

## THE COMMUNITY RADIO IN KASHMIR: A WAY FORWARD

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### ABSTRACT

*In India, the campaign to legitimise community radio began in mid-1990s, soon after the Supreme Court of India ruled in its judgment of February 1995 that “airwaves are public property. Though the approval for setting up of Community radio stations in India was granted in 2002, it is yet to develop in the valley of Kashmir. Till now, the valley has not established any community radio station, but the first effort to use radio for the development of the community was made in 2009 when Panos South Asia, in collaboration with the Islamic University of Science and Technology (IUST), a rural University in Awantipora (Kashmir) started a community radio program in the Awantipora community. The program named “Pesh Kadam” meaning “Step Forward” started in 2009 and completed 350 episodes in 2018.*

*This paper is aimed to study the reasons for absence of community radio stations in Kashmir. It also documents the efforts made to bring this medium to Kashmir and understand the evolution and challenges of first ever community radio program in Kashmir, study its content, analyse its popularity and efficacy. Both qualitative and quantitative research techniques are deployed in this study.*

**KEYWORDS:** Community Radio, Awantipora, Kashmir & Pesh Kadam

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### INTRODUCTION

The state of Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) is a fascinating geographic region including unique blend of natural and cultural characteristics. The state comprised of three regions - the Jammu division, the Vale of Kashmir and Ladakh. Though by area Kashmir is the smallest province (15.73%) but in terms of population, it is the largest (54.93%). Hindus and Sikhs are prevalent in Jammu region with Muslims as a minority, on the other hand, Muslims are predominant in Kashmir valley with Hindus & Sikhs as a minority and Buddhists in Ladakh-Baltistan region.

At the time of transfer of power from British to India, there were 562 princely states in India and every prince was given three options; join Indian Union, join the Dominion of Pakistan or remain independent. Most of the states had signed the Instrument of Accession before 15 August, 1947 and joined the Indian Union lead by Congress, except Hyderabad which was ruled by a Muslim Nawab, Junagadh in Western India, a Hindu majority state ruled by a Muslim ruler who wished to join Pakistan dominion, and Jammu and Kashmir a Muslim Majority state ruled by a Hindu king. In the end, Junagadh was added to Indian union when New Delhi held a plebiscite in the state, which Pakistan never accepted, Hyderabad was brought under control by India using armed forces, and Jammu and Kashmir became victim of a military dispute politically and diplomatically which still continues (Lamb, 1991).

Kashmir has been an acknowledged conflict area reeling under continuous violence for the past three decades. It is more in focus regarding militancy, civil unrest, human rights violations that make an alluring subject