

EDUCATING PEACE AND HARMONY: AN IMMEDIATE NEED FOR PROGRESS IN SINDH

Prof. Dr. Abida Taherani¹ , Prof. Dr. Aslam Pervez Memon²

Abstract

We are passing through and witnessing a critical time of history in terms of preserving and retaining of centuries' old cultural values and norms. At this juncture of history it is very much important not to lose our sane heritage we have lived with and for. If we speak specifically for Sindh province, we need to read and replicate our cultural assets, peace and tolerance Sindh province has retained through centuries. If we want to bar the current wave of intolerance and conflicting situation, we need to revive the culture of peace and tolerance by education our children with cultural and social norms that propagate harmony. Besides, all those basic teachings of our religion, Islam, that urge a good Muslim is one who cares his neighbours and don't cause harm to any one just because of his/her caste creed and religion.

Key words: *Peace, Harmony, Culture, Education, Religion, Sindh, Tolerance, Sufism*

Introduction

Peace can be defined as a time period of content/brotherhood and harmony among various social classes featured by minimized violence, high-handedness and conflicting attitudes with no fear of violence and hostility. In common terms the condition of peace is also marked with sincere attempts in letter and spirit the full implementation of law and order to realize the reconciliation (UNICEF: 1999). Peace is also vital for creating a healthy atmosphere and space for debate and argument. With these preconditions, peace will lead the society towards prosperity, social or economic welfare and maintain a political platform that benefits all.

¹ **Prof. Dr. Abida Taherani**

Vice Chancellor, University of Sindh, Jamshoro

² **Prof. Dr. Aslam Pervez Memon**

Pro Vice Chancellor, University of Sufism and Modern Sciences, University of Sindh, Jamshoro, Bhit Shah Campus

Tolerance is the ability of a person to bear the difference of opinion based on faith, language, culture or political affiliation. This is also the character of some who is able to understand and face the logical arguments of the opponents. Tolerance does not mean to consider everything right rather to suggest corrections based on reason and reality (UNESCO: 1994).

Process of learning can be interpreted as education with certain procedures involved. Values, skills, beliefs and habits of one segment of society get passed to the other one in this process via training, teaching and research (UNICEF: 2000). In this process a trainer/teacher is involved but in certain conditions people learn through reading books and listening stories. However, this is a continuous procedure and naturally human being keeps learning in formal and informal ways for all his/her life.

Conflicting Aspects of Sindh

Historically, Sindh province is known for tolerance, diversity and stability if compared with other areas of Pakistan. In past Sindh province has maintained its reputation for cultural festivity and values. However, during the last three decades Sindh province has witnessed a fundamental change because of what happened in Afghanistan and Iran since 1979. Nowadays Sindh's cultural values, tolerance and diversities, are equally threatened by terrorism, violence, extremism, tribal feuds, corruption and cessation movement. If government wants to save the province from falling in the hands of violent groups then it has to take ample actions to mobilize the residents to fight the forces of extremism as a society and help the government to progress. Poverty and illiteracy, as said and referred by many as the main reasons of terrorism and extremism are coupled with reasons of increasing extremism and intolerance in Sindh province (Ayesha Siddiq: 2013).

Some Important Issues in Sindh

Following are some important issues and conflicts in Sindh:

- Bringing and ensuring stability in Sindh is interpreted and directly linked with security conditions in Karachi, financial capital of Pakistan. This is because extremists groups and land mafias have strong footholds in Karachi.
- Penetration of extremist organizations in interior Sindh is very alarming situation for the policy makers and law enforce agencies. Recent suicide attacks in Shikarpur and Jacobabad districts are undeniable evidences of sectarian militant groups and the anti-state Tehrik-e-Taliban's increasing power in rural areas of Sindh.

- Increasing attacks on religious minority by extremist groups are having an impact on the Sindh's pluralistic and liberal society. These kinds of can bring further strain India-Pakistan bilateral relations with untold loss of human values.
- Situation of organized vandalism and crime in all over Sindh is a big challenge for security agencies in rural Sindh. In recent day wave of organized crime has decrease but it requires a fundamental change in society so that whole society acquire a 'zero tolerance' for crime.
- Tribal clashes and killings opponent groups are the main reasons for backwardness of rural society as such conflicts go from one generation to the next. In recent days extremists have started exploiting these feuds' sectarian affiliations.
- Separatist movement in Sindh is alive but not active as such and this issue can be addressed with better educational and job opportunities for native Sindhi people. Law inforce and intelligence agency must crackdown against sectarian extremists and should not lose focus from those who are main enemy of religious harmony and peace in Sindh.
- Social conflicts in Sindh get multiplied through poor governance, poverty, illiteracy, rural-urban divide and less opportunities for educated people in interior areas of Sindh as there is no industries in rural areas.
- The federal government should take ample measures and play active role to not let this province, Sindh, fall in hands of extremists. This needs significant policy focus from the central government (Huma Yousaf and Syed Shoaib Hasan: 2015).

Revival of Cultural Values and Heritage in Sindh

Sindh province has been center of culture heritage and activities in Pakistan. It is necessary that the governments of the day should lead the cause of revitalizing the cultural activities so the people can feel the free air. Current atmosphere of 'fear and threat' has shaken the confidence of people who want to live a cultural life. Society as whole has got divided on the lines of race and religion and this is the main cause of 'social disruption' in Sindh (Grant Jarvie: 2006). Government of the day should take steps to convert its 'social policy' in letter and spirit to the people can feel it by living and celebrating their cultural values through activities which are inclusive in nature for all segments of society.

Women should be provided equal opportunities and space in celebrating cultural life. All this is linked with 'better governance' so that people can get confidence in the government. According to statistical estimates, more than half of the population consist of women but in terms of opportunities, they do not come on focus for the policy makers. If, in some cases, the government focuses on women but at the ground policies are not translated into action by the government machinery. Given the rural-urban divide in Sindh, women living in rural areas are far behind the technological world and have not become beneficiary of global initiatives taken for the uplift of women.

Recent Local Government Elections

Recently conducted local government elections are a welcome step by the government in terms of reaching the local people's issues. Though came after a decade but this process of local elections should continue as this is the only way to bridge the people and state. Like other democracies, local government system in Pakistan, especially in Sindh's rural areas, can be very much beneficial for the people if it is given more powers and development funds (DAWN: 2015). This will help to get the confidence of people within state and its apparatus. There can be many local bodies/authorities which can help the people to get engaged with state and vice versa. This, hopefully, will leave no space for those who have extremist designs in their mind. Local government system will bring people more close to each other and then they can push the forces of 'hate and intolerance' back with the help of government and 'poverty-redressal' initiatives.

Education of Sufism and Peace

Sufis are the spiritual guides who aspire for closer union with God. Islam is an exterior edifice in which an entity subsists, whilst the inner exploration for enlightenment belongs to an ambit of Sufi realization. The Sufi approach endeavors to mend a human demeanor and to open up human vistas to the sublime amity that comes from propinquity to God. Sufism is a devotional and spiritual current in the Islamic history. Sufism enlightens society to abstain from spitefulness, barbarianism, bigotry, sadism and discrepancy. Now it has been subject matter to the strain of modernization experienced across the Muslim world and people are faced with terrorism on its peak. The present-day approach of sadism and belligerence calls for a good propel for the message of Sufi Diaspora for the alteration of traumatized mental approach of the populace. The conflict ridden people really have a pursuit for peace. Sufi ideas generously contribute to the harmony and relief. Islam is a great and splendid religion now has become maligned due to atrocities of 'Jehadis' in the label of religion. Fundamentalism has amended the motif and spirit of Islam. Pakistan as a soil of Sufis, longs for

serenity and harmony. Sufis are the people who believe in tolerance, love and well being of all humanity. It is necessary to follow the doctrine of Sufism in the world of turmoil and tribulations and to address the most serious issues like lack of interfaith harmony, terrorism, exploitation in Pakistan. The intention of this study is to explore the role of major Sufi saints in Sub-continent for preaching religion on the instructions of their sacred mentors and people have faith on Sufi Saints (Shugufta Bano, Mohammad Sohail and Syed Shahbaz Hussain: 2015).

Education of 'peace and harmony' has been neglected in our formal education system. This has caused a big loss to our society. Given the 'social structure' of our society based on different races and religions, we must have included lessons on 'harmony and peace'. Sufism is one of our best weapon against violence and hatred so we should include the education of Sufism and peace in courses from primary to university level. People of Sindh province have always welcome the Sufi thoughts and peace education so this is prime time to start the education of Sufism and peace from Sindh and then spread it further to other part of the country.

Our children should learn peace and harmony right from the primary level as in each class we find students from all segments and all religious back ground. This is why our government should strengthen such initiatives which promote peace and harmony in the population. We should, right from the childhood, teach our generation to tolerate the difference of opinion and prepare them to speak with logic and reason. Our children should realize that there is beauty in diversity and no area in the world is as such where our children may meet, see and interact with their likes only.

Conclusion

Society as a whole has to revisit and redirect its ways in Sindh if it wants a sustainable peace for the generation to come. Government initiatives in all this have to be detrimental as the driving force in this regard is always the state and its leadership. Political parties and media organizations are the main institutions in this regard to lead the public and build the public opinion in this regard. All this has to be implemented at local level with the aims and objective clear to the common people for their betterment. Daily life of rural people has to be freed from high-handedness of feuds and extremists so that they can live their life with full cultural participation and can celebrate all their religious and social festivities.

Peace education and Culture of Sufism needs to be re-vitalize an strengthen in Sindh and economic opportunities for rural the people must be created so that the Karachi, the financial hub of Pakistan, can be relieved from more influx of in-migration from rural areas to urban centers.

References:

- UNICEF. (1999). *Peace Education in UNICEF*. New York. P. 1
- UNESCO. (1994). *Tolerance: The Threshold of Peace*. France. P. 9
- UNICEF. (2000). *Defining Quality in Education*. Florence, Italy. PP. 6-8
- Siddiq, Ayesha (2013). *Friday Times*. The Sorry State of Sindh.
- Jarvie, Grant. (2006). *Sport, Culture and Society: An Introduction*. New York. P. 5
- Yousaf, Huma and Hasan, Syed Shoaib. (2015). *United States Institute of Peace. Conflict Dynamics in Sindh*. New York. P. 8
- DAWN. (2015). *Local Government Set-up Explainer*. (<http://www.dawn.com/news/1216234>. Retrieved on 20-11-2015)
- Bano, Shugufta, Sohail, Mohammad and Hussain, Syed Shahbaz. (2015). *A Research Journal of South Asian Studies. Curbing Extremism through Sufism: A South Asian Perspective*. Lahore. P. 189