

SECTARIANISM IN PAKISTAN: CAUSES & REMEDIES

Farmanullah *

Abstract:

In Pakistan, religion has been used as an effective ca by the religious, political and military elite for grabbing more and more power. General Zia-ul-Haq patronised and encouraged religious political parties to sustain his unlawful regim and perpetuate his power. Z. A. Bhutto also appeased these parties to win and retain their support. Leaders of religious rties themselves used religion as a means of getting politic power. It was due to this exploitation of religion that the problem of sectarianism emerged in Pakistan and has become now part of culture in Pakistan.

The menace of sectarianism is not new to Pakistan. Even before the creation of Pakistan, sectarian clashes used to happen off and on in Indo-Pakistan subcontinent. After the formation of Pakistan, there was harmony between *Shi'ahs* and *Sunnis* to some extent. However, the 'divide and rule' policy adopted by Zia-ul-Haq compounded the already existed sectarian divide. Other major developments that led to ctarian divide were Saur Revolution and the subsequent Soviet on intervention in Afghanistan, the emergence of *Jihadi* and militant organisations, Iranian Revolution and Iran-Iraq war.

* Instructor, Government College of Management Sciences, Nowshera at Jallozai and Ph.D Scholar in Pakistan Study Centre, University of Peshawar.

Religious intolerance and bigotry has reached deep ins de our society. There is no respect for other than one's own views and opinions. The followers of every sect consider themselves as true Muslims and others as 'infidels'. Muslims are ing Muslims. Innocent worshippers are targeted in mosques nd *Imam Bargahs* in the name of religion. The narrow interpretation of Islam and *Jihad* by semi-literate *mullahs* has damaged the true image of Islam.

Sectarian problem is no more of an occasional nature, r limited to isolated localities. It is becoming the pro of national concern because it is spreading its tentacles rapidly in the country. It has hit those areas which were free of sectarian riots. If it continues with the same pace, it will soon engulf other areas in Pakistan. It is, therefore, extremely necessary to address the root causes of the problem in each sectarian ridden place to contain the problem immediately. The present study will not only highlight the root causes of sectarianism in Pakistan but also suggest certain remedies.

Sect:

The term sect has been derived from a Latin word *sequi* which means 'to follow.' The words sect, sector and section signify division; whether it is a group of people as separate from the main body; a piece of land partitioned from the whole; segregation of book into chapters; an organization into departments. In the terminology of religion it purport a body of followers; a school of opinion within a main religion.¹

¹ Mircea Eliade, ed. *The Encyclopaedia of Religion*, vol.13 (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1987), "Sect," by Michael Hill, p. 154.

Sectarianism:

The term sectarianism is the combination of two words e., sect and ism, which means a group of people and ideology respectively. Thus sectarianism means the ideology of group making it different and distinct from others. According to Oxford Dictionary, 'it is the strong support for a particular religious or political group, especially when this leads to violence between different groups.'² According to Musa Khan Jalalzai, 'it is the religious intolerance possessed by one religious sect against others due to its divergent doctrines.'³ It is also defined as, 'it is the exclusive adherence to particular view, doctrine or school of thought in such a way as to consider other's views absolutely wrong and their followers as infidels.'⁴

In the light of the above definitions, sectarianism can be defined as, 'the intolerant attitude of a particular school of thought towards others which divides different segments of society into antagonistic groups and creates hatred against each other on the basis of faith and beliefs system.'

The Origin of Islamic Sects:

Immediately after the demise of the Holy Prophet (PBUH), believers were divided over the question of succession to the Prophet (PBUH). It was a critical juncture because Muslims were confronted with the problem of the leadership of Islamic State. Moreover, the Prophet (PBUH) had neither nominated anyone as his successor nor had he left any vivid directions in this connection. In such a critical situation, different groups

² Sally Wehmeier, ed. *Oxford Advance Learner's Dictionary* (Tehran: National Library of Iran, 2000), pp. 689, 1154.

³ Musa Khan Jalalzai, *Sectarianism in Pakistan* (Lahore: A. H. Publishers, 1992), p. 3.

⁴ *Aman Aur Islam*, "Intiha Pasandi Kia Hai," (Peshawar: National Research and Development Foundation, March 2003), p. 24.

claimed their right to lead the Muslims. A small group of people remarked that leadership must stay in the family of the Prophet (PBUH) and that is why in later days they backed ? li for that purpose and were known as *Shi'an-e-?li*, which means the party of ? li. Majority of the people forwarded the name of Abu Bakr for succession subjected to the will of the o rry Muslims. The assumption was that because the Holy Prophet (PBUH) left no clear instructions regarding his successor, so the matter should be decided through general will of the people. They got the title of *ahl al-sunnah wa'l- jama'ah* which literally means the group of people who believe in the *sunnah* of the Holy Prophet (PBUH).⁵

Justification by Shi'ahs' and Sunnis' for Caliphate:

Shi'ah justifies claim of ? li as first and rightful *Khalifah*⁶ (vicegerent) due to his dual relationship with the Prophet (PBUH) as his first cousin and son-in-law. Secondly, they believe that the Holy Prophet (PBUH) had designated ? li as his successor. They cite the proclamation of the Holy Prop et (PBUH) which he made in 632 AD. After his last sermon n the Mount of ? rafat, the Holy Prophet (PBUH) was returning to Medinah when he stayed at a place called *Ghadir al-Khumm*⁷. It was at this place that the Holy Prophet (PBUH) made the following proclamation. The proclamation has een reported in different versions, the most popular being, 'he for

⁵ Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Ideals and Realities of Islam* (London: Harper Collins Publishers, 1994), pp.147-149.

⁶ This word is used by the Sunnis for the successor of t e Holy Prophet (PBUH).

⁷ A pond formed by a spring in a valley between Medinah d Makkah.

whom I was the *Mawla* (master) should hence have ? li as his master.’⁸

Thirdly, they criticize the principle of free-will of people for choosing the successor of God’s messenger, reasoning that the will of the people may go wrong. Only the person who has enough knowledge of Qur’an and *Hadith* can lead Muslims in the right direction.⁹ That knowledge was available to those who were near and dear to the Prophet (PBUH) – especially, ? li and through him to his eleven male descendants.

On the other hand, the *Sunnis*’ contention in considering Abu Bakr as a legitimate successor consists of the following arguments. Firstly, he was a distinguished member of the community in the sense that he was the close companion of the Holy Prophet (PBUH); he was older than other contender for caliphate; he was with the Holy Prophet (PBUH) during his migration from Makkah to Medinah, an event of such importance as to deserve mention in the Qur’an (09:40); he had given his daughter ? isha in marriage to the Holy Prophet (PBUH) and acted as his chief adviser.¹⁰ In addition, it was Abu Bakr who officiated as *Imam* during the Prophet’s (PBUH) illness. Also, the *Sunnis* criticize the interpretation and understanding of the term *Mawla* in the Prophet’s (PBUH) proclamation. The word *Mawla* can be taken to mean a ruler or it can simply mean a friend. Due to different interpretation, they consider it to be too vague for any hard and fast conclusion to be evolved from it.

⁸ Hamid Enayat, *Modern Islamic Political Thought* (London: Macmillan Publishers, 1986), pp. 4-6.

⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 5-6.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 4-6.

Thirdly, they regard succession as elective rather than hereditary. They defend the principle of free-will of the people for election of the caliph and that it is Islamic and not a foreign concept. The Arabs used to choose their chieftains by exercising their free-will. They were against the law of primogeniture. In case of the Holy Prophet's successorship, the matter was quite easy. Because he had not made any will regarding his succession. Moreover, there was neither written constitution nor any provision, which could guide Muslims for successorship. In such a vague situation the principle of free-will of the people was genuine response to the situation.¹¹ A reputed tradition also adds support to the principle of the free-will.

'My community cannot agree on error.' (Ibn-i-Majah)¹²

Some Important Characteristics of Shi'ism and Sunnism:

There also exist a contradiction between *Shi'ism* and *Sunnism* regarding the qualifications and functions of the successor of the Holy Prophet (PBUH). *Sunnism* considers the successor of the Prophet (PBUH) to be his *Khalifah* who is to be the guardian of *Shari'ah*. On the other hand *Shi'ism* entitles such successor as *Imam*¹³ possessing prophetic powers of 'esoteric interpretation of the revelation and the inheritance to the Prophet's esoteric teachings.'¹⁴

¹¹ ? tta Mohy-ud-Din, *Abu Bakr* (Karachi: Ferozsons, n.d.), pp.11-14.

¹² *Urdu Da-e-rah Ma'arif-e-Islamiyya*, vol.15 (Punjab: University of Punjab, 1975), "Firqah," p. 307.

¹³ This word is used by the *Shi'ais* for the successor of the Holy Prophet (PBUH).

¹⁴ Nasr, p. 150.

Moreover, they maintain that *Imam* as infallible with regard to character, making him unique from others for truth and purity. Conversely, the *Sunnis* reject such qualification and termed them secondary. The primary thing is that 'he must be free, adult, sane and possessed the capacity to attend to the ordinary affairs of the state.'¹⁵

Both *Shi'aism* and *Sunnism* have been further split into various sub-sects. The dominant sub-sects of *Shi'aism* are *Isna 'shariyyah* (those who believe in twelve *Imams*), *Isma'ilism* (those who believe in seven *Imams*) and *Zaidism* (those who believe in five *Imams*). However, majority of *Shi'ahs* are *Isna 'shariyyah*. The sub-sects of *Sunnism* are *ahl-al-Hadith*, *Hanfi*, *Shafi*, *Hambali*, and *Maliki*.¹⁶

An important aspect of *Sunnism* is that 'all *Sunnis* accept first four Caliphs, Abu Bakr, 'Umar, 'Uthman and 'Ali as true vicegerents (*Khalifas*) of the Prophet (PBUH) who fulfilled this function in its fullness so that they are called the rightly-guided Caliphs (*Al-Khulafa Al-Rashidun*)'. *Sunni* jurists do not accept *Umayyad* and *'Abbasid* caliphate as righteous caliphs because in these periods the Islamic caliphate was not the embodiment of the whole *Ummah* but was transformed into Arab kingdom.¹⁷ *Sunnism* accepts the authority of rulers even if they are oppressive. However, *Shi'aism* shows resistance against corrupt and oppressive rulers. That is the reason that the latter 'kept on

¹⁵ Mukhtar Ahmad Ali, *Sectarian Conflict in Pakistan: A Case Study of Jhang* (Colombo: Regional Centre for Strategic Studies, 2000), pp. 10-11.

¹⁶ *Urdu Da-e-rah Ma'arif-e-Islamiyya*, vol.15, pp. 298,307.

¹⁷ Nasr, p. 152.

challenging the legitimacy of different caliphates for most part of the Muslims' history.¹⁸

Shiaism and Sunnism in Different Periods:

During the caliphate of Abu-Bakr, 'Umar and 'Uthman, the *Shi'ites* were leading a mute life. In caliphate of 'Ali, they were satisfied as their aim was fulfilled. In reign of *Umayyad* dynasty, *Shi'ism* was openly and secretly opposed and its followers were often persecuted. *Abbasid* era marked the golden period of *Shi'aism* as there was little opposition to it. In the 3rd Islamic century and especially in the reign of Al-Mamun, *Shi'ites* operated so freely that 'Ali al-Rida, the eighth *Imam* of *Shi'ahs*, was chosen as successor of Al-Mamun.¹⁹

Fourth / Tenth centuries marked strengthening of *Shi'aism*. The Buyids who were *Shi'ites* gained political power not only in Persia but also extended it to Baghdad. Meanwhile, the Fatimids, who were *Isma'ilis*, conquered Egypt and organized a caliphate, which lasted for over two centuries (296/908-567/1171). In this period sectarian strifes occurred in major cities like Baghdad, Cairo and Nayshapur.²⁰

During the reign of Safavi monarch Shah Isma'il, the household of Shaykh Safi al-Din, a *Sufi* (mystic) master and also a *Shi'ite*,²¹ *Shi'aism* strengthened in Persia due to his expansionist policies. After a series of bloody wars with the local rulers, he succeeded in putting together Persia, piece by

¹⁸ Mukhtar, *Sectarian Conflict in Pakistan: A Case Study of Jhang*, p. 11.

¹⁹ Nasr, p.154.

²⁰ 'Allama Sayyid Muhammad Husayn Tabatabai, *Shi'aite Islam* (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd, 1975), pp. 64-65.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 66.

piece, into a country and in making *Shi'aism* the official religion in his kingdom.²²

Beside this, the Safavi monarch was engaged in converting majority of *Sunni* population to *Shi'aism*. 'These anti-*Sunni* policies of Safavides were responsible for deteriorating their relations with neighbouring powers such as Mughals in India, Ottomans in Turkey and Uzbeks in Central Asia.'²³

Phases of Sectarianism in Pakistan:

The problem of sectarianism is not new to Pakistan or to the Indo-Pak subcontinent. Even before the creation of Pakistan, sectarian conflicts used to break out in Lucknow as well as in other parts of the subcontinent. However, Lucknow was the main area of such strifes because it was one of the major centres of *Shi'ah* tradition in South Asia in religious, cultural and intellectual terms.

On the other hand, the establishment of religious groups like *Deobandi*²⁴ and *Brelvi*²⁵ in the subcontinent gave support to the *Sunni* school of thought. These religious institutions were tolerant not only towards the Hindus but towards each other as

²² Ibid.

²³ Mukhtar, *Sectarian Conflict in Pakistan: A Case Study of Jhang*, p.11.

²⁴ One of the *Sunni* sect, named after a religious school in Deoband (United Provinces of India). This sect is considered *puritan* but not as much as *Ahl-Hadith/Wahabis*.

²⁵ One of the *Sunni* sub-sect, named after a religious school in Brelvi (United Provinces of India). The Brelvi school emphasised more on mysticism as well as the spiritual side of Islam. They are similar to *Shi'ahs* in this respect that are ardent supporters of mysticism.

well. This fact is obvious from the close association of the *Deobandi* 'Ulama with the Indian National Congress.²⁶

However, the emergence of the *Ahl-i-Hadith* or *Wahabis*²⁷, a minor *Sunni* school of thought initiated by Muhammad bin Al-Wahab in Arabia, changed the situation in the subcontinent. The followers of this school began to get direct support from the sources beyond South Asia i.e. Saudi Arabia. The inclusion of the *Wahabi* factor to the religio-political scene of the subcontinent brought the old Arabo-Persian rivalry and hence the *Shi'ah-Sunni* relations began to deteriorate. 'In the following years, the involvement of external factors, especially of Iran and Saudi Arabia, increased and thereby added a new dimension to inter-sectarian problems.'²⁸

The problem of sectarianism did not emerge at once in Pakistan. It passed through some phases while becoming a national problem. These phases are as under.

- First phase (1947-77).
- Second phase (1977-88).
- Third phase (1988-2004).

First Phase (1947-77):

²⁶ Mukhtar Ahmad Ali, "Partition and Sectarianism," *The Scenario*, May 1998, p. 10.

²⁷ Literally, it means people who believe in the traditions of the Holy Prophet (PBUH). After the Holy *Qur'an*, they take guidance only from the traditions of the Holy Prophet (PBUH) and do not believe in blindly following religious scholars, mystics or any of the various schools of Islamic jurisprudence such as *Hanfi*, *Shafi*, *Hanbali*, etc. they are puritan of the extremist type. In Pakistan, they are a small minority. They are also called *Wahabbis*, after the name of 18th century puritan reformer Muhammad ibn 'Abdul Wahab of Saudi Arabia.

²⁸ Mukhtar, *The Scenario*, p. 10.

The beginning of this phase was confined to the joint efforts of both the *Sunni* and *Shi'ah 'Ulama* in framing an Islamic constitution for Pakistan. After the creation of Pakistan, '*Ulama* started their struggle in order to Islamize the new country. It was due to the united pressure by '*Ulama* that Islamic provision was incorporated in the famous Objectives Resolution passed by the assembly on 12th March 1949. However, Objectives Resolution did not satisfy the '*Ulama* section of society because they wanted that the new constitution be fully Islamic in its nature. In this regard '*Ulama* of different schools of thought met in January 1951 to formulate the fundamentals of an Islamic constitution. They unanimously agreed on 22 points. These points play a vital role in the constitutional history of Pakistan.²⁹

Other thing which could keep the *Shi'ahs* and the *Sunnis* together was the issue of *Qadianis/Ahmadis* who in their opinion were non-Muslims as they do not believe in the finality of the Prophethood of the Holy Prophet (PBUH). During his era the doctrinal differences between *Sunnis* and *Shi'ahs* were mainly overshadowed due to this *Qadiani*³⁰ issue. However, sectarian conflicts between the two sects continued in certain parts of the country, such as Jhang and Bhakhar. Most of the time there were sporadic clashes and did not involve much

²⁹ Afzal Iqbal, *Islamization of Pakistan* (Delhi: Idarah-e-Adabiyat-e-Delhi, 1984), pp.40-47, 51.

³⁰ Named after a town, Qadian, in India. They are the followers of Mirza Ghulam Ahmad who claimed in the late 19th century to be a prophet. They do not believe in the finality of the Holy Prophet (SAW). *Shi'ahs* and *Sunnis* do not accept them as Muslims. That is the reason, they were declared as non-Muslims in 1974 through a constitutional amendment in Pakistan.

human or material loss. As a whole, relations between the two communities were cordial and friendly.³¹

It was during this era that *Qadianis* were declared as non-Muslims by Act of Parliament of 1974 under the pressure of religious parties. This development is responsible for the escalation of sectarianism due to the following three reasons. Firstly, it emboldened the religious parties that they can achieve their goals at any cost. Secondly, the *Shi'ah-Sunni* doctrinal differences that had been overshadowed due to *Qadiani* issue began to resurface. Thirdly, the Act of Parliament was found an easy tool for declaring a sect as non-Muslim and in this connection the *Shi'ahs* were going to be next target.³²

During Bhutto era, *Shi'ahs* were still enjoying religious freedom and they did not feel threatened by the government or by fellow Muslims. There were some *Shi'ah-Sunni* riots during this period, however, particularly during *muharram*,³³ when Muslims in general and *Shi'ahs* in particular commemorate the martyrdom of *Imam* Husain and his fellows. During this era three *Shi'ah* persons remained heads of the state i.e. Muhammad Ali Jinnah, Iskandar Mirza and General Yahya Khan. Zulfikar Ali Bhutto also came from a *Shi'ah* background. Thus, during this phase *Shi'ah-Sunni* relations were cordial and the *Shi'ahs* did not feel threatened by the government or by the *Sunni* sect.³⁴

Second Phase (1977-88):

³¹ Afzal, p. 12.

³² Ibid.

³³ The first month of the Islamic calendar. On tenth *Muharram* the historic event of the martyrdom of *Imam* Hussain took place at Karbala.

³⁴ Charles H. Kennedy, *Pakistan 1992* (America: Westview Press, 1993), pp.77, 78.

The second phase witnessed a significant increase in t sectarian clashes in terms of its frequency, intensity and scope in different parts of the country. This phase of sectarianism began when general Zia-ul-Haq, overthrew Bhutto government in a bloodless coup on July 5, 1977. During this phase sectarianism received a tremendous boost due to number of factors. The Zia Islamization programme, the pressure of the *Sunni* religious parties, the formation of Tehrik-i-Nifaz-i-Fiqh-i-Jafriya (TNFJ), 'Islamic Revolution' in Iran and the emergence of sectarian organizations are some of the leading factors responsible for the escalation of sectarianism during this phase.³⁵

The second phase of sectarian violence between *Shi'ahs* and *Sunnis* is distinct in the following ways. Firstly, extremist groups emerged which were sharply in contrast in milit ncy to the traditional religio-political parties such as Jami'at 'Ulama-i-Islam (JUI), Jami'at 'Ulama-i-Pakistan (JUP), Jama't-i-Islami (JI), TNFJ etc. Secondly, the problem spilled over to e other parts of the country because it became an issue of national concern. Thirdly, well-organized and well-trained terrorist groups emerged which were and are involved in bomb blasts and killing of innocent people.³⁶

Third Phase (1988-04):

The phase is distinct due to the following reasons.

Firstly, the sectarian killing was at its crescendo du this phase because all the sectarian plants that were implanted in Zia's era began to bear fruits in this phase.

³⁵ Mukhtar, *The Scenario*, p. 12

³⁶ *Ibid.*

Secondly, legislation was carried out to combat terrorism and sectarianism with an iron hand. Thirdly, in spite of legislation the problem of sectarianism emerged with full force. Fourthly, after the 9/11, the government of Pakistan joined the international coalition against war on terrorism. Fifthly, due to high pressure from USA and India, Pakistan imposed a ban on all militant groups which were involved in terrorism in one way or another.

CAUSES AND FACTORS:

1) Zia's Islamization:

The process of Islamization, initiated by General Zia ul Haq, was greatly resented by the *Shi'ah* community of Pakistan because it had treated all the people of Pakistan under the same law i.e., *Hanfi*³⁷ law. This created a sort of tension between *Shi'ahs* and government. The first meeting of *Shi'ah* leaders was held on 12th April 1979 in the town of Bakkar near Mianwali in Punjab to protest against the government's decision of enforcing *Hanafi* law in the country.³⁸

The protest by *Shi'ahs* intensified after the promulgation of *Zakat*³⁹ and *Ushr*⁴⁰ Ordinances. They were of the opinion that *Zakat* and *Ushr* principles were different in *Shi'ah fiqh*. Under *Shi'ah fiqh*, *Zakat* was not due on all savings; nor was *Ushr* due on all crops. Moreover, the government was not the proper

³⁷ One of the four *Sunni* schools of thought named after its founder Imam Abu Hanifah.

³⁸ Hasan Askari Rizvi, *Military, State and Society in Pakistan* (Lahore: Sang-e-Meel Publication, 2003), pp. 172, 173.

³⁹ One of the five pillars of Islam. It refers to the tax paid by the rich, sane and adult Muslims at the end of a year. *Shi'ahs* and *Sunnis* have different *Zakat* systems.

⁴⁰ One of the Islamic taxes paid on wheat, rice, maize and other crops.

agency of collecting *Zakat*. They also demanded that the *Hudood*⁴¹ Ordinance should be applied on them in accordance with *Jafri fiqh*.⁴²

In July 1980, the *Shi'ah* community called for a countrywide demonstration by gathering in Islamabad. The government tried to stop it but failed. Ultimately, Zi met with the *Shi'ah*'s leaders and on 6th July 1980 Mohammad Haroon, the minister for religious affairs, and Mufti Jafar Hussain, the TNFJ leader, jointly signed an agreement called *Islama ad* agreement. The agreement proclaims that the *Shi'ahs* will be treated according to their own *fiqh*. It was due to this Islamization programme that the *Shi'ah* felt the need to form a political organization of their own that could safeguard their interests.⁴³

2) 'Islamic Revolution' in Iran:

'Islamic Revolution' in Iran affected the internal situation of Pakistan, more particularly the *Shi'ah-Sunni* relations. Khomeini expressed that this was an Islamic Revolution and would be expanded to the neighbouring countries. Iran published and circulated literature related to *jihad*⁴⁴, merits of the revolution and the teachings of Khomeini in Pakistan through its established institutions. The high ups of an made contacts with the leadership of *Shi'ahs*, showing their religious sympathies towards them. The *Shi'ahs* of Pakistan also looked to Iran for spiritual guidance. They held Khomeini in great esteem. Iran made *jihad* related movies to infuse the spirit of

⁴¹ In Islamic *shariah* it refers to Quran and *Sunnah*.

⁴² Kennedy, pp. 79, 80.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 180.

⁴⁴ Literally means struggle. In Islam it refers to struggle against evils in the society. It is also one of the pillars of Islam. Here it has been used in the sense of holy war.

jihād among the *Shi'ahs* and to raise them against the government. The messages of Khomeini were communicated to *Shi'ahs* through cassettes. The *Shi'ahs* of Pakistan, as a reaction to these changes, held processions and criticized the *Sunnis'* doctrines and beliefs. After congregation prayers, the *Shi'ahs* would gather in circle and raise slogans like *Allah Akbar, Khomeini Rahber* meaning Allah is Great and Khomeini is the guide.⁴⁵

On the other hand, *Sunni* community was also in action against *Shi'ahs*. They targeted *Shi'ahs* in their discussions and meetings. They openly criticized and opposed the *Shi'ahs*. The ex-head of the SSP, Haq Nawaz Jhangvi, chanted the slogan *Shi'ah kafir*, meaning *Shi'ahs* are 'infidel'. They distributed stickers of *Shi'ah kafir and Khomeini murdabad* (*Shi'ahs* are infidels and Khomeini is dead) among the people, paste these on walls and buses. Mosques were used as source of criticizing each others' policies and doctrines rather than the source of providing religious guidance to the masses. These hostile policies of both sects created sectarian hatred between them.⁴⁶

3) Saur Revolution and Soviet Intervention in Afghanistan:

The Saur Revolution and the subsequent developments proved to be a source of bonanza for the politically weak religious parties in Pakistan. Financial and military help started to flow into Pakistan for the Afghan *mujahidin* (those who fight *jihād*) from USA, Saudi Arabia and other anti-Soviet countries. This help of money and weapons were either channeled through military government or religious groups such as

⁴⁵ Mohammad Shoaib Adil, ed., "Firqawaranah Jang ka Aghaz," *Awaz*, October 1997, pp. 240, 244.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 252.

Jama'at-e-Islami. Within no time, funds and weapons intended for *mujahidin* started making their way into the hands of religious groups within Pakistan. This development led to the emergence of the Kalashnikov culture in Pakistan.⁴⁷

The civil war in Afghanistan, after the defeat of the Union, added a new dimension to sectarianism in Pakistan. New sanctuaries and training centres emerged in different parts of Afghanistan. Places like Khost and Kunar became training centres for *Sunni* extremists. Hazarajat area became training centre for *Shi'ah* militants of Pakistan. The *Shi'ah* militancy received a major setback when *Taliban*⁴⁸ overran the *Shi'ahs* of Hazarajat area. After this development, Afghanistan became a good sanctuary for *Sunni* extremists of Pakistan.⁴⁹ During the civil war, after the Russians withdrawal from Afghanistan, *Taliban* were backed by Pakistan while the Northern Alliance was backed by Iran, India and Russia. When General Pervez Musharraf came into power in October 1999 through a bloodless coup, he also adopted the same policy of supporting *Taliban*. Pakistan pro-*Taliban* policy facilitated her in Kashmir. *Jihadi* camps were established in Afghanistan for training of *mujahidin*. These *mujahidin* were sent to Indian-held Kashmir to fight the Indian army for the cause of Kashmiris. However, after the 9/11 carnage in United States of America, there came a shift in Pakistan policy towards *Taliban*. The United States held *Taliban* responsible for terrorist attacks and declared war against them. In this war, Pakistan did not side with her

⁴⁷ Zaffar Abbas, "A Brief History of Sectarian Violence in Pakistan," *The Herald*, December 2003, p.59.

⁴⁸ Literally means students or those who seek knowledge. It refers to those who were ruling in Afghanistan at the time of 9/11 event in America.

⁴⁹ Adil, ed., p. 252.

Taliban. It joined the international coalition to combat the war on terrorism.⁵⁰

4) **Iraq-Iran War:**

The Iraq-Iran war was actually a tussle between two ideologies rather than two countries. The one ideology was *Sunnism* and the other was *Shi'ahism*. The former was backed by Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates and Iraq along with the USA while the latter was backed by Iran, since Khomeini termed the Iran Revolution as Islamic Revolution and also showed his likeness to export it to the neighbouring countries. The neighbouring countries came out with diverse strategies to contain it. Iraq, backed by Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates and USA, went for an open war with Iran to contain it.⁵¹

This development was greatly resented by the *Shi'ah* community of Pakistan under the TNFJ. When the war was raging between the two countries, Baghdad encouraged the formation of a Karachi-based group called the Sawad-e-Azam to counter Tehran's influence. The move sparked the first major round of sectarian violence in Karachi in years. Dozens died, houses were torched and property losses ran into millions. When the conservative Gulf Sheikdoms plunged in it soon it became evident that a proxy war was being fought on Pakistani soil courtesy in terms of TNFJ and the newly formed Sipah-e-Sahaba confrontations.⁵²

5) **Politicization of Shi'ah:**

Tehrik Nifaz-i-Fiqah Jaffaria was formed in April 1979 as a reaction to the Zia's Islamization programme and the

⁵⁰ "Pakistan main Islam....Itihad aur Tazadat," *Asia*, 10-16 July 2003, pp. 28-30.

⁵¹ Abbas, p. 59.

⁵² Ibid.

psychological boost received from the Iran Revolution with Mufti Jafar Hussain as its first president. For the first time the party stood for the rights of the *Shi'ah* community in Pakistan, when Zia promulgated *Zakat* and *Ushr* Ordinance in 1980. It was due to this reason that Zia acceded to the demands of *Shi'ahs* by concluding 'Islamabad Agreement' with Mufti Jafar Hussain in July 1980. After the demise of Mufti Jafar Hussain in August 1983, the party leadership went into the hands of Allama Arif Hussain al-Hussaini.

The operation activities of TJP were mostly confined to the Northern Areas and some parts of NWFP in its early years. However, with the formation of SSP, which the TJP claimed, is an Iraqi puppet organization to counter the revolution, the party moved to Punjab also. As the SSP grew in strength, the TJP became more and more militant. From being a defensive organization, it became the aggressor on a number of occasions.⁵³

The assassination of Allama Arif Hussain al-Hussaini in August 1988, was greatly resented by the *Shi'ah* community all over the world. Allegations were made that he was killed due to his anti-Zia, anti-US and pro-Iran policies. Allama's assassination did spark *Shi'ah-Sunni* riots in his native Kurram Agency, where sectarian fanatics turn every issue and dispute into clash between the two sects.⁵⁴

After the 1988 polls the *Tehrik* (movement) changed its name to Tehrik-e-Jafaria Pakistan (TJP) and established itself as a political party and the sole representative of the *Shi'ahs* in

⁵³ Amer A. Khan, "Faction Replay," *The Herald*, June 1994, pp. 35,36.

⁵⁴ Musa Khan Jalalzai, *The Sunni-Shia Conflict in Pakistan* (Lahore: Book Traders, 1998), pp. 264-265.

Pakistan. The group felt that Tehrik's focus had shifted from religion to politics.⁵⁵

6) Emergence of Sectarian Organizations:

Sectarian organizations have played a vital role in the emergence of sectarian menace. The emergence of such organizations took place in the Afghan-Russian war. When the war was over, they turned their attention towards Jammu and Kashmir. The emergence of these sectarian organization is very interesting. These emerged from the main stream religious parties of Pakistan. However, they are totally differe from their parent organizations. These splinter groups are r more dangerous than their parent organizations. They have e y access to arms in Pakistan. These groups are not accountable to anyone for their activities.

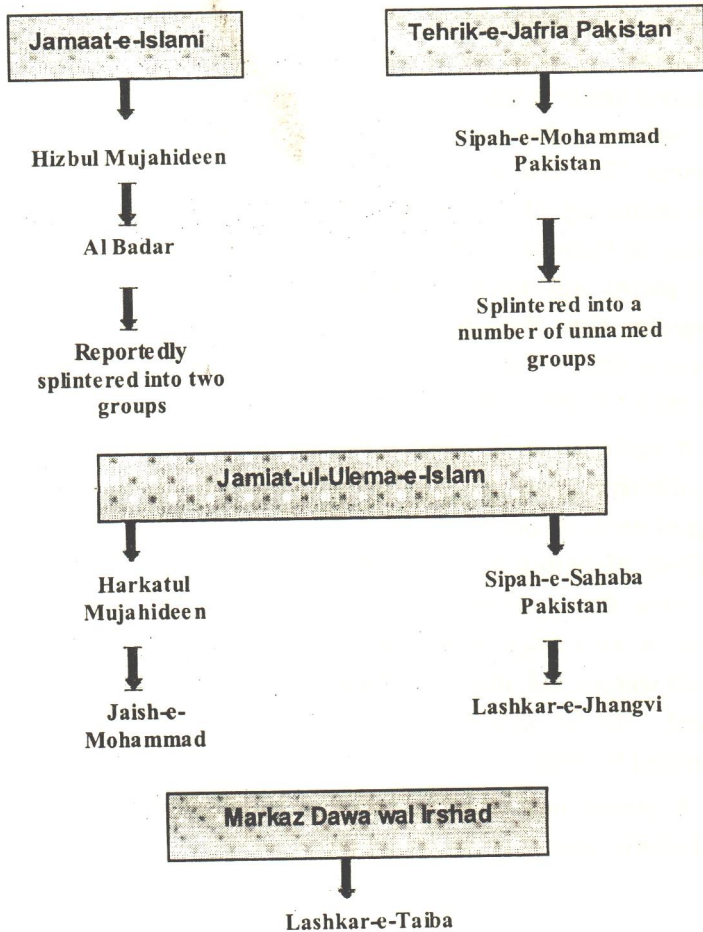
A vast amount of sectarian literature is circulated by these organizations every day. The amount of money spent by hese organizations on producing offensive literature alone uns into millions of rupees every month. It is through this offensive literature that restlessness is created among the followers. There is not a single page in all these pamphlets and oklets which will not fall under the offence of 'incitement t religious hatred.' The fire of sectarian hatred is also ignited by speeches delivered by leaders of these sectarian groups.⁵⁶

A general outline of the religious parties, militant groups and splinter groups in Pakistan is given below.

⁵⁵ Musa Khan Jalalzai, *The Holy Terror* (Lahore: Dua Publications, 2002), p. 101.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 31.

Outline of the Religious Parties, Militant groups and splinter groups in Pakistan



Source: *The Herald*, May 2000, p.54.

7) Active Sectarian Organizations:

Some of the sectarian organizations that are involve in sectarian strives are as under.

a) Imamia Students Organization (ISO):

Imamia Students Organization is a *Shi'ah* organization formed on May 22, 1972 at the University of Engineering and Technology in Lahore and its founders included Dr. Majid Naroze Abidi and Ali Raza Naqvi. Dr. Marghoob Zaidi be ame the first ISO president. The real purpose of this organization is to protect the interests of, and provide financial sup rt to, *Shi'ah* students all over Pakistan. By 1977, ISO had proliferated all over the country and had developed contacts with a number of similar organizations in Iran. This relation became further strong with the 'Islamic Revolution' in Iran in 1979. ISO has played an active role in protesting against the Islamization process of Zia regime.⁵⁷

b) Sipah-i-Sahaba Pakistan (SSP):

Sipah-i-Sahaba Pakistan is one of the major anti-*Shi'ah* splinter group in Pakistan. On September 6, 1985, Maulana Haq Nawaz Jhangvi, a *Deobandi 'alim* (theologian) of JUI (F) founded Anjuman-i-Sipah-i-Sahaba Pakistan in Jhang, later renamed as Sipah-i-Sahaba Pakistan. It was the first organized *Sunni* party with the exclusive professed objective to defend the honour of *Sahaba* (companions of the Holy Prophet (PBUH)) and counter and contain the influence of 'Islamic Revolution' in Iran. He was constantly demanding to declare *Shi'ah* as non-Muslims. He also demanded that since Pakistan was a *Sunni*

⁵⁷ Azmat Abbas, "Tentacles of Hatred," *The Herald*, September 2001, p. 58.

dominant state, it should be declared a *Sunni* state as Iran was declared a *Shi'ah* state due to its *Shi'ah* majority.⁵⁸

The SSP remained a relatively peaceful party for as long as it was officially a part of the JUI. However, once Haq Nawaz Jhangvi, the then JUI's provincial president quit JUI, separation occurred between SSP and JUI. Within a year of the split Haq Nawaz was gunned down in February 1990. He was replaced by Maulana Eisarul Haq Qasmi, who only survived for one year. Then the leadership went into the hands of Maulana Zia-ul-Rehman Farooqi, who also breathed his last in a bomb blast in January 1997. Maulana Azam Tariq who became its next leader, was too gunned down in Islamabad on October 6, 2003.⁵⁹ Now the present patron in chief is Allama Ali Sher Haidari.

On becoming independent, the first thing SSP did was to launch a protracted guerrilla war against the *Shi'ahs*. It also publishes and distributes the anti- *Shi'ah* pamphlets and booklets in which they reproduce what they term 'objectionable material from *Shi'ah* history books' and urges the public to get rid of these 'blasphemers.' The government also alleges that SSP is drawing huge amounts of funds and arms from India and Iraqi intelligence agencies. Most of its leaders are involved in serious crimes ranging from incitement to religious violence to kidnapping and murder.⁶⁰

In March 1995, Milli Yekjehti Council (MYC) was formed consisting of eleven religious and sectarian parties' leaders to create sectarian harmony and to do away with the

⁵⁸ Mukhtar, *Sectarian Conflict in Pakistan: A Case Study of Jhang*, p.31.

⁵⁹ *The Herald*, December 2003, pp. 62-63.

⁶⁰ Adil, ed., pp. 252-253.

misunderstanding between the *Shi'ahs* and the *Sunnis*. The council agreed in May 1995 to a 17-point code of conduct. As a result, the situation significantly improved in 1995 and 1996. However, the extremists on both sides were not happy with the agreement, and they blamed their respective leaders for deviating from their beliefs and principles. As a result, the middle of 1996 witnessed a violent increase in sectarian violence proving the failure of MYC.⁶¹

In April 1998 both the SSP's leader, Maulana Zia ul Qasmi and the government proposed framing two draft laws. On April 1, 'Ulama Committee, presided by Dr. Israr Ahmad was formed in this connection. It was agreed in the meeting that there should be a law on the national level that whoever insults the *Sahaba* (companions of the Prophet PBUH), *Khulfa-e-Rashideen* wives of the Holy Prophet (PBUH) or *Ahl al-Bait*, should be punished strictly. However, Sajid Ali Naqvi, patron in chief of TJP rejected both the laws on the ground that increasing punishment for these offences will lead to chaos in society.⁶² SSP also targets the *Brelvi*, a *Sunni* sect for its 'unIslamic' doctrines, however, *Brelvi* do not agree with SSP doctrines.⁶³

c) **Sepah-i-Muhammad Pakistan (SMP):**

Sepah-i-Muhammad Pakistan is one of *Shi'ah* splinter groups that was formed in 1994 in Thokar Niaz Baig, a suburb of Lahore with a sizeable *Shi'ah* population. SM was formed because SM was not satisfied with the performance of Iamia Students Organization and TJP. Like the splinter group SSP,

⁶¹ Mukhtar, *Sectarian Conflict in Pakistan: A Case Study of Jhang*, pp. 37, 38.

⁶² Zaigham Khan, "Peace at Raiwind," *The Herald*, May 1999, pp. 48,49.

⁶³ *The Herald*, June 1994, pp. 31, 35.

SM is also an independent organization, working aggressively against SSP and *Deobandis*.⁶⁴

The first patron in chief of organisation was Murid Ab as Yazdani. He had adopted a lenient policy towards SSP. 95 Yazdani signed the code of ethics prepared by MYC. The code had declared that both *Imam Mehdi*⁶⁵ and the *Khulfa al-Rashideen* would be the part of Islamic faith. However, Ghulam Raza Naqvi, one of the founders of the organization, protested against the decision and led a rebellion against Yazdani. His contention was that accepting the *Khulfa al-Rashideen* was like forsaking *Shi'ah* faith and converting to *Sunni* faith. This decision divided the party into two groups, one led by Naqvi and other by Yazdani. Later on, due to great pressure, Yazdani left MYC and rejoined the group led by Ghulam Raza Naqvi.⁶⁶

In September 1996, Yazdani was gunned down in Islamabad and party leadership was taken over by Ghulam Raza Naqvi. It was suspected by the workers of SMP that Naqvi is involved in the murder of Yazdani. Suspicions proved correct when Musa Khan, a SMP activist close to Ghulam Raza Naqvi, was arrested by the police and confessed that he had

⁶⁴ *The Herald*, June 1994, pp. 29, 37.

⁶⁵ Literally means the guide. Among *Shi'ahs* it refers to the divinely appointed person who guides the Muslim community, both spiritually and politically, after the demise of the Holy Prophet (SAW). But *Imam* does not bring a new *Shari'ah* (Law). He just interprets *Shari'ah* in the light of new realities and circumstances. First *Imam* was ? li. *Isna ?shariyyah* believes in twelve *Imams* and in the disappearance of the twelfth one, *Mehdi* (the guide). It is believed by the *Shi'ahs*, the twelfth *Imam* will appear again and establish justice on earth.

⁶⁶ Zaigham Khan, "Crime and Punishment," *The Herald*, December 1996, p.57.

Jhangvi that LeJ derives its name. It was formed under the leadership of Riaz Basra and Akram Lahori. The LeJ is one of the two sectarian terrorist outfits proscribed on August 14, 2001, by President Pervez Musharraf.

It is said that Sipah-e-Sahaba created Lashkar-e-Jhangvi (LeJ) to serve as a separate militant wing. According to this logic, the SSP platform would be reserved for political activities while militants could work under a different banner.⁷⁰

Muhammad Ajmal alias Akram Lahori has been reported as the present commander-in-chief of the LeJ. Lahori was originally with Sipah-e-Sahaba Pakistan (SSP), which he had joined in 1990. Subsequently, in 1996, he along with Malik Ishaque and Riaz Basra founded the LeJ and launched terrorist activities in Punjab.

Lahori succeeded Riaz Basra, after the latter's death on May 14, 2002. Lahori is in police custody following his arrest in Orangi Town, Karachi, on June 17, 2002. Five accomplices of Lahori were also arrested on the same day.⁷¹

Lahori, according to reports of July 2, 2002 quoting senior police officials, was involved in 38 cases of sectarian killings in Sindh. These included killing of Ehtishamuddin Haider, brother of Federal Interior Minister Moinuddin Haider, Pakistan State Oil Managing Director Shoukat Raza Mirza. Besides, he was also involved in massacre at *Imambargah*⁷² Mehmoodabad and in the murder of Iranian cadets in Rawalpindi. Lahori's predecessor was Basra. He was involved in more than 300 sectarian incidents, including attacking Iranian missions, killing

⁷⁰ *The Herald*, September 1998, p. 29.

⁷¹ <http://www.satp.org/satporgtp/countries/pakistan/terroristoutfits/LeJ.htm>

⁷² Worship place for *Shi'ahs*.

an Iranian diplomat Sadiq Ganji in December 1990 and targeting government officials. He was arrested and tried by a special court for Ganji's killing, but escaped during trial in 1994 from police custody during the process of being produced in court. Media reports said Riaz Basra, along with three of his accomplices, was killed in an encounter on May 14, 2002.⁷³

A news report of October 2000 claimed that the LeJ had split into two factions, one headed by Riaz Basra and the other by the chief of the outfit's Supreme Council, Qari Asa ullah Alias Talha. The split reportedly occurred due to differences between the two over resumption of ethnic strife, after the military coup in Pakistan in October 1999. While Basra favoured resumption of terrorist attacks against *Shi'ahs* in order to force the government to comply with the demands of the outfit. Talha opposed the plan as he, reportedly, felt it was suicidal not only for the organization but also for national solidarity. Talha based his opinion on the assumption that, with a military regime in power, any armed activity would invite stern action against the LeJ.⁷⁴ Members of the outfit have had links with Hizbul Mujahidin as well as *Taliban* in Afghanistan.⁷⁵

8) Religious *Madrassahs* (Seminaries) and '*Ulama*:

The proliferation of *madrassahs* in Pakistan since 1977 has contributed a lot to sectarian divide. Many factors are responsible for it. Firstly, soon after the *Zakat* and *Ushr* Ordinance of 1980 religious activity was accelerated. The *Zakat* and *Ushr* Ordinance rose the '*Ulama* status and

⁷³<http://www.satp.org/satporgtp/countries/pakistan/terroristoutfits/LeJ.htm>

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ *The Herald*, September 1998, p. 29.

empowered them socially and politically. They began to contest elections first at local bodies level and then for legislatures. 'Ulama also began to give *Zakat* money to their established *madrassahs* in order to strengthen their sects by building more *madrassahs*, thus creating more loyal followers.⁷⁶ Secondly, the poverty also led to the increase in the strength of *madrassahs*. People diverted their attention towards these *madrassahs* because they provided free religious education and lodging to students. Third reason is the negligence of the government in having a check over the unregistered *madrassahs*.⁷⁷

According to an estimate there are 10,000 to 40,000 religious *madrassahs* in Pakistan in which 10% to 15% are linked with extremists groups for producing militants. These extremist *madrassahs* are spoiling the image of Pakistan nationally as well as internationally. Such types of *madrassahs* advocate the culture of religious intolerance and extremism.⁷⁸

The militant character of the *mujahidin* was transferred to Pakistan because they were supported by Pakistani religious parties. Many *mujahidin* who had fought in Afghanistan against the Russians were the products of these *madrassahs*. During the war many *madrassahs* in Pakistan were the training and ammunition stores, especially in Punjab and NWFP. When Afghan-Russian war ended, these militants resorted to terrorism and fanning sectarianism in Pakistan. Consequently, sectarian

⁷⁶ Jalalzai, *The Sunni-Shi'ah Conflict in Pakistan*, p. 303.

⁷⁷ Ghayoor Ahmad, "The Menace of Extremism," *Dawn*, 21 April, 2004.

⁷⁸ *Asia*, 10-16 July 2003, pp. 28-30.

riots broke out several times not only in large cities but in villages as well.⁷⁹

There are some *madrassahs* funded by government from the *Zakat* fund. However, there are many *madrassahs* that are not registered with the government but still are running smoothly. Such *madrassahs* are funded by the mainstream religious and sectarian parties or from foreign source. Such *madrassahs* tutor their students in all the skill ranging from propaganda to combat. These institutions pose real challenge to government, since very little in terms of specific detail is known about them. All the *madrassahs* have developed a clever means of camouflaging their real source of income. They some times regard their publication as a source of income, h is not true, because these do not have enough circulation to fulfill their requirements. There is also exaggeration in the onations from their patrons.⁸⁰

The content of the syllabi of most of the private *madrassahs* is also very controversial and militant in its nature. This is evident in the primers in which the Urdu letter “*jim*” stands for “*Jihad*(holy war)”, “*tay*” for “*toap*(canon)”, “*khay*” for “*khoon*(blood)” and “*kaf*” for “*Kalashnikov*(machine gun)” and so forth.⁸¹

Sectarian *madrassahs* impart ideological or sectarian education. It is extremely effective because, in most cases, a student begins this education at a *madrassah* at the age eight or below. Not admitting to being sectarian is an essential part of the training. But the brainwashing is so comprehensive that

⁷⁹ Jalalzai, *The Sunni-Shia Conflict in Pakistan*, p. 303.

⁸⁰ Amer Ahmad Khan, “Striking at the Roots,” *The Herald*, February 1995, p. 63

⁸¹ *Ibid.*

students of every sect come out of the *madrassah* believing that they are the only true Muslims around.⁸²

REMEDIES:

Sectarianism is spreading tentacles rapidly in Pakistan. It has hit those areas which were free of sectarian strife. It is getting violent day by day. The sectarian issue of the past was totally different from the present. In the past, it used to be confined to debates among the sectarian *'Ulama*; later, it progressed to hot discussions among the masses; hot sectarian discussions riled up emotions to a level where followers of one sect pelted with stones religious processions of the rival sects. With Afghan war for independence from the former USSR's yoke, gun culture took strong hold in Pakistan and rival sects started firing at each other's processions. As the Afghan war prolonged; it brought bomb-making expertise in Pakistan and as a result, sectarian outfits started bombing each other's religious processions. Finally, the most dangerous, suicide attacks on processions and gatherings in worship places started. If the problem continues, it may soon root out the integrity and solidarity of Pakistan. It is, therefore, extremely necessary to do something decisive for the resolution of the problem. Keeping in view this backdrop, following suggestions are made.

1) Establishment of Non-sectarian *Madrassahs* (Seminaries):

In the present religious educational system every sectarian seminary is imparting religious education of a particular sect e.g. *Sunnis* and *Shi'ahs*. The *Sunnis* are then divided in *Deobandis*, *Barelvis* and *Ahl-Hadith*. The emphasis is made to prove the flawlessness of a particular school of thought. When

⁸² Ibid.

students graduate from these seminaries, they consider their own sect people as the only followers of true Islam, and others as impious and even 'infidels'. They always try to impose their thinking on others.

The government should take immediate action. It should establish religious institutions where students are taught the general teachings of Islam. Emphasis should be on issues on which all schools of thought agree. Sectarian ideologies should be taught as different versions of Islam and as equally valid. Broadminded teaching staff should be hired. This will not only create a healthy educational environment, but it will also create a sectarian harmony and brotherhood among students of all schools of thought.

2) Curriculum Reforms:

Education reforms should be introduced in the syllabus of seminaries to cater to the needs of modern life. The syllabus based on traditional pattern only trains a student to attend congregational prayers, but cannot enable him to work for his livelihood, other than being paid as an *Imam*. It is necessary to equip students with modern education along with the religious knowledge. Computer science, everyday science and other secular subjects which could help students to find jobs, should be included in the curriculum. This step will not only broaden the outlook of students but will also bridge the gulf between the modernists and traditionalists.

3) Right of Expression:

There should be freedom of expression. No one should impose his opinion on others. Everyone should respect others' views and opinions. An approach which is based on convincing others by reasoning rather than imposition of one's will, should be adopted. This will lead to the culture of religious tolerance.

The respect for the right of expression has been aptly described by Imam Shaf'i in these words, 'I consider my opinion accurate, but I do profess that possibility of error lies in it; I consider others' opinion wrong, but I do not neglect that possibility of accuracy lies in it.'⁸³

4) **Ban on Sectarian Speeches and Gatherings:**

Provocative sectarian speeches delivered in public gatherings or from loudspeakers of places of worship misguide people, particularly, the young or illiterate ones. Similarly, sectarian gatherings increase religious fanaticism because it is in these gatherings that more emphasis is made on adherence to a sect. The sectarian leaders on such occasion also demand more and more loyalty from its followers for the propagation and protection of their sectarian ideology. It is also these gatherings that followers of opposing sects bomb.

It is, therefore, strongly suggested to ban sectarian speeches. This will not only decrease the chances of happening of unpleasant events but will also minimise religious fanaticism.

5) **Establishment of Supreme Council of 'Ulama:**

There should be a supreme council consisting of 'Ulama from all schools of thought. It should operate under some fundamental principles. The principles should have such a binding authority that no one should have the courage to violate them. Right of expression and respect for others' sects beliefs should be the mainstay of these principles. Representative 'alim of each sect in the council should exercise full command and confidence of the followers of his sect. If any member of the

⁸³ *Aman Aur Islam*, "Intiha Pasandi Kia Hai," (Peshawar: National Research and Development Foundation, March 2003), p. 24.

council violates any of the principles, he should be severely punished. For example, his membership should be terminated and a heavy financial punishment should be levied on him. Moreover, he (accused) should also be subjected to severe punishment by the followers of his sect. If the member 'alim of the council as well as his entire sect followers are found to have hatched a conspiracy for the council to fail or have openly violated the rules of the council, a collective step should be taken by all of the members of the council in such a way that the accused sect no longer is able to operate in Pakistan. The floor of the council should also be used for the collective solution of various national problems, particularly, the ones related to religion.

6) **Elimination of Sanctimonious Nature of 'Ulama:**

Most of our 'Ulama have sanctimonious nature. There are contradictions in what they say and in what they do regarding the eradication of sectarianism. In the print and electronic media, the 'Ulama talk of unification of Muslims. However, in their private gatherings, they stress upon their followers to adopt a violent behaviour towards other sects. This attitude is very disappointing. If they are really serious in the solution of the problem they must defuse cant and should put forward their services honestly for creating sectarian harmony. The common people should have a check over the 'Ulama of their respective sects and should avoid the provocative statements given by them. Due to the lack of support from the public, the 'Ulama will be compelled to come on the right track.

7) **Ban on Sectarian Organisations:**

All the sectarian groups and parties fanning sectarian hatred should be banned. Their offices should be sealed. Their workers and leaders should be put behind bars. Though this

practice is against the notion of freedom of association and expression, but essential for maintaining public peace and order. However, this imposition of ban should not extend to peaceful groups who are in no way involved in fanning fanaticism.

8) Disarmament of Sectarian Organisations:

Arms with security forces mean protection while arms with sectarian militants mean destruction. All sectarian organisations are reported to have heavy weapons through which they carry out their militant activities. In order to maintain peace and tranquillity, all the sectarian organisations should be disarmed. Arms without license should be seized and the offenders should be punished severely. Great care should be taken while issuing arms license. Those involved in illegal selling, buying and trafficking of arms should be severely dealt with.

9) Anti-sectarian Legislation and its Effective Execution:

Government should legislate and execute laws effectively for curbing sectarianism. The legislation should be unanimously passed by members of parliament. Sectarian laws should be independent of procedural as well as administrative flaws. These should not be black laws in the sense that they should not give immense powers to law enforcement agencies. Because in that case powers may be abused against innocent people. Individuals could be forced to confess to crimes they may not have committed. Similarly, these laws should not be so lenient that they do not scare offenders. These laws should be so framed that the innocents are not deprived of their right to prove themselves not guilty.

Laws cannot yield any fruit until and unless these are effectively enforced. For this purpose law enforcement agencies should be active and honest.

10) Creating Religious Awareness:

Awareness should be created among the masses regarding the true teachings of Islam. This can be effectively done if the *'alim* of every sect takes responsibility of conveying true Islam to the advocates of the concerned sects. Narrow interpretation of Islam should be strongly discouraged. The true concept of *jihad* should be highlighted. Suicide attacks should be condemned. Respect for human beings and punishment for killing of a human should be implemented. Books and pamphlets should be published to discourage sectarian killing. Live programmes should be telecast and broadcast for the promotion of Muslims unity.

11) Ban on Foreign Aid to Sectarian Organisations:

Sectarian organisations have been reportedly receiving financial aid from indigenous as well as foreign sources. The amount of indigenous aid is not as much high as that from foreign sources. Due to ideological similarities with the indigenous sects and some other vested interests, certain countries provide financial aid to sects that espouse their ideologies. It has been reported that first these organisations were created by these countries and then funded for the propagation and protection of their respective ideologies. Thus, a proxy war is being fought on the soil of Pakistan.

To protect Pakistan from this proxy war and to have a peaceful environment, the government should impose a ban regarding the provision of the foreign aid to these sectarian organisations. Lesser budgets will neither enable them for

carrying out militant activities nor help them in publishing sectarian literature.

12) **Elimination of Unemployment and Poverty:**

All of the terrorist activities are carried out by the people of poor class. They may accept this choice due to unemployment and poverty. Having nothing to do, these people can be bought easily for carrying out terrorist activities. Steps should be taken by government for elimination of unemployment and poverty. Employment will not only decrease intensity of poverty but it will also keep people busy and thus away from sectarian violence. Employment also eradicates the sense of envy. Government should create job opportunities. It should also launch welfare projects for elimination of poverty. Beside social uplift, these projects will also provide job opportunities to the jobless.

13) **Ban on Publishing Sectarian Literature:**

Enough amount of money is reported to have been spent on publishing sectarian literature for the protection and propagation of sectarian ideologies. Beside provocative statements, the *mullahs* (semi-theologian) also criticise beliefs of other sects on sensitive issues. Emphasis is also put on adopting a violent behaviour against other sects.

For sectarian harmony, a ban should be imposed by the government on publishing sectarian literature. Efforts should be made by the '*Ulama* of all sects to produce literature which contributes to cordial relations among various sects. The common masses should also avoid reading literature of sectarian nature. This collective struggle of government, '*Ulama* and masses will fully discourage publication of sectarian literature.

14) The Role of NGO's:

Non-governmental organisations are set up for the welfare of the masses by fighting against social evils. Since sectarianism is a threat to the security of society, therefore, NGO's should be set up in various parts of the country for creating sectarian harmony. In each locality, hit by sectarian violence, staff of NGO should constitute local religious people of all sects. This collective work of NGO's staff members will not only create a sectarian harmony within NGO but also in the locality where it exists. Inclusion of 'Ulama in the staff of NGO will also eliminate general apprehension which 'Ulama and masses have regarding the negative role of NGO's.

15) Conducting Research Studies:

Sectarianism is confined to some areas of Pakistan. If we are serious in eliminating it, then it is necessary to have knowledge about all these areas hit by sectarian violence. This task though difficult, yet can be accomplished by researchers. In each of these areas research should be conducted. Primary data should be collected about all the sectarian hit places. Government should provide basic facilities needed to researchers. The collected data then should be handed over to government for action. In the light of the collected data, decision-making body will be able to frame policies for the best solution of the problem.

Pakistan is our country; we have to protect it from external and internal threats collectively. We have to work collectively for the national development; otherwise we will lag behind in race of development. This is only possible if we discourage sectarian based identity, and believe on Islamic and national identity. Criticising the sectarian division, 'Allama Iqbal has aptly described,

یوں تو سید بھی ہو مرزا بھی ہو افغان بھی ہو
تم سبھی کچھ ہو بتاؤ تو مسلمان بھی ہو؟
فرقہ بندی ہے اور کہیں ذاتیں ہیں
کیا زمانے میں پنپنے کی یہی باتیں ہیں؟

‘You are Syeds, Mirzas and Afghans,
And besides being all these, are you Muslims also?
Divided you are in castes and sects,
Do you think it is the way to prosper in this world?’⁸⁴

⁸⁴ Sharif Farooq, “Sadar Musharraf ka Falsafah Fikar wa ? mal aur Naujawan Nasal,” *Daily Khabrian*, 28 May 2004.

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