

Role of Religious Interventions in the Reintegration of Prisoners (A Case Study of Selected Jails of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa/KP, Pakistan)

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Abstract:

Prisoners' reintegration is the core concept of almost all penal systems in the world. One of the potent tools to ensure prisoners' reintegration is effective network of religious services within prisons. This paper aims at exploring the role of religious interventions in the reintegration of prisoners with specific focus on Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa (KP) jails. Six high profile jails--- Central Jail Peshawar, Haripur, Bannu, and District Jail Timergara, Mardan and Kohat of KP were purposively selected. Mixed methodology, more specifically concurrent triangulation technique, was used to collect and analyze the data.

Of all 261 respondents, 250 comprised of jail inmates (under-trial and convicted adults and juveniles male prisoners) were randomly selected within the six jails of the province and interviewed through semi-structured questionnaire. The remaining 11 respondents, purposively selected and interviewed through interview-guide included jail officials of all the selected prisons (6 in numbers) and ex-prisoners (5 in numbers).

It was found that a clear majority of the respondents considered religious interventions instrumental in accomplishing the goal of prisoners' reintegration i.e., making them law abiding, productive, contributing and pro-social citizens. Many of the apparently incorrigible and potentially dangerous prisoners altered the course of their lives once they went through religious programs inside prisons. It was also discovered that in KP prisons, there was no effective network of chaplaincy services, and often these services were provided by self-motivated religious prisoners and rarely by the prison management with the collaboration of NGOs. Yet, the existing religious interventions had an extraordinary impact in terms of reforming the inmates. Hence, it is recommended that any prisons' reform strategy must incorporate a well-designed framework of religious programs to transform criminals into an asset for society.

Key Words: Reintegration, Religious/ Chaplaincy Services/ Interventions, Prisoners

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1. Introduction:

Reintegration of the criminals is a preferred aim in the current penology. Throughout the history the well known ways of dealing with offenders have been incapacitation, deterrence, retribution, rehabilitation or reformation¹ etc. Among them, the rehabilitation/reintegration/reformation/reclamation (the terms overlap in this research) prevailed in the modern world, because its ultimate end is to change an offender into a law abiding citizen. By the end of 18th century, prior to this newly emerging approach, it was a deeply entrenched belief in Europe that the imposition of radical penalties on the lawbreakers could only guarantee the social and moral soundness of society. Yet, this viewpoint was substituted by a novel outlook in 1870, whereby the emphasis removed from punishment to the reformatory and remedial functions of the jails. For instance, it was made crystal clear in the first Prison Congress in 1870, that lawbreakers were to be treated as per their criminogenic needs, and that prison regimes would serve institutions of reforming the outlaws². Moreover, to protect society has been an agreed upon aim behind the punishment of wrong doers. However, it is well understood that society's safety would be elusive if its prisons are mainly punitive rather than rehabilitative³. It is also noteworthy that according to current philosophy of Human Rights; convicts must to be measured human beings, worthy of self-respect and honourable treatment as John⁴ has claimed that the privileges of captives are indisputable seeing greater approach of human civil rights. Also, B.G Ramcharan (UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, 2003-2004) declares that a society can be ranked stable or otherwise considering the ways it treat with, its feebler sections⁵. It may also be noted that the nineteenth century presented captivity to be the cultured approach of penalty in contrast to the cruel and punitive conducts, convicts were dealt with, in the Dark Ages and thus the remedial and rehabilitative aspects of jails came to the limelight, at least theoretically⁶. Tomar⁷ speaks that contrary to the past, when jail imposed discomfort merely on the physique of the deviants, the modern prison works on both the body and the mind of the convicts to achieve the superior aim of convicts' reintegration. Identifying the emerging idea of imprisonment, Khan, Majeed and Ajmal⁸, establishes that the ultimate end of jail reforms is to ensure the reentry of such individuals into society who could successfully tackle the hardships of life inside the border of law without hurting others. The statement of the Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (hereinafter, KP), Prison Department should also serve as an eye opener, which says that the only purpose of restricting convicts to the **Total Institutions** like prisons is to reform them under the watchful eyes of the state officials⁹.

Thus, it is well understood in the light of modern approach that prisons are supposed to make an inmate well equipped for normal and productive life on his/her reentry to society and all the pre-release efforts are to be designed in this direction. Also the concept of human rights reinforces the idea that deprivation of liberty does not mean to label inmates "Persona-non- grata", rather, their rights, which ensure their dignity and humane treatment are to be observed to the maximum.

One of the effective interventions that have been found throughout the history to reform the wrong doers is religion. For instance, Dammer¹⁰ revealed as,

Throughout the long history of corrections, religious persons and religious institutions have greatly influenced the treatment of offenders. For centuries, churches were among the first institutions to provide asylum for accused criminals. The actual establishment of prisons and penitentiaries was a religious idea that allowed the offender to obtain penance for his crimes, make amends, and convert while being isolated from others. But probably the most significant influence was the establishment of a regular chaplaincy. Correctional chaplains were among the earliest paid non-custodial staff and were the first to provide education and counseling for inmates. Currently, many correctional inmates practice their religion on an individual basis or within the structure of an organized religious program. Religious programs are commonplace in jails and prisons and research indicates that one in three inmates participates in some religious program during their incarceration.

Faith based programs are widely found in the prisons worldwide as Johnson, Larson & Pitts¹¹ disclosed that religious programs have been in practice inside prisons since long, and they are widely operative even today to rehabilitate the inmates. Also, researches divulged that in the modern world, the US criminal justice is characterized by the active role of religious people. Almost each of the 1100 State and Federal prisons in the US have at least one paid chaplain or religious services coordinator, and as a whole they employ about 1,700 professional chaplains¹². Peters¹³ brought to light the Federal Bureau of Prisons America a report which stated that religious programs by faith groups inside prisons are not only focusing just on spiritual deliverance of the prisoners; rather, their rehabilitation in the profane world is also taken into consideration. Clear & Sumter¹⁴ stated that religion based programs are an effective tool of offenders' correction and are very instrumental in reforming their misconduct. Johnson, Tompkins & Webb¹⁵ argued in the juvenile context that many researches claim that the more a child inmate engages in chaplain services, the more s/he gives up his delinquent life style. Coyle¹⁶, on the occasion of the 6th worldwide conference of the International Prison Chaplains' Association Stockholm 21st August, 2010 speaks:

O, prison chaplains of the world. You are one of the most important groups in ensuring that prisons are places of decency, places which operate within an ethical context, where all who live and work there are treated with humanity and with respect for their inherent dignity. That is not an easy calling. You may be mocked for your efforts; you will certainly be challenged; you may even be threatened. But that is your prophetic and pastoral role.

Larson & Larson¹⁷ unveiled the findings that those prisoners who go through religious practices on routine basis show great level of satisfaction, happiness and no or very little signs of psychological stress. Moberg¹⁸ described that the inmates' close relationship with God motivates them to have positive and constructive relation with themselves and others. Fagan¹⁹ stated that individuals, families and states, once begin to follow religion become more stable and reformed. Chiarizio²⁰ identified the findings of various studies showing that the greater religious engagement, the lower is the level of delinquency. Also, participation in religious programs makes a person abide by the prison rules and overcome recidivism as well. Moreover, Clear et al²¹ suggested that, "religious programming is easily the most common and pervasive form of correctional rehabilitation available to prisoners." The story of Prophet Joseph as mentioned in the Quran revealed that he consolidated his reformatory mission from within the jail. He reformed and recruited many of the jailbirds to spread his divine cause. As mentioned in the holy Quran, he addressed, to his fellow inmates as:

O my fellow prisoners, say, which is better: various gods or the One Omnipotent Allah?²² The gods you worship other than Him are nothing more than mere names you and your forefathers have invented, for Allah has sent down no authority for them. Sovereignty belongs to none but Allah. He has commanded that you shall not worship anyone but Him. This is the right and straight Way, but most people do not know this²³.

It shows that religious services have the potential to turn not only prisoners into better human beings rather it can make prisons launching pads for reforming the whole society.

2. Methodology:

Mixed methodology i.e., both qualitative and quantitative data collection tools were employed in this study. Moreover, it is a case study of KP jails. Case study is recommended for getting in-depth and well elucidated evidence and understanding of a social phenomenon²⁴. To collect the data, 250 prisoners (see Annexure A) were randomly selected from the six selected jails of KP. The jails purposively selected throughout the province include central prisons, namely *Peshawar, Haripur, Bannu* and district prisons namely *Temargara, Mardan* and *Kohat*. For in-depth interviews 11 key respondents including 5 ex-prisoners and 6 superintendents or deputy- superintendents (of all the selected jails) were purposively selected. The prisoners within custody were interviewed through semi-structured interview, whereas the jail officials and ex-prisoners' views were taken through an in-depth interview guide. Concurrent triangulation technique was used to collect and analyze the data. The triangulation technique combines qualitative and quantitative data sources and secondary data to confirm, cross-validate or corroborate findings within a single study.²⁵

3. Results and Discussions

3.1. Chaplaincy Services and its impact on the inmates

Table 2 (see Annexure B) shows the existence, impact and nature of chaplaincy services inside KP jails. In this regard, the majority of inmates i.e., 223 out of 250 (89.2%), replied that they were morally and spiritually upgraded by the chaplaincy programs, while only 27 (10.8%) prisoners responded the contrary. Regarding the nature of chaplaincy services, 59 out of 223 (26.5%) said that the Holy Quran with translation was widely functional; 68 (30.49%) and 6 (2.71%) inmates identified periodic classes by religious scholars and routine admonition classes respectively to be in place. Whereas, 90 i.e., (40.35%) inmates admitted the prevalence of all the mentioned services in the jails. Furthermore, among the 27 inmates, who experienced no reforms through religious interventions, 18 (66.77%) referred to translation of the Holy Quran and the rest 9 (33.33%) identified periodic classes by religious personnel to be in practice within their jails. These prisoners, however, did not say that religious programs had any adverse impacts on their lives. Rather, they disclosed that they had gone through some of the religious programs, but not decided yet, to abandon their criminal life style. They also revealed that it was their own fault, instead of the sacred religious services (Field Notes, 12th May 2014). It was observed that in addition to the mentioned religious programs, often arranged by self-motivated religious prisoners inside jails, there were seminars on selected topics conducted by various religious organizations. These seminars aimed at motivating prisoners to abide by religion, which may lead to a crime-free and law abiding life. Also, religious interventions were directed to improve the positive self-concept of the inmates. A prisoner having feeling of guilt cannot be adjusted properly into society. He is often at war with himself. Thus, religious interventions help inmates to believe in the mercy of God, and do as much righteous deeds as possible to be expiated and elevated by Almighty Allah in this world as well as in the hereafter. This self-respect, a cause of prisoners' peace of mind, is direly needed to reform a prisoner. Also, to many prisoners along with reform and psychological relief, religious education was an incentive to get remission. It may also be noted that the six jails visited by the researcher had no effective and systematic procedure for the arrangement of chaplaincy services. The self-motivated prisoners could be mainly accredited for providing religious services to other prisoners. Occasionally, prisons' management too arranged certain programs with the collaboration of various NGOs. However, considering its positive impact, the officials often attributed these programs to themselves (Personal Observation, May 2014). It was discovered that religious teachings had extraordinary impacts on many prisoners, and eventually they altered the course of their lives. For example, an inmate in his forties from *Haripur* Jail unfolded that he was a habitual criminal and had chosen crimes as his profession. However, a turning point came in his life when he heard the translation of the holy Quran from a religious scholar inside his jail. He repented, tears rolled down his face many times remembering his past life and he promised with God that he would lead a law abiding life on his release which

was soon expected (Field Notes, 12th May, 2014). Another prisoner, from Peshawar jail unveiled almost the same story as:

I was polluted in the crimes; I was such a stone hearted person that to kill torture and abuse others was my hobby. I had been twice to the prison before, but one day when a religious scholar was delivering a sermon on the mercy of Almighty Allah, it shook me to the core and changed me from within. I wept that night and sought forgiveness for my sins from Allah, the Almighty. I would say goodbye to the dirty world of crime forever. I, also admit that the way I changed, everybody could be changed and reformed (Field Notes, May 2014).

The **jail superintendents** too were convinced that religious teachings had dramatically reformed the inmates. For instance, Deputy Superintendent of *Bannu* Jail expressed as: “Religious scholars regularly come and take admonition classes with prisoners on various topics which have proved to be very fruitful for their reformation” (Interview with T. Sehbaz, 13th May 2014). Also, due to remission incentives many prisoners are attracted towards religious and contemporary education programs as Deputy- Superintendents of *Peshawar* and *Haripur* jails admired in their statements (Interview with S. Babak & Q. Khan, May 2014). Superintendent of *Temargara* Jail also highlighted the significance of religious interventions saying, “Religious scholars are formally invited to deliver sermons and lectures focusing on the brainwashing of offenders or accused. Recently, a religious scholar has delivered lecture on “Repentance” (Interview with prison officials, 7th May 2014).

Ex-prisoners too admitted the magic impact of chaplaincy interventions on their lives. They revealed that religious norms were inculcated into prisoner by the management through chaplains. Remission was also provided if certain targets were achieved. It was stated by one of the ex-prisoners that inmates would have been collapsed without these services within the jails. Prisoners were upgraded physically, morally and psychologically once they had gone through the religious interventions. An ex-inmate, while sharing his feelings expressed that he had the potential to become a devil, but through religious indoctrination he was reformed to the extent that then he was committed to an angelic life. One of the prisoners described that he had full peace of mind with the learning of Quran, taught to him by some religious personnel. Expressing his view a released inmate had to say that any person having strong attachment with Quranic injunctions would indeed avoid wrong track as he did. Another ex-jailbird remarked that he was worse but God changed him through the admonishing classes he had inside jails. He realized his worth as a human being; developed self-respect, avoided harming others, and stood against all odds of life with patience and smiling face. He attributed this miraculous change in his life to religious interventions (Interviews with ex-prisoners, 2014).

4. Conclusion and Recommendations:

Thus, the results herein show that religious programs are imperative to reform and to give solace to the inmates who are on the verge of collapse. In countries

like Pakistan, and in the province of KP where religious attachment is too strong, religious interventions may always be instrumental in reclaiming and correcting the wrong doers. Also, religion's role as an effective tool of social control and reform is widely recognized as shown in the secondary data. Hence, any reform strategy for the reform of prisoners must consider it. As recommendations, Stoddard²⁶ findings are worth noting. He described that state must ensure in-prison religious services owing to its utility, as these programs decrease recidivism, raise morale of the prisoners, make them self-disciplined, improve their peace of mind, can ease the state's strained financial coffers by relying on volunteers to deliver faith-based programming, and last but not least, they *work extraordinarily as an agent of change*. Those without chaplaincy services when released, half of them are likely to be rearrested within three years, while in case of religious interventions, their recidivism rates are reportedly as low as 13%. Moreover, the problem of overcrowding can be tackled appropriately once the cycle of recidivism is decreased considerably through religious indoctrination. Hence, a well-designed strategy to incorporate religious programming thorough learned chaplains is instrumental to fit back prisoners into society as law abiding citizens.

Table 1 Annexure A

Area	Population Size	Sample Size
Central Jail Peshawar	2474	97
Central Jail Haripure	1359	54
Central Jail Bannu	813	32
District Jail Temergara	533	21
District Jail Mardan	453	18
District Jail Kohat	315	28
Total	6346	250

Note: The population of each jail is based on Bangash, M. (2013) Investigation Report in *Daily Mashriq* Islamabad/Peshawar. Monday, April 8th, 2013)²⁷.

Annexure B:
Table 2 Chaplaincy Services and its Impacts on Prisoners

Statement	Nature of Chaplaincy Programs				Row wise Total &%	Total
	Translation of the Holy Book	Periodic Classes by Religious Scholars	Routine Admonition classes	All of the Mentioned		
Prisoners are morally and spiritually upgraded by Chaplaincy services						
Yes	59 26.45%	68 30.49%	6 2.71%	90 40.35%	223 100%	223 89.2%
No	18 66.67%	9 33.33%	0 0%	0	27 100%	27 10.8%
Total	77 30.8%	77 30.8%	6 2.4%	90 36%	250 100%	250 100%

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