

## ***An Analytical Study of Islamic Teachings for the Promotion of Inter-Sectarian Harmony in Pakistani Society***

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### ***Abstract***

*Pakistan is a multi-sectarian Islamic society where different jurisprudential, intellectual and religious interpretations have existed for centuries. Although this diversity is in essence a manifestation of intellectual breadth and scholarly wealth, However, in recent decades, due to certain social, political and historical factors, this same diversity has also become a cause of sectarian tension and intolerance. In this context, the promotion of inter-sectarian harmony has become an indispensable necessity for the peace, stability and social progress of Pakistani society. The main objective of this research is to identify the principles present in the Holy Quran, the Sunnah of the Prophet (PBUH) and the Islamic intellectual tradition that provide the basis for inter-sectarian harmony, tolerance and mutual respect, and to clarify how these teachings can be effectively implemented in the Pakistani social context. The research has studied the basic Islamic sources through Textual Analysis, while under the Analytical Method, the sectarian diversity existing in Pakistan and the social attitudes related to it have been critically examined. The present paper will attempt to understand this important issue analytically in the light of Islamic teachings. The study reveals that Islamic teachings recognize differences of opinion as a natural thing but advise to keep these differences within the scope of dialogue, justice and good morals instead of conflict. The Holy Quran emphasizes the principles of unity of the Ummah, moderation, and human dignity, while the life of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) provides practical examples of peaceful coexistence with different tribes and intellectual groups. The main findings of the research show that the major causes of sectarian tension in Pakistan are deviations from religious teachings, partial interpretations and unscientific emotionalism, and not the original principles of Islam. This research is important in that it places the issue of interfaith harmony in an intellectual and religious context rather than considering it as a mere social or political issue. The paper concludes that if Islamic teachings, in their true spirit, are made part of the educational curriculum, sermons, media, and social dialogue, the path to promoting sustainable interfaith harmony in Pakistani society can be paved.*

**Keywords:** *Inter-Sectarian Harmony, Islamic Teachings, Sectarian Diversity in Pakistan, Qur'an and Sunnah, Tolerance and Mutual Respect, Unity of the Ummah, Peaceful Coexistence*

The scope of harmony is considered desirable in any area of human life to normalize tension and balance the imbalance of mutual attitudes, but the serious intellectual classes have always realized its importance and necessity with regard to religious identities, and in the present era, there is a dire need for harmony between religions and then between the beliefs of Muslims. The relationship between religion and man is ancient and will remain eternal. Similarly, dialogue and religious dialogue have been ongoing since ancient times and will always continue. Religion discusses the problems of human life, and human discussion, understanding, mutual exchange of ideas and conversation are possible only through dialogue. This is why the Holy Quran has preserved many religious dialogues. Dialogue has gained acceptance in the

modern era, and the term interfaith dialogue has also seen many historical periods. But before examining the status and objectives of interfaith dialogue, it is imperative that an “interfaith dialogue” be organized to promote harmony among the different schools of thought of Muslims at the global level. Unity and solidarity are a basic need at the national and international levels. The Holy Quran is the last book of Allah Almighty. Muslims are forbidden from grouping and sectarianism in the Holy Quran.

"وَأَعْتَصِمُوا بِحَبْلِ اللَّهِ جَمِيعًا وَلَا تَفَرَّقُوا"<sup>1</sup>

*“And hold firmly to the rope of Allah all together and do not become divided.”*

Hazrat Abdullah bin Masood (RA) said that the rope of Allah means the congregation.<sup>2</sup> There are some statements of the commentators in the interpretation of “Ḥabl-illāh”: Some say that it refers to the Quran. Thus, it is stated in the book of Muslim that the Holy Quran is the Ḥabl-illāh, whoever follows it is on the right path, and whoever abandons it is on the wrong path.<sup>3</sup>

### Meaning of Sectarianism

Any society thrives on peace, love and tolerance and if these qualities are not there, then many problems arise. Intolerance refers to that negative attitude, which results in inappropriate reactions as a result of not agreeing with the thinking or behavior of another, not being able to tolerate differences, and this attitude is the root of all deterioration and conflicts. This is not only affecting social harmony but is also a major cause of rifts in relationships and relationships between individuals.

According to the Roberts “Sectarianism can be understood as the coexistence of two or more competing communal identities in a locality, creating persistent social dualism that is evident both culturally and physically.”<sup>4</sup>

Sectarianism means that a group or community considers its specific beliefs and ideologies superior to other groups and adopts an intolerant attitude towards them, considering its own religion to be the only right and declaring other religions to be wrong or misguided. On the contrary, differences of opinion in themselves are not a negative thing, because different beliefs and ideologies are part of intellectual diversity, which advances human development and dialogue. But when these differences turn into hatred, prejudice, and hostility, differences of opinion take the form of sectarianism.

Religious sectarianism in Pakistan is a complex problem that is the result of various historical, social and political factors.<sup>5</sup> Supporters of different sects and religious groups consider their own beliefs superior to other groups, and these differences are often colored with infidelity and

<sup>1</sup> The Qur’an, Al-Imrān 3:103, (King Fahd Complex for the Printing of the Holy Qur’an, 2020)

<sup>2</sup> Al Tabarānī, Al Mu‘jam al Kabīr (Beirut: Dār Ihyā’ al Turāth al ‘Arabī lil Ṭibā ‘ah wa al Nashr wa al Tawzī ‘, 2009), vol. 9, p. 212, Hadith 9033.

<sup>3</sup> Muslim, *Kitab Fada’il al-Sahabah* (RA), Bab: “Min Fada’il Ali ibn Abi Talib” (RA), p. 1313, al-Hadith: 37 (2408).

<sup>4</sup> Keith Daniel Roberts, *Liverpool Sectarianism: The Rise and Demise* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2017), 19.

<sup>5</sup> Grare, Frédéric. "The evolution of sectarian conflicts in Pakistan and the ever-changing face of Islamic violence." In *South Asia*, pp. 131-148. Routledge India, 2013.

hatred.<sup>6</sup> This problem arose when the British colonialists created a political system in India based on the policy of "divide and rule".<sup>7</sup>

### First Reason of Sectarianism

Sectarianism is rooted in human behavior where people use the Quran to validate their pre-established beliefs and ideologies instead of accepting it as a pure guide. This behavior arises when individuals, instead of being free-minded and seeking guidance from the Quran, try to fit their mental molds onto the Quran, thereby distorting and obscuring the original teachings. The Quran has clearly and distinctly explained salvation and basic beliefs, without any abbreviations, so that humanity can avoid misguidance, but not reading it with due deliberation is a serious negligence that manifests itself in the form of sects.

The Quran must be seen as a 'Furqan' and a 'Mizan' that differentiates between right and wrong and becomes the criterion for testing all ideas. Therefore, salvation from sectarianism is possible only by turning to the Quran and following its injunctions, which provide the basis for unity and truth.

### Second Reason

The second major cause of religious sectarianism is exaggeration. That is, some people consider their religion to be absolutely correct and the best, calling others as misguided or wrong. There is also group exaggeration, where people consider their organization or group to be the most important and make others unnecessary, and value the method more than the goal. Another type is exaggeration, where a person is praised so much that other great figures begin to belittle them.

The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) prevented this and said:

"لَا تُطْرُونِي كَمَا أَطْرَبَتِ النَّصَارَى ابْنَ مَرْيَمَ فَإِنَّمَا أَنَا عَبْدُ اللَّهِ، فَقُولُوا: عَبْدُ اللَّهِ وَرَسُولُهُ"<sup>8</sup>

*"Do not exalt my status as the Christians exalted Jesus, the son of Mary, peace be upon him. I am only a servant of Allah, so say (about me) that I am a servant of Allah and His Messenger)"*

because the Quran says not to differentiate between all the messengers, but to respect them equally. In this way, exaggeration can end division!

Difference in matters of ijtihad is permissible and there is no harm in it, but it is not right to adopt the method of prejudice in these subsidiary issues and declare those who disagree with the course of action chosen by one's own free will as invalid and infidel.

### Condemnation of Sectarianism

The important aspect of intrafaith dialogue is to adopt a moderate and balanced approach to minor issues so that society can be protected from all kinds of religious fanaticism, intellectual hypocrisy, practical misguidance, mental disorder, and psychological complexity. The texts of the Quran and Sunnah clearly prove that division and sectarianism are contrary to national unity and cause irreparable harm to the Ummah, therefore sectarianism has been condemned in Islam.

<sup>6</sup> Ahmar, M. (2007). Sectarian conflicts in Pakistan. *Pakistan Vision*, 9(1), 1-19.

<sup>7</sup> Ahlawat, Sube Singh. British "Divide and Rule" Policy and the Indian Armed Forces. Delhi: Lancer Publishers & Distributors, 2018.

<sup>8</sup> Bukhārī, Muḥammad ibn Ismā'īl. Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī. Kitāb: Aḥādīth al-Anbiyā'. Hadīth 3445. Bab: "Wa-adhkur fī al-kitāb Maryam idh intabadhat min ahluhā".

"إِنَّ الَّذِينَ فَرَّقُوا دِينَهُمْ وَكَانُوا شِيَعًا لَسَتْ مِنْهُمْ فِي شَيْءٍ. إِنَّمَا أَمْرُهُمْ إِلَى اللَّهِ ثُمَّ يُنَبِّئُهُمْ بِمَا كَانُوا يَفْعَلُونَ".<sup>9</sup>

*"Indeed, those who have divided their religion and become sects - you, [O Muhammad], are not [associated] with them in anything. Their affair is only [left] to Allah; then He will inform them about what they used to do."*

Hazrat Abu Hurairah (RA) narrated

"روى أبو هريرة عن النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم في هذه الآية إن الذين فرقوا دينهم هم أهل البدع والشبهات ، وأهل الضلالة من هذه الأمة".<sup>10</sup>

*That the Prophet (PBUH) said regarding this verse: "Those who divide their religion are innovators, doubters, and the misguided people of this nation."*

In the commentary of this verse, it is written in Tafsir al-Tabari: Abu Ja'far says: In my opinion, the correct thing to say about this is that Allah Almighty informed His Prophet (PBUH) that he is exempt from those who abandoned their true religion and divided it into fragments, and they became different sects and groups within it. The Prophet (PBUH) has nothing to do with them, nor are they from the Prophet (PBUH), because the religion with which Allah Almighty sent His Prophet (PBUH) is Islam, which is the pure (single) religion of Prophet Abraham (PBUH).<sup>11</sup>

Al-Baghawī, al-Ḥusayn ibn Mas'ūd wrote in *Ma'ālim al-Tanzīl fī Tafsīr al-Qur'ān*.

وروي عن عبد الله بن عمر قال : قال رسول الله - صلى الله عليه وسلم - : " إن بني إسرائيل تفرقت على اثنين وسبعين فرقة ، وتفرقت أمي على ثلاث وسبعين ملة ، كلهم في النار إلا واحدة " ، قالوا : من هي يا رسول الله؟ قال : " ما أنا عليه وأصحابي"<sup>12</sup>

*Hazrat Abdullah bin Umar (RA) narrated that the Messenger of Allah (PBUH) said: "The Children of Israel were divided into seventy-two sects, and my Ummah will be divided into seventy-three sects. All of them will be in Hell except one." The Companions (RA) asked: O Messenger of Allah! Which one is that? He (PBUH) said: "The one on which I and my Companions are"*

Abū Ḥayyān al-Andalusī wrote about it in *Al-Tafsīr al-Kabīr*,

When Allah Almighty declared that His path is straight, and forbade following other paths, and mentioned Moses and the commandments revealed to him, and spoke of the Quran and commanded its following, and mentioned the punishment that awaits the disbelievers, then Allah Almighty mentioned those who followed the paths and as a result deviated from the path of Allah, in order to attract the believers to unity in the true religion, and so that they would not differ as the nations before them differed, although they were previously agreed on the laws that were sent through their prophets. And those who divided their religion, whether it was the

<sup>9</sup> The Qur'ān. Sūrat al-An'ām 6:159.

<sup>10</sup> Al-Qurṭubī, Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad al-Anṣārī. Al-Jāmi' li-Aḥkām al-Qur'ān. Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya, n.d., Juz' 4, 136.

<sup>11</sup> Abū Ja'far Muḥammad ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī, Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī: Jāmi' al-bayān fī ta'wīl āy al-Qur'ān (Bayrūt: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, 1999), vol. 12, 268.

<sup>12</sup> Al-Baghawī, al-Ḥusayn ibn Mas'ūd. *Ma'ālim al-Tanzīl fī Tafsīr al-Qur'ān*. Vol. 3. Beirut: Dār Iḥyā' al-Turāth al-'Arabī, n.d., 209.

Haruriyya sect, or the misguided people of this nation, or the followers of innovations or desires are also included in this.<sup>13</sup>

Al-Qurtubī wrote in Al-Jāmi‘ li-Aḥkām al-Qur’ān

"ومعنى شيعا فرقا وأحزابا . وكل قوم أمرهم واحد يتبع بعضهم رأي بعض فهم شيع"<sup>14</sup>

*And Shia means sects and groups. And every nation that has the same issue, and some follow the ideas of others, they are called Shia.*

Islamic society is not an artificial union of sects and groups, but in the true sense it is a single nation like a leaden wall. However, sectarianism has intensified in the present era and this issue requires special attention. Dialogue between sects is the need of the present era for national, regional and inter-ethnic stability. In this regard, the past of Islamic history is wonderful because during the era of the Companions and the Tabi‘in, and after them, the Imams of the Muḥtāhids and their followers never called each other misguided, wicked or infidels due to differences of opinion on minor issues. There was no concept of war and debate, insults and rhetoric based on differences of opinion in Ijtihād in those holy times.

#### Prohibition of Sectarianism:

There are verses in the Quran condemning and prohibiting sectarianism. The first of these verses with the word sectarianism is:

"وَاعْتَصِمُوا بِحَبْلِ اللَّهِ جَمِيعًا وَلَا تَفَرَّقُوا. وَاذْكُرُوا نِعْمَتَ اللَّهِ عَلَيْكُمْ إِذْ كُنْتُمْ أَعْدَاءً فَأَلَّفَ بَيْنَ قُلُوبِكُمْ فَأَصْبَحْتُمْ بِنِعْمَتِهِ إِخْوَانًا"<sup>15</sup>

*“And hold firmly to the rope of Allah all together and do not become divided. And remember the favor of Allah upon you - when you were enemies and He brought your hearts together and you became, by His favor, brothers.”*

Al-Qurtubī explained this verse in Al-Jāmi‘ li-Aḥkām al-Qur’ān

"and do not become divided in your religion, as the Jews and Christians became divided in their sects; this is narrated from Ibn Mas‘ud and others. It may also mean not to follow the whims and different goals, but to be brothers in the religion of Allah; thus, it prevents them from disagreeing and clashing with each other.<sup>16</sup>

In this verse, it is commanded to unite and unite on the rope of Allah, that is, the Quran and the Sunnah, because this is the basis of the unity of the nation and the unity of the nation. After that, it is said not to divide among yourselves, do not divide into sects and groups in such a way that the thread of national unity is broken and you become divided and scattered instead of being united and united on the basis of the unity of the nation.

"عن عبد الله بن الزبير، أن عمر بن الخطاب رضي الله عنه قال : إن رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم

قال : " من سره ببحوحة الجنة فعليه بالجماعة فإن الشيطان مع الفذ وهو من الاثنين أبعد."<sup>17</sup>

<sup>13</sup> Al-Andalusī, Abū Ḥayyān Athīr al-Dīn Abū ‘Abd Allāh Muḥammad ibn Yūsuf. Al-Tafsīr al-Kabīr al-Musammā al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ. Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyya, n.d., Juz’ 4, 261.

<sup>14</sup> Al-Qurtubī, Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad al-Anṣārī. Al-Jāmi‘ li-Aḥkām al-Qur’ān. Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyya, n.d., Juz’ 4, 136.

<sup>15</sup> The Qur’an, Al-Imrān 3:103

<sup>16</sup> Al-Qurtubī, Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad al-Anṣārī. Al-Jāmi‘ li-Aḥkām al-Qur’ān. Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyya, n.d., Juz’ 4, 151.

<sup>17</sup> Al-Baghawī, al-Ḥusayn ibn Mas‘ūd. *Ma‘ālim al-Tanzīl fī Tafsīr al-Qur’ān*. Beirut: Dār Iḥyā’ al-Turāth al-‘Arabī, n.d., Vol. 2. 87.

Hazrat Abdullah bin Zubair (RA) narrated that Hazrat Umar bin Al-Khattab (RA) said: The Messenger of Allah (PBUH) said: “Whoever loves the spaciousness and comfort of Paradise, let him adhere to the congregation (i.e. remain a part of the congregation), for Satan is with a solitary person and is far away from two people.”

Al-Bayḍāwī, wrote in *Anwār al-Tanzīl wa Asrār al-Ta’wīl*: And do not be like those who divided and differed among themselves, such as the Jews and the Christians, who differed about the Oneness of Allah, the Exaltation of Allah, and the Hereafter, as you know. All this happened after clear signs, verses, and arguments had come to them that made it necessary for them to agree. And what is more obvious is that the prohibition here is specific to differences in fundamental matters, not in subsidiary matters.<sup>18</sup>

The Holy Prophet (PBUH) has also pointed out this fact in his blessed saying:

"ان النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم بعث معاذًا رضي الله عنه إلى اليمن , فقال: ادعهم إلى شهادة ان لا إله إلا الله , واني رسول الله، فإن هم اطاعوا لذلك فاعلمهم ان الله قد افترض عليهم خمس صلوات في كل يوم وليلة، فإن هم اطاعوا لذلك فاعلمهم ان الله افترض عليهم صدقة في اموالهم تؤخذ من اغنيائهم وترد على فقرائهم"<sup>19</sup>

*When the Holy Prophet (PBUH) sent Mu’adh as the governor of Yemen, the Holy Prophet (PBUH) addressed him and said: “O Mu’adh! You are going to a people who are the People of the Book. So, first of all, invite them to worship Allah. If they recognize Allah, then inform them that Allah has enjoined upon them five prayers during the day and night. If they accept this, then inform them that Allah has enjoined upon them Zakat from their wealth. It will be taken from their wealthy people and distributed among their poor people. If they agree to this, then collect their zakat and do not touch the best of people’s wealth.)*

In this way, it is reminded of the era of ignorance that there were enmities and factions among you and there were tribal and group enmities and hostility which ended due to Islam and you became brothers among yourselves. Now, after embracing Islam and uniting on the one religion, if you again ignore the basis of the unity of the nation and adopt the method of mutual division and start the same old tribal factions and enmities, then you will be deprived of the blessing of brotherhood and affection.

### Unrestrained Oratory

Undoubtedly, the art of oratory has remained significant in every era due to its necessity and influence. Yet, it is equally true that oratory is like a double-edged sword. When exercised with wisdom, planning, and in the hands of capable and responsible individuals, it becomes a powerful means of education, moral guidance, encouragement, and constructive warning. Through effective speech, public opinion can be organized, emotions can be guided positively, and collective goals can be pursued in a meaningful way.

However, when this same responsibility falls into the hands of incompetent, ill-informed, and unrestrained speakers, it often results in the ruthless exploitation of public emotions. Such reckless rhetoric ignites the flames of prejudice in hearts and minds. In the glow of these flames, illegitimate structures of *sectarianism* are constructed and deceptively labeled as “religious

<sup>18</sup> Al-Bayḍāwī, Nāsir al-Dīn Abū al-Khayr ‘Abd Allāh ibn ‘Umar ibn ‘Alī. *Anwār al-Tanzīl wa Asrār al-Ta’wīl*. Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyya, n.d., Juz’ 2, 32.

<sup>19</sup> Al-Bukhārī, Muḥammad ibn Ismā‘īl. Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī. Kitāb al-Zakāh, Bāb Wujūb al-Zakāh (Zakat is obligatory). Beirut: Dār Ṭawq al-Najāh, n.d., Ḥadīth no. 1395.

zeal” or “defense of faith.” Consequently, the deepening and spread of sectarian divisions in society owe much to this aggressive, unethical, and intellectually barren form of oratory. The abundance of jurists and the scarcity of speakers are good. Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) Said

"إنكم أصبحتم في زمانٍ كثيرٍ فقهاؤه، قليلٍ خطبائه، قليلٍ سؤاله، كثيرٍ معطوه، العلمُ فيه خيرٌ من العلمِ. وسيأتي زمانٌ قليلٌ فقهاؤه، كثيرٌ خطبائه، كثيرٌ سؤاله، قليلٌ معطوه، العلمُ فيه خيرٌ من العمل"<sup>20</sup>

*Haram bin Hakim narrated from his uncle, Abdullah bin Saad (RA), that the Messenger of Allah (PBUH) said: "You are in a time when there are many jurists and few sermons, and few beggars and many givers. In that time, action is better than knowledge. But soon there will come a time when there will be few jurists and many sermons, and many beggars and few givers. In that time, knowledge will be better than action".*

The foundation of the rise and rise of nations is unity and agreement. Those nations are trampled upon in the world and the system of life which do not appreciate such blessings as unity and agreement. All the qualities and abilities of such nations become blocked and useless. Their noble beliefs and ideals and their glorious past become a thing of the past and their destiny is humiliation and humiliation in the world. In this context, if we examine the causes and motivations of the division and discord of Muslims, we come to the conclusion that the major causes of this division and discord include the shortsightedness of the Muslim political leadership and the greed for power and rule, the conspiracy of the world imperialist powers, the inattention of the powerful religious leadership and the mutual hatred and animosity of the religious classes. It is true that an important factor that causes a rift in the unity and agreement of nations is mutual hatred and animosity, due to which the nation is divided into groups. This fact is revealed in the Holy Quran in these words:

"وَمَا تَفَرَّقُوا إِلَّا مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا جَاءَهُمُ الْعِلْمُ بَعِيًا بَيْنَهُمْ."<sup>21</sup>

*And they did not become divided except after knowledge had come to them, out of hatred among themselves.*

One of the most powerful factors in creating and even strengthening a sectarian atmosphere is hostility (Baghi). People affected by this disease of the heart, instead of working constructively with fellow believers, pick up the axe of enmity and try to destroy what has already been built. Those who are striving for Islam often see others not as companions in the cause, but as opponents or rivals. These are dangerous traits, and as long as they exist, the idea of unity of the Muslim community cannot even be imagined.

The lack of reasonable standards for religious organizations and groups is also becoming a major cause of sectarianism. On what basis should a group, organization, or movement be established? What qualifications should its leaders have? These and similar requirements have still not received our serious attention. The “desired religious objectives” of these organizations are perhaps far fewer than the sheer number of groups and movements that exist.

<sup>20</sup> Al-Albānī, Muḥammad Nāṣir al-Dīn. Silsilat al-Aḥādīth al-Ṣaḥīḥah. Riyadh: Maktabat al-Ma'ārif, n.d., no. 3189.

<sup>21</sup> The Qur'an. Surah al-Shūrā 42:14

Worse still, many leaders and heads of these groups may not even rank in the twentieth tier in terms of competence and ability, yet the position of leadership elevates them to the front lines as if they are indispensable. The practical manifestation of “half-baked faith” has become evident in many ways through these groups’ “half-prepared” leaders. If you investigate any corruption or mischief in the name of religion and trace it to its roots, you will almost always find a “half-baked” individual behind it—half-educated in knowledge, half-complete in practice or ethics, or deficient in wisdom and judgment. In any case, such mediocre religious leadership has left no stone unturned in creating an environment of sectarianism.

### **Situation in Pakistan**

Intolerance between the Shia and Sunni sects of Pakistan, the publication of hurtful literature, irresponsible speeches, insults and ridicule of each other have led to extremism and lawlessness. Pakistan is one of the major countries of the Islamic world. But here, Shia-Sunni differences and conflicts have often taken a serious turn. The Sunni people are in the majority. The Shia sect is a minority, but this population is larger than the Shia population in Iraq. Thousands of people have fallen victim to this sectarian killing and destruction in the last two decades. Under a plan, not only Shias but also Sunni scholars, preachers, great sheikhs, doctors and engineers are being targeted. Madrasas, mosques, shrines and Imambargahs are all being targeted for sabotage under a plan, all this has been done to create hatred in Pakistan.

Jamal Malik wrote in his book ‘Islam in South Asia’ “From 1977 until the end of the century, the policy of Islamisation spiralled out of control. The aim was a unifying Islam, but in reality more radical groups from different Islamic sects emerged. Specific ethnic and linguistic identities were also legitimised on religious grounds.”<sup>22</sup>

Arif Rafiq writes the negative effects of sectarianism in Pakistan

“Sectarian violence between Sunni Deobandi and Shia Muslims in Pakistan has escalated in recent years, resulting in approximately 2,300 deaths in Pakistan’s four main provinces between 2007 and 2013 and at least 1,500 deaths in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) agency of Kurram since 2007.1 Local networks perpetrate most of this violence, but the sectarian phenomenon also has important ties to regional security dynamics and transnational terrorist networks. Sunni Deobandi militants that first began organizing with the support of Pakistani security services in the 1970s and 1980s have directed their violence against Pakistan’s Shia minority, the Pakistani state, and the general populace.”<sup>23</sup>

A fanatical mind becomes accustomed to maintaining a confrontational stance against opponents at all costs. Its focus is on proving its own superiority and belittling the other. This mindset and behavior breed mutual bitterness, making it impossible to achieve any constructive work through the collective strength of the community. People become habituated to thinking destructively, and their nature shows little interest in positive, productive efforts. The Quran and Sunnah are often cited only to support or refute controversial issues, while hundreds of commands that require positive and constructive action are neglected. This happens largely because the focus of many religious-minded individuals is on debate, argument, and defending their positions rather than on practical application. As a result, such a mindset proves inadequate even in understanding the fundamental requirements of Islam.

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<sup>22</sup> Jamal Malik, *Islam in South Asia*, revised, enlarged, and updated 2nd ed. (Leiden: Brill, 2020), 557.

<sup>23</sup> Rafiq, Arif. “Pakistan’s Resurgent Sectarian War.” United States Institute of Peace. November 2014. <https://www.usip.org/publications/2014/11/pakistans-resurgent-sectarian-war>

Polite and intellectual differences have existed among scholars since ancient times, but since the last century, the tendency of extremism among Muslims has increased to a frightening extent. Sectarianism has become common and the field of killing and destruction has become hot. Muslim society is divided in the name of colour, race, language and patriotism. Muslim countries are suffering from innumerable such problems internally and externally, hostile forces are keeping them engaged in war and conflict with each other in some way or the other, causing the massacre of unarmed Muslims and are trying to make their economy poor and bankrupt. It is necessary that Muslims abandon sectarianism and turn to their universal Islamic teachings and promote Islamic brotherhood.

### **Conclusion**

The analysis of Islamic teachings reveals a consistent and clear emphasis on unity, mutual respect, and ethical conduct among Muslims. The Quran and Sunnah not only provide guidance for personal faith and morality but also set forth principles for maintaining social cohesion and inter-sectarian harmony. Key concepts such as Tawheed, the respect for the Prophet (PBUH), the acknowledgment of righteous predecessors, and the emphasis on justice, consultation (Shura), and brotherhood collectively provide a moral and legal framework that discourages division, sectarian hostility, and communal prejudice.

In the context of Pakistani society, where sectarian tensions and factionalism have historically disrupted social stability, the teachings of Islam offer a strong foundation for reconciliation and constructive engagement. The study highlights that sectarianism often emerges from misinterpretation, lack of scholarly guidance, weak leadership, and unrestrained rhetoric rather than from the core Islamic teachings themselves. Misguided or ill-prepared religious leadership, combined with poorly regulated religious discourse, has contributed significantly to the widening of sectarian divides. Practical steps based on Islamic principles such as promoting respectful dialogue, establishing merit-based leadership standards, avoiding inflammatory rhetoric, and emphasizing shared beliefs over minor differences can play a transformative role in reducing inter-sectarian hostility. The active implementation of these measures can strengthen social cohesion, channel collective energy toward development, and cultivate an environment of unity, mutual respect, and cooperation within the Muslim community.

Islamic teachings provide both ethical guidance and pragmatic tools for promoting inter-sectarian harmony. The challenge lies in translating these principles into practice through responsible leadership, informed scholarship, and community engagement. By doing so, Pakistani society can move toward a model of religious unity and collective progress, where diversity of thought and jurisprudential opinions coexist without breeding conflict, and where the shared values of faith serve as a bridge rather than a barrier among different Muslim communities.

### **Suggestions**

Even after situations have become critical, change is still possible. If people begin to accept right thinking and correct actions, the journey from corruption to reform can certainly be achieved. Below are a few suggestions proposed with the aim of eliminating sectarianism:

1. Avoid speeches or writings that may harm the belief in Tawheed (Oneness of God), or that could show disrespect toward any respected personalities or beliefs of any group such as the Prophet (PBUH), his wives, his companions, the Ahl al-Bayt, righteous predecessors (Salaf), saints, jurist-imams, or other religious symbols and practices.

2. Set clear merit-based standards and limits for preachers and leaders of each sect and group. It is essential to establish regulations that prevent incompetent or unrestrained speakers from taking the pulpit or leading prayers.
3. A board should be formed with the cooperation of the state and scholars, which should make it a crime to publish any literature without its verification.
4. A Supreme Council of scholars of every sect should be formed to play the role of a conciliation commission in emergency situations and other sectarian disputes.
5. In religious educational institutions, useful literature should be included in the curriculum that highlights the unity of the Ummah, human rights, moral values, and the rights of other sects, because there is no other effective means of reforming a person without education and training.
6. This awareness should be raised among the teachers of madrassas as a campaign so that they themselves should refrain from insulting opposing sects and personalities in front of their students and make practical training efforts to restrain the students.
7. Joint inter-religious seminars and meetings should be held from time to time. Students and scholars should arrange visits to each other's institutions and universities. Misunderstandings arising due to mutual distances will be eliminated.
8. Adherence to Islamic moral principles should be ensured.
9. The differences in the spheres of disagreement should be clearly understood and explained, whether the disagreement is between disbelief and Islam, right and wrong, or first and second, etc. Every disagreement has its own sphere of etiquette and order; this difference should be kept in mind.
10. The awareness should be spread that even the biggest opponent has certain rights that Islam has made obligatory for you. It is not permissible to destroy these rights under the guise of disagreement.
11. It is necessary to keep national and Islamic interests in mind instead of individual prejudice, since every prejudgment creates another prejudice in response, thus prejudice cannot exist without creating conflict with partiality.