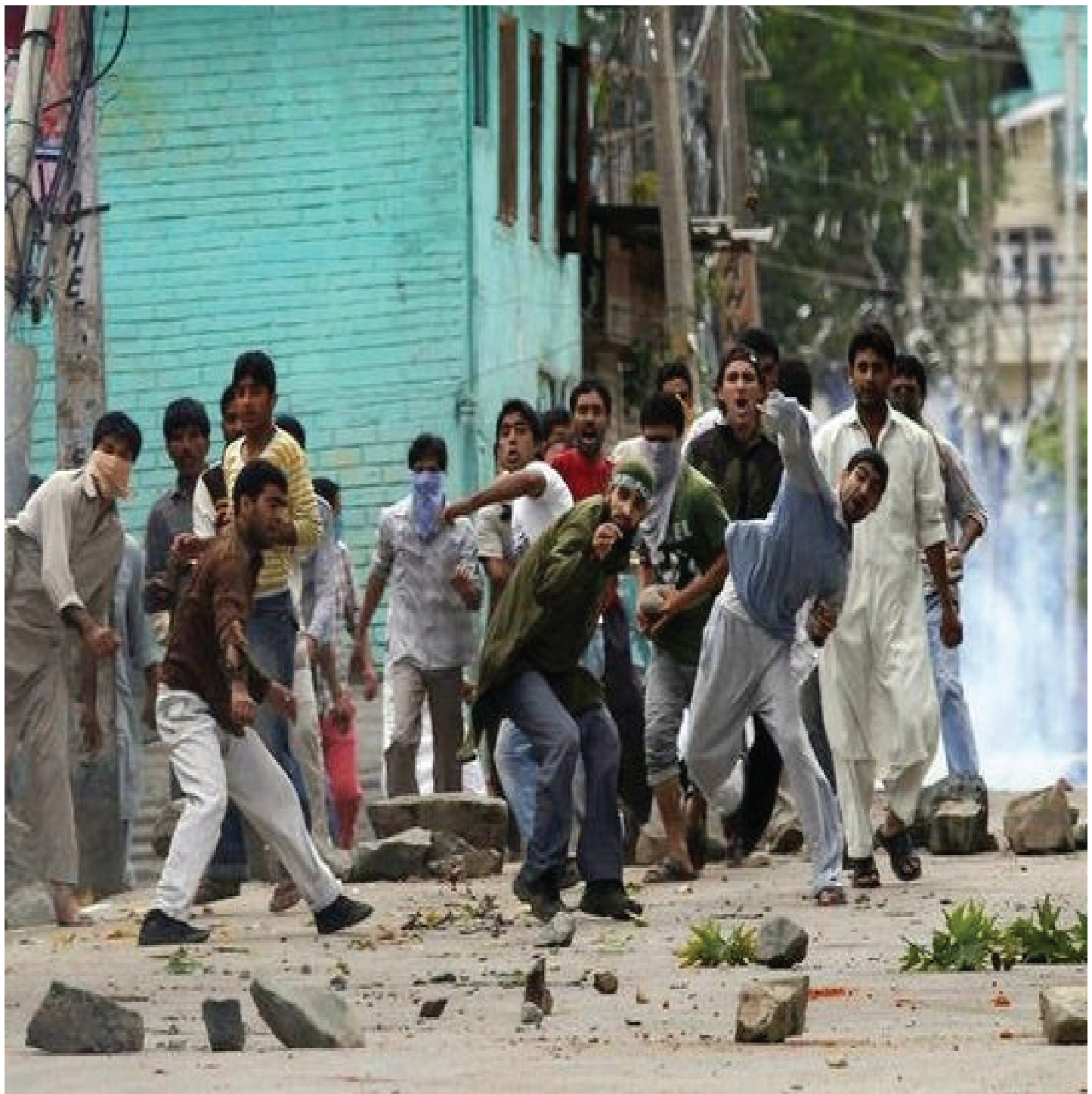


Peacebuilding in Jammu and Kashmir State: A Proposed Intervention

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Introduction

“People living in settings of deep-rooted conflict are faced with extraordinary irony. Violence is known; peace is the mystery. By its very nature, therefore, peacebuilding requires a journey guided by the imagination of risk.” - John Paul Lederach, *The Moral Imagination*

Jammu and Kashmir's (J&K) identity has been understood mostly through the lens of Pakistani and Indian national frameworks. Since Pakistan and India's independence from British Colonial Rule in 1947, J&K has been a disputed territory claimed by both states. This dispute has led to a state of ongoing political tensions, border violations, and even full-fledged wars, including the War of 1947, 1965, 1971, the Siachen Conflict, and Kargil War. In 1949 the first group of unarmed military observers called the United Nations Military Observer Group in India and Pakistan (UNMOGIP) were sent to supervise the ceasefire in the state of Jammu and Kashmir. In 1972, both India and Pakistan signed an agreement regarding the Line of Control (LOC), a de facto border between both states that takes the form of an electric fence between eight and twelve feet in height. The narratives told from Pakistani and Indian perspectives excludes the marginalized voices and experiences of the people from J&K. Due to years spent under conflict, children living in J&K have been left on the forefront of violence, and have been deprived of a shared understanding of the region's history.

This paper will propose a peace building intervention in an attempt to fill the void of missing voices from J&K's narrative, gain a collective understanding of history in the region, and promote structural values of peace and understanding in the current and future communities of J&K. This UNICEF-style peacebuilding intervention will take the form of peace education, peace training, and peace workshops. Using UNICEF's model of peace education, and the theories of John Paul Lederach's *The Moral Imagination*, I argue this intervention will begin the process of communities imagining a state of peace in Jammu and Kashmir.

Background

Jammu and Kashmir, which has been under the conquest and rule of the Mughals, Afghans, Sikhs, and the British Empire throughout its history, is a place full of contradictions and complexity. History of this

region extends as far back as the third century BC, “under the rule of Asoka, whose empire extended from Bengal to the Deccan, Afghanistan to the Punjab, and included Kashmir” (Schofield 1). Written records dating back to the 12th century can be found in the “Rajatarangini (Chronicle of Kings), which illustrate how, since legendary times, the valley's rulers came into contact and conflict with their neighbors” (Schofield 1). This historical narrative suggests the extensive nature of conquest in Kashmir, which, today, has left a diverse population made up of various tribes and ethnic groups inhabiting the region now known to the rest of the world as a territory dispute between India and Pakistan. J&K is divided into the geographic regions of Jammu, Kashmir Valley, and Ladakh, and is further divided into the diverse ethnic and religious groups including: “Gujjars, Bakkarwals, Kashmiri Pandits, Dogras, and Ladkhi Buddhists on the Indian side, and Balti, Shina Khowar, Burushashashki, Wakhi, and Pahari speaking people on Pakistan side, as well as Ismaili, Sunni, Shia, and Nur Bakshi sects of Islam in Azad Kashmir and Northern Areas” (Behera 104). The political interests of Pakistan and India have repeatedly overshadowed these diverse tribal, religious, and cultural groups with distinct identities. Additionally, J&K is commonly described as a Hindu-Muslim conflict, which is a misleading and simplistic interpretation of the conflict. Although J&K has a population of Muslims in majority, it is insufficient to overlook the many sects of Islam, as well as religions of Hinduism, Sikhism, and Buddhism that are practiced in the region. “Jammu and Kashmir is one of the most diverse regions in the subcontinent. Even its majority community of Kashmiri Muslims is not a unified, homogeneous entity in terms of its political beliefs, its ideological leanings, or the political goals of the decade-long insurgent movement in the Kashmir valley” (Behera 2). Further J&K political parties such as the Jammu and Kashmir National Conference, and the Jammu and Kashmir People's Democratic Party do not represent all interests of the state. Various minority groups including the Kashmiri Pandits, Dogras, and Gujjars are left marginalized and unrepresented by political parties. After the Pakistan and India partition in 1947, J&K was split with India gaining control of Ladakh, Kashmir Valley, and Jammu, while Pakistan controlled Gilgit, Baltistan, Muzaffarabad, Mirpur, and Poonch” (Behera 29). This division of J&K has led to disenfranchisement of minority groups, leading to

further disconnect and grievances over competing narratives.

Due to the diverse identities and interests of J&K, political movements have continuously failed to achieve desired objectives (Behera 144). Regardless of having a Muslim majority in J&K, the different secessionist movements in the 1950s and 1990s remained unsuccessful due to the exclusion of voices of minorities, with only Kashmiri Muslims represented by the campaigns (Behera 144).

“The minority social groups, in fact, sought autonomy from the Kashmir Valley. The collective and consistent opposition of the state’s linguistic, regional, and religious minorities checkmated the Kashmiri Muslim’s demand for secession. Likewise, the most important reason for the failure of Jammu’s political demands- ranging from regional political autonomy and a regional council to a separate state has been the lack of mass supporting in the region” (Behera 144).

Kashmiri politics in pre-partition India and disregarding the political stakes of the Indian National Congress and of the Muslim League in Kashmir, previous analyses have tended to see Kashmir as an immutable zero-sum test of India’s and Pakistan’s legitimating ideologies- in which one’s validity invalidates the other’s- which in turn precludes the possibility of any reconciliation” (Behera 1).

The purpose of this UNICEF-style peace education intervention in the region is to not leave the needs of J&K’s local communities unattended. Rather, UNICEF’s peace education training programs and workshops will allow local communities to imagine a state of peace.

UNICEF has implemented multiple peace education programs under its Peace Education Working Group, which is a part of the UNICEF Peace Education network. The following section will lay out how UNICEF defines peace education in this intervention,

Objective: To help children to understand and tolerate difference

This clearly demonstrates fragmentation and lack of unity among local groups in J&K. Further, regions of J&K such as Azad Kashmir are uncertain of their legality as a province of Pakistan. According to a 1948 resolution of the United Nations Commission for India and Pakistan, Azad Kashmir is not a province, or independent state of Pakistan, but, “pending final solution,” and “administered by the local authorities under the surveillance of the Commission” (Behera 172). This clearly suggests the ambiguous nature of local regions of J&K, which can be argued as purposely left unclear in “their constitutional and legal status as an effective tool for politically subjugating these areas” (Behera 172).

Proposed Intervention

Navnita Chadha Behera, in *Demystifying Kashmir*, suggests that our understanding of Kashmir, has always remained through an India-Pakistan or Hindu-Muslim lens, which in turn leaves it solely a conflict between India and Pakistan, ultimately ignoring the history and needs of Kashmir and its local people.

“By turning a blind eye to the local dynamics of

and how the intervention will operate peace training and workshops in the state of J&K. Peace education is defined as “ the process of promoting the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values needed to bring about behavioral changes that will enable children, youth and adults to prevent conflict and violence, both overt and structural; to resolve conflict peacefully; and to create the conditions conducive to peace, whether at an intrapersonal, interpersonal, intergroup, national or international level” (Fountain 1). This definition is particularly valuable in that it is rooted in addressing behavioral changes, which will begin the process of changing values and attitudes steeped in distrust and fear. Additionally, this operational definition by UNICEF is one that will work simultaneously with the intended intervention, for it targets structural prevention, or “measures to ensure that crises do not arise in the first place or, if they do, that they do not recur” (Hill PowerPoint).

The proposed intervention, which will implement peace education via peace training and peace workshops, will ultimately influence behavioral changes, which can potentially shift the values of the

society. Both the peace training and workshops will focus on promoting values of understanding, empathy, and recognition of 'other' narratives of history. This process of influencing behavior change in individuals can take place in eight stages as outlined by UNICEF. These include that participants "become aware of the issue, become concerned about the issue, acquire knowledge and skills pertaining to the issue, become motivated based on new attitudes and values, intend to act, try out the new behavior, evaluate the trial, and practice the recommended behavior" (Fountain 5). By incorporating peace education in training sessions and workshops, individuals in the community will begin to develop skills and values that are encompassing of change, solidarity, and reconciliation. UNICEF outlines the aims of peace education to influence both knowledge, skills, and attitudes that include some of the following: "self awareness, conflict analysis, critical thinking, ability to live with change, acceptance of others, and social responsibility" (Fountain 16).

The UNICEF-funded peace-training sessions and peace workshops will occur in J&K both inside and outside of schools. Peace training will be aimed at community leaders, teachers, and parents, while the peace workshops will target children and youth. The community-based training sessions will introduce individuals to both peace education and conflict management.

UNICEF-implemented peace training sessions, which are targeted towards adults, aim to provide adults with skill sets and attitudes that they can bring home to their communities, neighborhoods, schools, and families. For example, peace training sessions in the past by UNICEF have "been initiated by a facilitator who organizes sensitization and conflict resolution workshops for the adult leaders of the school, the parents, and teachers together. Teachers are also trained in pedagogical approaches which encourage planning and decision-making on the part of children and parents, to enable them to be more actively involved in school outreach activities" (Fountain 21). These types of sessions can be modeled in J&K, and can encourage trainees to use conflict prevention, and mediation as solutions to conflict. Further, this will encourage people to begin to challenge past conflict responses, and encourage people to conceptualize methods of self-sustaining peace both within the community and at home. Peace training workshops

aim to bridge the gap of marginalized voices in J&K, gain a collective understanding of history, and promote values of acceptance and coexistence.

UNICEF-implemented peace workshops for children and youth will occur both as part of the school curriculum and outside of the classroom. In the classroom, teachers will use the toolkits provided by UNICEF to implement activities that enhance children's understanding and knowledge of other religions, cultures, and local groups. These types of activities implemented in curriculums will provide children with the skills to understand a shared history of J&K. For example, the following peace activity used in secondary schools in Sri Lanka can be replicated similarly in J&K. (slightly modified to fit the needs of J&K)

"Tolerance of Differences

Objective: To help children to understand and tolerate difference in people in terms of their religions, cultures, personal values and belief systems.

This activity is effective when done as a follow-up to a detailed study of selected human differences. This can be used as an activity connected with religious education or social studies, or it may be done as a separate activity on its own.

Preparation:

1. Select a type of difference you want the children to study; e.g., religious differences, racial differences, national differences, occupational differences, intellectual differences, personal and attitudinal differences.

2. Assign, children to study these differences by analyzing their foundations, sources, historical developments, etc. This may take the form of a formal lesson, self-learning, reading, home assignments, bring outside speakers.

3. All the children in the class should form pairs, choosing one person to be A and one person to be B. In each pair, one assumes the role of one belief, and the other assumes a different belief.

Suggested Questions to lead the discussion

1. What were the feelings you had when listening to someone who was different from you?

2. Did you find it difficult to listen? What made it difficult inside you?

3. How do you think you can overcome this difficulty?" (Fountain 21)

For children who have grown up amidst conflict, these class exercises will teach them to become aware of different groups' needs, as well as their own needs. Further these activities, which are done as a team or as part of group work, encourage skills of cooperation, collaboration, and active listening. Building these skills sets is necessary for helping children develop values of respect, tolerance, and acceptance for all groups. By implementing these UNICEF workshops across schools in J&K, children will begin to learn about the shared history of their region, and develop the skills and values that promote peace.

While these workshops will benefit children in formal schools, UNICEF peace education workshops also aim to benefit children whose schools do not implement peace education, children in religious schools, and children who have dropped out of school to join militant groups. These workshop camps around various communities in J&K will provide children peace education through creative and hands on means. These workshops will be designed based on the interests of youth in respective regions. Past UNICEF models outside of school included "year-round 'Solidarity Camps' in Rwanda that bring together young people of different ethnic groups for recreational and community service activities, and 'Peace Camps' in Lebanon which focused on bringing together young people from different ethnic groups, and engaging them in recreational activities, vocational training, and study of the history and geography of the country" (Fountain 21).

Implementing 'solidarity camps' or 'peace camps' among youth from all diverse regions of J&K will provide understanding and recognition of different voices from the region, especially those voices that have been silenced or are unrepresented. These workshop camps hold great potential in building shared and collective values of recognition and coexistence of others, and will encourage participants to begin the process of imagining shared communities. Similarly, UNICEF peace workshops outside of the school will encourage creative projects and activities to be undertaken by youth. These may include "travelling theater, which has been used in Burundi, Mozambique, and Rwanda, which used art, drama, song and dance, enabling young people to express

themselves and serve as community educators" (Fountain 22). Puppetry, which has been used by past UNICEF peace workshops, is "an ideal medium for discussing sensitive issues. Puppets draw viewers into the drama without causing them to feel threatened by the actions in the drama" (Fountain 23). These different creative mediums can be designed based on the interest of youth in Kashmir, and are extremely valuable in helping participants gain awareness of conflicts, religions, cultures, different groups' needs, and methods of resolving and preventing conflict. These tools of peace education influence behavioral changes in children. In the long-term, these programs contribute to participants shifting attitudes and values to contribute to a collective understanding of sustainable peace.

Theoretical Assumptions

The training sessions can be understood through John Paul Lederach's definition of constructive social change, "the pursuit of moving relationships from those defined by fear, mutual recrimination, and violence toward those characterized by love, mutual respect, and proactive engagement" (Lederach 3). This requires the sessions to consist of encouraging trainees to incorporate J&K's relationship with both India and Pakistan locally within communities. Whether by teachers opening dialogue on the shared narratives between all regions in classrooms, finding ways to incorporate Kashmiri history in school curriculums, in artwork around the community, or even in parenting at home, these actions will create relationships with the 'other' in hopes of dismantling the notion of the 'other' altogether.

"Peacebuilding requires a vision of relationship. Stated bluntly, if there is no capacity to imagine the canvas of mutual relationships and situate oneself as part of that historic and ever-evolving web, peacebuilding collapses. The centrality of relationship provides the context and potential for breaking violence, for it brings people into the pregnant moments of the moral imagination: the space of recognition that ultimately the quality of our life is dependent on the quality of life of others" (Lederach 3).

Using this framework by Lederach, J&K must incorporate all voices in peacebuilding, in order to move forward and begin a new shared narrative. The training

sessions that target community leaders, teachers, and parents will provide them with the tools necessary to engage in peace education in their professions. This catalyst of change for local communities will instill progressive values of trust, understanding, and solidarity in the future generations.

The youth workshops, which will be implemented both in and out of the school curriculum, have the potential to be of immense value and success. Children are key components in peace building, because children are naturally imaginative, explorative, and creative. John Paul Lederach in *The Moral Imagination* emphasizes how imagination is key in the process of peace building. He states, "If the moral imagination lies within us as a dormant seed of potential, and this seed holds the key to breaking cycles of destructive conflict, then our challenge is how to invoke the growth of this kind of imagination as an integral part of developing innovative professionals" (Lederach 7). Children harness these unlocked seeds of potential. The workshops are intended to water these seeds and help them grow. Whether by encouraging theater, artwork, puppet shows, or music, the youth workshops contain an embedded creative element to them, one that is humanely universal and shared. Lederach shares that another "key discipline that gives rise to the moral imagination is the provision of space for the creative act to emerge. Providing space requires a predisposition, a kind of attitude and perspective that opens up, invokes, the spirit and belief that creativity is humanly possible" (11). Children via the intervention of UNICEF-run workshops will be encouraged to explore and create, while envisioning solutions to conflict. This will be extremely powerful in not only unlocking the imaginative element in peacebuilding, but creating a generation that is not discouraged from thinking outside of the box.

The second aspect of the youth workshops, which intend to focus on open dialogue and conversation, will encourage participants to embrace the unknown. Lederach states, "Accepting vulnerability, we must risk the step into unknown and unpredictable lands and seek constructive engagement with those people and things we least understand and most fear. We must take up the inevitably perilous but absolutely necessary journey that makes its way back to humanity and the building of genuine community" (4). The workshops, which promote behavioral changes over time, will

lead to a J&K state identity that isn't rooted in fear or distrust, but is open to accepting and understanding its neighbors. This engagement of youth from J&K learning about neighboring communities and local groups will begin the process of creating a larger community with positive shared values. These shared values will slowly be the catalyst in breaking the cycles of violence and conflict in J&K and lead to a self-sustained peace in the region.

Conclusion

The state of Jammu and Kashmir and its people have remained in a system of violence for many years; children and youth especially have been denied a safe and peaceful environment, which has contributed to increased tension and lack of social cohesion. To challenge the dominant narrative of J&K, traditionally understood through the lenses of Pakistan and India's national frameworks, this paper focused on the perspective of the diverse groups of people who inhabit J&K, emphasizing their respective positions and needs. Through the proposed intervention of peace education, peace training, and peace workshops, this programming will fill the gap of missing regional voices, cultivate a shared and collective understanding of history, and promote values of structural peace within communities. This peace building intervention holds the great potential to encourage and provide individuals with the skill set to imagine coexistence and self-sustaining peace in their communities.

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