

## ***Critical Review of Two Pakistani TV Ads in the light of Islamic Shariah***

**Dr. Shahab Naimat Khan**

Assistant Professor, Department of Islamic Studies, BUIITEMS University Quetta  
Email: shahab.naimat@gmail.com

**Dr. Aftab Ahmad**

Assistant Professor Department Islamic Studies, SBB University Sheringal Dir  
Upper  
Email: dr.aftabahmad@sbbu.edu.pk

**Dr. Mohammad Naeem**

Assistant Professor (Shariah), Department of Islamic Studies, Abdul Wali Khan  
University Mardan, K.P  
Email: drnaeem@awkum.edu.pk

### ***Abstract:***

*Pakistan was founded on the name of Islam and those people who struggled and faced atrocities of the occupying nations, aimed to have a free place where they can practice their religion without any barrier. On the other hand Islam required from Muslims to act upon the teachings and directives of Islam in their all fields of lives. For this purpose, Islam demanded from Muslims to review critically their all walks of lives and try hard to conform them with the instruction and guidelines provided to them. If they face novel situation or issue, they should consult the origins of Islam and strive to search its solution. The advertising in its present condition is a novel issue. Its Shariah Ruling has been discussed here in this article first. Afterwards, two ads of the Pakistani TV are translated into English and then their critical review in the light of Islamic Shariah and Pakistani Society is stated. The conclusion of the article and some suggestions are added in the end.*

**Keywords:** *Islamic Shariah, Advertising, Quran, Hadees*

### **Introduction:**

It is a proven fact that the need for something determines its importance. Let's take the example of oxygen and water. Both are extremely important to humankind; therefore, it is impossible for a person to deny their significance. The same is the case with the advertising in today's business. In the present, both the businessman or the consumer is exposed to the advertisement. The businessman uses advertising to promote his goods and increase his revenue, whereas the consumer uses the ad because he wants to find new items and ways to meet his needs and desires so that he

can buy and use them if they are within his reach. Now the Islamic teachings are for Muslims to know the Islamic status and its limits in everything and act accordingly. The same was the aim of those people who gave their blood to free this country Pakistan. They wished to live their lives in conformation with the teachings of Islam. Keeping in view these point the Shariah ruling of the advertising is mentioned here first in this article. Then two ads of the Pakistani TV are translated and their critical review considering Islamic Shariah and Pakistani culture is presented in the article. The conclusion of the article and some suggestions are stated in the end.

### **Shariah Ruling of the Advertising:**

Inviting people to the products and catching their attention to increase their sale is not a new thing in business and history both. But the ways which are being used nowadays for that have been advanced and developed along with the advancements in other areas of life. In the old days people would be hired to advertise goods. Those people would roam towns and cities and inform the masses about a trade item, its qualities, and whereabouts. Another way of advertising was that people would specify a place in a village or a town for market and sellers and buyers would gather there and conduct their transactions there. The sellers used to place their selling items open in those markets to show people what they had been selling. These two were the simplest ways of the advertising in the ancient times.

Same was the case in the time of the holy Prophet (PBUH) and he was aware of the same, but he never stopped them. His silence in this regard will be considered as ‘Silent Approval’.<sup>1</sup>

Another proof of its existence in the life of the holy Prophet (PBUH) is that once he was passing by a shop of one of his companions and he was selling grains. He had sited sacks of the grain open to display for people. The holy Prophet (PBUH) thrust his hand into a sack of the grain to check, he came to know that the upper layer of the grain was dry, and the inner grains were wet. He asked the grain seller: O Grain Seller! What is this? He said: O Messenger of Allah! It was raining at night and the grain got wet. The Prophet (PBUH) said: Why did you not put the wet ones up so that people might know its real status. Then he added: “Whoever deceive us is none of us.”<sup>2</sup>

In the abovementioned hadees, the holy Prophet (PBUH) forbade the deception but did not prevent the grain seller from placing the trade item openly for the advertising.

Similarly, *Hazrat Anas* (r.a) reported that there was a man named *Zahir*. He used to bring presents for the holy Prophet (PBUH) from a village and the holy Prophet (PBUH) would give him things as gifts when he would leave for his village. The holy Prophet (PBUH) said: ‘*Zahir* is our village, and we are his city.’ He was beloved of the holy Prophet (PBUH), but he was not a beautiful man.

One day the holy Prophet (PBUH) saw him in the market and got closer to him. He was selling his goods. The Prophet (PBUH) hugged him from behind so he could not see him. He said: who is this? Leave me. All the sudden he recognized the holy Prophet (PBUH). He abandoned the resistance to get free of his grip to the extent that he himself started touching the chest of the holy Prophet (PBUH) with his back. The Messenger of Allah said: Who will buy this boy? He said: O Messenger of Allah! Then you will find me worthless. The Prophet (PBUH) said: But you are not worthless in the sight of Allah. Or he said: You are too expensive in the sight of Allah.<sup>17</sup>

The words ‘Who will buy this boy?’ are proof of an advertising in that era. All the preceding evidence from the life of the holy Prophet (PBUH) clearly indicate that the advertising itself is legitimate in the Islamic Shariah unless something contradictory religiously is added to it.

## **AD NO: 1 Sprite**

### Scene No: 1

The scene starts with a Dhaba (small local restaurant) on the screen. Red painted wall is behind a refrigerator and only sprite bottles are in there. A young pretty girl is picking a sprite bottle from the refrigerator. She is wearing a pant-shirt and a green jacket despite she needs a cold drink. Suddenly the camera comes to a young guy and two young girls (one of these two is that green jacket girl). All of them are wearing pant-shirts. The hair of girls are untied and they are not having head covering. The girl with a green jacket is drinking a sprite and the other girl is speaking English and trying artificially to copy the English people’s accent. She is doing so to show that she belongs to high class. Her words are: ‘I love desi films, the products....’ The other girl says: ‘Come, let’s make you taste some red chilies.’ The background music is on.

**Scene No: 2**

These three people approach a vacant table and sit on chairs around it. The girl in the green jacket orders the dhaba cook sitting in her chair, sounding like this: “O Uncle! A KARHAI (name of a Pakistani dish), special, with Sprite.” And she passes smile to the cook. It indicates that she is a regular customer of this restaurant and the things she ordered are well-known to the cook. Soon after this the background music starts increasing and swings at its fullest as if any work is reaching its climax.

**Scene No: 3**

The Chicken Karhai is being cooked as well as Sikh Kabab are on fire. The red chillies are being sprayed in large quantity.

**Scene No: 4**

The camera is on a cat. She is being seen among chairs and meows. That artificial modern girl says: ‘Pretty Cat!’ During this a waiter brings the Karhai etc. for them. The boy with those girls pours extra red and green chillies on the Karhai. The modern girl takes some pictures of the Karhai and mumbles something. The boy says to the other girl: Will she eat or keep doing her aimless chores?

**Scene No: 5**

That artificial modern girl eats a morsel of the Karhai and her tongue begins burning and the worlds seems to her like moving fast. She grabs a sprite bottle from an icebox and put the bottles on her mouth at once. After drinking enough sprite in one breath, she puts the sprite on the table and hurls abuse unknowingly. She says: “O sister f\*\*\*\*\*! These chillies tore my ....”

Before this when she placed the sprite bottle on the table, it was being said in the background with music in male voice: ‘Chilli, Chilli, Chilli, Chilli, Chilli, Chilli,Chilli, this chilli has ruined me.’

**Scene No: 6**

This girl says it all so loudly that all the people around start to stare at her in surprise. When the girl says her abusive words, the girl and the boy next to her laugh surprisingly. She feels embarrassed and looks around. Then, to hide her embarrassment she calls the cook and beat the table saying: ‘O uncle! One another Karhai.’ At that movement everyone around her laughs and gets busy in his/her work.

**Scene No: 7**

Sprite bottle is placed among the food plates and in the circle of fire around the plates SPRITE is written in bold English letters. At that time the fire circle turns into a words and moto of the sprite brand is written in Roman Urdu: ‘PEHLE BHARKAYE PHIR BUJHAYE’ (First pulses then repulses or first ignites then extinguishes.)<sup>3</sup>

**Review of the Sprite Ad:**

1. This ad exposes an unpleasant face of some of the people of Pakistani society. They feel proud to follow European people and their lifestyle. If they cannot do so perfectly, they try hard for it exaggeratedly.

Islam does not like its followers to imitate or bear a resemblance to any non-Muslim nation. The holy Prophet (PBUH) said: ‘Whoever imitates any nation is one of them.’<sup>4</sup>

2. The ad contains abusive language. Such abusive words by a girl in Pakistani Society is an obnoxious and offensive act. Furthermore, Islam forbids all Muslims to use vulgar language even for a rooster and wind. The holy Prophet (PBUH) said: “Do not revile the rooster for it wakes you up for prayer.”<sup>5</sup> Likewise the holy Prophet (PBUH) said: “Do not revile the wind.”<sup>6</sup>

If a Muslim person utters abusive words for anyone, it is considered one of the signs of hypocrite. The holy Prophet (PBUH) said: “Whosoever possesses four qualities is a real hypocrite, and who possesses one of them he has a quality of hypocrisy till he abandons it. These are: when he is entrusted with something, he proves himself dishonest, when he speaks, he tells a lie, when he makes promise he does not keep it and when he fights, he becomes evil and uses abusive words.”<sup>7</sup> So use of such words in the advertisement is an illegal act in the light of Islam.

3. The ad girls are wearing pant-shirts and their heads are not covered. Further, they are wearing make up to attract people to themselves. Islam does not approve such clothes. The holy Prophet (PBUH) prevented Muslims from wearing tight and thin clothes. ‘Once a daughter of Abu Bakr, Asma, entered upon the Messenger of Allah (saws) and she was wearing thin clothes. The Messenger of Allah (saws) turned his face from her and said: O Asma! When a woman reaches the age of menstruation, it done not suit her that

she exposes her parts of body except this and this, and he pointed to his face and hands.’<sup>8</sup>

4. The ad displays free intermingling of males and females. Islam has established system of veil between both genders. Islam never permits a strange man to meet a strange woman and vice versa unless they have legal Islamic relation. The Messenger of Allah (saws) strictly prohibited his followers to be alone with a strange woman.

Uqba bin Amir narrated that the Messenger of Allah (saws) said: “Beware of getting into the houses and meeting” (in seclusion). A person from the helpers said: O Messenger of Allah! What do you say about husband’s brother? As a result of which he said: “Husband’s brother is like death.”<sup>9</sup> Means he is as dangerous as death in destruction. Because the chances of falling in illegal relations are more in the case of husband’s brother than anyone else as he enters the house more frequently.

5. Islam does not sanction any of those advertisements which depict human or his/her body negatively. Whosoever watches TV ads experiences that the women and their bodies are misused in the ads. They are added to the ads with the main products to attract evil and lustful eyes to them or their bodies. Here in this ad the women are illustrated as the same way, because Sprite is used by male and female equally. Then the question is why did they bring two girls with such unacceptable clothes in Pakistan, to the ad.

The Islamic Shariah has given a respectful status to all mankind regardless of their religion. Allah the Almighty said: “Verily We have honored the children of Adam and have carried them over land and sea, and have made provision of good things for them, and have distinctly exalted them far above most of Our creation.”<sup>10</sup>

Allah the Sublime also said: “Certainly we have created the human in the best of moulds.”<sup>11</sup>

Islam commanded the Muslim woman to cover her body and wear modest clothes. Whereas in the different advertisements she is displayed as a material object. The goal of this display is to invite satanic eyes to watch her. Through this way the manufacturers want to publicize their products. Abdullah bin Masood (r.a) narrated that the holy Prophet (saws) said: “The women are traps of Satan.”<sup>12</sup> Under the guise of women and their bodies people are promoting their products, services and companies. This act

degrades the Muslim woman and her body from the status of honor and respect.

6. This ad with such foul language cannot be watched with family members and especially with children.
7. The ad is being broadcasted nowadays with sensor beeps and vulgar language is censored after the great demand of the Pakistani people.<sup>13</sup>

## **AD NO: 2 Sunsilk Black**

### **Scene No: 1**

A park is on the camera screen where boys and girls, who neither look Muslims nor Pakistani by their appearance, seem to be preparing for a music concert. Loudspeakers are around and next two search lights are set on poles. All these shows that the concert is at night and they are getting ready in daylight.

One of the girls in pant-shirt and with untied hair among them says: 'It's crazy that if girls work in daytime...' (She leaves the sentence incomplete, and the upcoming girl will complete it.) Another girl who is in pant-shirt too and she is wearing a white gown with untied hair, it tells that she is at workplace, says: and shine then it is allowed. Once again, the first girls say: If the same thing girls do at night? (She says this in question tone.) Afterwards, the camera focuses the sky, and the video is put on forward mode to show that time passed, and the dark came. The second girl says whispering: At night OUT? No, not allowed. (She completes the sentence.) Now again the first girl, with a headphone around her neck, says: Further, Yes, a standard dialogue: "what will people say?" expressing her disgust to these words, she lifts her eyes and shakes her shoulders. After that she gets busy in her music once more.

### **Scene No: 2**

The first girl is dancing with music instruments. Different liquid ingredients of Sunsilk Black are showed on the screen and a bottle of the Sunsilk black is among those ingredients. The same first girl holds her one hand in the air and dances amusingly. Her hair is flapping smoothly.

It is said in the background with music and female voice: 'Sunsilk believes that girls should shine day and night, therefore, their hair should shine day to night too. There are five natural oils in Sunsilk Black that provide hair long lasting shine. So, shine day tonight.'

### **Scene No: 3**

The second girl and her fellow are walking at night, their hair is flying in the wind. She turns to the camera and answers the question that appears to every mind that is: how are you given permission by your family members to be out at night? She says with smile: "It is allowed." The same scene displays two bottles of Sunsilk Black and it is written in Roman Urdu: JAB BAAL HON SAATH BAN JAYE HAR BAAT. (When you have nice hair, everything is fixed for you.)

### **Scene No: 4**

The screen is black and Sunsilk is written on the right side. There are some round designs in yellow color and a sachet of Sunsilk Black approaches twisting and Rs 5 is written next to it.

These words can be listened in the background with music tone and female voice: Give your hair Sunsilk shine day to night in only five rupees.<sup>14</sup>

### **Review of the Sunsilk Black Ad:**

1. Islam and Pakistani values do not allow young girls to leave their houses at night for parties and dance programs. This ad conveys a negative message in the aforesaid context that this type of values and rules are not applicable today.
2. To prove that negative view, the advertisers have mentioned an evidence, which is not acceptable both in the sight of Islam and Pakistani Society. The evidence is: "It's crazy that if girls work in daytime and shine then it is allowed. If the same thing girls do at night? At night OUT? No, not allowed." According to the Islamic Shariah and Pakistani Society it is objectionable for young girls in modest clothes to go out alone in the daylight without need. The holy Prophet (saws) said: "If a woman goes out, the devil looks out."<sup>15</sup> So presenting this statement, which is false, as an evidence and an acceptable fact is a lie. Nobody allows such irresponsible behavior in any religion and society.
3. When young Muslim girls in modest clothes are not allowed to leave their houses in daylight, how can they be allowed at night alone with immodest clothes? Therefore, many people of Pakistan have criticized the ad and disapprove it. They called it brain washing. Some others said: Sun silk Black advertisers should sell their product not Muslim values.<sup>16</sup>
4. This ad is promoting sense of vulgarity in Pakistan and paving way for night clubs and dance programs at night. Allah the Mighty and

Sublime said: “Those who love to spread indecency among the believers, will have a painful punishment in this world and the next. And Allah knows while you do not know.”<sup>17</sup>

5. The ad is an invitation to Muslim young generation especially girls to adopt European lifestyle.
6. It is very painful to say that Pakistani Sensor Authority i.e PEMRA has not banned this ad till date.
7. The Islamic Shariah and Pakistani norms are totally rejected through this ad.
8. This ad tries to spoil young minds and tries to fill them with hatred towards their religion and culture.
9. The clothes of all girls in the ad are intolerable in the light of Islamic Shariah.
10. Free gatherings of males and females are displayed in the ad which does not comply with the teachings of Islam.
11. This ad tries to break limits of Islam and invites Muslim girls to live their lives as they deem fit and they should not care about anything other than themselves and what pleases those most.
12. The girl is dancing on music and songs in the ad. The Islamic Shariah does not authorize the music and the songs. The holy Messenger of Allah (saws) said: “Undoubtedly, people among my nation will drink wine, naming it by another name, musical instruments will be played for them and singer girls (will sing for them). The earth will swallow them with the order of Allah, and He will turn them into monkeys and pigs.”<sup>18</sup>

### **Conclusion:**

The advertising has become an inevitable part of every business today. Since Muslims are bound in this world with the rules of Islam, it is their duty to search for its legal status before its utilization. Therefore, the legal status of the advertising is explained in this article and three examples are presented from the traditions of the holy Prophet (PBUH). After the consulting those examples, the result is that the advertising itself in its modern shape is allowed unless something contradictory to the Islamic Shariah is annexed to it.

Afterwards, two Pakistani TV ads were translated and reviewed in the light of Islam and the Pakistani culture. Both of those ads were clashing the Islamic Shariah and the Pakistani culture. The main negative point of the first ad was that there was use of vulgar language by a young girl. The girls' clothes were intolerable by both the Islamic

Shariah and the Pakistani culture. The second ad contained a lie and a scornful gesture towards the teachings of Islam and the Pakistani norms. All the aforesaid advertisements show that Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority (PEMRA) is not performing its duties sincerely.

### **Suggestions:**

1. PEMRA should perform its duty efficiently and ban all those ads which are against the Islamic Shariah and the Pakistani Culture.
2. People of Pakistan should avoid purchasing those products whose ads are not complying with the teachings of Islam, because if they cease to buy these products, they will never broadcast such ads. Allah the Merciful said: "Help one another in righteousness and in piousness and do not help one another to commit sin and transgression."<sup>19</sup>
3. The manufacturers should do their business within the limits of Islam and should make ads according to the Islamic Shariah. Further they should seek forgiveness of Allah the Greatest, otherwise they will be considered as wrongdoers. Allah the Almighty says: "Those who do not repent are the wrongdoers."<sup>20</sup>
4. It is mandatory on the manufacturers to abide by the laws of the country and should not make any ad which is contradictory to the laws of Pakistan. Allah the Sublime said: "O you who believe! Obey Allah and obey the Messenger and those who are in authority among you."<sup>21</sup>
5. Allah the All-Merciful commanded Muslim woman to stay at home. Allah the Most Beneficent said: "And stay in your houses and do not show yourselves off as did the women in the old days of ignorance."<sup>22</sup> Therefore, Muslim woman should stay at home and should not go out without a need.
6. Muslim women are not allowed to show their beauty except to those who are near to them in kin. Allah the Lord of the worlds says: "they should not display their beauty save to their husbands or to their fathers."<sup>23</sup> Hence Muslim women should cover herself and should not show herself to any strange man.
7. Such indecent language, which is used in the first ad, should not be used in any case.
8. Muslims should be proud of their religion and they should feel pleasure and satisfaction in being a Pakistani.

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