



INTEGRATION, ASSIMILATION, SEPARATION OR MARGINALIZATION? AN INTERFAITH STUDY OF HINDU FESTIVALS IN BAHAWALPUR

Qudsia Firdous

Lecturer Islamic Studies

Riphah International University Islamabad

PhD Scholar

Department of Comparative Religions

Faculty of Usuluddin, International Islamic University

Islamabad – Pakistan

Dr. Taimia Sabiha

Assistant Professor

Department of Comparative Religions

Faculty of Usuluddin, International Islamic University

Islamabad – Pakistan

taimia.sabiha@iiu.edu.pk

Abstract:

This study delves into the Hindu community festivals celebrated in Bahawalpur, Pakistan, through the lens of Berry's Model of Acculturation. Despite being a minority within the region, the Hindu community in Bahawalpur holds a rich tapestry of cultural traditions and festivals. Through qualitative analysis and ethnographic research, this paper examines how these festivals serve as focal points for cultural preservation, identity reinforcement, and community cohesion amidst the challenges of acculturation. By applying Berry's Model, which delineates four acculturation strategies integration, assimilation, separation, and marginalization, the paper investigates how the Hindu community in Bahawalpur navigates cultural adaptation while maintaining their distinct religious and cultural practices. Through this exploration, the paper aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of the dynamics of cultural preservation and adaptation within minority communities in diverse sociocultural contexts.

Keywords: Hindu festivals, Bahawalpur, acculturation, cultural preservation, community cohesion.

Introduction:

Pakistan is a home to a population of 207.68 million people. The most recent available data on



religion and languages provided by the state agency Pakistan Bureau of Statistics is released from data of Pakistan Census 2017 on 19 May 2021(Pakistan bureau of statistics-2021). According to the census 96.47% are Muslims, followed by 2.14% Hindus, 1.27% Christians, and 0.09% Ahmadis and 0.02% others. The 2017 census showed an increasing share in Hinduism. Moreover, the Hindu Population in Bahawalpur District is 39,664 whereas in Yazman City 29,951 Hindus are located. The Scheduled castes are also consisting on Hindu population that is counted other than Hindus in Census (Pakistan bureau of statistics-2021).

Pakistan is a multi-religious nation with Muslim majority and minorities represent 8 per cent of the total population. Pakistan has ancient temples, historical gurdawaras, synagogues, churches and other such places of worship. Hindu and Bhuddist Kings ruled over the land for centuries. Even during Muslim period, some Hindu Rajas and Maharajas continued to rule. Thus, the rulers in each period of history built their own places of worship. These places of worship were later on decayed when that specific religious population would diminish. Centuries later they would be discovered by the archaeologists. The Hindu cultural heritage in Pakistan is unique. Pakistan has very important places of worship for both Hindus and Sikhs. Recently some of these sites are declared part of the World Heritage.

Hinduism in Bahawalpur & Yazman:

In the 10th Century, Arabs from Baghdad captured western part of South Asia and founded Baghdad-ul-Jadid (New Baghdad). When more Muslims immigrants spilled through the fertile valley of the Indus River, the princely state of Bahawalpur was born (Saudi gazette-2015).Bahawalpur is neither just a tale nor a traveling account. It pertains to one of the interesting episodes of the history of the South Asia. The story tells how adventurous Abbasids, after the downfall of their empire at Baghdad got another lease of life on the South Asian soil. Baghdad to Bahawalpur is the life story of people who have for the past many centuries have been serving Islam and the Islamic values in the South Asia. The city was home to various nawabs (rules). It is located near the historical and ancient cities of Uch and Harappa, which were once a stronghold of the Delhi Sultanate and the Indus Valley Civilization. According to the Abbasid historians, the city of Bahawalpur was founded in 1748 by Nawab Muhammad Bahawal Khan Abbasi I, who ruled the area until the state joined Pakistan in 1947.The state was spread over 451 kms and was ruled by Nawab Sadiq Muhammad Khan Abbasi V Bahadur, who decided to join Pakistan at the time of independence in 1947.Technically the State had come into existence in 1702. According to census of 1891 the total population of the Bahawalpur state was 650,042. The Muslims numbered 546,680; Hindus 90,013; Sikhs 13,321 and Christians 11. The big landlords were Muslims, while the money lending and banking sector was mostly comprised of Hindus. The Hindu community is found mainly in Sindh, but there are sizable pockets of Hindu settlements in some districts of southern Punjab, mainly Bahawalpur, Bahawalnagar, and Rahimyar Khan. In Bahawalpur division the non-Muslim population of Bahawalpur state, according to the 1941 census, was 2, 40,000. The population of Hindus in Bahawalpur City is 67818 according to the



Hindu council of Pakistan. A large number of Hindus also lived in ex-state of Bahawalpur with Muslim majority following the same social manners. The note able thing is that they both participated in each other's celebrations of social and religious nature and had sense of endurance and polite attitude towards each other. Besides this, they were passionate followers of the social traditions as well. Their traditional manners regarding birth, wedding and other social activities were simple but full of amusements. Hindus living in Pakistan can be divided into two broad categories 1- Upper castes, middle- or upper-class urban Hindus 2- Lower/scheduled caste, rural, bonded labour (Hari) Hindus. Many little villages are there who earn their living by working on the local landlord's fields. The community living in urban areas of BWP is mostly sanitary workers and sweepers However most of them are working on good posts too. Also, Hindu shopkeepers and small-scale businessman's can be easily founded everywhere the prominent Hindu tribes living in BWP/Yazman are following.

- Balmiki
- Bheel
- Bohra
- Gandhila
- Mareja or Marecha
- Meghwar
- Menghwar

All of them claimed to have an individual and different theological background while considering themselves superior to other clans.

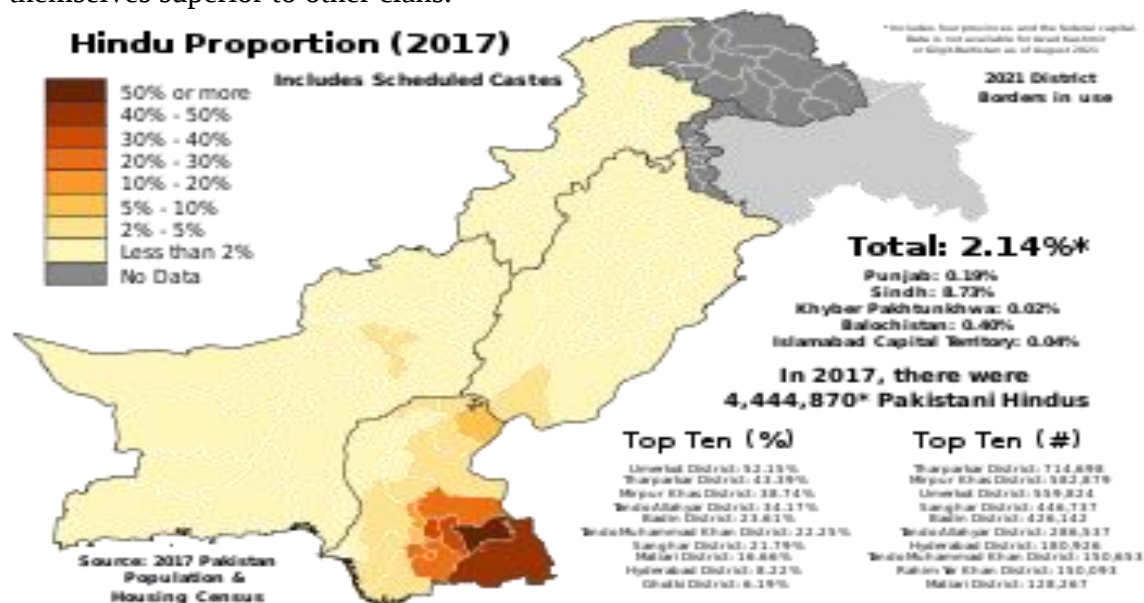


Figure 1: Hindu Proportion of each Pakistani District in 2017 as of the 2017 Pakistan Census



Importance of Religious Festivals celebrations:

Festivals are a time in each religions calendar when a special story, event or people are remembered and celebrated. These festivals are often a time of great celebration and help believers to remember important beliefs in their religion. Religious celebrations bring faith communities together to celebrate these shared beliefs and values. Similarly, these festivals are a symbol of identity to every religion and its followers. People show their affiliation and attachment with any religion by celebrating the special days associated with certain religious contextual. Festivals are not just religious orders for disciples to follow but they pour essence into life. An occasion like a religious festival or a day brings charm and color into people's dull lives. Such a festival is a day of get-together and of uniformity.

The religious festivals are part of human existence and constitute the highlights and the heads in the rhythm of the religious life of the community and the individual. Sometimes this rhythm results from the order of cosmic life; sometimes it springs from the power of the revelation of God in the course of history.

Thus, the festivals may have categorized in following types (C. J. Bleeker-The Significance of Religious Festivals):

1. Agricultural festivals: which are linked with agricultural work, such as sowing and harvesting.
2. Seasonal festivals: which are celebrated e.g. in spring, mid-summer and autumn.
3. Calendar festivals: the dates of which depend on the position of the sun, the phases of the moon and the advent of the new year.
4. Family or personal festivals: which impart a certain importance to important events in the life of the family e.g. Birth rituals, Wedding ceremonies
5. Festivals of the dead: during which the memory of the dead is honored at regular intervals.
6. Festivals connected with events in the life of the community which are of exceptional religious importance, e.g. Janmashtai, Christmas
7. Festivals in honor of mythical divine figures
8. Festivals in commemoration of events in the life of the founder of a religion.

Religious commemorations not only a source of endorsing community engagement and promoting religious association among followers rather it is an important part of self-identity (Fuchs, M.-M., & Fuchs, S. W.-2019). Celebrating religious festivals is a public expression of beliefs that strengthens the believer's relationship with God. Thus, Religious festivals and the specific rituals associated with them is a matter of Identity formation and a tool of self-recognitions as a community. Additionally, these festivals and celebrations transfers the legacy and heritage of religious thoughts to next generation. Religious rituals associated with certain fiesta disseminates the disremembered theological and cultural roots to devotees which enable them to revive the sense



of religiosity, spirituality and community successfully. As defined in an Encyclopedia (Encyclopedias almanacs transcripts and maps)

“Ceremonies, festivals, and other rituals provide a structure for an individual or a group to reaffirm social values and ties. They have a tendency to be public events, seen as different from every day, which spotlight an important personal or cultural happening. Ritual helps to give meaning to the world in part by linking the past to the present and the present to the future. Ritual works through the senses to structure our perception of reality and the world around us; it is often when a society's deepest values emerge in the form of activity, objects, and dress. Ceremonies often combine religious belief with social and political concerns. Although rituals tend to evolve very slowly, cultures do change over time, and possible disjuncture's may develop between a ceremony and the attitudes of the society, resulting in the modification or even elimination of the ceremony. The costumes worn at these times are frequently special to the occasion and dramatically symbolic; they can reflect historical or cultural preferences that are no longer in vogue”.

Thus, the religious festivals are a tool to scan the presence and manifestation of a community and its uniqueness. They can serve as a means for social integration, peace, and harmony too (Abdun Nasir- contending modernities). Nothing brings people together like festivals do. They play a pivotal role in nation-building; bringing people from every religious, economic and social background together.

In Bahawalpur (BWP), a dynamic city, a distinct incident experienced on March 17, 2022, offering a glimpse into the life of the Hindu community. While walking down a busy street, a young police officer, dressed in an authoritative outfit, gestured for me to stop. The speaker's elucidation evoked a strong connection with the vibrant festivities of the Holi festival among the Hindu population, establishing the backdrop for an unforeseen narrative of peaceful coexistence. The security measures in Himaytian Muhallah BWP were extensive, with a strong presence of security forces, Fire brigades, and ambulances, ensuring compliance with limits that required approval from the Pandit of the Shiv Mandir, a local temple. However, Shehzad Akhter, the son of the Pandit, arrived and acquainted the security personnel with the nature of my research, resulting in permission for our passage. Beyond this specific event, the wider range of security and safety precautions mandated by the government was observed. Importantly, these efforts are not limited to a single day; they routinely occur in all Hindu settlements in Bahawalpur, encompassing not only Holi but other religious and celebratory events. The streets of Bahawalpur serve as a canvas, showcasing the cohabitation of many religious communities through a combination of security measures and cultural events. The exemplifies the intricate interplay of mutual respect and conversation, breaking down boundaries and creating an environment where traditions and festivities from other faiths blend together in a joyful and unified manner.



Figure 2: Shiv Mandir Himaytian Muhallah, BWP

The integration of minority cultures into the broader national fabric holds profound implications for their acceptance within the larger community and their overall well-being in their surroundings. However, the reception that minorities encounter when they lead festivities and celebrations can vary significantly among the majority population. This discrepancy offers a telling gauge of the nation's level of acceptance and coexistence with diverse cultures, religions, and social groups. In essence, the politics of minority celebrations serve as a barometer for peaceful coexistence. They also serve as an indication of a nation's tolerance, acceptance, and understanding of its minorities or subgroups within society. Pakistan is a diverse society with different ethnic, sectarian, and religious groups coexisting in the same homeland. All these groups celebrate their religious festivals and special occasions with full moral and spiritual fervor. In Bahawalpur, where Hindus and Muslims have lived together peacefully for centuries, the case of Hinduism has a particularly distinctive hue. It is the people-to-people relationships that provide the foundation for real peace and respect for other religions and cultures. The Hindus in Bahawalpur consider themselves as sons of the soil, and the Muslim majority broadly accepts this fact.

Within the city of Bahawalpur (BWP), three prominent temples are situated across different districts, each responsible for organizing celebrations for various religious days. These pivotal celebrations are accompanied by a robust presence of security forces, police personnel, fire brigades, and ambulances, strategically positioned to swiftly address any unforeseen emergencies. The vigilance extends to nearby markets and the vicinity, where heightened security measures are



evident during these events, as was notably observed during the Holi festival of 2022. In an interview, Pundit Heery Laal expressed his deep gratitude towards the government and security forces for providing full security during their events, which makes them feel secure and important (An Interview with a Pandit BWP-2022). Despite their longstanding presence in the region, these gestures of support from the authorities bolster their feelings of being an integral part of the societal tapestry. Pundit Heery Laal underscored the mutual engagement between their Hindu community and the local Muslim populace. He emphasized that they freely participate in each other's functions, and the local Muslim community and authorities always offer great support. The solidarity is further epitomized by the attendance of local government representatives at their celebrations, fostering a tangible atmosphere of unity. Regarding the financial aspect of their religious observances, Pundit Heery Laal elucidated that while the Auqaf (religious endowment) is ready to assume responsibility for these celebrations, the Hindu community prefers to retain authority over their temples (Mandirs). Nevertheless, the Auqaf (Auqaf Department under the ministry of Religious Affairs is responsible for the management and maintenance of Mosques and Shrines) still supports them in different ways as required. Typically, the community collects funds internally to sustain their religious fervor and perpetuate their heritage, thus ensuring the continuity of their legacy for generations to come. These vibrant celebrations and associated financial arrangements demonstrate the resilience of the Hindu community in BWP and their resolute desire to preserve their culture and traditions. The support from the local government and Muslim community highlights the coexistence and respect for diverse religious and cultural practices in the city (An interview with Pandit Heery laal, March 17,2022).





taken from official page of BWP Police

Figure 4: The researcher at Fareed gate Mandir BWP while meeting with Pandit on occasion of Holi 2022



Figure 6: Maqbool Colony also called Muhallah Himaaytiyan BWP



Figure 7: Security Alert around the Shiv Mandir/Temple BWP on Holi 2022



The important festivals/Religious events of Hindu community which are largely celebrated by them in BWP are the following:

1. Maha Shivratri
2. Holi
3. Dusehera
4. Rakhi
5. Goga Nomi
6. Janam Ashthami/ Janamashtami
7. Karwa Choth
8. Diwali
9. Guru Valmik Suwami Day

The Hindu community in Pakistan takes immense pride in upholding their religious and cultural festivities, which hold deep roots within their historical heritage. These celebrations, sustained across generations, remain integral to their daily lives, demonstrating their resilience in the face of



challenges. The Hindu religious calendar, based on the lunar cycle, boasts numerous significant events throughout the year, marked by spirited enthusiasm. Festivals like Holi, Diwali, and Navratri are observed with fervor, and in addition to these religious events, the Pakistani government also recognizes the importance of these celebrations and includes them in the national calendar. This acknowledgement is an important step towards promoting religious tolerance and acceptance in the country. This recognition extends to granting Hindu employees and university students the option to take the day off on these occasions. Such a gesture not only enables active participation in these crucial events but also reflects the government and society's genuine respect for the Hindu community's religious and cultural heritage. Nonetheless, it's noteworthy that these holidays are not observed at the school level, where regular attendance is expected. Furthermore, in recognition of the significance of these events, many employers in Pakistan distribute gifts and cheques to their Hindu employees (Holi celebration by Hindu staff and workers at Islamia University BWP). This practice serves as an acknowledgment of their dedication and a recognition of the religious and cultural importance of these festivities.

The inclusion of Hindu celebrations in the national calendar, coupled with the provision of optional holidays, represents a commendable stride toward fostering religious harmony and embracing diversity in Pakistan. This approach underscores that the country values and respects the religious and cultural traditions of all its citizens, transcending their beliefs or origins. To explore the perspectives of young individuals within the Hindu community of Bahawalpur, especially in light of their upbringing within a Muslim-majority society and the challenges they might face, series of interviews with numerous young people and university students were conducted. These discussions aimed to capture a comprehensive understanding of their experiences and viewpoints in the context of religious events and celebrations. Several recurring themes surfaced from their responses:

Hindu festivals have a special position in the dynamic environment of Bahawalpur, a city recognized for its cultural richness and interlaced traditions. These festivals, in addition to being vivid occasions that inspire unity and celebration, present a unique prism through which we can investigate the intricacies of cultural acculturation. The Barry model of acculturation provides a useful framework for understanding the intricate interaction of these festivals within the larger cultural landscape. This model distinguishes four basic techniques — assimilation, integration, separation, and marginalization — each revealing a particular aspect of how Hindu festivals integrate into or remain distinct within the Bahawalpur society. By adopting this paradigm, we can better grasp how these festivals contribute to the harmonious coexistence of many cultural aspects and facilitate a sense of cultural unity among varied populations. Examining Hindu festivals via this lens allows us to appreciate the city's welcoming attitude while also providing insight into the larger dynamics of cultural exchange, inclusion, and tradition preservation inside the heart of Bahawalpur.



Maha Shivratri:

Maha Shivratri holds great significance within the Hindu calendar, serving as a commemoration of Lord Shiva's birthday. In Bahawalpur (BWP), this occasion is observed with grandeur and magnificence. The community adorns themselves in their finest attire, exchange greetings, and participate in a day-long fast. Special Pooja (worship) is organized, and the entire community gathers in the Mandir (temple) to perform the ritual of worshipping the Shivlinga - a distinguishing symbol and emblem of the generative power of God Shiva. Shivaratri is celebrated on the 13th night and 14th day of every lunar month, but the Maha Shivaratri, meaning "the Great Night of Shiva," falls in the month of Falgun (known as Phaagan in the local Punjabi language), which is the last month of the Hindu calendar. This event takes place just before the arrival of Spring, typically in February or March according to the Western calendar(Britannica-lingam).

Under scrutiny of Barry's Model of Acculturation, Maha Shivratri exemplifies assimilation by effortlessly blending Hindu cultural components with the larger Bahawalpur community. With the entire community celebrating together, it demonstrates the festival's active participation of people from all walks of life. Hence, the community's celebration of Maha Shivratri together, in which people from all walks of life actively participate, exemplifies the assimilation technique. The fact that the entire community comes together in the Mandir to worship the Shivlinga represents a shared practise. Integration can be seen in common cultural practises like dressing up, exchanging greetings, and fasting, which are not exclusive to Hinduism but are embraced by the larger community during Maha Shivratri. Meanwhile, the emphasis on the entire community celebrating together suggests that the Hindu festival is not marginalised within the Bahawalpur community, though the special Pooja in the Mandir may be seen as a more exclusive religious practise, indicating a separation from the broader cultural practises associated with the festival. Thus, the Maha Shivratri celebration in Bahawalpur appears to predominantly follow assimilation and integration tactics, with indications of common cultural practises and significant community participation. Although the mention of a specific Pooja in the Mandir suggests some separation, the whole event demonstrates the inclusive spirit of the celebration.

Diwali/Deepwali:

Diwali, a momentous festival within the Hindu community, draws its name from the Sanskrit term "dipavali," signifying a "row of lights." During the new moon night, clay lamps are illuminated to symbolize the presence of Lakshmi, the goddess of wealth. The festival concludes with fireworks and the distribution of Prasad. Diverse religious groups converge to partake in this grand occasion, featuring speeches delivered by representatives from varied faiths that underscore the Hindu community's dedication to contributing to Pakistan's progress. In Bahawalpur and neighboring villages, the Hindu community celebrates Diwali with profound enthusiasm. Residences shimmer with illuminated clay lamps, temples host special prayers, sweet treats are shared, and fireworks paint the sky. The festivities commence the preceding evening, continuing into the mid-month of Kartik as a tribute to Ram Chand's serene 14-year sojourn.



Diwali is embraced by the Balmiki Hindus, Bheel, and Mangwal Hindu communities across diverse villages within Bahawalpur. Notably, Hindu employees are granted leave from work to actively partake in the celebrations, underscoring the community's commitment to the observance. The media, which includes prominent news networks and print magazines, provides extensive coverage of the Diwali celebrations. The following passage is extracted from a prestigious newspaper (Nation 2020 -Hindu Community Celebrating Diwali)

Diwali was celebrated by the Hindu community residing in Bahawalpur and many villages in Cholistan on November 15, 2020. The commencement of the celebrations occurred on the preceding evening, whereupon individuals illuminated lamps within their residences, engaged in devotional rituals at religious establishments, and exchanged confectioneries, all while igniting pyrotechnic displays. Temple premises hosted modest congregations adhering to COVID-19 Standard Operating Procedures. Diwali, a festival commemorating the period of serenity experienced by Ram Chand during his 14-year sojourn, is observed in the middle of the month of Kartik. The event was observed by adherents of the Balmiki Hindu faith in Bahawalpur, as well as by the Bheel and Mangwal Hindu populations residing in various villages within the Cholistan region. The Hindu population residing in Attock actively participated in the observance of their religious festival, Diwali, with great passion and deep religious devotion. They illuminated traditional clay lamps as a symbolic gesture to honor the homecoming of Lord Rama. Special assemblies took place at the Vel mekh Mander of Attock, during which notable sermons were presented advocating the principles of love and peace, accompanied by dedicated prayers for fostering brotherhood and promoting the prosperity of Pakistan. Sweets and lunches were disseminated to the community. According to Pandit Sarwan Kumar and Roop Lal, the holiday in question is observed in remembrance of the arduous trials endured by Shree Ram Chandar Jee, who spent over 14 years in exile inside forested regions while disseminating the teachings of Hinduism. The authors additionally asserted that Hindus in Pakistan are afforded complete religious freedom and possess the same rights as other residents. Individuals from diverse backgrounds extended greetings to adherents of the Hindu faith on their religious festival, expressing Pakistan's unwavering dedication to safeguarding minority communities without any kind of bias or prejudice. Additionally, it was emphasized that each individual possesses an equal entitlement to commemorate and participate in their religious celebration without experiencing any apprehension.

Honest voices from our neighboring nation, India, have also recognized this reality. An article titled "Pakistani cities erupt in colors during Holi, with the day off for students to celebrate the festival" was featured in the esteemed Indian newspaper, "The Hindu," on March 8, 2022, and authored by Sumit. In this piece, Sumit offered an authentic portrayal of Pakistan, highlighting the deep-rooted religious diversity and interfaith concord present within society. However, such truthful opinions are challenging to come by due to preexisting biases and predispositions against Pakistan.



Barry's framework:

Before understanding how the Barry's framework would apply on the said festival it is important to understand that assimilation focuses on the merging or blending of cultural elements, while integration emphasizes the inclusion and recognition of a specific cultural or religious practice within the broader societal context. The distinction lies in whether the cultural elements maintain their distinctiveness (assimilation) or are accepted and recognized within the larger society (integration). Hence, in the Diwali celebration, diverse religious groups converging to partake in the grand occasion, with speeches by representatives from varied faiths, demonstrates assimilation because this indicates a shared celebration that goes beyond the Hindu community. The media coverage from a famous newspaper mentions that Diwali is celebrated not only by the Hindu community in Bahawalpur but also by the Hindu community in Attock. This suggests a broader assimilation of the festival across different regions. Similarly, the use of the Sanskrit term "dipavali" and the explanation of its meaning ("row of lights") introduces and explains Hindu cultural elements to a broader audience, showcasing assimilation, meanwhile, the distribution of Prasad during Diwali celebrations, while a cultural practice familiar to the Hindu community, is shared with others, contributing to assimilation.

Diwali also showcases a remarkable degree of Integration strategy as well, like the fact that Hindu employees are granted leave from work to actively partake in the celebrations. This acknowledgment and accommodation of Diwali in the national work structure implies that the broader society acknowledges and accommodates the significance of Diwali for the Hindu community. The extensive media coverage, including major news channels and print publications, indicates integration into the mainstream culture, with Diwali being recognized and celebrated at a societal level. Also, the mention of diverse villages within Bahawalpur, including Balmiki Hindus, Bheel, and Mangwal Hindu communities, celebrating Diwali, indicates integration by showcasing widespread participation in the festival.

For Diwali's celebration, the mention of special prayers at temples, the distribution of Prasad, and the festival's commemoration of Ram Chand's 14-year sojourn imply separation by emphasizing specific religious practices that distinguish Diwali from secular or non-Hindu celebrations. Similarly, the commitment of the Hindu community to the observance of Diwali, as highlighted in the newspaper article, underscores a separation of their religious practices from the broader cultural context. Meanwhile, marginalization cannot be hinted at during the tradition, reflecting an inclusive environment, as also acknowledged in the media under religious freedom and equal rights. Furthermore, the recognition of Pakistan's commitment to protecting minorities without discrimination, as stated by representatives in the newspaper article, further negates the idea of marginalization.

Holi:

Holi, recognized as the festival of colors, stands as a spring harvest celebration akin to occasions



like Vaisakhi or Thanksgiving. It is a secular celebration that involves throwing dry colored powder on one another while singing, dancing, and playing. Holi is celebrated in many parts of the world, not just in the Indian subcontinent, and is viewed as a time to renew oneself by letting go of evil, repairing broken relationships, spreading love, peace, and harmony, and enjoying the company of others while feasting.

Typically celebrated in March according to the Gregorian calendar, Holi embodies the triumph of virtue over vice. On the eve of Holi, communal bonfires illuminate the night sky, symbolizing this narrative of victory over evil. Amid the celebrations, a gender-based segregation is observed, with females, particularly daughter-in-laws, congregating around the "holika dahan." Here, they fast and tie bunches of wood with different fruits. These women cover their faces, hold a plate of Puja, and later revolve around the Holika Dahan while chanting some words. Subsequently, the bundle of wood is kindled by the Pundit and males, accompanied by religious incantations as they encircle the burning pyre until its completion. (Richland library -2020)

The next day is even more colorful as it is the day to put colors on each other's faces. Rangoli, an art of decoration drawn on the floor or the entrances of homes, is also seen in many places during Holi. These designs are believed to usher in good fortune and prosperity to households, extending a warm welcome to guests. Rangoli is not just an aesthetic pursuit; it carries the intention of infusing homes with resilience and benevolence, fostering auspiciousness. In its entirety, Holi stands as a jubilant tribute to triumph, marked by the spirit of forgiveness, cohesion, and joy. It encapsulates the essence of victory and serves as a poignant reminder of the virtues of unity and happiness. (A Live interview-2022)

The description of Holi as a secular celebration, not limited to the Indian subcontinent, indicates assimilation by embracing a diverse and global participation in the festival. Similarly, Holi being recognized as a spring harvest celebration akin to Vaisakhi or Thanksgiving showcases assimilation by drawing parallels with other cultural festivities from different regions. Assimilation is also reflected by the portrayal of Holi as a time to renew oneself, repair relationships, spread love, peace, and harmony by emphasizing universal values that can be shared across cultures.

However, the celebration of Holi in many parts of the world and its view as a time to renew oneself and enjoy the company of others while feasting also demonstrates integration into a global context, recognizing and celebrating the festival beyond its cultural origins. The mention of communal bonfires illuminating the night sky symbolizing the triumph of virtue over vice reflects integration by incorporating religious and cultural narratives into the festival. And the practice of Rangoli, believed to usher in good fortune and prosperity, represents integration by incorporating art and symbolism into the celebration, extending a warm welcome to guests.

The separation is suggested by the gender-based segregation observed during the Holika Dahan,



with females congregating around the bonfire, fasting, and performing rituals, by highlighting specific roles and practices for different gender groups. The detailed description of the rituals performed by females around the Holika Dahan, including covering faces, holding a plate of Puja, and chanting words, also indicates a separation of specific religious practices associated with the festival.



Figure 9: Holika Dahan by Females in Shiv Mandir BWP



Figure 10: Observing Hindu ladies celebrating Holi Shiv Mandir BWP



Figure 12: Observing Holi Celebration Farid Gate Mandir BWP March 2022



Figure 13: Rangoli made by boys and girls , Farid gate Mandir BWP March 2022



Figure 14: Rangoli in a house of Hindu, BWP March 2022



Dussehra :

Dussehra, also referred to as Dasara or Vijayadashami, holds a significant place within the Hindu calendar, commemorating the triumphant tale of Lord Rama's victory over the ten-headed demon king Ravana. Ravana had abducted Rama's wife, Sita, and the name of the festival itself draws from Sanskrit, where "dasha" signifies "ten," and "hara" denotes "defeat." It is celebrated on the 10th day of the month of Ashvina, which falls in September or October, and coincides with the full moon, known as the "bright fortnight" (shukla paksha), marking the end of the nine-day Navratri festival and the tenth day of the Durga Puja festival. It symbolizes the victory of good over evil. Across many locales, the ritualistic burning of a symbolic effigy of Ravana, often crafted from old newspapers and simple paper, is a prominent custom. This ritual signifies the conquest over malevolence, as exemplified by Ravana's defeat. In Bahawalpur (BWP), Dussehra is an optional holiday, with numerous offices and enterprises operating as usual. While some individuals may opt for the day off to partake in celebrations, the festival's observance is not widespread, primarily due to the emphasis on preparing for Diwali. Diwali, occurring twenty days after Dussehra, carries heightened significance and often entails grand gatherings, buoyed by local holidays tailored to support the Hindu community's observance (Britannica- Dussehra).

The description of Dussehra as commemorating the triumphant tale of Lord Rama's victory over Ravana, a narrative from Hindu mythology, highlights assimilation by celebrating and preserving specific cultural and religious stories. In line with that, the mention of Dussehra symbolizing the victory of good over evil reflects assimilation by emphasizing universal values that transcend cultural and religious boundaries. Meanwhile, Dussehra coinciding with the full moon, marking the end of the nine-day Navratri festival and the tenth day of the Durga Puja festival, demonstrates integration by intertwining Dussehra with other Hindu festivals and practices. The mention of the ritualistic burning of a symbolic effigy of Ravana as a prominent custom signifies integration by incorporating a symbolic act into the celebration, reinforcing the narrative of triumph over malevolence.

Dussehra being an optional holiday in Bahawalpur, with offices and enterprises operating as usual, suggests a separation between the festival and the broader societal practices. The limited observance of the festival might indicate a separation of its celebration from mainstream cultural practices. The emphasis on preparing for Diwali, which occurs twenty days after Dussehra and is described as having heightened significance, suggests a separation in terms of prioritizing one Hindu festival over another within the community.

Goga Nomi/ Gugga peer mela:

The Goga Nomi or Gugga Peer Mela is a highly significant festival for the Hindu community of BWP. The Goga Nomi or Gugga Peer Mela holds profound significance within the Hindu community of Bahawalpur (BWP). It derives its roots from the folk tale of Googa, renowned for



his affinity toward snakes. Though variations exist within the narrative, the festival carries historical ties to Pakistan, as recounted by Hindu pandits. This event unfolds on a grand scale within an open expanse, drawing visitors from across the nation. Notably, leaders from the Muslim community, local authorities, and Members of Parliament come together to extend their greetings and partake in the jubilation alongside the Hindu community. This camaraderie is further underscored by the distribution of gifts and sweets. Every year, stringent security measures are meticulously implemented to ensure the safety of all participants, solidifying the festival's atmosphere as one of communal harmony and well-being. (YouTube-Vid)

The event drawing visitors from across the nation indicates assimilation as it brings people together from diverse backgrounds to partake in the festival. The distribution of gifts and sweets to participants, irrespective of religious affiliation, also suggests assimilation by incorporating a practice that fosters unity and shared celebration. The festival's celebration by leaders from the



Muslim community, local authorities, and Members of Parliament alongside the Hindu community signifies integration by demonstrating a shared communal experience transcending religious boundaries. The participation of leaders from different religious and community backgrounds at the festival reflects a collective recognition and celebration of the event within the broader societal context. Also, the presence of stringent security measures, implemented annually to ensure the safety of all participants, indicates integration by addressing the festival's logistics and safety concerns at a societal level. The festival's specific significance within the Hindu community might suggest a degree of separation, emphasizing the event's cultural and



religious importance to that particular community.

Figure 17: Gogga Peer Mela BWP 19 August 2022



Shahida Malka Ahmed-MPA-Kha... • [Follow](#)

Aug 27, 2019

Attend Maila Goga peer of Hindu at Bahawalpur with Mahinder. It was excellent and they gave us alot of Respect.

Figure 18: Gogga Peer Mela BWP 19 August 2022



Figure 19 :MPA Shahida Malka at Gogga Peer Mela BWP



Shahida Malka Ahmed-MPA-Kha... • [Follow](#)

Aug 27, 2019

Attend Maila Goga peer of Hindu at Bahawalpur with Mahinder. It was excellent and they gave us alot of Respect.

Figure 20 :MPA Shahida Malka at Gogga Peer Mela BWP

Rakhi:

Raksha Bandhan is a revered festival observed on the full moon day in the Hindu Lunar calendar's





month of Shravan. It holds profound significance as a day dedicated to celebrating the bond between siblings. During this occasion, sisters and brothers join in an expression of affection and invoke prayers for each other's well-being. A symbolic act involves the sisters to tie a knot of rakhi/ thread on the wrist of her brother, who promises to protect his sister from the evil. Over time, the festival's observance has expanded beyond siblings, embracing friends and cherished individuals with sentiments of love and care. This festival is also celebrated individually within family members. Typically coinciding with the Gugga Peer Mela, this festival often intertwines with the festive ambiance. The significance is further emphasized when observed as an official holiday with comprehensive security measures, ensuring a harmonious environment for participation. (Williams, P. -2007)

Figure 15: Rakhi celebration. A sister tying the rakhi to her brother, BWP



Figure 16: Rakhi celebration. A sister applying Tika to her brother, BWP

The expansion of Raksha Bandhan's observance beyond siblings to embrace friends and cherished individuals reflects assimilation by incorporating a broader circle of relationships into the festival's celebration. Significantly, the intertwining of Raksha Bandhan with the Gugga Peer Mela suggests assimilation, as it connects this Hindu festival with another cultural event, potentially fostering a sense of shared celebration. Meanwhile, the festival being observed as an official holiday with comprehensive security measures indicates integration, as it highlights the recognition and accommodation of Raksha Bandhan within the broader societal and official context. Next, the specific mention of Raksha Bandhan being observed individually within family



members might suggest a degree of separation, emphasizing the festival's specific significance to individual families.

Hinglaj Yatra

The Hinglaj Yatra, an annual Hindu pilgrimage in Hingol, some 250 km west of Karachi in Balochistan, lasts four days and attracts about 250,000 pilgrims from diverse places. The pilgrimage begins at Tharparkar, with some devotees walking 550 kilometres in 22 days to reach their spiritual destination. The Makran Coastal Highway has greatly reduced travel time for individuals who want speedier travel. ((Mata Hinglaj Yatra: To Hingol, a pilgrimage to reincarnation, 2016)

Hinglaj's significance in Hindu mythology stems from its link with the goddess Sati. Sati, Shiva's wife, is said to have burned herself to death after her father Daksha humiliated her and refused to invite her partner to a feast. This enraged Shiva, who proceeded on a rampage throughout the globe, carrying Sati's body with him. Vishnu then stepped in and utilized his divine powers to calm Shiva down. He then cut Sati's body into 51 pieces, which dropped to the ground in various locations.

According to Giyan Maharaj, a pandit in Khipro, these 51 locations have been designated as Shakti Peethas and have become sacred sites. Hindus believe the goddess's head fell at Hinglaj, making it the most cherished pilgrimage site. (Mata Hinglaj Yatra: To Hingol, a pilgrimage to reincarnation, 2016)

The pilgrims carry traditional red flags and red-gold ornate head scarves linked with Hinglaj Mata's sanctuary. The festival lasts four days, with only the faithful remaining throughout. Pilgrims arrive at Hinglaj Mata's shrine on the third day. They engage in rites such as climbing the Chandragup and Khandewari mud volcanoes. Coconuts are thrown into the craters of the Chandragup mud volcano to represent wishes and gratitude to the gods. Pilgrims then take a ritual bath in the sacred Hingol River before arriving at the shrine where the goddess rests. Pandits chant hymns and mantras in order to gain divine favour for their offerings. (HINGLAJ YATRA : THE ANNUAL PILIGRIMAGE, 2023)



PHOTO: Ali Xafar



Pilgrims make their way to the top of Chandergup mud volcano in Hingol. PHOTO: ALI XAFAR/EXPRESS

Regarding Hingol's mythical history, Maharaj Gopal tells of Raja Hingol, who was led astray by



deputies and participated in alcohol-fueled orgies. Mata stepped in and beheaded the king with a sword. Raja Hingol had two requests before his death: Mata should become a stone statue again, and she should serve anyone who asks her help, regardless of morals. (Notezai, 2019)

. The sanctuary is also said to be visited by Sufi saint Shah Abdul Latif Bhitai, a significant figure in the region, who addressed Hinglaj Devi as "Nani Maa" (grandmother). According to legend, the goddess promptly reacted to his address, giving rise to the temple's name, Nani Mandir. (Notezai, 2019)

The pilgrimage to Hinglaj, along the banks of the Hingol River, is thought to be a transforming journey that purifies the soul and prepares it for reincarnation. (Concordia Expeditions Pakistan, n.d.). While the pilgrimage has acquired recent attention due to social media, organisers anticipate a potential influx of thousands of Hindu pilgrims from throughout the world if visa conditions allow. (Mata Hinglaj Yatra: To Hingol, a pilgrimage to reincarnation, 2016)

For the past 31 years, the Hinglaj Yatra, organised by the Hinglaj Mata Welfare Trust, has encountered logistical obstacles, restricting foreign participation. (Mata Hinglaj Yatra: To Hingol, a pilgrimage to reincarnation, 2016) During the event, Balochistan Frontier Corps personnel patrol the entrance road, ensuring that only those accompanied by pilgrimage organisers can enter the shrine. Historical records, on the other hand, reflect a more inclusive past, with Muslims participating in the yatra for years, earning it the vernacular appellation of "Nani Ka Hajj." Local volunteers are key in supporting the event, arranging parking, and providing essential amenities for devotees. (Mata Hinglaj Yatra: To Hingol, a pilgrimage to reincarnation, 2016)

The pilgrimage's practical arrangements include the deployment of security personnel along the route and the distribution of polio vaccines to children. (Shahid, 2019). The Sindh government's new plan to provide a bus service, lodging, and meals for the Hinglaj Yatra attempts to make the pilgrimage more accessible to people who cannot afford to travel.

Over the last three decades, the location has grown in popularity and served as a focal point for Pakistan's numerous Hindu groups. The Hinglaj Yatra attests to Hinglaj Mata's continued spiritual and cultural significance. Faith, tradition, and a shared sense of community motivate devotees on a difficult journey through hostile desert terrain. (Staff, 2023). This event has special significance for the Hindu community of Bahawalpur, who travel in huge numbers to this temple each year via buses.

According to Barry's Model of Acculturation, the large number of pilgrims from many places, including India and Nepal, suggests assimilation, demonstrating a worldwide convergence of



Hindus in the Hinglaj Yatra. The pilgrimage's recent popularity on social media suggests absorption, since it reaches a larger global audience, adding to cultural interaction and awareness of the event beyond regional bounds. The event also demonstrates an inclusive past with Muslims, as seen by historical records of Muslims participating in the yatra for years, earning it the colloquial appellation of "Nani Ka Hajj," which emphasises assimilation and demonstrates a common communal experience that transcended religious borders. Sufi saint Shah Abdul Latif Bhittai addressing Hinglaj Devi as "Nani Maa" and the temple being known as Nani Mandir exhibit cultural integration, since it reflects the awareness and blending of cultural aspects.

The deployment of Balochistan Frontier Corps soldiers, security personnel along the route, and practical procedures for polio drops demonstrate integration into the larger sociocultural environment. The pilgrimage is facilitated and secured, exhibiting societal recognition. The Sindh government's measures, such as a bus service, lodging, and meals, demonstrate integration. These steps attempt to make the pilgrimage more accessible and supported by the government. For years, historical records of Muslims participating in the yatra highlighted integration, emphasising the festival's historical importance as a unifying point of reference that transcended religious ties. Similarly, the Hinglaj Yatra's role as a unifying point of reference for Pakistan's Hindu community during the previous three decades demonstrates absorption into the nation's cultural fabric.

The festival's relationship with Hindu mythology and rituals, particularly the Sati narrative, suggests separation, emphasising the festival's specific religious and cultural relevance to the Hindu population. The emphasis on rites peculiar to Hindu beliefs, such as throwing coconuts and having a ritual bath, emphasises separation, emphasising the pilgrimage's separate religious practises. However, the Hinglaj Yatra's logistical constraints, which limit international participation, imply marginalisation. Evolving limits, such as limiting international participation and potentially banning Muslims, suggest features of marginalization, calling into question the festival's long-standing inclusion.

Conclusion:

Festivals are an essential part of any religion. Every religious community eagerly waits for the special events and celebrate them with full zeal and zest. This is fundamental right to every person to have full freedom and security to act upon religion and to celebrate the religious festivities with all the traditions and customs. Pakistan is being portrayed since ever in International and national media as a dangerous and unsafe country for minorities. In this article it is the coexistence of Hindu Muslims living in Bahawalpur Punjab is shown and deliberated by evaluating their religious life despite of living with Muslim majority and how do Hindus present themselves in public appearances. Moreover, the exploration of Hindu community festivals in Bahawalpur through the lens of Berry's Model of Acculturation offers valuable insights into the dynamics of cultural



preservation, adaptation, and intergroup relations within a minority community setting. The acknowledgment and celebration of these festivals serve as pivotal moments for reinforcing cultural identity, fostering community cohesion, and navigating the challenges of acculturation. By applying Berry's Model, which delineates four acculturation strategies—integration, assimilation, separation, and marginalization—this study illuminates how the Hindu community in Bahawalpur strategically navigates their cultural adaptation while preserving their distinct religious and cultural practices. The findings underscore the resilience and adaptability of minority communities in embracing cultural diversity while maintaining their unique heritage.

Moreover, the implications extend beyond academic discourse, offering actionable insights for policymakers to craft inclusive policies that protect minority rights, promote cross-cultural contacts, and strengthen ties between different religious groups. Furthermore, these findings energize the field of interfaith communication by providing tangible examples of effective tactics for fostering dialogue, understanding, and empathy across religious divides. Importantly, this exploration promotes a shift in societal perspectives towards recognizing and amplifying positive interactions within religious communities. By highlighting instances of understanding and camaraderie, the broader society may be inspired to emulate and expand upon such examples, fostering a more cohesive and accepting collective consciousness. In summary, this study demonstrates the transformative power of cultural celebrations and intergroup relations within the Hindu community in Bahawalpur. As these implications resonate, they call upon stakeholders to collaborate in creating an environment grounded in mutual respect, understanding, and cross-cultural collaboration, thereby weaving a tapestry of unity amidst diversity in the region.



References

- Abdulla, M. R. (2018). Culture, religion, and freedom of religion or belief. *The Review of Faith & International Affairs*, 16(4), 102–115. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15570274.2018.1535033>
- Ansari, S. (2005). *Life after Partition: Migration, Community and Strife in Sindh: 1947 - 1962*.
- Berry, J. W. (1974). Psychological aspects of cultural pluralism. *Culture Learning*, 2 (1), 17- 22.
- Berry, J. W. (2008). *Cross-cultural psychology : research and applications*. Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press.
- Berry, J. W. (2017). *Mutual intercultural relations*. Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press.
- https://brill.com/display/book/edcoll/9789004378629/B9789004378629_s003.xml
- Berry, J. W. (2019). *Acculturation*. Cambridge University Press.
- Berry, J. W., & Dasen, P. R. (2019). *Culture and Cognition*. Routledge.
- <https://www.britannica.com/topic/lingam>
- <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Dussehra>
- Curtis, L. (2016). Religious Freedom in Pakistan: Glimmers of Light on a Darkening Horizon. *The Review of Faith & International Affairs*, 14(2), 23–30. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15570274.2016.1184439>
- Devji, F. (2020). Changing Places: Religion and Minority in Pakistan. *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies*, 43(1), 169–176. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00856401.2020.1694466>
- Berry, J.W. (1991). Psychology of acculturation: Understanding individuals moving between cultures. In R. Smelser & P.B. Baltes (Eds.), *International encyclopedia of the social and behavioral sciences* (pp. 102–107). Elsevier.
- Berry, J. W. (2008). Globalisation and acculturation. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 32(4), 328-336. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijintrel.2008.03.007>
- <https://contendingmodernities.nd.edu/field-notes/religious-festivals-and-peaceful-co-existence/>
- Fathullah Mujtabai. (1978). *Aspects of Hindu Muslim Cultural Relations*.
- Fuchs, M.-M., & Fuchs, S. W. (2019). Religious Minorities in Pakistan: Identities, Citizenship and Social Belonging. *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies*, 43(1), 1–16. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00856401.2020.1695075>
- Gillani , A. H. (2014). History of Bahawalpur State and its Culture . *Pakistan Journal of Social Sciences (PJSS)* , Vol. 34(No. 2), 463–471.
- Global Restrictions on Religion*. (2020). Pew Research Center. Retrieved from <https://www.pewforum.org/2020/07/21/global-restrictions-on-religion>.
- Hawabai Mustafa Shah. (1991b). *Aboriginal Tribes of India and Pakistan, the Bhils & Kolhis*.
- Home – ISKCON – The Hare Krishna Movement. (n.d.). Retrieved from <https://www.iskcon.org/>
- Honor Head. (2012). *Hindu festivals*. London: Wayland.



- Hussain Ahmad Khan. (2004). *Re-Thinking Punjab*. Research and Publication Centre, National College of Arts, Lahore.
- Hussain, G. (2019b). *The Rise of Dalit Peasants: Kolhi Activism in Lower Sindh*. 2. <https://doi.org/10.17632/5sfhcztmx6.2>
- Ibbetson, Denzil Sir. Asian Educational Services, 1990 . (1970). *A Glossary of the tribes and castes of the Punjab and NWFP*. Lahore : Language Department Punjab. Labana caste is found in District Bahawalnagar. In Cholistan there is Rangers Check post Labana and Toba Labana.
- Iftikhar Haider Malik. (2002). *Religious Minorities in Pakistan*. Conran Octopus.
- Iftikhar Haider Malik. (2008). *The history of Pakistan*. Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press. <http://ictadministration.gov.pk/auqaf-department/>
- J. Gordon Melton. (2011). *Religious Celebrations: An Encyclopedia of Holidays, Festivals, Solemn Observances, and Spiritual Commemorations [2 volumes]*. ABC-CLIO.
- John. (2002). *Religion and Dalit Liberation*.
- Jürgen Schaflechner. (2018). *Hinglaj Devi : identity, change, and solidification at a Hindu temple in Pakistan*. New York, Ny: Oxford University Press.
- Karapanagiotis, N. (2021). *Branding Bhakti*. Indiana University Press.
- Loyd, A. (2020). *Bahawalpur : the kingdom that vanished*. Gurgaon: Vintage, An Imprint Of Penguin Random House.
- Mackay, J. (2015). *Hindu mythology*. Farmington Hills, Mich: Lucent Books, A Part Of Gale, Cengage Learning.
- Malik Muḥammad Dīn. (2001). *Bahawalpur State with Map 1904*.
- Malik, M. D. (1904). *Gazetteer of Bahawalpur state*. Sang-e-Meel publication Lahore.
- Mehfooz, M. (2021). Religious Freedom in Pakistan: A Case Study of Religious Minorities. *Religions*, 12(1), 51. <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel12010051>
- Meister, M. W. (2010). *Temples of the Indus*. BRILL.
- mohammad-inayatullah-asad-subhani-ebook
- Mukundcharan Dās. (2010). *Hindu festivals: origin, sentiments and rituals*. Amdavad: Swāminārāyan Aksharpath.
- Punjab (Pakistan. (1935). *Punjab District Gazetteers: Bahawalpur State*.
- Rahman, T. (2012). Pakistan's policies and practices towards the religious minorities. *South Asian History and Culture*, 3(2), 302–315. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19472498.2012.664419>
- Rengel, M. (2004). *Pakistan: a primary source cultural guide*. New York: Rosen Pub. Group.
- Ruhland, H. (2019). *Peacebuilding in Pakistan*. Waxmann Verlag.
- Şafdar ‘Alī Shāh. (2013). *The Hindu Heritage of Pakistan*.
- Shahāmat Ālī. (1848). *The History of Bahawalpur*.
- Sharma, U. (2008). *Festivals In Indian Society (2 Vols. Set)*. Mittal Publications.
- Steele, A. (1986). *The Hindu Castes Their Religion and Customs*. Mittal Publications.
- Swami Agehananda Bharati. (1981). *Hindu Views and Ways and the Hindu-Muslim Interface*.



- William Joseph Wilkins. (1882). *Hindu Mythology, Vedic and Purānic*. Calcutta : Thacker, Spink ; Bombay : Thacker ; London : W. Thacker.
- Wilkins W.J. (2002) *Hindu Mythology*, Second Edition. New Delhi: Rupa
- Williams, P. (2007). Hindu–Muslim Brotherhood. *Journal of South Asian Development*, 2(2), 153–176. <https://doi.org/10.1177/097317410700200201>
- (n.d.-b). Retrieved from). Guidelines for the study of religious freedom. Retrieved from <https://www.iclrs.org/content/publications/guidelines-for-the-study-of-religious-freedom/>
- <https://youtu.be/s91z75x4T88>
- <https://www.richlandlibrary.com/blog/2020-07-15/rangoli-creative-expression-indian-folk-art-through-use- colors>
- <https://nation.com.pk/2020/11/15/hindus-community-celebrates-diwali/>
- About: Kohli (clan). (n.d.). Retrieved July 20, 2023, from dbpedia.org website: [https://dbpedia.org/page/Kohli_\(clan\)](https://dbpedia.org/page/Kohli_(clan))