



## Kidnapping, Forced Marriages and Conversions of Christian, Hindu and Sikh Minor Girls: Who is Responsible?

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### Introduction

The incidents of kidnapping forced conversion to Islam and forced marriages of minor Christian, Hindu and Sikh girls to Muslims men who are much senior to the girl child in age, have increased many folds during the past few years. This problem has always been present in Pakistani society since the creation of Pakistan. Minorities have always been treated like wretched of the earth, but such incidents have increased during the Imran Khan government because writ of the government has reached the lowest level as we have seen in the case of price hike of food items that prices are increasing on daily basis and government seems to be absolutely absent from the scene.

In the past, the incidents of violence against religious minorities were mostly taking place during the Nawaz Sharif regimes. This article will try to answer the following questions: What are the factors responsible for increasing incidents of kidnapping, forced conversions to Islam and forced marriages of minor religious minority girls to Muslim men? Why minors girls aged 12, 13, 14 years, belonging to Christian and Hindu community are targeted? Why do majority of police personnel, judicial officials, Muslim religious leaders, politicians, bureaucracy and general public side with and support the culprits instead of raising voice against the injustices? What is the problem with the state institutions? Why do they continue to sleep even during the worst suffering of the poorest of the poor people? What is the solution to this problem? Should minorities start living in ghettos, or should minorities run away from Islamic Democratic Republic of Pakistan? What are the options available to people of religious minorities because state has terribly failed to protect them like a mother?

### Findings and analysis

#### Cultural factors

Pakistan has become a Society without Sense of Justice and Ethical Norms: Generally there is serious lack of justice, ethical and moral norms in Pakistan and several other Asian, African and South American societies. Particularly Pakistan is a feudal society and everyone, even a peon level person also thinks he is a feudal lord for the people who are weaker than or inferior to him. So the feudal values are found in every field and level of society. Every person thinks he is the king and the law in himself that is why there is no respect for rule of law.

Judiciary and law enforcement agencies do not provide justice to poor people. Only rich can buy justice and even poor Muslims are denied justice because they cannot grease the palms of a police cop, judicial staff and cannot hire an expensive lawyer. There is a saying in Pakistan that "instead of hiring a lawyer, you should hire a judge". This means that pay bribe to the judge through his clerical staff or through lawyers who have connections with judges.

This means Pakistan is a society, where there is serious lack of justice, even Muslims are living a miserable life and more than 70 per cent population of the country is living below the poverty line and do not have any kind of human rights.

But the people of religious minorities have to go through additional suffering because even Muslims of similar class and social strata who are suffering in poverty, love to discriminate and hate the poor Christians and Hindus because Muslims poison the minds of their children that religious minorities are inferior, non-believers and unclean and this discrimination and prejudice continues to

be transferred from one generation to the next one. That is why the highly educated and modern looking Muslims also continue to be very narrow-minded and prejudiced.

But even the rich Christians and Hindus (and there are not many of them) are also discriminated even by the poorest of the poor Muslims and they use very bad and dirty language even for a Christian or Hindu who is highly educated and rises to the level of a Minister or some other good post in government or Army etc.

Prejudice on the basis of religion, sect, caste, creed, colour is deeply part of South Asian societies and Hinduism has had a strong impact on people of every faith, caste and creed. There are more than 3000 castes and more than 25000 sub-castes in South Asia. So, discrimination of every kind is part of Indian and Pakistani cultures.

Muslims and others have inherited discriminations and prejudices from Hindu Culture. So, in Pakistan, discriminations and prejudices are part of everyday life and most people do not think it is bad. Not only Muslims discriminate against non-Muslims, but Muslims discriminate against Muslims as well and Christians discriminate against Christians on the basis of denominations, caste and class etc.

But minds of Muslims are poisoned in such a way and to the extent that they have a right to discriminate against non-Muslims because Muslims are told and taught through school syllabus, parents and by their religious leaders that Pakistan was created for Muslims so this is a country of the Muslims, by the Muslims and for the Muslims and non-Muslims are not even citizens. The majority of Muslims considers religious minorities as their slaves. And Muslims are completely free to insult non-Muslims and their Holy Books and faiths, discriminate against them and snatch their women and properties because this country belongs to the Muslims.

But this writer is not saying that all the Muslims are extremist, narrow-minded and insulting towards non-Muslims. There are some Muslims who are like angels and never discriminate and hate anyone, but such are hard to find and majority of Muslims have very insulting attitudes towards non-Muslims.

These attitudes have been inherited by Muslims from the Hindus. Majority of the Muslims and Christians have converted from low caste, suddras/daalats, the fourth caste of the Hindu religion. Even the Muslims who came from Saudi Arabia with Mohammad bin Qasim, from Afghanistan with Mughals and other Muslim in-

vaders hated Hindus as kaffirs and unclean and lived in separate cantonments and localities of Muslims, but they loved to attack, kill, loot, suppress Hindus and snatch their women.

As a reaction, Hindus promoted a thinking among their children that Muslims were "malich" (dirty and filthy) because they had attacked and looted and occupied the civilization of the Hindus. They also promoted hatred against Muslim so that their girls wouldn't mix up and stay away from Muslims. Muslims were labelled as dirty for being attackers, looters of wealth and women and also because they were ruthless in butchering animals for consuming meat. Especially the butchering of cows by Muslims terribly angered Hindus.

In India Hindus are in majority so they do not allow a Muslim to marry a Hindu girl. Only people of elite classes and showbiz personality have that kind of freedom.

#### Individual life style and no communitarian/national spirit

Since society is extremely disunited, disorganized and divided on religious, sectarian, caste, colour and regional lines. There is no nationalism at all and masses are a herd of animals and have not been able to become a nation. Ruling elite has never made any effort to promote nationalism. So, the masses never become united and organized to become a nation to demand for their rights. When a person or family is harassed by police or other goons, they never raised voice together and suffer individually. People do not agitate even against the collective problems like corruption by politicians and bureaucracy or inflation and tolerate everything quietly. In such an individualistic and selfish society you cannot even think of a voice being raised against violation of minority rights.

There are very few Muslims who speak against such injustices.

In such a society, if you raise a voice, the culprits will turn their guns against you and no police or judiciary is going to protect you. Your neighbours will also be silent observers because they do not want to invite any trouble from the criminals.

#### Widespread discrimination against religious minorities

The Muslims had demanded a separate homeland for themselves that they are discriminated by Hindus and that Hindus were not allowing a Muslim to drink water from the pitchers meant for Hindus and a Hindu family never allowed a Muslim to enter their home and particularly their kitchen. So the demand was made for a separate homeland.

In his first speech to the Constituent Assembly, on 11<sup>th</sup> August 1947, Quaid-e-Azam Mohammed Ali Jinnah, the founder of Pakistan presented his vision of the country to be a liberal, secular and modern state, which would be a home to all the citizens on equal basis and that the religion would be a personal business of every citizen and all the people were going to be equal citizens of the state. He also said that the duty of the state was to protect every citizen and his beliefs. But the ruling elite did not follow the vision of the father of the nation.

The result of deviating from Jinnah's vision is that the country is full of extremist and jihadi groups and life has become a hell for minorities and smaller sects of Muslims i.e. Shias. Mosques, Imambar-gahs (Shia place of worship), churches, temples, schools, colleges and universities are very insecure and we have to offer our prayers and educate our children under tight security.

### Cockfight watching mentality

Asians generally have a cockfight watching mentality. Since most of Pakistanis (same is true about most poor Asian people) are jobless, they have nothing positive or constructive to do so they resort to negative things. Their localities and villages have piles of garbage and filth, but they will never get united to clean their streets. Inflation is increasing on daily basis, but they will never get united to raise their voices together against inflation and other problems faced by them. But when they have to burn Shantinagar, Sanglahill or Joseph Colony of Lahore, a crowd of 20,000 violent extremists will gather in few minutes and lash out their aggression on poor, weak and unarmed religious minorities. Most of the crowd doesn't even know the cause of attack, but since violence on minorities is a fun for them and their minds have been poisoned that this is jihad so they join the crowd to burn, kill and loot.

### Political factors

#### Weak state institutions

Almost all the state institutions, except Pakistan army, are working against the people of Pakistan: Parliament is not doing any legislation for improving situation of the poor; judiciary is not providing justice to the poor; police is a mistress of criminals; and religious leaders are promoting extremism and intolerance in society.

In civilized societies, political leadership plays the role to improve working of the state institutions. Unfortunately, Pakistani politicians are only working for themselves. Politics is a business

for them. Problems faced by people are not important for ruling elite. Pakistani politicians and political parties are only there to loot the national wealth and fool courts in accountability and corruption cases.

Therefore, Pakistani people should never expect anything good from Pakistani politicians and political parties.

- **Extremism and religion-based violence suits to the ruling elite:** Jinnah's vision of a secular and tolerant Pakistan was deviated and Pakistani ruling elite intentionally promoted religious extremism and violence and especially by Ziaul Haq regime on the instructions from his masters, so that ruling elite could keep the masses busy in cutting throats of one another on religious and sectarian basis and the ruling elite could loot the national wealth without any interruption.
- **Bureaucracy and politicians prefer violence against minorities:** They think it is good that masses divert their anger towards minorities instead of government offices and homes of politicians to release their anger due to inflation and other problems. So, violence against minorities is a good outlet for public and ruling elite. Shantinagar, Joseph Colony and several other attacks on villages and slums of religious minorities were engineered and planned by politicians and police.

### Religious factors

#### Hypocritical Religious Leadership without proper education and understanding of Islam

Religious leadership of Muslims is not playing any role for making improvement in morality of society. They are doing just the opposite. Mosque and pulpit are used to promote extremism, intolerance and hatred against Shias and religious minorities.

As it has already been said above in this paper that Ziaul Haq regime promoted religious and sectarian intolerance and violence to please his foreign masters, so life became a hell for religious minorities, women and Shias.

When there is a dispute between a Sunni and a Shia, the state machinery, which has majority of Sunni Muslims, prefers to support the Sunni party. But when there is a dispute between a Muslim and a Christian/Hindu, the state machinery always supports a Muslim no matter a Sunni or a Shia. We have seen this in many cases of violence and abduction of girls of minorities that Shias also

keep quiet and silently support their co-religionist regardless of his denominational links. They support their Muslim brother even if he is a criminal.

Some girls have reported that the mullahs who were forcing them to recite Kalima to become a Muslim resorted to torture and slapped furiously on the face of the girl for refusing to recite Kalima.

#### **Non-Muslim women are halal and non-Muslim men are haram**

Muslim never tolerate the boys (Christians and Hindus) who fall in love with a Muslim girl. Such Christian or Hindu boys have been killed by the families of the Muslim girls. In some cases such boys were arrested by the police on false charges of theft and were tortured to death by the police in a police lockup. In some cases, the Muslims killed their own daughter also for having a love affair with a Christian or a Hindu boy.

Original Islam allows both Muslim men as well as Muslim women to marry a non-Muslim ahl-e-kitab (people of the book, Jews, Christians and Muslims are people of the book because they were given Holy books by God through prophets). Having social relations with Christians and Jews and eating with them and marrying their men and women is allowed by Islam.

But in Pakistan, the religious leaders have declared that Muslim men can marry non-Muslim women, but Muslim women cannot marry non-Muslim men because non-Muslim women are halal (permitted) but non-Muslim men are haram (forbidden) for Muslim women. Haram is what is forbidden by Islam for Muslims to be eaten or to be used and halal is not forbidden for Muslims to use or eat.

A Muslim man would love to rape, abduct or marry a non-Muslim girl because she is halal, but her brother is haram for the sister of the Muslim man. It seems very funny that a boy and a girl coming from the same family and same religion, from the same bloodline – one of them is pure and the other is impure. One is halal and the other is haram.

This is basically feudalistic goonism and gangsterism. Just the way a feudal lord's son can rape the daughter of every poor peasant, but the son of a poor peasant cannot even have love affair or marry the daughter of a feudal lord because he, despite being a Muslim, has a low social status. In such case, even if the son of the peasant is Muslim, he will be killed by the feudal family because the honour of the family is at stake.

#### **Concept of going to heaven by converting a non-Muslim to Islam**

Illiterate, poorly educated and ignorant mullahs are promoting this mentality/thinking/idea that if a Muslim converts a non-Muslim to Islam that Muslim and his seventy relatives and those who support him in this task, will definitely go to heaven. This is rather sad that this mentality compels Muslims to focus their energies on hounding a non-Muslim into embracing Islam instead of improving their deeds and morality to become a better Muslim and a better human being to avail a seat in heaven.

A society full of corruption, sins and crimes, wherein moral degradation is increasing by every passing day, can only hope to get heaven through dirty means of forcibly converting others instead of improving its morality and ethics.

#### **Misinterpretation and misuse of concept of jihad**

The concept of Jihad is widely misunderstood, misinterpreted and misused by extremist and ignorant Muslims against religious minorities. They are always so much full of anger because school syllabus widely praises the Islamic conquering and the attacks carried out by early Muslim and the early leaders (Caliphs, Mohammad bin Qasim and Mughals) are praised to the sky as heroes.

The young Muslims get highly impressed by their heroes and want to follow them out of context. They are not taught that attacking and looting poor religious minorities in their own country is not Jihad.

They should be taught the real Islamic concept of jihad that a jihad or war is only fought when they are attacked by some external enemy.

#### **Violation of prophet's covenants and charters with Christians**

Muslims must respect and honour the agreements of their Prophet. Let us have a look at the following document: "PROPHET MUHAMMAD'S CHARTER OF PRIVILEGES TO CHRISTIANS LETTER TO THE MONKS OF ST. CATHERINE MONASTERY - In 628 C.E. Prophet Muhammad (s) granted a Charter of Privileges to the monks of St. Catherine Monastery in Mt. Sinai. It consisted of several clauses covering all aspects of human rights including such topics as the protection of Christians, freedom of worship and movement, freedom to appoint their own judges and to own and maintain their property, exemption from military service, and the right to protection in war. An English translation of that document is presented below. This is a message from Muhammad ibn Abdul-

lah, as a covenant to those who adopt Christianity, near and far, we are with them. Verily I, the servants, the helpers, and my followers defend them, because Christians are my citizens; and by Allah! I hold out against anything that displeases them. No compulsion is to be on them. Neither are their judges to be removed from their jobs nor their monks from their monasteries. No one is to destroy a house of their religion, to damage it, or to carry anything from it to the Muslims' houses. Should anyone take any of these, he would spoil God's covenant and disobey His Prophet. Verily, they are my allies and have my secure charter against all that they hate. No one is to force them to travel or to oblige them to fight. The Muslims are to fight for them. If a female Christian is married to a Muslim, it is not to take place without her approval. She is not to be prevented from visiting her church to pray. Their churches are to be respected. They are neither to be prevented from repairing them nor the sacredness of their covenants. No one of the nation (Muslims) is to disobey the covenant till the Last Day (end of the world)". (Dr. A. Zahoor and Dr. Z. Haq (Copyright 1990, 1997, All Rights Reserved) <http://www.cyberistan.org/islamic/charter1.html>.

### Socio-economic factors

#### Financially, socially, economically and politically weak religious minorities

Most of Christians and Hindus are extremely poor and backward in education and technical education and they are financially very poor. They are discriminated in educational institutions and in government offices. They are forced to work as sweepers and janitors because discrimination has promoted a thinking and feeling among them that they will not be given jobs and their applications will be thrown in the dustbin so there is no use of wasting money and time on the education of their children. Their women have to work in the homes of Muslims as maids or as field labourers on the lands of feudal lords. This makes them easy target of sexual abuse, harassment, kidnapping, conversion to Islam and forced marriages to Muslims.

Being a poor and then also being a member of a religious minority is extremely vulnerable and miserable in societies like Pakistan and India. Religious minorities have to suffer on two counts: firstly due to being poor; and secondly due to being a member of a religious minority.

Even the poorest of the poor Muslims discriminate against religious minorities because of the feelings that this country belongs to

Muslims, who are believers and holy and that the religious minorities are unholy, unclean and non-believers. The religious minorities and even Shias are treated like wretched of the earth.

The women and minor girls of religious minorities are easy target of Muslim men because they know that religious minorities are financial poor, physically weak and social and culturally voiceless, Muslims are much larger in numbers, financially strong, have weapons and men, have all the support of police, politicians, judiciary, bureaucracy, religious leaders and the general Muslim public. Due to being weak and also due to the fear of Muslim attacks on Christian or Hindu slums and villages, Christians and Hindus tolerate everything. They know very clearly that the state and its machinery is going to be a silent spectator in a situation when villages and slums of religious minorities are burnt and this was proved when Sangla Hill, Shantinagar and Joseph Colony were burnt.

There have been cases wherein Muslims turned their personal disputes into a religious conflicts. Muslims burnt Quraan and threw it into the Christian locality and there was attack by a Muslim crowd. Announcements are made mosques and thousands of people gather and start burning, killing and looting the locality of religious minorities.

Muslim men also prefer to marry or have illicit relations with women of religious minorities instead a Muslim woman because they know that a Muslim woman is aware of Islamic laws and will demand all her rights according to Islam. But a Christian or a Hindu girl or woman has a poor family background so her family will not put up a fight against the Muslim man and the woman of a religious minority will also not demand her rights according to Islam.

Most Muslim men who marry Christian or Hindu girls by playing a false drama of love, divorce the girl after a year or so and find a better rich, beautiful Muslim girl.

#### Failure of political and religious minority leadership

Political and religious leadership of minorities have not paid serious attention improve social and financial conditions of religious minorities. Billions of dollars are taken from foreign countries in the name of the poor but most of the aid goes into corruption. Church leadership and those who run relief and human rights organizations become billionaire and their communities continue to suffer in poverty because this suits to the minority leadership,

for, they can demand for more aid by showing photos and videos of suffering minorities. Their own children are settled in USA and Europe but they are getting dollars in the name of poor minorities in Pakistan.

### What are the implications

In such a culture where criminals are protected by courts and police, life and dignity of all citizens becomes extremely under threat. But religious minorities become extremely vulnerable as compared to majority community.

- According to some reports more than 70 per cent Muslim population of Pakistan wants to leave the country because state has failed to protect their life, honour and properties.
- Almost all the religious minorities want to leave the country but they do not have resources to move to other countries.
- Many Muslims and Ahmedis leave Pakistan because they have financial resources to leave the country.
- Life becomes miserable for weak, poor and gentle people of minority as well as majority communities.
- The best brains of the country are drained and those excellent brains are welcomed by other societies who benefit from the talents and intelligence of those best brains.
- Pakistan further loses respect in the eyes of international community.
- Youth of religious minorities become aggressive and go into drugs and crime.
- The image of Islam and Muslims further deteriorates in the eyes of the international community.
- Foreign invest, foreign aid and tourism suffers due to insecurity in the country for its nationals and foreigners.

### Conclusion

Following are the conclusions of the paper:

- Pakistani society has a serious lack of justice especially for poor and religious minorities.
- Members of this society are living an individualistic life and there is serious lack of communitarian spirit.

- Culture allows discrimination and prejudices on the basis of religion, sect, caste, colour and gender.
- There is widespread discrimination against religious minorities and Muslims have inherited this discrimination from the Hindus who hated and discriminated Muslims.
- State institutions are very weak and are working against the people of Pakistan.
- Politicians are working against the interests of Pakistan and its people.
- Ruling elite deviated from the vision of the founder of the nation and promoted religious discrimination and intolerance.
- Religious intolerance suits ruling elite because if people continue to fight on religious and sectarian basis, then the ruling elite can loot the country without any hurdle.
- Politicians and bureaucracy loves to divert anger of Muslims towards religious minorities.
- In cases of injustices against religious minorities, bureaucracy, police, politicians, religious leaders, judiciary and general Muslim public supports the criminals because they think they must support their Muslim brother even if he is a criminal.
- Religious leaders are promoting intolerance against religious minorities and Shias.
- Religious intolerance was particularly promoted during the Ziaul Haq regime.
- Religious leaders are promoting this thinking that if a Muslim converts a non-Muslim to Islam, he/she and their 70 relatives and supporters will definitely get a place in heaven.
- Religious minorities are treated as slaves by Muslims because Muslims are made to believe that Pakistan is a country created for the Muslims, by the Muslims and for the Muslims.
- Looting wealth and women of religious minorities is part of Islamic History.
- The concept of Jihad is widely misunderstood, misinterpreted and misused against religious minorities.
- Minors girls of religious minorities are particularly targeted because they are an easy prey due their immaturity and easy to be lured. Also because criminal minded men have a liking for little children.

- Although Islam allows Muslim women to marry Ahl-e-Kitab men, but Muslims claim that it is not allowed and non-Muslim men are haram for Muslim women but non-Muslim women are haram for Muslim men. It is funny interpretation.
- Muslims who indulge in the acts of kidnapping, forcibly converting and forcibly marrying minority girls are violating and dishonouring the covenants, agreements and charters of Prophet Mohammed which he signed with Christians.
- Due to poor socio-economic conditions of religious minorities, minority girls and women are easy target of Muslim men.
- Political and religious leadership of minorities have not paid serious attention improve social and financial conditions of religious minorities.
- Christian and other religious minorities must work hard for the education and skill development of their children to become financially and socially strong.
- Families belonging to minority or even majority communities must be very careful and should not allow every Tom, Dick and Harry to mix up with their families. Every neighbor, relative and friend is not trustworthy.
- Parents of every religion must be very strict about the education and formation of their children, keep an eye on their friends, use of internet and all their social and educational activities.
- State, media, NGOs, and religious leaders must educate parents and particularly mothers to guide their children from early childhood to protect their modestly and report to the parents whoever tries to violate it. Parents, teachers, religious leaders, media and teachers of every level must work for improving morals and ethics of children. The case of Azhar Ali and the rapist of Zainab of Qasoor has proved that in such cases the criminals are without any moral norms and that is why their physical lust overpowers them and they lure, kidnap, rape and kill a child.
- Churches, development organizations, state etc. must set up more and more boarding houses to give protection and education to the poor (minority and Muslim) children in a secure atmosphere because criminals like Azhar Ali are found mainly in poor and lower middle class settlements and slums and poor children of every religion are more at risk and vulnerable. Children can also remain secure from pandemics like Covid-19.

### Recommendations

State must follow the charters and covenants of Prophet Mohammed and Mohammed Ali Jinnah, the father of the nation and protect religious minorities:

- Lessons on tolerance, peaceful co-existence and respect for every human being should be taught at school, college and university level.
- Religious leaders must preach about charters of Prophet Mohammad and founder of the nation in their Friday sermon during Friday prayer in Mosques and Imambargahs.
- State must keep an eye on such religious leaders who play a role in forced conversion and those who support criminals like Azhar Ali who kidnap a girl child and then hide behind Islam.
- Supreme Court and Bar Councils must play a role to cleanse the legal and judicial system and punish judges like Amjad Ali Sahito and lawyers who support such criminals.
- State must punish police, politicians and bureaucracy who supports and protects criminals like Azhar Ali. Services of such officials should be terminated immediately and they should be tried with the criminal for committing the same crime by supporting him.
- Criminals like Azhar Ali should be charged under Terrorism Act because such incidents terrorism all the religious minorities and more criminal elements are encouraged.

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