

# TOPIC:- Religious Extremism As a Challenge To Economic Development

## OUTLINE:-

### 1. Introduction

#### Thesis statement:-

Religious extremism has posed a significant challenge to the economic development of the country. It is creating impaired business climate and destruction of infrastructure. However, the issue can be resolved by fostering social cohesion and by promoting education.

### 2. Interconnection between religious extremism and economic development

### 3. How religious extremism poses a challenge to economic development:

- a) It promotes intolerance among members of different groups.
- b) Leads to political and social instability.
- c) Religious extremism divides

society on the basis of caste, creed and culture.

- d) It creates feeling of superiority over other group.
- e) Marginalization and radicalization may lead to terrorism in the country.
- f) Believer of extremist ideologies discourage critical thinking, creativity and innovation.

#### 4. Negative impacts of religious extremism on economic development.

- a) Decline of foreign investment in the country.
- b) Impaired business climate
- c) Limited chances of women's participation
- d) Decline in cultural tourism
- e) Destruction of infrastructure due to violence and conflict.
- f) Loss of Human capital
- g) Disrupts overall functioning of the society.

#### 5. Ways to control religious

## extremism.

- a) Addressing the root cause of the issue.
- b) Promote religious education.
- c) Strengthen social cohesion and dialogue between different religious groups.
- d) Engage religious leaders in promoting peaceful interpretation of religious teaching.

## 6- Conclusion

### Essay:-

Imagine of a machine working properly, all its parts are in cohesion with each other will result in desired outcomes and high productivity. Likewise, if a human body is functioning properly and all its organs are performing their own functions without interruption in others role will result in healthy life of

human being. Same is the case with country where different institutions of the state need to be in cohesion and harmony for smooth and proper functioning of the state. Although the Islamic Republic of Pakistan constitutionally guarantees the fundamental rights of minorities, religious extremism is gulping the country for the last 20 years. It is posing challenge to economic development of the country by promoting intolerance and by creating social and political instability. It has also divided society on the basis of caste, creed and culture. Consequently, it has negative impacts on economic development which can be seen as decline of foreign investment, impaired business climate and destruction of infrastructure due to violence and conflict. Nevertheless, the situation can be controlled by addressing the root cause of the issue and by promoting religious

education. Along with this, Dialogue between different religious groups would also be fruitful in bringing cohesion and peace in the country. As, religious extremism has posed a significant challenge to the economic development of the country. It is creating impaired business climate and destruction of infrastructure. However, it can be resolved by fostering social cohesion and by promoting education.

The two institutions of the society: Religion and economy are highly inter-connected. Religion creates forces of adhesion or cohesion among different groups of societies which ultimately affects the functioning and economic status of the state. Religious beliefs and teachings can shape economic decisions and behaviour of an individual. whereas, religious extremism may discourage many may innovative

ideas. Extremism directly impacts the cohesion and unity ~~of the~~ among the society. Masses with higher co-operation would work collaboratively for the development of the state. It also creates intolerance and will make it hard to accept the change which is hurdle in development. So, religious extremism and economic development is complex and multifaceted relationship.

To begin with the challenges posed by religious extremism in the way to economic development, the most important is the intolerance among members of different groups. Religious extremism exploit economic environment by creating racial and ideological conflicts. Extremist groups have a rigid interpretation of religious texts which leads to intolerance and conflict. According to united Nations office on Drugs and Crimes (UNODC) most of the cases

of violence are due to racial and ideological motivations, including those in the name of religion or belief. In this way religious extremism promote violence and intolerance among members of different group which is definitely a challenge to economic development.

Likewise, religious extremism poses a challenge to economic development by contributing in political and social instability in the country. The deteriorating relations between religious communities and instances of intercommunal violence adds to the social and political instability. For example, the resurgence of extremist groups, such as Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), has exacerbated Pakistan's struggle to achieve social and political stability. Along with this, religious extremism do not provide peaceful ways to resolve grievances and encouraged groups to

resort to violence, leading to fragile economy and deepening social polarization. Thus, social and political instability ~~is~~ due to extremism is a hurdle for the economic development of the country.

Moreover, religious extremism divides society on the basis of caste, creed and culture. It divides society by promoting intolerance and discrimination against those who do not share the same beliefs. The country's soiled education system has failed to create unity, tolerance and understanding among the individuals. This <sup>has</sup> led to radicalization among the youth, contributing to division of society on basis of caste, culture and creed. For example, religious extremism in Pakistan <sup>has led to</sup> ~~and~~ division of society which then results in targeting vulnerable groups and minorities, resulting in increased discrimination, extreme behaviour and social division?

This is how religious extremism affects the economic development of the country.

Furthermore, Extremist views in religion create the feeling of superiority by promoting an exclusive and rigid interpretation of religious teachings. Followers may believe that their beliefs are the only correct ones, leading to a sense of superiority over other groups who hold different beliefs.

This can be witnessed in the case of lynching of Priyanka Kumara - a 49 ~~to~~ years old sritankan working in Pakistan - was lynched by a mob over the allegations of blasphemy. The accused was attacked without proper investigation just because of the feeling of superiority of a group over minorities. This mindset fosters a sense of entitlement and justify discrimination, which leads to disruption in the society. So, in this way extremism contribute to

~~political~~ economic instability in the country.

Adding more to it marginalization and radicalization are also the product of extremism which promotes terrorism in the country. When individuals or groups feel marginalized or excluded from mainstream society, they may become more susceptible to radicalization. This led individuals to resort to acts of terrorism as a means of expressing their frustration, seeking revenge or trying to bring attention to their cause. This can also be proved by Robert Merton's theory of deviance which says that "when people are prevented from achieving culturally approved goals through institutional means, they experience strain and frustration that lead to deviance and crime in the society." In this way marginalization promotes terrorism which causes great hurdles in the economic development of the

Country

In the same manner, believers of extremist ideologies discourage critical thinking, creativity and innovation. They like to stick to those conventional methods and thoughts and consider innovation as a western agenda. Such extremist believers become hurdle to the economic development. They oppose women's participation, adoption of western methods for development and much more. They promote strict adherence to religious ideologies leaving little room for questioning. By discouraging these qualities of creativity, innovation and critical thinking, extremists attempt to control over their followers thoughts and actions, which limits their potential for growth and progress. So, we can say this extremists by thinking and actions of individuals poses a great challenge to the economic development which restricts out of box thinking.

As a result of religious extremism, country has evidenced various negative impacts on its economic development which are discussed below. The most ~~not~~ notable negative impact of extremism on the economic development is the decline of foreign investment in the country. When there is extremism, it creates a sense of insecurity and instability, which makes potential ~~visitors~~ investors hesitant to invest.

According to the report of Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad, During the year 2013 - 2014, when Terrorism was on peak in Pakistan. The FDI fell to \$463 million during the first quarter as against \$1.16 billion during the same period the previous year, a decline of 58.5% per year. This shows that extremism in the country badly affects economy of the country by decreasing foreign direct investment.

Another negative impact of religious extremism on economic

development is impaired business climate. Extremism creates hurdles in the smooth working and completion of the projects. No one wants to invest in a place where - there safety and assets are at risk. This can be evidenced from 2018's attack on Chinese nationals in Pakistan that creates rift among the citizens and results in halting the project (CPEC). Such attacks, bombings and threats on businesses create an atmosphere of fear and uncertainty that discourages both domestic and foreign investors to expand or establish their ventures. In this way, investor loses confidence to invest - which directly portrays bad effect on the economic development of the country.

In addition, religious extremism poses negative impact on economic development by having conventional thoughts about women's employment. Extremist ideologies

often promote strict gender roles and restrictions on women's rights and opportunities. This results in limited access to education, employment, political participation and role of women in decision making. They consider it western agenda of exploiting women but do not consider the fact - that the country where half of the population consist of women can not make progress without equal participation of women. In this way the orthodox thoughts of extremists restricts women's education, employment and participation that badly impact the economy of the country.

Along with this, extremism is a challenge to economic development because it adds ~~not~~ to the decline in the cultural tourism in the country which becomes a great loss of the country which has natural beauty, monumental buildings ~~mountains~~ and awe inspiring

mountains to visit. According to world Bank Report, tourism contributing to 12.6% in Sri Lanka, 6.7% in Nepal, 4.6% in India and remarkably low, only 2.7% in Pakistan (World Bank, 2021) This is due to the image Pakistan has portrayed throughout the years and due to destruction of infrastructure, too. However, Forbes, an American business magazine acknowledge Pakistan as one of the coolest place to visit in 2008. This clearly depicts that religious extremism discourage tourism in the country which means no contribution in GDP from tourism sector.

Moreover, religious extremism causes destruction of infrastructure which is devastating loss for the economic development of the country. Destruction is due to violence and conflict between different groups which is further inflamed ~~on~~ by intolerance. Its <sup>extremist</sup> people do not respect the differences

which results in conflicts and then major attacks and bombings. A recent example of infrastructure destruction in Jaranwala can be witnessed where angered muslim mob attacked homes and holy places of christian community causing destruction to the infrastructure in the country. This deters investment in infrastructure, ~~and~~ development and maintenance. Thus, one can say that it is negative for the economic development of the country.

Furthermore, Religious extremism gives a detrimental impact on human capital. By promoting narrow and rigid interpretations of religious teachings, extremist discourage human development. This hinders highly skilled and knowledgeable workforce. Along with this, extremist suppress certain groups like women and minorities, limiting their access to education and opportunities for growth. This <sup>not</sup> only affects

individuals' potential but hampers the overall progress and productivity of the society. Thus, extremism contribute in loss of human capital which exacerbates the negative impact of extremism on economic development.

Last but not the least, extremism disrupts the overall functioning of the society. It creates divisions and conflicts among different groups, leading to social unrest and instability. Extremist ideologies often promote intolerance and discrimination which erodes the social cohesion and trust. It directly impacts the social bond of the people along with their economic and social benefits. These rifts also cause political and economic instability in the country because of the breakdown of the community relationship and loss of trust among individuals. Extremism also creates credibility issues where

followers of specific ideologies do not believe in thoughts or actions of others. This ~~is~~ leads to the economic instability in the country.

However, religious extremism can be controlled by addressing the root cause of the issue. This includes tackling of underlying issues such as social instability, political grievances, lack of economic opportunities and elimination of feeling of superiority and deprivation. All these issues if not addressed become the cause of radicalization and marginalization which forces an individual to take extreme steps to meet up their demands or for their recognition. Therefore, the foremost priority should be to address the root cause of the issue which would bring unity, peace and cohesion in the society and in this way individual would learn to respect the differences.

Another step worth considering is the promotion of religious education. Religious education can play a vital role in countering extremism by promoting a more clear and balanced understanding of religious teachings. Many of the core values like: Peace, compassion, truth, tolerance, justice, hardwork are found in every religion. Such teaching can become the bedrock to promote mutual trust and it can challenge the distorted interpretation and extremist ideologies. Religious education also encourages respect for diversity. Thus, to bring peace and tolerance in the country and to eradicate religious extremism promotion of religious education is a step that is dire need of the era where religion is used only for personal benefits.

Another recommendation that can uproot religious extremism

is ~~the~~ strengthening of social cohesion and dialogue between different religious groups. First step is strengthening of social cohesion by organizing activities that helps others in knowing about different religion. In this way individual would learn to respect the differences. Along with this, dialogues between religious groups is crucial in ending extremism. These conversations would promote empathy, tolerance, understanding and respect among individuals of different groups. By engaging in open and honest discussion, people can learn more about each other's beliefs, values, and perspectives. So, social promotion of social ~~and~~ cohesion and dialogue between different religious groups is a step having potential to end extremism

likely, religious leaders should be engaged in promoting

peaceful interpretation of religious teachings. This would also help in conveying the simple interpretation of religion. Religious leaders have significant influence on their communities and can shape the narrative around religious practices and beliefs. They can encourage the people to live with peace and harmony by promoting values of peace, compassion and justice. This would help in creating more inclusive society where people would be humble enough to respect the differences, to remain within the limits of the basic teachings of their religion. In this way, ~~diaton~~ religious leaders can promote peaceful interpretation of teaching that would be instrumental in eradicating religious extremism.

To conclude, it can be said that religious extremism is a complex issue that has posed a

significant challenge to economic development of the country. It has divided society on the basis of culture, cast and caste and has created the feeling of superiority or deprivation. Along with this extreme behaviours have resulted in marginalization of groups which has promoted terrorism in the country. Besides, it has negatively impacted the economic development of the country by restricting women's participation, decline in tourism and loss of human capital. However, the issue of religious extremism can be controlled by engaging religious leaders in promoting peaceful interpretation of religious teaching and by promoting religious education. Along with this strengthening of social cohesion and dialogue between different religious groups is a step worth considering. As it is said, "Respect for other religions is not just a matter of tolerance; it is a recognition of the inherent dignity and worth of every human being."  
(Dalai Lama)