

**INSTITUTIONALIZATION OF SUFI ISLAM AFTER 9/11 AND RISE OF  
BARELVI EXTREMISM IN PAKISTAN**

**Muhammad Suleman Shahid**

Research Associate

Centre for Pakistan and Gulf Studies, CPGS Islamabad (Principal Author)

&

**Tahir Ahmad**

Ph.D. Scholar

School of Politics and International Relations Quaid-I-Azam University Islamabad

***Abstract***

*Pakistan has been a victim of extremism and terrorism since 1970s, which has disrupted its social values, economic growth and spoiled the face of religion. In order to tackle growing menace, the Musharraf regime promoted Sufi Islam in the country as an antidote to it, perceived as flexible and pluralistic in nature. Owing to such accommodative characteristics, Sufi Islam was deemed more adaptive with respect to changing socio-cultural realities. Hence, it was thought to be more tolerant than the orthodox conception which was perceived to be encouraging armed endeavors, thus threatening the authority of the state. To achieve these objectives, National Council for the Promotion of Sufism was established by Pervez Musharraf, which was later carried forward by Pakistan People's Party to extend the promotion of Sufism in the country. However, the seemingly soft school of thought started growing violent in 2010 primarily on the basis of blasphemy law. This paper covers the era when Sufi Islam was felt essential to counter radical religious mindset and analyzes its employment through its institutionalization, followed by the causes and effects of the emergence of violent extremism among its clerics and followers.*

**Keywords:** *Extremism; terrorism; Sufism; cultural relations; change; clerics*

### 1.1. INTRODUCTION

Pakistan has been facing the menace of extremism and terrorism for last three to four decades which has disrupted the social fabric and effected economic growth of the country. In 1980-90s, Pakistan, USA and Saudi Arabia openly supported warlords of Afghanistan to fight the former Soviet Union. Muslim fighters who were called *Mujahidin*, gathered from all over the Muslim world in Afghanistan to combat USSR forces. It can be said that it was one of the biggest designed religious radicalization programme of the 20<sup>th</sup> century to indoctrinate Muslims for Jihad, which later left severe impacts on the landscape of religious ideology, society, economy and politics. After the withdrawal of USSR from Afghanistan, the USA hardly took interest in left over turbulence. Nonetheless, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and some other Arab countries maintained assistance for their favorite warlords in Afghanistan. It wasn't too late, these groups indulged in global terrorist activities, and became a challenge for the region and beyond. Gradually, the malignancy started propagating and turned into a dreadful monster. Owing to the indiscriminate nature of their targeting and the independence such groups had gained in framing and pursuing their strategic interests by hook or by crook, the menace reached the doorstep of their creators. Following the horrific incident of 9/11, the USA started its War on Terror (WOT) against Al Qaeda and Afghan Taliban regime. Such Western endeavors in Afghanistan, as well as the one in Iraq against Saddam Hussain and other Jihadi organizations, proved worse. As the attempts to eliminate extremism contributed more to it, in addition to notable human rights violations and socio-economic deterioration. Because of this war, not only were the thousands who lost their lives with the conflict still unresolved, the deliberation proved counter-productive by further fueling extremism along with fanning Islam-West misperceptions.

Pakistan, which kept actively involved in recruiting and training jihadists even after USSR's withdrawal from Afghanistan, has also been facing its backlash on its own land since then. After 9/11 incident, General Musharraf decided to support the US-led war as a key non-NATO ally at in combating terrorists while taking different measures at domestic level to tackle the threat of extremism and terrorism. Employing soft measures, President Musharraf started institutionalizing Sufi Islam, which is followed by Barelvi school of thought, perceived as more flexible and pervious. This was intended to suppress Wahabi and Deobandi school of thought, which was viewed to be sowing the seeds of extremism through promotion of armed Jihad. It is noteworthy that the followers of Sufi and orthodox school of thoughts have long history contentions with each other over religious beliefs.

### **1.2. SUFI -ORTHODOX DIVIDE: INCLUSION VERSUS EXCLUSION**

There are no exact figures of sectarian demographic division in Pakistan. However, according to different estimates, the followers of Sufi Islam or Barelvi sect constitute majority with more than fifty percent of country's total population. While the remaining 50 percent is divided as 25 percent *Deobandis*, 15 to 20 percent Shias and 5 percent Ahl-e-Hadith. Both *Deobandis* and *Barelvi* belong to Fiqqah-e-Hanfia and Sunni schools of thought, however the split between both schools started in Britain colonial rule in the Indian Subcontinent.

The name Deobandi finds its roots to the famous Madarssah 'Dar-ul-AloomDeoband', which was established in 1861 in the town of Deoband, India with the object of promoting actual values of Islam. They started working for the purification of religion by excluding the local values which had been, perhaps, mixed into religion. They criticized the shrine culture, *piri-muridi* (saint-follower bond) system and termed it *Bida'at* (impurity addition to the religion). In reaction, another school of thought emerged under the leadership of Ahmad Raza Khan

Barelvi (1856-1921), currently known as Barelvi school of thought. According to *deobandis*, terming Prophet (Peace be upon him, PBUH) as *noor* of Allah is a *shirk* (association with God). In Islam, *shirk* has been vehemently prohibited and termed as the biggest sin in religion. In this way, many *Deobandi* clerics expel *Barelvis* out of Islamic circle by designating them as non-Muslims. Contrary to this, *Barelvis* term *Deobandis* as *gustakh* (blasphemers) of Prophet (PBUH), by perceiving their orthodox views as not appreciative of Prophet's true sanctity and stature. Calling him a normal 'human being' subjugates his status, value and veneration. Whosoever perceives so is termed as a '*gustakh*' (Blasphemer) according to *Barelvis*. Ahmad Raza Khan issued a decree in his famous book *HusamulHarmain ala Munhir Al Kufarwa al Moeen* (The sword of respectable at the throat of nonbelievers and falsehood) that the leading Deobandi clerics like Mualana Rashid Ahmad Ghanghoi (1829-1905), Maulana Qasim Nanwotvi (1832-1880) and Mualna Asharaf Ali Thanwi (1863-1943) were *gustakh* (blasphemers) and infidels. In response, the *Deobandi* clerics also brought a decree, *Ulema-e-Hijaz* (clerics of Hijaz), and countered the *Barelvi* fatwa by terming them non-Muslims.

Historically, both sides have been struggling to counter each other's influence on every front i.e. religious, political, social and economic. Currently, the existence of *Barelvi* groups like Sunni Tehreek, Dawat-e-Islami, Pakistan Awami Tehreek, Minahaj-ul-Quran, Ahle-e-Sunnat-wal-Jamat (*Barelvi* group), Jamiat-e-Ulemai Pakistan (JUP), Tehreek Labaik Ya Rasool Allah, and Sunni Ittehad Council etc. are a manifestation of this fact. These are meant primarily to establish and dominate country's politics, economy, ideology and social fabric. *Barelvi* clerics claim that as they are in majority, it is therefore important for them to take more part in the country's power share. The gap is equally present at inter-personal level too; a few people from opposite sectarian beliefs avoid attending each other's religious and funeral gatherings.

Furthermore, the orthodox school of thought is also termed responsible for terrorism, and its followers are declared as *khwarj is* (excluded from religion) by the *Barelvi* sect. On contrary, Deoband is perceive that Barelvi clerics and their followers are spoiling the true face of religion by introducing *bidaat* (impurity) to the religion. The conceptual disagreement has often been seen as translated into armed tussle against each other to gain territorial control by snatching each other mosques, especially in Karachi, to establish control and promote their own teachings. These contrasts led to dreadful armed clashes between both schools in which many precious lives have been lost.

Salim Qadri, a former member of Dawat Islami, laid the foundation stone of Sunni Tehreek in 1990 and had the silent support of JUP. The prime motive of the organization was to release *Barelvi* mosques, defend shrines, and promote other interests of the *Barelvis* against the rival groups especially the *Deobandis*. Saleem Qadri was famous as a *Gernail-e-Ahl-e-Sunnat* (General of Sunnis) among his followers and party workers. The party also kept struggling against the appointment of *Deobandi* clerics on official posts in the country. Under Saleem Qadri's leadership, *Barelvis* succeeded in regaining control over many mosques in Karachi forcefully from *Deoband is*. After these incidents, Qadri came on the hit-list of his rival groups and was killed in 2001.

### **1.3. SUFI ISLAM AS COUNTERWEIGH TO EXTREMISM**

The long history of segregation between Barelvi and orthodox has left divisive impacts on the society. In the history of Pakistan, President Ayub Khan and Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto also politicized Sufi Islam and employed the ideology for their political ends. Musharraf Government perceived the ideology of Sufism as the one presenting a gentler face of Islam and hence decided to promote it as more accommodative towards the culture and natural to

Pakistan which is based on pluralism. It was also viewed more tolerant and patient in the context of inter-faith and intra-faith harmony, resilient in nature and progressive for the state of Pakistan. In addition to Musharraf government, the USA was also interested in promoting popular Islam to tackle the threat of religious extremism in Muslim countries, especially in Pakistan. The prominent think tanks of the USA also conducted studies on Sufi Islam and termed it fit in countering the growing orthodoxy and militancy in the country. In 2003, the Rand Corporation concluded a study that Sufi Islam is helpful for American interests in building modern democratic Islam in the Muslim states, aimed at countering the religious fanatics. In 2007, Rand Corporation re-examined its report and termed that Sufi Islam is a “natural ally” for the West in countering the threat of radical Islamists. However, this time the report also warned that due to the emergence of radical mindset, there is a room for radical and extremist tendencies in popular Islam too.

The Heritage Foundation, a conservative think tank of American, published a report in 2009 on Sufi Islam and recommended that Sufi Islam was the best for Pakistan’s internal stability, as it not only restores local traditions and culture but also counters the threat of extremism. Another think tank, World Organization for Resources Development and Education (WORDE), a Washington based institute, published a report in 2010, in which it emphasized that to defeat the radical tendencies in Muslims and project the US foreign policy in the region, the mainstream *Barelvi* politico-religious parties, which promote the Sufis and *pirs* should be bolstered in Pakistan. However, these studies neither covered all the aspects nor indicated the fault lines in ideologies of clerics and followers of popular Islam which can stem intolerance and extremism in the society.

#### 1.4. ASSIMILATION OF SUFISM INTO NATIONAL IDEOLOGY

In Pakistan, history reveals that the governments have been resorting to the doors of Sufis and Shrines during turbulent political hours. In response, the shrine custodians fully extended their support to the rulers due to their vested interests. To tackle menace of extremism, like his predecessors, Musharraf regime also sought help from *pirs* and Barelvi clerics of the country. This time, the state used Sufism as a symbol against extremism and terrorism. State officials and political leaders gave statements to propagate that Sufi Islam was the actual version of Islam while *Deobandi* and *Wahabi* Islam was an imported version which spoiled the society. It was rationalized that Sufi Islam had great relevance with the local culture, based on its teachings of coexistence, and promotion of tolerance and peace in the society. One way or the other, Musharraf government started politicization of Sufism and instrumentalized *pirs* and Barelvi clerics to ensure internal stability.

In 2004, Musharraf promoted his doctrine of “enlightened moderation”. In order to make it successful, he emphasized on his fellow countrymen to “shun militancy and extremism” and “promote Islam... as the flag-bearer of just, lawful, tolerant and value oriented society”. The initiative of promoting Sufism against extremism started in 2006, when extremism and terrorism were at its culminating point in Pakistan. Allama Iqbal’s grandson Yousaf Salahudin suggested to General Pervez Musharraf that Sufism was the best weapon to counter the threat of extremism in the country owing to its liberal, secular and tolerating nature, which suited to Pakistan’s pluralist society. He had also opined that western countries are mystic hungry and Pakistan has the potential to export its Sufi Music to the West. General Musharraf picked the idea of Yousaf and established National Council for the Promotion of Sufism (NCPS) in 2006. The main motive of the council was to promote Sufi philosophy and culture which has common

values of society, especially the tolerance and pluralism in order to project soft image of the country. General Musharraf was appointed Patron in Chief of the Council, while Chaudhri Shujat Hussain (President of the then ruling party PMLQ) became Chairman, Mushahid Hussain Syed (Secretary General of ruling party PMLQ) represented Islamabad, Yousaf Salahudin the Punjab, Jam Muhammad Yousaf (Chief Minister of Baluchistan) the Baluchistan, Hameed Haroon (Chief Executive Dawn Media Group) the Sindh and Abbas Sarfraz (ex-senator and ex-federal minister) represented KP region. Shrine-custodian of famous Indian Shrine of Khwaja Moeenud Din Chishti of Ajmair Sharif, Pir Sarwar Chishti tied turban to Chaudhri Shujat Hussain. He also blessed him with the authority of being a Sufi along with authorizing him to promote the values of Sufism in the country. All the major positions of the council were occupied by state elites and non-Sufis. However, shrine custodians and Barelvi clerics also got involved to serve the purpose. In first meeting of the council, Chaudhri Shujat said that the message of Sufism was “peace, love and brotherhood” and steps must be taken to this end. In the same year, Musharraf inaugurated the ceremony of National Council for Promoting Sufism on the birthday of national poet Allama Muhammad Iqbal at Lahore. The Chief Minister of Punjab, Chaudhri Pervez Elahi also arranged an International Sufi Conference in Lahore. During the conference, Punjab Home Secretary said that it was necessary to promote the Sufi philosophy of peace, love and tolerance to counter the “Mullah Islam”.

In this regard two facet strategy was adopted by the government to disseminate Sufi ideology, one on social level to penetrate Sufi ideology into social structure of the state. Second was on political front to incorporate Sufis, *pirs* and Barelvi clerics into the national politics. On Social front, the Sufi ideology was promoted through celebrations of *urs*. It encouraged spiritual poetry and Sufi music shows at different shrines and arts councils to mold people towards

moderation and soft version of Islam so that they could not fall into the hands of extremist forces. Government officials started paying homage on Sufi Shrines. On political front, the pro-Sufi religious parties were promoted and strengthened to defy religious extremism and ideology of terrorists through demonstrations. These pro-Sufi religious political parties arranged processions throughout the country and openly condemned the Talibanization. Even these groups also termed Taliban as *khawarji* (outside of Islam) and terrorists. Among them, the politico-religious party of Dr Tahir-ul-Qadri, Pakistan Awami Tehreek (PAT) and his religious organization Minhaj-ul-Quran, also played an important role.

To promote Sufi ideology and shrine culture in the country, Musharraf himself visited shrines located in Punjab and Sindh. During his visits, he advised public that Sufism was the real face not only compatible with Islam but also the country's traditions and culture. He also termed Punjab and Sindh as the lands of Sufis which emphasized on peace, tolerance, and liberal and moderate values. He also prayed at different shrines for the protection of country from religious fanatics which challenged its existence. Government officials, leaders and politicians started active participation in the *urs* of different shrines, where they used to lay shroud on the grave of enshrined *pirs*, offered prayers, and addressed the people over the importance of shrines and Sufism in country and religion. Former Governor Punjab Khalid Maqbool also supported the idea to counter extremism through soft approach of Sufi Islam. He met with different shrine-custodians and gave them instructions to promote unity among Muslims. Sheikh Rasheed Ahmad, the then Railway Minister of Musharraf cabinet, praised the importance of Sufism in the country and emphasized on getting rid of evil powers who wanted to disrupt social machinery. Musharraf also, for the first time, appointed a Shrine-custodian, Sahibzada Saeedul Hassan Shah, as Minister of *Awqaf* Department. Prior to him, the slots were occupied by all non-*pirs*, who used to criticize the role of *pirs* in country's social landscape.

In order to achieve anticipated goals, some government institutes have also assisted in disseminating Sufi ideology. These include Pakistan Academy of Letters (PAL), Ministry of Culture, Ministry of Education, and Pakistan National Council of the Arts (PNCA). These institutes emphasized on promoting cultural values through conducting seminars, conferences, workshops, literature festivals, and music and arts exhibitions. Different Sufi Music nights were also arranged in which prominent singers from across the country participated. Among such singers, Sain Zahoor, Abida Perveen and Rahat Fateh Ali Khan are notable. In order to promote Sufi culture and Music, Musharraf also approached Rafi Peer Theatre Workshop (RPTW) to bring out the soft image of Pakistan at domestic level and in front of international audience. The USA Government also took great interest in Pakistan's new policy of incorporating Sufi ideology into nationalism. In this context, calendars were distributed among the officials which contained fascinating pictures of different Sufi Shrines and interestingly, these pictures were captured by an American photographer. In 2008, with the ending of Musharraf tenure, the National Council for Promotion of Sufism (NCPS) also lost its functioning.

### **1.5. ROLE OF PAKISTAN PEOPLE'S PARTY (PPP)**

The left-wing party PPP has several shrine-custodians as its active members, occupying central position in the party, which emphasizes on pluralistic values and religious harmony. In this context, it is also said that shrine-custodians are natural allies to PPP. Before 2008 general election, Pakistan People's Party (PPP) had pledged in its manifesto for promoting Islam as a peaceful religion. Its manifesto stated;

*“The message of Islam is the message of Peace. It is a message of brotherhood and tolerance. These are symbolized in the words and verses of Data Sahib,*

*Shah Abdul Latif of Bhattai, Baba Farid GanjShakar and Lal Shahbaz Qalander. The sufi saints adopted a life of simple living and high thinking. It's time that we do the same. By no means did they use or preach the use of force. The PPP commits itself to religious tolerance."*

After coming to power, Pakistan People's Party (PPP) government took initiatives to promote Sufism in the country. In this context, they also followed the footprints of Musharraf government by establishing the Sufi council with new name 'Sufi Advisory Council' on June 08, 2009. The Council consisted of seven members, dominated by clerics of *Barelvi* political party Jamiat-e-Ulemai-e-Pakistan (JUP). Head of the JUP, Haji Muhammad Hanif Tayab, was appointed as Chairman of the council. PPP government also nominated a descendant of Moosa Pak Shaheed shrine, Syed Yousaf Raza Gilani, as the Prime Minister of Pakistan. In addition to this, Shah Mehmud Qureshi, shrine-custodian of Shah Rukn-e-Aalim, was appointed as Foreign Minister and Hamid Saeed Kazmi, shrine-custodian of Ahmad Saeed Kazmi shrine of Multan, was appointed as the Federal Minister for Religious Affairs to handle the religious issues, *Awqaf* and Interfaith Harmony. This indicated PPP's policy to promote harmony through believers of Sufi Islam. Kazmi was very vocal against Taliban and survived a murder attempt. Meanwhile, on political front, Sunni Tehreek and Sunni Ittehad Council (alliance of different *Barelvi* religious parties) had also been strengthened and activated against extremism and terrorism in the country. In May 2009, the then Foreign Minister and shrine-custodian of one of the influential shrines of the country, Shah Mehmud Qureshi while addressing the ceremony of *urs* of the Shah Rukn-e-Alim said, "Sunni Tehreek has decided to play an active role in the fight against Talibanization... We will not surrender to forces harming the interests of the country and distorting the image of Islam... people of the country loved Islam but their

Islam was totally different from the brand which troublemakers were trying to impose at gunpoint.”

Prime Minister Yousuf Raza Gilani and his cabinet members also used to visit many shrines across the country and stressed on promoting the values of Sufism. In March 2010, he officially participated in Okara’s famous shrine Karmanwali Sarkar’s *urs* ceremony. While addressing the ceremony, Gilani said, “*Khankahi* (monastery) system was vital to eliminate terrorism from the country”. Nonetheless, experts believe that the Sufi ideology has the potential to curtail the menace of extremism and terrorism from across the country due to its pluralistic nature, but they also raise questions on rewarding greater authority to pro-Sufis which may put negative impact on social sector by exploiting the people of their *pirs*. Ayesha Siddiq a well-known Pakistani writer warned about this issue as she wrote, “Greater power not only enhanced the greed for more power but also resulted in corruption of the Sufi order.” While some also termed it as “not good news” and also considered it a sort of politicization of religion that has already created many issues for the country. It was also perceived that state-sponsored Sufism gets everything back especially in the environment where religion is used for political purposes. On August 29<sup>th</sup>, 2011, Pakistan People’s Party government ceased the function of the Council due to apparently, non-availability of fund. It is also worth-mentioning that at that time, the radical and extremist sentiments were penetrated into Barelvi followers especially on the issue of blasphemy.

#### **1.6. SYMPTOMS OF EXTREMISM**

In 2010, the former Governor Punjab Salman Taseer started to support Asia Bibi, a Christian woman sentenced to death for alleged blasphemy of Prophet (PBUH). During a TV interview, Taseer termed the Article 295 of the Pakistan Penal Code (PPC), blasphemy law, as “*kala*

*qanoon*” (black code) and said that many people use this law just for the sake of their personal enmities against other people. Upon this, many clerics especially from Bareilvi school issued *fatwas* (religious decree) against Taseer that he had committed blasphemy by using inappropriate words for the law that ensured execution of a blasphemer and declared him *wajib-ul-qatal* (bound to die) including members of JUP, SIC, ST etc. The fallout of these *fatwas* was detrimental; Taseer was shot down by his own bodyguard Mumtaz Qadri, who was a Punjab Police personnel, in 2011. Mumtaz Qadri was also a follower of Karachi based non-political Bareilvi religious organization, Dawat-e-Islami, which is mostly considered a peaceful organization. Later in the court, Mumtaz Qadri said that he had no links with any extremist organization. However, he admitted that he was “impressed” by the speeches of two Bareilvi clerics Mufti Qari Haneef Qureshi and Imtiaz Shah. After confiscation of Mumtaz Qadri, Bareilvi religious parties started staging rallies and processions in support of Mumtaz Qadri and against any expected bill to amend the blasphemy law. On February 29, 2016, Mumtaz Qadri was executed in Rawalpindi jail and thousands of people across the country participated in his funeral prayers. Sunni Tehreek organized Qadri’s funeral prayer.

The funeral prayer was led by Pir Haseenud Deen Shah, an influential cleric in the country who administers a seminary in Rawalpindi and is the Chief Caretaker of Tanzeemul MudarisAhl-e-Sunnat Pakistan. The prominent among the attendees were Jamat-e-Islami chief Siraj-ul Haq, Mufti Muneebur Rehman, the head of country’s Ruet-e-Hilal Committee, Former Federal Minister for Religious Affairs Hamid Saeed Kazmi. Many other prominent leaders of various Sunni organizations, Pirs and custodians of different famous sufi shrines also participated. Among these, Pir Muhamamd Afzal Qadri, Dr Ashraf Asif Jilali, Allama Khadim Hussain Rizvi, Sahibzada Abu Al-Khair Muhammad Zubair, Pir Muhammad Naqib, Allama Kokab Noorani, Syed Riaz Hussain Shah, Engineer Sarwat Ijaz Qadri, Shah Muhammad

Awais Noorani, Hafiz Ahmed Raza Qadri, Sahibzada Hamid Raza Hashmi, Qari Hanif Qurehsi and Sahibzada Usman Qadri were prominent.

After Qadri execution, many religious parties emerged on the surface, especially on social media, in support of Mumtaz Qadri cause. Mumtaz Qadri has got the status of saint in the society, dozens of people pay homage at his shrine daily and his first *urs* ceremony has been celebrated by a large portion of the people this year. In this context, a coalition party on the name of TehreekLabaikYa Rasool Allah (LYRA) (Movement of ‘we are Present, Messenger of God’) was formed by Barelvi Ulema in which Sarwat Ijaz Qadri; Chief of Sunni Tehreek, MualnaKhadim Rizvi—chief of Fidayeen-i-Khatam-i-Nabuwat (willing to martyr on the issue of last prophethood ), Pir Afzal Qadri—chief of AalmiTanzeem-e-Ahl-e-Sunatand Mualna Ashraf Asif Jalali— leader of Pakistan Ahle Sunnah walJamaat, had participated. Since then, the party has been arranging processions and rallies in different cities of the country in which they emphasized not to compromise on Article-295-C of the PPC, and that if anyone committed blasphemy, the government should execute him or the people will do it otherwise. They always raised slogans in their processions which is their main narrative, objective and motto, “*Gustakh-e-Rasoolkiaiksaza, sar tan say juda*” (There is only one punishment of blasphemer, his/her head should be chop-off from the body). Their narratives and actions left deep impact on society by radicalizing people on the issue of blasphemy. In result of these activities, the years 2016 and 2017 saw dramatic rise in human rights abuse under the garb of blasphemy issues in the country. One of the pupil of Molvi Khadim Hussian Rizvi, leader of TLYRA, Tanveer Qadri who resides in England killed an Ahmadi person on the issue of blasphemy in Glasgow, Scotland. Later, Ghazi Tanveer released his audio messages in which he admitted Khadim Hussian Rizvi as his mentor. His audio messages have been played at the

processions of TLYRA to incite the audience. Khadim Hussian Rizvi also calls himself as Ameer-ul-Mujahidin (Commander of holy soldiers).

In March 2016 Junaid Jamshed, the pop singer turned Deobandi cleric, was also victimized by Barelvi mob at Islamabad Airport on the issue of alleged blasphemy. Even before that, Junaid sought forgiveness on any misunderstanding but he was beaten and abused. When he died in a plane crash in December 2016, the TLYRA social media pages abused him and termed the accident as a punishment of God to the blasphemer. The members of TLYRA also warned and threatened Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf Chairman Imran Khan over saying inappropriate words about Prophet due to slip of tongue. Upon this, Imran immediately sought forgiveness from the Barelvi clerics and visited the Dawat-e-Islami headquarter in Karachi. A fatwa of *wajib-ulqatil*(deserving death) was also issued against Shaan Taseer, son of Salman Taseer, over supporting Asia Bibi.

### **1.7. NARRATIVE**

At the Chehlum (after 40<sup>th</sup> day ceremony of a dead Muslim) of Mumtaz Qadri, TLYR leaders gathered in Liaquat Bagh, Rawalpindi. They bashed the PMLN policies as well as cursed General Raheel Sharif for not saving Mumtaz Qadri. The literature comprising of pamphlets and books was also distributed during ceremony among the devotees of Mumtaz Qadri. The literature contained narrative against PMLN government and provided justification for the killing of blasphemers, and that the execution of the holy task shall be gifted with heaven.

The first and foremost narrative of the organization is *Gutakh-e-Rasool kiaiksaza, sar tan say juda* (there is only one punishment of blasphemer of prophet, his/her body should be chopped off). Further justification included literature written by clerics of different Barelvi madariss

that blasphemer deserved only death and no one had the right to forgive a blasphemer except Prophet (PBUH) himself. In this context, a pamphlet written by Abid Ali Aiz Hijazi, a cleric from Azad Kashmir Madarssa, whose copies distributed widely among the people, narrated four blasphemy incidents during the period of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). The first incident which was quoted from *Almustdrk al Raqam 8210*, stated that “a blind companion of Prophet killed the mother of his children on the issue of blasphemy. On this issue, Prophet Muhammad forgave him.” In second incident, he quoted from *Alraqam 4362*—a book of Abu Dawood, “the killer of a Jew woman blasphemer was released.” He narrated the third incident that “Hazrat Umair was forgiven by the court of Prophet on the killing of his blasphemer sister.” In third incident, he narrated the story of Hazrat Umar which was quoted from *Tafseer Ibn e Katheer* and *Tafseer Dar e Mansoor* that “Hazrat Umer killed a Muslim because he was not satisfied over the decision of Prophet, which was blasphemy according to Hazrat Umer. Later, Prophet released Hazrat Umer not guilty of any wrong act.” With the help of such literature, it was conveyed that not only the Muslim but also the non-Muslim blasphemer deserved death.

### **1.8. STIMULATION TOOLS**

The followers of Barelvi School of Thought consider themselves as Aashiq-e-Rasool (true lovers of Prophet) and for that matter they justify going to any extent for the purpose. They organize religious gatherings on different public fora and narrate inspiring religious incidents and emotional stories to agitate the public. Striking miracles of the deliberate individuals, who took steps against blasphemers, are narrated to incite the public. A booklet was distributed on the life account of Mumtaz Qadri, written by Alama Ahmad Zia Sialvi; cleric at Jamia Nizamia Rizvia Lahore, at the *chehlum* ceremony of Mumtaz Qadri. The booklet is written in Urdu and is available on the internet. The book is full of miracles on the life of Mumtaz Qadri

and implied that Mumtaz had been chosen for this ‘sacred adventure’ long ago by the divine authority. The book narrates that two years before Qadri’s birth, his father woke upon night and saw a man offering prayer in his courtyard, and told him that soon God would grant him a baby child who would illuminate his father’s name in the entire world. The booklet has a separate portion which consists of the miracles of Mumtaz Qadri, claiming that Mumtaz had met with Prophet (PBUH), the first four caliphates, Ghaus-e-Azam (Abdul QadirJilani 1078-116) and Data Ganj Baksh (1009-1077), with open eyes and they also showed their willingness to accept his sacrifice.

The book also uses classical tactics of attracting people by narrating fascinating scenes of heaven on earth. The specifications include the conversion of Qadri’s jail into heaven, renovated with blooming flowers. The book also narrates the quote of a DSP (Deputy Superintendent of Police) who came near his body after execution, saluted him and said, “*tum khud to chalaygye ho, laikena pnaypee chaymehkmaymeinbhotsaray Ghazi chorgye ho* (although you have left the world, the seeds for the emergence of other Ghazis have been sown in the department). It is an effective way to have an emotional impact on the devotees. Furthermore, the cleric who performed the last bath rites of Qadri also claimed that he smelled a unique fragrance emanating from his dead body.

The objective of such narrations is not only to convince followers of a guaranteed high stature in hereafter, but also the empirical sensations reflective of the truth of such purpose so that armed endeavors against perceived blasphemers could further be promoted. The policy of politicization of Sufi Islam is also slowing down due to different reasons. One among those is the failure of Sufi Islam to serve its as initio purpose i.e. to counter violent extremism and terrorism. Instead, it added another dimension of armed deliberation and lawlessness.

Secondly, such parties (except a few), are not very well organized and just enjoy politics restricted to local level due to the tactical scope of interests.

### **1.9. CONCLUSION**

In the wake of increasing extremism and terrorism in the country, the government of Pervez Musharraf promoted Sufi Islam which was perceived as a relatively tolerant, flexible and prone to local culture. By considering the Barelvi Islam, Sufi Islam or what it called the Popular Islam a soft image of Islam, its ideology was institutionalized into national ideology. However, society was also divisive before 9/11 on sectarian basis and by promoting the Sufi Islam against orthodox Islam further deepen the gulf between these sects as well. The policy of promoting Sufi values in the country tried to implement without analyzing its fault lines which inclined its followers toward extremism. The sudden rise of Barelvi extremism in the society rise many questions even they were considered peaceful sect. There are some possible answers to Barelvi extremism are due to empowering them against extremism, they became popular in the public, also indulged into sense of superiority that they are in majority than other sects why they feel inferior so they should struggle to occupy more influence in society. In this way they wanted to achieve two objectives on one side to counter the other influence of other sects especially Deobandi while on the other side they wanted to uplift themselves in the society by attracting their sects fellow which are in majority. For these ends and to attract the attention of Barelvi sect they also used the sensitive issue of the religion as tool. There Barelvi clerics and followers are devotees of Sufis but they have strong tendencies toward radicalization and extremism on some religious issues in which blasphemy issue is prominent. In the wake of Salman Taseer interview, his killing and then execution Mumtaz Qadri many religious extremist groups, especially Barelvi groups, have been bolstering themselves in the country who have not only

orthodox views but also injected these views in the society very deeply. The country which has already been facing multiple dimensions of religious extremism and terrorism now have been indulged into another dimension of extremism on the issue of blasphemy.

## REFERENCES

- Adil Pasha, "Mumtaz Qadri's shrine: In memory of Salmaan Taseer's assassin", *Dawn* (December 27, 2016), last accessed May 03, 2017, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1302289>
- Ahmad Hassan, "Sufi Advisory Council set up to fight extremism" *Dawn*, (June 08, 2009) last accessed May 01, 2017, <https://www.dawn.com/news/469894/sufi-advisory-council-set-up-to-fight-extremism>
- Alama Shakoor Ahmad Zia Sialvi, *Ghazi Islam Malik Muhammad Mumtaz Hussain Qadri Rizvi Shaheed* (Lahore: 2016), <http://ghulamenabi786.blogspot.com/2016/03/hayat-e-malik-mumtaz-hussain-qadri.html>
- Alix Philippon, "A Sublime, yet disputed, object of political ideology? Sufism in Pakistan at the Crossroads" *State and Nation-Building in Pakistan: Beyond Islam and Security*, ed. Roger D. Long, Gurharpal Singh, Yunas Samad and Ian Talbot, (New York: Routledge, 2015), 154.
- Ali Eteraz, "State-Sponsored Sufism", *Foreign Policy*, (June 10, 2009), last accessed May 02, 2017, <http://foreignpolicy.com/2009/06/10/state-sponsored-sufism/>
- Angle Rabasa, Cheryl Benard, Lowell h. Schwartz and Peter Sickle, *Building Moderate Muslim Network*, (Santa Monica: Rand Corporation for Middle East Public Policy, 2007). 73 <https://www.rand.org/pubs/monographs/MG574.readonline.html>
- Anti-terror consensus shaping up: Qureshi, *Dawn*, (May 04, 2009), last accessed May 01, 2017, <https://www.dawn.com/news/856494>
- Ayesha Siddiqi, "*Faith Wars*", *Dawn*, (February 14, 2009), last accessed May 02, 2017, <https://www.dawn.com/news/833136>
- "Asad Shah murder: Killer Tanveer Ahmed releases prison message", *BBC*, (January 31, 2017), last accessed May 03, 2017, <http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-scotland-38815366>

- <sup>1</sup>Imran Khan faces blasphemy allegations, to be declared “kaafir” unless he publicly apologizes: Religious group issues serious warning, *Daily Pakistan*, (January 02, 2017), last accessed May 15, 2017, <https://en.dailypakistan.com.pk/headline/kufr-fatwa-to-be-issued-against-imran-khan-unless-he-publicly-apologizes-religious-group-issues-serious-warning/>
- Farah Naz Ispahani, “The PPP — hope for a new Pakistan,” *Express Tribune* (December 01, 2010) last accessed May 01, 2017, <https://tribune.com.pk/story/84092/the-ppp--hope-for-a-new-pakistan/>
- Farzana Shaikh, “Will Sufi Islam Save Pakistan?,” *Under the Drones: Lives in the Afghanistan-Pakistan Borderlands*, ed. Shahzad Bashir and Robert D. Crews, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, May 2012), 175.
- Hedieh Mirahmadi, Mehreen Farooq, Waleed Ziad, *Traditional Muslim Networks: Pakistan's Untapped Resource in the Fight Against Terrorism*, (Montgomery Village: World Organization for Resources Development and Education (WORDE), May 2010), p-10, [http://www.worde.org/publications/worde\\_reports/traditional-muslim-networks-pakistans-untapped-resource-in-the-fight-against-terrorism/](http://www.worde.org/publications/worde_reports/traditional-muslim-networks-pakistans-untapped-resource-in-the-fight-against-terrorism/)
- Katherine Ewing, “The Politics of Sufism: Redefining the Saints of Pakistan”, *The Association for Asian Studies Vol. 42, No. 2* (Feb, 1983), 252-268.
- Khaled Ahmed, *Sectarian War: Pakistan's Sunni-Shia Violence and Its Links to the Middle East*, (Karachi: Oxford University Press 2011), 156.
- Lisa Curtis, A.H. Mullick, *Reviving Pakistan's Pluralist Traditions to Fight Extremism*, (Washington D.C: Heritage Foundation, May 04, 2009). <http://www.heritage.org/asia/report/reviving-pakistans-pluralist-traditions-fight-extremism>
- Martina Schrott, “Muslim Sects”, *Pakistan: Challenges and Perspectives*, ed. Wolf Gang, Mathias Vogl and Peter Webinger, (Vienna: Austrian Federal Ministry of Interior, 2014), 138 [http://www.bfa.gv.at/files/broschueren/Buch%20komplett%20\(Onlineversion\)%206,23MB.pdf](http://www.bfa.gv.at/files/broschueren/Buch%20komplett%20(Onlineversion)%206,23MB.pdf)
- Muhammad Amir Rana, “Dilemma of Barelvi Politics”, *DAWN*, (August 24, 2014) last accessed May 17, 2017, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1127288>

- Mujeeb Ahmad, "The rise militancy among Pakistani Barelvis: The case of the Sunni Tehrik", *State and Nation-Building in Pakistan: Beyond Islam and Security*, ed. Roger D. Long, Gurharpal Singh, Yunas Samad and Ian Talbot, (New York: Routledge, 2015), 166.
- Pervez Musharraf, "A Plea for Enlightened Moderation", *Washington Post* (June 01, 2004), accessed May 11, 2017, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/articles/A5081-2004May31.html>
- Saifur Rahman Sherani, "Ulema and Pirin the Politics of Pakistan", *Economy and Culture in Pakistan Migrants and Cities in a Muslim Society*, ed. Hastings Donnand Prina Werbner, (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, April 1991), 216.
- Saints, not Army generals spread Islam: Gilani, *The News*, (March 01, 2010), last accessed May 01, 2017, <https://www.thenews.com.pk/archive/print/669853-saints,-not-army-generals-spread-islam-gilani>
- Salman Siddiqui, "Hardline Stance: Religious bloc condones murder", *Express Tribune* (January 05, 2011) last accessed May 03, 2017, <https://tribune.com.pk/story/99313/hardline-stance-religious-bloc-condones-murder/>
- Saqib Akbar, *Pakistan kay Deeni Masalik (Religious Sects of Pakistan)*, (Islamabad: Al-Baseera, December 2010), 50.
- Senate Secretariat of Pakistan, "Questions for Oral Answers and their replies: 259<sup>th</sup> Session", February 16, 2017, P-15 [http://www.senate.gov.pk/uploads/documents/questions/1487233258\\_245.pdf](http://www.senate.gov.pk/uploads/documents/questions/1487233258_245.pdf), On February 16, 2017, the Minister for Religious Affairs and Inter-Faith Harmony, Sardar Muhammad Yousaf, while responding to the questions in the Senate of Pakistan confirmed that Sufi Advisory Council had been closed in 2011.
- "Sermons motivated killer of Governor Taseer", *Dawn*, (January 10, 2011), last accessed May 03, 2017, <https://www.dawn.com/news/597628/sermons-motivated-killer-of-governor-taseer>
- "Sufism to be promoted, says Shujaat," *Dawn* (October 13, 2006), last accessed May 11, 2017, <https://www.dawn.com/news/214641>
- Vali Nasr, "The Rise of Sunni Militancy in Pakistan: The changing Role of Islamism and the Ulamain Society and Politics", *Modern Asian Studies* 34, no. 1, (2000), 176.