**Societal Outlook**

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Pakistani society is reflective of diversity as well as economic disparity. The social status of people owing to their varied sources of income divides the populace into strata. People from the middle class have a different lifestyle than an enriched or elite. The different living conditions lead to sentiments, ranging from real optimism to despair. Every segment of society is living out its narrative. Should the co-existence of multiple narratives at the societal level be seen as a weakness or a dividing line? The enthusiasm in people while watching a cricket match, and the unanimous stance against terrorism are all traits of this multifarious and economically divided society. The optimism expressed by people about ties with China and the CPEC is yet another trait defining pragmatism and a prospective approach to regional connectivity. Pakistan-China’s flourishing relationship shows that ideological, and cultural differences have never been a point of concern. This also shows the sagacity and balanced outlook of Pakistani society, and it negates the mantra of extremism often equated with Pakistan by some disgruntled elements. Pakistan’s wars with India, nuclear tests and support for the right of self-determination of Kashmir reflect assertiveness and courage to defy the odds. Pakistan in the region has tried to promote religious tourism and the opening of the “Kartarpur Corridor” is a step in that direction. It is a message for the Sikhs living in India and the world over that humanity is above political differences.

In Pakistan, there are Hindus, Sikhs, Christians and Buddhists. Tharparkar district (Sindh province) is home to a large Hindu population. The movie “Ramchand Pakistani” is a depiction of the Hindus living in Sindh and their love for Pakistan. The film is a story of a seven-year-old Pakistani Hindu boy, who, while playing, crosses the border and spends years in jail in India. Another film “BOL” describes the ordeals of Pakistani women where a female has to bear children till a son is born. Childbearing is prioritized over the mother’s health. Having a large number of children burdens the finances due to which the education of children is compromised. The film also reflects the attitude towards transgendered people and how they have to fight for survival in society. While highlighting the bitter facts of society, the film also shows the other side where a girl takes a principled stance and encourages his sisters towards empowerment. The film depicts that the stereotypical approaches are being shed away by a balanced outlook. People’s interest in such movies reflects their understanding towards a balanced perspective.

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Pakistanis have also migrated (legally or illegally) to other countries in quest of better job prospects and living conditions. The passion which overseas Pakistanis have for their country even after they acquire dual nationality is phenomenal. The zeal and patriotism in overseas Pakistanis are so strong that the dual nationality has not eroded their Pakistani identity.

The weaknesses in Pakistani society which require immediate correction include the ‘education system’ and the ‘voting pattern’. In Pakistan, university education is flourishing but alarmingly 20 million children are out of school. About half of the school-going children in Pakistan do not reach class eight and drop out of school. Based on school enrollment data, if Pakistan continues at the same rate it is currently going, will eventually reach the level of education in 2047 that India reached in 2011 and Bangladesh in 2016. There is a need to focus more towards school education. Politically, Pakistan needs to develop a democratic culture and for that, electoral reforms are a must. To ensure that the election results are truly democratic, vote casting should be made mandatory for all in the country. Lastly, the tension and conflict within a nation are not necessarily destructive, they can produce catharsis and can lead the way forward as long as it does not become violent.

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