

# From Scholars to Teenagers-What Makes Kashmiri Youth to Join Militancy?

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## ABSTRACT

Since the partition in 1947, the Jammu and Kashmir remained disputed between India and Pakistan. The Indian administered Kashmir always suffered violence, protests, curfew, killings etc. However in Pakistan occupied Kashmir there has been never such acts. Various anti-Indian militant organizations came into being since Kashmir was divided between the two countries. Both countries wanted to take over their rule all over Jammu and Kashmir. For this purpose, the two countries have fought two wars since partition which ended with the establishment of Line of control (LOC). After these events, various separatist parties came into being that demanded separation of J&K from India. Various Pakistan based militant outfits came into existence that allowed Kashmiri uneducated and unemployed youth to get training and fight against India. But all this changed after 2016 when a new version of militancy came into existence. Well qualified and educated youth started joining militancy. These militants could have a better life but they preferred to pick up Guns against India. Burhan Wani HM commander, who was killed in 2016 was considered the hero of Kashmir. Similarly, Zakir Musa who was killed in 2019 was a role model for the people of Kashmir. In this article, the author has studied the biography of top educated militants and has tried to sketch out the reason which made them join militancy.

**Keywords:** Militancy; Zakoora; Tenggpora massacre

## INTRODUCTION

The state of Jammu and Kashmir is the northern most part of India and is divided into 3 regions called Jammu, Kashmir and Ladakh [1]. The state has remained disputed region between India and Pakistan from last 70 years and is claimed by both the countries as their integral part which has resulted two wars and everlasting insurgency and unrest between two countries. The complete state of Jammu and Kashmir constitutes area of 2, 22,236 square km's. The state after formulation of two nation theory was first divided into two parts called Indian administered Kashmir and Pakistan occupied Kashmir. In 1962, china established control over some part of north-east region of J&K and is called as china occupied Kashmir [2].

India controls about 55% of land area of the state while Pakistan and china controls about 30% and 15% of land area respectively. The part of the state administered by India includes Jammu, Kashmir and Ladakh, Pakistan occupied Kashmir includes Gilgit and Baltistan and the part administered by china includes Aksai chin and Shaksam valley [3]. Shaksam valley was illegally gifted to china by Pakistan in 1963 Figure 1 shows geographic map of Jammu and Kashmir [4].



Figure 1: Map of Jammu and Kashmir.

The Kashmir part of the IAK has always been in top stories for violence, protests, killings, terrorist attacks etc. It all started in 1989 when people started protesting and revolting against India and demanded right to self-determination which gave rise to various separatist parties such as JKLF. There has been lifelong conflict between such parties and Govt. of India over right to self-determination for the people of Kashmir and such parties have

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won belief of people all over Kashmir [5]. The period of 90's was the worst in the history of Kashmir with much more violence, terrorism, killings etc. Local started to join militant ranks by enrolling in various training camps of Pakistan based militant organizations like Jash-e-Mohammad (JeM) and Hizul-ujahedeen (HM). HM and JeM are recognized as international terror groups by India, US and various European countries. JeM was banned in Pakistan in 2002 but it is still active in Kashmir. The chief of HM syed Salahuddin and chief of JeM Azhar Masood are designated as Global Terrorists by US and India. JeM has carried out many terror attacks in India including 14 Feb 2019 Pulwama attack which almost brought two countries on the edge of war [6]. The emergence of various anti-India organizations gave sleepless nights to government of India [7]. The various chronological rows like Amarnath land row (2008) in which more than 30 people were killed, 2010 unrest in which more than 100 peoples were killed made tense situation in in Kashmir [8]. 2010 unrest began after alleged killing of local youth in fake encounter. This led to violent protests, burning of Govt. buildings and vehicles by demonstrators, stone pelting on security forces etc. (Figure 2).

There has been absolute Human right volition in Kashmir by security forces since 1989. Incidents like Gawakadal massacre, Handwara massacre, Zakoora and Tenggpora massacre, Hawl Massacre, Kunan Poshpora incident made people literally insurgent towards Indian administration [9]. Locals joining militancy were least compared to 90s, until 2013 when more local youth started joining various militant organizations. Security forces and government was successful to stop more recruitment of Kashmiri youth in militancy until 2013, after which there was increase in local youths joining militant ranks still (Figure 3).

After killing of Burhan wani (HM commander) such joining increased tremendously. From Govt. employers to Scholars, engineers, philosophers, college students, Teacher and even

SPO's of J&K Police started joining militant ranks [10]. So what makes such qualified and employed youth to join militancy is still a question to be answered. Chart 1 illustrates the number of youth who joined militancy from 2010- 2018[11]. The number of fatalities of militant [12] chronological events happened since 1947 in the history of Kashmir [13,14].

1947- India Got independence. Emergence of Pakistan as a new country after the partition.

1947- The Maharaja Hari Singh signs a treaty of accession with India

1949- Kashmir is divided between India and Pakistan.

1957- The constitution of Indian administrated Jammu and Kashmir defines it as part of India.

1962- China defeats India and took control over Aksai Chin.

1963- Pakistan cedes the Trans-Karakoram Tract of Kashmir to China.

1965- Indo Pak war over Kashmir ends in a ceasefire.

Rise of Kashmiri nationalism: Jammu Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF) came into existence with the aim of forming an independent state.

1971-72- Another Indo-Pakistani war over Kashmir ends and Line of Control was established.

1980-90s- Kashmir insurgency: mass protests against Indian rule and a rise in militant groups. Ten of thousands of people are killed.

1984 - Kashmiri separatist leader Moqbool Bhat Hanged in Tihar Jail.

1987- Elections in Indian-administrated Jammu and Kashmir gave rise to pro-independence revolt directed by JKLF.

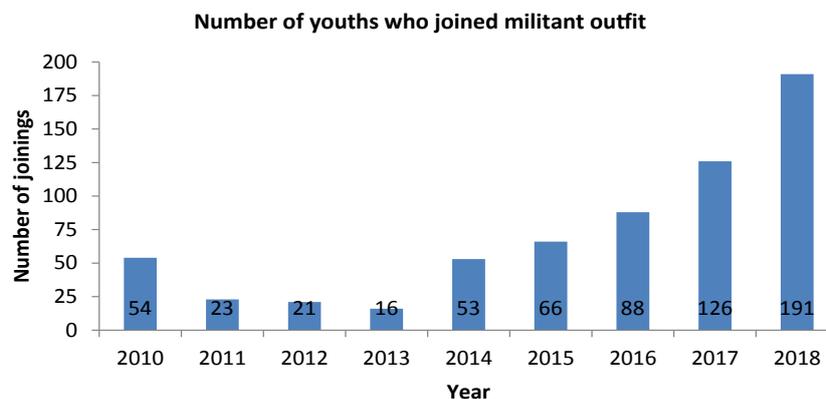


Figure 2: Number of youth who joined militant outfit: 2010-2018.

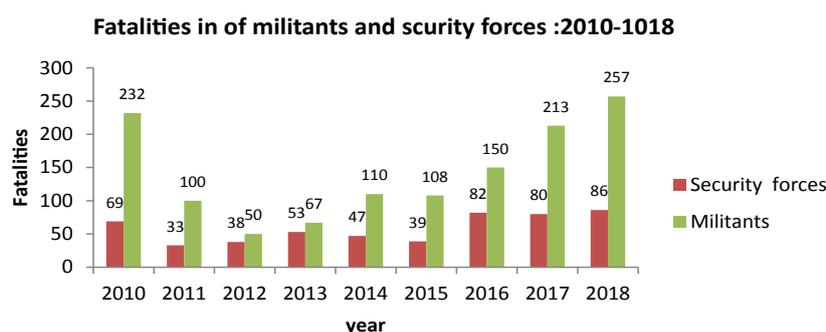


Figure 3: Facilities of security forces and militants in Kashmir as per South Asia Terrorism report.

1990- Indian Army kills about 100 demonstrators at Gawakadal Bridge. Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA) was imposed after Kashmiri pandits were attacked.

1990s- Pakistan militant organizations started training camps for Kashmiri militants and India started deploying thousands of troops in Jammu and Kashmir.

1999- Kargil war broke out.

2001-2010- insurgency continues.

2019- More than 100 people died in protests.

2013 February -2001 Indian parliament terror attack accused Mohammad Afzal Guru hanged which led to protests in which two young men were killed.

2016 July- Top commander of the Hizbul Mujahideen group Burhan wani Killed by Indian Army led to violent protests in which 68 civilians died and more than 9,000 people injured.

2016 September - 18 Indian soldiers killed by gunmen.

2017 May - Thousands defy a curfew across Indian-administered Kashmir to attend the funeral of top rebel commander Sabzar Ahmad Bhat.

2017 July - Militants attack Hindu pilgrims, killing at least seven and injuring 16, in the worst such attack since 2000.

2019 February- 49 soldiers killed after Suicide attack on Indian paramilitary convey by JeM Kashmiri militant.

2019 August - Indian government strips Jammu and Kashmir State of the special status that gave it significant autonomy

## EXPOSITORY PROFILES OF EDUCATED AND EMPLOYED YOUTH WHO JOINED ANTI-INDIA MILITANT ORGANIZATION

It all started with Burhan Wani. He was the commander of Hizbul Mujahideen (HM). He was the first militant who used social media platform to innovate new face of militancy. He joined militancy in Oct 2010, when he was 15 years old. According to his father, he joined militancy after an incident in which he was innocently beaten by security forces along with his brother Khalid. However security forces claimed that they were beaten after their statement that they were trying to cross LOC. Khalid was killed by security forces in April 2015 by Indian Army who claimed that he was underground worker of militants which police failed to prove due to lack of evidence. He was killed by security forces in an encounter in July 2016 which led to mass violent protests in Kashmir resulting in death of more than 96 people and injury of 15000 civilians and 4000 security forces [15,16].

After Burhan another most wanted militant in Kashmir was Zakir Musa. He was appointed as top commander of HM after death of Burhan Wani. Zakir Musa was founder of anti-Militant organization 'Ansar Ghazwat-ul-Hind' in 2017 after he left HM. He joined militancy in 2013 and was gunned down by security forces in May 2019. Before joining militancy, Musa was engineering student at a college in Chandigarh and was award winning carom player [17]. Another engineering student Eisa fazili joined militancy in 2017. He was a B.Tech student at Baba Ghulam shah Badshah University and was known by nickname Newton. Eisa was deeply disheartened by enormities and wrong doing on Muslim countries by super power countries. According to one of his class mate he was a brilliant student and blamed Wahhabi preachers and Tehreek i Insaf leader for his decision of joining militancy. Eisa was neutralized by security forces in March 2018 during an encounter at Anantnag in Kashmir [18]. Rafiq bhat who was an assistant professor at University of Kashmir joined militant outfit in May 2018 and was killed just after 40 hour of joining by security forces. Rafiq had completed his PhD from Kashmir University and had also qualified NET twice before joining militancy [19]. Another scholar turned militant was Manan Wani. He was one among the most wanted militants of Kashmir. He joined militancy when he came in touch with students from South Kashmir at Aligarh Muslim University. Before joining militancy, he was PhD scholar at Dept. of Geology in Aligarh Muslim University. Manan was gunned down by security forces in oct-2018 [20]. Sabzar sofi, another scholar turned militant joined Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) in Aug, 2016. Sabzar was NET\_JRF qualified and had completed his M-Phil from Jiwaji University Gwalior [21]. Mohammad- Younis Lone joined Hizbul Mujahideen in February 2017. He was killed within a month in an encounter at Yaripora. He had two Masters Degrees (MA sociology, MA Islamic Studies) [22]. Azharuddin Khan was another well qualified militant who joined militant outfit in April 2016 and was killed in Feb-2017. Azhar was lecturer at a higher secondary school and had completed PhD in Arabic before joining militancy. According to one of his friend, Azhar joined militant outfit when one of his neighbour was killed by security forces during a protest which affected him deeply [23]. Shamsul Haq, younger brother of IPS officer Inam Ul-Haq joined militancy in July 2010 and was killed in Jan 2019 [24]. Junaid Ashray, son of newly elected chairman of Tehreek-e-Hurriyat joined militancy in March 2018. His father blamed that oppressions and injustice of Indian Govt. toward Kashmir made his son to join militant outfit [25].

Besides these highly qualified there were many other educated and employed youth who joined militant organizations, among which most highlighted ones are in Table 1 [21,26].

Table 1: Militants and their qualifications.

S.No	Name	Qualification/Designation	Age	Militant outfit
1	Asif Nazir Dar	BE computer science	22	HM
2	Mohmmad Qasim	B. Tech	23	HM
3	Rayees Ahmad dar	B. Tech	21	LeT
4	Basit Rasool	BE Civil	22	LeT
4	Iahfaq Ahmad Dar	JK Police Constable	NA	LeT
5	Salman Khan	JK Police SPO	NA	LeT
6	Sahbir Dar	JK Police SPO	NA	LeT
7	Mohd Ashraf Dar	MA	21	LeT
8	Mir Tufail	Under Graduate	19	HM

According to police about 12 J&K police personals have joined police ranks from last 3 years. Not only scholars and employed youths, but also teen agers have joined militant outfits. Mudassir Ahmad Parray aged 14 was the youngest militant killed by Indian army. Faizan Ahmad Bhat was just 15 years old when he joined militancy. Another teenager Faizan Ahmad Bhat, who was just 16 years old when he was killed in an encounter. Another class 10<sup>th</sup> student Fardeen Ahmad Khanday was just 16 when he joined militancy. He was killed along with another two militants when they carried suicide attack on CRPF training school in which 5 CRPF personals died [2].

This new breed of militants are well qualified, well employed and belong to wealthy families. Like viz. Zakir Musa belonged to a wealthy and educated family. His father is an engineer, his brother is a doctor and his sister is bank officer. So it is not wise to say that poverty and unemployment drags youth of Kashmir towards militancy.

## CONCLUSION

Since the death of Burhan Wani, there has been continuous increase in the number of youths joining militancy. He was the most successful and most wanted militant. He got attention of people through social media by his videos, pictures and audio messages. Since then social media became one of the main and easiest source by which militants used to communicate their messages to the people of Kashmir. Militants begin to gain popularity across the valley. From last five years Militants are considered as heroes of the Valley. The family of the militants is given high respect in the society. Tens of Thousands of people across travel to attend the funeral ceremonies of militants. There is sympathy for the families whose beloveds were killed as militant. So, why militants are considered as heroes of the land, why they are given such respect, why thousands and lakhs of people come to attend funeral ceremony of militants?

The people of Kashmir are psychologically disturbed, frightened, angry and scared towards broken promises and attitude by the government. There have been killings, curfews, arrests, disappearances; thousands have been booked under PSA and other human right violations that has made people to revolt against Govt. Students and businessmen are being harassed outside Kashmir. Suspension of Mobile network, suspension of train services, high way ban etc. has become the common thing to make people suffer. Use of pellet guns to disappear protest has made hundreds of people blind. The grant of Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA) to Indian Armed Force has many allegations of human right violation in Kashmir. Most of the youth who took guns were either harassed in custody for taking part in protests.

Burhan and Musa effect have also motivated local youth to join militancy in the name of jihad. The various speeches of militants through audio and video clips encourage youth to join militancy. Moreover it is obvious to say that Pakistan is fully involved in pushing Kashmiri youth towards militancy. HM and JeM are Pakistan based anti -India militant organization that currently operates in Kashmir and recruit youth. JeM was banned by Pakistan but still it is operating under Kashmir and recruit local militant. These organizations provide platform for Locals to join Militancy. All the funds and weapons for these organizations are coming from Pakistan. Government of India is now trying to save local people from this burden by diverting the interest of youth towards education, sports, art and entertainment etc. Tournaments are

being organized to engulf youth towards sports. Various seminars and conferences are being held to encourage people and keep them away from violence. Parents of youth are being convinced by army and police to keep their wards away from protests, anti-India demonstrations etc.

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