

Religious Minorities and the 'Civil Repair' Role of the Press; A Case Study of the Lynching of Sri Lankan Citizen Priyantha Kumara in Pakistan

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Abstract- Pakistan saw a heart wrenching, disgusting and condemnable crime against humanity when a 49-years old Sri Lankan citizen was brutally killed by a mob in Sialkot, Punjab on December 03, 2021 over blasphemy allegations. Given the nature of the incident and it's similarity with many other such unfortunate incidents international and national press took up the murder seriously and rigorously. Newspapers from Pakistan and Sri Lanka covered the issue not only to inform the readers but to highlight various dynamics and features of such incidents that occur every now and then in Pakistan. This research endeavor is an attempt to explore and analyze the news coverage of the killing of Mr. Priyantha Kumara in Pakistani and Sri Lankan newspapers. This study is an attempt to test a theory called *Civil Sphere Theory* proposed by Jeffrey C. Alexander in his book *The Civil Sphere* (2006). The findings of the study suggest that the newspapers in an attempt to perform the 'civil repair' role in their news stories, portrayed Mr. Priyantha Kumara as a 'victim' and 'disciplined man' (civil code) and the murderers as insane, wild-passionate, excitable, irrational, violent and unlawful people (anticivil codes) by using words such as violent, brutal, and inhumane. Their actions have been highlighted as 'anticivil' and the role of authorities has been portrayed as 'civil'.

Index Terms- Blasphemy, Civil Sphere Theory, Lynching of Priyantha Kumara, Religious Minorities, Sialkot Incident, Solidarity Discourse.

I. INTRODUCTION

The rise in religious intolerance in the society has become a major concern for the Pakistani nation especially for the non-Muslim communities which comprise roughly 3% of the entire population¹. The Christians, Hindus, Sikhs, etc. living in the country are always worried and fear about the safety and security of their lives. In the view of some scholars, a main factor of intolerance is the extremist mindset and ideologies that people

have developed over time². Some claim that this is due to the historical brainwashing of the people by the religio-political parties and their populist rhetoric³.

A consequence of such rising extremism was manifested on December 03, 2021 in Sialkot when a Sri Lankan citizen, Mr. Priyantha Kumara who was working as general manager for Rajco Industries, was beaten to death and later his body was cremated⁴. A later investigation into the matter revealed that a foreign delegation was to visit the factory and Mr. Kumara was responsible for organizing the visit who wanted things to be in order. He ordered whitewash and removal of some posters from the factory walls and machines. The content of the posters contained invitations to some religious congregation. This ignited a quarrel between some employees and Mr. Kumara which was later resolved by the factory owner. Mr. Kumara had to apologize for hurting the sentiments of those workers⁵.

Afterwards, a mob started gathering at the factory including those disgruntled workers who were not happy with Mr. Kumara for his 'disciplined nature' and they started chanting slogans normally heard during political rallies of Tehreek-e- Labaik Pakistan (TLP- a religio-political party). In an attempt to save his life Mr. Kumara fled to the roof of the factory but the angry mob rushed into the factory, bypassing the security guards, dragged him outside the factory, punched him, and hit him with iron rods

² Basit, Abdul. "Barelvi political activism and religious mobilization in Pakistan: The case of Tehreek-e-Labaik Pakistan (TLP)." *Politics, Religion & Ideology* 21, no. 3 (2020): 374-389

³ Kazmi, Syeda Ulya Ehsen. "Rise in public approval of religious extremism in Pakistan." (2022). Retrieved from <https://mpra.ub.uni-muenchen.de/114872/>

⁴ Sadiq, Imran. "Sialkot lynching: new footage shows a colleague trying to save Sri Lankan man; police arrest scores." *Dawn.com*, December 4, 2021. Retrieved from; <https://www.dawn.com/news/1661908>

⁵ Bilal, Rana. "Sialkot lynching case: ATC indicts 89 accused of murdering Sri Lankan national Priyantha Kumara." *Dawn.com*. March 12, 2022. Retrieved from; <https://www.dawn.com/news/1679614/sialkot-lynching-case-atc-indicts-89-accused-of-murdering-sri-lankan-national-priyantha-kumara>

¹ Hasnain, Khalid. "Pakistan's population is 207.68m, shows 2017 census result." *Dawn*. May 19, 2021. Retrieved from; <https://www.dawn.com/news/1624375/pakistans-population-is-20768m-shows-2017-census-result>

which resulted in his death⁶. According to the postmortem report the skull and jaw bones were fractured which caused Mr. Kumara's death⁷.

Given the nature of the incident and its similarity with many other such unfortunate incidents international and national press took up the murder seriously and rigorously. Newspapers from Pakistan and Sri Lanka covered the issue not only to inform the readers but to highlight various dynamics and features of such incidents that occur every now and then in Pakistan. This research endeavor is an attempt to explore and analyze the news coverage of the killing of Mr. Priyantha Kumara in Pakistani and Sri Lankan newspapers. This study is an attempt to test a theory called *Civil Sphere Theory* proposed by Jeffrey C. Alexander in his book *The Civil Sphere* (2006)⁸. He is a Professor of sociology in the Yale University, America.

Drawing on the civil sphere theory this research endeavor is an attempt to explore and analyze how and to what extent the selected newspapers have played the role of 'civil repair' in the aftermath of lynching of Priyantha Kumara in Sialkot? The researchers intend to explore and analyze the civil and anticivil codes produced by the selected newspapers in their news coverage of the murder of Mr. Priyantha Kumara in Sialkot.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Pakistan is a multicultural society with a majority of Muslims along with approximately 3% minorities⁹ including Hindus, Christians, Sikhs, and Ahmadis etc. Religious minorities have been given recognition since the advent of Pakistan, as the white color in the national flag has provided them a separate identity¹⁰. However, Rahman (2021)¹¹ argues that religious minorities are not treated well, and with the passage of time there has been evidences of hostility and prejudices against them in Pakistan. The religious minorities face lack of basic facilities and also suffer from insecurities regarding their existence in the

⁶ Sadiq, Imran. "Sialkot lynching: new footage shows a colleague trying to save Sri Lankan man; police arrest scores." *Dawn.com*, December 4, 2021. Retrieved from;

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1661908>

⁷ *The News*. "2 suspects "confess" to police they lynched Sri Lankan factory manager in Sialkot." December 4, 2021. Retrieved from; <https://www.thenews.com.pk/latest/914053-two-suspects-confess-to-lynching-sri-lankan-factory-manager-in-sialkot>

⁸ Alexander, Jeffrey C. *The civil sphere*. Oxford University Press, 2006

⁹ Hasnain, Khalid. "Pakistan's population is 207.68m, shows 2017 census result." *Dawn*. May 19, 2021. Retrieved from; <https://www.dawn.com/news/1624375/pakistans-population-is-20768m-shows-2017-census-result>

¹⁰ Ambreen, Qandeela. "Representation of religious minorities in Pakistani print media: A study of Daily Dawn, the News and the Nation." *American International Journal of Contemporary Research* 4, no. 1 (2014): 140-156

¹¹ Rahman, Khaista. "Attitudes towards Religious minorities in Pakistan: Gaps in the literature and future directions." *Pakistan Languages and Humanities Review* 5, no. 2 (2021): 345-359

mainstream society. The author mentions that as far as the state policies are concerned, government has not been successful in giving them basic rights¹². The facilities like 'education, religious freedom, and protection' have been lacking. Laws like blasphemy laws have not been providing protection, rather than lead to 'extrajudicial killings' and discriminatory behavior of the authority. Rahman (2021) maintains that the education system also has prejudice and discrimination against religious minorities¹³.

Kazmi (2022)¹⁴ in her research entitled 'Rise in Public Approval of Religious Extremism in Pakistan' has attempted to shed light on the growing phenomenon of extremism in Pakistani society. In the effort to justify the claims and build an argument regarding rising public approval of extremism, the author presents various pieces of evidence. The author, while giving the conceptual definition of religious extremism, blends in certain concepts e.g. blasphemy, hate speech, incitement to violence etc. The major focus of the study is the religio-political parties and the author has presented a scale of measuring extremism in the religious political parties. The scale is a twelve-point measurement that provides a spectrum of moderate to extremist values. However, the author does not mention how the validity and reliability of the scale was assured. The author does not provide enough evidence to support her major claim that "Pakistan has been facing religious violence for the past many years", other than the three major unfortunate incidents that occurred in the last decade. In the introduction of the article, the author mentions her fear that the people of Pakistan might vote for religious parties in the future. While outlining the religious extremism in Pakistan from the historical perspective, the author has presented selected facts to build a weak argument that the country's constitutional history has shown extremist behavior with the inclusion of Islamic provisions in all versions of the constitution.

The author has claimed that the wealthier people would vote more for religio-political parties which is a contributing factor in rising public approval of religious extremist in Pakistan. The researcher has claimed this on the basis of studying the income tax returns filed by the respondents. However, the author did not mention any intervening variables or extraneous variables that might also be a contributing factor in the people's political affiliations. This article provides an interesting perspective regarding increasing religious intolerance in Pakistan but the reasons behind this phenomenon are weakly knitted. There is no doubt that the religious intolerance in Pakistani society is increasing and being used by various pressure groups but the reasons and factors need to be elucidated with more care.

¹² Din, N., and Peter Jacob. "Challenges in Exercising Religious Freedom in Pakistan." (2019).

¹³ Rahman, Khaista. "Attitudes towards Religious minorities in Pakistan: Gaps in the literature and future directions." *Pakistan Languages and Humanities Review* 5, no. 2 (2021): 345-359; Hussain, Azhar, Ahmad Salim, and Arif Naveed. "Connecting the Dots: Education and religious discrimination in Pakistan: A study of public schools and madrasahs." (2011).

¹⁴ Kazmi, Syeda Ulya Ehsen. "Rise in public approval of religious extremism in Pakistan." (2022). Retrieved from <https://mpira.uni-muenchen.de/114872/>

In a recent and comprehensive research endeavor on the issue Musferah Mehfooz (2021)¹⁵ has attempted to study the various aspects of religious freedom in Pakistan in the light of Pakistan's national constitution. The researcher has questioned the authority of Islamic clerics to object religious freedom of minorities in Pakistan. Ms. Mehfooz has studied the constitution of Pakistan and primary sources of Islamic teaching to provide evidence for the readers to understand the dilemma happening in Pakistan. Researcher has analyzed different factors influencing the process of smooth establishment of religious harmony. In the introduction the researcher has referred to different research studies from different Muslim countries to support the argument of discrimination against minorities. In defining minorities, the researcher has stated various previous studies to identify the classification of minorities. Mehfooz (2021) claims that people are discriminated on the bases of religion, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, race, age and disabilities. She proposes that the religious minorities are the ones who practice their religious rituals and preserve their language, traditions and beliefs within the territories they live in. According to the findings of Mehfooz (2021) the violence, intolerance, discrimination, and hatred against religious minorities in the South Asia has been a usual practice historically. Whether it was India (Naveed et al., 2014), Burma (Gravers, 2015), Iran (Affolter, 2007) or Pakistan (Manchanda 2009), the religious minorities in these countries have faced discrimination, violence, and forced conversions¹⁶. Discussing the media attitudes towards the religious minorities Rahman (2021)¹⁷ claims that the representation of religious minorities in the mainstream media is significantly low. Ambreen (2014)¹⁸ believes that the English newspapers in Pakistan have more representation of religious minorities and that too in positive tone. Batool (2018)¹⁹, however, claims that

the representation of Hindus in Pakistani media is low and that the minorities' issues are ignored in Pakistani media. Batool further argues that representation of Hindus in Pakistani media is unequal and biased where Hindus' issues have been ignored.

Coverage of religious minorities by national media is not only a problem in countries like Pakistan, but this problem exists in press coverage of religious minorities in other developed countries as well. For example, Ghauri (2019)²⁰ claims that 'political parallelism' exists as an influential factor when it comes to the coverage of Islam and Muslims in the Australian press. Using critical discourse analysis as a methodology, the researcher explored and analyzed the coverage of Islam and Muslims in two Australian newspapers, *The Age* and *The Australian*, during 2016-17. The results of the study showed that *The Australian*, a newspaper with an overtly conservative or right-wing political ideological leaning, portrayed Islam and Muslims in the most negative light. The newspaper criticized pro-immigration policies and political stances. However, on the other hand, *The Age*, a newspaper with a liberal and left-wing political ideological leaning, supported immigration policies and criticized far-right policies against Muslims and immigrants. Therefore, coverage of religious minorities in the national press is a noteworthy phenomenon. In addition to political leanings, personal preferences, exposure and expertise of journalists are also influential factors affecting the coverage of religious minorities. Ashfaq et al. (2022)²¹ claim that the majority of journalists in Pakistan lack deontological skills, professional knowledge and resources when it comes to reporting critical events. In general, journalists are unable to separate rumors from facts, which makes it difficult to report on sensitive issues.

Regarding the use of social media with respect to the religious minorities Anthony and Hussain (2018) and Tanveer (2016) argue that the platform has been used significantly to promote religious hatred and discrimination against the religious minorities in Pakistan²². However, Rashid (2019)²³ believes that no doubt that the people living on the margins in any society have always experienced discriminations and disruptions, however with the advent and use of the new technologies the

¹⁵ Mehfooz, Musferah. "Religious freedom in Pakistan: A case study of religious minorities." *Religions* 12, no. 1 (2021): 51

¹⁶ Naveed, Fouzia, Maryam Munir, and Yasir Saeed. "Unveiling the situation of religious minorities: A case study of marginalized groups living in Lahore." *International Journal of Asian Social Sciences* 4, no. 1 (2014): 41-50; Gravers, Mikael. "Anti-Muslim Buddhist nationalism in Burma and Sri Lanka: Religious violence and globalized imaginaries of endangered identities." *Contemporary Buddhism* 16, no. 1 (2015): 1-27; Affolter 1, Friedrich W. "Resisting educational exclusion: the Baha'i Institute of Higher Education in Iran." *Diaspora, Indigenous, and Minority Education* 1, no. 1 (2007): 65-77; Manchanda, Rita. "Living on the Margin. Minorities in South Asia." *EURASIA-Net Project*. Kathmandu, 2009. 50-72. <https://www.yumpu.com/en/document/read/9713325/living-on-the-margins-minorities-in-south-asia-eurac>

¹⁷ Rahman, Khaista. "Attitudes towards Religious minorities in Pakistan: Gaps in the literature and future directions." *Pakistan Languages and Humanities Review* 5, no. 2 (2021): 345-359

¹⁸ Ambreen, Qandeela. "Representation of religious minorities in Pakistani print media: A study of Daily Dawn, the News and the Nation." *American International Journal of Contemporary Research* 4, no. 1 (2014): 140-156

¹⁹ Batool, Sumera. "Representation of religious minorities in Pakistani and Indian print media: a comparative

analysis." *Pakistan Social Sciences Review* 2, no. 1 (2018): 247-258

²⁰ Ghauri, M. J. (2019). Political parallelism" and the representation of Islam and Muslims in the Australian press. *SEARCH Journal of Media and Communication Research*, 11(2), 21-37

²¹ Ashfaq, M., Zubair, J., & Shahid, N. (2022). Journalism as a profession: An examination of the cognitive dimension of professionalism. *SEARCH Journal of Media and Communication Research*, 14(2), 79-90

²² Anthony, Kashif, and Zahid Hussain. "Social media stoking religious hatred in Pakistan." *Union of Catholic Asian News* (2018); Tanveer, Rana. "Social media being used as tool against minorities." *The Express Tribune*. December 22, 2016. Retrieved from;

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1272167/unregulated-hate-social-media-used-tool-minorities>

²³ Rashid, Dr Tahmina. "Social Media, Religion and Religiosity in Pakistan in the Era of Disruption." *Hamdard Islamicus* 42, no. 1-2 (2019)

marginalized people are enabled to disrupt the existing power hierarchies. She claims that "It seems that social media as well as disruptive technologies have disrupted the existing hierarchies to some extent" (p. 50). Similarly, Batool et al. (2021)²⁴ claim that there is a significant association between the level of Facebook use and the awareness level among the Christian community in Pakistan. Pakistani Christians are using Facebook pages to highlight their issues.

Rahman (2021)²⁵ claims that the religious minorities in Pakistan have been treated unjustly and that the media have been part of promoting the religious hatred but the research evidence is insufficient. The killing of Mr. Priyantha Kumara is yet another unfortunate incident that bring the role of media in spotlight. This research endeavor is an attempt to explore the role of Pakistani as well as Sri Lankan newspapers in the aftermath of this brutal killing. The researcher intends to analyze the role of the newspapers in the light of the civil sphere theory proposed by Jeffrey C. Alexander (2006)²⁶.

There is a plethora of research evidence available that indicates the 'civil repair' role being played by media during and after various conflicting situations in different countries. For instance Ghauri et al. (2022b)²⁷ state that in the aftermath of 'Christchurch Mosque Shootings' and the 'Easter Bombings' in Sri Lanka the global media produced various kinds of discourses regarding these linked terrorist incidents. The discourses ranged from "the 'white supremacy' to the 'Islamist terrorism' to the 'polarization' and to the need of 'social solidarity'" (p. 804). The findings of their study has evidenced that the newspapers in New Zealand and Sri Lanka have performed the role of 'civil repair' by producing the 'solidarity discourse' in the aftermath of 'Christchurch Mosque Shootings'. However, the predominant discourse produced by the same newspapers in the aftermath of the 'Easter Bombings' in Sri Lanka contained 'othering' for Muslims.

Similarly, while exploring the solidarity discourse on Islam and Muslims in the Australian press Ghauri et al. (2022a)²⁸ found out that *The Age*, one of the Australian newspapers, contained 'solidarity discourse' regarding Islam and Muslims within and outside Australia by emphasizing on the needs of understanding,

we-ness, and cohesion. However, the 'solidarity discourse' was completely non-existent in coverage of Islam and Muslims given by *The Australian*, the second newspaper understudy. Khan, Z. et al. (2021)²⁹ found out almost the same kind of evidence from the Sri Lankan and Pakistani press in the aftermath of the 'Easter Bombings' in Sri Lanka. They found that after the terrorist attacks in Sri Lanka "*The Express Tribune* (Pakistani newspaper) played the role of 'Civil Repair' by producing the 'solidarity discourse'. However, the Sri Lankan Newspaper; *The Daily Mirror*'s coverage lacked the 'solidarity discourse' in the aftermath of the Easter bombings" (p. 531).

However, Khan, A. et al. (2021)³⁰, in their study entitled 'exploring the civil repair role function of media: A case study of the Christchurch Mosques Shootings', have found out that the New Zealand and Pakistani press have performed the role of 'civil repair' quite significantly. The newspapers from both the countries have produced the 'solidarity discourse' "in terms of the 'we-ness', harmony, understanding, and by mitigating the conflicting opinions" (p. 467). These research findings make it interesting and pertinent to explore that whether and to what extent the press from the same countries perform the role of 'civil repair' in the aftermath of killing of Mr. Priyantha Kumara.

²⁴ Batool, S., S. Sultana, and S. Tariq. "Social Media and Religious Minorities: Analyzing the Usage of Facebook Groups among Christian Minority to Highlight their Issues in Pakistan." *Global Mass Communication Studies Review*, VI (2021): 117-132

²⁵ Rahman, Khaista. "Attitudes towards Religious minorities in Pakistan: Gaps in the literature and future directions." *Pakistan Languages and Humanities Review* 5, no. 2 (2021): 345-359

²⁶ Alexander, Jeffrey C. *The civil sphere*. Oxford University Press, 2006

²⁷ Ghauri, Muhammad Junaid, Amrat Haq, and Riffat Alam. "Journalism a Tool of 'Civil Repair' or 'Othering' in a Society: A Comparative Study of the 'Christchurch Mosques Shootings' and the 'Easter Bombings' in Sri Lanka." *Journal of Development and Social Sciences* 3, no. 2 (2022b): 804-818

²⁸ Ghauri, Muhammad Junaid, Amrat Haq, and Riffat Alam. "Exploring the solidarity discourse on Islam and Muslims in the Australian press." *Journal of Humanities, Social and Management Sciences (JHSMS)* 3, no. 1 (2022a): 40-56

²⁹ Khan, Zahir, Muhammad Junaid Ghauri, and Riffat Alam. "Exploring the 'civil repair' role of media: A Case study of the Easter bombings in Sri Lanka." *Pakistan Social Sciences Review* 5, no. 4 (2021): 531-546

³⁰ Khan, Ayaz., Muhammad Junaid Ghauri, and R. Alam. "Exploring the 'civil repair' function of media: A case study of the Christchurch Mosques shootings." *Journal of Development and Social Sciences* 2 (2021): 467-484

III. THEORETICAL AND METHODOLOGICAL

The *Civil Sphere Theory* (CST) is a critical normative theory which is based on a concept of solidarity. According to the CST the senses of solidarity and/or differences within a 'civil sphere' are demonstrated through the 'cultural codes' and 'public opinion' which are conveyed and expressed in regulatory and communicative systems within various social institutions. According to the CST a 'civil sphere' is composed of three key elements namely; communicative system (media and mass communication), regulatory system (laws and legislations), and public opinion (elections, polls, surveys). The CST proposes that the 'civil sphere' in a society tend to expand and becomes more inclusive when the three elements of the civil sphere reflect solidarity across various social domains. In such civil spheres people from different race, religion, ethnicity, gender etc. are treated justly. On the contrary, the CST assumes, the 'civil sphere' contracts and become more exclusionary when the civil sphere elements reflect binary oppositions and polarization which result in increased racial hatred, discriminations and injustice in the society.

Jeffrey C. Alexander in his *Civil Sphere Theory* (2006)³¹ proposes that media as a communicative system being an integral part of the civil sphere play an important role in such situations by producing civil and anticivil codes. Within these binary oppositions the civil codes include "active, autonomous, rational, reasonable, calm, self-controlled, realistic, and sane". On the other hand, "the anticivil Codes include being passive, dependent, irrational, hysterical, excitable, wild-passionate, distorted, and mad" (Alexander, 2006, p. 57).

These civil and anticivil cultural codes are shared and disseminated through the communicative systems i.e. media which disseminate stories of good and bad, right and wrong, social approval and social stigmatization. By producing civil codes the media generate a 'solidarity discourse' which ultimately serves as the function of 'civil repair' in the society during and/or after any conflict.

Drawing on the theoretical and methodological underpinnings provided by the *Civil Sphere Theory* (CST) we have analyzed the press coverage of the killing of Mr. Priyantha Kumara in two newspapers; one each from Pakistan and Sri Lanka.

IV. DATA COLLECTION AND SAMPLING

We have selected daily the *Dawn* as a representative of Pakistani press and the *Daily Mirror* from Sri Lankan press because of their distinguishing characteristics in their respective countries. News stories published by the selected newspapers on the issue during December 03, 2021 to December 17, 2021 i.e. first fifteen days after the incident took place were collected. The data was collected from the reliable database LexisNexis by employing key words including; Lynching of Sri Lankan Citizen, Blasphemy, Priyantha Kumara, and Sialkot Incident. A total of 19 news stories were found from both the newspapers i.e. daily *Dawn* (08) and the *Daily Mirror* (11) during the time period under study. After employing census sampling the data was

³¹ Alexander, Jeffrey C. *The civil sphere*. Oxford University Press, 2006. P. 57

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sorted out and then initially published two news stories were selected as sample from each newspaper. Hence, the sample size under study is 04 news stories.

Keeping in view the research objective and the research question the researchers have identified predominant civil and anticivil codes appearing in the news stories regarding the lynching of Mr. Priyantha Kumara. The predominant civil and anticivil codes have helped the researchers to determine the role of the newspapers whether and to what extent have the selected newspapers performed the role of 'civil repair' by producing the 'solidarity discourse'.

V. FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

Analysis on daily the *Dawn*;

First news story among the sample collected from daily the *Dawn* was published on December 04, 2021 with the headline; "Ghastly murder of Lankan man in Sialkot shames nation"³². The news story contains civil codes in favor the murdered factory manager Mr. Kumara such as; victim, widespread condemnation, Sri Lankan general manager, Sri Lankan Christian, sensitive matter etc. On the contrary, the story contains anticivil codes for the incident and for the perpetrators such as; ghastly murder, shames nation, to nab more, PM Promises culprits will be punished with 'full severity', brutal killing, gruesome incident, police's incompetence, horrific Sialkot incident, aggravated murder, horrific vigilante attack, tragic incident, heinous incident. All these anticivil codes employed by the newspaper to report the killing condemn the incident, but at the same time they do not cause any division in the society nor blame the society as a whole for the incident. Rather, these words within the context of the news reports exclude the perpetrators from the mainstream society and highlight the condemnation of the killing by the society.

The same societal level condemnation is evident from this sentence from the report; "The brutal killing drew widespread condemnation from government officials and human rights bodies". The news contains direct quotes from the statements of the Prime Minister, Chief Minister, politicians and Human rights commission of Pakistan. All these quotes are again an indication of production of solidarity in the broader society and condemnation of the incidents. Prominent quotes that can be considered as civil codes include; "Prime Minister Imran Khan said it was a day of shame for Pakistan", "...individuals involved in this inhumane act will not be spared!!" CM', 'The army chief condemned the "cold-blooded and shameful murder" of Mr. Kumara by a mob', "Condemnations also poured in from across the political divide", The Human Rights Commission of Pakistan has been quoted as, "Today's event underscores the urgency with which an environment that enables abuse and puts lives at risk must be rectified".

Similarly, in a more significant way the newspaper quoted religious fraternity as; "...the Ulema and mashaykh of all

³² Mehmood, Abid. "Ghastly murder of Lankan man in Sialkot shames nation." *Dawn*, December 4, 2021. Retrieved from; <https://www.dawn.com/news/1661878/ghastly-murder-of-lankan-man-in-sialkot-shames-nation>

religious schools of thought, Pakistan Ulema Council and Interfaith Harmony Council also condemned the killing, saying it was a violation of the teachings of the holy Quran and Sunnah". This quote from a significantly relevant religious fraternity is also an attempt on the part of the newspaper to exclude the perpetrators from the mainstream society and highlight the condemnation of the killing by the society. In this news report the whole society has been portrayed as condemning the tragic incident. All the reports, quotes, words, verbs, adjectives and adjectives seem to be distancing the whole society from the culprits and excluding them from the mainstream 'civil sphere'. Since this was clearly an inhumane incident that took place in a country which is supposed to be a safe place for living for religious minorities according to the law of the land and according to the Islamic teachings so there was no point in defending this heinous crime against humanity. Rather, all the efforts have been made to portray the whole society with all its segments condemning this incident.

So, the newspaper in an attempt to perform the 'civil repair' role in this news story, portrays Mr. Priyantha Kumara as a 'victim' (civil code) and the murderers as insane, wild-passionate, excitable, irrational, violent and unlawful people (anticivil codes) by using words such as violent, brutal, and inhumane. Their actions have been highlighted as 'anticivil' and the role of authorities has been portrayed as 'civil'.

Second news story among the sample collected from daily the *Dawn* was published on December 05, 2021 with the headline; "Imran assures Sri Lankan president culprits will be punished"³³. The story contains civil codes in favor the murdered factory manager Mr. Kumara such as; culprits, justice, confident, tight security, grieving wife, slain husband, innocent man etc. On the contrary, the story contains anticivil codes for the incident and for the perpetrators such as; alleged blasphemy, kicked, slapped, punched, tortured to death, enraged workers, brutally murdered, inhumane killing etc. So, by employing 'innocent man' and 'enraged workers' as civil and anticivil codes for Mr. Kumara and for the factory workers respectively, the newspaper attempts a civil repair role in the aftermath of the brutal killing.

The civil repair role of the newspaper is also evident in this news story from the statements quoted in favor of the authorities and law enforcement agencies working to bring the killers under law. For instance, the SHO is quoted as;

"The applicant admitted that the protesters had slapped, kicked, punched and hit Mr Kumara with sticks in his presence, and dragged him out of the factory on Wazirabad Road where he died. They then set the body on fire. The SHO said he was helpless in front of the mob owing to shortage of personnel"³⁴.

The newspaper highlights the efforts of the police as; "Police are trying to identify the culprits through CCTV footage from the

³³ Mehmood, Abid. "Imran assures Sri Lankan president culprits will be punished." *Dawn*, December 5, 2021. Retrieved from; <https://www.dawn.com/news/1662031/imran-assures-sri-lankan-president-culprits-will-be-punished>

³⁴ Mehmood, Abid. "Imran assures Sri Lankan president culprits will be punished." *Dawn*, December 5, 2021. Retrieved from; <https://www.dawn.com/news/1662031/imran-assures-sri-lankan-president-culprits-will-be-punished>

factory cameras as well as video clips that have gone viral on social media". The same effort of civil repair by the newspaper is also evident from the statement; "The 230 arrested include two main suspects, Mohammad Talha and Farhan Idrees, and all of them have been shifted to an undisclosed location".

The newspaper quotes the Chief Minister Punjab as; "Mr. Buzdar vowed the culprits would not escape punishment as he was personally monitoring the progress". Special Assistant to Punjab CM on Information has been quoted as; "118 people had been arrested, including 13 primary suspects, in over 200 raids". Similarly, the newspaper quotes Pakistani Foreign Minister's statement as; "Spoke to my brother FM Gamini Lakshman Peiris of Sri Lanka and expressed my deep grief and condolences". A local minister of national assembly is quoted as; "[...] expressed grief over Mr. Kumara's killing".

The newspaper's 'civil repair' role is evident from the report as; "Local businessmen also hung pictures of Mr. Kumara outside the Sialkot Chamber of Commerce and Industry and laid garlands on it". Here, it can clearly be seen that the newspaper plays up the civil motives and portrays the authorities and the civil society expressing solidarity with the deceased person. In the same attempt the newspaper quotes a local news TV channel as "...some factory workers disliked the deceased general manager, a textile engineer, for being strict in enforcing discipline". Here, again, the newspaper seems to construct a positive image and highlights the victimhood of the deceased. The use of civil codes for Mr. Kumara and anticivil codes for the perpetrators are also evident from the following sentence; "Mr Kumara offered an apology, but a supervisor instigated the workers, who attacked him".

So, the newspaper in this news story, portrays Priyantha Kumara as a 'disciplined person' (civil code) and the murders as insane, wild-passionate, excitable, irrational, violent and unlawful people. Their actions have been highlighted as 'anticivil' and the role of authorities has been portrayed as 'civil'.

Analysis on the *Daily Mirror*;

First news story among the sample collected from the *Daily Mirror* was published on December 03, 2021 with the headline; "Sri Lankan manager killed by mob of workers at Pakistan garment factory over blasphemy"³⁵. The news story contains civil codes in favor of the murdered factory manager Mr. Kumara such as; Sri Lankan man, export manager etc wherein the newspaper has confined to employ any loaded words for the victim. However, the anticivil words, adjectives and phrases have been used by the newspaper to report this "very tragic" incident such as; brutally murdered, attacked by workers of the factory, the violent incident, the horrific incident, torturing the man to death etc.

The DM restrained to use loaded words for the incident, for the perpetrators and for the victim. For instance, in the very first story the DM used the word 'the incident' four times to refer to the murder without any loaded adjective. Only once the word

³⁵ *Daily Mirror*. "Sri Lankan manager killed by mob of workers at Pakistan garment factory over blasphemy." December 3, 2021. Retrieved from; [HYPERLINK https://www.dailymirror.lk/breaking_news/Sri-Lankan-manager-killed-by-mob-of-workers-at-Pakistan-garment-factory-over-blasphemy/108-226102](https://www.dailymirror.lk/breaking_news/Sri-Lankan-manager-killed-by-mob-of-workers-at-Pakistan-garment-factory-over-blasphemy/108-226102)

'brutally murder' and 'the horrific incident' has been used by the newspaper. In an effort to avoid anticivil codes within Pakistani society and between the Pakistani and Sri Lankan societies the DM has employed the pronoun as 'workers' for the perpetrators, 'the man' for the victim and 'the incident' for the crime. All these anticivil codes employed by the newspaper to report the killing condemn the incident, but at the same time they do not cause any division in the society nor blame the society as a whole for the incident. Rather, these words within the context of the news reports exclude the perpetrators from the mainstream society and highlight the condemnation of the killing by the society.

Rest of the words are from the direct quotes from the statements of various officials and authorities. The same societal level condemnation is evident from various statements of the officials quoted in the report. For instance; the police spokesperson was quoted as; "the tragic event" and the Chief Minister of the Punjab Province was quoted as; "The CM expressed concern over the incident, terming it "very tragic"". Similarly, the broader civil society has been quoted in a way that condemns the killing of Mr. Priyantha Kumara as; "The episode has generated a lot of anger among citizens..."

In this news report the whole society has been portrayed as condemning the tragic incident. All the reports, quotes, words, verbs, adjectives and adjectives seem to be distancing the whole society from the culprits and excluding them from the mainstream 'civil sphere'. So, the newspaper in an attempt to perform the 'civil repair' role in this news story, portrays Mr. Priyantha Kumara as a 'victim' (civil code) and the murderers as insane, wild-passionate, excitable, irrational, violent and unlawful people (anticivil codes) by using words such as violent, brutal, and tragic. The incident and the perpetrators have been highlighted as 'anticivil' and the role of authorities has been portrayed as 'civil'.

Second news story among the sample collected from the *Daily Mirror* was published on December 06, 2021 with the headline; ""My husband was not mad to tear any poster. I want justice"-Wife of Priyantha Kumara"³⁶. The story contains civil codes in favor the murdered factory manager Mr. Kumara such as; not mad, justice, innocent individual, peace-loving citizen etc. On the contrary, the story contains anticivil codes for the incident and for the perpetrators such as; brutal murder, brutally massacred, inhumane killing etc.

The civil repair role of the newspaper is also evident in this news story the way the statements of Mr. Kumara's widow have been quoted. For instance, the civil codes in favor of Mr. Kumara have been quoted in the form of statement from his wife as;

"Nilushi described him as an innocent individual who cared for his employees and colleagues. He respected the Pakistani laws and lived as a peace-loving citizen.

He also respected all religious views" (Daily Mirror, 2021 December 6)³⁷.

The civil repair effort by the newspaper in the aftermath of the unfortunate incident is explicitly evident from the statement of Mrs. Kumara;

"My husband lived in Pakistan for 11 years, and he never once complained about the people or his colleagues there. So he is definitely not mad to tear any poster. If I knew there was any threat on him, I would have never let him leave us"³⁸.

This statement and its reporting in the news story suggests that the newspaper attempts to keep the 'civil sphere' and its sanctity intact in both the Sri Lankan and Pakistani societies. Pakistani society, at large, has been portrayed as peaceful. And, Mr. Kumara has been constructed as 'sane'.

The newspaper appears to keep the Sri Lankan 'civil sphere' intact and peaceful by highlighting the widow's demands which actually represent the national sentiments in Sri Lanka. For instance, the newspaper quotes;

"She demanded for answers as to why the mob in Sialkot killed her husband in such an inhumane manner, and she wanted compensation for a stable future for her two sons aged 14 and 9" (Daily Mirror, 2021 December 6)³⁹.

Similarly, another statement goes like this;

"I have not had the courage to see these videos as it's my husband's final moments. I urge everyone to stop sharing these videos and pictures on social media and have sought the intervention of the Defense authorities to remove them from the internet" (Daily Mirror, 2021 December 6)⁴⁰.

This statement is also an effort by the newspaper to raise sane voices in the aftermath of the inhumane incident.

So, in this news story, *Daily Mirror* attempts to create solidarity in the aftermath of the killing of Mr. Priyantha Kumara by producing civil codes in favor of the deceased, his family and for both the societies at large. Along with that, the lynching and the perpetrator have been portrayed as anticivil.

Overall, drawing on the detailed analysis of the selected news stories in the light of Civil Sphere Theory it can be claimed that the newspapers both in Pakistan and Sri Lanka have attempted to reflect solidarity across various social domains. Which implies that the newspapers have attempted to perform the role of 'civil repair' in the aftermath of killing of Mr. Priyantha Kumara. Both dailies; the *Dawn* and the *Daily Mirror*, in an attempt to play the role of 'civil repair' during the news coverage of the murder, portrayed Mr. Priyantha Kumara as a 'victim' (civil code) and the killers as crazy, wild-emotional, wild-passionate, irrational,

³⁶ *Daily Mirror*. "My husband was not mad to tear any poster. I want justice"-Wife of Priyantha Kumara." December 6, 2021.

Retrieved from; HYPERLINK

https://www.dailymirror.lk/top_story/My-husband-was-not-mad-to-tear-any-poster-I-want-justice-Wife-of-Priyantha-Kumara/155-226273

³⁷ *Daily Mirror*. "My husband was not mad to tear any poster. I want justice"-Wife of Priyantha Kumara." December 6, 2021.

Retrieved from; HYPERLINK

https://www.dailymirror.lk/top_story/My-husband-was-not-mad-to-tear-any-poster-I-want-justice-Wife-of-Priyantha-Kumara/155-226273

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

excitable, violent, brutal, and outlawed people (anticivil codes) by employing words like violent, brutal, and tragic. The murder and the murderers are highlighted as 'anticivil' and the role of the authorities is portrayed as 'civil'.

VI. CONCLUSION

Keeping in view the available codes in the news stories under study it can be concluded that the overall and predominant discourse produced by both the newspapers is the 'solidarity discourse'. The newspapers have employed strong and explicit civil codes in a way to condemn the killing of Mr. Priyantha Kumara and to keep the 'civil sphere' of the society intact within Pakistan and in Sri Lanka. The production of the 'solidarity course' through the use of 'civil codes' is particularly important in the context of reports published by the *Daily Mirror* because of the fact the Sri Lankan society was grieving and the society hosts Muslims as significant minority. So, to keep the 'civil sphere' and social fabric peaceful and intact in the Sri Lankan society was even more important task which was accomplished by the newspaper quite effectively.

Drawing on the literature reviewed and the theoretical underpinnings of the CST the findings of this study are quite interesting. In this case, unlike Ghauri et al. (2022a; 2022b) and Khan, Z. et al. (2021), selected newspapers from both the countries have employed 'civil codes' quite overwhelmingly in an effort to keep the civil sphere intact in both the societies⁴¹. The 'civil repair' role by both the newspapers in the aftermath of the tragic incident is explicitly evident in the form of 'solidarity discourse' produced by them in the reporting of the incident. So, drawing on the theoretical underpinnings provided by the *Civil Sphere Theory* the findings of the study can be interpreted as; the 'civil repair' role by both the newspapers in the aftermath of killing of Mr. Priyantha Kumara is evident from their news reports.

Therefore, the *Civil Sphere Theory* proposed by Jeffrey C. Alexander is approved within the context of the editorial coverage given by the selected Pakistani and Sri Lankan newspapers to the killing of Mr. Priyantha Kumara over the charges of blasphemy. Both the newspapers; the *Dawn* and the *Daily Mirror*, in an attempt to play the role of 'civil repair' during the news coverage of the murder, portrayed Mr. Priyantha Kumara as a 'victim' (civil code) and the killers as crazy, wild-

⁴¹ Ghauri, Muhammad Junaid, Amrat Haq, and Riffat Alam.

"Exploring the solidarity discourse on Islam and Muslims in the Australian press." *Journal of Humanities, Social and Management Sciences (JHSMS)* 3, no. 1 (2022a): 40-56; Ghauri, Muhammad Junaid, Amrat Haq, and Riffat Alam. "Journalism a Tool of 'Civil Repair' or 'Othering' in a Society: A Comparative Study of the 'Christchurch Mosques Shootings' and the 'Easter Bombings' in Sri Lanka." *Journal of Development and Social Sciences* 3, no. 2 (2022b): 804-818; Khan, Zahir, Muhammad Junaid Ghauri, and Riffat Alam. "Exploring the 'civil repair' role of media: A Case study of the Easter bombings in Sri Lanka." *Pakistan Social Sciences Review* 5, no. 4 (2021): 531-546

emotional, wild-passionate, irrational, excitable, violent, brutal, and outlawed people (anticivil codes) by employing words like violent, brutal, and tragic. The murder and the murderers are highlighted as 'anticivil' and the role of the authorities is portrayed as 'civil'.

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