

*Full length Research Paper*

# **Conflict zone and developmental issues faced by youth: “A study from Kashmir”**

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**Conflict in any of its forms affects the human beings; Youth are the future leaders of any nation and impact of conflict hampers their efficiency of work and thinking; this study looks at the issues faced by the youth of Kashmir due to ongoing conflict, arose by infiltration after 1989. A study on youth aging between 15 to 30 years was conducted in three conflicted affected districts of Kashmir. Interview schedule was used to collect the responses of youth so that both illiterate and literate youths can be interviewed. Survey method was used to conduct this study, the questions were asked to youth in local language namely Kashmiri and back-translation (Brislin, 1970) procedure was used to ensure validity of the interview schedule. The study results make some interesting revelations. It emerges that most of the youth think that issues like identity crises, unemployment, psychological stress, identity crises etc., are all offshoots of conflict. In any conflict hit zone, the government and other agencies should ensure economic security, safety of women and children, skill based education should be provided to youth and parents at their ends should properly do counselling to their children about good and bad. The study about the impact of conflict on youth reveals many facts and also re-verified many others, the data collected from different districts of Kashmir Valley showed youth feels and sufferings they go through due to conflict.**

**Key words:** Youth, conflict, Kashmir, identity crises, unemployment, psychological.

## **INTRODUCTION**

Youth are considered the future of the nation, so the positive development of youth is very important for any nation to develop. Currently, most of the developing regions have young population, with children under age 15 accounting with 29% of the population and young people aged 15 to 24 accounting for a further 18%. In fact, the numbers of children and young people in the developing regions are at all time high (1.6 billion children and 1.0 billion young people). The situation in the least developed countries is even more pressing because children under 15 constitute 40% of their population and young people account for a further 20%. In the developed regions, children and youth account for just 17 and 13% of the population, respectively (U.N, 2011). In Asia and the Pacific, youth makes up 61.8% of the world's total

youth population of 1.2 billion, an increase of 4% as compared with 57.7% in 2000 (U.N., 2009). India has the largest youth population in the world that is poised to increase further in the coming decade. 70% of India's population is below the age of 35 years (MYA&S, 2011). India has the youth population including adolescents around 550 million (Census, 2011) (Map 1).

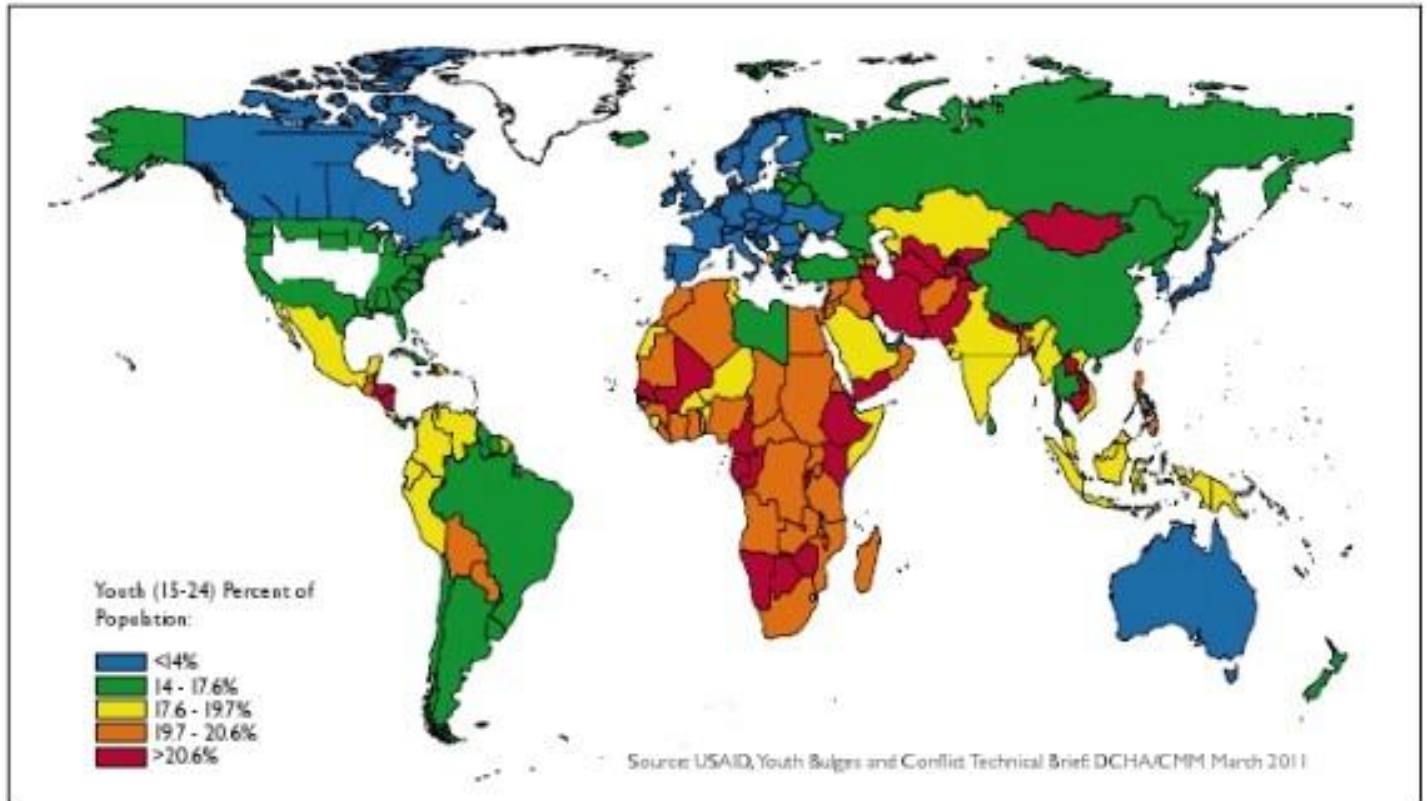
## **Definition**

### **Youth**

The UN, for statistical consistency across regions, defines 'youth', as those people between the ages of 15 and 24 years, without prejudice to other definitions by Member States. All UN statistics on youth are based on this definition, as illustrated by the annual yearbooks of statistics published by the United Nations system on

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**Map 1.** Map of youth population.

demography, education, employment and health (UNESCO). All United Nations statistics on youth are based on this definition, as illustrated by the annual yearbook of statistics published by the United Nations system on demography, education, employment and health (Aassve et al., 2005). Within the category of “youth”, it is also important to distinguish between teenagers (aged between 13 and 19) and young adults (aged between 20 and 24), since the sociological, psychological and health problems they face may differ (DESA, 2002).

Different societies across the world have their own definition or meanings of youth, in some societies youth has an important gender dimension, boys and girls might experience being young in a considerably different way. Hence, in addition to being defined chronologically (as a period of age between certain ages), youth is also defined functionally involving a process of transition. Youth is also defined functionally (involving a process of transition from childhood to adulthood, marked by rituals or physical changes), as well as culturally (pertaining to the role that individuals play in a given social context). In from childhood to adulthood, marked by rituals or physical changes), as well as culturally (pertaining to the role that individuals play in a given social context) (UNDP, 2006).

### **Conflict**

Conflict is such a term which, is used in various spheres of life, conflict arise with ideological differences, economic differences, value differences and power differences between two people, groups, teams, nations etc., conflict can occur at approach–approach (*between two positive goals*), avoidance–avoidance (*between two negative goals*) and approach–avoidance (*attracted and repelled by the same goal*). Conflict whatever level takes place hampers human functioning. Conflict could neither be good nor bad. However the conflict is handled determines either it could be constructive or destructive (Deutsch, 2000). Conflict is defined as an incompatibility between two or more parties who are not able to live together in relationship, despite number of attempts made to be together (Fisher, 1990).

### **Conflict in Kashmir**

The situation in Kashmir with the insurgency since 1989 things got affected. The prevailing condition since 1989 has not only deteriorated the social setup, but the economic conditions as well (Sehgal, 2011). With the conflict in civil areas and huge deployment of armed

forces, thousands have been killed, and thousands became widows and orphans, social relations have been destroyed, and in addition to these people became psychologically ill, and are unable to carry out day to day activities. Family breakdown, family conflicts, unemployment, late marriages, orphanage culture, etc., grow at fast rate in these situations of Kashmir. Most of the educated youth of Kashmir are Unemployed or underemployed. With the result most of them either switch to drugs or indulge in anti-social activities resulting damage of social and economic fiber (Dar, 2011).

### Study objectives

1. To understand the impact of conflict on social development of youth,
2. To understand the impact of conflict on economic development of youth,
3. To analyze the psychological and other issues pertaining to youth due to conflict.

### LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature review focused in two parts; positive development of youth and affects of conflict on youth. Conducive atmosphere, services and various activities, help youth to transform into a positive adulthood life. Positive development of youth through various formal and informal opportunities and experiences provided to them by the nation and society help him grow strong and productive. Youth with good physical and mental status can contribute strongly to the development of their nation, rather than those with problems or at high risk (Robertson, 1997).

Conflict has played a great role in children being employed by various automobile shops and other sectors; conflict has made many young boys and girls' parent-less with the result they were forced to earn to survive. Conflict has also increased the number of orphans in Kashmir and many of such orphans left their schools at primary or middle school level to fetch their family needs (Naqshbandi, 2011).

Positive development of youth can be termed as ongoing growth process, in which all youth endeavor to meet their basic needs for their socio-psychological grooming and connects them to the larger community, youth development can be achieved by providing proper atmosphere for academic achievements, vocational training for skill development to earn, social and personal skills (soft skills) etc (Quinn, 1995).

Youth development helps young people to grow strong and develop inner strength and skills which are needed to cope with pressure that might lead to unhealthy and antisocial behaviors. It helps them perform their duties in society according social norms. Healthy behaviors are

one of the positive outcomes of positive youth development, but there are others including the production of self reliant, self confident etc., positive developed youth are adults who can become responsible members of society and contribute to the development of society (Development, 1992).

Thousands of Kashmiri youth suffer from psychological disorders, suicide rates are at increasing rate among young women and adolescent youth. The conflict situation has left behind a track of destruction, danger, and depression. Conflict bring the magnitude of loss and suffering to description in cold statistics, conflict in any form especially armed conflict always affect the youth the future of any nation and hampers their efficiency to deliver (Sofiya, 2012).

There are cases of psychological and social unhealthy behavior of youth in areas affected with conflict. The core component to respond to conflict can be psycho-social recovery and well being. In an acute emergency, exacerbated by conflict, identifying and consolidating the links between psychosocial and human rights work is unlikely to be straightforward (Grove et al., 2005).

The conflict usually hampers the socio-psycho development of youth, and its impact on society as a whole is enormous, most of the time conflict rips apart the social fabric of the societies. With the people being killed, families torn apart, communities being displaced and divided, infrastructure being damaged and destroyed and natural support systems crumble. It is recognized that violent conflict situations have devastating effects on any human being and can be particularly shattering for young people. Youth usually get affected in the conflict the most apart from women and children, youth being in their developing stage actively forming identities and determining acceptable roles for themselves within their community and society as a whole. Conflict often destroys the safe environment provided by a house, a family, adequate nutrition, education and employment. Health risks increase during conflict, anxiety and depression, extreme stress, high-risk drug use and suicide are disturbing aspects of youth health that are particularly prevalent in societies experiencing conflict (Asima, 2011).

During the civilian conflict in Sri Lanka, the way children were used and its impact of their socio-psychological growth led many of them psychologically distracted or unhealthy. Research reveals how child centered tropes were used and how youth have been affected. A huge number of youth in their areas indulged in the conflict by one or other way. Their socio-psycho-educational growth suffered and most of these became victims of conflict (Kleinfeld, 2009).

Conflict highly impacted the youth of Kashmir, their socio-psychological capabilities got affected, and lack of resources and unemployment added to depression of youth in conflict hit Kashmir leading them to drug addiction and other anti social activities. Further

**Table 1.** Respondents profile.

Parameter		Frequency	Percent	Valid percent	Cumulative percent
<b>Gender (Valid)</b>	Male	165	52.9	52.9	52.9
	Female	147	47.1	47.1	100.0
<b>Age (years) (Valid)</b>	15-19	36	11.5	11.5	11.5
	20-25	139	44.6	44.6	56.1
	26-30	137	43.9	43.9	100.0
<b>Educational qualification (Valid)</b>	Illiterate	23	7.4	7.4	7.4
	Undergraduate	143	45.8	45.8	53.2
	Postgraduate	146	46.8	46.8	100.0
<b>Family type (Valid)</b>	Nuclear family	182	58.3	58.3	58.3
	Joint family	130	41.7	41.7	100.0
Total		312	100.0	100.0	

education system got highly deteriorated resulting to the failure of youth in their future. Many youth are lying in jails and many are still missing, which resulted to the depression of their family members and sufferings too (Dar, 2011).

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The methodology used in this study was non-probability method with quantitative approach. Interview schedules were used to collect the data from the respondents. This was done so that both fractions of society illiterate and literate youth can be interviewed and views can be obtained.

### Tool formation and limitations

The interview schedule was developed after intensive literature review, referring of previous interview schedules and questionnaires and discussion with scholars. The interview schedule having close ended questions was used only to ensure the safety of the interviewers, and considering security point of view. The open ended questionnaires would have created trouble, and such similar cases were witnessed already some research scholars.

### Data collection and sample

The process of data collection with the help of interview schedules took approximately three months. The data was obtained from district Kupwara, Pulwama and Srinagar. A total number 312 youth were approached deploying accidental sampling method and from each district 104 youth per district were approached.

### Scope of study

Northwest state of India, Jammu and Kashmir with its borders touching Pakistan, Afghanistan and China, has three geographical regions a) Jammu Province, b) Kashmir valley, and c) Ladakh Plateau. These three regions differ widely with regards to physical, socio-economic and cultural characteristics (Naqshbandi, 2011).

Jammu And Kashmir State is divided into two administrative divisions Jammu and Kashmir. The state has 22 districts, 87 Assembly Constituencies and 6 Parliamentary Constituencies with total Population; the total population of Jammu and Kashmir is 12.5 million (Census, 2011).

### Data analysis

The data collected with the help of interview schedules was first manually scrutinized to ensure that all the interview schedules are properly filled. The total of 312 interview schedules was analyzed. The Statistical Package for Social Sciences program (SPSS) version 16.0 was used for further testing. The frequency test was conducted to understand the ration. Further the cross tabulation was conducted to understand more facts.

## RESULTS

Table 1 respondents profile gives outlook of respondents. Analysis of Table 1 showed that; 52.9% of respondents were male and 47.1% of respondents were female. 44.6% of respondents belong to age group of 20 to 25 years, 43.6% of respondents belong to age group of 26 to 30 years and 11.5% of respondents belong to 15 to 19 years. 46.8% of respondents were having educational qualification of post graduate level, 45.8% of respondents were having educational qualification of Undergraduate level and 7.4% of respondents were illiterate. 58.3% of respondents belong to nuclear families and 41.7% of respondents belong to joint families.

Analysis of Table 2 psycho-economic impact reveals many interesting facts: 64.4% of respondents revealed that they feel difficult to sustain in today's world due to conflict surrounded them. 53.8% of respondents mentioned they face identity crises due to living in conflict zone. 81.4% of respondents revealed that conflict has greater negative impact on youth. 69.6% of respondents mention that conflict plays greater role in youth unemployment. 63.8% of respondents revealed that their

**Table 2.** Psycho-economic impact.

Item		Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative percentage
<b><i>Do you feel conflict in Kashmir has made youth's life difficult to sustain in today's world?</i></b>				
Valid	Yes	201	64.4	64.4
	No	111	35.6	100.0
<b><i>Do you feel youth living in conflict zone face identity crises?</i></b>				
Valid	Yes	168	53.8	53.8
	No	144	46.2	100.0
<b><i>Do you feel prevailing situation in Kashmir has negative impact on youth?</i></b>				
Valid	Yes	254	81.4	81.4
	No	58	18.6	100.0
<b><i>Do you think conflict has played great role in unemployment in Kashmir?</i></b>				
Valid	Yes	217	69.6	69.4
	No	95	30.4	100.0
<b><i>Has your family been affected economically due to conflict in Kashmir?</i></b>				
Valid	Yes	113	36.2	36.2
	No	199	63.8	100.0
<b><i>Do you think state's economy has been badly hit by ongoing conflict?</i></b>				
Valid	Yes	248	79.5	79.5
	No	64	20.5	100.0
<b><i>Do you feel conflict has great role to play in problems of youth?</i></b>				
Valid	Yes	240	76.9	76.9
	No	72	23.1	100.0
<b><i>Do you feel psychological problems among youth has grown up since conflict erupted?</i></b>				
Valid	Yes	271	86.9	86.9
	No	41	13.1	100.0
Total		312	100.0	

family does not face any economic problems due to conflict; however 79.5% respondents mentioned that state faced huge economic problems due to conflict. 76.9% of respondents revealed that conflict has played huge role in enhancing problem of youth and 86.9% of respondents mentioned that conflict increased psychological problems among youth.

Analysis of Table 3 social impact shows: 77.2% of respondents do not feel that conflict has played any role in social problem like late marriage; however 59.6% of respondents mentioned that conflict has increased cultural degradation. 69.2% of respondents mentioned that conflict has played great role in family breakdown. 76.3% of respondents revealed that people in their village or area have witnessed conflict in their lives. 71.8% of respondents revealed that conflict has increased rate of drug addiction among youth.

Analyzing the Crosstabulation 1 it was revealed that

97.3% of female respondents mention that conflict has increased psychological problems among youth; however 77.6% of male respondents also have same views.

Analyzing this Crosstabulation 2 show, 73.47% of female respondents mentioned that conflict has played great role in unemployment of youth in Kashmir, whereas 66.06% of male respondents also mentioned the same thing. However 33.94% of male respondents mentioned that conflict has not played any role in unemployment in Kashmir. This was supported with 26.53% of female respondents.

Analysis of this Crosstabulation 3 reveals that 74.83% of female respondents mentioned conflict in Kashmir has played great role in family breakdown and this view was supported by 64.24% of male respondents. The Chi-Square test shows statistical significant difference between male and female with regards to conflict in Kashmir played great role in family breakdown

**Table 3.** Social impact.

Item		Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative percentage
<b><i>Do you think that conflict has added to the social problem like late marriage?</i></b>				
Valid	Yes	71	22.8	22.8
	No	241	77.2	100.0
<b><i>Do you feel cultural degradation at present is because of Conflict?</i></b>				
Valid	Yes	186	59.6	59.6
	No	126	40.4	100.0
<b><i>Do you think conflict in Kashmir has played great role in family breakdown?</i></b>				
Valid	Yes	216	69.2	69.2
	No	96	30.8	100.0
<b><i>Have people from your village or area become victim of conflict at any point in their lives?</i></b>				
Valid	Yes	238	76.3	76.3
	No	74	23.7	100.0
<b><i>Do you feel armed conflict is major responsible player for drug addiction among youth in Kashmir?</i></b>				
Valid	Yes	224	71.8	71.8
	No	88	28.2	100.0
Total		312	100.0	

**Crosstabulation 1.**

<b>Do you feel psychological problems among youth has grown up since conflict erupted?</b>						
Valid		Yes	Percentage	No	Percentage	Total
Gender	Male	128	77.6	37	22.4	165
	Female	143	97.3	4	2.7	147
Total		271		41		312

**Crosstabulation 2.**

<b>Do you think conflict has played great role in unemployment in Kashmir?</b>						
Valid		Yes	Percentage	No	Percentage	Total
Gender	Male	109	66.06	56	33.94	165
	Female	108	73.47	39	26.53	147
Total		95		217		312

**Crosstabulation 3.**

<b>Do you think conflict in Kashmir has played great role in family breakdown?</b>						
Valid		Yes	Percentage	No	Percentage	Total
Gender	Male	106	64.24	59	35.76	165
	Female	110	74.83	37	25.17	147
Total		216		96		312

$[X^2 (2) = 45.23 P < 0.05, \text{Cramer's } V = 0.43].$

## DISCUSSION

Naqshbandi et al. (2012) revealed in their study that conflict has increased psychological problem among adolescents and same has been argued by (Asima, 2011) in her study that due to conflict people suffer physically, emotionally, economically etc., she further mentioned that youth in productive age due to conflict struggle for their identity and this identity crises cause many problems both psychological and economical also social. The same was found in this research paper that 53.8% of respondents revealed that they face identity crises. Naqshbandi (2011) in his study mentions that conflict has given rise to the unemployment, with the result parents forced their children to join early laborhood. This study also showed that conflict has reason in the increase of unemployment among youth. In a report published in *TamilNet*, 2002 it was shown that conflict is main cause of economic damage in Sri Lanka where conflict was prevailing. This study also showed that conflict is responsible for the state's economic damage, wherein 79.5% of respondents expressed this. Grove et al. (2005) in their study argued that psychological problems increase among youth due to conflict zones the same was found by this study that psychological problems were at increase in the Kashmir due to ongoing conflict and most among victims are Youth, 86.9% of respondents expressed their views in support of this argument. Apart from psychological problem conflict brings physical, social, religious, educational etc., problems, the data of this study clearly showed that people feel conflict is directly responsible for their cultural, social, psychological and physical problems, many respondents revealed that drug addiction in Kashmir is offshoot of conflict as well as late marriages are results of it. The data analysis showed that youth suffer from psychological disorders due to conflict hence it can have a greater impact on their working capabilities and even of their academic capabilities. Family breakdown was also revealed during data analysis which means due to conflict family breakdown also takes place which again has bad impact of youth, the psychological and physical development of children can get hampered and some research has shown that children those who live in joint families are physically and psychologically strong than those who live in nuclear families.

## Conclusion

Since the independence of two nations India and Pakistan in 1947, Kashmir remained the center of conflict, Pakistan and India fought three wars over Kashmir. Though the nature of conflict is different until

1989, with the downfall of the Soviet Union, India as its closest allies got affected and in 1989 insurgency in Kashmir forced India to deploy huge armed personals in the civilian areas of Kashmir, this move made civilians vulnerable and many lost their lives, became disabled psychologically as well as physically (Sehgal, 2011).

*Older men declare war. But it is youth that must fight and die. And it is youth who must inherit the tribulation, the sorrow and the triumphs that are the aftermath of war (Hoover, 1944).*

This saying comes true about Kashmir where years ago older men started armed conflict and youth started losing their lives, psychological balance, avenues of employment and many more. Often young people are compelled to enroll themselves into armed conflict through individual hunger and poverty or through family economic strains. Other reasons why young people voluntarily enroll in armed conflicts include religious / ideological, social, community or family reasons, peer pressure, love for freedom and revenge.

The youth are the most affected by the conflict, with the conflict in Kashmir since 1989 today's youth lost their childhood in the incidents of armed conflict, they could not be socialized in proper cultural and religious ethos of Kashmir. Due to exposure to the environment which was created with guns, killings and fear of conflict number of youth became involved in the struggle. The number of youth lost their lives, their beloved ones and many others are languishing in jails, detention centers and so many of them became psychological and physically disabled. All the aspects of their young likes have been affected; be it their cultural aspect, social aspect, religious aspect, psychological aspect, physical aspect, conflict broke down tradition community structure, disintegrated cultural norms and coping mechanism. In any conflict situation, civilians including children, women and youth, often witness traumatic events or are the victims of horrible atrocities like shooting, killing, displacement, loss of friends and close family members, loss of livelihood and income, exposure to sexual violence and psychological and emotional trauma, physical assaults and life threatening injuries. Conflict of any nature always has its impact on youth as youths are the people with fresh blood and are emotionally immature hence can be exploited easily, besides those the traumatic moments which they have gone through remaining with them till the end. This was observed that most of the youth from conflict hit areas despite, them being intelligent are not able to deliver many at times.

## SUGGESTIONS FOR POLICY IMPLICATION

The suggestions provided will help to improve lives of youth in the conflict hit zones, and also will help to build

peace and safeguard to women and children.

- (i) Conflicts should be avoided at first place, for that matter resolution of conflict via peaceful dialogue should be preferred.
- (ii) All the international treaties and United Nations declarations should be respected by the nations who come under it, in the large interest of human beings.
- (iii) The economic security should be provided to the citizens falling in the conflict hit zone, so that their basic needs can be fulfilled.
- (iv) Children and women should be given due respect and safety.
- (v) Proper counseling should be done to the children by their elders time to time about various social issues, so that their chances falling prey of conflict can be reduced.
- (vi) Trainings of various vocational skills should be provided to youth in conflict hit zones so that they find it easy to earn their bread and butter even in difficult times.
- (vii) People in conflict hit zones should be freely allowed to perform their religious, social, cultural activities, so that feeling of belongingness can be created.

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