrators to be hanged publicly – while they refused to intervene in a situation where a girl was being violated before them. The Group highlighted the insecurity and constant threat that women feel, in both Delhi and Kashmir, which restricts their mobility and freedom to travel, while also bringing to fore the apathy of the general public to take initiative in stopping acts of violence against women.

Group Five

The Group enacted a situation portraying a participant's experience of teaching at a government school in Delhi along with a Muslim colleague. In the act, a young Muslim student approached the Muslim teacher with immense respect and kissed her hand with gratitude for the day's lessons on learning that she was Muslim. The same student asked the participant with great curiosity if she was Muslim. On receiving a response in the negative, she passed a derogatory look and left the classroom. The Group highlighted the sense of shock and hurt experienced by the teacher, where her lack of affiliation to a particular religious group seemed to discredit all the hard work she had invested as a teacher. She felt incapable of addressing the deeply communal sentiments breeding in the young child. The Group suggested the need to engage in a dialogue with the child to understand the source of her prejudices. Perhaps, greater interaction with children from diverse religious backgrounds will enable her to de-construct stereotypes and appreciate differences.

Group Six

Through silent theatre, the Group portrayed the different standards of justice for acts of sexual violence in Jammu and Kashmir and New Delhi. Participants drew attention to the Kunan-Poshpora mass rape incident of 1991, and the complete absence of justice in the case more than 20 years after the incident. The Group compared the inaction in this case to the swift action taken by the Indian government in the Nirbhaya gang

rape case of December 2012. Comparisons were also drawn between the media coverage and mass public outrage over the Nirbhaya case and the complete absence of these in the wake of incidents of sexual violence in Kashmir. Deeply saddening was the fact that while the perpetrators of rape in New Delhi were convicted and sentenced by the court in a timely manner, such responsiveness and sensitivity were absent when the victims of rape resided in Kashmir.

This session was received very well because it helped participants to collectively brainstorm on the challenges they faced, while also sensitizing them to the problems that their peers from ‘the other city’ faced. For example, the Delhi participants realized that they could no longer ignore the violence and injustice that people in Kashmir are subjected to and came forward to lend their voice and support to their cause. Similarly, participants from Kashmir discovered that youth in Delhi also faced stress and violence, although in different forms. Violence against women emerged as a core challenge that was common to both Kashmir and Delhi. It was heartening to see several male participants speaking against violence women are subjected to and advocating a change in misogynist attitudes through reflection and constructive action. Most significantly, this session witnessed a high degree of understanding, cooperation and empathy between participants from Kashmir and Delhi.



Participant-groups making presentations at the Workshop

Mapping Multiple Aspirations and Strategies in Jammu and Kashmir

The purpose of the session was to bring together youth leaders from Delhi and Jammu and Kashmir to collectively search for areas of convergence and to develop strategies for constructive social change and peace in Jammu and Kashmir. In preparation for the session, participants had read some documents on peace accords from diverse regions of conflict across the globe and various proposals for peace in Jammu and Kashmir that had been discussed over the last decade. These were seen as a starting point for discussions among the participants and for exploring creative and inclusive strategies for transforming the conflict in Jammu and Kashmir.

The session opened with an introduction by workshop resource person, Vidya Shankar Aiyar, a media professional and strategic analyst, who highlighted the complexities and competing perspectives inherent in the conflict in Jammu and Kashmir. Highlighting the fragmentation of the state along religious and ethnic lines with different communities leading segregated lives, he noted that each region in J&K seems to have different political aspirations and allegiance to different constitutional agendas (stay with India, stay with Pakistan, or gain independence). Hence, building consensus and finding solutions along these lines was not feasible in the short to medium term. There were as many visions for the future of J&K as there were stakeholders, but that did not mean visions could not be shared. Drawing the group's attention towards some common aspirations, he noted that one cannot refute that everyone in J&K wanted to stimulate the economy, strengthen governance, make democracy participatory, improve education and health facilities, and re-build fractured relationships between different communities, which would eventually pave the path for a more robust region.

Commenting on the inefficiency of the state and political apathy in addressing the conflict, he stated that a key factor that has contributed to the 'intractability' of the conflict was the lack of genuine efforts on the part of the government in reaching out to people mired in the conflict and addressing the needs of multiple stakeholders. Furthermore, the state had insulated itself from constructive ideas and inputs for social change



Dr. Vidya Shankar Aiyar addressing the Workshop participants

coming from the civil society. Despite this, Aiyar foregrounded the present times as a period of immense opportunity and hope. He urged the participants to shed the baggage of the past and trust each other to collectively design innovative solutions for a brighter future in Jammu and Kashmir. Stressing the importance of trusting the ‘other’ to move forward, he said:

A conflict cannot be resolved unless there is an interest in the parties to resolve it. And for that, the parties must have faith that the other party is interested in resolving the conflict. I have to, at some level, even with my enemy, have faith and trust to say ‘we can talk about peace’, ‘we can come to some sort of agreement’, ‘you may have some idea that I like’, ‘you may receive some idea that I have to give you’. That faith, that trust, has to be there. If that faith doesn’t exist, you don’t even get to talk.

On this note, he invited the participants to map their vision for justice, peace, and security in Kashmir for the year 2025, and asked them to draft proposals that addressed the following questions:

- As youth leaders, what is your group’s vision for building justice, peace, and security in Jammu and Kashmir by the year 2025?

- How does your proposal address the concerns of other stakeholders? For instance, if your group represents the voices of the people from the Kashmir Valley, how will you build consensus with New Delhi, Islamabad, and Muzaffarabad?
- What are the partnerships for peace that your group envisages in terms of connecting and collaborating with members of the other groups at the workshop?
- What are the challenges that you anticipate in building consensus across divides?
- What strategies would your group adopt to accomplish its vision for Jammu and Kashmir?

Participants formed groups broadly representing two regions, Jammu and Kashmir and Delhi, and shared the following ideas and visions:

Group Representing Jammu and Kashmir

Justice Delivery and Healing

- Special courts should be established for speedy trial of cases of human rights violations in Jammu and Kashmir. Inquiry should be lodged to trace those who ‘disappeared’ during the peak of the armed conflict, along with conducting a systematic documentation of un-marked graves.
- The system of self-inquiry which authorizes the military in Jammu and Kashmir to investigate allegations levelled against itself must be repealed. This compromises the process of fair investigation.
- The challenges faced by Kashmiri Pandits in the aftermath of their exodus from the Valley must be addressed. This includes the lack of employment opportunities and absence of proper homes with basic facilities. Attention was also drawn to the restitution of property (belonging to Pandits who had left the Valley) occupied by armed forces and civilians and restoration of the sanctity of Hindu places of worship in Kashmir.
- Justice must be delivered to the victims of rape in Kashmir, along with psycho-social support to deal with the trauma.
- Compensation must be given to families of martyrs and people suffering disability due to the conflict.

- A Truth and Reconciliation Commission should be established in Jammu and Kashmir.
- Rehabilitation of refugees of the 1947 war who crossed into the Indian side of Kashmir from Pakistan was foregrounded. They have lived in abject poverty and without citizenship rights for 65 years.
- Need for reintegration of surrendered militants into the society with ensured livelihood and access to community benefits was raised.

Dealing with the Challenge of Alienation and Trust Deficit

- Promotion of educational, cultural and sports exchanges between youth across conflict divides to make national and state borders more 'porous'.
- Ensuring non-discrimination and equal opportunity for employment and safe residence to Kashmiris outside the state.
- Forging a Youth Alliance among the stakeholders to create pressure on the governments to engage with the concerns of the common people.
- The Indus Water Treaty must be reviewed in consultation with the Jammu and Kashmir State.
- Engaging in a constructive dialogue with multiple stakeholders in the conflict to address the issues and grievances of different groups. Simultaneous dialogues should be held at different levels of the society – for instance, a dialogue between the political leaders of India, Pakistan and Jammu and Kashmir (including the separatists); a dialogue between youth of J&K and New Delhi; an intra-state dialogue in J&K with representations from different regions, namely Kashmir, Jammu and Ladakh and diverse communities including Sunni Muslims, Shia Muslims, Pandits and marginalized groups like *gujjars*, *bakarwals*, refugees from Pakistan, among others.

Media Regulation and Freedoms

- A Jammu and Kashmir Press Council must be established which comprises of elected candidates from civil society and media professionals to keep a watch on the credibility of news published in local newspapers.

- Peace Journalism which focuses on reporting news through the lens of truth, people and solutions should be encouraged in Jammu and Kashmir.
- Misreporting and manipulation of facts to further political agenda must be kept under check with strict disciplinary action.

Security

- Lethal weapons like pellets and pepper guns used by the state to control mobs must be banned.
- Armed forces must be withdrawn from civilian areas in Kashmir.
- Strict laws must be passed to ensure accountability within the armed forces in Kashmir to transcend the prevailing culture of impunity and gross human rights violations.
- Reforms must be introduced in the orientation courses for paramilitary forces in Jammu and Kashmir to sensitize them to humane and gender-sensitive ways of dealing with public in emergencies.
- The possibility of demilitarization across the Line of Control should be given serious thought.
- Special amendments must be made to Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act and Disturbed Areas Act for the welfare of the public.
- Steps should be taken to empower the local police (men and women) in the state.
- Non-registered and unconstitutional defence organisations in the region should be disbanded.

Education

- New textbooks on good governance and human rights should be introduced in schools in Jammu and Kashmir at the secondary level.
- Topics dealing with the history of Kashmir and eminent leaders of the state must be included in the school curriculum to enable students to better understand and develop their sense of identity.
- Scholarships must be offered to women to encourage them to pursue courses in peace and conflict studies to empower them to voice their unique experiences of conflict and explore their role in building peace.

Group Representing New Delhi

Bridging Trust Deficit through Dialogue and Collaborations

- Need to hold discussions among the youth on the feasibility of the demand for 'Azadi' with a view to chart the finer details of the way forward was foregrounded. Deep analysis was required on the relationship of an independent Kashmir with its neighbouring countries, availability of resources for self-sustenance, views on inclusion/exclusion of different regions of the current state of Jammu and Kashmir, consensus on the nature of the state and its religious leanings, among several other issues.
- Dialogues should be held between all stakeholders in the conflict including the security personnel, bureaucrats and common people. Promotion of greater interaction and communication between inhabitants of the three regions in Jammu and Kashmir was seen as critical to address the rising sense of alienation and segregation within the state.
- Promotion of cultural exchanges between the youth of Kashmir and rest of India was stressed to move beyond perceptions of 'Us versus Them'.
- Through dialogue and constructive engagement, the need to form a strong network of youth, activists and academicians dedicated to working for peace in Jammu and Kashmir was highlighted.
- Need for a 'mental revolution' in the rest of India, positive change in attitudes and perceptions towards Jammu and Kashmir, and cultivation of empathy for the sufferings of the people of the state was underscored.

Spreading Awareness through Creative Mediums

- Need to harness the power of social media to spread awareness about the conflict in J& K among people outside the state was foregrounded.
- Publishing a youth manual which brings together diverse narratives of the conflict in J&K through the voice of young people within and outside the state.
- Need for establishment of museums displaying pictures of the natural beauty of the state, indigenous resources and handicrafts, and audio-visual facilities that share the history of J&K and narratives of the conflict.

- Hosting cultural events that project and promote the cultural diversity, festivals, music and cuisines of J&K outside the state to arouse interest in the state and highlight aspects other than the conflict were seen as necessary.

Education

- Peace Education should be introduced in schools and colleges across the country to sensitise young people to the burgeoning conflicts in their surroundings and inculcate values of non-violence and coexistence. Familiarity with these values from a young age can empower them to make choices as adults that contribute towards the sustenance of democratic values that respect peace with justice.
- Educational exchanges between schools and colleges in Kashmir and Delhi should be promoted to provide a shared space to exchange ideas and opinions with one another.

Empowering Women

- The costs of conflict are borne disproportionately by women, and their needs and rights are constantly marginalized. Emphasis was laid on establishing organisations which cater to the needs, aspirations and desires of women in the Valley.
- Economic emancipation of women adversely impacted by the armed conflict in Kashmir should be advanced through setting up self-help groups. Facilitated by NGOs, women should be trained in a variety of on- and off-farm income-generating activities.

Economic Opportunities

- Promotion of social entrepreneurship in Jammu and Kashmir to provide impetus to the pursuit of innovative solutions to social problems in the state.
- Need for economic development and adequate investments in human capital in order to build an environment conducive to the creation of jobs, growth, and prosperity.
- Inclusive development should be foregrounded with a focus on UNDP's human development approach that integrates the standards and principles of human rights: participation, non-discrimination and accountability.

Justice and Security

- The renunciation of violence by the common people, in all its forms and from all sources, was seen as an important strategy by this group. Kashmiris should ‘wage conflict non-violently’, using constructive, dialogic, and non-violent methods to express disagreement and grievance.
- There should be no presence of military forces in the civilian areas of the state.
- Special training must be provided to paramilitary forces to manage law and order without resorting to violence.
- Governance in Jammu and Kashmir should reflect transparency and accountability with special responsibility towards upholding human rights. Better mechanisms must be designed to listen to and address the grievances of the public.
- There was a need to make a shift from retributive justice towards restorative justice when dealing with the conflict in Jammu and Kashmir, to look at addressing the needs of the involved parties and rebuild fractured relationships. The need to problematize the understanding of ‘victim’ and ‘perpetrator’, and the fluidity of these roles was also stressed.
- The group stressed on the need to view the conflict in Jammu and Kashmir through the lens of ‘conflict transformation’ which regards conflict as a natural phenomenon that creates potential for constructive growth by bringing to surface and addressing suppressed issues. Immense value was also seen in this approach’s focus on addressing the underlying root causes of conflicts by placing relationships at the heart of the process and emphasizing change that is ‘short-term responsive and long-term-term strategic’.

Responsibility of India and Pakistan

- The group was critical of the confidence building measures that had so far been undertaken by India and Pakistan. In this context, it urged the two countries to move beyond rituals and token initiatives, and undertake genuine steps that could actually instil a sense of confidence, hope, and trust in the people of Jammu and Kashmir.
- The two countries should make efforts to build consensus among Kashmiris living on either side of the LoC with respect to their

political aspirations. Their perspectives should not be considered synonymous with those of Pakistan and India, but should rather be seen as constituting an independent voice.

- Governments of both countries should initiate a ‘conscious peace process’ wherein it invests time and energy in building positive relationships at all levels of society by encouraging dialogue between diverse stakeholders. The group foregrounded that ‘plurality essentially is not a problem, but to consider plurality a problem is essentially a problem.’

Participants also discussed the notion of Kashmir as an integral part of India, which initiated conversations about the possibility of Jammu and Kashmir existing as a sovereign nation. The role of Pakistan as a stakeholder was discussed and the aspirations of families divided across the Line of Control were brought to the fore. The plight of women subject to multiple forms of violence in contexts of conflict was highlighted when someone pointed towards ‘majority of the narrative of the conflict being masculine’. Stress was also laid on focusing energies on resolving ‘the issues of Kashmir’ referring to daily impediments of prolonged power cuts, poor infrastructure, rising unemployment, lack of toilet facilities for girls in most rural schools among others, as opposed to ‘the Kashmir issue’.



A participant from Kashmir making a point at the Workshop

Weaving together the learnings and recommendations from all the presentations, Aiyar urged the participants to reflect over a pertinent question: ‘In what little ways can you make changes to the current situation in Jammu and Kashmir, and work towards a better future?’ He encouraged the participants to work collectively on identifying a common set of problems and prioritising the most pressing issues to be addressed. To this end, he stressed that they focus on the immediate issues of daily concern which inhibited them from reaching their full potential. He said:

While we may have different views on the history of Kashmir, the role of the separatists, should Kashmir be independent or a part of India or a part of Pakistan – all these are matters of details that should not concern you so much right now. What should concern you is your security. Are you feeling secure on the streets of Kashmir today or not? That needs to be addressed. Are you getting two-square meals a day, water, electricity or not? That needs to be addressed. Are you getting an opportunity to earn your bread in Kashmir? That needs to be addressed. The rest of it, the politics of it, the history of it, is important but not our only concern right now. Let not people die because nobody is looking at these day to day issues... For that I need those who are in Kashmir to give information to those who are outside. And for those who are outside Kashmir to start taking interest about what is happening in Kashmir and putting it out in a fashion that the media gets it.

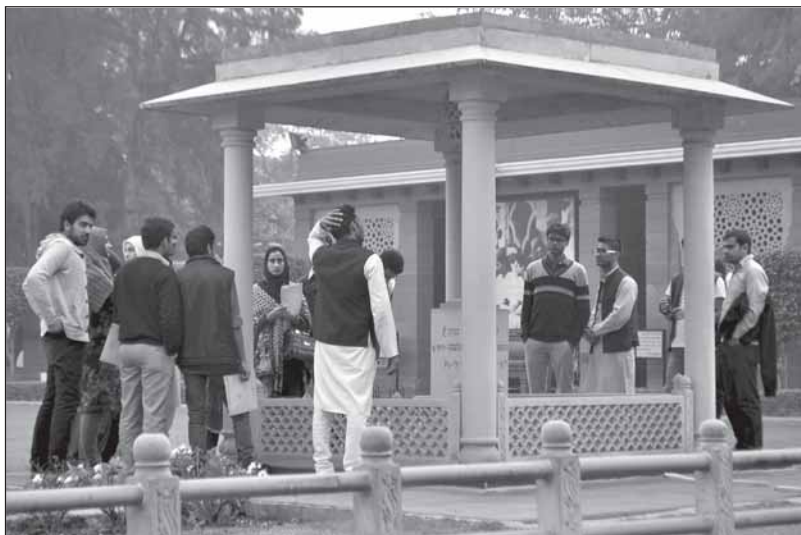
Foregrounding the significant role that the youth can play in initiating change processes, he motivated them to work collaboratively, empathize with the sufferings and challenges of each other and aim at transforming the situation for a future of sustainable peace and security in Jammu and Kashmir.

Gandhi, Non-violence, and Conflict Transformation

In the protracted conflict of Jammu and Kashmir, violence has gained populist appeal and is consciously used as a mobilization strategy by political players in the Valley. Initially, violent acts were committed primarily by members of armed groups and state security forces. However, the past several years have witnessed a significant rise in street violence and stone pelting by the common public, especially the youth. This follows from the fact that in Kashmir, safe public spaces for the

articulation of opinions and expression of discontent have shrunk and public debates are increasingly marked with discordance and intolerance. Lack of state responsiveness to genuine youth concerns and aspirations further exacerbates the problem. In such a context, the only alternative avenues remaining are street protests and public agitations by the youth. Young people are increasingly seen adopting violent action as a means to vent their frustration and gain social legitimacy. However, street protests in Kashmir incite state repression, as was seen during the 2014 Lok Sabha elections in Kashmir which were marred by violence. This results in cycles of violence, consequentially heightening the sense of insecurity among citizens and increasing polarization in the state.

Questioning the efficacy of violence as the only means of resistance, Maya Joshi, Associate Professor, Lady Shri Ram College for Women, discussed with the participants how in the turbulent context of Jammu and Kashmir, the Gandhian concepts of non-violent action and *satyagrah* could provide constructive alternatives to violence, and guide young people in their quest for peace and justice in Kashmir. She led the group on a heritage walk to Gandhi Smriti where they walked through a rich exhibit of sculptures, paintings, inscriptions and frescos embodying messages of peace and inter-faith harmony from Gandhi's life.



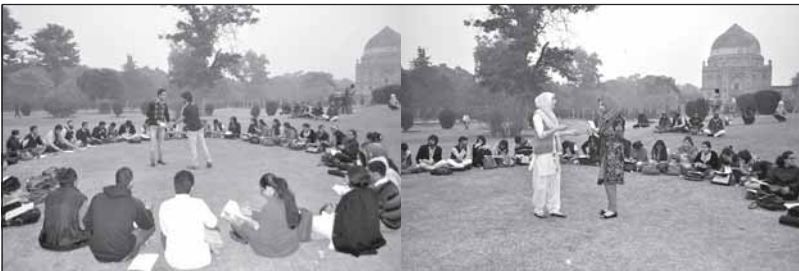
Workshop participants at the Gandhi Smriti for the heritage walk

Elucidating the relevance of Gandhi in contemporary times, Joshi discussed the Gandhian value of non-violence as emanating from inner strength. Violence stems from fear and weakness. Cautioning the participants against valorising violence as often happens in conflict zones, she urged them to keep anger, hatred and a whole spectrum of violent emotions outside their frame of mind. Foregrounding the power of non-violent resistance, she noted that silence and fasting were very important strategies in Gandhi’s arsenal, which he used to mobilise lakhs of masses and ‘change the hearts of the opponent’.

Proceeding further, she drew the group’s attention to Gandhi’s emphasis on coexistence between Hindus and Muslims, and noted how Partition pained him deeply. Kashmir, which was previously celebrated as a crucible of different religions and cultures, had lost its rich, layered cosmopolitan culture. Urging the participants to revive an ethos of religious diversity in the Valley and inculcate respect for differences, she shared Gandhi’s work on inter-faith harmony and understanding, as a source of inspiration and guidance. During the discussion, participants pointed towards an inscription at Gandhi Smriti which encapsulated Gandhi’s desire for communal harmony in India,

Even if I am killed, I will not give up repeating the names of Rama and Rahim, which mean to me the same God. With these names on my lips, I will die cheerfully.

Joshi concluded her presentation by encouraging the participants to foster their internal capacities and ‘look for solutions within’, and to explore the possibilities of nonviolent action in their local contexts.



Workshop participants presenting certificates to each other during the closing ceremony

Closing Circle

The Workshop concluded with a *Closing Circle*, where the participants presented the workshop certificates to each other and shared their learnings and experiences of the preceding three days. They gave overwhelmingly positive feedback of their interactions with people from ‘the other city’ and described each other in affirmative words such as ‘welcoming, friendly, caring, good listener, energetic, honest, kind’. A large majority had no previous experience of engaging in face-to-face interactions with people from Delhi or Kashmir, and thanked WISCOMP for the novel experience of meeting people from different states, colleges and communities.

Participants shared experiences of positive change in perceptions and attitudes towards their friends from other regions and communities. Some of their messages are shared below:

Messages of Delhi Participants:

Before this I had a very different perspective of Kashmir..ki it's very conflict-ridden..people are violent and wo log shayad peace chahte hi nahi hai.[perhaps they do not desire peace] This workshop taught me they are struggling very hard to achieve peace, and now I am with them.

I had heard a lot of negative things about Kashmir in the news.. but meeting them I have felt a change in my perception. And change in perception is necessary for transformation.

I was so ignorant of the conflict in J&K and even felt scared of Kashmiris sometimes. This is the first time I got a chance to have a face-to-face interaction with them and I realized how simple and loving they are! I feel so much for their problems now and also for the Pandits who lost their homes.

Messages of Kashmiri Participants:

The people who are living in Delhi are very nice and have a generous heart. I met them for the first time and enjoyed a lot. They are very aware of the Kashmir issue and know how to feel our pain. They

have started accommodating our viewpoints for which I am very thankful.

First time in my life I had a chance to meet people from Delhi. They are brilliant people, very cooperative and nice.

This is the first time I've come to Delhi. I had heard a lot about how Kashmiris are harassed in Delhi and I was scared before coming here. But my experience was so positive and I found people in Delhi to be so caring. We should have more such workshops so that youth in Kashmir become aware and think positively about them.

I have made a lot of friends in Delhi and had the best experience of my life. I don't want to go back so soon!

They saw the dialogue as a unique opportunity from which the learning had been immense. Their diverse range of learnings is shared below:

Kashmiri participants: *I learnt....*

- To build trust, it is very important that we listen to the other person. Just by listening with all our heart and attention, half of the problem melts away.
- To voice my individual opinion without fearing any criticism.
- To be cooperative and work in a team.
- That people in Delhi are very friendly and nice to us.
- To respect the opinions of others even if it clashes with our views and to value diversity in behaviours, perceptions and cultures.
- New and creative strategies for making the society peaceful and better.
- That dialogue is the best way to make peace in Kashmir and we must be positive.
- That meeting each other can remove so many stereotypes from our minds.
- How to hear for positive intentions even in negative words.
- That there are so many complexities in the Kashmir issue and we have to deal with all the layers when we think of a solution for the conflict.

- That people in Delhi feel our pain and understand our problems.
- That I have the power to bring about change in Kashmir.
- That the road ahead is tough, but there is a road and we can build it together.
- The importance of building strong relationships with people in Delhi and working hand-in-hand for peace in Kashmir.

Delhi participants: *I learnt....*

- That people from Kashmir are very accepting and are ready for change.
- That I have no right to judge people without knowing them personally.
- To listen patiently and understand different views on the same issue.
- That I knew very little about Kashmir and now I'm very interested to learn more about Kashmir.
- How to interact respectfully with people from different cultures and religions.
- How peace-loving people from Kashmir are.
- The need to question everything and awaken my critical consciousness.
- To form my perception of Kashmir based on my real life interactions with Kashmiris and not from what the media tells me.
- The need to listen to the views of all the stakeholders in any situation.
- That at the fundamental level we are all human beings sharing one humanity and whatever divides us is only man-made.
- A lot about the problems and pains of the people in Kashmir, especially the Pandits.

“To me, it was a great learning experience, listening to young voices and they all had an opinion! This is a very good sign in itself. Thank you to WISCOMP for organizing such an event in the first place. Kudos to the good, silent work you people are doing.”

*Dr. Vidya Shankar Aiyar
Former Executive Editor,
CNN-IBN
Workshop Resource Person*

- That I feel responsible for the conflict in Kashmir and I feel motivated to work for change in the state.

Bonds of friendship developed at the Workshop, and participants from Kashmir shared that they were sad to leave, while their friends from Delhi expressed eagerness to welcome them back. The group from Delhi was inspired to work for peace in Kashmir and felt a sense of responsibility to educate their peers in the national capital about the problems that people in Jammu and Kashmir faced. Those from Kashmir derived immense strength from this support, and expressed a sense of renewed hope for a better future in the state. This sentiment is aptly encapsulated in the following lines by a Kashmiri participant,

I feel that this workshop successfully bridged the gap between a group of young people from Delhi and Kashmir. It is the first step in a positive direction. I hope that someday the leaders of Delhi make a similar effort to engage in a dialogue with the political leaders of Kashmir, and understand our needs and political aspirations in a democratic manner. If this young group continues to work together and stands up for each other, we will go a very long way.

The Workshop concluded with a lot of promise and hope that young people from both sides will work together to infuse the Valley with 'peace and justice'.

Programme Schedule

DECEMBER 18, 2013 (Wednesday)

Venue: Lecture Hall, India International Centre, Annexe

Registration

Venue: Lecture Hall, IIC Annexe

Time: 9:00 a.m. – 9:15 a.m.

Welcome Remarks

Dr. Meenakshi Gopinath

(Director, WISCOMP)

Venue: Lecture Hall, IIC Annexe

Time: 9:15 a.m. – 9:45 a.m.

Session 1

Introductions and Icebreakers

Facilitators: The WISCOMP Team

Venue: Lecture Hall, IIC Annexe

Time: 9:45 a.m. – 10:45 a.m.

Tea Break

10:45 a.m. – 11:15 a.m.

Session 2

Roundtable

Conflict Transformation in Jammu and Kashmir: Engaging with Possibilities

Speakers: Mr. Saleem Beg, Ms. Alpana Kishore

Facilitator: Dr. Meenakshi Gopinath

Venue: Lecture Hall, IIC Annexe

Time: 11:15 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.

Lunch

1:00 p.m. – 1:45 p.m.

Session 3

Workshop

Identity, Stereotypes, and Culture: Exploring Spaces for Trust and Dialogue

Facilitator: Ms. Shirin

Venue: Lecture Hall, IIC Annexe
Time: 1:45 p.m. – 3:15 p.m.

Tea Break

3:15 p.m. – 3:30 p.m.

Session 3 (continued)

Workshop

Identity, Stereotypes and Culture: Exploring Spaces for Trust and Dialogue

Facilitator: Ms. Shirin

Venue: Lecture Hall, IIC Annexe

Time: 3:30 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.

Welcome Reception

Venue: IIC Annexe Lawns

Time: 5:00 p.m. – 6:00 p.m.

DECEMBER 19, 2013 (Thursday)

*Venue: Conference Room, Nelson Mandela Center for Peace and Conflict Resolution,
Jamia Millia Islamia**

Session 4

Participant Reflections and Group Work

Venue: Conference Room, NMCPCR, Jamia Millia Islamia

Time: 9:30 a.m. – 10:45 a.m.

Tea Break

10:45 a.m. – 11:15 a.m.

Session 5

Roundtable

Book Discussion: ‘Our Moon has Blood Clots’ & ‘Curfewed Night’

Resource Persons: Mr. Rahul Pandita, Ms. Shazia Salam,
Mr. Irfan Hakeem

Facilitator: Dr. Kaushikee

Venue: Conference Room, NMCPCR, Jamia Millia Islamia

Time: 11:15 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.

Lunch

1:00 p.m. – 1:45 p.m.

Session 6

Conversations

Diverse Narratives, Multiple Truths: Exploring Common Ground

Facilitators: Seema Kakran, Manjrika Sewak, Shilpi Shabdita

Venue: Conference Room, NMCPCR, Jamia Millia Islamia

Time: 1:45 p.m. – 3:15 p.m.

Tea Break

3:15 p.m. – 3:30 p.m.

Session 6 (continued)

Conversations

Diverse Narratives, Multiple Truths: Exploring Common Ground

Facilitators: Ms. Seema Kakran, Ms. Manjri Sewak, Ms. Shilpi Shabdita

Venue: Conference Room, NMCPCR, Jamia Millia Islamia

Time: 3:30 p.m. – 4:30 p.m.

DECEMBER 20, 2013 (Friday)

Venue: Room No. 8, Lady Shri Ram College

Session 7

Workshop

Mapping Multiple Aspirations and Strategies in Jammu and Kashmir

Resource Person: Dr. Vidya Shankar Aiyar

Venue: Room No. 8, Lady Shri Ram College

Time: 9:15 a.m. – 11:00 a.m.

Tea Break

Time: 11:00 a.m. – 11:30 noon

Session 7 (continued)

Mapping Multiple Aspirations and Strategies in Jammu and Kashmir

Resource Person: Dr. Vidya Shankar Aiyar

Venue: Room No. 8, Lady Shri Ram College
Time: 11:30 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.

Lunch

Time: 1:00 p.m. – 1:30 p.m.

Travel from LSR to Gandhi Smriti for Heritage Walk

Time: 1:30 p.m. – 2:15 p.m.

(All participants will travel together in a bus arranged by WISCOMP.)

Session 8

Heritage Walk

Gandhi, Nonviolence and Conflict Transformation

Resource Person: Dr. Maya Joshi

Venue: Gandhi Smriti, Tees Marg

Time: 2:30 p.m. – 4:15 p.m.

Session 9

Evaluation & Feedback

Closing Circle

Venue: Gandhi Smriti

Facilitators: The WISCOMP Team

Time: 4:15 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.

Profiles of Resource Persons

Alpana Kishore is an Independent Researcher and Journalist. She has reported extensively on Jammu and Kashmir as a television journalist at the peak of the conflict from 1990-96. She has also worked on documenting partition identity issues among Muslims in India and Pakistan with a specific focus around the question of choosing nationality/identity or migration/staying-back in areas where violence was not the deciding factor. She was awarded WISCOMP's Scholar of Peace Fellowship in 2006 to explore shifting identity notions during Jammu and Kashmir's armed conflict and issues on the periphery of reportage like the minorities, rural militancy, the changing face of Islamic beliefs etc. She has travelled widely in remote and inaccessible areas of the state, documenting narratives of various players in the conflict including militants, armed forces, ordinary people, state actors and the new generation of students in schools and colleges.

Hakeem Irfan is a Principal Correspondent with the DNA newspaper of the Zee Group and reports on Defence, Ministry of Human Resource and Development, Delhi Police, and crime. Based in New Delhi, he also writes for Al Jazeera. He has been associated with the India Today Group in New Delhi and the Rising Kashmir newspaper in Srinagar. Hakeem has a Masters' degree in Mass Communication and Journalism from Kashmir University and is trained in TV and Video Production from the University of Pune. He has reported on pro-freedom politics, the India-Pakistan dialogue process, cross-LoC trade, ceasefire violations, weapon acquisitions, and elections. He has worked on documentaries for France-24 and interned with NDTV.

Kaushikee joined as Assistant Professor in the Nelson Mandela Centre for Peace and Conflict Resolution, Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi in July 2004. Presently, she is an Associate Professor at the Centre. She completed her Doctorate from the Department of Political Science, Banaras Hindu University on the theme "Refugee Problematic and Regional Security in South Asia". Earlier, she was awarded the Fulbright Scholarship to pursue Masters in Conflict Transformation from Eastern Mennonite University, Harrisonburg, Virginia, USA. She has another Masters' degree in Political Science from Banaras Hindu University. Her research interests and publications are in the areas of Conflict Resolution/

Transformation, Education for Peace/Peace Education and Forced Displacement.

Maya Joshi is an Associate Professor in the Department of English at Lady Shri Ram College for Women, New Delhi. She received her Doctorate from the University of Delhi. Her dissertation explores, through the life-writings of select historical figures from India and the West, debates in autobiography studies, with special reference to how they negotiated the spaces of the public/private, east/west, national/regional, and spiritual/political at a formative juncture in India's history. Dr. Joshi attended the Gandhi Vichar Camp at Wardha in 1996 and has been working closely with the late Gandhian Shri Ravindra Varma ji and Lakshmi Ashram at Kausani, a pedagogically radical space that puts into practice Gandhi's ideas on *Nayee Taleem* and the Constructive Programme. In 2013, she visited the University of Kashmir as a Special Invitee to help finalize the Masters' syllabus in English. Her publications include a critical edition of Mary Shelley's classic novel *Frankenstein* and a co-edited volume on Buddhist philosophy.

Rahul Pandita is a noted author and journalist and currently works as Associate Editor at *Open Magazine*, New Delhi. He has authored the best-selling books *Hello, Bastar: The Untold Story of India's Maoist Movement* and *Our Moon has Blood Clots: The Exodus of the Kashmiri Pandits*, and co-authored *The Absent State*. Previously, Mr. Pandita worked as a correspondent with leading news channels such as Aaj Tak and Zee News. He has reported extensively from conflict zones like Iraq, Sri Lanka, Jammu and Kashmir, and India's North-eastern regions. In 2010, he was awarded the International Red Cross Award. Mr. Pandita is a Member of World Comics India and has been working on using comics as an alternate mode of communication. He has directed a film on female infanticide and feticide titled *Dariya ki Kasam*. He writes extensively for national and international newspapers and magazines such as Outlook, Deccan Herald, Daily Pioneer, Northeast Sun, Sahara Times, Strategic and Defence Magazine, Ibmisoikeus and Ydin.

Saleem Beg is a Member of the National Monument Authority at the Ministry of Culture. He has served in the Government and retired as Director General of Tourism. He was also Convener of the Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage (INTACH), Jammu and Kashmir Chapter. Under his leadership, the Chapter undertook several projects on documentation and conservation of monuments, cultural sites,

vernacular and natural heritage, and arts education. Mr. Beg is also Founder Trustee of Indian Heritage Cities Network Foundation, a UNESCO-sponsored trust. He is affiliated with several national and international organizations and holds the position of Member, Working Group on Climate Change, University of Kashmir; Member, Shalimar Gardens Network, University of Illinois, USA; Project Convener, Restoration and Conservation of Ancient Shrines in Srinagar, Prince Claus Trust, Netherlands, among others. In 2009, Mr. Beg was honored with the INTACH-Satte National Award for Heritage Conservation and was also conferred an Honorary Fellowship and Life Membership of the International Association of Ladakh Studies, Leh. He has presented papers at several national and international conferences and delivered lectures at universities across the world.

Shazia Salam belongs to Kashmir and is currently pursuing her Ph.D. in Women's Studies from Jawaharlal Nehru University. She is an independent social worker and is passionately committed to working for the women of Kashmir. Her current research is focused on studying the Partition narratives of Muslim women and the manifestation of resistance through literature. Ms. Salam's broader academic interests cover the issues of Muslim women and the modern world: the debates that need to be confronted, the critical engagement with such issues, and the ever increasing friction between cultural modernity and Islamic tradition.

Shirin is a theatre practitioner and educator using both street and proscenium theatre. Most of her work deals with peace between communities and women's rights. Her other areas of interest include globalization, and immigrant and refugee rights. Organizations she has worked with include the US Network for Global Economic Justice, Peace Vigil, and the Pilgrimage Project (in the USA) and Nishant Natya Manch (in India). Her educational experience includes facilitating workshops for the Institute for Policy Studies and teaching theatre for public education at various universities in the United States, including the San Francisco School of Arts, University of Maryland, Georgetown University, and Catholic University. Occasionally, Shirin also takes journalistic assignments from newspapers and journals as also from the Inter Press Service. She holds degrees in Journalism from Lady Shri Ram College and in Women's Studies from La Trobe University, Australia.

Vidya Shankar Aiyar is Honorary Advisor to the Prime Minister's Informal Group on Global Nuclear Disarmament. He is also a Media Professional and a Strategic Analyst. He helped establish the Institute of Peace and Conflict Studies, New Delhi and led the first-ever South Asian team to the Harvard Project for Asian and International Relations. The Rockefeller Foundation identified Dr. Aiyar as a Next Generation Strategic Analyst in 1998. Globally, he writes and speaks academically on international affairs. He was the face of Channel News Asia, Singapore, and has interviewed several of the hundred top world personalities. In India, he was an executive editor with CNN-IBN and used to host their 9 and 10 p.m. shows. Dr. Aiyar conducts media training and workshops, and is a passionate advocate of a nuclear weapons-free world, professional media ethics and using the media to unite South Asia.

Profiles of Participants

Aamir Jameed Magry (Gurez) is pursuing a Bachelors' degree in Education at Government College of Education, Srinagar.

Abid Hussain Mir (Srinagar) is pursuing a Bachelors' degree in Education at Government College of Education, Srinagar. Mr. Mir is a talented vocalist.

Ahmad Faraz (New Delhi) is pursuing a Masters' degree in Conflict Analysis and Peacebuilding at Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi. Mr. Faraz has interned with Indian Council of World Affairs. His areas of academic interest include Conflict Studies and International Relations.

Aishwarya Vijay (New Delhi) is pursuing a Bachelors' degree in Elementary Education at Lady Shri Ram College for Women, New Delhi. Ms. Vijay is a Member of the Golden Key International Honors Society. Broadly, her areas of academic interest include Education and Sociology.

Ambreen Yousuf (Srinagar) holds a Masters' degree in International Peace and Conflict Studies from Islamic University of Science and Technology, Awantipora. Ms. Yousuf has attended an online lecture as part of Global Campus Program organized by Tokyo University of Foreign Studies. Her interests include photography, acting and fashion Designing.

Amit Kaul Bamzai (Pune) holds a Masters' degree in Business Studies from Coventry University, England. Mr. Bamzai has worked with Lebara Mobile in United Kingdom. He is deeply interested in Literature, Poetry and Kashmir's History and Culture. His articles feature in *Kashmir Sentinel* and he has been working dedicatedly towards preserving the Kashmiri language.

Ankit Chadha (New Delhi) is a writer-storyteller who brings together Performance, Literature and History. His writing has varied from research-based biographies of personalities like Kabir, who form an essential part of India's cultural history, to modern adaptations of folk tales that have been passed across generations through oral tradition. He specializes in Dastangoi – the art of Urdu storytelling, and has written and performed stories under the direction of Mahmood Farooqui. Having

spoken at prestigious platforms like TEDx, National School of Drama, IIT Delhi and Faculty of Management Studies, Mr. Chadha also works closely with school children and teachers.

Asavari Bhardwaj (New Delhi) is pursuing a Bachelors' degree in Political Science at Lady Shri Ram College for Women, New Delhi. Simultaneously, she is also pursuing a Post Graduate Diploma course in Conflict Transformation and Peacebuilding at the college, and a Diploma course in Spanish at Instituto Cervantes, New Delhi. Ms. Bhardwaj has worked as an intern at NDTV, volunteered at Friendicoes, an animal welfare organization and has worked with underprivileged children at Kada village as part of Adhyatmik Sadhana Sangh. She has also conducted research on Autistic Behaviour at Asha School, New Delhi.

Astha Agarwal (New Delhi) is pursuing a Masters' degree in International Relations at Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi. Presently, she is interning as a Youth Facilitator at Pravah, a Delhi-based NGO. In the past, she has interned with Aman Biradari, National Human Rights Commission, and Mazdoor Kisan Shakti Sangathan. A passionate writer, Ms. Agarwal has written an article *Mahabharata- A War for Peace* for an online journal, Cottage Reader.

Bhawana Gupta (New Delhi) is pursuing a Bachelors' degree in Elementary Education at Lady Shri Ram College for Women, New Delhi. She has actively participated in several workshops and seminars on Peace Education and Creative Pedagogy for Mathematics in Elementary Classroom organized at her college.

Bhumika Rajdev (New Delhi) is pursuing a Bachelors' degree in Elementary Education at Lady Shri Ram College for Women, New Delhi. She has attended several seminars organized in different colleges across University of Delhi on themes ranging from Pedagogy of Mathematics in Elementary Classrooms to Peace Education and Women Empowerment.

Darakshan Madani (Srinagar) is pursuing a Bachelors' degree in Education at Government College of Education, Srinagar. Simultaneously, she works as an English Language Trainer at Libra English Academy, Srinagar on a part-time basis. Previously, Ms. Khalid

has worked as a Volunteer at HELP Foundation in Srinagar where she taught English to students of different classes.

Devika Gupta (New Delhi) is pursuing a Bachelors' degree in Psychology at Lady Shri Ram College for Women, New Delhi. She has participated in several Model United Nations Conferences which invoked interest in Policy-making and Conflict Resolution. Ms. Gupta has volunteered at a social entrepreneurship organization for two years. Her areas of academic interest include Social and Cultural Psychology.

Divyanshi Chugh (New Delhi) is pursuing a Bachelors' degree in Psychology at Lady Shri Ram College for Women, New Delhi. She is the President of her Department in College. Ms. Chugh has attended various national conferences including Shri Ram College of Commerce National Transformational Conference and Young Psychologist National Paper Presentation Competition.

Eesar Mehdi (Budgam) is pursuing a Masters' degree in Political Science at Indira Gandhi National Open University, Srinagar. He holds a Bachelors' degree in Science from University of Kashmir. Mr. Mehdi writes articles and opinion pieces in local dailies in Kashmir such as *Kashmir Images* and *Rising Kashmir*. He is academically inclined towards studying Ethnic Conflicts, Religion, Peacebuilding and Conflict Resolution.

Elman Jeelani (Bandipora) is pursuing a Bachelors' degree in Education at Government College of Education, Srinagar. She holds a Masters' degree in Commerce and wishes to pursue Doctoral studies. A sports enthusiast, she is passionate about baseball and has played baseball through the Jammu and Kashmir Sports Council in Agra.

Gowsia Saleem (Srinagar) is pursuing a Masters' degree in Political Science at Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi. A passionate debater, Ms. Saleem has won several accolades including the Best Speaker award at a national level debate competition organized by University of Delhi in 2011. She participated in an international Summer School organized in New Delhi in 2013, which brought together 20 students from across the world. She was also selected to participate at the World Innovation Summit for Education, 2013 in Qatar. Ms. Saleem is well-versed with several languages including Urdu, Arabic, Kashmiri and Sanskrit.

Humaira Majeed (Pulwama) is pursuing a Bachelors' degree in Law at the Kashmir Creative Education Foundation Law College, Pulwama. She has actively participated in several workshops and seminars focusing on Women's Empowerment, Environmental Protection and Domestic Violence, organized within and outside her College.

Ilyas Ahmad Chat (Pulwama) is pursuing a Bachelors' degree in Civil Engineering at Lovely Professional University, Punjab. Mr. Ahmad is working in the Finance department of Concrescence Coalesencia De Ceribritos, a student led organization. He has actively participated in several seminars, workshops and peace programs and has worked with the Kashmiri Pandit community. He is also an active member of Be The Change initiative in Kashmir.

Ishfaq Rashid Malla (Pulwama) is pursuing a Bachelors' degree in Law at Kashmir Creative Education Foundation Law College, Pulwama.

Ishleen Kaur Takkar (New Delhi) is pursuing a Masters' degree in Conflict Analysis and Peacebuilding at Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi. She holds a Bachelors' degree in Mass Communication. Ms. Takkar has worked with Must Bol, which is a campaign on creating awareness about gender based violence.

Khalid Yousafzai (Afghanistan) is pursuing a Bachelors' degree in Political Science at Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi through a scholarship awarded by Indian Council for Cultural Relations. He is well-versed with several languages including Arabic, Urdu, Persian, and Pashto.

Maneesha Tripathi (New Delhi) is a Doctoral candidate in the Department of Political Science at Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi. The topic of her research is *Regional Integration: A Comparative Analysis of European Union and ASEAN*. Ms. Tripathi has attended a national seminar titled Making Democratic Governance Work: Reinventing Public Service Delivery System in India, where she presented a paper on *Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan*.

Marya Neyazi (New Delhi) is pursuing a Masters' degree in Conflict Analysis and Peacebuilding at Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi. Ms. Neyazi has worked as Production Assistant with Blue Leaf

Production House for a reality show *Talash Ek Rohaani Awaaz Ki* featured on Zee Salam. She has also participated in several youth initiatives under Leaders for Tomorrow. She has actively participated in debates, street plays and dance at the College level. For several years, she has been volunteering to teach children from slum areas. Currently, she is writing her Masters' thesis titled *Inter-State Migration–An Identity Loss: A Gaining Process*.

Mehrusa Farooq (Srinagar) holds a Bachelors' degree in Law from Kashmir Law College. She has actively participated in peacebuilding workshops organized by Standing Together to Enable Peace Trust (STEP), a Delhi-based non-profit organization. Ms. Farooq has attended seminars and represented her college in several competitions. Currently, she is preparing for higher studies in Law from University of Kashmir.

Mohmmad Adil Shah (Budgam) is pursuing a Bachelors' degree in Computer Engineering at Kashmir Government Polytechnic College, Srinagar. A social activist, he has been working with the Youth Parliament of Jammu and Kashmir since 2008 on issues of human rights violation in the State. Mr. Shah is also adept at strengthening the network security of websites through ethical hacking.

Mohd. Irfan (New Delhi) is pursuing his Ph.D. in Political Science at Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi. The title of his research is *Rise and Fall of a Regional Party in North India: A Case Study of Rashtriya Janta Dal (RJD) in Bihar 1997-2012*. Mr. Irfan's areas of academic interest include Indian Government and State Politics.

Najamus Saher (Srinagar) is pursuing a Bachelors' degree in Education at Government College of Education, Srinagar. She had attended a workshop on understanding mental disorders organized by Royal Psychiatrists London.

Nawab Moazam Khan (Srinagar) is pursuing a Bachelors' degree in Engineering at SSM College of Engineering And Technology, Srinagar. Mr. Khan has participated in several workshops organized by Mercy Corps, an international development organization, focusing on the conflict in Kashmir.

Palak Chugh (New Delhi) is pursuing a Masters' degree in Political Science at Lady Shri Ram College for Women, New Delhi.

Simultaneously, she is also pursuing a Post Graduate Diploma course in Conflict Transformation and Peacebuilding. Besides her academic engagements, Ms. Chugh has worked actively with organizations in the social sector such as Teach for India and Muskaan. She has also participated in several Model United Nation Conferences at the school level.

Ruchi Bindal (New Delhi) is pursuing a Bachelors' degree in Arts at Lady Shri Ram College for Women, New Delhi. Simultaneously, she is also pursuing a Post Graduate Diploma in Conflict Transformation and Peacebuilding.

Ruqaya Ahmad (Srinagar) is a Research Scholar and Guest Lecturer at Women's Studies Centre, Government College of Education, Srinagar. Ms. Ahmad is a talented singer and has seven years of experience in hosting western music programs on Radio Kashmir in Srinagar.

Sadaf Shabir (Pulwama) is pursuing a Bachelors' degree in Law at Kashmir Creative Education Foundation Law College, Pulwama. Ms. Shabir has experience of working with Standing Together to Enable Peace Trust (STEP), a Delhi-based non-profit organization engaged in peacebuilding initiatives in Jammu and Kashmir.

Sadia Hussain (Srinagar) is pursuing a Masters' degree in Political Science at Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi. Ms. Hussain is a member of the Subject Association of the Political Science Department at her college. She has participated in a Winter School on Rethinking Development.

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