

Promoting Religious Tolerance through National Spiritual Education in Pakistan: Building Bridges, Not Walls

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Abstract: This article examines the viability and obstacles associated with the implementation of national spiritual education in Pakistan, with an emphasis on the vital importance of religious tolerance. Pakistan, a country renowned for its diverse array of religious beliefs, confronts the formidable task of nurturing spiritual growth amidst an intricate religious terrain. This article has investigated the establishment and implementation of national spiritual education in Pakistan, emphasizing its capacity to foster interfaith understanding, social cohesion, and ethical values. The fundamental significance of religious tolerance in the provision of such education. This entails recognizing the multitude of religious convictions that exist within Islam and demonstrating reverence for the presence of other faiths in Pakistan. The difficulties associated with designing a curriculum that is sensitive to and inclusive of diverse religious perspectives. Prospective frameworks for nationwide spiritual education that place an emphasis on reverence and acceptance of diverse faiths. The Pakistani context offers a distinctive perspective through which to analyze the dynamic relationship between religious tolerance and spiritual education. The objective of this paper is to make a scholarly contribution to the ongoing discourse surrounding the promotion of a Pakistani society that is more spiritually conscious and inclusive.

Key Words: Spiritual Education: Tolerance: Social Harmony: enlightenment: Pursuit of Happiness.

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1. INTRODUCTION

There is a complicated and intertwined relationship between Pakistan's journey with Islamic identity and education. In order to investigate the possibilities of national spiritual education, it is essential to have a solid understanding of this historical backdrop. Pakistan's formation in 1947 was built on a shared Muslim identity; nonetheless, it inherited a heterogeneous religious landscape. The early years of Pakistan's existence were marked by a search for identity. It was during these early years that efforts were made to define the character of the nation, with Islam playing a prominent part in these efforts. As a result of the emphasis placed on Islamic studies by educational institutions, a certain view of Islam was promoted. In spite of the fact that it helped to cultivate a feeling of Muslim identity, this strategy offered very little to address the requirements of minority faiths (Kharisma & Aisyah, 2024). The invasion of Afghanistan by the Soviet Union and following wars in the country led to an increase in religious fanaticism and violence between different Christian sects. There were instances when educational institutions turned into fertile ground for the propagation of these beliefs. The phenomenon of religious intolerance increased, which resulted in the marginalization of minority faiths and the split of society. Due to the absence of a focus on religious tolerance within the educational system, these trends were not successfully countered (Rukiyanto et al., 2024).

The contemporary landscape and the necessity for change in Pakistan is still struggling with the issue of religious extremism and the influence it has on social cohesiveness. It is widely acknowledged that educational reform is an essential instrument for combating these narratives. There is a growing part of the population that acknowledges the importance of fostering religious tolerance and encouraging interfaith understanding (AS et al., 2024). This requirement could be met via a national spiritual education program that is created with inclusivity in mind. The significance of national spiritual education lies in the fact that it has the potential to cultivate moral principles that are not limited by religion bounds, thereby building a society that is more compassionate and just (Khalilova, 2024).

It has the potential to establish a forum for interfaith discourse and understanding, thereby fostering respect for faiths that are different from one another. A feeling of common humanity and national identity that appreciates Pakistan's religious plurality can be cultivated through this, which can contribute to the strengthening of national unity. National spiritual education, on the other hand, necessitates careful assessment of the existing conditions. The educational system must proceed with caution, avoiding any curriculum that favors one religion over another or that exacerbates sectarian tensions (Aseery & Alfaifi, 2024). The successful execution of such a program necessitates the participation of a wide

range of stakeholders, such as religious authorities, educators, and members of civil society. This research is able to begin the process of exploring a framework for national spiritual education that promotes religious tolerance and builds Pakistan's social fabric if we first acknowledge the historical context, then recognize the problems, and then comprehend the potential significance (Egamberdiyev, 2024).

1.1 Research Questions

1. Pakistan's national spiritual education program should prioritize fostering religious tolerance. How can this be achieved?
2. How difficult would it be to design a spiritual education program for the entire country of Pakistan that places an emphasis on religious pluralism and tolerance?
3. How might spiritual education on a national level help Pakistani society become more accepting and spiritually attuned?
4. What are potential models for national spiritual education that can be adapted to the Pakistani context, prioritizing tolerance and respect for all faiths?

This research has used a comparative legal research (CLR) approach to examine national spiritual education and religious tolerance in Pakistan. It has analyzed how countries like India, Israel, and Indonesia integrate religious tolerance into their curricula, identifying best practices that can be adapted to Pakistan's unique religious demographics and social challenges. The study has also analyzed challenges in developing a tolerant curriculum, such as balancing religious representation and navigating potential biases within the education system. It has also identified models for national spiritual education, evaluating their strengths and weaknesses in fostering religious tolerance and inclusivity. The research has also examined case studies from countries where national spiritual education programs have contributed to a more inclusive and spiritually aware society.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK:

In Pakistan, the potential for national spiritual education (NSE) to promote religious tolerance is investigated through the use of this paradigm (Bokhrolievich, 2024). This study employs a comparative perspective to investigate pertinent ideas and models from a variety of contexts, with the objective of providing valuable insights that may be utilized in the construction of an NSE program that is both inclusive and effective in Pakistan. The concept of religious tolerance can be defined as the acceptance and respect for beliefs that are

different from one's own, with the goal of fostering peaceful coexistence (Buribayev et al., 2024). Within the context of a national framework, the term "national spiritual education" refers to a formalized educational program that encourages the development of spirituality, ethics, and possibly even religious insight (Chifeche, 2024).

2.1 Examples of Theoretical Frameworks:

Interfaith dialogue theory is a theory that places an emphasis on people of various religions communicating with one another and understanding one another. Specifically, it implies that NSE has the ability to establish forums for conversation, so fostering respect and appreciation for a variety of theological beliefs. A diversified society that has a number of different religious perspectives is argued to be beneficial under the pluralism theory. A more pluralistic Pakistan can be fostered through the curriculum of the National Spiritual Education (NSE), which has the potential to build a feeling of shared humanity that transcends religious boundaries.

A theory that emphasizes the significance of social relationships and trust within a society is known as the social cohesion theory. NSE has the potential to foster a sense of common values and national identity, so enhancing social cohesion in spite of the existence of a diverse range of religious beliefs (Afwadzi et al., 2024).

A theory that promotes critical thinking and the questioning of prevailing narratives is known as the critical pedagogy Theory. By means of developing critical engagement with religious beliefs, NSE, which incorporates this method, has the potential to confront potential prejudices and promote tolerance. Examine the ways in which India's value-based education, which incorporates aspects of a variety of religions, fosters tolerance in a society that celebrates a wide range of religious beliefs. By Examining the difficulties and achievements of Israel's separate education systems for various religious groups, with the goal of gaining insights that can be used to promote tolerance within the context of a national framework for Israel. Investigate the manner in which the Pancasila doctrine, which places an emphasis on national unity despite religious diversity, is incorporated into the education system of Indonesia. This could provide Pakistan with instructive opportunities (Ibraimov, 2024).

2.2 Assessing Different Models:

When it comes to fostering religious tolerance, compare and contrast the effectiveness of various strategies. Consider aspects such as the development of the curriculum, the training of teachers, and the involvement of the community. The framework ought to be modified so that it caters to the particular requirements and difficulties of Pakistan (Rezmer, 2024). The legal framework of the country regarding religious freedom, the various demographics of the religious communities inside the country, and the educational infrastructure that is already in place are all factors that should be taken into consideration. Enhanced mutual understanding and respect for the many religious beliefs held by people of different faiths. A sense of national identity that is shared by all citizens and is independent of religious differences —(Millar et al., 2024).

Pakistani society should be encouraged to promote ethical principles and social harmony. It is important to be aware of the possibility of prejudice while developing curricula and training teachers. Handling any sensitivities while also ensuring that minority faiths are included in the study. Obtaining the concurrence and backing of a wide range of stakeholders, such as religious authorities, educators, and members of the general public. As a nutshell, developing a national spiritual education in Pakistan that encourages religious tolerance with the help of this comparative framework gives a theoretical foundation for doing so. The National Spiritual Education (NSE) has the ability to make a contribution to the development of a society that is more peaceful, inclusive, and respectful of its diverse religious fabric by drawing on the lessons learned from established models and tackling potential problems. Additional development of this framework is possible through the incorporation of particular recommendations for the design of curricula, the training of teachers, and implementation tactics that prioritize religious tolerance within the context of Pakistan (Moran, 2024).

The purpose of this research is to investigate the opportunities that national spiritual education (NSE) presents for fostering religious tolerance in Pakistan. There has been friction and conflict in the country as a result of the country's diversified religious landscape, which has necessitated the investigation of strategies to promote

interfaith understanding and peaceful coexistence. Through the promotion of common values, the construction of bridges of understanding, and the strengthening of national unity, NSE has the potential to play a significant role in the promotion of religious tolerance. India's value-based education, Israel's separate education systems for different religious groups, and Indonesia's Pancasila philosophy have the focal points of a comparative analysis of NSE models in other nations with diverse religious landscapes. Some of the difficulties that are involved with the implementation of NSE programs include the development of curricula, the training of teachers, and the participation of stakeholders. Interfaith discussion, societal cohesiveness, and the promotion of ethical ideals are all positive consequences that can be experienced as a result of effective NSE programs (Maghfiroh & Sugiarto, 2024). In order to adapt NSE to the setting of Pakistan, it will be necessary to investigate the legislative framework, the demography of the religious population, and the educational infrastructure. Long-term impact studies, context-specific evaluations, and community involvement techniques are examples of areas where there are gaps in knowledge and further study has to be conducted. The review comes to the conclusion that NSE has the potential to make a contribution to a society that is more peaceful and inclusive by gaining knowledge from models that have been successful, addressing obstacles, and adapting NSE to the context of Pakistan (Faxritdinovich, 2024).

3. SUCCESSFUL MODEL OF NSE:

In Uzbekistan, a country founded on religious tolerance, people of many faiths and nationalities coexist peacefully. However, in this multireligious society, the challenge of accurately defining "secularism" and striking a healthy balance between religion, state, and society is becoming more pressing by the day. In modern Uzbekistan, the challenge of raising a generation that is both intellectually and physically capable of handling life on its own merits is a state-wide and national responsibility, and the standard for success in this area is the consistent and resolute pursuit of this noble aim. It is a well-established fact that education is a never-ending cycle that helps pass on knowledge and wisdom from one generation to the next, and that it shapes and improves people's physical and mental health through the influence of many sources, including but not limited to families, schools, religious institutions, community groups, government agencies, and the media (Huda, 2024).

It is of the utmost need to establish a robust civil society, bring national, spiritual, and religious values into harmony, and put democratic principles into action in order to create a new spiritual society. It is common knowledge that the Eastern worldview is based on a pursuit of enlightenment, spirituality, and excellence in all aspects of life. This, in turn, necessitates living in accordance with these principles, which necessitates seeking happiness and virtue, which guarantees a person's spiritual education. What this means is that humans are capable of perceiving and comprehending a superior, non-human being. The Eastern tradition of deep spirituality and enlightenment laid the groundwork for progress that, at various points in human history, triggered dramatic shifts in direction. Spirituality, enlightenment, religious tolerance, and thinking have been allowed a lot of leeway in our nation, whereas ignorance and superstition have been criticized for a long time. This nation has exalted the ideals of enlarging man's spiritual horizons, a life centered on spirituality, education, and the pursuit of perfection in all things. The most important thing is to recognize a person's humanity, regardless of their country, race, socioeconomic status, or religious beliefs. A person's spiritual education is profoundly impacted by the presence of high-minded ideals like religious tolerance, mutual respect, and trust across nations and peoples (Aseery & Alfaifi, 2024).

Since gaining independence, this country has acknowledged inter-religious tolerance as a concept that requires collaboration not only among religious leaders, but also among all members of society. It is seen as a crucial factor in promoting peace and stability. From this perspective, this concept has emerged as the primary standard for efforts aimed at reconciling the interests of individuals from many religious backgrounds and fostering harmony within our nation, which is actively progressing towards establishing a democratic society.

According to President Shavkat Mirziyoyev of Uzbekistan, the resolution titled "Enlightenment and religious tolerance" that was proposed during the 72nd session of the UN General Assembly is based on a strong and logical foundation. Our sacred religion promotes the belief that achieving enlightenment is the way to cultivate tolerance, perform virtuous actions, and attain happiness. It is satisfying that the current reforms are considering the way of life, national traditions, values, and the overall sentiment of our population. The ultimate outcome of any reform is primarily assessed based on the extent to which the general populace comprehends and endorses it's imperative, as well as the tangible impact of these modifications on human existence and the enhancement of its welfare. It is crucial to effectively communicate the significance and core principles of the reforms to individuals in order to cultivate trust in the future among members of society and consequently mold their moral character (Jati & Bachtiair, 2024).

The term "tolerance" is extensively employed in diverse domains of scientific endeavor and social existence,

encompassing political science, sociology, philosophy, theology, ethics, and religion. The term "tolerance" originates from the Latin word "tolerate", which signifies "to endure" or "to bear". It essentially refers to the act of accepting and accommodating diverse opinions or perspectives, irrespective of one's own understanding, with a high degree of tolerance and forbearance. This idea universally encompasses the notions of "endurance", "tolerance", "benevolence", "carefulness", "forgiveness", "kindness", and "sympathy", among others, across several languages (Mamatqabilov et al., 2024).

It is crucial to acknowledge that "religious tolerance" is a significant aspect of tolerance. Irrespective of the divergent ideas held by representatives of many religions, this concept entails their coexistence in harmony and mutual reverence for each other's religious doctrines. Retains According to the "Declaration of Principles of Tolerance", the absence of tolerance prevents the existence of peace, and without peace, there can be no progress or democracy.

Throughout the years, mosques, churches, and synagogues operated without restrictions throughout the urban and rural areas globally, allowing individuals of other nationalities and religions to peacefully do their religious rituals. Even during the most intricate and challenging periods of our history, there were no religious conflicts among them. This demonstrates that the sentiments of venerating an individual and esteeming others, displaying deference to the elderly, and expressing reverence to the younger generation, irrespective of ethnicity and religious beliefs, can be summarized as the inherent spiritual essence of our nation's people. The moral foundation of religious tolerance, which is a defining attribute of our society, is comprised of these elements (Seyidov, n.d.).

It is widely recognized that every religion possesses its own set of beliefs. Occasionally, they exhibit a proportional relationship, but at other times they may be contradictory. Religious tolerance mitigates problems that may emerge due to diversity and facilitates the coexistence of various faiths. In the hadith, the Prophet (PBUH) states that the highest form of faith is demonstrated through the qualities of patience and tolerance. Undoubtedly, in accordance with Islamic beliefs, tolerance serves as an indication of one's faith. The admirable initiative of promoting equal chances for individuals belonging to diverse religious backgrounds residing in our nation today, particularly through the reinforcement of legal regulations on religious tolerance, deserves recognition. Article 20 of the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan guarantees freedom of conscience for all individuals including minorities. Every individual possesses the entitlement to embrace any religious faith or choose not to adhere to any religious beliefs. imposition of religious beliefs through coercion is not permitted. The rule functions as a framework for promoting religious tolerance. Based on

this principle, individuals are granted the freedom to engage in their own religious practices and beliefs, while also acknowledging and respecting the same right for others. It is not permissible to impose one individual's religious beliefs on others (Zainiyati et al., 2024).

Furthermore, Article 25 of the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan affirms that human rights and freedoms are acknowledged and ensured in accordance with universally accepted principles of international law and in alignment with this Constitution. Human rights and freedoms are inherent to all individuals from the moment of their birth. In Pakistan all citizens are granted equal rights and freedoms and are treated equally under the law, irrespective of their gender, race, nationality, language, religion, belief, social origin, or social status. This includes the recognition that individuals of diverse religious beliefs are considered equal before the law, regardless of their specific religion or belief system (Pirnazarov, 2024).

The Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan acknowledges and ensures human rights and freedoms in conformity with universally accepted principles of international law and its own Constitution. Human rights and freedoms are inherent to all individuals from the moment of their birth. The sentiments of solidarity, tolerance, and fraternity among the several peoples and religions residing in our country, as well as the outcomes of the current consistent and equitable policies, are evidently manifested. This demonstrates that our country has established the appropriate approach towards national and religious factors, in line with the principles of constructing a democratic society. Furthermore, we have undertaken endeavors that align perfectly with the fundamental aspects of social, spiritual, and cultural progress. Life consistently affirms that the division between the state and religion, the separation of religion from the state, and the principle of freedom of conscience align with civil society (Kharisma & Aisyah, 2024).

Ultimately, it may be asserted that enhancing spiritual education, fostering inter-ethnic communication, cultivating patience, and promoting religious tolerance have emerged as pressing imperatives in today's globalized society.

4. A WAY FORWARD:

Pakistan's diverse array of religious beliefs can serve as a source of resilience, although the issue of religious intolerance persists as a significant obstacle. The strategies and recommendations to enhance religious tolerance in Pakistani society:

4.1. National Spiritual Education (NSE):

4.1.1 Create an Inclusive Curriculum:

Construct curriculum materials that are suitable for the age group and: Encourage the adoption of common ethical principles among different religious beliefs. Provide

comprehensive education on the primary religions observed in Pakistan, promoting comprehension and admiration. Prioritize the development of critical thinking abilities to question and challenge biases and preconceptions.

4.1.2 Teacher Training: Provide teachers with the necessary abilities to effectively manage difficult religious themes in a fair and respectful manner. Promote and encourage interfaith communication and facilitate classroom discussions. Foster the development of analytical thinking skills and inspire pupils to challenge established narratives.

4.1.3 Stakeholder Engagement: Collaborate with religious leaders of all major faiths to ensure the inclusion of the curriculum. Educational specialists are working on creating efficient instructional techniques. Civil society organizations aim to enhance public awareness and garner support.

4.1.4 Interfaith Dialogue Initiatives: Facilitate the coordination of seminars, conferences, and peacebuilding programs aimed at fostering dialogue and understanding among individuals of diverse religious beliefs. Advocate for the promotion of interfaith youth organizations and initiatives that facilitate student exchange programs. Promote collaborative initiatives involving people from different religious backgrounds to engage in volunteer projects aimed at addressing the needs of the community.

4.1.5 Media Literacy: Advocate for the inclusion of media literacy instruction to encourage the discerning analysis of information and the proactive response to hate speech.

Promote the portrayal of religious diversity in media outlets in a favorable manner and encourage the promotion of interfaith understanding. Implement and uphold current legislation that prohibits religious discrimination and hate speech. Examine legal systems that support and encourage both the freedom to practice religion and the inclusion of diverse religious beliefs. Provide assistance to interfaith councils and legal aid organizations that specifically focus on resolving complaints and disputes.

4.1.6 Community Engagement and Social

Cohesion: Facilitate the coordination of interfaith cultural festivals and festivities to publicly demonstrate and highlight the common values that are shared by different religious groups. Promote ecumenical sports tournaments and other social gatherings to cultivate bridges among different communities. Promote the establishment of interfaith neighborhood watch programs to foster mutual security and confidence. Elevate the influence of religious leaders who advocate for tolerance and peace. Promote and urge celebrities and public personalities to actively oppose religious bigotry. Advocate for the inclusion of interfaith tales in popular culture, film, and television.

4.1.7 Study and Evaluation: Perform thorough study on the efficacy of different initiatives and consistently assess NSE programs.

4.1.8 Capacity Building: Provide training to schools, religious leaders, and community workers to empower them as advocates for religious tolerance. Devote resources over an extended period to support programs that promote religious tolerance at all levels. Curriculum planning and program design should consider sensitivities and refrain from favoring any particular religious belief. Securing support from a wide range of stakeholders, such as religious authorities and the general public, necessitates meticulous communication and cooperation. Promoting religious tolerance is an ongoing endeavor that necessitates consistent commitment from all sectors of society.

5. CONCLUSION:

Constructing a more tolerant Pakistan necessitates employing a comprehensive and diverse strategy. Pakistan may establish a more peaceful and inclusive society by implementing a range of initiatives such as national spiritual education, interfaith dialogue, community involvement, and legislative frameworks to harness the strength of its religious diversity.

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