

## **ROLE OF PEACE JOURNALISM IN INDO-PAK RELATIONS: A CASE STUDY OF “AMAN KI ASHA”**

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### **Abstract**

*South-Asian region remains the focus of global community since India-Pakistan, the two nuclear antagonists, subsist in an atmosphere that is prone to recurring crisis and critical circumstances thus, leading to intractable conflicts. Keeping into account the failure of the two governments to construct peace within the region, peace journalism seems to be one of the remedies that can guarantee peaceful future. The article explores the prospects and promising outcomes that the peace-oriented news media can bring within the premises of the subcontinent. The phenomenon of peace journalism has deeply been investigated in the article where “Aman ki Asha” has been taken as a case study of peace media fostering positivity and brotherhood.*

### **Introduction**

Ever since, life has come into existence on this planet earth, war and peace have remained important aspects in determining the very destiny of human kind. With every conflict, there is a solution; with every war, there comes peace. The bonding between war and peace is like the association of day and night; no matter what comes first. The realization of peace-building efforts in any conflict-ridden society leads to the conclusion that the construction and maintenance of peace and harmony has always been the core hub of every society, thereby, leaving behind no reason to refute its importance as a significant prerequisite of human existence.

Media, of any society, is the most influential tool of winning hearts and minds of the targeted public. It is equally true in the context of Pakistan and India where people put a lot of confidence in whatever is portrayed through their respective media. Media has been acknowledged as the most

significant instrument for communication at a larger level. It is the fourth influential institution of the state besides Executive, Legislation and Judiciary and therefore, is very significant in shaping the opinion of the public and their attitudes<sup>1</sup>. The term media is a vast phenomenon including those paradigms or ways through which a large number of people could be communicated in a structured pattern thereby incorporating electronic, print and online media. The current study, however, focuses on the news media which encloses the journalistic features aimed to inform and educate a larger public.

Due to marvellous influential characteristics, media can do wonders through cultivating the content in the mindset of the public, thereby shifting their beliefs and behaviours. The credit goes to media that the term 'peace journalism' has been coined. The debate on peace journalism through media has attracted many scholars, peace advocates, Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) owners and workers, journalists and other governmental organizations all-over the globe. Fortunately, people of India and Pakistan have started realizing that peace journalism can prove itself a significant and worth considering bridging aspect through which the ever continuing hostile relations of both the nations can be normalized<sup>2</sup>. The reason lies in the fact that media, especially the news media, regulate a watchdog function and maintain an eye on the other sectors of the society, making them answerable to the public<sup>3</sup>.

Unfortunately, news media<sup>oo</sup> particularly television, news channels and newspapers, have been used as an instrument for negative propaganda by the governments on both sides of the border. Despite their contribution in promoting peace by making the public well-informed, they have become a tool of promoting violence and conflict both within Pakistan and India and beyond<sup>4</sup>. Therefore, effectual steps towards confidence and trust building need to be embraced in-order to lessen suspicion and revulsion between India and Pakistan and guarantee such environment which proves helpful for collaboration and brotherhood<sup>5</sup>. Consequently, promoting

peace through journalistic media of both the countries has gained the status of Confidence Building Measures (CBMs) and has attracted many national and international players. India and Pakistan have always been engaged in arms-race but the outcome of such actions has been appalling for the either country. Hence, endorsing peace and cooperation has become extremely important for the stability of the region.

The key objectives of the study are to; identify the significance of peace and serenity in South-Asia particularly in the context of India-Pakistan; explore the importance of peace journalism in the contemporary relationship of Pakistan and India; offer recommendations pertaining to the endorsement of media peace-building initiatives that the journalists might find helpful in furthering the phenomenon of peace journalism in the subcontinent.

### **Mass Media Theory of Agenda-Setting**

The roots of agenda-setting can be found in early 1960's in the findings of Benard Cohen where he concluded that "the press is significantly more than a purveyor of information and opinion. It may not be successful much of the time in telling people what to think, but it is stunningly successful in telling readers what to think about"<sup>6</sup>. Since then, it has been considered as one of the most noteworthy theories discussing the powerful clutch of mass media on its captivated audiences.

The idea of agenda-setting is that media is the instigators of the narratives since majority of the people do not witness such events on their own<sup>7</sup>. Therefore, the views and attitudes of the public rely mainly upon how the events are propagated through the media. Being media as the influential projectors of the issues, the viewers tend to believe in the reality portrayed via media<sup>8</sup>.

In the Indo-Pak context, agenda-setting via media seems to be in accordance with the political agenda of both the states. Therefore, this theory is highly relevant in the subcontinent where the war-oriented agenda setting is

amongst the core reasons behind the ever strained India-Pakistan ties. Hence if the Indo-Pak media authorities are sensitized regarding the negativities furthered by the war-oriented agenda setting, it is only then that the peace narrative could materialize in the two societies.

### **Mass Media Theory of Cultivation**

Cultivation theory is largely focused on the implications and effects particularly of the television exposure on the audiences. The theory is based on assumption that more the individuals are exposed to television content, the more they are liable to form opinion that are similar to television's media reality<sup>9</sup>. On one hand, television is the major source of information for many people, on the other, its continuous exposure can result into an enormous amount of behavioural and attitudinal changes.

The practicalities of cultivation theory can also be verified within the contemporary Indo-Pak ties. Since the media of both the countries have played a major role in cultivating negativities and hatred amongst the people of both nations, the peace journalists must consider this approach while figuring out the genesis of the ever strained India-Pakistan relationship.

### **Intensification of Indo-Pak Rivalry**

History of the strained relations between Pakistan and India can be traced back to 1947 when these two nations were declared as independent sovereign states. Ever since, the rivalry has continued and become stronger, intense and yet more enduring as the time went by. Both India and Pakistan face the dilemma of weak political system that is unable to construct policies which are apt to develop reconciliation and more likely to settle the enduring concerns and problems that have captivated both the societies, since partition. The leaders of both the nations, however, have been engaged in the exchange of some constructive declaratory statements but the effects of such proclamations are very limited.

The unresolved issue of Kashmir has hampered efforts to improve relations between the two states. Despite all three wars being fought on this very cause, Kashmir still remains an unfinished agenda between Pakistan and India<sup>10</sup>. In the years following the partition, Pakistan has always voiced for solution of Kashmir problem as the main issue, while India has always asserted that the problem is a non issue for the world<sup>11</sup>. since then, Pakistan's foreign policy has often revolved around this matter and has demanded the solution of the entire Kashmir episode. Non resolution will render the peace initiatives within the nuclear neighbours as worthless.

Another factor that has escalated suspicion and a risk of miscalculation within the entire region, is the nuclearization of the two highly antagonistic yet strategic giants of South Asia. It must be noted that both the nuclear and conventional wars are directly proportional to each other as the threat of one leads to the likelihood of the other<sup>12</sup>. Pakistan's open nuclear strategy declares that if it feels threatened by India then Pakistan would not hesitate even to use nuclear technology while India, on the other hand, has declared that if Pakistan engages nuclear weapons in the first place then India would be the second to use them<sup>13</sup>. Along with that, Siachen Glacier is also a source of conflict between India and Pakistan. The issue, of course, is a part of the legacy of partition coupled with the incompatibility of the political wisdom of both the governments<sup>14</sup>. Moreover, the iceberg is less an area of strategic importance than it is an emblem of ego, national pride and a sense of belongingness for the people of both the countries<sup>15</sup>. The Indo-Pak forces are not only consuming their precious resources over a needless war but also damaging the natural environment and ecosystem of that area<sup>16</sup>.

The highly unexpected Kargil conflict in 1999 left behind strains that might take several years or even decades to get washed out from the minds of both the nations. The Kargil incident provides a clear understanding of the Indian and Pakistani elitist's desires under the canopy of "national interests"<sup>17</sup>. Moreover, the Kargil conflict had made the foreign powers suspicious of Pakistan's capability of becoming

a reliable and responsible nuclear state while India successfully placed its demands before U.S. and came-out as a sound and trustworthy nuclear ally of the world's super power.

Similarly, India and Pakistan have also been engaged in vicious competition of arms race long before the acquisition of nuclear technology thereby creating a security dilemma for the entire region. It is perhaps not the nuclear weapons but the escalation of arms and missile technology also that places the security of South Asia at a high risk<sup>18</sup>. Moreover, in the third world countries like Pakistan and India where, there is a food deficiency along with worst health conditions, the considerable amount of the budget is allocated for the arms trade.

Considering the above mentioned reasons, one can reach the conclusion that it is perhaps the national pride that has forced the Indian and Pakistani news media to endorse war propagandistic designs that has jeopardized the peace of entire region. It is time for the people of both the countries to realize that "friends can be chosen but neighbours cannot". Therefore, peace journalism seems to be one of the remedies that can overcome the above mentioned hurdles in bringing peace between India and Pakistan.

### **Conceiving Peace**

Before proceeding to peace journalism, one must have an understanding of what the term "peace" means. Peace is a varied phenomenon and its definition depends on how the individuals perceive the very notion. Johan Galtung, originator of the discipline of peace-research, divided peace into two different categories i.e. "negative-peace" and "positive-peace"<sup>19</sup>. By "negative – peace", he meant nonexistence of brutality, war and other such demonstrations of direct-violence while the attainment of such a scenario is not all the times possible through non-violent means<sup>20</sup>. The international organizations like UN carry the authority to set-up "negative-peace" where-ever required either through utilizing its authority of militia or coercion<sup>21</sup>. By "positive-

peace”, he meant the nonexistence of all sorts of misunderstandings, lack of all categories of violence either structural or cultural and the attainment of peaceful scenario is always through non-violent means<sup>22</sup>. Peace journalism, disarmament, conflict transformation; all exemplify the struggle towards “positive-peace”.

### **Peace Journalism: A Tool of Confidence-Building**

The notion of peace journalism, as suggested by the term itself, relates to the process through which tension and communication gaps could be alleviated and a message of peace could be promoted via journalism amongst the adversaries. As the field of journalism depends entirely on media therefore peace-building through the use of media can be entitled as peace journalism.

Peace journalism illustrates and reorganizes the main responsibilities and core functions of the reporters who bear the burden of covering disputes and conflicts<sup>23</sup>. It is a common belief that humans are meant to interact with each other as they cannot isolate themselves from the environment of other fellow beings, due to their dependability on one another. The irony is that the humans cannot exist without their fellow beings and at the same time, they cannot stand one another. The incompatible goals of individuals as a consequence of these interactions lead to tension and conflicts putting way to anxiety and destructiveness. Being communication as an essential constituent of human existence, the idea of peace journalism possesses the ability to foster positive and rather productive interaction amongst people. Structuring peace as the major aim of this phenomenon, it depolarizes, deflates and de-escalates anxieties or conflicts, thus motivating the journalists to report the differences and disputes in such a manner that encourages communication in order to have a better understanding amongst the adversaries<sup>24</sup>.

A peace journalist attempts to balance the perceived power of the antagonists, coordinates the dialogue process and

facilitates openness and mutual understanding<sup>25</sup>. Furthermore, the importance of visual images in the projection of peace journalism has also been considered. The human brain is most likely to bear the visual images more than the written texts for considerably longer period<sup>26</sup>. This is more evident in the war situations where the dramatic heart-touching images immediately penetrate into our personalities than the written or verbal news content.

Therefore, television and newspaper images are the most powerful and influential medium of all media institutions as individuals tend to relate the images, they see, to their view of world reality. However, the press images, because of their single freeze-frame ability, are likely to affect more than television content or films<sup>27</sup>. Moreover, cartoons, pictures and other such visual representations do bear a tendency of propagating war journalism by generating "enemy images" and in the same manner these visuals also have the potential to mobilize the efforts towards constructing peace amongst the adversaries<sup>28</sup>.

Peace journalism seems to be the antidote that perhaps could cure the stressed relations between Pakistan and India. Both nations being intensely affected by such a pricey historic enmity, desperately need their journalists and media to proceed professionally and ethically as they mostly cover stories regarding conflicts and tension related to these two nuclear neighbours.

### **Applying Peace Journalism in War-Like Situation**

Media, in any conflictual or peaceful situation, is a powerful weapon used by the authorities in order to influence public's support. Without media, disseminating a particular message to a larger audience is rather impossible. Therefore, one can say that media is the most powerful tool, that can be used for promotion of peaceful milieu.

The journalists perfectly know how influential media can be, especially in war-like circumstances. Media can best be

used as a catalyst for peace and can bring reforms and revolutions around the world. Two different approaches on reporting conflicts have been identified. The first approach propagated by Martin Bell, an experienced British Broadcasting Company (BBC) war journalist, denies objectivity to have any role in conflict reporting as, according to him, objectivity has never alleviated the agony of the victims<sup>29</sup>. Such journalism has been named as humanitarian journalism. However, the second approach sees objectivity as the basic element defining journalism<sup>30</sup>.

Whatever the approach might be, one thing is quite clear that journalists are socially and ethically bound to protect the public interests<sup>31</sup>. In areas of intense conflict, peace journalism does not require the journalists to show only the good side of the picture but it emphasizes on impartiality and in-depth research of available facts. Every conflicting party has its own story and it is a democratic right of every individual to be heard before being analyzed or criticized. Therefore, peace journalists seek good reporting because it is often through such reporting that the problem automatically is reduced or resolved<sup>32</sup>.

In fact, peace journalism is all about building bridges by facilitating dialogue process in war-like situations. A peace journalist should know the scope of an issue, background, major causes behind the escalation of conflict, impact and repercussions of the entire conflict<sup>33</sup>. Similarly, peace journalist should be fully equipped with skills in peace-building, and conflict analysis and transformation of the issue.

It has also been suggested that instead of only covering sudden erupted conflicts, the journalists should keep on alarming the people before any such event could occur<sup>34</sup>. This would not only help in de-escalation of tension but would also make the adversaries understand underlying factors that worsen relationship between the parties at conflict.

## **Indispensable Components of Peace Journalism**

Three major components of peace-journalism approach are; representing the other side; alternative media reporting; and creative peace coverage<sup>35</sup>.

### **Representing the Other Side**

Representing the other's point of view through journalistic media can do wonders by clarifying each party's position through projecting the in-depth storylines of the conflict which otherwise are ignored by the people. This very component underlies the hypothesis that, as the media cover the other's point of view, the public becomes more informed regarding peace opportunities<sup>36</sup>. However, the other party's contextual information can help in better decision making and understanding one another. Moreover, if media could provide even half-image of the actual reality (from other's view point), it becomes more simple to humanize the "perceived other".

In fact, a peace journalist is bound to provide diversified information independent of the officially provided stories, otherwise, lack of ample information can even lead to misunderstandings, ambiguities and more intractability in the stances.

### **Alternative Media Reporting**

Unfortunately, there are times when the peace processes assume back seat due to certain reasons in the context of India-Pakistan. In such circumstances, peace journalists require reporting on alternative stories that could promote and strengthen the peace processes. The alternatives to brutality can be provided through revealing the stories pertaining to human-rights violation. Such an attempt would not only provide some exciting rather human-interest stories but would also help in making the victims voice their sufferings. In times of less enthusiasm towards any peace initiative, alternative reporting can help peace process in the very sight of public. Besides human-rights violation,

interviewing the politicians or the prominent opinion makers of the “other side” can ensure more in-depth understanding of their viewpoints<sup>37</sup>. Hence, in this way the public of one side could develop firsthand knowhow regarding other’s perception of the conflict.

A journalist may follow two steps while covering any peace process. First, the backchannel negotiations should be reported in order to build public trust and secondly, the obstacles likely to distort the peace environment should be revealed and discussed honestly in the news stories<sup>38</sup>.

### **Creative Reporting**

The last important component is reporting peace stories creatively. It is a common perception and a big obstacle in peace journalism that peace stories are often unexciting and boring. Since the audience is more interested in exhilarating stories, therefore, peace journalists need to go out of the box in order to attract the public. For this purpose, the journalists require creative reporting that could motivate and inspire the individuals both emotionally and socially.

Creative reporting could include the stories of cooperation that involve the grass-roots of both rival parties. In this way the media practitioners would not only empower their public with various viewpoints but also create opportunities for the audiences to develop a balanced rather more accurate judgment about the issue.

### **Peace Journalism in Indo-Pak Scenario**

In countries like Pakistan and India, there are times when the formal level (official) dealings often fall short of alleviating mistrust and suspicion amongst the people of both the nations. The recurring crisis, impolite political stances, arms-race, internal problems, lack of concern; all combine to give a horrific picture of the future of South-Asia. In such circumstances, Track-III (citizen-diplomacy) remains the sole prospect that could bring both societies closer to pressurize

their representatives to reassess what has gone wrong during all these years.

Media, in both the states, enjoy a highly honoured and credible position amongst the people. Indians and Pakistanis tend to structure their perceptions in accordance with the light of news media. The recent boost of journalistic media in Pakistan, after the concluding episode of 2009 Chief Justice's restoration, has proved media's efficacy in portraying and resolving social issues. The same is applicable to the Indian society where the major economic, social or political information is extracted from the media sources.

Since media, over the previous six decades, have intensely fuelled the Indo-Pak conflict and these issues have been inculcated in the minds of the public so deeply that escaping this media war has become almost impossible. Such a trend has always come in the way of peaceful and secure South Asia. Thanks to citizen diplomacy, due to which the observers on each side saw a positive change in the official stances of Indian and Pakistani governments. The era of 1990s is characterized with various Track-III initiatives where different groups of the society made a positive move towards confidence building and the official efforts took a different, rather much concerned course<sup>39</sup>. It is because of peace-oriented journalistic media that people on the two sides, now, are much aware of the significance of peace and evils of war between India-Pakistan. Credit goes to media's reporting that the Indian and Pakistani representatives now meet each other by having their public backing and media support.

The recent argument of the citizen peace-communities in Pakistan and India has burdened both governments with heavy responsibility of continuing the ongoing confidence-building efforts sincerely and devotedly<sup>40</sup>. Here, the input of journalists and other media practitioners is worth-mentioning. The current attitude of media industry has contributed in across-the-board public awareness regarding how much crucial peace is for nuclear-armed South-Asia. Peace journalism in South Asia gained popularity in 1990s but

due to the frequent leg-pulling being exercised on part of both governments, it could not receive much public heed<sup>41</sup>. Today, the things are quite different; people are much aware, civil society is much mobilized and media is fairly independent and privatized. Therefore, current environment seems to be more suitable for attaining the maximum benefits of peace journalism between India-Pakistan.

### **News Media as Instrument of Peace-Journalism and Conflict De-Intensification**

Media, predominantly news-media, serve twofold tasks; either they can be viciously dreadful by cultivating facets of fanaticism or they can be awe-inspiringly human-oriented through disseminating authentic information by regarding human-rights<sup>42</sup>. The pervasive conviction in war reporting leaves war outcome to the incumbent governments while peace-oriented war reporting grants journalists the power to take the resultant outcome in their hands by affecting the public positively and much fruitfully<sup>43</sup>.

Peace-oriented news-media not only strengthens democracy but also guarantees individuals' sovereignty and people's right of having access to plausible information within their immediate environment<sup>44</sup>. Constructive news media of any society enables the citizens to form their opinion impartially on contemporary problems, whether political or social, and help the individuals in making conversant decisions on societal issues that directly affect them. They monitor, evaluate and critically analyze those who possess significant ranks thereby empowering citizens to keep an eye on their government representatives<sup>45</sup>.

Furthermore, peace-values, being cultivated through peace-oriented media, reproduce such a society that ensures tranquil minds and healthy living of the public<sup>46</sup>. Such media grants voice to the unheard, valour to the suppressed, power to the weak, remedy to the victimized and an opportunity to the citizenry to take fate of the state in their own hands. In the underdeveloped states of South-Asia (especially Pakistan and

neighbouring India), peace-oriented journalism remains the only option.

### **'Aman Ki Asha': Compensating Bitterness and Exemplifying Peace Journalism**

Perhaps one of the most lasting and celebrated peace journalistic endeavours between India and Pakistan is the one that came after 2008 hostile media's treatment of Mumbai incident. The project, accredited as "*Aman ki Asha*", demonstrates the worth of media in mediation, conflict-transformation and bilateral discourse<sup>47</sup>. Started in January 2010, Pakistani "*Jang Group*" and Indian "*Times of India*" teamed up to compensate media's track-record of acrimony and surliness against each-other. The initiative's title combines Urdu (*Aman* denoting peace) and Hindi (*Asha* denoting hope) terms to articulate harmony and understanding between India-Pakistan to illustrate the dying desire of both the nations to acquire peace.

The project incorporates various initiatives ventured via both entertainment and news-media that are intended to strengthen the ties between India and Pakistan and to mobilize mass support to attain peace objectives<sup>48</sup>. In partnership with the dynamic civil-society of both states, "*Aman ki Asha*" seeks to expose the public aspirations for witnessing a serene and secure region that lacks animosity and abhorrence against any nation. It has ushered the two historic opponents into such a context that guarantees mutual discourse, buoyancy, reciprocated respect, trust and has compelled both the governments to adopt fresh innovations to tackle their ever-continuing animosity. It attempts to offer productive outlook, broad in mindedness, acceptance, generosity and above all, it seeks to soften the deadlock that stands responsible for limiting the thinking ability of Indian and Pakistani politicians. Furthermore, it has insisted upon the journalists to search for shared values in lieu of divulging disparities and has brought the two societies closer enough to endorse the culture conducive of practicality and optimism.

A recent survey executed by *Daily Jang* has revealed that roughly 65% of Indian and Pakistani populace is very much mindful of this peace-journalistic endeavour and hence cherishes the initiative for its uniqueness, charisma and vigour<sup>49</sup>. Fortunately, it has touched nearly every issue that has anything to do with both the countries; whether it is trade, business, culture, language, education, visa policy, health issues, politics, cricket diplomacy, lifestyle, music, drama, movies or tough concerns like Siachen, war prisoners, Kashmir or water issue. Under the canopy of “*milnay do*” (let citizens convene), it has incorporated and fostered civil-society endeavours by drawing near to the grass-roots of India and Pakistan and has been lucky enough to win their trust and minds<sup>50</sup>. “*Aman ki Asha*” has granted a phenomenal breakthrough since partition particularly by involving the consent of Indian and Pakistani governments and citizenry. The most celebrated programs liked by the public under the said initiative are “Surk Shetra”, “Chotay Ustad”, “Foodistan”, “Pakistan-India Takra” and frequent current affair shows being hosted by anchors of both the media.

Drama, music and film icons have enthusiastically supported the initiative by appealing the public to disregard what has happened before and anticipate better rather more productive future. It has altered the most dominant yet most unfriendly Indian and Pakistani mindset through portraying their common roots, culture, food and language. Being an extension of Track-III diplomacy, it has fostered the worth of democracy which is ultimately the only way out for both the societies. Following the media’s treatment of dreadful Mumbai episode and media’s aggressive track-record, the initiative hunts for denuclearization by halting the arms-race, deforms the “otherization” by valuing human-rights, alters the pessimistic mindset by illustrating commonness, cracks the deadlock by engaging the masses and strives to heal the miseries of the individuals.

The initiative has been regarded as the most sincere and solemn strive undertaken by both the states towards cultivating peace and synchronization<sup>51</sup>. Its practicality has

made the most contradictory issues to be conversed on a single platform and the resultant views to be projected on both Indian and Pakistani media without bias or stereotyping. Being supported by a win-win stratagem, it ponders on mutual gains, bilateral compatibility, confiscating misconceptions, cultivating acceptance and positively modifying mindsets. It has accomplished what the other millionaire public-relation industries or NGOs have so far been unsuccessful to achieve. In India, Pak-phobia or Pak-threat has seen a considerable decline from 75% to 42% while in Pakistan the similar trend has reduced from 54% to 29% which confirms that this peace-journalistic endeavour has fruitfully come much nearer to what it was destined to accomplish<sup>52</sup>.

Similar to other India-Pakistan peace initiatives, "*Aman ki Asha*" has also drawn condemnation and suspicion from Indian and Pakistani cynics. In Pakistan, few politicians, thinkers and media practitioners have deemed this step as merely an unnecessary idea intended to waste audience's valuable time and weakening of Pakistan's political posture over Kashmir<sup>53</sup>. While, Indian cynics' obsession over Pakistani backed extremism has grown thorns in the way of project's success as they observe the very initiative as being business-oriented, impractical and divisive<sup>54</sup>. However, the peace drive is in its babyhood and calls for uphill struggle to reach maturity but it is the primary step that, if allowed to prevail longer, might dismantle India-Pakistan historical antagonism and prove itself to be the torchbearer of new rather much peaceful beginning<sup>55</sup>.

### **Roots of "*Aman ki Asha*"**

The proposal of "*Aman ki Asha*" did not arrive suddenly from nowhere but possesses a history too. One might draw back the very initiative with the inception of SAFMA (South-Asian Free Media Association) that came along in 2000<sup>56</sup>. *The News* in alliance with United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) pioneered the plan of an energetic and liberated media that would be well-versed in endorsing long-lasting peace initiatives<sup>57</sup>. The objectives were comparable to

those of “*Aman ki Asha*” with an intention to exercise media for their mediation, watch-dog and conflict-resolution functions, thereby contributing in alleviating misconceptions, exposing truth, facilitating discourse or communication and discouraging negative stereotypes in South-Asia.

SAFMA, still in the scene, has focused on media’s liberty, unblocked surge of information, conflict-transformation, regional collaboration, trust-building and a struggle towards obtaining peace both within and beyond the region. It has embraced those who reckoned the worth of discourse and who believed in the diplomatic resolution of divergence and, hence, has penetrated its voice into the doors of parliament and policy institutions. It has struggled for peace-building via media, journalists’ liberation and citizen’s right of accessing truth. Similar to “*Aman ki Asha*”, several seminars and dialogues have been arranged by SAFMA with an intention to construct a conflict-free environment. Furthermore, it has assisted Indian and Pakistani journalists to collaborate with one-other to alter their prejudiced mindsets and to undermine stereotypes regarding each side through utilizing media.

Again in 2001, Agra summit, to some extent, brought back the ideals of peace journalism when in the presence of approximately 500 media-teams General Musharraf, the then Pakistani President, and Vajpayee, the then Indian Prime-Minister, met to converse bilateral issues. The event turned into a “media-summit” where a sea of journalists flew from Pakistan to its neighbouring India<sup>58</sup>. Though the conference did not prove fruitful but it had projected the peoples’ longing for witnessing a brotherly atmosphere between India-Pakistan. The event, however, fell victim to sensationalism but the expectations and mood of the spectators were very optimistic and an opportunity was seen for alleviating tensions and misconceptions through utilizing the influence of media<sup>59</sup>.

The above stated events have pioneered the foundations of “*Aman ki Asha*” and have demonstrated how Pakistani and

Indian media can prove to be useful to reduce bilateral tension and misunderstandings.

### **"Aman ki Asha": Psychological and Societal Ramifications on Public**

As peace is beneficial for both states therefore, "*Aman ki Asha*" is likely to have the following ramifications on Indian and Pakistani public; healthy social living of people; chance to settle Kashmir-dispute; strengthening of Indian/Pakistani news and entertainment industry; creation of cultural and psychological benevolence amongst Indian and Pakistani citizens; financial boost through economic interdependence. Across-the-board tourism; diminution of trans-border extremism, smuggling and crimes; bilateral job opportunities. improvement in labour, education, infrastructure, political system, economy, culture, lifestyle, clothing etc; bilateral renewal of cricket, political, military and trade relations; decline in India-Pakistan risk of nuclear-war; considerable lessening of Indo-phobic or Pak-phobic trend; diversion of arms expenses to developmental and health projects; and finally, an opportunity for South Asia to succeed.

### **Recommendations for Peace Journalism in India-Pakistan**

Peace journalists cannot operate alone; they need their fellow members to join them, government's endorsement and public appreciation. In Indo-Pak framework, the journalists require security and freedom to proceed in the best interests of the public. They need space to function, resources to preserve quality, capital to discard yellow journalism, security to certify objectivity and above all, respect for human-being and a public's messenger holding the duty to disseminate valid information. Unfortunately, the region of South-Asia has been viewed as the most dangerous place for conducting journalism.

First, the Indo-Pak journalists and other media practitioners must clarify whether they desire peace between

India and Pakistan or not. If yes, then they ought to endorse the following recommendations in their working media environments since these are not merely suggestions but a way of conducting ethical journalism in Indo-Pak hostile context. The following recommendations are offered from the personal opinion and experience of the participants selected for the survey of current study.

- The professional media-practitioners in India-Pakistan must be segregated from the non-professionals.
- The Indian and Pakistani journalists must be equipped with required training, professional education, financial and logistic resources. Various training camps must be established all over the subcontinent to strengthen the journalists' capability towards peace-building<sup>60</sup>.
- Young journalists must be promoted and encouraged in both states' news-media industries since they are more energetic, possess fresh ideas, more logical and much creative than the older journalists<sup>61</sup>.
- The media peace initiatives like "*Aman ki Asha*" must persist as it is due to such endeavours that Indo-phobic or Pak-phobic mindsets could be altered. Such initiatives must be made globalized by engaging all stakeholders and all media industries. Human minds tend to have short-term memory, therefore, such peace endeavours should emerge on a regular basis<sup>62</sup>. Furthermore, Indo-Pak peace journalists must have to go out of box, something apart from cricket diplomacy or few mutual entertainment or news programmes. Perhaps the element of creativity is more significant and obligatory especially in the context of India-Pakistan historic enmity.

## Conclusion

The article has focused on the evolution and progression of peace journalism as an autonomous theme of peace-research. The entire literature has presented the only conclusion, that in a tense political relationship between the governments of

Pakistan and India; only objective, unbiased and rather peaceful media can help revive the forgotten history of Hindu-Muslim unity, fill the political and communication gaps, allow free-movement of people on both sides and could alleviate suspicion and miscommunications between the two nations. The South Asian journalists and media authorities should accept peace journalism as the only remedy of resolving historic issues as such conflicts have contributed in portraying the region as highly volatile, dangerous and insecure.

## Notes

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<sup>1</sup> M. Imtiaz Shahid, *Advanced Mass Communication* (Lahore: Advanced AP Publishers, 2008), 51-61.

<sup>2</sup> Shahrukh Hassan, "Aman ki Asha: Changing Mindsets," accessed 24 June, 2012, [http://amankiasha.com/detail\\_news.asp?id=348](http://amankiasha.com/detail_news.asp?id=348).

<sup>3</sup> M. Imtiaz Shahid, *Advanced Mass Communication* (Lahore: Advanced AP Publishers, 2008), 51-61.

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