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Stirring up of Extremism by Islamic Factions in Pakistan: An Analytical and Statistical Survey

**Ghulam Sarwar*

***Dr. Muhammad Imran*

****Dr. Muhammad Yaseen*

*Assistant Professor, Government Degree College Pasrur, Sialkot, Pakistan

**Assistant Professor, Department of Islamic Studies, the Islamia University of Bahawalpur, Pakistan

***Assistant Professor, Islamic Studies, National Textile University Faisalabad. (Corresponding Author)

Abstract

This research paper primarily dealt with fomenting of extremism and the outcome thereof by certain Muslim religious factions in Pakistan. It endeavored to unmask those foul faces who have done an irretrievable damage to the very fabric of Pakistani society by their atrocious and fiendish crimes under the guise of piety and asceticism. As we know, the very word "Islam" stands for peace and tranquility. However, unfortunately, some narrow-minded and bigot disciples of Islam, instead of spreading the universal Islamic message of peace, love, affection, uprightness and tolerance, made arrangements for their unscrupulous ideas and notions - a natural outcome of their agreeable interpretations of Islamic teachings - to flourish; hence, making the peaceful atmosphere of Pakistan unruly and disorderly. So, keeping in view this background, this research article tried to highlight this unblushing corruption on the part of these Muslim religious factions whose vital duty was to promote peace and harmony and to make Pakistan and the world a peaceful place to live in. By and large, as a matter of fact, this disgusting and scornful success of these religious factions owes much to the moral and financial assistance they got indigenously as well as from abroad. Hence, in a nutshell, this research paper also made a humble effort to trace those ways and means which had been responsible for this overt or covert financial support to these ignorant and relentless Muslim religious factions. Lastly, the research paper made an attempt to analyze the overall impact of prevalent extremism in Pakistan. Data was collected through written questionnaire and compiled in a statistical manner accordingly.

Key words: Extremism, Islam, Religious Factions, Pakistan, Financial Assistance, Impact of Extremism.

Introduction:

Good and evil have been up in arms with each other since the time immemorial; the tussle between the two is, in fact, a naked truth which cannot be denied at any cost. In this eternal strife, however, the final victory conventionally remains with the Good. Extremism---the holding of extremely conservative views of Islam¹---is a ruthless manifestation of

Evil which generates utter unrest and frenzy in society making the masses feel absolutely insecure and pushing them into a state of quandary, predicament and plight. As a matter of fact, the extremists are ignoramus and mindless people who are imbued with prodigious parochialism, and absolute hostility against all those who differ with them in religious and political dogmas whatsoever. British Government has defined Islamic extremism in the following terms: “any form of Islam that opposes the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect and tolerance of different faiths and beliefs” which is also befitting with regard to Extremism in Pakistan.² Longman Dictionary defines extremism: “opinions, ideas and actions, especially political and religious ones, that most people think are unreasonable and unacceptable.”³

Historically, the first faction which showed extremism in its notions and convictions was the Kharijites (seceders), the earliest religio-political sect of Islam⁴, which showed bitter barbarism and pure provincialism in opposition to all those who were at variance with them in religious creed and catechism. The Kharijites thought it legitimate to slay their political and religious adversaries; this extreme thinking even led them to assassinate great personalities of Islam like the fourth Caliph of Islam, Ali bin Abu-Talib. Hence, the Kharijites laid the foundations of the edifice of extremism in the history of Islam by commencing the acts of extreme excesses and utter brutality.

Similarly, the Qarmatian Movement with its communistic, revolutionary tendencies developed into a most malignant growth in the body politic of Islam. To shed the blood of their opponents, even if Moslem, the Qarmatians considered it legitimate.⁵

Another bloodless and callous extremist movement, the Assassins movement was inaugurated by al-Hasan ibn-al-Sabbah. The fida'is (suicides) of this movement always stood ready to execute the orders of its supreme leader. The assassination in 1092 of the illustrious minister of the Saljuq sultanate, Nizam-ul-Mulk, by a fida'i disguised as a Sufi, was the first of a series of mysterious murders which plunged the Muslim world into terror.⁶

Unfortunately, a great stratum of Muslim religious factions in Pakistan did an irreparable damage to the very fabric of their homeland by fomenting the feelings of ill will, prejudice and detestation, among the denizens of the land. This ignoble, sordid and despicable deed of such sects created an atmosphere of qualm and fear, hence paving the way to extreme repellent actions against one another. The religious sermons delivered at the Friday congregations in the Mosques of various factions

played a pivotal role in making the situation worse. The mosques were destined to serve the sects rather than to serve the Lord.

Owing to the illiteracy, ignorance and backwardness of most of the Pakistani masses, these so-called religious Imams succeeded in accomplishing the ignominious goal of extremism which, in turn, put an end to the great sentiments of mutual-faith and harmony in the society. Every faction had on his back the hoards of stalwart supporters in order to meet their vested interests blatantly or surreptitiously. The tabernacles, instead of preaching Islam's universal message of love, mutual-respect, and co-existence, were used to declare the opponents as kafirs (disbelievers), hence were liable to be slain. A series of brutal actions by these religious factions shed the blood of the disciples of the same religion in the mosques, in the markets, in the churches, and in the Imam Barghas (house of prayer of Shia sect of the Muslims), hence showing to the world that Islam was a religion of fanaticism, dogmatism and warfare; it has nothing to do with peace and harmony.

In Pakistan, the last three decades, in particular, saw heavy mass murder in the backdrop of this vicious wave of extremism and sectarianism and the barbaric acts of these jingoists have not stopped yet and one can still observe bomb blasts and suicide attacks—however scarce owing to the operations of Pakistan Army against these extremists-- resulting in the killing of innocent children, women, and police and army personnel. These bigot and illiberal leaders of various religious factions never found a word of peace, love, inter-faith harmony and mutual respect in their lexicon; hence, extending utter disregard to the religious and historical traditions of their rivals. To their mind, nullification of the religious literature and other dogmatic traditions of the rival sect was sine qua non for the ratification of their own ones, hence denying the very simple fact that the light of reality may be found in others' religious traditions, too. Because of these ignorant and semi-literate clergymen of every religious faction—Shia or Sunni--, extremism saw mushroom growth in Pakistan. It was the natural outcome of the official policy of such intolerant and narrow-minded clerics that the Muslims of this land stood against each other in order to wipe out the others, in toto.

This heinous crime of extremism did not spare even the followers of other religions namely Christians, Sikhs, and Hindus and other minorities living in Pakistan. The churches, temples, and synagogues saw brooks of blood flowing through them. Most shockingly, even the educational institutions of Pakistan were not spared and hit ruthlessly by the intolerant and short-sighted followers of Islam resulting in tens of

hundred fatalities. Men, women, and even children were killed indiscriminately throughout Pakistan – the land of the pure.

Discussion:

Extremism breeds sectarianism and radicalism which, in turn, results in terrorism. The respect for others' beliefs and dogmas is emphasized much in Islam. When we go through the original text of the Holy Koran and the dictums and epigrams of the Prophet Muhammad, we come to know that these two fundamental sources of Islam accord immense regard to believers of the other religions. The Qur'an testifies the truth of all theistic religions. Its teaching is that from the earliest prophets down to Muhammad the essentials of religion have not changed.⁷

That is why; the Holy Qur'an indubitably asserts:

"The freedom to have any religion (a way of life) under the sun" is a basic right of Man as is evident from the verse 256 of Surah tul **Baqarah** of the Qur'an that reads:

”لَا إِكْرَاهَ فِي الدِّينِ“⁸

“Let there be no compulsion in religion”.

Man is liable to be honored because he is a Man. Being a human being is enough to be respected. Thus, discrimination on the basis of cast, colour, creed, race, or language cannot be justified in any way. The Glorious Qur'an stresses:

”وَلَقَدْ كَرَّمْنَا بَنِي آدَمَ“⁹

“We have honored the sons of Adam.”

This verse of the Qur'an clearly puts great stress on the believers that they must honor the humans and their dogmas, as well. Extending respect to a person but humiliating his faith are two contradictory things which cannot be justified on any grounds. If you respect others, you should also respect their faiths and creeds. And, this can be done only if you have in your heart pity, love, benevolence and magnanimity for people irrespective of the fact whether they belong to your faith or not. Islam being a universal religion takes into account such amiable and affable passions as compassion, commiseration and fellow feelings.

Tolerance and diversity is the beauty of the whole scheme of life; the existence of schisms in religions is, in fact, the will of the Lord – the creator of all the creatures, good or bad.

Those who want to annihilate the believers of the other religions or creeds are living in a fool's paradise as they are unaware of the fact that conglomeration and mishmash of various religions and ideas lies in the very foundation of this world.

The Qur'an bears the testimony to this reality that plurality of ideas and notions must be tolerated; and there may be other paths to salvation, too.

”وَأَنزَلْنَا إِلَيْكَ الْكِتَابَ بِالْحَقِّ مُصَدِّقًا لِّمَا بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ مِنَ الْكِتَابِ وَمُهَيِّئًا عَلَيْهِ فَاحِشَةً بَيْنَهُمْ بِمَا أَنزَلْنَا اللَّهُ لَا تَتَّبِعْ أَهْوَاءَهُمْ عَمَّا جَاءَكَ مِنَ الْحَقِّ لِكُلِّ جَعَلْنَا مِنْكُمْ شِرْعَةً وَمِنْهَاجًا وَلَوْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ لَجَعَلَكُمْ أُمَّةً وَاحِدَةً وَلَكِنْ لِّيَبْلُوَكُمْ فِي مَا آتَاكُمْ فَاسْتَبِقُوا الْخَيْرَاتِ إِلَى اللَّهِ مَرْجِعُكُمْ جَمِيعًا فَيُنَبِّئُكُمْ بِمَا كُنْتُمْ فِيهِ تَخْتَلِفُونَ

“ 10

The Qur'an asserts:

"To each of you God has prescribed a Law and a Way. If God would have willed, He would have made you a single people. But God's purpose is to test you in what he has given each of you, so strive in the pursuit of virtue, and know that you will all return to God [in the Hereafter], and He will resolve all the matters in which you disagree."

On this and other occasions the Qur'an goes on to state that it is possible for non-Muslims to attain the blessing of salvation:

”إِنَّ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَالَّذِينَ هَادُوا وَالنَّصَارَى وَالصَّبِيَّانَ مَنْ آمَنَ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ وَعَمِلَ صَالِحًا فَلَهُمْ

أَجْرُهُمْ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ وَلَا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ“¹¹

"Those who believe, those who follow Jewish scriptures, the Christians, the Sabians, and any who believe in God and the Final Day, and do good, all shall have their reward with their Lord and they will not come to fear or grief."

This is not mere religious tolerance which is a very negative attitude; it is a positive injunction to extend the brotherhood of faith to all those who have the essentials of faith although they may differ in their laws and ritual.

By analyzing above cited injunctions of Qur'an carefully and impartially, it can be easily inferred that the extremism showed by the Muslim religious factions in Pakistan is the result of ignorance and intolerance on the part of these so-called sectarian junta. These zealot religious cliques did their agreeable and affable interpretations of the Quranic injunctions in order to persecute their opponents, Muslims or non-Muslims. In this way, they wittingly forgot the universal moral values of peace, love, compassion, and tolerance as are narrated in the Holy Qur'an and the traditions of the Prophet Muhammad; rather they focused on petty issues and slight differences of dogmatic traditions and exploit them vigorously in order to show that true Islam rests with their sect and others' are not on the right path; so they must be meted out with severe punishment, which may include the assassination in some cases.

While doing this, they thought, it is their Divine mission to exterminate their opponents. Even, being the believers of the sub-sects of Islam, these religious factions do not tolerate one another; what to say of their attitudes towards the non-Muslims? By doing so, they, in reality, forget the noble instance presented by Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) at the time of the conquest of Mecca when he proclaimed general amnesty to all the disbelievers including his worst foes. His remarkable words were:

“I say to ye what Yusuf (Joseph—the prophet) said to his brothers; that today there is no retaliation; ye are free.”¹²

Research Questions:

This study addressed, in specific, the following research questions in detail:

1. The bigots and jingoists in various Muslin religious factions and mindset thereof.
2. Islam, Pakistan and the role of bigots of various Muslin religious factions.
3. Ethical and moral corruption on the part of various Muslin religious factions.
4. The assaults and onslaughts of such factions against one another.
5. Analyzing the sources of aid and ministration of these religious factions.
6. Impact of the rampant extremism in Pakistan.
7. Consequences of extremism in Pakistan.

So as the bigots are concerned, they are the part and parcel of each religious factions of Pakistan. Either it is Wahabies/Ahl-e-Hadees and Deobandies or Brailvies and Shitties; one can have a number of fanatics in these sects of Islam. These jingoists are staunch followers of the teachings and traditions of their respective sect and, usually, do not have a critical or intellectual approach towards them. In other words, they are blind minions of their religious traditions, fair or foul. Sui generis characteristic of their character is illiteracy and ignorance. That is why; the clerics of these factions use these bigots to meet their ulterior motives. Hence, it becomes evident from this that the tangible cause of violence and bloodshed in Pakistan are such bands of bigots who, owing to their low mentality and backwardness, have become a toy in the hands of their sectarian leaders and are causing an irreparable damage to Islam-- a religion of peace and restfulness.

Islam has various brands in Pakistan as mentioned in the above paragraph i.e.; Wahabies, Deobandies, Brailvies and Shitties to name a few but a few. To talk about the role of bigots of these sects at least two things must keep in mind: first, majority of them is ignorant and illiterate;

secondly; they think it obligatory on their part to reject the stance of their opponents, whatsoever. In this way, they become ludicrous and ridiculous characters, whose first duty is to extend utter disregard to their adversaries' view point and assist theirs—right or wrong. And by doing so, they consider that they are making great service to their religion---Islam. Owing to the nefarious role of this class of bigots, the peaceful atmosphere of Pakistan has become filthy and messy.

These bigots and their counterparts, in general, have a common agenda to meet and that is that they will never compromise over the petty differences present among the sects because adding fuel to fire to such trivial differences help them a lot in gaining a position of prestige and prominence in their respective faction. For example, the question of believing “whether the Holy Prophet knows the unknown or not” is highly debatable among the above mentioned sects of Islam and one or two of them believe that the Holy Prophet knows the unknown and the others diametrically refute it and because of this difference of opinion these sects abuse one another in the religious sermons taking place in the mosques or in other religious assemblage of their co-religionists and call each other's as kafirs (Pagans), hence expressing their deep love to the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH).

In certain cases, this act of abusing each other leads to violence and bloodshed and they do it as their sacred mission. In this way, these acolytes of various sects receive high praise from their respective quarters. This is one instance of myriads of nugatory differences over which these religious factions make merciless onslaughts—moral and corporal-- against their opponents which manifests that how much the level of tolerance as well as of intellect of these followers of Islam has dwindled.

Those who do not have regard for the life and property of others (Muslims and non-Muslims alike) cannot be good Muslim; a true Muslim has great respect for these things and those who do not have such respect face eternal grief and sorrow. That is why; The **Holy Prophet (PBUH) in one of his famous sayings said:**

¹³ “الْمُسْلِمُ مَنْ سَلِمَ الْمُسْلِمُونَ مِنْ لِسَانِهِ وَيَدِهِ”

“A Muslim is one whose hands and tongue other Muslims/Humans remain safe from.”

Similarly, it has been nicely described in the proverbs of the king and the prophet Solomon in the Holy Bible:

“A man that doth violence to the blood of any person shall be to the pit; let no man stay him.”¹⁴

And Hazrat Ali (RA) said:

“The blood of the zimmi (non-Muslims) is like the blood of the Moslems.”

So the life of humans cannot be taken on trivial issues such as expressed by religious factions; it is a great sin.

Islam lays immense stress upon high moral character of its believers. The integrity and probity have been given exalted position in Islam. Islam demands purity of thought and action from its followers. It says that there must not be an iota of ostentation in performing rites and rituals and other religious prayers. Allah Almighty rewards as per the intention by which the deed is done. Intention—good or bad-- is the basic thing behind an action. The purity of intention has been illustrated in a Hadith of the Prophet **Muhammad in the following glorious words:**

¹⁵ “إِنَّمَا الْأَعْمَالُ بِالنِّيَّاتِ”

“The actions are judged by their intentions.”

So, it becomes crystal clear that rightness of intention is mandatory to make the actions to be accepted by Allah Almighty. If the intention is good, the action is rewarded and when the intention is bad, the actions whether they may be of very high value in the eyes of the masses are rejected by the Lord.

When the characters of most of the followers of Muslim religious factions in Pakistan are judged in the light of above cited sayings of the Holy Prophet and the Prophet Solomon, it becomes as clear as day light that they lack morality and good character and this shortcoming in their character make them ethically corrupt. They usually perform religious duties in order to receive laud from the people and do not try to make the Lord happy by the purity of their intentions. And this fact has been clearly described in the Holy Quran that the Lord rewards the prayers and sacrifices of those who have good intention, purity of thought, and fear of the Lord.

That is why the sacrifice of the Cain—the older son of Adam—was rejected by the Lord; whereas the sacrifice made by Abel was accepted by the Lord; so, in a fit of jealousy, Cain killed his brother Abel. Instead of correcting his intention, Cain murdered his real brother and this is what the Muslim followers of religious sects are doing by following the footprints of Cain.

Hence, it can be deduced from this discussion that ethical and moral corruption on the part of these Muslim religious factions has led to a colossal damage ---- the damage of loosing character which is an asset for a good Muslim.

This moral bankruptcy of most of the followers of these religious factions has caused stupendous damage to Islam because these poor

character adherents have no shame to act immorally in their daily affairs and they can even go to extremes in this business. They show much alacrity in performing religious rites and rituals but when they are out of the tabernacles they do not bother to doing harm to their co-religionists or the followers of other sects in their daily businesses and plunder them ruthlessly. This act of performing the prayers and other ceremonials should make them men of principles, rather they prove to be the men most unworthy of the believers. Ostensibly, they are very noble, but, inwardly, they lack sacredness and purity of character. Thus, this duality of character, make them very disgusting figures, liable to be hated.

The hostile assaults of one religious faction against other factions have been the hallmark of Pakistan's social milieu. A glance at the recent history of Pakistan shows that people with divergent religious background has been at daggers drawn against each other. The attacks on the places of prayer of the opponent sects have been a common feature in the backdrop of rising extremism in Pakistan. This land of the pure ones has seen carnage and decimation on large scale because of the pure bigots of the land. The mosques of each sect were attacked ruthlessly resulting in heavy death toll including women and innocent children, too.

The religion which lays a great stress upon rules and regulations of even war and strictly prohibits the killing of children, women, old men, priests, clerics, clergymen, and non-combatants; how can it tolerate and appreciate the highly scornful acts of these extremists who do not care about the true teachings Islam and shed the blood of faultless people in the name of Islam. The barbaric onslaughts of such menacing elements in Pakistan have taken innocent lives in order to promote their narrow conception of the religion namely extremism.

Owing to their pernicious crime, these ignorant sectarian bigots have brought that worst fame to Islam of which it does not deserve at all. Internationally, the image of Islam has blurred badly because of these religious extremists; the religion of peace and tolerance is being labeled as the religion of extremism, warfare and terror. This is the greatest loss that has been done to Islam owing to such religious factions in Pakistan.

Coming to the means of aids and succors, the religious factions in Pakistan have had. There are many sources of this ministration to these religious factions. Indigenously, these factions are supported by the unflinching supporters that are so blind in their affiliation to a specific grouping that they do not see any good in their adverse sect and, by and large, spent lavishly for the sacred cause of their factions. Even the downtrodden followers do not lack behind in this noble mission, so they do assist their favorite faction financially. Apart from this, the skins of

the slaughtered cattle at the sacred eve of the Eid-e-Qurban are given to these religious factions by their followers as aids.

On the other hand, these sectarian groups also receive financial assistance from their global supporters; hence making these sources of their aid as the stupendous means of the income of these factions. Globally, every country gives aid to those sects that have some common bonds of dogmatic tradition and religious teachings and beliefs with her. By the irony of the fate, no audit of the income of these religious sects is ever made. A lion's share of the income of these factions goes in the pockets of the clerics leading these factions. So, these religious factions accumulate millions of rupees in their accounts, they spent extravagantly on their ceremonious occasions; however, a meager portion of this heap of rupees is spent for the so-called welfare of the poor children (studying in the religious schools of these sects) on whose name this aid is collected indigenously or from abroad. International donors usually have their own secret agenda; so, in order to fulfill their hidden motives they usually use these religious factions against their opponents. Every fair or foul method is used to humiliate one's adversaries through this aid. Extreme ideas and notions and hate and disgust were spread in the context of this aid to religious institutions/sections, hence making the peaceful atmosphere of Pakistan unruly and disorderly.

Extremism saw new horizons in Pakistan because of this financial help given by their respective donors to these religious factions. These sects did all out efforts to wipe out their opponents in order to please their indigenous as well as global supporters. Religious congregations were destined to promote parochial tendencies against other sects; the real message of love, respect for others and tolerance was put in the back burner.

The rampant extremism affected the peaceful atmosphere of Pakistan adversely, making this piece of land a dangerous place to live in. The prevalent extremism—the holding of extreme religious views—attacked the very foundations of Pakistan. A country that was won to make it a laboratory to test the universal teachings of Islam was pushed into a blind alley of ignorance, intolerance, prejudice, hatred, and antagonism. Pakistan from its inception as an independent and sovereign state has seen very short days of happiness, peace and harmony owing to the extremity shown by the bigot clerics and their blind followers.

The clerics of each sect made lavish use of loud speakers to rebuking other factions and eulogizing their own ones; in this way, they endeavored to nullify the fact that others' intellectual and traditional asset may contain truth or reality, too. These religious factions, unfortunately,

totally forgot the behavior of the Holy Prophet Muhammad with their worst enemies at various occasions of his life in Madina and Mecca.

Just look at the deportment of the Prophet at the Truce of Hudaibia. This armistice was signed between Muslims of Mecca under the leadership of Prophet and the infidels of Mecca in the 6th year of Hijrah. The moderation and magnanimity displayed by Mohammad in concluding this treaty caused some discontent among the more impulsive of his followers but he remained steadfast in signing the agreement;¹⁶ hence proving that Islam is a religion of peace and harmony not only for its followers but for the pagans, too.

Similarly, at his arrival at Medinah, he invited the representatives of the Muslims as well as the non-Muslim inhabitants of the region: Arabs, Jews, Christians and others, and suggested the establishment of a City-State of Medinah. With their assent, he endowed the city with a written constitution—the first of its kind in the world—in which he defined the duties and rights both of the citizens and the head of the State---the Prophet Muhammad was unanimously hailed as such—and abolished the customary private justice. The document laid down the principles of defense and foreign policy.¹⁷

The main instrument of this City-State of Madinah was the Madinah Pact that was signed among the Muslims, Jews, Christians, and other tribes living in the vicinity of Madinah. Mohammad did not merely preach toleration; he embodied it into a law. To all conquered nations he offered liberty of worship.¹⁸ By analyzing these two momentous events from the holy life of the Prophet Muhammad, it can be concluded that his conduct with the non-believers was unprecedented. His exemplary comportment with the non-Muslims has no parallel in the history of Islam. In fact, his whole life is full of such demeanors.

Moreover, on the other hand, when we examine the bearing and stance of the Muslim religious factions of Pakistan in the light of the above cited thought provoking episodes from the life of the Holy Prophet, we feel utter disappointment. The followers of the Holy Prophet (PBUH) did not care for these lustrous examples set by their Prophet (PBUH) and played that dirty game of intolerance, antipathy, and abomination whose effects can still be observed in Pakistan. Here, the Muslims cut the throat of their brethren ruthlessly, attacked the non-Muslims mercilessly and wholly forget the holy life of their beloved Prophet (PBUH); hence proving that they have, as a matter of fact, no respect for the noble instances of their Prophet (PBUH); because if they had some reverence to the paradigms of the Holy Prophet (PBUH), they would have not indulged in the disgusting crime of extremism and radicalism that ultimately led them

astray from the right path set by their Prophet (PBUH)—the paragon of peace and forgiveness.

The Glorious Quran says in Surah Al-Hujurat:

“The Believers are but a single Brotherhood: so, make peace and reconciliation between your two (contending) brothers.”¹⁹

This verse of the Holy Quran emphatically states the true relationship that the Muslims must embody in their collective social life. But, alas! The Muslims of Pakistan forgot this golden injunction of the Holy Quran and got entangled in the worthless issues that paved the way towards fanaticism and extremism. If they had acted upon the following injunction of the Holy Quran, they would not have sown the seeds of extremism in the land of our homeland. The injunction reads as: “And hold fast, all of you together, to the rope of Allah (i.e. this Quran).”²⁰

This immoral behavior on the part of the Muslim religious factions in Pakistan clearly falls in the domain of sin; so most of them have been thrown away from the blessings of the Lord because blessed men do not walk in the way of immorality.

This fact has been beautifully narrated in The Holy Bible (The **Book of Psalm**) that reads: “Blessed is the man that walketh not in the council of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of the sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful.”²¹

Consequences:

The land of Pakistan paid heavy price of the extremism showed by the Muslim religious factions in Pakistan. Religious schools of thought in Pakistan adopted the policy of zero tolerance to one another. One who embraces Islam is a Muslim in accordance with the injunctions of Quran and Sunnah; however, surprisingly, in Pakistan who says that he is just a simple and straight-forward Muslim is seen as heretic. These Muslim religious factions are of the view that besides to be a Muslim, the label of Deobandi, Sunni, Barailvi, Wahabis, Shia, etc is also necessary to have to be a Muslim, otherwise his status to be a Muslim is suspicious and dubious. This thinking and approach toward the religion of Islam gave impetus to extremism because people indulged in the futile practice of proving the authenticity of their school of thought by negating the other completely. This situation created a mess in Pakistan.

Instead of following the sublime Quranic idea of “Muslim Brotherhood”, the Muslims of this land preferred the traditions and teachings their sects and factions blindly and, hence, commenced a movement that shook the very foundations of Pakistan by creating an air of bias, bigotry, and sectarianism and hence paved the way to everlasting tussle among these sects of Islam. Every sect has his own mosques and

tabernacles from which the sermons against other sects are delivered so passionately that the followers of one sect enjoy them much and appreciate the scholasticism of their clerics. It is customary in Pakistan that people of one sect do not go to say prayers in the mosques of other sects because they think that their prayers in the imamat of the clerics of opposite sect would not be acceptable to God. They do not even shake hands to other sects in some cases. This is the situation among the followers of the same religion—Islam, the religion of peace and love. And what would be expected from them in case of the followers of other religions like Judaism, Christianity, etc.

Keeping in view these circumstances, we can safely estimate that extremism showed by these religious factions in Pakistan created confusion, disorder and turmoil in this piece of land and defaced her so much, as the aim of its creation--- peace, love, brotherhood, harmony,--- lost completely. In this way, the image of Pakistan in the international fraternity disparaged, badly. Besides, Pakistan got entangled in that chaos and turmoil that she never thought of to be in.

Research Methodology:

We used “Survey Research”---a quantitative research method--- in order to collect data to test our hypothesis through a questionnaire given to one hundred and twenty people belonging to various fields of life. Nineteen respondents did not respond. We contacted university teachers, college and school teachers-- both male and female –, followers of different Islamic factions and people doing others jobs. The survey was, in fact, aimed at testing the tolerance level of the people towards other people having different ideas and notions and knowing about their profound propensity to the truth of their own creed and the falsehood of the dogmas of the opponents whatsoever. Following is the list of questions (Seventeen in all) put before the people to get their opinion. The questions were closed end questions having “YES/NO” format.

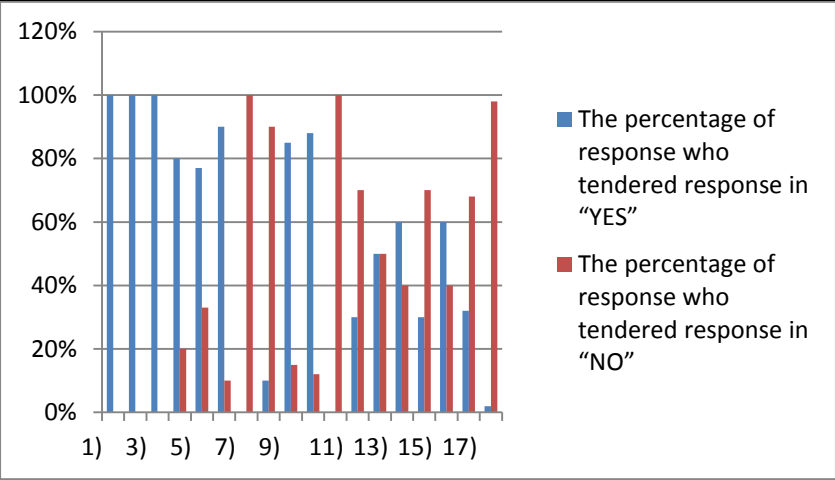
1. Is extremism repugnant to the very spirit of Islam?
2. Would you not liked to be called extremist?
3. Is the action of the government indispensable against the extremists?
4. Is it legitimate to go with various preaching religious groups for the preaching of Islam?
5. Are the prayers of the followers of one faction can be said behind the imam of opposite faction?
6. Is it mandatory to attach oneself to a specific school of thought (Maslik)?
7. Is a Muslim can be declared as pagan owing to some difference of opinion?

8. Is it necessary to commence Science and English education in Madaras?
9. Are the interpretations of the injunctions of Islam made by the famous scholars of all the schools of thought enough till the Doomsday?
10. Should the institutions of co-education be closed by force?
11. Is the salvation of the believers of the other religions possible?
12. Is it right to close the institutions of co-education by force?
13. Is it not obligatory to us to tolerate others' dogmas, right or wrong?
14. Should the government ban those factions involved in Prevailing extremism?
15. Is a new Fiqah necessary for the present age?
16. Are Shias kafirs (Disbelievers)?
17. Should religion be used as a ladder to reach the parliament?
18. Is there any of salvation other than Islam?

Table No. 1 showing statistical feedback from the respondents in the order of questionnaire as put to the respondents.

Questions	The percentage of response who tendered response in "YES"	The percentage of response who tendered response in "NO"
1.	100%	Nil
2.	100%	Nil
3.	100%	Nil
4.	80%	20%
5.	77%	33%
6.	90%	10%
7.	Nil	100%
8.	10%	90%
9.	85%	15%
10.	88%	12%
11.	Nil	100%
12.	30%	70%
13.	50%	50%

14.	60%	40%
15.	30%	70%
16.	40%	60%
17.	32%	68%
18.	02 %	98%



Surprisingly, the response to first three questions was in “YES”. All were of the view that extremism is against the very spirit of Islam. However, the response to other question shows the other side of the picture, too. For example, the response to question number “06” shows that most of the disciples of Islam in Pakistan accord much significance to be associated to one or other religious sect; they do not think it better if someone claims to be a Muslim only. This thinking is the main cause of extremism, in fact. Similarly, the response to question “11” and “18” undoubtedly clarifies the “tolerance level” the Muslims in Pakistan have. Perhaps, this is the result of the teachings of intolerance and bigotry that each Islamic faction in Pakistan has been imparting to her followers incessantly for the last six decades.

Shia is a major branch of Islam and the response to question 16 was very sorrowful; 40% of Muslims belonging to other sects think that Shias are disbelievers i.e. they are not Muslims; hence liable to be persecuted. It is to be noted that questions 06, 11, 16, and 18 were, in fact, crucial, destined to infer the true level of tolerance and the capacity to bear the ideas and beliefs of others wholeheartedly. The response to these questions was painfully disturbing as it highlighted the very fact that the

most of the followers of Islamic factions in Pakistan are bigots and they do not show regard to others' beliefs; hence, showing extremism—an anti-Islamic feeling. And, this way of thinking has caused heavy loss to Pakistan by violently shaking its roots.

Suggestions:

Keeping in view the above stated discussion, the following suggestions are hereby made:

1. Government should take stupendous measures in order to check and monitor whole activities of the Muslim religious factions in Pakistan and deal those sects with iron hand who are found to be involved in exploiting sectarian differences.
2. The sectarian factions should be bound by the Government to use the pulpits of the mosques for promoting the universal message of Islam--- love, peace, inter-faith harmony, the notion of mutual- existence--- only. The instances from the life of Prophet Muhammad and his Followers should be narrated to the audiences in the mosques in order to promote peace in the society.
3. There should be strict audit of the incomes and expenditures of the religious institutions (Madaras).
4. It is observed; the clerics running the Madaras lead a life that does not match their incomes. Thus, there should be a complete check of the incomes of the clergymen; as it is commonly complained by the common masses that a major part of the income of the Madaras is used by the clerics to lead a life of luxury; whereas, a meager part is allocated to feed the indigent and downtrodden children getting religious education in these Madaras.
5. The curriculum of these Madaras needs a de novo enquiry in order to make it in accordance with the needs of the hour and purging it from those elements that become a main cause of inculcating the seeds of extremism and sectarianism in the innocent brains of the poor children studying in these Madaras.
6. There should be a complete ban on the meetings and conferences of the religious factions destined to hit other factions and their teachings and traditions.
7. These factions should be confined to their respective mosques or Madaras to deliver religious sermons and these homilies should be delivered without using loud speakers so that other sects may be saved from the sectarian fire of these discourses.
8. The orations based on sectarian differences should be banned by the Government as these are the basis of conflagrating the fire of extremism, sectarianism and violence.

9. The curriculum of the Government schools needs to be changed in the backdrop of rising flames of extremism in Pakistan. The subjects of social studies and Islamic studies especially need to be revised in order to promote the universal Islamic teachings of brotherhood, love, affection, inter-faith harmony, and concept of co-existence etc.
10. The financial assistance that these Madaras receive from their global donors should be audited properly in order to ensure its appropriate use and if they are found to be involved in fomenting extremism and sectarianism, Govt. of Pakistan should make arrangements in order to stop this international assistance, too.
11. The science education should be made an integral part of these Madaras so as to make the students of these institutions somehow aware of the changing trends in science and technology hence making them less bigot and more secular/ liberal.
12. Women has tremendous role to play in a society; so, it is high time to educate the women of Pakistan in a proper way so that they can be of greater help in flourishing the ideas of peace and harmony in their families and the society as well.
13. The unlawful lands and properties of the clerics of various religious factions should be confiscated and proper inquiry should be launched against these so-called representatives of Islam so that they could be brought into book.
14. Electronic and print media should be used vehemently to unveil the evil designs of these religious factions; there should be free debates and seminars on electronic media to express the tangible message of love and harmony.
15. The religious scholars having moderate approach towards the present issues should be encouraged by the Government of Pakistan as these unbiased scholars can present the soft image of Islam before the International Community.
16. The government should confiscate all the illegal property of the clerics of different religious faction; sooner it be done, the better it would be for the society as a whole.
17. Law enforcing agencies should be given carte blanche to establish the writ of the state at every inch of the land. Nobody is above law; if someone is found to be involved in extremism, he should be given his reward according to the law of the land.
18. The imams and clerics should be appointed by government and they must have, at least, graduation degree. I do believe, it is very necessary in the perspective of Pakistan. As all the jobs have some sort of eligibility criteria whatsoever and religion is the most sensitive

job for the believers, so the deployment of educated and moderate imams and clergymen is very essential in this regard.

19. The use of loud speakers should be prohibited by law and the infringement thereof should be meted out with severe punishment, both corporeal and pecuniary.
20. Last but not the least, the wall-chalking and the display of controversial slogans should be strictly banned by the government of Pakistan. Also, the religious processions should not be allowed to be held at the cross-roads and there should be some parks like Hide Park especially designated for this purpose.

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