

# A Critical Analysis of Islam and Pakistan

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## ABSTRACT

This article describes the current religious, political and social practices, the worldviews of different scholars on these practices and my understanding of these worldviews, with a particular focus on Islam and Pakistan. It is considered that Islam is a religion that promotes authoritarianism, patriarchy and moralistic views, but I argue against such allegations based on the Quran and its scholars. At the same time, this article is an attempt to develop a critique of unjust socio-religious practices in the name of Islam, a misleading education system, and the question of why Islam was being misinterpreted or interpreted differently by specific schools of thought. These misinterpretations can be observed in the issues of gender inequality, forced marriages, corporal punishment, discriminating minorities, victimizing other groups who have different religious opinions and introduction of brutal laws like the Hudood Ordinance. This article is also a critical review of political decisions made by politicians throughout the history of Pakistan by using Islam for political gains.

**Keywords:** Religion, Islam, Misinterpretation, Critical Analysis, Brutal Laws, Pakistan

## INTRODUCTION

This article is A Critical Analysis of Islam and Pakistan. It is a topic that has been moving in my thoughts for quite some time, and he wants to understand and share its importance with others. The article explains what Islam means to Pakistani society and how it is used and abused in Pakistani society to achieve personal gains.

This article is a research work that talks about the current religious practices, worldviews of different scholars on these practices and personal understanding of these worldviews through the Quran and its scholars. With ever-changing circumstances, it is difficult for any institution, law or religion to have all the answers to the arising questions. Islam has always provided an option of ijtehad. My main objection to the current narrative of Islam presented by Pakistani media or the way it is being practised and offered by most Pakistani Muslim scholars is that it lacks depth, logic, and a humanistic and relational approach. Hence, this article attempts to analyse this approach critically.

This article also presents an analysis of so-called Islamic teachings and education systems that are based on made-up stories. They have no historical or religious bases but are taught through formal and informal education systems that play a vital role in our society. There are so many books filled with these made-up stories like Maut Ka Manzar, but one book called †Faza'il-e-Amaal, written by Muhammad Zakariya Kandhlawi, is very popular. It is a curriculum for Tablighi Jamaat. The book (Faza'il-e-Amaal), besides containing some authentic information, also includes several weak, concocted, interpolated as well as fabricated hadith (sayings of Prophet Muhammad) ascribed to the Prophet Muhammad (Bagdadi 2012). In this regard, Javed Ahmad Ghamidi also thinks that although their work is for the betterment of Muslims, the way is not according to what God has mentioned in the Quran. Instead of using the Quran, they rely on invented stories, and that is where the problem comes from (Ghamidi 2010).

## METHOD AND RESEARCH

As the title of this article highlights, it is about different understandings and interpretations of available literature, religious laws, norms and mixing religion with culture. Therefore, I have used hermeneutics and

hermeneutic strategies as a theoretical base. The hermeneutics theory and practice of interpretation systematically but more subjectively to understand Islam and Pakistan's history (Paterson & Higgs 2005). This research topic is very personal, familial, and societal, focusing on religious aspects and their influence on relational shifts and behavioural patterns, as well as the literature written by Pakistani authors, international writers, and the Quran. Through these interpretations, we get the answers to the question, "Why has Islam brought more division to Pakistan than unity? Furthermore, to get some valuable answers about the causes of the downfall of Pakistani society, I will have to rely on the literature review and the interpretation of the opinions the scholars gave. That is why I am using a Hermeneutics theory and practice of interpretation proposed by (Paterson and Higgs 2005).

### **Critical Analysis: Islam**

The era when Islamization was flourishing under General Zia-ul-Haq's dictatorship. It was the time when religious and regional intolerance was at its peak. The seed of extremism was already sown. Shia Sunni division was getting louder and louder; Shia kafir and crushing India's slogans and batches were a symbol of real Muslim patriotism. It is apparent to every keen eye that the most significant issues faced by Pakistan society in current times are religious extremism, religious discrimination and sectarian killing; hundreds of children, adults, out of schools and old people have fallen prey to it (Ghamidi 2015, 64)".

The Soviet Union had invaded Afghanistan, and Pakistan had gained so much importance for the West as it had become a strategic planning field (Shams 2016). Since Pakistan came into being, it has been widespread to see Islam being used for political reasons. From the Pakistan movement and throwing out Zulfikar Ali Bhutto's government to jumping into Afghanistan's internal matters and ending up catering to freedom fighters like Osama Bin Laden was an attempt to use Islam for political reasons. Pakistan's religiopolitical parties took the central stage to capture power avowedly for the Islamization of Pakistan (Isani 2010, 02). Even before the partition, initially, the Pakistan movement was purely on a political basis. Still, later, some religious forces convinced Mr. Jinnah that religion could play an essential role in the creation of Pakistan. "Maududi and Allama Iqbal greatly affected Jinnah and made him realize the potential of using the religious card in politics (Isani 2010, 12).

It is also believed that Islam promotes violence, sectarianism, radicalism and extremism. Its foundations are based on inhumane principles or violate fundamental rights like freedom of movement, speech, and choice. Islam is a rigid entity in the West (Karim & Eid, 2012). We have seen in recent times that people who have written against Islam, especially against Prophet Muhammad, were targeted. These actions are being executed in the name of blasphemy. "The cartoons depicting the Prophet Mohammed, the prosecution of David Irving, and the controversy surrounding the Abu Ghraib and Basra photos each present very different legal, ethical and historical issues. However, at the heart of the debates and attendant violence of the last months are core questions: What are this right's boundaries?" (Callamard 2006, 02) These are the critical questions: Should disrespect to a particular religious group be punishable? It can be caricatures of Prophet Muhammad or talking about the Holocaust.

Religion longs for inner peace and rituals to attain inner peace. During a personal interview, Professor Wolfgang Palaver said, "Every human being by nature is religious or spiritual." When I asked him, what religion is for him, He replied: "A deeper longing for fulfilment (Palaver 2018)". It is there to establish a connection between human beings and their creator. I understand religion as a way of life without social or cultural pressure. It gives the followers liberty to use their free will, and no one has any authority over others to punish them for not following religion in a certain way. "There shall be no compulsion in the religion (Quran 2:256)."

### **Differences In Understanding The Islam**

The newly elected government of (PTI-Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf) economically devastated and war against terrorism-torn Pakistan in 2018, decided to form an economic advisory committee. It included 18 renowned economists from around the world and gave them the task of guiding the government on issues related to

economics and improving them. Immediately after its formation, news started circulating on social media that one of its members, Mr Atif Rehman Mian, is ‘Ahmadi/Qadiani.’ This news hit Pakistan like a storm, and the government succumbed to the pressure of an extremist religious mindset. It has outflanked even society’s celebrities and intellectuals.

This type of discrimination and human rights violation can be found in the constitution of Pakistan. One of the things that I must disagree with is the discriminatory contradiction between articles 27, 41 and 260. On one side, article 27 of the Constitution protects the rights of an ordinary citizen and talks against any discrimination. Still, Article 260, which defines who is a Muslim and Article 41 says a non-Muslim cannot be a president of Pakistan, takes away the rights of the citizens given by the constitution (Constitution of Pakistan 1973). Initially, when the current constitution of Pakistan was drafted and approved by the National Assembly, this point of Ahmadis being a non-Muslim was not part of it. Still, later, in 1974, through the second constitutional amendment, it was introduced. According to Nadeem Farooq Paracha, a renowned Pakistani writer and journalist, in the general election 1970, Ahmadis voted for Mr. Zulfikar Ali Bhutto. His falling popularity in the left-wing corridors of the political sphere and some other political realities of that time pushed him towards the second amendment (Paracha 2013). In my opinion, religion is someone’s matter, and any government, state, or person has nothing to do with it. An individual shall be free to choose whatever they want. The message of Islam is primarily addressed to an individual (Ghamidi 2015, 148).

In the past, many governments have used religion to achieve their objectives. One of its examples is the role of Pakistan during the Cold War between the US and the former Soviet Union. According to former Secretary of State and presidential nominee of the US, Mrs. Hilary Clinton, the Taliban were created to defeat and get rid of the Soviet Union. It was a successful mission (Dawn 2009). Continuing with the same line, another topic that emerges and concerns me is the issue of treating children in ‘madrassas. They also use Islam as a tool to protect their vested interest. These madrassas recruit children from poor backgrounds and treat them inhumanely. According to the recent annual report by the UN Secretary-General on Children and Armed Conflicts, covering the January-December 2017 period, In Pakistan, the United Nations continues to receive reports of the recruitment and use of children, including from madrassas and other religious extreme groups and allegations of the use of out of school adults to carry suicide attack (Firstpost, 2018).

In the act mentioned above of brutality, parents also play a critical role. Although parents decide things about the lives of children, they do not ask or involve them in their decisions, and Islam does not allow such things. Parents sometimes forget that forcing children can make them distant and negatively impact them. It is a widespread practice in Pakistan, whether it be marital life, educational career or professional life; family pressure always plays a very crucial role. “Despite the status that Islam confers upon parents, they do not have the right to force their children (Ghamidi 2010). Moreover, it gets even more complex if you are a woman.

Another issue that disturbs me a lot in the current setting and the viewpoint of many Pakistani Muslim scholars is the creation and misuse of blasphemous laws. The way this law has been made and implemented has no roots in Islamic teaching or sources like the Quran or Hadiths. According to Mr. Ghamidi, the possible basis of this law, in the opinion of some scholars, are the two verses of the Quran (Ghamidi 2015, 258) where God says that people who wage war against Allah or Prophet Muhammad should be punished severely because for them there will be a great disgrace in this world and a punishment in the hereafter, but if they repent forgive them (Quran 5:33-34). In my opinion, these verses refer to someone who has declared war against Allah and his messenger and does not develop a simple disagreement or criticise specific actions. It is also important to note that in the verses (5:33-34), the Quran does not bind Muslim leaders to make it a law and give capital punishment. In the Quran, capital punishment can be given only on two offences. One, if someone disrupts, disturbs and challenges the writ of the government in a way that threatens the lives of people and property. Suppose someone kills another person (Ghamidi 2015, 259). With the current laws of blasphemy and capital punishment, I do not think that all these points were taken into consideration. It is essential that the clarifications related to punishment for blasphemy that are often cited also need to be agreed upon accurately (Ghamidi 2015, 260).

In 1979, General Zia-u-Haq, who was the mastermind behind the militancy, sectarianism and polarization in Pakistan, decided to introduce a law of sexual offences labelled as the 'Hudood Ordinance'. Hudood means to limit or boundary, and Hudood laws were intended to restrict acceptable behaviour. Considering these laws, any sexual act committed outside a legal marriage is regarded as a crime. According to this law, even a rape victim will have to prove their innocence or else otherwise they will be punished. This law has been considered by many liberal scholars as fundamentally misogynistic since its application results in women being convicted of adultery fornication if they report a case (Dawn 2011).

Furthermore, in addition to other problems generated by these laws, their judicial solicitation also made it easier to get away with criminalities against women, such as honour killings and general deprivation and humiliation of women in Pakistan (Dawn 2011). With this law, everyone was handed in the license to kill a girl and name it as honour killing or rape victim-survivors would not go to court as they were bound to provide four pious men to prove their case (Dawn 2011). The point here I want to make is that according to this ordinance, not only people could use this law to justify killing women, but also, if even ten or twenty women witness a rape, the accused will not get punished under this law.

On top of that, the rape survivor cannot testify as well. It is entirely against the Quran as it is mentioned in (24:6-10) that if someone accuses another one, they will have to present testimonies. Still, if it is impossible, their testimony will be accepted.

### **Pakistan: A Nation State And Islam**

In Pakistani society, religion plays a crucial and pivotal role in the lives of people, and that is why whoever came into power used religion as a tool; they were successful, but if they decided to challenge religion, it became difficult for them to survive. During the Pakistan movement, the same thing was done by Allama Muhammad Iqbal, who was once considered a very enlightened and moderate Muslim scholar and philosopher, along with another enlightened scholar, Maulana Maududi; he convinced Mr Jinnah to use religion to gain political milestones same Maududi, who was not in favour of creating Pakistan. "Maududi and Allama Iqbal greatly affected Jinnah and made him realize the potential of using the religious card in politics. We have seen in the past how when the Muslim League started using religion in politics with great success and ended up scoring a remarkable victory in the elections of 1945-46 (Isani 2010, 12-13). This was one of the classic examples of using religion for political goals, and its success encouraged Maududi to use Islam repeatedly, so he did it against the democratically elected government of Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto as well. While criticizing loyalists and political stooges, K.K. Aziz says that many facts were distorted, and personalities were posed as the only ones who created Pakistan (1993). Kids are taught hatred and discrimination based on falsehood. There are hundreds of examples, but one of his quotations I will use here as an example is that the Muslims treated the non-Muslims very well when they ruled the province.

Nevertheless, the non-Muslims nursed in their hearts a hostility against the Muslims. When the British invaded the area, the non-Muslims sided with them and against the Muslims. So, the British conquered the whole country (Aziz 1994, 12). It is again an act of inciting deep-rooted violence, preaching hatred and intolerance in the name of Islam.

### **Two Nation Theory and Its Later Effects**

An ideology behind the creation of Pakistan was the two-nation theory (Saeed 2009, 06). This theory was to establish a distinction between 'us' and 'them,' 'us' being Muslims and 'them' being Hindus. The colonial concept of divide and rule was implemented in this theory, and it was brought to light. Bigotry was sown in the minds of the general population, resulting in the concept that Muslims cannot live peacefully with Hindus within one country. Still, this divide was to gain power over a particular group of people (Jalal 1995). If we look at the leaders around the globe and the history of humanity, theocracy is not an alien idea. Not so long before the creation of Pakistan, in the Indian subcontinent, Arabs and Moguls used the same idea and were glorified by the Muslim leaders. In his critique of Muslim invaders, Mr. Aziz says that the leaders glorified by the leader of the subcontinent were nothing more than simple invaders. Hindus and Sikhs do not consider them



their heroes, and before their arrival, there were no Muslims in the region, so who are we to claim that Muslim leaders have changed their lives and people were so inspired that they have adopted the Muslim lifestyle? He further questions why Hindus do not eat beef (Aziz, 1994) if this is true.

After learning the art of theocracy from the past, Muslim leaders started applying it during the Pakistan movement. They decided to promote the idea of having an Islamic state combined with a nationalistic approach. This nexus seemed a perfect formula to come into power. “The architects of Pakistan embraced the idea of the nation-state without conceding space to territorial nationalism in their official ideology (Jalal 1995, 74)”. The idea of a Muslim nation is not Islamic. Nowhere in the Quran or hadiths can we find this idea. “It is not a requirement of Islam or a directive of its Shariah that the nationhood of Muslims should be based on religion and hence all Muslims must become one nation (Ghamidi 2015, 164-165)”. Although there are no such directives from the Quran or hadiths, people of that time and most Pakistanis thought that it was and is an Islamic cause.

### **Cold War, Islam And Pakistan**

Setting aside the merits and demerits of using Islam and the nation theory in the Pakistan movement, the world had come to know that Islam was used as a model or primary reason for the separation of the Indian subcontinent and the creation of Pakistan in 1947; yet even secular leaders like Muhammad Ali Jinnah had to shift their stance to fit the public's and the establishment's general expectations. After the partition, the idea of one nation and one language resulted in a massive loss in 1971. Still, even then, the establishment (the military) did not learn any lesson, and it continued its adventures in the shape of General Zia-ul-Haq. The effects of Islamization that are omnipresent in Pakistani society nowadays are the aftermath of General Zia's eleven years of brutal dictatorship.

Support of military establishment, religious groups, right-wing political forces, Soviet invasion in Afghanistan and US aid made General Zia more potent than ever before. Although the US had no direct interest in South Asia, it was helping Great Britain keep an eye on Russia. It was also in competition for power with the other regional global players. Moreover, from the beginning, the US strategic interests and perspective regarding South Asia were strongly influenced by the British, who wanted the US to assume the role of a successor (Hilali 2005, 70).

Soviet invasion of Afghanistan presented to the West and especially to the US an opportunity to end ‘the Great Game’ or ‘the Cold War.’ Before even the Soviet Union landed its feet on the ground in Afghanistan, the CIA (Central Intelligence Agency) and State Department had already started negotiating with Afghan Mujahideen in Pakistan. They made Afghanistan a Soviet Vietnam by using the Taliban, Pakistan and Islamization as driving forces. CIA, with the collaboration of ISI (Inter-Service Intelligence), provided Mujahideen with weapons and recruited young Muslims around the globe to fight a ‘holy war’ in the name of Islam against the Soviet Union (Mamdani, 2004). In my opinion, the actual extreme version of political Islamization was validated when Mr. Reagan invited leaders of Afghan Mujahideen to the White House and said, “These gentlemen are the moral equivalents of America's founding fathers (Mamdani 2004, 119).

The Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, on record, accepted that the US was the one that created the Taliban and used extremist ideology against the Soviet Union, and this policy backfired; Mamdani says that the CIA organized the Taliban, funded them, recruited them and taught them the radical version of brutal, authoritative, moral and patriarchal Islam. The US claimed to have created a group of Jihadists for liberation, but they have made a group of terrorists who have nothing to do with Islam but to fulfil their agendas (Mamdani 2004). Upon concluding this subchapter, I would like to say that once again, Islam was being used as a tool to motivate its followers for political purposes.

### **Education System of Pakistan**

Education is meaningful in progressing intellectual maturity and a deeper understanding of life. Every state's foundation is the education of its youth (Covey 2008, 134). The education system in Pakistan is facing a few serious problems. First, it runs on three parallel education systems: the English medium school system, the

Urdu medium school system and madrassa education. In Pakistan's formal education system, irrespective of whether it is an English medium or an Urdu medium school system, the content and its validity raise plenty of question marks. The syllabus provided by the government of Pakistan contains misconceptions, false historical facts, biased information and a discriminatory point of view to brainwash children (Aziz 1993).

The alternative factor that plays a crucial role in Pakistan's education system is gender and regional imbalance. The quality of education provided in Islamabad, Lahore, or Karachi is entirely different than in the farfetched areas of Pakistan. Although the male and female population in Pakistan is almost the same, the number of male students is way higher than that of females. Mr. Aziz, while referring to the educational books taught in our schools, says that this content can teach our kids how to read and write. Still, it does not serve as a tool for critical thinking, attention to truth, precision, clarity, accuracy, validity and fidelity to facts. They only contain plain lies, superficiality, misjudgments, self-deception and unnecessary glorification of people (Aziz 1993, 121). The current education system in Pakistan is increasingly dissociating our nation from its cultural beliefs. A short argument with the young group members makes one recognize that it will not take more than a couple of decades before we lose our memory as a nation (Ghamidi 2015, 80). They think that they are the sole responsible for the whole Muslim world (Ghamidi, 2015).

Although for the government and private stakeholders, it is necessary and, at the same time, a difficult task to reform the entire educational system of Pakistan, working on formal education would be much easier than the madrassas. Roughly fifteen thousand madrassas are in Pakistan, and around 1.7 million students are enrolled in these madrassas.

There are four main Muslim sects in Pakistan: Deoband, Barelvi, Ahl-e-Hadith and Shia. All these sects have their madrassas, syllabus, and federation called wafaq-ul-Madaris. Still, it is ironic that these sects do not agree with each other except for wafaq-ul-Madaris, which has a financial or political agenda (Ahmad 2009, 03-04).

Even though the religious syllabus of these madrassas is ancient, most teachers and students think it fulfils all the current needs. The syllabuses of the madrasas are synchronised by their respective boards and have not undergone any substantial changes in their core substance since inception in the 19th century (Ahmad 2009, 05). Mr Ghamidi says in madrassas that there are four things every teacher teaches to their students: 1) if someone commits the crime of polytheism or apostasy, we must kill that person; 2) if someone is a non-Muslim, they are meant to be subjugated; 3) all Muslims must have one khilafat and 4) the concept of nation-state is illegitimate. He goes on to say that another crime that our madrassas commit is that they admit students of five to six years old and teach them how to become a scholar without any broad base education, which is against human rights. You cannot take a child who does not know anything and put them to become a doctor, engineer or scientist. According to Ghamidi, first, you need to give them a primary education, and then they can choose to pursue any field they want (Ghamidi 2015).

## CONCLUSION

According to my findings, the most important sector that the Pakistani government and society can think to work on is to invest in educating people. There should be only one education system because having English medium, Urdu medium and religious education separately creates classes and divisions in society. Madrassas should be under the supervision of the government; for someone to get higher religious education, it should be an obligation to complete twelve years of broad-based primary education first. Another thing that the education system should pay attention to is how to indulge in healthy debate and critical thinking without accusing, threatening or harming others. There is nothing wrong in receiving criticism; it is okay if someone has a different opinion because the beauty lies in diversity. If at the time of Prophet Muhammad, there was no punishment for blasphemy. So, in my opinion, there should not be any blasphemy law as we have seen in Asia Bibi's case; it was used for political reasons or to feed personal animosity.

Pakistan's Ministry of Religious Affairs, the Pakistani government and the public should take notice of the syllabus taught by Tablighi Jamaat that contains so many made-up stories without any connection to Islam but is used with the concept that lies are fine as long as they provide good results. Children should be educated at

school that religion and culture are two different entities; they should be treated separately, and religion should never be used for personal, social or political reasons. Children should also be taught the importance of individual, physical, mental, emotional and spiritual well-being. The constitution of Pakistan contains quite a few laws that need to be revisited, amended, or dissolved, and the Hudood Ordinance is one of them. Pakistan's government needs to look at it and come up with a law that does not discriminate against any gender and is logical in terms of implementation.

The government should also revisit the articles 27, 41 and 260 of the constitution. There is a contradiction among these articles, and as they are not based on equality, they violate human rights. Finally, *ijtihad*, as I have mentioned before and scholars have shed some light on it, is one of the most versatile law-making opportunities that Islam has provided to its followers. The state's responsibility is to educate not only the masses but also form a public committee that deals with all the issues faced by the public and comes up with solutions while practising *ijtihad*.

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