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*Religious Behaviors in Pakistan: Impact  
on Social Development*

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Behavioral sciences have come a long way in studying human behaviors and behavioral change. The list of research carried out on the subject is a long one. *The freedom to do God's will: religious fundamentalism and social change*, edited by Haar and Busuttil,

<sup>1</sup> and Aidala's "Social Change, Gender Roles and New Religious Movements"<sup>2</sup> are among the examples. Social development is a process that<sup>3</sup>

encompasses a commitment to individual well-being and volunteerism, and the opportunity for citizens to determine their own needs and to influence decisions which affect them. Social development incorporates public concerns in developing social policy and economic initiatives.

The goal of social developments is<sup>4</sup>

the welfare of the people...and the consequent creation or alteration of institutions...so as to create a capacity for meeting human needs at all levels...and for improving the quality of human relationships and relationships between people and societal institutions.

Social development also refers to social processes at all levels. It also "connotes the development of people, institutions, and their environment." Paiva identifies four crucial concepts with reference to social development: structural change, socioeconomic integration, institutional development, and institutional renewal.<sup>5</sup> He also explains major concepts associated with the larger concept of social development, including inter-systemic integration, structural change, and institution development.<sup>6</sup>

The list of factors behind social development is a long one and includes religious behaviors and attitudes. In this paper, only religious behavior as a factor in social development is analyzed. However, keeping in mind the prevailing situation of Pakistani society, underdevelopment and non-development of society would also be touched upon.

The importance of religious behaviors and attitudes is substantially acknowledged by the theorists in the field of development studies and research. Development models based on European and Japanese experiences in the field of social development also take religious attitudes and behaviors as a factor of development and change.

Religious behaviors and social development in any society are interlinked and cannot be seen in isolation. As Calhoun wrote in 1925, "...the social universe is a real universe and not a series of segregated divisions."<sup>7</sup>

Social conditions in Pakistan, religious influence on people's lives, religio-behavioral change, deterioration of social institutions, exploitation in the name of religion, religio-political behavior, religious behavior of the ruling elite, social divide, sectarianism, militancy and terrorism have also been analyzed. Irrational, conservative and dogmatic aspects of religious behavior have been discussed. Towards the end of this paper, the aspects of religious behavior that support and contribute to the process of social development are also discussed.

In order to understand the relationship between the two variables (religious behavior as independent and social development as dependent), various manifestations of religious behavior are discussed in the following pages, including, offering prayers; fasting; pilgrimage to Makkah; growing a beard; dress code;

observing *pardah* (veil); social services; charities; donations to madrassas, mosques, and orphanages; free clinics, medical camps and hospitals set up by charities; preaching tours with the Tablighi Jamaat;<sup>8</sup> blind following of clerics' motivated interpretations of Islam; exploitation; and sectarianism, extremism, violence, militancy and terrorism in the name of religion.

Social development essentially entails social change. Thus, social changes contributing towards social development also need to be analyzed.

Since Islam draws certain parameters for not only one's personal life, but also social, political and economic dimensions of life, a religious follower's behavior in all spheres of life needs to be studied as religious behavior. So, we need to look into the personal, social, political and economic aspects of people's behavior in order to understand the relationship between religious behavior and social development. Social behavior can be defined as a "behavior that takes place in a social context and results from the interaction between and among individuals."<sup>9</sup> Antisocial behavior is one that "violates the rights of others; usually associated with antisocial personality."<sup>10</sup>

A country-wide survey was conducted in order to substantiate the findings, with 1,568 respondents answering a questionnaire with closed-ended questions. The survey sample included respondents from all four provinces, federal capital Islamabad, Azad Kashmir, Gilgit-Baltistan, and the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA). See the following table for details.

Table 1: Province/Region of the Survey Respondents

Region	Frequency	Percent
Punjab	538	34.3
Sindh	290	18.5
Khyber Pakhtunkhwa	359	22.9
Balochistan	178	11.4
FATA	35	2.2
Islamabad	40	2.6
Azad Kashmir	77	4.9
Gilgit-Baltistan	51	3.3
Total	1,568	100.0

The rural-urban mix of the respondents is given in the following table.

Table 2: Rural-Urban Mix

Place of residence	Frequency	Percent
City	837	53.4
Town	232	14.8
Village	469	29.9
Tribe	7	0.4
No Response	23	1.5
Total	1,568	100.0

Gender ratio of the respondents is shown in the following chart.

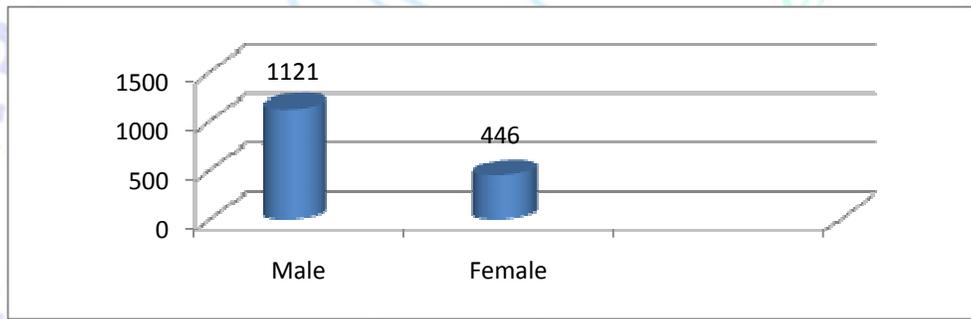


Chart 1

As the following chart shows, the respondents belonged to a range of age groups.

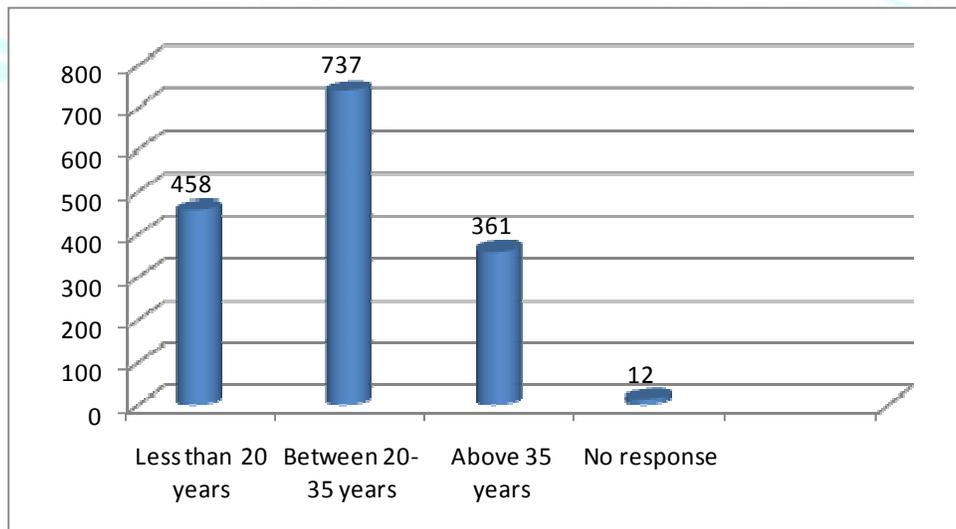


Chart 2

The survey sample included people from almost all walks of life. See the following table for details.

Table 3: Occupations of Respondents

Occupation	Frequency	Percent
Government service	308	19.6
Private service	315	20.1
Private business	240	15.3
Student	442	28.2
Unemployed	229	14.6
No response	34	2.2
Total	1,568	100.0

Before proceeding further, a look at the prevailing social conditions in Pakistan would be worthwhile. A country profile prepared by Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) says that 29 percent (46 million) of Pakistanis live in absolute poverty. Adult literacy rate is only 52 percent. Dropout rate in primary schools is 44 percent for boys and 65 percent for girls.<sup>11</sup> Development indicators prepared by Asian Development Bank are given in the following table.

Table 4: Pakistan: Development Indicators<sup>12</sup>

Population in millions	162.58 (2008)
Annual population growth rate (%)	1.8 (2006–2008)
Adult literacy rate (%)	54.9 (2007)
Percent of population in urban areas	35.7 (2007)
Percent of population living on less than \$1.25 a day	22.6 (2005)
Percent of population living below the national poverty line	22.3 (2005)
Under-5 mortality rate per 1,000 live births	90 (2007)
Percent of population using an improved drinking water source	90 (2006)

Human Development Index (HDI)—a publication by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) that relies on composite statistics to formulate an index to rank countries by level of ‘human development’—“uses life expectancy, literacy, average number of years of schooling, and income to assess a country’s performance in providing for its people’s welfare and security.”<sup>13</sup> In Human Development Report 2009 published by the UNDP, HDI rankings are divided into four categories: very high human development; high human development; medium human development; and low human development. Pakistan is in the “medium human development” category and is currently in the 141<sup>st</sup> place out of 182 countries.<sup>14</sup> It has slipped five places since 2009 when it was in the 136<sup>th</sup> place.<sup>15</sup>

A comparative look at the development indicators with reference to Pakistan and its neighbors is also helpful in understanding the issue. Urban growth rate in Pakistan is 3.54 percent, whereas it is 5.72 percent in India. Pakistan’s gross domestic product (GDP) is 60,177 thousand US dollars, compared to 482,765 thousand US dollars for India. Infant mortality rate in Pakistan (87 per 1,000 live births) is much higher than Iran (33), China (37) and India (64). According to figures released by the Statistics Division of the United Nations Secretariat for the year 2000, public energy consumption in Pakistan was 291 kilograms per capita, much lower than that in Iran (1,814), China (561) and India (318). According to Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations, 541 cubic meters of water per person from rivers and groundwater is available annually in Pakistan. The water availability per person in Afghanistan is 2,421 cubic meters, in China 2,201 cubic meters, in Iran 1,898 cubic meters, and in India 1,244 cubic meters.<sup>16</sup>

Around 50 percent of the survey respondents said they had not experience any improvement in their economic conditions as time went by. They said their economic circumstances had either worsened or remained unchanged.

Religion is one of the most, if not the most, fundamental characteristics of Pakistani society. Few people dare to call themselves secular publicly. Seculars also pretend to be religious in order to avoid the wrath of society and attacks by extremists. In Pakistani society, individuals start learning about religion literally as soon as they are born. In the laps of their mothers, children listen to parents and other family members reciting the Quran. In schools, Islamic Studies is a compulsory subject from the beginning to the graduation level. Most children receive daily lessons from religious teachers visiting their houses, or attend classes at mosques and madrassas, on how to recite the Quran and read other Arabic texts. Mosques are spread across the country, almost all of them equipped with loudspeakers. *A’azan* (call to prayer), Friday sermons and prayers, and sermons on other religious occasions are delivered using the loudspeaker. Clerics and students at madrassa established in mosques use loudspeakers whenever they want to recite Quranic verses, or sing praise of God and Prophet Muhammad or to deliver a speech to convey or remind people of the religious commandments. In everyday social interaction, individuals are keen to lecture others on how to follow the religion and conform to the injunctions ordained by God, His prophets and religious authorities and leaders. Against this backdrop, one can imagine the extent of influence religion has on people’s lives and behaviors. Answers by the survey respondents in the following tables provide evidence of the reach of and access to religious education in Pakistani society.

Table 5: Source of Learning about Religion

Sources	Frequency	Percent
Parents	395	25.2
School	107	6.8
Mosque	92	5.9
Madrassa	50	3.2
Reading	50	3.2
Any two of these sources	339	21.6
Any three of these sources	345	22.0
All of these sources	178	11.4
No response	12	0.8
Total	1,568	100.0

Table 6: Preferred Source of Learning about Islam

Sources	Frequency	Percent
Parents	229	14.6
Common course books	77	4.9
Religious books	539	34.4
Prayer leader/cleric	224	14.3
Any other	37	2.4
Any two of these sources	226	14.4
Three or more of these sources	80	5.1
All of these source	122	7.8
No response	34	2.2

Total	1,568	100.0
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Around 84 percent of the respondents said they watch television. Eight percent of the TV watchers watch only religious channels. More than 43 percent watch channels of two or more of the following categories—news, entertainment, sports, and religious—signifying that religious channels have a considerable audience.

According to the findings of the survey, 33.5 percent of the respondents use internet. A little over 14 percent use internet solely to get information. Out of the 14 percent, only four percent use internet to access religious information. Of the 33.5 percent who use internet, around two percent use it for chatting. Only two percent of the two percent chat with religious-minded people, implying that religious-minded people, in general, do not have internet access or do not use that to be in touch with like-minded people.

Nearly one quarter (23%) of the respondents do not listen to music, while 16 percent ascribe that to religious reasons. A further one percent say they do so on account of a combination of parental restrictions and religious reasons. Another nine percent listen to music for religious reasons, i.e., they listen to *qawwali*, *naat* or *hamd*, where singers sing praise of God and Prophet Muhammad. In other words, 32 percent of the respondents consider music an issue which has something to do with religion. The majority of the respondents (51%) consider the decision by Pakistani pop singer Junaid Jamshaid's decision to quit singing, after he grew increasingly religious, as correct. Only 17 percent consider it to be an incorrect decision. More than a quarter of the respondents were not sure whether the decision was correct or not.

These findings do not necessarily mean that people are guided by religion in all spheres of life. The majority of the people tend to behave religiously when the issue at hand does not affect their own interest. If an issue or thing is deemed as depriving them of something, then religion takes a backseat. People violate religious teachings but want to be viewed as not behaving irreligiously. It is a kind of duality existing in society as a whole.

Paiva points out that structural change is a prerequisite for social development and changes in existing institutions are required so that the process of social development continues to move forward. The overwhelming majority of people in Pakistan accepts the righteousness of the religious authorities (clerics, preachers, prayer leaders, etc.) and follows their advice and interpretation of religion. Fifty-six percent of the respondents surveyed believe that clerics, religious teachers and scholars and prayer leaders are actively serving Islam and society. Whereas the fact of the matter is that figures of religious authority do not allow change to take place in certain social institutions. The institution of 'honor' of men and women and violence in the name of 'honor' is one example. The woman, in general, is not seen as an entity in her own right, but as the honor of her male relatives, including father, brother, husband and son. Male family members take the life of a female relative if they feel that her actions or even her existence has slighted their 'honor' and consider that murdering such a woman would redeem their 'honor'. Frequently, women are married, despite their objections, to men chosen by the women's male relatives. The majority of the clerics delivering sermons in mosques or religious congregations condone crimes committed in the name of 'honor' or act as if they do not negate the principles of Islamic or human rights. This has serious implications for social development as well as for women's rights and their empowerment. Many deem a woman working outside her house to earn money for the family as bringing dishonor to her family. If a man is unemployed and his wife or sister is employed, he is called

*bayghairat*, one who has no honor, for living off money earned by female relatives. Most men do not tolerate female family members working to earn a livelihood in order to 'maintain family honor'. As a consequence, a huge number of women are unable to grow personally, socially, economically, and politically. On the one hand, such restrictions deprive them of the right to realize their potential, and, on the other, the process of social development does not gain its full momentum because half of the population is not allowed to work outside the house.

Many Muslims believe that educating girls might encourage them to go astray. Parents either do not allow their daughters to join a school at all or discontinue their education after they reach the age of puberty, around the middle or matriculation level. Some of them argue that if a girl learns to read and write, she may engage in un-Islamic romantic affairs by writing letters to men.

Less than five percent of the respondents think that observing *pardah* (veil) is not necessary for women. More than 67 percent believe it to be a religious duty. Less than six percent say it is a personal matter. Eighteen percent think that observing *pardah* depends upon the situation. Fifteen percent of the respondents hold that female education is 'not important' or 'not very important'. Another three percent have no opinion in the matter, pushing to 18 percent the number of respondents who do not consider educating girls as necessary. The response of 34 percent of the people was a categorical 'no' when asked if women should be allowed to work outside their homes. Half of the respondents (49 percent) consider the grant of right to divorce to women as 'bad'. Another 16 percent say they are not sure whether it is good or bad, signifying that 65 percent of the people do not believe it to be 'good'.

It is common for women in many parts of the country to be barred from voting in an organized manner, sometimes by mutual agreement of all candidates contesting the election. Thousands of women were not allowed to cast their votes in Lakki Marwat, in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, on February 10, 2010 in polling for by-election in a constituency. A national daily reported:<sup>17</sup>

Very negligible [number of] women voters turned up at female polling stations.... Many of the combined polling stations even did not have female booths. The reasons for low female turnout were restrictions on women mobility and local agreements among contesting parties and candidates on barring women from voting.

For social development to take place, Paiva lists three prerequisites: political will, an ideology that sees man as a human being, and cooperation.<sup>18</sup> But a number of groups in Pakistan see man as a religious entity first. One of its consequences is that such groups engage in killing 'heretics' and 'infidels'. Such a behavior negatively impacts the process of social development. In Islamists' view, any ideology in Pakistan must be a religious ideology. But, at the same time they do not allow rational and innovative thinking to penetrate into the Islamic ideology. Here lies the dilemma of how to push the social development process forward while preserving the Islamic character of the state and society.

About followers of the Moravian religion, a Protestant denomination that originated in Bohemia (modern Czech Republic), Max Weber had concluded that "the emotional and nonrational elements of the Moravian religion tended to preclude the development of a rational attitude toward economic action."<sup>19</sup> To a large extent, that is also true in case of Pakistan where the problem is not with the religion itself, but with the way the people perceive and follow the religious teachings. Religious behavior, in general, is irrational. Quite often, people see their lot as an outcome of the grand divine design. Many, whose economic lot is not that good, hold that the life on earth is temporary and the life hereafter, which is

permanent, would be perfect in every respect. Such an attitude leads them not to utilize their temporal, physical and intellectual resources appropriately. It also leads to complacency and inactivity, with the result that such individuals do not grow economically, develop socially, and advance intellectually. Thus, it keeps them from becoming a part of the process of social development. It does not allow them to be able to contribute towards the development of their family and society. Rather, they remain a burden on the infrastructure for the many services they need throughout their life, such as transport, roads, healthcare, etc.

Theorists argue that “Development...can only be sustained through a supportive network of social structures, process, and norms.... The innovative value...will have to be institutionalized.”<sup>20</sup> Religion itself is not dogmatic and anti-innovation but a large number of followers and preachers of religion tend to possess a dogmatic thinking which ultimately shapes their behavior. Such a behavior usually suppresses innovation and only rarely accommodates it.

Development essentially entails change. Any social development taking place in any society simply means that the society and its institutions are undergoing a process of change. Barring exceptions, religious behavior in Pakistan tends to be anti-change. The religious forces are for status quo as far as observance of rituals associated with religion is concerned.

Three alternatives have been put forward to change social structure in order to facilitate social development: “to introduce new institutions, modify or restructure existing ones, or eradicate harmful institutions.”<sup>21</sup> One can hardly imagine religious institutions in Pakistan embracing change. Rather, they are symbols of resistance to change.

A visible transformation has taken place in religious environment of Pakistan in recent years with the emphasis on continuity of religious conservatism. Violent religious behavior has emerged with full force. Pakistani society is moving from spiritual Islam to a violent version propagated by individuals and groups that subscribe to a militant ideology. As religious tolerance has waned, intolerant religious behavior is on the rise. With a few exceptions, various interpretations of Islam are getting more rigid by the day, making the religious behavior more inflexible and extremist as well. One facet of that extremism was on display in Gojra town of the Punjab province on August 1, 2009, when more than 50 houses belonging to Christians were torched, seven Christians burnt alive and another 18 injured. Another dimension of this change is the perceptibly increased trend of use of force and resort to violence by religious extremists.

In fact, some religious institutions have deteriorated over time. *Dars-e-Nizami*—a study curriculum used in a large number of madrassas in South Asia—is one example, which at the time of its inception around three centuries ago was much more comprehensive and ahead of its time. It included the most advanced branches of natural and social sciences along with the theological subjects at that time. Now, *Dars-e-Nizami* no longer includes modern branches of knowledge and fields of inquiry. The institution of *tasawwuf* (mysticism) is another example of deterioration. Most of the individuals who lay a claim to being Sufis (mystics), or are perceived by society as such, no longer have anything to do with *tasawwuf*. In the past, Sufis were considered the flag-bearers of tolerance, peace, love and respect for humanity and were renowned for exemplary moral character. That is no longer the case for the Sufis of today, whose behavior simply reflects their ignorance, and weak character. “Society has moved backward over the past decades; it has become more conservative and rigid,” laments Ashfaq Saleem Mirza, associated with South Asian Free Media Association (SAFMA).<sup>22</sup>

Sufis have historically been symbols of tolerance, peace, love and respect for humanity. These values are the anti-thesis to violence, sectarianism, militancy and terrorism, and terrorists and extremists have recently targeted mausoleums of renowned Sufis in Pakistan. The mausoleum of Pashto Sufi poet Rehman Baba was bombed in Peshawar in March 2009. The shrine of another renowned mystic, Bari Imam, was bombed in May 2005, killing at least 20 people and injuring another 150. And in early July 2010, suicide bombers targeted the shrine of Hazrat Data Ganj Bukhsh in Lahore, killing 36 people and injuring 175.

Individuals who work hard in order to improve their economic conditions and are not regular in offering prayers are considered irreligious or materialistic. They are regularly accused of forgetting God and not spending an appropriate amount of time and energy on fulfilling their religious obligations.

People with religious inclinations generally emphasize and argue in terms of overt acts such as observance of prayers, fasting, dress code, growing a beard, not drinking alcohol and offering Haj, the pilgrimage to Makkah. Values like respecting the rights of others, sanctity of human life, and contribution towards humanity are not considered as important in today's Pakistan. The same was reflected in the outlook of the respondents of the survey. Sixty-five percent of the respondents answered in the negative when asked whether a person can be a good Muslim even if he or she does not offer prayer five times a day. Another eight percent did not have an opinion in the matter. Less than 27 percent believe that a person can be a good Muslim even if he or she does not offer prayers regularly. Approximately 68 percent of the respondents like wearing *shalwar kameez*, the traditional dress worn by men and women in Pakistan. Twenty-five percent of the respondents mention religion as a reason behind their dress choice, with 22 percent giving religion as the sole reason, whereas the other three percent cited culture and comfort as considerations in addition to religion. They believe that following the western dress code takes one away from religion.

In an interesting study, Leighton and Smith compared social and cultural change in seven villages of Canada, Peru, Thailand, Burma, India, Japan and the semi-autonomous Native American Navaho Reservation. They found family sizes reduced in many places and linked that to changed values and ideologies, "including the trend toward secularization".<sup>23</sup> Despite considerable efforts by the government in Pakistan, including through funding by international organizations, family size has fallen in the country in very few cases with a vast majority of families still large in size. That alludes to the fact that change in social values and ideologies has not taken place at the required pace. Religious behavior is the major reason behind this phenomenon as family planning and birth control methods are still looked upon distastefully and considered un-Islamic. People argue that God has taken it upon Himself to feed and shelter every living being. The result is that the population in Pakistan is increasing at a fast rate, while the infrastructure is not developing at the required pace to meet the challenges posed by a population of this size.

It is not uncommon for religious circles to see globalization and the spread of a global culture as a threat to religion. That is more so in case of Pakistan. Globalization constantly draws tirades from religious leaders and preachers, who castigate it for spreading a monoculture, exposing the social process to two opposite pressures exerted by the forces of globalization and the religious enthusiasts. Though the process of globalization has a number of drawbacks, it has also yielded benefits in several areas, such as education, healthcare, promotion of free media, human rights and personal freedoms, increased awareness and empowerment for individuals. But religious groups are generally not willing to concede any benefits of globalization.

Exploitation in the name of religion is another hurdle in the path of social development. Modern-day *pirs* (spiritual leaders), with few exceptions, thrive on myths created by themselves and, in some cases, by their followers. People demonstrate devotion and reverence for *pirs*, offer them money and do their bidding. In addition to exploiting their followers, these *pirs* also mislead them regarding their religious, personal, professional, and social dealings. In some cases, they take full control of the lives and families of their followers. The followers consider it a blessing bestowed upon them by God. This is only one mode of exploitation in the name of religion. There are many others. The exploiters pretend to be acting in the name of religion and the exploited believe the pretense. The following editorial that recently appeared in a national daily illustrates the phenomenon:<sup>24</sup>

It is symptomatic of the retrogression in Pakistani society that heinous crimes are committed under the influence of misplaced notions of culture, religion and superstition.

The recent case of infanticide in Karachi is an example. A raid on a Korangi house [in Karachi] led the police to the remains of a six-month-old girl buried in a shallow grave and her four-year-old sister trussed up and starved. The girls' parents told the police that their house had fallen under the influence of 'evil spirits' and that a 'pir sahib' had appeared in their dreams to guide them towards this course of action....

However, there is no doubt that in Pakistan's deeply conservative, illiterate society, holy men and *pirs* often exercise a pernicious influence over the credulous. There have been cases where such so-called religious men have raped and tortured or incited followers to commit inhumane crimes – the victims have generally been women and children. At the very least such *pirs* use their influence to extort money or goods....

Feudalism could not be rooted out in Pakistan mainly because a group of religious scholars declared land reforms un-Islamic. Feudalism remains the single largest obstacle in the path of social development in the country. Feudal lords thrive on the illiteracy and simplicity of their tenants. They use their influence and power against human development in the vast tracts of land owned and controlled by them. Thus, they are a symbol of anti-development. The religious scholars came to the feudal lords' rescue when the government was planning to carry out land reforms in order to ensure equitable distribution of land.

Voting behavior in elections is also influenced by religious factors. Twenty-one percent of the respondents surveyed said that religion is a consideration when they cast their vote. Forty-seven percent replied in the affirmative when asked 'Should the religious political parties be given a chance to rule Pakistan?' Thirty-three percent said they support religious parties and organizations. Religious influence is much stronger in rural areas compared to cities on account of less education and modernization in the villages. Had the survey teams surveyed more people from rural areas, the findings are likely to have shown even greater religious influence.

Religious behavior of the political leadership also needs to be taken into account. It is theorized that human rights and human development thrive in areas where democracy flourishes. But under autocratic regimes, human development does not take place because their "policies fail to recognize cultural identities and discourage diversity...."<sup>25</sup> In Pakistan, autocratic regimes (military dictatorships) have been getting legitimacy and enjoying support of religious parties. Leadership of the Pakistan National Alliance (PNA) mobilized people in the name of Islam against the elected government of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto<sup>26</sup> and

contributed significantly to Bhutto's ouster from power and the ensuing 11 years of military dictatorship of General Ziaul Haq, dealing a severe blow to the fledgling democracy in the country.

Religio-political parties, particularly the Jamaat-e-Islami, have been engaged in politics of agitation throughout the history of Pakistan. They claim their behavior, which is dominated by agitation, is directed towards serving Islam and Pakistan. But, in fact, such a behavior is a disservice to both, as it diverts people's attention and energies from the real problems and issues concerning social development. Religi-political behavior of the ruling elite is another dimension of the phenomenon. Bhutto's government declared *Ahmedis* as non-Muslim. The declaration led to social repression of *Ahmedis*. General Ziaul Haq's Islamization drive "heightened sectarian tendencies within society."<sup>27</sup>

Those who go on preaching tours with the Tablighi Jamaat on a *chilla* (visit of three, ten, forty or more days for preaching and meditation) generally neglect their family responsibilities, leaving their wives, parents, and children for extended periods because of their imbalanced religious behavior.

A 'jihad' campaign was launched by General Ziaul Haq in collaboration with the United States and its allies to drive out the Soviet Union from Afghanistan after the December 1979 invasion of Afghanistan. Dubbed as the 'Afghan Jihad', this campaign was promoted as a religious duty for Muslims to fight against the Soviets in Afghanistan purportedly because the secular Soviet Union's presence in Afghanistan was a threat to Islam. Under the 'jihad' campaign against the Soviet Union, non-state actors were provided with financial resources, weapons and trained to fight. In hindsight, this campaign proved to be the biggest folly in the history of Pakistan. Non-state actors have now turned their guns against the state which had facilitated their growth. The state is now struggling to rein in the insurgents at the expense of development of the nation and society.

In the early 1950s, the government of the province of Punjab had used the print media to promote extremist religious views. The newspapers that campaigned against *Ahmedis* received money from the government's Directorate of Information.<sup>28</sup>

Socio-political divisions on the basis of religion are deepening with the passage of time. Through their sermons, a substantial number of prayer leaders and *khateeb*s (religious leaders who deliver sermons or *khutba* ahead of Friday prayers and religious occasions such as *Eids*) contribute towards deepening of the existing divides rather than bridging them, again creating obstacles in the path of social development.

An overwhelming majority of religious groups and organizations as well as the clerics associated with them spread hatred against each other. They brand people from other sects 'infidels' or 'heretics' and incite their murder. Such hatred against other sects is spread not only through sermons and speeches but also through a litany of religious magazines and newspapers.<sup>29</sup> Mainstream media also faces threats and attacks by religious parties and groups, sometimes for publishing certain news items and at other times for not giving sufficient coverage to the views and activities of religious parties. Many political parties in Pakistan also resort to similar tactics against the media when they think that that would serve their purpose.

The social identity of a Pakistani citizen hinges on (a) religion, (b) province, and (c) tribe or caste. As with the two other foundations of social identity, religious identity is further divided into innumerable categories, mainly on the basis of sects. However, divisions on the basis of perceived religious identities are much more absolute than provincial and caste-based identities. Though divisions in all three

categories have bred hatred and animosity among the people in Pakistan, the religious divide seems to have done the most damage to social fabric and to the process of social development.

The intensity of the sectarian divide among is brought home by the fact that 61 percent of the respondents surveyed believe that life partners should share the same religious sectarian background. Another 10 percent did not have an opinion in this regard, signifying that 71 percent of the respondents do not believe that life partners should be from different sectarian backgrounds.

There have been over 4,000 killings in sectarian violence in Pakistan in the past two decades.<sup>30</sup> Mosques, shrines, rallies, congregations, Eid prayers and other religious gatherings have been targeted by bombers and gunmen belonging to different Islamic sects. A suicide bomber hit the largest *A'ashura* procession of Shia Muslims in the country, in Karachi, on December 28, 2009, killings at least 43 people and injuring more than 50. Another Shia procession was hit in the same city by a bomber on February 5, 2010. Soon after the February 5 explosion, a second bomb exploded in a hospital where the injured from the first explosion had been brought for treatment. Thirty-three people were killed and more than 100 injured in the two explosions.

Pakistan has a vast and diverse territory (796,095 sq km)<sup>31</sup> and a huge population (153,578,000 in 2003).<sup>32</sup> When it comes to religious behaviors, there are huge dissimilarities among different regions as well as followers of various schools of thought. For the sake of analysis and keeping in mind the most problematic issue of terrorism and militancy in the name of religion different areas of the country can be categorized as:

- 1) War zones
- 2) Peripheries
- 3) Relatively peaceful areas

Similarly, religious groups in Pakistan with reference to militancy and terrorism can be classified as:

- 1) Militant/Terrorist
- 2) Their sympathizers
- 3) Their critics
- 4) Neutrals

The darkest aspect of the religious behavior with reference to social development is violent extremism, militancy and terrorism engulfing Pakistani society in the name of religion. It is the extreme form of violent religious behavior, and has brought the process of social development across the country to a standstill. The damage violence and terrorism have caused to the process in the militancy-hit areas is particularly extensive. Schools, colleges, universities, and even hospitals, have been bombed. Millions of people have been internally displaced.

Many of the religious-minded people support violence and terrorism against members of other sects and consider it 'jihad'. Twenty-six percent of the respondents believe that Taliban are fighting for the glory of Islam. Eight percent of the respondents also support Taliban attacks on CD/video and barber shops, girls' schools, and cinemas. The respondents say that such attacks are justified to (a) end anti-Islam activities, (b) spread fear among anti-Islam forces, (c) push people towards Islamic teachings, and (d) compel the government to enforce Islamic laws.

Some armed religious organizations and groups collect funds through coercion. It is not uncommon for members of these religious groups to phone factory owners and ask them to have large sums of money delivered to the religious groups' offices as the office-holders do not have the time to go and collect the money themselves. The factory owners regularly comply with such demands for fear of loss of life or property. Fear of the radical religious groups has gripped society, casting long shadows on the processes of personal as well as social development.

Pakistan has made substantial cuts in the development budget and diverted the money to the security and law enforcement sectors to meet the huge challenge of eradicating terrorism being carried out in the name of religion.

Looking at the arguments made in these pages, one may ask that if indeed such is the case then what is the explanation for the social development that has been witnessed in the country. The answer is that this paper does not at all suggest that all the factors behind social development have been or are working in a negative direction. Neither has it been suggested that all Pakistanis behave in a 'religious' fashion. Many people do not buy the narrow interpretations of religion and many others act in a secular manner. The acceptance and popularity of interest-based banking and other businesses illuminates this point. Usury (interest) is forbidden in Islam. All Muslims believe it to be un-Islamic. Yet, with a few exceptions, they do not mind engaging in interest-based activities.

Social welfare projects and activities by religious organizations and charities, undoubtedly, are a great contribution to the process of social development. Such projects are working mainly in the sectors of health, education, and humanitarian relief. Poor children get basic education, boarding and lodging free of cost. Free hospitals and dispensaries are run and free medical camps are arranged by a number of religiously motivated organizations. In cases of natural disasters, such as floods and earthquakes, religious organizations are always in the forefront of relief activities. Many people volunteer on such occasions out of religious motivation.

### **Conclusion**

In Pakistan, the linkage between religious behavior and social development is a strong one. However, on the whole, the linkage is negative. As the facts and arguments furnished in these lines demonstrate, religious behaviors in Pakistani society have caused hiccups in the development process. Trends and patterns of change in religious behavior are damaging the social fabric. Furthermore, the distorted interpretations of Islam have pushed the humanitarian aspect of the religion far backwards.

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