

ISLAMOPHOBIA AND PREJUDICES AGAINST MUSLIMS (1)

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The word Islamophobia is something that we hear very frequently, but do we actually know the real meaning of it? If we break the word into two, we get 'Islam', a religion of Muslims and 'Phobia', which means fear, which when combined means fear of Islam or Muslims. But why should one be afraid of Islam or Muslims in particular, aren't Muslims humans just like each one of us? They are afraid not because they are on rise but they fear that their jobs and places might be snatched from them and that they have to suffer the brutality that once those Muslims faced, what they don't know is that Islam preaches of not torture but mercy, not hate but love, not violence but peace.

There has been a history of prejudice and violence against Muslims in USA, Europe, and other countries of the world. Recently we have witnessed it in India, where many videos including religious slurs against Muslims got viral. In USA, this has increased after the 9/11 attack, since the terrorists involved in the attack were Muslims, and therefore, now every Muslim is a terrorist in a normal American's eyes. Muslims have always condemned these attacks, still somehow because of politics, people are brainwashed and are made to hate a certain community so that they vote for that particular person who is behind all this. It happened with the Jews in Germany, which was truly haunting.

According to The Times of India, during an annual gathering of South Asian Sunni Muslims in Uttar Pradesh this week, almost 1.5 million attendees signed a document protesting against global terrorist activity. There have been multiple occasions where Muslim organizations have strongly denied any connection of terrorism with Islam. But sadly, people only see the dark side of the alley.

Most of the terrorist attacks that take place are in the Muslim majority countries. Even mosques, the sacred place of worship, are being bombarded. Last year, there was an attack on a mosque in Christchurch, New Zealand. And the brutal oppression and torture that the Chinese government is inflicting on Uyghur Muslims by forcing them into

concentration camps is not something to be ignored. "...the world largely remains mute on the plight of Uyghur, with their sufferings only being mentioned in occasional reports by a few media organisations...", wrote Aljazeera in an article.

Why is it so that even after so much condemnation from the Muslims, they are labelled as terrorists? The main reason that can be understood is politics.

Islamic fundamentalism started in 1995. But the people who started it were 'namely Muslims' as they didn't showcase any true Islamic beliefs and thoughts. Russia invaded Afghanistan, but Afghanistan fought back for its Independence, after which the US interfered, and that's how the whole story began. It is believed that the problem in the middle eastern Islamic countries started when the oil was discovered. The people of these countries were innocent and hence, countries like USA took benefit of them by doing everything they could to get oil from them, be it fuelling civil wars in and between the countries, or killing their leaders. The powerful countries have gained full control of the middle east over their arms and ammunition market. Today, most of the revenue that the USA makes is by selling the weapons of war.

Islamophobia has, in a way, also helped Islam. This is so because since the 9/11 attack, people got interested to learn about the religion, and studies show us that today, Islam is the fastest growing religion. But the real problem is that what about those innocent peace-loving Muslims, who only own small shops or do job, and want a simple life and education for their children. Also, because of the rise in Muslim population, people are afraid that they are going to take away their place. Unfortunately, some politicians take benefit of this situation. For example, the feeling of nationalism by an attack on Pakistan is enough to win elections in India, while not caring about those soldiers who sacrifice their lives for their nation. Although, in USA, this is an old trick, now people have slowly started realizing it. However, this process is very new for the people of India.

Media also plays a big role in it. Leaving one or two organizations, the media portrays certain religion (in this case, Muslims) as unworthy of respect (because of the intimidation by the governments). A hate speech or some violence created by a non-Muslim goes unnoticed, but the same done by a Muslim becomes the topic for prime-time debates. That is how the feeling of hatred between religious groups is fuelled. It is observed that the

people chanting Jai Shri Ram are actually unaware of what Shri Ram has preached all his life. Similarly, the terrorists who are Muslims do not know what Prophet Muhammad has preached all his life. It was witnessed that Prophet Muhammad even used to give food to the women who used to dump garbage on him every day. All news channels outlined how the members of the Tablighi Jamaat spat on the doctors and nurses of the hospital, but no-one spoke when it was proved to be a rumour just to spread hate, media didn't cover when a pregnant woman was denied treatment just because she was Muslim, or how an MLA from UP was asking people to not take vegetables from a vendor because he was Muslim.

But recently there has been a stir in social media platforms, especially twitter, when several Indian nationalists living in Arab countries were fired from their jobs for displaying and portraying Islamophobia through social media as violence carried out by Hindu extremist against Indian Muslims has seen a spike during the coronavirus outbreak. A UAE princess also hit out against Islamophobic posts by Indian expats and requested the Indian government to not ignore such acts. She tweeted, "I humbly request the Indian government to take proper actions in order to eradicate the hate spread due to religious discrimination". Looks like even the Gulf countries feel that the Muslim minority is subjected to hate and discrimination.

Islam is a verbal noun originating from the triliteral root S-L-M which forms a large class of words mostly relating to concepts of wholeness, submission, sincerity, safeness and peace, hence denoting its relevance. Moreover, we cannot determine a person's actions just by his/her religion. Ajmal Kasab, a terrorist who was involved in 26/11 attack, knew nothing about Islam. Hence, it can't be said that he was a 'Muslim' and that's why he did it. We need to treat all religions as equal and have to be rational.

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