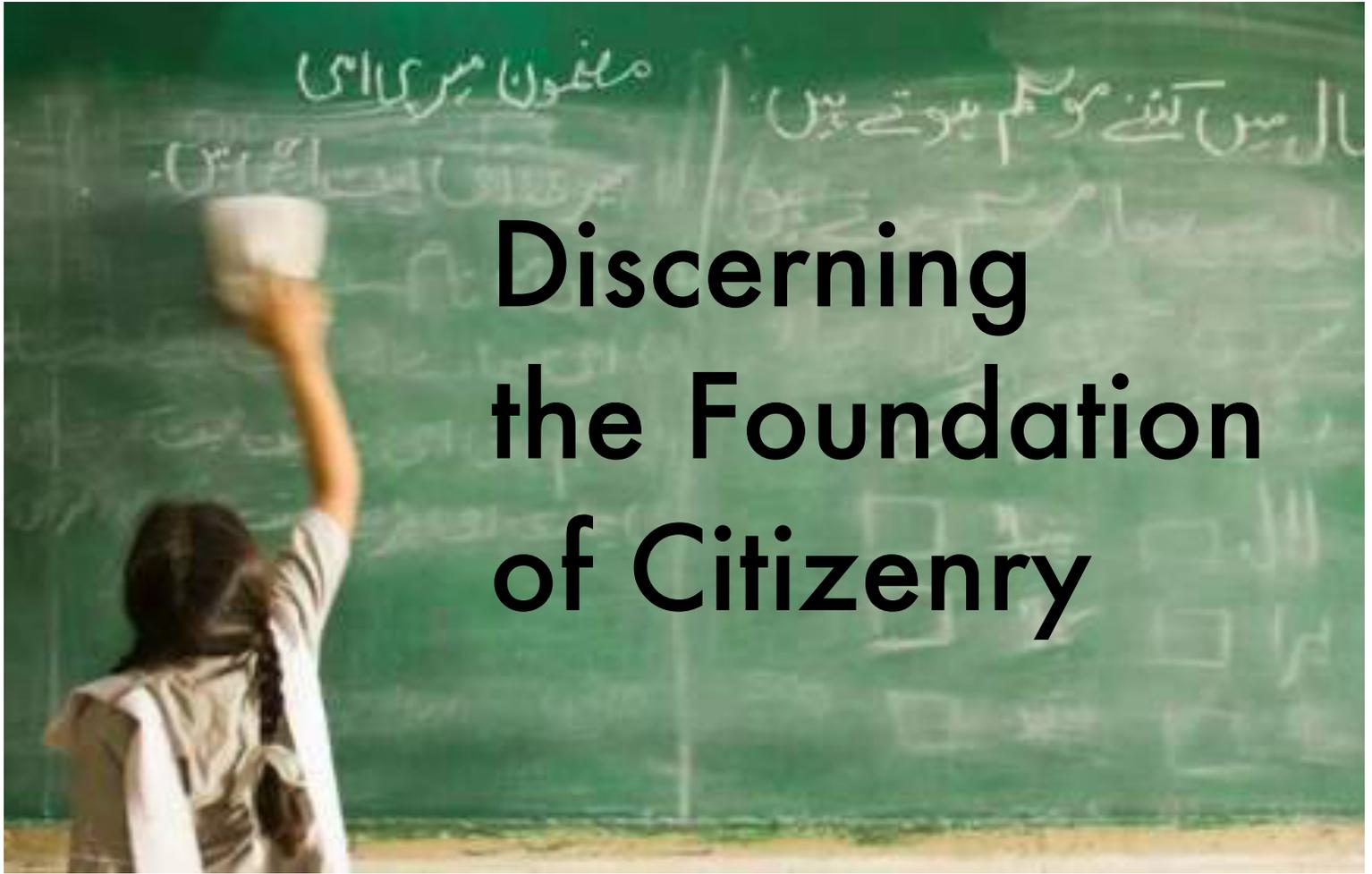


Education and Inequality



Discerning the Foundation of Citizenry

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Acronyms and abbreviations

AIOU	Allama Iqbal Open University
BA	Bachelor of Arts
BEd	Bachelor of Education
C111	Convention - Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) 1958
CoP	Constitution of Pakistan (1973)
CRC	United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
DEO	District Education Officer
EDO	Executive District Officer
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
GBHS	Government Boys' High School
GBMS	Government Boys' Middle School
GGHS	Government Girls' High School
GGMS	Government Girls' Middle School
GGPS	Government Girls' Primary School
HRCP	Human Rights Commission of Pakistan
HSSB	Higher Secondary School for Boys
HSSG	Higher Secondary School for Girls
ICCPR	International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
ICESCR	International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
IDRAC	Institute of Development Research and Corresponding Capabilities
ILO	International Labour Organisation
IT	Information Technology
KII	Key Informant Interview
KP	Khyber Pakhtunkhwa
NADRA	National Database and Registration Authority, Pakistan
NBF	National Book Foundation
NEP	National Education Policy
OHCHR	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
PCTB	Punjab Curriculum and Textbook Board
PMTA	Pakistan Minorities Teachers' Association
UDHR	Universal Declaration of Human Rights
UGC	University Grants Commission
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation

The minorities, to whichever community they may belong, will be safeguarded. Their religion, or their faith or their belief will be protected in every way possible. Their life and property will be secure. There will be no interference of any kind with their freedom of worship. They will have their protection with regard to their religion, their faith, their life, their property, their culture. They will be in all respects citizens of Pakistan without any distinction of caste or colour, religion or creed.

Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah 13 July 1947

We are starting in the days when there is no discrimination, no distinction between one community and another, no discrimination between one caste or creed and another. We are starting with this fundamental principle that we are all citizens and equal citizens of one state.

Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah
Address to the First Constituent Assembly of Pakistan 11 August 1947

No person attending any educational institution shall be required to receive religious instruction, or take part in any religious ceremony, or attend religious worship, if such instruction, ceremony or worship relates to a religion other than his own.

Constitution of Pakistan 1973, Article 22(1)

Foreword

Inequalities in various fields of life constitute some of the greatest challenges Pakistan has been facing for many years. These inequalities not only cause endless unhappiness to millions of underprivileged citizens but also cut into the country's potential for progress towards building a prosperous, just and happy society.

Education is a key area that is marked by critical inequality largely between the affluent and the indigent. There are experts who maintain that our education system produces two nations. One of them is a nation of the privileged, who are enabled to acquire the means to live in luxury and do good to the people close to them for one reason or another. The other nation comprises underprivileged people who can neither provide adequately for themselves nor render any significant service to their fellow beings. Neither of the two groups can do much good to society in general.

Besides inequality in education on the basis of economic and social status or domicile (urban or rural, relatively developed province/region or underdeveloped province/region), we find the existence of inequality on the grounds of belief. At one level faith-based inequality poses serious problems for developing commonly shared and non-controversial courses in the subject of Islamiyat and, on another level, it fosters extremely serious discrimination against non-Muslim students and teachers. It is the latter theme and its effect on the quality of education that the present study addresses.

The difference between proper and improper education has been ably brought out in the very first paragraph of the Executive Summary. Ideally, according to the authors of the study, education is one of the most effective tools to address parochialism and ethno-religious fault lines in society, particularly in a diverse and polarized country such as Pakistan. If imparted intelligently, education can help in resolving social tensions and conflicts between ideologies. But where the purpose of education is to inculcate among students a negative attitude towards the minority communities it is often justified in the name of ideology. Myths and stereotypes are maintained against the so-called minorities. It is easy to ascertain a country's will to accommodate diversity and move towards plural democracy and social justice as well as its capacity to fight extremism, instability and violence.

The study brings out the paradoxical result of Pakistan's education system, that instead of promoting understanding between the majority community on the one side and the minorities on the other side, it widens divisions between them and fosters mutual hatred and antagonism instead of promoting mutual regard and collaboration.

Armed with the requisite candidness and respect for objectivity, the authors of the study establish the fact that students as well as teachers belonging to minority communities are victims of various forms of discrimination. And they are deeply conscious of this discrimination, may be in an exaggerated form in some places. It is wrong to presume that it is only minorities that bear the disastrous results of inequality/discrimination in education. Of course, they are the ones that are directly affected by discriminatory policies, flawed choice of curriculum content and bias in selection of teachers but eventually the whole society has to bear an incalculable cost.

I may take the liberty of recalling what once happened in Lahore. The bosses of public education found that a number of non-Muslim teachers serving in different high schools were due to be promoted as headmasters. This prospect was totally unwelcome to somebody in authority. Somehow it was decided to transfer these senior teachers to a single school where they were supposed to take evening classes. Only a small number of pupils were available to join these evening classes. It is easy to calculate the harm resulting from a single act of wanton discrimination. The teachers concerned were deprived of their right to promotion, a good number of students were deprived of receiving instruction from highly experienced teachers, and the quality of learning acquired by the high school students was lower than the level that was possible to attain. Surely a case of national loss.

The study rightly laments the absence of action to tackle the issues that are widely recognised and which are completely indefensible. The study is limited to the Punjab province but one hopes it will be possible for the Institute of Development Research and Corresponding Responsibilities (IDRAC) or some other similarly inspired organizations to carry out comparable studies all over other parts of the country.

The Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP) is happy that it was able to join IDRAC in conducting this valuable study. It was a learning experience HRCP treasures.

I A Rehman
March 2019, Lahore

Executive summary

Ideally, education is one of the most effective tools to address parochialism and ethno-religious fault lines in society, particularly in a diverse and polarised country such as Pakistan. If imparted intelligently, it can help in transforming tense relationships and conflicting identities. Where it concerns nurturing behaviours towards or against a community, the process also confers ideological support. Myths and stereotypes maintained against the so-called minorities speak volumes about a country's will to accommodate diversity and inclusivity; in other words, towards plural democracy and social justice. On the other hand, it also suggests where and what is wrong in handling extremism, instability and violence.

Discrimination and inequality are a deeply entrenched malaise in our society. Education is the most significant arena to be investigated from this perspective. For all intents and purposes, it builds and sustains children's attitudes for the rest of their lives. Potentially, the outlooks and impressions picked up through this process cast their impact in all arenas of social life. Regrettably, education in Pakistan largely sharpens the existing divisions mainly around religious lines, supplementing the so-called ideology of Pakistan.

Discriminated against in all respects and every aspect, the life of non-Muslims students and teachers is miserable. In the Punjab, from where the data was collected, an alarming 60% of non-Muslim students experience discrimination or feel they are being discriminated against and disrespected. About 70% of the teachers endure exclusion just because they do not happen to be Muslims. As many as 72% of the parents report their children to be ill-treated in schools/colleges for being Christians or Hindus or some other faith. Their torments and tribulations are described here in the form of case studies, key informant interviews and focus group discussions.

The education and academic environments lack the characteristics of objectivity, impartiality and critical cum analytical thinking. Scientific and empirical principles of thought and enquiry, mainly in the social arena, are almost absent. Islamic content has crept overwhelmingly across all social science subjects that affect teachers' as well as students' behaviours and thinking. Due to the non-recruitment of the necessary teachers, as well as in-built bias and impracticality, non-Muslim students are almost compelled to study Islamiyat. Neither non-Muslim teachers nor students are 'reasonably accommodated' while studying or teaching religion.

Unfortunately, undermining every other identity, faith has become the only denominator of one's existence. Other ethnic, linguistic and cultural identities that are an integral part of Pakistan's composition are rarely acknowledged or respected. Even one's professional distinction or eminence is subordinated to one's faith. Humanist values of respect, equality and empathy rarely feature in the academic environment or teachers' orations. Lessons on equality, fraternity, interfaith harmony, social justice and citizenship fall short of dissemination in academic curricula. Sometimes, Muslim students are found to be confusing 'the west' with the local Christians and India with the local Hindus and Sikhs. Non-Muslims are widely perceived to be the enemies of Islam by Muslims students and Muslim teachers.

Ceremonies and festivals of non-Muslim communities are never considered by the academic system. Sometimes they coincide with unavoidable academic events and even with in-house assessments or final exams. Almost all the students, parents, and some of the teachers, express their discontent over the aberration. To reasonably accommodate differences, if a national holiday cannot be declared, community-specific arrangements need to be made. Periodic exams and teachers' duties could be appropriately scheduled to avoid coinciding with their annual festivities.

Influencing and proselytizing non-Muslim teachers and non-Muslim students to embrace Islam seems to have become a grand mission. It is difficult to find a non-Muslim student or teacher who has not encountered that particular assault. Teachers' attitudes towards non-Muslim students clearly influences the attitude of Muslim students towards their fellow students. Faith is rarely perceived as one's personal affair.

Disproportionate to their population and quota, the number of non-Muslim teachers is very low at all levels, which itself is a statement of formal and non-formal discrimination in recruitment processes. The constitutional provision barring non-Muslims from holding any position of power and influence does not include teaching but it directly affects the attitudes and preferences of recruitment panels as teaching is generally perceived to be a position of power and influence. Although not analysed in this study, it is obvious that curriculum and methodology for teacher training needs a thorough revision and improvement to transform it along modern lines of teaching and learning. Teachers' refreshers and students' awareness sessions need to be organised on a regular basis.

There is no specialised body to monitor discrimination, receive complaints and reports, redress grievances and compensate losses, although there is clearly a need for one. Most of the victims of discrimination (80%) reported they had not submitted an application to the courts or even to the district ombudsman. However, whenever a student or teacher did communicate an act of discrimination to the higher authority within the system, in most cases he or she was heard and an effort was made to address the problem. Sadly, the system does not encourage non-Muslim students and teachers to lodge complaints even though such measures are necessary.

Chapter 1: Introduction and methodology

Unequal treatment and faith-based discrimination are recurrently observed and reported from multiple arenas of life in Pakistan. Education is one of the most significant areas to be investigated from this angle. It is a process that most probably builds and sustains certain attitudes for the rest of one's life. And if it nurtures behaviour towards or against a community, the process provides them with ideological backing as well. The measures and dispositions maintained against minorities speak volumes about a country's polity and stance towards diversity and inclusiveness; in other words, towards plural democracy and social justice. Alternatively, it opens up an avenue into the menace of extremism, instability and polarisation at large.

Undoubtedly, education policy, curriculum and teacher/student behaviour induce an environment of acceptability and inclusion or rejection and exclusion, casting ripples across the societal plateau. A reasonable amount of work has been produced on the biased, exclusionary and myopic curriculum offered from elementary to intermediate in public schools and colleges of Pakistan. However, relatively limited work has been done on the study of teachers' and students' behaviour and the belligerent milieu it generates against the Christian, Sikh, Hindu and Ahmadiyya communities. In addition to several other factors, the mirror effect of text and teachers' attitudes, and other way round, cements pupils' behaviour towards one another and towards minorities. It is, therefore, essential to look at the overall academic environment from a faith-based perspective. Listening to the victims, i.e. the non-Muslim students, carries immense importance. To know who says what about whom from a religious denominator, as well as how it affects students, teachers and parents, also prescribes the much-desired improvement in children's learning environment. In effect, there is a lot to work to be done beyond addressing the biased textbooks.

Discrimination may range from admissions, teachers' behaviour and marking, to peer group exclusion and extra-curricular activities. The broader Muslim society happens to be biased against the non-Muslims and the same attitudes proliferate in our schools and colleges. The psycho-social inferiority it inflicts upon minority students is poorly documented. A minority student may suffer from multiple discriminations if she or he happens to be a non-Muslim, differently abled, a female, and from a very poor background. Non-Muslim teachers may face institutionalized discrimination, hateful attitudes and decisions which obstruct their professional growth and progress.

This study is an effort to document direct discrimination quantitatively and qualitatively. Although difficult to study, indirect discrimination is nevertheless equally important and this work may suggest certain indicators of this aspect.

Methodology

To collect evidence on the scale and patterns of discrimination, the Institute of Development Research and Corresponding Capabilities (IDRAC), in collaboration with the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP), employed both qualitative and quantitative methods. IDRAC devised an elaborate plan to study discrimination against minority students and teachers at the primary and secondary level in five selected districts in Punjab.

To start with, IDRAC identified the secondary and higher secondary schools/colleges close to the vicinity of non-Muslim communities in Bahawalpur, Multan, Khanewal, Nankana Sahib and Gujranwala. District Multan was not at first part of the study. However, at a later stage, it was added to include small minority communities to add to the voice of religious minorities in the study. Therefore, without increasing the sample size, Multan and Bahawalpur districts were broken down by half. To collect quantitative evidence, close to 50 structured questionnaires were filled out in Gujranwala, Khanewal and Nankana Sahib, and at least 25 questionnaires were filled-out from Multan and Bahawalpur. All the questionnaires were collected from the consenting school and college students in each district. Out of the said sample, exactly half the questionnaires (100) were completed by non-Muslim boys and the remaining half (100) by girls. In addition, about 23 questionnaires were filled in by male non-Muslim teachers and 17 by female non-Muslim teachers out of the sample size of 40 teachers. Similarly, around 18 questionnaires from non-Muslim fathers, 21 from non-Muslim mothers and one from a guardian were collected out of the sample size of 40. In total, 280 questionnaires were completed – 200 from the students and 80 questionnaires (40 each from non-Muslim parents and non-Muslim teachers to take into account the teachers' and parents' opinions in this regard).

To accumulate qualitative evidence accurately, two Focus Group Discussions (FGDs), one each in Multan and Bahawalpur and four FGDs, i.e., one each in Gujranwala, Khanewal and Nankana Sahib were organised in select communities, encouraging participants to discuss and themselves analyse the issue of discrimination against their children. In all, 16 FGDs were organised. For a more in-depth exercise, IDRAC managed to conduct 20 Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) with parents, teachers and community leaders or expert representatives of non-Muslims as well as some education

authority/administrators. Simultaneously, IDRAC collected a total of 24 case studies of minority students and teachers (stories of the worst forms of discrimination) from all five districts. These combinations of tools enabled IDRAC to collate generalizable data on the nature and patterns of discrimination in Punjab.

Sampling of the data collected

Non-Muslim Students Covered Per District		
	Students Interviewed	Percent
Bahawalpur	25	12
Gujranwala	51	26
Khanewal	43	22
Multan	33	16
Nankana Sahib	48	24
Total	200	100

Non-Muslim Parents Covered Per District		
	Parents Interviewed	Percent
Bahawalpur	4	10
Khanewal	8	20
Nankana Sahib	10	25
Gujranwala	10	25
Multan	8	20
Total	40	100

Non-Muslim Teachers Covered Per District		
	Teachers Interviewed	Percent
Bahawalpur	4	10
Khanewal	9	22.5
Nankana Sahib	8	20
Gujranwala	10	25
Multan	9	22.5
Total	40	100

Gender Wise Non-Muslim Students		
	Male/Female Interviewed	Percent
Male	100	50
Female	100	50
Total	200	100

Gender Wise Non-Muslim Parents		
	Male/Female Interviewed	Percent
Male	19	48
Female	21	52
Total	40	100

Gender Wise Non-Muslim Teachers		
	Male/Female Interviewed	Percent
Male	23	57.5
Female	17	42.5
Total	40	100

Relations of Non-Muslim Students		
	Father/Mother Interviewed	Percent
Father	18	45
Mother	21	53
Guardian	1	2
Total	40	100

Non-Muslim Students Covered by the Level of Institution		
	School/College Interviewed	Percent
School	122	61
College	78	39
Total	200	100

Non-Muslim Parents Interviewed by Level of Students' Institutions		
	School/College Interviewed	Percent
School	24	60
College	10	25
Both School and College	6	15
Total	40	100

Non-Muslim Teachers by Level		
	School/College Interviewed	Percent
School	36	90
College	4	10
Total	40	100

Non-Muslim Students Covered by Minority Group

	Students Interviewed	Percent
Christian	145	72
Hindu	51	25
Ahmadi	3	2
Sikh	1	1
Total	200	100

Non-Muslim Parents Covered by Minority Group

	Parents Interviewed	Percent
Christian	29	72.5
Hindu	11	27.5
Ahmadi	-	-
Bahai	-	-
Sikh	-	-
Total	40	100

Non-Muslim Teachers Covered by Minority Group

	Teachers Interviewed	Percent
Christian	29	73
Hindu	9	23
Ahmadi	1	2
Bahai	-	-
Sikh	-	-
No response	1	2
Total	40	100

Non-Muslim Students Covered by the School/College Category

	Frequency	Percent
GGMS	13	7
GBMS	4	2
GGHS	52	26
GBHS	36	18
HSSB	9	4
HSSG	13	6
Government College for Boys	48	24
Government College for Girls	25	13
Total	200	100

Age of Teachers		
	Teachers Interviewed	Percent
< 25	1	2.5
26-30	4	10
31-35	10	25
36-40	11	27.5
40>	14	35
Total	40	100

Rationale for selection of districts and province

According to the population census of 1998, religious minorities are close to 3.73%. Hindus constitute 1.60%, Christians 1.59%, Ahmadiyya (Qadianis) 0.22%, scheduled castes 0.25%, while others i.e. Bahais, Sikhs and Parsis (Zoroastrians) 0.07%. Although the summary results of Pakistan's most recent population census (2017) are now public, statistics of the numbers of religious minorities are still awaited.

Punjab accommodates the largest diversity and concentration of non-Muslims, particularly Christians, in Pakistan. The Christian, Sikh, Bahai and Ahmadi communities mainly live in the Punjab (Ahmadis do not consider themselves non-Muslims). The province is too large (comprising 36 districts) to collect evidence from all its areas, therefore IDRAC collected data from only the select five districts as indicated above.

Bahawalpur and Multan maintain a small but significant Hindu population while the same is true for Christians in Khanewal, in the Saraiki region of the Punjab. Nankana Sahib is the birthplace of the founding father of Sikh dharma, Guru Nanak, and is the heart of the Sikh population. After Lahore, the largest Christian minority resides in Gujranwala. IDRAC did not intentionally ignore or undermine other, but equally important, non-Muslim identities like the Bahai, Ahmadiyya and Parsi (Zoroastrian) communities. Bahais are not appropriately represented, the Parsi population is too sparse to be easily identified, while the Ahmadis are too fearful and reluctant to expose their vulnerability without a sustained effort. However, a reasonable effort was made to collect their opinions and experiences as well.

Chapter 2: Perspectives and problems with respect to equality and non-discrimination

Potentially, education is the very prism suggesting what is wrong, and where and how we can address the broader chasms and fault lines in our social fabric. At the same time, if directed otherwise, the very process can pose massive challenges for peace, plurality, inclusiveness and diversity. Depending on its content and contours, it can bridge or widen the societal rifts and breaches. It can also, if employed wisely, transform and even revolutionise a society. Along with building up their rational and scientific faculties, education is capable of imparting empathetic and humanist attitudes to the students in each generation. Unfortunately, education in Pakistan, or at least the social sciences, have been instrumentalised to serve parochial nationalist and political aims.

General Zia-ul-Haq's regime (1977-1988) changed the entire outlook and spirit of education, to Islamise the whole of society. Part of that was done against the backdrop of America's war against the former Soviet Union in Afghanistan and Pakistan was its frontline ally. In Zia-ul-Haq's own words: "Our Curriculum must ensure that our children are brought up educated as good Pakistanis and good Muslims. They must imbibe the lofty ideals and principles of Islam." Quoting him again, "The highest priority would be given to the revision of the curricula with a view to reorganising the entire content around Islamic thought and giving education an ideological orientation so that Islamic ideology permeates the thinking of the younger generation and helps them with the necessary conviction and ability to refashion society according to Islamic tenets".

A directive issued by the University Grants Commission (UGC) to the textbook authors in the early 1980s, very clearly states that: "To demonstrate that the basis of Pakistan is not to be founded in racial, linguistic, or geographical factors, but, rather, in the shared experience of a common religion. To get students to know and appreciate the ideology of Pakistan, and to popularise it with slogans. To guide students towards the ultimate goal of Pakistan – the creation of a completely Islamised State".

It is no surprise that a number of educated people in the process of education happen to be far more parochial or prejudiced than the non-literate. In this context, the cautionary words of Katarina Tomasevsky (special rapporteur on the right to education) are relevant: "...more importantly, retrospective studies of genocide and inter-ethnic or inter-religious warfare have often identified school textbooks as a factor leading to warfare or genocide. Failure to address such issues can thus be deadly." In case of Pakistan, apart from the widening of societal rifts, polarisation and sectarianism, it is the non-Muslim minority that suffers the most. Nevertheless, one thing is certain: the education reform process can only be successful if human rights and the principles of equality and non-discrimination are underlined in the social science curricula and teachers are intensively oriented towards adopting and imparting those principles.

Exclusion, discrimination and victimisation on any social, linguistic, cultural, racial or religious grounds is prohibited in international human rights law and the principles of equality and non-discrimination. To look at the depth and the magnitude of the problem in the following chapter, it is appropriate to make an a-priori reference to the human rights provisions of equality and non-discrimination.

'Education reforms process can only be successful if human rights and the principles of equality and non-discrimination are underlined in the social science curricula.'

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) delineates very clearly that "Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It shall promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial or religious groups, and shall further the activities of the United Nations for the maintenance of peace" (Article 26).

Discrimination, as defined by UNESCO's Convention against Discrimination in Education (1960), includes "any distinction, exclusion, limitation or preference which, being based on race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, economic condition or birth, has the purpose or effect of nullifying or impairing equality of treatment in education and in particular: of depriving any person or group of persons of access to education of any type or at any level; of limiting any person or group of persons to education of an inferior standard; of inflicting on any person or group of persons conditions which are incompatible with the dignity of man".

To prevent and eliminate discrimination, it also binds States Parties to: "abrogate any statutory provisions and any administrative instructions and to discontinue any administrative practices which involve discrimination in education; ensure, by legislation where necessary, that there is no discrimination in the admission of pupils to educational institutions; not to allow any differences of treatment by the public authorities between nationals, except on the basis of merit or need...; not

to allow, in any form of assistance granted by the public authorities to educational institutions, any restrictions or preference based solely on the ground that pupils belong to a particular group”.

Reinforcing the obligation further, Article 2 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) states: State parties shall respect and ensure education to... “each child within their jurisdiction without discrimination of any kind, irrespective of the child's or his or her parent's or legal guardian's race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national, ethnic or social origin, property, disability, birth or other status.” Article 29 (1) of the same Convention makes it very clear that the education of the child shall be directed to “The development of the child’s personality, talents and mental and physical abilities to their fullest potential; The development of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, and for the principles enshrined in the UN Charter; the development of respect for the child's parents, his or her own cultural identity, language and values for the national values of the country in which the child is living, the country from which he or she may originate and for civilizations different from his or her own; the preparation of the child for responsible life in a free society, in the spirit of understanding, peace, tolerance, equality of sexes, and friendship among all peoples, ethnic, national and religious groups and persons of indigenous origin.”

Similarly, Article 26 of ICCPR emphasises, “All persons are equal before the law and are entitled without any discrimination to the equal protection of the law. In this respect, the law shall prohibit any discrimination and guarantee to all persons equal and effective protection against discrimination”.

Non-discrimination and equality go side by side. Without abrogating discrimination, ensuring equality is impossible. According to the Declaration of the Principles on Equality, “The right to equality is the right of all human beings to be equal in dignity, to be treated with respect and consideration and to participate on an equal basis with others in any area of economic, social, political, cultural or civil life. All human beings are equal before the law and have the right to equal protection and benefit of the law.” The law of equality offers protection from discrimination in “the exercise of public functions, employment, education, provision of goods and services.”

According to the National Action Plan, material promoting hate and extremism is considered a crime under the Anti-Terrorism Act.

The equality principles also prohibit discrimination when it: “causes or perpetuates systemic disadvantage; undermines human dignity or adversely affects the equal enjoyment of a person’s rights and freedoms in a serious manner that is comparable to discrimination” on the prohibited denominators as mentioned above. The same Declaration identifies certain acts and attitudes as ‘victimisation’ when “a person subjects another person to a detriment because that other person has, or intends to make, a complaint or an allegation of discrimination; give evidence or information in connection with a complaint of discrimination; or bring proceedings or do anything else under or by reference to the anti-discrimination law”. It also needs to be noted that some laws assume victimisation as a form of ‘discrimination’ while others take it as a distinct form of prohibited conduct apart from discrimination.

To eradicate extremism, violence and religious persecution, Pakistan’s National Action Plan (2014) emphasises that: “the material promoting hate and extremism will be considered crime under Anti-Terrorism Act and strict action would be taken against those who will publish and disseminate such material and; effective steps would be taken to stop religious persecution.” In a similar standpoint in Article 20, the Constitution of Pakistan also guarantees that “Every citizen shall have the right to profess, practice and propagate his religion.”¹

First and foremost, it is enshrined in the Constitution of Pakistan (CoP)1973 that “No person attending any educational institution shall be required to receive religious instruction, or take part in any religious ceremony, or attend religious worship, if such instruction, ceremony or worship relates to a religion other than his own (Article 22-1).”

In violation of national legislative provisions and international obligations (mostly ratified by the State of Pakistan), attitudes of inequality and discrimination, in certain cases quite abysmal and appalling, are commonly observed in our school and college environment. It is an established fact that history, Islamiyat, Pakistan studies, Urdu and English language/literature in Grades I–XII preach and promote the supremacy of Islam and Islamic glory. To other religions and cultures, their views are exclusionary and myopic. Assumingly, there is immense give and take between the text, curricular instruction for teachers and the teachers’ behaviour. Supplementary teaching instructions usually advise teachers to highlight the Islamic spirit of the lessons, but social science teachers particularly prove to be discriminatory and derogatory towards non-Muslims.

¹ <https://www.dawn.com/news/1395999>

Textbook-driven bigotry and predispositions

Although textbook analysis is not part of this study, it appears that, apart from parental and clerical influence, much of the teachers' and students' behaviour is drawn from the textual content itself. While explaining an essay, a poem or story, teachers' supplementary interpretation tends to be influenced by his/her own religious biases. A quick look at the context will help the reader comprehend the prejudices identified in this study.

Blatantly undermining Pakistan's multi-cultural, multi-lingual and multi-religious society, social science textbooks, especially Pakistan studies and Islamiyat, exclusively instil and uphold the Islamic identity of Pakistan and Islamic ideology of Pakistan. The country's integrity is described as tantamount to the integrity of Islam. To the exclusion of all other religious values and cultures, only Islamic values and Muslim nationalist aspirations are promoted. In other words, Islamic indoctrination appears to be the sole purpose of social science subjects. While teaching ethics (optional subject for non-Muslims in place of Islamiyat) or comparing religions, the whole purpose is not to promote common humanity but to prove Islamic superiority. Deplorably enough, lessons on peaceful co-existence, empathy, tolerance, equality and human rights are almost absent.

For instance, the analysis of the compulsory integrated curriculum of the First-Grade students i.e., *Meri Kitab* (My Book) reveals that 7 of the 16 chapters contain Islamic orations. Similarly, an examination of the Punjab Textbook Board's compulsory Urdu language texts up to Grade 10 shows that 96 essays, stories and poems from a total of 362 heavily communicate Islamic substance. No mention of Pakistan's other religions and cultures is made. The Hindus are portrayed as cunning, unjust, irrational, cruel, backward, superstitious and caste-driven while Islam is portrayed as a logical, just, peaceful and natural faith.

Lessons on peaceful co-existence, empathy, tolerance, equality and human rights are almost absent from the curriculum.

With the implementation of the National Curriculum Policy 2006, and National Textbooks and Learning Materials Policy 2007, efforts are underway to transform the social science curriculum on progressive lines with some success, but the process in general remains controversial and procrastinated. However, the eventual outcome is relatively encouraging.

For instance, the National Book Foundation (Islamabad) published an essay "The Role of Minorities in the Creation of Pakistan" in its History VIII Book in 2014. Similarly, the Punjab Curriculum and Textbook Board (PCTB), Lahore has published "The Role of Minorities in the Establishment of Pakistan" in History VIII Book, 2015. The essay '*Ravadar*' (Respect for other identities) in Islamiyat's Textbook V advises children to respect Christianity and other faiths. Also, it has a whole essay on the Prophet Jesus Christ. The province of Sindh has also taken some progressive initiatives but its details are out of the scope of this study. Such contents supposed to promote equal citizenry and peaceful coexistence.

Education and equal citizenship of minorities

The notion of inclusive citizenship, civic responsibilities of a citizen and citizenry rights and equalities rarely feature in our textbooks or class lectures. Overtly or otherwise, our teachers and the textbooks label non-Muslim communities as unpatriotic and inferior citizens. Emphasis on minority rights and their presence and contribution in different sectors is avoided. In young minds, they further strengthen the idea of non-Muslims as inferior and untrustworthy citizens. Combined with the madrasa and clerical influence in society, an apartheid-like citizenship becomes inevitable for non-Muslim communities.

Equal citizenship for all, despite being stressed and asserted by Muhammad Ali Jinnah, and included in the Constitution of Pakistan (CoP), is rarely advocated by the textbooks. Students and teachers are observed clearly undermining the minorities' right to equal citizenship and equal opportunity. Citizenship education is an essential aspect, yet hardly appears anywhere in the elementary and higher secondary education and classroom instructions. Alongside that, the teaching and learning environment and attitudes are devoid of citizenry norms. Even the CoP prohibits non-Muslim citizens from becoming head of state and it is almost impossible for them to become a prime minister, which only reinforces students' and teachers' perception of non-Muslims as unequal citizens of the country. The High Court of Islamabad recently issued a ruling that, before assuming a position of power and influence in the civil and military bureaucracy, it is mandatory for a citizen to declare his or her faith. The ruling refers specifically to Ahmadis being barred from holding a position of power and influence, but that might potentially extend to the minorities and even certain sects of Islam.

As assessed in *Connecting Dots* (2011), only about 60% of the public school students could identify religious minorities as equal citizens of the country. Many of them were even sceptical of the role of religious minorities in the development of Pakistan. Mirroring the students' opinion, a little over half the public school teachers had reservations about equal citizenry

for religious minorities. They even had doubts that they were 'good citizens' of the country. It is very likely that both the teachers and the students' attitudes are influenced by the textual opinions of the non-Muslims and ignore their role in the making and development of Pakistan.

Discrimination and marginalisation are among the reasons that minorities are left behind in education. According to the Population Census of 1998, a paltry 11% Christians and 20% Hindus are identified as literate. The following chapter illustrates the entrenched biases and the humiliating atmosphere cultivated for non-Muslims in our schools and colleges. Non-Muslim students and teachers, as well as parents and community representatives, share their own and their children's first-hand experiences and interactions with reference to studies and schooling. As recounted by them, the comments and statements of the Muslim students and teachers amply demonstrate the widespread prejudice and exclusionary behaviour dominating our learning environment.

Chapter 3: Experiencing discrimination in educational life

Non-Muslim students and teachers are overwhelmingly believed to be ‘unequal others’ but all of them are not believed to be equally unequal. Therefore, it is also helpful to have an idea of the subtle differences in discrimination with regard to different communities. To address the problem effectively, it is relevant to consider the historical, ideological or theological ‘causes’ and ‘justifications’ put forward overtly or covertly by the state and/or wider society to ‘justify’ the unjust treatments and behaviour towards different non-Muslim groups.

Of all non-Muslims, the Ahmadiyya community suffers the most from discrimination, oppression, exclusion and ‘otherisation’. In other words, institutionalised exclusion is in process against them. Skipping the history and heated theological controversies of admitting or rejecting them as part of the Muslim community, they were officially declared as non-Muslims in Pakistan in 1974, as a result of the violent religious movements and lobbying that continued from 1952 to 1973. Contrary to the intention of accommodating them a place (of citizenry) as a non-Muslim community, aggression and hostility against them has instead deepened and proliferated. After that, the outright rejection of a group people had and has the force of law behind it, almost amounting to apartheid.

Of all non-Muslims, the Ahmadiyya community suffers the most from discrimination, oppression, exclusion and ‘otherisation’.

Widely believed to be ‘apostates and deniers of the finality of the prophethood’, their isolation and oppression is on the increase. The blasphemy laws (298-B and 298-C in particular) have evolved and become stronger since 1986, institutionalising their unequal status and ill treatment. The socio-economic boycott and their removal from or denial of influential political, civil, military, bureaucratic and judicial positions is somehow officially sanctioned. In some of the larger cities, even shopkeepers affix posters saying “Qadianis, who call themselves Ahmadis, are non-Muslims and blasphemous, therefore, any business deal with them is haram in sharia. When a couple of shopkeepers were arrested for that, a large protest erupted the following day. Recently another tough ruling was issued by the Islamabad High Court compelling them to declare their faith before assuming or expressing an interest in occupying a position of power and influence. Although the ruling is Ahmadi-specific, it may further disadvantage other minority communities as well. Obviously, teaching is not part of that, but religious influence and a tacit and tangible tendencies ‘justify’ their segregation in the academic institutions as well. To many, teaching is also a position of exercising power and influencing young minds.

After the Ahmadiyya community, Hindus are the second most discriminated people in Pakistan. Historically, Hindus and Muslims have much in common and have lived side by side for centuries. Almost as many Muslims live in India as in Pakistan. The two-nation theory emerged during the struggle to seek identity and autonomy of the Muslim minority (1916-1946) in the then undivided India. But post-partition (1947) and post-cessation of East Pakistan, despite the tiny population of Hindus left behind, the idea has been hammered home to students and teachers that Hindus and Muslims are two separate faiths and civilisations living side by side but worlds apart in spirit and practices; that Hindus are infidel polytheists venerating myths and idols; that no prophet was sent to them and no book was revealed to put them on the rights path and what they profess is all man-made myths and fabrications. They revere the cow as their *maata* (mother), adore its excreta, burn their dead, immolate (*satti*) widows and, most importantly, are potentially disloyal to this country.

At times, certain acts and incidences of violence against Muslims in India provoke reaction and hostility against the local Hindus, as was observed in the Muslim massacre in Gujrat (2002) and the demolition of Babri Mosque (1992). Historical and geo-political tensions and the rising Hindutva extremism in India is often reduced to religious enmity and alienation. Also, the simmering concern for Kashmir and Kashmiris supplements antagonism against India that is, at times, wrongly directed towards native Hindus. Their poverty and engagement of many a Hindu in lowly jobs, mainly in the Punjab, diffuses religious discrimination with the class-based disaffection.

Loosely speaking, Christians fall into the third level of discrimination. Ahl-i-kitab and Din-i-Ibrahimi ‘People of the book’, ‘Abrahamic faith’ and theological clichés are freely quoted as an argument for their equality and fraternity with the Muslim *ummah*. The reality is often very different. True, they are discriminated against a little less, so to speak, but equality is usually conditional upon theo-political qualifiers. Directly or indirectly, students and teachers are convinced that Islam is the ultimate and only true message of God. The Christian sacred book, the Holy Bible, has been amended or distorted overtime. They conflate the divinity of God with the divinity of Jesus Christ and esteemed Mary (*Maryam Muqqadisa*). Better they be diverted to the ‘right path’. Every now and then, they are perceived to be the stooge of western (Christian) nations. Given the circumstances, retaliation and blaming them for the Euro-American policies has also been witnessed, say, in reaction to the post-September 11 (2001) American led war on terror and the 1990 Gulf War.

Finally, the Sikhs too are treated unequally, though grievances against them are not theologically-based. In the subject of History and Pakistan Studies at higher secondary and intermediate level, one reference is especially made without exception that, immediately after Independence (August 14, 1947) Hindu and Sikh balvai (rioters) massacred migrating Muslims and raped innocent women, overshadowing the sad truth that both sides were engaged in the said atrocities and bloodshed. Not in texts but at the societal level, the Sikhs' appearance and their rituals are also criticised to proclaim that Muslims are the only 'rational and true believers'. Jokes and parables about Sikh individuals are circulated regularly. Nonetheless, relatively harmonious relations between the Sikhs and the Muslims, mainly in the Punjab, must also be acknowledged. Sikh religious pilgrims are welcomed almost every year and appropriate security is ensured by the government. Sometimes, it is also acknowledged that scores of *abyaat* (couplets) of Baba Farid (a venerated Muslim sufi poet of the 12th century) are part of the Garanth Sahib.

To sum up, nothing matches the stories told by the victims themselves. The so-called 'justifications' described above can be measured against the stories, comments, statements and satires quoted by the non-Muslim students and teachers. Their experiences have been sequenced below, with the levels of discrimination, and a discursive interpretation at the end.

The ordeals of Ahmadiyya students and teachers

A teacher who had to seek asylum abroad

R. A. Butt is an Ahmadi by faith. Residing in Qala Rai Singh, Gujranwala. A couple of years ago, he was appointed as a primary school teacher. In his words:

Before I began teaching, mullahs of the local area made an announcement over the loudspeaker that 'an Ahmadi teacher has arrived here to teach our children. Do not send them to school. He will turn them apostate'. For a few days, no child turned up. But when the children began to come, mullahs pounced upon them and whisked all the children out of the school yard. 'He will spoil your faith,' the mullahs shouted.

Hearing of the incident, the EDO Education of the district invited me to explain the situation. Sympathising and fearing a risk, he transferred me to another school in Tatley Wali, Gujranwala. Over there, the same and some other mullahs approached the respective *numberdar* (local leader) and pressured him to evict me from the school. They launched a whole campaign against me over there too. The numberdar ignored their concerns and children kept attending the school. But I then began receiving life threats. One day, when I was going to school, someone shot me from a hideout, tearing my shoulder apart. Fortunately, I survived. Now, there was no way out but to resign".

He later sought asylum and now lives in the UK.

A shining student under pressure

This is a story from Muzaffarabad (Azad Jammu and Kashmir) shared by Mr K. Ahmad, an advocate living and working in Rawalpindi:

The daughters of I. Ahmad are my real nieces. Back in 2013 one of my nieces was in 7th and the other was in 8th Grade in Kulala Girls' High School, Kulala Bral (Pallandri, AJK). The younger one stood first in her 7th Grade final exams and was just short of 10–12 marks from the total. Her record of securing such high marks has yet not been beaten in the school. Soon the village people came to know that the girl who stood first is the daughter of an Ahmadi man. The village people gathered together and put up banners against the girl. Some of them went to the headmistress and insisted she should expel the girl from her school. The following day when the girl – and her sister – went to school, her headmistress said, 'Go back home; you need not come to school'. When I came to know, I got the headmistress's cell from someone and called her up. 'I am going to report this to the EDO and to higher authorities,' I said. 'I know the girls are very competent but the village fellows compelled me to take a decision, which is unfair, but I am helpless,' said the headmistress. I said, 'I will write against you and take action'.

In the evening, the headmistress gave me a call and said, 'the only thing I can do is to get myself transferred, nothing else'. 'Give me some time and let me think it over', she added. After two days, she called my nieces back to school and asked them to take their classes. But after some time, she managed to get herself

transferred to some other school. People kept complaining to the new headmistress as well but she did not bother.

A superb teacher who had to leave his school

The story was also shared by Mr K. Ahmed (as above):

Coming from the Ahmadiyya faith, Master N. Ahmad used to teach in the Government Middle School, Tarbakla, Paintal (AJK). By the end of 2009, about 70-75 people from neighbouring houses – including some of the local influential people – organised a meeting against the teacher, his family and other members of the Ahmadiyya community. They agreed to socially boycott the whole community including the said teacher. Also, they decided that whosoever maintained contact with them would have to pay a fine of Rs. 25,000.

Once the decision was made, they further mounted pressure on Master N. Ahmad to quit the school. He was a talented and dedicated teacher. Students loved him a lot and as a teacher he was quite well-known. Eventually he had to resign. He later left his hometown, sold his property, and migrated to Kotli.

Likewise, another teacher from the same school and the same area, Mr A. Farooq, had to resign prematurely, following local protests and propaganda, around a decade earlier. In that case, even his own fellow teachers turned against him.

The persecution of schoolchildren, teachers and parents in Nankana

The story was described by the head of the press unit, Jamaat Ahmadiyya:

R. M. Akmal is a school teacher in Hakamwala, district Nankana. Being Ahmadi by faith, he has been facing threats and humiliation since his appointment in 2013. The same year, in the month of Ramzan, local clerics announced over the mosque loudspeakers that people should sever all social ties with him because he was a Mirzai (Ahmadi) and maintaining any relationships with him and his family were haram. 'Even an exchange of greetings with them was disapproved in Islam,' they emphasised. He received life threats, directly and indirectly. Fearful, he disappeared from his job and sought refuge somewhere else, but returned after a few weeks.

In Nankana Sahib, most of the shops read, 'entrance for Qadianis (Ahmadis) is prohibited'.

One dark night, a couple of men barged into his house and threatened to kill him and his family. They warned them to quit the Ahmadiyya faith or wait for a follow-up visit. Robbing them of some cash and jewellery, they left the house. In the face of severe hostility, Mr. Akmal moved to Nankana city. Over there, when the administration of his son's school came to know of his identity, they told him either to quit his faith or enrol his son in some other school. He chose the latter but things for him, his son and his family are still not very different.

In Nankana Sahib, most of the shops read, 'entrance for Qadianis (Ahmadis) is prohibited'. The hostility and anti-Ahmadiyya agitation turned even worse in the city after the murder of Mr. Saleem Latif, an Ahmadi lawyer, on March 30, 2017. Anti-Ahmadiyya agitation further ensued in the city after his murder.

Another Ahmadi, Mr. Muddisar Ahmad from Shadbagh Colony was repeatedly harassed by a local person who would follow him almost everywhere. In September last year, when he was waiting to collect his child from school, an unknown man approached him and asked him to stay away or end up dead. On another occasion, the same man encountered him at a stationery shop where Mr. Ahmad was buying stationery for his son. His wife and his son were with him too. Addressing the shopkeeper, he said, 'selling them anything is haram (disapproved) in Islam as they are Mirzai (Ahmadis)'. He too threatened to kill him. On another occasion, Mrs. Ahmad bought some fruit from the shopkeeper. Before handing her the bag of fruit, he too asked if they were Ahmadis. She nodded in affirmation. The shopkeeper did not hand over the bag and used foul language. She went back home crying.

Mr. A. Masood, another Ahmadi from the same locality, is also facing a tragic situation. All his neighbours observe a social boycott against him and his family. Several schools refused admission to his children and

those who would discover their faith later, would urge him to remove his children from the school. Once his son Absar A. was returning home having said his *maghrib* prayers. Some young boys grabbed and manhandled him. Onlookers saw what was happening but no one stepped in to rescue him. Masood's daughter had died of natural causes sometime earlier and was buried in the common cemetery. When certain extremists found out, they exhumed her body and asked her family to bury her somewhere else. The bereaved father had no way out but to succumb to the pressure. He then buried his daughter in his arable land.

The story of a businessman

Another member of the Ahmadiyya community described his brother's ordeal as a teacher:

I am Raza Butt. I am a businessman and come from the Ahmadi community. My own brother was a government school teacher. His children were studying in a private school in Ghumman Wala, Gujranwala. They would always face hatred and humiliation everywhere. Be it school, streets, playgrounds, markets or shops, wherever people would know who they were, they would misbehave and insult them. They were excluded and ostracised. This badly affected their psychology and self-esteem. Eventually, he had to move his children to Rabwa (officially renamed 'Chanab Nagar') to enrol his children in a community school there.

Earlier he was appointed in Qala Rai Singh. Over there, people rallied against him and he was not allowed to teach the kids. He managed his transfer to a small village of Tattley Wali but was hounded out from there too. There was a murderous attempt on him but he somehow survived. Frustrated, he secured asylum in Britain.

The neighbouring community observes a social boycott against us. They hate mingling with us and those who mingle are also ostracised.

Likewise, one of my cousins Imran was appointed as a teacher in Zia-ul-Islam School, Gujranwala. As an Ahmadi, he too was intimidated every now and then. Even the school principal was warned to kick him out or face the consequences. Initially, the principal put up some resistance but eventually bowed down to the extremists' demands and insisted that he seek a transfer or resign. He too had to quit the country.

We are 25 families in Tatley Wali. The neighbouring community observes a social boycott against us. They hate mingling with us and those who mingle are also ostracised. Rumours are common that they and their food smell bad as they are Ahmadis. Although we are quite prosperous and our property and business in the market is worth millions, even a small shopkeeper in the village refuses to sell goods to our children, saying, 'you are Ahmadi-Mirzai. Accepting your pennies is haram (disapproved of) in Islam.' Hotel owners refuse to serve us food because their utensils will turn impure. No one participates in our marriage and death ceremonies. We are vilified and maligned in so many ways. Whenever there is a religious upsurge, be it the execution of Mumtaz Qadri or something like Moulvi Khadim Rizvi's dharnas, we fear lest we face the wrath. Our life is too miserable to describe.

The ordeals of Hindu students and teachers

'Convert or face humiliation'

Rabia Sakeena, a Hindu student of Class IX at Government High School, Multan narrates her story as under:

Given our faith, most of us Hindu students have to face many difficulties in school from day one. Impelling us to embrace Islam, keeping their food and utensils apart, not playing with us, ill treatment from teachers, so on and so forth, are common indicators of the discrimination we suffer. My brother and sisters also have to put up with similar circumstances and I have no idea how many other students endure the same.

When I was promoted to the 8th Class, I found one of our teachers particularly biased and discriminatory. She would teach us Islamic Studies and Arabic as part of it. As for non-Muslims, there is a choice to study Islamiyat or Ethics. Usually, there is no teacher for Ethics and we are left with no option but to choose Islamiyat. I too, therefore, chose Islamiyat.

In her class, she would always speak negatively about Hindus and Hinduism, saying, ‘These are the people who refused to embrace Islam. They worship idols, pray and bow before them and seek their forgiveness. They are *kaafir* (infidels) and commit *shirk* (share divine powers with gods and goddesses).’ Such denigrating comments turn many students against us. One day, the said teacher asked me to convert to Islam. ‘I shall perform the ritual and no one will know it including your parents’, she said. After three or four days, she asked again if I had decided. I refused. She insisted a little harshly and said that she too would go to *jannat* (paradise) if I embraced Islam. But I did not reply in the affirmative. She became hostile and inattentive towards me in class.

In the final board exams, I secured 85 marks out of 100 and the teacher was sceptical and surprised to hear this. ‘You were never that good in Islamiyat. How you could have secured such high marks?’ she asked.

One day, while listening to the lecture, I perhaps was not attentive. She hit me with a stick so harshly that the stitches on my shirt were opened and I got a big injury mark of injury on my shoulder. I complained to my parents and my aunt back home and they told one of the local correspondents of the daily *Pakistan* from Multan. The correspondent visited my school and reported the same to the school principal. ‘I shall report it in the national media,’ said the correspondent. Hearing that, both the principal and the teacher apologised and said it wouldn’t happen again. But later, she kept saying, ‘you are such a mean student that you made a news out of a small matter.’ This and other forms of discriminations are very common in our school and now in college. In the final board exams, I secured 85 marks out of 100 and the teacher was sceptical and surprised to hear this. ‘You were never that good in Islamiyat. How you could secure those high marks?’ she asked.

Muslim girls refuse to accept food from Hindu girls in school. Generally, when we take our homemade food to school, about 7 out of 10 girls refuse to eat with us. At times, they would come forward and tease Hindu girls saying ‘is it true that you worship cows? Is it true that you adulate monkeys? Do you believe in an elephant god? Is it true whatever the teacher says? And we have seen such and such things in a film or a teleplay, specifically referring to some negative character or characteristics.’ They would ask, ‘are you Hindus like this and that?’ Arguing about religion, they would almost try to pick a fight with us. Facing such attitudes, many Hindu girls drop out and never go back to school.

If Muslim girls are fighting and we try to arbitrate, they shout, ‘You stay away. You are a Hindu. How can you settle a dispute between two Muslims?’

Faith, character and Valentine’s Day

Muskan is the daughter of a poor tailor, Ramesh, and lives in an underbridge squatter colony in Multan. She is a student of Grade IX in a GGHS. In her own words:

Last Valentine’s Day (14 February), I arranged a party with a few of my Muslim friends and class fellows in school. All of us put on beautiful clothes and brought homemade food to eat together. Somehow, one of the teachers discovered that we were celebrating Valentine’s Day there. She came to shout at us in the middle of the party and disrupted the whole fun. The next day, she made a big fuss out of that and sneered at Muslim girls saying, ‘by the way, why were you observing Valentine’s Day, and that too with Hindu girls? Are you a Hindu?’ Pointing out one of my Muslim friends in particular, she said, ‘why do you befriend a Hindu girl at all? I noticed you wearing Hindu-like costumes and wearing Hindu-like make-up. Are you scheming to perform *nikkah* (marriage) with her brother? ‘It might be fine in their faith,’ she further asserted, ‘but don’t you know celebrating Valentine’s Day is *haram* (disapproved of) in Islam? You are a Muslim and you must behave like a good Muslim.’ As punishment, she confiscated our utensils too but returned them the next day.

Also, she said, ‘You need to know that Valentine’s Day is banned by the Government of Pakistan and about 400 boys have already been arrested for that.’ She said all this over the mic in assembly and in front of the whole school. The next day, she said satirically, ‘why do you worship the gods whom you create with your own hands and then pray before them? Do you believe they listen to and fulfil your prayers?’ After a day or two, I took my mother along who asked her about criticising her daughter’s faith. She simply denied that anything like that had happened at all. The following day she complained, ‘you Hindus are very quarrelsome.’

Ramesh contacted Shakuntla Devi, a human rights activist struggling for the rights and welfare of the Hindu community, herself a Hindu. He asked her to report this to the media. According to Shakuntla, she contacted a couple of local correspondents, but they had said that, as celebrating Valentine's Day was officially banned and she had scolded Muslim girls as well, the issue would not attract any media attention. Shakuntla said they had then dropped the matter.

The school-going children of Shakeela Devi, a railway employee

Shakeela Devi lives in Double Phatak Colony across the railway track under the bridge, where the poorest of the poor Hindu families squat. About 100 children are of school-going age there but only 20 go to school. Poverty and unavailability of a school there is the major cause, though some of the parents do refer to the teachers' indifference and loathsome attitude towards the wretched community. The closest public school there is at least one kilometre away and, being jam-packed by traffic and passers-by, it is impossible for a child to commute to his/her school. As Shakeela Devi explains:

I work as a cleaner for the Divisional Supervisor's Office in Multan Railways at a very low scale. I also work as a household maid in a bungalow and then manage my own house too. Four of my children go to school. The youngest one is six but I do not send him to school. I am already managing the pick and drop of my other children with a great deal of hassle. Their father has placed all the pick-and-drop responsibility upon my shoulders. If I put him in school, it will be an added responsibility. Another reason is that he was born in Haroonabad (my parents' town) and I will have to collect his *janam parchi* (birth certificate) from Haroonabad. Both of us (husband and wife) are terribly busy making ends meet.

Schools do not award public holidays at Holi and Diwali and sometimes the festivals coincide with tests or annual exams that cause big trouble for our children. If they take these days off without informing the school, they will have to bear insult, and exclusion from or missing certain classes. Public holidays should be mandatory for the Hindu community on their annual religious festivals.

How Arpan suffers

Arpan is a student of the ninth grade in a public school in Multan. In the first place, getting admission was an arduous task. For whatever reason, the school in his vicinity was reluctant to enrol him. 'On the *sifarish* (personal influence) of an army officer, I finally secured admission,' says Arpan. "'You are the first Hindu in our school,' I was later told by a teacher.

'My school-mates irritate me, calling out *kafir-kafir* (infidel, infidel) and using false and disturbing names. They even distort the names of our gods and goddesses. Whenever there is something about Indo-Pak history, the teachers try to prove Hindus are enemies of the state. Such lessons further strengthen my class fellows' unfriendly and hostile attitudes towards me.'

Traumatizing a third-grade Hindu child

When Radheka was a student of Grade 3 at a GGPS, Multan, her fellow Muslim girls would often mock her as she was a Hindu: 'You worship *butti* (idols) whom you create yourself. How can they ever help you?' One day, a girl almost assaulted her saying, 'Hey, you Hindus worship a funny creature like Kaali Maata possessing many heads and arms and a long, bloody tongue. Horrible. When I see her, I feel like chopping her tongue off.'

'We scared the girl,' said her mother, 'so that she would never fight or argue with Muslim girls in future. Who knows what a child may say in innocence?'

'We don't criticise your God, why do you criticise ours?' replied Radheka. In the middle of the argument, her elder sister approached. Fearing the likely dreadful outcome of such an argument, she slapped Radheka to silence her. Back home, she told all this to her mother and aunt. All of them warned her never to engage in an argument with Muslim girls 'lest you say something wrong, they will lynch you then, etc.' 'We scared the girl,' says her mother, 'so that she never fights or argues with Muslim girls in future. Who knows what a child may say in innocence?' 'Whatever, they (Muslim girls) say, just go silent,' Radheka's parents told Radheka. She is in the fifth Grade now near Kalar Kahar and lives with her aunt. Since that time, she has been too fearful to ever quarrel with a Muslim girl.

As you are a Hindu, move to the other section

This is Mahik Ajmal's story:

I am Mahik Ajmal. When I reached 9th Class, the school administration put me in Section-A. Things were fine while my teacher and the class fellows had no idea what faith I practiced. But after a week, when I filled up my Registration Form, it disclosed my faith to my Class In-charge that I was a Hindu, and the attitudes began to change. First, my Class In-charge was surprised to know that I was a Hindu. Later, she asked if I would like to change my Section. I refused and preferred to stay in the same Section. Despite my disinclination to switch over, the said teacher put me in another Section and the next morning asked me to move to the other Section. I quit my Section, went outside and instead of going to the other Section sadly sat in a grassy plot.

'When I disclosed my faith to my class in-charge, the teacher's attitude began to change.'

Quite unexpectedly, the Deputy Headmistress turned up there and asked me why I was sitting outside. I told her the problem. Grabbing my hand, she took me to the class and told the class teacher that she had no right to compel a child to switch over her Section, if she was not willing to. She warned the teacher not to discriminate against a child on the basis of her faith. 'I hope I will not come to know of any such complaint in future,' she warned my Class In-charge. Once the Headmistress was gone, the teacher said, 'I did not expect you to do that.' After a few days, she tried to convince me to convert to Islam. I said, 'everyone's faith is good for one's own self. Our Quaid (the founder of Pakistan), did not believe in faith-based discrimination.' Thereafter, she went silent and did not say anything disturbing.

'Since Hindus are extremists, you might be an extremist too'

Shiva is a student of Government Bohar Wali School, Multan. In her own words:

When I was promoted to the 9th Class, my teacher-in-charge changed. In the first couple of weeks, when she discovered that I was a Hindu, she said. 'Oh, you are a Hindu. In other words, you too are extremist, as I know that Hindus are extremists.' I said, 'Ma'am, the Hindus you are talking about are Hindustani Hindus while we are Pakistani Hindus. Why do you draw a parallel?' Though she went silent after that, she sent me down to the back of the class. The next couple of weeks, she remained indifferent towards me. I reported this to the Deputy Headmistress but things remained the same.

A public college student in Khanewal

A college student in Khanewal had this to say:

I am Hindu by faith and an intermediate student at a public college in Khanewal. I am not interested in studying Islamiyat but there is no way out. I have to. If we don't, teachers insist and sometimes compel us to study Islamiyat. If I, and a couple of other Hindu students, skip the class, teachers threaten to impose a fine. Fellow students overwhelmingly insist we become Muslim. Most of them irritate us by calling us infidels and idol venerator. Most of the students as well as teachers abhor us, I believe. Therefore, I do not feel like going to college regularly. I personally think teachers should avoid spreading religious hatred. Teachers are known as spiritual parents, so they should treat all of us as equals. With a smile and love, we can eliminate faith-born odium.

'For a Hindu, it is an arduous task to become a teacher'

Shirimati is a primary school teacher at a GGPS, Thattapur, Multan. Ever since doing her BA and BEd, she has dreamt of becoming a teacher. She tried for both government and private school vacancies but in vain. She secured her present job after a number of attempts. She explained her experience quite reluctantly in cases she lost this job too:

When I was trying for a job as a school teacher, I appeared for several interviews. The panel would ask questions about Islamic history or Islamic teachings, which obviously, I did not know as I studied 'Ethics' as an optional subject. (Even the non-Muslim girls who opt for Islamiyat just to secure marks, forget it once the exams are over.) As a result, I failed to qualify more than once. The experience was not very different with private schools too. Here the problem was not the Islamic questions, but the panel was normally observed to be disinclined to take a Hindu teacher. In one case, the principal told me that he would like to take me but his fellow teachers disagreed, arguing that the parents may object. Finally, I secured the present government job through the quota system.

KII with Sajid Naz Mukesh Laal, Islamia University, Bahawalpur

My Muslim name is Sajid Naz while my Hindu name is Muskesh Laal and I belong to the Hindu community of Yazman. I work in Islamia University, Bahawalpur, as a senior clerk. Myself and my forefathers have all been living here in Bahawalpur since time immemorial. We are not immigrants. This is our *dharti mata* (motherland) and we love it. Ironically, we have been turned into aliens in our own land. Poverty and untouchability are corroding our lives like anything. General social hatred multiples our menial status. Even at a place like university, people preach to me to embrace Islam: 'Lest we are accountable hereafter that we found an infidel, yet we did not invite him to come to the true faith of Islam'.

About children's education, you just don't ask; things are too bad, mainly for Hindus. They begin feeling like people apart from the early years of their education. A number of Hindu children hardly get to the fifth grade and then quit. Apart from poverty and inappropriate environment at homes, discrimination plays a part. Even private schools are not free from derogation. My own daughter, who is 10, studies in a private school in Bahawalpur Cantonment. Even she faces discrimination.

I think all religions try promoting humanity; all differentiate between 'virtuous' and the 'vile'. But Muslims are adamant that only Islam is the best faith in the world. The same is true for Christians. Earlier, at least an introduction to the major faiths of the world was part of our higher studies but no more. It needs a re-incorporation, I believe. What is almost entirely neglected is our religious ceremonies and festivals. Hindu minorities must be awarded nationwide holidays on their big days such as Holi, Diwali and Dosehra.

Many Hindu children barely reach the fifth grade before they leave school. Apart from poverty, discrimination plays a part.

The independence movement in Pakistan studies portrays Hindus as evil creatures and refers to them as 'cunning', 'greedy', 'caste-driven' and 'scornful'. It also asserts that Hindus massacred innocent Muslims, raped women and occupied their properties at the time of Partition. Naturally, it affects their attitudes towards Hindus. Whosoever did it, and of course it was on both sides of the border, have nothing to do with us; we are rooted in this land for centuries, and people need to understand this."

KII with Shakuntla Devi, Multan

I am a Hindu. Our community is very poor. But we are now educating our children. As you know, non-Muslim children have no option but to study Islamiyat and Arabic as part of Islamiyat at various levels. Not being well-oriented to the language, they often make mistakes. Arabic is difficult and is known as the sacred language to Muslims. It is often possible that children may make mistakes. I would therefore suggest to please avoid teaching Arabic or Islamiyat to our children. Under the circumstances, it is highly risky that children make a mistake and face trouble like blasphemy allegations etc. Thank you for considering our problems.

The ordeals of Christian students

Attempting to convert a small girl in Khanewal

Saleem Masih had this to say:

I am Saleem Masih. My daughter, Yumna Romio is in Grade-II and attends a Government Primary School in Khanewal. For several months, I kept seeing my daughter getting back from school crying. The reason was interesting. 'My teacher pulls my hair and beats me up. She says, 'You are a Christian. You are black. You are devoid of any faith. You will go to hell, so on and so forth.' The next day, I went to school and complained to the Headmistress. 'It won't happen again. I will speak to the teacher,' she promised.

After some time, the same practice recurred, and once again I went to see the Headmistress. The Headmistress told me to write an application to the EDO Education, Khanewal and she would pass it to him. I wrote an application and went back to her office. I was right there when the same teacher turned up in the Headmistress's office with a couple of her colleagues. She discovered that I was holding an application against her written to the EDO. Realising that, the teacher apologised and promised not to

taunt or punish my daughter for her faith again. After that day, my daughter has not yet complained. Hope, it is over.

'I will fix you Christians': The tale of an IT student

Abeel belongs to a Christian family that lives in a small *chak* (village) of Khanewal. He is a student of Intermediate at a public college, district Khanewal. Since he enrolled in this college, he has suffered the contemptuous behaviour of a Muslim teacher who instructs them in business information technology (IT). In Abeel's own words:

It's a class of about 90 students and five of them are Christian by faith, all coming from the same village. The teacher is ostensibly biased against the Christian students including myself. He, the teacher, says that 'teaching IT to the Christian youth is a waste of time. They are incompetent and can hardly succeed.' Lampooning Christian boys is part of his attitude. Occasionally, he would slap them too. He is particularly prejudiced against me and there are times when he does not allow me to sit in the class, though I am a good student, I believe. Having been enrolled, I was allotted two roll numbers. This means that I could sit in this one or another class too. Perplexed, sometimes I would sit in this one and sometimes in the other class. Like a shuttle, I would move from one to the other classroom.

The teacher would say that Christian children were there only to waste their time, that they were unlikely to succeed.

Last month, I was terribly disappointed and there was some problem at home too that caused me to skip the college for a few days. When I returned, I was surprised to know that due to my absence and using two roll numbers at a time, my name had been struck off from the college enrolment list. My fellow students spoke to the administration and succeeded in getting me enrolled again. But now, the teacher will not allow me to sit in the class. 'You are not going to succeed anyway, therefore it's a waste of time helping you get through. You better stay out there,' he said. Several other students insisted but he did not agree to allow me take the classes." The said teacher would also hurl comments such as: 'Christian children are here only to waste their time. They are absolutely dumb and unlikely to succeed. Even if they get through, ultimately, they are going to hold a broom in their hands and sweep the streets... I will fix these sweepers,' he would often shout derogatively.

Astive Satial, a student at a public college in Khanewal

I am an intermediate student of a public college in Khanewal. The behaviour of the teachers, mainly of Islamic and Pakistan studies, is unkind with Christian students. One way or the other, they try to preach Islam. More than once, it happened to me too and I have observed the same for other Christian students as well that they are punished more severely than a Muslim student for a similar mistake. Exclusion from sports is also common. Once in a blue moon, a non-Muslim student is encouraged to play a game for his college.

Javed Masih, Government College, Khanewal

I am Javed Masih and I work as a sweeper in Government College, Khanewal. I feel that Christians, particularly rural Christians, are discriminated against in jobs including the jobs for janitors in the education sector too. They are very poor and must be employed in education and other sectors to come out of poverty. There is also a Muslim janitor appointed here in the same college. Despite absences, his attendance remains complete while he draws his salary from the same place I draw my salary from. But I know he works for the EDO Office and almost never comes in.

I do have interaction and relations with the Muslim brothers too. Some of them insist that I convert to Islam but I have yet not decided.

My children face serious problems in schools as they are poor Christians. At times, they happen to wrangle with other students and mainly the argument starts from what they believe. Studying Islamiyat and especially the Arabic language as part of Islam is a serious challenge for them. Sometimes, my children take their separate glass and plate with them as the Muslim children hate to use the pots they use. But I still believe that Muslim attitudes towards Hindus have improved compared to a couple of decades ago.

KII with Amanat Masih, Headmaster Rtd., Government School, Khanewal

Amanat Masih's case is almost unique, where a Christian made progress to the position of a Headmaster but also faced many challenges. He was quite reluctant to relate his story in detail but this is how he partly described his experience in the education sector:

I have served in the education sector for 40 years as a dedicated teacher. I taught children with my heart and soul. Never discriminated against a child on any ground. To me, a child is a child, the son or daughter of a human. Given my commitment and experience, I was promoted to Headmaster in 2008 and was transferred to a rural school in Jahanian, Khanewal. After a couple of weeks, I began to notice that my colleagues, I mean my subordinate teachers, began developing prejudice. 'How come a Christian is appointed as the Headmaster? Why should we report to a Christian head?' I could easily read such questions on their faces. They started communicating their grievances out in the community, I suppose. One day about half a dozen community members and a couple of teachers gathered around and threatened me to quit the school otherwise they would kill me. One of them even held a dagger in his hand.

I made a complaint to the Education Department. They were kind enough to transfer me to another area but nothing beyond. I worked for three years there too. Nonetheless, the situation there was not much different, though I did not face a life threat. Contempt and disdain for a Christian head of the school was noticeable in my fellow teachers' and parents' behaviour there too. Then I worked at a couple of other places in similar circumstance. Deeply disheartened, I finally resigned though I could still have hung on to the position for 10 more years. Now I am running a private school.

Punishing a Christian student for using the same glass

This story was told by Pastor Younis Masih from Nankana Sahib as under:

One of my female relatives studies in Intermediate at a public college in Nankana Sahib. Without knowing, she once used her Principal's glass for water. Noticing that, the Principal called her into her office and beat her up very badly. 'Don't you know, you are a Christian; you have no right to drink water from my glass. You made it impure (*pleed*). You should not have done it. Never do it again,' she stressed.

Textbooks are almost silent on the role of minorities, including Christians, in the creation of Pakistan, equating them with non-citizens.

When I came to know of it, I went to the college and protested to the Principal. She got embarrassed and apologised. 'I will take care in future,' she said.

My own daughter kept facing distressing attitudes in her school and college at Nankana. About her faith, she keeps hearing the following comments from her fellow students and teachers: 'Holy Bible is no longer in its original form. Its message has been muted. Christians believe that Jesus Christ is the son of God. Christians do not believe in heaven or hell. Therefore, they are free to commit sins. After all, who is going to ask them?' When my daughter asks them how they know that and can they prove it, they fail to provide an answer.

Textbooks are almost silent about the role of minorities, including Christians, in the making of Pakistan which implies that they are alien and non-citizens of Pakistan. In fact, several of the Muslim and Christian values are the same and that needs to be promoted. Being Punjabis, our culture is the same as that of the Muslims.

Christian students beaten up by a tea stall owner

"With a concentration of Christians, Qasim Bela is a suburban town in Multan. One day, near their school, three or four students went to a tea stall and had their tea there. Discovering that the students were Christians, the stall owner thrashed and humiliated them. 'You should have told me that you are Christian. You have polluted the pots. Now pay the price,' he shouted. The students took the matter to the police. When the policemen came, he apologised out of fear." This story was narrated by Munir Gill, local councillor of Qasim Bela, Multan. He adds, "When we were students, we too had to keep our food and drink separate. It has been 50 years now. Things are still the same. So sad."

He went on to say: “Two of the Christian students who are studying in Islamia School, Khanewal said their maths teacher hated them a lot. He would hardly answer any of their questions. If at all, he would ask their classmates to explain to them the problem or a formula. The canteen of the school refuses to sell them food.” Once, as he claimed, he made a complaint to the school administration but things remained the same.”

What do you think then? Efforts to convert a Christian teacher in Gujranwala

I am George Farhan. I am a born teacher, I believe. Given the overall hostile environment against non-Muslims, I was never inclined to opt for public school teaching and I taught in a missionary school, ‘Saint Francis’, for more than a decade. After that I got a job in a well-known private school in Gujranwala. I would teach higher secondary students with honesty and commitment. Being a competent teacher, within a few months I earned respect from students and fellow teachers. The administration also admired my sincerity and wholeheartedness.

The next day, a couple of other students asked the same question: ‘Had I decided to accept Islam?’

One day, I was chatting with my fellow teachers in the break time. One of the teachers, Mr. Akhtar said, ‘George Sahib, you are not only a good teacher but a man of character and cordial spirit too. Me and my friends think that you should embrace Islam and become a source for your and our redemption in the afterlife. No compulsion but you must think it over. Take your time please. Think it over and then decide.’ This was unanticipated. I was confounded as we had never spoken of faith before. After a few days, I almost forgot the talk. The next week, when I went to teach my 10th class, a couple of students stepped forward after the class and asked what I had decided. I asked, ‘What do you mean’ as I had forgotten the whole argument. They said, ‘We came to know that Sir Akhtar invited you to accept Islam’. I was baffled to hear that. It was quite annoying but, composing myself, I asked them to leave it and sit back down in the class. The next day, a couple of other students asked the same question – if I had decided? In a few days, once again, I was asked the same question by another group of students in another class whom I snubbed. In no time, it became almost a universal query in the whole school.

Amplified, this voice echoed in the school corridors. Finding out about it, the school principal invited me to explain the story. I told him everything as it was. Listening to the whole story, what he said was stunning. ‘It is a divine call. You must listen to your heart. How lucky you are, you need to consider. Think of that invitation. Seek God’s assistance to get to the right decision.’

Upon my silence on all that, the behaviour of my fellow teachers, administration and students began to change. I could best describe it as alienation in general. Obviously, it became very difficult to continue teaching there. Finally, I decided to quit the school.

The nephew of Y. K. Masih, Rawalpindi

I am Y. K. Masih and work as a finance officer at a private school in Rawalpindi. A couple of years ago, my cousin’s son secured his admission in the 8th Grade in my school. When he approached the 9th Grade, he opted for Islamiyat instead of Ethics that he had studied in the previous grade. After hardly one and a half months, his teacher said. ‘My son, while studying Islamiyat, please avoid touching the verses of the Holy Quran as (being a Masihi) you are (naturally) not with *wuzoo* (ablution). If you touch the holy verses, it will be an act of (*bay-hurmati*) disrespect.’ My nephew reported it to his mother. She became nervous and called to tell me about the problem. I did not believe it and asked her to send the boy to my office next day.

The next day, when the boy came to my office, I reconfirmed the matter. He said, ‘Uncle, it happened as I said. If you don’t trust me, please confirm it from the rest of my classmates.’ I told the Vice Principal, who is a qualified man and a good friend of mine. He affirmed the matter as other children had already spoken to him. Then, I asked the same of the relevant teacher. ‘It is essential to perform wuzoo before you touch Quranic verses,’ she insisted. ‘I said that because your nephew is without wuzoo.’ ‘Are you sure that other Muslim children are with wuzoo when they put their fingers on the verses of Holy Quran that are part of the Islamiyat course,’ I asked. She had no answer to that. I said, ‘Please come to the administration office, we shall talk there.’

The teacher came there. The Principal was there and the Administrator too, who is also the owner of the school. The Administrator said, 'There is nothing wrong in that. When I myself take Islamiyat class, I request Christian children to please leave the class.' I was so sad to hear that as I had been working in that school for almost a decade. In fact, his elder brother earlier ran the school and he was a learned man who held no biases. Also, he gave me a lot of respect. When he left for the USA, his younger brother, the present Administrator, assumed control, and he is a little conservative.

After that event, the administration turned biased against me. They replaced my revolving chair with a simple one, raised the salary of the same Islamiyat teacher, and did a couple of other discriminatory acts. In protest, I resigned and said, 'If that is the case, please appoint a Muslim finance officer in my place.' The Vice Principal intervened and requested me to withdraw my resignation and was concerned that if the problem came to the attention of the Rawalpindi education board, it would not be fair for us all. I withdrew my resignation. She encouraged me to take a stand and extended her support too. The relevant teacher later changed her attitude and her unnecessary increment was withdrawn. I am still there. The Vice Principal then is now the Principal and the problem is over.

KII with Professor Salahuddin (Rtd), former principal of a public college, Gujranwala

I have seen discriminatory behaviour against religious minorities multiple times in my career. Minority students and teachers are never treated equally. Ahmadi students are treated very poorly in particular. Unequal treatment aside, they are assumed to be enemies of Islam and their lives have become wretched.

Let me share the example of one of my fellow professors who was a Christian named Ashiq Masih Yazdani. He was a very decent and competent person. Once, at the time of elections for the teachers' union, I put forward his name for vice president on behalf of my group for he was a man of character and popular too. Fortunately, he won the elections. His opponent professor was a member of Jamaat-e-Islami (JI). Having lost, he visited my office the next day and said, 'I have no regrets about losing, but what hurts me most is that you got a janitor (*choorba*) elected as a vice president of the teachers' union.' Such is the behaviour of even the teachers. What do you expect from others?

Whenever he discovered that an enrolling student was Ahmadi, he would simply refuse them admission.

Having retired from the college, I opened up a private college in partnership with another professor. He was Hafiz-e-Quran (one who memorises Holy Quran) and a highly religious man. Whenever he would discover that some of the enrolling students were Ahmadi, he would simply refuse admission. It was a financial loss too, but he was so adamant about this opposition to Ahmadis that he even sustained the financial loss.

I think exclusivist attitudes are getting stronger over time. The socio-economic backwardness of minorities contributes to that. Better off non-Muslims are treated relatively better. Muslims in general believe themselves to be superior. Partially, it is the legacy of Mughal rule in India too. I closely witnessed the anti-Ahmadiyya movement in 1973. But it intensified in Zia-ul-Haq's regime (1977-1888). Not just teachers, even students would hurl insults at Ahmadi teachers. But in return, they would not even whine. Fear is the major cause of their timidity. The law of the land was and is entirely against them. Fear subdues them entirely and they are being further pushed to the margins with every passing day.

On the other hand, I think America played a role in that. "Bay (B)", *bandoog* (gun) and Jeem (J)" – Jihad type alphabets in early childhood lessons were even printed there and exported to Afghanistan and Pakistan. Biases against minorities intensified with that. The science books would even have religious inscriptions then. You can see the books of biology printed in the 1980s clearly revealing Islamic influence.

I personally think religion must not be taught in schools or colleges. It is a personal matter. If at all, then teach whatever is one's faith. There is a serious need for secular legislation with respect to education in the country.

KII with Mushtaq Ahmad Kashfi, social worker, Gujranwala

I have a rural background and can relate some rural experience. Many a time, I saw people hurling insults at non-Muslims. To insult a Christian, they would most often call him a janitor (*choorba*). In police and court cases, Muslims are usually preferred over non-Muslims.

Similarly, if a Muslim girl falls in love and gets married to a non-Muslim boy while fulfilling all the legal requirements, people and the respective legal institutions still favour the Muslim family if they are unhappy with that.

I personally think that in a school or college environment, text is responsible for generating and/or entrenching such attitudes. Proclaiming the superiority of one faith over another causes many problems once the students enter their professional lives. Look at History and Pakistan Studies, how far they have distorted facts just to demean India and the Hindus. I think our textbooks are entrenching unequal attitudes. In other words, instilling and consolidating religious prejudice is the prime characteristic of our textbooks. There is no need to impart religious education in schools and colleges. Objective textbooks hold tremendous potential to nurture egalitarian behaviour. Only science and secular studies can improve the situation.

KII with Albert Youhana, Principal, Girls' High School, Gujranwala

Usually people think it's all about social status. If you are prosperous who cares what faith you belong to. They will just treat you equal. But I think faith still matters in Pakistan. Once they discover that you are not a Muslim, they put the discriminatory spectacles on. One of my acquaintances is a Christian and teaches at Government High School, Feroze Wala. He complains frequently that he cannot eat and drink with his Muslim colleagues. He has to keep his food and utensils apart.

My own daughter, Maryam, is aggrieved by similar behaviour. Maryam is a student of Punjab University Campus, Gujranwala. One day, while teaching Islamiyat, her teacher passed denigrating comments about Christians, so mean that even her Muslim friends felt terribly embarrassed. But the teacher did not care.

Similarly, the daughter of one of my colleagues, studies in Jinnah College. The very first day, her teacher said in a derogatory manner, 'What are you doing here? Go to your Christian college please.' She kept hearing such remarks over and over. Deeply disturbed, one day she quit the college.

I know a local private school which neither appoints a Christian teacher nor takes a Christian student. We hope for a change, but behaviours are not very different in private schools too. Not to mix with Christians and separation of utensils is common there too.

'What are you doing here? Go to your Christian college please.' She kept hearing such remarks over and over.

I think the non-Muslim children need not be taught Islamiyat. If at all, they should be taught Bible or Gita. Rather, I believe Ethics should be taught to every single student. Textbooks need to be rewritten on the principles of equality and mutual respect. Non-Muslims live in a state of fear, particularly after the incidences of Shanti Nagar, Badami Bagh and Youhanabad. The blasphemy law is like a naked sword over our heads. I myself have observed how the extremist Muslims invaded Aziz Colony and attempted to set their houses on fire.

I have no idea whether there is a law to arrest anyone who discriminates against non-Muslims in the academic institutes or not, but I sincerely think there is a need for one. Those who discriminate against students or teachers in a school or college must be brought before the law and those who suffer need proportional compensation.

KII with Dr Kristofer John, leader of Anjuman Mazareen Punjab, Khanewal

As a leader of the land rights of peasants, I do not believe in faith-based segregation and discrimination. But how can I deny that such a thing is always there? Many Christian children of the area attend private schools till primary. Once they start going to the public school from the sixth grade, they study Islamiyat

and certainly the verses of the Holy Quran too. Given the lack of orientation, what becomes harder for a Christian child is to understand and appropriately pronounce Quranic verses and then translate into Urdu. Upon that, teachers get furious and mistreat our children. Hence, children begin experiencing injustice and religious discrimination right from an early age. Besides that, the text of the social studies is discriminatory and teachers of Islamic Studies and Social Studies are usually poorly educated. They reinforce hatred against religious minorities. At school level, there is a need to promote argument and dialogue amongst the students. It may help them think better.

If a child is interested in Islamic Studies, he or she has every right to study it but one need not force anyone. In general, all religions need to be respected and should find a place in the text. If not possible or not acceptable then no faith needs to be taught in schools and colleges.

KII with Manzoor Masih, Government teacher, Khanewal

Manzoor is a teacher at a government college, Khanewal. In his own words:

My father was a priest. He and I believe that discriminatory attitudes are weakening with the passage of time and better education. About a decade ago, someone inscribed on our door, 'This is a Christian's house.' But I think the reason might have been the post 9/11 American-led invasion in Afghanistan and heightened opposition amongst Muslims.

In my academic experience, I have never felt any major discrimination. Earlier, I was appointed in a college at Layyah. There, local teachers kept some distance from me. But I think it might be ethnic prejudice rather than the religious one. Where Saraiki identity is stronger, people do not admire Punjabis much. Including myself, almost all Christians in the Punjab speak Punjabi. Those struggling for a separate Saraiki province assume Punjabis are oppressors and usurpers of their lands. Here, in Khanewal, I do not feel excluded as almost the whole staff speaks Punjabi.

In one of the local hotels, a sign on the wall reads: 'Christian customers must declare their faith before they ask for food or tea. We have a separate arrangement for them'.

In the recruitment process, 5% quota for non-Muslim teachers is usually not complied with and, once a non-Muslim teacher is taken on, he is posted in far-off places. Christian and Muslims are far friendlier in rural areas than in urban ones, I understand. Rural Christians have got their own land and lived there before Partition while the urban Christians are migrants from villages and interact with the local middle classes. Teachers' behaviour is relatively more egalitarian than administrative staff. More discrimination is heard of in schools than in colleges. Students are even compelled to convert to Islam. Education does affect attitudes. I am the only non-Muslim teacher in my college while four of the Christians are Class IV employees (i.e. janitors).

In one of the local hotels, its wall reads, 'Christian customers must declare their faith before they ask for food or take tea here. We have a separate arrangement for them'. While the fact is that eating with Christians is acceptable (*ja'iz* in religious terms) as they are 'people of the book' and Muslims are fellow believers. We hold no prejudice against anyone. We demand equal rights. Nevertheless, I think the teachers' role is only to focus on children's education so that they can grow up as good citizens of the country.

FGD in Aziz Colony, Gujranwala

Most participants of the FGD were female students or teachers. All of them were Christians by faith. However, some of the household women were also part of the discussion. In response to the discrimination against Christians in the education sector, the following comments were randomly shared.

Most of the participants agreed that non-Muslims are never treated equally. Many persons would address them with derogatory titles like janitors etc. In a comparative situation, Muslims are always preferred. However, they agreed that less educated communities were far more discriminatory than the educated and upper classes. Many Muslims avoid sharing food and water with them. On the other hand, non-Muslim communities are mostly non-literate and poor which cements their low self-esteem even further. Derogated and disrespected, they lose their confidence to fight for progress. Gradually, they begin to accept their social standing as it is.

“Take the case of education,” said one of the participants. “It is the worst arena of discrimination. My brother used to go to KIPS. The canteen owner would keep his utensils separate. One day, he took water in the same glass as others. One of the students, right in front of him, smashed the glass on the floor. He remained heartbroken for several weeks.”

“When I put my brother in a school,” said Shama Faryad, “his class fellows would tease him calling ‘choorah, choorha (janitor, janitor)’. He quit the school and is now wasting his life. “Though Ethics is an optional subject for non-Muslims students, once again it is fraught with Islamic messages. On the other hand, those who opt for Ethics fail to secure better marks. At the same time, those who attempt Ethics in exams are readily recognised by the marking examiner. Therefore, most of the non-Muslim students prefer studying Islamiyat. A Hafiz-i-Quran Muslim student secures 20 marks extra while applying for a professional degree but a non-Muslim candidate cannot enjoy that privilege. In fact, Ethics needs to be taught to all the students as our societal morals are too conservative.”

Teachers and head teachers could play a role in promoting equality and non-discrimination. Unfortunately, they too have been indoctrinated not to believe in these principles.

“Religion and one’s religious superiority have crept into the minds of teachers and students so complete equality seems to be a far-off reality. Teachers and head teachers can play a role in promoting equality and non-discrimination but, unfortunately, they are the ones who themselves are indoctrinated. Education, is the key to promote secular attitudes,” stressed the participants. “Our religious festivals are not respected and no community-wide holiday is announced by the government, say, on Easter or Good Friday. Fortunately, Christmas happens to be on the Quaid’s anniversary and coincides with the national holiday.”

“I have had an interesting experience,” said Anam, a student in the group. “Your complexion is so fair and you are so beautiful, how can we believe you to be a Christian?” comment my teachers as well as my class fellows. ‘Why don’t you embrace Islam,’ most of them insist.”

One can quote many incidents of harassment and violence against the Christians. However, the incidence in this very colony is horrifying. Accusing some Christians of desecrating the Holy Quran, an angry mob of extremists attacked Aziz Colony with arson and other tools. By the end of the day, it only proved to be a false accusation.

FGD in Francisabad, Gujranwala

Participants of this FGD were teachers, students and employees of different departments. Their experiences and observation about discrimination are as under.

Most of the participants agreed that non-Muslims are inherently assumed unequal, whatever the field. Education, however, is strategic as it can manufacture both good and bad behaviours. Unfortunately, it is the very sector where non-Muslims are distinctively discriminated against. Ahmadis, on the other hand, face the worst kind of discrimination, more than Masihis (Christians).

“One of my friends”, said Dr Ilyas, “is a government teacher. His son was studying in Punjab College. His class fellows sitting behind his chair would print ‘Eisai’ (Christian) in bold on the back of his shirt, as if it is something to be ashamed of. A couple of times, he happened to scuffle with them. The practice still did not stop. Eventually he abandoned the college and went to study abroad, obviously never to return. His father had some resources at his disposal to send his son abroad. What about the many other students at various levels who have to go through such derogation every day? Many of them are dumped in the streets and fall prey to drugs.

“Regarding the choice between Ethics and Islamiyat as optional subjects, the point is that Ethics is not an alternative to Islamiyat for non-Muslim students. Either they should be offered their own holy book, say the Bible, Ramayana or Granth Sahib along with separate teachers from their own faith, or religious text, in our opinion, must not be taught in schools/colleges at all.”

“Once we had an argument over something with our Muslim friends,” said Chand Mughal. “A few of us said, you are disfavoured as we are Christians. R. A. Khan, a Muslim fellow said, ‘Believe you me, we never assume you to be Christian. In other words, if they take me for a Christian, then discrimination is due.

“In a village S. G., a group of four young men, two Muslims, two Christians, once raped a woman. All the four were arrested. When the case proceeded, the Muslim men were freed for ‘so-called lack of evidence’ while the Christians were handed life sentences. In our perception, that too was discriminatory as all the four were equally involved in that crime.”

FGD with a Christian Group in Jahanian, Khanewal

This was a mixed group and about 10 persons participated in the following discussion:

“Christian women are suffering from multiple problems. We can hardly secure a job other than household work. If we send our children to government schools, both teachers and students torment them and make a mockery of their identity and faith. ‘He or she is a Christian. His or her father cleans gutters. His or her father sweeps the streets.’ It is one of the major causes that our children lag behind in education. Sometimes we feel we should not send our children to schools. Disheartened, many children drop off halfway through. If we put them in private schools, their fees and other expenses are too high to afford. They have to listen to contemptuous and scornful comments like these” said a couple of women in the group.

“One of the teachers wipes off her desk with my daughter’s dupatta. ‘It is impure,’ she says,” added another woman. “It is even difficult for me to secure a certificate for my child so that I can put her in a private school. School uniforms are given to the Muslim children on a priority basis and many of the Christian children are deprived of free uniforms provided by the Punjab government. Our children are given only books for free. Scholarships are won by Muslim students and there is hardly a Christian child who secures a scholarship.

“Studying Islamiyat is a challenge for our kids. Arabic expressions and phrases are simply too difficult for them to understand and narrate properly. Ethics is listed but there is no one in the school to teach it. We feel it is the government’s policy to force them to study Islamiyat.”

FGD in Amrat Nagar, Mian Chanoon, Khanewal

About 19 men and women participated in this FGD organised in Mian Chanoon. In addition to the similar concerns and observations that have been stated in other FGDs, the following supplementary points were made by the participants of this FGD:

Many of the Christian boys and girls have got English names. Sometimes primary school teachers and administration at the time of admission get this wrong. False spellings change the name, sometimes partially, sometimes wholly. The Christian youth also faces a similar difficulty after doing their matriculation and/or once they attain the age of 18. People in Baldia (Municipality) and NADRA usually spell our names wrong. Under the circumstances, correction requires prolonged procedures and multiple justifications. Clerks sitting in service windows usually say irritably, ‘change your name or choose a simple name like Muslims.’

Clerks sitting in service windows usually say irritably, ‘Change your name or choose a simple (Muslim) name.’

The teachers’ quota in the education department needs to be increased and the existing one should be respected so that more and more Christian teachers can secure jobs. Teachers need to be educated in the fact that non-Muslim minorities did play an important role in the creation of Pakistan so that their attitudes towards minorities might change. At the same time, they need reasonably sufficient training to understand and respect the presence and acceptability of non-Muslim communities in Pakistan. They are keen to serve their country but only if they are extended opportunities.

Problems faced by Sikh students and teachers

Ramesh Singh, Nankana Sahib

One of the parents from Nankana Sahib said:

Earlier most of our children used to go to public schools. Over there, their class mates would, most often, pull off their turban or open it up, not necessarily to ridicule but out of curiosity too. ‘What is in there?’ they would ask. ‘Are you hiding something?’ Teachers too are ignorant and insensitive towards other beliefs. While speaking against other faiths, they turn sentimental as if they themselves have been hurt by them or suffered some personal loss at the hands of non-Muslims. The influence of the Zia regime continues in schools and colleges and that is one of belligerence towards religions other than Islam. I have heard, not seen, that the new syllabus is better which is good news.

Simultaneously, as there is exclusive emphasis on only one religion in all school texts and academic environment, most of the children hold false opinions about Sikhism or they develop the idea of certain stereotypes from films and television. Therefore, the children are criticised for their appearance or religious rituals and practices.

Gradually, we began to remove our children from public schools and put them in our community-driven private schools or other private schools. Primary schools are now set up in our gurdwaras and our children seek both religious as well as secular education there. They learn Granth Sahib, Gurmukhi language and even music there. Apart from studies a Sikh child completes his/her religious course in three years, mainly from the 3rd to the 6th classes. In fact, about 200 of our families moved from Orakzai Agency and Peshawar to Nankana and around 600 families moved to Hassan Abdal. We are interested in educating our children more and more and would like the discrimination to end. There must be a quota for the Sikh community to seek admission in colleges and professional institutes.

Since there is exclusive emphasis on only one religion in all school texts and academic environments, most children hold false opinions of Sikhism or develop stereotypes from film and television.

A model of religious harmony

Sardar Mohindar Singh, Baleela, Gurdwara Patti, Nankana relates:

There is a Guru Nanak Public Model School in Nankana Sahib. It is a unique school in Pakistan where children of all faiths are equally respected. The school begins with the teaching of each faith's Holy Book for each group of children separately. There are separate teachers for and from each faith. After the first period, they study the rest of the subjects together. Poor children are encouraged to come to this school. Free books and free uniforms are provided by the Sikh Gurdwara Committee that has been working since 1999. No faith-based conflict or discriminatory attitude has ever been reported in this school.

Informal comments by non-Muslim students and teachers

During interaction with non-Muslim students and teachers, some of them have commented about the discriminatory situations they face. Their select statements and expressions are quoted hereunder:

“In class, we sometimes feel as if we keep studying Islamiyat all day long.”

“It doesn't make a difference whether the minority students study or not. Eventually they have to clean the streets,” some of our teachers say satirically. (S. J. Bhatti, male student of a public school, Khanewal)

“Whenever someone finds out that I am an Ahmadi by faith, most of them stiffen in response, avoid taking food with me, ask tricky questions, dub me ‘infidel’ straightaway.” (S. Masood. Jalalpur, Multan).

“There are three government schools i.e. primary, middle and high, in Youngsonabad, Nankana where the majority of Christians live. But there is not a single Christian teacher as they are not preferred in recruitment” (David McArthur, Minority Counsellor, Nankana Sahib)

“Sometimes some of the students make fun of our pagri (turban) and there was something in our BS Part One in a subject that made fun of the Sikh turban in particular. We reported it to our MPA. But in general teachers and students of our college are well aware of social harmony and educate others about it as well. So, I have no specific story of discrimination to tell.” (Diljeet Singh, Government College, Nankana Sahib)

“I am doing my matriculation from Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU). When I would go to public schools, the girls would usually argue and ask questions about my faith. At the same time, my parents could not afford the school expenses. Hence I quit the school.” (Shumaila, female student of a government school, Khanewal)

“In my class, a student who sits nearby says, ‘Do not accept water from this girl because she is Christian. Christians are impure. If we take water from their glass or the water left over by them, we shall turn

Christian. "The class monitor says, 'Why don't you become a Muslim? You already look like a Muslim.'" (Samra Thomas, GGHS, Khanewal)

"Hindus worship the cow. They drink its urine,' sneer my classmates." (Sonia Bibi, GGHS, Bahawalpur)

"Wherever we go about, common Muslims avoid shaking hands. Utensils are separated. In the case of teachers, we are not allowed to teach, and essentially never allowed to teach Islamiyat. Social boycott by the larger Muslim society is a matter of routine." (R.A. Butt, a former Ahmadi teacher, Gujranwala)

"Being Christian, we are taking Ethics instead of Islamiyat. When the Islamiyat class begins, the teacher sends us out of the class. There is no one to teach Ethics, so we have to prepare for the subject on our own." (Samrina Tariq, GGHS, Nankana Sahib).

"When I was a student, I would face discriminatory behaviour from both my teachers and my peers in school. Often, I would take my own glass. I had to have my food separately. Discrimination persists but ways and means have changed. In fact, teaching moral values should be the first duty of teachers in schools." (Munir Gill, Minority (Christian) Councillor, Multan)

"Ethics and human rights should be part of the school syllabi." (Sardar Mohindar Singh, Baleela, Gurdwara Patti, Nankana)

"Most of our (Sikh) children study in private schools. Muslim and Christian students are also there. Religious harmony is part of the study there and no complaint is heard." (Sardar Mastan Singh, City Municipal Ward, Guru Nanak)

"I am forced to study Islamiyat in my school. A couple of times, my teacher said that if I am not going to study that subject, she will impose a fine on me." (Maneesha, a Hindu girl from GGPS, Khanewal)

Interpretation and implications of discrimination against non-Muslim students and teachers

This study clearly identifies the violation of Article 20 (a), 22 (1) and 25 (a) of the CoP in every sense of the term. One can easily extrapolate that the textbooks consider all the students to be of one faith i.e. Islam, and predominantly preach and glorify it. Almost all textbooks exclusively uphold the Islamic identity of Pakistan, downplay other holy books and other identities, and present Quaid-i-Azam as the leader of Muslims alone. Teachers and students presumably derive their perceived superiority from the textbooks, and a division between Muslim and non-Muslim cultures and civilisations is created and disseminated in the education sector.

Although no cases of blasphemy allegations were shared in this study, it was noted that this is a constantly lurking fear amongst all the non-Muslim students, teachers and parents (except the Sikh community). In a politically and religiously charged environment, the parents of children live with the anxiety of them making a mistake, of unintentionally saying or reading something wrong. The best way to deal with this is not to force non-Muslims (directly or indirectly) to study Islamiyat. This will minimise the possibility of mistakenly saying or reciting something inaccurately, and will free them from unnecessary fear.

Creating this divide not only hurts non-Muslim Pakistanis but also national integrity. If the role of non-Muslims in the creation and development of Pakistan is highlighted in the textbooks, it can potentially make a difference. Presenting non-Muslim role models in history as well as in present times can help boost the self-esteem of non-Muslims and motivate them as equal Pakistani citizens.

In a politically and religiously charged environment, parents from religious minorities live with the anxiety that their children might unintentionally say something wrong, thereby inviting the charge of blasphemy.

The information collected above reveals that all the four forms of discrimination as identified and prohibited under Principle-5 of 'the principles of declaration' are observed and practised in the Punjab i.e. direct discrimination, indirect discrimination, harassment, and failure to make reasonable accommodation. It has been observed that in a comparative situation – be it classroom, administrative arena, staffroom, canteen or general social gathering, non-Muslim students and teachers are treated

less favourably than Muslim students and teachers. Qualified non-Muslim individuals are discouraged directly and indirectly from becoming teachers, as is demonstrated in more than one of the quoted cases. Informal discrimination appears to be a greater problem than formal discrimination.

The education department and higher authorities also fail to reasonably accommodate non-Muslim students and teachers. For example, no arrangements are made for specialised teachers to offer them education in their own faith. The understandable difficulty for non-Muslim children to read Arabic words and verses as accurately as Muslim children, given their different religious and family orientation, is consistently ignored. Teachers of the subject of Ethics are usually unavailable. If at all, the Islamiyat teacher also teaches Ethics and applies Islamic principles and moralities.

There is no national or community-specific arrangement for vacations to allow Hindus, Christians and Sikh students to celebrate their religious festivals. Sometimes the festivals conflict with important academic days and they miss essential lectures. Little account is taken of their holy days in the preparation of academic schedules, which is another case of failing to reasonably accommodate non-Muslim students.

Contrary to the Principle-13 of the declaration of equality, the State of Pakistan (in this case the Government of Punjab) has failed to achieve 'full and effective equality' by failing to make necessary arrangements to reasonably accommodate differences and different capabilities of non-Muslim students and teachers. It has blatantly failed to make necessary and appropriate modifications and adjustments, including anticipatory measures in curriculum and teachers' training and attitudes. It has also fallen short of facilitating the ability of every student and teacher to fully participate in Pakistan's economic, social, political and cultural or civil life in general.

Under the same declaration, the study observes discrimination against Muslim teachers and students who associate with non-Muslim students or teachers. Take the case of Muskan, who observed Valentine's Day with her Muslim friends. Her Muslim friends were vociferously berated by her teacher. Take the case of Ashiq Yazdani who contested elections and the nominating principal was derogated; the case of Mahik Ajmal whose section was changed against her will demonstrating the avoidance of association with a non-Muslim student; and the case of the Principal of a school in Qala Rai Singh, who was threatened for accommodating an Ahmadi teacher. These are all examples of discrimination with respect to association.

Perceptual discrimination also prevails. Shiva was immediately labelled an extremist by her teacher as, in her opinion, all Hindus were extremist because she had heard some examples of Hindu extremism against Indian Muslims. Although the reported cases of overt discrimination are becoming fewer and fewer, in the case of Hindu, Ahmadi and, in some cases, Christian students and teachers, the study reveals overt discrimination where they are not allowed to teach or attention is not paid to them on prohibited grounds of discrimination. The case of Amanat Masih and the case of A.R. Butt are very clear examples.

The state has fallen short in helping every student and teacher – regardless of their faith – participate fully in Pakistan's economic, social, political and cultural life.

Unfortunately, fewer complaints are made to the higher authorities by the victims of such discrimination. The case studies also demonstrate very clearly that, where a complaint was made to some higher authority, in most cases the victims were facilitated. Improvements in civil law would encourage non-Muslim students and teachers to file a suit against cases of outright discrimination.

Once again referring to the 'declaration of the principle of equality', non-Muslim students and teachers are harassed with a clear purpose or effect of violating their dignity and 'to create an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment' for them. The study observes this very clearly in the cases of A. R. Butt, Raza Butt, Arpan, Radheka, Abeel, George Farhan and other students and teachers.

In violation of labour laws against discrimination (in employment and occupation), C-111, 1958 (Article - 2), the state (in this case the Government of Punjab) has failed to promote 'equality of opportunity, equity and equal treatment to eliminate discrimination. Though the study has not investigated this, and has no evidence to offer, as perceived by non-Muslim teachers, distinctions, exclusion or preference is made on the basis of religion and social origin, nullifying or impairing the equality of opportunity or treatment in employment or occupation.

Several teachers, and sometimes students, put forward a theological argument that 'People of the Book' (those who believe in monotheistic Abrahamic faiths) must not be discriminated against in social affairs and interactions. But realities and practices in the education sector (and others) refute such claims. Similarly, most of the authorities (political and, in this case, educational) are not willing to allow non-Muslims to assume a position of power and influence. Though no one explicitly

indicated it in this study, their attitudes of exclusion and unequal citizenry allude to another theological problem of 'dhimmitude'. In other words, non-Muslims can be given protection in exchange for *jizya* (special or additional tax) but they are not allowed to assume any political or other influential office. The treatment of the Ahmadiyya community vividly substantiates this, while opposing the appointment of Hindu and Christian teachers (examples shared above) reflects a similar underlying conviction.

Chapter 4: Quantitative findings

Non-Muslim students' views about discrimination

Discrimination in classrooms

Out of 200 students, 140 (70%) said that they were not treated equally in schools and colleges. Around 60 (30%) respondents affirmed that they enjoyed equal rights in classrooms.

Do non-Muslim students enjoy their equal rights freely at school/college?		
	Frequency	Percent
Yes	60	30
No	140	70
Total	200	100

Facing discrimination

The students were asked whether they were facing or had faced any discrimination in the past with respect to their safety, faith, religious beliefs, class representation or in merit policy. A significant number of the respondents 151 (75.5%) who replied admitted that they had endured such experiences and 46 (23%) said 'No'. Only a fraction of the students did not provide any response to the question.

The majority (62%) of the students said they were discriminated against by fellow students, nearly a third (30%) of the students said that teachers do discriminate against them, with about 5% discriminated against by school administration. Only 3% answered that the non-Muslim students were discriminated against by the students, teachers and school administration. Thus, it is clear that the majority of the students are discriminated against in the school/college setting.

In this regard, when asked to state the nature of discrimination, 29% of the respondents confirmed that Muslim students 'prefer not to sit with non-Muslim students', 26% 'do not share food with non-Muslim students', 23% 'do not mingle with non-Muslim students in class', and 3% of Muslim students 'ridicule non-Muslim faiths and their religious icons'. While describing the type of discrimination, the majority of students (65%) said they faced faith-based discrimination, 23% faced the same in 'class representation' in various events and opportunities, 6% endured the 'teachers' discriminatory attitude', and only 1% did not wish to respond to the question.

Do you (non-Muslim student) face any discrimination with respect to security, faith, religious beliefs, class representation or merit policy for students?		
	Frequency	Percent
Yes	151	75.5
No	46	23
Do not know	2	1
No response	1	0.5
Total	200	100

Non-Muslim students are discriminated against by:	
	Percent
Fellow students	62
Teachers	30
School administration	5
All the above	3
Total	100

Discrimination with respect to school/college management

However, students also stated that they see less discrimination on the part of the school/college management or relevant authorities. For example, more than half (57%) of the students felt that school management or authorities did not discriminate and nearly one-quarter (24%) answered that school/college management did discriminate with non-Muslims. Only a small percentage (8%) preferred not to answer the question.

Do you think any discriminatory attitudes exist in school management/authority?		
	Frequency	Percent
Yes	48	24
No	114	57
Do not know	22	11
No response	16	8
Total	200	100

The feeling of social inferiority

A vast majority of the students (68%) affirmed that non-Muslim students feel deprived of academic opportunities for growth and this inevitably had a negative psycho-social effect. About 24% of the respondents did not feel any deprivation in availing academic opportunities.

Do you think minority students are deprived of academic opportunities of growth or afflicted with a sense of psycho-social inferiority?		
	Frequency	Percent
Yes	136	68
No	48	24
Do not know	12	6
No response	4	2
Total	200	100

Students' perceptions about discrimination in textbooks

Regarding discrimination, non-Muslim students were asked if they had encountered any discriminatory or derogatory remarks about non-Muslims in the text books. Over half of the respondents (68%) responded in the affirmative that they had noticed discriminatory or derogatory remarks about non-Muslims in the textbooks which could lead to hatred for non-Muslims. The rest of the 24% responded in the negative, 6% had no idea about the extent of derogatory remarks in the textbooks, and 2% opted not to answer.

More specifically, 42% of the non-Muslim students felt that perhaps Islamiyat was the major subject spreading discrimination. For 37%, Pakistan Studies was the second such subject, with Urdu (language and literature) as the next subject that 9% found discriminatory about non-Muslims in textbooks. 1% found a derogatory attitude towards non-Muslims in English textbooks, and about the same percentage in other subjects. Eight percent did not know or did not wish to answer which subject communicated discrimination or derogation. While, 2% did not respond to this question.

Complaining to the relevant authorities

Strikingly, 82% of non-Muslim students reported that they did not complain about discrimination to any relevant authority and a mere 14% of the non-Muslim students agreed to register a complaint to the school/college administration or a relevant authority. Only 3.5% decided to remain silent. A very small fraction of students did not know. In connection with those who filed a complaint to the relevant authority i.e. 14%, a good 35% of non-Muslim students said that the authorities took some notice of their complaint. About 22% of non-Muslim students said that the authorities had advised them not to complain, and 19% said that despite their complaint, they had received absolutely no response from the relevant authorities. Moreover, a small percentage (5%) said that the teacher rebuked and advised the Muslim students not to discriminate against non-Muslims students in future, and 3% said the authorities did take notice of their complaint but the outcome was still pending. 16% of the students did not reply to the question.

Have you ever registered any complaint against students'/teachers' discriminatory behaviour to school administration/relevant authority?		
	Frequency	Percent
Yes	28	14
No	164	82
Do not know	1	0.5
No response	7	3.5
Total	200	100

Satisfaction with behaviour of teachers

Over half of the students (52%) were not satisfied with the behaviour of the teachers and close to the same percentage (47%) were found to be satisfied with the behaviour of teachers. Only 1% of students did not respond at all.

Non-Muslim teachers' views about discrimination

Discrimination faced by non-Muslim teachers

Concerning discrimination faced by non-Muslim teachers, quantitative findings suggest that it is not just non-Muslim students who are discriminated against. Non-Muslim teachers also encounter discrimination from multiple sources. Similarly, the findings also indicate that a higher percentage of teachers (70%) validate the claim that non-Muslim teachers are being discriminated against by their fellow teachers, alarmingly 13% from students, 7% from higher authorities, with an equal percentage from school/college administration. Only 3% of teachers say that they are being discriminated against by the top leadership of school/colleges, for instance, head of the school or principal of the college.

The survey findings reveal that a significant number (78%) of non-Muslim teachers did not dare to file a complaint with their respective authorities for reasons best known to them. Only 15% filed complaints to the school/college administration and only a small number (3%) approached their respective District Education Officer (EDO) or any other concerned authority. This trend points to most non-Muslim teachers being reluctant to file a formal complaint against discrimination.

A sizeable percentage (42%) of non-Muslim teachers stated that they face hateful attitudes and 19% felt that Muslims did not take non-Muslim teachers seriously. Five percent chose other reasons, such as Muslims not wanting to share food with non-Muslim teachers, preferring not to sit with non-Muslims, and not even trusting non-Muslims. A number of them (26%) simply refrained from responding to the question.

Non-Muslim teachers' perspective of non-Muslim students

A high percentage of non-Muslim teachers (82.5%) felt that non-Muslim students faced discrimination in the school and college environment. They further said that, in their experience, over half (58%) of the students faced direct discrimination from their fellow students, from teachers (38%), and a small percentage (4%) from the school administration. Further, when bifurcating the nature of discrimination, teachers said that one-third (33%) of Muslim students did not like to mingle with non-Muslim students; 31% did not like to share food with non-Muslim students; 23% preferred not to sit with non-Muslim students, while a small number (4%) of Muslim students tended to ridicule the faith and religious practices of non-Muslims.

Similarly, non-Muslim teachers also said that the larger percentage of students (87%) faced faith-based discrimination in government schools and, in their opinion, a far smaller but meaningful percentage (7%) of the non-Muslim students faced discrimination from their Muslim teachers.

Do you (as a non-Muslim teacher) think that non-Muslim students face any discrimination in the school/college environment?		
	Frequency	Percent
Yes	33	82.5
No	7	17.5
Total	40	100

Teachers also said that, like non-Muslim teachers, non-Muslim students also had a limited tendency to file complaints against their fellow Muslim students or teachers. The table below validates the finding that 80% of the non-Muslim students refrain from filing a complaint against fellow Muslim students and teachers.

Did non-Muslim students register any complaints against Muslim students'/teachers' discriminatory behaviour with the school administration/relevant authority?		
	Frequency	Percent
Yes	7	17.5
No	32	80
No response	1	2.5
Total	40	100

Non-Muslim teachers' perception of discrimination in textbooks

A major chunk (60%) of non-Muslim teachers felt that there was a significant amount of discriminatory content and derogatory remarks in the prescribed textbooks. However, 30% of them answered in the negative and 7.5% simply did not answer.

Do you (as a non-Muslim teacher) perceive any discriminatory or derogatory remarks about non- Muslims in the textbooks?		
	Frequency	Percent
Yes	24	60
No	12	30
Do not know	1	2.5
No response	3	7.5
Total	40	100

Policy issues and recommendations

Teachers felt that biased religious attitudes (45%) and lack of policy implementation (40%) were the leading causes behind discrimination against non-Muslims. In addition, a staggering but not surprising 97.5% of the non-Muslim teachers felt that human rights should be part of the social science curriculum at school/college level. Also, 33% of non-Muslim teachers thought that the government should develop policy mechanisms, 29% recommended appropriate policies, and a quarter (25%) supported the implementation of existing policies to reduce and eliminate discriminatory attitudes against non-Muslim teachers.

What are the reasons that non-Muslim teachers are discriminated against?	
	Percent
Lack of policy implementation	40
Biased religious attitudes	45
All the above	2.5
No response	12.5
Total	100

Do you (as a non-Muslim teacher) think that human rights/equal rights should be part of the social science subject in the school/college curriculum?		
	Frequency	Percent
Yes	39	97.5
No response	1	2.5
Total	40	100

Parents of non-Muslim children: views and perspectives about discrimination

Non-Muslim parents were also interviewed to identify the patterns of discrimination against their children and how they viewed, thought, and felt about the nature and types of discrimination against their children or loved ones.

Equal rights

The majority (68%) of non-Muslim parents said that they did not think their children enjoyed equal rights at schools and colleges. However, one-third (32%) of parents believed that they were treated as equally as Muslim students.

Complaint against discrimination

Based on their faith, a larger percentage (72%) of non-Muslim parents believed their children were being discriminated against in schools while 28% did not share this view. Describing the source of discrimination, over half (57%) of the parents said their children's fellow students discriminated against them, with about 34% discriminated against by their teachers because of their faith. According to the parents, only 3% of children were being discriminated by fellow students as well as by teachers. However, 6% of parents decided not to respond to the query.

The nature of discrimination against their children, according to the parents, included 27% of Muslim students preferring not to sit with non-Muslim students; 22% of the Muslim students not mingling with non-Muslim students in class and in other school activities; 19% of the Muslim students not sharing food with non-Muslims, and 8% of the students ridiculing the faith and/or religious practices/icons of non-Muslims. The option 'Other' was chosen by 11% of parents to describe the nature of discrimination, which involved hateful attitudes of teachers towards non-Muslim students, deliberately ignoring them, forcing them to sit at the back, and degrading them every now and then.

Do(have) any of your children complain(ed) about faith-based discrimination in school?		
	Frequency	Percent
Yes	29	72
No	11	28
Total	40	100

Source of Information		
	Frequency	Percent
Fellow Students	20	57
Teachers	12	34
All the Above	1	3
No Response	2	6
Total	35	100

Discrimination in academics

Faith-based discrimination has a direct impact on children's psycho-social abilities and self-esteem. Facing structured and institutionalised discrimination, they begin to feel inferior to others in a society. Accordingly, the survey results demonstrate that more than half (55%) of the parents believed that their children were being deprived of academic opportunities which developed a serious psycho-social inferiority complex. However, one-third of the parents (35%) did not agree with this and said their children were not being deprived of academic opportunities and did not suffer from any sense of psycho-social inferiority.

In the same vein, half the parents (50%) recounted that their children had complained to them that Islamiyat tended to contain discriminatory and derogatory comments and statements about non-Muslims, while about 41% said the same about Pakistan studies. They said religions such as Sikhism, Hinduism and Christianity had become the victims of discrimination, in one way or another, whether for their faith, their religious icons, or their own community and individual personalities.

Registration of complaints

Interestingly, on the one hand parents felt that their children were discriminated against, while on the other, they said they had not registered any complaint with the responsible authority when their children had complained of discrimination. For example, only 25% of the parents admitted having registered a complaint and a strikingly large proportion (75%) of parents never filed a complaint to their respective authorities. Further, out of 25% of the parents who filed a complaint, about 23% registered a complaint with the school administration and only 2% to other relevant officials that includes relevant education authority, ombudsman etc.

Have you (as a non-Muslim parent) ever registered any complaint against students'/teachers' discriminatory behaviour to school administration/relevant authority?		
	Frequency	Percent
Yes	10	25
No	30	75
Total	40	100

Policy issues and recommendations

In the view of non-Muslim parents, biased religious attitudes (60%) are among the conspicuous factors that lead to discrimination against non-Muslims in schools and colleges. Twenty-three percent of parents believed that lack of policy implementation in schools and colleges led to discriminatory attitudes. However, when asked about their acquaintance with legislative provisions/reforms for equal rights, 70% of parents did not possess any knowledge and understanding of them

and only 20% knew a little about the relevant legal provisions and reforms. Around 10% of the parents did not respond to the question.

Despite knowing little about technical and legal provisions, an overwhelming percentage (90%) of the parents felt that human rights/equal rights should be part of the social sciences syllabus either as a separate subject or integrated into the existing textbooks, say, in Urdu, English, Pakistan Studies or History, at schools and colleges.

The assessment results also suggest that as high as 82% of the non-Muslim parents thought that disciplinary actions should be taken against teachers and students who discriminate against non-Muslim students. Non-Muslim parents also believed that the government had a pivotal role to play in curbing the detrimental discrimination in a school/college setting. To do that, 40% of the parents believed that the government should develop appropriate policy mechanisms and implement existing policies, 28% suggested the government should develop appropriate policies, 28% mentioned a combination of all the workable ways to overcome discrimination, while 4% opted not to answer

Chapter 5: Conclusion and recommendations

As revealed by the study, the situation is quite alarming. A massive 60% of the non-Muslim students interviewed as part of this study said they had experienced discrimination or felt they were being discriminated against and disrespected. Similarly, 70% of teachers admitted to having faced discrimination based on their faith. As many as 72% of parents believed their children to be discriminated against in schools/colleges because of their faith-based identity. The state of affairs naturally demands radical shifts and reforms all the way from legislation to the teachers' training and behavioural transformation. The following significant measures are recommended:

The policy and purpose of pre-university education needs to be thoroughly revised. The process needs to be instrumentalised to create objective, critical and analytical thinking and understanding in children. Scientific and empirical principles of thought and enquiry need to be promoted across all subjects.

Most importantly, humanist values of respect, equality and empathy need to be instilled and strengthened in young minds. Freed from propaganda, history and Pakistan studies should be taught using modern methods of instruction. Diversity and development and peaceful co-existence should be employed to create national unity and patriotism. Language and literature must concentrate on evolving an aesthetic, artistic and creative spirit amongst the students. Faith is a personal matter and must not be promoted as the only denominator of one's identity. Other ethnic, linguistic and cultural identities need to be respected and acknowledged as integral parts of Pakistan's composition.

The notion of non-Muslims as enemies of Islam should be dispelled; issues in real politics are governed by political and economic interests, not by faith. Students should be made aware of this.

The publishing of the National Book Foundation's (NBF) and Punjab Textbook Board's "Role of Minorities in the Making of Pakistan" for the 8th Grade is a welcome sign. Similar essays and historical excerpts need to be further incorporated by other provincial textbook boards at different levels. The role of non-Muslims in the development of Pakistan needs to be highlighted. Lessons on equality, fraternity, interfaith harmony, social justice and citizenship should be made essential components of the social sciences to eliminate the exclusionary views of citizenship in Pakistan. Non-segregated access of teachers and students should be ensured in all academic institutions at all levels.

If at all, regional and international trade and political relations and security crisis should be presented accurately and analytically so that the students and teachers avoid confusing 'the west' with the local Christians, and India with the local Hindus and Sikhs. Information provided in the textbooks needs to be error-free, unbiased, unambiguous and up-to-date. Myths and stereotypes about other religions should be avoided. The notion of non-Muslims as enemies of Islam should be dispelled as everything in real politics is governed by politico-economic interests, not by faith. Students of history, Pakistan studies and political science need to know that.

All the relevant provisions of equality and non-discrimination that are part of the UDHR (especially Article 26-2), ICCPR (especially Article 18), and CRC (especially Article 2 and Article 14-1) and Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and of Discrimination based on Religion or Belief (especially Article 5), signed and ratified by Pakistan, must be incorporated in the CoP and enforced. Article 20 (a), Article 22 (1) and Article 25 (1) of the CoP must be respected and observed in devising, imparting and promoting education.

Teachers' and fellow students' proselytisation and influence over non-Muslim students, insisting they convert to Islam, should be monitored and strictly prohibited.

Islamic content must be consolidated only in the subject of Islamiyat. While explaining Jihad, other significant meanings of Jihad i.e. self-discipline and self-purification, should be highlighted. Non-Muslims must not be compelled (informally) to study Islamiyat or Arabic and they should have a choice of studying their own holy books. The Government of Punjab should try to 'reasonably accommodate' non-Muslim children who are not interested in taking lessons in Islamiyat or Arabic. At the same time, it is worth emphasising that the CoP (1973) needs to incorporate provisions that better accommodate non-Muslim communities in different fields.

Teachers' and fellow students' proselytisation and influence on non-Muslim students to convert them to Islam should be monitored and strictly prohibited. The Supreme Court of Pakistan's verdict of June 19, 2014 to undo all the wrongs against minorities, must be reviewed to eliminate injustices against non-Muslim communities, including the rectification of biases from the education sector.

The constitutional provision barring non-Muslims from holding positions of power and influence should be removed as it is diametrically opposed to acknowledging them as equal citizens of the country. Pejorative provisions in the CoP 1973, for example Articles 41-2, 91-3 and 260-3 (b), should be removed. In the case of teaching, the subject people teach should not and must not have anything to do with their faith. Non-Muslim teachers should be encouraged to assume teaching roles and offered equal respect.

Apart from the subject they teach, imparting humane values and accommodating pluralism should be part of every teacher's training.

The 2006 curriculum reform plan and the reviewed National Education Policy (NEP) (2009) must be implemented across provinces. Nevertheless, the said policy violates Article 14, 20, 22, 25 and 29 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, Article 13 (1 & 3) of the ICESCR and Article 18 (4) of ICCPR. The proposed education policy (2017) builds upon Article 31 and 25-A of the CoP but ignores its guarantees under Article 22, 26 and 36 of safeguarding minorities against discrimination in educational institutions too. Though limited, certain changes and incorporation of essays, stories and poems on human rights and environmental conservation are welcome, yet much of the problematic content persists. A provincial Curriculum and Teachers' Training Advisory Board needs to be set up to advise on the content and methodology of teaching along progressive lines.

Curricula for teachers' training should be revised and radically improved along modern lines of teaching and learning. A comprehensive mechanism of teachers' training should be devised, both on what they teach and how they teach it. Apart from their subject, imparting humane values and accommodating pluralism should be part of the training. Under-represented minority children's enrolment and teachers' recruitment schemes should be initiated as a positive action to ensure their proportional representation in schools and colleges.

With regard to egalitarian behaviour, teachers' and students' awareness sessions should be organised from time to time. Strong academic standards should be developed along with authentic and effective compliance mechanisms to ensure regulation and to put an end to the acts of intolerance towards religious minorities. Educational aid should be effectively used to develop on-site and external teacher training centres, to promote and implement diversity and inclusion.

According to the 'law of equality and non-discrimination', it is the primary obligation of the state to respect, protect and fulfil the principles of non-discrimination for people within its territory. It incorporates a range of duties to enact legislation to protect its people from discrimination in their personal, private and public life (including education); ensure that laws and policies do not discriminate; ensure that public (and corporate) actors do not discriminate; where necessary, enforce and implement anti-discrimination legislation, and provide effective protection from violence based on discrimination and hate speech.

Substantive equality must be ensured to generate a level playing field by specifying proportional vacancies for non-Muslim candidates at all levels in the education sector.

The 5% employment quota for non-Muslims must be respected in the education sector as well by providing them teaching and other relevant administrative positions in the sector. Beyond formal equality – as enshrined in the CoP – substantive equality must be ensured to generate a level playing field by specifying proportional vacancies for non-Muslim candidates in the professional colleges/universities and for teaching at all levels in the education sector. Adopting equity principles will help them to be treated equally.

Accordingly, Principle 3 of the 'declaration on the principle of equality and non-discrimination', the right to equality, requires affirmative action that the State of Pakistan needs to employ to overcome past disadvantages and to expedite progress towards the equality of disadvantaged groups (in this case non-Muslim students and teachers). Similarly, Pakistan needs to abide by Principle 22 to enforce access to justice and facilitate the student and teacher victims in submitting evidence and proof against the injustice done to them. Where necessary, as advised by the said Principle, the Government of Pakistan (in this case the Punjab) should impose remedies and sanctions against prejudiced teachers and the sanctions for breach of the right to equality must be effective, proportionate and dissuasive.

A specialised body should be created to observe discrimination, confidentially receive complaints and reports, redress complaints and compensate for loss. Such bodies will prove effective and help eliminate discrimination, as we have already seen from the qualitative data that, where a student or teacher victim submitted a complaint to the higher authorities, support was offered. Unfortunately, more than two-thirds (about 80%) of the affected students and teachers never bothered to lodge a complaint outside their system. At the same time, it is also the responsibility of the relevant authorities to encourage non-Muslim students and teachers to lodge complaints whenever they feel discrimination exists. Information should be

disseminated and procedures made simple. Public litigation, civil suits and compensatory claims should be possible if the complainant believes he or she possesses sufficient evidence.

Public litigation on the part of both non-Muslim teachers and students is extremely uncommon. Invoking CoP's Articles 20, 21, 22, 25, 25(A) 26 and 27, if court cases are pursued, it is very likely that decrees go in their favour and, where appropriate, monetary or other forms of compensations can also be extended. Courts can expand the Right to Life (Article 9) to 'life with dignity and self-esteem' and may demand affirmative actions.

Corresponding to their major festivals and ceremonies, minority-specific national holidays should be declared for students as well as teachers. To reasonably accommodate non-Muslim students and teachers, periodic exams must not be scheduled to coincide with their holidays.