

# Pakistan Studies

Asad Raza Talpur  
Sukkur IBA University

# Culture And Society



# What Is Culture?

The Search For Satisfactory Answer To This Question Has Given Rise To A Great Deal Of Discussion And Debate.

# What Is Pakistani Culture?

It Is Another Difficult Question For Which No Completely Acceptable Answer Has Yet Been Evolved, But Towards Which We Can Draw Closer By Discussing And Debating The Question

The United Nations Economic, Social And Cultural Organization UNESCO (2002) Has Defined Culture As:

“Culture Should Be Regarded As The Set Of Distinctive **Spiritual, Material, Intellectual And Emotional** Features Of Society Or A Social Group, And That It Encompasses, In Addition To **Art And Literature, Lifestyles, Ways Of Living Together, Value Systems, Traditions And Beliefs.** In Short, It Requires **Unity In Diversity**”.

# The Main Components Of Culture

The Following Four Elements Can Be Considered To Be The Main Components Of Culture:

1. Values
2. Norms
3. Institutions
4. Artefacts

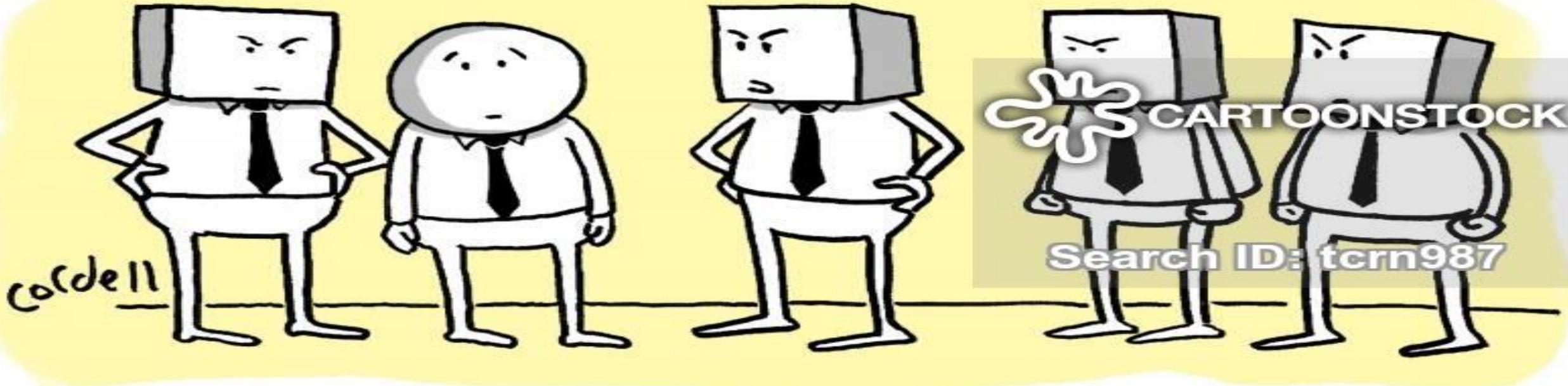
# Values

Values Can Be Described As Ideas Of What Seems Important In Life To A Group Of People Or A Society. They Are Ideals That Guide Or Qualify Conduct And Interaction Among People. They Help To Distinguish What Is Right From What Is Wrong, Serve As A Guide On How To Conduct Life In A Meaningful Way.

Culture Is Greatly Influenced By Values; And Most Often The Ideas They Generate Are Brought Together In Religion From Which Society Drives Its Values. For Example, Honesty Is A Value Present In Some Religions But Not In All.

# Norms

Norms Consist Of What Society Considers As **Normal Behavior**. Eating With One's Finger Is Considered Normal Behavior In South Asia But Not In Europe. Each Culture Has Methods Or Sanctions, Of Making Sure That People Live And Respect Its Norms. If You Eat With Your Fingers In A European City, People May Look At You With Disapproval, So That You May Stop Eating That Way.



**“What’s wrong with you?”**

Sanctions May Be Strict Or Not, Depending upon The Importance Of The Norm. Norms That A Society Enforces In A Formal Manner Because It Considers Them Important, Become The Laws Of The Society. For Example, Drinking Alcohol Is Legally Prohibited In Pakistan

# Institutions

Institutions Are The Structures Of A Society Within Which Values And Norms Are Practiced And Transmitted. Some Institutions Are Exclusive To South Asian Society, Such As *Mushairas*. However, Marriage Is An Institution Of Our Society Which Prevails In Many Other Societies As Well. In All These Societies Having Family And Providing Stability For Them Is Considered An Important Norm. The Rituals Which Are Legal Are Religious, Those Which Are Cultural Are Social

# Artefacts

Artefacts Are Shaped By A Culture's Values And Norms. A Society's Art And Crafts Come Under This Heading. Geometrical Design For Example, Has Grown Out Of Islamic Culture As A Substitute For The Artistic Depiction Of Human Bodies Which Is Not Acceptable In Culture. This Is An Example Of How A Culture's Values Influence Its Artefacts.

The Earliest Mosque, At Medina, Had No Dome Or Minaret, But Now A Dome And Minaret Are The Most Recognizable Feature Of The Mosque.



Mosque At Medina, During Prophet PBUH

Culture Has Also Been Described As  
The Result Of ‘The Best That Has  
Been Thought And Said In The  
World’.

In A Progressive, Developing And Evolving Culture, All Achievements And Accomplishments Improve With Time. In Such A Culture, All Improvement Is Given A Great Deal Of Importance, And Since Improvement Becomes A Value, People Are Open To Listening To And Acting Upon The Views Of Others.

Thought And Respect For Ideas Are  
Forces Inherent In The Development Of  
A Culture's Artefacts, Just As Thought  
And Research Are Reflected In Scientific  
Advancement.

Those Who Are Courteous, Tolerant  
And Calm Are Considered Cultured, As  
Are Those Who Are Interested In The  
Artefacts And Institutions Of Their Own  
And Other Cultures

# Culture And Classes

It Is Often Said That Culture Is  
The Collective Behavior Of The  
Educated Segment Of Society

Education Is Conceived To be A  
Vital Ingredient Of Culture. When  
We Call A Man ‘Cultured’ We  
Presuppose A Certain Level Of  
Education.

# We Can Relate Our Observation To The Class Structures Of Pakistan

We Can Say That The Appreciation Of Art And The Patronage Of Art Belong To The Pakistani Upper Class, Although The Creation Of Art Itself May Be Outside The Purview Of The Upper Class

Apart From The Arts, As far As  
Customs, Manners And  
Behavioral Norms Go, They  
Belong More To The Middle And  
Lower Classes.

Dress And Food Varies  
From Class To Class In  
Style, But In Seemliness,  
There Is Unity.

Education Is An Important  
Element In Relation To The  
Arts As Well.

There Are Many Arts Which Cannot Be Appreciated Naturally. They Develop From An Acquired Taste. For Example, In Pakistan, Classical Musical And Modern Art Can Be Appreciated Only By Those Who Know The Intricacies Of These Arts. Folk Music And Pop Music Have Separate But Overlapping Audiences.

There Is An Effort By Established Artists To Embrace The Crude And Garish Artwork On Trucks And Busses



Literature Is The Only Art Which Is Available To All Classes, But Even Here There Is A Distinction Between Serious And Popular Literature

# Popular Literature Is Devoured More By The Middle Class.

Cinema Has Not Yet Found Its Bearings, In Spite Of Three Or Four High Class Films. Television Drama Which Played A Formative Role In Fostering Cultural Awakening Has Seen Technical Advance And Artistic Decline At The Same Time.

# Culture And Politics

Culture Acquires A Political  
Dimension When The Culture Of  
The Conqueror Perceived To Be  
Higher Than The Culture Of The  
Conquered

Since Pakistani Culture Cannot Be  
Divested Of Its British Content, The  
Clothes We Wear, The Language  
Employed Both By This Writer And His  
Readers And Other Technological  
Improvements Into Our Life

Education In English Overcame The Separatist Tendency Of Vernacular Languages And Provided An Outer Shell To Culture.

In Other Words, Acting As A Common Language Among Speakers Of Various Regional languages, English Brought Them Closer, Giving Their Cultures A Better Chance To Merge.

In Pakistan, Cultural Varieties  
Have Been Given A Political  
Meaning. It Is Reiterated That By  
Neglecting Regional Cultures We  
Are Threatening The Federation.

One Of The Reasons Why East  
Pakistan Broke Away Was The  
Issue Of Not Giving Bengali Its  
Rightful Place.

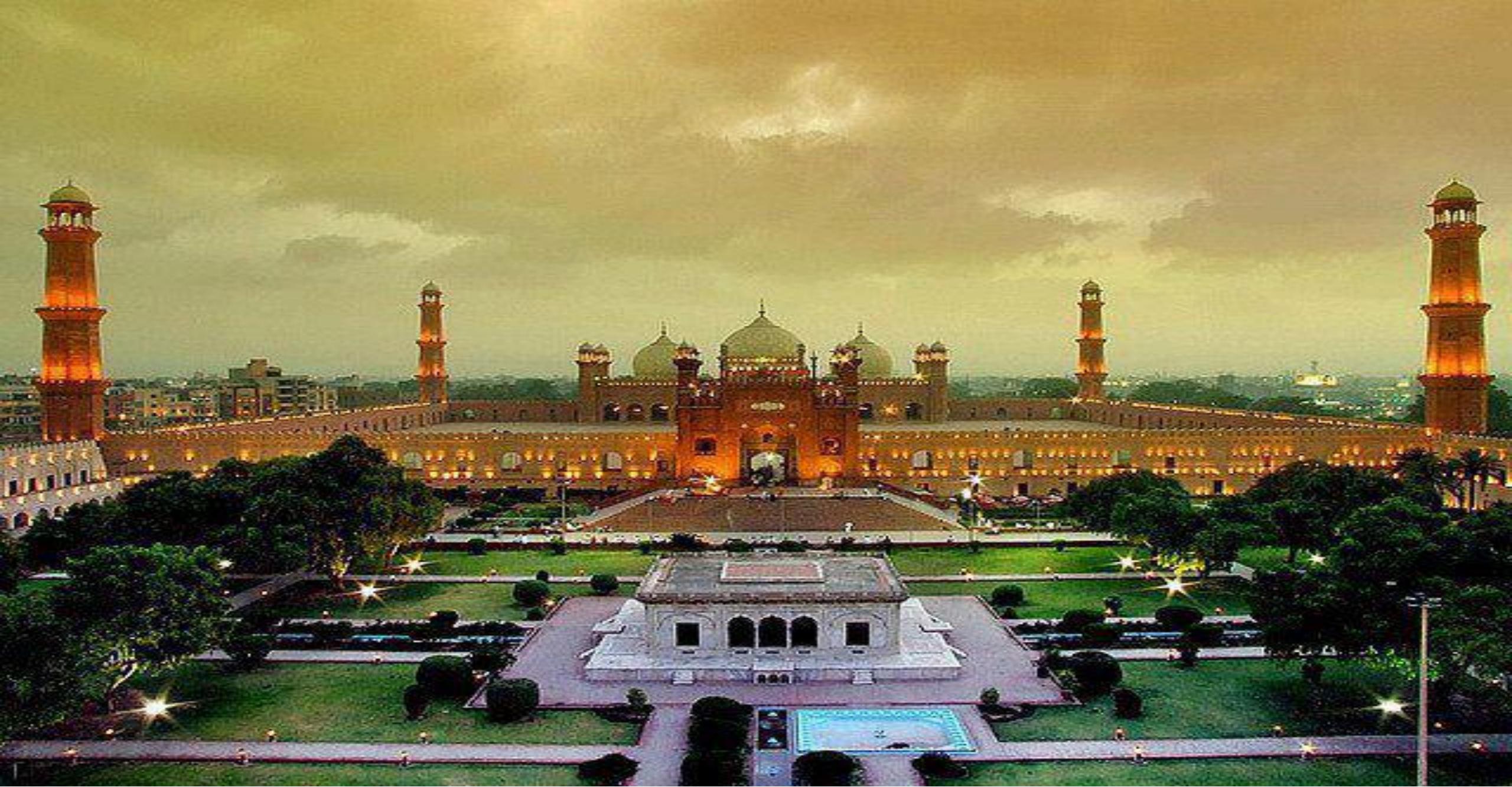
# Cultural Heritage And Modern Culture

Although Culture Is The Term Most  
Used To Interpret History, The  
Historical Component Of Culture Is  
Not Unanimously Acknowledged.

People Wishing To Reform, Are  
Mostly Hampered By Hereditary Or  
Historical Norms; Like The Mughal  
And British Attempts To Abolish *Sati*.

# The Cultural Scene In Pakistan Attests To The Compartmentalization Of The Historical And Current

The Badshahi Mosque, Lahore Is Our Cultural Heritage,  
The Tooba Mosque In Karachi Is A Product Of Modern  
Culture.



Badshahi Mosque, Lahore



Tooba Mosque, Karachi

In Historical Terms It Should Be Clarified  
That The Possession Of Great Cultural  
Heritage, To Belong To A Religion Which  
Has Had A Great Cultural Impact Is Not  
The Same As Possessing A Great Culture

A Great Culture Is One  
That Can Overcome  
Military Superiority.

The Hindus Were Able To Assimilate  
Conquerors Like The Huns And  
Muslims Were Able To Convert  
Mongols And Tartars Who Were Their  
Conquerors, To Their Own Religion.

When The British Invaded India,  
European Culture Was In A Dynamic  
State; Scientific Discoveries, Political  
Theorizing And Literature Were  
Receiving And Impetus, And At The  
Same Time Muslims Were Reflecting  
On Their Decline.

Gradually The Mold Of South Asian Culture Will Become Obsolete. The Mold Of Modern Pakistan Will Come Into Play

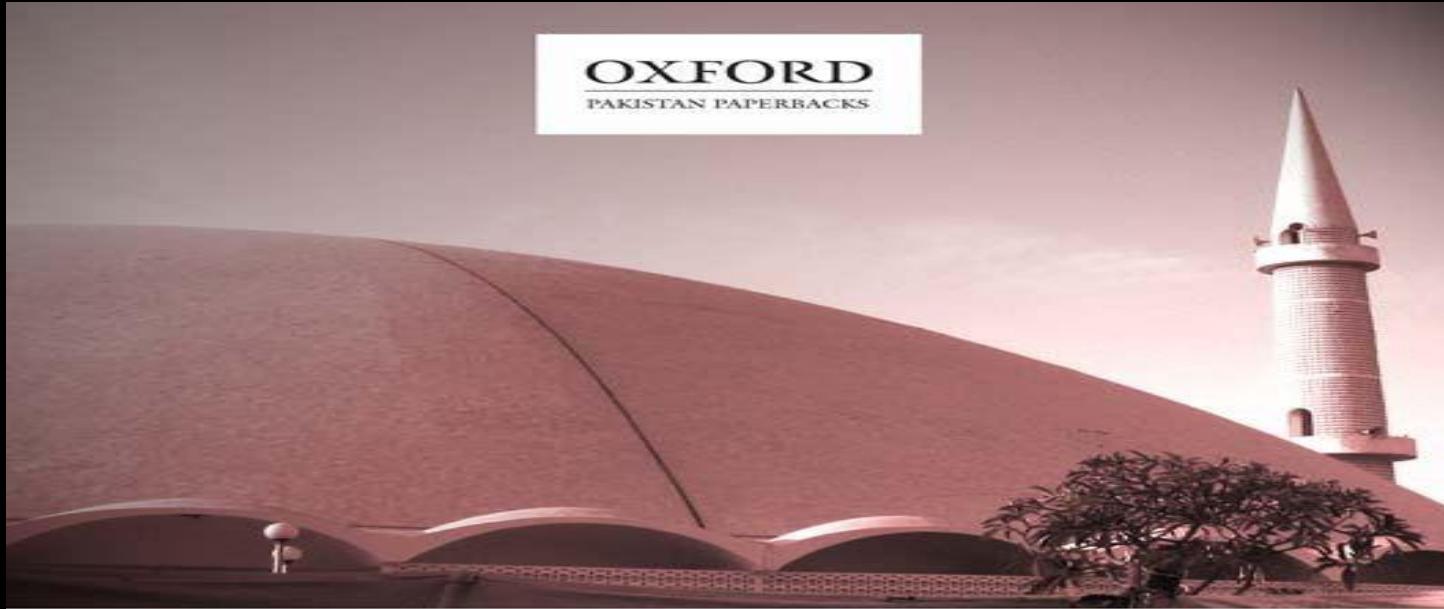
Perhaps The Present Is Not Equal To The Past, But Nevertheless It Will Point To The Future, To A Pakistan Which Is Perforce Nuclear, A Pakistan Which Is Threatened, A Pakistan Which, In Addition, Is Beset With Environmental Hazards, Which Has Serious Gender Inequalities, And Which Is Sitting On A Population Time Bomb.

These Are To Be The Future  
Parameters Of Pakistani Culture  
Regardless Of Whether We  
Overcome These Challenges, Or  
Whether They Overwhelm Us.

If These Trends Are A Danger, They Are Equally So To All Pakistanis And In That Sense They Have A Unifying Effect, For They Call For All Of Us To Put Our Heads Together In Order To Evolve Values And A Mode Of Life Acceptable To All.

# Question/Answers

# Reference



A CONCISE  
HISTORY  
OF PAKISTAN

M. R. KAZIMI