

**IMPACTS OF HINDU WEDDING CULTURE: AN APPRAISAL OF CURRENT WEDDING TRENDS IN PAKISTAN**

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**Abstract**

*Development and preservation of distinctive Islamic culture was one of the significant and major objectives of the creation of Pakistan. It involves not only the fate of the Muslims of the Subcontinent but also raises question about their capabilities and abilities to preserve and practice those distinctive values on the basis of which the demand was made. In this perspective analysis of wedding culture in Pakistan is very important. Islam accommodates cultural diversities to the extent that these diversities do not come in contrast with the teachings of Islam. In Islam marriage is not only obligatory but it is a part of Sunnah. Walima and Nikkah are fundamental Islamic wedding rituals. All of the others have been adopted from the Hindu culture through the process of acculturation when Muslims and Hindus were living together in the united India or through the cultural diffusion via electronic media after division. Intermingling of Hindu and Muslim wedding culture is adversely affecting separate identity of the Muslims which had once provided theoretical and ideological foundation for the Pakistan Movement. The paper will strive to analyze the extent of penetration of Hindu culture into Muslim culture and its consequences upon Muslim society by proceeding qualitative and exploratory approach. It also aims at highlighting prevailing scenario of now a day kind of marriages as well as the teaching of Islam in order to identify and classify them as parallel or contrary to Islam.*

**Keywords:** Pakistan, Islamic Rituals, Acculturation, Cultural Diffusion, Wedding

## INTRODUCTION

The end of World War-I had brought the growing realization of cultural identity and cultural self-determination in the Western societies. This growing realization of cultural identity later shifted from Europe to Asia. The root word of the culture is “kulture” in German which refers to civilization. For Sociologists and anthropologists culture includes refinement, taste, sophistication, education and appreciation of the fine arts (Kottak, 2002). However, the theory was seemed difficult to apply in a country Sub-Continent, where ideologically heterogeneous societies were living with almost identical racial background, living together for thousands of years on the same land and exhibited identical external influences. Historically, the culture of subcontinent had a flexible characteristic which could engulf the traits of foreign invaders and immigrants (Ali, Aslam, Chaudhry, 2012). For a Western mind it was not easy to accept these societies as heterogeneous who possessed virtually same outlook and way of lives. Apparently Hindu and Muslim communities looked homogenous but in fact they preserved their separate entity as two different societies (Ehsan, 1987). But at the same time it was unnatural for them if they did not get each other’s cultural influence partly if not completely. It is in man’s instinct that he is inspired and influenced by the neighboring cultures due to continuous and close association. Such assumption applies in India where one neighbor was Muslim family, the other was Hindu family and the association was continued for many centuries. The state of Pakistan emerged under the banner of separate religious and cultural identity. In his famous 14 points, founder of Pakistan had demanded that “the constitution should embody adequate safeguards for the protection of Muslim culture” (Waheeduzzaman, 1964). While presenting the idea of separate state for the Muslims of India in 1930, Allama Muhammad Iqbal argued that for Islam, separate state would mean an opportunity to mobilize its laws, its education, its culture, and to bring them into closer contact with its original spirit and the spirit of modern times”. (Ahmed, 2000)

Pakistan consists of four provinces in which the province of Punjab is geographically and ethnically much closer with the Indian culture (Ahmed, 2014). It had been relatively much closer during pre-partition period. Consequently, in Punjabi wedding rituals there are so many rituals which have been taken from Hindu culture. However, impact of Hindu wedding culture is not prominent in the rest of the Pakistan, as have been seen in Punjab due to its geographical proximity with India (Ali, 2009).

Culture is a way of identifying distinctive groups or nations. No culture either Arab or otherwise cannot be considered virtually Islamic or un-Islamic. In the process of evaluation of cultural norms and traditions in the context of Islam, it is necessary to distinguish between prohibited things and permissible things. Islam accommodates culture by general principle that everything which is not prohibited is

in fact permissible. While practicing Islamic principles Muslims can preserve certain features to enrich and enlighten their cultural values (Ramazan, 1999).

Islam abhors extravagance in weddings ceremonies and advocates adopting simple way of live as it is evident by the practical life of Prophet (PBUH). Living in an agricultural society and possessing agricultural resources but having lavish ambitions of an industrialist's society create contradictions between resources and ambitions. The inhabitants of such a society who tend to forget their own religious identity may lose their own social, moral and religious values. Indulgence in extravagance in wedding rituals, irreligious practice of rituals has made it complex and even more difficult. Marriage in Islam is a simple way of initiating new lives of a bride and a groom with some necessary expenditure. It does not require show off, lavish spending and the fulfillment of worldly desires.

In prevailing culture and wedding rituals of Pakistan, people have placed themselves in difficult conditions and unnecessary lavish expenditures. These expenditures are derived from norms and cultures to somehow maintain social status and sometime to maintain superiority complex in the society. The privileged section of society observed these heavy wedding expenditures and brazen rituals willingly knowing that they can afford, but middle class and poor community accept unwillingly to maintain their prestige in the society.

Islam prefers *Taqwa* and character building on the lines of *Qura'an* and *Sunnah*. While choosing partner a Muslim must consider social, moral and above all religious standards. These belong to religious and ethical values, not in conflict with cultural norms and traditions. Material preferences, demand of luxurious dowry, exchange of expensive gift to maintain social standards and superiority complex in society are not part of Muslim Culture. These practices have converted the whole society into different classes. The heart of the matter is that preservations of religious and cultural identities had been more important for the Muslims both inside and outside India (AL-Madina-UI-Ilmiya, 2015).

## **PERIOD OF PRE-PARTITION, CULTURAL INTERACTIONS AND TRENDS OF ADAPTATION**

Before partition of Indian Sub-Continent, Muslims had spent thousands years in united India and developed one of the most important constituent of Indian National Stream. Muslims had proved a major force in shaping India's religious, social and cultural life. Mental evolution and social interaction with other religious groups had been responsible for the determination of social and cultural status of the Indian Muslims. Indian land integrated and incorporated almost all foreign immigrants who have entered here at different times by broadening her faith and social structure (Madni, 1993). Throughout the history of united India, Muslims

maintained their distinct entity on the bases of their compact religion but the culture they observed was not pure Islamic which they proclaimed as Islamic, may have been seen a diffusion of Indian culture. Islam advocates equality of all human beings regardless of their race, color, sect and social status. It is a solemn feature of Hindu system but Muslims of India also indulged in caste system by getting influenced from their immediate neighbor (Usmani, 1999).

Islam stretches a diverse terrain of culture with its followers and practices as different as the countries from which they hail. The whole freedom movement till 1947 revolves around 'Two Nation Theory', on the basis of which Muslim of India got their independent state. The core purpose of having separate state was to let the Muslims practice their religious and cultural values. It reflects not to adopt again or to borrow some of Hindus cultural norms and traditions (Ali, 1997). The foundation of state has been laid out of new system of ideas, i.e., when the process of stabilizing the state has begun and its people have resumed the life of peace they have to pursue their distinct culture rather to imbibe previous culture. After conquering Persia, second Caliph of Islam Hazrat Umar (R.A.) remained there for some time. In order to prevent them from adopting the ways of Persian and forgetting their own values, he issued an order,

“Tighten your waist-bands, wear *chadaars*, fix horse shoes under your soles, give up wearing socks and *shalwars* and strictly follow the dress of your own ancestors Ismail. Keep away from luxurious living and the way of *Ajam*, and make a point of it to sit in the sun. Sunshine is the natural hot bath of the Arabs. Follow the ways of wandering tribes, wear coars clothes and lead hardy lives. Accustom yourself to wearing old clothes and eat camel flesh. (Khuldoon) This order was intended to prevent the Muslims from forgetting their duties and taking to Iranian luxurious way of life, considering it evil that would have shaken the roots of Islam at that juncture (Ashrafi, 1992). A society may experience healthy interaction with other culture; it may adopt such elements that are not contrary to its own culture and way of life, values and beliefs. Amongst other festivals the wedding ritual was one of the only rituals that both (Hindu & Muslims) cultures of the united India had in common. The non-Islamic elements have found their way into it through their coexistence with the Hindus over centuries, and revert to pure Islamic elements”.

### WEDDING RITUALS IN PAKISTAN

Wedding is an act to perform the religious obligation, that can be fulfill by reciting *Nikhah*, and arranging ceremony of *Walima*, besides these there are wedding rituals as they pertain to the popular culture. Material and cultural interpretation of marriage ceremonies demonstrate that there are some common

rituals with some differences in values. Geographically, and ethnically the parts of Pakistan nearer to the eastern boundaries with India, i.e. parts of Punjab have been under greater influence of Indian wedding Culture. The trend of practicing Indian culture is prominent in Punjabi culture as compare to the other part of Pakistan due to its geographical proximity with India. For centuries Islam harmonized the indigenous form of cultural expression which happened to be compatible with its sacred law. Historically, Islam has been culture friendly, and in that regard, has been likened to a crystal clear river. The colorless water of Islam is sweat; life giving and pure reflects the bedrock over which it flows. In China Islam looked Chinese, in Arab it has Arabian beauty, in Mali it looked African and in Pakistan it has four regional colors.

Unity in cultural diversity has been the hallmark of traditional Islamic societies as it seems in Pakistan. Despite the distinct local and ethnic color, Pakistani society reflects Islamic cultural instinct made up of many systematic hints and practices for collective human existence. While explaining the recognition of cultural diversity, Edward W. Said says: "Not trying to rule others, not trying to classify them or put them in hierarchies, above all not constantly to reiterate how our culture or country is number one, or not number one for that matter" (Said, 1993).

#### **LAVISH EXPENDITURE ON PRE-WEDDING AND POST-WEDDING RITUALS**

There are two types of rituals, the allocated rituals and the rituals performed to fulfill religious requirements. The former have been developed due to capital displays and class structure while the later ritual consists of religious obligation.

Berardoand Vera defined rituals in the following words,

Rituals and ceremonies form a part of the institutional arrangements which can be understood only in terms of ideas, beliefs, attitudes and values, i.e., the ideological frameworks which render them meaningful. The movements, gestures, instruments, times, places and words that constitute these rituals are expressions (signs and symbols) of other aspects of society (Buckley, 2006).

It is a matter of pride in the contemporary society of Pakistan to spend heavy amount on weddings to show off by arranging pre-wedding and post wedding rituals. Except *Nikkah* and *Walima* all other rituals are unnecessary and part of Hindu wedding culture. Marriage is virtuous deed like other religious obligation but ruined because it is generally believed that people spend in the name of customs for showing their wealth to others. Consequently, these customs have become part of Muslim weddings to attain social status instead of blessing of Almighty (Al-Madina-Tul-Ilmiya, 2015).

### **DOWRY AND EXCHANGE OF GIFTS**

Dowry and exchange of gifts have become integrated rituals into wedding customs in Pakistan. Originally it was meant for voluntary gifts given to girl by her parents, relatives and friends out of love and affection. Contrary to Islamic custom dowry is part of Hindu customs in which it is obligatory for bride's parents to give handsome dowry. Islamic custom of dowry degenerated into an evil obligation on the part of bride's parents. A ritual becomes custom and compulsory element when they are repeated and in subsequent weddings, without which a wedding thought to be incomplete. Religion does not provide any bases for such rituals so they can be classified as adopted and innovated rituals (Roper, 1999).

### **PREFERENCES OF CASTE, CREEDS AND SOCIAL STATUS OVER RELIGIOUS, SOCIAL AND ETHICAL VALUES**

Islam promotes equality of mankind regardless of their creed, castes, colors and social status (Azmi, 2016). These are the features of Hindu culture. Since pre-partition a section of Muslim society were the descendent of converted Hindus, hence it is in man's instinct that he observes new culture in the mirror of old culture consequently a new culture emerges. It may be a fusion of both cultures, which contains some previous rituals with the mixture of newly adopted rituals. So while choosing spouse, Muslim families also indulged in these differences which are contrary to their own Islamic way of life.

A spouse can be chosen on the bases of his/her *Taqwa* and piety. There are glorious examples available in Islamic history when a milkmaid becomes daughter in-law of Caliph Hazrat Umar. Once Hazrat Umar was on his way to check if everyone was fine accompanied by His companion Hazrat Ibn Abbas. During the visit they listened the conversation of mother and daughter. The mother was insisting to add water into milk so they would have greater profit. But the daughter refused to add water as it was the order of Caliph not to do deceitful acts. Daughter said that Caliph may or may not be here but His order must be obeyed. Hazrat Umar (R.A) had determined her *Taqwa*, religious and ethical values which were far beyond from social status and castes. He did not feel hesitation to accept a milkmaid for his son as it was not a matter of social standard and feeling of inferiority for Caliph in his society, because Islam prefers character over caste, creed and material things (Trimzi, 2007).

### **FEELINGS OF SUPERIORITY COMPLEX, INFERIORITY COMPLEX AND MATERIALISM**

Culture is a profound and intimate phenomenon that exists among the people to guide their thoughts and actions. As societies develop with the consequent

rise of material wealth weddings have become a circus for materialism. Purpose of Marriage in Islam is to establish family. Due to materialistic mindsets and priorities a person with low economic conditions feels hesitation to marry from upper class. It is very rare and often unacceptable for a rich family to accept wedding proposal from poor family. However cross-cultural marriages can be seen in Pakistan, e.g. one spouse may belong to Pashtun family and the other is from Punjabi family (PLD, 2004).

### **ROLE OF MEDIA, INDIANS MOVIES, DRAMAS AND CARTOONS**

Though Indian and Pakistani cultures got separated after the geographical division during 1947 but the cultural interaction through media is continuing since the inception of independence and lasting its cross cultural impacts (Shahid, 2003). Media plays a cheapest source for creating mental picture and cultural influences. Pakistani wedding culture is getting influenced by Indian culture through the marriage ceremonies being presented in their dramas, movies and reality shows. Culture takes diverse forms across time and space. In this process of change media plays a source of exchange, innovation and creativity. It may change eating stuff of communities, room setting and clothing styles. Most of the Indian movies and drama stories revolve around wedding culture dresses and rituals (Hirji, 2008). Pakistan's media is presenting all aspects of Indian wedding culture as it seems that Pakistan's culture is a mixture of neighboring culture. Despite living in a separate territory media has played a mediator role between the two neighboring cultures. Hence experience of Indian rituals in Pakistani weddings is evident which has transformed the simple obligation of marriage into a complicated and huge festival. One of the most influential popular platforms which characterize the materialistic and status symbol mindsets are Pakistan's own TV reality shows. Media plays an important role in shaping the lives of people and it influences the society as a whole. Media marriages on TV Channels have started a new trend. Especially in morning shows, where modern weddings present brides and grooms as the stars of an elaborate production. The media wedding allows both Bride and Groom being celebrities for a day and sharing their private lives for televised fame. Media weddings do not necessarily reject the wedding rituals or the institution of marriage entirely, but articulate fantasy and reason in wedding consumptions (Khan, 2016).

During 2014, host of a morning show has arranged wedding of already wedded couple to assimilate that un-Islamic activity with the sacred wedding of Hazrat Bibi Fatima and Hazrat Ali (Geo-TV, 2014). This assimilation turned into blasphemy; because the intervening of Indian way of life has eroded Islamic way of wedding. TV reality shows have transformed traditional wedding culture into highly commercialized and modernized culture. The high display of wealth in media marriages are used to sell ideas about fashion industry. Resultantly simple

ceremony of *Nikkah* became status symbol, expensive and even more complicated (Schiller, 1989).

### ISLAMIC WAY OF MARRIAGE

Qura'an Ordains about Nikkah in the following verse; (Surah Al-Noor, 32)

وَأَنْكَحُوا الْأَيَّامَىٰ مِنْكُمْ وَالصَّالِحِينَ مِنْ عِبَادِكُمْ وَإِيمَانِكُمْ

The Word *Nikkah* is an Arabic word which is refers marital status of a man or woman (Roberts, 1982). The Word 'Al-Ayama' is the plural of 'Auuim', and is used to describe a woman who has no husband and a man who has no wife, regardless of whether they have married and then separated, or have been never married at all. This is command from God to marry through the adaptation of simplest way to fulfill man's social and biological needs. The simple way prevents from being indulgence in unnecessary customs, extravagance and show off (Dawud, 1999).

### STUPENDOUS MARRIAGE OF HAZRAT ALI AND HAZARATBIBI FATIMA

Hazrat Bibi Fatima, beloved Daughter of Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) inherited noble traits of her father, acquired brilliant mentality, cleverness with the elegance, grace and beauty. At the time, when she had attained the age of maturity prominent companions of Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) sent their proposal to marry her, but the apostle of Allah replied them that He is waiting for Allah's decree in this matter (Ordoni, 2016).

Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) said,

"Her affair has left to her Lord; whenever He will, She will marry." (Al- Muslim, 2005).

### Prophet (PBUH) preferred Allah's Command over materialism and Socio-Economic Status.

Hazrat Abdur Rahman Ibn Awf visited to Prophet (PBUH) and said,

"If You give lady Fatima (R.A) hand in marriage to me, I will put as her dowry a hundred camels covered with expensive Egyptian clothe followed by a thousand gold Dinars". Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) Replied:

"Do you think that I am servant of wealth and money that you are trying to impress me with these things". During pre-Islamic era, a custom of presenting expensive dowry from husband was prevailed in Arabs to show his true intention for his expected wife (Yousaf, 2009). Finally Allah duly made His selection, Ali Ibn Abi Talib to be the spouse of the daughter of His beloved Prophet (PBUH). Hazrat Ali visited to the house of Prophet Mohammad and said,

“O Messenger of God, you brought me up as your own child. You have overwhelmed me with your gifts, your generosity and your kindness. I owe you everything in my life now I seek one more kindness from you”. The beloved Prophet of Allah understood what Ali was trying to say. After getting the formal consent of Hazrat Fatima the wedding ceremony was arranged, the guests were feasted with the lamb meat, bread, dates and milk. It was strange for the Quraish who come to Prophet and said, “ Surely you have taken the low dowry from Ali (R.A), for Fatima (R.A)”, Prophet(PBUH) replied, “It was not I who gave Fatima to Ali in marriage rather Allah did so on the night of ascension near the Lotus tree in the seventh heaven” (Al-Bukhari, 1961).

### **WEDDING PREPARATION OF HAZRAT FATIMA**

Hazrat Ali sold his war dress for 450 Dirhams and presented this money to Prophet (PBUH) who gave this money to Hazrat Salman Farsi (R.A) and Hazrat Bilal (R.A) and asked them to buy some necessary household from the market. They went to market and bought following things as dowry for Fatima (R.A);

Two mattress, a leather mat, a pillow made of skin, a khaibarion clock, an animal skin for water, some jugs and jars, a pitcher painted with tar, a thin curtain made of wool, a shirt, a veil, four cushions made of skins, a mat for Hajar, a hand mill, a copper container and a pestle for grinding coffee (Al-Muslim, 2005).

Marriage of Hazrat Bibi Fatima and Hazrat Ali was solemnized accordance to the strict relevant laws. In view of relationship and dedication they are perfect couple, it also rejected marriage based on materialistic gains and recommended non-materialistic values i.e., level of faith, character and ability to make each other better human being (Al-Bukhari 1961).

### **CONCLUSION**

Pakistan was the outcome of a struggle based upon distinct cultural identity of Muslims. Although the country itself is divided into four different cultures, there are various common cultural features due to the religion of majority Muslim population. Pakistani Culture can be called a diverse culture which has to follow Islamic Culture to create a common cultural identity. However there is significant influence of Hindu Culture upon Muslim Culture and tradition. The influence can be seen in marriage ceremonies, dowry system and heavy expenditures on marriages. So there are multi-colored pattern of cultural units create bewildering problem of how to extract solidarity out of contradictions. Weddings on TV reality shows do not realize that every one cannot afford an exorbitantly priced designer dress and jewelry. The economic gap between the middle class and the elite widens by practicing huge marriage festivals. Such shows inculcate a desire for materialist things only and ultimately create resentment which is contrary to the teaching of Islamic.

There is need to revive Islamic Culture which was practiced by Holy Prophet (PBUH) during His whole Life. Prophet (PBUH) had chosen his companion who was economically and financially poor but rich in morals and high religious values for His beloved daughter Bibi Fatima, where there might have been numerous proposals from rich and privileged persons. But the Prophet presented an example for His Ummah to prefer religious and ethical values while choosing a partner. Adopting this great tradition of Prophet (PBUH), Hazrat Umar has chosen a milk maid for His son Hazrat Asim without considering differences of class and social status but weighing truth and honesty of the poor girl.

To curb the menace of expensive dowry which is so deeply pervasive in the thick sans thins of our society; government must enact anti-dowry legislation making lavish dowry a cognizable offence under the law. Dowry takers must be condemned in the society. Expenses at the marriage ceremonies should be cut down, needy married couples should be given loans and grants to help them set up their homes on easy installments. Only in this way we can eradicate this evil out and create such a social climate where marriage is as easier as that was the marriage of Holy Prophet (PBUH)'s daughter Hazrat Bibi Fatima (R.A.) and Ali (R.A).

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