***NAME:- MUDASSIR AFRIDI***

***ROLL NO:- 15893***

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***SUBJECT:- SOCIOLOGY***

***ASSIGNMENT***

***INTRODUCTION TO SOCIOLOGY***

***EXTREMISM***

Extremism is a critical problem faced by Pakistani society today, leading to social, economic, cultural, political turmoil and humanitarian crises, it has nurtured due to internal and external factors, internal being the prevalence of social injustice, inequality, illiteracy and exploitation in the society and external and external factor being the involvement of Pakistan in the regional and international power game and proxy wars. Modus operandi of extremism id the expression of a fanatic behavior by individual and group, who are not able to convey their will in the society, through prevalent social mechanism. The people who cannot exert their influence, in the decision making process, go for violent means to express their opinion. As a result we see anarchy in the society. This situation fuels the flames of poverty, terrorism and social distress. Extremism can by of different types, it can be ethnic, linguistic, narrow nationalism but the most severe kind of extremism faced by our society is religious extremism. The main characteristics of religious extremism are:

• Forcefully imposing the own version of religion on others.

• Intolerant behavior towards other sects.

• Strict regulation of women, including formal schooling & most of the employments.

• Persecution of minorities i.e people of other religions.

A new terminology coined in recent pat is Talibanization;

It is a form of extremist ideology that has its roots in soviet war in Afghanistan and is currently prevalent in both Pakistan and Afghanistan. Apart from above features, there are certain specific features of Talibanization, such as:

• Conducting terrorist attacks on government building and public places.

• Implementing the own version of Sharia Laws.

• The destruction of non-Muslim artifacts, especially carving and statues such as Buddha of Bamyan.

• Banning activities like hairstyles, shaving and clothing.

• Forceful closure of music/video centers and banning electronic media.

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Sometimes the term ‘extremism’ is interchangeable used with ‘fundamentalism’; however there are some basic differences between the two terminologies. In lexical meaning the term ‘fundamentalism’ is used for those who are the strict believers of the codes of any religion of any ideology, it is focused on one’s own self-regulation rather than forcefully molding others’ behavior and as like other religions, lslam also preaches peace and equality of human being, the fundamentalists would be having the respect of human life and would be less violent toward others. Conversely, in cultural context, the term ‘fundamentalism’ is associated with Christian extremist groups which violently imposed their religious beliefs on others, this difference in lexical and cultural meaning of the term ‘fundamentalism’ is crating conflict between Muslims and west, Muslims perceive the lexical meaning with the Christians perceive the term in cultural context.

Another factor giving rise to the religious extremism in Pakistan is the proxy wars of different Muslim states being fought in Pakistan i.e. predominantly of Saudi Arabia and Iran, Saudi Arabian government is follower of Wahabi ideology and Irani government follows Shiite ideology, followers of both the ideologies live Pakistan. So both the countries are fighting proxy war in Pakistan for the dominance of their co-religionists in Pakistan.

Extremism is one of the social evils faced by our country, causing violence, hatred, terrorism and great vulnerability to our society. It has it’s the roots in our flawed foreign policies in the past, mainly on the northwestern frontier, our socio-polotico & economic situation has provided conducive environment for the extremism to flourish. Extremist mentality has severely deteriorated the business environment and economic situation of Pakistan. Government’s efforts via military action are handy in short run, but in the long run government needs to focus on changing the living conditions of people in areas where extremism is increasing. Individuals also need to cooperate with government for the eradication of extremism; there is very important role family, ulema, intellectuals and the well-off (upper class), for the control of extremist ideology in our society. We have to take the issue of extremism serious and devise concrete measures for its eradication or else our society will be in the state of anarchy and civil war.

The military operation started by current government to curb the extremists and Taliban in Swat and Agency areas is a brave step, but it has both positive and negative connotations. The positive consequences are in a sense that government is iron-handedly crushing the panic creators, who are challenging writ of the government. The approach is helpful in the short run. However, in the long run this approach is not result oriented, because the government operation is indiscriminately killing the innocent and culprit both. As the tenure of army operation will increase it will increase the innocent killings, therefore the army operation will lose its legitimacy amongst the messes and will prove to be victorious for insurgents. Therefore army operation must be completed in minimum possible time with minimum possible civilian causalities.

Consequently, the extremism exerts very grave impacts on the society, it creates a vulnerable situation, whereby law and order situation deteriorates and writ of the government is challenged by the individuals and order of the system is in trouble. Frequent terrorist attacks are the result of this situation; Pakistan is one of such countries in the world where most of the terrorist attacks happen. This scenario is source of a great threat to internal stability of Pakistan, as the security of the state institutions as well as the general public is at stake. The terrorist attacks on religious occasions, further engrave the sectarian violence and create tensions between communities and people of different sectarian background living side by side. This creates an overall state of social distress.