

Ramzan vs Ramadan: linguistic shift or culture? (1)

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The month of Ramzan or Ramadan has begun. Every year, this month brings joy, the feeling of brotherhood and love for others; a sense of responsibility towards our less privileged brothers and sisters. We help them by offering them food and help. But since a few years, a unique thing that this month brings is the debate around the pronunciation of the word 'zuad', should it be pronounced 'Ramzan' Or 'Ramadan'?

The advocates of pronouncing it as Ramzan call against the romance of Muslim elites with the Arab version of Islam, i.e., Wahabism and their desire to shift from Indian culture and align themselves with the Saudi version of Islam. The reason they give is that Islam originated in Saudi Arabia, so they are kind of 'originals' and every elite Muslim in India keeps on shunning their Indian identity and look and behave like what Saudis do. Be it wearing Saudi style clothes or pronouncing words like 'Shukran' for 'Shukriya' (Although it is very rarely seen).

This shallow understanding of the Indian Muslims and the terms like 'Globalization' is ineffable. We proudly ask for 'Mohito'(actual spelling Mojito) while sitting in a cafe and make tweets criticizing 'Ramadan' because of our little understanding of languages and culture.

The word 'zuad' lost its pronunciation from z to d with time, it was borrowed to the Persian and Urdu languages centuries ago and could not retain its original sound which happens with a lot of words of different languages. This shift has happened because of Globalization and an increase in communication technology. We today have the largest Indian population working in Gulf countries like Saudi Arabia or Qatar and they naturally bring the pronunciation with them, many Indians even have kids born and brought up in these countries, for them saying Ramadan instead of Ramzan is very natural. Not just Middle east, it has happened from Western countries also, in almost all the English newspapers of the UK or USA that I have read, they have spelled Ramzan as Ramadan and we knowingly or unknowingly follow them too.

This whole debate around Ramzan-Ramadan shows the sorry state of Indian Muslims, I am saying this as we have seen a lot of Muslims like Zeeshan Ayyub speaking about it, where he calls the shift from 'z' to 'd' as shifting from Indian to the Saudi version of Islam. The Muslims in India shy away from asserting their Muslim identity, because of the fear of getting stereotyped. They keep on drawing lines between radical Muslims and liberal Muslims and live in a state of denial, they always try to distance themselves from some Muslims and portray that they are not like them.

This explanation sometimes is also given by people with certain political agendas to push Muslims to the corner or to fill the minds of people of other religions with hatred towards Muslims. This shift from 'z' to 'd' is explained as the loyalty shift of Muslims towards India to Muslim countries, Saudi Arabia specifically and hence label them as anti-nationals.

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