

**PERCEPTION OF INTERFAITH DIALOGUE IN  
PAKISTAN: A STUDY OF THE PAST TWENTY  
FIVE YEARS**



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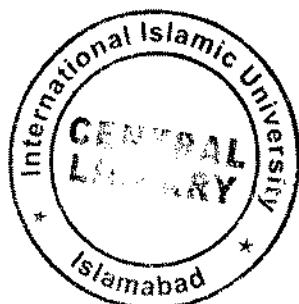
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PAKISTAN: A STUDY OF THE PAST TWENTY  
FIVE YEARS**



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**Registration No: 120-FU/MS/F08**

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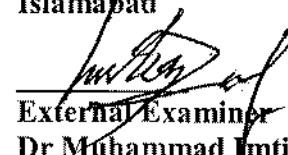
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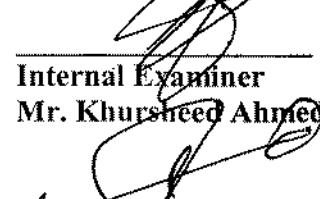
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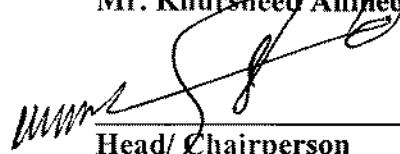
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## ABSTRACT

Dialogue is as old as the history of man. It is the communication tool much needed for man's survival and for the preservation of his history. Hence, as dialogue has preserved our past, it is the need of today and for the rest of the existence of human beings on Earth.

In a time, when our present era is marked by violent natural catastrophes, human beings are as well threatened to extinction by their own-made policies. If measures of survival are not worked out, man could be seen trapped in several wars, conflicts and unrest, hence further threatening its survival. However, our world has become a highly vulnerable place to live. Pakistan, being the case study of the subject is unfortunately among the most subjected nation of the world to these conflicts as it is considered, by the belligerent of the world war mongers, a hub for world terrorism. Hence, the fight against terrorism is being operated from here, as such creating more and more enemies in its surroundings and its interior affairs. To sort out these problems, question is raised whether interfaith dialogue could be of importance or not. To come up to a conclusion the need for understanding the perception of dialogue in Pakistan for the past 25 years is considered important.

Pakistan being a Muslim majority country with significant minorities, creating a myriad of cultures, it is important that a proper dialogical process should take place on the basis of which the society can develop and progress. This is because, in truth, Pakistani society is divided from every perspective of the society, between the haves and the haves not, among different section within the religions and as well among different

religion. Even women and some other partners of the society for example the she-males, the downtrodden etc are seen marginalized by the mainstream society. Therefore, interfaith dialogue is seen considerable and can work for the solution of the societal problems as the Pakistani society is highly religious.

But, unfortunately, due to multiple reasons the dialogical process in this country is at its worst. A large communication gap between the proponents of interfaith dialogue and the public is noticed. Interfaith dialogue is completely absent from the Pakistani public sphere. Pakistan is thus facing challenges from the world most dangerous warring enemies from all its borders and the Americans who are fighting for their interest in the name of War against Terrorism.

In an attempt to understand the problem in this part of the world, a research on the perception of interfaith dialogue in Pakistan for the past 25 years is felt important to situate what is going on in the name of religion and peace. Hence, this work finds its raison d'être to reach a proper understanding and come up with a result at the end.

Therefore, to start, this work considers reaching a proper definition of interfaith dialogue, its importance and its understanding among different people, institutions and interfaith bodies. To reach this objective a literature review was of utmost importance. Internet surfing was very helpful and interviews were carried out where no biased method were applied. It was also important to survey the work being done at international level. History of interfaith dialogue was considered and how dialogue has been subjected to changes was evaluated to understand the new concept of dialogue in our present era. The Sociological importance of interfaith dialogue is as well elaborated to understand how

society can benefit from our changing world towards religious pluralism. What is good and failure from the dialogical point of view for the proper evolution of the society is also evaluated. And how to create such a dialogue that can benefit humanity is considered rather than satisfying the self with dialogue within limited dimensions. Relevant theories like that of the Clash of civilization, Democracy and Theology are considered in seeking the relevancy of interfaith dialogue in this era. To limit the work to its dimension, the researches already done by other researchers have not been re-investigated.

However, this is not the final attempt that can give the expected result for interfaith dialogue to succeed. The questions raised throughout this work have to be further investigated through proper and sincere research to succeed in activating or revitalizing the dialogical process which is needed to bring peace and harmony in the society.

The result or conclusion reached in this research work could be stated as follows:

1. Work on Interfaith dialogue being the need of the time should be revised. A critical and analytical work of the pioneers of dialogue should be carried out to highlight what could be the reasons interfaith dialogue is not being successful.
2. There should emerge a think tank to understand how dialogue is being used as a cover to play the game in favor of the powerful. It is questioned whether or not the capitalist is in a new attempt to get rid of religious values, after having failed through secularism.
3. Society, Religion, Dialogue, Modernity, Secularism and all related concept should be redefined properly without any biased attitude. And at the same time question

should be raised as to why man should struggle to develop new ideologies when the existing ideology presented by religion is not far from what the secular minded people are seeking to do while keeping the truth hidden to the public at large.

4. The Muslim scholars and thinkers who are participating in dialogue with Christians, Jews, Hindus and Buddhist should first of all understand the purpose and role of human beings in this world. Although the others seem that they know exactly what their aims and works is, yet, their knowledge about human purpose in this world is as well not compatible with reality. Their ideologies, thoughts and works are not coherent. A comparative study of Religion and society is needed to be studied analytically so that the pioneers of dialogue and the people may understand the reality of dialogue so that we are not taken by surprise and hence lose our identity. Not to forget, history is here to witness how religions have been spread and destroyed as well. Are not the non-believers anxious of the growing revival of religions?

To sum up, hope that this work could meet the aim of effectively communicating what the perception of interfaith dialogue in Pakistan is and what it ought to have been.

## ملخص

الحوار هو قديم قدم تاريخ الإنسان. هو أداة اتصال تشتت الحاجة إليها لبقاء الإنسان والحفاظ على تاريخه. وبالتالي، وكما حفظت الحوار ماضينا، هو حاجة من اليوم وعلى ما تبقى من وجود البشر على الأرض.

في وقت واحد، عندما يتم وضع عالمة عصرنا الحاضر بفعل الكوارث الطبيعية العنيفة، مهددة البشر وكذلك للانقضاض من قبل سياساتها الصنع، إذا لم يتم عمل التدابير للبقاء بها، يمكن أن ينظر الرجل المحاصر في العديد من الحروب والصراعات والاضطرابات، وبالتالي يزيد من تهديد بقائها. ومع ذلك، فقد أصبح عالمنا مكاناً عرضة للعيش. باكستان، ويجري دراسة الحالة من هذا الموضوع هو للأسف من بين أكثر الدول في العالم يتعرض لهذه الصراعات حيث أنها تعتبر، من قبل المحاربة من مروجي الحرب العالمية، مركزاً للإرهاب العالمي. وبالتالي، يجري تشغيلها مكافحة الإرهاب من هنا، على هذا النحو خلق المزيد والمزيد من الأعداء في محيطه وشونته الداخلية. لفرز هذه المشاكل، وأثار مسألة ما إذا كان الحوار بين الأديان يمكن أن تكون ذات أهمية أم لا. من أجل التوصل إلى استنتاج أن يعتبر ضرورة لفهم مفهوم الحوار في باكستان على مدى السنوات الـ 25 الماضية الهامة.

باكستان كونها بلد مسلم الأغلبية مع الأقليات كبيرة، وخلق عدد لا يحصى من الثقافات، فمن المهم أن عملية الحوارية السليم ينبغي أن يتم على أساسها المجتمع يمكن أن تتطور والتقدم. هذا هو لأن، في الحقيقة، وينقسم المجتمع الباكستاني من كل جهة نظر المجتمع، بين من يملكون ومن لا يملكون لا، بين مقطع آخر داخل الأديان وكذلك بين دين مختلف. على سبيل المثال أنها-الذكور، وينظر حتى النساء وبعض الشركاء الآخرين في المجتمع وغيرها المسحورة المهمشة من المجتمع.

وبالتالي، يعتبر الحوار بين الأديان كبيرة ويمكن أن تعمل من أجل حل المشاكل المجتمعية مثل المجتمع الباكستاني هو ديني للغاية.

ولكن، للأسف، لأسباب متعددة عملية الحوارية في هذا البلد هو في أسوأ حالاته. ويلاحظ وجود فجوة كبيرة بين الاتصالات دعوة الحوار بين الأديان والجمهور. الحوار بين الأديان هو غائب تماماً عن الحياة العامة الباكستانية. وبالتالي تواجه باكستان تحديات من أعداء العالم المتحاربة أخطر من جميع حدودها والأمريكيين الذين يقاتلون من أجل مصلحتهم باسم الحرب ضد الإرهاب.

في محاولة لفهم المشكلة في هذا الجزء من العالم، وشعرت البحوث حول مفهوم الحوار بين الأديان في باكستان على مدى السنوات الـ 25 الماضية المهم أن وضعه ما يجري باسم الدين والسلام. وبالتالي، فإن هذا العمل يجد سبب وجودها للوصول إلى الفهم الصحيح والخروج مع نتيجة لذلك في نهاية المطاف.

وبالتالي، لبدء، يعتبر هذا العمل التوصل إلى تعريف مناسب للحوار بين الأديان وأهميته وفهمها بين مختلف الناس والمؤسسات والهيئات الدينية. للوصول إلى هذا الهدف هو مراجعة الأدب ذات أهمية قصوى. تصفح الإنترنت كان مفيدة للغاية وأجريت مقابلات خارج حيث تم تطبيق أي أسلوب متحيز. ومن المهم أيضاً لمسح العمل الذي تقوم به على المستوى الدولي. واعتبر تاريخ الحوار بين الأديان، وكيف تعرضت لتغيرات حوار جرى تقييم لفهم مفهوم جديد للحوار في عصرنا الحاضر. أهمية علم الاجتماع من الحوار بين الأديان وضفت كذلك أن نفهم كيف يمكن أن تستفيد من المجتمع عالمنا المتغير نحو التعددية الدينية. ما هو جيد والفشل من وجهة نظر الحوارية للتطور السليم للمجتمع يتم تقييم أيضاً. وكيفية إنشاء مثل هذا الحوار التي يمكن أن تستفيد يعتبر الإنسانية بدلاً من إرضاء الذات مع الحوار داخل أبعاد محدودة. النظريات ذات الصلة من هذا القبيل

من صراع الحضارة، وتعتبر الديمقراطية واللاهوت في السعي إلى ملائمة الحوار بين الأديان في هذا العصر. للحد من عمل لأبعادها، والبحوث فعلت من قبل باحثين آخرين لم يتم إعادة التحقيق.

ومع ذلك، لم تكن هذه هي المحاولة الأخيرة التي يمكن أن تعطي النتيجة المتوقعة للحوار بين الأديان لتحقيق النجاح. الأسلمة المطروحة خلال هذا العمل يجب أن يتم التحقيق من خلال مزيد من البحوث المناسبة والصادقة لتحقيق النجاح في تفعيل أو تنشيط عملية الحوارية الذي هو ضروري لإحلال السلام والونام في المجتمع.

يمكن القول نتيجةً أو استنتاج تم التوصل إليه في هذا العمل البحثي على النحو التالي:

يُنْبَغِي تَقْيِيقُ الْعَمَلِ عَلَى الْحَوَارِ بَيْنَ الْأَدِيَانِ كَوْنُهَا ضَرُورَةٌ فِي ذَلِكَ الْوَقْتِ -

1. يُنْبَغِي إِجْرَاءُ الْعَمَلِ النَّقْدِيَّةِ وَالْتَّحْلِيلِيَّةِ مِنْ رُوَادِ الْحَوَارِ إِلَى تَسْلِيْطِ الْضَّوْءِ عَلَى مَا يَمْكُنُ أَنْ تَكُونَ الْأَسْبَابُ الْأَدِيَانِ الْحَوَارُ لَا تَكُونُ نَاجِحًا.

2 - يُجَبُ أَنْ تَظَهُرَ هُنَاكَ فَكْرِيَّةٌ لِفَهْمِ كَيْفِيَّةِ اسْتِخْدَامِ الْحَوَارِ كَفَطَاءٍ لِتَلْعُبِ لَعْبَةِ فِي صَالَحِ الْأَقْوَيَاءِ. وَتَسْأَلُ مَا إِذَا كَانَ أَوْ لَمْ يَكُنْ الرَّاسِمَالِيُّ فِي مَحَاوِلَةٍ جَدِيدَةٍ لِلْتَّخَلُصِ مِنْ الْقِيمِ الْدِينِيَّةِ، بَعْدَ أَنْ فَشَلَتْ مِنْ خَلَالِ الْعِلْمَانِيَّةِ.

3 - الْمَجَمُوعُ، الْدِينُ، الْحَوَارُ، الْحَدَانَةُ وَالْعِلْمَانِيَّةُ وَكُلُّ مَفْهُومٍ ذَاتِ الْصَّلَةِ يُنْبَغِي إِعادَةِ تَعْرِيفِ صَحِيحٍ مِنْ دُونِ أَيِّ مَوْقِفٍ مِنْحَازٍ. وَفِي نَفْسِ الْوَقْتِ مَسَأَلَةٌ يُنْبَغِي أَنْ تَثَارَ لِمَذَا الرَّجُلُ يُجَبُ النَّضَالُ مِنْ أَجْلِ تَطْوِيرِ أَيْدِيُولُوْجِيَّاتِ جَدِيدَةٍ عِنْدَمَا الْأَيْدِيُولُوْجِيَّةُ الْقَانِمَةُ الَّتِي قَدَّمَهَا الْدِينُ لَيْسَ بَعِيدًا عَنْ مَا النَّاسُ فِي التَّفْكِيرِ الْعِلْمَانِيِّ يَسْعَونَ لِلْقِيَامِ مَعَ الحَفَاظِ عَلَى الْحَقِيقَةِ الْخَفِيَّةِ لِعَامَةِ الْجَمَهُورِ.

4 - العلماء والمفكرين مسلم الذين يشاركون في الحوار مع المسيحيين واليهود والهندوسية والبوذية وينبغي أولاً وقبل كل فهم الغرض ودور البشر في هذا العالم. يبدو أن الآخرين يعرفون بالضبط ما هو هدفهم وبالتالي أعمالهم، أيديولوجياتها والأفكار هي متماسكة. وهناك حاجة إلى دراسة مقارنة للدين والمجتمع لدراستها من الناحية التحليلية بحيث رواد الحوار والناس قد فهم واقع الحوار بحيث لا تؤخذ على حين غرة ونحن وبالتالي تفقد هويتنا. لا تنسى، والتاريخ هنا ليشهدوا كيف انتشرت الأديان ودمرت كذلك. ليست هي غير المؤمنين حربصة على إحياء متزايد من الأديان؟

لتلخيص، ونأمل أن هذا العمل يمكن أن تلبي الهدف من التواصل الفعال ما هو مفهوم الحوار بين الأديان في باكستان وما يجب أن يكون.

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Praise be to Almighty Allah, The Most Gracious and Merciful who bestowed me with much divine favor in finishing this demanding work. Blessings of Allah be on our last Prophet of Islam (May Peace and Blessing of Allah be upon Him) and his companions and all sincere Muslims.

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Abdool Yousouff Farjan

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## INTRODUCTION

Dialogue is as old as history, yet it's the most debated headline of the 21st century as faced with the challenges created by conflicts, wars and terrorism. The fact that our new global environment after the 9/11 terror attack on the American soil has forced man to change, dialogue cannot afford to be what it was traditionally. Although contemporary struggles replicate ancient tragedies like genocides, inter-religious wars and conflict, yet it is evolved and holds new connotation such as global or planetary terrorism. As such interfaith dialogue is sought to be part of the solution to contain several kind of conflict. As well, in this thesis dialogue and interfaith dialogue has no disparity as in every aspect of life and in any other activity it is related deeply to religion. Example of the above statement could be as follows: In Pakistan and even other part of the world from parliament to the market life religion is the prime factor that is brought into account. In parliament seats for the minorities are reserved. Even ministries are distributed on religious basis. In job selections religious creed are considered so that no religion is felt misrepresented. In choosing friends, marriage partner, neighborhoods, religion is considered. In the setting up of a market the religious touched of the society is considered. That is why although the 9/11 event of the World Trade Center has a political agenda, yet religion has been blamed for that and hence, it became the main cause of the conflict throughout the world. This conflict has been given the name Terrorism depicting the Muslims as the terror group willing to spread their Shariat (Islamic Law) everywhere in the globe.

This is why the West is suddenly seen to be in conflict with a much undefined enemy that is terrorism, engaging the whole Muslim world. Misunderstanding and stereotyping are very common. The traditional Muslim faith is put into question. Muslims are found under the pressure to diverge from a political Islam to a more pacific and subjective Islam. Western Democracy is being imposed on them as a new model for governance, at the expense of Islamic values, hence giving way to radicalism and fundamentalism. Conflicts emerged as a cry for resistance and survival which has been termed as terrorism by the West. Consequently, these new scenarios have dragged the whole world in this dangerous eye of the storm, which is the war against terror. No place in this world can claim to be safe as the world is no more than a global village and that the threat is real everywhere. Therefore, it is seen incumbent to promote peace and harmony throughout the world. In this regard, Religion is seen as a powerful force that can help to resolve most of the conflicts. This implies that a direct involvement of religious leaders, communities, organizations, and also the government could be engaged in an open and frank dialogue addressing the real issues. Being a student of Comparative Religion at the International Islamic University, Islamabad, I felt a duty to study the perception of dialogue in Pakistan, so as to understand the ongoing process of interfaith dialogue and its relevancy for the coming generations. As well, Pakistan is my host country for my studies and she is a Muslim majority country based on Islamic Ideology, once again I felt the necessity to carry out a research for the benefit of this mighty nation.

Working for peace and ending conflict is a claim being made by everyone, be it the rulers, communities, organizations, individuals, religious leaders and even terrorists. Yet, the world is at its worst state of unrest, uncertainty, wars and conflicts than ever in

history. Although Interfaith Dialogue institutions are engaged in the highest degree of talks, debates and dialogues, yet the outcome is quite static. We are faced with the highest kind of irony in the way to peace. However, we should continue our effort to work and promote peace and harmony sincerely until we succeed to secure a better place to live. Considering, Pakistan, with its 97% Muslim majority, is undergoing an intense process of social changes. The growing interest of the world effective and powerful nations in Pakistan and its strategic role in international affairs and hostile neighborhood has made Pakistan vulnerable to different kinds of dangerous conflicts. Moreover, considering its minorities, comprising of the followers of Christian churches, oriental religions and other denominations; it is incumbent to seek a stable Pakistan for its survival and growth as a successful nation. As Religions are being considered a powerful force that can help resolve most of the conflicts, this work seeks to research and establish the true perception of interfaith dialogue and its work among different religious groups and organizations. It is also intended to provide a sociological preview of interfaith dialogue so that the society and interfaith activist can cooperate for the success of the work for peace and harmony in its true context.

## **IMPORTANCE OF THE TOPIC**

It is important to understand what interfaith dialogue is and how it is understood by the society in Pakistan as they are the main subject that can bring the result expected by different interfaith dialogue activities. That is why the concept of dialogue is treated as being the very essence for the survival or existence of human beings. And to ensure the existence of humans, a proper dialogical process needs to take place on the basis of which

civilizations can develop and progress. Contrary to animals where there is no dialogical process and no civilizations, and that their survivals depend on their instinct, human beings need to organize and work for their survival. For this purpose human being should understand each other, and this is possible only through proper dialogue. Dialogue is not mere accidental or human achievements, it is gifted, but one's future is built on the form of dialogue he engages in. Faith to be undermined from this dialogical process is not possible, as in every field of work faith is being used to create the harmony that is necessary and important.

Without dialogue human beings are not human in its true sense, they are mere animals. Society should focus on helping human to learn what it means to be human. An entire social arrangement and institutions is needed to materialize the understanding for dialogue.

Therefore, this work is intended to develop in such that the true perception of interfaith dialogue is understood and that we could come to a point of defining where misunderstanding and flaws of such dialogue lie. This is because, up to now whether national or international, interfaith dialogue in its formal aspect is seen a failure. It is condemned to stay within a few activists of dialogue and talks. While, informal dialogues among faiths have proved its worth since the very existence of human beings in this world. Hence, cooperation among different faith people in an atmosphere free of political influence.

Dialogue in this work is exclusively concerned with dialogue among faiths. To understand dialogue among faiths it is important to know and comprehend the language

used for interfaith dialogue. What we experienced so far in the rhetoric of interfaith dialogue is that dialogue is for building a peaceful and conflict free society. In this quench, such languages of keeping away the fundamentals, polemic talks, or the proselytizing intentions are therefore not feasible. One should not forget that to achieve peace all the components of the society should be taken into confidence. But, unfortunately, despite all efforts, interfaith dialoguers and movements could do nothing above serving dinner parties, Ramadan offers and gathering for festivals and combine prayers in their different activities of interfaith dialogue where only selected people are called. It has also become a trend in coming up to the help of the affected in different calamities with the hope of increasing adherents and incurring more and more funds from the public for support. It seems all a fruitful business in the hands of a few. Such languages and activities expose confusion and pessimism in the public. That is why no significant changes are observed in the thinking of the people. Many dialoguers and scholars believe that these limited activities of interfaith dialogue in society could not bring the necessary changes in the thinking and behavior of the people. With the problem of rhetoric and language, the problem of research is as well considerable. Besides, the problem is political and cultural, and there is a lack of research, that's why we cannot find any theory about interfaith dialogue on which policy can be made.

However, interfaith dialogue has its 'raison d'etre' as dialogue is seen an important tool in working for peace building and conflict ending. The importance of this research work is:-

- To apprehend, understand and evaluate dialogue in Pakistan in this generation.

- To recognize its importance, and its interpretation in Pakistani context.
- To create awareness and further help improve and strengthen interfaith understanding, promote peace building and create anti-violence consciousness and target communities that are in need and that their problems be addressed in a true and just way.
- To save interfaith dialogue from being an illusion and propaganda.
- Finally, this work is intended to be different to the existing works which are mostly traditionally based, where the work of different organizations and institutions are being dealt with. But to reach a true perspective of interfaith dialogue we are to come out of the traditional vocation and reach to the death of what dialogue is meant to the proponents of dialogue and equally what dialogue is meant to the public. Hence, this work will be totally different in approach and its proceeding.

## **REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

Literature is flooded in the market in different written forms, conferences and electronic materials. Unfortunately, very little could be helpful, while the existing works are based mainly on political justification and is subjective in approach that is they are just formalities to satisfy their promoters and donors' which is why Interfaith Dialogue is considered a failure up to now. However, there are groups sincerely working but they are either marginalized or ignored.

Despite lots have been written and done on interfaith dialogue, still it seems that dialogue has stayed within the four walls of related activities. The public at large is

unaware that such works are being carried out in their country. Many people whether lettered or unlettered don't even know what interfaith dialogue stands for. While knowledge about other related issues to interfaith dialogue, such as wars, conflicts, terrorism and aggressions exist and the needs to be settled are known, yet, they don't know that there are people involved in such works like interfaith dialogue for peace. This could be because the methods used to handle and find solution is not effective. There could be large communication gap between the proponents of dialogue and the public. The debate of interfaith dialogue has not reached the public sphere. They better look at their government to come up with policies that could work for solutions. To understand these matters a survey of literature has been carried out which could help to find out the causes of any existing weaknesses.

There is, as well, a lack of scholarly books, describing truly what interfaith dialogue is and intended for. So far we can rely only on few individual descriptions of their activities, which is not enough for understanding dialogue and its purposes. Poor public rhetoric on dialogue among faith and a lack of conceptual theory represent a problem which is intended to be explored in this thesis.

Therefore, a justified research and understanding of interfaith dialogue may provide such a theory that could be central for the understanding of the concept of human existence. This work shows how dialogue is not merely a form of communication, but rather, the entire social organization of a society which enable people to evolve peacefully.

The following literatures are sought and useful in the making of this work

1- Author, Hans Küng, Translator, Leonard Swidler, Parliament of the World's Religions, Declaration toward a Global Ethic, 1993, Chicago, U.S.A.  
[http://www.parliamentofreligions.org/\\_includes/FCKcontent/File/TowardsAGlobalEthic.pdf](http://www.parliamentofreligions.org/_includes/FCKcontent/File/TowardsAGlobalEthic.pdf)

The work of Dr. Hans Kung is very important where one can understand how, if religion is marginalized, interfaith dialogue could fail. More significant is when it concerns Pakistan which is a highly religious and spiritual country justified by the very reason on which it was created. However, there are elements of thought that is very intelligently presented by Dr. Kung to divert the mind of people from a theological to a secular type of religiosity which is interesting in developing this work.

In an attempt towards peace building Dr. Hans Kung through his writings in his duty towards: "The Council for a Parliament of the World's Religions in Chicago," where he was commissioned to develop a draft on Global Ethic, states, The world is in agony...peace eludes us...we condemn the social disarray of the nation; the disregard for justice which pushes citizens to the margin; the anarchy overtaking our communities; and the insane death of children from violence. In particular we condemn aggression and hatred in the name of religion.

He further pledges for a just social and economic order and continues calling for readiness for sacrifice without which there can be no fundamental change in our situation. Therefore, he says that we have to commit ourselves to the global ethics he is talking of and hence he says:

We invite people, whether religious or not to do the same.

He further adds that we know that religions cannot solve the environmental, economic, political, and social problems of Earth. However they can provide what obviously cannot be attained by economic plans, political programs, or legal regulations alone: A change in the inner orientation, the whole mentality, the “hearts” of people, and a conversion from a false path to a new orientation for life.

These thought of Dr.Kung are problematic, while it can easily be applied to the Western religion, Christianity and few other Eastern religions, Buddhism and Hinduism, yet these cannot be applicable to Islam given that Islam has its economic plans, its politics and its legal regulations. If these are misunderstood, obviously dialogue will suffer.

2- M. Estlund, David, *Democratic Authority- A Philosophical Framework*, Princeton University Press, Princeton and Oxford, 2009

As most of the contemporary wars are being fought in the name of democracy, it is important to know what democracy represents in its true nature in the consideration of those using it. Somalia, Iraq, Palestine, Afghanistan and Pakistan are few to be mentioned where wars are being fought in the name of democracy. It is very important to be understood that the justification given for their presence is totally against moral ethics. Although it may look right and just in their regards, they could not forcefully impose on others as it could hold prejudice and illegitimacy. The author David M. Estlund has clarified how democracy is a lie and deception in the following statements:

"Democracy has no tendency to produce good decisions. Authority imply: if laws are created for implementation then the authority has to make you morally required to do so, otherwise the implementation is illegitimate. That some views are qualified even though they are not true"

Understanding this book can be helpful in understanding how interfaith dialogue could be engaged in those parts of the world where the belligerents are active in wars for democracy. Otherwise prejudice and justification could lead to moral and political inequality thus more conflict.

3- Eric J. Sharp, Dialogue of Religions, the Encyclopedia of Religion, Macmillan Publishing Company, New York, Vol.4, 1987

This encyclopedia holds its importance for this work as it helps us understand how the activist of interfaith dialogue is trying to modify religion. Although formal interfaith dialogue is being held for centuries, yet it is still met with failure. Reading this encyclopedia will show how they are insisting to rely purely on their human mind to find a solution for mankind. They are unable to understand that Religion is not man-made. Religion cannot be manipulated, rather it has a beyond rational connection which they are trying to ignore. Any attempt to modify religion would be an attempt to alter truth and this would not be tolerated by the Divine power. But, the fact that most of the proponents of dialogue are from the political background and secular organization; there is no readiness or effort to scrutinize the reality of Religion. That is why theology is kept aloof from the debate on Interfaith Dialogue. Unless religion is understood in its due form then

only can the world succeed in containing the war-mongers countries and enjoy peace and harmony.

4- Smock R. David, Interfaith Dialogue and Peace Building, United State of Peace Press, Washington, D.C, 2002

The author David Smoke highlights the problem of religion being considered to be the driving force of hatred and conflicts. He writes:

“A crime committed in the name of religion is the greatest crime against Religion.”

From the above statement it is obvious that religion is not the real cause of wars and conflicts. So, any attempt to influence the society based on false assumptions could be chaotic and thus dialogue could be an illusion. Therefore, this book could help us track out the true causes of conflicts then only can the well wishers of interfaith dialogue be successful in their job.

#### **STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

Pakistan's relations with its allies and enemies, and the relations between Muslims and Jews which remain quite difficult, notably due to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and inter-Muslim issues and also, relations between Muslims and Hindus in India and Pakistan should be kept in mind when talking of dialogue among faith. Unfortunately, there exist a wrong interpretation and implementation of interfaith dialogue in this country. For an effective dialogue to take place in its real perspective in

this society, a careful study and understanding of Interfaith Dialogue in Pakistani context is due on its well-wishers.

Therefore, the following are the problems that need to be addressed in this work:

- What is dialogue and how it is important in human existence?
- What are the perceptions of dialogue in the society? How it is connected to the peaceful and harmonious life of the society? How and why interfaith dialogue is treated as a new issue?
- Is it important to have a Sociological analysis of Interfaith Dialogue? How could the sociological view of dialogue change the perception of the self towards the other in the society?
- What is good and failure from the dialogical point of view for the proper evolution of the society? And how does one create such a dialogue?

## **METHODOLOGY**

The methodology in this work is a critical, analytical, and comparative approach. It is as well a qualitative work based on the opinions of different stakeholders of the society. This helps to distinguish the work from its appropriateness and flaws so as to help a true dialogue to reach toward its end. It also considers its sociological implications as the society is the direct subject of interfaith dialogue. Relevant books, leading scholars' views and literatures are availed of for a well defined work.

In addition valuable articles and other materials are considered to fulfill this task. No doubt my teachers and other intellectuals have been of utmost importance for the precise completion of this work.

Moreover, people were approached from different level to situate how far they feel concerned and to see the relevancy of peace building in their mind.

### **OBJECTIVE OF RESEARCH**

- 1- When religions are not considered in their totality, the very essence of religion is destroyed. Given that religion is a Divine gift for humanity, and if divine teachings are manipulated by man to keep only its ethics at global level, and the rest, that is, ideology, rituals and spirituality at an individual level then it is questionable. The objective here is to evaluate Man effort to achieve peace and harmony in the society and to find out means for success.
- 2- When minorities are found engaged in interfaith dialogue with the main objective to work for obtaining their rights then the purpose of interfaith dialogue is shifted from its priority. In such case, is it not that a tug of war has been created between the minority and majority in search for rights, instead for a dialogical process. This work clarifies the true objective of interfaith dialogue.
- 3- When we see that wars and conflicts are being carried in the name of democracy, but the ideals of democracy is not observed by the belligerents then how come people will accept interfaith dialogue in the name of democracy to succeed in bringing peace. In such cases most of the time the aggressed nation is condemned

of not being democratic, while tolerating the aggressors. The objective here is to clarify how interfaith dialogue is misused.

- 4- Finally, if the proponents of interfaith dialogue are not sincere to the words they proclaim as their objectives, then sadly it would not be possible to achieve the expected results. Therefore, this work sincerely comes up with valuable suggestions for interfaith dialogue to be successful.

## CHAPTER 1

### PERCEPTION OF INTERFAITH DIALOGUE

Interfaith dialogue is understood differently by different proponents of dialogue and the public throughout the world. While in Pakistan it has its specific context where the perceptions could be quite different compared to other nations. The perception could even differ to such that the understanding of the interfaith dialoguers and the public are not the same. In such case the outcome of the work for interfaith harmony could not yield the expected results. In the context of Pakistan, it is important to know the Pakistani Society, its socio-cultural and political background that could expose the understanding of interfaith dialogue in the country and its variances. Therefore, this chapter deals in clarifying the Pakistani society, explores the different concept of interfaith dialogue. Here, the importance of the topic of research is expounded and a justification for a study of 25 years of interfaith dialogue is presented.

#### **Part One**

##### **Understanding Dialogue**

Dialogue, since human existence, is understood to have been an integral feature of human being as a communicating tool. There are different medium and types of communication. People speak, use electronic medium such as phone, fax, radio, video, broadcast and internet, as well as publications; music and dance are also means of

communication; even bees dance to communicate with other bees.<sup>1</sup> To meet particular communication agendas successfully specific channels are chosen supporting successful exchange of information.<sup>2</sup> Depending on the content of the message either of any channels could be used such as brochures, letters, e-mail messages, video e-mail messages, telephone conversation, video conferencing, face-to-face meetings and others. For successful communication, the sender needs to select the communication channel appropriate for the context. However, there are certain medium which are not appropriate for all people, although it could be easy to use, for example, fax is relatively easy to send, and some people may not have easy access to receiving it.<sup>3</sup> Therefore, human beings use both their linguistic and dialectical virtues for the purpose of communication, which make them superior to any other form of life, and hence, a social being. Dialoguers or students of dialogue know that the general public and other stakeholders of dialogue are not all having the same background. Dialogue should be promoted and held using all possible and appropriate channels. These communications channels exist in different forms such as the sign language (deaf-and-dumb language) known as nonverbal communication, and language consisting of ordinary words i.e. verbal communication where speaking and hearing is common and written communication where writing and reading are involved. There are as well formal communications which are “dressed up” to

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<sup>1</sup>See: Dornhaus, Chitka, Why do honey Bees Dance, 15 July 2003, 28 Oct.2003, 22 Nov. 2003, Springer-Verlage 2003, p. 1, Visited 7 July 8, 2014, <<http://link.springer.com/article/10.1007%2Fs00265-003-0726-9#page-2>>

<sup>2</sup>See: *Communication tool*, visited: 05.09.11  
<<http://ask.reference.com/web?q=communication%20tool&l=dir&qsrc=2891&o=10616>>,

<sup>3</sup> See: *Communication Channels | Research & Encyclopedia Articles*,  
<<http://www.bookrags.com/research/communication-channels-ebf-01/>>, visited: 12.05.12

fit customary rules and ceremonies. And informal communications which are casual talks among people.<sup>4</sup>Communication is conversation, exchange of ideas and opinions, discussions, and literary works. This is actualised by the act of speaking, hearing and writing; a process of coming together, that is, people share information which lead individuals or groups into action and interaction, which ultimately develop into different relationships and thus bring people together. But this togetherness is possible on things which both the speaker and the hearer agree upon, that unite people and thus support their existence. If communication is lacking or unapparent, effective communication has not taken place and the goal of communication has not been successfully attained. This possibly accounts for many wars and conflicts among human beings.

Communication helps man to remember and record things that become history and on its basis human beings organise their future. How man shapes his future depends significantly upon his communicative skills. Dialogue being communication is necessary at every level and form. And how dialogue is pursued colors our perceptions, relationships and policies at international, national, and public levels. My conclusion is that a true understanding of dialogue may provide such a language that could become a central concept for understanding human existence, and hence, facilitate the social organization of the people.

Therefore, it is necessary to consider some basic questions before interfaith dialogue could be understood in its true perspective: What is interfaith dialogue and how

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<sup>4</sup>See: *Types of Communication & How We Use Them*,  
<<http://www.typestofcommunication.org/>>, visited: 05.09.11

it is understood? How different groups of people consider each other and the relationships among them? How interfaith dialogue is conducted and whether the desired dialogical process that unites a nation is ongoing or not? If not, what are the hindrances and why it is not sought out? Before answering these questions in the context of Pakistan, a brief preview of the Pakistani socio-cultural and political background follows. The questions raised above will be answered partly in part 1 and part 2 of this chapter and then fully discussed in the rest of the coming chapters.

### **Socio-Cultural and Political Background of Pakistan**

Pakistan is a Muslim majority country which constitutes approximately 95 to 97 percent of its population; the rest comprise of Christians, Hindus, Buddhist, Sikhs and others such as Parsis representing a tiny minority. Minorities are considered as those who are lesser in number and as well differ in role, religion, and language as defined by (Oxford Advance Learner's Dictionary. 1992: 570). However, together they represent the plurality of the society, where myriad of cultures and traditions co-exist. Pakistan that has emerged from the debris of a religious conflict and the economic and political turmoil of the British colonial India, she is found unsuccessfully battling for a political, economic and religious harmony and peace. The detail of these events will not be discussed in this work as there are lot that have been written and that it does not concern our research on interfaith dialogue for this work.

Pakistanis despite being a nation proud of its existence, yet there are many physical factors like its neighbouring countries, the mountainous life, its strategic situation in the world where it possesses the gateways and seaways that attract the

attention and interest of others. Pakistan known for its diverse cultural heritage that gives a colourful outlook has lot to do with its life and the influence it brings. All these make Pakistan stand at the crossroads of the world. These factors condition and merge the behaviour of its people and the world around in their everyday life which make up the society and its success. Its minorities are so much talked about in the international, national spheres and the media. There are tendencies projected to tarnish the image of the Pakistanis against its Minorities that should not be ignored. It need to be given due consideration. They should be understood and taken into confidence for the making of the future of the country.

However, despite, the effective role played by the Minorities in all walks of life, and their rendering of meritorious services for the development and prosperity of Pakistan. Their renowned teachers, judges, civil servants, journalists, and businessmen all made for Pakistan a place of peace and harmony where coexistence and togetherness manifest itself.<sup>5</sup> Yet, for a few Social Scientists, minorities are given a negative connotation as it could be read below

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<sup>5</sup> See: Ali, Shahzad, *Portrayal of Minorities in Elite English Press of Pakistan: A Study of Daily Dawn and the Nation*, Pakistan Journal of Social Sciences, (Multan: September, 2010), Vol. 30, No. 1, pp. 141-145, visited: 08.05.12, <[http://www.bzu.edu.pk/PJSS/Vol30No12010/Final\\_PJSS-30-1-13.pdf](http://www.bzu.edu.pk/PJSS/Vol30No12010/Final_PJSS-30-1-13.pdf)>,

Contemporary sociologists generally describes that minorities are relatively lacking in power and hence, are subjected to certain exclusions, discrimination, and other differential treatment<sup>6</sup>

This can explain why there are so many exaggerated theories about minorities which goes against Pakistan. But, one should consider the fact that Pakistan is a newly born country with only 63 years of existence and the context in which it was created should not be ignored. Although minorities are representing a tiny part of the population, they are considered significant and important. Their role played in the society is considerable and they stand by the Muslim in every situation. Their recognition in the society can be reflected through the white part of the national flag which represents them. Their role in the movement of Pakistan is recognized and saluted. Minorities are happy with the Muslims (Ahmad, 2002: 2).<sup>7</sup> Unfortunately, Pakistan has experienced a very complex evolution. The country could not pave its way successfully. Since a couple of years or decades, with the rise of terrorism, people are confused, trapped in all kind of conflicts, wars and corruptions. People of this country complain of being duped and that the ideology for which Pakistan was built has been hijacked. The lovers of religion, the religious hard liners and those who want a religion free system of governance and way of

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<sup>6</sup> *International Encyclopedia of Social Science*.1968: 365, visited: 08.05.12, <[http://www.bzu.edu.pk/PJSS/Vol30No12010/Final\\_PJSS-30-1-13.pdf](http://www.bzu.edu.pk/PJSS/Vol30No12010/Final_PJSS-30-1-13.pdf)>

<sup>7</sup> See: Ali, Shahzad, Portrayal of Minorities in Elite English Press of Pakistan: A Study of Daily Dawn and the Nation, *Pakistan Journal of Social Sciences*, (Multan: September, 2010), Vol. 30, No. 1, p. 142, visited: 08.05.12 <[http://www.bzu.edu.pk/PJSS/Vol30No12010/Final\\_PJSS-30-1-13.pdf](http://www.bzu.edu.pk/PJSS/Vol30No12010/Final_PJSS-30-1-13.pdf)>,

life, the secularist are still at par, struggling for a distinct ideology for their country.<sup>8</sup> Ziad Haider, a Pakistani scholar, vows for a new and progressive Islamic narrative to save Pakistan as a state.<sup>9</sup> Regrettably, from Mohammad Ali Jinnah, Liaqat Ali Khan up to Benazir Bhutto and recently Salman Taseer, most of the political and religious leadership have met unnatural death. (I had in mind that Mr Mhd.Jinnah was not given the protocol he needed at his last hours, but if you say that this is not a solid idea then we respect your judgement).<sup>10</sup>

Furthermore, out of its short existence, more than 40 years have been under four different military rulers. The democratic process has been disrupted. The constitution was altered time and again. Today, Pakistan faces different forms of threat that its elected government is trying to combat. As the country finds itself on the defensive against so many factions, it must come up with such policies defending its ideology, defining the role and use of Islam and satisfying its minorities who complain to be left perplexed about their future. Above these issues, the people are further subjected to different cultures in the course of the new political debates, influence of open and free media and an aggressive missionary work and foreign influences as the United States becomes more

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<sup>8</sup>See: Kashif, N. Chaudhry, *How Pakistan Drifted Away from Itself. Voices of Pakistan*, Posted: 08.19.11, <<http://www.huffingtonpost.com/kashif-n-chaudhry>>, visited: 21.12.11

<sup>9</sup>See: Ziad, Haider, *The Ideological Struggle For Pakistan*, (USA: Hoover Institution Press Stanford University, Stanford California, 2010), p. 2, <<http://www.scribd.com/doc/48985872/The-Ideological-Struggle-for-Pakistan-by-Ziad-Haider>>, Visited: 21.12.11

<sup>10</sup> Hamayoon, Munee. *Was Jinnah Killed?* <<http://www.slideshare.net/muneehamayoon/was-jinnah-killed>>, Visited: 12.05.12

and more involved in Pakistan. However, these factors have influenced the society in every perspective of life, in both a positive and negative way.

Although cultural and religious conflicts were not common in Pakistan, yet there were allegations of abuse and ill-treatment of different sects and religious minorities and it is continuing even today. But, what is more concerning is the conflict arising for a political identity among the proponents of different systems and school of thoughts. This fact is highlighted by Benazir Bhutto when she said in her book how Islam is being debated today between moderates and fanatics, between democrats and dictators, between those who live in the past and those who adapt to the present and plan for a better future. She believed that in the resolution of this conflict lies the direction of international peace in the twenty-first century.<sup>11</sup>

To face these problems different approaches are sought and propelled by different groups and movements. The need for interfaith dialogue to address these issues as part of the solution has been significantly felt. However, interfaith dialogue activities are growing and people seem to be getting more and more involved whether consciously or unconsciously. Viewing the importance of dialogue in the international sphere and the confusions and suspicions that surrounds its validity and integrity, it is incumbent to define the concept of dialogue, its importance and how dialogue is being pursued.

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<sup>11</sup> See: Bhutto, Benazir, *Daughter of the East*, (London: Hamish Hamilton, 2008), p. 19-20

## The Concept of Dialogue

The concept of dialogue is not new and it is understood differently by different scholars and trainers of dialogue. It connotes different meanings within different languages, cultures, and religions. Besides this, there is indeed a kind of brutish and ignorant perception that gives a general prejudice against interfaith dialogue that needs to be understood and removed. Mostly, the west thinks that it is faith or religion itself that is the root cause of violence.<sup>12</sup> Moreover, they think dialogue is a new phenomenon that has started with the establishment of Human Rights and that it is a western originated devise<sup>13</sup> to bring peace and harmony in the world. As well, all the previous works on dialogue are treated just polemics or discussion. These could be inferred from the words of Alexander M. Sidorkin dissertation:

I will argue that this break with western thought is itself conditioned by modernity, more precisely by the aporia there of, rendering the notion of intercultural dialogue the truly paradoxical character of a western concept seeking to negate its origin.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>12</sup>See: Virginia Cawagas, Toh SweeHin and others, eds. *Many Faiths One Humanity, An Educational Resource for Integrating Interfaith Perspectives in Educating for a Culture of Peace*, (Queensland: Griffith University), <[http://www.erae.edu.au/\\_uploads/\\_ckpg/files/Many%20Faiths%20One%20Humanity.pdf](http://www.erae.edu.au/_uploads/_ckpg/files/Many%20Faiths%20One%20Humanity.pdf)>, visited: 26.05.12

<sup>13</sup>See: Griffioen, Henk, *Is the Notion of Intercultural Dialogue a Western Concept?*, (University of Leiden), <<http://www.dhdi.free.fr/recherches/theoriedroit/articles/griffioen.htm>>, visited:17.05.12

<sup>14</sup> Ibid

Amazingly the truth is that dialogue has started since human existence and it constitutes the very essence of human existence.<sup>15</sup> But, there are theories that create distrust, misunderstanding and confrontation among human beings through the use of religions, civilizations and cultures. Such theories are like that of Huntington's theory of Clash of Civilization, Fukuyama's End of History, and War on terror, Radical Islam and so on. It is awful to see how these theories are used to create fears and apprehensions in our societal set up. This will be further discussed in the coming chapters. But, no doubt dialogue is the need of the time to address any issue in the society. This need is more pressing when modern media is one dominated by the West, where a misrepresentation and disinformation about Islam is presented. It is as well noticed that the world leaders are more ignorant about Islam and Muslims. That is why there are so many phobias against Islam. However, it is encouraging to see counter theories coming up through dialogue like the dialogue of civilization propounded by King Abdullah of Saudi Arabia, the Iranian ex-President Ali Al Khamenei after whose speech at the UN council, its president felt compelled to name that year the year of Interfaith Dialogue, and Fethullah Gulen who has been described in the English-language media as "one of the world's most important Muslim figures<sup>16</sup>.

Therefore, whether calling dialogue conversation, debate, social interaction, polemics or dilemmas, it requires elaborate reasoning to prove and establish it. Otherwise, it could be fatal to the very objectives of dialogue among religions. This study

<sup>15</sup>See: Sidorkin M. Alexander, *An Ontological Understanding Of Dialogue In Education*, (USA: University of Washington, 1996), <<http://sidorkin.net/pdf/dis.pdf>>, visited: 17.05.12

<sup>16</sup>See: *How far they have travelled*, *The Economist*, 6 March 2008, Retrieved 2 May 2012, <[http://www.economist.com/node/10808408?story\\_id=10808408](http://www.economist.com/node/10808408?story_id=10808408)>, Visited: 26.05.12

considers, first of all, the analysis of different concepts and meaning known throughout history and what the researcher understands by dialogue to work out a comprehensive understanding that could help understand how dialogue is perceived in Pakistan.

Here, the wrong concepts are elaborated first and then what dialogue means to different people or community is highlighted, and follows what I understand by dialogue to finally establish a fair meaning of dialogue.

### **Historical Development of Dialogue**

Dialogue, since the existence of man, has been in simple words and body languages. But through the course of history, dialogue transformed into written (narrative, philosophical) and rhetoric as can be seen in the work of the Greek philosophers and Indian literatures. Plato, during the 5<sup>th</sup> BC, introduced the systematic use of dialogue as an independent literary form and transformed it further into pure argumentative conversation, keeping its element of character drawing. After it lost importance during the medieval era until the 2<sup>nd</sup> half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century (The West and more precisely Europe of the medieval era were dominated by the sophisticated ecclesiastical empire of the medieval Christian Church. Honestly agreed upon, it had an imperialist ambition seeking world supremacy. The Bishops were believed to be the Vicar of Christ on earth. Thus implementing the words of the Bible was their priority:

Psalm 24:1 < The earth is the LORD's and all its fullness ><sup>17</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> The New King James Version, Psalm 24:1,

The intention here was that Christianity should be the World's dominant religion. These were the centuries during which the doctrine of the Church and the sacrament were fully worked out. As such there were no needs for interfaith dialogue.<sup>18</sup> It was their rules which were prevailing in the conquered lands. Missionary activities were at its utmost. Their rules of laws were imposed unjustly and the ruled were forced to give up their cultures, consequently all these were creating havoc within the societies. Africa is an example, as is the Middle East and the Subcontinent, of what represented the colonial rule.<sup>19</sup> Quarrel and conflict were also becoming horrible between the Church and the Emperors within Europe which lasted for centuries. Fortunately, those days were also marked by a true atmosphere of learning and dialogue among faith in the Muslim world where Europeans travelled to Muslim countries for scientific knowledge and developments.<sup>20</sup> This helped the Christians learn more about Muslims and Islam. Then started changes in Europe, but, unfortunately a tendency toward a secular Western world emerged as can be confirmed from history. And gradually the Church evolved to adapt to the emerging multicultural society of the late eighteenth century. Then followed an ecumenical and interreligious dialogue between Christians and Muslims and ultimately with other faith as well, which took its shape of modern interfaith or interreligious

<sup>18</sup> See: Evans, Gillian Rosemary, *The Church in the Early Middle Ages*, (I. B. Tauris & Co. Ltd , London, 2007), p. xix,

[http://books.google.com.pk/books?id=5EatUp\\_sOskC&printsec=frontcover&source=gbse\\_summary\\_r&cad=0#v=onepage&q&f=false](http://books.google.com.pk/books?id=5EatUp_sOskC&printsec=frontcover&source=gbse_summary_r&cad=0#v=onepage&q&f=false), visited: 26.05.12

<sup>19</sup> See: *Studying Africa through the Social Studies, Module 7B: African History, the Era of Global Encroachment*, Student's Edition, Social Practice and Legacy, <http://exploringafrica.matrix.msu.edu/students/curriculum/m7b/activity3.php>, visited: 28.08.2013

<sup>20</sup> See: ABNA.CO (Ahlulbyte News Agency), *Shia cleric calls for interfaith dialogue*, Date: 2011/12/28, p. 129, <http://abna.ir/data.asp?lang=3&id=286920>, visited: 26.05.12

dialogue. Dialogue as well emerged as philosophical and didactic device to counter the negative effects of industrialization that gave precedence to the modern world, and the anarchy created by the two World Wars. The post-modern world has further experienced changes in dialogue. At present dialogue for the modernist is merely a social devise that seeks human togetherness and a better society. On the other hand, the true spirit of dialogue is claimed to be perturbed by the so called polemics and missionary work of the major religious movements. There are others whose view for dialogue to be fruitful is not simply to hear what another side has to say but to feel the sameness and commonality among the participant of dialogue.<sup>21</sup>

#### **Different Connotations of Dialogue:**

- Tolerance and Religious Pluralism
- To seek human togetherness, commonness and a better society
- Evangelization and missionary
- A process of indigenization
- A means to address the barriers to communication
- Dialogue as polemics
- Tolerance and Religious Pluralism

In a world threatened by so many wars and conflicts, where there are so many religions and people who change from one religion to the other or from one sect to the

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<sup>21</sup> See: Springsted, O. Eric. *Conditions of Dialogue: John Hick and Simone Weil*, (The University of Chicago Press, Vol. 72, No. 1, Jan., 1992), pp. 19-36, <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/1204100>>, visited: 10.12.09,

other, it is imperative to work out such social understanding and behavior that could prevent society from its dire consequences. Because, normally conversions are not well viewed in the society, even proponents of dialogue usually pronounced against such acts. It is mostly considered a bad behavior and an act of provocation from the one who is involved in this change which more often results in family break up, fights and killings. It is found difficult to workout peace and a conflict free society in such circumstances. However, there are people of good faith trying their best to bring understanding to meet the goal of bringing people together through many ways. This could further be encouraged through interfaith dialogue which is an important device towards the need to understand each other and encourage people towards spiritual humility and help find common ground and accept universal respect for human rights and freedom of conscience.

Moreover, interfaith dialogue involves persons of different religious faiths to come into communication and find grounds for understanding and accepting that there is more than one religion in this world, which have been called religious pluralism, where all need to co-exist together. This could help eliminate or reduce false stereotypes, religious-phobias, prejudices and unjustified fears. Many religions working together can fight against social injustice, war and poverty. It is very important to be respectful of other religions and cultures; else conflict and wars can result in destroying the harmony of the society.

Religious pluralism and tolerance should be inculcated in people so that understanding, respect and humility enclose them in a harmonious and prosperous

society. In this way people could be conscious of religious sensibilities and societal values. It could help people to realize that religions have played a very important role in human life. And it is religion that has taught man to live under the rule of law and helped strengthen moral behavior among people. It is worth mentioning here that it is ignorance of religious values and increase in intolerance that resulted in war like that of the Holy Crusades. Unfortunately, new form of crusade is being pursued against Muslim, which could harm our plural environment.

Therefore, acceptance of others, respect and tolerance can create love for one another and bring to the world, places free of conflict and full of happiness.

### **Religious Pluralism and Tolerance**

Religious Pluralism is commonly contrasted to exclusivism, where only one religion is considered true and all others as false, and inclusivism, where only one consists of absolute truth and all others contain some measure of it. According to the author Yong Huang, Interfaith dialogue is a convenient name for the religious mission of converting all to the only true and genuine pluralistic belief. Interfaith dialogue is thus congenial only to a pluralistic view of different religions as on a par with each other. He presents two different models of religious pluralism with very different implications for interfaith dialogue. The first model is Universalism and the second is Particularism. In the former, different religions are seen as different parochial expressions of some universal essence. Interfaith dialogue is thus important in enabling all religions to better express this common essence. While, for the latter, different religions are regarded different in their fundamentals. Interfaith dialogue is then necessary for different religions

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to clearly realize these fundamental differences so that they can tolerate each other. The first view is borrowed from John Hick and the second from S. Mark Heim. The author utilizes these two views in an attempt to develop the alternative model of religious pluralism with alternative implications for interfaith dialogue.<sup>22</sup>

#### **Dialogue to Seek Human Togetherness, Commonness and a Better Society**

The modern understanding of dialogue, especially for the western world, has seen dialogue evolved from its ancient and pre-medieval values. Dialogue in the medieval world served the purpose of seeking Christian theological agendas. While in the modern and the post-modern world dialogue is seen very important to confront the rapidly changing society into a highly plural society. It helps people and society to better know and understand each other that facilitates interaction. On this path whatever creates troubles or barriers to the communication process is regarded as detrimental to dialogue and is either discarded or sometimes considered as polemics that could not be tolerated. As such the participants of dialogue are called to seek or feel the sameness and commonality among them and ultimately transmit the same to their people respectively. Such objective is sought by mainly all the representatives of interfaith dialogue but with little variance.

For the Muslims, formal dialogue existed since the advent of the Prophet of Islam and is still an on-going process of building up societies and means to promote humanity and peace.

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<sup>22</sup> See, Huang, Yong, *Religious Pluralism and Interfaith Dialogue: Beyond Universalism and Particularism*, International Journal of philosophy of Religion, Netherland, Springer, Vol.37, No.3, 1995, pp.127-144

The basis for this understanding, commonness and peace seeking exist in seeking the Unity of God, love of the One God, and love of the neighbour. This is sustained by both Islam and Christianity. The Holy Qur'an says:

Say: He is Allah, the One! Allah, the Self-Sufficient Besought of all! (Al-Ikhlas, 112:1-2).<sup>23</sup>

But keep in remembrance the Name of thy Lord and devote thyself to Him wholeheartedly (Al-Muzzammil, 73:8).<sup>24</sup>

And the Prophet Muhammad said: "None of you truly believes until he wishes for his brother what he wishes for himself."<sup>25</sup>

In the New Testament, Jesus Christ said: 'Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with your entire mind and with all your strength. The second is this: 'Love your neighbor as yourself. There is no commandment greater than these. (Mark 12: 29-31)<sup>26</sup>

For the Hindus, there is no need to seek togetherness, commonality or peace. Their religion is based totally on caste system mainly divided into the Brahmins, the Kashtriyas, the Vaisyas and the Shudras (Untouchables or Dravadians). This system is based on social stratification and social restriction where each group has to respect the other and any attempt to mix up with the other either through marriage or their societal

<sup>23</sup> *The Holy Quran, English Translation of the meanings and commentary*, Revised and Edited by The Presidency of Islamic Researches, IFTA, Call and Guidance, p.2028

<sup>24</sup> Ibid, p.1840

<sup>25</sup> See, *Imam Nawawi's Forty Hadith*, n13.

<sup>26</sup> New International Version

organization is punishable. Therefore, it is futile to talk of dialogue which goes against their beliefs and faith. On the contrary they believe that such social construction in itself realizes peace and harmony in their society.

The Buddhists are essentially missionary; their main objectives are to call people towards Buddhism through peaceful ways that would be discussed later. As for the Jews, they do not believe in any form of dialogue among religion. However, there are changes that are coming gradually. This belief would be developed in the coming paragraphs.

### **Dialogue as an Evangelization and Missionary Devise**

Evangelization and missionary works are better propelled by the world major religions. Evangelism is usually referred to the missionary work of the Christians as it can be read from the quotation below;

Evangelism is the sharing of evangel - the "good news." Historically, it has referred primarily to the preaching of the Gospel of Jesus Christ by his followers, Christians.<sup>27</sup>

There are mixed reaction to such approach in their respective societies. Different denominations have different ways to propel dialogue. While the Christian apologetics considers dialogue to be invalid,<sup>28</sup> the Christian missionary church finds dialogue as an important tool for the evangelization process. It is a means to expand the mission of

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<sup>27</sup>See: *Evangelism, Sharing the Gospel of Jesus Christ*, An Apologetics Index research resource, <<http://www.apologeticsindex.org/e05.html>>, visited: 06.01.12

<sup>28</sup> See: *Interfaith Activities and Inter-religious Dialogue - religious cults and sects*, <<http://www.apologeticsindex.org/i06.html>>, visited: 11.12.10

Christ and lead the people to eternal salvation by converting them to Christianity.<sup>29</sup> This is the very pre-requisite of their authentic relationship between man and man, and between man and God which symbolizes their salvation.<sup>30</sup> The Christians liberals and others, however, consider dialogue as a social devise rather than a tool for religious propaganda.

The Jews advocate closer ties between the Jewish and Christian communities considering dialogue desirable and even essential on non-theological issues such as war and peace, poverty, freedom, morality and civil rights, and to work together against the perceived threat of secularism. On the other hand the orthodox Jews consider interfaith dialogue in any form as undesirable.<sup>31</sup>

There are few moderates for whom dialogue is aimed at drawing together Muslims, Christians and Jews, the three Abrahamic Religions dominant in the West. This idea is elaborated by the author Jane Broida Drake in her book *Of Promise and Previews*, which does well in its efforts to draw together Muslim, Christian, and Hebrew scriptures while pointing out the historical basis for the actual divisions among them. The aim is to find out their historical and religious commonalities, rather than seeking missionary or

<sup>29</sup> See: Borge, Schantz, *Islam in Europe, [Threat of Challenge to Christianity]*, (art) *Missiology: An International Review*, (U.S.A: American Society of Missiology, Vol.21, No. 4, October 1993) p. 451

<sup>30</sup> See: Siddiqui, Ataullah, *Christian-Muslim Dialogue in 20<sup>th</sup> century*, (London: Macmillan Press LTD, 1997), pp. 39-40

<sup>31</sup> See: *Christian- Jewish Reconciliation*, The Center for Catholic Jewish Studies, Jewish responses, <[http://www.fact-index.com/c/ch/christian\\_jewish\\_reconciliation.html](http://www.fact-index.com/c/ch/christian_jewish_reconciliation.html)>, visited: 25.01.11

evangelization agendas and in this way preventing the world threatened by hatred and enmity.<sup>32</sup>

The Buddhists consider three types of dialogue; dialogue in the service of world peace, dialogue in the service of the scholarly search for truth, and dialogue aimed at mutual understanding. All these enclose what is called their missionary activities and dialogue. Each member is considered a missionary. But, there are no officially designated missionaries in the sense it is associated with the spread of Christianity to non-Christian countries. It is simply a result of their bodhisattva that is each member struggles to become a shining example of the religion's good results in his or her compassionate behavior at home and in the community.<sup>33</sup>

Donald Swearer, in response to the Buddhist view on dialogue and mission, comments that mission have three modes which are: mission as dialogue, mission as synthesis, and mission as service, respectively represented by, Won Buddhism, Theravada Buddhism and the Soka Gakkai International.<sup>34</sup> All these represent the relationship between mission and dialogue in Buddhism. Therefore, Buddhism has been a missionary religion and missionary activity is considered a natural part of every member's practice.

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<sup>32</sup> See: Drake, Jane Broida, *Of Promise and Previews, Urgent Old Messages for a New Millennium*, <<http://www.ofpromisesandpreviews.com/downloads/Chapter36.pdf> -On Repentance>, visited: 10.01.11

<sup>33</sup> See: Straus, Virginia, *Mission and Dialogue in the SokaGakkai International, Buddhist-Christian Studies*, (University of Hawai'i Press, Vol. 17, 1997), pp. 106-113, <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/1390404>>, visited: 21.12.10

<sup>34</sup> See: Swearer, Donald, *Buddhist Views: A Response, Buddhist-Christian Studies*, (University of Hawai'i Press, Vol. 17, 1997), pp. 114-117, <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/13904045>>, visited: 21.12.10

As for the Hindus, they believe that their religion can enclose all other faith within the broad canopy of Hinduism. They claim that dialogue, coherence in their society, tolerance and the Hindu social system are all based on the principle of dharma which effectively deals with the questions of diversity and plurality. They have a coherent view of truth that regards others' errors and opposing views as not totally false rather, all have certain truth. The Brahmins wholly understand those truths and are not compelled on them to spread them or to correct any kind of false ideologies. Consequently, such coherence provides a suitable atmosphere of tolerance and cooperation. As such, there is no need to carry any missionary work. Hence, there is no need for inter religious dialogue.<sup>35</sup>

### **Dialogue as a Process for Indigenization**

According to the researcher K. R. Sundararajan Professor of Theology, St. Bonaventure University, New York, while dealing with the Hindu Models of Interfaith Dialogue has categorized dialogue into two models: the 'closed-border model' and the 'border-crossing model'. The former is that where one should stick to one's own religion and seek neither to convert nor be converted by others. The 'border-crossing model', is the process of indigenization by which the Brahmanical tradition absorbed into its fold other conflicting traditions; thus, Buddha which was once seen as a nastika (heretic) was

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<sup>35</sup> See: Sundararajan, K. R. *The Hindu Models of Interfaith Dialogue- Hindu Epistemology*, pp. 2-3, <<http://www.scribd.com/doc/43920706/The-Hindu-Models-of-Interfaith-Dialogue>>, visited: 02.02.11

ultimately considered an incarnation of Vishnu. In more recent time, modern Hinduism has Hinduized Jesus in an attempt to better understand him.<sup>36</sup>

Wayne Teasdale, a Christian sannyasi (someone who follows both the Christian and Hindu contemplative paths) pointed out that:

They are not committed to dialogue. Some are fascinated with it, but they always see it in the Hindu context that Hinduism embraces everything. Hinduism can hijack Christianity and obliterate differences.<sup>37</sup>

Mr Vijay Venugopal while delivering his speech in an interfaith dialogue with Islam, pointed out that each person is an individual spirit soul labeled respectively as Hindu, Muslim, Indian and Pakistani etc. He further stated that everyone has to come out of these labels and identify themselves with the individual spirit soul a servant of God.<sup>38</sup> Such approach satisfies the indigenization process in line with the Brahmanical tradition which serves their basic purpose of dialogue. Even eminent dignitaries like Vivekananda and Ramakrishna traditionally regarded as tolerant claim that the real teachings of all scriptures are Vedanta.<sup>39</sup> And the Hindu Renaissance figures see that their views are universal and thus enunciated in all other scriptures as well, saying as quoted below:

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<sup>36</sup> See: Ibid- pp. 6-8,

<sup>37</sup> Teasdale Wayne. *The Heart of the Christian-Hindu Dialogue*,  
<http://www.innerexplorations.com/catew/the.htm>, visited: 28.01.11

<sup>38</sup> See: *Salaam Center. An Interfaith Dialogue with Islam*,  
<http://absolutetruth.in/2010/05/an-interfaith-dialogue-with-islam/>, visited: 22.12.10

<sup>39</sup> See: Coward, Harold ed., *Hindu-Christian Dialogue*, (New York: Orbis Books, 1989), p. 41

...the measure for truth everywhere becomes the Vedas, or the Upanishads, or Vedanta.<sup>40</sup>

Such statement clearly indicates that anything or any concept can easily be equated to the teachings of the Hindus.

A survey of the book of Dr. Abdul Hamid Qadri could be of good help to understand this indigenization process in history. In a comparative attempt, he showed how from ancient Mithra, Adonis, Attis, Bacchus, Osiris, Krishna, Buddha all are sharing some kind of faith in common. He even proves how Christian leaders attempted to use others faith for their benefit to conquer the world.<sup>41</sup>

#### **A mean to address the barriers to communication**

Dialogue is used as a communicating tool that helps individual and society to learn more about each other. Although it raises trouble, yet, it efficiently addresses the barriers in the communication process. Dialogue helps listening, understanding and facilitates interaction among people with different viewpoint. In this context dialogue does not imply defending one's own opinion or coming up with counterpoints. Dialogue is differentiated from discussion that implies convincing others of your view and thus become convinced that others position is not acceptable and that it is invalid. To discuss is to shake apart what others say.<sup>42</sup> Such views are regarded harmful to dialogue as it

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<sup>40</sup> Ibid

<sup>41</sup> Dr. Qadri Abdul Hamid, Dimensions of Christianity, Da'wah Academy, International Islamic University-Pakistan, 1989.

<sup>42</sup> See: *Tips for Effective Dialogue: Dialogue vs. Discussion*, <<http://hendersongroup.com/articles/tips-for-effective-dialogue-dialogue-vs-discussion.asp>>, visited: 03.01.12

does not meet the purpose of dialogue, whose objective is to contribute to bridge or strengthen the communication gap among various stakeholders such as the interfaith organization, the local community organizations, state officials, NGOs, donors, media, and researchers to contribute to their success.

The Christian in the West find in dialogue a mean to address their differences among different sects and other religions, to work out solutions that synthesizes relationship among Christians Catholics, Protestant, Orthodox and others. This is considered to be represented in the Second Vatican Council as the Decree on Ecumenism (*Unitatis Redintegratio*) voted on 1964, during the third session of the council's fathers. While the relation of the Church to non-Christian religions was represented as the *Nostra Aetate* voted by the Church council on 1970, in an attempt to open up, rethink their attitudes towards other religions, and consider human beings as one community.<sup>43</sup>

Interfaith dialogue, for the Non-Orthodox Jews, the Conservatives Jews, Reform Jews and a smaller number of Modern Orthodox rabbis, implies to engage in interfaith theological dialogue. These Jews also participate in any kind of interfaith dialogue to foster religious conversation and dialogue in the spirit of religious pluralism. This is a mean to facilitate communication among people of different faith. These groups are

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<sup>43</sup> See: Cassidy, Edward Idris, *Ecumenism and interreligious dialogue: Unitatisredintegratio, Nostra aetate*, (New Jersey: Paulist Press, 2005), pp. 4-8

represented under the National Council of Synagogues that deals with interfaith matters and works with different denominations and religions.<sup>44</sup>

For the Muslims, dialogue goes back to the beginning of Islam, the Qur'an itself invites Christians and Jews to dialogue with fair words in order to adore the one God (Qur'an 3:64) and invites Muslims to discuss with them in a courteous manner. The Qur'an further asks Muslims not to abuse idols, nor the idol-worshipers. The idea of such dialogue can be drawn from the act of the Prophet (PBUH) himself when he contracted a treaty with the Jews of Medina for the purpose of seeking protection, peace and justice. Islam has further permitted marriage, eating foods and dealing with the people of the Book. Dialogue in its formal aspect was known before the Second Vatican Council of the Church as highlighted by Salih Yucel in reference to Said Nursi's proposal that called for dialogue and cooperation between Christians and Muslims 54 years before the *Nostra Aetate*.<sup>45</sup> Muslims were very conscious about their relationships with the rest of the world, thus communication was very important. Even in this modern world, interfaith dialogue for the Muslims is of utmost importance to face the challenging and threatening anti-religious forms of secularism and liberalism brought in by the Westernizes, the secular fundamentalism.<sup>46</sup>

<sup>44</sup> See: *Christian- Jewish Reconciliation*, The Center for Catholic Jewish Studies, Jewish responses, <[http://www.fact-index.com/c/ch/christian\\_jewish\\_reconciliation.html](http://www.fact-index.com/c/ch/christian_jewish_reconciliation.html)>, visited: 25.01.11

<sup>45</sup> See: Yucel, Salih, *Institutionalizing of Muslim-Christian Dialogue: Nostra Aetate and Fethullah Gülen's Vision*, p2, <[http://www.acu.edu.au/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0016/223090/Institutionalizing\\_of\\_Muslim-Christian\\_Dialogue\\_Nostra\\_Aetate\\_and\\_Fethullah\\_Gulens\\_Vision.pdf](http://www.acu.edu.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0016/223090/Institutionalizing_of_Muslim-Christian_Dialogue_Nostra_Aetate_and_Fethullah_Gulens_Vision.pdf)>, visited: 25.01.11

<sup>46</sup> See: Akyol, Mustafa, *The threat is secular fundamentalism*, *Turkey*, the New York Times, May 4, 2007, Opinion, <<http://www.nytimes.com/2007/05/04/opinion/04iht-edakyol.1.5565938.html>>, visited: 06.01.12

## Dialogue and Polemics

Polemic in interfaith dialogue is considered to be a person's or groups' attitude engaged in controversial argument, especially over a doctrine, belief, etc. In such dialogue one usually attacks the opinion or doctrine of their counterparts. Such attitudes can be found in people of every group. Many proponents of dialogue believe that interfaith dialogue is a must today, and it can only be established in forgetting the past, ignoring polemical arguments, and seeking common grounds on which to emphasize so that better relationship can be established among religions. However, although outnumbered by large majority, there are people engaged in dialogue still believed that dialogue cannot be possible unless past grievances and the feeling of superiority by the westerners are properly addressed?

Different issues are discussed under polemics such as the use of the name of God or Allah is debated; the blasphemed attitude of Christians against the Prophet of Islam, the issue of Crusades, Colonization and other matters of controversial nature. There are debates by different religions over theological issues like Trinity, Jesus son of God etc are also considered as polemics. A better example can be given from Hindu- Christian dialogue where we can read:

...The lengthy polemic of Dayananda against notions of forgiveness and original sin.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> Coward, Harold ed. *Hindu-Christian dialogue: perspectives and encounters*, (New York: Orbis Books, 1989), pp.41-42,

Roy ridicules Trinitarian formulation and clearly implies that the dogma of the divinity of Jesus was a huge mistake by the apostles and the early church fathers.<sup>48</sup>

On the other hand, there are Christians who are apprehensive of carrying dialogue with Muslims in view of the threat of Islamization, application of Shari'at and the concept of Dhimmis. They want to argue all these issues under dialogue. Furthermore, Christians, Muslims and others cross analyze, defend and refute these issues which are again considered polemics.

However, these apprehensions from all sides should not go unnoticed and ignored; many people read such articles from the internet and other sources. Debates on such issues are highly appreciated by major sections of the population. Undermining such attitudes will make dialogue remain under the four walls of conferences and forums. It will hardly reach the general public who could be a major subject of the interplay of dialogue.

Although many think that arguing about religious truth or validity is wrong and it does not fit for faire interfaith dialogue, yet I would suggest referring to the book of Ninian Smart, *World Religions: A Dialogue*. This book could be helpful how positive interfaith and comparative study through dialogue of faith can help people understand each other and come to a point of understanding and respecting others.<sup>49</sup>

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<<http://books.google.com.pk/books?id=6eHgNyNimoAC&printsec=frontcover#v=onepage&q&f=false>>, visited:03.01.12

<sup>48</sup> Ibid, p. 41

<sup>49</sup> See, Smart Ninian, *World Religion: A Dialogue*, (England, Penguin Books Ltd, 1960) p. 19

### Researchers' View

In my consideration, after having researched long on dialogue since I am engaged in this work, my journey in the study of Comparative Religion and my experience of childhood, I am of the opinion that to understand dialogue it is not wise to look up from some formal works and definitions and say this is dialogue or this is not. However, it can be imagined of two people sitting together, discussing about everyday life, faith, politics and other issues. It can further grow into larger group working together, playing, gathering for celebrating special events like marriage or festivals etc. Or helping each other to face hardship and transforming enmity into friendship and organizing for a better life. These noble causes join people in societies and communities engaging thousands and millions. Although most of the time it is informal dialogue, yet it can also extend to formal dialogue to meet national and international interests. But, unfortunately when dialogue fails it often results into break up of relationship or conflict.

This is not fiction, it was only a few generation ago that, although it seems a long time, we could see people sat and talk together after their long and tired day of work. Telling of old stories, recalling old traditions and relating day to day events, and building relationships, which were all meaningful in connecting people together. It could hardly be imagined of any ancient or near recent society that such an art of communication did not exist.

As concern our recent time, I can recall my childhood, citizen of a multi-racial country, Mauritius, where the Hindus, Christians, Muslims and others live in harmony. The Hindus on the festival of Divali would share and distribute homemade cakes among

their neighbors especially those of other faith. The Muslims would share sweets for the festival of Shabe-Barat. Even the Christian will share some of theirs for Christmas. The wedding ceremonies, as is the tradition in my country, are colored by people of different faith joining together to greet the newlywed couple. In our everyday life, at work, at the market, in the playground and among neighbors we could see cooperation and harmony. Encounters of every kind took place every day without any major or significant incident in so far as the world community of tourism has called it a place for destination, the Paradise Island. This was not any miracle; rather it was the real happening of the dialogical process that is needed to build a healthy society which is the core process for the self-governing of the individual and different larger institutions and communities.

But, unfortunately, the brutal and unbalanced transformations of the society from agricultural to industrial society and the perpetual modern western influence have been at the origin of harming these dialogical processes. Gradually people are not seen talking together except for some material purpose. At the same time people are so busy in the hunt for wealth and the fight or struggle for survival from the emerging socio-economic problems created mainly by the process of modernization and globalization that they hardly find the necessary time to communicate to each other. Worst enough; it was a time when communication between elders and the youth were the first hand education that was important for the transfer of tradition and societal mores that helped to harmonize family and society. Unfortunately our modern set up could not protect or preserve such grooming of the human race. People are suddenly more concern about their animalistic nature and are busy giving justification in defense and promotion of such beliefs through science and theories like the one Charles Darwin use to project, the Evolution theory. Or

even the game of power politics and survival of the fittest and at the same time discarding the importance of religions and traditional values. Therefore, it is clear that the dialogical process has been absent for long which have to be restored, otherwise the threat of anarchy and chaos cannot be prevented.

But, now that the world has transformed into a dangerous place to live and exist due to the turmoil and chaotic situation prevailing everywhere in the world, the haunting question is can a society survive without the core process that has always bound societies in peace and harmony.

Thus, one is lead to conclude that the need for dialogue whether informal as described above or formal dialogue through some organized forums to meet our advance and complex society is a necessity.

To conclude the above discussion, it can be inferred that there is no agreed standard for conducting dialogue. It is understood differently and it serves different purposes. Dialogue is mostly understood as discussions for the sake of finding points of agreement assuming that these are what various religions are all about. For some, dialogue is mere conversations that take place in everyday life. Others view dialogue as a process of conversation between the individuals or groups where views are exchanged, discussed and debated seeking significant and potentially transformative conclusions. Therefore, they have to speak, listen, tolerate and respect each other. One group recognizes others as equal partners, seeking good governance and better life.

At the end, considering the arguments discussed in this Part 1, for effective dialogue to take place it requires openness of mind, objectivity and readiness to give up some of our oneness.

Finally, for the purpose of this work, dialogue is regarded as a conversation between two or more person and groups with differing views, whether formal or informal, the purpose of which is to learn from each other so that there come positive changes in understanding and cooperation. Instead of coming up with assumptions of different kind that in truth look like a mockery towards religious values which in anyway does not satisfies the true purpose of dialogue, we should come up with objective evaluation of interfaith dialogue and try to understand why dialogue is at an stand still. Therefore, there should be exchange of ideas and arguments aiming at understanding, and educating at every level to bring changes whether one agrees with the position of others or not.

Considering the phenomenon of change that is inherent in all living things, human beings are also subjected to changes and adaptations due to different elements of change. Dialogue in the context of this work, is also considered responsible for the change of human mind. Here dialogue being a factor of change cannot be ignored for its aspect as an evangelical tool, missionary, da'wah and social interaction devises. Whether, dialogue or polemic both has its importance in working out a better understanding for each other.

Moreover, this work not only considers the person directly involved in formal dialogue but also finds that it is very important to consider the role of those who are the immediate or distant listeners. Without the listeners dialogue could remain mere talks or

gossips. Listeners either give opinions or react to what they listen and thus dialogue is realized, that is, effective communication has taken place. It could be a serious mistake to hinder people's attraction towards any religion of their choice. So that the flow of people of one religion to the other cannot be stopped nor discouraged, as it is one's right to freedom of choice, but it should be under the ethical law without vilifying others' religious beliefs.

## **Part Two**

### **Importance of Interfaith Dialogue**

Interfaith dialogue is dealt differently in different context as such in this part its importance will be elaborated in its different context.

### **Importance of Interfaith Dialogue in a Global Context**

The modern world faced with the fear of a clash of civilization as propelled by S.P. Huntington and the fear that Islam represents a threat to the West have created much misunderstanding among many Westerners.<sup>50</sup> Prejudice, stereotyping and Islamophobia have become very common. These social mores are disturbing the society in every way and are having repulsive effects throughout the world. The West is being regarded as immoral and selfish by many Muslims worldwide. In consequence, Muslims are regarded

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<sup>50</sup> See. On the 4th November 2010, the Cambridge Union held a debate entitled "*This House believes Islam is a Threat to the West*". Uploaded by mujtahid\_2006 on Mar 14, 2011, <<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nmehfwvMCcI>>, Visited: 06.04.12

as fanatics and terrorists for their reaction.<sup>51</sup> Now, it is the duty for every Muslim wherever they are to prove in deeds and actions what they really represent. And the same is expected from their counterparts, the Westerners, if peace and harmony is really sought in this globe. As for Pakistan, it should be more conscious and participating in any effort for peace and a conflict free world view its importance in the world context and the Middle-East. Interfaith dialogue should not be taken lightly or just for formality. Rather, it should be given a true and sincere consideration where none of the stakeholders of such dialogue could feel marginalized and pressurized to accept others view.

However, Muslims in the West are mostly immigrants and are outstandingly doing much for their integration and identity in their new society. At the same time, it is with great respect and hope that they look to their origin country and other Muslim countries that represent the origin of their faith. They hope that these countries could become their identity and model. Although, Muslim worldwide have lot to learn from their brothers of the West as concern educational values and cooperation with other faith neighbors, yet these Western Muslims have many expectation from the Muslim countries to sustain their exemplary way of living and behavior. In this way instead of fear for Islam, if given its proper image and teachings could represent a way of life that has much to contribute to the Western society.

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<sup>51</sup> See. Bortin, Meg, *Muslims and the West: Antipathy and mistrust* - Europe - International Herald Tribune, Published: Thursday, June 22, 2006, The New York Times, <<http://www.nytimes.com/2006/06/22/world/europe/22iht-pew2.2030216.html?pagewanted=all>>, visited: 06.04.12

Pakistan, being a Muslim majority country and the homeland for thousands of Pakistani Muslims spread over the world, is surely looked upon to be their pride nation. To meet the expectation of these Muslims and the rest of the world, dialogue in Pakistan with its minorities and even intra-faith dialogue are important means to promote global peace and harmony. On this path Pakistan is seen doing effort through participating in different interfaith activities throughout the world, but still much have to be done to reach its expected goal and purpose. Beside, Pakistan is as well compelled to be reciprocal to the international call for interfaith dialogue.

### **Pakistan and the UN Interfaith Dialogue**

Although, there were many high profile persons involved in interfaith dialogue since 1985 and beyond, like Shahbaz Bhatti, Minister for the Minorities, he was one of the founding members of the organization 'All Pakistan Minorities Alliance' (APMA) in 1985 and was considered a representative of the religious minorities in Pakistan.<sup>52</sup> Dr. Ahsan Akhtar Naz, Punjab University Lahore, delivered lecture on the topic of "The Role of Global Elite Media in Interfaith Dialogue" in the Iqbal International Institute for Research, Education, and Dialogue" on September 01, 2007.<sup>53</sup> Rev. James Channan was awarded the Pioneer of Christian-Muslim Dialogue in Pakistan for his intense service in promoting Christian-Muslim and interreligious dialogue in Pakistan since 1985.<sup>54</sup> Yet

<sup>52</sup> See, Newton John, *Leader's Profile, Pakistan: UK Christians remember Shahbaz Bhatti* with peace concert, Media News about Leader, 12 March 2012,

<<http://www.internationalchristianvoice.com/Shahbaz-Bhatti.php>>, visited: 27.04.12

<sup>53</sup> see, Dr. Ahsan Akhtar Naz,<<http://pu.edu.pk/images/cv/1313726285106.pdf>>, visited: 23.10.12

<sup>54</sup> See, Channan James, United religious initiative Pakistan, *Pioneer of Christian-Muslim Dialogue in Pakistan* Award given to Rev. James Channan, Last Updated ( Tuesday, 14 February 2006},

Pakistan is not seen very much active in organizing interfaith dialogue activities. Only talks, conferences and formal activities will not be enough on this issue to reach success. There should be serious will and understanding of what is the exact purpose for such dialogue to take and contribute to it whole heartedly. But, the absence of a proper theory for the promotion of interfaith dialogue leaves nations and hence Pakistan less motivated and subjected to formalities and face saving steps.

However, among those interfaith works which are commendable, Pakistan is found endorsing the United Nations efforts after it was started by Saudi Arabia's King Abdullah bin Abdul-Aziz Al Saud, to promote global peace and harmony. The Saudi initiative also gave precedence to the first Catholic-Muslim Forum sponsored by the Vatican and received by Pope Benedict XVI. It was organized by the Pontifical Council for Inter-religious Dialogue and 138 Muslim leaders were present.<sup>55</sup> This signifies further step ahead towards greater understanding between Muslims and Christians and with other regular encounters with various other groups. Pakistan's President Asif Ali Zardari was among the world leaders attending the UN General Assembly meeting on November 12 to 13 in Philippines in an effort to promote dialogue among diverse faith and culture.<sup>56</sup>

Acknowledging the recent increase in dialogue initiatives and meetings between Catholics, Muslims and other groups, it is imperative that Pakistan troubled by violent

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<sup>54</sup> <http://www.uripakistan.org/news-article-detail.asp?NewsID=33>, visited: 26.04.12

<sup>55</sup> See, Mohammad Jamil. *Interfaith dialogue*,

<http://www.nation.com.pk/pakistan-news-newspaper-daily-english-online/Opinions/Columns/19-Nov-2008/Interfaith-dialogue>, Published: November 19, 2008, visited: 26.04.12

<sup>56</sup> See, Ibid

terrorist act and the global war against terrorism, formally supports and promotes global peace and harmony among people of diverse faith and culture. But, more should be done at home before Pakistanis' voice could be effective in the global context. As such forums, researches and debates about society and its needs and identify the true anti-social and anti-human elements so that the outcome of any dialogue could be acceptable to the people.

### **Importance of Interfaith Dialogue in a Religious context**

Muslims, Christians, Jews, Buddhists, Hindus and many other religions adherents' together represents the whole Humanity. Promoting anti-religious values or disregarding religious importance in the society and its role in binding human being together is an attempt against rationality and logic. Such attempt as it has been experienced in the past in the name of secularism is more a conflicting rather than peace-building approach. It is clear today that without peace and justice among these religious communities, there can be no meaningful and sustainable peace in this world. The need for understanding each other is incumbent on every community for the future of humanity. As a reminder, it is important to know that no species can survive nature expect as a whole. The moment they are fragmented death and extinction is imminent. Therefore, human being, being part of the nature must unite to face the challenges of war, clash of civilisation and the dangerously changing climate in the wake of global warming.

Fortunately, the basis for this peace and understanding exists. It can be traced from the very foundational principles of all scriptures. The love of the One God and the necessity of the love of the neighbour are those principles found in all respective sacred

texts. Even, Shazad Ali's research, the Portrayal of Minorities in Elite English Press of Pakistan that was to investigate the coverage of minority groups in English press of Pakistan study found that except Ahmadis the coverage of other minority groups was almost positive.<sup>57</sup>

While, on the other hand, religious fundamentalism in its new Western terminology, termed as religious terrorism, has shaken the world with fear, terror and confusion. It is made to believe that religion or more precisely Islam is a religion of terror because of their strict adherence to their creed and their reaction against the foreign interference in their country and religious affairs. This can be read from what follows:

According to Macksood Aftab, managing editor of the Islamic Herald,

"The term Fundamentalist, in the Christian world, is synonymous with the 'Bible thumpers' and the televangelists." Recently, the term has been used by Westerners to describe Muslims who promote strict adherence to traditional Islamic tenets. Bahman Baktiari, a political science professor at the American University in Cairo, contends that there is no word for fundamentalism in Arabic. Baktiari states that Islamic fundamentalism is a purely Western construct, "used to describe the rise of Islamic forces in the Middle East."<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> See, Ali, Shazad, *Portrayal of Minorities in Elite English Press of Pakistan: A Study of Daily Dawn and the Nation*, Pakistan Journal of Social Sciences, Vol. 30, No. 1(September 2010), pp. 141-156 (Multan), <[http://www.bzu.edu.pk/PJSS/Vol30No12010/Final\\_PJSS-30-1-13.pdf](http://www.bzu.edu.pk/PJSS/Vol30No12010/Final_PJSS-30-1-13.pdf)>, visited: 08.05.12

<sup>58</sup> *Islamic Fundamentalism*, <http://www.enotes.com/islamic-fundamentalism-article>, visited: 24.10.12

The above quote clearly signifies that there is misrepresentation and misunderstanding between Christian and Muslims. Hence, no one seems ready to respect and tolerate the other. Moreover, most Westerners are ignorant of Muslim customs and ideologies, apart from what they hear from the media, thus stereotyping of Muslims and Islamophobia are growing.<sup>59</sup> The West representing Christianity is seen as the Christian aggressors by the affected Muslims worldwide. The tension between these two great nations which forms nearly half the population of the globe are creating apprehensions among the rest of the inhabitants of the world. It has become a highly vulnerable place to live. Therefore, in the first place it is very important for building peace between these two communities and subsequently extending it to other communities for the future of the world and humanity. Again dialogue among faith is necessary and also commendable in its due form.

Concerning dialogue between Muslims and Christians and the people of the scriptures, the Holy Quran mentions:

Say: "O People of the Book! come to common terms as between us and you: That we worship none but Allah. that we associate no partners with him; that we erect not, from among ourselves, Lords and patrons other than Allah." If then they turn back, say ye: "Bear witness that we (at least) are Muslims (bowing to Allah's Will)."<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> See, Ibid

<sup>60</sup> Yusuf Ali, Abdullah, The Meanings Of The Holy Qur'an (Aal 'Imran 3:64)

In the New Testament, Jesus Christ said:

'Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is One. / And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.' This is the first commandment. / And the second, like it, is this: 'You shall love your neighbour as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these." (Mark 12:29-31)<sup>61</sup>

The people of the scriptures and the neighbours as read in the above two quotations signifies the other. Beside the call for the unity of God and His devotion and love for the other, there is inspirational call for dialogue without which no such understanding and love can take place.

The same kind of teachings can be read from different scriptures but it won't be mentioned here. However, in the future elaboration of the subject according to the need of this work it could be highlighted.

### **Importance of Interfaith Dialogue in Pakistan**

In the wake of globalization, the world has become a global village. As such no action happening in one part of the world can go without notice and reaction in other places. Any action happening in the US can be known in Pakistan before the US citizen itself. Considering 9/11, the Danish cartoonist, the burning of the Quran as announced in New York, to the occupation of Iraq, Afghanistan and Kashmir and multiple other events

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<sup>61</sup> See: John R. Kohlenberger, ed. *The Evangelical Parallel New Testament: New King James Version*, Oxford University Press, 2003

all have sparked violent protestation and violence of every kind over the world and Pakistan is sadly found trapped in this line of fire.

Most of the atrocities and aggressions of the West targeted towards the Muslims minorities are directly felt by the Pakistani as their relatives are the victims, stereotyped or subjected to Islamophobia. The West occupations of the Arab lands are considered as a war against Muslims. The Christians who represent the religion of the West are held highly responsible. The same for Kashmir, its illegal occupation by the Indian authority is regarded as a Hindu aggression over the highly Muslim majority of the Kashmiri who identifies themselves to the Pakistani Muslims. Of the insurgent, the so called Pakistani Taliban are supposed to be supported by Afghani Taliban are creating much tensions among these nations.

In the Muslim majority Pakistan, native minorities live in constant fear and agony of being targeted by extremist elements. Such feelings create apprehensions and it's tearing the community apart. On the other hand, the Muslims express disgust and hatred towards the minorities who are considered partners of those Western and Indian aggressors.

The recent assassination of Salman Taseer, the Governor of Punjab, who pronounced in favor of revising the blasphemy law followed by the killing of the Minister for the Minorities Mr. Sehbaz Bhatti, has left everyone perplexed of what could be next and its consequences.

Sadly, too many people of either side guided through emotion and anxiety can react disproportionately that could tarnish the society. A handful of such elements can plunge the whole nation into conflict. Muslims and the minorities together have to condemn such action. They have to create understanding among themselves and develop sense of oneness as human beings. Therefore, education from early stage and interfaith dialogue at all level in its true sense and sincerity is the need of the day.

### **Interfaith Dialogue in Pakistan**

Talking of interfaith dialogue in Pakistan directly links one to his faith, more precisely to his religion. A little survey since the creation of Pakistan after its separation from India is felt important. Pakistan creation was justified for Muslims could practice their religion freely based on their ideology that could ultimately lead its people towards freedom of thinking, development of knowledge and socio-political and economic prosperity. From Sir Sayed Ahmad Khan to Mohammad Iqbal and Mohammad Ali Jinnah all tried their best through dialogue for a unified India but unfortunately dialogue between the two biggest faiths in India failed. However, the words of Jinnah could testify his love for Hindu-Muslim co-operation in India which is as follows:

Nothing will give me greater happiness than to bring about complete co-operation and friendship between Hindus and Muslims<sup>62</sup>

But, the double standard politics practiced by the Congress turn the well-wishing faith of these eminent people.<sup>63</sup> And ultimately, the Two Nation theory became a reality.

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<sup>62</sup> Bolitho, Hector. *Jinnah Creator of Pakistan*, (Karachi ,Oxford University Press), 2006,p 101

Muslims got separated from India. However, Pakistan, despite, being a Muslim majority land, it has an insignificant amount of minorities comprising of Christians, Hindus and few others. Muhammad Jinnah, the founding father of Pakistan, had this issue in his mind as his words (11th August 1947) shows:

“Pakistan will provide its minorities an ample field for the outlet of their genius and they should come forward and play their role as true citizens in making Pakistan one of the greatest nations”<sup>64</sup>

Hence, the minorities and the role of Muslims towards them preoccupy many in our present day Pakistan. Religious authorities, the Government, Human rights organizations and many other related organs are seen interested to deal with the issue of minorities, their rights and the attitude of the majority towards them. Many think that the majority in Pakistan has failed to provide the minorities their necessary rights as claimed by the Society for Human Development Pakistan, in their Missions’ objective:

“The Muslims totally neglected the religious minority and made them feel not only as second or third class citizens but as if the other religious minorities were aliens in their own country, the land where their forefathers and foremothers have lived for a thousand years and more.”<sup>65</sup>

However, while the Muslims reject such claims few minorities’ representatives continue to believe that the Islamic-oriented constitution of Pakistan and the sense of a religio-

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<sup>63</sup> See, Ibid, p 108

<sup>64</sup> *Society for Human Development Pakistan*, <<http://hdcpakistan.tripod.com/>>, visited: 11.12.10

<sup>65</sup> See, Ibid

national identity and the violence accompanied through certain dispute, that Muslims are not doing their duties towards them. This forced Christian's theologians to go through history and remind Pakistanis the reality of Christians in Pakistan as can be noted from the words of Amjad Ali:

Christians of Pakistan were neither people with whom agreement like Meesaq-e-Medina[5] was made, nor were they captured people whom Islamic forces had taken over, i.e. dhimmi. Rather, one day they were an equal part of British India alongside the Muslims, and on the day of independence, 14th of August 1947 relegated to dhimmi status<sup>66</sup>

Interfaith dialogue is sought to play an important role to overcome such feelings. However, interfaith movements are seen playing increasing role in the emerging phenomenon which is the pluralistic society of our modern global village. The modern world has brought in many challenges that no nation can afford to say that it is not concerned or affected by it. Among those are questions that affect Pakistan both directly and indirectly which are as follows: Does the freedom sought by Muslims who got separated from United India recognize the same for its minority or not? How is the relationship among the existing religious groups? What is the role of different religions in the war against terrorism that Pakistan has found itself engaged in?

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<sup>66</sup> Nawaz Dil, *Pakistani Christians and the Myth of Clash of Civilizations* August 6th, 2011, <<http://pakteahouse.net/2011/08/06/pakistani-christians-and-the-myth-of-clash-of-civilizations/>>, visited: 26.04.12

Pakistan is a country faced with different socio-political and economic problems. Terrorism, corruption at all level, underdevelopment, illiteracy, sectarian conflict and many more have led the nation terrified, confused and into extreme poverty. The nation is further splited into deep social fragmentation. From high class to downtrodden, no one is really sure of their future in this country that explains partly the high level of emigrants towards the developed countries. The country has even experienced several democratic and military rules, yet the nation is totally confused which way to turn for their solace. Many questions arise in the mind of the people but hardly any answer can be found nor any concern authority to refer to. Foreign interest is seen increasing that is further terrorizing the people. From Osama Bin Laden to Raymond Davis and different other agencies as the Black Water, pitifully the nation cannot identify who the true enemy is. While waiting for things to get clear, the nation is tearing apart at an unstoppable pace. An eventual collapse of the nation is feared ahead.

Concerns at different level show different perspective of the problem. There are those who see some kind of religious differences that are resulting into conflict which is hindering the proper evolution of the nation. There are others who see that there is a conflict between religious tendency and liberalist that is creating an atmosphere of imbalance in the society where progress is hardly achievable. While other groups see that corruption and lawlessness is driving the nation into anarchy. No theory seems to clarify these concerns. No one is taking a just view of the matter for the comfort of the society. Many observers can be seen in action, but for their interest. The present states of affairs need to be addressed from the grassroots level as the nation sensibility is under fire and is threatened from every side.

In conclusion, interfaith dialogue can play its role and helps to eliminate or reduce stereotypes, prejudices and fears through direct human communication and addressing the root causes of these social mores. But unfortunately the existing interfaith activities if properly analyzed could show how it is overwhelmed by faithlessness. Except little social work nothing concrete is noticed. Even, when there is an emergence to solve the most alarming problem of Pakistan, the War against Terror, that is, against the Taliban, the interfaith dialogue activists have nothing to say or are just silent. Such attitude should be tackled and interfaith dialogue should consider the Taliban for dialogue for peace as they represent an important section of the Pakistani population and that they are religiously motivated.

### **Part Three**

#### **Importance for a Study of the past 25 years on Interfaith Dialogue**

In the light of the present state of affair what was of central importance some 25 years ago includes much of our interest today that could be of value to clarify matters that are the very core issues of our vital interest in this 21<sup>st</sup> century. Although much change has been noticed since the 9/11 tragic event which has propelled dialogue in every corner of the globe, there are some basic evil elements that are being dragged throughout our history. A thorough study of the last part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century could help us obtain a glimpse of what interfaith dialogue was and what changes have occurred. Even interfaith dialogue during the 19th Century is to be looked at for a better insight.

In general, Muslims feel angry when the Western media presents distorted picture of Islam and Pakistan. Truth is again distorted when they see how the Western interfaith dialoguers oversimplify the complex issues of the Muslim world. Muslims feel that through Western oriented dialogue there is an attempt to corrupt their mind and religious ideology. There is a tendency towards re-secularizing their society the way they attempted to do through crusade, colonization and missionary work, but, failed. Their methods of comparing others' religious beliefs for the past few decades are considered a tool for their politics, religious missionary work, and economic interest. Since the seventies of the past century Muslims residing in the West are consistently harassed in every way. Muslims feel forced to engage in such interfaith dialogue where they are called upon to respond according to the Western understanding of religion which is no doubt contrast to Muslim understanding and concept of religion. A little survey of the past twenty five years could prove that in many such dialogues Muslim are made to answer polemical issues, they are further accounted for the Islamic fundamentalism while ignoring the existence of Christian or Jewish fundamentalism, rather than seeking to understanding Islam and vice versa. One should not forget that historians are not totally reliable as very often they are politician in disguise, they are often seen as cherry-picking, and choosing what the historian wishes to project.<sup>67</sup>

Therefore a short research on history could help to understand the problem at its grassroots level. It should also be noted that most of the present theorists apply

<sup>67</sup>See, Nauriya, Anil. *Reflecting on Sir Syed*. Sir Syed Memorial Lecture delivered on October 17, 2007 under the auspices of Sir Syed Foundation, New Delhi at Jamia Millia Islamia. November 13, 2007; Friday, January 25, 2008, < <http://sirsyedahmadkhan.blogspot.com/2008/01/reflecting-on-sir-syed.html>>, visited: 27.04.12

conventional methods to approach any social problem that keep the public in an illusion that the efficacy of their theories will soon bring the salvation needed. Such overconfidence has met with failure where many have lost confidence in interfaith dialogue itself. However, a thorough study for the past 25 years may help to identify the causes for the failures and then address them proportionately. But, although the West believes that dialogue is a new phenomenon and all the past work are polemics and dilemmas, yet we shall go further comparing the concept of dialogue of Sir Syed Ahmed Khan to put an insight of the truth in this perspective.

Sir Syed Ahmad Khan, can be traced out as a nation builder through building a bridge between the two dominant communities of India, the Hindus and the Muslims. Sir Syed's work and his intellectual power used to shape his communities towards a brighter 19<sup>th</sup> century could be considered a first step towards interfaith dialogue. Hence, it could be coined as the first man who curbed the way towards peace building and doing much for a harmonious society in the Sub-Continent. His educational values based on faith and societal values could be of great value that could be compared to the change that interfaith is believed to have gone during the 20<sup>th</sup> century and beyond. Evaluation of his work can give an insight whether interfaith during the present era is real or dogmatic.<sup>68</sup> Many Western scholars and students of dialogue believe that mostly the dialogue held in the past was nothing more than polemics and dilemmas, while that of the present one is real dialogue based on respect and tolerance. However, such claim can be evaluated and

<sup>68</sup> See-Ahmad Naseem, *Sir Syed Ahmad Khan: Architect of Modern India*, posted by Khan Shaheer, Foster City, CA, United States, Wednesday, January 23, 2008, <<http://sirsyedahmadkhan.blogspot.com/2008/01/sir-syed-ahmad-khan-architect-of-modern.html>>, visited: 26.04.12

checked through proper academic work. This can help bringing dialogue of faith to a success and protect interfaith dialogue from any distortion and misunderstanding. One should not forget that the Easterners and the Africans always think of the Western dialoguers looking at them with prejudice and arrogance.

Therefore a study of the past 25 years and reference to history of the sub-continent can be helpful in any evaluative work to make dialogue more acceptable and effective to the people.

### **The Misconception**

Pakistan ailing economy, the psycho-mental disorder created since the occupation of Afghanistan by the USSR, the increasing crimes and poverty were all made to believe that only through social sciences there can be solutions. Religions were treated as the evil or monster that could never be of any help to science and society. Religion was regarded as a hindrance to moral and intellectual development. The fear and confusion created by these problems and their indisputable failures have once again forced both sociologist and common man to seek solution from religion. So, how these issues could be addressed? Is there sincerity when talking of religion concerning these matters? How religion is viewed and considered by the social scientist that once rejected and condemned the same? How religious dialogue can be related to these problems for an eventual change in the society? Is dialogue the only solution or not? These are questions of concern that have to be addressed by every stakeholders of the society which can help analyze the past, correct the present and prepare a better future. As such a study of the past 25 years and beyond could be a matter of importance for this work.

## Barriers to Dialogue

The world today is divided between the West and the East, or the North and the South. This division is based mainly between the Haves and the Haves not. It is further divided between the Christian West and North and the Muslim, Asian and African and other indigenous religions. These differences are interpreted differently among different people. For few, the West is secular and the rest is religious. Secularism is seen as a greater threat to religion than any other forces. This phenomenon has begun since the French Revolution. It usually implies taking away religious tenants, replacing it by science and reason. This can be justified by the following lines:

"Secularization" is one of the most popular topics in today's religious and political discourse...it means turning something sacred into something profane: for example, turning a cathedral into a "temple of reason"...Secularization is the process by which functions and institutions of the Church are taken over by the State... Secularization describes the process by which the influence of religion in society decreases – as is evident in the advanced industrial and post-industrial West of our time.<sup>69</sup>

However, there is counter theories that is being formulated through research that secularism is a failed or failing theory and that the world is rapidly returning towards

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<sup>69</sup> Sorokowski, Andrew. *Christianization, de-christianization, re-christianization*, 20 January 2011, <[http://risu.org.ua/en/index/expert\\_thought/authors\\_columns/asorokowski\\_column/40282/](http://risu.org.ua/en/index/expert_thought/authors_columns/asorokowski_column/40282/)>, Visited: 26.10.12

ancient or new religions. This can be inferred from the same source as above that continues:

Recently, this thesis has been challenged. While students of politics, culture, and economic development point out that the experience of Western Europe should not be taken as a blueprint for the globe, sociologists of religion demonstrate that in much of the world, religion is on the upswing.<sup>70</sup>

The fact that the West lost ground in their traditional European and American homelands in containing the society from its mores, as compared to the religions or new charismatic cults in the Third World, there is a kind of reformation of the church. There is an attempt of re-Christianization of Europe from the damages of secularization that started after the Reformation period of Europe.<sup>71</sup> These attempts are again giving way to ethnic tensions and cultural clashes, racism and discrimination base on xenophobic tendencies and institutionalized inequalities against minorities and immigrants. These are factors of concerns that have international effect. Dialogue is seen difficult in such situations to pave its way due to the violent kind of competition among secularism in an attempt towards multiculturalism and integration, but their failure is leaving other nation perplex, as the world today is such that anything happening in one place has direct effect in the other part of the globe. However, the fear of “Clash of Civilization” and other conflicting theories are initiating a Global debate on dialogue among civilizations.

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<sup>70</sup> See, Ibid

<sup>71</sup> See, Ibid

Moreover, it is obvious that there is a tendency in the Western countries to engulf the whole world in their model of dialogue. The ongoing debates on dialogue seem to mislead people towards fictitious analysis. The words of the late Lady Benazir Bhutto confirms how although being right in her analysis she failed to describe the facts behind the causes.

But the serious battle for the hearts and soul of Islam today is taking place between moderates and fanatics, between democrats and dictators, between those who live in the past and those who adapt to the present and plan for a better future. In the resolution of this conflict may in fact lie the direction of international peace in the twenty-first century.<sup>72</sup>

To be sincere it is not enough to point out the fragmentations of the people. It is as well not wise to just term all odds to the past or the traditionalist. If sincere analysis is carried on it will be shocking to find that the liberals are much extremist than those who use their traditional method of life. This idea will be discussed further in the coming chapters. One should remember how people who fought for independence together based on one ideology are found today showing their grief towards each other? What gave rise to religious fanatics? Why the dictators overturn the democratically elected government? Although, it is condemnable and that they could not keep up with their agenda, yet the causes should be debated to reach a conclusive solution so that it won't repeat again. Otherwise we will find ourselves pumping out water from our cities while we are unaware that it's a tsunami and we are helpless. The same apply to dialogue, unless we

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<sup>72</sup> Bhutto, Benazir, *Daughter of the East*, (London: Hamish Hamilton, 2008), p. 19-20

are knowledgeable enough, dialogue will continue to drain millions of dollars and the result will be indifference of the people and that dialogue could be confined to the four walls of the conference rooms. Ethnic tensions and cultural clashes, inequalities and human rights abuse will continue to contribute towards the failure of nation building.

A sincere approach to interfaith dialogue as a means to address these oblivious practices and get away with the barriers could help identify a just mean to seek a proper integration and peace building process. The coming chapters will deal with the ongoing work for the past 25 years until now. It will be analyzed and evaluated to give a conclusive work on the perception of dialogue in this part of the world.

### **Pakistani identity**

The debate for a Pakistani identity is seen as another barrier to dialogue. Pakistan subjected to different states with hundreds of ethnics and immigrants during the independence pose a great challenge for the creation of a Pakistani identity. Already 65 years since its inception, yet the country is seen divided. There are tensions of all sorts from all corners. Demands for separate states based on ethnicity are growing. Baluchistan is seen struggling for independence. While addressing UN panel, Baloch express the intense desire for freedom from Pakistan's occupation.<sup>73</sup> Failure in law and order are immediately blamed on failure of state governance and this is further damaging the unity of the country. The Pakhtun population is complaining that the failure of the stopping of drone attacks is a double standard policy against them. This statement is as well reflected

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<sup>73</sup> See, *The Baloch struggle for freedom*, September 21, 2012, <http://balochistanandafghanwar.blogspot.com/>, visited : 26.10.12

by the columnist Joe Klein's of The Times. On Joe Klein's sociopathic defense of drone killings of children reflecting the Obama legacy and US culture, the former right-wing Congressman, Joe Scarborough voiced an eloquent and impassioned critique of President Obama's ongoing killing of innocent people in the Muslim world using drones,

"This is offensive to me, though. Because you do it with a joystick in California - and it seems so antiseptic - it seems so clean - and yet you have 4-year-old girls being blown to bits because we have a policy that now says: 'you know what? Instead of trying to go in and take the risk and get the terrorists out of hiding in a Karachi suburb, we're just going to blow up everyone around them.' "This is what bothers me. . . . We don't detain people any more: we kill them, and we kill everyone around them. . . ."<sup>74</sup>

Solution to these problems can hardly be addressed in the present context for the fear of being considered as terrorist against Western interest or betrayals of modern Pakistan ideology, and the fear of reprisal by alleged terrorist.

However, dialogue among the ethnic groups to create the sense of oneness and inclusiveness in consolidating the unity for which Pakistan was made, can be helpful to face the challenge to create a "common identity" mutually accepted by all the partners of the society. This can help one to identify himself in the community rather than being regarded as the other. Such a unity in diversity can never be achieved unless proper

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<sup>74</sup> Klein's, Joe. *Sociopathic Defense of Drone Killings of Children*, The Guardian <<http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2012/oct/23/klein-drones-morning-joe>>, Visited:01.11.12

examination and understanding of the masses, its economic needs and a balanced education are imparted.

### **A Muslim or Secular Identity crisis**

Debate for a Pakistani Muslim Identity or a Pakistani Secular Identity is seen as another hindrance towards dialogue. Many think that Pakistan should be a secular state because of its plurality of culture. Although, the fear in relation to the minorities and the cultural diversity were not an issue at the creation of Pakistan, yet, many think that it should be debated and re-defined. But, at the time of separation, everyone knew the basis on which Pakistan came into existence. Though Pakistan had experienced a very difficult succession process after its separation from India, She is seen striving for its survival and identity. Beside many critics, the only demand at the time of creation was that the minorities will be given their rights and freedom to live their life according to their faith and that they will be considered as Pakistani contributing to the progress of the country. Until recently, there were no major complaints except a few attempts by some individuals to meet their political interest. The constitution clearly indicates all these rights. But, the effects of globalization and the Western intensification of dialogue among faith and its spread and their interest in Pakistan have given much importance to human rights or minorities' rights. This explains the wide interest and activities of interfaith dialogue by the Pakistani Christians under the aegis of the West. Since then the identity and rights crisis started anew. However, the issues are discussed from different angles; some try to highlights a cultural crisis; that the minorities are threatened under a Pakistani Muslim Identity. Others see that it is a tension driven by socio-economic and

marginalization of some states or groups. But, the question arise, Pakistan after nearly more than 60 years of independence, although having a difficult path, where the expectation were so great, yet lurching from one crisis to another, is still a problem to its people and its neighbors and to the wider international community. Pakistani affairs were going wrong in its past and so does in its present as it can be witnessed in our daily life and the media. On the question what went so wrong? Hasan Suroor in his article 'Making sense of Pakistan's identity crisis' has this to say:

A country which has no dearth of talent and whose founders had such high hopes for it that they named it "Pakistan" (a pure country) go so horribly wrong? Was there something rotten at the very core of the idea of Pakistan that has been its undoing? Is Pakistan's failure to make sense of itself the result of a deep confusion over its Islamic/Muslim identity? If yes, what is the way forward, if any?<sup>75</sup>

Therefore, in such a confused atmosphere, the need for a proper and sincere dialogue free of foreign influence could be of great help for peace and prosperity for this country.

However, this work is intended to analyze all the above mentioned hindrances against dialogue among faith throughout the past 25 years. How dialoguers have understood and interpreted it? What are the causes for their failures? It should be noted that interfaith or intercultural dialogue are not just talks and exchange of ideas, rather it

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<sup>75</sup>Suroor, Hasan. *Making sense of Pakistan's identity crisis*, Date: 12/06/2009 URL: The Hindu : Opinion / Leader Page Articles, <<http://www.defence.pk/forums/general-images-multimedia/28059-identity-pakistan-ideology-islam.html>>, visited: 01.11.12

should be a means to identify the causes and effects of any present crisis and should have the capability for implementation of the process needed to overcome them.

What is important, is that there is hope that the expected unity and harmony needed for this country can be sensed when cultural differences and harmony is experienced through sports, arts, cuisine, fashion, dance, drama and music, creating appreciation of the other where ethnicity is disregarded. Cricket tournaments at international and national level make the people go hand in hand. In craft and fashion stores, in restaurants, in the electronic and printed media, are all appreciated as if the other does not exist. This country has never practiced apartheid; neither any kind of xenophobia exists as in the West. However, despite these positive aspects, serious questions remain. Why the nation is divided on religious and political aspect while they are united in all other aspect of life? What is causing such dishonesty? Who is behind these activities which are threatening the nation and its neighbors? Why such high level of poverty? How can help be extended to affected youth living in the extreme poverty and living in mud made huts and sub-standard colonies? How can understanding and dialogue be promoted in a highly unemployment affected country? The same question arises when illiteracy is at its highest, and those having a chance at school are not doing well. How can intercultural dialogue address these serious problems? Can intercultural dialogue take into confidence both the religious and liberal fundamentalist and facilitate a just discourse for the policy makers? Or is it really that Islam is a threat as propounded by the West? This work attempts to answer these questions and suggest areas for further research for a better Pakistan and a better world.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **PROCEDURE OF THE RESEARCH AND DATA COLLECTION**

Dialogue requires sincerity and objectivity. Since dialogue is conversation it means that people speak, listen, observe or are simply distant listener. When all these concerned are involved and taken into confidence then dialogue has really started or taken place. It is important to understand that the person listening will in turn speak and then the former will have to listen. The people who are observing will either give their opinion or simply react to what they listen. Dialogue can be either formal or informal. Therefore, to reach a proper understanding of interfaith dialogue, this work considers all the partners in dialogue, whether formal or informal. Then only sincerity and objectivity could be achieved. This is because interfaith dialogue has many difficulties and failure could be devastating. The scholar Anton Karl Kozlovic has clarified seven points that could help overcome the problems that dialogue among religions faces. These points are:

(a) Participant Sanctioning: Official Recognition, (b) Representation: Are Participants Truly Faithful to the Faith? (c) Relevancy: Insiders or Outsiders of the Faith? (d) Knowledgeable: Understanding Oneself and the Other, (e) Technical Competence: Argumentation and Presentation Skills, (f) Articulate: Knowing the Language of the Dialogue, and (g) Appropriateness: Issues of Dress and Other Nonverbal

Behaviors.<sup>76</sup> However, these points are not to be described in this work as it is not necessary for the development of this thesis.

As concern sincerity, many people are made to believe that interfaith dialogues are being carried all over the world to bring peace and a world free of conflict. Hence, many nations are seen involved in interfaith dialogue, and so does Pakistan. However, there are many mighty nations deceiving their own people and the rest of the world. Through the cover of dialogue their hidden agendas are being projected. Dialogue seems to be covered with lie and cheat. Unfortunately, people support them for what they are made to believe. Usually, these people are told that their representative, that is, their governments are doing the job. Doing their job, is being made to make understand to common people that the cause for humanity is being fought both in the foreign land and within the country and in the name of democracy. In fact, these could be sanctioned as lie, because there is no place in the world where the international peace-fighters are in operation can be said peace has been achieved or true democracy has been implemented. Rather, these forces are considered as alien forces and occupiers of their land. They are considered robbers and looters by the locals and they see them as invaders and aggressors. Now, when the people of the invaders are seen supporting their government, naturally hatred for them grow among the invaded. Therefore, no doubts in such case nations become enemy to one another. The aggressed resisting the aggressor is termed as terrorist, barbarians and uncultured. This creates the feeling of inferiority and

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<sup>76</sup> Kozlovic, A. Karl, *Who Should Be Allowed to Participate in Official Interreligious Dialogues?* MARBURG JOURNAL OF RELIGION, Volume 6, No. 2 (2001), Australia, <http://archiv.ub.uni-marburg.de/mjr/kozlovic.html>, Visited 11.07.2013

powerlessness among the conquered. Being poor and ill-equipped to fight conventional war, they are forced towards guerilla wars to resist the occupiers. This is how the world has become vulnerable to conflict and crime against humanity.

Therefore, the research carried out in this work considers the above discussed issue as the main factor for wars and conflicts in the world of today. There are as well many traditional issues that affects the harmony of our world but these, in this work, are considered natural phenomena that could be contained by society and community through organized social set ups.

This chapter will, therefore, make an assessment of different stakeholders of interfaith dialogue, so that it can help at the end to analyze and evaluate them. Part 1 of this chapter deals with 'Understanding Pakistan role in Interfaith Dialogue'; while, Part 2 discusses 'Pakistan in the arena of International Interfaith Dialogue'; and Part 3 elaborates 'Perception of Interfaith Dialogue among Different Groups and Individuals in Pakistan'.

### **Part One**

#### **Understanding Pakistan's role in Interfaith Dialogue**

Like other nations, Pakistani society is dominated by its politicians, media, NGO's, its scholars and other institutions. Politicians are chosen through votes in election to govern the country and its people. A politician can aim to be a statesman who works for his country having patriotic interest or just a political man who seeks his party interest or his self interest. As for Media, being a mean of communication for man that reach and

influence people widely, are considered to have emerged as a safeguard for the people against any misuse of power and other factors that determine the fate of the nation. As well, there are many organizations which have crop up to satisfy the need of the people, beside what the government are doing or are lacking to do. While, Scholars observe, carry out researches and bring up theories which are considered in decision making. Hence, the role and work of these institutions are being gathered here that could help us understanding Interfaith Dialogue, its purpose and its 'Raison d'Etre' especially in Pakistan.

The topic Christian-Muslim dialogue in the history of Pakistan has been the background of the Church in Pakistan, where the government concern is prominent. Many activities has been carried out on different kinds of dialogue where Scholars, the Christian Study Center, and the Muslims have been engaged in inter religious dialogue and is still going on to this date. Eminent government politicians of Pakistan have also shown their interest. We have Ex.President Zia-ul-Haq, Ex.Prime Minister Nawaz Shareef, Ex. President Parvez Musarraf and the Pakistani Ministry of Religious Affairs, who have considered dialogue in their capacity of their office and the tradition of dialogue they have inherited. These works need not to be ventured further in this research as many researchers have already highlighted them in their thesis. However, an attempt to clarify interfaith dialogue in the history of Pakistan politics and other institutions will be scrutinized to show that the validity of interfaith dialogue is not only a modern day achievement but it existed long before our modern age.

## Politicians and Interfaith Dialogue

Politicians are person experienced in the art or science of government, especially: one actively engaged in conducting the business of a government.<sup>77</sup> They are person usually influencing public policy and decision making for the governance of the country. They are active in both national and international sphere according to their office and responsibility. Hence, they are best suited to actualize any kind of dialogue for the sake of the people and country.

Pakistan, before and after its inception, is known for its rulers interest in interfaith dialogue. Sadly, it is unfortunate that much attention was not given to those works that could have been tangible source of inspiration for our generation to work for harmony in this part of the world. Although the name interfaith was not coined in Pakistan or its people history before its inception, yet the activity that is sought to be carried out in this field of interfaith dialogue was well existing since Muhammad Bin Qasim conquered this part of the Sub Continent. It is said that the Brahmins protested against the Buddhist ill-treatment against their right to prayer to Muhammad Bin Qasim. He, with the approbation of his boss Yusuf Bin Hajjaj, allowed them to restore their prayer house with all right to observe their religious duty.<sup>78</sup> No doubt it is this kind of work that is sought to

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<sup>77</sup>See. *Definition: Politician*,

<http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/politicians?show=0&t=1363841842>, Visited: 22.03.13

<sup>78</sup> See, Ahmad, Toheed, 'A LARGE WHITE CRESCENT', *Anthologization of heritage*, November 28, 2011, <[http://www.facebook.com/permalink.php?story\\_fbid=310459588978579&id=205536026181517](http://www.facebook.com/permalink.php?story_fbid=310459588978579&id=205536026181517)>, Visited:28.03.13

be targeted by interfaith dialoguers. Taking example in such historical facts can ease the works of our actors in dialogue.

But, strangely, it seems that our politicians, scholars and other concerned authorities have either forgotten or just ignored the priorities in this field of work or that their self political interest prevents them. Here one should keep in mind that when Interfaith Dialogue is being considered a modern phenomenon, it is obvious that historical facts should be ignored. As such a little survey of the works of our stars heritage can really remind us of what had been done and what could be done. Such evaluations and reflections can help to re-organize and repair the wounds of the society.

Inspired by the work of Mortimer Wheeler, Muhammad Bin Qasim, Al-Beruni, Amir Khusro, Dara Shikoh, Shah Waliullah, Maulana Altaf Hussain Hali, Sir Syed Ahmad Khan, Allama Muhamad Iqbal, S.M. Ikram, Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah, Maulana Ubaidullah Sindhi, Dr. Abdus Salam, Abdul Rahman Chughtai, Faiz Ahmed Faiz, Justice A. R. Cornelius and Eqbal Ahmad, the megastars of our heritage, and “Darbar-e-Milli” (The Court of the Nation) sub-titled ‘Life History of the Nation as Narrated by Those Who Lived It’, Toheed Ahmad, presented his work, “A LARGE WHITE CRESCENT- Anthologization of heritage: Readings in Dialogue among Civilizations: The Pakistani Experience”. In his work Ahmed presents the effects of aggregation of such powerfully fragrant works as Alberuni’s Kitab ul Hind, Khusrau’s masnavi Nuh Sipir (The Nine Skies), Dara Shikoh’s Majma ul Bahrain (The Mingling of the Two Oceans), Shah Waliullah’s Hujjat Allah ul Baligha (The Conclusive Argument from God), Sir Syed Ahmad Khan’s Causes of the Indian Revolt, Allama

Iqbal's seminal lecture on The Principle of Movement in the Structure of Islam, Maulana Ubaidullah Sindhi's "Idea of a Hindustani University in Kabul", and more. His aim was to present a confluence of ideas that may yield a civilization pattern or delineate the cultural contours of a nation. The objective of this 'gardenization' of the heritage was firstly, to suggest Pakistan's assets in the context of the Dialogue among Nations. Secondly, was to look for synergies among these icons of Pakistan's history and culture.<sup>79</sup>

Looking at our near past, during the struggle for Pakistan, Muhammad Iqbal, like Sir Syed was considered the pioneer of the modernist visions and agendas during the 19th and 20th centuries. While Sir Syed called for acceptance of the best in the Western thought, Muhammad Iqbal, poet-philosopher, lawyer, Muslim reformer, great political ideologist/activist, outstanding man of letters and one of the most distinguished and dominant figures of 20th century, called for the 'reconstruction' of religious thought (in Islam) to revitalize the Muslim Ummah. These thought is still relevant to the reformist and modernist discourse in the entire Islamic world and the South Asia in particular. But, Muhammad Iqbal, in contrast to Sir Sayyed, was confronted to a totally modern and educated society.<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> See, Paray, Tauseef Ahmad, *Islamic Modernist and Reformist Thought: A Study of the Contribution of Sir Sayyid and Muhammad Iqbal*, *World Journal of Islamic History and Civilization*, 1 (2): 79-93, 2011, Department of Islamic Studies, Aligarh Muslim University (AMU), Aligarh -202002 (UP), India, <<http://idosi.org/wjihc/wjihc1%282%2911/2.pdf>>, Visited: 23.03.13

<sup>80</sup> See, Ibid

Quaid-e-Azam, the founder of Pakistan, was among the greatest of the modern politicians the country has known. He wanted to establish Pakistan as a welfare state for all its inhabitants irrespective of their religious affiliations. But it is wrongly debated and argued that the Quaid had inclined for only a secular state for Pakistan.<sup>81</sup> Here it is wise to be noted that what is good for the society is not always a secular aspects, as there are many religions that vows for such rights for man in general. One should not forget what history has preserved since long and that it can be approved, it is dishonesty to claim that it is a secular achievement. Such claim will always create fanaticism and fundamentalism rather than acceptance and cooperation.

In our present era, while, religious organizations for interfaith dialogue, movements or communities work at the grassroots level mostly depending on their own effort and as well supported by local or international institutions to improve life and harmony among different faith, and NGO's who draw their funding from their Western allies<sup>82</sup> and influenced by the ideas of the secular professionals and leaders of interfaith dialogue, politicians delves around their own field of work to sort out some of the difficulties encountered in the relationship between religion and the secular to assure development and harmony in the society. Hence, an alliance is formed among these

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<sup>81</sup> See, Ejiz, Abida, *Reconceptualizing Secularism in the Backdrop of Fethullah Gulen Movement: The Case of Pakistan, New Media and Mass Communication* (NMMC@iiste.org), Home > Archives > Vol 8 (2012),

<http://www.iiste.org/Journals/index.php/NMMC/article/view/3777>, Visited: 19.03.13

<sup>82</sup> Tyndale, Wendy, *Idealism and Practicality: The role of religion in development*, Palgrave Macmillan: Development, Volume 46, Number 4, December 2003 , pp. 22-28(7),

<http://www.ingentaconnect.com/content/pal/dev/2003/00000046/00000004/art00004> , Visited: 28.03.13

institutions to build bridge among societies, communities and nations. Therefore, Pakistan political leaders have to choose carefully their partners for dialogue.

Pakistan being a member of the Third World countries and member of the UN at the same time has no choice except to align itself with the policy of these institutions. In this way it helps protect itself from any kind of aggression and as well to enable help, where necessary, for the betterment of the country. Therefore, it would not be a surprise to see Pakistan and its politicians participating on interfaith dialogue and activities under the aegis of the UN.

Pakistan since its inception has been facing difficult situation to come up as a world free body and stand on its own. Among many considerable problems there are those which are considered threatening to its sovereignty, peaceful existence and the breakaway of its provinces, and division among its people. The problem of the emigrants coming from India, the separation of West Pakistan (Bangladesh), the war for Kashmir, its minority's safety are among the few issues that have made Pakistan a troubled nation. These problems have remained unsolved. The emigrants who came during the separation of Pakistan are settled but not to their satisfaction. The native Pakistani still called them Muhajir (emigrants). West Pakistan has got separated from United Pakistan in an atmosphere of enmity and until now the two countries have not developed friendly relation. As for Kashmir it has remained a disputed issue until today. This issue has led Pakistan and India towards several wars where Kashmir has been divided into two parts, as free Kashmir and Jammu and Kashmir known as occupied Kashmir. This issue has been dealt many a time at the seat of the United Nation and resolution has been taken but

to the defiance of India who refused to implement them. The Kashmir issue has been and is still a hot issue that can at any time break into sever war between the two stakeholders who claims that Kashmir should be theirs. Although many efforts seem to be done to solve the matter, yet it is obvious that never any world body has shown or taken any serious step towards an end of this dispute. Hopes are in the mind of the people that for once Kashmir should be given due interest and that the UN resolution should come to its reality. However, stakeholders of interfaith dialogue in Pakistan have shown much interest and its Politicians have engaged with the faith dialoguers to come to a point of understanding and resolve the matter.

There are many works done by politicians under the umbrella of interfaith dialogue and other related forums to create consciousness and find solutions for Pakistan and the Kashmiris. The following articles could shed light on the effort for dialogue among politicians:

Muhammad Tahir Tabassum, Chief Executive Office Institute of Peace and Development (INSPAD) has presented an article on 'Political Situation in Kashmir and Role of United Nations.' Reminding the right of self-determination of Kashmiri under the UN Charter and several UN Security Council resolutions stating the question of accession of the State of Jammu and Kashmir to India or Pakistan will be decided through the political democratic method of free and impartial plebiscite.<sup>83</sup>

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<sup>83</sup> See, Tabassum, Muhammad Tahir. *Political Situation in Kashmir and Role of United Nations*, Institute of Peace and Development (INSPAD), 2012/10/5, <http://inspad.org/modules/news/>, visited: 12.11.12

In an article ‘Two Kashmir’s should become one’ presented by Former Assistant Secretary General United Nations and Director General Independent Bureau for Humanitarian Issues (IBHI) H.E. Mr. Syed Zia Rizvi at Leadership Conference on dialogue for peaceful coexistence organized by EU based an eminent Think tank Institute of Peace and Development (INSPAD) at Islamabad Pakistan on August 1, 2008. Based on the basis of his experience working to unite divided countries and its people like Vietnam, Cambodia and others, he seized the opportunity given to him at this conference and suggest that the two Kashmir’s should become one Kashmir and all the Kashmiris should work together to improve their future. He further proposed that India and Pakistan should strengthen friendship and encourage Muslims, Hindus and Sikhs to live peacefully in Kashmir as they do in India and Pakistan.<sup>84</sup>

The work for interfaith dialogue is not new for Pakistan and its politics. Since this work concerns 1985 onwards, we will consider the work of the then President of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, General Mohammad Zia-ul-Haq. In a congress held in Rawalpindi, on the 21<sup>st</sup> – 25<sup>th</sup> November, 1985, the Third International Qur'an Congress under the auspices of the Humdard Foundation, having the theme “The Qur'anic Understanding of the Human Situation, President Zial-ul-Haq, affirmed that the Qur'an invites people to seek knowledge and urges for an intellectual renaissance. Hence, he

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<sup>84</sup> See, Rizvi, Syed Zia. *Two Kashmir's should become one Kashmir*, Leadership Conference on dialogue for peaceful coexistence, Administration, Institute of Peace and Development (INSPAD), Islamabad, Pakistan, August 1, 2008. <http://inspad.org/modules/news/>, Visited: 12.11.12

hoped for reviewing the educational system and encouraging some dialogue among religions so that the Ummah could work for the unity of mankind.<sup>85</sup>

Moreover, it is highlighted by a research carried out at 'Centre d'études et de recherches internationales science pro', where the writer says:

But Zia pursued a strategy of statization of Islam that had been initiated by Jinnah and Ayub Khan on behalf of different ideologies, which is one more illustration of the existence of an additional form of secularization that has been neglected by Taylor<sup>86</sup>

In his strategy of statization (to bring to the fold of the state) General Zia wanted to bring the religious leaders and the Islamic Institutions under control of the secular politics and hence automatically leaving room for the protection of minorities rights in the secular set up. Doing so, it enabled Muslim to observe Islam and its ideology but it bring them to be governed by the ruler's writ and at the same time recognizing the existence of other religions and made co-habitation possible. This is what it meant to be the additional secularization as previously this kind of secularism where not considered. It was rather considered that religion is totally contrary to the secular. But globalization is the phenomena that changed the secular belief and made society experience a revival of

<sup>85</sup> See, Grassi, Vincenza, *THE THIRD INTERNATIONAL QUR'ĀN CONGRESS* Rawalpindi 21<sup>st</sup>-25th November 1985, <http://www.jstor.org/discover/10.2307/25816954?uid=2134&uid=4579010517&uid=2&uid=70&uid=3&uid=4579010507&uid=60&sid=21101958049941>, Visited: 01.04.13

<sup>86</sup> Jaffrelot, Christophe, *Secularization without Secularism in Pakistan*, Centre d'études et de recherches internationales Sciences Po, <http://www.sciencespo.fr/ceri/sites/sciencespo.fr.ceri/files/qdr41.pdf>, Visited: 27.02.13

religion. What is important here is that, General Zia who is much targeted for his Islamization policy, still there can be found work of great wisdom where understanding and cohabitation among religions are sought after.

Benazir Bhutto, one of the most famous politicians, and Pakistan People's Party Chairwoman of her time, on the occasion of the eve of Christmas, said:

"It is also an occasion to restate the need for interfaith dialogue and harmony among people of different religions. The need for such a dialogue and understanding has never been this great." In another message to the nation on Quaid-e-Azam's birthday, Bhutto urged the people to build unity in their ranks in order to regain their democratic and political rights and make Pakistan a shining example of prosperity and progress. "I wish to greet the entire Pakistani nation on this bright occasion."<sup>87</sup>

It is to be noted that Benazir Bhutto, like other political leaders were conscious of the need to build the society in considering its plural nature.

The leader of the Jami'at ul-Ulema i Islam , Maulana Fazl ur-Rehman is recognized for his position taken when he publicly stated that " abuses or aberrations " of the blasphemy law could indeed be discussed in the National Assembly. Hugh Van Skyhawk in his article compared him to countless other noble men who had the courage to reach out to their fellow man, regardless of his religion, caste, or ethnic. Such courage

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<sup>87</sup> Benazir calls for interfaith dialogue, Daily Times, 25/12/2006,

[http://dailymail.co.uk/default.asp?page=2006\12\25\story\\_25-12-2006\\_pg11\\_9](http://dailymail.co.uk/default.asp?page=2006\12\25\story_25-12-2006_pg11_9), Visited: 05.02.13

he says cannot be destroyed by the bombs and bullets, neither of the misguided faithful, nor by the cynicism of hardened target killers, the arrogance of drone bomber imperialism, or the machinations of shamelessly corrupt political leaders.<sup>88</sup>

Prime Minister Raja Pervez Ashraf said, he is committed in interfaith dialogue, keeping in line with the vision of Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto and Benazir Bhutto for an enlightened, moderate, progressive and tolerant Pakistan. Hence, he confirms the stands of few earlier politicians and their convictions in dialogue among faith and cultures.<sup>89</sup>

It can be concluded that from the birth of Pakistan up to the present there is no such government that is against the harmony of the country and its people. However, view the law and order situation and few attacks against minorities in this country; it is the duty of the government to check which are the elements creating such disturbances and make all effort to control it.

## Media

Media is the oldest and most effective form of communication. It reaches the greater mass of the society and is responsible to inform facts with explanation and interpretation as well. There are print and broadcast media which are the most common form of media accessible to the Pakistani. However, we have social media which are

<sup>88</sup> See, Van Skyhawk , Hugh, *A Garden Amidst the Flames: The Categorical Imperative of Sufi Wisdom*, Chapter 14, p.234, <http://www.taxilastudies.com/Data/Sites/1/userfiles/A%20Garden%20Amidst%20.pdf>, Visited: 08.04.13

<sup>89</sup> See, *PM favours interfaith dialogue to promote peace, harmony*, Daily Times, 23/12/ 2012, [http://www.dailymail.com.pk/default.asp?page=2012\12\23\story\\_23-12-2012\\_pg7\\_14](http://www.dailymail.com.pk/default.asp?page=2012\12\23\story_23-12-2012_pg7_14), Visited: 05.02.13

gaining foothold in our society in the world of communication. Pakistan was known to be a country where Media was not free during the twentieth century and beyond. Media was in a chaotic situation during those days. But, the twenty first century was marked by a revival of free media in this country. It is widely believed that today Pakistani media, especially Pakistani private media, is categorized as one of the freest media of the Muslim world and the strengthened civil society and is also responsible for the emergence of the independent judiciary.<sup>90</sup> While, Pakistan is a country where traditions of political pressure from government and non-governmental bodies and individuals posed a constant threat to independent journalism, to the point that Islamabad, the capital of Pakistan, where coined as the 'media threat capital'.<sup>91</sup> Media has then seen itself transformed through a sudden increase of private broadcast media during the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Constant reform is carried out for a better role of media as it represents a better tool for communication and directing the mind and behavior of the people.

### **Role of Media in Interfaith Dialogue**

As concern its role in Interfaith Dialogue since 1985, media has its importance in preserving most of the work done in the field of dialogue. It is through media that we can get a better understanding of how dialogue among faith developed and progressed. Media is as well very helpful in understanding what the flaws in the fields of dialogue are. It is through media, either print or electronic, that one comes to know about the evolution of

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<sup>90</sup> See, Baqai, Huma, *Transition to Democracy in Pakistan: A Comparison to Rustow's Thesis*", Pakistan Vision Vol. 13 No. 2,

[http://pu.edu.pk/images/journal/studies/PDF-FILES/Artical-4\\_V13\\_No2\\_2012.pdf](http://pu.edu.pk/images/journal/studies/PDF-FILES/Artical-4_V13_No2_2012.pdf), Visited: 04.03.13

<sup>91</sup> See, Ibid

the world of conflict among cultures and communities. To counteract these conflicts, and build bridges of understanding and respect between cultures and religions, media, Internet and new social media are as well used to reach a larger audience. Role of media in the success of interfaith dialogue is of great importance. The main objective of interfaith dialogue is to work out a peaceful and conflict free society to live in. While, peace and harmony is always threatened by lack of toleration and violation of minorities' right. Media can play a very constructive role in containing such situation. Its investigative reporting can highlight areas where elements of violence can ignite conflict. Live discussion from sensitive places can bring to the knowledge of the public how fragile is society and what could be our responsibility in preventing them. Public is made aware of any kind of ill practice of the political class, the bureaucratic system and the elite's influence. Media proper role can help society to democratic values which, fortunately, are compatible to the religious sentiments of Pakistanis. Media can as well be very educative in the building of society and its humanist values especially in a pluralistic environment.

When Pakistan, in the present age, is considered to be backward in economic and political development, human rights and most of other field of life, it really needs change. Media is seen to be the most powerful element of change as it affects people thinking and shapes behavior. It is the most effective source which is easily accessible to people. Being conscious of such great responsibility it can help society for a better life and create understanding of the other.

But, unfortunately, up to now, media is seen just reporting and praising few activities that are held in the country without giving proper coverage. It is not in their culture to organize programs and activities that could reach the majority of the people with an objective to educate and inform people about dialogue between faith, its importance and its necessity. Media, in this country, has the chance to play a vibrant role in projecting an image of the importance of peace, understanding and cohabitation among different faiths and cultures, as this duty is as well recommended in the revealed book of Islam, the Qur'an. For example, the Qur'an clearly states that,

‘O Mankind, we have created you male and female, and have made you races and tribes, that you may know one another’ (Al Quran: 49:13)

This engaging message for dialogue between human being can be addressed through media, as it is the most important medium to inform mankind of our primary duty toward each other, which is cooperation. It is hoped that through media we can transform our exclusivist attitudes and images to a more inclusive one, creating a global communication hub and promoting independent thinking process and freedom of speech. Hence, with this strategic position of media in public life, we should never underestimate the power of media, as good journalism guides the masses and policy makers to take the right decisions. The use of media to propagate the culture of dialogue can help dialogue to merge into broader socio-political life of the people and influence the necessary changes for a better life.

Not to forget that human survival depends on the information he receives. Here is the importance of our senses in the process of communications. Hence, the way

information reaches people determines his particular behavior, what he is to do and what will be its impact on the society.

It is unfortunate that media, although free in Pakistan, could not come to its responsibility when it faced the prejudicial reporting of the Western media against Islam, which is the religion of the vast majority of Pakistani. For long enough, the Western media has been reporting things that hurts the sentiments of the Muslims. Muslims are being projected as bad guys, terrorist, barbaric etc. The way their religion and prophet Mohammad (SWA) were mocked at during the tragedy of Danish cartoon, showing Islam as inherently violent while suppressing women and violating human rights at the same time. How this led to a series of violence and protests throughout the world and a boycott of Danish products in numerous Muslim countries. Again in effect of the Western Compiegne against Islam and its Prophet, Face book had to be banned in Pakistan. During all these events, Pakistani media was not seen professional in handling its information properly. While, it was seen serving the purpose of the Westerners in spreading the information the way they wanted to further tarnish the image of Islam. Our media could have portrayed the matter in such a way that it could have become a matter of instruction of the Islamic values in response to their way of provocation. Our media, in reaction to theirs, behaved the same way as theirs rather than being impartial, neutral and informative. As such, their irresponsible behaviors further damaged the chance of creating an atmosphere of dialogue in this country.

## Social Media

Social media appears to be an effective means of communication for the new generation. Pakistani although affected by its literacy rate which is approximately 58%<sup>92</sup> among (10 years and above), social media is widely used by the youth. If few are using internet for research purpose or any other academic work. Yet face book, twitter and mobile phones are widely used for normal communication process. It can be said that more than 90% of the population is using mobile to communicate. Nothing to say what these social media represent, especially when one looks at the last few revolutionary events that touched the Middle East, of which are Egypt, Tunisia, Algeria, Libya, Yemen, Syria and others.<sup>93</sup>

Conscious of its potentialities, interfaith activist are using social media as well. Through the directive of interfaith movement, Faith Matters, a not-for-profit inter-faith organization, mobile phones are being used to spread messages of love, peace, and harmony by sending SMS messages targeting active mobile phones through Pakistan. These have been coined as 'Peghaam Project' by the interfaith activist. These schemes

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<sup>92</sup> Highlights of the Pakistan Economic Survey 2012-13, *Education*, According to Pakistan Social and Living Standard Measurement (PSLM) survey 2011-12, the literacy rate for the population (10 years and above) remains 58 percent during 2011-12,  
[http://www.finance.gov.pk/survey/chapters\\_13/HIGHLIGHTS%202013.pdf](http://www.finance.gov.pk/survey/chapters_13/HIGHLIGHTS%202013.pdf), Visited: 19.09.13

<sup>93</sup> Rothman, Joel, *Unregulated Social Media Plays Large Role in the Middle East Upheaval*, 2/2/11,  
<http://www.appslawblog.com/unregulated-social-media-plays-large-role-in-the-middle-east-upheaval/>, Visited: 19.09.13

mobilize to reach radicalized individuals and groups, which aims to inspire ordinary members of the public to promote messages of harmony.<sup>94</sup>

## Organizations

There are numerous organizations working for interfaith dialogue in Pakistan. But, the fact is that most of them do not really exist in due form. There are many such organizations that exist only in name and propaganda of which “Three Cups of Tea”<sup>95</sup> is one of those. It was supposed to be an inspirational story of one man's efforts to address poverty, educate girls, and overcome cultural divides. It was supposed to have constructed more than 50 schools across rural Pakistan and Afghanistan ... but, in truth it does not exist, it's all lie<sup>96</sup>. To value this work only those organizations will be considered that we have personally identified them existing in this field.

People do organize themselves seeking for a better life and harmony in their society. There are governmental organization, non-governmental organizations and as well international bodies. These organizations found there place in the society as the government alone cannot not fulfill their duty towards the people. Organizations are well

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<sup>94</sup> See, *Faith Matters, Countering Extremism and Promoting Tolerance through Mobile SMS technology in Pakistan*, Weekly Zaman, UK, 2011, <http://faith-matters.pk/press-and-media/65-faith-matters-peghaam-project-cited-in-weekly-zaman-uk>, Visited: 29.11.12

<sup>95</sup> See, Mortenson, Greg and Relin, Oliver, *Three Cups of Tea: One Man's Mission to Promote Peace*, 1993, [http://www.nicoletakeda.com/uploads/4/2/8/5/4285390/skimming\\_activity\\_2\\_advanced.pdf](http://www.nicoletakeda.com/uploads/4/2/8/5/4285390/skimming_activity_2_advanced.pdf), Visited: 02.05.13

<sup>96</sup> See, Lowrey, Annie, *Don't Build Schools in Afghanistan: The real lesson of the Three Cups of Tea scandal*, May 5, 2011, [http://www.late.com/articles/business/moneybox/2011/05/dont\\_build\\_schools\\_in\\_afghanistan.html](http://www.late.com/articles/business/moneybox/2011/05/dont_build_schools_in_afghanistan.html), Visited: 2.05.13

viewed in the society as they are known to be doing good job and at the same time awakening the public and the rulers of their duty towards each other. There are profitable and non-profitable or charitable based organizations. Whether, government or private these organizations work in cooperation for the well being of the public welfare. However, there are organizations which are believed to be missionaries and their job is to convert people, for example the Christian Missionaries, Islamic Da'wah and the Buddhist Bodhisattva etc. One of their best tools is sought to be interfaith dialogue that would be highlighted in this work.

Mostly, interfaith organizations in Pakistan are religious based organizations and play very significant role in the society. They are mainly known for their educational, vocational, health, social welfare and assistance to the poor and needy of the society. They are as well non-profit based organizations. They are structured, independent from the state and their members are volunteers, they are not paid for their services. Their fund is basically through voluntary contribution from the public. Although they are very much ignored by the secular societal set ups, they actively participate in socio-political affairs and have their part played in different development processes of the country. However, the post modern world is changing and the role of religions and religious based organization are gradually gaining position against the secular minded society. Their contribution in various aspects of development and constructions of the society is being recognized and welcomed. For this reason, in the secular and modernize world, for example in Canada, there are increasing study program of the religions' works and activities at national and international level that are seen positive in combating poverty, sectarianism, terrorism and building peace in the societies and communities. This claim is

sustained by the following quote which relates to the Religion and public policy in Canada:

In an effort to clarify some of the basic issues underlying this relatively new subfield in religious studies, in this article I address three questions. First, how is religion currently framed by existing Canadian laws and policies? Second, is there evidence that policy-makers are actually interested in academic perspectives on religion and public policy? Third, which problematic issues might merit scholarly attention in the near future?<sup>97</sup>

Here, the author of the article wants to show that in their society, policy makers and other elite members are increasingly interested in a discursive realm in which religious studies scholars have something unique to contribute that were previously neglected by the secular theorist. Marxists, Liberals, nation-builders and integration specialists treated religion as a marginal variable.<sup>98</sup> But, hardly such studies are carried here in Pakistan.

Fortunately, our present postmodern society has given another platform for the religious leaders to voice out against those elements that always harmed religious sentiments. Hence, participating in International Interfaith Forums, gives the participants especial voices to get some kind of prejudices against communities that harms and create hatred to be checked. In 2008, at the UN interfaith meeting in New York UN Secretary

<sup>97</sup> Bramadat, Paul, *Religion and public policy in Canada: An itinerary*, Studies in Religion/Sciences Religieuses March 2008, <http://sir.sagepub.com/content/37/1/121.short>, Visited: 02.05.13

<sup>98</sup> See, Reychler, Luc, *RELIGION AND CONFLICT*, The International Journal of Peace Studies [http://www.gmu.edu/programs/icar/ijs/vol2\\_1/Reychler.htm](http://www.gmu.edu/programs/icar/ijs/vol2_1/Reychler.htm), Visited: 02.05.13

General Ban Ki-moon very honestly acknowledged the eidetic reality and described Islamophobia as new term for an old and terrible form of prejudice and called for ensuring human dignity for all.<sup>99</sup> Addressing the conference, King Abdullah of Saudi Arabia told world leaders that terrorism is the enemy of all religions; therefore a united front to combat it and promote tolerance is of necessity.<sup>100</sup> All these international organizations have their representatives in Pakistan.

As such, Pakistan has its different interfaith organizations based on different religions. There are the Islamic interfaith organizations, and minorities' organizations comprising of Christian interfaith organizations and others.

### **Islam based Organizations**

Among the few interfaith organizations bodies among Muslims, the madrasas are the rare cases of the interfaith players. Outside madrasas, there are several large and small set ups that organize themselves at the grassroots level at the cities or villages reach. There are as well welfare based organizations that collects and distributes charities, do social welfare activities and relief projects. There are others at higher levels which are interested in more developmental oriented project only. Base on the populations Census Report, 1998, Government of Pakistan, the Muslims' population comprised of 96.28%<sup>101</sup> and that was divided among the majority Sunnis which were further divided among

<sup>99</sup> See, Jamil, Mohammad, *Civil Service Interfaith dialogue*, Pakistan, 19/11/2008, <http://www.cssforum.com.pk/css-compulsory-subjects/islamiat/50441-islamayat-important-questions.html>, Visited: 18.04.13

<sup>100</sup> See, Ibid

<sup>101</sup> See, Population by Religion, <http://www.census.gov.pk/Religion.htm>, Visited: 19.09.13

Barelvis, Deobandis, Ahl-hadith and the socio-political group the Jamat-e-Islami, then came the Shias'. All these groups have their interfaith organizations.

### **Minorities' Organizations**

Christians' organizations are formally associated with the Catholic Church or the Church of Pakistan. There are others which are both related to the Catholic Church, Church of Pakistan and International bodies from whom they are funded. They comprised of the 1.59%<sup>102</sup> of the Population divided mainly among the Protestants and Catholics

### **Other Minorities**

There are Hindus organizations, Sikh, Parsees, Ahmadi and Shia organizations. Hindus are 1.6% including Sikhs, and Ahmadis' are 0.22%.<sup>103</sup>

### **Role Played by Faith Based Organizations**

Understanding the role played by faith based organization is very important to understand the relationship that exists among different religions. It is clear that their struggle started since the struggle for independence from the British Raj in India. While the Muslims fought for independence from United India which was of Hindu majority, the other religious leaders and families supported the Muslims to establish their new homeland that was Pakistan. Therefore, this work will consider different religious based organizations, their institutions and their role played.

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<sup>102</sup> Ibid

<sup>103</sup> Ibid

## Faith Based Organization

Muslims drawing their resources from the religious background, as we have earlier seen in Sir Syed understanding of religions, started to propagate the idea for Two Nation Theory that were to help Muslim find their own homeland where they could practice and live their faith based life. The same rhetoric was adopted later by Muhammad Iqbal and Muhammad Ali Jinnah which was very clear from the adoption of the famous Lahore Resolution until independence was achieved in 1947.<sup>104</sup> But here it should be noted that separation from India was incumbent not because of hatred for their co-religionist, it was rather because of the attitude of the Hindu politicians which was to make Hindus dominant force over others. Again common Hindus continued to share good relationship with Muslims and the other, but the problem came through the political leaders biased by few extremist. Yet, neither Alama Iqbal nor Muhammad Jinnah showed any hatred against the Hindus or Christians. They were all in favor of a Pakistan for all, where all could live in peace, harmony and cooperation.

The main stream religions of Pakistan were well known for their philanthropic, spiritual and voluntary activities to cater for the poor, the needy and the underprivileged of the society. The Subcontinent, of which Pakistan emerged, had always been very sensitive to religion, which had been a major source of inspiration to its socio-political

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<sup>104</sup> See, Iqbal, Muhammad Asif and Siddiqui, Saima (2008), *Mapping the terrain: the activities of faith-based organizations in development in Pakistan*, Working Paper. University of Birmingham, Birmingham, UK, 2008, [http://www.religionsanddevelopment.org/files/resourcesmodule/@random454f80f60b3f4/1229940021\\_working\\_paper\\_24\\_web\\_file.pdf](http://www.religionsanddevelopment.org/files/resourcesmodule/@random454f80f60b3f4/1229940021_working_paper_24_web_file.pdf), Visited: 15.04.13

development and welfare activities. Madrasas, Sufism and Khanqah during the Mughal rule in India, were important institutions to promote education and other socio-political activities. Madrasas were establishments of higher learning that produced civil servants and judicial officials.<sup>105</sup> Khanqah along with Madrasas, beside educational programs, were responsible for the social services of the community such as providing food to the people regardless of caste, creed and race.<sup>106</sup> The Sufis were well known for their role played in bringing togetherness and building relationship between the rulers and their subject which comprised of different faith. But, later after the arrival of the British Raj in the Subcontinent brought many changes in the socio-political sphere, where the Muslims' institutions were marginalized and spared from their funding from the state patronage. Changes in the administration and economy introduced by the English East India Company meant that madrasa as a productive education institution lost its employment value. The result was that madrasa education became increasingly subjective. In consequence of this displacement of Muslims from political authority and public offices, gave rise to the Deoband Islamic school of thought with the largest affiliation of madrasas in South Asia. Further, in reaction to the colonial rule, religion underwent a

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<sup>105</sup> See, Séverine Deneulin (with Masooda Bano), *Religion in Development: Education and Dialogue*, Paper for a seminar series, chp.3,5 & 6, University of Copenhagen, 4th March 2009,

[http://www.dclsm.dk/graphics/IO\\_indsatsomraader/Religion\\_og\\_social\\_konflikt\\_og\\_Mellemosten/Deneulin%20paper-4Mar09.pdf](http://www.dclsm.dk/graphics/IO_indsatsomraader/Religion_og_social_konflikt_og_Mellemosten/Deneulin%20paper-4Mar09.pdf), Visited: 22.04.13

<sup>106</sup> See, Iqbal, Muhammad Asif and Siddiqui, Saima (2008), *Mapping the terrain: the activities of faith-based organizations in development in Pakistan*, Working Paper. University of Birmingham, Birmingham, UK,

[http://www.religionsanddevelopment.org/files/resourcesmodule/@random454f80f60b3f4/1229940021\\_working\\_paper\\_24\\_web\\_file.pdf](http://www.religionsanddevelopment.org/files/resourcesmodule/@random454f80f60b3f4/1229940021_working_paper_24_web_file.pdf), Visited: 15.04.13

religious revivalism which later brought independence and separation of the subcontinent into India and Pakistan.<sup>107</sup>

In conclusion it should be noted that the Muslims institutional set up since its history in the subcontinent were known for their cooperative attitude and action for the welfare of their community without disregarding the other. Here again the objective that interfaith dialogue organization is working for in the present era were achieved by the religious institution although the name interfaith were not coined yet in this part of the globe. This fact is indicated in the above discussion where the Khanqah and Sufis did their work regardless of the caste, creed or race.

However, the post-independence of Pakistan had witnessed a setback to different religious institutions either to contain or control the faith based movements of the country. Confusion reigned for a true political identity for Pakistan between the liberals and the traditionalist. But, General Zia's rule had given way to a revival and growth of those religious institutes in an attempt to Islamize the country. Hence, they enjoyed a very good and close relationship with the states, especially with the military and this continued with General Musharraf's rule despite the war on terror. Finally, the religious movements again experienced a very hostile relationship with the last democratic government of the country.<sup>108</sup>

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<sup>107</sup> See, Ibid

<sup>108</sup> See, Ibid

### **Political Based Organizations**

Beside madrasas, we have political based organizations which are playing important role in the socio-political activities in Pakistan. Example is the Al-khidmat Foundation sponsored by Jamat-e-Islami. This institution is responsible for the education, health, emergency relief and provides help to the needy irrespective to the caste, creed, religion or nationality.<sup>109</sup> Different denominations have their own organization to promote facilities to the people and hence peace and harmony.

### **Christian Faith based Organizations**

Christians faith based organizations are well established in Pakistan for the past 25 years. These are present in the socio-political works and participate actively in the process of development of the country. From educational to health care, social works and reliefs programs are provided through their net work. Charitable institution, drug rehabilitation centers and other forms of assistance and help are being provided to the public without discriminations of race, caste or creed. Caritas Pakistan, which is a member of the International Caritas, is one of the most prominent Christian Organization of Pakistan.<sup>110</sup>

### **Hindus Religion based Organizations**

Hindus are present all over Pakistan, but the majorities, which form the considerable minority, are located in Sindh. Hence, most of their Organizations are found

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<sup>109</sup> See, Ibid

<sup>110</sup> See, Ibid,

in Sindh. The Hindu Gynkhana, the Pakistan Hindu Panchayat and the Pakistani Hindu Welfare Association are among the prominent Hindu faith based organizations of Pakistan. However, there are others which are small organizations that mostly work at grassroots level for the welfare of the Pakistani Hindu.<sup>111</sup>

### **International Faith Based Organizations**

International faith based organizations are mainly Muslims and Christians. They participate in nearly all spheres of life and activities within the country. But, their main target is the natural disaster affected areas, emergency and relief program. They are widely organized to assist people. Their sources are from private donors and international donors such as the UNDP, UNICEF and USAID. They operate in cooperation of both the religious based and the secular non-profit based organizations. Their areas of work comprise of emergency relief and rehabilitation programs against any kind of natural disasters, assistance to Afghan refugees, health care, education, non-formal education, HIV/AIDS, community development, income generation, food security and agriculture.<sup>112</sup>

Most of the faith based organization of Pakistan comprises of Muslims, Christians, Hindus, Parsis, Sikh, Ahmadi etc. They are all involved in activities related to

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<sup>111</sup> See, Ibid

<sup>112</sup> Deneulin, Séverine (with Masooda Bano), *Religion in Development: Education and Dialogue*, Paper for a seminar series, chp.3,5 & 6, University of Copenhagen, 4th March 2009,

[http://www.dcis.msu.edu/graphics/JO\\_jdsatsomraader/Religion\\_og\\_social\\_konflikt\\_og\\_Mellemosten/Deneulin%20paper-4Mar09.pdf](http://www.dcis.msu.edu/graphics/JO_jdsatsomraader/Religion_og_social_konflikt_og_Mellemosten/Deneulin%20paper-4Mar09.pdf), Visited: 22.04.13

the welfare of their communities. They actively participate in the field of education, health, food, shelter, relief, emergency, advocacy, material assistance, income generation program, income support, drug rehabilitation, research, HIV/AIDS and interfaith dialogue. Examples of Current Dialogue institutions in Pakistan are:

1. International Islamic University and Dialogue having two separate branches:
  - a. Islamic Research Institute (IRI)
  - b. Shari'ah Academy
2. Minhaj ul Qur'an, it is actively involved in working for woman rights and interfaith dialogue.
3. Institute of Policy Studies (I.P.S) and Dialogue
4. Pakistan Association of Inter-Religious Dialogue
5. Universal Inter-faith Peace Mission

We have as well some well established Christians Institutes and Organizations in Interfaith Dialogue which are as follows:

1. Christian Study Center Rawalpindi
2. The Pastoral Institute Multan
3. National Commission for Christian-Muslim Relations, Pakistan

#### 4. United Religions Initiative (URI)

Traditionally, all interfaith dialogue movements or institutes carry the same themes and issues of Religious Dialogue in Pakistan, which are, Dialogue for Peace and Harmony, dialogue in the present era, Role of Minorities in Pakistan, history of Inter-Faith Dialogue, dialogue for Peace and its importance, how to promote Interfaith understanding and few social activities. Again these institutions and issues have been largely describes of which literatures are flooded in the market. Therefore no further research is needed.

#### Scholars and Interfaith Dialogue

When talking of scholars the importance of education is well understood. History could be valued for evidence to the development of education. While the Greeks were spending centuries in developing their philosophies, the Europeans were busy in things other than education. The Christian Church and Fathers either destroyed most of the work of the Greek philosophies or were simply unaware of the Greek work and its importance. This gave precedence to the emergence of Dark Ages of Europe. It happened after the collapse of the Roman Empire in the 5th century, where urbanization were replaced by decentralized rural populations, and education and enlightenment were replaced by superstition and unquestioning devotion to authority. In consequence, the "Greek" thought and culture were temporarily lost from Europe.<sup>113</sup>

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<sup>113</sup> See, *Rise of Western Culture & Philosophy (Classical Greece)*, World. Ology, The People, Nation& Events that have shaped our World, [http://www.worldology.com/Europe/Europe\\_Articles/rise\\_of\\_western\\_culture.htm](http://www.worldology.com/Europe/Europe_Articles/rise_of_western_culture.htm), Visited: 03.05.13

While at the same time, Muslims through their conquest of the Land of the Romans, the Byzantines, came across the works of Greek philosophies which they recognized and made use of. Such encounters gave the world its first interfaith cooperation. The Caliph of the Muslims ordered studies, translations and synchronization of the different foreign philosophies be it Greek, Indian or Persian and their implementation in their rule and educational values. Thus, it gave way to the efflorescence of Islamic civilization that started in the 8th century and continued until it faded away through the course of history.<sup>114</sup>

As concern interfaith values in the scholarly world of the Islamic Empires, it was marked by the participation of religious minorities, especially Christians and Jews, in the intellectual and academic life which are well-documented in various sources. Inter-faith dialogue and dialectics were sometimes conducted at the caliph court to promote a critical understanding of the other's religion. For example, the Abbasid caliph al-Mahdi (d. 785) convened formal discussions on theological matters with the Catholicons Timothy, leader of the Nestorian church in Iraq in the eighth century. Inter-religious scholarly exchanges and collaboration took place in study-circles and other venues.<sup>115</sup>

Unfortunately, such work is no more known in our modern world. However, there are efforts for dialogue among faith to work out cooperation among religions in society, as it is widely believed that religion can be of much help in bringing peace to the world

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<sup>114</sup> See, Afsaruddin, Asma, *Islam in Contemporary World: The Fethullah Gülen Movement*, Rice University, Nov 12-13, 2005, <http://www.interfaithdialog.org/newsletter/documents/AAfsaruddin.pdf>, Visited: 29.11.12

<sup>115</sup> See, Ibid

than any other institutional association. Of them are a few mentioned in this part of the work that can shed light on the participation of Pakistani scholars in promoting interfaith values.

### **Sir Syed Ahmad Khan**

Syed Ahmed Khan (1817-1898), during the British Raj, worked for a new identity for Muslim based on Islam where territory and community difference were highlighted. He vowed for the two-nation theory where Muslims will have to live in their own territory based on the fact that Muslim are different community from the Hindus in every aspects. Sir Syed who was basically endowed with Islamic and modern-secular education strived for the upbringing of the Muslims to regain its lost glory, as the colonial power of India had deprived them from political power. Thus, emerged a new group of educated Muslims as was the need of that time where mostly religious education prevailed outside modern educational values. He faced sever encounter with the old-tradition Muslims scholars and Ulemas. He was blamed for secularizing Islam. However, he successfully projected a new ideology based on Islam where room was made for all different religions to co-habit under the canopy of Islam.

Fearing the kind of Hindu nationalism based politics played by the Congress, strong with their numbers as they were majority, and Muslim were minority, Sir Syed saw the danger for all the nationalities of India who were minorities.

Taking into consideration the diversity of faith present within the territory of the eventual separate Land for the Muslims, the mindset of the Syed worked out for a secular

form of religion that could co-habits other religions. But, Islam being the official raison d'être of the new state, how could it make room to other religions? To sort out this question Sir Syed prepared the ground to the secular repertoire, because he wanted to promote the coexistence of ethno-religious groups. In 1883, he declared:

[...] my Hindu brethren and my Muslim co-religionists breathe the same air, drink the water of the sacred Ganga and the Jamuna, eat the products of the earth which God has given to this country, live and die together. [...] I say with conviction that if we were to disregard for a moment our conception of Godhead, then in all matters of everyday life the Hindus and Muslims really belong to one nation (qaum)<sup>8</sup> [...] and the progress of the country is possible only if we have a union of hearts, mutual sympathy and love. (cited in Varma 1980:430)

The above words of Sir Syed gave the way to a secular perspective of governance. But the fact that Independence was near and the Muslim were about to secure a separate land for them and that Islam were their ideology, the question: How far could this secular perspective be implemented after independence given not only the Islamic identity on which the Pakistan movement had been built, but also the resilience of traditionalist and fundamentalist schools of thought? This concept of secular Pakistan was in turn adopted by the Muslim league and as well many Ulemas believing in the secular regime of Ghandi and Nehru.<sup>116</sup>

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<sup>116</sup> See, *Islam in Contemporary World: The Fethullah Gülen Movement*,  
<http://www.interfaithdialog.org/newsletter/documents/AAfsaruddin.pdf>, Visited: 29.11.12

Sir Syed became a source of inspiration for many Scholars and Ulemas as well. His metaphor that the Hindus and Muslims were the two eyes in the mother India's face inspired Maulana Azad to strive for the Hindus-Muslim unity. Moreover, his publication of 1847, Asar-al Sanadid (The Remnants signs of Ancient Heroes) and translated by M. Gracin de Tassy shows the vibrant composite culture of north India, the pride of every Dilwala. Despite, several controversies with the Hindus, Sir Syed wanted to preserve that composite inheritance of India, for which M. Azad became the custodian.<sup>117</sup>

Mohammad Iqbal (1876-1938) was as well very much impressed by Sir Syed works and thus, elaborated and refined his view on Ijtihad and he praised him on several occasions. Sir Syed Ahmed, who was well conscious of the religious diversity of the human race, has dealt with the Jewish, Christian and Muslims denominations all the way. He even extensively described the religions and philosophies of Iran, India and Greece. Sir Syed wanted and vowed for a Muslim and Christian unity in India, strengthened mutual knowledge and respect among them. Sir Syed visited Europe in this regard. He was praised by M. Gracin de Tassy for his comments on Christianity, the Bible and Jesus that was for synthesizing the Western and Eastern relationship. Sir Syed wanted to set aside those religions assertions that triggered conflict from the middle Ages and promote interfaith relations. He always convinced his fellow religionist to work on harmonious environments rather than to bear the burden of conflicts and antagonism. He read books on Christianity, compared its teaching with the Quran, which he found was in conformity with its teaching. He wrote his commentary of the Bible (Tabyan-al Kalam) at Ghazipur

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<sup>117</sup> See, Ibid

in 1862, and endorsed the message of the Bible as the word of God. He finds that the Christian, in consistency with Quran were friends of the Muslims. He further found that both the religions were propagating the same doctrine of the unity of God, had the same patriarchal foundation of Abraham, Moses and the Prophets. He emphasized on religious tolerance and plurality.<sup>118</sup>

Thus followed a range of Scholars inspired from Sir Syed interfaith approach. But this fact was given little attention in our later history. There were Christian-Muslim dialogue carried out between T.W Arnold the Cambridge Professor at Aligarh and Shibli Numani (1857-1914). This trend continued in the younger student at Aligarh of them is Mohammad Ali, Abdul Halim Sharar to Syed Suleiman Nadwi all student of Shibli at Aligarh and Khwaja Hassan Nizami (1878-1957). Mohammad Ali conceded that Muslim and Christian Scholars should enter into conversation to discover the interrelatedness of their religions. Sharar dwelt on the Christian-Muslim historical relationship in the light of the age-old barriers of ignorance, misunderstanding and prejudices. While, Nizami wrote on the life of Jesus to soften his community attitude towards the Christians. However, all these Scholars suffered dire consequences and criticism from the traditionalist.<sup>119</sup>

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<sup>118</sup> See, Ed. Mushirul Hassan and Nishat Zaidi, *A Voyage to Modernism Syed Ahmed Khan*, Delhi 110 009, Prmius Books, 2011,

<http://books.google.com.pk/books?hl=en&lr=&id=Yc5tE3G98s0C&oi=fnd&pg=PP2&dq=%3Csir+syed%2Binterfaith%2Bpakistan&ots=JzfgzYyzCr&sig=Bd5IBNgaXY7chtPJ0n4kFGQgzpM#v=onepage&q&f=false>, Visited:- 26.02.13

<sup>119</sup> See, *Ibid*

But here we have to acknowledge that inter-religious dialogue of their time was not connoted by the name Interfaith Dialogue as it is nowadays. Yet the work done was remarkable and worth consideration to perfect our modern and formal concept of dialogue.

### **Allama Iqbal**

Allama Iqbal like Sir Syed is considered to be among the rare reformist in the Islamic arena that curved the way for a progressive Islam and liberate his fellow Muslim from the darkness of blind following which made Islam stagnant and weak. By recalling the glories of Muslims in the past, their strength, their vast empires and their formidable civilization where science, medicine and philosophy were at its high, Muslim were called for change. Embracing the ideas of reform, revival and ijtihad (independent judgment and interpretation), Mohammad Iqbal promoted Muslim unity and resistance to western cultural hegemony by adopting the fruits of science and technology while empowering Muslim educational, legal and political institutions. Among many question on Islam compatibility with modernity, more precisely, how Muslim react to the plural society that was emerging from the world globalization phenomenon were sought out. Mainly the liberalist and fundamentalist attitude were discussed to seek a better life based on the Islamic ideals that is compatible with Islam and modernity. Mohammad Iqbal gracefully combined the Islamic and western thought and find that Islam is a dynamic force but has been corrupted by the conservatism of the traditional Ulamas. It had to be revived and reinforced in the society. He believed that the law of God is absolutely supreme, however, he was convinced in the absolute equality of all members of a community and

here comes his conviction about a fruitful dialogue for both intra-faith and interfaith dialogue.

## **Part Two: Pakistan and International Interfaith Dialogue**

### **Pakistan in the arena of International Interfaith Dialogue**

No doubt, any action taken in one part of the globe has worldwide effect. The same could be the effect for interfaith dialogue. Harmony or conflict in one place has its effect at other places. Humanity is such a relationship that binds individuals, society and communities together in a natural way where people are not insensible to what is happening to the other. Most of the time the language used for the call for peace and harmony in any troubled society sounds very much beautiful and appealing. Harmony, which is characterized by integration, dialogue, combination, impartiality and humanity, easily catches the hearts of policy makers and organizations. Politicians, religious leaders and others are also attracted to be part of peace-makers. However, it is not necessary that all are sincere in their intention to join in the process of peace keeping. There are those among them who just work for show off and make use of easily justifiable propagandas to hide their exploitative intentions and actions in the society. As such interfaith dialogue can be said is used both for the sake of the exploited and for exploitation that remain a question. Similar remark was made by Karl Marx against religion when he treated religion of being opium of the people and that religion is an illusion.<sup>120</sup> Marx wanted to say that the powerful always dominated and exploited the weaker for economic purpose.

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<sup>120</sup> See, Xie, Jieyi, *Karl Marx on religion*, Helium, where Knowledge Rules, 2009, <http://www.helium.com/items/1535015-karl-marx-on-religion>, Visited: 03.05.13

But, as the weaker could not understand, nor could they counter-react, they had to suffer. Religion was the only shield against their exploited life. It gave them hope of an eventual happy life in the next world. But, Marx highlighted that such belief was erroneous. This led the powerful to take advantage of that belief and started to promote and better organize religion to continue their trend of exploiting the weakest. The same trend could be at an attempt in our present era and it has to be diagnosed. The conflict between religion and secular is too flagrant that need not long elaboration to create doubt in the thinking mind.

As concern interfaith dialogue, the dialoguers are conscious that their power is limited as the power for decision making is not in their hand, nor can they influence the ruling power. To change the suffering state of the people there should be the will and power to take decision and that is in the hand of politician. Unfortunately, the politicians are either atheist or secular, while to promote dialogue it needs to engage religions' leadership as well. Therefore, how to synthesize between the religion and secular? This is a question that has to be dealt with. Is it possible that such understanding be realized? Here it should be noted that both religion and the secular have to be promoted. In this context there should be a merger or sharing of power between the two dominant powers for joint venture in the socio-political development of the country. But, given that the majority of the people are emotionally attached to their fundamental religious belief, how to drag them to accept the union between the dialoguers and policy makers? If such scenario is seen difficult or quasi impossible then the only solution is that the masses should be kept ignorant, while showing pretensions that dialogue activities are going well and solution is ahead. This is what is seen everywhere in the world. Interfaith dialogues

at international or national level are being held for centuries, but it is widely believed that it's a failure. Even today interfaith dialogue is seen active for some philanthropic activities, or gathering for dinner or lunch, organizing faith based programs or standing for collective prayer which is totally irrational. Shall one pretend that what he rejects in his inner concept, he has to accept for show off? Is that tolerance or acceptance of others? Is it necessary that through pretention we can conquer the heart of others? If the foundation itself is based on pretensions and falsehood, can this bring success? While conducting survey for this work it was obvious that people of different faith never show any kind of hatred for each other. Even more striking was that these grassroots level people hardly had any idea of the formal interfaith dialogue. They are having good relationship for centuries. They are good neighbors for each other. In contrast, those who know and understand what dialogue is are found more aloof in their luxurious life and their social status. How far they are conscious of the weakness and flaws of dialogue is hardly believed that it is taken seriously. Policy makers are more interested with their Western Democratic Values which is based on total freedom of life, free sex, homosexuality, individualism, consumerism etc which is totally contrary to the religious values. Such belief is seen favoring exploitation at every level. The gap between the haves and the have not continues to expand. Interfaith dialogue is thus taken for a show in the hands of the powerful. This is the reason why for long interfaith dialogue is being met with failures. Even at the UN level this failures are highlighted as can be read from what follows:

Again speeches have been made at the UN interfaith meeting in New York but neither anything came out concrete nor there is hope that the West would change its policies.<sup>121</sup>

Finally, whether international or national, interfaith dialogues are left to the belief that it is all complaisance, formalities and show off. But, still the need for serious and sincere interfaith dialogue is pressing to contend the world from the brink of collapse as predicted by Mr. Huntington. While, talking against the "Clash of Civilization" sounds interesting as professed by Mr. Khatami of Iran and taken up the UN, yet the world is seen slowly nearing such clash. The War on Terror is the vivid example of such dangers where the two great civilizations are being drag into warring. The West, representing Christianity and the secular and the Middle East, representing Islam, are believed that the former are the aggressors and the latter the aggrieved. The War on Terror is highly believed to be targeted against Islam and the Muslim fraternity,<sup>122</sup> a continuation of the crusade, as once voiced by the American President G. Bush but later excused for it saying that he did not meant the historical crusade led by the Church.

### **Pakistan Role in International Interfaith Dialogue**

Unfortunately, after September 11, 2001, Pakistan through biased propaganda has always been linked to terrorist in the international arena especially for the Westerners. Since then, Muslims have been blamed for any kind of terrorism in the world. It is

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<sup>121</sup> Jamil, Mohammad, *Civil Service Interfaith dialogue, Pakistan*, 19/11/2008, : <http://www.cssforum.com.pk/css-compulsory-subjects/islamiat/50441-islamayat-important-questions.html>,

Visited: 18.04.13

<sup>122</sup> See, Ibid

considered that Pakistan is the hub for terrorist camps and training centers.<sup>123</sup> Based on The National Commission on Terrorist Attacks upon the United States Report, 2004, Pakistan involvement in terrorism is confirmed.<sup>124</sup> Many accused and questioned Islam for its true nature and its responsibility in these terrorist acts. Is Islam a religion of peace or terror came to the lips of every Westerners. Thus, the war on terror followed, led by the Americans and its allies. Pakistan becomes its main ally and its territory was used to carry out the so called punitive strike against the Islamist Afghanistan which was against the will of its people. Once again we can see policy makers or politicians and the common people at odds. In reaction, there followed tragedy after tragedy. Pakistan being an Islamic country became the main target for the terrorist fighters for its support to the Allies. She was as well targeted by the Westerners blaming her to be supporting terrorist and wrongly using the American fund in their fight against the terrorist. In this fight Pakistan's Pukhtoon section of its people that boarders the Afghans' territory finds themselves trapped in the war against terror for which there is speculative reason from both sides of the warring people. The Western allies say that the Pakistani Pukhtoon joined the war in solidarity for the Afghan Pukhtoon for they are of same ethnicity. On the other hand, the Pukhtoon say that they were force to fight against the allies in reaction to the killings of the innocents by the American fighter jets and drones bombings. Hence, all the blame of terror was put to the shoulders of the Muslims. Muslims, in this case

<sup>123</sup> See, *Pakistan's role in the War on Terror, Training ground for European militants*, <http://www.pakpasban.com/pakistans-role-in-the-war-on-terror/>, Visited:- 04.05.13

<sup>124</sup> See, Palit, Pardma Sinha, The 9/11 report: *Reaffirming Pakistan terrorism nexus, Strategic Analysis*, Volume 28, Issue 3,2004, <http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/09700160408450150?journalCode=rsan20#.UYSXjJGLuDM>, Visited: 04.05.13

Pakistani Muslims around the globe felt horrified to be linked to terror against their creed and country and thus felt forced to organize to contain the situation. Pakistani abroad and within, fell in a very difficult situation. Many rejected the American foreign policy and the war against terror was considered to be an aggression against the Muslims and Pakistan. In an effort to defend their faith, Pakistani scholars, writers, and thinkers in collaboration with other Muslims started to investigate and explain the true perspective of Islam from every angle to satisfy the query of the people in general. After a long struggle people throughout the world felt the necessity to understand the religion which they felt has given them so much fear and grief. Thus, began a flow of dialogue among the Christians, the main religion of the West, and Muslims worldwide. Pakistani Muslims abroad as new citizens of their host country, of them students, professionals, women, religious leaders and others engaged in dialogue with the Christians and others. As such we can see a new wave of interfaith dialogue emerging throughout the world.

#### **International concern over Pakistani Religious Minorities**

Pakistan is being projected to be a violent nation as can be testified from what is projected in the international media. This has lead foreign powers to voice their concern and the necessity to keep Pakistan under check and control. However, what is evident is that the interference of foreign powers in its politics and social matters is evident and has made Pakistan a troubled nation. Its minorities are being considered as exploited and harassed. An aggressive campaign is thus carried out against Pakistan where its Islamic identity and laws are questioned. There emerged many NGOs and other organizations promoted by foreign powers, religions, and the government, etc. They operate either

openly or in hidden forms. Interfaith dialogue and philanthropic activities are part of the work done and are growing rapidly specially among its minorities. Such work project a soft and friendly image of those organizations where no doubt can be casted against them if ever they are involved in the interior affairs of the country. Furthermore, interfaith activities are as well promoted by government agencies, whether democratic, autocratic, despotic or military governments. The ways interfaith activities are supported and promoted are being questioned by different segment of its people. They are seen biased as their work goes at a very slow pace and success is seen far away.

However, with awareness in the public through education, media and other social organizations, the need for interfaith dialogue has never been as urgent and great as it is today. Society is thus organizing itself. More and more cases of minorities' victimization, human rights violations and other form of discriminations and inequalities are being highlighted. Society, Media, Educational institutions are doing their best to promote interfaith harmony being conscious of its need in Pakistan to face the dangers of hatred and maligns against their country. But, sadly, the way Pakistan is being accused and maligned leave others perplex about their intention. This is because the world has seen such atrocities in other part of the world especially non-Muslims nations where the situation is far worse than Pakistan but no one seem concerned. Examples are Indian atrocities in Jammu and Kashmir, Israel in Palestine, Burma against its Muslims community, while Pakistan is being blamed for petty things which are inevitable in any part of the world and which have been a normal process in the evolution of humanity. Moreover, India which has witnessed so many Hindu deadly attacks against innocent Muslims, just to remind us the case of Babri Masjid, the Gujarat arsonist, the trains set

ablaze among them the 'SAMJAWTA EXPRESS,' yet India are cited among the greatest democracy of the World. Americans who are by far the worst enemy of humanity as they are responsible for the killing and massacre of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the Vietnamese during the Vietnam war, innocent Iraqi's, Afghani's and the inhuman use of the African soil, yet it is cited as the best democracy of the modern world.

On the other hand, in reaction to the many blame game, is seen the growth of religious and secular fundamentalism which will be discussed later during the development of this work. Although there is growing number of interfaith organization and activities, yet there presence is not felt in the community. Therefore, once again interfaith dialogue is not seen productive in this society. The call for the creation of more and more dialogue activities based on sincerity is ever pressing.

### **Emergence of Fundamentalism in Religion and Secular Set Ups**

In an attempt to work for a peaceful and harmonious society every stakeholders of dialogue and other organizations and religions are doing their best to succeed. But, consciously or unconsciously few are going to their extreme resulting in both liberal and religious fundamentals. By fundamentals we imply reaching far extreme in one's belief and thought. However, Religious fundamentalism, as defined in the dictionary is as follows:

“...is the act of religious groups advocating for the true teachings of the Bible and avoiding modern influence. It is also a reaction and opposition to modern ways of

religious teachings which was initially used in USA to depict the protestant community.”<sup>125</sup>

Although religious fundamentalism is not a new phenomenon, yet it is given a new shape in the modern society to coin the hardliners of religions. But, amazingly, while religious fundamentalism is targeted, there is a tendency where liberal fundamentalism is ignored.

For example, for the need of this work, it is worth mentioning here how an American politician accepted to reach far extreme to protect the ordinary citizens from the influence of the elite class. This may justify how extremity can be used based on one’s understanding of good. The following quotes are of William Jennings Bryan, who called on Democrats in 1912 to declare,

“as proof of [their] fidelity to the people,” their opposition “to the nomination of any candidate for president who is a representative of J. Pierpoint Morgan . . . or any other member of the privilege-hunting and favor-seeking class. . . ‘If thy right hand has offended thee, cut it off.’ The party needs to cut off those corrupting influences to save itself.”<sup>126</sup>

Here, it should be noted that to reach a just cause, extremity has been used to protect the people from the exploitation of the dominant class. Bryan was a “religious conservative and a political radical.”<sup>127</sup> He was both a liberal and a religious element and he fit

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<sup>125</sup> [www.ask.com/question/what-is-religious-fundamentalism](http://www.ask.com/question/what-is-religious-fundamentalism), Visited:

<sup>126</sup> Heim, David. *The liberal fundamentalist*, *The Christian Century*, 29/08/2012,

<http://www.christiancentury.org/blogs/archive/2012-08/liberal-fundamentalist>, Visited 27.11.12

<sup>127</sup> See, *Ibid*

himself the way he finds worthy to defend his cause. The same way the liberals condemn religious oriented person as fundamentalist and this is an attitude towards extremity. Most of the times, interfaith dialoguers call to keep away the religious fundamentalist, as their engagement are seen as an obstacle to dialogue. The fundamentalist, in turn, claim to be victims of stereotyping and cultural marginalization. They consider themselves oppressed.<sup>128</sup> Hence, the liberals' pretensions of impartiality could be challenged here. Their attitudes can well be termed as fundamentalist that is liberal fundamentalist. This is because they always try to impose their secular concept over the religious people, willing that ideological religion turn into secular religion.

### **Religious and Liberalist Fundamentalism in Pakistan**

Most of the dialoguers believe that religions are responsible to what is going wrong over the world. It has been termed as terrorism. Terrorism in its present context has also been defined as an irrational act of religious fanatics aiming at destabilizing civilized and peace loving people. The fundamentals of religions have been accused and blamed for the social mores and its identity crisis of the post-modern society. Farzana Shaikh — a highly regarded U.K.-based Pakistani scholar and Fellow of Chatham House in her new book, 'Making Sense of Pakistan (Hurst & Company, London)' argues:

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<sup>128</sup> See, Macedo, Stephen, *Liberal Civic Education and Religious Fundamentalism: The Case of God v. John Rawls?* Ethics, Vol. 105, No. 3 (Apr., 1995), pp. 468-496, The University of Chicago Press

That there is no hope for Pakistan unless it sorts out its identity crisis which, it says, is the root cause of the country being such a disaster. Indeed, in order to make sense of Pakistan, it is important to make sense of its identity crisis first.<sup>129</sup>

But unfortunately, the concerned theorist and politician never feel the pain to ask "Why?" or "Why Do Terrorists Keep Picking on the western society specially the United States and its allies?" However, common men do ask such questions. Their minds are deeply disturbed by the social, political, or religious injustice and hypocrisy they have been experiencing since long. Here terrorism emerges in the form of retaliation for the action of the aggressors.

Of the Pakistani society, the country is seen suddenly trapped under the fire of suicide bombings which it had never experienced in the near past. The people here know well the game of interest of the US since its independence 1947. Pakistan which was separated as an independent country from India had chosen to ally with the US as a powerful friend that could be of help and protection against their aggressive neighbors which were the Afghans and the Indians. But the US double standard was soon noticed when Pakistan fought its different wars with India. For the Pakistani such betrayal and hypocrisy of the USA were indigestible.

Moreover, Pakistan being a Muslim country and their brotherhood with the rest of the Muslim world could not be denied. What they saw was that the same USA at the

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<sup>129</sup> Shaikh, Farzana, *Making Sense of Pakistan* (Hurst & Company, London): <http://www.defence.pk/forums/general-images-multimedia/28059-identity-pakistan-ideology-islam.html>, visited: 01.11.12

grievance of their brother nations. The USA activities in the Middle East, from the bombing of Lebanon and Libya and their attitude toward the Islamic republic of Iran and the continuous bombing of the Iraqi people to the support of the despotic Middle East regimes and the substantial military aid to Israel, despite their endless torture and aggression inflicted upon the Palestinian nation are all considered an aggression towards the Muslims.<sup>130</sup> Such massacres of human beings which have taken many lives were never seen in the history of man. Even the Nazis were left behind. Furthermore, the decades of military, economic and political oppression and embargo imposed upon the Muslim population have left the people with good reason for hating what the US government does. It is now believed that the United States has created potential terrorists all over the world through its foreign policies. It is not only the Muslims who hate the Americans, the South-East Asian, the African and the Latin American have the same sentiments against them.

Such facts were hardly known by the Western World and the American citizens and its media. But fortunately, the 9/11 attack on the world mighty nation, the USA, took the world by surprise. Although a condemnable act, yet it took the people and media worldwide to reach the truth and its causes. They came to know how the foreign policies of the American government are responsible for the anti-American feelings throughout the world. But unfortunately, the American masses were duped again and the truth remained outside their reach. Most Americans could not believe that it was their foreign policies that ignited the terrorist acts against the United States in retaliation and revenge.

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<sup>130</sup> See, Blum, William, *Freeing the World to Death: Essays on the American Empire Terrorists in their own words*, <http://williamblum.org/chapters/freeing-the-world-to-death/myth-and-denial-in-the-war-against-terrorism>, Visited:

They were made to believe that the US is targeted because of its freedom, democracy, and wealth. The Bush administration, like its predecessors following other terrorist acts, has pushed this as the official line ever since the attacks. The quotation below could confirm this claim to a certain degree.

"The American Council of Trustees and Alumni, a conservative watchdog group founded by Lynne Cheney, wife of the vice-president, and Senator Joseph Lieberman, announced in November the formation of the Defense of Civilization Fund, declaring that "It was not only America that was attacked on September 11, but civilization. We were attacked not for our vices, but for our virtues."<sup>131</sup>

Suddenly, the American leadership and its people sang "God Bless America" and their then President announced the beginning of the "New Crusade".<sup>132</sup> Although later he tried to assure the Muslim that he didn't mean the old crusade led by the Christian Church, yet the world could not accept as the ground realities were so obvious. America, despite calling themselves the most democratic and secular nation of the world is seen fighting a religious war in the name of "War against Terror" and surprisingly the ex-Military President of Pakistan became the biggest non-NATO ally in their assault against the Afghans who share the same religious ideology and culture as theirs. Thus both the religious and liberals of Pakistan saw in their leadership as a betrayer. For the religious,

<sup>131</sup> Blum , William, *Freeing the World to Death: Essays on the American Empire , Myth and Denial in the War Against Terrorism: Just why do terrorists terrorize?* <http://williamblum.org/chapters/freeing-the-world-to-death/myth-and-denial-in-the-war-against-terrorism>, Visited:

<sup>132</sup> See, Coagula, Solvee, *America's New Crusade: Imperial U.S. vs Political Islam*, *OpenDemocracy*, 2009, <http://www.opendemocracy.net/forum/thread/americas-new-crusade-imperial-us-vs-political-islam>, Visited 30.08.2013

the Americans and their allies became Satan as their people and institutions were the target. For the Muslim liberals it was the American hypocrisy and double standard which was denounced specifically for their support for a Military ruler and the cheap killing of their kinds.

Quite cunningly, the Americans and their allies spy presence, as could be confirmed by the Raymond Davis case in the city of Lahore, clearly indicate their ill-intensions in this area. The continuous drones' attack targeting most of the times civilians is further damaging the sentiments of the people. The old game of "divide and rule" is being played at its best. Instead of pointing the real agents behind the social rift in the country, the blame game towards each other has sparked the spread of sectarian violence all over the country. This sectarian thinking has transcended all limits and the governments and the entire stakeholders of the society have failed to contain or reach any meaningful result. As a consequence, terrorism is growing and the fear of civil war is sounding as a future threat to the nation.

Taking into account all historical facts, the colonial past and the ongoing wars forced upon the people are proving traumatic to the entire nation. However, revivalist movement both among the traditionalist and modernist religious and secular nationalist are emerging. The former is seeking the past lost glory of Islamic rule e.g the Taliban and other Islamist Movements, while the latter are seeking democratic secular state and society. These are mostly the politicians and liberalist among Muslims. There are, as well, those who are seeking Islamic democratic system as claimed by our Islamic

Political Parties who are participating in the politics and election process of the country.

All are seen adopting fundamentalistic approach consciously or unconsciously.

Now that the scenario is clear, how can interfaith dialogue be successful if the root cause of the war and conflict and the changing society are not addressed properly?

Interfaith dialogue proponents should understand that keeping away or marginalizing the religious fundamentals is to be revised, as the truth is always camouflaged. In the name of democracy and their interest, the Westerners in the land of the Asians, Middle East and Africans' have terrorized the locals through the forceful use and imposition of their secular and democratic rules and institutions at the same time destroying their centuries of peaceful evolution. Considering the Western definition of fundamentalist, the author Davis Odell-Scott find that the West are themselves the fundamentalist in their approach to the weaker nations.<sup>133</sup>

#### **An International call for Reciprocity for Interfaith Dialogue in Pakistan**

No relationship is possible without reciprocity among Nations. In a world shaken by the two world wars and the fear for further aggression and evangelization from dominant Western powers had a very bad impact on the development of bilateral and multilateral relationships. The world saw aggression and colonization by the then super powers. Instead of understanding and cooperation among nations, we witnessed fear, hatred and conflict among them. Nations were reluctant to build relationship for fear of being occupied after being friend; an example is what the British, East India Company,

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<sup>133</sup>See, Odell-Scott, David, *Democracy and Religion, Free Exercise and Diverse Vision*, Fundamentalism and its Discontents, (Kent & London, The Kent State University Press) p.12

did in this part of the world. Such assaults in their territory were never seen. After the two World Wars ended and the Security council were established and later the United Nation emerged, people thought that the world will turn into a better place to live in as was claimed by the new secular and modern nations. Rather, we saw more conflict at international and bilateral level. The modern secular system could not give the world what it was promised to them. Secularism which claimed eventual death of religion and god was disillusioned. They immediately understood that the society cannot do away with their God and religion and started to investigate and research how religion organized them to come up to the solution of man so naturally and with much satisfaction. Now, recognizing the fact that Religion is a major factor in binding people together in peace and harmony, it is being sought to play an important role in the task of building peace and harmony. However, religion for the westerners was once considered to be the core issue that led to the warring state of the world. Then followed enlightenment and its fast growing led to modernism. Enlightenment was to do away with religion and the Church and build up secular societies where God and religion had no place. But soon the optimism of modern scientific reason seems to be faded away due to the shock of the world wars. The church again took the challenge and faced the threat that posed against the world evangelizations. At the same time developed the ecumenical effort of the church to bring unity among Christians. But, the carnage of the world wars forced the need to develop mutual exchange and understanding among nations and other religions. It became incumbent on the church to revise its policy and relation towards Judaism and Islam. The first World Missionary Conference in Edinburgh, 1910, shows how Islam was

recognized as a “living faith” “intense, more intimate and more comprehensive than sight”<sup>134</sup> As well, Vinoth Ramachandra points out:

“The Report dares to ask: ‘Have we in our modern theology and religion sufficiently recognized what Islam stands for – the unity and the sovereignty of God?’”<sup>135</sup>

This happened when on the October 13th 2007; an unprecedeted range of Muslim scholars and leaders issued the document: “A Common Word between Us and You” to the representatives of Christian traditions throughout the world, proposing a basis for dialogue between Muslims and Christians. The “common word” is from the Quran chapter 3, verse 64 which calls upon the “People of the Book” to worship of the one God. This is an implicit call to good relations between the faiths which is compatible to the “love of the One God, and love of the neighbor”.<sup>136</sup> Such teachings that exist in the holy scriptures of different faiths require reciprocity for a successful approach, understanding

<sup>134</sup> See, Sudwort, *The Church of England and Islam, Hospitality and Embassy - Theologies of Religion in Process*, Jne 2009, p.4  
<http://www.cmcsoxford.org.uk/downloadlibrary/mail%28Richard%20Sudworth%29.pdf>, Visited: 16.02.13

<sup>135</sup> See, Sudwort, *The Church of England and Islam, Hospitality and Embassy - Theologies of Religion in Process*, Jne 2009, p.4  
<http://www.cmcsoxford.org.uk/downloadlibrary/mail%28Richard%20Sudworth%29.pdf>, Visited: 16.02.13

<sup>136</sup> See, Ed. Miroslav Volf, Ghazi bin Muhammad (Prince of Jordan.), Melissa Yarrington, *A Common Word: Muslims and Christians on Loving God and Neighbor*, <http://books.google.com.pk/books?hl=en&lr=&id=UT7KISknWDoC&oi=fnd&pg=PR9&dq=%E2%80%9Clove+of+the+One+God,+and+love+of+the+neighbor%2Bbible%2Bquran&ots=0iHYAek8Tp&sig=YbLzC8nvNb4KATwQE0nDQnB5O3E#v=onepage&q=%E2%80%9Clove%20of%20the%20One%20God%2C%20and%20love%20of%20the%20neighbor%2Bbible%2Bquran&f=false>, Visited: 20.09.13

and good relationship to develop among them. While if one will profess commonality and the other will stick to polemical argumentations, then enmity and quarrel will prevail.

Therefore, Pakistan being a country of learned scholars and educationist who positively welcomes the idea of bringing peace and world free of conflict, has to respond to the call of the world for the establishment of dialogue among its myriad of faiths.

### **Part Three**

#### **Perception of Interfaith Dialogue among Different Groups and Individuals in Pakistan**

As stated earlier that different people understand interfaith dialogue differently, it is incumbent to know at this stage how different groups and individuals perceive interfaith dialogue differently. This attempt could shed light on how to work out theories to bring a common understanding to promote such dialogue among the people. Otherwise, the country will tire apart each one criticizing the other for not being cooperative to achieve success in building a peaceful nation. Thus follows an analysis of how the religions, the secular and common Pakistani understand interfaith dialogue

#### **Religious response to Interfaith Dialogue**

The post-modern world, which in my opinion started by the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century after the end of the cold war, and the fall of the Wall of Berlin, and the importance given to the works of anti-religious perspective like that of "The Satanic Verses of Salman Rushdie", have seen a re-emergence of the religious arguments. Thus,

the work of the American Orientalist, Bernard Lewis, in a 1990 Atlantic Monthly article entitled “The Roots of Muslim Rage”, followed by the famous “The Clash of Civilizations?” (Huntington, 1993), which later were re-written under more or less the same title but with little change that became “The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of Global Order (Huntington, 1997)” came at front of the public sphere. Huntington highlighted and analyzed the emerging importance of culture and religion within the field of international politics. Further debating this issue, it was found that these were the reasons why cultural identity based on religion, language, race, region, nation, clan or tribe, were gaining greater importance within the emerging global society, rather than the nation-state political and economic system as can be seen in the booklet of Vince Cable entitled “The World’s New Fissures: Identities in Crisis (1994: 4-5)”.<sup>137</sup> It is also wise mentioning here that nation-states were believed to be the cause for an eventual fade away or death of religion from the public sphere as were advocated by the West secular system and the Communist atheistic system in their politics. Conversely, religion re-appeared in the international sphere in reaction to a world doomed with conflict and violence, where Islam was associated to violence and terror. One can re-call the event in Kosovo, Chechnya, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Palestine, Kashmir and Afghanistan which are all related to religion and ethnicity. Shockingly, the 9/11 event in the United States turned the world toward a new development where the Huntington’s thesis ‘Clash of Civilizations’ got more relevancy. Today it is widely believed that the West and the

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<sup>137</sup> See, Weller, Paul, *The Clash of Civilizations Thesis and Religious Responses*, *European Journal of Economic and Political Studies*, 3 (1), 2010, University of Derby, [PDF] The Clash of Civilizations Thesis and Religious Responses: Visited: 11/03/2013

Islamic nations are at war.<sup>138</sup> This is further substantiated by the extension of the War on Terror on the Muslim world.

However, in critique of Huntington's thesis, the former President Katami of Iran proposed a "Dialogue of Civilizations". Later the United Nations took the follow up in naming 2001 as the Year of Dialogue among Civilizations. While at the 59th General Assembly of the UN in 2005, Spanish President Zapatero and Turkish Prime Minister, Erdogan, projected the "Alliance of Civilizations" initiative.

Hence, a new era of dialogue found its track based on dialogue for Civilization. Given that interfaith dialogue is directly related to religion, it became imperial to understand how religions or religious authorities interact and what could be their response against the call for dialogue. From Islamic perspective it is clear that Islam and its teaching are well established for dialogue with others. Unfortunately, it is regrettable that the same is not seen in other faith that is why there is reluctance in adopting such behavior that satisfies interfaith dialogue. And it is more regretting that even Muslims because of the absence of an Islamic world or constitution properly approved by qualified bodies of scholars, are leading a more individualist life which is not compatible to be more human or serve humanity. While, interfaith dialogue strongly favors for toleration and compassion and is in accordance with religious teachings, yet religion is not given its due consideration. For Muslims, Islamic values represent love, mercy, forgiveness, tolerance, and dialogue. Love implies belief in God and that love of God is the essence of

<sup>138</sup> See, Coagula, Solvee, *America's New Crusade: Imperial U.S. vs Political Islam*, OpenDemocracy, 2009, <http://www.opendemocracy.net/forum/thread/americas-new-crusade-imperial-us-vs-political-islam>, Visited: 30.08.2013

everything, the utmost source of all love. God is thus, the only source of all compassion and love, and people's hearts receive these values from Him. Therefore, any human relationship to develop to serve the purpose of interfaith dialogue should be in accordance with the people's relation to God. Hence, religion is very important as the only source of God's teaching for human beings is religion. Regrettably, religions are seen least involved in the process for interfaith dialogue. However, we will highlight some of their role played.

It could be said that because of a lack of knowledge about religion a few scholars or dialoguers of faith tried but failed to successfully come up with the idea for adaptation and integration and were at last rejected by all participants on the grounds that moral, ethical, and spiritual religious dimensions would often prevent individuals from adopting integration or adaptation responses.<sup>139</sup>

Despite that religion is thought of being a source of conflict, and that its role in the overall peace process is often being overlooked, yet it is widely believed that the importance of religion and religious leaders in the process of mediation is considerable. Leading scholars of the academic world based on their research as can be read from the book 'The Ashgate Research Companion to Religion and Conflict Resolution' are of opinion that, if religious traditions and teaching could encourage violence and conflict, so the same tradition can be applied to bring about for the resolution for peace based on their

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<sup>139</sup> See. Abu-Nimer, Mohammed, *Journal of Peace Research, Conflict Resolution, Culture, and Religion: Toward a Training Model of Interreligious Peacebuilding*, (USA: International Peace and Conflict Resolution Program, American University, November 2001,) vol. 38, pp. 685-704  
<http://jpr.sagepub.com/content/38/6/685.short>, Visited: 24.02.13

scriptures, teaching and history.<sup>140</sup> Here it could be concluded that from religious perspectives interfaith dialogue has the possibility to bring to the world its longing peace and harmony if properly worked upon.

### **Secularism and Interfaith Dialogue**

Secularism emerged in contrast or opposition to Religion or more precisely, to the rule of the Church in Europe. Religion was often cast as the demon of modern science, while secularism was believed to be the reason against the darkness of superstition. Science, which was believed, could eventually eradicate poverty, class distinction, caste and gender discrimination had gradually eroded. It is unfortunate that science could not fulfill its promise. With the passage of time and the failure of securing a peaceful and harmonious world as were projected by the secularist, religion re-emerged.

Feminism is another force that emerged from the secular set up and is as well seen as a dominant force in the modern society.

Hence, different studies have shown that the routes to modernity is not one but many. The role of religion in the emergence of multiple forms of modernity is imminent. Base on specific cultural conditions and interpretations of the 'modern project', the question of whether modernity, democracy and secularism are universalistic concepts or are, on the contrary, unique to Western civilization, are studied. The relationship of post-

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<sup>140</sup> See, Ed., Marsden, Lee, *The Ashgate Research Companion to Religion and Conflict Resolution (Religion and International Security)*, pub: Ashgate publishing Limited, England, 1988, [http://www.amazon.com/dp/1409410897/ref=rdr\\_ext\\_tmb](http://www.amazon.com/dp/1409410897/ref=rdr_ext_tmb), Visited: 12.03.13

secularism to the varied paths of modern development is also considered among researchers and theorist.

Even, science given to be an institution influenced by social, cultural, and economic factors, it is now believed that it could not do without the powerful force that religion represent in this new post modern world. Science which also claimed to be apolitical could not remain so.

A proper understanding of secular and modern culture in the light of contemporary religious resurgence, the concept that secular culture replaces religion, is not applicable to most of humanity. Even, in the West, post-secular societies are experiencing religious pluralism, and religion is acting as a driving force towards modernization in some places. This work is intended to drive readers to reconsider the theories of secularization through dialogue.

A living example is America while it is the world most democratic, secular and human rights observer, yet it is speedily driving towards religious conservatism. Here, it is important to note, that the Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, as reported by Reuters, declined to criticize the Army Lt.-Gen. William Boykin, deputy undersecretary of defense for intelligence and war-fighting support, who has told Christian gatherings that Muslims worship an "idol" and not "a real God," and instead praised the general's "outstanding" military record. In another speech, Boykin said God selected George W. Bush as president. His word is as follows:

"Why is this man in the White House? The majority of Americans did not vote for him. Why is he there? And I tell you this morning that he's in the White House because God put him there for a time such as this."<sup>141</sup>

He used such speeches at churches and prayer breakfasts to portray the U.S. battle with Islamic radicals as a fight with "Satan," But, such a speech by high rank officials of the American Army is verily not suitable in the wake of dialogue among faith. However, there are peace loving people like Mahmood Monshipouri who seeks to turn opposition into coalition. For him, the Middle East, where we usually find Islamists against Western secularists, he argues that these two should instead coexist harmoniously in the Muslim world.<sup>142</sup>

Considering the above facts, we could be in a better position to understand, the role of Pakistani secularist in dialogue. In Pakistan there are many movements sponsored by the secular systems. There are Interfaith Youth in Action (IYA), a network of diverse faith youth and a project of Youth Development Foundation (YDF) and local chapter of World Faith USA founded by Shahid Rehmat. It is a non-profit, non-government and secular organization. Led by young people from diverse faith, the IYA serves as a network to promote pluralism, mutual respect for religious diversity and bridge building among different faiths through interfaith dialogues, need based initiatives, friendly

<sup>141</sup> DUNHAM, WILL, *We're Fighting Satan, Says U.S. General*, REUTERS NEWS AGENCY, 10-17-2003,

<http://www.sitcomsonline.com/boards/archive/index.php/t-86703.html>, Visited: 19.03.13

<sup>142</sup> See, Quraishi, Asifa/ Monshipouri, Mahmood, *Islamism, Secularism, and Human Rights in the Middle East*, Human Rights Quarterly 22.2 (2000) 625-629, (Boulder: Lynn Rienner Publishers, 1998) pp. 257, <http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/hrq/summary/v022/22.2quraishi.html>, Visited: 19.03.13

relationship and human based coexistent.<sup>143</sup> It is a secular organization committed to interfaith harmony in Pakistan, with the objective to promote social co-existence and interfaith harmony among Pakistani youth. Recently the IYA spoke out the anti-Islam film and the violence it triggered.

The Pakistan Interfaith League is another interfaith organization in Pakistan.<sup>144</sup> Its leader Sajjad Ishaq is a member of the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf,<sup>145</sup> a centrist, progressive political party in Pakistan. These movements usually work in areas of conflict and try to help prevent violent conflicts before they start as it is claimed. They try reducing the impact of violence, and bringing harmony among communities in the aftermath of violence. However, their work is often ignored, this is because people aren't aware of their existence and importance in general, or simply haven't had access to information and contacts for local peace builders and their works.

These organizations are mostly sponsored by Western International Organizations like Peace Direct, a UK-based charity that finds funds and promotes local peace builders in conflict areas around the world.

Therefore, considering the above arguments it could be concluded that if religion can be used as a shield to promote interfaith dialogue, so why not religion be used directly and sincerely for the just cause for peace and harmony.

<sup>143</sup> See, Interfaith Youth in Action (IYA) Pakistan, *Insight on Conflict*,

<http://www.insightonconflict.org/conflicts/pakistan/peacebuilding-organisations/iya/>, Visited: 19.03.13

<sup>144</sup> See, Saeed Shah (2012-08-27). "Pakistani Muslim leaders support Christian girl accused of blasphemy", The Guardian, Retrieved 2012-08-28.

<sup>145</sup> See, "Interfaith League chief joins PTI". The Nation. 2012-05-13. Retrieved 2012-08-28.

### **Pakistani Perception of Interfaith Dialogue**

Pakistanis are in majority illiterate. They hardly know about the existence of any formal interfaith dialogue. However, they are very friendly about informal interfaith dialogue as can be assessed from their daily activities wherever they are found. Surprisingly, the same could be said as concerned the learned. Very few of them could be aware of the development of interfaith dialogue in Pakistan. Among those who know the majority shows indifference claiming that interfaith dialogue is only propaganda. However, for those few conscious of the importance of dialogue in this post modern area where we are facing a world full of terror and conflict, different stakeholders of the society representing different institutions find that interfaith dialogue is very important from societal, political, economic and development point of views.

While surfing on the net, talking to people and reading books we come across interesting articles and thoughts that project the variances of knowledge about interfaith dialogue in Pakistan. Before coming up with their experience let me elaborate my own experience of how I came to the study of religion and hence, my thesis on interfaith dialogue.

### **Researcher's Experience in the Quest of Knowledge of Religion and Interfaith Dialogue**

Recalling myself about my early youth when I was 20 years, once it comes to my mind that when I was quite young about ten years old, I accompanied my father to the mosque and what I experienced there. It was Esha prayer and my father was telling my mother about an important Imam coming to our village mosque to talk about our religion.

Hearing this I became much exited to accompany my father for prayer and more specifically to listen to that important imam. On hearing his speech and seeing what proceeded after the talk, that is zikrr (remembrance of ALLAH), and after that followed bayat (taking allegiance), I was amazed of what was going on. What I saw and realized that day was terrific. The method of preaching and actions accompanying those prayers were similar to the Hindus in actions and certain rituals. There were sandals, coals, fire lighted around and the followers sitting around the imam hearing some prayers came to excitation and started shouting in a strange voice and jumping on the floor. The imam told that these people are attaining spirituality and can see the unseen world. Then people started kissing the hand of the Imam and drinking water from Imam's glass as a sign of relatedness and oneness. Telling stories which he called karamat (miracles) and at the end holding a big piece of cloth that twenty people could hold together around it at a time and taking oath and allegiance implying that in any of our difficulty we will remember the Imam and ask him to ask Allah for forgiveness, help or assistance. Nothing was talked about the importance of Allah and His Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) or explanation on what is Islam and our responsibility towards it. Rather, the importance of taking bayat was focused. All these made me confused and nervous especially when I saw who are the people who were supposed to be achieving some spiritual visit/ascension and that these were manifested by violent movement of their body.

On returning home when I asked to my father, he was unable to give any explanation and was much embarrassed. Even when I asked the Imam of the mosque he told not to ask such question it is sin. For the resemblance of few actions with the Hindus rituals, the Imam told me that there is no answer for that and when we will grow young

man and with constant prayer we will attain such level that will enable us to understand. Not satisfied with these answers, I started sharing my views to other friends, which they related to their parents and friends and later in reactions I was taxed to be a Wahabi(a conservative Maccan imams' follower and considered to be a kafir (unbeliever). Disgusted with such behavior, I started thinking profoundly and instead of distancing from religion as was the trend in the society. I started to investigate about wahabi. I came to know about the existence of different other sects among the Sunni Muslims. After that I started visiting those different sects. The Tabligh jamat were busy propagating stories of sufis and awlias etc about their religious experience which were not compatible for man with modern education. Approaching Ahl-e-hadith brought to my knowledge about the different sects existing among themselves and how one is backbiting other's imam and at the same time depicting a negative face of Islam and how our Imams are expert in using foul words to discredit their likes. The ahl-e-Sunni of which I belonged, known in Pakistan as Barelwis they contend themselves with langars (food sharing) and nats reciting as if it was their rituals. None of them satisfied my quest of learning more about my religion. When I reach 17 years and I was in grade 11, studies at that time was not my priority as I was busy looking for an explanation of what is Islam and how some of its aspects resembles others religions, and why we are at odds with them. The college I was visiting those days was a private Hindu college, but its library was full of Soviets and Iranian magazines. Going through these books attracted me much that I stop going to the class and all my times was passed reading in the library. Here I came to know about religious fanaticism and Western imperialism and their hatred for Islam. Then once I

came across Maulana Maududi's books on importance of Islam and Ahmad Deedat's works on comparative religion of which I was very much attracted.

My next step was a change in priority, from seeking knowledge about Islam; I started to seek knowledge of the other. One question that haunted me was that why we are so common and so different at the same time that we were ready to shed blood to protect something of which we could not understand nor explain. Approaching different religious leaders from the Hindus, Christian Catholics, and Muslims Imams none could help me in my quest for knowledge of religion and answers to my questions. Finally, I met a group of Jeovah Witness preachers spreading the words of Gospel to the villagers. On approaching them I was delighted by their behavior and warmth while they were talking to me. If I had not come across Ahmad Deedat's books before meeting them I could have change my mind. However, I listened to them and trying to copy Ahmad Deedat way of refuting some Bible verses and arguments I found that this approach of mine will not lead me to acquire what was my need. Then I decided to change my approach and present myself as an observing student. Satisfied with my attitude of change, they offered me to visit my home weekly and teach me Bible, which I accepted.

But, finally after a year of studying with them the Bible and different literatures which are made to conquer heart and mind of students, they proposed me to convert and in return enjoy new identity and its benefits that is written in their guide books. But, with much respect for my Bible preacher, I excused myself not to accept his offer. On this he was quite embarrassed and after lengthy discussion he kindly asked me permission to curse me as per Jehovah Witness belief. I agreed and he proceeded with the curse. He took me in front my house and threw few pebbles and dust over me. But I was confident

that I would not be cursed as by that time my knowledge of Islam was enough to understand the attitude. At the same time listening to an Imam who came from Macca University, a graduate of Shariat and a charismatic leader for the Muslim had already influenced my mind and brought a change in the way of my thinking. Then I decided to step to Pakistan for further studies at the age of 32. First I reached Jamiat Ashrafia Lahore, after 8 month course in Dars-e-Nizami, I shifted to Islamabad after securing an admission in International Islamic University Islamabad at the Center for Basic Studies (CBS). After completion I joined BA (Hons) Usuluddin and my specialization was on Comparative Study of Religions. Although it was a very long way, I struggled and it was with much success that I completed my course. At present this work is my thesis for MS Comparative Religion. My experience helped me lot to overcome all obstacles in my way seeking for knowledge. At that time I knew nothing about interfaith dialogue nor did my adventure show any sign of research about such dialogue. But, the eagerness to know the religions surrounding me brought me towards studies of religions and hence interfaith dialogue.

Being in Pakistan, I came across Interfaith Dialogue Organizations and individuals who are spread throughout the country to work at grassroots level to create consciousness about interfaith dialogue in the society. Now, we will present Pakistanis' perception for interfaith dialogue based on the assessment of the interviews conducted with different members of the society.

### **Pakistani's Show of Indifference and Ignorance of Interfaith Dialogue**

While talking to friends concerning their knowledge and perception about interfaith dialogue or any of their activities most of the people did not show any keen interest. Majority did not have any idea of what interfaith dialogue is or whether such things really exist surprised them. Few who knew about dialogue were skeptic about its seriousness and sincerity. Many doubts whether interfaith dialogue, given that most of the organizations are from Christian groups and that the society comprises of a majority of 97% of Muslims and that they could not see their mosque or Imam involved in such dialogue, they showed reluctance to venture in this field or to talk about it.

Therefore, it can be said that dialogue among faith is not well projected in this society or it is in the hand of those whom already people are tired of them. Having a glance at what is the thinking of Pakistanis could help understand this situation.

Talking to Mauritian Ambassador in Islamabad in the year 2009, he very frankly and boldly said that these are all politics; there is nothing serious or real in it. It's just a waste of time. His wife who is a senior information officer at Hong Kong Bank shared the views of her husband. She even added that when dialoguers, politicians and policy makers do not share the same concept, obviously nothing concrete is realized.

Talking to students, very few really showed interest in dealing with the subject interfaith dialogue. For many it's just a waste of time and that they were of opinion that the stakeholders of faith dialogue are doing it for pleasure and money and are politically motivated or they are being used by powers who have hidden interest over Pakistan or simply because many think that those seeking dialogue are all part of the corrupt system that prevails over this country. For others mostly secular minded people, it's all disguised

form for continuity of missionary work or imperialism. Strangely enough, the students of Madaris were totally unaware of such activities in their areas or Pakistan. They claimed, if such is the case, then it is illegal for Muslim to participate. Their behavior proved that nothing is being done at educational level to promote dialogue among faith.

The same reactions as above were observed when civil servants were approached. The thing common among them was that both students and civil servant whether Muslims, Christians or other religion's members consider the other as friends, class mates or colleagues having good relations, helping each other in their daily activities and to the extent of their relationship they were found sincere to each other. But, unfortunately, when approached to the depth of their thought and talking of religion, although agreeing that there should be good understanding among each other, all the parties showed the same emotional perception, i.e. their exclusivist attitude, and that the other are in a wrong position as concern their ideology and creed. There was a kind of hatred that looked difficult to be overcome and that it is not an easy job to wipe it off of them. Further investigating about their mind set, it was understood that such hatred was primarily based on political ground inherited since the colonial powers were active in this part of the globe. Immediately, the idea of 'divide and rule'<sup>146</sup> came to mind, that is, the colonial powers used this method to divide the people they ruled over by creating mistrust and dispute among them based on their caste, race, ethnicity and religion etc so that they became weak and hence cannot opposed or stood against the rulers' interest. It seemed that I reached the root of the problem but again further surfing the mind of the people it

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<sup>146</sup> See, Tal, Lawrence, *Divide and Rule*, Journal of Palestine Studies, Vol. 24, No. 2 (Winter, 1995), pp. 84-86, : University of California Press, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2537739>, Visited: 28.04.13

became obvious that the root cause was even deeper and dated far away in history. It was identified that such hatred and mistrust against each other is a natural phenomenon that existed since human existence on earth. There are few who believed that it is the "natural sin" which is the reason why people quarrel. Others think that it is Satan who is playing his mischief in making people quarrel. There are those who believed that such dispute in society will not end until a messiah will come and save the world from destruction of humanity. There are others who think that such conflict will not end so long the world is divided between the haves and the haves not. It is noted here that all these are justifications against what is going on and everyone has formulated his own explanation to the existing conflicts and poverty. It is all different explanation given by different religious thought to the problem human is facing. But the fact is that there are people of power who for the sake of exploitation, they always used religion as a hindrance to their inhuman approach. The ignorant and weak layman could not understand what is going on behind their innocence. This fact is well expressed by Karl Marx in his explanation on the relationship between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie. Even today, in Pakistan, there is a relationship and understanding between the religious authorities, capitalist and the rulers. This could explain the unquestionable respect and obedience of the people to their leaders. Ordinary people believe in their religious leaders to the extent that they are the pure and sinless beings in this world. Where these leaders stands or ask to support, it becomes an unconditional contract for them. But, despite their support these people continues to suffer from their daily miseries. There problem seems to have no end. However, hope in their eyes that their life will be better soon is present. But, silence in their lips against their master's inefficiency showed their incapability and fear to take any

action. They suffer, endure and a deep wound engraved in their hearts were easily sensed. As a researcher, being impartial and questioning at every single idea emerging from the interviewees, I felt that this should be exposed and true education and understanding of the religion and society should be imparted to the common people, so that this global era can bring back true understanding for each other and cure the malaise among us all.

Moreover, there existed another perception among the people that was revealed through the investigation carried out. It was: one thinks that there should exist among us a kind of hypocrisy, formality or complaisance in our societal business. So that, the prevalent ideologies like democracy, socialist or communist etc run smoothly without being derailed in its process. The poor society deprived of education and other facilities of their life, although they know the game for power, they cannot oppose as they have faith in their leaders. But, behind such thinking resides all kind of mischief that always creates bids of elements that could destroy societies, rather than binds societies in fair play. The stronger in power always lie, cheat and manipulates society in such that they always preside and exploit the weak and the poor. Here it could be understood that people know they are being exploited but they refuse to acknowledge the disparity and exploitation they are facing, as they feel helpless and no one to approach for salvation. These people are kept in rift and divided so that they may not revolt. Hence, in such case when dialogue is proposed among them, they show reluctance as they know that all these are futile and drama to deceive them further. This explains their indifference to the call of interfaith dialogue. It is felt that interfaith dialogue is just a slogan and unfortunately a failure in itself. As concern failure of interfaith dialogue, Saudi King Abdullah, in his speech at Madrid conference, in July has clearly put it, "Most of the dialogue between

religions has ended in failure."<sup>147</sup> As concern Pakistan, dialogue is seen confined mainly to fight for human rights and poverty and that most of the activities for interfaith dialogue is formal and limited within the four walls of conference rooms. The public at large are unaware of the activities, while those who know are skeptic about its validity. Therefore, these organizations target only a selected few to satisfy their media coverage and financial organizations for their funding. Unfortunately, success is never realized by the union of the few selected ones only. Such assumption will always be detrimental to dialogue among faith. Now it is for the stakeholders of dialogues to take those innocents and victims of the society into confidence, show them what the fact is, so that they can believe and find solace in the dialoguers' truth if ever they possessed. Then only, this research concludes, interfaith dialogue could be a success and acceptable at the grassroots level of the society. Because, whatever is talked of or decided in the name of society, it is not the selected few who are the subject matter, but it is the whole population, that is the society. If the people are kept ignorant it implies that interfaith dialogue is just propaganda, there is nothing serious and sincere that can bring peace to the people.

After all, based on the demographic reality of Pakistan, it is only a negligible few that are interested in interfaith dialogue. Many saw that such formal dialogue is not a necessity for the nation as the problem does not arise from within the society. Pakistani's relationship with their neighbors, be it Muslims, Christians or any other, they are happy with each other. There are much understanding and cooperation among them. Yes there are isolated cases of dispute that results in violence but it is not alarming. The other are

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<sup>147</sup> See, In July, Saudi King Abdullah while opening an Interfaith Conference in Madrid had said, "*Most of the dialogue between religions has ended in failure.*"

not seen targeted, neither is there any fear of ethnic cleansing like that of Bosnia Herzegovina, Kosovo, or India where the Kashmiri are at threat. Never such thing like Babri Mosque destruction or Gujrat killings and arsonist has happened in Pakistan. While Muslims in India have faced so many atrocities and mass killing from the Hindu mob, Pakistan has never seen such atrocities and killing against its minorities. And the killing of Myanmar Muslim minority, what if such killings happened in Pakistan against its minorities. Unfortunately, the Western media in its prejudice against the Muslims and its hatred has always misuse its media against the Muslim worldwide. Sadly, every Christian ignorant of Islam is made to believe by the church and their rulers that the Muslims are devils, their Prophet (PBUH) are the anti-Christ etc. While Pakistan is being maligned through the Western media, the Pakistani media is not seen countering them as it ought to be and neither do they present the true picture of their religion. This is either because they are ignorant of facts and that this is not news for them or because they are not to speak against the West as they are to abide by their rule 'either with us or against us'. 'Us' here implies the USA, which their then leader, Bush had implied to build their new international policy that was the 'New World Order' since the Gulf War against Iraq started.

Quite disappointed with what I came across in the search for the relevancy of interfaith dialogue in Pakistan, I approached, one professional for interfaith dialogue, working for the civil servant to raise consciousness of interfaith dialogue. When he was asked how he responds to the work of interfaith dialogue among different movements in Pakistan, his opinion was that although dialogue is necessary at global level, yet Pakistan being a Muslim country is not subjected to it. This is because in his opinion, referring to

history, for the Muslims there is no need for dialogue, as Islam is already a religion that preaches plurality. Dialogue is necessary when somebody was in a dominating position and suddenly finds itself turning towards a weaker position and is losing ground in the society. He argues, while Muslims are the fastest growing community in the world, Christianity is steadily going down. Europe has already been de-Christianized, and, there is enormous effort being done to revive Christianity given that the world is experiencing a revival and return of religion in the public sphere. America being the world sole super power and itself a conservative Christian state need to see a world dominated by Christianity so that their Big Plan, that is, 'The New World Order', could be realized. Although the professional civil servant works for interfaith dialogue, he said it should only be propagated in conformity with Islamic teachings of dialogue, while the rest, he thinks, are all working for their individual interest or for some hidden agenda.

Those people voicing freely against dialogue seem wrong at first sight, but a deeper study of what they say could give ample reason for their being skeptic or reluctant about dialogue. This concern could be justified when one is sure about the role of the sole super power, the USA. In an article published in May, 1991, Mr.Chomsky said with regards to the Third World Countries:

These lessons are directed to several audiences. For the Third World, the message is simple: Don't raise your heads. A "much weaker" opponent will not merely be defeated, but pulverized. The central lesson of World Order is: "What we say goes"; we are the masters, you shine our shoes, and don't ever forget it. Others too are to understand

that the world is to be ruled by force, the arena in which the US reigns supreme, though with its domestic decline, others will have to pay the bills.<sup>148</sup>

In such context, how a learned Man could deny such words when coming from the super powers. How these dialoguers, who are as well targeting the Middle East, could counter the super powers in this competition of taming the Middle East? Most of the dialoguers are partners of the USA, and how can they not work for the interest of their Masters? Unless they see things changing and there is a humanistic approach to the problem of the world. But, unfortunately countries like France, Italy, Turkey and others had to stand beside the US to ensure their booty of the Gulf War, despite that the Third World Nations were condemning the Gulf War.<sup>149</sup> In this situation, how these so called civilized nation will incline for peace in the Third World countries when war is needed to promote arm race and control over resources.<sup>150</sup>

As for the Christian Catholics in Pakistan they are working hard for dialogue in both creating and supporting institutions where Christian and Muslim can work together to build better understanding and cooperation. The Church, using its own institutional influence to accommodate Muslims and their needs has been considerable. They have to support the World Church Council in their mission. The Protestant Christians are skeptic about the true nature of dialogue and think that it is all politics. These were the views of few Fathers and Preacher when they were approached to give their opinions.

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<sup>148</sup> Chomsky, Noam, "What We Say Goes": *The Middle East in the New World Order*, Z Magazine, May, 1991, <http://www.chomsky.info/articles/199105--.htm>, Visited: 28.04.13

<sup>149</sup> See, Ibid

<sup>150</sup> See, Ibid

## CHAPTER 3

### INTERFAITH DIALOGUE A SOCIOLOGICAL ANALYSIS

#### Part One

##### Sociological Importance of Interfaith Faith Dialogue

The 20<sup>th</sup> century had witness a change in the history of the world, from modernity to post modernity. Modernity until 19<sup>th</sup> century was dominated by race discrimination and modernism. But post modernity was marked by an attempt to defeat racism and modernism. Modernity made people to believe in the possibility of human progress, rational planning and faith in science and technology to solve human problems. Sociology which developed alongside modernity was for the same purpose. Religion was believed to fade away and would be replaced by sociological aspect. But not long enough this belief reversed as modern society could not sustain their claim to solve the problems of humanity. Thus, modernity gave way to the postmodern era that witnessed a return of religion and its values. In consequence, the return of religion especially the Western religion could not preserve its original aspects. Due to this fundamental change that is the lost of original religious values, Communism, New Religious Movements and Cults emerged. However, for many sociologists this change was insignificant, as many still ignored the religious aspect of the society.

Although ignored, the truth was that the postmodern era experienced the growth of a consequent religious diversity in different societies. This was explained by the

colonial policies in transporting laborers from one colony to the other and even to their home land. Later this trend gave way to emigration of their families and relatives leading to an increase of emigrants and their faith which was brought with them. Although Jurgen Habermas, renowned German Sociologist, was of the view that with the growth of their offspring, the problem of their religious identity would vanish and they would adopt the faith of their fathers and grand fathers host country. This was proved failed as the present world is experiencing a revival of religions and growth of religious fundamentalism and religious radicalism among the youth. This could be explained as a reaction to the international policies of the world's super powers and their prejudicial attitudes towards religions of the other. In this changing era even Jurgen Habermas and Peter Berger and other sociologist have recognized that no more can religion be ignored from the public square.

Although much had been done by sociologist to engage issues of race, gender, and other important markers of identity, religion had typically been left out of this conversation. It is a critical time for educationist, sociologist or other stakeholders of the society to engage religious diversity seriously. One important way to address this issue is through interfaith dialogue which is the basic discussion of this thesis.

Many works have been done, yet the problems seem unsolved, rather, it has become more alarming than before. This work has in its initial parts highlighted the issues as undertaken by interfaith dialogue and how it is understood in Pakistan. Now, in this chapter, a sociological analysis of interfaith dialogue is carried out to better understand the issues of religious diversity and its failures up to the present day. It should

be noted that in this present era, sociologist have recognized the marginalization of the religious aspects of the society and hence, they are now involved in the field of religious studies. So, a sociological analysis of interfaith dialogue in Pakistan could be of more benefit to study the society and sort out: How a pluralistic society could be better entertained and encouraged? How a positive impact could be created in this country and hence worldwide.

Following the trend in this work to introduce the subject, the perception of the researcher and a preview are presented for the readers to understand how the work will follow its course, until it reaches its objective.

### **The Researcher's View**

When I was a young boy and I became conscious of the religious diversity as is earlier presented in this work, I wanted to acquire knowledge about religions surrounding our society. But, the general trend in a Muslim society was the belief that Muslims were the only people whose religion was from the true God and the rest were followers of false religions. It was further believed that there was not any need to understand or inquire about those false religions as one day all false religion will die and only Islam will prevail or exist. We were very conservative, exclusivist and reserved. We never talk religion among friends or people. Although we had friends of different faith yet we avoid religious discussion. All we knew was our college life, sports and work place where hardly religion was in the forefront. But something unnatural were going on around us: our politicians always talk of religious representatives based on the majority; our national sports teams were marked by religious appellations like 'Muslim Scouts', 'Hindu

Cadets', 'Tamil Cadets', 'Fire Brigades' for the Black Christians and 'Dodo Sporting' for the White Christians. These gave the idea how religion was manipulated for the game of power. But people were reluctant talking of religion because of racial and religious prejudices. Religious based influence in sports and politics were always marked by conflicts and hatred where hooliganism was a major concern.

But in Pakistan things are different. Here Muslims are highly in majority, the minorities are insignificant in numbers. Yet, the facts are different. Western media manipulates<sup>151</sup> information as is the trend to tarnish the image of Muslims through propaganda, prejudice and stereotyping. Western media is also known, despite claiming to be free under the democratic principle, playing a double standard policy against the Muslim nations where Israel is being tolerated and pampered while it is the most dangerous nation in the Middle East as she threatens other nations and carry preemptive attacks on her enemies without the consult and approval of the United Nation or the Security Councils. One example is the Western media's consistent refusal to include Israel's nuclear weapons in the current debate over Iran's enrichment activities.<sup>152</sup> Pakistani as well feels that they are being treated with prejudice and unnecessary fear for their country being treated as a terrorist hub. Islamophobia became a major factor that destabilized the smooth life of the city dwellers. While Pakistani minorities have never

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<sup>151</sup> See: Moore, Joseph, *Selective Journalism: How Western Media Manipulates Information and Context to Conform to Official Narratives on Iran's*, OpEdNews, 2012,

<http://www.opednews.com/articles/Selective-Journalism-How-by-Joseph-Moore-120731-288.html>, Visited: 10.05.13

<sup>152</sup> See, *Ibid*, p.1

suffered any major kind of ethnic, race or religious discriminations as are the cases in other countries, its contrary is being propagated. However, it is admitted that there are problems in this country but they are insignificant. Compared to other nations, Pakistan is highly underdeveloped and the rate of illiteracy is as well very high and corruption in the country is alarming. In these circumstances there are problems of different kind. True study could show that these problems are not based on religious hatred. There are problems of human rights, women rights, gender discriminations, child labor abuse etc but all these are due to poverty, bad governance and foreign influence in the affairs of the country. While the famous Hudood Law is not that problematic, yet it is given exaggerated coverage to further curse the Muslim creed.

Considering my own personal life as discussed earlier was marked by a search for knowledge of different religions and this led me towards a better engagement of my own religion, Islam. Having read Anne Marie Scheimel, Karen Armstrong and few other books make me increasingly inclined towards the study of religions and society. My university engagements as well further pushed me toward further studies of religions, until my MS project led me towards this research work on interfaith dialogue. By now, many literatures and researches have shown that mostly the conflicts are political, racial and economic, but, everywhere religion has been used as a cover to protect the blame from going to the secular. This is because politics, economics and fight against race discriminations are all presumed as aspect of secular set ups, although it is not true. But, contrary to such belief, the nature of the problems are not similar everywhere, hence the blame could not be generalized.

Therefore, there is a need that a comparative analysis is carried out among nations to point out the real issues for conflicts. Many secularists think that religions and religious diversities are the root causes for conflicts. At this point everything religious should be scrutinized to see how far these claim is sustainable or not. When compared to the kind of religious diversity that exists in the Western countries to that of the Eastern countries there is a great deal of difference. The Western countries host emigrant workers from every part of the world, which ultimately led to significant diverse religious minorities. The question of adaptation and acceptance of the other in their societies became an issue. These minorities faced lots of problems and they were psychologically forced to a life in Diasporas. These people were brought to the West as workers. But, unfortunately they were not considered among their fellow human. They were totally neglected, hence forced towards building their own social environments based on their history and particularities associated to their economic, political and cultural specificities. At this stage the problem was not religion but, it was race, ethnicity and culture. It is true religion were imported with them and later developed and emerged as a uniting factor among the respective minorities. This later created a confrontation with the hosting religion which was Christianity. Given that Christianity is a missionary religion, she could not accept emergence of any other religion in her territory. Nevertheless, school and college life, work places and the world turning into a global village had a positive effect in the relationship of the people towards religious diversity, pluralist society and cooperation. Although the problem of religious identity was serious, yet little was talk at the public sphere. The questions on religion were intentionally ignored as the media and the politics were secular. But as truth cannot be suppressed, religion being real emerged

by all possible means and today religion has again come in the public debate and there is a rival of religion in general. Hence, in my quest for interfaith cooperation, the much conflicting world dominated my questioning mind mainly when I could see the kind of the news broadcasted in the last quarter of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The news channels were full of conflict's news around the world among religious communities. In Northern Ireland Catholics and Protestant were at odds and so many terrorist acts were committed. Hindus and Muslims in India, Orthodox Christians and Muslims in the Balkans, the Christian America against the Muslims in Iraq were all subjected directly or indirectly to religious sentiments which caused conflicts. But the fact is that none of such conflict can be solved religiously, in truth it is all political issue.

As for the Eastern countries the realities were different. Here, the hosts were the colonized and the guests were the colonizers. The colonizers (guests) were not treated as second grade citizens but they imposed themselves as the masters and the native in their own lands were made their subjects. This was done through subjugation and use of force. Furthermore, the colonizers, who were obviously the Westerners, had brought with them the Christian missionaries with the intention to convert their subjects. But to their surprise in the Middle East, contrary to other parts of their colonies, their Muslim subjects were resistant and later rebelled. So in such context what could be more a cause of hatred and conflict?

However, when I reached Pakistan for the study of religion, I was enthusiasm by the opportunity in front of me when I came to know that the International Islamic University in Islamabad had a department of Comparative Study of Religions for which I

joined in. But to my surprised among students there was much reluctance towards this department as many were of the opinion that studying others religions is not legal for Muslims. Even, there were campaigns against student enrolling in this department to abandon this field. Moreover, I could not find any student from other religion nor teachers in the University. However, what was to my appreciation was that I never heard or read any conflicting situation of the kind that was going on in the Western societies and India. What was surprising was that: these Western societies were always cited in the media and political sphere as models for human rights and democracy. But that fact could prove the contrary. Democracy implies equal rights for all, but how is it that among Indians there are hundreds of thousands starving, millions are unemployed, thousands are imprisoned and tortured, racial prejudice is rampant, the poor are victimized and discrimination against minorities is alarming and such are the situation in most part of the so called civilized world.<sup>153</sup>

Based on the above 'mise-au-point', I think that studying Pakistani society for the context of interfaith dialogue from its sociological perspective could shed light on the realities about the minorities' existence and growth in Pakistan. It could also help promote better cooperation and inter-relationship among religions in the society. However, the minor problems faced by the minorities here have to be studied so that it

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<sup>153</sup> See, Ennals, Martin, Ed. Desai A R, *Violation of Democratic Rights in India, The Struggle for Human Rights*, Popular Prakashan Private Limited, Bombay, p.3,  
[http://books.google.mu/books?hl=en&lr=&id=9i5sNMNh\\_uIC&oi=fnd&pg=PR7&dq=violation%2Bdemocracy%2Bindia&ots=XF5tz0BAbb&sig=nIQKWWLkxVWb87Sb3rRPvTxrPlc&redir\\_esc=y](http://books.google.mu/books?hl=en&lr=&id=9i5sNMNh_uIC&oi=fnd&pg=PR7&dq=violation%2Bdemocracy%2Bindia&ots=XF5tz0BAbb&sig=nIQKWWLkxVWb87Sb3rRPvTxrPlc&redir_esc=y), Visited: 27.06.13

could reveal the exact nature of the conflicts and its solutions. This is what this work is intended for and proposes for a proper method towards actions.

### **Pakistan Society and the Western Policy**

Contrary to the Western societies, the collapse of traditional religion and urbanization were not an issue in Pakistan or for the Eastern countries. Therefore, the problems faced by the Western societies and their measures were not applicable to Pakistan nor did the approaches to their problem could be the same. The end of religion and the death of God<sup>154</sup> as were predicted by the Western Philosophers and Sociologist were not relevant for Pakistan. Pakistan stayed a highly religious society where all the religions evolved peacefully. It is only the Western influence in the matter of Pakistani politics that started all kind of blame game, human rights violations or interfaith conflicts and so on. However, the present era proved the Western theory about the secularization process failed and vanished as these days everywhere in the world there is a revival or return of religions. Until today, it seems that the issues of the 21<sup>st</sup> century will be that of

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<sup>154</sup> Ed. Kolb, David, *New Perspectives on Hegel's Philosophy of Religion*, State University of New York Press, Albany, USA, 1992,

<<http://books.google.mu/books?id=P7Dz2Yb23X0C&pg=PA1&dq=end+of+religion%2Bdeath+of+god&hl=en&sa=X&ei=jAnMUZmSLsGBrQfo44G4Cw&ved=0CC4Q6AEwAA#v=onepage&q=end%20of%20religion%2Bdeath%20of%20god&f=false>>, Visited: 27.06.13

Zondervan, Antonius A. W. *Sociology And The Sacred: An Introduction To Philip Rieff's Theory Of Culture*, University of Toronto Press, Canada, 2005,

<<http://books.google.mu/books?id=79EF2QxnUEYC&pg=PA3&dq=end+of+religion%2Bdeath+of+god%2Bsociologist&hl=en&sa=X&ei=XBDMUfqwDY3jrAeQ3YCICQ&ved=0CDQQ6AEwAQ#v=onepage&q=end%20of%20religion%2Bdeath%20of%20god%2Bsociologist&f=false>>, Visited 27.06.13

faith based issues where the threat of a clash of civilization is predicted as propelled by Huntington or with little variances.

The fact that America represents the home for every nations due to emigration, any problem facing any nation anywhere in the world have to have an effect in the USA. This could be the explanation for the terrorist attack of September 11, 2001 and the spread of war in the Muslim countries. But, the war in the Muslim world carried by the USA and its allies is considered to be against the Muslims. This has spread Muslims radicals, hence terrorism in our planet. These Muslim radicals think that revenge against America could be their salvation in front of God. And, the fact that most of the emigrants throughout the world are Pakistanis, naturally, the probability that the Pakistani emigrants could involved in terrorist act is high. If condemning any of these Pakistanis, one blames Pakistan or the Muslim world would not be wise as it is prejudicial and it creates hatred and worries against each other. Even any terrorist act committed anywhere in the globe by any Muslim national, and Pakistan being blamed for that is again unacceptable.

What could one say seeing the Muslim Ruling history in Subcontinent? It is well known that during that whole period there could not be seen any single issue of atrocities against the minorities at the basis of religion. The much shouted conflicts and violence against religious minorities started after the colonial power, of the British Kingdom, reached the Subcontinent in the name of trade. However, since its independence, Pakistan, had managed to contain its harmony except few incidents that could not be compared to the kind the so called civilized world of the West has in their history.

Pakistan these days, after the September 11 event in the United States and its aftermath, has seen a growth in terrorism and foreign influence in its territory. This is no doubt due to her alliance with the War on Terror led by the Americans. Pakistan being a Muslim nation is blamed for the terror worldwide. In consequence, the Americans being Christians in majority, the Christian world are held responsible for the American aggression in the Muslim world. Now, the American supports the government of Pakistan and its minorities, basically the Christians minorities. Hence, they are both considered as supporting the American war policy in the Muslim world. The same way Pakistani Hindus are identified as supporting Indian policy in Kashmir and the atrocities against Muslims in India. There are elements from both the majority and minorities that are influenced by the extremist elements of their respective fundamentalist groups. In consequence, Pakistan which was once known for its internal harmony has gradually lost its stability and turned to be a disturbed nation. Suddenly, the minorities are voicing their grief of being spared from their identity and they are facing threat of being marginalized in every aspect. Therefore, whether the problem is real or fabricated, it is just to destroy Pakistan as it is claimed by the majority. Therefore, there is a need to address these problems to save this country and its plural society. As there are many ways to address this problem and that this work concerns interfaith dialogue, it is through this medium that we will try answering questions that arises.

It is clear, although the problem is political and game for power, the medium used to disturbed Pakistan is religion. Pakistan is a Muslim majority country and its minorities are important to make the colorful and peaceful Pakistan a reality. Instead of nurturing the interreligious conflict it would be wise to create a loving atmosphere to see the

progress of Pakistan. This means that we have to take religious diversity seriously, and engage interreligious engagement in a very calculated way. I think if we get that right in Pakistan, she can play a role model for other nations and in this way prevent the country from foreign influence and terrorist action in its territory.

Pakistan having a strong religious ideology, Islam, which values both individual freedom and contribution to the common good, and that The Holy Qur'an says that "God made us different nations and tribes that we may come to know one another" (Quran 49:13), can easily work out a just theory on which to work out how to address these problems. If the society were a fundamentally secular society then it would have been difficult to adopt religion as the base for making peace and harmony for its people. Therefore, seizing this opportunity we should engage with religious diversity in such that religious, racial and cultural pluralism be attained.

In a world where media is influenced by the United States and that the Americans by a majority of 40%, say that they have some prejudice against Muslims<sup>155</sup>. And that Muslims has to go through stricter security procedures at airports and over one third of Americans believe that Islam is more likely to promote violence than any other religions.<sup>156</sup> When such is the case and that Western media never omit to broadcast any malign news against Muslims, obviously the world would see Muslims as terror loving

<sup>155</sup> See: Saad, Lydia, *Anti-Muslim Sentiments Fairly Commonplace, Four in ten Americans admit feeling prejudice against Muslims*, 2006,

<<http://www.gallup.com/poll/24073/AntiMuslim-Sentiments-Fairly-Commonplace.aspx>>, Visited: 13.05.13

<sup>156</sup> See, Patel, Eboo, *Religious Diversity and Cooperation on Campus*, Journal of College & Character, Vol. IX, No. 2, 2007, <[http://www.gmu.edu/programs/icar/ijps/vol2\\_1/Reyschler.htm](http://www.gmu.edu/programs/icar/ijps/vol2_1/Reyschler.htm)>, Visited: 08.05.13

people, which is the case today. And Pakistani in his turn considers being stereotyped and subjected to prejudices as they are targeted for being an Islamic Republic. Hence, hatred for each other is at its ever high and Pakistan faces more and more pressure from its neighbors, international bodies and its own people for change. Pakistan is thus in a very complex situation, the international bodies for peace and harmony and its secular and liberal segment of population are vowing for a Western democracy, while its majority religious people are for a moderate Islamic democracy as it has the solution for these problems.

But, the fact that the basis for a positive evolution of a diverse society is positive relations among its different communities, it is important to know how to build these relationships. In this work interfaith dialogue is sought to be analyzed to work out for cooperation and understanding among diverse society. Pakistan being a Muslim Country, it is obvious that Islam will be the vantage point from where to seek for such work. But, the fact that Pakistan has a diverse society it is incumbent for her to take into confidence all the existing religions that consists of its society to curve the way for success and progress. Religious pluralists hold that people believing in different creeds and belonging to different communities need to learn to live together. It is therefore a sociological, not theological, pluralism.<sup>157</sup> Society has to be studied scientifically and theories have to be developed on how to deal with different components of the society. Which institutions are going to be given the responsibility to lead the work? How could Pakistani be prepared to accept or reaccept differences and maintain a common life?

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<sup>157</sup> See: Ibid

Given that Religious pluralism is a form of positive cooperation among communities that is attained not only through the policy of coexistence and consensus but is as well realized through a natural dialogical process that ensures the well being of each component of the society. It is therefore, important that society must be understood and how dialogical process be promoted.

It is no doubt that the Western world has divided life into profane and spiritual. What is religious is hardly considered to be profane and vice versa. And all those things which are based on pragmatism are considered secular and that which has no material benefit is religious or superstitious. But Islamic thought is totally different. Islam is believed to be a complete religion, a combination of both the material and spiritual. In this case, one has to use the material means to reach the spiritual heights which are morality, ethics and sincerity etc in every aspect of life. Any element of the society is material whether in the form of matter, rituals, good governance and economy. Every religion teaches its own way to realize the eternal bliss which is attained after the person goes through this world until he reaches the next world through death. This way of life is called religious duty for the religious person and secular duty for the secularist or atheist. While both the duties are the same, one refers it to God and the other refers it to the people or the society.

Here a great confusion has been created and left un-debated and unsolved. The Westerners think that their secular society is right and just in all aspect and that religion has nothing to do with the secular. It is that confusion which is creating so many hurdles in the way of the society to better organize them. Being among the super power, the West

is of the idea that imposing their way of thinking in those Eastern Religious societies will do the job. But unfortunately the reverse is happening.

While the West has created the separation theory everything has been categorized theological or sociological and hence they leave all the theological questions off the table to work for a sociological pluralism that responds to the pragmatic realities of everyday life. But, any attempt to blindly follow the West or that the Western powers trying to impose their methodology of work could be doomed to fail.

In fact, Sociology concerns with the scientific study of the society. The society comprises of formal and informal social set ups where human beings are involved in different interactions. This behavioral attitude is the sociological aspect of the society. Now how interfaith dialogue is analyzed in the society gives the sociological analysis and result in the society.

Man at the market interacts with each other and his behavior creates an impact on the person concerned. If the person selling goods shows good ethics of his commerce and the buyer behaves as a good citizen in respecting his ethical values or vice versa immediately the person refers this to his religious appurtenance. He immediately understands that this is the result of his religious teachings and nothing other than respect and inquiry about religions begins and this is interfaith dialogue. The same happens in every aspect of life whether at work, on playing grounds, at sport, in shopping malls, at the bus stand, seaside, at the mechanic shop or whatever comes in ones day to day life. Unfortunately such approach is not found necessary in the domain of interfaith dialogue, and it is ignored and termed as informal dialogue.

If the so called informal dialogue were considered important and effective measures were taken up to promote such dialogue, people could have the opportunity to live out the service ethic in their own tradition and learn about the same in others. Relationships with people from different traditions on the universal value of serving others would have been built. This could help talk to develop among each other and know the uniqueness in ones tradition. The participants need not to abandon their claims to absolute truth, or even the call to proselytize. One can feel absolutely free to preserve his ideological belief and find ground of cooperation to fulfill the need for the plural society in which he finds himself in his day to day life. If men are able to understand him, his identity and the society in which he leaves and at the same time understand the other, the value of being human is realized. But, unfortunately the contrary is happening and the world is losing its societal values of it is the one most important that is the dialogical value, which is ultimately leading to economic and political crisis.

## **Part Two**

### **Interfaith Dialogue and its Effect in the Society**

It is earlier discuss that dialogue is communication and sharing of information. People action is only possible when there is successful communication. Given that the society is the major subject for interfaith dialogue, obviously, if the job is done and communication is reached, no doubt society is subjected to changes. New perspective of life and cooperation will emerge and hence influencing the socio-economic and politics of the country.

**Loss of values and their global effect: Economic and political crisis**

Various parts of the social structure of the society are related and integrated to each other in such a way that influences the whole society. Material, economic, political and religious values are those which are directly related to the society. All these values are dependent to truth, justice and respect of each other to make social life possible and hence, the survival of human beings. Thus, a just social order is created in the form of social unity, social solidarity and cooperation to achieve their goals.

On the other hand, when such values are not respected then follows conflicts, contradictions, exploitations, oppressions and distortions. The fact that major changes have occurred in the society like that of industrialization, urbanization etc., it has affected the existing structures of the society. Capitalism, individualism and consumerism emerged in the new structure of the society where religions and its values are being targeted. Again with the new force of productions that emerged due to the change in the social structure, there arose new relationships and values. Wealth felt in the hands of the capitalist. Means of productions became privately owned and profit sharing felt within these forces. These situations led to exploitations and oppressions of the working class which ultimately led to conflicts. Politics, same as economic forces became controlled by the dominant forces of the new societal powers, again followed exploitations and oppressions and thus conflicts. To curb these conflicting situations laws were formulated to contain and protect the changes. While the ruling class was protected, the weaker sections of the society were subjected to discriminating laws. Hence, dissatisfactions and revolts gave rise to new ideologies like that of communism and New Religious

Movements, where old religious values faced a setback. . However, the facts in the Eastern societies are different. The changes were not mainly economic and political but it was colonization and imposition of the colonial values which affected the society that gave way to revolt and conflict especially in the Middle Eastern and Muslims societies. Pakistan although emerged later, she inherited the messed up situation of the Subcontinent created by the British colonizers. Religion and religious values suffered a lot under the new order of the world, but contrary to the West, there emerged revival of the old religious order. Whether Western or Eastern the world had already gone through a transformation which gave precedence to religious pluralism and globalization in a new world order, bringing with it a mess up situation where the dialogical process need in the society is lost. Therefore, taking these facts into account, interfaith dialoguers can work to revive the lost dialogical process for the reconstructions of the lost societal values.

**Religious Diversity and Interfaith Relations in the Global Age: Resurgent of religion and New Religious Movements (NRM) and their impacts on the Pakistani society.**

Religious Diversity and Interfaith Relations in a Global Age is very important to be understood. Globalization is not an unexpected, nor an imposed phenomenon. Its tendency was always present and has been growing until in our present era it has become the major issue in the public sphere in an attempt to understand societies and save the world from an eventual clash that is haunting man and his future. Considering the sayings of Carlo Fonseka, a Sri Lankan scientist: "Indeed the capacity to globalize has been

encoded in our genes,”<sup>158</sup> here the author tries to make people understand that humankind is the only truly global creature on earth that can survive in any environment, including even outer space. This human capacity, that is the ability to globalize, is not a new phenomenon but it existed since human existence.

Globalization is that part of human life which is traceable since human communities first began to migrate in search of water, food and shelter or to escape natural calamities. Technological innovations made possible for human to travel, communicate and trade more easily and rapidly over distances. In our present era, this human capacity is increasingly rendering the world more and more a global village. Sociological study of the society has much to say about this globalization. This aspect of human evolution is more under scrutiny while defining the relationship between religion and socialization in our society. As very often religion is targeted to be the source of most of the conflicts in the world, it is important to consider the facts behind the causes of the warring countries in the Middle East, Nigeria, Sudan, India, Yugoslavia, Chechnya and others and recently the uprising against the despotic government of Tunisia, Egypt, Libya and others. A fair and sincere study reveals that the causes of these wars are not because of religion, but, religious background is found secondary element in these wars. Nevertheless, the Indian theologian, Michael Amaladoss, considers, drawing the fact from the wars, religious identity today “is a source, not of relationship but of conflict.”<sup>159</sup> But, this work points out that religious identity is being used by the fundamentals,

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<sup>158</sup> See: Ariarajah, S. Wesley, *Religious Diversity and Interfaith Relations in a Global Age*, p.10, [http://www.flinders.edu.au/oasis-files/chaplains/geoff\\_papers/ariarajah.pdf](http://www.flinders.edu.au/oasis-files/chaplains/geoff_papers/ariarajah.pdf), visited: 25.05.13

<sup>159</sup> See, Ibid, p.10

subjugated nations, or the occupied nations as driving force to unite against the usurpers and occupiers who advance their thought for the game of power behind the cover of democracy. But Western democracy when analyzed sincerely from a sociological point of view and as well analyzed from other related theories is mostly a lie that is being imposed on innocent people. David M. Estlund, on his work on Democratic Authority exposes what the true face of democracy represents. The following quotes can be of much support against the democratic shield:

“That some views are qualified even though they are not true”<sup>160</sup>

“Democracy has no tendency to produce good decisions”<sup>161</sup>

“Authority imply: if laws are created for implementation then the authority has to make you morally required to do so, otherwise the implementation is illegitimate.”<sup>162</sup>

Here, the author implies that democracy is supported although truth has to be suppressed, or even no good decision is taken and that human have to be manipulated to legitimize their decisions. This idea is important to be presented here because if democracy which based on a perfect theory for human evolution is being used to manipulate human for the sake of power, then the probability that religion could be used for the same purpose by the same people is unquestionable.

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<sup>160</sup> See, M. Estlund, David, *Democratic Authority- A Philosophical Framework*, Princeton University Press, Princeton and Oxford, P.4

<sup>161</sup> See, Ibid, p.1

<sup>162</sup> See Ibid, p.2

Another important factor for globalization is that the world is not faced only with a demographic globalization, but economic and political globalization as well, which needs scrutiny in the context of interfaith dialogue. Globalization not only affects social behavior in man to man relationship, but also affects economic and political life of the society. Any change in the society has both positive and negative effects. The current economic, political, and social reality influenced by the secularization process of the world has direct conflict with the applications of the Islamic ideals and values in a Muslim community. Contrary to Europe that has succumbed to the secularization process and turned away from religion into atheist and secular society, Muslims are the only nation of the world which has resisted this diversion. In consequence, Pakistan being a Muslim country is facing a conflict of identity between those who want to preserve their identity, that is, the traditionalist and those who want to follow the change, the secular thinking parties of the society.

Moreover, the secularization process had direct effect in the evolution of the people. With the introduction of new educational order, people became more aware, knowledgeable and conscious of their surroundings. Industrialization and urbanization further contributed towards such modernization. But the consequence such as inequality, growth and a mad race of the military machine, the spread of atomic bomb, standardization and destruction of diversity, and excessive rules and regulations in the name of the common good, led man toward the self and religion was seen losing space in the public sphere as predicted by Karl Marx, Peter Berger and others. But later as the

analysis of Peter Berger shows the world has seen a re-emergence of old religions and the emergence of new Religious Movements.<sup>163</sup>

Concerning Pakistani society, being faced with literate and illiterate, poor and rich, society could not identify itself which way to move. Between the traditionalist and the liberals, this country is stuck in the milieu of this fight and conflicting ideas. Pakistanis are confused which way to go as both religion and capitalism enables individuals to regulate every aspect of their daily lives.

Within Pakistan the religious trend has both political and societal touch that influences the decision of the people. For example, taking into consideration one of the most organized religious authority of this country, the Jama'at-e-Islami formed by the late Maulana Maududi, represented classical Islam for long, but, the powerful economic forces have transformed the Jama'at-e-Islami of Pakistan from a classical form of Islam to a more reactionary form of Islam.<sup>164</sup> Such economic forces with the help of media represent the major factor of change in the society, politics and economy of Pakistan in an attempt to build a new society where individualism and consumerism dominates, that claims to create more educated, more secular and prosperous Pakistanis with more democratic, modern, having more respect for human values and more freedom.

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<sup>163</sup> See: Keskin, Tugrul, *A Comparative Analysis of Islamist Movements in the Neoliberalization Process: Jama'at-e- Islami in Pakistan and the Fethullah Gulen Movement in Turkey – Reactions to Capitalism, Modernity and Secularism*, Virginia, 2009,  
<http://scholar.lib.vt.edu/theses/available/et11192009-142211/unrestricted/TugrulKeskinDissertation904334706.pdf>, Visited:07.04.13

<sup>164</sup> Ibid, p.iv

To better understand the economic, political and the value related issues of the Pakistani society it is relevant to remind how the emergence of this society took place. It is to the knowledge of the whole world that the emergence of Pakistan was based on a unique development, where the colonial power of that time, the British Raj, after the mutiny of 1857, wanted to create a strife among the existing Muslim and Hindu society to better control their subjects, of the kind that were not known before. Hence emerged educated secular Muslims elite to lead the Muslim's struggle and here started the idea for a separate nation. But Maulana Maududi and few others were against such separation.

While the gradual growth of the economic market policies have been contributing towards distancing Muslims from religion and the rapid move of the liberals for a more secularized and modern society, it has instigated a de-secularization process within Muslim-populated countries that resulted in the emergence of an Islamic-oriented moderate class. But for some sociologist the de-secularization of the Muslim society is temporal and will soon fade away due to new market conditions.

Few of the concepts that drive the Islamic movements of the country could be understood from the following words of the Qur'an and few ideals of the Jama'ats:<sup>165</sup>

The Qur'an, Al-Maeda (verse 44): "Those who do not rule in accordance with God's revelations are the disbelievers."

Islami Jamiat-i Tulabah: "The rule of man over man is exploitation; submission to Allah the creator is the only way to emancipation."

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<sup>165</sup> Ibid, p.viii

Maududi, The Islamic Way of Life: "The chief characteristic of the Islamic Concept of Life is that it does not admit a conflict, nay, not even a significant separation between life-spiritual and life mundane. It does not confine itself merely in purifying the spiritual and the moral life of man in the limited sense of the word. Its domain extends to the entire gamut of life. It wants to mould individual life as well as the social order in healthy patterns, so that the Kingdom of God may really be established on the earth and so that peace, contentment and well-being may fill the world as waters fill the oceans. The Islamic Way of Life is based on this unique approach to life and a peculiar concept of man's place in the Universe."

From the above mentioned ideas which regulate the concept and actions of people here in Pakistan, it is obvious that to impose interfaith dialogue in its present form looks impossible. How to convince these people to accept to drop part of their belief and accept new or modified forms of religion is quite questionable. It is for the proponents of dialogue to analyze, evaluate and decide. Otherwise, instead of peace, ground for more conflicts will open.

#### **West and Islam dialogue and their social effects in Pakistan**

While talking of social effect from one country to another, it is imperative that there should be constant dialogue going on among them. In this age of globalism where we all agree that the world has become a global village and communications is much easier than anyone could realize. Electronic media is one of the best means that serves this purpose. Of it, internet is such a mean that has overcome all kind and every possible means of hindrances that are used to curb information or control them. Another important

mean of communication is books, especially after the September 9<sup>th</sup> 2001 event in the USA when the World Trade Center was attacked. Many books emerged throughout the world and especially in the United States with truth and fatwa's of different kind and intensity but which were later curbed by the US authority.<sup>166</sup> Internet has become so useful that many seekers of truth after the Western propaganda against Islam and the blame for different terrorist act on Muslims throughout the world that many "Islamic decision making" and religious "remedies" to life's problems are taking place more often outside the traditional channels of authority.<sup>167</sup> Such popular attitude of the Muslim has forced the once dormant ijihad to pop up towards revival. Hence, Islamization of knowledge is becoming common everywhere and so does in Pakistan. There are many prolific British-Pakistani intellectuals, among them Ziauddin Sardar has written considerably on topics ranging from the social consequences of science and technology and the future development of Muslim societies to cultural studies and the impact of postmodernism on religious belief.<sup>168</sup> The fact is that the 9/11 attack on the US has generated more tension and its escalation throughout the world. The Western countries in their dealings with their Islamic components of their societies have to face more and

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<sup>166</sup> See: Bunt, Gary, *Islam in the Digital Age: E-Jihad, Online, Fatwas and Cyber Islamic Environments*, London: Pluto Press, 2003. : Pluto Press, 2003, p.98.

[http://i-epistemology.net/attachments/850\\_Ajiss21-4%20-%20Book%20Reviews%20-%20E-Jihad%20and%20Online%20Fatwas%20and%20Cyber%20Islamic%20Environments.pdf](http://i-epistemology.net/attachments/850_Ajiss21-4%20-%20Book%20Reviews%20-%20E-Jihad%20and%20Online%20Fatwas%20and%20Cyber%20Islamic%20Environments.pdf), Visited: 14.07.13

<sup>167</sup> Ibid p.99

<sup>168</sup> See: Sardar, Ziauddin, *Islam, Postmodernism and Other Futures*: London and Sterling , Pluto Press, 2003. P.99, [http://i-epistemology.net/attachments/850\\_Ajiss21-4%20-%20Book%20Reviews%20-%20E-Jihad%20and%20Online%20Fatwas%20and%20Cyber%20Islamic%20Environments.pdf](http://i-epistemology.net/attachments/850_Ajiss21-4%20-%20Book%20Reviews%20-%20E-Jihad%20and%20Online%20Fatwas%20and%20Cyber%20Islamic%20Environments.pdf), Visited: 14.07.13

more with the emerging Islamic fundamentalism and as well the growing political force of Islam and the moderate and ordinary Muslims as well. The West is seen confronted from different angle in dealing with the above mentioned Islamic tendencies.<sup>169</sup> The escalation of these confrontations is also considerable as the world is interrelated with each other. In this context Pakistani feel much concerned about the behavior of the Christian dominated Westerners. Therefore what is common between the West and the Muslim world is very important to be sort out. It is as well important to consider the factors responsible in the growing tension in their relationship. After all it is incumbent to work out solutions to appease these tensions. This, however, will only be possible when the two sides of the contestants agrees to let the principle of positive dialogue based on sincerity and mutual respect rather than opportunism and ideological supremacy dominant while dealing their foreign policy.

Another important fact is that these Westerners, that is, Christianity and the Islamic world have been at odds since the advent of Islam in those regions despite the facts that they share most of their ideologies about monotheism as common. Mostly, they share many social values based on their respective religion that can contribute to a peaceful and harmonious environment. Islam is known for its positive relation with their neighbors throughout history and what their holy book teaches in this regards. And so does exist in the Westerners faith that has to be elaborated and put into practice where love and justice is talk about.

<sup>169</sup> See: Saikal, Amin, ed. Amin, M. Virginia, *Islamic Perspectives on the New Millennium*, Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, Islam and the West Challenges and Opportunities, Singapore, 2004,p.19, [http://books.google.mu/books?hl=en&lr=&id=RA4uJDY1M0EC&oi=fnd&pg=PA19&ots=9MUplFmXjF&sig=XASvrwBq3tWoR4IfJhnlRXzuKBQ&redir\\_esc=y#v=onepage&q&f=false](http://books.google.mu/books?hl=en&lr=&id=RA4uJDY1M0EC&oi=fnd&pg=PA19&ots=9MUplFmXjF&sig=XASvrwBq3tWoR4IfJhnlRXzuKBQ&redir_esc=y#v=onepage&q&f=false), Visited 14.7.13

Not long before religion was always a theological issue and so did religious pluralism and it was well a phenomenon that existed only in few countries or cities of the world, but this reality has changed and the world has become a religious plural world, where mostly all countries and cities are affected by religious pluralism. These religious tendencies of the people have its effect in almost all sphere of life. The sociologists who once disregarded religion are all in the forefront of these debates to study how to understand and contain this change in the people. Amazingly the religious authorities in Pakistan are seen unaware of this change in the society and how it affects their area of influence. Although there are much work done throughout the world from both religious and secular tendencies to give the explanation of such change and better propose for a proper integration among the different religions and cultures, yet the consciousness is not seen developed in Pakistan. However, the Pakistani secular researchers are actively doing their part of the work, but their effort is seen affected by double standard policy,. While, they are looking for cooperation with the different religions, they are being more fundamentalist in their approach with their Muslim brothers, willing them to give up their traditional values and adopt their secular attitude. Again it is an attempt that could bring more hatred than love for each other.

But what impact has the processes of globalization, with its pressures for integration, brought to religious traditions, and what are some of the challenges we face in a global age? It is to this question that we need to turn our attention.

## Part Three

### Analysis/ Evaluation/ Conclusion

#### Analysis

Dialogue demands objectivity and sincerity. This is a statement that all stakeholders of dialogue agree. Truth should not be compressed; rather all kind of doubts and fallacious statements and proposition should be debated and refuted. Then only can past errors and grievances be addressed which may bring in respect and understanding among people. Furthermore, people can become more knowledgeable as it provokes more inquiry and understanding of the self and the other. Interfaith dialogue activities can help to resolve such issues and create the willingness to reconsider one's faith in the light of how others relate to their tradition. Understanding the faith of others could strengthen rather than weaken any person's commitment to his or her tradition. It can also help to shift from the hatred, exclusion and demonization of others and construct a more humane and peaceful world. Now, how one considers truth depends very much on what is meant by truth.

Christians talk of truth as salvation, the hereafter and judgment. This is only possible when one believes in Jesus as Son of God and his resurrection.

Jews believes in salvation but does not see it in Jesus Christ and neither is he considered as Son of god.

Truth for Muslims is belief in total submission to ALLAH and having faith in the Last Prophet of God, Mohammad (SWA) and as well believing in others Prophets from Adam (AS) to Jesus and their revealed books. Salvation for Muslims is in Jihad of the self up to jihad to protect their creed and propagating the word of God.

Hindus believes in Karma and Dharma, which leads to Moksha. Their final salvation is reached after several re-birth take place.

Buddhists salvation depends on their reaching the stage of Buddhstava.

Thus, a trend of different kind and ways of salvation follows among different religions whether old religion or New religions. In such case, how interfaith dialogue could be realized if every religious preachers or activist will preach his own way of salvation? This question bring to the mind that there ought to be a theory which can bring a synthesis among the beliefs so that dialogue becomes a reality. But how far this thinking could be sustainable? As this work is concerned with the perception of dialogue in Pakistan and that the perception is more or less the same in other part of the world. It is inferred that there is a presumption that is adopted which help dialogue to take place otherwise formal dialogue has to be put to an end. The presumption is that dialogue is not a complete debate over the conflicting truth claimed by different traditions. Otherwise dialogue has no place for religious believers, as believing in the religious truth is a mean for salvation for them. One cannot preach others to come and convert, rather it is expected that one is bound to make listen what they mean by salvation, and as well listen what salvation means to the others so that others can understand it. For example, Christians have to make Jews understand how Jesus is the promised messiah of the Old Testament. And also

Christians have to understand how present Jew who does not find salvation and the promise in Jesus, sees what salvation is and who is Jesus. If this is not so, then there is no common ground for dialogue between different traditions to take place. The same apply to Islam or any other religion. In this way a proper interfaith dialogue paves the way towards truth and sincerity and ultimately peace.

But, dialoguers believe that there are other grounds of understanding, like that of Justice on a grand social scale, not only an individual to individual scale. Question arises, is there no justice being practiced or promoted in religions. The answer is obvious, every religion teaches justice at societal and community level. So, why we should spend so much time and money in formulating theories to work on justice?

Another sphere of work is that dialoguers are looking for common point of departure such as: The fact that the three major traditions, Christianity, Islam and Judaism are all monotheists and refer to the same source base on the basic stories of Noah, Abraham and Moses. This is good thinking but not wise because it implies that dialoguers either don't know history and truth or they just ignore it to build new theology and hence another way of getting rid with true religion or the truth.

Religious bases for dialogue exist in every religion especially for social justice etc. But why it happened that today we are still seeking ground for dialogue. Why societies are at odds to the point that countries like America started the game of mass killing since the Hiroshima and Nagasaki events. And it is still continuing in another form where people believe that she is killing for peace and justice using weapons of mass destructions against defenseless people. For the Americans, democracy, justice and fair

play has different meaning and for the rest of the world it has different. In the name of democracy and justice they are seeking petrol and another raw materials and precious stones. They have invented nuclear weapons to threaten other weak nations. They have created laws to prevent its proliferations. They are as well not signatories of any kind of existing laws that prevent the use of nuclear weapons. But, not all nations and people are fools that do not understand their games of power, dominance and double standard policies. It is their attitude and their way of dealing with their foreign policy that made freedom loving people aroused and raised resistance against them. In return these resisting forces are termed terrorist. Questions should be raised why double standard policies is existing in a world that is believed to be a civilized world. If such behaviors of the super powers and their protectors prevail then its wasting time to make people understand that we have to be civilized the way they are civilized. So, how interfaith dialogue could be justified when there are country and nations that are not ready to respect and subject to fair play.

Moreover, self interest and mutual distrust of power group can pose almost insurmountable obstacle. Such groups exist within super powers as described above. They are as well political, religious and other societal groups including even dialoguers that are unwilling to work sincerely as for many it has become a source of pride, income and power that can be utilized in different situation for selfishness.

Another belief is that the fundamentalist as well does not see from the view of dialogue as for them everything is already fixed and set to their religion and understanding. Here question could arise: How far the statement is true. Are

fundamentalist really the way they are presented or they are made to behave the way they are interpreted. When these fundamentalist are kept away of the dialogue, no doubt that part of the society will always be in trouble. Hence, exercise for dialogue will continue and the result will be the same as usual failure and effort and money will constantly be invested for peace which look ironical in this context. Thus, nothing more than a fruitful business is guaranteed in their favor.

There are sayings that for the fundamentalist there is little room for dialogue as they see only in their religion. Again its looks a prejudgetment as we in Pakistan we can see how religions are active during any sort of catastrophe. Help comes from every side; never any question arises that such and such religious affected will not be included in the help and support program.

Question arises, what it would be like if people of different religion treated each other with contempt rather than with respect and understanding? No community could prosper with such mentality and no country could prosper and remain peaceful if it harbors hatred and bigotry. A glance at history can answer these questions. To say only a little, let's have a glance a history that could shed a thoughtful insight of how it was for at least 5000 years of which we have records. The conflicts that we can see today and the animalistic behaviors of human being in our contemporary world had never existed in our near past. Our forefathers, philosophers like Iqbal, Dantes, Machiavelli etc all talked about governance, society and freedom of people and rights of life and property. Freedom for them and the society were relevant but under the law. But what we can see today is that Man wants total freedom. Such freedom as nudity, homosexuality, prostitutions and

killing for honor in protecting a group of people to the detriment of the other are sought to seek happiness. But never in the history of the world we had observed such freedom; rather people lived under the law of religion which kept society in control and as such our forefathers were prosperous so that we inherited a world where it made happy to live in. But what we are doing now would no doubt leave a world equivalent to hell for our coming generations. Today every kind of mores is tolerated in the society. Drugs are distributed under the eyes of the law, prostitutions are flourishing as well. Laws are being created to satisfy human animalistic behavior such as homosexuality, guy marriages, target killings and so on. If one believes in religion how he can tolerate what goes against the law. Man made laws are another thing. Such law can never be considered universal law. A group of people cannot decide for another group of people who differs in every aspect of life. For the world to prosper there should be a universal law that regulates the matters of life in this world. If men at this age are not able to understand his own nature and the nature in which he is dwelling, how he can prepare a law that can safeguard the nature, its inhabitants and their future. So long that universal law was observed the world was at peace. It's true that there were conflicts that existed since the existence of man in this planet. But these conflicts were natural and for survival, not for destruction as can be seen today.

It is this that explains how the world was prospering in peace and harmony. Our planet was never at risk of eventual speedy extinction. Men today have become a threat to our own nature. Global warming, nuclear threat, biological bombs, mass killings are few to mention. As for the scriptures it is full of guidance, but are people especially the champions of societies' peace seekers ready to adopt these laws. The Qur'an orders

Muslim to respect other religion and be polite to their followers: "There is no compulsion in religion." The same could be found in other religions but unfortunately such debates are prohibited in interfaith dialogue.

### **Evaluation**

Interfaith dialogue is seen doing its best to achieve the goal of peace and a conflict free world. But that did not seem achievable as their efforts are always disrupt at the end of the day because very often they come across political forces who do not want religion to come in the forefront as mostly the political parties are secular and oppressive. There is, no doubt, secular peace building movements exists, but they as well has to use religious language, text and prayers when addressing conflict situation to attract the emotion of the people to achieve peace. One should not forget what Karl Marx said. The capitalist (powerful) and proletariat (layman), for both religions were of importance. Religion became a protest against the exploitation of the bourgeoisie. Marx treated religion as opium of the society as they found relief against their weakness to confront the capitalist. While the capitalist manipulated religion for their interest to keep in control the weaker against their injustice and an eventual confrontation. The same can be seen today the secular and the religious are at odds. The former is projected by the powerful and the later by the common man.

Another important fact is that how to change attitude and behavior of individuals and groups in grass root level and then how to change the same at community level. The fact that changes happen over time, it is important to evaluate and plan for the future taking account of the present and the past. All factors and institutions that bring changes

in the behavior and attitude of the people should be taken into confidence to create awareness. They should be ready to undergo changes themselves first and then create effective communication with the public to reach the goal. This is because the world of conflict and intervention is too complex for simply trying attempt to dialogue. Hence, participant should work to create new political order, new effective media, and new educational reforms. Time factor is very important as is evaluation of the work done. Behaviors of the people should be measured again and again to check how far the measures are effective in achieving the goals and objective of dialogue.

Evaluation should not be on biased methodologies; rather face to face contact with the public should take place to know how far different programs and activities have reached the public effectively. Media if properly and objectively monitored can play a very important role in helping communication to reach the public at large and redirect public behavior towards peace and cooperation in a plural society.

Consciousness should be created among super powers to help reduce or eradicate their thinking of being mighty and stop the game of superiority and learn how to respect small, weaker and underdeveloped countries and neighbors. They should be conscious and knowing how there arise rich and poor countries. These powers should not use the international organizations for peace to manipulate and make use in justifying their aggressive method of dealing with terrorist or freedom fighters. Such language as: 'either be with us or face the consequences' should be unanimously condemned and action has to be taken against aggressive attitude and language in disrespect of other countries.

Interfaith dialoguers or peace building activist should not wait for a country to be destroyed, its people to be exterminated or massacred and destruction of its infrastructures, then to intervene. This is because before any country goes into war or conflicts there are enough time for dialogue and diplomacy to work out solution. The United Nation is never seen talking and taking measures to stop countries like the USA to carry out war against poor and ill equipped countries. More often the arrogance of the belligerents is provocative and humiliating that indulge countries into wars. It is also to be taken into consideration the game of selling weapons. It is a fact that to sell weapons wars are to be created intentionally as weapons making is not a cheap deal; it's a game of trillions.

But after all if realities of human beings are taken into account, we will see that humans are built to kill. Humans are killing machines and they are killing. Since human existence on earth men have been fighting each other. This is a universal truth that both religious and secular set up accept. But the reason behind wars was for survival not for wealth. Unfortunately, those wars evolved into wars for power and wealth and it is continuing today in a more dangerous and inhuman way. In this context, how interfaith dialoguers could continue their job effectively need to be understood through proper evaluation of the root cause of human nature of wars and its history. If it is assumed that the grass root level should not be the public, but, the rulers, politicians, media, governments etc. then they are to be understood, that is these class of the people need to be protected and promoted. And this is what is going on, because the general people, religions and other institutions are being manipulated to favor the elites, and stops any kind of revolts. Then only, it implies a world of peace and tranquility as we have seen our

past was before modernization of politics, religions and secularism. Karl Marx well said that religion is the opium of the people. The layman was seen building their hope that religion can only take them out of their misery, while the bourgeoisie were manipulating religion in their favor to stop any revolt of the layman against them and their wealth. During the renaissance the secular was used to counter religion and send it to its death and now in our post-modern era interfaith dialogue is being promoted to be the mean to do the job where the secular has failed. Today, people are mostly educated and media is able to reach most of the people everywhere in the world. During the middle ages and the early modernity the facts were not the same. Information could hardly reach common man as means of communications were not easy and illiteracy was high. Today everyone is accountable to their people. The rulers should not forget that they are the representatives of the people; they will have to face the people in case they are not up to their responsibility. They have to remember that it is a mutual contract between them and the people; they can't deviate anymore because of awareness.

### **Conclusion**

To reach an appropriate conclusion of the work on the perception of interfaith dialogue in Pakistan, it is necessary to understand few basic vocabularies and terms used in this research. As such we have society, religion, modernity and post modernity.

### **The Society**

Society in a broader sense refers to societies such as the human society, sport society, educational society, economic society, political society and so forth. But here, we

are concerned with the community of people sharing the same territory, common goal and objective. Though, they may differ in religious beliefs and cultures, like the American, European or Arabian societies. These imply that human societies have something common that bind them together in some specific parameters. As for Muslims, the concept of society is known as the Ummah which imply brotherhood. We do have such feelings in other religions as well but it is less developed. Now it is the duty of the interfaith dialoguers to highlight these qualities in their respective faith activities and then transport to a broader public sphere and work to merge the teachings of brotherhood for the sake of humanity.

But, unfortunately, many people who consider themselves sociologist, modernist, or scientist directly reject any connection of religion with society. For them, this is an irrelevant issue that has nothing to do with reason. Nevertheless, the world is experiencing its new phase, the post-modernism, where we can see a spectacular return of religions.

However, many debates are going on, whether Society is in need of Religion or vice versa. Hundreds of books are available on this core issue. On this ground, modernists think to have gained their "raison d'etre". They came with the concept of secular society where religion is relegated merely to its ethical importance. They believed that they have killed the God of men. Fortunately, Post Modernism emerged along with the resurrection of God (as being called in the West) that is the revival of religion.

## Religion

"The Word 'Religion' is often used to mean simply whatever an individual or a group regards as being true or that whereby conduct is regulated. Even Communism is sometimes regarded as religion, regardless of its origin and its tendencies, and the fact that it is no more than a construction of the human mind."<sup>170</sup>

Kile Jones wrote in his essay on defining religion:

"It is apparent that religion can be seen as a theological, philosophical, anthropological, sociological, and psychological phenomenon of human kind. To limit religion to only one of these categories is to miss its multifaceted nature and lose out on the complete definition."<sup>171</sup>

However, many attempts have been made in defining religion. Mostly, only a few aspects of religion are considered. They tend to exclude those Religions or aspects of religions that do not fit well. Dictionaries, academicians and others have tried to define religion but all of the definitions that we have come across contain at least one deficiency or more. Yet, some people do not consider their personal spiritual path to be a religion but a special individual relationship with the Eternal.

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<sup>170</sup> Lord Northbourne, RELIGION IN THE MODERN WORLD. Suhail Academy, Lahore, 1981 p.1.

<sup>171</sup> Jones, Kile: Definitions of the word "religion": [http://www.religioustolerance.org/rel\\_defn.htm](http://www.religioustolerance.org/rel_defn.htm). Visited on 11.03.09

We can summarize in a broader form of definition, that Religion is any specific system of belief about deity, involving rituals, code of ethics, philosophy of life, and sometimes generalized view are considered.

On the other hand, in its more original sense, we can say that Religion applies only to something which is not a construction of the human mind, but of divine origin, which is supernatural, revealed or mysterious, where relationship between God and Human Beings are established. Thus, Christianity, Islam, Judaism, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Confucius are forms of Religions.

### **Religion and Society**

Man has always been confronted with the rational and irrational justification of its religious belief. What is clear and evident from religious experience is that Man believes in a living God not a philosophically interpreted god or in a dogmatic one. The God, Man considers, is a real force operating within him. He loves God, fears Him and worships Him to be saved from his wrath. This is the belief in the Sacred and it is continuing since the beginning of Man. Throughout the history of Man, until the 16th century, when the Modernist or the Scientific Society, as they call it, questioned all concerning religious belief and called it the irrationality of man. As Karl Marx held it and reported by Jennifer Hernandez :

"Religion was a significant hindrance to reason, inherently masking the truth and misguiding followers."<sup>172</sup>

These societies organized themselves against such irrationalities and put forward scientific progress for a rational and humanist solution of men's problems. But soon, it turned into an illusionary unrealistic issue where men become more and more confused and immoral. Instead of solution, men's problems increased dramatically. Old evils of the society emerged again like sex, homosexuality, black magic and crimes. Likewise new evils took birth like colonialism, followed by two Great World Wars and now it has emerged as a "War against Terror". Contrarily, such beliefs are rendering the world more insecure and dangerous. People, especially in the West, lost their traditional values and religion reduced to its mere ethical and moral aspects, consciousness of accountability and salvation vanished. Here, we quote what the writer, Northbourn said in his book:

"Religion has been grossly sentimentalized and humanized, distorted and even perverted, and sometimes reduced to little more than a kind of idealism or ideology competing with profane ideologies for the same ends, an alternative way of promoting welfare."<sup>173</sup>

Considering what Northbourn said, it is unfortunate that when everyone knows that religion was doing the job in containing the society from its mores and preparing or

<sup>172</sup> Watching my World crumble, searching for meaning, 2010, <http://jennifa417.blogspot.com/>, Visited on 15.12.2010

<sup>173</sup> Lord Northbourne, RELIGION IN THE MODERN WORLD. Suhail Academy, Lahore 1981 p15.

socializing them, yet the Western champions thought of an alternative way to come to the same end. It is as well more unfortunate that many other religions are following the West in transforming religion from its truth. It looks just what Pharaoh of Egypt was doing during their rule that is, imposing themselves as Gods, rather than believing in God. Here the modernists have turned man to accept God but not to obey Him.

Now, it is the duty of the interfaith promoters to bring forward a new and true argument about God, Religion and Society. Debate are being held in many corners of the world but it is unfortunate that fearing to lose their subjects and their respect in the society, studies are carried out only in within, rather than engaging in broader meeting where all representatives of religions are present to seek for truth. One could say that truth about religion is not necessary as all religion bears truth. Although, they may be right, yet they should know that due to non-scientific method of transmission of revelation from centuries, truth could have been altered or human interferences could have distorted the truth about many religions. Just the way modernist and sociologist wanted to bring alternative ideology based on science and technology to divert human from belief in true God. Here, it should be noted that all religions have, to certain extent, preserved degree of truth to the limit of socializing man. Let's venture what few sociologist had to say about society.

#### **Eminent Sociologist Views:**

According to Shah Wali Ullah, the basic objective of a Prophet's mission is reform of a society. That is, revival of the qualities that is latent in human nature and others which are either remnants of their own past, pattern of living rooted in the

collective experience of their progenitors, or have their origins in the teachings of the earlier prophets.<sup>174</sup>

Durkheim believed that religion was a powerful element and institution of society. It plays a vital role in social organization and represents great social consciousness. Religion serves the purpose of teaching people the moral basis of society.<sup>175</sup>

Max Weber writings show how religious thinking can influence the development of an economic system.<sup>176</sup>

These are renowned sociologist that enjoys respect from all the components of the society. Therefore, society was the main concern of the people since their evolution started and this continued till our late pre-modern time. So, why Modernist are eager to develop another ideology to serve the same purpose of reforming the society?

Again, it is the duty of the dialoguers to find out answers and propose solutions that can revolutionize people thought to get them out of the modernist way of driving people away from religion. Especially when we know how modern man proved them to be destructive both to human beings and environments.

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<sup>174</sup> See Muhammad al-Ghazali, THE SOCIO-POLITICAL THOUGHT OF SHAH WALI ALLAH. International Institute of Islamic Thought and Islamic Research Institute. Islamabad 2001

<sup>175</sup> See-Javed Soonharo Jiskani Baloch, AN INTRODUCTION TO SOCIOLOGY. Matab-e-Faridi, Urdu College ,Karachi. 2005, p15, 17

<sup>176</sup> See, Ibid

## Religion in Post-Modernity

Many societies are made to believe that God is died; religion has lost its “raison d’être”. End of religion was regarded as salvation. Faith in human nature and faith in the future have nothing to do with God. This way of thinking was the result of the long political and intellectual campaign of the Western countries. Science and technology were considered to be the rational tool to solve human problems or to answer the questioning mind of the people. However, the same Science and technology gave way to postmodernism where Religion has experienced a revival. Sociologist, anthropologist, psychologist, historians and other fields of studies have immensely contributed to prove the validity of religion. John C. Caiazza, author of an editorial review rightly put forward:

“In some respects, the postmodern environment is caused by science itself, by the development of postmodern science, its nineteenth-century adversarial stance toward religion now somewhat softened.”<sup>177</sup>

Religious experience has been and is still a reliable source of solving human problems and sufferings. Religious tolerance through education and awareness can help to build healthy society. The quotation which follows could be a good insight:

“The conflict between science and religion is being resolved in the form of a dynamic. Religion and science are both ways of giving moral and intellectual order to the universe, enabling mankind to cope with a chaotic universe and live

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<sup>177</sup>See, Caiazza, John C. *The War of the Jesus and Darwin Fishes: Religion and Science in the Postmodern World*, [http://www.amazon.com/War-Jesus-Darwin-Fishes-Postmodern/dp/0765803801/ref=tag\\_dpp\\_lp\\_edpp\\_ttl\\_ex/178-0104880-3385305](http://www.amazon.com/War-Jesus-Darwin-Fishes-Postmodern/dp/0765803801/ref=tag_dpp_lp_edpp_ttl_ex/178-0104880-3385305). Visited on 15.03.09

well. For example, both religious critics and scientific researchers have attacked and analyzed pornography, which has become a prominent characteristic of our culture. Both share contemporary sensitivity to individual opinions and protection of the individual for social control. Both science and religion share a sense that postmodern culture lacks structure. Caiazza shows how renewed attention to religious and scientific insights can resolve longstanding conflicts, providing postmodern society with a vision of tolerable order.<sup>178</sup>

Although Reformation and Enlightenment disregarded religion and claimed its irrelevancy, yet Religion has continued to play its vital roles. In America and Africa Christianity has a startling effect. The rise of Islam as a major world religion and its emergence in the West is quite spectacular, leaving the presupposed secularization (the decline of religiosity) to be a myth. Fortunately, many sociologists predict a rise in religiosity when philosophers were claiming "God is dead."

Here, it is important that interfaith dialoguers take over such debates and arguments or join those positive sociologists to work out for a peaceful and harmonious society through the basis of truth rather than wasting time in promoting man made ideology to replace truth.

### **Opinion**

In my view, the greatest defect we have in the sphere of thought and development is the lack or weakness of religious intellectualism. The defect is not necessarily

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<sup>178</sup>See, Ibid

ignorance, but the illusion of knowledge. Even though, I see the ground as ripe for its emergence and growth, the only solution for the world to come out of its mess, is an approach of science and religion, the way our late philosophers like Aristotle, Ibne Sina, Ibne Rushed, Ibne Arabi did in merging reason to revelation and bringing forth the glory in the Middle East known as the Golden Age, while the Europeans were in there dark age. One should remember that the Dark Age was because Christian Europe had rejected reason, that is, Greek philosophy. But, when the same was ultimately brought forward by the enlightenment and reformation of Europe through the Arab influence, Europe again came to its glory although for very little time. It was because; this time they committed another blatant error of relegating religion and coming forth with reason only in the form of science and technology. It is important to know that success for our society depends on both reason and revelation, the way it was synthesized and worked by the Muslims during their golden period or in a more calculated way acceptable to the world of today.

Therefore, if interfaith dialogue is not tackled using revelation and reason, rather than only revelation or reason, the result will doom to be chaotic. It is worth mentioning here that it is not for the first time that our modern society is attempting to create international institution for peace building and conflict free world. The League of Nations<sup>179</sup> was created after the First World War which was itself a consequence of failure of modernity, where for the first time in history human beings faced catastrophic mass killing. The Second World War was followed after the failure of the League of

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<sup>179</sup> See, Diehl, F. Paul, *The Politics of Global Governance, International Organizations in an Interdependent World*, New- Delhi, Viva Books Private Ltd, 2005, p.3

Nation. Then it followed the creation of the United Nation<sup>180</sup> with the same objective for peace building and conflict free world. But unfortunately it proceeded with more and more violent wars supported by the United Nation in favor of the world super powers. It is the critics from every member country of the United Nations that this institution has become a tool for the Super Powers. And now, how it could be justified, the bringing forward of Interfaith Dialogue as a World Organization for peace building by the same Super Powers of the world? And not to forget that these Super Powers project themselves as the best secular democratic Nations in the globe. Therefore, is it not justifiable to question the validity of such organizations? After mostly failing in their entire attempt to fulfill their promise for a peaceful world to live, where religion and God ought to have been relegated at individual level that is removed from the public sphere. Now it can be said that religion is being used against religion. Interfaith dialogue having religion at its base, yet, religious arguments and truth have to be kept away from the discourse. Only ethics is considered from religion in the making of dialogue while ideology, spirituality and rituals are ignored. Attempt for common rituals are seen but that goes against religious teachings. Religious specificity is not respected. Hence, it can be assumed as another attempt to kill true religion.

As Modern civilization becomes increasingly worn out and senile, humanity is today searching for a new vision for its future, awaiting a new civilization which is more capable of meeting its material and spiritual needs and wants. The Western-dominated world, where science and technology failed to provide the crucial need of its society, has to turn towards religions. Here, with lack of consciousness and knowledge, we can see

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<sup>180</sup> See, Ibid

these nations inclining towards Buddhism, and other Indian Religions which in their belief could be safer for their interest. While Islam, through different kinds of propagandas, is being termed as religion of terror. However, despite what they say, Islam is the fastest growing religion in the West. Moreover, in most Muslim worlds, there is a reawakening and revival of Islamic Values and a cry for the return of Islamic Sharia. At this juncture, we can claim that Iran's Islamic revolution has opened a new chapter in human history.

As a result, we can conclude that the World needs reason and religion, as both are the creation of One God and that none of them can survive without each other. Yet, here, we have to recognize that one should not be too extremist or conservative in their thought that their very religion is the only religion that should survive and all others are doomed to perish. No doubt, such belief will continue to harm nations and societies. As Muslims, we should be mindful of what Allah says in Qur'an chapter 49, verse 13:

O mankind! We created you from a single (pair) of a male and a female, and made you into nations and tribes, that ye may know each other (not that ye may despise (each other). Verily the most honoured of you in the sight of Allah is (he who is) the most righteous of you. And Allah has full knowledge and is well acquainted (with all things).<sup>181</sup>

This verse is obviously addressed to all mankind, not only Muslim. As mankind is descended from one pair of parents, their tribes, races, and nations are all one. It is just for the purpose of differentiation so that it can help people to identify the other and how

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<sup>181</sup> Yusuf Ali, Abdullah, The Meanings Of The Holy Qur'an, Ch.49, v. 13

their behavior towards each other is. But, before Allah they all have equal rights to survive. For this reason, we can say Religion serves society and plays an important role in determining relationships and understanding, where actions are to be determined from being right or wrong. Therefore, interfaith dialoguers should not be too emotionally attached to secular thinking but have to accept religion in its true sense then only can society survive. And here dialogue among faith is very important to establish a just relationship and overcome the problem it is facing that is hindering its evolution.

These problems could be summarized as follows:

- Interfaith dialogue is partially addressing the truth.
- It does not reflect any established work.
- It seems all manipulation in the hands of a few.
- Man is confronted with its natural spiritual evolution and confused with the idea of a united religion.
- Those Super Powers calling and promoting peace and a conflict free world are at the same time fighting terrorism and arming terrorist with arms.
- Finally, I feel skeptic as for why theology is strongly kept away from these dialogues.

To conclude this work it is important that I end up with the word of Abu-Nimer and Mazharuddin Siddiqi who say:

AbuNimer says: While many Sociologist and other stakeholders of dialogue argue and forward their opinions through explaining the current economic, political, and social reality which influences societies, Abu-Nimer is of opinion that Muslims should rely on the Qur'an, Hadith, and early Muslim period (first Caliphate-constitutional period) as these Islamic primary teachings and text illustrate the ideals which influences the applications of these ideals in a Muslim community. Many scholars have illustrated such values and principles derived from the teachings of Islamic ideals that include: Tawhid (unity), Muhabbat (service, faith and love), Adl (justice), Ihsan (benevolence), Rahman (compassion and mercy) and Hikmah (wisdom). These principles are the foundations of such ideals as social justice, brotherhood, equality of humankind (abolishment of slavery and racial and ethnic barriers), tolerance, and submission to God and recognition of the "other's" rights.

Siddiqi says after a lengthy explanation of the subject that secularism has ended its time. Despite his great scientific power and its immense material resources, it has only been able to increase the ravage and the confusion of the world. However, that does not mean that the powerful, after their failure, they will leave and go, rather they should be overcome by an alternate authority with more competence and much social justice. But the task would be to organize in a new way which guarantees the divine sovereignty and equality among man who is already divided and troubled by the instauration of nations and the conflict based on class in the society.<sup>182</sup>

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<sup>182</sup> See, Siddiqi, Muhammad Mazharuddin, 1955. *After secularism what?* Lahore: Markazi Maktab-Jamate Islami. Tr. By Hart Robert Eduard: *Apres Le Secularism, Quoi?* Chicago, 15<sup>th</sup> ed. Pp.24-25

In my conclusive argument it can be said that interfaith dialogue as an independent institution for peace is not viable so long it is led by the secular institutions. Rather, it should be treated as a part of the curriculum of the country, under Studies of Religion, that can reach each and every student in their process of socialization. It should as well be treated as the main subject in the field of social sciences to inculcate respect, tolerance, and understanding among the stakeholders of our plural society with the objective to further enhance the socialization process of our society. Moreover, interfaith dialogue is better to be taken up by our academicians for the purpose of research and study to promote truth. However, these arguments need to be studied and debated as it's an attempt against the emerging tendency of a new secular institution. Finally, the pretension that secular and religion is at opposition should be cleared away from our mind as secular is nothing more than part of religion, except that part which talks against religion and God. Siddiqi says "Le temporel n'est qu'un aspect du spiritual, et non une categorie apart"<sup>183</sup> that is the temporal is part of the spiritual, not apart from it.

#### **Suggestions and Recommendations:**

1. A research to see the importance to have a full-fledged higher educational institute, in Pakistan, promoting Interfaith Dialogue with a think tank to promote intellectual approach towards different communities and works that guarantee the interest of Muslim Ummah and humanity altogether.

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<sup>183</sup> Siddiqi, Muhammad Mazharuddin, 1955. *After secularism what?* Lahore: Markazi Maktab-Jamiat Islami. Tr. By Hart Robert Eduard: *Apres Le Secularism, Quoi?* Chicago, 15<sup>th</sup> ed. Pp.24-25

2. It is important to carry out a research, whether interfaith dialogue is just a fruitful business in the hands of a few and why it is not coming out of the four walls of conference rooms and formal activities?
3. A research is necessary to fix why we cannot find any theory about interfaith dialogue on which policy can be made if it is thought that interfaith dialogue can bring the change in the mind set of the people and society.
4. A research to find out whether the need for interfaith dialogue is a real issue or the government policy is enough to bring its society towards understanding and peace. A critical study of George Washington Letter Project: Exploring Religious Freedom and Democracy will be quite insightful.
5. A research work has to be carried out based on a comparative analysis among nations to point out the real issues for conflicts
6. Which institution is going to lead the way, if interfaith dialogue is to succeed as a medium for peace? Or should interfaith dialogue be considered only as a subject in the curriculum of the government? The possibilities have to be studied otherwise conflict of interest at the policy making level will emerge.

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