

OPEN ACCESS

Name
pISSN: 2617-3336
eISSN: 2617-3700
www.iqan.com.pk

IQĀN -Vol: 04, Issue: 01, Dec-2021
DOI.10.36755/iqan146.2021,PP: 80-90



Media-tic challenges for inter-faith harmony in Pakistan and Pragmatic social egalitarianism

* **Dr. Syed Aftab Alam** < Aftab.alam@fjwu.edu.pk >

Assistant Professor, Fatima Jinnah Women University, Rawalpindi.

****Dr. Saeed Ahmad Saaedi**

Assistant Professor, Institute of Islamic Studies, University of Punjab Lahore.

< saeed.is.edu.pk >

Version of Record

Received: 15-Sep-21; **Accepted:** 01-Nov-21, **Online/Print:** 31-Dec-21

ABSTRACT

Pakistan being multi-religious country has diverse religious communities which have been living as friends for centuries. In the recent past, few incidents of targeting the minorities were reported which labeled Pakistan as a locus of intolerance, extremism and terrorism. As matters of fact, all these troublemakers were funded by some specific international groups and prorogated illicitly by some media groups otherwise the same religious communities have been living in the same land for centuries as brothers and friends.

The research is comprises a survey study about the role of Pakistani media for promotion and observing inter-faith harmony among different religious communities in Pakistan. Media has a crucial part in maintain the social pulse especially on inter-faith harmony platform. Nationally and internationally, the wave of creditability is more recognized than the quickness of media so it is pertinent to understand to regularize the media of Pakistan that they should first recheck the news and incidents through the concerned professors of the area and the government officials then break a comprehensive report to stable the creditability of their channel and paint a positive image of Pakistan all over the world. It is also found that Pakistani media is not sufficiently covering the scholars of different religions other than Islam on social life topics and on harmonic points of their religions also.

Keywords: *Media-tic Challenges, Inter-Faith Harmony in Pakistan, Religious Communities in Pakistan, Pragmatic Pakistan, Social Egalitarianism*



Introduction

Mohinjo Daro and Harappa are the oldest reported civilizations of the land of Pakistan¹ which are prominent due to their peaceful culture² and progressive governance³ in the history of human being. Archeologists admit that there was no iron weapon discovered from these cities⁴. History is evident that it was invaders Aryans who started wars and continued non-peaceful atmosphere in this land⁵. It was Aryans who distributed the human beings into casts and humiliated discriminations⁶ and later recognized with the term of Hindus.

Peacefulness is the most powerful element of human being⁷ which is integrated with nature so the study of governing history of this land is witnessed that the peaceful communities remain prevalent in the same land⁸ and the cruel or non-peaceful human beings had to travelled towards new areas of this land and they had to colonize the eastern part of this land.

Peaceful people of this land are still in this land of Pakistan. They had not faced a single war in the name of religion in this region. They even did not fought with each other but some outsiders and greedy groups of natural sources of this peaceful land tried to sabotage the peace of this land⁹ but the learned minds of this land, Pakistan, once again replied with the manifestation of Pegham- e-Pakistan program¹⁰ and blocked their ill targets.¹¹

Pakistan has multi-religious and diverse religious communities¹² which have been living as

¹Agarwal, Dharma Pal. (2007). *The Indus Civilization: An interdisciplinary Perspective*. Mumbai: Aryan Books International, P.65

²Ibid, p.111

³Irfan Habib. (2015). *The Indus Civilization*. Kalkatta: Tulika Books. New Delhi: A.P.H. Publishing Corporation, P.34

⁴Raj Paruthi. (2004). *Pre History and Harappan Civilization*. P.127

⁵Porus Homi Havewala. (2011). *The Saga of the Aryan Race*. UK: Arktos Media Ltd. P.64

⁶Nicholas B. Dirks. (2011). *Castes of Mind: Colonialism and the Making of Modern India*. London: Princeton, p.207

⁷Kent D. Shifferd. (2014). *From War to Peace: A Guide to the Next Hundred Years*, California: McFarland & Company Inc. Publisher, p.197

⁸Mara Goldman, Makko Sinandei and Laura DeLuca. (2014). *Conflicts Resolution, Land disputes and Peace Building in Northorn Tanzania: The role of Customary Institutions*, in Building Peace with Within edited by Maphosa Sylvester B. and Deluca, Pretoria: Africa Institute of South Africa. P.153

⁹Hameed Ali Khan Rai. (2009). *Pakistan in the United Nations: Speeches Delivered in the General Assembly by the Heads of Pakistan Delegations 1948-1978*, Lahore: Aziz Publishers, p. 131

¹⁰Islamic Research Institute. (2018). *Pegham-e-Pakistan*, Islamabad: International Islamic University. P.5

¹¹Ibid, p.20

¹²Ahmed Saleem. (2011). *Non-Muslims in an Islamic State: A Case Study of Pakistan*, in Non-Muslims in Muslim Majority Societies: With Focus in Middle East and Pakistan edited by Kajsa Ahlstrand and G. Gunner, Cambridge: The Lutterworth Press, p. 134

Sources of Sirah & historical quests

friends for centuries¹. In the recent past, few incidents of targeting the minorities were reported² which labeled Pakistan as a locus of intolerance, extremism and terrorism³. As matters of fact, all these troublemakers were funded by some specific international groups⁴ and prorogated illicitly by some media groups otherwise the same religious communities have been living in the same land for centuries as brothers and friends.

The study investigated the challenges of inter-faith harmony in Pakistan and found that “media in promoting interfaith work in all of cases is very important” and “Media can play positive and negative both roles also⁵”. In the same patten, it can be said that media can play a key role to build or destruct the inter-faith harmony in Pakistan. It is decided to conduct an empirical study in this concern and investigate the influential aspects of media in the promotion of Interfaith harmony among Muslim, Christian, Hindus, Sikh, Bahai, Noor Bakhshi, Ismaili, Bohra, Zikri and other religious communities in Pakistan.

Importance of the Study

- Media role and Inter-faith harmony during New Reporting is a neglected area so no particular research has been done.
- This is the duty of the Pakistani media to keep in view the inter-faith harmony during New Reporting to eliminate the label of extremism painted on Pakistan.
- In the universities of Pakistan, a course entitled ‘Inter-faith Harmony and New Editing or Presentation’ is needed to be taught but it lacks information about these areas so this study will fill this gap also.
- Islam has given the equal rights to all mankind so this study will highlight the importance of New Reporting in context with Inter-faith harmony in Pakistan.
- The study has especial focused on future News Reporting about Inter-faith harmony incidents and suggested a code of conduct regarding creditability or quickness of news channels.

Religious Communities in Pakistan

Muslim, Christian, Hindu, Bahai, Zikri, Bohra, Ismaeli, Kelashi, Jude and Noor Bakhshi along with many others are community members in Pakistan⁶. They have citizenship of Pakistan. They

¹Ibid, p.142

²Frank R. Lautenberg. (2011). *Firearm, Explosives and Terrorists: A Looming Threat, a Major US Vulnerability*, New York: New York City Police Commissioner Office. P.5

³Satish Kuman. (2016). *India’s National Security: Annual Review Report 2012*, London, New York , New Delhi: Routledge. P.175-76

⁴Madiha Afzal. (2018). *Pakistan Under Siege: Extremism, Society and the State*, Washington: The Brookings Institution, p.132

⁵Muhamamd Abu Nimar, Amal Khoury and Emily Welty. (2007). *Unity in Diversity: Interfaith Dialogue in the Middle East*, Washington: United States Institute of Peace Press, p.216

⁶Iftikhar Haider Malik. (2002). *Religious Minorities in Pakistan*, Lahore: Minority Rights Group International, p.32

are mainly concentrated in Islamabad, Lahore, Multan, Jamshoro and Karachi. They are all officially registered as a different and independent entity so enjoy all facilities being the citizens of Pakistan¹. These religious communities have rights to get education in any institution of Pakistan. They can start business in any area of Pakistan as Muslims can do. They can buy the properties and moveable properties in any area of Pakistan. These communities are free to move any area of Pakistan so these have complete official freedom and respectable free status by the government of Pakistan². These community members have social free and respectable status also all over the Pakistan. All community members of Pakistan behave with each other positively and help at needy time without any discrimination³. Muslims and other religious members take part in others ceremonies. Qadianis cannot call themselves or pose to be Muslim and the community people have also same facilities and status except they cannot preach their religion outside their own religious places⁴.

Commonly it is understood that in Pakistan, there are only Shia and Sunni which remain mostly at quarreling situation⁵. Historically and religiously, this concept is wrong. Pakistan, in south Asia region, has the most peaceful and liberal land. Pakistan has diverse religions and cultures and all the communities have been living here peacefully for a long time⁶. Pakistan has many minor religious communities also like, Bahai, Noor Bakhshi, Bohra, Ismaili, Kailash and Zikri and all of these are living with full social status. This is the land where Gandhara and Indus civilizations had been flourished and up till now, not a single heavy weapon was found during the excavation which verifies that this is the land of peace⁷.

Media Role in Coverage of Scholar other than Islamic

As far as various sects of Islam are concerned, it is found a variety of programs which give representation to these sects especially on special occasions like Muharram, Eid Milad un Nabi and the program like 'Alim on line' provides different angels of different Muslim sects on a matter under discussion. It is also found that there are rules approved by PEMRA that no program can be online if it "contains derogatory remarks against any religion, sect or community⁸". But it is

¹Shahid Javed Burki.(2018).*Pakistan: Fifty Years of Nationhood, Third Edition*, Abingdon:Taylor & Francis, p.27

² Ibid, p.45

³Kamran Hashemi. (2008). *Religious Legal Traditions: International Human Rights Law and Muslim States*, Boston: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, p.179

⁴Pakistan Courts Tribunal. (1985). *The All Pakistan Legal Decisions*, p.2, Vol. 37, Issue 1

⁵Thomson F. Homer-Dixon. (2008). *Environment, Scarcity and Violence*, New Jersey : Princeton,p.167

⁶Farahnaz Isphahani. (2017). *Purifying the Land of the Pure: A History of Pakistan's Religious Minorities*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, p.145

⁷Agarwal, Dharma Pal. (2007). *The Indus Civilization: An interdisciplinary Perspective*. Mumbai: Aryan Books International, P.66

⁸Christina Fair. (2015). *Militant Recruitment in Pakistan: a New Look at the Militancy-madrasah connection in Pakistan's Political Labyrinths: Military, Society and Terror* edited by Ravi Kalia, New York, London, New Delhi: Routledge, Taylor & Frances Group, p. 58

Sources of Sirah & historical quests

seldom found representation of other non-Islamic religious factions of Pakistan. At times, Christians are consulted occasionally but Pakistan is a host of several different religion, no other religious faction is given media coverage. Unless there is some mishap to some religious group, they are given some coverage, but there is no policy found in any channel of media to give some room to other religious factions living in Pakistan as officially sound citizen.

Survey Study

An empirical Survey Study was planned with the civil members of Rawalpindi Society. A questionnaire was prepared and personally got filled by the protestors through the author and research assistants. The questionnaire had two parts, i.e. first about to collect data regarding effects of mob psychology and second regarding effects of media interpretation during News presentation about the incident.

Population of the Survey

The population of the survey was randomly selected from Quaid-e-Azam University students, advocates from district courts Rawalpindi, patients, staff and doctors of Rawalpindi Institute of Cardiology, traders, shopkeepers and buyers from markets of Saddar Rawalpindi and drivers of public conveyance of Rawalpindi. The questionnaire was in Urdu language for an easy understanding of the respondents and later it was translated into English language for an easy interpretation of the article. The questionnaires were filled and collected by the 100 respondents from different areas of Rawalpindi. The data collected through questionnaire was tabulated and analyzed through SPSS program for creditable results.

Data Collected

The data was collected in the form of close ended questionnaire format i.e. Yes / No. Data was collected without the personal information of the respondents so that they can easily express their real understanding and researcher can collect the real facts about the research.

The data was tabulated in the following format:

		YES		NO	
		No.	%	No.	%
1.	Do you watch TV or read any Newspaper daily?	95	95%	5	5%

		YES		NO	
		No.	%	No.	%
2.	Do you try to watch religious programs on TV or read any religious article in Newspaper daily?	75	75%	25	25%

		YES		NO	
		No.	%	No.	%
	What do you think that TV channels are giving proper or sufficient time to the religious programs?				

3.		20	20%	80	80%
----	--	----	-----	----	-----

4.	What do you think that Newspapers give proper and sufficient coverage to the religious articles and news?	YES		NO	
		No.	%	No.	%
		15	15%	85	85%

5.	Do you know that people of other religions like Christianity, Hinduism, Sikhism, Bahai, Noor Bakhshi, Bohra, Zikri, Ismaili, Ahmadi and others are also citizen of Pakistan?	YES		NO	
		No.	%	No.	%
		98	98%	2	2%

6.	What do you think that TV channels calls the representatives of others religions also in their religious programs?	YES		NO	
		No.	%	No.	%
		00	00%	100	100%

7.	What do you think that Newspapers publish the religious articles and news of others religious representatives in their newspapers also?	YES		NO	
		No.	%	No.	%
		5	5%	95	95%

8.	What do you think that Pakistani Media is fulfilling the responsibilities regarding inter-faith harmony in Pakistan?	YES		NO	
		No.	%	No.	%
		5	5%	95	95%

9.	Do you like to watch the program of other religious representatives talking about truthfulness, theft, adultery, rewards by God and other social matters?	YES		NO	
		No.	%	No.	%
		65	65%	35	35%

	Do you want to read the articles and news of others religious representatives about social matters in context of their religious	YES		NO	
		No.	%	No.	%

Sources of Sirah & historical quests

10.	views?	60	60%	40	40%
-----	--------	----	-----	----	-----

Data Analysis

1. Maximum numbers of Respondents watch TV programs or any read newspaper on daily basis.
2. A great number of respondents try to watch religious programs on TV or read religious articles on daily basis.
3. A great number of respondents opinioned that TV channels do not give proper coverage to religious programs or news.
4. A great number of respondents opinioned that newspapers do not give proper coverage to religious programs or news.
5. Maximum numbers of respondents know that Pakistan has other religious followers like, Christianity, Hinduism, Sikhism, Bahai, Bohra, Noor Bakhshi, Zikri, Ismaili, Ahmedi and others as citizen of Pakistan.
6. All respondents opinioned that no TV channels call religious representatives of other religions in religious programs on social issues.
7. Maximum numbers of respondents said that newspapers do not publish religious manuscripts of other religious communities of Pakistan.
8. Maximum numbers of the respondents opinioned that Pakistani media is fulfilling its responsibilities regarding to promote or flourish inter-faith harmony in Pakistan.
9. A good number of respondents want to watch on TV religious representatives of other religions talking on social issues and matters to develop inter-faith harmony in their lives.
10. A good number of respondents want to read in newspapers religious representatives of other religions talking on social issues and matters to develop the inter-faith harmony in their lives.

Result Summary

The respondents, whose are from the city Rawalpindi, are habitual to watch TV or read newspaper daily whatever the ratio of time they spent for this watching or reading. Many of the respondents want to watch and read religious programs or writings but they responded that TV channels and newspapers give lest time and space to the religious programs and news. They also explained that the ratio of participation other than Muslim scholars or programs is very minor so the contribution of TV channels and newspapers in interfaith harmony is very little.

The TV channels and newspapers are contributing to interfaith harmony to some extent, but the representation of different religious factions is not proportional. Newspapers mostly do not publish opinions of the religious groups other than Islamic ones. Respondents incorporated their opinion that TV channels and newspapers cover the Intra-faith harmony and give time and space to different scholars from sects of Islam but they are giving time to the scholars of Christian, Hindus, Shikh, Bahai, Noor Bakhshi or others about even social issues and preaching. The

explanation of this point is this that other religions than Islam also gives same preaching about ethics of life so if there would be talks among all religions in Pakistan also then it will be a good inter-faith harmony symbol of Pakistan.

The respondents opinioned that TV channels are not calling the community members and scholars of other than Islamic religion and newspapers are also not publishing religious articles of scholars or writers of different other religions. In connection of these responses, it is looking like the demand of respondents that the media of Pakistan should cover the community members of other than Islamic religions in their religious issues and matters.

Conclusion

In view of above literature review and Survey study, it found that Pakistan has multiple religious communities. They are living peacefully in this land for centuries and contributing their share for the progress of Pakistan. Members of religious communities have official and social status. The quarrelsome nature people were Aryan who had been shifted towards the present Indian parts beyond the Punjab land. The remaining communities of this Land, Pakistan, are peaceful and tolerant peoples.

Pakistani media is observing the religious rights of all sects of Muslims and obeying PEMRA rules. It is making their parts to promote intra-faith harmony in Pakistan. It is also found by the results of survey study that Pakistani media is not giving sufficient coverage to the scholars of other religious communities than Muslim communities.

Recommendations

It is recommended that Pakistani Media should call the scholars of other religions i.e. Christianity, Hindu, Sikh, Bohra, Bahai, Noor Bakhshi, Ismaili, Zikri and other to discuss the Ethical issues of life and about harmonic topics of religious versions also.

Sources of Sirah & historical quests

**MEDIA-TIC CHALLENGES FOR INTER-FAITH HARMONY IN
PAKISTAN
QUESTIONNAIRE**

Protestors at Faizabad Islamabad on Evacuation of Aasia Bibi

		YES		NO	
		No.	%	No.	%
1.	Do you watch TV or read any Newspaper daily?				
2.	Do you try to watch religious programs on TV or read any religious article in Newspaper daily?				
3.	What do you think that TV channels are giving proper or sufficient time to the religious programs?				
4.	What do you think that Newspapers give proper and sufficient coverage to the religious articles and news?				
5.	Do you know that people of other religions like Christianity, Hinduism, Sikhism, Bahai, Noor Bakhshi, Bohra, Zikri, Ismaili, Ahmadi and others are also citizen of Pakistan?				
6.	What do you think that TV channels calls the representatives of other religions also in their religious programs?				
7.	What do you think that Newspapers publish the articles and news of others religious representatives in their newspapers also?				
8.	What do you think that Pakistani Media is fulfilling the responsibilities regarding inter-faith harmony in Pakistan?				
9.	Do you like to watch the program of other religious representatives talking about truthfulness, theft, adultery, rewards by God and other social matters?				
10.	Do you want to read the articles and news of others religious representatives about social matters in context of their religious views?				

Bibliography:

1. Agarwal, Dharma Pal. (2007). *The Indus Civilization: An interdisciplinary Perspective*. Mumbai: Aryan Books International, P.65
2. Irfan Habib. (2015). *The Indus Civilization*. Kalkatta: Tulika Books. New Delhi: A.P.H. Publishing Corporation, P.34
3. Raj Paruthi. (2004). *Pre-History and Harappan Civilization*. P.127
4. Porus Homi Havewala. (2011). *The Saga of the Aryan Race*. UK: Arktos Media Ltd. P.64
5. Nicholas B. Dirks. (2011). *Castes of Mind: Colonialism and the Making of Modern India*. London: Princeton, p.207
6. Kent D. Shifferd. (2014). *From War to Peace: A Guide to the Next Hundred Years*, California: McFarland & Company Inc. Publisher, p.197
7. Mara Goldman, Makko Sinandei and Laura DeLuca. (2014). *Conflicts Resolution, Land disputes and Peace Building in Northorn Tanzania: The role of Customary Institutions, in Building Peace with Within* edited by Maphosa Sylvester B. and Deluca , Pretoria: Africa Institute of South Africa. P.153
8. Hameed Ali Khan Rai. (2009). *Pakistan in the United Nations: Speeches Delivered in the General Assembly by the Heads of Pakistan Delegations 1948-1978*, Lahore: Aziz Publishers, p. 131
9. Islamic Research Institute. (2018). *Pegham-e-Pakistan*, Islamabad: International Islamic University. P.5
10. Ahmed Saleem. (2011). *Non-Muslims in an Islamic State: A Case Study of Pakistan*, in *Non-Muslims in Muslim Majority Societies: With Focus in Middle East and Pakistan* edited by Kajsa Ahlstrand and G. Gunner, Cambridge: The Lutterworth Press, p. 134
11. Frank R. Lautenberg. (2011). *Firearm, Explosives and Terrorists: A Looming Threat, a Major US Vulnerability*, New York: New York City Police Commissioner Office. P.5
12. Satish Kuman. (2016). *India's National Security: Annual Review Report 2012*, London, New York , New Delhi: Routledge. P.175-76
13. Madiha Afzal. (2018). *Pakistan Under Siege: Extremism, Society and the State*, Washington: The Brookings Institution, p.132
14. Muhamamd Abu Nimar, Amal Khoury and Emily Welty. (2007). *Unity in Diversity: Interfaith Dialogue in the Middle East*, Washington: United States Institute of Peace Press, p.216
15. Iftikhar Haider Malik. (2002). *Religious Minorities in Pakistan*, Lahore: Minority Rights Group International, p.32

Sources of Sīrah & historical quests

16. Shahid Javed Burki. (2018). *Pakistan: Fifty Years of Nationhood, Third Edition*, Abingdon: Taylor & Francis, p.27
17. Kamran Hashemi. (2008). *Religious Legal Traditions: International Human Rights Law and Muslim States*, Boston: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, p.179
18. Pakistan Courts Tribunal. (1985). *The All Pakistan Legal Decisions*, p.2, Vol. 37, Issue 1
19. Thomson F. Homer-Dixon. (2008). *Environment, Scarcity and Violence*, New Jersey : Princeton, p.167
20. Farahnaz Isphahani. (2017). *Purifying the Land of the Pure: A History of Pakistan's Religious Minorities*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, p.145
21. Christina Fair. (2015). *Militant Recruitment in Pakistan: a New Look at the Militancy-madrasah connection* in *Pakistan's Political Labyrinths: Military, Society and Terror* edited by Ravi Kalia, New York, London, New Delhi: Routledge, Taylor & Frances Group, p. 58



@ 2021 by the author, this article is an open access article distributed Under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>)