

'Liberators of the ages': The Role of Buddha and Muhammad (PBUH) for the Liberation of Humanity

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this paper is to highlight and present the role of two charismatic religious and spiritual leaders, Buddha and Muhammad (PBUH). Both emerged as a liberator and reformers of their ages. At the time of Buddha, people were squeezed, enslaved and cruelly treated by the upper class Brahmins. Poor were strictly reduced to be the dependent on the mercy of that class and its so-called tenets. In such conditions, Buddha and his teachings gave a new dimension to the suppressed people for living a dignified life. Thus, he was considered, at that time, as the liberator for humanity from man-made tenets and injustice. Muhammad (PBUH) too, liberated people from the cruelty and oppression of the upper class of the Meccan society. He conveyed the message of God to the people, with warnings and glad tidings, for the construction of a just society that should be based on the equality as per instruction of God's revelation. He continued his mission of bringing justice and equality, and always supported the poor and weaker section of the society. So, due to such efforts he is also called the liberator and reformer for the humanity. Both, Buddha and Muhammad had same motivation to liberate people from oppression, subjugation and injustice from the oppressors of their ages.

Keywords:liberators of the ages, Buddha, Muhammad (pbuh), liberation, humanity.

Though the 21st century is the age of globalization, science and technology but many human societies are stumbling in several crises. Today, people in millions are suffering from injustice and oppression. Particularly, the crisis of refugees and marginalized people due to war and violence in many socio-politico-religious (in term of religious extremism, ethno-religious nationalism) and economic factors. People, again, facing the quandaries, bearing the torment of the damn racism and discrimination. Beside such common social anguishes and evils, there is also discrimination and dehumanization, corruption, injustice, persecution, terrorism, fanaticism and gender inequality. Humanity, again, needs liberation.

Liberation is not only considered as freedom from oppression and violence, slavery and injustice, poverty and cruelty, sufferings and atrocities, but also to get rid of illiteracy, ignorance and unemployment which are major causes of depression and crime nowadays. Further, Liberation from one's ego, and the will to control and dominate over it, is also appreciated in the most world religions in a spiritual way. The world's major religious traditions have a variety of notions about the term "liberation" as it is the need for every human being to get liberated from spiritual debauchery, economic greed, racial prejudice, and politico-cultural imperialism.

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Conclusion

Our life has been changed drastically with the innovation of WhatsApp messenger. It has transformed a talkative social Pakistani citizen into a mobile addict. From reducing boredom to spreading harmony, WhatsApp has managed to become an important part of lives. On one hand it has affected physical relationship and on other hand it has kindled romances and affection between people. It's sometimes proven to be a best way to kill time and sometimes it is being considered wastage of time. Sometimes it's a source of information and sometimes it's causing disturbance, disagreements and creating misunderstandings between people. It helps people to plan and arrange events and they can often invite people to their events through WhatsApp. It has brought together people on one platform and enabled them to metaphorically flock together. The sight of a son and father sitting on two corners in a home with smart phone in their hand is a common sight in Karachi. Friends, Relatives, family, colleagues, acquaintance, fiancé, and siblings are all connected to each other through WhatsApp. It was observed that different kind of people exist on WhatsApp. Some people have secular mind while some are so extremist about their religious views. They talk about different religious topics in entirely different way. Thus we can say that WhatsApp can be used to promote religious sentiments, personalities and acts. On the other side it can also be used as a tool to promote extremism and hatred against other religions and minorities.

The findings also show that a lot of people are forwarding religious content to each other which shows the religious interest of people living in Karachi.

Hence we can conclude that WhatsApp is being used for all type of discussions. The conversations of professionals provide more in-depth understanding of the usage of WhatsApp application. From national to international issues, from fitness to health issues, from psychological to mental issues, from economic to domestic issues, from religious to extremism issues, from terrorism to political issues, from entertainment to taboo issues, from personal growth to learning, from promoting business to helping clients; WhatsApp has covered each and every domain of life.

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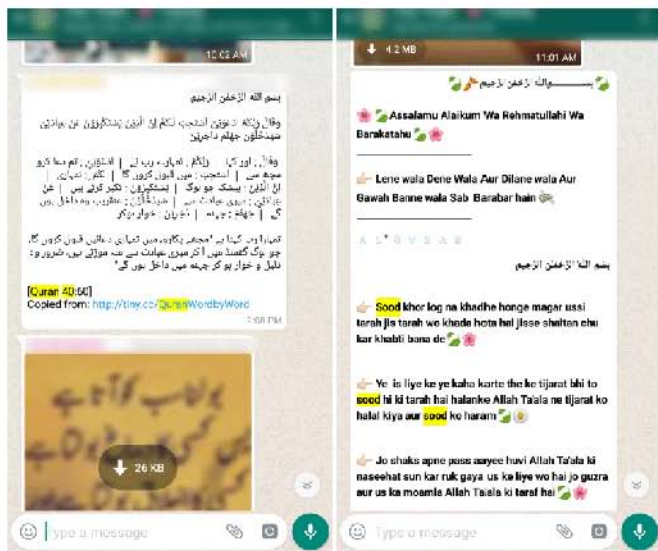
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religion after having religious discussion with atheist on WhatsApp. So we may say that WhatsApp is being used as a medium through which people can switch or leave religion.



Sharing religious stuff

It was noticed that people forward Islamic ahadees, quranicayat, and Islamic lectures to each other in the form of text messages, videos and pictures on WhatsApp without even investigating about its authenticity.



Thus it supports our hypothesis that WhatsApp help people to disseminate religious and non religious narrative among their fellow beings.



Religious personalities

It was observed that people talk a lot about religious personalities on WhatsApp. They admire them, imitate them and follow them. They share their stories, quotes and pictures on WhatsApp group and do not bear any criticism against them. Consider the following example;



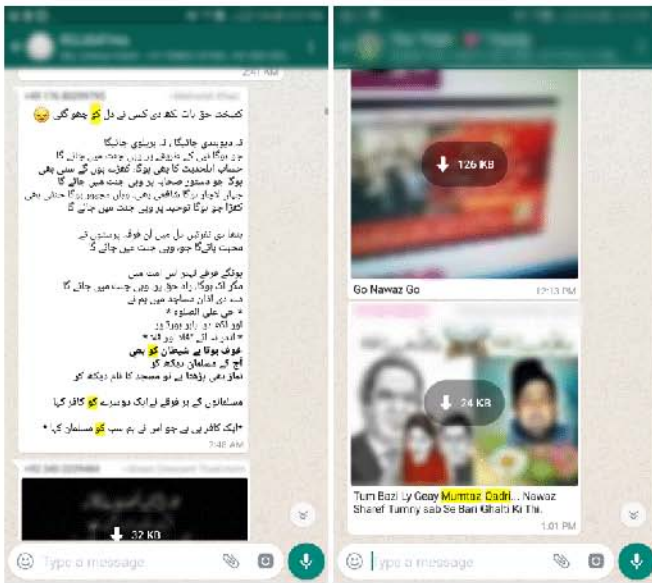
Atheism

With the advent of technology and science, so many people are leaving or converting their religion. It was observed that WhatsApp users do take part in discussions related religion and raise questions on the existence of God on WhatsApp. It was noticed that few people become atheist or convert to another

pictures, videos and audios with opposite sex without any additional cost. Living in a conservative society mostly students are not allowed to talk with opposite gender openly. Due to some cultural restrictions it is not considered good. Girls and boys are not allowed to meet physically in our religion but WhatsApp give them chance to share their sexual desires in very affordable manner. It's easy to hide conversations from parents. As several lock codes are available on smart phones. They can also delete media after chatting. So it rejects the notion that WhatsApp is being used as a medium to promote Islamic values and culture by students.

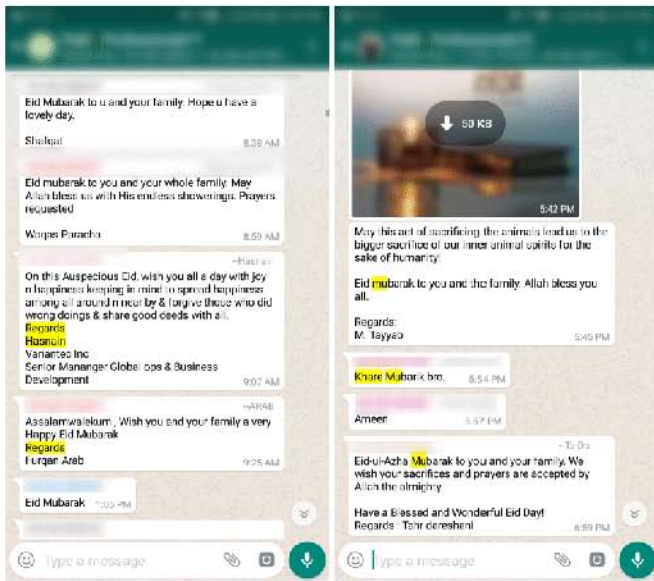
Religious Extremism

It was observed that there are few people who condemn religious extremism on WhatsApp. They share and forward messages against religious extremism. On the other hand, there are also some people who support religious extremism. Consider the following:



Sects/Other religion

Karachi is a cosmopolitan city so people from different religions and sects are using WhatsApp in Karachi. It was mentioned in rules and regulations of few WhatsApp groups that no flaming of person belongs to other sect or religion is allowed on this group. Admin immediately block the person from the group who gets engage in any kind of religious conversation. . It was also observed that Muslim people do not want to listen against their religious beliefs and if any one talks against their religious belief they start criticizing them. Consider the following example in which a WhatsApp user is criticizing people who celebrate Christmas day.



Anti religious Activities

It was observed that mostly students are involved in different antireligious activities on WhatsApp. They share adult pictures videos images and get involved in sexual conversation on WhatsApp. Some examples are given below.



They also play 'role play' game in which they act as if everything is happening in real. It shows that WhatsApp is being used in bad ways as well. Now almost every student male or female has camera in his/her room. They can write about everything even if they are sitting in front of their parents. They can share

language. They start using in WhatsApp as well. Some of the major examples from WhatsApp conversations are given below

List of top ten clipped words from 50 WhatsApp conversations:

| Clipped words | Frequency | Original words |
|---------------|-----------|-----------------|
| ok | 19822 | Okay |
| Uni | 8219 | University |
| congrats | 5191 | Congratulations |
| exam | 7280 | Examination |
| bro | 911 | Brother |
| mid | 2440 | Midterm |
| sec | 1201 | Second |
| prob | 232 | Problem |
| mon | 496 | Monday |
| salam | 256 | Asalamoalikum |

4. Topic Analysis of WhatsApp Conversations

In recent years, WhatsApp has become a global phenomenon. People share valuable and interesting content, develop relationship and discuss different social, political, religious and economic issues on WhatsApp. Previous studies have focused on linguistic features and its effect on education and business activities of students and professionals. In this study, researcher investigates the role of WhatsApp in disseminating religious narrative.

Discussion about Religious Events

It was observe that people celebrate different religious events like EidulFitr and EidulAzha on WhatsApp by wishing each other in form of different text, audio and video messages. People plan to go to cow mandi together. They share pictures of cows, camel and goats with each other on WhatsApp. They talk about the prices of animals and often sell and purchase them on WhatsApp group.

27/7/2017, 5:48 PM – Saud: Mandikakya scene hae Boss

27/7/2017, 6:02 PM – Ehitisham Khan: Mandika scene ho to apkabhai always ready

27/7/2017, 6:05 PM - Saud: 11 pe pick kartahunFaheembhichalrahahaesath

They share pictures, plan gatherings and send invitation letters to each other on WhatsApp. Screenshot is attached to see the way WhatsApp is being used to promote religious events.

a fatwa declaring 'angle with a halo above face emoji' haram. He also warned Muslims to avoid using 'sign of the horn' emoji on WhatsApp as it symbolizes two horns of Satan. (Verkaik ,2016)¹³

Moreover, it was observed that people signed different petitions to request the concerned authorities to add emoji of a woman wearing hijab. As a result now we can see emojis of a woman wearing hijab and a heavily bearded character emoji in our WhatsAppemoji list. It indicates that people associate emojis with religion and the choice of emoji is affected by the religious beliefs of person.

3. Language Analysis

An attempt has been made to analyze the language used in WhatsApp conversations. The language of conversation is categorized according to their characteristics.

Initialism:

Initialism is an abbreviation consisting of initial letters of a word, sentence or phrase e.g. hru (how are you), omg (oh my God). Yeboah, J. and Ewur, G. D. (2014)¹⁴ assert that students usually adopt short hand form of writing (WE THANK GOD written as 'WTG') due to laziness.

List of top ten frequently used initials in 50 WhatsApp conversations

| Initials | Frequency | Original words |
|----------|-----------|------------------|
| LOL | 172021 | Lots of Laughter |
| TC | 87213 | Take Care |
| GM | 10431 | Good morning |
| KHI | 9752 | Karachi |
| LVU | 8621 | Love you |
| WS | 6399 | Walikumsalam |
| BC | 5290 | Slang word |
| AOA | 4793 | Asalmoalikum |
| BRB | 4372 | Be Right Back |
| MA | 2154 | MashAllah |

The findings show that along with English, Arabic, Roman English and Urdu words are also adapted as initials. Malik Naseer, Hussain (2013)¹⁵ posits that 'AOA' and 'SAW' are frequently used to replace Asalmoalikum and sallallahuelaihiwasalam in SMS languages in Pakistan. Likewise, students are following the same language pattern in WhatsApp.

Clipping (Morphology):

Clippings are small piece of words that have been clipped off or out something e.g. exam (examination). Rafi (2010)¹⁶ say that people prefer to use shortened words like 'intro' for introduction, 'bro' for 'brother', 'sis' for 'sister in SMS

maximum conversation takes place after noon. The tone of their conversation is mostly informal. They prefer to send messages in roman English. As far as Pakistani society is concerned, mostly Urdu, English and Roman English are used in the domain of mobile phone communication. (Ali, I., and M. T. Aslam, 2012)⁷

2. Emoticon Analysis

It was observed that a new kind of emoji language and emoji grammar is emerging on digital media. Apart from text and media files, people communicate through emoticons. When we write something, emojis act as non verbal cues that provide so much information which is not possible to deliver through words only. These pictorial reflections of sentiments are playing a vital role in our everyday conversation.

The meaning of emojis

Emoticons are “graphic representations of facial expressions” (Walther & D’Addario, 2001, p. 324)⁸. Emoji is a Japanese word comprised of two parts – the e means “picture” and moji means “letter”. Emojis are a form of non verbal communication (Derks et al., 2008)⁹ or combination of keyboard characters that depicts the writer’s mood (Crystal, 2001)¹⁰. Emojis are the way through which we express our emotions (Kelly, 2015)¹¹.

How emojis are affected by different factors

It also turns out that the use of emojis varies from person to person. According to a study 73% respondents do not send same emojis to their parents and friends (Kelly, 2015). The way WhatsApp users use emojis is affected by their age, religious beliefs, nature, culture, relationship, and context. Dunlap et al. agrees that different people use emoticons in different ways and the usage is affected by experience, context and preferences. Furthermore, these emojis are not labeled on WhatsApp so their meaning is up to those who use them. According to the findings of a survey done by Kelly (2015), 70% students interpret the emojis differently, depending on the sender of the message.

It was observed that the choices of emojis are influenced by religious beliefs. As Karachi is cosmopolitan city so it is comprised of people from all religion. Some major religions include Islam, Hinduism, Christianity and Buddhism. It was observed that kneeling person under a roof emoji is the most common religious emoji among Muslims. Om symbol and praying hands emoji are the most common religious emojis among Hindus. Orthodox cross symbol is the most common religious emoji among Christians. The findings are consistent with the findings of a survey from twitter data that praying hands is the most popular emoji in India (Briese, 2016)¹².

However it was also noticed that the use of emojis are criticized by Muslim clerics in Pakistan and around world. A Saudi based preacher, Wajdi Akkari issued