

ENSURING A HARMONIZED AND PLURALISTIC SOCIETY IN GILGIT-BALTISTAN

Dr. Haji Karim Khan,* Zakir Hussain,* Fazal Amin Baig,*
Basharat Husain,* and Azra Batool*

Abstract

Creating and ensuring a harmonized and pluralistic society has become the need of the time in the 21st century. Historically harmony has prevailed in Gilgit-Baltistan allowing people living together with peace, acceptance, and love. However, in the last few decades sectarian conflict has created unrest among the masses in the region. This has claimed hundreds of precious lives over the passage of time and needs a comprehensive strategy to uproot it. This paper has been developed on the basis of literature review from the region and newspaper reports related to the very issue. On the basis of the analysis, the paper concludes that taking mere administrative measures to curb the issue is not the only panacea; rather, there is a need for taking a constructive and educative approach to create awareness among the youth and masses through relevant education and training opportunities; ensuring employability through robust market-oriented measures; and strengthening existing education institutions in the region.

Key words: *Harmony, pluralism, educative approach, curriculum reform, peace initiatives*

Introduction

The term harmony refers to a friendly agreement, pleasing combination of sounds, notes sung or played together. In a philosophical term harmony means right and desirable relationship of parts to a whole, whether in nature, society, or an individual. This term is basically used for rhythmic movement and melody in music. It can easily

* Dr. Haji Karim, Asst Prof., Karakaram International University Gilgit.

* Mr. Zakir Hussain, Asst. Prof. Karakaram International University Gilgit.

* Mr. Fazal Amin Baig, Ph.D Scholar, Karakaram International University Gilgit.

* Mr. Basharat Husain, M.Phil Student, Karakaram International University Gilgit.

* Ms. Azra Batool, M.Phil Student, Karakaram International University Gilgit.

be explained taking example from music. According to Arnold Schoenberg, harmony is “the study of simultaneous sounds (chords) and of how they may be joined with respect to their architectonic, melodic, and rhythmic values and their significance, their weight relative to one another.”¹ Philosophers see ‘universal harmony as the actual state of the world’ and ‘harmony in the society as the goal of morality and social relationship.’ Aristotle refers it to a language into which rhythm, harmony and song enter.² Perhaps for the similar reasons one of the greatest proponent of harmony and pluralist society, the Sufi saint Jalaluddin Rumi starts his Masnavi with the story of flute. In the opening verse of the great Masnavi, Rumi says:

بشنوا ز نئے چونحکا یتمی کند
وا ز جدائیہا حکا یتمی کند

“Hearken to the reed-flute, how it complains,
Lamenting its banishment from its home.”³

Do we listen to the tales of flute filled with love and loyalty to its home? We need to encourage people to love their roots. The voice of flute as depicted by Rumi is a symbol of harmony and peace, a deeper association with one’s home or origin.

Likewise, appearing out of the late Latin *pluralitas* (referring to plural) and via the Old French *pluralite*, the word pluralism entered through Middle English into today’s parlance, especially in English Language. Another identical term, having one of the concepts related with pluralism is “plurality”.⁴ As it is clearly observable literally that the term pluralism is composed of the word plural (referring to “more than one”) and the suffix -ism (referring to support or inclination or loyalty towards supporting an ideology, a doctrine or practice, whether socio-culturally approved and promoted or disapproved and depreciated at any level.

In the religious realms the Holy Qur’an also strongly emphasizes on pluralistic teachings to its followers in order to maintain societal peace and harmony. The entire teaching in the Qur’an, literally and allegorically, is a reflection of pluralism and harmony. Similarly, when meeting and greeting each other, a Muslim conveys his or her kind wishes of peace to

¹ Arnold Schoenberg, *Theory of Harmony*, (Berkeley: University Of California Press, 1922), 13.

² Aristotle, *Poetics*, trans. S.H. Butcher (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1961), <www.gutenberg.org/wiki/Philosophy>.

³ Jalaluddin Muhammad Rumi, “Masnavii Manavi: Teachings of Rumi,” trans. E.H. Whinfield (Ames, Iowa: Omphaloskepsis, 2001), 3, <<http://www.omphaloskepsis.com/Library/masnavi.pdf>>, accessed August 15, 2015.

⁴ *The Concise Oxford English Dictionary*, 1995, s.v. “Pluralism”.

his co-believers by saying Assalam-o-Alaikum (meaning “may peace be blessed upon you”). When a person calls for prayer (*adhan*, or *azan*), he wishes with the high pitch of his voice for “sustenance of offering prayers” (*Haya ‘alas Salah*) in order to “maintain welfare” (*Haya ‘alal Falah*) for all, and Never warfare for all by keeping God, The Almighty (Allah-u Akbar) as witness.

It is unfortunate that in the recent period common people tend to forget the message of love, harmony, peace, patience, and acceptance. Perhaps we need to reflect upon the nature of the very notion of harmony at local and national level; we need to know what are the key factors affecting the notion; and strive to address those issues so that harmony and peace prevail in our country.

The situation of harmony and the dream of a pluralistic society has been a huge concern in Gilgit-Baltistan. The region lies in the extreme north of the country with an estimated population of above two million. It has a paramount strategic importance. The region’s borders join Xinjiang province of the People’s Republic of China in the north, Chitral in the west, and Kalam, Kohistan and Kaghan Vallies of Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa province in the south. In the east are the occupied territories of Ladakh and Kashmir.⁵ Gilgit-Baltistan is divided into seven districts including Gilgit, Skardu, Diamer, Ghizer, Ghanche, Astore and Hunza-Nagar with 22 Tehsils and 108 union councils including seven municipal committees.

Like its natural resources, Gilgit-Baltistan is also rich in its cultural perspectives. Fourteen language communities — such as Shina, Balti, Burushaski, Khowar, Wakhi, Domaaki, Gujri, Uyghur, Kirghiz, Keloch, Kashmiri, Hindkoh, Pushto, Punjabi — live side by side with each other in different valleys and in the administrative headquarters of the seven districts. Majority of the inhabitants are Muslims belonging to mainly four different communities of interpretations such as Sunni, Shia, Ismaili and Noorbakhshi. Population of various sects varies from district to district. There is no denying the fact that Gilgit-Baltistan’s multi-ethnic, multilingual and multi-sectional composition is a rare example of “unity in diversity.”⁶ Given the multi-cultural and multi-ethnic perspectives coupled with the natural resources, the region can showcase huge potentials for local and national harmony and development. Peace and harmony is a dire need in the region in order to take benefit of the resources. However, in the last few decades the region has observed a severe condition of sectarian unrest between the Shia and Sunni communities. This has tended to paralyze the entire society and has engulfed all the efforts on the way to development.

⁵ Gari Khan, “GIS Based Environmental Baseline Information of Shimshal Pamir Lake,” *World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF-P)*, (2009): 9.

⁶ Omar Farooq Zain, “A Socio-Political Study of Gilgit-Baltistan Province,” *Pakistan Journal of Social Sciences* 30, 1 (2010): 183.

In this paper while focusing on the very nature of harmony in Gilgit-Baltistan, we highlight the issue of sectarian unrest in the region, which has been an alarming issue in the last few decades and the administrative measures taken at the government level needs to be revisited so as to make harmony flourish in the region. We also give an analytical overview of the GB and federal governments and social sector initiatives to overcome the issue. On the basis of the analysis we argue that besides the administrative approach to curb the issue of unrest there is a need for a constructive, educative, as well as enabling approach to create awareness among the youth and masses through relevant education, training opportunities; ensuring employability based on market-oriented measures; and strengthening existing education institutions in the region.

Sectarian unrest as a key challenge for harmony in Gilgit-Baltistan

Soon after the establishment of Pakistan, the people of Gilgit-Baltistan also got independence and voluntarily joined Pakistan.⁷ For a considerable time afterwards, the constitutional status of the region remained undefined. The agency system, the FCR and the rule of hereditary princes were abolished in 1974 by Zulfikar Ali Bhutto and various districts were established like those in other parts of Pakistan. The region has been under the direct control of the Federal Government under the Ministry of Kashmir Affairs and Northern Areas.⁸

In the year 2009 Gilgit-Baltistan received the Empowerment and Self-Governance Order.⁹ This Order aims at providing greater political empowerment and better governance to the people of Gilgit-Baltistan. As a result, Gilgit-Baltistan Assembly was formed and governor was also appointed. The first GB government has completed its tenure recently and an interim setup is in progress (during the preparation of this research paper). Though the new setup has a province-like status, yet it certainly has created a space for public participation in the decision-making.

Sectarian unrest has been one of the top issues in Gilgit-Baltistan in the last few decades. A historical analysis shows that Islam came to this region in the thirteenth century and all the sects lived in peace and

⁷ Muhammad Feyyaz, "Sectarian Conflict in Gilgit-Baltistan," Background Paper, *Pakistan Institute of Legislative Development and Transparency*, (2011): 11, ISBN: 978-969-558-213-8, <http://www.pildat.org/publications/publication/Conflict_Management/GB-SectarianConflit-BackgroundPaperEng-May2011.pdf>, accessed August 12, 2015.

⁸ Ibid., 13.

⁹ Government of Pakistan, "Governance Order," *Ministry of Kashmir Affairs and Northern Areas* (9 Sept. 2009), <www.gilgitbaltistan.gov.pk/downloadfiles/governanceorder.doc>, accessed August 11, 2015.

harmony.¹⁰ The issue has been a recent concern as a core issue and researchers believe that sectarian unrest between the Sunni and Shia sects in the region emerged in 1960s and 1970s and got strengthened during the regime of Ziaul Haq.¹¹ Over the passage of time many precious lives have been lost in the region, which is a great human loss and hurdle in the creation of harmony in the society.

The apparent and invisible causes may be different, which need to be understood well through in-depth historical analysis of the issue involving comprehensive empirical studies. As Nosheen Ali, who studied the 'micro politics of sectarianism and state-making' in Gilgit-Baltistan, has rightly mentioned that "in order to make sense of rising sectarianism, we also need to investigate the everyday forms through which religious conflict is produced, as well as the specific political contexts in which religious identities are created and shaped."¹²

Researchers see the causes of the very issue through various perspectives. For instance a study conducted by the International Crisis Group looks it from the identity crisis and denial of basic rights. "Instead of making Pakistan's grip on the Northern Areas more secure, the denial of basic rights and representative institutions through which to express grievances has led many, particularly youth, to turn in frustration to radical sectarian groups."¹³ The report further explains that "since the Northern Areas have no representation in any federal constitutional or political forum, stakeholders cannot articulate demands or grievances to a wider audience."¹⁴ As a result, these grievances tend to result in unrests in the region.

Aziz Ali Dad looks into the issue from the perspective of cultural disintegration."¹⁵ Aziz further explains that the geo-political developments and demarcation of boundaries between different regions of the surrounding areas during the first half of twentieth century furthered the geographical mutilation of Gilgit-Baltistan and deprived it of Ladakh,

¹⁰ Nosheen Ali, "Northern Pakistan Sectarian Imaginaries: The Micropolitics of Sectarianism and State-making," *Current Sociology* 58, 5 (2010): 738-754, <<http://csi.sagepub.com/content/58/5/738>>, accessed August 12, 2015.

¹¹ Izhar Hunzai, "Conflict Dynamics in Gilgit-Baltistan," *United States Institute of Peace, Special Report 321*, (2013), <www.usip.org/sites/default/files/SR321.pdf>, accessed August 11, 2015.

¹² Ali, "Northern Pakistan Sectarian Imaginaries: The Micropolitics of Sectarianism and State-making," 738.

¹³ International Crisis Group, "Discord in Pakistan's Northern Areas," *Asia Report 131*, (April 2007): 1, <http://www.crisisgroup.org/~media/Files/asia/south-asia/pakistan/131_discord_in_pakistan_s_northern_areas.pdf>, accessed August 16, 2015.

¹⁴ Ibid., 9.

¹⁵ Aziz Ali Dad, "State, Religion and Culture in Gilgit-Baltistan," *Wordpress* (2004): 2, <<https://pamirtimes.files.wordpress.com/2009/06/state-religion-and-culture-in-gilgit-baltistan1.pdf>>, accessed August 13, 2015.

Daras, Guraz and Kargil. This, in turn, cut these areas off from the mainstream culture and reduced the religious cultural diversity of the area, which become instrumental in bringing about a gradual cultural dissipation and absorption of the fragmented cultural units within alien cultures of the regions that do not share historical or cultural commonalities with Gilgit-Baltistan.¹⁶

The process gained momentum when Bhutto stooped to the demands of the religious parties, particularly, when General Zia introduced the concept of Islamization in the country in connection with his political perspectives.¹⁷

Some of the researchers look at the issue from curriculum perspective, too. They believe that schools curricula lack creating harmony in the society. After analysis of the 'State of Curricula and Textbooks in Pakistan' Nayyar and Salim found some of the most significant problems in the curricula and textbooks such as:

- Inaccuracies of facts and omissions that serve to substantially distort the nature and significance of actual events in our history.
- Insensitivity to the existing religious diversity of the nation.
- Incitement to militancy, violence, including encouragement of *Jehad* and *Shahadat*.
- Perspectives that encourage prejudice, bigotry and discrimination towards fellow citizens, especially towards women, religious minorities, and towards other nations.
- A glorification of war and the use of force.
- Omission of concepts, events and material that could encourage critical self-awareness among students.
- Outdated and incoherent pedagogical practices that hinder the development of interest and insight among students.¹⁸

Reports show that in 2001 violence in Gilgit broke on the basis of Islamiyat curriculum. Shia community perceived the curriculum very much related to the Sunni school of thought. As stated by Peer Muhammad¹⁹, the agitation continued and in May 2004, a local attempt was made to resolve the curriculum issue and all sects from this region agreed to a settlement on the basis of an agreement. Local communities

¹⁶ Ibid., 2.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ A. H. Nayyar and Ahmad Salim, eds., "The Subtle Subversion: The State of Curricula and Textbooks in Pakistan (Urdu, English, Social Studies and Civics)", Sustainable Development Policy Institute, (2002), <<http://unesco.org.pk/education/teachereducation/reports/rp22.pdf>>, accessed August 13, 2015.

¹⁹ Peer Muhammad, "From Intra-Sectarianism to Fragile Peace: the Gilgit-Baltistan Model," Pakistan Institute for Peace Studies, (2014): 4, <www.san-pips.com/download.php?f=275.pdf>, accessed August 12, 2015.

agreed on separate Islamic Studies courses for Shia and Sunni students, signifying their willingness to resolve differences peacefully, but could not get endorsement from the then government. This led to strikes and protest demonstrations by Shias, bringing Gilgit to a standstill.²⁰

Peer further explains that for it took four years since the Shia community in the Northern Areas agitated over the controversial curriculum, yet the dispute remained unresolved. "Discouraged and angered, Shia students began to boycott classes and stage rallies: on 17 May 2004, more than 300 went on a three-day hunger strike in Gilgit. Within days, the situation gravely deteriorated as thousands took to the streets, blocking roads and bringing businesses to a halt."²¹

According to newspaper reports it took one whole year to the government to defuse the tension and reopen schools in Gilgit and adjoining areas. A *Dawn* news report shows that the then Prime Minister constituted a special committee headed by the then Federal Education Minister to resolve the issue.²² The committee unanimously agreed to the proposal of the federal minister to withdraw books of Islamiyat and Urdu of the Punjab Textbook Board which were perceived to contain controversial contents. It was suggested to replace them by the one published by the NWFP Textbook Board and the National Book Foundation (NFB).²³

If this be the case that our curriculum instead of promoting harmony through appreciation for diversity becomes causes of 'incitement to militancy and violence, encouragement of prejudice and discrimination and insensitivity to religious diversity', then the ultimate expected outcome would be what is being faced by Pakistan in forms of intolerance, extremism, and militancy. In other words the aesthetic elements of harmony and melody seem to be missing from our curricula and textbooks. Similarly, "in the educational curriculum the students of Gilgit-Baltistan do not find a material pertinent to their history and culture.... Thus, they raise question as to why they have been neglected by the state."²⁴ The question is, what results can we expect after excluding important aspects of life and nature in our education? This also raises question about the purpose and role of education. It is a fact that education not only helps in preparing individuals for the role of citizen; train appropriate occupational role; and develop their personality but also builds harmony amongst them. Ideally education is the process of

²⁰ Ibid., 4.

²¹ Ibid.

²² "N.As Curriculum Issue Resolved: Schools Open Today," *Dawn*, April 27, 2005, <<http://www.dawn.com/news/402768/nas-curriculum-issue-resolved-schools-open-today>>, accessed August 13, 2015.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Dad, "State, Religion and Culture in Gilgit-Baltistan," 6.

nourishment and nurture of the innate powers such as intellectual, spiritual, and moral propensities of the child. We need to reflect whether our education partially serves the job market or cater for holistic development of the students? The key proposition is that human beings are learning beings and 'a right type of education' can make things better'. If the type of education that we have, is not effective in making any difference in societal wellbeing, then we need to revisit the very education process, system, the pedagogies and curriculum.

It is a well-established fact that education plays an important role in creating harmony in the societies; it should never aim to create gaps among the communities. The importance of education has been emphasised repeatedly in the Qur'an, which is the ultimate source of guidance for Muslims. Indeed the first verse of the Qur'an revealed on Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) indicates the importance of it. Education is also an important tool for social change. It refers to the methods by which a society attempts to direct and accelerate the learning process.

All the educational policies in the country ranging from the very first conference of education in November 1947 to recent ones have emphasised the importance of education. According to the Pakistan Vision 2025 "Our primary focus is to create a world-class software for development by investing in human resources and governance. Our approach to development is people centric. Development has to be of people, for people, and by people. Therefore, our vision of development is based on inclusiveness and social justice."²⁵ Here it is vital to mention that the best way to develop competent human resource is by educating them.

As Dewey has rightly mentioned:

"When the school introduces and trains each child of society into membership within such a little community, saturating him with the spirit of service, and providing him with the instruments of effective self-direction, we shall have the deepest and best guaranty of a larger society which is worthy, lovely, and harmonious."²⁶

Likewise, "if we wish to concentrate on peace, we must learn how to suspend ourselves in the present and focus on the future we ultimately wish to work on together."²⁷ There is no doubt that in order to ensure harmony and peace in the society we need to invest in education, work with our schools and education systems so as to develop our future generation as peace-loving and beneficial citizens for the nation. The focus

²⁵ Government of Pakistan, "Pakistan 2025: One Nation – One Vision," *Planning Commission, Ministry of Planning, Development and Reform*, (2015) X, <<http://www.pc.gov.pk/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/Pakistan-Vision-2025.pdf>>, accessed 13 August 2015.

²⁶ John Dewey, *School and society* (Whitefish: Kessinger Publishing, 1900), 29.

²⁷ Abida Begum, "The Concept and Perception of Peace Education in Gilgit-Baltistan Pakistan: A Comparative Case Study", *The Peace and Conflict Review* 7, 1 (2012): 29.

needs to be on learning which strengthens the capacities of children to act progressively through the acquisition of relevant knowledge, useful skills, appropriate attitudes for a safe, secure and healthy interactive environment for future.²⁸ In doing so, we need to revisit and re-conceptualize the very notion of our education and curriculum.

Initiatives of imparting harmony seem to be just administrative measures

Reports show that the Federal and GB governments have been taking some initiative to create harmony in the region from the very beginning of the emergence of this issue. Several steps have been taken in this regard, which generally seem to be just violence-controlling rather than long-term and strategic mechanisms. We give an analytical review of those initiatives in this section.

In November 2011, the Lawmakers in Gilgit-Baltistan Legislative Assembly took initiatives to control the killing of innocent people through a comprehensive inquiry into the issues by identifying the culprits involved in the unrest and punish them as per the law.²⁹ Likewise, the Assembly in 2012 unanimously passed a bill titled as “Code of Conduct” (CoC), and it was also confirmed to treat the violators of the law under the Anti-Terrorism Act.³⁰ In the same year, the government also took measures to make the KKH safer for the passengers. In this regard, a strong force was established to patrol the strategic highway.³¹ Furthermore, in 2012 after noticing some subsequent cruel incidents on the KKH the GB government undertook a targeted operation to collect illegal weapons from key locations of the capital.³²

In the same year, considering the deteriorating condition of the interfaith harmony and the urge to bring about peace in the region the GB government established the Masjid Board involving top religious leaders from both Shia and Sunni schools of thought.³³ This effort

²⁸ A. Bernard, “The Child-friendly School: a Summary”, Paper written for UNICEF, New York, (1999).

²⁹ Shabbir Mir, “Worsening Law and Order: Lawmakers in Gilgit Raise Alarm over Sectarian Violence,” *The Express Tribune*, November 24, 2011, <<http://tribune.com.pk/story/296693/worsening-law-and-order-lawmakers-in-gilgit-raise-alarm-over-sectarian-violence/>>, accessed August 15, 2015.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Shabbir Mir, “Sectarian Violence: G-B Government Appeals for Peace,” *The Express Tribune*, April 30, 2012, <<http://tribune.com.pk/story/371486/sectarian-violence-g-b-government-appeals-for-peace/>>, (accessed August 16, 2015).

³² Shabbir Mir, “A Beacon of Hope in Gilgit,” *The Express Tribune*, December 24, 2012, <<http://blogs.tribune.com.pk/story/15325/a-beacon-of-hope-in-gilgit/>>, accessed August 13, 2015.

³³ Shabbir Mir, “Healing scars: In G-B, Muharram blurs sectarian differences,” *The Express Tribune*, November 24, 2012, <<http://tribune.com.pk/story/470524/>>

provided both the leaderships with a platform to sit together, listen to each other, discuss issues and concerns, and come up with solutions and consensus. This initiative was well appreciated by the communities and leadership in the region. For instance, according to a newspaper report in November 2012, dozens of Sunni community members comprising elders and the youth convened in one of the Imambargahs in Gilgit, where they joined hundreds of mourners. The delegation was led by a senior member of the Masjid Board. In 2014 the Gilgit-Baltistan government formed the Ulema Advisory Council to help forge sectarian unity among various sects inhabiting the region. The council consists of renowned scholars and legislators who were to help regulate matters concerning sects. The council included members from all sects.³⁴

Approaches of the federal government in connection with the creation of harmony in the region are also seen in the region under the youth development initiatives. There are certain initiatives of youth empowerment and development undertaken in the region. Working with the youth and involving them in the decision-making is seen as an affective step in connection with the creation of harmony. In GB the Prime Minister's six new schemes to facilitate youth development is a bid to combat soaring unemployment in the country. These initiatives include the micro interest-free loan scheme; the small business loans for those youth who are educated and/or skilled and wish to become entrepreneurs in their industry; the youth training scheme; the youth skilled development scheme; sponsoring the tuition fees for the higher studies of financially deprived students; and the provision of laptops to students.³⁵ Such initiatives, though in the initial phase, tend to play a pivotal role in the context of youth development and inclusiveness. The need of the local/provincial and the federal government steps to make such programmes successful is of a paramount importance.

As far as the Federal Government initiatives are concerned, the role of Karakoram International University, which is the only federal university in the context, is also vital in instilling harmony among the youth in the region.³⁶ The university has been playing key role in nurturing and developing the youth towards a harmonized and pluralistic society. By providing a platform through various programmatic activities, as well as seminars and conferences, the university engages the youth in critical

healing-scars-in-g-b-muharram-blurs-sectarian-differences/>, accessed 15 August 2015.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Talha Ahmed, "Address to Nation: Nawaz Announces 6 New Schemes for Youth Development," *The Express Tribune*, September 21, 2013, <<http://tribune.com.pk/story/607430/address-to-nation-nawaz-announces-6-new-schemes-for-youth-development/>>, accessed August 15, 2015.

³⁶ Karakoram International University, Gilgit, <<https://www.kiu.edu.pk/index.php>>, accessed August 16, 2015.

thinking and analytical discourses with the aim to a holistic development of the youth. Through market and society oriented programmes the university plays a key role in the socio-economic development of the region. As a result of the university alumni become the advocates of the peace and pioneers of community educators. The role of the university may further be strengthened to involve it in policymaking and conducting research in the very notion of harmony in the region. Though school education is not the mandate of the university, yet the university can contribute in framing educational policy and curriculum revision as expert stakeholders.

Besides the federal and provincial government initiatives, those from social or NGO sectors seem to play a notable role in the youth development with the aim to create a harmonized society. In this regard, various agencies of Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN) have also been playing an effective role in the context of education development, poverty alleviation, health care, infrastructure, and youth development. In connection with the youth for example, the Aga Khan Rural Support Programme (AKRSP) under its Enhancing Employability & Leadership for Youth (EELY) project offers the Youth Development Fellowship (YDF) for young professionals from Gilgit-Baltistan and Chitral between the ages 21-28 years. Such initiatives are not only becoming instrumental in the context of employability but also creating leadership capabilities among youth.³⁷ Likewise, there are other NGOs in the region which also work in various sectors aim at development and harmony.

After analyzing the above mentioned initiatives, it can be concluded that most of the measures are violence-controlling mechanisms through legal and administrative approaches. Some of the initiatives are attention-diverting techniques such as the loan scheme and employment opportunities. Though appreciated somehow these initiatives do not seem to offer sustainable solution or resolution to the core issues of sectarian unrest.

Policy recommendations and implementation strategies

On the basis of the analysis of various approaches to curb sectarian unrest and imparting harmony in Gilgit-Baltistan, we recommend an educative stance in order to promote harmony and appreciation for diversity in GB. We believe that change always takes time and comes slowly on the other hand a fire-fighting stance may not be a panacea. It is imperative to bring about change in minds and thinking, which is indeed a

³⁷ Aga Khan Rural Supports Programme, "Report of the LSO-Youth Convention 2013: Empowered Youth – Empowered Communities," Agha Khan Foundation, (2013), <<http://lson.org.pk/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/LSO-Youth-Convention-2013-Report.pdf>>, accessed August 16, 2015.

long-lasting change. Therefore, we recommend working with a focus to bring about changes in minds through 'right type of education'. The educative stance in terms of providing a contextually long-term need based curriculum, updated with latest developmental needs and is free from the undesirable elements as indicated by Nayyar and Salim³⁸ would be the first step. Working with the youth while taking a participatory and inclusive approach in the educative process would be the second step. Provision of a platform where people from all schools of thought would have opportunities to interact with each other on educative and humanistic grounds is vital. Such a scenario can be created through an educative stance and a participatory approach. This is discussed in the sections below.

Curriculum reform

As discussed earlier, our curricula and textbooks need a complete revision of content, presentation and pedagogy. The curriculum needs to be revised in more pluralist ways. Only updated, precise, and correct content have to be presented in textbooks. The pedagogies need to be made child-centred instead of teacher or subject centred.

Unlike other provinces, in Gilgit-Baltistan there is no existence of Textbook Board and Bureau of Curriculum and Extension Wing. Therefore, establishment the provincial Curriculum Development Wing as an autonomous body of curriculum development has been suggested. Highly qualified professional representatives from major occupations, who have deeper understanding of the resources and issues of the region, should be placed in with assignment of curriculum revision/development. These professionals must also have the confidence of the communities as being enlightened-moderate people with an already agreed set of criteria. The next step would be establishment of the Textbook Boards with competent educationists who encourage pluralistic perspectives in the textbooks. By introducing transformative measures in education and developing a high quality, contextually relevant, and responsive curriculum acceptable to all communities/stakeholders can make a huge difference in future of the region in creating a harmonies society.

The Karakoram International University, being the apex institution of this region, can potentially be involved in the process of curriculum development for GB which is aspired to be equally acceptable for all, up to the mark of national and international standards as per the aspirations of our youth and as per needs of future generations.

The school curriculum should inculcate inter-faith-harmony, peace, patriotism, respect and appreciation for diversities. In doing so, textbook publishers should be bound to incorporate materials and texts

³⁸ Nayyar and Salim, "The Subtle Subversion," 2002.

that promote these social and moral values especially in primary and secondary level, and measures should be taken to promote respect for all human beings. In addition, there is a need for integrating Peace Education and Human Rights Education in the school curriculum so as to educate people about respect and appreciation for diversity, patience and other cultural manifestations that promote harmony.

Teacher induction and development

Teachers are the actual implementers of the curriculum. They play pivotal role in the national development by imparting quality education among the youth. If they are well educated they can play an unprecedented role in creating harmony in the society by demonstrating and educating values of respect, harmony, patience, critical thinking, and brotherhood among their students. Therefore, it is important to consider various quality measures in teacher recruitment, professional development, and monitoring. According to latest research based literature teachers are seen as researchers, reflective practitioners, curriculum developers, educational leaders and decision-makers rather than simple classroom teachers.

In this regard, teacher education curriculum should also highlight various aspects of harmony and the role of teachers in creating harmony in the society. They need to be developed as role models through robust trainings and educational opportunities so that they are able to inculcate the concepts of love, harmony, integrity, patience and tolerance.

Educational management and supervision

School leadership plays an important role in providing a conducive learning environment in the schools. Our head teachers need to understand the context, the surrounding environment and the need to address them through provision of firm leadership. Literature on school leadership shows that “head teacher’s school improvement challenges are inextricably linked to the location, the historical background and the diverse population of the schools.”³⁹ Similarly, effective principal leadership concerns chiefly with providing coordination among classroom teachers, discerning needs of the external environment (parent and community), and providing a bridge between the external environment

³⁹ Mola Dad Shafa, “Role of Head Teachers in Managing the Forces Emanating from the External World of Schools in Gilgit-Baltistan of Pakistan,” *American International Journal of Contemporary Research* 1, 2 (2011): 67, <http://ecommons.aku.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1006&context=pakistan_ied_pdcn>, accessed August 16, 2015.

and the school.⁴⁰ Therefore, it is imperative to develop strong leadership in the schools through provision of training and other professional development opportunities to the head teachers.

Educating various stakeholders

Educational programmes (conferences, seminars, workshops) should be developed for religious leaders of all sects and other community leaders in the context of harmony. The golden rules set by Islam in the context of humanity, brotherhood, and harmony should be discussed in such forums. In addition, educational and awareness programmes should be launched through media. People associated with the media should be trained and educated through various workshops and training sessions pertaining to their role in bringing about harmony in the society.

It is important to highlight the deep-rooted cultural beauty across the region through different programmes. Such programmes should aim to promote mutual understanding, tolerance and solidarity among the communities of the region. Fortunately the region has a university along with hundreds of colleges, and thousands of schools in various parts. This is imperative that a platform for the youth, involving all the educational institutions exist so interactions through seminars, conferences, colloquia, and workshops could take place.

Initiation of market-oriented and enabling programmes

Gilgit-Baltistan is rich with natural resources. It is a fact that three world famous mountain ranges namely Karakorum, Himalaya and Hindu Kush are home to fourteen highest peaks of the world. Gilgit-Baltistan is also known as the longest glacier ranges (Baltoro, Siachin and Batura) beautiful landscape, crystal lakes and high meadows. The potential of Gilgit-Baltistan is enormous in terms of water resources for irrigation hydro power, minerals, tourism, high value horticulture, and opportunities for trade and transit.⁴¹ These mountain ranges, have been upholding the world's highest peaks like K-2, Nanga Parbat, Broad Peak, Gashabrum, Mashabrum, Rakaposhi, Haramosh and many more.⁴²

The mountain ranges, valleys and ravines — as hugely natural walls and fertile fields have been supporting, nourishing and sustaining the innumerable seeds of snow within them. The unique snow products could also found in the region in the forms of thousands of glaciers,

⁴⁰ James Griffith, "The School Leadership/School Climate Relation: Identification of School Configurations Associated With Change in Principals," *Educational Administration Quarterly* 35, 2 (1999): 268.

⁴¹ Izhar Hunzai, "Conflict dynamics in Gilgit-Baltistan."

⁴² H. G. Rasul et al., "Wildlife and Forest of Northern Pakistan," World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF-P), (2013): 60-62.

springs, lakes, streams and rivers. The mountain passes, particularly high altitude ones, have been performing as natural gates for the humans and animals to enter the valleys and pasturelands where a variety of biodiversities live in consonance with their abiotic environment. The Karakoram Highway or the Pak-China Corridor, which is going through the region can also bring economic development to the region.

Therefore, it is vital to realize the importance of these natural resources for the economic development of the region. Market-oriented policies and procedure in the context of power and energy generation, agriculture, minerals, dry fruit, and tourism may result in a paradigm shift among the masses; particularly among the youth of the region ensuring a collaborative engagement in the development.

Conclusion

Gilgit-Baltistan is rich with natural resources, deep-rooted cultural beauties and hardworking human beings. It is important to harness and develop the potentials of the region. The sectarian unrest has been an issue in the region for the last few decades. Local and federal governments have been trying to bridge the gap through administrative and fire-fighting approaches, which in fact may not be a longstanding solution. There is a need to initiate a long term (strategic) reforms in the region through an educative stance.

The long-term or strategic recommendations focus on curriculum reforms responsive to developmental needs, contextually relevant and the youth development by taking an educative stance. In other words, there is a dire need of educational reforms in the region through a moderate curriculum, effective teacher education and community/parent education mechanism. We can re-touch the flute and let it sing the songs of harmony.

