



Economic Challenges Faced By New Muslims in Sindh and Its Solution

Talal Nawaz Janjua

Dr. Rab Nawaz

Senior Lecturer, Islamic Studies Department, Bahria University, Islamabad.

Associate Professor & HOD, Islamic Studies Department, HITEC University, Taxila

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Abstract

Acceptance of Islam and faith conversion is a common scenario in Sindh. People have converted over the years in different parts of Sindh in an overwhelming numbers. However before and after conversion people have to face many economic issues. Research was conducted across Sindh covering its 6 division and various districts. Interview based questionnaire was used to analyse the economic problems people face after conversion to Islam. The is an empirical study with applications of qualitative and quantitative data. Economics is the backbone of every society. New Muslims after converting to Islam often loose their jobs, face loss in business, are deprived of inheritance, face undue pressures in returning of loan, are at times poverty stricken and of are even made part of Zakat. The Government and Society must join hands for New Muslims together to create job opportunities for New Muslims, provide circumstances for small business, promote concept of fraternity, and give due share in Zakat as well.

Keywords: New Muslims, Islamic Conversion In Sindh, Economics Challenges and its Solution, Concept of Fraternity, Zakat.

Introduction

Economics is the key to any society and in return for an individual's life. It is the methodology we can increase our standard of living. Strong economy helps you to turn your goals into reality. People who face financial constraints in their life sometimes fall deep down from the extent of criminal activities and even to sue side. Sindh, although is termed as a strong economy due to Karachi being the hub of all activities, however we find many places where people are poverty stricken. New Muslims are in the line of fire as soon as they accept Islam. Minors whether boys or girls are totally dependent on their parents for finances and once they convert are totally left alone. Males who are grown up are also pressurized in one way or the other financially. Females are normally dependent on their families and struggle. They normally try to get married and skip



from these problems. Economic problems are also cashed by people of former religion and NGOs who try to attract people back toward the former religion by extending a helping hand towards them. Muslims are also unaware of problems of new ones and don't extend a monetary hand towards them as required. New Muslims are simple clue less for their economic problems as the people of former religion turn their back where as Muslims normally are very welcoming in the beginning only. The major economic problems faced by new Muslims identified during my visit in various regions of Sindh are as follows:

1.1 Un-Employment

It is the basic right of every human being to be provided the basic opportunity to earn his livelihood. Employment sources should be furnished to be every individual by the Government at his doorstep. New Muslims faced a drastic situation when we talk about employment. Research Findings have shown that people who converted their faith, lost their jobs. We find the same situation in the West as well even the law protects them. Institutions would find reason and fire them out. Employment opportunities should be equal to all irrespective of colour, creed, religion, sect or area. The constitution of Pakistan highlights the fact in this way:

Article 27. Safeguard against discrimination in services.

No citizen who is eligible for employment in Pakistan may face discrimination on any post on the sole basis of race, religion, caste, sex place of residence or birth. ⁱ However, in case of new Muslims, if one is serving at a place concerned with their former religion, they would be fired straight forward or making some excuse. New Muslims if working in an organisation as per their new faith, they are sometimes seen with crossed eyes as why have they converted. Their faith is being questioned and they feel tortured to such attitude. New Muslims are already facing a lot of social turmoil and loosing the job is another disaster. In some situation, it has been seen that hurdles are created by the religion of former people for acquiring of job as well. People also face hindrances while applying for jobs as the hiring authorities are in doubt about the attitude, character and future of the employ. New Muslims are often kicked out of their houses as a result they often miss out their educational degrees at home. Family members are strictly against them as a result they are unable to recover their degrees. The process of reissuance of documents is extremely painful. The delay in documentation process or its provision sometime is so painful that people have to struggle for it normally more than 4-5 years. There are cases where people have tried for many years and finally given it up. In return, people find it hard to get jobs and they would start begging for money for existence. We find the same issues across the globe as indicated by a research articles on Anuradhapura District, Sri Lanka where it is seen that after conversion people lose their jobs or are forced to work at low wages. ⁱⁱ

1.2 Loss In Business

Research Findings show that people who had combined business with other people were deprived after faith conversion. People are either simply kicked out of the business or they are forced to leave it themselves. There are instances where new Muslims business has been damaged by the people of their former religion as well. In case a person accepts Islam, people of his former religion would start boycotting him in terms of business. A campaign is run against



him and people would not buy goods from him. There are instances where Muslims would treat new Muslims in the same way as Hindus they have strong business terms with them. The article 18 of Constitution of Pakistan states:

Article 18: Freedom of trade, business or profession.

Every citizen has the choice to choose any lawful occupation and involve in any trade, subjects to requirements by law:

Provided that nothing in this Article shall prevent: -

- (a) Any trade or profession governed by a licensing system or
- (b) the direction of trade, industry or commerce to promote healthy competition; or
- (c) the carrying on, by the Federal Government or a Provincial Government, or by a corporation controlled by any such Government, of any trade, business, industry or service, to the exclusion, complete or partial, of other persons. ⁱⁱⁱ

People become extremely intolerant to people who accept Islam and try to deprive them in every possible manner. This attitude is extremely bad and creates diverse effects on the harmony of the society. All citizen of the country have equal rights to carry out trade they like.

1.3 Deprivation Of Inheritance

Inheritance is basically the money, property, etc. that you receive from somebody when they die; the fact of receiving something when somebody dies is common among all nations. ^{iv} People who convert alone are often deprived of this right. As soon as one converts, he is considered odd in his own family. The question of giving him some benefit from the property does not arise. In Islamic law, a person who accepts Islam and his family is not Muslim he loses the right of inheritance. The Prophet (Peace Be Upon Him) once said: 'A Muslim cannot be the heir of a disbeliever, nor can a disbeliever be the heir of the Muslim.' ^v In terms of Islamic Law, a Muslim cannot inherit from non-Muslims and vice versa. However, the constitution of Pakistan is opposite to Islamic injunctions and affirms the right of property for all ignoring the fact what religion one belongs to, the Article 23 and 24 of constitution clearly state:

Article: 23 Provision as to property.

Every person is entitled to own a property in any region of the country and even sell it out, however in view of the Constitution or limitations can be imposed by Government in public interest. ^{vi}

Article: 24 Protection of property rights.

(1) No one should be deprived of his wealth as per the law. ^{vii}

(2) No property may be taken forcefully unless for public interest or in accordance with law, which provides for compensation therefore and either fixes the amount of compensation or



specifies the principles on and the manner in which compensation is to be determined and given.
viii

New Muslims are often deprived of this constitutional right and are not in a position financially to launch a case against their relatives for their legal right. In some situation, people are also found reluctant to file a case against their relatives as they feel that due to their faith conversion we already have lost our parents and now if we go in the court the slightest chance to be in good terms with family would die out.

1.4 Remittance Of Debt

We are living in a society where we have to face different challenges. Due to increased inflation in the world, people sometimes have to take loan's to manage their financial constraints. Research finding show that people who accept Islam are mostly poor as a result they often are bounded in debts. They have normally taken debt from people of their former religion. When people get to know about their conversion to Islam, they become extremely harsh in demanding their loan back. People move on to the extent that they offer that we can forgive your loan if you return to your old religion. In the same way people are also ready to give their loans on the condition that they leave Islam. These all conditions are un-ethical from people of their former religion. Loans are used as a tool to pressurize people to stop from changing their faith or reverting them back to their former religion. This is surely against the rights tabulated in the constitution of Pakistan which states:

Article 20 Freedom to profess religion and to manage religious institutions.

Subject to law, public order and morality:-

(a) Everyone has the right to proclaim, exercise and spread his religion

and

(b) The freedom to create, preserve, and oversee one's religious institutions belongs to every religious sect. ^{ix}

None should be pressurized to change his religion on any grounds. Hence, this is a also a problem faced by New Muslims.

1.5 Poverty Stricken

Research Finding show that people who accept Islam are mostly from the lower class. The people who are accepting Islam in Sindh mostly belong to Hinduism or Sanatana dharma. The major castes of Hindu's living in Sindh are Kohli, Bheel and Meghwaar. They are normally very poor and are often found working under the feudal lord. These people when they accept Islam are tortured by their feudal lords as they are fearful that they might escape after becoming Muslims. Feudal Lords are Muslims and Non-Muslims both. There are occasions where they have given them money with interest. Their daily income is so less that they seldom can pay



back their loans as a result they are practically slaves to them. In case the feudal lord is a Non-Muslim he would pressurize the converted one to extent that he would demand him to revert back to his religion. In case the New Muslims wishes to leave the place and travel to another place to attain Islam Knowledge he would be spared unless and until he pays off his debt. The people are extremely poor and some are living below the line of poverty as well. People who accept Islam are often approached by missionaries of other religions, NGOs, who try to bribe them in order to leave Islam. People of the former religion also try to bribe the people so that they can leave Islam. However, if a daughter of rich person converts or accept Islam, she is being projected in the mainstream media. Poor people conversion especially males don't attract the main media as do the female conversion. A detailed documentary has been made namely. 'Chained in the Web' by Ayesha Ghazi – British-Pakistani Advocate who throws light on these facts in detail. ^x

1.6 Non-Payment Zakat

Zakat is one of the five obligations or pillars of Islam. People who have certain amount of wealth over a period are bound to pay it. Allah Apostle has mentioned it a numerous time to pay alms with prayers. This is certainly the basic right of humans upon humans. Allah Apostle has also designated the categories where zakat should be paid. Holy Quran states:

Zakah is to be given to poor, needy, zakat collectors, bringing hearts together, freeing slaves, in debt people, in the way of Allah and travellers. An obligation by Allah.^{xi}

Holy Quran clearly states that zakat may be given to people to bring their hearts near to Islam. It includes people who are non-believers and are expected to accept Islam or people who have accepted Islam and are new to the religion.^{xii}

The Prophet (Peace Be Upon Him) also blessed people with wealth during the Ghazwa Hunain and Fateh Makkah. Imam Ibn Kathir has highlighted this fact under exegesis of Surah Toubah in his luminous work.^{xiii}

Generally, people are unaware of this fact as a result New Muslims are deprived of this right.

Solution:

The proposed solution for issues mentioned above can be as follows:

2.1 Employment Opportunities

Employment opportunities should be equally available to all. It has nothing to do at most times with the faith of a person. In an Islamic Republic, people who accept Islam should not be targeted for this reason. The Government must take strict action against people and organisations promoting such male fide attitude. The Government should keep quota for people who accept Islam which would be a motivational factor for people. The society is also indulged in a number of business where people can be entertained. Business creates jobs opportunities and people can help others especially new Muslims to be accommodated. A person should be



trusted in terms of his identity and qualification, skills should be the standard of judging a person.

2.2 SMALL BUSINESS INVESTMENT

New Muslims face a lot of issues in business after their conversion. People drag them out of their business or damage their property. The Government must take this as serious offence as these are clear examples of religious discrimination. No one has the right to destroy anyone's property at any reason. The Government and Society must intervene especially if a new Muslim is being deprived of his business. There should be strict laws covering the new one's so that no one is cruel to them. In addition, Government must tackle this issue by providing investments to people so that they can set up their own business. The Government should also establish guiding centres where people can be trained and counselled regarding their future.

2.3 CONCEPT OF FRATERNITY

Islam introduced the concept of fraternity on the occasion when the Prophet (Peace Be Upon Him) migrated from Makkah to Madina. This was incident that had never happened in the history of the world. An occasion where people divided their belongings equally among those who were strangers to them.^{xiv} They presented a true picture of the Holy Quran which says:

The believers are brother to each other

In the way, in Islamic terms when one accepts Islam, people lose the right of inheritance from their in laws as both are from separate religions. It is the duty of Muslims to come forward and give a helping hand to the new one's. This would give them the feeling that they have absorbed and warmly welcomed. In the constitution they have been given right of inheritance, which is against the Islamic Law, hence may not be practised.

2.4 PAYMENT OF DEBT

We live in a society where we often take help in the form of money from other people. Change in faith has been often observed to change people's attitude as well. People who accept Islam in Sindh are often poor and face financial constraints. This leads to the fact that when they accept Islam people would become extremely demanding. The Muslims should play their role and fall in between rather than sitting aside. They should step and try that the loan demand be made sensible. The demand should be according to what has been given and in due time. The Government must also take steps to stop people from creating unnecessary pressure on people who have loans especially if they are new converts. We as a society must stand up for betterment of the people.

2.5 POVERTY ERADICATION

Poverty is a common problem across Pakistan. However, we see it visible in interior Sindh. New Muslims are also one of those. The Government should enrol such people on priority basis to programs where poverty can be eradicated like Benazir Income Support Program. The



Government should also start special programs like, 'New Muslim Support Program' (NSP) to help financially the new Muslims. The Government and Society together should together monitor all such NGOs who are peaking in affairs of New Muslims and trying to revert them while giving them the greed of wealth.

2.6 PROVISION OF ZAKAT

Holy Prophet (Peace Be Upon Him) on the battle of Hunain favoured the new one's with a booty of hundreds of camels. He basically aimed to stabilize the hearts of new one's which is also one of the types that can be paid while giving zakat.

On the day (of the battle) of Hunain, Allah's Messenger () favored some people in the distribution of the booty (to the exclusion of others); he gave Al-Aqra' bin H'Abis one-hundred camels and he gave 'Uyaina the same amount, and also gave to some of the eminent Arabs, giving them preference in this regard. ^{xv}

Hence, this phenomenon needs to be promoted among the masses. It is the duty of scholars to aware people regarding this sect of Zakat and encourage people to act upon it. This can be done by writing books, articles, speeches and specifically Friday Sermons can play a vital role. Currently, people are lacking behind in this domain as a result less contribution come up. This will help to sort out the financial needs of New Muslims.

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