
Extremism an Emerging Challenge in Sindh: An Analysis

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Abstract

The issue of religious intolerance is increasing day-by-day. Innocent people are misguided in the name of some Islamic obligations. Such misinterpreted information has been received from so called religious scholars (Mullahs). It is causing social, economic and international relations turmoil and major level humanitarian crises. Sindh was the land of peace and religious harmony - is now turning towards the scenario of extremism and terrorism. There are several unavoidable factors, which prevalence of social injustice, class inequality, illiteracy, and major level exploitation in the society. The fanatic behavior by individuals and groups have created a situation that fuels the flames for many other social problems i.e. poverty, injustice, social distress and suicide attacks on innocents' masses. The Sufi saints in Sindh, and over the world have spread a tolerant, mystical, and universal philosophy of peace, love for human being and respect for other religions. The true message of Sufi saints is appealing to people to come together and observe religious practices according to their own faith and belief. The primary teaching is the theme of unity which is a universal for every individual. It leads to a path of the heaven in philosophy of Islam, and other religions. The mystic thoughts, words, poetry and other stuff of Sufi saints should be included in the curriculum contents which are all about the tolerance and for bearing. Present research has explored the knowledge of Sufi saints for addressing the problems of extremism, intolerance fanatic behaviors, as this rapidly increasing problem.

Keywords: Tolerance, Terrorism, Rigidity, Sufi saints, Mystical thought

Introduction:

As long as history witnesses, Sindh has been land of unique culture, folklore, folkways, peace and tolerance due to shrines of Sufi saints. It is familiar as "Mehran valley", and the fertile land of Sufism, and love for mankind where the flow of Indus River has been flourishing from northern to southern Sindh straight to the Arabian Sea. It has been home of Sindhi speaking people having different castes and creeds. According to census of 2017 61% population speak Sindh language, 14% Urdu, 6.9% Punjabi, 4% Pashto, 2% Balochi, 1% other 5% others.

Geographically, Sindh province is stretched as borderline in west with Balochistan, in North with Punjab, in eastern border it is connected with India (Gujrat and Rajasthan) and there is Arabian Sea in South of the province. There are varieties of flora and fauna which live since long due to its natural beauty with plain areas, mountains and sandy dunes. All these types of land areas are full with natural resources. People in Sindh are locally and globally known as "Sindhis". Sindh has very unique in its culture, and traditions people in rural and urban areas are welcoming and open minded. They warmly welcome the guests at the common guest houses (Otaques) offer them simple delicious food i.e. vegetables, butter, milk and bread (chapattis).

There are fruit trees and plants like the mango, date palms, banana, orange and many other aquatic and semi-aquatic species. The soil is fertile where good-quality vegetables, fruits and crops are produced during each season. Only 5% land is covered with forest which is needed to be improved with healthy activities like re-forestation during rainy seasons. The plant and animals species in fresh water lakes as well as on land should be protected because nowadays

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there are many endangered plant and animal species. The census indicators as shown in 2017 a population is 47 million, which is rapidly increasing. Sindh as whole has the Sammat population those who originally speak Sindhi language. However there are many other tribes settled in Sindh since decades, and their mother tongue is also Sindhi, besides other native languages. After independence of Pakistan in 1947 many families were settled in Sindh. Mostly in urban areas; yet they do not speak Sindh language. Below is the map of Sindh province after the independence of Pakistan.

Figure 1:1
Map of Sindh Province






Source: <https://www.google.com.pk/mapsindh>

It is well-known historical fact, that Sindh was become center of religious preaching in 711 A.D. when Muhammad Bin Qasim conquered it. Later on Soomro dynasty ruled on Sindh,

there major contribution was translation work of Holy Quran into Sindhi language. King Dodo-I established their rule in Sindh from shores of Arabian Sea to the northern side of Sindh. In 1339 A.D. the Samma dynasty took over the rule of Sindh. The familiar name of this period was of Jam Nindo - who expended the capital Thatta by replacing the Debal. Mughal period was started in 1524 A.D. Sindhi art, literature and historical indigenous work was flourished during that period. It was the period when great poet and Sufi saint Hazrat Shah Abdul Latif Bhattai, and Sachal Sarmast became prominent throughout the land. At the end of Mughal the Kalhora period started and they made Hyderabad the capital of Sindh, afterwards Talpur period started soon and finally in 1783 the British rule was started. Sindhi province was became one of the four provinces of Pakistan in 1974. Throughout the historical period the Sindh has been land of different religions and people were socially and morally connected with their culture. The teachings of Sufi saints were prominently practiced at same level among the Muslims as well as Hindus.

Table: 1:2
Percentage-wise data of population belongs to different religions

Religions in Sindh		
Religion	Color	Percentage
Muslim		94.81%
Hindu		5%
Others		19%

Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/demographics_of_Sindh

Not too long ago, people in Sindh were united together at every social gathering without religious discrimination. While they amuse themselves with singing and dancing at the shrines, the teachings and message of Sufis was followed by Hindus and Muslims alike because it was message of mankind and mystical as well as the spiritual dimension of teachings of Islam. Recently the religious intolerance is gaining grounds in Sindh. The new style of sectarian teachings through seminaries (Madrassas) and increased activities of banned organizations are affecting the previous cultural and traditions of Sufi system in Sindh.

Literature Review:

Sindh, the fourth province of Pakistan - along lower Indus valley basin, is famous for enormous number of saints and mystics who were lived. Sindh the Indus delta name is derived from its life-stream, the "River Sindhu" from time immemorial. It was the place of cultural progress, different religions with mutual cooperation. There was neither any religious conflict nor ethnic issues. It was familiar as peaceful land in sub-content (Dr. G.A. Allana, 2006 p19). This region was balanced in those days. There was equilibrium in social

system, where individuals were interacting with each other. The interacting units are basically persons but may be group's organizations of persons within systems. Social harmony is inter-relationships or principles operating of the parts of a social system. When there is an adjustment in the functioning of the parts of a social structure, it is said have equilibrium. In contrasting situation that is when there is lack of adjustment there will be disequilibrium (Shahid Muhammad Qayyum, 2008, p332-333). Durkheim defined religion as "a unified system of beliefs and practices related to sacred thing uniting into a single moral community all, which adhere to those beliefs and practice (Abdul Hameed Taga 2010, p210). In-fact, religion deals with ideas that transcend everyday experience. It is a matter of faith, belief based on conviction rather scientific evidence. The society has power of its own beyond the life of any individual. In other words society itself shapes the functions and activities whether religious or non-religious. The factor of tolerance is basic element that is necessary in the religious thought and education, if it is misinterpreted for the common men that it creates major disturbance for the society (Muhammad Sohail Bhatti, 2010 p395). The Indian Sociologists namely Sachedeva and Gupta viewed that religion affects human behavior deeply concerns man's belief in supernatural forces which influence human events. As concrete experience, religion is accompanied by emotions, especially of fear awe, or reverence. Religion has close connections with moral control and sets up system of ethics with elaborate rules of conduct (Sachedeva and Gupta, p233). Mead argued that social interaction, the central concept that defines us as humans, revolves around oneself as others see us. Mead referred to this process as role-taking. This concept is much similar to "looking glasses self" theory given by C.H Cooley. He argued that society is like a mirror in which we see our image that is we have a self-image based on how we perceive others see us. Mead further differentiated between two parts of self that are I and me (Amal Sajjad and Jawad Tariq p33). The well-known research scholar Dr. Nabi Bux Baloch has opinioned that everyone goes in the process of self-education in order to rediscover inner self and undergo the intricate process of self education and learning, observation and experimentation of realities of life. He further added that Hazrat Shah Abdul Latif Bhittai made numerous visitations to the abodes, hearths and homes of eminent sages, seers, saints and mystics of Sindh. He also had repeated meetings and discourses with scholars and self-actualized personages of standing. He was an eminent poet of Sindh in his time and Shah Abdul Latif Bhittai (Dr. Nabi Bux Baloch 2010, p107). Religious tolerance offers you the capacity to cooperate with others. Someone's should have balanced nature and not self-centered because self is an idea of a person about himself that he has formulated during his interaction with his fellow beings. It is a social product which arises out of the comments of other people about an individual. Self includes ideas, habits, thoughts, emotions, interests, and feelings. It is not inborn but on other hand is social product. A newborn baby does not have self. It is developed later due to associations. The socialization process of learning of the expectations (standard of value and specific norms of behavior) associated with various roles to which the actor is allocated. Major share for the realization of self comes from informal source. The family is the most important group which is responsible for the socialization of the child and the development of self (Muhammad Iqbal Choudary p135-137).

Research Methodology

The qualitative as well as quantitative mixed methods (multi-strategy) research was carried out. The qualitative research methodology was conducted to explore the issues of religious education and unawareness on the spiritual message and teachings of the Sufi saints. The quantitative approach was conducted for exploring the perceptions of different women and men on social good practices of people in previous days and present scenario of intolerance and extremism. The non-literature, literate and well-qualified people were involved in research. All ethical considerations were noticed carefully so as people could share correct information. In qualitative research method the face-to-face interviews were arranged with respondents whereas in quantitative methods, the primary data was collected through a designed research tool having close ended sub-questions. The list of respondents was received from religious teaching centers, locally known Maderssahs, academic institutions, and concerned departments. The respondents were selected randomly for involving in research process. The snowball sampling was carried out, where respondents list was not available. Sample size was calculated by Raosoft sample size calculator. There was 5% margin of error and confidence level was 95% and (universe) population is Sindh province.

Data collection tools

In data collection process two research tools were used. (1) The focus group discussion (FGD) tool was used for collecting qualitative data and (2) a research questionnaire with closed ended response was developed for quantitative data.

The data was analyzed by both qualitative as well as quantitative forms. The qualitative data was analyzed through thematic framework strategy and quantitative data was analyzed through using special package for social science (SPSS) software.

Primary and Secondary Data

The primary data was collected through using data collection tools i.e. a focus group discussion and a questionnaire prepared with around twenty or thirty sub-questions. These prepared tools were reviewed at first and piloted/pre-tested in the field. After pre-testing of these tools the authors mutually carried out the research. Then final data collection process was started.

The secondary data was collected from the books, research reports, documents from the government department and private sectors. The websites were visited and necessary secondary data was searched from the relevant areas. The appropriate references were mentioned of each source against the mentioned data.

The researcher gathered primary data from the male and female respondents' i.e. religious scholars, students studying in Maderssahs, folk-poets, devotees of shrines, custodians of Sufi shrines, poets and academic scholars. The prior consent from each respondent was sought over phone or through letters consent letters, the Sajada Nasheen of the selected shrines, leaders of Maderssahs were informed about the purpose of research. They were assured about use of gathered data only for research purpose that would not be published without seeking prior permission. However, the law and force departments were requested. They were well-informed about the research plan, wherever it was needed for the subject.

Findings and Discussion

Rapidly increasing of Madrassas system in Sindh has caused the elements of intolerance and religious extremism. Such Madrassas are secretly funded by banned religious groups who are engaged in promoting the factor of extremism and narrow-mindedness. It is a changing of picture of Sindh province which was familiar as the land of Sufis saints. The short-sighted religious people have been misinterpreting the true teaching and message of Islam. They misspell the actual words of Sufi saints are conveyed to common people that the teachings of Sufis are contradicting with teaching of Holy Quran and Prophet Muhammad (Peace Be upon Him). As a result the youth and non-literate people follow the misinterpreted statements of so called Mullas that causes of becoming extremists and zero-tolerated. Due to such increasing element of intolerance many social issues are emerging like suicide attacks on Mosques, Imambrahahs, Temples, and Sufi shrines. Many Hindu families have migrated from Sindh due to such increasing issue of extremism and that causes many social issues like force marriages of young Hindu girls with Muslim men, kidnapping, and openly using unethical language about their religions. Present research recommends the spreading of Sufi education for addressing the issue of intolerance and extremism in Sindh, Pakistan and over the world.

Conclusion

The present era is becoming thin-skinned and zero-tolerated with some unmanageable social circumstances due to modified teachings of religious leaders. In every religion, few people are fanatic and they create issues for majority of the peaceful citizens. Islamic teachings as per Quranic education and in light of sayings of Holy Prophet (Peace Be upon Him) lead us to the path of peace, and love but few people misinterpret the actual message and that stuff is negatively affecting the mind-set towards war and extremism. Research finds, we are insecure at public places as well as in Mosques, Imambrahahs, Temples, and other religious places. It is high time for us on learning the lesson of love and peace for our lives and securing the future generations. There is urgent need to ponder upon the philosophy of love and comprehend the true meaning of message of Sufi saints and adopt their teachings in our lives. The teachings and lovable message of Sufi saints is explored as treasure of peace, love and tolerance. It promotes sense of mutual respect, union, and universal peace. Their suggested path is an experience of Sufism spreading love and behavioral adjustment. The present research finds true message of Sufi saints from Sindh province and their philosophy was explored through scientific approach. It suggests that we prepare our security measures with self-initiatives and disseminate the true teaching of Sufi saints because peace lies within us not outside the world. If we start learning philosophy of Sufi saints beyond doubt the land of Sindh would be again a land of love, peace and brotherhood.

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