

**Guns and Books at Odds:  
The Impact of Militancy on  
Education in Jammu and Kashmir**

**Aarti Tikoo**

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# Preface

The *Scholar of Peace* Fellowships, awarded by WISCOMP for Academic Research, Media Projects and Special Projects, are designed to encourage original and innovative work by practitioners, journalists, scholars, policymakers, NGO workers and other professionals. The series WISCOMP Discussion Papers in conjunction with WISCOMP Perspectives brings the work of some of these scholar-practitioners to a wider readership.

The fourteenth in the series of WISCOMP Discussion Papers, *Guns and Books at Odds: The Impact of Militancy on Education in Jammu and Kashmir* is the outcome of a Media Fellowship awarded to Aarti Tikoo, to explore the complex relationship between education and violence in Jammu and Kashmir.

Although the causes of the Kashmir conflict and strategies for its peaceful transformation have been the subject of extensive research, what has received little attention is the linkage between the armed conflict, school curriculum and the construction of what renowned Lebanese journalist Amin Maalouf defines as “identities that kill”. Since the inception of the Fellowship Program in 1999, WISCOMP has supported research on a wide range of issues – gender, security, religion and reconciliation, to name a few – in the context of Jammu, Kashmir and Ladakh. This monograph by Aarti Tikoo, however, is the first to address the contentious relationship between education and violence in Jammu and Kashmir: on the one hand, there are perspectives on the influence of education on conflict generation and conflict transformation (and on the motivation for violence and nonviolence); on the other, there are arguments concerning the impact of the armed conflict on school curriculum, particularly with reference to teachings about religion, history and coexistence.

Conducting primary research across the state of Jammu and Kashmir, Aarti Tikoo addresses the following questions in her study: Why did affluent, educated youth join the armed conflict? Why are Kashmiri children, even today, attracted to the idea that violence is an effective methodology to resolve conflict? To what extent have different forms of school curriculum generated prejudices and a demonization of “the other”? Has education – formal and informal – been a factor in

encouraging young people to sacrifice everything, including their lives, for what they see as an important cause? Are there examples of schools that promote coexistence and the idea of *Kashmiriyat* in the state? How have the armed conflict and different systems of education affected the psyche of young people – Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs – in the state?

Through articles on these diverse issues, Aarti asks a fundamental question: What are the different sources of learning for children and youth in Jammu and Kashmir? And how has this process of learning been influenced by the armed conflict? This is a crucial question in a context where young people are surrounded by different forms of violence.

While the formal education system forms an important source of learning, often core beliefs and interests, as the articles in this publication suggest, are constructed through, and grounded in, life experiences which involve the activities of *watching*, *thinking*, and feeling the impact of an experience on our daily life.

Another significant dimension is the complex and changing relationship between faith and cultural traditions and the motivation for violence and nonviolence as strategies to redress grievances. While religion and culture can offer resources for peace and coexistence, as the historical tradition of *Kashmiriyat* has reflected, they can also be used to motivate young men and women to pick up the gun and to believe that violence will help them achieve the self-esteem and dignity that they feel has been denied to them. This perspective is discernible in many of the interviews that Aarti conducted with youth across the state.

Weaving together diverse experiences from Jammu and Kashmir on the complex relationship between formal and informal sources of learning and the armed conflict, each article in this monograph points to the urgency with which Peace Education – highlighted in the National Curriculum Framework 2005 of the NCERT (National Council for Educational Research and Training) – needs to be introduced in schools across the state. Emphasizing the need for such projects, the NCF states, “Education is a significant dimension of the long-term process of building peace, justice, intercultural understanding and civic responsibility.” In the context of the armed conflict in Kashmir, the need for such projects cannot be emphasized enough. Schools and colleges in Kashmir – public or private, secular or religious, urban or rural – need to play a more proactive role in building a culture of peace

in this violence-torn region. A culture of peace that empowers the next generation of youth to foreground the historical tradition of *Kashmiriyat* and adopt nonviolent methodologies for conflict communication, can play a crucial role in ensuring that succeeding generations of Kashmiris are not affected by the current cycle of fear, trauma and violence.

Although only four of the twelve articles in this project were published in local Kashmiri dailies – *Kashmir Images* and *Greater Kashmir* – we hope that, through this publication, the important, yet hitherto unaddressed, issues raised by Aarti become the subject of a more vigorous dialogue in Jammu and Kashmir.

**The WISCOMP Research Team**



# Introduction

For long, my university professor's opinion kept echoing in my mind. I had once asked him if there were any durable approaches to prevent violent conflict. His answer was in the affirmative. "Right education imparted in the right perspective", was his reply. His argument seemed too idealistic since he spoke of a rosy picture of a peaceful world with everyone "rightly" educated and "rightly" brought up by their parents and society.

Yet this led me to ponder on the causes and impact of the conflict in Kashmir. As I began thinking about it, reading about it, learning about it as a journalist, I noticed that a lot had been written about the political causes of the militancy in Kashmir. A plethora of literature on how Indian political blunders pushed Kashmiri people to the wall and compelled them to resort to violence was available in the market. There were also several books that showed how Pakistan's support for cross border terrorism in Jammu and Kashmir had wrecked the state. While some blamed Islamic fundamentalism for the conflict, others held human rights violations committed by the Indian security forces as responsible for the militancy in Jammu and Kashmir.

Missing from all of this literature were stories on why young people like Yasin Malik took up guns; why Kashmiri children were drawn to the militancy; why educated youth were attracted to suicidal killings and martyrdom; and, how militancy had affected the psyche and lives of children and youth in the valley.

I learnt about the WISCOMP *Scholar of Peace* Fellowship at a time when I was struggling with these questions. The information about WISCOMP and previous fellowships was useful and it strengthened my resolve to submit a proposal on militancy and education in Kashmir.

I had little awareness of how difficult this research would prove to be – especially in a region where people judge others by their religious or ethnic identity. My ethnic identity became the biggest hindrance to my research, though at times, the linguistic affinity with Kashmiri people did help.

I wanted impartial opinions, experiences and observations, but I often felt that people held back their stories, their truths, their views since they assumed that being a Kashmiri Pandit/Hindu, I was on a mission to gather propaganda material against Kashmiri Muslims. Similarly, Kashmiri Pandit migrants felt that since I belonged to their community, I would favour their perspective that pan-Islamic fundamentalism is responsible for the militancy and for the migration of Hindus from the valley.

As I began my research, I tried to wipe out all that I knew, all that I had read, all that I had heard. I went to Kashmir as an ignorant pupil, meeting people from Srinagar city, from the suburbs, towns and villages, trying to persuade them to share their pain and grief with me along with their opinions and experiences. It was difficult to convince people to confide in me, but I gradually succeeded in making them see me as a researcher/scholar rather than as an individual representing a particular ethno-religious group.

I met people of all sections of society in Kashmir, ranging from ex-militants to the boys who were fascinated by the idea of picking up guns against India; from scholars, teachers, doctors, engineers and politicians to security forces and Ikhwanis; from children studying in affluent private schools, madrassas and colleges to those living in orphanages. I conducted hundreds of interviews; although while writing, I did not include everybody's opinion or experience. But based on these interviews, I formed my own set of observations and opinions. I mentioned only those visits and interviews which I felt could speak for themselves and which were profound.

With hope that these stories would earn appreciation by the media in Jammu and Kashmir, I sent my articles to different local newspapers for publishing. However, I was disappointed after the dailies refused to publish the articles since they "did not suit the newspapers' policies". Four of these articles were published by two local dailies of Kashmir, *Greater Kashmir* and *Kashmir Images*. I am grateful to the two dailies and especially to Mr. Bashir Manzar, Editor, *Kashmir Images*, for using my articles, even though it could have threatened his life, given the volatile situation in Kashmir.

I thank WISCOMP for going ahead with this project and printing my articles. In so doing, it has honored my efforts and acknowledged that the contents of my research are meaningful. It is indeed a matter of pride to be a Peace Fellow with WISCOMP.

# The Spark and the Gunpowder

*Greater Kashmir:* April 1<sup>st</sup>, 2005

Through a small slit, a teenager crouching in a ticket-counter at a bus stand saw men-in-uniform, setting the beeline shops of Lal Chowk, Srinagar, on fire. The flames rose high, razing shops to the ground; the signboards fell down. Though scared stiff, the 13-year-old boy, watched the material blowing up, crackling; pieces of plastic toys scattering all around.

The soldiers had gone berserk after a platform hawker slapped an Army driver for having trampled his shop under the jeep. This had followed a tiff between the soldiers and the shopkeepers. Later in the evening, the soldiers came to seek vengeance.

That was July 1980. Kashmir did not have the media stories of the markets, trade marked with fidayeen attacks or fierce gun battles. It didn't have martyrs graveyards either.

From the maddening crowds of the world, fatigued tourists would prefer the fresh breeze along the shimmering waters of Dal Lake in the backdrop of lofty Zabarvan hills. The visitors would chill out in wooden huts in the snowy mountains of Gulmarg in winters. The cheer and the chill would not stay. It was not going to be. The fire of 1980 left the market in a heap of rubble and ash- and it also left a spark in a young heart that would burn Kashmir soon.

When the ash-covered street was deserted by the men-in-uniform, the young boy emerged from the ticket counter. With a red face and bloodshot bulging eyes, the boy's heart filled with insolence toward the system. The only thing he could think of was – a liberated Kashmir. A map of independent Kashmir was clearly dotting the globe before his eyes and in the next few years, the dream was converted into a sticker, ironically printed from a private press in New Delhi.

For him, the course to become an adulated hero of Kashmir had set right then- now 18 years old, the boy was put behind bars and questioned in the dreadful, Red-16 Interrogation Centre, Srinagar. From the jail, he appeared for 12th class exams and when he was released after three months, he had a mission to take forward. He would not become a

fashion model though he had some experience of it at the international level. He would not become a scientist either, though he did fairly well in sciences.

The boy was going to author a new lexicon of AK-47s, rocket launchers and martyrdom for Kashmir- Yasin Malik- an insurgent was in the making. The anti-India sentiment, brewing since 1947, would now accelerate and take a violent turn after the 1987 elections.

In 1986, Yasin and his like-minded friends constituted the Islamic Students League, a rightist group with a political ideology to fight for independence of Kashmir. It was well accepted by the Muslim students and soon became a mass based organisation, though sans Kashmiri Pandits. The group thus became overtly rightist. The same year, Jammu and Kashmir witnessed the worst ever communal riots that divided the Kashmir valley on religious lines – a factor which many tend to forget, but is significant since this would define the shape of insurgency in the future. In 1987, an amalgam of Islamic political and social organizations joined hands and together formed the Muslim United Front (MUF) to stand against the National Conference-Congress pre-poll alliance in assembly elections. MUF roped in the Islamic Students league and motivated it to support it in the elections. MUF was an Islamic political group, which did not accept the accession of Kashmir with India as final. There were also some groups within the MUF who believed that by way of the two-nation theory, J&K, with a Muslim majority, should have acceded to Pakistan.

Elections were rigged, several MUF leaders jailed, manhandled and maltreated. The ruling party in the state and centre, National Conference and Congress respectively, joined hands to keep the MUF away from the corridors of power. And in the next few months, Kashmir was going to become a go-down for keg-powder and violent conspiracies. The movement was more intense and powerful than the sporadic attempts of militancy in the past such as the hijacking of the Indian Fokker friendship plane allegedly by a short-lived militant organization Al-Fatah in 1971.

1987 is like the Dooms-year in Kashmir's history that swept the entire valley in floods and drowned the basic socio-economic and political fabric. And after the lull set on the waters of the Jhelum, a new cult of ethno-religious insurgents was seen floating and littered all around in the Kashmir valley.

The militant movement didn't descend from the hills or the dense forests of Rural Kashmir. It rose from the very urban centres of Kashmir valley and then percolated into every village and to the lumpen element at a later stage. Yasin Malik and his group of insurgents belonged to the very politically active cradle – Srinagar. The very first insurgent came from the politically conscious class of urban life- young school, college and university going boys. And those who supported them were lawyers, doctors and professors too. They were not frustrated because of unemployment which is generally the common perception. The educated unemployed youth were motivated to join the movement because they were conscious of their rights. Insurgency as a phenomenon was an outcome of political mobilization in urban Kashmir which made the younger generation of urban Kashmir more conscious of their political rights. Though Sumit Ganguly, a noted political scientist in his book *Between War and Peace: The Crisis in Kashmir*, has used political mobilization and political consciousness to argue the case that this along with institutional decay explains best why insurgency erupted in Kashmir, I would judiciously use the term political consciousness or mobilization for urban Kashmir and not rural Kashmir. Urban Kashmir population also indicates that though it was very effective yet it referred to a much lower percentage of population than the rural populace percentage.

Political mobilization, as Ganguly puts it, “is the process by which individuals enter as actors into the political arena. It involves growing demands for political participation. Instead of remaining politically quiescent and accepting the existing political dispensation, mobilized populations actively seek to influence their political destinies. Political mobilization stems from increasing literacy, media exposure, access to higher education, and the concomitant growth of political knowledge.”

The JKLF insurgents that came from Urban Kashmir were conscious of their rights. The consciousness had come due to the developmental activities of the central and state governments in urban Kashmir. Srinagar being the summer capital of the state, was advanced in terms of adequate schools, colleges and university. The interaction with foreign tourists, access to mass media like radio, newspapers, TV and videos in urban Kashmir was also a factor that added to their exposure to the outer world. “As economic modernization proceeds, growing levels of literacy, higher education, and media exposure will contribute to increased political mobilization. This heightened political awareness

will inevitably contribute to greater political demands,” Ganguly argues. This theory is also substantiated by the noted Samuel Huntington. And while, urban Kashmir had seen considerable economic modernization which thus paved the way for political mobilization, rural Kashmir was absolutely backward and illiterate. In 1961, as per the census, 11.03 percent population was literate in the valley and by 1981; it rose to 43.54 out of which however the majority came from urban Kashmir. The rural literacy rate increased from 4 to 9 percent, still an insignificant percentage as compared to the urban literacy rate, as by the estimates of Kashmir University since there was no census conducted in 1947.

The rural and its uneducated unemployed youth were easy to mould into the movement on ethno-religious, that is, Kashmiri-Islamic lines. To understand this, it is important to note the historical background of the divisions in Kashmir society.

# The Political Seeds

*Greater Kashmir:* April 14<sup>th</sup>, 2005

Islam entered Kashmir (which till the first half of the 14<sup>th</sup> century was ruled by Hindu Kings and queens), not by means of force but in the form of Sufi influence. “From 1465 onwards, Kashmir fell increasingly under the influence of the Sayyid Muslims.... One of the explanations for the pronounced intolerance of Sultan Sikander’s towards Hindus and other non-Muslims was the presence within Kashmir of Sayyid Muslims-clans and tribes that claimed direct descent from the royal house of the Prophet and they brought with them a particularly orthodox Sunni Islam, which held much of Kashmir’s Sufi practice to be heretical, let alone the practice of Hindus.... Numerous rebellions against Sayyid domination resulted; these involved local Kashmiri nobles and marred the last years of the Sultanate. This period of unrest is interesting and an early example of an ethnic division; it took on religious overtones and the strict adherence to Sunni Islam isolated the Sayyids from Kashmiri Muslims, Hindus and Buddhists,” notes Dr. VM Hewitt in his book *Reclaiming the Past*. Though there were several brief periods of religious bigotry by some of the successive rulers, Kashmir recovered and carried on with its traditional faith in religious tolerance.

As the Indian freedom struggle gained pace, Kashmir also woke up to stand against the discriminating and ineffective Hindu Dogra monarchy. In the 1930s, Sheikh Abdullah constituted the Muslim Conference and, with the passage of time, as he leaned towards Jawaharlal Nehru and the Congress ideology, he eventually changed the nomenclature of the Muslim Conference and its structure from a rightist group to a secular party. However there was a substantial section that was inclined towards the Muslim League led by Mohammad Ali Jinnah. A division was once again forged in the political structure that had just begun to take shape in Kashmir valley.

In the coming decades, this division would deepen due to four factors, one; the growth of Jamaat-e-Islami and Deobandi madrassa education that had filled up the vacuum created by the lack of educational infrastructure in rural Kashmir, second; the state was divided geographically on religious lines. The entire Kashmir valley is Muslim majority, very distinct from the Jammu region with a Hindu majority

in some districts and Muslim majority in some. Ladakh's two districts also have a mix of Buddhists and Muslims. Third, geography had left them far away from the rest of Muslims in India and it therefore began to develop as a separate community. The fourth factor was the most important: Pakistan, created on the basis of rejection of secularism and the acceptance of the two-nation theory, was geographically closer. It had also made a case for its claim on Kashmir in 1947 and it continued with its unsuccessful attempts in 1965 and 1971. 1987 was the ripest situation when JKLF turned towards it for monetary, military and diplomatic support.

Since the decision to strengthen the militant movement was a conscious one, it meant larger participation of the youth. It was easier to mobilize rural youth along religious line rather than anything else. Once Pakistan took centre stage and began its proxy war operation, the uneducated unemployed and Jamaat cadre driven by ethno-religious sentiment rather than political consciousness, jumped into the violent movement. It is easy to orient a politically naïve mob on religious lines rather than create political awareness among masses through modern education. Insurgency that was launched by politically conscious JKLF went into the hands of those who were motivated to join the movement on ethno-religious lines. This explains the communal element within JKLF and also the emergence of dozens of different pan-Islamic militant outfits within a year of the advent of the militant movement in the valley. The movement that could have been completely political was now converted into a pan-Islamic movement and targeted minorities. From threats to persecution, different modus operandi was used against the minorities, which in this case were Pandits. This created a fear psychosis among the minority Kashmiri Pandits who consequently fled from the valley after over a hundred of them were targeted and killed in the very first year of militancy.

But along side the political mobilization, which converted into ethno-religious mobilization, the decay of political institutions by the state, a constant phenomenon, was also taking place. In other words, there was a gradual decay of political institutions in Jammu and Kashmir; the rigging in the 1987 elections can be taken as an example. This erosion of political institutions was triggered soon after Sheikh Abdullah-led National Conference, the party which had dominated the pre and post 1947 political arena of Jammu and Kashmir by revolting against the Dogra monarchy and then by coming into power, expressed

its doubts over the finality of J&K's accession with India after coming into power. In 1953, New Delhi chose to dismiss Sheikh Abdullah's government and later arrest him on charges of seditious communication with foreign hostile powers (like the US and Pakistan) to India's non-aligned stance. Not only this, Abdullah was also accused by his own party men, of being dictatorial and arbitrary in his political style, but was only tolerated by the general masses out of their loyalty to the tall leader and partly out of their lack of political consciousness due to their low levels of literacy, education and exposure to mass media. As a result, there was virtually no political opposition to Sheikh's National Conference, and an unprocessed and dwarf democracy was established in the state which created the ground for Pakistan's claims on Kashmir. Sheikh was given a free hand by New Delhi as long as he accepted India's sovereignty over J&K. Indian visionaries were short-sighted since such a skewed policy would not work in Jammu and Kashmir, more so, when it was coveted by Pakistan. Created on the basis of the two-nation theory, Pakistan had been, believing since 1947 that Jammu and Kashmir, being a Muslim majority state, would justifiably become its part.

Sheikh Abdullah's arrest hurt both the literate and the illiterate, the politically naïve and the conscious public, who became vulnerable to the idea of secession which was already being supported by a section that had been there ever since National Conference (the erstwhile Muslim Conference) came into being in 1930s. After Sheikh's arrest, the plebiscite front- run by his colleagues and supporters, sought referendum as promised under UN resolution by the Indian government.

Because of his indecisiveness and political aspirations, the then J&K Maharaja Hari Singh had not made a choice between India and Pakistan until Pakistan tribal raiders made an attempt to annex J&K by force. The Hindu Dogra ruler at that point sought military help from India; in return he signed the instrument of accession with India on October 26, 1947. However the then Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru who had taken the issue of Pakistani aggression on Kashmir to the UN, promised to offer plebiscite and to allow the people to decide for themselves. Pakistan refused to withdraw its forces from the areas that it had occupied thus foiling the chances of a referendum, which was a requirement under UN resolutions.

The disputed status of Kashmir being what it was, J&K as a state meant a lot to secular India in terms of the fact that a Muslim majority state could survive and prosper under a secular dispensation, a rebuff to the two-nation theory that had divided the country.

From Nehru to his subsequent successor, Delhi began to see Kashmir in this perspective and let corruption, nepotism, favoritism grow with the simultaneous decay of institutions only to secure the loyalty of the local leadership towards Indian rule. The Hindu rightists groups called it an appeasement policy. The successive governments after the arrest of Sheikh Abdullah also prevented the growth of any healthy political opposition. The deinstitutionalization escalated during Indira Gandhi's centralized rule from New Delhi.

In the absence of a well developed and democratic political structure and opposition, after Sheikh Abdullah died, his son Farooq Abdullah became chief minister. Allowing the National Conference to rule alone was not acceptable to Indira Gandhi. On her behest, Farooq Abdullah was dismissed in 1984 on unconvincing grounds, replacing him by a lesser known leader and a defected member of the National Conference, GM Shah. GM Shah too had to go as he could not control the law and order situation of the state in the 1986 communal riots which were allegedly orchestrated by the state Congress. Rajiv Gandhi who became the prime minister in the wake of Indira Gandhi's assassination signed a pre-poll accord with the National Conference and ensured that the MUF would not win any seats in the 1987 assembly elections. This electoral fraud of 1987 was however not accepted by the young politically conscious generation. The urban populace, due to higher levels of literacy, had gradually become conscious of the political games played in Kashmir.

The convergence of urban political mobilization, political deinstitutionalization and a hostile neighbor who mobilized rural and illiterate youth on ethno-religious lines led to the insurgency in Kashmir. The insurgency, oriented towards a political goal, has however contributed towards furthering the ethno-religious divide in Kashmir. It has also cultivated radicalism in Kashmir that was essentially the land of the Sufis.

# Torn Books, Ravaged Schools

*Kashmir Images:* June 19<sup>th</sup>, 2006

*It is indeed one of the most cruel ironies of the rebel war that as the nation turns in on itself in conflict, so much of its useful human resource is being used to destroy so much that has been achieved in the past.*

– Cream Wright, 1997

A quote from the Upanishad is written on the unsmudged blackboard of a wrecked school: “Thought For the Day: You are what your deep driving desire is; As your desire is so is your will; As Your Will is, so is your deed; As your deed is, so is your destiny.”

Lunch boxes containing egg curry and rice, omelet and Kashmir roti lie scattered along with school bags, examination clip boards, shoes, pieces of broken glass and wooden frames. The scene at the ruins of Central High School in Pulwama was a moment frozen by the death that visited the town on June 15, 2005. A car bomb explosion near the school had killed 16 people including three school children and a teacher.

Among the school children, was fifteen year old Ishfaq. He was always in a hurry, recalls his best friend Isac who sobs in a corner. He wanted to be the first one to reach school, first one to take the front seat, the first one to raise his hand for answering a question and the first one to submit his examination paper, Isac cries. On June 15, Ishfaq was the first one to leave the classroom after submitting his paper to the teacher. He went out to drink water when the car bomb exploded.

Ishfaq was a very bright boy at the school. He had remained a topper throughout. He would always talk of bigger dreams. He used to scold me for not working hard. He was brilliant himself and would not waste time in gossiping or playing. We always thought that he will do something great in life, the friend says. No word of sympathy could console Ishfaq’s sister Ameena. “He cannot die. He wanted to become a doctor. How will he become a doctor now?” she screams and wails as relatives fail to comfort her.

In Kashmir, several hundred potential and prospective doctors and engineers were thus killed. Though there are no official records separately made to detect how many minors have been engulfed by the 16 year old insurgency, everybody's estimate from administrators to separatists is that hundreds of children have been killed.

Killing Kashmiri Muslim children is the phenomenon that came into existence as the complexion of violence in Kashmir changed from insurgency to terrorism. The JKLF – the pioneers of insurgency in 1989 certainly didn't have the intentions to kill the Muslim children of the valley. It was not a part of their agenda. However as pro-Pakistani groups took over, the insurgency took the shape of brutal, inhuman and barbaric terrorism. The terrorist groups spared no one that came in their way including the children.

But what preceded the killings of children, was a strategic way that annihilated the education system of which children are the most important part. The foundation fathers had taken over a century to set up a progressive and growth oriented educational system in the state. Forty years after the first mission school with modern education was started in Kashmir in 1850, CE Tyndale Biscoe arrived in the valley, which was stuck with a Kashmiri Pandit thinking that a football made of leather was unholy, boating was a degradable job, and rivers were too haunted for swimming and with a Kashmiri Muslim orthodoxy that non-religious and secular education would render them as infidels. Biscoe changed it all. Kashmiri Pandits gave up the rigidity and Muslims followed them slowly but surely.

In 1931, Sat Lal Razdan was a proud student of one of the missionary schools that formed the new creed of education introduced by Biscoe. Inspired by Biscoe, Razdan himself rose to become a teacher at Biscoe's Mission school and has the distinction of educating doctors, engineers and bureaucrats in Jammu and Kashmir. Razdan also happens to be the father of the state's renowned neurologist Dr Sushil Razdan.

As the gun began overshadowing Kashmir in the early 1990s, the first casualty was the pride of teachers like Sat Lal Razdan. "I still cannot comprehend what happened in Kashmir. I still see it as an aberration because my Muslim students gave me enough love and respect. As a teacher however I was shocked, disheartened and saddened at how the educational system was torn apart by the violence. It is terrible

especially for the teachers whose investment in life is only students,” regrets Razdan.

The Kashmiri Pandits were traditionally seen as the most learned scholars and consequently a community of teachers as well. However between July 1989 and October 1990, out of 316 Kashmiri Pandits killed, nine were teachers, as per the records of the J&K Centre for Minority Studies. For a miniscule community of not more than 3.5 lakh people, 316 killings in over a year, was a huge figure and enough to induce a fear psychosis among them. But more horrendous were the torture killings such as strangulation with wires, hanging, impaling, branding with red hot iron, burning alive, lynching, gouging of eyes before assassination, slicing, dismemberment of body, breaking of limbs, dragging to death and slaughter.

On 14<sup>th</sup> April 1990, *Alsafa*, an Urdu daily published its lead story as ‘Kashmiri Pandits responsible for duress against Muslims, should leave the valley within two days’. The posters issued by the terrorist outfit Allah Tigers which read as- “Allah-o-Akbar! Awake and Arise Muslims. Run Away Infidels (non-Muslims). Jihad (Islamic crusade) is ahead” – were pasted on the doors and at the corners of lanes of the localities where large numbers of Hindus lived. There were announcements from the local mosques ordering Pandits to quit the valley and slogans like ‘*Kashmir bani Pakistan, batto rus ta battino saan* (Kashmir will become Pakistan with Pandit women but sans Pandit men) in public rallies.

The state administration had completely collapsed and the centre seemed directionless.

The Pandits were forced to leave the valley and along with them migrated thousands of teachers. 94 percent Pandit families left Kashmir from January 1990 to May 1990. As per an official estimate, out of 26,000 Kashmiri Pandit government employees before migration, around 75 percent were teachers in schools, colleges and the university. There were a few thousand private Pandit teachers as well.

It would however be incorrect to say that Muslims did not face the wrath of the insurgency. Aqeeda Jaan and Owais Rasool Allayee who studied in Jammu after migration have their own bitter memories of what terrorists did to their families. For security reasons, without divulging their identities further, all that can be said is their parents

were on the hit list among people who were to be killed by the terrorists. “The JKLF militants tried to kill my father several times. Once with their masks on, they barged into our house. I was five years old and my mother hid me under the bed. We were lucky enough to escape death. But enough was enough. We decided to leave,” says Owais. His home was blown up by the militants after they left the valley. But there were several Muslim students who left the valley for reasons other than the threat to life.

# Unlearning learning

*Kashmir Images:* June 20<sup>th</sup>, 2006

By 1989, the schools in Kashmir had suffered considerably on account of curfews and strikes. On the days of big protest demonstrations, attendance at schools was negligible and firing prevented many pupils and teachers from leaving home. If they did risk the streets, security checkpoints often stopped them.

In a month, schools would remain closed for at least 15 days due to curfews, strikes and disturbances like explosions or a crack down. Under the University Grants Commission (UGC) guidelines, the institutes should remain open for a minimum of 180 days in a year. “But in the early 1990s, the schools, colleges and universities didn’t see the light of the day for more than 60 working days. Obviously, it affected studies of the Kashmiri students. It was like going backwards in education by at least a decade as against the rate of growth in education in the rest of the country,” says the then vice-chancellor of Kashmir university Prof. Jalees A.K.Tareen.

The next step was destroying schools by means of burning them down or blowing them up. The official records show that 650 schools were damaged by militants between 1990 and 1995. When the popular government came back to power in 1996, then chief minister, Farooq Abdullah, spent Rs.43 crore on the damaged schools.

The schools came under severe attack when troops began moving into Kashmir. Initially, the security forces were accommodated in the abandoned schools which irked the militants. One after another, schools were razed to the ground so that the troops could not take shelter in the schools.

The fact that 559 closed schools were re-opened with the deployment of local teachers on a contract basis and 2903 teachers appointed during Farooq Abdullah’s government is enough evidence to show how much education had suffered in J&K during the initial years of the militancy. Since 1996, official records show 178 educational institutions have been either burnt down or damaged in militancy related incidents. Thus during the last 16 years, in the Kashmir region, around 276 primary schools, 146 middle schools, 129 high schools and 45 higher secondary

schools and in the Jammu region, 119 primary schools, 62 middle schools, 43 high schools and eight higher secondary schools were damaged.

By destroying schools, it was also easier for militants to motivate children who were left with no schools and therefore no avenues to continue their education (which was available for free at the government schools). Children were lured into the militancy by several means. Schools imparting modern secular education did not suit Pakistan's designs. In fact, not by mere coincidence, in the last 15 years, madrassas (religious seminaries) have mushroomed in the valley.

Another phenomenon was more startling. The acquisition of arms and weapons became quite easy as huge quantities were being smuggled from Pakistan by the youth who went across for militant training. Heaps were dumped in houses and the access to the weapons for children or students was not difficult at all. "In fact, our elder cousins and brothers would feel smug at showing their courage to bring weapons and keeping them right in the houses while the security forces were patrolling outside," says Ashiq, a former KU student who out of curiosity and by mistake pulled the trigger once and it hit the power transformer right across the street. For one whole week, the locality went without power, not knowing the actual reason for the transformer's disorder.

Young boys like Ashiq were dazzled by the power of the gun rather than the ideology behind the separatist movement launched by JKLF and supported by lawyers, doctors and other intellectuals of Kashmiri Muslim society. "A revolution" that was "intended" by the JKLF and the Kashmiri think tank lacked the basic fundamentals. As far as the revolutions are concerned, world history shows that they were based on highly motivated political philosophies rather than mere sentiment. The pre-requisite of any revolution is the propagation of the political philosophy to the point that it convinces masses at an intellectual level rather than on mere heroism. The gun that percolated into Kashmiri society created farcical heroism instead of bringing intellectual awareness. Heroism could mean anything- pelting stones on security forces, throwing nasty slangs and abuses on Indian soldiers, or a militant carrying an AK-47. The definition of heroism grew as the ammunition heaped in Kashmiri households. Till one day, heroism was destroying public infrastructure: razing buildings to the ground, annihilating everything that sounded reasonable and developmental.

Economics Professor A. Wahid of Kashmir University admits that he himself saw boys with guns and pistols roaming in the university during the initial days of the militancy. “There was no law and order. Boys would come with guns under the pheran and just make it a little visible to the examiner. That was enough to scare him and pressurize him to stay quiet while the boys would copy from the text books unashamedly in the examination hall,” he recalls.

Inevitably, the standards of education eroded, though the pass percentage looked wonderful to everyone. Thousands of educationally challenged became matriculates and graduates in those four years, while the administration became completely defunct and militants ruled the roost. There were fathers appearing for their sons, elder brothers for younger brothers and even those drop outs who had crossed the age bar sat for the tests. Iqbal, then a household helper, confesses that it was on the basis of his matriculation certificate acquired through such means, that he secured a government job. “Though I had no guns or militant influence but since there were stories about mass copying and proxy candidates sitting in the examination, I made hay while the sun shone,” he admits. Several hundreds like Iqbal with fake certificates filled up the vacuum created by the migration of Kashmiri Pandit teachers, thus reducing the quality of education.

The weapons were thus not only used in insurgency, they were also used as a tool to exploit education for materialistic benefits. It was a sheer element of criminalization that entered the society to achieve the ends at the expense of ruining the basic educational fabric. An irony indeed since the think tank behind the militant movement envisaged attainment of an ideal amount of political, economic and social independence to create an ideal state.

The argument of the separatists and those who started the movement that the present is being sacrificed for a better tomorrow of the generations to come, stands hollow in view of this situation when criminalization has become a permanent part of Kashmiri society and the growth in the education sector has received a major set back.

The 2001 census report shows that Jammu and Kashmir with 54.46 percent literacy rate is at 33<sup>rd</sup> rank among the states of India. The new report also shows that only the newly created states of Jharkhand (54.13 %) and Bihar (47.53%) are behind Jammu and Kashmir in the literacy rate. As compared to the winter capital Jammu’s amazing

literacy rate of 77.30 percent, the summer capital Srinagar has only 59.18 percent. Kupwara, Budgam and Anantnag showed abysmally low results with 40.80, 40.94, and 44.10 per cent literacy rates respectively.

Lynn Davies, in her book, *Education and Conflict: Complexity and Chaos* observes, “Just as types of violence in a society will be reflected in school, the types of conflict will be reflected too.” If it is ethnic conflict, then we will see ethnic tension in schools, or between students of separated schools/systems. If it is an arms culture, this will percolate into the schools. Fearful societies have fearful schools.

# The Street with a Dead End

*“The test of the morality of a society is what it does for its children.”*

– Dietrich Bonhoeffer

Through a crisscross narrow, dingy street, a strange sense of fear walks with you as you search for Bitta Karate’s home. People look at you with suspicion. Children grin at you with unmistakable signs of thrill and excitement. Not many journalists or research scholars have tread upon this route in over a decade. Non-Muslims are completely out of the question. But even a toddler on the street can direct you to Bitta Karate’s old address (his present residence being the jail) in Chhota Bazar. He is an icon, an adulated hero for several in Kashmir.

Karate, after all, is the man who brazenly, on a television channel, admitted that he “could remember killing 22 Kashmiri Hindus” after which he “lost the count”. Farooq Ahmad Dar, known as Bitta Noorie at home, was a judo-karate player with several awards and certificates in martial arts. Hence the nick name Bitta Karate. From the very beginning, Karate was known for his defiant nerve against everything and everyone. He enjoyed being an outlaw. Ironically, this earned him the title of being a revered champion for the children of Chhota Bazar where his parents and family live in a small old house at the end of a street. “He is a real freedom fighter,” says Javed, an 8<sup>th</sup> class student, along with his gang of friends, in the locality.

Through acts of criminal violence, militants like Karate built an aura of power and audacity around them that attracted other youth to experiment with the idea of taking up guns.

The insurgency in Kashmir was a movement launched by a group of people who were politically conscious and wanted to stand up to the system in their quest for political rights. They had full knowledge of armed conflicts in other parts of the world and drew inspiration from Hollywood movies such as Omar Mukhtar: Lion of the Desert, who fought against Italy’s conquer of Libya during the Second World War. While the parallel might seem absurd, it speaks of the high levels of political consciousness and mobilization that had been achieved through education and the mass media.

However, as all insurgencies have a lumpen element, the movement in Kashmir had it too. Therefore, Bitta Karate's 60 year old mother Fatima says: "We were poor, they used the poor boys," and Karate's sister-in-law Fareeda adds, "The Aazadi was fought on the shoulders of the poor. The rich leaders of the Hurriyat and Pakistan used the poor and then didn't care enough to look after them later."

"By and large," says Prof. Noor Mohammad Baba, from the Department of Political Science at Kashmir University, "Kashmiris are docile; most of the students were not a part of the violent process. They shared the euphoria, but from a distance. By mid 1990s, the lumpen element in the Kashmiri society jumped in for several reasons. Initially, militancy was out of conviction; later it became fashionable. The social position of a militant attracted the poor and rural children. An illiterate, poor and unemployed boy from a village thought that militancy was a profession and it would bring him immediate respectability, power and money. Seeing it as a reward, the youth joined the most popular profession of their time."

The "profession" is still glamorous with children worshipping militants like Karate. These children come from the localities like those where Karate's home is situated. The locality is inhabited by the lower middle class and the poor class of the Kashmiri society. The children mostly go to the Islamic seminaries, government schools or to the low cost, lesser known private schools. Several among them are dropouts, depressed with their economic situation and under-privileged life. To see somebody from the same class elevated to a high profile personality who becomes a symbol of terror not only for the common masses but for the establishment as well, gives encouragement to others to follow suit. "There are several children who want to follow dreadful terrorists because they fantasize that they would get media attention. They fancy that people would be afraid of them. They start living in the make-believe world that they could acquire anything on gun-point," say counter-insurgency experts in the valley.

However, glamour is not the only reason for the Kashmiri youth's fancy with the gun. The reality is more complex. Different villages, different localities in Kashmir have different stories on why the youth joined the insurgency. As the insurgency launched by a few politically motivated people was taken over by Pakistan, multiple forces began working both horizontally and vertically. While it could be seen as a

phenomenon with a simultaneous effect at several levels, it may also be perceived as a phased gradual transformation of a movement into terrorist violence.

Either way, certain inferences are clear: That the insurgency was not a pure political movement. It was also not merely a consequence of alienation among the unemployed frustrated youth. It was not a simple formula for attaining wealth either. Through this study, it surfaced that there are eight theories on why the youth joined the militancy in the valley. Based on the theories, eight categories or classes of Kashmiri youth joined the movement. One, those who were politically conscious and motivated; those who were fascinated by the glamour of the gun; those who were lured by money; those who experienced unemployment even though they were educated; those who practiced criminal violence as a profession; the uneducated lumpen element; those who were coerced into militancy; and, those who were indoctrinated by religious zealots advocating a particular interpretation of Islam. These different categories of youth joined the militancy at different stages of the movement as it transformed from an insurgency into an ethno-religious terrorist movement.

Article 38 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (United Nations 1989) states that it is ‘the obligation of states to respect and ensure respect for humanitarian law as it applies to children...[N]o child under 15 [should] take a direct part in hostilities or be recruited into the armed forces’. The reality is that ethno-religious and political conflicts around the world have increasingly involved child warriors, despite this prohibition. The reason is that armed non-state groups believe that the security forces would be less suspicious of the children. The search is always for children from the downtrodden and oppressed sections since they can be easily motivated or coerced into joining militant groups. In armed conflicts across the world, children have been involved in all activities – from serving as spies to walking through the minefields. While some see their participation as a means of finding security, protection from victimization, or supporting a liberation struggle, others are coercively recruited, subjected to physical abuse and forced to commit acts of violence against targeted communities. Once captured, they are threatened to face death if they fail to commit an atrocity. Gradually, they are forced to adapt and reconcile themselves to the situation. Soon imperviousness sets in.

# The Toy Soldiers

In Jammu and Kashmir, hundreds of young recruits, attracted by the power of the gun or lured or coerced into the militancy, are receiving arms' training in the mountains of Kashmir by Pakistan-backed terrorist outfits. The boys are imparted elementary arms' training and made to work as cooks, cleaners, guides and porters. The brighter among them are sent to Pakistan for advanced training. Some are used for setting up hideouts, networks and infrastructure for carrying out terrorist operations. Although no figures exist, several of these young recruits are believed to have died in encounters between terrorists and the Indian security forces.

The recruiter, normally an over-ground worker, plays "Alyosha" to the kids in the school or local madrassa. The boys are encouraged to play truant, to play cricket, and generally act adventurous. Then, one day the recruiter shows them pictures of young *mujahids* armed with Kalashnikovs. The Kalashnikov has become a phallic symbol of sorts in rural Kashmir. It has been turned into a badge of empowerment. One 13 year old child who had been recruited was asked why he joined the terrorists. He said he was told that "*gun hai to izzat hai, gun hai to paisa hai, gun hai to ladki hai.*" Simply translated it means, "If you have a gun, you have respect and fame; you have money; and you get the girls." What he did not know then was that the gun is not a toy. The gun spits death and invites doom.

The excited boy is then taken to a hideout and shown the gun, allowed to feel it, meet the masked *mujahids*. For the starry eyed teenagers, the Kalashnikov is a thrilling toy. It repels and it fascinates. It excites and it warps judgment. The boy, himself trapped in low self-esteem, poverty, and an inferiority complex, gradually accepts it as the only way of life.

A Lashkar-e-Toiba recruiter walked into the National High School at the village of Vijhar near Bandipora in July 2003. He spoke to the six children including 12 year-old Ishfaq Bhat, 14 year-old Tanveer Ahmad Malik and 16 year-old Mumtaz Ahmad Dar. The boys told the Army later that the recruiter said he wanted to organize a cricket match and wanted them to join it at 7 p.m. Although the National High School has its own playground and has separate hours within the school time to play cricket. The time, as fixed by the recruiter, raised doubts since

playing cricket in the evenings without lights in the open fields is not possible. The children nevertheless went to the nearby forest in Arin as instructed by the recruiter. Ishfaq Bhat's relatives in Arin heard some noises and recognised him among the children. The relatives had a correct hunch that it was a meeting about the recruitment of boys in a militant group. They raised an uproar and, along with other villagers, approached the recruiter. The villagers confronted the recruiter and made explicit to him that they did not like the idea that children should join the group. Following an altercation, the recruiter, sensing trouble, ran away. The children were rescued.

According to official reports, in the year 2000, more than 100 children between 13 and 18 years of age were reported missing from the hilly terrains of Doda district and are believed to have been sent to Pakistan to be trained as "battle machines". These children were missing from the areas of Gandoh, Thathri, Kishtwar, Bhaderwah and Doda. "Militants threaten villagers and demand Rs 5 lakh or a child," said Rashid, who was among the five children rescued by the Army. "When families refuse their demand, militants forcibly take away their children for arms training," he said. Hamad, a student in a professional college in Jammu admits: "Every second day, militants of Hizbul Mujahideen (HM) or some other group would come and ask my father to contribute to the movement by sending me with them or by giving donations to them. There would be open debates about it at home and I would wonder why my father was so strict that he would not let me go out in the evenings at all. He dared to offend them, but he has always remained in constant tension in Kashmir. The only times we have seen him smile is when we go out of J&K for holidays."

However Hamad has seen his immediate cousins gobbled by the militancy and indoctrination. "Irfan was only in 4<sup>th</sup> class in Anantnag when he was picked by a militant group and then trained. He came back but he was again picked up in 9<sup>th</sup> class by HM. He worked for them and then left them. Last year, he was killed. I used to play cricket with him but I didn't see him for long since he was away with the militant group. When I saw him, I couldn't recognize him. From a young sweet boy, he had grown into a strange creature with a long beard. From a progressive student, he had grown into a fanatic. He was completely brainwashed. While everybody was mourning his death, a group of HM militants came to the house. It was so ironic that those who got him killed had come to shed a tear or two."

The story of Abdul Gafoor in Reasi showed how terrorists were coercing rural and poor children into their violent operations. In 2003, Gafoor's father Saki Mohammad was killed by terrorists since they suspected he was an informer to the Army. His mother Malika was kidnapped after which her whereabouts are not known. Gafoor, who had just entered the third standard in school, was also kidnapped by the Hizbul Mujahideen terrorists from his hutment at Prankot in Udhampur. During his stay with the HM in the thick forests of Pakikot, Narla and Larki in the upper reaches of Udhampur, Gafoor was initially made to wash the utensils and carry the luggage as the terrorists moved from one village to another. "Then I was trained in the use of AK-47 rifles and later to handle explosives." He was also taught to use a radio set and, sometimes, he was instructed to go near the security installations and inform them (militants) about the strength of the security forces. The boy had a narrow escape when the militants launched an attack on an Army patrol party in the Poni area in December 2003. The security forces retaliated, in which a militant was injured. Gafoor, along with the militants, managed to escape. In a dare devil act, one day, he dodged the group of militants and ran away from their hideout while they were asleep. The boy was spotted by a police party in the Thuv Thanol forest belt in Reasi in January 2004. Over a hundred teenagers, some as young as 12, were rescued by the Army from militant groups in the first half of 2003. Despite rescue efforts, the Army believes that an estimated 500 teenagers were recruited into the militancy in the same year.

Abdul Ghani, a 13-year-old was rescued in the famous Sarp Vinash operation in Hill Kaka. Hill Kaka was a huge Pakistani militant base in Surankote, Poonch, where recruitment and arms training was also being done. A resident of Pagai village in Rajouri district, Ghani was found under the rubble after the security forces blew up a hideout in Hill Kaka. Later there were news reports that most of the twenty militants who were claimed to have been killed in a 2001 encounter near Khari Dhoke in Hill Kaka were in fact children taken by the militants to the Surankote area as slave labour. According to reports, there were five major hideouts around Hill Kaka, which sheltered over 75 Lashkar men. Forty of them were Pakistani-trained militants and the rest were children from South Kashmir and Poonch coerced into the service. Several parents in Kashmir and in the upper reaches of the Jammu region are still searching for their missing sons. For example, Tahir Mohammad's 15-year-old son Yaqoob was picked up by the militants and is still missing. The desperate father approached several militant

commanders, but it bore no fruit. The J&K Police and Army files are full of such cases.

There are also parents who have spent their every penny to get back their sons: not from the clutches of the militants, but from behind the bars of the jail. A substantial percentage (the number keeps changing due to the releases) of Kashmiri boys who were involved in militancy related cases are in the jails of Kashmir or have moved out of the state in search of better livelihood options. This is a huge loss for the state since the youth form the foundations of a progressive society.

Mothers like Jaana of Nadigam, Budgam whose son Bashir was arrested in a violence related incident at Wadwan finds it difficult to believe that her son could do something like this. For Hajra of Khaniyar Hannabal, visiting her son in jail in Srinagar has become a routine. Her 21 year old son Tanveer Ahmad Khan, she says could have served her as she is growing older. “But it has been the other way round. He was arrested in a *Mujahid* case. Instead I have to fend for life, teach my daughter Marfa who is in class 12<sup>th</sup> and also manage to pay visits to my son in jail. I am surviving on cotton weaving. One could well imagine what kind of an existence it is. But I try my best to bring fruits and mutton for my son in the jail,” she sighs. Fifty-year old Mohammad Abdullah Khan of Penzith Shopian whose son Tariq Ahmad Khan, an Al-Barq militant was arrested when he was in the ninth class, has been visiting different jails in J&K and outside the state for seven and a half years.

The thread that connects the all these visitors to the jail is that they stand on the deprived side of the class war in Kashmiri society. For them, even sustenance is a struggle. The road ahead, for them and for their children, is already dead.

## Life after Death

Plates of hot steamed rice and Kashmiri wazwan, served by menials in a cozy, silk carpeted bungalow; electronic gizmos from computers to ostentatious mobile phones and DVD players; wardrobes full of trendy clothes and the company of a beautiful lass on a long drive through the mountains in flashy cars or motorbikes... The dreams of a young madrassa boy are no different from any other teenagers' in Kashmir. Yet, he stands out because he doesn't want to fulfill them in this life. Rather, he desires all this for a life after death.

In a street, deep inside Srinagar, chorus recitations from the Holy Koran, echo loudly from a large building. A semi-circular signboard at the gate reads (both in Urdu and English): *Darul-Uloom-Qasmia*.

As I step in, a small bearded man with a skull cap prohibits my entry. Not that he has any objections over my mission. His discomfort is my attire. I am wearing a Kurta-Pajami with my cloak draping over sideways. "Women are not allowed here without a veil. Cover your head with your *dupatta*," the man who introduces himself as the peon of the school, orders before permitting a meeting with the students and the in-charge of the Madrassa (Islamic seminary).

An argument could have narrowed the chances of getting his consent. Therefore with a properly covered head, I enter the school premises and glance around. The school with 200 in-house students (as told by the peon), appears utterly disorganized – four half-constructed buildings in four different corners of a dusty courtyard, cement sacks, crushed rock, bricks, scattered all around...the construction seemingly abandoned midway.

On the balcony of one of the buildings, boys of varying ages in khan suits and skull caps are squatting, on their haunches in a line, holding the holy Koran in hand and reciting it aloud from its pages. I watch them from a distance, as they rock back and forth in time to the Arabic verses. The bell rings. Very devoutly, the boys close their holy books, hold them gently to their hearts and then go inside. Shortly, young boys emerge out of a dark doorway and begin gawking at their female visitor.

I am told to wait for them in the school headmasters' room while they are briefed. After a while, a young boy with a small growth of a beard on his face enters the room. This is 19-year-old Manzoor Ahmad. Sitting across, he explains that he and his likes are at the school to qualify *Hifz* – that is to dedicatedly mug around 78,000 words of Koran so that they can recite it in full. The rewards for doing so are many, he adds: A very comfortable place in God's abode (heaven after death), the blessing to get one's desires fulfilled (good food, nice clothes, palatial bungalows, cars and all comforts). "Everything," he underlines, "After death".

I begin wondering if this allurements that brings Manzoor to the madrasa is different from the desires of human beings in the material world. The question, whether any kind of enticement should be the way to reach God, strikes me at the back of my mind.

Manzoor studied up to class four in the government school at Pampore. Being the son of a Maulvi (religious head), Manzoor expectedly joined the Madrasa in 1994 when he was nine years old. He boasts that his two brothers also studied in a Madrasa in Gujarat. He himself plans to become a Maulvi in a Darul-uloom. "I was interested in religion and learning *Hifz* from the very beginning," he says with a sense of pride.

After all, what is true life, he poses the philosophical question and answers immediately, "This worldly life means nothing. You always find pain attached with pleasure in an average life of 70 years. In the material world, power corrupts one and then one takes to evil practices. But here in this school, we are away from that world. We are working hard here to reach heaven where we would have what we desire. A doctor can help patients but can't make them doctors in turn. We can treat patients and also make them religious like us. Doctors and engineers enjoy this material life but they will never get an entry to the heaven. Because, heaven is for true Muslims only and a true Muslim is one who abides by the Koran. Unfortunately, people in the material world don't adhere to the principles of Islam. There is a long life after death. And if we follow the Islamic rules strictly, one is sure to reach heaven." The concepts of heaven and hell are a fundamental part of the madrasa education, and the students here (unlike several others outside) are quite clear about the distinction between the two.

Beside Manzoor, are, the others flanking him on the floor. Comfortable furniture like chairs and bed belong to the material world; therefore,

the boys sit, work and sleep only on straw mats on the floor in Darul-Uloom. Anything that has the potential to distract the boys from religious studies, (TV, movies, radio, newspapers, etc.) is not available at the school. The boys are woken up at 3.30 a.m. and after morning ablutions, they go for Namaz and recitation of Koran till 7.30 a.m. A cup of tea is served to them before the classes. At 11.30 a.m., the classes break for lunch and resume at 2.30 in the afternoon for two hours. A cup of tea at 4.30 p.m. and then Namaz. The only sport in the school is cricket.

A madrassa shelters the students while their courses are underway. The Madrassa here offers a four-year course after which the students can join Deoband for another four-year certificate course. In all, an eight year period is required for the Koranic education in full. At Qasmia, students are taught *Nahusarf* (Arabic Grammar), *Mantiq* (evaluation and analysis of conversation), *Falsafa* (Philosophy), *Farsi* (Persian), *Almi Adab* (language and phonetics), *Kashmir ki Islami Tareekh* (Islamic history of Kashmir), *Almi Asool* (Islamic Jurisprudence), *Fiqa* (reference to context), *Ibn-e-Khuldoon* (Islamic philosophy), *Koran, Hifz and Hadith* (Sayings of Prophet Mohammad).

“We are very happy here,” says 20 year-old Ghulam Rasool Shah. Shah, like Manzoor, is from the poor and under-privileged class of Kashmir. He is the son of a farmer from Machhel Kupwara. He studied up to eighth class in a government school. The grown up Shah is outspoken about his aim and objectives. “I want to be a true Muslim and devote myself to Allah. And a true Muslim is one who reads *Kalma* and whosoever is not a Muslim and does not believe in Allah is doomed to go to hell. Allah leaves them free, but at the end, he will throw them in a large boiling oil pan. The infidels will be tortured,” he threatens. I begin thinking if he knows that I am a non-Muslim and if it was a deliberate statement? And does he know that Islamic fundamentalism is seen as a cause of terrorism in the world? And does he know that Madrassas have come under the scanner? “No, I don’t know,” he replies right away.

Gauging my inquisitive mood, the school principal, Maulvi Ahmad Sayeed interrupts: “The boys have nothing to do with politics and world affairs.” Irritatingly, he orders the peon to send another boy. The next boy is 18-year-old Sajjad Ahmad Zargar. Sajjad is from an urban area of Srinagar. The son of a poor goldsmith, Sajjad chose the madrassa

education himself. After his tenth class exams, on his father's advice, he visited the local mosque for a ten-day religious course during Ramzaan.

The boys in the school have similar backgrounds: they come from poor, backward and illiterate families. Islamic seminaries in villages, towns and even in Srinagar are the only accessible means of education for the downtrodden. The children at madrassas are segregated from the world around them. Modern technology and science is forbidden. The comforts of life are proscribed. They are made to believe that they are fated to suffer for good and long-term heavenly gains.

Being cut off from the world leaves them vulnerable to indoctrination with ideas and attitudes that have no place in the larger world. These boys, instead of learning to accept differences and the world as it is and feeling a part of it, learn to hate it by not understanding it and believing that they are better than it. They refuse to see the world through any lens other than the one that is provided to them in the madrassas. They shut their eyes to the wide range of experiences that human beings can have in a lifetime. Put simply, such an education stunts their analytical skills and ability to think for themselves. An inability to make reasoned judgments leaves children susceptible to exploitation – whether as child soldiers or as the next generation of ethnic mobilizers.

Deprived of the basic needs in life, the less privileged Muslim groups in Kashmiri society remain excluded from full participation in the economic and social life of the state. In a society divided deeply along socioeconomic lines, quality education has increasingly become an expensive service. While the quality of education imparted in government schools is questionable, private schools have become unaffordable for the poor of Kashmir. As a result, children of the privileged classes have access to quality, higher-level education.

## Positive or Negative Education?

The growth of seminaries in Kashmir has been considerably high. The number has doubled since the beginning of the insurgency. As of 2006, there were 173 unregistered *Darul-ulooms*, as per the state government's records. There are around 40 madrassas affiliated with *Wifaq-ul- Madaris* (union of madrassas) in Kashmir with around 4000 students. Of these, 20 are fulltime where poor students are provided free meals, clothing and accommodation. Most of them are in the frontier Kupwara district, the ancestral home of Anzar Shah. *Darul-Uloom-Raheemia* of Bandipora with 500 in-house students is the largest in the valley. It is headed by Maulana Rehmatullah Qasimi.

Darul-Uloom-Qasmia in Srinagar was established in 1992 when the insurgency was at its peak. 55 year-old Maulvi Ahmad Sayeed from Lolab, the school principal, claims that the school was set up as part of "a broad vision" outlined by Maulana Anzar Shah, Vice Chancellor of Deoband University. Alama Anzar Shah who heads the 143-year-old *Darul Uloom Deoband* (Deoband University) is a Kashmiri. He is also the president of all the Deoband madrassas.

The religious seminaries in the Kashmir valley derive inspiration from the Deoband school of thought. Darul-Uloom Deoband, the largest seminary (equivalent to a university), is home to 3,500 boys and young men, mostly from poor families, in Deoband town, 146 kilometers north of Delhi. The Deoband University is a product of the Indian mutiny of 1857. The Muslim dominance over the sub-continent ended with Britain's colonial rule. It was around this time that the school became the center of a movement that sought to reform and unite Muslim society in a country under colonial rule. It was born out of a dislike for the Western system of education that was imposed by the British. The Deoband schools opened their doors to the poor, offering free education to all students. The movement spread across India to Afghanistan and into Central Asia. Darul-Uloom depends on voluntary donations and does not receive any government funding. In Deoband, the Darul-Uloom's annual budget is more than Rs. 5 crores. The students in religious seminaries are given textbooks free of cost. They are provided free accommodation and free food. Age is no bar in acquiring admission to the institution.

The Deoband took center stage when the Taliban regime gained power in Afghanistan. The Taliban's ideological center was a particularly fundamentalist and aggressive, even tyrannical, interpretation of the Deobandi school of thought. The Indian Express reported on April 12, 2001: "In Kashmir, the Deoband school of thought is the driving force, the same force that feeds the Taliban in Afghanistan and jihadi groups in Pakistan, including the Jaish-e-Mohammad and the Harkart-ul-Mujahideen.... Although Deobandis here deny that these religious schools are potential jihad factories. They insist that students in the valley are taught not to take to the gun but they admit that much of what is taught overlaps with the hard-line philosophy of the Taliban."

"The Deobandi School in Kashmir teaches: The safe place for women is in pardah (veil) and inside the four walls of the house. Television is the spark of hell responsible for moral degradation and watching it is un-Islamic and sinful," notes the author of this article. The glimpses of these beliefs were seen in *Darul-ul-Uloom Qasmia* right in the heart of the summer capital Srinagar.

What is more disturbing about the Darul-ul-Uloom madrassas in J&K is that these schools are essentially institutes with political ideologies since they are backed by political groups. For example, Jamaat-e-Islami (JI) schools are run by the Jamaat-e-Islami group, at one stage headed by Syed Ali Shah Geelani. Jamaat-e-Islami was founded in India in 1938 by Sayyid Abdul A'l Maudoodi. It developed on the concept of Nizam-e-Mustafa – the system enunciated by the Prophet Mohammad. Maudoodi wanted total supremacy to be given to Koran and Sunnah in Pakistan. The organization aimed at molding the entire social, moral, political and economic system of the world in accordance with the tenets of Islam. In J&K, the organisation was set up in 1942 at Shopian by Maulvi Ghulam Ahmad Ahar in collaboration with Syed Shahab-ud-Din and other like minded people. Both in theory and practice, it is on the same wavelength as the Jamaat-e-Islami of Pakistan. It rejects secularism and socialism; therefore it works for Kashmir's merger with Pakistan. It believes in Islam-oriented political mobilization. It also wants Kashmiri society to be reformed and refashioned in accordance with the principles of the Shariat. It has also gone on record to advocate jihad as a legitimate weapon for the Muslims. In the early 1990s, it constituted its militant wing, Hizbul Mujahideen, earlier known as Al-Badr. It has an indirect influence on the children studying in their madrassas and schools.

Though it has been very rare that a madrassa student in Kashmir has been found guilty in militancy-related cases, the concern has more to do with the negative face of education that leaves young boys vulnerable to be motivated to join jihad, as has happened in Pakistan. Ghulam Qadir Ganai, an eighth class student in a madrassa at Bandipora Darul-Uloom, is a case in point. In 1990, instead of joining a mosque, he crossed the LoC to get arms training. He later rose to become one of the most dreadful militants in the valley – known for having blown up the former power minister Ghulam Ahmad Bhat. In South Kashmir, a survey on ‘the militants arrested and killed’ throws light on the alarming situation. A boy of Redwani, Kulgam Bashir Ahmad who was studying in a madrassa in Gujarat and was under the police scanner is another example. After graduating from a madrassa, he joined the Hizbul Mujahideen in the valley. Several youth of Kulgam are reportedly studying in madrassas in Gujarat, the most ethnically divided state in the country. The J&K government keeps a watch on the madrassas since it believes that though they are not directly involved in the militancy, they propagate subversive ideologies that can increase ethnic tension in the state.

Qasmia’s Principal Ahmad Sayeed however denies any connection between madrassas and the militancy or pan-Islamic terrorism. “It is a vicious propaganda against Muslims of the world. Nobody is clear as to who did September 11 and if anyone is to be blamed, it is the US. Look at the US and its role in Iraq. The Deoband believe in peace and service through religion. We believe in morality, humanity, and it is essentially the education imparted in material world that has created troubles all over. The education outside is unhealthy. It is deviating man from the path of humanity and religion,” he argues, making his political ideology very explicit. Sayeed adds: “Government schools which also offer free studies are secular and scientific. But we say that since we are Muslims, we need to study Islam and its related subjects alone. Our focus is our religion and not secularism or other religions.”

Religion is the focus of other Islamic schools as well in the valley. Besides Darul-Ulooms, according to official records, there are eight *Anjumane-Nusrat-ul Islam* schools run by Mirwaiz Umar Farooq, 350 schools affiliated to *Jamaat-e-Islam Falah-I-Aam Trust*, 150 Hanfia schools run by *Anjuman Tableg-I-Islam*, 88 *Muslim Auqaf Trust* madrassa High schools and 12 higher madrassa schools, based on different schools of Islamic thought or sects in Jammu and Kashmir.

The difference between Darul-ulooms and these schools is that the former are confined to Islamic studies alone where as the latter are teaching regular subjects like Mathematics, English and Sciences alongside Islamic studies.

That is why, Qasmia's principal, has a strong opponent in Mufti Ghulam Rasool Samoon, Principal of the Islamia Higher Secondary school, Arabic Oriental College and a Deobandi himself who spent 12 years in Deoband. "Islam doesn't say that don't read Science. In fact science is in built in Islam. We are teaching science, computers and religion simultaneously," he says.

The UNICEF says, "Education is often used as a panacea for a broad spectrum of social ills, from racism to misogyny. While the impact of such initiatives has been mixed, their starting premise is the same: that formal education can shape the understandings, attitudes, and ultimately, the behaviour of individuals. If it is true that education can have a socially constructive impact on inter-group relations, then it is equally evident that it can have a socially destructive impact. Because more energy tends to be expended on the examination of the positive face, rather than the negative face of education, it is useful to begin by considering some of the ways in which education has exacerbated inter-group hostility under conditions of ethnic tension."

Madrassas like Qasmia deepen the ethnic differences in Kashmir which is already torn by the ethno-religious violent movement. The negative orientation of education can be as harmful as illiteracy. Since education is essentially seen only as a positive process of reforming societies, one tends to ignore how education can be directed negatively and cause damage to not only the students but to the society as whole. With a thinking that "only we are better", children see everyone else around them as the enemy and as being inferior, causing deep divisions in the society and annihilating ideas like pluralism, secularism and democracy.

Prof. H Naseem Rafiabadi at the Department of Islamic Studies at the University of Kashmir supports the idea of madrassas teaching science and English besides religion. "Islam has not prohibited value education and madrassas need to reform their curriculum."

# The Suicidal Cult Martyr

*“Mankind will reject and kill their prophets, but men love their martyrs and honour those whom they have done to death.”*

– Fyodor Dostoyevsky

Some pungent fumes of gunpowder, roasted flesh, metal and plastic were still rising from the debris of a multi-storey building in Srinagar.

On August 27, 2003, when the then Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee and his deputy L.K. Advani were in town to attend the eighth inter-state chief ministers’ council meet, the building was smashed in an encounter between the holed up militants and the Indian security forces. At 7 p.m., an unidentified militant had fired a number of pistol shots and lobbed a hand grenade on the CRPF personnel guarding the highly fortified Central Telegraph Office (CTO) complex on Maulana Azad Road in Civil Lines area, four kilometers from SKICC – venue of the Inter-State Council Meeting. The militant’s attempted suicide attack on the CTO had failed. He had run into the three-storey Hotel Greenway opposite the CTO complex. In the ensuing gun-battle between the fidayeen and the forces, five people were killed.

After some searching through the rubble, security forces pulled out the charred body of the Al-Mansurian (Lashkar-e-Taiba’s shadow name) militant.

In the police records, this body got registered as “fidayeen” (the suicide attacker). But as his identification was ascertained, the specifics devastated even more than what had been destroyed in the encounter. His identity shattered several beliefs.

Unlike other fidayeen attacks which are generally carried out by Pakistani militants, this was a Kashmiri boy – Ishtiyahq Ahmad Matta – the 26 year-old son of Ghulam Qadir, a driver in downtown Srinagar.

Not only that he was a Kashmiri youth who had taken the unusual course of becoming a fidayeen, Matta was shockingly a computer engineering student on the verge of graduation. He was not like those several hundred Kashmiri youth who had few career prospects due to lack of modern education. Matta had a great future in the booming

international IT sector, had he lived. This incident was horrifying not only to his parents, but to Kashmiri society, since it had torn apart the belief that a Kashmiri militant cannot turn ferociously suicidal. In fact, this one incident became an example of the changing face of the indigenous militancy.

Not that he was the first militant in the valley, or the first local fidayeen, but he became an indicator of the fact that the suicidal cult is not a rejected doctrine among educated Kashmiri boys. His death made it clear that the theory that only foreign or Pakistani militants can go on suicidal missions in Kashmir was no longer correct. His dead body was evidence to the reality that many literates like him are motivated to die in Kashmir. Many prospective doctors and engineers, like him, prefer dying to an honorable, comfortable life that comes from education and employment. Many college or university-going boys like him are attracted to the idea of “martyrdom”.

Matta’s parents and friends haven’t come to terms with this as yet. It is still incomprehensible to them as to why Matta would choose the path of self-destruction. Right at the corner of a narrow lane through downtown Srinagar is Ghulam Qadir’s house where even now Matta’s mother spends hours crying and sobbing. “How could he kill and die,” she wails hearing his name. The woman narrates how her poor illiterate husband had worked hard to provide education to all three sons. “We did not want our children to suffer because of our illiteracy and poverty. We sent them to school and college so that they could have a decent life. Matta would have become an engineer but look what a disaster has happened,” the father bemoans.

Matta is not the only Kashmiri fidayeen who became a martyr. And martyrdom is not merely a glamorous word; it is a concept, an ideology that has the potential to indoctrinate boys in Kashmir. There have been around half a dozen cases where fidayeen were identified as young Kashmiri boys, according to official records. Afaq Ahmad Shah, a 12<sup>th</sup> class dropout of Khanyar, Srinagar is seen as the first Kashmiri fidayeen. He drove a car loaded with explosives up to the gates of Army headquarters at Badami Bagh in Srinagar. As soon as he was ordered to stop by a sentry at the check post, one of his aides positioned in the vicinity of the car, triggered the remote controlled car bomb. Afaq, along with the car, was blown up into smithereens.

A shy boy, Afaq had started going to the mosque regularly and would spend hours there after he failed in his examinations twice and left school. Jaish-e-Mohammad upper ground workers in the mosque befriended him and began motivating him. But Ishtiyaq Matta was not a dropout like Afaq. So wasn't Nadeem Khateeb. Nadeem was trained as a pilot in the US. His brother Waseem would be seen hanging around with the elites, government officials and influential politicians in Kashmir. His father Inayatullah Khateeb was a government chief engineer and mother Mahjabeen, a former lecturer. When Nadeem was killed in an encounter with security forces in the forests of upper reaches of Udhampur district in J&K, it had shocked everyone in the state including the administration. Nadeem had joined Al-Badr and received arms training in Pakistan.

Another such case is that of Mohammed Sheikh of Pulwama district, a post-graduate in commerce. He joined Hizbul Mujahideen but was arrested by the police a few years ago. Lashkar's spokesman arrested in the valley a couple of years ago, Majid Qadri alias Abu Huzifa, was doing his MBA from Kashmir University and belonged to an affluent family. He was also preparing for the civil services examination. Tariq Ahmad Dar, arrested in the New Delhi serial blasts masterminded by Lashkar, held a Masters degree in Science and was working with a multinational company as an executive.

So why are educated youth from well-to-do families drawn to the suicidal cult of martyrdom? Can we draw parallels between this new generation of youth who are suicidal and the insurgents of 1989-90? To the latter question, the answer is "No". One would argue that it is obvious that the contemporary educated youth who have taken to the most ferocious and dreadful methodology of insurgency must be politically conscious because of the education. But there is a sharp distinction between the two. In the early 1990s, when militancy began, it was an expression of political resentment against the Indian establishment in Kashmir alone. The insurgents targeted the establishment and its supporters, both Pandits and Muslims in Kashmir, but were far away from killing themselves. Yasin Malik managed to dodge the security forces at least half a dozen times while he was running for his life. He even jumped from a multi-storey house when forces were hounding him. Several of his partners and colleagues in the movement remained underground. Their mission was to uproot the system, but not kill themselves or people elsewhere in India. There

were no fidayeen cells within the JKLF and their area of operation was confined to Kashmir unlike current militant groups which have carried out attacks in Delhi, Gujarat, UP, Bangalore, Bombay and elsewhere in India.

JKLF realized the futility of violence and bloodshed very soon. They chose the path of resolving their political resentment through political means like dialogue and through the peace process. But contemporary educated youth have joined terrorist organizations such as the Lashkar-e-Taiba and Jaish-e-Mohammad, which do not accept political solutions through the use of political and constitutional means. Instead, they have politico-religious goals that they want to attain through “Islamic jihad”.

To the first question – why educated youth are turning suicidal – Nadeem’s story can throw some light. Aashiq Peerzada, a friend of Nadeem Khateeb’s family narrates how Nadeem was “chosen by the Almighty for Holy Jihad to end the Indian occupation in Kashmir”. Nadeem Khateeb was a close friend and classmate of Ishfaq Majid Wani, one of the pioneers of Kashmir insurgency, killed in 1990 itself. Though they were good friends at Biscoe School Srinagar, yet Nadeem was not attracted to the militant movement in the early 1990s and therefore didn’t follow Ishfaq. Instead, he chose to go to the US to become a flying instructor. It is while teaching at Arizona that he was drawn to the “religious jihad against Indian occupation in Kashmir”.

“Having become a pure Islamist, he wanted to join jihad in consonance with the Islamic law. And according to Islam, one needs to seek the permission of parents to join jihad. Therefore he called his mother from the US and told her about his wish. Nadeem’s mother was furious and upset; she instantly asked him to give up the idea. So as to distract him from this self-destructive path, Nadeem’s parents got him engaged to his cousin. But Nadeem sent back the engagement ring telling them that he had a bigger mission in life. Nadeem kept calling his mother and she kept refusing. Till one day Nadeem, out of a mystic claim, told her that he is certain that she would permit him after the dream that she will have within a week. Miraculously, Nadeem’s mother saw a dream. In the dream, she saw Nadeem in an old fashioned green Arabic robe standing near a river. Nadeem’s mother, in the dream, was shocked to see him in such clothes and she told him that people would mock at his old fashioned dress. Nadeem did not respond but he walked ahead and

entered a green mosque nearby, in the dream. It was through this dream that Nadeem's mother received a divine message to let her son follow the path of jihad. Next day, Nadeem called again from the US and his mother permitted him to be a jihadi and blessed him to be a shaheed (martyr)." After his "martyrdom", the Khateeb, living in the posh Rawalpora area in Srinagar constructed a mosque in Nadeem's name.

Ishtiyaq Ahmad Matta had fasted for two days before going for the suicidal mission and was deeply religious. The common thread of radicalized religion binds together the new generation of educated youth who joined the violent movement.

## **The Grammar of Suicidal Missions**

Kashmir, known for its Sufi Islam, is fast changing its religious identity and ideology. The induction of pan-Islamic terrorist organizations in Kashmir is annihilating the moderate peace-loving form of Islam. Along with these organizations, came foreign mercenaries and the foreign radical version of Islam. In the last 15 years, either through coercion or gradual means of influencing Kashmiri masses, radical Islamic groups have played a significant role in changing the complexion of Islam in the valley. Apart from imposing their diktats on dress codes and the Islamic code of conduct, these groups have focused on the propagation of Wahhabism – one of the most radical forms of Islam and indoctrination of the youth.

Ferocious violence and the suicidal cult are special features of two terrorist outfits active in Kashmir: Lashkar-e-Taiba and Jaish-e-Mohammad, and their sister wings or shadow groups. The US has labeled the outfits as "foreign terrorist organizations". It is only after strong motivation and indoctrination that terror groups like LeT and JeM have succeeded in recruiting about 50 percent of the local youth in the valley. A Kashmiri youth who joins such organizations fully accepts their ideology and also garners support for them in the valley (since foreign militants cannot survive without local support).

In Kashmir, where the majority was drawn towards Sufi Islam, where people still believe in going to Sufi shrines, and where mystics have a huge following, a considerable amount of literature and CDs on Jamaat-e-Islami and Wahhabi ideology have been sold and circulated over the last 15 years. That sales have increased is evident by the fact that, in Srinagar, there are several big and small shops involved in this business.

Since the establishment of the Jamaat-e-Islami ideology in the valley in 1942, a strong cadre has been created and this has been used to set up its militant wing Hizbul Mujahideen. The famous Muslim religious leader Dr Zakir Nayak whose television shows are telecast on all Pakistani channels such as QTV and Ary, is more or less seen as an ideologue of Jamaat-e-Islami. The local cable servers in Kashmir provide all Pakistani channels and regularly telecast his shows on local private channels in Kashmir.

However, the Wahhabi ideology, which is overtly more hard-line in nature, is being imparted by foreign mercenaries and terror outfits. There are four Islamic schools of thought – Hanafi, Maliki, Shafi'i and Hanbali. "Out of these, Hanbali comes from Saudi Arabia and is considered to be the hardest and most radical in character. The Wahhabis belong to the Hanbali madhab (school of thought). The theologians who pushed Pakistan towards Islamic radicalism and became the founders of Taliban espoused Wahhabi ideals. This sect, which took inspiration from the Saudi Hanbali school of thought and the Wahhabi worldview, increasingly co-opted the Deobandi movement in South Asia," says Syed Mohammad Sameer Siddiqi, an Islamic scholar at Kashmir University.

"Wahhabism was essentially a movement within the Hanbali School founded by Muhammad Ibn Abd Al Wahhab (1703-1792) to rid Islam of Sufi influences. Wahhabis seek the creation of Islamic states to be run by absolute Islamic law," he says adding, "This ideology has severely destroyed our Sufi Islam in Kashmir in the last 15 years." The Wahhabi ideology doesn't permit Muslims to violate Islamic dress code or habits; to follow the saints; to hold pilgrimages to shrines and tombs; and to venerate stones, trees and caves. Besides, the Wahhabis strongly believe in elimination of non-believers (non-Wahhabi Muslims, Sufis and Shias, Christians and people of other faiths). They attack all luxury, infidels, alcoholism, adultery and infidelity.

"The terror group Lashkar-e-Taiba follows Wahhabism. Lashkar-e-Taiba (Army of the Pure), came into existence in 1987 in the Kunar province of Afghanistan, as the military wing of the Markaz-ud-Dawa-wal-Irshad (MDI), an Islamic fundamentalist organisation of the Ahle-Hadith sect in Pakistan. The MDI was founded by Zafar Iqbal and Prof. Hafiz Mohammad Sayeed (University of Engineering and Technology, Lahore) and Abdullah Azam of the International Islamic

University. Based in Muridke near Lahore, Pakistan, MDI runs around 2,200 madrassas and training centres across Pakistan and is headed by Prof. Hafiz Muhammad Saeed, who is also the Amir of the LeT. MDI propagates the pan-Islamic Wahhabi ideology and believes that democracy is the tool of infidels. It has nearly 500 offices in Pakistan,” intelligence officers in J&K say.

After taking part in the Afghan war against the Russians, Lashkar was inducted into Kashmir around 1993. The Markaz has a clear agenda: Starting with the complete Islamisation of Pakistan and Kashmir, they hope that Islam will finally dominate the entire world. Lashkar’s agenda includes the restoration of Islamic rule over all parts of India. The outfit seeks to bring about a union of all Muslim majority regions in countries that surround Pakistan. For Islamisation of the world, the MDI established the Jamia Dawat-ul-Islam, or university of Dawat-ul-Islam, in 1989. Located on a four-acre campus, it imparts religious education and military training.

The MDI, through its several websites like <http://www.jamatdawa.org/> and journals like Voice of Islam, which are either re-named or blocked now by the US administration has made strong cases for launching jihad against India. Articles written under the names of Muhammad Qasim, Abdur Rehman, Dr Manzoor Ahmad, Qazi Kashif Niaz, Memoona Sajid, Hafiz Abdussalam bin Muhammah, Mohammad Bashir vociferously argue the need for “jihad” against infidels and Indians. One of the most popular writers for Markaz, Prof. Abdur Rehman Makki in an essay on ‘Fidayee Activities in Shariah’ very selectively misinterprets the Shariah. Quoting instances from Muslim history, particularly from the life of the Prophet and the companions, he tries to prove that Fidayeen missions date back to the days of the Prophets. Lashkar-e-Taiba’s fidayeen missions are a continuation of this glorious tradition, he claims. There are glorified accounts of Lashkar terrorists as martyrs on these websites.

“Though these are suicidal missions and not suicide attacks, they are un-Islamic,” says Syed Mohammad Sameer Siddiqi who is also Mirwaiz of Aishmuqam in South Kashmir. He points out that Islam in Kashmir was essentially Sufi in nature and therefore about compassion and humanity. But with new means of indoctrination, MDI and other terrorist ideologues have influenced the youth in Kashmir. LeT, according to police records, has carried out at least 35 suicide attacks since 1999.

LeT cadres, unlike other terrorists, are known to prefer death in an encounter with the security forces rather than be arrested. Besides, majority of the massacres of non-Muslim minorities – Hindus and Sikhs – have been carried out by Lashkar.

Jaish-e-Mohammad (JeM) Mujahideen-e-Tanzeem (Army of the Prophet, Mohammad) is a much more recent organization, launched formally from Masjid-e-Falah, Karachi, on February 3, 2000. Founded by Maulana Masood Azhar (the man held responsible for IC-814 hijacking), the outfit was supported by three religious school chiefs, Mufti Nizamuddin Shamzai of the Majlis-e-Tawan-e-Islami (MTI), Maulana Mufti Rashid Ahmed of the Dar-ul Ifta-e-wal-Irshad and Maulana Sher Ali of the Sheikh-ul-Hadith Dar-ul Haqqania. The outfit claims that each of its offices in Pakistan would serve as schools of jihad. In its fight against India, the outfit aims to not only “liberate” Kashmir, but also to take control of the Babri Masjid in Ayodhya, Amritsar and Delhi.

The Jaish’s first attack on the valley was the suicide car bombing outside the 15 corps headquarters in Srinagar. A few days later, a 24-year-old British national, also a militant, blew up an explosive-laden vehicle while sneaking into the camp. The Jaish identified him as Mohammad Bilal, a former college student in the UK. Born into a Pakistani family in Birmingham, he was supposedly a “nightclub going lad until he became a born-again Muslim at the age of 18 after seeing the Prophet Mohammad in a dream.” Bilal flew straight to Pakistan for training after joining the Harkat-ul-Ansar, though he went back to England briefly in 1995. According to the Jaish mouthpiece, Zarbi-e-Momin, Bilal, who volunteered for the bombing, “always aspired to martyrdom and God fulfilled his desire.”

Assan Ullah shared a similar motivation that came from religious indoctrination. On February 21, 2004, Jammu and Kashmir Police, in a major breakthrough, foiled a terrorist strike that was to be carried out by a Lashkar suicide group at the Delhi International Airport. It was a rare incident that the fidayeen were caught alive well before they could succeed in their mission.

A group of three terrorists, hailing from Pakistan and owing allegiance to Lashkar-e-Toiba (LeT), were arrested in Poonch. The fidayeen were identified as Assan Ullah code Abu Bilal of Gujranwala, Pakistan, Mohammad Bashir code Abu Maria, and Rashid code Abu Kasha of

Karachi, Pakistan. The plan as per police interrogation was hatched in village Fazalabad in Surankote where LeT commanders namely Abu Salama and Asadullah under the supervision of Divisional Commander of LeT Abu Hanzullah prepared this group to carry out the fidayeen attack.

Assan Ullah would have attained “martyrdom” had J&K Police not thwarted his suicidal attack plan. Even as he regretted for having failed in his mission, he smiled, posed for photographs and then giggled when he was confronted by questions. What were the reasons behind his maniacal laughter? Assan Ullah quipped: “Those who are ready to die keep smiling always.”

Hailing from Gujranwala, Pakistan, the failed fidayeen narrated his plot: “Our group wanted to attack security personnel at International Airport, Delhi, and give the supreme sacrifice.” “But it did not happen,” he regretted. Assan Ullah divulged that he and his four other Pakistani LeT associates had infiltrated to the Indian side two-and-a-half months ago from Mendhar sector, Poonch. “We hid in Dara Sangla jungles of that sector and prepared a plot to carry out the fidayeen attack.”

“The motivation for joining jihad came when, in Pakistan, we were told that Muslims in Kashmir and in India are being tortured and victimized. So I joined LeT two years ago to be a jihadi. I wanted to help my Muslim brethren here. We were trained by our own Muslim people in Pakistan.” Did he have any special training for suicide attacks? “No, no, there is no special training for that. Initially, all men are trained for all kinds of attacks. Thereafter, there is a draw of lots that selects men for suicide missions. Only lucky people who are blessed by God get selected and the rest feel disappointed,” Assan Ullah said.

But Assan Ullah was a Pakistani semi-literate boy. The Lashkar and other terrorist groups, for the last three years, have been emphasizing on local educated youth. Though these groups are immensely dependent on exploitation of religion and religious sentiments, they have also realized the need for educated youth to not only spread their ideology but to also use skills acquired through professional courses.

In fact, over the last five years, Lashkar has increased its focus on educated youth for its second-rung leadership in Kashmir. Lashkar modules comprise well educated, computer literate and intelligent Sunni

Muslim boys between 20 to 30 years of age. Only Sunnis are recruited because the group propagates Sunni Wahabism, the pan-Islamic doctrine. They prefer skilled people against the illiterate and poor since they believe that only skilled and well-read people can carry out missions successfully. For example, in the 9/11 attack on the US, considerable research had been carried out as to how the twin towers could be rammed and at what angle to cause maximum damage and destruction. Such research would require education and expertise in engineering. “Educated youth are needed by the terrorist organizations because the definition of jehad or war has changed with the changing times. It is no longer a conventional war which can be fought by swords, but one that needs lot of expertise to carry out attacks on buildings and in public places where security is also vigilant and well equipped. That’s why educated Sunni boys who are also religious, make the cadres of terrorist organizations now,” says a senior intelligence officer in J&K.

## Pedigree Charts Soaked in Blood

*“What difference does it make to the dead, the orphans, the homeless, whether the mad destruction is wrought under the name of totalitarianism or in the holy name of liberty or democracy?”*

– M. K. Gandhi

Six year-old Ashwani and four year-old Sakhshi are oblivious to the word “Papa” or “Daddy”. They don’t seem to hear it when I ask them the name of their father. Their aunt Anjali holds them closer to her chest and shouts, “Don’t ask them that. They don’t know what Papa means.” Innocently, Ashwani and Sakhshi look towards their enraged aunt and then set themselves free from her hold. Their lunch, a common plate of rice with a variety of cooked turnip, remains untouched on the floor. They rush bare-feet to play hide and seek outside on the sweltering cemented small gallery of their one-room hutment in the Purkhoo migrant camp.

The Pandita siblings don’t have an idea of what Papa or daddy means. Because consciously they never saw one. Their father Ravinder Kumar, working in the Jammu and Kashmir Police, was killed in a bomb blast while he was on duty in Srinagar on August 10, 2000. For them, the family comprises their mother Ranjini, grandmother Nirmala Pandita, an uncle whom they call brother, and aunt Anjali. This is what has been taught to them, the relation Papa or daddy having been expunged from the vocabulary spoken at home. “They don’t know about their Papa as yet. Ashwani was only three and Sakhshi only a year old when their father was killed. It was difficult to make them understand at that time and we let them grow without explaining it to them. But they would know eventually,” says Anjali.

Panditas of Telwani Achhabal, South Kashmir, had chosen to stay back in the valley even as the majority of the Kashmiri Pandit community migrated to Jammu and elsewhere in 1990. Nirmala Pandita a mother of three sons and a daughter, was a contended woman living in the countryside, tending fields, nurturing orchards and sharing moments of joy and sorrow with the other six Hindu families of the village and the Muslim neighbors. On February 4, 2000, her younger son Veerji was shot dead when militants opened indiscriminate fire on all the six

Hindu families of their village. The killing shattered the family and without performing the last rites of her son, the family left the valley. The family landed up at the Purkhoo migrant camp at Jammu. However, she was compelled to permit her eldest son Ravinder to return to his job in the Police in Srinagar so that they could survive on his income. On August 10<sup>th</sup>, 2000, the radio news shattered the family completely. Among the dead of the August 10<sup>th</sup> blast was Nirmala's son and Ranjini's husband, Ravinder.

"I have lost my two sons and I am still alive. What an unfortunate mother I am," wails a tearful Nirmala. In a choked voice, Ranjini adds, "I lost everything that day. My children became orphans that day. In societies like ours, the father's death means more than a mother's since the father is the bread winner, the protector of the family. A female does not count much. A fatherless child is an orphan officially."

But when a child loses a mother too, he becomes more than an orphan. He becomes homeless. He is deprived of the comforts of a mother's lap, her love, care and tenderness. Like 15 year-old Kiran at SOS Narwal in Jammu whose father Krishen Nath, a farmer was killed by terrorists in a massacre at Doda. Her mother couldn't bear the tragedy; she fell into severe depression; developed mental disorders and died in grief, leaving behind six orphaned children. "Both mummy and daddy left us at nobody's mercy. When they were alive, we had a home, clothes, food, books and their love. But now we have nothing. All of us are scattered because there was no one in the family who could feed us, sustain us. That is why I and my sister Anita are here in this orphanage. I haven't seen my brother for one year, he is in Baderwah all alone, I don't know if he is well," she cries.

A grim faced five year-old Sharifa of Kupwara in Banat Orphanage in Kashmir keeps gazing at the sky. Perhaps, she has no one to look at on the earth. Her father Mohammad Maqbool was killed by the Special Task Force. Her mother Saja was pressurized by the relatives to re-marry and therefore Sharifa landed at the orphanage. These facts about her are revealed by her teacher and if you ask her about her parents, all Sharifa has to say is, "I don't know. I want to fly. I want to become a pilot," suddenly trying to justify her favorite pass-time of looking at the sky. She has no understanding about the life and its intricate complexities. She doesn't know if she ever belonged to anyone, if she ever was a normal child like all others. She doesn't know even

know what normal means, what a parentless child means. All that she is conscious of is that she doesn't have anywhere to go and she is ordained to live in the orphanage.

A generation of orphans has been produced by the conflict in Jammu and Kashmir. Hundreds have lost both parents and become homeless. Scores have nowhere to go but for the orphanages. If the violence continues, Kashmir will soon become a valley of orphanages. Although precise figures on the number of orphans in Jammu and Kashmir are not available, according to a survey conducted by J&K's Yateem Trust in 1999, the orphan population in the valley alone is 15,308. Yateem Trust was set up with one orphanage in 1972 in the valley, but its responsibilities increased tremendously after the insurgency broke out. It has three orphanages now. "The number of orphans must have increased by five percent since 1999," Abdul Rashid Hanjoora, a trustee of the Yateem Trust said.

As per a study on 'Impact of conflict situation on women and children in Kashmir' by sociologist and a professor in University of Kashmir, Bashir Ahmad Dabla, "the problems that children faced after the death of their father included economic hardships (48.33 per cent), psychological setback (22.00 per cent), denial of love and affection (13.66 per cent), and apathy by relatives and friends (08.66 per cent)."

Ravinder Koul whose father Roshan Lal Koul of Pulwama was killed by militants in 1991, for example, has been living in a migrant camp for the last 15 years and sustaining his mother, two sisters and himself, on tuitions and his father's pension. "My father's killing made us leave the valley; we became homeless and migrated to live in a pigeonhole at a migrant camp. I did small part-time jobs to graduate. Our existence has been hand to mouth ever since my father was killed. I have been doing over time to provide education to my sisters," he says. But Ravinder is very worried about how he would manage to marry off his two sisters happily. Dr. Dabla's study shows that 86 of the 300 orphans he surveyed received financial help from relatives, 67 from government organizations, 36 from NGOs, and 24 from other sources like neighbors and well-wishers. But the rest, the single largest group of 87 orphans received no help at all. And consequently, as Dr. Dabla notes, most of them began to work in the carpet, handicrafts and agriculture sectors in the valley.

The psychological impact of being orphaned is more devastating. Eleven year-old Salma wakes up in the middle of the night; screams; cries; looks around; and then fixes her gaze at the floor. For hours, she stays quiet and unmoved. Four years ago, when her father, a tea seller in Rajouri was killed in a grenade explosion, Salma slid into a depressed anxious state which developed into Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD).

PTSD is a specific form of anxiety caused due to a frightening event such as violence, physical torture, rape or natural calamity. The symptoms include recurring of memories or dreams of the event, a sense of personal isolation, and disturbed sleep and concentration.

In Kashmir, seven percent of the total population suffers from PTSD, says noted psychiatrist Dr. Mushtaq Margoob. Salma is his patient. Salma, he says, shows relapse of symptoms whenever Kashmir is badly hit by violence or natural calamity. “The psychological morbidity is generally transitory but a residual percentage remains and because of recurrence of violent attacks around, it develops into PTSD again,” he adds.

Although there are NGOs working for orphans, the government coming up with rehabilitation schemes, civil society moving forward to help them in one way or the other, these measures do not guarantee an end to the growing numbers of orphans in Jammu and Kashmir. More than anything else, a peaceful society is what will ensure that another generation of orphans is not produced. More than orphanages, children in Kashmir need their parents, their homes, and a peaceful and progressive life.

# Newton's Third Law of Hatred

*You can kill a man but you can't kill an idea.*

– Medgar Evers

“A Mujahid is the man who hides in the dark.” Tabassum, a seven-year-old girl, defines her late father as the man who would disappear in the dark woods. But darkness here does not have any negative connotations. That’s why she forthrightly answers this question: What was your father’s occupation? “He was a Mujahid,” she says with a little pride in her big eyes.

Belonging to a generation of orphans, Tabassum and her likes at the Banat Institute of Education – an orphanage in Kashmir – cannot distinguish militancy from any other profession. “A militant”, to them, is as respectable as a doctor or a professor. And their interpretation of the word is, “The man who hides in the dark.”

Hides from what, from whom? “The Indian Army.”

Why? “Because the Army wanted to kill him.”

Why?

Tabassum stares back, blankness suddenly overshadowing her vibrant face. Another voice interrupts the silence, “She doesn’t know the answer. But I do.”

The girl in the clothes that outsize her small build introduces herself as the monitor of the class. She is the daughter of a late Kashmir University professor in whose memory the Banat orphanage was set up very close to his residence. “Because Army doesn’t like Mujahid, because Army is Hindu and Mujahid is Muslim, because Hindus are bad and Muslims good, because Hindus kill Muslims unnecessarily, because Hindus have many Gods but there is only one, and that is Allah of Muslims,” argues the girl with a strange innocence.

Encouraged by the monitor’s outspokenness, her classmate, nine-year old Kausar comes forward and describes her father, a Hizbul Mujahid militant, as a “martyr”. “A martyr is the man who fights for his nation and my father was killed by security forces because he was fighting

for Kashmir-Pakistan nation,” says Kausar, whose younger sister Kulsuma is also living with her at the orphanage in Budgam, far away from their widowed mother in Bijbehara, South Kashmir. Their uncle could take only the responsibility of their poor mother and two daughters, younger to Kousar and Kulsuma.

It becomes a difficult situation for their teacher Sameena Muzaffar when the girls ask her why they couldn't go home as she herself does at the last school bell. Eventually, the girls at the orphanage behave sensibly as is expected in an orthodox and conservative Kashmir where gender bias is not uncommon and where girls are not supposed to fight the rules, nor show their rebellion.

But nine-year-old Feroz (name changed) in Kupwara, feels angrier and stronger than girls like Kousar and Kulsuma. “Indian security forces killed my father and I am going to kill them,” says Feroz emphatically. He announces his aim: “I want to become a Mujahid like my father.”

Miles away, in Shri Ved Mandir Bal Niketan, a shelter for poor children, live a dozen orphans who lost their parents to the militant violence. A boy who hates Tabassum's father and his likes is determined to join the Army. Sunil wants to join the forces, “only to kill Muslim terrorists” who killed his father Mungi Lal, a farmer in Doda in 1995. “They (militants) barged into our house, kicked my mother and dragged my father to the fields. I was hiding downstairs at the basement along with my grandfather. My mother went in search of my father. But it was after four months that my father's body was found along the riverside,” he recalls.

So does Parmilla, an eight-year-old Dogra girl of Paddar. She wishes to avenge the death of her father and grandfather. Hiding in the adjacent room with her mother and siblings, Parmilla listened to the gunshots that left her father and grandfather dead. They cried, sobbed and fainted only to wake up with a consciousness that their loved ones had gone forever.

Tearful Parmilla recalls and sings in Paddari dialect, “oh faujia ghar teri amma ho bimare/meri sahib chhuti na dende/oh goria oh na koyi chhithi na vistare/hum door desh rehte/oh goriya border par teri yaad aate (oh soldier, we miss you at home).” Parmilla's soldier father and grandfather were killed with five others by militants in 2003. She was adopted by SOS Jammu. “I want to become a soldier to kill mujahid,” she asserts.

The conflict in Kashmir has produced a generation of orphans on both sides. But it has also created a vicious cycle of hatred and disgust in both Jammu and Kashmir. Hindu children recognize militants as Muslims and Muslim children see the Indian Army as bad Hindus. Hindu children want to kill Muslim militants and Muslim children want to kill the Hindu Army. The militant movement of 1989-90 that aimed at achieving absolute political rights has pushed Jammu and Kashmir to the point where current and future generations will exude hatred and animosity towards each other for decades to come.

A legacy left by the likes of Feroz's father is not the only factor that would allow death and destruction to reign in Kashmir for the next several generations. A heap of files and few odd photographs are as prominent as anything else in Parveen Ahengar's small decaying house. From early dawn to dusk, her mission is to meet the "who is who" of Jammu and Kashmir and New Delhi. Every single penny has been spent on Javed Ahmad Ahengar, her son. Javed's existence is in question for the last 16 years.

On August 18, 1990, Javed, a class eleven school student, was picked up in a raid at his cousin's house by the security forces. "The Army told me he is in the hospital. From hospitals to jails, I went everywhere in search of my son, but didn't find him. I met all the ministers, all those who are at the helm of affairs, but I haven't found my son," she cries. "I have been fighting this case for the last 14 years, my footwear has worn out, my feet hurt with blisters, but I guess there is no justice in this country. Therefore isn't it justified to feel revengeful," she asks.

According to official figures, between 1990 and 2003, 3931 persons have disappeared and 144 have been killed in custody by security forces. Since 2003, the number has gone up considerably.

Rukaiya's father, an auto driver, Abdul Hamid Badiyari from Gawkadal Srinagar was picked up by the police after an explosion in Law Chowk. He never returned home and the police never provided his whereabouts to Rukaiya's mother. Helplessly, the mother admitted Rukaiya and her brother at two different orphanages and is herself fighting a case for her disappeared husband in the court. The incidents of Army and paramilitary forces committing murders, rapes and human rights violations in Kashmir are cultivating more hatred.

“That’s why we say it is not terrorism in Kashmir, but it is a reaction against the atrocities committed by India against Kashmiri Muslims. We have been deprived of our fundamental rights, our honour is at stake,” says Mushtaq Mughal, a student at the Urdu Department in Kashmir University. Rawoof Mudasir of Pulwama and from the English Department at Kashmir University endorses this and adds: “We have respect for the militants, and the movement is not on the decline at all. It certainly is gaining momentum day by day. We all are prepared to take up guns and we can cope up with the economic and other losses once we get rid of Indian occupation in Kashmir.”

UNICEF’s Padilla, Ruiz and Brand (1974) have noted that within the context of ethnic conflict, ethnic attitudes are formed early in life. Once positive or negative prejudices are formed, they tend to increase with time. Early socialization experiences are, therefore, critical in the formation of ethnic attitudes. There are many components that make up these experiences for each child. In the broadest sense, Riegel (1976) argues that socio-cultural attitudes and identities are a function of the interaction of historical socio-cultural milieu, individual factors and the physical environment. Together, these are understood to form unique patterns of development for each generation, each ethnic group and each individual.

Children do not come to the classroom as blank slates. They bring with them the attitudes, values and behavior of their societies beyond the classroom walls. In this context, even early research in contemporary social sciences indicates that children who show less acceptance of other groups tend to be more constricted, cynical, suspicious and less secure than children who are more tolerant (Adorno, Frenkel-Brunswick, Levinson and Sanford 1950). Prejudiced children are more likely to be moralistic, to dichotomize the world, to externalize conflict, and to have a high need for definiteness (Allport 1954). Under conditions of inter-ethnic tension and conflict, such characteristics unavoidably find their way into the classroom and must thus be taken into account if the peace-destroying impact of education is to be minimized.

## Conclusion

When I wrote the research proposal on “Guns and Books at odds with each other in Kashmir”, I had no idea that I would later regret the assumptions made in this title. As I began my research on this subject, I realized that the title failed to fully convey what I had discovered through the study.

The journeys that I undertook during the course of this Fellowship exposed me to new realities, which in turn influenced my opinions. It was not just that guns and books were at odds with each other in Kashmir, but it was also that books were at variance with books and guns were in conflict with their usage. It was not just that militancy had an adverse impact on education but the reverse was also true. While illiteracy was a cause of militancy, literacy too was a factor that contributed to the mobilization of youth to take up guns.

When I make the assertion that “books are at odds with books”, it is a reference to the fact that education has two faces. Education can be oriented in both positive and negative directions. Education, perhaps more than any other force, can transform a society and thus a whole community of people.

In Kashmir, education has played a complex role. Even as modern education and exposure to the mass media made urban youth conscious of their political rights, the education system in madrassas had a paralytic impact on the young minds living in the suburbs and in rural areas. While the growing literacy in urban Kashmir generated political awareness, the skewed education in madrassas created a make-believe world for children. Such education has paved the way for the radicalization of Kashmiri society. The children and youth of a radicalized community see everything and everyone from the prism of their own fanatic interpretation of the religion. This in turn encourages violence and conflict with other ethnic groups. In such circumstances, religious fanatic terror groups are able to find a space for their survival. This explains why foreign militant groups have been able to recruit Kashmiri youth into suicide squads.

Further, the conflict has created a bitterness, animosity and hatred that will be transferred from one generation to the next. The Hindu children despise Muslims and Muslim children detest Hindus. Due to the

migration of Kashmiri Pandits from the valley, Kashmiri society has little memory of what pluralism means. The new generation of young Muslims in the valley has not seen coexistence since Kashmiri Pandits and Muslims have lived segregated lives for more than 16 years now. Similarly, Kashmiri Pandit children and teenagers have been born and raised in Jammu or elsewhere due to the migration.

Most important of all however is the ripple effect of human rights violations committed by the Indian security forces and the state police. Children in Kashmir identify India with its forces which, at times, have committed grave atrocities and exhibited inappropriate behavior. Due to such incidents, Kashmiri society is quick to disparage goodwill gestures and developmental work done by the security forces. This has further widened the gulf between India and Kashmir.

Further, the constant tension between centre-state relationships has not ended. New Delhi lacks a long-term vision and policy to handle relations with Jammu and Kashmir, although India and Pakistan have moved ahead on several levels to end the hostility of 58 years. But when it comes to India's relationship with Jammu and Kashmir, there remains a tendency to meddle with state politics and governance. The political mistakes committed in the past are still a part of New Delhi's policy on Kashmir. Good governance is certainly a factor that could have prevented the sustenance of the conflict, but the political system in J&K and New Delhi's approach has not helped.

Children and youth are both within and outside the system of violence and conflict. They are the ones who are directly influenced by it and can transfer its impact to the next generation. If the conflict is prolonged, the vicious cycle of hatred will multiply and overshadow the beautiful and soothing Chinars of the valley for decades to come. Kashmir will reach a stage of no return.

