

## Islam and Pakistan: The Dilemma of Orthodoxy and Modernism

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### Abstract

This research paper delves into the intriguing strife between the preservation of genuine Islamic beliefs and social practices in today's modern Pakistan and the need for change to keep up with a rapidly changing globe. The article gets down to the street by issuing in the picture of the Islam orthodoxy in the Pakistan context where different religious institutions and schools are in the blame of keeping the old traditions since the Revolution of seal. It then deals with the different obstacles that modernity presents. Such as, but not limited to, technological innovation, globalization, and social change. The above economy and the mode of life also create enormous of variables that Pakistanis are exposed to of different ideas and lifestyles. In consequence, some are deviating and becoming antagonistic to the Islamic teachings. In addition, the article covers new ground concerning the efforts of some Muslims at tha reconciliation of their religion with the modern age. It examines movements both traditional and more progressive within Muslim groupings as well as the ongoing tensions between these views. Lastly, the article brings back the core discussion points and presents a challenging question that asks about the future of Islam in Pakistan as it goes through the orthodoxy and development complexities.

**Keywords:** Traditional Islam, Modernizing World, Globalization, Orthodoxy & Modernity

### Introduction

Pakistan, a country that came into being in 1947, has a complicated relationship with Islam that is a unifying principle as well as a source for internal strife. Pakistan declaring itself as an Islamic state, being the prominent factor in its constitution, hints at this interworking. Founders desired a Muslim state, which they could actually call a homeland where one's faith could be exercised freely and Islamic laws could be the driving force in the societal as well governance. While this vision has been the touchstone, yet it has become controversial because of the question raised regarding the authority to govern state and society from the perspective of Islamic identity (Ahmed, 1999). An overwhelming majority of Pakistani people not only identify as Muslims but also heavily associate with the tenets of the faith believing Islam to be an intrinsic part of their being. Its legal system is based on Islamic jurisprudence, with principles and rules of Sharia law inherently affecting the systems of family law and inheritance. Islamic attributes a lot of attention to public spaces, that mosques, calligraphy and Islamic emblems prominently appear there and

on state emblems and flags. Celebrating during the Islamic festivals and rituals have got a great meaning for the cultural inheritance as it helps in expressing our jointers in terms of religious importance. Notwithstanding the fact that the proclamation of Pakistan as an Islamic state has been a controversial issue, it has often been the source of further conflict in the country. The public backlash over the part religion plays in public life, the protection of minorities and the interpretation of sharia law may make the situation turn worse. Sometimes the people are killed due to these reactions. Islamist militancy claiming religious justification and group efforts towards radical ideologies has been the other avenue that has cumulatively challenged the image and the status of Pakistan. However, Pakistan opposes this fragile process of integrating modernity and pluralism into the Islamic identity. On the one range, those calls for the strict implementation of traditional religious norms and on the other spectrum those supporting a more tolerant, liberal approach that emphasizes community cohesion welcomes diverse views are varied.

Basically, the dialogue that persists on this subject represents the complicated matrix in which conservative elements and modern ideas are juxtaposed. It also shows the Islamic identity dynamics of the nation, which defines its way of life and ambitions. (Rahman, 2005). Yet, disagreements develop as to the extent which the influence of Islam can reach into the details of legal provisions, policies, and societal norms and values. Should Pakistan graduate to a more stringent version of Islam or adapt to a progressively leaning method which is created to suit today's multitude of societies as they evolve? Such contradiction aggravates challenges within, with some of them calling for restoration of faith through ethnic traditionalism, while others advocate for more pluralistic and inclusive spirit within religion (Ahmed, 1999). Furthermore, the increased level of extremism brings about this complex problem, which always manifests itself in form of a terroristic agenda of a supranational militant group (Fair, 2014). Overall though, Pakistan's story will depend on evinces for the possible ways to balance the Islamic heritage with the contemporary world that can foster the economy. One of the crucial debates is centered on the middle problem of the Islamic orthodoxy balance and the globalization requirements of a modernized world. Unlike other countries which begins their journey well before independence from their colonizers, Pakistani foundation is solidified by Islamic principles, and its Constitution refers to it as an Islamic Republic. This results into the spread of Islam as the legal system, social norms, and cultural identity have been influenced by the faith significantly (Rahman 2005; Aziz 1983).). However, the extent of this influence sparks debate. Should Pakistan adhere to a stricter interpretation of Islamic law, or embrace a more progressive approach that accommodates the complexities of a modern society? This tension fuels internal discussions, with some advocating for a return to traditional values, while others push for a more inclusive and pluralistic understanding of faith (Ahmed, 1999). The rise of extremism further complicates the issue, highlighting the delicate balance between preserving Islamic heritage and fostering a society that thrives in the contemporary world (Fair, 2014). Ultimately, exploring these points will provide a

nuanced understanding of Pakistan's ongoing struggle to reconcile its Islamic identity with the demands of a modernizing world.

### **Religious Orthodoxy in Pakistan**

Within the Pakistani context, Islamic orthodoxy refers to a strict adherence to traditional interpretations of Islamic law and principles. This often translates to a focus on implementing Sharia law in its entirety, encompassing aspects of criminal justice, family law, and personal conduct. Proponents of Islamic orthodoxy advocate for a return to what they perceive as the purity of early Islamic practices and a social order strictly guided by religious doctrine. This interpretation often prioritizes religious authority figures and their pronouncements on matters of faith and societal norms (Ahmed, 1999). It's important to note that Islamic orthodoxy is not a monolithic concept, and there can be variations in how strictly it's interpreted within Pakistan. The religious authorities and Islamic scholars are key in the process of the maintenance of traditional versions of Islam in Pakistan. Institutions such as mosques and Madrassas (Islamic seminaries) are in charge of education and indoctrination of the religion issues, with particular reference to sown interpretations of Islamic law and Holy Scripture. Beside the Standard scholars are with social authority which can help Islamic scholars to interpret the Islamic texts of the past and to issue the fatwas (religious rulings) which take an active part in the shaping of public discourse and the legal decision. This factor tends to be most powerful when alternative interpretations are unavailable for the people who live in rural areas in particular. Yet it's not a monolithic landscape. While many people think from a more conservative perspective which re-analyze the religious books to face contemporary dilemmas, other scholars prefer a progressive approach. Additionally, the power disparities between different religious groups is another factor which many times could lead to some institutions or scholars being more important compared to the others. Besides, the role of religious establishments and clerics regarding the preserving of customary interpretations would be more complicated being involved in societal norms, legislation and forming a religious identity for Pakistani nation.

In Pakistan, the foundation of Islamic orthodoxy as well modernity rests firmly on three pillars: the Quran, the Hadith, and the Islamic jurisprudence systems. The Quran, which is the Holy Book God has sent to Prophet Muhammad and is known as the only one true word of God, stands as the supreme authority for all Muslim faithful (Rahman, 2005). Along with the Quran, the basis of the Sharia is the Hadiths, uncountable collections of the Prophet's sayings and actions that really serve as a guide and additional information in understanding and implementing the Islamic law (Aziz, 1983). Furthermore, Islamic jurisprudence, developed over centuries through scholarly endeavors, serves as a comprehensive framework for interpreting and implementing Islamic teachings in various aspects of daily life (Ahmed, 1999). This jurisprudential tradition offers methodologies and principles for deriving legal rulings and ethical guidelines from the Quran and Hadiths, ensuring their relevance and applicability in contemporary contexts. Through a traditional lens, these foundational sources guide the pronouncements of religious scholars and institutions, exerting a profound influence on the religious and socio-cultural fabric

of Pakistani society. Meanwhile, the modernists take the basic sources of Islam, the Qur'an and the Sunnah, as being authoritative. However, they seek to purify Islam at two levels: first from superstitions and accretions, and second from rigid and petrified classical interpretation (Dessouki 1987, 15). This modernist challenge is underlined by Gibb when he qualifies them as 'those modernists who do care and sometimes deeply about their religion but who are, in various degrees, offended by the traditional dogmatic and insistence of the conservatives upon the sanctity of the traditional social institutions in the Muslim words.' These views of both thoughts shaping the understanding of Islamic orthodoxy and modernity in Pakistan, as the sources of personal conduct, societal norms, and legal frameworks, reflecting the enduring legacy of Islamic tradition.

### **Challenges of Modernization**

The challenges posed by modernity to traditional Islamic beliefs and practices are multifaceted and often profound (Ahmed, 2016). One significant aspect is the rapid advancement of technology, which brings with it unprecedented access to information and communication (Hassan, 2018). While it can improve education and bring people closer to each other, it can also cause differences in ideas and styles of life which are contradictory to the foundations of the Islam (Amin, 2020). However, it can be the cause of some conflicting ideas and ways of life derived from diverse cultures (which are contrary to the religion) (Hussain, 2019). Examples of this are that the social media playing field provides a way of dissemination of Western values and cultural norms that therefore fits perfectly to challenge the traditional Islamic values that have been emphasized on modesty, family values and gender roles (Hussain, 2019). To this matter, the growing influence of globalization creates a world of inextricable bonds where the fundamental friction of individualistic ideas and Western consumerism against community-based and spiritual values of the Islam (as mentioned by Ahmed, 2016) is prominent. Economic globalization, whether it is capitalist or not free, may see to the furthering of poverty of some people and the increased accessibility of others to resources thus increasing the gap between the rich and the poor. This kind of scenario will further make a mockery of Islamic principles of equity and justice (Ahmed, 2016). Moreover, cultural reformation in certain parts which can be due to urbanization or migration can also be seen as an obstruction to the conventional Islamic lifestyle. Urbanization, by virtue of the collapse of traditional society, which undermines the sense of community and leads to the culture of a general secular lifestyle in cosmopolitan centers.

Throughout the fast-paced life in urban communities, an individual may shift his or her priorities from religious satisfaction to material achievement, and eventually be inclined to lose faith and adherence to Islamic principles (Khan, 2017). Migration, be internal and external, makes individuals submerges in an equitable setting where Islamic practices are considered dead or stigmatized (Ahmed, 2016). Muslims, under the influence of secular society, tend to tackle some serious issues including giving up their religious identity, compression, or other problems regarding alienation and cultural dissonance. In this context of changing scenery, the Islamic religious scholars together with their traditional institutions are faced with the terrifying problem

of reconciling between the strict textbook notion of Islam with the very requests of the new modern life that requires a balance between the central elements of the religion and the new experiences and challenges of modernity (Haneef, 2022). Among socio-cultural movements related to the conflict of Islamic traditional values and modern age is the “Women's Rights” Movement in most Muslim populated countries (Ahmed 2020). This means of activism fights for the gender equality both among women and with men. They also stand for providing more rights for women and for removing the patriarchal power rooted deep in the literal reading of Islam (Mohammad, 2019). Women activists have always been portrayed as the sector of the society that have stood out to challenge customs like segregated gender, restrictions, and discriminative laws that do not allow them to lead autonomously in public participation (Mohammad,2019). Based on the Islamic principles of justice and equality (Wadud, 2006), women activists have to challenge yet have their faces resistance from their communities, which uphold the traditional gender roles and interpret the Islamic law conveniently through (Ahmed, 2020). The clashing facets of modern gender equality aspirations and ancient patriarchal norms stashed in traditional Islamic teachings manifest the deep-rooted ground on which the movement of religion with progress is taking place in nowadays societies (Mohammad, 2019).

### **Bridging the Gap**

Pakistan grapples with reconciling its Islamic identity with the demands of a modern world. Several prominent figures have emerged, playing key roles in this ongoing discourse (Ahmed, 2016). Malala Yousafzai, the Nobel Prize laureate and champion of girls' education, exemplifies this struggle. Despite facing extremist threats, Malala's unwavering commitment to education as a fundamental right, rooted in Islamic principles of knowledge and empowerment, has challenged traditional gender roles and inspired millions (Malala Yousafzai Fund, n.d.). Her story highlights the potential for Islam to embrace progressive values. In the realm of Islamic scholarship, Dr. Javed Ahmed Ghamidi stands out as a leading proponent of reformist interpretations. Ghamidi emphasizes contextualizing Quranic verses and Hadiths, advocating for a rational and holistic understanding of Islam relevant to modern times (Ghamidi & Ahmed, 2007). Through his work, Ghamidi has sparked critical discussions on religious tolerance, pluralism, and women's roles, offering alternative perspectives that resonate with many Pakistanis seeking to reconcile faith with contemporary realities. Moreover, the renowned human rights lawyer and activist Asma Jahangir also devoted her efforts to issues about justice, gender equality, and rule of law within the framework of Islamic guidelines. Warisan's fearlessness with battling for the minorities, women, religious groups and the LGBTQ+ individuals reflect his determination of staying with the main values of human dignity and Human rights backed by Islam (Vouelasco, 2018). By this she displayed how not only the notions of justice and mercy should be the engine of activism and reform but also its catalysts. While these people face opposition from the conservative's fractions in the society, their endeavors are equally significant in ensuring that the discourse on faith and modernity is continued. By representing hope for a more progressive and pluralistic future that is

not divergent from the principles of Islam, that comes with compassion, justice, and humanism, they play a positive role among the community.

The international Islamic panorama is not a homogeneous one either, wanting to give birth to in different Islamic schools of thought as well as to modernist movements, which are looking for a more modern way of perceiving the Islamic teachings. A well-established instance is the Islamic "Modernism" which emerged in the late 19th and early 20th centuries as a result of the domestication and the progress (Rahman, 1982). Figures such Muhammad Abduh in Egypt and Sir Syed Ahmad Khan of India were after deciphering the work of reason, science, and social justice in Islam. Educational reform and reprocessing religious texts through a modern perspective and applying democracy within a Muslim framework was the goal of these scholars (Ahmed, 1999). Pakistan as well has represented spiritual expressions of Islamic modernism. The PWA (Progressive Writer's Association), established in the 1930s, utilized literature and culture in order to spread modernism (Ideas) amongst the masses (Majeed, 1992). The leading Muslim minds and intellectuals, who served as the central figures in the movement, addressed social problems, women's movement and secularism through their writings which censured narrow mindedness and reintensified colonialism while promoting the advancement of reason and humanism. The breakup of the PWA in the 1950s was due to political suppression and not idea died down, but rather lived on in remarkable speakers who later continued the voice of advocacy by a new progressive Islam in Pakistan. This extends to the figure-heads of institutions that are renowned for conservative interpretations; nevertheless, elements of modernity can be found in their actions.

Traditionally, "Council of Islamic Ideology" (CII) are regarded as defenders of traditionalistic views on certain issues, but from time to time these reformist organizations like CII propose amendments to Muslim laws in support of modern ideas like social justice and equality (Malik, 2006). The CII seeks to resolve the issues of social justice (personal rights, social welfare and minority rights) from Islamic angle though their conclusions may not be obeyed always. This engagement is much like the arena where modernists are given a place to raise their ideas side by side with the nation's religious and cultural components. True, these different instances provide the world with the variety of Muslim enlightenment theologians advocating for a more modernized version of Islam of their Islamic faith. These interpretations not only redefine commonly held views, but also free away from the shackles of orthodoxy and embrace the concepts of enlightenment, progress, and social justice. This consequently leads to the dynamic and ever-evolving understanding of Islam by the contemporary world. Nonetheless, this process of reconciliation often faced off with long-running debates as well as controversies as a result. The issue of Islamic dominance in jurisprudence, the function of religious figures in world perception, and the way the Shariah is being interpreted in contemporary times are all aspects of discord. Some call for a conformity to the ancient standards, while others are for innovation, more accommodate, and firm in their people who are looking for new views. Extremist trend, specifically, puts in question the very balance, being a factor that promotes one of the two

opposite sides: preserving Islamic cultural heritage and the unending quest for a better today. Complicated as this path may be, Pakistan eventually has to decide on how to change the Islamic identity in order to be progressive in the twenty-first century.

### **Concluding Remarks**

Pakistan is passionately grappling with the difficulties of accommodating its centuries-old Islamic identity along with the requirements of a rapidly evolving world. The Islamic Modernism, an international movement of banner calling of a reasonable and scientific understanding of the religion as well as social justice, provides an understanding way of interpreting the Islamic values in a contemporary sense. The reverberations of this movement reach Pakistan through the way which Progressive Writers' Association have used literature to put a case for social justice and women's rights and other religious bodies like Council of Islamic Ideology tried to tweak the outdated rules of Islamic law. On the other hand, the road to reconciliation is bone-marrow weary. The issues debated regarding the effect of the Islamic legislation on society, morality, and conduct of individuals continue to revise the legal field. Create an online survey to gather feedback from a diverse group of community members about their needs and concerns related to these issues. The supporters of orthodoxy of Islamic idea think that we should be stricter on the basis of classical interpretation, while the others believe that we should accept the members of various different Islamic approaches. The growing of extremism moreover is the challenge, proving the point to sustain the Islam values and create convenient communities who can progress in the best way of nowadays world. As Pakistan navigates this ongoing tension, a crucial question emerges: Will the homeland fashion the future which is pointed to the coexistence between modernity and Islamic lifestyle or these questions will still determine the main features of our national identity?

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